

Press Release



Honorary Golden Bear and *Homage* to Michael Ballhaus

The 66th Berlin International Film Festival will award an Honorary Golden Bear for lifetime achievement to German cinematographer Michael Ballhaus, to whom the festival is also dedicating this year's *Homage*.

Ballhaus is one of the world's most important cinematographers. Before spending 25 years working primarily in the USA, he established his reputation in Germany where he worked with, among others, auteur Rainer Werner Fassbinder, helping "Young German Cinema" achieve new artistic freedom. At the lens alongside great American directors such as Martin Scorsese, he had a decisive effect on the lighting and look of US moviemaking.

"We are honouring Michael Ballhaus as a director of photography who was a kindred talent to directors and whose oeuvre is unique," says Berlinale Director Dieter Kosslick. That body of work comprises some 130 films for theatres and television, including 15 films with Fassbinder and seven with Scorsese alone, alongside many other legendary directors, including Peter Lilienthal, Wolfgang Petersen, Volker Schlöndorff, John Sayles, Robert Redford, James L. Brooks, Paul Newman, Mike Nichols, and Francis Ford Coppola.

Michael Ballhaus began as a still photographer and cameraman in television. He had already been Fassbinder's director of photography three times before taking his place at the eyepiece on *Martha* (West Germany 1974), a psycho-drama about a sado-masochistic marriage. During the shoot, Fassbinder and Ballhaus discussed how to film the first meeting of the future couple as a magical moment. Ballhaus suggested a semi-circular travelling shot due to the uneven ground at the location. Fassbinder countered with a challenge to have the camera make a full circuit of the pair. The resulting 360-degree dolly shot drew audiences into the scene's emotional intensity and was to become a Ballhaus trademark. But the cinematographer's intent and his genius is the way he comes up with visual language to suit each individual director and film.

Ballhaus' second outing with Martin Scorsese, for whom the DP has expressed great admiration, was *The Color of Money* (USA 1986), which was shown out of competition at the 1987 Berlinale. For the film about pool hustlers, Ballhaus unleashed the camera to glide, in a movement echoing that of the pool balls, around the room.

For the romantic comedy *Working Girl* (USA 1988, director: Mike Nichols), about a secretary who cleverly grabs the chance to transform herself into a powerhouse businesswoman, Ballhaus put a spectacular aerial shot behind the opening credits. The camera slowly circles the Statue of Liberty before pushing in to land on the Staten Island ferry.

In the key piano scene in *The Fabulous Baker Boys* (USA 1989, director:

**66. Internationale
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Steve Kloves), the camera dollies slowly around singer Susie Diamond and pianist Jack Baker. The long, sensual travelling shot is a flirtation just as intense as the interaction between Michelle Pfeiffer in her red dress and Jeff Bridges at the ivories. The cinematography garnered Ballhaus one of his three Academy Award nominations.

His fame grew in the 1990s with work on films such as *Goodfellas* (USA 1990, director: Martin Scorsese), *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (USA 1992, director: Francis Ford Coppola) and *Quiz Show* (USA 1994, director: Robert Redford, shown out of competition at the 1995 Berlinale). In *The Age of Innocence* (USA 1993), the subtle use of camera angles and gentle dolly shots brought the drama of a love triangle in 19th century New York to life. The film is considered a masterpiece by the team of Ballhaus and Scorsese. After returning to Germany in 2007, he lensed *3096 Tage* (*3096 Days*, Germany 2013) directed by Sherry Hormann, his final outing as a director of photography.

The Berlin International Film Festival has a long and close history with Michael Ballhaus; he has been a frequent guest at the festival with his films, and was president of the International Jury in 1990; in 2006, he was awarded the Berlinale Camera for his unique contribution to film.

In 2016, the Berlinale will bestow an Honorary Golden Bear on Michael Ballhaus for his extraordinary body of work. The award ceremony on February 18, 2016 at 10 pm in the Berlinale Palast will be accompanied by a screening of *Gangs of New York* (USA / Italy 2002, director: Martin Scorsese, shown out of competition at the 2003 Berlinale).

In cooperation with the Deutsche Kinemathek and *Berlinale Talents*, there will be a dialogue in English with Michael Ballhaus and Jim Rakete, titled "Michael Ballhaus meets Jim Rakete", the preceding evening at the HAU Hebbel am Ufer (HAU1) theatre.

For the third year in a row, the Berlinale *Homage* and *Retrospective* will be supported by their section partner, Glashütte Original, a watchmaker rich in tradition and a Berlinale co-partner since 2011. Among other generous contributions, the brand, with headquarters in Saxony, will join the Berlin International Film Festival and the Deutsche Kinemathek - Museum für Film und Fernsehen to mount the reception that will be part of the Honorary Golden Bear award ceremony.

The ten films screening in the *Homage*

Martha (West Germany 1974, director: R. W. Fassbinder), TV film

The Color of Money (USA 1986, director: Martin Scorsese)

Working Girl (USA 1988, director: Mike Nichols)



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The Fabulous Baker Boys (USA 1989, director: Steve Kloves)

Goodfellas (USA 1990, director: Martin Scorsese)

Bram Stoker's Dracula (USA 1992, director: Francis Ford Coppola)

The Age of Innocence (USA 1993, director: Martin Scorsese)

Quiz Show (USA 1994, director: Robert Redford)

Gangs of New York (USA / Italy 2002, director: Martin Scorsese)

3096 Tage (*3096 Days*, Germany 2013, director: Sherry Hormann)

Press Office
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