



Press Release

Berlinale *Retrospective* 2017: "Future Imperfect. Science · Fiction · Film"

The *Retrospective* of the 67th Berlin International Film Festival is dedicated to science fiction films, one of the most visual stunning and spectacular genres in the history of film. This year's *Retrospective* will showcase imaginary worlds in an imperfect future, the way the science fiction genre has conceived of them since its beginnings, with a focus on two themes - the society of the future, and the strange and Other. A total of 27 international features, including classics, cult films, and largely unknown productions from places like Japan, as well as Central and Eastern Europe will make up the 2017 *Retrospective*.

"Science fiction is one of the most commercially successful film genres. The possible worlds on Earth or in space open up a vast scope for re-defining questions of collective visions and fears. So as a mirror for society's public debates, science fiction films are enormously topical", says Festival Director Dieter Kosslick.

The particular appeal of these films is that they provide us with a sensory experience of a distant future, although positive visions of that future tend to be the exception. The genre is dominated by depictions of dystopias that use pessimistic extrapolation to imbue contemporary issues with an explosive quality. The environmental dystopia portrayed in *Soylent Green* (dir: Richard Fleischer, USA 1973), for instance, is the result of over-population and environmental pollution. Using a muted colour palette, it depicts a world in which there is intense competition for water, food, and accommodations, and humans are recycled like trash. Central to the sci-fi genre are storylines dealing with totalitarian systems and omnipresent surveillance, such as in the first film version of George Orwell's famous novel *1984* (dir: Michael Anderson, UK / USA 1956). Director George Lucas' memorable vision of a technocratic future in *THX 1138* (USA 1971) is a highly efficient and fully automated society, in which the emotions and free will of the individual are suppressed with medication. Another sub-genre are post-apocalyptic films where the Earth has become uninhabitable. In *O-bi, o-ba: Koniec cywilizacji* (*O-bi, O-ba: The End of Civilization*, dir: Piotr Szulkin, Poland 1985), the survivors of a nuclear holocaust have retreated to a life underground. When all civilized order has been annihilated, violence and chaos rule; but new forms of community also emerge.

Another ubiquitous theme in science fiction films is the alien or unknown Other. The genre is replete with scenarios that have humans coming into contact with extraterrestrial life forms, and ideas about what the aliens might look like and how they live. The Danish silent film *Himmelskibet* (*A Trip to Mars*) by Holger-Madsen premiered in 1918, making it one of the

**67. Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
09. – 19.02.2017**

Press Office

Potsdamer Straße 5
10785 Berlin

Phone +49 · 30 · 259 20 · 707
Fax +49 · 30 · 259 20 · 799

press@berlinale.de
www.berlinale.de

Ein Geschäftsbereich der
Kulturveranstaltungen des
Bundes in Berlin (KBB) GmbH

Management:

Prof. Dieter Kosslick
(Intendant Internationale
Filmfestspiele Berlin),
Charlotte Sieben
(Kaufmännische Geschäftsführung),
Prof. Dr. Bernd M. Scherer,
Dr. Thomas Oberender

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Prof. Monika Grütters MdB

Amtsgericht Charlottenburg
HGR Nr. 96 · HRB 29357
USt ID DE 136 78 27 46



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earliest science fiction films ever shot. It conjures up a very peaceful vision of a Mars expedition and the encounter with the life forms who live there. Other friendly-seeming alien races include the starfish-shaped extraterrestrials in Kōji Shima's *Uchūjin Tōkyō ni Arawaru* (*Warning from Space*, Japan 1956) and the childlike creatures in Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (USA 1977). The genre classic *The War of the Worlds* (dir: Byron Haskin, USA 1953), by contrast, is a perfect example of the threatening alien invasion from space storyline. But the Other can also surface within human society or even within the individual. Artificial intelligence, androids, and robots raise the issue of the difference between men and machines. That is explored in a gloomy, merciless manner in Marek Piestrak's *Test Pilota Pirxa* (*Pilot Pirx's Inquest*, Poland / USSR 1979).

"In selecting the films, we were inspired by the subject of our exhibition 'Things to Come'. But the *Retrospective* takes a look at the history of the genre and shows imaginary worlds, including films from countries such as Denmark, Japan, Poland, and Czechoslovakia", says Rainer Rother, head of the festival's *Retrospective* section and artistic director of the Deutsche Kinemathek.

The exhibition "Things to Come. Science · Fiction · Film" has been on view at the Deutsche Kinemathek - Museum für Film und Fernsehen since June 2016 and will run parallel to the *Retrospective*. It also explores the intertwining of science and fiction and will remain open until April 23, 2017 at Filmhaus on Potsdamer Platz.

The publication accompanying the *Retrospective* will be released only in English for the first time. The richly-illustrated volume published by the Bertz + Fischer house will feature essays by renowned international authors, who delve into science fiction film within the context of their national cinema.

For the second time this year, the film *Retrospective* will be rounded out with a special presentation in the television mediathek of the Deutsche Kinemathek, showcasing the intensity, with which German television has been exploring the subject of the future for decades.

The Deutsche Kinemathek will also host numerous events to complement the *Retrospective*.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, has been a *Retrospective* partner since 2011. In the summer of 2017, MoMA will present a related and extended exhibition of science fiction films, organised by Joshua Siegel, MoMA Curator of Film.

Press Office
November 3, 2016