



Bermuda International Film Festival

For Immediate Release

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World Cinema to showcase two Oscar nominees

Two Oscar-nominated films and a Cannes award-winner are among the 10 films selected to screen in the World Cinema Showcase at the 12th Bermuda International Film Festival, March 20-28. Tickets for the Festival go on sale March 11 both online at www.biff.bm and at the BIFF Box Office at 53 Front Street, Hamilton.

Revanche, a slow-burning thriller by acclaimed Austrian director Goetz Spielmann, was among the nominees for Best Foreign Language Film at this year's Academy Awards.

Also nominated in the same category was *Waltz With Bashir*, a brilliant animated feature by Israeli director Ari Folman, which tells the disturbing story of his own involvement in the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The film won the Best Documentary Screenplay award this year from the Writers Guild of America.

Hunger, the debut film by UK director Steve McQueen, follows the harrowing last days of Bobby Sands, the Irish Republican Army hunger striker, in Belfast's Maze prison in 1981. The film won the Golden Camera at the Cannes Film Festival, was named European Discovery of the Year at the European Film Festival and won the Diesel Discovery Award at the 2008 Toronto Film Festival.

Another award winner is *8*, a collection of eight films by directors from seven countries sharing their visions of the United Nations' Millennium Development project, whose goals include eradicating world poverty, universal primary education and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The film won the Cinema for Peace Award for Contribution to the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Programme director David O'Beirne said: "Once again we are delighted to be able to screen such a diverse selection of films at BIFF. With films from more than a dozen countries by

some of the most talented and creative directors working in independent film, the World Cinema Showcase truly lives up to its name. It's a line-up that is both entertaining and thought-provoking and we urge film-lovers to book their tickets early!"

The 10 feature length films selected for the World Cinema Showcase are:

8

(d. Abderrahmane Sissako, Gael Garcia Bernal, Gasper Noe, Nira Nair, Jane Campion, Gus Van Sant, Jan Kounen, Wim Wenders; 100 minutes)

English and various languages with English subtitles

In September 2000, 191 governments committed to halve world poverty by 2015 and set eight goals to achieve this. The Millennium Development Goals are: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development. At the halfway point, eight directors were invited to share their vision of these major issues, each by way of a short film. *Tiya's Dream* (Ethopia), *The Letter* (Iceland), *SIDA* (Burkina Faso), *How Can It Be?* (USA), *The Water Diary* (Australia), *Mansion on the Hill* (USA), *The Story of Panshin Beka* (Peru) and *Person to Person* (Germany) make up the 8.

Citizen Havel

(d. Pavel Koucky and Miroslav Janek, Czech Republic-United States, 120 minutes)

English and Czech with English subtitles

This intimate, sensitive and cultured piece looks behind the scenes at the political and private dramas of former political dissident, leader of the Velvet Revolution, playwright and essayist Vaclav Havel's presidential tenure at the helm of Czechoslovakia and, later, the Czech Republic. His friend, filmmaker Pavel Koucky, began shooting in 1992 when Havel was considering his second candidacy for the presidential office, and continued shooting for more than a decade. Full of fascinating footage, this is Havel as you have never seen him. The film not only reveals a different side to one of the key figures in modern Czech history but, in doing so, it gives the viewer greater insight into the modern history of the Czech Republic.

Empty Nest

(d. Daniel Burman, Argentina-Spain-France-Italy, 91 minutes)

Spanish and Hebrew with English subtitles

Marriage is hard work. It involves commitment, constant negotiation and putting up with your spouse's friends. Daniel Burman's superbly imaginative and entertaining *Empty Nest* is a comedic look at the problems inherent in married life and the difficulties associated with keeping a long-term relationship new and exciting. At once hilarious and nostalgic, Burman's film ponders reality itself while offering a profound consideration of memories and how they are created.

Burman invites the viewer into the quasi surrealist world of playwright Leonardo (played with Woody Allen-like guile by Oscar Martínez) and his wife Martha (wonderfully performed by *All About My Mother's* Cecilia Roth). The well written script naturally interweaves plot twists, and *Empty Nest* is a testament to Burman's maturity as a director. The narrative sustains a sense of gravity throughout, but manages to treat the difficult topic of infidelity with delicacy and a dose of playfulness.

Heaven on Earth

(d. Deepa Mehta, Canada, 106 minutes)
English and Punjabi with English subtitles

Opening with an ecstatic, vibrantly coloured celebration marking the impending nuptials of Chand (Bollywood star Preity Zinta, who delivers one of the year's finest and most courageous performances), Deepa Mehta's powerful and visceral *Heaven on Earth* quickly shifts gears. The minute its heroine gets off a plane in Toronto to meet her new husband, Rocky (Vansh Bhardwaj, who's impossibly good in his first film role), the colour scheme greys, and virtually all scenes (even outdoor ones) appear to be lit by fluorescent lights. This twilight world is fitting, because there's something off-putting about Rocky's family. Deepa Mehta has always had a particular gift for portraying unique families and their subtle power dynamics. Still, *Heaven on Earth* may be her strongest work to date because of her insistence on the collective liability for the acts of a lone individual. Rocky's coldness and horrific temper may be the primary causes of Chand's unhappiness, but he has numerous – albeit often passive – accomplices, most importantly his domineering mother.

Hunger

(d. Steve McQueen, UK, 96 minutes)
Film contains profanity and scenes of violence

Hunger is an extreme cinema work that follows the last days of IRA hunger striker, Bobby Sands' life in the Maze prison during 1981. The movie starts with scenes of the prisoners' revolt: bold images of faeces-painted bodies, urine washed cells and beaten to bath prisoners. Visual Artist Steve McQueen conveys raw but powerful images to expose an ugly, almost forgotten period in British and Irish history. The film introduces Sands when announcing his decision to start the hunger strike during a sharp philosophical conversation with a Catholic priest. Michael Fassbender's performance of the decomposing Sands is an outstanding contribution to the controversial *Hunger* scenes. Every single scene in *Hunger* is powerful and stunning; it is a movie with a committed vision.

Of Time and the City

(d. Terence Davies UK, 72 minutes)

Terence Davies's symphonic cinematic poem was one of the surprise hits at Cannes last year and has gone on to charm audiences around the world ever since. Davies made the film on a minuscule budget (£250,000), using archive footage, some shots of

contemporary Liverpool, his own inimitable voice-over (at times viciously critical) and a great deal of music. Made to celebrate Liverpool's year as Cultural Capital of Europe, the film is a personal reflection on, a paean of praise to and a lament for the city where Davies was born. Homosexuality, class society, Protestants versus Catholics, post-war aftermath: they are all examined. An extraordinarily powerful, almost magical, combination of sound and image in a way not seen on the British screen since the films of Humphrey Jennings, the film's ostensible focus is Liverpool. But its true subject - and the reason why it has won over those with no direct knowledge of Merseyside (or, indeed, postwar Britain) - is that overwhelming sense of loss which lies at the heart of the human condition.

Revanche

(d. Goetz Spielmann, Austria, 121 minutes)

German and Ukrainian with English subtitles

Revanche is a slow, intimate thriller that evolves around desperately-in-love Ukrainian prostitute Tamara and Austrian henchman Alex and the lovers' attempts to escape from their seedy downtown brothel. 'Grand Plan' is the ultimate 'bank robbery' that radically alters the life of everyone involved. 50,000 Euros are gained but Tamara is unintentionally sacrificed, leaving Alex and a police officer with the feeling of despair and guilt. After the calamity, Alex ends up with his left over emotions at his grandfather's isolated farm in the countryside. Alex's feeling of revenge transcends in the process and becomes clear in his consciousness as the projection of his own guilt rather than the policeman's crime.

Summer Book

(d. Seyfi Teoman, Turkey, 92 minutes)

During a long summer vacation by the sea, the life of an ordinary Turkish family takes an unexpected turn. Told through the eyes of a ten-year-old boy, this is a picturesque and moving debut. *Summer Book* is the seemingly ordinary story of a Turkish family in a provincial Mediterranean town. It's the end of the school year, and ten-year-old Ali and his classmates receive a study book for the summer. When Ali's book is stolen by the class bully, his patriarchal father Mustafa, an ambitious merchant, gives Ali a different task: sell a boxful of chewing gum for profit. Meanwhile, Ali's much older brother Veysel comes home for a break from the military academy and reveals his wish to switch to a civilian school in Istanbul. This infuriates the father. His wife does what she can to calm tempers and keep the family together. Easy-going Uncle Hasan is on Veysel's side. But when the father suffers a stroke, all the dynamics of this family topple.

The Upsetter: The Life and Music of Lee "Scratch" Perry

(d. Ethan Higbee and Adam Bhala Lough, United States, 95 minutes)

There is sometimes a fine line between genius and madness – and Lee "Scratch" Perry demonstrates both sides of the line amply in this fascinating documentary about the legendary Jamaican musician and music producer. The film traces Perry from his early days through to the peak of his career – he was a mentor to the young Bob Marley, he

defined the sound of modern reggae and he pioneered a slow and darker version of the genre known as dub. He was also among the first to come up with the studio sound familiar today as remix and he produced international hit songs for artists such as Paul McCartney and The Clash. He also built his Black Ark Studio with his bare hands, and then burnt it down in a fit of drug-induced rage.

The Upsetter is a sight and sound clash of visual and aural styles, using stock footage, photographs, concert video, audio clips, music video clips both old and new, and an exclusive, candid interview with the mastermind himself at his home in Switzerland.

Waltz With Bashir

(d. Ari Folman, Israel-Germany-France, 87 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles

Director Ari Folman explores a dark chapter in his (and Israel's) life in this award-winning animated feature. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon. Soon afterwards, Israeli soldiers including Folman's brigade, allowed Christian Phalangist militiamen to invade the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps where they killed thousands of men, women and children. While not directly responsible for the slaughter, the Israelis – mostly teenage soldiers like Folman – tacitly assisted by sending up flares to illuminate the night sky and, many feel, by standing by and allowing the murders to occur. The director's ferociously honest exploration of the reliability of memory and the long-term impacts of violence on young soldiers is a tribute to the filmmaker's own moral honesty and to generations of young people scarred by ungodly acts of war.

Tickets to BIFF 2009 will go on sale March 11 at 10 a.m. both online at http://www.biff.bm/box_office/tickets.html as well as at the Festival's physical box office, at 53 Front Street, Hamilton (next door to MAC). Tickets for UnWrapped!, the Festival launch party featuring hot Manhattan band Peculiar Gentlemen and Sugar Shack Burlesque, will also go on sale on March 11.

The mission of the Bermuda International Film Festival is to advance the love of independent film from around the world, and create a community welcoming to filmmakers and filmgoers.

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