

The Festival Daily

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2003

PUBLISHED BY THE TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL*

www.bell.ca/filmfest

DAY
3
OF THE FESTIVAL

Death-defying act, page 2

Film fixation, page 3



Today's best bets

As of 4pm on Friday, September 5, tickets were still available for the following screenings:

MATCHSTICK	9:30 am	Uptown 1
MEN		
I LOVE YOUR WORK	12:00 pm	Visa Screening Room (Elgin)
THE TULSE LUPER SUITCASES, EPISODE 3	12:00 pm	Varsity 8
CHOKHER	12:30 pm	Isabel Bader Theatre
A PASSION PLAY	1:00 pm	Uptown 2
BON VOYAGE	1:15 pm	Uptown 1
STRUGGLE	1:45 pm	Cumberland 2
SCHLUSSE ANGST (GUN-SHY)	2:00 pm	Cumberland 3
ZATOICHI	2:30 pm	Visa Screening Room (Elgin)
MEMORIES OF MURDER	3:15 pm	Varsity 1
CRIMSON GOLD	3:30 pm	Uptown 3
THE FOG OF WAR	4:00 pm	Uptown 1
RAJA	6:00 pm	Uptown 2
JAMES' JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM	6:00 pm	ROM
CLOUDS OF MAY	6:15 pm	Varsity 4
GO FURTHER	6:45 pm	Uptown 1
ELEPHANT	7:00 pm	Visa Screening Room (Elgin)
WAVE-LENGTHS	8:00 pm	Jackman Hall AGO
CARANDIRU	9:00 pm	Uptown 1
THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVIEWED	9:00 pm	ROM
PIECES OF APRIL	9:00 pm	Varsity 8
MONSIEUR IBRAHIM ET LES FLEURS DU CORAN	9:30 pm	Visa Screening Room (Elgin)
SPRING, SUMMER, FALL, WINTER... AND SPRING	9:30 pm	Isabel Bader Theatre
BRIGHT FUTURE	9:30 pm	Uptown 2
SANSA	9:30 pm	Varsity 1 or 6
SEXUAL DEPENDENCY	10:00 pm	Uptown 3
LES CORPS IMPATIENTS	10:00 pm	Varsity 2
ONG-BAK MUAY THAI WARRIOR	11:59 pm	Uptown 1

High-flying Canadian filmmakers

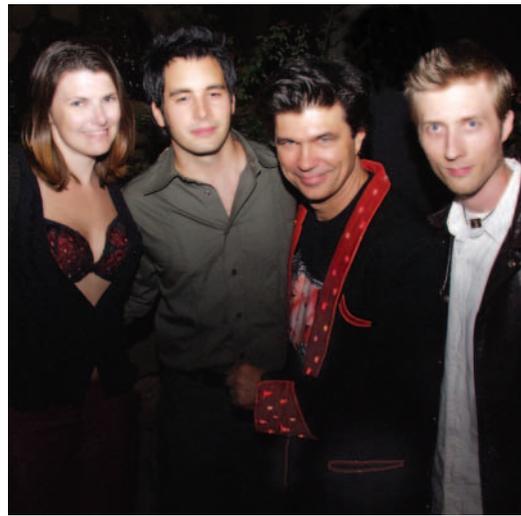
HUNDREDS OF FILMMAKERS, members of the press and industry movers and shakers descended upon the Liberty Grand on Thursday night to celebrate the opening of the Festival. Among them were the subject and crew of *Flyerman* (left to right): costume designer Janet Hansen, director Jason Tan, Mark "Flyerman" Vistorino and director Jeff Stephenson.

Tan and Stephenson's documentary tracks five years in the life of Vistorino and his alter ego Flyerman, a self-styled superhero who visits clubs and theatres, often with the help of a bullhorn and a flamboyant outfit.

With a preternatural gift for self-promotion, Flyerman lands himself a gig as a regular guest on a morning radio show and quickly joins that distinct class of celebrities – those famous simply for being famous.

Tan and Stephenson follow Vistorino's pursuit of fame with humanity and dignity, capturing his ups (trips to Los Angeles and Las Vegas) as well as his downs (his battle with addiction), to offer a touching portrait of an indomitable spirit.

Flyerman, which is part of the Perspective Canada programme, screens Sept. 8, 7:00 pm at Varsity 4 and Sept. 10, 4:30 pm at Cumberland 1.



Janet Hansen, Jason Tan, Mark Vistorino and Jeff Stephenson from *Flyerman*.

Mario Van Peebles pays a sweet, sweet tribute to his father

BY SCOTT MacDONALD

YOU'RE 13 YEARS OLD and your dad, a struggling filmmaker, says: "Hey, son, how would you like to be in your old man's movies?"

You've wanted to be an actor for as long as you can remember – and you also want to make your dad happy – so you say, "Okay." You see your mom glaring at your dad, that "Can I talk to you for a minute?" expression on her face. Dad is unconcerned. Next thing you know, your butt is in front of the cameras – not to mention your entire family – performing your first sex scene.

"It was kind of a weird spot to be in," says Mario Van Peebles of his acting debut. The film, of course, was 1971's *Sweet Sweetback's Baad Asses Song*. Melvin Van Peebles's groundbreaking, X-rated tale of a black hustler who gets revenge on whiter after a

lifetime of mistreatment. Though it's not as well known as *Shaft* or *Superfly*, *Sweetback* was a huge underground hit – the opening salvo of the blaxploitation boom.

How to Get the Man's Foot Outta Your Ass is the younger Van Peebles's loving – but not uncritical – look back at the making of *Sweetback* and at the financial and emotional toll it took on his father. Confidently stepping into the lead role himself, Mario plays Melvin as a Great Santini-type figure, a larger-than-life man with passion and fervour who can sometimes be a bit of a bully.

"One of the first things my dad said when I told him I wanted to make the movie was, 'Don't make me too fuckin' nice,'" Mario says with a laugh. "It was his way of saying, 'Run with it. Make the movie you want to make.' So I

didn't try to make him likeable or unlikeable. I just tried to play him as the guy I know."

Like *Sweetback*, *How to Get...* was shot in less than three weeks with independent financing, and the similar pressures helped the younger Van Peebles get into his father's headspace.

"I made this film very much in the spirit of my dad's movie," Mario says. "I put it together for 50c, with no studio intervention, no interference... and I think it helped my performance. The social climate's totally different now, of course, but there were times when I felt very strong déjà vu."

Though *How to Get...* recreates a lot of fond memories, it's the not-so-fond ones that provide some of the best sequences. A vivid scene where the young



Actor-director Mario Van Peebles

Mario has to return a bike given him by a white neighbour was culled from memory almost verbatim. And, of course, there's that on-screen deflowering. Now that Mario has kids of his own, how does he feel about what his dad did to him?

"I think he was nuts! I would never do that to my children! Not in a million years! He's since apologized, though."

HOW TO GET THE MAN'S FOOT OUTTA YOUR ASS

Sept. 7, 7:15 pm, Varsity 8
Sept. 9, 3:00 pm, Varsity 8

Kiyoshi Kurosawa's personal Bright Future

BY MARK SCHILLING

HOW CAN A title like *Bright Future* not be ironic when Kiyoshi Kurosawa is the director? Best known for films, like *Cure* and *Pulse*, that chill the spine more than they warm the heart, Kurosawa is the dark prince of the Japanese New Wave.

But he is also almost painfully sincere. When he says "bright future," he means it – though his definition may be quite different from yours.

Mamoru (Tadanobu Asano) and Yuji (Joo Odagiri) are anti-social loners working in a hand towel processing plant. Yuji worships the older Mamoru, who lives with a hauntingly luminous, and fatally poisonous, red jellyfish.

One day, their boss (Takashi Sasano) visits Mamoru's apartment and playfully sticks his hand in the jellyfish tank. Mamoru signals Yuji not to warn him. The boss later learns of the danger and fires Mamoru on the spot. Yuji explodes with rage – but Mamoru is the first to take revenge.

With Mamoru in prison, Yuji finds himself taking care of the jellyfish – and dealing with Mamoru's long-lost father, Shinichiro (Tatsuya Fuji). A fixer and seller of discarded gadgets, Shinichiro also wants to repair his relationship with his son, while Yuji, now adrift, is looking for a new guide to life. Then he loses the jellyfish – and Mamoru.

Bright Future reflects a more personal Kurosawa than usual. Instead of ghosts in machines, his heroes are two young men seething with a rage they can barely articulate or control.

The phenomenon of Japanese urban youth blowing up at the slightest provocation is hardly new, but Kurosawa's take is characteristically modest: instead of striking a pose of directorial omniscience, he gropes toward understanding, and runs up against a blank wall of mystery. His heroes' violent acts are less a matter of rational cause and effect than essential to their natures, which are ultimately unknowable.

Mamoru, we see, is to human society what the jellyfish is to the natural world: a solitary being, possessed of a strange charisma, who stings whatever invades its space. Played by indie icon Tadanobu Asano (*Taboo*, *Ichi the Killer*), he is, with his unreadable face and coiled power, almost terrifyingly remote.

Veteran Tatsuya Fuji (*Empire of the Senses*) projects a bemused tolerance and sympathy that makes a good fit with Kurosawa's world view, in which a "bright future" is defined less by status or riches than by the possibility of love.

Mark Schilling is a reviewer for "The Japan Times" and reports on the Japanese film industry for "Screen International." His publications include "The Encyclopedia of Japanese Pop Culture" and "Contemporary Japanese Film."

BRIGHT FUTURE
Sept. 6, 9:30 pm, Uptown 2
Sept. 8, 9:00 am, ROM

IN FOCUS Von Trier's masterpiece pits aesthetics against pleasure

BY PETER BRUNETTE

IMMEDIATELY AFTER I saw *Dogville*, Lars von Trier's new film, at Cannes this year, I was approached by a Danish journalist. Covering international reaction to hometown boy von Trier's three-hour opus, she wanted to know what I thought of it. Without hesitation (I must have been on a French espresso high), I replied: "I have three things to say. First, I wouldn't see the film again for at least five years, even if someone paid me. Second, I'm disturbed about its reactionary political implications. Third, I think it's a masterpiece."

Unlike me, most U.S. critics at Cannes despised the film, pure and simple. They complained about its blatant, rigorous artificiality (it takes place on a nearly empty sound stage with few props) and its rabid anti-Americanism. One obnoxious critic at a press lunch the next day seemed to take von Trier's film as a personal insult and wouldn't shut up about it.

Actually, as an American, I didn't mind the anti-Americanism, because I think von Trier's portrayal of our country's relentless, sometimes naïve do-goodism – often a cover for self-interest – was right on target. I was more bothered by the film's implication, as I read it, that any attempt to make the world a better place to live in was not only doomed to failure, but would inevitably make things worse.

But fine; he's entitled to his opinion. More interesting, perhaps, is the central aesthetic question this film raised for me: to what extent must a work of art, in order to succeed, be entertaining or even enjoyable? We're used to the idea of having to do some work when we confront the atonal music of Schoenberg, or a cubist painting by Picasso. But aren't we supposed to have fun at the movies? At least a little?

A title at the beginning of *Dogville* announces that what we're about to see is a film in nine parts plus prologue. The inevitable countdown begins in your mind. Our initial view of the town of *Dogville*, located in the western United States during what seems to be the thirties, comes in a high overhead shot. From this point of view, the town resembles a Monopoly board come miraculously to life. We see all the town's 15 or so inhabitants virtually all the time, among various pieces of furniture and parts of buildings that stand in for larger structures. There are few walls, and we see no doors, though, like so many Marcel Marceau, people open and close them and we hear them click.

I don't think any critic, even among the film's supporters, would say *Dogville* is a walk in the park. Even with the luminous presence of Nicole Kidman, it's tough going. But I'm glad I made it through, for the film ultimately en-

plays a range of cinematic invention unparalleled in cinema history. As in the best theatrical performances – and the relationship of cinema to theatre is one of the things *Dogville* is about – the lighting is imaginative and nuanced. But that barely scratches the surface. Of the 30 or 40 fascinatingly novel – and even exciting – formal techniques on display, my favourite was the hand-held camera (along with accompanying quick zooms, disjunctive editing and so on), normally the supreme marker of "realism," but employed here in the context of total stylization. The juxtaposition was at times downright thrilling.

It was an intellectual thrill, not an emotional or kinetic one. But isn't a thrill a thrill nevertheless?

Guest columnist Peter Brunette is the lead critic for *IndieWire.com* and writes frequently for "The Boston Globe" and "Screen International." His latest book, on Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai, will be published in 2004.

DOGVILLE
Sept. 7, 12:00 pm, Visa Screening Room (Elgin)
Sept. 8, 2:30 pm, Uptown 1



Today's Festival highlights

BY ANDREW McINTOSH AND SCOTT MacDONALD

Kim Ki-duk exchanges perversity for serenity

Sept. 6, 9:30 pm, Isabel Bader
Sept. 9, 10:00 pm, Cumberland 1

IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT that Japanese gore-meister Takashi Miike had abandoned his trademark graphic, sado-masochistic dementia and had made a film evocative of the best work of Zhang Yimou. If you can wrap your brain around that thought, then you're prepared to be dazzled by *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring*, a serenely meditative and visually sumptuous film by Korean maverick Kim Ki-duk.



Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring

Kim, whose earlier films provided what Festival programmer Giovanna Fulvi describes as "an unflinching exploration of the sexually and emotionally perverse," does a complete about-face with this lovingly composed portrait of the life of a monk who lives in a temple on a pond. Each season represents a different period of time in the monk's life — childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age — as he encounters various dilemmas and crises and gains insight into his purpose in the world.

One of the most celebrated directors on the international festival circuit, the award-winning Kim is sure to see his reputation grow even stronger with a film that will stand as a landmark in his already acclaimed career. *AM*

The doomed passion of *Errance*

Sept. 7, 6:00 pm, Isabel Bader
Sept. 8, 11:30 am, Varsity 4

AN EXAMPLE of a species of European film that has become almost extinct, *Errance* is a dark and harrowing love story. It continues director Damien Odoul's trilogy of self-exploration that began with *Le Souffle*, his widely heralded debut, which played at the Festival in 2001.

A tragedy whose story structure is divided into three distinct time periods — 1968, 1972 and 1973 — *Errance* follows the lives of Lou and Jacques, an urban couple facing difficulties in their relationship. After the birth of their first child, the selfish and destructive Jacques (Benoît Magimel) promises Lou (Laetitia

Box Office Information

The Festival Box Office is located at College Park, 444 Yonge Street, on the Market Level.

The Box Office is open seven days a week from 9am to 7pm (9am to 5pm on September 13).

For more information:

tel: 77 968-FILM
info: 968-6111

There are three ways to purchase tickets for screenings:

1) ADVANCE TICKETS: At least one day in advance of the screening, go to the Festival Box Office. For more information, call the Festival Box Office at (416) 968-FILM.

Please note that the Box Office does not issue Same Day tickets.

2) SAME DAY TICKETS: These may be obtained ONLY at the theatre on the same day as the screening, subject to availability. The Theatre Box Office opens one hour before the first screening of the day. If Same Day tickets are no longer available, you may join the Rush Line outside the theatre.

3) RUSH TICKETS: If available, tickets will be issued approximately five minutes before the screening starts.

NO REFUNDS. ALL SALES ARE FINAL.



Errance

Cast) he is turning over a new leaf, and moves the family to the Côte d'Azur as part of his plans for reform. But when Jacques's past arrives abruptly in the present, it threatens to present a crisis from which they may never recover.

Many directors have attempted the kind of cinema typified by Ingmar Bergman, Robert Bresson and particularly Odoul's hero, Andrei Tarkovsky. Most have come across as deluded or imprudent as a result, but Odoul's work succeeds in expressing his unique voice while evoking those past masters. A tale of doomed passion and harsh fate, *Errance* is an austere and poetic film. *AM*

Not a typical culture clash

Sept. 7, 8:30 pm, Isabel Bader
Sept. 10, 12:15 pm, Uptown 2

ON THE SURFACE, Sue Brooks's *Japanese Story* is a typical culture-clash tale, the kind in which two people meet, squabble, then fall in love. But the film doesn't unfold the way we'd expect — by the time it reaches its finale, it has grown as vast and as humbling as the Australian Outback in which it is set.

Toni Collette plays Sandy, a touchy, stressed-out geologist forced to lead a Japanese businessman (Gotaro Tsunashima) on

a tour of the mines in the remote Pilbara Desert. The Japanese man is aloof and slightly imperious, and the two find little to like about one another. When their Range Rover gets stuck in the sand, however, the sudden isolation and the danger of their predicament draw them together.

It's hard to convey the achievement of *Japanese Story* without spoiling its surprises, but rest assured this is no self-congratulatory, brotherhood-of-man parable. It is a sophisticated examination of the strained relations between Japan and Australia and an expert study of the effects of environment on character. Ultimately, it is about experiencing something fine and transfiguring and being unable to incorporate it into the rest of your life.

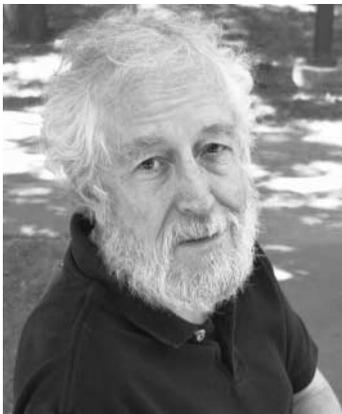
Featuring a lovely, raw performance from Collette, exquisite work by noted cinematographer Ian Baker and an intricately layered screenplay by Alison Tison, *Japanese Story* attains the heights of other modern-day neorealist films like Walter Salles's *Central Station* or Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica*. *SM*



Japanese Story

Allan King confronts death with grace

BY TAMMY STONE



Director Allan King

Every once in a while, a film comes along that resists conventional critical formulations, commanding attention with such force that the viewer is confounded by the enormity of the experience. *Dying at Grace*, by legendary documentary filmmaker Allan King, is one of those films.

After observing the daily operations of the palliative care facility at the Salvation Army Toronto Grace Health Centre, King and his crew began filming five people on their journey toward death. Each of them wanted to leave a record behind, and each dies during the making of the film. It's not easy to watch, which of course makes it all the more crucial.

"We exercise great ingenuity to deny the reality of death,"

King says. "Most people don't accept that they will die until late in life. For example, one can only be admitted to a palliative care ward if one is terminally ill; patients know this consciously — but many expect to get out of the ward alive."

"All life, every organism, hates death. It lives and evolves only by hating it, and loving that which it deems life-enhancing. It is truly a cosmic joke that the object of life is life itself and its outcome is death — always."

King describes his documentaries as "actuality dramas" — in earlier films like *Warrendale* and *A Married Couple*, he has allowed the drama of life (at a home for disturbed teenagers and within a problematic marriage, respectively) to unfold in tanta-



Haute Tension

Haute Tension's bad dream

Sept. 7, 11:59 pm, Uptown 1
Sept. 10, 7:15 pm, ROM

HAUTE TENSION, from 25-year-old French filmmaker Alexandre Aja, is a true horror movie. It's not like many new Japanese works, which are primarily concerned with cooking up baroque new forms of torture, and it's not like the soft stuff currently coming out of the U.S., in which pretty teens bleed corn-syrup blood.

This is a vivid, deeply unsettling bad dream, with gruesome images that linger not only in the mind but in the senses.

Like all nightmares, this one is mercilessly simple. It's night. A young woman named Alex has just arrived at her family's farmhouse in the French countryside, her best friend Marie in tow. Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the nearby cornfield, a strange van sits parked in the moonlight. After a quick meal provided by Alex's folks, everybody heads to bed, but to be awakened a short time later when the doorbell rings. . .

Reminiscent of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* and the true-crime classic *In Cold Blood*, *Haute Tension* graphically subverts the notion of home as shelter.

It's a truly frightening movie, and its blunt, uncompromising ferocity marks Aja as a filmmaker to watch. *SM*

lizing and revelatory ways.

Dying at Grace emphasizes observation over explanation. Nurses are shown giving daily briefings on their patients' conditions. Clinical but warm medical analyses continue to be heard over shots of death as the film opens; Joyce is lucid, and doesn't want sedatives for fear of dying in her sleep. When prompted, Joyce discusses the afterlife: "I'd like to believe," she says, "but I don't."

Eda, Lloyd and Rick are introduced next. Fantastically different personalities, they don't interact with one another, but their stories are edited together by sensitive hands.

With *Dying at Grace*, King accomplishes the monumental task of making what is, in the end, a life-affirming documentary that creates awareness for the benefits of palliative care and reminds us how very different and how very much the same we all are. He also provides a forum for contemplation and exchange.

"What each member of the audience projects onto the image is exactly and uniquely their own," King says, "and therefore, in each case, different."

"Discovery may then be fresh and surprising... especially in this kind of film. As a filmmaker, that is what I most wish for. It's why I make films — to discover the nature of human experience and to learn what others, for their part, draw from the exploration."

Tammy Stone is a Toronto writer and a Ph.D. candidate at York University.

DYING AT GRACE

Sept. 8, 8:30 pm, Cumberland 3
Sept. 11, 6:00 pm, Varsity 7



West of the Tracks

Documentary masterpiece captures urban decay and destruction

BY SHELLY KRAICER

WEST OF THE TRACKS, by Beijing filmmaker Wang Bing, is a monumental documentary: perhaps the first Chinese film masterpiece of the 21st century.

His 545-minute work is about post-industrial China, a moment of transition from a collectively designed society to whatever, still amorphous, is in the process of replacing it. It is about globalization in all its radical, destructive glory, as it hits a society completely unprepared to withstand the shock.

From 1999 to 2001, Wang lived with and filmed the workers of Shenyang city's metal factories; this material makes up *Rust*, the film's first segment. The second, *Remnants*, documents the destruction and redevelopment of a workers' residential area. The conclusion, *Rails*, follows a team of railway workers as they shuttle around the now-empty factories.

Q: Nine hours suggests something monumental. It also asks from the audience a very rare kind of attention and dedication to one film.

A: People ask me questions about the length of the movie. Nine hours is almost a miracle. It's monumentally miraculous.

But my compromise is to divide the film into three chapters. This way, I think I can keep some of the audience, by enabling them to watch each chapter at a different time. If you like the first chapter, you can come back for the second. But I'm sure that those people who are really and seriously interested in the documentary won't be concerned about its length.

Q: You were able to record the end of an era, the last six months before the Shenyang factories went bankrupt. And you stayed to watch the transition, the very beginning of what ever new era China is groping towards.

A: I had already seen signs of collapse, of this kind of transition. In fact, I sensed that a certain moment was on the way.

I am most concerned with those people who are still in the factory, with those workers who remain at their jobs. They are living the history of that period during the collapse. It is a moment in which you see workers still living their old way of life, without knowing which direction their factory is heading in, which direction the country is heading in. I am interested in that state of expectation that the workers find themselves in.

Q: Tell me about the relationship between you as a filmmaker and the subjects of your film. How did you get you get them to allow you into their private lives? How much did you want to disappear during the filmmaking process? A: I have never wanted to use the so-called voyeuristic style of filming. To make it real, you've got to respect what you see. I

won't pass judgment on the people I am shooting. Once people understand documentary: perhaps the first Chinese film masterpiece of the 21st century.

The camera becomes a part of me. I am one of them, but one who is just recording the truth, their actual way of life. These people stand before the camera and respect that camera eye.

Q: When you were editing the film, did you try to create a particular texture or rhythm to the passage of time?

A: The camera is always leading you into a certain venue, a place, a space, where people are talking. The camera eye, always moving forwards, leads you into that conversation. That guarantees the continuity of movement from one space into another, and from one discursive zone into another.

And this discursive zone is the very heart of the matter. Because if you want to know a person's life, you've got to know their words, their language, as well as the content of their discourse. Once you are within their discourse, then what unfolds before you are the tiny details of their lives. And those tiny details constitute a cycle. And that cycle repeats itself, not just in fragments, but in a continuous manner. And that constitutes a life cycle.

And that life cycle is what I mean by a certain speed and rhythm. Once you're in that cycle, you don't feel time passing slowly, you just feel time passing.

Shelly Kraicer, currently based in Beijing, is the editor of the "Chinese Cinema Digest" and maintains a website on Chinese film at www.chinesecinema.org.

Special thanks to Teng Jimeng, who translated this interview.

WEST OF THE TRACKS, PART I: RUST

Sept. 7, 4:45 pm, Varsity 7
Sept. 9, 1:00 pm, Varsity VIP 4

WEST OF THE TRACKS, PART II: REMNANTS

Sept. 8, 9:45 pm, Varsity 7
Sept. 10, 1:00 pm, Varsity VIP 4

WEST OF THE TRACKS, PART III: RAILS

Sept. 9, 9:30 pm, Varsity 7
Sept. 11, 1:00 pm, Varsity VIP 4



Director Wang Bing

The Festival Daily

Managing Editor
Rachel Giese
rgiese@torfilmfest.ca

Writers
Andrew McIntosh
amcintosh@torfilmfest.ca
Scott MacDonald
smacdonald@torfilmfest.ca

Photo Editor
Dave Kemp
dkemp@torfilmfest.ca

Copy Editor
Alex Bozkovic
abozkovic@torfilmfest.ca

Manager, Publications and Print Production
Nicholas Davies
ndavies@torfilmfest.ca

Layout
Echo Advertising + Marketing Inc.

Design
Kim Zagar

2 Carlton Street, Suite 1600
Toronto ON M5B 1L5

Copyright ©2003 Toronto
International Film Festival Group.
All rights reserved.

Printing and distribution by
National Post.

Thank you to Olympus for its support.

Toronto International
Film Festival Group
Information

Cinemathèque Ontario is a year-round screening programme that presents the history of world cinema, as well as contemporary films.

Film Circuit facilitates screenings of Canadian and international films in communities across Canada.

The Film Reference Library (www.filmreference.library.ca) houses the world's largest collection of English-language Canadian film-related materials.

Sprockets Toronto International Film Festival for Children presents the best of contemporary and classic international children's cinema to family and school audiences.

The Toronto International Film Festival* is widely recognized as the most successful public film festival in the world and the most important international film festival after Cannes.

Talk Cinema is a popular subscription series that features monthly sneak preview screenings of the best in international cinema, followed by interactive, informal discussions with film critics and professionals.

Canada's Top Ten promotes and celebrates Canadian cinema by inviting a panel of industry experts to select the best Canadian films of the year.

Industry Programming and Services is a year-round initiative that serves as a nexus for the Canadian and international film industries.



Visionary directors push film form to its limits

BY SCOTT MacDONALD



Twenty-nine Palms

THE FESTIVAL'S VISIONS programme, now in its sophomore year, highlights filmmakers who push the film medium to its limits and challenge us with innovative new approaches to visuals and narrative. Last year's programme screened many of the Festival's most talked-about films — Aleksandr Sokurov's *Russian Ark*, Gaspar Noé's *Irreversible*, the Dardenne brothers' *The Son* and Larry Clark's *Ken Park*. This year's lineup is another treasure trove.

In his latest work, Taiwanese master Tsai Ming-liang (*The Hole, What Time Is It There?*) takes the film medium itself as his subject. *Good Bye, Dragon Inn* is an entrancing homage to influential Hong Kong action director King Hu (whose style informed Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) as well as a mournful look at the state of cinema-going in the 21st century.

The film is set in and around a crumbling, dilapidated theatre in Taipei where Hu's 1966 martial-arts classic *Dragon Inn* is being screened.



Good Bye, Dragon Inn

Instead of seeing images from Hu's film, however, we listen to its soundtrack while Tsai shows us the various goings-on inside the theatre: the chattering of conversation, shadowy gay encounters, the undeclared love of a ticket-taker for the projectionist. *Good Bye, Dragon Inn* is an elegiac look at what happens when the lights go down — not just in one cinema, but on an era of cinema itself.

Meanwhile, Peter Greenaway (*Drowning By Numbers*) looks ahead to the future of cinema with *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*. This ambitious, ongoing work is intended to be a multi-media epic, incorporating film, CD-ROMs, a television series, DVDs and books. The project, subtitled *A Personal History of Uranium*, spans six decades in the life of Tulse Luper, a hapless dealer who is unwittingly shepherded through various prisons and through the shadows of history itself. The Festival screens two of the films in Greenaway's magnum opus, *Part 1: The Mob Story* and *Episode 3: Antwerp*.

Epic journeys figure prominently in two other Visions features, Michael Winterbottom's *In This World* and Vincent Gallo's *The Brown Bunny*.

Guerrilla moviemaking at its most vital, *In This World* finds Winterbottom (*The Claim, Welcome to Sarajevo*) taking digital cameras and a small crew deep into the war-ravaged Middle East.

The documentary-like story, about two young Afghan refugees seeking passage to the West, leads us from Pakistan through Iran, Turkey, Italy, France and England. This harrowing journey, caught on the fly, is at once a tribute to man's resiliency and a sobering wake-up call for a world too often blind to human catastrophe.

Gallo's *The Brown Bunny* follows a young man named Bud (Gallo) on a road trip across the United States. Bud is the quintessential

disfranchised youth, yearning for a place to call home, and the landscapes he drives through are wide-open vistas of loss and alienation. With its meandering narrative and graphic sexuality, *The Brown Bunny* is bound to get people talking.

Bruno Dumont's *Twenty-nine Palms*, about an American man and an Eastern European woman travelling together through a California state park, features desert landscapes of staggering, austere beauty. Unable to speak each other's languages and surrounded by the sublime, the companions gradually regress to more primal forms of communication: sex and fighting. Like Dumont's earlier films, *La Vie de Jésus* and the 1999 Festival de Cannes Grand Prix winner *L'Humanité*, *Twenty-nine Palms* places human desire within a vast, indifferent landscape, then waits patiently to see what happens.

Two Asian directors known for dabbling in the conventions of the horror film bring their latest works to the Festival. In *Bright Future*, Japanese filmmaker Kiyoshi Kurosawa (*Cure, Pulse*) examines Tokyo in the 21st century through the story of an antisocial young man who plans to murder his boss. The youth's inarticulate urges are quieted by only one thing: an obsession with a lethal red jellyfish he keeps in a small fish tank.



The Tesseract

In *The Tesseract*, an adaptation of Alex Garland's critically acclaimed novel, Hong Kong filmmaker Oxide Pang (*The Eye*) unravels the inhabitants of a dilapidated Bangkok hotel in a metaphysical mystery of interlocking personal connections. Adding an extra twist to the omniscient and omnipotent techniques common to directors of the suspense genre, Pang conjures up a world in which fate and the very fabric of reality are puzzles waiting to be decoded.

Thirteen of the 14 films in the Visions programme this year are world or North American premieres. Check them out — but prepare to check your notions of mainstream cinema at the door.

VISIONS film run throughout the Festival.

Life after loss in Naomi Kawase's *Shara*

BY MARK SCHILLING



Shara

IN THE OPENING SCENE OF *Shara*, twin boys, Kei and Shun, chase each other through the summer streets of an old neighborhood in Nara, Japan's ancient capital. Then Kei turns a corner — and is never seen again.

Five years later, Shun (Kohsei Fukunaga), now 17, is still grieving. At school, he has painted a life-size portrait of Kei — not the real missing boy, but the teenager of his imagination. His one confidant is Yu (Yuka Hiyoudo), who has been his friend since childhood. Shun wants to move beyond friendship, but can't. Yu, on the other hand, can — and is willing to show Shun how.

Meanwhile, Shun's easygoing father (Katsuhisa Namase) is helping to organize an annual summer festival and his hard-working mother (Naomi Kawase, who also directs) is pregnant with her third child. Slowly, with the help of his father's buoyant optimism, his mother's quiet

strength and Yu's vibrant sexuality, Shun lets go of his obsession with the past and comes to see that change has another side — bringing not only death and defeat, but new life.

A Nara native and winner of the 1997 Festival de Cannes Caméra d'Or prize for her debut feature *Suzaku*, Kawase imparts a hazy, summery beauty to this story, while locating it precisely within its Nara milieu. Filmed in only 12 days, *Shara* has a documentary-like spontaneity and presence. In its dynamic final dance scene, it becomes not a feel-good movie, but a mesmerizing you-are-in-the-frame experience.

Kawase herself impresses in the role of the mother. Directors who appear in their own movies often tend to flatter themselves, but Kawase stresses her character's look of late-pregnancy exhaustion, while giving a performance all the stronger for its calm understatement. She may have risked the success of her film by taking on this major role (the professional actress she had cast dropped out shortly before the start of shooting), but her gamble pays off in a rare identification between a director and her vision.

SHARA
Sept. 7, 9:45 pm, Varsity 3
Sept. 10, 12:15 pm, Varsity 1



PHOTO BY DAVID KLEP

September 3, 3:30 pm: Rogers Industry Centre, Sutton Place Hotel

FOR THE LAST 18 YEARS, hundreds of Toronto International Film Festival staff and volunteers have been shot by the same man.

Dr. Mary Waxman, who volunteers as the Festival's on-call physician, arrives the day before the Festival begins to administer shots of vitamin B₁₂ to health-conscious staff members (like Rogers Industry Centre's Liza Paul, above at right) worn out by pre-Festival preparations.

Vitamin B₁₂, which has no side effects and does not interact with

anything else in the body, helps give Festival workers a much-needed lift before being swamped by the demands of the Festival grind. (A few days into the Festival, Dr. Waxman offers a second B₁₂ shot to staff needing another boost.)

Dr. Waxman, who does a lot of on-call work in the entertainment industry, is quick to point out that, although B₁₂ is helpful, a more general effort can help keep energy levels from crashing. He offers advice with every injection

to help people cope and stay relatively stress-free.

"Many people find the B₁₂ is a big boost," he explains, "but I also advise them to stay away from caffeine and alcohol. Alcohol inhibits sleep and caffeine is even worse."

But with all the parties and screenings to go to, who wants to sleep?

— Andrew McIntosh



Director Aaron Woodley

Aaron Woodley's film obsessions

BY MICHELLE MCCREE

IF YOU'RE NUMB-BUMMED after days of sitting in dark rooms watching flickering images on the big screen, and you've gone from being a seemingly well-rounded fan of film to a Festival-goer whose existence is now defined by the emotional arc of the characters you've been watching, the cinemania of *Rhinoceros Eyes* will amuse.

"It's really about the nature of obsession," says writer-director Aaron Woodley, "and how our obsessions can cause us to lose a grip on reality."

The film tells the story of Chop (Michael Pitt), a delusional prop-house assistant with a film fixation and a compulsion to fulfill the item requests of Fran (Paige Turco), an equally single-minded art director. Fran's obsession with authenticity gives the film its title — those rhinoceros eyes have to be the real thing.

Of course, that's just the beginning, as the objects of Fran's desire become increasingly outlandish, and Chop spirals out of control, adopting a by-any-means-necessary approach to acquiring them. Digitally shot, richly lit and stylishly directed, this darkly twisted comedy combines live action with stop-motion animation while evoking the eerie atmosphere of twenties horror films.

On the phone from his home in Toronto, Woodley sounds like he understands a thing or two about the obsessive pull of filmmaking. "It just feels very natural to me to make films," he says. "[Film has] all the things that I love: music and visuals and lighting."

If he is obsessed, he comes by it honestly — some might even say genetically. The nephew of David Cronenberg, Woodley grew up visiting his uncle's movie sets and knew from an early age he wanted to enter the profession.

"I visited the set of *The Brood*; in fact, I was one of the brood," recalls the 32-year-old filmmaker. "I played dead, basically, because I wouldn't put the mask on. I cried because it was very scary. But visiting his sets was always very inspiring. I thought, 'What a great job, and what a fantastic world. Look at all these adults playing make-believe and having fun.'"

Years later, Woodley inevitably learned the other side of filmmaking. "I was surprised by how much work it was. It was something else."

Rhinoceros Eyes was produced by Madstone Films, a New York production company with a unique programme: promising directors from around the world are moved to New York, put on salary for two years and given a feature budget of up to \$1.5 million. Of the experience of making his first feature, Woodley says: "I learned if you are going to attempt something a little different, you really have to fight and be brave, because there are a lot of people saying 'What the hell are you doing?' What is this?"

A freelance broadcaster, Michelle McCree produces for the Independent Film Channel and reviews movies for *CBC News-world's arts and entertainment show*, "p!y."

RHINOCEROS EYES
Sept. 6, 9:15 pm, Cumberland 2
Sept. 9, 2:30 pm, Uptown 3