



Filmfest DC

The Washington, DC International Film Festival

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**WASHINGTON, DC'S INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
LAUNCHES ITS 23RD YEAR FEATURING OVER
70 WASHINGTON, DC PREMIERES
OF INTERNATIONAL CINEMA
APRIL 16 - APRIL 26, 2009**

**SPOTLIGHTING NEW FEATURES AND DOCUMENTARIES
FROM JAPAN AND EASTERN EUROPE**

WASHINGTON, DC - **The 23rd annual Washington, DC International Film Festival (Filmfest DC) commences April 16 through April 26, bringing the best in new international cinema to the Nation's Capital.** The Festival features **over 70 films** from around the world including: World premieres, DC premieres, international headliners and award winners, Official Foreign Language Film Oscar® Selections, and an assortment of films with topics unique to the Washington, D.C. region. **The festival also boasts over 30 international guests** set to present their films including many well known directors and producers.

Since its inception in 1987, Filmfest DC has become one of Washington's major cultural events, enhancing the artistic profile of the nation's capital both nationally and internationally. Filmfest DC is a District-wide event, bringing together the city's major cultural institutions in a spirit of cooperation and celebration.

"Over the years, Filmfest DC has introduced hundreds of international films to the District of Columbia and scores of filmmakers have shared their insights with us. It is through their lens that audiences enjoy the unique perspective of diverse cultures. That is the beauty of Filmfest DC," declared Festival Director Tony Gittens.

Each year, the festival focuses on cinema from a particular region in addition to presenting strands of films with a similar theme. This year Filmfest DC's areas of geographical focus include **Eastern Europe**, with its long-standing and emerging talents, and **Japan**, a culture of endless gentle beauty and social complexity. **World Views, Views from the News, Global Rhythms**, and unique film events including free **Cinema for Seniors**, complete this year's program.

New to Filmfest DC in 2009, is the **SIGNIS Award**, presented to the film judged to best illuminate and celebrate what it means to be human in a diverse and challenging world. The Festival also incorporates a juried competition of selected films and honors them with the

Capital Focus Award. In addition, the **Circle Audience Award**, sponsored by the Washington, DC Film Society, offers a chance for audiences to vote for their favorite film. The winners for all three awards are announced on Closing Night.

Selected films for this year's **Capital Focus Award** competition are:

- **35 SHOTS OF RUM** (France/Germany)
- **KABEI** (Japan)
- **THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE** (Canada)
- **SMALL CRIME** (Greece)
- **SNOW** (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
- **TEAR THIS HEART OUT** (Mexico)
- **WRONG ROSARY** (Turkey)

The much anticipated **Opening Night** film, **DEPARTURES**, won the **Oscar® for Best Foreign Language Film of 2008**, Montreal festival's Grand Prize, and Audience Awards in Hawaii and Palm Springs. The impressive **Harman Center for the Arts** will host the **Opening Night** screening **Thursday, April 16, at 7:00 PM** with **Master of Ceremonies**, the multi-Emmy® Award winner and beloved entertainment reporter, **Arch Campbell**. A Champagne and Dessert reception will follow the screening.

The **2009 Filmfest DC Closing Night** presentation, co-presented by the Italian Cultural Institute on **Sunday, April 26 at 4:00 PM**, features the Washington, DC premiere of Italy's vastly successful box office hit, **WE CAN DO THAT** (Si Può Fare), directed by **Giulio Manfredonia**. The screening at Regal Cinema Gallery Place includes a Q&A with the director followed by the closing night party at Bar Louis.

SPECIAL EVENTS in addition to Opening and Closing Night Galas include:

DIRECTORS' ROUNDTABLE

An informal discussion with festival guest directors; moderated by News Channel 8's Kyle Osborne.

Saturday April 18, 2:00 PM
Free, Borders Books (1801 K Street)

SALUTE TO ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES: SAVED BY ANTHOLOGY

A program of classic American avant-garde 16 mm and 35 mm shorts newly restored.

Saturday, April 18 at 3:30 PM
Free, National Gallery of Art

KINOAUTOMAT

The American premiere of the world's first interactive film. The audience determines the next scene in the plot with voting buttons.

In Person: Alena Cincerova, daughter of director Director Radúz Cincera
Sunday April 19, 3:00 PM, Regal Cinemas

CINEMA FOR SENIORS

LET THE CHURCH SAY AMEN

One church nourishes love and hope in members suffering hardship.

In Person: Director David Petersen
Tuesday, April 21 at 10:00 AM
Free, Avalon Theatre

SHORT CUTS

A selection of 6 international short films.

Thurs. April 23, 8:30 PM, Goethe Institut
Sat, April 25, 5:00 PM, Regal Gallery

BRUCE CONNER: A TRIBUTE

Conner was the iconoclastic creator of found-object assemblages and counter-culture induced 16 mm shorts that inspired the international art world for five decades.

In Person: Film Historian Scott MacDonald
Sunday, April 26 at 4:30 PM
Free, National Gallery of Art

The full festival schedule with highlights can be found on-line at www.FilmfestDC.org. A downloadable version of the 24-page catalog is also available on the home page.

Special Guests

Filmfest DC is proud to announce a wide variety of guests from all corners of the world set to attend the Festival and host a discussion and Q&A at their individual screenings. For a complete list of guests, please visit the home page of www.FilmfestDC.org.

A sample of Filmfest DC guests include:

- Director **Kalthoum Bornaz** with **The Other Half of the Sky** (Tunisia)
- Director **Mehreen Jabbar** with **Ramchand Pakistani** (Pakistan)
- Director **Philippe Falardeau** with **It's Not Me, I Swear!** (Canada)
- Directors **Brendan Canty, Christoph Green** with **Ashes of American Flags: Wilco Live**
- Director **Denis Rabaglia** with **Marcello Marcello** (Switzerland)
- Director **Ben Hopkins** with **The Market: A Tale of Trade** (Turkey)
- Directors **Mando Alvarado, Michael Ray Escamilla** with **Cruzando** (USA)
- Director **José Luis Cuerda** with **The Blind Sunflowers** (Spain)
- Director **Benoit Pilon** with **The Necessities of Life** (Canada)
- Director **Férid Boughedir** with **Villa Jasmin** (France)
- Director **Annemarie Jacir** with **Salt of this Sea** (Palestine)
- Director **Uroš Stojanović** with **Tears for Sale** (Serbia)
- Director **Maria Govan** with **Rain** (Bahamas)
- Director **Christos Georgiou** with **Small Crime** (Greece)

Eastern Europe Now!

From the first-time Bulgarian filmmakers behind the widescreen genre thrill ride **ZIFT** (the 2009 Official Oscar selection from Bulgaria), to the welcome return of Polish enfant terrible **Jerzy Skolimowski** with his darkly funny psychological thriller **FOUR NIGHTS WITH ANNA**, the cinemas of Eastern Europe are alive and well.

Filmfest DC's snapshot survey of the region catches a number of countries in the midst of an economic resurgence providing opportunity to young filmmakers: Hungary's current production boom has resulted in such original work as **Attila Gigor's** labyrinthine caper film **THE INVESTIGATOR**, while first-time writer-director **Aida Begic's** contemplative **SNOW** (2009 Official Oscar section from Bosnia), about a Bosnian village struggling to survive after most of their men are lost in the 1990s conflict, has invited comparisons to Iranian cinematic icon Abbas Kiarostami. The dazzling, effects-laden fantasia **TEARS FOR SALE** typifies the deft balance of black comedy and serious drama that is a hallmark of regional cinema.

From the Czech Republic comes **KINOAUTOMAT: ONE MAN AND HIS HOUSE**, the world's first interactive movie. Originally screened in a specially equipped theater at the Czechoslovak Pavilion at Montreal's Expo '67, the film was shelved by the Communist government in 1972 and is only now seeing the light of day. Finally, although he's been making features steadily since 1970, **Goran Markovic's** hard-hitting yet sublimely funny **THE TOUR**, the 2009 Official Oscar selection from Serbia, neatly sums up the survival instinct of Eastern European cinema: through war, economic uncertainty, and human eccentricity, the show must go on.

New Japanese Cinema

While much has changed since Japanese filmmaking's golden age, the six movies in this series show that its sensitivity endures. Most of these films are, like **DEPARTURES**, concerned foremost with family. **Kiyoshi Kurosawa** earned his reputation with apocalyptic thrillers like *Pulse*, but his new film, **TOKYO SONATA**, depicts the un-supernatural breakdown of a Tokyo household. A family struggles without its jailed patriarch in **KABEI**, by 77-year-old **Yoji Yamada**, one studio veteran who's still active. And **Shunichi Nagasaki**, who's known for his raw super-8 films, reveals a gentler touch with **THE WITCH OF THE WEST IS DEAD**, the tale of a defiant teenager who's mellowed by her grandmother.

Also featured is **MEGANE**, in which a young woman is soothed by Okinawa's tropical rhythms, and **ACHILLES AND THE TORTOISE**, the story of an aspiring artist. The former is by **Naoko Oigami**, one of Japan's new female directors; the latter is by **Takeshi Kitano**, whose dual careers as popular comedian and art-film director exemplify the complexity of Japanese culture.

Additional Film Series

Filmfest DC prides itself on creating diverse elements within its festival each year. This year the festival will once again present **World View**, a selection of recent cinema from around the globe including the Official Selection, Venice FF '08, and Toronto FF '08, **35 SHOTS OF RUM** from France's **Claire Denis** (*Chocolat*); **ELDORADO**, the 2009 Oscar Selection from Belgium by the multi-award winning director, **Bouli Lanners**; Canada's **NECESSITIES OF LIFE**, their 2009 Oscar submission by acclaimed documentarian **Benoit Pilon**; and Palestine's 2009 Oscar submission, **SALT OF THE SEA** from **Annemarie Jacir**.

Film productions with **Washington, DC connections** include **BREAKING NEWS, BREAKING DOWN** the moving and personal documentary by veteran broadcast journalist, **Mike Walter**; the rocking music documentary, **ASHES OF AMERICAN FLAGS: WILCO LIVE** by Trixie imprint founders **Christoph Green** and **Brendan Canty** (drummer for Fugazi); and the inspirational **BONECRUSHER** by **Michael F. Fountain**.

Global Rhythms, the Festival's popular music-on-film series presents features and documentaries from Singapore, Brazil, Senegal, Argentina, Hong-Kong/Taiwan, Spain and the USA. **CAFÉ DE LOS MAESTROS** where twenty-two "maestros," singers, musicians, and composers from tango's glory days are brought back for a grand performance and recording session; **CELIA THE QUEEN**, a loving tribute to the great Celia Cruz featuring everyone from Gloria Estefan to Wyclef Jean; **YOUSSOU NDOUR: I BRING WHAT I LOVE**, chronicling the difficult journey Ndour undertakes to assume his true calling; and **THE DRUMMER**, a beautifully shot, multi-award winning audience favorite featuring a compelling storyline *and* Chinese Zen drumming.

Selections from **Views from the News** include **I.O.U.S.A.** which boldly examines the rapidly growing national debt and its consequences for the United States; from Pakistan, **RAMCHAND PAKISTANI**, derived from a true story about the accidental crossing of the Pakistan-Indian border during a period of war-like tension; **A WEDNESDAY**, a taut thriller focused around a retired Mumbai police commissioner Rathod as he recounts his most memorable case; and **BEDFORD: THE TOWN THEY LEFT BEHIND**, an incredible documentary recalling the solemn place in history given to this small town after WW II with a contemporary context: the directors connect Bedford's bravest soldiers from WWII to those who serve in Iraq and Afghanistan today.

Filmfest DC would like to thank the University of the District of Columbia, Government of the District of Columbia, The National Endowment for the Arts, Washington Film Society, the Embassy of France, the Italian Cultural Institute, the Mayor's Office of Motion Picture and Television Development and METRO. Official Sponsors include WJLA Channel 7/News Channel 8, Telemundo, WAMU 88.5 FM, Darlington House and Hotel Madera.

A complete 4-page festival guide is attached as a PDF document for your use. High-resolution photos are available at www.FilmFestDC.org/press

TICKET INFORMATION

General Admission is \$10.00. Special Admissions are noted. Tickets are available through Tickets.com (www.tickets.com) or by calling (800) 955-5566, the Goethe-Institut of Washington, DC and CD Game Exchange stores. Tickets are also available through the Filmfest DC website (www.filmfestdc.org). No Tickets.com sales the day of the show.

Tickets may also be purchased at the theatre one hour before the first show of the day; cash or check sales only at the theatres. Free events are on a first come, first serve basis, with no reservations accepted or tickets required.

Director's Pass: Ten-ticket package valued at \$100.00 will be discounted to \$80.00.
Weekday Pass: Four-ticket package valued at \$40.00 will be discounted to \$30.00. This pass grants the holder admission to screenings Monday through Thursday. Passes are available through Tickets.com by phone and online only (not applicable for Opening and Closing Nights or Special Events).

THEATRE LOCATIONS

Avalon Theatre 5612 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Metro Red line to Friendship Heights. Street parking available on side streets/Connecticut.

Borders Books 1801 K Street, NW Take Metro Red Line to Farragut North.

Goethe-Institut Washington 812 Seventh Street, NW - Street parking available.
Metro Red, Yellow, or Green Line to Gallery Place-Chinatown and exit toward 7th and H

Embassy of Canada 501 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Take Metro Green or Yellow Line to Archives-Navy Memorial-Penn Quarter.

Embassy of France 4101 Reservoir Road NW

Harman Center for the Arts 610 F Street, NW
Take Metro Red, Yellow, or Green Line to Gallery Place-Chinatown.

Landmark's E Street Cinema 555 11th Street, NW
Metro Red, Orange or Blue line to Metro Center. Entrance on E Street between 10th & 11th.

National Gallery of Art East Building Auditorium, 4 th St. & Constitution Ave., NW.
Take Metro Green or Yellow Line to Archives-Navy Memorial-Penn Quarter.

Regal Cinemas Gallery Place 701 7th Street, NW
Take Metro Blue, Green, Orange, Red or Yellow lines to Gallery Place/Chinatown

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