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PRESS RELEASE

exground filmfest 21 takes a look southwards: Focus on Spain and numerous films from Latin America

Retrospective on Julio Médem // New contest: BETTING ON SHORTS

From November 14 through November 23, 2008, exground filmfest takes place in Wiesbaden for the 21st time: Within the ten festival days, around 250 short and feature films as well as videos will be shown – in the ancestral sections “American Independents”, “News from Asia”, “International” and “Documentary”, as well as in the contests “Deutscher Kurzfilm” (German short film), “ON VIDEO”, “Wiesbaden-Special”, and “Internationaler Jugendfilm” (International youth film). In addition, the exground filmfest team has compiled a series for this year’s country focus on Spain, and a retrospective on Basque director Julio Médem. A novelty is the contest “BETTING ON SHORTS“, which is being screened simultaneously in different European cities. The audience places bets on the assumed winner in advance. A further premiere can be celebrated in the extra events-category: A WALL IS A SCREEN offers a cinematic experience of the special kind: During a vespertine walk through the city, different films are being projected onto Wiesbaden house walls. As always, among the many events of the supporting programme are the opening and closing parties, plus a CINEMAGICA LOUNGE with RAS-ANDI, the legendary exground-Gong-Show, and a filmmaker discussion on documentary film. In line with this year’s country focus, exground filmfest will open on November 14, 2008, with Spanish film ROAD SPAIN. A seemingly cheated on husband looks back at his life so far, and spontaneously begins a trip through Spain. In this



unorthodox road movie, director Jordi Vidal uses beautiful pictures to not only show the surprisingly varied country-sides of Spain, but also to mirror his protagonist's different states of mind.

The film program

exground filmfest's youth film program - the **exground youth days** – will open this year on November 16, 2008, with Wiesbaden „youth film contest“. Talented domestic directors will compete with their short films for the audience-chosen winner's cheque, endowed with 450 Euros. The award money will again be donated by the "Hessische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung". From November 17 through November 22, 2008, the exground youth days turn international: In the course of the „youth days – international youth film“ contest, seven current productions from all over the world are being shown: LOVE, PEACE & BEATBOX by Volker Meyer-Dabisch, a documentary on beat boxers in Berlin; THE SPEED OF LIFE by Ed Radtke, a US feature film about youths in New York who rob tourist's video cameras; the German premiere of AURORA BOREAL by Mexican Sergio Tovar Velarde, a sort of video diary of a 14-year-old boy planning his suicide; Spanish production COWARDS by José Corbacho and Juan Cruz, about violence and mobbing at school; TEENAGE ANGST by Thomas Stuber from Germany, about dangerous games in a clique of pupils; THE KING OF PING PONG by Jens Jonsson from Sweden, a sensitive portrait of a 16-year-old outsider way up in Northern Europe; and the German comedy LEROY by Armin Völckers, which is being presented non-competitively in the course of a school screening.

One of the highlights of the **American Independents** sections must surely be GEORGE A. ROMERO'S DIARY OF THE DEAD by the grandmaster of US horror movies. Further films in this program are: THE CAKE EATERS, the internationally awarded directorial debut by Mary Stuart Masterson, starring Bruce Dern, Elizabeth Ashley and other outstanding actors; THE WACKNESS by Jonathan Levine looks back at the year 1994 in New York. Just like the city itself, the two protagonists – a drug dealer and a psychiatrist – are at a turning point. Ben Kingsley's brilliant performance is worth the price of admission alone. JOHNNY 316 by Erick Ifergan is a modern version of Oscar Wilde's „Salo-me“: Independent legend Vincent Gallo embodies a salvationist who finds himself exposed to the sins of the flesh. Also in the program: droll comedy MISTER LONELY by Harmony Korine, starring Denis Lavant, Werner Herzog and Anita Pallenberg.



This year's **News from Asia** program consists of six films from Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong. But the number of countries is not the only varied aspect: The range spans droll musical (SINGAPORE QUEENS – BORN TO DANCE by Royston Tan) as well as hysterical splatter film (THE MACHINE GIRL by Noboru Iguchi). Also in the program: SPARROW by Hong Kong's cult director Johnny To, about pickpockets in Hong Kong; HELP ME EROS by Kang-Sheng Lee, about a sex-obsessed stalker (German premiere); and low budget comedy HEY JAPANESE! DO YOU BELIEVE PEACE, LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING by Ryôtarô Muramatsu, another German premiere. Last but not least: news from Thailand. exground filmfest presents the latest masterpiece by Pen-Ek Ratanaruang: PLOY shows a marital drama in Bangkok, staged like an intimate play.

For the **International section**, the festival team has chosen 13 films: FEAR(S) OF THE DARK from France, a team work by six graphics artists and comic illustrators about man's primal fears; TALE 52 by Alexis Alexiou, a fantasy thriller from Greece; NOTHING TO LOSE by Pieter Kuijpers, a breathtaking psycho thriller from the Netherlands; Turkish-German co-production HIDDEN FACES by Handan Ipekçi, on the subject of honour killing; PLAY ME A LOVE SONG by Goran Kulenović, a Croatian comedy about a rock musician; the German premiere of poetic love story UNFINISHED SKY by Peter Duncan from Australia; and 35 RUM from France/Germany, the latest masterpiece by French cult director Claire Denis, to whom exground filmfest dedicated its retrospective in 2005. This year, the International program is strongly represented by current productions from Latin America: ESTÔMAGO: A GASTRONOMIC STORY by Marcos Jorge, a fable about power, love and cooking in a Brazilian-Italian co-production; DOG EAT DOG by Carlos Moreno, an award-winning thriller from Columbia; BOG OF BEASTS by Cláudio Assis, a frightening social study from the Brazilian province; the incest drama BURN THE BRIDGES by Francisco Franco from Mexico; as well as the Mexican-French-Dutch co-production SILENT LIGHT by Carlos Reygadas, in which a married man and member of a Mennuit community in Northern Mexico is torn between his extra-marital love and his deep belief. The cornucopia of Latin American films is closed with LA RABIA by Albertina Carri from Argentina, in which she takes an unsparing look at the brutal world of the grown-ups – from the perspective of a dumb girl somewhere in the vastness of the Argentine pampas.



The **Documentary program** consists of 13 productions from seven countries: The German production SONBOL – RALLYE DURCH DEN GOTTESSTAAT by Nico Apel is an unusual portrait of an unusual woman, Iranian rallye driver Sonbol Fatemi. In AGRIDULCE by Julia Keller from Germany, everything turns around cream cakes; in OHNE HALT, Eva Maschke portraits 2 HIV-infected persons in Cologne and their ways of dealing with their illness; in the Australian production SOLDIERS OF PEACE, Tim Wise takes a filmic journey to the UN blue helmets in this world's areas of conflict; and in SUDDENLY, LAST WINTER, Italians Gustav Hofer and Luca Ragazzi offer a distressing insight into the homophobic body of thought of their fellow countrymen. From the USA comes GONZO: THE LIFE & WORK OF DR. HUNTER S. THOMPSON by Alex Gibney, a portrait of the founder of the „Gonzo“ journalism. Following a good old exground tradition, one focus of the Dokumentar section lies on music documentaries: In the US production GOGOL BORDELLO NON-STOP, Margarita Jimeno takes a look behind the scenes of gypsy punk band „Gogol Bordello“; the German premiere of BERLIN by Julian Schnabel documents the 2006 live performance of Lou Reed's conceptalbum „Berlin“ from 1973; the British-US American co-production JOY DIVISION by Grant Gee portraits the British rock band of the same name; and ALTER EGO by Daniel Thouw gives an oversight of the global graffiti scene. In addition, the festival team has selected two films for the Dokumentar section which approach different aspects of today's sex business: The Swiss production FRAU MERCEDES by David Fonjallaz, Simon Jäggi and Louis Mataré, deals with the problem of ageing street prostitutes in Bern, and the German documentary 9TO5 – DAYS IN PORN takes a look behind the scenes of the porn industry. In the British-US American co-production THE END, Nicolas Collins lets a conspired gangster clan from London's East End have their say – among them her own father.

exground filmfest's **country focus** offers a comprehensive overview of the current film work in Spain: The feature films presented are SHIVER, a dark fantasy thriller directed by Isidro Cortiz, the dark apocalyptic drama BEFORE THE FALL by F. Javier Gutiérrez, LIFE ON THE EDGE by Ventura Pons, set in the illegal gambler milieu of the Seventies, and the drama A BIT OF CHOCOLATE by Aitzol Aramaio – starring Daniel Brühl in a leading role. In addition, documentary SEPTEMBERS by Carles Bosch celebrates its German premier in Wiesbaden: For one year, the director accompanied some of the candidates of the Spanish version of „Deutschland sucht den Superstar“. What makes it special is that all “superstars” are inmates of Spanish prisons. The country focus is topped off with two short film programs: The first is dedicated to current Spanish



short documentaries, the second contains short feature films and short animations. The section „Focus Spain“ is sponsored by the Embassy of Spain Berlin, the Instituto Cervantes Frankfurt, the Spanish Tourist Office, the House of Basque Studies at the J. W. Goethe-University Frankfurt am Main, and the film library of San Sebastian.

The **retrospective** is dedicated to the varied work of significant Basque director Julio Médem: His much-discussed documentary about the century-old conflict around the Basque country THE BASQUE BALL: SKIN AGAINST STONE, can be seen at exground filmfest, as can his feature films COWS, SEX AND LUCÍA, THE RED SQUIRREL, THE LOVERS OF THE ARCTIC CIRCLE, and EARTH. The audience also has the opportunity to see Médem's latest film CAÓTICA ANA for the first time in Wiesbaden.

Traditionally, exground filmfest's special attention is aimed at current short films from all over the world: Not only are they screened in the contests „Deutscher Kurzfilm“ (German short film), „ON VIDEO“ and „Wiesbaden-Special“, but also in specially compiled programs: BEST OF collects the festival team's favourite shorts; DOKUMENTAR presents current documentaries from all over the planet; and SHORT MATTERS shows all Prix-UIP winners from the most important European film festivals from the year 2007. Special eye candy is promised for the compilation of short films by one of the great Russian directors, IM FOKUS: ALINA RUDNITSKAYA. Last but not least, the festival team continues the good old habit of presenting a short film before each full-length feature, continuing to present a platform for this almost forgotten genre.

The contests

One of the traditional festival highlights is the **German short film contest**, this year presenting ten films competing for the prize money of 6.000 Euros in total. The Cultural Office of the state capital Wiesbaden sponsors the German short film contest with 4.000 Euros for the winner and third place of this audience award. In addition, the Cultural Office endows the prize money of 2.500 Euros for the **youth days – International youth film contest**. The winner of this contest, in which six domestic and international productions compete, is determined by a Wiesbaden youth jury. This year, the **International ON-VIDEO contest** takes place for the seventh time. The panel of three



experts has to choose between 22 contributions from 13 countries this time. The director of the best film on video format receives the prize money of 1.500 Euros. For the fourth time, the **Wiesbaden Special – short film contest**, endowed with 500 Euros, is being sponsored by the Wiesbadener Kurier newspaper. The audience will decide which director can take home the prize money cheque. For the second time, the Hessische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung endows the prize money of 450 Euros for the **Wiesbaden youth film contest**, which takes place in the course of the youth days program. Again, the audience chooses the winner here.

One premiere is likely to become a real crowd puller: exground filmfest is proud to present the event **BETTING ON SHORTS**, organized by the renowned London Institute of Contemporary Arts, on November 21, 2008. On this evening, a contest program of international short films will be shown simultaneously in Athens, Barcelona, Istanbul, London, Maribor, Munich, Naples, Novi Sad, Paris, Po-sen, Stockholm, and Wiesbaden, under the motto „Money, Money, Money“. The show stopper is as follows: The audience is invited to place bets on who will be the winner before the screening. Whoever placed the correct bet in Wiesbaden will win two tickets for exground filmfest's German short film contest including award ceremony and closing party on November 23, 2008. The bets will have to be based on a short film synopsis, a freeze frame, and a short biography of the director; this information is given to the audience two hours before the program start. Additionally, short clips from the chosen films can be viewed at www.bettingonshorts.com and in the participating screening locations as of November 15, 2008.

In 2008 we finally managed to bring the Hamburg group of **A WALL IS A SCREEN** – who are active all over Europe by now - to Wiesbaden! exground filmfest and A Wall is a Screen invite fans of short films on November 22 to a free-of-charge cinematic stroll through Wiesbaden's downtown area. The streets will become movie theatres and the house walls will become movie screens. Start is at 8 pm in front of the festival center.

Further information

Again, exground filmfest's festival center ist the Caligari FilmBühne, located right in the heart of Wiesbaden and one of Germany's most beautiful cinemas. The “Alpha Kino” and the “Kulturpalast” are additional screening venues. As in the past years, exground filmfest's opening party will be celebrated in the “Kulturzentrum Schlachthof” in Wiesbaden. Numerous films from the section



“Focus Spain“ and the retrospective on Julio Médem will also be shown at the Instituto Cervantes in Frankfurt am Main.

Tickets for the film screenings are 6,50 Euros, reduced 5,50 Euros. The exground ticket valid for ten screenings is available for 50 Euros. The events in the course of the exground youth days cost 2,50 Euros for adolescents up to 20 years of age. As last year, recipients of unemployment money II have the opportunity to accredit themselves for the whole festival by presenting an appropriate confirmation, thereby being able to visit all exground filmfest events for free. This only excludes the opening- and closing events of exground filmfest in the Caligari FilmBühne. Tickets will be on sale as of November 1, 2008, in the Tourist Information, currently located in its interim home at Marktplatz 1 on the Dern'sches Gelände. In addition, tickets for all exground filmfest events can be purchased during the festival at the ticket counter in the Caligari FilmBühne. The ticket counter opens half an hour before each respective screening.

Comprehensive information on all films and events at exground filmfest can be found in the festival program which will be distributed for free in the whole Rhein-Main area as of end of October, 2008. In addition, the whole program will be available online at the festival web site www.exground.com.

Your contact for press requests

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- Cultural Office of the state capital Wiesbaden
- Hessische Filmförderung
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