

# The Festival Daily

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2004

PUBLISHED BY THE TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL\*

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DAY  
**8**

Akerman goes slapstick, page 3



Italian cinema's new day, page 2



PRESENTED BY



Director Velcrow Ripper fields questions during the Q & A following the world premiere of his film *ScaredSacred* at the ROM Theatre on Tuesday. The film, which received production assistance from the National Film Board and Vision TV, has already attracted attention from several distributors and sales agents. *ScaredSacred* will also screen at the Vancouver International Film Festival at the end of September, where it will be the first feature documentary to open the Canadian Images programme.

## Festival Frames

BY CAITLIN STAROWICZ

With never a dull moment, the past week has been a whirlwind of events for actors, filmmakers and producers from all corners of the world.



Sunday's Directors Dinner at Bistro 990 played host to (above, left to right) writer-producer J.W. Galuchovsky and John Waters, director of the hilariously lewd *A Dirty Shame*.



Monday saw (above, left to right) Jacques Bensimon, commissioner and chairman of the National Film Board, Festival Director Piers Handling, Pierre Perrault's widow Yolande Perrault and David Clandfield, author of "Pierre Perrault and the Poetic Documentary," at the book's launch at the NFB Mediatheque.



Just around the corner at the ChumCity building on Friday, the Citytv party hosted a wealth of Canadian talent, including (above, left to right) actor-producer Ingrid Verlinger, actor Charles Officer, director Anais Granofsky and actor Julian Richings of *The Limb Salesman*.



On Monday night, the Planet Africa party saw the likes of (above, left to right) actor Ellie Downs, *Crash* director Paul Haggis and costume designer Antoinette Messan get together at the Courthouse.



The following night was the Icelandic Directors party at Bistro 990 with (above, left to right) Gudrun Thorhannesdottir, actor Róbert Douglas and Erlendur Eiriksson, director of the quirky documentary *Small Mall*. With so many exciting films, events and talent in town, who has time for sleep anymore?

## Dasgupta's everyday people dream big

BY ALLAN TONG

After shooting in India's poor hinterlands, legendary director Buddhadeb Dasgupta could have changed the title of his latest film from *Chased by Dreams* to "Chased by Crowds." "All the time, we were chased by mobs of thousands," he recalls. "We were not spared even while shooting sequences that needed absolute silence."

Dasgupta's experience parallels that of his characters, who journey across wartorn India in pursuit of their dreams but are robbed and chased by strangers. Dasgupta himself was dogged by two forces in conceptualizing his film. "The reality [of] my country has failed to meet the dreams and aspirations of its people," he explains from India. "The country is still marred by ethnic and religious violence, and a social system which has failed to enlighten the marginalized people."

Dasgupta's three main characters em-



Buddhadeb Dasgupta

body these concerns. Paresh (Prosenjit) is a government employee who goes from one village to another showing 16mm films about birth control. The rural folk despise him for this, and he is run out of town with his projector. However, he falls in love with the image of a girl in one of these films and dreams of finding her one day.

Meanwhile, Paresh's driver Chapal (Rajesh Sharma) dreams of making it rich in Dubai. In the course of their journeys, they pick up Ameena (Rimi Sen), a pregnant Muslim girl fleeing Gujarat in northwestern India, where her husband was killed in Hindu-Muslim clashes. Ameena is trying to return to her homeland of Bangladesh to give birth to her child.

"Paresh, Chapal and Ameena are three of the commoners we meet every day in India, who carry their dreams under their wings," Dasgupta explains. "The theme of the film is what happens to these three different dreams."

*Chased by Dreams* is rich in Dasgupta's trademark allegory and poetry. These come easily to Dasgupta, a celebrated poet and novelist who is considered by many to be India's greatest living director.

"His films don't play by genre codes, follow boy-meets-girl scenarios or include musical numbers," explains Festival international programmer Steve Gravestock.

"Instead, he has an elliptical, poetic approach to film which is rare and beautiful."

The film's overall atmosphere and evocative visuals, courtesy of cinematographer Venu, are surreal and painterly. "Ninety percent of the film was shot at 26 to 28 frames [per second] instead of 24 frames," explains Dasgupta. "For the first time, I [shot] a film entirely outdoors, depending on the available source light."

The beauty of Dasgupta's cinema is to dig beneath the surface of story and character and discover hidden truths. Based on everyday Indian people, the director's characters lead harsh, difficult lives. Dasgupta lends voice to their aspirations. "In the periphery of this reality, I have seen eyes ready to make a journey beyond it," he says. "It has always been an inspiration for my poetry and cinema."

### CHASED BY DREAMS

Sept. 16, 9:45pm, Isabel Bader Theatre  
Sept. 18, 7:15pm, Cumberland 2

## Toronto stands tall with art over commerce

BY RONALD OCKHUYSEN

One of the highlights of the Toronto International Film Festival is standing in line. No, I'm not joking. Of course, I also feel privileged to walk in and out of theatres with ease, my press badge around my neck. But when I am back in Amsterdam, I always long for the moments in line at public screenings in Toronto.

This strange melancholy has a simple reason: the people. Festivalgoers in Toronto are unbelievable. Do you know another place on earth where complete strangers start talking about the newest Godard, the work of Pablo Trapero, or about a Dutch film they like (and which I have not seen)? Do you know any other place where people ask you to watch their bag while they buy you a cup of coffee?

The huge success and importance of the Festival has a lot to do with the position of the art film in our society. So many impor-

tant artistic films still get made (the Festival's programme book can drive one mad with its bevy of interesting titles), but opportunities to screen these films are becoming ever fewer. The emphasis on financial success too often pushes better films into a small corner where they are left to wallow in anonymity.

Meanwhile, the power of the big studios grows and grows. They know better than anyone how to market a product. Each blockbuster is presented as a unique event which you simply must experience. Selling films is all about a mood, a style, a constant search for kicks; it is not about content or taste. In the arts (the phrase itself has a stodgy air), as in the rest of the world, hype is king.

It seems hopeless to resist this development. We film buffs have to accept the difficulties faced by an independent exhibitor who would like to book a small film for an extended run simply because he believes

### IN FOCUS

in the picture. But this does not mean that filmmakers and policymakers should not loudly protest against politicians who think that art films can do without any support, that films for small audiences make no sense because it's difficult for them to recoup their costs, or that making a film is like making butter or shoes.

Every minute, we are overloaded with images. It is becoming increasingly vital in our society to question the stream of meanings communicated by these images. A filmmaker can do that. Film does not aim to copy reality, as television does. We all know what reality looks like. What we don't know, and what we look for in art, is insight on how to deal with it. A good filmmaker helps us get a grip on reality, as does Terry George when he portrays a brave man's stand against genocide in *Hotel*

*Rwanda*. Or Oliver Hirschbiegel, whose *Downfall* gives us an insightful look inside the head of Adolf Hitler.

This brings me back to the lineups Toronto. Why do I feel so comfortable in these queues? The answer is clear: waiting for a film in Toronto is about experiencing art. This is a place where people talk about movies without mentioning box-office figures. In this happy community, we embrace Goran Paskaljevic's *Midwinter Night's Dream* because the acting and cinematography are at such an exceptionally high level. Did the filmmaker make it on virtually no money? The people in the lines don't care. They're here to see the many great films they can't see anywhere else, and for that I applaud them.

Film critic Ronald Ockhuysen is a member of the editorial staff of the Dutch daily newspaper "De Volkskrant." He also hosts a film programme on the Dutch public broadcaster VPRO.

### Today's available tickets

as of 4pm Wednesday, September 15th

- morning screenings  
8:45am to 11:59am
- afternoon screenings  
12:00pm to 5:01pm
- evening screenings  
5:02pm to 11:59pm

**STAGE BEAUTY**  
9:30AM  
RYERSON

**PLANET AFRICA SHORTS**  
12:00NOON  
ROM

**A GOOD WOMAN**  
12:30PM  
RYERSON

**THE BROOD**  
1PM  
CUMBERLAND 2

**VENTO DI TERRA**  
1PM  
PARAMOUNT 4

**LES VOITURES D'EAU**  
2:30PM  
JACKMAN HALL

**SCAREDSACRED**  
3PM  
ROM

**DEAD MAN'S SHOES**  
5PM  
VARSITY 3

**THE YEAR OF THE YAO**  
6PM  
RYERSON

**CINEVARDAPHOTO**  
6PM  
VARSITY 8

**ACAPULCO GOLD**  
9PM  
ROM

**INNOCENT VOICES**  
9PM  
RYERSON

**TWO GREAT SHEEP**  
9PM  
VARSITY 5

**BRODEUSES**  
9:30PM  
VARSITY 6

**CHASED BY DREAMS**  
9:45PM  
ISABEL BADER THEATRE

**ZEBRAMAN**  
11:59PM  
RYERSON



Drivers wanted.



What are you doing after work?





# Today's Festival highlights

BY RAY CONLOGUE AND ALLAN TONG



Our Own

## Acclaimed Russian depiction of war

OUR OWN

Sept. 16, 10pm, Paramount 4  
Sept. 18, 12:30pm, Varsity 4 or 5

A male-bonding epic unafraid to portray the moral uncertainty, bloodshed and brutality of war, *Our Own* may revive the Russian war film, dormant since the days of Soviet propaganda. Drawing comparisons to *Saving Private Ryan*, Dmitry Meskhiyev's gripping World War II picture swept the awards at this summer's Moscow International Film Festival.

As the Nazis advance in August 1941, three Russian soldiers escape while on a forced march to a POW camp. Security officer Tolya (Sergei Garmash) flees with sniper Mitya (Mikhail Evlanov) and Politburo man Lifshits (Konstantin Khabensky). Although he is collaborating with the Germans, Mitya's father Ivan (Bogdan Stupka) offers them shelter in his barn. However, the local police captain uncovers Ivan's secret, and arrests Ivan's daughters and Mitya's fiancée Katya (Anna Mikhalkova). Meanwhile, Tolya lusts after Ivan's girlfriend and plots revenge on the Germans.

The film's horrifying battle scenes have drawn much attention, even though the film was shot in desaturated colour. With superb performances from a mix of veteran actors and newcomers, *Our Own* is a rousing drama

that mixes jealousy and love with the horrors of war. AT

## The cruelty of cool technocracy

THE FOREST FOR THE TREES  
Sept. 16, 7pm, Cumberland 2  
Sept. 18, 5pm, Cumberland 1

Bright-eyed and hopeful, 27-year-old Melanie (Eva Löbau) has moved from a small town to the city of Karlsruhe to be a teacher. But she's not ready for the insolent city students,



The Forest for the Trees

and her professional confidence is shaken. Worse, she can't make friends. Her neighbour Tina (Daniela Holtz) seems nice, but she and her hip, club-going friends are appalled by Melanie's neediness and cruelly rebuff her. Lonely as she is, though, Melanie avoids the advances of fellow teacher Thorsten (Jan Neumann), who is even more awkward than she.

This first feature film, made while director Maren Ade was still a student at the Munich Academy for Television and Film, features dialogue mostly impro-

vised by the actors. The resulting sense of documentary realism, enhanced by Ade's use of a hand-held digital video camera, carves her a place in German cinema distinct from the stylized work of influential filmmaker Tom Tykwer.

Ade clearly believes that the cool, technocratic society captured by her camera is cruel enough to be filmed straight-on, with no need of stylistic devices. And that suits the character of Melanie, who is also without devices. She has been given fewer inner resources than most of us. Nonetheless, she struggles with everything she has, and no viewer will remain unmoved by her bravery. RC

## Skewering China's newfound materialism

PLASTIC FLOWERS  
Sept. 17, 2:30pm, Cumberland 1

Chinese director Liu Bingjian returns to the Festival (after 2001's celebrated *Cry Woman*) with the accomplished *Plastic Flowers*. This intimate and expertly realized drama offers a disquieting yet compassionate portrayal of the forced facades of China's rapidly evolving value system.

Nouveau riche Chunhua (Liu Xiaoping) inherits her late husband's share of a plastic flower factory, but doesn't have the head or heart to address its many financial woes. Instead, she pays her employees with useless plastic flowers and seduces young factory workers. She sets her sights on a shy, stuttering flute player named Qiusheng (Min Xiding), who gets entangled in a friendship with the less-than-honest Mr. Wang (Yin Zhi), a flower designer. As each relationship grows more intimate, the trio's emotions build to a devastating resolution.

Liu's assured direction captures his characters' insecurities with sensitivity and maturity, particularly the subplot concerning the men's increasingly sour friendship. Liu takes an ironic look at social mores in today's rapidly changing China, skewering the country's newfound materialism and artificial values, symbol-

ized by the factory's fake flowers. AT

## Walking a tightrope

KINGS OF THE SKY  
Sept. 16, 9:45pm, Varsity 7  
Sept. 18, 1:45pm, Varsity 7

A dil Hoxur remembers walking on clouds—literally.

In *Kings of the Sky*, Hoxur, a tightrope walker, recalls tiptoeing in a foggy rain along a rope suspended high between two mountains. Spectators lost sight of him in the rolling mist and he felt gripped by fear. He prayed to Allah. Suddenly, he felt someone guiding him across. "Angels," he believes.

Deborah Stratman's experimental documentary captures Hoxur and his troupe as they tour remote villages in the Taklamakan Desert in northwestern China. This is the land of the Uighurs, a Muslim people seeking religious and political autonomy from the ruling Chinese, who censor, repress and imprison them. The internationally famous Hoxur, a five-time Guinness world record holder, has become a hero to his people. However, he sees himself as merely the latest in a long line of tightrope walkers.

Stratman takes a candid look at her subjects as they wind through the desert and pitch their tent to adoring, impoverished crowds. The footage is raw and mesmerizing. She captures jokes and birthday parties, but juxtaposes them with police beatings and falls from the high wire. Compelling and insightful, *Kings of the Sky* presents an oppressed nation walking the delicate line between defiance and submission. AT



Kings of the Sky

# Innocent Voices in times of war



Innocent Voices

BY ALLAN TONG

Mexico's Luis Mandoki returns to his roots as a political filmmaker with *Innocent Voices*, a gritty portrait of children growing up in wartorn Central America. Mandoki's latest is a coming-of-age tale about a boy who endures the ravaging of his country to emerge with a renewed sense of hope and spirit.

Tellingly, the film opens with shots of soldiers' boots marching through mud as rain beats down hard on helpless civilians. El Salvador is so crippled after two years of fighting that the army has been reduced to kidnapping young boys to sustain its ranks.

Eleven-year-old Chava has witnessed many of his friends being taken away. One day, his Uncle Beto provides Chava with a means to escape his helplessness: a radio. He begins listening

to an underground station, and its protest songs increasingly fortify Chava against the despair that surrounds him.

The success of Mandoki's *Gaby - A True Story* (which played at the Festival in 1987) started Mandoki on a successful career in Hollywood, directing such films as *White Palace* and *When a Man Loves a Woman*. Telling the story of *Innocent Voices* from a child's perspective, he imbues the film not only with his signature glossy touch but also a strong symbolism that buttresses the film's potent themes. *Innocent Voices* illustrates that in the face of war, small acts of resistance, like the voices from the radio, can keep hope alive in even the most vulnerable of souls.

INNOCENT VOICES

Sept. 16, 9pm, Ryerson  
Sept. 18, 9:30am, Isabel Bader Theatre

# Funny and low-key Sheep

BY SHELLY KRAICER

When a faraway philanthropist unexpectedly bestows two expensive prize sheep on a poor rural village in China, honest farmer Deshan (Sun Yunkun) is selected to take care of them. But Deshan and his wife are getting on in years; moreover, their farm can barely support them, let alone finicky, high-maintenance livestock.

Chosen by the district governor for his frankness more than his competence, Deshan quickly finds the sheep's demands for food and shelter far beyond his means. Even Deshan and his wife's frisky love-making has to give way to the sheep's need for a warm place to sleep. With the village's reputation on the line, Deshan's efforts to disguise his failure become more and more desperate.

Keenly observant, this dark, low-key comedy by Beijing direc-

tor Liu Hao reprises the acutely intimate gaze of his earlier work in urban underground cinema. And yet, in its repeated evocation of the vast, empty northwestern Chinese plains that threaten to absorb the sheep and their new keepers, *Two Great Sheep* is vaguely reminiscent of the work of Abbas Kiarostami.

While questioning the demands a fast-developing society is willing to impose on its weakest members, the film relies on Liu's compassionate eye and former Beijing opera performer Sun Yunkun's fine central performance (he is the only professional in the fine cast) to keep Deshan's humanity at the centre.

Based in Toronto and Beijing, Shelly Kraicer is editor of the "Chinese Cinema Digest."

TWO GREAT SHEEP

Sept. 16, 9pm, Varsity 4 or 5  
Sept. 18, 11:45am, Cumberland 1

# Italian renaissance

*The House Keys* and *Vento di terra* help revive Italian cinema

BY RAY CONLOGUE

Following a crisis in the nineties when Italian audiences seemed to lose interest in their own movies and young filmmakers preferred to work in television, there has been a recent resurgence in serious Italian film. The proof is in two beautifully restrained films in this year's Festival.

*The House Keys* is from veteran director Gianni Amelio, a product of Italian cinema's golden era. *Vento di terra*, the second feature by director Vincenzo Marra, has all the elegance and gravity of classic Italian cinema.

*Vento di terra* follows an improvisational young Neapolitan named Vincenzo (Vincenzo Pacili), who joins the army after his father's death because there are no other jobs available. We see his life in what appear to be snapshots—his mother's attempted suicide, his sister's desire to live on her own. Vincenzo drifts aimlessly through life, catering only to the needs of others. Then, just as his life seems secure, his unit is sent to serve in Kosovo, where a sudden accident sends his life in a tragic new direction.

Amelio's *The House Keys* employs a mysterious narrative. A



The House Keys

handsome young man, Gianni (Kim Rossi Stuart), brings an autistic but intensely charming young boy named Paolo to a German hospital for special treatment. Neither understands a word of German, which lends a Bergmanesque intensity to their isolation. When he is befriended by an Italian woman (Charlotte Rampling) who is caring for her own disabled daughter, Gianni claims he is not the boy's father. The woman immediately sees through the lie, but comforts him and helps him face his own fears about raising a disabled child.

Many of Amelio's films, notably

*A Blow to the Heart*, are about tormented father-son relationships. *The House Keys* is a deeply touching return to this theme. Both films take place in a matter-of-fact Italy devoid of romantic references. In *Vento di terra*, Marra's camera often pans across the endless sunbaked tenements of Naples where the only sounds are the various styles of music (some North African) emanating from different buildings.

Marra clearly owes a creative debt to the Neo-realists of an earlier generation, while Amelio's more stylized film offers a study of people confronted by extraordinary challenges. But both directors capture the fine texture of their own society, and their success in reaching Italian audiences has helped engineer a turnaround in Italian cinema. According to Cinecittà's Cristiana Paternò, they are part of a new wave of filmmakers that also includes *Private*'s Saverio Costanzo. "They are giving something new and fresh," she says, "and speaking to audiences about their problems and feelings."

THE HOUSE KEYS

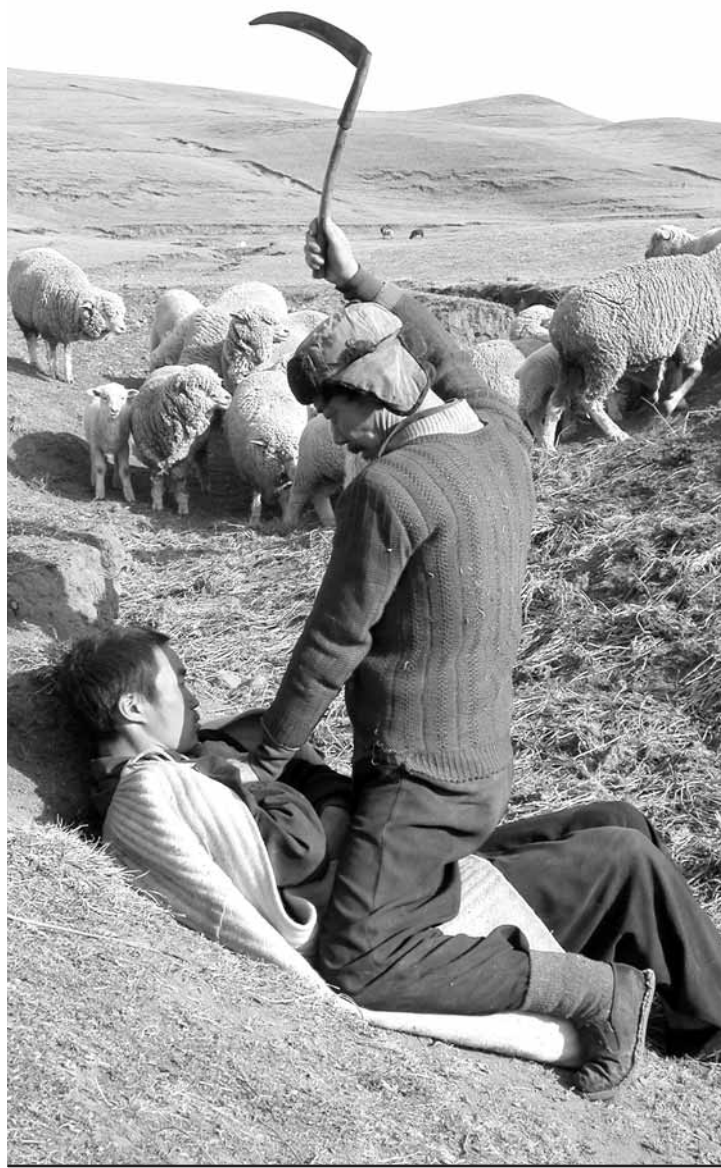
Sept. 16, 6pm, Paramount 2  
Sept. 18, 12 noon, Paramount 2

VENTO DI TERRA

Sept. 16, 1pm, Paramount 4



Vento di terra



Two Great Sheep

SEPTEMBER 9-18 • 2004  
TORONTO INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL

## HOW TO FESTIVAL

### BOX OFFICE LOCATIONS + HOURS

**New year-round Box Office:**  
Manulife Centre  
55 Bloor Street W  
(main floor, north entrance)

#### Hours:

Sept. 8 to Sept. 17: 7am to 7pm  
Sept. 18: 7am to 5pm

#### Festival Box Office:

College Park  
444 Yonge Street  
(Market level)

#### Hours:

Sept. 8 to Sept. 17: 9am to 7pm  
Sept. 18: 9am to 5pm

### HOW TO BUY TICKETS

#### NEW THIS YEAR: Online Ordering

Visit the Official website at [www.bell.ca/filmfest](http://www.bell.ca/filmfest) to purchase advance online tickets. Online tickets are available for the next day's screenings up to 7pm the night before.

#### In person:

Visit our new year-round Box Office or Festival Box Office. On the day of the screening in person tickets may also be purchased at the theatre at which the film you wish to see is playing (subject to availability).

#### Rush tickets:

If rush tickets become available, tickets will be issued at the theatre approximately five minutes before the screening.

#### NO REFUNDS. ALL SALES ARE FINAL.

For more information, visit:

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**Toronto International Film Festival Group Information**

The Toronto International Film Festival Group consists of several divisions that educate and entertain audiences ages four and up.

**Cinemathèque Ontario** is a year-round screening programme that celebrates the history and achievements of cinema.

**The Film Reference Library** is a collection which documents, conserves and catalogues information on cinema and makes it available to the public.

**Film Circuit** is a national film exhibition programme designed to bring films to communities across Canada.

**Toronto International Film Festival** is an annual ten-day public film festival of international and Canadian films with an industry component.

**Sprockets: Toronto International Film Festival for Children** is an annual film festival programmed for families with children ages 4 to 14, designed to foster and encourage understanding of global culture through cinema.



Other programmes, including Talk Cinema, Canada's Top Ten and Industry Programming and Services, bring film-related activities to the community.

**Whisky has a gentle, droll flavour**

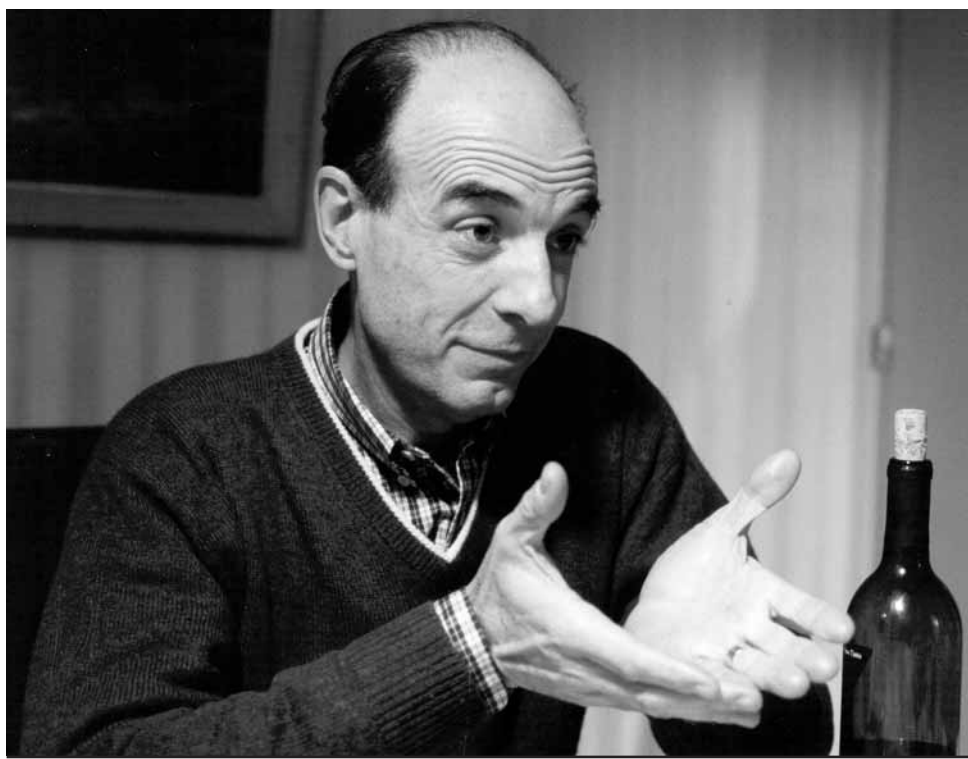
BY MICHAEL LEO

Understatement is everything in *Whisky*, a comedy with a grim facade and gentle, droll undercurrents.

The hero and heroine of this Uruguayan-Argentine-German feature are an unlikely duo: Jacobo (Andrés Pazos) is the sour, sixty-something owner of a rundown sock factory, and Marta (Mirella Pascual) is the silent, put-upon manager. Their relationship is a paradox; they are emotionally reliant upon one another and have an innate understanding, but are too awkward to engage in anything resembling conversation.

Everything begins to change when Jacobo gets word that his brother Herman (Jorge Bolani) is coming to visit. Dreading the encounter, Jacobo asks Marta to masquerade as his wife and act as a filter between himself and his unwelcome sibling. But once Herman arrives, the visit stretches out, and soon this dowdy "married" couple begin to live their roles, taking tiny steps out of their routine and braving a few emotional risks.

Co-directed by Juan Pablo Rebella and Pablo Stoll, who collaborated on the screenplay with Gonzalo Delgado Galiana, *Whisky* is deliberately austere in technique. Its stationary camera setups and simple framing emphasize the plainness of Jacobo's and Marta's existence. But once their bizarre little ruse begins, things grow livelier. In spite of himself, Jacobo relaxes a little and finds he has a



**Whisky**

flair for gambling. Marta, likewise, unveils hidden sides of her personality; her scenes are like a low-key variation on Vittorio De Sica's 1973 drama *A Brief Vacation*.

The emotional revelations are quiet but aptly timed and the victories are small, sweet,

and lasting. *Whisky* makes a quiet but persuasive case for the little things in life.

**WHISKY**

Sept. 16, 10pm, Varsity 2  
Sept. 18, 3:45pm, Varsity 2 or 3

**Cinema's mad scientist**

In *Zebroman*, Takashi Miike gives us an unlikely superhero

BY THOM ERNST

When murderous aliens infiltrate our ranks, when supervillains in giant crab outfits terrorize the public, when psychotic killers begin brandishing scissors against the innocent citizens of the earth, it's time to call on a higher power: Zebroman.

The one thing to expect from Takashi Miike, whom Midnight Madness programmer Colin Geddes has appropriately dubbed "a mad scientist of celluloid," is that each film he makes will be different from the others. *Zebroman* – which, rest assured, is not without the occasional twisted and brutalized body – marks a departure from earlier films like *Ichi the Killer* and *Gozu*, and is Miike's most accessible and disarming film to date.

With Shinichi (Sho Aikawa), a meek and ineffective schoolteacher, Miike has found a protagonist primed for persecution. His students despise him, his daughter has taken promiscuity to new levels, his wife openly shows her contempt and his son has become the favoured target of every schoolyard bully. The only connection he is able to make is

with a young disabled student who shares his fascination with "Zebroman," a television show he watched as a child.

Shinichi becomes so obsessed with this fallen hero that he builds a makeshift Zebroman costume and begins patrolling the neighbourhood searching for evildoers. It's not long before Shinichi comes across a psychotic supervillain who mistakes Shinichi for the real thing. But Shinichi, through his own determination, discovers that he is the real thing. Soon, the enemies of all that is good in this world are left cowering (or beaten to a pulp) when they hear the mighty battle cry, "Zebra Back-Kick!"

*Zebroman* recalls Japanese television superheroes of the sixties, but there is more going on here than a spoof or even nostalgic homage. In fact, *Zebroman* is a commentary



**Zebroman**

on society's tendency to divide people into those we admire and those we persecute.

A freelance film writer and reviewer, Thom Ernst conducts interviews for TVOntario's "Saturday Night at the Movies."

**ZEBRAMAN**

Sept. 16, 11:59pm, Ryerson  
Sept. 18, 9:30pm, Varsity 2 or 3



**Jimmywork**

**A documentary gone off the rails**

**JIMMYWORK**  
Sept. 15, 9pm, Cumberland 3  
Sept. 17, 9:30am, Cumberland 3

*Jimmywork* is a genuinely intriguing and compelling film. It began as filmmaker Simon Sauvé's documentary about his neighbour Jimmy Weber, but as Sauvé followed Jimmy through four years of increasingly far-fetched behaviour, the film that was taking shape began to push the boundaries of documentary.

Jimmy is a chubby, whiskery, charismatic fellow whose dreams never seem to come true. At the age of 50, he

**CANADIAN HIGHLIGHT**

survives by making cat food in his kitchen and selling it to a cat lovers' society. Occasionally, he searches his eccentric father's house for spare cash, rifling through the phantasmagoric mountains of teacups and pottery that fill every room.

One day, Jimmy decides to pose as a producer of TV commercials with a great idea for Quebec's St-Tite rodeo to promote itself in the United States. The canny rodeo manager, however, quickly sees through Jimmy, and his dream collapses. Now it's time for Jimmy's revenge on the rodeo.

At this point, the viewer is taken on an increasingly wild ride on which Jimmy's story starts to blur reality and fiction. As the landscape broadens to include burning cars and police cruisers, Jimmy Weber becomes more and more lovable – the emblem of the hapless clown who lurks in every one of us. **RC**

**Wim Wenders's L.A. story**

German auteur explores post-9/11 America in *Land of Plenty*

BY CHRIS KENNEDY

The heart of Wim Wenders's oeuvre has always been his early love affair with the United States. American movies, rock'n'roll and the frontiers of the open road allowed the director to imagine a new culture for the divided post-war Germany.

Indeed, love of American culture is so inseparable from Wenders's filmmaking that it is no surprise he needed to respond to the tragedies and aftermath of September 11. Informed by both the romance of America and the reality that the country now faces, *Land of Plenty* is a deeply personal response from a master of personal cinema.

Wenders's characters are loners and outsiders, always restlessly searching for their home. In *Land of Plenty*, Lana (Michelle Williams) is a young peace activist returning from Israel to her hometown of Los Angeles in order to reunite with her estranged uncle, Paul (John Diehl). A strangely twisted version of another Wenders trope, the observing guardian angel, Paul is no heavenly being out of the Wenders classic *Wings of Desire* – rather, he is a vigilante who drives around in a surveillance van, monitoring downtown Los Angeles for signs of terrorist activity.

This obsessive patrolling finally brings the two together. Lana volunteers at a street mission run by an old family friend (Wendell Pierce) and tries to get Paul to meet with her. Coincidentally, a homeless Pakistani man whom Paul suspects of being a terrorist shows up at the mission. This man's sudden, mysterious death

causes Lana and Paul to reunite in order to learn about his past, a process that helps resolve their own personal traumas.

Like all of Wenders's films, *Land of Plenty* has a profound sense of place. The director is particularly adept at depicting Los Angeles, the setting for many of his films. (The namesake of his last L.A. film, *The Million Dollar Hotel*, appears here, looming over the mission's rooftop.) This time, Wenders captures the despair of inner-city Los Angeles, the "hunger capital of America," with deft use of location shooting. The tents and makeshift shelters that line the sidewalks for blocks create a harrowing setting for the unfolding drama.

Written in less than a month and shot in 16 days, *Land of Plenty* has a fast and furious feel. Diehl, in particular, chews up his lines, lending both humour and poignancy to Paul's shell-shocked righteousness. The characters' worldviews are coloured by their particular ideologies, but there always seems to be the possibility of reconciliation.

Thanks to its committed performances and chilling backdrop, *Land of Plenty* has a strong sense of urgency. As an old lady complains in one of the film's funniest scenes, the television has been stuck on the same channel for a long time now. *Land of Plenty* is perhaps Wenders's attempt to do something about fixing the remote control.

Chris Kennedy is a programmer for The Images Festival in Toronto.

**LAND OF PLENTY**

Sept. 17, 4:15pm, Varsity 8

**VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:**

Stephen Landry



"I'm just walking to the Ryerson Theatre," says Stephen Landry over his cellphone. "It's my job to go to every venue every day, see what they need, what the problems are."

Landry seems happy with that arrangement. As a liaison captain, he's the physical embodiment of the Festival to every beleaguered volunteer. If somebody is in trouble, and they don't know who to call, it's comforting to know that Landry or another liaison captain will show up regularly and know exactly what to do.

Last year, however, Landry was confronted with a situation where even he wasn't sure how to react.

The Uptown Theatre, where he had volunteered for four years, collapsed, resulting in the death of a language student in a neighbouring office. This was well after the Festival had finished, but "it was bad when we heard about it," he recalls. "There's a lot of camaraderie in each theatre, and especially at the Uptown. We'd say, 'We're the Uptown people.' A lot of us were very sad about what happened."

Like many people in relationships, he and his partner Diana volunteer together for the Festival. "We have to," he laughs, "Otherwise, we wouldn't see each other for 10 days!" **RC**

**Akerman experiments with romance**

BY RAY CONLOGUE

Chantal Akerman says *Demain on démenage* is "a film that tells the story of who I am."

The avant-garde French filmmaker has, of course, been making films about who she is ever since *Je tu il elle*, where she filmed herself naked in a series of sexual encounters. But there has always been something funny and self-deprecating in her appearances, and *Demain on démenage* pushes the self-portrait genre straight into slapstick. "I've always thought I was Charlie Chaplin-ish," she recently told a French newspaper. "When I eat, the food falls on the floor, and when I walk, my shoelaces are undone."

Akerman's alter ego in the film is Charlotte (Sylvie Testud), who ineptly tries to write an erotic novel while her glamorous, uptight mother shows their apartment to a series of prospective buyers. Charlotte's glasses fall off, she bumps into the furniture, and nobody can find anything sexy about her novel. Of course, the clumsiest of the prospective buyers falls in love with her.

Watching *Demain on démenage*, it's hard to believe that Akerman specializes in abstract, cerebral films inspired by filmmakers like Michael Snow. Shortly after moving to New York in 1972, she was introduced to the Canadian artist's work; three years later, she made *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, a film that tracks the daily routine of a repressed Brussels woman with particular attention to what Akerman called "a woman's daily gestures" – movements and activities that are typically undervalued and ignored by commercial moviemakers.

But Akerman is never abstract simply for the sake of abstraction. There is always a narrative



**Demain on démenage**

thread somewhere, often related to her own body and history: her Jewishness, her mother's refusal to tell her about the concentration camp where she was imprisoned, her own sexuality.

One mode of address Akerman favours is dance or dance-like movement. In *Chantal Akerman par Chantal Akerman*, she juxtaposes similar dance scenes from two of her movies to show the range of emotion similar gestures can evoke. In *Demain on démenage*, Charlotte's awkwardness is conveyed with this same concern for movement and what it communicates about a person's character.

Akerman's unconventional mixture of cerebral filmmaking with sex, comedy and even murder is disconcerting for some filmgoers. But she has a large and loyal following, and a reputation as one of world cinema's most innovative woman filmmakers. Critic Janet Bergstrom reminds us that Akerman has always insisted "that her films' modes of address rather than their stories alone are the locus of their feminist perspective."

Akerman's deep compassion softens her sense of the absurd, creating wonderful portraits of the human condition.

**DEMAIN ON DÉMENAGE**

Sept. 17, 6pm, ROM  
Sept. 18, 9pm, Isabel Bader Theatre