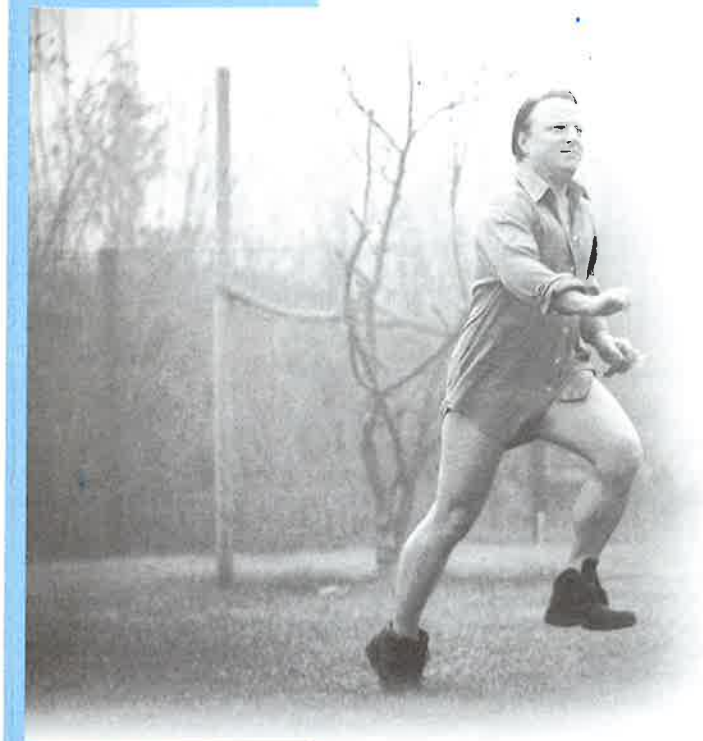


New Films
From
Germany,
Switzerland
and Austria

January 20 - 26



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CINEMA

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If there's an immediately identifiable theme to this year's selection of new German-language feature films, it might well be that old dramatic standby: the journey. Yet more than a person or people moving from one place to another, acquiring knowledge along the way, it's Germany itself, and Austria, and Switzerland, making the trip, and asking "what do our films say about who we are, and what is our place in the world?" Note, for instance, the number of one-word and English-language titles; when asked why his new film didn't have a German moniker, ONE DAY IN EUROPE writer-director Hannes Stoehr explained that English "is easier to find on the Google search engine." Look as well at the more than half-dozen languages spoken in just this collection of films: gone, for the most part, are the days when all the movies are conceived and performed strictly "In German with English subtitles" (well, the subtitles are still there...). As a function of this multicultural awareness, clashes inform the drama and comedy in GHOSTS, KEBAB CONNECTION, KUSSKUSS, ONE DAY IN EUROPE and WELCOME HOME, while BAREFOOT, LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG, OKTOBERFEST and WILLENBROCK involve looking at a familiar yet changing world in an entirely new and different way. A snapshot of a rapidly evolving moment in time, the 14th annual edition of this well-established program once again promises a cutting-edge selection of German-language films for dedicated and appreciative Washington-area audiences.

-Eddie Cockrell

Eddie Cockrell is a film critic for the trade paper *Variety* who, when not reviewing new international cinema from festivals in Europe and Canada, splits his time between Wheaton, Maryland and Sydney, Australia.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 7:15 PM
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 9:30 PM

GHOSTS (GESPENSTER)

Germany, 2005, color, 85 minutes

In German with English subtitles

Director Christian Petzold **Screenplay** Christian Petzold, Harun Farocki **Producers** Florian Koerner von Gustorf, Michael Weber **Director of Photography** Hans Fromm **Editor** Bettina Boehler **Music** Stefan Will, Marco Dreckkoetter **With** Julia Hummer, Sabine Timoteo, Marianne Basler, Aurelien Recoing, Benno Fuermann **World Sales** Bavaria Film International, Geiseltasteig (bavaria.international@bavaria-film.de)

The network of parks that lace the old and new Berlin are, in the verdant summer months, the veins and capillaries that move the populace through the human bloodstream of that great city. During one such season, problem teen and disgruntled sanitation worker Nina (Julia Hummer) watches impassively as two men assault a young woman, Toni (Sabine Timoteo). Aloof but needy, Nina is desperate for a friend and maybe even a lover; for her part, Toni reveals herself to be a streetwise aspiring actress all too happy to string Nina along for now. Meanwhile, well-to-do French businessman Pierre Hurel (TIME OUT lead Aurelien Recoing) has driven to Berlin yet again to fetch his emotionally fragile wife, Francoise (Marianne Basler), who continues to wander off in search of their young daughter Marie, kidnapped from a supermarket many years before. Believing Nina to be the long-lost Marie, Francoise's distraught entreaties trigger shifts in all these relationships. Now established as one of the most thoughtful and authoritative filmmakers in the German film industry by virtue of such quietly resonant features as THE STATE I AM IN, SOMETHING TO REMIND ME and WOLFSBURG, Christian Petzold continues, with GHOSTS, his pursuit of what Variety critic Derek Elley respectfully calls "taut, slow-burning portrait(s) of emotional discombobulation." -Eddie Cockrell

Christian Petzold (b. 1960, Hilden) studied German and Theater studies at Berlin's Free University and graduated from the German Film & Television Academy. His acclaimed feature filmography includes CUBA LIBRE (1996), THE STATE I AM IN (2000, screening at the Goethe-Institut on February 6), SOMETHING TO REMIND ME (2002) and WOLFSBURG (2003). ■

TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 9:30 PM
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 7:15 PM

WELCOME HOME

Austria/Germany, 2004, color, 102 minutes

In German, English, African languages

with English subtitles

Director Andreas Gruber **Screenplay** Andreas Gruber, Martin Rauhaus **Producers** Veit Heduschka, Frank Doehmann **Director of Photography** Herimann Dunzendorfer **Editor** Guido Krajewski **Music** Peter Androsch, Hons & Handler **With** Georg Friedrich, Rainer Egger, Abdul Salis, Johannes Silberschneider, Abdi Gouhad, Jeanette Hain, Nina Blum **World Sales** Colonia Media, Cologne (coloniamedia@coloniamedia.de)



A favorite topic of late among socially-responsible international filmmakers has been the moral conundrum and physical toll of immigration. Documentary filmmaker and film festival director Andreas Gruber has found a new way into that storyline, emphasizing how the trappings and status of a society dictate those who live within it. When the British passport of 25-year-old Isaac (Abdul Salis) is by chance found to be forged, his standing as a local soccer star and upstanding citizen is immediately cancelled. In the company of Mutt-and-Jeff Austrian cops Roesler and Samhaber (Georg Friedrich, Rainer Egger), Isaac is flown back to Ghana even though he insists he's not Ghanaian. In a startling development, officials there reject the validity of Isaac's deportation and confiscate the cops' papers. Stripped of their uniforms, and thus their authority and very identities, hot-headed Roesler and mild-mannered Samhaber must rely on each other-and Isaac-to endure the long weekend prior to Monday morning's opening of the Austrian embassy. Inspired by real deportation stories and shot through with dark humor buttressed by the strong leading performances, WELCOME HOME explores the cloudy logic of racism.



the helpless fear of the unknown and the fundamental human bonds between people struggling to overcome preconceived notions and rigid social structures. That it is also entertaining is a credit to Gruber's instinctual humanism. -Eddie Cockrell

Andreas Gruber (b. 1954, Wels, Austria) studied screenwriting and directing at Vienna's Academy of Music and Performing Arts. His films include SHALOM, GENERAL (1989), THE QUALITY OF MERCY (1994), THE INJURED SMILE (1995) and DEBT OF LOVE (1997). A member of Wels' City Cultural Committee, he's run the KINOVA film festival there since 1998. ■



THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 7 PM
THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 9:30 PM

KEBAB CONNECTION

Germany, 2004, color, 96 minutes

In German and Turkish with English subtitles

Director Anno Saul **Screenplay** Fatih Akin, Ruth Toma, Jan Berger, Anno Saul, from an idea by Ralph Schwingel **Producers** Ralph Schwingel, Stefan Schubert **Director of Photography** Hannes Hubach **Editor** Tobias Haas **Music** Marcel Barsotti **With** Denis Moschitto, Nora Tschirner, Guven Kirac, Hasan Ali Mete, Paula Paul, Cem Akin, Sibel Kekilli **World Sales** ValueFilms Licensing, Kreuzlingen, Switzerland (thamm@valuefilms.net)

Here's the recent German comedic hit about love, parenthood, martial arts, family and really big stuffed pitas. Hamburg-born Ibrahim "Ibo" Secmez (Denis Moschitto) aspires to make the first German kung-fu movie. Though stymied by actual plot details, he's already got a killer title: LETHAL FIST OF THE YELLOW AVENGER. To hone his craft, Ibo has made a razzle-dazzle cinema ad-"for two fistfuls of doner" is the tagline-for Kebab Connection, the fast food stand run by his tightly-wrapped Uncle Ahmet (Hasan Ali Mete) in direct competition with the Greek joint across the street owned by the equally determined Kirianis (Adnan Maral) and his seductive daughter Stella (Tatjana Velimirov). Ibo's plans are derailed, however, by his impregnation of lovely and mature German girlfriend Titzi (Nora Tschirner), who is herself determined to be accepted to drama school and practices "Romeo and Juliet" incessantly with her roomie Nadine (Paula Paul). Are Ibo's strict but eager Turkish parents ready for such a grandchild? Is Ibo ready for fatherhood? And is Hamburg ready for Ibo? Alongside the recent German comedy GO FOR ZUCKER!, the witty and mischievous KEBAB CONNECTION, co-written by HEAD-ON wunderkind Fatih Akin, whose earlier romantic comedy IN JULY was a hit of the 2001 series, continues a bold new chapter in German film, where tensions over nationality and religion are relieved and bridged by good old-fashioned politically incorrect belly laughs. -Eddie Cockrell

Anno Saul (b. 1963, Bonn) studied at the Jesuit College for Philosophy and the Academy of Television & Film, both in Munich. He worked extensively in TV, industrial and advertising films before parlaying that knowledge into the story of his theatrical feature debut, KEBAB CONNECTION. Saul's film THE GREEN DESERT will screen at the Goethe-Institut on February 27. ■

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OPENING

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 7 PM
FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 9:30 PM

ONE DAY IN EUROPE

Germany/Spain, 2005, color, widescreen, 95 minutes
In Russian, English, Turkish, German, Galician, Hungarian and French with English subtitles
Director and Screenplay Hannes Stoehr Producers Anne Lepin, Sigrid Hoerner Director of Photography Florian Hoffmeister

Editor Anne Fabini Music Florian Appl With Megan Gay, Luidmila Tsvetkova, Florian Lukas, Erdal Yildiz, World Sales Beta Cinema, Munich (ARothbauer@betacinema.com)

Discussion with Eddie Cockrell and actor Erdal Yildiz will follow the 7pm screening.

In Moscow, fans clad in red and gold have gathered to cheer on their Galatasaray Istanbul team against Galicia's blue and white Deportivo La Coruna club in a Champions League final. Against the offscreen backdrop of this raucous match, four pairs of mismatched Europeans struggle to understand each other in at least seven mangled languages-defaulted into comically accented English-as four tourist thefts are reported in four different police stations. Distressed visitor Kate (Megan Gay) is helped by spunky Russian pensioner Elena (Luidmila Tsvetkova), while in Istanbul, larcenous backpacker Rokko (Florian Lukas) is thwarted by overly curious cabbie Celal (Erdal Yildiz). In Spain's picturesque Santiago de Compostela, Hungarian traveler Gabor (Peter Scherer) becomes frustrated by cynical, time-wasting local cop Barreira (Miguel de Lira). As the game surges into overtime, a pair of penniless French street performers (Rachida Brakni, Boris Arquier) find trouble in Berlin. A quantum leap forward in ambition and tone from director Hannes Stoehr's 2001 nocturnal mood-piece BERLIN IS IN GERMANY, which was featured in the 2002 edition of this program, ONE DAY IN EUROPE finds him painting fluidly and with controlled flair on the much larger widescreen canvas. This is the new comedy of benevolence, a knowing wink to Jim Jarmusch's NIGHT ON EARTH that wonders if we can't all just get along-even if a procession of mangled languages is what's required to do so.-Eddie Cockrell

Hannes Stoehr (1970, Stuttgart) studied European Law in Passau before tackling scriptwriting and direction at the German Film and Television Academy (dfbb) in Berlin. He made his feature directing debut with BERLIN IS IN GERMANY (2001, screening at the Goethe-Institut on February 13).

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 2 PM
SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 4:15 PM

KUSSKUSS

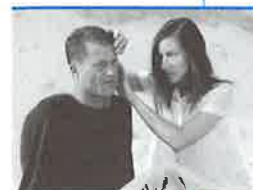
Germany/Switzerland, 2005, color, 99 minutes
In German, English, French and Russian with English subtitles
Director Soeren Senn Screenplay Katrin Milhahn, Soeren Senn Producer Mike Plewnia Director of Photography Marc C. Weber Editor Kristine Langner Music Boris Bergmann With Carina Wiese, Axel Schrick, Saida Jawad, Victor Choulman, Daniel Stock World Sales Novapool, Berlin (film@nova-pool.de)



Discussion with director Soeren Senn follows the screenings.

The best of intentions leads to an awkward love triangle in the superbly acted, affecting drama KUSSKUSS. At Benjamin Franklin University Hospital in Berlin, thirtysomething doctor's assistant Katja (Carina Wiese) discovers illegal Algerian immigrant Saida (Saida Jawad) hiding in the cloakroom. Generously, she brings the frightened young woman to the flat she shares with fiancé and humanities writer Hendrik (Axel Schrick), who, by his own admission, spends his life "thinking all day." Though initially hostile towards the unwanted guest, Hendrik soon falls hard for the seemingly compliant Saida, who appears to welcome the advances but may well have an obvious ulterior motive. Oblivious, Katja hatches a marriage of convenience between lover and charge, with heart-breaking results that reveal the buried faultlines of their own relationship. As Hendrik, Schrick's haunted, deadpan visage is reminiscent of a young James Spader, while Wiese's selfless turn as the often achingly naive Katja is impeccable. Yet the fulcrum of the drama is Saida Jawad's ultimately unreadable immigrant; her murky motives, never precisely clear, imbue the drama with tension and mystery. An immensely assured first feature, KUSSKUSS won young Swiss-born director Soeren Senn the Babelsberg Media Award for best German diploma film. That's right: with its astute insights into the strategies of love and manipulation, KUSSKUSS is a graduation project.-Eddie Cockrell

Soeren Senn (b. 1969, Graubuenden, Switzerland) studied religion, philosophy, literature and science in Bern, Berlin and Paris. He moved to Berlin in 1991 and studied directing at the Konrad Wolf Academy of Film & Television in Potsdam. KUSSKUSS marks his directorial debut.



mother's death, Leila (Johanna Wokalek, Ilse in AIMEE & JAGUAR) refuses to wear shoes that "cage up my feet." Nick gets a job mopping up at the psychiatric clinic that houses Leila, and they meet when he prevents her from hanging herself. From this unlikely pairing comes a love story of uncommon wit and depth, as Nick reluctantly allows the escaped and adoring Leila to accompany him on a trip to see his brother marry his former flame. But Leila has a few things to teach Nick about life, and the freedom that comes with going barefoot...

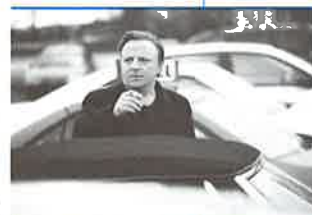
Retooled for his native Germany when an American studio passed on the project, this is an odd labor of love for Schweiger, who manages the not inconsiderable feat of balancing the very real emotional damage of the characters with a fragile sense of wonder that renders BAREFOOT a strange, funny and altogether unique romantic fairytale. As an added bonus, fans of new German cinema will enjoy the cavalcade of contemporary talent in bit parts.-Eddie Cockrell

Til Schweiger (b. 1963, Freiburg) is a director, writer, producer and actor whose dozens of high-profile films in front of the camera include 1997's KNOCKIN' ON HEAVEN'S DOOR (which he also wrote), LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: THE CRADLE OF LIFE (2003), and Michael "Bully" Herbig's hit space spoof (T)RAUMSCHIFF SURPRISE-PERIODE 1 (2004).

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 9:30 PM
SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 2 PM

WILLENBROCK

Germany, 2005, color, widescreen, 108 minutes
In German with English subtitles
Director Andreas Dresen Screenplay Laila Stieler, from the novel by Christoph Hein Producer Norbert Sauer Director of Photography Michael Hammon Editor Joerg Hauschild Music Advisor Jens Quandt With Axel Prah, Inka Friedrich, Anne Ratte-Polle, Dagmar Manzel, Tilo Prueckner, World Sales Bavaria Film International, Geiseltasteig (bavaria.international@bavaria-film.de)



Middle-aged, husky and driven, former East German Bernd Willenbrock (Axel Prah) runs a successful car dealership in Magdeburg that allows him a high standard of living and a home in the country that he shares with pretty wife Susanne (Inka Friedrich). He's also somewhat of an unlikely Lothario, conducting a casual affair with professor Vera (Dagmar Manzel) even as he pursues an impetuous infatuation with the much younger Anna (Anne Ratte-Polle), daughter of the night watchman at his business. Though Susanne tolerates his infidelity, their love is put to the test when the couple is robbed by a pair of thugs who break into their cottage. Suddenly, Willenbrock's well-ordered world isn't so familiar. On the strength of such gritty, hand-held DV dramas as THE POLICEWOMAN and GRILL POINT-both of which were shown in this series and also starred the appealing and solidly blue-collar Prah-the work of East German-born Andreas Dresen invites favorable comparisons to the working-class improvisations of Mike Leigh. WILLENBROCK represents a strong leap forward: it's Dresen's first film in 35mm (widescreen, no less) and the first to be adapted from a novel. The resulting tension, between the literary gloss of the story and the dangerous realities of life in the new Germany, renders WILLENBROCK a piercing profile of a philanderer who finally sees the error of his ways, sort of. Or, in the words of Bernd Willenbrock, "life has to go on, doesn't it?"-Eddie Cockrell

Andreas Dresen (b. 1963, Gera) apprenticed at the DEFA studios and studied Direction at the Konrad Wolf Academy of Film & Television in Potsdam. His award-winning films include NIGHT SHAPES (1999), THE POLICEWOMAN (2000), GRILL POINT (2002, screening at the Goethe-Institut on January 30), VOTE FOR HENRYK! (2003) and SUMMER IN BERLIN (2005).

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 7 PM
MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 9:30 PM

BAREFOOT (BARFUSS)

Germany, 2005, color, 110 minutes
In German with English subtitles
Director Til Schweiger Screenplay Til Schweiger, Jann Preuss, Steven Zotnowsky, Dina Marie Chapman, Nika von Altenstadt Music Dirk Reichardt, Stefan Hansen, Max Berghaus With Til Schweiger, Johanna Wokalek, Nadja Tiller, Michael Mendl, Erdal Yildiz, Paula Paul

Rudderless thirtysomething Nick Keller (multi-hyphenate hunk Til Schweiger) has such a casual approach to life that he floats through jobs and even forgets about the strange woman in his bed. To combat the post-traumatic stress disorder in the wake of her



Discussion with director Johannes Brunner follows the screenings.

Since 1810, the traditional fortnight-long bacchanalia of food, funhouse frolics and, of course, beer, the quintessentially German Oktoberfest-now held, ironically, in late September-sprawls among some 14 main tents on a mammoth Munich fairground. In a typical year, six to seven million visitors consume some one point five million gallons of the six local brews on offer. Astonishingly, it wasn't until now that a German filmmaker thought to use the actual event as a dramatic backdrop, but that's what sculptor-turned-filmmaker Johannes Brunner has done. A grieving Italian falls for an unhappy Japanese bride, while the owner of the Ghost Train haunted house ride struggles with her finances and life choices. A 16-year-old girl discovers her father is having an affair with one of his students, even as a Cameroonian dishwasher screws up his courage to profess love for the unhappy barmaid wife of one tent's single-mindedly cheerful bandleader. Through it all, a disturbed young man pretending to be wheelchair-bound taunts the head of security with veiled threats referencing the actual 1980 bombing of the front gates. "That oompah-pah in my head," moans one server of the sensory overload, echoing the criss-cross nature of the multiple storylines Brunner has carved from the mammoth cultural phenomenon; think of this as SHORT CUTS with beer. Photographed with breathtaking fluidity against the suds-fueled chaos by ace cinematographer and esteemed documentary filmmaker Thomas Riedelsheimer, whose Evelyn Glennie documentary TOUCH THE SOUND recently thrilled Washington audiences, OKTOBERFEST is an audacious, riveting drama of lives spinning as furiously as the gaudy carnival rides.-Eddie Cockrell

Johannes Brunner studied sculpture before turning to film. OKTOBERFEST marks his fiction feature debut after making shorts and video installations since 1993.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 9:40 PM
MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 7:15 PM

LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG (KATZE IM SACK)

Germany, 2004, color, 87 minutes
In German with English subtitles
Director Florian Schwarz Screenplay Michael Proehl Producer Alexander Bickenbach Director of Photography Philipp Sichler Editor Florian Dreschler Music Fabian Roemer With Jule Boewe, Christoph Bach, Walter Kreye, David Scheller World Sales Filmakademie Baden Wuerttemberg, Ludwigsburg (eva.steegmayer@filmakademie.de)

A drifter with a knowing look in his eyes, Karl (Christoph Bach) meets pretty but haunted Doris (Jule Boewe) returning to Leipzig from her mother's funeral ("one less problem in the world," she explains). Far from strangers on a train, these two steely-nerved opportunists see in each other kindred spirits of drifting and exploitation. Once in the city their trine is complete with the addition of Brockmann (Walter Kreye), a pasty-faced surveillance expert whose unrequited lust for Doris is driving him up the wall. During one long night in and around the Lavoza karaoke bar, each of these damaged people will act out their own strange obsessions, none of which end particularly well. And woe be it to the first to let the cat out of the bag. "A film noir from Leipzig?" fretted one German festival, "This just can't work out." But work it does, thanks to the pungent mood of nocturnal existentialism created by debuting director Florian Schwarz (hey, that means "black") and cinematographer Philipp Sichler from Michael Proehl's provocative script. Kreye is fearlessly creepy as the dissipated Brockmann, and the chemistry between Bach and Boewe is so palpable that they've since been cast together again, in

Marcus Lenz' similar-themed feature debut CLOSE. Winner of a handful of influential European film awards, LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG is at once a determinedly foul-tempered noir and a bracing antidote to more sunny cinema. After all, when you let the cat out of the bag, what you've got is one very pissed off cat.-Eddie Cockrell

Florian Schwarz (b. 1974, Koblenz) was trained in art and design before working as an editor in Munich. From 1999 to 2004 he studied directing at the film academy Baden-Wuerttemberg. LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG is his graduation film and feature directorial debut.

