



Festival to screen record number of films

Vancouver, BC (September 1, 2004) – The 23rd Vancouver International Film Festival announced today that it will show 370 films, including 246 feature and mid-length films and 126 shorts, at more than 500 screenings. Among the features and mid-length films are 4 World Premieres, 32 International Premieres, 34 North American Premieres, 58 Canadian Premieres and 25 English-Canadian Premieres. The Festival opens on September 23 with a Gala screening of Istvan Szabo's **BEING JULIA**. Xiao Jiang's **ELECTRIC SHADOWS** will screen as the Anniversary Gala on October 2, while Agnès Jaoui's **LOOK AT ME** will close the festival on October 8. All will be presented at the VISA Screening Room @ The Vogue.

GALAS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

The Festival announced all three gala screenings for this year's Festival, as well as its line-up of Special Presentations, which features some of the year's most honoured and anticipated films.

Produced by Robert Lantos, the Opening Gala **BEING JULIA** captures the dramatic world of 1930s theatrical life. Adapted by Oscar winner Ronald Harwood from W. Somerset Maugham's novel "Theatre" and directed by István Szabó. The film stars Annette Bening as a British star taken for a ride by a young American fan. Jeremy Irons, Bruce Greenwood and Michael Gambon co-star.

The Anniversary Gala on October 2 will also see the presentation of the Dragons & Tigers Award for Young Asian Cinema. To mark this occasion, the festival will show **ELECTRIC SHADOWS**, the supremely entertaining debut feature by woman director Xiao Jiang. A tangled family story (set in Ningxia and Beijing), the film is the vehicle for a highly emotive love-letter to five decades of Chinese movies. It is a Chinese *Cinema Paradiso*.

A gem of comic melancholy, **LOOK AT ME**, the Closing Gala on October 8, was the winner of the best screenplay award at Cannes this year. Agnès Jaoui's superbly written and acted study of a hilariously egomaniacal writer (Jean-Pierre Bacri) and the chubby daughter (Marilou Berry) who craves his attention is French filmmaking at its best.

Special Presentations

The two VIFF Special Presentations are among the most feted and critically acclaimed films from this year's Cannes film festival. Maggie Cheung took away Best Actress at Cannes for her wrenching performance in Olivier Assayas' **CLEAN** as the widow of a Canadian rock star trying to kick drugs and win her young son back. Assayas's nimble direction charts Cheung's movement from a state of disequilibrium towards a state of relative peace. In January 1952, Che Guevara and his companion, Alberto Grenado, travelled across South America on an eight-month journey of discovery. In the beautiful and captivating film **THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES**, director Walter Salles and star Gael Garcia Bernal (Y Tu Mama Tambien) delight in documenting the human and vivid geographical details that would inform the politics of the future revolutionary leader.

"GERMAN INDIES" SERIES

It's been 13 years since we last highlighted new films from Germany. The overwhelming number of quality German films screened at other festivals, combined with the high quality of submissions, prompted VIFF to put together a special focus on independent German cinema. The *German Indies* series comprises some of the year's hippest new fiction features and the most entertaining and invigorating documentaries.

One of the year's standout debuts, Maren Ade's **THE FOREST FOR THE TREES**, charts the social disintegration of mousy teacher Melanie, as she leaves the countryside to start her teaching career, but is confronted by rebellious students and the loneliness of the big city. In his sharp, nuanced and bleakly funny directorial debut **QUIET AS A MOUSE**, Marcus Mittermeier gives us Mux, a warrior for justice on a self-appointed mission to set the world right. Leander Haussmann's FIPRESCI-winner **BERLIN BLUES** is a wry comedy about a band of drinkers, artists and oddballs trying to get by in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin shortly before the fall of the Wall. Achim von Borries' taut, gorgeously filmed period piece **LOVE IN THOUGHTS** is based on a true story about two students in 1920s Germany who form a "suicide club." Angela Schanelec's moody **MARSEILLE** follows a young Berlin photographer to the south of France when she swaps apartments to escape an impossible love with the husband of her best friend. While Michael Schorr's **SCHULTZE GETS THE BLUES** humorously observes, à la Kaurismäki, an obese laid-off miner in eastern Germany obsessed with Cajun zydeco music and Creole cooking.

On the documentary front, Andres Veiel's inspiring documentary **ADDICTED TO ACTING** follows four would-be thespians over a period of four years, resulting in a thoroughly appealing look at a rarely seen process. Jörg Adolph's **CHANNEL-SWIMMERS** is a gripping documentary on the idea, history and dangers of swimming the 33-kilometre English Channel. Andrew Horn's **THE NOMI SONG** draws on interviews, old footage of performances, etc. to get behind icon Klaus Nomi's carefully crafted façade. An exuberant, empowering and inspiring celebration of dance and music, Thomas Grube and Enrique Sánchez Lansch's stirring **RHYTHM IS IT!** stars Berlin Philharmonic conductor Sir Simon Rattle, choreographer Royston Maldoom, Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and some 250 Berlin schoolchildren of disparate ages, races and backgrounds.

"CINEMA OF OUR TIME" HIGHLIGHTS

Our largest single section—and one often overlooked in the torrent of documentaries, Asian films, and Canadian films—is Cinema of Our Time, which again presents award-winning films and audience favourites from around the world.

Cannes highlights include *Un Certain Regard* Best Film winner **MOOLAADÉ**, a rousing, late-career triumph for Ousmane Sembene. The film stingingly indicts female genital mutilation in an exuberantly made, masterful portrait of the changes experienced in Senegalese village life. This year's *Camera d'Or* winner, **OR (MY TREASURE)** is Keren Yedaya's gripping portrait of a Tel Aviv prostitute (Ronit Elkabetz) and her daughter. We are also presenting the FIPRESCI award-winner from Critics Week, the Israeli/Palestinian co-production **THIRST**. Tawfiq Abu Wael's debut concerns an authoritarian father who drags his shamed family to an isolated spot to eke out an existence. One of the most controversial films screened at Cannes this year—and one of that festival's hottest tickets—was Yousry Nasrallah's epic four-and-a-half-hour adaptation of Elias Khoury's novel, **THE GATE OF THE SUN**, which retells the story of Palestine through the eyes of a young villager turned freedom fighter.

Along with award-winners, the VIFF highlights new films making their debuts this fall from returning VIFF favourites. **A HOLE IN MY HEART** is the much-anticipated new film by Lukas Moodysson, which continues where his previous film, *Lilya 4-Ever*, left off, and covers much of the same thematic ground—female exploitation. Present-day Prague abounds with impossibly intertwined stories in Jan Hřebejk's (*Divided We Fall*) **UP AND DOWN**, a comedy that will make you cry and a drama that will make you laugh. Valery Todorovsky's taut, psychological drama **MY STEPBROTHER FRANKENSTEIN** sees a physically and mentally scarred veteran of the war in Chechnya bringing havoc to the well-ordered home of his long-lost father. Veteran Aussie director Paul Cox returns with **HUMAN TOUCH**, another humanist take on the need for love and the complexities of relationships.

The third part of Youssef Chahine's autobiographical trilogy, **ALEXANDRIE...NEW YORK** is an absolutely unique musical comedy about an Egyptian director who travels to New York and is reunited with the woman he loved 40 years before. **DEAD MAN'S SHOES** is Shane Meadows' down-and-dirty gangster tale about two brothers who return home to exact revenge on some drug dealers. In Pablo Trapero's **ROLLING FAMILY**, based on the experiences and anecdotes of his family and friends, matriarch Emilia and her whole clan take off across Argentina in a motor home. And in this Presidential election year, what would make for better entertainment than **SILVER CITY**, a scathing political lampoon and detective story that offers John Sayles' timely and toxic look at the state of the union.

Also, this year's VIFF welcomes talented new filmmakers to the festival world, from countries far away and closer to home. We're proud each year to welcome new discoveries, and this year is no exception. Recently emigrated to Vancouver from his home in Macedonia, Svetozar Ristovski presents his tough, no-nonsense feature debut **MIRAGE**, in which young Marko tries to escape the cycle of gambling and alcohol that poison his home life. Actress and filmmaker Mania Akbari's **20 FINGERS**, an important and powerful look at gender relations in Islamic Iran, is structured as a set of conversations conducted in moving vehicles, à la Kiarostami. Martin Koolhoven's **SOUTH** charts the emotional breakdown of a successful boss at an industrial laundry in pure Fassbinderian fashion. Featuring poet Lisa Jarnot, Jennifer Reeves' debut feature, **THE TIME WE KILLED** is an impressionistic and deeply personal cinematic poem that offers a clear view of the world we live in now. And former VIFF guest Jem Cohen returns with **CHAIN**, a mix of avant-garde drama and documentary partially shot in Vancouver, where generic spaces of post-modern life are joined into a monolithic "superlandscape."

SPOTLIGHT ON FRANCE

With the help of the French Consulate General, we are again pleased to present a spotlight on new films from France. This year, we are including documentaries in the Spotlight on France, again emphasizing the need to break down the lines between the established boundaries of narrative and nonfiction films.

Ten years after *Caught in the Act*, Raymond Depardon returns with another masterpiece about the French justice system, **THE 10th DISTRICT COURTS—MOMENTS OF TRIAL**, capturing defendants and their lawyers as they amusingly attempt to weasel their way out of petty crimes and misdemeanours. Jean-Henri Meunier's **AS LIFE GOES BY** is a charming portrait of the immensity of small-town life, here Najac in the south of France. Based on an operetta from the 1920s and starring *Amélie*'s Audrey Tautou, French master Alain Resnais' light and thoroughly entertaining confection **NOT ON THE LIPS** features dialogue that is part spoken and part sung. Abdellatif Kechiche's intimate and energetic **L'ESQUIVE** takes place in the suburbs of Paris, where the largely inarticulate Krimo and his foul-mouthed, charismatic compadres deal with life, love and Marivaux.

Too hot for Cannes, Christophe Honoré's serious-minded, necessarily shocking adaptation of George Bataille's unfinished last novel **MA MÈRE** charts the sexual initiation of a young man with three women, including his mother (Isabelle Huppert). Also featuring Huppert, Michael Haneke's **TIME OF THE WOLF** is a post-apocalyptic tale that strips away the surface conventions that keep our dark impulses at bay. Veteran Benoît Jacquot's **À TOUT DE SUITE** is a wonderfully observed *amour fou* drama set in 1970s Paris, Morocco, and Greece. Finally, two from iconoclast Eugène Green: **THE LIVING WORLD**, part fairytale for adults and part minimalist drama in the vein of Bresson, and **LE PONT DES ARTS**, an absurd Baroque romance set in the Parisian theatre world.

NONFICTION FEATURES OF 2004

Each year the Nonfiction component of the Festival continues to grow, making the VIFF one of North America's premiere documentary film showcases, and attracting critics and programmers from around the world. Including the "Changing the World" component, this year's Nonfiction Features program—sponsored by CBC Newsworld—consists of 74 films, including 11 International Premieres, 10 North American Premieres, 23 Canadian and 5 English-Canadian Premieres. Including all series, we are presenting a total of 97 feature or mid-length documentaries this year.

NONFICTION FEATURES COMPETITION AND JURY

For the 13th year, the National Film Board of Canada will present an award for Best Documentary feature. The nonfiction jury will be comprised of: John Anderson, chief film critic for *Newsday* in New York; Karen Cooper, director of Film Forum in New York; and Rob Nelson, film editor for *City Pages* and programmer for Get Real: The City Pages Documentary Film Festival in Minneapolis.

The films nominated for the NFB Award are:

AS LIFE GOES BY (Jean-Henri Meunier, France) *Canadian Premiere*
CZECH DREAM (Vít Klusák, Filip Remunda, Czech Republic) *North American Premiere*
DUTCH LIGHT (Pieter-Rim de Kroon, Netherlands) *North American Premiere*

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON: THE IMPASSIONED EYE (Heinz Bütler, Switzerland) *English-Canadian Premiere*

IMAGINING ULYSSES (David Blake Knox, Ireland) *International Premiere*

IN THE REALMS OF THE UNREAL (Jessica Yu, USA) *Canadian Premiere*

JOURNEYINGS AND CONVERSATIONS (Arvind Sinha, USA) *Canadian Premiere*

LIFE RUNNING OUT OF CONTROL (Bertram Verhaag, Germany) *North American Premiere*

MONUMENTAL—DAVID BROWER'S FIGHT FOR WILD AMERICA (Kelly Duane, USA)

SCAREDSACRED (Velcrow Ripper, Canada)

SHAKE HANDS WITH THE DEVIL: THE JOURNEY OF ROMÉO DELLAIRE (Peter Raymont, Canada)

WALL (Simone Bitton, France/Israel) *North American Premiere*

THE VANCOUVER FILM CENTRE PREVIEWED

To prepare for the opening of the Vancouver International Film Centre in the Spring of 2005, we are presenting two films that give the opportunity for reflection on the history and purposes of film societies and cinema spaces in general. Paul Cronin will be on hand to present **FILM AS A SUBVERSIVE ART: AMOS VOGEL AND CINEMA 16**, his documentary on the experimental film pioneer and the New York cinema he founded in 1947. (Cronin will also give a talk on filmmaker Alexander Mackendrick, subject of his latest project.) Jacques Richard's epic documentary **HENRI LANGLOIS: PHANTOM OF THE CINÉMATHÈQUE** is a richly rewarding tribute to the massively important founder of the Cinémathèque Française, and rightly shows Langlois to be a visionary historian to whom the state never gave enough financial means to preserve the world's foremost film archive.

The 23rd annual Vancouver International Film Festival runs from September 23 to October 8. More than 150,000 patrons are expected to attend 500 screenings of over 300 films from 50 countries at 10 Vancouver screens: Cineplex Odeon Granville Cinemas (7 screens); the VISA Screening Room at the Vogue Theatre; The Ridge; and the Pacific Cinémathèque.

All box offices open September 4 for VISA cardholders. VISA and cash sales from September 11. The fastest way to buy advance tickets is at www.viff.org, 24 hours a day, or through the VISA Charge-by-Phone line at 604-685-8297, open noon to 7pm. There are two advance ticket outlets, the Pacific Centre Kiosk (Granville and Georgia) and City Square Mall (Cambie and 12th, mezzanine level). For festival information, call the Starbucks Hotline at 604-683-FILM (3456) starting September 2, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., or see the website.

Media Office - 604-646-4770

Jennifer Wesanko – jennifer@viff.org; Helen Yagi – helen@viff.org; Wendy Soobis – wendy@viff.org;
Andrew Poon – andrew@viff.org; Ruth Atherley – ruth@viff.org; Vicky Jones – vicky@viff.org;