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Cottbus, October 24, 2008

PROGRAMME INFORMATION NO. 2

- 1. The Feature Film and Short Feature Competitions**
- 2. The sections of National Hits and Spectrum**

Between local roots and the search for visions**18th FilmFestival Cottbus: over 100 films from 30 countries exploring the world of our Eastern neighbours in six days****1. The Feature Film and Short Feature Competitions**

Ten films from ten countries of Central and Eastern Europe were nominated for the Feature Film Competition, stretching geographically from the Polish neighbour to far-off Kazakhstan. They include three international co-productions, of which two were made in collaboration with German partners. The traditionally strong Czech cinema is represented with two films, while the revived Russian cinematography - by far the most productive film nation of Eastern Europe - has substantial involvement in four works. Nine of the selected works will have their German premiere in Cottbus. While there is stylistic diversity, a thematic relationship makes itself clearly felt between the films. Five of the ten nominated titles deal with an existence far away from the hectic and glittering life of the big city. The harsh and tradition-bound living conditions in the country are often in conflict with the supposedly free and progressive conditions in the city.

A humorous tone is adopted by Sergei Dvortsevoy in his story about looking for a bride in the Kazakh steppe. The Cannes prize-winner **TULPAN** - also the opening film of the Cottbus festival - tells the problems of a young man who returns to the boundless expanses of Kazakhstan from the big city and wants to build up a new life for himself in the traditional way. The hero in Mikhail Kalatozishvili's **WILD FIELD** ends up in a similar steppe-like region. This visually stunning and elliptical epic of beguiling beauty uses gently ironic melancholy to tell the story of a man in a practically deserted landscape, who calmly gives himself up to the realities of nature. The Hungarian Kornél Mundruczó also gets by with little dialogue in his drama **DELTA** and subsequently won the FIPRESCI Prize in Cannes. The wildly poetic delta, the mouth of the Danube with its many channels flowing into the Black Sea, is the setting for a disastrous incestuous brother-sister relationship. Another life on the river is the subject of the new film by the Czech Bohdan Slama, who had previously had success in Cottbus in 2002 and 2005 with the films **WILD BEES** and **SOMETHING LIKE HAPPINESS**. In **COUNTRY TEACHER**, he now focuses on the homosexuality of a young intellectual who escapes to a small village from the capital of Prague. With great sensitivity, Slama ventures here to address a taboo of Czech cinema. **MUCHA** by Vladimir Kott is also about an exodus from the big city, albeit more of an involuntary one. With an unerring sense for dry humour and without false sentimentality, he tells an unusual father-daughter story and provides an insight into Russian provincial life far away from the hip metropolises.

Meanwhile, Michaela Pavlátová's **NIGHT OWLS** is set on a city's outskirts. The Prague suburban tales provide the background for a touching coming-of-age story. The Czech director describes the first steps into adult life precisely and with unpretentious and minimalistic strokes as a story of a difficult transition.

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Anca Damian's **CROSSING DATES** functions like Robert Altman's **SHORT CUTS**: Seemingly chance encounters, the supposedly unmotivated meeting of people are presented in an interwoven narrative whose loose strands are finally brought together in a common patchwork of life.

Explicitly political statements can be found, on the other hand, in the productions from Poland and Croatia as well as in a Russian-Bulgarian co-production. Michal Rosa takes the audience in **SCRATCH** to a largely suppressed chapter of recent Polish history. After decades of a supposedly harmonious life together, a woman suspects that her husband had worked as a spy in the 1960s and simply married her as a means to an end. With **NO ONE'S SON**, Arsen Anton Ostojic delivers a furious snapshot of today's Croatia which is still fighting with the shadow of the Yugoslavian past.

In his Karlovy Vary prize-winning film **CAPTIVE** Alexei Uchitel presents a commentary on the Chechnya conflict, which, from a Russian perspective, is unusually differentiated and conciliatory. An almost intimate human rapprochement begins across hostile fronts between two Russian soldiers and their Chechen prisoner.

The **International Festival Jury** this year includes the Kosovo-born actress Artta Dobroschi (**LORNA'S SILENCE**), the deputy managing director of German Films, Mariette Rissenbeek (Germany), the Russian FIPRESCI president Andrei Plakhov, the executive director of the Israel Film Fund Katriel Schory and the Polish set designer Allan Starski, the Oscar-winner for **SCHINDLER'S LIST**.

Ten films from eight countries were nominated for the **Short Feature Competition**. Traditionally the festival's crowd-puller, these films are screened in the "Long Night of the Short Films." The countries featured range from the Baltic states to the Caspian Sea, with Romania and Poland both having a particularly strong presence at this year's edition with two productions apiece.

The Romanian cinema, now having enjoyed international success for some time, is represented firstly with **THURSDAY** by Hadrian Marcu, which describes the frustrating daily routine in a cotton mill. Radu Jude's **ALEXANDRA**, meanwhile, follows on from **THE TUBE WITH A HAT** which received the short film competition's main prize at Cottbus in 2006. The Pole Jan Wagner is also coming to Cottbus for the second time with a short film. He follows **PORNO** with **MY BROTHER** and a further episode about the difficulties of becoming an adult, while Anna Karasinska strings unusual everyday experiences together in **UNIVERSAL SPRING**.

The difficulties of puberty and first love are depicted by Marina Vroda in the Ukrainian film **THE OAT** and Karchi Perlmann underpins Hungary's reputation for droll humour with **THE DINNER**.

The Bulgarian film **GAME** by Kristina Groseva - at two minutes, the festival's shortest film - will be shown out of competition.

The German-Hungarian actress and director Rita Lengyel **BERLIN CALLING**, Mira Staleva, director of the renowned industry event "Sofia Meetings", as well as Martin Adamsoo, development manager at the "Baltic Film and Media School" in Tallinn, were appointed as members of the international **Jury for the Short Feature Competition**.

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2. The sections of National Hits and Spectrum

Another audience highlight at the festival is provided with the **National Hits** section. Perfectly staged genre cinema at its finest is offered here with a lightness of touch that one would scarcely have expected of East European cinema. This time round, three top hits will have their German premiere in Cottbus and promise first-class entertainment: Latvia will be represented by **DEFENDERS OF RIGA** which will appeal to patriotic emotions, Poland is participating with **LADIES**, which has become the most popular contemporary film since the fall of the Berlin Wall, while Juraj Jakubisko delivers the most successful Slovakian film of all time with the opulently staged historical drama **BATHORY**.

Six debut films have been selected this year for **Spectrum**, of which three works supplement the selection for this year's Focus of "New Cinema from the Baltics": **KINNUNEN**, an eccentrically comical tale from Estonia, **VOGELFREI** a Latvian joint project by four directors, as well as the international co-production **MIDSUMMER MADNESS**, a turbulently humorous story with a star cast.

The showcase also features the latest works by the cinematographies of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, which have rarely appeared at film festivals. Both Marat Alykulov's **ABSURD AND ABSURDITY** as well as **SWIFT** by Abai Kulbai offer a modern view of today's youth in the cities of the former Soviet republics, since they are hardly aware of their past and follow their own paths in the search for identity.

The complete programme can be downloaded from www.filmfestivalcottbus.de from Monday, October 27.

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