

A festival of film from 3 Continents

The 3 Continents international documentary and feature film festival opens at Cinema Nouveau screened by Nedbank in Johannesburg on 12 September and in Cape Town on 19 September with an impressive range of cutting-edge, revelatory films from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

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Showcasing over 40 films, screenings will highlight a variety of contemporary issues, from large-scale political corruption to personal tales of human endurance with humour, poignancy, skill and gripping insight

In 2002 a group of Latin American documentary filmmakers organised the first 3 Continents film festival in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to provide a forum for documentary films on human rights-related themes. This year the festival comes to South Africa and includes 22 films from the African continent, 12 from Asia and 14 from Latin America. Looking for individual or community stories that addressed issues within the developing world, the organisers considered over 160 films documenting key moments in politics and human rights struggles worldwide.

The festival opens with a special screening of Patricio Guzman's inspiring film ***The Pinochet Case***, documenting the Chilean people's eventual overthrow of the dictator's brutal 25-year regime. Little did Pinochet imagine, as he enjoyed a cup of tea with Margaret Thatcher in 1998, that he would shortly be placed under house arrest and deported to face 200 accusations of crimes against humanity.

The political theme continues with ***Chavez: Inside the Coup***. Directors Kim Bartley & Donnacha O'Briain got more than they bargained for when they went to Venezuela to make an intimate profile of president Hugo Chavez. Instead they found themselves shooting a thrilling expose covering an attempted political coup from inside the presidential palace during a crucial 48 hours in Venezuela's history.

Bibby Zobel and Jessie Sinclair's ***The Shoeshine President*** captures the heady atmosphere of history in the making in Brazil. With his hands tied by debt and international bank loans, will popular new President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva – a former shoeshine boy with little education - be able to feed his country's 30 million starving citizens?

The festival also contains a number of controversial films banned in their native countries, such as director Rajesh Touchriver's ***In the Name of Buddha***. This multi-award winning documentary examines the enormous human tragedy that has resulted in over 60,000 Sri Lankans losing their lives and hundreds of thousands more seeking asylum. Banned in Israel, ***Jenin, Jenin*** shows the extent to which prolonged oppression and terror has affected the state of mind of the Jenin refugee camp's Palestinian inhabitants. Directed and co-produced by Palestinian actor Mohammed Bakri.

In contrast, writer-director Aparna Sen's award winning film ***Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*** is a wonderful personal examination of human nature and relationships. A Muslim man and a Hindu Brahmin woman get to know each other on a fateful cross-country bus trip in India, filled with singing teenagers, doddering old people, card-playing drunkards, newly-married love birds and a crying baby.

War and Peace, filmed over three years in India, Pakistan, Japan and the United States, is the long-awaited new film by India's leading documentary filmmaker Anand Patwardhan. This deeply insightful documentary

examines India's path to naked militarism and documents the current, epic journey of peace activists in the face of global militarism.

The festival also features 12 impressive South African documentaries, including two different insights into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings; Mark Kaplan's ***Between Joyce and Remembrance*** and Cathal McLaughlin's ***We Never Give Up***. The line-up also includes the world premiere of ***Scratched, Mixed and ?*** the fourth and final episode in *Rhythms from Africa*, co-produced and co-directed by South Africa's Bridget Thompson and Somalia's Abdulkadir Ahmed Said. Exploring the profound changes taking place within Africa's music culture, the film features local Kwaito stars Arthur, Zola and Queen, and hip hop acts Godessa and BlackNoise.

Other home-grown highlights include ***My Father Rick Turner*** by Emmy award winner Jann Turner, made to commemorate the 25th anniversary of her father's assassination during the apartheid regime at the age of just thirty six; Ouida Smit and Madoda Ncayiyana's ***The Sky in Her Eyes***, an award winner at the prestigious Cannes film festival, about a young girl struggling to cope with grief and confusion after losing her mother to AIDS; and Siyabonga Makhatini's eight-minute movie ***The Moment***, a funny, honest film in which a variety of South African's give their personal insights into dating and sexuality.

There is also an intriguing mix of films from the African continent. Set in war-ravaged Rwanda, Nick Hughes' feature film ***100 Days*** examines the plight of a young Tutsi girl and her efforts to survive in the face of the Hutu government's policy of genocide. In ***Disobedience***, directed by Lucinio Azevedo, a Mozambican peasant is accused of having caused her husband's suicide by refusing to obey him. Despite being absolved by both a traditional healer and a formal court hearing, her in-laws continue to seek revenge.

The Famine Business, a controversial documentary by Jihan El Tahri, highlights Zambia's entrapment in a chilling trade war between the USA and the EU and examines the reality behind the apparent generosity of international aid agencies. Danielle Smith's award-winning and visually arresting ***Beat of Distant Hearts*** takes us to the borders of a remote town in Algeria where almost 200,000 refugees live in four large tent cities. Their homeland, a little known territory of Western Sahara, is the last remaining colony in Africa. Since 1992 the Saharawis have languished here, waiting for the long promised UN referendum on self-determination.

The festival also aims to encourage audience participation and discussion on the economic challenges of producing film in the developing world. A number of international and African filmmakers will be present at their screenings in both Johannesburg and Cape Town, including directors Anand Patwardhan (*War and Peace*), Lucinio Azevedo (*Disobedience*) and Danielle Smith (*Beat of Distant Hearts*), producer Sai George (*In the Name of Buddha*) and filmmaker and teacher Miguel Mirra, the executive director of the International 3 Continents Festival.

Showing dates:

12 – 21 September, Rosebank Mall, Johannesburg

19 – 28 September, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town

Cinema Nouveau, screened by Nedbank

All movies can be booked through the Ster-Kinekor Contact centre on 08216789 or Cinema Nouveau box offices or via the Johannesburg Festival Office - 011 403 0651/011 403 9368 - and the Cape Town Festival Office - 021 788 5462. For further information visit www.3continentsfestival.co.za.

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