

**2012**

**Thursday 26-1**

**Unfair world**, Pilippos Tsitos, Greece, 4

Sotiris is a policeman nearing retirement. His work consists of interrogating suspects. One day, he decides he only wants to be just - a decision which means all his interviewees are let off and which leads him to make a fatal mistake during a corruption hearing.

Dora, an opportunistic cleaning lady, who just like everyone else is desperately trying to keep her head above water in a bankrupt country, is the only person who can help him. The tired policeman trusts her and they even seem to be falling in love. However, time and again, Sotiris' desire for and faith in honesty is invalidated.

**Mercado de futuras**, Mercedes Alvarez, Spain, 3

The Greek poet Simonides of Ceos is remembered for his fabulous memory and as the founder of mnemonics. In **Futures Market**, Simonides' reflections constitute the backbone of the commentary-free shots, which - in a well-paced edit - reflect on the past, present and future.

The film shows an old house being divested of its valuable contents, which then end up at a second-hand market as a collection of random items. The footage of the trade in objects from the past alternates with futures trading. At the real estate exchange, men in suits sell houses that haven't even been built yet and at the stock exchange, abstract numbers change owners during nervous phone calls. In the meantime, Simonides, timeless works of art and energetic market trader Jesús Castro comment on our increasingly hectic society.

**Les Geants**, Bouli Lanners, België, 5

Smoking weed, joyriding, stealing food: the 'giants' from the title are full of mischief. It's a languid summer vacation in the Ardennes mountains of Belgium and the three teenage boys Zak,

Seth and Dany have been left to their own devices by their parents. Without a penny in their pocket, they have to fend for themselves. The ideal recipe for an exciting boys book: a series of fairytale adventures in woodlands and over meandering rivers in which not only the local drug dealer and Dany's crazy brother, but also three pigs, angry wolves and a good fairy turn up.

**Hoi no tuve miedo**, Ivan Fund, Argentina, 1

Boring movie. In the first half of this intimate study of everyday life on the outskirts of a small provincial town, we follow the sisters Ara and Marian and their girlfriend Belén with her dog Lulu.

## **Friday 27-1**

**The day he arrives**, Hong Sang Soo, , 4

Hong volgt, in charmant zwart-wit de jonge regisseur Seongjun die na vier films heeft besloten om voor de klas te gaan staan. Hij weet niet zeker of hij is gestopt met filmen of dat hij het gewoon niet meer kan. Dat doet er ook nauwelijks toe: Hongs film over Seongjun wordt namelijk stiekem ook diens eigen nieuwe film. The Day He Arrives is een soort Groundhog Day, waarin Seongjun een aantal actrices en zijn ex-vriendin tegenkomt, zich een gat in zijn kraag zuipt en volop seksuele uitpattingen beleeft. Het is alleen niet duidelijk of hij toevallig steeds hetzelfde meemaakt, of dat de gebeurtenissen elke keer volledig nieuw voor hem zijn.

**Ace Attorney**, Miike Takashi, 4

Among all the comedy and sci-fi gadgets of the lawyers, the film provides a caricature of the show-business character of Japanese law. Through the immense pressure on the legal system, in the near future of **Ace Attorney** a case will only be allowed to last three days before the judge takes a decision. Under the enormous pressure of time, it is increasingly important for lawyers to intimidate the other party and give a smooth presentation, even though they say that success is determined by strong evidence. Miike's typical cartoon style, combined with

dynamic game visuals, results in a playful crossover between live-action, game and manga.

**Le havre**, Aki Kaurismäki, 5

An optimistic fairytale about a selfish old man who better his life by helping a young African refugee. Heartwarming and drily comic scenes in the French port of Le Havre show the soft side of Kaurismäki. Finnish submission for the Oscars.

While his Finnish wife is in hospital, the selfish old shoeshine Marcel Marx living in the French port of Le Havre, takes an interest in an African kid who was in a container on his way to his mother in London when the immigration service caught up with him.

The hand of the master is immediately apparent in Aki Kaurismäki's touching, comforting and wryly comic drama **Le Havre**. With meticulously framed long shots and the sparse, slightly absurd dialogues. And thanks to his characteristic bitter humour and the special characters, played by Kaurismäki regulars such as André Wilms and Kati Outinen.

**Monday 30-1**

**Cousin**, Syria, Mohammad Ali Atassi, 5

A very honest and interesting portrait of the Syrian dissident Riad al-Turk, who managed to maintain his ideals through long periods of extreme harshness as a political prisoner. The Syrian dissident Riad al-Turk is a prominent critic of the Baath regime in Syria, and has spent over 17 years in prison. The film reveals a man of deep humanism who, faced with extreme harshness, also managed to keep his ideals.

**On the sand, under the sun**, Mohamad MALAS, 3

Short documentary about political prisoners struggling to come to terms with haunting memories, produced for the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The film presents a reflection on the effects of prison in general and on the theatre director Ghassan Jbaili in particular. The artist used his work to

come to terms with his haunting memories and regain the world outside the prison walls.

**Room 514**, Sharon Bar/Ziv, Israel, 5

In this disturbing, realistic debut a determined young female soldier interrogates an officer. Contrary to her colleagues' advice she accuses him of beating up an Arab family. She perseveres against the abuse of power in the army.

Her colleagues, including her lover, advise her to stop the case - because it is too political, too complex and too notorious.

Instead, she fastens her teeth in it, in the hope of getting justice for the victims. In the meantime she has the thumbscrews tightened by her lover and his intended marriage..

All the interrogations take place in room 514, where the sound palette is formed only by voices and the air conditioning. **Room 514** is a courageous, hyper-realistic, low-budget drama that provides a worrying and critical picture of Israeli Army culture, where young soldiers discover that good and evil, black and white, don't exist. This debut film filled with expressive, hand-held shots was recorded in only a few days.

I met the director in the bar of the IFFR before and he invited me to come and see his movie. I admire him for making this film (his first at the age of 47)

**Old dog**, pema Tseden, Tibet, 3

Third feature by the front runner of Tibetan cinema, whose first short film was screened in Rotterdam. Without raising the tempo, he gets better and better. In this allegory, an old shepherd is angry at his son for selling their Tibetan mastiff, a popular dog race among rich Chinese people.

**Un nuage dans un verre d'eau**, France, Srinath C.

Samarasinghe, 4

Young Anna is from Romania and old Noun is from Egypt. They are neighbours in a rundown building in Paris. They share the same interest in idle news but they hate to talk about themselves. Yet, old secrets are unveiled, little by little. A curious collection of styles and genres focussed on an Egyptian film

operator who passes his old age in a small apartment in Paris. **A Cloud in a Glass of Water** starts as a documentary: the grandson of Monsieur Noun films while the old man talks about his deceased lover and the days when he screened films during the British rule in Cairo. Then Anna, the woman next door becomes involved in the project.

From then on, the film ricochets in different directions. Fiction, biography, animation, mystery, detective story - the life of Monsieur Noun has too many stories in it to be captured in one form.

### **Sur la Planche**, leila Kilani, Morocco, 3

After making a documentary about immigrants who risk the crossing from Tangier to Europe, the breathtaking feature debut of Leïla Kilani is also about the bitter-sweet dream of globalisation. The 'plank' of the title is a springboard, diving board and pirate plank all at once; a springboard to a richer, more materialistic system -but one that is accompanied by great danger to life.

Badia and Imane are girlfriends who peel prawns during the day in the factory and at night rob men under false pretences. In the streets, they get to know Asma and Nadal, who have jobs in the Free Zone, the European- oriented part of the city. It is primarily Badia, spiritedly played by Soufia Issami, who sees that as an opportunity to gain more wealth. She will have to raise her criminal activities to a riskier level.

Kilani provides a raw and authentic glimpse of the attempts of poor workers/petty thieves to get a better life. As moody as dynamic *film noir*, in which the shots of Tangier by night contrast with the broad panoramas by daylight.

### **Tuesday 31-1**

### **Return to Burma**, Midi Z, Myanmar, Birma,3

Xing-hong has the sad duty of returning the ashes of a friend who had a fatal accident in Taiwan. But there's also the joy of seeing friends and family. Young people still gather together to sing romantic songs and dream of working in China or even America.

Xing-hong's younger brother is about to leave for Malaysia. Xing-hong himself would prefer to stay and goes to markets and smuggling centres to see if there are any opportunities for him.

**Wuthering heights**, Andrea Arnold, UK, 4

Andrea Arnold filmed Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* as the story was intended: dark and sensual. Words are barely audible, eyes see eyes, skin touches skin when no one is looking and the seething rain batters the windows. The heath outside is like an unknown land, where the mansions from Brontë's original story have been replaced by derelict farms, closed off from the world. This eighteenth adaptation of the novel turns Heathcliff into even more of an outsider than he already was, as a result of casting the black actors Solomon Glave and James Howson as the young and older Heathcliff. The mood is more hostile than ever: the first time the kid appears, he gets spat in the face. **Wuthering Heights** was never about romantic love, Arnold stated in interviews, but about obsession. She managed to capture that obsession, that uninhibited, destructive energy.

**Oslo, August 31st**, Joachim Trier, Norway, 4

On the eve of his discharge from an addiction clinic, 34-year-old Anders gets one day's leave to have a job interview. He takes advantage of the opportunity to look up old friends and to roam apparently aimlessly through 'his' Oslo, coloured by the last light of summer. But the failed suicide he attempted at the beginning of the film taints everything that follows: the subject of suicide is never far away in the conversations he has.

**Thursday 2-2**

**The Comedy**, Rick Alverson, US, 4

Ageing hipster Swanson is about to receive his father's inheritance, but doesn't care. He hangs around and acts like a complete jerk. Nevertheless, he's clearly in search of something to provide satisfaction. An indifferent hero in a fable about modern humanity. Nice acting.

**A simple life**, Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 5

A very meticulously observed and, as a result, very moving phase in the very ordinary life of two very ordinary people - see the title. A single Hong Kong inhabitant (superstar Andy Lau), who has always been cared for by his housekeeper (beautifully acted), suddenly has to look after *her*.

**A woman's revenge**, Rita Azevedo Gomes, Portugal, 4

Roberto is a handsome, wealthy man of the world. He is arrogant and easily bored. Yet one evening his attention is attracted by a prostitute who turns out to be a missing noblewoman. She tells her story: a marriage without passion, an affair, a shocking murder and ultimate revenge.

The movie is extremely slow and more theater than film. Still at the end it compensates for the long waiting . The story unfolds and even becomes exciting. Well done.

**Derniere séance**, Laurent Achard, France, 3

With his pale face, penetrating gaze and inscrutable expression, which is both sad and scary, he could have walked straight out of one of the old classics of the silver screen. Sylvain is the cinephile operator of a small neighbourhood cinema. French Cancan (1954) by Jean Renoir is one of his favourites. But his love for film also has a darker side. At night, he turns into a chilling murderer who preys on women who wear earrings. We are worried sick about the young actress who is about to make her debut in the play *Phèdre* by Jean Racine and innocently falls in love with Sylvain. A bit too simple, but I enjoyed the film

**Friday 3-2**

**La Jubilade**, Jairo Boisier Olave, Chili, 3

Appealing film about how ordinary people relate to each other in unusual situations. Fabiola (played by Tony Manero actress Paola Lattus) returns to her birthplace, far from Santiago, after seven years away. But there are still enough people who recognise her from her work as a porn actress.

The title of the film refers both to Fabiola's father as to herself: at



the age of 30 she turned her back on her career as a porn actress in Santiago de Chile and has returned to her parental home, where her father lives with her elder sister Gina.

Fabiola is initially not welcomed with open arms; Gina is not keen to have someone who interferes with her tightly organised housekeeping. It soon becomes clear to Fabiola that it isn't easy to leave her professional past behind her. Moises, who offers her a job, turns out to be interested in more, and others also seem to only regard her as the lust object she once was.

While Fabiola tries to improve conditions and relationships at home, an unlikely yet honest relationship develops with the 16-year-old son of Moises.

### **Hello, mr Tree**, Han Jie, China, 3

Rapid urbanisation in China, seen through slightly absurdist spectacles. A mining company takes over a dusty village in the Chinese hinterland and the inhabitants are sent to the settlement New Sun City that still has to be built. At first the pressure is gentle. The sleepy and rather unworldly Mr Shu - the Chinese word for tree - doesn't seem to notice any of it. He just tries to carry on his life with the aid of several old friends, and he wants to win the love of the deaf-mute Xiao Mei.

The film is rather vague and not very entertaining.

### **Saturday 4-2**

#### **Romance Joe**, Lee Kwang-Kuk, South Korea, 4

Complicated but rather nice film. A filmmaker with writer's block is given stories by a fun-loving waitress in exchange for night-time overtime. Full of the pleasure of telling stories and causing confusion. Where to start? With the filmmaker who was cruelly dumped in a rural town and told to seek fresh inspiration there? With the energetic waitress who is willing to give him more than coffee in return for payment and has a talent for telling stories? For instance about Romance Joe, whom she had interrupted a little earlier as he tried to commit suicide in his hotel room, and who also wanted to make films?

It may even start with Romance Joe's squabbling parents. In all



these intertwined stories, we keep seeing a different narrator. For instance, Romance Joe himself remembers a childhood love that he never dared to pursue. Then there's the little boy who is looking for his mother who ran away...

In **Romance Joe**, someone can allege you don't exist at all. Should you start doubting everything, just remember it's only a film. And yet, despite all the irony and perspective, the characters are real enough to be moving.

**Monsieur Lazhar**, Philippe Falardeau, 4

A primary-school class is horrified by a most unpleasant event. Simon finds his teacher Martine after she has hung herself in the classroom. Her replacement, the strict yet fair Algerian immigrant Bachir Lazhar, first tries to teach the children the literature of Honoré de Balzac. In vain, as they have other things on their mind. The suicide left a deep wound, especially on Simon and Alice. Bachir is himself in the meantime wrestling with family problems and can be thrown out of the country at any moment. Winner of the audience award