

Programme 2016

Friday 30-1

Bone Tomahawk, S. Craig Zahler, 5

The peaceful town of Bright Hope is startled one night by a mysterious kidnapping: a prison guard, a criminal and a nurse have been taken from the local prison by persons unknown, while a little further on a stableboy is murdered gruesomely. A strange quartet sets off in pursuit: the pragmatic sheriff (Kurt Russell) and his bungling sidekick (Richard Jenkins), a dauntless and arrogant cowboy (Matthew Fox) and the nurse's infirm husband (Patrick Wilson).

It's a classic start very reminiscent of John Ford's masterpiece *The Searchers* (1956), were it not that novice director and scriptwriter S. Craig Zahler sends his intelligent neo-Western in the second half further and further into the territory of the explicit horror film, including man-eating wild beasts and limbs flying everywhere. At the same time, the black humour and amusing jibes between the four heroes ensure that *Bone Tomahawk* retains its lighter tone right up to the grizzly final act.

With part of cast of *Fargo*, the series 2.



11 Minutes, Jerzy Skolimowski, 4

A budding actress goes to an audition. A filmmaker wants to seduce her. Her jealous husband wants to save her. A motorbike courier races through the city, a couple watches porn, a girl takes her dog out... In eleven minutes, their lives cross in Skolimowski's exciting mosaic drama about the chaos that rules life.



Anomalisa, Duke Johnson, Charlie Kaufman, 5

In Anomalisa's stop-motion world all men and women have the same face and voice and behave like marionettes. One woman is an anomaly (voiced by Jennifer Jason Leigh) and attracts the attention of famous customer service guru Michael Stone (David Thewlis) who is schlepping himself around yet another business hotel, depressed. The fabulously detailed Anomalisa is a great example of animation's potential. In Venice the film won the Grand Jury Prize and the film is nominated for the Oscar for Best Animated Feature Film. Co-director and scriptwriter Charlie Kaufman based the scenario for the partially Kickstarter-crowdfunded film on his own, eponymous play.



Saturday 31 January

Artist of fasting, Adachi Masao, 3

absurdist comedy with political bite. The multilayered hypocrisies of contemporary Japan are slowly unveiled when a wordless man

stages an unexplained hunger strike and the people who surround him exploit his silence to further their own cause. A bit over the top and not one coherent film. But still interesting enough to watch and there is enough to be seen.



Mr Robot, Sam Esmail, 3

A paranoid hacker aims to bring some cyber-anarchy in the corporate world. He cannot trust anyone, not even himself. This dark drama is smartly connected to current topics (internet, income inequality) and channels them in its own deranged way. Season 1, episodes 1 and 2. Not a film but entertaining enough



Sayonara, Fukada Koji, 4

Japan after a nuclear disaster. Tanya is terminally ill and awaiting the results of a government-organised evacuation lottery. But since she is a migrant, her chances to win are very low. Left all alone, she spends her last days in a desolate place together with Leona, a female android in a wheelchair who becomes her only true friend.

Sayonara is perhaps the most subtle, poetic and intimate of takes on a post-apocalyptic world and relations between humans and cyborgs. Tanya builds a deeply emotional bond with the robot, who not only looks like a human but also learns to understand things that only people can know - mortality and the fear of death.

In Japanese, 'sayonara' means 'the last goodbye'. This is a special moment full of deep melancholy and true beauty, and such is the film of Fukada Koji. The film features the most charming android ever, fantastically played by the real android Geminoid F, created in Osaka University.



Monday 2 February

The idol, Hany Abu-Assad, 4

Biopic of Palestinian singer Mohammad Assaf, whose winning of the pan-Arab version of TV talent show Pop Idol in 2013 led to a moment of national pride and unity in Palestine, which finally had something to celebrate on the international stage.

Palestinian-Dutch director Hany Abu-Assad (who received Oscar nominations for *Paradise Now*, 2005, and *Omar*, 2013) shows the tough circumstances in which Assaf, first as a little boy in Gaza, and later in his twenties, grows up to be a singer. The Israeli occupation continuously plays a role in the background, such as when Assaf and his friends - as well as his feisty sister who suffers from kidney failure - cycle along the separation barrier. From the wedding parties at which he makes his singing debut as a boy to the enormous pressure he feels during the final of *Arab Idol*, with all of Palestine glued to the tube, Assaf always embodies his country, yearning for freedom.



Tuesday 3 February

Heated gloves, William English, 3



Captain Maurice Seddon was a British eccentric who preferred to heat his body than his house, and so he invented electric clothing. This curious portrait is also a striking piece of media history, as it partly comprises Seddon's countless TV appearances, for instance in the David Letterman Show. With the most boring first 20 minutes ever.

Time passes, Ane Hjort Gutta, 4

Political, ethical and existential questions arise when street life mixes up with art school projects. In the first few moments of Time Passes we find ourselves in a Norwegian library being introduced to Bianca, a woman who calmly informs us that she's not come there to read but to keep warm. After hours spent begging on the pavement, she usually visits the library with a young art student called Damla. Inspired into action by artists such as Bas Jan Ader and Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Damla has decided to join Bianca on the streets for six months.

Framed around preparations for Damla's graduation show, Ane Hjort Gutta's film provocatively asks whether art can play any role in meaningful rebellions against injustice. Funny little movie about purpose and border of art. And if even art cannot cross borders, then it has become the same as everything else...



Too Young to die, Kankuro Kudo, 2

Kankuro Kudo, who also made a name for himself with several bizarre scenarios for his compatriot Miike Takashi (Zebraman), portrays the Buddhist underworld in this frenzied and absurdist comedy as a theatrical mud bath in which rock musicians battle to be allowed back to their earthly existence. So it's a demonic musical, but then one in which eventually all comes down to love. Bit too childish movie 4 me



Wednesday (with AM)

Brand new U, Simon Pummel, 3

"There's a better life waiting for us. Someone else. Somewhere else." That is the motto of the company Brand New-U, which offers clients an opportunity to lead a better life by taking over the life of one of their 'Identicals'. That sounds sunny, but twentysomething Slater discovers the darker side of this practice when his girlfriend Nadia is kidnapped during a failed life takeover. Hoping to find her again, he surrenders himself to Brand New-U's reforms. But how can he be sure that the one he finds really will be Nadia? And how sure is he about who he really is himself?

Well made and nice to watch David Lynch type of movie. But a bit more of the same.



Halal love and sex, Assad Fouladkar, 4

Sex by the book, is that conceivable? And what if the book happens to be the Koran? With this mosaic film in contemporary Beirut, Assad Faloudkar gives us a glimpse behind the veil. In this morality sketch, modern devout Muslim couples wrestle with love and lust, without breaking religious rules. Awatef is looking for a second wife for her husband Salim, so she can have a break from his boundless libido. The young couple Mokhtar and Fatmeh have just married, but his hot-tempered jealousy means they've also divorced three times. Now Fatmeh first has to marry someone else before Mokhtar can be hers again. The recently divorced Loubna finally wins her childhood sweetheart, but only in a temporary 'marriage of pleasure'. Funny and well made. With appropriate metaphor of electric wires for sexuality



Men & Chicken, Anders Thomas Jensen, 5

Funny and brilliant. Two brothers go in search of their father in this mysterious and hilarious, philosophical and absurdist horror comedy. By far the weirdest Danish film in recent years, performed by a top cast with infectious pleasure (Mads Mikkelsen, Nicolas Bro, Nikolaj Lie Kaas) and directed by the maker of Adam's Apples.

Never before was the cream of the Danish actors' guild this ugly. Mads Mikkelsen, Nikolaj Lie Kaas, Søren Malling, David Dencik, Nicolas Bro - each a familiar face from many films and series. Here, however, as members of a rather eccentric family, they're almost unrecognisable.

In search of their biological father, Gabriel (Dencik) and Elias (Mikkelsen) end up in what at first looks like a madhouse - the dwelling of three wild men on a small island cut off from the rest of humanity. The men turn out to be related to them, but exactly how much genetic material all of them share is the pivotal question: the house harbours a tragic family secret.

After his widely acclaimed black comedy Adam's Apples (2005), a new film by Anders Thomas Jensen was long in the making. Men & Chicken is a supremely idiosyncratic mixture of horror movie and comedy, full of fist fights, bad haircuts, questionable progressive optimism and moving personal revelations.



Suburra, Stefano Sollima, 4

Mafia and politics collide on a real estate project in Rome, leading to uneasy alliances, treason and bloodbaths. After adapting the crime hits Romanzo Criminale and Gomorra for TV, director Stefano Sollima goes straight to the big screen for a fast-moving update of the 1960s/1970s Italian political thriller.

After Romanzo Criminale and Gomorra (which were adapted into TV series by Stefano Sollima), Suburra (2015) shows again that crime on screen is the main export from Italy - after all, the Italians invented the Mafia genre.

This time, Sollima uses Rome and one of its suburbs (Ostia) as the 'Eternal City' for greed and violence: a dangerous battleground where politicians, different generations of Mafiosi (the old guard who want some kind of order versus the restless young ones) and even the Vatican want their share. Suburra is a fizzing, energetic, Scorseseian depiction of a corrupted system, which at the same time feels like a series squeezed into a film with its many characters, twists and 'chapters' (the film takes place one week before the 'apocalypse').

The logical next step: Suburra is being adapted as a series for Netflix in 2017, the first original Italian content shot for that provider.



Thursday (with Jaap)

The Model, Mads Matthiessen, 4

Sixteen-year-old Emma, just embarked on her modelling career in Paris, clearly doesn't yet know the fashion world's unwritten rules about love and sex. A tender coming-of-age story in which the temptations and promises of the fashion industry drive a beauty to insanity.



An, Kawase Naomi, 4

In *An*, a food stall selling dorayaki (pancakes filled with the sweet red-bean paste *an*) is surrounded by cherry trees. The grumpy stallholder Sentaro doesn't pay them any mind, until the older

Tokue (Kiki Kirin), whom he hesitatingly takes on as assistant, draws his attention to their foliage, which transforms according to the seasons during the film, from blossom to falling leaves. Tokue (who just like Sentaro harbours a secret namely that she had leprosy), with her cooking skills shown in close-up, and regular Wakana (Uchida Kyara, Kiki's granddaughter) bring new life into the eatery. A quiet story, told in a naturalistic style, around a fundamental question: what is worthwhile in life as it is lived from day to day? Nice movie with great shots and acting.



Alba, Christina, Barragan, 3

Alba is eleven years old and terribly shy. She has great difficulty standing up for herself among the precocious girls in her class, who talk like little adults about relationships but keep making fun of Alba with the cruelty of children. The fact that she gets nosebleeds at inconvenient moments doesn't help. To make matters worse, when her ailing mother is hospitalised she is dumped with her eccentric father Igor, who she never knew and of whom she is very ashamed. Very slowly and cautiously, the father and daughter get to know each other.

Alba is a coming-of-age film that is both heart-rending and unsentimental. It's striking that such a mature and powerful debut comes from Ecuador, the country that until the beginning of this century had only made one film a year. Young leading actress Macarena Arias is one to keep an eye on. She manages to use a minimum of dialogue to devastating effect.

Path of the Soul, Zhang Yang, 5

When two inhabitants of a Tibetan mountain village decide to undertake a pilgrimage to the holy city of Lhasa, others join them. A group of eleven people (including a pregnant woman and a girl) eventually sets off on their pilgrimage on foot - a journey lasting months through all kinds of weather over a distance of about 2000 kilometres, partly intended as penance and partly for the peace of mind of others. The Buddhist ritual which forms part of the pilgrimage will surprise Western viewers: every few yards, the travellers throw themselves to the ground, wearing a large apron of animal skin and wooden blocks on their hands for protection. Zhang worked without a script and with non-professional actors, so the boundary between feature and documentary fades. This soberly made road movie juxtaposes beautiful shots of impressive landscapes with more intimate moments, for instance when praying together and when a child is born, for which the journey has to be interrupted briefly.



Friday 5 feb

The other side, Roberto Minervini, 4

For his fourth film The Other Side, the Italian-American director Roberto Minervini again follows the technique he developed for his previous Texas trilogy, of which Low Tide (2012) and Stop the Pounding Heart (2013) could be seen at IFFR. With the smallest

possible crew and in close co-operation with his protagonists, he sets up long takes that are shot in one go.

The first protagonists here are Mark and Lisa, a couple of drug addicts from the backwoods of Louisiana, where over sixty percent of the population is unemployed. At first sight, you would write them off as white trash, but the intimacy with which they allow the camera to share their lives in the social trash can soon change that preconception. Just as the reactionary militia members who appear in the second part of the film also gradually acquire a profile thanks to Minervini's lyrical and painfully real approach.



Oleg e les raras artes, Andres Duque, 5

The legendary Oleg Nikolaevitch Karavaychuk is the mysterious and moving subject of this loving film by the young director Duque. He was moved by the music the pianist composed for a film by Kira Muratova and is the first foreigner to win the trust of the eccentric and still active 89-year-old Russian.

Several biographical facts: Oleg Nikolayevich Karavaychuk (1927) played the piano for Stalin as a child prodigy, attended the Leningrad Conservatory and in the course of his career primarily wrote music for theatre and film - for instance, for Paradjanov

and Muratova. In Russia, he is admired for his music and his playing, but also for his unique and eccentric personality. At the age of 89, Karavaychuk is still a controversial and puzzling figure in Russian culture. Who is this man, who looks as if he stepped out of a story by Gogol?

The beautiful film that the young Andrés Duque made about him is a gift to the viewer, a gift from an old artist who wants to be reconciled with the world and who transports us away from reality with words, gestures and piano playing, free of social conventions, to a world where clashing dissonants have a liberating beauty.



The fourth direction, Gurvinder Singh, 3

Set during the conflict between Sikh separatists and the Indian army in the early 1980s, fear, distrust and paranoia form the main emotional frame of the narrative. Jugal and Raj, two Hindi friends, miss their last train to Amritsar, the holiest city in Punjab. They end up in a cargo wagon among illegal passengers. In flashbacks we follow Jugal's family lost at night on the outskirts of a Punjabi village. Full of fear, they hesitantly knock at the door of an isolated house and ask for directions. Later that night, Sikh terrorists visit the same Punjabi family and give orders to kill their dog for barking and drawing attention. The next morning, paramilitary men burst into the house looking for the terrorists.

Sophisticated direction and impressive photography that creates claustrophobia and suspense evoke the time of the Punjab insurgency, which culminated in the assassination of Indira Gandhi.



Belgica, 1

Bad surprise film. Unrealistic story line, bad acting and a shame for the festival. About 2 owners of a pub in Belgium.

Nuts, Penny Lane, 3

In 1918, John Romulus Brinkley and his wife open a doctor's practice in the linear settlement of Milford in Kansas. Goats pairing in the meadow gives a local farmer an idea. Can't the brand-new surgeon transplant some of those testicles into him in order to heal his impotence? It is a great success and countless villagers choose surgery. The next step is publicising the intervention for a wider audience. When he gets his own radio mast, this leads to Brinkley's second career as a radio personality. In his heyday, Brinkley even has political ambitions. The chapters in the wayward documentary *NUTS!* are based on Brinkley's autobiography; they are staggering episodes, accompanied by moving images made by a variety of artists. Alongside archive material, animation plays a major role. This can wrong-foot the viewer, just as Brinkley did with his supporters. Everyone believes the stories that he wants them to believe; that much is demonstrated very clearly by director Penny Lane.



Saturday 6 February (partly with Yolanda and Geert)

Land of mine, Martin Zandvliet, 5

#1 of festival this year, impressive and tough film. Filmmaker Martin Zandvliet incisively brings to life a willfully forgotten and shameful part of Danish history. It is the end of World War II and the occupation has left its marks, both on the Danish coast and in the minds of the people. Under the leadership of the callous sergeant Rasmussen (Roland Møller), a group of German boys - counter to the agreements of the Geneva Convention - are forced to risk their lives to make the beaches safe again. The serene Danish coastal landscapes, caught in crispy clear images, are regularly shaken up by explosions when another trembling, underfed hand has detonated a landmine. In a subtle manner, Zandvliet transforms the German teenagers from anonymous enemies to full-blooded characters. The bloodier the post-war battle ground becomes, the greater Rasmussen's inner conflict. Owing to the outstanding performances of the entire cast, every scene of this fact-based drama vibrates with urgency.



Tanna, Bentley Dean, 4

By holding on to our traditions we've been able to withstand colonialism, Christianity and money", reflects a worldly-wise chieftain on the tropical island Tanna. But suddenly traditions don't seem to suffice any more. To defuse a violent conflict, the young girl Wawa is married off to a neighbouring tribe, as a result of which she can't marry the boy she loves. The enamoured couple refuses to comply with this custom and elopes, with drastic consequences.

Impressive images of a paradisiacal jungle and the infernal crater of an active volcano form the background of this drama about a forbidden love. This is the first feature film by documentary makers Butler and Dean. They spent seven months among one of the tribes on Tanna that actively upholds the traditional way of life. Together with them they developed the scenario, which is based on an event that took place in 1987 and includes an unexpected role for the British royal family.



The land of the enlightened, Pieter-Jan de Pue, 4

Not really a fiction movie, but more a documentary. Still a special film. The Afghans have been waiting for their king since the day their mythical forefather Nasrullah - who received the land from God's own hand - fled from Ghengis Khan. For Gholam Nasir, America's announcement of the withdrawal of its troops is the sign he has been waiting for.

Aged only about fourteen, Nasir has already become the leader of a gang controlling the smuggling routes over the Pamir Mountains, along which no caravan can pass without offering up part of its goods. These consist mainly of the country's natural resources: valuable lapis lazuli, and even more fiercely desired raw opium. Nasir knows he can make good use of this opium to placate the father of his intended bride; but before any wedding can take place, he will have to travel to Kabul to ready their palace. During a quiet interlude at the army base, an American soldier also succumbs to lordly fantasies. His army will be made up of children, because "their innocence makes them terrifying". From 2007, Pieter-Jan De Pue made several trips to Afghanistan as a photographer for organisations such as the United Nations and the International Red Cross. He visited the mines, the poppy fields, the smuggling routes and the minefields that supply the local population, including many war orphans, with a means of subsistence. His daring, poetic debut film gives a searing portrait of a tormented country in which the current generation is forced to dream themselves a future.

