

THURSDAY 20 MAY 2010

CANNES

# Nisimazine



A MAGAZINE BY NISI MASA, EUROPEAN NETWORK OF YOUNG CINEMA

From *Biutiful* by Alejandro González Iñárritu - Official Competition

*Philip Koch*  
*Biutiful*

*Encounter with Takeshi Kitano*

# editorial

by Mirona Nicola

No matter who you are or where you come from, the Cannes Film Festival provides an interesting experience. Your daily schedule here is hardly what you can call a routine: it's not something that you can plan, no matter how well-organized you are. The movies you see are also surprises, good or bad. And then there are of course the people, themselves potential film characters.

As a screenwriting student I must say that over the last week and a half I must have recharged my batteries enough to be able to handle quite a few future writer's blocks. I

couldn't help but be a voyeur, fantasizing about what kind of movies I would make about the people and events here. How about an absurd comedy on how people always get in the wrong queue accidentally (or) on purpose? A melodrama would perhaps be suitable to capture the destinies of those left out when the screening room is full.

People's anger in situations like these or when pushing and pulling each other to get in the midnight bus could be the innocuous beginning of a thriller. Once on the bus the chronicles of happenings, events, parties and so on keep

pouring out in an international soundtrack that you can't help but overhear. It's never certain anyway which stories are true, so why not take the fiction further from there?

Last but not least, each of us curious characters around here could be the subject for a love story, which doesn't necessarily have to end happily. I myself fell in love with certain films and experienced disappointment with others. And this town as a whole can take you in its passionate embrace or simply reject you, leaving you with a broken heart.

**Erratum: in the last issue we accidentally misspelled Olivier Masset-Depasse's name. Apologies!**

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'Youth in Action' Programme



BY DAMIEN RAYUELA

A second interview next year, Xavier?

picture of the day

# The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu

Andrei Ujică (Romania) – Official Selection - out of competition

As the past few years have witnessed a major buzz around Romanian films, it's easy to understand why the Cannes Film Festival chose to dwell on communism by screening a historical documentary. The political and social turbulence of the 20th century has certainly left its mark on contemporary Romanian cinema: whether explicitly discussing historical events or using them as a background for personal drama, directors like Corneliu Porumboiu, Radu Muntean and Cristian Mungiu have found inspiration in the recent dark past. It's this past that Andrei Ujică works with: as in his 1992 documentary, *Videograms of a Revolution*, a long research process played its part in organizing archive footage into a narrative. *The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu* is a history lesson and an invitation to remember. Ujică delivers a collage-portrait of a figure now embedded in pop culture: for many, Ceaușescu is a subject for jokes, while for the brainwashed elderly, his memory stirs up nostalgia and regret. The film is also a demonstration of an effect that few history books talk about: anyone can believe he's a genius if he is constantly told so.

In never-ending monologues, meanings get lost between the lines. Most public speeches or press conferences shown in the film are subtle battles between demagogy and common sense. These battles had no stake, as the power was already won: their only purpose was to put logic to sleep and kill curiosity. Worried faces shown at natural disasters, polite smiles during state visits, and stores filled with quality food were all the people



© Icon Production

needed to know. In between, the royal couple of an anti-bourgeois "heaven" relaxes in luxurious mansions or by the sea. Faced with a grainy and saturated cinematography, the audience is free to laugh at the private clumsiness of a once almighty persona.

Now that youth is no longer wasted on exaggerated choreographies or singing lyrics that nobody believes in, a new generation is trying to define itself. Since interest in recent history has been

blown away by a questionable educational system, their heritage is mainly based on urban legends and psychological leftovers. Almost twenty-one years after the so-called "revolution", many people still fear thought-crime and wait for higher powers to show the path and give commands. Among mentalities that are as immutable as Ceaușescu's megalomaniac architectural dreams, freedom exists, but only for the open-minded.

By Andreea Dobre

This is the last print edition of Nisimazine Cannes for 2010!  
But we will continue coverage on

[www.nisimazine.eu](http://www.nisimazine.eu)

for example: Video of the Takeshi Kitano meeting

# review

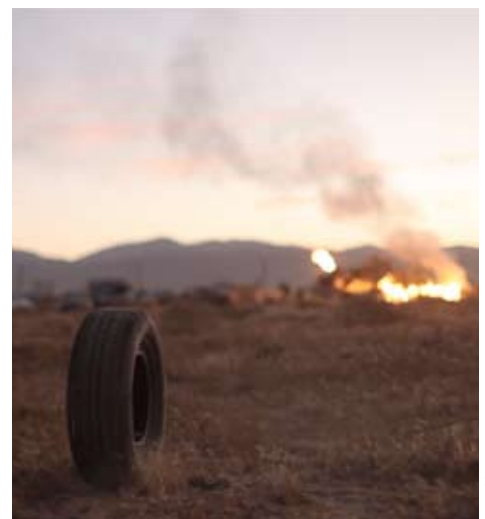
## Rubber

Quentin Dupieux (France) – Critics' Week

In a rather sedate 2010 Cannes edition, no wonder Quentin Dupieux's new onscreen craziness attracted everyone's attention in the Critics' Week. The French director (alias electro musician Mr Oizo) is a proponent of the film-within-a-film and other screenplay disturbances - testified by the plastic surgery of Eric and Ramzy in *Steak* and the gigantic making-of *Nonfilm*. His latest head trip is *Rubber*, in which a serial-killer tyre suddenly comes alive and wanders across the Californian desert, filled with a violent hatred against all living things. The first few minutes clearly set in motion the nonsense of things to come - those who are allergic to offbeat movies can already get out of the cinema.

In an almost political way, the director wants to unseat his audience. The exercise is quite twisted, but we can only admire such freedom and boldness. A hilariously absurd mockery of mainstream entertainment, especially Hollywood, *Rubber* deforms the classic shapes of American cinema with an overflowing madness, making for instance Roxane Mesquida (also seen in Gregg Araki's *Kaboom* as a lesbian witch) the princess of a lonely boot. Even if its limitations are clear, such experimentation can only be applauded.

by Geoffrey Crété



© Elle Driver

## Beautiful

Alejandro González Iñárritu (Mexico) – Official Selection, in competition

Between broken homes, ghosts of illegal immigrants and freakish club dancers, a man tries to make peace with himself. When he finds out he has cancer, Uxbal tries to put things in order before his last breath. *Beautiful's* simple poster, featuring a close-up of leading actor Javier Bardem, pretty much tells everything about Iñárritu's fourth film. His tired face looks you directly in the eyes: this is



© Menage Atroz

not the story of a man, but the story of mankind. His wild ride through love, family, business and the city hustle of Barcelona is summed up in barely perceivable tears. For Uxbal's two children, the only warmth

found at home comes from a lamp that allegedly cures bipolar disorder; Marambra, their mother, swings from one extreme to another.

With only a few months left to live, a man who has seen and done too much tries to pay for his sins with good deeds and parental affection. But is that possible? An act of charity turns into murder, while inner demons get in the way of family getaways. What legacy does today leave for tomorrow? Not only misspelled beauty, but also misused coping mechanisms: grown-ups have more dilemmas than answers. With vivid chromatism and hypnotic sounds, Iñárritu portrays a world in which good intentions lead to catastrophe. Putting the weight of all contemporary evils on one character's shoulders could have easily become an exercise in pity, but *Beautiful* ends a heavy-hearted story with a serene touch of hope.

By Andreea Dobre

## Poetry

Lee Chang-Dong (South Korea) – Official Selection, in competition

In a way, *Poetry* is the story of an elderly woman who desperately wants to write a poem but just can't. There is ugliness beneath the surface of our society, stories that you don't want to hear about. Maybe this is what keeps us apart from the real beauty of the world. Mija, the dandy old lady, is raising her grandson by herself. In poetry class she learns that poetry is inside of her and has to be freed from her heart. However Lee Chang-Dong shows us a different point of view: poetry is all around us. It is in details, moments, silences, and looks. The strength of his film is that it portrays everything around the ugly event that changes Mija's life, without showing the event itself. Her grandson did something awful and she needs to find a lot of money to get him out of trouble. The film has a slow pace and is a bit too long; time with the characters is chosen over rhythm.



© Pine House Films

The fragile universe which Chang-Dong creates is full of intimacy and truth. He captures small lives and personal struggles. Feelings, mastered by great performances even in the supporting roles, are always accurate. Indeed the title, *Poetry*, echoes the never-ending quest of Mija for more sensitivity. Poetry, as every art, is an original way of looking at the world and of expressing it. The hard question that comes afterwards is how to express the indescribable. Chang-Dong answers with elegance and emotion.

By Romain Pichon-Sintes



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# interview

PHOTO BY CRISTINA GROSAN

participant of L'Atelier with *Liza, the Fox Lady* (Hungary)

## Károly Ujj Mészáros

**Károly Ujj Mészáros has brought a leaf to our meeting. "I found this leaf that has such an interesting smell", he tells us, showing off his discovery. Indeed, it has this aromatic bittersweet aroma. It's almost evocative of what can be found in the Cinéfondation Atelier program, where producers come to sniff out exciting new films. The Hungarian director is in Cannes with his first feature film project, *Liza, the Fox Lady*, which has the exotic scent of an "almost comedy" with a note of sadness and a hint of Japanese spice.**

*How long have you been working on this project, and what is your story about?*

It's a bit older than 3 years. The original play that inspired me was written by Zsolt Pozsgai: it's about a nurse who wants to meet men. When these men go to her apartment, eventually they all die. For example one commits suicide, another has an accident, and so on. Although I really liked the story, I wanted to have a different ending. So I started introducing some new elements, like the figure of a Japanese pop-singer, who turns out to be Death. He falls in love with the nurse, so he tries to get rid of all potential competition. I also introduced a detective who investigates, and falls in love with the nurse as well. However, I don't want this to be a rosy fairytale, so I tried to sharpen the story with a social edge. It would be like a

distorting mirror of our society seen through the eyes of this innocent, naive woman.

*How did you imagine the visual world of the film?*

Like this [he holds the brochure of the film towards the sound recorder]. It's hard to record it, but like this. I would like to have a very rich visual world for this film, so I would indulge and spoil audiences with a real cinematic experience. If I say that this is an adult fairytale, I mean this in a very good sense. I'd really like it to be a fairytale with a bizarre world. For example the interior of the house where Liza lives, or the clothes she sews for herself from curtains.

*If my suspicions are right, it would be kind of a thriller sliding towards comedy.*

I wouldn't call it a thriller, because we know that the nurse is not actually killing the men, only the police suspect this. It would be something we call an "almost comedy".

*You've mentioned before that you were here last year too with this project. How did you manage to get into L'Atelier this year?*

We were participating in a co-production fair in Sarajevo, where we actually found a German co-producer. The director of the Cinéfondation Atelier, George Golderstern, was in the jury. He liked my project, so he suggested I apply with the material for L'Atelier and so we did. There was a great silence for a while, and then in the middle of January we received a fax, saying that we got in.

*How do things work in L'Atelier pavilion?*

Well, we have a program, according to which producers, sales-agents, and commissioners come about every hour, to get familiar with our projects. We show them the trailer, and we have this brochure. So far, there has been very intense interest in our project. They say that usually about 89% of the projects presented here are made in the end.

That's a big number.

*The beginning of one of your previous short films, *Rubberman*, reminded me of the style of *Lynch*. Are there some directors who influence you in a special way?*

There are, certainly, but this is quite funny, because everyone tends to see in my film the influences that they actually like. Even in the case of the trailer, some say "it's a bit like *Tarantino*, right?" Or "the whole has a bit of *Kaurismaki* style in it, no?" Or "will it be like *Almodovar's* films?" Generally I respond with no to these questions, but there are some influences I do want to use. For example, in the way I would like my actors to play their roles, there would be indeed some *Kaurismaki* elements. In terms of visuals and lighting techniques there are some features from *Tarantino* that I like. Oh, and they also mention *Jeuné*. Well yes, I like him as well, but my film won't be as sweet as his films. More like this leaf, somewhat bitter.

**By Erzsébet Plájás**

# Takeshi Kitano, *Outrage* and the Yakuza: the Way of the Chopped Finger

## encounter

**When it happens, meeting a myth is always too short, too mysterious and too unrealistic to catch what is inside the mind of the master. You are left with even more questions, because no secrets are revealed. It's the moment that matters, the infinitely tiny moment when two universes collide: the one in front of the screen and the one behind. Interviewing Takeshi Kitano, whose slight tics of the eye make him seem somewhat fragile, only gives you hints, not answers. Let's follow some of the leads.**

### The fascination

*"As in other parts of the world, the entertainment industry has a deep association with gangster society."*

Why are filmmakers so in love with the world of gangsters? Bad guys, outlaws, killers and robbers are over-exposed onscreen. Of course, we all have a fascination for the outsider and for what



is radically different. Gangsters occupy a world controlled by their own rules, engaging in a brutal escape from society and using its weaknesses and fears to manipulate it. So filmmakers take advantage of this irresistible attraction to portray otherness and propose another way of looking at our world. With *Outrage*, in competition in Cannes, Kitano makes a powerful comeback to the Yakuza genre.

### Insightful violence

*"I think it's not so much about individual revenge but about maintaining integrity and saving the face of the family as a collective identity. It's more about satisfying the collective ego."*

A thorough illustration of this collective ego battle, *Outrage* is a vicious game of ping pong between several Yakuza families. A mistake is committed on one side (a member swindled by

the other family) which provokes the rest of the domino fall. Kitano emphasizes this precise moment with an oblique shot and sudden burst of music - breaking completely with the style of the rest of the film - in which the mistaken Yakuza is dragged into a whorehouse. The absurdity and excessiveness of the Yakuza's logic makes us think that every spiral of violence boils down to one primary moment. As if the order of these families, and to a certain extent the order of the world, was a fragile crystal.

### Movements and actions

*"I came up with this idea of stepping back as an actor, stepping back from the front line and putting the others actors in front, so that it would be an assemble kind of movie rather than protagonist-driven. Structurally speaking, there's a lot of talking in the first part and it shifts into more movements and actions in the latter part."*

Being a Yakuza is all about posture. With Beat Takeshi, his actor's name, Kitano has created a distinctive figure: a low talker, calm and still but with sudden bursts of violence. This posture is the signature of his films and is contagious. In almost every scene, the characters are not moving, they are posing. It is well-known that Japanese society is bound to an emotional restraint. Here, the body becomes the expression and language is superfluous.

### The laughing demon

*"I think comedy and humour have this demonic element in them. It is always prepared to raise its ugly head to seep into the situation. The more serious and sacred the situation is, the funnier it is when something goes wrong. For instance, when you're at a funeral or a sacred event, such as a marriage, and somebody messes up, people laugh but for the person himself it's a tragedy."*

*Outrage* is full of self-derision, and that's what makes it so pleasant to watch. Kitano uses the code of the Yakuza genre movie to picture an absurd world. When they're not chopping off their little fingers to make excuses, they compete imaginatively to find the meanest way to scare or kill a man, as if they were advertising their own cruelty. Even splashes of blood become joyful. For Kitano, violence is one of the many ways we express ourselves, but also a game of pure entertainment.

In the end, playing with the frontier between comedy and tragedy is what Kitano masters the best. In a world in which dying is easy, killing a sport and torturing a game, laughter is disturbing. Because the inner structure of *Outrage* is a circle, violence keeps its cyclic proprieties. How can one laugh when there's no end to its curse?

By Romain Pichon-Sintes



PHOTO BY VINCENT BITAUD

## Philip Koch Director of *Picco* (Germany) – Directors' Fortnight

**When German films have the chance to get out of Germany, they often pass by in a ghost-like silence; unnoticed or unwatched (the exception makes the rule). What is labelled as "Big cinema" in Fritz Lang's home country is marked art house as soon as it crosses the border. Few possibilities are left for the industry in its struggle for life, and so it must be conventionalized. Philip Koch, whose graduation film *Picco* is selected in the Directors' Fortnight, knows that very well: "In Germany you can make a children's film, family entertainment, big historical films or a TV movie", he says.**

Considering this, *Picco* automatically holds one's curiosity. Based on true events, it tells the story of life in German youth prisons, focusing on a case of three inmates who tortured and forced another to commit suicide. The film gained a controversial reputation after its premiere in Saarbrücken, where

people tore down the film poster in protest. Who is this enfant terrible we wonder, this director fresh out of film-school who's causing so much fuss already.

From short films to features, video art to documentaries, and even advertising, the 27-year-old filmmaker has worked with many formats. After high school he chose the film critic's path to begin with, and, as one can guess from his cultivated manner of speaking, his work consisted mainly of essays. All of these previous experiences gave him the skills to reflect on his own cinema, both in theory and in practise. "I researched over a year for *Picco*, talked to wardens, inmates and psychologists", reveals Koch. The result was a script, and the help of a very supportive school enabled the project to go into production.

Pointing out relevant facts and anecdotes, the young cineaste gives a concise image of his work. *Picco* (a name given to the new inmates which marks them as a target for bullying) was shot in an actual prison which had been shut down about a year prior. To gain authen-

ticity, the team modernized the place. Koch explains that they used "steadycam travelling shots from the cells, through the aisles and up the stairs into another room, to show the limitation of space they have there". It's not hard to see that he has some thorough and elaborate working methods as a director: he certainly has a talent for making the audience feel like the fifth inmate. He seems to be a master of psychoanalysis, and admits to being very interested in psychological approaches to history and philosophy.

The way he describes the controversy his film raises belongs to the same way of thinking. With a calm tone and strong, detailed arguments, he explains that violent German films always elicit defensive reactions in their home country, but also that there is actually very little graphic violence in *Picco*. "The film is very claustrophobic, and much happens off-screen. It's at the same time more and less bearable for the viewer", he explains, adding that "there are big scandals over films that aren't really violent". My attempted comparison to Gaspar Noé is refused on the spot: "I

don't want to be a German Noé; my story conveys a deeper truth about ourselves, humans and German society. *Picco* is an important film for Germany".

Still, making *Picco* was no piece of cake since it didn't receive one single penny from the country's TV funding bodies. "Even Christoph Hochhäusler, who has already been twice in the *Un Certain Regard* section, has no TV channel backing", Koch claims, surely aware that he has found the key to escape a system full of concessions, but also conscious of the courage he has needed in order to go his own way. "In France you would never make a film with those budgets", he reckons. Ironically, it is in France that *Picco* will be distributed first.

Frédéric Boyer, Artistic Director of the Directors Fortnight, called the film "not German but international". Congratulations Philip, this definitely applies to you as well.

By Maximilien Van Aertryck

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