



The New Zealand International Film Festivals

UTOPIA, AGONY AND A GERMAN COMPLEX

[HELLO FILM LOVERS! MAY NEWS FROM THE FILM FESTIVAL](#)

May! In the international film festival world May is synonymous with Cannes, premiere venue for many of the films likely to mean the most to us in the year to come. Our programmer Sandra Reid will be there to greet them. Meanwhile in Wellington and Auckland we're tying down the participation of some of the great new films that mean a lot to us already. And we're making our way through an avalanche of submissions. From New Zealand alone we've logged 82 shorts, 20 documentaries and 10 features. Stand by for an escalation in the newsletter service and irruptions of excited announcements from now until Festival time. In this month's newsletter we highlight a new programme of films by Len Lye; the most talked about German film of the year; and four portraits of real life figures no dramatic feature director would dare imagine.

BILL GOSDEN

LEN LYE: NEW, RESTORED AND RE-DISCOVERED



"Film is advanced art, not science, not education, nor box office - but utopia."

So said New Zealand's favourite 20th century expatriate artist and filmmaker Len Lye.

A programme screening in Auckland and Wellington at this year's International Film Festival will provide a new showcase for that perennially refreshing utopian spirit. Curated by Roger Horrocks, the programme begins with the premiere of *Art That Moves*, the new

short film he has made with cinematographer Leon Narbey about Lye. Horrocks' film collates a revealing mix of text and images.

In his writings, Lye rejoices in the close observation of movement in man and nature. The echoes of that observation that Horrocks and Narbey find in the kinetic sculptures and films are so wonderfully evident that there's no need to spell them out. The remainder of the programme is a cornucopia of Lye's own works.

Highlights include previously unexhibited shorts discovered in the MoMA collection and restored at the Film Archive in Wellington; a new print of *Tusalava* incorporates a soundtrack proposed by Lye; a restoration of *Colour Box* follows the colours of the original hand-painted copy. And when you might least expect it, there's a newsreel: a 1946 episode of *March of Time*, directed by Lye in his day job, features Albert Einstein and dramatises the development of the Atomic bomb and its use at Hiroshima. The emphasis is on peace not power.

LATEST CONFIRMATIONS

What do a 'Wall of Sound' pop producer, a New Wave filmmaker, a marathon endurance swimmer and a heavyweight boxing champion have in common? Phil Spector, Agnès Varda, Martin Strel and Mike Tyson are all larger than life personalities who will feature in the NZ International Film Festival. Read on.

THE AGONY AND ECSTASY OF PHIL SPECTOR



Pop genius, Hollywood recluse and now convicted killer, Phil Spector agreed during his first trial to grant an unprecedented on-camera interview to Vikram Jayanti. Scornful of the world's unworthiness to judge either his lifelong brilliance or his criminal guilt, he's riveting, an indelibly American "success story". Jayanti's layering of unreliable testimony, with Top Twenty rhapsodies and courtroom reality TV might have been dreamt up by David Lynch. - BG

"Spector talks straight to camera, spinning stories about his groundbreaking productions for The Ronettes and The Righteous Brothers, his friendship with John Lennon, and his enmity with Paul McCartney... Spector's songs - sublime in their innocence, towering in their grandeur - serve as a sort of haunting Greek chorus to the unfolding drama... Hearing these songs [performed in their entirety], and watching marvellous archive footage of The Crystals, The Righteous Brothers and Ike and Tina Turner, provides a reminder of Spector's monumental, enduring musical accomplishments." - Mick Brown, *Daily Telegraph*

"Not only a hell of an exclusive but a work of art itself, a synthesis of a psychological profile,

a critical history and a candid, surprising interview." - Andrew Billen, *The Times*

THE BEACHES OF ANGES



Agnès Varda was the lone female amongst the New Wave directors who shook up French cinema and helped set the agenda for the cultural revolution in the 60s. At almost 80 she has created a playfully idiosyncratic memoir of her sentimental education and life as an artist. Responding eagerly to the possibilities offered by digital technology, she sets up tableaux that recall her earlier work and places herself within her old photographs and extracts from her films (*Vagabond*, *The Gleaners and I* and many more). She revisits old haunts to reminisce fondly with

collaborators she's not seen for decades. She discusses the years spent with her husband/soulmate, the late Jacques Demy, her feminism, her romantic adventures and the rewards of independence. It's an illuminating account of a wonderfully full life and the best possible proof of her perpetual, instinctive reinvention of herself as an artist. - BG.

"She is such an inspiring and creative presence - this film should be given to all young hopeful film-makers." - Lizzie Franke, *Sight & Sound*

BIG RIVER MAN



Marathon endurance swimmer Martin Strel is the Captain Bad Example of extreme sports, attributing his stamina to a diet of horse burgers and alcohol. The raucous beer-bellied Slovenian has swum the length of the Mississippi and survived the toxic wastes that stream into the Yangtze. At 52 he's ready for the Amazon. His English-speaking son/manager/spin doctor Borut accentuates environmental awareness and raises sponsorship. Filmmaker John Maringouin follows as the Strels and their self-taught American navigator prepare for piranhas and penis-invading

parasites, and embark on the 3274 mile swim. As Strel Snr succumbs to sunburn, spurns doctor's instructions and knocks back whisky like it's sports drink, he becomes as demented as any of Herzog's Amazon adventurers, and twice as bizarre to behold; a white-masked monster muscling down the mighty currents. Superbly photographed, with an ecstatic operatic score, the film glories in the Amazon's primeval splendour and one man's indomitability, but with an ear tuned to the siren call of oblivion.

- BG

"The pivotal figure in this excellent documentary has so much personality it's a wonder he fits on the screen." - Manohla Dargis, *NY Times*

TYSON

Mike Tyson's early record was extraordinary. At 20 in 1985, he was heavyweight champion of the world, a feared, worshipped, highly profitable icon of pugilistic brutality and speed. His fall from the throne was spectacular. A rape conviction in 1992 saw him serve three years in prison. On release, his vicious comeback match with Evander Holyfield cemented his disgrace. Utilising fight clips, archival news and



blazingly frank new interviews with Tyson himself, director James Toback throws new light on his successes and excesses and his current bid to find something resembling inner peace. - BG.

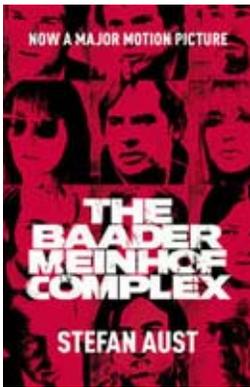
"*Tyson* is a documentary... but it is a heart song, too, as Tyson talks about a life of near constant abuse and humiliation. And as he talks, so his innate violence becomes clearer. *Tyson* is not an apology or an apologia, but a piercing insight into how our society creates its villains and then despises them for behaving badly. Whatever you think of Mike Tyson

now, we guarantee your mind will be changed." - David Thomson, *San Francisco Film Festival*

"A hard-won perspective on a hard-fought life, in a movie that's a contender for best sports documentary, heavyweight class." - Richard Corliss, *Time*

THE BAADER MEINHOF COMPLEX

MAJOR GERMAN FILM OF THE YEAR MAKES NZ DEBUT IN THE NZIFF



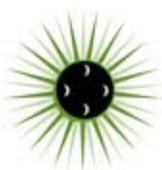
Based on the book by investigative reporter Stefan Aust, *The Baader Meinhof Complex* is a bold mixture of action thriller and reconstruction, it traces the lifespan of the violent self-styled anti-fascist group who called themselves the Red Army Faction and from 1968 into the 90s repeatedly attacked the German establishment. Moritz Bleibtreu as the charismatic, possibly psychopathic Andreas Baader and Martina Gedeck as writer Ulrike Meinhof, lead an exceptional cast of actors whose iconic status among young Germans today evokes the outlaw glamour of the Red Army Faction's star performers then. Bruno Ganz is reliably strong as the head of police with the tactical intelligence to bring the Faction to justice. While never stinting on adrenaline thrills, director Uli Edel remains coolly observant of the contradictions inherent in the mix of idealism, frustration and personal grievance that drove them to murder

their fellow citizens in the name of democracy and justice. - BG

Author Stefan Aust will be in New Zealand in May for the Auckland Writers and Readers Festival 09. An Hour with Stefan Aust chaired by Mark Sainsbury will be held on Friday 15 May 1.30 - 2.30pm. Early bird tickets are available until 12 May from [The Edge](#).

On behalf of Random House NZ we have two copies of the book to giveaway. Simply email us your name and postal address to baadermeinhof@nzff.co.nz before Friday 29 May to be eligible to win.

FINAL WEEK OF THE WORLD CINEMA SHOWCASE - AUCKLAND



The World Cinema Showcase continues a strong programme of drama and real life at the Academy Cinemas until Wednesday 6 May. In most cases it will be the last opportunity to see these worthy features on the big screen:

[Silent Light](#)

Modern cinematic masterpiece set amongst Mexico's Mennonite community.

"If there's one film you have to experience on the big screen, it's Carlos Reygadas' *Silent Light*. A patient, quiet, devotional piece of cinema." Aaron Yap, realgroove.co.nz

[Of Time and the City](#)

In one of the most acclaimed British films of last year, the director of *Distant Voices, Still Lives* delivers a bittersweet ode to his native city Liverpool.

"Davies is sharing a very specific part of himself with us, and we should thank him." Uther Dean, *Salient*

[Youth Without Youth](#)

Francis Ford Coppola (*The Godfather*) returns to the director's chair with this monumentally strange drama of regenerating youth. "A gorgeous search for lost time." - *indieWIRE*

[JCVD](#)

Straight-to-video action star Jean Claude Van Damme brings battle worn charisma and frank self-awareness playing himself caught up in a bank robbery gone wrong.

"Van Damme reveals a previously unseen on-screen vulnerability..which might be the best acting he's ever done." Aaron Yap, *realgroove.co.nz*

[Genius Party Beyond](#)

A collection of five beguiling, mind-expanding short animations from Studio 4°C the geniuses behind *Mind Game* and *Tekkonkinkreet*.

Tickets can be purchased directly from the **Academy Cinemas on (09) 373 2761**. A detailed Auckland screening schedule is available on the [World Cinema Showcase website](#) with a PDF download option available.

WIN A DOUBLE PASS TO THE ESCAPIST



Great films from the 2008 NZ International Film Festival continue to return to the big screen. *The Escapist* returns courtesy of Rialto Cinemas from 28 May.

We have six double passes to giveaway. Email us your name and postal address to escapist@nzff.co.nz before Friday 29 May to be eligible to win.

Please note these passes are not valid during the "no comps" period.

WIN A DVD BOX SET - MICHAEL APTE'S 'UP' SERIES



Now available on DVD is Michael Apted's complete *Up* Series. In 1964 director Michael Apted interviewed 14 children for a TV documentary. All of the children were seven years old and from completely different backgrounds - a snapshot of children all over Britain. The series that ensued has returned to these 14 every seven years to chart their progress beyond childhood. *42 Up* and *49 Up* have previously featured in the NZ International Film Festival.

Now available for purchase or rental through Aro Video this acclaimed series has been produced as a complete seven disc box set valued at \$79.95.

Aro Video are long serving supporters of the NZ International Film Festival, continuing to deliver quality cinema to the home well after the Festival finishes at the theatre. With a

catalogue that boasts a comprehensive selection of ex-festival releases as well as classic and curious titles, we love Aro Video. Not only can you rent from Aro Video anywhere in the country but you can also purchase DVDs online (with free delivery to any address in New Zealand).

Check out www.arovideo.co.nz to view the catalogue and sales gallery.

Aro Video has supplied FIVE box sets of Michael Apter's *Up* series for giveaway. To be in the draw to win simply name any one interviewee from the *Up* series but not Neil.

Email us your answer, name and postal address to upseries@nzff.co.nz before Friday 29 May to be eligible to win.

The New Zealand Film Festival Trust

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