

# Nashen's Top 10

Andy Mason surgically extracts a choice of ten films from the brain of Festival Manager Nashen Moodley.

THE CENTRE FOR CREATIVE ARTS is always a frenzied place in the run-up to the film festival, and this year, with the added pressure of important anniversaries, a huge number of films, world premieres, bigger expectations and more pizzazz, the atmosphere borders on the manic. It's a bipolar atmosphere of oscillating emotional extremes – a fit of deep depression follows an unexpected cancellation, suddenly replaced by a moment of triumphant elation as some wild plan or other comes together at the last minute. Through the flurry of late-arriving films, last minute pre-screenings, press kits, schedules and updates, prowls a rather gaunt looking Peter Rorvik, a vaguely worried expression on his face. By contrast, Festival Manager Nashen Moodley wafts through it all with a beatific grin, looking like a man without a worry in the world.

Nashen loves the movies, and this cacophony of chaos is a symphony of delight to him. I throw a couple of questions at him and he slides easily into full stride. Nashen's not a man to shy away from adjectives, but even he is at a loss for words to describe the range and variety of filmic delights on offer – just how many times can one use the word "incredible"?

"It's difficult for me to choose just ten," says Nashen. "I love them all. There are so many incredible..." But I interrupt him. "Just focus on what you really like," I say. "Forget about what you think you ought to be recommending. "OK," says Nashen. "It's tough, but here goes..."

## 1. LAST LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE (RUANG RAK NOI NID MAHASAN)



"This is one of my favourites. An incredible director. This is his fourth film (last year's was the brilliant *Mon Rak Transistor*), but he grows so much in stature and distinction with each new film that in ten years' time he'll be one of the greatest – he's definitely one of the most talented directors in film today.

Thai Cinema has up till now been mostly a mainstream affair, but with their new wave of young directors it is the most exciting cinema around at the moment."

## 2. ZATOICHI

"Kitano is my favourite filmmaker. We've seen a number of his films at DIFF in previous years – *Dolls*, *Brother*, *Hana Bi*, *Kukujiro*. But this is his first period piece, set in 19th century Japan, so it's very stylish – wonderful costumes and sets. It's about a blind master gambler and it's very violent of course, as one would expect of Kitano. Stylish and amazing."



TAKESHI KITANO'S ZATOICHI

## 3. LOST EMBRACE

"This is the first DIFF outing for Argentinian director Daniel Burman. It's his third film. I like this one because it's so refreshingly funny, while quite serious at the same time. The characters are very amusing. It's an emotional rollercoaster of a movie. We've had lots of requests for more South American films and this is one of three at the festival. The others are *Magic Gloves* (also Argentinian and wonderful) and the Brazilian film *Carandiru*. We looked at several Argentinian films, and they were all good. The standard is incredibly high – but this was the best of the lot."

## 4. YESTERDAY

"A great film... patient...unhurried. The way it handles Aids is very human – it's not at all in your face, not at all preachy. Ultimately it's a story of a young woman's courage and her love for her daughter. Aids isn't in the foreground at all, but is palpably there... It's very well scripted – Darryl James Roodt, of course.

We're delighted to have it. It's the first Zulu feature, ever. This is the world premiere. It goes on general theatrical release on 30 July and then heads for the international circuit. It's going to do very well. And we've got the filmmakers and the star here for opening night. So it's going to be a great event."

## 5. FORGIVENESS

"This is a local film that really gets beneath the surface of the Rainbow Nation ideology. It looks at a case where the TRC doesn't really solve anything for anyone – the perpetrator is still tortured by his crimes, and so is the victim's family. The film centres around their meeting – it's suspenseful, and there's a surprise in store. The film's a very honest analysis, very authentic, set against the background of a small fishing village, bleak but beautiful – a glimpse into a generational lifestyle that lends credence to the story. It's a layered and complex film about levels of forgiveness. It's another world premiere and it'll be great to have director Ian Gabriel and the star Arnold Vosloo here."

## 6. THE RETURN

"This is Andrey Zvyagintsev's first film and it's a remarkably assured debut. It looks like it's made by an established master – a carefully constructed story, tremendous acting, excellent cinematography – truly a great work of art. It's rare for a first film to win the Golden Lion at the Venice film festival – one of the top prizes in world cinema. The film explores the nature of the relationship between fathers and sons – it completely captures those feelings of intense hatred and intense love. By the way, there are two other great Russian films this year – *Fathers and Sons* and *Russian Ark* – both by Alexander Sokurov, who as you should know is one of the great masters of contemporary Russian film. *Russian Ark* is the one that everyone wants to see – it was made in 2002 – but we were lucky to get *Fathers and Sons*, made last year, as well."

## 7. FINAL SOLUTION

"This film exposes what is done in the name of religion – how politicians encourage quite horrific acts of violence... it's scary. The film is nearly four hours long but it doesn't seem so because it's so compelling. A thorough investigation, with minimal intervention by the director. Look, it's not for the dilettante, but for the serious film goer it's a must. It shows that you can make a serious film that has huge impact, on a limited budget. Although the violence that the film talks about is not shown, it is nevertheless quite horrific and heartbreaking – some of the interviews are rather disturbing. And the scenes of the political rallies where you can see the crowd being whipped up into a frenzy explain how religious intolerance can be fanned by politicians. It may not sound that sexy – but you've got to see it."



FINAL SOLUTION



DIFF's Monica Rorvik and Nashen Moodley making tough decisions for your edification and delight.

PHOTO: ANDY MASON

## 8. MEMORIES OF RAIN

"This is another film that demonstrates the possibility – and the necessity – of committed filmmaking. Gisele Albrecht and Angela Mai, both of whom will be here with the film's protagonists, Jenny Cargill and Kevin Qhobosheane, invested a huge amount of passion, determination and patience into making this film. They started interviewing and shooting in 1994 and continued developing their material over the next decade. The film is not really about the logistics of the struggle – it's more about the personal feelings and experiences of the protagonists – one compelling aspect is the feeling of remoteness that comes from living a life of complete secrecy. But both Jenny and Kevin are the most amazing people and this quality shines through in the film – one can only admire them and their courage through some pretty horrible times. The film is very respectful and devoted to its subjects and therefore very moving and personal. It's impossible not to be affected by it."



THE RETURN

## 9. SUPERSIZE ME

"This is obviously one of the most talked-about movies in the festival – Morgan Spurlock is being called the new Michael Moore. I like it because it's funny, ridiculous and scary all at the same time. It's scary because you get to observe the actual changes in body and demeanour that he goes through as a result of a month-long 'fast food only' diet. He starts out as this fit, healthy dude and progressively degenerates into a slob. There are some very funny scenes – like the family who can't recite the US pledge of allegiance but get the McDonald's song word perfect. The politics and economics underlying the consumer society are woven into the film in some very clever ways – Spurlock's got a wicked sense of humour and he uses it to develop and extend the first-person moviemaking style pioneered by Moore. Great fun and an absolute must-see."

## 10. LILYA-4-EVER

"This is by far the most heart-breaking film of the festival. It's really sad and although there are a few glimmers of hope here and there it left me feeling gutted. It's about a 16 year-old Russian girl who is abandoned by her mother, is forced into prostitution, meets this guy, falls in love, follows him to Sweden, and it's in Sweden that things get really bad. Then it gets even worse. It's riveting nonetheless and you just keep watching, hoping for some respite, but of course there's none. There's a brilliant sequence towards the end that offers a glimmer of hope... but don't let me give it all away. It made me sad but I emerged knowing I'd watched something powerful and important. We all see too many lightweight films these days and it's rewarding to watch a film that's not afraid to go into the realm of deep emotion and despair."



DON'T MISS THIS ONE!

SUPERSIZE ME  
A Film of Epic Portions

## SPECIAL EVENTS – WEEK 1

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED

**TIBET SOCIETY OF SA:** *Tibet: Cry of the Snow*. **Sneddon TUES 15**, 17.45. Normal ticket prices.

**ART EXHIBITION:** "A Place Called Home" curated by Zayd Minty. **NSA Gallery**, 166 Bulwer Rd, opening **TUES 15**, 17.30. ☎ 202 3686.

**YOUTH IN FILM CONCERT** featuring KB, Cashless Society, Skwatta Kamp, Mabapatsi, DJ Bionic and more! **Gugu Dlamini Park** (next to the Workshop, Commercial Rd). **WED 16**, starts 10:00.

**GDTV/GREATER DURBAN FILM & TELEVISION SCHOOL:** Class in digital journalism techniques with Roger Lucey – Mission Control, **Bat Centre**. **WED 16**, 9:00-11:00. ☎ 260 2506.

**MUFIP/EKHAYA YOUTH DAY PROGRAMME** at Ekhaya, Kwa Mashu, **WED 16**, starts at 10:00. Workshops on youth empowerment, dance and music performances, speakers. Screening of *Coming to South Africa* (introduced by filmmaker) at 16:00. ☎ 083 741 0245.

**AFDA SCRIPT WRITING WORKSHOP** with Andre Basson. **Stable Theatre**, Alice Street, **THURS 17** 9:30-12:00. ☎ 309 2513.

**AFDA DIRECTING WORKSHOP** with Willem Rossouw. **Stable Theatre**, Alice Str. **FRI 18**, 11-2:00. ☎ 309 2513.

**CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY.** Memory and resistance: screening and discussion of *La Cueva Sola*, facilitator Kerry Chance. **Shepstone 2**, Howard College Campus. **FRI 18**, 12:00.

## WANTED: STUDENT JOURNOS

Finished exams? Wanna see your name in print? Or maybe see a few movies for free and meet some famous filmmakers?

Call Andy on ☎031-303 6466 or email [artworks@iafrica.com](mailto:artworks@iafrica.com) if you'd like to write for *Reel Times*.

## CREDITS

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Views expressed are those of the writers and are not necessarily held by the Centre for Creative Arts, the University of KwaZulu-Natal or Artworks Communications.

**NEXT ISSUE: THURSDAY 17 JUNE**