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I've just got back from the Berlin Film Festival. The line up promised an abundance of riches particularly with some European auteurs hopefully coming back on form. Most prominently for me in the potential stakes was Swedish director Lukas Moodysson. His earlier films breathed a freshness into European cinema. His international breakthrough films **Show Me Love** from 1998 and **Together** from 2000 were warm, tender dramas of human connection. Underpinning them was an optimistic, almost naïve, belief in the possibilities of human nature. His third film **Lilya 4 Ever** hinted at a darker side but the warmth still spilled from the screen. After that the darkness seemed to envelope and extinguish all possibility of hope. His films from there on were bleaker visions.

So with his new film **Mammoth** in main competition at Berlin there was, at least for me, the tantalising possibility of a return to form for a director who is clearly talented. Unfortunately he seems to have replaced Hollywood and saccharine for humanitarian optimism. I wrote more about this on my blog from Berlin which you can read at http://www.dshed.net/festivaldiaries/berlin_09/index.php.

I raise it here for two reasons. First to illustrate the peculiar world that a film programmer such as I occupy – wanting directors and films to deliver so that they can be put in front of an audience. My second reason is to try to illustrate a point that watching films is about watching and following filmmakers and trends in world cinema. So watching **Mammoth** is not about watching one film but about watching in relation to a body of work. Whether or not this is

appropriate is an arguable point but one I would be happy to argue about. Surely, I hear you say, let *us* determine (that's the audience). When the film gets released, and I would suspect it will, it stars Gael García Bernal and is in English language. I will be interested in hearing what you think about the film.

Back at the festival smaller was most definitely better. Films such as **Can Go Through Skin** from Holland and **The Happiest Girl in the World** from Romania were two which stood out. However in UK terms they present significant problems - no stars, non English language - that there is every possibility they will not get picked up for distribution. What does this, I often think, mean for film culture in the UK? Should we worry about this? I think so. But then that's my job! What happens next for me is to track the films to see if they do actually get bought for distribution and if not to look at ways of getting them into some cinemas in the UK.

Whilst I was at the festival I got into a discussion about 3D. I don't know if you are following things out there about 3D and the film industry but.... basically, the argument goes, it is going to transform cinema in very profound ways. If you are older you may well remember 3D first time round. This was in the mid late 50s when cinema was taking a big hit from competition from television. How do you compete with telly? You play to your strengths and make the screen bigger and the experience more dynamic! Thus a host of wide screen formats developed the likes of VistaVision Cinemascope and also 3D. If you have ever seen **House of Wax** - Warner Bros' first 3D film from 1953 - you will remember Vincent Price standing outside the aforementioned house banging a bouncing ball on a string on a bat straight at you.

All the films had a gimmick which launched themselves into the audience. It, like everything else, was a fad. And by everything else I mean things like smellovision – orange poured down guttering, even skeletons coming out of the wings at appropriate moments to scare the beejeezus out of the audience. If you want to find out more I recommend Joe Dante's wonderful homage to the period – 2000's **Matinee**.

I have kind of always been in the camp that 3D is a fad. However, a number of people have been telling me in very impassioned ways about the latest version. I am aware the technology has significantly developed – particularly the glasses which for the viewer were always a problem. In some quarters of the film business it is being described as the revolution. Legendary producer Jeffrey Katzenberg, creator of **Shrek**, is positively messianic and James Cameron's **Avatar**, scheduled for release at the end of this year will, the argument goes, finally create the critical mass.

Thing is it is no longer cinema versus TV - it is about a way of viewing both: 3D TV is happening. (Godard's great distinction between cinema and television – you look up at the cinema, you look down at the television – no longer applies as we have increasingly flatter, bigger screens in our rooms) And so in the spirit of research I took the kids to see the new Pixar film **Bolt** in 3D and... it works. There is a depth to the image which feels comfortable and, well, natural. It is no longer about events – the ball popping out at you – but about a way of viewing the screen surface - an immersive space, even!

And so back to my discussion in Berlin, my view is that if cinema – in essence a two dimensional plane - can create the illusion of 3 dimension without being effects driven it could take off. I, for example,

would like to see **The Class** - which we are screening at the moment - a small, intimate drama in 3 dimensions: you have a spatial relation in the classroom which is non intrusive but precisely enhances reality.

I'm sure the spiritual godfather of film criticism and the nouvelle vague, André Bazin, would agree. His seminal writings on cinema described a line of filmmaking which created a truth to space. He applauded and celebrated such directors as Jean Renoir and Orson Welles for their filmmaking which through camera movement (Renoir) and depth of field (Welles) opened up a more intense relationship with reality. 3D in its new incarnation seems to me no longer about gimmicks but simply an extension of a way of viewing. Watch this space – in all its dimensions!