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Watershed March 2011 Podcast

I've just come back from the 61st **Berlin Film Festival**, one of the key forums for me to see work that will hopefully end up on Watershed's screens. I say hopefully because such are the vagaries – largely commercial – of the film industry that large swathes of interesting cinema never see the light of a projector in the UK as they are deemed very precisely as uncommercial. They may well be insightful, creative, artistic visions but they have to go through that process of being bought and sold for territories before they get a chance of getting to a cinema audience. I always think it is paradoxical that I see work that I know audiences at Watershed will be interested in but can't screen as no one has the rights to present it in the UK. "But isn't this the age of everything available everywhere now?" I hear you exclaim! Not when money and copyright are involved. I am working on getting some of these titles into the UK and will keep you posted.

However in the festival there were films that will find their way in to the UK and onto Watershed's screen. Certainly Ralph Fiennes' muscular contemporary update of Shakespeare's **Coriolanus** will - as it is produced through BBC films - and Paddy Considine's powerful **Tyrannosaur** - produced by Sheffield-based Warp films. **My Idiot Brother** from America should as it is a hugely entertaining expose of the two facedness of metropolitan family life. I described it – in true film pitch lingo – as The Kids Are Alright meets Being There. Irish film **The Guard** is a sharp, jaw-droppingly unpc crime drama brilliantly performed by Brendan Gleeson. Maybe the writers got carried away with themselves in reimagining Tarantino in Connemara but the clash of cultures is playfully done.

A couple of documentaries really stood out. The first was **The Black Power Mix Tape** which is a history of the black civil rights movement in American in the 60s told through the lens of Swedish news reporters who were covering it for Swedish television. It is fascinating because these white reporters were coming in with a non-polarised agenda of their American equivalents. The result is they at times get more relaxed off guard insights from such key figures as Stokely Carmichael and Angela Davis. The other was **Bobby Fischer v The World** which tells the story of

that mercurial volatile chess genius who became a focal point for the cold war aspirations of America and the west in his Icelandic Chess match stand off with Russian Boris Spassky in the 70s.

Elsewhere there was everything from a Norwegian 'documentary' on the existence of trolls to Slovakian debut feature **House**, a delicately detailed depiction of generational feud.

A major theme in and around the festival was technological evolution and its impact on cinema. At its most high profile it was manifest in two leading German filmmakers breaking new ground in **3D**. **Werner Herzog** and **Wim Wenders**, who helped reshape German and European cinema in the 1970s, have both embraced 3D to startling effect. Herzog has gone in to the Chauvet caves in Southern France to reveal the earliest cave paintings in **Cave of Forgotten Dreams**. What might seem uninspiring material for 3D is actually quite exceptional and engrossing as he reveals the forms and shapes that early man (and women) responded to to depict life around them. Wenders' was working on a 3D dance film with choreographer Pina Bausch who tragically died as filming was starting. Wenders progressed with the film that would become a celebration of Bausch's art. The movement and choreography lends itself spectacularly to the 3D medium.

Also technology was in evidence in the restoration of Martin Scorsese's **Taxi Driver**. The original film was digitised frame by frame at a 4K resolution – all you need to know about 4K is that it is bigger and better than anything seen in cinema to date - all the scratches scrapes and abrasions taken out and screened on digital at the festival. The aim is not to airbrush or in some way modernise the film but to re-render it as it was originally conceived. The film has lost none of its power in the depiction of what Schrader described as a vision of male psychopathology. The restoration was overseen by Scorsese who had a 4K cinema installed on the set of his new film in London so that he could keep tabs on the process.

Not only is technology changing the way the images are captured and projected it is transforming the way filmmaking is approached. A couple of years ago I half jokingly claimed that a filmmaker no longer makes films but makes "data flow across a multi-platform environment" or DAMPE for short if you prefer! The pitch would no longer be to make a film but to make "data flow across a multiplatform

environment” of which one manifestation is a period of time where people are sat in a darkened room watching images move on a screen.

As the tools of technology are being utilised so the face of filmmaking is changing: there are courses on ‘Investment for 360 degree Content’ and ‘Cross commissioning multi platform Content’ appearing alongside the more traditional ‘How to tell your Story’.

Some of the film titles above will find their way to Watershed over the next year. Watch this space.

Herzog and Wenders is more imminent with **Cave of Forgotten Dreams** opening on **Fri 25 March** and **Pina** scheduled for April.

If you want to have a glimpse into a future where digital technology and creativity meet to generate new forms and possibilities you should have a look at **<http://www.dshed.net/media-sandbox-2010>**.