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## **Watershed September 2011 Podcast**

**The Story of Film: An Odyssey** is a remarkable 15-part series directed by Mark Cousins. It follows on from his book of the same name published a couple of years ago which provided an impassioned, astute insight into the history of film. The series is being broadcast in September on More4 with an accompanying season of films on Filmfour. From what I have seen it promises to be something of a landmark series focussing not only on the art of film but also the richness of world cinema. Mark gives long overdue attention to cinema from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

As we well know Hollywood dominates our imagination when it comes to thinking about cinema. Ask most people what their favourite film is and you can bet it will be something from Hollywood. This of course is in itself no bad thing but it is when you think that that is the majority cinema that people are exposed to. Take a look at your local cinema listings and see what is available, take a look at the TV schedules and see what kinds of films are being screened. Go in to a DVD shop and see what titles dominate.

I asked Mark recently about what turned him onto cinema and part of it was seeing the now infamous world cinema strand on BBC Two in the 1970s. Indeed ask a generation of people working in the film world and they will be connected by this experience. My own experience as I fall into that category was of growing up on a diet of Saturday TV screenings of John Wayne and Jimmy Cagney. I distinctly remember though one night circa aged 14 staying up late and watching this black and white subtitled film which had come from another planet and was beamed into the living room of 18 Oak Bank Drive in a council estate in Barrhead on the outskirts of Glasgow. I can still remember the spellbinding difference of this film. I realise now that this Japanese film's quiet, tense, haunting otherness pulled me towards a completely unknown other cinematic world. I later found out the film was Kaneto Shindo's **Onibaba**.

The impact of the world cinema series was quite profound in planting seeds of cinematic curiosity in a generation now in their mid to late forties. It will be interesting to see what impact *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* will have on audiences' appetite for world cinema.

I mention this also because one of the things I found myself saying at a conference recently – a conference which was about audience development and education – was that when I studied film in the early 1980s there were only three places in the UK that you could study film to degree level. Film studies in schools was certainly non-existent. We now have a proliferation of film and media studies degrees and film regularly features in schools curriculum. Yet according to a recent study less than 7% of cinema screens in the UK show world cinema. I leave you with that thought and hope you manage to catch Mark's cinema series.

Ironically it seems that the range of films available in the UK is as diverse as I have known it. Ten to twelve films regularly open nationally every Friday and indeed a significant percentage are from outside of Hollywood. Take this month at Watershed for example – we are showing from Japan **Beetle Queen Conquers Tokyo** and **Guilty of Romance**, from France **The Hedgehog** and **Tomboy**, from Norway **Troll Hunter**, from Chile **Post Mortem** and from Denmark, **Melancholia**. Plus I could name a few that for lack of space we missed off. Hopefully some of these might take people in cinematic directions and discoveries they had not previously thought of.

For the first 10 days of this month I will be doing jury duty at the **Venice Film Festival**. I have been invited onto the Europa Cinemas jury which selects the European film in the festival which has most opportunity of playing at cinemas across Europe. I will be tweeting regularly from Venice about all the films I am seeing and any snippets of inside info I can come across – to follow the news just use **#shedvff**.