



What is !f Istanbul?

www.ifistanbul.com

Founded in 2001, the !f Istanbul AFM International Independent Film Festival is Turkey's first and only festival dedicated to independent cinema.

Every February, it hosts some 70,000 film buffs and celebrated filmmakers from around the world. Dedicated to investigating directions cinema is taking, the festival is based around thematic sections, which change every year.

In 2008, !f launched an international film competition - !f Inspired- designed to showcase emerging directors who are taking film in new directions. The competition carries a \$15,000 prize for the Most Inspired Director.

!f²: A Transterritorial Experiment in Film. 5 films in 20 locations, simultaneously

As a festival our goal is to curate a broad variety of innovative films in a meaningful way, to screen that selection to as wide an audience as possible and facilitate a collective conversation. We have a new ally in digital technology which now allows films to travel great distances, unweighted by the canisters and reels that previously made such an enterprise both difficult and costly, without compromising on top-notch visual quality.

In partnership with the acclaimed US-based cinema website The Auteurs, this year we will screen five of the festival's most sought-after films in 20 locations across Turkey and the Middle East concurrent to their weekend screenings in Istanbul. Many of these cities do not have cinema theaters. Those that do are often reliant on mainstream studio distribution of second or third run features.

In GYUMRI

!f Istanbul in partnership with the local partner City Research Center is organizing the **!f²** screening with the following Q&A session webcast in Gyumri at "Style" Art Gallery: address: 12 Gay str.; phone (0312) 52011; contact persons Ashot Mirzoyan, Armine Avetisyan.

SCHEDULE

Saturday, 20 February

1:00 – 3:30	A Prophet	2:30
4:00 – 5:40	She, A Chinese	0:48
5: 40 – 6:00	Discussion	0:15

Sunday, 21 February

3:00 – 4:45	Age of Stupid	1:45
5:30 – 7:15	No one knows About Persian Cats	1:45
7:15 – 7:30	Discussion	15 min
7:30 – 8:45	Bawke	0:15
8:45 – 9:30	Winterland	0:52
9:30 – 9:45	Discussion	15 min

FILMS

She, a Chinese

UK – France – Germany - 2009 - 98' - Renkli - 35mm

Chinese – English / English and Turkish subtitles

“As a filmmaker born in a little village in rural China, who later came all the way to Beijing and then wandered in the West, I feel that any journey is a journey of the mind, colliding with a person’s destiny and the accidental choices of life, creating a completely unexpected present and an enigmatic future.” Xiaolu Guo (director)

She of the film’s title is Mei, an enigmatic young Chinese woman raised in a backwater and curious about different lives elsewhere. A combination of fate and restlessness sets her off on a journey, first to a city in her own country, where she finds love, and loses it. Still seeking, she travels to England, a foreign land of tasteless food and strange customs. But Mei’s journey is ultimately one to find herself. Structured over 12 chapters, the film has a lightness of touch to it even in its darker moments, and a sense of being thrust forward into the unknown that resonates deeply with the contemporary cross-cultural rhythms of our lives. In a way, this is a story beyond borders, addressing contemporary issues of identity, leaving and longing in a globalized world. In Mei’s experience of the unknown, one senses the personal experiences of filmmaker and novelist Xiaolu Guo who has herself followed a trajectory from China to the UK. PJ Harvey’s collaborator John Parish and Chinese rock bands supply a cutting-edge sounding score to this work of visual poetry that heralds the arrival of an exciting, original new voice in world cinema.

2009 Locarno Film Festival: Golden Leopard

Hamburg Film Festival: Screenplay Award

Toronto Film Festival

Pusan Film Festival

London Film Festival

About the Director

Xiaolu Guo

Xiaolu Guo was born in China in 1973. Her first novel translated into English, ‘Village of Stone’, was selected for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. Her film *The Short Concrete Revolution* (2004) was screened at more than 50 festivals worldwide. Her feature film *How Is Your Fish Today?* (2006) premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival and was nominated for various awards in Rotterdam and Sundance. Guo’s latest film *She, A Chinese* received the Golden Leopard Award at Locarno Film Festival.

No One Knows About Persian Cats

Iran - 2009 - 106' - Renkli - HD CAM

Persian / English and Turkish subtitles

"I compare them (Persian cats) to the young protagonists of my film, without liberty and forced into hiding in order to play their music." Bahman Ghobadi (Director)

Negar and Ashkan are young indie rockers in Tehran looking for band members to play a London gig that has been booked. A bigger problem though is the visa to get there - the film follows them as they navigate the dodgy black market in travel documents and watch their options for exiting the country slowly narrow down. The rest of their time is spent at impromptu music gigs performed by a variety of indie bands- in a cow shed, on a rooftop, on the street. Shot without a permit in just 17 days with real-life subjects, *Persian Cats* blurs the fact-fiction boundary to tell this tale of the booming underground music scene in Iran. There are dozens of similar youthful bands playing everything from electric blues to hip hop, singing in both Farsi and English and poring over illegal copies of NME. They do not need concert halls or equipped venues; they play anywhere. Ghobadi’s free-wheeling film manages to perfectly capture the

passion, energy, anger and optimism of these young people. It is a rock 'n' roll tribute to artistic spirits persisting under exceedingly difficult conditions.

2009 Cannes Film Festival: Un Certain Regard – Special Jury Prize

São Paulo Film Festival: Critics Award – Best Foreign Language Film

Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival: FICC and NETPAC Jury Awards, Jury Prize for Best Cinematography Tokyo

Filmex: Special Jury Prize

London Film Festival

About the Director

Bahman Ghobadi

Bahman Ghobadi was born in Baneh, Iran. He finished high school in Sanandaj, and then moved to Tehran in 1992. He started his artistic career as an industrial photographer. *Life In Fog* (1999) was his initial award winning film. His debut feature, *A Time for Drunken Horses* (2000) won numerous awards at international festivals including Cannes, São Paulo, Edinburgh and Chicago. Currently, he is recording his first music album.

A Prophet

France - 2009 - 149' - Renkli - 35mm

French – Arabic – Corsican / English , French and Turkish subtitles

“Think you can last here without protection?” (from the film)

Condemned to six years in a French prison, when he arrives to serve his term, Malik El Djabena can neither read nor write. Arriving at the jail entirely alone, he appears younger and more fragile than the other convicts. He is just 19 years old. The jail is in France but it feels as if it could be anywhere; there are people of all backgrounds here, notably Arabs and Corsicans. Cornered by the leader of the Corsican gang who rules the prison, he is given a number of “missions” to carry out, toughening him up and gaining the gang leader’s confidence in the process. But Malik is brave and a fast learner, daring to secretly develop his own plans as he slowly rises through the ranks of the prison universe. Winner of the Grand Jury Prize at Cannes, *A Prophet* is a masterful work of cinema crackling with ambition, compelling drama and sweeping scope. Much like the *Godfather* series, it delves into the dark and murky labyrinthine depths of the criminal underworld with an unflinching eye. Chosen 2009’s best film by the respected UK film magazine *Sight & Sound*, *A Prophet* is cinema at its most powerful.

2009 Cannes Film Festival: Grand Prize of the Jury

London Film Festival: Best Film

Vancouver Film Festival

Bangkok Film Festival

Vienna Film Festival

Toronto Film Festival

2010 Golden Globe Awards: Nominated for Best Foreign Language Film

Independent Spirit Awards: Nominated for Best Foreign Film

Sundance Film Festival

About the Director

Jacques Audiard

Jacques Audiard was born in 1952, Paris. He is the son of writer, director and actor Michel Audiard. His filmmaking career started as a screenwriter. In the 1980s he wrote the scenarios of *Réveillon chez Bob* (1984), *Mortelle randonnée* (1983), *Baxter* (1989) and *Saxo* (1987). In 1994 he directed the César winning film *See How They Fall* (1994). His last film *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* (2005) was widely acclaimed and won numerous awards.

Age of Stupid

UK - 2008 - 89' - Renkli - HD CAM

English / Turkish subtitles

"We could have saved ourselves, but we didn't. It's amazing. What state of mind were we in, to face extinction and simply shrug it off?" (from the film)

Are humans genetically programmed to deal only with immediate threats, the predator outside the cave or the enemy army across the plain, but not longer-term threats like climate change -- even if it may end the world as we know it? 'Yes,' according to current evidence, says Age of Stupid - hence the not too flattering title. One of the few documentaries of climate change that has become an international phenomenon, Age of Stupid is structured as a flashback from a future when it's all over and the stupidity of our age is confirmed. Trying to help future inhabitants avoid making the same mistakes, Pete Postlethwaite sits in front of a camera which is also his computer screen and picks out images from Earth's last decades. We visit Nigeria, where the discovery of oil only made local people poorer and left nature so polluted that fresh fish had to be washed with Omo before being cooked. We visit Iraqi refugee kids in Jordan, trying to establish a new life; a hurricane victim in New Orleans who lost everything; a couple in the lush British countryside struggling in vain against neighbors' resistance to build a wind-power generator on their farm; a French mountaineer in his eighties who recalls when the glaciers of the Alps were within easy reach, instead of at the bottom of a canyon; and an Indian entrepreneur proud of launching India's first budget airline. Director Franny Armstrong focuses on consumerism and gives striking figures about how much the earth's resources could last if developed countries, especially the US, consume less. The film is like a last-resort call to humankind before it's too late.

2008 Grierson Awards: Best Green Doc.

Sunchild Environmental Festival: First Prize

2009 Middle East Film Festival: Jury Special Mention

Birds Eye View Film Festival: Best Documentary

San Francisco Film Festival

Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival

Vancouver Film Festival

About the Director

Franny Armstrong

British documentary filmmaker Franny Armstrong is the owner of Spanner Films and also a former drummer in an indie pop group, The Band of Holy Joy. She directed McLibel (1998) about the famous Mc Donald's court case against activists. Her other documentary films are Drowned Out (2002) and Baked Alaska (2002). Since 2004, she has been working on Age of Stupid (2008).

Bawke

Norway - 2005 - 15' - Renkli - 35mm

Norway / English and Turkish subtitles

Kürt asıllı Norveçli yönetmen Hisham Zaman ilk olarak 2005 yılında Bawke adlı kısa filmi ile dünya çapında adını duyurdu. Sınırlar arasında hareket halinde olan köşeye sıkışmış insanların hikayesini anlatmaktaki ustalığı ve hassasiyeti nedeniyle birçok ödüle layık görüldü. Bawke, yüzünü melodrama dönmeden izleyiciyi kalbinden yakalıyor, hiç öğüt vermeye kalkışmadan insanlığın durumuna dair evrensel bir gerçeği göz önüne seriyor ve empati duymamızı sağlıyor.

About the Director

Hisham Zaman

Born in 1975, Hisham Zaman is a Kurdish-Norwegian filmmaker. He graduated from the National Norwegian Film School at Lillehammer in 2004. His most notable short film, Bawke (2005) screened at numerous international and

national film festivals and won more than 20 awards. His other films include *The Bridge* (2003), *The Roof* (2004) and *Europa* (2009).

Winterland

Norway - 2007 - 52' - Renkli - 35mm

Kurdish, Norwegian, Sami / English and Turkish subtitles

It's her! Renas, give her the flowers." (from Winterland)

In his subsequent feature *Winterland*, Zaman continues to delicately mine this field of in-between lives. Renas is a happy-go-lucky Kurdish refugee who lives in a godforsaken snow-covered spot in northern Norway. He has everything he wants, but he would like a wife. Over the course of a year his family back home arranges for him to wed a woman there whom he has never seen, and even hold a wedding in Iraq with him in absentia. But the marriage gets off to a rocky start when Fermesk arrives in Norway. Neither her husband nor the country appear the way she had imagined. And Renas too is confronted with the reality of a flesh-and-blood woman he has only known through a photo. There is also the distant cacophony of in-laws and relatives, navigating the ways of this foreign land that is now home and Renas must also negotiate what it means to be a man in this new situation. Featuring strong visuals, a highly original script and engaging sense of humor, *Winterland* is a love story with a political edge that will touch you at your core.

2007 Amanda Norwegian National Film Awards: Best Male Actor :(Raouf Sarag)

Montagne d'Austrans Film Festival: José Giovanni Grand Prize

Tromsø Film Festival

Mannheim-Heidelberg Film Festival

London Kurdish Film Festival

2008 Los Angeles

Scandinavian Film Festival

2009 New York Kurdish Film Festival

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