

# Unearthing the brightest new talents

Around 2,500 entries were considered for Locarno's international competition for short films. The titles finally chosen have one trait in common. As programmer Alessandro Marcianni explains, they all show promise. The aim is to identify directors with strong voices – filmmakers with the capacity to grow. Marcianni and his team aren't necessarily looking for the perfect film. They are searching for distinctive new talents whose careers Locarno can continue to follow. « We are really looking for authors, » Marcianni declares. « We search maybe not for the best film but for the director with the most potential. »

*No Country For Chicken* by Chinese director Huang Huang is a film rich in irony. It's a satirical yarn that deals with bird flu in comic fashion, exploring the relationship between the Government and some hard-pressed citizens.

Although Locarno has strong relations with the Beijing Film Academy (where Huang Huang was once a student), *No Country* was one of the many shorts which turned up at the festival unsolicited. «We found the DVD between

the others. It just popped out!» Marcianni recalls.

By complete contrast, George Chiper's *The Palm Lines* is a drama about a woman trying to come to terms with a traumatic moment in her past. « I would really say that this director has a lot of potential, » Marcianni observes of the young Romanian who was also in Locarno last year.

Spanish title *Absent* by Guillermo Asensio Alegre comes billed as a «delicate» and «courageous» study of a solitary woman coping with intense loneliness. Danish title *Beast*, by Lars p Arendt, is more classical in construction than many other titles in the sec-

tion. «He knows how to make films. Maybe the story is a little bit easy. When you speak about violence, you always touch people directly. But he really knows how to use the language of cinema,» Marcianni says of the director.

Brazilian short *Mira*, by Gregorio Graziosi, is experimental in nature. « It doesn't have the normal structure of a narrative film. It is again about solitude and the relationship a man has with the environment around him. »

Asked to identify trends in this year's selection, Marcianni suggests filmmakers are often turning away from classical narrative construction.

« They are really stealing elements from documentary, experimental films and sometimes even from animation. » He also points to the increasing number of films dealing with solitude.

Festival audiences remain intensely

curious about Leopards of Tomorrow. Around 12,000 people are expected to watch the films in the section. Meanwhile, programmers from other festivals and leading distributors like La Big Family and Shorts International will be poring over the titles in official selection. Locarno has long been recognised as one of the key festivals for short films. Marcianni and his team receive huge numbers of shorts from directors who want their work shown in the festival. They also travel widely and work closely with the major film schools around the world.

«Every festival tries to have the best films,» Marcianni reflects on the competition that exists between Locarno and other major festivals. He adds, though, that there is a camaraderie among programmers. «More or less, we are old friends. I know very well the programmers from Cannes, Venice and Berlin.» If programmers do «steal» a film from under the eyes of another festival, they always have the decency to telephone their rivals first.(GM)

**Leopards of Tomorrow, International Copeption 2**  
La Sala, 8/8, 14.00  
rpt 9/8, 10/8.



*Mira*, by Gregorio Graziosi

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