

Program brings international films to Bay Area theaters

S.F. nonprofit helps spotlight movies from many countries not usually tied to cinema

By Janos Gereben
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The more, ahem, mature movie fans among us remember the time when foreign films were a rarity in this country. If the names of the Thalia in New York and the Surf in San Francisco's Sunset resonate for you, we are in the same ballpark. Just a few years back, there were only small "art theaters" for movies with subtitles. Thank goodness those days are gone, and Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese, Romanian and Japanese films are available everywhere, at festivals, in commercial theaters, on DVD. Except for ...

There is a continued dearth of independent films from developing countries, movies not embraced, championed and sold by American studios or distributors. And so it was that Global Lens born four years ago: an annual touring series of award-winning feature-length and short films from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

The nationwide program is presented by the Global Film Initiative, a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization, headed by founder Susan Weeks Coulter, and supported by a board of such cinematic notables as directors Pedro Almodovar, Mira Nair, Lars von Trier and cinematographer Christopher Doyle. Nationally, Global Lens covers the country from coast to coast (and beyond, to Hawaii), with stops in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Florida, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Arkansas, Utah and other locations.

At an affordable cost (some without charge) and in unusual San Francisco venues, now through Nov. 15, Global Lens is presenting nine features and seven shorts. Rather than screening in multiplexes, these films are being shown in small independent houses, such as the Roxie and the Balboa, in addition to the Bayview Opera House, de Young's Koret Auditorium, San Francisco State University, St. John's and the El Rio bar in Bernal Heights.

The "world of voices waiting to be heard" this year is represented by Mozambique ("Another Man's Garden," about a young girl who wants to study medicine in a society still hostile to women, screens at 3 p.m. Saturday at the Bayview Opera House, 4705 Third St.); China ("Dam Street," about the friendship between a young woman cast out of her family and a 10-year-old boy) and Algeria ("Enough!" — perhaps the best-made film this year, about

a wife's search for her journalist husband kidnapped by fundamentalists).

Other represented countries include: Croatia ("Fine Dead Girls," about life in present-day Zagreb, and "A Wonderful Night in Split," of

contemporary chaos in the medieval city); Kurdistan ("Kilometer Zero," set during the 1980s war between Iraq and Iran); Indonesia ("Of Love and Eggs," in a working-class community in Jakarta); Chile ("The Sacred Family," a domestic drama);





The Algerian film "Enough!" screens at 8:30 p.m. Nov. 10 at the San Francisco Art Institute Lecture Hall, 800 Chestnut St. — Courtesy photo

and Argentina ("On Each Side," about a new bridge transforming life on both sides of a river).

For the complete schedule of films and locations, visit www.globalfilm.org/globalensSF/.

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