

conglomerate both co-produced Ullmann's film and owns Cine-International – to release a 150-minute version in Germany, provided the film (plus all advertising) carried a statement that it had been edited without her collaboration. But, fulminated Ms Ullmann, there was no question of this being the 'international' version and she would, if necessary, sue to prevent it from happening.

'Kristin Lavransdatter' has proved hugely popular in Norway, meanwhile, where it has been seen by 2 million people – around a third of the population – and is the country's official submission for the Best Foreign Language Picture Oscar.

● Winter 1995-96 has so far proved especially chilly for several of the film-friendly organisations grouped under the European Union's Media umbrella.

All the many and varied bodies set up under phase two of the plan in 1992 have been under close scrutiny, with a view to restructuring the programme from the start of 1996. Some of the smaller organisations have been axed, and most of the larger ones (such as the European Script

Fund, the European Film Distribution Office, the Media Business School and the marketing umbrella Euroaim) have spent most of 1995 preparing detailed business plans – something which has left them with little time to help films and film-makers.

Their enthusiasm to help with phase three of the Media programme has not been matched by the politicians in Strasbourg or the bureaucrats in Brussels who, at time of writing, seemed no nearer to confirming funds for the five years from 1996 than they were a year ago.

As a result, Euroaim, which was to have been the biggest standholder at MIFED, the Milan trade fair referred to above, pulled out at the last minute and put itself into voluntary liquidation, leaving a hundred or more producers without a market base. None of its funding had come through so it had been operating on reserve funds, said Euroaim. It also cancelled its large stand at the Berlin Film Festival's market next month.



Lost in Felix: 'Land and Freedom'

Also defunct – though less regretted – is the Felix, or 'European Film Award', awarded for the last time on 12 November 1995. The first Felix ceremony in 1988 was a lavish affair, broadcast live on Channel 4; the 1989 event in Paris was a shambles; 1990 in

Glasgow was efficient but low-profile. Since then, Felix has been back in Berlin, attracting less and less attention each year. This year's ceremony was so low-key that not even *Variety* carried the results. Sad, really, given that Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom* won the top prize.

Readers of the above items will have gathered that Mr Busy is not at his most cheerful when the winter solstice is within sniffing distance. He does, however, recognise that readers may want to enter 1996 with the dark days shot through by the odd ray of hope about the film business. Here, then, are three determinedly upbeat items.

1. Hitchcock's masterpiece 'Vertigo' is to be fully restored by Robert A Harris and James C Katz, the same team that did the business on 'Lawrence of Arabia', 'Spartacus' and 'My Fair Lady'. A new 65mm negative will be created from every available source, and a stereo score substituted for the mono one on Paramount's 1958 VistaVision release print. Restoration – which, in this case, means digitally recreating colours that have bleached into insipidity – will take about a year, after which millions of movie buffs will be able to confirm that Kim Novak's complexion was not, in fact, the same colour as her hair and that neither was pale green.

2. Italian producer Aurelio Grimaldi plans to make a movie based on Pier Paolo Pasolini's novel 'Petrolio', which was published after the writer and film-maker's death in November 1975. It will be a daunting task, since 'Petrolio' is a heavily allegorical mediaeval tale concerned, in Pasolini's words, with "the obsession of identity and also of its shattering". In other words, 'Die Hard' on an autostrade it ain't...

3. Those chastened by the return to movies of Barbra Streisand in the guise of producer, director, star and general demiurge behind the romantic comedy, 'The Mirror Has Two Faces', which began shooting in New York in November, may be encouraged to learn that



In charge: Barbra Streisand

at least Dudley Moore is no longer in the flick.

Dud was to have played a drinking companion of Streisand's co-star, Jeff Bridges, but left the film after a few days' shooting, to be replaced by George Segal.

● And finally, just to prove that Hollywood definitely believes in retribution, Roland Joffé – once the great hope of the British film industry as a maker of thinking man's epics – will follow the unspeakable *The Scarlet Letter* with a Steven Seagal action movie. And with that happy thought, I leave you to enjoy 1996.

## NANTES NOTES

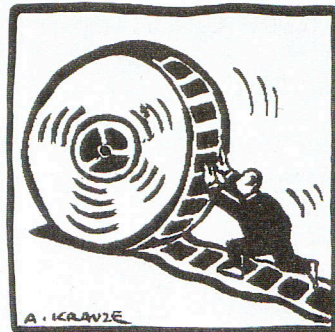
### On the road

Nantes, home to the annual *Festival de trois Continents*, seems an unlikely location for the presentation of new cinema from Asia, Africa and Latin America. This straightlaced, rather bourgeois French town, once a centre for the slave trade, is still hardly multicultural, and doesn't lack *Lepénistes*. Nonetheless, its citizens are earnest cinéphiles, and this year's festival (the seventeenth) attracted an estimated audience of 30,000 people.

Films were in competition from Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Syria, China, Japan and Kazakhstan, but with journalists, directors and film stars all lodged within minutes of the six festival cinemas, and despite this year's SNCF (French railway) strike, student protests, the cold weather, even the siege mentality seemed more cosy than exotic. No one could leave Nantes, and no one wanted to go outside (to avoid rioting students and bronchial infection). So film-makers from Iran, Syria and Indonesia would linger over *café au lait* in the lobby of the Hotel de France discussing the problems of censorship in their various countries.

A delegation from Egypt included the well-known actress Yusra, adding an element of glamour. A retrospective of her films was featured, along with a cinematic homage to the 50s filmstar Naima Akef. A delegation from Azerbaijan on a plane direct from Baku included the young Ajas Falajev, whose *The Bat* (in competition) was a sophisticated contrast to much of the 60-year retrospective of Azeri cinema (such as the *Silver Truck*) which often had a charming *naïveté* (plus too many 60s-style zoom-shots).

Highlights from the competition



included *Kardiogramma* (Heartbeat), by Kazhak director Darezhan Omirbaev. Given the Special Jury Award, this starts like a Kazhak road movie (empty lunar landscapes, strange bus-drivers and assorted passengers) and becomes a rite-of-passage story about a Kazhak peasant boy coming of age in a sanatorium, its understated humour and keen observation transcending the Central Asian setting.

*Det, Yani Dokhtar* (Det Means Girl), by Iranian director Abolfazl Jalili, which won the award for best young actor, was a moving film about a boy who tries to save his young sister, who has succumbed to a mysterious paralysis and cannot speak. Read on one level, the film is a commentary on Iranian society "paralysed" by social and political problems. Jalili's last film, *Dance of the Dust*, was banned from distribution by Iranian authorities, which certainly makes the indirectness and subtlety of his commentary in *Det Means Girl* understandable. Originally trained as a painter, Jalili's film reads like a visual poem, and certain images are unforgettable. The young girl receiving electric shock treatment in a hospital while a woman screams

behind bars; the rural workers in a communal dining hall sipping mint tea *en masse* like one amorphous body; jasmine flowers floating on a pond as a cow is slaughtered for sacrifice.

Syrian director Ryad Chaia's *Al Lajat* (The Land of Leja), which tells the story of a young village woman in the 40s who tries and fails to run away with the man she loves and escape the confines of her family, can also be read as a sociopolitical commentary. But as in *Det Means Girl*, there is a powerful visual poetry which functions on its own terms. Haunting shots of moonlit courtyards and a woman's stifled longings; a man branding a sheep as the errant Leja tries to escape her fate; a dog and a man howling at the moon on a barren Syrian hilltop. Like a visual *ataba* (the classical Arabic love poem) the film speaks in a beautiful, mysterious code.

Indeed, the *Festival de trois Continents* often provides film-makers facing restrictions in their own countries with the opportunity to show their work abroad. The winner of this year's City of Nantes/Jury Award – *And the Moon Dances*, by Indonesian director Garin Nugroho, about music students, with strong undercurrents of political allegory – only made it out of Jakarta because the final edit was done in Singapore. This is also a place where film-makers hope to find distributors. This year Jalili may have found a French one; others are still searching.

And so the film-makers of the three continents continue their delicate dance, between funding and censorship, between fame and obscurity, between home and Hollywood, as the good citizens of Nantes watch the last busload of foreigners leave town. *Hadani Ditmars*