



# AFI FEST 2003

AFI LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL  
NOV 6-16

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **AFI FEST 2003 ANNOUNCES GALAS**

**OPENING NIGHT GALA: THE NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE  
OF NIGEL COLE'S CALENDAR GIRLS**

**CENTERPIECE GALAS:  
THE WORLD PREMIERE OF VADIM PERELMAN'S HOUSE OF SAND AND FOG  
THE WORLD PREMIERE OF NORMAN JEWISON'S THE STATEMENT**

**CLOSING NIGHT GALA: THE WORLD PREMIERE  
OF PATTY JENKINS' MONSTER**

*Charlize Theron, Christina Ricci, Tilda Swinton, Julie Walters  
and Academy Award® winners Ben Kingsley and Jennifer Connelly, as well as  
directors Nigel Cole, Norman Jewison, Vadim Perelman and Patty Jenkins are  
expected to attend AFI FEST 2003*

**September 18, 2003 (Los Angeles)**— AFI FEST 2003—the AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival—today announced its Opening, Centerpieces and Closing Night films. Los Angeles' longest running film festival opens on November 6, 2003, with the North American Premiere of CALENDAR GIRLS, from director Nigel Cole. The Centerpiece Galas will be on November 9 with the World Premiere of Vadim Perelman's HOUSE OF SAND AND FOG and on November 12 with the World Premiere of Norman Jewison's THE STATEMENT. The Festival's Closing Night Gala, November 16, 2003, will be the World Premiere of MONSTER, directed by AFI alumnus Patty Jenkins.

"This year's Galas represent the best in World Cinema and reflect the quality of this year's entire program," said Nancy Collet, AFI FEST Director of Programming.

"What a thrill to have four such powerful films premiering at AFI FEST 2003," added Festival Director Christian Gaines.

AFI FEST 2003 kicks off with the North American Premiere of Nigel Cole's CALENDAR GIRLS on Thursday, November 6, at 7:30 p.m. at The ArcLight Hollywood's Cinerama Dome. CALENDAR GIRLS is inspired by the true story of a group of women who bare all—or nearly all—for charity and become international celebrities as a result. The Women's Institute in Great Britain encourages the ancient skills of jam-making, flower pressing, knitting and baking. So when a group of extraordinary women are looking for a new way to raise money, they decide to take the annual fundraising calendar, normally featuring landscapes or flowers, and create something traditional—but with a twist. Behind the baked goods, the apple pressing and the flower arranging, the women are completely nude. CALENDAR GIRLS stars Helen Mirren and Julie Walters, is directed by Nigel Cole (SAVING GRACE) and written by Tim Firth and Juliette Towhidi. The film is a presentation of Touchstone Pictures.

The Opening Night Gala is presented by Neutrogena and the Hollywood Sign Trust. The Opening Night Media Sponsor is Variety, with support from AFI FEST 2003 Major Gala Site Sponsor, the Henry Fonda/Music Box Theatre.

The Centerpiece on Sunday, November 9, at 7:30 p.m. will be the World Premiere of Vadim Perelman's HOUSE OF SAND AND FOG, based on the acclaimed bestseller by Andre Dubus III. The film stars Academy Award® winners Sir Ben Kingsley (GANDHI) and Jennifer Connelly (A BEAUTIFUL MIND).

Massoud Amir Behrani (Sir Ben Kingsley) is living a lie to fulfill a dream. Once a member of the Shah of Iran's elite inner circle, he has brought his family to America to build a new life. Despite a pretense of continued affluence, he is barely making ends meet until he sees his opportunity in the auction of a house being sold for back taxes. It is a terrible mistake—through a bureaucratic snafu, the house had been improperly seized from its rightful owner, Kathy Lazaro (Jennifer Connelly). The loss of her home tears away Kathy's last hope of a stable life—a life that had been nearly destroyed by addiction—forcing her to fight to recover her home ... at any cost. Exposing the unsettling truth that it is sometimes our hopes and not our hatreds that drive us to ruin, HOUSE OF SAND AND FOG is a devastating exploration of the American Dream gone terribly awry.

The film also stars Ron Eldard (BLACK HAWK DOWN) as Deputy Sheriff Lester Burdon, who takes the law into his own hands to help Kathy; major Iranian film star Shohreh Aghdashloo as Behrani's wife, Nadi; and Jonathan Ahdout as their son Esamil. HOUSE OF SAND AND FOG is a presentation of DreamWorks Pictures.

Another Centerpiece Gala on Wednesday, November 12, at 7:30 p.m. will be the World Premiere of Norman Jewison's THE STATEMENT, which stars Michael Caine, Tilda Swinton, Jeremy Northam, Charlotte Rampling and Alan Bates.

THE STATEMENT is the story of an elderly French man, Pierre Brossard (Michael Caine), who as a young man during WWII, was responsible for the deaths of seven Jews and is now living a quiet anonymous life in the South of France (where the "old guard" in both the government and the Catholic Church helped hide him for over half a century). Pierre's peace and tranquility are rocked, however, when new blood in

the French government launches a new investigation. He becomes a target of the police (Jeremy Northam), assassins and an aggressive French judge (Tilda Swinton).

THE STATEMENT is inspired by a true story, based on the novel by Brian Moore, written by Academy Award® winning writer Ronald Harwood (THE PIANIST), and directed by Norman Jewison (MOONSTRUCK, IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT). It is produced by Norman Jewison and Robert Lantos, and is a presentation of Sony Pictures Classics.

The AFI FEST 2003 Closing Night Gala on Sunday, November 16, at 7:30 p.m. will feature the World Premiere of Patty Jenkins' MONSTER, starring Charlize Theron as Aileen Wuornos, a highway prostitute who was executed in Florida for killing seven men during the 1980s. Christina Ricci also stars as Aileen's girlfriend, Selby Wall, and Bruce Dern portrays Aileen's friend Thomas, who tries to protect her in the end.

MONSTER is written and directed by Patty Jenkins, and produced by Brad Wyman, Donald Kushner, Charlize Theron, Mark Damon and Sammy Lee. Executive producers are Clark Peterson, Meagan Riley-Grant, Stewart Hall, Andreas Grosch and Andreas Schmid. MONSTER is a production of MDP Filmproduktions GmbH and VIP Medienfonds. Newmarket Films recently acquired the film for distribution.

The Closing Night Gala is sponsored by LA Weekly and Absolut, with support from AFI FEST 2003 Major Gala Site Sponsor, the Henry Fonda/Music Box Theatre.

All four of the Gala Screenings will be held at the historic Cinerama Dome at The ArcLight Hollywood (6360 Sunset Blvd. at Vine in Hollywood). This year's AFI FEST Galas are also sponsored by Absolut, Venice Magazine, Anheuser Busch, Sole, Tropicana/Dole, Pepsi-Cola Company, Krispy Kreme, and Amoeba Music.

Other noteworthy films confirmed at press time include:

- Denys Arcand's acerbic BARBARIAN INVASIONS, his much-anticipated follow up to DÉCLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION, which had its World Premiere in competition at the Cannes Film Festival and was the Opening Night film at the 2003 Toronto International Film Festival.
- The U.S. premiere of Jean Paul Rappeneau's grand World War II comedy drama BON VOYAGE, France's 2004 Oscar entry starring Gerard Depardieu, Isabelle Adjani, and Virginie Ledoyen.
- Ross McElwee's BRIGHT LEAVES, a satirical meditation on tobacco and family, from the director of SHERMAN'S MARCH and SIX O'CLOCK NEWS.
- Robert Altman's THE COMPANY, a portrait of the Joffrey Ballet in rehearsal and performance, starring Neve Campbell, James Franco, and Malcolm McDowell.
- Errol Morris' timely THE FOG OF WAR, from the critically acclaimed filmmaker of THE THIN BLUE LINE and A BRIEF HISTORY IN TIME, presents an insider's testimony about key events of the 20th century.
- Gabriele Salvatores' I'M NOT SCARED, a haunting, suspenseful thriller from the director of MEDITERRANEO.

- Jim Sheridan's *IN AMERICA*, written by Sheridan and his two daughters based on their own story, stars the radiant Samantha Morton in a tale of an immigrant family's survival on the tough streets of New York.
- *JAMES' JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM*, the first feature from documentarian Ra'anan Alexandrowicz (*INNER TOUR*), tells of an African villager's eye-opening pilgrimage.
- Sue Brooks' debut feature, *JAPANESE STORY*, stars Toni Collette in a touching personal story set against the backdrop of the awesome Australian Outback.
- Siddiq Barmak's Afghani produced, award-winning *OSAMA*, based on the true story of a young girl living under the harsh rule of the Taliban.
- From Poland, Jan Jakob Kolski's *PORNOGRAPHY* is an edgy tale of war and its devastating effect upon civilians.
- Jesper Jargil's *THE PURIFIED* is an insightful documentary about the *DOGMA 95* Manifesto and the filmmakers who set fire to hidebound cinematic conventions.
- Sylvain Chomet's *THE TRIPLETS OF BELLEVILLE* breaks down the rules of studio animation with a sledgehammer. This European gem has rediscovered the potential animation has to offer a pure sense of wonderment and delight.

AFI FEST 2003, the 17th AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival, returns to the ArcLight Hollywood November 6-16 with over 140 new films from around the world. As one of the most eagerly anticipated film festivals in North America and the longest running film festival in Los Angeles, AFI FEST captures the cultural diversity of Los Angeles and provides new and established filmmakers with a crucial avenue of exposure to the film community, while celebrating the accomplishments of filmmakers worldwide.

AFI FEST annually presents an international competition of features, documentaries and shorts as well as ambitious global cinema showcases, including Asian New Classics, European Film Showcase, Latin Cinema Series and American Directions. Also returning are the popular Made in Germany series and the Filmmaker Tribute and Retrospective. New this year is a special sidebar entitled Beyond Conflict: Focus on the Middle East.

Films that have premiered previously at AFI FEST include *NOWHERE IN AFRICA*; *TALK TO HER*; *ANTWONE FISHER*; *ARARAT*; *CITY OF GOD*; *DARK WATER*; *SWEET SIXTEEN*; *THE QUIET AMERICAN*; *NO MAN'S LAND*; *MONSTER'S BALL*; *LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL*; *THE CIDER HOUSE RULES*; *BEFORE NIGHT FALLS*; *O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?* and *AMORES PERROS*.

**For Festival ticket sales and information, please call 1.866.AFI FEST or visit the AFI FEST Web site at [www.AFI.com](http://www.AFI.com).**

AFI FEST 2003 is supported, in part, by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. AFI FEST 2003 is proud to continue its collaborative partnership with the Skirball Cultural Center. Made in Germany is made possible through the cooperation and support of the Export-Union of German Cinema.

Official AFI FEST 2003 sponsors include AFM 2004, Absolut, ArcLight Hollywood, Christie Digital, Chrysler Million Dollar Film Festival, CineSpace, Dell Computers, Los

Angeles Times, Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), Roosevelt Hotel – Hollywood, LA Weekly, FormDecor, Inc. and Venice Magazine.

Major Sponsors of the Festival are Adelphia Communications, Aloha Airlines, Eastman Kodak Company, Neutrogena, TriCoast Studios, Hollywood & Highland, Hollywood Sign Trust, Jurlique Australian Film Festival 2004, SILVERDOCS: AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Festival and Variety.

**AFI** is the preeminent organization dedicated to advancing and preserving the art of film, television and other forms of the moving image. AFI trains the next generation of filmmakers at its world-renowned Conservatory, provides film preservation leadership and explores new digital technologies in moviemaking. AFI's New Media Ventures programs bring together the creative and digital communities, as the department seeks to develop a literacy program for the 21st century, helping young people learn to read and write screens of all sizes—cinema, television, computer and the Internet. With **AFI ON SCREEN**, the institute is the largest nonprofit exhibitor in the US, with programs at the AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival (AFI FEST); the AFI National Film Theater at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC; and the AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center in Silver Spring, Maryland. A 49,000 square foot complex with three theatres—one historic, two new state-of-the-art stadium-style theatres—the AFI Silver exhibits film and video generally unavailable elsewhere in the region. AFI's annual almanac for the 21st century, **AFI AWARDS**, honors the most outstanding motion pictures and television programs of the year. **AFI's 100 Years . . . 100 Movies, 100 Stars, 100 Laughs, 100 Thrills, 100 Passions and 100 Heroes & Villains** have ignited extraordinary public interest in classic American movies. During the past 31 years, AFI's Life Achievement Award has become the highest honor for a career in film. More information about AFI can be found by visiting its Web site, located at [www.AFI.com](http://www.AFI.com).

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PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

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