

## Dear fan of European Fantastic Cinema,

Welcome to the September/October issue of the European Fantastic Film Festivals Federation Newsletter. The federation is constantly growing and so is the production of European fantastic films. We hope that you the reader will continue to be an active participant in spreading the information on European Fantastic Cinema.

/Christian Hallman  
EFFFF Web Producer

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### 4th Silver Méliès Stage in Sitges (October 9-18)

*Sitges celebrates the modernity and audacity of European Fantastic Cinema in an edition visited by stars Jodie Foster and David Cronenberg.*

For its 37<sup>th</sup> year (it was founded in 1968 at the dusk of Franco's fascist regime) The **Sitges International Film Festival of Catalunya** introduces a solid line up of international fantastic features, such as "A History of Violence", "Fragile", and "Flightplan" starring Jodie Foster, whose visit on the liberal shores of Catalunya will be crowned by the festival's Honorific Award. Major guests such as David Cronenberg and Viggo Mortensen are also expected to join the Party.

A founding member of the EFFFF, Sitges will thus award the 4<sup>th</sup> Silver Méliès of this season. 15 features, including De La Madrid's "The Nun", Dominik Moll's "Lemming" or the Quay Brothers telluric fantasy "The Piano Tuner of Earthquakes" will compete for the prestigious European award.

For more information visit [www.cinemasitges.com](http://www.cinemasitges.com)

### Adherent Members stick to Terror!

*Maybe traumatized by baroque catechism, Catholics seem to have a crush on the horrors of the real world.*

In Italy, the young, yet not so innocent **Ravenna Nightmare Film Festival (October 4-9)** will present for its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition a heavy pack of humorous and blasphemous horror movies, ranging from nunsplotation "The Nun" to the orthodox "Nightwatch".

Neither less barocco nor blood-thirsty, the famous **San Sebastian "Semana de Ciné Fantastico e de Terror" (Oct. 29-Nov. 5)** will paint the town red around Halloween. The region's famed gastronomy will be gut-flavoured by the distorting scents of Fruit Chan's "Dumplings" and Rob Zombie's "The Devil's Rejects". Yuzna's "Beneath Still Waters", "Evil Aliens" and Tsui Hark's "Seven Swords" complete the blood feast.

Both proud adherent members of the infamous EFFFF, Ravenna and San Sebastian will share their part of the dark side, each granting a nomination to the Golden Méliès to the Best European short film.

More information on both festivals at [www.melies.org](http://www.melies.org)

## **Espoo Ciné – Cinema, Sweat and Sauna!**

The 16th edition of Finland's leading art house film festival – **Espoo Ciné** finished August 28. As an affiliated member of the Federation, the Espoo Fest screened a strong line-up of European fantastic movies. Among them, "Duplicity" (Trouble) by Harry Cleven – who was present at the event. The Méliès d'Argent award was given to "Strings" – the wonderful Danish puppet live-action film by Anders Rønnow-Klarlund.

The Festival also organized a very nice screening of Eisenstein's classic "Battleship Potemkin" with live music from the amazing Finish group "Cleaning Women". The crescendo was the traditional sauna party, which left all the guests smelling like smoked herring for days after leaving Finland. A truly fantastic experience!

Espoo Ciné will be the host of the 2006 Méliès d'Or Award Ceremony – so see you all in the sauna in August next year!

### **Interview with Anders Rønnow-Klarlund** **director/ co-writer of STRINGS** **By Tuomas Riskala**

*T: "Strings" is a very unique fantasy film, made in a very unique way. How did the idea come to you?*

A: I was sitting in an airplane on my way to Portugal and the Golden Méliès ceremony in Fantasporto, and I was watching this city promo about Prague. It had some marionette puppets in it, and I was immediately fascinated by the strings they had and also the expressions they could display. I drew this sketch about a marionette fleeing its enemies, climbing up on a tree, while you could see the thousand strings around him closing in and going up to the sky. I thought - "this is an image I haven't seen before." So I promised myself that if I won the Golden Méliès Award for Possessed, my previous film, "Strings" would be my next project. A few days later I was accepting the award.

*T: How big of a challenge was it to create something like this in Scandinavia?*

A: It didn't feel really uphill; it was only securing the last bit of financing which felt a little tricky. The budget was originally very low, around 14 million Danish crowns, but it grew to be 35 million as the project expanded, I did more sketches and we brought in an extra crew to be able to stay in schedule. But it really didn't feel too difficult as everybody was so enthusiastic all the time. My philosophy with the financing was that every month I would show something new to the money people who came in: a new character design, storyboards, etc. We did huge production design sketches and the art direction department was working at least one and a half year straight on. The puppeteers we found all over the world and it took actually two years to find them.

*T: After being so successful with "Possessed", was it clear to do another fantasy film?*

A: I'm not a genre freak. Choosing a genre comes when you come up with the story. "Strings" is very much about the world we live in right now. It's a contemporary story about people being suppressed, calling somebody your enemy and then crawling out with your big army to crush them, and in the end finding out that the only enemy is the enemy within yourself. It is a very contemporary story about Iraq, the whole Middle-East situation, Americans, and all that stuff. Had I done that as a normal, realistic film, as a war film for instance, it would have been difficult as the whole war situation is very fragile, there is lot of details and people have lot of different opinions. I had to choose a genre where I could tell the story in a simpler manner. It is the storytelling tradition of Hans Christian Andersen, that when you tell a fairy-tale, you tell about something that is going on today, but you do it in a way that isn't offending anybody. Choosing a film genre is like when an author is choosing a style. Certain things go together with the subject you're dealing with. With "Strings", fantasy was the answer.

## **Lund closed with Serenity, and the Méliès d'Argent went to The Descent**

The 11th edition of **Lund International Fantastic Film Festival** in Sweden closed on Sunday the 25th with an award ceremony at Filmstaden in Lund. The festival opened with Miyazaki's "Howl's Magic Castle", and closed with Joss Whedon's "Serenity". The Méliès d'Argent went to Neil Marshall's "The Descent" with the jury motivation;

*"The Descent manages to be realistic, emotional, and absolutely terrifying from start to finish."*

During 10 days 100 films from 20 countries were screened for a record-breaking audience. Guests of honour were **Terry Gilliam** and the Swedish animator **Per Åhlin**. **Terry Gilliam** also received the festival's first honorary **Finn the Giant Award** for "stretching the limits of cinematic imagination".

### **Interview with Terry Gilliam**

**Writer/director**

**By Kasper Heftholm Kristensen**

**KHK:** *This year's special guest hardly needs an introduction, so I won't give him one. It's of course Terry Gilliam of Monty Python fame gone directing such wonderful movies as "Time Bandits", "Brazil" and "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas"...*

**Terry Gilliam:** ..."12 Monkeys", "Jabberwocky"... just in case... laughs... "Fisher King"...

**KHK:** *It's been a long time since we heard anything from you; "Fear and Loathing..." is from 98?*

**TG:** 98, Yes.

**KHK:** *And now you come up with two movies within a few months. What happened?*

**TG:** Exactly. What happened? There has been about three years spent on making "Don Quixote", which didn't happen. So we got a good documentary out of how NOT to make a movie. ("Lost in La Mancha" is the title of the documentary Terry Gilliam is referring to. Editors remark) Then we spent the rest of the time to get a few other projects going. I actually began "The Brothers Grimm" partially in 2002. So time goes past, but I've been very busy, I just haven't gotten any movies finished.

**KHK:** *And that whole "Don Quixote" thing sounded like a nightmare.*

**TG:** That was one of the worst experiences ever.

**KHK:** *So let's not dig more into that, let's talk about the positive things. You just finished two movies. "Tideland" is finished, right?*

**TG:** "Tideland" just opened in Toronto last week, so I got two movies running around.

**KHK:** *Let's talk about "The Brothers Grimm".*

**TG:** "The Brothers Grimm" is really a bit like "Time Bandits" and "The Adventures of Baron von Münchhausen". It's made for everybody, young and old. It's really a fairy tale about the Brothers Grimm not "Brothers Grimm", we reinvented it. We revenged ourselves on all those stories that were told to us as children and all those nightmares we learned to live with. It's got Monica Bellucci, Matt Damon, Jonathan Pryce and Peter Stormare a famous Swedish actor who finally gets a chance to play an Italian; he probably always wanted to play an Italian. It's a very funny, exiting, interesting movie where we kind of recreated the world where fairy tales grew out of. Not unlike this tomb we're sitting in. Many fairy tales probably grew out of this crypt as well.

**KHK:** *Did you write the script?*

**TG:** The original script was written by Ehren Kruger but I didn't like it, so Toni Grisoni and I completely rewrote the script. So if you look closely in the credits in the film you'll see "Dress Pattern Makers" by Terry Gilliam and Tony Grisoni. So this is the first film not based on a script but on a dress pattern.

**KHK:** *Tell us a little bit about how you work creatively. Your movies always seem to have a distinct "Terry Gilliam look". Do you work with conceptual art or "on stage" so to speak?*

**TG:** Well I do a bit of everything. I mean, we do a lot of research to begin with, especially if you work on a movie like "The Brothers Grimm" where you want to recreate the historical period it took place in, in this case the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, you look a lot at paintings. I was looking a lot at fairy tale book illustrations, Arthur Rackham from Germany, Gustave Doré from Belgium, everybody from all the worlds, you gather ideas and images and you try to make them real at the same time that's going on you try to develop the characters and that's probably, well to me, it has become more important than the look of the films. But if you have a fairy tale world it's got to look believable and it's going to look enchanted and you got lots of special effects in the movie around 800 effect shots.

**KHK:** *Computer generated?*

**TG:** We began trying using models and mechanics and do everything physically. We got trees that walked and everything but it didn't work though. So it ended up being computer generated images, but the trick is to disguise it, to degrade it so it doesn't look computer generated.

**KHK:** *Anything you want to tell the festival audience*

**TG:** Well why aren't there more of you? Lund is a wonderful place. It has one of the best crypts in Europe. How often do you get Christian churches built on pagan ideas? This is an important thing to remember. So what else can I say? Who's watching this anyway? Am I all alone in here? Nobody's there? Is your web site a total disaster? Let's hope not. Laughs...

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On this note we conclude this, the second EFFF Newsletter. Please feel free to forward the content of this newsletter as long as you announce the source of the material.

*The European Fantastic Film Festivals Federation Newsletter is put together by the federation newsgroup, comprised of selected members from the federation film festivals.*

*This newsletter is distributed by the European Fantastic Film Festivals Federation, the only federation for promoting European fantastic films to a world audience, as well as acknowledging the force of fantastic films from all over the world. Contact Phone: +32 2 201 1713, Contact Email: [info@melies.org](mailto:info@melies.org) or [christian@melies.org](mailto:christian@melies.org)*

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