

ROTTERDAM AND BERLIN – FILM FESTIVAL DISPATCH

27 February 2012 by Binger Reporter Matthew Curlewis

You know it's winter film festival season when... from the windows of Rotterdam's Doelen complex you can watch moviegoers, tickets clenched firmly in gloves, slip sliding their ways across the icy metal sheeting entry paths to the Pathé Cinema, when the snow is swirling through Potsdamer Platz... and when you see the Binger's name cropping up everywhere. From the **Tiger Awards** to **CineMart**, from the **Berlinale's Co-production Market** to screenings in the festival's **Generation**, **Forum** and **Panorama** sections, plus Binger advisors hosting every apparent event within sight... all the way up to the **Academy Awards** themselves, the Binger invasion, clearly, is on.

Leading the Rotterdam charge in the **Tiger Awards** competition, was Writers Lab 2011 participant **Dominga Sotomayor's** feature debut ***De Jevnes a Domingo***, produced by **Benjamin Domenech** (Creative Producers Lab 2011). Their "very precise and gentle depiction of the intimate space of a family" according to the Tiger jury, earned them one of the three **Tiger Awards** that were presented to the most outstanding of the fifteen films competing.

Over in the **Bright Future** section, **Ezequiel Erriquez** (Writers Lab 2011) was enjoying the world premiere of his ***A la Cantabrica***, along with the Dutch premiere of Writers Lab 2006 participant **Nicolas Provost's** debut feature ***The Invader***. Having already made significant critical impacts at the film's competition screenings in Venice and Toronto last year, Provost was now relatively 'in the flow' of the film's release, with the time to do extra festival gigs like appear on an **Art: Film** panel moderated by **Screen International Editor** and Binger regular **Mike Goodridge**.

When asked if there had been any surprises along the path of making his first feature, after making his string of internationally acclaimed shorts, Provost's frank reply was, "Distribution. That has really been a slap in the face. Nothing about making a feature, compared to making a short, was surprising. Of course there were challenges and obstacles, but you expect those. What I totally wasn't expecting was that I would make this film which you know, I think is OK, and it's done pretty well at a few festivals, and then damn – it's just a really gigantic struggle to land a distributor. *That* has been surprising."

Operating alongside the screenings and panels in Rotterdam every year is the internationally renowned CineMart – the oldest and most respected of all the co-production markets – and this year Writers Lab 2011 participant **Peter Hoogendoorn's** project ***Between Ten and Twelve*** was in official selection, doing its exhaustive rounds of meetings under the skilful hands of producer **Keren Cogan** (Producers Lab Company! 2010).

During Rotterdam the Binger also played co-host in honouring one of its advisors, the esteemed documentary and mixed genre filmmaker **Heddy Honigmann**. The evening took the form of an effusively warm panel slash premiere screening slash launch in a large Doelen cinema, packed with many of Heddy's nearest and dearest family, friends, colleagues and admirers. Her

new film ***And Then One Day*** was screened, with its delightful leading actress **Maryamm Hassouni** on hand to field a few questions, and then **Heddy Honigmann in Focus** was officially launched – a box set containing six DVDs and a book, spanning over 25 years of Heddy's career.

Via a quick bit of ice-skating and gluhwein drinking on Amsterdam's frozen canals, it was then time to pack extra pairs of thermals for the minus fifteen degree bear-like embrace of the **Berlinale**...

This is one of the world's A-list film festivals, sharing that distinction with **Toronto, Cannes** and **Venice**, and is Europe's only A festival that is not just industry only. The Berlinale is open to the public as well, and their masses can be seen, huddling indeed in an effort to stave off the cold while queuing up for movie tickets – Berlin is a massive festival. And yet, again the Binger was everywhere.

The project ***Hot Comb***, by Ugandan sisters **Agnes Kanya** (Writers Lab 2011) and **Caroline Kanya** (Directors Lab 2012), was part of the **Official Selection** of the **Talent Co-production Market**. This market takes place in a large building directly across from the **European Film Market** where 7,000 delegates from distributors to sales agents to film commissioners to producers and filmmakers are all trading cards and doing business.

Of the six Binger films screening in various Berlinale sections, New Zealander **Pietra Brett-Kelly** had the **Generation 14+** world premiere of her Doc Lab 2010 project ***Maori Boy Genius***, a fascinating piece about a sixteen year-old Maori boy who is being groomed by his family and his people to be a future contender for New Zealand's main leadership position.

Closer to home, Dutch filmmaker **Sacha Polak's** (Directors Lab 2009) feature debut ***Hemel***, screening in the **Forum** section, earned her the coveted **Fipresci Prize**, the prize awarded for the best film as voted by the **International Federation of Film Critics**. The industry film magazine **Variety** called Polak "a name to watch" and declared leading actress **Hannah Hoekstra** to be a "stunning newcomer".

Meanwhile, down the strasse, and on both sides of the frozen solid Ufer, 350 attendees of the **Berlinale Talent Campus** were being treated to the talents and guidance of a range of Binger advisors. **Gyula Gazdag, Franz Rodenkirchen, Susan Korda, Molly Malene Stensgaard** and **Michael Donaldson** were all on hand advising on projects, speaking on panels, or casually conducting interviews with A-list Hollywood movie stars like... **Binger Artistic Director Marten Rabarts** in conversation with **Andie MacDowell**. Watching this interview, the casual camaraderie Rabarts was immediately able to establish with this Hollywood luminary, was a testament to the professionalism and respect commanded by the people who have created the Binger brand.

Andie MacDowell knew straight away she was in safe hands. She was with a professional and a peer. And that's the Binger, through and through. Oh, and

by the way, did we mention that **Michael Roskam's** (Directors Lab 2005) Binger project ***Rundskop*** (Bullhead) was the Belgian contender for **Best Foreign Language Film** at the **Academy Awards**?

The Binger invasion has concluded – for the time being, at least.