

Arbor, The

Dir: Clio Barnard **UK** **2009** **90 mins** **Cert: TBC**
Starring: Manjinder Virk, Christine Bottomley, Monica Dolan, Neil Dudgeon, Danny Webb, Jimi Mistry
Language: English
Formats: Digital only
Available: February

A housing project in Northern England known as The Arbor left an indelible impression on playwright Andrea Dunbar. She grew up there, named her first play after it, and based all of her subsequent work there. Director Clio Barnard could have adapted Dunbar's play *The Arbor* for the screen or made a conventional documentary on her life, but instead she has crafted a captivating and truly unique work that transcends genre and defies categorization.

After spending two years conducting audio interviews with Dunbar's family, friends, and neighbors, Barnard filmed actors lip-synching the interviews, flawlessly interpreting every breath, tick, and nuance. Barnard's film focuses in particular on the playwright's troubled relationship with her daughter Lorraine. Dunbar died tragically in 1990 at age 29;

Barnard connects with Lorraine—now age 29 herself—to reintroduce her to her mother's plays and private letters, prompting her to reflect on the parallels between their lives. Interwoven with these interviews are staged scenes of Dunbar's play filmed on the street where she lived. Barnard seamlessly stitches together these disparate but innovative elements, matching Dunbar's unconventional life with a befittingly unconventional film. - *David Kwok / Tribeca Film Festival 2010*

Bluebeard

Dir: Catherine Breillat **France** **2009** **80 mins** **Cert: Club** *Barbe Bleue*
Starring: Dominique Thomas, Lola Creton, Daphne Baiwir
Language: French
Formats: Digital only
Available: January

Catherine Breillat's new film isn't for everyone. With its severe, stylized compositions and purposeful lack of realistic action, it might even be unbearable for some. In this retelling of the tale of the wife-killing Bluebeard, drawn from Perrault's classic three-page story, there's hardly an inch of bare skin visible, let alone the erect penises of Italian porn stars that graced some of Madame Breillat's earlier films.

Breillat's retelling comes in two layers. The first is set in the 1950s and features two delightfully charming little girls, the younger of whom (according to an autobiographical statement in the press materials, she represents Breillat) loves torturing her slightly older sister with dramatic readings of the story of Bluebeard, the ogre who loves to murder women and eat little children.

The second layer is set in what vaguely looks like the Renaissance, though sometimes it unfortunately resembles those commercial Renaissance fairs in which people in costume walk about eating big turkey legs. (One other little problem that should be mentioned for the benefit of the scrupulous is that Bluebeard is occasionally shown

wearing what is clearly a Catholic priest's chasuble.)

In any case, this setting represents the younger girl's, that is, Breillat's, imaginative projection of herself into the tale. In this version, Marie-Catherine (played by gorgeous teenage newcomer Lola Creton), Bluebeard's last wife, gets the better of the ogre because she is the virgin princess he cannot make up his mind to kill.

Like the famous biblical subject of Judith and Holofernes embraced by many female painters throughout the centuries, Marie-Catherine closes the film lording it over Bluebeard's severed head lying on a plate.

The furthest thing imaginable from a slice-of-life open-form film, Breillat's *Bluebeard* is stripped to the barest, most classical and most literary form. There's little fresh air here, but there's not meant to be. Rather, it's the establishment through reversal of an imaginative paradigm in which little girls, and, by implication, big girls in their turn, conquer their fears by confronting them head on. - *Peter Brunette / Hollywood Reporter*

Carlos

Carlo

Dir: Olivier Assayas France, Germany 2010 165 mins Cert: 15

Starring: Édgar Ramírez, Alexander Scheer, Nora von Waldstätten, Ahmad Kaabour, Christoph Bach, Susanne Wuest

Language: French

Formats: Digital only

Available: January

Carlos is everything *Che* wanted to be and much, much more - a dynamic, convincing and revelatory account of a notorious revolutionary terrorist's career that rivets the attention during every one of its 165 minutes. In what is certainly his best work, French director Olivier Assayas adopts a fleet, ever-propulsive style that creates an extraordinary you-are-there sense of verisimilitude, while Edgar Ramírez inhabits the title role with arrogant charisma of Brando in his prime. It's an astonishing film.

The film's scope, range and ambition are incredible; it's set in at least 16 countries over a 21-year period, and at all times features the characters speaking the languages they would have spoken in the relevant situations - Carlos himself shifts effortlessly among Spanish, English, French, German, Russian and Arabic...The film is so convincing that it persuades you this is essentially the way it was. There are few so completely transporting historical movies, in that it drops the viewer down in another world and time without evident artifice, doctoring, nostalgia, revisionist thinking or overt political agenda... Never dull or slack and crammed with so much incident, character and detail you can't possibly soak it all in as it charges past you, *Carlos* enters deep and dangerous waters as it takes on biography (of a still-living figure), international politics, terrorism, history, religion, sex and much more and handles all the issues with staggering dexterity, intelligence and skill. - *Todd McCarthy / Indiewire*

Certified Copy*Copie Conforme***Dir: Abbas Kiarostami France, Italy, Iran 2010 106 mins Cert: PG****Starring: Juliette Binoche, William Shimell****Language: French, English****Format: Digital only****Available: January**

On the evidence of its chic promotional poster and a trailer intercut with wistful platitudes ('He... a writer in search of meaning. She... an art dealer in search of originality'), you'd swear that *Certified Copy* was the result of a ludicrous clerical error saddling Iranian maestro Abbas Kiarostami with the script for a droll coffee-table rom-com while, elsewhere in Europe, a baseball-capped minnow struggled to fashion an abstract visual essay on the nature of the subjective conscious. Of course, that's not entirely the case. But while it's true that Kiarostami appears to have drawn a line under a decade of provocative visual experimentation – resulting in such poetic cinematic workouts as *Five*, *Ten* and *Shirin* – not long into his latest it becomes clear that this is just as challenging, ambiguous and moving as anything he's made before.

Like those earlier titles, the act of consuming *Certified Copy* requires a willingness to engage in a game of intellectual hide-and-seek. In the past, Kiarostami challenged us to think about off-camera space – what is happening outside the frame that could influence what's on the screen. Here, he offers a decontextualised fragment of a relationship which only begins to make sense if we consider the details outside the story's timeframe. Juliette Binoche stars as a ruffled, slightly manic antique dealer, opposite English opera baritone William Shimell as an arrogant cultural commentator on a brief Italian stopover to deliver a lecture on the value of copies in art. Over the course of a single afternoon, they meet, drive into the Tuscan countryside, go for lunch, wander around a gallery and discuss the nuances of art, love, family and possible discrepancies in Shimell's thesis. When a waitress naturally assumes the pair to be romantically entangled, Kiarostami takes that cue to have his characters mutate into what appears to be a bickering wedded couple. The game is set: is this love or just a copy?

There's a pleasingly self-aware quality to the dialogue in the film, as if Kiarostami is anticipating the inevitable auteurist deconstructions of its meticulous structure and composition. In a telling line, Shimell admits, 'I only wrote the book to convince myself of my own ideas,' as if this rambling tale is organically working itself out as it goes along. Binoche and Shimell are superb: she expressive, impulsive and emotional; he haughty, dogmatic yet vulnerable. If there's a problem with the film, it's the idea that two people would instinctively choose to immerse themselves in unbroken role play.

It makes the ambiguities ring a little false and dampens the easy naturalism to which the film obviously aspires. But if Kiarostami's fingerprints are occasionally evident on the screen, the pair's off-kilter chemistry and the unquestionable artistry of the filmmaking prevents this from descending into an exercise in cold, technical pyrotechnics. And in true Kiarostami style, the final shot is an absolute doozy. - *David Jenkins / Time Out London*

Easier With Practice

Dir: Kyle Patrick Alvarez USA 2009 100 mins Cert: TBC

Starring: Brian Geraghty, Kel O'Neill, Marguerite Moreau, Jeanette Brox, Jenna Gavigan, Kathryn Aselton

Language: English

Formats: Digital only

Available: February

Accompanied by his younger brother Sean (Kel O'Neill), writer Davey Mitchell embarks upon a promotional tour publicising his new, unpublished book. Alone in their motel room one night, Davey receives a seemingly random call from a total stranger that results in a sexual encounter over the phone. From this bizarre erotic experience, a strange, anonymous, yet meaningful, relationship begins to blossom ... but where will it end?

Easier With Practice was inspired by an autobiographical article in GQ magazine called *What are You Wearing?* by author Davy Rothbart, creator of the fascinating Found Magazine. Kyle Patrick Alvarez – one time personal assistant to Warren Beatty – resigned from his job to become a filmmaker and set about adapting Rothbart's story for his debut feature, producing the first draft of the script in less than a month. After 18 months of fundraising, and having already created a popular website for the film, Alvarez began the casting process. Auditioning more than 200 actors for the all important lead role of a character who is in almost every scene, he finally settled on the exceptional Geraghty, having been impressed by his work in Sam Mendes' *Jarhead*. It was an inspired choice. Geraghty skilfully negotiates lengthy shots, playing the only side of the central telephone conversations we are ever privy to. He brings a gentle, endearing vulnerability to his sexually and emotionally insecure character, that – with notable support from O'Neill, Marguerite Moreau and Kathryn Aselton – proves both extraordinarily touching and compelling.

Shot on the state of the art Red One – an economical digital camera with the capability to record large amounts of material straight to hard drive – over 20 days in Albuquerque, New Mexico, *Easier with Practice* is a stunning debut from Alvarez. In concealing the film's pivotal secret while simultaneously developing an intimate and provocative study of sex, love and loneliness over the phone, he maintains a tantalising uncertainty until the very last sincerely dramatic moment. - *Edinburgh Film Festival 2009*

Winner - Best New International Feature, Edinburgh International Film Festival 2009

Hunter, The

Dir: Rafi Pitts Iran 2010 91 mins Cert: Club

Starring: Rafi Pitts, Mitra Hajjar, Ali Nicksaulat, Hassan Ghalenoi, Manoochehr Rahimi

Language: Farsi

Formats: Digital only

Available: January

A powerful portrayal of the effects of political oppression, *The Hunter* depicts a war of two worlds: the chaos of Tehran's unforgiving city streets and the misty solitude of its snow-covered hinterland.

Ali (Rafi Pitts) lives in a cramped apartment overlooking the highway with his loving wife, Sara (Mitra Hajjar), and their precious six-year-old daughter, Saba (Saba Yaghoobi). Recently released from prison, Ali is forced into an oppressive job as a night watchman. His only consolation is his family, though their reunion proves almost as temporary as Tehran's short-lived Green Revolution. Coming home from work one day, Ali finds his loved ones gone. After a long and fruitless interaction with the local police, the tragic news is delivered: his wife has been killed in the crossfire between police and protesters and his little girl is missing, presumed dead.

Fuelled by paternal anxiety, Ali takes to the streets, the city now his sworn enemy. But what he doesn't know is who is responsible for the murders: is it the police or the political opposition? Unable to find answers in the confusion, Ali takes his high-powered rifle and exacts his own vengeance before fleeing to the hills outside the city. Filled with a bitterness that brings him focus and purpose, Ali must escape two feuding policemen who are out for his blood.

This beautifully sparse narrative lends itself to insightful interpretations of Iran's contemporary political climate, but also stands alone as an evocative exploration of the lengths to which a man will go to avenge his family. Backed by unforgettable images of Iranian landscapes and a haunting sound design, Ali's emotional state is writ large across the lonely woodland. As Ali retreats farther into the hills, his persecutors are dwarfed to toy-soldier proportions by the labyrinthine forest. The only thing that remains to be seen is which party will emerge victorious. Will it be Ali, weighed down by a righteous kill, or Tehran's mercenary police officers? Maybe the forest will defeat them both. - *Dimitri Eipides / Toronto International Film Festival 2010*

I'm Still Here

Dir: Casey Affleck **USA** **2010** **107 mins** **Cert: Club**
Starring: Joaquin Phoenix, Casey Affleck, Antony Langdon, Larry McHale
Language: English
Formats: Digital only
Available: January

What happened to Joaquin Phoenix? How did the seemingly shy, intense actor go from young heartthrob to two-time Academy Award® nominee to pop culture mystery? Was it a breakdown? A retreat? A hoax? It's a testament to our accelerated culture that both the Joaquin Phoenix story and its interpretations jostled for attention as Phoenix transformed himself before our eyes. As ubiquitous as he was – appearing famously on Late Night with David Letterman and testing his rap skills at a series of live performances that went viral on the internet – Phoenix became more and more enigmatic for his fans. No one had close enough access to get an accurate look at what was really happening in the world of the increasingly unpredictable actor. No one but Casey Affleck.

A celebrated actor himself, Affleck also happens to be Phoenix's brother-in-law and friend. He had the perfect vantage point, but what does it mean for a friend and brother-in-law to pick up a camera and chronicle your every move? *I'm Still Here* offers fascinating insights, not just into Phoenix, but also into the relationship between these two famous men.

At the height of his fame the movie star declares, "I don't want to play the character of Joaquin anymore.... My artistic output up to now has been fucking fraudulent." And so begins his hip hop career. Affleck crafts this part of the Phoenix story with heart and sensitivity. Although the scenes of the actor trying to woo P. Diddy to produce his album are loaded with comic potential, Affleck shades the awkward humour with an appreciation of Phoenix's sincere ambition.

But as Phoenix pours his soul into spitting rhymes, his world begins to spiral downwards. Affleck's camera is there to witness all manner of celebrity debauchery: drugs, alcohol, groupie sex and the casual abuse of assistants. In one near-magical scene, the actor Edward James Olmos attempts to stage a kind of intervention.

I'm Still Here is completely engrossing, but it provides few answers. What happened to Joaquin Phoenix? Hard to say. It's still happening. - *Cameron Bailey / Toronto International Film Festival 2010*

Maid, The *Nana, La*
Dir: Sebastián Silva **Chile** **2009** **96 mins** **Cert: Club**
Starring: Catalina Saavedra, Claudia Celedón, Mariana Loyola, Andrea García-Huidobro, Alejandro Goic, Agustín Silva
Language: Spanish
Formats: Digital only
Available: January

After 23 years of service to the Valdes family, Raquel is comfortably ensconced in a vague existence between maid and her illusion that she is a family member. Her barely concealed bitterness and increased clashes with her employer's eldest daughter lead the family to think she is overworked. They hire more help, and, feeling usurped, Raquel begins to sabotage each new employee by resorting to childish antics, clinging to her ambiguous place within the family.

In his remarkably astute second feature, Sebastian Silva questions, without bias, a dusty remnant of class division—the common, Latin American, aristocratic tradition of serfdom. Within this complex dynamic, we are privy to the inner workings of a well-intentioned family's relationship with their servant—however endearingly the word is used. Silva wields his handheld camera like a magnifying glass, revealing Raquel's fenced-in fragility, and watching her evolve is truly touching. Astonishing in its intimacy, the film wrings awkward humor from the alienated Raquel's mind games. Only Lucy, last in the line of new maids, is able to nudge Raquel gently toward the momentous kick-start needed to rediscover herself. Sebastian Silva's hungry curiosity to examine the intersection of social and personal forces produces a painful, yet satisfying, comedic drama that shakes up and humanizes an insidious system. - *2009 Sundance Film Festival*

Winner - Best Actress at Biarritz International Festival of Latin American Cinema 2009
Winner - Best Actress, Best Script Miami Film Festival 2009
Winner - Grand Jury Prize & Special Jury Prize Sundance Film Festival 2009

Metropolis re-release (Restored version)

Dir: Fritz Lang **Germany** **1927** **150 mins** **Cert: Club**
Starring: Brigitte Helm, Alfred Abel, Gustav Fröhlich
Language: Silent
Formats: Digital only
Available: January

The original version of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* returns to the screen – almost in its entirety! It's been eighty-three years since this silent cinema classic received its world premiere; this recently reinstated version restored by the Murnau Foundation was unveiled at the Berlinale, at the Brandenburg Gate.

The mutilation of this monumental work began not long after the film's premiere at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo cinema in Berlin on 10 January, 1927. The production company Ufa withdrew the original 4,189-metre version of this work after an unsuccessful four-month theatrical run at this cinema and subsequently released a significantly abridged 3,241-metre version in the summer of 1927. For decades, important parts of the film – the 2001 restoration of which was the first cinematic work to be inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register – were thought to have been irretrievably lost. Until recently it was believed that only one original negative and various prints of the abridged German and international versions existed. Following the sensational discovery of a 16mm negative in Buenos Aires in 2008 and the restoration of a version which is thirty minutes longer than the previous one, *Metropolis* can now be screened in a form which almost completely reflects the original.

The restoration and reconstruction of *Metropolis* represents one of the most significant film restoration projects in cinema history. The restoration of *Metropolis* was conducted by the Murnau Foundation in Wiesbaden in cooperation with ZDF and Arte in association with the Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen (Berlin) and the Museo del Cine Pablo C. Ducros Hicken (Buenos Aires). - *Berlin Film Festival 2010*

Of Gods And Men

Des hommes et des dieux

Dir: Xavier Beauvois **France** **2009** **120 mins** **Cert: TBC**
Starring: Lambert Wilson, Michael Lonsdale, Olivier Rabourdin, Philippe
Laudenbach, Jacques Herlin, Loïc Pichon
Language: French
Formats: Digital only
Available: February

Xavier Beauvois (*Don't Forget You're Going To Die, Le Petit Lieutenant*) vaults into the realm of mature mastery with this sombre, humane and provocative drama. Based on a true incident, the film is set in a Cistercian monastery in North Africa in the 1990s, where eight French monks live in cordial harmony with the local population. The monastery's abbot, Brother Christian (Wilson), is as much versed in the Koran as in the Bible, giving him a special insight into, and respect for, the nation he has chosen to work in. But the country is increasingly in the grip of fundamentalist violence, and the brothers must soon decide whether to stay or leave.

A compassionate plea for understanding between cultures, the film muses on the meaning of religious vocation in a violent world, and tackles its subject with authoritative,

non-sensationalist forcefulness. Superbly photographed by Caroline Champetier - watch her sensitivity to faces in the dinner sequence near the end - this powerful but understated drama features terrific performances by an ensemble cast including the ever-magisterial Michael Lonsdale as the monastery's resident medic. - *Jonathan Romney / BFI London Film Festival 2010*

On Tour

Tournée

Dir|: Mathieu Amalric **France** **2010** **111 mins** **Cert: TBC**
Starring: Mathieu Amalric, Miranda Colclasure, Suzanne Ramsey, Linda Marraccini, Julie Ann Muz, Angela de Lorenzo, Alexander Craven, Damien Odoul, Pierre Grimblat, Ulysse Klotz, Simon Roth, Joseph Roth, Aurelia Petit, Antoine Gouy, Andre S. Labarthe, Florence Ben Sadoun
Language: French
Formats: Digital only
Available: February

Joachim, a former Parisian television producer had left everything behind - his children, friends, enemies, lovers and regrets to start a new life in America. But he returns with a team of New Burlesque strip-tease performers whom he has filled with romantic dreams of a tour of France, of Paris!

Traveling from town to town, despite the cheap hotel rooms and lack of money, the curvaceous showgirls invent an extravagant fantasy world of warmth and hedonism that wins an enthusiastic response from men and women alike.

But their dream of a tour culminating in a last grand show in Paris goes up in smoke when Joachim is betrayed by an old friend and loses the theatre where they were due to perform. An obligatory return journey to the capital violently reopens the old wounds of his past... - *Cannes Film Festival 2010*

Winner - Best Director, Cannes Film Festival 2010

Pipe, The

Dir: Risteard Ó Domhnaill **Ireland** **2009** **82 mins** **Cert: 15A**
Featuring Willie Corduff, Pat 'The Chief' O'Donnell, Monika Muller, Mary Corduff, Maura Harrington
Language: English
Formats: Digital
Available: January

What do people do, when the law prevents them from protecting themselves? That's the question at the heart of *The Pipe*, a stirring, character-rich documentary from Risteard O Domhnaill about Shell vs. Rossport, Ireland, where the oil company decided to run a gas line, and the community decided otherwise. The Irish don't harbor a lot of affection toward things British, but those behind *The Pipe* might think fondly of BP, whose recent gulf disaster will add currency and urgency to this charismatic David-Goliath tale.

The film is beautifully composed and valiantly photographed (O Domhnaill, also the d.p., shoots clashes between Rossport villagers and members of the Irish Garda so closely

you can virtually feel the rioters' breath in your face). But it's also politically astute: It isn't just one village that's at stake, but democracy itself, especially when the Irish government all but abdicates its role in the case and the Garda essentially assumes the role of corporate muscle. Shell will move on, *The Pipe* implies, but the wounds left behind on a small community like Rossport -- where neighbor essentially fought neighbor -- will take generations to heal, if at all.

Narration-less and musically upbeat, the film begins in 2005, with the arrest of what would become known as the "Rossport Five" -- locals who refuse to allow Shell to lay pipeline across their land. Among them was Willie Corduff, who not only exemplifies how a Rossport waterman makes a living, but also shows how delicate the ecosystem is below his feet. Shell refused to cooperate with the film, and that may have been a good move, politically speaking: It's hard to imagine a corporate functionary countering Corduff's knowledge or elementary wisdom.

O Domhnaill's access to the Rossport citizenry seems to have been unlimited, and just as he portrays a people pulled together by common grievance, he also gets inside the internecine verbal warfare that threatens to pull them apart. Maura Harrington, whose take-no-prisoners attitude toward Shell makes her a divisive force in the town, launches a hunger strike that may or may not have helped the cause. Pat O'Donnell, a fisherman and community pillar, stars in several scenes in which he defiantly runs his fishing boat around the massive Shell craft; he's arrested many times for insisting Shell obey the court orders it so blithely ignores. O'Donnell is a hero of the campaign, and the movie. - *John Anderson / Variety*

Police, Adjective

Politist, Adjectiv

Dir: Corneliu Porumboiu Romania 2009 114 mins Cert: Club
Starring: Dragos Bucur, Vlad Ivanov, Irina Saulescu, Ion Stoica, Marian Ghenea, Cosimi Selesi
Language: Romanian
Formats: Digital only
Available: January

Prize-winning and praised, this extremely calm and occasionally dry, cool yet irresistible story about the boundary between maintaining the law and a sense of justice. A young Romanian policeman wonders whether it's a good idea to put school children in jail just because they smoke marijuana.

Cristi, a young cop, has for some time been following a schoolboy who is suspected of drug smuggling, based on a tip by an informer. Cristi's superiors demand that the schoolboy is arrested, even though the investigations have not yielded any valuable information. 'If anyone has anything to do with drugs, then it is my informer,' Cristi complains. In addition, why does he have to rob every Romanian adolescent of his freedom and future when, in the Czech Republic and the rest of Europe you can smoke hash wherever you like? But the bosses won't budge: the law is the law and Cristi is a policeman - isn't he? In simple scenes, Corneliu Porumboiu reveals the complex moral dimensions of an average police investigation. The calmness and attention for detail with which Porumboiu shows Cristi's investigation underline the futility of his actions. - *Rotterdam International Film Festival*