

Show time

Movie critic Sam Edwards casts his eyes over the International Film Festival programme.

Dammit, Bill! Here I was, all set to pick the eyes out of the festival films and use the usual generic organisers to group the rest. It should be easy to do in 800 or 900 words, and now I find my list of worthy mentions growing to include nearly everything on the programme. Bill (Gosden) is the long time organiser-director of the annual New Zealand International Film Festival, knows his films better than anyone, and has a worldwide array of contacts who advise and supply, knowing that he always has the best interests of cinema at heart. Okay, the latter is a cliché, but (a) it is true and (b) there are no screenings in this festival to which the term cliché could be applied.

More importantly, this really does appear to be a festival which celebrates the camera, which pays homage to the ways in which film can be employed to portray that which we can only imagine, emotions which we rarely feel, and information to which we do not have easy access. Using the camera to bring audiences into the heart of its subject, into the essence of the ideas, is the

true art of the cinema, way beyond the skilful, but mere, recording of events to enable viewers to be entertained by a selectively assembled narrative.

For the first time, almost all the screenings will be DCPs or Digital Cinema Packages. A number of others are HDcam, which is also digital, leaving only seven which are traditional 35mm. And I bet you won't know the difference.

This could even be the last year in which the century old technology, with its intermittent shutter and a light bulb shining through a lens, will be used, so it is worth taking in as many titles as possible, just to reassure yourselves all will be well.

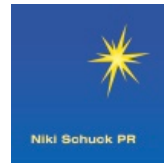
But away with stats and spectacles – including the 3D distractors – and get set to enjoy the best real cinema we have had for years.

It begins on the morning of Thursday, August 23, with a remastered DCP screening of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, that iconic Howard Hawks/Monroe/



Earth watch: *Vivan las Antipodas*.





Russell classic from 1953, which is a prime example of traditional Hollywood storytelling. In it, the camera is used deliberately to hide that fact that this is photography, to give instead the illusion that the audience is there in the room with Monroe as she beats out "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend".

After that, there is a straight-up recording of the times of Bob Marley, a traditional doco which still manages to turn Marley's life into foot tapping, but intelligent entertainment.

Then there's the festival's formal opening movie at 6.15pm, *Beasts Of The Southern Wild*, which, displaying a complete mastery of film language and innovative technique, is a remarkable entree into the imagination of the child-observer at its heart.

That is followed by the exquisitely cinematic, disturbingly perceptive *Barbara*, about a woman coping with the fears and injustices of life in East Germany under the Soviets. There. See what I mean Bill? I am halfway through the preview and still on day one. Blast.

There is a good Kiwi presence this year, mostly documentaries, and with some excellent shorts and the entertainingly appealing fiction *How To Meet Girls From A Distance*. It's a variation on the romcom, with a thematic link with central festival

values, using photographs as a central motif, with a young man creating photos of his fictional relationships to please his Mum.

The docos include *The Last Ocean*, a hard-hitting contribution to the toothfish controversy as director Peter Young argues a case for preserving the biodiversity of the Ross Sea in the face of increasing, and illegal, commercial fishing.

A related entry with some New Zealand focus is the German doco *Vivan Las Antipodas!* which identifies four places in the northern hemisphere and figuratively shoots through the earth's core to the place exactly opposite – the Antipodes. From a butterfly in Spain,

one of the four trips takes viewers to a stranded whale on a beach in the Wairarapa, where some stunning camerawork makes viewers see their

world through eyes they never knew they had. Along with *Antipodas* there are over a dozen co-productions, some involving three or four countries as disparate as USA/Serbia/Montenegro or UK/France/Belgium/Italy and bringing in wonderfully energetic ideas and visions in films quite beautifully realised.

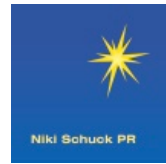
The film world is changing, but the changes are exciting and invigorating, and a telling answer to the commercially generated pseudo cinema of titles constructed by formula-driven money spinning studios, marketed by admen with no background in the arts, and consumed by viewers addicted to dumbed down social media and the myths of Tinseltown and Bollywood.

Even the horror movies in the festival, the undertaker as killer parody *Bernie*, the R16 gorefest *The Cabin In The Woods*, and the UK gem *Sightseers*, which follows the depredations of a pair of killer caravaners on their road trip through the UK countryside, are quite different entertainers from the usual OTT blood drains that are our regular horror fare. And already I have run out of space without even mentioning the French, or the . . .

So here's what to do. Go today to the Lido in Centreplace. Pick up a programme and take at least one for a friend. Over the next 24 hours choose a minimum of three films to see between the opening on Thursday, August 23, and the final screenings of the wonderfully surreal *Holy Motors* on Sunday, September 16. Tomorrow or Saturday, go and buy tickets which will guarantee admission, but, in the modern way of doing things, not give you a seat number. That means, incidentally, that there are good reasons for coming before the start time, when everyone else seems to arrive, but early enough so that you won't interrupt the beginning of the film because you will already be sitting in the seats of your choice. Any doubts, and you can always ring the Lido booking office on (07) 8389010. Enjoy.

■ The New Zealand International Film Festival 2012, directed by Bill Gosden. In Hamilton from August 23 to September 16.





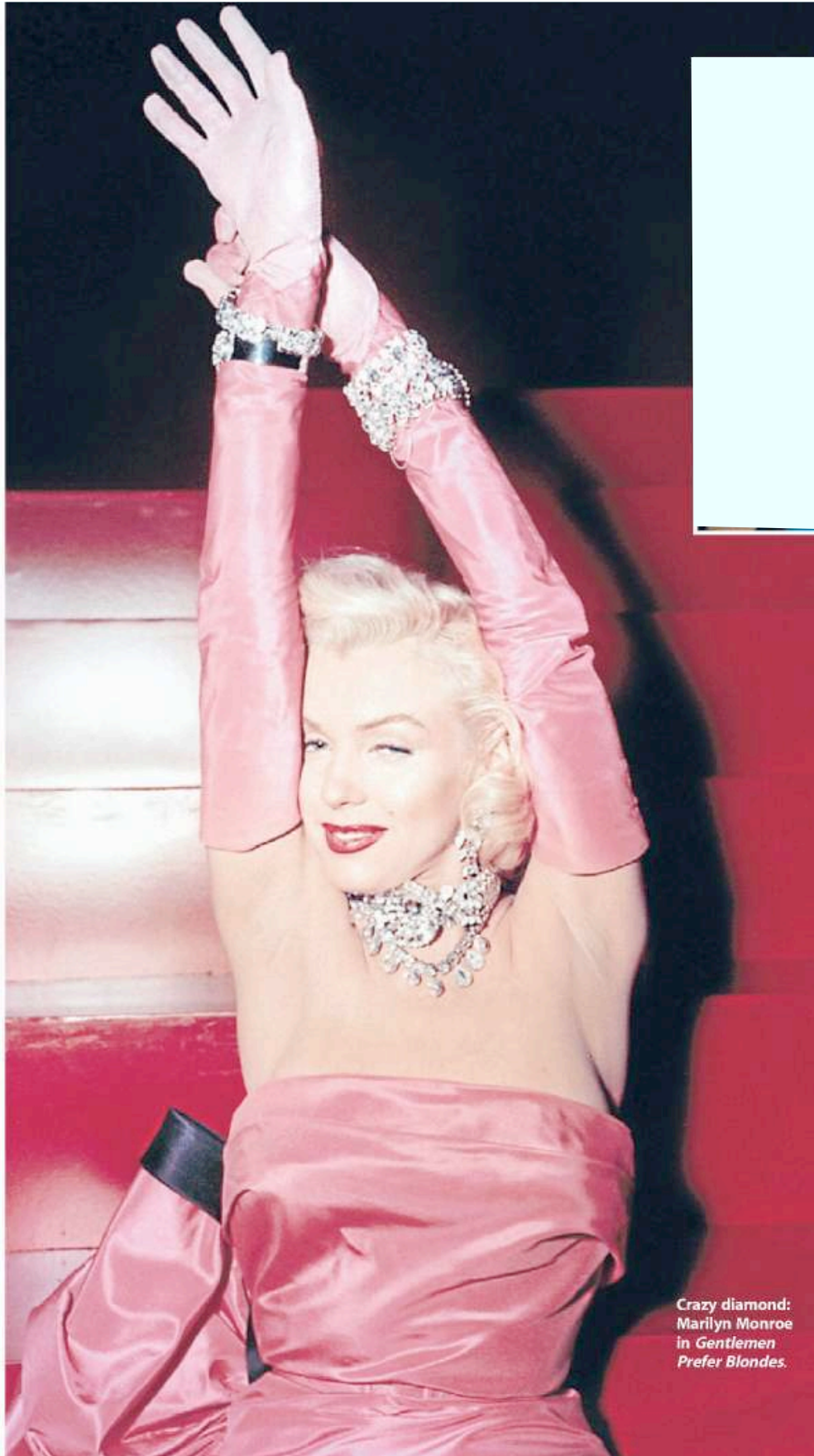
Beasts Of The Southern Wild: A remarkable entree into the imagination of the child/observer at its heart.

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Crazy diamond:
Marilyn Monroe
in *Gentlemen
Prefer Blondes*.