

Cinem

Festival of European Films

Zahir Raihan Film Society presents classics from European master film makers

THE contemporary European film festival got underway in Dhaka this week. Zahir Raihan Film Society, this time, has brought some of the better movies from Europe as part of its 15th anniversary celebrations.

The festival was inaugurated yesterday at the auditorium of the Indian High Commission with the screening of *Meeting Venus* by Istvan Szabo of Hungary and *Danton* by Andrzej Wazda of Poland.

Other films that will be screened at the five-day long festival include *Ulysse's Gaze* by Theo Angelopoulos of Greece, *Underground* by Emir Kusturica of Croatia, *Cabaret* by Goran Paskaljevic, of Serbia, *Before the Rain* by Milcho Manchevsky of Macedonia, *The Wall* by Yilmaz Guney of Turkey, *The Eight Day* by Jaco Von Dormael of Belgium and the *Match Factory Girl* by Aki Kaurismaki of Finland. The festival also includes *Buena Vista Social Club* by Wim Wenders of Germany, *Journey of Hope* by Xavier Coller of Switzerland, *Tainted Horseplay* by Vera Chytilova of Czechoslovakia, *Billy Elliot* by Stephan Daldry, of United Kingdom, *All Things Fair* by Bo Wilderberg of Sweden, *Pola X* of Leox Carx from France, *All about My Mother* of Pedro Almodovar from Spain, *Life is Beautiful* of Roberto Benigni from Italy, *The Thief of Pavel Chukhray* of Russia and *Dancer in the Dark* of Lars Von Trier from Denmark.

About some of the directors:
Andrzej Wazda is the Polish cinema's masterful narrator of the past, and he was honoured at the Oscar ceremonies with a lifetime achievement award for his 34 films. He is no stranger to film buffs around the world. Many of his classics like *Ashes and Diamonds*, *Kanal*, *Man of Iron* and *Danton* are studied and analysed at film institutes around the globe. In short, Wazda is to Poland what Satyajit Ray was to India.

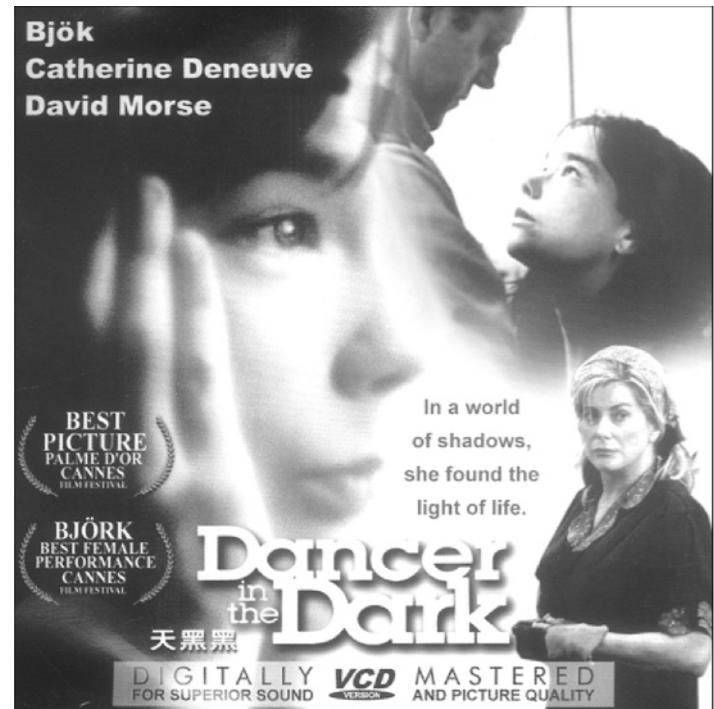
Theo Angelopoulos, the Greek born director and screenwriter, studied law before studying film making in Paris. He directed his first feature, *I Ekipomi*, in 1968 and has continued to work in Greece ever since.

Brought up by a Kurdish father from Siverek and a Kurdish mother



from the village of Mus, Yilmaz Guney completed his high school in Adana in 1955. Guney was widely popular in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s as an actor, director, writer

and political activist. In and out of jail in those troubled decades for his leftist writings, Guney wrote many of his screenplays in prison and directed the films through an inter-



DIGITALLY FOR SUPERIOR SOUND

MASTERED AND PICTURE QUALITY

mediary. Among his most renowned films are *Hungary Walls*, *Siyit* and *Hope*. In 1982 his film *Yol* (*The Road*) won the *Palme d'Or* at the Cannes film festival. Written while Guney was in prison, serving a 19-year sentence for a controversial murder conviction, the screenplay was smuggled out of jail and the movie was filmed clandestinely in south eastern Turkey, under the direction of one of his collaborators, Serif Goren. Guney escaped from Turkey in 1981, while on leave from prison, and moved to Switzerland where he finished the post production of the film. A life sentence for writings published from jail had been added to his term and in 1983 he was stripped of his citizenship. He died in exile in Paris in 1984.

Synopsis of some of the films that will be screened at the festival:

Match Factory Girl

A girl's life is hilariously bleak as friends, family, lover, and co-workers all belittle her. A packet of rat poison could be the solution to her problems.

Meeting Venus

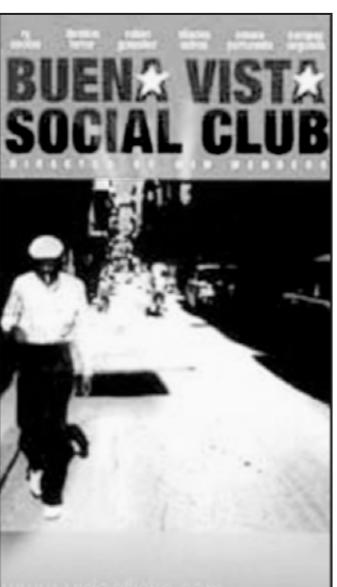
Karin Anderson is an icy Swedish signer, whose heart ultimately melts for her conductor, in this sophisticated behind-the-scenes comedy about the feuds and foibles of the fractious cast of an international theatrical production.

The Wall

This story of the fourth dormitory of the Ankara Prison is a metaphor for Turkish life. Here boys live in the worst conditions until they realise their only hope is to be sent to another prison or to revolt.

Buena Vista Social Club

No one can recall exactly where the *Buena Vista Social Club* once stood in pre-revolutionary Havana, but Wim Wender's documentary of a dozen legendary musicians resurrects the magnificent music of the era. Guitarist Ry Cooder assembled the aging singers and musicians for a series of recording sessions. The resulting 1997 album won a Grammy. The music performances are intercut with shots of the performers reminiscing in decaying Havana bars. "...A valid celebration of musical sophistication and ageless optimism..." "...Opulent, organic and as intoxicating as a rum bing... Terrific, truly liberating stuff..." Exhilarating.... A documen-



tary that mixes music with impressionistic glimpses of urban life in Cuba..."

The Thief

Autumn of 1952. Six year old Sanya and his young mother Katya are going by train across cold and starving Russia still struggling to recover from World War II. Like many others in postwar Europe, a

young window and her fatherless child, Katya and Sanya strive for at least a bearable life, which for them means finding shelter and enough bread to eat. A handsome and gallant young officer in uniform named Tolyan boards the train at one of the stations and is immediately attracted to Katya. At night half-awake Sanya sees his mother and the officer embracing on the carriage platform. Early in the morning all three of them get off the train in a small provincial town, where they rent a room in a communal flat with a lot of neighbours. They live as a family, Tolyan loves Katya and orders Sanya to call him father. The boy can't do this as he thinks of his real father all the time. Nevertheless Tolyan fascinates him as he is the first man in the boy's life.... One fine day everything is revealed. Tolyan takes numerous tenants of their huge apartment to the circus but leaves the performance in its full swing. Katya follows him. She realises that he is not an officer at all but an ordinary thief.

Zahir Raihan Film Society has been leading the film society movement in the country for the past 15 years. It has over 450 members at present. The society has proved

itself to be the most active film society in the country. With its well thought out programmes, it holds film festivals, seminars, publishes brochures, posters, leaflets and booklets focusing on the technical as well as thematic aspects of cinema.

Last year the society screened some 125 films and hopes to cross that mark in current year by screening 175 films for the film buffs of the capital city.

The President of the society is Prof Aminul Islam Chowdhury, ex-Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University and its general secretary is Sabir Chowdhury, teacher of the Literature Department of Jahangirnagar University.

Membership to the society is open to all and comes with a small annual fee.

(Compiled by Muneera Parbeen)



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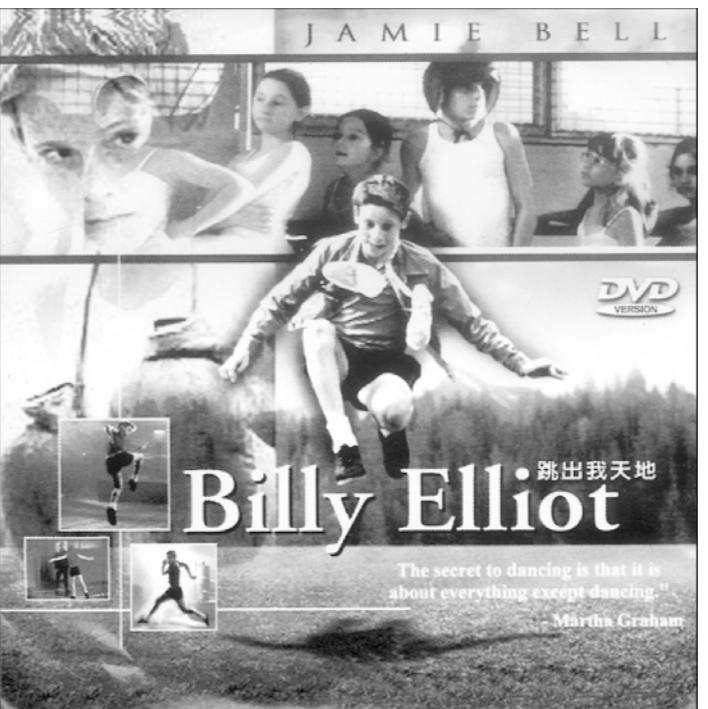
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The secret to dancing is that it is about everything except dancing.

Martha Graham



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