

Development Heaven at the Berlinale

by Julian Friedmann

The opening session of the Script Clinic, part of the Talent Campus at the 57th Berlinale, the International Film Festival that takes place every February in Berlin, started with a discussion about the way we use words, something highly appropriate for a scriptwriting event.

It was proposed by Merle Kröger, who ran the Clinic, that we changed the title 'Script Clinic' as it suggested the scripts and perhaps the writers were ill and that there were 'doctors' who could heal them.

This was the third time I had participated in the Talent Campus and the Script Clinic. Each time I was aware of the enormous respect and commitment from literally dozens of leading figures from the international film world to support the Talent Campus, people I would go a long way to listen to.

Yet here they were again - writers, sound, camera, set designers, directors and so on - giving their time freely to an international gathering of young film-makers. This year, though, there were fewer than the usual 600 'talents' because the main venue used in the past was being refurbished.

The Talent Campus is what distinguishes the Berlinale from most other festivals, some of which now hold their own campuses, but this is where it started, another innovation from the ever-amusing boss of the Festival, Dieter Kosslick.

Apart from the one-to-one meetings to discuss individual scripts, the Campus has lectures, seminars and great parties. The five days are broken into sections: day one is orientation day, day two is philosophy, followed by pre-production day, then

production day and finally promotion day. In this brief review it is not possible to list all the events but it is worth checking out the Campus website www.berlinale-talentcampus.de. If it were possible to start putting names (or your children's names) down for future campuses, I would start now!

Among the events that took place were (to mention a few):

- Global speed matching with Janine Marmot of Skillset
- Walter Sallis in conversation
- A discussion about virtual cinema with Tom Tykwer, Kees Kassander and Noah Falstein
- Iain Smith (*The Killing Fields*, *Cold Mountain*) and Sandy Lieberman (ex-President of Production at 20th Century Fox) on risk-taking and the balance between art and money
- A session on casting with leading casting directors and one on pitching with Eileen Quinn and Judy Counihan
- A session on whether scriptwriting can be taught
- Gael Garcia Bernal (*Amos Perros*, *Babel*) interviewed by Peter Cowie
- John Waters in conversation
- The future of film: a discussion about the digital world
- A session about the renaissance of short films
- A tour through the editing room with Susan Korda
- A session on documentaries from the Documentary Clinic
- The importance of music and the emotions with Jan A P Kaczmarek (*Finding Neverland*)
- An indie film-maker's guide to the Internet
- Workshops on Avid, on HD, on music, on working the Berlinale

Co-production Market
• and many, many more

Then in the Festival itself, there were hundreds of movies to be seen and meetings to be had in the packed hotel lobbies and bars around Potsdamer Platz.

It is true that the weather is better in Cannes or Edinburgh but for writers, the Talent Campus is a real draw. The heady combination of ambition (you have to be good to be selected for the Campus), an openness to learn, and a sparkling array of international names included amongst those teaching, makes for an event that would lift any festival. Only the Screenwriter's Festival in Cheltenham in July rivals it.

For scriptwriters, the mix is potent, bringing them into intensive contact with others involved in film-making, people whom they might not always be able to access. The ubiquitous Mr Kosslick said that there were now more than 2,500 'talents' around the world with numerous co-productions and an increasing number of marriages and babies too.

I could well imagine some writers - after the Campus experience - wanting to move into other areas such as sound or directing and I assume that there are directors wanting to write if they are not already doing so. The five days made me want to be a student again and to be at the cutting edge of creativity rather than at the desk of a somewhat cynical agent!

The buzz and energy radiating was such that the cold weather didn't seem to matter and, with Teutonic efficiency, there were buses and shuttles moving between all parts of this hydra-like festival. The only thing that sometimes took time was getting tickets for screenings but even then, you had to feel good about it as the Berlinale is the festival where more members of the public see films than anywhere else. And if we are not making films for the public then we should not be making them at all.

In the end there was no consensus as to what the new name for the Script Clinic should be. My suggestion came from the nurturing and constructive and inspiring environment in which the writers work: it should be called Development Heaven.