

Home TV Radio Talk Where I Live A-Z Index

UK version International version | About the versions

Low graphics

BBC NEWS

WATCH LIVE BBC News 24

News service Your news where you want it

News Front Page World



- Africa
- Americas
- Asia-Pacific
- Europe
- Middle East
- South Asia
- UK
- England
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales
- Business
- Politics
- Health
- Education
- Science/Nature
- Technology
- Entertainment
- Also in the news
- Video and Audio
- Have Your Say
- Magazine
- In Pictures
- Country Profiles
- Special Reports

RELATED BBC SITES SPORT WEATHER CBBC NEWSROUND ON THIS DAY EDITORS' BLOG LANGUAGES

Last Updated: Monday, 11 February 2008, 12:20 GMT

E-mail this to a friend

Printable version

Slain Russian writer in new film

A new documentary about the murdered Russian investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya contrasts starkly with other red-carpet events at the Berlin Film Festival, the BBC's Tristana Moore reports.

The premiere of Eric Bergkraut's documentary Letter to Anna, at the Berliner Ensemble Theatre, attracted its fair share of stars, including Catherine Deneuve. But there was a sombre atmosphere.

Cinema For Peace - an international charity gala and a platform for peace and tolerance at the Berlin festival - is not for an audience of popcorn-eaters.

"How come I am still alive? When I really think about it, it's a miracle," - the words of Ms Politkovskaya haunt the documentary about her life.

The film, narrated by Susan Sarandon in the English version, is based on interviews with the journalist and other conversations with her friends, relatives and colleagues.

'Courageous'

Anna Politkovskaya was shot dead in the lift of her apartment block in Moscow in October 2006. She was a fierce critic of human rights abuses in the Chechnya war.

Swiss director Bergkraut met Ms Politkovskaya while he was making another film about Chechnya, called Coca: The Dove from Chechnya.

"Anna does not die in the film, freedom dies... she is very much alive, she is even funny. She was severe with herself and with the truth. I really felt a kind of obligation to tell her story, I had the footage," said Bergkraut.



Politkovskaya's reports exposed alleged abuses of power by officials

SEE ALSO Charges in Rus. 17 Oct 07 | Eu New team for P 04 Sep 07 | Et Murder probe g 28 Aug 07 | Et Arrests over Ru 28 Aug 07 | Et Chechen police murder 23 Jan 07 | Eu Crowds drawn I 10 Oct 06 | Eu Anna Politkovsk 09 Oct 06 | Eu Death of a cour 09 Oct 06 | Eu

RELATED INTERI Berlin film festi Novaya Gazeta The BBC is not n content of exterr

TOP EUROPE STC 'Substantial' Du Arms suspect fr Greece rejects News fee

MOST POPULAR MOST E-MAILED

Pentagon ban: makers E-mail is ruini Sydney police Airmen told 'n Hope over hig jab

Most popular no

" She stood for values that she believed were of the utmost importance and she paid an ultimate price "

Garry Kasparov Russian opposition activist

"Anna had a lot of courage... maybe to see a woman who is very courageous looking for the truth may help us all be more courageous," he added.

The journalist's son, Ilya Politkovsky, said he still was hoping that his mother's killers would be brought to justice.

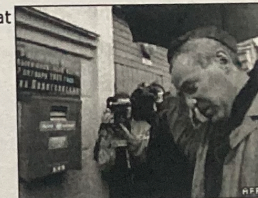
"It is really important for me to see my mother laughing in the film, walking around, as a normal person, a normal mother, not a soldier," Ilya said.

"I am sure there will be an outcome of this investigation. I am hoping that the whole story will come out, from the people or person who ordered the killing, to the killer," he said.

'Cover-up'

Russian opposition activist Garry Kasparov - a former world chess champion - also attended the premiere of the film.

"I think it's very important that the story of Anna Politkovskaya is presented from different angles," Mr Kasparov said.



Mr Kasparov says the Politkovskaya investigation is a "mockery"

"The film includes her own words, those who supported her and loved her, and the villains who hated her, and most likely were behind her horrible murder... she stood for values that she believed were of the utmost importance and she paid an ultimate price.

"We have seen no tangible results yet from the investigation into the murder of Anna Politkovskaya. I think the investigation is another mockery and cover-up that Putin's regime uses to hide its real intentions," he said.

Bergkraut said he did not set out to discover who was behind the journalist's murder.

At the end of the documentary, there is no answer to her son's question: who gave the orders?

E-mail this to a friend Printable version

Bookmark with: Delicious Digg reddit Facebook StumbleUpon What are these?

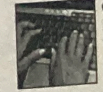
FEATURES, VIEWS, ANALYSIS Iraq war dead The campaign for British personnel to be honoured on stamps



Contentious cuisine Why the Japanese persist in hunting and eating whales



Out How free inbc



Variety

NEWS REVIEWS VIDEO BLOGS CHARTS FEATURES PEOPLE PROJECTS COMPANIES

Q

Powered by Digg

Contact Us

Sign up for

FILM

Posted: Sun., Feb. 10, 2008, 6:00pm PT

TALK BACK! DISG EMAIL PRINT CONTACT RSS

'Anna' sends out strong message Film played to packed festival fringe screening

By NICK HOLDSWORTH

A documentary tribute to the murdered Russian journalist and Kremlin critic Anna Politkovskaya was turned down by the Berlinale's Forum.

Instead, "Letter to Anna" by Swiss producer/director Eric Bergkraut, played to a packed festival fringe screening Sunday that counted Russian opposition coalition leader and former chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov, ex-German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, Bob Geldof and Catherine Deneuve in its audience of around 300.

The film tells the story of the campaigning reporter's life -- and tragic slaying in the lobby of Moscow apartment where she was gunned down in October 2006.

Bergkraut met and filmed Politkovskaya during the making of his documentary "Coco the Dove From Chechnya," about the Chechen women who record human rights abuses by the Russian army.

"Anna was part of that film -- not the main protagonist and I ended up with lots of wonderful, strong footage of her," Bergkraut said. "When I heard the news on the radio that she had been murdered I was shocked but not surprised."

Narrated by Susan Sarandon, the film tells the story of the fearless and dedicated campaigner for human rights through the footage Bergkraut shot in 2003-04 and through the eyes of her children Ilya and Vera, Novaya Gazeta newspaper editor Dmitriy Muratov, ex-husband Alexander Politkovsky, and anti-Putin activist Kasparov.

Ilya Politkovsky said the family had seen and approved of the film. "The film has absolutely no chance of being shown in Russia on television (which is under heavy state control) but maybe it could get arthouse release."

Bergkraut confirmed Sunday that the film had been turned down by the Forum. The screening at the hastily arranged venue was the film's first public screening and he hoped it would be more formally presented as a premiere at a festival soon.

Deneuve, who has recorded a voice over for a French language version, told Variety that "it was the least I could do to help fight for the truth."

MORE ARTICLES:

Producer Aiken adding to packed slate

Warner Music to distribute 'Chemical'

Sanders to direct 'MOT!' docu

Telecinco dials two

Misr displays ART work

Schulberg in Berlin with double punch

At Sunday's screening Kasparov said he did not have "no doubts" that the order came from

Bergkraut urged Putin and world leaders including Merkel, French president Nicolas Sarkozy, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and US president George Bush to help reveal the truth.

The Ultimate Scriptwriter
www.finaldraft.com

Links posted in this story: Anna Politkovskaya, Bob Geldof, Catherine Deneuve, Eric Bergkraut, Joschka Fischer, Susan Sarandon

TALKBACK:

VIEW ALL DISCUSSIONS | COMMENT ON THIS ARTICLE

Have an opinion about this article? Be the first to comment

FESTIVAL CENTRAL:

Variety is your first stop for news, reviews, photos and video from the world's best film festivals.

SXSW - South by Southwest Film & Music Festival

- SXSW Lineup
- SXSW Photos: Austin Restaurants
- SXSW Photos: Texas Film Hall of Fame
- All Photos from South by Southwest

SUBSCRIBE LOGIN ABOUT US ADVERTISE CONTACT US

RELATED SITES: Variety Asia Variety Japan Video Business ContentAgenda SX

© 2008 Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Use of this website is subject to our Terms of Use.

MEDIA & PUBLISHING:

Variety | Variety Asia | Variety Japan | LA 411 | New York 411 | Video Business | ContentAgenda | Broadcasting & Cable | Multichannel News | Publishers Weekly | Library Journal | School Library Journal | Criticas | Tradeshow Week

MANUFACTURING:

Design News | Control Engineering | Plant Engineering | Purchasing | Purchasing Data | Logistics Management | Industrial Distribution | Supply Chain Management Review | Modern Materials Handling | Manufacturing Business Technology | Kellysearch

BUSINESS & PRINTING:

DM2-DecisionMaker | Zbb | Packaging Digest | Graphics Arts Monthly | Graphics Arts Blue Book | Converting | Expert Business Source | Hotfrog USA | The Industry Measure

GIFTS & FURNISHINGS:

Furniture Today | Home Textiles Today | Home Accents Today | Casual Living | Kids Today | Gifts & Decorative Accessories | Playthings | Jirs, Circ, Keystone

HOSPITALITY:

Hotels | RR1 | Chain Leader | Foodservice Equipment & Supplies

Variety

NEWS REVIEWS VIDEO BLOGS CHARTS FEATURES PEOPLE PROJECTS COMPANIES

Q

GO Powered By

Contact Us Sign up for

FILM

Posted: Thurs., Mar. 6, 2008, 12:24pm PT

TALK BACK! DISQ EMAIL PRINT CONTACT RSS

Hot Docs

Letter to Anna: The Story of Journalist Politkovskaya's Death

Ein Artikel zu viel: Der Mord an Anna Politkovskaja (Documentary -- Germany-Switzerland)

By DEREK ELLEY

A.P.S.72 Prods. (Switzerland)/Zero One Films (Germany) production, in association with SF, ZDF/3sat, MDR/RBB, Cinema for Peace. (International sales: Accent Films Intl., Montreux, Switzerland.) Produced by Eric Bergkraut, Co-producers, Jaka Bizilj, Thomas Kufus. Directed by Eric Bergkraut. Screenplay, Bergkraut, Therese Obrecht-Hodler.

With: Anna Politkovskaya, Vera Politkovskaya, Andrei Mironov, Yuri Chaika, Elena Kudimova, Dmitri Muratov, Ilya Politkovsky, Andrei Nekrasov, Elena Tregubova, Alexander Politkovsky, Boris Berezovsky, Saljap Gashayeva, Garry Kasparov. Narrator: Susan Sarandon (English version). (Russian, English dialogue)

The 2006 murder of crusading Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya gets a cool-headed, quietly inoscent analysis in "Letter to Anna." Swiss-based documaker Eric Bergkraut, who'd come to know Politkovskaya while making "Coca: The Dove From Chechnya," mixes leftover footage from that docu with interviews conducted after the journal's death, resulting in a film that's part personal tribute, part sociopolitical essay. Very much in the liberal-humanist tradition of Euro docu, rather than harder-nosed investigative journalism, pic will fit comfortably into fest and upscale tube skeks.

After being strangely turned down by the Berlin fest's Forum section (in which "Coca" had played in 2005), docu was privately shown to an invited audience on Feb. 10, during (but separate from) the Berlinale. A 50-minute version was broadcast on German TV later that month. Feature-length version will officially world-preem at Toronto's Hot Docs fest in April.

Bergkraut puts his creepiest material right up front, starting with a reconstruction of the fateful afternoon of Oct. 7, when Politkovskaya was shot by an unknown assassin by the elevator in her apartment building. CCTV screen caps show Politkovskaya entering the building seconds before her death and also her killer, his face obscured by a baseball hat.

Helmer had several hours of unused footage of Politkovskaya walking and talking during 2003-04 from his docu on Chechnya, a subject on which the journalist had taken a fierce stand, branding the Russian government's policy

"genocide." Three other journalists for Novaya Gazeta -- one of the last independent newspapers in Russia -- had already met with untimely deaths, so Politkovskaya knew exactly the high-stakes game she was playing. As her editor Dmitri Muratov says, "Her only protection was her name."

Politkovskaya always claimed she was against the policies of Putin rather than the president himself, though no one interviewed is in any doubt that the order to kill her must have come from very high up in the Russian government. In a supreme irony, Politkovskaya died on Putin's own birthday (she was 48; he was 54).

Docu's weirdest aspect is the sight of a woman talking about her probable fate some two years before it actually transpired. Very calmly, and very rationally, Politkovskaya makes it clear her death is likely, and that she has always prepared herself for it, like a soldier. In 2004, she had barely survived being poisoned on a plane en route to covering the Beslan school hostage crisis.

Though all interviewees -- from colorful businessman Boris Berezovsky to opposition leader (and former chessmeister) Garry Kasparov -- paint contempo Russia as a lawless dictatorship, Politkovskaya herself comes across as an elegant, soft-spoken but stubborn woman for whom the situation was just a fact of life. But as members of her family -- including ex-husband Alexander Politkovsky and daughter Vera -- repeatedly hint, there was more to her than Bergkraut's camera actually captures.

Pic could do with some tightening in its repetitious second half, which has too many shots of Politkovskaya walking around Moscow. But HD tech credits are of high quality throughout, and English narration by Susan Sarandon matches Bergkraut's approach in its non-heckoring tone.

Camera (color, HD), Laurent Stoop; editor, Vendula Roudnicka; music, Marie-Jeanne Serero. Quatuor Modigliani; sound, Roberto Filafarro; assistant director, Anja Kofmel. Reviewed at Berliner Ensemble theater, Berlin, Feb. 10, 2008. (In Hot Docs Film Festival, Toronto -- competing.) Running time: 82 MIN.

Variety is striving to present the most thorough review database. To report inaccuracies in review credits, please click here. We do not currently list below-the-line credits, although we hope to include them in the future. Please note we may not respond to every suggestion. Your assistance is appreciated.

Web Exclusive

TALK BACK! DISQ EMAIL PRINT CONTACT RSS

Links posted in this story: 3sat, Accent Films, Andrei Mironov, Andrei Nekrasov, Anna Politkovskaya, Berliner Ensemble, Eric Bergkraut, Laurent Stoop, One Films, Susan Sarandon, Thomas Kufus

TALKBACK:

VIEW ALL DISCUSSIONS | COMMENT ON THIS REVIEW

Have an opinion about this article? Be the first to comment

FESTIVAL CENTRAL:

Variety is your first stop for news, reviews, photos and video from the world's best film festivals.

SXSW - South by Southwest Film & Music Festival

- SXSW Lineup
• SXSW Photos: Austin Restaurants
• SXSW Photos: Texas Film Hall of Fame