

BRITSPOTTING

The annual Britspotting Festival has remained small in the best of ways. Its charm lies in the fact that it's possible for one human being to watch most of the program (unlike, say, the Berlinale, where even those who survive six films a day will have seen only a minute fraction of those on offer). This year's highlight is a film that's been much talked about in its country of origin, but has gotten little exposure anywhere else so far. *This Is England* by Shane Meadows goes back to 1983, when 12-year-old Shaun, a bullying victim, a slightly pudgy, friendless loner with a boy's giggle, is adopted by group of incongruously playful skinheads. The fun turns serious, however, when a former member of their group returns from prison and attempts to turn them into a National Front commando. A heartfelt film full of surprising moments, it shatters many clichés and stays close to its protagonist, played with impressive intensity by Thomas Turgoose. Britspotting always attracts some big names, as with *Chromophobia* (Martha Fiennes), which stars Kristin Scott Thomas and Penelope Cruz, or the new Ken Loach/Paul Laverty collaboration *It's a Free World...*, in which a one-woman job recruitment agency faces the moral issue of legal and illegal immigrant labor. Director Asif Kapadia will be present for a Q&A after the screening of *Far North*, a dark fairytale set in a land of war, deprivation, and an archaic logic, and the festival's familiar atmosphere offers many other opportunities for talks and discussions with filmmakers. It will close with Martin McDonagh's *In Bruges* starring bad boy and heartthrob Colin Farrell as a hitman on vacation in Bruges. /ÄT Britspotting British and Irish Film Festival, Apr 10-16, fsk Kino, Segitzdamm 2, Kreuzberg, U-Bhf Kottbusser Tor; Hackesche Höfe Kino, Rosenthaler Str. 40, Mitte, S-Bhf Hackescher Markt, www.britspotting.de

