



## 74th IFFMH: The 2025 Retrospective

### “Cry Your Eyes Out – The Aesthetics of Grand Emotions in Melodrama”

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Cry Your Eyes Out – the name says it all! The International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg, whose 74th edition will be held from 6 to 16 November, is dedicating this year’s retrospective to the aesthetics of grand emotions in melodrama. In keeping with the IFFMH’s key visual for 2025, the retrospective will also be asking: “Feel Good?!”, that is, whether we are comfortable watching films that make us cry. Why are we doing this?

Hannes Brühwiler, curator of the retrospective, and festival director Dr Sascha Keilholz have selected a total of 12 works from 1945 to 2012 that invite viewers to rediscover the significance of this subgenre in the history of filmmaking while indulging in the great emotional power of cinema. The selection of films includes key American works that reflect Hollywood’s formative role in creating melodrama, as well as works from Japan, Egypt, Sweden, France and the United Kingdom. The diversity of this film genre will be reflected not only geographically, but also in terms of content: classically, these dramas focus on female characters, although they are directed by men. The feelings of the main characters are at odds with society and its values, so that melodrama can also be interpreted as a genre offering a critique of society.

Curator Hannes Brühwiler: “Our aim with this year’s retrospective is to bring the emotional power of cinema to life and to pay tribute to the range of aesthetics that filmmakers employ in order to show grand emotions on the silver screen. This ties in with last year’s retrospective, which focused on ‘Bodies in Film’, as we now turn our attention to cinema that depicts emotional extremes. After all, where can we better indulge in the full intensity of human emotions than in a cinema?”

#### **Female perspectives in melodrama**

The retrospective takes a particularly varied look at the way the fates of women are portrayed: first and foremost, in Michael Curtiz’s ›**Mildred Pierce**‹ (1945), in which a single mother attempts to provide a better life for her daughters but reaps only ingratitude from one of them. Joan Crawford received an Oscar for her performance in the leading role. In Douglas Sirk’s ›**All That Heaven Allows**‹ (1955) – one of the most influential melodramas in film history – a widow causes a scandal by falling in love with her gardener, a younger man. Kimono designer

Kiwa Funaki achieves financial success in one of the rediscoveries in this year's retrospective, Kōzaburō Yoshimuras ›**Night River**‹ (1956). However, her independence as a businesswoman conflicts with the traditional ideas held by her family and her male admirers. Men also queue up to see Rose, the young prostitute in Paul Vecchiali's ›**Rose la Rose: fille publique**‹ (1986). But when she falls in love with Julien, a craftsman, this inevitably leads to conflict. In this film, Paul Vecchiali explores class relations as well as female sexuality. In Lars von Trier's unsettling drama ›**Breaking the Waves**‹ (1996), a young woman's religious fanaticism even leads to sexual obsession. Emily Watson's portrayal of the main character, Bess, enabled her breakthrough.

As different as all these female characters and their fates may be, they share a condition of being isolated in their own circumstances and of facing an existential conflict with social conventions, class differences and traditional role models that threaten to break them.



›Night River‹ © Kadokawa Corporation

### Social commentary and contemporary history

Melodramas show their protagonists in exceptional situations, revealing problematic social structures as if under a magnifying glass. Peter Ho-sun Chan's ›**Hongkong Love Affair**‹ (1996) is more than a love story; it also deals with cultural belonging and the question of what the handover of Hong Kong to China meant for the people there. In ›**Cairo Station**‹ (1958) – a classic of Arab cinema – the rejected advances of a penniless newspaper seller rock the railway station of this North African megacity. Eleven-year-old Budd also finds himself in the role of an outsider in Terence Davies' autobiographical work ›**The Long Day**‹



›**Closes**‹ (1992), about growing up in conservative Christian Liverpool in the 1950s. In the style of a thriller, Ingmar Bergman conveys the fear of loneliness in ›**The Passion of Anna**‹ (1969). While the television reports on the horrors of the Vietnam War and animals die mysteriously in the forest, Andreas (Max von Sydow) and his mysterious neighbour Anna (Liv Ullmann) begin an affair.

### True love and longing

The retrospective touches on the emotional heart of melodrama by focusing on stories about true love that is ultimately thwarted: the longing for a life that is yet un-lived or even impossible. This is what Nickie Ferrante (Cary Grant) and the self-confident singer Terry McKay (Deborah Kerr) experience: what begins as a promising encounter on a luxury liner is abruptly stymied by fate. With ›**An Affair to Remember**‹ (1957), a remake of his 1939 film ›Love Affair‹, Leo McCarey created one of Hollywood's most defining melodramas, which spawned further remakes and served as the basis for ›Sleepless in Seattle‹ and other films. Visually spectacular and with a keen sense of the transience of the moment, Wong Kar-Wai's ›**In the Mood for Love**‹ (2000) stages the encounter between the unforgettable screen couple Maggie Cheung and Tony Leung as two lonely hearts. In contrast, Felix van Groeningen's multiple award-winning ›**The Broken Circle Breakdown**‹ (2012) takes us into the bluegrass scene, where Eli and Didier meet at a concert and fall in love. Everything seems perfect until fate strikes in the form of an incurable illness, destroying the happiness of this budding family.

Passionate empathy and sympathy are thus more than welcome – and if the audience sheds a tear or two, that's entirely in keeping with the curators' intentions. The retrospective will be accompanied by a discussion featuring a panel of experts. Admission to the discussion is free; the venue, date and panellists will be announced in due course.

### The films in chronological order:

- ›**Mildred Pierce**‹ Director: Michael Curtiz, USA, 1945
- ›**All That Heaven Allows**‹ Director: Douglas Sirk, USA, 1955
- ›**Night River**‹ Director: Kōzaburō Yoshimura, Japan, 1956
- ›**An Affair to Remember**‹ Director: Leo McCarey, USA, 1957
- ›**Cairo Station**‹ Director: Youssef Chahine, Egypt, 1958
- ›**The Passion of Anna**‹ Director: Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1969



- ›**Rose la Rose: fille publique**‹ Director: Paul Vecchiali, France, 1986
- ›**The Long Day Closes**‹ Director: Terence Davies, UK, 1992
- ›**Hongkong Love Affair**‹ Director: Peter Ho-Sun Chan, Hong Kong, 1996
- ›**Breaking the Waves**‹ Director: Lars von Trier, Denmark, 1996
- ›**In the Mood for Love**‹ Director: Wong Kar-Wai, Hong Kong, 2000
- ›**The Broken Circle Breakdown**‹ Director: Felix van Groeningen, Belgium, 2012

**The full schedule for the 74th IFFMH will be announced on 17 October.  
Tickets will go on sale on 20 October.**

## About the IFFMH

With “New Film Experience” as its credo, the IFFMH has been venturing new, interdisciplinary perspectives on and through the art of film since 1952. This makes it the longest-running film festival in Germany after the Berlinale, and it continues to be a major platform for cultural, social and political dialogue. With each subsequent edition, the IFFMH, as a festival for the public in cinemas, invites festivalgoers to discover the rising stars of the international film scene as well as to follow the careers of established filmmakers and to become more familiar with film in the context of other art forms.

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