



Charlotte Gainsbourg



Giovanna Mezzogiorno



Kim Hye-ja



Julie Sokolowski



Isabelle Huppert

WOMEN ON THE VERGE

Strong, determined female characters ruled the celluloid scene at the 2009 Toronto International Film Festival. Chick flicks? Hardly. These films feature women in the throes of melancholy, madness and obsession.

1 Chaos theory Stories of seizures, walk-outs and boos dogged Lars Von Trier's latest twitchy endurance test in Toronto, which is, of course, just how the Danish director would like it. Scandal aside, there's no doubt that Charlotte Gainsbourg burrows deeply into her grieving character's mounting insanity in *Antichrist*. Her fearlessness makes an essentially silly film more than a little bit scary.

2 He's just not that into you The "he" in Marco Bellocchio's operatic period piece *Vincere* is none other than Benito Mussolini. The film relates the strange tale of Ida Dalsler, the woman who was seduced and abandoned by Il Duce during his ascent to power in Italy. Giovanna Mezzogiorno gives a bravura performance as a woman hopelessly devoted to a tyrant.

3 Mother knows best The protagonist of South Korean master Bong Joon-ho's stylish thriller *Mother* redefines the term "unconditional love." Thrown by the news that her son may have murdered a schoolgirl, this widowed acupuncturist (played by TV star Kim Hye-ja) does her own investigation—and in so doing reveals that the apple has not fallen far from the (family) tree.

4 Jesus Christ superstar Like many teenagers, Céline (Julie Sokolowski) has a serious crush on somebody: The problem is that the object of her affection is Jesus Christ. French director Bruno Dumont's troubling TIFF-prizewinner *Hadewijch* takes Céline's predicament very seriously, gradually deepening in implication to examine the contemporary moment's uneasy relationship to authentic religious commitment.

5 Out of Africa! Claire Denis and Isabelle Huppert are among the best in the world at what they do, so an eventual collaboration was inevitable. Huppert is mesmerizing in Denis' *White Material* as Maria, the manager of a dilapidated African coffee plantation: At a politically volatile moment when all other French nationals are fleeing the country, she clings stubbornly—or maybe pathologically—to an adopted home that clearly doesn't want her. **ADAM NAYMAN**



PROFILE THRILL RIDE

Caterina Scorsone tangoes with Mel Gibson in her new big-screen thriller.

Caterina Scorsone's first acting gig isn't on her imdb.com filmography—*Mr. Dressup* probably doesn't impress too many L.A. casting agents—but playing alongside Casey and Finnegan made quite an impression on the then eight-year-old girl. "I had grown up with *Mr. Dressup*, so being on his show was amazing," recalls the 28-year-old Toronto-born actress who is best known for her star turn as the psychic FBI detective on the TV series *Missing*. This month, she heads to the big screen in the action thriller *Edge of Darkness* alongside Mel Gibson. Based on the hit TV series, this taut remake follows homicide detective Thomas Craven (Gibson) as he investigates the tragic death of his daughter. Scorsone is coy about revealing too many details about her character, who is key to solving the daughter's mysterious death. "She's pivotal to the reveal," she says. "You'll just have to see for yourself!" Aside from working with Gibson, whom she describes as "very helpful," Scorsone says that she enjoyed the project because it tapped into very human, universal themes. "It explores repressed emotions and memories—those aspects of our humanity that we are not brave enough to look at." **NOAH LEHAVA**

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