



## Cinema of substance

**The recent Mumbai film festival showcased some exceptional films that were a delight for lovers of good cinema**

**H**OLLYWOOD may be scraping the bottom of the barrel but once in a while it comes out with some exceptional films, like for example *Christina*, directed by Larry Brand, which was easily the best of the 130-odd Mumbai Academy of the Moving Image (MAMI) film festival which concluded recently.

*Christina* is set in Germany towards the end of World War II with the action centred on a German Fraulein (Nicki Aycox), who lives in a luxurious apartment and with the best of food and comforts unknown to war-ravaged Berlin. When the American GI Billy (Jordan Belfi) lands there, dance music is playing but the windows are blackened to keep the aura of a decrepit city well outside bounds.

But what this secretive girl is trying to hide will gradually be unfurled after Inspector Reinhardt (Stephen Lang) arrives halfway through the film but easily steals the show. There are only three characters (shades of *Sleuth* starring Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine) and all the action is shot inside that vast apartment. Billy has made plans to take her to the United States, but there's a catch. That the girl has had a sleazy past gradually comes to light. What's more? There is a child involved. Whatever happened to it? That is Reinhardt's mission. It is 90 minutes of taut, suspenseful drama with the three characters glowing and dimming with rare intensity. It is a brilliant screenplay and all three players get under the skin of their roles. Brilliant cinema. Look for it when it is released shortly.

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