



DRIVING FORCE: Thomas Woschitz's 30-minute short "Girls and Cars," the third part of his Josef trilogy, will play in Un Certain Regard.

'Hotel' among offbeat entries

Austria repped in main Competition, Un Certain Regard and Critics Week

By **CATHY MEILS**

Jessica Hausner's sophomore effort "Hotel," in Un Certain Regard, was almost a no-brainer, following the critical success of her debut "Lovely Rita."

Production company Coop 99 was still putting the finishing touches on the film, described as an atmospheric play on the horror genre and, according to one insider, "very unusual for an Austrian film."
Variety senior film critic

Derek Elley called "Rita" "a deliciously observed, ironic take on middle-class Austrian life through an introverted teen's eyes," and noted the film was "a strong step up to the feature plate by 28-year-old Jessica Hausner after a couple of well-remarked shorts."

Hausner says the plot "revolves around a secret that obviously appears to be threatening and dangerous, but which is something that can't be resolved: the fear of the dark, of

loneliness and the inexplicable."

Given the dark, edgy tone and subject matter of "Rita," and its out-of-the-blue, horrific plot twist following a fairly conventional troubled teen tale, Certain Regard selectors are once again putting one of Europe's most bracing and disturbing young filmmakers front and center.

Production company Amour Fou, which splashed onto Cannes with four films last year, has Thomas Woschitz's 30-

minute short "Girls and Cars," the third part of his "Josef" trilogy, in Critics Week.

The latest installment concerns four lumberjacks, all named Josef, who leave Europe to search Canada for the fifth Josef. Along the way, the quirky tale draws in a hamburger joint employee, a pin-up girl, twin strippers, a car saleswoman, a taxi driver and, of course, lots of cool cars.

"It's not the film we expected," says Amour Fou's Alexan-

der Dumreicher-Ivanceanu. Its competition hopeful "Ma Mere" didn't make the cut.

The biggest surprise is Coop 99's co-production (with Germany) competition entry "The Edukators" by Hans Weingartner. Also a second film by a young director — his first film, "The White Sound," won the prestigious Max Ophüls prize in 2001 — "The Edukators" is a political comedy and a love story featuring "Good Bye Lenin!" star Daniel Brühl.