

A FOREIGN AFFAIR

Screen correspondents profile the five nominees for the best foreign-language film Oscar



BEAUFORT (ISRAEL)

(Metro Communications, Movie Plus)

A last-minute replacement for the popular *The Band's Visit*, which had too much English dialogue for Academy regulations, *Beaufort* has proved as worthy a contender and is the first Israeli film since 1984's *Beyond The Walls* to score a best foreign-language Oscar nod.

Based on the novel by Ron Leshem, *Beaufort* tells the story of the last Israeli stronghold in Lebanon, before forces were

pulled out in 2000.

Directed by Joseph Cedar, the production was one of the most complex Israel has seen, with a great deal of work going into creating the film's claustrophobic sets.

With a cast made up of some of the most promising young Israeli stage and TV actors, the film was unveiled last year in Berlin where it picked up the best director Silver Bear. Kino International released the film in the US.

DAN FAINARU



MONGOL (KAZAKHSTAN)

(Eurasia Film)

A dazzling historical epic about the young Genghis Khan, *Mongol* explores the legendary ruler's rise to power across the vast landscapes of Central Asia.

Directed by Setgei Bodrov (*Prisoner Of The Mountains*) the film had its world premiere at Toronto last year and also screened at the Rome Film Fest. Bodrov wrote the film with Arif Aliyev, based on scholarly accounts.

Sales agent Beta Film has sold a raft of territories including The Works for the UK and Hopscotch for Australia/New Zealand and Picturehouse for North America, where it will open this summer.

The film took \$2.7m on its opening weekend in Russia in September and has now taken \$6.5m. A Kazakhstan-Russia-Germany co-production, *Mongol's* foreign-language nomination is a first for Kazakhstan.

LEON FORDE



KATYN (POLAND)

(Akson Studio)

When word emerged in 2004 that Andrzej Wajda was developing *Katyn*, it was clear the film would be the director's most personal. *Katyn* examines the 1940 massacre of some 20,000 Polish prisoners of war, including Wajda's own father, by Soviet troops.

Wajda started filming in October 2006. The \$5.8m film drew attention to a new fund