

## 'Tsotsi' against 57 for Oscar nod

South Africa's official entry for the 2006 Academy Awards, Gavin Hood's 'Tsotsi', has secured a string of awards on its road to the Oscars and is now up against 57 other films vying for nomination in the Best Foreign Language Film category.

"The award is considered the Holy Grail for international films seeking to break into the US market, and the competition is stiff," said Helen Kuun of Ster-Kinekor Distribution Marketing.

Brazil's entry, Breno Silveira's biopic, 'Two Sons of Francisco', which follows the lives of country music duo Zeze Di Camargo and Luciano and their rise to fame, is the highest-grossing domestic film in the last 20 years, beating Hollywood blockbusters to become the number one film in the country.

Mexico's entry, 'On the Other Side' by Gustavo Loza, is a triptych featuring three youngsters who venture from home into unknown territory, set in Mexico, Cuba, Spain and Morocco. The film has been seen as excessively heart-tugging by some critics.

India's official entry, Amol Palekar's 'Paheli', has done well in the US, but did not set the box office on fire in its home country and was panned by most Indian critics. Another sentimental film, it tells the story of a friendly ghost who falls in love.

From China comes director Chen Kaige's high-profile martial arts fantasy epic, 'The Promise'. The US \$35 million film is the most expensive Chinese film ever made and features an international cast drawn from Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and mainland China. It follows the story of a princess who becomes the object of affection and intrigue of a duke, a general and a slave.

'Tsotsi', based on the novel by Athol Fugard about six days in the violent life of a young Johannesburg gangster, is in stark contrast. Director Gavin Hood attributes the film's success to its authenticity. "The characters and the themes represented in 'Tsotsi' have had a profound effect on audiences around the world, and we have strong hopes for its performance at the Oscars."

A story of hope and redemption, 'Tsotsi' challenges the audience to change its attitude towards the young gangster whose has made bad choices in his life based on difficult circumstances. The word 'tsotsi' means an urban criminal, street thug or gang member. The film will be distributed in South Africa by Ster-Kinekor Distribution, a division of Ster-Kinekor (Pty) Ltd.

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