

Festival News

BIFF Celebrates its 10th Anniversary in October 2009

Bergen, Norway's beautiful capital of the Fjords, celebrates **Bergen International Film Festival's** 10th anniversary in October 2009. BIFF has become one of the largest and most important film festivals in the Nordic region. 44.000 admissions were registered at the 2008 edition of the festival, which screened 140 titles.

The festival is screening a great mix of new international fiction and documentary films. The competition section Cinema Extraordinaire is dedicated to discoveries and innovative fiction films. The festival also has a competition section for documentaries. In addition BIFF also screens upcoming theatrical releases and several domestic productions.

The strong 2008 documentary section consisted of about 70 productions – half of the programme, and many of these were linked to educational purposes in schools, as well as panel discussions and seminars. To curate the programme content in different sections has become BIFF's hallmark. For instance, BIFF 2008 presented a special sidebar devoted



Anna Melikyan's Mermaid

to the U.S. presidential election with eight films about former presidential candidates and presidents. Also, a seminar about the Americanization of Norwegian politics was arranged.

The sidebar Checkpoints is a collaboration with The Rafto Foundation – which annually grants the prestigious Rafto Prize to individuals or organizations working for human rights. At BIFF 2009 the Rafto jury, consisting of former Rafto Prize winners, will grant an award to the best film in competition.



The festival also has a strong focus on music, and invites bands to play live as well as screening music films. BIFF 2008 hosted gigs and films with Canadian heavy metal band Anvil and Chinese punk rockers Subs, and ten other music docs were presented.

News from Copenhagen

Two prominent Danish festivals will emerge as one in 2009, offering local audiences a dynamic and vibrant overview of world cinema, and international directors, producers and studios an exciting platform to exhibit their films. CPH:PIX will take place between 16–26 April 2009, in the place of the NatFilm Festival and Copenhagen International Film Festival.

The artistic profile of CPH:PIX is drawn up by Festival Director Jacob Neiiendam and Head of Programming Niels Lind Larsen, who used to be the programme heads of Copenhagen IFF and Natfilm respectively. 'This has given us a unique opportunity to start from scratch and ask ourselves what a new festival anno 2009 should strive for,' says Neiiendam. 'It was obvious to us that we should look to the future, which is also why we chose the name we did - celluloid is a thing of the past, but visual storytelling and the filmmaking craft is used across a constantly expanding range of new media platforms. The role of the film festival is changing along with the technology, and we aim to be on the forefront of this development.' However, computer games, 3-D and collaborations across artistic genres and cultural institutions will not overshadow the backbone of the festival, which continues to be a strong and varied film programme. It is highlighted by a Competition Programme dedicated to feature directing debuts. The 10-12 films will compete for a cash prize of 50.000 Euros, which goes to the director. 'A substantial cash prize can make all the difference to a first time filmmaker, and it is our hope that the money is used to kick start their next project,' Jacob Neiiendam adds. The festival's other main award is a distribution prize of 15.000 Euros sponsored by the

national newspaper, Politiken. This audience award goes to a film that hasn't already secured distribution in Denmark.

A fascinating strand of the new structure, CPH:PIX are proud to premiere the exciting FILM-ART-FILM project during its first edition in April 2009. Five Danish acclaimed filmmakers will create five different films in collaboration with five equally renowned visual artists. The pairings will include: Pernille Fischer Christensen (A Soap) and Cathrine Raben Davidsen; Christoffer Boe (Reconstruction) and Kristian von Hornsleth; Dagur Kari (Dark Horse) and Christina Hamre; Lone Scherfig (Italian For Beginners) and Ulrik Møller; and Martin de Thura (Young Man Falling) and Peter Callesen.

GL Strand, the modern exhibition hall in the heart of Copenhagen, will for two weeks be transformed into an installation that will be part cinema and part exhibit. The FILM-ART-FILM project will reflect the challenging process the filmmakers and artists have gone through and how it has worked as a creative dynamo. The result will be exciting unpredictable fusions between the two artists, who each have a strong artistic expression themselves, but together they also become a manifest for the Danish creativity, innovation and high quality. 'We are thrilled to be able to present this unique project at CPH:PIX,' says Neiiendam. 'GL STRAND is famous for presenting audiences with new art and for putting art into new contexts and different framesets, not unlike what we will strive to do



CPH:DOX 2008 (photo: Kristoffer Horn)





Buster 2008 (photo: Hasse Ferrold)

with films at our new festival. Danish art is on the brink of a major international breakthrough and we hope we can help raise awareness around these extraordinary artists.'

When the Danish capital's two feature film festivals merged into CPH:PIX, two already established and popular film festivals also became part of the same family: BUSTER – Copenhagen International Film Festival for Children and Youth and CPH:DOX – Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival. These strong brands continue unchanged but strengthened under the new umbrella organisation: Copenhagen Film Festivals. Thus this new festival power station today houses Denmark's three major international film festivals: CPH:PIX (late April); BUSTER (late September) and CPH:DOX (early November). The organisation also hosts two film markets. September's COPENHAGEN FILM MARKET, exclusively for invited film professionals, has a section for new Danish feature films and one for Nordic films for Children and Youth. DOX MARKET for international documentaries is held during the festival in November.

European Film Awards

In his welcome speech to the audiences gathered for the European Film Awards, European Film Academy President Wim Wenders admitted to a secret agenda behind the location for the event. After years of trying to persuade Lars von Trier to travel to previous awards at other European locations, it was conceded that they

would come to him instead. And von Trier did indeed attend, where he and his other Dogme cohorts, Thomas Vinterberg, Kristian Levring and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen accepted an award for European Achievement in World Cinema.

In the presence of Their Royal Highnesses The Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Mary of Denmark, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen and EU Commissioner Viviane Reding, Danish news anchorman Mikael Bertelsen played host to the 1,400 guests gathered for the 21st awards at the prestigious Copenhagen Forum. Guests presenting the awards included Marianne Faithfull (UK), Julia Jentsch (Germany) and Paprika Steen (Denmark), as well as Andrzej Chyra (Poland), Mads Mikkelsen (Denmark) and Santiago Segura (Spain).



Matteo Garrone, European Director 2008 for GOMORRA (photo: Rune Evensen/ScanPix)

The evening was dominated by the stark, brutal and disturbing Italian crime drama, Gommorah. It picked up five awards, included European Film 2008, Best Director for Matteo Garrone, Best Screenplay (Maurizio Bracci, Ugo Chiti, Gianni di Gregorio, Matteo Garrone, Massimo Gaudioso and Roberto Saviano) and Best Cinematography (Marco Onorato). Tony Servillo's European Actor Award was given both for his performance in Gommorah and for his startling transformation into Giulio Andreotti in Paolo Sorrentino's *Il divo*.

The European Actress Award went to Kristen Scott Thomas for her searing performance in *I've Loved You So Long*, although theatre



Steve McQueen European Discovery 2008 for **Hunger** (photo: Jens Dige/Polfoto)

commitments prevented her from attending. Another English actress who was present, Dame Judi Dench, received one of the evening's largest ovations when she accepted the European Achievement in World Cinema.

Certainly one of the most striking debuts of the year, Turner Prize-winning artist Steve McQueen's *Hunger* earned its director the European Discovery Award, while this year's Prix FIPRESCI went to Abdellatif Kechiche for *Couscous*.

Magdalena Biedrzycka deservedly received the European Film Academy Prix D'Excellence with her costume designs for *Katyn*, Andrzej Wajda's powerful examination of the Soviet slaughter of thousands of Polish officers and citizens in the Katyn forest in 1940. Helena Trestikova's *René*, an account of the life of

habitual offender René Plášil, was awarded the European Film Academy Documentary Award, while the Prix UIP for the best short film went to *Frankie* by Darren Thornton.

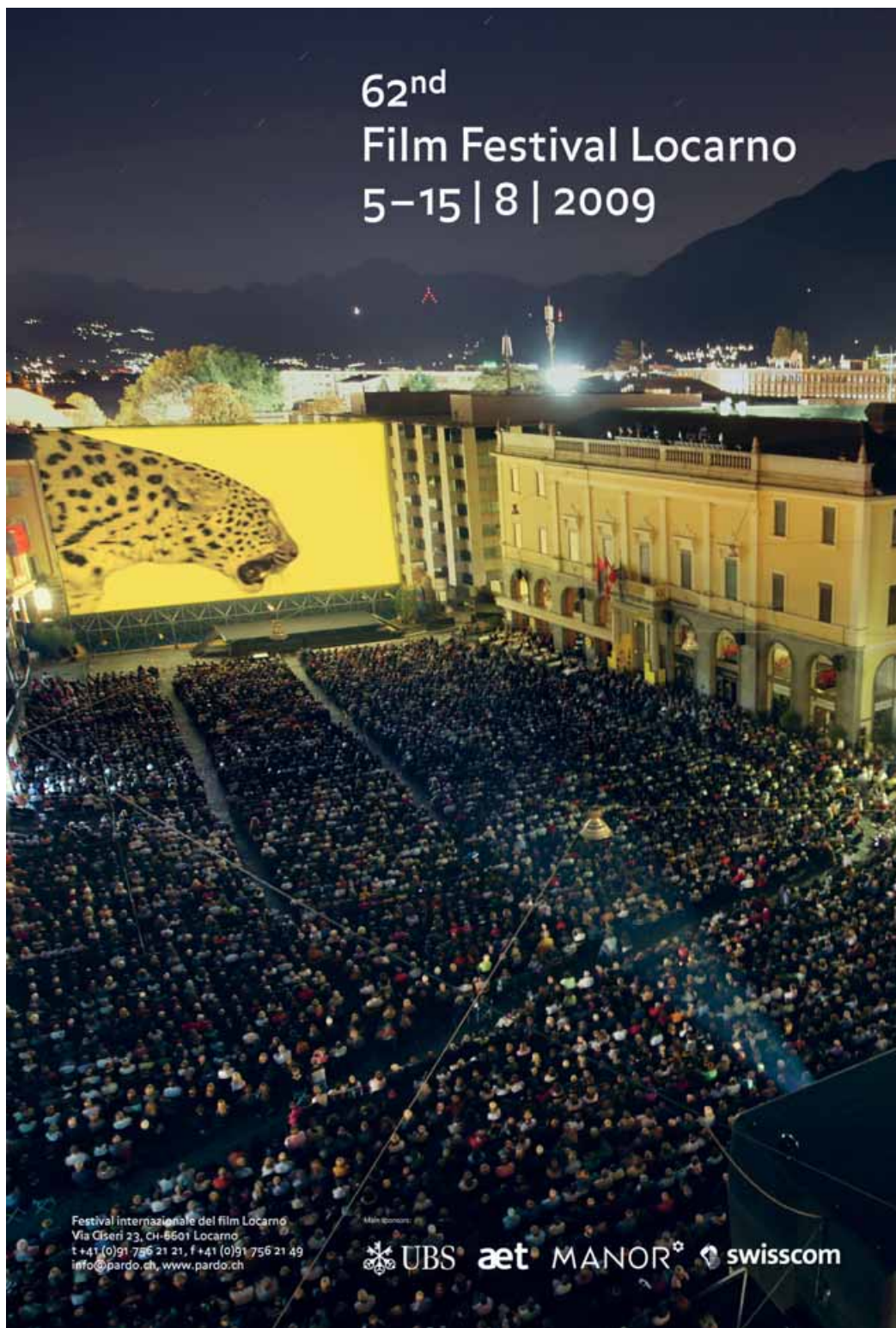
Arguably the most moving moment of the evening was the announcement of the Award for European Composer. Instead of the usual announcement, the envelope was rushed over to the orchestra who then began playing the haunting music to *Waltz with Bashir*, which filled the auditorium as composer Max Richter walked up to the podium to accept his award.

The 2009 awards ceremony will take place in Essen, in Germany's Ruhr region in North Rhine-Westphalia. The unique move is a change from the regular system that brings the European Film Awards to Berlin, home of the European Film Academy, every two years. In the years in-between the awards ceremony is held in different European film capitals such as London, Paris, Rome, Barcelona, Warsaw and now Copenhagen. Berlin's contribution of the European Film Awards 2009 to Essen are a first highlight of the European Capital of Culture year 'RUHR 2010'.



Abdellatif Kechiche, European Film Academy Critics' Award 2008- Prix FIPRESCI for **Couscous** (photo: Rune Evensen/ScanPix)





62nd Film Festival Locarno 5-15 | 8 | 2009

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