



Festival International  
de Films de Fribourg

31<sup>e</sup> 31.03 > 08.04 2017

Press release  
31 March 2017

## The 31st FIFF underlines the need for festivals

The 31st Fribourg International Film Festival (FIFF) opened on Friday evening to a full house. The audience had the chance to see the Swiss Premiere of *The Eagle Huntress*, a documentary by the British filmmaker Otto Bell about the unusual life of Aisholpan Nurgaiv, Mongolia's first female eagle trainer. The young woman travelled to Fribourg to meet the audience. FIFF was delighted to welcome a number of jury members to the opening night, including Israeli director Yaelle Kayam, who in 2016 won a prize at Fribourg for *Mountain*; the Nepalese actor and filmmaker Subarna Thapa; the Director of the Busan International Film Festival, Kang Soo-young; and the Swiss directors Georges Schwizgebel and Jan Gassmann. From Saturday, audiences can attend screenings of the short and feature films in competition and the other 140 films on this year's programme, which come from 45 different countries. Also attending the ceremony was the American writer Douglas Kennedy, who will be holding a Masterclass on Saturday 1 April. Other famous names from the world of film were among the special guests, including the Swiss filmmaker Lea Pool, who will present her latest film, *Double Sentence*, for its French-speaking Swiss Premiere on Saturday 1 April. Marco Solari, President of the Locarno Festival, kicked off proceedings for the 31st FIFF in the presence of Antoinette de Weck, Vice-Syndic of Fribourg, and François Nordmann, President of the FIFF Association, in front of an audience of high-profile figures from the worlds of politics, media and culture.

In his speech, Marco Solari praised FIFF as a festival with "fundamental human values and solidarity".

Antoinette de Weck reminded the audience that the University of Fribourg has just awarded the Peruvian writer and Nobel Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa an honorary doctorate for his book *The Civilisation of the Spectacle* "in which he criticises lightweight literature, film and art, which only seeks to entertain." The Vice-Syndic stated that consequently, Fribourg was the best place to "host a festival that has the nerve to think outside the box and offer us a view of the world from a different angle."

The FIFF President, François Nordmann, said that he was very proud to welcome Marco Solari to open the FIFF. He paid tribute to the "dynamic, quality-driven, passionate, indefatigable long-time friend of the Festival and gentleman of the Swiss film world". This year the Locarno Festival is celebrating its 70th year, and the FIFF President wanted to mark the anniversary by paying homage "to the pioneer and father of all Switzerland's festivals" and underline the "major part it has played in the field since 1947, as a driving force, a role model, a beacon and a bastion of our country's film industry". François Nordmann then welcomed the presence of writer Douglas Kennedy, who he described as a "great champion of the humanist values of American civilisation, values that are in fact shared by us all: freedom; solidarity; equality amongst all people, without discrimination; human fraternity; openness; tolerance; democracy; and the pursuit of happiness". Values which the FIFF President reminded us have "recently come under attack".

Thierry Jobin, Artistic Director of the FIFF, spoke after Marco Solari to evoke the importance of festivals in a society that claims to be open: "It is dangerous to limit the most popular art, cinema, to productions from the US and Europe, as they only represent a billion people. That would be to deprive ourselves of the view points and realities of 6 billion people, whose cinematic work is often,



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as is particularly the case in South Asia for example, more breathtaking, inventive and necessary than the films with which we are overrun. Our ignorance of more than three quarters of humanity gives rise to the most absurd alternative facts. Festivals that take risks like Locarno and Fribourg act as safeguards".

### **Talking about cinema**

As well as screenings, all week the FIFF will be offering chances to meet and debate with various guests. The first weekend will feature Douglas Kennedy's Masterclass, on Saturday 1 April, and the round table discussion about "Ghosts, death, spiritualism and denial," part of the Genre Cinema section. Throughout the week, a succession of special guests will present their films from around the world. Audiences will be able to see films that have never been screened before, such as the films in the New Territory: Nepal section, or take a behind-the-scenes look at the world of cinema with the Decryption section, which will have the honour of welcoming Freddy Buache, Pierre Rissient and Alexandre O. Philippe.

For more information on the FIFF programme : [www.fiff.ch](http://www.fiff.ch)

### **SAVE THE DATE**

Saturday 1 April, 18:30 **Masterclass Douglas Kennedy**

Sunday 2 April, 17:15 **Round table : Ghosts, death, spiritualism and denial**

Tuesday 4 April, 18:30 **Masterclass Freddy Buache**

Wednesday 5 April, 18:30 **Round table New Territory : Nepal**

Thursday 6 April, 18:30 **Skype with James Toback**

Friday 7 April, 14:00 **Think Tank : Cinema, a ghost machine?**

Saturday 8 April, 16:00 **Encounter with the International Jury**

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Please don't hesitate to contact us for any additional information, interviews or [photographs](#).

### **FIFF Management**

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