



FIFF has high hopes for 35th edition

The Fribourg International Film Festival has decided to forge ahead with its 35th edition. After lengthy consideration, and encouraged by the fact that no cases of infection have been traced back to movie theatres since the pandemic began, the FIFF team has started putting plans in place for the in-person event. Barring the shutdown of cinemas again, the Festival will be held on 19th–28th March 2021. On the programme will be the cream of Mexican and Rwandan filmmaking, as well classic musical movies, as chosen by the public. All necessary prevention and control measures will be taken over the 10 days to ensure that the public can once more enjoy the full film festival experience in complete safety.

FIFF has always sought to serve as a meeting point for different cultures and people. Never in the Festival's history has this mission been as relevant and necessary as in 2020. Following the cancellation of the 34th in-person edition in March, FIFF devised an ingenious plan to share at least part of its 2020 programme with the public. This '34½' edition featured 60 or so films as well as quite a few out-of-the-ordinary screening venues, including a mountain top and a clinic roof. FIFF also benefited from the generous support of other film festivals and institutions, such as the Maison du Grütli in Geneva, the Zurich Film Festival and the Cinémathèque suisse in Lausanne, which graciously offered to show selected films from the 2020 programme. The 34½ edition attracted over 10,000 visitors, who were able to indulge their love of films that dare to be different, open a window on to the world and are filled with emotion.

Music to the public's ears

This overwhelming show of solidarity was a source of inspiration for the upcoming 35th edition. Most notably, it has led to the launch of a brand-new section *Audience Choice*. In autumn 2020, the public was called on to choose the classic movie musicals they would most like to see in the 2021 *Genre Cinema: Music!* section. The five winners, which received 335 votes, are *Pink Floyd: The Wall*, *The Blues Brothers*, *Hair*, *West Side Story* and *Moulin Rouge!*. The FIFF team will also handpick a group of voters to present these iconic films to the Festival's audience. Thanks to this decision, FIFF is now one of the very few film festivals around the world which give the public a direct say in their programming. The audience choice idea came about during the pandemic and reflects an irrepressible yearning for community and solidarity.

Finishing touches for the 2021 programme

The selection process is in full swing and FIFF already has some gems lined up which will take the audience on a journey through the gamut of human emotions. Two sections from the 2020 programme – *New Territory: Rwanda* and *Decryption: History of Mexican Cinema by its Creators* – will be fine-tuned and shown in their entirety next spring. *New Territory: Rwanda* has been expanded to include more recent productions, while the *Decryption* section will showcase the best that Mexican cinema has to offer as chosen by Mexican filmmakers themselves. Originally, the panel included 30 or so leading directors like Arturo Ripstein, Carlos Reygadas, Guillermo del Toro and Alejandra Márquez Abella, whose film *The Good Girls* won the FIFF Grand Prix in 2019. Since March of this year, a further 15 Mexican filmmakers, among them the immensely talented and multiple Oscar-winning director Alejandro González Iñárritu, have joined the selection process. Their final choice of films as well as more details on the feature and short films in competition this year will be unveiled on 3rd March 2021. Tickets will go on sale the same day.

Enthusiasm and public safety – top priorities for FIFF 2021

A festival that invites both the public and celebrated names in the industry like del Toro and Iñárritu to help shape its programme is bound to generate enthusiasm. With these reinforcements and buoyed by the success of the 34½ edition, the FIFF team is working flat out to put all the necessary public health measures in place to ensure that everyone can enjoy the 35th edition as safely as possible. There will be fewer films, more venues, contact tracing, face masks, payment by card only and a schedule that allows enough time for the cleaning of venues between each screening. Also, the online FIFF store (fiff.ch/en/christmas-sales) is now open, full of cool gift ideas, including the all-essential protective masks. FIFF is determined to do everything within its power so that the only contagion the public will catch between 19th and 28th March 2021 is a passion for cinema, community, and shared moments of emotional connection that have been so lacking in recent times.