For its fifteenth year, the Marrakech International Film Festival is honoring a young but none the less powerful cinema, and one that is in no way less talented or diverse. This is rich cinema, and it’s Canadian cinema. This tribute, like those that have preceded it, partakes of the very identity of the Festival, which symbolizes an exceptional moment where all cultures meet and talk, making the film a universal language.

Renewing this dialogue every year between talents and intellects in the ancient city of Marrakech, and to have such creativity and inventiveness gather around the Seventh Art is to notice with pride and enthusiasm that the Marrakech International Film Festival has become that crossroads where great national and international creators invent tomorrow’s cinema.

Moreover, the Kingdom of Morocco has become this privileged destination for major movie productions and where the greatest unite.

For all these reasons and more, the Marrakech International Film Festival will continue to be the place where dreams, art and civic engagement coexist in harmony. Be it programming, tributes, masterclasses, audio-descriptions for the visually impaired, screenings on the main square of Jemaa El Fna, an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, the Marrakech International Film Festival is in itself a combination, a fusion, between cinema and humanity.

While the world and its terrible news worries more than it reassures, we shall recall that in the face of adversity and misfortune that affect so many men and women, and at a time when thousands of humans seek refuge, fleeing brutality and violence, cinema is, today and more than ever, called to testify. About that, there are so many views to consider about today’s world with this year’s young talents.

Through the Cinecoles Competition, we welcome young Moroccan directors of tomorrow to express themselves and share this moment when culture and consciousness meet. Our purpose is that, by involving our young film students in this celebration, and ensuring they have the chance to meet the immensely talented people that will be here in Marrakech, we will meet the challenge of a talented Moroccan cinema.

I wish you all a Festival that will fill your expectations and help us build a better future.
To live is to change

Don’t be astonished to find out that “Ecran” magazine has changed. It is now lighter, yet richer. So, in order to celebrate the new “Ecran”, the editorial team wants to tell you how Marrakech International Film Festival, your festival is made…

It’s made with passion and hard work! All year long, hundreds of women and men, with enormous talent, apply themselves to ensure that this grand cinema gathering is ready to receive you in what is becoming an internationally renowned film festival! We want to introduce you to some of these ladies and gentlemen... Among them, some speak for the first time about what they do.

“Ecran” is glad to put a spotlight on those who are not used to be the center of attention on a stage. They told us, in their own language and through their art and expertise, how this amazing festival works, in its smallest everyday aspects, starting with tonight’s opening ceremony.

Enjoy your reading and, most importantly, enjoy your festival.

So they said

“In the current edition, 90% of the 1 200 people working in the festival are Moroccans. French and Moroccans work together on the artistic aspect, especially the scenography and the film selection. The collaboration with our French partners is due to their sharp knowledge and their established international reputation in the field of cinema.”

SARIM EL HAQ FASSI FIHRI, DIRECTOR OF THE MOROCCAN CINEMATOGRAPHIC CENTER AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE MARRAKECH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL.

Mohamed Khatiri and Yassine Charai
The Festival’s builders

The design and building manager and the location manager-deputy production manager are the pillars of the Marrakesh Festival. Meet Mohamed Khatiri and Yassine Charai.

Their backgrounds are different but they both feel the same “pride” to contribute to the success of the Marrakech International Film Festival. Mohamed Khatiri is design and building manager. Yassine Charai is location manager and deputy production manager. Their mission? To give form to the Festival, and make sure that the scenographer’s vision is materialized. “Once the concept is born and finalized, we handle the baby” says Charai. “To achieve it, we need to analyse the scenography, and translate each idea into requirements specification and execution plans. All of it, while respecting quality, security and budget imperatives” he explains. A task Charai, who studied interior architecture and worked in post-production (for TV and advertisement), has been fulfilling since 2006, when he started his collaboration with the Festival Foundation. Designing and building the sets and stages is Mohamed Khatiri’s mission. This event expert (Mawazine, Salon du cheval, Davos…) manages the Marrakesh Festival Foundation’s workshops in Sidi Ghanem, where the different sets are manufactured. “The foundation wants to integrate, build and develop the skills of young professionals” he comments. Thanks to this philosophy, new talents and fresh potentials emerge. Charai adds that the majority of the Moroccan location technicians were trained by the Festival. Year after year, the Festival also follows technological and materials innovations. In 2015, for instance, some stages will display LED visuals, “the first of its kind in the world”, says Charai. For both Charai and Khatiri, one word comes back again and again: “rigour”. “To work with the Foundation, you need to be rigorous”, says Khatiri. And today, we are able to build any type of event, in Morocco and elsewhere”, he concludes.

Today’s guest

Mohamed Khatiri and Yassine Charai

YASSINE CHARAI AND MOHAMED KHATIRI.
A conversation with...
Bruno Graziani
“A Moroccan modernity”

Bruno Graziani has been scenographer of the Marrakech International Film Festival since 2005. In this interview, he opens up about his job and the passion he has for an event he watched grow up.

You’re the Marrakech International Film Festival’ scenographer. What does your job consist of and why is it important?
In every festival, scenography is the image that the media or the people who are attending perceive. It’s about creating the language and the recurrent visual signs that build the identity of the Festival. It’s also about managing the different ceremonies on the program (opening and closing ceremonies, tributes…). In addition to that, the job is about the display of a set and the red carpet. All this contributes in shaping the identity of each edition.

How did the Festival’s scenography evolve these last years? And how did the festival contribute to the emergence of new competencies in the field?
I was very fortunate when I joined the festival in 2005. I was asked to lay down a comprehensive plan for indoors and outdoors activities. Since then, I have been relying on the steps I set before in order to help the festival grow. There was also a need to follow up its evolution. Instead of seeking foreign companies to build the sets I drew, we decided to manufacture everything here in Marrakech. This was the reason that incited the Festival’s Foundation to create its own workshops and recruit collaborators.

This approach not only guarantees that we get exactly what we need, but it also helps the promotion of internal expertise and the Moroccan know-how.
In sum, we bring a combination between a local modern touch and a universal one. This is what we call Moroccan modernity.

For 11 years you have been a pillar of the festival. What does that mean to you?
I feel emotionally connected to the Marrakech Film Festival. It’s like watching someone grow up and become important. Every edition presents its own set of challenges, and what’s at stake is the capacity to, each time, bring ideas that would preserve the general coherence of the Festival and at the same time introduce something innovative. Once an edition is over, I’m already plunged in planning for the next one.

This year, the festival has never been more technologically settled in terms of lighting and projection. The result is less statutory and more show-business like. We want this 15th edition to be more joyful and colorful.

Around 1200 people work to achieve the Festival’s success. What drives them all?
I believe it’s a shared passion about the Festival, and also a common will to see it prosper.

The world as we know it
Ecran’s editorial team would like to suggest to you, each day through this column, two films from the official competition, which are screened in La Salle des Ministres at the Palais des Congres, where the directors of the films and members of the cast would be present.

Fifteen feature movies, among which 7 are film debuts, were selected by the Festival to compete for its Golden Star, the most prestigious among the five prizes delivered at the Final Ceremony.

These works reflect the state of mind of our societies and the preoccupations of their auteurs with a constantly changing world where digital revolution is affecting the modes of artistic creation, its production and distribution. They tell the story of a confiscated innocence, of women who are strong and defiant, of children’s wishes. They also tell us about their auteurs, those who seek to place back human beings at the core of artistic creation. These suggested works are sometimes provocative. But isn’t provocation the essence of art itself?
Following the footsteps of Martin Scorsese and Isabelle Huppert, Francis Ford Coppola is doing us the honor of presiding over this 15th edition’s Grand Jury.

Other jury members round up the panel; namely: Amal Ayouch, Sergio Castellitto, RichaChadda, Anton Corbijn, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Naomi Kawase, Olga Kurylenko and Sami Bouajila. Stay tuned for tomorrow’s first presentation of two films from the official selection.

Living the festival
“I’m proud to be part of the organization. One regret? I don’t have time to watch the films”
SOUAD REGRAGUI, LOGISTICS OFFICER AT THE FESTIVAL FOUNDATION

“The Festival wouldn’t exist without the women and men who work to ensure its success. It’s my duty to pay them tribute”
ZINEB MRABET, HEAD OF CINEMA PROFESSIONALS DEPARTMENT
**Arnaud Bailly: Surfer on the waves**

He’s one of those invisible people supporting the visible. Without them Marrakech International Film Festival wouldn’t be what it is today.

Arnaud Bailly is a sound engineer. On the set he’s the one to make sure the sounds, dialogues and ambiance are well recorded. His job evolved with time. Yesterday, he used to capture sound on magnetic tapes, now he’s doing it on digital recorders. But his role is as important as ever. The sound engineer is the hidden soul of every movie. He strives to provide the sound editor with the material on which he can apply the best effects to adapt the sound with the scenario and the narration of the movie. If we’re taken by the image of a film we watch, we surely owe such emotional interaction to the sound as well.

In a performance hall or a stage like the ones where the Marrakech Film International Film Festival is taking place, Arnaud orchestrates all the sound elements that make up the ceremonies.

He mixes these elements on a 48-channel live digital mixing console, with amplifiers, compressors and equalizers and delivers them back to the audience via a line array, a sound system similar to a flash light. An art in itself.

**Murray: “Morocco is the entry level to Africa”**

American actor and comedian, Bill Murray, to whom the Marrakech International Film Festival is paying a resounding tribute, was recently a guest on the famous show “Jimmy Kimmel Live!”.

The actor talked especially of his recent film Rock the Kasbah, shot in Morocco. “I recommend Morocco to anyone. It’s nice for the cowards like me. It’s like the entry level to Africa and the Muslim World”, he said in his usual humorous way. “I’m receiving nothing for that”, he added, making the audience burst into laughter. The Hollywood star believes that Moroccans are “the most generous, kind, normal nice people”. What better way to return the sweet compliment than to pay him a personal tribute?