



The Marrakech International Film Festival

The 18th Edition of the Marrakech Film Festival took place from 29 November to 7 December, 2019

AN EDITION ORGANISED UNDER THE BANNER OF DIVERSITY, COMMITMENT AND FREEDOM

- L'Étoile d'Or (or Gold Star) of Marrakech was awarded to « Valley of Souls », by Colombian director Nicolás Rincón Gille

- 98 films were shown in the various sections of the Festival before audiences of as many as 105,000 people.

Marrakech, 7 December, 2019. The final applause was heard for the 18th edition of the Marrakech International Film Festival—a strong edition that further confirms the popularity and relevance of this world-class cinematic event. The Festival has made it possible for a very large public to engage with a variety of cinematic expressions from the five continents.

This year, fourteen films competed in the framework of the Official Competition with a jury chaired by Scottish performer and producer Tida Swinton, who, on the occasion of her first press conference, called for 'the dismantling of borders between cinematic genres and allowing the self to be impressed by the images and the stories that Marrakech proposes.'

At the end of its deliberations, the Jury of the 18th Edition awarded *L'Étoile d'Or* (the Gold Star) of the Marrakech International Film Festival to « Valley of Souls », by Colombian director Nicolás Rincón Gille.

The Jury Prize was awarded ex aequo to « Last Visit », by Saudi Abdulmohsen Aldhabaan and « Mosaic Portrait », by Chinese director Zhai Yixiang.

The Best Directing Award was given to Tunisian director Ala Eddine Slim for his film « Tlames ».

During the Closing Ceremony of the 18th Edition, the curtain was also lifted on the winners of the awards for Best Actor and Best Actress. The prizes were awarded respectively to Australian actor Toby Wallace for his performance in « Babyteeth », and British actors Nichola Burley et Roxanne Scrimshaw were jointly awarded the prize for their work in « Lynn + Lucy ».

To conclude her role as Jury President of the 18th edition of the Marrakech International Film Festival, Tilda Swinton stated: “This experience here during these days has been pure magic for our jury. We have found fellowship, both in the hands of the filmmakers we have been privileged to discover here, and also, profoundly, amongst ourselves. We came together as strangers to find and celebrate new cinema. We are parting as friends for life. Thank you, dear Marrakech, on behalf of us all, for that. We have been extremely happy here. And our palmeres is entirely unanimous.”

Tributes and homages

The 18th Edition of the Festival also paid tribute to four significant names in Moroccan and international cinema. The great actor, director, and producer Robert Redford received an *Étoile d'Or* from actor Chiara Mastroianni and director Rebecca Zlotowski, in a hall full of deeply moved attendees, who gave a lengthy standing ovation to the great artist.

Blending humility with humour, French filmmaker Bernard Tavernier asserted, during the tribute paid to him, that ‘the Marrakech International Film Festival has opened windows on the world and allowed people to cross all borders.’

Indian star Priyanka Chopra Jones, for her part, received a vibrant popular tribute on Jemaa El-Fna square, amid thousands of fans who came especially to express their admiration for her in what is certain to remain a cherished memory. Another significant moment of this 18th edition was the tribute paid to Moroccan acting icon Mouna Fettou, which the acclaimed performer dedicated to ‘all Moroccan actresses and women.’

Highlights

The 18th edition of the Marrakech International Film Festival also had some remarkable high points, consisting of powerful exchanges, emotion, and discovery.

The tone was set at the opening ceremony, an evening during which the Festival paid tribute to the late Amina Rachid and Abdellah Chaqroun. Their reserved seats in the Marrakech Palais des Congrès remained vacant during the ceremony, as a token of recognition and respect for these two friends of the Festival and true monuments of cinema, television, and creation in Morocco.

Reviving a tradition initiated in 2004, for this 2019 edition, the festival presented a Tribute to Australian Cinema—one of the first national cinemas in the world, and among the most prolific, in terms of both talent and wonderful films.

To mark this exceptional tribute, a delegation made up of 22 prominent Australian actors and directors travelled all the way to Marrakech for the event. Among many others, present were actors Geoffrey Rush, Ben Mendelsohn, Naomi Watts (“Mulholland Drive”) and Abbie Cornish (“Bright Star”), Simon Baker, and directors

including Gillian Armstrong (“My Brilliant Career,” 1979) and Bruce Beresford, winner of the Academy Award for Best Film in 1989 for “Driving Miss Daisy”.

Festival audiences attended screenings of 25 feature-length films that demonstrate the diversity and richness of Australian cinema. The public thus had a chance to see powerful and groundbreaking films that provided a snapshot of five decades of Australian cinematic creativity.

12 Moroccan Films out of 98

In keeping with its tradition, the Marrakech International Film Festival once again reserved a privileged place for the professionals of Moroccan cinema. The five films scheduled in the framework of the Moroccan Panorama section attracted a public that filled cinemas, as did those feature films that were programmed for other sections of the Festival.

An enthusiastic public, eager to see local images and stories, stood up and enthusiastically applauded these national productions, among them some films that were having their world premieres. Numerous festival-goers expressed their pride at the idea of seeing a Moroccan film competing in the framework of the Official Competition “The Unknown Saint”, by Alaa Eddine Aljem. The same respect was offered to the film “Adam” by Maryam Touzani, which was shown as one of the Festival’s Special Screenings. In total, of the 98 films screened during this 18th Edition of the Festival, 12 were Moroccan.

The passion of the large public for the various sections of the Festival never abated during the nine-day event, and was extended to screenings that took place in the morning. Overall, nearly 105,000 people attended the various screenings and activities of this 18th edition.

Cinema-lovers, students, tourists, and the public at large set out to discover and appreciate original works that represent the world’s various cinematic expressions. And numerous people from among this large public also attended the question-and-answer sessions that followed the screenings of each of the films taking part in the competition at Marrakech’s Cinema Le Colisée.

Enriching Conversations

After its success during the first edition in 2018, the Festival’s Conversation with... event has once again kept its promises, attracting large and passionate audiences. Every day, nearly 500 people, among them industry professionals, students, journalists, and cinema lovers, took part in these conversations.

Through exchanges marked by sincerity and simplicity, major names of international cinema engaged honestly and shared their ways of making and viewing film works. Eleven sessions (an increase over the seven presented last year) were scheduled at the Festival’s 18th edition with 12 major figures of world cinema: Robert Redford, Marion Cotillard, Harvey Keitel, Goshifteh Farahani, Hend Sabry, Bertrand Tavernier, Sergei Loznitsa, Elia Suleiman, Luca Guadagnino, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Roschdy Zem, and Jeremy Thomas.

Professional encounters

The Atlas Workshops were another highlight of the 18th edition. An industry programme initiated in 2018 in partnership with Netflix, the Workshops are devoted to cinema from Africa and the Middle East. This year, the meetings brought together 270 international professionals around a selection of 28 projects led by a new generation of Moroccan, Arab, and African filmmakers.

The Atlas Films Showcase, a new part of the Atlas Workshops, unveiled the first images of new films by three filmmakers in front of 30 directors and festival programmers from Cannes, Venice, Toronto, Locarno, Sundance, Karlovy Vary, El Gouna, IDFA, Nyon, and Cairo, among others. In parallel, six Moroccan projects participated in the new mentoring programme A View on the Atlas.

Social Commitment to Citizens

As in previous years, more than 100 blind or visually impaired people from all parts of the country had access to special audio-described film screenings. This audience received all necessary support and personal assistance to attend the five selected films alongside other activities organised for their benefit (including lectures, poetry, songs, music, etc.).

Young people also came to see the screenings devoted to them. In total, 3,500 students from the Marrakech region, along with their teachers, came to watch the films presented in the Cinema for Young Audiences programme.

The 18th edition of the Marrakech International Film Festival was also marked by a new medical-social campaign for cataract surgery, organised under the auspices of HRH Prince Moulay Rachid. The campaign took place at the Al Antaki Hospital in Marrakech from 2 to 7 December.

More than 400 poor patients suffering from eye diseases, originating from the Marrakech region received operations free of charge. In total, more than 6,000 people have benefitted from such solidarity campaigns over the past 10 years.

The 18th edition of the Marrakech International Film Festival is proud to have met its mandate, thus confirming the positioning of the Festival as a major cinematic and cultural event in Morocco and the surrounding region.

For more information:

www.festivalmarrakech.info