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**26^e GENEVA INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL**

G I F F . C H

Press release
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26th GIFF: Endless, unfailing creativity

From November 6 to 15, 2020, the 26th Geneva International Film Festival (GIFF) will send a wave of film-loving madness surging through Switzerland. From Mads Mikkelsen to Sara Forestier, Woodkid, Abel Ferrara, Emilie Dequenne, Sophie Letourneur, André Dussolier and Stephan Eicher, numerous personalities are expected on the shores of Lake Geneva to celebrate a program that features discoveries, special nights and unique collaborations. Altogether GIFF will present some 130 works, including more than 90 Swiss, European and international premieres. Among them, major films and series of course, but also the best of Swiss and international digital creation. Due to the circumstances, the Festival has been completely revamped with a particularly strict health protocol, as requested by the organizers.

The 26th GIFF will be like no other. Revealed this Thursday, the program has been completely reworked to cope with the health situation, while maintaining a “particularly powerful program that expresses GIFF’s unique DNA”, as General and Artistic Director Emmanuel Cuénod reminded the press during the Festival’s conference. Between the opening on November 6 with the special screening of ***True Mothers*** by eminent Japanese director Naomi Kawase, and the closing ceremony of the Festival on November 14 with the exclusive presentation of the first three episodes of the mini-series ***The Good Lord Bird***, starring and executive produced by Ethan Hawke, the public will have the opportunity to discover some 132 films, series and digital creations, most of which are being shown for the first time in Switzerland.

Major names and discoveries

This year’s program features a significant number of influential names in film and TV series, such as Thomas Vinterberg (***Another Round***), Katori Hall (***P-Valley***, based on the play by the American activist and playwright), Gaspar Noé (***Lux Aeterna***), Kōji Fukada (***The Real Thing***, shown in its serial version, in full), Luca Guadagnino (***We Are Who We Are***, full series presented in collaboration with the Directors’ Fortnight), Andrei Konchalovsky (***Dear Comrades!***), Kiyoshi Kurosawa (***Wife of a Spy***), Carice Van Houten (***Red Light***), and Swiss filmmakers Jacob Berger (***Cellule de Crise***, presented in its world premiere), Elena Hazanov (with a focus on the Russian series ***Hope*** also in the presence of the Russian star Viktoriya Isakova) and Petra Volpe (***Labyrinth of Peace***). Two honorary prizes will also be awarded to key personalities: the Geneva Award, which this year goes to actor Mads Mikkelsen, to whom the Festival is devoting a retrospective in association with Les Cinémas du Grütli, and the Film & Beyond Award, which will be presented during a unique event to artist and musician Woodkid.

“GIFF remains a privileged platform for discovering new talent,” says Emmanuel Cuénod, “and this year is no exception. Never before have cinema and television seemed so alive, so innovative, so rich in possibilities”. Several talented filmmakers have emerged in recent months, such as Sandra Wollner from Austria (***The Trouble with Being Born***, a film that caused quite a stir at its screening at the Berlinale), director Lemohang Jeremiah Mosese from Lesotho (***This is Not a Burial, It’s a Resurrection***, rewarded at Sundance for its “visionary direction”), English playwright Lucy Kirkwood (creator of ***Adult Material***, a mini-series on the porn industry that will be shown in full at GIFF) and Tunisian Kaouther Ben Hania (***The Man Who Sold His Skin***, one of the highly acclaimed films of the last Venice Film Festival). All will be presenting their works for the first time in Switzerland at GIFF. The Festival will also host the prestigious European Script Award, a prize given until now in Berlin and Helsinki to up-and-coming talent in European series.

Audiences will also be able to attend the premieres of numerous French-language films including the much-anticipated ***Mandibules*** by Quentin Dupieux, ***Énorme*** by Sophie Letourneur, ***Les choses qu'on dit, les choses qu'on fait*** by Emmanuel Mouret, ***Médecin de nuit*** by Élie

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Wajeman, and **Filles de joies** by Frédéric Fonteyne and Anne Paulicevich, and discover a special selection of Scandinavian series, grouped together in the **Northern Lights** program.

Important adjustments

In order to avoid large gatherings of festivalgoers, GIFF will be spreading to more sites this year. Furthermore, the Festival has given up important markers of its identity, such as its central hub and its clubbing events. Wearing a mask will be mandatory in all Festival venues and ticketing will be entirely electronic, with numbered seats to ensure that the public can be tracked.

The Festival's digital programming has also undergone major adaptations. Virtual reality works will feature prominently, as they do every year, but access will be limited to allow for the complete disinfection of the equipment between each viewing. GIFF's 2020 digital selection features several major discoveries, including **The Hangman at Home** by Michelle and Uri Kranot, the Jury's Grand Prix at the last Venice Film Festival, a new Swiss project in the **Hors-Cadre** series on Paul Klee, which will be unveiled in its world premiere, and **Missing Pictures: Birds of Prey** by Clément Deneux, starring American filmmaker Abel Ferrara. The latter will be back at GIFF, as he acts as President of the Feature Film Jury this year. He will also give a masterclass organized in collaboration with HEAD – Genève and will present a special session devoted to his latest film, **Sportin' Life**.

Another major digital event: GIFF has decided to give greater visibility to young Swiss digital creators in this special year, through a collective exhibition entitled **Our Digital Selves**. Also eagerly awaited, the **Algorithmic Perfumery** installation, which won an award at the last Ars Electronica, will enable festivalgoers to enjoy a custom-made perfume made by artificial intelligence. For its part, the Geneva Digital Market will be held online for the first time, with the exception of its inaugural conference, organized in association with AROPA (Association romande de la production audiovisuelle), where the impact of Covid-19 on production and distribution in French-speaking Switzerland will be discussed.

Numerous collaborations are also planned. GIFF will host works from the Locarno Film Festival, the FIFDH and Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, collaborate with the Théâtre de Saint-Gervais and Locarno to host **Les Bonimenteurs** by Jonathan Capdevielle, based on the horror film **Suspiria** by Dario Argento, take over Pavillon Sicli for a unique screening of **Last and First Men** by Jóhann Jóhannsson in association with CinéSiclique, and begin a first collaboration with the Plaza Foundation. This will be an opportunity for the public to rediscover the Plaza movie theater, a jewel of Geneva architecture, before its renovation, which will last until 2023. "This is a truly extraordinary opportunity that has been given to GIFF," explains Emmanuel Cuénod. "To take over this place and pay tribute to all those who have fought to make films in a year when the planet simply came to a standstill, we have worked with the great Stephan Eicher on a unique creation, based on film scenarios that have never made it to the screen. The planned event will be most surprising". In addition, GIFF will set up its VR Cinema in the Plaza as of Sunday, November 8.

Discover today the complete program of the 26th GIFF on giff.ch.