



“Facing New Challenges” – Successful conclusion of a memorable 69th edition of the IFFMH

After yesterday's award ceremony, during which six prizes and four special mentions were awarded, with *My Mexican Bretzel* by Nuria Giménez Lorang receiving the International Newcomer Award, the International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg (IFFMH) takes stock of the event.

The 69th IFFMH was intended to offer a “new film experience”. The edition, planned as a hybrid event that eventually took place only digitally, did so in several respects. With an outstanding, diverse and innovative programme across newly created sections, the IFFMH under the new leadership of Sascha Keilholz focused on contemporary questions, situated itself in relation to film history, and looked to the future of cinema. The core mission of the tradition-rich festival – the discovery of young talented directors with a vision – received even greater prominence.

Although this year the IFFMH wanted to bring the festival experience to all cinemas in Mannheim and Heidelberg for the first time, the cultural lockdown that came into effect shortly before the opening of the festival rendered this impossible. In keeping with the title of the new section **FACING NEW CHALLENGES**, the IFFMH instead planned an “online meeting place”, enabling a shared cultural experience even in times of social distancing, while also drawing attention to the cultural and social significance of cinemas. Most important, however, was that the films remain the focus of attention online as well.

A total of 49 films were available to the public on the festival platform expanded.iffmh.de from 12 to 22 November. It was thus possible to offer the audience a stimulating festival framework. The film artists were present not only in greetings and video interviews. Various interactive formats such as Flax, Gather and Zoom Talks also brought the filmmakers, audience and festival team together.

The festival passes on sale could exceed the limit of 200 – the core of audience “regulars” again dived into the depths of the programme this year. Around 300 industry specialists and press representatives were accredited for the online offers. A total of over 5,000 users



accessed the expanded.iffmh.de platform. The films were watched by more than 14,000 viewers. The IFFMH's online offers, including the supporting programme, were accessed more than 40,000 times.

Festival director Sascha Keilholz would like to thank the filmmakers, sponsors and partners for their support, as well as his team for their enormous commitment.

"When we had to re-change the concept two weeks before the festival began, this time from 'hybrid' with emphasis on the cinemas to 'online', we didn't dare dream that our offer would be embraced to such an extent," says Keilholz, looking back. "We are truly overwhelmed by the response. But it's not the numbers that count; what's really wonderful to experience is how the audience and artists write, call, interact and chat with us. That being said, we remain aware that a social film experience in the cinema cannot be replaced. All the more we hope and believe in an anniversary edition that will take place in the cinemas of the region."

It wasn't only the title of the opening film, *The Death of Cinema and My Father Too* by director Dani Rosenberg, that indicated how closely the 69th IFFMH's programme selection was oriented towards the social and cultural-political themes of the present. The new documentary film by IFFMH returnee Frederick Wiseman, *City Hall*, offered a glimpse into the democratic structures of the USA. Racism as a structural problem in Germany was examined by the art film *Again / Once Again* by Mario Pfeifer, which was shown in the section *FACING NEW CHALLENGES* in collaboration with the Kunsthalle Mannheim. In the entire programme, a feminist thread ran across the sections.

In 2021, the IFFMH will celebrate its 70th anniversary. For the upcoming edition, which will take place from 11 to 21 November, the festival team looks forward to a vibrant anniversary celebration together with filmmakers, partners and sponsors.

If you have any questions, please contact Gloria Zerbinati at gloria.zerbinati@gmail.com or +33 (0)7 86 80 02 82. For German language inquiries, please contact our partner agency Agentur Filmpresse Meuser, Anne Schütz, a.schuetz@filmpresse-meuser.de, Tel. 069-405 804 - 19, or Carola Schaffrath, c.schaffrath@filmpresse-meuser.de, Tel. 069 - 405 804 - 17.



The Festival thanks its sponsors and partners.

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