



72nd IFFMH: Announcing the Award-Winners

Press release – Mannheim, 24 November 2023

›In Flames‹ by Zarrar Kahn has received the 30,000-euro International Newcomer Award for the best film in the competition. +++ The Rainer Werner Fassbinder Award for the best screenplay, which was raised to 15,000 euros this year, goes to Nick Pinkerton for ›The Sweet East‹, directed by Sean Price Williams. +++ The Student Jury has honoured ›Without Air‹ by Katalin Moldovai with the 5,000-euro Student Award. +++ ›An Endless Sunday‹ by Alain Parroni has received the Ecumenical Jury Award of 2,500 euros. +++ The Audience Award, worth 5,000 euros, goes to ›Upon Entry‹ by directors Alejandro Rojas and Juan Sebastián Vásquez. +++ Sofia Exarchou's ›Animal‹ has earned the FIPRESCI Award. +++ An honourable mention by the International Jury goes to the German entry ›Touched‹ by Claudia Rorarius.



Film still from ›In Flames‹ | © XYZ Films/The Festival Agency

The winning films of the 72nd International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg were honoured yesterday at the Gala Award Ceremony in the new Karlstorbahnhof Heidelberg. Remarks were delivered by the juries, by Festival Director Dr Sascha Keilholz and by Heidelberg's mayor, Prof. Eckart Würzner as well as Catharina Seegelken, Managing Director of the Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation and Juliane Lorenz-Wehling, Managing Director of the Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation.

Despite all their narrative and aesthetic variety, the award-winning films are about protagonists who struggle against adverse living conditions and power structures in society, thus conveying a deeply humane message. The grand prize of 30,000 euros, the International Newcomer Award, goes to ›In Flames‹ by Pakistani director Zarrar Kahn, who accepted the honour in person. ›In Flames‹



is a suspenseful portrait of a society in which a young female student battles both the patriarchal power structures in Pakistan and the demons in her own family's past.

A total of 16 first and second films by outstandingly talented international directors competed for six awards in the competition. Five of these are presented by four juries. Additionally, a film chosen by the audience receives the Audience Award. All films in the competition will be screened again until November 26.

The entire IFFMH team warmly congratulated the award winners. Noting the full cinemas, the well-attended festival lounges and the thoroughly enthusiastic feedback from the international guests, Festival Director Dr Sascha Keilholz drew an overall positive interim resume and thanked all the juries for their dedicated work.

The juries' statements are as follows:

INTERNATIONAL JURY

Jury members: Elisa Schlott, Denis Dercourt, Goran Stolevski

International Newcomer Award – best director (30,000 euros)

›In Flames‹

Director: Zarrar Kahn (Pakistan, Canada)

The jury stated: "Our award goes to a filmmaker who manages to shift and play with genre while maintaining a connection both to his audience as well as his protagonist throughout the film. The main character is a young woman who is allowed to be both brave and fragile, and she is brought to life through a wonderful debut performance that complements the mise-en-scene. The winner is ›In Flames‹."

The International Newcomer Award, the IFFMH's grand prize, is sponsored by the Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder Award – best screenplay (15,000 euros)

›The Sweet East‹

Screenplay: Nick Pinkerton (USA)

The jury stated: "The Rainer Werner Fassbinder Award goes to a shape-shifting, endlessly surprising odyssey in which you never know what will come next. It's a one-of-a-kind story that explores a whole range of milieus in present-day



America, and it does so unflinchingly, with rare boldness and a generous dose of pitch-black humour. The award goes to ›The Sweet East‹.”

Honourable Mention

›Touched‹

Director: Claudia Rorarius (Germany)

The jury stated: “Our special mention goes to a fearless and remarkable work that explores the sexuality of two vulnerable, isolated people, and does so with singular empathy and detail. Our special mention goes to ›Touched‹.”

FIPRESCI Jury

Jury members: Nataliia Serebriakova, Michael Ranze, Roberto Tirapelle

FIPRESCI Award

›Animal‹

Director: Sofia Exarchou (Greece, Austria, Romania, Cyprus, Bulgaria)

The jury stated: “The second film by this director is an engaging work. The topic is little-known in cinema, and the film deserves recognition for its ability to create empathy between the characters and for depicting aspects of the exploitation that goes on behind the glittery curtain. We are presenting our award to ›Animal‹, the second film by Sofia Exarchou. We also wish to mention that all the actors and actresses gave a great performance.”

Ecumenical Jury

Jury members: Lotta Lundberg, András Petrik, Markus Leniger

Ecumenical Award (2,500 euros)

›An Endless Sunday‹

Director: Alain Parroni (Italy, Germany)

The jury stated: “Three teenagers on their own in a desperate search for affection embark on a wild trip through the Eternal City. This film is both a road movie and a coming-of-age story. The teenagers instinctively pose the big questions about the meaning of life. Their lack of direction and their frustration lead them to experience a genuine wake-up call. Visual allusions to ancient biblical imagery add layers of meaning to the film. The birth in the final scene offers the three protagonists a fresh outlook. ‘I’m only 16. Help me!’ The Ecumenical Award goes to ›An Endless Sunday‹ by Alain Parroni.”



Student Jury:

Jury members: Yasmin Renani, Joseph Holten, Tristan Horn

Award of the Student Jury (5,000 euros)

›Without Air‹

Director: Katalin Moldovai (Hungary)

The jury stated: “We are very honoured to have the opportunity as the Student Jury to present an award to one of these 16 fantastic films. It was not easy to make this decision, as we have seen a lot of wonderful art in these films, but we have chosen one that most of all gives us a young person’s perspective, but that also depicts important conflicts within society. This film uses a case study to illustrate the indispensability of universal democratic values. Its plot also shows how people unfortunately neglect or even abandon these convictions under societal and financial pressure. It would not be possible to produce films of this kind in certain countries today. This film has therefore become historic after only a short time. It’s an appeal to stand up for educational freedom in every societal context, at schools as well as universities – despite resistance from a loud minority or one’s own complacency. The award of the student jury goes to ›Without Air‹.”

The Audience

Audience Award (5,000 euros)

›Upon Entry‹

Directors: Alejandro Rojas, Juan Sebastián Vásquez (Spain)

This year’s Audience Award goes to a film that takes viewers to the oppressive transit area at a US airport. A young couple, he from Venezuela, she from Barcelona, seek to emigrate to Miami, but are in danger of being torn apart amid the pressuring questions from the immigration authorities. This is a virtuoso chamber play that reveals an inhumane immigration system and the price of security in 77 enthralling minutes.

The 72nd IFFMH is being held from 16 to 26 November.

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About the IFFMH

With “New Film Experience” as its credo, the IFFMH has been venturing new, interdisciplinary perspectives on and through the art of film since 1952. This makes it the longest-running film festival in Germany after the Berlinale, and it continues to be a major platform for cultural, social and political dialogue. With each subsequent edition, the IFFMH, as a festival for the public in cinemas, invites festivalgoers to discover the rising stars of the international film scene as well as to follow the careers of established filmmakers and to become more familiar with film in the context of other art forms.

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The festival would like to thank its sponsors and partners.

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