

THE BARCELONA FILM FESTIVAL



AFTER ITS FIRST EDITION, THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE FESTIVAL IS INEVITABLE, AS IS BORN OUT BY THE FACT THAT BARCELONA, AS A RESULT OF THE 1988 FESTIVAL, HAS BEEN CHOSEN AS ONE OF THE OFFICIAL HOST-CITIES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION YEAR.

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The first Barcelona Film Festival was held from 15 to 23 July 1987. The occasion was a real celebration, with a general feeling of satisfaction amongst those who took part and who helped to make this initiative a reality. Barcelona had aspired to a festival on this scale for a long time and, in fact, the twenty-eight editions of the International Film Week already held—originally called Colour Film Week—were a tangible demonstration of the fact. To be able to take the important step forward, considerable institutional support was needed, as well as a clear idea of the fes-

tival's aims, especially at the present moment, when this sort of film event has to decide between massive commercialism and self-complacent localism. Clarity of aims is indispensable if one is to achieve a creative integration into the international scene and not end up as a sort of superficial miniature of other events with more means at their disposal.

The job of planning and organizing the new festival was undertaken by the *Oficina Catalana de Cinema*, an organization founded on the initiative of the College of Film Directors and which represents different sectors of the film industry and

culture in Catalonia. The active participation of professionals in the preparation of the festival is one of the things that makes it different from others. From this vitality have sprung the three aims that have characterized the first edition. First of all, that of linking the cinema and the city; secondly, to show its intention of promoting the European cinema, and thirdly, to define it as a directors' festival.

That the Barcelona Festival has made the cinema the city's cultural protagonist this summer is shown by the success it has had with the public and in different cultural spheres, many of which still resist the cine-



ma's influence. However, this is not a purely localist question. The relationship with the public has been formed actively, with a spectacular presentation of film culture, tied to the city's most dynamic cultural elements. One definitive aspect of this was the idea of holding the festival in the *Rambla de Catalunya*, the city's most important artistic centre, an avenue filled not only with cinemas but also the best art galleries, and which, with its street cafés and lime trees, is one of the most characteristic streets in Barcelona.

In keeping with the setting, the four first-class exhibitions organized by four avant-garde galleries were given as much protagonism as the films themselves. In the Joan Prats gallery, there was a series of photographs taken by Wim Wenders when he was looking for locations for the film *Paris-Texas*, photographs which in themselves contain the film's fascinating expressiveness; at the Eude gallery, Leopold Pomés, one of the best photographers in Catalonia, exhibited a series of portraits of twenty Catalan film directors, thus capturing the personal and stylistic variety that characterizes our national cinema; an extensive exhibition of set-designs by Alexander Trauner, the cinema's greatest craftsman in this field, earned the admiration of visitors to the Dau al Set gallery, and finally, the Ciento gallery put on an exhibition to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Directors Guild of

America, the historic director's union that has always maintained a clear defence of film-makers' interests.

The activity around the cinemas and exhibitions shows that the festival has been a success. However, to turn the street itself into a showpiece for the whole film-world, the very structure of the area was transformed. For a few days, it was turned into a pedestrian area, and a select group of architects —Gae Aulenti, Oriol Bohigas, Josep M. Martorell, David Mackay, Òscar Tusquets and Dani Freixes—, along with the poet Joan Brossa and the painter Toni Llena, designed a series of environmental elements connected with the cinema, that formed a constant light-hearted reminder along the length of the avenue. By converting the *Rambla de Catalunya* into a string of cinematographic connotations, the integration of the cinema with the other arts and with the urban setting was complete. In this way the cinema acted as a catalyst for the most creative and dynamic elements of the city's culture.

As already mentioned, the second characteristic of the new festival was its wish to promote European cinema. The competitive section was restricted to European films, although in the other sections they participated side by side with films from America or other countries. The most important materialization of this European wager was the Europa prize, the festival's

main award, for the best film in the competition, provided with 200,000 Ecus towards the winning director's next film. The value of the prize, but also its implications as an active contribution towards the creation of a new film, has had an exciting response in many areas of the European film-world. Apart from the enthusiastic approval of film-makers themselves, it has also received support from the Community's political authorities, such as Simone Veil, president of the International European Film and Television Year Commission, or Carlo Ripa di Meana who, on presenting the festival in Brussels, referred to the award as the "Nobel Prize of the Cinema". In this first edition of the festival, the Europa Prize was won by the Belgian film-maker Marion Hänsel, for her film *Les noces barbares*, which competed with films by Patrice Chéreau, Vadim Glowna, Patrick Conrad, Gunnel Lindblom, Mady Sacks and Basilio Martín Patino, amongst others. These names are evidence of the festival's intention to promote high-quality but not yet fully established directors, and those for whom this prize is of vital assistance in the consolidation of their careers. In the same section, though not in the competition, were the latest films by Ettore Scola and Stephen Frears. In other sections, "lost treasures" were recovered, magnificent films which have been forgotten for some reason or other; the "perspectives" of



modern cinema were looked at, both within and outside the European context; or a "rendezvous" was established, dedicated this year to seven young female directors from France, providing tangible evidence of the importance the festival has given, in this and other sections, to women's cinema.

The Barcelona Festival's subtitle is Films and Directors, and this is far from being rhetorical. The festival receives the unflinching support of the most important international directors' organizations, such as the FERA (European film-makers' federation), the Directors Guild of America and

the Directors Guild of Japan. Representatives of the three organizations visited Barcelona, along with many other directors, to debate this year's central theme: the preservation and conservation of the integrity of the films and the respect for the film-maker's moral rights in the control of his work, a vital question at a time when the manipulation of films, their format, their integrity or even the change from black and white to artificial colouring is taking place with impunity and without permission.

An international symposium dealt with the various aspects of this problem from ar-

tistic, political, juridical, organizational and technological points of view. Film directors (amongst them Fred Zineman and George Sydney, representing the American directors); photography directors (headed by Néstor Almendros); film archive directors; copyright experts and European Community politicians with responsibilities in these areas (from Ivo Schwartz to Paul Bogels, responsible for the Eureka High Definition Television project) discussed in depth the necessity of finding short- and long-term solutions to these problems through a regulatory code of practice. The symposium ended with the



publication of the Barcelona Manifesto, a document prepared by the festival in collaboration with the various directors' associations, and signed by more than 700 directors from all over the world, including leading figures such as Fellini, Antonioni, Kurosawa, Oshima, Resnais, Woody Allen, Sydney Pollack and Fred Zinemann, united under a single statement that expresses an unchallengeable demand: "We film directors demand as a moral right that our films reach the public exactly as they were originally conceived." Fred Zinemann presided the formal presentation of the manifesto, a

memorable occasion which took place one evening in the unique setting provided by the "Casa Milà", one of Gaudí's most suggestive works, closed to the public for many years and reopened for the first time on this historic occasion; historic because there is unanimous international feeling that the Barcelona Manifesto is the most important step taken so far towards the unity and awareness of directors in the long, unstoppable struggle in defence of their rights.

After its first edition, the consolidation of the festival is inevitable, as is born out by the fact that Barcelona, as a result of

the 1988 festival, has been chosen as one of the official host-cities for the International Film and Television Year. This shows faith in the city's organizing ability, but at the same time confirms the coherence of the strategy chosen, which suggests that the Barcelona Festival has found its place in the international scene, based on the promotion of film-makers and the national cultures of Europe, in the face of various attempts at uniformity. And also, a commitment in favour of the simple but enriching demand for the cinema's retrieval of the position it deserves within modern culture. ●