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History of the Cannes Film Festival Part I

Description

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Before 1939, Jean Zay, the French Minister for Education and Fine Arts had a desire to implement a cultural event in France to rival the Venice International Film Festival (Bienalle) after the jury members at the Biennale changed the award winners a few hours before announcing the official results in favor of a Nazi propaganda documentary under duress from pressures imposed by the Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini.

Shocked by these events, the French diplomat and historian, Philippe Erlanger, had already begun thinking about organizing a free festival, with no pressure and no constraints. The idea became official when he received approval from the French Ministry of Education at the time, Jean Zay.

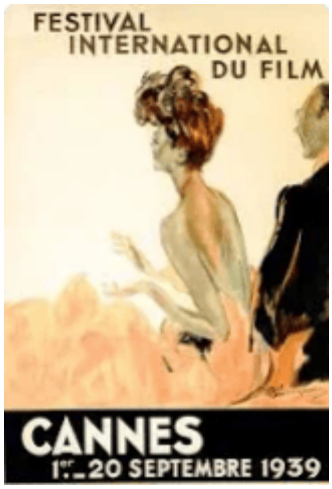


Cannes Cinema

France also wanted to do as well as Italy, giving its Festival an equally prestigious setting. Cannes and Biarritz were included in the list of some ten French cities. There were rumors that Cannes was going to win but, in a dramatic turn of events, it was announced on 9 May 1939 that Biarritz had been chosen as the Festivalâ??s home. Cannesâ??s supporters got back to work and ended up winning the

competition by offering to increase the municipalityâ??s financial participation.

Thus, on 31 May 1939, the city of Cannes and the French government signed the International Film Festivalâ??s official birth certificate. The International Film Festival opened in Cannes on 1 September 1939, at the same time as the Venice Film Festival. The first festival-goers arrived in August, taking part in sumptuous parties. The painter Jean-Gabriel Domergue produced the official poster for this first festival.



First Cannes Film Festival Poster, 1939

The originality aspect of the event was emphasized: each country would select a film to be proposed for the competition. France did not want to create further tensions and decided to invite all filmmaking nations, including Germany and Italy which turned down the invitation. Only nine countries agreed to take part in the first Festival as the looming crisis was building in the summer of 1939.

The first Festival was supposed to be held from 1 to 20 September 1939 in an auditorium at the Municipal Casino. The first festival-goers arrived in August, taking part in sumptuous parties. The painter Jean-Gabriel Domergue produced the official poster for this first festival.

But with the increasingly threatening clouds of war, they fled. On 1 September, German troops invaded Poland. The festival was postponed for 10 days, but the situation only worsened. War was declared on 3 September and general mobilization was declared, making it impossible for the festival to go on. A single screening was organized â?? privately â?? of the American film *Quasimodo* by William Dieterle, for whose promotion a cardboard replica of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris was built on the beach.



Quasimodo

(Derived from Cannes.com)

Category

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