The 80s â?? History of the Venice Film Festival

Description



It took Carlo Lizzani, director from 1979 to 1982, to win back international prestige for the Festival, flanking films in competition with significant retrospectives, sections devoted to experimentation (â??Officinaâ?•) and most importantly the new section â??Mezzogiorno-Mezzanotteâ?• devoted to spectacular films (Spielbergâ??s Raiders of the Lost Ark and E.T.), remakes (Vertigo, Leave Her to Heaven) or eccentrics, ideated by the great, late critic Enzo Ungari. The formula inaugurated by the Lizzani-Ungari duo was to become a model for festivals throughout the world.
In 1980 the Golden Lion was re-introduced, with an ex aequo award for Louis Malle (Atlantic City) and John Cassavetes (Gloria). Over these years Venice helped establish New German Cinema throughout the world. Filmmakers such as Wim Wenders and Margarethe Von Trotta (the first woman to win the Golden Lion) received the highest recognition at the Festival, Rainer Werner Fassbinderâ??s Berlin Alexanderplatz (1980) was screened in episodes to great acclaim while the controversial Querelle de Brest, presented in â??82, a matter of months after the death of the director, divided the jury when it did not win the Golden Lion.
The new course was consolidated in 1983, under the direction of Gian Luigi Rondi. The Festivals were numbered once again, expanded organization planned for, the sections were made permanent fixtures and greater attention given to the masters of cinema from the past and present. Godard won in â??83 with PrÃ©nom Carmen, Zanussi in â??84 with A Year of the Quiet Sun, Agnes Varda in â??85 with Vagabonde, Rohmer in â??86 with Le rayon vert. 1984 saw the creation of SIC, the **International Criticsâ?? Week**, run independently by the National Italian Film Critics Union and devoted to debut and second works.
Guglielmo Biraghi, writer and film critic for the Rome daily â??Il Messaggeroâ?•, not to mention director of the Taormina Festival, became the 14th director of the Venice Festival in 1987. Widely travelled and a great linguist, Biraghi (who passed away in 2001) distinguished his mandate (extended for five festivals up until 1991) with a taste for experimentation and discovering unusual filmmakers and types of cinema. Biraghiâ??s first Festival featured a competition line-up of an Indian, Lebanese, Swiss,

Norwegian, Korean and Turkish film. In 1989 he presented O Recado das Ilhas by Ruy Duarte de

he Cape Verde islands ever to be screened at an international festival.

Well organized and with a workable programme (competition,

International Criticsâ?? Week, tribute to Mankiewicz), appreciated by the experts (Biraghiâ??s nomination was given full backing by the Union of Critics), Biraghiâ??s first Festival assigned an award to festival veteran Louis Malle (Au revoir les enfants), discovered Carlo Mazzacurati in the Criticsâ?? Week (Notte italiana), presented important films such as The Untouchables by Brian De Palma, The Dead by John Huston and The House of Games by David Mamet. Considerable hue and cry was caused by the â??experimentâ?• Giulia e Giulia, a film by Peter Del Monte produced by the Rai (Italian National Broadcasting) and shot with â??high definitionâ?• cameras, though it did not receive critical acclaim.
In â??88 Biraghi enriched the programme with the sections â??Orizzontiâ?•, â??Notteâ?• and the â??Eventi specialiâ?•, including the film The Last Temptation by Martin Scorsese. A sentimental-erotic re-interpretation of the final days of Christ, the film stirred up a hornetâ??s nest of polemics in religious circles in both America and Italy, before it was screened in Venice. The film was screened in its entirety in the Palazzo del Cinema, protected as if it were a bunker, and Scorsese outlined the artistic reasons behind his choice at a crowded but orderly press conference. The 1988 Festival saw the discovery of the talent of Pedro Almodovar (Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown) and a comedy of international success A Fish Called Wanda. 1989 on the other hand was the year of Polish director Kieslowski and his Dekalog (Ten Commandments), one of which was shown each day, dividing the interest of both public and press. Together with Kieslowski, the start of the Festival was Nanni Moretti with his much-debated Palombella rossa excluded from the official selection but presented in the International Criticsâ?? Week.
(Source:www.biennale.org)

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hollywoodglee