



THE JURY OF THE 20th MARRAKECH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES ITS AWARDS

Étoile d'Or awarded to Moroccan film *The Mother of All Lies* by Asmae El Moudir

Marrakech, December 2nd, 2023. The 20th edition of the Marrakech International Film Festival has come to its close. After nine days of screenings and discussions, the jury, chaired by US actor Jessica Chastain, revealed the winners of this year's festival, which screened 14 films in its Official Competition.

For the first time in the history of the Festival, the Étoile d'Or has been awarded to a Moroccan film: *The Mother of All Lies* by Asmae El Moudir.

The Jury Prize was awarded *ex æquo* to *Hounds* by Kamal Lazraq (Morocco) and *Bye Bye Tiberius* by Lina Soualem (Palestine).

Notably, all three of these winning films participated in the Atlas Workshops, the Festival's industry programme, which was launched in 2018 (*). The platform is thus further confirmed in its significant role as an incubator for new talent from Africa and the Arab world.

The jury awarded the Best Directing Prize to Ramata-Toulaye Sy for her film *Banel & Adama* (Senegal).

The prize for Best Performance by an Actress went to Asja Zara Lagumdzija for her role in *Excursion* by Una Gunjak (Bosnia and Herzegovina), while the award for Best Performance by an Actor went to Doga Karakas for his role in *Dormitory* by Nehir Tuna (Turkey).

For this 20th edition, the jury, presided over by **Jessica Chastain**, brought together eight personalities from five continents: Franco-Iranian actor **Zar Amir**; French actor **Camille Cottin**; Australian actor and director **Joel Edgerton**; British director **Joanna Hogg**; US director **Dee Rees**; Egyptian-born Swedish director **Tarek Saleh**; Swedish actor **Alexander Skarsgård**; and Franco-Moroccan writer **Leïla Slimani**.

The 20th Marrakech International Film Festival has lived up to all its promises, despite today's difficult economic climate. More than ever, the event focused on cinema as a universal language for raising awareness and bringing people together.

Audiences came in droves for the screenings and the Festival's other programming. In all, nearly 21,000 people registered free of charge and obtained electronic accreditation. As every year, nearly 8,000 schoolchildren and teenagers from the region attended screenings in the Cinema for Young Audiences programme. Among them were 750 young people from the Al Haouz region.

The 20th edition paid tribute to two great figures of international and Moroccan cinema: Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen and Moroccan director Faouzi Bensaïdi.

Speaking at the tribute event, Mikkelsen said: “This is too much for someone who was young – it feels like yesterday – in Copenhagen, who never dreamt of being an actor, but who nevertheless had heroes he watched over and over again. It's too much that Marrakech has given me the chance to meet those heroes and share the stage with them.”

Bensaïdi did not hide his emotion on receiving his tribute: “Today, I'm 25 years old – as a filmmaker – and I'm receiving a tribute. My next film won't be my seventh, but my first. All my films are first films; cinema doesn't film certainties, it films doubt, flaws, accidents, and weakness. A filmmaker cannot be sheltered from the noise of the world, and the noise of the world right now is atrocious, painful, tragic, and filled with the cries of children”, he declared.

Several national and international celebrities and industry professionals responded to the call from Marrakech. Among them, 10 personalities from five continents took part in the In Conversation With programme. Casual, intimate discussions were held with Australian actor and director Simon Baker; Moroccan director Faouzi Bensaïdi; French director Bertrand Bonello; US actor Willem Dafoe; Indian filmmaker and producer Anurag Kashyap; Japanese director Naomi Kawase; Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen; US-Danish actor and director Viggo Mortensen; Scottish actor Tilda Swinton; and Russian director and screenwriter Andrey Zvyagintsev.

In all, Festival audiences discovered 75 films from 36 countries in section including the Official Competition; Gala Screenings; Special Screenings; The 11th Continent; a Panorama of Moroccan Cinema; and Cinema for Young Audiences; as well as films shown as part of the Tribute series.

The Atlas Workshops, the Festival's industry and development platform, brought together more than 300 professionals to discuss 25 films and projects in development or post-production from 11 countries. In its six editions since its launch in 2018, the Atlas Workshops has supported 136 projects and films, including 57 from Morocco, among them the three award-winning films of this year's Festival.

This 20th edition of the Festival was very well attended by Moroccan professionals, over 900 of whom were accredited, and saw extensive media coverage. A total of 163 national and international media outlets were accredited, represented by 518 journalists, camerapeople, photojournalists and photographers from six continents.

This 20th edition of the Festival, conducted as a low-key event, was notable for its high level of public participation, as well as by the warm exchanges among film professionals and spectators during the conversations and question-and-answer sessions organised after

screenings. Once again, the Festival shone the spotlight on the diversity of international filmmaking, helping to reveal new talent and giving festival-goers the chance to meet some of the great names in world cinema.

() Asmae El Moudir was awarded an Atlas Development Prize (€5,000) in 2019, and an Atlas Post-Production Prize (€20,000) in 2021. In 2019, Kamal Lazraq won the ArteKino Prize (€6,000). Lina Soualem took part in the 2022 edition of the Atlas Workshops.*