



Press release

6th Arab Film Festival Zurich at Filmpodium, 17 to 27 November

The 6th edition of the Arab Film Festival Zurich will take place at Filmpodium from 17 to 27 November. 43 long and short films from Arab countries will be screened; numerous filmmakers are expected to attend. Once again, the 14 new feature-length films will be in competition.

In 2012, the private, denominationally and politically neutral association International Arab Film Festival Zurich (IAFFZ) joined with the Filmpodium of the City of Zurich to found the Arab Film Festival Zurich, which has since taken place every two years. From the very beginning, the goal of the festival was to showcase the diversity of film production in Arab countries and to offer a platform for cultural exchange that would enable a Swiss audience to experience first-hand accounts of what life in the Arab world is like, beyond the usual media coverage.

This year marks the sixth edition of the Arab Film Festival Zurich, and thanks to the improved situation regarding Covid-19, more guests from Arab countries will be able to attend the festival in person than at the last edition in 2020.

Opening night with Mayor Corine Mauch

On Thursday, 17 November at 6 pm, the festival will be opened by Zurich's mayor Corine Mauch. The opening film on 17 November, *Daughters of Abdul-Rahman* by Jordanian director Zaid Abu Hamdan, is a tragicomedy about four different grown-up sisters who have to get it together when their father suddenly disappears; their private conflicts also reflect societal differences.

For the second time, the festival will also have a competition section: The 14 feature-length films and documentaries from the last two years will be judged by a jury of three: Jihane Bougrine was born in Rabat (Morocco) and grew up in the Parisian banlieue; she has made a name for herself as a singer-songwriter and as a cultural critic. Ahmad Ghossein, born in Beirut, is an artist and filmmaker; in 2020 he won an award for his film *All This Victory* at the Arab Film Festival Zurich. Jean Perret, born in Paris, has established himself as a film critic and film lecturer in Geneva, and he was the director of the documentary film festival Visions du Réel in Nyon for many years. The jury will award two prizes, for Best Film and Best Director; the ceremony will take place on Sunday, 27 November, at 5.30 p.m.

Focus on Jordan and Lebanon

This year, the Arab Film Festival Zurich will focus on two very different film countries:

Jordan has long served Hollywood and other western film countries as a location, but for many decades, it hardly established a domestic film production. Since 2003, the situation has changed and a new generation of Jordanian filmmakers is gaining worldwide recognition. On Saturday, 19 November at 6.15 p.m., there will be a panel discussion on Jordanian filmmaking.

Lebanon is the second most important Arab film country after Egypt in terms of the volume of production: films have been shot there since 1929, and despite civil war and economic crises, the country continues to produce new talent and compelling films. On Friday, 25 November at 6 p.m., a panel discussion will look at filmmaking in Lebanon.

More special events and guests

Presentations will also be dedicated to the following topics:

On Saturday, 19 November at 1 p.m., Gemini Africa, a Cairo-based entrepreneurial hub, will present its project CinemaTech Track, which aims to support and professionalise filmmaking in the region.

On Saturday, 19 November at 2 p.m., Swiss director Milo Rau will present the project "A Film School in Mosul", which he launched together with Mosul's Institute of Fine Arts as part of the UNESCO initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul".

On Saturday, 26 November at 5.30 p.m., Ahmed Al Mulla, poet, screenwriter and director of the Saudi Film Festival, will talk about Saudi Arabia's filmmaking, which has been revived since 2018. An above-average number of Saudi women have turned to film to express themselves artistically.

Varied film programme

Even in the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021, Arab filmmaking remained varied in terms of form and content and maintained a high quality. In addition to the problems of everyday life, classic family dramas and the pandemic itself, filmmakers also address the struggle for women's and LGBTQIA+ rights, the migration to Europe, the political radicalisation of marginalised people and the fight against IS in their documentaries and feature films; today's reality is set in relation to history and the fate of Palestine is discussed in the context of neighbouring Arab countries.

Detailed information on the entire programme can be found at www.filmpodium.ch and on the newly designed festival website www.iaffz.com.

Up-to-date information on the participants of the panel discussions as well as on the presence of filmmakers will be available shortly before each event at www.filmpodium.ch and www.iaffz.com.

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