

# African Film Festival of Cordoba proves to be successful

More than 8 000 spectators crowded five different cinemas in the Spanish city of Cordoba during the recently held African Film Festival, far exceeding last year's figures, which were counted at slightly under 4 000 spectators. For eight days, 94 African and Middle Eastern films were screened, 23 of which competed for 13 different awards.

This year, the griot for the Best Feature Film has been awarded to Alain Gomis (Senegal) for *Tey*; the griot for the Best Documentary went to Teboho Edkins (South Africa) for *Gangster Project* and the griot for the Best Short-film went to Uda Benyamina (Morocco) for *Sur la Route du Paradis*.

More than 100 film professionals and industry stakeholders from Africa, Europe and the Middle East were in attendance at the festival. Approximately half of the films in competition were personally represented by their respective filmmakers or producers. Notably as well, the FCAT Espacio Profesional (FCAT Industry Area) gathered this year an unprecedented number of film experts, filmmakers, distributors, and festival directors along side public and private film funding donors.

## The African Film Festival, a positive impact on Cordoba

Mane Cisneros, director of the African Film Festival of Cordoba, points out that "the assessment of this past edition is certainly positive. Cordoba was the correct location for the festival to select in its consolidation. The festival has been beneficial for Cordoba and Cordoba has been beneficial for the festival".

Cisneros notes that the festival had a positive economic impact on the city. "The festival (a mechanism which initiated 10 months ago) worked with a €450 000 global budget, successfully providing an economic return for the city; which according to calculations, exceeds € 2 million".

For his part, the city's cultural councillor, Juan Miguel Moreno, declared that "the festival received significant citizen support in coming years we would like other public and private entities to join this effort, taking into account the festival's achievements as well as the positive impact it has on Cordoba, in terms of image and economic revenue".

The festival supports the city in its effort against the impositions of the current debt crisis. Furthermore, the festival has achieved this year a wide presence in national and international media coverage. Among the different international media accredited at the festival, reporters from BBC, Al Sharqiya and Algeria International Radio were present.

Through these outlets, the African Film Festival facilitated the international exposure of Cordoba's multi-cultural environment as well as the city's capability to host and participate in investments which involve nations from Africa and the Middle East. In many ways this can be seen as a reinvention of the traditional multiculturalism associated with the city of Cordoba.

The festival director has stated that "Cordoba is the perfect setting to eventually normalize African and Middle Eastern cinema while facilitating its access to Spanish-speaking audiences". However, Cisneros also recognizes that "we can't continue this mission alone. Therefore, if we want the festival to continue, we will need more means".

## Collaborative networks of African Film Festivals

The FCAT Espacio Profesional (Industry Area), which over the course of six days consisted of encounters, round tables and workshops, led to two main achievements.

Firstly, foundation Lettera27 (supported mainly by Moleskine) granted a €25 000 fund known as the Director's Eye, to Ghanaian-Kenyan filmmaker Hawa Essuman for the development of her film project *Djin*.

Alternatively, the industry section of the African Film Festival of Cordoba reunited directors from six African Film Festivals in Europe to explore the potential for synergy in the face of common hardships, such as sustainably raising funds. Despite

each festival having a particular funding structure, all share similar funding sources comprised mainly of International Development or Cultural public institutions at the local, national and European level.

With the current financial crisis, both areas have been targeted by governments for reasons of achieving budget savings. The festival in Cordoba, for example, still faces serious funding deficits due to the virtual disappearance of one of its prime donors, Casa Africa.

This convergence of film festival directors in Cordoba acknowledged the importance of festivals establishing collaborative networks to overcome this situation while continuing to act as gateways for the distribution of African films in Europe.

The participants featured in this meeting were Mane Cisneros, director of the FCAT Cordoba, Heidi Lobato, director of Africa in The Picture (Netherlands), Lizelle Bisschoff, representing Africa in Motion (United Kingdom), Isabel Arrate, representing IDFA Fund (Netherlands), Guido Convents, director of the Afrika Filmfestival (Belgium), Karl Rössel, representing Filminitiativ festival (Germany), Hans Christian Mahnke representing AfricAvenir (Namibia) and Jesús Hernández, representing the Media Desk Europe (Spain).

This first fruitful dialogue led to a jointly agreed action plan which recently was further defined in Amsterdam's African film festival, Africa in the Picture.

Initially, the mission of this network is to further mutual understanding between European institutions and donors, and to achieve greater collaboration and cost efficiency between the festivals, as well as between African filmmakers. Cooperation is more necessary than ever now that five African Film Festivals in different European cities will take place in October and November (Cordoba, Amsterdam, Edinburgh, London, and Apt).

## **Cinenomada film distribution program**

Just like other film festivals, the African Film Festival of Cordoba tries to be a platform and starting point for film distribution. For that purpose, Al Tarab, the non-profit organisation behind the festival, created in 2006 a film distribution program known as Cinenomada (Nomad cinema). Over the years, the festival has achieved a 700 title film archive subtitled in Spanish. Nowadays, Cinenomada is the only constant mechanism in regards to the distribution of African cinema in Spain, and is the most important of its kind in the Spanish-speaking world.

Cinenomada offers all varieties of organisations its extensive selection of films with subtitles in Spanish upon payment of the film copyrights. In this manner, Al Tarab offers income, sometimes the only income albeit a modest one, to directors and producers from the African continent.

Furthermore, it makes African cinema accessible to audiences beyond the dates of the festival. Last year, Cinenomada carried out 250 film screenings in 36 Spanish and Latin American cities.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>