

Press release,  
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### **GIFF's bold approach rewarded with success for its 24<sup>th</sup> festival**

**Innovative and pioneering, the Geneva International Film Festival // GIFF reaffirms its key role as the foremost event in Switzerland devoted to audiovisual innovation. This year the Festival brought together over 32'000 festivalgoers in its main venue (Pitoëff) as well as in many venues across the city. While overall turnout remained stable, ticket sales literally soared by 30% relative to 2017 – especially thanks to the special projects of the Festival. Of particular note, the VR program was massively attended, with numerous sold-out screenings throughout the Festival alongside the cinema and TV sections.**

The 24<sup>th</sup> Geneva International Film Festival – GIFF drew to a close tonight with the much-anticipated screening of Naomi Kawase's latest film, **Vision**. Later in the evening, the screening of Rolf van Eijk's **My Foolish Heart** ended on a musical note, with a live *a cappella* performance by the lead actor Steve Wall. Finally, a big closing celebration brought together the Festival's various audiences as well as many audiovisual professionals into the small hours of the morning.

The Festival winners were announced during the evening, with the triumph of **Yomeddine** by A.B. Shawky, which received the Reflet d'Or for Best Feature Film. A special mention was also given by the International Features Competition Jury to **Long Day's Journey Into Night** by Bi Gan. **Autonomies** by Yehonatan Indursky and Ori Elon received the Reflet d'Or for Best TV Series, and **Vestige** by Aaron Bradbury, which received the Reflet d'Or for Best VR Work. These three prizes are awarded by the City of Geneva. In addition, **Rapin\*** (Jenny Wilson) by Gustaf Holtenäs was awarded the Reflet d'Or for Best Music Video, and **The Enemy** received the SENSible Award, which rewards a digital work displaying outstanding humanist qualities, in partnership with newspaper Le Temps and the Leenaards Foundation. Finally, festivalgoers voted for **Oslo Zoo** by Øyvind Holtmon, which received the People's Choice Award for Best Web Series, in partnership with Konbini.

At a special evening event several days prior, Emmanuel Cuénod, Executive and Artistic Director of the Festival, presented the Film & Beyond Award – the GIFF's honorary prize awarded in partnership with watch and jewelry purveyor O.Zbinden – to director **Peter Greenaway** for lifetime achievement and a career based on a constant dialogue between cinema, visual arts, photography, and drawing.

The 24<sup>th</sup> GIFF saw a stable attendance but a sharp increase in ticket sales in particular. Two additional screenings of the opening film, **Knife + Heart** by Yann Gonzalez, were added to the schedule to give all festivalgoers the opportunity to see it, and many events, such as the memorable comedy show **Marguet X Rollman X Chucky**, the World Premiere of the Swiss series **Double vie**, and the Swiss Premiere of Steve McQueen's film **Widows**, were extremely well attended.

The biggest surprise of this 24<sup>th</sup> event, however, came out of the digital section. The Virtual Territories venue, which hosted some thirty VR works as well as the GIFF's VR Museum, attracted such a large crowd that unfortunately not all were able to get in. Moreover, the sixty or so screenings of the project **The Enemy** all sold out, three quarters of them before the Festival started, while the Swiss virtual experience **Birdly – Jurassic Flight** enabled 500 festivalgoers to fly like a pterodactyl. "GIFF will immediately start working on solutions to offer more festivalgoers the opportunity to experience the VR productions", stated Emmanuel Cuénod. "Moreover, we were forced to turn away close to 300 students from the VR Museum, as school requests increased by close to 500% this year. We are now considering making this particular program permanent such that it can tour schools in Geneva as well as elsewhere in Switzerland."

As for another source of satisfaction – with five World Premieres and eight Swiss Premieres, the GIFF, this year more than ever, showed its support for Swiss audiovisual production, presenting a panorama of the best the country has to offer across all audiovisual formats. In addition, during a day-long



workshop on independent audiovisual creation, the Festival along with Swiss professionals in the field reflected upon the future of television creation. On this occasion, SWAN, the Swiss Women's Audiovisual Network, released a study on the role of women in TV series in Switzerland. Moreover, during five Nuits blanches, numerous young talents from the electronic music scene were invited to show off their skills behind the turntables.

Among the roughly 250 guests of the Festival this year, let us mention filmmakers **Kenneth Lonergan, Stephen Frears, Eva Husson, Jacob Berger, Julie Bertuccelli, Andréa Bescond, Eric Métayer** and **Souleymane Cissé**, actors **Manal Issa, Marina Golovine, Kate Moran, Nicolas Maury** and **Steve Wall**, as well as key figures of the digital industry such as **Michel Reilhac, Loren Hammonds, Karim Ben Khelifa** and **Antoine Cayrol**.

With GIFF, Geneva strengthens its position as the leading platform for audiovisual innovation in Switzerland, where cinema, television, and digital production actors and audiences can meet, engage in debates and exchanges, and together create the audiovisual world of tomorrow.

*The 25<sup>th</sup> GIFF will take place from 1 to 10 November 2019 and is looking more ambitious than ever.*