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Press Kit

35th TEDDY AWARD



THE 35th TEDDY AWARD- the Queer Film Award of the Berlinale

THE TEDDY AWARD

The TEDDY AWARD is the most prestigious queer film award in the world. It is a socially committed political award that praises films and individuals who communicate queer topics on a wider scale, thus contributing to greater tolerance, acceptance, solidarity and equality in society.

The TEDDY AWARD has been awarded since 1987 as part of the Berlin International Film Festival in the following categories: the best feature film, the best documentary / essay film and the best short film, as well as the TEDDY Readers' Award powered by queer.de, Newcomer Award, the TEDDY Jury Award and a special TEDDY AWARD for outstanding artistic achievements. Films from all sections of the Berlin International Film Festival compete every year for the bronze-covered TEDDYS.

The series of previous TEDDY AWARD winners ranges from international star directors such as Pedro Almodóvar, Gus Van Sant, Derek Jarman, Mitra Farahani, Lisa Cholodenko and Nan Goldin to international screen stars such as Oscar-winning Tilda Swinton, Helmut Berger, Udo Kier and John Hurt.

THE TEDDY AWARD 2021

Like almost all events in these days of pandemic, the 35th TEDDY AWARD has to take place in a modified form. Parallel to the first stage of the 71st Berlin International Film Festival - the **Industry Event** from March 1-5, 2021 - live studio talks, discussions, panels and interviews on current films and developments in the queer media industry will be streamed daily on the TEDDY AWARD online platforms. **These formats will also be available to the public.**

In addition, the TEDDY will also host the following Market events: the Speedy Film Pitches and the Queer Industry Reception for professional attendees, will take place parallel to the EFM.

As part of the **Summer Special** of the 71st Berlinale - from June 9-20, 2021 - with numerous screenings for Berlin audiences in cinemas and open air, the TEDDY AWARD will be present with coverage and interviews on the queer films of the Berlinale. As a highlight of the summer event, we will then celebrate queer cinema with our audience at the 35th TEDDY AWARD GALA, of course by following the necessary hygiene measures. Our summer activities will also be streamed and planned in a way that - if necessary - they are also feasible as an online-only event.

LIVE FROM THE TEDDY TV STUDIO MARCH 1-5 2021

From March 1-5, 2021, we will broadcast live daily from the TEDDY TV Studio – talks, discussions, panels and interviews on teddyaward.tv/live.

(All talks will be in English, except March 4th 2021 – 2-3:30 pm).

MONDAY, March 1st 2021

2-3:30pm

THE SITUATION ROOM – Zsombor Bobák in conversation with filmmakers, festival organizers and producers

4-6pm

A DIRECTOR'S EXCHANGE; our role in writing queer history

TUESDAY, March 2nd 2021

2-3:30pm

THE SITUATION ROOM – Zsombor Bobák in conversation with filmmakers, festival organizers and producers

4-6pm

TEDDY TALK – From Live to Dial Up Content: Queer films festival trajectories after moving online

WEDNESDAY, March 3rd 2021

2-3:30pm

THE SITUATION ROOM – Zsombor Bobák in conversation with filmmakers, festival organizers and producers

4-6pm

TEDDY TALK – A Look Back Into the Future: Distribution strategies in the wake of the pandemic

THURSDAY, March 4th 2021

2-3:30pm

TEDDY SPECIAL – #ActOut and Beyond – a roundtable discussion by the Queer Media Society (in German)

4-5:30pm

TEDDY TALK – Building a Nurturing Work Environment for Queer BIPOC Industry Executives

6-8pm

Queer Your Program: Online Speedy Film Pitches
(Only for professional visitors with registration)

8-10pm

Queer Industry Reception Goes Online
(Only for professional visitors with registration)

FRIDAY, March 5th 2021

2-3:30pm

TEDDY SPECIAL – Invisible Threat - Similarities and Disparities of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

4-6pm

TEDDY TALK – Queering Common Space

THE FILM SELECTION

The **film selection** for the 35th TEDDY AWARD has been finalized! The films listed here will be shown to the professional audience at the Industry Event of the 71st Berlinale at the European Film Market.

Feature Film – Fiction

Glück (Bliss)

Germany

by Henrika Kull

with Katharina Behrens, Adam Hoya, Nele Kayenberg, Jean-Luc Bubert, Petra Kauner, Bence Máté, Sarah Junghauß, Mandy Schicker

Alternating between waiting in the break room, having sex and lining up for the next john: Maria, a self-confident Italian in her mid-twenties, is new to the Berlin brothel where Sascha has been working for a long time. With her tattoos, her piercings and her penchant for writing poetry in a notebook during breaks, she is quite different from the others. The two women are immediately attracted to each other. Maria keeps her cash in a locker in the Berlin State Library. She regularly assures her father on the phone that she is doing well and earning a lot of money. For Sascha, the regional train connects her not only with her old life in provincial

Brandenburg but also with her 11-year-old son who lives with his father. When she takes Maria to a village festival and introduces her as her new girlfriend, Sascha brings with her the assertive, non-conformist ways of the city. For the first time she is trying to be true to who she really is.

Filmed with precision and a lightness of touch, Henrika Kull's second feature tells a love story set in a place where the female body is a commodity and depicts two charismatic sex workers who manage to charm the viewer just as much as everyone around them.

Guzen to sozo (Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy)

Japan

by Ryusuke Hamaguchi

with Kotone Furukawa, Kiyohiko Shibukawa, Katsuki Mori, Fusako Urabe, Aoba Kawai, Ayumu Nakajima, Hyunri, Shouma Kai

As with the rest of his oeuvre, duplication and mirroring of female characters once again informs Ryusuke Hamaguchi's latest work, *Guzen to sozo*. It would not be out of place to make a literary analogy and, if one were to regard his two previous films (*Happy Hour* and *Asako I & II*) as novels, this new work could be described as a collection of short stories. The film's recurring rhythm amplifies this effect. The three episodes, which each revolve around a woman, are in turn divided into three movements, like a piece of music. They tell stories of an unexpected love triangle, a failed seduction trap, and an encounter that results from a misunderstanding. The fragmentation serves to emphasise rather than undermine the exquisitely organic storytelling and *mise en scène*. Although most of the action takes place in a single space and involves just two actors, not once does it feel like filmed theatre. The secret lies not only in the writing, but also in the notion of a more complex temporality in each episode that flirts with science fiction in the final instalment. The moments we witness are crystallised into touching universal destinies marked by choices, regrets, deception and coincidences. They are the film's true protagonists.

Kelti (Celts)

Serbia

by Milica Tomović

with Dubravka Kovjanić, Stefan Trifunović, Katarina Dimić, Anja Đorđević, Olga Odanović, Konstantin Ilin, Milica Grujičić, Slaven Došlo, Nikola Rakočević, Nada Šargin, Jovana Gavrilović, Jelena Đokić, Jovan Belobrковиć

Belgrade in 1993. Serbia is at war, people are suffering on account of sanctions and inflation, but everyone is doing what they can. Mother Marijana is holding the family together. Her husband only raises his gaze from the floor when loving moments with his young daughter

Minja brighten an endless string of daily chores. It is Minja's eighth birthday. Instead of a cocker spaniel of her own, there's the neighbour's three-legged dog to play with, and the cake has been made with margarine instead of butter. In the living room, she and her classmates leap about dressed up as Ninja Turtles while the adults congregate in the kitchen. An ex-girlfriend rubs her new relationship in her ex's face, there are heated discussions about who is to blame for the collapse of Yugoslavia and they all agree that it doesn't take more than a bit of sperm to become a mother. A boozy evening of unrestrained smoking, flirting and drinking takes its course. An intimate and honest insight into the life of one family in which political identities clash and entangled relationships cause conflicts.

Milica Tomović stages a party that is both lovingly observed and sharp-tongued, in which all the pent-up tension of uncertain times is released.

Language Lessons

United States

by Natalie Morales

with Natalie Morales, Mark Duplass, Desean Terry

When Adam's husband surprises him with weekly Spanish lessons, he's unsure about where or how this new element will fit into his well-structured life. However, when an unexpected tragedy turns his life upside down, Adam decides to carry on with the lessons and develops a complicated emotional bond with his Spanish teacher, Cariño. But do you really know someone just because you've experienced a traumatic moment with them?

A tight-knit production team is behind this clever film that revisits the classic set-up of an unlikely friendship between a woman and a man. Cuban-American actor Natalie Morales, who is also the film's director, has previously worked with her co-star and co-writer Mark Duplass on the HBO series Room 104. This level of comfort and trust becomes apparent in the fluidity of the film's narration, whose shifts from comedy to drama echo the ups and downs of life. It is also shown in the actors' heartfelt performances, with the two protagonists gradually growing in depth and adapting to each other. Morales cunningly uses the film's unusual format to observe this evolving relationship from different angles, both literally and figuratively. Bittersweet, honest and at times darkly funny, Language Lessons is a disarmingly moving exploration of platonic love.

Der menschliche Faktor (Human Factors)

Germany, Italy, Denmark

by Ronny Trocker

with Mark Waschke, Sabine Timoteo, Jule Hermann, Wanja Valentin Kube, Hassan Akkouch, Isaak Dentler, Daniel Séjourné, Hannes Perkmann, Marie Rosa Tietjen, Steve Driesen

Jan and Nina travel with their two children to their weekend home on the Belgian coast to find some peace and quiet. But this is ruined by a mysterious break-in when the family arrives. Afterwards, Nina has a bloody nose and Zorro, their son Max's pet rat, has disappeared. What happened? None of them is able to give the police a clear description of the intruders. Back in Germany, the successful advertising agency that this bilingual couple runs together becomes the target of a paint bomb attack. Jan had previously made the single-handed decision to take on the election campaign for a political party with populist tendencies – a move that goes against everything Nina holds dear.

Director Ronny Trocker's second feature film is a subtle family drama that smoothly transitions between different perspectives of an event. What took place and what it means is thus shown to us in diverse ways and is continually expanded. As he zeroes in on the state of mind of individual family members, he reveals the fragility and potency of individual perception.

Mishehu Yohav Mishehu (All Eyes Off Me)

Israel

by Hadas Ben Aroya

with Elisheva Weil, Leib Lev Levin, Yoav Hait, Hadar Katz

Danny is pregnant by Max but she doesn't get around to telling him at a party. Meanwhile, Max is busy trying out his girlfriend Avishag's sexual fantasies with her. She wants him to hit her when they have sex. Avishag takes her bruises over to Dror, whose dog she sits. A familiarity develops between the older man and the young woman that neither of them expected.

In three loosely connected chapters, director and actor Hadas Ben Aroya's second feature film portrays a confident generation of young Israelis who are ready to try anything and everything but are unable to foresee how these experiences will affect them. The cast interacts fearlessly and with great authenticity while the fluid cinematography captures moments that are intimate, painful and beautiful. In atmospheric yet convincingly spontaneous sequences the film addresses physicality, intimacy, desire and emotional and physical vulnerability and asks the question: how liberated are we really?

Moon, 66 Questions

Greece, France

by Jacqueline Lentzou

with Sofia Kokkali, Lazaros Georgakopoulos

When a grave illness strikes down her father Paris, Artemis decides to return home to Greece after an absence of some years. Being the sole child of divorced parents, she is the only one

who can look after Paris, who requires daily care. Father and daughter embark on a journey into knowledge and revelation, which heralds a new beginning for their relationship.

After a series of surprising short films, Moon, 66 Questions is the long-awaited feature debut of Jacqueline Lentzou. It initially defines itself as “a film about flow, movement and love (and lack of them)”. Delineating a psychoanalytical portrait, the film accompanies the flow of the unconscious, vivifies the grey areas of family life and restores the love between Paris and Artemis. The road is long and hard, taking in Paris’ old home movies as well as the journal Artemis keeps: writing is the only escape. It is all part of the journey she takes to bring her body closer to that of her ailing father. The structure of this beautiful, touching film is rather like the astral patterns of tarot cards: for a few moments, the sun and the moon converge and even touch in a mutual, caring embrace – just like the one between Paris and Artemis.

The Scary of Sixty-First

United States

by Dasha Nekrasova

with Betsey Brown, Madeline Quinn, Dasha Nekrasova, Mark Rapaport

In this feature debut by actor and podcast host Dasha Nekrasova, two mismatched roommates discover and relive the murky secrets of their new Upper East Side apartment. The film is as possessed as one of its protagonists: while she finds herself being taken over by the spirits of paedophile billionaire Jeffrey Epstein’s young victims, the film itself is haunted by Italian “giallo” movies and 1970s psychological horror. Both genres are reincarnated in a work that is well aware of its lineage and sets about challenging and demolishing each and every power and gender relationship. Consistently irreverent in tone, and reaching its peak during a memorable, psychedelic nocturnal trek to Epstein’s New York residence, The Scary of Sixty-First exacts ruthless, mocking revenge on the perpetrator, while also taking us on a brilliant romp back through the history of film and the media. Cheekily reviving the tools, style, grain and excesses of cinematic works the director clearly knows and loves, her film puts on full view the imagery generated by one of the most renowned and revolting criminal cases of our time, one which was fed by internet culture, conspiracy theories, cults of personality and capital.

Feature Filme –Documentary Form

Esquí (Ski)

Argentina, Brazil

by Manque La Banca

with José Alejandro Colin, Segundo Botti, Shaman Herrera, Fernando Gabriel Eduard, Axel Nahuel Villegas, Aixa Iara Snaidman, Antonio Snaidman, Bárbara Anguita, Matilde Apellaniz, Mane Medina

There's a monster in the Nahuel Huapi Lake. In the twilight, it spreads itself out across the surface of the water like a taut cowhide, grasping at its victims with sharp claws. Another monster also lurks in the surroundings of the lake, which is close to Bariloche in the Argentine Andes. It is called Capa Negra: the Black Cape. It haunts the ski slopes by night and should be avoided at all costs.

Monsters from the legends of the Mapuche find their way into Manque La Banca's feature-length debut *Esquí* via various twists and turns. Once there, they interact with the film's other characters: elderly Austrians who claim to have brought the sport of skiing to Bariloche; skiers who shoot down the mountain in scenes made all the more breathtaking through generous use of slow motion and repeated stops and starts; the local residents of a poor neighbourhood, who take part of the direction of the film into their own hands; and finally the filmmaker himself, who points his hairy buttocks at the camera. *Esquí* is so precious because it marks the point where hipster dedication to form and the political consciousness of the woke generation start a beautiful friendship.

Genderation

Germany

by Monika Treut

with Annie Sprinkle, Beth Stephens, Stafford, Sandy Stone, Susan Stryker, Max Wolf Valerio

Monika Treut's *Gendernauts* was one of the first films to portray the transgender movement in San Francisco. Twenty years after the film screened in Panorama in 1999, Treut seeks out the pioneers of that time. What has changed? How have the lives of the protagonists evolved? San Francisco was once, as Annie Sprinkle puts it, the "clitoris of the USA", but today the tech industry has a firm grip on the city. Aggressive gentrification has displaced the genderqueer community of yesteryear. Under the Trump administration, hard-won transgender rights are under massive pressure as protection against discrimination in healthcare and freedom of choice in the use of public toilets are rolled back.

Alternating between quiet, unobtrusive images and flashbacks, the film delineates how the gendernauts have grown into their identities over the years, developed their careers and started families, and how their energy continues to have an impact today. Their activism has changed over time, but the struggles continue. New perspectives have been added – such as the relationship between humankind and nature in the Anthropocene epoch – but also the question of how they want to live in old age.

Miguel's War

Lebanon, Germany, Spain

by Eliane Raheb

with Miguel Jleilaty, Ruben Cardoso, Maria Zabala Peña, Hashem Adnan, Majdi Machmouchi, Maya Yammine, François Nour

In this portrait that is multi-layered both in terms of form and content, a gay man confronts the ghosts of his past and explores hidden longings, unrequited love and tormenting feelings of guilt. Miguel was born in 1963 to a conservative, Catholic Lebanese father and an authoritarian mother from a wealthy Syrian family. Numerous conflicts over his national, religious and sexual identity compelled him to flee to Spain in his early twenties. In post-Franco Madrid where he lived an openly gay existence, his life resembled one long Almodóvarian orgy, full of excess and sexual taboo-breaking. This was followed first by a collapse and then a new beginning. After fleeing war and repression 37 years ago, Miguel returns to Lebanon. In a mixture of re-enactments, animation, soul-searching interviews and archive material, the filmmaker and the filmed join forces to dissect old traumas and emotional injuries and explore possibilities of catharsis via a brand of self-scrutiny that holds nothing back.

Instructions for Survival

Germany

by Yana Ugrehelidze

Alexander's transgender identity means he is obliged to lead a life of secrecy in his home country. Being identified as "female" in his passport means he cannot legally find work, either. Since even a visit to the doctor is a risk for him, he has begun hormone therapy to transition on his own with support from internet forums and the local transgender community. Desperate to escape their hopeless situation and leave the country, Alexander's wife Mari decides to become a surrogate mother for 12,000 dollars. But their ostensibly pragmatic plan backfires when Alex and Mari gradually develop an emotional bond with the unborn child. Instructions for Survival narrates the love between two people whose lives are a constant battle but who stick together against all odds.

North By Current

United States

by Angelo Madsen Minax

Three years after the unexplained death of his niece Kalla, artist and filmmaker Angelo Madsen Minax returns to his Mormon family's home in the small town in Michigan where his

father's sawmill is located. His sister Jesse, who had found temporary stability as a mother after a difficult youth and addiction problems, is suspected by the authorities of being responsible, along with her partner David, for the death of their daughter Kalla. While Jesse struggles with her trauma and depression, her mother gradually opens up to the camera. Everything is brought out into the open during emotional discourses including, time and again, the filmmaker's transition which has been the cause of much upheaval in the family.

The distances the filmmaker covers on long car journeys to his family are emblematic of the slow process of rapprochement. The chronology of their meetings is enriched by home video footage and voiceover dialogue with Kalla's imagined spirit. A personal essay that spans a broad arc, negotiating the topics of depression, domestic violence, motherhood and transgender masculinity in what turns out to be cathartic family therapy.

Short Film

Blastogenese X (Blastogenesis X)

Germany

by Conrad Veit, Charlotte Maria Kätzl

with Charlotte Maria Kätzl, Conrad Veit, Juraj Černák

Looking like a rediscovered film reel from the early days of cinema and with its "animal drag" costumes, this Dadaist nature documentary imagines a utopia where any and all life forms are equal. Fabulous creatures that defy the binary classification of male and female and the division between human and animal go through the classic cycle of birth, courtship, reproduction, parental care and predatory behaviour.

International Dawn Chorus Day

Canada

by John Greyson

with Shady Habash, Sarah Hegazi

On International Dawn Chorus Day (May 3, 2020), birds from six continents join an online video call. They gossip about storms and cats and wires and dates. They share speculations about Egyptian filmmaker Shady Habash, known for his satirical anti-dictator music videos, who died the day before in Cairo's notorious Tora prison. They talk about Egyptian queer activist Sarah Hegazi, famously incarcerated for flying a rainbow flag at a Cairo concert, now living as a political refugee in Toronto. They don't realise that a month later, Sarah will take her own life, unable to bear the pain of her prison trauma. "The experience was harsh and I am too weak to resist it, forgive me," she wrote.

Les Attendants (The Men Who Wait)

France, Singapore

by Truong Minh Quý

with Gérard Thomas, Jean-François Geneste, Souleymane Sanogo

In mining, a slag heap refers to an artificially raised hill consisting of the cleared waste that accumulates during the extraction of raw materials. Birch trees now grow where workers from near and far once went underground to labour hard for very little money. Nowadays, this is a place where men meet to have anonymous sex and share moments of intimacy. "I think he was gay too," says one of these men about his father who was a miner. Today, as in the past, those who cannot find shelter elsewhere live here. Home is far away, returning is impossible. Human beings need more than water and a tent.

Luz de Presença (A Present Light)

Portugal

by Diogo Costa Amarante

with Diana Neves Silva, João Castro, Gustavo Sumpta, Luís Miguel Cintra, Fernando Soares

One rainy night, Gonçalo sets off to give his lost love one last letter. "Beware of the slippery road!" warns Diana from the street corner. In vain. An accident that is both an end and a beginning.

More Happiness

United States

by Livia Huang

with Tina Wonglu, Joyce Keokham, Rui Ying Lu

During a conversation late at night, a woman asks her mother how to be a good person. As they talk, the woman thinks about an old lover. Seasons change and memories accumulate that bring no respite.

Series

Entre hombres (Amongst Men)

Argentina

by Pablo Fendrik

with Gabriel Goity, Nicolás Furtado, Diego Velázquez, Diego Cremonesi, Claudio Rissi

Buenos Aires, 1996. Three influential men are being recorded as they take part in an orgy in a hotel suite with all the usual ingredients: alcohol, drugs and sex. But after one too many lines, a prostitute dies and the compromising video suddenly disappears. This sets off a chain of events that quickly embroils not only the city's entire demi-monde and underworld, but also the corrupt police force. Corpses are being found, a gangland boss's pigs are served plenty of fresh food and the police accidentally torture the wrong person in their search for the video cassette.

Based on the eponymous cult novel by Germán Maggiori, who also collaborated in this adaptation, director and co-writer Pablo Fendrik takes a look at a shady world of men and the swamp of corruption in Buenos Aires in four episodes. In *Entre hombres*, the experienced Argentinean series director with an inimitable sense of pace has created a modern classic about moral and political abysses that is full of pitch-black humour and relentless brutality.

It's A Sin

United Kingdom

by Peter Hoar

with Olly Alexander, Neil Patrick Harris, Stephen Fry, Keeley Hawes, Nathaniel Curtis, Lydia West, Callum Scott Howells, Omari Douglas

In the early 1980s, London is a safe haven for anyone who is different – not least young gay men. Escaping the stuffy small-town life of his parents' home on the Isle of Wight, Ritchie ends up in the big city where he quickly swaps his law degree for drama. Colin comes from Wales to take up an apprenticeship at a men's tailors. And Roscoe moves to London because his Nigerian-born parents refuse to accept his queerness. Their paths soon cross in the city's nightlife and the queer flat-share "Pink Palace" becomes their home. Together they launch themselves into a promising future, unaware that a deadly virus is spreading, threatening to destroy this future for them and their friends.

Having made television history with *Queer as Folk* and *Doctor Who*, BAFTA winner Russell T Davies, who recently created *Years & Years*, now presents the first series to deal with the AIDS crisis in Great Britain. As heartbreakingly tragic as it is life-affirming, *It's a Sin* addresses a topic that is still enormously relevant today.