



Festival newsletter 10 (30.9.2019)

Audience awards go to Tunisia, Libya and Rwanda

The 17th edition of Afrika Film Festival Köln drew to a close on Sunday (29.9) with the presentation of the audience awards at a well-attended ceremony at Filmforum in Museum Ludwig. The prize for best feature film was awarded by culture magazine **CHOICES** in cooperation with FilmInitiativ and the award for best documentary was presented by **WDR**, with each award worth 1,000 euros. This year also saw a new 500-euro prize for best short film awarded by the **KIOSK – Arts Exchange e.V.** association in cooperation with the **Nikolaus Gülich Fonds**.

Fifteen films from eleven countries competed for the award for best feature. All films received a rating between “good” (4 points) and “very good” (5 points). The winner achieved an average score of 4.71 (out of 5) and was announced via its trailer on the big screen. The winning feature was **LA MISÉRICORDE DE LA JUNGLE** by **Joël Karekezi** from Rwanda, an anti-war drama about two soldiers who get separated from their military unit in the jungle and have to get along in order to survive.

Oualid Baha, the film’s producer, who already won the main prize at Africa’s premier film festival, FESPACO in Ouagadougou, expressed his opinion that audience awards “are the best awards” and hoped the Cologne award will “serve as encouragement to all filmmakers in Africa who are fighting to be able to tell their stories”. He thanked the organisers for the “comprehensive festival programme with many excellent films and for the wonderful hospitality that he and other festival guests enjoyed in Cologne.” **Rüdiger Schmidt-Sodingen** from CHOICES presented him with the prize money and added that he and his entire team at the culture magazine, “have long considered the Afrika Film Festival to be Cologne’s top film festival.”

The 15 documentaries from 14 different countries that competed for the **WDR**-sponsored audience prize also all received very positive ratings. The prize-winner **FREEDOM FIELDS** won with an average score of 4.69 (out of 5). There was huge applause in the cinema when the trailer started and images of football fans celebrating on the streets of Libya appeared on the big screen, and of women who fight for their right to be able to play football in their conservative, patriarchal society. Speaking to **Jutta Krug** from the documentary department at WDR, the young filmmaker **Naziha Arebi** explained that this portrait of female footballers in Libya was her “first feature-length documentary” and that, due to countless difficulties they faced in producing and shooting the film, “many people would not have gone ahead with it, knowing the hurdles they would have to overcome to make the film”.

23 shorts from 11 different countries competed for the new prize for best short film. The winning film, with an average rating of 4.64 (out of 5), was the feature short **BROTHERHOOD** by Meryam Joobeur from Tunisia. It tells the story of a Tunisian shepherd whose life descends into turmoil when his son Malik returns home with a veiled woman following his time serving IS in Syria.

The three award-winning films will again be screened in November as part of the “Best of the 17th Afrika Film Festival Köln” series at the Alte Feuerwache cinema.

Before the screening of the closing film **THE BURIAL OF KOJO** from Ghana, refugees from various different countries, who were invited by FilmInitiativ to take part in an educational filmmaking project run by **Borderless TV**, whereby they documented the festival goings-on with their cameras and video cameras, presented a short video showcasing their work.

The organisers brought the festival to a close by thanking “the African guests and everyone who made the festival possible” and said “goodbye and see you again at the **18th Afrika Film Festival Köln**, which will be held from **17 to 27 September 2020**, the theme of next year’s festival will be ‘**Opportunities and risks of digitalisation in Africa**’.”