

The EFAs 2020: How To Tackle The Virtual Challenge

Instead of uniting 1,000 guests underneath the polar sky for a ceremony at the spectacular Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavik, the 33rd European Film Awards took on a decidedly different and also unique format: Over the course of five evenings, a series of virtual events, “The EFAs at Eight”, celebrated the nominees and winners of the various categories of the 2020 European Film Awards.



Hosted by film journalist **Wendy Mitchell**, FROM SURVIVAL TO REVIVAL focused on the current situation in the European film world and what that means for its future. Discussing were British director **Mark Cousins**, recipient of the new EFA Award for Innovative Storytelling for his ground-breaking documentary WOMEN MAKE FILM: A NEW ROAD MOVIE THROUGH CINEMA; Polish director and newly elected EFA President **Agnieszka Holland**; **Kirsten Niehuus**, CEO Film Funding Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg; and Danish director **Thomas Vinterberg**, who was going to win the EFAs with his film ANOTHER ROUND.



“Moderating the talk with Mark, Thomas, Agnieszka and Kirsten was really fascinating,” says Wendy Mitchell, “of course, we’ve all seen a lot of Zoom talks this year, but it felt special to get these four experts together in such a reflective mood at the end of 2020.”

“It was an exchange of our thoughts about the situation and about the future,” explains Agnieszka Holland, “hoping to find ways how to take advantage of this crisis because, as we know, a crisis can be destructive or constructive – it means it can wake up new ideas and new ways how to make films, distribute and promote them.”

“That spirit of discourse and connection and listening to each other can’t be stopped by a pandemic,” Wendy adds.

The full-length discussion remains available [here](#).



Next was an evening dedicated to the Excellence Awards moderated by former EFA President **Wim Wenders** & former EFA Director **Marion Döring**, both of whom were to step down from their posts after this edition of the EFAs. Decided by the international jury, they presented the winners in the categories European Cinematography, Editing, Production Design, Costume Design, Make-up & Hair, Original Score, Sound, and Visual Effects.



Two further events were moderated by EFA Board Member **Mike Goodridge**: the first one included the presentation of the winners in the categories EURIMAGES Co-Production Award, European Short Film and European University Film Award (EUFA); the second celebrated the winners in the categories European Comedy and European Animated Feature Film.



All of these are still available on the [awards website](#).

Finally, the Grand Finale from the Futurium in Berlin included the new EFA Award for Innovative Storytelling, as well as the Awards for European Documentary, European Discovery, European Actress, European Actor, European Screenwriter, European Director and European Film.

It also saw – for the first time – the announcement of the nominations for the [LUX European Audience Film Award](#) by the European Parliament and the European Film Academy and in partnership with the European Commission and Europa Cinemas.

[The public is now invited to vote for this award!](#)



Moderated by German TV host and film buff **Steven Gätjen**, the evening was hosted by leaving EFA Director **Marion Döring**, EFA Chairman **Mike Downey**, new EFA President **Agnieszka Holland** and leaving EFA President **Wim Wenders**.

“We were in a situation where we couldn’t send out over 40 crews to get the nominees into the show,” says executive producer **Jürgen Biesinger**, “so we had to find other solutions.” This included quickly getting partners on board who could make the virtual EFAs possible, among them GlobalM and maz&movie.

“We quickly assembled the video equipment to enable more than 40 nominees across Europe to participate virtually in the ceremony,” says **Tobias Schmidt**, head of productions at maz&movie. The package included an iPhone with a little tripod and light ring, a microphone and earpiece. In a reality where physical events, red carpet lines and group interviews had not been possible for months, maz&movie adapted: “Last year – during the pandemic - we had to digitally re-invent ourselves and jumped on the virtual train – from virtual junkets, to virtual press lines and product presentations,” explains Tobias, “we find a virtual solution to any challenge.”

The iPhones were already pre-configured with the Global M app. **Lance Newheart**, Co-Founder & CEO, explains: “we take the smartphone and turn it into a broadcast camera.” The streaming uses SRT (secure reliable transport, an encrypted open-source protocol) over the Global M network. “We provide a broadcast quality stream to be able to produce a very low latency but very high-quality live stream,” adds Lance, “so that it looks good on a big screen.” **Paul Calleja**, Co-founder & CTO of GlobalM, adds: “Trying to use conferencing software for the video wall would not allow the flexibility to arrange the nominees and categories as the director would like to see them.”

maz&movie is a full-service creative agency with over 20 years of experience that provides video content and events of all shapes and sizes: film premieres, award ceremonies, press conferences, corporate videos, tv documentaries and social media content.

GlobalM is a high-tech company that provides professional streaming solutions in broadcast quality to media outlets and broadcasters for News, Sports, Business, Culture, and Entertainment, as well as remote production services.



Of course, those people present at the Futurium were tested. They wore a mask whenever off camera, and kept a distance. **Agnieszka Holland** came from France, so she was tested upon arrival and had to wait for the result. She recalls that “the hotel was ghostly” and adds: “Berlin felt very strange, so empty”. Still, she feels fortunate that it was possible to meet in Berlin: “Several people told me that it felt very authentic and personal. And the moment when the walls of nominees, of our friends and colleagues, appeared, was a very strong moment, it will stay in the memory of Academy members and viewers for a long time.”



One of these people is **Thomas Vinterberg**, one of the 40+ nominees - and the one who ended up winning European Film, Director and Screenwriter - who followed the entire ceremony on their computers from their hotel rooms, offices or living rooms. In a message to EFA he writes: “While the circumstances we all find ourselves in these days are terribly out of the ordinary and for some deeply saddening, I am happy to say that the essence of the EFAs – the permeating sense of ‘European togetherness’ – was by no means lost in the digital version of the Awards. We may have been many miles apart, but still all were present, engaged and committed to supporting our community and love of films.”

The After-Show Lounge



After the “Grand Finale”, all winners, presenters and nominees were invited to a virtual after-show lounge.

“They hadn't been able to talk to each other so I think a lot of people just wanted to say hello to each other, to congratulate each other, to have that sort of chat you'd do at a real-life after party,” says Wendy Mitchell who hosted the event on Zoom. “Mads Mikkelsen was zooming in from a London hotel room and he was in a celebratory mood after ANOTHER OUND's many wins, but he also apologised to everyone for winning too many!” Many of the winners and nominees paid tribute to the CORPUS CHIRISTI team as being the youthful future of the European film industry. “People showed off their babies, their cats and dogs, and, of course what celebratory drinks they were having,” she recalls, adding: “It wasn't the same as being dressed up at a fancy party together in Reykjavik (we await 2022 for that!) but it was a moment of fun and relaxation and celebration, and EFA Board Members joined us to keep the conversation flowing.”

Interviews

The interview slots with nominees which EFA organises for the accredited media also took on a new form. Moderated by the EFA's press attachées, 70 interview slots were hosted on Zoom.

Blanka Elekes Szentágotai, EFA press attaché for Central & Eastern Europe, points out that the online format “didn't take away any of the intimacy”. In fact, it added a new kind of individuality because all the nominees were in their homes or offices which allowed a rare glimpse into their lives. As an example, Blanka reports that “Thomas Vinterberg's lunch delivery came during the interview and we all went with him to the front door to pick it up – certainly something that we wouldn't normally experience during an interview!”

The 33rd European Film Awards



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