



Back in focus

Film festival giants can often narrow views of world cinema and the riches on offer, writes Cineworld correspondent *Sean Wilson*, as he digs deeper into the international scene

The wider perception of film festivals is often dictated by Cannes. And its surface-level skew toward Hollywood glamour, above a progressive awards selection, has taken the shine of its gleaming reputation in recent years. More and more column inches today are afforded to ‘smaller’ festivals, such as Venice. Like Cannes, Venice has courted Hollywood in a bid to sustain relevance – look no further than the *Joker* triumphing with the Golden Lion. Increasingly, however, it’s the ‘margin’ festivals that have loyally leaned towards progressive and challenging cinema.

SUNDANCE

Taylor Swift, Anne Hathaway, Willem Dafoe and Elisabeth Moss all rolled into the 42nd Sundance Film Festival this January. As ever, the Robert Redford-founded event mixed and matched glamorous red carpet premieres (Emerald Fennell’s black comedy *Promising Young Woman* won critical raves), with plenty of intriguing selections off the beaten track. Sundance 2020 jurors, including Ethan Hawke, Isabella Rossellini and Wash Westmoreland, awarded the Grand Jury prizes to two films. The first, *Minari*, is an autobiographical account of Korean-American director Lee

Isaac Chung’s upbringing in Kansas; the second, *Boys State*, is a documentary exploring a mock-government election carried out by a group of Texas teenagers. sundance.org

BERLINALE

The noted Jeremy Irons acted as jury president at the 2020 Berlinale, awarding the coveted Golden Bear to Iranian movie *There Is No Evil*. Director Mohammad Rasoulof was unable to accept the award as he is banned from leaving his home country. His daughter, Baran, accepted the award on his behalf. Of particular note was the winner

of the Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize, *Never Rarely Sometimes Always*. Directed by Eliza Hittman, this sensitive abortion drama was already the recipient of a Special Jury Prize at Sundance. berlinale.de

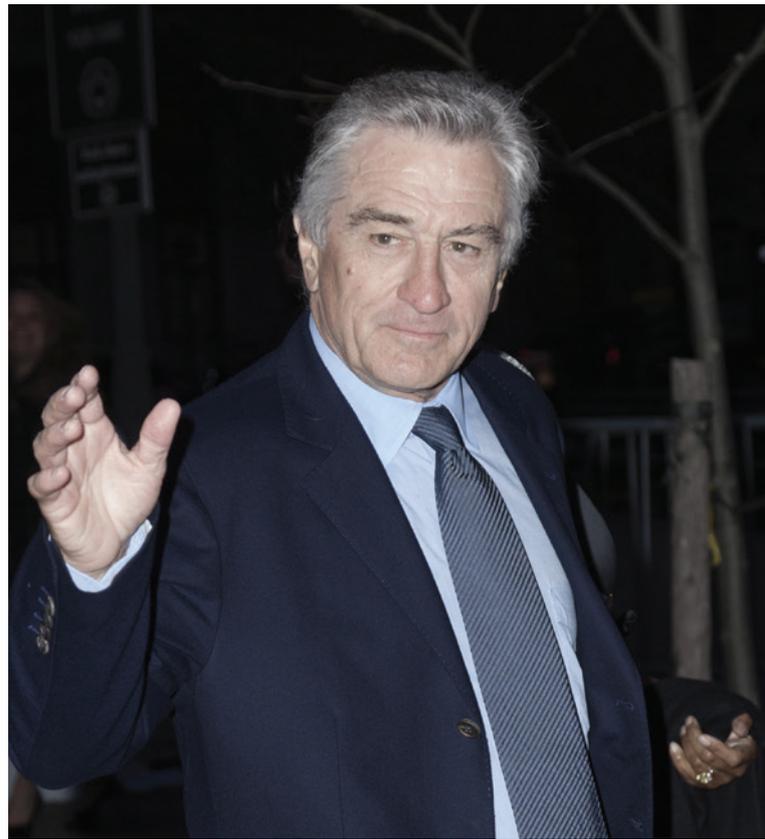
ROTTERDAM

The show was stolen at the 49th edition of IFFR with the appearance of the celebrated Bong Joon-ho, who debuted a black and white version of his masterful *Parasite*. “I think it may be vanity on my art, but when I think of the classics, they’re all in black and white,” Bong explained.

“I had this idea that if I turned my films into black and white then they’d become classics.”

IFFR segments its awards along various lines, including up and coming filmmakers, ▶

Above left: Kate Bosworth as Jill Taylor in the casino in the film *21* Above: Vegas is famous for its themed strip that takes visitors to a replica Eiffel Tower



documentaries and short films. There's also the Robby Muller Award, which champions cinematographers while honouring the legacy of the revered Wim Wenders collaborator.

2020 winners spanned a range of countries, including China's Zheng Lu Xinyuan, who won the jury prize, known as the Tiger Competition, for *The Cloud In Her Room*. This emotive black and white drama, filmed with non-professional actors, follows a 22-year-old woman as she returns to her home town of Hangzhou for the new year celebrations, only to find things aren't as she remembers. iffr.com

TRIBECA (POSTPONED)

Robert De Niro's annual New York celebration of maverick filmmaking was set to kick off in April with documentary *Jimmy Carter*:

Rock and Roll President. Directed by Oscar and Grammy-winner Mary Wharton, it intertwines Carter's rise to the American

Presidency with the multi-faceted musical backdrop of the period, incorporating archive footage from the likes of Aretha Franklin and

Willie Nelson. Check website for news of rescheduled dates. tribecafilm.com

PANAFRICAN

Known in the circles as FESPACO, Burkina Faso's celebration of cinema is set to return in 2021, having celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2019. In the most recent edition of the festival, *The Mercy Of The Jungle* won the festival's top prize, the Etalon d'Or de Yennenga for best film, and also clinched best actor for co-star Marc Zinga (Dheepan). The film is the story of a sergeant and a private who must trek through inhospitable terrain to reach safety. fespaco.bf ■



Above left: Keira Knightley and Dominic West at Sundance in 2018 Above: Robert De Niro and (Left) Ethan Hawke at Tribeca