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SCREENDAILY

"Piracy is the most successful form of distribution," says Werner Herzog

BY **MARTIN BLANEY** | 16 APRIL 2019



German director Werner Herzog voiced his reluctant support of film piracy during a masterclass at Switzerland's documentary-focused Visions du Réel International Film Festival in Nyon which closed on April 13.

SOURCE: NICOLAS BRODARD / VDR

WERNER HERZOG AND VISIONS DU RÉEL ARTISTIC DIRECTOR EMILIE BUJÈS

"Piracy has been the most successful form of distribution worldwide," said

Herzog in response to a comment from Ukrainian producer Illia Gladshstein of Phalanstery Films. Gladshstein said he was only able to access the filmmaker's works via illegal Torrent sites in Ukraine.

"If you don't get [films] through Netflix or state-sponsored television in your country, then you go and access it as a pirate," Herzog continued. "I don't like it because I would like to earn some money with my films. But if someone like you steals my films through the internet or whatever, fine, you have my blessing."

The legendary director of over 60 fiction and documentary films including *Fitzcarraldo* and *Where The Green Ants Dream*, went on to suggest it was now getting easier to access his back catalogue. "Now you can find them on the internet, on Amazon, as Blu-Rays or DVDs, or you can stream them. I am very

happy about this because all of a sudden most of the requests and observations I receive now come from 15-year-olds who bombard me [with] questions of 'why can't we see this or that film?'"

Record admissions

Herzog was in Nyon to receive the Maitre du Réel lifetime achievement award as part of the festival's 50th anniversary celebrations.

This was the second edition under the aegis of artistic director Emilie Bujès. According to the festival's executive president Claude Ruey, who is now stepping down, this year's event posted record-breaking admissions of 45,000 over nine days, up 12.4% on 2018.

Thomas Heise's 218-minute *Heimat Is A Space In Time* won the festival's best film prize. Heise traces his family's history through the prism of the upheaval that was Germany in the 20th Century. *A Space In Time* was first shown at this year's Berlinale where it won the Caligari Film Prize and is being sold internationally by Deckert Distribution, the sales arm of the film's producer Ma.ja.de. GM Films is releasing the title in Germany in October.

The jury of producers Joslyn Barnes and Pauline Gygax and IDFA artistic director Orwa Nyrabia went on to present the prize for most innovative feature to *That Which Does Not Kill*, directed by Belgium's Alexe Poukine, and gave a special mention to Azerbaijani filmmaker Hilal Baydarov's *When The Persimmons Grew*. The latter also received the Inter-religious Jury Award.

Afghan director Hassan Fazili and Emelie Mahdavian's *Midnight Traveler* won the festival's audience award. Their film is about the dangerous journey undertaken by the filmmaker, his wife and daughters across Europe over the course of three years. Doc & Film International is handling world sales.

Business done at Pitching du Reel

French sales agent Doc & Film picked up Argentinian filmmaker Manuel Abramovich's *Pornomelancholia*, one of 15 international documentary projects presented at the festival's Pitching du Réel forum. The film was developed at the San Sebastian Film Festival's artist residency, with support from INCAA and the City Of Buenos Aires.

Abramovich explained his fourth feature documentary - which also won the Visions Sud Est Award - will be the second part of a trilogy beginning with *Blue Boy* which won the Silver Bear at this year's Berlinale Shorts competition.

"*Pornomelancholia* is not a pornographic film," he said. "It's a film about pornography as a form of representation. About how sex become fiction, sex as 'performativity'."

Furthermore, Christa Auderlitzky, the founder of the Vienna-based sales outfit filmdelights, confirmed to Screendaily she has picked international rights of Valentina Primavera's feature documentary debut *Una Primavera* ahead of its North American premiere on April 29 at Hot Docs in Toronto where it will screen in the Made In Italy sidebar.

The Austrian-German-Italian co-production sees the filmmaker following her mother's first steps into an unknown future when she decides to leave her abusive husband of 40 years.

Una Primavera was first shown at Dok.Leipzig last year and recently won the Big Stamp for best regional film at ZagrebDox. Stadtkino Filmverleih is releasing the film in Austria later this year.

- **Apple names producer Molly Thompson head of documentaries**