



SARAJEVO REVIEW DAILY

Sarajevo 2023: The Verdict



Emotional highs and lows marked a politically charged Sarajevo edition that saw one day cancelled in solidarity against gender-based violence.

Carmen Gray, August 17, 2023

Sarajevo is a complex city of contradictions, historically known as both a richly diverse cultural centre of peoples living side by side, and a geopolitical flashpoint of stirred divisions.

There is a tangible sadness that persists in the air here, inevitably sensed by audiences attending the Sarajevo Film Festival, even as they immerse themselves in the heady party atmosphere of long Balkan nights. A showcase for new regional cinema, and a buzzing

hub for forged collaborations in its well-attended Cinelink Industry Days, the festival is also very conscious of the role it has to play in reconciliation and healing of former Yugoslavia's painful past. This intentionally comes to the fore in its programming decisions and preference for politically committed, rigorous work — a festival identity felt more than ever in its 29th edition, with strong new competition films in this vein.

[Continues next page](#)

COMPETITION



FAIRY GARDEN

VERDICT: Gergo Somogyvari's humanistic doc portrait of life in the woods on Budapest's margins spotlights the criminalisation of LGBTQ+ people and the homeless by Orban's government.

Carmen Gray, August 17, 2023

Hungarian documentarian and cinematographer Gergo Somogyvari's feature debut *Fairy Garden*, which screens at the Sarajevo Film Festival in the Documentary Competition, takes us to a cluttered hut buried in the woods on the outer margins of Budapest.

Cobbled together from scraps of mismatched building materials to keep the elements at bay, the makeshift construction could

[Continues next page](#)

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FAIRY GARDEN *(Continued)*

scarcely be called a house. Yet it is home for sixty-year-old Laci and his nineteen-year-old trans housemate Fanni, who he has welcomed in to share the space after her parents kicked her out and she repeatedly ran away from a state care institute. She cuts a vulnerable figure, as she totters through the mud in a flimsy dress with just a suitcase and a couple of bags. The hardened-looking, bespectacled Laci acts as a support to her as she goes through the gruelling ups and downs of hormone therapy for her transition. Their bond, an oasis free of judgment in a nation that has rejected them for who they are, also alleviates his own loneliness. There is much warmth apparent under their bickering and wisecracks as this oddly matched pair of misfits carry out the daily, practical tasks of survival as a chosen family.

The ejection of Laci and Fanni from society into this quasi-wilderness offers a damning vision, in literal terms, of Hungary's failed duty of care to its most disadvantaged citizens under Viktor Orban's hardline right-wing government, which in 2018 criminalised rough sleeping in public places, and in 2021 outlawed the changing of gender on official documents, amid a wave of propaganda against LGBTQ+ people and the homeless. *Fairy Garden* ultimately comes off somewhat slight in its observational looseness, as it struggles to give a propulsive order to moments of lives of few options orbiting each other in a purposeless drift. Nonetheless it succeeds admirably, through its focus on two distinctive and likeable personalities, in giving visibility and a human face...

[Full Review](#)

FESTIVAL VERDICT *(Continued)*

What's more, an unforeseen National Day of Mourning in the middle of the week, in the aftermath of a brutal femicide and protests around Bosnia, upended the schedule but occasioned a strong show of solidarity with the victims of gender-based violence from the festival team and attendees.

Sarajevo opened on an emotional high note, with packed multi-venue screenings of *Kiss the Future*, Ninad Cicin-Sain's documentary about the music underground that flourished in 90's Sarajevo despite, or indeed because of, the 1,425-day siege of the capital by Serb forces. The film traces the background of the first major concert in the city afterward, when rock band U2 dared to come.

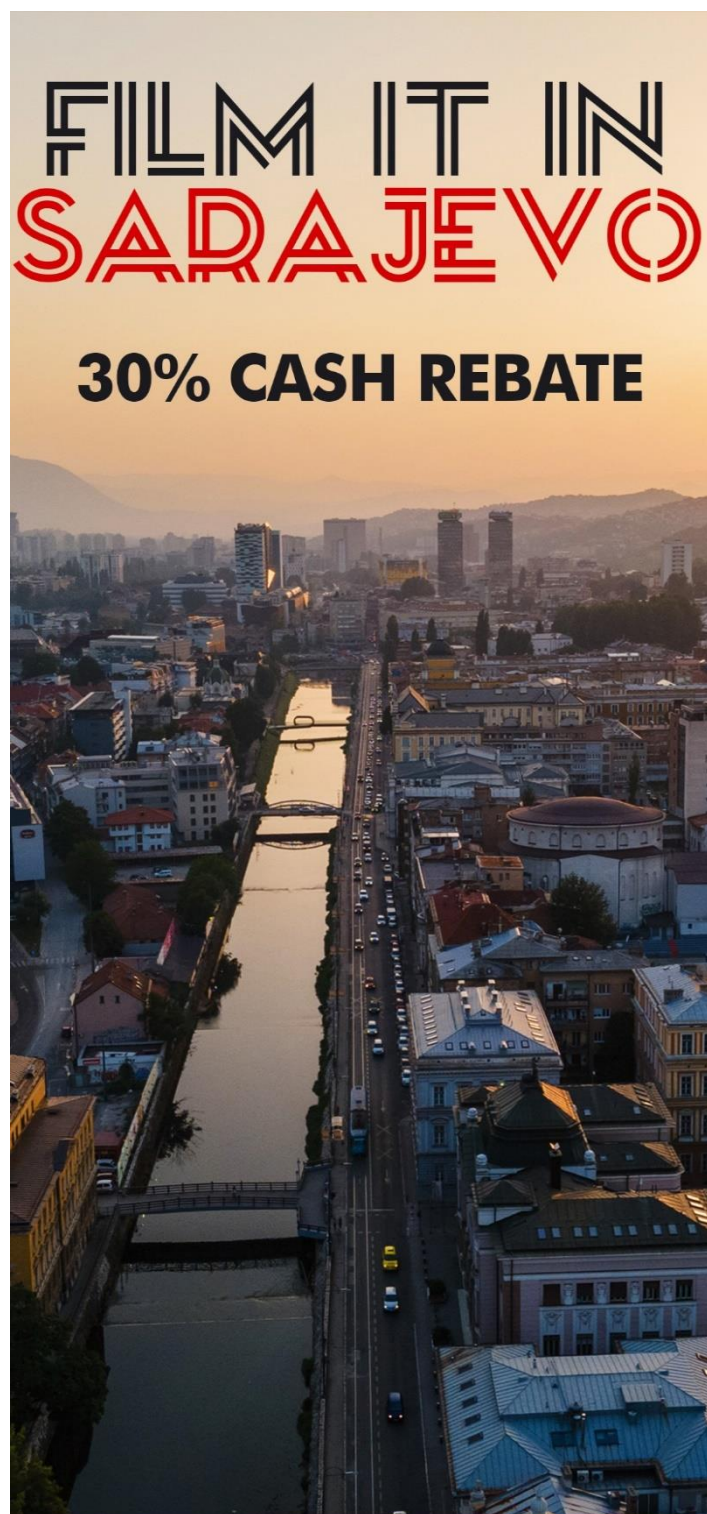
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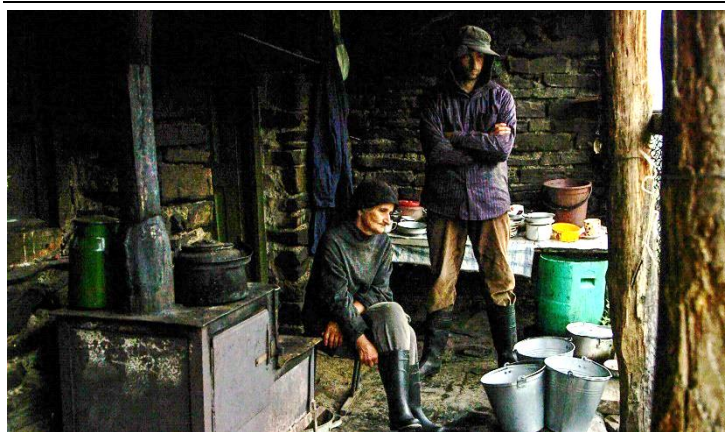
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COMPETITION



REQUIEM TO THE HOT DAYS OF SUMMER

VERDICT: The quietude of a bucolic life, and the deep wordless bonds between a mother and son, lie at the heart of Giorgi Parkosadze's serene doc.

Ben Nicholson, August 17, 2023

In a picturesque dell in Vakisofeli, in northern Georgia, lies a ramshackle dairy farm inhabited by Sanata Tokhosashvili and her adult son, Guri, who are the subjects of the stately observational documentary, *Requiem to the Hot Days of Summer*.

Made by documentarian Giorgi Parkosadze, the film was previously selected for the Docu Rough Cut Boutique – a development initiative run by Sarajevo Film Festival and the Balkan Documentary Centre – where it won the DOK Leipzig Preview Award. Now, this patient and beautiful and sensitive film returns to have its world premiere as a part of Sarajevo's 2023 edition. A delicate but deceptively thought-provoking gem, it competes in the perennially interesting documentary section of the main competition programme.

Parkosadze spent time creating his pastoral portrait across four years, during which he would effectively embed himself on the farm, living there with Sanata and Guri for periods of time. In interviews, he has spoken about feeling the need to contribute and so sometimes left his camera packed away for a day while collecting firewood or trying to make himself useful. The impact of this can be felt in the intimacy and easiness of the material he has captured. The physical descriptions of what the film entails are fairly mundane: Guri milks one of their cows, Sanata works the cheese curd, a mower engine is fixed, and an old leaking barn roof is stripped. Sometimes, Parkosadze's camera just sits stationary as its subjects do, lazing indoors out of the summer heat. But all of these apparently unfussy shots are captured with an arresting authenticity.

Full Review

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OPEN AIR



CLUB ZERO

VERDICT: Austrian director Jessica Hausner's offbeat thriller about a classroom cult of teenage diet extremists is visually delicious but lacks dramatic bite.

Stephen Dalton, May 22, 2023

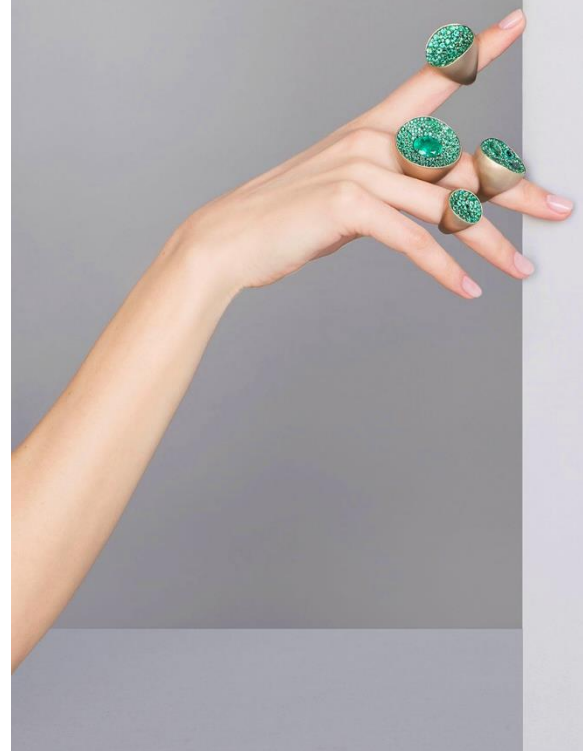
A group of impressionable high schoolers fall under the bewitching spell of a charismatic teacher with extreme ideas about food in *Club Zero*, the latest Cannes competition contender from Austrian writer-director Jessica Hausner. A minor-key semi-thriller with a bright fairy-tale look, this decidedly strange teens-in-trouble movie is Hausner's second English-language feature after her quirky botanical sci-fi puzzler *Little Joe* (2019), which also premiered in Cannes competition. Both films share some stylistic crossover in their impeccably composed visuals, vivid colour schemes, and oddly blank tone. Beautifully shot and packaged, but lacking in bite, this is a light snack of a film that should have been a feast. It will have more festival mileage after Cannes, but fairly limited art-house appeal thereafter.

Shaming, peer pressure, self-loathing, eating disorders, addictions and other food anxieties that affect adolescents – teenage girls especially – should translate to pretty intense dramatic material. Indeed, recent films including Julia Ducournau's *Raw* (2016), Ruth Paxton's *A Banquet* (2021) and Samantha Aldana's *Shapeless* (2021) have given these real-life body-horror issues a potent genre-friendly twist. Hausner pitches *Club Zero* as a cautionary tale about idealistic teens being lured into harm's way, but her low-voltage treatment of these themes robs them of menace of mystery, despite some promisingly dark plot twists. Even an inventively nasty scene featuring vomit, designed to disgust, feels strangely tasteful.

Club Zero takes place at a strikingly modernist private school for children of elite, wealthy parents. The vaguely defined European location is purposely vague, but Hausner filmed in both Austria and Britain, and the cast share a range of accents.

[Full Review](#)

ANTONINI
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VERDICT SHORT



TRIA

VERDICT: A family is forced to make an unthinkable sacrifice in this stomach-churning dystopian tragedy about the chilling effects of social control.

Ben Nicholson, September 8, 2022

Giulia Grandinetti's gripping short drama, *Tria*, is set in an alternative near present in which the oligarchs of an authoritarian Rome have instituted limits on procreation. In this world, couples – or at least certain couples – are only allowed to have three children; if they fall pregnant again, they must carry the new baby to term and then choose a child to have killed,

prioritising the lives of males. It's a deliciously terrifying scenario to provide the backdrop of a contained and charged short film. Grandinetti drops the audience into this nightmarish setting in media res – en route to a hospital where a fourth child will be born, and three adolescent daughters are confronted by an ominous fate.

Once their new bouncing brother has been brought into the world, sisters Zoe (Irene Casagrande), Iris (Anastasia Almo), and Clio (Sofia Almo) can do nothing but await their parents' impossible choice. The film is split into two discrete scenes – one in which the girls make the most of the time they have left, and then the unnervingly ritual killing. The girls are all very comfortable with one another, they lie half-entangled on the floor as the baby that has condemned one of them cries from another room. Iris and Clio are played by real-life sisters and their relaxed physicality evokes a closeness that somehow makes what is about to happen feel all the more harrowing. "Have you ever kissed a boy?" asks oldest daughter Zoe of the younger Clio, before leading her siblings to a local park full of friends where they listen to music and dance, without inhibition.

[Full Review](#)

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The European Film Awards Selection 2023



20,00 Species of Bees, Photo: European Film Academy



Anatomy of a Fall, Photo: European Film Academy

The European Film Awards honor the greatest achievements in European cinema. This year the Awards ceremony, presented jointly by the European Film Academy and European Film Academy Productions, takes place on 9 December in Berlin.

20,000 SPECIES OF BEES /

20.000 ESPECIES DE ABEJAS

Directed by: Estibaliz Urresola Solaguren

Spain

FALLEN LEAVES / KUOLLEET LEHDET

Directed by: Aki Kaurismäki

Finland / Germany

AFIRE / ROTER HIMMEL

Directed by: Christian Petzold

Germany

ANATOMY OF A FALL /

ANATOMIE D'UNE CHUTE

Directed by: Justine Triet

France

BLACKBIRD BLACKBIRD BLACKBERRY

Directed by: Elene Naveriani

Switzerland / Georgia

LA CHIMERA

Directed by: Alice Rohrwacher

Italy / France / Switzerland

THE OLD OAK

Directed by: Ken Loach

UK / France / Belgium

THE TEACHERS LOUNGE /

DAS LEHRERZIMMER

Directed by: Ilker Çatak

Germany

THE GOLDMAN CASE /

LE PROCÈS GOLDMAN

Directed by: Cédric Kahn

France

FIREBRAND

Directed by: Karim Ainouz

UK

SAFE PLACE / SIGURNO MJESTO

Directed by: Juraj Lerotic

Croatia / Slovenia

CLOSE YOUR EYES / CERRAR LOS OJOS

Directed by: Víctor Erice

Spain / Argentina

For full list, [click here](#)

In the coming weeks, the 4,600 members of the European Film Academy will start to watch and vote for the selected films. Nominations to be made public on Nov 7. The winners will be announced at the European Film Awards ceremony in Berlin on Dec 9 2023.



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FEST clips

The Boy and the Heron to Open San Sebastian Film Festival



The festival will host the European Premiere on September 22, after the opening Gala

Hayao Miyazaki's latest film, *The Boy and the Heron* (*Kimitachi wa Do Ikiruka*), will open the San Sebastian Festival's 71st edition 'out of competition'. San Sebastian will host the European premiere after its shown at the Toronto Film Festival on September 7. The movie will screen in the Kursaal Auditorium on September 22, after the opening gala.

The Boy and the Heron is an original story written by the director. The Japanese title references the 1937 novel of the same name by Genzaburo Yoshino. The story is featured in the film, but the film has an original plot that is not connected to the novel. The soundtrack is by Miyazaki's regular composer, Joe Hisaishi.

This is the fourth time that a film by the Japanese moviemaker, has been programmed at the San Sebastian Festival, but it is the first time he will have participated in

Miyazaki was previously at the Velodrome with *Spirited Away* and *Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea* (2008) and in Perlak with *The Wind Rises*.

In addition to the aforementioned films, two other Ghibli films (the animation studio founded by Miyazaki, Director Isao Takahata and producer Toshio Suzuki) have been selected in the Perlak section: *Kaguya-hime no Monogatari / The Tale of The Princess Kaguya* (2013) by Isao Takahata and *Red Turtle / La tortue rouge* (2016) by Michael Dudok de Wit.

GKIDS will release *The Boy and the Heron* theatrically in North America later this year. The all-rights deal marks a continuation of GKIDS' long-standing relationship with Ghibli.

Tickets for the opening gala will go on sale on September 4.

Festival takes place Sept. 22-30

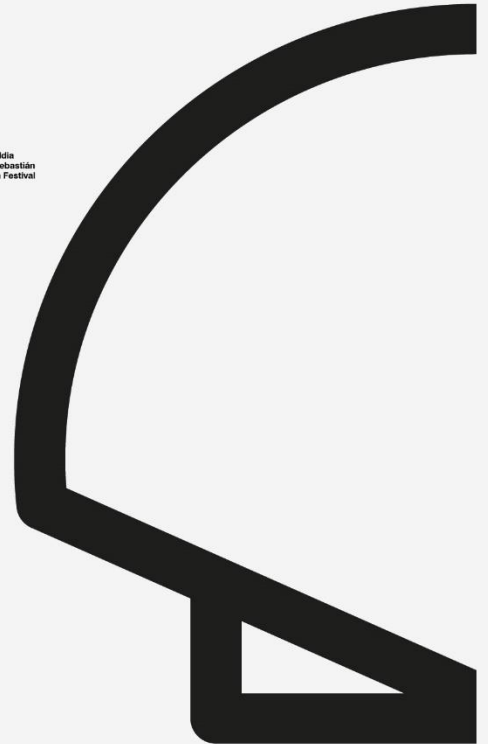


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