

## SPECIALE Cinephilia and Festivals

### On the Need to Analyze the Lives and Ideas of Festival Founders

One of the main and most obvious characteristics of cinephilia, which is part of the personal sphere of the cinephile, is its relationship with others, i.e. those outside of his or her very private and intimate relationship with film. The cinephile, in fact, makes his or her personal and intimate love for cinema externally recognizable. The cinephile talks about films and about his or her relationship with films, which s/he describes as exclusive. S/He overwhelmingly seeks to involve others in an educational manner so that they can understand and accept this relationship as exclusive. The cinephile is certain that s/he not only knows and sees films better but also can see more *within* films, and his or her purpose is that this ability to look (also in quantitative terms) is recognized more or less implicitly. Thus, s/he acts as a critic or as an organizer of film screenings and events, fosters discussions and debates, encourages controversy, joins and leaves groups, and in the meantime, tries to involve as many people as possible to become followers of the so-called “tenth muse”, of which s/he is an apostle and messiah<sup>1</sup>. The cinephile draws his or her strength from the potential and frequent indifference of other people, even though s/he suffers from it, and this marginalization feeds his or her presumption. Loneliness can mean intellectual and emotional radicalization, stemming from the idea that exclusion from the masses brings about exclusivity of one’s relationship with films. There are no schools or handbooks on how to become cinephiles, and yet cinephiles are made, not born: they convince themselves and others to be so by nature. Cinephilia is a pretentious and flashy presumption of having the ability to see *more*, to see beyond what the image represents. It is a language, a *habitus*, a “lifestyle” choice and is undertaken by some people. Some “appearances” that one puts on to show him/herself as a cinephile are *collecting*, an encyclopedic knowledge of the sector, and the complete knowledge of an *auteur*, including the reflexive look on them and their lives.

This aspect has been represented in *Les sièges de l’Alcazar* (Luc Moullet, 1989), “*le vrai film cinéophile pour cinéphiles sur la cinéphilie*”<sup>2</sup>. At the end of the film, the protagonist Guy, cinephile and columnist of *Cahiers du cinéma*, takes great pride in seeing many of his colleagues have become fans of Cottafavi’s films thanks to his articles: “I was proud to convince all of them about the brilliance of Cottafavi.” Yet he adds: “But I was also sad: Cottafavi was no longer mine alone”<sup>3</sup>.

The place where cinephiles meet is film festivals. In this article, I would like to sketch an initial reflection on the role of cinephile as festival founders. According to Wikipedia, “a festival is a festive event, often organized by a local community, with a certain theme. Festivals are usually recurrent, normally they take place in a single day or within a week, and their theme is culture or spectacle. Festivals take place in a city or in a larger area. During the staging of a festival, events of various types (e.g. concerts at a music festival) take place which are not necessarily linked to the type of the festival”<sup>4</sup>. There are several kinds of festivals: arts festivals, film festivals, culinary festivals literary festivals, recreational festivals, music festivals, theatre festivals, hippy festivals, multidisciplinary festivals and so forth.

Among many different types, purposes, themes, and of course, historical origins of the festival, a common point is the existence of a personality who kicked off the initiative. There are several examples from Richard Wagner and The Bayreuth Festival (opened in the summer of 1876) to Jean Vilar and The Festival d’Avignon (which took place on 4-10 September 1947), and also Gian Carlo Menotti and *The Festival of Due Mondi* in Spoleto (since 1958); Virgil Braconi, composer and record producer, and The Castrocaro Music Festival - *Concorso per Voci Nuove* (since 1957); Michael Lang, John P. Roberts, Joel Rosenman and Artie Kornfeld, the promoters of the Woodstock Festival (in Bethel, a small, rural town in the state of New York, on 15-18 August 1969); Cino Tortorella, *il Mago Zurlì*, and *Zecchino d’Oro*

**SPECIALE** (since 1959); Achim Ostertag<sup>5</sup> and Summer Breeze Open Air, a metal music festival held annually in Munich since 1997; Alberto Gollan, “a pioneer of Argentine Television”, and *Festival Iberoamericano de Publicidad* (since 1969), etc.



Fig. 1

I compiled on purpose a random and heterogeneous list of examples to show better the scheme of personality ↔ place → festival.

The film festivals follow the same scheme:

Oscar Martay	<i>The Berlin International Film Festival</i>	1951
Kamal el-Mallakh	<i>The Cairo International Film Festival</i>	1975
Philippe Erlanger	<i>The Cannes International Film Festival</i>	1946
Raimondo Rezzonico	<i>The Locarno Film Festival</i>	1946
Jesus Miller	<i>The Mar del Plata International Film Festival</i>	1954
Serge Losique	<i>The Montreal World Film Festival</i>	1977
Sergej Michajlovič Ėjzenštejn	<i>The Moscow International Film Festival</i>	1935
Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata	<i>The Venice Film Festival</i>	1932
Roman Gutek	<i>The Warsaw Film Festival</i>	1985
Dilys Powell	<i>The Times BFI London Film Festival</i>	1956
Bill Marshall, Henk Van der Kolk e Dusty Cohl	<i>The Toronto International Film Festival</i>	1976
Sigmund Kennedy	<i>Viennale (The Vienna International Film Festival)</i>	1960
Jerry Rudes	<i>Avignon Film Festival (Rencontres Cinématographiques Franco-Américain d'Avignon)</i>	1984-2008
Hilmar Hoffmann	<i>The International Short Film Festival Oberhausen</i>	1954
Tudor Giurgiu e Mihai Chirilov	<i>The Transilvania International Film Festival</i>	2002

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Fiorenzo Alfieri, Gianni Rondolino e Ansano Giannarelli	<i>The Torino Film Festival (formerly Festival internazionale Cinema giovani)</i>	1982
Ignas Scheynius, Kim Klein e Git Scheynius	<i>The Stockholm International Film Festival</i>	1990
Şakir Eczacıbaşı	<i>The Istanbul International Film Festival</i>	1994
Giorgio Gossetti	<i>The Courmayeur Noir Film Festival</i>	1991
Avni Tolunay	<i>The Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival</i>	1963
Annie Bozzo, Gigi Étienne, Freddy Bozzo, Georges Delmote e Guy Delmote	<i>The Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival</i>	1983
Víctor Nieto Nuñez	<i>The Cartagena Film Festival</i>	1960
Ben Ter Elst e Dirk De Meyer	<i>The Flanders International Film Festival Ghent (formerly Événement cinématographique de Gand)</i>	1974
Isaac del Rivero Sr.	<i>The Gijón International Film Festival (formerly International Children's Cinema and TV Contest)</i>	1963
Mário Ventura	<i>The Festroia International Film Festival</i>	1985
Alan Stout, John Heyer, John Kingsford Smith e David Donaldson	<i>The Sydney Film Festival</i>	1954
Pavlos Zannas	<i>The Thessaloniki International Film Festival</i>	1960
Roman Gutek	<i>New Horizons Film Festival</i>	2001
Mikhail Litvyakov	<i>Message to Man</i>	1988
Ilkka Kalliomäki	<i>The Tampere Film Festival</i>	1970
Elliot Grove	<i>The Raindance Film Festival</i>	1993
Elliot Grove	<i>The British Independent Film Awards</i>	1998
Elliot Grove	<i>Raindance.TV</i>	2007
Lia van Leer	<i>The Jerusalem International Film Festival</i>	1984
Stefan Kitanov	<i>The Sofia International Film Festival</i>	1997
Sterling Van Wagenen	<i>The Sundance Film Festival (formerly the Utah/US Film Festival)</i>	1978
Huub Bals	<i>The International Film Festival Rotterdam</i>	1972

I compiled this inevitably partial list<sup>6</sup> starting from the list of festivals accredited by the International Federation of Film Producers Associations<sup>7</sup> (competitive film festivals, competitive specialized film festivals, non-competitive film festivals and documentary and short film festivals).

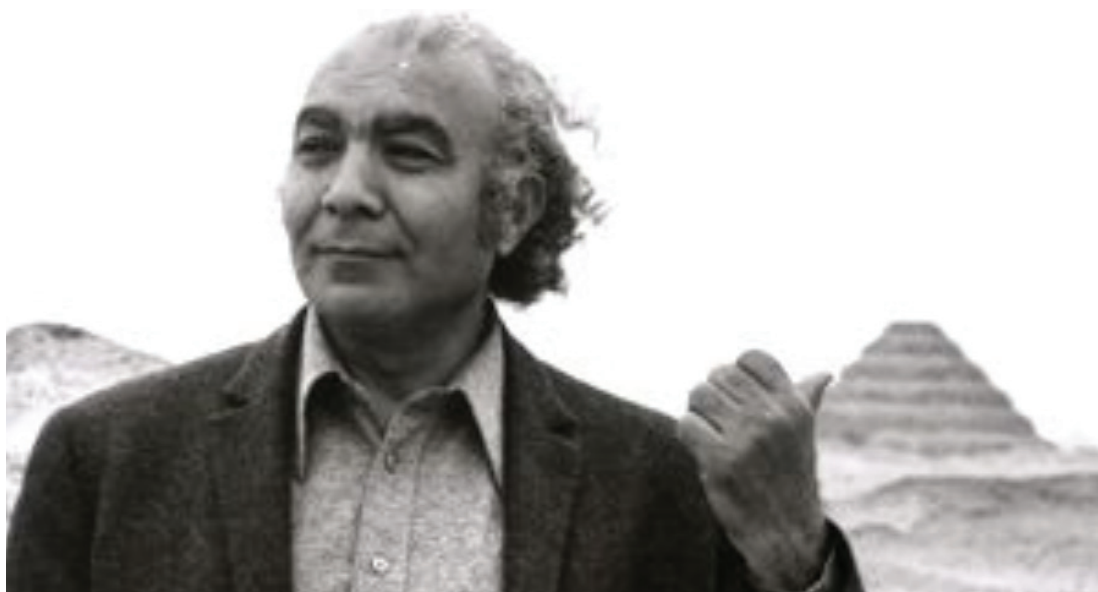


Fig. 2

**SPECIALE** Thomas Elsaesser has described the role and capabilities that festival directors should have<sup>9</sup>. Especially in this case, I think it is appropriate to focus on the personalities who are “founders of festivals” because they show maximum variety of initial means and motivations while sharing the common denominator that led them to create the film festival event. In addition, examining these personalities allows us to have a historically diachronic and as well an intercultural and transnational look at cinephilia.

A glance at the biographies or résumés of these personalities reveals that they have three characteristics: they are businesspeople, political administrators, and proud cinephiles. While in some examples one of these three characteristics is dominant, in others they are present simultaneously.

Oscar Martay, for example, the founder of the Berlin Film Festival, was a member of the Information Services Branch of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, who was sent to Germany at the end of 1948 with the task to revive the German film industry. Rather than cultural, political motivations, including the willingness to show the values of freedom and democracy in the Western part of the city - in opposition to the Soviet East where the International Youth Festival was planned in the same year - were the drive to financing the festival, mainly through resources provided by the Marshall Plan<sup>9</sup>.



Fig. 3

An exemplar figure of intellectual cinephile with great organizational skills<sup>10</sup> is Hubert “Huub” Bals, the founder of *Cinemanifestatie* in Utrecht and The International Film Festival Rotterdam, as well as co-founder of *Fédération Internationale des Festivals Indépendants* which used to cover the Directors’ Fortnight in Cannes and the International Forum of Young Cinema in Berlin. He was a “legendary”<sup>11</sup> representative of Dutch cinephilia: A filmmaker friend characterized Huub’s motivation as “film as life’s comforter”. Others describe him as a Don Quixote, a Dutch Langlois, in an analogy with the battles this founder of the French Cinémathèque fought against bureaucracy and the high-handedness of power structures.” He is remembered as a strict<sup>12</sup>, ironic, and shy person with an exuberant lifestyle, a great enthusiasm for food and obsession with films. According to Marijke de Valck, the purpose of Bals was

**SPECIALE** “to find an audience for his films and not to find films for his audience”<sup>13</sup>. His memorable quotes are: “What I would like is that in this country every possible means is used to teach the people the love for cinematography (...) Let the State to buy the rights and screen the film for free, like you are going to a park or a museum. Just film.” And “Watching a good movie is better than screwing”. The word on his gravestone is *filmkunstenaar*, literally, film artist<sup>14</sup>. Bals was a sponsor and propagator of emerging films from developing countries, and The Hubert Bals Fund<sup>15</sup> was established after his death to support new productions<sup>16</sup>.



Fig. 4

Equally prominent, there have been intellectuals, promoters, men and women of the cultural sphere, critics, scholars and film theorists such as Kamal el-Mallakh, Philippe Erlanger, Raimondo Rezzonico, Jesus Miller, Serge Losique, Roman Gutek, Dilys Powell, Bill Marshall, Henk Van der Kolk and Dusty Cohl, Sigmund Kennedy, Jerry Rudes, Hilmar Hoffmann, Tudor Giurgiu and Mihai Chirilov, Fiorenzo Alfieri, Gianni Rondolino and Ansano Giannarelli, Ignas Scheynius, Kim Klein and Git Scheynius, Ilkka Kalliomäki, Şakir Eczacıbaşı, etc. Despite the great geographical, historical and professional differences among them, they are united by the desire to show films, which gives birth to their film festival projects. Dilys Powell and Sigmund Kennedy were very active and famous film critics; Roman Gutek, “one of the pioneers of film distribution in the post-communist Poland”<sup>17</sup>, is a key figure in the contemporary film culture in Poland; Kamal El-Mallakh<sup>18</sup>, an archaeologist and journalist, was the founder of the Egyptian Society for Movie Writers and Critics, and a genuine cinephile; Ilkka Kalliomäki details the origins of the festival he founded as an idea emerged out of a debate with young and enthusiast cinephiles like him just after the military service<sup>19</sup>, and Şakir Eczacıbaşı, another very interesting personality certainly worthy of further research: pharmacist, photographer, entrepreneur, translator, film critic who was in the board of directors of the Turkish Cinematheque Association and the chairman of the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts.

**SPECIALE** It is clear that each of these figures deserves an in-depth and analytical study of their life stories, as much as a study of their thoughts, and literary and cultural works. Such a study can be both a historical and a theoretical inquiry which rebuilds their relations with the places in which they created the event, scrutinize their potential intellectual heritage as inspiration to the directors or successors and as well in the practice of selecting and scheduling films. Moreover, starting from one of these figures may prove useful to highlight the culture of film and cinephilia in places which are geographically peripheral to the western metropolitan cinephilia. What these figures show is that, in the origin of each festival, there are certainly significant geopolitical reasons, as stated by Marijke de Valck and other scholars<sup>20</sup>, but there are also individual thought and the original and personal desire to start a film festival to show films and to share one's cinephilia.

Giacomo Di Foggia

## Notes

1. This religious terminology is neither out of line nor exaggerated nor purely rhetoric, especially when you consider, for example, André Bazin and his militancy in the Catholic cinephile groups of the postwar period after the Second World War. See Antoine de Baecque, *La Cinéphilie. Invention d'un regard, histoire d'une culture 1944-1968*, Paris, Hachette-Fayard, 2003, pp. 33 - 62 e Dudley Andrew, *André Bazin*, Paris, Éd. Cahiers du cinéma, 1983. De Baeque further writes: "on peut dire que si Bazin peut être regardé comme le père des cinéphiles, c'est qu'il était celui qui pratiquait le mieux le rituel majeur: il fut le plus sensible «discuteur» du cinéma", p. 59.
2. According to Antoine de Baecque: *Ivi*, pp. 11 – 12.
3. Translation of the author.
4. [http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Festival\\_\(antropologia\)](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Festival_(antropologia)) Translation of the author [Last access November 2014]
5. "At that time Achim was still playing drums in a local band called Voodoo Kiss. Back then, however, there were almost no places to play live, so Achim and his friends decided to organize their own festival. The Summer Breeze began like this, with 10 bands playing over 10 days in a tent in the fair area of Abtsgmünd. This was the first chaotic attempt, with 300 fans in the audience. The second Summer Breeze took place in 1999 in the same tent. This time, there were some well-known names among the 10 bands that played, like Darkseed, Night in Gales and Crack Up, which attracted over 500 attendees per day". (Translation of the author): [http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer\\_Breeze\\_Open\\_Air](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer_Breeze_Open_Air) [Last access November 2014]
6. Not having time and ways for an inevitably more in-depth historical research nor the language skills, I had to exclude, among others, the following festivals: the International Film Festival of India, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, the San Sebastián International Film Festival, the Shanghai International Film Festival, the Tokyo International Film Festival, the Jeonju International Film Festival, the International Film Festival of Kerala, the Los Angeles Film Festival, the Namur International French-language Film Festival (formerly Festival cinématographique de Wallonie), the Busan International Film Festival, the Sarajevo Film Festival, Sitges - Catalanian International Film Festival, Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, and the Krakow Film Festival.
7. FIAPF Accredited Festivals Directory - L'Annuaire des Festivals Accrédités par la FIAPF <http://www.fiapf.org/pdf/directoryFIAPFv3.pdf> [Last access November 2014]
8. "Festival directors, their artistic deputies and section programmers have to be political animals. They know about their power, but also about the fact that this power depends on a mutual act of faith: a festival director is king (queen) or pope only as long as the press believes in his/her infallibility, which is

**SPECIALE** to say, a festival director is only too aware of how readily the press holds him personally responsible for the quality of the annual selection and even for the prize-giving juries, should their decisions fail to find favor. The complexity of a festival's politicization can be measured by the adamant insistence that the sole criterion applied is that of quality and artistic excellence [...] A festival director is deemed to have a vision - of what's what and who's who in world cinema, as well as a mission - for his/her country, city, and the festival itself. Each of his/her annual "editions" usually stands under a motto, which itself has to be a formula for a balancing act of competing agendas and thus has to be as attractively tautological as possible. The 'pre-eminence of talent' then becomes the code word for taste-making and agenda-setting, and thus for (pre-)positioning one's own festival within the network, and among its patrons. These comprise the regular roster of star directors along with talents to be discovered. It also has to include the tastes of those that can most effectively give exposure to these talents: distributors, potential producers, journalists. When one is in the business of making new authors, then one author is a 'discovery', two are the auspicious signs that announce a 'new wave', and three new authors from the same country amount to a 'new national cinema'. Festivals then nurture these directors over their second (often disappointing) film, in the hope that the third will once again be a success, which then justifies the auteur's status, definitively confirmed by a retrospective". See Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2005, pp. 98 – 99.

9. Cindy H. Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, Rutgers University Press, 2011, pp. 42-43; Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2007, p. 65; Janet Harbord, *Film Cultures*, SAGE, 2002, p. 62; Wolfgang Jacobsen, *50 Years Berlinale: Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin*, Berlin, Filmmuseum, 2000, pp. 11-19; Stephen Mezias, Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen, S. Svejenova, Carmelo Mazza, "Much Ado about Nothing? Untangling the Impact of European Premier Film Festivals" in *Creative Encounters Working Paper #14*, September 2008 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10398/8152>) [Last access November 2014]; Caroline Moine, "Festivals de cinéma et politiques culturelles dans l'Europe de la guerre froide: diversité des enjeux et des acteurs" in Philippe Poirrier (ed.), *Festivals et sociétés en Europe XIXe-XXIe siècles*, Territoires contemporains, nouvelle série, January 2012 ([http://tristan.u-bourgogne.fr/UMR5605/publications/Festivals\\_societes/C\\_Moine.html](http://tristan.u-bourgogne.fr/UMR5605/publications/Festivals_societes/C_Moine.html)) [Last access November 2014]

10. "Bals was also attributed with the ability, like a spider, to keep his eyes on a network and to put out the right feelers. The fact that he produced and directed his film festival to an organic whole, in the same way a film producer or director produces a film, also fits this picture." Jan Heijs and Frans Westra, *Que le tigre danse. Huub Bals a biography*, Amsterdam, Otto Cramwinckel, 1996.

11. "Hubert (or Huub) Bals was the legendary founder of the International Film Festival Rotterdam. He towered over its first twenty years and after his death in 1988 became something of a legend." James Quandt, *The Sandwich Process: Simon Field Talks About Polemics and Poetry at Film Festivals*, interview with Simon Field, in Richard Porton (ed.), *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals*, Wallflower, 2009, p. 80. "Also the stuff of legends is the freedom of Huub Bals was given in organizing Film International" in Patricia Van Ulzen, *Imagine a Metropolis: Rotterdam's Creative Class 1970-2000*, Amsterdam, 010 Publishers, 2007, pag. 94

12. "He gave some people the impression that he was a potentate or a prince. In the Netherlands there were people on whom the coterie of the film festival left a negative impression, like that of a tsarist court with a Byzantine aura. It was in his own country in particular that there were more love-hate relationships than elsewhere. [...] Some people saw him as a 'sparring partner,' others felt protected by his power and his contacts, which were comparable to the prestige of the ballet impresario Diaghilev." Heijs and Westra, *op. cit.*, p. 21

13. Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener, *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, Amsterdam,

**SPECIALE** Amsterdam University Press, 2005, p. 102.

14. Van Ulzen, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

15. "Following Bals' preference for South-Asian cinema, the fund is focused on supporting filmmakers from developing film countries. Its strategy is to concentrate on artistic productions that have a good chance on the international film festival circuit, but lack the popular appeal of a national audience and therefore need to rely on international funding. This strategy has been so successful that the Hubert Bals Fund has become a hallmark of quality. The Cannes competition of 2004 featured no less than four productions that received support from the Hubert Bals Fund." Marijke de Valck, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

16. For example, the fond contributed to 11 productions in 2013.

17. Observatoire européen de l'audiovisuel, *Les entreprises de distribution cinématographique en Europe*, Council of Europe, 2007, p. 212.

18. "was no ordinary man. He was a thoroughbred. They called him "genius", "walking encyclopaedia", "Ancient Egyptian". He was all of these, and he was more. The love of art and the love of country were his very essence". Lubna Abdel-Aziz, "Dirge without music", Al-Ahram Weekly Online, 11 - 17 October 2001, Issue No.555.

19. *History of Tampere Film Festival*, by Riina Mikkonen e Manu Alakarhu, <http://www.tamperefilmfestival.fi/history/> [Last access November 2014].

20. Marijke de Valck, *op. cit.* and among others, Michael J. Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics*, Routledge, 2008; Kenneth Turan, *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made*, Oakland, University of California Press, 2002; Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2011; Roberta Seret, *World Affairs in Foreign Films: Getting the Global Picture*, Jefferson, McFarland, 2011.