

Transilvania IFF 2023 Highlights: films from Lars von Trier, Fatih Akin and Cate Blanchett in Tár

New films from **Lars Von Trier** and **Fatih Akin**, winners in Venice and Locarno festivals, but also the long-awaited **Tár**, with **Cate Blanchett** in the lead role, will be part of the program of the 22nd edition of the Transilvania International Film Festival (June 9 – 18, 2023, Cluj-Napoca).

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Riget Exodus / The Kingdom Exodus (Denmark, 2022) the third part of the cult horror trilogy directed by **Lars von Trier** premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2022. The series follows the absurd and supernatural life of patients and staff in the neurology ward of the Rigshospitalet hospital in Copenhagen. An enormous organism of flesh and blood materialized in the corridors and halls of the institution, interfering with the already troubled destinies of those who inhabit it. 28 years after the first season made for Danish television, **The Kingdom** quickly became an international sensation, and in this final season, **von Trier** returns to some of the original characters and stories, bringing them into the present with even more humor and grotesque: " Striving to be as seamless as possible in its recreation of what, to many, is already perfection, there's plenty of vintage atmosphere to be enjoyed by cultists near and far." (Cineuropa). All 5 episodes of the series will be presented at Transilvania IFF in a unique marathon screening, part of [Nordic Focus](#).

"Her performance will pierce you like a conductor's baton through the heart " (The Guardian). **Cate Blanchett** is perhaps one of the most acclaimed actresses of the season, both by critics and the public, for the role in the film **Tár** (dir. Todd Field, USA, 2022) where she plays Lydia Tár, a genius composer and conductor. With 6 Oscar nominations – including Best Picture and Best Actress – **Tár** is a psychological drama about an exceptional character, tormented by paranoia and insomnia. From rumors of inappropriate relationships with younger women in the orchestra to her rock star-like lifestyle, Lydia Tár's destiny is a violent one, obsessively amplified by the music she composes and conducts.

A Transilvania IFF regular, the famous German director, screenwriter, and producer **Fatih Akin** (**Head-On, The Edge of Heaven or Soul Kitchen**) will present his new film – **Rheingold** (Germany, 2022) – in June in Cluj-Napoca. Inspired by the life of the rapper Xatar, Rheingold is a captivating story about success and music, but also the violence of the streets, all told with humor to hip-hop beats. Famous in Germany for his music, especially for the first album he wrote in prison, Xatar, real name Giwar Hajabi, co-wrote the script with Akin.

The new film starring **Isabelle Huppert** will also be screened at Transilvania IFF 2023. **La syndicaliste** (dir. Jean-Paul Salomé, France, 2022) is a thriller inspired by reality: the character played by Huppert is an employee of a nuclear power company who denounces a series of illegal practices within the institution. Her act triggers an unscrupulous war between employee and employer, which culminates in a violent attack on the woman in her own home. Determined to find justice, she enters a blame game where the company, as well as the government, try to make her a suspect and remove her. The Romanian actress **Alexandra Maria Lara** is also part of the cast of the film.

Winner of the Golden Lion in Venice 2022, the documentary ***All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*** (dir. Laura Poitras, USA, 2022) centers on artist Nan Goldin. An intimate portrait of haunting beauty, the film is a showcase of the life and work of one of the most important contemporary American photographers. Her career blends art with activism, and ***All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*** captures Goldin's battle with the Sackler family, founders of a pharmaceutical empire that played a crucial role in the US opioid epidemic. Two narrative threads – the artistic journey and the committed one – intertwine "in an elegant and powerful documentary" (New York Times), nominated for an Oscar in 2023. Laura Poitras has already won an Oscar for the documentary ***Citizenfour*** (2015).

Also from the official selection of the Venice Film Festival 2022, where it won three prizes, comes ***Lord of The Ants*** (Italy, 2022), the latest feature film by Italian director **Gianni Amelio**. Based on the biography of gay writer Aldo Braibanti, ***Lord of The Ants*** captures the Rome of the 60s and the atmosphere surrounding the trial of Braibanti, accused of corrupting a young man, based on outdated laws. A story about homophobia and falsehood in Italian society, the film is a plea for freedom. Amelio is a veteran of Italian cinema, awarded throughout his career at Cannes, Venice, or the Goya Awards for ***Il ladro di bambini*** (1992) or ***Lamerica*** (1996).

The provocative ***Rule 34*** (dir. Júlia Murat, Brazil, France 2022) won the Golden Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival in 2022. A story of race, social class, justice and sexuality, the film follows a feminist student in Rio de Janeiro, who does video chat at night to pay for her studies. Her sexual explorations lead her to extreme areas, on the edge between life and death. The film's title refers to an unwritten rule of the Internet: every story or scenario in the world has a pornographic version. The lead role is played "powerfully, sensually and empathetically" (Screen Daily) by debutant actress Sol Miranda.

An intense thriller, ***Kompromat*** (dir. Jérôme Salle, France, 2022) "is a reminder of how the Russian government can destroy lives if you fall victim" (Variety). A French diplomat working in Siberia is arrested for child pornography and thrown into a sinister prison. The film keeps viewers on the edge of their seat following the Frenchman's attempts to escape as his own country's government seems to have abandoned him. The term "kompromat" refers to a technique of reputation destruction often used in political processes.

The list of titles announced for Transilvania IFF 2023 continues with ***Stories Not To Be Told*** (Spain, 2022), a series of short romantic stories collected in a comedy directed by Cesc Gay, known to Transilvania IFF audiences for ***People Upstairs*** (2021). The cast of the film includes some of the most beloved Spanish actors of the moment. The Chilean director **Matías Bize** also returns to the screens in Cluj-Napoca with the drama ***El Castigo*** (Chile, 2022), a tour de force filmed in a single frame: a child disappears from his parents in a mysterious forest. The film premiered at the Black Nights Festival in Tallinn, where **Antonia Zegers** won the award for best actress. Bize is known to the Transilvania IFF audience for films such as ***The Memory of Water*** (2016) or ***The Life of Fish*** (2011).

The program will also include Austrian director Ulrich Seidl's controversial film: ***Sparta*** (Austria, 2022). The film completes the story of ***Rimini*** (which was shown last year in the

festival), but focuses on Richie Bravo's character's brother, Ewald. He moves to a village in Transylvania, where he transforms a dilapidated school into a battlefield for children.

Patrick and the Whale (dir. Mark Fletcher, USA, 2022) is a documentary that uses extraordinary aquatic images to illustrate renowned photographer and marine explorer Patrick Dykstra's quest to connect with an intelligent and complex mammal: the sperm whale. One of the producers of this documentary is **Alexander Nanau**, the Romanian Oscar-nominated director for ***Collective***.