A FESTIVAL IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

How we did it
The first major film festival to be organised in Europe during the pandemic took place between July 31st and August 9, 2020. 10 special days in which safety was the key word. Federico Fellini, celebrated at the Transilvania International Film Festival, was a symbolic patron of this unusual 19th edition, reconfigured exclusively outdoor to prioritise public health, safety, and physical distancing.

Postponed from May, the festival took place completely outdoors in 14 venues throughout the city of Cluj, Romania, and the surrounding area. With two screenings per night/ per location, morning screenings for children, interviews and TIFF Talks during the day, live concerts in the afternoon - the programme was adjusted accordingly and the end result was amazing: around 45,000 socially distanced participants enjoyed the festival.

Since 2002, the Transilvania IFF experience means an exciting and intriguing selection, picturesque locations such as castles or open air museums, cine-concerts in churches, educational platforms for young audiences, solid industry programs, and a consistent focus on the future of audio-visual content. Being accredited by the International Federation of Film Producers’ Associations (FIAPF) places it among the 40 most important festivals in the world.
### TIFF in numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Films</td>
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Culture can be enjoyed safely, we can say that now. It was a tremendous effort from the entire team to make the festival happen. When we decided to postpone it, we expected cinemas to be open by July 15, but when we realised this is not going to happen, we re-shaped everything in a very short time. We analysed the safety measures imposed by authorities, we scouted all available spaces in Cluj - from schoolyards, museums and sports fields to grasslands - and we chose the most suitable ones. Then we adjusted the film selection in order to fit the new programming possibilities. We sacrificed some films, but we had a festival.

Tudor Giurgiu, Festival President
Transilvania International Film Festival

Transilvania IFF remained one of the most visible Romanian cultural brands, with more than 7,600 print and online articles, TV & radio news, and social media mentions in national media and dedicated news in international outlets.

TIFF marks the first major film festival to take place physically in Eastern Europe since the beginning of the pandemic. Screenings were held at outdoor venues with social distancing measures in place and a maximum capacity of 500 people while face coverings were made mandatory for all public events in Romania from August 8.

It's a hundred years since the Italian cinema giant's birth and there's a selection of his films and a photo exhibition on display. Since both countries' languages are closely related, and many Romanians understand at least some Italian, it’s an apposite choice.

But the festival's 19th edition will of course be most remembered for the conditions it has to be held in. All film screenings are outdoors and the seating has been reduced for safety.

*Data offered my mediaTRUST from April 1 to August 15, 2020*
A hybrid edition of the Transilvania Film Festival will unspool through a combination of online industry events and open-air screenings, marking one of the first large-scale film events in Europe to take place since the start of the pandemic.

At a time when movie-goers across the globe have spent restless weeks and months in quarantine with their loved ones, this year’s competition perhaps fittingly offers 12 “surprising, daring, and cutting-edge stories…all revolving around family dynamics and the inherent crises that come along with it,” says TIFF artistic director Mihai Chirilov.

The Romanian Days sidebar of the postponed edition of TIFF comes with its widest selection ever.
Curatorial challenges

157 films in 13 sections

Opening film: La Belle Époque by Nicolas Bedos

Closing film: Delete History by Benoît Delépine and Gustave Kervern

2 night time screenings per venue, starting from 9.00 p.m.

Daylight screenings for children, in the EducaTIFF programme

Selected films available online on the festival’s streaming platform, TIFF Unlimited
Even if #staysafe was the order of the day this year, **films that take risks continued to occupy a privileged space in our festival**. Personally, I wish we wouldn’t have to go through this again, but I’m the kind of person who always looks at the bright side of things - which was people in a crowd enjoying cinema.

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The greatest challenge for us has been related with observing the legal and technical rules in place, issued by central and local authorities in a very tight timeframe. The uncertainty of the overall venue capacities, entrance triages, distancing and hygiene measures have kept us in a months-length limbo, with many alternative plans on the table. From the moment we green lighted the dates and dimensions (venues, hours and number of films), we started a race against the clock to create the film schedule and identify the best outdoor night venues. In a little over one month, we had to finalise all film screening deals, technically prepare them and ensuring the best possible **programming** on new venues with uncertain potential and reduced notoriety.

Ștefan Bradea,
Program Manager
Logistical challenges

9 completely new venues out of 14

“All locations had to be mapped by a team of specialists and we hired an architect who drew simulations of the chairs setup. It was essential, otherwise we would not have known how many seats we have. And from the number of seats start a lot of other essential technical details.”

“My position had to be invented this year. We practically created 9 cinemas from scratch, something that we did before, but not to this extent, not in this extremely tight time frame and not in this special situation of distancing and strict ruling. The arrangement of the seats had to be made according to the surfaces and the technical specifications imposed by the projection conditions - screen size, visibility, access etc. A complex algorithm which practically dictated the capacity of the festival, meaning the number of seats and tickets sold, respectively.”

Oana Giurgiu,
Executive Director

Ralua Pascu,
Locations Setup Coordinator
Traditional venues

Unirii Square Open Air

Art Museum

Iulius Parc Open Air

Bunățida, Bánffy Castle

Vlaha, Arkhei Sculpture Park
New venues

- Babeș-Bolyai University
- "János Zsigmond" Highschool Yard
- Transilvania Base — Sports Club
- Echinox Courtyard
- "Apáczai Csere János" Schoolyard
- Hoia — Ethnographic Museum Alley
- Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine University
- Curtea Liceului Național „George Coșbuc”
- "Báthory István" Highschool Yard
The total confrontation was to rethink everything considering that most venues were new. These outdoor locations did not have Internet or at least good Internet access for our projection team and I had to return to a more bureaucratic system on paper to manage everything, one that I luckily used many years ago.

Vlad Plăiașu, Technical Manager
Safety measures

Team, guests and audiences were all kept safe due to rigorous rules.

The maximum number of participants allowed for open air events was 500.

Special guides were sent to team members, volunteers, guests and journalists regarding their activity in the festival.

Contactless temperature checks at each entry point.

Mask wearing was mandatory.

Clearly marked entry and exit routes.

1.5 meters distancing was mandatory for all events.

Seats were set up for one or two persons and were disinfected after each screening.

Official Festival cars were disinfected after each trip.

Tickets were mainly sold online and through the TIFF Official App. Only one ticketing point was set up in the Unirii Square. The result: only 4% of the payments were made in cash!

Sanitary measures were prominently displayed in all locations.

No parties!
We acted mathematically: we gathered as much information, applicable rules, and opinions as possible. We organized everything into three categories: audience, team and guests and we made a special guide for the festival during pandemic times.

Cristian Hordilă,
Festival Manager
The volunteers

“The most challenging aspect was getting a sense of the motivation level of the volunteers and keeping it high. We had to manage extremely diverse attitudes towards the entire health context, from people that were careless when it came to wearing a mask to the ones that saw threats everywhere. We were very clear from the beginning that we will follow protocols, and if anyone feels uncomfortable at any point they should come to us. This helped in clearing their minds of worries and focusing them on the activity. We got complaints that volunteers were too strict in applying health protocols – these were celebrated among us.

Despite the challenges, we got great feedback about and from the volunteers.”

Diana Bere, Volunteers Coordinator

250 volunteers
— mostly teenagers from Cluj-Napoca
Guest or no guest?

RSVPs were a must, to ensure all seats are filled and that there are no unannounced guests.

Upon arrival, we asked everyone to use hand sanitizer and to sit down at tables of no more than four, as per Government advice.

We encouraged guests to organize their own travel to and from events, ensuring festival cars were used in exceptional cases only.

The meals came in sustainable packaging, portioned for one, with cutlery individually wrapped. All sauces came in little jars, and there was nothing on tables for our guests to pass around.

400 guests, mostly Romanians
“During the festival, the most difficult mission was adapting to the ever-changing conditions, especially the fact that borders were opened and closed from one day to another. Each such change obviously generated all sorts of modifications in the festival itself and the structure and job description of the team. Even though the number of guests was smaller this year, all the late confirmations or cancellations made it very difficult to predict the workload.”

“We delivered social events to a much smaller scale, taking all precautions to ensure the safety of our guests while creating a welcoming environment. The government limited social gatherings to 50, outdoor only, and we had to come up with creative ways to serve food and drink, encourage interaction with the advised physical distance. Our large parties were cancelled and we adapted our social calendar to consist of outdoor lunches only, in various, unconventional venues.”

Mihaela Stănescu, Guest Manager

Carmen Pop-Tiron, Hospitality Coordinator
TIFF Industry

The industry platform this year had both online and offline component. Due to travel restrictions, only a handful of industry international guests were present in Cluj, while the rest of them participated online. The Closed Screenings programme took place completely online.

The pitch on August 7th was a hybrid one as well, with physical presence and live transmission. The event was open to interested industry professionals present online and the prizes were announced at the Awards Ceremony, as follows:

**Transilvania Pitch Stop Awards**

- **Eurimages Co-production Development Award**, in amount of 20,000 euro - *Kretsul*, directed by Alexandra Likhacheva, produced by Anna Shalashina - WISH Media (Russia)

- Post-production services offered by *Chainsaw Europe*, in amount of 25,000 euro - *Panopticon*, directed by George Sikharulidze, produced by Vladimir Katcharava - 20 Steps Productions (Georgia)

- **Transilvania Pitch Stop Award**, offered by Dacin Sara, in amount of 3,500 euro - *Blue Banks*, directed by Andreea Cristina Borțun, produced by Gabriela Suciu-Pădurețu (Atelier de Film)

**Transilvania Pitch Stop Workshop**

- **Transilvania Pitch Stop CoCo Award**, offered by Connecting Cottbus Co-Production Market - *Sep & Ana*, director Paul Cioran, producer Claudiu Mitcu (We are basca, Romania)

**Villa Kult Cultural Residency Award** (a 5-day residency in Berlin) - *Death and the Maiden*, director Adina Pintilie, producer Bianca Oana (Manekino Film, Romania)
“Our department followed the general trend and had to adapt quickly to a new reality. We’ve researched for the best online tools to cater to our needs, and luckily we had our own VoD platform to use for the Closed Screenings. The project presentations at Transilvania Pitch Stop were hybrid, allowing those present the chance to meet. Nevertheless, the continuation of our programmes was essential, to offer as much support as possible to the projects in development and the films in post-production.

The industry will surely change and reshape after 2020 and we are all curious about the direction. We are now working on a long-term strategy to reflect the needs of the industry and the current environment.”

Dorina Oargă, Industry Manager
TIFF Unlimited

A few of the most anticipated titles from the 2020 programme of the Transilvania IFF were available online simultaneously throughout Romania on the festival’s platform TIFF Unlimited (unlimited.tiff.ro). Films from the Supernova, No Limit, and What’s up, Doc? sections could be watched online on a 48-hour pay-per-view basis.

TIFF Unlimited is the first streaming service launched by a film festival in Romania and the only product of its kind in Eastern Europe. Available online and as an iOS and Android (mobile and TV), TIFF Unlimited has a constantly refreshing catalogue of independent films and can be accessed by purchasing a monthly or annual subscription.

Throughout 2020, unlimited.tiff.ro has experienced an intense growth, becoming an important alternative for audiences in Romania.
Awards

For the first time in the festival’s history, the Awards ceremony took place outdoors, in Cluj-Napoca’s Unirii Square, on August 8. Most winners sent video messages that were aired during the gala, while others were present on stage.

Transilvania Trophy, in amount of 10,000 euro - *Babyteeth*, directed by Shannon Murphy

Best Directing Award, in amount of 3,500 euro - Tim Mielants, for Patrick and ex-aquo Zheng Lu Xinyuan, for *The Cloud In Her Room*

Special Jury Award, in amount of 1,500 euro, offered by HBO - *Sister*, directed by Svetla Tsotsorkova

Best Performance Award, in amount of 1,000 euro, offered by Conceptual Lab - Evgeniya Gromova, for *Fidelity*

The Audience Award, offered by MasterCard - *Babyteeth*, directed by Shannon Murphy

FIPRESCI Prize for a film in the Romanian Days section - *Everything Will Not Be Fine*, by Adrian Pîrvu, Helena Maksym
More awards

The Audience Award for the most popular film in the Romanian Days section, in amount of 1,500 euro, offered by Dacin Sara - So, What’s Freedom?, by Andrei Zinca

Excellence Award, offered by Mercedes-Benz – actress Maria Ploae

Romanian Days Award for Best Feature Film, in amount of 10,000 euro (in post-production services) offered by Cinelabs Romania – Acasă, My Home, by Radu Ciorniciuc

Romanian Days Award for Best Debut, in amount of 1,000 euro, offered by Banca Transilvania – Legacy, by Dorian Boguță

Special Mention of the Jury in the Romanian Days section - Ivana the Terrible, by Ivana Mladenović

Romanian Days Award for Best Short Film, in amount of 1,500 euro, offered by UCIN and camera & electric & grip equipment services, offered by CutareFilm, in amount of 5,000 euro - Kaïmós, by Sarra Tsorakidis

Special Mention of the Romanian Days Short Film Jury - Letter of Forgiveness, by Alina Șerban and Death and the Knight, by Radu Gaciu

Romanian Days Feature Film jury
Marcel Maiga (programmer)
Edvinas Puksta (programmer)
Dan Făinaru (film critic)

Romanian Days Short Film jury - present in Cluj
Guillaume de Seille (producer)
Artur Brzozowski (programmer)
Silje Nikoline Glimsdal (TrustNordisk sales manager)

FIPRESCI jury
Jean-Max Méjean
Marina Kostova
Jenni Zylka
Transilvania International Film Festival

Our audiences

Residents

33.6
average age

men 35% women 65%

income from all categories

>> TIFF is an event for all residents of Cluj, regardless of their income

Non-residents

34.2
average age

men 50% women 50%

above average income

+80%
of TIFF audience has at least one university degree

Main reasons to come to TIFF

Love for cinema - 50% of participants go to the cinema at least once a month and 80% of them use a VOD platform

The desire to experience the festival atmosphere
Impact & notoriety

The impact of the festival in Cluj-Napoca is felt on several levels: cultural life, tourism, local economy.

- **85%** of Cluj residents see TIFF as the most representative cultural event in their city.
- **+60%** of residents participated at least 5 previous editions!
- **72%** of the non-residents interviewed came to Cluj especially for TIFF.
- **35%** of non-residents come for the first time >> attracting newcomers.
- **5 days** of the festival and see:
  - 1.6 movies a day - residents
  - 2.3 movies a day - non-residents
- **50%** of participants take part in other events within the festival: cine-concerts, masterclasses, exhibitions, workshops, etc.

Data extracted from the impact study conducted by the Faculty of Business of Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca between 2016 and 2019.
As we were walking on thin ice, somehow pioneering what I would call the “pandemic” events industry, we felt grateful to count on the support of many of our international partners, who have stood by us even in such difficult and unpredictable times. We have built programmes and made them happen with the help of Creative Europe-MEDIA, Embassies, cultural institutes, foreign film centres, partner festivals. We have experienced true solidarity among cultural stakeholders.

Claudia Droc, Head of International Relations
For my first participation to TIFF, I had the pleasure to create and perform a piano interpretation of Murnau’s extraordinary *Faust*, one of the biggest masterpieces in cinema history, right in the magnificent, yet surprising setting of the Bánffy Castle. At TIFF I have discovered an entire city vibrating for cinema and its artists, a unique festival made possible thanks to the energy, enthusiasm and professionalism of a one-of-a-kind team.

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It was my great pleasure taking part in the 19th Transilvania International Film Festival, a festival of cultural importance with rich history. With a firm and long-standing cooperation between the Embassy of the Republic of Korea and TIFF, it was a great opportunity to present two Korean films this year, including an Oscar-winning film *Parasite*. I hope TIFF continues to be a passageway for the Korean cinema to reach out to the Romanian audience.

Jean-François Zygel, Pianist & Composer, France

H.E. Mr. Kim Yong Ho, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea in Romania
Plans for 2021

We plan to celebrate 20 years of Transilvania IFF with a remarkable selection of films and many special events.

July 23 — August 1, 2021

For the 20th edition, we are working on two scenarios. If things return to normal, we will do the same, but if restrictions will still be in place, we will use our previous experience to reorganise accordingly.
What were we watching 20 years ago?
Special events with surprise guests.

Screenings of digitally restored Romanian films

TIFF Camp
An intensive laboratory about filmmaking, dedicated in a first phase to teenagers and organized during the summer, in Transylvania. Details will follow.

Focus Spain
The best of contemporary Spanish cinema, accompanied by special guests.

European film series
Marathons and showcases of series that cannot be found currently on mainstream platforms in Romania.

Focus Serbia
Award-winning films from our neighbors, plenty of humor and unforgettable evenings with Serbian music.

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SEE YOU NEXT YEAR

23 July — 1 August 2021