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**Press release**

**The winners of the 7th Torino Underground Cinefest  
*“Echo” by Amikam Kovner e Assaf Snir and “Take care” by Itamar  
Giladi are the Best Films of the seventh edition of TUC, directed by  
Mauro Russo Rouge***

The seventh edition of the Torino Underground Cinefest has just ended, a festival created and supervised by the director Mauro Russo Rouge, side by side with Annunziato Gentiluomo and Matteo Valier, and created by the associations ArtInMovimento and SystemOut. As announced, despite the special streaming version on the Italian platform Indiecinema and on MYMOVIESLIVE, the juries did their job deciding, for the two categories in competition – feature films and short films – respectively as Best Film “Echo” by Amikam Kovner and Assaf Snir and “Take care” by Itamar Giladi, who thus received cash prizes.

The Feature Films Jury, composed of Fabrizio Odetto (President), Alessandro Amato, Davis Alfano, Paolo Armao, Laura Salvai and Alessio Brusco, motivated its choice stating that “*Echo* is the fragmented reflection of an ancient sin – betrayal – which is dealt with with extreme authenticity and sensitivity, through a narration made of symbolic and highly metaphorical images and suggestions, in which the characters are wrapped in an emotional dimness that pushes them to communicate in an indirect and deferred way. The script is of great value, as sublime is the writing of the characters, so well portrayed and balanced, on the precarious balance of their lives. The harmonious and elegant direction is never intrusive and is not afraid of silences.

A powerful story, full of a melancholy sense of the unresolved; a mosaic of snapshots in which each piece fits perfectly at the end, leading us towards a cruel, sublime truth, in front of which we cannot help but wonder”.

The Short Films Jury includes Annunziato Gentiluomo, Armand Rovira, Nicolas Gauthier, Stefano Semeria, Andrea Morghen, Roberto Vietti, Raimondo Livolsi, Guglielmo Francavilla, Jacopo Schieda, Luca Del Fuego Confortini and Carlo Conversano. They motivated their choice by claiming that “Take care” is “a rough film of great thematic complexity and considerable emotional tension: the themes of immigration, health care, family relationships are intertwined in an America that is a crossroads of cultures and where rights are certainly not equal for all.

A dramatic film that in a short time deals with the problematic life of the *Chicanos*, thus becoming socially and politically involved without necessarily wanting to.

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Desperation leads the protagonist to break the rules, but remorse holds him back from the final act of the crime. It is the character's attitude, his kindheartedness, that emerge from an inexorable, announced and outlined moral deviation. In spite of this, he is not rewarded, perhaps because he turned his back on his principles and his faith, selling his golden cross at the pawn shop, and because he did not believe in the possibility of help from the other, taking upon himself the burden of the whole situation, proudly legitimizing his status of immigrant. In this *retro-front*, we find an unexpected light, its rebirth, its liberation. The climax is reached with a finale masterfully rendered by the Israeli Itamar Giladi in the extreme close-up of the protagonist which recalls the style of the director Martin Scorsese in the cult scene of Mean streets.

From a technical point of view, it is a truly remarkable product in which different elements can be found: the director's awareness, an excellent use of photography and sound and a narrative system characterized by historical and personal implications that go beyond the film and bring it closer to the logic of a feature film.

*Take care* is not, therefore, a group work or a pro or anti-migrant job, but it just wants to show (and it is an incredible task) that nothing – neither the difficulties, nor greed, pain, victimization, fear and not even guilt – live up to the values".

As far as the Feature films are concerned, the Jury awarded Ton Van Zandvoort as Best Director for "Sheep Hero" claiming that "making a documentary appealing is a rather difficult task and Ton Van Zandvoort's direction succeeds in it superbly! The care for the composition of the shots makes each frame a wonderful bucolic painting. The presence of the camera is never intrusive, managing to give the audience the illusion of really being there, at that precise moment, together with the characters (and sheep) populate this rural reality, framed in a photographic composition "frame as canvas" which is never an end in itself.

For the sensitivity and depth with which he faces the conflict between tradition and innovation, between dream and reality, between security and freedom, between personal and social life, between internal and external world, between simplicity and complexity. For the cleverness in the dual semantic use of the herd: as a real, physical flock to be followed through the great spaces of nature, guided by the best ideals, and as a metaphorical flock to conform to, sacrificing every desire for freedom.

For the masterful use of the cinematographic artifice, well masked, almost invisible in unobtrusively telling a necessary story that projects the audience in the cruelty of the human condition.

A story in which every feeling reveals itself as pure, spontaneous, sincere, authentic to the point of becoming touching! "

The Jury awards Yaël Abecassis playing Ella in "Echo" (by Amikam Kovner and Assaf Snir) as Best Actress "for the refinement and maturity of her performance, the cornerstone

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on which the whole narrative rests and around which all other characters move and enrich themselves with meaning.

For the elegance and talent with which she manages to subtly express the double drama of a woman who finds herself, on the one hand, hurting her beloved, and on the other hand suffering from the emotional unreceptiveness deriving from it and that stands at the root of her gesture, embodying the role of oppressor and sacrificial victim at the same time.

The inner world of her character is slowly revealed, making the echo of her story more and more concrete and less evanescent, leading us to conclude that there is no winner or loser, no wrong or right in betrayal, like there is no truth and no lies...There are only fragile souls who hopefully will find in their mistakes the strength and courage to exalt their humanity”.

The Best Actor is Adar Hazazi Gersch in the role of Eden in “Doubtful” (by Eliran Elya) “for having efficaciously accompanied the audience in the exploration of the inner turmoil, the relational difficulties and the anger of a problematic boy with self-destructive tendencies who, despite his emotional inability to trust and rely on someone, is looking for redemption.

An extraordinarily balanced and intense performance, never over the top that draws the line between Fiction and Truth.

Adar's acting finds its strength in the forced repression of any empathic feeling; the emotional suspension deriving from the "unspoken" brings to light the disruptive psychological suffering and the unexpressed cry for help of his character. Just like a silent fuse, his soul slowly burns towards the epilogue, where passions and turmoil finally find their powerful, cathartic outburst!”

The Feature Film Jury awards a Special Mention to Adnan Omerović, leading actor and co-screenwriter in “Majnuni” (by Kouros Alaghband) with this motivation: “The visionary poetics that comes from Omerović’s writing and confident performance has a hypnotic and alienating effect on the audience and deserves proper recognition.

The extraordinary power of dream language, combined with the lucid, destabilizing madness that shines in the eyes of the protagonist, make this peculiar and fascinating independent work worthy of reaching the attention of the general public”.

In the Short films category, the Jury awarded the prize for Best Director in ex-aequo to Konstantina Kotzamani (“Electric Swan”) and Marie Losier “Felix in Wonderland”, two female directors.

As regards the director Kotzamani, the choice is motivated in this way: “the dreamlike and surreal composition is masterfully directed by Konstantina Kotzamani, who offers a look on class relationships. An evident social portray thus emerges, in which each

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character is captured in a mask and plays a predetermined role. On the big screen we witness stereotyped movements of puppets acting in a scenario that gradually becomes more and more grotesque and which are skillfully orchestrated by the director. In other words, "Electric Swan" is an excellent directorial expression of magical realism".

As far as the director Marie Losier is concerned, the Jury maintains that "she directs sagaciously a documentary that explores the world of the Dadaist musician Felix Kubin. The product is remarkable in its entirety which is expressed in a kaleidoscope of colors, sounds, experimentation and musical research. A technically impressive work, the result of perfect synergy with Aël Dallier Vega who managed the editing with empathy. A work that focuses on Felix himself, an all-round artist, who is directed in a very natural way, expressing himself and what he believes in. An immersive direction that combines genius, electronic music contents, history of music, quantum physics and excesses. Amazing!"

The Best Actress is Linde Van Der Storm ("*Till the end of the world*" by Florence Bouvy) because "she is endowed with that expressiveness, with those intense looks and gestures that can be found in an accomplished actress with a relevant career behind her. Her performance is superlative and convincing from all points of view. The relationship between father and daughter leaves nothing to the performative action, but it is absolute truth: they are father and daughter. The girl offers a repertoire of nuances, the humanity of a childhood forced to a rapid growth due to the situation of alienation and uncertainty she lives in. In her unconditional love for her father, she wants affection, but takes care of him, showing an evident ability to empathize with the situation in which she finds herself".

The Best Actor is Denis Lavant ("*The Figurant*" by Jan Vejnar) who "has demonstrated in almost forty years of career to be able to play different roles thanks to a unique and typified physicality. In *The Figurant* he is everything: he is the focus and the driving force of this dystopian short film.

He is a typical character of Beckett's theatre, without a voice and tormented, a figure at times grotesque and totally alienated. He embodies the so-called white clown who is pushed on stage and becomes victim of whatever is happening: he really is an extra and not the protagonist of the actions.

His every movement, every aspect, every atom reveal, in fact, antagonistic intentions between a spirit ready to play and a body of animal sensitivity too slow to participate in this role-playing game, of which he is a puppet".

The Short Film Jury awards a Special Mention to Farhad Delaram's "Tattoo", a short film that "imposes on our eyes a labyrinth of social hypocrisy in which the audience naturally activates a process of identification that leads them to almost want to enter the scene and shake the protagonist or defend her from the undeserved aggressions she is suffering. The

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woman is the victim of a society that considers her only slyly free: this lack of freedom is symbolically reproduced by the environment in which the action takes place, that is to say closed settings so as to create a sense of strong claustrophobia even in those who are watching. The protagonist lashes out against these people to the point of having her hand tattooed as an act of rebellion against her cultural constraint. Photography, sounds, locations and colors participate in the drama in a punctual manifestation of a rich simplicity capable of creating contrasting emotions and expressing, through the true story of Dena Rassam, a clear social criticism when it comes to women's rights”.

The Audience awards Lorenzo Melegari’s social documentary “Dentro il collettivo”, an exciting journey on the uncertain border between legality and justice.

The Award for Best Sound Designer is given by Paolo Armao to “Easy does it” (by Will Addison – Sound Designer: Ben Sellers), “for the great attention paid to the sound concept that can prove to be a tribute to the sound timbre of the ‘Spaghetti Western’.

The sound editing gives rhythm to the scene, helping represent the surreal world of the two main characters”.

Davis Alfano awards “Olma Djon” (by Victoria Yakubov – Photography: Iskander Narymbetov) for the Best Photography “for having transformed an intact nature and a metaphysical landscape, with images that clearly show the conflict of the characters, indicating through the figure of the father the hidden difficulties in every human being”.

The Mention ArtInMovimento Magazine is awarded to “Mare” by Guille Vázquez, “a poetic, delicate film with a great symbolic value that manages to portray psychic unease with special impressions in which the perceived and the objective truth overlap. Seven technically convincing minutes with impressive photography and soundtrack, in which the dedication of the son for the mother stands out”.

The students of the 4AGC class of the I.I.S. Giulio Natta of Rivoli award “Rood” by Falko Jakob for “the exciting plot and above all for the excellent work of the sound designer who has been able to convey emotions and make the audience lose itself thanks to the soundtrack. The post-production work and the editing are remarkable, the photography is great and so is the actor who managed to enter the role conveying the suspense typical of the horror genre”.

“And the curtain comes down again on this special edition of Torino Underground Cinefest, and there are no regrets. We put ourselves to the test and in a game of transformism we created a streaming version I am really proud of. The numbers have demonstrated that the experiment was successful and that our "never give up" motto was

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rewarded. We are already working on the next eight-day edition”. These are the words of Mauro Russo Rouge, artistic director of TUC.

Media partners of the seventh edition of TUC are the following: ArtInMovimento Magazine (which also edited the press office), MYmovies, Italia Che Cambia, Piemonte Che Cambia, CameraLook, Movieplayer, Nocturno, Sentieri Selvaggi, Psychofilm, La Settima Arte and TorinOggi. The technical partners are MYMOVIESLIVE, Indiecinema, Forword and Event Horizon; while the cultural partners are BIMED - Biennial of Mediterranean Arts and Sciences, Ambrosio Cinecafé, CineTeatro Baretta, I.I.S. Bodoni-Paravia of Turin and I.I.S. Giulio Natta of Rivoli (Turin).

The End

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