

RADIOCINE MAG



PENDANCE
FESTIVAL

PENDANCE 2024:

A FESTIVAL FOR THE BIG SCREEN

The seventh edition of one of the few winter festivals in Toronto was succesful both artistically and in attendance. But it wants to grow, without compromising its vision.

by Antonio Peláez Barceló

Giuseppe Garau had an idea. He wanted to film a feature where the camera would always be inside a car.

He did it; and it won the best feature award at Pendance Film Festival on March 25, 2024, in front of a full auditorium #9 at Imagine Carlton Cinemas.

"I like to stay in the room during the screening," Garau tells Radiocine. "I still have to discover what I've done. And the critics, the questions, the audience in the Q&As are teaching me something... And that's why I like to travel to attend festivals."

This has just been the beginning of our review of Pendance Film Festival. The following is the festival's overview in seven cinematic takeaways.

1. **Sold Out.**

The "sold out" sign has been hung on practically all the screenings. Nevertheless, the festival began on Thursday, Feb. 22, with Ararat, an extraordinary and risky Turkish film that filled more than half of the theatre. From Friday, Feb. 23, onwards, all the screenings were sold out or almost sold out, with a special mention for the comedy short film session, which was the first to sell out.

"People love it; it has been really fun watching it here," says Clara Altimas, director of the short film Wedding Song, who received several congratulations before talking with Radiocine.

"There're things I saw tonight that I hadn't seen before," says Jake Remington, director of the feature \$\$\$ after the screening. "Now, you have another image of yourself."

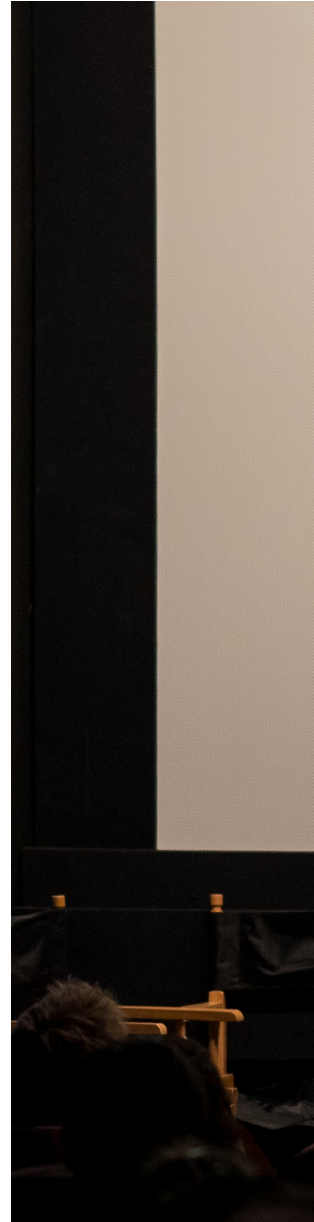
From our own experience, we can say that there has been much more public in this edition than in last year's edition.

Robert Misovic, co-founder and director of the festival, says that the audience responded in most editions, but not in 2020.

"There were a couple of screenings that ran almost half empty because of the pandemic," Misovic says. "I think we had to issue close to 1000 refunds that weekend."

2. **The Independent.**

This year, Pendance has included films from up to 16 different nationalities, with 12 shorts from Spain, 10 shorts from Canada (and no feature films), the world premiere of a Cuban short film and feature films from Turkey, Italy, the U.S. and Bosnia.



FILM FESTIVAL



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Giuseppe Garau
Director - The Accident

Misovic says the festival seeks quality, and he doesn't want to depend on public funding because it could imply establishing quotas.

"If I know beforehand that we are selecting 50 percent Canadian films, let's just say arbitrarily, then I have booked half my slots for films that may not be as good as others that I will have to bump out," he said.

This year, the festival included 12 short films from Spain, but "we might have a festival next year where we program 30 Korean films", Robert Misovic says.

Misovic said their policy has established Pendance as a quality festival, and that's



Joe Sonnenblick (left), actor; Jake Remington (center), director, and Teo Babini (right), actor, from the feature \$\$\$.

Photo: Valentina Richarz

why filmmakers have submitted films like *The Accident* or *Hard-core*.

“No film has a hard time at Pendance, only bad films have a hard time,” says Misovic.

3. So Help Me Rob.

Misovic says Pendance is a filmmaker-friendly festival that tries to help filmmakers in every way.

For example, this year, he worked with a professional photographer to shoot photos of the directors and actors of the selected films and the festival team. Misovic, who did not pose in any of these photos, was literally jumping for joy when he saw the results.

In addition, they help filmmakers with DCPs (Digital Cinema Package, the standard for digital cinema projection). “If they don’t have one, we’ll create it. If they have a bad one, we’ll fix it and we’ll send it to them after. So, they have it for other festivals.”

Regarding previous years, he’s especially proud of the trailer he edited for the short film *Piggy* by Spanish director Carlota Pereda. It was used in its successful

career until Pereda subsequently completed a feature film, selected by Sundance, based on the short one.

Misovic says the Pendance team did the same with a short film by a veteran filmmaker selected in 2019 who “was just making a short film for the hell of it.”

“A year later, he messaged me and said, ‘Hey, we’re working on a big feature with this big actor, and you know, TIFF is interested, but we would prefer to go with you guys because it can really help your film festival and you’ve shown so much love here.’”

Misovic says he was “nearly on

NO FILM HAS A HARD TIME AT PENDANCE, ONLY BAD FILMS HAVE A HARD TIME

Robert Misovic

Director, Pendance Film Festival

the ground in tears,” but it was 2020. Covid came, “and then we went virtual, and it didn’t happen.”

4. The Workshop.

Another of Pendance’s hallmarks is its free panels and workshops.

According to the information on its Filmfreway submission page, “past workshop leaders include filmmakers like Mark Raso, Barbara Vekaric, Ann Lupo, Peter Brunner, and Miljan Milovanovic.”

This year there were two workshops. Funding films, conducted by the producer Shan Joshi, and Editing between the scenes by Jeffrey Michael Bays.

Joshi, producer of the Oscar-nom-

inated Canadian documentary Kill the tiger, showed in just over an hour what financing pathways are available in both Canada and the United States. Bays presented how editing can give meaning to different types of transitions that can take place in a film.

Both speakers gave presentations of the highest quality, with useful and applicable content. Once the time was up, they answered questions from the audience even in the lobby.

And both were free of charge.

“I’ve always believed in free education,” says Misovic. “I think barriers need to be removed at this stage, which is access of funds and access of information.”

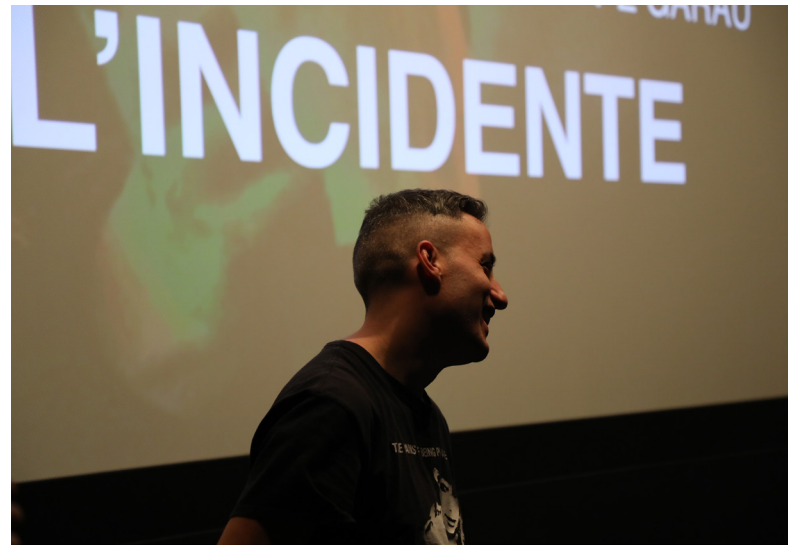
5. Network(ing).

Shant Joshi (down) during the workshop about funding films.

Photo: Shanthan Reddy

Giuseppe Garau, director of The Accident, receiving his award.

Photo: Kash Tehan



Fernando Bruce, director of Ojue.

Photo: Shanthan Reddy



Birgitte Solem (left), actress, and Clara Altimas (right), director of *Wedding Song*.

Photo: Valentina Richarz

“Those who didn’t know each other, by the second day are already talking as if they’ve known each other all their lives. The organizers have created a good environment for networking and sharing ideas.”

Most filmmakers agreed they have enjoyed the environment, but there is still place for improvement.

6. The little things.

Unfortunately, only the first screenings started at the scheduled time. The numerous Q&A questions and the limited margin that the organization had calculated between screenings, or even between the workshops and the first film sessions, caused delays to accumulate, the most significant of which was the screening of the closing film.

While this did not bother the

Nevertheless, Misovic tells Radiocine that in the second year of the festival, he thought hundreds of producers would be coming by now.

“I also think there’s always a potential for co-production,” Misovic says. During the festivals, filmmakers from Europe and North America meet and develop a relationship that can evolve into an international co-production.

In this regard, Fernando Broce, Panamanian director of the short film *Ojue*, was one of the most active guests, attending all the screening and panels, and asking questions at the Q&As.

“It’s a very community festival,” said Broce, who is also a TikTokker with over 4,3 million followers.

THE ORGANIZERS HAVE CREATED A GOOD ENVIRONMENT FOR NETWORKING AND SHARING IDEAS. BBC HELPED US TO SEND

Fernando Broce
Director - *Ojue*



Jeffrey Michael Bays during his workshop Editing between the scenes.

Photo: Kash Tehan

filmmakers and professionals, it did puzzle the general public, who wondered (and also asked us) when the doors would open.

Misovic ya ha dicho previamente que el año 2020 supuso un retroceso importante para Pendance.

Because some of them returned to Europe, “our team has been very small since 2020,” he says. But Robert Misovic has his eyes set on the tenth anniversary.

7. Blade Runner...2027?

The titles (or very similar) of six films and one Canadian series have served to underline the main characteristics of this year’s edition.

None of them were screened at Pendance.

But Misovic’s dream for 2027 is to have a fully operational festival and so many features and short films that we may write our report only with their names.

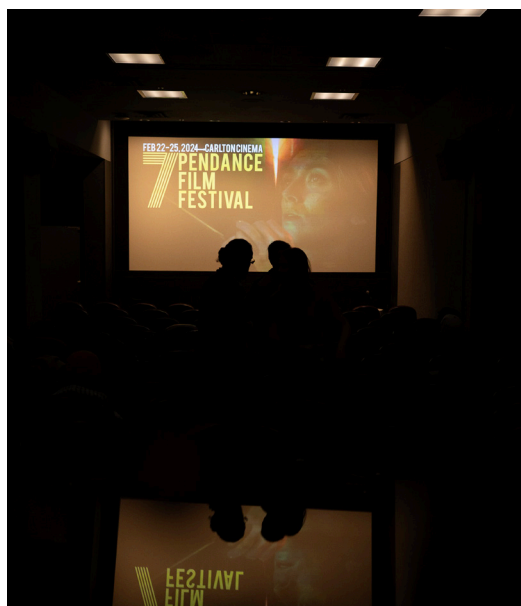
Meanwhile, the festival is hiring more staff. “We’re looking at a new art director, at someone for sponsorships, and we’ll look at someone for spearheading the Pendance labs initiative,” Misovic tells us. “I always said this was a

50-year mission for me.”

He has objectives for the festival’s tenth anniversary, including a different theatre, a bigger feature selection, and negotiating with local businesses to further integrate the festival with the local area.

“Hopefully, you will still be covering us in year 10.”

Of course, I will be covering it. And we will check not only if the festival has grown to live up to Robert’s dreams but whether this has been the beginning of a beautiful friendship.



The festival, about to end, and about to begin again.

Photo: Shanthan Reddy



L'Incidente

STORIA DEL FANTASMA presents a film by GIUSEPPE GARAU "L'INCIDENTE" GIULIA MAZZARINO ANNA COPPOLA and with ALICE DENTE ELENA SAVIO TONI PANDOLFO NATHALIE BERNARDI BETANI MAPUNZO
executive producer CRISTINA TRIO assistant director MAURIZIO LESTO DE ANGELIS casting TATJANA CALLEGARI location manager GIULIA COTUGNO cinematographer GIULIA SCINTU production designer ELEONORA DIANA costume designer ANNA BONARDELLO
make-up ERIKA TRUFFELLI gaffer ALESSIO PANZETTA sound SIMONE BRIZIO sound design GUIDO SMIDER TOMMASO SIMONETTA music by HEKLA written and directed by GIUSEPPE GARAU supported by FILM COMMISSION TORINO PIEMONTE



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