

# BERGAMO FILM MEETING

International Film Festival

40<sup>th</sup> edition, March 26 - April 3, 2022

**Bergamo Film Meeting honours to director Costa-Gavras with a complete retrospective.**

On the occasion of its 40<sup>th</sup> edition, scheduled from March 26 to April 3 2022, Bergamo Film Meeting dedicates a complete retrospective to director Costa-Gavras, master of political cinema. The filmmaker will also be honoured during the 43<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Efebo d'Oro, taking place in Palermo on November 14-20, 2021, where he will receive the Efebo d'Oro Lifetime Achievement Award - Banca Popolare Sant'Angelo.

## Costa-Gavras

Costa-Gavras, short for Konstantinos Gavras, was born in Loutra Iraias (Athens) on February 13, 1933. From his mother, he received a Greek Orthodox religious education, while his father, originally from Odessa (Ukraine) and a Resistance fighter during World War II, had a profound influence on his vocation as a political filmmaker. In 1949 he moved to Paris where, in 1956, he obtained French citizenship. There, he attended the Institut Des Hautes Études Cinématographiques (IDHEC). Later, he worked as assistant director to the likes of Yves Allegret, Jacques Demy and René Clément. He achieved international recognition with *Z* (France/Algeria 1969), a political but also highly entertaining film of great emotional impact which, that same year, won the Jury Prize at Cannes and the Oscar for Best Foreign Picture a year later. *Z* is the powerful portrayal of a political assassination in Greece. The film is inspired by a novel by Vassilī Vassilikos on the Lambrakis affair, a university professor and left-wing deputy who died in 1963 "accidentally" hit by a car.

Costa-Gavras directed his first feature film, *Compartiment tueurs* (The Sleeping Car Murders), a thriller based on a detective novel by Sébastien Japrisot and produced with the support of his friends Yves Montand and Simone Signoret, who are also the main characters of the film. His second feature film, *Un homme de trop* (Shock Troops, 1967), is a drama set in World War II during the Nazi occupation. After *Z*, he directed *L'aveu* (The Confession, 1970), centered on the figure of a Czechoslovakian government minister, Jewish communist Arthur London, who was accused of treachery by party members and sentenced to life imprisonment by a Stalinist court. For Costa-Gavras himself, or Semprún and the performers Yves Montand and Simone Signoret, this film represented an excruciating reconsideration of their own communist militancy.

Strong political themes also persist in his subsequent films. In 1973 *État de siège* (State of Siege) was released, denouncing the support given by the U.S.A. to the authoritarian regimes of South America. *Séction spéciale* (Special Section, 1975) is about the trials brought by the Vichy government.

The film was a fiasco which stopped Costa-Gavras in his tracks for four years and inspired him a momentary change of course with *Clair de femme* (Womanlight, 1979), an intimate drama featuring Yves Montand and Romy Schneider. After another long period of inactivity, in 1982 the Hollywood studios offered Costa-Gavras an opportunity to revive his career, entrusting him with the direction of *Missing*, a denunciation of the US responsibilities in the post-Allende Chilean dictatorship. His next feature film was *Hanna K.* (1983), in which a Jewish lawyer (Jill Clayburgh) suffers an identity crisis after taking on the defence of a Palestinian man accused of terrorism.

*Conseil de famille* (Family Business, 1986), is a comedy about the internal contradictions of the bourgeoisie. In 1988 he shot *Betrayed*, a denunciation of the horrors of the Ku Klux Klan; the following year came *Music box*, a judicial drama in which a lawyer (Jessica Lange) takes on the defence of her father, a Hungarian exile accused of war crimes as a member of the pro-Nazi Hungarian militias. His two following films were less convincing: *La petite apocalypse* (The Little Apocalypse 1993), a satire on the failures and weaknesses of the European left, shot in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and *Mad City* (1997), a denunciation of media mystification. With *Amen*. (2002) Costa-Gavras tackles the thorny question of the relations between Pope Pius XII and the Nazi regime.

His latest films are: *Le Couperet* (The Ax, 2005), about a frustrated laid-off employee who is willing to kill his job competitors to get back on his feet; *Eden à l'Ouest* (Eden is West, 2009), a drama about illegal immigrants; *Le Capital* (Capital, 2012), about the corrupt and ruthless power struggle in the international world of finance), and *Adults in the Room* (2019), about the financial crisis that exploded in Greece in 2015 and the rise leftist politician Syriza to government.

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