

December 5

The seventh edition of the Tirana International Film Festival is on the eve of its closing night, tomorrow night, December 6, 2009. The Sunday evening award ceremony will be followed by a gala celebration in the National Theatre where most of the ten day festival took place.

This was the first year that TIFF expanded into a features competition after its previous six editions which were mostly shorts and special programs. The competing shorts and features that fill the day-long programs have been featured in numerous festivals including Sundance, Berlin, Cannes and Locarno.

The festival opened with an out of competition showing of Serb director **Goran Paskaljevic's** **'Honeymoons'**, the first Albanian-Serbian co-production and co-written by festival programmer **Genc Permeti** and produced by festival director **Ilir Butka**.

A packed hall on Friday night watched **Filippos Tsitos** comedy of a man discovering his Albanian roots, **'Plato's Academy'** which is sure to be a top contender for the grand prize. The film was attended by the Greek director as well as one of the Albanian stars **Anastas Kozdine** who received a thunderous ovation in the theater after the films introduction.

The festival was also marked with half a dozen special screenings and programs including a tribute to Albanian film pioneer **Viktor Gjika**, a collection of Chinese propaganda films and several rare prints of international classics from the vaults of the **Albanian State Film Archive**.

Sunday's closing awards will also feature a lifetime achievement award given to Greek master filmmaker **Theo Angelopoulous**, who will be visiting Albania the subject of many of his acclaimed motion pictures. During the nine days, three of his classic films were featured in special screening in Tirana's Sheraton Hotel, the location of many of the special programs. Among the attendees of Sunday nights closing will be a number of visiting foreign artists and filmmakers to Albania among the German experimental filmmaker **Sylvia Schedelbauer**, American indie producer **Paul Mezey** along with deciding jurors **Josh Marston** (Maria Full of Grace), American character **Richard Edson** and British experimental legend Ben Rivers.