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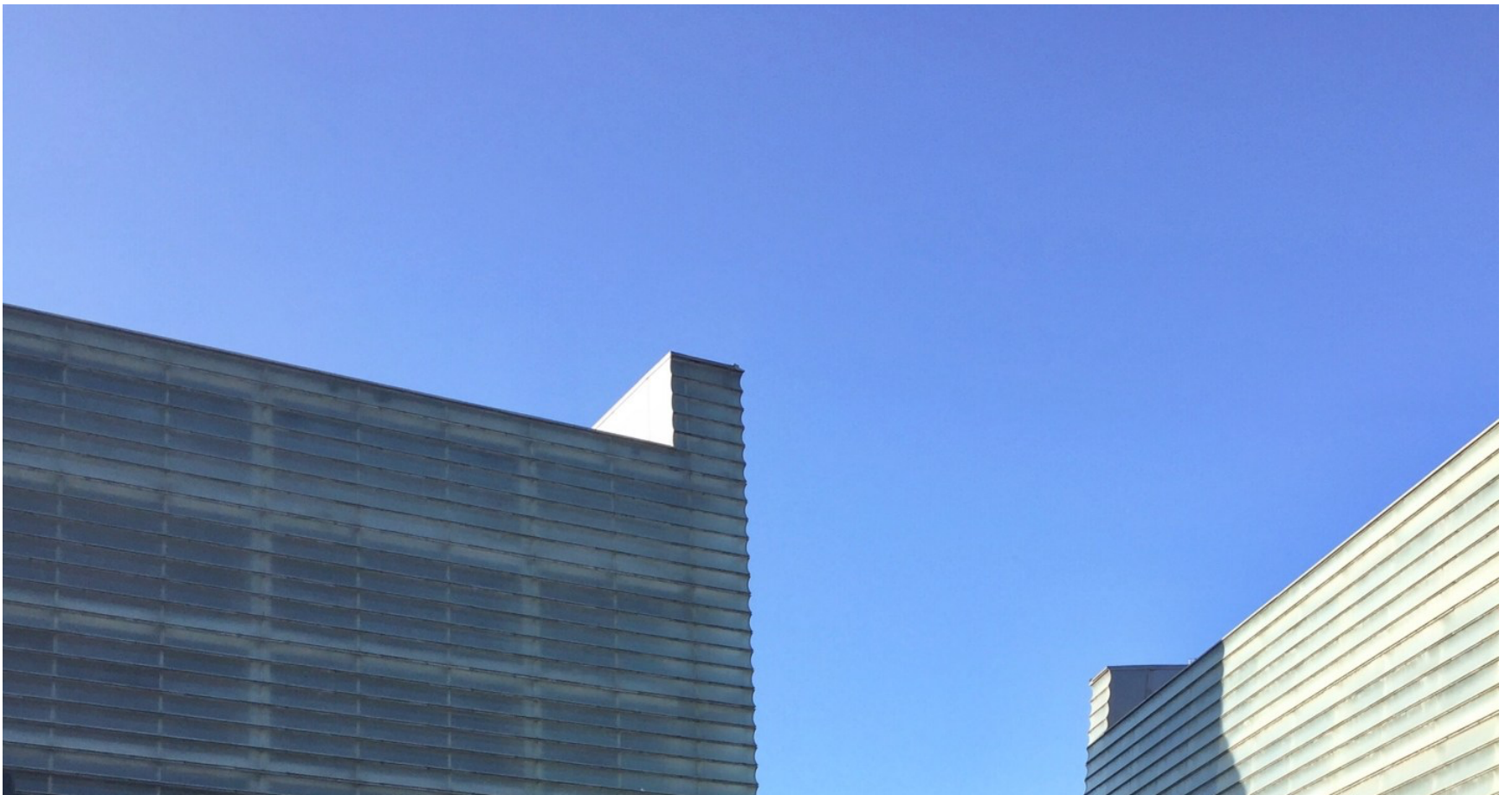
A GUIDE TO THE SAN SEBASTIÁN FILM FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 25, 2019

ALEX HOGENDORF

NO COMMENTS

Red carpets pave sidewalks, billboards line the boulevard, and movie stars are milling around town... It's that wonderful time of year again when the **San Sebastián International Film Festival** (SSIFF) takes over and adds even more glamour to this already glamorous city. Now in its 67th year, the annual festival is one of Spain's most prestigious. Read on for more about one of our favorite weeks of the year in Donostia...





WHAT'S THE SSIFF?

Founded in 1953, the SSIFF has hosted some illustrious events in cinematic history through the years, like the international premiere of Hitchcock's "Vertigo" and the European premiere of Star Wars. It's accredited by the FIAPF as a **competitive film festival** and features an international jury that awards several prizes every year. There's an Audience Award too, giving viewers a chance to vote on their favorite.

Films are divided into **several categories**, from the Official Selection movies that are in competition, to New Directors, Horizontes Latinos (made or set in Latin America or by Latin filmmakers), Basque films, and those made in Spain.

Noteworthy is the **Perlak** category – quite literally, cinematic pearls. It's a chance to see some buzzy films before they're officially released. Some to watch out for include the Korean film *Parasite*, a dark comedy thriller that won the Palme d'Or in Cannes; *La Vérité*, a comical family drama starring Catherine Deneuve as a diva of an actress; and *The Lighthouse*, a black-and-white horror film that's been garnering raves from critics.

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The lineup of films is stellar this year, but we have our eyes set on a handful of particularly appetizing ones – **Culinary Zinema**, a selection of foodie films that fuse gastronomy with cinema. Screenings are accompanied by themed dinners that bring the delicious movie magic to life. The selection this year is tempting, as always. Some of our top picks include a film about acclaimed chef Bittor Arginzoniz of Etxebarri fame; *Gazta*, a documentary about Idiazabal cheese; *The Taste of Pho*, a movie about a Vietnamese cook living in Warsaw; and *Cocinar Belleza*, which ponders the question “can a flavor be beautiful?”

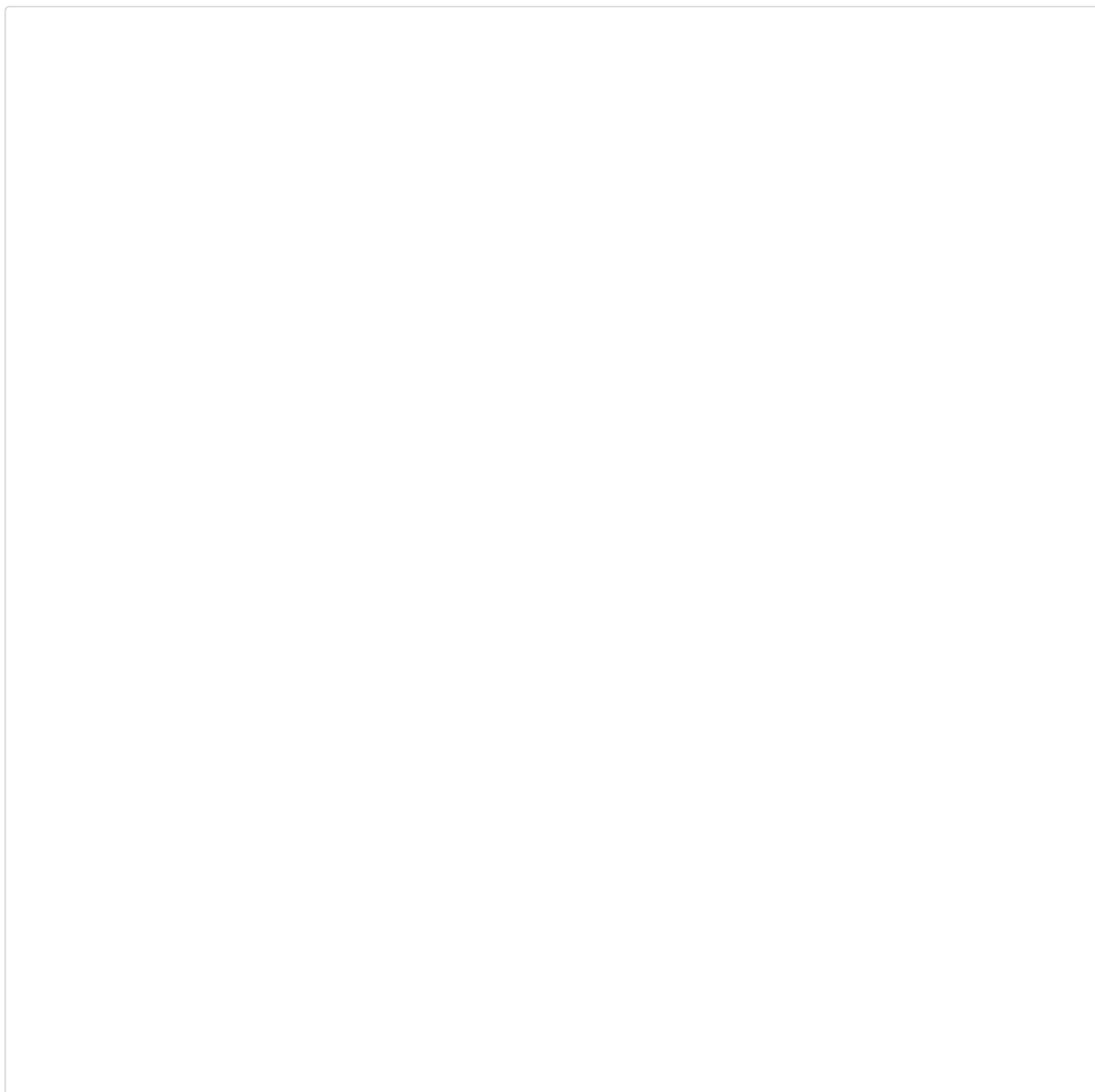
WHO TO EXPECT


The festival has hosted some of cinema’s greatest through the years, including Bette Davis, Audrey Hepburn, Gregory Peck, Robert De Niro, and Meryl Streep. This year’s roster of talent scheduled to attend includes Juliette Binoche, Eva Green, Javier Bardem, Kristen Stewart, and Gael García Bernal. Penelope Cruz, whose face adorns posters all around town, will receive the festival’s honorary Donostia Award for her contribution to the world of cinema, as will actor Donald Sutherland and director Costa-Gavras.

THE VENUES

From the Belle Époque stylings of the Victoria Eugenia theater to the modern angles of the Kursaal to an old tobacco factory turned anew, the SSIFF takes up residence in some of the city’s **most iconic buildings**. All three of Donosti’s cinemas also take part in the festival, bustling with screenings throughout the week.

The main events — the premieres, the presentations, the special screenings and awards — are held mainly in the Kursaal building and the Victoria Eugenia theater. The **Kursaal** is a hub of activity during this week, home to a box office and info center, host to photo shoots, and buzzing with perpetual activity. The historic **Victoria Eugenia** is its glamorous counterpart — red-velvet seats, frescoed ceiling, grand chandelier, gilded ornamentation.... It's a treat to see a movie in this space.





The Parte Vieja's Principal Theater is the most historic of all the venues, being the oldest theater in the city (dating back to 1843). In contrast, the Tabakalera is one of the newest. This former tobacco factory turned contemporary culture center dates back to 1913, but a complete refurb in 2015 has made the multi-use space one of the coolest in town.

WHERE TO EAT

Pintxo time is always a good idea! And who knows, maybe you'll spot a star or two as you hop your way across the Old Town from bar to bar... Don't know where to go, what to order, or even how to order it? Join us for a [pintxo tour](#) and learn more about the culture and etiquette behind these delicious Basque bites.

There's no better place to rub shoulders with movie stars and industry insiders this week than in the **Maria Cristina Hotel**, the official residence of everyone that's anyone during the film festival. Don't be scared off by the

paparazzi flashes outside – pop in for a drink at Dry Bar or opt for a meal at Ezcaray, a pop-up restaurant from Michelin-starred Chef Francis Paniego. You can also join us for a cooking class and learn some new skills in between movies, or stock up on delicious souvenirs in our gourmet shop.

Happy movie watching!

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