



A French Initiative: The Best Subtitled Film Award

The majority of foreign films are generally dubbed when screened in France, but some cinemas show the original version with subtitles (VOST), which film aficionados actually prefer. Until recently, this was the only possibility for deaf and hard-of-hearing people to see new films.

But what about French films in France? The situation is slowly improving, as roughly one out of three films are now subtitled for hard-of-hearing people – but unfortunately, their circulation remains extremely limited.

This is why ARDDS (Association pour la réadaptation et la défense des devenus sourds) has launched an initiative to present the “Best Subtitled Film” of the year (Prix du meilleur film sous-titré). This award was conceived with the hope of creating awareness among citizens, the media, professionals, and politicians so that they can fully understand that deaf and hard-of-hearing people have special needs and that these needs can easily be met: films just have to be subtitled for them.

The 2015 award was awarded to Jean-Pierre Améris for Marie Heurtin: a true story of a young girl who was both deaf and blind. This film was subtitled in all cinemas and at each showing. He received his award at Cannes last January (see picture).

This initiative is backed by French film director Paul Vecchiali (his 50th film, *Le cancre*, starring Catherine Deneuve and others, has been officially selected by the 69th Festival de Cannes) and supported by a number of organisations, including Bucodes SurdiFrance, Agir pour l’audition, and EFHOH. For practical reasons, it is presently limited to French-speaking films screened in France.

Although the situation and difficulties differ from country to country, the screening of films subtitled for deaf or hard-of-hearing people in cinemas are an issue in many, if not all European countries (as far as I know, Ireland, Belgium, and the Netherlands certainly feel involved). Wouldn’t it be nice to join our efforts and develop similar approaches in more countries, speaking other languages, to promote accessibility for hearing-impaired citizens, everywhere?

We would also appreciate receiving feedback from national associations on this situation in their respective countries: to what extent are films screened in cinemas subtitled for deaf or hard-of-hearing people?

You will find up-to-date information on our dedicated website: <http://vfst.ardds.org>

Additionally, you can also view it “machine-translated”: http://translate.googleusercontent.com/translate_c?tl=en&u=http://vfst.ardds.org

