

# NAMES OF FILM AND MUSIC FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

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## Abstract

The present paper analyses the main patterns used in naming the best-known film and music festivals and awards, following a comparative approach which involves reference to languages such as Romanian, English, French, Italian, and Spanish. Two approaches are proposed throughout the study: a socio-onomastic approach, which draws attention to the problematic status of this category of names that combine characteristics of scientific terms, proper names and common nouns (appellatives), on the one hand, and a linguistic approach, which is further developed from etymological, formal, lexical and semantic perspectives, on the other hand. The analysis proves an obvious preference of those languages towards using highly motivated signs, some of which can be twofold motivated: extra-linguistically, by the denomination pointing to the space where the respective film or music festival/award is held, and linguistically, by the derivational process that underlies the relationship between the denomination and the toponymic base. A series of patterns of naming have been identified, some of which are quite homogeneous and cross-cultural, whereas others tend to be culture-specific. Numerically, the names of film and music festivals and awards seem to prefer loan words (and more precisely, English/American words), followed by free adaptations, and internal means (especially compounds with a toponymic or anthroponymic base).

**Keywords:** *appellatives, nomenclature, onomasticity, patterns of language, proper names*

## Résumé

Le présent article analyse les principaux modèles utilisés pour nommer les festivals et prix de cinéma et de musique les plus connus, en suivant une approche comparative qui implique la référence à des langues telles que le roumain, l'anglais, le français, l'italien et l'espagnol. Deux approches sont proposées tout au long de l'étude : une approche socio-onomastique, qui attire l'attention sur le statut problématique de cette catégorie de noms qui combinent des caractéristiques de termes scientifiques, noms propres et noms communs (appellatifs), d'une part, et une approche linguistique, approche qui s'approfondit d'autre part d'un point de vue

étymologique, formel, lexical et sémantique. L'analyse prouve une préférence évidente de ces langues pour l'utilisation de signes hautement motivés, dont certains peuvent être doublement motivés : extra-linguistiquement, par la dénomination pointant vers l'espace où se déroule le festival/prix du film ou de la musique respectifs, et linguistiquement, par le processus dérivationnel qui sous-tend la relation entre la dénomination et la base toponymique. En outre, une série de modèles de dénomination ont été identifiés, dont certains sont assez homogènes et interculturels, tandis que d'autres ont tendance à être spécifiques à une culture. Numériquement, les noms de festivals et prix de cinéma et de musique semblent privilégier les mots d'emprunt (et plus précisément les mots anglais/américains), suivis des adaptations libres, et des moyens internes (surtout composés à base toponymique ou anthroponymique).

**Mots-clés:** *appellatifs, nomenclature, onomasticité, modèles de langage, noms propres*

### **1. Introductory remarks**

The present paper aims to identify the main patterns which are used in naming the best-known film and music festivals and awards, some of which are quite homogeneous and cross-cultural, whereas others are more related to historical, geographical and ethno-cultural factors, that is, they tend to be culture-specific.

Quite unexpectedly, given the huge impact upon the general public, only the oldest and the most widespread names within the category have permeated everyday use, and more often than not they have been subject to a broadening of meaning. Consequently, some examples from English, French, Italian, and Spanish have been taken into consideration, following a comparative approach, in order to identify similarities and idiosyncrasies between Romanian and these languages.

### **2. Names of film and music festivals and awards. A socio-onomastic approach.**

The paper starts from the assumption that such names combine characteristics of scientific terms, proper names and common nouns (appellatives). Their relationship with nomenclatures has a twofold explanation: their ability to unambiguously designate a unique entity (such as a festival or an award), on the one hand, and the main denominating criteria underlying them, which reflect an extra-linguistic classification (usually origin), on the other hand.

Concerning the relationship with proper names, it is worth mentioning that the vast majority of the nouns used to refer to film and music festivals and awards

include a proper name, either a toponym or an anthroponym, which means that they are monoreferential, since they serve to identify individuals/places and their meaning is usually context-bound<sup>1</sup>. As for appellatives, they are meant to name logically delimited classes of objects and each object within a class, so they *designate* objects, unlike proper names, which *nominate* them<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, the category of names under discussion doesn't seem to fit into this bipartite configuration based on opposition. Rather, they enter the class of nouns "which differently combine appellative and onomastic properties and are partially common nouns and partially proper nouns" (Sklyarenko and Sklyarenko 2005: 278), which makes it possible for them to be characterized according to their 'degree of onomasticity' and to the mode of referring (either onymic or semantic reference)<sup>3</sup>. That leads to the conclusion that onomasticity is a scalar notion stretching from the highest degree of onomasticity (and the lowest degree of lexical meaning) to the lowest degree of onomasticity (and the highest degree of lexical meaning). The former situation corresponds to noun phrases made up by primary (non-derived) proper names: toponyms which evoke the space where the respective festivals originated or are held (The Cannes/Venice/Locarno Festival; Sanremo/Mamaia/Amara music festivals), or anthroponyms which refer to a prototype-based categorisation (the name of a famous actor/director/singer, etc.: the César/Oscar Awards; Festivalul Aurelian Andreescu). A lower degree of onomasticity is displayed by words such as *Berlinala*, with a toponymic base, or acronyms like *BAFTA* (British Academy of Film and Television Arts), and *TIFF* (Transylvania International Film Festival). As a matter of fact, the higher the motivation, the lower the degree of onomasticity. Concerning the motivations underlying this onomastic category, the overwhelming tendency is to name the film/music festivals and awards taking into account either the origin/city (toponyms), or an iconic figure within the field (anthroponyms).

### **3. Names of film and music festivals and awards. A linguistic approach.**

In what follows, the focus of investigation shifts to the linguistic profile of this category of names, which are further classified from etymological, formal, lexical and semantic perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup> See Guțu Romalo, ed. (2005, I: 118-119), who addresses the problem of proper names, previously referred to in terms of either lack of meaning or richness of significance.

<sup>2</sup> Stoichițoiu Ichim and Roibu (2013: 534-535).

<sup>3</sup> Proper names can be conceived of in terms of "a continuum with those containing an transparent and clearly identifiable lexical meaning at one end and those having an incomprehensible lexical meaning at the other" (Ainiala 1998: 44).

### 3.1. The etymological perspective

From an etymological point of view, the names of film and music festivals and awards fall into three main categories: international loans, free adaptations and words obtained by internal means.

#### 3.1.1. International loans

Most of the English unadapted names are either denotative loans, which are motivated objectively by globalization (see examples like MTV/Grammy/Billboard Music Awards), or stylistic/connotative loans, motivated by the prestige attached to English or by the so-called anglomania, as is the case of many Romanian music festivals that resort to English words or phrases: *Untold*, *NeverSea*, *Electric Castle*, *Summer Well Festival* (Buftea). Such signs are interlinguistic, as they are not subject to translation, and may result in a mixture of Romanian and foreign phonetic traits, at the level of the *signifiant*, and in a possible opaqueness of meaning, at the level of the *signifié*<sup>4</sup>.

Interestingly enough, Romanian has also borrowed a French phrase, *Palme d'Or*, whereby the original form is preserved due to/because of its ambiguity: see *palm*<sub>1</sub> (palm tree leaf) and *palm*<sub>2</sub> (part of the arm). The ambiguity is maintained at visual level too: the image of the French award is made up of a palm tree leaf (symbol of victory) which is held in a palm.

#### 3.1.2. Free adaptations

The analysis of most famous names of film and music festivals and awards seems to illustrate the preference for translating noun phrases which observe certain patterns, some of which are cross-cultural, whereas others appear quite seldom. Among the cross-cultural categories, the “Golden” pattern proves to be the most productive and can be found in names such as *Golden Bear* < Germ. *Goldenen Bär*, *Golden Lion* < It. *Leone d'Oro*, etc. The pattern tends to acquire a quasi-universal status, as it is also used in Spanish (*Espiga de Oro/Golden Spike*, *Concha de Oro/Golden Seashell*), and Romanian (*Cerbul de Aur/Golden Stag*; *Crizantema de Aur/Golden Chrysanthemum*; *Strugurele de Aur/Golden Grape*), where colour/value is conveyed by grammatical means (the prepositional phrase *de Aur*), quite similar to French and Italian. The “Silver” pattern appears in names like *Silver Bear/Lion*, *Nastro d'Argento/the Silver Strip* and mirrors a hierarchy which is normally used in sports, whereby gold corresponds to the highest position (number one) and silver, to the second position. Yet, no “Bronze” pattern can be found within this onomastic

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<sup>4</sup> These features evoke autonymy, a complex phenomenon based on self-reference and the use of echoing techniques. For further information on autonymy, see Roibu (2010: 69-85).

category. Instead, a “Crystal” pattern can be invoked in relation to names like the *Crystal Globes*. The “Best” pattern, whereby the determiner *best* sets the standard for excellence in the film/music industry is very productive and cross-cultural as well (see categories like *Best Movie/Actor/Actress/Director/Singer/Album*), which is not the case of the “Grand” pattern, used to designate the second prize awarded within the Cannes Festival, after *Palm d’Or (Le Grand Prix)* and in some Romanian music and film festivals, where it indicates the highest distinction.

### 3.1.3. *Internal means*

Other names within the category are highly motivated signs, since they result from a derivational process which is sometimes followed by lexical conversion. Such is the case of *Berlinala*<sup>5</sup>, whose toponymic base makes it context-bound and culture specific. The same is true for some compounds:

– based on juxtaposition: they contain an anthroponym (the name of a personality within the respective field) + a generic term, such as *Award/Festival* (the César/Oscar Awards; Festivalul Aurelian Andreescu/The Aurelian Andreescu Festival) or a toponym + the classifier *Award/Festival* (The Cannes/Locarno Festival; Sanremo/Mamaia/Amara music festivals);

– acronyms, like *BAFTA* (British Academy of Film and Television Arts), *TIFF* (Transylvania International Film Festival), *ASTRA* (a documentary film festival held in Sibiu, Transylvania, Romania); *Gala/Premiile UNITER*<sup>6</sup> (The UNITER Gala/Awards).

### 3.2. *The foral perspective*

From a formal point of view, two main criteria appear as relevant: the number of words and the lexical material they incorporate, which leads to a two-level classification of nouns:

*a. simple nouns*, which can be further divided into:

– proper nouns (anthroponyms), such as *Oscar*, *César*;  
 – former adjectives, converted to nouns, *via* ellipsis, which are usually derived from toponyms: *Berlinala*;

*b. compounds* (acronyms): *BAFTA* (British Academy of Film and Television Arts), *TIFF* (Transylvania International Film Festival).

Yet, the overwhelming majority of the names under focus are multiword expressions, more precisely, noun phrases which generally include a head and a

<sup>5</sup> Used as an alternative to the noun phrase *Golden Bear/Goldenen Bär*.

<sup>6</sup> Uniunea Teatrală din România.

modifier, the position of the latter depending on the language whereby they are being used. The modifier can be:

– a toponym (usually the name of a city) + *Festival/Award*: Le festival de Cannes/The Cannes (Film) Festival, Festival di Sanremo, Festivalul de la Mamaia;

– an anthroponym + *Festival/Award*: the *Oscar/César Awards*; *Premiile Ion Popescu Gopo*;

– a noun designating colour/value, which is conveyed indirectly, by means of the so-called referential structure, that is, by chromatic terms obtained from the name of the referent *via* derivational means<sup>7</sup> (*gold* + suffix *-en*, like in the case of *The Golden Bear/Lion/Raspberry*), or *via* grammatical means (as is the case of the French *Palme d'Or*, the Italian *Zecchino d'Oro/The Golden Coin*, or the Romanian *Cerbul de Aur/The Golden Stag*).

In Romanian, names of film and music festivals and awards function as neuter nouns, following an implicit agreement with the classifiers *festival/award*, which are subject to ellypsis (*Oscarul/Oscaruri*). Exceptionally, expressions such as *Zmeura de Aur*, which translates the English *Golden Raspberry*, are marked for the feminine, based on the semantic criterion. Nevertheless, this is limited to the names that have a Romanian equivalent; in all the other cases, the form preserves the original unmarked gender (masculine), spelling and pronunciation. With respect to the categories of gender and number, it is worth mentioning that even the noun phrases that are based on anthroponyms shift to the category of neuter nouns and are attached the typical ending for the plural: see examples like *Oscarul/the Oscar, Oscarurile/the Oscars*<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, their openness to combinations with quantifiers (*un Oscar/one Oscar* vs. *două Oscaruri/two Oscars*) testifies to the problematic status of this category of names, which are placed in-between proper names and common nouns<sup>9</sup>. It is true, however, that the use of quantifiers draws attention to a change of meaning, and more specifically, to a broadening of meaning (see below, section 3.3.). The same is possible in English, if one thinks of equational phrases based on antonomasia like *les Césars = the French Oscars/Les Oscars français/Oscarurile franceze*. Such expressions prove that Romanian, English, and French, for instance, have the same treatment when it comes to the category of number: more precisely, when used without the generic term (*festival/award*), the plural mark is attached directly to the former anthroponyms. However, if the appellative is preserved, the plural marks are attached to it: *Premiile Oscar/the Oscar Awards/Les Prix Oscar*.

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<sup>7</sup> See also Roibu (2021: 321-332).

<sup>8</sup> See the concept of *generalising antonomasia* (Stoichițoiu Ichim 2006: 331-341)

<sup>9</sup> Stoichițoiu Ichim and Roibu (2013: 539).

The former situation is more interesting, since Romanian, unlike English, French and Italian, is very sensitive to the [+/- human] parameter<sup>10</sup>, which means that the plural mark is not compatible with nouns referring to a unique entity marked as [+human], as is the case of anthroponyms, whereas the plural value associated with the [-human] trait is typical of the shift from a person (called Oscar or César, for instance) to a corresponding object (the Oscar/César Award). Actually, the two names (Oscar and César) are based on assonance, and both point to (real) persons, yet in different ways: *via* metaphor, in the former case, and *via* metonymy, in the latter. One cannot speak of metonymy in the case of *Oscar*, since its creator's name is not Oscar, but George (Stanley). Nonetheless, that does not prevent some metonymical shifts, as in *The Oscar goes to...*

### 3.3. *The lexical-semantic perspective*

As seen before (3.1.), different languages and cultures resort to similar denominating techniques, which seems to indicate that patterns of thought result in patterns of language, with a possible shift from common sense to commonplace, cliché or stereotype. What brings together the concepts of *commonplace/cliché/stereotype* is a series of common traits, such as oversimplification, standardization, and reproducibility of a certain model (Redfern 1989: 8), which explains why they are sometimes used interchangeably<sup>11</sup>, although they may present some idiosyncratic features too. Actually, some dictionaries tend to draw a fine line between *cliché*<sup>12</sup>, as a repetitive formula, referring thus to a linguistic expression, and *stereotype*, as a more negatively loaded and oversimplified evaluative formula and mental attitude (Ilie & Hellspong 1999: 387), used to refer to non-linguistic entities, such as people, situations, etc. As far as I am concerned, I

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<sup>10</sup> See Guțu Romalo (ed.), (2005 I: 66-67).

<sup>11</sup> More often than not, their definitions are circular, since a cliché is explained in relation to either a stereotyped expression or a commonplace phrase.

<sup>12</sup> The French printers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century used the word *cliché* in order to refer to a cast obtained by dropping a matrix face downwards upon a surface of molten metal on the point of cooling. It may be interpreted as an echoic word as well, since it imitates the plopping sound that the matrix made as it fell into its hot bath, which is rendered in English by 'click' and 'clack' (Redfern 1989). Yet, as time went by, only the most prominent features were preserved of the original definition, such as imitation or identical reproduction, which brings the term *cliché* close to commonplaces and stereotypes. Actually, a *cliché* is defined as "a stereotyped expression, a commonplace phrase" by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), whereas *stereotype* is defined by the same source as "something continued or constantly repeated without change; a preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation, etc.; an attitude based on such a preconception".

opt for the compound *commonplace*, as a result of its being less ambiguous and more neutral than the others, since it translates the relevant meaning of the Greek *topos*<sup>13</sup>.

Moreover, the similarity in naming film and music festivals and awards can be seized at both lexical and semantic levels, and is reflected in shared linguistic structures (formal resemblance) as well as in shared semantic content, including recurrent semantic changes, some of which can occur in chain.

Within the category of names under discussion, such formal repetitions involve:

– the reference to the origin or the creator of festivals/awards, which accounts for the frequency of modifiers that belong to the category of toponyms or anthroponyms within the structure of many names of film/music festivals or awards;

– the use of recurrent semantic fields, often in combination, which results in quasi-idiomatic two-word expressions made up of a nominal head and a modifier. The former belongs to one of the following semantic fields (which observe the frequency criterion):

- **animal field:** *Golden Bear/Lion/Leopard /Stag/Seashell*;
- **vegetal field:** *Golden Raspberry/Spike/Grape/Chrysanthemum*;
- **geometric shapes:** *Golden Globe(s)/Pyramid*;
- **monetary units:** *Zecchino d'Oro*.

The modifier, instead, belongs to the **chromatic field** (that may also indicate value) and is part of the denomination. It is obtained by derivational means from the names of materials (the referential structure). The prototypical example is that of *gold(en)* and its equivalents in different languages: *Golden Bear/Lion/Raspberry*; *de Aur* (*Cerbul de Aur/Golden Stag*; *Crizantema de Aur/Golden Chrysanthemum*; *Strugurele de Aur/Golden Grape*); *d'Or* (*Palme d'Or*)/*d'Oro* (*Leone d'Oro, Zecchino d'Oro/Golden Coin*); *de Oro* (*Espiga de Oro/Golden Spike, Concha de Oro/Golden Seashell*). Less often, one can find reference to other materials, such as *silver* (*Silver Bear/Lion*; *Nastro d'Argento/The Silver Strip*) and *crystal* (*Crystal Globes*).

Not only shared formal properties, but also shared semantic content can account for the large spread of cinema and music related lexicon across cultures (and languages). Suffice it to think of expressions such as Eng. *Golden Bear/Lion/Raspberry*, Rom. *Ursul de Aur/Leul de Aur/Zmeura de Aur*, or Fr. *Palme d'Or*, which are all based on the positive connotations attached to the determiner. The noun *gold*, used as a derivational base for the adj. *golden* is not randomly chosen and is an instantiation of an exemplar-based categorisation, since gold has long been perceived as the most precious material and has come to indicate a superlative status

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<sup>13</sup> A phrase or an idea known and accepted by many, which could be used in order to establish common ground, since it is taken for granted and is not subject to debate (Ilie & Hellspong 1999: 389).



and the highest distinction within a certain field. Incidentally, the idea of superlative, yet in a negative way, is preserved within the metaphor the *Golden Raspberry*, whereby the derogatory meaning can be accounted for by the use of some informal English expressions such as *to blow a raspberry*, intended to insult someone or to make fun of them<sup>14</sup>.

Moreover, since Hollywood has become a landmark in cinematography, some words and linguistic expressions connected with it have been subject to a broadening of meaning, which is usually achieved by two major figures of speech – metaphor and metonymy<sup>15</sup> that can be used either individually or combined. The former situation is illustrated by the existence of metonymic expressions of different types, such as the metonymy PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT (see the case of *Césars*, whereby the name comes from its creator, the sculptor César Baldaccini) or, more often, the metonymy SYMBOL FOR OBJECT, typical of those categories evoking a certain area/space. That is the case of expressions such as *Golden Bear*, *Golden Lion*, *Palme d’Or*, all of which are based on iconicity: the bear and the lion are featured on the flags of Berlin and Venice, respectively and have a symbolic value. Similarly, the palm tree is the symbol of Cannes and has then become the symbol of the Film Festival hosted there.

The chain of figures, instead, can be illustrated by the use of some words originating in the American space, but enriched with new broader meanings as a result of them being associated with different axiological values. *Oscar* is one of the possible examples, since it has been subject to three successive figures of speech, the first of which is a metaphor, followed by metonymy and antonomasia. As a similarity-based conceptualisation, the metaphorical projection can be invoked in relation to either actress Bette Davis or the Academy librarian Margaret Herrick, both of whom found some similarities between the appearance of the statuette and people they knew and that were named Oscar (Levy 2003: 45). Then, by way of metonymy, Oscar began to be used in order to designate both the statuette and the trophy named after it (see expressions like *And the Oscar goes to...*). Eventually, Oscar has come to indicate the highest level of recognition, that is, excellence in the film industry, *via* antonomasia, which explains the use of expressions like *Césars*, *the French Oscar(s)*. The latter example also proves that, unlike proper names or scientific terms, some names of film/music festivals or awards can have

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<sup>14</sup> See also Roibu (2021: 321-332).

<sup>15</sup> Antonomasia is now considered either a subtype of the metonymy “PART FOR THE WHOLE”, namely “A MEMBER FOR THE CATEGORY” (Kovecses 2006: 100-104), or an independent figure of speech based on metonymical and metaphorical mechanisms, as well as on semantic, morpho-syntactic and stylistic means (Stoichitȃiu Ichim 2006: 333-353).

interlinguistic onomastic equivalents, meant to refer to quality or value. Actually, a word like *palmares* has its remote etymology in Lat. *palmares*, which is the plural of the adjective *palmaris* (“that deserves the palmary or prize; superior, excellent”); a more recent etymology could involve Fr. *Palme d’Or* (with emphasis on the quality of the movies presented in the festival). Interestingly, one of the prizes of the Cannes Film Festival, awarded to the best canine performance, is called *Palme Dog* and is based on a pun which exploits paronomasia (it sounds quite similar to *Palme d’Or*).

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

The present study aimed to prove that the names of best-known film and music festivals and awards account for the existence of some patterns of language, which are triggered by patterns of thought, and that many of them are cross-cultural, *i.e.*, spread over different cultures and languages. Moreover, I have emphasized that the similarity which lies at the basis of these patterns involves both the form and the meaning(s) of the linguistic expressions that are being used. The formal resemblance refers to the use of either international loans (such as *Palme d’Or*, *Oscar*), which are cross-cultural, or free adaptations (as is the case of *Ursul/Leul/Zmeura de Aur*, which translate the *Golden Bear/Lion/Raspberry*). More seldom are the cases where Romanian vocabulary resorts to internal means, that is, derivation (*Berlinala*) and compounds (acronyms: TIFF, ASTRA), in order to render names with toponymic bases, which are context-bound and culture specific. As regards the shared semantic content, the analysis tried to prove that, although initially culture-specific, some cultural models originating in the American space tend to acquire (near) universal status, since they reflect conventional patterns of thinking and acting. That is the case of the *Golden* pattern, which exploits the positive connotations that the adjective inherits from its noun base (*gold*), or the (former) anthroponym *Oscar*, which has developed successive figurative meanings.

From an onomastic point of view, the vast majority of names used to refer to film and music festivals and awards stand out by their motivated nature, which compensates for their ambiguous status, oscillating between nomenclatures, proper names and appellatives (common nouns). Moreover, many of the signs used within the category are twofold motivated: extra-linguistically, based on the relation between the denomination and the origin of the film or music festival/award, on the one hand, and linguistically, given that the toponym that has become part of the denomination is the result of a derivational process (*Berlinala*) or represents a compound whose elements are more or less transparent (BAFTA, TIFF), on the other hand. Numerically, names of film and music festivals and awards seem to prefer loan words (and more precisely, English/American words and phrases), followed by free adaptations, and internal means (especially compounds with a toponymic or anthroponymic base).

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