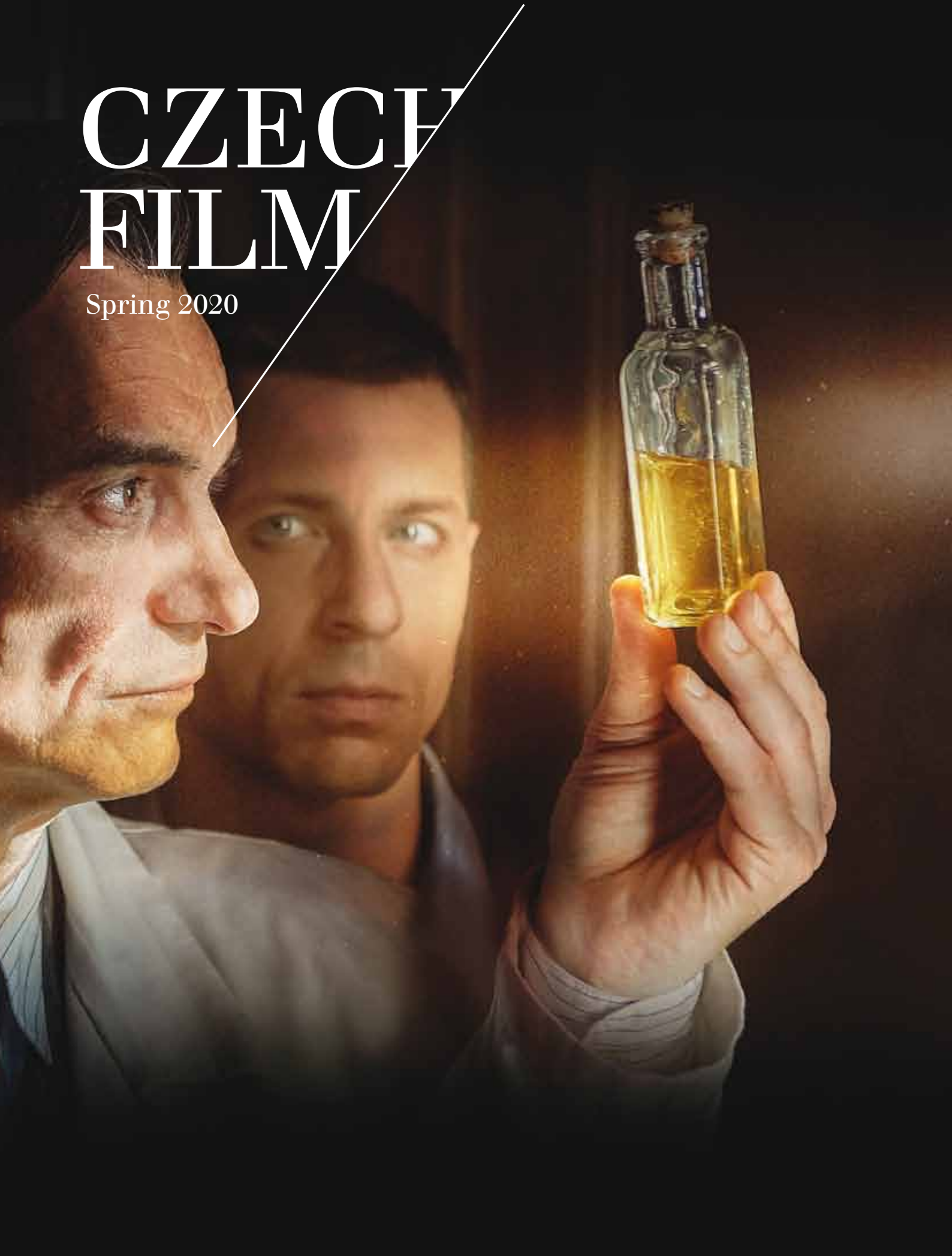


CZECH FILM

Spring 2020



The Czech Film Fund is the main public financing body for cinema in the Czech Republic.

The Fund supports all stages of film production, as well as promotion, distribution and other film-related areas. It also administers production incentives for audio-visual projects made in the Czech Republic.

Apart from financing, the fund also includes two divisions for international activities: the Czech Film Center and the Czech Film Commission.

The Czech Film Center promotes and markets Czech films and the local film industry worldwide. It collaborates with major international film festivals and co-production platforms and utilizes a global network of partners, seeking opportunities for creative exchange between Czech filmmakers and their international counterparts.

The Czech Film Commission promotes the country with its film infrastructure as one of the world's top destinations for audio-visual production. As a comprehensive resource for filming in the Czech Republic, the commission provides incoming filmmakers with consultation, guidance, and contacts.



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Dear Friends of Czech Film,

I I thought a long time about how to introduce this spring issue of the Czech Film Fund magazine. Then I recalled a line from a famous Czech song, “Sometimes you’re up, sometimes you’re down,” since that defines 2019 to a T. The thrill when *The Painted Bird* made it to the main competition in Venice; or when FAMU student Daria Kashcheeva flew to Los Angeles to receive a Student Oscar for her animated film *Daughter*, which the fund also supported; or seeing the record three hundred fifty million euros spent on foreign and domestic filmmaking in the Czech Republic last year, thanks to incentives. And then there was the feeling of utter dejection when the tremendous interest in shooting led to the film incentives budget being completely exhausted in the middle of the year, major foreign productions were threatening to leave, and it took five long months to resolve the problem.

The song I mentioned above is from the famous Voskovec + Werich film *Your Money or Your Life* (1932), and ends with the words “Those who love must not lose hope.” Everything worked out all right for the fund in 2019, in part because we really do love Czech film here. In this new year I wish you, too, lots of undying love, including love of film and cinematography. Never lose hope, even when you’re down.

Helena Bezděk Fraňková, Director, Czech Film Fund



BERLIN IFF /

Five Czech films
in this year's
Berlinale
programme



FOCUS /

Daria Kashcheeva: Major
talent in Czech animation



FOCUS /
Inside the Mind
of legendary
documentarist
Karel Vachek

IN PRODUCTION /

Havel: Slávek Horák explores
the lesser-known side of
playwright, dissident, and
statesman Václav Havel

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CZECH FILM NOW

Exceptional Festival Autumn

Czech films enjoyed a high profile at festivals abroad in the second half of 2019. *The Painted Bird*, Forman vs. Forman, and animated shorts *Daughter* and *SH_T HAPPENS* received dozens of festival invitations, while other films scored notable achievements as well. *A Certain Kind of Silence*, by Michal Hogenauer, won the Audience Award at Milano Film Festival and the Bronze Pyramid Award for Best First or Second Work at Cairo IFF. Jiří Mádľ's second film, *On the Roof*, conquered Mannheim-Heidelberg, taking home the Grand Newcomer Award, decided by the festival audience, while the coproduction drama *Let There Be Light*, by Marko Škop, bagged the Almaty Film Festival's main prize. Artemio Benki's documentary feature film debut, *Solo*, which premiered earlier last year in Cannes, won the main prize in the Czech Joy Competition at Jihlava IDFF, as well as awards at Makedox and Duhok.

On top of that, cinematographer Vladimír Smutný was honored with the Best Cinematography Award at Chicago IFF and the Bronze Frog at Polish Camerimage for his exceptional work on *The Painted Bird*. At Camerimage, the film also took home the FIPRESCI prize, while at Kolkata IFF Václav Marhouľ received the Best Director award. /

Czech



The Painted Bird

© Silver Screen

Ivan Passer, R.I.P.

Director and screenwriter of the Czechoslovak New Wave classic *Intimate Lighting* Ivan Passer passed away on January 9, 2020, at the age of 86. Passer, a close collaborator of Miloš Forman's, having coauthored Forman's early films *Loves of a Blonde* and *The Firemen's Ball*, left Czechoslovakia after the Soviet occupation in 1968 and continued developing his unique directing style in the United States. His most famous films from the American era include *Born to Win*, *Law and Disorder*, *Cutter's Way*, and *Haunted Summer*. /



Women on the Run

© Intimidy Prague

Record Year in Czech Cinemas

2019 was yet another record year for cinema attendance and box office revenues in the Czech Republic. More than 18 million people came to Czech cinemas, the highest figure since 1993, thanks to which box office revenues reached 100 million EUR. Czech films again made up a good chunk of the pie, with the market share of Czech films at 26.5 percent.

The biggest hit at Czech cinemas in 2019 was the comedy *Women on the Run* by debut director Martin Horský. More than 1.5 million viewers paid to see this mosaic of stories about a mother and her three daughters finally getting their lives under control. Second and third places were occupied by Jiří Vejdělek's nostalgic comedy *The Last Aristocrat*, about a family who get their ancestral castle back after the Velvet Revolution, which sold nearly half a million tickets, and the romantic sports-world comedy, *Přes prsty (Unexpected Server)*, the directing debut by seasoned screenwriter Petr Kolečko, which drew 380,000 viewers. /

Film Crews Spent Nearly 350 Million EUR in Czech Republic Last Year

Thanks to the Czech Film Fund's incentives program, in 2019 local and international film crews combined spent nearly 350 million EUR in the Czech Republic while shooting more than 80 films and TV series using local talent and services. The majority of the projects were made for VOD giants Netflix and Amazon. The budget of the incentives program for 2020 is 31 million EUR. /

Satirical Comedy *Owners* Tops Nominations for Czech Lion Awards

Owners, Jiří Havelka's directing debut, which cleverly depicts and mocks stereotypes in Czech society using a meeting of apartment owners in a single building, garnered 12 nominations, followed by international success *The Painted Bird*, by director and producer Václav Marhouľ, with 11 nominations, and *Old-Timers*, by directing duo Martin Dušek and Ondřej Provozník, with 10. The awards ceremony will take place on March 7. /



© CinemArt

Owners

Upcoming Features *Even Mice Belong in Heaven* and *The Crossing* at Cartoon Movie

The highly anticipated Czech animated feature *Even Mice Belong in Heaven*, directed by Denisa Grimmová and Jan Bubeníček, will be presented at Cartoon Movie in Bordeaux, France. This tale of two mortal enemies — a mouse and a fox who meet in heaven and become best friends — will be introduced at the In Production pitching sessions by producers Vladimír Lhoták and Alexandre Charlet. The film should be finished in summer 2020. Meanwhile the Sneak Preview section will include the French-German-Czech coproduction *The Crossing*, by first-time director Florence Miahle. The animated feature film about two children on the run through a shattered continent should be completed this summer. /



The Crossing

© MAUR film

Three Czech Shorts in Clermont-Ferrand

Three Czech animated shorts will screen at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival this year. *SH_T HAPPENS*, by Dávid Štumpf and Michaela Mihályi, will compete in the International Competition, while viewers in the Young Audience section will have the pleasure of seeing *The Kite*, by Martin Smatana, and *The Concrete Jungle*, by Marie Urbánková. /



The Concrete Jungle

© UMPRUM

Film

CZECH FILM NOW



Now

© Xova Film

Erhart

Shooting Finishes on *Erhart* and *Two Ships*

A couple of projects recently entered the postproduction phase: *Erhart*, the first feature film by Jan Březina, reflects on the changes in Czech society over the past 30 years and the impact capitalism has had on the generation born in the early 1990s. The film is produced by Marek Novák (Xova Film) and should be finished in May 2020.



© WEMMY



Two Ships

© FILM KOLEKTIV

In *Two Ships*, documentary director and musician Jan Foukal steps into the world of fiction, telling the story of an ill-fated love between a psychologist and a musician set against the backdrop of Brno. Shooting on the film ended in early January in Norway, where the crew moved for a couple of days. *Two Ships* is a FILM KOLEKTIV production, with producers Silvie Michajlova and Ondřej Zima in charge, and should be completed in summer 2020. /

Ordinary Failures at When East Meets West

Czech producer Marek Novák (Xova Film) and Romanian director Cristina Grosan successfully introduced their upcoming feature film project, *Ordinary Failures*, to a huge crowd at the When East Meets West coproduction market in Trieste. Their pitch earned them the Pop Up Film Residence Award, giving Grosan and scriptwriter Klára Vlasáková the chance to spend three weeks working on the script under the guidance of experienced international mentors. *Ordinary Failures* focuses on a day in the life of three women in a city struck by random mysterious explosions, presaging the end of an era and a new beginning in the chaos of the postmodern world. Also, in the Last Stop Trieste program, the rough cut of the documentary *Soviet Man* was screened for sales agents and festival programmers. The film is a Latvian-Lithuanian-Czech coproduction, produced on the Czech side by Hana Blaha Šilarová and Jitka Kotrlová from Frame Films. /

A photograph of two men sitting in the back of a vintage convertible car with a brown top. They are both laughing heartily, looking towards the right. The man on the left is wearing a light blue shirt, and the man on the right is wearing a light-colored jacket. The background is a blurred green landscape.

Charlatan and other Czech Films at the Berlinale

Representing the Czech Republic at this year's Berlinale are three feature-length fiction films, one documentary, and an animated short. First and foremost, the long-awaited new work by Polish director Agnieszka Holland, *Charlatan*, a majority Czech production, has been selected for the Berlinale Special Gala. Other films, too, are raising hopes: *Servants*, by Ivan Ostrochovský, is trying its luck in the new competition section called Encounters, while *FREM*, an experimental documentary by Viera Čákanyová, will be appearing in Forum, and the animated *Leaf* by Aliona Baranova is screening in Generation Kplus. The fifth film is the restored version of Alfréd Radok's *Distant Journey*, which will be shown in the Berlinale Classics section.

by Hedvika Petrželková



© Marlene Film Production

“It is a duel between good and evil, playing out primarily in the soul of the main character,” Agnieszka Holland said in an interview with *Total Film* about *Charlatan*, which looks at recent Czech history. This is a subject close to Holland’s heart, one of many reasons why Czechs often consider her one of “ours.” The FAMU graduate has never made a secret of her close ties to the country where she studied film, and it shows in her care about its past and its present. This was more than clear in her HBO miniseries *Burning Bush*, which delved into a key period in modern Czech history, and for the first time for many Czechs gave a vivid portrayal of a man they consider a hero, Jan Palach.

Charlatan is a project by Marlene Film Production and producers Šárka Címalová and Kevan van Thompson. The Czech-Irish-Polish-Slovak

coproduction features collaboration by Mike Downey, Sam Taylor – Film and Music Entertainment (IE), Madants (PL), Czech Television (CZ), Barrandov Studio (CZ), Furia Film (SK), Radio and Television Slovakia (SK), Certicon (CZ), and Magiclab (CZ). The film was made with support from the Czech Film Fund, the Polish Film Institute, the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, and the Prague Film Fund.

This film drama, written by Marek Epstein, was inspired by the life story of healer Jan Mikolášek, portrayed here by Ivan Trojan, one of the most popular film and theater actors in the Czech Republic today. His younger self is played by Trojan’s own 18-year-old son, Josef Trojan. In the important role of the healer’s assistant is Slovak talent Juraj Loj.

The true story of an exceptional man endowed with healing powers is told against a backdrop of historical events. Over the course of several decades, Mikolášek was approached by thousands of people from all walks of life, including some of the most important figures in Czechoslovak culture and politics. Despite his lack of professional or medical education, the healer possessed an unusual and inexplicable gift for determining diagnoses and treatments from urine. But his extraordinary abilities came at the cost of a battle with his own demons.

The author of the screenplay, the talented Marek Epstein, has already racked up numerous successes and awards, including the Czech Lion for

BERLIN IFF

CZECH FILMS



Charlatan

© Marlene Film Production

In the Shadow (dir. David Ondříček, 2012), the Shanghai IFF Award for *Václav* (dir. Jiří Vejdělek, 2007). Holland has surrounded herself with renowned Czech and Slovak professionals in other departments as well: The cinematography was handled by Martin Štrba (who also worked with the director on *Burning Bush*), the set designer was Milan Býček (Czech Lion for *Burning Bush*), the costumes are by Katarína Štrbová Bielíková (Czech Lion for *Masaryk*), and the editor was Pavel Hrdlička (Czech Lion for *Burning Bush*). The score was composed by Antoni Komasa-Łazarkiewicz, who also collaborated with Holland on the film *Spoor* and was awarded a Czech Lion for *Burning Bush*. The Czech premiere of *Charlatan* will be on March 26 in Prague.

Servants: collaboration or imprisonment

In *Servants*, Slovak director Ivan Ostrochovský looks back in time to the era of Communist Czechoslovakia. Set



Servants

© Punkchart films



Distant Journey

© NFA



© University of Tomáš Baťa in Zlín

in early 1980s Bratislava, the film tells the story of two young boys entering seminary. There they encounter the dismal conditions of the Czechoslovak Catholic Church, which collaborated with the Communist regime through the organization Pacem in Terris.

The main characters are theology students Michal and Juraj. Their teachers, afraid of the seminary being abolished, train their pupils to accommodate the Communist Party, leaving each of the young seminarians to decide for themselves whether to succumb to temptation and choose the easier path of collaboration, or to maintain their faith and face pressure from the forces of State Security.

The story and screenplay of *Servants* were written by well-known Slovak author Marek Leščák, winner of a Czech Lion for Marek Šulík's *The Garden* (1995) and numerous Slovak Sun in the Net film awards (*The Interpreter*, 2019; *Little Harbour*, 2018; *Blind Loves*, 2010; *The City of the Sun*, 2006). Ivan Ostrochovský and Polish screenwriter Rebecca Lenkiewicz, who wrote the screenplay for the Oscar-winning film *Ida*, also collaborated on the script.

The film was produced by the Slovak company Punkchart films (producers Ivan Ostrochovský, Albert Malinovský, Katarína Tomková). This is the second film by Ostrochovský, who debuted in 2015 with *Koza*, which premiered at the Berlinale. *Servants* will be screened in Berlin in the new competition section Encounters, designed to highlight new visions of film as a counterpoint and complement to the main competition.

The Slovak-Romanian-Czech-Irish coproduction was joined on the Czech side by Negativ (Petr Oukropec, Pavel Strnad), editor Jan Daňhel, and film make-up artist Lukáš Král. "What appealed to us was the topic of collaboration with the powers that be, plus the fact that Ivan's first film, *Koza*, was such an original story with splendid cinematography. *Servants* is also visually unique and goes even further in its narrative method. Overall, it's a film that stands out from local production and is really at the level of top European works," says producer Pavel Strnad of Negativ.

The other coproducers on *Servants* are Point Film (RO), Radio and Television Slovakia (SK), Film and Music Entertainment (IE), Libra Film Productions (RO), Hai Hui Entertainment (RO), and sentimental film (SK). Support for the project came from the Slovak Audiovisual Fund (SK), the Czech Film Fund, Eurimages, the CNC (RO), the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (SK), the Bratislava Municipality Fund (SK), and Romanian Public Television (RO). The film was also shot in the Czech Republic, including in the Plasy Monastery.

In the lead roles of the students are Slovak actors Samuel Skyva and Samuel Polakovič, while the dean of the theological faculty is played by Slovak director Vladimír Strnisko, and the secret police agent by Romanian actor Vlad Ivanov, who is best-known from the Romanian film *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes IFF (2007).

The Czech premiere of *Servants* will be in April of this year.

Distant Journey: expressing the inexpressible

This year's Berlinale Classics section will feature Alfréd Radok's *Distant Journey*. Initially released in March 1949, the film, a fictional love story set during the Holocaust, will be screened in Berlin in its digitally restored form, completed by the National Film Archive in 2019.

Distant Journey, Radok's feature debut, gives a still unique answer to the question of how to express the inexpressible. The film depicts the fate of a Jewish family in Czechoslovakia during



Servants

© Punkchart films



Distant Journey

© NFA



Leaf



FREM

World War II — from the stifling atmosphere as they wait to be sent to a concentration camp, to their cramped life in the Terezín ghetto. Rather than convey the horror of Terezín camp directly, Radok juxtaposes the different visions that shaped the horrific reality of the Holocaust in a multilayered art reportage that combines a melodramatic story with echoes of expressionism and self-reflective experimentation.

For Radok, this sensitive topic is based on personal experience. He was of Jewish origin and at the end of World War II was in an internment camp that he managed to escape. Although the film was a great success abroad and won many awards, it was withdrawn from distribution in then-Communist Czechoslovakia almost immediately after its premiere, due to “inappropriate” themes — officials objected to its portrayals of racial persecution.

In 1968, the director and his family emigrated to Sweden, which subsequently became a second home for him. Radok (1914–76), as founder of the world’s first multimedia theater, *Laterna Magika*, was one of the most

important Czech and European directors of the 20th century’s latter half, and his works still rank among the greats of the Czech modern era.

FREM: a land beyond the borders of perception

Director Viera Čákanyová’s documentary *FREM* is what she calls a reaction to the current wave of post-humanist thinking incited by the development of technology and artificial intelligence, as well as by the climate crisis.

“The human species is beginning to realize its insignificance and transience and the human identity is in crisis,” the creators say in the official synopsis. “*FREM* attempts to reflect this feeling and creates a dehumanized and alienated view of the countryside and nature beyond the human perception of reality. The fragmentary thoughts and snippets of dialogue, the motley music interrupted by noises and glitches, and the seemingly confused, unchained camera, create a disturbing philosophical reflection on the limits of anthropocentric thinking.”

Subtitled *A Requiem for Homo Sapiens*, *FREM* was produced by Hypermarket Film (CZ) in coproduction with Czech Television (CZ) and Punkchart films (SK). The experimental 70-minute film was supported by the Czech Film Fund, Creative Europe MEDIA, and Eurimages. It will be screened in Berlin in the Forum section. The Czech premiere took place at the Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival in October 2019.

Leaf: looking for home

“A huge sailor receives a lovely autumn leaf from a little girl. It reminds him of his home. How long has he been away? The sailor takes off in search of his memories. What will he find there?” This is the synopsis of Aliona Baranova’s *Leaf*, which will be screened in the Generation Kplus section at Berlinale.

The film was produced by Tomáš Bata University in Zlín, where the author completed her studies in the Animation Studio. Baranova, who was born in Belarus, explores the themes of home and aging parents in her poetic graduation picture. Similar topics appeared in her successful undergraduate film *Home*, about a young man in search of his identity.

“It’s more like I register the feelings of a foreigner who has adapted well to a new environment in general, rather than my own experience as a Belarussian in the Czech Republic,” as Baranova said in an interview for the Czech version of *Laydeez Do Comics*.



Leaf

Personal and Original:

Daria Kashcheeva Is a Major Talent in Czech and European Animation

2019 was an exceptionally good year for Czech animated film, thanks in no small part to the innovative and emotionally intense film *Daughter*. Made by Daria Kashcheeva as a student at FAMU, the father-daughter tale has been nominated for an Oscar in the Animated Short Film category.

by Pavel Sladký

Daria Kashcheeva, born in Tajikistan and currently a student at the FAMU film school in Prague, won the Best Student Film award for her puppet animation film *Daughter* at the Anecy Festival, where it had its world premiere. She then won a Student Oscar from the US Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and as of this writing she has been nominated for an Oscar for Best Animated Short.

The next stop for Kashcheeva is the upcoming Sundance Festival, and that's just one of the many honors *Daughter* has earned so far — one of three films in Czech distribution through the *Three Voices* coproduction project, which brings together three student films created simultaneously at three Czech art schools: FAMU, UMRUM, and the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň.

We've all experienced being misunderstood or wronged at some point

The impressive, highly personal, and formally original film *Daughter* is the wordless tale of the relationship



between father and daughter and more generally the human (in)capacity for mutual understanding. “I’m very interested in psychology,” the director said in an interview with Czech Radio Vltava. “The feeling of being misunderstood, even wronged, by one’s parents is something everyone has been through. Even if we’re not really aware of it, or don’t even remember it, it can influence our behavior in adulthood. I decided this would be a personal screenplay and dug around in my past. Then, when the basic idea for the film came up quickly, I took it as a good sign.”

Despite this being her first puppet film, the format of *Daughter* is ambitious and innovative — shot in part as if it were a live action film, with the camera movement simulating handheld cinematography, jump cuts, and a great deal of closeups on the puppets’ faces and shifting (re-painted) expressions. In order to be able to do this kind of stylization and closeup shooting, Kashcheeva made the largest puppet 40 centimeters (nearly 16 inches) tall.

“I do everything by hand, and I have to consider every single aspect,” says Kashcheeva. “We created a whole new world for this film. This is the justification for making *Daughter* an animated film, despite the live-action stylization. Plus, animation allows me to depict dreams, and all kinds of transitions between situations, in a different way artistically. And the atmosphere is different.”

Drawing the viewer in with images

The director professes her admiration for para-documentary methods like those used in the films of Lars von Trier, or the social realism of brothers Jean-Pierre and



Luc Dardenne. “With their films, I feel like that pulls me into the story, which is what I wanted to achieve with my film. I actually watched the Dardenne brothers’ *The Son* and von Trier’s *Breaking the Waves* frame by frame. In live action film, the cameramen, and even the other creative departments, do a lot of things intuitively — a lot of the movements of the actors and the cameras happen naturally, on set. But with animation, every motion is planned and created in advance, so I studied and analyzed my models.”

Not wanting to fall into a stereotype, however, the director says she plans to do her next film without any handheld cameras. “I’d like to work more with live actors, for example,” says Kashcheeva, giving us a peek at what she has in store.

Drawing the viewer in with sound

Daughter also makes intense use of audio. “I have a degree in musical direction,” Kashcheeva reveals. “I used to be a sound technician at a theater in Moscow and worked with music, so I place a lot of importance on the audio aspect.” The director did most of the sound work on the film herself. “What I wanted was for the sound to be as atmospheric as possible and draw the viewer into the story. Even when working on the screenplay, I’m already thinking about the sound.”

Daughter shares motifs and an underlying mood with Kashcheeva’s previous effort, *Before the Wind* (2016), an intimate film shot in black and white. There, too, we

“The feeling of being misunderstood, even wronged, by one’s parents is something everyone has been through...”



Daughter

FOCUS

DARIA KASHCHEEVA

witness the symbolic transformation of a dying person into a bird, which we may interpret as a symbol of loss and inaccessibility, but of course also of freedom. The metamorphosis from person to animal can also be interpreted as a transformation in the sense of the circle of life in Buddhism and other religions.

This is me. This is my love.

Even before *Daughter*, however, Kashcheeva achieved international recognition with her film *To Accept*, a vertical film in 9:16 mobile-phone format that won the 2017 Nespresso Talents competition in Cannes. "That win really influenced my career, it gave me my first impulse, faith in myself and that I could make something good," the director told the magazine *Cinepur*.

With only slight exaggeration, *To Accept* might be described as a "declaration of love in pixels." The three-minute film, narrated by the director's husband, Alexander Kashcheev, who we also see in the main role, speaks of self-discovery, self-acceptance, and making the leap toward a life of sincerity by discovering the right partner.

Daria and Alexander Kashcheev's journey together from Moscow to Prague, and the start of her studies at FAMU, were part of a major change in her life, which the direc-

tor living in Prague. The action moves quickly from filling out residence forms and initial formal introductions to the travails of life, and doesn't shy away from the negatives.

"I was thinking about how Czechs see Russians. That's how the film came about," says Kashcheeva. "It doesn't matter where we live but what's inside us. *Prague: A Foreigners' Perspective* helped me loosen up, in a way, and tune in to the city I've been living in for six years now."

The colorful silence of intimacy

Finally, Kashcheeva's two-minute film *Oasis* (2017), about hoping for peace amid the tumult of civilization and the gurgling of everyday life, is dominated by an intensive soundscape and colorful 2D animation done in pencil. A woman walking through a city takes shelter in what seems to be an oasis of heavenly peace but in fact may be only an escapist illusion.

Oasis, like *Daughter*, is reminiscent of a live-action film, particularly in the way it captures hectic reality and characters "walking into the shot." More significant, though, is that while the silence in the film is colorful, the bustle of the streets is done in contour, in black pencil, presenting the artist as an introvert and a person



"I was thinking about how Czechs see Russians. That's how the film came about..."

tor says brought a lot of uncertainty, fresh stimulus, and the promise of a new beginning. All of that left its mark on another, very personal project. The 5-minute *Prague: A Foreigners' Perspective* (2017) might be termed an ani-documentary. The cutout animation film highlights the experiences of several foreigners, mostly friends of

with a rich inner world. This is borne out by Kashcheeva's own description of the long, meticulous work of a lone animator as her dream job.

Her portrait is further fleshed out in the film *In a Dumpster* (2017). As the title suggests, this film employs an unusual perspective, and featured again in one of the main roles of this mostly cutout animation, in which petty household rubbish comes to life in the dark bowels of a dumpster, is the director's husband. You can see all of the older short films mentioned here on the director's Vimeo channel: <https://vimeo.com/203516255>

Czech Animated Shorts at Sundance

Daughter

Two short animated films were competing at the most prestigious festival of independent films: Sundance. For the films *Daughter* and *SH_T HAPPENS*, this marks one more in a series of major successes. Both films have been included in the competition section for short films.

“I am tremendously pleased that Sundance selected not one but two Czech animated films from our school. I’m so glad Czech animation is experiencing this wave of success and that I can be a part of it. It’s encouraging,” says *Daughter* director Daria Kashcheeva.

“Sundance was great news for us — coming as it did while we were working through the night, it raised our morale at least 300 percent! We’re very excited about having our American premiere at the biggest festival in the US, which is also one of the most popular in the world. We keep an eye on the festival’s selection every year, and we appreciate that Sundance has always given a lot of attention to animated shorts. And the fact that there are two animated films from FAMU there this time is fantastic,” said Michaela Mihályi and Dávid Štumpf, the directors of *SH_T HAPPENS*.

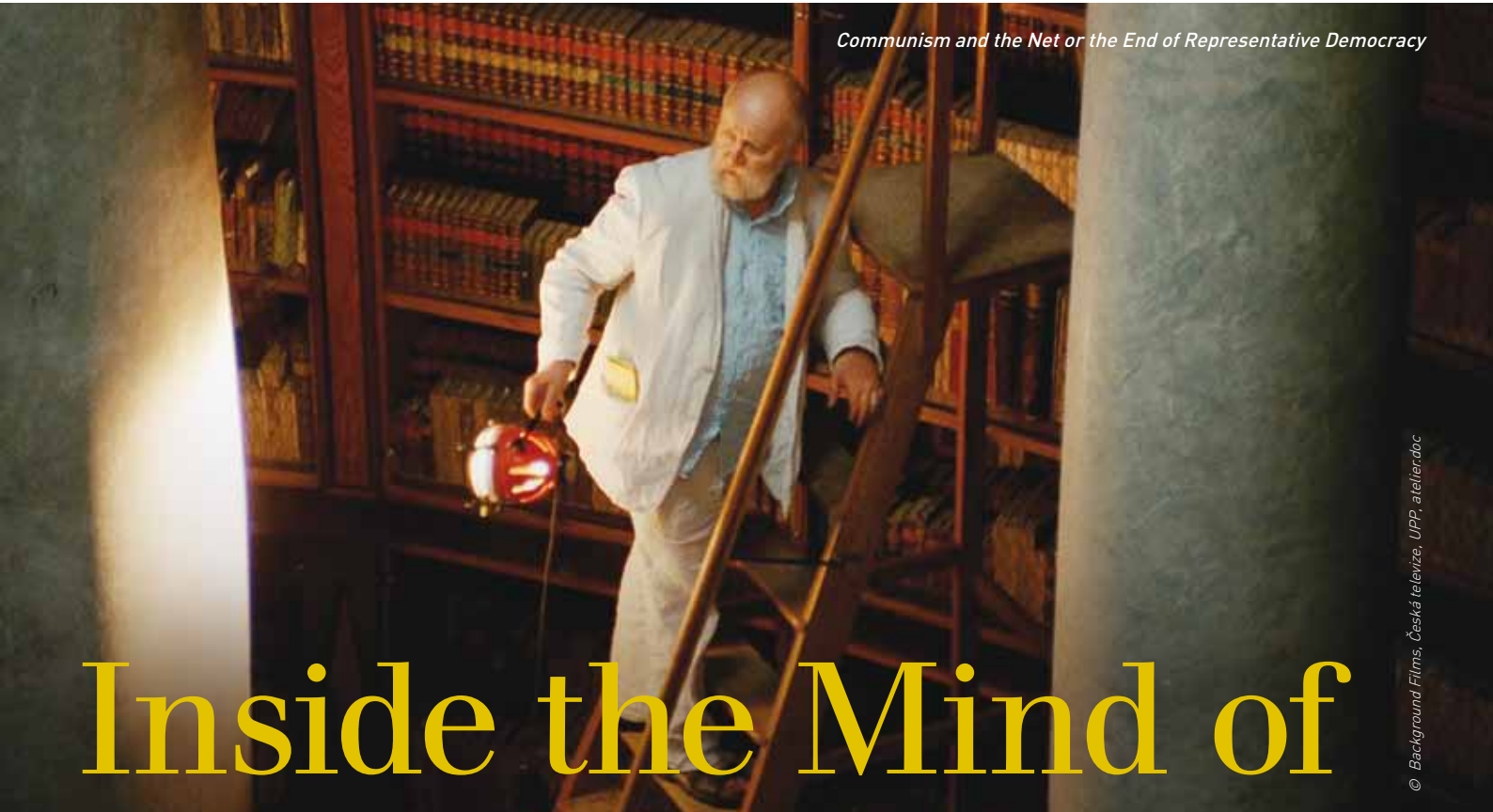
In September, director Daria Kashcheeva’s film *Daughter* was chosen from over 1,600 films from around the world to receive a Student Oscar. At the start of the summer, it took two awards at the world’s largest festival of animated film in Annecy, France — and awards keep rolling in from festivals all over

the world. In January, the film received an Oscar nomination. *Daughter* was produced with the support of the Czech Film Fund as part of the *Three Voices* project.

The second Czech animated short that was at this year’s Sundance — from directors Dávid Štumpf and Michaela Mihályi, *SH_T HAPPENS* — premiered in September at the Venice Film Festival, in the Orizzonti section for innovative and new forms of cinematic expression. This marked the first appearance of a Czech film in this section of the Venice Biennale. Štumpf and Mihályi’s film also received support for animated production from the Czech Film Fund.

Sundance FF, organized under the auspices of actor, director, and producer Robert Redford, is the biggest festival of independent film in the United States. Equal in importance to the world’s three biggest festivals — in Cannes, Venice, and Berlin — it has been held in the small town of Park City, Utah, since 1978. Sundance has five competition categories and its main objective is to discover new talent. Czechs have enjoyed success at the festival over the years, with Bohdan Sláma’s *Four Suns* premiering in competition there in 2012, and the short film *Peacock*, by director Ondřej Hudeček, winning the Special Jury Award for Best Direction in 2016.





Communism and the Net or the End of Representative Democracy

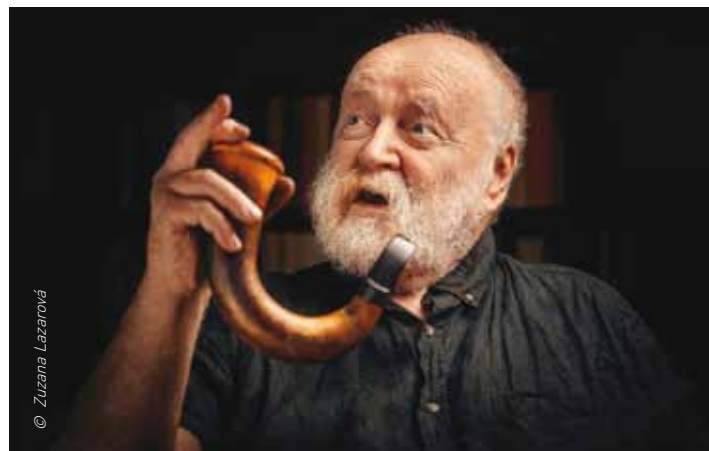
Inside the Mind of Karel Vachek

© Background Films, Česká televize, UPP, atelier.doc

This year, legendary Czech director Karel Vachek will be premiering his latest opus, *Communism and the Net or the End of Representative Democracy*, in The Tyger Burns, a program of the International Film Festival Rotterdam that highlights “the gaze of the old filmmaker.” The Tyger Burns (a reference to the William Blake poem “The Tyger,” with its famous line “Tyger Tyger burning bright”) features new and recent films by directors who were already active when the Rotterdam festival started in 1972.

by Petr Fischer (inspired by the article published in Novinky.cz)

The films of Karel Vachek do not fit very well into the traditional genre categories that we usually use to think about cinema and other art forms. The imagery of his films spills over and out into an in-between space where we struggle to put a name to what we are seeing. Although not a problem for the films themselves, which, thanks to their editing structure, infiltrate the viewer’s mind quite naturally, their indeterminate form defies categorization, and therefore — not paradoxically but unavoidably — a more personal understanding. It is probably human nature that most of us need a map, or at least some basic bearings, before we



© Zuzana Lazarová

are able to step into a labyrinth of images and characters, and allow its magic to speak to us.

In Vachek's films, this problem is addressed through two words: *essay and novel*. This is meant to suggest that a film is always nothing more than an inconclusive attempt to draw attention to the way the mind is in motion, to capture the movement of thought, a goal best achieved through a long, extensive narrative that, as Walter Benjamin wrote, attests to the failure of human dreams to grasp the mystery or essence of life. Vachek's latest project, a four-part, nearly six-hour opus titled *Communism and the Net or the End of Representative Democracy*, is notable for not only not accepting Benjamin's thesis concerning the essence of the novel, but deliberately refuting it, as it strives to arrive at the mystical source that gives rise not merely to art, but to the art of living, if not life itself.

Inspired primarily by the work of his brother, Petr, a painter of enormous canvases, Vachek attempts to create an all-encompassing film, taking in everything, a "grand tableau" of colossal proportions, a Bosch-like bulletin board of the world.

"There can't be just something there, there has to be everything," says Petr in the film — though speaking of his painting, he could just as well be commenting on the approach of Vachek's film itself.

As a matter of fact, we see this same expansiveness in the other works Vachek has made since 1989: in particular in the tetralogy *The Little Capitalist — New Hyperion or Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood* (1992); *What Is to Be Done? (A Journey from Prague to Český Krumlov, or How I Formed a New Government)* (1996); *Bohemia Docta or The Labyrinth of the World and the Lust-house of the Heart (A Divine Comedy)* (2000); and *Who Will Watch the Watchman? Dalibor, or The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (2002) — as well as the same attempt to include, insofar as possible, everything important. Vachek's aim has always been to show the transformation of society and consciousness in what is not immediately visible yet nonetheless, unobtrusively, arranges the life of the whole.

In some sense this is the opposite of what Vachek did when he started out making films in the '60s. Whether in his famous work *Moravian Hellas* (1963), which dealt with the growing irrelevance of folklore, or the lesser-known *Elective Affinities* (1968), examining the election of a president, Vachek was enamored with the immediacy of contact sound while having a camera on site to capture the action, and his preferred format was (pseudo)reportage. Here the filmmaker is exploring particular phenomena: the rawness of folk culture and its cultural abuse; the presidential election as a political process — these form the frame of the film, the borders within which his compositions of imagery are played out.

Post-1989, he no longer made "reportage," abandoning phenomena in favor of background and assumptions.

Vachek turned his attention to the *manifestation of things*, the process by which something emerges and becomes apparent, becomes an image, though what matters to him is not the image as such, its content and form, but what it emerges from and how its appearance occurs. In this regard, Vachek's filmmaking resembles the movement of modern phenomenology, which in the wake of Husserl and the exhaustion of his scientific concept of philosophy, can only be maintained by turning from pure phenomena to pure manifestation or revelation.

The stream of images Vachek produced after 1989, then, resulted in work completely different from his previous films in terms of structure and internal logic: curious mosaics in shifting configurations, like mental maps composed from the thoughts of "the people in the center" and "the people on the margins," maps on which, in hindsight, we can recognize the historical movements



"Note the way it is edited. You see, that is where the inner laughter is hidden. I've seen it already at least fifty times, and I still laugh."

we lived through but were unable to perceive clearly while they were taking place, to say nothing of the substratum from which they sprang. Yet it is precisely this essential "invisibility" that is carefully preserved and intensified in Vachek's imagery. This is also why his films are best understood and speak most powerfully with the passing of time; over time they grow, increasing in intensity and flavor: they ripen.

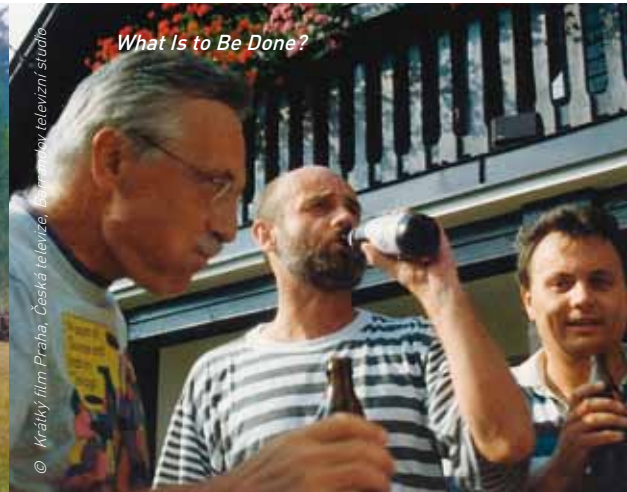
At first glance, *Communism and the Net or the End of Representative Democracy* exhibits the same novelistic approach seen in his earlier works. Again, a curious mental

FOCUS

KAREL VACHEK



Bohemia Docta



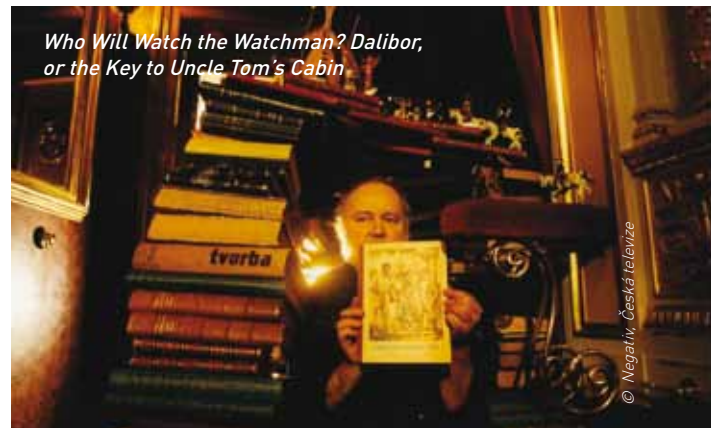
What Is to Be Done?



New Hyperion or Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood

structure grows before our eyes, and though we may be looking in at it from outside, it is simply a mirror image of our day-to-day reality — albeit with one important difference: While in previous films, some more or less open space remained, both inside and outside of the structure, since the goal was to depict a slice within the space-time continuum, this time Vachek seeks to achieve a closed space of absolute perfection, in an attempt to create an all-encompassing film with the same magical effect as the paintings of his brother Petr (or like those of Hieronymus Bosch, in which what appears to be a chaotic configuration is actually perfectly and precisely organized, as revealed by compositional drawings underneath the paint in Bosch's large tableaux, recently discovered thanks to X-rays).

There are two ways in which Vachek as director attempts to create the perfect "omni-film". The first is by the enormous compilational editing of his own work; the second by overloading his images with additional meanings, exposed and superimposed on top of one another as if we were watching the appearance of a secret message in invisible ink, the revelation of some cultural palimpsest. So fascinated is the director with the modern concept of "the net" that he sees it everywhere — in maps of artists and authors, in a stream of images of great books and important politicians, in compilations of quotes, imposing an older, literary order on the endless stream of images. All these webs of associations are woven into the foundation of the world as we experience it; they are not random but in fact constitute the mystical



Who Will Watch the Watchman? Dalibor, or the Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin

structure of the universe, which normally remains unseen although we can certainly sense it (here we see the senses taking precedence over reason; the influence of Vachek's sister Ludmila), and we can also make it visible through art — writing, painting, and film.

Having expanded on the subject in his book *A Theory of Matter: On Inner Laughter, the Schism of the Mind, and the Centrality of Fate*, now Vachek attempts to depict on screen: through imagery and the recomposing of images, but most of all through editing, which, as demonstrated by Orson Welles, among others, is where the true magic of cinematography lies.

As Vachek himself says: "Note the way it is edited. You see, that is where the inner laughter is hidden. I've seen it already at least fifty times, and I still laugh."

And what we should be paying the most attention to? "There are two ropes we cling to in life. One is our encounter with what is given, causes and effects; the other is our encounter with the essence, also known as God," Vachek explains in his film as he also does in his book. God, he says, taking his inspiration from the philosophy of Spinoza, is merely a different type of given. In Vachek's view, our fear of acknowledging the limitedness of our choices compels us to live in an illusion of free will to keep from going mad

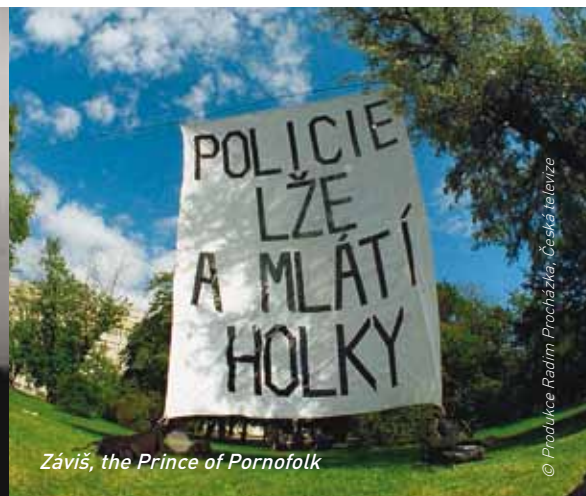


Moravian Hellas



Elective Affinities

© Kratký film Praha



Záviš, the Prince of Pornofolk

© Produkce Radim Procházka, Česká televize

because of the burden we would bear otherwise. "And yet, the only freedom we really have is to remain in God."

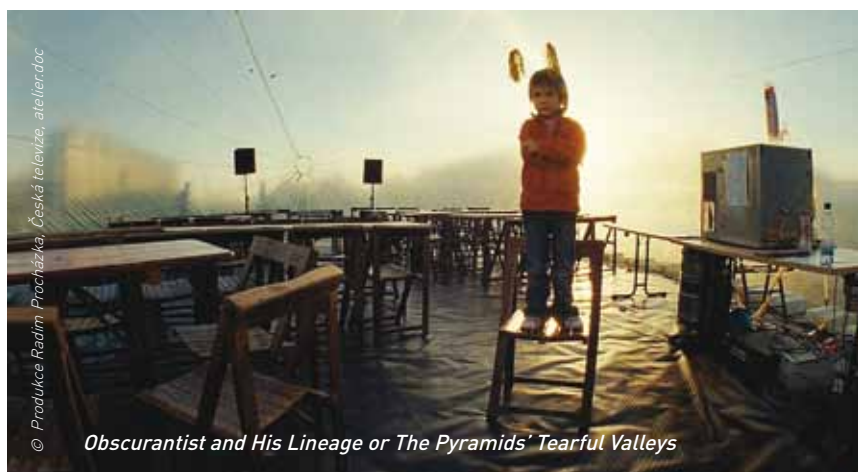
Provided we can ignore the undeniably self-referential framework of *Communism*, which may get in the way for many, since really what we are watching is an exploration of Vachek's mind and his attempt to remain in God, the film shows us a whole new world. It is not just a panopticon of society, where the politicians of today meet those of yesteryear, party leaders and popular singers come face to face — the Pope encounters economist Ilna Švihlíková or historian Jan Tesař while we succumb to the cleansing laughter that is, after all, the point of this work — but there is also a highly complex structure created, an interweaving of webs of reciprocal links and references, the reading and interpretation of which provides a useful guide on the road to freedom, when understood in the way Vachek has described. So it is also a net or a web in the sense that we commonly understand it today, that is, the digital interconnecting of free individuals, just another reflection, another configuration of God, which becomes the one who can save us.

Communism scoops up in its net everything important to society — politics, economics, philosophy, art — and finds a way through this tangled knot by means of editing. If you sit through all six hours, gradually you will see Czech culture revealed as the battlefield of a classic power struggle in which ideologies vie for dominance, with their power only now and then overshadowed by the charisma of a historical personality — the allure of a figure whose vision extends further or deeper than the know-it-all politician chasing money and power.

With his faith in "our Czechs," who see through the world to the essence the 79-year-old Vachek so fervently seeks, there are times when the director can be incredibly irritating. His foursome of so-called national mystics — Ladislav Klíma, Edvard Beneš, Jaroslav Hašek, and Alexander Dubček — is also cause for great skepticism. On the other hand, his obstinacy and doggedness in his lifelong quest for an essence that is often repugnant and callous toward

humankind, as *Communism* demonstrates, ultimately wins our sympathy. In a world carried away by the trend for speed and high energy, Vachek continues to make slow, oceanic films that must be patiently and attentively read, like the good novels of the old days, filled with mysteries and revelations. At first it may be boring and maybe even hard work, but anyone who makes it through the first half hour is guaranteed a rich reward in the end, the bliss of experiencing an everything-film.

That is a conviction shared also by the director, who, like his brother Petr the painter, would just as soon blanket his picture in Naples yellow to express the penetrative revelatory power of sunlight, a halo of eternity. There are at least flashes of this magical color in the editing, which shines a new light on what Vachek has been doing all his life. So what about communism and the net and the end of representative democracy?



© Produkce Radim Procházka, Česká televize, atelieroč

Obscurantist and His Lineage or The Pyramids' Tearful Valleys

On the road to learning how to free ourselves of ideology (the ideology of power and of money) by following the essence, we are all equal; in the ideal egalitarian web of liberated individuals, there can be no talk of representation. When it comes to the freedom to remain in the essence, no one else can represent us. And somewhere around here is where communism begins. /

Jan Švankmajer Biopic & Three Other Films at IFF Rotterdam

Jan Švankmajer, the world legend of surreal animation, has said he won't be making another film after *Insect*. But fans can look forward to the biopic *Alchemical Furnace*, which was screened in the Deep Focus section at this year's IFF Rotterdam. Also at this year's festival were three more Czech films: the live-action *Cook F**k Kill*, plus the documentaries *The Vasulka Effect* and *Communism and the Net or the End of Representative Democracy*, by Karel Vachek.

by Hedvika Petrželková

The Vasulka Effect



There is only one poetry: Jan Švankmajer

Jan Švankmajer (b. 1934) is one of the most acclaimed and popular Czech filmmakers abroad. His peculiar poetics, based on a playful affiliation with surrealism, have enthralled audiences and critics alike ever since his early films, from the shorts *The Coffin House*

*Cook F**k Kill*



The *Vasulka Effect*, which tells the story of Czech video-art pioneer Woody Vašulka, screened in the same section as *Alchemical Furnace*, while the program titled *The Tyger Burns* presented the latest opus by Czech

documentary master Karel Vachek, *Communism and the Net or the End of Representative Democracy*. The fourth representative of Czech cinematography in Rotterdam was Mira Fornay, with her fiction film *Cook F**k Kill*.

IFF ROTTERDAM

CZECH FILMS



© Athanor

(1966) and *J.S. Bach: Fantasia G-Moll* (1965) to feature films *Alice* (1988, winner of the Annecy IFF) and *Faust* (1994), through the short *Dimensions of Dialogue* (1983, Golden Bear at the Berlin IFF), features *Conspirators of Pleasure* (1996) and *Little Otik* (2000), and his most recent, *Insect*, which premiered in Rotterdam two years ago. *Alchemical Furnace* was screened in the "Regained" program of the Deep Focus section, which presents works connected to cinematic history. Directing duo Adam Olša and Jan Daňhel say their film is not only a portrait of Švankmajer but also of his company, Athanor,

mapping out more than 40 years of collaboration between Švankmajer and Jaromír Kallista. Athanor is producing the film in cooperation with the Slovak company PubRes, with support from the Czech Film Fund (EUR 65,385) and the Slovak Audiovisual Fund.

"The aim of the film is to get to the core of the creative world of 'big child Jan Švankmajer' and 'adult child Jaromír Kallista' and discover how elements of everyday life become magical," say the creators. The film is grounded in the "ten commandments" Švankmajer penned as a manifesto for his filmmaking. In them

he delineates his approach to cinematography and what he considers to be the universal cornerstones. The commandments are key to understanding Švankmajer's work, and *Alchemical Furnace* enters into dialogue with them, highlighting the creative process and the never-ending process of liberation, in the sense of "what is possible as opposed to what is real."

"Remember that there is only one poetry. The opposite of poetry is professional expertise. Before you start making a film, write a poem, paint a picture, put a collage together, write a novel, an essay, etc. Because only by cultivating universality can you ensure that you will make a good film."

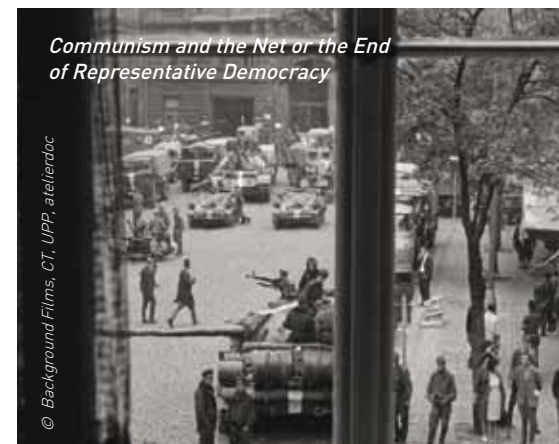
— from Jan Švankmajer's
Ten Commandments

Video art with Icelandic-Czech roots

In the same section as *Alchemical Furnace*, Rotterdam also presented the Icelandic-Swedish-Czech production *The Vasulka Effect*. Director Hrafnhildur Gunnarsdóttir first heard of the art duo Steina and Woody Vašulka in the 1980s and has endeavored to bring their work to a wider audience ever since.



© Cineart TV Prague



Communism and the Net or the End of Representative Democracy

© Background Films, CT, UPP, atelierdoc

The collaboration between video art pioneers Steina (born Steinunn Briem Bjarnadóttir) and Bohuslav ("Woody") Vašulka dates back to the late 1950s, when they first met in Communist Czechoslovakia: Bohuslav Vašulka was studying at the FAMU film school in

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CZECH FILMS

Prague and Iceland native Steina was studying violin at the State Music Conservatory. In 1960's, they traveled to Steina's native Iceland together and then went on to New York, where in 1971 they set up the famous arts organization The Kitchen, which became an important center for independent electronic and performing art, hosting such legends as Jimi Hendrix, Arthur Russell, Bill Viola, Laurie Anderson, and Andy Warhol. The couple later settled in Santa Fe.

Although sometimes called the grandparents of the "YouTube generation," the Vasulkas were not well known among the general public. "I increasingly realized what a fundamental impact the Vasulkas and other video artists had on bringing together video and computer technology, and how their art and research influenced everyday things," says Gunnarsdóttir. Her film points out the transformation of art and society with the arrival of video from the 1960s onwards. The period is sometimes called a second renaissance, when video art contributed to the decentralization of art and mass media.

Unfortunately, Woody Vašulka himself did not live to see the Rotterdam screening, as the Brno native (b. 1937) passed away on December 20, 2019.

Everyday demons: Cook F**k Kill

Like Jan Švankmajer, director Mira Fornay is not new to Rotterdam, having won the main prize, the Tiger Hivos Award, in 2013 for her drama *My Dog Killer*. Her latest work, *Cook F**k Kill*,



a Czech-Slovak coproduction (Cineart TV Prague, Mirafox) supported by the Czech Film Fund (EUR 305,769), was screened in the main program of the Voices section. The film, centered on the subject of domestic violence, tells the story of Jaroslav K., who is battling his wife, Blanka, for custody of their children. In order to get them, he not only has to work things out with his domineering mother, Dorota, but also come to terms with his demons. His metaphorical journey, structured like a computer game, demands more sacrifices than any viewer can anticipate.

The specter of communism: the ageless Karel Vachek

Communism and the Net or the End of Representative Democracy is the title of the latest opus by legendary Czech documentarist Karel Vachek (b. 1940), produced by Background Films. It was screened in the section called The Tiger Burns in Rotterdam.

According to the official synopsis, this nearly six-hour "film novel" seeks "a way to make the world a better place

to live in." It is divided into four parts, examining contemporary politics, philosophy, religion, and art. Fifty years after the Prague Spring and thirty years after the Velvet Revolution, Vachek takes stock of social developments and finds the only possible future in direct democracy, which he believes will let humanity come together through a computer network.

A peculiar place in Vachek's universe is the staffroom of FAMU's documentary film department, where he has taught for 25 years and now invites important contemporaries and students for discussions in front of the camera. All of these people intersect in the film and together they point out the often humorous paradoxes and contradictions of the time. You can read more about Vachek's work and this film on page 12. Czechs have a rich history with the Rotterdam festival, including where awards are concerned. Three Czech films in particular have left their mark since 1998. In addition to Mira Fornay's film, the festival's grand prize has also gone to Bohdan Sláma, for the film *Wild Bees* (2001), and Petr Zelenka, for *Buttoners* (1998).



The Making of an Unruly Political Hero

© TVORBA films

Emerging filmmaker Slávek Horák explores the lesser-known side of Václav Havel's rise to becoming a symbol of democracy, in the creative biopic *Havel*.

by Martin Kudláč

Not everyone gets a kick start to their career the way Slávek Horák did. The Czech writer, director, and producer went from being an award-winning director of commercials to fiction filmmaking in his forties, with *Home Care* (2015), a bittersweet rural dramedy about dying and sacrifice.

Leading actress Alena Mihulová excels under Horák's sensitive directing as a self-sacrificing home nurse who

discovers she has a terminal illness and has to come to terms with her mortality while preparing her family for what will come after she is gone.

Home Care charmed audiences on both sides of the spectrum, mainstream and arthouse alike. After raking in a handful of international film awards on the festival circuit, it was selected as the national pick for the Oscars race in 2015 by the Czech Film and Television Academy, and the

IN PRODUCTION

HAVEL



“On the one hand, political power gives you the wonderful opportunity of confirming, all day long, that you really exist, that you have your own undeniable identity, that with every word and deed you are leaving a highly visible mark on the world. Yet within that same political power lies a terrible danger that while pretending to confirm our existence and our identity, will, in fact, rob us of them.”

Václav Havel ¹

industry trade magazine *Variety* named Horák one of 10 directors to watch.

Previously, the rising Czech talent had served as second assistant director on Jan Svěrák’s 1996 Oscar-winning drama *Kolya*, followed by a long stint in advertising. “I was waiting until I was ready and mature enough to create something significant,” he told *Variety* after unveiling his fiction feature debut.²

Home Care became Horák’s rite of passage — which was convenient, given that he already had another ambitious project in mind. “I’m primarily interested in the protagonist,” Horák says of his character-driven approach to plotting and story building. In his debut, the leading character was inspired by his own mother, who served as the center of the heart-stirring story. But the protagonist he had in mind for his sophomore feature already had a protagonist with a fully fleshed story to tell.

Trials and delights

The subject of Horák’s new project, titled simply *Havel*, is none other than Václav Havel, the celebrated Czech playwright, dissident, and statesman, considered to be one of the most important intellectuals of the 20th century. The script is based on meticulous research and the recollections of Havel’s closest peers. Writing and fine-tuning the project’s script took three years, with the director joined in this work by his *Home Care* collaborator, Rudolf Suchánek. The story, based on true events, unfolds over the course of two decades and follows Havel’s transformation through three different periods of his life.

Havel has already been the subject of many documentaries. Horák never intended to shoot “a descriptive biography,” though. He wants the audience to relive Havel’s life story through his own eyes, which means tapping into lesser-known events and gaps in the official biography. This is why he decided to espouse fiction filmmaking to tackle Havel’s life story in the form of a creative biopic. Mapping out the making of the Velvet Revolution’s leader, Horák’s film scrutinizes Havel’s reactions in conflicting situations — his hesitations and decisions, the fears and insecurities that shaped his personality. The film explores the internal drama, thinking, and motives of this famous “entertaining intellectual” and, most of all, flawed human being.

The story begins with the future president as a young playwright, enjoying the freedom of Prague Spring 1968, when “politics is as exciting as theater, sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll,” as the writer-director notes. After the Soviet-led invasion, Havel refuses to sign a statement approving the occupation, which earns him the distinction of being “a forbidden author.” Eventually, he manages to unite a diverse group of critics around a common program of human rights. After a prison stint, with public unrest growing and the regime on the verge of crumbling, Havel rides the momentum of the Velvet Revolution to become Czechoslovakia’s first democratically elected president and a symbol of democracy in Eastern Europe as a whole.

Meandering between Havel’s professional and private lives, Horák’s film also includes Havel’s lopsided rela-



¹ Michael Žantovský, *Havel: A Life* (New York: Atlantic Books, 2014).

² <https://variety.com/2015/film/features/10-directors-to-watch-slavek-horak-home-care-1201668744/>

tionship with his first wife, Olga. "I knew he was a man of flesh and blood," says Horák, emphasizing that he didn't set out to make a monument. He explains that he does portray Havel's debauched lifestyle and serial infidelities, contributing to the absurd humor that is an integral part of the film. Yet he insists there is nothing controversial or sensationalistic about the film, which he likes to refer to as a "biodramedy."

The man behind the legacy

Each of the three different historical periods in the film is matched with its own distinctive visual style. Scenes from the '60s, when Havel lived the life of a bohemian playwright, feature the black-and-white look of Czechoslovak New Wave films. Havel's dissident period, in the '70s, is rendered in the colors of domestic films of that era, followed by the grainy aesthetics of period footage as he becomes leader of the revolution in the '80s. Horák explains that the stylization is used in a natural way, implicitly indicating each time period along the way as the story line unfolds.

Picking the right cast was another crucial step. Even when the script was in development, Horák says he still didn't know who would play the leading role. Then he ended up with a roommate in film school who bore an uncanny resemblance to the former president. That roommate, Viktor Dvořák, turned out to be a theatrical actor, and he got the role right after meeting Horák. This will be his first lead role in a film, though coincidentally, he brilliantly portrayed the famed statesman and freedom fighter already in a minor role in Irena Pavlášková's recent film adaptation of the Philip Roth novel *The Prague Orgy*.

Compared to the lead, choosing someone for the role of Havel's wife Olga was easy. "She's exactly Olga's type. No one else even auditioned," says the writer-director of Anna Geislerová. The popular Czech actress recently starred in the glossy political thriller *Amnesty*, revolving around Havel's controversial amnesties shortly after he became president (a period that isn't part of Horák's film).

Principal photography wrapped in late November with the film crew shooting predominantly in Prague. The final



© TVORBA films

scene was also shot in Prague, on the iconic balcony of the Melantrich building on Wenceslas Square, re-created on the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution: November 17. Horák expects to have the final film ready by April 2020, after postproduction work is done, though he says the rough cut is ready.

The writer-director is producing his sophomore project through his own company, TVORBA films, while Czech Television is boarding the project as coproducer as it did on his feature debut. Half of the film's 2.33 million EUR budget comes from the Czech Film Fund (selective support EUR 584,615 and production incentives) and a Creative Europe MEDIA Development grant, with the other half chipped in by private Czech investors who consider the topic important. The film doesn't yet have a sales agent, though it presented as a work-in-progress at Les Arcs 2019 to tempt sales agents and distributors. No pre-sale deals have been pursued either. "We didn't need to do any pre-sales since the film was fully financed," says Horák. He added that he is confident *Havel* will sell itself once released. Domestic release is scheduled for July 2020 by Bontonfilm in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.


Václav Havel was not only a global celebrity, but remains the paramount political leader and hero of the Velvet Revolution. By re-creating the transformation from carefree bohemian to adored national leader, Horák looks at the man, often unruly yet still inspirational, behind the legacy. /



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Ivan Arsenjev: *Variety in My Work Keeps Me Refreshed*

© Irena Vodáková

Screenwriter and script editor Ivan Arsenjev (b. 1961) divides his work among many genres, and likes to see his stories all the way through production, from shooting to editing and beyond. The main thing for him, he says, is working with story. Learning to play the organ was what taught him creative discipline, and whenever he needs a break from writing, he travels around Europe with the Forman Brothers' Theater.

by Vojtěch Rynda

You have several films based on your work in production right now: the animated *My Sunny Maad*, the documentary *Those Who Dance in the Dark*, and the feature film *End of the World*. How do you manage so many different genres?

I guess it's just one of life's coincidences. I like to say I do the pentathlon: narrative film, animation, documentary, theater, and script editing. I enjoy all five and I don't really care which one I happen to be working on. The important things for me are to be able to relate to the topic, the poetics, the people working on the project, and to develop myself professionally. Variety keeps me feeling

refreshed. I'm interested in every part of the production process: shooting, editing, music composition.

Aside from screenwriting, you also work as a script editor.

When I was in college at FAMU, script editing was basically on the same level as screenwriting. Our professor was Vladimír Bor, and every week we would analyze and talk through a text — its components, its structure, characters, themes. Also, you need to be available for the writer to help them figure out what it is they want to say. I see script editing as a craft that was put down as censorship and therefore kind of written off after

1989. It needs to be systematically cultivated again.

As a screenwriter, do you have a set creative method, or does it change from project to project?

It's more about whether it's film or theater. For me, theater is about teamwork. Screenwriting, on the other hand, is lonely work. I'm lucky to have studied organ-playing in conservatory, because music teaches you to sit with things, practicing for hours a day. Otherwise you'll never be able to play anything. I appreciate having learned to put on blinders like a workhorse — sit down at the desk in the morning, start

writing, and not deal with anything else. I remember Woody Allen, who says he has a wonderful job: He makes breakfast, sits down, and makes stuff up. Being able to do that is a gift. And whenever I've been doing a lot of writing, I start looking forward to being back in the theater with people again.

The first time you worked with Petr Forman was on Zdeněk Tyc's film *Vojtěch, Called Orphan*, which at the time didn't receive the praise it deserved.

Naturally, no one was all that interested in a ballad set in South Bohemia in the spring of 1990. For me, though, it was a one-of-a-kind thing. Because it was Zdeněk's graduation film, it brought together our group of classmates, and it was our first big step in filmmaking. We learned a lot from it, we went through a lot of hardship, and it reinforced relationships we still have today. We lived in a village pub on the edge of Suchdol nad Lužnicí, 50 meters from the former schoolhouse where those 14 poor souls from *Shadow Country* were arrested in 1945 and later executed.

You're referring to your screenplay about the dramatic cohabitation of Czechs and Austrians in the border region, which Bohdan Sláma has made into a film. How did you come upon that story?

The film's producer, Martin Růžička, heard about it on the radio. He decided that people needed to know about an event of that importance, and word came to me through some people at the film studio in Zlín. At the time, he didn't know much about how things work in the film industry, but he still somehow managed

to get *Shadow Country* made. I think it maintains that ethos of a powerful story that just has to be filmed.

The Czech premiere of *Shadow Country* will be in September 2020. In the meantime, Michaela Pavlátová is making *My Sunny Maad*, which is something of a rarity in your filmography: an animated film that's an adaptation of a book by Petra Procházková.

It's true, I usually do adaptations only for theater, but I don't mind also doing it for film. It's the same as writing an original screenplay, only instead of collecting material you're reworking another text: deconstructing it, dividing it up into film segments, then rebuilding it into a whole.

It was originally supposed to be a live-action film.

It's the story of a Czech woman — in the original version, she's Russian — who marries an Afghan in Kabul. The situation in Afghanistan wasn't so bad at the time the screenplay was emerging. The director, Radim Špaček, and the cinematographer, David Čálek, who had already made some documentaries there, were determined to do it, but it ended up not being possible for security reasons. I was happy when Michaela took over the screenplay. We've known each other since we were 16.

Did turning it from a live-action into an animated film require major changes?

I had to simplify it, of course, because animated film deals differently with reality, dialogue, and so on. But the main shift was that my screenplay was originally based more on a clash of cultures, while the more important thing



for Michaela was the relationship between the main characters.

You've also taken part in several documentary films by Jana Ševčíková. What is that collaboration like?

With Jana I come in when the footage has already been shot. I don't take part in the shoot, so there is at least one impartial perspective from someone who hasn't met the characters the film is about. Jana and I discuss everything, from the original idea to the sound mix. She's an exceptional filmmaker in that she's truly independent: She doesn't rush, she works on every film for years, and she's vigilant in making sure it's actually "about something" and has true cinematic quality.

What topics does your new film, *Those Who Dance in the Dark*, deal with?

It's a reflection on the fortunes of several young people who are losing or have lost their sight. We examine how they come to terms with this tremendous loss and learn to live again. I'm fascinated by how incredibly strong and full of energy these people are.

The *End of the World* project is in the stage of seeking financing. Director Ivan Zachariáš, known for his commercials and TV series for HBO, is hoping to make his feature film debut based on your screenplay. What's it about?

This is my most personal work, and it's partially autobiographical, set in 1968 and five years later. Writing it was a kind of detoxification after *Shadow Country*, after that heavy story full of terrifying events and evil. *End of the World* is lighter, "a little story about big things," with elements of magic realism.



endorfilm:

Global Arthouse Hits in the Making

Czech production company on a mission to deliver independent auteur films with “added value”

by Martin Kudláč



With 2019 marking the 30th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, Czech and Slovak cinema converged to commemorate this historic milestone. Among the works reflecting the fall of communism and the ensuing three decades of freedom are the fiction features *Amnesty*, by Slovak director Jonáš Karásek, and *Old-Timers*, cowritten and codirected by Czech documentarists Martin Dušek and Ondřej Provozník.

Both films — the first, a glossy political thriller for the younger, multiplex crowd; the second, a revenge road movie subverting the genre while addressing issues of crime, punishment, justice, and aging with a dose of dark humor for the arthouse audience — share the name of Jiří Konečný, a producer with

the Czech independent production outfit endorfilm.

“Challenging and silly”

Konečný is one of those younger Czech producers whose work is known and recognized beyond his home turf. Considering the range of its productions, endorfilm can be labeled “an orthodox arthouse,” with more than 100 international awards and 6 Oscar nominations to its credit. Konečný, the company’s founder and sole producer, says he regards filmmaking as a nonprofit activity for the production of cultural goods. “I choose the path of greater independence and optimized fixed costs so that I can work freely,” Konečný told *Czech Film* magazine, explaining why he rarely takes on

commercial gigs, despite operating in an environment where idealism frequently clashes with pragmatism.

“To combine and fine-tune challenging and silly” is the producer’s motto and the philosophy behind his films. Konečný says he named his company after the euphoria-producing hormone, though it is also a cryptic reference to the motivational ethos of “end-or-film” (and he is also a fan of Ewoks, who come from the planet Endor). The spirit of that attitude is fully captured in *Old-Timers*, as it also was, for example, in *Koza* (2015), a film the producer calls a “wild” weaving together of challenging and silly. At the end of the day, Konečný says, endorfilm’s mission is to produce high-quality films that amount to “cultural goods with added value.”

Discoveries and experiments

Apart from specializing in daring and thought-provoking projects, the company is also a haven for first-time feature-length directors. Careers have launched and swerved under Konečný's tutelage. Olmo Omerzu, the Slovenian-born, Prague-based writer-director, got his start when endorfilm produced his graduation film, *A Night Too Young* (2012), an intimate coming-of-age story. "I don't want to keep on doing the same things; I want to discover new things," says Konečný, explaining his predilection for newcomers.

Tomáš Doruška, Bohdan Sláma, and Pavel Göbl. Other promising domestic talents soon joined the company's ranks, including Vít Pancíř, with *Sister* (2008), based on the novel by famous Czech writer Jáchym Topol; Dagmar Smržová, mapping the life of a schizophrenic in *Story of Mr. Love* (2013); and Pavel Štingl, exploring the history of eugenics in *Eugenic Minds* (2014).

Reflecting the company's weirder side is the absurd tragicomedy *Rail Yard Blues* (2006), codirected by Pavel Göbl and Roman Švejda, while Dan Přibáň's travelogue cycle featuring the notorious

another filmmaker who started her career under endorfilm's wing. Her first feature-length fiction outing, *Made in Ash* (2012), defied formalistic borders, seamlessly fusing fiction, documentary, and animation elements. Konečný then coproduced Grófová's Crystal Bear-winning sophomore feature, *Little Harbour* (2017). The company's roster also includes the debut effort by critically acclaimed Slovak photographer Martin Kollár, *5 October* (2017), an intimate docu-diary cum visual essay.

Nor does endorfilm confine its activities to any particular region. Among the



Koza, the fiction feature debut by established Slovak producer and documentarist Ivan Ostrochovský, fits the endorfilm mold perfectly: a dry comedy-sports docudrama-biography-social realist drama all rolled into one. Balancing on the edge between fact and fiction, while defying the conventions of a boxing drama, *Koza* paid off, reaping awards in Vilnius, Wiesbaden, Brazil, Pula, Warsaw, and Mar del Plata, before ultimately landing in the catalog of Filmatique, a VOD streaming platform dedicated to discovering and curating new talents in world cinema for U.S. and Canadian audiences.

The very first production on endorfilm's bill was *Riedgost* (2002), a feature-length triptych about alienation and disillusion, by the young Czech directors

East German Trabant automobile — *Trabant vs. South America* (2014), *Trabant: From Australia to Bangkok* (2016), and *Trabant: There and Back Again* (2019) — also stands out as a deviation from endorfilm's trademark product. Konečný admits this widely popular series is the antithesis of "a festival film," but says audiences took it as a genre film with, again, "added value." Eventually, the Trabant films found their way into the local catalog of the streaming giant Netflix.

Konečný also maintains warm professional ties with neighboring Slovakia, having coproduced *Out*, an ambitious project by promising talent Györgi Kristóf. A social realist East European road movie with an absurdist bent, *Out* premiered in Un Certain Regard on La Croisette. Iveta Grófová is

foreign projects Konečný has taken on is *Aferim!* (2015), a tragicomic drama on the taboo subject of Roma slavery in 19th-century Romania. This critically lauded work by the leading figure of the Romanian New Wave, Radu Jude, was the first collaboration between the Czech Republic and Romania. *Aferim!* became the most-seen Romanian film the year it was released, and won 13 Gopos, the Romanian national film awards. This collaborative success continued with Jude's next intriguing project, *I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians* (2018), the Crystal Globe-winning black comedy selected as Romania's nomination to the 91st Academy Awards. And the cherry to top it all off is Hungarian director Gyula Nemes's anarchistic caricature, *Zero*, starring the cult actor Udo Kier.

INTRODUCING

ENDORFILM

Amnesty



Koza



Artist and producer

Konečný is in the filmmaking business for the long run, and prefers working on projects that last a long time. The first of the two writer-directors in his inner circle is Olmo Omerzu. After Omerzu's *A Night Too Young*, the creative team finished his *Family Film* (2015), a coming-of-age drama defying preconceived notions about the genre while including an episode of canine

the Czech film industry, saying, "It is more than just a professional partnership, and is more of a long-term camaraderie — the coupling of two artists, two personalities."

This also points to why Konečný is not fixated on hitting box-office numbers, but instead on high-quality productions that make a lasting impression. If a film is good, it will find an audience—that is his working assumption. Ultimately, he says, his desire is to make "a global hit" on the scale of Pawel Pawlikowski's *Cold War* — a major feat for any small-country cinema.

Meanwhile Erika Hníková, the other writer-director in endorfilm's inner circle, has returned to Slovakia (where she made her previous documentary, *Matchmaking Mayor* [2010], with Konečný) to shoot her latest project, *Every Single Minute*, about Kamevéda (Complex Multidevelopmental Education for Children), an educational method designed to produce "world champions." As in her previous endorfilm-produced docufeature, *The Beauty Exchange* (2004), again Hníková explores the big questions — this time about parents, their offspring, and family values.

Also in the works from endorfilm is *This Is Havel Speaking, Can You Hear Me?*, a documentary by Petr Jančárek mapping the last two years in the life of the revered playwright and statesman Václav Havel. And last but not least on Konečný's busy schedule is a new feature by Ondřej Provozník of *Old-Timers*: Currently in in the development stage, the sibling drama *The Choirmaster* addresses the sensitive and widespread issue of sexual abuse of adolescents by powerful men. /

Near future and new chapter

The year 2019 marks Konečný's two-decade anniversary as an independent producer. He describes it as the end of endorfilm's first chapter as he prepares to digitalize all the projects they've produced and rethink the company's conceptual direction before entering the new chapter. But this doesn't mean a slowdown in pace.

Shooting on Omerzu's next film, *Admin*, gets underway in January 2020 — again, an international coproduction, with Slovakia, Slovenia, and Germany. But this time Omerzu leaves behind the world of adolescents in favor of adult topics, as *Admin*, a drama underlaid with irony, revolves around the generation gap, globalization, cybercrime, and the stark confrontation between pragmatism and romanticism.

Robinsonade (Bryan Singer noted that he had never before seen such an impressive performance by a dog). Their most recent project, *Winter Flies* (2018), is yet another multilayered drama with child protagonists, and has been widely lauded.

Karel Och, director of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, cites the Konečný-Omerzu team as a particularly successful example of collaboration in

Aferim!



Trabant: There and Back Again





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Zatopek:

Both Crafty Joker and Self-destructive Workhorse

Director, screenwriter, and producer David Ondříček is preparing a new film, portraying legendary Czechoslovak runner and Olympic champion Emil Zátopek.

by Pavel Sladký

David Ondříček, son of legendary cinematographer Miroslav Ondříček, made his debut in 1996 with the film *Whisper*, and first captured attention, both at home and abroad, with *Loners* in 2000. Though his early works focused mainly on contemporary topics, more recently he's made the 1950s crime film *In the Shadow* and a historical drama about a mining accident, titled *Dukla 61*. His latest project is a biographical drama about one of the greatest figures in the history of Czech (and Czechoslovak) sports — someone who, as the magazine *Runner's World* has pointed out, is regarded as a figure who revolutionized athletics on a worldwide level.

An audience-friendly film — and not only for sports fans “To me, Emil Zátopek is an extremely colorful personality who is hard to pin down. On the one hand, he was

a cheerful, seemingly carefree guy, a mischievous prankster with an unusually high-pitched voice. At the same time, he was an absolutely extraordinary man, a self-destructive workhorse with a tremendous will and desire for victory,” says Ondříček of the holder of 18 world records and three gold medals from a single Olympics.

It was in Helsinki, in 1952, that Zátopek created a sensation by winning the 5,000 meters, 10,000 meters, and the marathon. Not only that, but his wife, Dana Zátopková, won the gold medal in javelin throw at the same Olympics, making them one of the most famous sports couples in history.

In preparing to make the film, Ondříček also consulted with Zátopková, who turned 97 this year. “I had the

IN PRODUCTION

ZATOPEK

opportunity to spend a lot of time with her. I read the handwritten copy of her book and spoke with her a lot about Emil and their amazing life. But I didn't give her the script to read."

Ondříček spent seven years preparing for the film and only got down to shooting after several delays with the screenplay, which he wrote in collaboration with well-known Czech musician Jan P. Muchow and screenwriter and director Alice Nellis (*Some Secrets, Wasteland*, etc.).

"Alice Nellis and director David Ondříček succeeded in writing a very impressive, lifelike portrait of a phenomenal Czech athlete. Zatopek is an audience-friendly film, even if it doesn't avoid unpleasant themes or simplify anything. I think it will appeal to both those who want to be proud of the famous Olympic champion and those interested in the political and romantic background of his accomplishments," says producer Helena Uldrichová of Czech Television.

Shooting on the project began in April 2019 at old Czech athletic stadiums in Louny, Březnice near Příbram, and Brno. "Originally, we hoped to shoot at the stadium in Helsinki, but unfortunately it's under reconstruction. The Brno stadium is in disrepair, so we could adjust it to our liking," says the director. He adds that they were also filming in Slovakia.

Decades of a life

The famous Czech runner is often credited with saying, "When you can't go any further, go harder." Ondříček says: "He fulfilled a lot of dreams and became a hope for lots of people all over the world. He became a symbol of the idea that anyone can fulfill their dreams if they pursue them with purpose."



Director David Ondříček (right) with James Frecheville

© Lucky Man Films



Although the movie doesn't cover Zatopek's entire life, it does span several periods, the main one being the critical year of 1968. But the director says he doesn't want to reveal any more about that just yet. "Let's just say the final version of the film is less about sports and more about politics. It doesn't tell a linear story, narrated from his birth to his successes. It has a more sophisticated framework."

Previously, Ondříček had already made an hour-long documentary about Zatopek for the public broadcaster, Czech Television, and this played a major role in development of the feature film. "I met a lot of people who knew Zatopek personally. I was in Finland and spent time in places connected with the legendary 1952 Olympics. I was at the stadium, on the marathon track, in the Olympic village. Most of Emil and Dana's contemporaries remembered them with tears in their eyes," recalls Ondříček. "After completing the documentary, I had a very real feeling that Emil was my friend. And when we're shooting, he's looking over my shoulder, being a back-seat driver."

Four years of training and rehearsals

For the movie, Zatopek, whose face is recognizable to many people, and not just sports fans, is portrayed by Václav Neuzil, a theater and film actor well known to Czech audiences. He also appeared in the films *Anthropoid* and *Toman*, and worked with Ondříček on *In the Shadow*. According to the director, the process of preparing the actors for this project was very long and intense.



© Lucky Man Films

“Let’s just say the final version of the film is less about sports and more about politics. It doesn’t tell a linear story, narrated from his birth to his successes. It has a more sophisticated framework.”

“Václav Neužil has delivered incredibly. He’s been running intensively for four years now and has lost eight kilograms to reach Emil’s actual weight in 1952. Under the guidance of coach Jan Pernica, he runs dozens of kilometers a week. Plus he’s read everything there is about Zátapek. And Martha Issová (as his wife Dana) has approached it the same way.”

“Our goal was for me to run the real racing times,” says Neužil. “I didn’t train for the marathon or other long distances, but for pace. For example, we shot stretches of 400 meters, which, thanks to intensive interval training — which is actually something that Zátapek came up with — I was able to run at the same speed as he did.”

Over the course of his work on the film, Neužil has gained a lot of insight into the man he plays: “Emil was a quirky fellow with a lot inside him. I noticed that whether people were disparaging him or singing his praises, everyone agreed that people felt good in his presence. He was one-

of-a-kind: a selfish man, in a way, who never let anyone coax him into doing anything he didn’t feel like doing. Even his memories from his school days attest to that,” says the lead actor of his character. “He was shrewd. For example, during races he would talk a lot to his competitors, and to this day nobody knows for sure if it was just a tactic or a natural expression of his personality. Either way, I see Zátapek as a sensitive and intelligent person who was apolitical at a very politically charged time. He made a few mistakes in life, but he just wanted to run, and certainly didn’t want to hurt anyone. He discovered that running allowed him to be free inside.”

Neužil says he believes the film will be entertaining even for moviegoers who have no interest in sports. “That has been one of our goals on the shoot. *Zátapek* will be a sports film, but not only that,” he promises.

Of the foreign actors, director Ondříček has special praise for Australian James Frecheville, who plays his compatriot Ron Clarke, an Australian long-distance runner and admirer of Zátapek’s. Clark himself set 17 official world records on tracks, from 2 miles to 20,000 meters, but never became an Olympic champion. “Working with James Frecheville has been amazing. Jimmy knows how to make fun of himself, and prepared for the role obsessively.”

Zátapek to take off at 2020 Olympics in Tokyo

Zátapek is being produced through Lucky Man Films by the director himself with Kryštof Mucha, who among other things is the executive director of the Karlovy Vary Film Festival. The Czech coproducers are Czech Television, Z Films, and Barrandov Studio, and the Slovak coproducer is Azyl Production. The filmmakers are also working in cooperation with the Czech Olympic Committee. “The film’s budget isn’t completely finalized, but at the moment it’s a little over EUR 3.9 million,” notes Ondříček. The film is slated to premiere this year at the time of the Olympic Games in Tokyo. /



David Ondříček and Václav Neužil on the set

© Lucky Man Films

MEDIA Support Helps Take the Pressure Off, *Producers Say*

In 2019, eight Czech productions received a total of EUR 260,000 in support from the MEDIA development single projects program. The projects included feature films, documentaries, and TV series. The first of them is set to premiere in July 2020.

by Vojtěch Rynda

The project closest to premiering is the feature film *Havel*, by screenwriter, director, and producer Slávek Horák, whose previous movie, *Home Care*, earned him a spot on Variety's "10 Directors to Watch" list. Horák tells the story framed by the August 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the November 1989 "Velvet Revolution," thus showing Václav Havel in his dissident period, before his election as Czechoslovak president.

"For me personally, Havel is the biggest Czech topic there is. [His story] is so archetypal — an outsider's fight for freedom — that resonates all over the world," Horák says. "Add to that the absurd Czech humor and sadness, and you've got an original, fresh look at a classic theme."

"MEDIA support allowed me to finish the screenplay in peace and negotiate with potential coproducers and sales agents

from the position of a producer whose development is already financed, so I'm not pushed into disadvantageous contracts due to financial constraints," says Horák, whose own company, TVORBA films, is producing the film.

Havel was selected for the Work in Progress section of the 2019 Les Arcs Film Festival, where initial negotiations with potential foreign vendors, distributors, and festivals began. The Czech premiere is slated for July 16, 2020.

In late summer 2020, *Martin and the Forest Secret*, by director Petr Oukropec (*Blue Tiger*, 2012) and screenwriter Kateřina Kačerovská, is set for completion. "The film is intended for children and families and continues the tradition of Czechoslovak family films from the 1970s and '80s," says Peter Badač of BFILM.cz, the producer behind the festival success of *Filthy*, *Pandas*, and *The Kite*. *Martin and the Forest Secret*,

a Czech-Polish-German-Slovak coproduction, combines live action with 2D and 3D animation to tell the story of a spoiled 11-year-old boy named Martin who learns independence and friendship at a summer camp in the woods. Foreign sales are being handled by LevelK.

Jan Šimánek and Petr Záruba's documentary *Adam Ondra: Pushing the Limits* follows the world's top climber on the road to a new challenge: the August 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, where sports climbing will be among the competition disciplines for the first time. Šimánek and Záruba's film is an intimate portrait of an athlete immersed in his performance and nature, but also observes the commercial pressures involved. Shooting began as a Czech-Italian coproduction at the end of November and will end a month after the games, with the festival premiere set for early 2021. As part of its development, the project participated in the East Doc Market in Prague.

"MEDIA's support has helped us to expand our development, including pre-production, with the aim of producing an audiovisual demonstration for future film presentations and preparatory work on the distribution, marketing, and crowdfunding campaign," says Alice Tabery of the Czech production company Cinepoint.

The documentary *A Marriage* has been in development since spring 2017, when director and producer Kateřina Hager of Bohemian Productions joined forces with Pakistani filmmaker Assad Faruqi (a 2019 Emmy-award winner for his documentary

A Marriage



Armed With Faith). *A Marriage* tells the story of a wheelchair-using Czech woman, Zdenka, and her Pakistani husband, Tabish, whose relationship began through the online computer game *Farmville*. Their virtual communication evolved into a marriage that Czech officials nonetheless considered contrived. The project went through the pitching forums at MEDIMED, East Doc Platform, and EBU and is now preparing for the dok.incubator program. The creators are hoping for a world premiere at the Berlinale or CPH:DOX in 2021.

Human Beeing, a documentary directed by Kristýna Bartošová, focuses on “The Honey Men,” two amateur beekeepers from Brno whose bees fail to survive two winters in a row. It soon becomes clear it isn’t only the bees that are dying; it’s also something in us. *Human Beeing* is a reflection on modern humans losing their relationship to nature and themselves. “We’ve been developing the film since 2016, so we’re in the second half,” says producer Hana Blaha Šilarová of Frame Films. “MEDIA support has helped us do more extensive research, more location scouting, and negotiate coproduction agreements and broadcasting rights.” The film should be ready by spring of 2022.

Another documentary, *Happily Ever After* is headed for a festival premiere in autumn 2022. The Punk Film production follows six pairs of “different forms of 21st-century love,” including polyamory, open relationships, relationships with married partners, and love on the Internet. Director Jana Počtová also looked at relationships in her previous documentaries, *Generation Singles* and *Non-Parent*. Casting is almost complete and shooting will begin in June 2020.



© Cinepoint

Adam Ondra: Pushing the Limits

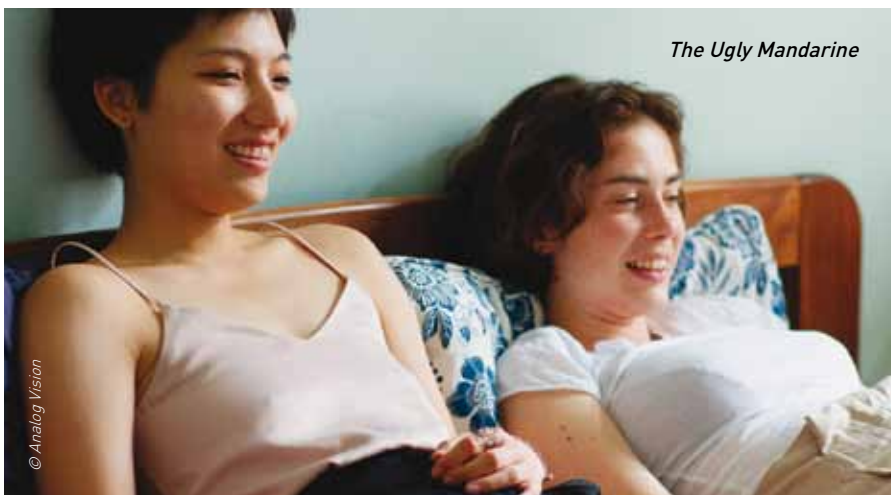
Czech projects supported in the Development Single Projects scheme in 2019 (call EACEA/22/2018)

company	webpage	project	amount [EUR]
BFILM.cz	www.bfilm.cz	Martin and the Forest Secret	30 000
TVORBA films	www.tvorbafilms.cz	Havel	50 000
Bohemian Productions	www.bohemian-productions.cz	A Marriage	25 000
Cinepoint	www.cinepoint.cz	Adam Ondra: Pushing the Limits	25 000
Analog Vision	analog.vision	The Ugly Mandarin	30 000
Evolution Films	www.evolutionfilms.cz	Dorotka	50 000
Frame Films	www.framefilms.cz	Human Beeing	25 000
Punk Film	www.punkfilm.cz	Happily Ever After	25 000
TOTAL		8	260 000

An unusual relationship is also at the center of *The Ugly Mandarin*. This feature debut by Chinese director and FAMU graduate Piaoyu Xie is the story of a love triangle: Yiou, a Chinese sculptor, will have to leave Prague unless she can get a residence permit. But then she falls in love — with someone else who’s leaving. Meanwhile, the Slovak doctor Greta falls in love with Yiou and is prepared to pretend to be her partner in order to get Yiou a visa. The planned Czech-Taiwanese-French coproduction

is being produced on the Czech side by Veronika Kührová of Analog Vision who also worked on the films *David* by Jan Těšitel and the recently released documentary *Kiruna – A Brand New World* by Greta Stocklassa. Filming should take place in 2021.

The titular heroine of *Dorotka*, an adventurous family series with a touch of sci-fi and mystery thrown in, is an 11-year-old girl who has moved with her parents from the capital to the countryside and found a special radio — in fact, an advanced artificial intelligence that can make human wishes come true. But all Dorotka wants is for her dad to come home from his job in Egypt. The story, set in the countryside around Slovakia’s Orava Dam, emphasizes childhood friendship and the yearning for discovery and, according to producer Pavel Berčík of Evolution Films, it aims to get children off their tablets and computers and out into the great outdoors.



The Ugly Mandarin

© Analog Vision

Czechs Prep for Shooting on **Haunted** Season 3

© Julie Vabelová, Courtesy of Milk and Honey Pictures.

As the worldwide flood of serial productions continues, many shows have filmed or are filming in the Czech Republic, including such major companies as Amazon Studios (*Carnival Row*, *Lore*, *The Wheel of Time*), Netflix (*The Letter for the King*, *Freud*, *Haunted*), the BBC (*World on Fire*), the History Channel (*Knightfall*), and Sky (*Das Boot*).

Das Boot and *Knightfall* have already shot two seasons here, while shooting on season two of Amazon's *Carnival Row* is currently underway and Netflix has commissioned the third season of *Haunted* to be shot in the Czech Republic in the spring.



© Julie Vabelová, Courtesy of Milk and Honey Pictures.

Czech professionals have worked on all these series, but *Haunted* is different in that it was filmed not only using an almost entirely local crew but also under a Czech director. Given that every episode has its own flavor, *Haunted's* producers didn't want to stick with just one director, and originally Netflix commissioned Jan Pavlacký to direct just the two first episodes. In the end, though, he directed all six episodes of seasons one and two, and has been tapped to direct the third, due to start shooting in spring 2020.

"The fact that Netflix decided to continue with season two, and then produce a third season, is a great success, given how many series are being shot these days. The filming itself was a big challenge, especially due to the diversity of settings where the stories take place. In the Czech Republic, we shot scenes set in Afghanistan, Mexico, and many places in the United States. For me personally, the combination of local and foreign actors,

cast mainly in London, was quite interesting. They worked really well in collaboration with local acting talents,” says Pavlacký about the shoot.

Haunted was developed and is being produced by the U.S. company Propagate, with Jordan Roberts as showrunner. Producing on the Czech side is Milk and Honey Pictures, led by Tomáš Krejčí, Radomír Dočekal, and Alessio Spinelli. The first season, which premiered October 19, 2018, was filmed in the Czech Republic from February 5 to March 4, 2018; the second season was shot here a year later (May 16 to June 6) and premiered October 11, 2019.



© Julie Vrabelová. Courtesy of Milk and Honey Pictures.

“I’ve had the great pleasure of producing two series and one pilot in the Czech Republic. The creative vision was always realized, supported with passion, expertise, and professionalism. It has been a top-notch partnership and experience,” says showrunner Jordan Roberts.

In addition to Jan Pavlacký as director, Czechs held most of the HoD positions in the 90-member production crew. Among them were production designer Martin Martinec, DOPs Marek Dvořák (first season) and Dušan Husár (second season), and costume designers Josef Čechota and Dagmar Pomajbíková (seasons one and two, respectively).

“We filmed at locations in Prague and Central Bohemia, while the studio scenes were created at Prague Studios,” says Krejčí of Milk and Honey. “It’s great that we’ve shown we can make an internationally successful series here, using almost exclusively local people. And *Haunted* has opened the door for us to cooperate on other projects.”



© Julie Vrabelová. Courtesy of Milk and Honey Pictures.



Director Jan Pavlacký

© Julie Vrabelová. Courtesy of Milk and Honey Pictures.

FILM COMMISSION INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTIONS

Haunted is an anthology series combining reality with the chilling tension of classic horror as people recall dramatic experiences accompanied by supernatural phenomena. It’s kind of a pseudo reality-TV show, with people’s terrifying stories re-created through chilling reenactments. Intended mainly for the U.S. market, each season begins streaming during the All Souls’ Day/Halloween period. Each individual episode, running 19 to 31 minutes in length, has its own closed storyline.

For example, viewers can experience the story of a boy born under special circumstances who grows up believing that he and his family are being followed by an evil character he calls “The Hangman.” In another episode, a girl hears her roommates’ voices in an old house with a dark past, even though they’re not there. And in another episode, an old well in the basement connects a boy with the ghosts of three children, who beg him to come down and play with them.

“As in almost every proper horror movie, we used a lot of make-up effects. Our SFX make-up designer Josef Rarach, for example, is at the top of his field worldwide — as are all the locals in leading positions who we’ve had the opportunity to engage,” says Krejčí. “Czechs are incredibly creative, and differ from filmmakers in other countries not only in their skills but also in their creativity and their readiness to resolve any situation, no matter what the requirements.”



© Julie Vrabelová. Courtesy of Milk and Honey Pictures.

FILM COMMISSION

REGIONAL FILM OFFICES



Vysočina: a Fairy-tale Land

in the Heart of the Czech Republic

Vysočina: The name means “highlands,” and nearly every peak in this region so full of mysterious beauty offers filmmakers unique cinematic settings and views.



alongside picturesque country villages, castles and chateaux of various sizes and architectural styles, and monumental monasteries — not to mention industrial locations, which these days are highly sought after by filmmakers.”

“Hardly any region in the country is as photogenic as Vysočina and offers as many opportunities for panoramic shots of Czech landscapes,” she adds.

functioning glassworks, and a historic brewery that has received architectural awards for its sensitive reconstruction,” says Králová, adding that for her personally, Vysočina is especially ideal for fairy tales: “There are new fairy tales made here every year — though in 2019 there were more horrors and criminal series shot here,” she adds.

The Film Office operates under the regional tourism board Vysočina Tourism, which in 2019 launched a major marketing campaign called *Vysočina in Film*. That campaign included a special app for editing photos of film locations, and a film-themed game for visitors about famous and lesser-known film locations.

What else does the Film Office have planned? “We definitely will be cooperating more closely with the Ji. hlava International Documentary Film Festival, which is the largest film event in our region and among the largest documentary festivals in Europe. And while we have already organized small annual location tours for their industry visitors, we hope to do much more at the festival,” Králová says. /

The Vysočina Region is in the heart of the Czech Republic, and many of its most interesting sites are just an hour’s drive from Prague. The area features pristine nature interspersed with fertile fields and picturesque small towns — including Telč, a Renaissance pearl, and Třebíč, which has one of the most extensive preserved Jewish quarters in Europe (and the only Jewish monument outside of Israel listed in the UNESCO Register).

“Filmmakers often associate our region just with Třebíč and Telč. We aim to show them how much more we have to offer,” says Michaela Králová of the Vysočina Film Office. “There are many wonderful natural settings and phenomena,

The region’s expansive views are ideal for a variety of genres and stories. Among the international productions were two horror films: *It Becomes Her* (Australia), whose crew spent several weeks in the region, and *Devil* (USA), plus the Czech fairy tale *Princess Lost in Time* and scenes for the Czech TV Nova crime series *Dáma & Král*.

The Vysočina Film Office organizes an annual location tour for filmmakers in cooperation with the Czech Film Commission, during which it presents many interesting film-friendly, yet little-known locations.

“For example, we recently introduced the Úsobí chateau, as well as an old but still

Fund Director **Remains** in Office

Helena Bezděk Fraňková will remain in place as director of the Czech Film Fund for another six-year term. She was reappointed at the end of last year by Minister of Culture Lubomír Zaorálek following a selection procedure.



Helena Bezděk Fraňková with producer Rick McCallum during the shooting of Shadowplay in the former brewery in Lenešice

The 44-year-old manager has run the fund since its transformation in 2013. She has worked in the film industry practically since the end of the 1990s. She also has experience from the Ministry of Culture, where she led the Media and Audiovisual Department for four years. Helena Bezděk Fraňková not only oversaw the rebirth of the fund in its current form but also helped bring about the Audiovisual Act and the film incentives program, thanks to which film crews shooting in the Czech Republic brought nearly nine billion crown into the local economy in 2019, the greatest amount since that parameter has been monitored.

Fund Council under new management

The new chairwoman of the Council of the Czech Film Fund is Helena Bendová. She was elected in autumn of 2019. The new chairwoman has years of experience in academic and university settings, she has authored numerous film monographs, and has also worked as editor-in-chief of film magazines and taken part in the programming of film

festivals. She is no new face to the council but has been a member since the times of the "old" fund. Filmmakers and producers had the opportunity to meet her as the new chairwoman at the Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival where the Czech Film Fund organized regular Happy Hours – informal informative meetings. Helena Bendová says that under her chairmanship the council will seek even greater diversity and variety of film projects than it has until now. The fund council also has also elected a new vice-chairwoman, Marta Švecová. The Council of the Czech Film Fund supports cinema as a comprehensive cultural industry, including for phases of development and distribution. It also supports festivals, projects fostering Czech cinema, and the activities of film institutions. It sets both short and long-term strategies for cinema in the Czech Republic. The nine councilors are elected from the ranks of respected figures in cinematography by the lower house of Parliament at the behest of the Ministry of Culture. Candidates are proposed to the ministry by professional and industry organizations or schools and universities with film departments. A third of the council is changed each year.

Incentives system receives a one-time financial injection

In November, the system of film incentives received a financial injection from the state budget. This came in response to massive pressure from filmmakers interested in shooting in the Czech Republic. The film incentives budget had been exhausted in mid-2019, forcing the Czech Film Fund to stop accepting requests to register new film projects for several months. After intensive meetings between the fund and representatives of the Audiovisual Producers' Association with the Czech prime minister, the minister of finance, and the minister of culture, the crisis was successfully resolved. The system received one-time supplementary financing of 500 million crowns from the state budget, averting the threat of an exodus of foreign film crews. /



Films to Come



Films to Come

Selected new Czech feature films in development, production, post-production or ready for release.

For more information please contact us at info@filmcenter.cz.

IN DEVELOPMENT

Adam East & Rebecca West

2ND FILM

Oľha's concept of this film loosely follows on from his well-regarded *New Life* (2012, MFDF Jihlava, Hot Docs Toronto). The key subjects remain the family, fatherhood and taking on social roles in the wider cultural context. Adam is a Slovak filmmaker and bohemian, his partner, Rebecca, a well-brought-up young lady from a wealthy area of Milan. They live in several European places between which they constantly 'commute' with their two daughters and ever-increasing quantity of things. And, in the meantime, at all cost they attempt to pursue their work, stay true to their ideals and love each other. The resulting film is an intimate road movie which goes right to the limit of a family type of film.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Adam East & Rebecca West

runtime: 70 min

estimated release: December 2020

director: Adam Oľha

produced by: Klára Žaloudková – Background Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Arterlia (SK)

Brothers

In October 1953, five friends decide to leave communist Czechoslovakia and get to West Berlin. They manage to cross the guarded border but are soon detected in East German territory. Unknowingly, they initiate the largest armed manoeuvre since WW2; twenty thousand German Police and Soviet Army members are mobilised, all because of five teenage boys. After an extensive hunt, two group members are caught and, after extradition to Czechoslovakia, executed. In the following week, with no shelter, food or rest, the remaining three, the Mašín brothers and their injured friend Milan Paumer, finally make it to West Berlin. They save themselves but the regime will have its vengeance on their families.

FICTION

original title: Bratři

runtime: 100 min

estimated release: October 2021

director: Tomáš Mašín

produced by: Petr Bílek – FilmBrigade (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), Rohfilm Productions (DE), PubRes (SK)

Dustzone

2ND FILM

In a mysterious district in the middle of present-day Prague, time has stopped in the 19th century. Electronic devices and electricity have never worked in Dustzone, but one day, this anomaly starts to spread to the whole city. And three children, George, En and Tony, are the only ones who can stop the disaster from happening. Film is based on the bestselling Czech book of the same name by Vojtěch Matocha and is planned as the first part of a trilogy.

FICTION

original title: Prašina

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: December 2021

director: Štěpán Fok Vodrážka

produced by: Vratislav Štajer – Bionaut (CZ)

Human Beeing

2ND FILM

The relationship between people and bees is one of the best mapped phenomena in human history. In most cultures, the honeybee was considered a sacred animal and enjoyed great respect. Today, due to our irresponsible interventions in nature, it is facing extinction. Together with Honeymen, two amateur beekeepers from Brno, we set out to search for an answer to how to save the bees. However, it soon becomes clear that it is not only the bees that are dying; it is also something in us. *Human Beeing* is a reflection upon modern humans losing their relationship both to nature and to themselves.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Human Beeing

runtime: 78 min

estimated release: February 2021

director: Kristýna Bartošová

produced by: Hana Blaha Šilarová – Frame Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Magicláb (CZ), Bystrouška (CZ), FAMU (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

IN DEVELOPMENT

It's Not Moscow Here!

The film's main protagonist, Vitaly (40), is a nuclear physicist by education, and bricklayer and cabin repairman by profession. Above that, he is also a hardcore swimmer, extreme athlete and a holder of numerous records in winter swimming. From the biological perspective, swimming in icy water makes him a superhuman; he can stay almost an hour in 2 degrees cold water.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Tady nejste v Moskvě
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: September 2021
director: Filip Remunda
produced by: Filip Remunda, Vít Klusák – Hypermarket Film (CZ)
in co-production with: Ventana Film (DE), Peter Kerekes Film (SK), Czech Television (CZ)

Little Daughter

Vladimír is in his sixties. He has lived in one place all his life and devoted himself to build a family business, which went bankrupt recently. In order to maintain his family, Vladimír takes a job of personal driver in the family of a successful entrepreneur - to drive their daughter, 16-year-old Sofie, to and from school. Her parents have recently moved back to their homeland, from where Sofie's father manages his prosperous business. During her life, Sofie has been forced to change her home several times and she speaks several foreign languages better than Czech. She is uprooted, lonely and given her parents' nomadic way of life, she has never felt at home anywhere. Two different people are brought together under these circumstances.

FICTION

original title: Dceruška
runtime: 110 min
estimated release: 2022
director: Jan Hřebejk
produced by: Luboš Kučera, Max Funda – Actress Film (CZ)

Polaris

1ST FILM

Dan, a Czech living in Munich, leaves his wife and his child in the middle of the night without explanation to head to the city of Cheb, where a tragic fire at the Polaris hostel has recently broken out. His intention is to write an article disentangling the background of racial hatred; however, it slowly gets out of hand. During his search in the tragedy-struck city, Dan meets up with his ex-colleagues that are journalists, as well as residents, and unwittingly gets involved with the underworld. During an unsuccessful effort to come up with something, Dan gradually realizes that he came to Cheb for himself rather than for the article.

FICTION

original title: Polárka
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: August 2022
director: Tomáš Janáček
produced by: Mikuláš Novotný – Background Films (CZ)

The End of the World

Vladimír Bača, Czech representative of the Flat Earth Movement, sets off to visit a conference in Dallas to meet the members of the American Flat Earth association. There, he will strive to make it onto the list of people who will try to write to the history by sailing to the Edge of the World. This film doesn't attempt to present the most bizarre conspiracy theories. The ship sailing out onto the high sea is a symbol of the world looking for truth. The film won't try to persuade anyone about the correct shape of the world. Instead, it maps today's society, drowning in the endless possibilities, flood of information and losing its trust in the system.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Konec Světa
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: March 2022
director: Barbora Chalupová
produced by: Radovan Sírtr – PINK (CZ)

The Visitors

2ND FILM

The young anthropologist Zdenka arrives with her family in the Svalbard archipelago to live there for two years, in order to study and understand how life changes in the polar regions. Her stay in the High Arctic soon becomes a story of seeking a perfect home and of the attempts at affecting the peculiar place in which not only the icebergs and permafrost, but also the diverse human community, are vanishing.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Návštěvníci
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: March 2022
director: Veronika Lišková
produced by: Kristýna Michálek Květová – Cinémotif Films (CZ)

Waves

Czechoslovakia, 1968. The police brutally break up a student march, but it's clear the ice is beginning to thaw in totalitarian Czechoslovakia. Tomáš he (30) is the son of political prisoners. With his father dead and his mother somewhere in the West, takes care of his younger brother Pavel. He does not want Pavel to get involved in any pro-democracy movements, but Tomáš is himself recruited under strange circumstances to the international section of Czechoslovak Radio, headed by Milan Weiner, the leading light in the endeavour to reach greater freedom in the country. Tomáš has to collaborate with the secret police, without his colleagues being aware of it.

FICTION

original title: Vlny
runtime: 120 min
estimated release: November 2021
director: Jiří Mádln
produced by: Monika Kristl – Dawson Films (CZ)



A Colorful Dream

A troupe of travelling performers lands on an island governed by a despotic ruler with strict police control. When, during their performance, a shot fired from circus cannon goes astray, it triggers a series of unexpected events. A young man and woman, Drin and Tuvi, and Nathan the seagull enter into an uneven struggle with totalitarian power. A struggle which eventually changes the fates of all the island inhabitants – both human and feathered.

ANIMATION

original title: Barevný sen
runtime: 72 min
estimated release: July 2020
director: Jan Balej
produced by: Jan Balej – Hafan Film [CZ]



Adam Ondra: Pushing the Limits

Born in 1993, Adam Ondra was a child prodigy and has become the "Mozart of climbing". Since his early childhood, he has astonished the world with his performance in climbing, pushing the limits of human abilities. Having conquered the world's most difficult route in 2017, Adam is getting ready for a new challenge: The Summer Olympics in 2020 in Tokyo, where sport climbing is recognised as an Olympic sport for the first time. Despite the initial befuddlement for its format – a sort of championship that mixes totally different disciplines, including speed, lead and bouldering – Adam wants to live up to his reputation: be the best climber in the world and win the first ever Olympic gold.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Adam Ondra: posunout hranice
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: December 2020
director: Jan Šimánek, Petr Záruba
produced by: Alice Tabery – Cinepoint [CZ]
in co-production with: Jump Cut (IT), Czech Television [CZ]



Breaking Point

Trapped in a marriage with the cold-hearted Robert, Catherine has long been determined to leave. The situation reaches breaking point when Robert returns from a business trip and catches her cheating. For Catherine, this finally marks the beginning of the end, but Robert refuses to let her go. Everything changes when Robert has a car accident in which he and their daughter Sarah are badly injured. Little does he know that this is where his story will intertwine with that of Viktor, a mentally retarded boy whose abusive mother dies in the same car accident. In Robert's wallet, Viktor finds a photograph of Catherine, and his sick mind hatches a mad plan: Catherine should pay for his mother's death.

FICTION

original title: Hrana zlomu
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: November 2020
director: Emil Křížka
cast: Štěpán Kozub
produced by: Vratislav Šlajer, Jakub Košťál – Bionaut [CZ]



Every Single Minute

Twenty years ago, Pavel Zacha decided he would raise his newborn son to be a top athlete. A day after his son was born, Zacha started training him using his own sophisticated method which he called Kameveda [a Czech acronym for "comprehensive multifaceted child rearing practice"]. He has dedicated every single minute to this goal and eventually his plan succeeded. Today Pavel Zacha Jr. plays hockey in the NHL. Dozens of other couples around the world also raise their kids in accordance with Kameveda principles and Zacha helps them as their mentor. This documentary explores the efforts of one family of Kameveda followers and offers a reflection on whether and to what extent we should plan out our kids' lives.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Každá minuta života
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: September 2020
director: Erika Hníková
produced by: Jiří Konečný – endorfilm [CZ]
in co-production with: Punkchart films (SK)



Occupation

Socialist Czechoslovakia. A group of actors meet in a bar after performing a play inspired by the life of Julius Fučík, a communist journalist executed by the Nazis. The evening is disrupted by the arrival of a Russian officer, who starts terrorising the group, professing his power over them. He targets Vladimír whom he humiliates in front of everyone, disappearing inside of the theatre. The actors start blaming each other for not standing up. When the Russian is not returning, Petr who played a Nazi officer in the performance, announces that he found him lying in the boiler room with his head injured – apparently, Petr's costume freaked him out. Vladimír uses the opportunity and beats the Russian unconscious. They are now trapped and decide to kill him as the enemy. But who will do it?

FICTION

original title: Okupace
runtime: 70 min
estimated release: January 2021
director: Michal Nohejl
cast: Martin Pechlát
produced by: Julie Žáčková, Jan Hlavsa – Unit and Sofa Praha [CZ]

FILMS TO COME

IN PRODUCTION



One More Question

A generation of educated Roma reveal why they left their homes in Central Europe, and what they found in England. With the decision of Great Britain to leave the EU, they now face new challenges and tensions in their lives as they try to work out where they belong. Roma are one of Europe's largest ethnic minorities and one of the UK's least documented immigrant communities. Over 300,000 Roma who have settled in UK now look to their young educated elite for guidance.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: One More Question
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: May 2021
director: Mira Erdevički
produced by: Lucie Wenigerová – Spring Pictures (UK)
in co-production with: Krutart (CZ), PubRes (SK), Arcimboldo (CZ), Czech Television (CZ)



People of Blood

Otto Hille, a man from a Czech-German family, prepares an expedition for the old and seriously ill Leopold Švarc, understood to be a cleansing experience to make amends for deeds long past. Švarc is accompanied by his loyal, autistic servant Mišel, his cook Jan and doctor Ignác. At the very beginning of the long enterprise, Otto takes on board Henry, an insolvent painter who, despite his devastated body and mind, is hired as a carrier. The group sets out on a challenging trip to a large cave where they spend the night. While sleeping, Otto experiences one of his nightmares. He has a vision in which he can see an old event. Otto witnesses events that explain what he is carrying with him and why Leopold Švarc is hiding.

FICTION

original title: Lidi krve
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: February 2021
director: Miroslav Bambušek
cast: Miloslav König, Tereza Hofová, Miloslav Mejzlík, Jiří Černý
produced by: Saša Dlouhý – freeSaM (CZ)
in co-production with: atelier.doc (SK), Jana Cisar Filmproduktion (DE), Czech Television (CZ)



Rosa & Dara and Their Great Summer Adventure

Rosa and Dara set off with a group of friends and Grandma for a summer camp. When a piece of comet hits an old castle on an island near the camp, a labyrinth opens beneath the ruin to reveal a gateway to another dimension, where Laiko the dog gets lost. The rescue mission to an unknown world is complicated by the camp troublemaker, Bert, who meets himself in the other dimension. The other Bert has a plan to change the world so that the first Bert will never get laughed at and will have lots of friends. The comet goes out and the gate soon closes. Will Rosa and Dara be able to find Laiko? And will Bert get the better of his evil self?

ANIMATION

original title: Rosa & Dara a jejich velké letní dobrodružství
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: 2021
director: Martin Duda
produced by: Vratislav Šlajser – Bionaut (CZ)



Two Ships

Eliška, a psychologist, and Martin, a musician, meet at Martin's birthday party. For a while, it is like a Hollywood romance, just set against the backdrop of Brno. The first crisis, the first pain, comes right before Eliška leaves for Norway for an internship. After her return, they move in together. The idyll is soon disrupted by Eliška's worsening stomach pains, no medical exams can uncover the cause of. Finally, Eliška decides to shut the pains down by jumping under a train. She will stay with him as a memory, as gratitude for an experience.

FICTION

original title: Martánské lodě
runtime: 95 min
estimated release: July 2020
director: Jan Foukal
cast: Eliška Křenková, Martin Kyšperský, Jan Střejcovský
produced by: Ondřej Zíma, Silvie Michajlova – FILM KOLEKTIV (CZ)
in co-production with: Storm Films (NO), Czech Television (CZ)



Wishing on a Star

Only 7% of the world population admits believing in astrology. Among these, there are some who think that travelling to a specific destination on their birthday will change their lives. Behind the travelling choices of these birthday-globetrotters, there is a woman: the Neapolitan astrologist Luciana de Leoni d'Aspardo, 63, one of the exponents of Active Astrology. Luciana's job is partly that of an esoteric strategist and partly that of a travel agent. Women looking for love, confused teenagers, entrepreneurs on the verge of a crisis: these are the customers. Underneath the humorous mood, the documentary intends to be a tender and empathic reflection of a very human need: longing for meaning in a cosmos filled with endless chaos.

DOCUMENTARY, EXPERIMENTAL

original title: Wishing On A Star
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: January 2021
director: Peter Kerekes
produced by: Erica Barbiani – Videomante (IT)
in co-production with: Mischief Films (AT), Levante Films (BR), Peter Kerekes Film (SK), Artcam Films (CZ), ARTE (FR)

FILMS TO COME

IN POST-PRODUCTION

IN POST-PRODUCTION



A New Shift

Tomáš lives in the industrial Ostrava. His peaceful life is disrupted by the closure of the Paskov mine, where he has worked for more than 20 years. Tomáš is forced to radically change his life. After completing a tough programming course, he discovers that the ability to write a working code is not enough. Far more difficult is to sell oneself on the job market. Suddenly, a positive answer comes up, and Tomáš joins an IT company as a programmer. Now, he is sitting in an air-conditioned office in front of computer screen, writing emails to the colleagues sitting next to him. Meetings, briefings, brainstormings. It's time to ask an unpleasant question. What has he lost?

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Nová šichta
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: March 2020
director: Jindřich Andrš
produced by: Miloš Lochman, Augustina Micková – moloko film (CZ)
in co-production with: FAMU (CZ), Czech Television (CZ)



Anny

A time-lapse documentary about an elderly Prague prostitute and her painful search for dignity and happiness.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Anny
runtime: 65 min
estimated release: May 2020
director: Helena Třeštíková
produced by: Kateřina Černá – Negativ (CZ)



Bourák

Your mother wastes away in front of your eyes, pretending to be oblivious, while your dad, hit by yet another attack of chronic puberty, shakes a leg with some twenty-year-old who looks like a model from an old American bra catalogue. Can you stand it anymore? The way your own parents lead their lives? Feeling ashamed of your dad while your mum pulls the wool over her own eyes? As their only daughter, you could do something about it. Would you? I did. And all of it ended with a few funerals and one beautiful wedding.

FICTION

original title: Bourák
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: May 2020
director: Ondřej Trojan
cast: Ivan Trojan, Veronika Marková, Kristýna Boková, Jiří Macháček
produced by: Ondřej Trojan – Total HelpArt T.H.A. (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), PubRes (SK), bpd partners (CZ)



Censor

Lyesa is a young woman who killed her husband in a jealousy attack. Six stab wounds resulted in a seven-year sentence served at the prison No. 14 in Odessa. Her pregnancy is considered a mitigating circumstance. During Lyesa's jail time, she is monitored by Irina, an older lonely operating officer without a husband and a family – Lyesa's exact opposite. In prison, Lyesa gives birth to a son – Kolya. Shortly before his third birthday, she's hoping to get out on probation for good behaviour. When her request is denied, Lyesa starts her race against time to contact her family and even the mother of her murdered husband, desperately trying to keep Kolya from ending up in an orphanage.

DOCUMENTARY, HYBRID

original title: Cenzorka
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: 2020
director: Peter Kerekes
cast: Irina Kiriazeva, Marina Klimova, Ljubov Vassilina
produced by: Ivan Ostrochovský – Punkchart films (SK)
in co-production with: endorfilm (CZ), Radio and Television of Slovakia (SK), Arthouse Traffic (UA), Peter Kerekes Film (SK)



Doggy Love

The documentary focusing on mushing, the sport, which isn't very typical for the Czech environment. However, this sport has surprisingly many Czech representatives and it turns out that a Czech musher is considered a favourite in worldwide competition. Jana Henychová is a pro, she's regularly training in Sweden and participates in important foreign races. The film unveils the specifics of this sport and its uniqueness.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Psí láska
runtime: 75 min
estimated release: March 2020
director: Linda Kallistová Jablonská
produced by: Pavel Berčík – Evolution Films (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

IN POST-PRODUCTION



Erhart

A small Czech town, early autumn, the present. Young, energetic Erhart (23) returns to his hometown, after hearing of his mother's (50) mental breakdown and hospitalisation. Erhart's mother lives alone in a big family house and has been suffering from mental issues since her husband was jailed for privatisation fraud. She tells Erhart that their family house is for sale. At the same time, she claims that his missing father has returned to stop the sale and put things in order. Erhart is used to mother's delusions, but when he finds out, that their house actually belongs to an anonymous offshore company, he starts to doubt, what has so far been considered unconditional truth.

FICTION

original title: Erhart
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: May 2020
director: Jan Březina
cast: Filip Březina, Klára Soukupová, Elizaveta Maximová, Přemysl Bureš
produced by: Marek Novák – Xova Film (CZ)
in co-production with: IS Produkce (CZ)



Once Upon a Time in Poland

In the middle of Europe, two nations coexist side by side, close to one another in many ways, and yet worlds apart. The Czechs are dedicated atheists, while the Poles are born as baptized Catholics. Czechs shake their heads in disbelief at Polish piety, while Poles hold Czechs in contempt for living without God. A Czech documentary crew sets out on a summertime pilgrimage across Poland in order to investigate through the camera the concrete situation regarding the notion of "Czech atheism vs. Polish religion".

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Jak Bůh hledal Karla
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: April 2020
director: Vít Klusák, Filip Remunda
produced by: Jana Brožková, Zdeněk Holý – Vernes (CZ)
in co-production with: Hypermarket Film (CZ), Czech Television (CZ), Plesnar & Krauss Films (PL), Peter Kerekes Film (SK)



Shadow Country

A young, good-looking city girl, Marie, marries into a small Austrian town of Schwarzwald. A little vain for a small-town woman, she likes to dress up and makes her own clothes. The town is by Austrian border, in an area, forcibly annexed by Czechoslovakia in 1920. Most of the Czech-speaking citizens chose German nationality at the beginning of WW2. While peaceful during the war, the area was swept by violence right after the war. A group of malicious neighbours force fourteen wealthiest town inhabitants in front of the people's court and they are murdered. Marie and her two children have to cross the border into the woods, where they build a temporary shed of branches.

FICTION

original title: Krajina ve stínu
runtime: 120 min
estimated release: July 2020
director: Bohdan Sláma
cast: Magdalena Borová, Stanislav Majer, Pavel Nový, Bára Poláková
produced by: Martin Růžička – LUMINAR Film (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), Filmpark (SK)



The Year Before the War

The film connects political and philosophical extremes of 1913 in a story of a young man participating in the creation of a new world. A mysterious adventurer, who was known as Peter the Lett, gets involved in a tragicomic and surreal race from a routine clerk job and a romantic passion in Riga to preparation of world revolution in Vienna, psychoanalysis at Freud's salon and seduction of Mata Hari in Paris.

FICTION

Czech title: Rok před válkou
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: August 2020
director: Dāvis Sīmanis
cast: Petr Buchta, Lauris Dzelzītis, Gints Grāvelis, Ģirts Ķesteris
produced by: Roberts Vinovskis – Locomotive Productions (LV)
in co-production with: Studio Uljana Kim (LT), Produkce Radim Procházka (CZ)



Wolves on the Borders!

A documentary taking the controversy around the reintroduction of wolves to the Czech Republic to tell a broader tale of humankind's ambivalent relationship towards nature. It has been more than 200 years since the last wolf was killed in the Broumov region, the area with the largest concentration of sheep in the Czech Republic - where the story takes place. The public is divided - on one side there are farmers and inhabitants who feel threatened and want to get rid of the wolves again. On the other side are people who welcome them as natural predator. This film looks at the wolves as providing an opportunity to transform our society into one that is more open and tolerant

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Vlci na hranicích!
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: June 2020
director: Martin Páv
produced by: Zuzana Kučerová – Frame Films (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)

NEW RELEASES



Alchemical Furnace

Jan Švankmajer at 85 years of age is one of the most prominent artists of European cinema. His work which has inspired and guided generations of directors, represents an entirely unique, sharp and merciless exploration of human nature. Films such as *Alice*, *Faust* and *Little Otik* changed forever the image of stop-motion cinema and opened a world of possibilities in terms of the representation of the inner self. Over three years, the directors followed the life of Jan Švankmajer, from his collaboration with producer Jaromír Kallista to his memory of Eva Švankmajerová, his wife and creative partner. Shot on various film formats, using found footage and with a touch of Czech humor, *Alchemical Furnace* is an ode to creation and to companionship.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Alchymická pec
runtime: 117 min
festival release: January 2020 (Rotterdam IFF)
director: Adam Olša, Jan Daňhel
produced by: Jaromír Kallista – Athanor (CZ)
in co-production with: PubRes (SK)



Caught in the Net

A social film experiment in which those who steal the innocence of children fall into their own traps. The documentary, opening the hitherto taboo topic of online child abuse. Statistics show that the problem is becoming bigger with each passing day, unfortunately, awareness remains very low.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: V síti
runtime: 103 min
national release: 27 February 2020
director: Vít Klusák, Barbora Chalupová
produced by: Vít Klusák, Filip Remunda – Hypermarket Film (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), Peter Kerekes Film (SK), RTVS (SK), Helium Film (CZ)
international sales: Outlook Film Sales



Charlatan

Inspired by the true story of herbalist Jan Mikolasek, who dedicated his life to caring for the sick in spite of the immense obstacles he faced in his private and public life. Born at the turn of the 20th century, Mikolasek wins fame and fortune using unorthodox treatment methods to cure a wide range of diseases. Already a local institution in Czechoslovakia before World War II, the healer gains in reputation and wealth whether during the Nazi occupation or under the Communist rule. One after the other, every regime will want to use his skills and in return gives him protection. But how high shall be the costs to maintain this status as the tide turns?

FICTION

original title: Šarlatán
runtime: 118 min
festival release: February 2020 (Berlinale)
director: Agnieszka Holland
cast: Ivan Trojan, Josef Trojan, Juraj Loj
produced by: Šárka Címbalová, Kevan van Thompson – Marlene Film Productions (CZ)
in co-production with: F&ME (IE), Madants (PL), Furia Film (SK), Czech Television (CZ), Barrandov Studio (CZ), RTVS (SK), Certicon (CZ), Magiclab
international sales: Films Boutique



Cook F**k Kill

Jaroslav, a handsome and seemingly good-natured son, father and a decent husband, is, as a matter of fact, pathologically jealous of his wife Blanka. He is very much afraid that one day she would leave him together with their three children. Jaroslav and his family don't hesitate to employ violence, deceit and terror against others, which ultimately leads to a family tragedy.

FICTION

original title: Žáby bez jazyka
runtime: 116 min
national release: 9 April 2020
director: Mira Fornay
cast: Jaroslav Plesl, Petra Fornayová, Regina Rázlová, Jan Alexander
produced by: Viktor Schwarzc – Cineart TV Prague (CZ), Mira Fornay – Mirafox (SK)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), RTVS (SK), Synergia Film (CZ)
international sales: Cercamon



1ST FILM

Daria

The film about fear; about the thin line between madness and sanity and about the equally thin line between truth and fiction. Psychiatrist Marek meets Daria, a young pharmacist, on chat. He is immediately smitten with her, but ever since their first date, a succession of peculiar events begins to unfold. Moreover, Daria disappears and turns up a week later as a patient in the mental sanatorium where Marek works. He takes up her case and slowly begins to unravel that there is something wrong with her.

FICTION

original title: Daria
runtime: 84 min
national release: 30 January 2020
director: Matěj Pichler
cast: Jaromír Nosek, Klára Miklasová, Jiří Schmitzer, Paul Louis Harrell
produced by: Michal Theer – Europe DMT Production (CZ)
in co-production with: Patrik Kettner (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

NEW RELEASES



Droneman

Having worked for several years in Israel as a chemist, Pavel witnessed a terrorist attack. After return to the Czech Republic, he is approached by an old friend to help him with a film commercial, flying a drone. Pavel enjoys working with the drone, but he realizes that life around him is dissatisfying – there is a lot of tension among people, but none is able to take direct action or to see a bigger picture. So Pavel sets out to „do the right thing“. He aims straight to the top, choosing to eliminate Dick Cheney, the controversial American politician and businessman, on his upcoming visit to Prague. It's not too difficult for Pavel, an ex-chemist, to build a home-made explosive. The question is – can he succeed?

FICTION

original title: Modelář
runtime: 105 min
national release: 6 February 2020
director: Petr Zelenka
cast: Kryštof Hádek, Jiří Madl, Veronika Khek Kubařová
produced by: Petr Zelenka, Martin Sehnal – 0,7km films (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), Punkchart films (SK), Fabula (SI), Innogy (CZ), Hangar Films (CZ)



Mucha: The Story of an Artist Who Created Style

The fate of Alphonse Mucha, a genius graphic artist and self-made man, whose glory was born almost overnight thanks to collaboration with the actor star of Paris, Sarah Bernhardt. His posters, applied art and paintings have become world-renowned. Still, he did not hesitate to leave Paris at the height of his success to realize his artistic dream – to create a monumental work for his nation. Mucha's life tells us that something new and unique can only be born if you are prepared to hold to your vision and risk your whole future. A new view of Alphonse Mucha's life based on exclusive and unpublished correspondence, diaries and autobiographical writings.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Mucha, příběh mého otce
runtime: 90 min
national release: 30 April 2020
director: Roman Vávra
produced by: Ondřej Beránek – Punk Film (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television, Maxim Films (DE), ARTE (FR)



My Father Antonín Kratochvíl

Three generations of photographers marked by totalitarian regimes. Through the youngest Michael, we follow the fates of the Kratochvíl clan, focusing particularly on the most famous of them – Antonín. At 18, Antonín emigrated from Czechoslovakia, where his father Jaroslav spent a life marked by the communist terror. Antonín left a new-born son behind. In America, he tasted fame and became a sought-out war photographer. He met his son for the first time after 20 years. Antonín wants to make up for the guilt of abandoning a small child, Michael attempts to process reuniting with father.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Můj otec Antonín Kratochvíl
runtime: 85 min
national release: 2 April 2020
director: Andrea Sedláčková
produced by: Martin Hůlvec – Punk Film (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)



Princess Lost in Time

Princess Elen wakes up to her birthday celebrations knowing she must kill the evil witch who cursed her or find a true love. In case she doesn't make it, the kingdom will be destroyed by dark storm, as it has already happened multiple times. Luckily, the princess is protected by a magical mark which she was given by the court alchemist. However, will she be able to persuade her friends, break the strong warding spells and defeat the powerful witch? The mark weakens and is unluckily revealed and destroyed by the witch. Princess has got one last chance to save herself and the kingdom. Maybe destroying the witch is not the only way and the princess will have to sacrifice much more...

FICTION

original title: Princezna zakletá v čase
runtime: 100 min
national release: 19 March 2020
director: Petr Kubík
cast: Marek Lambora, Natalie Germani, Eliška Křenková
produced by: Viktor Křištof – three brothers (CZ)
in co-production with: ProfesionalniVideo (CZ), QQ studio Ostrava (CZ)



Servants

The year is 1980. Michal and Juraj are students at a theological seminary in totalitarian Czechoslovakia. Fearing the dissolution of their school, the tutors are moulding the students into a shape satisfactory to the ruling Communist Party. Each of the young seminarians must decide if he will give into the temptation and choose the easier way of collaborating with the regime, or if he will subject himself to draconian surveillance by the secret police.

FICTION

original title: Služebníci
runtime: 80 min
festival release: February 2020 (Berlinale)
director: Ivan Ostrochovský
cast: Samuel Skyva, Samuel Polakovič
produced by: Ivan Ostrochovský, Katarína Tomková, Albert Malinovský – Punkchart films (SK)
in co-production with: Point Film (RO), RTVS (SK), Negativ (CZ), F&M (IE), Libra Film Productions (RO), Hai Hui Entertainment (RO)
international sales: Loco Films

