

Czech films selected for Cinéfondation and Cannes Classics

Two Czech films take part in the selection of 74th Cannes International Film Festival. The Cinéfondation section will present world premiere of short animated film *Red Shoes* by Anna Podskalská, and this year's edition of prestigious Cannes Classics will welcome one of its awards-winning Czechoslovak films, *The Cassandra Cat (1963)* by Vojtěch Jasný. Moreover, six Czech films and co-productions will be screened at the Marché du Film, Zuzana Kirchnerová will take part in the Cinéfondation's L'Atelier with *Caravan*, and even more Czech projects will be pitched within the various industry panels.

Official Selection

For its 24th edition of the Cinéfondation Selection, created to inspire and support the next generation of international filmmakers, the Cannes International Film Festival has invited 17 films (chosen from among 1,835 submissions), of which only 4 are animated – one of them is 14-minutes-long *Red Shoes* by FAMU student Anna Podskalská who made her film in co-production with FILMTALENT ZLÍN and Mária Môtovská.

The film takes us to the village party which has already begun and Róza, the main character, hasn't been invited to dance. Suddenly, an unknown stranger appears, inviting Róza to dance, giving her a pair of red shoes. Róza starts to dance with great passion, quickly becoming the center of attention. Soon after she realizes, she can't control the shoes, but the shoes are controlling her.

Several Czech co-production projects took part in the Atelier in the past - Michal Blaško's *Victim*, Gyorgy Kristof's *Out* or celebrated *Touch Me Not* by Adina Pintilie.

In 1963, Czechoslovak director Vojtěch Jasný introduced in Cannes his fairy-tale allegory *The Cassandra Cat*. In the end, he took home two prizes from the festival – Cannes' Special Jury Prize and the Technical Grand Prize. The digitally restored version of the film, carried out in 2021 at L'Immagine Ritrovata (Bologna) under the supervision of Národní filmový archiv, Prague, was selected to appear in the prestigious Cannes Classics section, focused on restored works and the history of cinema.

The Cassandra Cat tells a story of a traveling magician (Jan Werich, also the co-writer of the film along with Jiří Brdečka) who puts on a show in the small Czech town. The magician is accompanied by the performer Diana (Emília Vášáryová) and a magical cat with sunglasses. When the sunglasses are removed, the cat's vision is able to reveal the true nature of people. Lovers turn red, thieves turn gray, traitors turn yellow... The headmaster of the local school and a restaurant manager are afraid the cat will expose their unfair practices, so they steal the animal.

This marks the fourth time a Czech classic has appeared in the prestigious section, in recent years, following *Loves of a Blonde* (in 2019), *Diamonds of the Night* (in 2018) and *Ikarie XB 1* (in 2016).

Market Screenings

Six Czech films and minority co-productions – *My Sunny Maad*, *Even Mice Belong in Heaven*, *The Crossing*, *A Marriage*, *Dear Ones* and *Unidentified* - will also be screened at the Marché du Film. The

first 3 films mentioned are animated features which world-premiered at the Annecy IAFF this June and left a great impression. All of them were supported by the Czech Film Fund.

My Sunny Maad is directed by celebrated Czech animator Michaela Pavlátová, produced by Petr Oukropec and Kateřina Černá of Negativ in co-production with French Sacrebleu Productions, Slovak BFILM, Alkay Animation Prague, Czech Television, Gao Shan Pictures and Innervision (both FR). The film, which won Annecy's prestigious Jury Award, paints a picture of society in post-Taliban Afghanistan using the story of Herra, a Czech woman, who falls in love with Nazir, an Afghan, and has no idea about the life that awaits her in a new country, nor about the family she is about to join.

Even Mice Belong in Heaven, which was selected for Annecy's Screening Events section, tells an adventurous story about a little mouse Whizzy and Whitebelly the fox, who after an unfortunate accident meet in animal heaven where they lose their natural instincts and gradually become best friends. The puppet-animated film is directed by Denisa Grimmová & Jan Bubeníček (*Murderous Tales*, 2016) and produced by Vladimír Lhoták of Fresh Films (CZ) & Alexandre Charlet of Les Films du Cygne (FR). The co-producers include Grzegorz Waclawek & Piotr Szczepanowicz of Animoon (PL), Marek Jeníček & Tomáš Janísek of CinemArt SK (SK), Czech Television (CZ), Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Cinéma (FR), DD Production (CZ), Barrandov Studio (CZ), EC1 Łódź (PL) and Canal + (PL).

Another Czech participation at Annecy's main competition, which will be screened at the Marché du Film, emerged from the co-operation among France, Germany and the Czech Republic. ***The Crossing***, a feature-length debut of director Florence Miailhe, is produced by Dora Benousilio of Les Films de l'Arlequin and co-produced by German Balance Film, established Czech company MAUR film, ARTE (FR, DE), Czech Television (CZ) and XBO films (FR). The film tells a story of never-ending human effort to find a new home, where one can find a better life. An effort for which we are willing to risk our lives. On this journey of hope, people overcome various perils and experience the most terrible of situations.

A Marriage celebrated world premiere within this year's lineup of The Changing Face of Europe: New European Documentaries, a section co-organized by the European Film Promotion at HotDocs. Unconventional story of Zdenka from the Czech Republic and her Pakistani husband Tabish, is directed and produced by Kateřina Hager & Asad Faruqi (Bohemian Productions) and co-produced by Czech Television (CZ) and Circus Lion Pictures (US). The Czech Film Fund supported the film with EUR 77 000.

Dear Ones, directed by Grzegorz Jaroszuk, produced by Agnieszka Kurzydło and co-produced by Karla Stojáková from AXMAN PRODUCTION (CZ), deal with people who miss a real contact with their family and friends. ***Unidentified*** is a Romanian-Czech-Latvian crime-drama by director Bogdan George Apetri, which celebrated world premiere at the Warsaw IFF last fall, and it is represented by Cineart TV Prague on the Czech side.

Cinéfondation L'Atelier

The **Cinéfondation's Atelier**, which was created to stimulate creative filmmaking and help foster a new generation of filmmakers, hosts its 17th edition this year – and for the first time, also with Czech director on board. Zuzana Kirchnerová (winner of the Cinéfondation with *Baba* in 2009) will present her promising feature project ***Caravan***, the Czech-Slovak-Italian co-production drama (produced by Dagmar Sedláčková of MasterFilm), which tells a story about a mother and her mentally handicapped son who together set out on a long journey away from everyday worries. The project, which received Torino Film Lab Production Award (EUR 40 000) last fall, was also supported by the Czech Film Fund for both development and production altogether with EUR 412 000.

Other Activities at Marché du Film

Within the **Goes to Cannes** programme, two Czech films will be pitched and presented – ***Saving One Who Was Dead*** as part of the HAF Goes to Cannes (in co-operation with the Asian Film Financing Forum) and minority co-production ***Imago*** as part of the Polish days (co-organized with the New Horizons IFF). While ***Saving One Who Was Dead*** is a personal project of director and producer Václav Kadrnka, who deals with a fate of a family whose father fell into a coma (world premiere at the upcoming Karlovy Vary IFF in the Crystal Globe Competition), ***Imago*** is a drama by Polish director Olga Chajdas who follows Poland during the political and social transformation from communism into Solidarity. Polish-Dutch-Czech-French co-production film is represented by Miloš Lochman & Karel Chvojka of moloko film on the Czech side.

Focus Works in Progress, which provides guidance to short filmmakers through mentoring sessions, will offer a pitching to short animated documentary ***Love, Dad*** by FAMU student Diana Cam Van Nguyen (the world premiere will take place at the Locarno FF in Pardi di domani) who recalls the complicated relationship with her father, as well as to minority co-production project ***Team Building***, set in the environment of a company using unfair practices, by celebrated auteur Mateusz Pacewicz (***Corpus Christi***), co-produced by Bionaut on the Czech side and in collaboration with Midpoint Institute.

Prague's Midpoint Institute also participates in the **Focus Script** programme, which looks to offer a dedicated space for students or recent graduates from the collaborating Film Schools and help them to get targeted feedbacks on their scripts at an early stage of work. Midpoint Institute will offer a professional training for one of 7 projects, represented on the Czech side by Damián Vondrášek's ***Rites***. In his film, produced by Martina Netíková of Cinémotif Films and recently supported by the Czech Film Fund, Vondrášek (***Imprisoned***) depicts one afternoon in life of two boys physically different from the others, who decide to pass a ritual of admission to the local boys' gang and gain respect.

Cannes Docs' Spotlighted Projects, aimed at projects seeking potential co-producers, funding or sales agents, will give floor to ***I'm Not Everything I Want to Be*** by director Klára Tasovská and producer Lukáš Kokeš of Somatic Films. Their intimate portrait of a photographer dealing with ageing, gender, everyday struggles and identity exploration recently received funding for production by the CFF (EUR 65 000). Furthermore, Cannes Docs also hosts **Doc Talk with Ji.hlava IDFF** – a discussion with emerging producers on the topic “How the Pandemic Affected the Unbalanced Regional Representation at Film Festivals” – and the announcement of the winners of the **2021 Doc Alliance Awards** (the nomination received ***Traces of Landscape*** by Petr Záruba).

In addition, Czech company **Artinii**, a cloud-tech driven media enterprise providing revolutionary point-to-point solutions for secure digital distribution of audio-visual content returns to **Cannes NEXT** to showcase how the company's goal to simplify the distribution process works in practice, making it easier for filmmakers, producers, distributors, agents and IP owners to reach audiences worldwide, and how the company has grown and pivoted in the midst of the pandemic.

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