

CZECH FILM

Fall 2018



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.



Markéta Šantrochová
Head of Czech Film Center
e-mail: marketa@filmcenter.cz
tel.: +420 724 329 948



Barbora Ligasová
Festival Relations-Feature Films
e-mail: barbora@filmcenter.cz
tel.: +420 778 487 863



Vítězslav Chovanec
Festival Relations-
Documentary & Short Films
e-mail: vitezslav@filmcenter.cz
tel.: +420 778 487 864



Jana Krivenkaja
Project Manager
e-mail: jana.k@filmcenter.cz
tel.: +420 724 329 949

Magical 25. No, I don't mean the age, and certainly not my own. What I mean is the percentage increase in rebates for foreign filmmakers: the most heavily discussed topic in debates about the future and competitiveness of the Czech film industry internationally. A strong film industry is not only a good promotion for filmmakers, the state, and cities, but also brings the benefit of work opportunities in locations with higher unemployment. Over the last five years, the Czech Film Fund has come a long way. We have built a stable cinema and film industry support system, and become a trusted partner to domestic and foreign filmmakers alike. Numerous European productions, US independent studios, TV projects, and series for VOD platforms shoot in the Czech Republic, enjoying the use of our great locations, our efficient system of regional support, and our highly professional local crews and craftsmen. We have the capacity to welcome back the majors. Increasing the percentage will help us win new markets that haven't yet used our facilities here and haven't inquired into the possibility. Our target is to see international investment of CZK 6 billion (€234 million) in one fiscal year, the volume we achieved back in 2002–03. We've done it before, and we can do it again.



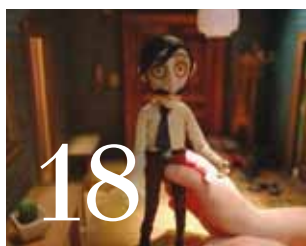
Helena Bezdek Fraňková, Director, Czech Film Fund

TORONTO IFF /

Olmo Omerzu's *Winter Flies* is about to have its international premiere at Toronto IFF



6



18

FOCUS /

MAUR film, one of the Czech Republic's biggest and most-respected production companies specializing in animation, celebrates its 15th anniversary this year



IDFA /

Documentary director Helena Třeštíková has been one of the best-known names in Czech culture for over three decades

8



INTERVIEW /

Vladimír Smutný, winner of seven Czech Lions for Best Cinematography, has worked with legendary domestic directors František Vlášil, Jiří Menzel, and Karel Kachyňa

21

2 CZECH FILM NOW

12 LOCARNO IFF / RECONSTRUCTION

14 CZECH ANIMATION SERIES

28 JURAJ HERZ / CZECH MASTER OF HORROR

37 FILMS TO COME

EDITORIAL

This summer Czech cinema has seen a great success – Altogether, twelve Czech films and coproductions premiered at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, three of them taking home main awards from the closing ceremony.

The Czech presence has never been so strong at our most prestigious film event. To see so many young and emerging filmmakers side by side with the most seasoned masters, working in different genres, different styles. That makes us very proud.

As the fall creeps up on us, tasks for Czech film has its plate full. The Venice Gap-Financing Market will feature presentations of director Irena Pavlásková's ambitious adaptation of *The Prague Orgy* by world-acclaimed author Phillip Roth (more on page 26), as well as Artemio Benki's *Fugue*, the subtle portrait of a composer and his fight to overcome a nervous breakdown with the help of music, which we covered in these pages previously.

Also upcoming is the international premiere of Olmo Omerzu's *Winter Flies* at Toronto IFF just a few days after it hits Czech cinemas. Don't miss our interview with the director on page 6. The trip to Toronto is a repeat visit for the film's producer, Jiří Konečný, who accompanies not just one but two films this time – the second being Radu Jude's *"I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians"*, which Konečný coproduced. Also returning to Toronto this year is Filip Remunda and Vít Klusák of Hypermarket Film, a minority coproducers on Vitaly Mansky's *Putin's Witnesses*. In April, they visited Toronto Hot Docs with *The White World According to Daliborek*.

And as if that weren't enough, Xavier Dolan's *The Death and Life of John F. Donovan*, shot in Prague in spring 2017 with the help of production incentives programme by the Czech Film Fund will have its world premiere in Special Presentations at Toronto IFF.

Enjoy the issue, and stay tuned!

Markéta Šantrochová

Head of the Czech Film Center
Czech Film Fund



Czech Projects at Warsaw Kids Film Forum

Three Czech children's projects have been selected for the Works in Progress section at the Warsaw Kids Film Forum, September 26–28: *Martin and the Forest Secret* (director Petr Oukropec, produced by Peter Badač, BFILM); the animated TV series *The Little Odyssey* (director Jakub Kouřil, produced by k-pictures); and, finally, *Rosa & Dara and Their Great Summer Adventure* (director Martin Duda, produced by Bionaut). /



The Pack Goes to Busan

Czech film project *The Pack*, supported by the Czech Film Fund, the Zlín Regional Film Fund, and the National Film Center of Latvia, has been selected for the 21st Asian Project Market, October 7–9 at the Busan International Film Festival. Director Tomáš Polenský's debut is the first Czech project to be picked for this coproduction platform, which offers emerging filmmakers the chance to meet with leading professionals in international film. This year, 401 projects from around the world were submitted, with 29 making the final cut. *The Pack* tells the story of David, a 16-year-old hockey goalie, who tries to stand his ground in the face of an avalanche of bullying. /

Czech

Three Upcoming Films Win Grants From Eurimages

Thirty coproductions were tapped for support at this year's Eurimages meeting in Montreal, including three forthcoming Czech films: *National Street*, directed by Štěpán Altrichter, produced by Pavel Strnad (Negativ); *Old-Timers*, directed by Martin Dušek and Ondřej Provazník, produced by Jiří Konečný (endorfilm); and the German documentary *Fever*, by Helen Simon, coproduced by endorfilm. /



Old-Timers



The Glass Room

The Glass Room: Shooting Complete on Adaptation of British Novel

Directed by Julius Ševčík, *The Glass Room* is adapted for the screen from Simon Mawer's acclaimed 2009 novel, inspired by dramatic events of the 20th century and an iconic architectural gem: the Functionalist Tugendhat Villa, in Brno. The movie features a cast of European and Czech stars, including Carice van Houten, Hanna Alström, Claes Bang, Alexandra Borbély, Karel Roden, and Karel Dobrý.

The Glass Room is produced by Rudolf Biermann's IN Film, coproduced by Czech Television, Igor Rattaj (Investito, Slovakia), and the Slovak TV channel JOJ. Backing was provided by the production incentives program of the Czech Film Fund, as well as the MEDIA subprogram of Creative Europe. Renowned Polish editor Jaroslaw Kaminski (*Cold War*) is on the project, and the score is by the Oscar-nominated Spanish composer Javier Navarrete. /



Fugue

The Prague Orgy and *Fugue* to Be Presented at 5th Venice Gap-Financing Market

Two forthcoming Czech films will be seeking coproducers and partners at this year's Venice Gap-Financing Market, held during the Biennale di Venezia: *The Prague Orgy*, by Irena Pavlásková (more on page 26), and *Fugue*, directed by Artemio Benki.

Fugue follows Martin, a young Argentinean piano virtuoso and composer who is hospitalized, following a nervous breakdown, at El Borda, Latin America's largest and most distinguished, but also controversial, psychiatric hospital. *Fugue* is produced by Artemio Benki and Petra Oplatková (Artcam Films, Czech Republic), in coproduction with Golden Girls Filmproduktion (Austria), Buen Destino (Argentina), Petit a petit Productions (France), and Lomo Cine (Argentina). Artemio Benki is also a coproducer of another project selected for the forum, *January* by Andrey Paounov (BG / PT / CZ). /

Film Now



Zátopek

© Wikimedia

David Ondříček's *Zátopek* Is Top Recipient of Feature Film Support

The Czech Film Fund announced support at the end of May for production of nine feature-length fiction films, with a total sum of €2,516,000 (CZK 65 million). The highest amount – €588,235 – went to *Zátopek*, by director David Ondříček and his production company, Lucky Man Films. The film, based on a screenplay by Alice Nellis, tells the story of Czechoslovak long-distance running legend Emil Zátopek, winner of three Olympic gold medals.

The fund's second-highest evaluation, €392,157, went to the feature projects Bourák (directed and produced by Ondřej Trojan/Total HelpArt), the historical drama *Principle Kriegel* or *The Man Who Stood in the Way* (directed by Ivan Fíla, produced by



© Bio Illusion

Principle Kriegel

Miloslav Šmídmajer), and *Snake Gas* (directed by David Jařab, produced by Viktor Schwarcz/Cineart TV Prague).

Other supported projects include *Silent Companion* by Pavel Göbl, produced by Czech Film; €313,725), *Mistakes* (€274,510), by Jan Prušinovský (produced by Offside Men), the black comedy/thriller *Terrorist*, by Radek Bajgar (produced by Petr Erben/Logline Production; €78,431). The remaining projects to receive backing were *Orange Days*, an adaptation of Iva Procházková's Young adult book, directed by Ivan Pokorný and planned as a Czech-Polish-German coproduction, with Daniel Severa/Daniel Severa Production representing the Czechs (€78,431), and *A Scream Is a Beautiful Song* (a joint project by Viktor Tauš and Beata Parkanová, produced by Heaven's Gate; €39,216).



Mistakes

© Offside Men

Film Fund Backing for Documentaries

The Czech Film Fund also voted to support 11 documentary projects in production, with a total of €470,588. Most of the films portray major cultural figures, such as photographer Antonín Kratochvíl (directed by Andrea Sedláčková), actor and director Jiří Suchý (directed by Olga Sommerová), and painter Alfons Mucha (directed by Roman Vávra).

Olmo Radu Adina Vitaly

Four Czech films or coproductions will be celebrating their international or North American premieres at this year's edition of the Toronto International Film Festival. Three of them already won awards earlier this summer at Karlovy Vary.

The young and talented Olmo Omerzu was named Best Director for his movie *Winter Flies*, which goes to Toronto right after entering Czech cinemas in September. In Toronto it will screen as part of the Contemporary World Cinema section. Read more about the director in our interview on page 6.

Another entry in the Contemporary Cinema section will be *"I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians"*, by Romanian director Radu Jude, who took home a Crystal Globe from Karlovy Vary. Produced by Ada Solomon (Romania) in coproduction with the Czech Republic (Jiří Konečný/endorfilm), France, Bulgaria, and Germany, the film is an ingenious update of Hannah Arendt's incisive work on the banality of evil. Supported by the



"I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians"

© endorfilm

Omerzu, Jude, Pintilie & Mansky



Kit Harington during shooting
The Death and Life of John F. Donovan

© Lyla Films

Putin's Witnesses



© Hypermarket Film

Czech Film Fund to the tune of €156,863, Jude's latest project is the second collaboration between Romanian producer Ada Solomon, director Radu Jude, and Czech producer Jiří Konečný, following the successful *Aferim!*

Discovery section will present the winner of this year's Berlinale main competition, experimental drama *Touch Me Not* by Adina Pintilie. The film is a Romanian-German-Czech-Bulgarian-French coproduction, with Radovan Šíbrt/PINK on the Czech side. The film received funding from the Czech Film Fund amounting to €151,373.

Last but not least to screen in Toronto, in the section TIFF Docs, is Vitaly Mansky's *Putin's Witnesses*, winner of the Documentary Films Competition in Karlovy Vary this year. The Latvian-Swiss-Czech coproduction takes a fascinating look at the start of Vladimir Putin's career as Russian president. It is the third collaboration between Mansky and the Czech producer/director duo Filip Remunda and Vít Klusák (Hypermarket Film), following *Under The Sun* and *Pipeline*. The film was backed with €39,216 by the Czech Film Fund.

Shoot in Prague: New Work by Xavier Dolan

Another film with a Czech imprint in Toronto will be the long-awaited project from Canadian director Xavier Dolan *The Death and Life of John F. Donovan*, having its world premiere in the Special Presentations program. The film stars Kit Harington, Jacob Tremblay, Natalie Portman, Ben Schnetzer, Susan Sarandon, and Kathy Bates. The Canadian director shot one week in Prague, in March 2017, with line producing by the Prague-based company Film United.

Dolan's film tells the story of John F. Donovan, a rising U.S. actor whose career is cut short when a magazine reveals his pen-pal relationship with an 11-year-old British boy. The film was supported by the Prague Film Fund in its first call for proposals, receiving €38,300. The production spent €1.3 million during shooting in the Czech Republic, and incentives from the Czech Film Fund reached €257,000.

Unlike many projects shot in the Czech Republic, Prague actually plays itself in this film: A significant part of the story takes place in a Prague café. "The shooting went very smoothly. Dolan had a clear idea of what he wanted, and brought a number of people who'd worked with him on previous films, including cinematographer André Turpin. We shot in the park of Hořovice Castle, on the banks of the Berounka near Týřovice, in the interiors of Slapy Chateau, and especially the Café de Paris, at Hotel Paris, who helped us in all sorts of ways," said line producer Veronika Lencová. /

Radu Jude



© endorfilm

Touch Me Not



© PINK

Winter Flies:

Of Freedom and Fabulation

Olmo Omerzu seems to be a wunderkind. After several student short films, his international breakthrough took place at the 2012 Berlinale, where he unveiled his graduation film-cum-feature debut, *A Night Too Young*. Omerzu's sophomore outing, *Family Film*, featured in San Sebastian, while his most recent work, *Winter Flies*, launched at the bastion of Central and East European cinema—the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival—netting him the Best Director award. Now *Winter Flies* is about to have its international premiere at Toronto IFF.

by Martin Kudláč

Winter Flies marks a creative departure for Omerzu: the first film he's directed without authoring the script. The writer, Petr Pýcha, a teacher and award-winning author of radio plays, originally penned the story for radio. However, because of the coarse language of the 12- and 14-year-old characters, a badge of its authenticity, the story needed to find a different outlet.

Coincidentally, Pýcha at that time had just encountered *A Night Too Young*, a film he appreciated for its subtlety and for the actors' nonprofessional performance. What's more, according to Omerzu, the feeling was mutual: "What

I found interesting was Petr's sense of dialogue and authenticity."

Winter Flies opens in media res, with the young bad boy Mára sporting a shaven head and driving a stolen car. Along the way, he bumps into a dorky kid named Heduš, dressed in ragged camo and carrying a BB gun. After a heated argument, Heduš brags about having enough cash for gas, leading the unlikely pair to embark on a trip. Omerzu kicks off his story with the dawn of an improbable friendship that might not materialize under normal circumstances, emphasizing the enigma of the young protagonist fleeing home.

The concealed segments of the plot are of major importance in Omerzu's storytelling strategy, a puzzle narrative that marks a departure from his two previous works. The director discloses



his intention to narrate the story in the vein of *Rashomon*, presenting two perspectives.

"The film switches between two planes: One is set in the police station, the other is the story [of two boys on a road trip]," Omerzu says. "Interestingly, both planes correspond stylistically." Yet the story comes out of the mouth of the unreliable narrator Mára, a plot device the director harnesses in order to convey the unspoken amid the whirlwind of truth and lies.

The youngsters' adventures are recounted in retrospect as Mára, detained at the police station, recounts their exploits while a policewoman tries to establish his identity. This collision of two worlds—one of children, one of adults—in a single space is reminiscent of *A Night Too Young* and *Family Film*. Yet in *Winter Flies*, Omerzu downplays the conflict to embrace adventure over drama while preserving the tension underneath the surface.

"I believe I can afford a more experimental approach that doesn't alienate the audience, but is still slightly anarchistic. In my previous films, I had to be conceptually restrained; in this project, I knew I didn't have to do that," Omerzu said. He added that *Winter Flies* was "a bit looser in terms of form".

Between Road Movie and Coming-of-Age Story

Omerzu's films are characterized by a blend of diverse aspects, and this trait is dominant in his latest feature. Besides combining psychologically different characters and having the plot unfold on two planes at once, in the formal dimension *Winter Flies* is a mutually beneficial marriage of genre and arthouse filmmaking—offering the ideal mixture of broad audience appeal and social message. Hybridization like this isn't uncommon in Czech film nowadays. Emerging talent Adam Sedláč's recent feature debut *Domestique* balances on the edge between a psychological drama about a dysfunctional couple and a horror film of obsession.

Omerzu's crossover between road movie and coming-of-age story is shrouded in the guise of social realism, especially in

its aesthetics, highlighting the poetics of realism. "It is anchored in realism, and the story is based on an actual event. So I decided not to cheat reality, even though we could tweak it here and there. I wanted authentic boys who actually represent something," said Omerzu. "I'm starting to be drawn to the documentary style of storytelling."

By working with nonprofessional child actors, Omerzu pushed the directorial envelope further in *Winter Flies*, extending the limits of improvisation. Despite having a script ("the screenplay is a regular script," he says), he invested several months in rehearsals and improvisational exercises before letting his leads get anywhere near the script. He also dedicated a great deal of time to finding the right boys, who would

contradiction to the usual summer vacation rollicking.

Although a departure from the approach he employed in his previous works, *Winter Flies* still displays elements easily identifiable as Omerzu trademarks: insertions from the realm of nature; the border collie from *Family Film* is replaced here by the unruly Jackal, who becomes the third member of the ragtag gang. More important, the familiar theme of innocence-in-peril from *A Night Too Young* and *Family Film* remains present here, albeit primarily offscreen, by way of suggestion and nuance, compared to Omerzu's previous works.

The recurring theme of child-adult relationships also prevails, though in a subtler way, apart from the direct



embody their characters even before they stepped in front of cameras to perform.

The poetics of realism also entails a visual style that shares similarities with social drama, especially in the bleaker color palette, which not only conveys the season but also carries undertones of melancholia—an uncanny feeling for a boisterous adventure. In this regard, *Winter Flies* demonstrates an unsentimental approach to, and depiction of, the coming-of-age genre. This is emphasized by Mára's hijinks, set against the gloomy time of year, in

confrontation at the police station. Authenticity is conveyed through language, harsh words and macho talk, unsuited to kids of Mára's age. Mimicking the typical dialogues of grown-ups, Mára and Heduš engage in sexist conversation and erotic flights of fancy, exposing the level of contamination of their world by adults.

Yet, one theme stands out above the rest in Omerzu's standing inventory, capturing the essence of a coming-of-age road movie while organically intertwining with the motif of childlike imagination: the sense of unbridled freedom.

Helena Třeštková (right) with the main character of her movie *Mallory*, awarded as the best documentary at KVIFF 2015.



The Simple Truths of Helena Třeštková

Documentary director Helena Třeštková (b. 1949) has been one of the best-known names in Czech culture for over three decades, and is widely respected abroad. Now she has been invited to be the guest of honor at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, where six of her most famous and important works will be screened: *Katka* (2009), *René* (2008), *Mallory* (2015), *A Marriage Story* (2017), *Doomed Beauty* (2016), and her debut, *Miracle* (1975). In addition, Třeštková will present her Top 10, the ten works that most influenced her as a filmmaker, introducing them to the IDFA audience.

by Martin Svoboda

Třeščíková's invitation to IDFA is a well-deserved honor. Given the uniqueness of her methods, we can't claim that she is representative of Czech cinema as a whole. The director herself has said that she considers her contribution to be "just a small part of the environment," but her impact on Czech culture is undeniable.

Most recently, this influence was evident in Lukáš Kokeš and Klára Tasovská's *Nothing Like Before* (2017), the Czech entry in last year's IDFA. Like many of Třeščíková's films, albeit within a shorter time span, *Nothing Like Before* takes an empathic view of its everyday heroes. Other Czech documentarists have chosen to distance themselves from Třeščíková, opting for a more satirical or political perspective. One example of this is Vít Klusák's *The White World According to Daliborek* (2017), which also follows a common man but shows him little empathy. In general, Klusák's work can be viewed as a counterforce to Třeščíková's kinder, gentler approach.

Observer of Ordinary Life

Ask a Czech to name five filmmakers, and odds are Třeščíková will be one of them. Her personal charisma, as well as the movies themselves, have won her an audience across the social spectrum, a rare phenomenon in this country. Respected by professors and factory workers alike, she stands tall as one of the few unifying elements within the Czech public sphere.

Třeščíková's films, which usually observe ordinary families and their everyday troubles, have the ability to pull viewers in and allow them to live a different life for an hour and a half. Her patience and willingness to spend years with people, almost at random, in the hope the result will be worth it, are matched by few other filmmakers in today's world. She is also extremely lucky: What



Třeščíková during shooting *A Marriage Story* (2017)

Richard Linklater achieved in *Childhood*, his tender celebration of the passage of time, Třeščíková has done over and over again in her documentaries. In particular, her lifework, the TV series *Marriage Stories*, in which she follows several newly married couples for 35 years (over three waves of shooting, aired in 1987, 2006, and 2018), is a masterpiece that has succeeded in captivating audiences even beyond the Czech borders.

Třeščíková has a special gift for finding the universal in her subjects and their life dramas—perhaps because they are not "heroes," living a life of extremes, but people who are just about as "normal" as you can get. Thanks to Třeščíková (and her knack for finding capable editors; lately she has been working with Jakub Hejna), we can find great unsensational excitement in these "adventures of the ordinary," as she calls them. No divorce is simple; no parent-child relationship is smooth. And even when she does follow someone living outside the middle class mainstream, as in her portrait of the recidivist *René* (which won her a European Film Award in 2008), she manages to make him more human, not less—as reality TV would.

Helena Třeščíková's Top 10

Looking at the list of works Třeščíková deems most important to her, we see her artistic preferences quite clearly. Miloš Forman's *The Firemen's Ball* (1967) is a film with "the most mundane characters, which became an allegory for society as a whole," as she puts it. She says she hopes her observations capture the essence of society, even without direct commentary. Another work Třeščíková singles out is *Farrebique*, or *The Four Seasons* (1946), by Georges Rouquier, which observes a family of peasants over the course of a year. "The ordinary life of ordinary people fascinates me," she says. And *Something Different*



Katka (2009)



Katka (2009)

© Film Servis Festival Karlovy Vary



A Marriage Story (2017)

[1963], by Věra Chytilová, was a “lightning bolt” for the 14-year-old Třeštíková, a movie balancing between documentary and fiction, telling its story through authenticity. “The first time I saw it, I wrote in my diary that I wanted to be a filmmaker. A dream that felt so distant I couldn’t even say it out loud.”

But her dream came true when she began her studies at the FAMU film school in Prague, in 1969. “I went straight to the archive and began watching all the world’s most important documentaries,” she remembers. Again, the pattern of her interest is clear: *The Seine Meets Paris*

(1957, dir. Joris Ivens), *The Savage Eye* (1960, dir. Ben Maddow, Sidney Meyers, Joseph Strick). Later works she cites are *Prague: The Restless Heart of Europe* (1984, dir. Věra Chytilová), *Citizen Havel* (2007, dir. Pavel Koutecký and Miroslav Janek), and, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, once “we could finally breathe,” *Up Series* (1964), *First Love* (1974, dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski), and *66 Seasons* (2006, dir. Peter Kerekes). These are the works Třeštíková names as influences throughout her career, and they all have one thing in common: They center on “tiny everyday life.”

Open to Criticism

Třeštíková isn’t one to shy away from criticism; in fact she is the first to acknowledge the problematic aspects of her work. She often recalls that although she won a national prize and a critic’s award for *Katka* (2009), the story of a young girl losing her life to drugs, there was also a pushback from progressives who claimed she was abusing her privileged position by exploiting ordinary people. She also noted that she has been criticized for not being willing to take the last step in revealing her subjects’ inner demons and for never openly challenging the social system.

However, reading the course notes for her students at FAMU, or any of the multitudes of interviews she has given, it is obvious Třeštíková is well aware of the moral and ethical issues she faces as a director of her caliber. She developed her method based on her own moral compass, and is willing to take responsibility for the decisions she has made. This may explain how she was able to master her specific mode of documentary-making in a way that makes it seem nearly effortless. Perhaps, too, this is why we have the luxury of debating the meaning of her work

Třeštíková and an actress Lída Baarová during shooting *Doomed Beauty*.

© Aerolins



Doomed Beauty (2016)

without thinking too much about the process behind it. Which is not to be taken for granted. Too often we forget that her approach is in fact a logistical nightmare.

First, there is the difficulty of funding a production that won't be completed until years, if not decades, after it has begun. Třeštíková started out her career, like every filmmaker of her generation, in the centrally managed film industry of Communist Czechoslovakia, slowly building confidence in her goals over time. To start with, of course, these goals were considerably less ambitious. Initially, she planned to spend far less time on *Marriage Stories* (the first series was shot in 1987, the last was completed in 2018), with the first wave of shooting the only one. But the audience reaction was so positive that Třeštíková remained committed to long-term observation for the rest of her career—even after the revolution of 1989, when the market economy made this type of project more onerous financially.

Thankfully, Třeštíková kept in touch with Czech Television (the public broadcaster) and, later, the Czech Film Fund, allowing her to find a way to keep the camera rolling. For over 10 years now, she has collaborated with the production company Negativ (Pavel Strnad and Kateřina Černá), who are behind her latest films, *Marcela* (2006), *René* (2008), *Katka* (2009), *Mallory* (2015, winner of Best Documentary at Karlovy Vary), and her latest work, *A Marriage Story* (2018).

As an established director, it may be easier to raise funding, but there are still a host of other variables at play. For starters, it isn't always easy to stay in touch with the people whose lives she's documenting. In *Marriage Stories*, if a couple gets divorced, one of the part-

ners may be unwilling to continue the project. That is still a manageable situation. But where Třeštíková is following only one person, portraying harsh truths while remaining on good terms with them can be like walking on eggshells. This is where it matters that Třeštíková seems to genuinely care about "her people," establishing a bond of trust through her empathy and unusually strong charisma. But she also truly does understand and care. The fact that these people are willing to open up their lives to millions of moviegoers through the lens of Třeštíková's camera, for sometimes more than a quarter of a century, is telling.

More Than Just Heartwarming

Třeštíková is deeply attached to her work. At the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival, she stayed for discussions with the audience after all six sold-out three-hour marathon screenings of *Marriage Stories*. And this was after sitting through the screenings—which goes a long way to explaining why she is cherished by so many. Not only does her work warm the heart, however; it also brings to light changes in the world as they are taking place (an especially valuable service in such turbulent times), raising every question that documentary films can raise about authorship and ethics.

In our first encounter with Třeštíková's work, the concept itself is usually the main fascination. To witness the human condition evolving before our eyes is pure cinematic magic. In retrospect, we appreciate the nuances of her approach, detecting the subtler details—sometimes in agreement, sometimes with an editorial comment. But either way, there is no denying the riveting pull of the works by this filmmaker who has devoted her life to looking for the little truths in everyday life.



Reconstruction of the Unspeakable

© MasterFilm

Based on a true story, the short film *Reconstruction*—directed by Ondřej Novák and Jiří Havlíček; produced by Dagmar Sedláčková (MasterFilm)—tells the compelling story of a boy who has committed a terrible crime. The two debut directors are the first Czechs to enter the competitive section Pardi di domani of the prestige Locarno Festival since 17 years ago, when Jan Němec's *Late Night Talks With Mother* took the Golden Leopard for Best Video.

by Martin Svoboda

Reconstruction follows the 17-year-old Olda as he awaits trial in a detention center for juveniles. He tries to forget his recent past, but the monotony of jail life, broken only by recollections of his brutal assault of a homeless man, keep Olda from putting his mind at rest. Even as he recalls pieces of the police reconstruction, which forced him to relive the crime, his memory is every bit as imperfect and incomplete as our efforts to comprehend his senseless act of violence.

The Danger Within Society

"The movie is based on an actual incident that took place over the summer holidays in a small Czech town," Novák and Havlíček explain in their directors' statement. Two bored young boys tortured to death a homeless man they found sleeping on a bench in a park. This was in 2015.

"It was the same year that Czech society was getting worried about the migration crisis," write Novák and Havlíček. "Some media and politicians were spreading fear of foreigners coming in, with no empathy for the fact that they were refugees of war. We were astonished by this biased attitude, as well as the narrow-minded, near-hysterical reaction of the Czech public. In response to this nationalistic rhetoric, we wanted to point out a problem that lies within Czech society, rather than outside of it. Violence by juveniles against homeless people is a reflection of the majority's attitude toward the socially weakest members of our society. Contrary to the potential danger posed by refugees, this danger is real."

Director Ondřej Novák is a self-taught filmmaker based in Prague. He has made several short documentaries and video clips, and is a member of the Motiv Collective, where he focuses on creating comic scripts, interactive games,

and animation. *Reconstruction* is his short movie debut. Jiří Havlíček is an artist and curator based in Prague, and has been making videos for the online platform Artyčok TV since 2011. He teaches in the Department of Graphics and Drawing at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Ostrava, and previously made two experimental short films, *Captives* (2012) and *Film Week* (2016).

Reconstruction wasn't produced in the way typical for films in the Czech Republic. Rather than turning to the Czech Film Fund, the public broadcaster Czech Television, or any other source, all the money for the project came out of Novák's own pocket.

"I was asked to work on the project only after the movie was nearly completed," says producer Dagmar Sedláčková. "We didn't meet till I came to the editing room, where we discussed alternate versions of the cut, trying to find the right narrative structure. Then I began work on the festival and distribution strategy. When I asked Ondřej why he didn't try the [Czech Film] Fund, he explained that given his experience, which was basically nil, he didn't stand a chance with the committee—and my guess is he was probably right."

The Difficulties of Financing Short Films

Luckily, with a budget of less than €6,000, producing the film without outside funding wasn't a problem. In the end, Sedláčková was glad she didn't have to go looking for money, since she says it's nearly impossible when it comes to short films.

"In the Czech Republic, we're lucky to have big institutions like the Czech Film Fund and Czech TV supporting short films, but unfortunately that's not enough," Sedláčková says. "Especially in cases like ours, where you're working with filmmakers who didn't go to film school and aren't established. Since the old tradition of screening films before the feature is long gone—probably due to an unwillingness to share profits—it's hard to find a way to get people to see shorts. What we need is some kind of institution to specialize in festival sales of shorts. It's the only way to keep them alive. Fortunately, there's a growing trend of linking short films to full-length program formats and putting them into theatrical distribution. Bionaut is about to release a program of animated films, which will include the MasterFilm short."

Reconstruction's acceptance to the Locarno competition came as a great surprise to everyone. "Neither of the direc-

tors had any such ambition," Sedláčková says. "When I told Ondřej it was time to send out festival applications, he looked puzzled. He'd never really thought about it. He was just planning to screen the film for some friends here in Prague and that's it. Both of the guys were real rookies when it came to festivals. They had no idea about the hierarchy of all the competitions and events. Locarno was, of course, on the top of my list, but I didn't really believe we had any chance, so I tried all kinds of other places. It's funny. Almost all of them turned us down, so I had started losing hope. And then we heard from Locarno! I can't even



describe how I felt when I heard the news. It seemed so right, so well-deserved. It was a real fairy tale come true."

According to Sedláčková, there was no great lobbying effort, no grand plan. "It's reassuring to know that the movie itself still matters, since lots of producers, and even directors, don't believe that anymore. What convinced the crew of Locarno to accept us was a good film. No favoritism, no friendships with 'the right people.' All we needed was a film that reflects the pure love of filmmaking—that's why it felt so right when we got in."

Good Strategy and Coproduction Are Key

As far as financing of the project goes, Sedláčková says she doesn't think their approach is right for everyone: "It's one thing to be happy for one specific case, and another to talk in general terms. We need good funding, good networking, and a good strategy. As a producer, I'm well aware that directors can't pay for their own movies, and they should be thinking about distribution."

She said she sees herself as focused on the international market. "We have to try to make films that can cross borders through festivals, but also through the productions themselves. We can't count on the Czech [Film] Fund and Czech TV. They do help, but their budgets are limited. The difference between European and Czech budgets is still significant. I believe that's the path Czech cinema needs to take if we want to achieve European levels of financing."





A Breath of Fresh Air

With New Animated

In most countries, when people hear the word “animation,” TV shows are the first thing that comes to mind. You’d literally have to live on the moon not to know about *The Simpsons*. For Czechs, however, the first thing they probably think of is *Večerníček* (*Bedtime Stories*), the animated series for kids that has been on the air since 1965, achieving near cult status. Put simply, there has been a lack of animated shows outside the established format of bedtime stories. But now this is starting to change.

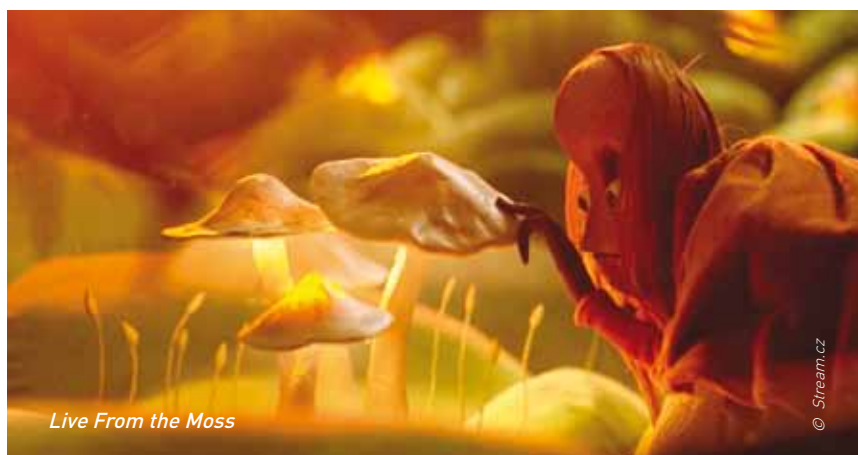
by Eliška Děcká





Live From the Moss

© Stream.cz



Live From the Moss

© Stream.cz

We can't go any further, however, without mentioning the pioneering work of the on-line TV platform Stream.cz, which produces animated series outside the traditional Czech canon. Producer Lukáš Záhoř, who is a huge fan of animation, was active at Stream.cz in various creative positions from 2007 to 2017, and played a major role in the development and production of original animated series aimed not only at children (*Live From the Moss*, 2016; dir. Filip Pošivač, in coproduction with nutprodukce), but their parents as well.

One such project that was particularly original was *Fridge Stories* (2016–17, dir. Lukáš Záhoř, Milan Kuchynka, Robert Geisler) consisted of, featuring silly stories of different types of food living in a fridge. "We were thinking about kids aged 4 to 9, but their parents too," says Záhoř. "We got a lot of praise from our audience, but for some people it was too much. I think that's partly because the look was so different: a minimum of computer animation, shabby 2D illustrations that was simplified on purpose, with ragged cutouts and very specific visuals. Plus the stories were pretty crazy, too."

Fridge Stories traveled the festival circuit, as did *Live From the Moss*. The latter series also had theatrical distribution in French cinemas together with *Deep in Moss* (2016, dir. Filip Pošivač, Bára Valecká). For Pošivač, the collaboration with Stream was his first creative work online, bringing a host of new experiences: "The feedback we received was very diverse, to say the least. Of course it's online, so there was some vulgarity involved—classic hater's stuff. You just have to get used to it. It's definitely different than screening your film at a festival among fans."

TV Series



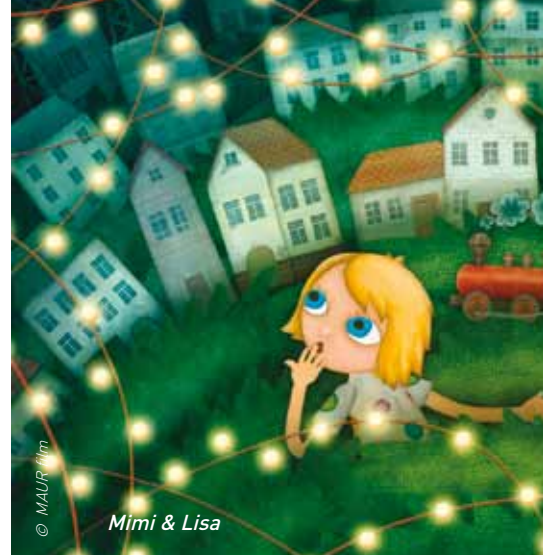
Live From the Moss

© Stream.cz

The Story of Mimi and Lisa

Currently one of the most significant projects in this area, supported with €35,700 from the Czech Film Fund, is the Slovak-Czech coproduction *Mimi & Lisa: The Christmas Lights Mystery*. This 26-minute Christmas special is slated for its small-screen premiere at Christmastime on Slovak TV, while viewers in the Czech Re-

FOCUS ANIMATION



public will get a look in theaters already in November, thanks to the Czech distribution partner Cinemart.

One of the things that makes *Mimi & Lisa* such an interesting project is the fact that it builds on the success of the bedtime stories format in Czech (and Slovak) culture. The Christmas special is a loose sequel to 13 short episodes *Mimi & Lisa* (directed by Katarína Kerekesová [2012–15]), about the adventures of two extraordinary girls, one of whom is blind. The series, broadcast by Slovak and Czech TV alike, met with extraordinary success, creating a whole brandseries. There has been that extends from DVDs, books, and coloring books, to other types of merchandise too.

Thanks to strong sales by Planet Nemo Animation (PNA), the stories of Mimi and Lisa have attained worldwide popularity can be, enjoyed by children in Taiwan, Brazil, China, Hong Kong, France, Belgium, Montenegro, Slovenia, Canada, and Columbia. PNA also mediated the sale of the series to French Cinema Public Films (CPF), which made a French dubbed version and released a compilation of the first six episodes in theaters. A DVD release is currently in preparation as well.

This strong network of international partners, as well as personal friendship and professional respect for Katarína Kerekesová, was one of the main reasons why Czech coproducer Martin Vandas and MAUR film chose to get involved in the project.

"I've known Katarína now for over 15 years, and we've always talked about collaborating, but the projects never seemed to be right," Vandas says. "With *Mimi & Lisa* and the Christmas TV special, though, it suddenly clicked. With this project, I really believe that Czech and Slovak collaboration on animation can once again be deeply meaningful, with a big impact throughout the animated world. This is thanks to the popularity of not only the *Mimi & Lisa* brand, but all the influential partners in the project—from Czech and Slovak television to the Planet Nemo Animation sales agency and to the Cinema Public Films distribution company in France."

Friendship lies not only at the core of the original *Mimi & Lisa* stories, but also in the creative team behind the Christmas special: besides Kerekesová (creative producer and codirector, mostly focused on sound postproduction), also Ivana Šebestová (director and art director) and Katarína Moláková (together with Šebestová and Kerekesová, author of the story and scripts).

Challenge for Young Animators

Apart from this central close-knit team, *Mimi & Lisa* is also a great opportunity for young Czech animators and animation students to get industry experience. "Especially for young animators, this kind of project can be very rewarding," Vandas says. "In the world of industry animation, *Mimi & Lisa* has unusually high standards of visual quality. Also, the whole process—where you finish





FOCUS ANIMATION

a task, submit it, receive feedback, then start a new task—is something you have to learn if you want to be a professional animator working as part of a team.”

Petra Feňdová, a third-year animation student at FAMU in Prague, echoes Vandas’s words: “The biggest challenge for me was definitely the software we worked with—Toon Boon—plus organizing my time. I had worked with the software before, but only passively, so especially at the beginning, it really slowed me down and I had a hard time keeping up with deadlines and the rhythm of the production. I got better over time, and really learned a lot, so I’m grateful they were patient with me and let me stay on the project even though I had trouble at first.”

Hungry Bear Tales

Also learning important industry lessons these days are Kateřina Karhánková and Alexandra Májová (born Hetmerová), the two directors who previously won international acclaim with their animated short films *Fruits of Clouds* (2017) and *Mythopolis* (2013).

Now they are codirectors on another interesting take on the bedtime story format: a new animated series for kids called *Hungry Bear Tales*, produced by Bionaut, with Czech TV as minority coproducer. Development of the project culminated in production of the pilot episode, *Blueberry Hunt!*, with Czech Film Fund support of €21,400. The pilot (currently making the festival rounds as an individual animated

short) has already garnered several awards, including a Golden Slipper at this year’s Zlín Film Festival, and the award for best online and TV film at Anifilm 2018.

Development of the series was supported by Creative Europe MEDIA with €60,000, and Bionaut producer Bára Příkaská adds, “We’re also putting together an application now for MEDIA TV Programming, which can cover production costs up to 12.5 percent of the budget. We’re the first Czech animated series to apply for this. Also, apart from Czech TV as minority coproducer, we’re still discussing potential coproduction with Belgium, Germany, and Poland.”

As for the directors, Májová shared about the pressure that comes with an animated series to be really responsible, and focus on every detail in the preparation phase, so things will be clear later on to every member of the team.

“Working on a series,” says Májová, “if you neglect anything, even something really small, and just leave it there, it can become a big problem later on. Plus, when I worked on my own films, everything was in my head and I didn’t need to explain it to anybody else. But here, everything has to be understandable to everyone and described in detail right from the start.”

This goes to show how important the production of animated series is, not only for the industry itself (and the job opportunities it brings), but also for the young, up-and-coming animators, who get a chance to learn professional skills in a way that would be impossible in the sheltered, low-stress environment of film school.

Martina Chwistková another young Czech animator involved in the *Mimi & Lisa* production, confirms this. “You always learn a lot every time you work with other professionals. This was my first time communicating only through emails and phone calls from the very start of the project, with all of the technical problems discussed over Skype or Team Viewer. I actually never met face to face with all the people on the project, which was totally new for me.”

As more and more projects are produced by this long-distance method, it’s an experience that will definitely come in handy in the future of every animator. /



MAUR film: Celebrating 15 Animated Years

MAUR film, one of the Czech Republic's biggest and most-respected production companies specializing in animation, celebrates its 15th anniversary this year. Founders Martin Vandas and Aurel Klimt started their careers together—Vandas as producer, Klimt as director—with the stop-motion feature film *Fimfárum* (2002). Following that, Klimt went on to work mainly for his own production company, Studio Zvon, where he completed his long-term project *Laika* (2017), while Vandas continued to run MAUR film, in tandem with his wife, Alena Vandasová.

by Kamila Boháčková



several different international coproductions at once, with Czech, English, and French all flying about the room. But, looking back on his beginnings, Vanda says he's just happy they managed to survive, given what an expensive and time-consuming venture it is producing animated films.

Vandas reminisces: "At first, it was just an expensive hobby, and my wife and I had to earn our money from something else. Now, we can at least make a living off it. Comparing the situation in those days to now, the Czech Film Fund gives more money to animation nowadays, but I would say the biggest change is I started producing feature films, and now I can also afford to produce shorts. Ten or fifteen years ago, it was hard to get funding for short films in the Czech Republic, and getting them into theaters was even harder."

Vandas says he has been systematically working to have shorts screened in cinemas alongside feature films, and his work has paid off. In one great example, he served as minority coproducer on a short experimental animation by the Hungarian Luca Tóth, called *Superbia*. A coproduction between MAUR film CZ,

In its decade and a half of existence, MAUR film has notched an impressive number of successes, including the animated features *Fimfárum 2* (2006) and *Fimfárum Third Time Lucky* (2011). The company—a member of the European Film Academy, the Audiovisual Producers' Association, and the Association of Czech Animation Film, which Vandas served as its first chairperson—is now producing its

eightth feature film, as well as multiple shorts and 30 episodes of an animated series for the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Short Films, Long on Success: *Superbia* and *The Tree*

Every visit to MAUR film studios, located in a residential home in Prague, finds the husband-wife team busy at work on

Fakt Visual Lab HU, and Artichoke SK, the film had a budget of €85,000 (€21,200 of it from the Czech Film Fund) and premiered in the Semaine de la Critique section at Cannes 2016. In Czech movie theaters, *Superbia* screened as the supporting film for the Czech documentary feature *Let Misik Sing!* (2017).

Another successful example of this was a short titled *The Tree* (2016), which Czech director Lucie Sunková made with the

as national coordinator for the Czech Republic from its inception. The forum seeks primarily to attract new partners, producers, broadcasters, and film distributors from Central and Eastern Europe, and although originally conceived as a Visegrad countries project, the participants now prefer to speak about Central and East European animation. Vandas adds: "Central and East European countries have more in common when it comes to culture,

€3 million. It received €118,000 in support from the Czech Film Fund and Czech Television, and is slated to hit theaters in spring 2020. *The Crossing* follows the dramatic journey of two siblings running away from pursuers in an unspecified East European country. It's a tale about the never-ending struggle to find a new home where we can make a better life. Lucie Sunková is head animator for the Czechs. "We've been developing this project for six years now," Vandas says. "The French producer had problems with funding, because Arte initially preferred another project. But eventually, they succeeded in getting Balance Film on board as coproducers, and then, by coincidence, Arte finally agreed to join. Eurimages is also supporting the project, and we've been working on it for six months already. A third of the paint-on-glass animation is being done here in our studio, another third in Germany, and the rest in France. So it's demanding in terms of communication and organizing the workflow, which is why we try to get the director to Prague as often as possible."



unusual technique of paint-on-glass animation. Sunková's film, a metaphorical story about parallels in the lives of people and trees, was released to cinemas as a supporting film with the Czech feature *Green Horse Rustlers* (2016).

Vandas says this is also a good example of how essential international coproduction is to the viability of Central and East European animation: "Nowadays, animated film basically means a coproduction." Having funding from multiple sources is better not only because of the time and the costs involved, he says, but also because it gives Czech animators a chance to gain international experience and establish contacts with foreign professionals.

The increasing number of successful international coproductions in the Czech animation industry is mainly due to the market access platform called the Visegrad Animation Forum. The VAF was founded in 2013, and Vandas has served

history, and budget and funding possibilities, and coproductions between them are easier than with Western Europe." On the other hand, *The Tree* is an excellent example of a successful coproduction between the Czech Republic (MAUR film) and France (Les Films de l'Arlequin). It was supported by both the Czech Film Fund and the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (CNC) in France, with a budget of nearly €100,000 (with €46,000 in support from the Czech Film Fund).

The Crossing: French Feature Collaboration

MAUR film and Les Films de l'Arlequin are now collaborating on another paint-on-glass film, *The Crossing*, a feature by the French director Florence Mialhe. This time out, there is a third coproducer, Balance Film of Germany, and the final product will be broadcast by TV Arte, the Franco-German public TV network. The project's budget is

Animating a Revolution Through the Eyes of a Child

Meanwhile MAUR film is also collaborating with the German company Balance Film on another big coproduction, titled *Fritzi: A Miraculous*



Revolutionary Tale. This feature-length animated film for children depicts the political events of fall 1989 in Leipzig as seen through the eyes of the 10-year-old Fritzi. In the story, Fritzi searches for her



friend Sophie who had asked Fritzi to look after her dog for the summer, but instead of coming back to school after the holidays, Sophie and her parents emigrated to West Germany and Fritzi can't figure out how to return the dog to her.

The film, due to open in cinemas in November 2019, is directed by the German duo Ralf Kukula and Matthias Bruhn. The project—coproduced by Balance Film and TrickStudio Lutterbeck (Germany), DogHouse Films (Luxembourg), Artemis Productions and Digital Graphics (Belgium), and MAUR film (Czech Republic)—has a total budget of €5.5 million with incentive backing from Eurimages (€480,000) and the Czech Film Fund (selective support €137,000 and production incentives €150,000), as well as the German Embassy in Prague.

Originally, the producers from Balance Film had proposed collaboration with MAUR film on the project, sending them the novel *Fritzi war dabei*, by Hanny Schotte, on which the film is based. Vandas explains: "My wife fell in love with the book and wanted to join the project. I didn't really want to, at first, because it's such a big coproduction, and the more coproducers you have, the bigger budget it requires. It seemed almost impossible for us to come up with 10 percent of the budget, which is the minimum required for minority coproduction, but we managed in the end, thanks to Eurimages. Here in our studio, we're recording the score for the film and making key animations for 40 minutes of footage. The drawing and animation style are realistic, and there hasn't been a project like this in Czech cartoons for at least 20 years, so we really had a problem finding animators

with the experience to do it. Students of animation in the Czech Republic are well prepared to make their own artistic films, but they aren't trained in the specialized professions." Even with MAUR film being a minority coproducer on the project, Vandas revealed that he wielded some influence on the story: "We pulled some strings to get the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and what happened at the German Embassy in Prague into the script. It's just a short part of the whole story, but we felt it was important."

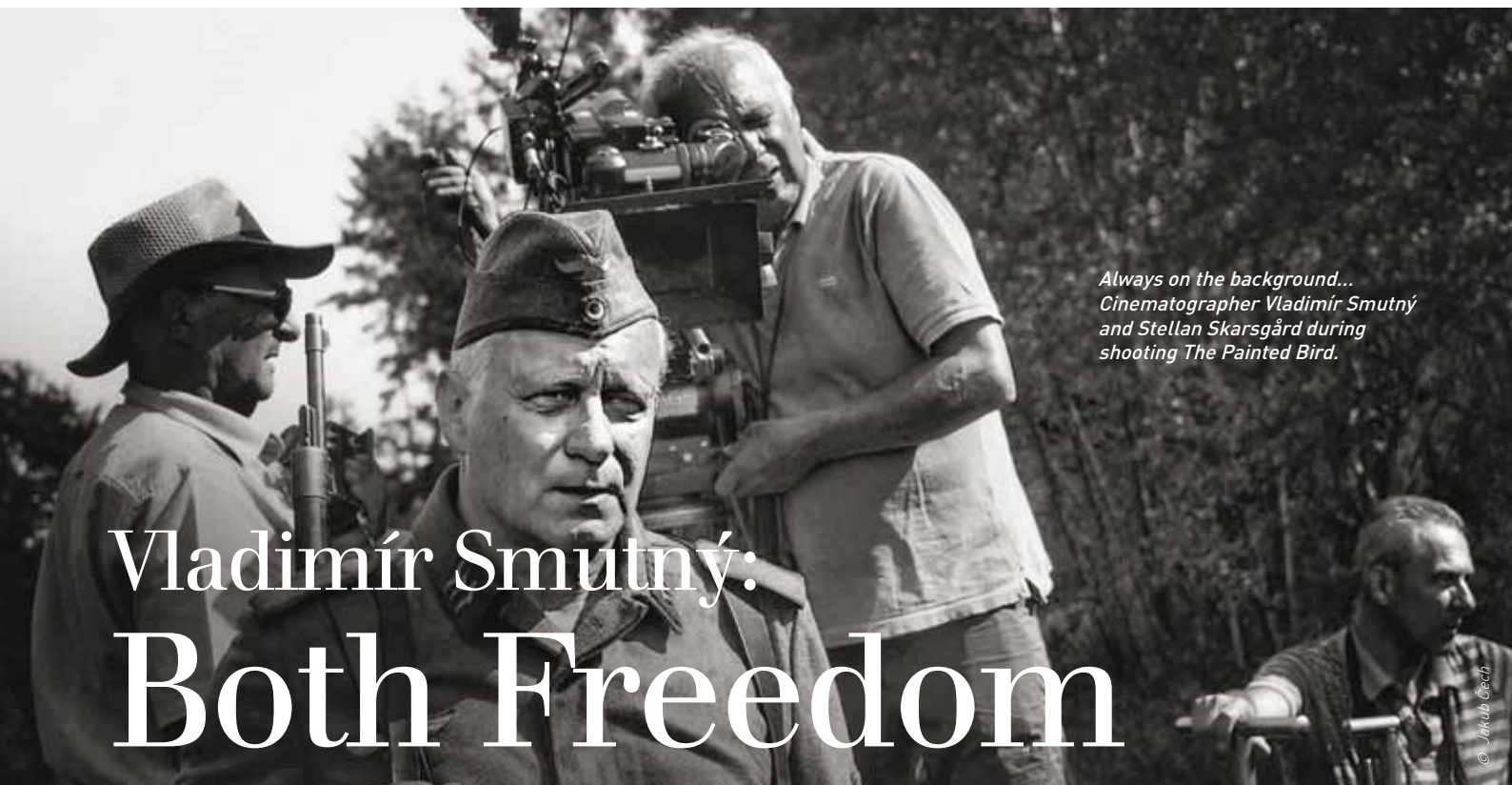
Forging Their Own Way Forward for the Next 15 Years—and Beyond

Apart from minority coproductions, MAUR film continues to develop its own projects, too. Vandas is currently a delegate producer and head of development on the coproduction of *Of Unwanted Things and People*, a Czech stop-motion children's animated film. The project got its start when Vandas sought the rights to film *The Orphans*, one of the stories in the book, authored by the famous writer, actor, and stage director Arnošt Goldflam. After optioning another three stories, Vandas chose a designer, director, scriptwriter, and dramaturge to adapt the story into a short film. He then began looking for funding, asking coproducers from Slovakia (Artichoke), Slovenia (ZVIKS), and Poland (WJTeam/Likaon) to sign on to the project, consisting of a feature film made up of four short stories by four different directors, working with four different crews—but just one designer (Patricie Ortiz Martinez) and one

dramaturge, to unite it artistically. The budget is €1.6 million, with support from Creative Europe MEDIA and the Czech Film Fund (contributing €118,000 toward the short film *The Orphans*, directed by David Sůkup). Vandas thinks the film could achieve success on a par with *Ma Vie de Courgette*. "We already have a world sales agent and a French distributor who wants to get it into French theaters. This is a movie about ignored people and taboo subjects that shows how they can be useful and important in our lives. And I must admit, the design and animation are better than they were back when we did *Fimfárum*. I can see how much progress there's been. Besides that, having the absurd sense of humour, originality, and hyperbole of Goldflam's writing is a big deal." Already, the coproduction *Of Unwanted Things and People* won the historical first Pitching Competition of Feature Films at the VAF in Třeboň this year.

Besides his work with MAUR film, Vandas is also a lecturer at FAMU in Prague, where he tries to help students of animation and production studies make the jump from school into the animation industry. Currently he's developing a project of three stop-motion student films with the working title *The Trio* (the budget is about €33,000, with €15,000 in support from the Czech Film Fund). For this project, he's trying to do distribution on an independent, site-specific basis, through Czech galleries and coffeehouses, with animation workshops for children, passing along his 15 years of experience in production to a new generation.





Always on the background...
Cinematographer Vladimír Smutný
and Stellan Skarsgård during
shooting *The Painted Bird*.

Vladimír Smutný: Both Freedom and Responsibility

Vladimír Smutný (b. 1942), winner of seven Czech Lions for Best Cinematography, has worked with legendary domestic directors František Vlácil, Jiří Menzel, and Karel Kachyňa, as well as with international crews on genre pics including *Love Lies Bleeding*, starring Faye Dunaway, and the French TV series *Maigret*. Recently he wrapped up shooting on two much-awaited features: a cinematic adaptation of Jerzy Kosiński's war story *The Painted Bird*, by director Václav Marhoul, and the sports film *The Golden Betrayal*, with Radim Špaček.

by Pavel Sladký

The Painted Bird is your third collaboration with Václav Marhoul, after *Smart Philip* and *Tobruk*. But this time is different, right? It's in black-and-white, with an all-star cast of Udo Kier, Harvey Keitel, Stellan Skarsgård, and Julian Sands, and tells the story of a Jewish boy trying to survive on his own amid the brutal landscape Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe...

The Painted Bird is so big and complicated, with such tough subject matter. What I realize more and more is it's about Václav's work as an auteur, his personal story-telling. I'm just the intermediary, bringing the images to the screen. There won't be much dialogue in this film.

We're telling the story with images. And because that's how we're doing it, which is what I always wanted, every composition, every movement of the camera, every single thing in the frame is so important. Fortunately, Václav and I are on the same wavelength, which helps the DOP-director dialogue a lot, on every single detail.

Would you say you feel more responsible as the DOP on this project?

I wouldn't put it that way. You can't have a heavy hand. You always need both freedom and responsibility at the same time.



The Painted Bird. Smutný and Udo Kier.

“I don’t think everything has to be fully under control”

***The Painted Bird* is going to be in black-and-white. How do you feel about that?**

That was Václav’s brilliant idea, not mine, and I couldn’t be happier. Thank God! Black-and-white images tend to be a bit more abstract. You can simplify the landscapes and you aren’t so distracted by the color of the structures. Even faces are more abstract.

How about the technical aspects? How do you control colors on the set, for example?

I don’t think everything has to be fully under control. Movies are scripted. They’re thoroughly thought out, and the more it’s all structured by rationality, the more you risk it’ll end up dry: reserved, too rational. For instance, I do use color filters, but I don’t try to control my method in every single detail. I try to simplify the lack black-and-white images, but I don’t want to completely control the style. Every professional has their own opinion on this, but this is the approach that feels right to me.

In recent years, you’ve made films that are pretty much the opposite of this one *The Painted Bird* going to be. Your collaboration with Jiří Vejdělek on *Patrimony*, for example. His films are focused on a Czech audience, using a broad palette of colors and fulfilling viewer’s expectations when it comes to emotions. As a cinematographer, I’m interested in changing genres, trying different approaches and solutions. *Patrimony* is a mainstream film. That doesn’t mean it should be dumb or dull. It still takes skill on the part of the cinematographer. Early in my career, I used to think there was something wrong with being skillful. I tried to make every film an

existential message. This was under the Communist regime, and my way of protesting was to shoot images that showed how ugly the world around us was. We used a lot of handheld camera, mixed colors. Basically, we were out to deconstruct reality. In Polish cinema, it was very much the same. Kieslowski, for instance. So it was nothing new, but that was how we felt.

My personal turning point came with *Kolya*. My style changed after that. Or maybe it started earlier, when I was doing *The Gentle Barbarian* with Petr Koliha. Already then, there was less randomness and destruction of the image. I felt I needed to go in a different direction. My path changed course during the ‘90s.

How do you look back on your early work on the films of František Vlácil, or with Jiří Menzel and Karel Kachyňa? You were gaining experience as second-unit director of photography, but you were nearly forty years old already.

Checking the camera after František Vlácil was nothing short of a miracle. I worked as camera operator on two of his movies, *Smoke on the Potato Fields* and *Snake Poison*, with František Uldrich as director of photography. I stood right next to Vlácil, checking the mise-en-scène, and even though we were both looking at the same set, I couldn’t see what he did. The images he made were unbelievable. That was the real start of my career. I learned more from him than anyone else. The way he worked with rain in *Smoke on the Potato Fields* was incredible. At one point, there’s an ambulance, we see the world through the windshield, and Vlácil decided to have it rain on the windshield, so reality became blurry, abstract. Unbelievable. I also learned a lot from a technical aspect back then.

After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the opportunity came to work with international film crews. You seized the opportunity, working on productions in Prague and elsewhere. Did you just want to try it out, to grow professionally, or were you looking for something specific you felt was missing in Czech cinema?



To be honest, I thought at the time that international coproductions had more to offer than local filmmaking. It was fun to shoot in distant countries and steal little bits of their everyday reality for the screen. But at its core, the work is basically the same everywhere, regardless of nationality. There's no great difference between Dutch, German, and Czech filmmakers, even though they work in different traditions. The differences are more on the level of personalities. But acting is very different! It's interesting to see how much the cultures of acting differ. Rudolf Hrušínský and Stellan Skarsgård, to name two actors I've worked with, are both great. It's unbelievable when you look in the camera and can't see them acting, but then you see the scenes edited, and they're definitely acting! Their acting can be so subtle that you can barely tell. A creative actor is sometimes the most valuable thing on a shoot.

Faye Dunaway came to the set when we were filming *Love Lies Bleeding* and I was preparing a shot with her in front of a window. Right away she came and asked, Why wasn't she in the light? I explained that I wanted her to be darker, to make it more mysterious. She checked every single shot during the dailies. Everyone was afraid of her. But I guess she liked the way I depicted her, so she trusted me.

The relationship between DOPs and actors is extremely important. If you both feel the character the same way, it brings you closer together. The actors know you can help them. And when you work closely, then you can both do your best for the character.

You mentioned the Academy Award-winning film *Kolya*. You still work with Jan Svěrák. Your latest collaboration, *Barefoot*, from last year, is narrated from a child's perspective, or the adult memory of the child's perspective. How did you go about that?

I like *Barefoot* a lot. The child's perspective allows for a certain level of hyperbole. It doesn't have to be so truthful. I appreciated that Jan brought in this happy, lighthearted perspective, and I also liked that the story doesn't tell you everything. There are blanks you need

to fill in for yourself. In your mind, in your heart. It was fun. And it did really well at the box office. We had a different film in mind when we started out, but once Jan and I start to work, it tends to follow our temperament. It follows its own path.

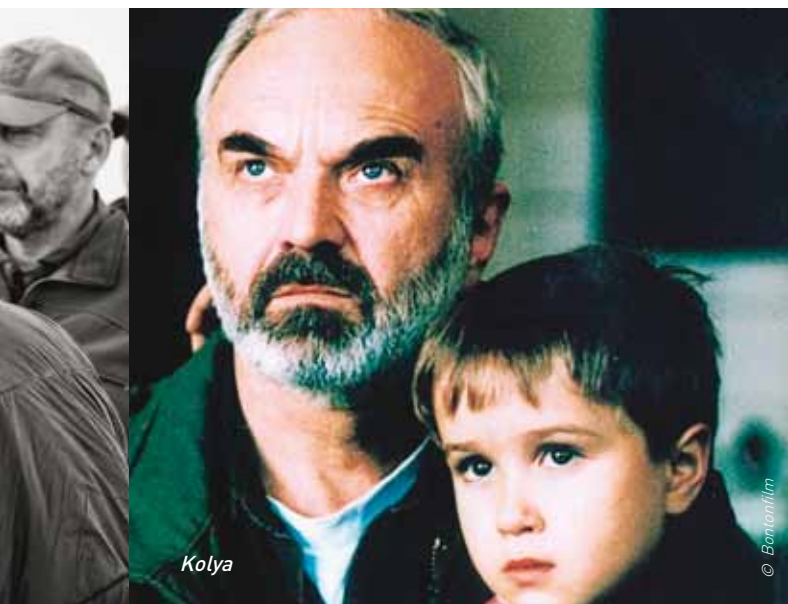
You also recently finished *The Golden Betrayal*, directed by Radim Špaček. Was this your first sports film? What made you choose it?

I'd been wanting to do a sports film for a long time. It's a rare opportunity in Czech cinema! Sports is so full of movement, and movement is a shortcut to emotion. That's what really interests me. When someone scores a goal in soccer, or makes a basket in basketball, their emotions are right there. You don't need a lot of words. That's what drew me to Radim's story about Czech basketball players, the European champions of 1946 whose lives were overshadowed by postwar politics.

At this point, you've tried all sorts of genres: mainstream, art films, sports, children's, Ivan Fíla, František Vlácil. Looking at this diverse variety of projects, would you say you've left a visible mark that people can identify? Or is a cinematographer just in service to the visions of others?

I walk my own path. I adhere to the sensibilities of the material and also, more and more, I try to avoid lighting. Besides the directing and emotional aspects, there's a photographic challenge to filmmaking, and that's my job.

Jiří Svoboda's *The Downfall of the Secluded Berhof* was based on oil lamps, with expressive colors and hand-held camera. In Jan Svěrák's *Barefoot*, I was even shadowing some of the daylight away. With Ivan Fíla in *King of Thieves*, I was dealing with colors, and in *Lea* with dark images. I have to be able to bring my professional knowledge to my service to the genre. Otherwise I'm not interested. I can't be just a servant. *The Painted Bird* is my first work in black-and-white and I'm in heaven. Every film brings the challenge back to me in a different shape. /



Kolya



Vladimír Smutný with Jan Svěrák, director of *Kolya*, *Barefoot* and more...



Czech Script Consulting Incubator Ready for Takeoff

This autumn, the Czech Film Fund's education and development program enters its main phase. Six feature projects supported by the fund will develop their scripts with renowned international experts, who will also train Czech script consultants.

The first workshop takes place in October and has two parts: Part one is a series of workshops dedicated to script consulting. Open to all interested film professionals, they will examine the craft of script consulting from various angles—from communication in creative teams to techniques of script assessment to detailed script analysis. Speakers will be drawn from the incubator's core, as well as guest tutors, including Gyula Gazdag, Anita Voorham, Franz Rodenkirchen, Christian Routh, Marietta von Hausswolff von Baumgarten, and editor Molly Malene Stensgaard, who will talk about her longterm collaboration with Lars von Trier. After completion of the seminar, the selected creative teams will work on their scripts with tutors and trainees. /



During Karlovy Vary IFF, Gyula Gazdag and Helena Bezděková introduced the program and selected trainees.

Czech Film Fund Support for Independent Producers

A new arrangement between the Czech Film Fund and ACE Producers offers Czech independent producers a chance to meet face to face with major figures in the international film industry, giving them access to important information and knowledge.



The meetings are intended to help Czech independent producers find success for their projects on an international scale. During the training held June 29 to July 1 in Prague, participants focused on how to distribute and promote work at international film festivals. Among those who shared their experience during the two-day program was Kate Ogborn, producer of the UK series *The End of the F***ing World*, coproduced by Netflix and UK Channel 4.

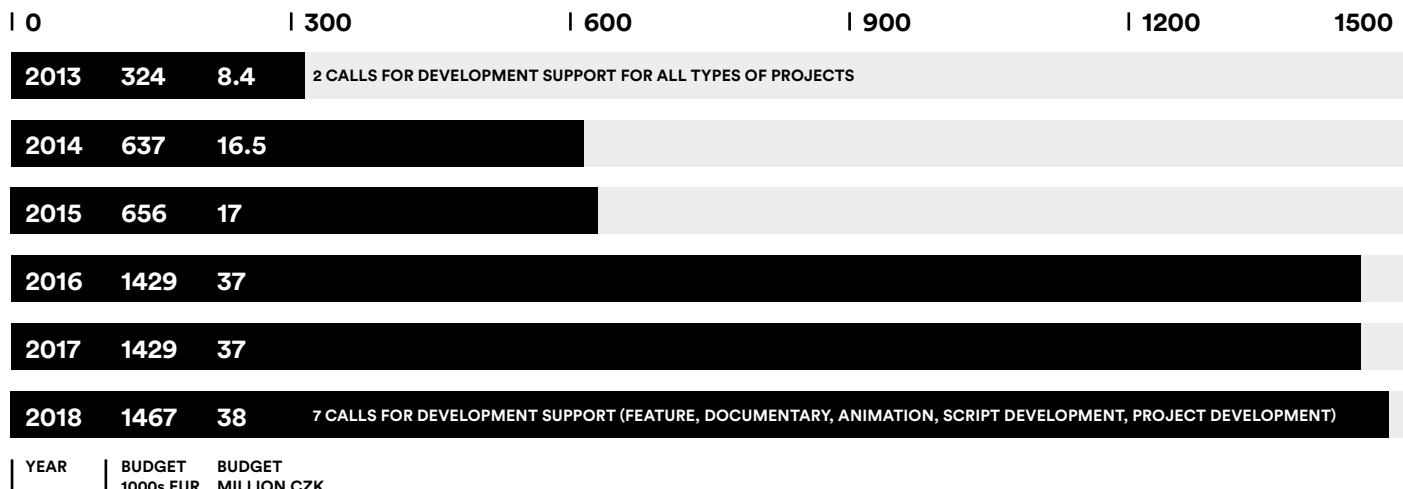
Two workshops were planned for 2018 with the participation of ACE Producers, a network of experienced independent film producers from Europe and beyond. Independent producers from the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia had their event in Prague in late June–early July, with a similar event planned in the Finnish cities of Helsinki and Espoo for the producer from Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Island and Estonia. /

All the tools are in place. Now the projects are coming.

The Czech Film Fund has made development support its top priority. Since 2013, we have been systematically increasing the scheme's budget and diversifying calls to help all types of projects come to life.

This year, we are launching the pilot project of Script Consulting Incubator, aiming to train a new generation of script consultants while connecting them with supported projects.

1. Development support year by year:



2. Script Consulting Incubator:

The Czech Film Fund offers one-year long professional guidance in script development to 12 projects while also training aspiring Czech script consultants.

Head of Studies: Gyula Gazdag
Tutors: Anita Voorham, Pavel Jech,
Franz Rodenkirchen

The first set of projects will be
selected this summer.

Learn more at
en.dramaturgicky-inkubator.cz

Subscribe to our newsletter and watch
the projects progress.



The Prague Orgy:

Human Behaviour Under the Pressure of Power

© Prague Movie Company

The U.S. writer's famous 1985 novella, based on his own experience, is set in mid-1970s Communist Czechoslovakia. Roth (1933–2018) visited Prague several times following the Soviet-led invasion of 1968, aiding Czech authors and intellectuals who were targeted by the regime. The project, a Czech-Slovak-Canadian coproduction with an international cast, will be shot in English, and was selected for this year's Venice Gap-Financing Market.

by Hedvika Petrželková

The *Prague Orgy* depicts a 1976 journey to the capital of Communist Czechoslovakia by Roth's alter ego Nathan Zuckerman. Apart from offering help to banned writers, Zuckerman is looking to rescue a Yiddish author's unique collection of short stories and smuggle it out of the country. Despite the political oppression, he finds the city's social life thriving, full of fun and open relationships. The more the regime clamps down, the greater people's desire to retreat into their private worlds of intimacy.

"Irena Pavlásková and I have been making preparations for *The Prague Orgy* for almost four years now. I am greatly honored that we succeeded in obtaining the rights to the work of a

literary figure of Roth's stature," says producer Viktor Schwarcz.

"Initially, we were focused on funding in the Czech Republic. Then, in 2016, we were joined by Michal Kráčmer, a young producer who specializes more in international collaboration. He presented the project at the prestigious European-North American Trans Atlantic Partners program in Berlin, then in Toronto and Halifax in Canada. The presentation in Venice will be our last one before shooting begins. Above all, we're looking to test the European market, since up to now we've presented the project mostly in North America. Thanks to our international cast and the fact that we're shooting in English, we believe we have a chance with distributors

from the big European markets, and we would also like to finalize our negotiations with the international sales agents there."

The film, which has backing from the Czech Film Fund (€350,980), Prague Film Fund (€29,400) as well as Creative Europe MEDIA (€50,000), is currently being made as a Czech-Slovak-Canadian coproduction, with Arina as the coproducer for Slovakia and Timshell Pictures from Toronto as the Canadian partner.

"We acquired our Canadian partners after Michal Kráčmer presented our project at the Toronto IFF and the Halifax," says Schwarcz, adding that they are still seeking funding. The budget of the film is set at €1.7 million.

Irena Pavlásková to Bring Legendary Philip Roth Book to Screen

© Prague Movie Company

When did you get the idea of adapting *The Prague Orgy*?

Right after I read the book for the first time, some six years ago, I said to myself, What a great book! Clever, original, complex, and at the same time provocative, sad, and amusing. I admired Roth for his deep understanding of our reality and his ability to really immerse himself in it. Also I was fascinated by the main female character, so different from most other female characters and at the same time so real. I really hope to capture her colorfulness, her attitude, her desperate inner resistance, and the way she reflects the heaviness and rottenness of the whole era.

Do you see the book as especially relevant to audiences today? What does it offer viewers, in your opinion? Are you planning to screen it abroad as well?

The story takes place in Czechoslovakia in 1976, eight years after the Soviet invasion, when the totalitarian regime was consolidating its position. People had resigned themselves to the situation, and everybody dealt with the pressure differently. Some people shut themselves away, some adapted against their will, others collaborated, and then there were a very few who actually resisted.

Although it is a period film, its main theme is still topical: human behavior under the pressure of power. Why is it that some people have the strength to resist while others bow down? How much should we be willing to accept and for how long? How to deal with the aggression of power?

I suppose most viewers will find the main story line—the relationship between the U.S. author Zuckerman and the Czech rebel Olga—quite appealing, although their mutual attraction

remains unconsummated: Olga is too dangerous and uncontrollable.

Filming is due to start in August. How long is it planned for, and at what locations?

We'll start in late August and continue through mid October. The main photography will take place in Prague. Then, at the end of October, we should have about three shooting days in Canada.

What is your directorial concept? Do you focus on certain story lines? What's the key theme for you?

I'm very faithful to the book. I just adapted it more to the cinematic form. For instance, I took some purely conversational scenes from the book and integrated them into the plot, or divided up conversations into several scenes and locations. Also the book itself is quite slim, so we added some scenes to the screenplay. Compared to the book, I stressed the fact that the main character is helping and supporting banned Czech writers—which corresponds with reality, since Roth actually did organize aid from the U.S. for persecuted Czech authors.

What was your meeting with Roth like? Did he have any comments about the film?

It's very sad that he passed away. We had agreed he would come to Prague for the premiere, and were planning to give him a great welcome and thank him once again for the help that he gave Czechs. Meeting Mr. Roth was a tremendous experience. It all started when I decided to write him a letter asking his permission to adapt the book. He wanted to see my films and an exposition first, to understand how I saw the story and how I intended to adapt it for the screen. Later he invited me for a personal meeting at his home in Connecticut. It was an experience I will never forget. The fact that Mr. Roth granted me the rights was a great success, but also a big responsibility. He was extremely charming, he had a certain mystery about him, and at the same he was completely natural and very kind. We talked for more than three hours. He asked about my motivation, about my own view of the story and the characters. I also told him about myself and my family, and he seemed to be very interested. Now I feel a double responsibility to make a film Mr. Roth would be happy with.



© KVIFF

Director and screenwriter Irena Pavlásková's directorial debut was *Time of the Servants* (1989), which among other honors was recognized at Cannes 1990, where it tied for the Caméra d'Or Special Distinction. Her other films as director are *Corpus Delicti* (1991), *Time of Debts* (1998), *Bitch's Diary* (2007), *An Earthly Paradise for the Eyes* (2009, winner of Best Actress and the FIPRESCI prize at Moscow IFF), and most recently, *Photographer* (2015). She has also directed feature films and documentaries for TV.

The Cremator

Juraj Herz

© NFA

Czech Master of Horror

“And what if I were to hang you, my dear?” That question, delivered in Rudolf Hrušínský’s honey-sweet voice in *The Cremator* (1969), is a defining line in Czech psychological horror, a genre created and defined by essentially one director: Juraj Herz. On April 8, 2018, Herz, creator of more than 25 feature films, passed away, at the age of 83.

by Jindřiška Bláhová (originally published in *Respekt* magazine)

Juraj Herz, born in Kežmarok, Slovakia, in 1934, was one of the most prominent and distinctive directors in post-war Czechoslovak film. A graduate of the Applied Arts

School in Bratislava and DAMU in Prague, he spent his apprentice years as an assistant first to director Zbyněk Brynych, then to Ján Kadár, on the Oscar-winning *The Shop on Main Street* (1965), after which he made his own directing debut with *Sign of Cancer* (1966), a more-or-less mediocre detective movie, set in a hospital.

Still, in its experimentation with imagery, sound, and casting, *Sign of Cancer* gave a hint of what was to come. In Ladislav Fuks’s 1967 novel *The Cremator*, about a crematorium employee during World War II who embraces fascism before killing his family out of a perverse sense of paternal obligation, Herz discovered

a work that spoke to him profoundly; to his personality, inclinations, and experience. The resulting film was one of the best ever made in Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, audiences had to wait a long time to see it. Herz’s movie adaption of *The Cremator* was banned by Communist Party censors, and remained unseen in Czechoslovakia until 1989.

Herz is routinely referred to as a “master of horror.” While this is certainly true, he was first and foremost an exceptional storyteller, capable of seeing poetic images in otherwise sinister places. He was also notable for his skill at visual and narrative abbreviation. For example,



Iva Janžurová in *Morgian*

© NFA

his stories about a ten-year-old Jewish boy, imprisoned in a concentration camp with sixty Roma children during World War II—based on his own memories—create a peculiar atmosphere, somewhere in between horror and subversive fairy tale. As Herz himself liked to say, he enjoyed being scared.

All of Herz's horror films are tinged with an absurd humor that only makes them all the more terrifying—be it the hygienic, mental, and domestic orderliness of *Kopřkingl the cremator*, a small person aiming for higher goals (serving as a metaphor for any kind of totalitarianism); the contrast of Zdeněk Liška's beautiful score with the horror of *Kopřkingl's* speeches; or the grimace on Lieutenant Pavel's face in *Oil Lamps*.

Oil Lamps, Herz's 1971 adaptation of the 1944 novel by Jaroslav Havlíček, is unjustly overshadowed by the brilliance of *The Cremator*. In this story of the free-thinking, emancipated Štěpa, who marries her cousin for lack of a suitable partner in her own social circles, only to discover that due to having syphilis, he not only can't give her a child but is losing his sanity, Herz delves still deeper into human psychology. The tragic fate of the characters is in part a reflection of early-20th-century small-town morality, which Herz found repugnant. *Oil Lamps* competed for the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1972.

Herz's films burrow into our memory because their psychology is brilliantly echoed in their style. In *The Cremator*, a disturbing, subliminal feeling of being unhinged is evoked through experimental use of a wide-angle lens, deforming the picture with a fish-eye effect—Barrandov Studio purchased it as part of its effort to give young filmmakers more creative leeway. In *Oil Lamps*, Herz worked with exposure and concealment, and with the dramatic score of Luboš Fišer, turning a Sunday promenade into a freak show of shame and hypocrisy. *Morgiana* (1972), about a mentally ill woman who plots to kill her own sister, is simultaneously hallucinatory and magical.

In *Oil Lamps* as well as his later films, Herz's casting ability shines through. He selected and cast distinctive actors, often going counter to type. They, in turn, went on to make the film what it was. Iva

Janžurová, who prior to *Oil Lamps* had been mainly a comedic actress, superbly portrays the raw drama of the ruined Štěpa. Her optimistic expression, as she strives to maintain a sense of hope and dignity, dramatically clashes with the increasingly deranged countenance of Petr Čepek as her cousin Pavel. The director later cast Janžurová in a double role in *Morgiana*, arguably the pinnacle of her acting career.

After his "dark", counter-socialist films, made in the years before the Soviet occupation, Herz redeemed himself with the Communist establishment in the 1970s, with a series of lighter films intended for a wider audience. The



comedy *Girls From the Crockery Shop* and the TV detective film *Girl for Killing* both starred the smiley-faced Dagmar Veškrnová (the late wife of Václav Havel). Little by little, Herz reoriented himself toward the politically safer genre of fairy tales, which he claimed he "didn't like" but nevertheless succeeded in making his own. In 1978 he directed both *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Ninth Heart*, showcasing his Poe-esque sense of moodiness and his ability to edge the fairy-tale template closer to horror.

Herz started out the '80s with *Ferat Vampire*, an attempt at mainstream sci-fi horror, about a car that runs on human blood. His parody of mafia films, *Bulldogs and Cherries*, also from 1981, is one of the most bizarre and perverse films to come out of the pre-1989 industry. Attempts at straightforward genre, without a psychological element, just

didn't work for Herz. By contrast, the medieval satirical fable *The Magpie in the Wisp*, with music by rock group Pražský výběr, although not the highlight of his career, is nonetheless driven by impressive imagery and energy, mixed with the emerging punk spontaneity of the early '80s. Like *The Cremator*, this film too was banned by the Communists, and newly premiered in 1991.

Two years before his emigration to West Germany in 1987, Herz shot *The Night Overtook Me*, somewhere in between a work that is pro-regime and a reckoning with personal history. On the one hand, it extols Communist resistance fighter Jožka Jabůrková, killed in the World War II concentration camp Ravensbrück. On the other hand, the director (who said he had always wanted to "film a black comedy in a concentration camp") here returned to his own experiences from the camp and the war to produce an expressive, and oppressive, film.

Herz would return to reflections on this subject for a third time, in 2010, in the historical film *Habermann's Mill*. With this movie, he convincingly closed out his career, a career that not only reflected the ups and downs of the Czechoslovak and Czech film industries, but in hindsight highlights the assertive, authorial vision of a director who liked to be afraid, but was never afraid of film.

Come February 2019, New York moviegoers will get a look at the first-ever comprehensive retrospective of Juraj Herz's feature films in North America. The series, produced by Comeback Company, will premiere at Metrograph movie theater, on Manhattan's Lower East Side, which in its two-and-a-half-year history has become a required stop on the city's repertory cinema circuit.

The retrospective will highlight the must-sees in Herz's sizable filmography, along with several lesser-known titles with new English-language subtitles. Following its premiere in New York, the program, drawing on the collection of the National Film Archive in Prague, will go on a North American tour.

Czech Web Series: Digital & Beyond

There's no more striking image to symbolize the death of TV than a guy smashing an old-school, oversized TV set with a hammer. In fact this image appeared in the first-ever video on Stream.cz, launched by entrepreneur Miloš Petana in 2006 with both original and user-generated content. Despite apocalyptic predictions, conventional TV channels have stayed alive, partly by dumping content online. But meanwhile Stream, now owned by the Czech's biggest search engine Seznam.cz, has emerged as the most important Web TV channel on the Czech market.

by Ondřej Pavlík

Stream's original content has long centered on nonfiction, from serious journalism like the investigative series *That's Enough!*, which exposes anti-consumer practices, to reality shows like *Gluttons*, an entertaining spoof of cooking shows. Unlike more traditional journalism, where the word *infotainment* often means "dumbed-down news," Stream

has embraced this concept with great results.

"I think people can see that even though we make entertainment, we care about the message it sends. But in order to successfully get the information across, first you have to engage the viewers," said Stream's former chief producer Lukáš Záhoř in an interview for Aktuálně.cz.





© Falcon

What really put Stream on the map, though, was its scripted shows. Headquarters had long seen original fiction series as a nonstarter, mostly due to financial reasons. That changed in 2014 with the success of *The Blaník Office*, a sharp political satire with five seasons behind it. Seeing the popularity and critical acclaim of *Blaník*, Stream decided to take more risks and continue with producing original scripted programming. These shows, created mostly by up-and-coming authors, represent some of Stream's most daring and innovative content—and have also managed to move beyond the boundaries of the streaming platform.

The Blaník Office: Satirical Immediacy

In a way, *The Blaník Office* was almost the ideal show for Stream to start its venture into scripted originals. As a political satire, the series has been entrenched in everyday Czech reality from the very beginning, similar to some of the platform's established journalistic shows. Centering on the greasy-haired lobbyist Tonda Blaník and his assistants, *Blaník* provides a harshly comical behind-the-scenes look at the corrupt world of Czech domestic politics.

Due to its explicit language and controversial take on the news, often

blending real and fabricated information to humorous effect, it's hard to imagine the show would have found a home on a more traditional TV channel. Czech public TV in fact did have a chance to participate in the project early on, but after seeing the first episodes, they declined Stream's invitation.

There's another reason why the comedy benefits from being online. Development and the production process are both far shorter at Stream than they would be at Czech Television, or any commercial channel. "With *Blaník*, it's all on a weekly basis, there's no time to approve the scripts. Each episode goes into the system, then straight up online," says Záhoř. Work like this needs to be based on trust, and in case of *Blaník* it's proved to be beneficial, allowing the show to respond quickly to relevant news.

Building on immediacy as a strength, the show's director, Marek Najbrt, also shot a feature film called *President Blaník*, with Tonda Blaník as a fictional candidate in the late 2017/early 2018 Czech presidential race. The film hit cinemas in February, just a few days after the election, and was a box office smash, drawing more than 160,000 viewers.

Growroom: Controlled Spontaneity

Soon after *The Blaník Office* proved to be a success, Stream began ordering more scripted dramas to further diversify its content. One of these shows was *Growroom*, a rather grim, at times darkly comic drama about a man forced to pay off his debts by working for three months in an illegal marijuana grow-room. Presenting the gritty show as original and innovative, Stream advertised *Growroom* as "the first-ever Czech internet thriller."



President Blaník

© Falcon

FOCUS

INTERNET SERIES

Growroom's screenwriter and director, Andy Fehu, signed a deal with Stream after his feature debut, the independent horror film *The Greedy Tiffany*, attracted 70,000 viewers in just three days on the platform. Fehu developed his unique style, a blend of semi-improvised realism and the supernatural, directing a series of amateur and student short films, most of them on a shoestring budget, using his friends as actors.

This explains why Fehu's work, including *Growroom*, feels so spontaneous and original. Discussing his methods, the young filmmaker told Filmový přehled he wasn't in the habit of writing heavily scripted dialogue. "The fewer rules you give to nonprofessional actors, the freer and more confident they feel and the more natural they look. We shot a lot of scenes in one take, relying on longer, uninterrupted shots and a handheld camera, so we could capture the sequence as a whole," explained Fehu.

To up the series' prestige, Stream screened an exclusive premiere of *Growroom*'s tenth and final episode at the Karlovy Vary International Film

Festival (2017). Fehu has since completed another show for Stream, a scathing satire of Prague's infamously greedy taxi drivers, called *Cabbie* (orig. *Štafl*).

Semester: Digital Relationships

Perhaps the most innovative series of all Stream's recent shows is *Semester*, a six-part dramedy focusing on six months in the relationship of two millennials: Amálie, a hipsterish humanities student, and her boyfriend, Damián, who spends six months on an Erasmus exchange program in Berlin. We see their relationship in its long-distance phase, mostly watching the couple communicate via Skype or Facebook. *Semester*'s creators, director Adam Sedlák and screenwriter Ondřej Kopřiva, tell the story cleverly using digital devices, jumping from a Messenger conversation to a Skype chat, showing us the protagonists' pixelated faces.

Because of its heavy use of webcam footage, multiple screens, and digital desktops, *Semester* has often been compared to the horror film *Unfriended*.



However, Sedlák says the biggest inspiration for their project was U.S. indie films and TV shows influenced by mumblecore: "We were watching stuff like *Girls* and *Looking*. We closely studied the first episode of *Girls*, where Lena Dunham's parents tell her they're going to stop sending money. It's a great scene, because in just five minutes the show eloquently introduces a completely unsympathetic character."

There are definitely signs of *Girls* DNA in *Semester*, a series celebrated by critics not just for its inventive storytelling, but also for its uncompromising yet weirdly empathetic critique of millennial privilege. The show has attracted a cult following among young viewers, and helped Sedlák to make his feature film debut, *Domestique*, which had its world premiere in this year's competition at Karlovy Vary.

Since Lukáš Záhoř, along with part of his team, left Stream at the end of 2017 due to creative differences with Seznam.cz (the new owner of Stream), the platform has yet to establish a new identity. Meanwhile Záhoř is already busy at work on Mall.TV, a new internet TV channel financed by the Czech e-commerce giant Mall Group. And he doesn't hide his ambitions of branching out abroad: "There are things connecting the Visegrad countries, where Mall operates, or even Eastern Europe as a whole. We want to tap into these things and try to make an internationally successful show. It's not a high priority now, but it's something we've always dreamed of at Stream."

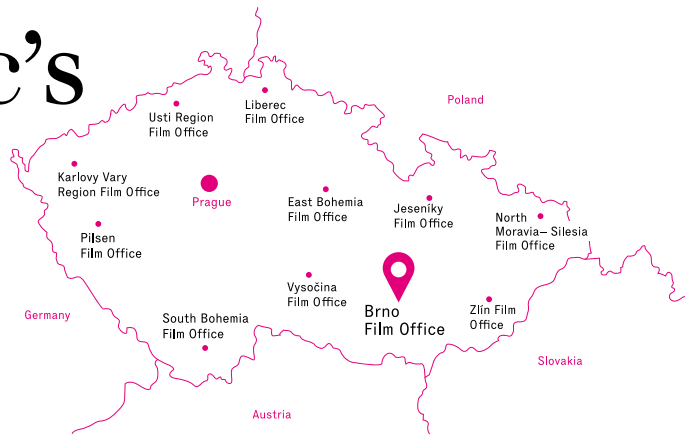




© The Brno Film Office

Brno:

Czech Republic's Second City Steps Into the Spotlight



Brno is a cosmopolitan European metropolis, a dynamic, developing center of trade and science with business and science incubators. Now the city has begun working to attract filmmakers, presenting itself as a highly desirable filmmaking destination. The Brno Film Office also successfully pushed to set up the South Moravian Film Fund, established in October 2017 as a joint initiative between the city and the region.

With a population of nearly 500,000, Brno, situated in the region of South Moravia, is home to a variety of locations, from ancient underground rooms to every architectural style from the past century to modern arcades to contemporary residential complexes. No wonder it's attractive to filmmakers, both at home and abroad.

"We established the film office in February 2017 with the goal of support-

ing the audiovisual sector in Brno and making domestic and international filmmakers aware that Brno is a film-friendly city, a great place to shoot. Overall, we promote the city as dynamic and cultural, and that filmmaking is definitely welcome here," said deputy mayor Matěj Hollan.

The Brno Film Office, operating as part of TIC BRNO (Tourist Information Centre), doesn't limit itself to the city proper, helping filmmakers with shoots

throughout South Moravia, a region that boasts romantic nature, acres of vineyards, historic castles and chateaux, and Baroque architecture of all kinds, from the folk architecture of village homes to multilevel merchant residences.

Although open just one year so far, the Brno Film Office already has many successful productions to its credit—from the Czech Republic, as well as the United States, Italy, Austria, Slovakia,

FILM COMMISSION

REGIONAL FILM OFFICES

Russia, the Netherlands, and other countries. "Most of our assistance consists primarily of recommending locations, providing contacts to local services, and dealing with specific production requests to make their work easier in a new location," explained Ivana Košuličová, the Brno Film Office director.

"So far this year," she said, "Brno has welcomed film crews working on two feature film versions of international bestsellers. The first is *The Glass Room*, based on the popular book by Simon Mawer. Director Julius Ševčík and his crew filmed in the Tugendhat Villa in several stages. Carice van Houten, known to viewers around the world for her role in *Game of Thrones*, plays one of the main characters."

"Then in June," Košuličová went on, "director Václav Marhoul shot parts of *The Painted Bird*, based on the Jerzy Kosiński novel, in a unique Baroque prison right in the city center. The film features international stars Stellan Skarsgård and Harvey Keitel. Shoots like this bring not only direct economic benefits, but also offer promotional potential."

"The film office worked extensively with the producers of both films," Košuličová said. "For *The Glass Room*, we started working with them in the development phase." On the other hand, *The Painted Bird*, which has been in production two years now, throughout the Czech Republic as well as abroad, didn't come to Brno until near the end of shooting. The project was shot on black-and-white film stock in the former Baroque prison in Brno, which stood in for an orphanage. The prison building, abandoned for decades despite its location right in



Carice van Houten during shooting *The Glass Room* in the Functionalist Tugendhat Villa

the city center, returned to its original function for a few days.

Working directly with filmmakers isn't the film office's sole function, however. It also successfully pushed for the establishment of the South Moravian Film Fund, which was set up in October 2017 as a joint initiative between the city and the region.

"In this year's first round of grants, we distributed a total of CZK 8.5 million (€330,000). Animated, documentary, and feature films, along with TV series and miniseries, were all eligible, on the condition that recipients are required to spend 100 percent of the grant in the region. Thirty-five projects submitted applications in the first round, including high-budget feature films by the famous Czech directors Petr Zelenka and Jiří Vejdělek, as well as small but interesting projects by local documentarists mapping the themes and history of the region. This year's second round, with a budget of CZK 500,000 (€19,300), is intended for script development," said Košuličová.

Pavlna Žipková, head of the Czech Film Commission, which operates under the

aegis of the Czech Film Fund, says Moravia as a whole is up-and-coming: "Brno and South Moravia aren't the only active areas. The Zlín Region has also set up a fund to attract productions. It has a very active film office that in a short time has successfully gained the trust of filmmakers and proven themselves. It's fantastic that filmmakers are working more and more with regional film offices." The national film commission had an active hand in setting up the eleven regional offices, and works closely with all of them.

So why should filmmakers put Brno and South Moravia at the top of their location lists? According to Brno Film Office director Košuličová, the answer can be summed up in a few sentences: a full supply of film professionals ready to work, all kinds of undiscovered, unique locations, and an attitude that is more than accommodating. In the future, the city plans to support the creation of exciting film projects financially as well. And to top it all off, Brno has a plethora of great restaurants, comfy cafés, and hip bars where tired crews can enjoy themselves in their free moments.



Karel Dobrý in *The Glass Room*



The Glass Room shooting in the Tugendhat Villa



The Painted Bird

The World-Beaters of the Czech Video Game Industry: From Kingdom Come to Chuchel

In addition to film development, the Creative Europe MEDIA program also provides support for the development of video games. The aim is to improve the European video game industry's competitiveness by increasing its capacity to produce works with a high circulation potential. For years now, Czech video games have topped the list of the country's main cultural exports, with local game designers, creating exclusively for the global market, loved around the world.

by Lubor Kopecký, Association of Czech Video Game Designers



Czech studio Amanita Design, has already been nominated for a prestigious IGF Award, in the category Excellence in Visual Art, and has won children's hearts all around the world.

The music video game *Beat Saber*, produced by the team at Beat Games, is based on the rhythmic cutting of flying cubes by light sabers. Thanks to the interesting idea and original execution, it has become one of the most successful virtual reality games, selling over 300,000 copies in its first two months, generating over €3,9 million in revenues.

It isn't just experienced game producers who are celebrating success, but also new designers. *Mashinky*, a computer simulation of the construction and operation of railways, was created by Jan Zelený, working on his own for eight full years,

Anually, Czech video game producers publish over 30 new titles, and each year the 20 biggest studios between them bring in more than €234 million, 99 percent of it from international fans. There are currently over 40 companies in the Czech Republic active in video game development, employing some 1,000 game developers, including programmers, designers, and artists.

In the last six months, Czech video game studios have launched three long-awaited titles, strengthening the country's already great reputation as an incubator

of talent, ideas, and projects: *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* (Warhorse Studios), *Chuchel* (Amanita Design), and *Beat Saber* (Beat Games).

Kingdom Come: Deliverance, the highly anticipated epic debut from Warhorse Studios, exceeded a million copies sold just eight days after the launch of the final version, with gamers and journalists worldwide spending days at a time in a story set in the Sazava region during the reign of King Wenceslas IV.

Chuchel, a humorous and artistically unique video game from the famous



CREATIVE EUROPE

MEDIA



Creative Europe supports video game concepts or projects that present original, innovative, creative, and culturally diverse work outside of the mainstream, enhancing Europe's cultural identity and heritage.

Other important criteria are game narrativity, ambitious gameplay, user experience, and artistic expression.

The works should also have commercial prospects, as well as the potential to access European and international markets.

In 2017, Creative Europe supported more than 32 video games from 13 countries with a total amount of more than €3.7 million.

The last Czech project supported was the horror adventure game *Someday You Will Return*, by CBE Software. The game, inspired by the Czech landscape and local folklore, was recognized at the Reboot game developer conference, in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

The Czech videogame industry enriches the diversity of the Czech audiovisual industry as a whole, offering not only inspiring projects and content, but also opportunities for professionals in animation and scriptwriting from the film industry to put their talents to work.

Daniela Staníková,
CED MEDIA Czech Republic

in his spare time off the job. In its first months, the title sold over 30,000 copies on Steam, earning over CZK 10 million.

Video game designers face no significant barriers to entering the industry. All the key tools are offered free of charge, anybody can easily use the existing distribution platforms, and most of the initial cost consists of labor. This explains why an average of up to 500 new games are published every day, available to all gamers on the given platform, albeit with no way to rank or filter them by quality. In this environment, the key to success is mainly the international community of gamers and journalists, who recommend titles to fellow members of their circles.

With only a small proportion of published titles earning profits, and just one in ten enjoying global success, the chances of a game flopping are huge. However, once a designer has broken through to achieve popularity, there are opportunities for a publisher to profit, if they know how to exploit the benefits offered by distribution systems. All three major platforms—Steam, Google, and Apple—return 70 percent of revenues to the developers, and offer numerous helpful functions and detailed surveys. They've also been successful in addressing the problem of piracy, freeing game authors from having to worry about it anymore.

These distribution systems allow implementation of two strategic business models at the same time:

1) free-to-play (or freemium) and 2) early access. The "freemium" model lets creators offer a game free of charge, making gamers pay only for additional features that increase functionality or unlock otherwise inaccessible parts of a game. The "early access" model lets gamers buy and play a game in the development phase, giving feedback to the designers, then following the process of finalization and fine-tuning until the final version of the game is released.

Czech designers have very quickly grasped and effectively implemented these monetizing models, creating the ideal conditions for rapid expansion of the Czech video game industry. Currently, we are not far from becoming a true video game empire; the only current obstacle is the lack of game producers and gifted game designers.

Czech high schools and universities are eager to discover and support talent.

Surprisingly, the longest tradition in this respect belongs to FAMU film school in Prague, which is about to introduce a two-year master's program in video game design, in cooperation with Czech gaming companies. Students will get extensive training in game design, as well as in the basics of other creative areas, from successful Czech game producers.



Films to Come

© Total Helpart T.H.A.

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

Bloody Easter

The Sudetenland – shortly after the WW2. The borderland was home to both Czechs and Germans for years. This fragile co-existence was shattered by the horrors of war, which the local Germans helped to unleash. While the world is celebrating a much longed-for peace, here the last conflict is about to start. The roles are reversing: the German winners are now defenceless losers and their former victims have the chance to take revenge. A Czech boy, Jirka, who must choose between his first love and his new best friend, decides to target the girl's German family in pursuit of his personal vendetta.

FICTION

original title: Krvavá pomlázka
runtime: 120 min
estimated release: September 2020
director: Jan Bušta
produced by: Veronika Kührová, Lubomír Konečný, Michal Kráčmer - Analog Vision (CZ)
in co-production with: Wandal Production (SK)

Ghost School

DEBUT

In order to get expelled from his new school, Marek (12) starts to damage the school premises. Vladimír, the ghost of a past janitor still trapped there, wants him to stop doing so and he decides to manifest before Marek. Since ghosts are not allowed to do that, a mysterious shadowy court appears, and unites their destinies. Vladimír has a week to find his Key, the arcane object, which binds him with the world of the living. Marek must help him. If they don't manage to do so, Vladimír's soul will end up in the underworld, and Marek will have to haunt the school instead of him.

FICTION

original title: Škola duchů
runtime: 85 min
estimated release: June 2020
director: Jan Bártek
produced by: Pavel Berčík - Evolution Films (CZ)

His Word, Her Word

His Word, Her Word portrays the life of Václav and Věra, their family and their immediate surroundings, between the summer of 1968 and 1969. Václav and Věra are people who differ in temperament, intellect or expressions of empathy, nevertheless, or precisely because of this they are spouses who are not leaving each other and go through difficult life situations together. Through intensive insights into several moments of their life, the film captures the situations and their attitudes as accurate, daily, intimate and detailed as possible. The main goal is not to tell a historical plot that took place in a given period but to draw as accurately as possible the most intense individual moments from the given period.

FICTION

original title: Jeho slovo, její slovo
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: December 2020
director: Beata Parkanová
produced by: Vojtěch Frič - love. FRAME (CZ)
in co-production with: Bontonfilm (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

IN DEVELOPMENT

Martin and the Forest Secret

The kids from a scout club often spend summer vacation at a place hidden in mountains of the romantic Kralovka region. For three weeks they live like savages – sleeping in a tepee, washing in a creek, cooking their meals on fire and having fun in the woods around. This time, the club goes to Kralovka for the last time. Due to a plan to build a transmitter here, the wilderness will disappear forever.

FICTION

original title: Mazel a tajemství lesa
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: February 2020
director: Petr Oukropec
produced by: Peter Badač – BFIILM.cz (CZ)

Mistakes

Ema shot several porn videos when she was very young. But she had not done it for some time, when she met her true love, an insulator named Tomáš. The two young people live together in a village, in a house that Tomáš's mother gave him. The situation changes one day when Tomáš, who is home alone, discovers several internet videos with his beloved Ema. After a dramatic exchange, Ema explains that all this is the past and it was long ago, and she was never unfaithful to him. In spite of that, Tomáš has a hard time coming to terms with the situation. First, he responds by sleeping with the first woman who offers herself, and subsequently, he confides in his best friend and colleague, the womanizer Igor, who spreads the information around the village.

FICTION

original title: Chyby
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: February 2020
director: Jan Prušinovský
produced by: Ondřej Zima, Jan Prušinovský – OFFSIDE MEN (CZ)
in co-production with: PubRes (SK)

Money from Hitler

It's a hot summer day in 2005. Denis, a respected orthopedic surgeon, has to attend an important meeting in his home village. His task is to protect his mother and unmarried sister from claims on their property made by Gita Lauschmannova, the daughter of its original German owners. Denis sees Gita as the daughter of a German who collaborated with the Nazis, whereas she sees Denis and the rest of the villagers as descendants of those who stole from her family and attempted to murder her upon her unexpected return from the concentration camp. She was sixteen, Jewish in the eyes of the Germans, and German in the eyes of the Czechs. The road to undoing the wrongs done in the past will be winding and full of unpleasant surprises.

FICTION

original title: Peníze od Hitlera
runtime: 100 min
estimated release: 2021
director: Tomáš Mašíň
produced by: Silvie Michajlová, Ondřej Zima – Film Kolektiv (CZ)
in co-production with: PubRes (SK)

Victim

DEBUT

MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

Irina is an Ukrainian single mother living in a small border town in the Czech Republic. She loves her 13-year-old son Igor and fights for his better life than she used to have. Igor, unlike her mother, is fully integrated into Czech society and has a great future like a young gymnast. When Irina learns in one night that Igor was attacked by three invaders and almost killed him, her whole world almost collapses. Igor, after surgery and arousal from narcosis, admits that the attackers were Roma. Irina fights for justice and wakes up the whole of Czech society to act and punish the culprits, but over the time she becomes aware of certain inconsistencies in Igor's story, until one day Igor shamefully admits that he has devised the whole assault.

FICTION

original title: Oběť
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: May 2021
director: Michal Blaško
produced by: Jakub Viktorín – nutprodukcia (SK)
in co-production with: nutprodukce (CZ)

Sisters

DEBUT

In the early 1990s Czechoslovakia, the democratic transformation is under way, though the spirit of totality is still pretty much alive. Twin sisters Věra and Veronika (50) are respected members of a prominent Prague residential neighbourhood, until one day Věra is attacked in a park by an unknown madman, who literally cuts her face off. The investigation begins to uncover unsettling facts not only about the sisters, but also about the whole community and even the detectives working the case. Based on a successful graphic novel by Vojtěch Mašek.

FICTION

original title: Sestry Dietlový
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: October 2021
director: Vojtěch Mašek, Michal Nohejl
produced by: Petra Oplatková, Artemio Benki – Sirena Film (CZ)

The Pack

DEBUT

David (16), a promising goalie, is placed in a new hockey team. The team doesn't exactly welcome him with open arms. David works hard and tries to stand up to the team's unacceptance on his own, bracing the avalanche of bullying. Finally, the bullies' brute aggression awakens David's instinct of self-preservation. Grabbing his hockey stick, he strikes the other goalie, his competitor – a predator's reflex more than anything else. David is terrified of what he had done. This wasn't supposed to happen. He got what he wanted – he's the starting goalie. But at what price? There's an inquiry. David's father wants to bribe the hearing committee; David, however, refuses to become part of his father's world of bribery, and refuses to submit to the cruel rules of the team.

FICTION

original title: Smečka
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: December 2019
director: Tomáš Polenský
produced by: Julietta Sichel – 8Heads Productions (CZ)
in co-production with: Ego Media (LV)

TvMiniUni and Question Thief

DEBUT

TvMiniUni and Question Thief is a family film, combining elements of animation, puppet and feature film. This time TvMiniUni have to solve the mystery of strangely obedient children who are not naughty anymore. Terrified parents are asking TvMiniUni for help, they do not recognize own children. Children stopped to be annoying, they are lethargic and without fantasy. Who is responsible for mechanical obedient children? Does the same thing threaten our TvMiniUni children?

ANIMATION

original title: TvMiniUni a Zloděj otázek
runtime: 75 min
estimated release: June 2019
director: Jan Jirků
produced by: Pavel Berčík, Ondřej Zima – Evolution Films (CZ)



Cook, F**k, Kill

A story of one day in the life of a perpetrator of domestic violence Jaroslav K. (45), who is handsome and seemingly good-natured son, father and decent husband. Jaroslav K. is in fact pathologically jealous of his wife Blanka and very much afraid she will leave him one day with their three children. Jaroslav K. does not hesitate to employ violence, deceit and terror against others, and vice versa what ultimately leads to a family tragedy.

FICTION

original title: Žáby bez jazyka

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: July 2019

director: Mira Fornay

cast: Jaroslav Plesl, Regina Rázlová, Jan Doman, Petra Fornay

produced by: Viktor Schwarcz – Cineart TV Prague (CZ), Mira Fornay – Mirafox (SK)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), RTVS (SK)



Fathers of Ours

Vít became a father very early, perhaps too early. Surprisingly enough, he fell happily and with determination into the parenthood. He adopted everything to the effort of provision of the family. He became a financial advisor – some kind of modern mercenary warrior operating in the jungle of finances. When he learned to use his natural charisma in work, a huge career perspective opened before him. The success, however is possible only for the price of moral compromise. An urgent question arises – to what extent it is possible for a man to be a good father, whilst still seeking father himself. Vít is a man on his journey to maturity in relationships as well as in the jungle called the world.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Otcové naši

runtime: 80 min

estimated release: June 2019

director: Martin Mareček

produced by: Petr Oukropec – Negativ (CZ)

in co-production with: HBO Europe (CZ)



Brotherhood

In a small bucolic village in the middle of the Bosnian mountains, a humble shepherd Ibrahim Delić's preaching reaches beyond the walls of the local mosque, instigating Balkan and European Muslims to join the ISIS ranks. In the rural areas all around Bosnia young people are embracing the Jihadism, leaving their houses to become foreign fighters. The film is a portrait of contemporary Bosnia, giving glimpses of the everyday lives of several families, amongst them Ibrahim Delić and his radicalized children. Through their conversations and encounters within the intimate setting of their homes, we perceive the ambiguities and complexities of a Bosnia struck by economic impoverishment and religious extremism.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Ve jménu Alláha

runtime: 70 min

estimated release: September 2020

director: Francesco Montagner

produced by: Pavla Janoušková Kubečková – nutprodukce (CZ)

in co-production with: FAMU (CZ)



Jan Jedlička: Colourful Traces of a Landscape

Czech painter Jan Jedlička lost the landscape of his youth. The political situation after 1968 forced him to emigrate. He settled down in Switzerland and he found his artistic home and topic in Maremma area in Tuscany. The film aims for mapping a 40-year-long journey during which this solitary artist has searched for his way to pronounce a landscape, to express it in its essence. A characteristic feature of Jedlička's works is earthiness. He collects colourful rocks from which he produces pigments that he uses in his paintings. The pictured landscape thus, becomes also the means (the pigments) of its image.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Jan Jedlička: Barevné stopy krajiny

runtime: 75 min

estimated release: July 2019

director: Petr Záruba

produced by: Alice Tabery – Cinepoint (CZ)

in co-production with: Box Productions (CH), Mammot Film (IT), Czech Television (CZ)



Let There Be Light

A guest-worker in Germany, Milan (40), discovers that back home in Slovakia his teenage son has become involved with home guards when he is accused of bullying and killing a classmate. The father starts searching for the truth about what happened, the truth about himself...

FICTION

original title: Nech je svetlo

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: February 2019

director: Marko Škop

cast: Milan Ondřík, František Belež, Zuzana Konečná, Ľubo Paulovič, Daniel Fischer, Csongor Kassai, Anikó Vargová

produced by: Marko Škop – Artileria (SK)

in co-production with: Negativ (CZ)

FILMS TO COME

IN PRODUCTION



Milos Forman – A Way for Freedom

The ultimate documentary biography of Oscar winning Czech director Miloš Forman. From his youth in Czechoslovakia under Nazi burden and communist rule to his first successes abroad with the Czech New Wave, to his exile in New York after the Prague Spring to his international fame. The intimate portrait of an outcast with exclusive access to family archive directed by award winning Czech documentary director Helena Třeštíková.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Miloš Forman – Cesta za svobodou
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: January 2019
director: Helena Třeštíková
produced by: Kateřina Černá – Negativ (CZ)
in co-production with: Alegria (FR)



Never Happened

After 1989, East European countries were coming to terms with their newly acquired freedom. Slovakia was ruled by charismatic and autocratic Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar. In 1995, the president's son, Michal Kováč Junior, was abducted; it soon became clear that the abduction was probably ordered by the highest government circles. Oskar Fegyveres, who worked for the Slovak Information Service back then and who participated in the abduction by order of his superiors, testified to the police about the role of the secret service in the case. Since he did not feel safe, he fled abroad. He communicated with his family through his friend Robo Remiáš, who died under unclear circumstances in a car explosion...

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Skutok se nestal
runtime: 80 min
estimated release: March 2019
director: Barbora Berezňáková
produced by: Dávid Čorba – Leon Productions (SK)
in co-production with: Frame Films (CZ)



Old-Timers

In their twilight years, two former political prisoners set off across the country in a camper van to seek out and demonstrably kill a once-feared communist prosecutor from the 1950s who was never officially sanctioned for his actions. The story is inspired by real events.

FICTION

original title: Staříci
runtime: 90 min
estimated release: May 2019
director: Martin Dušek, Ondřej Provozník
cast: Jiří Schmitzer, Ladislav Mrkvicka
produced by: Jiří Konečný – endorfilm (CZ)
in co-production with: Sentimentalfilm (SK), Czech Television (CZ)



On the Roof

Professor Rypar decides to provide a temporary shelter to Song, a young Vietnamese, whom he found hidden on the roof of his house. But can two such different people share one space at all? The coexistence of an old man angry at the world, which escapes him, and a young man looking for a way out of a desperate situation in an unknown city brings a lot of tension, tragicomic situations, but also surprising ideas and solutions. Every one of us needs to be needed. And Song needs, in addition to warm clothes and roofs, someone who will trust him. Professor Rypar will try to do so, even though he has to give up some of his rules and his roof has to get a little bit extended. But is Song really able to repay his trust?

FICTION

original title: Na střeše
runtime: 100 min
estimated release: February 2019
director: Jiří Mádl
cast: Alois Švehlík, Lukas Duy Anh Tran, Mária Havranová, Vojtěch Dyk
produced by: Monika Kristlová – Dawson Films (CZ)
in co-production with: Hitchhiker Cinema (SK), RTVS (SK), Czech Television (CZ)



Terrorist

"Beware of old people, they have nothing to lose." The story of a retired teacher, who gets angry at the whole world. She does not want to spend the rest of her life with a sense of being a victim, who always has to surrender. She buys an illegal gun, learns to shoot, and then points it at a man who seems to be omnipotent and non-punishable. "Are you threatening me with life imprisonment? It will not be long sentence. In addition, jail and retirement house are not so different."

FICTION

original title: Teroristka
runtime: 100 min
estimated release: May 2019
director: Radek Bajgar
cast: Iva Janžurová, Tatiana Vilhelmová, Pavel Liška, Eva Holubová
produced by: Petr Erben – Logline Production (CZ)
in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)



MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

The Crossing

An animated feature film following the dramatic journey of two siblings, Kyona and her brother Adriel, who are running away, because they are being pursued by an unspecified Eastern European country. A story about the never-ending effort to find a new home, where we 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. They are fueled by the awareness of who they really are, what they are running from and what they are hopeful of. In the end an experience like that becomes a story worth telling again and again.

ANIMATION

original title: La Traversée

runtime: 80 min

estimated release: 2020

director: Florence Mialthe

produced by: Dora Benousilio – Les Films de l'Arlequin (FR)

in co-production with: MAUR film (CZ), Balance Film (DE), ARTE (FR), Czech Television (CZ)



MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

The Disciple

In 1980, two friends Michal and Juraj apply for the studies at the Roman Catholic seminary so they can escape the moral devastation of the society. The initial excitement wears off as they discover that the Seminary is now controlled by Pacem im Terris, an organisation of clerics collaborating with the communist regime. When Juraj tragically dies, everyone is shocked. His death is investigated by both the Church authorities and the State Security. The students go on hunger strike, protesting against the interference of state power in church matters. The open revolt is followed by drastic repercussions.

FICTION

original title: Posol

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: February 2019

director: Ivan Ostrochovský

cast: Samuel Skyva, Samuel Polakovič, Milan Mikulčík, Vlad Ivanov

produced by: Ivan Ostrochovský – Punchart Films (SK)

in co-production with: Negativ (CZ), Libra Film Productions (RO), Film and Music Entertainment (IE)



The famous American writer Philip Roth based his book partially on his authentic experiences in 1970's when he used to visit Prague after the Soviet occupation in 1968 in order to help the banned Czechoslovak writers. Despite the political oppression, the social life, full of amusement and open relationship, was rampant in Prague. The greater pressure of the regime was, the more people would resort to their free private intimate worlds. The story of The Prague Orgy depicts a journey of the famous American writer Nathan Zuckerman who arrives in Prague in 1976. He carries out a mission to save a unique collection of brilliant tales written in Yiddish by smuggling them across the border.

FICTION

original title: Pražské orgie

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: May 2019

director: Irena Pavlášková

produced by: Viktor Schwarzc – Prague Movie Company (CZ)

in co-production with: Analog Vision (CZ), Arina (SK)

The Prague Orgy



DEBUT

MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

Wake

On hearing the news about his brother's death, Dušan Zrim heads off to his home village. At the wake there he sings together with the village people and tells stories about death. But when they talk about death, they talk about life, and stories gradually get livelier and rollicking while the line between reality and phantasy, the present and the past, the live and the dead, gets blurred.

FICTION

original title: Vigilie

runtime: 78 min

estimated release: March 2019

director: Matjaž Ivanišin

cast: Vladimír Vlaškalič, Miki Roš

produced by: Miha Černec – Staragara (SI)

in co-production with: i/o post (CZ)



Watchmaker's Apprentice

A famous and successful Watchmaker takes in the small orphan Urban, raises him, teaches him his craft and after years even betroths him to his daughter Laura. And yet it is not Christian charity that drives him. He believes a prophetic vision: that on the day of his marriage, Urban is destined to receive inestimable wealth. And the Watchmaker wants in on his riches. But shortly before the wedding, a mysterious Beggarwoman issues a prophecy: that the day of their marriage will be the Watchmaker's last. And she proves to him that she does indeed have the power to see the future. What now, when Urban and Laura love one another and can't wait to say "I do"? The terrified Watchmaker decides to get rid of Urban once and for all. He sends him on a pilgrimage from which he can never return...

FICTION

original title: Hodinářův učen

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: August 2019

director: Jitka Rudolfová

cast: Václav Neuzil, Pavlína Štorková, Jaroslav Plesl, Viktor Preiss,

produced by: Pavel Berčík – Evolution Films (CZ)

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

FILMS TO COME

IN POST-PRODUCTION



DEBUT

A Certain Kind of Silence

Czech young au pair Mia starts work abroad for a well-off family in a lavish villa. Mia has to look after their ten years old son and follows many strange rules of the household. She slowly begins to gradually and systematically disappear and abandon her humanity and her relationships with child entrusted as a result of manipulation by a radical family community. Mia is suddenly able to express her love by wooden rod.

IN POST-PRODUCTION

FICTION

original title: Venku (working title)

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: January 2019

director: Michal Hogenauer

cast: Eliška Křenková, Monic Hendrickx, Roeland Fernhout, Jacob Jutte

produced by: Petr Oukropec – Negativ (CZ)

in co-production with: Tasse Film (LV), Circe Films (NL)



MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

Parking

Adrian is a Romanian poet, who immigrated illegally to Spain in 2002. Rafael, a second-hand car dealer offers him a night guard job at his auto dealership. During the rituals of the magical night of San Juan, Adrian's life changes forever when he meets Maria, a Spanish woman, bass player in a jazz band, married to Javier. They fall in love, but Adrian never tells Maria he is also married back home in Romania. Rafael is torn between bankruptcy and his divorce, but he finds a new girlfriend, Maria-Eugenia. Adrian and Maria-Eugenia become good friends and they try hard to prevent Rafael's drifting. They all run for love and understanding. They all make mistakes. They fight against the evidence.

FICTION

original title: Apropierea

runtime: 112 min

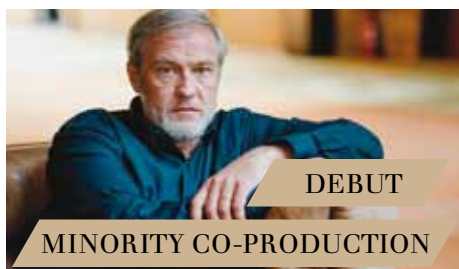
estimated release: January 2019

director: Tudor Giurgiu

cast: Mihai Smarandache, Belen Cuesta, Luis Bermejo

produced by: Bogdan Craciun – Libra Film Productions (RO)

in co-production with: Tito Clint Movies (ES), Evolution Films (CZ)



DEBUT

MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

By a Sharp Knife

Ľudovít has lost his son in a ruthless neo-Nazi attack. But because of a hole in the Slovak legislation, the attackers are soon released and Ľudovít is faced with absurd injustice. He struggles with the apathetic police force, the opportunistic judge, but also with the fact that he was never close with his own son. The more he blames himself for his son's death, the more he becomes distant from his wife Zuzana and the younger daughter Janka, and the more he tries to influence the investigation. When he learns that the attack was not an accidental neo-Nazi incident, but involved an organized crime gang, he realizes that he is facing an enemy beyond his powers. He tries at least to save the little he has left – his own family.

FICTION

original title: Ostrým nožom

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: November 2018

director: Teodor Kuhn

cast: Roman Luknár, Miroslav Krobot, Ela Lehotská

produced by: Jakub Viktorín – nutprodukcia (SK)

in co-production with: nutprodukce (CZ)



DEBUT

Fugue

Martin P. is a young Argentinean piano virtuoso and composer, who has been since his breakdown four years ago a patient of El Borda, the largest and the most notable but also controversial psychiatric hospital in Latin America. The child prodigy and the most promising talent of his generation is now trying to find a way how to overcome his mental disease and come back to life outside the walls of the asylum and on the concert stages, while working on his new composition Enfermaria. Fugue tells unique, yet universal story about the obsession with perfection and creation, narrating the evolution of a human being who draws his strength from his own fragility.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Fuga

runtime: 100 min

estimated release: November 2018

director: Artemio Benki

produced by: Artemio Benki, Petra Oplatková - Artcam Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Golden Girls Filmproduktion (AT), Buen Destino (RA), Petit a petit productions (FR), Lomo Cine (RA)



DEBUT

MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

Good Death

Janette is terminally ill and she would like to die a dignified death, however, this is not possible in her home in the United Kingdom. She gets in touch with Dr. Erika in Switzerland, who is willing to help her. Determined to see her decision through, Janette opts for physician-assisted suicide. Janette must plan her final departure from the UK before her illness prevents her from doing so. Janette's daughter, Bridget and son, Simon, travel with her to Basel in Switzerland. Simon has also inherited his mother's illness and, therefore, has much more sympathy regarding her decision than Bridget. Nevertheless, both children try to convince Janette that she still has enough time to make a decision. Do we own our life or does it own us?

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Dobrá smrt

runtime: 80 min

estimated release: January 2019

director: Tomáš Krupa

produced by: Tomáš Krupa – Hailstone (SK)

in co-production with: MasterFilm (CZ), Golden Girls Film (AT)

international sales: First Hand Film



DEBUT

MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

The Humorist

In 1984, the USSR's most famous and beloved stand-up comedian Boris Arkadiev is slowly becoming unhinged. Boris is tormented not only by external oppression and censorship but also by his own insecurities that poison all his relationships. This time, the eternal battle between the Artist and the State will be fought on the unexpected level of insult humor routines and jokes. *The Humorist* is a psychological drama raising timeless issues: is talent an excuse for unprincipled behaviour; can someone working in the "low genre" of comedy be considered an artist; what is the value of success achieved at the cost of endless compromise.

FICTION

original title: Yumorist

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: February 2019

director: Michael Idov

cast: Aleksey Agranovich, Yuri Kolokolnikov, Alisa Khazanova

produced by: Artem Vassiliev – Metra Films (RU)

in co-production with: Tasse Film (LV), Sirena Film (CZ)

international sales: m-appeal



DEBUT

Kiruna 2.0

The northernmost city of Sweden is going to be moved three kilometers to the East. Despite the fact that similar situations has already occurred in history (for example in the Czech republic), this case is unique. The city has used its difficult situation and made it into a sensation. The newspapers from all around the world has started writing about the little city above the Arctic Circle, with 15 000 inhabitants, which will become the most modern city in the world. Kristina Zachrisson, the Chairwoman of the City Council, said on the stage at the summer Kiruna festival that, "We'll start with a blank slate. People from all around the world will be coming to see how it's done. How you move a city."

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Kiruna 2.0

runtime: 80 min

estimated release: November 2018

director: Greta Stocklassa

produced by: Veronika Kührová, Michal Kráčmer – Analog Vision (CZ)

in co-production with: Studio FAMU (CZ)



MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

DEBUT

Leakage

"I am a woman, oil comes out of my body and they are looking for my husband," says Foziye, describing the reason why she has to immigrate to Germany. Being in her 50's, Foziye tries to find her lost husband on the pretext of having something very critical to tell him while she doesn't reveal the secret until a day her daughter and her sister find out that she is struggling with a privileged body and a leakage organ which can produce oil, the crude oil...but oil, such a vital substance is just being used to resolve the small family issues until a day her body stops functioning properly.

FICTION

original title: Leakage

runtime: 100 min

estimated release: November 2018

director: Suzan Iravanian

cast: Armik Gharibian, Ziba Eslamlou, Hasti Khaledi, Saeed Saeedy

produced by: Majid Barzegar – Rainy Pictures (IR)

in co-production with: Kaveh Farnam – Eupoe Media Nest (CZ)



DEBUT

Nomad in the City

Tradition and modernity juxtapose in the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar where white yurts dot the urban landscape, illustrating a spectacular societal change: the transition from nomadism to urbanism. Instead of overlooking endless steppe and blue sky, the nomad now lives on a grid. Tumurbaatar is a garbage truck driver in Ulaanbaatar striving for his daughter's education. Torn between life in the city and his home in the countryside, he struggles with his dreams and identity. He heads home for a visit, only to find the romantic image of home no longer fits with his current reality. Nonetheless, he clings fast to his dreams for his children to lead lives he cannot.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Nomád ve městě

runtime: 90 min

estimated release: January 2019

director: Anji Sauvė Clubb

produced by: Alice Tabery – Cinepoint (CZ)

in co-production with: Anji Sauvė Club (USA), i/o post (CZ), Suzanna Sumkhuu (USA)



MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

The Play

Petr runs a small-town theater. He rehearses a new play which should elevate the theater's reputation. The theater's budget is reduced. Petr's lover, an actress Karolina, breaks up with him. The situation at home is even worse. His wife suspects something. It is the night of premiere. Petr is proud of his work but the local people don't understand the play and leave the theater. He tries to cheer his actors but finally collapses in his office. His father in law understands him. New play, pressure from the city, the need to be loved and understood. At night Petr and his little son look for his wife. Maybe he never stopped loving her. She comes home with good news. She found finances for his theater. How, she doesn't want to say. They all sleep in one bed and the golden light enters the room.

FICTION

original title: Hra

runtime: 100 min

estimated release: November 2018

director: Alejandro Fernández

Almendras

cast: Jiří Mádl, Elizaveta Maximová, Marika Šoposká, Ondřej Malý

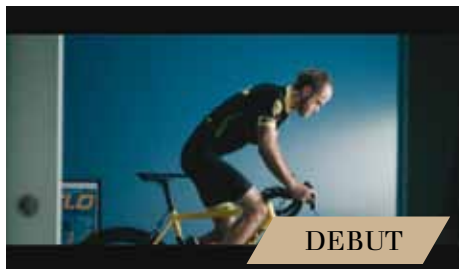
produced by: Guillaume de Seille – Arizona Productions (FR), Veronika Finková – Film & Roll (CZ)

in co-production with: Jirafa (CL)

FILMS TO COME

NEW RELEASES

NEW RELEASES



DEBUT

Domestique

Roman is a top level cyclist recovering from an injury through hard work and strict regimen. To improve his performance, he even sleeps in an oxygen tent installed in his bedroom. That is a bitter pill to swallow for his wife, Šarlota, whose long-time wish is to conceive a child. And so they both brim with determination, get lost in their obsessions, and improve their bodies to a point where they might even frighten themselves. With each night they spend in the oxygen tent, their relationship changes. Will they be able to catch a breath again in this claustrophobic environment?

FICTION

original title: Domestik

runtime: 116 min

national release: 27 September 2018

director: Adam Sedlák

cast: Tereza Hořová, Jiří Konvalinka

produced by: Jakub Jíra - Shore Points (CZ)

in co-production with: sentimentalfilm (SK), Czech Television (CZ), Soundsquare (CZ), UPP (CZ), Elekta Film (CZ)

international sales: Stray Dogs



Golden Betrayal

In 1938, Young Czechoslovaks learn to play basketball from American mormons at YMCA camp. When the war starts, their coach is arrested and executed and the team is taken over by young lawyer Franta. After the liberation, Franta visits prison where their coach died, picks up a handful of soil, puts it in a box and fasten it with tricolor stripe. The team carries this talisman to European Championship in Geneva and miraculously, they become the winners. However, everything changes again with the communist coup. The basketball players are persecuted, Franta is arrested. The weak team is still going to the championship in Paris. But will they succeed?

FICTION

original title: Zlatý podraz

runtime: 97 min

national release: 25 October 2018

director: Radim Špaček

cast: Filip Březina, Patrycja Volny, Zdeněk Piškula, Ondřej Malý

produced by: Jaroslav Bouček - Buc-film (CZ)

in co-production with: Punkchart films (SK), Czech Television (CZ)



DEBUT

Inside the War on ISIS

Czech documentarist Jana Andert left for Iraq in autumn 2016. For eight months she lived and shot there at the front line of the battle of Mosul with Golden Division, an elite Iraq Army squad. She got into the situation at her own expenses without support of any of the big TV stations she usually works for. Thanks to that she could be completely independent and not to respect any security measures usually imposed by those stations. She just wanted be at the front line.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: V Mosulu

runtime: 72 min

national release: 20 September 2018

director: Jana Andert

produced by: Jan Macola - Mimesis Film (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)

international sales: First Hand Films



Jan Palach

Jan Palach. Student, who burned himself in 1969 to protest the Soviet invasion to Czechoslovakia. An uncompromising young man who brought the ultimate sacrifice in a hope to rouse the nation from lethargy. His name is known to everyone in the Czech Republic. The film tells the last months of Palach's life. It describes his path from an affectionate son, a devoted friend, a sensitive and thoughtful philosophy student to the "Torch number 1". Two other deaths by self-immolation followed in the occupied Czechoslovakia but the communist regime helped by Soviet tanks regained full control over its citizens for 20 more years.

FICTION

original title: Jan Palach

runtime: 124 min

national release: 21 August 2018

director: Robert Sedláček

cast: Viktor Zavadil, Zuzana Bydžovská, Denisa Barešová

produced by: Viktor Schwarcz - Cineart TV Prague (CZ)

in co-production with: Arina (SK), Czech Television (CZ), RTVS (SK), Up&Up Production (CZ)



DEBUT

King Skate

The story of beginnings and development of skateboarding in Czechoslovakia during 1975 - 1989. The skateboarding is for the director a starting point in looking for signs of freedom outside the mainstream society controlled by the communist regime. This new western sport became quite attractive and contagious kind of entertainment for young people in otherwise greyish environment of socialist Czechoslovakia. Using old found footage never shown before, the audience has a chance to learn more about the beginnings of skateboarding in Czechoslovakia and about the unique community that grew around it.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: King Skate

runtime: 82 min

national release: 20 September 2018

director: Šimon Šafránek

produced by: Kateřina Černá - Negativ (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), Magic Lab (CZ)



DEBUT

Moments

Contemporary family drama *Moments* is structured around the character of young warm-hearted woman Anežka, who is always there for her family, tries to help everybody and keep her promises. But she learns in the course of the story that one's self-sacrifice has to be limited and that sometimes she also needs to fulfil her own dreams and longings. *Moments* is a film about everyday life, primary emotions, family relations and desire for harmony that we all struggle with.

FICTION

original title: Chvilky

runtime: 95 min

national release: 22 November 2018

director: Beata Parkanová

cast: Jenověfa Boková, Martin Finger, Lenka Vlasáková, Alena Mihulová

produced by: Viktor Tauš – HEAVEN'S GATE (CZ)

in co-production with: Fog'n'Desire Films (CZ), Czech Television (CZ)



Supervising the Meaning of Dreams

Three old friends – Musician, Thief and Circus Performer, former inmates of the communist prison, who after being widowed, live together in a house close to the Czech-German border. They share a need to pay revenge on someone who hurt them in the past – which is summarized in the previous film – *Sunrise Supervising*. But because the one who had hurt them, the former state police officer, is also the current innkeeper at the village pub, the three men have nowhere to go for the beer. Until the Thief finds out, that on the other side of the border, on the Polish side, there is a pub, where they can take a bus to and the new adventure begins.

FICTION

original title: Odborný dohled nad výkladem snu

runtime: 79 min

national release: 27 September 2018

director: Pavel Göbl

cast: Vratislav Brabenec, Jiří Vymětal, Jozef Poliefka, Nikol Fischerová

produced by: Tomáš Bělohorský, Přemysl Klimsza – Czech FILM (CZ)

in co-production with: WetCat Pictures (CZ)



DEBUT

Talks with T. G. Masaryk

The film is a reconstruction of a 90-minute conversation of two very important men: Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and Karel Čapek – the president and a writer – two human symbols of the First Czechoslovak Republic. The former has just turned 78 and has reached everything a man can reach in his life. The latter is 38 and is regarded as one of the most talented authors and playwrights of his country. Important thoughts the two men exchanged appeared in the book Čapek was writing about Masaryk at the time. The book brings up the basic questions of democracy – not as historically and contemporarily conditioned, but as timeless, eternal questions.

EXPERIMENTAL, FICTION

original title: Hovory s TGM

runtime: 85 min

national release: 18 October 2018

director: Jakub Červenka

cast: Martin Huba, Jan Budař

produced by: Jakub Červenka – Bednafilms (CZ)

in co-production with: Fantomas Production (SK), Karel Janeček (CZ)



MINORITY CO-PRODUCTION

The Cellar

The marriage of Milan and Táňa Labát is going through a crisis. Discontent and vigorous Táňa considers her husband, who avoids resolving any problems, a coward. Their 16 years old daughter Lenka takes their alienation very hard. But one night during the summer holidays, their lives change. Milan leaves to play a concert with his band in a district town while Lenka is celebrating birthday with her friends in a nearby village. However, Lenka does not return home...

FICTION

original title: Pivnica

runtime: 110 min

national release: 11 October 2018

director: Igor Voloshin

cast: Jean-Marc Barr, Olga Simonova, Milan Ondřík, Zuzana Vejvodová

produced by: Livia Filusová – Furia Film (SK)

in co-production with: 8Heads Productions (CZ), Gate Film LLC (RU)



The Magic Quill

For the sake of order in the world, each region has its hell, where a Magic quill writes down human sins. When a sinner's folder fills up, a devil squad comes to take them. Lucifer's son Boniface is sent to bring a new quill to Pitchfork, but gets robbed by the greedy Mr. Slime who uses the quill not only to hide his sins, but to enslave the villagers and make them dig for a treasure he hopes to use to charm the beautiful innkeeper Margaret. Boniface is scared and slips a fake quill into hell. As it doesn't work, devils grow lazy. Boniface meets beautiful Margaret and finally admits his mistake and decides to rectify his mistakes. How will things turn out in the end? Will the Good triumph over the Evil?

FICTION

original title: Čertí brko

runtime: 95 min

national release: 29 November 2018

director: Marek Najbrt

cast: Jan Cina, Judit Bárdos, Jan Budař, Ondřej Vetchý

produced by: Martin Hůlavec, Ondřej Beránek – Punk Film (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ), Magiclub (CZ), Trigon Production (SK), Barrandov Studio (CZ), RTVS (SK)

FILMS TO COME

NEW RELEASES



Toman

The historical drama about the controversial figure of Czech history Zdeněk Toman, the head of the Department of Foreign Intelligence Agency, which significantly influenced the political development in Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1948, and which contributed greatly to the taking political power by Communist Party.

FICTION

original title: Toman

runtime: 140 min

national release: 4 October 2018

director: Ondřej Trojan

cast: Jiří Macháček, Kateřina Winterová, Kristýna Boková, Stanislav Majer

produced by: Ondřej Trojan – Total Helpart T.H.A. (CZ)

in co-production with: PubRes (SK), Czech Television (CZ), RTVS (SK)



Trash on Mars

Budget cuts have stopped space conquest and flights to Mars have been canceled. The robot, Bot, has been left in an abandoned station. He has an order to colonize Mars but nobody is coming. He is keeping the station in a standby mode and waiting for the new expedition. When the day finally comes, instead of scientists and technology, they are sending tourists. Each of them has their own idea how to fill the empty space. Shocked by the quality of people, Bot needs to find a new way how to finish his original mission. The only problem is that the tourists don't understand the process of colonization. So he has to decrease his intelligence to the basic level of human needs. But is he capable of pretending to be a human?

FICTION

original title: Mars

runtime: 84 min

national release: 18 October 2018

director: Benjamin Tuček

cast: Petra Nesvačilová, Jiří Havelka, Tereza Nvotová, Halka Třešňáková

produced by: Benjamin Tuček, Zdeněk Janáček – Nyasa Films Production (CZ)

in co-production with: Soundsquare (CZ)



Vote For Kibera

The film *Vote for Kibera* is about people from the largest slum in Africa, who did not allow the hard living conditions to knock them down but have transformed the experience into meaningful activities that help the others. The main character is Don, a young photographer from Kibera, who is deeply dissatisfied with how Kibera is interpreted by people living outside the slum - as a place full of problems which we are supposed to get rid of. His photos and the stories of the people he photographs are supposed to tell the world about the positive aspect of life in a slum, which most of us are not willing to see.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Kibera: Příběh slumu

runtime: 96 min

national release: 1 November 2018

director: Martin Páv

produced by: Zuzana Kučerová, Jitka Kotrlová – Frame Films (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)



Vratislav Effenberger or Black Shark Hunting

Effenberger was captivated by the two reality opposite poles, incorporated in the name of the film. Concept of this documentary is built on an inference of a fiction and reality, acted and documentary parts, poetry and reflection theory, exaggeration and intimate confession. The concept at many places allows to switch directly between written script segments and situational takes of documentary characters. It also permits to create several partial stories. At some places both levels (documentary and acted) are present at the same time and are distinguished only by working with focus and sound. This will be a tool to accent or suppress either one. All film locations directly relate to Vratislav Effenberger or his screenplays and eventually are proper "hunting grounds" for Effenberger's search method.

DOCUMENTARY

original title: Vratislav Effenberger aneb lov na černého žraloka

runtime: 94 min

national release: 8 November 2018

director: David Jařab

produced by: Viktor Schwarcz – Cineart TV Prague (CZ)

in co-production with: Czech Television (CZ)



Winter Flies

Mischievously self-assured Mára and somewhat eccentric Heduš set out into the frozen wastes in search of adventure – by car, naturally. After all, Mára's turning fifteen soon. A road movie about the flies that occasionally buzz around even in winter, and a story – before it ends at the police station – that tells of the elusive bond of boyhood friendship and the irrepressible desire to experience something, even if you don't exactly know what.

FICTION

original title: Všechno bude

runtime: 85 min

national release: 6 September 2018

director: Olmo Omerzu

cast: Tomáš Mrvík, Jan František Uher, Eliška Křenková, Lenka Vlasáková, Martin Pechlát

produced by: Jiří Konečný – endorfilm (CZ)

in co-production with: Cvinger film (SI), Koskino (PL), Punkchart films (SK)

international sales: Cercamon

