

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Mouth to Mouth resuscitates best traditions of Swedish cinema

Swedish cinema is not exactly known for light entertainment, and the brooding *Mouth to Mouth* does nothing to dispel this impression. This dark Scandinavian drama about a middle-class family on the verge of collapse is screening today in the Official Selection competition. Peter Andersson stars as Mats, an alcoholic whose daughter Vera (newcomer Sofia Westberg) has run away from home after he hits her. She ends up living with abusive heroin addict Morgan (Magnus Krepper), who prostitutes her to feed his habit. Vera's mother, Eva (Marie Richardson) is devastated at her daughter's departure and this takes its toll on Vera's younger siblings (Anton Jarlos Gry, Liv Omsen). Upon finally quitting drinking Mats sets about rectifying the harm he's done to his family by trying to rescue his daughter from Morgan's clutches. Most of the protagonists experience some form of grim self-discovery, which eventually offers some hope of redemption and reconciliation. *Mouth to Mouth* Director Björn Runge had a word with the *Festival Daily* before his film screened at KVIFF

■ **Your film is mainly about the relationship between parents and their children. What attracted you to this topic?**

The family is the heart of our way of living. We all come from different forms of families. We all have experience of family life. The family can be a good place for us. But the family can also be a place you have to survive. So for me it's about relations. It's something very ordinary but also very exotic because most families are very much the same on the outside, but as soon as the door is closed there are very different forces going on.

■ **In *Mouth to Mouth*, drugs and alcohol are strongly linked to the protagonists' sense of alienation and fraught relationships. Is substance abuse the only reason for your characters' problems?**

The main problem for my characters is that they are a second behind or a second in front of their own breathing. Very many people are there. Behind or in front of their own breathing. I'm also there. And if you are there – behind or in front of yourself – you have a problem. And that problem needs a solution which can help you escape in whatever way. When the soul is knocking on your door, you are perhaps not prepared for that meeting...



■ **Some critics compare your films to Ingmar Bergmann dramas. Was he an inspiration to you?**

Of course, I'm very inspired by Ingmar Bergman. And I am fascinated by the close-up as a form in my films. But I am also very influenced by the American director/actor John Cassavetes. He is my big inspiration!

■ ***Mouth to Mouth* is the latest in a long line of Swedish films with very depressing themes. Why do you think your country is so dark?**

Because we don't live in a culture that explodes on the streets. Very much is going on behind closed doors. That's why.

■ **In *Mouth to Mouth*, there are famous Swedish actors, such as Peter Andersson or Marie Richardson. But Sofia Westberg (Vera) is a relative unknown. How did you find her?**

Sofia Westberg is the one we found after filming over one thousand younger women in Gothenburg. She had the qualities that I was looking for. And she could also give the more experienced actors a good fight. I believed in her as the character Vera. And she was not afraid of the feelings in the script. She understood the life of Vera and didn't judge her. That's what was important for me. She also has that aura around her that makes the camera like her.

Mouth to Mouth screens today at 8.30pm in the Thermal's Grand Hall and tomorrow at 10.30am in the Grandhotel Pupp Cinema.

Michaela Klečková

Correction: The director of the film *Sherrybaby* was misidentified in yesterday's Official Selection article. The director's correct name is Laurie Collyer.

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Beauty in Trouble: An emotional Chekhovian comedy

Czech director Jan Hřebejk, who is perhaps best known to English-speaking audiences for his Oscar-nominated wartime drama *Divided We Fall*, is in KVIFF this year with his latest feature, *Beauty in Trouble*. Aňa Geislerová (*Želary, Something Like Happiness*) stars in this Official Selection film, which represents something of a departure for both Hřebejk and his long-term collaborator, screenwriter Petr Jarchovský. The two have been teamed up since 1990 but made their biggest splash with 1999's *Cozy Dens*. This nostalgic story of life under the pre-1989 regime was followed up with more bittersweet ensemble comedies, which won strong followings among fans of Czech film abroad, namely, *Pupendo* and *Up and Down*.

"Compared to our previous movie *Up and Down*, this film is much more intimate," says Hřebejk. *Beauty in Trouble* "follows a single storyline and differs in another sense as well: It does not overtly take on social issues. Instead, it tells the story of a 30-year old woman – Marcela – who leaves her husband and moves back in with her mother, who is living with a man who is even worse. Eventually, this "beauty" finally meets a nice gentleman..." Hřebejk believes his film should be viewed as a "psychological" romantic comedy. "Chekhov wrote plays which he called comedies – even though they ended with suicides. So let's say this is a Chekhovian comedy," he says.

This intricate drama, which is also leavened by lighter moments as in many of Hřebejk's other films, explores the complex nature of personal relationships in contemporary Czech society. Besides Geislerová's impressive characterization in the leading role, there are also stellar performances from a supporting cast, which includes Jiří Schmitzer (*Wonderful Years That Sucked, Boomerang*) and Slovak Roman Luknár (*Dirty Soul, Garden*). Czech sixties icon Jana Brejchová (*Higher Principle, The Wolf Trap*) makes a long overdue return to the big screen in *Beauty in Trouble* as Marcela's mother, which is something of a coup for Hřebejk. He says he waited 17 years before plucking up the courage to ask her to star in one of his films. By all accounts, this was a move that turned out to be mutually beneficial. "I would say it is a wonderful comeback for this exceptional star, whom we have hardly seen at all in recent years," says Hřebejk.

Beauty in Trouble is based on a poem of the same name by Robert Graves whose Czech translation was



made popular by singer Luboš Pospíšil. "In the early 1980s, we went to Pospíšil's concerts and we liked songs such as *Beauty in Trouble*, which he had set to music," says Hřebejk. "I wanted the poem to appear in the film, too, but it is a rock song and you have to hear it several times to be able to appreciate the meaning of the lyrics. I finally asked [popular Czech folk singer] Radúza to write new music for it." Radúza herself also appears in the film and the soundtrack is supplemented with original songs by Irish singer Glen Hansard of The Frames.

Beauty in Trouble will be shown in the festival's official competition section as a **world premiere**. "We finished it in June but it will not open in cinemas until September. That's why we welcomed the chance to present it to festival audiences in Karlovy Vary," says Hřebejk. "I think the film has turned out well and I hope it will attract a large crowd. But I cannot predict its prospects at the festival. Maybe it has a chance of succeeding in the acting categories because Jiří Schmitzer, Jana Brejchová, Roman Luknár and, of course, Aňa Geislerová did superb acting jobs in parts audiences have never seen them in before."

Hřebejk himself admits that *Beauty in Trouble* is not as funny as his earlier movies such as *Cozy Dens* or *Pupendo* but that the film has other qualities to keep audiences interested. "I believe the relative deficit in humor will be counterbalanced by a heavy dose of emotions," he says. "*Beauty in Trouble* is probably my most emotional film."

Beauty in Trouble screens today at 6pm in the Thermal's Grand Hall and tomorrow at 1.30pm in the GH Pupp Cinema.

Honza Dědek

FOOD & DRINK

Cafe Bar Retro

TG Masaryka 18

☎ 353 100 710

Open from 11am to 3am during fest

Just off the main drag, a three-minute walk across the river Teplá from the Thermal, Retro invariably scores high on the list of places for a quick pick-up between flicks. With fine light meals, recommendable coffees and a fun list of cocktails (the 3-liter mojito pitcher for 490 CZK is an interesting idea - otherwise it's 70 CZK each).

Retro also has a cozy terrace on the slope of the cobbled street out front, handily equipped with a retractable cover – great idea considering Karlovy Vary's temperamental summers.

The menu covers the bases, with soups, salads, light appetizers and pastas (30-99 CZK), plus the usual traditional Czech offerings (99-169 CZK), which certainly does the job. Gourmands probably wouldn't find much of interest here but for handy festival eating on the go, Retro certainly delivers.

It also works fairly well as a party scene, with late hours, shutting down at 3am Fridays and Saturdays, and with DJs on deck from 10pm every night of the fest.

Bodam Rybí Restaurace

TG Masaryka 10

☎ 602 747 297

Open every day from 10am to 11pm

A stone's throw from the Thermal, Bodam Rybí Restaurace (Bodam Fish Restaurant) offers shaded outdoor seating and, as the name suggests, an extensive range of fish dishes, from carp (79 CZK) to tiger prawns on a skewer with pineapple (299 CZK). There is a choice of eight soups including creamy salmon and lobster varieties for 99 CZK. They also have a selection of traditional Czech dishes such as beef goulash with dumplings (119 CZK) and roast duck (189 CZK). Those of you who like to look their dinner in the eye can choose a live fish from a tank in the restaurant, which will then be prepared according to your wishes.

REVIEWERS RECOMMEND

Nick Roddick

Correspondent for the London Evening Standard

**Bothersome Man**

Director: Jens Lien, Norway, 2006

July 2, 7.00pm, Congress Hall – Thermal,

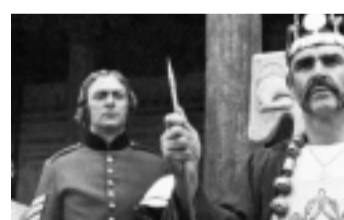
Norwegian director Jens Lien's look at a future dystopia manages to be both cynical and romantic, a combination I would have thought impossible. The film looks great, is often very funny – and, strangely enough, Lien's brave new world looks a lot like Norway.

**Requiem**

Director: Hans Christian Schmid, Germany, 2005

July 2, 10.00pm, GH Pupp Cinema

Don't read the plot summaries: if you know where Hans-Christian Schmid's extraordinary character study is headed, you will spoil one of the most disturbing experiences in recent European cinema. Sandra Hüller deservedly won Best Actress in Berlin, but Schmid deserves just as much credit for his controlled study of hysteria.

**The Man Who Would Be King**

Director: John Huston, USA, 1975

July 2, 12.00pm, Grand Hall

The art of cinematic storytelling at its very finest. John Huston tells Rudyard Kipling's tale of two ne'er-do-wells in 19th-century India with a deceptively casual skill, eliciting career-high performances from his two stars. Caine once told me Huston gave him only one piece of direction: "Speak slowly, Michael. He is an honest man."

**Offside**

Director: Jafar Panahi, Iran, 2006

July 2, 7.00pm, Husovka Theater

Jafar Panahi follows *Crimson Gold*, his portrait of a man's long night of despair, with a female football fan's efforts to get into a game. It's funny; it's angry; and it takes huge risks (of both sorts) by filming in real time at an actual World Cup qualifying game.

**Family Friend**

Director: Paolo Sorrentino, Italy, 2005

July 2, 10.00pm, Husovka Theater

Paolo Sorrentino's *The Consequences of Love* was an unexpected art-house hit last year. His follow-up is even better – a stylized, hyperconfident tale that breaks all the rules and ends up being one of the films of the year. Unusually for an Italian movie, it also has a great soundtrack!

WHERE IT'S AT

Julietta Zacharová

KVIFF Program Director

Well I think *Galerka* at Na Vyhliče 50 is a very good place. It's a bit off the beaten track but well worth the trip. You have to make an effort and walk uphill. If you go on foot it takes a while but for me it's a very nice walk. I always go there with other festival people just before KVIFF begins. They have great things to eat and it's a very pleasant restaurant.

Most of my colleagues usually have a *smažák* (deep-fried cheese in breadcrumbs) so that's a good bet. For me it's always connected with the before-festival period because once KVIFF starts the only place I know is the Thermal. I simply don't get the time during the festival to eat anywhere else.

