



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival

Festival Daily

THE OFFICIAL ENGLISH DAILY OF THE 43RD KARLOVY VARY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

SPECIAL EDITION OF
PRÁVO

Monday, July 7, 2008

free • strana / page 7

Tomorrow's program

strana/page 6, 11, 12

KVIFF Master Classes

strana/page 8

day
4

Today's Official
Selection films

strana/page 9

DIVÁČKÁ CENA / AUDIENCE AWARD
DENÍKU PRÁVO

Vote for the best film of the 43rd Karlovy Vary International Film Festival!
strana/page 2

Suddenly, it becomes something different

The Wire star and filmmaker Tom McCarthy keeps changing roles

Laura McGinnis

Connection is everything. That's the tagline of Tom McCarthy's latest film, *The Visitor*. But it's also a decent summary of how he operates. When discussing his work (he also wrote and directed *The Station Agent*, which screened here in 2006) McCarthy keeps returning to the theme of personal connection – both between colleagues, and between the artists and their work.

■ **As an actor, do you ever feel tempted to change a script someone else has written?**

Some directors and writers are more open to that... But, coming from the theater, normally I don't think of that first off. I kind of respect the text. If the writer spent enough time working on it, I feel like it's for a purpose. I usually try my best to make it true to the writer's words.

■ **Have you ever found that an actor's interpretation of your character is different from what you put on the page?**

Yeah, I do. I think, you know, that's the wonderful thing. You kind of have to let go of it at that point because suddenly an actor walks into the room and becomes that character. And that's kind of the exciting part of it: that it's not what you've seen in your head for the last two years. It becomes something different.

■ **Both of your movies have slightly withdrawn characters that start to open up to the world around them with the help of an outgoing friend – Joe in *The Station Agent* and Tarek in *The Visitor*. Do you write characters like this because you find them in your own life, or simply because they're fun to work with?**

Probably both. Both were



Director of *The Visitor* Tom McCarthy at the Grandhotel Pupp yesterday.

inspired by real people and, you know, Tarek and Joe have two very different approaches to drawing people out. Joe was just downright active. And Tarek is just... an easy guy to get along with. So he's not pursuing Walter in that way. He just happens to be in the right spot at the right time and he has the type of personality that allows Walter to come to him.

■ **Are Haaz Sleiman and Bobby Cannavale as much fun in real life?**

Yeah, they both are... Really, really fun. All those guys, the whole cast was. I've had two wonderful casts, not just in terms of being talented actors but just the type of people you want to work with.

■ **In *The Visitor*, was there**

a message you wanted viewers to take away, or were you simply trying to tell a human story in a political context?

Possibly a human context with a political story. You know? I think it's impossible, especially in our country right now, to tell a modern day story and not have some relevant political or social theme.

■ **Music is central to the plot of *The Visitor*, particularly drums and piano. Do you have a musical background, or did you have to do a lot of research?**

A lot of research and a lot of faking it. I'm not the least bit musical, so I really had to rely on research and reading and talking with friends and having other musicians take a look at what

I was doing. That was something I was a little nervous about, because a musician will watch a movie and know in two minutes. But I think Haaz [Sleiman] has fooled a lot of people in this movie. I think a lot of people think he's the real deal.

■ **You played corrupt journalist Scott Templeton on the critically acclaimed show *The Wire*. What kind of feedback did you get from the journalism community?**

[Joking] What do you mean by corrupt? I have no idea what you're talking about! I was making the news more interesting....

It was a funny time to do a press junket, right after that show came out. A lot of people, I think, still don't put me as a film

director and me as an actor together, so they'd know they had a meeting and I'd walk into the room and they'd be like, "Oh... Scott Templeton...."

It was actually a lot of fun.

■ **You've acted in both film and television. Is TV a more rewarding medium? When you have such a long time to develop a role, does it affect your relationship with the character?**

It depends. I don't think a lot of television is really that successful at developing multi-dimensional, deep characters.... But I think with a show like *The Wire* what made it such an extraordinary show is it was like a movie. Those characters really had a richness to them.

The Lowdown

KVIFF attendees are a special breed, of course, and it seems that their habits and lifestyles are just a bit different from that of many KV natives. More than a few visitors from out of town have been surprised by hotel maids, who seem uniquely unsympathetic to the demands of evening revelry.

One was overheard at a well-known hotel Sunday morning at the God-forsaken hour of 10.20am, knocking on guests' doors so that she could clean, and getting a blank expression in return from hungover KVIFF partiers. "It's late, yes?" she informed them sternly. A few minutes later, a colleague performed the same ritual a floor below. The Lowdown is beginning to suspect that these maids actually look forward to this rigmarole every year.

Like every filmfest KVIFF has its fair share of exclusive events. Saturday's gig by electro-pop legends Technotronic in Tretter's basement club was one such occasion. In theory, only those with the right sort of magic card were let in, but it seems a small band of intrepid fans managed to find a little-known back route into the venue. In a manner reminiscent of a Hammer Horror film, they followed a secret passage into the bowels of the Thermal. By all accounts, however, that turned out to be the most exciting part of the evening as the gig was over by the time they reached the inner sanctum.

Robert De Niro, meanwhile, obviously still has it: Like many great actors, he has the ability to become anonymous at will and slip undetected into crowds. He did just that after introducing *New York, New York* Saturday night when he got separated from his entourage and had to wait for them to notice he was missing and backtrack. Not one of his hordes of fans even spotted him alone by the Thermal.

SEE YOU THERE

James Marsh

Director of *Man on Wire*

I'd strongly recommend *Poppy Shakespeare*, which was made by a really good friend of mine [Benjamin Ross]. This is a really compassionate and provocative account of a woman who gets caught up the Kafkaesque bureaucracy of a day-care centre for mad people. It's very funny, but moving at the same time. *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* is an obvious reference point. It has some of the humor of that film, but is also very different because it's set in contemporary Britain. I'm not just plugging a friend's work here. This is a really great, beautifully shot film that is well worth discovering.

Poppy Shakespeare screens today at 9.30pm in the Cas Cinema and tomorrow at 4pm in the Espace Dorleans Cinema.

You can also catch James's documentary *Man on Wire* today at 7pm in the Panasonic Cinema.



THE KNOWLEDGE

Does Karlovy Vary have a local cuisine?

Karlovy Vary isn't exactly a hot destination for gourmet globetrotters, but it actually has two major culinary exports: wafers and Becherovka.

Wafers (*oplatky* or *Karlovarské oplatky* to the locals) are actually rumored to be part of the spa cure, along with the 12 hot springs for which the town is named. And what trouble would not be improved with a thin, crispy disc of sugary goodness the size of your head? Wafers come in several flavors – such as chocolate, hazelnut and cinnamon – and can be consumed as individual discs or as layered stacks, cut into wedges. Many vendors have hot presses that look a bit like smooth waffle irons. These are used to warm the



wafers and melt the gooey goodness within.

Although it may not be an essential part of the prescribed spa treatment, its proponents insist that a shot of Becherovka will cure what ails you. Medicines rarely go on to become a pub staple, but Becherovka, which was initially sold as a tonic to aid digestion, has been produced in Karlovy Vary for over 200 years and can be found on

most Czech bartenders' shelves.

The herbal liqueur can be consumed straight or in a variety of cocktails – recipes for which can be found on the company's website. One of the most popular is a *Beton*, which blends the "Becher" (as the locals affectionately call it) with a refreshing dash of tonic water.

While descriptions of the Becherovka vary – herbal, bitter, medicinal and sticky were among those offered by the *Daily* staff – most agree that it's easier on the palette than a hot mineral swig from the local *kolonáda*. There are also some hacks who swear by its ability to rapidly settle an upset stomach after a night on the tiles.

Na zdraví!