

OFFICIAL SELECTION



Photo: KVIFF archive

Distant Tremors – exploring the realm of mysticism and reality

In *Distant Tremors*, Belgian director Manuel Poutte has crafted a Jamesian world in which the influence of the supernatural is persistent, but unverifiable. The film tells the story of Bandiougou, a Senegalese youth whose desire to escape to Europe is thwarted by a series of misfortunes. As his troubles mount, so does his conviction that he's been bewitched. His journey to break the spell – if, indeed, one exists – draws him further into the interior, both physical and personal, with three Westerners in tow.

Bandiougou's seemingly hopeless dream is hardly unusual. When casting the principal role, Poutte and his colleagues interviewed hundreds of young Senegalese men and discovered that more than 95% had attempted to leave for Europe. Their assumptions about the imagined

utopia of Europe and the sacrifices these youths were willing to make to get there was one of the main impulses driving the film, Poutte says. One of his principal goals was to show the power that the mere image of Western society has on Africans, even those who have never left the continent and may live in remote provinces.

"The quest for material happiness, for success, for individualism creates great confusion" in people from cultures with different values, Poutte says. The differences between European and African culture are significant parts of the film. These differences are heightened by Poulette's decision to cast professional European actors and amateur Africans.

Mixing professional and amateur actors is a technique he's employed in the past, because it enables the cast to benefit from both experience and spontaneity, he says. But he had another agenda in selecting non-professional

African actors for this film.

"Professional African actors would have done nothing but follow my directions, which I did not want," he says. "I did not want the movie to be a projection of my own assumptions. It was essential to me that Africans would recognize themselves there."

The film leaves much room for interpretation. *Distant Tremors* is mystical, without being explicitly supernatural – a deliberate intention.

"I wanted to avoid any simplified or caricatured depiction of magic," such as one frequently finds in fantasy films," he says. Instead, he chose to focus on "the border between the visible and the invisible realm." Navigating that border is the response of the viewer.

Distant Tremors screens today at 8pm in the Thermal's Grand Hall and tomorrow at 10am in the Espace Dorleans Cinema.

Štěpán Kučera

OFFICIAL SELECTION



Photo: KVIFF archive

Night Owls – a gritty Prague love story

Michaela Pavlátová is part of what the director of the Cannes Film Festival's Cinéfondation, Laurent Jacob, has described as an "increasingly feminine presence" in Czech cinema. Like Karin Babinská (*Dolls*) and Olga Dabrowská (*Marbles*), she is one of a number of talented female directors who are making their mark in the local movie industry. Her second feature *Night Owls* is one of two Czech entries in KVIFF's official selection this year. This intimate coming-of-age story focuses on Ofka (Martha Issová), a young convenience-store night clerk who finds herself drifting aimlessly through life after a failed relationship.

Why did you want to make this movie?

What I really liked was the fact that Irena Hejzdová's screenplay follows only the main character Ofka. It focuses on her various

moods without distracting us by other developments. I sometimes like films where nothing seems to be happening. In real life, there are seldom any great twists but we still perceive our lives as quite dramatic. I had exactly that feeling when I read Irena's script.

Did you feel any personal affinity with the story?

There was a certain similarity to my own life and that is what intrigued me. I also liked the setting – the Prague district of Karlín. It could be situated in any other district or city but what I like about Karlín is that it is a relatively small and quite precisely defined area. It has its own unique charm.

I have to admit that I found it hard to like Ofka...

Were you irritated by what a brat she is? You were angry with her, right? We can all see that she is ignoring a very nice guy. We feel that she could do something about her life just like other people do, but she is not into it. Everybody finds her silly, maybe

even irritating, but I don't think she is unlikeable enough for the viewer to stop enjoying the film. I think most people will be interested to see what becomes of her...

Night Owls' gritty authenticity has prompted some critics to label it a "social drama"...

I don't see it that way. For me the film's milieu is quite common. I read the reactions from a pilot screening for high school students. Those from the more academic schools said it was about "losers." None of the students from industrial schools said that. I felt the first group was passing judgment. Perhaps they didn't like that fact that some people are poor and kind of grubby. I believe they have no idea that the word "loser" can be easily replaced by "authentic."

Night Owls screens today at 5pm in the Thermal's Grand Hall and tomorrow at 10pm in the Espace Dorleans Cinema.

Honza Dědek

denicek@kviff.com



WWW.CESKATELEVEIZE.CZ/VARY2008

Czech Television Telexport presents at 43rd Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

Dolls Pusinky

Directed by Karin Babinská | 35 mm, 99', © 2007

Year '68 - Hope/Betrayal Rok '68 - Naděje/Zrada

Directed by Viktor Polesný | Video, 2x 52', © 2008

Martin Frič, A Classic of Czech Film Martin Frič, klasik českého filmu

Directed by Zdeněk Zelenka | Video, 53', © 2008

Well Paid Stroll 2007

Dobře placená procházka 2007

Directed by Olga Špátová | Video, 52', © 2008

History of Jaroslav Šabata Dějiny Jaroslava Šabaty

Directed by Vít Janeček | Video, 79', © 2008

Czech Television - Telexport

Festival Department

Kavčí Hory, 140 70 Prague 4

Tel: +420 261 137 438, Fax: +420 261 211 354

jitka.prochazkova@ceskatelevize.cz

Sales

Kavčí Hory, 140 70 Prague 4

Tel: +420 261 137 047, Fax: +420 261 211 354

telexport@ceskatelevize.cz



HLAVNÍ
MEDIÁLNÍ PARTNER
FESTIVALU