



Photo: Milan Malíček



5/7 2016
FREE

INSIDE

Official Selection:
By the Rails, Waves
English Section, page 2

Another View:
The Lure, Tramontane
English Section, page 3

KVIFF honors Charlie
Kaufman and Jean Reno
English Section, page 4

Felix van Groeningen: 'The bohemian ideal, I guess, of "Fuck the world. We'll do it by ourselves and make our own rules, and we're different and we're free" – yeah, I guess that was there.'

FROM BOHEMIAN SUPERMAN TO *BELGICA*

OSCAR-NOMINATED DIRECTOR FELIX VAN GROENINGEN ON HIS NEW FILM AND HIS OWN 'BROKEN' CIRCLES

Brian Kenety

Belgian director Felix van Groeningen won a special mention at Cannes for *The Misfortunates* (2009), was Oscar-nominated for *The Broken Circle Breakdown* (2014), which won a Lux Prize, and was nominated for a KVIFF audience award, and won best director at Sundance for *Belgica*, a music-driven drama with a punk-rock ethos, loosely based on his dad's café-turned-nightclub in Ghent. He's developing an adaptation of *Beautiful Boy*, based on a father's story about his son's drug addiction, for New Regency and Brad Pitt's Plan B Entertainment. He's back at KVIFF to deliver a masterclass within the intensive filmmaking program **Future Frames**.

How old were you when your father ran The Charlatan club? And were your parents also artists, or musicians – bohemian types?

Yeah, they were (*laughs*) – but not like in the movie. The café became the

Charlatan when I was 12, and then my dad sold it when I was 23, to two brothers who had to start over, and the movie is like a strange mix of their story and the period when my father had that bar. So it's not like my father is one of the brothers in *Belgica*, but the atmosphere between the people – the bohemian ideal, I guess, of 'Fuck the world. We'll do it by ourselves and make our own rules, and we're different and we're free' – yeah, I guess that was there. And the strange thing is that happened again when my father sold it to those two brothers.

They went through the same process?

Yeah... Whenever something becomes more serious – and especially in nightlife with alcohol and drugs – it's just so hard not to cross the line and to lose yourself...

So was your dad a cool guy? Did that make it hard to have a classic teenage rebellion?

He was cool, yeah (*laughs*). Not in a superman sort of way or something. He was

frail like me, I guess, and had a big belly – and he was bald (*laughs*). He also wore rings... So he was a strange man but just really nice. He did it because of his love of people and because he loved music and hanging out. But the thing The Charlatan became was not what he really wanted. He got swept away by the success.

Is Ghent a character in your film?

Ghent has a vibrant scene. You know, it's a strange city. It became for *Belgica* a character, although the accent of the main characters, the dialect, is West Flanders. So in that sense, it's not really Ghent. But what is Ghent? It's a strange mix of people coming together, I guess, for me, and that's what *Belgica* is.

When did you know you wanted to be a film director?

When I was a kid, I wanted to be an actor. I loved the idea of playing the fool, but always within my family circle. Once I had to do it for other people, I became quite shy. I went to theatre courses, but

I didn't turn out to be so good at it... So, I thought, okay, I'll just become the boss (*laughs*). It's very strange how one thing led to another. My mother was working in film and TV, and I visited her on the sets and really loved also the technical side of it, sitting in the control where they mix TV live. I used to sit there all day. I was amazed by it. I started making little films or directing at school little plays when I was 10...

What changed for you after the success of *Broken Circle*?

What has changed? Well, when you're Oscar-nominated, you meet an incredible amount of people and get an incredible number of offers – which is amazing, but you have to stay true to what you want to do. I have to really fall incredibly in love with a project before I'll spend three years working on it. So, in a sense, a lot could have changed, but hasn't. We'll see what the future brings. I'm developing a U.S. project because of *Broken Circle*... and if it happens, it'll be on a much larger

scale... It's called *Beautiful Boy*. It's based partly on a writer's memoir about his relationship with his son who's a crystal meth addict.

Both *The Misfortunates* and *Belgica* feature this difficult dynamic between brothers. Did you have such crazy relationships or just find them fascinating?

I do find it fascinating. I have a great family – we're very tight, but also in a sense a little bit broken. My parents split when I was quite young... The idea of never finding that home, I guess, is something I don't suffer from, really, but it's why those kinds of strange families also fascinate me. And my father died when I was making my first feature, 15 years ago. But I love the people I've met and what I've been through because of that broken family, that my dad had that bar and I was working there alone, living alone or with my brother, at a young age. They were all interesting phases, and I don't regret any of it. But there's something I miss – the idea of that ideal family. I miss that. ■

SEE YOU THERE

KIM YUTANI

SENIOR PROGRAMMER
SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

I think Polish actor Michalina Olszańska is a really interesting new talent. She's the lead actress in both the Czech film *I, Olga Hepnarova* (dir: Tomáš Weinreb), where she plays a young sociopathic murderer, and also in *The Lure* (dir: Agnieszka Smoczyńska) – a vampire mermaid musical that won Sundance's Special Jury Prize. She's excellent in both films.

Also, I always recommend that people at festivals see short films and documentaries, and something you didn't plan or expect to see. In the Prague Short Film Festival Presents sidebar is a great film called *The Chickening* (dir: Davy Force), a remix of *The Shining* that's absolutely bonkers and artistically quite out there. I also think short film programs are a great place to discover new talent. (BK)

I, Olga Hepnarova *screens today at 7:30pm (Lázně III Cinema) and July 8 at 5pm (Cinema B)*. The Lure *shows July 6 at 1pm (Congress Hall) and July 8 at 2pm (Cinema B)*. The Chickening *screens today at 1pm (Národní dům Cinema) and July 8 at 12:30pm (Čas Cinema) ■*



EXPLAINER

THE THERMAL – A VERY CONCRETE STATEMENT

Dominating any aerial view of KV, the Hotel Thermal's monolithic concrete slabs and bewildering entrances make this a fairly specific kind of architectural experience. It's wrong to dismiss this as a communist monstrosity though.

New Brutalism (as this style is endearingly named) was not a communist movement, as examples like London's Barbican Centre demonstrate. Brutalism is a reference to the word 'brut', as in Le Corbusier's penchant for "beton brut" (raw concrete), though many find the effect of thousands of unadorned tons of the stuff a little brutal.

The Thermal's renowned architects, Věra Machoninová and her husband Vladimír, were also not kosher comrades, if his excommunication and subsequent work ban are anything to go by. Before they fell out with the Party, they al-



Photo: Petr Hloušek

the light fittings. Strolling on the Thermal's pebble dashed walkways, one can still see most of the original design.

As KVIFF's artistic director Karel Och once said, "It's like a museum." Unfortunately, it's a bit frowzy, with ragged retro-fitting cluttering the clean lines. But with imagination (or a multi-million koruna restoration job) we'd see a very different Thermal. We'd see, as 1960s KVIFF artistic director Ladislav Pospíšil said in his memoir, "a palace." (CLC) ■

OFFICIAL SELECTION

BY THE RAILS – A LONG NIGHT'S JOURNEY BACK TO INTIMACY



Cătălin Mitulescu's third feature unfolds subtle cues, building tension

By Hana Gomoláková

It's summer in sunny Italy, and the tourist season is about to start for the restaurant where Adrian (Alexandru Potocean) works as a waiter. Nervous as to why his wife back in Romania isn't answering his calls, he decides to return home to her and their toddler son, after a year abroad.

Arriving in his village by bus at night, his wife Monica (Ada Condeescu) greets him at the station in a revealing dress – a sharp contrast to her stand-offish attitude. From that moment on, there is a subtle dance between them of hidden emotions, unspoken regrets, and a search for forgiveness.

With the tension between Adrian and Monica building, they try to find a way back to each other over the course of a long night, while the whole village celebrates a wedding – providing the director's comment on the social background and values in Romania.

By the Rails, Cătălin Mitulescu's third feature, unfolds nearly in real time and is strongest in its silent moments, heavy with unspoken words. As so often in life, this is where the truth is uncovered, and the director keeps us on our toes so as not to miss another cue.

"There is a lot of tension, a lot of emotion when a couple gets back together after a long period of distance. Every gesture, every second is important. I started to write the film imagining that night when he comes back to her," he says. "The time is passing and by minutes and hours they start to feel the desire to be lovers again, and family, but it seems so impossible. I wanted to do a film about that."

The film bets almost everything on the performance of the two leads and their chemistry. There are a lot of emotional highs and lows, almost like on a roller-coaster. "We talked about the story, but generally we did not rehearse the scenes, es-

pecially the intimate ones. We tried to keep the distance alive till the end, building up the intimacy as much as possible," Mitulescu says.

Romanians leaving for work abroad was also a theme of the prison drama *When I Want to Whistle, I Whistle*, a film he co-wrote and produced that won the Silver Bear at the Berlinale in 2010. Many Romanians leave for Italy never to return "back to their country or to their language," he says. "I don't know if this is good or bad but for me it's full of mixed, strong emotions and it's natural to have this in some of my stories."

The film's title provokes the question of whether the rails are meant to provide an escape route for the young pair. "Could be, but for me it is something more," Mitulescu says. "I like rails, and when the train is passing I have the strongest feeling of time moving on. I wanted to have this close to my characters, to the story." ■

OFFICIAL SELECTION

WAVES – FEATURE DEBUT CASTS SCRIPT 'TO THE WINDS'



Grzegorz Zariczny's short doc *The Whistle* won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance

By Hana Gomoláková

You chose to work with non-actors. Why this decision and was it harder than working with professional actors?

In 2015, I made a short [documentary], *Love, Love*, where I showed the world of Kasia and Ania, two girls entering adulthood with the desire to become professional hairdressers, from the lower strata of society. I wondered what would have to happen for their social status to improve. That's how *Waves* began. I wanted to call attention to all the many young girls facing the same problem.

Ania and Kasia drew on their own experiences when we were filming particular scenes. In emotional terms, it was extremely difficult for them. But they knew that it was the only way of showing their world authentically and truthfully. Professional actors are armed with technical skills. And those skills often shield them from engaging emotionally.

You bring us close to the characters through their daily routine. How did you set up the story?

We did everything we could to film chronologically, following the screenplay, but after 10 days of shooting, I had to cast it to the winds. Ania and Kasia's interior truth was so vast and so very different from what I'd written that I decided to be courageous enough to give them a wider influence on the film. Ania's level of engagement was so intense that we only needed one take of the final shot. That's how much pain it cost her. She drew on her own experiences.

One subliminal theme is the emotional absence of alcoholic parents and the way it affects their children.

The problem isn't overly extensive, but it does exist. And, given that the right wing has come to power in Poland, it's a crucial one. The right was victorious thanks to the votes of people who've been of interest to no one since the col-

lapse of communism; people who have been unable to find their feet under capitalism. They preferred welfare to personal development. And from there, it's a short step to alcoholism. The children of those people have suffered the consequences. The saddest thing of all is that those children aren't to blame for their fate. When I made the film, I wanted to turn people's attention to them. Those children are now entering adulthood.

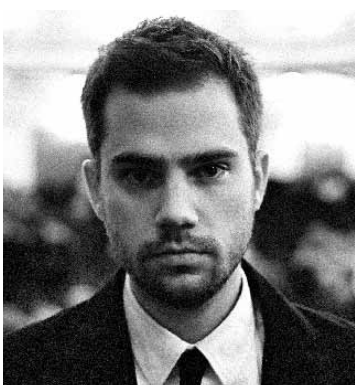
KVIFF programmers say your film reminds them of the authentic filmmaking of the Czechoslovak New Wave. Were you inspired by those films?

That came as a pleasant surprise. I've collaborated with Weronika Bilksa from the outset. Together, we're searching for our own original 'language' of cinematic storytelling, which we'd like to develop... Nonetheless, my favorite Czechoslovak New Wave film is [Miloš Forman's] *Loves of a Blonde*. In fact, it's also one of my all-time favorites. ■

FACES



Keith Maitland



Michał Marczak



Alice Nellis



Damjan Kozole



Žiga Virc



Cláudia Varejão

Among the new arrivals on the fifth day of KVIFF is the award-winning Italian actor **Valerio Mastandrea**, who stars in two films presented in the Horizons section: *Don't Be Bad and Sweet Dreams*. Slovenian director **Damjan Kozole** and actress **Pia Zemljič** are bringing *Nightlife*, screening in the Official Selection

main competition tomorrow; their countryman, director **Žiga Virc**, is leading the delegation presenting *Houston, We Have a Problem* in the East of the West section. **Michał Marczak** is bringing the doc competition film *All These Sleepless Nights*, followed by **Rozálie Kohoutová** and **Tomáš Bojar** with *FC Roma*, **Keith**

Maitland with *Tower*, and **Cláudia Varejão** with *Ama-San*. Czech directors **Alice Nellis** and **Ivan Zachariáš**, the latter already present at the festival, will present the new HBO Series *Wasteland*, while Thai helmer-scribe **Kongdej Jaturanrasmee**'s *Snap* was selected to screen at the festival by the *Variety* critics. (HG) ■



CERISE HOWARD, CRITIC'S CHOICE

CRITIC & FESTIVAL DIRECTOR, SENSES OF CINEMA & CASFFA

An already good year for Czech cinema has been enlivened to no end by director Jiří Sádlek's impressive feature debut. A pastoral horror film full of glorious sun-kissed cinematography, in which the drama is nonetheless principally interior, *The Noonday Witch* draws on Karel Jaromír Erben's macabre folkloric ballad of the same name to produce



THE NOONDAY WITCH

Director: Jiří Sádlek
Czech Republic, 2016, 90min
July 4, 4pm, Pupp Cinema

a cautionary fable of similar themes, atmospherics, and intensity to Jennifer Kent's superb recent Australian horror, *The*

Babadook (for Essie Davis, just substitute Anna Geislerová, and for the *Babadook*, the great Daniela Kolářová).

Alejandra Márquez Abella's fiction feature debut impressed in its European premiere earlier this year, landing a well-deserved special jury award at the Fribourg International Film Festival in Switzerland. An observational drama set at a Mexican holiday resort in which the nuclear family ideal comes under gentle and humorous, but nonetheless probing



SEMANA SANTA

Director: Alejandra Márquez Abella
Mexico, 2015, 87min
July 4, 7:30pm, Husovka Theatre

and sustained, scrutiny, *Semana Santa* is an understated treat whose narrative shifts, which gamely disperse the main charac-

ters midway through, emerge organically, yet still surprise. The sidebar *A Female Take on Mexico* is also well worth a gander.



ROMANCE FOR THE BUGLE

Director: Otakar Vávra
Czechoslovakia, 1966, 86min
July 4

Otakar Vávra's charming 1966 film demonstrates that it was not just the student body at Prague's storied FAMU that was catalyzed in the '60s towards collaborative production of an extraordinary run of poetic films far removed from the stifling restrictions of Socialist Realism, but also its faculty. This classic coming-of-age tale, told wistful-

ly in a summer holiday flashback and blessed with superb black-and-white cinematography from Andrej Barla, could

just as easily have been the work of any of Vávra's celebrated students. Screening on 35mm and presented by Jan Hřebejk. ■

ANOTHER VIEW: A KALEIDOSCOPE OF NEW VISIONS



Boulghourjian's debut feature *Tramontane* premiered in the Critics' Week at Cannes



Agnieszka Smoczyńska's story of mermaid sisters in Poland won a special jury award at Sundance

Michael Stein

In his feature debut that screened at Cannes Critics' Week, *Tramontane*, Lebanese director Vatche Boulghourjian presented the story of a young, blind musician who is prevented from getting a passport to travel to Europe to sing with his chorus. This simple practicality starts him on a journey into his country's past and the truth of his own identity.

For Boulghourjian the issues brought up by the film are both Lebanese and universal ones: "The war in Lebanon (1975-1990) left an enduring wound on the consciousness of the generation(s) that experienced it. How does one live with such a wound? How does one learn to live among the physical ruins and the spiritual damage that persist in the aftermath of a war? One may begin to seek understanding by trying to search for what exactly happened, trying to construct an accurate image or a narrative of incidents, trying, as it were, to clearly see the chain of events that take place in the fog of war with the benefit of hindsight.

Would this help? How? These and similar questions gave rise to the themes present in the film. In reality this can be related to any crisis in any nation in the world where individuals experience trauma. Collective experience is made up of many individual stories; *Tramontane* is only one story."

Emerging talent is the order of the day, with a slew of award-winning debuts filling out Another View, a section showing there is ample possibility for daring and innovation in world cinema today. From China to Turkey to Chile to Finland and beyond, first-time directors are expanding cinematic horizons and the 24 films screening share a boldness of vision and notable originality that has been widely recognized.

This is nowhere more evident than in another debut feature, *The Lure*, by Polish director Agnieszka Smoczyńska, in which fairy-tale, musical, horror and a bit of communist retro nostalgia are all tossed into the proverbial blender to create a feast for the senses. The story of two mermaid sisters who come ashore in

Poland in the late '80s was awarded a special jury award for unique vision and design at Sundance. The two otherworldly sisters are played by Marta Mazurek and Michalina Olszańska, both of whom played in the recent Czech feature *I, Olga Hepnarová*, which is screening at KVIFF in the Czech Films section, with Olszańska in the lead role.

From two sisters in a mythical underwater world to two women navigating life in the desert, another feature debut by Israeli Elite Zexer is *Sand Storm*, winner of this year's world cinema grand jury prize at Sundance. It portrays a Bedouin mother and daughter struggling within the harsh confines of highly traditional male-dominated society.

Another pair of women tread a more reckless path in French director Houda Benyamina's debut feature *Divines*. Winner of this year's feature film Camera d'Or at Cannes, it follows two French girls diving headlong into a life of crime. The buddy pic is packed with energy and invention, and benefits in particular from the performance of Oulaya Amamra as

Dounia, the girl in the hood who wants more from life.

In Chinese director Gan Bi's debut *Kaili Blues* a doctor, Chen, tries to redress the errors of the past by searching out his irresponsible brother's abandoned son. The film's highly atmospheric visuals fit nicely with its elegiac, dreamlike mood; a truly masterful sequence is a single shot held more than 40 minutes that follows Chen in a town where the mix of old China and the construction projects replacing it is a constant symbolic reminder of what's taking place in his own life. Gan Bi won the emerging director prize at the Locarno in 2015.

Italian director Petro Marcello set out to make a documentary about a farmer named Tommaso Cestroni who had restored a Bourbon palace in the face of multiple obstacles. Everything changed when Cestroni died suddenly of a heart attack during filming – but rather than give up on the project, Marcello pushed ahead, transforming his film into the realm of the fantastic by adding Pulcinella from the *commedia dell'arte*

and giving birth to *Lost and Beautiful*. The distinct visual effect arises from filming with expired 16mm stock, invoking an aged look, the atmosphere further developed by a score that blends original work by Marco Messina and Sacha Ricci with compositions by Vivaldi and Donizetti.

Marcello's feature debut *The Mouth of the Wolf* was shown in the documentary competition at KVIFF in 2010 and he returned two years later with his original portrait of Armenian director Artavazd Peleshyan *The Silence of Peleshyan*. *Lost and Beautiful* represented Italy at Locarno last year and won the Ingmar Bergman award at the 2016 Goteborg fest.

Premieres this week include the innovative fictional documentary *Lantouri* by Iranian director Reza Dormishian, Belgian director Wim Vandekeybus's highly stylized debut of twins separated at birth *Gallop Mind* and award-winning Belgian director Bouli Lanners' tale of a couple of petty thieves on the run in *The First, the Last*. ■

HLAVNÍ PARTNER 51. MFF KV



UMĚT ŽÍT



BEING CHARLIE KAUFMAN: I'M THE AUDIENCE

By Will Tizard

Oscar-winner Charlie Kaufman would never have finished anything had it not been for producers harassing him to get their money's worth. So says the soft-spoken scribe of some of the most wondrously weird and distinctive films of our time, from *Being John Malkovich* (1999) and *Adaptation* (2002) to *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) and *Synecdoche, New York* (2008) – his directorial debut.

Kaufman, who is here to screen the surreal, animated love story *Anomalisa* (2015) and be honored with the KVIFF President's Award, spoke to a packed room yesterday at the Thermal, covering his work habits, career trajectory, professional challenges and strategies for navigating the minefield that is Hollywood.

A selection of his answers to an hour of thorough grilling by *The Hollywood Reporter's* Scott Feinberg:

So your career began with acting?

Yeah. Third grade.

When did you realize that you're a talented writer?

I haven't realized that yet. No, seriously. I made movies as a kid, I did theatre, I went to film school, learned acting. I wrote plays and I did standup and stuff like that. I went to film school with a guy named Chris Columbus. He sold a screenplay while in school, then he sold a movie called *Gremlins*, so I heard and learned that the way to get into directing was to be a screenwriter first. So I figured that would be my ultimate goal – to write and direct.

It didn't work out for over a decade. I couldn't figure out how to get in, then I heard that it's easier to get into television. There's a process where you write a spec sitcom, then you get an agent. I didn't want to do TV, but I figured as a last ditch attempt I would try that. And I got TV work so I was lucky.

You worked on Chris Elliott's *Get a Life*, then also *The Dana Carvey Show*. Was your bent always towards comedy, or did it just work out that way?

No, comedy. I was always interested in comedy.

You worked with talented writers in between: Stephen Colbert, Louis CK, Steve Carell, Robert Smigel...

I enjoyed getting paid to be a writer. I couldn't believe that was actually happening. The job I had before was answering phones at an art museum in Minneapolis. For minimum wage. It gave me confidence because I didn't have any. And over time I was able to be more confident in a room and talk to people and pitch jokes. When I first started, I couldn't talk to people. I literally didn't say anything for six weeks. I was afraid I was going to be fired.

Where do ideas tend to come to you?

I walk a lot. I walk every day and carry a notebook with me and jot down things.

Where do you actually write?

I write at a desk.

I imagine. But where is that desk?

That desk is in an office. That office is



Charlie Kaufman enjoys getting paid to write. At a desk

in my house. My process is to go out every day to a coffee shop.

Do you write outlines? Do you like to know where your story or your script is going before you start it?

I prefer not to. When you're starting out, if you're writing an outline before you've thought about this thing, you're kind of committing yourself to something you don't yet know. Always I'll come upon something a month into writing that'll change everything. I don't like to feel I'm bound to something that's preconceived. It takes me a long time to write because of that, but it's the way I prefer to write.

Was it purely coincidence that three of your early scripts, *Malkovich, Adaptation...* all were about real people in fictional situations?

It's not conscious. The important thing to me about all those films is to make clear

that these are real people but I'm lying about them. That's why I made Susan Orlean (the writer for *The New Yorker* in *Adaptation*) so over-the-top: a murderer, a drug addict. Because it's not true, it's clearly not true, and I'm telling you it's not true.

Do you approach these people and say, 'Tell me you're on board on this?'

I didn't know Malkovich. I didn't ask his permission.

What was the biggest challenge in writing *Adaptation*?

I set about doing something I didn't know how to do and I was really panicked about the time it was taking me. I didn't want to make up a bullshit story about real people. There's no story in the book (Orlean's *The Orchid Thief*) and there's no drama. It's about flowers. So once I figured out a way to comment on doing that and not make it the real thing I was doing, the biggest challenge was I couldn't tell anybody I was doing it. I was really afraid I could hurt myself professionally. I wanted (the producers) to read it cold as opposed to knowing going in what it was.

Is it also frightening to know there's a certain event in the script where you may lose some of the audience?

No. I don't care about that. I don't think about audiences. I really, truly don't. I think about me. I'm the audience. Is this something that I want to see in a movie? Is this something I think is cool? Something I think is funny or sad? Otherwise, you're kind of doing this tap dance for people. Why bother? ■

DOCU TALENTS FROM THE EAST

By Hana Gomoláková

The 12th edition of Docu Talents, the annual presentation of 12 feature-length documentary films from Central and Eastern Europe in production or post-production takes place today at 2pm at the Congress Hall of Hotel Thermal.

The projects are selected together with the Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival (JIDFF) with a focus on cinematic films intended for the festival circuit premiering between August 2016 and July 2017. There were over 80 applications this year and the 12 selected projects all display innovative and creative storytelling as well as a compelling visual style.

The presentation's aim is also to draw the attention of "Western" film festivals to these upcoming films. "Eastern European documentary films are not represented enough in the West. From the 15 slots at the IDFA competition, there might be, for example, two films from Eastern Europe, if we're lucky," JIDFF director Marek Hovorka says. To break this pattern, Docu Talents is looking for variety.

"We are trying to bring attention to the most distinctive films, to show that an Eastern European documentary is not just a film from the countryside, as many Western festival programmers think," Hovorka says.

This year, Marek is proud to present the new film of Ivan I. Tverdovskiy, whose *Zoology* is screening in the Official Competition. Although *Zoology* is



JIDFF's Marek Hovorka

a fiction film, Tverdovskiy studied documentary film and is returning to the genre. "Personally, I think it's a hybrid study of what happens on Russian roads," Hovorka says. "Coincidentally, we will also present another Russian film about a similar phenomenon, Dmitri Kalashnikov's *The Roadmovie*, based on YouTube videos. The confrontation of these two films with the same premise, but different in style, is interesting. So I am happy to prove how variable it is – reality-based on found footage vs. something close to fiction."

Levan Koguashvili's *Gogita's New Life*, which follows an ex-con looking for a wife is also one of the highlights. Koguashvili, is already a well-known filmmaker in Europe, having screened his films in Rotterdam, Toronto and Berlin. Another established filmmaker, whose new film is already anticipated, is Piotr Stasik, whose *Opera*

About Poland, a cross-genre project blending opera and doc contemplates what is contemporary Poland.

But apart from these established filmmakers, the presentation also draws attention to emerging talent. Slovak filmmaker and photographer Lucia Nimcová's feature debut *A Tall Tale* searches for hidden Ukrainian reality in folk songs. "In Slovakia, photography is on the rise, showing a lot of talent. Last year, we presented Martin Kollar's film *5 October*, which is screening in the KVIFF Imagina section." Another Slovak talent is Pavol Pekarčík with *Long Day* – a documentary on hearing-impaired children. "The young filmmaker proved his talent as a director next to Petr Kerekes and Ivan Ostrochovský filming *Velvet Terrorist*, which premiered at Berlinale."

Czech docs will be represented by the well-known creative duo Filip Remunda and Vít Klusák with a film whose title clearly indicates its intention to provoke: *Pepik the Czech Goes to Poland in a Quest for Love of God*. "It loosely follows the *Czech Dream* and *Czech Peace*, concluding the trilogy on Czechness," Hovorka says.

After the presentation, one-to-one meetings will take place and a soirée has been prepared, giving filmmakers a chance to meet sellers, buyers and festival reps. "One of the things that filmmakers [from the region] still don't really realize is that the Western [industry] is very well connected and how important it is to be attached to it," Hovorka says. ■

KVIFF PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR JEAN RENO

North African-born action film star Jean Reno, currently shooting an adventure movie in the Czech Republic about which he can reveal few details, is at KVIFF to be honored with the President's Award and to present *Léon: The Professional* (1994).

He spoke to journalists Monday at the Hotel Thermal, professing his love for filming in the land of "beautiful women" and "great food." With well over 60 film credits as an actor, Reno says a performer must remember that movie making "is work" and is dismissive of the goal of being famous.

The European Film Award winner reflected on working with Natalie Portman, then 11, in her feature debut, in which she beat out some hundreds of others who auditioned for the central role in *Léon*, a spunky girl whose family has been murdered and who wants to learn the assassin's trade.

"She understood very quickly that it's work and not a game," Reno said. "We're not playing. She's a very smart person. With a big heart. I had a very good time with her."

As for his most recent project, the 67-year-old Reno will say only, "It is



Jean Reno

a big Chinese production with big Chinese stars. It is an action movie."

He reflected on *The Big Blue* (1988), his first major international hit, as "the first big action adventure that I had with Luc Besson." Reno recalled a year of training in free diving to enable him to perform underwater scenes at a depth of 33 meters while holding his breath for up to three minutes.

Just from reading the script, Reno says, he could see the scope of Besson's vision for the nine-month shoot. "It was something very big...and also a cinema adventure." Although the film is "very strange" because it's based on a death wish of the two central characters, Reno said, "It changed my life because we traveled all around the world with that movie." (WT) ■

EVENTS

Six Czech films in development will present their projects to the industry audience during **Pitch & Feedback** at the Industry Pool from 10am–1pm. After a 10-minute pitch to invited guests and audience, film experts will directly give the presenting teams feedback on their projects and presentations. At the Congress Hall at 2pm, 12 feature-length documentary films in the post-production stage will be presented during **Docu Talents from the East**. The panel is co-organized with the Jihlava IDFF. At 6pm, the Industry Pool will host Peter Federbush, International Director of the Sundance Institute's Feature Film Program, who will introduce the **FFP Lab** on a case study of Lebanese director Vatche Boulghourjian's drama *Tramontane*, which premiered in Cannes this year. The audience will have a chance to meet Oscar-winning production designer and set decorator **Allan Starski** at the Barrandov Villa at 2pm. (HG) ■

KVIFF TALKS

German director and artist **AKIZ**, nominated twice for the student Oscar is featuring his debut *The Nightmare* at the KVIFF as part of the Midnight Screenings. He will be screening his short films and documentary about making of *The Nightmare* during the KVIFF Talk with the audience, 3:30pm, Cinema A. ■

DAILIES

1/ Actor Sergi López, actress Emma Suárez, and actor Alex Monner from the Official Competition film *The Next Skin* on the KVIFF red carpet

2/ Scriptwriter Petr Jarchovský and director Jan Hřebejk [the team behind Official Competition film *The Teacher*], and actress Hana Vagnerová unwind

