



Simon Al-Bazoon (left) and Sherwan Haji will present the film they are starring in, *The Other Side of Hope*, today at 11:30 at hotel Thermal's Grand Hall.

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FREE

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FINNISH BY CHANCE

by Iva Roze, Šimon Šafránek

Aki Kaurismäki's new film *The Other Side of Hope* recounts the fate of a Syrian refugee named Khaled, played by Syrian actor **Sherwan Haji**, who ends up – not exactly by choice – in Finland, which is frigid, both meteorologically and interpersonally. Khaled's sidekick is an Iraqi refugee named Mazdak, played by Iraqi-Finnish actor **Simon Al-Bazoon**. The film is a debut for both starring actors, who have come to Karlovy Vary to present the film.

How did you wind up in this film?

Sherwan: For me it was one of those crazy universal moments when things just happen, there is some metaphysical intervention. I received an email which said that there is a production company that seeks an actor from the Middle East who speaks English, Arabic and Finnish would be a plus, and there is like a little thing that says "with a reasonable sense of humor." I looked at my old passport, went to the mirror and I thought: "OK, it might be me."

Simon: I had forgotten about doing theater or movies because I did that before. But I got a call and they said, "are you still doing acting?" And I was like, "Always, I never say no to acting."

Did you know it was Aki Kaurismäki's film?

Sherwan: I had no idea. I thought it was just an amateur film about the ongoing situation with refugees and I would be like making pizza behind all of the scenes as an extra or something like that. And then I went there, they gave me a script in Arabic, but it was Google-translated from left to right, I thought of it as a brain test or something.

Simon: We were sitting and doing the Arabic voice test and after that, they said this is Aki Kaurismäki's movie and you have been chosen for that movie. "Congratulations!" Sherwan was like: "Wow, it's amazing, unbelievable." And I was like, "Who's Aki?"

How did he direct you?

Sherwan: The beautiful thing was that he is so clear, crystal clear about what he

wants. The text was holy, but with the character, he only gave me the skeleton, the backbone for the character and the clothes. But then he gave me total freedom. That surprised me a lot. For an actor, you can't believe how beautiful it is when you feel like you have space to contribute. I try to avoid being a character, I try to be myself and think how I will cope if I go through these changes in my life.

Did the clash of cultures make it challenging?

Sherwan: It was a beautiful experience not to be put in a box because I am from the Middle East. We are normal people. We have minutes to ourselves, we reflect, we are silent when we are angry. We don't necessarily break tables. Being from a different background, of course, sometimes makes it challenging. Especially coming from a warm social environment to a very cold, low temper one.

How did you cope with that?

Sherwan: I try to see it as a football

team. It's not hard to play when you know the roles.

Is Aki Kaurismäki a good football coach?

Simon: He is a great coach. Because he is all about treating everybody equally. Sakari [Kuusmanen] has been acting with him for 35 years but I didn't feel at all that Sakari was a bigger actor than me or I am bigger than Sakari. The trust that he gave us was the best part.

Sherwan: That trust brought what you see on the screen. The first thing he said when he gave me the script was, "Read it and say yes." So I immediately said yes.

How did that trust manifest itself?

Simon: He writes in Finnish and tells us to just do the scene in Arabic. But in Arabic, it always comes out differently, so we tell him it will sound different and he said "yeah just go and do it." He had no idea what we were saying. So he trusted us that much. I don't think there are many directors out there who trust new actors so much.

How did you end up in Finland, of all places, anyway?

Simon: I came when I was 10 years old, in 1993, after Iraq lost the revolution against Saddam Hussein. We applied for asylum through the UN and they decided we would go to Finland. None of my family had even heard of Finland before. But they told us it was the neighbor of Sweden and we said, "Wow, Sweden, really?" We were one of the first refugees in Finland.

And your story, Sherwan?

Sherwan: I was in acting school in Damascus and one of our teachers brought a VHS with a film by Aki Kaurismäki (*The Man Who Wasn't There*). That was one of the few things I knew about Finland., except for ice cream and Nokia and some rally drivers. The year I graduated I met one Finnish girl, in front of an alcohol shop. Surprise, right? And we went for the same wine bottle and I told her, the first woman I'll see tomorrow, I'll marry her.

And, yep, you did. ■

SEE YOU THERE

VICTOR GRISS

I'm representing the Czech and Slovak Film Festival of Australia (CaSFFA), to preview and consider films for screening in Melbourne and Canberra later this year, to meet people in the industry and really just enjoy the event and have a good time. With regard to screenings, I'll be hoping in particular to catch the Slovak/Ukrainian co-production *The Line*, directed by Peter Bebjak, which I expect will be intriguing, and the documentary *The White World According to Daliborek*, directed by Vít Klusák, which addresses the rise in nationalism – an important and highly relevant topic right now. I'm also a martial arts tragic and harbor a fan crush on Uma Thurman, so *Kill Bill: Vol. 1 & Vol. 2* is a screen cocktail I'll find hard to resist. I might even sneak in a session at the hot springs too. Oh, and a beer. (CH)

CULTURAL ATTACHÉ, CASFFA
(AND FREELANCE MICHAEL CAINE
IMPERSONATOR)

The Line screens July 3 at 8pm [Grand Hall], July 4 at 1pm [Pupp Cinema] and July 6 at 11.30am [Drahomíra Cinema]. *The White World According to Daliborek* screens tonight at 10.30pm [Grand Hall] and July 3 at 11.30am [Drahomíra Cinema]. *Kill Bill: Vol. 1 & Vol. 2* screen tonight at 10.30pm [Outdoor Cinema]. ■



EXPLAINER

BRUTAL, MAYBE, BUT STILL IN VALIANT SERVICE

If KVIFF ever seems a touch, well, touchy, it's worth remembering that it is, after all, the child of Brutalism. Or at least the fest mother-ship, the Hotel Thermal, is – as you have no doubt noticed – a very special kind of base camp.

An architectural wonder of a sort at the time it was built from 1967 to 1976 by renowned architects Věra Machoninová and her husband Vladimír, the hotel was clearly meant to impress decadent capitalist Westerners with the wonders of state-controlled development projects. Its impressive hillside pool complex, complete with diagonal-running elevator, swooping cylindrical components and once-swanky terraces indeed made a distinct statement back in the early days of KVIFF, when the likes of Maximilian Schell and Donald Sutherland were doing photo calls here.

But its style was certainly not whipped up by party hacks. In fact, the style was in vogue worldwide throughout the 1960s and 70s, with many stunning examples still up and running all



around the world (they were made largely from concrete and reinforced steel, after all). So if their interiors are now looking a bit tatty – a few plumbing and maintenance issues may be plaguing such wonders as London's Barbican Centre, the Preston bus station in Lancashire and the Universidad de Ingeniería y Tecnología in Peru – at least they do serve as living monuments to a movement once highly regarded by artists.

The Machoninovi were on a par with the other famous Brutalist greats, including Alison and Peter Smithson, who coined the term in England in 1953.

Like Le Corbusier, the Czechs designed everything, from the foundations to the light fittings. The same couple designed Prague's largely hexagonal Kotva department store, which is also still standing and serving that purpose, but they ran afoul of the Party, getting themselves banned from further work. So just remember: we could just as easily be in a Czech Republic filled with a lot more concrete monstrosities. ■ (WT)

OFFICIAL SELECTION

KHIBULA - WHEN HOPE IS EXILED INTO THE WILDERNESS

by Will Tizard

Georgian writer/director George Ovashvili is back following his 2014 Crystal Globe win with *Corn Island*, a study of an ethereal space and the characters who stake their hope in it. This year's entry, *Khibula*, also embraces the wilds of his homeland but its central character, an ousted, democratically elected president on the run, is seeking a different kind of refuge in the wilds and weighing how to return to his rightful position.

The film takes a measured pace, as if in time with the changing of seasons like in *Corn Island* – did the setting affect the rhythm of your scenes?

The setting always affects the rhythm of people's life, which is usually reflected in my scenes, so, yes. Generally, changing of seasons and weather in the background could be a good measure of the foreground story and protagonists. This is a good figurative way to show how a man develops in relation with time's passing.

Khibula also follows characters through a shifting, borderline space in an echo of *Corn Island*. Is this a theme you are exploring?

Yes. After *The Other Bank* and *Corn Island*, *Khibula* is the third film of the trilogy dedicated to the same theme – Georgia's 90s, the most painful and cruel period of



A long walk in the woods...but hardly pacifying.

our recent history. *Khibula* continues the topic, which was set up in my two previous films and follows the characters living in the same environment, though tries to deal with the most complicated and mysterious episode with the most conflicting personage.

The president seems almost Christ-like sometimes and even sleeps in his blue suit. Do you see him as transcendent?

This is a time of big turn in the life of the hero. He was a powerful man, idolized by the whole country, adored by the absolute majority of people and now he has lost everything – his power, authority, supremacy. The president, doomed by everyone, goes through a way

full of pain and suffering and he is alone. We see his supporters, who accompany him, but still he is alone. This is not a fate of the ordinary man of course; he is somehow exceptional and he never acts like an ordinary person.

How did you balance the need for drama with the need for historical accuracy?

I don't think creative work should be historically accurate. My purpose was to show that our nation made a mistake. I find it a bad idea to idolize a person to that level and I find it a worse idea to abandon the person you admire and doom them to death. If my goal is fulfilled I don't care whether I followed the real events. █

OFFICIAL SELECTION

CORPORATE - HUMAN RESOURCES HELL UNLEASHED

by Zbyněk Vlasák

We might see in through the skyscraper window, but do we really ever know what's going on inside? *Corporate*, a debut film by the French director Nicolas Silhol competing for the Crystal Globe this year, gives us a peek into the world of global corporations.

Emilie is an ambitious human resources manager in a large multinational company. Her visionary boss Stéphane, physically somewhat reminiscent of Steve Jobs, hires her primarily to downsize the company by ten percent. Ideally as smoothly as possible. She's not supposed to fire them but rather manipulate them into leaving on their own. However, one worker cannot bear the pressure and commits suicide right there on the premises.

"What interested me about the story from the very beginning was the issue of responsibility," says Silhol. "What is the responsibility assumed by a person who agrees to do the dirty work for someone else? Is Emilie at least partly responsible for the fact that someone she planned to push out of the company committed suicide? Those are complex legal and ethical issues."

Corporate culture has fascinated Silhol for a long time (his father, incidentally, is a human resources specialist as well as



The distinct dangers of a comfortable position in a prospering firm.

a business school teacher) and in his earlier short films he portrayed such companies as environments where everybody has to accept their place – and give up their own individuality if possible.

Emilie, too, tries to suppress herself in various ways. She chooses to wear work clothes that don't match her personality. She obsessively uses antiperspirants. She tries to bury any emotional response she might have about the death of the "difficult" employee deep within herself. But that only works until an investigation is launched and gradually points to her. Feeling threatened, she decides to join the other side, though not exact-

ly because she feels guilty. It's more as if she doesn't want to be left on her own, fighting her own battles.

"I didn't mean to be judgmental. The drama of the film lies in the fact that to turn against the company means for Emilie to turn against herself to a large extent. Her only relevant piece of evidence against the corporation is a video in which she plays the central role," says Silhol.

Corporate, an ethical drama inspired, among other things, by a series of suicides of France Télécom employees between 2008 and 2009 and the detached way the company's management dealt with them, will have its international premiere at KVIFF. █

na 52. MFF Karlovy Vary

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ON THE TOWN

HEGE KRISTIN WIDNES, TROMSØ INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

PEK is what you need when feeling peckish.

Kinokavárna Drahomíra \$
Vítězná 50
Open Mon-Sun 8am - 1am
We're stretching the concept of 'on the town' since it adjoins the festival venue but it's sufficiently 'off-piste' to deserve a mention. I know Drahomíra seems a long haul but here you can enjoy 'film toasties' and other affordable delights, serviceable Italian coffee and top-notch Czech beer, either in the literally Bohemian café or on your own personal pull-out table in the theatre itself. Otherwise, there might be live music in the back or a proper art exhibition in the gallery upstairs. See a film – any film – just for the venue! Here there'll be a proper debriefing, together with a café full of cinephiles, over a pint or two of cold lager.

Karlovy Vary Art Gallery \$
Goethova stezka 6
Open Tues-Sun 10am - 5pm
Remember, not all art is film, so here's a chance to broaden your horizons and stretch those theatre-cramped legs. The permanent collection boasts esteemed modernists from early last century, and the festival exhibition, intriguingly titled "Ticklish Structure," features constructivist works from the '60s onwards. It's a short riverside stroll from Pupp. When you see the bust of that erstwhile fan

\$ of Karlovy Vary, the poet Goethe, you're almost there. You won't regret it. Refreshed and intellectually invigorated, you'll have a new yardstick for judging the artistic merits of all those flicks.

PEK \$
T. G. Masaryka 11
Open Mon-Sun 7am - 10pm
Has that groundbreaking documentary at Čas given you an appetite but there's barely half an hour till your next screening? We've all been there but I found the solution. Continue up the street and – before the McDonald's – you'll find a hole-in-the-wall takeaway, with a window full of pastries and a small hatchway for taking orders. These are cheap and cheerful morsels for people (like you) on the move but always fresh and good. Please don't walk right past it on your way to McDonald's! Another world is possible. It could start with something as simple yet extraordinary as a hunger-satisfying quick-bite for pennies. Then off you go, in good time for that screening at Grandhotel Pupp. █

\$ – Inexpensive
\$\$ – Moderate
\$\$\$ – Expensive
\$\$\$\$ – Very expensive
\$\$\$\$\$ – If you have to ask...

DOCUMENTARIES AROUND THE WORLD

by Michael Stein

Even though all the films in KVIFF's documentary competition, with one exception, are European, the films themselves represent as varied and international a selection as the festival has seen for some time.

Festival audiences will be treated to the much anticipated world premiere of *The White World According to Daliborek* by Vít Klusák, a highly stylized portrait of a Czech neo-Nazi skinhead who – though approaching middle-age himself – still lives with a mother who babies him.

The film documents his unhappiness, the small steps he makes to change his life, but also his relationship with his extremist ideology and his apparent ambivalence towards real violence. As unable as he is to filter his hate-filled opinions about racial minorities and refugees, he is equally unable to lie and claim he is willing to fight for his race or his country. The film is a portrait of his sincere, often absurd, sad confusion.

Local audiences will also be struck by the compelling portrait Slovak director Miro Remo has filmed of 90s Slovak pop star Richard Müller. *This Is Not Me*, which shows the effects of addiction and mental health issues that have plagued the singer since his glory days. Maryam Goormaghtigh's *Before Summer Ends* road trip film of two Iranians trying convince a third friend to remain in France is more lighthearted though tinged with a melancholy homesickness.

The fate of inner-city youth coming in and out of the criminal justice system in South Central



Camilla Magid's *Land of the Free* shows the perils and hope in the poverty-stricken areas of South Central Los Angeles.

Los Angeles is the focus of Danish director's Camilla Magid's stark, multilayered portrait *Land of the Free*. The film follows 42-year-old Brian, who has just gotten out of jail after a 24-year murder sentence, Juan, a Salvadoran immigrant who has just started to get in trouble as he has also just started a family, and a series of other figures involved in a local support group.

While Magid admits there is a strong political subtext to her film she says that as an outsider her main interest lies elsewhere: "I'm focused on the existential aspects of the theme that resonate no matter where you come from: what does it do to you to try getting to belong to a society that doesn't want you? How does being in prison affect you? How do you reconnect with a family who has given up on you? How important is it to be recognized as someone with value by the community that surrounds you? I'm looking at the human and universal elements of the theme," Magid says.

In Swiss director Lionel Rupp's *A Campaign of Their Own* it's the American electoral system that gets examined through the varied eyes of Bernie Sanders' supporters up through the very end of the democratic primary process. Like Magid's film it is a blend of disillusionment with a broken system together with

those unwilling to give up hope and who are intent on fighting to make things better.

Two other documentaries receiving their world premieres at KVIFF this year are *Lots of Kids, a Monkey and a Castle* by Gustavo Salmerón and *Another News Story* directed by Orban Wallace.

Spanish director Salmerón spent 14 years filming the real-life fairytale of a middle class woman with three wishes: to have lots of children, a monkey and a castle. After fulfilling the first two wishes, sudden wealth makes the wish for a castle a reality and an eccentric film about an eccentric woman was born.

Wallace's feature debut *Another News Story* turns the tables on the journalists covering the worldwide refugee crisis by placing the cameras' gaze on them.

Other films in the competition include *Tarzan's Testicles*, an exploration of a former research center in Abkhazia that aimed to crossbreed humans and apes; *My Life without Air*, an underwater portrait of Croatia's free diving record-holder; *Atelier de conversation*, featuring foreigners in Paris learning French; and *A Memory in Khaki*, Syrian director Alfoz Tanjour's portrait of his war-torn hometown.

Before Summer Ends screens today at 2pm [Drahomíra Cinema] *A Campaign of Their Own* screens July 3 at 3:30pm [Cas Cinema] *Land of the Free* screens today at 5pm [Drahomíra Cinema] *Tarzan's Testicles* screens July 3 at 6:30 pm [Cas Cinema] *The White World According to Daliborek* screens today at 10:30pm [Grand Hall] and July 3 at 11:30am [Drahomíra Cinema] #

FACES



Ken Loach



Emília Vášáryová

With the 52nd KVIFF in full swing director **Ken Loach** and screenwriter **Paul Laverty** will arrive to receive the Crystal Globe for Outstanding Artistic Contribution to World Cinema and to screen their films *Land and Freedom* and *Sweet Sixteen*.

The main competition welcomes **Peter Běbjak**, actresses **Emília Vášáryová**, **Zuzana Fialová**, **Rimma Ziubina** and actors **Tomáš Maštálir** and **Oleksandr Piskunov** (*The Line*), director **Onur Saylak** (*More*) as well as actress **Irina Gorbacheva** (*Arrhythmia*). The film *Little Crusader* is represented by actor **Karel Roden** (you can also see him in *Masaryk* and *Don Gio*).

The East of the West competition is represented by director **Josef Tuka** (*Absence of Closeness*) and director **Juraj Lehotský** with the film *Nina* (his *Blind Loves* is included in the People Next Door section).

Actress **Jasmine Trinca** is coming with the film *Fortunata* in the Horizons sections. In the Another View section *Austerlitz* director **Sergei Loznitsa** is arriving, as is *Quality Time* director **Daan Bakker** and director **Pelayo Lira** with *Kingdoms*. Documentary competition section participants arriving today include *A Campaign of Their Own* director **Lionel Rupp** and the director of *Tarzan's Testicles* **Alexandru Solomon**.

Director **Fiona Tan** arrives to screen her film *Ascend* in the Imagina section. The People Next Door section welcomes director **Miroslav Janek** with his film *The Unseen*.

The Future Frames section welcomes its ten directors to the festival: **Giorgi Mukhadze**, **Elsa María Jakobsdóttir**, **Michal Blaško**, **Joren Molter**, **Katarína Morano**, **Kirsikka Saari**, **Matei Lucaci-Grunberg**, **Liene Linde**, **Maria Eriksson** and **Damián Vondrášek**. #



Karel Roden



Jasmine Trinca



Pelayo Lira



Alexandru Solomon

INDUSTRY EVENTS

FOUR ARTISANS OF FILMMAKING

This year KVIFF launches a new project titled *Artisans in Focus* aiming to present the Central European region as a hub for professionals in film production who meet, connect and inspire one another. A panel **today at 2:30pm in the Vodafone Lounge** featuring the work of four talented film professionals and hosted by *Variety*'s Managing Editor **Peter Caranicas** is open to both professionals and film buffs from the wide public.



Monika Willi is an Austrian award-winning documentary and feature film editor and regular collaborator of director Michael Haneke and documentarian Michael Glawogger. In 2013 she was nominated for the Best Editing César Award for her work on Michael Haneke's *Amour*. In 2013 she won the Austrian Film Award for her editing work on Barbara Albert's *The Dead and the Living* and in 2017 she received the same award for Barbara Eder's *Thank You for Bombing*. The 2017 documentary film *Untitled* which she put together and edited from footage shot by Michael Glawogger, who died in 2014 while filming his journey through the Balkans, Italy and north and west Africa, is her first co-directing project.

Wojciech Staroń is a renowned cinematographer and documentary director. He studied at the Łódź Film School in Poland. As a DP he worked on *Saviour Square* (dir. Joanna Kos-Krauze, Krzysztof Krauze, 2006), *Vodka Factory* (dir. Jerzy Sładkowski, 2010), *The Prize* (dir.



Paula Markovitch, 2011) and *Refugiado* (dir. Diego Lerman, 2014), for which he was nominated for the Argentinian Film Critics Association's Best Cinematography Award. He directed the award-winning documentaries *Siberian Lesson* (1998), *El misionero* (2001), *Argentinian Lesson* (2011) and *Brothers* (2015).



Anell Brodeur is a costume designer and stylist. She studied costume design at the University of North Texas, Denton. She collaborated on award-winning movies by David Lowery, *Ain't Them Bodies Saints* (2013) and the fantasy movie *Pete's Dragon* (2016). She also worked on the drama *6 Years* (dir. Hannah Fidell, 2015). Her most recent collaboration with David Lowery is *A Ghost Story* (2017), starring Casey Affleck, which screens this year at KVIFF.



Ondřej Nekvasil is a Czech production designer. He studied at the Department of Stage Design at the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Among his movies are the Oscar-nominated film *The Illusionist* by Neil Bruger (2006), the award-winning sci-fi film *Snowpiercer* (dir. Bong Joon-ho, 2013) starring Tilda Swinton and Chris Evans, and *Underworld: Blood Wars* (2016) by Anny Foerster. In 2001 he won the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Art Direction for his work on the TV miniseries *Anne Frank: The Whole Story*. #