



Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

## WINNERS OF KVIFF EASTERN PROMISES 2023

### **Works in Progress, Works in Development – Feature Launch, First Cut+ Works in Progress**

KVIFF Eastern Promises, the festival's Industry section and film market, has the exciting mission of bridging the gap between talented filmmakers and their potential partners, festivals and audiences. "Just like every year, we've tried to curate a nice mix of projects from around the regions, a solid mix of documentary and feature films, and we now hope that they'll be able to find new partners to complete their films and start on the festival circuit." Hugo Rosák, the Head of the KVIFF Film Industry Office, commented.

A total of 27 film projects were screened within the festival's three established programs: Works in Progress, Works in Development – Feature Launch, and First Cut+, competing for awards with a total value of 115,000 EUR. The winners of this year's selection are:

### **Works in Progress**

#### Jury:

**Esra Demirkiran**, Festival Coordinator, TRT Sinema

**Petr Tichý**, CEO and Chairman of the Board of Directors, Baranov Studio

**Oscar Alonso**, Festival Manager, Latido Films

**Nadia Ben Rachid**, Film Editor

**Agustina Chiarino**, Producer, Bocacha Films

Works in Progress encompasses both fiction and documentary films under one program, as both of these categories, despite their differences, possess the same artistic value. In this year's showcase, a total of eleven feature and documentary projects from countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East and North Africa were presented.

### **Works in Progress Post-production Development Award**

The jury has chosen the film ***I'm Not Everything I Want to Be* (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria) directed by Klára Tasovská and produced by Lukáš Kokeš**. The award consists of post-production services in UPP and Soundsquare.



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**Jury statement:**

The jury finds this project about personal freedom exciting, since all the story elements from the past resonate today and can definitely inspire everyone.

**Works in Progress TRT Award**

The jury has chosen the film ***Tasty (Lithuania, Estonia)***, directed by **Egle Vertelyte** and produced by **Lukas Trimonis**. A cash prize of 5,000 EUR, sponsored by TRT Sinema, will be awarded to the project.

**Jury statement:**

For conveying in a culinary comedy a critical approach to today's world, which praises the exaggerated packaging in daily life and social media, and presenting true friendship as the most delicious dish.

**Works in Progress Karlovy Vary IFF Award**

The jury has chosen the film ***Bikechess (Kazakhstan, France, Norway)***, directed by **Assel Aushakimova** and produced by **Antoine Simkine, Almagul Tleukhanova, and Christian Fredrik Martin** as the winning project. The project will receive a cash prize of 5,000 EUR, sponsored by Barrandov Studio.

**Jury statement:**

Pointing out through comedic eyes the absurdity to which the state can go to hide deeper issues, the jury truly appreciates the director's fresh look at the ethics of journalism.

**Works in Development – Feature Launch**

**Works in Development Award Jury:**

**Danijel Hočevár**, Producer at Vertigo, Producer Mentor at MIDPOINT Feature Launch

**Joseph Fahim**, Film Critic, Programmer, Lecturer

**Simone Baumann**, Producer, Managing Director of German Films

For this award, KVIFF has partnered with the MIDPOINT script and project development program, the When East Meets West co-production market and Trieste Film Festival. Together they have showcased eight projects that have gone through development and mentoring within the Feature Launch program.



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The jury has decided to award the 10,000 EUR cash prize for further development, jointly sponsored by MIDPOINT, Barrandov Studio and KVIFF, to ***Flight from Kabul (Slovakia)***, directed and written by **Sahraa Karimi** and produced by **Wanda Adamík Hrycová**.

### **Jury statement:**

For its bold vision, political audaciousness and enterprising storytelling, the Works in Development Award goes to a project that explores a people and place seldom seen on screen; ones that have been let down by Western politicians who stood idle as the powers of darkness ventured to ravage it in front of the apathetic, complacent eyes of the world.

### **Connecting Cottbus Award**

The jury, consisting of Marjorie Bendeck and Katharina Stumm, has decided to give the award to the film ***Excavators (Cyprus)***, directed and written by **Argyro Nicolaou** and produced by **Constantinos Nikiforou and Minos Papas**. The project will be granted the opportunity to pitch at Connecting Cottbus, the East-West co-production market during the Film Festival Cottbus.

### **Jury statement:**

A fascinating story about intergenerational trauma and the ways in which we respond to the wounds of the past.

### **Rotterdam Lab Award**

The juror Facundo Lema has chosen **Tomáš Pertold**, producer of the film ***God Break Down the Door (Czech Republic)*** as the winner. The winner will participate in the Rotterdam Lab professional training program for producers, which takes place during the International Film Festival Rotterdam.

### **Jury statement:**

Not only is it about an original premise, a cohesive and well-constructed project and an attractive story; this is also the approach to filmmaking that we want to support. A strong, bonded team that includes the precise definition of an emerging, young and ambitious producer. The freshness, the powerful and genuine intentions, as well as a very promising career ahead make Tomáš Pertold the most suitable person to join us in January for the upcoming edition of the Rotterdam Lab 2024.



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### **First Cut+ Works in Progress**

#### Jury:

**Francesca Tiberi**, Sales & Acquisitions Manager, True Colours

**Marge Liiske**, CEO Baltic Event, Head of Industry Tallin Black Nights Film Festival

**Esra Demirkiran**, Festival Coordinator, TRT Sinema

First Cut+ is a programme created for boosting the competitiveness and marketability of feature films that previously participated in First Cut Lab. The programme was launched in 2020 through close cooperation with two dynamic and well-established film industry platforms: Trieste's When East Meets West and Karlovy Vary IFF's Eastern Promises Industry Days. Each year, it promotes a portfolio of 16 fiction feature films at the stage of post-production – eight of which were presented here in Karlovy Vary.

#### **TRT First Cut+ Award**

The jury has chosen the film ***Allen Sunshine (Canada, USA)***, directed by **Harley Chamandy** and produced by **Chantal Chamandy** as the winning project. A cash prize of 5,000 EUR from TRT Sinema will be awarded to the project.

#### **Jury statement:**

For an exceptional cinematic effort crafted by a remarkably talented emerging filmmaker, showcasing a sensitive portrayal of genuine friendship, the journey towards solitude following loss, and developing a minimalist yet deeply impactful approach to storytelling and cinematography.

**KVIFF Eastern Promises**, Karlovy Vary IFF's industry platform, strives to help discover promising talent from the regions of Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East, revealing it to over 1,300 distributors, sales agents, producers and festival programmers who attend the festival each year. Both European and non-European local distributors and major international sales reps rely on Karlovy Vary when searching for new movies. International sales companies introduce their films to both distributors and journalists from around the world. The Industry Days programme comprises a number of workshops, panels and presentations or networking opportunities. The primary focus on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East makes it possible for key European



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and American industry players to discover fresh new projects in various stages of development and production.

More about the KVIFF Eastern Promises mission and activities can be found [here](#).

**More information on the awarded Eastern Promises projects**

(Further details are also available in the [Book of Projects](#))

**Bikechess**

Countries: Kazakhstan, France, Norway

Directed by: Assel Aushakimova

Scriptwriter: Assel Aushakimova

Producer: Antoine Simkine, Almagul Tleukhanova, Christian Fredrik Martin

Camera: Aidar Ospanov

**Film synopsis**

Dina works as a journalist for the Kazakh national television station. The stories she is asked to report on are becoming increasingly absurd and full of praise for the government. Her love life is limited to a few secret meetings with her married cameraman. Dina looks after her young sister, a lesbian activist, who regularly finds herself in trouble with the authorities.

**I'm Not Everything I Want to Be**

Countries: **Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Austria**

Directed by: **Klára Tasovská**

Scriptwriter: **Klára Tasovská, Alexander Kashcheev**

Producer: **Klára Tasovská, Lukáš Kokeš**

Camera: **Libuše Jarcovjácová, Radka Šišulácová**

**Film synopsis**

After the Soviet invasion of Prague, a young female photographer strives to break free from the constraints of Czechoslovak normalization and embarks on a wild journey towards freedom, capturing her experiences on thousands of subjective photographs.

**Tasty**

Countries: Lithuania, Estonia

Directed by: Egle Vertelyte

Scriptwriter: Egle Vertelyte, Irena Kuneviciute



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Producer: Lukas Trimonis

Camera: Vytautas Plukas

### **Film synopsis**

Ona and Saule are best friends and passionate cooks who are stuck working at "Tasty", a local canteen. Ona is a single mother and Saulė is an enthusiastic girl from the countryside. One day, Saulė enrolls them in a national TV cooking competition, which offers a restaurant as the grand prize. Without Ona's consent, she lies about their culinary experience. Reluctantly, Ona gives in to Saulė's lies and they both manage to enter the competition. Despite being viewed as a joke, their popularity skyrockets on social media. As Ona becomes the audience's favourite, tension between the friends escalates as it's fuelled by the show's manipulative celebrity contestant, Bruknė. Ona even starts dating a French jury member, adding to the friction. Will their friendship survive the intense pressure of the competition?

### **Excavators**

Countries: Cyprus

Directed by: Argyro Nicolaou

Scriptwriter: Argyro Nicolaou

Producer: Constantinos Nikiforou, Minos Papas

### **Film synopsis**

Klió is on summer holiday back home in Cyprus when the remains of her grandmother Melpo – who has been missing since the Turkish invasion that divided the island in 1974 – are unexpectedly exhumed. Klió starts to suspect that there may be more to the story of her grandmother's disappearance than the family admits. Despite her mother Myrna's warnings to forget about the past and move on with her life, Klió stays in Cyprus and insists on uncovering the truth. A few seconds of newly discovered footage of Melpo as an extra in an old film lead Klió to her family's ancestral home, a ghost town cordoned off by the Turkish military for almost fifty years. Among the abandoned ruins, Klió pieces together a new version of her family's history, forcing her to reckon with her mother's silence and the ghosts of her own past.

### **Flight from Kabul**

Countries: Slovak Republic

Directed by: Sahraa Karimi

Scriptwriter: Sahraa Karimi

Producer: Wanda Adamik Hrycova



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### **Film synopsis**

Zibaa (30), a successful Afghan filmmaker and head of the National Film Fund gets engaged to Samir (29), the love of her life. But her end-of-summer wedding plans are horribly destroyed when the Taliban unexpectedly seizes Kabul, causing Zibaa to face a life-changing decision. As a famous anti-Taliban activist and governmental employee, Zibaa's life is at risk. While Samir suggests escaping to the conservative, male-dominated south for safety, Zibaa's sister-in-law begs her to leave the country and take her daughters with her. Caught between her love for Samir and her nieces' future, Zibaa has only one hour to make a decision.

### **God Break Down the Door**

Countries: Czech Republic  
Directed by: Vojtěch Novotný  
Scriptwriter: Vojtěch Novotný  
Producer: Tomáš Pertold

### **Film synopsis**

Bob (18) is an overweight, simple-natured boy who comes from a strongly religious family and lives within the safe routine of Christian values. As a reward, yet against his will, his parents send him to a religious medical resort for the physically disabled to fight his obesity. There he falls in love with Káťa (22), an intern, and becomes close to Vítek (17), a terminally ill nihilist with a crutch with whom he shares his room. During the stay, both relationships intensify, but as Káťa rejects Bob, he succumbs to Vítek's mentality. Eventually, his deep-rooted negativity comes to light and leads to the ill-considered decision to poison Káťa, who ends up in a coma. Torn by the loss of faith when the prayers for her recovery are not answered, Bob is manipulated by Vítek into another irreversible act – to help him end his suffering.

### **Allen Sunshine**

Countries: Canada, USA  
Directed by: Harley Chamandy  
Scriptwriter: Harley Chamandy  
Producer: Chantal Chamandy, Laurent Allaire  
Camera: Kenny Suleimanagich



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**Film synopsis**

*Allen Sunshine* tells the story of a former music mogul who retreats to an isolated lakeside home to grieve his famous wife's suicide. He copes by composing ambient-electronic music and nurturing an unexpected friendship with two young boys whom he meets on the lake fishing. Throughout the course of his stages of grief, Allen encounters characters that remind him of what he's lost and forgotten and what he hopes to gain and reconcile.