



Photo: Jan Handrejch

Besides presenting his latest film, Michel Gondry will also be giving a Master Class at this year's festival.

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MAYBE I WENT TOO FAR...

MICHEL GONDRY ON FILM ADAPTATIONS AND NOT TRYING TO REEL IN HIS IMAGINATION

Veronika Bednářová,
Kristýna Pleskotová

French director Michel Gondry is here with his latest film, **Mood Indigo**, an adaptation of Boris Vian's cult novel *L'Écume des jours* (*Foam of the Days*), which was the festival's opening film. He talked to the Festival Daily about why making films is nothing like therapy.

When did you first read the book? Did you have some of the images of the movie in your mind when you read the book for the first time?

I had read the book when I was 14, and I had memories from this first reading which stuck with me for all this time... The materialization of the light was something that I remember very well.

Your previous movie *The We and the I* was very indie, just a bus and some kids, while *Mood Indigo* is full of big stars such as Romain Duris, Audrey Tautou and the well-known French-Moroccan comedian Gad Elmaleh. Which of these moviemaking environments suits you best?

I like to do both. And I give the same importance to both of them. The idea of the film in the bus, I had it for years, even longer than to do *Mood Indigo*. So when I got the opportunity, even with nobody famous, it was really important for me.

With *Mood Indigo*, did you have to rein in your own imagination at all? Were you sometimes thinking, this is too much of my fantasy, I should do less?

Well, I didn't really stop myself! Maybe I went too far, but I was pretty free. I really wanted to feel free to express my memories of the book, and express it visually. The story is pretty simple, so I thought I could push the visuals quite far. And I had a girlfriend like ten years ago that got really sick, so I could identify with the role of Colin. She survived, but she was close because she had leukemia. It was really bad for a while.

Would you consider filmmaking as therapy for you?

No, if anything it aggravates me, it doesn't really help me. It's just something I can do, so I do it. But I don't do it to feel better. I don't know what I should do to feel better... It's just that I'm happy to do this job... It's rather the

other way around. If I have some experience in my life, even if it's painful, I can use it as inspiration for the movies. But I don't feel that using it as inspiration helps me. I don't really believe in that.

You said somewhere you like working with comedians rather than actors; what's the difference?

The difference is more in the USA, because there is the category who come from television and those who come from movies, and they have a different relationship with the camera. The comedians have a tendency to use the camera as a mirror, because they're used to talking to the camera on TV, and they have a harder time forgetting about the camera. And so my job is to distract them. On the other hand, they have a better rhythm than the more dramatic actors, they have more energy. I just have to be aware that I have to pull away the camera from their consciousness... In France it's a little bit the same. But Gad Elmaleh comes more from stand up. He's always very natural with the camera. What I do is I watch all the movies from each actor I can. I try to look for their weakness, to help or correct or

change them. To avoid something I've seen in movies, showing problems.

So what's the problem of Audrey Tautou then?

When I said "weakness" I knew you would ask that!

She's too beautiful?

She's very beautiful. That's not her weakness. It could be a weakness though. She has sometimes a way of speaking... like Arletty, the actress from the 1940s. I would tell her when it's too much like that, it's a sort of accent of Paris in some ways, you could call it. She's not from Paris, in fact, she's from the center of France... And the good thing is that she doesn't get upset.

And you give a lot of freedom to your actors...

Yes, I always let them do what they have in mind in the beginning. And then I correct them. And I let them influence each other so we find the tone like that. If you give them direction before they even try anything, I think they forget about their own idea of the character and you may miss something really interesting.

Mood Indigo screens again on July 4 at 4pm in the Pupp Cinema. I

LOWDOWN

It seems that Karlovy Vary's culinary world is aspiring toward the decor of diners and delis on the **Sunset Strip**, which sport the names and glossy photos of megawatt celebs who've dined over the years. The Lowdown was just perusing the menu at **Tandoor** when we noticed an odd scrawl across the top of the plastic-enclosed page of Indian delights.

Not quite able to decipher it, other than "for Nizam - all best wishes," discreet inquiries were made, and it turns out the autograph is from none other than **Todd Solondz**, the American indie arthouse godhead and writer/director of hilariously neurotic films such as *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, *Life during Wartime* and *Dark Horse*.

It seems the inspiring auteur, a rather fussy vegetarian, read a review last year of the excellent little family-run restaurant around the corner from the KVIFF mothership **Hotel Thermal** and headed over, causing general pandemonium among fans at other tables. He kindly signed a menu for the **ever-present owner**, and if you're lucky that very menu may end up on your table from which you can order a veggie jal frezi in Solondz's honor. I

SEE YOU THERE

DAVID ONDŘÍČEK

DIRECTOR,
IN THE SHADOW

I must recommend - primarily to international audiences - Vojtěch Jasný's *All My Good Countrymen*. I suppose every Czech film fan has seen it. I myself have seen it several times, and it always stayed on my mind for several days. With unbelievable accuracy, it describes the period of communist takeover in the former Czechoslovakia. It portrays the worst but also the best of human nature. This epic movie has a tremendous moral message, incredible acting by Vladimír Menšík, and fantastic camerawork by Jaroslav Kučera.

Not all that glitters is gold and that's how I see some of the films that are selected for prestigious festivals. I hope this isn't the case with the Chinese-Japanese film *A Touch of Sin*. I really like Asia, and the Asian mentality seldom leaves me cold. The storyline looks intriguing, and I really have to see the film that shocked Cannes with its scenes of violence. I

All My Good Countrymen screens today in the Thermal's Grand Hall at 12:30pm and on July 3 at 7:30pm in Lázně III. You can also see A Touch of Sin today at the Thermal's Cinema B at 9:30pm and on July 6 in the Karlovy Vary Theatre at 6:30pm. Ondříček's In the Shadow screens on July 4 in the Thermal's Small Hall at 12:30pm.



WHAT'S HELEN MIRREN DOING WITH AN ORB?!

To film folk, a trailer is no place to move into after a hurricane flattens your house - but that might make a good subject for one, provided you can cast a cool international star in it. No, dear readers, the trailer, or *znělka*, is the traditional short film that precedes the main feature.

The KVIFF trailer is, of course, a provocative, funny, 1-2 minute black-and-white send-up of celebrity living, and for the past several years has featured a glamorous personage such as John Malkovich, Danny DeVito, Věra Chytilová, Jiří Menzel, Miloš Forman, Harvey Keitel, Jude Law, and Andy Garcia finding a new and original use for their festival prize, the surprisingly handy Crystal Globe award. Turns out it serves as a great hood ornament, medicine grinder,



telephone smasher, foot-crushing blunt object, taxi conversation starter and magic glass for seeing through women's clothes.

Each year christens a new trailer, and the one that premiered last night stars last year's honoree **Helen Mirren**. It

was shot by **Štěpán Kučera** and directed by **Martin Krejčí**, a first-timer at this prestigious and high-pressure job who brings serious creds to the task - he's been honored at Cannes and feted by big-time ad firm Saatchi & Saatchi for his past work.

The shorts incorporating most of the above headlines were created by Czech filmmaker Ivan Zachariáš, but this year Krejčí has brought his signature offbeat, over-the-top style to the film before the film. For those who didn't make it to the opening movie, this adds a nice element of suspense to the burning question of what unimaginable act audiences will see a celeb performing with a hefty statuette of a nude nymphet hoisting a Moser crystal orb. Make sure you get to your screening early to find out! I (WT)

OFFICIAL SELECTION

HŘEBEJK'S KARLOVY VARY *HONEYMOON*

Zbyněk Vlasák

Czech cinema is represented in the Official Selection by director Jan Hřebejk. *Honeymoon's* starting point is simple; an uninvited guest, a friend from the bridegroom's past, shows up at a wedding feast intending to spoil it for everyone else.

You say *Honeymoon* is the culmination of a loose trilogy, which began with *Kawasaki's Rose and Innocence*...

We only call it a trilogy to indicate what to expect from *Honeymoon* – that it is a serious film, a psychological drama. Otherwise the three films share nothing significant in common. In fact *Honeymoon* is perhaps closer to *Divided We Fall*, which was screenwriter Petr Jarchovský's attempt to write a script based on a simple, straightforward story that can be summed up in one or two sentences, after he had written more episodic screenplays. In *Divided We Fall* and *Honeymoon* we wanted to get rid of all dramaturgical tricks, playing with genres etc.

Honeymoon may deviate slightly from your other work in that you worked with some members of the crew for the first time. One such example is architect Jan Kadlec. Was it he who found the large house where almost the whole story takes place?

For a long time, we had no idea where we would be shooting. His method is to first make a drawing of what the house and its surroundings are supposed to look like – that he wants water here, a forest there, a field here. Then he finds an actual house that corresponds to it on the internet – for instance somewhere in the US Midwest. And then he cruises the Czech Republic with a photo of this and looks for a suitable location. But in the case of *Honeymoon* he couldn't find anything. First, we relied on the fact that, be-



Czech director Jan Hřebejk used Bergman as inspiration for his latest picture.

cause he is also the co-producer of the whole movie and has his money in it, he wouldn't let it fall through, but then we started panicking. But in the end Jan Kadlec did find the ideal place. It looked exactly like his pencil drawing from nine months before.

Another new name is the seasoned editor Alois Fišárek...

We tried to find inspiration in Bergman's films from the 1970s, in his family dramas where most of the time the characters just sit in their chairs and talk. While watching them I found out something amazing: the movies don't lack pace at all, they have great inner tension. But how could one emulate that in *Honeymoon*? The script was a challenge in this respect, there were many long monologues – the longest one ended up being 11 minutes. And this is where Alois Fišárek helped us a great deal. He is a generation older than us; he has understanding for such things, but more importantly he has the courage to let the monologue flow.

Talking about Bergman and Scandinavia in general, did you look for inspiration in any of the Dogme films,

too? For example, *The Celebration* is based on a similar scheme...

In these more recent films, which are of course excellent, there is a certain perversity. You won't find that in Bergman. His *Autumn Sonata* is about an ordinary relationship between a mother and daughter, things that take place in the lives of all of us, and nothing more. When some kind of pathology comes up, it is a kind of pathology "from the neighbors." *Autumn Sonata* is fantastically written and played – four years before her death Ingrid Bergman pulled off the best performance of her career. Bergman's films inspired us to conclude that we shouldn't embellish *Honeymoon* anywhere, that we should hold back and it will be most impressive when the viewer thinks "This is what happened to me, too" or "This might have happened to me and I don't even know it."

Honeymoon screens today at 7:30pm in the Thermal's Grand Hall as well as tomorrow at 2pm in the Pupp Cinema and on July 2 at 9am in the Drahomíra Cinema. I

FACES



Adam Olha



John Appel

Look out today for esteemed Italian director **Paolo Sorrentino** who's in town to personally present his latest work *The Great Beauty* as part of the Horizons section. Joining him is another award-winning Italian **Giorgio Diritti**, here with *There Will Come a Day*. British legend of silent film accompaniment **Neil Brand**, who'll treat us to his live piano interpretation of Hitchcock's *The Ring* tomorrow.

Dwein Baltazar is visiting all the way from the Philippines to present her promising debut feature *Mamay Umeng* at the Forum of Independents. Also from far afield we've got Canadian director **Emanuel Hoss-Desmarais**, here for the non-competing Official Selection with his debut feature *Whitewash*. He's joined by **Ludwig Wüst**, the writer, director and producer of *My Father's House* which will have its international premiere here tomorrow. Ready to compete in the main section with *September*, Greek director **Penny Panayotopoulou** is arriving today.

A fresh crowd of documentary makers arrive today. See if you

can spot **Wiktoria Szymańska**, here for the docu-competition with puppeteer portrait *The Man Who Made Angels Fly*. And from the non-competing section we have **John Appel**, here with chilling study of the Breivik murders *Wrong Time Wrong Place*. A young Slovak documentarist is also expected to arrive today, keep an eye out for **Adam Olha**, whose family portrait *New Life of Family Album* was selected for Czech Films 2012-2013. Here for the world premiere of *Little Secret* we have local **Martin Krejčí**, best known for his advertising spots. Also look out for award winning Czech actress **Gabriela Míčová**, the lead in *Garbage, The City and Death*.

Opening this year's East of the West competition with his feature debut *Miracle*, respected Slovak documentary writer and director **Juraj Lehotský** is expected today. And last but not least, Belgian artist, musician and occult aficionado **Shazzula** is coming to town to promote *Black Mass Rising*, her two hour dark psych trip filmed entirely on a cellphone, which was selected for the Imagina section. I (PLC)

French Films on 48th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

INSTITUT FRANÇAIS PRAGUE

uniFrance films



CAMILLE CLAUDEL 1915

Saturday / Sobota 29. 6.

13:30 / Pupp / 2P3
CAMILLE CLAUDEL 1915 (Bruno Dumont, 97 min) / H
13:30 / Lázně III / 2L2
EL MUERTO Y SER FELIZ / BYT MRTEV A BYT ŠTASTNÝ (Javier Rebollo, 94 min) / AV
16:30 / Lázně III / 2L3
EPIZODA U ŽIVOTU BERAČA ŽELJEZA / EPIZODA ZE ŽIVOTA SBĚRAČE ŽELEZA (Danis Tanovic, 75 min) / H
16:30 / Richmond / 2R3
LA TENDRESSE / NĚHA (Marion Hänsel, 78 min) / AV
18:30 / Thermal, Malý sál / 224
HUNGRY MAN / HLADOVÝ MUŽ (Philip Martin, 70 min) / FI
21:30 / Kino Čas / 205
AU NOM DU FILS / VE JMĚNU SYNA (Vincent Lannoo, 80 min) / FI
22:30 / Kino Drahomíra / 2K9
TANGO LIBRE (Frédéric Fonteyne, 98 min) / H

Sunday / Neděle 30. 6.

09:30 / Thermal, Malý sál / 321
THE CONGRESS / FUTUROLOGICKÝ KONGRES (Ari Folman, 120 min) / H
10:00 / Thermal, sál B / 351
UROKI GARMONII / HODINY HARMONIE (Emir Baigazin, 110 min) / H
10:30 / Lázně III / 3L1
AU NOM DU FILS / VE JMĚNU SYNA (Vincent Lannoo, 80 min) / FI
12:30 / Kino Čas / 302
HUNGRY MAN / HLADOVÝ MUŽ (Philip Martin, 70 min) / FI
17:00 / Thermal, Velký sál / 317
11.6 (Philippe Godeau, 102 min) / C
18:30 / Kino Čas / 304
THE MAN WHO MADE ANGELS FLY / MARIONETISTA (Wiktoria Szymańska, 64 min) / D
21:30 / Thermal, sál B / 355
BLACK MASS RISING (Shazzula, 120 min) / I
22:00 / Thermal, Kongresový sál / 338
SI TU MEURS, JE TE TUE / JESTLI UMŘEŠ, ZABIJU TĚ (Hiner Saleem, 95 min) / FK
22:30 / Lázně III / 3L5
TANGO LIBRE (Frédéric Fonteyne, 98 min) / H



11.6

OFFICIAL SELECTION

SOURCES OF LIFE – A GNOMIC HISTORY OF WEST GERMANY



Photo: KVIFF

Oskar Roehler's main-competition film comprises three love stories spanning three generations.

Zbyněk Vlasák

"A love story – told with a certain wit and profundity – is the best way to depict the heritage, the generation gaps, the desires, pressures and later the political illusion that unites and disunites people in equal measure," says Oskar Roehler of his *Sources of Life*, which has its first screening today. His ambitious 174-minute movie, based on his semi-autobiographical novel *Herkunft* (Origin), recounts the saga of a German family that encompasses the country's post-war experience. It starts with Erich, a soldier devoted to Nazism, returning home, toothless and decrepit, several years after WWII. Immediately after a cleansing shower and getting hold of some dentures, he decides to win back his estranged wife. And when he succeeds, he establishes the first garden-gnome factory in Germany. Business booms and Erich can

soon celebrate shifting 100,000 units.

He is helped by his son Klaus, an aspiring author (played by occasional Stateside actor Moritz Bleibtreu). But Klaus, too, first needs to fight for his love. All this unfolds as the pressure of Germany's wartime legacy slowly recedes into the background and people no longer feel the need to behave themselves in order to make up for their parents' mistakes. Klaus marries Gisela, only to realize with jealousy that his wife is a much more gifted writer than he is. She also refuses to accept the patriarchal family model that Klaus sets so much store by.

Neither of them can assume the role of a parent, their marriage falls apart, and they both remain submerged in their own worlds for many years as the people around them understand them less and less.

The latter part of the movie follows their son, Robert, during the

eventful 1970s, when hippies and Red Army Faction terrorists become the byproduct of the West German economic boom. And another romantic infatuation is again at the center of attention.

By telling love stories, rendered with an extraordinary romantic sensitivity, Roehler has hit upon an interesting way of portraying the relatively short history of West Germany. He is not merely depicting it, however, but also offering an ironic commentary by juxtaposing a former Nazi who manufactures garden gnomes with the comic spectacle of Robert's schoolmate – two generations later – assembling models of tanks while waxing lyrical about Third Reich officials. And no one taking him seriously...

Sources of Life screens today at 3:30pm in the Thermal's Grand Hall as well as tomorrow at 10am in the Pupp Cinema and on July 2 at 11:30am in the Drahomíra Cinema. I

ANOTHER VIEW OF FORM AND CONTENT

MY KV

 Intense drama on the high seas in Tobias Lindholm's *A Hijacking*

 South Korean director Jeon Soo-il's *El Condor Pasa*
Brian Kenety

She was working as a waitress in a Bangkok tail bar – that much is true. But *Karaoke Girl* is a lyrical mix of fact and fiction, a docudrama about a village girl sent to work in a factory who became an escort to support her family back home. Newcomer Sa Sittijun plays herself in the title role of this debut feature by Visra Vichit-Vadakan, a director-screenwriter whose short documentary *rise* was screened in competition at KVIFF three years ago.

If the 29 films in the **Another View** sidebar have one thing in common, it's that, like *Karaoke Girl*, they're works by directors experimenting with form and content, and whose latest films have been well received on the festival circuit. Vichit-Vadakan's story of a sex-worker, beautifully shot in 35mm by veteran Hollywood cinematographer Sandi Sissel, may not be the most innovative in the line-up. Yet, apart from a few forced scenes depicting Sittijun's fictionalized romance, it's a fresh approach to a genre notoriously difficult to pull off.

Stop the Pounding Heart, the final installment of young Italian director

Roberto Minervini's documentary-style Texas trilogy, shot in single takes using a handheld camera and natural lighting, is the minimalist yet engrossing story of a 14-year-old girl, Sara Carlson, who has begun to question her family's deeply held religious beliefs and sheltered way of life. The cast consists largely of the Carlson family (with 12 homeschooled children) and another large rural family, all playing themselves in an unscripted yet directed narrative.

Sara appeared in Minervini's *The Passage* and her counterpart in this most recent film, Colby Trichell, was in his *Low Tide*. While she reads scripture, sinewy rodeo bull rider Colby comes from a family with a far less strict interpretation of the Bible and enjoys drinking beer. Their mutual attraction, driven more by curiosity about their respective lifestyles than by hormones, is subtly stage-managed by the director.

Lines are also blurred in Scottish director Paul Wright's debut feature, *For Those in Peril*, a haunting psychodrama screened at Cannes as part of the Critics' Week program. Village misfit Aaron (in an exceptional performance by George MacKay) is the only

survivor of a fishing boat accident that has claimed five souls, including his gregarious elder brother, Billy (played by Conor McCarron, in flashback). Few in the tightknit coastal community are untouched by this tragedy. In mourning and struggling with survivor's guilt, Aaron is treated as a living ghost by children, and called a "Jonah" by the men, a term sailors use for someone who brings bad luck. His inability to recall the wreck further makes him the lightning rod for grief, expressed as anger.

The story unfolds in a weave of shots with a raw documentary feel to them, with other scenes done in a conventional narrative model, and at the end the viewer is left uncertain what is real, imagined, or nautical myth come to life. Wright won a Bafta for his 2010 short *Until the River Runs Red*, the main narrative of which was also interwoven with faux grainy news clips and Super 8 home videos.

Among the more character-driven and conventional of the **Another View** pictures is Canadian director Sébastien Pilote's low-key drama *Le Démantèlement* – which won a prize at Cannes, and showed at Sundance. It's

the story of an aging Quebecois farmer (played beautifully by Gabriel Arcand) who is ready to sell his beloved homestead to help out his daughters, one of whom is getting a divorce.

Tenderness, by Marion Hänsel, which had its world premiere at Rotterdam, is another charming French-language family drama – and a road movie. Separated for 15 years, Lisa (Marilyne Canto) and Frans (Olivier Gourmet) drive together from Brussels to the French Alps to pick up their son, who has been in a snowboarding accident. They share more memories than barbs along on the way.

Premieres tomorrow include Chad Hartigan's *This is Martin Bonner*, winner of the Sundance Audience Award for Best of NEXT; Leszek Dawid's *You Are God*, about a legendary Polish hip-hop group; Katrin Gebbe's offbeat tragedy *Nothing Bad Can Happen* (Germany); Tobias Lindholm's intense drama *A Hijacking* (Denmark); Maria Saakyan's dreamlike coming-of-age tale *I'm Going to Change My Name* (Armenia); and two with religious themes: Jeon Soo-il's *El Condor Pasa* (South Korea) and Giovanni Columbu's *The King* (Italy). **I**

Kadri Kõusaar

 Writer/director *The Arbiter*


You're screening a new feature following up on the success of the controversial *Magnus*, in which you cast an Estonian man portraying his real-life role in his son's suicide, right?

Yes, I'm here in Karlovy Vary for the international premiere of my second film *The Arbiter*, competing in the East of the West program. It's a dark and mysterious drama of a British professor's quest to make the world a better place.

What else is on your radar for a first trip to KVIFF?

My producer Aet Laigu and I are having some meetings regarding our next projects: a thrilling Nordic love story based on a Scandinavian bestseller and an original story about a female journalist kidnapped in Egypt.

You've had some writing stays in Prague in recent years; any literary riffs for you in west Bohemia?

Of course I'd like to get a feel for a genuine Karlovy Vary spa – preferably as traditional as it could be, so it's like entering some chapters of a Milan Kundera book, feeling light and tense at the same time. **I** (WT)


Anna Franklin,

 Editor-in-Chief Film New Europe (www.filmneweurope.com)

CRITIC'S CHOICE

This movie arrives in KV fresh from its Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize win at this year's Berlinale. Bosnian director Danis Tanović – whose *No Man's Land* won the Oscar for best foreign-language film in 2001 – shot it in a few weeks after reading about the family of an uninsured Roma



AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF AN IRON PICKER
 Director: Danis Tanović
 Bosnia-Herzegovina, France, Slovenia, 2013, 75 min
 June 29, 4:30pm, Lazne III

woman who nearly died because she was refused medical care. The resulting movie is impossible to

categorize, lying somewhere between documentary and fiction film. Not to be missed.

Directed by Mira Fornay, one of Slovakia's hottest young talents, *My Dog Killer* won the main prize at Rotterdam this year and has had a very successful run at international festivals. Made with non-professional actors, it follows apathetic 18-year-old Marek and his dog, Killer, in a dead-end



MY DOG KILLER
 Director: Mira Fornay
 Slovakia, Czech Republic, 2013, 90 min
 June 29, 8pm, Drahomíra Cinema

Central European village where anti-Roma racism is widespread. After Fornay's success with her

first feature *Foxes*, set in Dublin, we get a chance to see the director at work on her home turf.

French films have a strong presence at KV this year. One of the most interesting is Bruno Dumont's *Camille Claudel 1915*, which screened in competition at the 2013 Berlinale. It stars Juliette Binoche as the tragically gifted turn-of-the-century sculptress, whose long affair with Auguste



CAMILLE CLAUDEL 1915
 Director: Bruno Dumont
 France, 2013, 97 min
 June 29, 1:30pm, Pupp Cinema

Rodin eventually drives her to madness. This is a film that offers fine performances, especially

from Binoche, and plenty of Dumont's characteristically sensitive direction.

Russian directors Natasha Merkulova and Alexey Chupov have teamed up for their debut feature *Intimate Parts*, an erotic drama set in Moscow. The story takes an ironic look at how present day people handle secrets. Scripted by the directors, it has a multi-linear plot involving



INTIMATE PARTS
 Directors: Natasha Merkulova, Alexey Chupov
 Russia, 2013, 80 min
 June 29, 4pm, Karlovy Vary Theatre

Muscovites dealing with universal questions such as happiness, fulfillment, secrecy, and sex. This

award-winning film also gives us an interesting look at contemporary urban Russian society. **I**

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Karlovy Vary International Film Festival
CSCARGO

EUROPE'S YOUNG GUNS HIT THE MARK



There's a lot of cinematic talent on display in Georgian coming-of-age story *In Bloom*.



Traffic Department takes a look at the murky world of police corruption in *Warsaw*.

Peter Le Couteur

Through 16 years' stalwart festival service, **Variety's Ten Euro Directors to Watch** has become a "very trusted brand" among KVIFF audiences, says Alissa Simon, who has curated the section since taking over from *Variety's* European senior film critic Derek Elley in 2010.

"Last year we were thrilled that a film from the *Variety* section won the Audience Award. Imagine! It usually goes to a film that plays in the Great Hall... We also had three other titles in the top ten of the audience vote."

It's not often the tastes of professional critics and the festival public neatly coincide and if last year's results are anything to go by, *Variety* has its finger firmly on the pulse. Their selection process is fluid, intuitive and social, Simon says. "To start out, I ask my *Variety* reviewer col-

leagues if they can recommend some films by upcoming European filmmakers... Since most of my reviewing is out of Europe, I also have some ideas. Then I watch lots and lots of DVDs." (Simon certainly does watch lots of DVDs, being senior programmer for the Palm Springs IFF besides working as a critic.)

This year's selection charts the margins of Europe, including three films from Scandinavia, one from Poland, one from Bulgaria, and for the first time a film from Georgia (though with footholds in France and Germany). The *Variety* section is run in collaboration with European Film Promotion (EFP), and Georgia is a brand new member. Founded in 1997, EFP is a unique network of organizations promoting and marketing European film, and was the perfect partner for the section when *Variety's* executive editor Steve

Gaydos founded the Critics' Choice (as the sidebar was then known) in the same year.

We find ourselves in Georgia for *In Bloom*, witnessing the end of childhood for two 13-year-old girls after the 1992 restoration of independence. Their stormy friendship helps them navigate the advances of various unsuitable suitors, one of whom bequeaths the bolder girl a pistol with single bullet to protect her honor. A lot of cinematic talent is emerging from Georgia at the moment, and debut writer and co-director Nana Ekvimishvili isn't lacking.

According to Simon, Bulgaria's offering "has cult film written all over it;" *The Color of the Chameleon* is a night-black comedy about the fall of communism, based on screenwriter Vladislav Todorov's novel *Zincograph*. Dismissed from the secret police for being too "cre-

ative," amoral provocateur Batko starts his own network of informants, opening the lid on the web of social complicity underlying totalitarian systems.

Sociopathic antiheroes are clearly "in" this year, with Greece's *The Eternal Return of Antonis Paraskevas* coming back to KV fully formed after its Works in Progress win last year. Debut writer/director Elina Psykou tells a tale of celebrity desperation and media manipulation as an ageing talk show host orchestrates his own kidnapping story from an empty hotel.

Continuing in the underbelly vein, Polish writer/director Wojtek Smarzowski takes us down into the dark world of Warsaw police corruption in *Traffic Department*. This is a rare fusion of genre flick, social commentary and \$6 million domestic box office success, with all the violence and mayhem that

entails. Expect troublingly realistic crudity, drunkenness, bribery and institutional rot on a staggering scale.

Ever popular with younger fans, *Variety's* midnight selection for this year is "ultra-cool" in Simon's opinion. Roar Uthaug is back with *Escape*, more Norwegian adrenaline to follow up on his hit slasher *Cold Prey*, which was part of the KVIFF Midnight Screenings in 2007. This medieval thriller features the unsettlingly feral blondeness of Ingrid Bolsø Berdal, already snapped up by Hollywood as the perfect baddie for this year's Hansel and Gretel schlock.

Variety's other two Scandinavian picks this year are more subtle, each limning the life of a segregated social group in Sweden. In Gabriela Pichler's award-grabbing debut *Eat Sleep Die*, gutsy Bosnian immigrant Raša is laid off from her factory

job, sparking a semiautobiographical small-town soul search. Half road trip, half social history, *Finnish Blood*, *Swedish Heart* follows a musician and his son as they search for roots, replete with a rousing soundtrack by Finnish/Swedish immigrants.

Meanwhile in Rome, classy Audrey Tautou-esque *NINA* combats her anxious isolation among ostentatiously stylish cinematography with more than a nod to the 1960s with its cellos, polka dots and wall-to-wall sunshine in a mysteriously empty summertime capital. Flemish love is more meller, with a full-on tissuefest set to bluegrass strains in *The Broken Circle Breakdown*. Deeper into the Netherlands, the arrival of a Teutonic Adonis precipitates *The Deflowering of Eva van End* with spot-on color and camera giving a knowing nod to Todd Solondz. **I**

ON THE TOWN

Panoptikum

Bělehradská 3
Tel: 728 520 822
Open daily 11am-1am

With wood-lined walls displaying fascinating photos of Karlovy Vary's rich and colorful past, this cozy eatery specializes in traditional Czech fare at reasonable prices. It's a little off the beaten track, but is worth the trek for some generous portions of dumpling-friendly grub washed down with delicious Svijany draft beer. The personable and relaxed service is another good selling point.

Tandoor

I P Pavlova 25
608 701 341
tandoor-kv.cz
Open noon-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun

This cozy hideout, with a well hidden entrance in the parking lot of an



Eastern delights aplenty at Tandoor, near the Thermal

apartment block five-minute's walk from the Thermal, serves authentic Indian cuisine, strong on tempting, spicy vegetarian classics, from biryani to vindaloo, at great prices. Because of

all the traffic during KVIFF, the usual menu becomes an express shortlist of treats (140-180 CZK) – madras, korma, curry and korai versions of greens, chicken, beef, lamb and prawns, bas-

mati rice included. It's a deal hard to beat anywhere, but in trad Karlovy Vary, it amounts to nothing short of an inspiration. As one veteran customer puts it, "Good karma...great korma." There's also delectable dahl soup at just 30 CZK. Grab a side of garlic naan and a fresh Gambrinus beer (25-45 CZK) and you'll enjoy all the inner warmth west Bohemia has to offer.

F-Bar

Thermal Hotel
Open daily 8:30am-6am

This hidden near-nonstop watering hole tucked behind the Thermal box offices boasts a gloriously unexpected terrace. With large beers for 40 CZK and shots from 40 CZK (including a couple of fairish bourbons), this long narrow bar also does a fair snack. Stop for coffee and cake (each around 50 CZK), or fill a hole with sandwiches and panini (55-70 CZK). The perfect pit-stop. **I**

EVENTS

MASTER CLASS WITH MICHEL GONDRY/11AM/JAMESON FESTIVAL LOUNGE

French director Michel Gondry, whose latest film *Mood Indigo* opened the festival last night, will give festivalgoers an insight into how he approaches his distinctive work, which includes surreal masterpieces as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *The Science of Sleep*.

AEROPORT/10 PM/GOETHE LOOKOUT TOWER

One of the festival's coolest clubs has just gotten even cooler with a brand new venue. We're sure even hardened KVIFF veterans will be impressed when it opens its doors today in the majestic setting of the Goethe Lookout Tower. You can take a marked trail to Aeroport from the Vřídla spring. If you don't fancy the two-kilometer walk, no worries. There'll be a regular bus to the tower, running between 7pm and 3 am every day. You can catch a ride at the Thermal or on Na vyhlídce. **I**

DAILIES

1/ So many films, so little time...

2/ KVIFF President Jiří Bartoška with Borderline film actor Brady Corbet

3/ Crystal Globe recipient John Travolta sure knows how to work a crowd.

