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Filmmaker Andrew Renzi says he learned much of his craft while making breakfast for Wes Anderson.

## RENZI SWINGS FOR THE FENCES

Will Tizard, Klára Kolářová

Writer-director Andrew Renzi, who impressed critics and audiences last year at KVIFF with *Fishtail*, his docu on the disappearing American west, has returned with another coup, *Franny*, starring Richard Gere in an unconventional role as man who has it all – except love.

**You actually worked with Wes Anderson when you were 19, helping him prep for a feature film. Was that inspirational?**

It was before he made *The Darjeeling Limited* and he'd just finished *Hotel Chevalier*, which is a short film that goes along with that film. So when he went off to India, I went back to college. It was amazing. I was literally making him breakfast so it wasn't like writing scripts with him or anything, but it was inspiring. He had mango lassis every day because he was preparing and he was only having Indian food all the time.

**But this was still in the US? So he wanted to be mentally in India?**

Mentally in India. The whole house,

everything, had to be mentally in India. It was very funny. The best part about it was I became very close with a lot of the people he works with, his crew members. So his peripheral collaborators became friends of mine and almost taught me how to make a movie.

**Did you end up working with them?**

Yep, quite a few people. I worked with his art director, Kris Moran... She did a movie I produced, *Afterschool* and one called *Two Gates of Sleep*.

**Afterschool was quite successful here. And you often use pop songs in your films – often retro stuff. What do these add for you?**

It always depends on the movie. *Fishtail* clearly wasn't going to have any pop songs in it but there's something especially about *Franny* and about *Karaoke!*, a short film I made that have a kind of pop element to them – a kind of undeniable, sporadic, kind of poppy feel and it's always been an interesting exercise for me to kind of play with tone. *Franny* is the kind of movie that kind of tonally falls all over – you're not quite sure what it is. And I thought that was

kind of fun to be able to experiment with that. It's not always the most popular thing to do – to put a pop song in a movie is not exactly like a “festival darling” idea...[but] why not try those kinds of things?

**Of course someone at a festival in Europe will say, “That's so American.”**

Yeah, exactly. And it's funny because it's not really anymore, because the American thing to do now is to be as stark as possible because that's kind of become the trend and the populist thing to do in terms of independent film. It's a bit of an “anti” move at this point but it still is kind of ingrained in our psyche as being this distinctly American flashy filmmaking thing to do.

**So you're not too troubled by your critics' reviews.**

Sometimes I read them. I'm not going to be like one of those guys who says, “I don't read my reviews.” I definitely read them. But I think a movie like *Franny*, there's just nothing critic-proof about it. So it's been kinda nice to see that, despite starting at negative 10, it's been getting positive responses.

**What was the collaboration like with Richard Gere in developing *Franny*?**

We decided we have two options: We can go and make almost a neo-realist approach to a film like this that could be something like *The Wrestler* where you have a stark meditation on a man and his loneliness, a man who's past his prime – almost a point-and-shoot thing. But we said, no, we're both doing something different here that we've never done together. He's never done a role like this, which is why he was attracted to it. So we said let's kind of swing for the fences here with a real kind of almost Italian-inspired tone, just something really wild.

**How was it teaming up with such a well-known veteran actor?**

The collaboration was the hardest part of the process for me. When Richard and I started working together, the movie was going to change. That was actually the hardest part for me – adapting to the idea of collaboration. Everything I had done before was like a singular narrative approach. In my short films, everything I shot was in the movie. There was nothing left over. ■

## LOWDOWN

It's surprisingly rare at a fest even as momentous at KVIFF that truly history-making moments transpire – especially ones in convenient view rolling out before the frantic popping of camera flashes.

Former fest Artistic Director Eva Zaoralová, however, made sure we got one Monday, with the christening of her new book, *The Story of a Festival*, which recounts “the good years, the not-so-good years and the bad years,” including the grim era in which Soviet-backed Czech communists viewed the Karlovy Vary fest as a useful tool for agitprop.

A far cry from today, thankfully, when fest prez Jiří Bartoška and other devoted fans of the great lady can openly cheer for such a journalistic achievement. The book reps a fascinating project loaded with archival riches from Henry Fonda to Tony Curtis by way of countless Czech legends of cinema. It's also bound to sell out at the fest shop so by all means do start rioting. Just maybe we can create enough of an incident to merit chronicling for future KVIFF historians. ■

## SEE YOU THERE

### NICOLAE CONSTANTIN TĂNASE

DIRECTOR,  
*THE WORLD IS MINE*

I'd recommend the competition film *Box* by Romanian director Florin Șerban whose first feature won a Berlin Silver Bear. He's got a very special way of working with actors and I think this will also be a big element in his new movie. I'm really looking forward to it.

I've heard the documentary *Game Over* is about a person bored by life who tries to find himself in a virtual persona. I met the filmmaker Alba Sotorra last night and she seemed very passionate about this project, so I think it's definitely worth seeing. And then there's all the midnight screenings, which are part of the festival's tradition. Everyone should get to see at least one or two of them, because they're pure fun and the audience is absolutely great. (COC)

Box screens today at 8pm (Thermal Grand Hall), tomorrow at 1pm (Pupp Cinema), and on July 11 at 9am (Drahomíra). Game Over screens today at 3:30pm (Čas Cinema), and tomorrow at 5pm (Drahomíra). Tănase's *The World Is Mine* screens today at 1:30pm (Lázně III). ■



## NEED SOME DOWNTIME? HEAD FOR THE HILLS!

We're over halfway through the festival and perhaps you feel the need to get away from it all. Maybe go to the mountains, breathe some fresh air, pet a goat, feel a tropical butterfly brush against your cheek... Believe it or not the wooded hill behind the Grandhotel Pupp has all that! The Diana tourist complex (dianakv.cz) comprises the Diana Observation Tower and funicular, Diana Restaurant (see page 4 for review), Butterfly House, and Mini Zoo. The funicular (steep light railway) can be boarded at Mariánská (a lane to the right of the Pupp). A return ticket costs 40 CZK for kids and 80 CZK for adults; the carriage runs 9am-7pm every 15 minutes, taking 3 minutes to get to the top. The first stop, halfway up, is the “Stag's Jump”



A beauty at the Butterfly House

ponies, pigs, and goats, and a pair of wandering peacocks. To complete this mini getaway follow the sign for the Butterfly House (10am-7pm, 40/80 CZK) – a room heated to rainforest temperatures and housing more than 20 different kinds of tropical butterflies in all stages of development, from egg, to chrysalis to fully grown. (GP) ■

(of KVIFF mascot fame). After disembarking at the second stop, you will find yourself at the Diana Observation Tower, which offers spectacular views of the town and across the region, as far as the Ore Mountains. Entry to the tower is free with the option of using an elevator or climbing 150 stairs (9am-6.45pm). Then venture around the back of the adjacent Diana Restaurant where kids and the young-at-heart will be delighted to find a Mini Zoo (no entry fee) with pettable



# USING FILM TO WRITE HISTORY

Kateřina Farná

Myriam Sassine is a Lebanese director and producer. She produced Lebanese/French feature documentary *e muet*, which is screening at KVIFF.

You assisted during the selection process for the Week of Lebanese Cinema sidebar...

I made an early selection of around 30 movies, including documentary and fiction, which showed the important titles of our industry. [KVIFF artistic director] Karel Och then picked eight titles from these films, but the selection is very emblematic of the Lebanese industry, because he practically picked one thing from each big Lebanese director. So we have our big filmmaking star Nadine Labaki, who was in Cannes for her past two films [*Caramel*, *Where Do We Go Now?*]. Then there are other filmmakers who have had recognition worldwide, such as Khalil Joreige and Joana Hádjithomas, who are a filmmaker couple living and working together. They made the film *A Perfect Day*, which is from our company.

Was it successful?

It had a lot of success. It was very important in Lebanon when it was shown because it was a period when not many Lebanese movies were coming out. It was a very art-house film, but it reflected on our situation and what we're dealing with – like how to get rid of the past, accept it, and move forward. It's about this guy who is narcoleptic and keeps falling asleep. He manages to convince his mom to go and declare his father dead. His father had disappeared during the war. There were no films showing contemporary Beirut at that moment, so this is a very important film.

Are stories of missing people commonly heard in Lebanon?

Yes, during the Lebanese civil war, a lot of people went missing. To this day a lot of their families and relatives have no clue what hap-



Myriam Sassine came up with a long list for the Week of Lebanese Cinema sidebar.

pened to them. Eliane Rehab's documentary *Sleepless Nights*, for example, takes a mother who lost her kid and has no knowledge of what happened to him. They say he died during a battle, etcetera. Eliane sets up an encounter between this woman and the main leader of operations at a battle where they say her son was killed. She tries to get an answer from him all through the film. The importance of this movie is that it gets somewhere; it gives the mother an answer...A lot of [films in the Lebanese showcase] seek out the memory of Lebanon, the memory of what happened during the Civil War, because our history books stop at 1940, after independence. We have no official history written, so filmmakers have started writing this history themselves

Does the documentary you produced, *e muet*, which follows three young women, seek answers too?

Actually, *e muet* is a completely different kind of film. It's a film that doesn't approach politics. If you watch our cinema, you'll see that a lot of it is very political. Corine Shawi's approach is to go through emotions, to look at what makes a human being and their feelings. What's the title all about?

It's the term in French for the "e" that denotes feminine adjectives but which you don't pronounce. It's silent but it wants to express itself. This letter is representative of women and the feminine side in French. The director felt this was what her film was about, to show women speaking out loud about things you don't usually talk about.

What's the situation like for women in Lebanon?

As a film producer myself, I personally don't feel a difference. Lebanon is somehow very modern regarding women. Women all work and they are in really high positions. It's part of the economic system, so we don't see it as a big achievement. But now that I've seen the situation in other countries, I believe we are lucky to have this. ■

## NOTICE

Today's screening of *A Perfect Day* (12:30pm, Thermal Small Hall) will be preceded by a screening of another Lebanese film, *Wave 98* (this year's Palme d'Or winner for best short at Cannes). The director Ely Dagher will be in attendance. ■

## MY KV

Gyula Nemes

Director/writer, *Zero*



What are your hopes are for *Zero*, which is screening in the East of the West competition?

In Europe, basically, all filmmakers make films for five people. Five-member commissions decide if my film can be made, five members decide in which country my film can be distributed, film members decide at which festival it can be screened. I was waiting for this moment for nine years; now a sixth person can watch my movie.

*Zero* is a subversive, provocative, aesthetically and politically radical film. So my first hope is the screening will be without any scandal. My second hope is that audiences will laugh from the first minute till the last one.

What drove you to take on the subject of eco disaster?

Ecological catastrophes all around the world and social and political injustice in Hungary gave me an elementary anger and the spirit to make a controversial film against the system. It wasn't easy to make it in a country that helped construct the Iron Curtain.

My two main goals were to provoke and to entertain. So there is some political delicacy in *Zero* when the main hero shoots customers from the roof of the shopping mall or when Merkel, Putin, and others are shot to pieces. All that so you can slap your knees with laughter.

Do you worry we really may be headed toward an apocalyptic world soon?

The apocalypse has already started – we just didn't notice. Some 30 percent of the bees have died out. In *Zero*, by 2017 all the bees finally die – and if we don't save them, in 2020 mankind will also die out. The danger is real: mankind has a less and less human face. The key will be Africa; that's why the film ends there.

You're a KVIFF veteran, having done well with your work here before

When I got the best short documentary award in 2008 [for *Lost World*], the security guys didn't let me in to the award ceremony because I didn't have a suit. Somehow I got to the stage and I shocked the announcer when I started to speak in Czech. He didn't know I speak Czech so he thought I was the wrong person on stage. He was searching for the mistake in his papers and I was standing there in my shirt and finally I got big, sympathetic applause.

*Zero* screens tomorrow at 4pm (KV Theater) and on July 9 at 1:30pm (Lázně III) (WT) ■

## FACES



Radim Špaček



Tonislav Hristov



Diego Ongaro

There's another batch of people hitting the fest today: actor **Udo Kier** is coming with two films – *Zero* and *The Forbidden Room*. Watch out for the director **Jan Prušinovský** and actors **Jan Hájek**, **Kryštof Hádek** and **Matěj Hádek** who are all arriving today with *The Snake Brothers*. Director **Radim Špaček**, actress

**Johana Matoušková** and actor **Vladimír Polívka** are here with *Places*. The stars of *Tangerine* **Alla Tumanian** and **Mickey O'Hagan** will be arriving today. Several directors are expected to arrive today, including **Diego Ongaro** (*Bob and the Trees*), **Tonislav Hristov** (*Once Upon a Dream – A Journey to the Last*

*Spaghetti Western*), **Dalibor Matanić** (*The High Sun*), **Martin Blažiček** (*oV*), **Peter Brunner** (*Those Who Fall Have Wings*), **Alexis Alexiou** (*Wednesday 4:45*), **Kim Hee-jung** (*Snow Paths*), **Min Kyu-dong** (*The Treacherous*) and **Bujar Alimani** (*Chromium*). Producer **Ada Solomon** (*Aferim!*) will be here too. (GP) ■



Dalibor Matanić



Kim Hee-jung



Udo Kier



## CRITIC'S CHOICE

Paul Katzenberger, Film Journalist, Süddeutsche.de

César Augusto Acevedo's debut feature is a simple but powerful story depicting the terrible effects of intensive single-crop farming in rural South America. An old man returns home after nearly 20 years to look after his son whose health has been ruined by hard toil. He rediscovers his old house, where his ex-wife still lives, with his daughter-in-law

As Europe gasps in disbelief at the outcome of Greece's referendum, Syllas Tzoumerkas' second feature conveys a sense of how the country became so radicalized while impressively depicting the pent-up rage of young Greeks. Like his 2010 debut, *Homeland*, he looks at the economic crisis through the prism of the family – the institution that

After taking a very serious look at religious fundamentalism in *Stations of the Cross*, Dietrich Brüggemann has surprisingly tackled something totally different: a radical send-up of neo-Nazis in eastern Germany. The director is sure comedy is an appropriate genre to deal with the topic and that satire is the only way of "cinematically getting

At first glance, Simon Jaquet's impressive debut feature about a monosyllabic teenager from a dysfunctional family who is sent to an Alpine young offenders resort has all the hallmarks of a social study. But it turns into something very different – a kind of anarchic declaration of war, like the title suggests ("Chrieg" means "war" in Swiss German).



### LAND AND SHADE

Director: César Augusto Acevedo  
Colombia/Chile/Netherlands/France/Brazil, 2015, 97min  
July 7, 6:30pm, Cinema B – Thermal

and grandson. The landscape that awaits him resembles a wasteland, with vast sugar cane plantations producing perpetual clouds

of ash. Using stunning imagery, Acevedo explores family, redemption, and the ghosts of the past.



### A BLAST

Director: Syllas Tzoumerkas  
Greece/Germany/Netherlands, 2014, 83min  
July 7, 9:30pm, Cinema B – Thermal

determines the life of every Greek and has never been questioned. The "mentality within families," can shed light on

Greece's recent past, says the director. "They are the people; who decide, who vote. History is created by their actions."



### HEIL

Director: Dietrich Brüggemann  
Germany, 2015, 103min  
July 7, 9am, Drahomíra

hold" of a complex reality. "Much of what we see in the movie is inspired by actual events, when reality itself almost becomes satiri-

cal," he says. Impressively paced, his film is a snappy commentary on German society with razor-sharp dialogue.



### CHRIEG (WAR)

Director: Simon Jaquet  
Switzerland, 2014, 110min  
July 7, 10:30am, Richmond

The outstanding camerawork plunges headfirst into the action with the protagonists, producing powerful images. Seeing anger

run wild in a country like Switzerland seems inconceivable, but this thriller-drama always feels authentic. ■



## OFFICIAL SELECTION

### THE SNAKE BROTHERS – A 'GENERATIONAL' FILM WITH METH HEADS, BUT NO LOSERS

Zbyněk Vlasák

Jan Prušinovský is best known to Czechs as the director of television comedy series infused with the poetics of Prague's famous Dejvické Divadlo theater. His film *The Snake Brothers* shows his talent for serious (but not suffocating) drama. The story is set in a small bleak town in Central Bohemia, where siblings Cobra and Viper (played by Kryštof and Matěj Hádek, respectively) struggle in radically different ways to find their way in life; while Cobra is a meth-head anarchist, his responsible big brother Viper is more at sea: on the verge of turning things around, he decides to teach Cobra a lesson.

#### Do you identify more with Cobra or Viper?

I'm not an anarchist like Cobra; in a way his behavior disgusts me. I feel closer to Viper, at the same time I myself battle with some features typical of him – such as dodging problems. I often have to muster strength to say something unpleasant or do something all out though it could be done at half steam.

#### Is Central Bohemia itself reflected in the film?

Central Bohemia is practically depopulated. Locals commute to Prague and come home only to sleep. They don't even stay for weekends. The result is almost zero civic activity; people don't get involved in their neighborhoods. It is an industrial satellite with only small entrepreneurs scraping



Czech director Jan Prušinovský (right) and actor Kryštof Hádek.

along and warehouses remaining... Kralupy, where we shot, looks just like it did 15 years ago – a town only 20km from Prague! And is anything reflected in the film? I guess mainly the meth. The ingredients come from the local chemical plant and supposedly the country's best meth is cooked there, so good it's only meant for export.

#### What attracted you to Jaroslav Žvábek's script?

I actually identified with it at first reading. I came across issues I feel the need to tackle myself... Suddenly, I had a script on my desk I actually regarded as some sort of generational statement.

#### The movie is a "generational" film?

In my opinion it is rather that than a "social drama." My generation experienced the Velvet Revolution as children. We remember it as a time of euphoria. Growing up in the 1990s, we still

thought everything was beautiful, open to all, and the world full of possibilities. Now we're over 30 and the reality is changing. The system is suddenly stricter. We have trouble reconciling with it; we feel cheated. The sobering up is painful. *The Snake Brothers* doesn't explicitly show this state of a generation, but I made it with this feeling.

#### You've objected to it being labeled a "loser" film...

I believe that "loser" movies look at a certain period in a person's life where they finally need to decide what to do next, what to follow and may not be successful at that... *The Snake Brothers* has no traces of loser mentality. All our characters have a clear motivation.

*The Snake Brothers shows today at 5pm (Thermal Grand Hall), tomorrow at 10am (Pupp Cinema), and at 11:30am on July 10 (Drahomíra) ■*

## OFFICIAL SELECTION

### BOX – LOVE ON THE ROPES IN INTENSE EMOTIONAL DRAMA

Will Tizard

Romania's Florin Șerban, established in recent years as a remarkable writer-director worth keeping an eye on, brings to KVIFF his study of tough but lonely fighters of different kinds with *Box*, his second feature.

Șerban, who studied and taught at Columbia University and holds a masters in directing (in addition to one in philosophy of culture and hermeneutics), invariably brings an analytical approach to filmmaking, presenting nuanced, intriguingly inconsistent characters and situations that are ripe for various interpretations. The writer-director, who teaches at the Acting School in Bucharest, is also known for his working relationships with actors – and, not surprisingly, for getting command performances from them.

*Box*, his second feature, shows off this skill again, with fascinating turns by Rafael Florea, a trained boxer, as 19-year-old fighter Rafael, and actress Hilda Péter as Cristina, the more mature, married object of his desire.

Much about Șerban's approach and philosophy comes through from a comment he made about filming his first feature, *If I Want to Whistle, I Whistle*, a tough prison drama focusing on a defiant youth. Having insisted on casting juvenile offenders to play themselves, Șerban found after working with them in a prison acting workshop that "if someone tells you over and over you are good for nothing you end up be-



Box eschews the styling of many of Romanian New Wave films.

lieving it. But when somebody tells you something else, you tend not to believe it."

Perhaps it's not so surprising that, with such a positivist approach, the filmmaker won rave reviews, a Silver Bear at the Berlinale, and attention at festivals far beyond Europe for *Whistle*. The moving story of another teen facing tremendous challenges in life and love, played in the US and was Romania's Oscar submission in 2011.

So, although *Box* is only his second full-length narrative, Șerban's background in short films and documentaries seems to have given him the grounding that many filmmakers take years to establish. Part of the movie's strength is in the rich imagery of dreary streets, fight training, and the environments both characters inhabit, each in their way missing the one thing Rafael and Cristina need most: love.

Cinematography by Romanian master Marius Panduru, who also lensed *Whistle* in addition to *12:08 East of Bucharest* and *Police, Adjective* adds a transcendent quality to the film. *Box* stands a little bit apart from the traditions of the Romanian New Wave of the last few years, with Șerban feeling no need to slavishly embrace the stark, bleak style of so many of his compatriots who have followed in the footsteps of Cristian Mungiu and his 2007 Cannes winner, the communist-era abortion drama *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*.

Șerban is now working on his third feature, *America*, whose script recently won backing from the Romanian film support organization CNC.

*Box screens today at 8pm (Thermal Grand Hall), tomorrow at 1pm (Pupp Cinema), and on July 11 at 9am (Drahomíra) ■*

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by *Lili Horváth*

IN EAST OF THE WEST – COMPETITION

#### SCREENINGS

July 7, 6.30 pm • Karlovy Vary Theatre • Premiere  
July 8, 4.30 pm • Lazne III

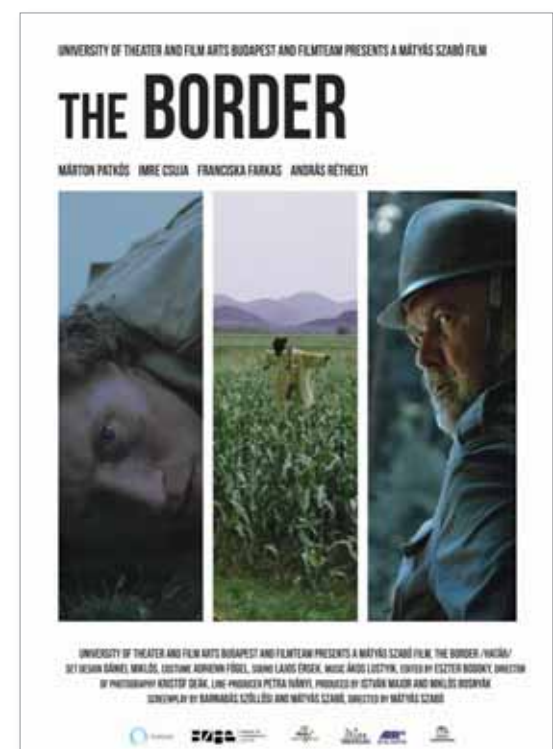


by *Gyula Nemes*

IN EAST OF THE WEST – COMPETITION

#### SCREENINGS

July 7, 3.30 pm • Cinema A • Press & Industry  
July 8, 4 pm • Karlovy Vary Theatre • Premiere  
July 9, 1.30 pm • Lazne III



by *Mátyás Szabó*

IN FUTURE FRAMES

#### SCREENINGS

July 7, 3.30 pm • Small Hall • Premiere  
July 11, 7.30 pm • Lazne III

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# LARISA SHEPITKO – THE ‘UNFINISHED ONE’

Brian Kenety

Ukrainian-born director Larisa Shepitko, an icon of 1960s and '70s Soviet cinema, died in 1979 while scouting locations near Leningrad, in a car accident that also claimed the lives of four crew members working on a film she did not live to finish, based on the novel *Farewell to Matyora*. She was 41.

Soviet montage theory pioneer Alexander Dovzhenko, her tutor at the fabled VGIK state film school in Moscow, had infused in Shepitko not only his passion for poetic documentary-style realism but also his motto: “You must approach each film as if it were your last.” And though she only made four features, each was exceptional.

*The Ascent* (1976), which would be Shepitko's final film and magnum opus, won the Golden Bear and three other awards at the Berlinale. Like the Vasil Bykov novel *Sotnikov* upon which it is based, the film is a gut-wrenching story of betrayal and martyrdom that increasingly parallels the story of Christ and Judas. Set in German-occupied Belarus, it centers on two captured Soviet soldiers who are tortured by the Gestapo; one succumbs under interrogation by a Russian collaborator and divulges damning information.

“No photograph, or portfolio of photographs, can unfold, go further, and further still, as does *The Ascent* ... the most affecting film about the horror of war I know,” wrote the American writer and filmmaker Susan Sontag, one of the most influential critics of her generation, in her essay “Looking at War: Photography's View of Devastation and Death.”

At the time of Shepitko's death, though, the international scene was still only just becoming aware of her genius for drama, already so strikingly evident in her diploma film, *Heat* (1963), which shared the prize for best debut at the 14th KVIFF. Set in the arid steppes of the then Soviet republic of Kirghizia (now Kyrgyzstan), its leitmotif is the majestic, melancholic beauty of the harsh land – shot by Shepitko in a style evocative of her mentor's (though she favored long takes over the rapid cuts of montage theorists).



Larisa Shepitko's *The Ascent* won a Golden Bear at the Berlinale in 1977 and was praised volubly by Susan Sontag.

Shepitko's heroes often find themselves at crossroads, as in her penultimate film, *You and I* (1971), a critical reflection on two comfortable yet frustrated doctors, each iconic of the Soviet intelligentsia, struggling to remain true to their ideals and searching for meaning. “From the very start of her filmmaking career, she set herself demanding tasks, choosing to subject herself to scrutiny through the actions of her contemporaries,” observes film historian Zdena Škapová, who wrote the *Tribute to Larisa Shepitko* section of the KVIFF catalogue. “[*You and I*] reflects her belief that a person never stops searching for life's purpose.”

Already in her student film *Heat*, though, she showed an astonishing talent for capturing characters' unspoken inner dialogue – an art form that cannot be taught, and which she mastered. Steven Gaydos, vice president and executive ed-

itor of *Variety*, says the artistry and sensibility that Shepitko proved capable of at such a young age is remarkable, and rarely seen in modern films.

“The basic competency of a 22-year-old Ukrainian filmmaker in 1963 scares me a little bit because it feels like people have forgotten the basics,” he says. “Her grasp of filmmaking language – the tools of cinematography, lighting, writing, acting – her ability to put the story together when she was a student... I'm a little nostalgic for that kind of classic command of the basics. And the end result is a film that lasts. It's a film that still moves you.”

## Farewell to Larisa

Because Shepitko had fallen seriously ill on the set of *Heat*, she had to ask her fellow VGIK student, Elem Klimov – at the time, one of many would-be suitors – for help in finishing the film; nearly 20

years later, a celebrated filmmaker in his own right, he would also be compelled to complete *Farewell* (finished in 1981, released in 1983). It was based on Shepitko's adaptation of Valentin Rasputin's 1976 novel about a Siberian village that will be razed to make way for a new dam, and its people shipped off to a bleak housing project.

Klimov took up the *Farewell* project after shooting *Larisa*, a half-hour tribute to the woman renowned for her sharp intellect – and her striking, exotic beauty – who had agreed to become his wife only after Klimov vowed that he would never try to influence her work.

Shepitko – who due to her untimely death is often referred to as “the unfinished one” – had inherited her dark eyes and high cheekbones from her father, a Persian officer who divorced her mother, a schoolteacher in Ukraine, and left her to

raise their three children alone. The sense of abandonment but also injustice that she must have felt is perhaps behind the prevalence of themes of isolation that run through much of her work, which feature characters of strong moral fiber facing down the powers that be.

Her first feature after graduation, *Wings* (1966), a complex character study of a woman who served as a fighter pilot during World War II but then must later reconcile herself to life as the headmistress of a school, is Shepitko's best-known film after *The Ascent*. Both are rich in moral ambiguity and spiritual undercurrents, and, free from the oppressive Socialist Realism style imposed on her teachers, also free to explore existential angst even in a socialist paradise (in the case of *Wings*, of a woman who, having outlived her own legend, loses her way).

“The primary tone of *Wings* is one of ambivalence – about Russia's Stalinist past and unsure future – and though it may seem surprising today, the film sparked much public debate, both for acknowledging a generation gap and for painting a war hero as a forgotten, lost soul,” writes Michael Koresky, for an article on the website of the Criterion Collection, which issued a box set of *Wings* and *The Ascent*. “Still, *Wings* remains most effective as a finely detailed portrait of a woman looking back wistfully, made by another woman, full of promise, just looking ahead.”

Shepitko's next film, *The Beginning of an Unknown Era* (1967), was an omnibus commissioned for the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution of which she directed one part (*The Homeland of Electricity*). She never saw it on the silver screen; the planned third part was not filmed, and the others shelved for two decades, banned by Brezhnev-era censors who found them to have insufficiently glorified the early days of communism.

“The banning of *Beginning* depressed Shepitko,” film critic Larushka Ivan-Zadeh wrote in *The Guardian*, calling it the filmmaker's first real loss to censorship. “However, her primary concern as an artist was not political protest, but the more intimate exploration of the individual in society, struggling with that eternal question: ‘Why do we live?’” ■

## ON THE TOWN

### Diana Restaurant

Výšina přátelství, Tel. 353 222 872, dianakv.cz  
Open 11am-7pm

The Diana Restaurant is part of the Diana tourist complex (see Explainer on page 1 for more info) at Výšina přátelství (Friendship Height), the hill behind the Grandhotel Pupp. The former hunting lodge has two large airy rooms surrounded by tranquil woodland and plenty of outdoor seating. In keeping with the restaurant's heritage, the menu is game-heavy and hearty. Keep it simple with a pork schnitzel (160 CZK) or chicken salad (190 CZK) or go all out and share a huge 4-person silver platter of rustic Czech specialties, game specialties, or fish specialties (all in the region of 2,000 CZK). Vegetarians needn't despair! Hunters also gather mushrooms. There are deep-fried breaded mushrooms or gnocchi with mushroom sauce (150



The Diana Restaurant, high in the hills above Karlovy Vary

CZK each). Krušovice is the beer on offer, in light, dark (35 CZK) or wheat (45 CZK) varieties. Dessert choices are crepes, strudel, or ice-cream sundae, but unless it's your first day in Karlovy Vary you already knew that!

### Coffee Bar Grand Café

T.G. Masaryka 24, Tel. 353 408 523, grandhotel-ambassador.cz  
Open 9am-9pm

The Coffee Bar Grand Café is in the same recently restored art nouveau building as the Národní dům

screening hall, making it a good spot to grab a drink before a film. Prices are reasonable considering the grandeur of the setting – 95 CZK for mixed drinks, 65 CZK for an iced coffee with a scoop of ice-cream. There's also a pleasant sidewalk terrace that's perfect for some crowd-watching.

### Tandoor

I P Pavlova 25 (in the courtyard), Tel. 608 701 341, tandoor-kv.cz  
Open noon-9pm

A good lunch spot serving up classic Indian dishes just a few minutes' walk from the Thermal. During the festival they will be offering a limited selected menu (including vegetarian options) to aid swift service and get you back to business promptly. Brisk service ensures a quick bite between screenings and tobacco abstainers will appreciate the non-smoking main dining room. (GP) ■

## EVENTS

### PITCH & FEEDBACK

This annual presentation of selected Czech and Slovak film projects in development is organized by the Czech Film Center, the Slovak Film Institute, the KVIFF Industry Office and the MIDPOINT Script Center. Projects will be pitched by their creators to representatives from various areas of the international film industry. The experts will provide direct feedback and advice for each project. The event takes place from 10am to 1pm today at the Barrandov Studios Villa (a.k.a. Becher's Villa).

### DOCU TALENTS FROM THE EAST

Pitch & Feedback will be followed by Docu Talents from the East at the same location (Barrandov Studios Villa, 2pm to 4pm). Docu Talents from the East is organized by the Jihlava international documentary festival and KVIFF. The event will introduce documentary projects from CEE countries in production or post-production. Directors and producers will give 8-minute presentations of 13 selected feature-length documentaries planned for theatrical distribution in the period August 2015-July 2016.

### AEROPORT 2015

Aeroport (Horova 3) is a traditional fest hotspot. This year's incarnation is located in a former water bottling plant. Head there tonight for DJ Rafo + Disco Møreti, free for accredited guests, 50 CZK for others. Things get started at 8pm. (GP) ■

## DAILIES

- 1/ Richard Gere bids farewell to the fest.
- 2/ The fest's artistic consultant Eva Zaoralová at the launch of her book chronicling the history of KVIFF, with Czech opera singer Soňa Červená.
- 3/ Girls just wanna have fun, but these days a selfie stick is part of the deal.

