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Foto: Jan Handrejch

Pakalnina says *Spoon* is not intended to be a mainstream ecological film.

Not another forking film

Laila Pakalnina unveils her new documentary about plastic spoons

After *The Linen*, showing a day in the life of a truck driver delivering linens to a hospital or *The Ferry*, with a boat transporting people from one shore to another, Latvian director **Laila Pakalnina** once again notices what everybody else ignores: plastic spoons. Already a fixture at every screening of the cult phenomenon *The Room*, they finally get a proper moment in the spotlight in *Spoon*, a documentary film detailing what it takes to make one.

by **Marta Bałaga**

Did you always plan to travel so much for this film? From Norway to China, from a refinery to a restaurant, its scope is quite impressive.

I usually like to shoot in Latvia – I think one country is more than enough to make films. But for *Spoon*, it needed to be more global. You can find subjects related to plastic in any country and it just shows the scope of this production process. There is so much logistics involved and some of these stages you don't even see! I was especially surprised by this spoon factory in China, as there is still so much ma-

nual labor going on. They polish every edge by hand.

Was it easy to access some of these places?

Not at all. In most cases we needed special permission, as there are always some business secrets behind it. Oil doesn't really need the promotion [laughter]. We always needed to pass security clearance, sometimes every day. We needed to wear helmets and protective clothes because, of course, it's dangerous there. When we were shooting on an oil platform in Azerbaijan, there was a tragic accident just ten days before. Peo-

ple died in an explosion. So many of my films are black and white, but I knew this one needed to be like this, because I was actually thinking about this contrast: white spoons and black oil.

No wonder your film feels like horror at times. Given the amount of work it takes to make this one spoon, seeing it discarded after a few seconds is horrifying.

It was our aim. That being said, one of my challenges right now is to see how the audience will understand this film. Because once you see this title and see it's about plastic, of course you already have your

own story playing in your mind. But what we are going to give is different from what they will imagine. It was not our intention to make a mainstream ecological film.

When you observe people, it's usually from a safe distance – you are behind the window or look at them from the street. Why?

You don't need to come close to see. Sometimes, you need to step back and only then you will notice the whole process. And I am not thinking about the production, but life in general. About how people move, how they react.

There is no boredom in life. There might be boring things done by people, especially when they are stuck in the cinema watching boring movies [laughter]. But life? It's never boring. Even when you are waiting for a bus or at the airport, you can create an entire composition with your eyes and just observe.

You were at KVIFF last year, talking about the school of Baltic Poetic Documentary. There weren't any talking heads in these films explaining where to look. With *Spoon* being completely deprived of dialogue, do you still think it's not necessary?

I think that film has its own language. I understand that people are very different and so are stories – sometimes you just need explanation. When someone is expressing himself through talking, it can be emotional too. It's just not my type of movie, even though as a viewer I accept all of them...

Let's see what will happen today, but you always need to start with something small. It could have been a fork as well, but I just thought that a spoon would be a little bit better. ●

Spoon will premiere tonight at 6.30 pm [Čas Cinema] and will also screen on June 30 at 2 pm, Drahomira Cinema and July 2 at 11.30 am [Cinema B].

See you there

Peter Badač
Producer at BFILM



I am so happy another year has passed and I am coming back to Karlovy Vary once again. Last year I saw all the films in the East of the West section and I was surprised by the quality of work by emerging filmmakers. This year, I would like to watch as many as possible and I'm especially looking forward to new films by Michal Hogenauer [*A Certain Kind of Silence*] or Pavol Pekarčík [*Silent Days*].

If I feel like taking a break from the cinema, I will walk to the Diana Observation Tower, where you can see Karlovy Vary from a different perspective. The only

thing I always miss now is the Thermal swimming pool. It used to be so refreshing! But I will at least stop by there for a drink with my friends. ●

MB

A Certain Kind of Silence will screen July 3 at 6.30 pm [Karlovy Vary Municipal Theatre], July 4 at 4.30 pm [Lázně III Cinema], July 6 at 1.30 pm [Husovka Theatre]. *Silent Days* will screen July 1 at 6.30 pm [Karlovy Vary Municipal Theatre], July 2 at 4.30 pm [Lázně III Cinema] and July 4 at 1.30 pm [Husovka Theatre]

Replay

I saw her yesterday-yi-yay

Last night, just after Julianne Moore glided elegantly down the red carpet and received the Crystal Globe at the official opening ceremony in the Grand Hall of the Thermal, one of KVIFF's most rousing non-screen events each year fired up with the open-air concert of top Beatles hits by the Czech National Symphony Orchestra.

The string rendition of "Yesterday" may have been a weeper but the mood was otherwise light as air as conductor

Kryštof Marek hoisted his baton and kicked off the thundering performance. The Fab Four's best, inspired by the KVIFF screening of Danny Boyle's Beatles-riff alternate-reality comedy *Yesterday*, got feet stomping.

Marek, a jazz pianist and composer who regularly conducts for theatre productions, led the big band in style as crowds gathered in front of the hotel, while swaying to the classic pop tunes. And you know that can't be bad. ● **WT**



Foto: Petr Horník

She loves you yeah yeah yeah.

Official selection



not only in working from someone else's screenplay. "It is also the first time that I have dared to make a film with a woman as the main character," Trueba says. "But without Itsaso I wouldn't have dared make the leap. She is a wonderful actress, but I also admire her as a scenic creator and writer. And above all as a person."

Madrid's summer heat envelopes its characters in a separate world

Making Assumptions

August Virgin is a wandering journey of self-discovery

by Michael Stein

In midsummer – a time when most of the city's inhabitants escape the heat, leaving Madrid's traditional August street festivals to the tourists – few stay behind. In Jonás Trueba's *The August Virgin*, 33-year-old old Eva is one of those willing to brave the scorching temperatures. "The main challenge in order to write about and perform Eva was to maintain a certain honesty and simplicity when tackling topics which, while appearing to be ordina-

ry everyday problems, are, in fact existential; one could even go so far as to say mystical," says Itsaso Arana, who plays the lead as well as having written the screenplay. The film follows Eva's daily life in an almost diary-like format, from August 1st to August 15th, the day of the feast of the Assumption. What is actually depicted though is very subtle and everyday - Eva walking around town, visiting a museum, sitting at home, meeting a friend. Working with Itsaso Arana was a unique experience for director Jonás Trueba, and

Sacred and profane
For Trueba the blending of earthly and religious reality on the summer streets in the film was inevitable: "The somewhat mystical or even religious charge that the film may have is something that came with the summer," he says. "Madrid is full of popular festivals in which the religious coexists with the earthly moments and, as a filmmaker, I tried to put myself in the middle of all that without making any kind of judgment." Arana also makes a case for the relevance of Eva's wandering, urban quest. "We live together with a deeply rooted Catholic heritage, and at the same time we feel part of an advanced society without beliefs. It's strange. In my case, I feel I lack some kind of faith, and as I can't find it in traditional forms, I hold onto love or the arts in order to survive, pinning my vital hopes there." ●

Official selection



"The unifying theme in my work is cultural identity and it's pretty unavoidable for me when I write. When you are a refugee and you've been displaced, there's this constant struggle where we don't ever feel we belong. The question is what shape or structure you choose to place that theme in."

Strange new world
Born in Cambodia at the close of the Vietnam War, Khaou's own journey to the West - parallel to the one his protagonist made 30 years prior to the film's action - has forced him to see things from many sides. *Monsoon* greatly benefits from that as Golding's character, Kit, grapples with Vietnam while awaiting the arrival of his older brother. Their mission: to find a meaningful place to scatter their parents' ashes. Kit last lived there as a six-year-old when his family fled as boat people, making it to England - and a new life so different he has forgotten how to speak his native language. While piecing together hazy memories of a fractured childhood, Kit manages, with help, to penetrate this strange old/new world - but is invariably left with more questions than before. ●

Stormy weather
Monsoon is awash in faded memories

by Will Tizard

Hong Khaou's homecoming story, about a Vietnam-born Brit who is compelled to rediscover his roots in Ho Chi Minh City, is one he could not escape telling. Starring Henry Golding, better known for his lighthearted turn as

a billionaire brat in *Crazy Rich Asians*, *Monsoon* confronts the actor with a role of vastly more subtlety and vulnerability. The director confesses the evolution of his original script, via the Sundance Screenwriters' Lab, forced him to confront painful personal issues.

Three picks for today

Géza Csákvári
Film Critic, Népszava, Hungary



I just can't believe that Ridley Scott's science-fiction horror, a real cult classic, is already 40 years old. This is one of these rare genre masterpieces of the cinema history, which just doesn't get old. It's still as breathtaking as ever in every single moment and it needs to be seen at least once on the big screen.

Alien
Director: Ridley Scott
USA/United Kingdom 1979, 117 min
June 29 at 11.59 pm, Čas Cinema



Let's put this guy's name on every "most promising directors" list: Colombian-Ecuadorian Alejandro Landes. *Monos* is a story of teenage guerrilla bandits in a jungle of some imaginary South-American country. What is actually amazing here is not the simple plot but the portrayal of fanaticism, dysfunctional society and populism in miniature.

Monos
Director: Alejandro Landes
Colombia/Argentina/Netherlands/Denmark/Sweden/Germany/Uruguay/USA 2018, 102 min
June 29 at 8 pm, Drahomíra Cinema



Ulaa Salim's script for his feature film debut was inspired by political and social developments in Denmark and abroad. As a critic I hate to use the "important" adjective to describe a film, but this one really is. We have already seen a couple of titles trying to paint a real picture of what is actually happening around, and this is the one that really succeeds in doing so.

Sons of Denmark
Director: Ulaa Salim
Denmark 2019, 123 min
June 29 at 10 pm, Pupp Cinema

On the town

Will Tizard
Festival Daily Writer



Flying the breakfast colors at a fave local Freedom Café for early risers.

Freedom Café
Jugoslávská 3
8 am-6 pm

Conveniently just around the corner from the main retail drag of Karlovy Vary, Freedom Café stands out for its filling, unpretentious breakfasts and solid coffee options. It's not the place to impress an international film buyer while pitching your masterpiece, perhaps, but definitely where you'll find the hungover indie producers recovering from last night's soiree. Fans of light, healthy day starters gather in the cozy but airy dining room here for poached eggs on whole-grain buns, classic

hemenex (ask a Czech friend), bacon with scramble and toast and a side of *palačinky*, the ever-popular bohemian crepe best topped with berries and whipped cream. Three breakfast menus lay out for you the whole nine yards at 95 Kč each - an unbeatable deal for actual hot *snídaně* that surely outdoes your hotel's buffet. Hair-of-the-dog Baileys cappuccinos are just the ticket for surviving a production planning meetup, while quiche, BLTs and pear salads fill out the recommended mid-day offerings. Delectable little Vienna-style cakes and cheesecake at 60 Kč are also just about obligatory with your americano, of course, and fear not - there's frappé, the common local way to order ice coffee, for blistering heat waves. ●

Kviffefe Tweet of the day

Marta Balaga
@martabalaga



We already have a film about a hammer and a film about plastic spoons, now all we need is one about a watering can and we are good to go @KVIFF!

Czeching in



Foto: KVIFF

The Czech national basketball team holds together through war and political oppression

A team of their own

Two Czech films use sports to dive into historical turmoil and cultural difference

People often look to sports as an escape from everyday life and its more troubling aspects. Yet in KVIFF's Czech Films 2018-2019 section there are two sports films dealing with topics much weightier than the games they depict.

by Michael Stein

Off Sides is directed by Rozálie Kohoutová and Tomáš Bojar, the co-directors of the highly-touted 2016 documentary *FC Roma* that likewise used sports to examine social issues. In their latest film they follow a youth hockey exchange between a small-town Czech team and a team from Morocco, where ice hockey is about ten years-old and virtually unknown.

Films are usually pitched by the filmmakers to a producer but in this case it was a deputy of the Czech ambassador in Morocco who presented the exchange as a potential subject to the filmmakers, Kohoutová says. Her first notion was that it would be a comedy not unlike *Cool Runnings*, a Hollywood movie about the Jamaican bobsled team, and *Off Sides* is filled with funny moments. Once she got to Morocco though she saw the seriousness of the players and how their efforts to connect with the Czech ice hockey association had been

rebuffed, she knew there was a bigger picture to present.

"In the midst of the raging immigration controversy, when most Czech people tended to view Muslims with suspicion and antagonism, while generally having scant knowledge of their culture, I began to cheer for the Moroccan ice hockey players," Kohoutová says.

Scenes on the ice have their drama, including some surprising results, but the interactions of teenagers from two vastly different cultures - their differences, their similarities - and the way this can be uncomfortable, funny, troubling, sweet, all at once, is the engine of this unique film.

Hoop dreams

In Radim Špaček's Czech-Slovak co-production *The Golden Sting*, the sports drama takes place on the basketball court, but it's the off-court hazards that prove to be far more dangerous and long-lasting. The story is based on Jakub Bažant and Jiří Závozda's book *They Did Not Shy from Courage*,

which draws on the real-life experiences of the Czechoslovak national team from 1938 to 1951.

František, played by Filip Březina, is the son of a politician but is focused entirely on basketball. When his coach is killed by the German occupiers for his resistance activity, František takes over coaching the team and vows to honor his coach's legacy, leading them to their first European championship in Geneva in 1946. While there he meets and falls in love with Michelle, a Polish-Jewish refugee played by Patrycja Volny.

But honoring this legacy, being together with the woman he loves, playing basketball, even surviving, all become much more difficult after the communist takeover, and František and those around him are all faced with fateful choices. ●



Foto: KVIFF

Rozálie Kohoutová co-director of *Off Sides*



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Off screen



This year’s “stripy” theme is an optical illusion incorporating a sly 54.

Showing your stripes

Studio Najbrt on designing the face of the festival for 25 years

by Jan Škoda

In 1995, for the festival’s 30th edition the poster featured a retro-style bathing movie star. It was the first time Studio Najbrt designed the festival look as they have ever since. In the early years the visuals were more visual representations of images on screen but they evolved into their present minimalist versions as designers gradually got more leeway. Every year a comprehensive visual style is conceived for everything from catalogs to program

brochures and merchandise. Najbrt and his colleague Jakub Spurný expound upon this year’s optical illusion.

What was the idea behind the theme, which once again has sparked heated debate?

Najbrt: Following up on the previous year we again worked with typography and figures, which is a long-term motif we had agreed on with festival management. Last year’s visual expressed a certain nostalgia after celluloid and film material but it had a totally contemporary

form. This year we wanted to continue in that framework. And Jakub figured out how.

Spurný: I came up with stripes that resemble film frames, an optical illusion connected to film and image. In the basic version the figure 54 – the current year of the festival – is hidden in the stripes. Some people may not notice it but the whole visual is supposed to catch your eye, even in the static, non-moving form. In short, it is supposed to make your eyes move. And also pro-

voke you. To be simple and powerful at the same time.

You said it was good to look at it from a distance...

Spurný: It is similar to a movie screen. If you don’t have to, you usually don’t sit in the front row of a movie theater - you need some distance.

You have been designing festival visuals for 25 years. Was it difficult to find the key to them in the beginning?

Najbrt: At first we based them on the trailers that various directors made for the



Aleš Najbrt and Jakub Spurný design the KVIFF look.

festival. I especially remember the year 2002 when David Ondříček made a trailer with the Tros Sketos trio that I am a member of. When he came up with the idea to use our acts, I was hesitant. I thought it might be too narcissistic and risky to appear in the trailers as well as design the visual. In the end it turned out well and people were amused. Over the years we have become part of the team that puts the festival together. And when you have such a long-term partner, your responsibility grows. Friendly relations in no way mean lower demands on our work.

But the general public is demanding as well, it likes to judge your work.

Najbrt: Actually, the response changes over time. It is different at the time of the presentation of the visual, during the festival and afterwards. We had that experience with the 47th year which people took as sheer provocation. We typed the figure 47 on the poster in the Helvetica font plus the individual dates on which the festival took place. But over time people accepted our idea. The motif of the 49th was a piggy. The unveiling caused great reluctance but during the festival people came to love it and waited in lines to buy the mugs which became scarce all of a sudden.

Spurný: They’re still asking for that mug! ●



The beloved “pig mug” people keep asking for.

Faces



Richard Lowenstein

Among the new arrivals on the second day of KVIFF is director and producer of the main competition film *Let There Be Light*, **Marko Škop**. The film will premiere on Sunday, June 30 at 8 pm in the Great Hall of the Thermal hotel. The Official Selection- Out of Competition section greets director **Richard Lowenstein** (*Mystify Michael Hutchence*) and directors **Martin Dušek** and **Ondřej Provazník** (*Old-Timers*).

The East of the West section welcomes director **Karolis Kaupinis** with his film *Nova Lituania*. Director and actor **Casey Affleck** screens his film *Light of My Life* along with actress **Anna Pniowsky** in the

Horizons section, which also sees the arrival of director **Leonardo D’Agostini** (*The Champion*).



Leonardo D’Agostini

Director **Nazareno Manuel Nicoletti** and associate producer **Antonella Di Nocera** bring their document *Up to Down* to the Documentary Films competition. Czech Films present director **Robert Sedláček** (*Jan Palach*), which will have its first screening today at 1 pm in the Congress Hall, director and screenwriter **Tomáš Bojar** together with director **Rozálie Kohoutová** (*Off Sides*), director and producer **Zdeněk Viktora** (*Miss Hanoi*), and finally director **Eva Tomanová** (*Another Chance*).



Nazareno Manuel Nicoletti

Another Views section will be represented by director **Claire Burger** (*Real Love*) and director **Syllas Tzoumerkas** (*The Miracle of the Sargasso Sea*). The Liberated section welcomes director **Irena Pavlásková** and composer **Jiří Chlumecký** (*Time of the Servants*). ● **EH**



Claire Burger

Top 5



In *Patrick*, there are several hammers featured, actually.

Hammers in film

by Marta Bałaga and Michael Stein

“The hammer pulled you off?,” Korg says to Thor in *Ragnarok* with surprise. “Sounds like you had a pretty special and intimate relationship with this hammer and that losing it was almost comparable to losing a loved one.” Because, yes, hammers can be special and we have cinematic list to prove it starting with a couple hammer-films you can nail down at this year’s KVIFF.

1. Patrick

Speaking of special relationships

with a hammer, Tim Mielants nudist extravaganza could get this year’s Crystal Globe just to make up for the tragic loss of its protagonist’s very special tool. No, not THAT one.

2. The Lodge

Kicking off Midnight Screenings at this year’s KVIFF, *The Lodge* includes a suicide cult, snowbound horror galore, guns, and other accoutrements of evil, but a hammer? Well, there might be a mallet. More significant is that it comes from the illustrious Hammer Films, one of the greatest horror production companies of all time.

3. Thor

As far as useful tools go, you just can’t do better than Mjölnir – the primary weapon of Thor, son of Odin, God of Thunder who commands the lightning and the storm. One hammer to rule them all, but not to get you enough respect. Or to protect you from getting tased.

4. Oldboy

Park Chan-wook’s glorious thriller might be best known for Choi Min-sik snacking on a live octopus and some tastefully shown incest, but the best scene shows the poor guy taking on the entire corridor of thugs armed with nothing but a hammer and years of resentment, keeping on going even with a knife jammed in his back. Real trooper, this one.

5. Zoolander 2

We will make it short: MC Hammer. Stuck in fashion prison, yelling out “You better listen to Hammer!” and, obviously, “You can’t touch this!” His crime? Hammer pants. Ouch. ●