**WINNERS OF KVIFF EASTERN PROMISES 2021**

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

KVIFF Eastern Promises, the festival's Industry section, has the exciting mission of being a bridge between talented filmmakers and their potential partners, festivals and audiences. A total of 29 film projects were screened within the 3 programs (Works in Progress, Works in Development – Feature Launch and First Cut+) dedicated to feature films and documentaries in development. *“What was important this year is that, despite the pandemic, we didn’t break the tradition of bringing into the spotlight quality projects from our region that are in the making and which buyers and producers can advance closer to distribution. It's reassuring to see that an online format can deliver this,"* Hugo Rosák, the Head of the KVIFF Film Industry Office, reflects. The winners of this year’s selection are:

**Works in Progress Awards**

Jury**:**

**Martina Bleis, Head and Project Curator of Berlinale Co-Production Market, Programme and Pitching Advisor at Connecting Cottbus**

**Uldis Cekulis, Producer and Founder, VFS FILMS**

**Yohann Comte, Co-founder and Producer, Charades sales and co-production company**

**Esra Demirkiran, Festival Coordinator, TRT Cinema**

**Michaela Patríková, Sound Designer, Soundsquare**

For the very first time this year, Works in Progress 2021 has merged fiction and documentary films under one program: “We have decided to do so, as we feel that both categories, despite their differences, possess the same artistic value,” Hugo Rosák explains. Therefore, in this year’s Works in Progress, a total of twelve feature and documentary projects from countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, and North Africa were presented.

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

The jury has chosen the film **An Owl, a Garden and the Writer (Iran, France) directed by**

**Sara Dolatabadi and produced by Amir Naderi, Sara Dolatabadi and Farhad Mohammadi.** The award consists of post-production services in UPP and Soundsquare.

**Jury statement:**

For a delicate and poetic exploration of an artist’s world and his relationship with the society he lives in. The pitch surprised us all in the best possible way.

**Works in Progress TRT Award**

The jury has chosen the film **Victim (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Germany) directed by Michal Blaško and produced by Jakub Viktorín and Pavla Janoušková Kubečková** as the winning project. A cash prize of 5,000 EUR from TRT will be awarded to the project.

**Jury statement:**

For the attentive approach to its story, which reflects the tender relationship between a mother and son and an individual and society in a strong social context. The director’s clear signature is evident in the artistic quality of the scenes and long, bold shots.

**Works in Progress Karlovy Vary IFF Award**

The jury has chosen the film **Tina & Megi (Georgia, Germany) directed by Ioseb “Soso” Bliadze and produced by Eva Blondiau** as the winning project. A cash prize of 5,000 EUR from KVIFF will be given to the project.

**Jury statement:**

A timely piece and a new and fresh voice showing and encouraging the fight of young women who “learn to fly” despite a society that allows them no time or freedom to develop their own choices in life.

**Works in Development - Feature Launch Award**

KVIFF & MIDPOINT Development Award Jury:

**Danijel Hočevar, Producer at Vertigo, Head of Studies and Producer Tutor at MIDPOINT Feature Launch**

**Arnaud Gourmelen, Head of Programming at Angers Film Festival – Premier Plans, Film Consultant at KVIFF**

**Karla Stojáková, Producer at Axman Productions, Head of the Production Department at FAMU, Vice-president of ACE Producers**

For this award, KVIFF has partnered with the Midpoint script and project development program as well as with the When East Meets West co-production market and Trieste Film Festival. Together they have showcased nine projects from Central and Eastern Europe that have gone through development and mentoring within the Feature Launch 2021 program. The jury has decided to award the 10,000 EUR cash prize for further development to **Head Nurse (Czech Republic) directed by Jan Vejnar and produced by Kamila Dohnalová**.

**Jury statement:**

The award goes to a project that is an unusual mix between dark reality and comedy and deals with social issues. The jury also wanted to support a director-producer duo to continue their creative journey from a successful short to the first feature, as it was clear to us even from the treatment what they wanted to achieve and how. The process of the MIDPOINT Feature Launch program really helped them bring out strong characters and their needs.

Special mention went to **Aliya (Israel, Russia, Poland) directed by Dekel Berenson and produced by Marek Rozenbaum, Alexander Rodnyansky and Paul Wesley.**

**Jury statement:**

One of the most promising debut films. It is important both on the political and personal level, and the idea of an autobiographical story from a female character’s point of view makes it very strong.

**Connecting Cottbus Award**

The jury, consisting of Marjorie Bendeck and Katharina Stumm, has awarded the film **The Bomber (Latvia), directed by Pauls Kesteris, written by Gatis Murnieks and produced by Inese Boka-Grūbe**.

**Jury statement:**

Once again, the selected projects at MIDPOINT Feature Launch were very strong and varied, and we’d like to congratulate all of the participants for their exciting work. To present their project at the upcoming edition of Connecting Cottbus this November, we’ve chosen the project The Bomber. The story captures a historical moment but universally asks what the voices are that shape us both in a personal and political sense, which is something we find incredibly relevant right now.

**Rotterdam Lab Award**

The jury, consisting of Alessia Acone and Mirjam Klootwijk, has awarded **Aleksandra Aleksander, the producer of the film ALIYA (Israel, Russia, Poland)**.

**Jury statement:**

With this award, we offer the chance for a young creative producer to join our training programme during the IFFR Pro Days 2022, which will help an emerging professional to continue on their career journey. The winner's multifaceted industry experience convinced us she was the perfect candidate; someone who wants to grow as a producer and position herself and her projects within an international context.

**First Cut+ Awards**

Jury:

**Michael Arnon, PR and Marketing Consultant, WOLF Consultants**

**Esra Demirkiran, Festival Coordinator, TRT Cinema**

**Laurin Dietrich,  PR and Marketing Consultant, WOLF Consultants**

**Alexis Hamaide, Film Marketing Executive, L’Avventura Studio**

**Boris Pugnot, Marketing Consultant, Trailer Editor**

**Federico Spoletti, Co-founder and Managing Director of SUB-TI, Founder of FRED Film Radio**

First Cut+ is a new program created for boosting the competitiveness and marketability of feature films that previously participated in First Cut Lab. It was launched in 2020 through close cooperation with two dynamic & well-established film industry platforms: Trieste’s When East Meets West and Karlovy Vary IFF’s Eastern Promises Industry Days. Eight projects coming mainly from Central and Eastern Europe were presented to the jury, who chose the following winners:

**TRT Award**

The jury has chosen the film **A Piece of Sky (Switzerland, Germany) directed by Michael Koch and produced by Christof Neracher** as the winning project. A cash prize of 5,000 EUR from TRT will be given to the project.

**Sub-Ti Award**

The jury has chosen the film **The Hatcher (Poland) directed by Grzegorz Mołda and produced by Izabela Igel** as the winning project. The award consists of subtitling services from Sub-Ti.

**First Cut+ Award**

The jury has chosen the film **The Hatcher (Poland) directed by Grzegorz Mołda and produced by Izabela Igel** as the winning project. The award consists of promotional services from L'Avventura Studio, WOLF Consultants and Tiramisù.

**More information on the awarded projects:**

**An Owl, a Garden and the Writer**

**Countries:** Iran, France

**Directed by:** Sara Dolatabadi

**Scriptwriter:** Sara Dolatabadi

**Producer:** Amir Naderi, Sara Dolatabadi, Farhad Mohammadi (associate producer)

**Camera:** Sara Dolatabadi

**Film synopsis**

On the backdrop of Iran’s recent political history, in an intimate setting, An Owl, a Garden and the Writer invites us to a poetic revelation of one of Iran’s most prominent writers, Mahmoud Dowlatabadi. Having been inspired by the way Mahmoud creates a fictional universe within the characters’ daily lives, his daughter, through her lens, portrays the imaginary world of her father in a parallel narrative line, blurring the lines of perceived reality for the audience. The film opens doors to the secret garden of Mahmoud’s life and draws a unique portrait of a novelist who has adopted a solitary routine outside the hassles of today’s Iranian society.

**Tina & Megi**

**Countries**: Georgia, Germany

**Directed by**: Ioseb "Soso" Bliadze

**Scriptwriter**: Tamar Mumladze, Ioseb "Soso" Bliadze

**Producer**: Eva Blondiau

**Camera**: Dimirti Dekanosidze

**Film synopsis**

2021, Tbilisi. During the coronavirus pandemic. Tina, a young woman, moves in with Megi (27) while waiting for her boyfriend Beka to come back to Tbilisi. They want to move in together. But when Beka finally returns, he has other plans. His family is against this relationship, because Tina was married and cheated on her husband with Beka. He leaves Tina.

Tina has no money, has never worked, and is shunned by everyone. Knowing no other place to go, she stays with Megi. They become friends. Megi shows Tina the advantages of living a self-determined life. They drink, they party, and Tina has new sexual experiences, even with Megi. But Megi still has a plan to emigrate. It’s time for Tina to learn to fly.

**Victim (Obeť)**

**Countries:** Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Germany

**Directed by:** Michal Blaško

**Scriptwriter:** Jakub Medvecký

**Producer:** Jakub Viktorín, Pavla Janoušková Kubečková

**Camera:** Adam Mach

**Cast:** Vita Smachelyuk, Gleb Kuchuk, Alena Mihulová, Claudia Dudová, Gabriela Míčová, Inna Zhulina, Igor Chmela, Viktor Zavadil

**Film synopsis**

Irina is a single mother, a Ukrainian woman living in a small Czech town. Her whole world comes crashing down when she discovers that her teenage son Igor has been assaulted and nearly killed. After Igor regains consciousness, he alleges that the attackers were Roma. Irina’s fight for justice mobilises the whole society. As the hostility towards the Roma is on the rise, Igor decides to tell Irina what really happened to him that night. The audience will follow a story through Irina's eyes as she gradually uncovers the truth and must face all the consequences of her decision.

**Head Nurse (Sestra Hana)**

**Countries**: Czech Republic

**Directed by**: Jan Vejnar

**Scriptwriter**: Jan Vejnar, Václav Hašek

**Producer**: Kamila Dohnalová

**Film synopsis**

During a one-day shift in a regional Czech hospital, different characters will sooner or later encounter Hana, the head nurse. Sometimes she is a random bystander, sometimes welcomed help, and sometimes an unshakable authority that cannot be defied. The elements of comedy and absurdity alternate in rapid succession, thus creating daily dramas that test everyone’s sanity: an agile young doctor is outdone by a tough maintenance worker, an experienced economic deputy drafts his patients like sports stars to avoid the hospital's rising debt, a famous actor from a popular hospital-based soap opera merges with his character, and a young idealistic intern is confronted with the true essence of the work she has chosen.

**ALIYA**

**Countries:** Israel, Russia, Poland

**Directed by:** Dekel Berenson

**Scriptwriter:** Dekel Berenson, Co-writer: Greer Ellison

**Producer:** Marek Rozenbaum, Alexander Rodnyansky, Paul Wesley, Co-Producers: Anna Rozalska, Aleksandra Aleksander

**Film synopsis**

Aliya, an 18-year-old recent immigrant from Ukraine, finds meaning in her recently discovered Jewish identity and feelings of patriotism towards Israel, her newly adopted country. Wishing to blend in, she volunteers to join the military and trains to become a drill instructor in order to help transform Israel's youth into toughened soldiers. After weeks of intense physical and psychological training at a desert base, her company receives seventy-two hours of leave before their final exam. Aliya returns to her family in Tel Aviv, where her mother confronts her for her choices. Determined to have fun, she heads into the city for a night out but ends up being assaulted by her date. After a turbulent and unsettling weekend at home, Aliya must return to the military base but struggles to complete her course as she re-evaluates her values, beliefs, and place in Israeli society.

**The Bomber (Spridzinātājs)**

**Countries**: Latvia

**Directed by:** Pauls Kesteris

**Scriptwriter**: Gatis Murnieks

**Producer**: Inese Boka-Grūbe

**Film synopsis**

The far-right organization 'Thundercross' fails to blow up the Victory Monument dedicated to the Soviet Army in Riga, Latvia. A premature explosion accidentally kills two of its members, but their leader Cross escapes. His teenage daughter Austra wakes up to find her life turned upside-down. Her father is named the most wanted criminal in the country and suspected in the murder of Austra's best friend's father. She cracks under pressure at school, alienates from her mother and comes under scrutiny by the investigator Ingrid, who must catch Cross at whatever cost. When Austra gets into trouble with the police, she starts a dangerous game with Ingrid while giving food to her father to help him survive in the woods. Finally, Austra learns the reality about Cross and is left with a choice between unconditional love, inevitable truth or control over her own destiny.

**The Hatcher (Matecznik)**

**Country:** Poland

**Directed by:** Grzegorz Mołda

**Scriptwriter:** Grzegorz Mołda, Monika Powalisz

**Producer:** Izabela Igel

**Camera:** Constanze Schmitt

**Cast:** Agnieszka Kryst, Michał Zieliński

**Film synopsis**

After being released from a juvenile detention centre, Karol lives alone in an apartment. Tracked by an ankle bracelet, Karol cannot leave and has no contact with the outside world.  A woman, Marta, arrives every day to take care of him and help him re-adjust to normal life. Marta makes sure that Karol is obeying the rules and learning to be a better person. But, as the relationship between them deepens, Marta’s lessons grow increasingly unconventional, and Karol begins to wonder who is taking care of who.

**A Piece of Sky (Drii Winter)**

**Countries**: Switzerland, Germany

**Directed by:** Michael Koch

**Scriptwriter**: Michael Koch

**Producer**: Christof Neracher

**Camera**: Armin Dierolf

**Music**: Tobias Koch

**Cast**: Michèle Brand, Simon Wisler

**Film synopsis**

In a remote mountain village, the young love between Anna and Marco is put to a severe test. As a result of a brain tumour, Marco increasingly loses his impulse control. In the tense relationship between the village community and the effects of Marco’s illness, Anna tries to preserve a love that in the end even outshines death.