



Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

WINNERS OF KVIFF EASTERN PROMISES 2022

Works in Progress, Works in Development – Feature Launch, First Cut+ Works in Progress, Odesa International Film Festival WIP Selection

KVIFF Eastern Promises, the festival's Industry section, has the exciting mission of bridging the gap between talented filmmakers and their potential partners, festivals and audiences. *“This year brought us back to live pitching sessions after two pandemic years, and we were delighted to see the return of both our industry audience and the well-prepared creative teams to a true brick-and-mortar cinema,”* Hugo Rosák, the Head of the KVIFF Film Industry Office, commented.

A total of 35 film projects were screened within the festival's three established programs (Works in Progress, Works in Development – Feature Launch and First Cut+) and the Odesa IFF Works in Progress selection. This showcase was held in Karlovy Vary instead of Odesa as a gesture of support towards the Ukrainian film industry impacted by Russian aggression. The winners of this year's selection are:

Works in Progress Awards

Jury:

Dennis Ruh, Director of European Film Market, Berlinale

Cosima Finkbeiner, Senior Festival Manager & Sales, Beta Cinema

Esra Demirkiran, Festival Coordinator, TRT Cinema

Michaela Patriková, Sound Designer, Soundsquare

Ewa Puszczynska, Producer, Opus Film

Works in Progress encompasses both fiction and documentary films under one program, as both these categories, despite their differences, possess the same artistic value. In this year's showcase, a total of ten 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.



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Works in Progress Post-production Development Award

The jury has chosen the film **The Burdened (Yemen, Sudan)** directed by **Amr Gamal** and produced by **Mohsen Alkhalifi, Amr Gamal, Amjad Abu Alala and Mohammed Alomda**. The award consists of post-production services in UPP and Soundsquare.

Jury statement:

The jury is impressed by the director's brave approach to tackling this sensitive subject against all odds.

Works in Progress TRT Award

The jury has chosen the film **Windless (Bulgaria, Italy)** directed by **Pavel G. Vesnakov** and produced by **Veselka Kiryakova, Alessandro Amato and Luigi Chimienti**. A cash prize of 5,000 EUR from TRT Cinema will be awarded to the project.

Jury statement:

For its strong artistic vision, mature directing and meditative way of storytelling, which creates a mirror for the viewer.

Works in Progress Karlovy Vary IFF Award

The jury has chosen the film **Endless Summer Syndrome (Turkey, France)** directed by **Kaveh Daneshmand** and produced by **Gem Deger, Eva Larvoire, Cédric Larvoire and Kaveh Daneshmand** as the winning project. A cash prize of 5,000 EUR from KVIFF will be given to the project.

Jury statement:

The jury appreciates how the film pushes the boundaries of modern society and questions family love. We believe in the film's audience potential.



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Special mention went to **The Visitors (Czech Republic, Norway, Slovak Republic)** directed by **Veronika Lišková** and produced by **Kristýna Michálek Květová**.

Jury statement:

The jury decided to give a special mention to this film, as it touches on the subject of immigration in a very unconventional and intriguing way. We consider the film to be fully accomplished and have no doubt that quite soon the finished film will travel the festival circuit.

Works in Development – Feature Launch Awards

KVIFF & MIDPOINT Development Award Jury:

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

Paul Ridd, Head of Acquisitions at Picturehouse Entertainment (UK), International Consultant at KVIFF, BFI London Film Festival Programme Advisor

Julia Sinkevych, Producer at JS Films, festival programmer and consultant

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 that have gone through development and mentoring within the Feature Launch program. The jury has decided to award the 10,000 EUR cash prize for further development to **My Best Friend's Baby (Sweden)** directed by **Sophia Vuković** and produced by **Eliza Jones and Markus Waltå**.

Jury statement:

Although the level of the projects in development was quite high this year, the jury was, in the end, convinced by the clear vision of one of the creative teams. Their take on queer parenthood and culture clashes is specific yet universal, and, last but not least, it's fun! The KVIFF & MIDPOINT Development Award goes to the project **My Best Friend's Baby**.

Connecting Cottbus Award



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The jury, consisting of Marjorie Bendeck and Katharina Stumm, has awarded the film **Dolphin (Poland) directed and written by Sonja Orlewicz-Zakrzewska and produced by Magdalena Sztorc**. The project will be granted the opportunity to pitch at Connecting Cottbus, the East-West co-production market during the FilmFestival Cottbus.

Jury statement:

Congratulations to all of the exciting filmmakers that were part of MIDPOINT Feature Launch this year. We have chosen a project that talks about the struggle for personal happiness and self-fulfilment in a unique and quirky way, a struggle that is best faced with a little help from an aquatic friend.

Rotterdam Lab Award

The juror Inke Van Loocke has awarded **Magdalena Sztorc, producer of the film Dolphin (Poland)**. The winner will participate in the Rotterdam Lab professional training program for producers, which takes place during International Film Festival Rotterdam.

Jury statement:

The MIDPOINT projects represent a very inspiring new generation of filmmakers, writers and producers. Magdalena Sztorc demonstrated a collaborative spirit, thinking beyond borders. She stood out as a true creative producer who can support the artistic vision behind the project in a unique way. We look forward to welcoming her to Rotterdam Lab.

First Cut+ Award

Jury:

Boris Pugnet, Marketing Consultant, Trailer Editor, First Cut+ Tutor

Ji Lacerna, Full Circle Lab Philippines Lab Manager

Esra Demirkiran, Festival Coordinator, TRT Cinema

First Cut+ is a programme created for boosting the competitiveness and marketability of feature films that previously participated in First Cut Lab. The programme was launched in 2020 through close cooperation with two dynamic and well-established film industry platforms: Trieste's When East Meets West and Karlovy Vary IFF's Eastern Promises



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Industry Days. Each year, it promotes a portfolio of 16 fiction feature films at the stage of post-production – eight of them were presented here in Karlovy Vary.

TRT First Cut+ Award

The jury has chosen the film **The Maiden (Canada, USA) directed by Graham Foy and produced by Daiva Zalnierunas and Dan Montgomery** as the winning project. A cash prize of 5,000 EUR from TRT Cinema will be given to the project.

Jury statement:

The jury is very happy to reward “The Maiden”. This movie succeeded in bringing to screen the intense energy of youth and delicately capturing the idea that time and space are witnesses to our memories. It also remarkably answers the question of what we are supposed to do with our pain and sorrow, by showing us how to turn mud into gold, which is the very meaning of art and cinema.

Odesa International Film Festival WIP Selection Award

Jury:

Pavλίna Žipková, Head of the Czech Film Commission

Petr Tichý, CEO at Barrandov Studio

Simone Baumann, Managing Director at German Films

Barbora Struss, Head of MIDPOINT

Alessandro Gropplero, Managing Director of When East Meets West

In full support of Ukrainian filmmakers and festival organisers, this year's KVIFF hosted the Works in Progress programme of the 13th Odesa International Film Festival, which cannot be held there because of Russian aggression. Eight full-length film projects in the final stage of shooting or in post-production produced in Ukraine or in co-production with Ukraine, selected by the OIFF selection committee, were presented by their creators. The jury has chosen the film **U Are the Universe (Ukraine) directed by Pavlo Ostrikov and produced by Volodymyr Yatsenko and Anna Yatsenko** as the winning project. A cash prize of 10,000 EUR from Barrandov Studio will be given to the project.

Jury statement:



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The jury finally agreed that the winner will be the project *U Are the Universe*. We were convinced by the whole team's very good presentation. We highly appreciated the genre of the film, the acting, and the directing. The jury feels great potential in the whole project. The jury also appreciated the author's statement, in which it defines the character of the film exactly while also attracting potential viewers to see it. If there is one certainty in the world, it is realising "how important it is to find someone who understands you", and that's something that no jury is going to question at all.

More information on the awarded projects

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

The Burdened

Countries: Yemen, Sudan

Directed by: Amr Gamal

Scriptwriter: Amr Gamal, Mazen Refaat

Producer: Mohsen Alkhalifi, Amr Gamal, Amjad Abu Alala, Mohammed Alomda

Camera: Mrinal Desai

Film synopsis

The story of Ahmed, Isra'a and their three children in Aden, Yemen, 2019. Both parents lose their jobs and suffer from the economic crisis. The movie starts with Isra'a finding out about her pregnancy at a time when they cannot cover the expenses of a new child, leading them to make difficult decisions in order to survive.

Endless Summer Syndrome

Countries: Turkey, France

Directed by: Kaveh Daneshmand

Scriptwriter: Laurine Bauby, Kaveh Daneshmand

Producer: Gem Deger, Eva Larvoire, Cédric Larvoire, Kaveh Daneshmand

Camera: Cédric Larvoire

Film synopsis



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Delphine and Antoine live an affluent life with their two adopted kids, Aslan and Adia. They are preparing for Aslan's departure to the US to study entomology, spending the last few days of his stay in the warm atmosphere of their summer villa.

Delphine receives an anonymous phone call telling her that, at the peak of a drunken night with his colleagues, Antoine mumbled something about having a relationship with one of his children. Confused, Delphine tries to get a grip on herself and quietly investigate the claim. However, as she looks closer at her husband and his relationship with their teenage daughter and son, she begins to see traces of what she can only wish to be untrue.

Windless

Countries: Bulgaria, Italy

Directed by: Pavel G. Vesnakov

Scriptwriter: Pavel G. Vesnakov, Simeon Ventsislavov, Teodora Markova, Georgi Ivanov, Nevena Kertova

Producer: Veselka Kiryakova, Alessandro Amato, Luigi Chimienti

Camera: Orlin Ruevski

Film synopsis

Kaloyan returns to Bulgaria for a few days to sell the empty family apartment after living in Spain with his mother for the last 10 years. There is a big investment project going on related to the construction of a casino, hotel and golf course in the desolated town of Kaloyan's childhood. Many of the old buildings must be demolished, while the cemetery gets moved to a different location to free up space for the golf course. Although Kaloyan and his deceased father never managed to get along and lost touch a long time ago, the young boy must arrange the transfer of his father's remains. The process starts as a mundane task, but soon transcends into a journey of self-discovery that tracks the connection between childhood trauma, memory and the passage of time.

The Visitors

Countries: Czech Republic, Norway, Slovak Republic

Directed by: Veronika Lišková

Scriptwriter: Veronika Lišková

Producer: Kristýna Michálek Květová

Camera: Vojtěch Vančura



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Film synopsis

A young anthropologist, Zdenka, moves with her husband and three sons to Svalbard, Norway, to study how life is changing in polar regions. She has received a prestigious two-year grant to carry out extensive research on the impact of globalisation on the inhabitants of the world's northernmost town, Longyearbyen. After falling in love with her new home, Zdenka discovers that icebergs and permafrost aren't the only things vanishing in the Arctic.

By conducting interviews with residents, she begins to perceive how heterogeneous the small local community actually is while revealing tensions that lie beneath the surface. Zdenka then has to weigh up her involvement in the local community, which she originally only intended to observe.

My Best Friend's Baby

Countries: Sweden

Directed by: Sophie Vuković

Scriptwriter: Sophie Vuković

Producer: Eliza Jones, Markus Waltå

Film synopsis

Damir (33) and Sara (37) have found a home in each other and in Stockholm's queer community. Damir floats among nightclubs, and still hasn't come out to his family in Croatia. Sara, single and self-reliant, wants to have a child on her own. The friends are convinced that they're so progressive that even a baby can't change their special bond. Damir offers to donate his sperm - but won't be involved as a dad.

When Damir visits Croatia for his cousin's wedding, pregnant Sara comes along. As usual, if his family want to assume they are a couple, that's up to them. Once on the Adriatic island, their straight act begins to live a life of its own. Damir's boisterous and intrusive family soon figure out that Sara is pregnant. Now Damir and Sara must face the fact that the baby is real and on its way - and that everything is about to change.

Dolphin

Countries: Poland



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Directed by: Sonja Orlewicz-Zakrzewska

Scriptwriter: Sonja Orlewicz-Zakrzewska

Producer: Magdalena Sztorc

Film synopsis

Anna's plan to release her brilliant debut album is fully supported by her loving boyfriend Jan, and entirely killed by her fear of sharing her music with anyone. This deadlock is Anna's greatest drag – at least until the day Jan comes back from his holiday, pregnant, with a dolphin growing inside him. Anna can't go on drifting along in the shallow waters of her routine, and she starts sinking. However, it isn't the little Dolphin who's pulling Anna down – it's her carefully hidden self-doubts. The emergence of the Dolphin kicks up a storm, which will change the landscape of the couple's life. To save the relationship and her own worth, Anna will have to unveil her truest self, which so far has been closed up in her music studio. Dolphin is a story about breaking free by achieving self-acceptance, maturing into a relationship, and learning to set free what one loves.

The Maiden

Countries: Canada, USA

Directed by: Graham Foy

Scriptwriter: Graham Foy

Producer: Daiva Zalnierunas, Dan Montgomery

Camera: Kelly Jeffrey

Film synopsis

A perfect summer day ends in a tragic death.

Colton, a suburban teenager, mourns the loss of his best friend Kyle.

Grief awakens decay and darkness in a world that swirls amidst glimpses of natural wonder and beauty. The discovery of a missing girl's diary transports us to a mirror world.

A magical ravine. A supernatural encounter. Is this Colton's psyche? A dream? The afterlife? Are we ever really alone...?

U Are the Universe

Countries: Ukraine



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Directed by: Pavlo Ostrikov

Scriptwriter: Pavlo Ostrikov

Producer: Volodymyr Yatsenko, Anna Yatsenko

Camera: Mykyta Kuzmenko

Film synopsis

The near future. Space trucker Andriy Melnyk transports radioactive waste on a cargo ship to an abandoned satellite of Jupiter. During another flight, the Earth explodes. Pieces of the planet are destroying everything in their path at breakneck speed, but Andriy manages to escape. He becomes the last person in the universe; but, after a while, Catherine, a French woman from a science station near Saturn, gets in contact. They are completely different people, and are far away from each other, but every day Andriy and Catherine want more and more to meet. Even if it will be their last trip.