

# 60th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

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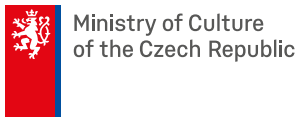
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Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

**THIS YEAR'S KARLOVY VARY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL CELEBRATES  
TWO ANNIVERSARIES**

In 2026, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (KVIFF) commemorates two important milestones: 80 years since the first festival, and the festival's 60th edition.



Poster for the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, Photo Credit: Film Servis Festival Karlovy Vary

*“The Karlovy Vary festival is an event at which long-term tradition and the format of a modern film festival come together in a unique way. Few domestic cultural events can boast such a rich and varied history. This is thanks in part to the distinctive personalities who have shaped its identity at various points in its history,”* says the festival's executive director **Kryštof Mucha**, adding: *“There is much that has formed its character over the course of its eighty-year history, but it is up to historians to assess the extent to which the state's cultural policy, the international situation, and various other factors have influenced the festival's organizational and artistic qualities. We should nevertheless remember that the foundations laid by the festival's first editions in the postwar years have given rise to an*



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*event that has managed to survive despite all internal tensions and external influences, that has withstood attempts at ideological control and efforts to abolish it, and that has succeeded in transforming itself into an internationally recognized showcase and a venue where filmmakers and audiences can meet in a unique atmosphere of harmony. It has become a festival that honors its legacy and that manages to reflect the present while confidently shaping the future of cinema.”*

As the second-oldest film festival in the world, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival was part of the so-called “first wave” of postwar European film festivals.

The first edition of the Karlovy Vary film festival was held eighty years ago as a non-competition event with international participation. Organized by the spa towns of Mariánské Lázně and Karlovy Vary from 1 to 15 August 1946, it took place before the inaugural editions of the festivals in both Cannes and Locarno and even predates the first postwar edition of the world’s oldest film festival, the Venice Film Festival (founded 1932, renewed 1946).

The festival’s first edition featured thirteen films, with premiere screenings in Mariánské Lázně and repeat showings the following day in Karlovy Vary. It began presenting awards in 1948, and in 1950 the festival moved permanently to Karlovy Vary. The earliest editions had to contend with political realities that significantly intervened in its programming decisions. One key figure who determined the festival’s character for several decades was the journalist, educator, and internationally respected expert Antonín Martin Brousil (1907–1986). Besides contributing to the festival’s founding, he chaired its main juries for many years and essentially served as its unofficial programming director.

*“Before my predecessor, the artistic director Eva Zaoralová, there was her predecessor, one of the founders of KVIFF and Antonín Martin Brousil,” says the festival’s artistic director **Karel Och**, adding: “It is also thanks to him and the Karlovy Vary festival that films from Africa, Asia, and Latin America are today admired at leading film festivals around the world. As early as 1962, Brousil created a platform for film pioneers from these very continents within the legendary section ‘Symposium of Young and New Cinemas’. He provided space not only for the presentation of the films themselves but also for numerous meetings and discussions among their creators – precisely that aspect of film festivals that we take for granted today.”*

The disproportion between the two anniversaries (60 and 80) is the result of several different factors. After not being held in 1953 and 1955, by political edict the festival subsequently took place only every other year. Starting in 1959 the festival, which two years earlier had been recognized as a category “A” festival by the FIAPF (a category that



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also includes Cannes and Venice), had to share this prestigious label and alternate years with the newly founded Moscow International Film Festival.

Over the course of its long existence, the Karlovy Vary festival has experienced a number of turbulent changes. After spending the 1950s in search of a meaningful identity, the festival truly spread its wings in the following decade, when it hosted numerous representatives of international cinema, only to suffer two decades of Normalization – a period full of restrictions that influenced both the selection of films and the awarding of prizes.

Only with the easing of outside pressures in the second half of the 1980s did more substantial foreign films and interesting guests gradually return to the festival. The first post-Velvet Revolution edition in 1990 featured participation by a number of exiled or banned filmmakers and the screening of titles that had previously been censored. Instead of the festival's expected flowering, however, there followed several years of uncertainty and deliberations as to the event's purpose, and the festival was on the verge of being canceled. Thanks to the initiative of the forward-thinking filmmaker, artist, and Ministry of Culture official Igor Ševčík, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival Foundation was established in order to take the festival's organization out of the hands of the state, and the festival's organizing team came to be headed by Jiří Bartoška as president and Eva Zaoralová as artistic director. It is no exaggeration to say that these changes began an extraordinary period during which the festival was transformed into an event meeting modern and international standards. Among other things, the illogical alternating of festival years with Moscow came to an end, and since 1994 the festival has been held annually in Karlovy Vary. The festival also successfully fought off attempts to move it to Prague, and after two years of stiff competition from the Prague Golem festival, it reasserted its status as the country's most important cinematic event. The festival's ongoing evolution was paused just once due to the international Covid pandemic, and so 2026 marks the festival's sixtieth anniversary edition.

The festival team that Jiří Bartoška and Eva Zaoralová built up over the years has continued to successfully meet these two important figures' vision even after their passing. The festival's identity has long been shaped by such people as moderator Marek Eben, designers of the festival's opening and closing ceremonies Michal and Šimon Caban, graphic designer Aleš Najbrt and Studio Najbrt, photographer Tono Stano, PR coordinator Uljana Donátová, and dozens of others who make up the event's tight-knit organizational structure.



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Since last year, the entire team has been headed by Executive Director Kryštof Mucha, Artistic Director Karel Och, and Head of Production Petr Lintimer. With the entry of strategic partner Rockaway Art several years ago, the festival has gained a stable foundation for its future growth.

### **PLANNED EVENTS COMMEMORATING THE FESTIVAL'S ANNIVERSARIES**

#### **Exhibition: KVIFF 60/80 (1946–2026)**

The festival looks back on its rich history with an exhibition of photographs focusing in particular on its lesser-known early years, the atmosphere of its pre-1989 editions, and important moments and festival guests.

Thirty outdoor panels, located along the path between two of the festival's iconic venues – the Grandhotel Pupp and the Hotel Thermal – take visitors on a symbolic journey through the festival's eighty-year history and let them witness the changes it has undergone in the intervening years.

#### **Out of the Past – KVIFF 60/80 (1946 – 2026)**

This year, the traditional Out of the Past section will focus on important titles from the festival's history. More detailed information may be found elsewhere in this press release.

#### **Special festival sneak preview in Mariánské Lázně**

The twin-city format of the festival's first edition will be recalled in the form of a special preview screening of a selected film from this year's program on 1 July at the historic Municipal Theatre in Mariánské Lázně.

#### **President Václav Havel and the Karlovy Vary festival**

Over the past thirty years, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival has enjoyed the support of numerous important figures, including director Miloš Forman, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and President Václav Havel. As a gesture of thanks for president, playwright, and author Václav Havel's long-term support and goodwill, the festival is marking what would have been his ninetieth birthday with a photographic exhibition at the Hotel Thermal commemorating his visits to the festival and his meetings with various representatives of world cinema.

#### **New architectural design for the festival's event spaces**

For this and future editions, the Karlovy Vary festival is redesigning the area around the entrance to the Hotel Thermal's Grand Hall with a new architectural design that will allow audiences to more intensely experience and share in the festival atmosphere during the festival's opening and closing ceremonies as well as at festival screenings. Guest arrivals



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with live commentary will bring the festival action closer to visitors and add interesting behind-the-scenes observations. Screenings in the Grand Hall will offer audiences a natural opportunity for a glamorous red carpet entrance.

### **Charitable projects as an integral part of the festival**

The Karlovy Vary festival has long provided a platform for public benefit corporations, nonprofit organizations, and foundations to present their activities to the general public. Each year, a selected organization is granted the status of Official Nonprofit Partner.

Past editions of the festival have supported the following foundations or charitable organizations: the Sirius Foundation, Taťána Kuchařová's Beauty of Help Foundation, Amnesty International, Help the Children, Centrum Paraple, the Kapka naděje (Drop of Hope) Endowment Fund, the Charter 77 Foundation, Konto Bariéry, the Czech Radio Endowment Fund's "Světluška" project, Pomocné tlapky (Helping Paws), DebRA ČR, the Jedliček Institute Foundation, Pink Bubble, Alliance of Women with Breast Cancer, the Club of People with Cystic Fibrosis, the Jakub Voráček Foundation, and Sue Ryder.

The No Barriers project, which has been a fixed part of the festival since 2000, provides services for disabled visitors to make their time at the festival as enjoyable as possible. The project includes a festive afternoon that introduces the public to interesting activities aimed at showing that a disability is no hindrance to playing sports, having fun, and pursuing one's interests.



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### **OUT OF THE PAST – KVIFF 60/80**

An unmissable part of the jubilee 60th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, which marks 80 years since its inception this year, will be a special edition of the popular "classic" section.

*"One of the festival's most popular permanent programs, which regularly looks back at the history of cinema, will take on a celebratory form this year," says the festival's Artistic Director, **Karel Och**. "It will consist of twenty carefully selected films from previous editions of the festival, which are firmly linked to its history as milestones key to the KVIFF's identity and reputation."*



*Kes (1969), Photo Credit: Park Circus/Amazon MGM*

Among the films, dating from 1946 to the recent past, is the masterpiece by the duo Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, ***A Matter of Life and Death***, which festival visitors in Czechoslovakia first admired in August 1947. More than twenty years later, in 1970, Ken Loach—a compatriot of the iconic duo—personally accepted the festival's top prize for best film for his acclaimed drama ***Kes***.



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From its very beginnings, the festival located in West Bohemia has been a warm home for the best of Mexican cinema. Emilio Fernández, a titan of Mexican directing, sent his films to Karlovy Vary several times, starting with ***Río Escondido*** in 1948. Konrad Wolf, a legend of East German cinema, also participated in the festival multiple times; his extraordinary drama ***Lissy*** won one of the main prizes in 1957.

Representing the colors of the former Czechoslovakia will be the drama ***The Defendant***, winner of the Grand Prix at the 1964 KVIFF, filmed by the future Oscar-winning duo Ján Kadar and Elmar Klos. Also featured is Juraj Jakubisko's prized film ***Birds, Orphans and Fools***, which will be personally introduced by the legendary actress Magda Vášaryová. This cult "banned" parable only had its true premiere more than twenty years after it was filmed, at the 1990 KVIFF.

For a long time, the print of one of the fundamental films in Australian cinematic history, the adventure drama ***Captain Thunderbolt***, was considered lost—until 2024, when an original, uncut 35mm print was found in the Czech National Film Archive. This year's celebratory program will commemorate the premiere of New Zealand director Cecil Holmes's film in the competition of the 7th KVIFF in 1952.

The complete list of films in the **Out of the Past – KVIFF 60/80** retrospective will be published at the beginning of June.



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## VISUAL IDENTITY OF THE 60TH KARLOVY VARY IFF

60th Karlovy Vary  
International Film Festival

3 — 11 7 2026

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Design: Jonatan Kuna, in collaboration with: Aleš Najbrt

*“For this year’s festival, we reflected on how to best express the celebration of the festival’s 80th anniversary and its 60th edition, and we decided to work with the symbol of the red carpet. The visual has been designed as simply as possible so that it might evoke various associations and interpretations while symbolizing the festival. With our design, we want to convey that the red carpet is for everybody – not just for the filmmakers to present their films, or for the stars arriving for the opening and closing ceremonies. All film lovers and festival visitors can walk across it. The red carpet is there for all, so that everyone can experience a few moments of fame. The shadows that variously appear on the carpet reflect this idea. They represent another layer of this year’s visual and come to life along with the festival as a whole. They are a kind of projection, a film unfolding right there on the red carpet,”* say Aleš Najbrt and Jonatan Kuna.



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**KARLOVY VARY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL TO PRESENT PREMIERE OF  
DIGITALLY RESTORED VERSION OF TAINTED HORSEPLAY**

This year's edition of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival will present a gala screening of a digitally restored copy of Věra Chytilová's tragicomedy *Tainted Horseplay*.



*Tainted Horseplay, Photo Credit: Národní filmový archiv*

**KVIFF and digital film restoration**

When the Karlovy Vary festival began its tradition of showing world premieres of digitally restored works of domestic cinema fifteen years ago, it joined the international trend toward the restoration of important films that have shaped cinematic history. The goal of this undertaking has been to call attention to works by leading directors whose message transcends the time in which they were made – films that are not just cinematic classics but that continue to resonate with new generations of viewers today. As the most important cinematic event in the Czech Republic, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival



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initiated and continues to support the digital remastering of important works of Czech cinema.

*“The presentation of classic works of world cinema has always been a part of the Karlovy Vary festival’s programming,”* says KVIFF’s executive director **Kryštof Mucha**. *“In 2010, when the Gucci company provided financial support for the digital restoration of Luchino Visconti’s legendary drama *The Leopard* as part of a project spearheaded by The Film Foundation, we definitely took note. In our view, a similar collaborative undertaking on the Czech scene represented an interesting opportunity for the partners of the Karlovy Vary festival, and so fifteen years ago we decided to launch a project aimed at preserving the best works of domestic cinema and bringing them back to the big screen. To this end, we managed to secure the necessary cooperation from the government, along with the ČEZ Foundation’s support for the project’s launch, and over time we have been able to bring other donors on board as well. As a result, the Karlovy Vary festival has contributed to creating a unique and continuously growing archive of digitally restored Czech films.”*

The festival’s digital restoration project has since the beginning involved collaboration with the National Film Archive, which preserves and safeguards works of Czech cinema. Besides receiving support from the Czech Ministry of Culture, the project has been financed by contributions from its partners, the ČEZ Foundation and the Czech Film Foundation. Several dozen films have been digitally restored thanks to the systematic and ongoing support of Milada and Eduarda Kučera, and more are in the works.

Another goal since the very beginning has been to provide a unique space at the festival for the world premiere of a selected digitally restored film. In 2011, the first title to be screened in this way was the historical drama *Marketa Lazarová* by director František Vlášil, recipient of the 1998 Crystal Globe for Outstanding Artistic Contribution to World Cinema.

The technical aspects of the entire process are handled by UPP and Soundsquare in collaboration with the National Film Archive and with support from the Czech Audiovisual Fund.

Over the past several years, the festival has presented the world premieres of digitally restored copies of several gems of Czech cinema, including Miloš Forman’s comedy *The Fireman’s Ball*, Vojtěch Jasný’s drama *All Good Countrymen*, Jiří Menzel’s Oscar-winning *Closely Watched Trains*, Ivan Passer’s *Intimate Lighting*, Juraj Herz’s *The Cremator*, and the Oscar-winning *The Shop on Main Street* by Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos.



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Digitally restored films are screened not just at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, but also as part of the KVIFF Classics mini-festival. Currently, the list of Czech and Czechoslovak feature-length and short films that have been digitally restored encompasses more than a hundred titles.

### **Tainted Horseplay**

Věra Chytilová shot her tragicomedy ***Tainted Horseplay*** in 1988. At the center of this generational portrait of thirty-somethings is a group of friends who engage in regular drinking sessions, the occasional borderline prank, and casual sexual adventures – until, that is, the wild and promiscuous Pepe ends up in the hospital. The group of friends subsequently undergo an anonymous blood test, which shows that one of member of their wild gang is HIV positive. This harsh confrontation with reality leads to a radical crisis of friendship.

Chytilová's film, co-written with Pavel Škapík, is a grotesque tragicomic mosaic of damaged relationships and a reflection of the moral decay of the 1980s. Its ostentatiously nonconformist protagonists grapple with boredom, alienation, and a sense of emptiness in their lives, but their flight from reality leads to bleak dead-ends. The director also – daringly for the time – addresses the taboo subject of AIDS, which becomes a metaphor for danger and irresponsibility. Jaroslav Brabec's camera organically contributes to the film's distinctive visual style.

Chytilová found a creative synergy with the members of the Divadlo Sklep theater ensemble, who brought their typically sarcastic and free-spirited poetic sensibilities to their portrayal of the characters. The film's title comes from an original poem by the theater troupe.

Appearing in the film, which was shot in Karlovy Vary, are Tomáš Hanák, Milan Šteindler, David Vávra, Tereza Kučerová, Chantal Poullain, and Jiří Bartoška. In 1989, ***Tainted Horseplay*** was selected as Czechoslovakia's candidate for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. At the 2000 edition of KVIFF, director Věra Chytilová was awarded the Crystal Globe for Outstanding Artistic Contribution to World Cinema.

***Tainted Horseplay*** is another in a series of films that have been digitally restored thanks to financial support from Milada and Eduard Kučera.

The film was digitized by UPP and Soundsquare, in collaboration with the National Film Archive and the Czech Audiovisual Fund, using an original picture negative and an original sound negative stored at the National Film Archive.



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## **KARLOVY VARY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL TO AWARD MAGDA VÁŠÁRYOVÁ**

**Actress Magda Vášáryová will receive the President's Award at the festival's 60th edition**

For much of its existence, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival – which celebrates the 80th anniversary of its founding this year, was an important representative of Czechoslovak cinema. By presenting an award to Magda Vášáryová, the festival aims not just to express its respect for the performances of one of the greatest Slovak actresses of all time, but also to remember the unique artistic connection between the Czech and Slovak filmmakers who shaped our two countries' shared cinematic history.



*Magda Vášáryová in *Birds, Orphans and Fools* (1969, dir. Juraj Jakubisko), Photo Credit: Slovak Film Institute*

Magda Vášáryová's breakthrough role at the start of her acting career came in František Vlácil's historical drama *Marketa Lazarová* (1967). In 1998, domestic film critics and journalists voted this cinematic masterpiece as the most important work of our hundred-



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year cinematic history. The film was digitally restored in 2011, and the restored version's world premiere was held at the 46th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

Vášáryová has said that she had originally not dreamt of becoming an actress: she initially attended a secondary school with a focus on math and physics and subsequently studied at the Faculty of Arts at Bratislava's Comenius University. But the international success of Marketa Lazarová brought further acting offers. Working with director Juraj Jakubisko, she subsequently filmed the anthology film *Deserters and Pilgrims* (1968, shown at the Venice film festival) and the drama *Birds, Orphans and Fools* (1969). Both films were "locked away" by the communist regime.

Magda Vášáryová appeared alongside Jan Tříska in the title roles of *Radúz and Mahulena* (1970), Petr Weigl's adaptation of the mythological play by Julius Zeyer. She also portrayed the female lead in Karel Zeman's distinctive adaptation of Jules Verne's novel *On the Comet* (1970) and also appeared in the fairy tale movie *Prince Bajaja* (1971, dir. Antonín Kachlík).

After earning her university degree, Vášáryová began to perform at the Divadlo Na korze theater, after which she appeared on stage at Bratislava's Nová scéna and at the Slovak National Theatre. She filmed the biopic *And Give My Love to the Swallows* (1972) with Jaromil Jireš and regularly appeared in television films. She again teamed up with Petr Weigl for a cinematic version of Dvořák's world famous opera *Rusalka* (1977), and she was exceptionally popular among audiences for her role as the mischievous housekeeper in the comedy *Cutting It Short* (1984), Jiří Menzel's adaptation of the novel by Bohumil Hrabal. She filmed the psychological drama *Quiet Happiness* (1985) with Dušan Hanák, and again worked with director Jaromil Jireš on *Lion With a White Mane* (1986), a biopic about the composer Leoš Janáček. Her final work for cinema was director Dušan Hanák's psychological drama *Private Lives* (1990).

After the Velvet Revolution, Vášáryová accepted an offer from President Václav Havel to be Czechoslovakia's ambassador to Austria (1990–1993), and in 2000–2005 she was Slovakia's ambassador to Poland. She has since continued to be engaged in politics and public life. In February 2026, she earned a Ph.D. in historical sociology from Charles University's Faculty of Humanities. She has authored several books, including last year's collection of interviews *Než zmizím* (Before I Disappear), in which she speaks openly about current issues.

**In honor of Magda Vášáryová, the Karlovy Vary festival will be screening Juraj Jakubisko's *Birds, Orphans and Fools*.** The film, a Czechoslovak-French co-production written by Jakubisko in cooperation with the writer Karol Sidon, was filmed in the turbulent



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year of 1968. Its three main protagonists – Yorick, Marta, and Andrej – manage to survive in a world full of hopelessness and disillusionment thanks to “foolishness,” lighthearted play, and a philosophy of joy that, in their view, is the only possible path toward happiness.

At the time, a special committee of the Slovak Ministry of Culture labeled this mosaic-like, fantastical allegory of unfulfilled dreams and the absurdity of the world “un-socialistic” and forbade its distribution. More than twenty years later, ***Birds, Orphans and Fools*** was shown at the 1990 Karlovy Vary film festival and also won the FIPRESCI Award. In 2008, Juraj Jakubisko was presented the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival’s Crystal Globe for Outstanding Artistic Contribution to World Cinema.



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**FUTURE FRAMES CONTINUES ITS SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP WITH ALLWYN  
AND ITS COLLABORATION WITH UTA AND RANGE MEDIA PARTNERS**

Future Frames – Generation NEXT of European Cinema, a program organized by the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and European Film Promotion, has been helping talented European directors start their careers in the film industry since 2015. For the fourth year in a row, the program has been able to significantly expand the opportunities it offers thanks to its partnership with lottery and entertainment company Allwyn, and also by collaborating with American talent agency UTA and Range Media Partners, which provide young filmmakers with valuable expert guidance and the chance to make important contacts.



*2025 Future Frames participants, Photo credit: Film Servis Festival Karlovy Vary*

Every year, the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival programming team selects ten film school students and graduates for Future Frames from a broader pool of candidates nominated throughout the year by member organizations of European Film Promotion. The participating filmmakers present their short and medium-length films at the festival and take part in a specially tailored mentoring program that includes training, networking, and



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promotion. This year's Future Frames will take place from 5 to 8 July at the Hotel Thermal, which will once again host the creative and networking space that is the Allwyn Lounge. Here, participants will attend training sessions and individual meetings with representatives from UTA and Range Media Partners, who will provide them with feedback and subsequently select one director for a residency in Los Angeles sponsored by Allwyn, a company that invests in the development of emerging talent across the arts, entertainment, sports, and culture. Last year's recipient of this great opportunity was German director Simon Schneckenburger. During a month-long residency in Los Angeles, UTA and Range Media Partners organized individual meetings with distributors, producer, and other American film industry representatives, with whom he could consult his planned feature-length film and other projects.