



Karlovy Vary International Film Festival

KARLOVY VARY IFF UNVEILS SELECTION FOR 'OUT OF THE PAST' AND 'SPECIAL SCREENINGS - CLASSICS' SECTIONS

The Karlovy Vary International Film Festival has revealed the film selection for its retrospective and heritage sections. *Out of the Past - KVIFF 60/80* will mark sixty editions and eighty years since the festival's inception by presenting pivotal films from KVIFF's history. The *Special Screenings - Classics* section will feature a special program dedicated to the history of cinema. Highlights from the selection include the international premiere of *The Hanging of Stuart Cornfeld*, a portrait of the independent producer and eccentric visionary Stuart Cornfeld (*The Elephant Man*, *Kafka*, or *The Fly*), alongside Ivan Ostrochovský's documentary *Igor and After*, and a 30th-anniversary screening of David Ondříček's cult debut *Whisper*. The full festival lineup, including the *Horizons* and *Afterhours* sections, will be revealed on June 18.

Special Screenings - Classics

A special program dedicated to the history of cinema features several premieres. Ivan Ostrochovský, whose *The Spring* will compete for the Crystal Globe, will also bring to Karlovy Vary his documentary *Igor and After*—an extraordinary portrait of the exceptional, world-renowned Slovak cinematographer Igor Luther (*The Tin Drum* or *Birds, Orphans and Fools*). Another intriguing portrait, *The Hanging of Stuart Cornfeld*, about the independent producer and eccentric visionary Stuart Cornfeld (*The Elephant Man*, *Kafka*, or *The Fly*), will be presented in its international premiere.

Alongside the previously announced, brand-new restoration of the dark slapstick comedy *Tainted Horseplay*, the festival will celebrate the producing career of Jaroslav Bouček with Vladimír Michálek's legendary tragicomedy *Autumn Spring*. The majestic premises of the Karlovy Vary Municipal Theatre will also host a special screening of David Ondříček's cult debut *Whisper*, marking thirty years since its filming this year.

The never-ending presentation of John Cassavetes' films in Karlovy Vary continues this year with his cult movie *Killing of a Chinese Bookie* (1976), a dark character study with reflections of a neo-noir crime drama, featuring an exceptional leading performance by Ben Gazzara.



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Babí léto / Autumn Spring

Director: Vladimír Michálek
Czech Republic, 2001, 98 min

A gently defiant pensioner drives his wife of 44 years to distraction in the understated comedy *Autumn Spring*, marking an assured old-school return for director Vladimír Michálek and cinematographer Martin Štrba. With help from longtime friend and former theatre colleague Eda (Stanislav Zindulka), deceptively dignified 75-year-old Fanda Hána (Vlastimil Brodský) delights in impersonations, from touring country estates to posing as subway inspectors. Though he constantly bickers with his wife Emílie (Stella Zázvorková), their bond remains unmistakable. Drawing on decades of experience, the trio delivers performances rich in restraint, playfulness and quiet charm.

The Hanging of Stuart Cornfeld

Director: Joan Bofill Amargós
USA, Spain, 2025, 89 min, International premiere

Are you a fan of *The Elephant Man*, *Kafka*, *The Fly*, or *Zoolander*? Then you probably know that they would not have been made without the crucial contribution of Stuart Cornfeld, one of the most fascinating producers in American independent film. Spanish artist and filmmaker Joan Bofill has shot an inventive portrait of this eccentric visionary, whose enthusiasm was more than a little infectious. Reminiscing about their creative partner are David Lynch, Steven Soderbergh, Guillermo Del Toro, David Cronenberg, and producer Mark Johnson. An unusually crafted biographical documentary, founded on the filmmaker's friendship with this plainspoken "geyser of creativity" and painted with both film camera and painter's brush.

Igor a potom / Igor and After

Director: Ivan Ostrochovský
Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, 2026, 70 min, World premiere

This year's gallery of artistically inspiring portraits of uncompromising eccentrics (among them *The Hanging of Stuart Cornfeld*, *Robert Richardson: The White Devil* and *A Pint of Ink*) features another unobtrusive stand-out in the shape of Igor Luther, a key figure of Slovak and European cinematography. Ivan Ostrochovský's perspective is rare, dynamic and also meditative, while Luther himself co-authored the project during the last few months of his life. Works such as Juraj Jakubisko's *Birds, Orphans and Fools*, Volker Schlöndorff's *The Tin Drum* and Andrzej Wajda's *Danton*, in the persuasive words of their creators, wouldn't have the same timeless energy today if it weren't for Luther's visionary endeavours.



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The Killing of a Chinese Bookie

Director: John Cassavetes

USA, 1978, 109 min

“Years ago, Martin Scorsese and I were talking and in one night made up this gangster story about this nightclub owner who owes a lot of money and is talked into killing someone who isn’t really the person he thinks he’s going to be killing.” Thus describes John Cassavetes the origins of this film, with which the Karlovy Vary film festival continues its ongoing Cassavetes master class. Ben Gazzara shines as the charismatic owner of a strip club in this dark character study passing itself off as a neo-noir crime drama. With his melancholic glimpse into the male psyche, Cassavetes created a metaphor likening the captains of Hollywood (whom he detested) to gangsters.

Kopytem sem, kopytem tam / Tainted Horseplay

Director: Věra Chytilová

Czechoslovakia, 1988, 128 min

It's the late 1980s. Three friends – Pepe, Milan and František – are making the most of Karlovy Vary's nightlife. While their days are dampened by the tedious, at times, absurd workplace reality of late socialism, their nights are given over to decadence. Naturally, women are essential to their plans, and who says you can't spend a night with your mate's girlfriend as well? Except there's a virus going around that causes a disease no-one dares mention, with currently no cure. AIDS. Věra Chytilová's jagged, expressive directorial style is complemented by the poetic sensibilities of Sklep Theatre, whose founders appear in the lead roles. This sombre farce blends an image of a society jaded by empty regime slogans with a portrait of friendship which, in the face of threat, disintegrates into cold egoism.

Šeptej / Whisper

Director: David Ondříček

Czech Republic, 1996, 85 min

Thirty years have passed since the theatre release of the cult film *Whisper* which, in the mid-1990s, evoked the atmosphere of the clubs of the time and the trends associated with them. Anna (Tatiana Dyková) travels from the country and arrives in Prague, where she meets Speedy (Jan Čechtický), his brother Filip (Jan P. Muchow), Kytka (Martin Myšička) and their flatmate Irma (Kateřina Winterová). Anna gradually eases herself into city life and becomes a part of the relationships that new friends cultivate among themselves. The unmistakable music tracks used in the film were created by the band Colorfactory.



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Out of the Past - KVIFF 60/80

On the occasion of celebrating sixty editions over the eighty years since the festival's inception, this year's "Classics" section of the KVIFF is entirely dedicated to pivotal films from the history of one of the oldest film festivals in the world. Here is the complete selection:

Barravento / The Turning Wind

Director: Glauber Rocha

Brazil, 1962, 81 min

"A political film must not only be revolutionary and radical, but also artistically and culturally enriching", stated director Glauber Rocha, a key figure of Brazil's Cinema Novo movement. His debut, awarded in Karlovy Vary in 1962, thus brings us an array of magical scenes of rituals performed by the inhabitants of the Bahia fishing region; at the same time, it nevertheless raises a critical question – how can mysticism maintain its relevance in the fight against oppression and exploitation? Rocha's loosely structured narrative, drawing on the documentary film aesthetic, is rhythmically and conceptually akin to the sea, whose calm surface can at any moment be roiled by the *barravento*, a sudden, violent and destructive wind.

Captain Thunderbolt

Director: Cecil Holmes

Australia, 1952, 73 min

In the 1950s, if the Karlovy Vary festival screened a film from a capitalist country, it usually involved an individual's struggle against a corrupt society – and the Australian Western by New Zealand-born director Cecil Holmes was no different. This feature-length film romanticizing the legendary outlaw Fred Ward was long considered lost in its home country, until a complete copy was recently found at the National Film Archive in Prague. After more than seventy years, the myth of Captain Thunderbolt, the "Robin Hood of the Australian bush," can thus be seen again in all its original glory.

Genbaku no ko / Children of Hiroshima

Director: Kaneto Shindo

Japan, 1954, 97 min

The end of the American occupation of Japan meant that, among other things, the country had to come to terms with a horrific legacy of the past, the impact of which had thus far been silenced by the censors – the atom bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Director Kaneto Shindō was the first to render this oppressive memento on the



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big screen. *Children of Hiroshima*, based on the book by Arata Osada, who witnessed the Hiroshima bombing himself, is a softly contoured portrait of the survivors, whose bodies and souls bore indelible traces long after the war had ended. The film, awarded the Peace Prize at the Karlovy Vary festival, was seen as a strong political gesture at the time of production and was not given its official American premiere until 2011. Second Grand Prix and FIPRESCI Award in 1966.

Hideg napok / Cold Days

Director: András Kovács
Hungary, 1966, 101 min

“I love the Danube, that silent witness to our history; how many times have we wished that it could talk”, stated András Kovács. The Hungarian director had recently completed his hitherto most ambitious film *Cold Days*, an adaptation of the novel of the same name by Tibor Csere. The public followed the production with a sense of anticipation and also trepidation, since the story explored the dark and, to this day, painful events of the Novi Sad massacre. In 1946 four men share a prison cell, accused of planning war crimes committed by Horthy’s army. As they await their trial, they reminisce about what happened, returning to those “cold days” on the banks of the Danube. Their aim is not merely to exonerate themselves before the tribunal but also, above all, to do so in their own eyes.

Kes

Director: Ken Loach
United Kingdom, 1969, 111 min

The emerging film career of Ken Loach, modest titan of European filmmaking, is strongly associated with the Karlovy Vary festival. After his feature debut *Poor Cow*, one of the most striking entries in the KVIFF competition in 1968, Loach returned to the spa resort two years later with his drama *Kes*. The story of 15-year-old Billy, whose only ray of light in his straitened and grim circumstances is his friendship with a wild kestrel, is ranked by the BFI among the top ten greatest British films of all time. This powerfully authentic picture about the tough transition from childhood to adolescence competed in Karlovy Vary in 1970, winning the Grand Prix for Best Film.

Die letzte Chance / The Last Chance

Director: Leopold Lindtberg
Switzerland, 1945, 112 min

Northern Italy, September 1943. A group of Allied prisoners of war escapes from a prison train headed to Germany. They soon meet up with local partisans and a multinational group of desperate refugees. All share the same goal – to cross the Alps and make it to



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neutral Switzerland. Lauded in its time and unjustly forgotten today, *The Last Chance* – filmed as the last battles of World War II were still raging – presages the coming era of Neorealist cinema. By using a minimum of studio shots and working with real soldiers escaped from Italian prison camps, director Leopold Lindtberg further amplified his film's urgent moral message. The film premiered at the first festival in 1946.

Lissy

Director: Konrad Wolf
Germany, 1957, 89 min

“Here we have a film that has been made in the masterful grip of a young director,” Germany's *Hamburger Echo* wrote in a review of *Lissy*, the first true classic by director Konrad Wolf. This still relevant story, based on the novel by Prague native Franz Carl Weiskopf, follows a young working-class woman who yearns for a better life, but her path toward this dream brings her uncomfortably close to the growing machinery of the Nazi regime. A fundamentally humanist drama with excellent cinematography by Werner Bergmann and a delicate, moving performance by Sonja Sutter in the title role, *Lissy* asks us to ponder what we are willing to ignore if we feel that we can benefit from it. Third Grand Prix in 1957.

A Matter of Life and Death

Director: Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger
United Kingdom, 1946, 105 min

Returning to England from a mission in the final days of the Second World War, RAF squadron leader Peter Carter is forced to jump out of his burning plane without a parachute. While the next world tries to locate him among the newly registered deceased pilots, the miraculously-saved young man manages to fall in love with an American radio operator named June. Representatives of the afterlife, however, don't intend to give up without a fight... This extravagant, imaginative romance about the strength of love and its delirium-inducing effect on the human mind is a legendary example of Pressburger's narrative talent, spectacularly developed by Powell's genius for unconventional and courageous filmmaking. The picture's first festival screening was held on 3 August 1947 at the Spa House in Mariánské Lázně.

Non c'è pace tra gli ulivi / No Peace Under the Olive Tree

Director: Giuseppe De Santis
Italy, 1950, 107 min

The Italian drama *No Peace Under the Olive Tree*, awarded a Special Honourable Mention at the 6th Karlovy Vary festival, is an epic tale of poor shepherds who unite against their oppressor – the cruel and amoral nouveau riche Bonfiglio (superbly portrayed by Folco



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Lulli). The directorial style of Giuseppe De Santis is rooted in Neorealist conventions; however, for greater viewer accessibility the film is enhanced with elements of lyricism, idealism and melodrama. The rural story, shot amid the rugged, scorched rocks near the director's native town of Fondi, thus enjoyed commercial success, although the critics of the day (particularly those from Western Europe) gave it a noticeably cooler reception.

Obžalovaný / The Defendant

Director: Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos
Czechoslovakia, 1964, 94 min

This compelling courtroom drama was one of the first attempts to present an unflinching criticism of the communist regime. The filmmakers skilfully upended the scheme of ideologically driven works advocating just punishment for embezzlers of socialist property. Managing director Kudrna, the key defendant in a high-profile trial, is guilty of financial crime, yet, without this act of misconduct, in a collapsing economy he wouldn't have been able to secure the construction of a new power plant. Perhaps even more daring are the revelations that the deputy minister who pressured Kudrna into taking on the project is a spineless individual and that the judiciary is subordinate to the state apparatus. *The Defendant* earned directors Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos the Crystal Globe at the Karlovy Vary IFF in 1964.

Oka Oori Katha / The Outsiders

Director: Mrinal Sen
India, 1977, 116 min

Mrinal Sen's *The Outsiders* is a searing exploration of the depths of abject poverty. Faced with an irredeemable system of exploitation, a father and son decide that working only exacerbates social inequalities, so they refuse to do so. The film's raw realism blurs the lines between protagonists and antagonists until all that remains are bitterness and suppressed rage, which serve as the central duo's guiding credo and the driving force behind their personal rebellion. Their anarchist philosophy, disrupted by the son's marriage to a girl named Nilamma, is reflected in the father's nihilistic declaration: "People have always worked hard, and still they die of hunger. I would rather die than work." Special Jury Prize in 1978.

Río Escondido / Hidden River

Director: Emilio Fernández
Mexico, 1948, 110 min

Films from far-flung Mexico were hugely popular during the first few years of the Karlovy Vary festival, a fact also reflected by the success of Emilio Fernández's social drama *Hidden River*, discovered by European festivals shortly before. In a reference to the



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political orientation of President Alemán Valdés, the story of the young teacher Rosaura expresses the hope that a better future is possible without the aid of rifles – primarily thanks to the country's modernisation and education. The quiet strength of the protagonist is underlined to this day by the evocative images of Gabriel Figueroa, one of Mexico's most talented cinematographers (and later collaborator of Luis Buñuel).

Sexy Beast

Director: Jonathan Glazer

United Kingdom, Spain, USA, 2000, 89 min

Gary "Gal" Dove (Ray Winstone) has decided to retire from his life as a bank robber and moves from London to Spain with his wife. But Gal's unpredictable former associate Don Logan (Ben Kingsley) has different plans, and visits him with an offer for one final job. Filled with gallows humor, Oscar-winning director Jonathan Glazer's debut demonstrates his love for gangster films as well as his ability to take an exceptionally innovative and absolutely unpredictable approach to the genre. Thanks in part to visionary producer Jeremy Thomas, his spontaneous and at times surreal journey into the subconscious is today considered a modern classic. World premiere of the digitally restored version.

To homa vaftike kokkino / Blood on the Land

Director: Vasilis Georgiadis

Greece, 1965, 124 min

Besides being an unexpected Greek contribution to the Western genre, director Vasilis Georgiadis's sweeping historical epic *Blood on the Land* is also a sophisticated parallel to the biblical Parable of the Prodigal Son or Odysseus's voyage home. Set in the scorching mountains of Thessaly, the film centers on a feud between irreconcilable brothers from a landowning family and the local peasants' growing resistance against their feudal oppressors, which escalates into violent conflict. This critical and commercial success was released just before the rise of the anti-leftist military junta, which unjustly condemned it to oblivion.

Trainspotting

Director: Danny Boyle

United Kingdom, 1996, 94 min

Thirty years since first being shown at the festival, this cult classic – without which British cinema of the nineties wouldn't have been half as cool – returns to Vary in a brand-new restored version. Despite the intervening decades, this original and sarcasm-laden rebellion against consumer culture based on the novel by Irvine Welsh has retained the authenticity and forceful energy of a defiantly raised middle finger. The iconic soundtrack (including tracks by Iggy Pop and Underworld) perfectly captures the frenzied pace,



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reminiscent of a wild drug-fueled ride, with which the film portrays its likable gang of eccentric slackers as they go through their daily lives of (in)action. *Trainspotting* was also a defining moment in the careers of Ewan McGregor, Robert Carlyle, and the other members of the ensemble cast.

Vtáčkovia, siroty a blázni / Birds, Orphans and Fools

Director: Juraj Jakubisko

Czechoslovakia, France, 1969, 78 min

A tale of two young men and the girl they love, Martha, played by the ethereally beautiful Magda Vášáryová. Their madcap ideas and pranks flitting between children's playfulness and provocation seemingly spring from an inexhaustible fount of joy. They swap bizarre costumes as well as masks, and no situation can be foreseen; nor can its outcome, a fact reinforced by dynamic lensing, editing and expressive music. In contrast to the protagonists' eccentric actions, however, the *mise-en-scène* is laden from the outset with the chaos of all-consuming decay and with dark references to the past. The threesome's merry escapades start to look increasingly like a dance on the edge of the abyss, into which they too will inexorably fall. FIPRESCI Award in 1990.