SLOVAK FILM INSTITUTE AND SLOVAK FILM COMMISSION JOIN FORCES TO PROMOTE SLOVAKIA AT INTERNATIONAL FILM MARKETS.

EUROPEAN FILM MARKET, BERLINALE

MARCHÉ DU FILM, FESTIVAL DE CANNES

FILM MARKETS.

SLOVAKIA AT INTERNATIONAL AND SLOVAK FILM COMMISSION SLOVAK FILM INSTITUTE

FESTIVAL DE CANNES

FESTIVAL DE CANNES

BERLINALE

EUROPEAN FILM MARKET,

BERLINALE

MARCHÉ DU FILM,

FESTIVAL DE CANNES

THE HISTORY AND PRESENT OF THE SLOVAK FILM INSTITUTE

The Slovak Film Institute (SFI) is the sole state-funded memory and archive institution operating in the area of audiovisual in Slovakia. The National Film Archive and the National Cinematographic Centre are the SFI’s basic organisational units. The SFI is a member of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), European Film Promotion (since 2006); it operates as a service workplace for the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) and the Council of Europe cinema support fund – Eurimages. Creative Europe Desk Slovakia is also part of the Slovak Film Institute.

The Film Institute in Bratislava was established on 1st April 1963. The Film archive, which was established in 1958, also became part of the Institute. In 1970, the SFI was presented with a copy of the first Slovak feature film Jánošík (dir. Jaroslav Siakeľ, 1921) which was later restored and provided with a soundtrack.

By the end of 1976, the Film Club of the Central Office of Slovak Film was opened in Bratislava. The SFI resumed operation of the facility, naming it Kino Lumière in 2011.

In January 1991, the National Cinematographic Centre was established as an independent public contributory organisation managed by the Ministry of Culture. By delimitation, the SFI acquired producer rights to the archived Slovak films made before 1991. It exercises these rights in accordance with the Act on Audiovisual Cinema, which defines the activity and position of the SFI.

In 2006, the Government adopted the draft Act on the Slovak Film Institute. The SFI acquired the name “Slovak Film Institute” in 2007. The Act became effective on 1st April 2010, the SFI became the sole state-funded memory and archive institution operating in the area of audiovisual in Slovakia. The SFI is a member of the International Federation of Film Archives, the International Confederation of Art Cinemas and the Council of Europe cinema support fund – Eurimages. Creative Europe Desk Slovakia is also part of the Slovak Film Institute.

At the turn of the year, the editorial team of the Slovak monthly Film.sk usually brought an overview of the best and most interesting film events in Slovakia in the previous year and combined it with a rundown of upcoming films in the following year. The English edition of the magazine then served as a source of information that promoted Slovak cinema at festivals abroad, where our cinema is represented by the National Cinematographic Centre of the Slovak Film Institute. The Centre, in turn, used to prepare newsletter What’s Slovak in Berlin / Cannes / Karlovy Vary, that served to inform the audience and accredited professionals about the representation of Slovak filmmakers and screenings at each particular festival.

This year, for the first time, we have decided to join forces of the editorial team with the National Cinematographic Centre, and we gladly present you Film.sk Berlinale Edition 2021.

This special edition provides also the information previously contained mainly in the mentioned newsletters, together with the evaluation of last year’s Slovak production, statistics of the success rate regarding distribution, as well as an overview of the most anticipated films this year. The filmmakers and their works are presented in several interviews, and it also draws attention to classic films from the archive which have been restored and released on DVD and Blu-ray by Slovak Film Institute.

The edition offers a lot more. Despite the pandemic situation, we had more than enough material to put together. That is why, in the summer, we may be looking forward to Film.sk Cannes / Karlovy Vary Edition 2021. For that: let’s stay negative but optimistic!

— Veronika Kryčlová / executive editor —

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THE HISTORY AND PRESENT OF THE SLOVAK FILM INSTITUTE

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Erik Binder
Film critic and publicist. Graduated as an archivist, currently a PhD student at the Department of Audio-visual Studies of the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of the Performing Arts in Bratislava (FTF VŠMU), from which he graduated in 2018. He lectures on World cinema and publishes on several portals and in magazines. Editor of the anthology Pavel Branko – Vznamení filmu a jazyka (In the Sign of Film and Language) about film critic Pavel Branko.

Eva Šošková
She works at the Department of Audio-visual Studies (FTF VŠMU), focusing on animated film. She participated in the preparation of the retrospective of Czechoslovak animated films for the Film Museum in Vienna. Every year, she reviews the past year’s Slovak animated films on various platforms.

Mariana Jarnková
Publicist and presenter. She collaborated with several editorial teams and worked for Film.sk for several years. Over a long period, she also cooperates with Radio Devín, the programme service of Radio and Television Slovakia that focuses on art and culture.

Jaroslava Zlíchová
Editor of Film.sk. Studied mass media communication at the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava and audio-visual studies (FTF VŠMU). In cooperation with the Cultural Centre of Gemer-Malohont in Rimavská Sobota, she does audiovisual creative workshops for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Lecturer of the Film Cabinet for Children, an educational project of the Association of Slovak Film Clubs.

Mária Ferenčuhová
Editor of Film.sk. Former lecturer at the FTF VŠMU, where she also worked as a vice-rector (2004 – 2007). Author of the scientific monograph Odložený čas (Time Delayed), co-author and editor of two more books on film. She translates prose, poetry and non-literary texts from French. Author of five poetry collections.

Matúš Kvasnička
Film critic and publicist. Graduated from the Department of Audio-visual Studies (FTF VŠMU), majoring in film science. In 2019, he joined and later managed (2012 – 2019) culture desk of nationwide daily newspaper Pravda.

Barbora Námerová
Screenwriter and story editor. Her first feature film screenplay Filthy (Spina) premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Tereza Nvotová is currently completing the second film they wrote together, The Nightsiren (Svetlonoc).

Miroslav Ulman
Film publicist, researcher at the Slovak Film Institute, co-founder of the monthly Film Fan (1990 – 1995) and founder of the first Slovak website about cinema Filmite (1997). Co-organizer of several festivals, co-author of the book Správovací klubových filmov (A Guide Through Club Film), dramaturge of the Music & Film cycle at the Cinema Lumíre. Winner of the Slovak Film Critics Award.
Climate Catastrophe and Tragedy of One Moment

Shadow County (Krajina ve stínu, CZ/SK, 2020, dir. Bohdan Sláma) is one of the most ambitious Slovak minority films of the last year. The black and white chronic traces the rise of Nazism and Communism, and it received 15 nominations for the Czech Lion Awards. In addition, the film will be screened at the European Film Market Berlinale on March 3 at 16:30 at Virtual Cinema 28. Slovak projects which are still at the preparation stage aim high as well. At the beginning of the year, the filmmakers presented them at industry forums of prestigious festivals.

“Mankind is unlikely to stop climate change, but it will have to adapt to the new, more difficult conditions,” director and producer Tomáš Krupa shares the main idea of his project We Have to Survive (Musíme prežiť), which follows the process of adaptation where the climate catastrophe is already a prominent reality — Greenland, the USA, Australia, China or Japan. Krupa’s previous film The Good Death (Dobrá smrt, 2018), in which terminally ill Janette fights for the right to die with dignity, won at the National Film Awards Sinus v setí in the Best Documentary category and received great acclaim at festivals around the world. The festival tour of the project We Have to Survive is also beginning promisingly. At the pitching forum within the industry programme of FIPADOC in Biarritz (January 18 – 22), We Must Survive won the WEMW-FIPADOC Window Award. This opened the door for the film at the co-production forum When East Meets West (WEMW, January 25 – 28), part of the Trieste Film Festival.

However, Krupa’s film was not the only Slovak representative at the WEMW. In the assembly of twenty-one upcoming projects from fourteen countries, Tereza Nvotová’s fiction film The Father (Otec) was presented as well. She is currently finishing another fiction film the Nightstiren (Svetlonec, read more on page 50). In her fiction debut Filthy (Spina, 2017), which premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, she addressed the topic of rape. The Father is based on a real-life tragedy of a man who forgot his two-year-old daughter in a hot car. According to Nvotová, the story requires a radical form, therefore, she wants to make a subjective film consisting of only a few long shots, so that the viewer can empathise with the main character. When asked what kind of film regarding this topic she would be willing to watch herself, Nvotová answered in an explanation for the Audiovisual Fund: “A film that shakes up my inner convictions, forces me to ask myself fundamental questions and teaches me to be more human.”

In the new consulting programme First Cut! in Trieste, intended for films at the stage of post-production, Censor (working title Cenzorka, read more on page 55) by Peter Kerekes, one of the most prominent Slovak filmmakers from the Slovak Generation 90, was presented. Award-winning director of Cooking History (Ako sa varia dejiny, 2009) and co-director of documentary comedy Velvet Terrorists (Zamatovali teroristi, 2013, Tagesspiegel Readers’ Jury Award – Berlinale 2014) also received the Sub-Ti Award in Trieste. At the festival, the Slovak minority film Il Bormo by Czech director Petr Václav about the declining career of opera composer Josef Myšliveček was also presented.

Musician who learns that happiness is a state of mind hidden in small things is one of the characters from the upcoming film Applause (Potlesk) by Jarosl Lehotský. He participated with the film in the Industry Village (January 20 – 22) at the Les Arcs Film Festival. Lehotský also belongs to the Award mentioned Generation 90. After the successful documentary Blind Loves (Slepé lásky, 2008, CICAE Award – Cannes 2008), he also started making fiction films: after Minuce (Zákrak, 2013) and Nino (2017), Applause is the third. Matíš, a handsome man in his thirties and a talented cellist, gives up a promising career when his adoptive mother falls ill. After her death, he lives with his stepbrother, who has a congenital growth defect, and seeks a way to realise his ambitions. Matíš is played by Polish actor Bartosz Bielenia. He became famous for his role as a fake priest in the film Corpus Christi (2019) by Jan Komasa, which was nominated for an Oscar. Other characters are portrayed by Vojtech Zdražil, Judit Bárdos and German actor Sahin Tambrea. In Les Arcs, audiences were introduced to the Slovak minority film The Bird Atlas (Atlas vtákov) by Olmo Omneru. It discusses strained family relationships and the world of modern communication technologies that can exploit our vulnerabilities.

At the festival in Clermont-Ferrand (January 29 – February 6), one of the most important of its kind, Slovak short films were presented at the online Short Film Market (February 1 – 5). The works were introduced under the heading of Central European Cinema, with the Slovak Film Institute joining the Czech Film Center and the Slovenian Film Centre. The animated project Tourists (Turisti, dir. Mária Kralovič) about finding mutual understanding after years of marriage was nominated by the Slovak Film Institute for the co-production forum Euro Connection. The project made it to the final line-up. At the festival, new films such as Eco Terra (dir. Matúš Vizek), Lies, Tramps and Thieves (Klamári, tuláci a zložedí, dir. David Benedek), Mercy (Milost, dir. Ivana Laučíková), Pattern 97 (Vzor 97, dir. Paola Reislova), Rheum (Opalinky, dir. Kateřina Hroniková) and Homeless of Silence (Ticho na poli, dir. Štefánia Levačová) were also presented.

In March, Slovak films are keeping up the pace. Peter Budinský’s project Heart of a Tower (Srdce vele), produced by the company BFLIM, was selected for the presentation forum on animated feature films Cartoon Movie in Bordeaux, France (March 9 – 11). The adventure film for children takes place in “Yourland, a magical world with a soul, a fact like the men, the building cranes walk like robots and a metal machine wants to rule the world. Riki has to enter this world to find the truth and save Yourland — his own world.” The second Slovak project presented at the festival was Home- - at ScripTeast. Of course, it contains characters such as the Italian mafia member Antonino, so I think I have a better chance with western co-producers. How can a programme like ScripTeast help a scriptwriter? What are your expectations? I signed up for ScripTeast thanks to Zuzana Liová, who rewrote her film The House (Dome) there. For a scriptwriter, the workshop represents an impartial dramaturge and an opportunity to get feedback from producers from around the world. I do not expect that co-producers in Berlin or Cannes will eagerly jump at the script, but rather I am interested in whether the story has potential and how I can increase it as much as possible.

What have you been working on lately? Which of your ongoing projects do you consider the most appealing to non-domestic audiences? I have three film projects in progress. I had to suspend one, about the partisan Zingor, because I still cannot find a model in which such a high-cost and extensive story could be produced. As a result, we tried to lower the budget by shortening the script to a cheeky drama about a beautiful girl who becomes a money mule for a mafia boss and a comedy from a homeless shelter. I am writing that script, inspired by the story of an assistant of our Števko minister, at ScripTeast. Of course, it contains characters such as the Italian mafia member Antonino, so I think I have a better chance with western co-producers.
Berlinale Talents is a talent development programme that explores the how and why of movie making. Since 2003, it has grown to become a festival within the larger festival and a one-of-a-kind forum for film professionals and cinema lovers alike, featuring talks, workshops, networking events and screenings. While the Berlinale showcases films in all their facets, the talents programme delves into how they are made and how to see the world through a different lens. Even in the middle of the pandemic, the Berlinale Talents creates a space for encounters, networks and exchanges. As the first part of this twofold Berlinale 2021, 200 chosen Talents as well as a host of guests and the public are invited into a virtual forum which will showcase the possibilities of film.

Barbara Berezháková studied at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, the New York Film Academy and at the Bellas Artes in Valencia. Her films incorporate an experiment with the film form. She created the documentary and transmedia project Ask Your Parents (Sprať sa valích, 2019). The key political events of the 20th century determining the further orientation of Czechoslovakia are presented through the memories of ordinary people and their family history. Her feature debut Never Happened (Skutká sa stal, 2019) premiered at the prestigious Warsaw International Film Festival. It reconstructs several fundamental political crimes and cases of post-revolutionary Slovakia in the 1990s while taking an interest in the experience of the individual against a background of political events.

Matúš Krajňák is a director and creative producer. He graduated from the German TV and Film Academy Berlin. His Sex Commercial (2014) was shortlisted for Young Director Award in Cannes, his short drama Monologues (2014) premiered at the Warsaw Film Festival. The feature script Gun Fun was second-rounded for the Sundance Screenwriters Lab and placed among the top 15% of entrants to the Academy Nicholl competition. Currently, Krajňák is producing a romantic web-series about queer dating in London and developing a feature script with a similar subject.

Do you have specific expectations from participating in the Berlinale Talents programme? I am really looking forward to the Berlinale Talents, I am curious about the programme, I think the whole Berlinale festival is of a very high standard.

What have you been working on lately? I am currently working on my debut feature film called The Dead Horse. It is an absurd drama with elements of comedy, discussing a conservative backlash. I would like to consult the project, look for potential co-producers and film partners because the story is very topical and interesting for European and international audiences.

Matúš Krajňák

Zora Jaurová is a film producer, cultural and creative industries policy expert, and politician (vice-chairman of the party Progressive Slovakia). She has been involved in EU affairs and cultural policies for several years. The co-author and director of Kolise – European Capital of Culture 2019, she is also the President of the Slovak Creative Industry Forum and member of Ateliers du Cinéma Européen. Jaurová works as a film producer and producing partner in Slovak film production company Mphilms.

Do you have specific expectations from participating in the Berlinale Talents programme? After attending the virtual reality version of the Sundance Film Festival in February this year and meeting many inspiring artists online, I am really excited to connect with filmmakers from all around the world in a similar VR experience at the Berlin Film Festival in March. This is a great opportunity for everyone working on their first feature film or TV project, and I am proud to become a part of the Berlinale Talents family.

What have you been working on lately? At the moment, I am working on several projects that are connected through one single topic – queerness. I wrote and produced a romantic comedy web series SEXFLUENCING (more info www.matus-krajnak.com/episodic) which is currently in post-production. I hope that at the Berlinale Film Festival I can meet new creative partners in order to develop this episodic project as a TV series. I also collaborate on two feature film scripts that I would like to direct, aiming to normalise queerness in the eyes of a wider audience. Both feature projects are relationship comedy-dramas.

What are your expectations from participating in the Berlinale Talents programme? What “competitive advantage” can a producer gain by participating in such a programme? Since the relevant European film industry is based on co-productions and collaboration beyond the national borders nowadays, I find this kind of training programmes extremely helpful, and not only for “emerging” producers. Apart from know-how and inspiration, it is mainly the people from different countries and producing backgrounds you meet, become friends with and add them to your professional network, which is the highest added value of producers training programmes. I produce both – features and documentaries, and it is interesting to see how the documentary gang is different from people working in features – it is more relaxed and somehow less crushed down by the heaviness of the film industry...

Finished projects (as producer)
- Slovakia 2.0 (Slovensko 2.0) – directed by Viera Čakánová, Iveta Grófová, Juraj Hez, Miro Jelok, Peter Kerekes, Peter Krštičák, Zuzana Lišová, Ondrej Rudavský, Milo Suchý and Martin Sulík, Slovakia, 2016. Twenty years of independent Slovakia in ten 10-min. films of different genres.
- Ex-Prime Ministers (Expremiéri) – directed by seven directors, 7×29 min, Slovakia, 2018. Documentary TV series.
- Paradise on Earth (Raj na zemi) – directed by Jaro Vojtek, Slovakia, 2019. Documentary.

Projects in progress
- Marathon of Juan Zabala (Maratón Juana Zabala) – directed by Peter Kerekes, in development. Feature.
- Twenty years of independent Slovakia in ten 10-min. films of different genres.
- Ex-Prime Ministers (Expremiéri) – directed by seven directors, 7×29 min, Slovakia, 2018. Documentary TV series.
- Paradise on Earth (Raj na zemi) – directed by Jaro Vojtek, Slovakia, 2019. Documentary.

Which of your ongoing projects is currently the biggest challenge for you, and do you consider it the most appealing to non-Slovak audiences as well? We are finishing the shooting of political thriller Power (Moc, dir. Mátýáš Prikler), and the pandemic is our worst enemy. Even if we were able to shoot most of it just before the virus hit Europe, now we are struggling with the last few days of shooting. This project was from the very beginning conceived as a truly international co-production, not only financially but also in terms of cast and crew – that is why the existing restrictions make it really complicated. However, this lightly dystopian drama asking questions about the limits and ethical borders of political power and seeming powerlessness of individuals in global society is supposed to be a film for a wide European audience.

Slovakian Film Institute in Berlin

Emerging Producers is an industry flagship project of the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival and the only one of its kind designed for documentary film producers in Europe. The Emerging Producers are being presented at major film events throughout the year. A fundamental part of the Emerging Producers programme consists of various informal meetings. The aim is to help the producers meet the key persons in the field of audiovisual industry present at the Ji.hlava Industry Programme and at the Berlin part of the training.
Distribution of Premiered Slovak and Co-production Films in Slovakia in 2020 / Minority Co-Productions

1. **Čarlín**
   - Director: Vladimír Motko
   - Year of Production: 2020
   - Country of Origin: Slovenia
   - Premiere Date: 07-04-2020
   - Average Attendance: 25,431
   - Distributor: FilmArt
   - Note: Co-production with Slovenia

2. **Náučná cesta**
   - Director: Jan Švětina
   - Year of Production: 2020
   - Country of Origin: Russia
   - Premiere Date: 02-03-2020
   - Average Attendance: 23,941
   - Distributor: FilmArt
   - Note: Co-production with Russia

3. **Kráľ televízie**
   - Director: Martin Šulík
   - Year of Production: 2020
   - Country of Origin: Hungary
   - Premiere Date: 08-09-2020
   - Average Attendance: 23,641
   - Distributor: FilmArt
   - Note: Co-production with Hungary

4. **Slovenský tenis**
   - Director: Juraj Vojtech
   - Year of Production: 2020
   - Country of Origin: Austria
   - Premiere Date: 01-10-2020
   - Average Attendance: 22,941
   - Distributor: FilmArt
   - Note: Co-production with Austria

5. **Istoric**
   - Director: Martin Kulhánek
   - Year of Production: 2020
   - Country of Origin: Czech Republic
   - Premiere Date: 08-09-2020
   - Average Attendance: 22,841
   - Distributor: FilmArt
   - Note: Co-production with Czech Republic

**TOTAL Minority Co-Productions: 4,520,156, 4,064,722
Minority Co-Productions: 10,076,916, 9,559,192
**

### Year 2020

**Scumbag Versus Pandemic**

The year 2020 started very promisingly. As of 8 March, four weeks after its premiere, the thriller *Scumbag* (Príliš osobné znamení / Far Too Personal), directed by Juraj Vojtech (SK), 2020, dir. Lucia Vojtechová – 57,021 viewers), a minority *film* focusing on his opening, the seating capacity had to be radically reduced, which is why the premises of almost twenty domestic *films* were postponed to 2021.

Let's take a look at the distribution of Slovak *films* from the statistical point of view. The total attendance in Slovak cinemas fell by 63.78% year-on-year, to 2,364,814 spectators. This is the lowest number since Slovakia gained independence. In particular, the attendance of domestic *films* dropped by 27.86%.

Apart from such declines, the pandemic caused one sharp increase. As a result of the premieres of American blockbusters being postponed to 2021, the share of domestic *films* attendance increased throughout Europe. Slovakia was no exception. Considering the total attendance, the share of domestic *films* (including non-premiere titles and minority co-productions) was 2% in 2018, it increased to 16.47% in the following year and roughly doubled to 32.79% in 2020.

Two works enjoyed almost 76% of the total number of 77,487 views of domestic *films*. Previously mentioned *Scumbag* (39,600 viewers) and *Far Too Personal* (Príliš osobné znamení, 2020, dir. Marta Ferencová – 176,080 viewers), a minority *film* focusing on his opening, the seating capacity had to be radically reduced, which is why the premises of almost twenty domestic *films* were postponed to 2021.

### Distribution of Premiered Slovak and Co-production Films in Slovakia in 2020 / Minority Co-Productions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLOVAK TITLE</th>
<th>ENGLISH TITLE</th>
<th>DIRECTOR</th>
<th>YEAR OF PRODUCTION</th>
<th>COUNTRY OF ORIGIN</th>
<th>PREMIERE DATE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SCREENINGS</th>
<th>VISITORS</th>
<th>DISTRIBUTOR</th>
<th>FILING OFFICE</th>
<th>DISTRIBUTOR FILING AGENCY</th>
<th>AMC*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Tempos</td>
<td>Nazarí Křížov, Roman Kleemen, Maxim Křížov</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>27-02-2020</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>23,491</td>
<td>150,015</td>
<td>Continental Film</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>28.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Letní rebuli / Summer Rebels</td>
<td>Martina Saková</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>18-08-2020</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>4,416</td>
<td>20,704</td>
<td>FilmArt SK</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Salto je krá / Salto Is the King</td>
<td>Pavol Barátko</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>09-08-2020</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>3,694</td>
<td>15,620</td>
<td>ASFK</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>15.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Slúdztebci / Servants</td>
<td>Ivan Ostrechovský</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>SK/RO/CZ/IE</td>
<td>12-10-2020</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>5,087</td>
<td>FilmTopia</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>10.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Raj na svete / Paradise on Earth</td>
<td>Juraj Vojtech</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>01-10-2020</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>2,494</td>
<td>ASFK</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>9.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Milan Sládek</td>
<td>Martin Slúšik</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>SK</td>
<td>08-10-2020</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>FilmTopia</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Krásni vlci / Video Kings</td>
<td>Lukáš Balavo</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>SK/CZ</td>
<td>17-12-2020</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>Continental Film</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL 100% Slovak Films and Majority Co-Productions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8,066</td>
<td>446,150</td>
<td>2,908,232</td>
<td>55.31</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Note: Films are sorted by the number of viewers.*
Slovak cinema has diversified and grown over the last ten years. However, the pandemic situation not only hampered the production of many films but also affected film distribution and cinema releases. After all, the subject of this review are only three Slovak feature fiction films, which had their distribution premiere in 2020: the number corresponds to the period of the greatest crisis of domestic cinema in the 1990s. As then, the films are vastly different, so it is difficult to speak about trends and tendencies. The film itself is based on several media affairs which interconnect with each other, but they are also transformed into even more demonic dimensions. Politician Bobo begins to be black-mailed and protected by businessman Wagner after one wild night in 1999. Drinking only coke, Bobo happens to win the parliamentary elections in 2012, carrying out a promise to Wagner: to form a party and take control of all state structures. Bobo finds himself a young mistress, strongly reminiscent of Jan Richter (Red. note: former Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family; in the controversial case of the abuse of clients in Čistý deň, a resocialisation centre for drug-addicted youth, Richter has long defended Čistý deň and its administration). The film does not only imply the minister’s abuse of the client of the resocialisation centre but even her brutal murder. Actions for which there is still no clear evidence are often hyperbolised in Scumbag, and the accusations of real people are suggested. The murder of a journalist, who took interest in Wagner’s frauds, and his fiancée is accentuated as especially frightening since the young woman’s pregnancy is suggested beforehand.

Rousing Scumbag

As in the case of the director’s previous film Kidnapping (Únos), released in cinemas shortly before the parliamentary vote on the abolition of the so-called Mečiar’s amnesties, even this time the distribution premiere supported the already existing public opinion, probably benefited from it as well. The film itself is based on several media affairs which interconnect with each other, but they are also transformed into even more demonic dimensions. Politician Bobo begins to be black-mailed and protected by businessman Wagner after one wild night in 1999. Drinking only coke, Bobo happens to win the parliamentary elections in 2012, carrying out a promise to Wagner: to form a party and take control of all state structures. Bobo finds himself a young mistress, strongly resembling Mária Trošková (Red. note: a former photo model and assistant to the previous Slovak prime minister; her past mafia contacts came to the surface after the murder of journalist Ján Kuciak), and he rents a luxury apartment with her. His minister, in turn, is strikingly reminiscent of Ján Richter (Red. note: former Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family; in the controversial case of the abuse of clients in Čistý deň, a resocialisation centre for drug-addicted youth, Richter has long defended Čistý deň and its administration). The film does not only imply the minister’s abuse of the client of the resocialisation centre but even her brutal murder. Actions for which there is still no clear evidence are often hyperbolised in Scumbag, and the accusations of real people are suggested. The murder of a journalist, who took interest in Wagner’s frauds, and his fiancée is accentuated as especially frightening since the young woman’s pregnancy is suggested beforehand. Although the film presents fictional stories and characters, they are too conspicuously inspired by the real ones: as evidenced by similar names, physiognomies or details that have become part of the domestic media space. Unlike Kidnapping, which was based on Christian symbolism and respect for the faith, in this film, ČengelSolčanská happens to integrate the influential businessmen’s efforts to take control of the church. All cases are interconnected, which at the same time excessively complicates the storyline and leaves the impression that the forces of good and evil
are, in fact, personified only by a handful of people – to the citizens’ utter astonishment, the only thing left is to stand by and watch how their personal assumptions about the powerful being rotten to the core are confirmed. The final song, Slovensko moje, striína moja (My Slovakia, my fatherland) comes across ironic but reassuring at the same time – the film is intended for viewers who have already formed an opinion on the coalition (at the time of its release still in power).

Evil, Beautiful Images and Intergenerational Affinity — Ivan Orochovský played it relatively safe with his second feature fiction film Servants (Slušobníci), albeit in a different sense. It depicts the functioning of State Security during the normalisation period. The form, adapted to the current trends of festival films, is also relatively successful foreign works.

For example, In 2020, the renewed premiere of Štefan Semjan’s No Cheap Exotics, Neither Real Adventure (Piata loď) has brought, such as the room for silence and temperamental portrayal of main characters, two young men — Servants’ theme revolves around the collaboration between artists and criminals. At the same time, however, it manages to portray the protagonists mainly as artists of life. From the perspective of majority cinema, the year 2020 is relatively inhibited. The Auschwitz Report (Správa) by Peter Bejčák, Cook, F**k, Kill (Záběh bez jazyka) by Míra Fornay, The Man with Here Ears (Muž so zajačími ušami) by Martin Sulík, Perinbaba: Two Realms (Perinbaba a dva svet) by Juraj Jakubisko and also Zuzana Mariánková’s debut Perfect Strangers (Známi neznámi), all scheduled for 2020, are still waiting for distribution premiers. We must hope that some of the positive values that the past year has brought, such as the room for silence and temporary slowdown, will be reflected in the future in new, perhaps different topics and ideas.
Portraits and Retro-spections

While the year 2018 was marked by several important anniversaries, to which, of course, the attention of documentary filmmakers was also drawn, the common denominator was more challenging to find the following year. Eventually, in various forms, it manifested itself in the subject of death. The year 2020 brought a total of 11 Slovak or co-produced documentaries, released in cinemas. However, it facilitated the coronavirus-induced crisis, which impacted production, distribution and is probably to affect the situation in 2021 as well. Nevertheless, the year 2020 offered a diverse mix of documentary production, as further seen by mentions of Bruce Lee or Arnold Schwarzenegger, referenced in the article. By no means a joke, it is, in fact, an allusion to Video Kings (Králi video), probably the most original Slovak-Czech documentary of the past year when considering the theme.

Portraits of "the Czechoslovak Golden Boys"

- Portraits of well-known Slovak, Czech or rather Czechoslovak (translator's note: the term indicates cultural affinity, not citizenship of the former republic) personalities, played the first fiddle in the last year's production, and the figure of speech truly applies to the protagonists. Let's start with art – music, acting, directing and fine art. The Czech and Slovak (not only art) worlds are still significantly interconnected, and Miroslav Zhbk, Milan Bldek, Patrik Vrbovský or Jan Svačmaje are so well known on both sides of our short border that labelling them on the ground of nationality loses its meaning. Furthermore, no one frets whether the films were shot by a Slovak or a Czech. All four personalities are, so to speak, "our golden boys," although certainly not to the same degree for everyone.

- Let's start with the musicians. Simon Šťaňaček Meky is a relatively comprehensive portrait of Miroslav Zhbka, the Czechoslovak John Lennon, whose career path remains breathtaking to this day. The current young generation will gape at his incredible music sales in the 1980s and the circumstances in the society of that time as well, the older ones will marvel at the “declassified” information about Meky’s creative and financial disagreements with his multi-talented colleague Laco Lučinč. However, the director keeps the confrontations at bay, the work does not bear anything controversial eventually, after
Salto Is the King - offers a portrait Milan Sládek Martin Šulík’s documentary film Temposkový sen, 2015) was a smash hit. From the conventions throughout his work, so the unique shot documentary work of the past year. In contrast, Milan Sládek seems to be the most conventionally of this genre. On the other hand, it is one of the reasons known friends or other famous personalities. In this in exile. Rare archival footage alternates with “talking the totalitarian period, a large part of which Sládek spent ginnings to the present, which also paints a picture of a cross-section of the acting genius’ work, from his be- trait of the world-famous Slovak mime. Viewers witness a cross-section of the acting genius’ work, from his be- ginnings to the present, which also paints a picture of the totalitarian period, a large part of which Sládek spent in exile. Rare archival footage alternates with “talking heads,” whether it is the protagonist or his publicly known friends or other famous personalities. In this case, however, the “talking heads” do not constitute a worn-out cliché but rather an inseparable convention of this genre. On the other hand, it is one of the reasons why Milan Sládek seems to be the most conventionally shot documentary work of the past year. In contrast, the experimental surrealist Jan Švankmajer deviated from the conventions throughout his work, so the unique smooth in dramaturgical sense, in this case it is not a hindrance, moreover, several Slovak documentarians struggle with similar problems when sketching. Portraits of “the Stone Age and the Wild East” in the Time of the Coronavirus — The creators of the documentary Vídeo Kings did not embark to prehistory but only to the 1980s and 1990s. The crazy era of voiceover, recording American, Asian or Italian commercial films with actors such as Bruce Lee or Arnold Schwarzenegger on videotapes and subsequently dubbing them, even over the phone, sounds now like an alternative past from the universe in which you would not wish to live, probably. For those who have experienced it, however, this fan work pro- vokes nostalgia that is rarely exposed and felt. When retold, few people who were born after the fall of the previous regime will believe the film’s content, so it is truly a great pity that the premiere date was moved several times and finally took place just before the December lockdown and another cinemas closure in Slovakia. Maybe even the future generation will not believe our present times, unless the film about it is to be directed by Lukáš Bulava, for example. — Seemingly, neither Paruď on Earth (Raj na zemi), a portrait of journalist and photographer Andrej Bán, directed by Jaroslav Vojtek, is set in the “Stone Age.” Unhappy images from areas such as Iraq, Georgia and the territory of the former Yugoslavia are marked by recent and current war conflicts, so even the Stone Age is a flattering remark in relation to the initiators of these colossal crimes. Paruď on Earth tries to be both: a portrait of a personality and an account of the gloomy times. The facts about horrible events, however, outweigh the information about Andrej Bán’s personality in the end, and the document implicitly raises the question of whether our mentality is still that of a caveman. — Whatever the answer to this question, potential discussions about human nature can also be sparked off by the confrontation of the viewer and film’s protagonis with online sexual predators in the staged documentary Caught in the Net (V sieti). In the Czech Republic, the film became the most visited documentary in modern history, seen by record-breaking 179,139 view- ers during the first week of screening alone. Before the cinemas closed during the first wave of the pandemic, more than 300,000 viewers came to see the film. In Slo- vakia, during the first few days of the screening, not even a whole week before the cinemas closed, there were more than 6,500 spectators. — Dominik Jurčák’s The Golden Land (Zlata zem) comes across as a documentary remake of some older American western dealing with the colonisation of a new land and even humorously plays around with elements of this genre. Today, after the legendary Wild West long gone, Slovakia also constitutes a new, ‘golden’ country enough and you would fancy finding yourself in absolute isolation, separated from the civilisation’s dead weight, then for a little over an hour you can opt for Antarctica, ergo, the experimental documentary FREM by Viera Čákanyová. — It cannot be predicted with absolute certainty what the year 2021 will bring (if we do not count the postponed premiers), although the past turbulent year with a quasi-only global theme, affecting all areas of our lives, could be giving us a hint...
No Need for Home-bodies to Remain Idle

It seems that the pandemic has not yet had a major impact on Slovak animated film, in contrast to other cultural sectors. Its production and distribution naturally tie to home spaces – small, closed studios or desktop computers at home for making the films; watching movies online when distributing them: both are ever-present in the case of animation. Perhaps perceived as a drawback in normal conditions, it has become an advantage during a pandemic, thus the work continues.

In the second half of last year, the Association of Slovak Film Clubs (ASFK) distributed films, which have been discussed in previous reviews: SH_T HAPPENS (2019), screened as a supporting film for the Polish Corpus Christi (dir. Jan Komasa, 2019), and Poetika Anima (dir. Kriss Sagan, 2018) screened prior to the main film Babyteeth (dir. Shannon Murphy, 2019). Both works were successful at various festivals. Filip Pošivač and Barbora Valecká’s Overboard! (Cez palubu!, 2019), a pilot for the upcoming series, completed its festival journey as well. Screened prior to Czech animated film Hungry Bear Tales by Alexandra Májová and Kateřina Karhánková (Mlsné medvědí příběhy, 2020), it was also distributed to cinemas by the ASFK.

As Seen at Anča

Last year, SH_T HAPPENS by Michaela Mihályi and David Štumpf won the Slovak Award at the Fest Anca International Animation Festival: a clear favourite by virtue of its humour, original storytelling, breaking the taboos and complex systems of meanings. In the competitive section, the festival, held in the city of Žilina, showcased even more films that received their premieres on the big screen. Though less striking compared to SH_T HAPPENS, they offered looser interpretative frameworks.

Screened at Fest Anca, Fruit of the Days (2020) by Peter Martinka, alias Szilard Kardiak, and his colleague Sebastian Kardiak is not only produced independently but also, as expected, independent of the easy-on-the-eye aesthetics, elaborate animation or audience-friendly narration. As ever, the Kardiak duo went “punk” and created an absurdly funny film, full of vaguely motivated intertextual references.

SH_T HAPPENS

→ text: Eva Šošková / lecturer at the Department of Audiovisual Studies of the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava

photo: FTV VŠMU, RTVS, BFILM, FAMU/Adela Krejčovská

2020 in animated film

→ eight.dnom
Forget Me Not
/two.dnom/zero.dnom —  /two.dnom/one.dnom
School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

Forget Me Not
Nut Boy’s Chest-
Boy
anime and Asian culture. Her previous works and the
were represented by already their favourites:
(dir. Marta Prokopová and Michal Blaško,
Wild Beasts
year’s distribution:
(dir. Joanna Kożuch, 2019),
Music Box
Spiders
of audiovisual rhythm than Lívia Suchá, who was com-
board animation – a music video for the song Spiders (2019)
by a lo-fi indie band Unstrung Harp.

Agáta Bolašovská, from the Academy of Per-
forming Arts in Bratislava, competed with her older
film Crossing (2018). Regarding animation, composition
of mise-en-scène and themes, she is greatly inspired by
anime and Asian culture. Her previous works and the
second film, in the non-competitive section, Chestnut
Boy (Gaštanko, 2019) explore the themes of death and
the afterlife by using horror-style devices, while Chest-
nut Boy’s fine cartoon animation appears quite chilling
when set in juxtaposition with the story.

The competition also showcased films from last
year’s distribution: Music Box (dir. Joanna Kožuch, 2020),
Wild Beasts (dir. Marta Prokopová and Michal Blaško,
2018) and Trust Me (dir. Zlata Golecová, 2019), screened at
last year’s Student Film Festival Čakto. Children’s films
were represented by already their favourites: Rocket (Ra-
leta, 2018), an episode from The Tots series (Drobci), and
The Flood (Povodeň, 2019), an episode from the Ka-Boom!
series (Tresky plesky). The latter, by Veronika Kocourkov-
á, received the Anča Slovak Award: Special Mention
in Žilina during the pandemic time, the Student Film
Festival Čakto took place online. This year, an animated
film about nuclear tests in America Dighton (2020) by
Michaela Hybelová, a student at the Visual Effects
Department of the Film and Television Faculty of the
Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, entered the
competition. Unlike the Animation Department, the
Visual Effects Department mainly produces realistically
oriented mise-en-scène films created with 3D anima-
tion technique.

International festival Biennial of Animation
Bratislava (BAB) has divided its programme, and films
were screened online or broadcasted via public tele-
vision service RTVS (Radio and Television Slovakia).
The new management of the festival as well as the new
form of distribution significantly increased the num-
ber of spectators. Thanks to dubbing, the films became
even more accessible to children’s audiences. The main
prize was awarded to already acclaimed film The Kite
(Sátkan, 2018) by Slovak director Martin Smatana.

In addition to BAB, new episodes of an ani-
mated family-friendly series about good manners
Domased
within the
(Homebody) project. Staying-at-
home director Martin Šulík also pursued animation –
last year, however, Veronika Kocourková took over with
a Ka-Boom! Christmas special. At first glance, her film
Cate Strophe Saving Christmas (Kata Strofová a tajomstvo
svetla, dir. Ivana Šebestová and Katarína Kere-
kesová, 2018) were broadcasted on RTVS on Christmas.
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Last year, however, Veronika Kocourková took over with
an animated series from Slovak animators to children, the emphasis
was put on the educational aspect. Looking back, new
animated bedtime stories or a Mimi & Lisa (Mimi a Líza)
Christmas special Christmas Lights Mystery (Zahada via-
nočného svetla, dir. Ivana Šebestová and Katarína Kere-
kesová, 2018) were broadcasted on RTVS on Christmas.

The portrayed events are, however, spread across the expanded running time of
20 minutes. Although the film loses the typical dynam-
ics of a visual and information whirlwind, its action and
clip aesthetics, it becomes more accessible and under-
standable. In a typical Christmas film, what prevails is
the Christmas atmosphere, sentimentialy and pathos.

Here, education remains the main objective, manifest-
ing the civil aspect at Christmas time.

New Situation, New Ideas

From a new situation, new ideas are usually
born, and the coronavirus crisis brought several of them.
In its online archive, RTVS made available Slovak bed-
time stories from the last ten years (animators were surely
delighted by huge traffic). Czech and Slovak artists drew
pictures and animated short videos about isolation
within the Domased (Homebody) project. Staying-at-
home director Martin Sulík also pursued animation –
intended only for friends, however. Last but not least,
director and producer Ivana Laučíková became an online
curator of publicly available animated films for children.
In particular, the latter inconspicuous idea ranks among
the most important events of the year in the animated
film industry. With around 1,600 followers so far, Facebook
page Čo pozerať s deťmi (What to Watch with Children) sys-
tematically educates not only children but also parents.
In a very accessible manner and with regard to rais-
ing awareness, Ivana Laučíková selects mainly short
films available online, thus cultivating the audiences’
taste. Thematic, technological and national criteria,
as displayed on her blog, are considered. The viewers’
film horizons broaden (their focus is usually narrowed
down to the 3D series aesthetics and the narration of
family 3D films), but they are also provided with some
options of how to interpret the works. After a large-scale
and more professionally conceived project Home Felix,
a journal and online platform founded and headed by
Laučíková, she came up with yet another substantial
medium to educate (not only her) audiences.

Compared to 2019, fewer projects premiered in
2020, although such circumstances are not unusual in
the animated film industry. The production of this type
of work takes a long time, thus the number of completed
projects is higher in some years than in others. At first
 glance, the year 2020 did not have a negative eff ect on
Slovak animated film. The total number of projects ap-
plying for financial support from the Slovak audiovisual
Fund (AVF) was also comparable to 2019. In 2020, Slovak
animated films constituted a significant part of domes-
tic screenings. Due to the longer production of films,
however, the eff ect of the changes is delayed. A funda-
mental and problematic change in the coming years may
be, particularly, a decrease in the funds that will be dis-
bursed by the AVF, as contributions from subjects doing
business in the audiovisual sector will also drop.
The year that was very challenging (not only) for filmmakers came to an end. How has the coronavirus crisis affected DNA Production projects?

Of course, the coronavirus crisis has not spared us either. Some projects had to be moved to 2021, and some had a forced break – we halted production during the first, spring lockdown. When the filming resumed, strict security measures had to be put in place, and they are quite expensive. It is necessary to constantly change the schedule due to the imposed measures but also for the growing number of actors or crew members who have tested positive. However, the crisis had the most serious impact on the distribution and premiere of our film *The Auschwitz Report*. The festivals were changing and getting cancelled, and we also moved the premiere date of the film several times.

Foreign countries have already shown interest in the film. Where has it been sold so far?

At present, it is already sold to Portugal, Spain, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Ukraine, Ireland, Japan, France, the USA, the Benelux countries, Canada and the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

DNA Production which you founded with Peter Bebjak will celebrate its 20th anniversary. How have you grown over the years?

This might probably be best judged by viewers of our formats and films. We strive to do everything honestly and in terms of the highest possible quality. In this regard, our attitude and approach have remained the same. I sense that our brand – DNA Production – has made a good impression on clients thanks to such an approach to work, and we are no longer obliged to convince them of what we want to do and in what manner, which is a positive change. At first, we met with the dramaturges who promised to look at our projects and get back to us... Today, stories are easier to present. It is also easier for us to reach out to co-workers, whether they are actors, scriptwriters, directors or crew members. They all have got to know us over the years and understand what kind of cooperation they should expect at this point.

Is there anything you agreed on at the beginning, and you stick to it to this day?

As I have already mentioned – to do things honestly and in terms of the highest possible quality, and especially so that we enjoy it instead of just insisting on making a profit at the expense of other aspects that are important to us.

When talking to producers, I am always interested in which part of the process they enjoy the most.

My main interest lies in the development phase: writing storylines, scripts, castings; and then working in the cutting room. Currently, I also really enjoy working on marketing and PR projects.

The interview, producer Rasťo Šesták outlines even more of their success stories.
If we consider fiction films, the first feature of DNA Production was Róbert Šveda’s low-budget film Demons (Démoni), and the latest is co-produced The Auschwitz Report. It was probably your most challenging project so far.

Indeed, we aim to advance further with each film, speaking of the financial-related difficulties of the project as well.

The first major success of DNA, the television series The Greatest Criminal Cases of Slovakia (Najväčšie kriminálie pripad Slovenska), is associated with the names of the directors mentioned above. Gradually, you produced television series at home and in the Czech Republic. The making of a crime series has revived. Do you regard the series Behind the Glass (Za sklom), which also overlapped with current socio-political events, as the high point for you, so to speak?

The Greatest Criminal Cases of Slovakia have opened the door to television for us. For DNA Production, it was a groundbreaking project. Afterwards, we started making crime films in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, which persists to this day. The series Behind the Glass constitutes a huge milestone because TV JOJ gave us a free hand, and it enabled us to capture the topics that moved our society. At the same time, we attempted to create a crime series that speaks modern television language.

What criteria have you set for commercial projects?

So that we are not embarrassed to walk in public [smile].

Rewarding from both audiences’ and a director’s perspective, how do miniseries fit into your production portfolio? What is your relationship towards them?

Undoubtedly, the series are full-fledged projects for us, not just a side job or a by-product, and it enables us to be creative in the same way as with films. In addition, some television stations already allow a series whose sole ambition is not to make a high profit but to be a high-quality television work as well, providing a high-quality viewer experience in terms of topics addressed and creative approaches.

After years of practice and experience with television, whether it is a public or private station, can you tell which projects will be turned down? What is worth bringing forward or, on the other hand, what would constitute a futile effort?

Absolutely. I can recognise their specific wants and needs and tell if it makes sense to present a certain story or not.

What about the creator’s good reputation when raising funds? Do you find it of great importance?

Certainly, success helps and paves the way. However, it does not always guarantee the financial resources you need. Acquiring exactly the right amount of money seems to be a constant struggle. To sum it up – a good reputation tells others that you are capable of coming up with something good or interesting.

In your company, does one project make a profit for another, for instance a commercial project for one with an artistic ambition?

Yes, it works this way. In DNA, we came to a decision that it makes sense to profit from something so we can invest in another project that requires our financial support.

We said that DNA Production is a 20-year success story. What’s next?

Big things, I hope. We would like to start working on transnational projects that could go global.
The creators describe the story as a lyrical comedy, and it revolves around an aging writer. His young girlfriend tells him that he will become a father again, after several years. At the same time, following a suicide attempt, his best friend is placed in a mental hospital. Something changes inside him, and the man senses a chance for a new beginning, but first he must come to terms with the past and set the relationships with his ex-wife and grown-up children right. In addition, the man starts to hear not only what people are saying but also their thoughts, and his self-image begins to crumble. "For a man from my generation, it is indeed an eye-opening film, a listing or a summary of our lifelong efforts. When a person thinks that they already know everything and cannot be surprised anymore, life takes a drastic turn. Other values or options that have been previously overlooked are discovered," says Czech actor Miroslav Kobot who plays the lead.

"We wanted to write a screenplay about a man who, at one point, realises that he has deluded himself about his own life. The protagonist is an artist, a successful but self-absorbed writer. Obvious to the world around him, he is only interested in what directly affects him: in short, a narcissist," explains director Martin Sulík for Film.sk. He wrote the screenplay with Marek Leščák. "Egoism is the diagnosis of our society. We are wrapped up in ourselves, caring solely about our own benefit. We do not see how we hurt our loved ones, we behave like immature children, constantly asking for something but unable to do anything by ourselves," the director clarifies in the author's exposition for the Audiovisual Fund. According to him, the story of a writer, a man with hare ears, is also a reflection on the meaning of contemporary art.

The film discusses serious topics, however, the creators tried to address them with humour. "Speaking of the composition, the real life of the main character and the fantasy short story he wrote interweave. At a festival in Poland, a journalist told me that it was a surreal film, and I had never thought of it before. I regard it as a comedy, but who knows how the audience will see it," says Sulík. "Comedy allows us to look at the life of the protagonist from a distance, without distorting it into a simplistic scheme. We do not wish to judge him nor moralise in any way. Humour should not spring exclusively from funny remarks and anecdotes but also from an awareness of the interrelationships that the viewer will discover," the director explains. "In the realistic storyline of the film, bizarre gnomes of a fantasy play emerge, while the dreamlike images of the second storyline are supposed to reflect the inner world of the main character and metaphorically communicate the central themes of the story," explains Martin Sulík. "The game become the basic creative principle. The fantasy storyline gave us a free hand, so we could play with the image as well as with the sound," he elaborates.

In addition to actors, such as Miroslav Kobot, Oldřich Kaiser, Alexandra Borbély, Zuzana Kronerová, Táňa Paušová, Zuzana Mauřejová, several Slovak filmmakers were cast in smaller roles.

Martin Sulík produced the film with Rudolf Biermann, who collaborated on most of Sulík’s feature films, such as Tenderness (Neba, 1993), Everything I Like (Všetko, co mám rád, 1995), The Garden (Zahrada, 1993) or most recently The Interpreter (Tlumočník, 2018). Starring Peter Simonischek and Jiří Menzel. "In every film I make with Martin, our attitude towards life is reflected, it could be a recent relationship or social context. Martin’s screenplays always respond to what he connects with in real life, what interests or concerns him. That usually concerns me as well. Specifically, in The Man with Hare Ears, it is the story of a mature man," the producer concludes. 

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**Reminding Us of the Time of Mankind’s Greatest Failures**

Last year, the Slovak Film and Television Academy selected The Auschwitz Report (Správa) by director Peter Bebjak as the Slovak candidate for the Academy Award in the category of Best International Film. It tells the story of two Slovak Jews escaping from the Auschwitz concentration camp. By reporting on the atrocities that took place in the camp, they helped to save thousands of lives.

— Alfred Wetzler and Rudolf Vrbá (born Walter Rosenberg) were one of the few who managed to escape from the strictly guarded concentration camp in Auschwitz. In April 1944, they embarked on a long dangerous journey and walked 170 kilometres on foot to bring an important testimony that saved the lives of other Jews. The report of the genocide they wrote reached US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and it affected the further development of World War II. Vrbá and Wetzler planned their escape with the assistance of their fellow prisoners, and they were also helped by chance encounters they met on the difficult journey, although all of them were risking their lives. "Rabbi Karol Sidon said: What would a life be worth if one was not willing to die for it." And Fredy Wetzler was willing to die for the lives of thousands. I met him nine years ago on the pages of his autobiographical book. But it was only the first step. This was followed by reading, watching documentaries, visiting Auschwitz and searching for Wetzler himself," said screenwriter Jozef Pasteka about the beginnings of his work on the film. The screenplay was written together with Tomáš Bombík and director Peter Bebjak.

The idea for the film The Auschwitz Report was born a few years ago, when the actor Ivan Štefko brought Peter Bebjak the book What Danz Did Not See. Alfred Wetzler wrote it under the alias Joseph Lánik. "The linear plot is absent, but it has the power of authentic observations, which can be written down only by a person who has gone through hell," Bebjak told Film.sk. Even in view of the growing threat of extremism and intolerance, he considers it important that films such as The Auschwitz Report are made. "They remind us of the time when mankind failed and allowed fanatics to come into power: who denied basic human rights, denied the right to freedom of religion, sexual orientation, freedom of thought. And I think that, unfortunately, we live in a time when similar tendencies and taints come back into the vernacular of political parties and leaders," says the director. The creators realised that many films on a similar topic were made, but Wetzler’s fascinating story in the form of a feature fiction film has not yet appeared on the big screen. Alfred Wetzler, played by Noel Carrese, entered the concentration camp at the age of twenty-four, and when he escaped, he was twenty-six; Rudolf Vrbá, played by Peter Ondrejčka, was not even twenty at the time. British actor John Hannah will also appear in the film. The Man with Hare Ears (SK/CZ, 2020, dir. Martin Šulík)
**Piargy | SK/CZ, 2021, dir. Ivo Trajkov | EUR 1,800,000 (EUR 1,097,510 – financial support from the Audiovisual Fund)**

The novella Piargy depicts the tragedy of a settlement in a mountain valley, which gets destroyed by an avalanche, shortly before the outbreak of World War II. Natural catastrophe is preceded by emotional dramas and flare-ups that mark the interrelations of the inhabitants. Only two of them survive the disaster: young Johanka and her husband Klement. The author shares a narrative role with them, creating a complex narrative structure.

Director Ivo Trajkov and scriptwriter Jana Škopeková chose one of those perspectives from which the literary story is told – the perspective of the survivor Johanka. By doing so, the overall narrative is lifted to a more ambiguous and magical plane. “It is a very subjective view of someone who is in a great shock and could not witness everything that was going on. Therefore, fantasy relatively complements some actualities,” director Ivo Trajkov addresses the adaptation. To some extent, the novella almost calls for genre adaptation – whether due to the unique style and language of Švántner, horror elements love and even animalistic motifs or due to the description of a natural disaster. Nevertheless, the creators adapted the story primarily in accordance with the Slovak film tradition. “I don’t see Piargy as a multi-genre film. Even if certain non-traditional artistic or mythical elements occur in the film, the director adhered very clearly and firmly to Švántner’s story, which is pure in its genre. It is certainly not an art film, a horror film or a mystification of the past. The story is set in a Slovak village surrounded by mountains, and it features clear actions of the characters and the logical outcome of the story,” explains film producer Erik Panák from the company Arina. According to him, the international and Slovak audiences will experience primarily “Slovak lyrised prose, which is converted into a more digestible film form but still exceptional thanks to the unique rendition of the story linked to Slovak traditions.”

The film adaptation corresponds to a wave of re-discovering folklore, manifested simultaneously in visual arts, design, music and literature in Slovakia for several years now. “Our folklore is a precious heritage that must be maintained for generations to come. It contains pleasure, beauty, traditions and enables identification. We chose this path, however, because it is precisely what I miss in the films. Ivo Trajkov is a Czech filmmaker, a native of North Macedonia, his inner energy and sense of visual aspect, along with Peter Bencít’s camera, certainly did not overshadow the folklore elements of the film, quite the opposite. The magical moments are emphasised, yet the story itself does not become suppressed,” Erik Panák considers the central motif of love triangle and human passions to be universal and topical even today, although the creators adapted it in a historicising way. At the same time, the film carries a powerful message: “From my point of view, it is an appeal to the viewers about the importance of one of the most difficult internal choices or abilities of man – to live in truth, in relation to other people but especially oneself.”

Švántner’s novella is built upon the contrast of pure and sinful, orderly and impulsive. The filmmakers conveyed the opposites also through a distinctly black and white visual.

The preparation took two years, the same time was required by production and post-production. Attila Mokos, Lucia Klein Švoboda, Judít Bárdos, Daniel Fischer, Jana Geißbergová Olňová and Jana Rvantičková will star in the Slovak-Czech-North Macedonian co-production.

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**The Sailor | SK, 2021, dir. Lucia Kašová | EUR 87,425 (EUR 30,000 – financial support from the Audiovisual Fund)**

The film producer Nazarij Kľujev, from the production company Toxpro, tells Film.st that ‘The Sailor’ was a huge challenge for him to collaborate when she found out that the project had outgrown the originally planned student film.

For me, Johnson is an image of the old world of sailors from the 18th century. He carries the principles of ‘free love generation’, and as his end is approaching, this specific generation is leaving with him,” explains the director of several short films, who also took part in several documentary series for television. Since 2017, he has been working more intensively on The Sailor. “It was important to ask the right question, which perhaps more people are dealing with: Where is the line of freedom or ego?” Kašová explains. According to her, the film is also about the choices we make everyday, we ask ourselves if it makes sense to follow our dreams, even if it means being selfish, hurt others or remain alone.

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**The Old Man and the Harbour |**

“In the project, I was fascinated by the topic of freedom, as well as its universality and actuality, and the fact that it can appeal to viewers of all generations. As a young person, I often wondered if I should devote more of my time to duties and career rather to live life to the fullest and not think too much about the future. For me, the film constitutes part of searching for an answer to a question of what the price of freedom is,” film producer Nazarij Kľujev, from the production company Toxpro, tells Film.st. The director invited him to collaborate when she found out that the project had outgrown the originally planned student film.

Following the story, the crew travelled to the southeastern Caribbean, to the island of Carriacou, where Johnson’s ship docked. “It was a huge challenge for me to shoot in absolutely unknown conditions, and the timing of the project was challenging as well. It required a very dynamic pace of preparation and production itself. Due to the advanced age of the protagonist, time was not on our side,” describes Kľujev, adding that the shooting itself and the days spent with Johnson delighted him the most during working on the project. “It is a pleasure for me to think back to the intensive phase of project development. In almost three years, we went with it to Belgrade, DocBarcelona, Meeting Point Vilnius, the Cannes Film Festival, IDFA in Amsterdam, and the participation in the dok.industrie editing workshop was very beneficial as well,” producer lists workshops and festivals.

“Filming was very demanding both logistically and humanly. We were on the other side of the world, so it was not an option to shoot anything afterwards. At certain moments, we all reached our limits,” says Lucia Kašová retrospectively. DoPs Martin Jurčí and Maxim Klufý, sound engineers Tomáš Bauer and Igor Jedničák, editor Roman Kelemen, composer Martin Tustan and Czech dramaturge Jan Gogol Jr. were involved in making the film.
In the story, the village community sort of constitutes only with her childhood trauma but also with the villagers, in sequence, I was drawn to the topics of motherhood, sexuality did not want to be. Only after I confronted these stereotypes, which indirectly imposed a role on me, one in which I naturally tolerated method of filming itself provided relief – there was a backup equipment – a camera. — text: Mária Perzová — photo: Guča

**Story of Slovak Countryside Where Witches Still Exist**

Tereza Nvotová’s second feature film *The Nightisiren* (*Střelcice*) is set in a small village surrounded by mountains. The dramatic story draws on Slovak realities, myths and legends, but it also discusses generally comprehensive topics: fear of the unknown, prejudice and various forms of discrimination. Formal elements of magic realism and the horror genre are employed in the film as well.

“The Nightisiren constitutes a film about the fear of otherness – whether one’s own or somebody else’s, which is the source of major problems in the present-day world. In our ‘traditional’ society, difference is enough of a criteria to ostracize people, whether it is based on ethnicity, beliefs or unconventional lifestyle... Fear can always be found at the root, leading people to find solace in a common enemy,” director Tereza Nvotová says for Film.sk. According to her, The Nightisiren is also about searching for inner freedom and acceptance of oneself, despite being rejected by society.

“I was motivated by the experience of living in female body and constantly encountering various social norms which indirectly imposed a role on me, one in which I naturally did not want to be. Only after I confronted these stereotypes, I was able to realize what I really wanted or not. In consequence, I was drawn to the topics of motherhood, sexuality and freedom also within the film story,” clarifies Nvotová. Her new film deals with a certain need to return to nature as well. “It is essential to understand that I am not only an independent unit but also part of a large whole and without being in harmony with it as such, I cannot be in harmony with myself. That is the reason why the story is set in the Slovak mountains,” says the director of the film, who works with elements of magic realism and draws on Slovak folklore, pagan customs, superstitions and myths.

“The main character is a thirty-year-old Charlotte, a nurse, who returns to the place from which she escaped as a child under mysterious circumstances. She is confronted not only with her childhood trauma but also with the villagers, in whom she immediately arouses suspicion,” Nvotová explains. In the story, the village community sort of constitutes a collective antagonist. Charlotte befriends Míra, an eccentric herbalist, that tries to mend Charlotte’s broken soul, but as they try to uncover the long-buried truth, dark legends seem to come to life, leading the local villagers to accuse them of witchcraft.

In the introductory phase, scriptwriter Barbora Námerová was inspired by the anthropological study that examines the witchcraft phenomenon in Slovak villages. She was surprised that it was still current. In the film, women described as witches in reality from being the broom riding, children eating hags of the story-books, but are open-minded women who embrace nature and love men, sex, and themselves. Regarding the script, the creators attended the Scripteast workshop, where they consulted with experts, such as scriptwriter Wiebke von Carolisfeld or producer Meinolf Zutharth. The project was also successfully presented at the Crossroads Co-Production Forum in Thessaloniki, at the Frontières Finance & Packaging Forum in Karlskrona, Sweden, and at the MIA Film Co-Production Market in Rome, where it won the Eurimages Award for best project in development.

The film is produced by Peter Badáč from the company BFILM and coproduced by moloko film (Czech Republic) and Silvera Productions (France).

“Most of the film take place in mountain exteriors and half of the story at night. To some extent, such difficult conditions suited me, I am convinced that a certain degree of discomfort and overcoming oneself is important for making a good film. Certainly, I’ve learned a lot about special effects, or non-conventional visual approaches as we shot almost the entire film using a hand-held camera,” director concludes. On the film, she collaborated with American DoP Federico Cesca, and Slovak actresses Natália Germánka and Eva Mores play the lead roles.

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As was the case with FREM, Viera Čákanyová’s new documentary *White on White* (*Biela na biele*) was filmed in Antarctica, where the director travelled with a group of Polish researchers. While FREM simulates artificial intelligence’s view on the South Pole in the time of climate change, the author conceives White on White as her own subjective film diary from a stay in an inhospitable but beautiful environment.

“I didn’t know in advance that White on White would happen, and for a long time I resisted the idea that I am actually making a film with myself as the main character. I prefer to stand behind the camera,” Čákanyová says about the genesis of her second feature film. The filming of the debut FREM was described as extremely demanding, marked by cold and bad weather, as well as cramped conditions at the base, where she resided with a cameraman and researchers. Initially perceived as a form of mental hygiene, White on White started to emerge during walks with a backpack equipment – a camera. “Most of the film was made at the Polish base or around it at a time when FREM could not be shot. I was surrounded by a beautiful landscape, moreover, as a person, I experienced feelings that had no place in FREM. These experiences were so intense and somehow healing that I needed to record them. The spontaneous and unrestrained method of filming itself provided relief – there was no complicated concept behind it,” the director explains to Film.sk, noting that she tried not to “think like a film maker” while going for walks with the camera. “Basically, I needed to talk to myself. I did not make a decision that I am going to shoot a diary. Sometimes I used the camera only as a voice recorder; the content of the statements was diverse. Although it sounds pathetic, in that white, immaculate country, one is confronted with the self, and the noise of civilisation disappears, gradually, as the mental noise in one’s own head too, as a result, a kind of inescapable ‘essence’ is tuned.”

In White on White, a human with a complex inner life replaces the cold perspective of artificial intelligence. However, Čákanyová’s film is not only about individual, subjective perception. The question of the function of art and its ‘energy value’ was incorporated into the film as well, yet the director does not provide a personal judgement, but she confronts it with artificial intelligence. White on White was created in a Slovak-Czech co-production. The crew consisted of a line-up similar to FREM: Tomáš Klein was behind the camera next to Čákanyová again, but archival footage from China, shot by Dominik Jursa, also appears as a contrast to the ubiquitous Antarctic white emptiness. Once again, the author edited the film with Marek Sulík and co-produced the film with Nina Numančíková. It was produced under the umbrella of Slovak production company Guća and Czech company Marina Films. Like FREM, White on White will be released in cinemas by Film Expanded, which focuses on alternative forms of distribution.
New films

“Once There Was a Sea...” (SK/PL, 2021, dir. Joanna Kożuch) offers the audience a view of one of the world’s greatest ecological catastrophes — the drying up of the Aral Sea. The film was created in a Polish and Slovak co-production.

— text: Jaroslava Jelčová — photo: BFILM —

Joanna Kožuch made her debut in 2014 with Fongo-Clermont-Ferrand. Their stories will help us make better decisions in the future,” says director.

Originally, the filmmakers did not intend to focus on imprisoned mothers. At the beginning of the project, the topic was set to be censorship, however, not necessarily prison censorship. “When in transit, DaP Martin Kollar once spent about five hours at Abu Dhabi Airport,” director Peter Kerekes addresses the genesis of his film. “He was sitting in a café, waiting and browsing through fashion magazines, just like all men when they are on their own at the airport. It might have been Elie or Marie Claire. And he noticed that someone had blacked out the models’ décolletages, exposed legs and shoulders with a marker. All magazines were likewise manually censored. He showed it to Ivan Ostrochovský and me. We immediately realized that it would make a great film. About censors, whose job is to scribble on exposed women’s breasts eight hours a day. They take children to school and kindergartens, grab a thousand issues of fashion magazines and blacken them.”

It has been a long way from the idea to take a closer look at censors, broadly speaking, to the film about imprisoned mothers. The creators first considered censors in Nigeria’s Nollywood or officials giving consent to musicians to perform in the Paris Métro. “Then Ivan thought of censors of letters in prison. We started with extensive inspections in Ukraine since it is closest to us, and filming in their prisons is not preceded by such complex bureaucracy as in the EU,” explains Peter Kerekes for Film.ik. The creators visited more than ten prisons, both men’s and women’s. “The inspections were very thorough. We talked to censors, guards, convicts, released. Finally, in Odesa, we met Irina Alexanderovna, one of the main protagonists of our film. A woman who reads love letters on a daily basis while being single. The documentary turned into a fiction film. One short story remained out of four. And letters and their censorship eventually gave way to the subject of motherhood. In fact, Irina works in a prison where mothers with children are placed. After the age of three, children have to leave the prison,” says Kerekes.

Speaking of the shooting technique and film narration, Censor is a hybrid film, and it creatively uses the potential of documentary and fictional narration. It was the label ‘fiction film’ that allowed the creators to dive deeper and paint the subject in vivid colours. “When we researched for the film regarded as a documentary’, the producers and staff were careful with their statements. As soon as we started making a fiction film, they became very open and shared absurd stories from prison life,” says the director.

Despite its hybrid form, Censor tries to show the prison world and its inhabitants as authentically as possible. “The script was based on the story of a woman who caught her husband cheating and killed his mistress. She went to prison while pregnant, gave birth and took care of her child which was later placed in an orphanage. Originally, she was supposed to play herself, but we changed it at the last minute. She happened to be a great consultant for us, guarding the authenticity of every manifestation of prison life. Almost all the characters in the film play themselves, there are only few professional actors,” explains the director.

Peter Kerekes wrote the screenplay for the film together with Ivan Ostrochovský, who is not only the producer of the film but also the author of the story. Kerekes and Ostrochovský’s long-term colleague Martin Kollar was behind the camera, and dramaturge Marek Ležák also joined the ranks of authors. The film was created in a Slovak-Czech Ukrainian co-production.

EUR 210,000 (EUR 82,000 – financial support from the Audiovisual Fund, EUR 10,000 – RTVS)

EUR 954,000 (EUR 300,000 – financial support from the Audiovisual Fund, EUR 150,569 – RTVS, EUR 140,000 – Eurimages)
What are they up to?

Marina Andree Škop

[ director, producer ]

I have the privilege to work on several inspiring projects for kids of which I would single out two that I am currently working on intensively. As a director, I am working on a short animated film for kids Blue Bear (Modry maco), which is supported by the Croatian Audiovisual Centre and the Slovak Audiovisual Fund. It is a story that teaches kids that even their parents can make mistakes. With Slovak director Vanda Rjavinainová, I am co-directing a feature film for kids: The Spacehead (Hlavnéta). The project development is supported by the Audiovisual Fund, the MEDIA sub-programme and the Croatian Audiovisual Centre, and we are planning to shoot it in 2022. This adventure comedy is written by Slovak author Juraj Rajman, and it reveals a topic of autism to the young audience in a very original way.

Peter Badač

[ producer ]

We are currently finishing The Nightsizen (Svetlanca), a new film by Tereza Novotná, which we managed to shoot last year during a break between two waves of the pandemic. At the same time, we are preparing to release two minority co-productions – Michaela Pavlatová’s first animated feature My Sunny Maad (Muje skino Maad) and a light-hearted version of the climate crisis. Heat, drought, desertification and floods are the four dominant signs of global climate change, the world has four cardinal directions, so we decided to present four stories in the film, pointing to each symptom and direction. We follow personal stories of people whose process of adapting to new, much more difficult conditions is at the heart of the film’s narration. We are currently putting together an international co-production, supported by the MEDIA sub-programme and the Audiovisual Fund regarding the development. We are looking forward to Radio and Television Slovakia being the first TV partner.

Tomaš Krupa

[ director, scriptwriter, producer ]

I am working on the new feature documentary We Have to Survive (Musíme přežít) because I consider the issue of climate change to be urgent. The coronavirus crisis is just a lighter version of the climate crisis. Heat, drought, desertification and floods are the four dominant signs of global climate change, the world has four cardinal directions, so we decided to present four stories in the film, pointing to each symptom and direction. We follow personal stories of people whose process of adapting to new, much more difficult conditions is at the heart of the film’s narration. We are currently putting together an international co-production, supported by the MEDIA sub-programme and the Audiovisual Fund regarding the development. We are looking forward to Radio and Television Slovakia being the first TV partner.

Juraj Lehotský

[ director, scriptwriter, producer ]

We finished shooting Applause (Potlesk), and what a joy it was in strange and difficult times. Devoted to the finalisation of the film these days, I am looking forward to recording music in Prague with the orchestra and film composer Alžír Březina. Recently, I attended the screening of our film at the Les Arcs Film Festival, this time online, and I have been going for walks along the Danube with my family. I am also looking forward to more distant trips, hopefully soon, ones more casual and without the necessary documentation.

Katarína Krnáčová

[ producer ]

In the midst of this sci-fi world we live in, I am tirelessly looking for ways to move forward and do the impossible. Last summer, we released a Slovak-German co-production Summer Rebels (letní rebeli) intended for the children audience. Under strict safety measures, in autumn, we shot a new children’s 4-side co-production How I Learned to Fly (Ako som sa naučil letať) in Croatia, currently working on visual effects in Slovakia. I am in postproduction of a road movie Stand Up and Vlach Kadíma’s Saving One Who Was Dead (Správa o záchraně mrtvého). We are also preparing for Flood (Potop), a debut film of Martin Gonda whose graduation film premiered at the Cinéfondation. Moreover, as a huge fan of high-end drama, I am thrilled to be developing a TV series with the Radio and Television Slovakia.

Michaela Mihályi

Michaela Mihályi (M)

[ directors, animators ]

D is currently finishing with the post-production of Diana Cam Van Nguyen’s short animated film with the working title What We Wrote after working on it for the past few months. At the same time, he is starting to work on animation for the new Marvel series, which is still secret, so it will be fun in the coming months! M is trying to complete her animated documentary Teen about adolescence, breasts and Breitney Spears. In the coming months, she will begin to work on a new animated documentary about menstruation, and she is looking forward to it! M & D also have a new joint project – Berta, a dog that is being taught tricks!

Martin Smatana

[ director, animator ]

Since last year, I have been working as director of the Slovak part of the co-production full-length puppet film Of Unwanted Things and People (O nepotrebných veciach a ludoch), which we are starting to shoot in the spring. I recently finished a development Jab Animation Sans Frontières, where I was developing my new animated film for children Hello Summmer (Ahoj Leto). These days, I am preparing a collaboration with the Animation Workshop in Denmark, where production will be held, thanks to the support from the MIFA pitch at the Annecy festival 2020. Sometimes, I attend online film festivals with my graduation puppet film The Kite (Šarkan). I also like to do online animation workshops for children these days.

Ivan Ostrochovský

[ director, producer ]

Peter Keezes and I are finishing a film shot in a women’s prison in Ukraine. Having a great sales agent Film Boutique on our side, we hope for a successful festival tour: Alongside Marek Lečák, I am preparing for work on Framne. The film deals with the functioning of abortion committees, and they are perhaps the saddest example of the communist regime’s intervention in women’s privacy in Czechoslovakia. Simultaneously, I am shooting a documentary about Igor Luther, the DoP of the Oscar-winning Tin Drum and Andrey Konchalovskij’s Danton, and another one about Alain Robbe-Grillet is under way. I am also writing a spy fiction film with Martin Šmok, and it is based on an event from 1973: Syrian terrorists hijacking a train with Jewish refugees from Bratislava to Austria.
In 2021, Martin Hollý would be 90 years old. Was it one of the reasons why you decided to have Night Riders digitally restored and submitted to Lumière Lyon?

— I did not propose Night Riders primarily because of the anniversary. The most crucial factor when picking a film is the film itself. Martin Hollý was a great storyteller, and via small stories of common people he could tell universal stories. If it were up to me, I would submit all his films to Lyon. Night Riders was my first pick and, at the same time, it was a kind of litmus test of how the festival selection committee would react to a film which bears traces of western, was made in socialist Czechoslovakia in the 1980s and does not star Gojko Mitij – so not your typical eastern. The film was selected and screened within a programme section named Treasures and Curiosities. That is the only section where an institution, such as the Slovak Film Institute, can submit its films. In 2019, the festival introduced the Lumière Classics label with an intention to support a selection of restored films. The Lumière Classics label is composed of French and International films, Treasures and Curiosities and a very narrow selection of films in other programme sections. It is a good feeling to know that Martin Hollý’s Night Riders bears the same label as masterpieces of world cinema such as The Brood by David Cronenberg.

What are the criteria when selecting directors and their films for Lumière Lyon?

— We do our best to select directors and films that are not known abroad, yet we are convinced that they deserve attention. In the past, classic Slovak cinema was known internationally almost for the films by two great Slovak filmmakers: Dušan Hanák and Juraj Jakubisko. Directors like Palo Bielik, Štefan Uher, Peter Solan, Eko Havetta, Stanislav Barabáš or Viktor Kubal were still virtually unknown. However, their films do have potential to be rediscovered, to attract international audiences. Some of them have already proven that. Viktor Kubal’s digitally restored The Bloody Lady (Krvavá paní, 1980) travelled from Lyon to the Sitges Film Festival, one of the most prestigious fantasy film festivals in the world. Peter Solan’s The Barnabí Kos Case (Prípad Barnabího Kos, 1964) had an amazing world tour – Lumière Lyon, Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, CineFan Hongkong, Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, National Gallery of Art in Washington DC. When the world stopped due to the pandemic in the beginning of 2020, the travels of comrades Kos stopped as well – already arranged and scheduled screenings at the Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley or Budapest Classics Film Marathon were thus postponed indefinitely. In fact, as we speak, the DCP of the film is still being stored in the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley.

Are there any limitations when selecting films for Lyon?

— Almost all the films which I would submit to Lyon instantly, Slovak Film Institute already digitally restored a couple of years ago, thus they do not meet the condition of being a recent restoration. It is also more difficult to pick a ‘new’ film for restoration, a film which still has potential to cross boundaries, to be selected and attract audiences abroad. It always has to be a “distinct” film. Western audiences perceive classic Slovak cinema as some kind of eastern exotica, which is, for the time being, (still) fresh: it can attract attention and entertain. However, in a long run, a promise of eastern exotica is not enough. Ideally, we would like to offer various kinds of films, present various genres in order to keep international audiences interested. The films have to be of certain artistic value and deal with universal topics which cross cultural boundaries. They should not be soaked in the political ideology of the times when they were made. Peter Solan’s The Barnabí Kos Case is a perfect example. When I saw the film with the audience in Lyon, their reactions were positive. Although the audience did not laugh at scenes which would make Slovak audience laugh, their reactions were spontaneous. Festival audience in Lyon is very demanding, in the positive sense of the word, spoiled by world-famous film classics usually presented there. However, it can appreciate small films which were virtually non-existent for them before they had a chance to see them at the festival. And then, their reactions are sincere – direct satisfaction for excellent work carried out by colleagues in the Digital Audiovision Department led by Peter Csordás.

The whole process (ideally) ends with a world premiere in Lyon, but where does it start?

— The process of selection and preparation of a film for its digital restoration here in the Slovak Film Institute starts more than a year before the deadline for film submission, which is usually in the beginning of June. One of the conditions for submitting the film is the deadline for the DCP delivery of a submitted film, which is usually in the middle of September. That is the basic timeline we have to stick to. Digital restoration itself is always preceded by a meeting with Marián Hausner, director of the National Film Archive of the Slovak Film Institute. There we discuss proposed film which we could possibly digitally restore “for Lyon.” Another condition for submitting film is, as I have mentioned before, a recent restoration. That is why we always pick one “crucial” film to digitally restore, with the deadline for submission in mind. However, it does not automatically mean that the film will be selected. It is up to the selection committee of the festival. The head of the selection committee and the festival itself is Thierry Frémaux, who founded the festival in 2012. If our film is selected, it is always a great pleasure and even greater honour. We began submitting our digitally restored films to Lyon in 2017, and it seems that, together with Marián Hausner, we have chosen the films well since all of them have so far been world premiered in Lyon.
Concerning the festival atmosphere, is there any difference between Lumière Lyon and ‘regular’ film festivals?

Classic film festivals have a different atmosphere compared to festivals of contemporary cinema. They are not so business-oriented, not so hectic. Everything takes place in a relaxed atmosphere. The heart of the festival in Lyon is the Institut Lumière, situated in the Lumière Villa. However, the festival is spread around the city – in single-screen cinemas, miniplexes and multiplexes. Based on my own experience, the festival cinemas are always full. The same goes for the Comédie Odéon theatre in the city centre, which hosts masterclasses open for the festival audience. If I mention that Frances McDormand, Jane Fonda, the Dardeis, Viggo Mortensen, Francis Ford Coppola, Bong Joon-ho, Alfonso Cuarón, Wong Kar-wai, William Friedkin or Guillermo del Toro were the festival guests in the past, you can picture the scope of the festival yourself, and how attractive it is not only for film professionals. All the film professionals, including the Slovak director Elo Havetta, were film professionals.

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In your opinion, which Slovak film had the best response in Lyon?

I had an amazing feeling after each and every screening, whether it was The Bloody Lady, The Barnabás, The Stoic, or Wild Lilies. It is essential that the festival demands every screening to be introduced by the film representative who “tunes its audience in” – briefly explains the cultural, social and historical context of the presented film. I did not travel to Lyon with Night Riders in 2020, so I don’t know reactions of the audience to the film. But what is extraordinary when speaking about Lumière Lyon is the fact that it does not differentiate between big and small films. My first visit to Lyon was in 2017 with The Bloody Lady. I was surprised when, right after I introduced the film, I was asked to do a short interview. And then, when you see Slovak Film Institute being presented with Anna Karina or William Friedkin in the same gallery on the festival website, it is strange but pleasant feeling that our work is being acknowledged at such prestigious classic film fora, and that its results are in a very, very good company.

Do you see any connection between the films you made at the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague and Celebration in the Botanical Garden?

With their poetics and relation to reality, they do not really differ very much from Celebration in the Botanical Garden. We wanted to tell the story in a way that it is not restricted by chronology, so that it does not slavishly stick to causality. The film can be put together from fragments that tell the story but are not immi-

The feeling of spontaneity which impresses viewers in Celebration in the Botanical Garden creates the illusion that the entire film was improvised. As the scriptwriter, can you elaborate on that?

That sense of improvisation or working with it is justified. Havetta often worked with non-actors, and you can never quite prescribe dialogue to them, but thanks to their minimalism, we used almost all of my dialogues. Non-actor has certain limitations but also certain talents, something emanating naturally from them. You need to have a sense of it on the set and to give it a chance. As regards what happened on the set, Havetta’s films certainly contain improvisation, but it never goes as far as to affect the way the film is composed. If you want to work with the illusion of coincidence, it has to be really well thought out. Moreover, those films are, so to speak, choreographies. They almost incorporate a dance rhythm, which is not a result of editing, though, since it was already in the script. Throughout the 1980s, when you emigrated, you met several significant filmmakers. What was this period of filmmaking like for you?

I have dual citizenship and even two different names. My name is Meir Lubor Dohnal on my German ID card, and only Lubor Dohnal on the Czech one, while in the opening and closing credits of German films I am named only as Meir Dohnal. This does lead to a certain confusion in my filmography. I was lucky to obtain my first screenwriting contract almost as soon as I arrived in Germany. It was Do Not Be Afraid, Jacob! (Fürchte dich nicht, Jakob) by director Radu Gubea. A documentary about Marlene Dietrich was another important collaboration of yours.

Marlene. It was a strange sort of collaboration with Maximilian Schell, I wrote the script, but it could never have been realised in that form. By that time, Marlene was already in a wheelchair and she did not want to spoil her image as a diva. But Schell managed to recind an amazing interview with her that she refused to give to other very famous filmmakers. He had a terrific charisma as an actor, and he was able to captivate her with it, so on Marlene’s side there was also some sort of peculiar provocative interest. It ended with me putting the film together again in the editing room. It was actually a retroactive creation of the script. We built the film from archive materials based on this interview in order to make it as spectacular as the portrait of this enigmatic character. It was an extraordinary job, but Maximilian Schell was extraordinary himself.
Elo Havetta
Destined for the Miracle of Cinematography

"Elo was one of our first real film poets, and we do not have too many of them. He was one of the first poets who were not allowed to evolve in the Slovak film environment," writer Vincent Šikula said about Elo Havetta years ago.

One of the most distinctive Slovak filmmakers also cast Šikula in his debut Celebration in the Botanical Garden (Slávnosť v botanické záhrade, 1969) and shot his second film Wild Lilies (Ľalie poľné, 1972) based on Šikula's screenplay.

Both films were released on DVD by the Slovak Film Institute. In addition, they were released as the Elo Havetta Collection on Blu-ray, including special bonus materials. The collection offers director's feature films in a version that is the result of a thorough process of restoration and colour corrections. DoP Dodo Šimončič was overseeing that they stay true to the original.

In 1989, in the magazine Film a doba, film historian Václav Havetta likened the significance of Havetta's work to the work of Ludovít Fulla and Mikušišky Galanda and what they meant for Slovak fine art and its contact with the outside world in the 1930s. According to Macek, Havetta and his peers in the late 1960s overcame the regionality of Slovak film and brought it closer to the trends of world cinema of that time.

"Author's progress and bold interpretation of reality broached the previously circumvented (taboo, undesirable) topics related to sexuality," writes film historian Eva Filová in the book Eros, sexus, gender v slovenskom (Erotics, Sex, Gender in Slovak Film). Filová also argues against the trends of world cinema of that time.

"Sexus, Gender in Slovak Film). Filová also argues against the previously circumvented (taboo, undesirable) topics related to sexuality," writes film historian Eva Filová in the book Eros, sexus, gender v slovenskom (Erotics, Sex, Gender in Slovak Film).

According to director Eduard Grečner, whose text about Havetta can be found in the booklet of the Blu-ray collection, with some exaggeration, it can be argued that Celebration in the Botanical Garden "is a crazy reflection of its time, an emotional protest, an explosion of spontaneous movement in a time constituted by prohibitions and denied by orders." Havetta's work and destiny were also significantly influenced in this manner. Elo Havetta died at the age of 36 – of normalisation, as dramaturge Albert Marenčin used to say.

Apart from Celebration in the Botanical Garden, he could make only another feature film, Wild Lilies. His protagonists, war retirees, are looking for a home and their place in society. They equally long to settle down and to roam freely like nomads. In Peter Mihálik's text in the daily Práca, at the time of the premiere, Havetta stated that there are many films about the horrors of war. Therefore, Wild Lilies was intended to provide a different perspective and show the psychological consequences of war, which, according to him, are worse than the physical ones. Supposedly, the film is based on the principle of multi-voice composition, it develops individual motifs so that in the end they merge into a symphony. Havetta was convinced that "the screenplay realised in a finished film will have a wide audience reach. Therefore, I strive for an audience-oriented film, in the best sense of the word." However, during his lifetime, he did not manage to achieve what he was describing. Just like Celebration in the Botanical Garden, the film Wild Lilies ended up being banned.
British film critic and historian Peter Hames also mentions Polanski in an extensive text in a 20-page booklet of the British Blu-ray edition. According to him, however, the analysis of intimate male-female relationships conducted by the screenwriting duo Martin Šulík and Ondrej Šulaj resembles more Ingmar Bergman’s films, especially *Scenes from a Marriage* (1973), despite having "Month after month, you can always rely on the team at Second Run to unearth a little-seen gem from corners of the globe underrepresented on the home video market," so begins a brief review of the current Blu-ray release of Martin Šulík’s *Tenderness* (*Neha*, 1991) on the website of the British Film Institute – BFI.org.

After years, Šulík’s film reaches foreign audiences digitally restored. “It’s a striking debut; formally and structurally rigorous, and elliptically designed to keep its central trio at arm’s length, foregrounding their alienation and rendering the film’s title cruelly ironic,” writes film critic Matthew Hames in his review at thegeekshow.co.uk titled *Tenderness: The Past is a Foreign Country in Martin Šulík’s (1991) Debut*. He states that the film “deployes” a relatively standard, universal film genre of a coming-of-age story as a metaphor for Slovakia waking up to see the light after a period of communist oppression. “Using the backdrop of regime change and the anxiety of an uncertain future, the film analyses the basic values, sense of morality and the complexity of human relationships at the dawn of a new age that is still intrinsically affected by the corruption of what has gone before,” writes Cunliffe.

The commentary at dvdbeaver.com praises, in addition to the film itself, the quality of the digital restoration under the supervision of the Slovak Film Institute, which was also approved by the director, and special bonus materials. Besides the film, the Blu-ray release concludes that the disc confirms the good reputation of the Slovak Film Institute regarding film restoration. “Already established for bringing key films from the wealth of Czechoslovak cinema to a much wider range of viewers, Second Run throws a bit of a curve ball with *Tenderness*, originally entitled *Neha,*” claims mondo-digital.com. “The title might imply a touching family drama or romance, but that’s definitely not what you get here.” The author of the text describes the film as an elusive and fascinating allegory, as well as a notable feature debut of a director who makes important Slovak films on a regular basis.
The Tragedy of Millions Through Two Fates

When the prominent British theatre critic Kenneth Tynan visited socialist Prague in the 1960s, he also showed interest in new films. The Shop on Main Street (Okolo na náměstí, 1964) by the Slovak-Czech directing duo Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos was recommended to him. Later, in a review for The New Yorker, he deemed the film unique. However, it was Tynan’s extensive review for the British Observer, written earlier, that indirectly opened the door to the world for The Shop on Main Street.

The story is mentioned by Elmar Klos Jr. in one of the bonus interviews prepared by the Slovak Film Institute for the new edition of The Shop on Main Street released on DVD and Blu-ray. “It was a coincidence that The Shop on Main Street competed for an Oscar,” elaborates dubbing director Klos. “In the spring of 1966, a Czechoslovak film festival was to take place in London. The selection of films was in the hands of a certain Mr. Baker, editor-in-chief of Films and Filming magazine. He selected various films, but The Shop on Main Street was not among them,” recalls film historian Václav Macek in his monograph on Ján Kadár. The film, which later won the first Oscar for Czechoslovakia, could go completely unacknowledged without Tynan and his article. Fortunately, Baker was convinced by an emotive review of “the most moving film about anti-Semitism ever made,” one to make you shed tears even after leaving the cinema. The Shop on Main Street was added to the selection in London, which was the gateway to the West. Only afterwards Czechoslovakia submitted the film in Cannes, where the performances of Jozef Kroner and Ida Kamińska were recognised. In fact, before and after the filming, The Shop on Main Street was not entirely welcomed at home. A note returned from when the script was being approved, and it read: Who would think this could be a film? In the bonus interview, the philosopher Egon Gál explains that neither the collaborators nor the Jews wanted to think back to the period in which the film takes place. “The people who went through it wanted to forget,” says Gál. “It was a taboo that Slovaks collaborated.”

“The story is mentioned by Elmar Klos Jr. in one of the bonus interviews prepared by the Slovak Film Institute for the New Wave entered the scene. Hanák had a breakthrough with both fiction and documentary films – Pictures of the Old World (Obrazy starého sveta, 1973), Paper Heads (Papierové hlavy, 1995). According to film historian Václav Macek, it is “the presence of the fiction in the authenticity and the authenticity in the fiction” that determines the quality of Hanák’s works. Dušan Hanák, who made his scriptwriting debut with Royal Dreams, the films are also a documentary about the time in which they were made. ‘The older they are, the more significant is their documentary value. If they are good, they tell the truth about the past. They help us to search for it and, if we are lucky, to find it,’” Duelke says. He wrote the script together with Hanák. The character of the postman was inspired by his friend, and Hanák shaped the character of Jolanka. “During the period of normalisation, he perceived Roma cultural milieu as an oasis of freedom and authentic life,” Duelke explains.

Royal Dreams is the only Slovak film that managed to penetrate the foreign market in the 1970s. The poetic story of the first big but forbidden love, in which Jakub (Jura) Nvota, a kind-hearted white postman, falls in love with Jolanka (Iva Bítová), a Roma girl, was seen by spectators at many festivals. Abroad, Hanák’s sense of poetry, authenticity but also his sensitivity and humanness, which is not malicious, were appreciated. “It seemed important to us that a good person still exists. At the same time, we wanted every inch of the film to be honest and authentic. The film communicates the search for humanity, the search for life’s colours and taste,” Hanák elaborates on the film, which had its renewed premiere in France two years ago.

Hanák and Dušek wrote together also the screenplay for the film I Love, You Love. Its protagonist is Pišta, who drinks because women turn him down, and women turn him down because he drinks. He is played by Polish actor Roman Klosowski and convincing performances are also given by Serbian actor Milan Jellić, Pišta’s friend Vinc, and by Czech actress Iva Janůvou, Pišta’s friend, for whom Pišta is longing. His mother is played by Milada Jejková, a non-actress who was catapulted into the world of film on the threshold of retirement by a chance encounter and the role of a mother in Miloš Forman’s Loves of a Blonde (Láska jedné plavovlásky, 1965). The convincing portrayal of the outcasts outraged the communists, in the film, they said, “fabricated and intentionally ugly visuals.” When the film was released for distribution in the late 1980s, almost a decade later, contemporary critics, on the other hand, welcomed its authenticity. “I wanted my films to be a greeting to the Czechoslovak New Wave and the 1960s, when authentic and high-quality films were made also in our country,” Dušan Hanák comments on Royal Dreams and I Love, You Love.
Bielič Must Be Presented Differently, He Is Unjustly Considered Archaic

Bielič famously stated that his only god is the audience. Where does the focus on viewers derive from?

Some directors are audience-oriented, but they lack a theme. Bielič, although focused on viewers, and from the perspective of the auteur films of the 1960s it might not have seemed so, had his inner themes, which he was intrinsically interested in. For instance, the defiance and manliness of the protagonists resonate in several of his films. Bielič’s cultural background was determined by “common sense.” Things worked if they served their purpose. In that sense, a film is considered a major investment, so it should make enough money. “Audience” was a certain moral obligation for Bielič. Simply put, things should work, and the film works if it has “appreciated in value” by audiences. Thus, he also had a rather negative attitude towards art productions into which money was “poured,” but which, later on, had only been seen by a handful of intellectuals. It was probably tied to his pragmatic mindset. Aesthetically, he was somewhere else – generation-wise, the sixty- was already a different culture for Bielič.

Did Bielič get into disputes with filmmakers who made a name for themselves in the 1960s?

At the time of writing the monograph, the archivist of the Koliba Film Studios was not yet accessible. However, I spoke to contemporaries such as dramaturge Albert Marenčin or historian Richard Blech. While Blech’s article Bielič wrote at that time, he was frustrated because only one of the two parts arrived in Canada, in fact, without any translation, even though the screenings were intended primarily for compatriots. Though, Bielič strongly disapproved of a sloppy job. He was no man of compromise.

Did Bielič have international ambitions?

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“Jánošík” was at times disobedient and resisting, not always willing to film whatever the leadership of socialist cinema would have wanted. His last film happened to be Three Witnesses (Triaja svedko- kovia, 1968). However, he also made plans for the first Slovak horror film The Gate of Nightmare (Gatecká můra). Why has it never been made?

— I don’t really have an answer for that. Perhaps out of spite, or there was no political will. Moreover, such large-scale commercial productions were “put out” in the 1970s, and Bielič was not in the best of health at that time. It is likely that he was crushed down by critics as well: his last films, in particular Master Executioner (Majster Kat, 1966), received very bad reviews.

What was his forte as a filmmaker?

— For instance, he was great with actors and able to cast them impressively against their established types. František Dibarbora was basically an entertainer, a caba-

ret artist, but Bielič cast him in the role of the SS man Thiele. Interesting is to observe how Bielič “uses” the same actor in different films. Hermann Thiele from Wolves’ Lair (Vlci diery, 1948) is truly a perfidious Sudeten SS man. In Jánošík, however, Dibarbora is already playing the role of a marcelled-hair bunfoo, robbed by high-waymen. Or let’s “trace” the casting of Cibor Filíčik: in Forty-Four Mutineers – a captain of the Austro-Hungarian army, in Captain Dabač – a Hlinka guardsman Slanec, a rather strong character but, compared to “heroic” Dabač, a coward. In Jánošík, he embodies the highway- man Hrajnoha, in some scenes, if I remember correctly, even shirtless.

Are there any myths about Bielič?

— The myth regarding Jánošík is probably the biggest. On the one hand, he made the story of the high- wayman’s life more dynamic, on the other hand, he must have been rather tired of it all. Bielič was constantly “Jánoslíkified,” which somewhat overshadowed the fact that he had been doing very decent films his whole life. Not just fiction films. His early non-fiction works, filmed in the company Nástup, is also intriguing, for instance the documentary On the Island of Cermontans (Na ostrove kormoránov, 1943/1946). It is both a film about cormo- rants and a “film about film,” with lovely lighting too. They shot early in the morning or in the evening, wander- ing through the picturesque Danube landscape in sweatsuits. Such a nice boy movie. It would be a great idea to re-release Bielič’s stuff from Nástup. As for his personality, constantly being labelled as Jánošík seems a bit unjust today.

Put on a pedestal as the mythical hero of Slovak cinema, do you think that it eventually hurt him?

— Today, who among the young people cares about the national hero Jánošík? They are perhaps interested in Dabač and the topic of the Uprising, which is once again popular. Bielič must be presented differently, he is unjustly considered archaic. The “bronze paint” of the national artist, or “of the dead man,” as he used to say, that ended up sticking to him, does not suit him. Now I even get the impression that Bielič is a bit of a tragic character. Although without consideration decorated with awards and patted on the shoulder during the anniversaries, I am not entirely sure whether the sur- roundings ever really understood him. I feel that, in a more profound sense, he was solitary.

Presented Diff erently

Presented Diff erently

— text: Matúš Kvašňa — photo: archive of the SFI/Zuzana Mináčová —
Ten years of Kino Lumière

The cinema offers a selection from around the world, new European films but also classics. Its four digitised screening rooms have 35mm film projectors, however, popcorn is forbidden. Kino Lumière – the cinema of the Slovak Film Institute (SFI), situated in the Bratislava city centre, is the only multiple-screen Film Club in the Slovak Republic and one of the most important domestic art house cinemas.

It will celebrate its 10th birthday in September.

Kino Lumière continues the tradition of the Film Club, a film events centre which operated in the same place since 1996. The premises had been rented since then. When the SFI started managing the cinema in 2011, it focused on contemporary Slovak and European cinema, the presentation of classic works and film education. Kino Lumière is part of the Europa Cinemas network. It supports more than 1,200 cinemas, which designate a significant part of their screenings to non-national European films and carry out activities for young audiences. In 2014, Kino Lumière won the Europa Cinemas Award for Best Programming.

In 2017, the number of visitors exceeded 100,000 for the first time and reached a new record of 120,000 spectators in 2019. Kino Lumière responded to the pandemic in mid-April with the Kino doma (Cinema at home) project. In 107 days, it offered 149 online screenings, streamed in real time. “Handly a perfect way, but it is the best solution available for substituting the cinema virtually,” Zita Hosszuóva explains. Other cinemas have joined the project as well, and spectators have the opportunity to buy tickets.

“However, it is not a project that can live off the tickets, at the moment, we are able to maintain it mainly because of the financial support from the Audiovisual Fund,” she adds. With the support from the Audiovisual Fund, four screening rooms with 195, 79, 44 and 36 seats have recently undergone a complete modernisation process. During the year, the rooms are designated for more than 15 festivals and showcases. The International Film Festival Febiofest Bratislava, One World, Be2Can, the Slovak Queer Film Festival and MittelCinemaFes as well as the Slovak Film Week and showcases of foreign cinema and retrospectives of important filmmakers take place. “We try to make a room for diversity, for all these films and events that do not have any other space,” Hosszuóva elaborates. In mid-February, it is still closed, and several events were moved to the online platform Kino doma.

In 2014, Kino Lumière celebrated 10 years of its existence. Since opening in mid-April 2004, the Kino Lumière has become a cultural landmark. It is a permanent feature in the Bratislava city centre, surrounded by outstanding cultural institutions such as the Slovak National Theatre, the National Gallery of Art and the Slovak Radio Centre. Kino Lumière is the only place in Slovakia that offers contemporary, European and foreign films screens 35mm film projectors, however, popcorn is forbidden. Kino Lumière – the cinema of the Slovak Film Institute (SFI), situated in the Bratislava city centre, is the only multiple-screen Film Club in the Slovak Republic and one of the most important domestic art house cinemas.

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It will celebrate its 10th birthday in September.

Kino Lumière continues the tradition of the Film Club, a film events centre which operated in the same place since 1996. The premises had been rented since then. When the SFI started managing the cinema in 2011, it focused on contemporary Slovak and European cinema, the presentation of classic works and film education. Kino Lumière is part of the Europa Cinemas network. It supports more than 1,200 cinemas, which designate a significant part of their screenings to non-national European films and carry out activities for young audiences. In 2014, Kino Lumière won the Europa Cinemas Award for Best Programming.

In 2017, the number of visitors exceeded 100,000 for the first time and reached a new record of 120,000 spectators in 2019. Kino Lumière responded to the pandemic in mid-April with the Kino doma (Cinema at home) project. In 107 days, it offered 149 online screenings, streamed in real time. “Handly a perfect way, but it is the best solution available for substituting the cinema virtually,” Zita Hosszuóva explains. Other cinemas have joined the project as well, and spectators have the opportunity to buy tickets. However, it is not a project that can live off the tickets, at the moment, we are able to maintain it mainly because of the financial support from the Audiovisual Fund,” she adds. With the support from the Audiovisual Fund, four screening rooms with 195, 79, 44 and 36 seats have recently undergone a complete modernisation process. During the year, the rooms are designated for more than 15 festivals and showcases. The International Film Festival Febiofest Bratislava, One World, Be2Can, the Slovak Queer Film Festival and MittelCinemaFes as well as the Slovak Film Week and showcases of foreign cinema and retrospectives of important filmmakers take place. “We try to make a room for diversity, for all these films and events that do not have any other space,” Hosszuóva elaborates. In mid-February, it is still closed, and several events were moved to the online platform Kino doma.
Before the first wave of the pandemic closed the cinemas, the last films we were showing were an animated fantasy adventure Onward and extremely successful Slovak film Scumbag (Spírka). Screened over the weekend of 7 – 8 March, it was a bit of luck because we had some money left in our account – thanks to their above-average attendance.

We were closed for 75 days until 25 May, then we tried to lure visitors with an animated film Paw Patrol 2 and an amazingly cast costume romance Little Women. Seven visitors came to the very first screening after the forced break. The Magnificent Seven. TV news and shows about the COVID-19 disease scared people enough, so they did not come rushing in for the films considered appealing to audiences.

The joy of reopening, fireworks and dancing were replaced by our preoccupation with the programme compilation. Distributors have not offered anything new yet – and how are you supposed to entice viewers with reruns? When something new came up in the catalogue, after a while it was removed, and the premiere date set to 2021. A real asset in promoting the cinema turned out to be my Facebook with five thousand friends. At least I hope they all are friends. Every day I was feeding my profile with new articles about films and convincing people that if someone compiled a list of the most sterile cinemas in the world, we would make it to the very top, no sweat. I also launched an appeal to compassion: adopting the slogans for saving culture, I tried to persuade potential viewers to visit us. Some really did show up, proclaiming they had arrived to save us. It was touching. At the entrance, with a facemask and white gloves, I greeted every visitor with a Japanese bow, I made sure that they used the hand sanitiser, and I also measured their temperature.

Nevertheless, we did not reach the before-the-pandemic attendance levels. Compared to the same period in 2019, attendance plummeted by two thirds. And then, cinemas closed again. Symbolically, the last film we screened happened to be Fatima, a story about a miracle that took place at the pilgrimage site. After all, we are also in need of a miracle to end this catastrophic period.

The Slovak Audiovisual Fund responded to the situation and offered cinemas financial support, which our cinema also applied for. The financial aid should be sufficient to restart the occupation. The occupation lasted more than two years. 33% CASH REBATE

Morris Chapdelaine, producer of Van Helsing

Waiting for a Miracle

*Note: In August 1968, the Soviet Union led the Warsaw Pact troops in an invasion of Czechoslovakia to brutally suppress the reformist trends. The occupation lasted more than 20 years.

“Working with the local cast and crew from Slovakia has been an absolute pleasure. The skill set, talent, experience, and dedication to the craft is second to none.”

Morris Chapdelaine, producer of Van Helsing