

The English *Film.sk* has now been published for the third time, the second time during the Berlin International Film Festival. Last year too, we were able to write about Slovak participation in the Berlinale, but this year the situation is even more optimistic – the film *Koza* is going to have its world première in the Forum Section; it is also nominated for the Best First Feature Award. It was made by Ivan Ostrochovský who was originally a documentary filmmaker. Lately, several renowned Slovak documentary filmmakers have ventured into feature projects. Jaro Vojtek's attempt entitled *Children* is also reviewed in the magazine. *In Silence* is another feature film reviewed in this issue and its director Zdeněk Jiráský also has ample experience with non-fiction works. The third film reviewed in the magazine is the documentary *Comeback* (dir. Miro Remo).

Last year, documentaries were hits with the audiences also; the commemorative portrait of hockey-player Pavol Demitra 38 even became the most successful Slovak film of 2014. Around 114,000 people saw it, which makes it a new attendance record for a domestic documentary since Slovakia gained independence.

In addition, you will read on page 12 that last year, taken all in all, more people came to watch Slovak films in cinemas than in any of the previous years. That is great. Because it is no use demanding more Slovak films at foreign film festivals if we ourselves know very little about them. In order for people to get to know about them, among other things, it is necessary to improve promotion of the films and to have a sufficiently strong network of cinemas that will support them. Also, a small cinematography matures and gains in self-confidence by taking part in film festivals. In the ideal situation, this leads to a gradual increase in its productivity and quality – after all, such a situation may be of interest for world festivals too.

► **Daniel Bernát** (Editor-in-Chief)

The History And Present of *Film.sk*

Film.sk is a monthly about film events in Slovakia published by the Slovak Film Institute. It has been published since January 2000 and up to 2010 it was the only film periodical in print in Slovakia. The magazine's editor-in-chief Simona Nôtová was present at its birth and she managed it until September 2012. Naturally, the monthly has undergone conceptual changes over the course of its existence but it was always based on the principle of the provision of a broad range of information on the events in the local film and audiovisual milieu.

At present, *Film.sk* is comprised of permanent sections: the Interview, Topic and Review which are complemented by further regular and irregular sections. These include current film events, reports on film festivals and film presentations in Slovakia and abroad, evaluating reflections on important events, an overview of distribution premieres in the given month but, in addition, the glosses or comments of experienced film journalists, contributions by filmmakers who respond to questions about the projects they are currently working on, profiles of personalities of Slovak cinema, separate texts about new Slovak films based on the accounts of directors and producers, presentations of inspirational new books from the area of film literature and several other sections. *Film.sk* also contains attachments which chart the annual results in one of the areas of Slovak cinema and provide valuable statistical data. One of the regular attachments brings a report summarising Slovak cinematography for the previous year, divided into a number of chapters: Legislation, Financial Support, Film Education, Film Production, Film Distribution, Cinemas, Multiplexes and Film Clubs, Film Festivals and Film Screenings. The study of Czech cinematography, which is also published as an attachment to the monthly magazine, takes on a similar structure.

Contemporarily, *Film.sk* is a well-established film magazine capable of appealing to film experts, filmmakers, students and the wider public alike. The website www.filmsk.sk has supported its printed version since 2001. ▲

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The Slovak Film Institute (SFI) is the sole state-funded memory and archive institution operating in the area of audiovision 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 (FIAP), European Film Promotion (since 2006); it functions as a service workplace for the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) and the Council of Europe cinema support fund – Eurimages. Creative Europe Desk Slovensko is also part of the Slovak Film Institute.

► The Film Institute in Bratislava was established on 1st April 1963 and it was placed under the directorate of Film Production and Distribution (Filmová tvorba a distribúcia) in Bratislava. The film archive also became part of the Institute; it was established in 1958 by the film historian Ivan Rumanovský at the Slovak Film Distribution Company (Slovenská požičovňa filmov).

► In 1970, the SFI was presented with a copy of the first Slovak full-length feature film *Jánošík* (Jánošík, dir. Jaroslav Siakel, 1921) which was later restored, provided with a soundtrack and in 1995 UNESCO placed it among the world cultural heritage.

► In 1972, the Film Institute came under the Central Office of Slovak Film (Ústredie slovenského filmu).

► By the end of 1976 the Film Club of the Central Office of Slovak Film was opened in Bratislava; at the present day, Cinema Lumière, belonging to the Slovak Film Institute, is located on its premises.

► In July 1989 the SFI came under the state organisation Slovak Film Production Bratislava – Koliba (Slovenská filmová tvorba Bratislava – Koliba) up to 1st January 1991 when, by decision of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (MC SR), the Slovak Film Institute – National Cinematographic Centre was established as an independent public contributory organisation managed by the MC SR. Hence, by delimitation, the SFI also acquired producer rights to the archived films which were made before 1991 by Slovak Film Production.

► The Slovak Film Institute participated in the preparation of the extensive publication called *History of Slovak Cinematography* (Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie, 1997); currently the second, updated edition is in preparation.

► In 2001, the SFI became a full member of the prestigious International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP).

► In 2002, the SFI published its first DVD (*Pictures of the Old World/Obrazy starého sveta*, dir. Dušan Hanák, 1972); since then it has published dozens of other DVDs in over 500,000 copies.

► In 2002, the SFI started to implement the long-term integrated audiovisual information system project, SK CINEMA, for processing, storing, interconnecting, organising, searching and presenting information from the SFI's individual departments.

► In 2006, the Government adopted the draft Project of the Systematic Restoration of Audiovisual Cultural Heritage with the objective of rescuing cinematographic and audiovisual works and gradually making them accessible to the public. This is the SFI's long-term priority project.

► In 2008, the Audiovisual Act entered into effect. It regulated and re-defined the position, tasks and activities of the SFI.

► In 2008, SFI's shop Klapka.sk was opened. It presents a broad offer of filmological literature, DVDs and CDs and other materials.

► Since 2011, in association with the Radio and Television of Slovakia, the SFI has implemented the national project entitled Digital Audiovision in order to systematically digitise the audiovisual heritage and make it accessible. Two specialised digitisation workplaces are part of the project. SFI's digitisation workplace is located in the basement of Cinema Lumière in Bratislava and it came into operation last year. You can read more about it on pages 38 – 39.

► In September 2011, Cinema Lumière was opened in Bratislava. The cinema is operated by the SFI.



Between Amateurism and Traditionalism

► Jana Dudková

In 2014, six full-length feature films produced in a professional environment and one amateur film were released into cinema distribution. Although continuity with the previous years is evident, this sample does slightly modify the picture of contemporary Slovak film. It is no longer true that the most important thing happening in Slovak feature film production is related to an effort to join one or other of the irreconcilable sides of the barricade – either social films intended primarily for festival and art house audiences, or films inspired by more popular genres.

Instead, 2014 offered the vision of a much livelier interest in the past, but it also reflected efforts to increase the social diversity of the target groups of viewers. This occurs thanks to experiments in the area of distribution (in particular in the case of *Slovakia 2.0*), and also thanks to the enhancement of the supply by way of new types and genres (in this respect, even non-comparable projects such as the amateurish *Socialist Zombie Massacre*, the fairy tale *Love in Your Soul* and the student film *Good Man* may be regarded as injecting a certain vigour).

As my aim is not to assess cinema distribution itself but rather the values that it brings to the Slovak environment through the prism of full-length feature films, I would like to highlight

several specific phenomena introduced by the previous year. Probably the most obvious of these is the resumption of interest in the past, in terms of recollecting traumatic periods of the national past, and the fetishisation of the past through costumes, lighting or stage design. In *A Step into the Dark* (*Krok do tmy*), M. Luther brings the traumas of individual failures from the communist era into close relation with individual fates from the period of the Slovak National Uprising and World War II. It is a fundamental gesture. Communism ceases to be a symbol of a discontinuity which hit the country out of the blue and which was staved off after 1989. Instead of a simple retro-nostalgic atmosphere, the film suggests a more credible

image of post-war devastation and dysfunction, inconspicuously contrasting with the period-builders' vision. The open ending of *In Silence* (V tichu, dir. Z. Jiráský) also points out, even though in a slightly different sense, that the traumas associated with World War II did not simply subside once the war ended. Both films have one shortcoming in common – the limits resulting from the integration of the genre matrices. Their conflicting role is, by turns, to support the impression of discontinuity between various sections of the past, but also between the past and present. For instance, *A Step into the Dark* is built on a love triangle with a tragic ending which allows the viewer to experience a catharsis and through it to re-build a defence against the period depicted by the film. Moreover, after a long period of preparations, it cannot act as a welcome alternative to “flying Cyprians” and bloody countesses any longer – within the current cinematographic context it appears to be a bit obsolete.

In turn, *In Silence* is limited by the undue dependence on the conventionally fetishistic visualisation of the Holocaust built on a sharp contrast between the pre-Holocaust retro-modernist idyll and the blue chill of shots filled with unkempt dirty figures in striped prison uniforms. The fact that the concentration camp shots are not strictly realistic but also contain poetic dream insets does not change anything in the conventional genre principle of image selection. And although the ending of the film is open and it is clear that the return to Slovak society, still replete with anti-Semitism and lack of confidence, will not be easy, due to its associations with traditional films about the Holocaust, *In Silence* supports forgetting and does not allow the exceptionality and extent of the specific, real and (thanks to the work of musicologist Agáta Schindlerová) excellently documented fates to lift itself above the genre visual matrices to which the narration conforms.

Interest in the past in an ostensibly completely different sense is presented by the amateur film, *Socialist Zombie Massacre* (Socialistický Zombi Mord, dir. R. Blažek, P. Čermák, Z. Paulini). It is a local version of a horror *slasher* set in a Slovak secondary school about thirty years ago.

Despite the substantial differences in the theme, narrative and genre dispersion, all three films are linked by an effort to come to terms with the past and by an interest in its fetishisation. The latter tendency is most obvious in the introduction to *Socialist Zombie Massacre*. The film begins with a summary of nostalgic fetishes linked with “normalised” ideas of the life of a period family. It does not make anything out of the fashion and design “fetishes of socialism”, it uses them only to provide an exotic atmosphere for the genre narrative, and the horror is suggested first by the conspiracy associations with the colonisation practices of the Soviet Union. However, instead of criticising the society of that time, the range of emotions anticipated by the genre of the film, and their gradual alteration over the course of the narrative, lead the viewer on through experiencing intense feelings of fear or abomination to the final catharsis. This also brings us to the symbolic coming to terms with the traumas of the period and insulating them from critical consciousness of the past or present.

The films with plots which are not unambiguously located in the past also have features in common, of which the fragmentation is the most symptomatic. In all three films focusing on the image of contemporary Slovakia, the effort to build on a long-term interest in family or partnership stories with more or less pertinent (and dominant) social motivations is prevalent. The fragmentation of the film into short stories or chapters may be linked with an effort to capture Slovakia's current problems in their greatest possible variety. However, it rather appears as though, for the moment, the filmmakers have lost the ability to construct a compact and meaningful full-length story in the given genre range. As if the times of *The House* or *My Dog Killer*, which had actually been developing over a long time, have subsided – but the desire to brand Slovak film on the basis of what they achieved has not been lost.

Slovakia 2.0 (Slovensko 2.0, 10 directors) was made on the basis of another omnibus film *Hungary 2011* (Magyarország 2011), tentatively “branding” national identity and, simultaneously, the national cinematography. Like every

intelligent brand, *Slovakia 2.0* is also based on the effort to enhance a certain awareness of the brand but, at the same time, it queries to some extent the identity of this brand and gives instructions as to how it could be disseminated. We can see in it the effort to disseminate the concept of Slovak film and several inspiring approaches to what Slovakia means today – twenty years after becoming an independent country. However, we need to come to terms with the fact that the film was made as an imperfect producer's project, fulfilled by directors with works of highly variable quality, whereby the film largely eschews critical tendencies within popular genres and serves up an image of Slovak cinematography as being exclusively art-house.

Like *Slovakia 2.0*, Jaro Vojtek's feature début *Children* (*Deti*) was produced by Mphilms, the company which was also behind the full-length début of Mátyás Prikler *Fine, Thanks* (*Ďakujem, dobre*). The film consists of four stories about dysfunctional relations between parents and children, about the lack of communication and about unexpected forms of love. It contains the "mandatory" excursion to a Roma settlement, albeit, for Slovakia, this time given an original treatment, and several quotations from other Slovak films (in particular, *Fine, Thanks* and *The Miracle – Zázrak*). It is again a particular form of branding, aimed rather at the ability of a very restricted audience to distinguish the individual images as allusions to projects executed by the film's screenwriter, Marek Leščák. Even though the film's theme is exceptional in the current domestic context, the quality of the individual stories varies in this case also and other shortcomings appear: for instance the attempts to use words or images to express the points that the viewer has already adequately understood from the narrative, or the selection and direction of actors who, in the great majority of cases, imitate rather than "live" their characters (with the exceptions of the excellent Éva Bandor and János Gosztonyi in the final story *Dad*).

The third film which bears witness to contemporary Slovakia barely meets the criteria for a full-length film and was made at the Academy of Performing Arts. It responds to the long-expressed demand for comedies, and it

makes use of absurd humour to revive the topical penchant for films about relations and also about "exotic" individuals (those excluded from society in different ways). Even though *Good Man* (*Dobrý človek*, dir. Cs. Molnár) blunders about in terms of pace, dramaturgy and the direction of actors, it does contain several pertinent situations or alienating elements which here and there are reminiscent of Šulík's early films or refer to the works of the Slovak new wave (the allusion to *The Sun in a Net*). The film's critical view of contemporary times, however, often sinks to the level of absurd verbal humour.

In this respect, even the fairy-tale *Love in Your Soul* (*Láska na vlásku*, dir. M. Čengel Solčanská) alludes to the current situation in the country, as similarly "pertinent" sentences can be heard in the film – according to it, people in "this country" have forgotten how to laugh or even to smile. However, the impression the film makes is very traditional, while a more rapid pace, fewer stereotypes in the dialogues and more inventive music would not come amiss. The attempt to vary the target group somehow misses its point, the marketing decision to cast the teenage idol, Celeste Buckingham, in the female title role does not conform to the reality that the film was inspired by traditional Czecho(-)Slovak fairy tales for the whole family. The only thing that is clear is that, since 2008 when Martin Šmatlák highlighted the mysterious post-revolutionary absence of fairy-tales, which were the most successful commercial genre in the 1980s, *Love in Your Soul* is the first film that has sought to address this deficiency.

It is something of a pity that, in their endeavour to enlarge the genre offering and thematic dispersion of Slovak cinematography, most of the seven feature films released into cinema distribution have remained somewhere between amateurism and traditionalism – whereby one amateur horror film and two professionally made fine-tuned excursions into the past (largely formally) confirm the qualitative broad range of this imaginary axis. ▲

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Author Versus Viewer, Art Versus Kitsch, Professional Versus Amateur

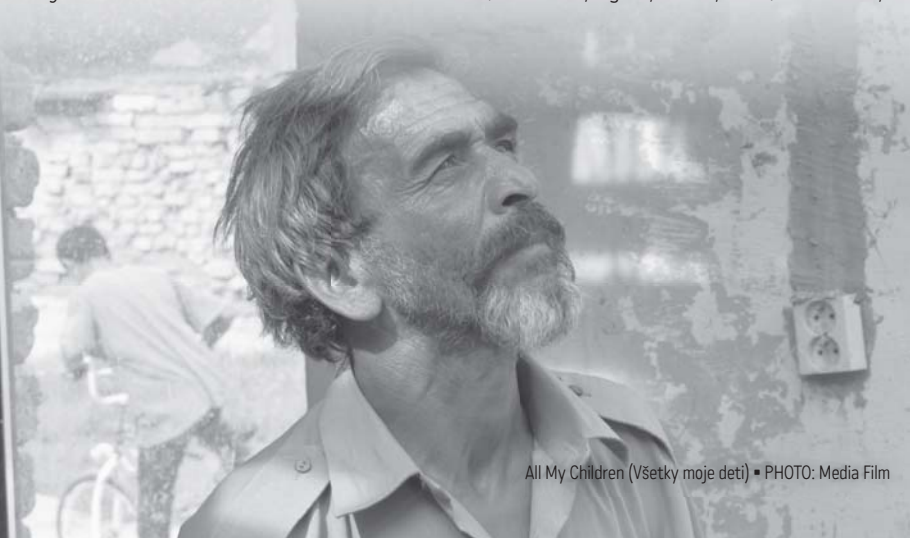
► Martin Palúch

Last year's collection of full-length documentaries in cinemas displays several remarkable trends. With regard to the diversity of qualitative, aesthetic, auteur and commercial points of departure and approaches in it, the number of débuts, in particular, should be something to please us (Miro Remo, Vladislava Plančíková, Arnold Kojnok, Olga Záblačká, Daniel Dangl and Lukáš Zednikovič, Patrik Lančarič, Róbert Slovák, Anabela Žigová, Martin Štrba, Ladislav Kaboš, Jana Čavojská and Vladimír Kampf). Along with these, one tried-and-tested professional – Ľubomír Štecko – also released his new film in cinema.

At the same time, this profusion of full-length débuts suggests that the filmmakers have changed shift, as the distinguished personalities of Slovak auteur documentary moved over to feature films (Juraj Lehotský, Marko Škop, Jaro Vojtek) or did not release a new documentary in cinemas last year. Another interesting signifier appears when comparing the auteur projects made with the ambition of winning recognition at international festivals with those projects made with a clear intention of confronting Slovak audiences, of stirring them out of their lethargy and reviving domestic attendances. The first type of production may be denoted as auteur film which seeks to

work creatively with filmic means of expression and approaches treatment of the concept in an artistically creative manner. The second type of film, on the surface at least, makes concessions to the viewer's taste, it takes up a calculated stance with its emotional part in advance and it is based on the attractiveness of the phenomenon emerging from the film.

Returning to the past and focusing on a portrait are the dominant features of these projects: on the portrait of an individual (Kojnok, Štecko, Kaboš, Záblačká) or of a group (Štrba); on commemorative films (Lančarič, Dangl and Zednikovič) or partial self-portraits (Plančíková, Žigová, Slovák, Štrba). Plančíková,



Laňčarič, Žigová and Štrba took advantage of a domestic idea based on an environment close to the author. Of all these filmmakers, only Plančíková, Kojnok, Štrba and Žigová do not only assemble biographical facts but also, using memories as a basis, reflect more profoundly on a certain social phenomenon seen from the position of a subjective historical perspective. In *Felvidek: Caught in Between* (Felvidek – Horná zem) Plančíková tries to reflect the national identity in the context of the deportations of citizens of Hungarian nationality from southern Slovakia after enforcing the Decrees of the President of the Republic in 1945. In *The Lyricist* (Lyrik), Kojnok offers an original view of the history of Czechoslovakia from 1918 to 1993 through the life-story of the erudite historian, Ján Mlynárik. It is the story of the joint state of Czechs and Slovaks and, simultaneously, the story of an individual who experienced the totalitarian regime "live" at first hand. This was also the main theme of his life-long historical research. In *Salto Mortale* Žigová investigates the "secret police" past of her own father, whereby, in broader overlaps, she reveals the practices of the former secret police, she uncovers the subtle and harsh methods it applied as an instrument of power and intimidation. In *Wave vs. Shore* (Vlna vs. breh) Štrba makes the audience familiar with the phenomenon of the "Slovak new wave" in photography in a dynamic video-clip montage, albeit to the detriment of consideration of the theme and reneging on the development of characters and story. It is a group portrait in which the director forms a part.

Only the films of Miro Remo, Ladislav Kaboš and, in parts, Oľga Záblačká are also original in that they do not draw on ideas from the past but instead they reflect current problems in a socially engaged manner. In *Comeback*, as an author, Remo creatively unveils the emotional world of repeat offenders. He offers us a glimpse behind prison walls, he analyses the reasons for repeat offending and he reflects critically on the judicial system which produces "eternal" inmates by complicating their return to society once their sentence has been served. In his film *All My Children* (Všetky moje deti) Kaboš combines both these trends. He approaches the topical theme of segregated Roma communities in an original manner and, through a portrait of the Catholic priest Marián Kuffa, he captures the practical and spiritual activities he performs in his effort to tackle the Roma issue in a colony near Žakovce in eastern Slovakia. He selflessly and devout-

edly helps marginalised groups of society: Roma, former prisoners, homeless, handicapped people, alcohol and drug addicts, physically abused women, etc. The documentary recorded festival response both in Slovakia and abroad; at the same time, it made an assault on attendance records even in the domestic distribution environment.

In *Square in a Circle* (Štvorec v kruhu alebo Život medzi únikmi a snami) Ľubomír Štecko has created a concentrated portrait of the Slovak artist of Ruthenian origin, Vladimír Ossif, who realised his dream of becoming an internationally renowned artist in the area of abstract painting purely by his own efforts, even through his privations. Štecko takes note of his personal trials and tribulations, the quirkiness of his personality, the inner determination and egoistic resilience which took the artist on his journey through the largest cultural metropolises of the world. Today he is able to evaluate the relationship of an artist with creation and life, to reflect on the uniqueness and originality or to highlight insignificant cultural values from the position of a well-established professional. At the same time, this road movie is a testimony to the spiritual freedom of a man who is bound neither to place nor to family so as to be able to carry on dreaming his dream and remain true to the ideals of a free artist. In *The Edge – 4 Films about Marek Brezovský* (Hrana – 4 filmy o Marekovi Brezovskom) Patrik Laňčarič created a portrait of the prematurely deceased Marek Brezovský (1974 – 1994) and a single generation in Bratislava. The four films (*Music, Love, Family, Solitude*) are interconnected by Brezovský's original music which elevates the story of the young artist to the level of a local legend. His music moved beyond the period he lived in, but his sensitive personality was not able to cope with the changes in society after 1989 and his depressions multiplied through heroin abuse. Laňčarič uses archive materials which are given a commentary by Marek's peers and family; the information is frequently repeated but from a different person, another voice. The animated final part of the film made by Patrik Pašš Jr. makes the film's structure formally remarkable. Animated techniques linked with archives and diaries are also used by Vladislava Plančíková in *Felvidek: Caught in Between*.

The inclusion of Róbert Slovák's film, *First Slovak Horror* (Prvý slovenský horor) among documentaries is questionable. The self-portrait is actually a styli-

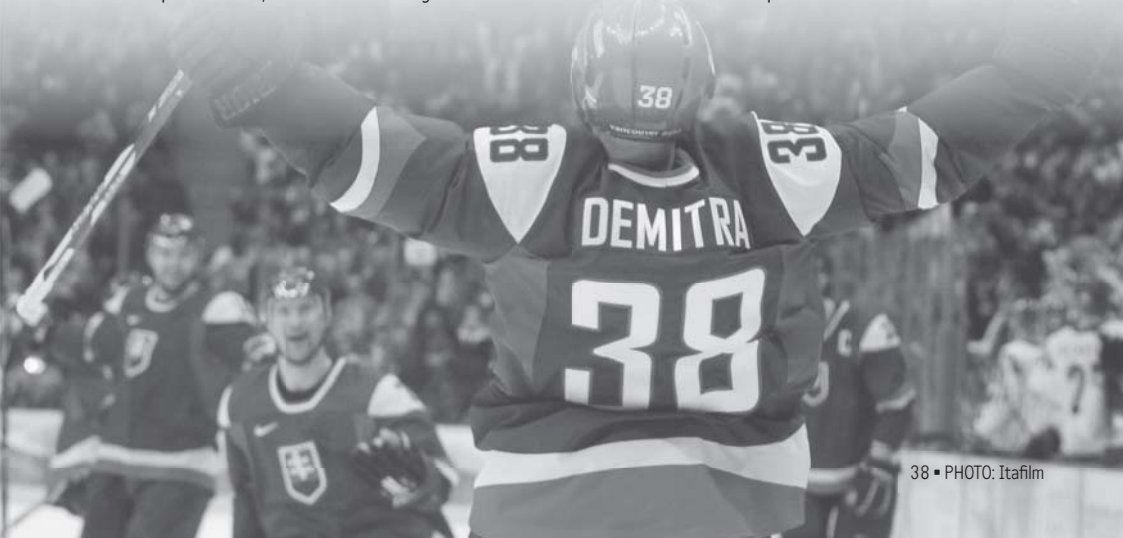
sed and staged reconstruction enlarging on the trials and tribulations of a producer who sought to make a horror movie under our conditions. The result is a sort of unbalanced mosaic about the development of a never-completed project in which the degree of stylisation of facts and self-presentation of the author exceeded the documentary component and this was formally manifested as an arbitrary playfully staged reconstruction. Thus, the "making-of" became more of a film pretending to be a documentary than a full-fledged documentary about the making of a feature film – a horror. For the reasons given in the film, this making-of remained an attempt to make a joke.

We may designate the commemorative film made by Daniel Dangl and Lukáš Zedníkovič *38* as commercial kitsch without any auteur or artistic ambitions. The film about the life of hockey-player Pavol Demitra is a sentimental interplay of television techniques and clichés. It is based on the tragedy of the hockey-player and the reactions in society and in the media to his death, it manipulates the audience's emotions, it is an obtrusive attempt to turn Demitra into a hero with a mythical personality cult. Paradoxically, due to its treatment and not its theme, *38* became a big hit with audiences. Olga Záblická's film *Archbishop Bezák, Adieu...* (Arcibiskup Bezák Zbohom...) calculates on a similar social order. The author attempts to create a civil portrait of archbishop Bezák in the form of interviews, staged commentary and shots from TV reports and coverage, and she tracks down the reasons for him being removed from the highest Slovak church circles. The journalistic form is confined within a classical account in conceptual terms, thanks to the unity of the idea and

the construction of dramaturgy. The same, however, cannot be said of *Salto Mortale* by Anabela Žigová. The theme of the film affords a really good basis for a documentary detective story with self-portrait elements. But the qualitative imbalance of all the components of the film expression means that the result displays all the hallmarks of an amateur home video. A lack of directing, cinematographic, editing and sound practice can be evinced from the treatment, and the film was probably made without any dramaturgic preparation. The bonus of the film is that the main character's face, the face of the director's late father, never appears on the screen.

DanubeStory by Jana Čavojská and Vladimír Kampf stands out from the auteur film framework. The filmmakers adopt the popular-educational genre from the outset and try not to diverge from it. We learn the details about the River Danube and about the countries through which the river flows by way of an informative commentary. However, the selection of protagonists appears to be somewhat haphazard. Whilst in some countries these are in some way related to the film's theme, in others the relation is somewhat strained.

In 2014, in addition to an increase in the number of documentary débuts, we also noted an inclination on the part of filmmakers towards the portrait form. The authors prefer to examine their subjectively perceived historical themes with an inclination towards narration in the first person or to revealing private family stories. The works of Miro Remo and Ladislav Kaboš stand out from this group as these two try to continue with their auteur works and, at the same time, stay in contact with current problems. ▲





The Ongoing Development Continues, Slowly

► Eva Šošková

2014 can be credited with bringing a style smorgasbord of animation techniques into Slovak animation, it moved Slovak post-revolution cinematography a little bit closer to a full-length animated film, it advanced in the area of marketing strategies and it also continued to erode the borders between traditional narrative procedures and psychologising themes with broader overlaps. However, after 2013's promising start in less traditional short film distribution, 2014 went into reverse.

The release of new professional animated films in cinemas has become something of a tradition thanks to the Association of Slovak Film Clubs. In 2014, two challenging projects in terms of money and time, supported by the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, were screened prior to full-length films. First, Joanna Kožuch's *Fongopolis* had its première. The author relied on her experience with pixilation, so typical for her generation, and on the clearly visible pencil-drawn lines which in the total animation of her previous, student film *Game* (Hra) depicted allegorical war scenes. In *Fongopolis* Joanna Kožuch not only combines, in a collage form, animation techniques based on a graphic stylisation of hand-drawn animation and on photo-realism, but also adds various graphical styles of visual smog to them. The very topical theme of information overload and the ensuing stress and distracted attention is thus al-

ready solidly entrenched at the mise-en-scène stage. Whilst, in the previous film made by feel me film *Snow* (Sneh, 2013), Ivana Šebestová's heroine almost lost herself fatally in her inside and had to get out of herself in order to rescue herself, the violinist in *Fongopolis* finds a solid point in himself from which he is able to change the surrounding world. Joanna Kožuch's film has already won several awards, for instance at festivals in Poland and Maribor.

The younger generation is represented by the second film in distribution, *Nina*. The creative duo Ové Pictures also builds on their previous experience, this time with animation from paper cut-outs in space (graduation film by Veronika Obertová, *Viliam*, 2009), wherein they move this technique to a new level. Spatial (embossed) puppets and objects which are traditionally animated on the surface are rendered unusual by scenes animated on a special cylinder.

By turning this, the camera and characters may wander endlessly across the country. Veronika Oberťová and Michaela Čopíková do not deviate thematically from their work, hence they also do not stand out at this level from the female stream already formed by authors in the 1990s. Partner relations and the psychologisation of characters are the determining factors for them; here, in the case of Ové Pictures, they are relieved and enlivened by pleasant humour. However, other dominant themes are added to the partnership theme in every film. In *Nina* it is the theme of fear which appeared in several other student films last year. It is fear that man is capable of fighting against on his own, albeit needing inspiration or a strong motivation to do so. In the film made by Ové Pictures, Ondro and Nina motivate each other. The film's marketing was not very extensive but adequate for a narrower fan base. Those who came to the première open to the general public could take the slogan of the film away with them, for instance on bags made by Ové Pictures.

Another animated film appeared in fixed and mobile cinemas – outside of the dominant generational context of the Studio of Animation at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts. Documentary filmmaker Vladislava Plančíková, following international trends in animation, made her début with a full-length documentary animated film about Slovak-Hungarian relations *Felvidek: Caught in Between* (Felvidék – Horná zem). The collage film with several animation techniques has already won awards at home and abroad.

We are still awaiting a purely animated full-length film but, as the marketing of *Heart of a Tower* (Srdce veže, Peter Budinský and Patrik Pašš) indicates and especially the campaign to *LokalFilmis* (InOut Studio) with several trailers have shown, the period of waiting is getting shorter. The première of the film with characters from the television and later Internet project *Local TV* (Lokal TV) has been announced for 2015.

In 2013, we witnessed several attempts to solve the problem of the distribution of short, animated films. However, the blocks *Slovak Shorts* and *Grasshoppers* (Kobylky) did not continue into the following year due to low attendance rates. The filling of the VoD platform with animated films also ceased. From this perspective, 2014 was a disappointment. Therefore, the presentation of further new animated films

remained to be borne on the shoulders of film festivals.

Last year, Fest Anča brought a new competition selection of Slovak animated films – ten films made in 2012 to 2014 competed for the Anča Slovak Award; *Fongopolis* won. As for those films that have not yet been released into broader distribution, the student film *NonStop* made by Silvia Senešiová is worthy of mention. Caricatured torn-off arms and legs are typical for the youngest generation at the Academy of Performing Arts and they are rapidly becoming an exhausted mannerism. In this film, the physical destruction is directly linked with a death threat which is also supported by the horror stylisation of the film. Death is not autotelic here, it is not an attraction, but it points out the hidden connection between consumerism and humanism.

The Film Europe distribution company made its selection from Slovak films at Fest Anča for the first time. It granted its Di Award to the entertainment – educational film *The Story of a Tornado* (Ako vzniká tornádo) and at the end of 2014 the company released the film in cinemas and on the Film Europe TV Channel.

The competition at the Áčko Student Film Festival presented new talents and their very varied, manifold production in terms of techniques and styles. A wide number of films even presented non-traditional techniques such as rotoscoping or motion pictures in the domestic context.

Recently we have been experiencing a gradual revival in productions for children. At the end of 2013, the series *Mimi and Lisa* (Mimi a Líza, Katarína Kerekesová) was successfully premièred on TV. The heroines of the series became not only a part of the Slovak media space, but also of households with small children. The demand for domestic production for children is talked about as a barren land that has absorbed *Mimi and Lisa* in the form of a book, TV series and DVD. In addition to a new season of *Mimi and Lisa*, other bedtime stories supported by the AVF and RTVS are also in production now; this year even the long-term project *If I Only Had a Screw Loose!* (Mať tak o koliesko viac!, My Studio) with 52 episodes should be concluded.

2014 did not result in any revolutionary changes or awards for still "fresh" films, but it does not suggest stagnation either. Animation in Slovakia is slowly developing and burgeoning in all directions. ▲

2014: the Year of 38

► Miro Ulman

In 2014, very nearly as many viewers came to see the full-length documentary **38** about hockey player Pavol Demitra as watched all the premièred Slovak films in 2013. From the preliminary total results, the share of domestic films in the total attendance is almost 6 per cent, a record number of 26 films were made and the gross box office takings should exceed EUR 20 million for the first time. Hence, we could call 2014 a year of records.

In 2013 we were pleased about the success of *The Candidate* (Kandidát) which managed to rank seventh in the list of top domestic films over the era of independent Slovakia with 80,234 viewers, while last year the "old" record of Dušan Hanák's documentary *Paper Heads* (Papierové hlavy) was broken, as it was the best attended domestic documentary over the era of independence since 1996, with 17,574 viewers. First Ladislav Kaboš's film *All My Children* (Všetky moje deti), premièred on 13 February 2014, was seen by over 22,000 viewers in ten weeks, and Daniel Dangl's and Lukáš Zedníkovič's full-length début *38* boosted this record up into the category of dreams. By the end of 2014 it had been viewed by 113,930 people, thus the film ranked fifth in the list of top films in the era of independence, only two thousand viewers behind *Soul at Peace* (Pokoj v duši).

With regard to production, 2014 was the most prolific in the history of Slovakia with 26 full-length Slovak and co-production films (of these only 6 were minority co-productions). And the number of premières was only one fewer than the record number achieved in the year before. Twenty-two full-length films were premièred in cinemas – 10 feature films (of these 3 minority co-productions) and 12 documentaries. The fact that three-quarters of the premièred documentaries were débuts is gratifying. In addition, four short films – *Tiger Fight* (Tanec tigra) by director Martin Repka, *Nina* (Nina) by Veronika Obertová and Michaela Čopíková, *Fongopolis* (Fongopolis) by Joanna Kožuch and *The Story of a Tornado* (Ako

vzniká tornádo) by Veronika Kocourková – were screened prior to full-length films.

In 2012, all the premièred domestic films were seen by only 90,830 viewers, a year later this figure had already increased to 160,151 viewers and last year it even reached 232,567, which meant a year-on-year increase of 45.22 per cent. The audiences' confidence in domestic productions appears to be slowly recovering. The average attendance per screening of a 100 per cent Slovak film or majority co-production increased to 41.56 viewers, which is almost twice as many as in 2012 (21.86 viewers). The average attendance per screening of minority co-productions also increased year-on-year from 17.80 to 20.14 viewers. The documentaries *38* (54.72 viewers), *All My Children* (54.42) and *The Lyricist* (Lyrik, 53.57) achieved the largest average attendance per performance. As for feature films, the amateur film *Socialist Zombie Massacre* (Socialistický Zombi Mord) achieved the highest average attendance per performance (39.51 viewers).

The average admission fee per domestic film was EUR 4.28 which is 1 cent less than in 2013.

The documentary *38* referred to above was the most successful domestic film of 2014, with 113,930 viewers. The fairy-tale *Love in Your Soul* (Láska na vlásku) by Mariana Čengel Solčanská (45,091 viewers) and another documentary *All My Children* by Ladislav Kaboš (25,523 viewers) also succeeded in crossing the 10,000 viewer threshold. *Fair Play* was the most attended minority co-production with 7,300 viewers. ▲

DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST-RUN SLOVAK AND CO-PRODUCTION FILMS IN SLOVAKIA IN 2014

	MOVIE TITLE	DIRECTOR	PRODUCTION YEAR	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	RELEASE DATE	SCREENING FORMAT	NUMBER OF SCREENINGS	ADMISSIONS	GROSS BOX OFFICE	AVERAGE ATTENDANCE PER SCREENING	AVERAGE ADMISSION FEE	DISTRIBUTION COMPANY
1.	38 (38)	Daniël Dangl, Lukáš Zedníkovič	2014	SK	11. 9. 2014	DCP	2,082	113,930	541,238,00 €	54.72	4.75 €	Italfilm
2.	Love in Your Soul (Láska na vlásku)	Mariána Čengel Solčanská	2014	SK	9. 10. 2014	DCP	1,589	45,091	201,679,20 €	28.38	4.47 €	Continental film
3.	All My Children (Všetky moje deti)	Ladislav Kaboš	2013	SK/CZ	13. 2. 2014	DCP, BD, DVD	469	25,523	83,862,00 €	54.42	3.29 €	Italfilm
4.	Archibishop Bezak Adieu... (Archibiskup Bezák Zbohom...)	Olga Záblačná	2014	SK	13. 3. 2014	DCP	315	12,106	39,978,36 €	38.43	3.30 €	Barracuda Movie
5.	Felvidék: Caught in Between (Felvidék - Horná zem)	Vladislava Plančíková	2014	SK/CZ	3. 4. 2014	DCP, BD	96	4,554	3,525,00 €	47.44	0.77 €	Filmtopia
6.	The Edge - 4 Films about Marek Brezovský (Hrana - 4 filmy o Marekovi Brezovskom)	Patrík Lančarič	2014	SK	27. 3. 2014	DCP, DVD	103	3,899	12,732,55 €	37.85	3.27 €	Magic Box Slovakia
7.	Children (Deti)	Jaro Vojeck	2014	SK/CZ	25. 9. 2014	DCP, BD, DVD	86	2,731	5,021,19 €	31.76	1.84 €	ASFC
8.	Comeback (Comeback)	Miro Remo	2014	SK	16. 10. 2014	DCP, BD, DVD	85	2,597	5,908,19 €	30.55	2.28 €	ASFC
9.	Socialist Zombie Massacre (Socialistický Zombi Morď)	Rastislav Blažek, Peter Čermák, Zuzana Paulini	2014	SK	25. 4. 2014	DCP, BD, DVD	35	1,383	4,783,66 €	39.51	3.46 €	Pavol Krchňák - Dark Stone
10.	A Step into the Dark (Krok do tmy)	Miloslav Luther	2014	SK	12. 6. 2014	DCP	134	1,364	5,415,21 €	10.18	3.97 €	Continental film
11.	In Silence (V tichu)	Zdeněk Jiříšský	2014	SK/CZ	18. 9. 2014	DCP, BD, DVD	69	1,006	3,131,00 €	14.58	3.11 €	Film Europe
12.	First Slovak Horror (Prvý slovenský horor)	Róbert Slovák	2014	SK	24. 6. 2014	BD	21	991	1,926,01 €	47.19	1.94 €	Róbert Slovák
13.	Slovakia 2.0 (Slovensko 2.0)	Juraj Herz, Martin Šulík, Peter Kerekes, Zuzana Liová, Mišo Suchý, Ondrej Rudavský, Peter Krištofek, Viera Čákanová, Miro Jelok, Iveta Grofiová	2014	SK	10. 4. 2014	DCP, BD	68	918	3,097,00 €	13.50	3.37 €	Film Europe
14.	Lyricist (Lyriik)	Arnold Kojnok	2014	SK	27. 3. 2014	DCP, BD	7	375	1,312,50 €	53.57	3.50 €	Arina
15.	Square in a Circle (Štvorec v kruhu alebo Život medzi únikami a snami)	Lubomír Štecko	2013	SK/CZ	27. 3. 2014	DCP, BD, DVD	23	300	265,80 €	13.04	0.89 €	ASFC
16.	Good Man (Dobry človek)	Csaba Molnár	2013	SK	27. 5. 2014	BD, DVD	22	199	67,700 €	9.05	3.40 €	Film Europe
17.	Wave vs. Shore (Vlna vs. breh)	Martin Štrba	2014	SK/CZ	6. 11. 2014	DCP	13	141	231,90 €	10.85	1.64 €	Barracuda Movie, PubRes
18.	Sanjo Mortale (Santo Mortale)	Anabela Žigová	2014	SK/US	20. 11. 2014	DCP, BD	8	55	192,00 €	6.88	3.49 €	Film Europe
19.	Danubestory (DanubeStory I - II)	Jana Čavojská, Vladimír Kampf	2014	SK	11. 6. 2014	BD	*	*	*	*	*	Danubestory
TOTAL	100 % Slovak films and majority co-productions						5,225	217,163	914,977	41.56	4.21 €	
1.	Fair Play (Fair Play)	Andrea Sedláčková	2014	CZ/SK/DE	13. 3. 2014	DCP	330	7,300	30,610,00 €	22.12	4.19 €	Summ Entertainment
2.	All My Tomorrows (Zejtra napořád)	Rudolf Hařík	2014	CZ/SK	14. 8. 2014	DCP	350	6,375	32,783,00 €	18.21	5.14 €	Italfilm
3.	The Places (Miesta)	Radim Špaček	2014	CZ/SK	11. 9. 2014	DCP	85	1,729	2,483,48 €	20.34	1.44 €	Barracuda Movie
TOTAL	Minority co-productions						765	15,404	65,876,48 €	20.14	4.28 €	
TOTAL	ALL Slovak and co-production films						5,990	232,567	980,853,05 €	38.83	4.22 €	

Note: The films are ranked in descending order based on the number of viewers. * = The distributor does not follow the data. Source: individual distribution companies



Freedom as Punishment

► Žofia Bosáková

The full-length documentary début of one of the most successful filmmakers of the young generation, Miro Remo, shows that it is virtually impossible to extricate oneself from the vicious circle of committing repeat offences. **Comeback** is visually attractive, it artfully uses mood-creating musical motifs which humanise the unappealing anti-heroes. It is a mosaic of attractions rather than a coherent story.

Miro Remo has had a nose for attractive themes since studying at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts. He is able to treat these themes playfully, to transpose them into unusual locations and exotic characters that are out of the common run – in a stylistic garb which digresses from dirty shots and does not give preference to what to depict over how to depict it. At a time when the public perceives Slovak film production to be non-attractive and abstruse when compared with American studio/television production and its different traditions, Remo's approach is welcomed with regard to his perception of cinematography as a whole with a set of various functions (also in regard to audience potential). Remo worked with these elements in his short films *Cold Joint* (Studený spoj) and *Arsy-Versy* (this is one of the most successful of all domestic films in terms of the number of awards at international festivals). His portrait of a bat lover was based on a socio-dramatic perspective, but he worked with semantic elements of documentary comedy about an eccentric bachelor – his mother worries about him as she is already quite old. The title of his latest film, *Comeback*, immediately gives a foreboding of

a similar reference to the visual parable, this time in the cyclic lives of the main protagonists – repeat offenders Miro and Zlatko.

Just as in his previous works, his native town of Ladce and its surroundings have become the "crime scene" – here he repeatedly finds ideas for his works. *Comeback* starts with the two protagonists serving their sentences in the Ilava penitentiary and waiting for their impending release. It could sound like a typical annotation for a social drama; this perspective is also supported by the promotional materials and the initial accounts of the prisoners who have probably had their predestination to a return to society implanted into their own language and thinking. The first third of the film deals with Miro's and Zlatko's living conditions while still serving their sentences, the remainder of the film deals with their lives after their release and captures their attempts to integrate themselves in life in freedom. According to the filmmaker's comments, it follows that the structure of *Comeback* was formed in medias res, after getting the feel of life behind the bars and after becoming familiar with the possibilities available to them in this community and space. Thus, the film is divided into two parts,



the first – in prison – is a view of the rhythm of the everyday lives of several prisoners. “Images from prison” record, between observation and staging, how prisoners spend their leisure time, from the production of a French dictionary up to toning the muscles using buckets of water instead of dumbbells. They are an exhibition of attractions, mainly at the visual level, such as the sculpturesque depiction of tattoos, or at the verbal level – pulp fiction stories about enforced anal sex. These tabloid suggestive elements are combined in the montage with humanising moments, such as the theft of a cookie and work duties in the prison workshop. The broad range of situations does not then depict the prisoners as one-dimensional schematic figures (when a character has only negative connotations, he is presented as just a crook), but breathes life into them. Despite all this, the characters do not come across as likeable since the years spent behind bars have left their mark on the way they express themselves and on their physical appearance. Pragmatic cold-blooded calculations or the absence of remorse for what they did prevent the viewer from relating to them emotionally, even though, rationally, the viewer is capable of

understanding their future wishes and desires. It is quite courageous to prepare such an exposition; the philosophy given here comes closest to the three tragic-comic “velvet terrorists”¹ and their ambivalent attitudes and acts. A certain amount of spoon-feeding and the didactic character of the scenes which are what they are on the textual and visual levels, without any overlapping, were probably caused by the restrictive conditions in prison, just as the initial motto – “that’s enough of everything” shouted by the decimated Zlatko – which in a few seconds encapsulates the idea of the film, and subsequently appears to reveal the filmmaker’s underestimation of the audience’s ability to comprehend the meaning of the film from the episodes selected, and diminishes the expectations from the subsequent development.

The second part of the film, which takes place after Miro and Zlatko are released, is more exciting. We get to know the protagonists through their actions when free, and through interactions with their relatives and pals. The narrative is structured along two individual branches which overlap only when the director intervenes during an interview in a radio studio. The men represent different approaches to

how to direct your life out of prison, which renders this part dynamic and more surprising. While the younger Miro tries to actively release himself from the vicious circle of repeat-offending, the older Zlatko moves on an alcoholic merry-go-round and the development of their lives in freedom shows up the paradoxes of the functioning of society and the judicial system in Slovakia.

The musical score by David Kollar has a fundamental effect on the viewers' experience – more markedly than at the beginning. Koller expresses the abstract inner world and everything the characters undergo in a live and plastic manner, from ambient even meditative positions (becoming aware of freedom) to the almost noisy depiction of estrangement and the physical unpleasantness of the outer reality. The mood-creating electro-acoustic music together with the false subjective views is a shift from the observational mode of the recording to the staginess and implicit commentaries on the part of the filmmakers who otherwise move on an impartial and credible level. Attractions do turn up in the second part also, even though not so often as in the first part, particularly as verbal accounts of sexual practices and fantasies, but such motifs confirm the already mediated characteristic of the protagonists.

The second part of *Comeback* is strongest in the moments when it reveals partial instances of wandering in freedom and their ambivalent nature without the black and white perspective (when Zlatko, drunk, falls on the ground like a sack of potatoes while climbing over a fence and Miro sleeps on the grass in front of the apartment building as he has no place to go). Here, Remo rather shows than judges, he maintains a distance and he leaves it to the viewers to make up their mind without affording them any guidance as to what position they should adopt on the re-socialisation of repeat offenders. On the one hand, he records ostracised individuals, on the other, he does not refrain from expressing their own share of guilt, without him resorting to searching for an enemy or the losers getting even with society. The ambiguous presentation of Miro and Zlatko touches upon the issue of existence and the functioning of the social system and, at the same time, it affords a space for deliberations on whether its existence would be

meaningful and the subsequent re-socialisation applicable for certain individuals. At the same time, the film gives itself a loophole because a sample of two recidivists and a few interviewed cellmates can hardly be regarded as representative, not even from the qualitative point of view. Hence, the film investigates the rules of the functioning of a life moving in a vicious circle, from the perspective of the behaviour of individualities. However, it conflicts with the generally accepted and presented view of repeat offenders, as it offers scenes of interviews with the anchor-woman Miroslava Ábelová as a contrast. Based on her naively selected questions and attitude, there is a visible difference between the mediated information from the media and the audience's direct experience with the given theme. The contribution of *Comeback* lies precisely in presenting moments which most of society would prefer not to see, because they disrupt the opinions which people can most easily identify with and which we formulate with a view to bolstering our safety and superiority. ▲

Miro Remo (1983, Ladce)

Studied documentary directing at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. Before making his full-length début *Comeback* he attracted attention with his original short portrait of his uncle and grandmother entitled *Arsy-Versy* (2009); he won dozens of awards at film festivals for this film. He also made *Cold Joint* (Studený spoj, 2007), *Pohoda Festival* (Pohoda, 2010), *Beverly Hills 01863* (2012) and collaborated in the making of the TV series *Slovak Cinema* (Slovenské kino), *Cans of Time* (Konzervy času), *Photographers* (Fotografi), *The Customs* (Colnica)... He is currently working on a film about the successful Slovak singer Richard Müller, and also on a documentary entitled *Coolture* (Cooltura).

¹ *Velvet Terrorists* (Zamatoví teroristi) – full-length documentary made by directors Pavol Pekarčík, Ivan Ostrochovský and Peter Kerekes.



Daughters and Sons, Mothers and Fathers

► Zuzana Mojžišová

Jaro Vojtek has been making documentaries since the mid-1990s and has received awards for them at home and abroad. Just from glancing at his filmography, it is quite obvious that he is attracted to topics usually denoted as “social”, in particular to the topic of man entrenched or imprisoned in a certain social environment – whether edifying, devastating, stagnating, voluntary, imposed or necessary... **Fish Tank** (Akvárium) is about Kosovo refugees, **Crazy Man** (Blázonko) about a mentally disabled man, **Here We Are** (My zdes) about a family from Kazakhstan who migrated to Slovakia, **Back Passing** (Malá domov) about a Roma boy who dreams of becoming a footballer, **The Border** (Hranica) about the life of people in a small village on the Slovak-Ukrainian border which was forcibly divided after World War 2 into our part and the Soviet part, **The Gypsy Vote** (Cigáni idú do volieb) about a man with political ambitions...

Traditionally, directors are categorised as being directors of documentaries and directors of feature films. Whether this division is strict or the line between fiction and non-fiction is permeable – and to what extent permeable – that is a matter for the specific author (or the country, period). Several decades ago, it was quite usual in our country that young graduates of FAMU in Prague were not allowed to make full-length films straight after returning to Bratislava. First they had to sharpen their claws for a shorter or longer time, i.e. they had to gain experience in documentary filmmaking, or as assistants to directors of feature projects made by older colleagues. That is the way in which Štefan Uher, Peter Solan, Dušan Hanák and Juraj Jakubisko started out. Nowadays, it is no longer a requirement for aspiring filmmakers to follow along these tracks, but they do not remain wholly unused – someone does take them from time to time. Recently, for instance, it was Juraj Lehotský who made his feature début *The Miracle* (Zázrak, 2013) after making several documentaries (the best known of them being *Blind Loves – Slepé lásky*). Or, even more recently, Jaro Vojtek made *Children* (Deti, 2014), even though this is not this documentary filmmaker's first contact with a fiction film. In 1999, he made a short film, *Dreamers* (Rojkovia), "a story about the complexity of relations in a young marriage" which was distributed as part of the Czecho-Slovak project *Magnificent Six* (Šešť statočných).

Vojtek's latest film consists of several stories. Not just literature (for instance, the late medieval picaresque novelettes and novels, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, or the newer ones *Around the World in 80 Days*) but cinematography also has known the episodic story structure from its distant past. Almost right from the outset, as the magnum opus of behemoth D. W. Griffith *Intolerance* of 1916 is one of the most famous of omnibus films. And he has had many successors with equally resounding names. Omnibus films were made in our region too, to mention just a few: *The Song of the Grey Pigeon* (Pieseň o sivom holubovi), *Deserters and Pilgrims* (Zbehovia a pútnici),

Dialogue 20-40-60 (Dialóg 20-40-60), *Only a Day* (Iba deň), *Fine, Thanks* (Ďakujem, dobre). Not only feature films but also documentaries were made with an episodic structure, for instance *Other Worlds* (Iné svety) or the quite recent *Slovakia 2.0* (Slovensko 2.0) where feature films and documentaries meet with a single animated film. In the *Encyclopaedia of Film* (Encyklopédia filmu), Richard Blech characterised an omnibus film as a "full-length film consisting of shorter, separate stories that are organically linked by the theme, the main idea being depicted in various circumstances and under various conditions (environments, generations of characters, historical periods, etc.)... The composition may be free or fixed, with differing degrees of the binding elements given by the initial intent."

The opening story of Vojtek's *Children* is entitled *Son*. It starts with a scene in the waiting room and the doctor's room which is unpleasant for all of those involved; the desperate and clearly exhausted parents drag their probably autistic son by force from under the examination couch and sit him down in the dentist's chair. Within a small space, we watch a family marked by the disability of their youngest member, in particular the relationship between the father and son, a father who deep inside carries a serious question about love.

The second segment entitled *Marathon* starts with the main hero, a young Roma, in prison. He has left his wife and child at home in the settlement, he is made anxious by the fact that they do not visit him or write to him. With the assistance of his cellmates he manages to escape and runs for dozens of kilometres through a snowy forest, along a stream, through a cottage area, hurt, cold but determined to run in order to find out what is going on with the people he loves.

The third story – *Canary* – is the story of a small boy fascinated by birds. He lives with his mother and her uncouth, hostile partner. He looks after a canary, he teaches it to sing, as if he were looking for things in the canary which he cannot find in relationships with people.

The final episode is entitled *Dad*. His adult

daughter is undergoing a life-changing crisis, as her suspicions that her husband is cheating on her are confirmed. The break-up of the family looks to be inevitable. Trapped in an emotional turmoil, the daughter decides to make the dream of her very old, wheelchair-bound father come true.

Let us try and look at Vojtek's film through the prism of the brief entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Film* cited above. We have four stories linked by a main theme. The title of the film suggests that children are the main theme but, with the exception of the story entitled *Canary*, the film is primarily about parents, about their relationships – with their child (*Son*), partner (*Marathon*), father (*Dad*). The episodic film has a free composition, the individual segments communicate with each other only marginally, there could be more binding elements given by the initial intention – the intent that the audience anticipates – and they could further strengthen each other. Each story could be an independent short film, some of which would be more successful, others less. But the overall idea is not rendered any more profound by combining the stories in one unit.

The journey is the strongest, non-basic element linking the four stories in a positive manner. The main characters always leave their original place in order to find answers to their questions, the solution of the problem, peace somewhere else – the journey to the Czech Republic to see a healer, the run through the forest to see the son, riding a bus to a bird competition, a journey to the sea. And there are other common areas also. Not one of the families in the stories is the sort of family that might feature in a cheery commercial. Disability alternates with Roma origin and prison, step-fatherhood with divorce. And everything takes place in shabby, unattractive, but inventively shot interiors or on poor streets; somewhat naively, nature affords the only pleasant environment in the film – a snow-covered forest or deserted seaside.

Director Jaro Vojtek said: "A documentary is

more complicated because you have to wait for a certain situation, you have to patiently capture the events, get the protagonists in certain contexts so as to avoid creating a staged impression and not to lose authenticity. However, authenticity for me means that the viewers believe what is happening in front of their eyes, regardless of whether they are watching a documentary or feature film. When the audience does not think about how it was done. Because life unfolds so credibly before them that they primarily perceive the content and the meaning of the depicted events." This time the strong sense of authenticity present in most of Vojtek's previous films is not so much present; as viewers we sometimes have to think "about how it was done", because the "content and meaning of the depicted events" are sometimes predictable. However, on the other hand, it needs to be noted that, as a full-length feature début, *Children* will definitely attract attention. The theme – family, children, parents – is the strongest aspect of the project. It is a theme that needs to be discussed at length, especially nowadays. ▲

Jaro Vojtek (1968, Žilina)

Studied documentary directing at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. His full-length début *Here We Are* (My zdes, 2005) was screened at the Karlovy Vary IFF. In 2009, Vojtek made the documentary *The Border* (Hranica) which won the Prize for Best Central and Eastern European Documentary Film in the "Between the Seas" section at the Jihlava IDFF, and it was screened in the prestigious Spectrum section at the Rotterdam IFF. Three years ago he presented his documentary *The Gypsy Vote* (Cigáni idú do volieb) and he is currently preparing a documentary about families with autistic children *So Far, So Close* (Tak ďaleko, tak blízko) for cinemas. Jaro Vojtek also collaborated on several TV projects. *Children* (Deti) is his feature début.



Silence That Remains Tacit

► Jana Dudková

In Silence is a film based on long-term research by Slovak musicologist Agáta Schindlerová who specialises in the fates of Jewish musicians under Nazism. It arrives in the cinema at a time when it emerges yet again that the participation of the First Slovak Republic in the deportations and persecution of Jews is being downplayed or even denied in some political and social circles.

Accordingly, this film could represent a substantial, i.e. authentic, contribution to the issue of the Holocaust; the film accepts Slovakia's participation in the persecution of Jews without question. At the same time, it could be an interesting contribution to the genre of docu-drama, or dramatic films made on the basis of archival research (which has recently become topical in almost all forms of dramatic art – from drama through opera to feature film). However, *In Silence* did not just seek to engage its audiences by means of authentic materials; it appears that, quite early in the preparation phase, the project's authors already had the aim of taking it to international audiences. And so it also represented something of a compromise and the topic of the Holocaust was quite evidently built upon "Academy Award" pillars – the film's original name (*Mrs. Schindler's Diary* – Denník Agáty Schindlerovej) refers to the famous film by Steven Spielberg thanks to the coincidental concordance of names, while the topic is evidently a variation on Polanski's *The Pianist*.

Producer Livia Filusová has allegedly long sought to make a film about music and she considered Agáta Schindlerová's research to afford

an excellent theme. The original idea was that the film would be made in the currently popular documentary spirit. In the end, the collaboration with the Czech director Zdeněk Jiráský has resulted in a feature film which is claimed to be an unusually poetic film without dialogues, a quite novel treatment of a topic that has now been exploited in the cinema for a long time. Slovak and Czech funds were used to produce the film and it is also the first Slovak film ever to apply for support on the crowdfunding portal Kickstarter, which indicates how unstoppable, brave and inventive the producer is. The film actually arrives in the cinema in a form that admirably reflects the professionalism of all the members of the creative team. Therefore, the greater the pity that this form also means a squandered opportunity of really saying something new on the theme of the Holocaust.

If we understand a Holocaust film as a specific sub-genre of historical film, then *In Silence* fits quite accurately within its genre matrices. These play into the hands of fictionalisation of the real event and also offer an emotional model that allows the audiences to experience a certain catharsis, so that they can subsequently return cleansed to

their everyday lives, without taking home too many unanswered questions.

In Silence conforms to the structure of most films about the horrors of war: it starts out with images of an idyll (mostly of the middle class) which is suddenly disrupted by the intervention of a greater power. That is how the first post-revolution Czecho-Slovak contribution to the topic was made – *All My Loved Ones* (Všetci moji blízkí) by Matej Mináč. Thus, *In Silence* does not initiate a local “discourse”; on the contrary, it continues this discourse with regard to the basic ideology. The initial idyll is outlined in a visually and musically attractive retro-nostalgic spirit. The individual scenes accurately evoke the modern image of the pre-war era, from the editing and figurative procedures of period films to period commercials. At a rapid pace, we get to know several characters who have just one thing in common – a preoccupation with music and love. Content-wise, the introduction focuses primarily on spending leisure time in the spirit of the rising modernity and the burgeoning contact with nature, mainly with the element of air: the aesthetics of the period commercials define the image compositions from the roller-coaster and the scenes from trips

into the countryside – the individual lovers or married couples undertake them with a camera or in an elegant car. The scenes from the recording of a popular song by the Comedian Harmonists only serve to endorse the concept of carefree retro-modernity. The fact that this idyll is about to be disrupted is suggested primarily by the repeated jump cuts to printing presses: the subtitles right at the beginning of the film inform us that in 1935 the book *Jewishness and Music with the ABC of Jewish and Non-Aryan Musicians* was published; it was quickly followed by two further editions (1936, 1938), and complemented in 1940 by the NSDAP’s institute’s *Lexicon of Jews in Music*. Music (and love) are thus presented as a counterpoint to the printed word – while an idyll such as might be lifted straight out of the illustrated magazines still endures, a number of books are published that should cleanse the music of its non-Aryan elements (and we are also led to infer that books not complying with the Nazi ideology were burnt).

The contrast between the printed word intended to remodel the public space and the introverted inner monologues of the characters evoking authentic diary entries is a good idea; however, just like

many other counterpoints (love versus loneliness, music versus silence, etc.) it becomes submerged under the layers of conventional ideology. Already in the first part of the film, the over-restricted range of the motifs introducing the audience to the pre-war idea of happiness is regrettable. The conflict on which the film is based is, thus, essentially reduced to a conflict between the Holocaust and frivolous light-heartedness, replete with middle-class dreams of love ending in marriage, where the music plays the somewhat conventional role of supporting retro-nostalgic moods: we see the group mentioned above, the Comedian Harmonists, only in period recording scenes in the radio studio through the eyes of an admiring lady, a young couple get to know each other thanks to jazz, a promising ballet dancer confesses to admiration of the most beautiful ballet teacher. There is one scene which is largely successful in avoiding these conventional images, one in which we see the composer, Arthur Chitz, playing a hitherto completely unknown composition by Beethoven, in the silent presence of his wife, ostensibly for the first time after its author ("No one has ever heard it before... Except for Beethoven... No one ever..."). Nevertheless, this scene does not avoid a certain tackiness – its sole purpose is probably to emphasise that the musicians in the sequences are equal or even superior to their Aryan colleagues.

But the inner monologues of the characters suggest a great deal more than just a loss of middle-class concepts of music: for instance, the Holocaust strategy is revealed through them as a gradual transition from the imposed identity ("Overnight I stopped being a Slovak and I became a Jew," says one of the characters) through the loss of dignity right up to the absolute silence which is also reflected in the final title of the film. Silence represents an impressive, but insufficiently employed metaphor. It not only means lost memory (in the case of the pianist Edith Kraus, it is expressed in the form of her total loss of memory of any notes), but it could also be a metaphor of the lost humanity and everything that edifies and liberates a human being from the inglorious identification with the withering, mortal body reduced to a single goal: to survive for a few more minutes.

It is a great shame that the film does not focus

more on emphasising the weight of the individual monologues and, despite the effort to combine dream and naturalistic images, it ends up using the conventional imagery of the genre. This relates to the representation of the middle-class idyll referred to at the beginning of the film, but also to the subsequent "Holocaust", whereby both types of images are located within a conservative ideological framework. It is a pity also because original works about the Holocaust based on original, authentic accounts are by no means superfluous, even today. However, *In Silence* is based on the highly predictable underlying premise that the Holocaust is best represented by a sudden change in the colour scheme (from warm tones to steel blue), conspicuously changing the characters' clothes to smeared striped uniforms or changing the make-up. It is also a shame that, although *In Silence* is a film without dialogues, it is not without pointless words. Instead of the expected authenticity or work with silence so cleverly alluded to in the film's title, words are heard almost continuously and their real power is from time to time lost in the pathetic acting of the cast and the director's inability to define a clearer attitude to the naivety of the frequently tacky monologues from the early part of the film – these are in no way compensated by the sudden maturity of the observations in the second, Holocaust part. ▲

Zdeněk Jiráský (1969, Jičín)

The Czech filmmaker graduated in screenwriting and dramaturgy from the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. He mainly makes television documentaries, such as *Vanishing Prague* (Mizející Praha, 2008), *As Regards Kitsch* (Co se kýče týče, 2008), *Asák* (Asák, 2010) or *The Jagiellon Dynasty* (Jagellonci, 2012). He has also made travelogues for Febio. The social drama *Flower Buds* (Poupata, 2011) presented at the Karlovy Vary IFF in the East of the West competition section was his first film for cinemas; it won four Czech Lion Awards.

In Silence (V tichu, Slovakia/Czech Republic, 2014) _SCRIPT AND DIRECTED BY: Zdeněk Jiráský _DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Michal Černý
_EDITED BY: Hedvíka Hansalová _MUSIC: Martin Hasák _CAST: Judit Bárdos, Jan Čtvrtník, Kristína Svarinská, Ján Gallovič, Laco Hrušovský, Valéria Stašková

Short Films, Strong Experiences

► Zuzana Sotáková

The animated film **Rosso Papavero**, which is the result of several years of work of Martin Smatana, student at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, was chosen for the Generation Kplus competition section at the 65th Berlin IFF. Slovak short films get into common distribution only rarely, they are more frequently presented at film festivals and some take on a successful festival life.

Rosso Papavero is a short story about a boy with a head full of imagination who witnesses a dream circus performance. However, dazed by the attractions, he realises too late that the door between reality and dream is closing behind him. The director, Smatana is fascinated by children's imagination which considerably affects their view of the world. According to his own words, he tried to play with the idea of a border behind which imagination might sound troublesome.

Last year, four short films screened prior to full-length films managed to get into cinema distribution. Three of them are animated films – *Fongopolis* (dir. J. Kožuch), *Nina* (dir. V. Obertová and M. Čopíková) and *The Story of a Tornado* (Ako vzniká tornádo, dir. V. Kocourková). You can read more about these projects in the section 2014 in Animated Film. Of the three mentioned animated films, mainly *Fongopolis* took part in foreign festivals and film screenings.

The co-production feature film *Tiger Fight* (Tanec tigra, dir. M. Repka) was the fourth short film screened last year in Slovak cinemas. The story of a director who does not give a chance to a talented dancer and later realises his mistake, takes place in India, but according to Martin Repka it reflects life in Slovakia. "We live in a world of casting shows, we have juries and people at high positions who judge others, but on the other hand, we have people who suffer as they are talented but they are not able to gain a foothold or earn money with what they are capable of," said Repka about *Tiger Fight*.

When speaking about animated films, it is worth mentioning that last year the first Slovak experimental 3D film *Kuku* (dir. H. Žucha) was

premiered at the Fest Anča Festival in Žilina. Thus, after three years of development, a short story about child visions and an inspirational search for secrets hidden under the surface of seemingly ordinary things came in existence.

The educational documentary *Monthlies* (Mesiačky) by Diana Fabiánová also includes animation elements. Fabiánová funded her 30-minute film about menstruation also by means of a crowd-funding campaign and she successfully presented it not only in Slovakia and in several European countries, but also in Puerto Rico, Brazil, China, Mexico and Nepal, for instance.

The Student Film Festival Áčko regularly presents new film talents. Of course, it has short films in its programme and last year Zuzana Marianková won the Grand Prix with her feature project *B moll* (B moll). Director Adam Felix was also successful with his student feature film *Checkpoint* which was in the 13th International Film Students Meeting competition at one of the oldest European film festivals, the San Sebastian IFF.

However, last year several well-established filmmakers presented their new films too. As for documentary filmmakers, it was for instance Zuzana Piussi who deals with controversial and avoided themes often exerting investigative efforts. Her new film *Transference* (Priamny prenos), almost one hour long, deals with child abuse. Pavol Barabáš is another type of documentary filmmaker; he specialises in films about nature, travelling adventures and expeditions under extreme conditions. His last year's new film is entitled *The Polarman* (Polárnik) and the almost one-hour long film has already won several awards at festivals. ▲




PHOTO: Miro Neta

INTERVIEW

On the Margin of Film Europe?

► Katarína Hlinčíková

Even though the Slovak cinematography is far from being the most productive, it could be said that it has succeeded in attracting the attention of international festivals in the last few years. Recently, *Koza* by director Ivan Ostrochovský might be a new, hot candidate for such interest. It is a story of a boxer from the social periphery who tries to raise money to save the relationship with his partner. The IFF Berlin included the film *Koza* in the Forum Section and, at the same time, the film is a contender for the Best First Feature Award.



Koza is your feature debut. How did you get the idea to make it?

- The idea for *Koza* came about easily. I come from Žilina and so does Koza. He lived about 200 metres away from me. We were not friends, but I was aware of him from childhood. I made a short film about him in my freshman year while studying documentary filmmaking and we've become better friends since then. I've helped him a lot, when needed. What you see in the film actually happened to Koza. They decided that his partner should have an abortion, because they already have two children and they obviously struggle to make ends meet. They had a problem because an abortion costs 300 – 400 euro. However, Koza gets 150 euro in social benefits so he had to take on boxing matches; moreover, he was in debt. At the same time, in the film he experiences a dilemma – to keep the baby or have it terminated.

The film about Koza could easily be a documentary. Why did you decide to make a feature film in the end?

- Screenwriter Marek Leščák and I pondered for a long time about making a documentary about Koza. I never even thought about a feature film, but many moments turned up which would have to be "staged" if I wanted to have them in the documentary. So we made the decision to make a feature film, wherein the real people played themselves. For a time, we reckoned that the coach at least should be an actor. Eventually, we cast a non-actor – our friend Zvonko Lakčević; Marek Leščák knew him from the Academy of Performing Arts. As a Montenegrin, he has all the features we imagined for Koza's manager.

How was it to work, as a documentary filmmaker, with the methods of directing feature films?

- Paradoxically, it is quite a different type of work. You are trained for a documentary and you see a situation that would fit fantastically into a documentary, but no one would believe it in a feature film. That was the most difficult issue for me. You need to have a different type of ideas. Anything can happen in a documentary, a comet might fall on a house and no one wonders why. Mere coincidence. Coincidences or exaggerated preposterous circumstances are disruptive in

a feature film. I am more of an observer, but in a feature film I have to be more of a designer – and I found that quite tiring. I spent enough energy in making the film to suffice for twenty documentaries.

What was it like working with Koza?

- He called us "journalists" for four years. We live in different worlds. Actually, that is good because he is not burdened down by what we live through – what if it doesn't turn out well, what if we are doing something in vain... It was never in vain for him, because he was being paid, he got out of the house, and that was fine for him. When we had Zvonko – the second main protagonist – he really had the jitters. Because, as a former film-directing student, he knew what it was all about and that it really mattered to everyone. Koza is not nervous, as he doesn't understand that every single day of shooting costs 4,000 euro. And that was beautiful.

How did the acting of non-actors turn out in the film?

- We knew right from the outset that the acting would have to be minimised. When the protagonists don't have to speak, they don't. Together with screenwriter Marek Leščák, I tried to come up with situations to present the story to the audience not solely through the dialogues, as frequently happens in other Slovak films. We tried to move the story forward by gentle interaction, gestures and often by silence, rather to have the feelings present than easily legible information.

You collaborated with cinematographer Martin Kollár for the first time on the successful documentary *Velvet Terrorists*. What did your collaboration bring to your second joint film, *Koza*?

- He is much more than just a cinematographer. We took Martin along every time we went location-scouting and we talked about the story. He could easily figure in the opening credits as a co-screenwriter. I think that we have an above-standard relation and, in particular, he is the best at what he does. I love his photographs. He is one of the best in European photography, so I'm glad I had the opportunity to collaborate with him. And Marek Leščák is also experienced. I was calmed down by the knowledge that they wouldn't let me do stupid things.



What was the image concept of the film like?

- Like Martin's photographs. He showed me his photographs and we went to those locations if we found something interesting there. We shot many times all over Europe based on his photographs. In essence, the story of *Koza* is absurd and we wanted to show it rather through the images of the country than the dialogues. I like films where the audience knows what the film is about. *Koza* has no money, he boxes, he gets beaten up, the end. This simplicity must be evident in the image and narration.

Several editors worked on the film. Why?

- I usually edit my films with people who I like and who are not conceited and don't get offended when someone else takes over the baton. The editing takes quite a long time and I know from experience that people aren't able to sustain their enthusiasm for such a long time, or I'm not able to revive it in them. Anyway, when I have the feeling that we've already done everything possible and we're just running round in circles, our collaboration ends. No one has boundless energy or ideas in store. We spent the most time on editing with Viera Čákanyová. She is more radical and courageous than me, and that is exactly what the film needs. I am rather ordinary and frightened that I might ruin something. When the rough cut was done, I called in Matej Beneš and Maroš Šlapeta. They are classics; in their case it was rather about rhythm and proportion, about editing dramaturgy. In turn, Peter Morávek is a silent hard worker who picks up the phone even at ten p.m. and agrees to edit with you. Each of them is different and each one is perfect in something.

In addition to being the director, you are also one of the producers of *Koza*. Which obstacles did you have to overcome as producer and simultaneously director?

- Almost the entire film has been re-shot once. We re-shot some scenes even three times. Fortunately, we had the luxury of having only six people in the crew. So we re-shot scenes as long as possible. If there'd been thirty of us in the crew, we couldn't have afforded it. For instance, we made the costumes ourselves. I knew we had to economise because it was quite obvious that I would make mistakes as a beginner, and that

I would have to re-shoot them. And I did make mistakes... Berco Malinovský was in charge of managing the production. He loaded the lighting rigs at four a.m. after a full day of shooting and he was smiling. After shooting for twelve hours, he is still capable of driving all day long. He was like five people in one, and that saved us money. Generally, no one is really interested in the production managers. Everyone is curious about the director, screenwriter, cinematographer, but without Berco it would never have been made.

You return to the past in documentaries in preparation. What do they bring that's new?

- It makes me angry how many things have not been filmed. We made a television series about photographers and composers because no one had ever made films about them. It is more like an obligation. It sounds pathetic but this reflects the decency of a country, that someone notices what kind of work these people are doing. *Guard (Garda)* is precisely an example of a film that has never been made here, which is totally incomprehensible. That is the same as if the Germans had no films about the Wehrmacht or about Hitler.

How would you summarise the current situation in Slovak cinematography?

- I studied the history of film, so I always look into the past and I make comparisons. Unlike the situation ten years ago, cinematography nowadays is running like clockwork. The Slovak Audiovisual Fund is not perfect, but who and what is perfect in our country? In any case, the Fund is the best film funding option we have had in the past twenty years, which is also endorsed by the number of films being made and the successes achieved at well-known festivals. I am a bit sad when I hear how filmmakers bad-mouth each other just because someone received funds and someone did not. The Fund is never going to be able to cover the needs of all filmmakers. That is just a sad fact that has to be reckoned with when preparing a film. In any case, I think that if someone really has the skills and the patience they will get to make their film in the end. A few years ago no one could do anything as there was simply no money. Now many of us have made films – albeit always with some problems, but no one ever promised us that it would be easy.



Ivan Ostrochovský (1972, Žilina)

Director, producer and teacher. He studied film science and documentary directing at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. He made films such as *Pietro Pascalo* (2000), *Script for a Documentary* (Scenár k dokumentárnemu filmu, 2001) and he collaborated with Pavol Pekarčík on *Lesser Evil* (Menšie zlo..., 2004), *Wind* (Vietor, 2004), *Karakorum* (2005), *Uli Biaho* (2008). He was awarded the Igric Award for the 30-minute documentary *Ilja* (2010). He also collaborated in the making of several TV series and he (co)produced films made by his colleagues. Last year the documentary *Velvet Terrorists* (Zamatoví teroristi) which he made with P. Pekarčík and Peter Kerekes was screened at the Berlin IFF where it won the *Tagesspiegel* readers award.

Is Slovakia a trustworthy partner for film co-production?

- It always depends on personal relations. However, there is so little money in the Slovak Audiovisual Fund that we are the eighth wheel on the wagon. A million euro is a small budget in Europe, but inconceivable for us. In other countries, co-producers raise twice as much money as we do in Slovakia just by snapping their fingers. The budget for Czech public-service TV is three times the size of that for Slovak TV. It is difficult to maintain a majority. I can't come up with an expensive project because I will lose it automatically. In the case of a minority co-production, the European Convention applies, which specifies a minimum contribution of 10 per cent. We barely meet the limit in order to have at least part of the project as Slovak. There is nothing of interest here for foreign filmmakers, as they know that they won't get as much from us as from Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic. That is also why Slovakia is on the margin of film Europe.

You are not only author and director, you are also behind successful festival films and television series as a producer. How can someone survive in Slovakia as a filmmaker?

- We have many projects and we try to have minimal costs. We are a business that does without a cleaning lady. We do only what is essential. I would rather pay more money to a few people than less to ten people. I apply for eight grants a year and we succeed in getting two. You can't bet everything on a single card. You should do what you like to do and try to raise the money for it at any cost. When we do our stuff well and try hard, somewhere someone will find it of interest. But it takes time. It took us seven or eight years to get from being out to grass to doing what we love to do. And we are old guys, we are 40, 45 years old. Many people can't take the pressure - that they don't have any money and think that that is the end. Of course, no one can give them any guarantee that they will be well off, even if they do their best. It is just up to you, that you want to do it and will do it even though you are not well off. But I will say that, over twenty years, it has never been better. Of course there are problems but, if you look at the calendar and see how many films were made when, the situation is certainly at its best now. ▲

Departures (and Returns) of Slovak Filmmakers

► Vladana Hrivnáková, Daniel Bernát

The fall of communism opened up the borders and presented new opportunities; however, prior to 1989 Slovak filmmakers had never made any secret of their desire to work abroad and experience how things were done in the more experienced “western” world. Under the previous regime, it was mainly cinematographers who were among the “globetrotters”, as it was easier for them to travel abroad than for directors. Igor Luther made a substantial mark on the world; he emigrated in 1969 and made films with Schlöndorff and Wajda. Cinematographer Dodo Šimončíč spent many years in Germany... How and where do the filmmakers of younger generations make their mark?

One of the most successful Slovaks abroad is actually a cinematographer – Ivan Ábel. He’s a forty-something who started out at the Koliba Studios in Bratislava as an animator and gradually gained a reputation abroad as a cinematographer of music video clips and commercials. Among his greatest successes we should mention the making of the video clip to *Heaven* by Depeche Mode, but he also worked on a visually playful video clip for the Icelandic singer, Björk, which was made by the well-known French director Michel Gondry. The list of Ábel’s projects is truly impressive – he collaborated in the making of video clips for The Strokes (*Under Cover of Darkness*), Regina Spektor (*Us, All the Rowboats, Samson*), Battles (*Atlas*), Kanye West (*Heard ‘Em Say*), Interpol (*C’mere*) or Jamie Lidell (*Another Day*). And he did not just confine himself to music and commercials. In 2013 he worked as camera operator on *Buried Alive* by the favourite American comedian Aziz Ansari, and he made the short film *Paradise Motel* with director John Gutierrez.

Peter Veverka is another successful Slovak abroad. He has succeeded in gaining a foothold right at the centre of western cinematography, in Los Angeles, where he works as producer and assistant director. This graduate of the Department of Production at the Film and Television Faculty of the

Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava started out with films like *When You Ain’t Got Nothing (... ani smrť nebere)* and he also worked on Vladimír Balco’s film *Rivers of Babylon*. His first direct encounter with Hollywood came with *Peacemaker* in 1997 – an action thriller with George Clooney and Nicole Kidman which was shot in Bratislava. Today, Veverka is a producer who has collaborated on several blockbusters – for instance, he worked on *A Good Day to Die Hard* (2013), the fifth film in the popular *Die Hard* series, on the film adaptation of the computer game *Max Payne* and on the remake of the famous horror classic *The Omen* under the same name. However, in 1999 he collaborated with Michal Struss on the Slovak animated film *In the Box* (V kocke) nominated for a Student Academy Award and in 2005, he made *Cheers!* (Nazdravíčko!) with animator Ivana Laučíková.

Filip Šustek also got a sniff at big foreign films; he participated as digital compositor/senior compositor in such projects as *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *The Theory of Everything* or *Exodus: Gods and Kings*.

There are many other Slovaks who have worked abroad, whether as directors, documentary filmmakers, cinematographers or producers. Documentary filmmakers, in particular, are “drawn”

abroad and it is interesting to note that, when abroad, they like to make films thematically linked to their homeland, the issue of departure or change. Mišo Suchý is one of these filmmakers. He emigrated to the USA shortly before the fall of the Iron Curtain, hence he comes well before the young generation of filmmakers. He has made a career as documentary filmmaker and university teacher on the other side of the Atlantic; his films have been screened all over the world. He screened his graduation film *I Have Come a Long Way* (Džavas mange dlugone dromeha – Šiel som dlhou cestou) in the Centre Georges-Pompidou in Paris. He also presented the documentary with the typical name *Home Movie* (2003) in Slovakia and in it he talks about his emigration experience and about how he feels as a Slovak living in the USA. He dedicated the film to his son and he presented it with the subtitle *A Diary for My American-Born Son* (Denník pre môjho syna narodeného v Amerike). Last year, he expressed his thoughts on his native land in a short contribution to the omnibus film made by ten directors *Slovakia 2.0* (Slovensko 2.0).

The renowned visual artist Ondrej Rudavský also joined the project entitled *Slovakia 2.0*; he too emigrated to America in the 1980s. In addition to making various types of films, he also won recognition in video clips; he has collaborated with such performers as Moby or Dead Can Dance. Rudavský has won many awards, including the Golden Eagle Award, Monitor Award, Grammy nomination and the MTV Video Music Award for the video clip *Kiko and the Lavender Moon* for Los Lobos.

Anabela Žigová also travelled abroad; last year she premièred her co-production documentary *Salto Mortale* in Slovakia. After wandering around Europe she settled in New York where she successfully pursues her career of sculptor, scenographer, producer, director and documentary filmmaker. Žigová studied scenography in Slovakia and she continued her studies in Paris where she graduated from l'École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts. She became fully engaged with film during her studies at the prestigious School of Visual Arts in New York. She also came to film through the producer, Ben Barenholtz who, for instance, collaborated on projects of the Coen brothers. Barenholtz helped her to make her first film *Forever* (Navždy) which was screened at the Tribeca Film Festival in Lower Manhattan. Žigová's new documentary *Salto*

Mortale concerns her inquiry into her father's past – he collaborated with the communist State Security (secret police).

The departure abroad also attracts the youngest generation of fresh university graduates. They start at home to be quickly taken away by the world. For instance, as soon as he graduated in direction from the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, Matúš Krajiňák allowed himself to be enticed by the creative atmosphere of the Berlin Film Academy. As a Berliner he was a member of the Berlin Film Festival Jury in the Perspektive Deutsches Kino Section. And he continues his career as director. He collaborates with German TV companies and recently made the short film *Monologues* (Monológy).

The United Kingdom continues to be the most popular destination for students and graduates. The novice filmmaker Katarína Complová did not stay at home for long. After studying film science for a year at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava she transferred to the British Falmouth University where she studied direction. She focused on experimental film and she has presented her works at several European festivals. The short film *Silent Rooms* (Tiché izby) was her feature début, about the life of two friends from Eastern Europe in London.

Michael Angelov also took to studying in England; after graduating from the Department of Documentary Filmmaking at the Academy of Performing Arts, he enrolled at the prestigious Goldsmiths, University of London, where he made his graduation film *The Pig Star* – for instance, he won the Best Documentary Short Film Award with this film at Fest 2013 in Espinho, Portugal. And the name of the director, Peter Magát is also linked to the UK. This year he should present in cinemas his own contribution to the Slovak omnibus film *Fear* (Strach). He made the short feature film *Wee King of Nowhere* in the UK – the story of a small boy who gets lost in London and is taken in by a wandering poet.

The number of Slovaks successful abroad is growing steadily. The documentary filmmaker, Diana Fabiánová, shuttles between her fellow countrymen, Marko Škop collaborates with Croatian TV where he made the local version of the HBO series *In Treatment...* And we haven't mentioned the filmmakers who have managed to make their mark in the neighbouring Czech Republic. ▲

The AVF also Supports International Projects

► Daniel Bernát

The Slovak Audiovisual Fund (AVF) is a public institution for the support and development of audiovisual culture and industry. It has been operating since 2009 and providing support since 2010. Many of the films you will read about in this magazine have been supported by the AVF. And, in addition to films, events and activities relating to foreign countries were also supported. Moreover, this year the Fund may for the first time support projects in the new Programme 5 which is to act as an incentive for foreign productions to make their audiovisual works in Slovakia in collaboration with Slovak film crews.

In principle, the new Programme 5 uses a familiar instrument for support of the audiovisual industry – when producers spend at least EUR 2 million in Slovakia in making a film, they will be entitled to a refund of 20 per cent of eligible costs. Applicants have been able to register their projects in Programme 5 since September of last year. The amount of the grant linked to a special contribution from the national budget will depend on the number and nature of the registered projects. *“When registering a project, the applicants must determine the approximate period within which they plan to apply to the Fund for a grant upon meeting certain conditions. Subsequently, the Fund will inform the Ministry of Culture as to what funds it will require for this purpose in the respective budgetary year,”* clarifies the Director of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, Martin Šmatlák. *“The beneficiary of the support does not need to be restricted by the annual budget of the Fund, but may plan the implementation of the project and draw down the support for the entire period of three years from registering the project”.*

Projects in Programme 5 are not assessed by any special committee; it is a certain form of “automatic” support, but the applicant has to meet the set conditions – i.e. spending at least

EUR 2 million of the eligible costs for implementation of a registered project and having the reality of this confirmed by an independent auditor's report. The Fund will then *“conclude a Grant Agreement with such an applicant for the amount corresponding to that stipulated by law – i.e. 20 per cent of those costs expended on the implementation of the project, and demonstrably paid by the entity, which are taxed in the Slovak Republic,”* states Martin Šmatlák.

When registering the project, the applicant must also complete a cultural test which consists of three parts – the basic criterion (the work is not of a pornographic nature), cultural criteria and implementation criteria. The criteria are set so as to allow the applicant to answer yes or no in the individual categories. As for the cultural criteria, whether the project is in some way related to Slovak or European culture, history or natural heritage is taken into consideration, whether its theme deals with any important social value within the European context, what the original language of the work is, how the work contributes to the development of the genre or audiovisual creativity, what is its relationship to the development of audiovisual education or the value orientation of children and young people, whether filmmakers who

have already won important awards are taking part in the work, and similar. The applicant can amass 24 points in this part. With regard to the implementation criteria, the nationality of the film crew members is taken into consideration, as well as the anticipated distribution of the work within the European Economic Area, shooting at locations in the Slovak Republic, the utilisation of domestic supply services or the planned sound or image post-production in Slovakia. Here, too, the maximum number of points is 24. The applicant must meet the basic criterion and accrue at least 24 of the total number of points, with at least 9 points for the cultural criteria.

The Director of the AVF considers the cultural test criteria as standard and comparable with similar support systems in other European countries. *"They are based on the concept that the cultural nature of the supported work, and not the business nature of the activities related to film production or increase in its commercial value, constitutes the basic legitimacy for granting state support for audiovisual production in Europe. That is also the reason why this cultural nature must be adequately 'demonstrated' by the cultural test."*

Any legal entity being the producer or co-producer of the project or providing services to the producer related to the implementation of the project may apply for registration of the project under Programme 5. In this case, the main seat of the applicant is not decisive, but the AVF may grant funds only to a beneficiary having the main seat or organisational unit on the territory of Slovakia.

As for the advantages to applicants in Programme 5, the AVF Director refers to the possibility to combine several works into one project. The maximum is three cinematographic works (each at least 70 minutes long) or a television series with at least 13 episodes (each having a footage of at least 40 minutes). *"The applicant must achieve the determined limit of eligible expenditures of at least EUR 2 million only in the total sum, whereby it is not important what share of the expenditures in the individual works pertain within the total sum. For instance, if the applicant registers a 'slate' of*

three films and achieves eligible expenditures of EUR 1.5 million on the largest of the three, two smaller works may be added which, individually, would never achieve this limit," explains Martin Šmatlák.

There are other points related to foreign productions among the five programmes in the AVF support activities structure. Straightaway Programme 1: Development, Creation and Production of Slovak Audiovisual Works also contains a category for co-productions with a minority creative and production input from Slovakia. Naturally, it is mostly projects with a Czech majority share that appear in this sub-programme. If we look at last year's statistics, we note that there has been a decrease in the total amount of funds allocated to minority co-productions. Last year it was EUR 331,000, while in the previous year it was EUR 515,000. In 2012, this amount even attained EUR 938,100, but prior to that period it was considerably lower. It is also of interest to note that, while feature films usually get the largest support in the minority co-productions category, last year the AVF granted the largest amount to animated films – this was over EUR 204,000 while the fiction area only received EUR 76,000. This anomaly is related to the anticipated marked increase in the number of new full-length animated films in cinema distribution this year; these films are made in Slovak co-productions. Of course, if we mention support in this sub-programme in more detail, this does not mean that the AVF did not support any other film co-productions. There were quite a few, but they were just Slovak majority projects.

You will also find an article about international workshops and similar events with Slovak participation in the pages of this magazine. We would like to inform you of the most significant ones – Midpoint, DOK.Incubator, Visegrad Film Forum and Visegrad Animation Forum. Last year, all of them also obtained support from the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, either within Programme 2 – Presentation of Slovak Audiovisual Culture and Industry, Annual Awards and Other Presentation Events, Ensuring Participation of Slovak Audiovisual Works at Events Abroad, or within Programme 3 under the Professional Education and Training Sub-programme. ▲

Slovakia and European Support

► Zuzana Sotáková

Slovak applicants in the audiovision domain may acquire support for their project from both the Creative Europe programme and the Eurimages fund.

"2014 was a successful year for Slovak applicants, as the total support provided achieved a record amount, and the number of successful applicants increased in sub-programmes where we were only sporadically successful in the past – for instance in the Support for Development of Single Projects. It had never previously happened that four out of five projects applying for funds were successful within one call," says Vladimír Štric, Head of Office of Creative Europe Desk Slovakia which, in its MEDIA Sub-programme, supports independent producers, distributors, organisers of events (festivals, markets or training events) and other audiovisual entities.

According to Vladimír Štric, the amount of support for distribution also increased. *"This is related to the new arrangement entailing support for the Distribution Selective Scheme – the support is a fixed amount calculated on the basis of the number of cinemas where the film will be screened. Slovak applicants were not successful in other schemes – for instance in the Support for Development of European Video Games Scheme – which we regret but, on the other hand, it is clear that European competition in this area is enormous,"* continues Štric. Last year, Slovak audiovisual projects received support amounting to EUR 617,074 from the MEDIA Sub-programme and 19 cinemas received a total of EUR 91,701 as support within the Europa Cinemas network. Hence, in total, EUR 708,775. *"This is the greatest amount of support since 2003 when Slovakia became a Member State of MEDIA. The greatest share of the support granted in 2014 went to distribution – EUR 106,300 was the total amount provided for selective support of cinema distribution (in 2013, the amount was EUR 50,000) and EUR 210,520 for automatic support of cinema distribution (EUR 140,193 in 2013). Support allocated to festivals amounted to EUR*

25,000 (EUR 45,000 in 2013) and EUR 145,000 went to the development of single projects (EUR 70,000 in 2013). The greatest percentage share of support for distribution stems logically from the priorities of the MEDIA Sub-programme – the greatest amount of funds is allocated to distribution," clarifies the Head of Office of Creative Europe Desk Slovakia.

The MEDIA Sub-programme underwent an organisational change in early 2014. Together with the Culture Programme, it became a part of the umbrella Creative Europe programme. According to Štric, most of the entities, especially distributors and production companies, coped with the changes more or less without any problems. *"After all, the changes in the programme were not that dramatic, they were mostly positive – a certain simplification of the selection process, the transition to fixed amounts of support and the like. However, some companies were not able to react flexibly to the changes in the conditions for granting support. For instance, some organisers of film festivals assumed that, if they had received support on a regular basis, then they would keep on receiving it without making any substantial changes in their projects, even though the new call for proposals emphasised totally different areas than in the past, for instance, work with the audiences or the range of activities accompanying the festival itself,"* adds Štric.

Film projects also receive support from Eurimages, the cinematographic fund of the Council of Europe, which focuses on the co-production, distribution and presentation of European cinematographic works. *"In the last few years, Slovak filmmakers have managed to become quite actively engaged in international co-productions and to adapt to their conditions. This applies not only to European support funds,*

but also to various film markets organised in the course of major international festivals," states Zuzana Gindl-Tatárová, the Slovak representative in Eurimages. The main objective of Eurimages is to support film co-productions on behalf of at least two of the Member States of the fund. Full-length feature films at least 70 minutes long, documentary and animated films intended primarily for cinema distribution may apply for co-production support. "Since 2005 Slovak co-production films have received EUR 5.5 million from Eurimages. These were both majority and minority co-productions. We enter three or four projects a year on average into the Eurimages fund, and I should add that their success rate by far exceeds our membership fee," continues Gindl-Tatárová. Whilst Slovakia contributed EUR 116,535 to Eurimages in 2013, the support it received amounted to EUR 550,000. All My Children (Všetky moje deti, dir. L. Kaboš), Little from the Fish Shop (Malá z rybárne, dir. J. Balej) and Wilson City (Najhorší zločin vo Wilsonove, dir. T. Mašín) received support. Last year, Slovakia's contribution was the same amount and it received support of EUR 520,000. This was allocated to two projects – Seven Ravens (Sedem zhavranelých bratov, dir. A. Nellis) and Family Film (Rodinný film, dir. O. Omerzu).

"In 2013, all three projects applying for funds were supported; last year only two of six were successful. It was a year with an unprecedented number of applying projects from all Member States of the fund, but the options for support remained the same. Under less exposed conditions, two more Slovak projects would definitely have succeeded, but they remained immediately below the line. On the other hand, over the years our producers have learned how to submit relatively well-prepared film projects when applying for European funds; however, they do not always manage to accurately estimate their artistic and social value or, conversely, their market value," concludes Zuzana Gindl-Tatárová. ▲

Sun in a Net and Igric Film Awards

Best Feature Film in 2012 and 2013, Best Director and Best Script – Mira Fornay won in these three categories with *My Dog Killer* (Môj pes Killer) at the National Sun in a Net Awards announced by the Slovak Film and Television Academy. The gala award-presentation ceremony took place on 26th April. "In addition to racism, for me this film is also about the effort to survive and to belong somewhere. At the same time, this is related to how important certainties, sometimes even a headstrong faith, are for us, what a big role pride plays and where fear of an eventual loss of position in society may lead," said Mira Fornay for *Film.sk*. She also won the Hivos Tiger Award at the Rotterdam IFF for *My Dog Killer*. *Normalisation* (Kauza Cervanová) by director Robert Kirchhoff won the Sun in a Net Award for Best Documentary. *Snow* (Sneh, dir. I. Šebestová) became the Best Animated Film and *The Exhibition* (Výstava, dir. P. Begányi, A. Kolenčík) won among the short feature films. Since 2006, the Sun in a Net Awards have been awarded every two years.

The national creative awards in the area of audiovision, Igric, were awarded at the end of September last year. These were already the 25th Annual Awards of the Slovak Film Union, Union of Slovak Television Creators and Literary Fund of the Slovak Republic. A jury comprising seven members evaluated 62 works and eventually awarded five Igric Awards – to cinematographer Tomáš Juríček for *The Candidate* (Kandidát), director Robert Kirchhoff for the documentary *Normalisation*, to Katarína Kerekesová for the idea, concept, directing and art direction of the TV series *Mimi and Lisa* (Mimi a Líza), to actress Zuzana Mauréry for her performances in *Colette* and *Fine, Thanks* (Ďakujem, dobre) and to actor Marek Majeský for his performance in the title role of *The Candidate*. In addition, Special Prizes for Creativity and the 22nd Slovak Film Critic Awards FIPRESCI 2014 were awarded (Best Feature Film: *My Dog Killer*, Best Documentary: *Normalisation* and *Velvet Terrorists* – Zamatoví teroristi, dir. P. Pekarčík, I. Ostrochovský, P. Kerekes). ▲

Slovak Involvement in International Workshops

► Zuzana Sotáková

Young filmmakers also have a chance to develop their abilities at international workshops, training programmes and forums where they can get advice from experienced filmmakers and assistance for their own projects. Some of the most important events Slovakia is also involved in are Midpoint, DOK.Incubator, Visegrad Film Forum and Visegrad Animation Forum.

The international Midpoint training programme is intended for students and professionals, and it supports screenwriters, directors and producers in the development of their projects. Workshops aimed at the development of a script and dramaturgy form Midpoint's main training activity. The three-month programme for recent graduates and young film professionals with their first and second full-length and short narrative film projects includes two residential workshops and two on-line consultations with lecturers. *"This year the first part of the workshop will be held, as has become traditional, at the Art Film Fest International Film Festival in Trenčianske Teplice; the next part will continue in late August, early September,"* says Kristýna Pleskotová, the Midpoint PR. Other activities for this year include, for instance, the planned Training the Trainers workshop which will take place at FAMU in Prague and is intended for screenwriting teachers and script development and dramaturgy professionals, also the Dramaturgy in the Editing Room workshop (FAMU Prague) which should help directors and editors with their films at the rough-cut stage, Story Launch – A TV Lab for Filmmakers intended primarily for professional teams of screenwriters, producers and directors of TV series, workshops for local film professionals and the miniMIDPOINT workshop to be held within the Training the Trainers programme and which will be dedicated to the scripts of

four selected full-length films or TV series. Last year, projects with the participation of Slovak filmmakers were also involved in the Midpoint main training activities, specifically the full-length projects *The Contest (Súťaž)* and *Filth (Špina)*, and the short project *Why Do We Believe (Prečo veríme)*. This last project even won an award at the 5th Midpoint and, in turn, the makers of *The Contest* won an education scholarship. Last year Zuzana Kaliská and Barbara Janišová Feglová took their project *The Journey Home (Cesta domov)*, Michal Baláž and Juraj Krasnohorský *The Taster (Ochutnávač)*, Iveta Grófová *Fifth Boat (Piata loď)* and Naďa Clontz and Biba Bohinská *The Brat (Zasran)*, to the workshop for Slovak film professionals.

The international DOK.Incubator workshop which offers six-month individual consultations led by recognised editors, producers, marketing experts and distributors is intended for directors, editors and producers of documentaries at the rough-cut stage. Workshop participants learn, inter alia, how to proceed when drawing up their projects and when creating a distribution strategy, how to address a broader audience and gain a foothold on the international scene, or how to proceed in the post-production of a film. *"The deadline for applications is March and eight creative teams working on a full-length documentary at the rough-cut stage will be selected from the applying projects. These teams will take part in three weekly workshops in order to continue developing their films and to prepare*

them for the international market," explains Silvia Dydňanská as to how DOK.Incubator works. The first workshop will take place in May in the Czech Republic (rough cut), the second in September in Slovakia (final cut) and the almost finished films will be presented in October during the prestigious DOK Leipzig Festival.

The sound-mixing legend and holder of three Academy Awards for Best Sound, Christopher Newman, is one of several filmmaking personalities brought to Slovakia by the educational and networking event, Visegrad Film Forum. *"The Visegrad Film Forum is intended mainly, although not exclusively, for young filmmakers who are interested in meeting and finding international partners for their productions,"* clarifies PR Manager Ondrej Starinský. The next workshop will be held on 11 – 14 March in Bratislava, and nearly ten partner schools from Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and Romania will take part in this workshop. *"Last year, for instance, Allan Starski, Academy Award winner for Best Art Direction/Set Decoration for Steven Spielberg's Schindler's List or Christian Berger, the only cinematographer that Austrian director Michael Haneke works with, attended the Visegrad Film Forum. The programme also included three case-studies of films (Ida, War Photographer, The Hives) and four discussions – one of them constituted what was the very first public forum with representatives of film funds from the V4 countries. The discussion participants focused on the need to create a space for future collaboration of the funds and better support for co-productions in Central Europe. The discussion entitled The Journey of Film to the Audience analysed various aspects of contemporary film distribution. The discussion entitled Let Us Talk about... opened up a space for an analysis of the current situation in the Slovak public-service RTVS. Each of the eight partner schools screened a collection of best films of the previous year,"* notes Starinský.

The Visegrad Animation Forum (VAF) is another event focused on the development of animated cinema in the Visegrad Region. It includes pitching forums, panel discussions,

presentations and workshops. The next VAF will take place in May as a part of Anifilm, the International Festival of Animated Films in Třeboň, Czech Republic. *"The main objective is to support the development, production and distribution of animated films in the V4 countries in a comprehensive manner; in the past, these countries were famous for their animation tradition and now they are fighting for the survival of this field of art,"* says animator Katarína Kerekesová from the Association of Animated Film Producers which co-organises the VAF. Approximately 150 professionals working in various European countries, although predominantly from the V4 countries, will take an active part in the project. These are film producers and authors, students and young talents, animated film distributors, university and academy teachers and television broadcasters. The makers of short animated films or television series under development who enrol in this event will have an opportunity to present their projects to European producers and broadcasters, and also the chance to win the main prize (EUR 2,000) in the short animated film category or the Czech Television Prize for the best TV project. *"Last year, 29 projects entered the competition, of these seven short animated films and seven animated TV series were selected. Koyaa from Slovenia won the Best TV Series Award and the Polish The Advisers of King Hydrops was the Best Short Film. Slovakia was represented by L.A.B. by Juraj Krasnohorský and Peter Košťál, and Brother Dear (Braček Jelenček) by Zuzana Žiaková,"* recalls Kerekesová. However, the Visegrad Animation Forum plans to extend its activities. *"It transpires that it is necessary to prepare presentations and projects over a longer lead-time. Accordingly, together with the other animated film associations we are considering a year-round dramaturgy of the event. We already started last year with an individual event entitled New Talents held at the International Animation Festival Fest Anča in Žilina; it focused on the presentation of what were chiefly student and first projects,"* adds Katarína Kerekesová. ▲



2015 Premières? A Full Load of Animated Films

► Daniel Bernát

In the first half of 2015 a situation will occur with regard to premières of Slovak and co-production films which is distinctly unusual for our environment – no less than three full-length animated films are to be premièred in cinemas, even though only one of them is a majority Slovak film. The last full-length Slovak animated film for cinemas was made 35 years ago – it was *The Bloody Lady* (*Krvavá pani*) by the artist and director, Viktor Kubal.

2015 started in Slovak cinemas with the full-length feature film *Hostage* (Rukojemník) which takes us back to the time of communist Czechoslovakia, but this is reflected primarily through the eyes of child heroes. It is the story of young Peter who lives in a border town with his grandparents, as his father and mother have emigrated to neighbouring Austria. Peter experiences common childhood situations connected with games, friendships, first signs of love, curious examination of the world, boyish desires and disappointments. In the end, the problems he is most sensitive to appear in the foreground – they concern his parents. All this against the backdrop of a period which at some times is just cheerfully awkward, but at others it is a period that silently but efficiently bends human characters or breaks their necks outright. The experienced Juraj Nvota directed the Slovak-Czech co-production. He returned to the communist period in his previous films (*The*

Confidant – Eštebák, 2012 and *Music* – Muzika, 2007). Nvota should also present his next film this year, this time a documentary. It is entitled *Elsewhere* (Inde) and deals with the Slovak artist Alexander Mlynarčík.

As far as feature films are concerned, one more new film with a majority production share from Slovakia will be premièred in cinemas in the first half of 2015. *Seven Ravens* (Sedem zhavranelých bratov) is based on the classical fairy tale and made in a Slovak-Czech co-production (with Eurimages support). The story of a girl who decides to free her seven brothers from a curse was made by the well-known Czech director Alice Nellis.

The new films confirm the ongoing close collaboration between representatives of Slovak and Czech cinema. However, co-productions between Slovakia and Hungary also appear sporadically, this time in the form of the film entitled *Mirage*. It was directed by the Hungarian

filmmaker Szabolcs Hajdu who cast Isaach De Bankolé in the title role.

After a digression to feature film (*Children*), the prominent Slovak documentary filmmaker Jaro Vojtek (*Here We Are, The Border, Gypsy Vote*) returns to documentary with his new film *So Far, So Near* (Tak ďaleko, tak blízko). The film shows families with autistic children and Vojtek characterises it as a film largely about reconciliation. In his view, parents have to primarily accept the given state of affairs in order to be able to cope with everything required by life with an autistic child. And it requires a high degree of empathy to break down the barrier that separates them from their children even though they are always close to each other.

Director Robert Kirchhoff's docu-drama *Normalisation* (Kauza Cervanová) was premièred in cinemas two years ago and it also attracted attention at festivals. This year, he should present two new projects to audiences. The first one is entitled *The Island of Fools* (Ostrov bláznov), made together with Czech director Filip Remunda. It is a documentary jam session with musicians Laco Deczi, Ľubomír Tamaškovič and Ján Jankeje. The second film *Through the Forest* (Cesta lesom) will get its premièred in cinemas in the second half of the year and, in this case, Kirchhoff bears witness to the destinies of European Roma in the form of an essayistic fresco, and he reflects on the tragic context of the Romani Holocaust, i.e. Porajmos.

By contrast, another reputable documentary filmmaker, Marko Škop, should demonstrate this year how well he has coped with a feature film. His feature debut *Eva Nová* tells the story of a woman – a cured alcoholic and former well-known actress – who above all yearns for the affection of her son. The documentary filmmaker Ivan Ostrochovský has also decided to try a feature film. You can read more about his project *Koza*, which tells the story of a boxer from the margins of society, and which was included in the Forum Section at the Berlin IFF, in the Interview section. However, Ostrochovský is also preparing the documentary *Guard* (Garda) which broaches an important topic hitherto avoided by filmmakers. It presents an account of the activities of the notorious Hlinka

Guard during the First Slovak Republic, and it uses the last living survivors.

Guard will be screened in cinemas in the second half of the year, but let us now return to the first half – a rare situation when three full-length animated films will be premièred. *LokalFilmis* is a Slovak project of young director Jakub Kroner who has already made two successful feature films: *Bratislavafilm* (2009) and *Lóve* (Lóve, 2011). In view of his previous animated sitcoms, it can be expected that Kroner will inject a deal of irony and sarcasm into his new film, that he will develop a bizarre plot ad absurdum and also include references to notable figures in public life and pop culture in his eccentric game.

The further two animated films to be premièred in the spring were made in Slovak minority co-productions and, unlike Kroner's film, they make use of puppet animation. *Little from the Fish Shop* (Malá z rybárne) was made by the experienced Czech filmmaker, Jan Balej; he was inspired by a fairy tale by H. Ch. Andersen. It is the story of the Sea King's daughter. The King left the ravaged coastal waters together with his family and went to live among people. But his daughter Little encounters trouble when she falls in love with a carefree young man, Baron. Another marionette film by Czech filmmaker Radek Beran is entitled *Little Man* (Malý Pán); it is based on the book *Big Journey of the Little Man* (Velká cesta malého pána) by Lenka Uhlířová and Jiří Stach and tells the story of a small hero who takes off on a dramatic journey across the world thanks to his dream. Beran's film shows not only the marionettes but also their strings; the marionettes are located in a real forest.

Other Slovak documentaries will be premièred in cinemas over the course of the year (for instance *Okhwan – Mission Impossible, Excursions – Exkurzie, Suri*) as well as feature films (*Fear – Strach, Wilson City – Najhorší zločin vo Wilsonove, Agave – Agáva, Cleaner – Čistič*). And, so as not to miss out on the world of animation either, the premièred of the Czecho-Slovak omnibus film by director Jan Bubeníček, *Grandpa Cactus Trilogy* (Trilógia kaktusák) is provisionally planned for December. ▲



Digitisation Workplace Is the Future of Film

► Simona Nôtová

In 2014, a modern digitisation workplace of the Slovak Film Institute (SFI) was built in the basement of Cinema Lumière. It was one of the activities of the Digital Audiovision National Project implemented in the SFI since 2011. It is the largest audiovisual heritage digitisation project in Slovakia and the SFI made use of European Union funds in its implementation. The Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) is the SFI's partner in the Digital Audiovision Project.

Construction of the digitisation workplace started in the second half of 2013 and it was put into pilot operation in the first quarter of 2014. The staff members were gradually trained for its full operation; they currently take part in the entire digitisation process and digital restoration of films. This is possible thanks to the state-of-the-art equipment at the workplace which complies with the current requirements of film archives and distribution channels for audiovisual works. The significance of the digitisation workplace activities and outputs will be tested over time, but it is already obvious that its existence is a must in the era of digital cinema and television broadcasting. Accordingly, the workplace is of crucial importance to maintain continuity in making the audiovisual heritage of Slovakia accessible, to conform to appropriately current modern technologies and, as it becomes a permanent part of the SFI workplaces, it also creates the basis

for improving and innovating other specialised activities of the SFI.

The complete processing procedure is designed for a 4K/2K resolution. It consists of an efficient archival film image-scanner, archival sound-transcription, work-stations for digital image and sound retouching, film and digital projection, grading workplaces and the digitised objects management system. State-of-the-art archival and post-production hardware and software solutions are used throughout the process. The workplace is used for film conversion, for restoring the image and sound parts of selected works, production of the digital master and its derivatives, as well as for preservation (simple laboratory) activities with the film media after conversion, at a high technological level. According to Peter Csordás, a digitisation expert and also quality and control manager of the Digital Audiovision Project, "the technical and

technological background of SFI's digitisation workplace makes possible, in addition to many other activities, the digitisation of 35/16-mm archival image cinematographic materials in a 4K and lesser resolution, using a unique construction of diffuse light of the recording head as the equivalent of the wet laboratory procedure with high fidelity presentation of the granularity film structure."

The restored digital master in high 4K/2K resolution and the original image scan and sound transcription are the main outputs of the digital workplace. The digital master is used to produce media for digital cinemas (DCP), for TV broadcasting and to be made accessible on the Internet, as well as to produce DVDs and Blu-rays. These outputs are stored on LTO tapes taking into account simple data migration for future generations on various new media. The outputs of the digitisation workplace are also extremely important for the construction of an audiovisual memory. When restoring archival films, attention at the digitisation workplace is primarily paid to maintaining consistency with the original film. SFI staff members collaborate directly with film cinematographers under the Association of Slovak Cinematographers (ASC). The ASC has collaborated with the SFI in the restoration of Slovak films right from the outset.

"The main role of the cinematographer in the restoration of films is to oversee maximum consistency between the analogue and digital copies," says cinematographer Ján Ďuriš who has supervised several films. In his view, from the technical perspective, it may seem that the presence of a cinematographer as the author of the image part of the film is superfluous. Some foreign companies even exclude such collaboration. Ďuriš's experience, however, inclines to the opposite: *"The most challenging thing is to maintain the light – the tone concept of the original specimen copy. The most frequent 'mistake' I observed when collaborating in the restoration of films was that the colourist is unable to accurately estimate the correct tonality, especially of early-evening and night shots."* However, for the SFI, the collaboration with cinematographers, sound masters, and other filmmakers or their representatives from professional guilds and organisations in

the digital restoration of films is a well-tested procedure.

The digitisation workplace in a current audiovisual and digital company opens up a new era in Slovak cinematography. An important Slovak director, Martin Šulík, said at his first visit to the SFI's digitisation workplace that was where he saw the future of Slovak film. The SFI collections are gradually being digitised in it, i.e. Slovak feature, documentary, animated and news films that are a period testimony to society. The digitised and restored audiovisual works from this workplace are comparable, in qualitative terms, with the digitally restored works from other significant international film archives, such as the British Film Institute, Deutsches Filminstitut or the film archives in Bologna or Paris. The words of Ján Ďuriš also confirm this: *"The equipment of the digitisation workplace is world-class. The resulting quality of restored Slovak films is also excellent thanks to the collaboration with the ASC which provides artistic supervision even over films of late cinematographers."*

Peter Dubecký, the SFI's General Director and also the main guarantor of the Digital Audiovision Project, considers this project to be fundamental with regard to the future of Slovak cinema. When the digitisation workplace was opened in June 2014 he said that *"thanks to the project, a digitisation workplace is being established which is capable of converting films into a digital form and, at the same time, a complete image and sound chain for digitisation is created. Thanks to this project the Slovak Film Institute has become a modern archive of the 21st century."*

THE DIGITISATION WORKPLACE EQUIPMENT MAKES IT POSSIBLE:

1. to digitise archival image cinematographic 35/16/9.5/8-mm materials;
 2. to digitise archival optical and magnetic 35/17.5/16-mm sound recordings;
 3. to digitally restore image and sound recordings;
 4. to create masters for digital cinema and television broadcasting up to a 4K resolution;
 5. to create conditions for long-term archiving of digitised films;
 6. to interconnect the SK CINEMA database with digital content. ▲
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Good Films in Good Quality

► Daniel Bernát

The Slovak Film Institute is making a catalogue of digitally restored films available on DCP with English subtitles. This currently contains more than twenty full-length Slovak films.

The collection contains films made between the 1950s and the early 1990s over which the SFI exerts producer rights. Naturally, the 1960s are particularly well represented – they are regarded as the golden era of Slovak cinema. Thus, *The Sun in a Net* (Slnko v sieti, 1962) could not be omitted from the selection, as this film heralded the advent of the Czechoslovak New Wave. It was made by director Štefan Uher and a further three films by the director are available on DCP: *The Organ* (Organ, 1964), *The Wonder-Maid* (Panna zázračnica, 1966) and *Three Daughters* (Tri dcéry, 1967). Another remarkable director, Peter Solan, is represented not just with his full-length début *The Devil Never Sleeps* (Čert nespí, 1956, co-directed by F. Žáček), but also with his pivotal film *The Boxer and Death* (Boxer a smrť, 1962) where he depicts a drama based on the unusual relations between a German officer and a prisoner in a concentration camp. Solan's next film, *Before Tonight Is Over* (Kým sa skončí táto noc, 1965), is a horse of a different colour; it consists of a mosaic of situations occurring among guests at a stylish night club.

As for the productions of the 1960s, the film transcription of Dobroslav Chrobák's novella *The Dragon's Return* (Drak sa vracia, 1967) is here. This was directed by Eduard Grečner and is an example of great work with image and music. In turn, *A Song about the Grey Pigeon* (Pieseň o sivom holubovi, 1961) is remarkable in the way the director Stanislav Barabáš reflects on the war through the eyes of children.

When speaking of the New Wave, Juraj Jakubisko, Elo Havetta and Dušan Hanák were its most distinct representatives. Elo Havetta's début *Celebration in the Botanical Garden* (Slávnosť v botanickej záhrade, 1969) is saturated

with ideas and playfulness, with an atmosphere of the celebration of vitality and emotionality. Thus, a peculiar world is created where, unlike the monotonous everyday reality, everything has a distinct taste, scent and colour, nor can miracles be excluded. Hanák is an equally remarkable personality but of a different nature. His début *322* is substantially more moderate in its expression. In this case, the director's resourcefulness is displayed not by staging an extravagant action but in his ability to see beyond what is obvious, into the intimate sphere of a man and his existence which might be veiled by silence; however, it is full of motion. Another film by Hanák is also available – the much awarded documentary *Pictures of the Old World* (Obrazy starého sveta, 1972).

Through DCP, cinema audiences may also become familiar with the various "faces" of the director, Juraj Jakubisko, whose work is characterised by powerful images. From his early period, *Birdies, Orphans, and Fools* (Vtáčkovia, siroty a blázni, 1969) is quite typical. In the film the dreamy "game of foolery" is mixed with cruelty and it grows into tragedy. In the 1980s Jakubisko made the epic family saga *The Millennial Bee* (Tisícročná včela, 1984); it was an extremely difficult project to make and it also captures historical changes. His fairy tale *Lady Winter* (Perinbaba, 1985) was hugely popular with audiences.

A marked dramatic conflict based on the confrontation of characters in a complicated situation contingent on the period context – that is what the director Miloslav Luther is usually interested in; this holds true for his film *A Path Across the Danube* (Chodník cez Dunaj, 1989) situated in 1939-1940. *Tenderness* (Neha, 1991) is the "youngest" film in the DCP collection. Martin Šulík made it as his full-length début as director. ▲

Publisher: SFI

► Daniel Bernát

The monthly **Film.sk** is published by the Slovak Film Institute (SFI), but its Publications Department also produces other materials, including film publications, DVDs and soon Blu-rays too.

On the occasion of the centenary of the start of World War I, the DVD with *Signum Laudis* by director Martin Holý was launched on the market. This dramatic story focuses on Corporal Hoferik who is made to pay dearly for his devotion to the army and the monarchy, his sense of duty and his faith in ideals. The second DVD includes *The Sweet Time of Kalimagdora* (Sladký čas Kalimagdory); in it director Leopold Lahola captures the life cycle of Jonáš on the principle of four seasons – in spring Jonáš behaves like a little boy, he becomes a man in summer, he gradually loses his energy in autumn and eventually he disappears into the mountains and lies down for a winter sleep. Last year, the SFI also prepared a second, modified DVD issue of popular films of the 1970s and 1980s, namely *Red Wine* (Červené víno, dir. A. Lettrich), *Pacho, the Brigand of Hybe* (Pacho, hybský zbojník, dir. M. Ďapák), *Sweet Troubles* (Sladké starosti, dir. J. Herz) and *She Kept Crying for the Moon* (Pásla kone na betóne, dir. Š. Uher). A set of newsreels *Week in Film 1945 – 1990* (Týždeň vo filme 1945 – 1990) was issued on 5 DVDs. The set consists of short reports capturing period events. The DVD collection contains 50 newsreels in all. Each of the above DVD titles includes at least English subtitles.

Several new publications also came into existence. The film theoreticians and aestheticians, Peter Michalovič and Vlastimil Zuska, are the authors of *Discussions of a Western* (Rozprava o westerne). The book deals with the genre contexts of the western, its determining attributes, characters, environments, weapons, types of conflict and, of course, it makes reference to many films from various periods of cinematography. At the end of 2014, another book by pop-culture theoretician Juraj Malíček and IT expert and film journalist František Gyárfáš was published. *Our Film Century* (Naše filmové storočie) contains

texts reflecting on a hundred miscellaneous films divided into ten chapters according to theme. Each of the authors offers his own view on the films selected. The SFI Publications Department continues to issue the filmological magazine *Kino-Ikon* (published in collaboration with the Association of Slovak Film Clubs – ASFC, the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava and the SFI). The occasional magazine from students of Film Science at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava entitled *Frame* also forms a part of *Kino-Ikon*. The SFI has issued a collection of texts *Film and the Cultural Memory* (Film a kultúrna pamäť) in collaboration with the ASFC; it contains contributions from the participants of the Czechoslovak Filmological Conference in Krpáčovo. The SFI was also involved in issuing the publication *Schemes of the Language* (Úklady jazyka) by the renowned film publicist Pavel Branko.

Inter alia, this year a representative 10 Blu-ray collection of Slovak films is to be produced. This was initiated by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic in connection with Slovakia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2016. The collection should contain five archive films made prior to 1989 and five films made in the past twenty-five years. The collection of films from SFI's own collection, for which the SFI exerts producer rights, contains *The Sun in a Net* (Slnko v sieti, dir. Š. Uher, 1962), *The Boxer and Death* (Boxer a smrť, dir. P. Solán, 1962), *Birdies, Orphans, and Fools* (Vtáčkovia, siroty a blázní, dir. J. Jakubisko, 1969), *I Love, You Love* (Ja milujem, ty miluješ, dir. D. Hanák, 1980) and *A Path Across the Danube* (Chodník cez Dunaj, dir. M. Luther, 1989). ▲

The SFI Co-produces Films and TV Series

► Daniel Bernát

The Slovak Film Institute acted as co-producer in the production of a number of films and television series in 2014, some of which even went into film distribution. These were the full-length feature film **In Silence** (*V tichu*) and the documentary **The Lyricist** (*Lyrik*). In January 2015, the documentary **Return to the Burning House** (*Návrat do horiaceho domu*) was premièred in cinemas and in April the film portrait of costume designer Milan Čorba will be screened in cinemas.

In March last year the documentary *The Lyricist* made by director Arnold Kojnok was given its première at the Febiofest International Film Festival. It concerns the historian Ján Mlynárik, a signatory of Charter 77, who was persecuted for his political and publishing activities. The communist secret police (State Security) spied on him; in their files he was nicknamed the Lyricist, thereby giving the film its title. In the documentary, Mlynárik reveals the trials and tribulations of his life but, at the same time, his account creates a map of the bigger history of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. It is not just his personal memories that are remarkable but, in particular, their combination with the knowledgeable description of the political context and interpretation of important historical events as well as the influence of personalities within the power structures.

Last year, *The Lyricist* was one of the films that was placed in cinemas not by distribution companies but by the producers of the work themselves. However, that was not the case for the feature film *In Silence* directed by Zdeněk Jiráský. The filmmakers chose the topic of the Holocaust but they tried to express it in an innovative manner. They eschewed the traditional method of dialogue interactions between the characters; instead, the audiences hear the inner monologues of the protagonists. And music gets quite a lot of space which also relates to the fact that the film focuses on Jewish musicians, singers, composers

and dancers. The first part of the film consists of idyllic scenes of their lives before the war, whilst the second part is an incursion in the conversely dark period of concentration camps. Notes by the musicologist Agáta Schindlerová served as the basis for the film. She mapped out the destinies of Jewish musicians during World War 2.

The documentary series *The First* (*Prvá*), which was also co-produced by the SFI, was premièred on the Slovak public-service television at the end of the year. The series presents portraits of women personalities from the history of Slovakia who, in their period, stood out with an unusual degree of self-fulfilment which helped them to achieve many a success. *"We came up with the project The First together with editor Alexandra Gojdičová and producer Barbara Janišová Feglová because we discovered that very little is known about women in our history. As if history were mainly the history of men... In addition to what they became leading figures in, we open the topic of the position of women in our society and we look into history from the perspective of the lives of selected women,"* explains the director, screenwriter and author of the idea and concept of the series, Zuzana Liová. Four episodes were broadcast at the end of the year and the beginning of 2015, dedicated to Magda Husáková Lokvencová – the first Slovak theatre female director, Irena Blühová – the first female photographer, Hana Gregorová – the first feminist and Beatrix "Trixi" Čelková, branded the youngest female spy in Europe.

Zuzana Liová, the author of the 2011 feature film *The House* (Dom), successful at festivals, directed the first and third parts; the second part was directed by Lenka Moravčíková-Chovanec and the portrait of Trixi was made by director Peter Kerekes who is known for his full-length documentaries *66 Seasons* (66 sezón), *Cooking History* (Ako sa varia dejiny) as well as being the co-author of *Velvet Terrorists* (Zamatoví teroristi) screened last year at the Berlin IFF in the Forum Section.

In January 2015, the full-length documentary by Anna Grusková *Return to the Burning House* was premièred in cinemas. It tells the story of Haviva Reik – a native of Slovakia who escaped from fascism to Palestine, played a part in the building of Israel, returned to Europe during the Slovak National Uprising and engaged in the fight against the occupiers. *“Haviva’s brave and restless soul not only led her to leave for the Palestine of that time, to build a kibbutz and later to undergo military and intelligence training, but also to rebel against the conventional model of behaviour of a married woman. She was diligent and resilient, she liked to learn and that took her to a leading position among paratroopers. But she was also receptive, kind-hearted, sensitive and selfless. The concept of the film is based on this dichotomy – the search for both faces of a heroine,”* clarifies the author of the film, Anna Grusková, on the website haviva.sk. *“We get to the lives of contemporary young women serving in the army in Israel and Slovakia through Haviva Reik’s story. They read the letters and period documents so they bring to the film spontaneity and an authentic expression of those who are close to her in their life choice.”*

At the beginning of January, ČT Art started broadcasting the documentary series *Czechoslovak Film Miracle* (Československý filmový zázrak). The script was prepared by Czech film historian and journalist Jan Lukeš, and the renowned Slovak filmmaker Martin Šulík is director. The series is in fifteen parts and deals primarily with the 1960s which are regarded as the golden era of Czechoslovak cinema. However, the authors also examine what preceded this period, how the scene was prepared

for the advent of the new wave and what was characteristic for its final phase associated with the dramatic political and social movements. The individual parts of the series consist of 57-minute documentaries on the given topic, and after them period films related to the given topic are broadcast. The following Slovak films were selected: *Wolves’ Lairs* (Vlčie diery, dir. Paľo Bielik, 1948), *A Song about the Grey Pigeon* (Pieseň o sivom holubovi, dir. Stanislav Barabáš, 1961), *Psychodrama* (Psychodráma, dir. Jozef Zachar, 1964), *Before Tonight Is Over* (Kým sa skončí táto noc, dir. Peter Solan, 1965), *Deserters and Pilgrims* (Zbehovia a pútnici, dir. Juraj Jakubisko, 1968), as well as short films by Dušan Hanák, Juraj Jakubisko and Dušan Trančík. Of course, the project also includes films by Czech directors (such as Věra Chytilová, Karel Kachyňa, Jan Němec, Ivan Passer and Jaromil Jireš). Moreover, in the coming autumn, the second season of the television series *The Golden Sixties* (Zlatá šedesátá) will be broadcast. Thematically, this series is related to the *Czechoslovak Film Miracle*, the script was again prepared by Jan Lukeš, director Martin Šulík also collaborated and it was co-produced by the Slovak Film Institute.

Martin Šulík also made the full-length documentary *Milan Čorba*; in it he seeks to capture the personality of the prominent Slovak costume designer. The film was made in two versions – a shorter television version and a longer one for cinemas. *“Milan Čorba was one of those who re-defined the profession of costume designer in the mid-1960s. Not only did the costume define the nature of the character and its social background, but it also directly affected the meaning and thematic level of the work. Within his profession, Čorba was unique in this. He belonged to the generation that tried to change Slovak culture overall,”* said Šulík for *Film.sk*. His portrait of Čorba is also plastic thanks to the myriad of Slovak and Czech filmmakers he collaborated with, and thanks also to suitably selected and combined answers. The Slovak public-service television has already presented the shorter version of the documentary; the longer one should be screened in cinemas in April. ▲

The Success of Slovak Film on an English DVD

The English DVD with the Slovak film *Birds, Orphans and Fools* (Vtáčkovia, siroty a blázní, dir. J. Jakubisko), which was issued in June last year in Second Run, a London-based DVD company, ranked second in last year's list of top Blu-rays and DVDs compiled by the *DVD Beaver* portal. The UK film magazine *Little White Lies* also entered the DVD in its TOP 25. *Birds, Orphans and Fools* is the second in the collection of films licensed by the Slovak Film Institute to be issued by Second Run. The first was *The Sun in a Net* (Slnko v sieti, dir. Š. Uher). At the end of February, Second Run will issue another Slovak film on DVD – *Pictures of the Old World* (Obrazy starého sveta, dir. D. Hanák).

Europa Cinemas Award for Slovak Cinemas

Of the 1,182 cinemas in 69 countries associated in Europa Cinemas, last year two Slovak cinemas, both in Bratislava, won the Best Programming Award. These were Cinema Lumière operated by the Slovak Film Institute and the Mladost Cinema which celebrated its centenary last year. *“Both cinemas have their unique history and identity, and they set the cultural standard,”* stated the representatives of Europa Cinemas, having the objective of stimulating the release of European films in cinemas. Last year, European films constituted up to 61 per cent of the programme of Cinema Lumière, without including Slovak films. The cinema attendance rate displays an upward tendency every year; last year the cinema attracted almost 66,000 viewers which represents a year-on-year increase of more than 25 per cent.

Audiences Unveil the History of Cinema

From the beginnings of cinema to the present day, for adults and for children. The Slovak Film Institute (SFI), in collaboration with the Association of Slovak Film Clubs, has been preparing an educational series entitled

Film Cabinet for film fans for the last two years; it deals with the history of world and Slovak cinematography. The new semester of events started recently – on 29 January, and up to June it will offer ten lectures: the Birth of Film, David Wark Griffith and the Detail, Documentary and Reality, the Birth of Slovak Cinema, Charles Chaplin and Gesture, Soviet Avant-garde and Montage, Expressionism and Expression, Peaks of Silent Film and Film Language, Surrealism and Luis Buñuel, and Sound in Film. Each lecture is accompanied by the screening of a film. First- to fourth-graders at primary schools may also discover the mysteries of film art at screenings of Slovak animated films and lectures within the *Film Cabinet for Children*. In addition to these educational series, an annual showcase entitled *A Train Named Film* started in January on the occasion of the 120th anniversary of the first projection of the Lumière Brothers' cinematograph for which the public paid admission. In the course of the year the showcase will present approximately 60 films from various periods of the history of cinematography. All of them are linked by the theme of railways and trains.

Last Year Documentaries Succeeded in the Film.sk Evaluation

Five years ago, in the *Film.sk* monthly, eight Slovak film theoreticians and critics started evaluating those Slovak or majority Slovak full-length films screened in cinemas in the given year. The assessors award films points on a scale of one to a maximum of five. Last year, they evaluated 19 Slovak films and the documentary *All My Children* (Všetky moje deti) by director Ladislav Kaboš scored the highest. It is a film about the priest, Marián Kuffa, and about the assistance he provides to socially disadvantaged people under harsh conditions. Documentary filmmakers also dominate other positions – *Comeback* (dir. M. Remo) ranked second followed by the documentary *Wave vs. Shore* (Vlna vs. breh, dir. M. Štrba).