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SPECIAL EDITION OF THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE ON SLOVAK CINEMA

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REVIEWS

- ▶ **Eva Nová**
- ▶ **The Cleaner**
- ▶ **Waiting Room**

INTERVIEW

- ▶ **Marko Škop**

2015 IN SLOVAK FILM

**WE INTRODUCE
THE SLOVAK FILM INSTITUTE**



Best
1921 of
1991
Slovak
Film



An Introduction to
35 Slovak Films and
20 Slovak Filmmakers

Film entries written by
Peter Hames

I, *Olga Hepnarová* (Ja, Olga Hepnarová) and *In Your Dreams!* (Ani ve snu!) were included in this year's Berlin International Film Festival programme. These films are Czech majority films, but Slovakia also had a part in their making. The interconnection between the Slovak and Czech audiovisual environments remains obvious, even although it is now more than twenty years since the break-up of the former federal republic. You will find several co-productions in the New Films section which offers a selection of Slovak films that are planned to have their premières in 2016. *Eva Nová* is also a Slovak-Czech film; we carry a review of the film in the magazine and also an interview with its author Marko Škop, an experienced documentary filmmaker who entered feature production. And also a filmmaker who has sampled the working conditions in Croatia, so he can compare, step back and look at the Slovak environment from a certain distance.

Recently, the productivity of Slovak cinema appears to be promising and its variety is also increasing. This is fostered by international collaborations; however, the support provided by the domestic environment is vital, especially the support from the Slovak Audiovisual Fund and public-service television. We deal with how the Radio and Television of Slovakia collaborates with film producers in the Topic of this issue.

It seems that the confidence of domestic audiences in Slovak films is gradually growing, as indicated by the statistics on pages 12 and 13. However, it is important that, at the same time, the audience be made aware that Slovak cinema does not just constitute the current films, but that it has its history where a variety of connections and remarkable works are to be found. The digitisation of the audiovisual heritage can contribute to this awareness and we provide information about it in the section devoted to the Slovak Film Institute.

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 (FIAPF), 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 (FIAPF).

► In 2002, the SFI published its first DVD (*Pictures of the Old World/Obrázky 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.

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

► The national Digital Audiovision project was concluded on 30 November 2015; however, it will be retained until 2020. Read more about it on pages 32 – 33.



Surprisingly Good Intruders and the End of a Comedy Dream

► Jana Dudková

The 2015 feature production confirms that Slovak cinema is becoming more genre-diversified without getting diverted along the road of following short-term trends. In it we can find a fairy tale, a comedy, a nostalgic retro-story, genre hybrids inspired by popular culture, and also auteur works innovating well-known models of socially-oriented works in which the impulses of the first domestic social films move in new, frequently unexpected directions. Thus, in essence, we can find all the trends that have been intentionally supported, largely after the Slovak Audiovisual Fund was established.

However, diversity does not mean that works are no longer divided between those which are focused more towards presentation at international festivals and those which are directed towards a broader audience, not just the local art house audience. Nevertheless, the differences are not so distinct as they used to be in recent years and films following global trends in art cinematography with regard to the cast or genre inspirations are also noticeably directed towards the domestic audience.

The distribution year 2015 commenced quite conventionally, in the line of films from the previous year dealing with the past. *The Hostage* (Rukojemník) is the third of the nostalgic films by director Juraj Nvota built on an a priori rejection of the normalisation processes in Czechoslovak

society. It is not a film signalling a cinematographic trend, rather a film confirming a certain trend in the auteur work of Nvota himself – his theatre and television works differ markedly from his cinema cycle in terms of genre and theme, even though some stylistic and ethical elements remain similar (the penchant for mitigating conflicts, the appeal to maintain the family hearth even despite a temporary disruption of the harmonic order, etc.). The balancing between realism, the decorative (n)ostalgia of the late 1960s and the childish plot-lines (the episode with the fox), however, does not seem convincing in the film and *The Hostage* remains a somewhat mediocre example of its genre.

Even though it might sound like a cliché, in respect of the films made in 2015, there are three

films which continue to stabilise the minimalist, socially sensitivised film or, in other words, the "social drama", which appear to be more valuable. While, in 2014, there was a short break and the genre was present only in the form of stories in *Children* (Deti) and *Twenty* (Slovensko 2.0), the subsequent year brought two feature débuts from directors of documentaries and one attempt to merge the elements of social drama made the Slovak way with a thriller, romance and film noir. In particular, *The Cleaner* (Čistič) and *Eva Nová* (Eva Nová) proved that the ongoing trend of "festival" films is capable of surprising and also developing new ways of appealing to domestic audiences. Thus, *The Cleaner* involves genres that are more attractive to audiences and *Eva Nová* entices audiences to view the still popular film star in an unexpected role. However, neither of these films attempts to make concessions to the taste of the masses; *The Cleaner* even radically frustrates the viewer's expectations. At the same time, both titles try to remediate the stable images of Slovak film. The dismal, film-noir-style images of (post)apocalyptic Bratislava under constant renovation in *The Cleaner* are miles away from the housing estate teenage hits and lifestyle films from the beginning of the millennium. The way the camera takes Emília Vášáryová in *Eva Nová* in combination with the unbecoming styling create a totally different spectacle of an ageing face than we have been accustomed to with Vášáryová. Of the three films made last year, Ivan Ostrochovský's début *Koza* (Koza) most obviously follows in the well-established trail of the Slovak festival film. However, even this film sneakily betrays some of the expectations, for instance, instead of the "glocal" magic of economically devastated Eastern Europe, it provides a homogeneous image of alienated countries on the social periphery irrespective of whether we are in the East or the West. It also adumbrates the transformation of the typical protagonist of Slovak films: even though it is the image of a Roma oppressed by life which has been exploited so many times previously, *Koza* fights for his place under the sun, but at the same time he remains humble and upright (by the end of the film he even manages to overcome the opportunist nature

of his fellow-traveller and manager with these traits).

The protagonists of all the three above films take their fate into their own hands; the "cleaner" Tomáš and the broken actress Eva Nová don't even need a "manager" from the majority society to do so. In this way, they refer back to the débuts of Mira Fornay and Zuzana Liová (Liová is also one of the dramaturges of *Eva Nová*); hence, in a way, also to the roots of Slovak "social" drama. However, both films also bring to it unexpected elements of self-reflection of film or reflection of the domestic film tradition. *The Cleaner* follows up on Krišťúfek's film *Visible World* (Viditeľný svet) and, through the character of a recluse who wins love from being hidden under the bed of the chosen woman, it also reflects on the theme of audience voyeurism. In turn, *Eva Nová* brings a self-reflective vision of cinematography in its historical perspective by means of archive pictures from the filmography of Emília Vášáryová.

In respect of the theme, *Eva Nová* is probably the greatest surprise. It does not relate to current tendencies in Slovak cinema films but, surprisingly, to themes found in the television films of the new millennium: this is where we find a certain prototype of a mother who betrayed her own child. Just like the mothers in Párnický's *The Cage* (Klietka) or Krišťúfek's *Long Short Night* (Dlhá krátka noc) so *Eva Nová* is also, in a certain sense, the victim of her own emancipation and, at the same time, of the political regime demanding compromises. However, the novelty of *Eva Nová* resides not solely in the minimalist narration but also in the fact that she does not remain dependent on her children, bound to them by fatal ties – she simply remains herself. And also adamantly determined to be reconciled with her son.

All three films build on a specific type of protagonist whose resilience and determination defy the absurdity of the projects in which they invest their energy. Just as in most Slovak social dramas, the projects largely entail their idiosyncratic ideas of renewing family ties or building partner relations. While for *Koza*, who tries to create the conditions for the new member of the family about to arrive, the



project is a series of boxing matches in which he is predestined to fail due to his diminishing physical condition, the other two films are based – each in its own way – on the character of an undesired intruder. The family can start to be rebuilt (*Eva Nová*) or the partnership come into existence (*The Cleaner*) only at the moment when the character literally becomes an intruder in the lives of others.

In this sense, the collection of feature films premièred in 2015 is aptly complemented by another film about a stubbornly resilient heroine faced with the seemingly absurd project of rescuing her enchanted brothers – the fairy tale by Czech director Alice Nellis *Seven Ravens* (Sedem zhavranělých bratrov). It signifies the gradual extension of the Slovak share in the fairy tale genre, which the director of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, Martin Šmatlák, shortly before the Fund was established, designated as one of those with a tradition that Slovak cinema could build on. The fairy tale by Alice Nellis was accorded a feminist context by the media solely because the film focuses on an active, resilient heroine and because of the casting, since the role of the future princess was given to an actress not conforming to the stereotypical ideas of beauty. However, compared with *Three Wishes for Cinderella* (Tri oriešky pre Popolušku, 1973), it transpires that *Seven Ravens* does not outface any older attempts to subvert gender roles in fairy tales, and it even mishandles the pace, the credibility of acting or the (il)logicality of the actions of the individual characters (the queen and her younger son) which do not fit into the logic of the film, in the attempt to combine the fairy tale magic with psychological realism.

In a certain way, the next co-production project, *Wilson City* (Wilsonov) by Tomáš Mašín also exists on the cusp of being a fairy tale. It is a peculiar genre hybrid, combining elements of comics, hardboiled detective stories, political farce, horror, fantasy and comedy, where real events from the end of World War I come into the context of a retro-dystopia about the Americanisation of old Bratislava. Its visually attractive image interspersed with references to these genres, in combination with the disunited degree of geopolitical irony, engenders mistrust

in the intentions of the film, and leaves many reviewers and spectators in doubt as to which of the references to historical life and events were meant as a post-modern joke and which are a consequence of inconsistency or latent Czech colonialism. In combination with the simplistic humour of the film, the whole outcome is decidedly awkward.

The distribution year 2015 was concluded in feature films by Viktor Csudai's comedy. On the one hand, *Vojtech* (Vojtech) is based on the topical discourse in which comedy is presented as a genre in great demand in the domestic environment, on the other hand, the film continues in the line of semi-professional expression also represented by Csudai's début *Big Respect* (Veľký rešpekt, 2008). *Vojtech* does not have the political satire ambitions that *Wilson City* has and *The Candidate* (Kandidát) or *Good Man* (Dobrý človek) had, but rather it draws on the character humour of social types – whereby, just like extremely superficial television formats, it recycles unrealistic stereotypes but also mocks the representatives of those social groups which essentially make up the target audience. The film lacks pace, lacks the gift to point up the individual situations, it lacks the harmonisation and consistent symbolism of the costumes, stage design and props. It also lacks the ability to work with genre transitions. The acting performance hovers between various genres and the melodramatic happy ending is even mentoring, reminiscent of the dark times of the "all explanatory" Slovak screenwriting.

It appears that, unlike the social drama which has perfectly achieved a second wind, the long-expected reinvigoration of Slovak comedy still remains a bizarrely tenacious wish. Even though optimists might say that it diversifies the equally tenacious mediocrity of the representatives of other genre types, the almost annual distribution of semi-finished comedy products, which attempt to satisfy the alleged demand, last year again tainted the overall image of Slovak film in a rather demotivating and destructive manner.

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Great Ambitions, More Modest Results

► Mária Ferenčuhová

After five years of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund being in operation, one might say that documentary films for cinemas have made a highly satisfactory beginning. Compared with 2012, when there were only four full-length documentaries in the conventional cinema distribution, in 2013, there were eight screened in cinemas and a year later as many as twelve. Last year, the distribution companies released precisely ten documentaries in cinemas. After the five years of joy from the rise of Slovak film it is probably about time to ask what last year's documentaries have actually delivered and whether all of them match up to the dimensions of the big screen on which they are so ambitiously screened.

Last year's distributed films very quickly confirmed the trend set in 2014. Portraits of personalities, artists or well-known public figures formed the dominant genre in 2015 also. Martin Šulík made the documentary *Milan Čorba*, a cultured, professional but, nonetheless, personal portrait of the late costume designer and scenographer. Alena Čermáková made a sensitive and civil portrait of the cherished Roman Catholic priest and philanthropist, Anton Srholec, bearing his name, *Anton Srholec*. And finally, Matej Mináč made the film *Through the Eyes of the Photographer* (Očami fotografky), a portrait of his mother Zuzana Mináčová. All these films have the same starting point: they pay tribute to the person portrayed. They seek to honour this person's memory and highlight the non-pretentious but at the same time greater

qualities of this person's work (*Milan Čorba*), to pay homage to him on the occasion of his 85th birthday (*Anton Srholec*) or to tell her powerful human story and at the same time present her art (*Through the Eyes of the Photographer*). All of these films have a sympathetic protagonist who, in part, carries the film on their shoulders. While, in *Milan Čorba*, Šulík predominantly uses archive materials and the many testimonies of his colleagues, loved ones or friends, and made the film with aesthetic sensitivity and refinement, which was also typical of the personality portrayed, Alena Čermáková is somewhat peripatetic, conversational and reportorial. The author enters the arena of the film right at the beginning (and, subsequently, there is too much of her present there) and she reveals that several years of friendship tie her

to the protagonist. Within this type of personal communication, the many diverse attitudes of Srholec are revealed, his sense of humour, but also his feeling of loneliness. Matej Mináč, probably the biggest Slovak recycler of his own themes and materials, chose a totally different approach. His mother-and-son relationship stepped aside slightly and, by applying docudrama procedures he sought to emphasise the melodramatic line of child-love and the rescue of the protagonist's life during the Holocaust. Despite all this, I regard as strongest the documentary line of his film, which captures the protagonist's talent, humour, gratitude and steadfast will to live.

To a certain degree, all three films historicise and place the protagonists within the context of the period. Whilst, in doing so, they sometimes efface potentially problematic places, they are either harmonic and non-conflicting (*Milan Čorba*), or they have a problem with their length (*Anton Srholec*), pace and narration method (*Through the Eyes of the Photographer*).

Another documentary portrait released in 2015 is *Rytmus: A Dream from the Block* (*Rytmus: Sídľiskový sen*) by Miro Drobný. Despite this being a portrait of the rapper Patrik Vrbovský, alias Rytmus, hence potentially a musical film, *Rytmus: A Dream from the Block* can be placed rather in the category of celebrity portraits of the type of the documentary 38. Moreover, as regards the genre, it varies between being a fan film and a social success story about a half-Roma who is searching for his identity, whereby the musical entrées become secondary. Here too, the dramaturgical and narrative shortcomings – the fabricated character of the line of ethnic origin or the staggering triple ending – are largely counterbalanced by the humour of the protagonist and his rapper common sense. Despite its weaknesses, I welcome *Rytmus: A Dream from the Block* to Slovak cinemas – it has the chance to attract into the cinemas even those who would not otherwise go to see a Slovak film.

A somewhat different case pertains for Anna Grusková's film *Return to the Burning House* (*Návrat do horiaceho domu*). It is a historical portrait of Haviva Reik, a representative of the Jewish resistance who returned to her native

Slovakia from Palestine in order to engage in the Slovak National Uprising and, after it was suppressed, she also died here. Despite the creative solution of using voice-over and despite the painstaking work with archive materials and many photographic sources, the film proceeds at too moderate a pace, so it seems to be too long on the screen and its television length suits it better.

In addition to the portraits of Slovak personalities, in 2015 three films were also released in cinemas which forsook the Slovak present or past to examine the world beyond our country's borders. In *Suri* Pavol Barabáš went to Ethiopia to visit the natural Suri tribe threatened by the global economy and the mining of minerals. The film is divided into two parts – the first is an adrenaline expedition of five adventurers who raft an almost impassable terrain, kill dozens of tsetse flies on their own bodies and escape from a herd of hippos, while the second part is a rather superficial ethnography and an attempt to capture the unique combat ritual of the tribe they visited. This part of the film is strongly endowed with anti-globalisation ecological-ethnological slogans in both the commentary and the image. However, the unbalanced dramaturgy makes the film look rather like an amateurish hybrid than an adventure ethnographic ecofilm.

More successful and, from the conceptual and dramaturgical aspect, also a more professionally mastered film is *Colours of Sand* (*Farby piesku*) by Ladislav Kaboš. The film follows the story of a Slovak nurse, the widow of a Libyan physician, a progressive Muslim, against the backdrop of the war conflict in Libya. Kaboš managed to make a film which is not primarily a war documentary, even though it includes authentic shots from the front lines of the Libyan insurgents. It is rather a film about the dual identity of one woman, about the European values which were not in any way weakened for this woman in deciding to convert to Islam and, at the same time, it is a film about family, home, understanding and love.

The third film does not belong to the war documentary genre, either, even though its title may lead one to think so. *5th Regiment – Mission Afghanistan* (5. pluk – Misia Afganistan) is, first and foremost, a promotional film aimed at

improving the reputation of the Slovak soldiers serving in elite troops in Afghanistan. The filmmakers tried to give the film a spectacular audiovisual form but it never quite struck home. The excessive use of music, the repetitive shots from the field and, in particular, the bombastic commentary, interminably disparaging the intelligences of audiences by questions such as "Who would master such a job?", "What do we really know about the situation in Afghanistan?" without providing more detailed visual or verbal answers, transform the film in an irritating and superficial promotional video that renders the soldiers a disservice.

Essentially, only two films released in Slovak cinemas in 2015 can be categorised as auteur and creative documentaries that usually need the big screen and a screening room immersed in darkness to play out and to have their full effect. The first of them, *So Far, So Close* (Tak ďaleko, tak blízko) made by Jaro Vojtek in 2014, was originally made to order but, due to the author's approach, the short educational film originally planned grew into a sensitive chronological portrait of four young autistic people and their closest relatives. Despite the seemingly simple construction, *So Far, So Close* has an exceptionally well-thought-out structure. Moreover, it copes very efficiently with the editing and the musical accompaniment. It even seeks to reveal the uncommunicative protagonists more closely through emotions, which Vojtek senses in them but which he himself often has to induce by way of the film equipment. Thus, Vojtek's main asset is rendering the audience susceptible to the persons portrayed. Hence, the major details of the protagonists' faces cease to be an impenetrable façade of otherness and they become the gateway into an intimacy that would otherwise have remained hidden.

The second film, the staged documentary *Waiting Room* (Čakáreň) by Palo Korec can essentially be regarded as an auteur and creative documentary in its concept only. According to the filmmakers, the film was supposed to be "a documentary mosaic of life which at times grows even into a cruel sociological probe into the current world". Its over-arching structure was to create something

like a "seven ages of woman" against the backdrop of the environment in which the protagonists of the film live, work or just waste their time. Waiting was supposed to act as a metaphor of the woman's life and the waiting room at the main railway station in Bratislava its metonymy. However, both the poles remained empty, as Korec was not able to occupy them with his conceptualised "staged observation". The protagonists of his film are mere pawns, stereotypes of women, not characters. The director shows them in reducing sections, in sterile artificial situations and, even if he lets them speak, they are allowed to express themselves only on a partial phenomenon; therefore, they seem superficial – even though superficiality is here rather a directing method, not a quality of the women. The ambitiousness of the filmmaker was evident in this case; however, it was probably greater than his directing abilities.

In most countries, documentaries in cinema distribution are not to be taken for granted at all. But here it was documentaries that, for a long time, rescued the reputation of Slovak cinema. However, they were other types of documentaries. They were able to fulfil their own ambitions and to hold the attention of demanding audiences. Today, documentaries make up a half of the domestic distribution titles. This relatively high proportion is also contingent on the fact that support for full-length projects from public funds depends, inter alia, on the interest expressed by the distributor. And so, films with a strong viewer potential (the above-mentioned celebrity portraits) as well as films that lack this potential get onto the cinema screens. Whereby the primary objective of the latter films is to extend our knowledge of current events in society, of our own history or cultural values; in other countries such films would be broadcast only on TV or, in the more deserving cases, screened at festivals. Not all of such films released in 2015 were deficient. But even those that were the more successful are still a bit smaller than the screens in Slovak cinemas.

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A Year of an Exceptional Première and also of Waiting

► Maroš Brojo

The year 2015 in Slovak animated film passed mainly under the sign of the long-time development of new films, the domestic success of student films, no short film in distribution and the first Slovak full-length animated film since 1980. Hence, we have advanced in some areas, and retreated in others.

Festivals were the ones that traditionally met the demand of the animated film for distribution; the latest films were presented at the Áčko Festival in Bratislava and the Fest Anča International Animation Festival in Žilina. The Áčko Festival presented in its competition section new student films of promising authors from the Animation Studio of the Film and Television Faculty at the Academy of Performing Arts. The western slapstick *Cowboyland* (Kovbojsko) by Dávid Štumpf – a social critique of the inability of the establishment to maintain order – won the Award for Best Animated Film.

The lyrical introspection *Mila Fog* by Marta Prokopová was in many ways reminiscent of Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life*; in it the author displays her animistic fascination with the beauty of nature and the entire universe. The puppet film *Brother Deer* (Braček Jelenček) made by Zuzana Žiaková based on the fairy tale by Pavol Dobšínský, referred to another form of connection to nature and to the inevitable demise of life.

A student film also won a prize at the Fest Anča in the Slovak animated film competition. The story of loneliness and old age with a slightly macabre undertone in the form of the return of a stuffed pet, *Half Puppet* (Half bábka) was made by the Belgian student, Jasmine Elsen, as her graduation film at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts. Dávid Štumpf received the distribution award for his *Cowboyland* and at the New Talents industry programme he received, together with Michaela Mihályiová, the award for

the best project in development entitled *The End* (Koniec).

The latest films of 2015 were also presented. The chalk animation *Stability* (Stabilita) by Daniela Krajčová, which was premièred at the prominent DOK Leipzig international festival, tells the story of a woman who gains her independence and frees herself from the claws of a dysfunctional family. In turn, the video clips *Breathing Sulphur* (Dýchateľná síra) by Marián Vredík and *The Spirit of the City* (Duch mesta) by Andrej Kolenčík and Veronika Kocourková demonstrate that even commercially commissioned projects can have an artistic value.

After *Stability*, a second professional short animated film also had its domestic première at the end of the year – *Star Taxi* (Hviezdny taxík) made by Igor Derevenec and Juraj Krumpolec. The project was almost ten years in preparation and the result is extremely imaginative, in both artistic and animation terms, and a fresh adventure story about the destiny of a small boy travelling with a mysterious taxi driver across the universe.

Last year, the first Slovak full-length animated film since 1980 was also made. Director Jakub Kroner followed up his year-long successful web project *LokalTV* with his film *Lokalfilmis*. His film attracted over thirty thousand viewers to cinemas in the first week alone. *Lokalfilmis* was based on the well-established universe of *LokalTV* and it drew on the popularity of well-known figures. However, it struggled with the problem of unbalanced dramaturgy and the variable attractiveness and wittiness of the individual iconic characters. But,

as an exclusively commercial project, *Lokalfilmis* deserves appreciation for the ability of the filmmakers to finance the whole project from their own funds.

In 2015, Slovak projects in development were successfully presented not only at the Fest Anča industry programme but also abroad. The following films were presented at the most important animation industry event for Central and Eastern Europe, the Visegrad Animation Forum (VAF) in Třeboň: *Night Shift* (Nočná) by director Andrej Gregorčok, *Once There Was a Sea* (Bolo raz more) by Joanna Kožuch, and *The Tots* (Drobci) by Vanda Raýmanová, which was among the projects in the production phase. Peter Budinský presented his full-length film in the development phase, *Heart of the Tower* (Srdce veže) in Třeboň during Anifilm and in Baden in Switzerland at the important Fantoche International Animation Film Festival. The series *The Websters* (Websterovci) by Katarína Kerekesová was looking for international partners at the most significant European industry event for animated series, Cartoon Forum, in Toulouse (France). Since 2015, *Cowboyland* and *Half Puppet* have been represented on the international market by New Europe Film Sales which already previously represented *The Last Bus* (Posledný autobus) and *Snow* (Sneh).

Thanks to the the local Association of Animated Film Producers' participation in the organisation of the VAF, Slovak films were also eligible to apply for presentation in the Visegrad Animation Rallye selection which presents the most distinguished young talents in the area of animated film from the V4 countries. Thus, together with six other films from the V4 countries, *Fongopolis* by Joanna Kožuch and *In Line* by Kamila Kučíková, got into the final selection which travelled around the foreign film markets in the form of a DVD and was screened at more than fifteen festivals abroad.

Other countries showed quite remarkable interest in Slovak animation. Last year, Slovak animated films were presented in Hungary at the Anilogue Festival, in Australia at the Melbourne International Animation Festival, in Ireland at the Visegrad Film Festival, in France at the À l'Est, du Nouveau Film Festival and in the Czech Republic at the PAF Festival.

Short films were maybe slightly remiss last year with regard to the number of completed

professional films, but this should not be considered as their gradual decline. There are many short films as well as series currently in development or in the production phase. The low number of films released in 2015 is only a manifestation of the relatively low number of active filmmakers in correlation with the average time needed to produce an animated film in Slovakia.

Bfilm is the key player in the area of production of short animated films. A considerable proportion of short animated films are made under this company. Currently, it represents mainly younger filmmakers, such as Mária Olthová, Dávid Štumpf, Martin Smatana and Joanna Kožuch.

A large number of series have been in production for a long time; however, they cannot, of course, be expected to be completed within one year. The production background, the size of the realisation teams and the length of production differ considerably case by case. In 2015, the second series of *Mimi and Lisa* (Mimi & Líza) by Katarína Kerekesová (Fool Moon) was completed. It was broadcast by RTVS over Christmas. Kerekesová is producing a new project, *The Websters*, Vanda Raýmanová (Objectif) continues making *The Tots* (Drobci), Jaroslav Baran (Animoline) is collaborating in a Polish-Slovak co-production on the production of the series *Mr. Toti* (Pán Toti), Jaroslav Niňaj (Polygon Production) is working on *Greek Myths* (Grécke báje), Ivan Popovič is continuing working on the cycle *If I Only Had a Screw Loose!* (Mať tak o koliesko viac, My Studio) and its new episodes were broadcasted by RTVS in December.

The year 2015 in Slovak animated film can be characterised as a year of waiting; the continual support provided to new short films and series by the Slovak Audiovisual Fund commissions and the readiness of young filmmakers to continue making short auteur films without being lured into commercial projects may be regarded as the greatest success of this year. Equally, it turns out that other countries are also interested in our animated films. In addition to the traditional festivals and screenings, a professional community is watching them and, for instance, *Heart of the Tower*, *The Websters* or *The Tots* are among the promising projects. We have undoubtedly taken a step towards another positive development in the area of short auteur film, as well as television and full-length films. ▲



2015: More Slovak Films and Also Viewers

► Miro Ulman

Last year we called 2014 a year of records of film distribution in Slovakia. However, many of these records did not last for even twelve months. Total attendance actually increased year-on-year by over 11 per cent and the share of domestic films in the total attendance was almost 7 per cent in 2015, whereas the share of minority co-productions in the attendance at Slovak films drops year by year. The best-attended domestic film was yet again a documentary: this time *Rytmus: A Dream from the Block* (Rytmus: Sídliškový sen).

Rytmus: A Dream from the Block made by debuting director Miro Drobný maintained its position in the TOP 10 films in Slovakia until early in December. Only at the end of the year was it demoted to the eleventh place by the latest Bond movie, *Spectre*, and the latest *Star Wars*. However, the 81,597 viewers it attracted were enough to make it the ninth best-attended domestic film over the era of independent Slovakia and the second best-attended documentary.

With regard to production, 2015 was the most prolific year in the history of Slovakia with 30 full-length Slovak and co-production films (of these only 8 were minority co-productions). And the number of premières was also a record. Twenty-five Slovak full-length films were released in cinema – 11 feature films (of these only one was a minority co-production), 11 documentaries and 3 animated films. It is gratifying that *Lokalífilmis* by Jakub Kroner was also among them. This, the first Slovak full-length animated film since 1980, was even the best-attended domestic film prior to the première of the documentary on Rytmus, and it was eventually second among the domestic films with 47,237 viewers (altogether

it was 22nd). The fairy tale *Seven Ravens* (Sedem zhavranelých bratov) made by Alice Nellis was the best-attended domestic feature film with 45,471 viewers. *Home Care* (Domáci péče, dir. S. Horák) with 4,315 viewers became the most successful minority co-production in 2015. The films were distributed by 7 distribution companies, of which the Association of Slovak Film Clubs was the most active with 7 domestic premières, and 4 production companies released their films in cinema directly without collaborating with the traditional distributors.

The confidence of audiences in domestic productions is gradually building. The average attendance per screening of a 100 per cent Slovak film or majority co-production did drop from 41.56 viewers in 2014 to 30.26, but all the premièred domestic films were attended by 303,048 viewers, which represents a 6.7 per cent share of the total attendance. *Vojtech* by Viktor Csudai (41.85 viewers) and *Eva Nová* by Marko Škop (41.76 viewers) achieved the highest average attendance per performance. The average attendance fee per domestic film was EUR 4.61 which represents an increase of 39 cents on 2014. ▲

DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST-RUN SLOVAK AND CO-PRODUCTION FILMS IN SLOVAKIA IN 2015

MOVIE/TITLE	DIRECTOR	PRODUCTION YEAR	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	RELEASE DATE	NUMBER OF SCREENINGS	ADMISSIONS	GROSS BOX OFFICE	AVERAGE ATTENDANCE PER SCREENING	AVERAGE ADMISSION FEE	DISTRIBUTION COMPANY
1. Rýmus: A Dream from the Block (Rýmus: Srdiskový sen)	Miro Drobný	2015	SK	20. 8. 2015	2,049	81,597	402,348,64 €	39,82	4,93 €	Itafilm
2. Lokalfilms (Lokalfilms)	Jakub Kroner	2015	SK	18. 6. 2015	1,773	47,237	235,872,98 €	26,64	4,99 €	Continental film
3. Seven Ravens (Sedem zhavranených bratrov)	Alice Nellis	2015	SK/CZ	28. 5. 2015	1,601	45,471	178,310,67 €	28,40	3,92 €	Magic Box Slovakia
4. Spievankovo 5: O profesiách	Diana Novotná	2015	SK	29. 10. 2015	1,081	33,510	170,976,88 €	31,00	5,10 €	TONADA
5. Vojtech (Vojtech)	Viktor Csudai	2015	SK	17. 12. 2015	464	19,419	98,461,28 €	41,85	5,07 €	Continental film
6. Wilson City (Wilsonov)	Tomáš Mešín	2015	SK/CZ	1. 10. 2015	775	19,334	102,111,17 €	24,95	5,28 €	Forum Film
7. The Hostage (Rukojemník)	Juraj Nvota	2014	SK/CZ	8. 1. 2015	660	17,048	84,289,23 €	25,83	4,94 €	Bararcuda Movie
8. Eva Nová (Eva Nová)	Marko Škop	2015	SK/CZ	19. 11. 2015	223	6,989	29,063,20 €	41,76	3,12 €	ASFC
9. Anton Srdnolec (Anton Srdnolec)	Alena Čermáková	2015	SK	8. 10. 2015	222	6,589	19,143,04 €	29,68	2,91 €	ASFC
10. Surr (Surr)	Pavol Barabáš	2015	SK	21. 5. 2015	139	4,694	11,259,79 €	33,77	2,40 €	ASFC
11. Koza (Koza)	Ivan Ostrochovský	2015	SK/CZ	10. 9. 2015	173	2,940	7,755,25 €	16,99	2,64 €	ASFC
12. So Far, So Near (Tak ďaleko, tak blízko)	Jaro Vojtek	2014	SK	2. 4. 2015	130	2,117	7,118,56 €	16,28	3,36 €	Itafilm
13. The Cleaner (Čistič)	Peter Bejčák	2015	SK	15. 10. 2015	180	2,077	9,177,71 €	11,54	4,42 €	Bontonfilm
14. Through the Eyes of the Photographer (Očami fotografky)	Matej Mínač	2015	SK/CZ	17. 9. 2015	88	778	2,802,03 €	8,84	3,60 €	Itafilm
15. 5th Regiment - Mission Afghanistan (5. pluk - Misia Afganistan)	Peter Kašíl	2014	SK	12. 3. 2015	55	637	2,813,07 €	11,58	4,42 €	Bararcuda Movie
16. Return to a Burning House (Návrat do horiaceho domu)	Anna Grusková	2014	SK	27. 1. 2015	27	395	838,38 €	14,63	2,12 €	ANZIO
17. Waiting Room (Čakáreň)	Palo Korec	2015	SK	29. 10. 2015	37	376	667,22 €	10,16	1,77 €	ASFC
18. Colours of Sand (Farby piesku)	Ladislav Kaboš	2015	SK	16. 9. 2015	14	367	722,25 €	26,21	1,97 €	MEDIA FILM
19. Johanna's Mystery (Johankino tajomstvo)	Juraj Nvota	2015	SK/CZ	18. 12. 2015	9	308	236,00 €	34,22	0,77 €	ALEF FILM & MEDIA
20. The Man who Changed Shanghai (Zmenil tvár Šanghaja)	Ladislav Kaboš	2010	SK	23. 9. 2015	8	169	310,50 €	21,13	1,84 €	MEDIA FILM
21. Milan Corba (Milan Corba)	Martin Šulík	2014	SK	30. 4. 2015	9,233	294,494	1,364,478,38 €	4,72	1,70 €	ASFC
TOTAL: 100 % Slovak films, majority and 50/50 co-productions					9,733	294,494	1,364,478,38 €	30,26	4,63 €	
1. Home Care (Domáci péče)	Slávek Horák	2015	CZ/SK	22. 10. 2015	290	4,315	19,089,13 €	14,88	4,42 €	Forum Film
2. The Little Man (Malý pán)	Radek Beran	2015	CZ/SK	30. 4. 2015	409	2,309	9,115,17 €	5,65	3,95 €	Itafilm
3. Mirage (Mirage)	Szabolcs Hajdu	2014	HU/SK	19. 3. 2015	101	1,521	2,716,50 €	15,06	1,79 €	ASFC
4. Little from the Fish Shop (Malá z rybárne)	Jan Balaj	2015	CZ/SK/DE	3. 9. 2015	139	409	1,292,02 €	2,94	3,16 €	Continental film
TOTAL Minority co-productions					939	8,554	32,212,82 €	9,11	3,77 €	
TOTAL All Slovak and co-production films					10,672	303,048	1,396,691,10 €	28,40	4,61 €	

Note: The films are ranked in descending order based on the number of viewers. Source: Union of Film Distributors of the Slovak Republic (UFD SR) and individual distribution companies

The Face in the Main Role

► Mária Ferenčuhová

It may seem at first sight that Marko Škop's feature début, *Eva Nová*, follows safely in the tracks left by other documentary filmmakers making their début in feature film – Iveta Grófová, Juraj Lehotský or Ivan Ostrochovský. *Eva Nová* also depicts a dysfunctional family, it has a strong social framework and is characterised by minimalist narration. However, unlike the above directors, Škop works with professional actors and his film has a precisely constructed script. Thus, with his style of work, he rather gets closer to those filmmakers who have graduated in feature film directing or screenwriting – such as Mátýás Prikler and Zuzana Liová and their débuts *Fine, Thanks* (Ďakujem, dobre) and *The House* (Dom).

Does this definition matter at all? There are graduates of directing who do not work with actors and the scripts of their films are more or less inconsistent (Mira Fornay). However, *Eva Nová* as another social film with the theme of a dysfunctional family encourages comparisons. Within the context of the films mentioned above, *Eva Nová* is actually new, mainly as regards the type of hero.

The protagonist of the film is a sixty-something recovering alcoholic, the formerly famous actress Eva (Emília Vášáryová). She is the centre point of the film and she also determines its frame of reference. Most of the shots are semi-close-ups, composed on the centre as three types of views: the frontal view of Eva, her view of others and her reflection in the mirror. Already, from these basic types of shots, it is possible to deduce that neither family nor the social situation, determining the relations between the main protagonists, are the main themes of the film but, first and foremost, the crisis of an individual who has lost everything that is

important in life – job, love and family relations – and who, in addition to combating a heavy addiction, is trying to inject a new meaning into her life.

Unlike the mostly young, helpless and socially marginalised protagonists of the above Slovak films, *Eva Nová* is something of a déclassée heroine. She is a woman with a past who constantly confronts her present life with what she had and what she has lost, who has certainly made mistakes, succumbed to her weaknesses, maybe to the circumstances, comfort, egoism or self-love – we don't know – and who will no longer get anything for free. We learn all this about Eva gradually, from precisely administered scanty dialogues, filled with innuendoes and references to the past.

However, Eva is not a protagonist stuck in the memories of the past. On the contrary, she is firmly anchored in the present day; she is decisive and extremely strong-willed. As she has lost everything and she does not perceive abstinence as her sole purpose in life, she tries



to achieve something greater, more significant: to revive the broken and probably permanently damaged ties with her son. She subordinates everything else to this objective: she is willing to humiliate herself and earn her living by stacking the shelves in a hypermarket or as a cleaning lady. She even waives her right to her inheritance when she realises that the social and financial condition of her unemployed son may depend on this property. At first sight, Eva might seem passive, as if she just contritely subordinated herself to the circumstances. She endures humiliation almost without resistance. If her son's dignity is at stake, she is willing to revise the limits of her own dignity. But let us not forget that, first and foremost, Eva Nová is a consummate actress, she controls herself excellently and she suppresses her emotions – she acts as a humble woman. It only emerges in several scenes that, in reality, she is not like that at all. When the cleaning ladies enter the house in the suburbs, her answer to the question whether she is “that actress” sounds

almost snobbish. She is not going to clean the house in sweatpants but in a blouse and skirt. Just like at home. Hence, she is proud and she can also be impulsive. She explodes only three times over the course of the film – each time unfairly, even though the reasons for her outbursts are understandable: first she accuses her sister who raised her son that she actually stole her son from her and set him against her, then she snaps at her ex-lover who teases her insensitively, albeit good-naturedly, and finally she attacks the pregnant partner of her ex-husband. Eva very quickly regrets her first two lapses and tries to atone for them; however, she resorts to drinking after the third one. Only when Eva drinks is she properly relaxed, she puts her mask aside and allows her emotions free rein. But it is at precisely this moment that it would have been best for her to maintain her mask of determination and uncertain amiability: it just so happens that her son decides to visit her the following morning – his wife has left him.



Also, based on this timing, it is clear that Škop's film has been built on a sequence of very precisely chosen situations. These gradually disclose all the necessary information and motivation of the characters. Even what doesn't, at first sight, appear to be justified gets explained later on in the film. There is no place for coincidences in the script, nor for images originating "by chance", simply to complement the atmosphere. Each situation is the consequence of another one from the distant past which, however, the viewer has not seen and to which other characters only refer in the film. Hence, the impression of causality is very strong but the viewers, paradoxically, find themselves – as they have not witnessed the past events and only know about them at second hand – in a similar situation to that of a drunkard who has a blackout. That means in a similar situation to that of Eva, herself. Then they are all the more able to chime and sympathise with her.

Environments and props are chosen equally precisely. Eva's comfortless apartment in Petržalka serves as a reference to her depressing post-divorce period. The withered flowers signify a long period of absence during her stint in rehab. The planting of new flowers symbolises the start of another cycle in the life of the abstaining alcoholic. Further props not only serve their basic purpose but they also have a symbolic value. The statues of the Virgin Mary belonging to Eva's sister refer not just to her piety but also to the image of a martyr that Eva's sister identifies with. In turn, the red dresses of both the love "rivals" and their "duel" in the ladies rest room insinuate the motif of reflection in the eyes of a man and the loss of one's own identity. And, finally, there is the swimming pool in her son's garden which accretes to itself several meanings; it is not just a visible reference to the fact that the family is financially still not altogether on its uppers, but also to the son's attempt to match those "western men" who compete with him and, in the end, it even becomes a sort of amniotic fluid in which – almost on the border of life and death – the mother and son communicate for the first time.

Such consistent work with causality, motivations and environments renders *Eva Nová* a chamber drama with an exceptionally well-thought-out structure. Out of the socially tuned Slovak films already referred to, only Zuzana Liová's *The House* (*Dom*) had a comparably elaborately developed script. The similarity is no coincidence: it was Zuzana Liová who edited the script of *Eva Nová* with the mathematically precise editor, František Kráhenbiel.

The fact that Marko Škop gave up, of his own accord, several means of expression in the film, most specifically music, contributes to the austerity and accuracy of the film. Not once did he use music outside of the frame of the image and even the music within the image is heard maybe just twice. That way he was able to concentrate more on the sounds of real environments. The dialogues of his film are heard against the background of the hustle and bustle of the city or the surrounding voices and sounds – Škop subsumed Tesco which, in reality, is always filled with jingles and ads, into a neutral shopping noise that is more likely to be heard in Lidl. With this approach to film sound he created a special impression of the realistic passage of time. Moreover, Škop and his editor Kráhenbiel allowed many shots to fade out in such a way that they sometimes look like dailies. In this way they managed to mitigate the effect of the mathematically developed script which could have otherwise seemed sterile, artificially fabricated (or even kitschy with music), and they allow life to flow into the script.

But even though everything meshes perfectly together in the film, that doesn't mean that everything is clear. We never discover whether something that was broken a long time ago can still be mended. And neither how, in reality, Eva Nová was and remains behind the mask of her humble, but impenetrable face with a sad and determined gaze. One thing, however, is certain: Škop's film is a concerto of minimalist acting that Eva Nová says she would never be able to master. Under Škop's lead, Emília Vášáryová has mastered it magnificently. ▲

Eva Nová (*Eva Nová*, Slovakia/Czech Republic, 2015) _SCRIPT AND DIRECTED BY: Marko Škop _ DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Ján Meliš _ EDITED BY: František Kráhenbiel _CAST: Emília Vášáryová, Milan Ondřík, Anikó Vargová, Žofia Martišová _LENGTH: 106 min.



PHOTO: Bontonfilm

A Slovak Genre Film

► Zuzana Mojžišová

There can be no doubt that events experienced in early childhood sometimes determine the entire subsequent life of a given human being. The world's complexity is demonstrated by the fact that ugly, sad and traumatic situations have a far more destructive impact on the future than those that are essentially agreeable, joyful and kind have the capacity to be constructive and life-enriching. An evil character from a Disney fairy tale, a crude neighbour, a father's excessively searching gaze directed at the mother, unusual sounds on the stairway to the cellar or a spiteful remark dropped incidentally by a classmate sitting at the same bench at school become blots on the soul, no matter what the mind and experience say.

Probably, nobody will dispute that the environment in which we grow up and live influences us to a great extent. I don't have people, relations, the political or social ambience of the country in mind here but rather the actual physical environment – houses, entrances, stairwells, corridors, streets, bridges, underpasses, passageways, tunnels, building sites, parking lots, industrial complexes, garage areas, abandoned buildings with disrupted amenities... These could also be mountains, meadows, forests, trees, brooks, gardens, parks, ponds, pastures or fields, but they are not. Because here we are in Bratislava and in this city even the most irreplaceable treasures are covered in concrete. In a

city where the hideous is never in short supply, where entire square kilometres are hideous, where you need to make a great effort and close one eye if you are seeking to look at something nice with the other. But whatever has a bad side also has a good side. It is quite easy to make grim urban films in our capital city, maybe without the architect even having to lift a finger.

You are probably familiar with the truism that in novels, novellas and stories the first sentence is always the most important one. And then the next two, three, or four subsequent sentences. If they are good, the author has achieved the most important thing, the reader has taken the bait. After that the



author “only” has to take care that the reader doesn’t slip off the hook. We are a tad more lenient in the case of a film, we have got used to giving it more time to get going. But sometimes just a few seconds are enough and... we are into it.

A seedy, stark narrow corridor in a concrete apartment building. It is empty. A door leading to an apartment. There are people behind this door. A woman and a man if we can distinguish the voices well. The man is shouting furiously. The woman is begging for mercy. We are not able to make out every word but the underlying emotion is clear. After the arguing has continued for a while a loud sound is heard, then a thud and silence. Cut. The corridor in the apartment building. The door to the apartment is open. Light flows through the door. A woman is standing in the doorway. She is silently regarding a small boy who is kneeling on the floor and wiping the floor of the corridor with a cloth. This is how the latest film by Slovak director Peter Bebjak *The Cleaner* (Čistič) begins. According to the author, it was inspired by several situations from life. “I lived on a street where terrible shouting was constantly heard from one apartment. Everyone living on that street witnessed domestic violence, the police were called several times, but nothing changed. Eventually it stopped...” But the main protagonist of the story, Tomáš, now adult, is forever marked by the past – for it was he behind that door, not in front of it like the camera. Actually, right until the final credits (or rather until the wonderfully mastered finale a few moments before them), but that is for eternity....

Tomáš works. At any hour of the day or night. His mobile phone rings, he gets instructions, jumps on his bicycle, rides across the city, meets two guys who give him keys, exchange a few words. Tomáš enters apartments, houses, he puts on a surgical mask and cleans whatever is found to be dirty. He is a cleaner. A cleaner of places where, just a few hours ago, a human being or maybe a four-legged pet has passed away. (Do they die peacefully? Or suffer a violent death?) Tomáš is good at his work. It suits his nature and his childhood mental trauma. He earns more than he spends. He stores the rest in a paper box in his wardrobe. (When the word “cleaner” is mentioned, two characters come to the viewer’s mind. Viktor from Besson’s *Nikita* as portrayed by Jean Reno, and then the absolutely unforgettable Harvey Keitel in the role of Winston Wolf in Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction*. And they really do have

something in common with Tomáš – they follow a strange profession, they are strange, but also precise, they don’t usually lose their head...)

As for film genres, Slovak cinema has been suffering from chronic anaemia from early childhood. From this perspective, the director Peter Bebjak plays the role of rescuer – he gives local films blood transfusions – crime, horror, thriller transfusions. Genre ones. Even though it didn’t look like that at the outset, after his terrific début with *Apricot Island* (Marhuľový ostrov), although the TV series Bebjak made prior to that had hinted at quite a lot (*City of Shadows/Mesto tieňov*, *Anděl C.I.D./Kriminálka Anděl*, *Dr. Ludský/Dr. Ludský*; these were later complemented by e.g. *First Department Cases/Případy 1. oddělení* or the current *Gendarmes from Luhačovice/Četníci z Luhačovic*). And then it happened that, after an intimate drama of one woman, a father and two sons set in the south of Slovakia, filled with sunshine, came *Evil* (Zlo). A Blair Witch Project-type of horror movie, presumably inspired by his work on the TV documentary series about paranormal phenomena *Mysteries SK* (Záhady SK) in which three young men making reports on inexplicable, occult matters find themselves in a really spooky house. And now we have *The Cleaner*. An urban thriller – and, in my view, we have never had that before.

Wardrobes are important for Tomáš. Not just money but a whole human being can hide inside them. In order, from their depths via a narrow opening, (significantly affecting the cinematographer’s strategy when shooting many scenes of the film), to observe human relations that he would not otherwise have unveiled. Tomáš spends as little time as possible in the outside world, he just rides quickly through the city on his bicycle, he spends very little time shopping, he always conceals himself under his hood. And his household is so clean he could eat off the floor. And sometimes he also hides under the bed (and then legs appear in the visible section of reality – Kristína’s legs, those of her brother Adam, a life-long loser, the legs of a guy with a suitcase, the legs of the furniture). Tomáš has been hiding since his childhood, convinced that a good hiding place can save your life. Because then the others don’t see you.

The Cleaner is very sparing with its words; when transferring emotions and information to the audience it rather – and quite successfully – relies more on images as means of expression. Words are

not really wasted in this film; however, everything necessary is easily read: something from the past, something about the motivations... And we learn all this gradually, some plots are untangled bit by bit and with an element of surprise (for instance, the one about the location where Tomáš's mother's phone calls are coming from, or the one explaining why the main protagonist buys so many decorative candles). However, sparse dialogue does not mean an impoverished sound track. Music – just as in Bebjak's previous films – enters into the action, it communicates, not only sounds. Last but not least: ambient sounds, sounds coming from behind the walls where we cannot see, voices of people, the more ruffled, the more upsetting, devastating for Tomáš.

Coincidences assault our reality day by day, sometimes in a good way, sometimes in a bad one. We live with coincidences in symbiosis whether we like it or not. That's life. But film is not life. One has to handle coincidences very carefully in film because it may happen that they will be perceived as a clumsy mistake on the part of the auteur, as a crude deliberate act... There is a range of coincidences in *The Cleaner* also – the clothes shop. Kristína works there, candles are sold there, Adam's grandmother dies at that time; moreover, they commission the funeral from the funeral service where Tomáš works... Audience experience confirms that one has to handle coincidences just as carefully as possible as those that move the action forward. *The Cleaner* relaxed its guard for a moment.

In one interview, director Peter Bebjak talked about where he sees the differences between his television and film works: *"In the fact that a television project is subordinated to figures (and success with viewer ratings) and all the other components of production are adjusted to this. As for the films that I have made for cinema (and also because we produced them in DNA) – it is about the freedom of creativity. It is only limited by the funds that we manage to scrape together for the given film – they then determine how many days of filming there will be, how much remuneration will be paid, technology used, etc. The filmmakers have to answer to themselves for the work they do."* As regards *The Cleaner*, I think that, in essence, their conscience can be clear. ▲

Peter Bebjak (1970, Partizánske)

He studied acting and directing at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. In 2001, he established D.N.A. Production together with Rastislav Šesták. This production company completed several television projects, such as *Greatest Criminal Cases in the History of Slovakia (Najväčšie kriminálne prípady Slovenska)*, *City of Shadows (Mesto tieňov)*, *Dr. Ludský (Dr. Ludsky)* and *First Department Cases (Prípady 1. oddelení)*. He made his full-length feature film debut in 2011 with *Apricot Island (Marhuľový ostrov)* which won the Grand Prix at the film festival in Rouen, France. In 2012, his horror movie *Evil (Zlo)* was premièred and *The Cleaner (Čistič)* is his third full-length film in cinema distribution.

The Cleaner (Čistič, Slovakia, 2015) _DIRECTED BY: Peter Bebjak _SCRIPT: P. Bebjak, Peter Gašparík _DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Martin Žiaran
_MUSIC: Juraj Dobrákov _CAST: Noël Czuczor, Rebeka Poláková, Kamil Kollárik, Éva Bándor, Jana Olthová, Eugen Libezňuk _LENGTH: 94 min.



The Waiting Rooms of Palo Korec

► Pavel Branko

After several films on various themes, the author has finally found himself in the theme of waiting or, sometimes, rather in the concept of the interact. Waiting for anything, from Godot to the right partner for tango argentino. Korec's *Exhibits or Stories from the Castle* (Exponáty alebo príbehy z kaštieľa) are kneaded from the same sort of clay as *Waiting Room* (Čakáreň); however, the determination by senior age in the former foreshadows not only a different journey, but also a joint final destination. Just like *Exhibits or Stories from the Castle*, *Waiting Room* also builds on a concentrated unity of the space where all the destinies either meet or intersect, but the seven female protagonists represent a generational cross-section from teenage to old age – apart from the last one which is only waiting for death.

The protagonists of *Waiting Room* are not waiting for death but life seems to be passing through their fingers in various ways in the selected phase. It is spanned by the metaphorical keystone of a colourful ball. Right at the beginning a little girl is playing with the ball on the seashore, but when the ball falls into the water and the wind blows it along the shore, the girl just walks helplessly along. The water is shallow, the ball is driven within her reach, just dip her feet a bit and get the ball back. However, the girl does not pluck up the courage to make the step into the water and in no time the ball is far removed, the chance is missed. At the end of the movie a photo of the girl with the ball appears between the amassed junk,

the stock-taking of a wasted life, now framed behind broken glass. The word **kaput** that the old cleaning lady uses to comment on one of the keepsakes that doesn't work, does not relate solely to that. The touching, nostalgic friendship with a flock of pigeons with habits that she has learned to know so well over the years of co-existence, is just a balm on the lonely dance with the broom. In this life-phase you cannot await too much.

By contrast, the young skiver, very nearly a sexy young lady, has her life before her and it's entirely up to her what she will make of it. As it seems, she doesn't care and, with her stubborn attitude to her yielding, resigned mother, she is not a reflection of

rebels without a cause (not even with a cause), she is just killing time, gently and with a half-childish charm, because she is fed up with the scheme her mother is pushing her into, but she really doesn't know what she wants. Is killing time waiting? If so, what for? For chances are not thrown away here, this is a life at random, day by day, equipped with a skateboard which gives the illusion of having butterfly wings. This episode, brilliantly directed, shot and acted, can give one the shivers.

Another, actually the key protagonist – the city and its main railway station – dominates the film right from the beginning. Their image as presented by Ján Meliš has dynamics and a changing, dense atmosphere, where familiar corners become illuminated with novelty and intimacy, and the hustle and bustle within the station complex, a part of everyday life, suddenly transforms it into a social megamachine which by its never-ending flow appears to offer hundreds of possibilities and opportunities. Only if behind that vibration, the stopping and moving of trains, above the maze of tracks and the slow-moving wagons and engines, flattened by the telephoto lens, a railway signal (sometimes even two) wouldn't catch the eye from time to time in the right corner; a signal which always shows red, thereby immediately denying what has been offered.

And so we follow, generation after generation, snatches from the lives of women of steadily increasing age and different attitudes who are, however, linked by one thing – they live alone in their women's lot wherein men have no access, the protagonists do not relate to men even as potential partners and sons and, if there are any men, they have no place in their hearts for them. In today's over-sexualised world this exclusion of men from the field of interest defies understanding and the motif of the tango, one of the most erotic of all dances, seems to endorse this obstacle to understanding. At first the tango appears only beneath the surface, in the form of hints, until it surfaces fully in the story of an elegant, attractive, nevertheless withdrawn clerk, in order to dominate in the end the whole field in a "Márquez-esque" scene which transforms the railway station waiting room into a semi-fairy-tale dance floor, a place where all those meet who have previously just passed each other by.

However, even this exclusion of men from the play paradoxically shows an opposite pole. The cynical

gambler burdened down by life, who hangs around the station and kills time with the one-armed bandit, constantly calls back on her mobile phone to some place where she has a husband (or partner) and a crying baby from the life she rejected. Hence, into the existing bonds that she escaped from and with which she no longer wants to have anything in common. But now, after her escape, she shrinks to a wreck shaken by the waves of life in the waiting room where nothing really awaits her.

Her opposite pole represent two "women of sorrowful countenance" – the mother of a seriously retarded daughter drags around her prisoner's ball in a tidy little flat; she could put her away in an institution but she doesn't even think of it and, voluntarily and with full comprehension, carries her cross which defies any chance for a change. More, she even manages to find a space of escape from the treadmill with a cigarette, where her burden cannot follow her and where, after returning, she carries on creating opportunities for moments of contentment for the uneven pair.

The second one is probably a teacher in retirement age with a big heart, about which her son doesn't care, so she gives it whole away at a desolate Roma settlement, bustling about with children (and adults) not in a waiting room, but on a blind track of vegetating and idling. Experience tells her she cannot achieve a lot there, but these frolicking, uncontrollable kids look forward to seeing her and the ageing woman will return again tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow... But now, after a shift far away from civilisation, she sits at her computer and sends out a call into the unknown depths of the web: *I don't smoke, I don't drink, but I love... sex*. Hence, she yearns for something that her body and soul obviously lack for years, but haven't given up on yet. She is the only one who, even though aging, has found the courage to dip her feet and reach for the ball.

Nothing like that reflects the story of a pretty woman in her thirties who could immediately play a look-alike of Barbra Streisand in her younger days and who now earns her living as a waitress, without any interest, and, with interest, makes bizarre photographic creations with her friend as a model. In the virtual waiting room, maybe she is the one who is closest to bring the waiting to some effect – or pushing her way to it – but the continuous delineation of the theme does not allow one to look behind the horizon of the

etudes ripped out of time. Like when a reflector rips a section of space out of darkness and leaves all that is surrounding only suspected, invisible to the eye.

Nevertheless *Waiting Room* is not in the least a so-called tunnel movie where much would take place in the dark. The exteriors (even the night scenes) mostly glow with colours, the panoramas emphasise rather the beauty of views of the city; the shots of residential houses and larger complexes do not slant towards the *aesthetics of ugliness* which turned out to be so expressive and functional in some movies by Dušan Hanák. In a nutshell, the image of the external environs in *Waiting Room* rather demonstrates that this socially layered city is worth living in. Although the precisely shaded atmosphere of the interiors does aptly characterise their inhabitants, we do not find any external depressing factor either. Hence, the forms of waiting or idling grow from the mind-sets of the protagonists rather than from so-called objective circumstances out of their reach. This is what distinguishes this rich and manifold mosaic from the basic axiom of social dramas where the misfortune is usually derived from the living conditions, whereby the resulting image of the protagonists mostly, at least in part, shifts to the position of victims.

Thus, *Waiting Room* presents a silent, empathic, but not at all uncritical tribute to womanhood in the variety of its rather passive, traditional forms and generational sequence. This way the author put aside the type of ambitious, modern woman who actively creates space for her self-realisation. Thus, a beautifully melancholic and not specially enjoyable, but incomplete group portrait emerges, where each character plays her unmistakable part in a purely female orchestra which ultimately results in a semi-dream-like tango. But you still need two to tango...

With its poetics, *Waiting Room* belongs to a productive and profuse stream where the fiction is so evidently inspired by unshaped, immediate reality that the makers almost have no choice but to reach out for non-actors who model the characters drawn for them and tailor-made for them under the baton of master so plastically as could hardly be achieved by creative acting. This life-giving stream was initiated by the Generation 90 of Slovak documentary filmmakers and it obviously enthralls the younger generations too.

Palo Korec, who joined the stream with his *Exhibits or Stories from the Castle*, played a lucky hand shifting the line between fiction and non-fiction a bit closer to fiction, as he sensed his gift to inspire non-actors to original spontaneity. The gift to let them put themselves in the shoes of their alter ego and to adapt to it so much that their creations on the verge of non-creations grew together into a coherent whole, exceeding the account of the etudes.

With his film *Waiting Room* the director moved this line even closer towards fiction. The individual episodes are filled with the aura of real lives imbued with a prevailing passiveness, withdrawnness, resignation, or even sometimes depression. None of this a priori precludes a big heart, but the author as poet juxtaposes those interacts at the generational station of life where he caught up with his heroines with the slowly increasing undercurrent of tango until he whispers in the magical oratorio of the finale, where the lonely destinies finally join in a common experience, that, after all, it probably is worth dipping one's feet for the ball the wind is just about to blow away. At least in a song or fairy tale which do not exclude the possibility of reaching for the impossible.

(collaboration on the translation: Pavel Branko, Vladimír Branko)

Palo Korec (1958, Partizánske)

He started out as a camera assistant in the Slovak Television in Bratislava. After graduating from the Philosophical Faculty of Comenius University in Bratislava he worked as assistant director and production assistant. He studied Film and Television Directing at the Academy of Performing Arts. In 1991-1992 he was awarded a scholarship at F.E.M.I.S Paris. He made several documentaries and feature films; three years ago his full-length documentary *Exhibits or Stories from the Castle* (Exponáty alebo príbehy z kaštiela) was in cinema distribution, and last year *Waiting Room*, which had its première at the Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival.

Waiting Room (Čakáreň, Slovakia, 2015) _SCRIPT AND DIRECTED BY: Palo Korec _DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Ján Meliš _EDITED BY: Peter Kordač
_MUSIC: Ľubica Malachovská Čekovská _CAST: Zuzana Smékalová, Monika Neksová, Barbara Slamková, Zuzana Krmeťová, Tímea Husveth, Regina Husveth, Sára MIKLÁŠOVÁ, Theodor Durmik, Miška MELIŠOVÁ _LENGTH: 72 min.

Sun in a Net Awards with Novelties

The National Sun in a Net Awards, which have been awarded by the Slovak Film and Television Academy (SFTA) every two years, will hereon be awarded annually. In this way the Academy reacts to the stabilisation of the situation in the Slovak audiovisual environment as, after the Slovak Audiovisual Fund was established and began providing support to film production in 2010, the production of domestic films has increased. At the same time, the SFTA wants to link the Sun in a Net Awards with a screening of domestic films entitled Slovak Film Week. The second edition of this event connected with a reflection on Slovak film production will be held on 11–17 April and the National Sun in a Net Awards will be handed out at a ceremony on 16 April in Bratislava. The SFTA will assess the films that were made and released in 2014 and 2015, and it will make its decisions on laureates in thirteen categories. The fourteenth will be the award for exceptional contribution to Slovak cinema.

Audience Expeditions to the History of Film

Paths of Adulthood is the name of the new semester of the educational series on the history of cinema entitled Film Cabinet which was launched on 4 February in Cinema Lumière. The series will cover the period of the 1960s up to the present day. The introductory lecture on the French New Wave and its transformation was complemented by a screening of François Truffaut's film *Jules and Jim*. Viewers who enrolled in the Film Cabinet will take part in the following lectures up to the end of May 2016: Czechoslovak New Wave, The Genre Panopticon of Juraj Herz, Italy Post Neorealism, The Transcendental Style of Andrei Tarkovsky, New German Film, New Hollywood, Dogma 95, Monty Python and the Contemporary Slovak Feature Film. A lecturer's introduction will be given prior to every projection and a discussion will be held afterwards. The Film Cabinet series, which came into existence three years ago, is prepared by the Slovak Film Institute in collaboration with the

Association of Slovak Film Clubs. Simultaneously, an interactive workshop, the Film Cabinet for Children for pupils and teachers of first- to fifth-graders at primary schools is organised in Cinema Lumière in Bratislava as well as in other Slovak towns and cities. Its lecturers explain to the pupils Slovak animated film and its creators, as well as the principles of animation.

Evaluation of Slovak Films in Film.sk

The monthly *Film.sk* publishes scores for the Slovak full-length feature films to be released in cinemas in the given year. The score is put together by eight Slovak film scientists and critics. In two rounds, they also evaluated the domestic films which were screened in cinemas in 2015. All in all, they assessed 18 films and gave the highest score to the documentary *So Far, So Close* (Tak ďaleko, tak blízko, dir. Jaro Vojtek) which was made in 2014. The feature début of documentary filmmaker Marko Škop, *Eva Nová*, was ranked second and *Koza* (Koza, dir. Ivan Ostrochovský) was third. The last mentioned film had its world première a year ago in the Forum section of the Berlin IFF.

Staff Changes in the National Cinematographic Centre of the SFI

The Department of Film Events of the National Cinematographic Centre of the Slovak Film Institute, which focuses on the presentation of Slovak cinema abroad and also collaborates with film events in Slovakia, has new staff members. The Department's long-standing staff member, Viera Ďuricová, retired and her place was taken by Imelda Selková as of 1 January 2016. Last year, Kristína Aschenbrennerová also started work in the Department. Staff changes also occurred last year in the Audiovisual Information Centre of the SFI; currently Miro Ulman and Soňa Balážová are its staff members. The National Cinematographic Centre is headed by Alexandra Strelková as its director.



I Can't Run Away From Myself

► Mariana Jaremková

After making or producing internationally successful documentaries (*Other Worlds, Osadné*), director Marko Škop made yet another début. His first feature film *Eva Nová* had its world première in September last year at the Toronto International Film Festival, where it won the FIPRESCI Award. The film was distributed in Slovak cinemas in November 2015. Škop has been living in Zagreb for several years where he has also managed to “settle down” as a filmmaker.

Where is your work concentrated now – in Croatia or Slovakia?

– In Slovakia, but I travel a lot to and fro.

Did it take you long to get into filmmaking in Croatia? What was your first project?

– The very first offer came from a festival organised by the Croatian-American producer, Branko Lustig. I led a workshop for foreign students; two short films were the outcome. Then I decided to learn Croatian. People are very keen on socialising in Zagreb, they go out together, there is a *kafić* – café on every corner. All my friends in Zagreb speak English, but the locals always switch back to their native language after a while. If I wanted to take part in the debate, I needed to speak Croatian. Our languages are similar, so it went smoothly and, of course, everyone appreciated my learning Croatian.

Did they know your documentaries?

– The Croatian ZagrebDox and Kosovan Prizren are the largest documentary film festivals in the Balkans. I was a member of the Jury in Prizren and *Osadné* was the opening film of ZagrebDox. The networking was very natural.

In Croatia, you worked on the TV series *In Treatment* which is known in our country as *Terapia*. How did you get into this project? It was made for HBO in the Czech Republic; how was it with the Croatian version?

– The public service TV made it in Croatia. My wife was involved in the project as one of the producers and she brought me into the discussions when she needed help with casting. The TV management was satisfied with my work and they offered me the job of second director. My Croatian colleague Tomica Rukavina directed 27 episodes, I directed 18. New faces appeared in the series together with Croatia's biggest stars, such as Ana Karič, Goran Bogdan, Nina Violič and Elvis Bošnjak. It was a lovely job and a good school for working with the actors.

Many renowned filmmakers work for television, for instance for the already mentioned HBO, where they get the chance to make high-quality films, TV series that are almost comparable with cinema films, wherein they have greater creative freedom. Several of them have almost become cult films or series. How do you, as a filmmaker, view television films?

– I'm involved in the development of two TV films

that might get to be made in the coming years. In Croatia, it's a story of a forty-something divorcée who has to fight for every bit of happiness. In Slovakia, it's a reconstruction of dramatic historical events. Negotiations are going on for both projects with regard to whether and how they might be made. We'll see, maybe in a year or two I'll be making television films again.

So, you don't perceive working for TV as something that will make you give up some of your filmmaking artistic ambitions?

– Not at all. I consider it important that the work be meaningful, and that is what many television formats in documentary and feature films offer. For instance, I'd love to make a travelogue around the Croatian islands, about their specific, unique features, the differences between them. That's a dream morsel for me and one that I might get to make. As for the word "ambition", I really don't like it, it's so double-edged. I've met authors in my life who were transformed into walking ambitions, as if the success and they themselves had become more important than the actual testimony itself. This attitude does not radiate any positive energy.

You are in a position to compare the available funds and the audiences in Croatia with those in our country. How does it look like with state support and the interest of the audiences in domestic production?

– The Croatian Audiovisual Centre HAVC operates with a similar budget to that of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund. The country has approximately the same size of population and not quite so many cinemas. HAVC maintains a reasonable proportion between support for films successful with audiences and films for the demanding viewer, they have blockbusters, such as *The Priest's Children* by Vinko Brešan and films successful at festivals – *The High Sun* by director Dalibor Matanič gained an award in Cannes last year. Croatian cinematography is intensely alive.

It is very difficult to make an exclusively domestic title – co-productions are often necessary. What is your experience so far? What are your priorities when looking for a co-producer?

– I consider natural co-productions to be the best, for instance, when you're shooting in a different country due to specific unique locations. It is most convenient to make Slovak films with a smaller budget at home but, since a film costs a lot, money from a partner is



very useful, for instance for post-production. Trust is a key factor in co-productions, hence I try to work with friends and people on a similar frequency.

You managed to build up a successful company with your friends which still operates without major changes and it is a guarantee of quality. What do you now, after a few years, think about the decision to establish your own production company? And what is its place in the current Slovak media environment?

– Arterlia is a company of authors of films. Our main initiative is to make films and each one of us does something else as well as working on joint projects. Ján Meliš and František Kráhenbiel were a great support for me at one moment when I wanted to give up on *Eva Nová* because we didn't receive support for the project in the development phase and I hit rock bottom. Along with Zuzana Liová, they persuaded me to carry on struggling, and I am very grateful to them for that. Film production is a complicated process and sometimes as a producer you are really ready to top yourself but, on the other hand, there's always joy when you get great satisfaction from what you do. Even though it might sound pathetic, I was happy during the shooting of *Eva Nová* itself and I am honestly delighted with the film. I wanted to talk about the importance of conscious decisions in life. I see many misunderstandings around me that are caused by the fact that we let many things take their own course, that people allow themselves to be led by what they are experiencing at the moment and do not think about the consequences for others. Our mistakes have the greatest impact on our nearest and dearest, on our family. Harm and misunderstandings create tensions in relations that can accumulate over the course of years. At the same time, I was interested in the theme of mental transferrals from parents to children. We not only replicate the physical appearance of our ancestors, but also their mentality, their behavioural patterns.

There is a scene in the film where Eva Nová tells her granddaughter at one moment: "You don't have to repeat anything after me," and the girl's toy repeats the same thing exactly in a mechanical voice: "You don't have to repeat anything after me." You inserted a comic moment in the emotionally tense situation...

– Eva then comes to a halt, she is taken aback by the repeating toy and she says: "And still it is repeating...", the toy again automatically repeats

after her and we look at the granddaughter and wonder if she'll be just like her grandmother. I'm convinced that in many aspects she will be.

A certain auteur's gesture is linked to your previous films. How is it in the case of *Eva Nová*?

– With each film I try to create something new, to touch upon something else, but I will always be present somehow. We cannot run away from ourselves, this is what *Eva Nová* is also about.

Your previous documentaries *Other Worlds (Iné svety)* and *Osadné (Osadné)* were linked with the Šariš Region, or with the north-eastern border of Slovakia, even though the problems of other regions surfaced through these films too. Are these regions still close and equally attractive to you from the documentary filmmaker's perspective? Do you see other burning issues in them that you are continually thinking about?

– I'll always be interested in the theme of the local in the global and equally in Eastern Slovakia. Half of *Eva Nová* was shot in Eastern Slovakia – in Pečovská Nová Ves and in several towns – Lipany, Prešov and Sabinov. We lived in a hotel in Sabinov that used to have a cinema. My parents used to go to this cinema. *The Shop on Main Street* (journalist's note: winner of the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film made by directors Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos) was made several decades ago in Sabinov, people still remember the shooting of the film with Jozef Kroner and the town gave us a big welcome. Mr. Baňas, mayor of Pečovská Nová Ves, created a completely homely atmosphere for us. Local people were cast as extras, actors from Prešov appeared in several roles. Even though *Eva Nová* could have taken place anywhere in Slovakia, we made the film in the country of my childhood where I feel very good.

Within this small area, in some cases Slovak cinema is paying the price for the unwillingness to collaborate (with the exception of the generation of documentary filmmakers that you belong to and who collaborate closely, help each other). What do you think about the Slovak film environment after all those years, all those films, achievements and, what is most important, from a certain distance as you live abroad?

– Every environment is created by individuals and it is a reflection of specific people. Of course, it is most affected by those who have the power to make



Marko Škop (1974, Prešov)

He studied journalism at the Philosophical Faculty of Comenius University and documentary filmmaking at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. Together with director Juraj Johanides, he made the mid-length documentary *Celebration of a Lonely Palm* (Slávnosť osamelej palmy, 2005); immediately afterwards on his own he directed the full-length documentary *Other Worlds* (Iné svety, 2006) for which he received, for instance, the Audience Award and the Special Mention at the Karlovy Vary IFF and the Talent Dove at the DOK Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Films. In 2009, he made the documentary *Osadné* which won the Best Documentary Award at the Karlovy Vary IFF.

decisions. There will always be a conflict of interests; that is how it is, all over the world, not just in Croatia, but also in France which is a well-developed film country. The situation has certainly improved considerably in our country thanks to the Slovak Audiovisual Fund and the Radio and Television of Slovakia. I regard it as right to allocate the largest possible space to quality, whether it be a high-quality audience film or a high-quality auteur film. But it seems that, in our country, whatever previous film the author might have made counts for nothing, i.e. in determining the author's potential for further results, good or bad.

That means that previous successful films don't guarantee anything?

– It's a shame because a great deal of energy is discarded along the way.

Documentary filmmakers who have decided to make feature films, claim that greater freedom is one of the reasons why they did so. Was that your case also?

– Every author has internal themes that he/she is interested in and looks for ways of depicting them as effectively as possible. I decided on a feature film in the case of *Eva Nová* because of the possibility to dig deep in the depiction of tense unresolved relations. Of course, the same can be achieved in documentary film but the immersion in the intimacy of a family with generational transferrals involves all the characters present, even small children; if I'd had real people, I would have come up against limits, my own human limits. I definitely felt more free with a feature film, but the converse might be true for the next theme and a documentary would be the appropriate means of allowing me to say things the right way.

The film had its world première at the Toronto Film Festival. How did viewers react to *Eva Nová*? And how did you enjoy the festival?

– The North American audience experiences films a bit differently from the European one. In Toronto, people expressed themselves out loud, you could feel it in the air when they rooted for *Eva Nová* or they murmured *no, don't do that!* I was a bit taken aback as the account is quite hard. On the other hand, it served to indicate to me that the viewers were able to identify themselves with the characters. Even after the discussion had finished, many people still came up to share their experiences with me in person. ▲

RTVS as the Partner of Slovak Films

► Zuzana Sotáková

In the troubled 1990s and at the start of the new millennium only a few Slovak films were made and the participation of the public-service TV in co-productions was also low. However, the productivity of Slovak cinema has recently increased and its support by the Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) has also revived.

Over the course of 24 years (1990 – 2014) 195 Slovak films were made, 81 of which were co-produced by the Slovak public-service television. While up to 2011 the number of film co-productions of RTVS ranged from one to five projects per annum, subsequently their number increased. Appreciably. In 2013, the RTVS supported 11 cinema films, in 2014, one more. At the same time, the RTVS strengthened the promotion of co-productions on its TV screens.

In the past two years (2014 and 2015) a total of 43 films – 17 feature films and 26 documentaries – got on the co-production list of the RTVS. Not all of them are full-length and some are primarily destined for television broadcasting, but more than half of them are related to cinema distribution. For these 43 titles from the given period, the co-production input of the RTVS was almost four million Euro (EUR 3,985,438). The highest input was provided to Mariana Čengel Solčanská's fairy tale *Love in Your Soul* (Láska na vlásku, EUR 738,377) which achieved a high rating even when broadcast on RTVS. However, in this case the RTVS did not just provide a financial input, but a non-financial one as well. Within it, the public-service TV was able to offer their own studios, props, costumes, post-production capacities, etc.

When in mid-2012 a new management starting working in the RTVS headed by the General Director Václav Mika and the Programme Director of the TV part of RTVS, Tibor Búza, the Central Register of Ideas was established and decisions

on co-productions are made on the basis of the applications submitted. *"This management set standard rules. Every single application or idea has to go through an evaluation system. Projects have to be enrolled in the Central Register of Ideas where the proposals are then distributed among individual dramaturges. They prepare the evaluation process. These projects are subsequently evaluated at a public forum, i.e. at a dramaturgical council. They are evaluated in a complex manner – the idea, artistic level, budget or the way the project will be implemented. If the council recommends the project, it progresses to the final phase where it is evaluated in the grand programme council. This decides whether or not the RTVS will get involved in the co-production, or if the project will be postponed,"* explains Tibor Búza. According to this system the proponent of the idea should get a response from RTVS no later than twelve weeks from entry in the Register.

"The filmmakers who submitted their ideas to the Register can continually see the stage of the evaluation and who is evaluating the project. There are strict rules now determining the approval procedure," continues Búza. The change also affected the number of applications in the Register which has increased. *"This is primarily due to the fact that the rules have changed and the filmmakers appreciate it. We don't have a problem with saying no when necessary, but we will present a clear argument why we don't want to get involved in a particular project. We always try to give a*

relevant response to everyone and I have to say that the ideas undergo a really harsh evaluation. I think that the RTVS dramaturgy is currently at a very decent level,” explains the Programme Director of the TV. According to the RTVS, in 2014, altogether 32 projects submitted to the Register, 20 of which were feature films, were assessed. Last year, it was 28 projects (24 feature films).

“As the RTVS is the only relevant additional source of funds in Slovakia in addition to the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, co-productions with the RTVS are in many cases essential for the producer,” states producer Barbara Harumová Hessová. On the basis of her experience, she appreciates the approach of the individual staff members of the documentary dramaturge in the RTVS but, at the same time, she emphasises that there is always room for improvement in the collaboration with the TV. Compared with the past, director and independent producer Peter Kerekes also recorded a more helpful approach on the part of the TV, even though he names weaker points too. He would, for instance, welcome a shorter period from the submission of the project, through its assessment and evaluation to the provision of funds. *“It would be good if this process could be accelerated even more but the TV would have to have a budget secured for a longer period in advance. There is a lot to be wished for in order to be satisfied, but that requires a stable management that will not change after every election, on the one hand, and also intensive pressure exerted by producers on the other hand.”*

With regard to feature and documentary films that had their premières in cinemas last year, the RTVS co-produced, for instance, *Eva Nová* by director Marko Škop, *Seven Ravens* (Sedem zhavranelých bratov) by Alice Nellis and *Koza* (Koza) by Ivan Ostrochovský. As for films that will be released in cinemas (and on television) the RTVS co-produced, for instance, *Agave* (Agáva) directed by Ondrej Šulaj, *Red Captain* (Červený kapitán) by Michal Kollár and the documentary *Coolture* (Cooltúra) by Miro Remo. The aim of the RTVS is to support films with different audience potential. *“My Dog Killer (Môj pes Killer) is an excellent art film that we got involved in at the last moment. We are interested in films that score highly at festivals but another thing is that we are going to try to support audience films as well, as was applicable*

for Wilson City (Wilsonov) which in my view will be successful with audiences,” continues Tibor Búza. As for projects in development, for instance, the documentary about the primary photographer of The Beatles, Dežo Hoffman who came up with the concept of jumping bands and who brought top personalities of the music world to the Bratislava Lyre, is interesting. According to Búza, interest in this project is already tremendous, even foreign TVs are interested in it. With regard to other projects in development, a spectacular documentary about Slovakia on the occasion of Slovakia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union should be mentioned.

“The involvement of the RTVS in many co-production projects often results in the rights to sell the licence. Currently, the RTVS features as a relevant producer and co-producer and it also strengthens its position by returning to the international selling markets MIPCOM and MIPTV in Cannes. This also extends the co-production collaboration to the sale of licences abroad. Last year's presence at the autumn MIPCOM market brought success in the forms of sales of licences for the broadcasting of two fairy tales across the Polish territory, Love in Your Soul and Seven Ravens, which were successfully broadcast by Polish PULS TV over Christmas,” said Juraj Kadáč, the RTVS PR Manager.

However, in addition to films, the public-service TV has ambitions to enter the international market with its own projects. *“We would like to offer our programmes there and even now, we have several requirements, so we are preparing the first packages that we are going to sell abroad. We have some backlogs in this respect, but when the current management started working in the TV, nothing was here and we had to set up everything anew. For instance, we have to arrange M/E tracks for the purpose of sales. Approximately 90 per cent of older projects from four-five years ago don't have them at all, because no one reckoned with the possibility that they would be sold abroad. Nowadays we make projects prepared for these tracks, for instance the second season of the dramatic TV series The Colonnade (Kolonáda) or Secret Lives (Tajné životy),”* adds the Programme Director of the TV part of RTVS, Tibor Búza. The RTVS will also take part in the MIPCOM fair in April 2016. ▲



2016 Premières? Genre Reinforcement

► Daniel Bernát

Slovak cinema has recently been characterised by an increasing productivity and its genre diversity is also developing. It seems that this is also true of the current year. This article presents a selection of the films with their premières planned in 2016.

Director Michal Kollár's psychological thriller *Red Captain* (Červený kapitán) will receive its première in March. Its story returns to the troubled 1990s, to the period shortly after the fall of communism when the decision on the break-up of Czechoslovakia was made. *Red Captain* is one of a few Slovak feature films to reflect on this period filled with naïve ideas of a better future, but also coping with a great many new impetuses and challenges, often onerous, and with the obtrusive burden of the past. Director Kollár depicts all this against the backdrop of the investigation of a murder referring to the former State Security. The film is based on a book by the successful Slovak author of detective stories, Dominik Dán, and it is a Slovak-Czech-Polish co-production.

The political thriller *Kidnapping* (Únos) is also based on a novel by Dominik Dán. It plunges deep into intricate Mafia networks, in which secret service employees and high-ranking state officials are also involved. The film was made by Mariana Čengel Solčanská who is one of the most productive filmmakers in Slovakia.

Agave (Agáva) directed by the experienced Slovak screenwriter Ondrej Šulaj will be premièred by the end of March. He also was inspired by literature – a prose work by the distinguished writer Ladislav Ballek – and in this story he returns to the period immediately after World War II, shortly before the communists assumed total power over the state. "I like to take chances and do things that are also a challenge for me. Ballek's prose is such a challenge – with its theme of searching for certainties in the post-war world, the seemingly trifling story against the background of a love triangle, the atmosphere of a southern sultry hot summer scented with acacias which opens and irritates the minds of the people living in a border town..." said Ondrej Šulaj.

The present time plays an important role in the road movie *Stanko*. In it director Rasto Boroš follows the fates of two young people from the edges of society on their journey together to Italy. The story also touches upon the topic of trafficking with girls, but the major focus of the film is friendship. "Each of the main protagonists follows their own idea of happiness. But in reality they need

something else. Someone to care for them. In the story, I wanted to show the consequences brought about by such a relation. Mainly, responsibility for the other and the consequences of the lie told by one of them to manipulate the other for his own benefit," says Rasto Boroš in explaining his intentions. He cast non-actors in the main roles.

Little Jarka from the novel *She Is a Harbour* (Piata loď) doesn't have an easy life either. She is not yet even a teenager and her inner world is already marked by experiences that augment her confusion. Director Iveta Grófová was inspired by the book by Monika Kompaníková. She herself made her film début in 2012 with *Made in Ash* (Až do mesta Aš) which was successful at film festivals. She collaborated with Marek Leščák on the script of *She Is a Harbour* and the Slovak-Czech-Hungarian film was also supported by Eurimages.

The road movie of director György Kristóf *OUT* (Vychladnutie) is under way in an extensive international co-production. Last year, the project figured at the Cinéfondation – L'Atelier in Cannes, which focused on fifteen of the most promising projects from all over the world. Kristóf tells the story of a fifty-year-old man who takes off on a journey from Slovakia all over Eastern Europe on a quest to find a job and make his dream come true – to catch a big fish.

The premières of two films with Slovakia as a minority co-producer are linked to this year's Berlin IFF. As a young woman, Olga Hepnarová killed eight people in Prague in 1973 and was subsequently executed. The existential drama *I, Olga Hepnarová* (Ja, Olga Hepnarová) attempts to capture the kind of person she was without downplaying her crimes. Olga came from an underprivileged family background, she was isolated and unable to build normal relations with other people; the debuting directors Tomáš Weinreb and Petr Kazda tried to look into her mind and discover what led up to her committing the said crime. The Berlin IFF also included the co-production film *In Your Dreams!* (Ani ve snu!) in its programme. It examines the world of contemporary young people living in the city. In the story, director Petr Okropec focuses on the sprightly teenager Laura who would like to get to join a parkour gang and, at the same time, deals with her first big love.

As for minority Slovak co-productions planned to have their premières in 2016, let us at least mention *Little Crusader* (Križiačik, dir. Václav Kadrnka), characterised by its makers as a medieval road movie based on the poems of Jaroslav Vrchlický; the historical drama *Masaryk* (Masaryk, dir. Julius Ševčík) about Czech diplomat Jan Masaryk and the events associated with the Munich Agreement; the omnibus animated film *Deadly Stories* (Smrteľné historky, dir. Jan Bubeníček) where each story is related to a different genre and technological treatment, and the 3D animated family film *Oddsockeaters* (Lichožrúti, dir. Galina Miklíňová).

Naturally, some new Slovak documentaries will also have their cinema releases. Several of them focus on personalities from various areas of art: for instance, director Juraj Johanides on the underground band Bez ladu a skladu which is referred to in the title of his film *Bez Ladu a Skladu. From Socialism to Capitalism* (Bez ladu a skladu. Od socializmu ku kapitalizmu); director Patrik Lančarič took to task the Slovak poet and Minister of Culture in the period of the communist normalisation, Miroslav Válek (the film *Válek*); Juraj Nvota focused his attention on artist Alex Mlynárčik (*Elsewhere/Inde*); in turn, the Slovak-Czech pair of filmmakers Robert Kirchhoff and Filip Remunda investigate fame and transience in *Steam on the River* (Para nad riekou) through musicians Laco Džeczi, Ľubomír Tamašovič and Ján Jankeje.

Okhwan's Mission Impossible (Okhwan) tells the remarkable story of Okhwan Yoon, a South Korean who used to be a successful businessman until he opted for a totally different life-project – he set off on an epic bicycle journey around the world in order to help to reunify the Korean peninsula. His personality and journey were mapped by director Marek Mackovič who had already introduced Okhwan thanks to a short episode in the *Life in a Day* project (2011) produced by Ridley Scott.

The young filmmaker Mária Rumanová considers the identity of the East Slovak border town Čierna nad Tisou and the local people in her creative documentary *Sunrise Hotel* (Hotel Úsvit). And, following our earlier reference to reflecting on the period shortly after the fall of communism through thrillers, documentaries such as *Sunrise Hotel* can offer authentic testimonies of life in contemporary Slovakia. ▲



Digitisation Is Not Over, We Are Going Still Further

► Simona Nôtová

The national Digital Audiovision project, aimed at the digitisation of the Slovak audiovisual heritage, ended on 30 November 2015. However, that does not mean the end of digitisation because the archives of the Slovak Film Institute (SFI) and its partner in this project, the Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS), contain many works that both institutions will carry on digitising.

The project will be retained until 2020. *"The SFI has undertaken to digitise at least a further fifty items in each subsequent year. This entails feature, animated, documentary films and newsreels,"* said Peter Dubecký, the General Director of the Slovak Film Institute. *"We anticipate that, within the retention period, 7,200 audio and 950 video items will be digitised every year,"* added Andrej Doležal, the Director of the Technical Implementation Section of the RTVS.

Within the project, by 30 November 2015 the SFI had digitised 1,001 cultural items, 600 of which are newsreels, 198 animated, 158 documentary and 45 feature films. All in all, this represents 900 kilometres of film material. The screening of a restored and digitised film is an important event for the filmmakers. Thanks to the Digital Audiovision project it will be possible to screen their works in a

high-quality form in digitised cinemas in Slovakia and abroad.

However, it requires a great deal of time, work and the cooperation of several experts to achieve the digital form of a work. For instance, the digitisation of *Forget Mozart* (Zabudnite na Mozarta, dir. Milošlav Luther) in the SFI's newly built digitisation workplace in the basement of Cinema Lumière took a full eight months from the preparatory works through the digitisation and restoration of the image and soundtracks up to the production of the DCP digital cinema master and the master for long-term archiving. In all, 136,025 frames were digitised in the film and 46 expert staff – scanning, retouching experts, editors, a colourist, a sound-master, film archivists and other experts – took part in the entire process in a three-shift operation.

Films come to the SFI digitisation workplace after the laboratory process from the systematic restoration and rescue project which has been ongoing since 2004. Only after thorough diagnostics of the image and soundtracks do the experts start the retouching operation. And how do experts proceed in the restoration of films with regard also to the fact that the works were made in various periods and on film materials of varying quality? *"In this process it is very important to determine the reference film print for the verification projections; the quality of the digitised film and the output digital master in the image and sound tracks are assessed on the basis of this copy... If the film is characterised by a specific granularity, we try to maintain it. If the image is characterised by a certain colour or tone, again we try to maintain it. If the sound has its characteristic expression, we also maintain it. Just as every director of photography had his own signature, so the signature of a sound-master is also discernible and can help us a lot when searching for the common features and dissimilarities of the individual films,"* explains Peter Csordás, a digitisation expert and quality and control manager of the Digital Audiovision project. And he immediately adds that, when working with these films, consultations with the filmmakers themselves are important to assess what the auteur intention of the filmmakers was and what was caused, for instance, by imperfections in the recording material. *"In particular, for this*

assessment we have guarantors of the laboratory process, guarantors for the image and guarantors for the sound. They are either the filmmakers who made these films or directors of photography suggested by the Association of Slovak Cinematographers. They remember the original atmospheres very well. They know what type of material they shot on, what turned out well and what not so well in the laboratories, what types of lighting fixtures and lighting they used..." It is essential that every digitised and restored film should conform to the appearance it had at the time it was made.

The RTVS, as a partner in the project, digitised 60,649 items at its digitisation workplace up to 30 November 2015. Up to 51,799 of them are audio items with authentic folklore and folk music programmes on analogue media, literary programmes of all genres on magnetic media, historic sound documents and items from the music fund. The remaining 8,850 items were video items, specifically journalistic and documentary works, and dramatic programmes.

The biggest digitisation project in the area of audiovision in Slovakia was supported from the European Union structural funds. The SFI carried out this project with its partner RTVS from 2011. In October 2015, the original amount of the grant, EUR 24,089,940.37 was adjusted to EUR 20,883,676.22, i.e. EUR 13,221,891.76 for the SFI and EUR 7,661,784.46 for the RTVS. Altogether, 77 staff members worked on the project in the SFI and 52 in the RTVS. ▲

Digitisation Has a Multi-level Significance

► Mariana Jaremková

Many experts with a variety of specialisations took part in the Digital Audiovision (DA) project. Mária Ferenčuhová, Eva Filová, Petra Hanáková and Eva Šošková collaborated in the project as film historians – curators. In the following interview they clarify their respective involvement in the project but they mainly discuss the outcome of the digitisation of the audiovisual heritage for film experts, filmmakers, historians and the viewing public.

How did your work as film historians – curators fit within the Digital Audiovision project and what are its outputs?

– **Mária Ferenčuhová:** I was the first one to get involved in the project in November 2012 when discussions were held in the Slovak Film Institute as to which of the plethora of short documentaries should be digitised. My original ambition was to watch all the available films without any exceptions and to choose those that reflect the period “film operation”, with films made to order, with works that were schematic, conformist, and, of course, those that were innovative for their period in terms of theme or form. However, that was not a task for one person and so Eva Filová and Petra Hanáková became involved in the project. The three of us then divided the films by theme. At the same time, Eva Šošková joined us. She had already dealt with animated film in her doctoral research. Paradoxically, due to lack of time, I left the project shortly afterwards. The outputs of my research were mainly scientific studies that were published in *Kino-Ikon*, others in turn in the monographs *Film and History 4* (Film a dejiny 4) and *Documentary Film in V4 Countries* (Dokumentárny film v krajinách V4). Among other things, in my outputs I tried to note how the opinion of Slovak short documentaries changed in the individual periods. Eva Filová then chose films with a similar mind-set that were screened

in Cinema Lumière. She was the one who selected the basic themes which showed the different ways in which short films were made and produced in comparison with full-length feature films.

– **Eva Filová:** I worked on a separate systematic research which consisted of several components. First the area to be examined had to be chosen – I opted for a big package of non-fiction films with the theme of the Slovak National Uprising which were mostly made to political order in the Short Film Studio in 1945 – 1989 and which quite naturally moved away from the centre of interest after the change of regime. This entailed more than a hundred films which, from a total production of 3,300 films, is no negligible number. After a time it became necessary to look at them from a different perspective, not just the ideological one. To my surprise, many of them would pass even today as an exceptional testimony of the given period, an interesting investigation of tragic events or an inventive handling of archive materials. It was necessary to watch all the films thoroughly, to take notes, to check and possibly make their original annotations more accurate, to write down the key words, to search for an adequate, representative still and a film extract approximately one-minute-long. During this initial work extending over several months, I started placing the processed films into the emerging categories and



to write a study that gradually developed, until it turned into four consecutive parts in *Kino-Ikon*. As the research was started in the year of the 70th anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising, further activities outside of the project were spontaneously added: a selection of the ten best documentaries for *.týždeň* magazine, the August block of films in Cinema Lumière within the *Shorts from the Archive* series, the selection and matching of short films screened prior to full-length films for the entire August Filmotheque of Cinema Lumière, a block of short films for the Brno 16 Festival. I presented the last selection of films with the characteristic title “The International Nature of the Slovak National Uprising” in summer 2015 to the foreign students of the Summer School of Slovak Language and Culture at the Philosophical Faculty of Comenius University.

– **Petra Hanáková:** My job was to perform background research: to watch, analyse and describe the films, to pick out their “substitutional” fragments and static shots, to create collections and reference notions, partly also to choose films for digitisation. Originally, I was supposed to deal mainly with *Nástup* (i.e. the beginning of newsreels) and – as I am also an art historian – with film on art, but eventually I got “sucked up” by the work and it moved me in another direction also. The collections of

the SFI’s archive are unusually rich – what we are familiar with is just the tip of the iceberg, especially in the documentary film segment. If I may take the liberty to answer the question of “outcomes” with a single word, then I will say: knowledge. It was a unique opportunity to get to know and to examine films that were up to then unknown, and to subsequently mediate them, for instance in the texts that I am writing now and publishing for *Nástup* (newsreels during the First Slovak Republic), in the introductions to screenings for the *4 Elements* Film Seminar or while programming the films for the *Fluid Muse* exhibition where, thanks to my working for both institutions, I naturally linked the collaboration between the SFI and the Slovak National Gallery.

– **Eva Šošková:** I dealt with animated film in the project and my main job consisted of several steps. I received the list of films to be digitised and I wrote a protocol for every film I watched. I recorded the key words based on the theme and characters, I wrote down the genre, the use of speech, the animation technique, for whom the film was intended, etc. I evaluated the protocol and collated blocks of films with a common theme, I created film profiles of the filmmakers and specified who the film was intended for. Such blocks of films could, for instance, be part of retrospectives at film festivals. An extensive study capturing the periodisation of the history





of animated film, the extent of auteurship of the films and an analysis of the film styles, the work of the filmmakers with the theme and genre, and a quantitative evaluation of the animation techniques, constituted the verbal evaluation of the research using the protocols.

How will the digitisation project affect work with film archives and what could be its greatest impact for film historians on the one hand, and filmmakers on the other?

– **Mária Ferenčuhová:** In my view, a readily available and compendious database plays a key role. When the SK CINEMA film portal was put into operation, this made it possible to comfortably search for films based on various keys. Hence, it is the first contact with the film archive, even though historians and filmmakers approach the archives quite differently. Filmmakers are often looking for a specific type of shot, a specific historical figure or a recording of a specific event, many times purely as an illustration. Film historians mostly approach an archive with regard to the issue examined, with expectations or hypotheses which they check by means of film. They do not look for a specific type of shot, they seek what materials were made on the given theme. And the historians

who deal with political history approach the archives quite differently. SK CINEMA is a useful tool for all these types of searches or research.

– **Eva Filová:** For a historian, it is important to have the broadest possible field of vision unveiled. Because working with a limited amount of material might lead to a misleading generalisation, to the repetition of the same titles and the same names. I consider digitisation to be not just a useful restoration of the cultural heritage, but especially the long-term process of making all available materials accessible – documents, photographs, complete films or their parts, film posters and magazines. A lot of information can be found even now in the SFI databases via the SK CINEMA portal. If I deal with a filmmaker, I am glad to be able to locate the available relevant and verified materials, not simply those on “Wikipedia”. Digitisation represents a certain satisfaction for a filmmaker, that due attention is paid to his film and that it was not just abandoned somewhere in a box.

– **Eva Šošková:** The basic property of digitised data is their capacity to be disseminated and then their accessibility. Accordingly, digitised audiovisual materials are destined to get readily to the people who are interested in them. Making



less familiar and unknown films accessible will broaden the exploring horizons to historians, and for filmmakers digitisation will technically simplify the use of archive materials in their films.

Can digitisation support interdisciplinary work with film in the areas of art and science? Will a film recording for instance become a more frequently used source for historians?

– **Mária Ferenčuhová:** Relations between institutional historiography and film have been my favourite topic for a long time now, so I will answer this part of the question especially. Unlike, for instance, German historians who have been “discovering” film sources gradually from the 1950s onwards, through the French and Anglo Saxon historians who joined them by the end of the 1960s, the Slovak ones have until recently almost hardly ever worked with film sources at all. Only in the last decade, mainly thanks to the younger generation of historians and thanks to the orientation of research towards the history of representations and cultural memory, works based on the analysis of film sources have also started to emerge. Digitisation will simplify the work for these historians considerably. The intermediary nature of curator work in the Slovak National Gallery in

recent years also demonstrates that intersections of film with other forms of art are attractive and carry a lot of information.

– **Eva Filová:** Definitely, a connection between film, film history and social sciences is missing here. It could, for instance, be beneficial for a political scientist examining normalisation to see how Husák’s status as a key figure of the Slovak National Uprising was strengthened in the period non-fiction production. We encounter film in museums and galleries more frequently.

– **Petra Hanáková:** Definitely yes. This way film is more available for use. Thanks to the SK CINEMA databases, which are older than the Digital Audiovision project itself, nevertheless, thanks to the project they are also copiously filled with data, it is possible to work with films “more operatively”. Thus, the researcher (from any discipline) sees and can readily search for what is available in the funds and in what form. I hope it will help because, in my view, historians in particular work with audiovisual material and its analysis disconcertingly little. Today, interest in the Slovak State is booming but which historian has ever watched the period newsreels?

– **Eva Šošková:** That is related to how accessible it is, so it could be. However, everything depends





on its systematisation and whether some data will be made accessible electronically.

What in your view are the benefits of DA for the general public, what possibilities are opening up in this respect and how could they be used?

– **Mária Ferenčuhová:** Thanks to digitisation the Slovak public can, for instance, finally discover the less prominent treasures of Slovak cinema, such as short films.

– **Eva Filová:** I hope that digitised materials will just be made more widely accessible. Not only in the form of projections in digitised cinemas and DVDs and Blu-ray Discs issued, but mainly via the Internet: thematic collections, interesting “stories” of films and virtual exhibitions of photographs and posters.

– **Petra Hanáková:** At the level of hardware aesthetics – because it was mainly full-length feature films that underwent the “big digitisation”, i.e. not only transcription but also a comprehensive restoration – our films will be “cleaner” and “more colourful”, it will be easier to distribute them in cinemas (that are also gradually being digitised thanks to support from the Slovak Audiovisual Fund). Therefore, they will (hopefully!) be a more solid and present part of our cultural awareness.

– **Eva Šošková:** As for the general public, I see the importance mainly in the provision of films for retrospectives at festivals and the further dissemination of audiovisual material by means of interesting DVD compilations (in the case of short films).

Can digitisation make it easier for foreign film experts to gain access to our film archives and thus stimulate their interest in our cinematography?

– **Mária Ferenčuhová:** That essentially depends on whether the databases but also the materials made accessible will be, so to speak, “foreign-user-friendly”. The SK CINEMA film portal does not yet have an English version. However, curator outputs can have it more easily and their availability on the web can clearly arouse such interest.

– **Petra Hanáková:** Here again I consider www.skcinema.sk to be the best gateway but, of course, also the publication of restored/digitised works on structured (i.e. with bonuses and several language versions) and “fictitious” DVDs, but maybe finally also curator work with an “on demand” format.

– **Eva Šošková:** It can, but everything again depends on the systematisation of this material and the access of foreign experts to it, for instance without needing to physically visit the archive. ▲

At Home with a Film

► Daniel Bernát

The Slovak Film Institute also carries out publishing activities and, in addition to publications, it offers DVDs and Blu-ray Discs with Slovak films on the market.

In 2002, the Slovak Film Institute (SFI) issued its first DVD with Dušan Hanák's *Pictures of the Old World* (*Obrazy starého sveta*). Since then the SFI has offered audiences many other films on DVD, but last year it also launched its first Blu-ray Disc on the market. This contained Martin Hollý's drama *Signum Laudis* (1980) which is set on the Russian front at the end of World War I. The protagonist is the Austro-Hungarian Corporal Hoferik. "It is the story of a human being who became a soldier. The story of a soldier who had all the opportunities to become a human being, but militarism and its mechanisms prevented him from doing so," said director Hollý. Among others, his film won the Special Jury Prize at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. It was issued on BD with subtitles in English and four other languages.

At the end of last year, the SFI re-issued a DVD with Slovak films of the 1980s, *Another Love* (*Iná láska*, dir. Dušan Trančík) and *The Southern Mail* (*Južná pošta*, dir. Stanislav Párnický). As for last year's new books, the SFI published *Film as Free Verse* (*Film ako voľný verš*) written by the prestigious representative of Slovak cinema of the 1960s, Eduard Grečner, director of the films *Dragon's Return* (*Drak sa vracia*) or *Nylon Moon* (*Nylonový mesiac*). In the present volume he deals with personalities of domestic and foreign film, specific works, but also with the nature of various historical periods and their relation to film art. The SFI was also involved in the publication of another book of essays, this time about the Slovak language and its use in the media; *The Pitfalls and Highpoints of the Language* (*Úskalía a slasti jazyka*) was written by the renowned film publicist Pavel Branko. *The History of Slovak Television* (*Dejiny slovenskej televízie*) was also issued in collaboration with

the SFI; in it its author, Ivan Stadtrucker, details the trends in the development of the public-service television from 1956 to 1989. In addition, the SFI continues to publish the monthly *Film.sk* and to collaborate in the publication of the magazine for science on film and moving images *Kino-Ikon*.

On the occasion of Slovakia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2016, the SFI plans to issue a collection of ten Slovak films on BDs. The collection contains films made over a period of several decades, wherein *The Sun in a Net* (*Slnko v sieti*, dir. Štefan Uher), *The Boxer and Death* (*Boxer a smrť*, dir. Peter Solan), *Birdies, Orphans, and Fools* (*Vtáčkovia, siroty a blázní*, dir. Juraj Jakubisko), *I Love, You Love* (*Ja milujem, ty miluješ*, dir. Dušan Hanák) and *A Path Across the Danube* (*Chodník cez Dunaj*, dir. Miloslav Luther) were made in the period of state cinematography of socialist Czechoslovakia, while *Everything I Like* (*Všetko čo mám rád*, dir. Martin Šulík), *Paper Heads* (*Papierové hlavy*, dir. Dušan Hanák), *The Power of Good: Nicholas Winton* (*Sila ľudskosti – Nicholas Winton*, dir. Matej Mináč), *Blind Loves* (*Slepé lásky*, dir. Juraj Lehotský) and *Soul at Peace* (*Pokoj v duši*, dir. Vladimír Balko) were made after the fall of communism. The above films reflect the auteur, thematic and stylistic diversity of Slovak cinema; several of these films won prestigious world awards (for instance, the Silver Bear from the Berlin IFF for Best Director for *I Love, You Love* or the International Emmy Award for Best Documentary for *The Power of Good: Nicholas Winton*) or they managed to appeal to a broad domestic audience as was the case of *Soul at Peace* (2009). The collection of films on BDs will be launched in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian language versions. ▲

Slovak Films on British DVDs

► Daniel Bernát

Slovak cinema can appeal to foreign audiences also, thanks to the DVD production of the British publisher Second Run, in collaboration with the Slovak Film Institute. Last year, *Pictures of the Old World* (Obrazy starého sveta) and *The Dragon's Return* (Drak sa vracia) were added to the collection of these DVDs.

The documentary *Pictures of the Old World* was made in 1972 by director Dušan Hanák who was inspired by Martin Martinček's photographic series and who also collaborated with photographer Vladimír Vavrek. In his film Hanák steps into the personal spaces of old people from the mountain regions, he talks about their difficult lives but, at the same time, he unveils their inner resilience and the variety of their personalities. *"I admired those old people for several reasons. They lived on the brink of society, sometimes excluded even from the village community, and their wisdom was related to their inner strength and positive thinking. They had humour and universal humanity,"* said Dušan Hanák about the protagonists of *Pictures of the Old World*. His film was suppressed for many years and it was a long time before it gained adequate attention when, for instance, it won the Los Angeles Film Critics Association Award for Best Documentary or the Special Mention in the Documentary Category at the 1989 European Film Awards. Second Run launched *Pictures of the Old World* on DVD on the Anglophone market in February last year. Several short films by Dušan Hanák and a booklet with an essay by film theoretician Jonathan Owen were included with the DVD. *"If the objects and surfaces presented are very conspicuously the physical components of an 'old world', they are also tactile and alive in their dense, grainy textures. ... But of all its objets trouvés, none are more potent, revealing or emphatically presented than the subjects' faces, photographed with great attention in the still and moving shots alike,"* wrote Owen. The DVD received positive response in foreign media and the magazine *Little*

White Lies put it in the TOP 20 DVD and Blu-ray titles of 2015.

This chart also included another DVD with a Slovak film from Second Run – *The Dragon's Return* (Drak sa vracia). The black-and-white feature film by director Eduard Grečner, based on the novel by Dobroslav Chrobák, tells the story of a man's forlorn attempt to return to the environment and community which betrayed and rejected him. It is a simple story but depicted in a way that enhances its magnitude and significance. The film is remarkable especially for the way in which Grečner manages to make the inner states of his characters and the atmosphere of their relations visible by working with the image and music, sounds or silence, with a limited use of dialogues. In this respect, *The Dragon's Return* also excels thanks to the director of photography, Vincent Rosinec and the composer Iľja Zeljenka. *"Grečner had been dazzled by the book's lyrical qualities, but he was also daunted by the challenge of transposing those qualities to film, of rendering visually the interior, 'invisible' realities that the novella captures poetically. ... The film's audio-visual realization achieves a distinctive poetry of its own, balancing the tactile and concrete with the stylised and near-abstract,"* wrote Jonathan Owen in an essay which is included in the booklet. The DVD also contains an introduction to the film by British film critic and historian Peter Hames, author of *Best of Slovak Film 1921 – 1991*, which was published by the Slovak Film Institute.

In the past, Second Run issued a DVD with the Slovak films *The Sun in a Net* (Slno v sieti, dir. Štefan Uher, 1962) and *Birdies, Orphans and Fools* (Vtáčkovia, siroty a blázni, dir. Juraj Jakubisko, 1969). ▲



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