

PRESS RELEASE: Competition sections of the 24th Ji.hlava IDFF
Prague/Jihlava, October 14, 2020

The 24th Ji.hlava IDFF kicks-off in two weeks! Despite the recent forced shift of the event to digital space, the full-fledged festival programme with over 59 world and 26 international premieres remains. What can the viewers look forward to?

The programme features [over 220 films](#): from the latest of Czech and international documentary crop, South Korean film retrospective, comprehensive showcase of Afro-American docs as well as new documentaries focusing on topics that are more than relevant these days: coronavirus pandemic, China and Hong Kong, climate change, and films asking the fundamental question – where is our home? The 24th Ji.hlava IDFF will take place between October 27 and November 8, 2020.

“We are sorry that we can’t screen the films in cinemas but we want to see the current situation as an opportunity. One positive aspect is that everyone will be able to get to see the films,” says Marek Hovorka, the Festival Director. “Fifteen years ago, the same year when YouTube was launched, Ji.hlava IDFF founded the first VOD portal dedicated to documentaries. Today, **DAFilms.com is one of the leading European VOD platforms**,” describes Hovorka the partnership with DAFilms, which will be the festival’s this year’s streaming platform.

“The uniqueness of this programme is in the fact that apart from over 220 films available to the Czech viewers, we will offer **more than 80 films from Ji.hlava’s competitions to audiences worldwide, released in their World, international or European premieres**,” says Diana Tabakov, the Executive Director at DAFilms.

This year’s Ji.hlava will not only focus on films. “In order to bring the unique atmosphere of Ji.hlava to online audiences, we have prepared several simultaneous live streams, **all-day live service from the festival’s Lighthouse studio at the Ji.hlava’s central Masaryk square** as well as an interactive environment interconnecting the audience with the filmmakers,” concludes Marek Hovorka.

Competition sections: Chinese struggle and Latvian coyotes

The topic “home” echoes in the [Opus Bonum](#) section that offers **the most remarkable world documentaries**. For example, *One Says No* by Chinese director Dayong Zha that captures the desperate fight of a man named Azhong against a brutal construction lobby to save his home. Expanding Chinese cities are swallowing the countryside, their inhabitants are forced to make space for new houses and businessmen from urban areas. The majority of the locals gives in to the pressure: despite poor compensation and bleak prospects of dignified housing. Azhong decides to stand up against the system. The raw documentary is based on his testimony that he is giving from a barricaded flat.

[Between the Seas](#) section brings the best documentary production from Central and Eastern Europe, reflecting on the topic of our search for home in film titles such as *Refugees Are Welcome Here* by Tomáš Ráfa. The film captures the uncertain situation of refugees in refugee camps in Berlin. “When you are shooting with extreme right-wing groups,” says the director “the most important thing is to act as if you belong among them, and keep calm. I don’t take part in discussions and I only record their words because they themselves want it, I don’t ask questions,” says Ráfa. Film *Latvian Coyote* directed by Ivars Zviedris brings a dramatic story of smugglers from

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the Latvian-Russian border, called coyotes. They are risking their freedom for a small reward, setting others free and wandering through endless swamp woods and villages full of abandoned and dilapidated houses.

The trauma of ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe is explored by the Serbian film, *Belonging* by director Tea Lukač. Their cohabitation with the local ethnicities ended during WWII when their German identity became a pretext for brutal violence. Only one tenth of them survived. Their concealed trauma gets to life in the memories of witnesses that all merge into the question of whether national identity implies the responsibility for acts conducted in its name. “*The issue of belonging is universal,*” says Lukač. “*It consists in the desire to define oneself in relation to others and at the same time it is a given fact that we didn’t choose.*”

Film discoveries: Ji.hlava’s First Lights

The [First Lights section](#) that each year discovers remarkable documentary debuts will include the Portuguese film, *Ghosts: Long Way Home* directed by Tiaga Siopa. The filmmaker visits a house where his grandmother used to live and follows the traces of her life by contemplating on the objects that have been left. *Home of One’s Own* by Lebanese director Ruba Atiyehse shows how an intimate self-therapeutic video-diary can help you overcome the feeling of alienation and find your own roots in a foreign country. The director herself lives in exile.

Motherlands by Italian director Gabriel Babsi relates a story of a man called Hervé who fled the war in Ivory Coast to Greece where he found a new home and a new job: living in a squatted apartment and working as a people smuggler. “What is morality when you don’t have a choice?” asks the film’s director. “What is ethical when you have no rights? Can we be judged? And if so, by whom?” A refugee from Syria who takes diligent care of his little garden at the outskirts of Remse in France and who would like to exchange his temporary asylum for a permanent home is the main protagonist of *Gevar’s Land. A House* by French director Judith Auffray provides a raw account of how people living with autism learn to be at home. Duo of authors George Tiller and Maéva Ranaivojaona is searching for a father who has long disappeared in Austrian-Madagascar film *Zaho Zay*. The film has been influenced by psychoanalysis and is composed of mesmerising images of Madagascar society ravaged by war, poverty, corruption and criminality.

Experimental sections: Catastrophe, collapse and magicians

What else will be there to see? Certainly the experimental competition sections, [Fascinations](#) and [exprmntl.cz](#). That will bring, among other films, the new title by French experimental filmmaker Jacques Perconte – *Before the Collapse of Mont Blanc*. It poses the question whether we are the last generation that will see snow on the mountain top. A profound physical experience comes in the form of a film experiment reviving George Romer’s old horror classic *Night of the Living Dead* made by Israeli video-artist Guli Silberstein who reflects on the current anxiety of the first months of the covid pandemic. “The combination of video and digital image has helped me express my fear and paranoia associated with the covid pandemic,” says Silberstein.

The section will also feature the best of Czech experimental cinema. Visual artist Lea Petříková will bring to Ji.hlava her new film *After the Magician* that references the work of French-Mexican surrealist Alice Rahon. In 1947 the filmmaker produced her first and last film called *Les Magiciens*; sadly, it got lost before its first screening. This has been the inspiration of the author’s dream about a film that was never seen, about a meeting with an artist that has unfairly been almost forgotten. Zbyněk Baladrán will screen his film, *Catastrophe* that references a one-act play by Samuel Beckett dedicated to former Czechoslovak president Václav Havel in prison.

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Czech Joy: Švankmajer and the Wolves

Czech Joy section, which presents the new Czech documentary works will bring the premiere of *Wolves at the Borders* by director Martin Páv who captures the approach of locals to the wolves returning to the Broumov region. The film concentrates on the relationship of people and wild nature. "To what extent are we willing to accommodate the unpredictability of the world that does not only belong to us?" asks the director. The Czech competition will also feature three film portraits of filmmaker and world-renowned surrealist Jan Švankmajer and visual artist Jan Jedlička. Surrealist artist Jan Švankmajer is captured in the film *Alchemical Furnace* made by the duo of authors, Jan Daňhel and Adam Olša. The film is trying to identify Švankmajer's creative methods and his sources of inspiration. "Our aim was to create a formally independent film that will not imitate Švankmajer's signature style," says Adam Olša. The film titled *Jan Jedlička: Traces of a Landscape* directed by Petr Záruba portrays the figure of Jan Jedlička, visual artist, photographer and experimental filmmaker who emigrated to Switzerland because of the political situation in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Among the other films showcased in the Czech Joy section will be film essay *White on White* by Viera Čákanyová. During her stay in the Antarctic, the author was chatting with artificial intelligence, discussing topics related to cinema, art and the meaning of life. The duo of directors Vít Klusák and Filip Remunda will present an international premiere of their most recent film *Once Upon a Time in Poland*.

Short Joy: viewers will decide the winner

Before the online start of the festival, the viewers will be treated to a preview of festival films from the **Short Joy section**. **All nominated short docs shown in their world or international premiere will be available for free at DAFilms.com starting already on October 19.** The viewers will be voting via dafilms.com portal until October 29 and the winner of the DAFilms Audience Award will be given online distribution and promotional services in the amount of 3 000 EUR. All of the participants in the vote will have the chance to win an annual subscription to DAFilms.com and other benefits. The Short Joy films will then be presented also as part of the online festival programme at www.ji-hlava.com until November 8.

100 years of South Korean documentary

The non-competition section **Transparent Landscape** that annually showcases the cinema production from one selected country will this year focus on South Korea. **The comprehensive showcase will start with films from 1920s that capture the boom of Korean cities and industries until the films from recent decades.** In 1988, Dongwon Kim made *Sanggye-dong Olympic* following the preparations of the Summer Olympics of 1988. At the time, Korean government kicked one hundred and sixty families out on the streets, tore down their houses in the slums of Sanggye-dong in Seoul where they built luxury flats. The director spent three years with the families and witnessed their desperate struggle with the state authorities. The film initiated a new era of Korean social documentary. Another chilling documentary is *The Murmuring* directed by Byun Young-joo who describes the trauma of Korean women who served and sex slaves to Japanese soldiers in WWII. Viewers will have the chance to see the very first experimental film in the history of Korean cinema. The *Meaning of 1/24 Second* made by Ku-lim Kim. Its fast-paced collage is critical of the drastic urbanization of the city of Seoul.

Black Cinema Matters

"This year's topical section **Black Cinema Matters** is not intended as a superficial response to the Black Lives Matter movement, on the contrary – the current social turmoil prompted us to draw attention to the rich and inspiring tradition," says David Čeněk, the section's programme selector. **"The section introduces a radical change in the perspective of the Afro-American narrative,** which has long been dividing not only American public but is also bogged down with a lot of

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prejudice, ignorance and lack of empathy,” says Marek Hovorka. The section will comprise **exclusively of works by Afro-American filmmakers attesting to their direct experience with racism and violence**. As a paradox, this authentic testimony has been marginalized or presented predominantly by other than Afro-American filmmakers. American curator Greg de Cuir Jr. was a consultant of the section.

The showcase will include *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm, Take 1* directed by William Greaves. “A doc documenting the documentary shooting of a documentary” this could be the motto of the film made in the tradition of cinema verité: a competition for a fictional film taking place in Central Park in New York which transforms into a riveting experience of the process of filmmaking thanks to the parallel shooting of three independent crews.

Ji.hlava Industry programme

The rich [Industry programme](#) will take place online and will include a number of projects focused on film professionals, such as the Emerging Producers workshop focused on up-and coming European producers, Conference Fascinations on the distribution of experimental works, virtual meeting of film festival representatives Festival Identity, presentation of new Czech documentaries Czech Joy in the Spotlight, educational seminars including Media and Documentary and the Ji.hlava Academy, and a wide range of discussions with film producers and distributors from V4 countries. [Industry accreditations](#) are intended for film professionals and film school students and this year are issued free of charge.

IDF will present the Silver Eye awards

During the 24th Ji.hlava IDFF, the [Institute of Documentary Film](#) (IDF) will organize an online version of the traditional East Silver Market with Central and Eastern European films for film professionals. Two international juries will decide on the best films on the market and the winners of the Silver Eye Awards. Eight films have been nominated in the short-film and eleven films in the feature-film category. The Ex Oriente Film workshop will offer its programme to the public starting already on October 19 – 24, 2020.

The 24th Ji.hlava IDFF will take place on October 27 – November 8. The programme consists of more than 220 films (including 59 world and 26 international premieres), which were selected from over 2,900 submissions.

The entire programme will be available online, geo-blocked for the territory of the Czech Republic. The festival accreditation, which includes a 14-days access to all films can be obtained for a symbolic 350 CZK (equivalent of 13 EUR).

The viewers from outside of the Czech Republic will have a possibility to watch between October 27 and November 8 over 80 selected festival titles from the festival's competition sections via DAFilms.com, for a fee 2–4 EUR per stream.

More information is available at www.ji-hlava.com and at the festival's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Contact (trailers, stills, photos, interviews): Ji.hlava IDFF Press service (pressservice@ji-hlava.cz)

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