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This year, Ji.hlava IDFF will be even more varied: from Karel Vachek through Man Ray to erotica

Ji.hlava for the twenty-third time! On an environmental note, with Man Ray, erotica and a rich off-screen programme. Make sure your last weekend in October will be dedicated to documentary cinema.

Five more weeks to go – until Ji.hlava’s thirty first edition kicks off! Not only with a rich programme, but also with many novelties. Starting this year, the Ji.hlava IDFF will be even more environmentally conscious. It is also indicated in the visual concept of this year’s festival, again and in line with our tradition, produced by artist, Juraj Horváth. Festival Director, Marek Hovorka, adds: *“Ecology is the main topic of some of the presented films and discussions, but our aim is to change the attitude of both the organisers and the festival guests and visitors. This is a long-term commitment, not a one-off activity. That is also why we set up a position of an environmental ombudsman who will help us implement the changes.”*

The person to take up this role will be environmental philosopher and sustainability activist, Ľuboš Slovák. What will be the first measures that Ji.hlava will take to handle the challenge? *“We will discontinue using single-use plastics, will favour public transport and introduce vegetarian buffets made of local produce,”* says Slovák, enumerating the specific changes. He also adds that an analysis of the entire festival operation is planned by the end of the year.

Piano, Vladimír Mečiar, Kiruna

What will be new in Ji.hlava? The **Czech Joy** competition section will newly open for Czech films made by other than Czech authors. *“It is also thanks to this change that Ji.hlava will dish out perhaps the most varied offer of Czech docs, shown in their world or Czech premiere. In addition, the Czech documentary scene will be enriched with a new generation of filmmakers who presented their films this year for instance in the Swiss city of Nyon,”* says Marek Hovorka.

For example, the Czech-based French director and producer, Artemio Benki, will present his feature-length documentary debut called **Solo**. It follows the destiny and career of talented Argentinian piano player, Martín Perin, whose promising career was influenced by his long-term stay at a psychiatric clinic in Buenos Aires. *“It is a story about human fragility, vulnerability as well as courage,”* says Benki about his feature-length debut. *“I wanted to contribute to the destigmatising of persons with mental illness, to blur the line between what is commonly seen as normal, and what is no longer considered to be normal,”* says the director whose film had a world premiere in Cannes.

Another debut will be presented in Ji.hlava by Slovak director Barbora Berezňáková. Her film *Never Happened* follows the leads in one large political case

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Hlava

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23. Mezinárodní festival
dokumentárních filmů

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of the 1990s in Slovakia: the abduction of the son of Michal Kováč, then president of Slovakia, the murder of a witness in the case, Róbert Remiáš, and the subsequent amnesty granted by Kováč's successor in office, Vladimír Mečiar. "The film is not only about a murder and kidnapping. Pretending that the thing did not happen, despite the fact that several people were left dead, affects the Slovak society and destinies of people to this day," says the director.

The film *Kiruna* by Czech-Swedish director Greta Stocklassa also has an international dimension. The author portrays the northern-most town in Sweden, where iron ore is found and mined – and which is also sinking due to this fact. "The mining is still profitable and so the politicians have decided that the town is to be moved away," explains Greta Stocklassa. Another noteworthy documentary film is *The Sound Is Innocent* by Johana Ožvold. The film pays tribute to "world's electronic music, its development since 1950s until today".

Karel Vachek and honey

Ji.hlava will also see a special screening of documentary essay *Communism* by Karel Vachek, the classic of Czech cinema. The author's ninth film that takes many hours and has four parts, maps out the contemporary Czech political scene, philosophy, religion and art. "One of the key points of the film is that if you want to live in the truth, you also have to be a bit of a bastard. The truth is hurtful for everyone and so it seems that it's better to avoid it!" says the director who already turned seventy-nine.

What to recommend from other sections? Definitely the story of human relentlessness made by the Macedonian duo Tamara Kotevska and Ljubomir Stefanov, *Honeyland*. The film follows the "protector of bees", Hatidza, who lives with her old and immobile mother in the Macedonian mountains where she keeps bees. The film is one of the winners at this year's Sundance festival. Another director team, this time composed of Jennifer Baichwal, Nick de Pencier and Edward Burtynsky from Canada, brings to the audience *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch*. In twenty countries on six continents, the authors follow the effects of human activity on the planet's ecosystem. *The Brink* by American director Alison Clayman shows the mentality of Steve Bannon, the right-wing populist and former strategist of president Trump.

Man Ray and erotica

And what will be this year's non-competition sections at Ji.hlava? Fans of American avant-gardist Man Ray, a renowned photographer and painter, experimenter close to surrealism, can look forward to the premieres of all of his preserved films. "As late as in the 1980s, Man Ray was considered the author of only four films. However, additional unique films were discovered in the estate of his partner, Ada Fidelin, that open the doors to his private world as well as to his creative workshop. You can thus follow the dispute between Pablo Picasso and Paul Eluard during a palm-reading session," says the section's programmer, David Čeněk, describing the showcase.

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Another selection dedicated to erotica in documentary cinema is also related to Man Ray. We will recall classical authors such as Kenneth Anger, Carolee Schneeman and Peter Tscherkassky, as well as less-known authors whose works will for the first time ever be shown on the screen. *“Contemplations on physical desires, attraction and the demonstrations of physical love in avant-garde cinema in addition to working with the naked body take on many motives and forms: the relationship of the society and the depiction of nudity and sex is questioned, diversity is emphasised in the form of queer erotica, and censorship of expressions of the physical in art works is criticised,”* says the section’s programmer Andrea Slováková, adding: *“This year’s retrospective shows this range from pure visual joy inspired by the naked body to radical political manifestos.”*

And the third is Ukrainian avant-garde, presented under the banner of **Conference Fascinations**: *“In the post-war period, there was no experimental film in Ukraine that would correspond with the international avant-garde movement, but radically poetical films were made on the outskirts of official structures, at film schools and outside the state-controlled system, combining allegory, distinct visual concept, staging, performance, documentary observation and situational aspects,”* says Andrea Slováková summing up her programme recommendations.

Džumelec and the earthworm

This year, the music programme will freely tie up with the main environmental theme of the festival. *“We will introduce Czech music makers who work with the sounds of the real world,”* says the programme composer of the “off-screen programme”, Pavel Klusák, specifying: *“Miloš Vojtěchovský, who has in the long-term been a significant figure of the Czech sound experiment, has prepared a walk through Jihlava accompanied with the sounds communicating with a smartphone app. Vocalist Lucie Páčová and her trio called LoveMe use recordings from Uganda and Congo; and the section of field recordings will feature Jiří Suchánek and Tomáš Šenkyřík. Slovakia will introduce their naive artists: Džumelec or Erik Sikora, currently nominated for the annual Oskár Čepan Award, and the aptly critical and surreally grotesque Samčo, a brother to earthworms.”*

And musicians from abroad? *“Contemporary European experiment is represented by guitar player Kim Myhr (Norway), drum improviser Ingar Zach (Norway) and Billy Roisz (Austria) who transforms the sound of her heart into a video during her concerts,”* adds Klusák. The evening in a traditional festival tent will feature the performances of WWW, the fresh energy of imaginative hip hop called PAST and Jihlava-based musicians and performers MAKE UP NOT WAR.

The 23rd Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival will take place on October 24–29, 2019.

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