

PRESS RELEASE

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The 26th Ji.hlava unveiled its programme. Clarke, Rogosin, the Philippines, Ukraine and film ethics

The Short Joy section is screened online, the viewers vote for the winning film

Only two weeks are left until the start of the documentary Ji.hlava! The programme will offer three hundred films including a unique retrospective of American Oscar-winning avant-gardist Shirley Clarke or the largest ever retrospective of Filipino cinema outside of Asia. In addition, the programme will feature a reflection on the Russian aggression in Ukraine or a conference dedicated to ethics in documentary filmmaking. The 26th Ji.hlava IDFF will take place on October 25–30.

This year, the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival will offer over three hundred film titles in both its competition and non-competition sections, of which **95 will be shown in the world premiere, 33 in the international premiere and 6 in the European premiere.**

“This year’s Ji.hlava will present almost one hundred films in a world premiere. And the programme also includes what is probably the first ever made feature-length documentary film, shot in the Philippines in 1913,” says festival director Marek Hovorka about this year’s discovery, which the festival will present in the previously announced section entitled **Transparent Landscape: the Philippines**. This section will include over 40 films hence being the largest ever retrospective of Philippine documentary cinema outside of Asia.

The Ji.hlava IDFF will offer even more retrospectives and new documentary releases. “Films on contemporary issues will be complemented by a section devoted to war films and profiles of 1960s American independent filmmakers. Nowadays we have the feeling that we are living in very difficult times, which is undoubtedly true. But many of the films made over the past 100 years that you can see at the festival show that almost every era has faced great challenges, and that we tend to see the past as “golden times” only because we idealize our memories,” adds Marek Hovorka.

The **Inspiration Forum** discussion platform will bring five days of discussions during the festival – it will focus on freedom, degrowth, digital technologies, the war in Ukraine, but it will also offer a debate of Czech presidential candidates.

The [festival spot of the twenty-sixth edition of Ji.hlava](#) was created by the internationally respected Roberto Minervini, an Italian director living in the United States, whose retrospective was presented at the festival in 2020.

Ji.hlava on the boundary between documentary and fiction films

What will the 26th Ji.hlava IDFF have to offer? For example, **a retrospective of films by Lionel Rogosin**, a key figure of American documentary and independent cinema, whose socially engaged work was the antithesis of the Hollywood conformism of the 1960s and 1970s. The showcase will comprise six films, including the most famous *Come Back, Africa* (1959), a seminal film about South African apartheid that caused a sensation at the Venice Film Festival. Rogosin’s retrospective will be accompanied by a film

made by the director's son Michael entitled *Imagine Peace* (2019), which focuses on the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis and the search for peace in the Middle East.

Another of this year's retrospectives will focus on the work of American director Shirley Clarke, whose films are almost unknown in Czechia. Clarke captured with humour the dark side America in the 1950s to the 1980s. In 1964 she won the Academy Award for her documentary *Robert Frost: A Lover's Quarrel with the World*. The selection of fifteen films will include her first feature, *The Connection* (1961), whose protagonists are heroin addicts waiting for their drug "connection". Clarke's work is characterized by crossing the boundary between documentary and fiction, which is also one of the leitmotifs at this year's Ji.hlava.

"More and more docs are nowadays made to resemble fiction films. Their protagonists move confidently and authentically in front of the camera, and the viewers become an integral part of their lives even at their most lonesome and vulnerable moments. They are also very believable in the way they are shot, with a distinct visual style and a finely tuned rhythm," says Marek Hovorka. "The programme offers a number of such films. In the Czech competition, we can mention Veronika Lišková's *The Visitors*, and in the international competition, the Belgian film *Terra in Vista* adds Marek Hovorka pointing out that this year's festival programme is specific for its strong cinematic quality. On the borderline between documentary and fiction balances also Italian director Alessandro Comodino's documentary comedy *The Adventures of Gigi the Law* that captures daily trips to a town where nothing ever happens, investigating a crime that may not even exist. The film will be presented by the **Constellations** section, which showcases the most interesting films from film festivals around the world.

Documentary ethics – who has the power?

Another prominent theme of this year's edition will be ethics in documentary filmmaking. "A novelty of this year's Ji.hlava will be the first annual **conference on ethics, which will focus on power relations in documentary filmmaking**. Documentary filmmakers find themselves in many ethically challenging or even controversial situations during filming. It is no coincidence that in the aftermath of a pandemic that has managed to turn social discourse away from the glorification of performance and towards wellbeing, ethical issues in film are receiving more attention. At the beginning there was the MeToo campaign, but today it is clear that this was only the beginning of a discussion that can be summed up as 'power relations'," adds Marek Hovorka.

The responsibility of filmmakers to those they work with will be one of the main themes of the conference. The panel will bring together professionals from the field of documentary and TV production to discuss ethical dilemmas related to power in film directing, dramaturgy and production, editing, cinematography and sound design. The following panel will feature academic scholars and a panel discussion will also be included.

"Ethical issues related to festival programming have been emphasised by the controversy around the latest film *Sparta* by director Ulrich Seidl, who was accused by Der Spiegel magazine of unethical and possibly even criminal behaviour towards child actors during filming," says Marek Hovorka, and further explains: "These situations are unacceptable to us and it's good that they are also covered by the media. However, we decided to screen the film because Ji.hlava has already shown Ulrich Seidl's films known for their controversy in the past and the director himself held a masterclass at the festival years ago. We don't want to be hypocritical, but to create an opportunity to watch the film and continue the discussion about the ethical responsibility of filmmakers. After all, this is far from the only such case in

the film world, and a wider discussion and societal demands in particular can change entrenched stereotypes.”

“In addition to the ethical conference that deals with the filming process, we will also focus on the ethical dimension of curatorial work. The call made by Ukrainian women filmmakers for film festivals not to show works by Russian filmmakers sparked an intense debate and showed the power that film festivals and curators have in terms of setting the themes and social discourse. At this point, more than sixty festival representatives have confirmed their participation and will take part in a closed panel on the topic. A public discussion with some of them will then take place as part of the industry programme,” adds Marek Hovorka.

Opus Bonum: War crimes and defiance against society

What will this year’s international competition programme offer? The **Opus Bonum** section, which encompasses the diverse practices and tendencies of world documentary cinema, will present sixteen films. The selection includes the Czech film *The Investigator* by director Viktor Portel, which will provide a look at war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia.

Slovak director Jaro Vojtek’s *Shift* is a social probe into the lives of three characters whose family relationships fall apart due to their work abroad.

Emily Allen’s American film *Cisco Kid* shows the opposite situation – a protagonist defying society’s ideas and standing outside the system. A young woman lives in the middle of a vast desert of the American West, in the ruins of a city where the last of the oddball inhabitants struggle to survive. “You’re not starting over. You just live and hope it gets better,” says the film’s protagonist.

Czech Joy: Love, bees, and Spitsbergen

Competition section **Czech Joy** that focuses on the latest Czech docs, will present twenty-one films and one VR installation this year. For example, *The Visitors* by Veronika Lišková will be premiered. “We followed our protagonist and her family in the world’s most northerly city, Longyearbyen in Spitsbergen, where over two thousand inhabitants from about fifty countries live together. Over the course of more than two years of filming, we have gradually uncovered the contradictions behind the ‘romantic’ notion of a kingdom of eternal winter and polar bears,” says the director about the film.

The **Czech Joy** competition will present seventeen films in their world premiere, including Jana Počtová’s *Happily Ever After*. The film is a probe into the various forms of contemporary relationships. “In my third film about relationships, I decided to map the various forms of love and relationships of today, such as polyamory, open relationships, love via the Internet or a long-term relationship with someone who is partnered,” says the director, whose documentary follows five people that decided to seek their happiness in different forms of partnerships than those generally accepted and lived by mainstream society. “Partnerships strongly influence our lives. As a filmmaker, I am interested in how our personal lives reflect the times, and also how our personal lives change the times,” says Jana Počtová.

“The first Czech bromance”, a film about male friendship, is called *At Home*. Thanks to their openness and the ubiquitous handheld camera, filmmaker and musician Jan Foukal and Albert Romanutti, frontman of the band Bert & Friends, recorded their living together against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. “In the film we reveal that two friends, and many of us are familiar with such a situation, can often be closer together than, for example, two partners. The pandemic made it possible to shoot the film almost non-stop for over six months. It was an opportunity – with no time limit, we didn’t

know when the situation would end because no one knew,” Foukal and Romanutti say about their film and their friendship.

Jana Ševčíková, who won the Contribution to World Cinema Award at last year’s Ji.hlava, will also present her new film at the festival. *Those Who Dance in the Dark* shows how six blind people cope with their life but never stop dreaming, longing and searching for ways to be as free in life as the sighted majority.

Czech Joy will offer *á-B-C-D-é-F-G-H-CH-í-JONESTOWN* by Jan Bušta about the Jonestown massacre of 1978, when religious fanatic Jim Jones forced over nine hundred members of his Temple of the People sect to drink a deadly poison.

The documentary *Invisible Landscapes* by director Ivo Bystřičan, based on the field-recording method, will show that sound can capture some processes better than image. The director, musicians Václav Havelka and Mr. Throrarsen, philosopher Lukáš Likavčan and field-recordists Sara Pinheiro and Magnús Bergson ask what sounds that we do not attach meaning to in everyday life say about us.

A poetic essay by documentary filmmaker Miroslav Janek, *All Ends Well*, invites the viewers to the fascinating world of bees. Serbian director Mira Erdevicki’s multi-layered film *Leaving to Remain* portrays the everyday trouble and small victories of three Roma in an England affected by Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. Seven days in the streets of Ústí nad Labem through the eyes of a homeless person will be shown in Tereza Vejvodová’s film *From the Bottom*. A personal autobiographical portrait that is also a probe into the lives and problems of non-binary and trans people called *Humans* will be premiered by director Kateř Tureček. Anna Petruželová’s playful documentary titled *how much is it uncomfortable for dogs to step out on a highway?* presents a collage of micro-stories that share a common motif, which is travel in all senses of the word. And the programme will also include an unflattering portrait of the Czech Republic as a country that will only offer a helping hand when it can get something in return. Robin Kvapil’s *More Miko* will tell the story of a Roma, a man who wanted to help those in need. Together with the Czechia Is Helping initiative, he made arrangements for child refugees from Syria, but government officials gave priority to political interests.

Testimony: A film about work and Koudelka

The **Testimonies** section, which follows world’s current issues, will offer fifteen films. This year, it will also have a noticeable Czech footprint. Director Tomáš Bojar will present *Good Old Czechs*, an edited documentary about two Czechoslovak pilots who took part in all the major battlefields during World War II. The documentary combines authentic testimonies of direct witnesses of the events and little-known archival footage.

The pilgrimage of Czech photographer Josef Koudelka across the Mediterranean is captured in a film by Turkish documentary filmmaker Coskun Asar entitled *Koudelka Crossing the Same River*.

The audience will peek behind the glossy corporate facades in the film *The Happy Worker – Or How Work Was Sabotaged* by John Webster. Exposing the systemic problems in companies, the film is laced with humour and irony, but without losing sight of the consequences a toxic workplace has on the health and happiness of the people who work there. “Sometimes I hope I get hit by a car and don't have to go to work,” says one of the film's protagonists.

Remarkable is also the work by Turkish director Zaynê Akyol's called *Rojek* (her debut *Gulistan, Land of Roses*, about Kurdish women partisans, was screened by Ji.hlava in 2016). The author seeks to

understand the roots of fanatical terror: she interviewed thirty jihadists and twenty wives of jihadists who were arrested when the Islamic State collapsed. “Hearing their point of view was a challenging experience because my values are exactly the opposite. Also, most of the women in my previous film died fighting ISIS,” says the director.

An unexpected experience is also promised in the film by the director duo Louie Psihoyos and Peggy Callahan, titled *Mission: Joy – Finding Happiness in Troubled Times*. The film captures the incredible friendship between two figures that transcends religion: the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama and South African Archbishop and human rights activist Desmond Tutu.

Voice for Ukraine

This year’s edition of Ji.hlava will also focus on the topic of Russian aggression against Ukraine. In addition to the new films by Ukrainian director Sergei Loznitsa: *The Kiev Trial* (about the 1946 trial of the Nazis) and *The Natural History of Destruction* (about the use of means of mass destruction to achieve a higher goal), and the film *Czech Peace* (2010) by Filip Remunda and Vít Klusák, included in the Notes on War section, which touch on the topic indirectly, the programme will also bring the most up-to-date news about contemporary Ukraine. The film *Freedom on Fire: Ukraine’s Fight for Freedom*, directed by Evgeny Afineevsky, which consists of personal stories of civilians, soldiers, journalists, doctors and foreign volunteers, paints a picture of humanitarian catastrophe and extraordinary human resilience. “I try to give a voice to the innocent. I want world leaders to hear them. You can visit a broken building, but if you have no relationship to the people who lived there, why should you care?” said Afineevsky in an interview with the US magazine *Deadline*. The disturbing footage of destroyed cities is accompanied by commentary from British Oscar-winning actress Helen Mirren.

The Inspiration Forum will also focus on Ukraine in its discussions. Among its guest speakers will be Ukrainian writer and civil activist Oksana Stomina, who survived the Russian shelling and the subsequent humanitarian crisis in Mariupol, and Ukrainian documentary filmmaker Alisa Kovalenko, who will talk about what it is like to be a woman in the Ukrainian army. “Against the backdrop of the horrific events and dark political analysis of the war in Ukraine, we can also see hope. Because something unexpected and unprecedented has happened in the form of strong resilience, solidarity and the ability to work together. The post-war world can take on many forms. We will look for those in which Ukraine can inspire a rethinking of what humanity means and how it can be practiced. For it is clear that its current definition is insufficient,” says Tereza Swadoschová, the head of the Inspiration Forum. Both guests will speak at the Inspiration Forum on 26 October.

Herbicides and plastic

Another theme that resonates in this year's programme is the climate crisis and the environment. For example, *Into the Weeds* by Canadian documentary filmmaker Jennifer Baichwal, famous for her previous films *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch* and *Manufactured Landscapes*, will be screened, which tells the compelling story of an individual’s struggle against a multinational agrochemical corporation. The film’s main protagonist, janitor Dewayne “Lee” Johnson, tries to prove that the massively popular weed killer Roundup causes cancer. Visually impressive is the documentary *Matter Out of Place* by Austrian director Nikolaus Geyrhalter which follows the futile efforts to transfer endless amounts of human waste to a designated location.

Climate crisis will also be one of the topics discussed at the **Inspiration Forum**. Environmental sustainability and especially “degrowth” will be the discussion focus on October 28. “We will ask what happens when we put try to stop our economic growth. We will explore degrowth through the lens of

ecology, economics and politics, but also in cultural practice or personal life,” says Tereza Swadoschová on the topic. One of the guests will be American environmental economist Jennifer Hinton, who promotes “not-for-profit” enterprises – that is, companies whose primary goal is social benefit, not profit. The debate will be complemented by Shaun Chamberlin, a British activist, writer and former climate change adviser to the British government, who calls his approach “dark optimism”, meaning that he is “determined to face dark truths while believing in the human potential for change”.

Short Joy: Short docs for free at dafilms.com. The audience will choose the winner.

Viewers eagerly waiting for the festival to start can enjoy films from the Ji.hlava IDFF before its official opening. From October 10 to 30, 2022, all of the nominated short documentaries from the Short Joy section which have had a world or international premiere will be available for free on dafilms.cz. In addition, until 23 October viewers can vote for the winner of the DAFilms Audience Award that will be announced at the opening ceremony at Ji.hlava. “The cooperation between DAFilms and Ji.hlava is crucial for us, and this also applies to the Short Joy section, which we are presenting online and free of charge to audiences around the world. We are delighted to premiere films not only by up-and-coming filmmakers, but also by experienced documentarians who employ more innovative and radical forms of expression in the short film format. For the audience, it is again a totally unique opportunity to watch and review online a whole slate of premiere titles”, says Diana Tabakov, Executive Director of DAFilms, about the competition section.

Progress in experimental filmmaking

The non-competitive retrospective section **Fascinations**, which presents films focusing on a single theme (over the entire history of cinema), will take place for the ninth time this year and will focus on Progress. “The abstractly defined category of content is represented through various literal and metaphorical concepts in the individual films,” says Andrea Slováková, the section’s curator. And what films will Fascinations namely offer? For example, *Berlin, Symphony of a Metropolis* (1927) by German filmmaker Walter Ruttmann, *Nothing but Time* (1926) by Brazilian director Alberto Cavalcanti or the famous *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) by Dziga Vertov. Among the section’s titles is also Czechoslovak film *Light Penetrates the Darkness* (1930) by Otakar Vávra.

VR Award

The documentary Ji.hlava will also offer the seventh VR showcase. This year, for the first time, it will present an award for the best VR work. “We are interested in those spatial and interactive audiovisual works that are documentary in nature: whether the relationship to reality is in the story, in the outline of the characters, or it is even directly observing the living world,” says Slováková, adding that “the field of works in various realities (whether virtual, augmented, or mixed) is developing rapidly, and the number of works created in these environments is also growing at a tremendous rate worldwide”.

This year, it will be possible to try out the role of a war pilot in 1945 (*Shadow*), follow the migration of various animal species (*Myriad. Where we connect*) or see the Cambodian genocide from the perspective of a survivor. In augmented reality, the visitors will also learn where the materials for smartphones come from (*Seven Grams*).

Inspiration Forum will discuss digital technology and freedom

What other topics will resonate at this year's Inspiration Forum? On the day dedicated to digital technologies (October 27), we will ask questions about the future of the internet or what will it look

like when human life relocates into virtual space. For example, the Austrian art and filmmaking collective Total Refusal, which uses the virtual space of computer games to create original audiovisual essays, will speak on the topic. On the day dedicated to freedom (October 29), the audience can look forward to a discussion with Canadian philosopher and pioneer in the field of neurophilosophy Patricia Churchland, who will answer questions about the origin of our consciousness and conscience.

Institute of Documentary Film at Ji.hlava

[Institute of documentary film](#) (IDF) in Jihlava organizes the traditional East Silver Market with films from Eastern and Central Europe, which focuses mainly on festival and VoD distribution. The best films from the East Silver selection have a chance to win the Silver Eye Award in the short and feature film categories. The winners will be selected by two international juries. The East Silver video library will be open throughout the festival in the Vysočina Regional Gallery. IDF has also prepared a discussion panel dedicated to short documentary films and their future from the perspective of festival programmers, sales agents and other experts. The Ex Oriente Film Workshop for film professionals will also offer a selected programme for the public free of charge: among others, a masterclass by Czech director Lucie Králová, who will present her new film *The Kapr Code*, and experienced American film PR and dramaturge Kathleen McInnis. The workshop programme will take place at EA Business Hotel Jihlava from October 24 to 29.

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The programme sections with all selected films for are available [here](#).

For more information visit www.ji.hlava.com and the festival's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) profiles or contact us at pressservice@ji-hlava.cz.

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