

PRESS RELEASE:

THE 29TH JI.HLAVA HAS BEEN LAUNCHED!

SHORT JOY CATEGORY WINNER IS [WEDLOCK TRADWIFE](#) BY GABRIELE NEUDECKER

Jihlava, October 25, 2025

The 29th edition of the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival has begun! During the opening ceremony, the first awards were announced. The *Respekt Award* went to a Czech Television reportage on cheap labour, and the best documentary book was *Dignity* by Petr Třešňák. The winning short film, an Austrian work, offers an ironic commentary on contemporary gender stereotypes and the revival of “traditional” female roles. The Ji.hlava documentary film festival runs until November 2.

The 29th Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival officially started today in Jihlava.

“Ji.hlava is turning into the capital of documentary film. We’re thrilled that after a year of preparations, the first visitors, filmmakers, and juries are arriving. We’re ready even for those who decide to come at the last minute or happen to be travelling through the Vysočina region and stop by. It’s absolutely worth experiencing the festival atmosphere in person – visit the cinemas, concerts, children’s and teen programmes, or the great cabaret by Divadlo VOSTOŠ!, says the Ji.hlava festival director, Marek Hovorka.

The festival opened with the world premiere of ***Virtual Girlfriends*** by Barbora Chalupová, who explores the phenomenon of digital intimacy and work on OnlyFans. *“Virtual Girlfriends isn’t a sensationalist look at eroticism, but an effort to understand how intimacy, relationships, and our ideas of closeness are changing in the digital world,”* said Chalupová. The film follows three women earning their living through OnlyFans content, examining how the boundaries between intimacy and economy blur. It is included in the main competition section *Czech Joy*.

Ji.hlava Has Handed Out Its First Awards

The first award of this year – the **Respekt Award** for the best audiovisual reportage on a political or social topic – went to *Černá práce* (“Black Work”) from Czech Television’s *Reportéři ČT* series.

Authors **Barbora Loudová** and **Jevhenija Vachničenko** investigated agency employment and labour exploitation in the Czech Republic. During months of undercover work, they infiltrated pseudo-employment agencies that exploit cheap labour – often without contracts, insurance, or decent conditions. The journalists even took illegal jobs themselves to document the system firsthand.

The **Respekt** editorial board praised the reportage for its courage, depth, and social impact –after its broadcast, several agencies shut down and the topic sparked an expert debate on the need for stronger worker protection. Loudová and Vachničenko accepted the award on stage, presented by journalist **Jan H. Vitvar**.

The Documentary Book Award, presented for the fifth time, went to Petr Třešňák for his book *Důstojnost* (“Dignity”). The jury described it as an exceptionally powerful and rigorously thought-through work that not only aspires but truly contributes to improving systemic conditions of care for vulnerable people in Czech healthcare and social services. Through case studies and real-life stories from the Czech Republic and abroad, Třešňák shows that dignified care is possible when expertise, courage, and empathy come together. The book not only makes an appeal but also outlines concrete steps and systemic solutions inspired by functioning international models.

“*Dignity* is authentic, unembellished, yet not bitter. It’s personal, deeply lived, and still full of hope. The jury commends the author’s long-term and systematic work, his personal humility, and his ability to turn lived experience into a strong social message. The book reminds us that safeguarding every person’s dignity is a fundamental condition of a democratic society,” stated the jury.

In the *Short Joy* category, the winning film was [wedLOCK tradWIFE](#) by Austrian director **Gabriele Neudecker**, which ironically comments on current gender stereotypes and the return to “traditional” female roles. The film is composed of social media testimonies, forming a shocking and painful bricolage interwoven with archival footage from the 1950s.

The opening also featured the presentation of *Film Fascinations* by Andrea Slováková, based on her long-term curatorial work for the festival’s *Fascinations* section dedicated to experimental documentaries. The book maps the history of 20th-century experimental cinema – an arena for exploring new possibilities of film as a medium, technology, and artistic expression.

Slováková traces themes such as the sea, the factory, eternity, perspective, psychedelia, home, eroticism, the garden, roots, and progress – showing how experimental film became a space of innovation, personal expression, and artistic research. The publication serves as both a synthesis of curatorial inquiry and a manifesto of the value of experimentation, celebrating its power to open new ways of seeing and thinking through film.

The Ji.hlava festival runs until November 2, 2025, offering more than 300 documentary films from around the world, discussions, industry programmes, and various side events.

The 29th Ji.hlava IDFF will take place on October 24–November 2, 2025. More information at www.ji-hlava.com and on the festival’s [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) profiles.

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