

PRESS RELEASE

THE 30TH JI.HLAVA WILL THINK THROUGH FILM!

FILMS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD AND A TRINH T. MINH-HA RETROSPECTIVE

Jihlava, 24th September 2026

The 30th documentary Ji.hlava is almost here! The anniversary edition will present outstanding new films from the Czech Republic and around the world, an extensive section entitled *Films That Changed the World*, and a retrospective of renowned Vietnamese-American filmmaker and film theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha. The programme will bring together films by Frederick Wiseman, Errol Morris, Rithy Panh, Eliška Cílková, Filip Remunda and Helena Třeštíková, among others. The Inspiration Forum will welcome British archaeologist David Wengrow as well as Iranian-Australian architect and Forensic Architecture member Samaneh Moafi. The [30th Ji.hlava IDFF](#) will take place from October 23 to November 1, 2026.

The anniversary edition of documentary Ji.hlava begins in four weeks and will feature new documentaries from the Czech Republic and abroad, revelatory retrospectives and the best of experimental cinema.

“Thirty years of the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival bear witness to the transformation of documentary film, which has become one of the principal ways of understanding today’s increasingly complex and interconnected world. Digital technologies have enabled filmmakers to capture events immediately, anytime and anywhere, whether major global conflicts or deeply personal and intimate situations. Only a year ago, we might have thought that documentary film, by its very nature, could remain protected from the influence of artificial intelligence. Today, we know that AI tools are capable of modifying, altering or creating an image in such a way that it can no longer be distinguished from an authentic recording. The contemporary world is therefore becoming increasingly fragile not only because of growing external tensions, but also because it is becoming ever harder to navigate the images through which that world is mediated to us. As viewers, we will soon need to redefine the principles and expectations associated with the truthfulness and authenticity of documentary images, as well as the ethical approach of filmmakers. What will documentary records mean to us when their relationship to reality can no longer be taken for granted? And what will trust between filmmakers and audiences be based on? Documentary cinema is thus reaching a turning point, and how it responds to these new challenges will be crucial,” says festival director Marek Hovorka.

“The films presented this year, both in their form and in their subject matter, offer an extremely timely reflection on the phenomena shaping our present. I am grateful to all the filmmakers who allow us to think about our time without prejudice or ideology, without shortcuts and distortions – simply in new ways. Through their testimony and artistic vision, we as viewers become inventors and explorers of the present. The atmosphere of a film festival further intensifies the shared experience of screenings, discussions and encounters, which in turn become a collective dialogue – or perhaps simply a shared silence – about a rapidly changing and morphing world,” Hovorka adds.

Ji.hlava 30: Thinking Through Film

Thirty years of Ji.hlava will be brought into the present through an archival film essay by director Andrea Slováková and editor Janka Vlčková, with the working title ***Ji.hlava 30: Thinking Through Film***. Drawing on almost one hundred hours of archival footage created for the festival's Minutes, as well as recordings of masterclasses and interviews, the filmmakers create a portrait of how thinking about documentary cinema has evolved over the past three decades.

Rather than offering a chronological history of the festival, the film is a distinctive composition of ideas and voices belonging to filmmakers who have visited Ji.hlava over the years. Among those featured are **Jørgen Leth, Frederick Wiseman, Deborah Stratman, Béla Tarr, Michael Glawogger, Viktor Kossakovsky, Godfrey Reggio**, the artistic duo **Flatfarm**, **Mike Hoolboom** and editor **Claire Atherton**.

“Exploring the festival’s audiovisual archive is adventurous, educational and sometimes deeply moving: we see filmmakers in their element – thinking about film; we see people who are no longer with us speak again; and we discover very different ways of understanding documentary cinema. At the same time, it is also a process of working with gaps: we become aware of what was not captured, of things said only to the audience present at the time that can no longer be heard again, because it is impossible to record every moment of a festival, every discussion or appearance. One of the strongest impressions that comes from working with the archive is therefore a renewed awareness of the uniqueness of a festival as an encounter – of people and ideas – that happens only in that particular place and during that particular period of time, before remaining as an imprint in the minds of the audience. Our film is a suspension of this ephemerality, expanding that imprint by recalling some of the ways documentary filmmakers think through film and about film,” says Andrea Slováková.

The completed film essay will premiere at this year’s anniversary edition of Ji.hlava. It consists of six chapters of approximately ten minutes each, which will also be screened separately as short films preceding selected festival screenings.

Films That Changed the World

The anniversary section [**Films That Changed the World**](#) will present films whose impact extended far beyond the cinema. The section comprises thirteen films that succeeded in influencing public debate and transforming it into action, changing legislation or fundamentally altering the way society viewed a particular issue.

“Can films change the world? We decided to take this question seriously and search across the past century for films that actually managed to do so. They include films that helped free people who had been unjustly imprisoned, led to changes in regulations, contributed to funding for neglected regions or helped change laws. These are not ideological films, but films that stand on the side of ordinary people – individuals, communities and society as a whole,” says festival director Marek Hovorka.

The section will include one of the most influential television documentaries in the history of American journalism, [**Harvest of Shame**](#) (1960). Producer and reporter **David Lowe**, together with **Edward R. Murrow**, exposed the appalling living and working conditions of migrant agricultural workers in the United States. At the time, these workers had no legal guarantee of a minimum wage, restrictions on working hours, healthcare or protection of children from labour. The film sparked a

nationwide debate and accelerated the consideration of agricultural labour legislation. Twenty-two months after it was broadcast, President Kennedy signed the *Migrant Health Act*, which enabled federal funding for a network of clinics and healthcare services for migrant workers' families. In 1967, some agricultural workers became entitled to the minimum wage for the first time.

In [*S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*](#) (2003), Cambodian director **Rithy Panh** brings eleven former staff members and two survivors back to the S-21 prison, where most prisoners had been tortured to death. Together they revisit torture sites, prison records and registration photographs. The film keeps its focus on the perpetrators: Panh has them repeat the routine gestures of everyday cruelty and describe how they became part of a killing machine. Made almost a quarter of a century after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, whose rule claimed approximately two million lives, the film documented their crimes and captured specific confessions by perpetrators. Cambodia passed legislation establishing a special tribunal to prosecute Khmer Rouge crimes while the film was being made.

The Czechoslovak contribution to the section is [*Children Without Love*](#) (1963), directed by Czech-German filmmaker **Kurt Goldberger** and made in collaboration with child psychologist **Zdeněk Matějček**. The film openly addressed the psychological deprivation experienced by children living in collective institutions in the socialist state of the time, particularly weekly nurseries and infant institutions. Their expansion was linked to efforts to bring women into the workforce on a large scale. The film triggered an extraordinary public debate and contributed to the extension of maternity leave and the regulation of women's night work.

Ji.hlava audiences will also have the opportunity to see **Frederick Wiseman's** landmark American documentary [*Titicut Follies*](#) (1967), an unflinching look at the inhumane conditions and treatment of inmates at a correctional institution for mentally ill offenders. Wiseman's debut raised fundamental questions about the treatment of people in psychiatric institutions and became the subject of a lengthy legal battle over censorship. The film had a significant influence on debate about the need to reform psychiatric care in the United States, as well as on discussions about documentary ethics.

Noriaki Tsuchimoto's groundbreaking [*Minamata: The Victims and Their World*](#) (1971) captures the lives of people affected by mercury poisoning in the Minamata Bay area. Black-and-white images of patients and their relatives are accompanied primarily by their own accounts. By the time filming began, Minamata disease had already shaped life in the region for almost fifteen years, yet the state had still not acknowledged responsibility, while residents distrusted the media. The film also captures the emergence of the "one-share movement," which allowed patients and bereaved relatives to attend the general meeting of the Chisso Corporation. The movement contributed to a 1973 ruling that held the company responsible.

A remarkable behind-the-scenes view of workers' unrest is offered by [*Be Seeing You*](#) (1968), directed by **Chris Marker** and **Mario Marret**. In December 1967, nine months after a major strike, they filmed interviews with workers and trade unionists at the Rhodiacéta textile factory in French Besançon. After seeing the film, however, workers criticised it for emphasising their grievances at the expense of a concrete programme and for overlooking both women's work and the trade-union organising that had preceded the strike. Marker and Marret responded by developing the idea of militant cinema made by workers themselves. They trained twenty workers in filmmaking, leading to the creation of the Medvedkin Groups, which produced around a dozen films about their own working environment by 1974.

Now regarded as a classic of documentary cinema, American filmmaker **Errol Morris's** [*The Thin Blue Line*](#) (1988) examines the 1976 murder of a Dallas police officer and exposes the mechanisms

behind a miscarriage of justice. Through interviews, police and court records, and Philip Glass's minimalist score, the film assembles conflicting versions of a single night and shows how manipulation, unreliable testimony and institutional pressure for a swift resolution contributed to the conviction of Randall Dale Adams. Evidence uncovered during the making of the film called both witness testimony and the prosecution's case into question, helped reopen proceedings and increased public pressure for a review of the verdict. In March 1989, a Texas appeals court overturned Adams's conviction, and he was released after twelve years in prison.

This year's Ji.hlava visual identity also reflects the idea behind the **Films That Changed the World** section. The motif of a circle transforming into expanding waves evokes the idea that every action can have an impact far beyond its original place and time – just like films whose effects continue to spread beyond the cinema screen. The section is supported by Jan Barta's Pale Fire Capital.

The Transparent Being of Trinh T. Minh-ha

This year, Ji.hlava will also present a [retrospective of Trinh T. Minh-ha](#), one of the most distinctive figures in experimental and essayistic documentary cinema. The Vietnamese-American filmmaker, writer, composer and theorist challenges traditional modes of representing other cultures, women, minorities and documentary reality itself.

The programme will include her directorial debut [Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen](#) (1982), one of the seminal works of postcolonial and feminist cinema. Filmed in Senegal, the work deliberately rejects the traditional model of anthropological documentary in which Western filmmakers assume the role of authorities explaining another culture to an audience. Instead, Trinh leaves images, sounds and fragments of everyday life open to multiple interpretations.

Another major work in the retrospective will be [Surname Viet Given Name Nam](#) (1989), in which Trinh Minh-ha uses testimonies by Vietnamese women to examine who tells their stories and what happens to those stories when they are transferred into cinematic images. Here, too, she deliberately disrupts the idea of documentary film as an objective record of reality.

What Will Czech and Slovak Cinema Bring?

The **Czech Joy** competition will include [Up Again](#), the new film by director Eliška Cílková.

“This longitudinal observational documentary follows three years in the life of a young athlete in a world where a person's worth is easily measured in results, points and rankings. Without commentary or explanation, it captures moments of training, doubt and the search for a way back. Gradually, a story about pursuing sporting success becomes an intimate coming-of-age portrait in which the protagonist must find her own relationship to performance,” says the director.

Filmmaker Pavel Štingl's [Jaroslav Seifert: A Rhythm Outside Time](#) returns to the life and work of the Czech poet and the only Czech recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature. The film arrives in a year marking 125 years since his birth and forty years since his death.

“The name Jaroslav Seifert still resonates within Czech cultural consciousness today. Yet few people know more than a handful of Seifert's rhymes, and even fewer know his mature poetry. And yet Seifert did precisely what young people today value in poetry – expressing authentic feelings through it, finding an immediate rhythm that, in his visual poems, allowed the young Seifert to anticipate the era

of social media. The film also raises questions about heroism under the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, cultural resistance and the formation of Czech national identity and memory culture from the emergence of the interwar republic to the present,” says the director.

Filip Remunda's [Love Exposed](#) is a personal film about the relationship between Blanka and her father, Vlastimil Kula, a renowned Czech photographer of nudes and erotic imagery whose monograph was published by Taschen. Blanka Kulová edits a film about her father, but instead of a celebratory portrait, an intimate confrontation emerges. The film reveals the tension between artistic self-realisation and responsibility towards loved ones, capturing the fragile process of reconciliation between a father and daughter attempting to understand their shared past.

“In terms of method, Love Exposed belongs to what is known in the American context as narrative documentary. We filmed situations from real life, yet together with cinematographer Jakub Halousek we searched for precise compositions, bringing the protagonists and the environments in which they live closer through dramatic images. We recorded sound with particular attention to the atmosphere of the forest and wild nature, as well as nuances of the human voice in emotionally charged situations. We carefully shaped the dramaturgy to ensure that the film remained faithful to its protagonists and their story. It is not, however, a reconstruction or staging in the strict sense, but an attempt to give authentic material a form that allows us to bring a reflection of real situations from a family's struggle for survival onto the screen,” says Filip Remunda.

The **Special Screening** section will present [Retuning](#) by Slovak director Sára Prokopová, recent winner of the Docu Talent from the East Award 2026. The film captures the situation at Slovakia's public-service television following the arrival of a new political leadership. Against a backdrop of growing political pressure and fears of censorship, it follows employees who decide to defend their profession and the public-service mission.

“From the beginning, I was interested less in the mechanism by which populists dismantle an institution than in the human response to that process. I therefore focused on those who had been excluded from the debate surrounding the legislative change, despite the fact that they are the people who create the institution's content and understand its real problems best. Despite intimidation and verbal attacks, which have become a routine part of the way politicians communicate with journalists and critical members of the public not only in Slovakia, a small group of courageous people decided to respond to the arrogance of power with a decent effort to engage in dialogue. The film captures only a fraction of the activities of the past three years, which were immensely demanding both in terms of time and psychologically,” says Prokopová.

Salman Rushdie, Anatoly Kashpirovsky and Cambodia

What else will this year's programme offer? One of its highlights will be Oscar-winning documentary filmmaker Alex Gibney's new film ***Knife: The Attempted Murder of Salman Rushdie***, which premiered at Sundance earlier this year. The film explores freedom of speech and the price an individual may have to pay for it. It follows writer Salman Rushdie's life and recovery after the 2022 attack in which he was stabbed fifteen times during a public appearance. Gibney draws on Rushdie's memoir of the same title and uses previously unseen footage from his recovery. Alongside the attack and its consequences, the film revisits the decades during which Rushdie faced threats following the publication of *The Satanic Verses* and raises broader questions about freedom of expression.

An award-winning portrait of a pioneering figure in lesbian and queer experimental film will be offered by director Brydie O'Connor's ***Barbara Forever***. Barbara Hammer was among the first

filmmakers to systematically inscribe lesbian experience into film history. For her directorial debut, O'Connor drew on more than four hundred hours of archival materials – films, home movies, photographs and personal audio recordings – allowing Hammer herself to tell the story. The film received the Editing Award at Sundance and the Teddy Award for Best Documentary Film at the Berlinale, and was awarded at the Ji.hlava New Visions Forum 2023 when still in production.

The programme will also feature **Viktor Kossakovsky's** new film *Trillion*. Almost wordless and shot in black and white, the film observes the subtle movement of people, water and landscape, transforming it into a cinematic meditation on repetition, labour and perseverance. Kossakovsky continues his “trilogy of empathy,” in which he attempts to look at the world from a perspective that is not exclusively human.

Ji.hlava audiences can also look forward to Cambodian-French director **Rithy Panh's** new film *We Are the Fruits of the Forest*, which follows the lives of the Indigenous Bunong people in the mountainous regions of northeastern Cambodia over four years. Their way of life is closely connected to the forest, the land and traditions passed down through generations, while at the same time they face a rapidly changing world, climate change and pressure from major development projects.

Another notable documentary is *Kashpirovsky: Under His Spell* by Polish director **Łukasz Konopa**. Its protagonist is Anatoly Kashpirovsky, a psychiatrist and hypnotist who became famous in the late 1980s through televised healing sessions and emerged as one of the best-known figures of the late Soviet Union. Millions watched his broadcasts. The film revisits his rise to fame as well as his life today, examining social transformation at the end of the Soviet era and asking what kind of power television possessed – and why a single individual was able to acquire such enormous influence.

The programme will also feature two films dealing with contemporary Afghanistan. *Mohabat*, by American director **James Longley**, follows a young boy whose life has been marked by the death of his father in a US drone strike. The intimate portrait shows war from a child's perspective. *771 Days*, by Afghan filmmaker **Zainab Entezar**, was made secretly during 771 days of her life under Taliban rule. Entezar documents changes in everyday life, the restrictions imposed on women and their protests.

FAMU 80

Prague's Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU) will also celebrate eight decades of its existence at Ji.hlava. The [FAMU 80 selection of films](#) from different periods of the school's history will show how both the institution itself and the society around it have changed through the work of generations of students.

The programme will include early works by **Věra Chytilová, Jiří Menzel, Evald Schorm, Jaromil Jireš, Helena Třeštíková** and others, providing not only a cross-section of eighty years of FAMU but also an unusual perspective on Czechoslovak and Czech history through the eyes of several generations of its students.

***The Dawn of Everything* Co-author David Wengrow Is Coming to Ji.hlava. The Inspiration Forum Announces More Guests and Topics**

David Wengrow, co-author of the international bestseller *The Dawn of Everything*, will appear at this year's [Inspiration Forum](#). He will be joined in Ji.hlava by Samaneh Moafi of Forensic Architecture, climate researcher and comedian Matt Winning, political theorist Camila Vergara and many other guests from the Czech Republic and abroad.

“The Inspiration Forum is taking place this year at an extraordinarily tense moment. In the course of a single summer, we have experienced extreme heat, serious warnings concerning the future development of artificial intelligence, Russia’s continuing war against Ukraine and the associated security tensions in Europe, as well as a flood of testimony about violence and destruction in Gaza. We do not want to look at the world as if it were a film playing out before us while we simply wait to see how it ends. We want to ask what kind of world we humans are creating, what image of it we produce, where power truly resides within it, how we can bear living through this moment – perhaps even with the help of humour – and whether we are still capable of steering the world in a different direction from the one in which it currently appears to be heading,” says Tereza Swadoschová, Head of the Inspiration Forum.

The programme will begin with the theme of the “map” and the question of who decides what is visible, what remains outside the frame and where borders are drawn – from the Mercator projection and Africa to digital maps and algorithms.

Samaneh Moafi of **Forensic Architecture** will demonstrate how a map can also serve as a means of reconstructing reality where it has been contested. Using video footage, satellite imagery, spatial data and 3D models, she reconstructs disputed or obscured events. In Ji.hlava, she will present, among other cases, a reconstruction of an attack on a school in Minab, Iran, and the case of six-year-old Hind Rajab in Gaza.

One day later, the forum will turn to “humour” and its capacity to capture the world more precisely than lengthy explanations sometimes can. **Matt Winning** has worked on climate policy for eighteen years while also performing stand-up comedy about the climate crisis. In his show *Solastalgia*, which he will bring to Ji.hlava, he connects fatherhood and fears about his children’s future with fossil-fuel wealth, the oil industry and financial power. Previously announced Romanian guest **Dan Perjovschi**, meanwhile, often manages in just a few lines to capture a political situation that might otherwise require a lengthy debate.

Another part of the programme will focus on “power”, which is often least visible when it has become embedded in everyday life: in where and how we are able to live, who owns the city and public space, who has access to institutions and who can genuinely influence their rules. **Camila Vergara** will examine what happens to democracy when political and economic power becomes increasingly concentrated within the system itself.

The final day will begin with a simple premise: the world is not finished. What other forms of living together are we capable of creating? **David Wengrow**, co-author of the bestseller *The Dawn of Everything*, turns to history to challenge the idea that today’s arrangements are inevitable. His work shows that people throughout history experimented with radically different forms of government, ownership and collective life.

Ji.hlava – An Important Hub for Film Professionals

Ji.hlava will once again be a place of intensive encounters among film professionals from around the world. The [Ji.hlava Industry programme](#) expects more than **1,200 accredited guests** and, over four days, will offer educational activities, networking and hundreds of individual professional meetings.

Among other topics, film-festival representatives will explore new ways of engaging young audiences, while Ji.hlava will also introduce the up-and-coming generation of European documentary producers – [Emerging Producers 2027](#).

The programme will also include a presentation of new film projects from contemporary [Montenegrin cinema](#), this year's Industry Country in Focus, and a **delegation of Polish filmmakers**.

“During the four Industry days, alongside an intensive programme, we organise more than 800 individual professional meetings between filmmakers and representatives of festivals, broadcasters, film funds, distribution companies and other film institutions. We often only see the results several years later – in the form of remarkable documentary films,” says Jarmila Outratová, Head of the Ji.hlava IDFF Industry Programme.

The 30th Ji.hlava IDFF will take place from October 23 to November 1, 2026. Early bird Industry accreditations for film professionals are available until September 30. More information is available at ji-hlava.com. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

To request a press accreditation, please contact us at pressservice@ji-hlava.cz