

The 23rd Ji.hlava IDFF is coming: Presenting the full program with 277 films

The 23rd edition of the Ji.hlava IDFF will kick off in two weeks! New films from the region, world documentary debuts, a showcase of works by Ukrainian director Feliks Sobolev, documentary experiments, films made by women about women, and a special reflection of 1989.

From the total of 277 films screened at Ji.hlava, 91 will be shown in their world, 47 in their international, and 17 in their European premiere. 3700 films altogether have been submitted to the Ji.hlava IDFF 2019.

Ji.hlava's official spot: After Godard, Dvortsevov

"Ji.hlava has always strived for discovering and interconnecting original filmmakers across countries and regions," says Marek Hovorka, the festival's director. *"Unlike last year, when we presented a large retrospective of direct-cinema-verité, combining the filmmaking production of the USA, Canada and France, we this year decided to dedicate substantial attention to Eastern European filmmakers"*, adds Hovorka. This year's author of the official festival spot – after Jean Luc Godard who honored Ji.hlava in 2018 – will be Kazakhstani director **Sergei Dvortsevov**. The festival will present also a comprehensive retrospective of his films. The work by Ukrainian director **Feliks Sobolev can literally be called an international discovery**. His profile will be complemented with a unique showcase of Ukrainian experimental films from the 1960s until 1990s.

Woman in Change: Films by and about women

Another important program theme of this year's edition will be *"Woman in Change"*, a topic introduced also in the festival trailer. This year, the trailer consists of a single take: a look on the face of actress Samal Yeslam. *"Dvortsevov captured her face just by chance; the scene was not scripted, shot outside the set of his last feature film, Ayka. Although Yeslam won the best actress award in Cannes for her role in the movie, she is being 'just herself', standing on an underground platform,"* explains Hovorka. And he continues: *"In the recent years, the role of women in the society has been becoming more prominent, and not only in the society, but also in documentary filmmaking."* Hovorka believes that films created by women draw our attention by evocatively opening painful issues, being formally innovative and lending an empathic ear to the stories of others. These include the exploration of female identity in the film essay by German director **Pia Hellenthal (Searching Eva)**, the topic of rape brought up by French director **Alexe Poukine (That Which Does Not Kill)**, and the world-known Harvey Weinstein case investigated by British director **Ursula Macfarlane (The Untouchable)**.

Opus Bonum, Best Central&East European Docs and Remarkable World Debuts

What else can festival visitors look forward to? The **Opus Bonum** section dedicated to international documentary titles will this year offer **nine selected films from France, the UK, India, Madagascar or Palestine**. One will be an adaptation of the globally successful novel, *Europeana*, by Patrik Ouředník, first published eighteen years ago and since then translated into thirty-six languages. The filmic "pun" made by French director **Arnaud de**

Mezamat called *Wishing You the Same* calls for the “contemplation on various aspects of humanity”.

The **Between the Seas** section focusing on the region of Central and Eastern Europe will introduce sixteen film titles. It includes a cinematic portrait of famous Slovak photographer Andrej Bán, *Earthly Paradise*, directed by Jaroslav Vojtek and an original collage *365 Days Also Known as a Year* by Ukrainian director Dmytro Bondarchuk. The section will present world and international premieres of outstanding films also from Romania, Hungary, Estonia, Serbia and Latvia. The awarded film will receive a cash prize of 10,000 EUR.

This year’s **First Lights** section will again be prominent with nine noteworthy film debuts ranging from Colombia to Turkey. The *Set Off* by Turkish director Mustafa Emin Büyükoşkun recalls the destinies of thirty-three people killed in Syrian city of Kobane, while the Canadian author Loic Darses examines the Quebecois identity in his *Where the Land Ends*.

Twenty-one Czech films: from Václav Havel to the Antarctic

The **Czech Joy** section will include unprecedented twenty-one competition titles. Director Adéla Komrží will introduce *Viva video, video viva* about her grandfather Radek Pilař who takes on a surprising role of the founder of Czech video-art. Věra Čákanyová will present her doc *FREM* that was made in the extreme conditions of the Antarctic and is described as an “audio-visual requiem for homo sapiens”. Radovan Šíbrt will introduce his film, *Two Roads*, dedicated to the famous Czech band, The Tap Tap, composed of handicapped musicians. The thirtieth anniversary of the Velvet revolution is the focus of director Robert Sedláček whose film is asking the question: Have the goals of the revolution in 1989 been met?

“Thirty years after the fall of the Communist regime in former Czechoslovakia, we have come up with a **special program section entitled Studio 89**,” says Marek Hovorka, and he continues: “Three different programs will offer a look on the figure of Václav Havel, an intellectual icon of political transformation: underground films, a portrait made by Juraj Herz which has never been released in Czechia, and a preview of an upcoming film by Petr Jančárek about Havel’s final years. These documentary films will explore conspiracy theories and offer a microstudy of the revolution, in this case directly at Prague’s FAMU.” A six-hour-long opus *Communism and the Net* by Karel Vachek, the legend of Czech cinema searches for the roots of today’s crisis of democracy.

Testimonies and Experimental Cinema

The festival’s **Testimony** section will include eleven films, notably *The Cave* by Syrian director Feras Fayyad who won an award for his *Last Men in Aleppo* two years ago at Ji.hlava. The film was then nominated for the Academy Awards. His latest film narrates a powerful story of Doctor Amani Ballor who with her colleagues treated patients in an underground hospital in besieged Syrian town of Ghouta.

The non-competition section Special Event will bring a unique documentary title, *Crisis* by the Czech-American photographer and film director Alexandr Hackenschmied – a film made in 1939 in the United States that closely observes the political and social events in Europe in 1938.

Experimental documentary films are a fixture of each year's festival program. The **Fascinations** is a section dedicated to world cinema, **EXPRMNTL.CZ**, in turn, focuses on Czech experimental titles. "*Fascinations introduce films that are seeking for new concepts of reality,*" says the programmer, Andrea Slováková, who has selected the program for both of these sections. For example, the Chinese title **Action, Almost Unable to Think** captures the inner world of a soldier killed by explosion. **The Wilds** is a film that incorporates performance, land-art and artistic installation. Last but not least, Czech visual artist **Zbyněk Baladrán** will present his essayistic film called **Powerless Source of All Power**. Together with the award, the winner of the EXPRMNTL.CZ section will this year receive a prize of 50,000 CZK (2,000 EUR, in partnership with The Art Zone 8smička).

Translucent Being: Feliks Sobolev

In addition to experimental films by versatile avant-gardist Man Ray, **one of the big discoveries of this year's Ji.hlava IDFF** will be the work by **Ukrainian filmmaker Feliks Sobolev** (1931–1984). His oeuvre will be presented in the section Translucent Being. "*Our aim is to introduce directors who have pushed the boundaries of documentary film reflection,*" says Andrea Slováková, the section's programmer. She calls Sobolev a legend: since 1960s, he has been considered one of the greats of Soviet documentary filmmaking, his films were sold-out, and yet he is still completely unknown outside Ukraine. "*He discovered new creative techniques: working with animation, time-lapse footage, and inventing technologies to capture otherwise elusive phenomena,*" continues Andrea Slováková, adding that this year's edition of the Ji.hlava IDFF will showcase seven of Sobolev's films. These will include **Animals' Tongue** (1967) that points out parallels between the world of humans and that of animals, and **Keep at It, You're Talented** (1979) which studies the possibilities of overcoming psychological obstacles.

Masterclasses by Puiu, Georgiev, Dvortsevov

The 23rd Ji.hlava IDFF will also bring traditional **masterclasses** – lectures by film professionals. Notable Romanian director, screenwriter and instigator of the Romanian New Wave, **Cristi Puiu**, or Macedonian producer **Atanas Georgiev** will both introduce their work. Floor will also be given to Czech documentarian **Barbora Chalupová**, who teamed up with **Vít Klusák** as one of the authors of **Caught in the Net** that focuses on the issue of online abuse of children. The author of this year's festival trailer, **Sergei Dvortsevov** will present a masterclass in which he will discuss his creative approach.

Juries of the 23rd Ji.hlava

The Opus Bonum competition section will, as always, have a single juror: this year, the honour will be given to the aforementioned **Cristi Puiu**. The five-member jury of the Between the Seas section will be composed of the likes of Serbian filmmaker **Srđan Keča** and Professor Emeritus of Cinema Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, **Timothy Corrigan**. Among those who will be selecting the best Czech documentary title, will be last year's winner of the Czech Joy section, **Karel Žalud**, and Slovak writer **Monika Kompaníková**. The award for the best debut in the First Lights section will be granted based on a decision by international festival representatives, including **Emilie Bujes**, the art director of Visions du Réel, a film festival based in Nyon in Switzerland. Curator of the London's Tate Modern **Andrea Lissoni** and Spanish filmmaker **Carlos Casas** will select the best experimental film.

Clifford Coonan, journalists specializing in Europe-Asia relations and editor of the Czech Referendum daily, **Fatima Rahimi**, will be among the jurors of the Testimony section. Last but not least, our **secondary school jury** will this year uniquely be composed of teachers.

How Not To Be Afraid (of the climate crisis)?

The 23rd Ji.hlava IDFF will also dish out a **rich off-screen program**, including the extended **Inspiration Forum** hosting over 100 personalities from outside the film world. Among those who accepted this year's invitation were **Isabella Salton**, director of Brazilian environmental organization Instituto Terra (**topic Climageddon**); **Dagestani writer Alisa Ganieva** who wrote her debut *Salaam, Dalgat!* under a male pseudonym to avoid the label "story for women" (**Women in Transformation**); **Croatian philosopher and political activist Srećko Horvat (Re:Democracy)**; and American of Mexican descent, writer and former border guard **Francisco Cantú**, whose novel *The Line Becomes a River* has become a bestseller (**How Not to Be Afraid?**). The Inspiration Forum's events take place during the whole festival. More information at www.inspirationforum.com.

Short Joy: already available online!

Short Joy is the name of a competition section that showcases docs from the whole world whose short running time underscores the possibilities and power of documentary film. This year, **all nominated films are available from October 7 to 22 online on DAFilms.cz**. You as viewers can also become the section's jurors; after watching all of the films for free, you can vote for the best title until midnight of October 22. The winning film will obtain assistance with online distribution and promotion services in the amount of 3,000 EUR. Moreover, it will be nominated into the pre-selection of the US Academy Awards in the documentary category.

IDF will present prominent documentary filmmakers and hand out the Silver Eye Award

In line with tradition, the Institute of Documentary Film (IDF) will be an important feature of the Ji.hlava IDFF. Its international workshop Ex Oriente Film, organized during the festival, brings together directors and producers who work on their documentary projects with the help of renowned directors, producers, editors and other film professionals. The workshop's program open to public attracts fans of cinema and expert public to masterclasses and lectures held in English.

This year, Ji.hlava will welcome Danish editor **Niels Pagh Andersen**, renowned for his collaboration on *The Look of Silence* and *The Act of Killing* by director Joshua Oppenheimer. Another of the workshop's guests will be director and producer **Audrius Stonys** who won the European Film Awards for his *Earth of the Blind*, and director, and cinematographer Erick Stoll, who will introduce his award-winning film *América*. Producer and editor **Atanas Georgiev** will disclose the success story of his festival hit, *Honeyland*, the winner of this year's Sundance festival.

Ji.hlava will see the eleventh **Silver Eye Awards** given to the best films from Central and Eastern Europe registered for the East Silver Market. International juries will select winners in two categories: short- and feature-length films. Film professionals will be able to use the services of **the East Silver video library consisting of almost 300 film titles** that are annually available on-line on dokweb.net.