

PRESS RELEASE
Jihlava, September 15, 2020

This year's Ji.hlava: encouraging, inspiring and lively.

Preparations of 24th Ji.hlava are in full swing! The packed programme will offer the first and the last film by Icelandic composer Jóhann Jóhannsson, a film portrait of artist Marina Abramović as well as the best doc of Sundance - *Epicentro* by Hubert Sauper. Women will dominate the music doc section. And the Inspiration Forum will turn its gaze towards Africa, technology and ecology.

This year's Ji.hlava will kick off in six weeks, but it is already evident that it will be different from its previous editions. *"This year's journey is by far the most adventurous in the history of the festival. We still believe that Ji.hlava will take place on-site, safely and that it will again bring extraordinary cinematic experience,"* says Marek Hovorka, the Festival Director. *"We want to stay loyal to our audiences and the filmmakers also in the unpredictable times. While safety remains our priority, we don't want to give up on getting together and inspiring our audiences with lively discussions. This is what makes Ji.hlava exceptional,"* adds Marek Hovorka. And if cultural events are banned completely, the whole festival will go on-line. *"We still believe this will not be the case. Our society has to learn how to live with the coronavirus and epidemiologists consider film screenings where the audience will be wearing face masks safe,"* adds Hovorka.

What festival spot will accompany the 24th Ji.hlava IDFF? This year, the author of the spot is experimental filmmaker Mike Hoolboom, who visited Ji.hlava for the first time fifteen years ago. Two years later, he brought his film called *Fascinations* that made such a strong impression that the experimental festival section adopted its name. „*The nun is Romy Cola, an artist who has a special interest in crossing over, stepping into forbidden zones, singing where others fear to tread. Who else could I ask to appear as a nun?*," says Mike Hoolboom about this year's festival spot. Before Hoolboom, the authors of the festival spot were the likes of Jean-Luc Godard, Godfrey Reggio and Jóhann Jóhannsson.

Tilda Swinton and speed end of humankind

What will the 24th annual programme of Ji.hlava look like? In line with tradition, the festival will offer classical and experimental creative documentary cinema and themed retrospective plus a number of off-competition sections, including **Special Events**.

The section that focuses on outstanding cinematic events will this year feature the first and last film of the above-mentioned Icelandic filmmaker Jóhann Jóhannsson called *Last and First Man*. And because the director died unexpectedly two years ago, his film was finished after his death. This "sci-fi poem" speaks about the end of humankind. It has been inspired by brutalist socialist monuments in former Yugoslavia, a text by

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British philosopher and author of sci-fi novels, Olaf Stapledon and Jóhannsson's music. The film is narrated by the voice of Scottish actress Tilda Swinton who received the Golden Lion Lifetime Achievement Award at the Venice Film Festival just a few days ago. "Astronomers have made a startling discovery which assigns a speedy end to humankind," her voice reveals.

The **Constellations** section showcasing the best of films shown at festivals over the past year will treat us, for instance, to *Epicentro* by Austrian filmmaker Hubert Sauper, the winner of the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize in the documentary category. It is a portrayal of the current version of the "island of freedom" – communist Cuba. In the film, Sauper again concentrates on the topic of colonialism that has been his long-term focus: Cuba was colonized first by the Spanish, then the Americans and finally rich western tourists, including the director. "I find one thing especially fascinating in relation to Cuba - the fact that despite the isolation of their society, the people are highly educated. Cuban reflection on the contemporary world is super interesting," says Hubert Sauper. A similar topic, only on a different backdrop will be explored by *Merry Christmas, Yiwu*, by Serbian director Mladen Kovacević. The film is set in Chinese city of Yiwu with six hundred incredible factories producing Christmas decorations and people fluctuate between the faith in communism and desire for the "Chinese dream": a bit of freedom, wealth and love. Todd Chandler's *Bulletproof* will take us among American students. On the backdrop of school rituals such as basketball matches and student parades he explores the phenomenon of "school shooters" and how they have transformed the US society.

The unbelievable story of Lithuanian seaman Simas Kudirka will be a part of the competition section **Testimonies**. During the Cold War, Kudirka randomly encountered an American ship on the sea. He made a dramatic leap from the board of the Soviet vessel to find his way to freedom. However, Kudirka was sent back to Russia. Rare footage in *The Jump* sheds more light on the global tensions in 1970s. *Testimonies* will also offer an intimate cinematic portrait of Marina Abramović, Serbian performer and body-artist who calls herself the "grandma of performance art" and has been pushing the limits of art expression for forty years. *Homecoming: Marina Abramović and Her Children* was made by Marina's compatriot Boris Miljković.

Polish trends

Festival retrospectives will also be packed with exciting film titles. Following last year's theme of erotica, this year the experimental retrospective will focus on the phenomenon of gardens. "The garden is one of the popular motives, metaphors and visual inspirations in the film avantgarde," says the section's programmer Andrea Slováková. "The selection also showcases various approaches and methods of presentation: from Norman MacLaren's stop motion-animation through exquisite structures of Kurt Kren, Takahiko Imuru or Steina Vasulka, to works where garden artefacts are glued directly to the film reel, such as *Biostructure* by Alice Růžičková." This year's **Fascinations** will feature films made over the past 120 years. The selection will also include the pioneer of film abstraction Oscar Fischinger and US avant-gardist Stan Brakhage.

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The audience will traditionally be introduced to the unique experimental and underground cinema of one of the East European countries. Last year's focus was Ukraine and this year's attention will turn to Poland. *"For six years already, Ji.hlava has been mapping experimental and underground film production from the countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc. Poland experienced strong experimental trends mainly since the 1970s and this part of filmmaking and thinking has been significantly affected by the National Film School in Łódź,"* says Andrea Slováková. The Polish value this facet of cinema which they have thoroughly explored and processed. *"From among the countries and regions that we have covered, Poland is most advanced in terms of their mapping and care for this type of films,"* adds Andrea Slováková. The section will feature renowned directors including the representative of Polish New Wave, Jerzy Skolimowski and works that have yet not been discovered internationally.

Discovering female creativity

The music film section has been an integral part of the festival. This year, its main theme is clear: films about female protagonists made by female filmmakers. *"It just turned out this way,"* says the curator of the **Siren Test** section Pavel Klusák, *"we are obviously living in an era where female creativity is getting massively uncovered. The authors of today and of the past."* *Sisters with Transistors* is a great lesson on outstanding women who have influenced electronic music. Riveting film portrait called *Lydia Lunch - The War Is Never Over* indicates the close connection between radical art and social change utopia. Music film and event curator Pavel Klusák also prepared a seminar called *Gották* with rare audiovisual testimonies relating to the career of Karel Gott - the brightest star of former Czechoslovakia.

The accompanying music programme also focuses on several communities that confirm that creativity is oftentimes of a collective character and is reinforced in communities. PIO or the Prague Improvisation Orchestra will perform with a guest - Austrian electronic artist Veronika Mayer. The original programme by SoniXpace, curated by Michal Rataj, will present trio Hornscape, Ivan Boreš, Michal Nejtek, Jan Trojan and Michal Wróblewski. The new wave of authorial music and sound art will be represented by Veronika Svobodová and Julie Lupačová. We are also proud to present the audio selection of filmmaker and thinker Karel Vachek whose commented playlist will illustrate a unique confrontation with Vachek's values, taste and "theory of matter".

The covid season has inspired the festival to a number of outdoor concerts at sunset. *"Narrator bands whose new impressive albums are definitely worth our attention will also perform,"* says the long-term curator of the music programme, Pavel Klusák. You can look forward to environmental electropop Koňe a prase, melancholic and extatic Jewish klezmer Klec and grotesque and critical DIY pop project with slammer Bio Masha - duo Debbi Love.

Ten years of inspiration

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This year's Ji.hlava will not forget about the **Inspiration Forum** that marks ten years of existence. Visitors will be treated to six days full of discussions and presentations on various topics. *"The Inspiration Forum provides an opportunity to discover new perspectives, strengthen the dialogue and introduce unexpected issues in the public space. We bring together global and local personalities, young and older generations, women and men,"* says Inspiration Forum's programmer Tereza Swadoschová. The six topics will kick off with "Women and Religion". The questions are obvious: Are men and women in the Church equal? How do priestesses live in our country? Another topic is the "Sustainable development", or the increasingly more burning questions asking how to feed the growing population of the planet without destroying it. *"We will be asking how to use technology to enhance the effectivity of our economy, how to be more considerate and efficient in the management of our resources and how to cut down on the consumption of water and meat and stop wasting food,"* describes Tereza Swadoschová. The third day will be in the name of Africa: *"Although Africa is still facing challenges of the post-colonial development, it is a progressive and in many ways a rich continent with a large potential to change,"* adds Swadoschová. And the remaining three days? Intelligent technologies will come to play, including the influence of algorithms on our daily life or the "crisis narrative". *"The connecting element of the Inspiration Forum is the faith in the power of imagination that can help revive the world and open the door to geopolitically, socially and environmentally more responsible future,"* adds Tereza Swadoschová.

The 24th Ji.hlava IDFF will take place on October 27 – November 1, 2020.

More information at www.ji-hlava.com and the festival's [Facebook page](#).

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