

PRESS RELEASE

JI.HLAVA IS UNDERWAY! THE 30TH EDITION ANNOUNCED ITS FIRST AWARDS

Jihlava, October 24, 2026

The 30th edition of Ji.hlava IDFF is underway! The festival opened with the European premiere of *Return to a Strange Land* by Olga Malířová Špátová, and the first awards were announced during the opening ceremony. Helena Třeštíková received the Award for Contribution to World Cinema. The best short film is *never been there, never.* by Filipino director Joseph Vitali, exploring the realities faced by workers in the service sector in the Philippines and beyond.

The 30th Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival officially kicked off on Friday night. The opening film was [Return to a Strange Land](#), directed by Czech director **Olga Malířová Špátová**. This poetic documentary follows internationally acclaimed choreographer Jiří Kylián during the creative process alongside his lifelong muse and dancer Sabine Kupferberg. Together, they reflect on more than fifty years of artistic collaboration, exploring the meaning of life, the passage of time, ageing, and disappearance. Archival footage woven throughout the documentary traces their collaboration from 1975 to the present day.

"I am fascinated by Jiří Kylián's choreography, through which he explores relationships and human existence. I am constantly surprised by his endless and extraordinary sense of humour, which is so characteristic of his work. Equally remarkable is his kindness – or perhaps kindness comes naturally to an artist of such stature? Through their art, Sabine and Jiří give audiences wings. They strive to bring optimism into people's lives and ease the weight of the human condition," says director Olga Malířová Špátová about the film.

The first awards were presented during the opening ceremony

This year's Award for Contribution to World Cinema was presented to Czech documentary filmmaker and FAMU lecturer **Helena Třeštíková**.

"It is symbolic that Helena Třeštíková is receiving the Award for Contribution to World Cinema in the year that the festival celebrates its 30th anniversary. Helena attended the very first edition of the festival and has supported us ever since. In turn, we have long admired her filmmaking, her patience, and her faith in longitudinal documentary filmmaking, which helps us understand not only our past," says festival director Marek Hovorka.

"I remember the first edition of the festival, when a group of students preparing for their final secondary school exams founded a festival attended by almost every Czech documentary filmmaker. We had a wonderful time, and I have returned every year since. This festival gives documentary filmmaking a deeper meaning," said Helena Třeštíková. *"The future of the Czech audiovisual sector is now at stake,"* she added.

The winner of the Sort Joy competition was [never been there, never.](#) by director **Joseph Vitali**. Its protagonist is Edison, a street vendor selling sorbet who must sell his entire stock before he can take time off to celebrate Christmas, a holiday that brings all of Manila to life. This observational portrait offers an intimate look at the realities faced by workers in retail and services, in the Philippines and beyond, raising questions about working conditions and the right to rest. The film was selected by audiences through an online vote and can be watched free of charge on the DAFilms platform until the end of the festival.

Debate on the Importance of Public Service Media in the Czech Republic

On Monday, October 26, audiences should not miss a screening of [Retuning](#), directed by Sára Prokopová, which examines the struggle for public service media in Slovakia. The screening will take place at 5 PM at DKO I.

The film will be followed by a debate on the future of Czech public service media, featuring Milan Fridrich, Director of the Programme and Digital Services Division and Deputy Director General of Czech Television; René Zavoral, Director General of Czech Radio; and Věra Jourová, a politician who has long been involved in issues concerning public service media. The discussion will be moderated by Ji.hlava festival director Marek Hovorka.

All press materials are available [HERE](#).

Read previous press releases introducing the programme [here](#).

Find the list of the guests of the 30th Ji.hlava [here](#).

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

30th Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival

23. 10.—1. 11. 2026

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