

The 16th Cinematik IFF presents extraordinary films that will be brought to visitors as Slovak premieres

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The Cinematik International Film Festival in Piešťany will open its gates for the 16th time in two weeks. This year, thirteen exclusive Slovak premieres meet in the *Paths of Glory* and *Artistic Director's Selection* sections, many of which already come with prestigious awards from festivals in Cannes, Venice and Berlin. However, there will also be great Slovak titles from the section *In The House*, that will be brought to the Slovak audience by Cinematik for the first time.

Paths of Glory is traditionally a section in the Cinematik program, where the most significant new films from around the world meet. Usually, they have already been a successful part of major foreign festivals. Visitors to Cinematik can often see them exclusively several months ahead before they get into regular Slovak cinema distribution - some of them never get to our cinemas.

This year, the section brings six different titles. It is dominated by a new film by 83-year-old Dutch filmmaker Paul Verhoeven (*Total Recall*, *Basic Instinct*), known for his emphasis on visual aesthetics, but also for the courage to take risks and break taboos. In *Benedetta*, 2021, he accurately confirms this reputation. The story takes place in an Italian monastery in the 17th century and its heroine is a nun who suffers from disturbing erotic visions. When her fellow nun tries to help her, their friendship turns into a passionate romance. The film is based on real events and had its world premiere in the main competition of the Cannes Film Festival.

The minimalist mysterious drama *Lamb* (*Dýrið*, 2021) by Icelandic director Valdimar Jóhannsson won the Un Certain Regard award for originality this year in Cannes. The main heroine María, played by Noomi Rapace, lives with her partner on a lonely farm. Their quiet life marked by childlessness is suddenly changed by the discovery of a mysterious newborn, who is finally supposed to give them the desired feeling of fulfillment. However, the blessing soon turns into a curse in this dark Nordic film.

Two years ago, French director Céline Sciamma conquered the festival world with an excellent historical drama, *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (*Portrait de la jeune fille en feu*, 2019). She presented her novelty *Petite Maman*, 2021, at this year's Berlinale. The main heroine is a girl who recently lost her grandmother. When she finds herself in her grandmother's house with her parents, unexpected findings come to her with a special friendship.

The family drama *Feathers*, 2021 is the remarkable debut of Egyptian director Omar El Zohairy. The main character, an authoritarian patriarch, invites his son - a magician - to a birthday party. Little does he know that the magician will show a very special trick in the middle of the party. After a shocking plot-twist, a difficult but important path of self-knowledge

awaits the family. The original film in Cannes was awarded the FIPRESCI Critics' Week Grand Prize.

Kaltrina Krasniqi, a filmmaker from Kosovo, will present her first feature film at the Venice Film Festival in a few days. In ***Vera drams of the Sea*** (*Vera andrron detin*, 2021) she tells the story of Vera, a middle-aged sign language interpreter whose life is disrupted by her husband's death. Subsequently, she has to come to terms with the raw reality and boldly oppose deep-rooted gender stereotypes. Cinematik will present this exceptional Kosovo drama as one of the first festivals in the world.

The series of six films in the *Paths of Glory* section is completed by ***The Green Knight***, 2021, an adventurous, artistic fantasy drama by David Lowery (*A Ghost Story*), which takes place in the time of Arthur's Round Table. Sir Gawain, the brave but stubborn nephew of the legendary king, must show his courage and defend his honor in the fight against the fateful challenger, the mysterious Green Knight.

The ***Artistic Director's Selection*** section continues to present the most interesting international films of the last year with a seven-member set of films selected by Vladimír Štric. Visitors to the festival can look forward to, for example, ***The Worst Person in the World*** (*Verdens verste menneske*, 2021) - a sweet-bitter favorite of viewers from Cannes, for which the actress in the lead role, Renate Reinsve, won the Best Actress Award. In the film, Danish director Joachim Trier (*Thelma*) follows the life adventures of young Julie, who is trying to find her place in a confusing world of endless possibilities.

The Man Who Sold His Skin (*L'Homme qui avait vendu sa peau*, 2020) is a thematically original and up-to-day story by Tunisian screenwriter and director Kaouther Ben Hania (*Beauty and the Dogs*) about a young Syrian trying to get to Europe to his love. However, the only open path brings a dilemma: The young man would have to have his back tattooed by a famous contemporary artist. The film was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film and its lead actor, Yahya Mahayni, won the Orizzonti Award at the Venice Film Festival.

Another title from the selection of artistic director is ***Bebia*** (*à mon seul désir*, 2021) a black and white drama in which Georgian director Juja Dobrachkous pushes 17-year-old model Ariadne from the catwalk back to the small village where she was born. The reason is the grandmother's funeral. On this occasion, Ariadne must undergo an ancient ritual pilgrimage to help the dead reconnect the soul with the body.

The Drover's Wife (2021) is a drama by Australian director Leah Purcell about a pregnant woman trying to raise her children in isolation while her husband is away for a long time. The film is loosely inspired by the short story of the same name by Henry Lawson, which the director first presented as a theatrical play. In Australia, the film has won critical acclaim and several awards.

Another film story from this section invites viewers to China, where the gloomy social drama ***Streetwise*** (*Remainder*, 2021) takes place. The protagonist, a poor young man from an unattractive small town, gets embroiled in a vicious circle of violence when he himself becomes a bailiff in an effort to pay off his father's debts. Director and screenwriter Jiazuo Na made his debut at the Cannes Film Festival, where he received two nominations for the Un Certain Regard Award and the Golden Camera.

Edson Odu's American film ***Nine Days***, 2020 has already won the Waldo Salt Screenplay Award from last year's Sundance Film Festival, as well as the Outstanding Actress Award for the central acting duo Zazie Beetz and Winston Duke from the Denver 2020 International Film Festival. Philosophically tuned drama with fantasy elements tells a story of a man who interrogates and selects souls who deserve a chance to be born into this world.

Seven films from Vladimír Štric's selection are completed by ***Rifkin's Festival***, 2021, Woody Allen's latest film, which, coincidentally, takes place at the film festival in San Sebastián, Spain. Wallace Shawn, Gina Gershon and Christoph Waltz starred in a typically Allen-comedy about an aging couple who, under the influence of a captivating atmosphere, gain a new drive in marriage.

There will be no shortage of interesting Slovak premieres within the domestic section ***In the House***. The films in the section will surprise us with current topics, such as the animated film ***My Sunny Maad*** (Moja afganská rodina, 2021) by director Michaela Pavlátová. The film tells the true story of a Czech woman who married an Afghan. Until recently, its creators could not have guessed what a closely watched situation this country would be in at the time of its premiere.

The Hungarian-Slovak film ***Wild roots*** (Külön falka, 2021) by director Hajni Kis tells the story of the former prisoner Tibor, who, after his release, tries to get closer to his 12-year-old daughter again. However, with his tendency to create conflicts, it is not easy to integrate into everyday life and the role of the father.

Also worth noting is the documentary ***Every Single Minute*** (Každá minúta života, 2021) by director Erika Hníkovová (Matchmaking Mayor), which over time follows an unusual educational experiment: A family that fills its four-year-old son every minute with the aim of him becoming a successful athlete. The film also offers a fresh and provocative perspective on today's children's upbringing and asks whether "too much" kind of approach is sometimes worse than "little". All three films had their world premieres at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival just a few days ago.

The sixteenth edition of the Cinematik Piešťany International Film Festival will take place from 14 to 19 September 2021. Cinematik will be the largest film event in Slovakia, presenting almost 100 titles and a number of accompanying activities. Until 31 August, those interested can still purchase festival accreditations on the website www.cinematik.sk at discounted prices.

Press release: Lucia Fajnerová & Peter Konečný

PR contact: Peter Konečný

mobile: 0905 316 005

e-mail: peter.konecny@cinematik.sk

www.cinematik.sk

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Cinematik, Lazaretská 2398/11, 811 08 Bratislava, Slovakia

tel.: +421 948 445 565, e-mail: info@cinematik.sk, www.cinematik.sk

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