

The main competition of the 18th edition of IFF Cinematik will bring together new films by renowned filmmakers and unique debuts

The **Meeting Point Europe** competition section has been an integral part of the Cinematik International Film Festival since 2006. It cannot be absent from the programme of its 18th edition, which will start in Piešťany in less than two months. It will feature new releases from seasoned European filmmakers such as Aki Kaurismäki, Christian Petzold and Martin McDonagh, as well as several exceptional debuts. Almost all of the films in competition will be seen in their Slovak or festival premieres.

At this year's Cinematik, viewers will have the opportunity to see almost a hundred unique documentaries and feature films from domestic and foreign filmmakers. The competition section of **Meeting Point Europe** is traditionally the place where many of the most attractive titles are concentrated.

The festival's main prize is awarded to the best European film of the past year and is decided by a jury of film critics from across Europe. The eight titles in competition this year are particularly unique.

This is also true for Finnish filmmaker Aki Kaurismäki's **Karaoke Blues** (Kuolleet lehdet, 2023), a comedy drama about the romance of a melancholic cashier and a charming alcoholic, which has already won the Jury Prize at Cannes in the main competition. For festival organisers, it is one of the best films of the season, with its compelling directorial narrative and Kaurismäki's distinctive screenwriting precision.

In its Slovak festival premiere, Cinematik audiences will also see Martin McDonagh's **The Banshees of Inisherin** (2022), winner of three Golden Globes, four BAFTAs and nine Oscar nominations, which follows the uneasy friendship of simple Pádraic (Colin Farrell) and morose Colm (Brendan Gleeson) on a sleepy Irish island during the Irish Civil War.

Afire (Roter Himmel, 2023), a new film by experienced German filmmaker Christian Petzold, will also compete for the prize and the audience's favour in the main competition. The relationship drama set in an idyllic beach holiday setting, during which not only human emotions flare up, was awarded the Grand Jury Prize – the Silver Bear – at the IFF Berlinale. The film offers great performances, romance, unexpected drama and humour.

However, other films in competition also have a holiday vibe, including the French-Canadian title **Falcon Lake** (2022) from debutant director and screenwriter Charlotte De Bon. The coming-of-age drama about the relationship between 13-year-old Bastien and 16-year-old Chloé is set at a picturesque lake around which many legends surround. This fine film had its

world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, where it also received a nomination for Caméra d'Or.

In **20,000 Species of Bees** (20.000 Species de Abejas, 2023), by emerging Basque filmmaker Estibaliz Urresola Solaguren, an eight-year-old child spends holidays with relatives among bees and beehives, exploring her own identity. This gentle drama won the Silver Bear for Best Actress at the Berlinale for lead actress Sofia Otero, the youngest winner of this prize in the festival's history to date.

British film **Enys Men** (2022, dir. Mark Jenkin) will bring mystery and an air of suspense to the Cinematik main competition. The minimalist horror film is set on a deserted island where a volunteer's observation of a rare flower turns into a metaphysical nightmare. The film had its world premiere in the Directors' Fortnight section at the Cannes Film Festival. The film has had "Best Motion Picture" nominations in the competition sections at festivals in London, Catalonia, Athens and Lisbon.

A completely different kind of thrill awaits the audience in the French-Moroccan-Belgian thriller **Hounds** (Les Meutes, dir. Kamal Lazraq, 2023). The story is set in the Moroccan Casablanca, where a father and son, who make a living out of petty crime, must deal with the aftermath of a botched kidnapping. The drama was screened at this year's Cannes and won the Jury Prize in the Un Certain Regard section.

The Croatian film **Safe Place** (Sigurno Mjesto, 2022) rounds off the competition's top eight. It is about a family trying to cope with the attempted suicide of a loved one in a single day. Debuting Croatian director and screenwriter Juraj Lerotić based it on a personal experience and also portrayed the main character in the film. The extraordinary film won the main prize at the Sarajevo Film Festival, also for best actor in a leading role.

Accreditations for the 18th Cinematik International film Festival are on sale at the official website of the festival www.cinematik.sk.

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