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# I'm like the girl in the film

## Kenneth Lonergan on the 'disconnectedness and interconnectedness' of life in NYC

Veronika Bednářová

Born and bred New Yorker Kenneth Lonergan is finally at KVIFF with *Margaret*, a critically acclaimed film about a teenage girl who feels responsible for a fatal traffic accident. Dubbed by some to be "a contender for best American film of the young century," it took several years and many cuts to complete.

■ You have come to KVIFF with your daughter who is now approaching her teenage years. Does the absent father in the film reflect your relationship with your daughter at all?

No, not really. That father is very removed, not just from her but from everything, I think. I'm more like the girl in the film.

■ It's easy to write about something you know, right?

Yes, but it's impossible to write about oneself directly. Without the transformation into some other person you see yourself as a non-being to whom things happen. And it's not interesting. But a 17-year-old girl who's very impulsive and strong-willed and guilt-wracked and articulate but not effective – that seems really interesting to me. And then if I hear myself using those adjectives I think: "Oh, I could describe myself that way," except I'm not a 17-year-old girl.

■ I thought the "triangular" way you shot the dialogue was very interesting.

In the film there's continually the idea that other people are living their lives while [Margaret's] going through her [troubled times], including the young lawyer. He's not callous or cold, he's just not that upset about it. Some people didn't like the café scene because there's so much legal jargon, but I didn't think it was about the legal jargon. I thought it was about the fact that the Jeannie Berlin character is



Photo: Jan Handreich

Margaret director Kenneth Lonergan at the Pupp.

suffering a real terrible loss that she is in anguish about, the Anna Paquin character is half enjoying herself, being a grown-up, smoking a cigarette, talking to the grown-ups about the law and feeling guiltier and guiltier as it goes on, and then there's the other fellow; he's trying to help out, but he's equally interested in the fact that the waiter didn't bring him the salt. And that's just life.

■ That people in such close proximity to each other are go-

ing through such different experiences?

When you run into someone you know on the streets of New York at first you think it's such an incredible coincidence. But then you realize you only frequent two or three neighborhoods, the same ones your friends do, so it's not such a coincidence. But if you go beyond those neighborhoods or if something heightens your awareness, something like a death, you suddenly realize that you're sitting

there and that within 15 minutes' walk there's 20 thousand people in their apartments and some of them are having fun and doing frivolous things and some of them are having much worse problems than you are. And I think one of the things the movie is about is the disconnectedness of that and also the interconnectedness of that.

■ The film went through several mutations. Now there's a theatrical release and an extended cut coming out too.

There were hundreds of versions! Honestly I didn't know if the film was going to have any life at all but now it has a life so I can't complain. I'm very pleased with the film that was released. That's my movie. But because of the nature of the film, it was nice to make a version with no restrictions of any kind. Not so much a preference but an opportunity to do it another way.

■ Some people say that it's distracting to have big stars in small roles. Why did you choose people like Matthew Broderick and Matt Damon for small parts?

The extended cut gives those characters more screen time but even without that I think it was very important for the film – to give other people as prominent a place as possible when [Margaret] runs into them so that it's not all about her. So I think the movie doesn't work at all if the other characters aren't as strong as possible. And I can't help it if Matt Damon is a big movie star. His character is his character. I was glad to have him in the movie. He's a wonderful actor. I think with most movies now, the side characters tend to be there only to serve the main character. And in older films that's not the case. I like to take care that every part is a part that somebody would like to act.

■ You've said that Matthew Broderick is your best friend. What drives the friendship?

I think we see the world from a similar point of view, although we have very different temperaments. He's a bit more anxious than I am. I'm a bit more on the depressive side. But we both like to make mean jokes about people. He has a very good sense of humor. I hope I do too. When we first met in high school I felt that he was exactly like me. So maybe it's pure narcissism.

## THE LOWDOWN

As hot young filmmakers advance their careers, factoring in the time span actually required to make a second feature, shop it around the festivals, go over scripts for a possible third, learn about distribution deals, sales agents, TV rights and territories...it seems you often end up with pre-middle-age former auteurs who are now pitching projects about life in the suburbs, battling angst, child-rearing responsibilities and expanding waistlines.

Many critics have grumbled about this phenomenon diluting the work of ex-vanguards of the Romanian New Wave, to take just one example. Film writers, however, remain fresh and edgy pretty much forever.

So when cohorts of Czech scribe Vojtěch Rynda noticed he hadn't been at many film cocktails of late, all became clear when he was spotted pushing a stroller around the Thermal with lovely child, Anička, for company. Big changes lately? "Six times a day," the weary Rynda told the Lowdown.

Elsewhere, the Docu Talents from the East turned up a robust crop of nine pending CEE projects on Tuesday. Only one focused on the issue of raising kids, and that was from the POV of the Lithuanian "Father of the Mafia," now 71 and reflecting on a fine former career as an airline hijacker and embezzler of millions of rubles.

Now that's family-oriented entertainment we can live with!

## NOTICE

Please note the new times for the following press screenings today: *Dear Betrayed Friends* (5:30pm, Cinema A – Thermal), *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (12:30pm, Cinema B – Thermal). Tonight's midnight screening of *Iron Sky* at the Čas Cinema is the original version (English, German) with Czech subtitles. English subtitles are not included.

## SEE YOU THERE

### Subrata Acharya

Director, *Spring in the Air*

I'd like to see *Polski film*. I've just seen the poster and it's a little bit shocking for me with the four guys and one of them is naked! It seems to be some sort of drama about them making a film. Filmmaking is a process and, as a filmmaker myself, it will be good to see as an outsider how these people go about making a film. [With this poster] I now have some expectations and some pre-conceptions! I would like to catch *Oh Boy* as well. I don't know much about it, but I want to see what sort of reflections it makes. I hope I'll enjoy the films I see. I don't actually think there is any good or bad in film or in any art. I look to see if it's peculiar or not.

*Polski film* screens today at 8pm in the Thermal's Grand Hall and tomorrow at 10:30am in the Pupp Cinema. *Oh Boy* screens today at 7pm in the Espace Dorleans Cinema.

You can see Subrata Acharya's *Spring in the Air* tomorrow at 7pm in the Thermal's Congress Hall and on July 7 at 7pm in the Drahomíra Cinema. (COC)



Photo: KVIFF

## EXPLAINER

### Taking the waters in Karlovy Vary

Legend has it that a hot spring was discovered in Karlovy Vary in the 14<sup>th</sup> century when one of Charles IV's hunting dogs raced into it in pursuit of a deer. The canny monarch saw the therapeutic potential of the hot water and used it to treat his troublesome leg, to good effect. Since that time 79 springs have been discovered in Karlovy Vary and 13 of them, of various chemical compositions, are used in traditional "drinking cures" that have become somewhat of a ritual in the town. These cures claim to treat ailments ranging from diabetes to obesity to gout. Before selecting a specific treatment plan it is advisable to consult a physician, which can be arranged by any one of the many sanatoria and spa hotels that are listed at [www.karlovyvary.cz](http://www.karlovyvary.cz). Any cure is likely to involve drinking the water from a certain spring while taking gentle walks in the town. You may see people walking around sipping from ceramic "beakers", which help to limit contact of the potentially corrosive mineral-rich water with the teeth. Visitors are free to sample the healing waters even without a consultation. If you fancy a casual approach, head to the Soviet-era Thermal Spring Colonnade (pictured)



Photo: KVIFF

where five outlets serve up water from the Thermal Spring at various temperatures. This spring puts on quite a show – spurting a column of water to a height of up to 12 meters. Cures may also include bathing in the spring water, which is pumped directly into several spa hotels, where no-nonsense therapists will direct you into your prescribed bath and fetch you out after the allotted time is up. Expect to feel invigorated rather than pampered! The KV spa experience is not one of fluffy towels and candlelight. (GP)



# Works in Progress get a boost

Will Tizard

An event called the Works in Progress sessions may not be as high-profile as KVIFF's Crystal Globe competition, but this year it brought international film development expertise to the makers of 18 films from around the region who are hoping to complete them soon and get them to audiences. The winner, announced Tuesday, *The Eternal Return of Antonis P* by Elina Psykou, will this year get a useful new benefit: 10,000 euros in services from sponsor Barrandov Studios.

Director-producer teams presented excerpts or trailers from what they've shot so far and pitched the projects to a three-person jury headed by Amy Dotson, a veteran producer and curator from the nonprofit US indie film network [www.ifp.org](http://www.ifp.org).

Dotson, who has heard hundreds of pitches from hopeful US filmmakers, found the perspective of European counterparts fascinating because, for one thing, "people were saying their film was a doctor when actually it was a lawyer."

It's no secret that creating a film, as with any major art work, has much in common with raising a child - and the seven-months-pregnant Dotson cautions that it's very common for a director to believe they have the kind of offspring they always wanted and intended to have, despite the film having gone in its own direction.

One reason such pitching practice with professionals is important, she adds, is that it can help them to see that their baby is now a different being completely than what they think it is. It's about "what I was seeing versus what I was reading," as she puts it.

"I think that they were limiting them-



Director Elina Psykou and producer Giorgos Karnavas take the Works in Progress prize with *The Eternal Return of Antonis P*.

selves. They thought it was one thing but they weren't talking about the universality - the things that would help it spread its wings. There are a lot of projects here that I really think, with smart strategy, and smart infrastructure from the producing team or their sales agent, can kind of go beyond the borders of their territory."

As someone who works with 17 different organizations around the world and sees films from just as wide a spectrum, says Dotson, "I was very struck that a lot of these could carry - which is a real testament to the teams that puts these projects together."

Dotson - who judged the presentations along with Czech indie distributor and arthouse cinema mogul Ivo Andrlé, and Silje Nikoline Glimsdal, Eastern Europe sales manager for Denmark-based TrustNordisk - said the experience was enlightening.

One refreshing discovery, she said, was that many Central and Eastern European filmmakers are shooting films that go well beyond the "buckets" - common tropes about dealing with life's pain and misery ("the girlfriend has died...my mother is now mourning the loss of my little brother, how do I ever recover?").

Instead, this collection ranges from a Polish story (*Aftermath* by Władysław Pasikowski) of two brothers who discover a dark WWII secret from their family's past, to a Slovak account of neo-Nazis (*My Dog Killer* by Mira Fornay) living in the hinterlands in desperate need of the kind of tenderness only a canine can offer.

Meanwhile, Romania's entry (*Omega Rose* by George Dorobantu) offers up a sci-fi post-apocalypse road movie and a Russian-Estonian film (*The Term* by Pavel Kostomarov and Alexandr Rastorguev) takes on the surreal world of Vladimir Putin's political machine and the risk it poses to those who dare to oppose it.

And, says Dotson, "In terms of style, there were quite a few unique projects - meaning unique to the marketplace but also creatively unique."

The chance to give feedback to films still developing is something American filmmakers lack, she adds. "In the US we don't do works-in-progress screenings. You only get one shot."

Perhaps because of that, US indie makers have to learn the art of seduction - that's something Dotson says some Europeans are still struggling with. Many reveal too much about their films, leaving no mystery. "What we always say is, 'You want to show a little leg, not throw your skirt up over your head. Young filmmakers - first and second-time directors - they show their wares too quickly.'"

Because the tide of films trying to wash into the US market is so huge, Dotson says, when a potential buyer sees the entire work, they tend to be dismissive. The trick, she says, "is making sure this filmmaker gets noticed." That, and an active web presence, a buzz at festivals, and all the other creative impetus it takes is what makes the difference.

## WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

Jacob Dammas

Co-director, *Polish Illusions*, Denmark



■ **Why have you come to Karlovy Vary?**

To treat my stiff neck and sore back after editing a certain film!

■ **Is it your first time at the festival?**

First time at the festival, yes; Czech Republic, no. My first film *Kredens* screened at the Jihlava documentary festival some years ago, and *Polish Illusions* is developed with Ex Oriente Film, so I and co-director Helge Renner got to know a bit of the Czech Republic and its people.

■ **Are there any films by other filmmakers that you would like to see?**

It is our European Premiere and Karlovy Vary is an A-class festival, so it's a double honor for us to be here. I just received the festival bag - at first I thought the festival was giving away MacBook Pros because of the weight! - so I will have to study the program first and make a viewing strategy for the many great movies that I am sure are here.

■ **Why should people see your film?**

It's a peculiar film in many senses because of its fantastic combination of characters (an American pilot, an aging magician, and a young local admirer of the US, all living at the charming Polish seaside) and because of the film's style - balancing bitter-sweet documentary, a fiction-like narrative in photography and editing, and a warmly ironic narrator commenting in a fairytale-like way. (GP)

SCREENING FRIDAY JULY 6TH  
15.30H - CINEMA B - PREMIERE

A portrait by Lluís Miñarro

# 101

à propos de Manoel de Oliveira

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## Czech, please!

Although Karlovy Vary's sizable Russian population means that you're likely to encounter quite a few signs in Cyrillic, there are still plenty of Czech notices you should be paying attention to. Here's a few that you're bound to encounter on your KVIFF travels.

**Od sebe/K sobě** (od se-beh/kuh so-byeh) - Push/Pull

**Tam/Sem** (tahm/sem) - Push/Pull

**WC** (vay-tsay) - Toilets

**Dámy/ Páni** (dahmee/pahnee) - Ladies/Gents

**Vchod/Východ** (vkhod/veekhod) - Entrance/Exit

**Nouzový východ** (nose-o-vee veekhod) - Emergency Exit

**Vstup zakázán** (fstoop za-kah-zan) - No Admission

**Zákaz kouření** (za-kahz korshenee) - No Smoking

**Nedotýkat se** (neh-doe-teekat se) - Do Not Touch

**Zákaz volného pobíhání psů** (za-kahz volnay-hoe po-bee-hannee pisoo) - Keep Dogs On A Lead

**Zákaz vstupu se psy** (za-kahz fstoopoo se pisee) - No Dogs Allowed

**Nevstupujte na trávník** (neh-vistooopoo-yetay na trahv-neek) - Keep Off The Grass

**Zákaz prodeje alkoholu mladistvým** (za-kahz prodaj-eh alkoholoo mladeestveem) - Sales Of Alcohol To Under-18s Prohibited

**Vstup pouze s platnou jízdenkou** (fstoop poezeh suh platnoe yeez-denko) - Entry With A Valid Ticket Only

**Zákaz fotografování (s bleskem)** (za-kahz foto-graf-ovane sbleskem) - No (Flash) Photography

**Vypněte si mobilní telefon** (vipnyeteh see mobilnee tele-fon) - Please Switch Off Mobile Phones

**Voda není pitná** (voda ninnie peetnah) - Non-Potable Water

**POZOR** (poe-zor) - Caution (Watch out!)

(COC/PH)

## FACES



Luis Miñarro



Pere Vilà i Barceló



Ektoras Lygizos



Sára Cserhalmi



Aik Karapetian



Miroslav Momčilović

Look out for the arrival of **Luis Miñarro** today, one of the most highly regarded producers of independent European film, already well known to KVIFF fans for his 2010 winner *The Mosquito Net*. He's here to compete in the Official Selection alongside director and co-writer **Pere Vilà i Barceló** and lead **Lou Castel** with *La lapidation de Saint Etienne*. This film evokes the conflicts of intellect and corporality, the fragile defenses of a private world against be-reavement and old age. They're joined by Greek writer/director **Ektoras Lygizos**, whose feature debut *Boy Eating the Bird's Food*

is generating a lot of interest. It's also the first feature for young lead **Yannis Papadopoulos**, who plays a boy calmly walking along the edge of catastrophe, without employment, food, or money.

Director and co-writer **Sára Cserhalmi** arrives today with her father **György Cserhalmi**, whom she cast in the lead role of her East of the West competition entry *Dear Betrayed Friends*. This exploration of state power, betrayal and the limits of friendship has resonance far beyond its setting in post-Soviet Hungary. Competing in this section with his debut feature is **Aik Karapetian**, who both

wrote and directed the bleak Latvian coming of age drama *People Out There*. Another strong competitor, **Roger Gómez**, one half of the writing/directing duo behind *The Little Team*, arrives today for the documentary selection.

And last but not least, **Miroslav Momčilović** arrives to show his third feature *Death of a Man in Balkans*, which he wrote, directed and produced. This acerbic chamber piece follows the action in a composer's apartment after his suicide using only the webcam on his computer, and was shot in a single take. A daring concept, well executed. (PLC)



## OFFICIAL SELECTION

**The Last Step –  
a chance to wear  
the trousers**

Zbyněk Vlasák

The *Festival Daily* talked to Iranian multi-tasker Ali Mosaffa – director, producer, screenplay writer and actor all rolled into one – about his Official Selection competition entry, which features an actress trying to come to terms with the recent death of her husband.

■ **Why did you choose the concept of a “film within a film” for *The Last Step*?**

For me the most enchanting thing about making films and whatever happens behind the scenes is the absurdity of the whole process, the comic situations where a group of overgrown children try to justify their inability to accept the world of adults, and perhaps that is what makes it one of the most honest professions in the world. So I was always interested in implementing this interpretation in a film but the truth is that it is not a “film within a film” concept in the sense that makes us believe whatever happened was part of the film which was being shot, but instead it is part of the female character’s life, an actress whose job is engaging and consuming and, of course, absurd.

■ **You are also an actor in *The Last Step*. How did that influence your film? And how did the fact that you are married to the lead actress influence it?**

In most cases it made things



The *Last Step* proffers a tale of loss and bereavement.

easier; I didn’t have to convince someone else to do what I wanted him to but, at the same time, I had no chance to relax behind the camera and think everything over with plenty of time and options. I had to get into the film and be part of the story and then consecutively I had to get detached and make my judgments and this added to the fact that I was also the producer of the film sometimes really confused me. Being the husband of my partner in the film was nothing new and in fact we are well used to it after making several films together, but I cannot deny things were more adventurous before we were married.

■ **Did directing your own wife pose any major difficulties for you? It’s a rather unusual situation...**

It really is, especially when

you are used to being directed by your wife in every other detail of your life. It is, in fact, a once-in-a-decade opportunity to have your say and finally wear the trousers.

■ **For you, is acting just a job or do you see something magical in it?**

I could never regard it as a job for myself because I’m not a professional actor in the sense that most of my colleagues are, and I do not have the flexibility required to portray a variety of characters. So I have to rely on my own characteristics and at the same time hope for something to happen, like the magic you mentioned.

**The *Last Step* screens today at 5pm in the Thermal’s Grand Hall and tomorrow at 1pm in the Espace Dorleans Cinema.**

## OFFICIAL SELECTION

**Mystery and  
intrigue surround  
*Polski film***

Will Tizard

Probably more mystery and intrigue have surrounded Official Selection entry *Polski film* by Marek Najbrt than any other recent contender. Much of that is by design, it seems, since the makers have done as little as possible of the usual film promotion activities – at least in the usual way.

They’d prefer that people who are asking for a simple synopsis or the answer to the eternal question, “What’s the film about?” continue scratching their heads for a time. Sure, glimpses of scenes have emerged on YouTube and on – appropriately enough – Polish film websites.

These really only tend to add to the mystery, however, as we see the characters, four Czech friends who decide to make a film about themselves, reading an apparently real article in the Czech daily paper *Mladá fronta Dnes* about themselves making the film.

They then appear on the terrace of the Thermal during the real-life KVIFF, with fake posters for their film slipped in among the real ones covering the hotel’s glass walls (or, at least, with *Polski film* posters promoting a film still being shot slipped in among those for films actually screening).

We see cast member and rocker Jan Budař hanging out with John Malkovich at last year’s festival, then see the other characters, who play versions of themselves (sort of), Pavel Liška, Tomáš Matono-



*Polski film* has kept audiences and critics guessing.

ha, Josef Polášek and Marek Daniel, promenading through town, grabbing girls’ breasts. Falling off a boat. Wandering naked through the night. Doing press for *Polski film*. Arguing about what the hell the film’s supposed to be about.

What gives here?

At least one source, Prague art-house cinema group and distributor Aerofilms, is willing to venture an attempt at summing up, if not what *Polski film* is about, exactly, then why it’s expected to engage audiences.

“*Polski film* is not going to be an easy piece for everyone,” says Aerofilms acquisitions director, Ivo Andrlé, “but we do believe that our audiences will be able to give it extra attention and enjoy the playful destruction of a film structure and storytelling.”

Indeed, Najbrt, who came to

prominence with *Protektor* in 2010, has dramatically departed from the carefully structured and plotted approach of that doomed WWII love story – and so have his co-writers Robert Geisler and Benjamin Tuček. (Though, ironically, it was *Protektor*’s big win at the 2011 Off Plus Camera festival in Krakow that provided much of the impetus for *Polski film* since the resulting substantial cash prize required him to make his next film in partnership with Poland).

“Since this is quite a special film,” Andrlé explains, “we decided to just show it to the people at the festival and release it nationwide right after. We are not explaining anything.”

***Polski film* screens today at 8pm in the Thermal’s Grand Hall and tomorrow at 10:30am in the Pupp Cinema.**

## REVIEWERS RECOMMEND

**Paul Katzenberger**

Film journalist, *Süddeutsche.de*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*


**Four Suns**

Director: Bohdan Sláma  
Czech Republic, 2012, 105 min  
July 4, 1:30pm, Lázně III Cinema

Bohdan Sláma is among the few Czech directors whose work is regularly shown abroad. Films such as *Something Like Happiness* and *The Country Teacher* all went into international distribution, and there is a good chance that his latest dramedy *Four Suns* will be shown internationally as well.

Again Sláma addresses the problems among the generations in modern society – torn between conformity and rebellion. Serious questions are posed, but the director/writer never loses his sense for comical situations.

**The Wall**

Director: Julian Roman Pölsler  
Austria, Germany, 2012, 108 min  
July 4, 4:30pm, Lázně III Cinema

Whenever a German-language production is about to fill the leading female part, Martina Gedeck seems to be among the desired candidates. After casting the lead for *The Wall*, Austrian director Julian Pölsler knew that he had to do his film with the heroine of the Oscar-winning drama

*The Life of Others*. And, in fact, Gedeck’s performance of a female Robinson Crusoe in the Alps is phenomenal. Portraying an unnamed woman, who is trapped alone by an invisible wall, she excels in a Kafkaesque drama about solitude, sanity, and mankind’s relationship with time, nature, and the universe.

**Cosmopolis**

Director: David Cronenberg  
France, Canada, Portugal, Italy, 2012, 108 min  
July 4, 9:30pm, Small Hall – Thermal

Robert Pattinson is known to the world as a slick vampire in the *Twilight* series, but in David Cronenberg’s latest film he turns into a young Wall Street billionaire. Don DeLillo’s 2003 novel *Cosmopolis* presaged the Occupy movement. Cronenberg picks up the baton in his film, showing

Pattinson as the archon of a stretch limo, where everything is taking place with alternating visitors: strategy discussions, prostate examinations, and sex. In the end, the mob of the 99 percent attacks the rich – who are also the ones in the limo.

**Dark Horse**

Director: Todd Solondz  
USA, 2011, 85 min  
July 4, 2pm, Grand Hall – Thermal

In his work, Todd Solondz oscillates between tragedy and pitch-black humor, and this irritating combination made him susceptible to accusations that he is taking advantage of his ill-fated maverick characters and mocking them. However, Solondz shows more compassion in his latest movie *Dark*

*Horse*. Once again proving to be a relentless observer of America’s suburban middle class, his protagonist, Abe, is not only portrayed as the loser he definitely is. Rather, the audience begins to identify with a guy who is a portly college dropout living with his parents at 35 years of age. Nonetheless, as the film evolves, you learn about the reasons for this, and cannot but feel close to a guy for whom nothing was ever meant to go right.

**TOMORROW SCREENINGS:**

|          |       |            |                  |
|----------|-------|------------|------------------|
| 5.7.2012 | 8:30  | Cinema A   | Press & Industry |
| 5.7.2012 | 9:00  | Cinema C   | Press & Industry |
| 5.7.2012 | 17:00 | Grand Hall | Premiere         |

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## Peter Le Couteur

"The best years of my life," says Jean-Pierre Melville at the start of the documentary *Code Name Melville*, "are the years of the war. I can't help it." He supports this contentious statement, unacceptable to the journalist interviewing him, by saying that it was during the war he met brave men, willing to die for what they believed. To him, he explains, courage is virtue.

During the last years of WWII, Melville worked for the French Resistance, but even before he enlisted in the army at 19 years of age he was gaining firsthand experience of the underworlds so memorably immortalized in his *film noir* masterpieces. He frequented bars with gangsters, his lawyer was a gangster lawyer he met hanging out with the toughs at the Saint-Lazare railway station in his native Paris. Though Melville's films are undeniably

stylized, they have the extraordinarily rare property of being stylized direct from reality, as well as from American film and pulp novels like the *Fantômas* series of Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre. His gangsters all retain the signatures of the Interbellum period, a Parisian *noir* that was never contemporary, but occupies an alternate reality where the 1930s, with its Burberry-donning dons and sleuths, never ended.

Through his heavily stylized and stereotyped pulp dreams, Melville explored the bizarre fact that, as he said, "As I grow old, I realize that the 1940-44 era, which should have left us bad memories, is something we dream of almost with nostalgia." This astounding insight is relevant even today, as the thousands of books and films still produced about this era attest. War nostalgia is as real as the undeniable appeal of gangster movies, detective novels, and (currently) forensic

dramas like *C.S.I.* Whether we are drawn to the darkness as Freudians would have us believe, or rather are drawn to a world where the intricacies of existential conflict are resolved by men with revolvers, the fact remains that we are still drawn there. As David Čeněk says in his excellent catalogue introduction to the tribute section, one of Melville's prerogatives, "...was to blend the American Dream with ancient mythology at the archetypal level..."

The world of war, especially that of military officers, was to Melville equal in virtue to the monastic life, and his filmmaking reflects his vision of the paradoxically ascetic and esthetic existence of the soldier. He portrays the man in uniform, whether the hat and long coat of the gangster in *Le deuxième souffle*, precisely the same outfit for a member of the Resistance in *Army of Shadows*, the habit of the priest in *Léon Morin, Priest*, or the

garb of an officer in *The Silence of the Sea*. His own mission to make films was likewise an exercise in renunciation, an absolute dedication of his life to cinema, perhaps one reason for his own affectation of a uniform in the ever-present hat, dark glasses, and raincoat. Jean-Pierre Melville was no stranger to life under a mask, and his imperious straight face and half-lidded gaze recalls that other contemporaneous giant of genre, Alfred Hitchcock. Melville was born Jean-Pierre Grumbach, an Alsatian Jew, only to become Jean-Pierre Cartier by necessity during the years of Nazi occupation, changing his alias to "Nano" (his childhood nickname), before finally taking on the name of Melville specifically as an homage to the author of *Moby Dick*.

Melville was hailed by the rising New Wave of French filmmakers as an antecedent, even an

inspiration. He specifically avoided any connections with intellectualism, favoring a more American style as did the New Wave movement as a whole, but in his later films, unlike the spontaneous, naturalistic techniques of the New Wave, Melville kept strict, almost obsessive control over color and lighting. He is perhaps the most significant forerunner of the fusion of a black-and-white noir style with the use of heavily restricted color, which can be seen today in the work of David Lynch and his imitators, monochrome dystopias like *Cypher* and *Gattaca*, and is arguably even an influence on the graphic-novel style of *Sin City*. The Lynchian link is particularly strong both in Melville's use of isolated, unexplained locations more suitable to the topography of a dream than simple geography, and to his use of a heavily present, almost physically palpable darkness.

If you only catch one film from the Melville retrospective, make it *The Red Circle* from 1970. This existential jewel heist is Melville at the height of his genre work. It has the tight control of color through the film's processing and through the sets, costumes and makeup: watch out for the perfectly employed touches of red, blue, and green. It has the hermetic solitude of the outlaw and the sleuth in their matching fedoras and Burberrys, navigating the archetypal plot with the bare minimum of dialogue. It has the slyly subjectivist, mannerist camera work. It has the Melvilian metafictional touches and artful timelessness. But most of all, it's a gripping thriller, ticking all the boxes and striding along at a mounting pace. Melville is a master craftsman, and we're very lucky indeed to have a chance to see this body of impeccable classics on the silver screen.

## ON THE TOWN

### Sushi Sakura

Zeyerova 1

☎ 777 912 311

www.sushisakura.cz

Open Mon-Fri 11am-10pm,  
Sat-Sun 12 noon-10pm

Sushi Sakura has moved around the corner since this time last year. The great thing about the new location is that there's plenty of space to sit outside if you don't mind the boisterousness of this busy corner of KV, but there's also the option of sitting inside in cool and serene surroundings if you need a break from the hustle and bustle. The restaurant has great lunch deals on weekdays from 11am to 3pm. Various sushi sets are accompanied by a complementary bowl of *miso* tofu soup (or a different soup of your choice if *miso* is not your thing). We tried the Happy Sakura Set (No. 318) for 240 CZK. The spicy chicken soup was good and hearty, and the selection of fresh

salmon and tuna sushi perfectly palatable. Apart from sushi there is a special Fresh Summer Selection menu with a good grilled salmon salad for 145 CZK. Wash it down with a small Pilsner for 35 CZK. (GP)

### Chebský Dvůr

Tržiště 39

☎ 353 229 332

Open 10:30am-10pm

With an impressive collection of beer mugs hanging from the ceiling, Chebský Dvůr has a very olde-Czech feel to it. The food on offer is also very traditional. You can get some typical goulash for 145 CZK, which is quite reasonable by KV standards. For the same price, you can also sample the local staple, *svíčková*, which consists of some thin strips of beef in a creamy sweet-and-sour sauce topped with cranberry goo. These saucy dishes are best accompanied by dumplings or potato



Sushi Sakura – an old KVIFF favorite finds a new home.

cakes (30 CZK) for soakage purposes. Thirsty beer lovers will enjoy a well-kept *Gambrinus* beer for 60 CZK. There's some

pleasant, sheltered outdoor seating, which makes it a good place for dining al fresco in KVs often warm but wet conditions. Ham

and eggs (known as *hemenex* in this part of the world) for just 80 CZK is also a good bargain-breakfast option. (COC)

Another unmissable KVIFF Talk is scheduled for today. There's a discussion with **Ágnes Kocsis and Tizza Covi** at 11am in the **Jameson Lounge**, moderated by Tomáš Baldýnský. These two respected directors and jurists will discuss their award-winning films, their production methods, and the position of women directors today.

Later on it's **Karlovy Vary Council's festival night**, starting at 8:30pm at the **Outdoor Cinema**. For 50 CZK you can witness *Nosferatu – Twilight Symphony*, a multi-genre concert combining a screening of the classic silent horror flick with live accompaniment by the KV Symphony Orchestra, playing well-known composer Karel Šimandl's *A Symphony of Horror*, which was written specially for the occasion. With up-and-coming young conductor Jan Kučera wielding the baton, expect the best. (PLC)

## DAILIES



Dark Horse director Todd Solondz rides into town



KVIF wouldn't be KVIF without a torrential downpour.



Open-air dramatics at the Colonnade.