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Foto: Milan Malíček



In *Border*, Ali Abassi defies expectations.

You have been trolled!

Border is only Ali Abassi's second film and it was already awarded Un Certain Regard in Cannes.

by **Marta Balaga**

Border, a touching story about lonely Tina (played by Eva Melander) stuck in a boring job at customs, turned out to be about trolls. The film by the Iranian-born, Denmark-based **Ali Abassi** (37) is based on *Let the Right One In*'s scribe John Ajvide Lindqvist's short story, and the director presented it at KVIFF last night.

Why did you decide to adapt John Ajvide Lindqvist's short story in the first place? And a relatively unknown one at that?
When the film *Let the Right One In*

came out, I really liked it. My friend told me it was based on a novel, and then he said: "Ok, if you like this, there is this short story about a woman who is ugly and works in customs. And then it turns out she is a troll!" I was like: "What the fuck?" When I got the chance to work in Sweden, some people asked me whom do I want to work with, and I still remembered this crazy story. Although it's not really that crazy. Have you read it?

Oh yes.

It's actually quite mellow and tender, and that's what I liked about it the most – that this old, supernatural element is so underplayed you hardly notice it at all. I didn't know anything about trolls and at some points I felt like I was walking on slippery ice. It's a mythology I don't really know that much about. And then I realized

that maybe it's a good thing, because the story isn't really about that. Maybe if I were Finnish or Swedish, I would make a bigger deal out of it. I tried to keep the soul of it intact, but John understands that making an adaptation isn't about turning a book into a film. He might not have been happy about everything, but he never gave me any kind of ultimatum.

For all the craziness going on, it's still a rather realistic story. Was it your intention all along?

I used to say to my actors: if this were an American movie, you would be going around sniffing things and lifting cars. In Scandinavia, we have a strong tradition of psychological dramas, dating back to Ibsen and so on. It's a good tradition to have, because you get some understanding of people and society you can then build upon.

As filmmakers, we are supposed to be interested in "real" people with "real" problems. And the rest of them go to see *The Avengers*.

It's funny that you mention The Avengers, as your films remind me of Hancock – a superhero movie in which a man doesn't actually know he is one. Just like Tina.

You don't really see these films as gender commentary, but then I started to think about it and went: why do these guys always look so gay? So maybe there is something going on with superheroes and sexual ambiguity and in that sense, *Border* fits right in. With the whole supernatural thing, I'm more interested in the surreal rather than flying dragons. Hulk is the only superhero I like, but if my characters were green like him, there would be no border to speak of. Not to mention it would be strange for a green person

to realize after 30 years they were different.

Even though your characters are trolls, they blend in within the rest of society rather easily.

When we watch a film and someone is not beautiful, we are trained to think there must be a reason for that. And when someone's fat, we expect comedy. People always talk about "normal" people. So who is supposed to play them, Brad Pitt? There is nothing normal about Brad Pitt. I wanted to talk about ugly people – that was one of the reasons for making this film. My producers would send me pictures of people looking like Saint Laurent models: perfect, with a slightly crooked nose. The thing is, everybody knows what you mean when you say ugly. They just don't want to admit it. •

See you there

Kathleen McInnis
Film Publicist/Strategist/Curator



As every year, I'm excited about KVIFF's films simply because the programming here is always outstanding.

Other than the films I am representing, and in addition to the ones I've already seen (Cyril Aris' *The Swing* and Yossi Madmony/Boaz Yehonatan Yacov's *Redemption* – both of which I love), I'm truly excited to also have the chance to see Hu Bo's *An Elephant Sitting Still* and Terry Gilliam's *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*.

Both of these titles represent the very best in cinema in my opinion. These are films that speak a very distinctive cinematic language and which are crafted by masterful visual storytellers. For me, at least, it is what

sets KVIFF apart from so many other festivals, this dynamic attention paid to the art and form of film.

And if you want to know my guilty pleasure, it will be to watch David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* on the big screen. I've done it 100 times in my life and I'd do it a 100 times more.

MB

An Elephant Sitting Still screens July 2 at 8 pm [Cinema B], July 5 at 8 pm [Drahomira Cinema]. *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* screens July 4 at 2 pm [Grand Hall], July 6 at 7 pm [Národní dům Cinema]. *Lawrence of Arabia* screens July 5 at 10am [Karlovy Vary Municipal Theatre].

Replay

Amid spinning gymnasts and flying Sokol colors, KVIFF's 53rd edition kicked off last night at the Thermal Grand Hall with a rousing celebration of the founding of the Czech nation 100 years ago as the Austro-Hungarian Empire broke up in the aftermath of WWI. The gala fest opening is always a big production by tradition, thanks to the inspiration of the rollicking Caban brothers, who conceive of the concept and choreography. But this year's version was bittersweet as those who have known and loved the late Czech-born director Miloš Forman throughout their film careers (and often earlier) paid tribute to him and reflected on his greatest work as the fest screened clips

from *Amadeus*, *Loves of a Blonde*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *The People vs Larry Flint*, *Man on the Moon*, *Hair* and others.

The American actor Tim Robbins, who took the stage to receive his Crystal Globe for Outstanding Contribution to World Cinema, joined the commemoration, confessing that he was dreaming of being in a Forman film a few years back, right up until he met the legendary Czech director in New York and learned that he had told the studios off. The problem: They had shown Forman a poster for the film even though it hadn't yet been cast.

"They want a poster, not art," Forman told Robbins. "Fuck them!"

WT



Tim Robbins says we still need Forman's inspiration and Havel's courage.

Official selection



Doroteja Nadrah faces her fears in History of Love.

All about her mother

Sonja Prosenc’s second feature *History of Love* will have its world premiere tonight in the Official Selection at KVIFF.

by Marta Bałaga

A teenage Iva struggles with the sudden passing of her mother. But her grief takes a different turn when she discovers what was supposed to stay hidden: her mom had a secret lover. Although she finds it hard to comprehend, Iva slowly learns to accept the complexity of one’s choices. Or, at least, she tries to.

In her second film, picked up at Feature Launch for the When East Meets West co-production forum and receiving the EAVE Scholarship Award along the way, the director Sonja Prosenc doesn’t hurry.

Just like the protagonist played by Doroteja Nadrah, torn after finding out the inconvenient truth about one of her closest people, she just lets things unravel. Occasionally inserting some playfulness into the story, she even manages to recall Alice Rohrwacher’s fondness for bees in *The Wonders*, while her experiments with sound are bound to surprise.

Emotional detachment
“The sound design for this film has been a special and quite a long process in itself, as it carries at least as much of the film’s weight as the visual narration,” explains Prosenc. “It

connects the parts that could be perceived as past and present into a meandering of events, memories and thoughts, with shots or sequences echoing variations and details.” Which explains why she seems to be more interested in Iva’s personal struggles than the actual plot.

“In my first film, I focused on three distinct forms of imprisonment: physical, within a system, and by our own feelings of guilt,” says the director, whose award-winning debut was chosen as a Slovenian candidate for the Academy Award. “During the shooting of the film a member of my family was dying and later on I decided to venture away from this kind of commentary in order to follow the intimate tale of Iva and her family. However, the urge to explore the characters’ inability to connect with each other during the worst moments of their lives still derives from a reflection on society: the currently prevalent nihilism, violence, and emotional detachment,” she adds, repeating once more something that her character, or anyone else for that matter, just doesn’t want to hear: don’t judge. ●

History of Love

Slovenia, Italy, Norway

June 30 at 8 pm
Thermal Grand Hall

July 1 at 1 pm, Pupp Cinema

July 3 at 11.30am
Drahomíra Cinema



Karelle Tremblay excels as Léo in The Fireflies Are Gone.

Buggin’ out

Sébastien Pilote’s film *The Fireflies Are Gone* explores “a new kind of fascism” in francophone Québec.

by Zbyněk Vlasák

Léo, portrayed vividly by the talented Karelle Tremblay, lives in a small town “full of zombies.” Everyone bugs her. She is a good student, popular among her peers, but her home situation is less ideal. Aside from having a complicated relationship with her mother, she is torn between two strong father figures.

Her stepfather is a familiar character in today’s public landscape: a local media star, a populist by nature, who lacks humility and self-reflection. On his radio show, he likes to fear-monger and talk about the good old days, while gladly taking advan-

tage of the perks of innovation. According to the director Sébastien Pilote, the film title itself comes from the allegory of the vanishing fireflies that Pasolini used while speaking about the new fascism in Italy. “For him, the little lights, the *luce* glowing in the night, are invisible, overpowered by the bright projectors of mass entertainment and the deafening sound of the speakers,” he says.

The Canadian filmmaker thinks *The Fireflies Are Gone* may be his most political film. “This may sound weird,” he says. “I made it with the sentiment that we’re heading towards a new kind of fascism. And that if there are occasion-

al glimmers of hope, they are rare and mostly invisible.”

Like a pop song
Léo hates her stepfather mainly because he once stood against her biological father in a dispute concerning a local factory. Her father, a onetime union leader, was defeated in the conflict. But Léo idealizes him and is shattered when she finds he is a more complicated character than she thought.

The Fireflies Are Gone is a fairly straightforward story. Pilote says that if the film had been a novel, it would have been written in short, simple sentences, the style would be unadorned but would not turn its back on metaphor or allegory. “It could have been a graphic novel or a song,” he says.

It’s no accident that sounds play a significant role in the film. Not only does Léo find solace in guitar playing; music follows her. Fairy tale fanfares evoking youth’s careless abandon only enhance her grande escape from a formal family dinner. And many other situations. ●

The Fireflies Are Gone

Canada

June 30 at 5 pm
Thermal Grand Hall

July 1 at 10 pm
Pupp Cinema

July 3 at 9am
Drahomíra Cinema

Three picks for today

Stephen Dalton
Film Critic, The Hollywood Reporter



On the town

Marta Bałaga
Festival Daily Writer



Spike Lee is back in magnificent form with this outrageous comedy thriller based on the true story of Ron Stallworth, an African-American police officer who infiltrated the ranks of the Ku Klux Klan in 1970s Colorado. With John David Washington

as Stallworth and Adam Driver playing the white Jewish cop who consents to impersonating his black partner at Klan meetings, *Blackkklansman* blends retro Blaxploitation style with timely anti-Trump commentary.

Blackkklansman

Grand Hall

Director: Spike Lee
USA, 2018, 128 min
June 30, 10.30 pm



The late Harry Dean Stanton plays his final lead role in this hugely charming, tailor-made star vehicle written and directed by John Carroll Lynch (no relation to David). The 90-year-old indie cinema legend fully inhabits the title character, a chain-smoking old cur-

mudgeon coming to terms with his impending mortality in a backwater desert town. Autumnal in tone but full of warmth, *Lucky* is the movie memorial that Stanton deserves, a bittersweet lap of honor by the last of the Zen Cowboys.

Lucky

Small Hall

Director: John Carroll Lynch
USA, 2017, 88 min
June 30, 9.30 pm



According to the UN, Tunisia has sent more young men to join the ranks of ISIS than any other country. Mohamed Ben Attia’s slow-burn family drama tries to put a human face on these shocking stats, probing the complex forces that drive 19-year-old Sami to leave his

parents behind to become a jihadi in Syria. Co-produced by the Dardenne Brothers, it’s an absorbing study of the shame, grief and confusion afflicting families torn apart by clashing generational values.

Dear Son

Čas Cinema

Director: Mohamed Ben Attia
Tunisia, Belgium, France, Qatar, 2018, 100 min
June 30, 3.30 pm



Top 3 stupid selfie spots in town

- 1. Masaryk sand sculpture**
Mlýnská kolonáda
As far as must-have pictures go, one has to start with a statue of the first Czech president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, commemorated, in sand, by the sculptor Tomáš Bosambo to mark the 100th anniversary of Czechoslovakia. While the concept of sand politicians is, I’ll admit, rather new to me, it makes perfect sense – in principle, they don’t last too long and you can just easily clean them up afterwards without having to dabble in that pesky tearing down business involving cranes, white supremacist rallies and whatnot.
- 2. The giant Becherovka bottle**
T. G. Masaryka 282/57
I am a simple person – if there is a giant whatever available at hand, I will take a picture with it and preferably hug it, too. It’s a philosophy that served me well throughout the years and

the new Chewbacca, Joonas Suotamo, should probably feel relieved we missed each other in Cannes. While it doesn’t talk Wookiee, the Giant Becherovka serves as a perfect stand-in, proudly advertising the museum devoted to a drink produced right here on the spot. Hug away, then, or head straight to happy hour.

3. Crystal Globe statues
Ivana Petroviče Pavlova 2001/11
Statues in the shape of KVIFF’s Crystal Globe trophy can be found in front of Hotel Thermal and judging by the number of selfie-takers, everybody knows this already. Although no, scratch that. It’s actually not advised to take a picture with said statues, whose enviable curves were celebrated in the festival’s 2016 trailer featuring, predictably, Zdeněk Svěrák. The end result reminded me of the time when a friend ill-advised me to take a pic with Monica Bellucci, only for it to mysteriously never resurface again after we took one look at it. Must have been a glitch in the Matrix.

Kviffefe Tweet of the day

Mark Cousins
@markcousinsfilm



View from my hotel here in Karlovy Vary film fest. Poster of my Orson film planted in the river below. Lunch in Grand Budapest Pupp Hotel with lovely fellow jurors. I could get used to this.

Czeching in



Diamonds of the Night is based on Arnošt Lustig's 1945 escape from the death transport.

A New Wave diamond

A Czech classic has been given a fresh new look

by Michael Stein

The digitally restored copy of **Jan Němec's** 1964 masterpiece *Diamonds of the Night* should be right at the top of the to-see list. Based on writer Arnošt Lustig's dramatic escape from death transport between concentration camps at the end of WWII, the film is legendary for many things, including its dramatic opening shot, which follows the two escaping young men to its stark visual style to its almost total lack of dialogue. The writer's daughter, filmmaker **Eva Lustigová**, born in 1956 in Prague, is presenting the film her father co-wrote the screenplay for and recalls many aspects of this great work of art, from the collaboration between her father and Němec to the surprise that, after his death, her father had left a large number of finished screenplays behind.

The process of adapting a work of fiction to the screen is always problematic but when it's such a sensitive subject like the Holocaust and based on personal experience. How did your father feel about the film?

Well, I can tell you that when he was co-writing the screenplay with Jan Němec based on a short story "Darkness Casts No Shadows" from a collection called *Diamonds of the Night*, which was his second book ever published in 1958. It was 1964 and I was six so I can't tell you how he felt about it, nor did we ever talk about it. But I can say that he was super-involved, obviously in the screenplay, and he was sitting in the editing room as much as Jan Němec was, the whole time, and he took part in the creative process from the beginning to the end. In his work he was always very visual and sparse with words, Hemingway being one of his idols, other than Tolstoy and Chekhov. So he was always very visual.

And how did the collaboration go?

There was one disagreement between my father and Jan Němec when they were shooting the film and my father wanted more dialogue and Jan Němec got very angry. He was super temperamental and told him to minimize the words. And he didn't say it politely! So it was a struggle between the two of them how much text to put in.

Almost all of your father's film work came in the Czech New Wave and then they both ended abruptly, his film career and the movement. On the one hand his work is associa-

ted with the peak of Czech filmmaking, on the other it ended so suddenly and unnecessarily. Was that bittersweet?

Basically, leaving Czechoslovakia at the time wasn't bittersweet, it was bitter. He was in pain until the Velvet Revolution in 1989, which came like a dream-come-true because neither he nor the family thought that he or the family would ever set foot here again.

What happened to the rest of his work?

He left screenplays for seven or eight feature films that my brother Pepe and I found in his writing desk drawer after he died. It is our responsibility, obligation, pleasure, challenge, thrill, whatever you want to call it – creative trip! – to bring these to life. And I have 30 good years left and I'm retiring from the UN at the end of August. I work for the World Health Organization. So I'm going to start bringing these screenplays to life.

What are these screenplays about?

One of them is for *Tanga Z Hamburku* (Tanga From Hamburg), then there's a comedy, which is the only actual comedy he'd ever written. Then there are a few others basically about the Holocaust. And they all have a female protagonist.

He worked with Jan Němec before this film, on a 1960 short?

Yes, it's called *A Bite to Eat* [sometimes titled *A Piece of Bread*]. Jan was making it while getting his PhD at FAMU and that's when they established their great working relationship that led to *Diamonds of the Night*. It's also a true story. •

Diamonds of the Night

Today at 2 pm, Grand Hall

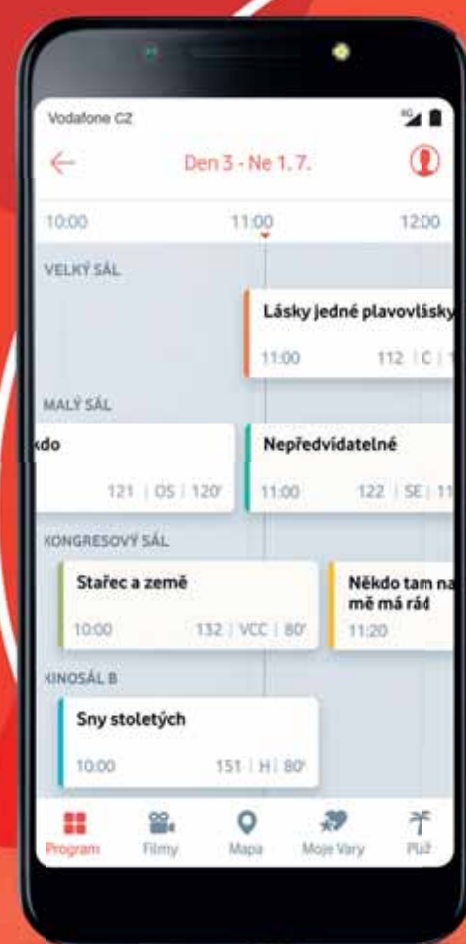
Thursday, July 7 at 7:30 pm
Lázně III Cinema



Lustigová is devoted to seeing her father's film work brought to the screen.

Stáhněte si do kapsy celý festival

S oficiální aplikací Vodafone KVIFF Guide 2018 máte program, aktuality i rezervaci vstupenek stále u sebe.



Budoucnost je úžasná.

Ready?



East of the West



Crystal Swan's Velya wants to leave Belarus for the Chicago house music scene.

East Side Stories

This year's East of the West competition runs the gamut – geographically, stylistically and thematically.

by Michael Stein

From a contemplative view of Iranian society to stories of young women willing to break the rules in Hungary and Belarus to some archetypal Czech situations that can be ripe for drama and comedy to a story of Polish madness, this year's regional section has it all. The section's opening film is Darya Zhuk's debut feature *Crystal Swan*, which follows the ambitions of young, maverick Velya to get out of Minsk and

move to Chicago, the birthplace of 80s house music, where she hopes to become a DJ. To do that though, she needs a visa, and this is where the heart of the film's gripping tragicomedy lies. The aspiring DJ is played with a compelling mix of ruthlessness and compassion by Alina Nasibullina. The Russian actress is no stranger to KVIFF, having appeared in last year's East of the West-winning film *How Viktor "The Garlic" Took Alexey "The Stud" to the Nursing Home*. Zhuk says

she didn't know anything about Nasibullina's role in the film because it was still in post-production when they began shooting *Crystal Swan*. What drew the director to the actress was as unconventional as the character she plays. "I got smitten by her as she sent in a personal introduction tape she recorded at 2am, where she didn't read for Velya but talked about herself," Zhuk says. "I kept looking for some nowhere-to-be-found *joie de vivre*, and bucket full of personality in a young actress. Velya is

naive but brave, persistent and spunky. This character carries this film for me." Hungarian director László Csujá went through a long and involved casting process for his lovers-on-the-run film *Blossom Valley*. The story revolves around a wild young girl impulsively stealing a baby and going on to form an unlikely, unstable but somehow loving family. The director says he was looking for two totally different people with strong inner worlds and that the year-and-a half casting process was

also an attempt to discover different subcultures. "We rewrote the script after we found them," Csujá says. An unstable family is also the centerpiece of Ewa Bukowska's *53 Wars*, in which Anka, the writer wife of war correspondent Witek, loses her hold on reality as anxiety over her husband's safety chips away at her sanity. A unique film that asks what it means and what it can cost a person to experience war at second hand, Magdalena Popławska's performance as the tortured Anka stands out in particular. Director of *53 Wars* Ewa Bukowska says her influences gave her a roadmap for how to chart her challenging psychological drama. "In my directing, I draw inspiration from Michael Haneke's films and from his precise, engrossing narrative, which culminates in a powerful, and surprising, pay-off. I want to follow my characters and their emotions and I aim to create portrayals which are as psychologically credible as is possible," she says. "I will set out to seize the audience's attention by avoiding easy solutions, impelling them to ask questions and form their own opinions about the characters." In the beautifully shot Iranian film *Amir*, director

Nima Eghlima explores the depths of personal imprisonment of young Iranians, as it follows the story of Ali, who comes to Tehran in search of his estranged wife and son, relying on his friend Amir to smooth things out. Despite all his family problems, Amir spends most his days driving around polluted Tehran, solving other people's problems. A life that's now one's own is a familiar theme in *Moments* by the Czech director Beata Parkanová, too. In this poised directorial debut, a young woman, Anežka – portrayed by the rising star among young, Czech actresses, Jenováfa Boková – sacrifices her own life just to please her family. The dialogues wittily explore the passive aggressive dynamics within Czech families ("Do you want a plate, Anežka?" She doesn't. "Here, just take the plate.") Speaking of exploring "Czechness," few themes are as Eastern European as good old vacationing in one's cottage. In Tomáš Pavlíček's comedy *Bear With Us*, a family decides to spend one last day at their beloved *chata* before selling the place. The story has all the elements of a Czech crowdpleaser: overbearing, bitchy females whipping the male *podpanto-flák* characters into shape. ●



Milad Keymaram as Amir in director Nima Eghlima's debut feature.

Faces



Olmo Omerzu

Among the new arrivals on the second day of KVIFF are actress **Anna Paquin** and director **Stephen Moyer** representing *The Parting Glass*, which will be showing in the Horizons section. Also arriving today are two directors of main competition films, **Olmo Omerzu** presenting *Winter Flies* and **Ömür Atay** with *Brothers*. The documentary competition greets directors **Johanna Domke** and **Marouan Omara** to screen *Dream Away* while *Bridges of Time* is represented by directors **Audrius Stonys** and **Kristine Briede**. Further documentary competition arrivals include director of *The Swing*, **Cyril Aris** as well as **Zita Erffa** with *The Best Thing You Can Do with Your Life*.



Željka Suková

The East of the West section is bringing **Roman Bondarchuk** with *Volcano* and actress **Julia Kijowska** from the film *Via Carpatia*, who is also here to screen the film *Nina*. The section Reflections of Time: Baltic Poetic Documentary welcomes directors **Andres Sööt** with *Midsommer Day* and *511 Best Photographs of Mars*, **Laila Pakalniņa** with her trilogy *The Mail*, *The Ferry* and *The Linen*, and director of photography **Ivars Seleckis** to screen *The Coast*.



Zita Erffa

Moreover, **Audrius Stonys** will present his earlier films *Earth of the Blind* and *Antigravitation*. The Imagina section greets director **Željka Suková** to screen her film *Endless Tail*.



Aivars Freimanis

Documentary



Mansky got closer to Putin than any other documentarist.

Putin Out

The film Putin's Witnesses will compete in the documentary competition.

by Zbyněk Vlasák

"None of us will probably live to see the screening of my film in Russia," says the Ukraine-born director Vitaly Mansky who's emigrated from Russia to Latvia. In his competition documentary *Putin's Witnesses*, he brings unique commented footage of two Russian presidents: Vladimir Putin and Boris Yeltsin from 1999 to 2000,

when the power handover was taking place. Why did you decide to return to the footage you shot at the turn of the millennium? I didn't think I would ever return to the material. The times themselves returned me to it. The disaster that befell my country made me look again at the whole history, at how we could let it happen that Putin came to power.

What was the disaster for you? Like for everyone else, it is Crimea, the events in Eastern Ukraine and Russia's war with the whole world. **What was your impression of Putin back then? No documentarists has gotten so close to him since.** No one has gotten as close because Putin no longer needed it. In the elections back then he strived for presidency and my TV films were useful for him. No one knew him, he wasn't too likeable, he lacked charisma and was haunted by a KGB past. For me, too, he was an unknown person but he was backed by people whom I trusted. So I gradually got to know him, learned his ways. Looking back I was quite naïve, I assumed that a society that was liberated with the end of the communist regime, couldn't lose its freedom just as easily.

How do you look now at the role of Boris Yeltsin? He was a very sick man and had occupied the Russian throne for too long. It's often forgotten that Yeltsin had undergone heart surgery before the elections. During the final four years it was a collective entity, then called "the family," that actually ruled instead of him and they directed everything towards that handover to Putin. Still, the Yeltsin era was a path towards democratization, at least from 1991 to 1996. **Do you see the events in Russia**

of 1999 and 2000 as a warning to Western countries as well? Yes, I wanted my film to have a universal value. Because the same can happen anywhere else. Including the Czech Republic. Politicians even in the West have lost a sense of responsibility that they should lead their societies towards higher goals. On the contrary they started to exploit the public mood to gain political advantage. That applies to Trump as well as the Czech president. Luckily he's no longer that young, so hopefully isn't as dangerous. **In the film we see Putin's former allies, most of whom however have ended up in opposition sooner or later.** Putin was ushered to power by democratic, liberal politicians. And maybe that is their main offence vis-à-vis Russian society and history. The liberals became the first victims of the one they had chosen. They built a robot – and it turned against them. Immediately after assuming power, Putin started destroying all public institutions that the opposition leaned on. **As a liberal yourself do you feel any responsibility for what happened then?** Of course! I feel responsibility and guilt and I think that other democrats from that time feel similarly. On the other hand, many of them still pursue a path of compromise with Putin and that bothers me. ●