**Oscar candidates, playing with reality, and Barry Keoghan.
Pragueshorts announces its complete program**

The 19th Pragueshorts Film Festival, which runs from 26 February to 2 March at Prague’s Světozor, Bio Oko, Ponrepo, and Kino Pilotů cinemas, has officially released its complete program. The festival, organized under the banner of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, will officially open on Wednesday 26 February at the Bio Oko with a block of films titled *Relax, It’s Not Real*, featuring shorts by directors Coralie Fargeat (nominated for an Oscar for *The Substance*) and Alice Rohrwacher, among others.

The International Competition presents a genre- and geographically diverse selection of 26 films from 23 countries, including Oscar nominees and films that were a hit at Cannes, Berlin, and Venice. Another competition section, LABO, consists of eight experimental films defined by a desire for exploration. And the third competition section is the National Competition, where audiences can see 15 outstanding examples of domestic filmmaking.

As in the past, this year’s festival will feature the popular *Brutal Relax Show*, an evening of horror and frighteningly funny and disturbing films moderated by Jan Špaček, plus weekend screenings for kids and their parents. Also on the program are a special section titled *Hot Topic: My Body* exploring the topics of self-acceptance, identity, and the body; a section titled *We Love Barry Keoghan*, which will delight fans of this talented actor; and a tribute to the NEOZOON art collective. From 2 to 23 March, the festival continues online on KVIFF.TV, where you can catch selected films from the program.

For a full program and ticket sales, see [**here**](http://program.pragueshorts.com).

Complete press materials, including a press release presenting the National Competition program, can be found [**here**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fa6_VQYRbQKckwqg6ufyK2OSiQcRMd4Q?usp=sharing).

**International Competition presents 26 films from 23 countries**

Of some 1,200 submitted films representing 23 countries, the festival’s programmers have chosen 26 live-action, animated, and documentary films for the International Competition. These films will be shown in a total of five blocks that offer audiences a unique opportunity to familiarize themselves with contemporary trends in short film production. “This year’s International Competition is truly diverse. I am glad that we can present works from places such as Panama or Haiti whose cinematic creations are rarely seen by Czech audiences. Naturally, the line-up also includes greatly anticipated films that have already been shown at some of the world’s leading festivals, where they have collected numerous prestigious international awards,” says Pragueshorts organizer Radka Weiserová. One such film is the Palm d’or-winning Oscar nominee *The Man Who Could Not Remain Silent*, which recalls a tragic event from the Yugoslav war. Vying for the Academy Award for Best Short Animated Film is the delicate puppet animation *Beautiful Men*. The suspenseful Spanish drama *Masterpiece* won at last year’s Sundance Film Festival, and coming to Pragueshorts after earning a Golden Bear at the Berlinale is the free-spirited Argentine film *An Odd Turn.* The international jury will award one main prize, which comes with a financial reward of 3,000 euros; the jury will also name two Special Mentions.

**Barry Keoghan and the festival’s opening ceremony featuring films by Coralie Fargeat and Alice Rohrwacher**

On Wednesday 26 February, the opening program of this year’s Pragueshorts at Bio Oko presents five films that experiment with reality. Like her recent horror hit *The Substance*, director Coralie Fargeat’s *Reality+* tackles the theme of a society obsessed with physical beauty. It does so by imagining a world in which people can use a brain chip to easily transform into a sexy version of themselves. Young Jay escapes from the reality of everyday life into a dreamlike fantasy in *An Urban Allegory*. Based on Plato’s famous allegory of the cave, it is a joint project by renowned Italian director Alice Rohrwacher and French street artist JR. Audiences can also look forward to *I’m Not a Robot*, the story of a woman who must contend with a new reality after a series of failed Captcha tests. Besides receiving an Oscar nomination, the film has earned more than 60 festival awards.

This year’s Pragueshorts has also dedicated a special section to actor Barry Keoghan, the 32-year-old Dublin native who, thanks to roles in *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*, *Dunkirk*, and *The Banshees of Inisherin*, has rapidly acquired a reputation as a highly talented actor of his generation. The four short films from 2013–2016 that we have included in “We Love Barry Keoghan” show the beginnings of his career providing a look back at British and Irish cinema of the last decade.

**Industry program and support for young directors**

The Karlovy Vary International Film Festival first organized the Pragueshorts Film Festival in 2005. In the nearly two decades of its existence, Pragueshorts has not only become a popular survey of the best short films of the previous year but has also grown into a distinctive platform for supporting and presenting talented domestic filmmakers. Over the course of the year, Pragueshorts organizes, among other things, a presentation of film schools for interested applicants and a consultancy workshop to help filmmakers develop and finance their short films. Every year, the Pragueshorts industry program offers lectures and discussions that help beginning filmmakers navigate the domestic and international audiovisual industry. “Seeking out and supporting young talents has been an important part of the Pragueshorts Film Festival since the very beginning,”says Kryštof Mucha, executive director of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. “In this way, we follow on other activities associated with the Karlovy Vary festival that aim to support emerging filmmakers and help us understand their needs. Among other things, we apply this experience in the KVIFF Talents project, which since 2022 has offered Czech and Slovak filmmakers systematic support for developing feature and other films. The next edition of KVIFF Talents will be launched at this year’s Pragueshorts,” Mucha adds.

**An innovative and creative LABO and a tribute to the NEOZOON art collective**The LABO competition program traditionally presents films that explore new forms of cinematic expression. This year, it will show eight films characterized by innovative approaches and a yearning for discovery. Examples include the French film *The Exploding Girl*, which was nominated for a European Film Academy award, and the Czech Republic’s *Medical Field Guide or Rules of Engagement with Native E-Girls* about a former member of the Foreign Legion. The jury for the LABO section, which consists of representatives from the Czech art scene, will name one film the festival’s Best Experimental Film, an award that comes with a financial prize of 1,000 euros.

For fans of contemporary art and experimentation, the festival’s organizers offer the unique opportunity to get to know the work of the women’s artistic collective known as NEOZOON, which over the past few years has shown its work at a number of prestigious international exhibitions and film festivals, for instance at the Centre Pompidou and the International Film Festival in Rotterdam. Our tribute to NEOZOON consists of eight short films on the subjects of consumerism, religion, or animals in the human world. The filmmakers will subsequently talk about their work at a master class titled “NEOZOON: Nothing Cute to See Here.”

**Public discussion on current issues and a children’s program**

This year, Pragueshorts has put together a new program for teens and young adults called *Hot Topic: My Body*, which aims to provide an inclusive and supportive venue for discussing current topics. A screening of three films on the subjects of self-acceptance, identity, and our bodies will be followed by a public discussion with well-known figures and experts. Chef Adam Rundus, influencer Christian Kozel, and Markéta Brabcová of the non-profit organization Konsent have all promised to participate.

As in the past, the festival will also feature the popular *Pragueshorts for Kids* program, which presents animated and live-action films from around the world, chosen especially for preschool-aged children.

The winners of the 19th Pragueshorts Film Festival will be announced on Saturday 1 March at the Bio Oko cinema during the festival’s *Long Night with Short Film*. On Sunday 2 March, Pragueshorts moves to the KVIFF.TV streaming platform, where around 60 films from the festival program will be available for online viewing.