



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival

Festival Daily

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PRÁVO

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Wanna be a pimp for a day?

Director Scott Sanders makes it big with a little help from his friends

Laura McGinnis

If the film career doesn't pan out, Scott Sanders could always try his hand at finances. The director's latest film is a paradigm of economy. Sanders shot on a shoestring budget, fleshing out his movie with discounted stock footage and scenes filmed in his garage. On his first trip out of North America, the director came to KVIFF this week to spin discs at KV hotspot Aeroport, deliver a Master Class with director Cary Joji Fukunaga and introduce his film – the blaxploitation spoof/tribute *Black Dynamite*.

■ **How do you pitch a story like *Black Dynamite*? Do you just sit somebody down and say "White House nunchuck battle" and wait for them to sign up?**

It started with Michael Jai White, who plays Black Dynamite. He came up with the idea of being a blaxploitation character and ... he showed me some pictures of himself – in that outfit actually, in the nunchuck battle White House outfit. And, I was like, "OK, let's do this." And so we shot a trailer, a fake trailer, that cost us like 500 dollars and we just ran around shooting it and that's actually what raised the money. We didn't have a script yet, so a lot of the lines in the trailer had nothing behind them.

■ **A film like *Black Dynamite* treads a fine line between parody and tribute. How do you manage to go over the top without going over the cliff?**

That's a good question. Some might argue that the White House nunchuck scene might be "going over the cliff." A lot of the scenes are based upon scenes that are in blaxploitation movies. With a lot of the over-the-top stuff, there's



Photo: KVIFF
Director Scott Sanders who was in town to present his film *Black Dynamite*.

something extremely similar in the real movies.

■ **How did you get people in on this project?**

Well, Michael Jai White was friends with a lot of them, so it was pretty easy. I mean, especially on the pimp deck, where we have the pimp council. You know, people in Hollywood, as much as it's hard to get things done, they're just looking to have fun. And so you ask them, "Hey, would you like to dress up and be a pimp for a day on a pimp council..." We actually had people who

weren't in the movie who wanted to come in, like Macy Gray was gonna be a pimp, but her plane got held up.

■ **The 1970s are obviously the heyday for blaxploitation films, although a few parodies and tributes have been made in later decades. Do you think a film like this has to be set in the 1970s to work?**

Yeah. I do. We get compared to *Undercover Brother* a lot and also *I'm Gonna Get You Sucka*. I think those are good movies in their own right. I just think if you're

going to do a parody of blaxploitation, it's such a specific time period. It's 1972 to 1975. After that, disco came and ruined it all. The world went to another place.

■ **Czech audiences obviously didn't get a lot of exposure to the original blaxploitation films in the 1970s. Do you think somebody can appreciate this movie without having seen *Shaft* or *Superfly*?**

I have no idea... The movie has so much physical stuff in it that I think it probably will work OK.

I mean, I watched it with a German audience and they pretty much got all the jokes except for a couple... To be honest, I'm surprised that more people don't like it. I kind of prepared myself for the fact that when I made the movie that a lot of people would have issues with it.

■ **Have you found that to be the case?**

The reception has been completely not what I expected. Like, we had a screening for an older black audience who I thought would really like the movie and they really did not, whereas apparently in Sydney, Australia they loved it. So that's just not something I really expected.

■ **Tell me about the music. Was Adrian Younge in charge of the soundtrack?**

He did all of the original music and he did a great job. He's also the editor. And he's also a friend of mine, and how I met him is we used to be DJs together. And so I kind of got him involved in this and said, "Hey, would you like to edit your first film and help me compose it?" And he did a great job. A lot of the music came from David Hollander, who was my music supervisor, and that actually all came from ... production libraries here in Europe that were like funk libraries.

■ **What's next for you?**

That's a good question. I think I should get a job... I would like to try to do a Hollywood movie... I'm also going to a lot of film festivals, but that's not really a job. They pay for everything but I don't make a salary. I'm trying to weigh those two things because I've never been anywhere either, so I also like to just go to all of these exotic places.

■ ***Black Dynamite* screens at midnight in the Thermal's Small Hall.**

THE LOWDOWN

The KVIFF hotels and their sometimes perplexing customs are, for better or worse, some of the most story-worthy icons of the festival. Over the years, fest regulars have developed a deep relationship with accommodations that may come with soaring-concrete-and-brown-aluminum-siding or jumpy staff that have long lists of obscure rules.

One new arrival, **Charles Officer**, director of *Nurse.Fighter.Boy*, got the introduction of a lifetime when, after an all-night flight from North America and a two-hour drive to Karlovy Vary at 6am, he was told his room at the Venus wasn't yet ready. But an ever-helpful clerk suggested an impromptu solution: Why not have a "jet spa bath" while you wait?

Not a bad idea, thought Officer. Or at least he did until an elderly female attendant who spoke no English greeted him in the hydro room of the hotel and, through sign language, **ordered him to strip**. Completely. "No towel! No towel," she managed to say.

They proceeded from there, following the standard procedures of Karlovy Vary spa therapy, which have changed little since before the Velvet Revolution. It's an efficacious and clinical, if not particularly nurturing, approach, let us say.

Eventually the room was ready and Officer **escaped with his life** and what remained of his dignity. The woman who ordered him to bare all has been asking after him ever since. The Lowdown is told, and wondering when he'll be back. ■

NOTICE: Today there will be extra, unscheduled screening of **Pedro Almodóvar's *Broken Embraces*** (Thermal's Grand Hall, 11:30am) and **Ken Loach's *Looking for Eric*** (GH Pupp Cinema, 10pm). ■

SEE YOU THERE

Humberto Hinojosa Ozcáriz

Director, *Black Sheep*

I want to recommend *Those Who Remain*. It's another Mexican film. Carlos Hagerman and Juan Carlos Ruflo have made a lot of documentary films with their sense of Mexican people. In this case it's a story about the people who stay in Mexico when their families go to the United States. And it's a very interesting point of view, how the directors focus not on the people who go to the other side, but on those who stay. It's very interesting, how they stay, they hope and dream. The other one I'm interested in is *Cold Souls*. I've just seen the trailer and it's a very original idea about an actor trying to find his soul. The director has a very interesting point of view, so that's the other movie I'd recommend.

■ ***Cold Souls* screens tonight at 8pm in the Thermal's Grand Hall and tomorrow at 10am in the Espace Dorleans. *Those Who Remain* screens tonight at 7pm in the Panasonic Cinema. You can also see Humberto's film *Black Sheep* tonight at 7pm in the Espace Dorleans Cinema.**



THE KNOWLEDGE

Healing waters and terrible fires – a brief history of KV

A place like Karlovy Vary doesn't just spring up overnight. This fairytale town has been a long time in the making. The city owes its very existence to the healing hot springs it is famous for. It was named after King (and Holy Roman Emperor) Charles IV who, legend has it, discovered the hot springs while out hunting. He subsequently granted city privileges to the settlement in 1370. Legends aside, archaeological research has unearthed evidence of an ancient Bronze Age settlement and the remains of a Slavic settlement nearby.

In the 16th century, Karlovy Vary underwent major construction and there was a boom in balneological activities. In the 17th century, however, the town faced the hazards of the Thirty Years War and a series of disasters, including a fire in 1604 that destroyed 99 of the existing 102 buildings. Slowly, the inhabitants rebuilt their town and towards the end of the 17th century it began to flourish again,



boosted by a flood of aristocratic visitors. Visits by Peter the Great in 1711 and 1712 greatly promoted the town as a spa retreat.

The 18th century saw further flourishing of the spa trade, but unfortunately there was another devastating fire in 1759. Again, the townspeople rebuilt and the city's reputation as a center of healing grew. Its connection to the European railway network in 1870 was of crucial significance to its development. Two world wars and 40 years of communism left the city battered but not defeated. Thankfully, both the town and its film festival have gone from strength to strength since the Velvet Revolution of 1989. ■