

Showcasing artistic originality in KVIFF's Musical Odyssey

Cóilín O'Connor

Film and music have always been good bedfellows and this year's **Musical Odyssey** section offers some fine fusions of both art forms. Since it was first introduced in 2003, this hip sidebar has screened celluloid presentations of some of the most interesting contemporary music around.

"We have tried to develop it as a sort of continuous chronicle which not only brings good films with music but also bears witness to what was happening in this field over a certain period of time," says music journalist Pavel Klusák, who chose the films. The 2009 selection, which is being presented under the subheading **Global and Intimate: Two Ends of the Same Spectrum**, includes a wide range of films that are symptomatic of international trends in music and film, but which also offer an up-close-and-personal look at the artists involved.

"In these films, you can see the emergence of certain global tendencies that have been brought about by things such as internet communication," says Klusák. "And the musicians who are the subject of the film, as well as the filmmakers themselves, reflect these developments in a very personal and intimate manner."

The use of mobile phone footage and other media to provide an in-depth portrait of an alternative music festival in *All*



French dance duo Justice in *A Cross the Universe*.

Tomorrow's Parties is one example of what Klusák is talking about, but you can also see contemporary musical trends in *Before the Music Dies*, a documentary that takes an exhaustive look at the tensions that exist between creative musicians and the corporate powers that distribute their output.

The reluctance of the musicians featured in this film to bow to pressure to make their music more popular and accessible is another common thread running through many of this year's movies.

"These films are about a certain unwillingness to comply with the mainstream perception," says Klusák. "They show individuals finding the strength to perceive music personally and refusing to let anyone impinge on this."

This uncompromising individ-

uality is particularly evident in *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, which creates an intimate "portrait" of the musician David Toop by focusing on his record collection. The unbending artistic values of the original poetess of punk are more than apparent in Steven Sebring's *Patti Smith: Dream of Life*, which follows the fascinating bohemian life of the singer over a period of 11 years. There is also plenty of rebellious rock'n'roll behavior on display in *A Cross the Universe*, an entertaining record of French electronic dance duo Justice touring America.

Although this year's selection is broadly international in scope, there are also some films with a decidedly local emphasis: Vincent Moon's *Little Blue Nothing* looks at the innovative traditional music created by

Czech duo Vojtěch and Irena Havel, while Peter Křišťáček's *Snapshots* reappraises the career of the hugely talented, but enigmatic Slovak rock poet Ivan Štrpka, who died in 1995 at the premature age of 48.

A Musical Odyssey also stands out from many other KVIFF sidebars in that it includes several different film forms and formats. One notable example of this is Richard Chartier's montage collection of experimental films and musical images *Colorfield Variations*, which was originally presented as a gallery event.

"We present big distribution movies, but we also have things from video distribution that we feel are overlooked and have had no critical reception," says Klusák, who adds that the main criteria for selecting these works is their quality, not just in terms of the music portrayed, but also in terms of how well the cinematic medium is used to do this. "This is a film festival and people would never accept a film just because of how good the music is," he says. "The film itself is the decisive factor."

WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

Marion Döring
European Film Academy

What brings you to KVIFF?

The national film academies of Europe are holding a meeting here. It's a regular thing we have at KV. This is the fourth time we've done it.

And what do you discuss?

Every year we have different subjects, but mainly it's an exchange of our experiences, projects and ideas. It's very good to meet with people who organize film awards like we do. Every year the national academies have their national awards and we organize and produce the **European Film Awards**. We have created a network here called **FAN of Europe**. It stands for Film Academies Network of Europe. It's a name we're quite proud of!

How long have you been coming to the festival?

I have been coming for something like 15 years now, more than I can even remember.

Why do you keep coming back?

It happens at a very good time in the year and it's in a central location, so it's easy to get to. There's also a wonderful hospitality here. What I like about



KVIFF is the light spirit that prevails here. There's always a little irony in everything that is done. There's a very good humor at this festival that is pretty special. You can see this in all the trailers and clips that are shown here. What I mainly like is the fact that it's such a young festival. You have all these wonderful young people queuing to get into the cinema and sleeping in parks. They create a very special atmosphere. You feel like the films are really welcomed here by the audience. This is a real passionate and very rare spirit that you don't find everywhere.

Master Classes

Today's KVIFF **Master Class** will be given by the American actor, director and producer **John Malkovich** who will be receiving a Crystal Globe this year for his outstanding artistic contribution to world cinema. The class will be held at **7pm in the Zender Hall (Lázně 1, Mariánskolázeňská 2)**. Because of this venue's limited capacity, those who wish to attend the event are advised to get there early. No one will be admitted to the class once the event starts.

KVIFF Master Classes are given by directors, actors and other film professionals whose work is being shown at the festival.

Archives sidebar includes three restored classics

Laura McGinnis

Face lifts, skin peels, Botox: It's no secret that movie stars take drastic measures to fight the aging process. Chemicals and computers are the tools Grover Crisp uses to restore the youth of his charges – not Hollywood starlets, but the films themselves. Crisp recently led the restoration of two Hollywood classics, *From Here to Eternity* and *Cover Girl*, which, along with the Czech silent film *Gipsies*, recently restored by the National Film Archive in Prague, make up the sidebar **Treasures from the Film Archives**.

"There are a number of contributing factors to film degradation and deterioration. How the film has been stored, the type of film stock, the amount of overprinting on the film elements are the most common causes resulting in issues of physical condition," Crisp says. "Once we know the inherent qualities or issues of our material, including audio, we decide the best approach to restoration, which could be photochemical, digital or a combination of both technologies."

With pounding surf and soaring strings, the beach scene in *From Here to Eternity* is an iconic moment in U.S. cinema. On film, Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr are forever young, captured in that moment by Fred Zinnemann's cameras. But the film that preserves their eternal youth has not weathered time as gracefully.

Crisp and his colleagues used



Newly restored classic *From Here to Eternity*.

both photo-chemical restoration processes and digital technology to make the film (originally released in 1953) and the 1944 comedy *Cover Girl* look as they might have when they were first released.

"With some digital technology, we were able to remove most of the built-in dirt and gouges to the film, plus reduce or remove scratches. By digitizing the audio elements, we are also able to remove pops, crackles and so forth, in ways that we could not do at one time. Depending on the severity of these problems, we can make great improvements," Crisp says.

The Czech National Film Archive employed similar techniques to restore the 1922 Czech film *Gipsies*, splicing together four incomplete copies and combining tinting and toning processes to enhance the movie's color.

The three films in this section

are very different. *Cover Girl* is a musical comedy starring Rita Hayworth and Gene Kelly. *From Here to Eternity* is a drama set on a Hawaiian army base on the eve of the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. And *Gipsies* is an adaptation of a Romantic novella by Karel Hynek Mácha. It will be presented at the festival, as it was nearly a century ago, with live musical accompaniment.

"Karel Anton made many important films, but this one is maybe one of his best," says KVIFF artistic director Eva Zaoralová.

In the past, KVIFF has run several films restored by the National Film Archive, most recently Fritz Lang's *The Spiders* in 2007. This year, festival programmers decided to expand the section to include three films. "If it were up to me, I'd play 50," says programmer Karel Och. "This is a very audience-friendly section."

REVIEWERS RECOMMEND

Nick Holdsworth

Eastern Europe Bureau Chief, *Variety*



Black Dynamite

Director: Scott Sanders
July 9, midnight, Small Hall – Thermal Hotel

This is an extremely well done pastiche of 1970s blaxploitation movies. It's absolutely hilarious and will have you rolling in the seats. The characters are as well observed as you can observe characters who are actually cartoon characterizations of people who weren't really characters back in the seventies. Scott's just had a lot of fun with this. The music is great. It's just a really funny film and it sails pretty close to the wind in terms of political correctness, which is another reason why I like it.



Oxygen

Director: Ivan Vyrypaev
July 9, 10pm, Espace Dorleans Cinema

This is a somewhat pretentious Russian film, which is really a collection of video clips set to a fairly deep and apparently meaningful poem about the nature of life and death and murdering your wife with a shovel. It's extremely lyrical. It just has to be experienced. I must confess a slight vested interest here in that one of the brief voiceovers of an apparent BBC commentator is mine... But if you want to sample the cutting edge of the new wave of young Russian directors, this is a less nihilistic and bleak one than most at the moment.



Choose Me

Director: Alan Rudolph
July 9, 10pm, Panasonic Cinema

Choose Me from the Alan Rudolph retrospective is a delightfully wacky ensemble film about people who don't really know what love is but yearn for it. A completely mad radio commentator called Dr. Love advises a reformed hooker (played by Lesley Ann Warren) who runs a bar called Eve's Lounge. Their lives are hilariously disrupted when an escaped lunatic called Mickey (Keith Carradine) enters their lives. (We're never really sure whether he's really been a CIA spy in Moscow and a jet fighter pilot and everything else he claims to be.) This film is a funny and welcome relief from some of the more obtuse films at Karlovy Vary this year.



Scratch

Director: Michal Rosa
July 9, 5pm, Karlovy Vary Municipal Theater

This is a very interesting Polish film that lifts the lid on the damage that Communism and its system of secret police can do to the lives of individuals. Here we have a couple already in their late 60s or early 70s who have apparently been happily married for 30-odd years. Suddenly it emerges that the husband had been instructed to marry the wife years ago when he was in the Polish secret police. The devastating impact this has on the marriage and what it does to both characters is revealed in all its force. It's not an easy watch but it's worth seeing.