

## OFFICIAL SELECTION

***I Am Not Your Friend***  
– exploring  
the dark side of  
human relations

Zbyněk Vlasák

Hungarian filmmaker György Pálfi is perhaps best known for his grotesque study of human bestiality in *Taxidermia*. His latest feature *I Am Not Your Friend*, which screens today in this year's KVIFF Official Selection, takes an equally provocative look at the seamy side of human relationships. Besides its challenging subject matter, the picture is also highly experimental in form, using improvisations prepared by nine amateur actors.

■ **The film begins with a short documentary about some young children. What was the idea behind this?**

The point of the film is that, already at the kindergarten level, the same kinds of human games are played out as they are later on in the "grown-up" world. These kids are perfectly capable of emotionally manipulating each other, with the undisguised aim of wanting to become respected members of their community. By saying "I'm not your friend any more" – which became the film's title – kids can exclude someone from their society within seconds. This is one of the most severe punishments a human being can get, both in childhood and in adult life.

■ **Do you think the moral emptiness displayed by the pro-**



Photo: KVIFF

**tagonists is a malaise that affects the entire developed world?**

These people are not "empty," but they want to be happy in a terribly forced and spasmodic way. In societies where individuals don't have to struggle for mere survival, there will probably be similar problems. But of course, the methods of "finding happiness" are different in the case of each individual, and it is safe to say that there are cultural differences in this as well.

■ **Why did you use improvisations to shoot the film?**

I wanted to see and record the faces of the characters as decisions are actually made, to show the feelings of the moment. For this reason, we shot each scene only once. No one from the crew knew what was going to happen in the next moment. The cameramen and the sound crew had the same freedom; they could move as freely as the actors.

■ **How did the script look at the beginning of the shoot?**

There was no script. Or rather, our script was the casting: we wanted to base the whole film on the nine people we chose to work with. Before shooting started, we talked a lot and played a lot together, in order to get to know each other. Then we jointly developed the system of relationships that was to appear in the film: who is the husband, wife, lover of whom, etc. On the fourth day we were already shooting on location.

■ **Do you think there are some similarities between *I Am Not Your Friend* and *Taxidermia*?**

The two films are about the same thing – only the methods are different. It seems that my basic questions haven't changed: a human being's biological, social and historical determinations, the limits of individual freedom and free choice.

*I Am Not Your Friend* screens today at 8pm in the Thermal's Grand Hall and tomorrow at 10am in the Espace Dorleans Cinema.

## OFFICIAL SELECTION

***Will Not Stop There***  
– a redeeming look at  
the Yugoslav conflict

Laura McGinnis

"I believe that redemption is possible through love," says Vinko Brešan, director of the Croatian-Serbian feature *Will Not Stop There*. The Official Selection film, which explores themes of love and war, violence and redemption, and the tenacious grip of the past, will have its international premiere today.

Djuro is a sarcastic young man who pays the bills by starring in obscure Serbian skin flicks, including a XXX adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood*. When his co-star Desa, a prostitute, captures the attention of a Croatian war veteran named Martin, Djuro agrees to help him track her down. With limited options, Martin purchases Desa from her pimp and moves her to a new city, where the two discover that the war may be over, but the past is not as distant as it seems.

The influence of the Serbo-Croatian conflict is still pervasive throughout the region, so it's hardly surprising that the topic has influenced so many artists from the former Yugoslavia. But drawing on such sensitive material can be risky, Brešan says.

"Of course it's risky. And by that, I don't just mean politically... There's also the risk that you will transform the film into a certain political statement and you'll lose what the film is all about – and



Photo: KVIFF

that's emotions." The universality of human experience is essential to a good story, and humor, such as that provided by the film's sarcastic protagonist, can be a useful tool in making a story personal, and not simply political, the director says. But that, too, can be perilous, as humor has the potential to offend – particularly when applied to such contentious material.

Ultimately, it's a question of timing. If you make a film directly after a painful event, you risk isolating people whose wounds are still raw. But if you wait until the pain has disappeared, you may miss an opportunity to capitalize on its relevance.

"Obviously it is too early to make films about the war through a humorous discourse. But this is exactly why I'm making such movies – because it is too early," Brešan says. "If there were a 'right time' to make these movies, there would be no need for them."

Dark humor is an important

aspect of this film, but *Will Not Stop There* is certainly not a comedy – and that's fine with Brešan. For him, the genre of a film is of secondary importance. The most important thing, he says, is sincerity. A film will not resonate with an audience if it lacks authenticity.

"A film could be an absurdist comedy. It could be drama or tragedy. It could be completely stylized. But if a movie has sincere emotions, then the audience will recognize it as a documentary film," says Brešan. "Life is a combination of drama, melodrama, comedy and tragedy."

All of these elements mix freely in this tragicomic feature. But ultimately, *Will Not Stop There* has one essential theme.

"This is a film about redemption," Brešan says.

*Will Not Stop There* screens today at 5pm in the Thermal's Grand Hall and tomorrow at 1pm in the Espace Dorleans Cinema.



Skupina ČEZ

GENIÁLNÍ PANTER

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MFF Karlovy Vary

