

17th Bratislava Film Festival Features Films on Family, for Family

Compared to past several years, the upcoming edition of the Bratislava International Film Festival will place greater emphasis on thematic sections. One of the main themes of this year's edition, which has also determined its visual identity, is family. Festival-goers will have a great opportunity to get acquainted with contemporary filmmakers' perception of the phenomenon of family, an issue that has rocked not only Slovak society in recent months.

"We see our festival's forte in inventive dramaturgy, which juxtaposes films to each other and creates new and sometimes perhaps surprising connections between them. This year's programme structure therefore features many sections that are carefully composed by their curators, which allows us to keep abreast with the hottest trends, respond to issues that have taken the world around us by storm or introduce concrete subjects to the public discourse. Besides, the themes of special sections will also be reflected in the festival campaign," said Pavel Smejkal, Bratislava IFF Programme Director and curator of the section entitled **Topic: Family**.

Each of the films in this thematic section treats the family motive from a different angle and through a different genre. A family drama, **Nahid** (2015), is firmly anchored in life and customs of modern Iran. A story of a woman who struggles to obtain custody of her son after divorcing her husband, the picture explores the institution of *sigheh* or temporary marriage, which is very little known in this part of the world. In strict Iranian legislation, *sigheh* represents kind of a loophole that allows couples to coexist outside regular matrimony. In her surprisingly mature directorial debut, Ida Panahandeh focuses on stigmatisation and other problems facing female divorcees in a society ruled by the conservative version of Islamic ethics. Perhaps **Nahid** will make festival-goers remember Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation* (*Jodaeiye Nader az Simin*, 2011) the Bratislava film festival presented four years ago.

Part of the Family section is also a block of short films that features a festival smash hit by young Austrian director Patrick Vollrath, **Everything Will Be Okay** (*Alles Wird Gut*, 2015), a chilling miniature about a father who resorts to a desperate measure as he is unable to bear the trauma of recent divorce and separation from his daughter. In the context of the section, the film makes for a surprising and interesting contra-item to the Iranian picture, **Nahid**.

Slovenian director and Prague's FAMU graduate, Olmo Omerzu demonstrated his sense for building up tension and weaving complex relations between characters already in his debut feature-length film, **A Night Too Young** (*Příliš mladá noc*, 2012), which is also known to Slovak cinemagoers. Similar, though a slightly bit spectacular, is his second fiction feature, **Family Film** (*Rodinný film*, 2015). A married couple embarks on an ocean voyage to a tropical island, leaving at home an adolescent son and his older sister, hoping that they can learn a thing or two from separation. For some time they communicate via video-calls, but at one point the contact goes dead and the parents seem to have disappeared from the face of the earth. This critical situation brings a lot to the surface.

Babai (2015) is a feature-length debut by director Visar Morina and Kosovo's official nominee for Academy Award in the category of for Best Foreign Language Film. Set in pre-war Kosovo of the 1990s, the film tells the story of Nori, a 10-year-old boy who helps his father eke a living by selling smuggled cigarettes on the street. Nori's cowardly father is used to running away from problems, which is exactly what he does as he leaves his son behind and ventures to Germany to pursue his own happiness.



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But stubborn Nori decides to follow his irresponsible father to Germany, track him down on his own and make him seek a working father-son relationship in a new environment.

In her feature-length debut, *16 Years till Summer* (2015), talented Scottish documentarist Lou McLoughlan follows up on her previously released, critically acclaimed short film, *Caring for Calum* (2011). For more than four years, she followed Uisdean, a man in his fifties who had served a 16-year prison time for killing a woman. Upon his release, Uisdean returns to his home village in the Scottish Highland to nurse his father and seek redemption for his past sins. A seductive variation to the biblical story about the return of a prodigal son, the film's depth and narrative remind of a novel rather than a documentary as we usually tend to think of it.

As we have said, programme sections **Topic: Family** and **Nostalgia: VHS Stories** dominate this year's festival campaign. Our desire to highlight the themes that stick out from this year's programme has been materialised in the form of official poster and spot that are both based on the nostalgic atmosphere of family videos and specific creative qualities of the VHS medium, i.e. distorted image, noise and chromatic aberration. In doing so, we toy around with the contrast between two forms of film – the “high-class” art of cinema and “low-end” home videos that may be viewed as marginal but nevertheless form an equally fascinating part of what we call cinema. The new visual identity of Bratislava Film Festival has been created by graphic designer Marián Preis who collaborated with animator and visual artist Marián Vredík on the festival's new jingle and commercial spot.

In compliance with this year's emphasis on family, the Bratislava Film Festival did not forget about the youngest generation of cinemagoers. Together with Fest Anča, Slovakia's largest international festival of animated films, it prepared a programme for the entire family featuring the best animated films released in recent years. “*A short animated film for children may not necessarily be popular-oriented, strictly educational or uselessly garrulous. There are a lot of filmmakers in the world who regularly manage to avoid these notorious shortcomings in their films. Our selection includes pictures that feature some well-thought-out, far-from-obvious humour, which is guaranteed to entertain not only infant viewers but also their adult chaperones,*” said Maroš Brojo, Programme Director of the Fest Anča film festival and curator of the section entitled **Junior: Contemporary Animation for Children**. The projection of the collection of films from the section will take place on Sunday, November 15, at 11.00 at Gorila.sk Urban Space.

For latest updates on the programme of International Film Festival Bratislava, please visit our official website at www.iffbratislava.sk or our official Facebook account at www.facebook.com/bratislavaiff.

17th INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL BRATISLAVA

November 12 – 17, 2015

Kino Lumière, Kino Mladost', Kino Nostalgia, Gorila.sk Urban Space

Main Organisers: **Partners Production, Ars Nova civic association**

The Festival is held under the auspices of Marek Maďarič, Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic.

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Main Partners: **Slovenská elektrizačná prenosová sústava, Transpetrol**

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