

# PROTEKTOR by Marek Najbrt

in the Cinema Europe section  
at the London Film Festival IFF

Screenings:  
October 28, 20:30 NFT2  
October 29, 14:00 NFT1



## 1 JAN HUS – MŠE ZA TŘI MRTVÉ MUŽE JAN HUS – MASS FOR THREE DEAD MEN

D: Miroslav Bambušek  
CZ 2009 | 75 min | DVD  
Cast: Michal Pěchouček, Karel Dobrý, Igor Chmela, Leoš Noha, Milan Stehlík, Tomáš Jeřábek, Halka Třešňáková, Radim Špaček  
Domestic release: October 24

*Jan Hus – Mass for Three Dead Men* is a highly political docu-thriller in the sense that it deals with people who were not indifferent to how public affairs were handled. But the real-life story of Jan Hus is presented not as his biography but rather as a painful issue that permeates the Middle Ages till today. As an issue that invites activism through protests, attacks and suffering; as an issue that opens like jackknife in one's pocket.



## 2 PAMĚTNICE WITNESS

D: Vlado Štancel  
CZ 2009 | 100 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Libuše Švormová, Tomáš Magnusek, Dalibor Gondík, Vladimír Brabec, Vlado Štancel, Jan Cimický, Zita Kabátová, Pavel Zedníček, Josef Zima  
Domestic release: November 5  
[www.pametnice.cz](http://www.pametnice.cz)

When former classmates come together for their 60-year reunion, undoubtedly their last, they find themselves face to face with Miluška Bínová. Bínová, once the most popular student, has returned to her hometown after years of absence, determined to discover which of her schoolmates had ruined her life. Setting the record straight with her classmates is not, however, Bínová's only task. She also needs to reconnect with her family and grandson, who is trying to organize the reunion. Though it may seem so, *Witness* definitely is not about revenge. It is about the life of seniors today, their relationships to their families, to society at large and to other generations.

## 3 JAN KLUSÁK – AXIS TEMPORUM JAN KLUSÁK – AXIS TEMPORUM

D: Dan Kraměš  
CZ 2009 | 57 min | DigiBeta  
Domestic release: November 5

This black-and-white documentary captures composer Jan Klusák in the axis of time (axis temporum) between the ages of 70 and 75, with incomparable vitality, charm and wit. Klusák composes a pivotal composition in this period and follows its genesis into a performance by Petr Altrichter. He allows us a glimpse of his childhood, which comes alive through photographs of his beloved father who perished in Auschwitz, and characterizes the ups and downs of his life. Everything is permeated with his music – music as a mindset.

## 4 OKO VE ZDI EYE IN THE WALL

D: Miloš J. Kohout  
CZ 2009 | 85 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Jürgen Prochnow, Karel Roden, Catherine Flemming, Soňa Valentová  
Domestic release: November 12  
[www.oko-film.cz](http://www.oko-film.cz)

Our story takes place over three rainy and tepid days. Transcending time and national borders, this tale could happen just about anywhere, any time. Psychodramas occur regardless of borders; they do not exact their toll by nationality or race but by the fates of those involved. We meet Sophie and Vincent just as they enter a deserted house. Their curiosity leads them to the bathroom, and somebody locks them in. They have no idea who has locked the door or why. Watching them through a peephole in the wall is an eye, an eye that foretells nothing good...

## 5 ZOUFALCI DREAMERS

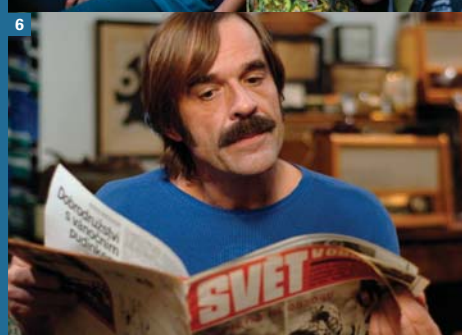
D: Jitka Rudolflová  
CZ 2009 | 97 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Simona Babčáková, Jakub Žáček, Zuzana Onufráková, Václav Neuzil, Pavlína Štorková, Michal Kern, Jaroslav Plesl, Jiří Havelka, Dagmar Bláhová, Jaroslava Obermaierová, Jaroslav Róna, Lucie Žáčková, Helga Čočková  
Domestic release: November 12  
[www.youtube.cz/zoufalci](http://www.youtube.cz/zoufalci)

How to be happy and yet not be alone? A comedy about six thirty-somethings, longtime friends who all gradually moved to Prague from Jablonec. After seeing each other at a party in their hometown, one thing is perfectly clear: While they know what they don't want out of life, they have yet to figure out what they do want.

## 6 ZEMSKÝ RÁJ TO NAPOHLED AN EARTHY PARADISE FOR THE EYES

D: Irena Pavlásková  
CZ 2009 | 110 min | 35 mm  
Domestic release: November 19

The story depicts the mundane yet extraordinary life of Marta, her two adolescent daughters and their "fathers." It opens on the eve of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and ends with the persecution of Charter 77 signatories, when a divorced man, once an actor and later a prominent dissident, emigrates with his new bride, while his seemingly cowardly ex-wife Marta stays behind with her daughters and confronts adversity quietly yet persistently. Audiences may be captured by the story's authenticity and subtle drama, but they will also be enheartened and moved. The film can convey to younger moviegoers, for whom the normalization period is just a hazy legend, how a "normal" Czech family lived.



## 7 BÁBA | DRUHÉ DĚJSTVÍ BABA | THE SECOND ACT (block of films)

D: Zuzana Špidlová |  
D: Olmo Omerzu  
CZ 2008 | 64 min | 35 mm  
Domestic release: November 19

*Baba* – cast: Marika Šopovská, Eva Pokorná, Ondřej Havel  
Mom didn't ask me anything. She just took granny in. Now she is laying in the middle of my room and I have to take care of her. All the time.

*The Second Act* – cast: Petr Marek, Ivana Uhlířová, Nataša Burger  
Cílie and her spouse Martin are the main protagonists of this story of a love that is slowly but surely dying. Between the monotony of life and Martin's never to be finished translation of a novel, the story of a belated honeymoon trip begins to unfold just when everything is actually already lost. The story opens in Prague and ends in Trieste.



## 8 3 SEZÓNY V PEKLE 3 SEASONS IN HELL

D: Tomáš Mašín  
CZ 2009 | 108 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Kryštof Hádek, Karolina Gruszka, Martin Huba, Jan Kraus, Miroslav Krobot, Tatiana Pauhofová  
Domestic release: November 26  
[www.3sezonyvpekle.cz](http://www.3sezonyvpekle.cz)

It's 1947, a time of sensuality, extravagance, humor, anticipation. Ivan, a handsome young provocateur, has left home to join his bohemian friends on a quest for artistic ideals, erotica and total freedom. While composing his first collection of poetry, Ivan rushes headlong into a wild romance with a liberal-minded bisexual, Jana. As the new communist regime begins to show its repressive face, the new lovers are light-footed dancers on the razor's edge. They scoff at society, live off the spoils of petty robberies and plan their escape to Paris, only to find the borders suddenly closed...

## 9 STÍNU NEUTEČEŠ YOU CANNOT ESCAPE YOUR SHADOWS

D: Lenka Kny  
CZ 2009 | 100 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Jaroslava Adamová, Pavel Landovský, Helena Dvořáková, Anna Polívková, František Němec, Matěj Hádek, Alois Švehlík  
Domestic release: December 10  
[www.vnucka.cz](http://www.vnucka.cz)

After sixty years of wedlock, an eighty-year-old woman approaches her granddaughter, a lawyer, to help her get a divorce. The young woman is shocked by her grandma's decision, not to mention her resolve and pertinacity. What must have happened in the elderly couple's relationship that all those decades couldn't smooth over? Not wanting to divide her beloved family, the granddaughter attempts to discover her grandma's reasons. Although the family's dramatic past comes to light, her grandparents' secret remains a mystery to her.

## Czech documentary film announces bold ambition



At a time when documentary production in Europe is feeling the crunch from cuts in public television budgets, this year the Czech Republic can boast approximately the same number as last year – a grand total of ninety-nine documentary films in one year. While only a fraction is screened in cinemas, the ratio in the Czech Republic just keeps getting better – in 2005, three documentaries made it into in Czech cinemas, in 2008, twelve, and by September of this year we had already seen eleven documentaries in theatrical release.

Czech documentaries have also been scoring abroad. Today, it is not unusual to see them being screened and winning awards at prestigious international festivals around the world. Whilst Helena Třeštková has no doubt become Czech documentary film's flagship on the international scene, other documentarists have picked up prizes at important festivals, too, and documentary film was finally

added as a category in the Czech Lion Awards. Now the Institute of Documentary Film (IDF), a non-profit training, promotion and networking centre based in Prague, would like to see a Czech documentary for an Oscar using DocuWeeks as a springboard. The annual event was launched in 1997 by the International Documentary Association (IDA), which selects 18 long and ten short documentaries from the entries for a one-week, summertime run in official distribution in Los Angeles and New York. There, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences members view the works and choose the category's Oscar nominees. Over the years DocuWeeks has primarily presented North American films, but the percentage of European documentaries screened is rising steadily. "This year the Polish documentary *Rabbit à la Berlin* – a film which we at IDF were involved in making – was selected for DocuWeeks. This proves that Eastern European filmmakers' dreams of Oscars are not unattainable," remarks IDF Director Andrea Prenghyová. IDF officials believe that the Czech documentaries gaining acclaim abroad could also make the cut for DocuWeeks, which is actually just one step away from an Oscar nomination.



## PROTEKTOR,

Marek Najbrt's romantic drama set during the Second World War, has its world premiere at the London Film Festival end of October. We chatted with the director about the movie.

### Is *Protektor* inspired by the lives of specific people or is it solely the product of the authors' imagination?

*Protektor* is inspired by Czech history. We culled certain motifs from specific people's lives, but not the story itself.

### Why did you choose to call it *Protektor*? Isn't that title a bit misleading given that the very Reichsprotektor himself, Reinhard Heydrich, only appears in the film for a few moments, from a distance, sitting in an auditorium at the Rudolfinum...?

Our film had very little to do with Heydrich right from the outset. The name *Protektor* is a metaphorical expression of the very essence of the story. The Germans were crafty in calling the occupied lands of Bohemia and Moravia the "Protektorate"; it was a huge swindle that concurrently generated the anxiety that pervaded our country during that period. Emil, our hero, becomes his Jewish wife Hana's protector. But because that protection is contingent on his own collaboration, it is underpinned by a lie. Emil acts against his own beliefs, which in turn causes failure. While Hana (unlike others) isn't actually suffering from deprivation and there is no imminent danger of the regime taking her life, love disappears and the couple's initially harmonious relationship becomes dysfunctional. Emil the defender turns into a mere "protector" as his new position begins to suit him. When Hana seeks an escape from her involuntary solitude, she meets another man. He, a former medical student who is now a projectionist at the cinema where Hana secretly seeks refuge, reveals the sanctuary of internal freedom. He teaches her how to navigate the world of stringent prohibitions and anti-Jewish measures...



The assassination of Heydrich, however, offers up a twist that leads to our two heroes rekindling their bond at the end of the story, however tragic the context and fleeting the moment.

### When you leave the editing room, do you feel relief and joyous anticipation or are you plagued by doubt?

Doubts accompany me constantly and everywhere. Given that self-reflection helps, I consider that a useful part of filmmaking.

### What made you set this fateful love story during the Protectorate era? Isn't that period just too distant and extreme to ensure that it touches the younger generation?

The choice the main character faces is universal. People struggle with similar dilemmas today, too – whether to betray one's convictions, conscience or honor for pragmatic reasons. In a free and wealthy society, however, it rarely has fatal consequences. That is why wartime periods are so popular with filmmakers. It's a time when life is at stake, a period that kick-started the process of moral decay in our nation that subsequently culminated in communism. We are still reaping the fruits of this process today. The Protectorate era is also interesting in that the war did not interfere with it directly. Those who were loyal could live in peace, even with relative material abundance. It is no coincidence then that the media at the time often called for "tranquility for work that needs doing." It has been a popular empty phrase, used in Czech history whenever the "threat" of necessary reform surfaced.



Czech film giant Juraj Herz has recently released his latest horror flick, *Darkness*, and is currently completing a **Czech-German-Austrian co-production called *Habermann's Mill***. The latter is based on actual events and deals with one of the darkest chapters in Czech-German relations – the postwar deportation of Germans. Mark Waschke, Karel Roden and German Shooting Star 2008 Hannah Herzsprung star in leading roles.

American director and screenwriter Gary Keith Griffin is preparing a **film about November 17, 1989** with the working title *Our Hands Are Bare*. Griffin studied at FAMU in Prague in the late eighties and took part in demonstrations himself. He even wants to include shots he took at the time in the film. Experienced and award-winning writer Arnošt Lustig and his son Josef will assist him with the project.

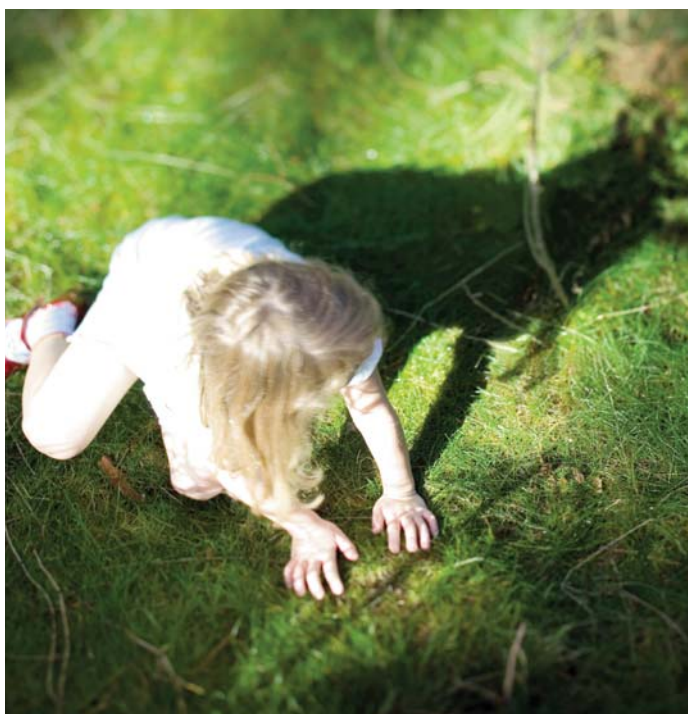
Director and screenwriter Jiří Vejdělek, who created the successful film adaptation of novelist Michael Viewegh's *Holiday Makers* and the critically acclaimed film *Václav*, has begun shooting ***Women in Temptation***. The primary theme of this movie, falling into the "passionate comedy" genre, is love. The premiere is scheduled for March 18, 2010.



When it comes to the new digital format, film producers and what they offer don't lag behind the cinemas in the Czech Republic and abroad which are quickly adopting **digital technology**. The first Czech movie which viewers will be able to watch in stereoscopic format with 3D glasses in digital cinemas will be the last part of the Werich trilogy: *Fimfarum – Third Time Lucky*. Its premiere is planned for October 2010.



Director Maria Procházková's movie about love for both young and old audiences, *Who Is Afraid of the Wolf?*, has been purchased for **theatrical distribution** in a number of European countries. Since competing in the children's section and being received warmly at this year's Berlinale, the picture has graced silver screens in Germany, Austria, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Croatia and France.



## The Restored Films of Jan Špáta

Thanks to a unique digital restoration project aimed at transferring film classics to DVD and Blue-Ray, a selection of films by legendary Czech documentary filmmaker Jan Špáta (1932–2006) will be screened in cinemas on November 5. One of his first directing efforts is the famous cinematic essay *Respicere finem* (15 min) about elderly women awaiting their demises with humility.

*Hallo Satchmo* (26 min) reported on jazz giant Louis Armstrong's visit to Prague in 1965. In *Variations on Gustav Mahler's Theme* (*Variace na téma Gustava Mahlera*, 13 min), Špáta expressed his relationship to and admiration for the Czech-born musical genius of international renown. In the 1990 film *Between Light and Darkness* (*Mezi světlem a tmou*, 24 min), he collaborated with photographer



Jindřich Štreit, a native of the borderlands in northern Moravia, to examine the lives of the heroes in the latter's photos. *Athletic Variations* (*Atletické variace*, 28 min) is a refined essay on athletes' victories and failures at the European Athletics Championships in Athens in 1982.

**More information on [www.janspata.cz](http://www.janspata.cz).**

## Jan Švankmajer's special methods

Acclaimed animated filmmaker Jan Švankmajer is currently working on his latest movie ***Surviving Life (Theory and Practice)***, which he is making with innovative methods. Is neither a computer animation or a feature film. In this movie, photo cut-outs of actors and are animated under the camera. The director also had to integrate with the actors' speech. They first voiced syllables and vowels, as their expressions and movements were recorded and saved in computers. Each phase was then printed and cut out, and were then manually animated under the camera. Moreover, in some scenes the actors play live, but only part of their faces. Švankmajer also worked with "colors" – the live actors are in full color, while black and white photographs of their images "play" in the background.

And what is the premise of the movie? The main protagonist of this psychoanalytic comedy leads a double life. Whereas in real-life he has a wife who suspects him of infidelity, in the dream world he has a pregnant lover. To get to the bottom of this, he finally has his dreams interpreted.

Švankmajer has praised the new technique, which allows unprecedented transformation. He is preparing his latest work in a house in the village of Knovíz near Prague with a team of students from around the world helping him. Producer Jan Kallista forecasts that it will be finished in summer of 2010, and remarks that even now it is a wholly unique spectacle.

