

**PRESS RELEASE:**

**Ji.HLAVA UNVEILS FULL PROGRAMME OF ITS 27<sup>TH</sup> EDITION**

*“The world is changing and Ji.hlava is here to reflect”*

**Prague/Jihlava, October 11, 2023**

Only two weeks are left until the start of this year's Ji.hlava documentary film festival the programme of which will offer more than three hundred and fifty films. Among other things, it will feature a revealing retrospective of the Méliès brothers and Václav Táborský, scenes from the underground of the Kharkiv metro, elderly women on bicycles, the phenomenon of deep fake, and TV pastors influencing US international politics. Films made by artificial intelligence and a portrait of the French bestselling author Édouard Louis will also be included. The Inspiration Forum discussion platform will focus on topics such as food, space, water, communities, and artificial intelligence. The twenty-seventh edition of MFDF Ji.hlava will take place from October 24th to 29th.

This year, the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival will offer **357 films** in both competitive and non-competitive sections, of which **115 will be in world premiere, 22 in international premiere, and 17 in European premiere.**

*“Ji.hlava is a place that brings forth striking images from around the world, connecting the community of filmmakers and viewers. Intense discussions follow the films, much like during the festival's discussion platform, Inspiration Forum”, says Marek Hovorka, the festival director. “The festival is accessible and open to all viewers, an opportunity to meet interesting personalities both on screen and in the audience,” he adds.*

Artificial intelligence and new technologies, the changing planetary climate, migration, transformation of the democratic system and society, as well as the search for new paths to freedom and happiness. The films of this year's programme reflect on the dynamic changes of the contemporary world. *“The world in which we live is rapidly changing, and this year's Ji.hlava brings images of these transformations. The films in the program are thematically and formally very diverse, allowing us to recognize and contemplate the world's transformation,”* says festival director Marek Hovorka, explaining the programme concept of this year's edition.

*“If we were to look at the Ji.hlava programme through the lens of the themes of the presented films, we see films capturing various forms of work, films addressing aging, and examining often dysfunctional interpersonal relationships, the invasion of technology into our everyday lives, and political topics affecting the lives of millions of people in different parts of the world. From an artistic perspective, these are distinctive, personal, and poignant films,”* says Hovorka.



Related to the theme of this year's edition is the American film ***Another Body*** by director duo Sophie Compton and Reuben Hamlyn, in which a college student discovers that her portrait photos were misused in a deep fake pornographic film. Similarly, the director of the film ***The Other Profile*** Armel Hostiou travels to the African Congo to find out who stole his identity via a Facebook profile. The Polish time-lapse documentary ***Distances*** by director Matej Bobrik captures the fate of a Nepalese immigrant, a food courier, who moved to Poland in hopes of a better life. The film ***Praying for Armageddon*** by Tonji Hessen Scheai and Michael Rowley explores the weakening democratic mechanisms in the United States, whether due to influential religious groups or popular TV pastors. The **Constellations** section, which presents a selection of films from other festivals, will feature a new observational documentary ***Youth (Spring)*** by Chinese director Wang Bing, following teenagers working in one of the many Chinese textile factories producing fast fashion for European clothing chains. The film premiered this year at the Cannes festival.

### **Unknown Méliès brothers and Václav Táborský**

*"In addition to showcasing current film production, Ji.hlava offers a unique opportunity to delve into the works of prominent filmmaking personalities. Two showcases will bring closer the pivotal French footprint in film history: one dedicated to the Méliès brothers, and the other to the writer, screenwriter, and director Marguerite Duras. As regards Czech documentary cinema, we will focus on the work of Pavel Koutecký, a chronicler of the postcommunist journey to freedom and capitalism, and Václav Táborský, who in the **Czechoslovak Film Feuilleton** section offers a humorous and unexpected view of the celebrated cinematography of the 60s,"* says Marek Hovorka, outlining this year's retrospectives.

An exploratory showcase of **Gaston and Georges Méliès** will present a unique selection from their work that has not been presented in this way before. *"We collaborated with the Cinémathèque Méliès foundation – Les Amis de Georges Méliès and gathered all the existing films that document the efforts of both brothers to capture the contemporary and historical reality,"* explains the retrospective's curator, David Čeněk. He adds that the aim of the showcase is to demonstrate that Georges Méliès wasn't just a creator of fantastical tricks. The programme includes twenty-eight short films from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, capturing events such as the Dreyfus Affair, the story of Joan of Arc, or the coronation of the English king Edward VII (a film which was directly commissioned by the English royal court from Méliès).

Another retrospective this year will focus on the work of **Václav Táborský**, who turns ninety-five this year, a pioneer of the Czech counterpart to cinéma vérité, who directed over eighty short films. After August 1968, he emigrated to Canada, where he worked as an educator; his body of work includes both feuilleton-style documentary satire and feature-length films for children. His cinematic works depict the hardships of the Czech people not only in the 1960s. In collaboration with the National Film Archive, Ji.hlava this year will also offer a section dedicated to Czechoslovak film feuilletons, which, in addition to Táborský's films, will also commemorate the work of Jiří Papoušek and Radúz Činčera.



### **Special Events: Man in Black and Jim Jarmusch**

*"Several films promise to deliver strong cinematic experiences, having already made a splash at their premiere at this year's Cannes festival. Chinese director Wang Bing, who visited Ji.hlava in 2014, presented in Cannes the exceptional portrait of the living music composer Wang Xilin, titled **Man in Black**,"* points out Marek Hovorka. The protagonist of the film will personally introduce it in Jihlava. *"Another highlight of Ji.hlava will be the screening of **Return to Reason**, for which the rich musical accompaniment was composed and recorded by Jim Jarmusch with his band,"* adds Hovorka. The film was created as a tribute to the first, surrealistically tuned films of American avant-gardist Man Ray. *"When you see a train, Man Ray would probably prefer you to hear the sound of the ocean,"* reveals Jarmusch about the film.

The viewers can also see the film **Blix Not Bombs** directed by Greta Stocklassa, which offers a portrait of the world-renowned diplomat Hans Blix. Until 2003, he was the UN inspector for international arms control and was involved, among other things, in the issue of whether Iraq was producing weapons of mass destruction. *"When the world is burning, call Hans Blix,"* is heard in the film. *"Why can't we live in peace?"* Stocklassa asks. The film will be accompanied by an online debate with Hans Blix.

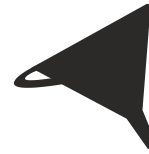
In collaboration with the Czech National Film Archive, Ji.hlava will present the more than a century-old travel film **The Wonders of the Amazon** directed by Silvino Santos. The film was considered lost until recently and is among the key films in the history of South American documentary cinema. The film will be screened as part of UNESCO's World Day for Audiovisual Heritage.

### **Opus Bonum: Elderly nomadic women and Romanian detective story**

What will be featured in this year's competition programme? The Opus Bonum section, which presents diverse approaches and trends in global documentary cinema, will offer seventeen films. Among the selection is the time-lapse **Nomad Solitude** by Belgian filmmaker Sebastien Wieleman about three American elderly women for whom the car is the only available housing option. The documentary mosaic **The Third End of the Stick** by Slovak director Jaro Vojtek introduces four stories from Roma settlements in Slovakia; their protagonists do not fit the profile of the majority society, nor their own community. The reasons include sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or physical disabilities. The almost detective film **A Cautionary Tale** captures the story of Romanian senior Constantin, who worked for a quarter of a century in Turkey – and upon returning to his homeland, found out he is formally considered dead. However, as director Ilinca Călugăreanu eventually discovers, everything is completely different.

### **Czech Joy: Crisis of manhood, and the bowels of the Kharkiv metro**

The competition section **Czech Joy**, which focuses on new Czech documentaries, will introduce fifteen films this year. *"Audiences can look forward to several dimensions: there's an interesting line of films shot abroad, reflecting on the contemporary world in an international context, whether it's China, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, or France. There are strong stories told through intergenerational dialogue, as seen*



in films like ***You Will Never See It All*** or ***The World According to My Dad***. And then there's a pure concentration on the means of artistic cinema, which can be found in the works of Lea Petříková or Martin Ježek," says Marek Hovorka inviting viewers to the traditional Czech Joy section.

Czech premieres will include the film ***Photophobia*** by the Slovak duo Ivan Ostrochovský and Pavol Pekarčík. The film captures the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv in the spring of 2022, where the only safe place was the local metro. "We decided to find something that comes closest to 'ordinary life' and to preserve it as best we could: to capture a moment of genuine humanity in a time of devastating horror," state the creators. Their film, which is the Slovak nomination for an Oscar and opened this year's Venice Film Festival.

***Is There Any Place for Me, Please?*** directed by Jarmila Štuková will also be premiered. The film follows the story of Martina, who was attacked by her ex-boyfriend with acid, causing third-degree burns and blinding her. The documentary portrait follows her life story after this attack: coping with the loss of physical attractiveness, fear of the world she can't see, and the search for a new meaning in life. "When we started working together, she was deeply traumatized by the attack. She avoided journalists and agreed to the documentary filming only on the condition that if she wanted, I would throw everything away," says the director about the film.

The Slovak director Viera Čákanyová will introduce her new film at the festival. ***Notes from Eremocene***, which straddles the genres of science fiction and philosophical essay, elaborates on the concept of a land shaped by artificial intelligence, where there is no longer a place for the human element.

Jan Gogola Jr. and Matěj Hruďička explore the history of the former prison in Uherské Hradiště in their film ***The Prison of History***. The place was notorious for its brutality, violence, and injustice: during the German protectorate of Bohemia, the prison was used by the Gestapo; after the war, it hosted people's courts and public executions; and later, people who were inconvenient to the communist regime were imprisoned and tortured there.

In the film ***Atirkül in the World of Real Men***, Kyrgyz director Janyl Jusupjan introduces viewers to the harsh world of the game called Buzkashi, a group sport played on horses. Atirkül, a headstrong horse lover with an entrepreneurial spirit, enters the masculine reality of Buzkashi with the ambition to establish her own team. The film follows her daily life as she navigates the challenges and obstacles that come with breaking gender norms in such a male-dominated environment. "Sometimes Atirkül stumbles, but she always gets back up. That's what I learned from her," says the director about the main protagonist who challenges gender stereotypes.

In his film ***Bedwetter***, director Jan Hušek reflects on the crisis of masculinity. Until the age of thirteen, he faced the titular problem: he wet the bed. Through his candid video diary, he captures his physical and spiritual transformation on the journey from a child to a man. "I ran away from home in the middle of the night, and as I walked through the forest, I realized that becoming a man is entirely up to me," says the director about his film.



The **Czech Joy** section will also present the documentary ***O Baripen – The Legacy of Elena Lacková*** directed by Vera Lacková. The film sheds light on the fate of Romani activist and author of the famous book *I Was Born Under a Lucky Star*, Elena Lacková, and her great-granddaughter, singer Alžběta Ferencová, also known as Zea. Both women, despite societal and cultural prejudices, have dedicated their lives to the arts. *"Elena captivated me with her natural humanity and, for her time, timeless emancipation. Our film exudes femininity and the fight for a fair life,"* says the director about the film.

In the Czech Joy section, the film portrait of an older "hippie" named Ian, titled ***La Reine***, will be presented by director Nikola Klinger. Drugs have accompanied his protagonist throughout his life. However, while in the 1960s they were part of the counterculture, today drug addicts who aren't seeking a different or better society but instead bring their own, flock to his lavender farm, far removed from the surrounding world.

### **Testimonies: Executions, Google and the liberation of Édouard Louis**

The competition section **Testimonies**, which monitors current global events, will feature twelve films.

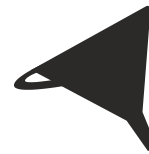
***Project 02*** by American creator Adam Diller will take audiences behind the glossy façade of Google's data centre. The film uncovers the power dynamics, media relations, and ecological implications of this multinational company's operations in the state of Oregon, USA.

***The Hostage Takers*** is a raw film about the fighters of the Islamic State who were responsible for a series of kidnappings, tortures, and executions of Western journalists and humanitarian workers. Created by the Danish duo Puk Damsgård and Søren Klovborg, the film pieces together the testimony of a surviving Danish photographer and interviews with two fighters. These interviews are conducted by a British journalist whose friend was executed by this group.

***The Many Lives of Édouard Louis*** by director François Caillat is a compelling portrait of the famous contemporary French writer. The thirty-one-year-old Louis, who blends philosophy and sociology into his autobiographically inspired literature, is one of the leading figures in the French literary scene. In the film, he narrates the story of his challenging childhood, adolescence, and adult life in a new social stratum.

### **Fascinations and EXPRMNTL.CZ: Established figures and new talents**

This year, film experiments will once again be in the spotlight. The competition section Fascinations will showcase two dozen films from all over the world, including countries like Mexico, Norway, Canada, South Korea, Taiwan, Cuba, and Tunisia. The programme will consist of works from established filmmakers, some of whose creations the Ji.hlava audience has had the chance to view in the past, as well as completely new names. Prominent figures of the global experimental scene such as Dietmar Brehm, Steve Reinke, Mike Hoolboom, Thomas Kutschker, and Karel Doing will be featured. Yet, as with every year, the section also discovers entirely new talents.



According to Andrea Slováková, the curator of the experimental sections, *"The work of experimentalists with natural motifs, exploring landscapes, imprints, echoes, and shadows of plants and animals, often carries an urgent environmental undertone. What remains fascinating about these films is how the conceptual choice of expressive means can emphasize thematic urgencies."*

Artists are exploring the possibilities of the digital image, working with found footage or even classic film techniques, and capturing the world through hand-made lenses, filters, or algorithms.

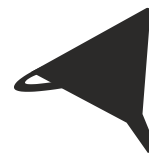
Ji.hlava traditionally features the Czech experimental competition section called Exprmntl.cz. This year, it offers two dozen films. *"Returning to the Czech competition are filmmakers who, in past years, showcased their progressive thinking about the audiovisual capture of the world in Ji.hlava. However, as usual, we are also discovering the upcoming generation of talents,"* says Slováková, describing the showcase. Video artist Adéla Babanová will present her film ***The Law of Time*** at Ji.hlava. This spatial film installation had its premiere at the group exhibition *Shifted Realities* in Prague's Rudolfinum Gallery earlier this spring.

### **Fascinations AI: chatbots and I**

The non-competitive retrospective section Fascinations this year offers a selection of films co-created by AI. *"In the past, we've seen many films where tools and computational processes assisted filmmakers in shaping the film's individual components. Today, we're looking at works where AI's role is autonomous,"* says Andrea Slováková, emphasizing the diverse approaches represented in the selection of thirteen pieces. The theme of identity is explored, for example, through transformations of a single photographic portrait in the film ***Me, Myself, and I***. It was created by a neural network in collaboration with chatbots. Similarly, AI critically examines biases in its own work, as seen in the film ***Fag Face***. AI is also behind the film ***Let's be Friends!***, where it crafted images, sounds, texts, poems, editing sequences, and in some cases, even the narration. Experimental film classic John Smith, in collaboration with AI, produced a metropolitan symphony in an algorithmic translation.

### **Short Joy: free on [dafilms.com](https://dafilms.com). The winner will emerge through online voting.**

Documentary enthusiasts can tune into Ji.hlava even before its kickoff. All nominated short documentaries from the **Short Joy** section, presented as world or international premieres, will be available for free on [dafilms.cz](https://dafilms.cz) from October 9th to 29th, 2023. Moreover, until October 22nd, it will be possible to vote and decide for the winner of the DAFilms Audience Award, which will be announced at the grand opening of Ji.hlava. All voting viewers will be entered into a raffle for a chance to win one of three annual DAFilms subscriptions. *"Short Joy features films from every continent this year. We ensure representation of various directorial approaches and creative methods,"* explains the Ji.hlava curator, Andrea Slováková.



### **27th festival trailer created by Albert Serra**

The festival trailer for the twenty-seventh Ji.hlava was created by Catalan director Albert Serra, whom the legendary film magazine Cahiers du cinéma listed among the fifteen most important young directors of the last decade. *"Once in an interview, I said that I decided to become a filmmaker so I could make fun of the world. They made it a headline, and in large print, it seemed even more true to me. I think it's the healthiest attitude an artist can adopt. My entire work stems from this principle. I love Ji.hlava. I love the festival,"* says the director, often referred to as the "discovery of the Cannes Festival". The trailer is available [here](#).

### **Who will sit in the jury?**

This year, a five-member jury in the Opus Bonum section will decide not only on the winner of the main prize but also on the best camera, editing, or sound design. The members will be French editor **Dominique Auvray**, American writer and educator **Michael Renov**, Czech director **Adéla Komrží**, British curator and filmmaker **Christopher Small**, and director **Una Gunjak** from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Professional awards will also be given in the Czech Joy section, which will meet in Ji.hlava composed of Czech film publicist **Kamila Boháčková**, Iranian director **Kaveh Daneshmand**, Slovak director **Robert Kirchhoff**, writer **Klára Vlasáková**, and director **Lucie Králová**.

The winner of the best experimental films in the **Fascinations** and **Exprmntl.cz** sections will traditionally be chosen by a family jury, this year consisting of Ukrainian director and editor **Anna Kryvenko** and her mother **Iryna Kryvenko**.

The **Testimonies** section jury will include Icelandic writer **Andre Magnason**, Czech analog astronaut **Lucie Ráčková**, and Canadian publicist known from a podcast dedicated to the criticism of the current technology industry, **Paris Marx**.

There will also be an award for the best **VR work**. Among others, the laureate will be selected by Czech artist **Vojtěch Radakulan**, Hungarian AI expert **Bujdosó Gyöngyim** and Polish artist, lecturer and historian **Krzysztof Pijarski**.

Since 2021, the author of the Ji.hlava festival awards has been the Czech-Argentine artist **Federico Díaz**.

### **Inspiration Forum: Looking for a fair and free world**

How can we have enough food for everyone without destroying the planet? Is the universe alive? Who owns the water? Can communities replace the state? How will artificial intelligence change our lives? The Inspirational Forum invites you to six days of debates and conversations. Leading figures from both Czech and international fields of science, philosophy, art, as well as professionals will discuss topics related to water, artificial intelligence, space, communities, and food. *"We strive to find possibilities for*

# Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival



*a fair and free world. We want the Inspiration Forum to be a lively debate about the present and future that's open to everyone,"* says the head of the Inspiration Forum, Tereza Swadoschová.

A notable guest of this year's forum will be Icelandic writer and documentary filmmaker **Andri Snær Magnason**. He has long been involved in topics such as global warming, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, and even the impact of climate change on coral reefs. In his work, he seeks ways to communicate about the climate crisis in an understandable manner: through science, family stories, and mythology. Magnason will speak on the day dedicated to the topic of water.

The origin of life and what it means to be alive will be the topics of discussion for the American theoretical physicist and astrobiologist **Sara Imari Walker**. In her work, she delves into the essence of life – how life can be defined, whether it has any specific laws, the difference between living and non-living matter, and when life begins. She also works with the theory that time is a material property.

The Inspiration Forum will also introduce the grand topic of artificial intelligence. Sharing his experiences as a researcher and developer who "teaches AI to think" will be **Stanislav Fořt**, who has researched AI at American companies like Google and DeepMind.

In addition, the Inspiration Forum is happy to present their [new website](#).

The 27th Ji.hlava IDFF will take place on October 24–29, 2023. More information at [www.ji-hlava.com](http://www.ji-hlava.com) and on the festival's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) profiles. Email contact: [pressservice@ji-hlava.cz](mailto:pressservice@ji-hlava.cz).



# Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival



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