

POLISH FILM MAGAZINE

3 | 2016

Oscars 2017:
Andrzej
Wajda's
Afterimage

Wim Wenders
and European
desires

Poland on
Hollywood's
radar



THE 29TH EUROPEAN FILM AWARDS

10TH DECEMBER 2016, WROCLAW
NATIONAL FORUM OF MUSIC



It has been a year since the special envelope for minority co-productions was created within the Polish Film Institute. 15 out of 39 submitted projects received financing, which is why I encourage you to cooperate with Polish producers on inspiring projects, with support from the Polish Film Institute. 2016 has brought a number of significant awards for Polish filmmakers. Young director Tomasz Wasilewski received the Silver Bear Award for Best Screenplay in Berlin for *United States of Love*. Andrzej Seweryn, one of Poland's most acclaimed actors, received the Leopard award in Locarno for his performance in *The Last Family* by first-time director Jan P. Matuszyński. Jerzy Skolimowski received the Lifetime Achievement Award in Venice and — at the other end of the filmmaking career spectrum — young filmmaker Klara Kočańska received the student Oscar for fiction short *Tenants*. In this year's Oscar race, Poland will be represented by the last film by the great Andrzej Wajda, whose recent passing we are still mourning. Wajda, one of the most acclaimed filmmakers in world cinema, made forty feature films; *Afterimage*, which premiered at the 41st Toronto International Film Festival, sadly marks the final chapter in his oeuvre.

December 10 will mark an extraordinary event for our European film family. The city of Wrocław will host the 29th European Film Awards ceremony. The first ever award for Best European Film, back then known as the Felix Awards, went to Krzysztof Kieślowski for *A Short Film About Killing*. This year we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the passing of this exceptional director. It is a unique opportunity to take a look at Kieślowski's oeuvre and restate the questions he posed in his films. When accepting his Felix award, Kieślowski said "I hope that Poland is a part of Europe." Today, when we see the growing interest of the international audience in Polish movies, I have no doubt that our films are seen as an integral part of European cinema.

Magdalena Sroka

General Director of the Polish Film Institute



The work of great masters like Andrzej Wajda, Krzysztof Kieślowski or Wojciech Has has been an inspiration for the likes of Martin Scorsese and Tom Tykwer. Poland is known not only for great films. Also Polish cinematographers have a great reputation and they work all over the globe. But many of you already know that. What you may not know and what we are trying to show you in *Polish Film Magazine* is that

Poland is a great partner for film crews from all continents. In September we invited a group of American location managers to show them what our country has to offer. As one of the participants said: "From the depths of the underground river in Łódź and the Wieliczka Salt Mines, to soaring above forests, farmland, castles and forts - Poland offers an amazingly diverse selection of unique locations." (see page 34). No wonder that again a lot new international projects have found their way to producing in Poland. The Korean *Unfinished*, the German *Kalte Wasser* or the co-production *The Valley of the Gods* starring John Malkovich and Josh Harnett are some examples of successful ventures in Poland.

Locations are not the only critical point in being competitive in international markets. We have great postproduction outlets like Toya Studios (page 26), skillful and ambitious producers like Balapolis (page 20) and we can definitely prove that Polish filmmakers can work miracles with small budgets (*The Last Family*, page 16) as well as with the bigger ones and are not intimidated by big Hollywood names (*True Crimes*, page 18). As Wrocław hosts the next European Film Awards the president of European Film Academy, and amazing director Wim Wenders in an exclusive interview tells us (page 6) that EFA wants: "to be an open house for filmmakers from all geographic, cultural and professional backgrounds." We invite you to the *Polish Film Magazine*.

Tomasz Dąbrowski

Head of Film Commission Poland

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THE ART OF WAR

Oscar-winning director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck shoots his new film in Poland

Von Donnersmarck, who wrote and directed the enormously successful *The Lives of Others* (2006 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film) is returning with *Werk Ohne Autor* (*Work Without Author*). The film is a psychological thriller set in post-war Germany. A young artist, Kurt Barnet (Tom

Schilling, *Oh, Boy!*) escapes to West Germany. However, he is still haunted by experiences from his childhood and early adolescence, a period which coincided with Nazi rule and the East German communist regime. When he meets university student Ellie (Paula Beer, *Frantz*), he is convinced

that he has just met the love of his life. He starts painting images that reflect not only his personal experiences, but also the trauma of his entire generation. Sebastian Koch (*The Lives of Others*, *Homeland*), Saskia Rosendahl, and Ina Weisse play supporting roles. The DoP is Caleb Deschanel (*The Patriot*, *The Passion of Christ*). The crew worked on location in Germany (Berlin, Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia) and Poland (Lower Silesia, which stands in for Dresden). Polish services were provided by Tempus Film. *Werk Ohne Autor* is produced by Jan Mojto, Quirin Berg, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, and Max Wiedermann. The production companies are Pergamon Film and Wiedemann & Berg Film Production.

The film was co-produced by ARD Degeto and Bayerischer Rundfunk and supported by Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, FFA, FFF Bayern, Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, and MDM Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung. World sales are being handled by Beta Cinema.



Korean action film *Unfinished* wrapped shooting in Wrocław and Legnica

The story revolves around a secret agent (Tiger Lee), who has to play a dangerous game for the sake of his family. The cast includes actress Park Joo-mi and Polish actor Robert Mika. The action takes place in the 1980s and the two Polish cities stand in for East and West Berlin. All up, the crew spent 15 days on location in Lower Silesia. *Unfinished* was produced by Yerim Shin through

the Korean company D.seeD. Polish production service was provided by Stanisław Dziedzic and Małgorzata Wala of Film Produkcja (co-producer of Adrian Sitaru's *Illegitim*). The Koreans were joined by Polish crew, including extras, and the production outlets ATM, Heliograf, and Non Stop Film Service. The Wrocław Film Commission provided logistic support.

Skolimowski's golden roar

Veteran Polish director Jerzy Skolimowski received a lifetime achievement award at the recent Venice Film Festival. The Golden Lion was presented by Paolo Baratta, head of the Venice Biennale, and actor Jeremy Irons, who worked with Skolimowski on *Moonlighting*. "I need to make a few more films in order to prove that I deserve this award, so that it's not taken away from

me," Skolimowski said in his acceptance speech. He studied film directing at the Łódź Film School. In the early 1960s he co-wrote the scripts for Andrzej Wajda's *Innocent Sorcerers* and Roman Polański's *Knife in the Water*. In 1967, after his film *Hands up!* was shelved by the communist censors, Skolimowski left Poland and embarked on an international career.



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Blind Chance will happen at EFA

The short fiction *The Best Fireworks Ever* tells a story of three friends, whose lives are suddenly shaken by that violent political protest that escalates to the size of a civil war. The film, written and directed by Aleksandra Terpińska, was partly inspired by the political situation in the Ukraine. She won a competition organized by TV channel Kino Polska for the best script inspired by Krzysztof Kieślowski's *Blind Chance*. Terpińska's film was produced by Munk Studio. *The Best Fireworks Ever* will be screening during the European Film Awards Gala. The partners of the competition were Tor Film Studio, Munk Studio and the Polish Audiovisual Producers Chamber of Commerce.

Films that have received a support from the Polish Film Institute's minority co-production scheme

TITLE	DIRECTOR	POLISH PRODUCER	SUBSIDY IN EUR	
SESSION 2/2016	<i>High Life</i>	Claire Denis	Madants Sp. z o.o.	352 112
	<i>Dovlatov</i>	Aleksiej German jr	Message Film Sp. z o.o.	211 267
	<i>Hostages</i>	Rezo Gigineishvili	Extreme Emotions S.c.	129 108
	<i>Scaffolding</i>	Matan Yair	Film Produkcja Sp. z o.o.	58 685
	<i>Radiogram</i>	Rouzie Hassanova	Film Produkcja Sp. z o.o.	35 211
SESSION 3/2016	<i>Frost</i>	Sharunas Bartas	Donten & Lacroix Films Sp. z o.o.	129 108
	<i>When the Trees Fall</i>	Maria Nikitiuk	Message Film Sp. z o.o.	93 896
	<i>Garden Store: Family Friend Frost</i>	Jan Hrebejk	MD4 Sp. z o.o.	82 159
	<i>And Forgive Us Our Debts</i>	Antonio Marabito	Agresywna Banda Alessandro Leone	70 422
	<i>Harvest</i>	Etienne Kallos	LAVA FILMS Sp. z o.o.	46 948

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JOHN MALKOVICH PLAYS in Lech Majewski's fantasy drama *Valley of the Gods*. The cast includes Josh Hartnett, Charlotte Rampling, John Rhys-Davis and Bérénice Marlohe. The film was partly shot in Poland, locations include baroque Lubiąż Abbey and fortified Czocho Castle. For more Polish chateaux see page 34.



Cold Baltic water

German *Kalte Wasser* wrapped filming in Poland. The film is based on the true story of an 18-year-old girl who fell overboard in unexplained circumstances. The script, written by Raymond and Hannah Ley, is based on Dona Kujacinski's popular book *Unser Kind ist tot* (*Our Child is Dead*). The cast includes Romanian actress Maria-Victoria Dragus (*The White Ribbon, Graduation*), who was named a Shooting Star in 2014 and won a German Film Award in 2010, German actress Lisa Hrdina, Austrian actor Harald Schrott, and Polish actors Robert Gonera and Mirosław Baka. Baka

plays a journalist reporting on the cruise who becomes unexpectedly entangled in the tragic events. *Kalte Wasser* (*Cold Water*) was directed by Raymond Ley and produced by Nico Hofmann and Marc Lepetit (UFA Fiction). The film was commissioned by NDR and ARD Degeto for Das Erste and funded by nordmedia Film and Mediengesellschaft Niedersachsen/Bremen mbH. The commissioning editors are Marc Brasse (NDR) and Christine Strobl (ARD Degeto). Production services in Poland are provided by Tempus Film, represented by Jacek Gaczkowski and Piotr Strzelecki.

Greek-Polish co-production *Pity* started shooting in mid-October

The story evolves around a man who feels happy only when he is unhappy, a man who needs pity, who is addicted to sadness and self-inflicts pain when fearful of its absence. Principal cast includes Yannis Drakopoulos, Evi Saoulidou, Makis Papadimitriou and Nikos Karathanos. The film is directed by Babis Makridis (L), who also co-wrote the script with Efthimis Filippou. The director of cinematography is Konstantinos Koukoulis.



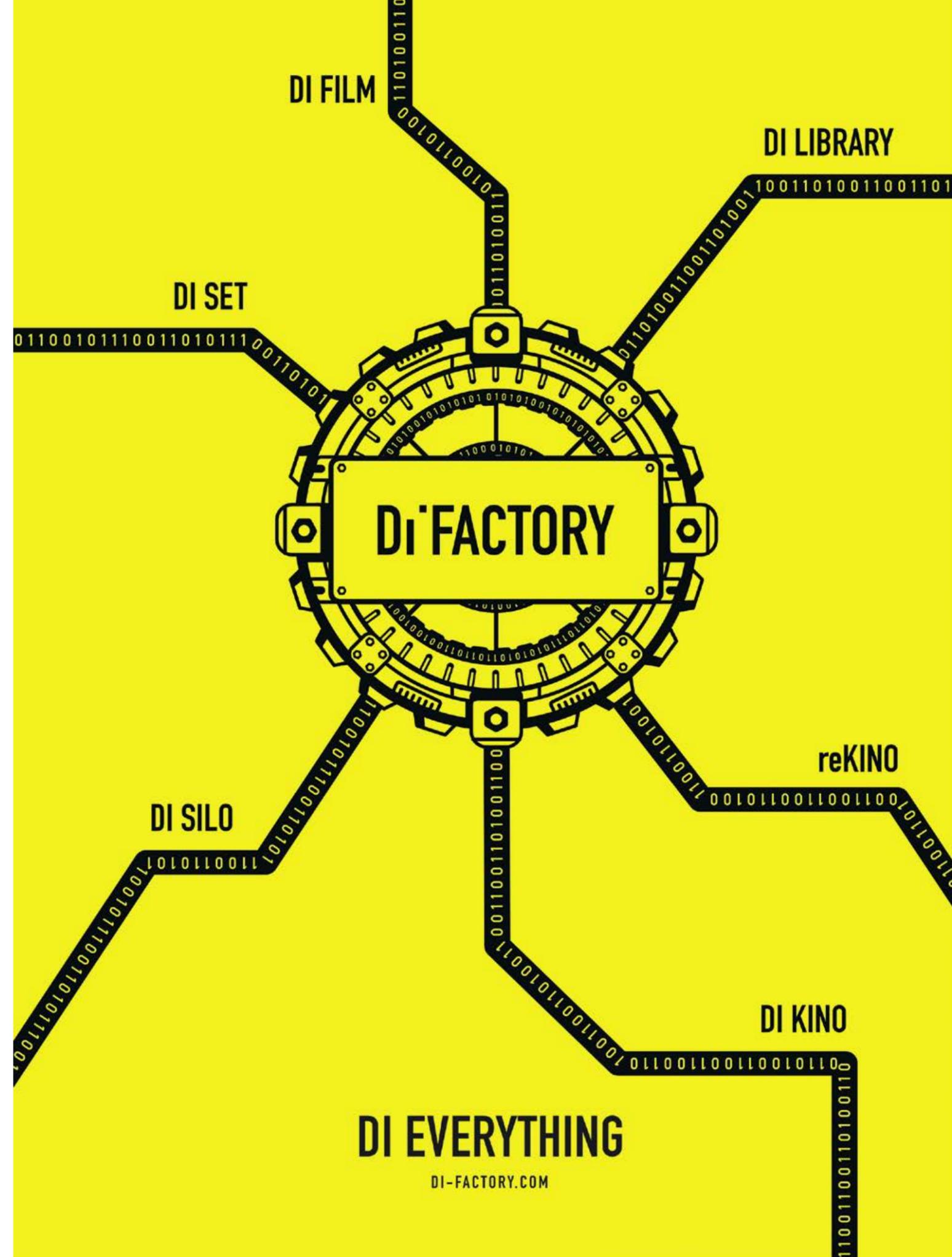
Pity is produced by Amanda Livanou (Neda Film), Klaudia Śmieja and Beata Rzeźniczak (Madants), who previously worked together on Sofia. The executive producer is Christos V Konstantakopoulos.

The film is also co-produced by the Greek company Beben Films and Faliro House. It is supported by The Onassis Foundation, Eurimage, the Polish Film Institute, the Greek Film

Center, Greek TV channel ERT SA, Greek Company Foss Production and the Polish outlet Orka.

Pity is to be released in 2017. The world sales are open.

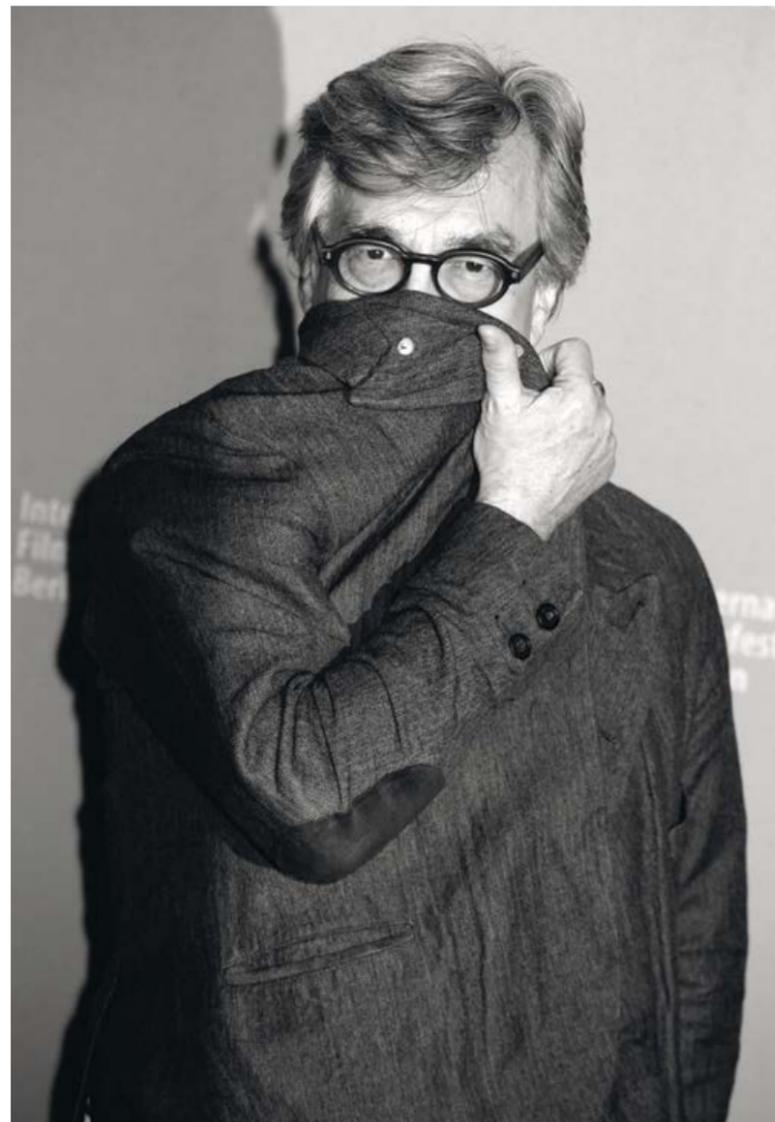
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JUST COME KNOCKING

Quintessential European director and president of the European Film Academy
Wim Wenders talks about his new film, the cinematic melting pot and the importance of politics

 Ola Salwa



In 1988 the first European Film Award, named Felix back then, was presented to Krzysztof Kieślowski. You won an award for Best Directing for *Wings of Desire*. Do you remember that ceremony and its atmosphere? I remember it very well, and not only because I was so happy about my award. What impressed me even more was being surrounded by so many colleagues and friends from all over Europe. It was a very special gathering. Berlin, Germany, and Europe were still divided in that winter of 1988. We came from completely different political universes, but from the very first moment we met, we felt united by a spirit of conspiracy and by our love of cinema. And we all agreed that unless we joined forces, European films would sooner or later disappear from the screen. Only a couple of months after the ceremony, we met again in Berlin and made our dream come true - we founded the European Film Academy. Now, however, almost thirty years later, and after a promising period in European history that brought democracy and opened borders, a new nationalism is

taking over again in more and more countries, taking us back to the dark ages, and ignoring human rights and European values. All the great achievements of the past few decades are at risk of falling apart. So politics are once more playing an important role in our Academy, which sees itself as a defender of freedom of speech, artistic expression, and human rights. Our commitment to European cinema goes way beyond its economic and cultural aspects. We strongly believe that cinema can play a vital role as an ambassador for freedom, peace, and tolerance.

European cinema is changing, for example the amount of international co-productions is growing every year. How would you comment on that?

This strong sense of co-operation has always been there, only now it is so much easier to co-produce because there are many bi-lateral co-production treaties between various countries, and because there are European supporting schemes and funds like Creative

Europe and Eurimages. International co-productions are not only an economic necessity if you want your film to be made. They also reflect

the reality of our contemporary Europe. Making films about the people who live on our continent increasingly means telling stories about people on the move, about people living in a multi-cultural context. So there is a natural need for co-production, because even local stories now often involve characters from various cultural backgrounds. And since you ask what I think about it, I very much welcome it, both as a director and as president of the European Film Academy. I don't even remember when I made my last film that was not a coproduction. I don't want to live in a country, or in a society, that does not open its doors and hearts to people from abroad. It doesn't matter whether they are political refugees or simply people who wish to live in my country, for instance, because they like it or because they're hoping for a better life. Not so long ago, around the time I was born, millions of Europeans were refugees and were on the move. I can't believe that our memories are so short.

Case in point: your upcoming film *Les beaux jours d'Arajnuez* that will be released in November is a French-German-Portuguese co-production.

This is the first film I've shot in French, and I did so because my friend Peter Handke (with whom I've collaborated several times during my career) wrote it in French. He's an Austrian who lives in France. I'm a German filmmaker who's now shot his first film in a neighboring country, in a neighbor's language that I like a lot, with a Belgian cinematographer, Benoit Debie, who has now shot my last three feature films, and with a Portuguese producer with whom I've now made half a dozen films as well. The other producer, Gian-Piero Ringel, is half-Italian and half-German. My lead actor is of Algerian descent. All these European ingredients made for quite a unique film - as if I'd never made one before. You see: I get along well in this European melting pot.

What are the main goals of the European Film Academy now?

We want to be an open house for filmmakers from all geographic, cultural and professional backgrounds. The EFA cannot support them with money, because it's not a funding institution, but we try to support them morally, and help them when they are in danger of losing their voice, both as artists and as citizens. We have a special focus on the younger generation of filmmakers, for example, by bringing them together in master classes or weekend seminars like *A Sunday in the Country* (which we've been doing in Wrocław for young critics for six years now). And we believe in film education. Five years ago, we initiated the EFA Young Audience Award, which invites young audiences of 12 to 14 to become members of a pan-European jury. Young audiences in 25 European countries participated this year

We strongly believe that cinema can play a vital role as an ambassador for freedom, peace, and tolerance.

- they all watched the same three films on the same Sunday in May. And by the end of the day they had chosen the winner - like in the European Song Contest. This YAA is an incredible success story which proves that there is a young audience that is hungry to watch quality European films. It's just that we have to take them by the hands and teach them how to watch these movies. This is a generation in danger of believing that "cinema" is synonymous with action and blockbuster movies.

If you - as a president of EFA was granted a wish from the genie from the bottle or a fairy what would you wish for European films?

No such wish will ever be fulfilled without working hard to make it happen. (Actually, I sometimes I feel that we have a lot of fantastic genies working in the EFA office) Therefore my answer is very simple. If we want a prosperous future for European cinema we have to accomplish two things: first, make good films; and, no less important, take good care of our audience. Fortunately, there are many very committed people and institutions in Europe who see this the same way we do. I really appreciate the strong European network that has grown up over the past three decades and which is taking the future of our cinema very seriously.

This year's EFA Award Ceremony will take place in Wrocław. Have you ever been there?

I have to admit that I haven't been to Wrocław yet. But I intend to spend some time there before my "official schedule" at our EFA weekend and our ceremony. But I can tell you an anecdote about my Polish colleague, the one and only Krzysztof Kieślowski. When he won the very first European Film Award for Best Film in 1988, he was asked what Europe meant to him. He gave a very memorable answer that somehow included me. He said that on that night of the ceremony he was suffering from a bladder infection which made him

There is a natural need for co-production, because even local stories now often involve characters from various cultural backgrounds.

run to the bathroom every ten minutes. And every time, so the story goes, he ran into Marcello Mastroianni, who was coming in to smoke a cigarette, and me, because apparently, I was washing my hands every ten minutes. That might well have been. I was very nervous that night. I can't remember why I might have been washing my hands so often. But I'm very happy to be part of that beautiful Kieślowski anecdote. Because the punchline was: "Me with my bladder infection, Marcello with his cigarettes, and Wim washing his hands in the bathroom - this is the Europe I dream of". Yes, Krzysztof, if only you were still around and with us. This very human spirit and love for each other is still alive and can be felt every time we come together to celebrate the European Film Awards. Next time in Wrocław, the European Capital of Culture, on December 10.



Andrzej Wajda (1926-2016)

MAN OF REEL

It would be hard to imagine a filmmaker more Polish than **Andrzej Wajda**. His films are deeply grounded in Polish history and literature, but they are also indispenable part of European cinema

✎ Jakub Majmurek

Andrzej Wajda, who originally trained to be a painter, often alluded to iconic Polish paintings (the symbolist Jacek Malczewski, the realist Aleksander Gierzyński, and the post-impressionist Ferdynand Ruszczyk). His palette was shaped by Polish landscapes, architecture, seasons, etc. Even Polish critics and film historians concede that Wajda can justifiably be regarded as a highly hermetic *auteur*. Indeed, some of his films (e.g. *The Wedding* and *Pan Tadeusz*) are so replete with references to Polish culture and history (fairly obscure to outsiders), that they might be incomprehensible to international audiences. But on the other hand, along with Krzysztof Kieślowski, Wajda remains the best known Polish filmmaker outside Poland. Some of his features – especially *Ashes and Diamonds* and *Man of Marble* – can be found on many lists of *Greatest films in the history of cinema*. Directors like Martin Scorsese frequently declare their admiration for Wajda's work. His films are studied all over the world by future filmmakers and film critics. Now that his *oeuvre* is closed, we can try to answer the following questions: What is the place of Wajda and his work in world cinema? What would a map of his global inspirations and influences look like?

The “War trilogy” and post-war cinema

Wajda's international career began in 1957, when his second feature film, *Kanał*, won the Special Jury Award at the Cannes Film Festival, together with Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*. *Kanał* received positive reviews in French film magazines, such as “Cahiers du Cinéma”, and an especially enthusiastic review from Lindsay Anderson in the U.K. The period from 1957 until the early 1960s was an exceptionally good one for Wajda and other Polish filmmakers, e.g. Jerzy Kawalerowicz and Andrzej Munk, in the UK. Three of Wajda's 1950s films, viz. *Generation*, *Kanał* and *Ashes and Diamonds*, comprise what is known as his “War Trilogy”. It was these films that



One of the iconic scenes from Andrzej Wajda's film *Ashes and Diamonds*: the death of Maciek Chełmicki (played by Zbigniew Cybulski)

established his reputation as one of Europe's leading filmmakers. His early works, which came a decade after the classics of Italian neo-realism, e.g. *Paisà* and *Germany, Year Zero*, both directed by Roberto Rossellini, are in a sense the final chapter in the cinematic portrayal of the vacuum that World War II left in its wake in Europe. The post-war reality, which is immediate in Rossellini's films, finds itself increasingly relegated to the distant past, to memory and phantasmagoria, in Wajda's *oeuvre*. The War Trilogy (and especially *Ashes and Diamonds*) is something of a synthesis of the whole post-war cinema, both European and American. Wajda himself referred to John Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle* as the deepest source of inspiration for *Ashes and Diamonds*, but it is not hard to discern other American affluents. The *mis-en-scène* draws heavily from *Citizen Kane* and other early Orson Welles films - deep focus,

Along with Krzysztof Kieślowski, Wajda remains the best known Polish filmmaker outside Poland.

low-angle shots, strong contrasts, long shadows, and baroque, expressive images. According to Roman Polański, who is seven years Wajda's junior, Wajda's late 1950s films were also heavily influenced by Carol Reed. *Odd Man Out* – a day in the life of a wounded IRA fighter in British Ulster, torn between duty and a desire for personal happiness – bears a strong resemblance to *Ashes and Diamonds* in terms of theme and style. Both directors employ flamboyantly baroque images, often centered around catholic symbols. The highly expressive photography of Robert Krasker (Reed's director of photography) could easily fit into any of Wajda's films from the 1950s.

Reed, Wajda, Rossellini, and Huston all set their stories in a world epitomized by decay, absurdity, and a certain fatalism. Maciek Chełmicki, the protagonist of *Ashes and Diamonds*, is left dying in a junkyard in the end of the film. For him, death is the only way out. This symbolically brings the post-war period to a close – not just in Polish, but also in world cinema.

Nouvelle vague avant la lettre?

Ashes and Diamonds premiered in 1958. A year later, François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* screened at Cannes. The French New Wave soon flooded world cinema. It has been said that Truffaut was inspired by Wajda's War Trilogy, and that the French critic-turned-director simply took what his Polish colleague had done and ran with it. This is not entirely accurate, but it is near enough. *French New Wave* directors were mainly fascinated with American cinema. Howard Hawks, Robert Aldrich, Nicholas Ray, and of course, Alfred Hitchcock, were among the favorite filmmakers of Truffaut and Godard when they were critics, and they did not cease to idolize them when they took up filmmaking themselves. The whole movement

Man of Marble: a story of a worker manipulated by a communist state



(at least before it became heavily political at the end of the 1960s) can be seen as an attempt to mediate between French traditions and the rapid Americanization of post-war French culture. Wajda reworked his American fascination in a similar manner as would French filmmakers a few years later, so Wajda's *War Trilogy* might well have

Reed, Wajda, Rossellini, and Huston all set their stories in a world epitomized by decay, absurdity, and a certain fatalism.

been a secondary source of inspiration. A close inspection of *Ashes and Diamonds* reveals just how close it is to the sensibility of the New Wave. Wajda intentionally employed a variety of film clichés, counterbalancing the most sublime pathos with the most malicious irony. This unexpectedly places him in the vicinity of Godard. Zbigniew Cybulski's performance as Maciek Chełmicki was visibly inspired by the James Dean style of acting, but it also suggests the future performances of Jean-Pierre L  aud, the most iconic actor of both Godard and Truffaut.

At the same time, it is hard to argue with John Orr, who claims that Wajda was never really able to find his place in the cinema of 1960s, shaped as it was by successive New Waves. His films from the 1960s seem dated, and cannot hold their own against the modernist cinema of the day. Generally, the 1960s, with the exception of the black and white period drama *Ashes*, can be considered a "lost decade" for Wajda's cinema.

The long 1970s

The 1970s, by contrast, was arguably Wajda's best decade. He returned to international prominence with the Oscar-nominated *The Promised Land* followed by *Man of Marble*, and *Man of Iron*, which won the *Palme D'or* at Cannes in 1981. In the 1950s, political context was obviously important to the international reception of Wajda's films. By the 1970s, it had arguably become crucial. Some of Wajda's 1970s films seem to be less interesting (at least for audiences at the time) as part of the ongoing political debates than as part of the evolution of the aesthetics of world cinema.

Tapping into Poland's turbulent history made Wajda a force to be reckoned with. His films from this period are set against the seismic social and political changes of the period, which historians now refer to as "the long 1970s". This prolonged decade stretches from May '68 to 1983 (the year of Margaret Thatcher's first re-election in the UK). It is marked by political upheaval, the decline and fall of the radical, utopian ideals of '68, and the final ideological bankruptcy of Eastern bloc state-socialism as a viable alternative to Western liberal democracy. In Poland, 1968 marks the peak of anti-Semitic activity, while the early 1980s saw the eruption of the "Solidarity" movement.

Actually Wajda wanted to make *Man of Marble* in 1963, but censorship and political pressure meant the project had to wait for the next decade. In a way, this was a blessing in disguise, especially for the film's international reception. Had *Man of Marble* come out in the 1960s, it would have been deployed in the cold-war cultural conflict. As such, it would have been lauded by



The Promised Land starred one of Wajda's favorite actors: Daniel Olbrychski (in the middle)

the anti-communist right, and attacked by the (not necessarily pro-Soviet) left. Following the publication of the English and French translations of *The Gulag Archipelago* in 1974, Western audiences were receptive to a film about a worker rebelling against a communist state, and which depicted state-socialism as a system based on lies, manipulation and violence.

The ideological bankruptcy of Soviet-style socialism in the West, and the failure of the revolution of May '68, led to a search for new modes of political organization and expression – ones that could transcend the limitations of parliamentary democracy and classical communism. For a time, the whole world had reason to believe that the Solidarity movement was a beacon for just such a new politics. The warm reception of Wajda's *Man of Iron* – his only *Palme D'Or* – was no less due to the political hopes it seemed to embody than to its cinematographic merits.

The final Wajda film from "the long 1970s" – *Danton* (1983) – ends with a rather pessimistic political message. The French Revolution is degenerating into a vicious cycle of violence, accusations and counter-accusations, and quasi-totalitarian terror.

On the one hand, *Danton* depicts the revolution as per the conservative, revisionist interpretation that prevailed in French academia during the Mitterrand era. On the other hand, however, the film is an allegory of the communist revolutions then underway in Eastern Europe. The final scene depicts a small child – the son of Robespierre's maid – reciting the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen". Is this meant to be purely ironic, or does it contain a kernel of hope? Perhaps it can be read

Wajda remains the point of reference for anyone interested in the history of Polish cinema

as a prophecy of the democratic reforms in the former Eastern Bloc, which were made possible thanks both to the democratic opposition and to liberal-minded members of the ruling, communist parties? Could the finale of *Danton* be the chronicle of 1989 foretold? However messy, bloody and atrocious the history of the second half of the 20th century might be, has it finally ended in the victory of liberal democracy and human rights everywhere in Europe?

After the Wall

The fall of communism in Europe, along with its symbol, the Berlin Wall, was expected to open up new possibilities for Eastern European filmmakers. For Wajda, the period after 1989 wasn't his most successful. This was partly due to the fact that Western audiences had previously been curious to see what was happening behind the "Iron Curtain". Once the Curtain fell, the countries that had been hidden behind it lost a lot of their mystique.

Wajda's next decade began with the scandal surrounding *Korczak*. The film, which was presented at Cannes in 1990, attempted to depict the complicated relationships between Poles and Jews before the war and during the Holocaust. The film was grossly misunderstood by several French critics and filmmakers, including Claude Lanzmann, best known for his monumental Holocaust documentary *Shoah*. Wajda was accused of anti-Semitism, and of making a kitschy spectacle out of the demise of European Jewry. Most of the accusations were wrong-headed, and were later addressed, but *Korczak* was never able to make the sort of impact that films like *Ashes and Diamonds* could take for granted. Ironically, Steven Spielberg's multi-Oscar award-winning *Schindler's List* (1993) was strongly inspired by Wajda's uneven film.

Only a few of Wajda's movies have been released outside Poland over the past 25 years. However, he still remains the main point of reference for anyone interested in the history of Polish cinema, or more generally, the history of Polish culture after the war. His honorary Oscar in 2000 confirmed that position. In *Gangs of New York*, released two years later, Martin Scorsese makes a clear reference to one of Wajda's greatest films, *The Promised Land*, in a scene where he juxtaposes the Catholic and Protestant prayers of the characters played by Leonardo DiCaprio and Daniel Day-Lewis before their final battle.

While being a mentor and inspiration to younger colleagues, he never stopped directing himself. He always talked about his next projects. In 2009 he won an Alfred Bauer Award at Berlinale for *Sweet Rush* proving that his retirement days are yet to come. His final film *Afterimage* (see page 12) competes for an Oscar nomination.

There is a lot more to Wajda's oeuvre than politics and contemporary history. The Polish master was also an *auteur* with a vivid, surreal imagination. Some of the scenes in *Lotna* (1959), *The Birch Wood* (1970), and *The Wedding* (1973), come close to Bu  uel's more oneiric moments. He also created subtle, psychological films like *The Maids of Wilko* (1979) or bitter, self-referential drama *Everything For Sale* inspired by Federico Fellini's *8 1/2*. For anyone keen to come to grips with Wajda's films, there are plenty of surprising threads to explore.



ART DOES CONQUER ALL

Poland's Oscar candidate and Andrzej Wajda's last film, *Afterimage*, is a love letter from one victim of communism to another

✍️ by Michael Brooke

When an artist enters his ninth decade, there's a widespread impression that every film he makes will be his last. This prediction was made for every Andrzej Wajda (1926-2016) film from *Katyni* (2007) onwards. But *Afterimage*, which had its world premiere a couple of weeks before Wajda's death at the age of 90, really was the end – and it turned out to be the perfect swan song, as it effectively brought his career full circle.

Wajda initially trained as a painter at the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts (1946-1949), but switched to film because he felt creatively stifled by the requirement that all Polish art adhere to the dictates of Socialist Realism, not least because he felt that this compelled him to produce second-rate imitations of Soviet art. At the same time, Władysław Strzemiński (1893-1952), Poland's leading avant-garde painter, was facing the same strictures. This was to have a much more serious effect on his work and ultimately his life. But the crucial difference between Strzemiński and Wajda, great Polish artists both, was that Wajda recognized the necessity of developing the political skills needed to guide his often confrontational work from concept to realization – his debut feature

Bogusław Linda gives a superb performance as Władysław Strzemiński (1)

© ANNA WELCZAK/ARSON STUDIO (4)

Generation (1955) is still recognizably a Socialist Realist work, but an unusually subtle and ambiguous one.

By contrast, the much older Strzemiński refused to compromise at all, trusting both that his reputation would be enough to deter his official critics and that everyone else at the Łódź Academy of Fine Arts would defend him at every opportunity – after all, he had co-founded the establishment. Tellingly, his strongest supporters were his students, as yet unversed in the ways of political expediency, whereas his colleagues gradually capitulated to the point where even Strzemiński's famous *Neo-Plastic Room*, a joyous celebration of color and abstraction that he intended as a permanent memorial to his work, ended up being dismantled.

Indeed, the film's recurring theme is that of dismantling – of Polish culture, of Strzemiński's work, and even his life. While fighting his artistic and professional battles, he first loses his estranged wife (the sculptor Katarzyna Kobro, a major Polish artist in her own right) to cancer, and then his daughter to a children's home. At the same time, his license to buy paint is revoked on account of his membership of the necessary artists' collective being cancelled. The fact that we're constantly reminded that Strzemiński is missing an arm and a leg (a legacy of World War I) powerfully underscores this impression of a man systematically being deprived of all he has.

Unmistakably heartfelt

Afterimage notionally offers an impassioned defense of avant-garde impulses, but it is paradoxically one of Wajda's most conventional films. It also comes as a surprise after the energetic, punk-scored *Wałęsa: Man of Hope* (2013). Although there are a few striking images, mostly revolving around strong color effects (notably an early shot of Strzemiński's studio suddenly being bathed in blood-red light when a pro-Stalin banner is rolled down the side of the building – which Strzemiński vandalizes in order to let natural light back in), the film is content to simply tell the story of Strzemiński's last four years in chronological sequence, focusing exclusively on his own



experiences and viewpoint. While this is a great showcase for Bogusław Linda's superb performance (he's in almost every shot), it largely renders him a passive victim of decisions made offscreen, in stark contrast to the initial ebullience of his personality, and his conviction that the practice and celebration of unfettered art offers the most

The film's recurring theme is that of dismantling – of Polish culture, of Strzemiński's work and even his life

certain path to a better future. We also learn almost nothing about his past, his relationship with his wife (which was what Wajda originally intended to focus on), and relatively little about his work. Anyone

approaching the film with no knowledge of Strzemiński will have to take his reputation on trust.

But the film is also unmistakably heartfelt – a love letter from one victim of communist censorship to another. Although Wajda came of age creatively during the Stalinist period, he rarely tackled this directly. *Man of Marble* (1977) came closest, but that was filtered through the parallel story of a mid-1970s documentary-maker investigating the era, thereby establishing historical distance. Here, thanks to Paweł Edelman's somber cinematography, Marek Warszewski's production design, and some discreet digital effects, we're transported back to the late 1940s, to a Poland still visibly recovering from the devastation of WWII, to a Poland where everything is strictly rationed – not least public displays of compassion.



The film introduces Bronisława Zamachowska as Nika Strzemińska (Władysław's daughter – 2, 3). The young cast includes Zofia Wichłacz, Filip Gurlacz, Irena Melcer, Mateusz Rzeźniczak, Tomasz Chodorowski and Paulina Gałązka (4)



GET SHORTIES

The 2017 Oscar heat is already on, as many as five Polish short films stand a chance of grabbing an Academy Award nomination. Keep an eye out for them. You won't be disappointed

by Darek Kuźma



Janusz Chabior plays the eponymous dogcatcher

The Dogcatcher, dir. Daria Woszek

It's only Woszek's third short film as a director, but she has been simultaneously gathering experience in Polish TV, and assisting the late Marcin Wrona on his *The Christening*. The titular dogcatcher is a double dealer who returns the dogs he catches to their thankful owners, so as to claim rewards from them, but he eventually meets his match in a stray German Shepherd. *The Dogcatcher* has already had its North American premiere at the Palm Springs International Film Festival, and Woszek is currently working on another short, *Bonjour, je suis Antek*, which received a European Short Pitch award.



Kuba Wandachowicz is a radio host and member of rock band Cool Kids of Death

End of the World, dir. Monika Pawluczuk

An amalgam of human stories brought together by the fact that, according to the Mayan calendar, the end of all we know is here. But if there are any disasters in this documentary, they are of personal proportions – the earth-shattering loss of someone dear, the eruptions of desperation and loneliness, the emergency ambulance service's dispatcher race against time. One night in a big city pulsating with human interactions and conversations, or the lack thereof. Pawluczuk's poignant project has already claimed an important win from the Hot Documentary Film Festival, and has Kitchen PR (US) and Radio Sales IP (Belgium) in its corner.



Krystyna makes a perfect protagonist: smart and funny

Invisible, dir. Zofia Pręgoska

The student short is Pręgoska's debut in directing, but, needless to say, it has already established the young filmmaker on the international festival circuit – it has been screened on four continents, and has won awards at the New Orleans Film Festival and the All Shorts International Film Festival in the US, among others. *Invisible* tells the story of Krystyna, an elderly, near-blind Polish poet who lives a quiet life in a small flat in Warsaw, and is completely dependent on other people. The film follows her inspiring comments and relevant ideas about life and poetry, thus presenting an energetic, intelligent and passionate woman who does not want to sit still, but wishes to reach a real audience with her poetry once more.

This short documentary by was screened in the competition at IDFA, and took home well-deserved prizes from the Kraków Film Festival and the T-Mobile New Horizons International Film Festival. It is a fly-on-the-wall study of the unconventional bond that defines a Polish marriage of forty five years and which was broken for eight years on account of the husband's infidelity. Zdzisław left Barbara for a younger lover, but moved back in with her after a while. *Close Ties* looks deeply into the day-to-day problems, as well as some of the unexpected joys, of their relationship. At 21, Kowalewska is the youngest of the five women filmmakers vying for the 2017 Oscar nomination.



Julia Kijowska (Justyna) is one of the most talented actresses of her generation

Tenants, dir. Klara Kochańska

The student short film *Tenants* by Klara Kochańska has already gathered some buzz after it received the bronze medal in the "Foreign Narrative" category at the Student Academy Awards. *Tenants* is a "be careful what you wish for story". Justyna, a thirty-something Polish woman, buys a flat at a bailiff auction. Her troubles begin when she goes to move in and the keys do not fit the lock. The film, lensed by Camerimage-winning cinematographer Zuzanna Kernbach, is also gathering momentum from having received recognition at the Warsaw Film Festival, the Gdynia Film Festival, and the Global Chinese Universities Student Film and Television Festival in Hong Kong.

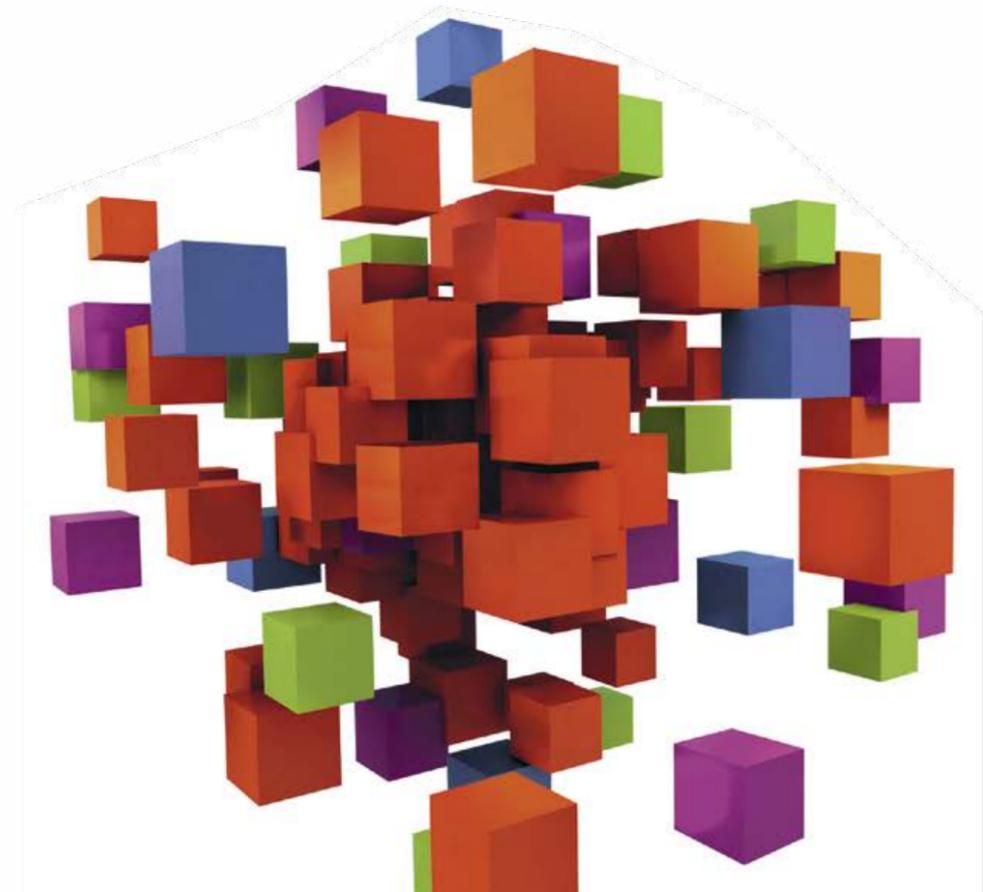
The film follows daily routines of Barbara and Zdzisław

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THE BEKSIŃSKI SHOW

If you like your biopics safe and by the numbers, then you would be well advised to stay away from *The Last Family*. This is Jan P. Matuszyński's impressive feature debut and it follows its own rules



1

 Darek Kuźma

1 Zdzisław and his family: wife Zofia and son Tomasz

Can a 1.4 mln EUR Polish film production about Polish artists living in specifically Polish conditions from a by-gone era that was shot in Polish, with an all-Polish cast, be of any interest to the rest of the world? Absolutely. The proof is the runaway success of *The Last Family* at the Locarno IFF (Main Competition, Best Actor Award) and the accolades it received during the Gdynia Film Festival. The international jury, which, among others, comprised *Room* director Lenny Abrahamson and Mike Leigh's go-to composer Gary Yershon, deemed it worthy of the main prize, the Golden Lions, as well as two main acting awards. Not to mention the Audience Award, which is, after all, the greatest of all. "It was a match made in heaven," says producer Aneta Hickinbotham from Aurum Film, the

next best thing in the Polish film industry, eager to enter the European co-production game. "This was Jan's first feature, so we, my producing partner Leszek Bodzak and I, knew we had to make him feel secure, and be a partner, not a naysayer. And he repaid us by creating an almost monolithic team of department heads and crew members who fiercely supported each other."

Sudden bursts of emotion

The year: 1977. The setting: one of Warsaw's new housing estates – huge rectangular concrete blocks of flats full of countless souls living out lives of quiet anonymity. The exception is the Beksiński family – Zdzisław an eccentric painter, his wife Zofia, a highly educated



housewife, and their son Tomasz, a suicidal movie translator/music journalist. They live in two flats in two separate buildings, but they constantly influence one another. We get to know them through brief glimpses of their everyday lives, some filled with sudden bursts of emotion, others pulsating with silent heartbreak. Fast forward to 2005. As the film ends, we are not much the wiser as to how Zdzisław amazed the world with his painterly horrors (and he did), or why Tomasz was considered a genius translator (and he was). None of that matters, as the film is above all a universal cinematic essay on the beauty and fragility of family ties, and the endless negotiation of personal identity and integrity with an indifferent world.

Zdzisław is celebrated in some circles for his surreal art, I know Donald Sutherland is a fan

"We aimed at universality of experience," says Hickinbotham. "Zdzisław is celebrated in some circles for his surreal art, I know Donald Sutherland is a fan and bought at least one painting, Guillermo del Toro once tweeted that he takes inspiration from Beksiński's imagination, but Tomasz's fame is limited to Poland. We knew we had to find a balance between focusing on the real Beksińskis and using their incredible lives to tell a much bigger story." They found the perfect basis for this in a long-ges-

tating screenplay by Robert Bolesto, who had been given access to Zdzisław Beksiński's diaries, countless photos, and thousands of hours of home-audio and home-video footage. "He was obsessed with documenting his family's life, first with VHS camcorders, then digital cameras. I mean, everything was there, waiting to be turned into a screenplay," explains Hickinbotham. "I always thought that Zdzisław was ahead of his time. It was like his personal version of *The Truman Show*, but made since the 70s."

Polish discovery

There is definitely a strong sense of voyeurism in how Matuszyński makes us observe the family's inner workings. But there are no ill intentions – just an endless fascination with their relationships. In other words, you might feel lost in the weirdness running through the Beksińskis' lives, but what they say and do does not need additional context. The amount of material left by Zdzisław also forced the crew to painstakingly recreate the way his world looked. "The production design almost killed our budget. We had to depict a Warsaw that is long gone, decorate flats that are not there, fill the streets with cars that no longer exist. It was a massive undertaking," reminisces Hickinbotham, who knows what she is talking about, as she earned her stripes in such projects as Roman Polański's *The Pianist* and Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy*. "It might have been the greatest challenge of my career, especially as I was also *The Last Family*'s production manager, so I couldn't shout at myself," laughs Hickinbotham. "But I'm really proud of the result. We all are."

So are the audiences that are eagerly filling the cinemas in Poland and that will soon be doing the same in Sweden, Ireland, the UK, Hungary, the Netherlands and Belgium. The list keeps getting longer, as news travels fast and this "Polish discovery" might easily become one of the most celebrated films of the year, if the enthusiastic reviews by the likes of *Variety*'s Jay Weissberg are any guide. After the final credits roll, you might not really know or understand the Beksiński family, but you will feel that you have spent a lifetime with them, laughing, crying, and experiencing a myriad of other emotions. The term "magic of cinema" was coined to describe just this.



4

2 Zdzisław Beksiński was obsessed with documenting his family's life

3 Many of Beksiński's paintings represent dystopian surrealism

4 Tomasz Beksiński debuted as a radio host in 1982

POLISH FILM THAT CARREYS AWAY



Based on real events, Polish-American *True Crimes* is a dark, gripping thriller about a cop who is fighting for justice - and doesn't always win

 **Darek Kuźma**

Far from his *Ace Ventura* days, Jim Carrey as Polish cop Tadek

It begins with a murder. You do not witness it because it was committed years before, but throughout the film you can see how it has affected the life of Jim Carrey's Tadek, an honest Polish cop who decides to re-open the cold case of a murdered businessman in the hope of shedding light on corruption in the police force. He turns to Marton Csokas's Kozłow for answers. Kozłow is a popular writer who described a strikingly similar murder in one of his books. Tadek is beset with obstacles, both internal and external, everywhere he turns. He comes to realize that he will have to risk everything to prove his allegations. It may feel somewhat generic, though it was inspired by a true story recounted by David Grann in his essay *True Crime: A Postmodern Murder Mystery*, published in "The New Yorker" in 2008. The article became the basis for Jeremy Brock's script, while David Gerson of Gerson Films and Kasia Nabiałczyk of RatPac Entertainment contacted Poland's leading production company Opus Film (Oscar-winning *Ida*). Together with producer Ewa Puszczyńska, they mapped out an enormously ambitious, truly international co-production that has combined the best of European art-house cinema and American genre films. All this for only a little over EUR 4 mil.

"We thought David Grann unveiled a fascinating true story that we wanted to work on. It was Polish at heart, and we all wanted to shoot in the country of origin, especially Jim Carrey," says Gerson, who was also responsible for bringing the award-winning Greek director Alexan-

dros Avranas on board, as well as casting the film with the crème de la crème of European actors - Carrey and Csokas were joined by the British-French actress Charlotte Gainsbourg (*Antichrist*), the Romanian Vlad Ivanov (*4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days*), the Finnish Kati Outinen (*The Man Without a Past*), as well as the Poles Robert Więckiewicz (Agnieszka Holland's *In Darkness*), Agata Kulesza (*Ida*) and Zbigniew Zamachowski (*Three Colors: White*). Puszczyńska took charge in Poland, secured financing from the Polish Film Institute and the Kraków Film Commission, handled the location scouting (*True Crimes* was shot entirely in and around Kraków) and recommended Polish professionals. "All the department heads were Polish, except for the costume designer, who was Greek. Actually, if you look at the end credits, much of the crew was ours," says Puszczyńska. "I believe we excelled at giving the film great production values. We are very proud of the job we did."

Small budget, big production value

True Crimes certainly benefited from the Polish contribution, especially in outlining the sociopolitical context that complements the crime arc. "It's a story about a man caught between the old, communist Poland, and the new Poland, which was supposed to be different, but which ended up being pretty much the same," explains Puszczyńska. "But it's really about a world-weary lawman who fights for justice, but loses on many fronts. The

***True Crimes* certainly benefited from the Polish contribution, especially in outlining the sociopolitical context that complements the crime arc.**

case is detrimental to his family life, his career, and to his sense of himself. This is where the script differs from Grann's article - it focuses on the cop character. That's why it can be understood everywhere," says the producer, adding

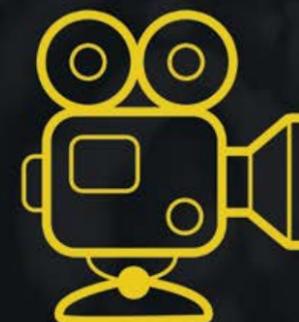
that she hopes the film will show the film industry that working with Poland can be beneficial to their projects. "We still don't have tax incentives. Everyone knows that. But I think we've demonstrated with *True Crimes* that we can make up for that in terms of budget and quality of work. We've made a film with American producers, and international stars, for a fraction of what it would have cost in the US or Western Europe," says Puszczyńska, smiling. "You may or may not like the film, but as a co-production it was a win-win situation."

"We had a great time in Poland. I'm working on two more movies there," affirms Gerson. "The crews were some of the best I've ever worked with." He's not the only one who sees the opportunities in the rapidly developing Polish film industry, with its quality casts and crews, its variety of locations that can stand in for almost every part of the world, and its growing number

of regional film commissions. Only this year Poland was visited by a group of American location managers and producers from China. The Kollywood action movie *24* was partially shot here, as was the legal drama *Denial*, starring Rachel Weisz and Tom Wilkinson. No wonder Ewa Puszczyńska is optimistic about the future and the scripts she recently got from the States. "One of them is a universal story that could be told anywhere, but they sent it to us. That's partly because of *True Crimes*," she reveals. "I'm an idealist who loves co-productions. I think they're the best tools to integrate our different worlds and cultures, even if they require at least twice as much work. And they do. Every country is different, and has different laws and work ethics. But this is the best and most exciting thing about being a film producer - you get to cross borders with each new project."

TRUE CRIMES. Director: Alexandros Avranas. Screenplay: Jeremy Brock. Cinematography: Michał Englert. Cast: Jim Carrey, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Vlad Ivanov, Marton Csokas, Agata Kulesza. Producers: John Cheng, David Gerson, Simon Horsman, Brett Ratner, Jeffrey Soros.

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FAST AND MISCELLANEOUS

Their films were screened in Berlin, Venice and Locarno. They work with Poland's most edgy directors. They are Agata Szymańska and Magdalena Kamińska, the producers

✎ Anna Serdiukow

There are so many things that make them stand out, starting with the name of their jointly run business. Balapolis, set up five years ago is a portmanteau of the names of their previous individual businesses: Magdalena Kamińska's Balabusta and Agata Szymańska's Filmopolis. "We asked ourselves which director we would like to work with," says Kamińska. "We chose Adrian Panek, whose film *Daas* we both rated very highly. We were unanimous in that decision and it brought us together five years ago. Agata invited me to produce Zbigniew Libera's film *Walser* with her, and that collaboration consolidated our relationship."

They both graduated from the Faculty of Radio and Television at the University of Silesia, with a degree in Film Production Organization. They started work very early on, and cheerfully admit that they like being active. "I feel more at ease and it's more convenient to work in a team," says Kamińska. "Working together means synergies, making joint decisions, and sharing the risks," adds Szymańska, looking back at the decision she made five years ago. Risk is part of the duo's DNA. You need only look at the line-up of films produced by Balapolis, both fiction and documentaries, to see that they're interested in top-notch arthouse cinema. Films such as Michał Wnuk's *Agfa 1939. Podróż w czasy wojny*, Kuba Czekaj's *Baby Bump* and Libera's *Walser* make it clear just how conscientiously they have been building their portfolio. "You have to really like this kind of cinema to produce it," Wnuk once said during a Q&A following the screening of his film. "These choices inevitably come down to a love of arthouse cinema, and a desire to show extraordinary, quality pieces."

As they had worked with the likes of Zbigniew Libera, a legendary, controversial contemporary artist, ladies of Balapolis decided to give filmmaker absolute freedom in realizing their visions.

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"The girls form a team, but there are three people on it, not two," says Libera. "We felt that we were on the same side. I was able to focus on my work while they handled the most arduous and unrewarding stuff. On top of that, we didn't make any distinction between the artistic team and the production team. It was a very precious film experience for a novice director, as I was back then. I wasn't entirely sure what I wanted, but the girls respected that and gave me time."

Anka and Wilhelm Sasnal also speak about Balapolis very highly. The company produced their films *It Looks Pretty From a Distance* and *Parasite*, and is currently handling the distribution of the duo's latest film, *Sun, The Sun Blinded Me*. The film premiered at the Locarno IFF, and other festivals have been queuing up to show it.

Fight and never look back

Kamińska and Szymańska are experienced in distributing their own films too. The first was Kuba Czekaj's fiction feature, *Baby Bump*. The film was made as part of the Venice Biennale College – Cinema Program, and stormed its way through many prestigious film events. It has garnered numerous awards and special mentions, but has also polarized audiences and triggered heated debate. *Baby Bump* was intended to have been distributed by a large distributor in Poland, but the company closed

up shop just before the film's theatrical release. Kamińska and Szymańska initiated talks with several distributors, but eventually decided to distribute the film themselves.

"Working together means synergies, making joint decisions and sharing the risks"

"We were really impressed by what Magdalena and Agata did," says Czekaj. "They took on a tough assignment and passed with flying colors. Obviously, some things could have been done better, but we learned a lot from and nobody can take that away from us. For me, the main thing was that my producers never gave up."

Talking with them gives the impression that their appetite keeps growing. They are never discouraged, they've drawn conclusions and they constantly wish to extend the scope of their activity. "We want to make important, quality films of high artistic merit, but our current ambition is also to complement these aspects with other features, so that the films reach a broader audience," says Szymańska.

Their next project is Panek's *Wilkotak*. They could be called boutique producers in a certain sense, as they are currently concentrating on one film, rather than taking advantage of their success to run several projects simultaneously.



LUCKY 13

***Agi Bagi* is the first Polish 3D animated series that conquered the world. It has been sold to television channels in fifty territories**

 Anna Bielak

The setting is a planet that has a green side and a violet side. One side is inhabited by the Agingas, and the Zeebee, who can do magic. The other belongs to the Bagingas, hardworking creatures who are curious about the world and who look after the roots of the plants that grow in the land of the Agingas. Whatever happens on one side of *Agi Bagi* immediately impacts the other side. Although the tribes don't meet on a daily basis, they need to help each other maintain the balance of the planet's ecosystem. *Agi Bagi* currently has 26 11-minute episodes. "Our target is 52," says Dominika Osak, who produces the series.

The first 13-episode season of *Agi Bagi* has been sold to TV stations in forty countries. It's a global success. Badi Badi Studio's production is also the first Polish animated series available to viewers on the Discovery Kids channel in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) and American VOD Play Kids platform. The American market is usually reluctant to absorb European productions, so this is yet another precedent. "I hope that we've opened up some doors for others too," says Osak. She also points out that those hoping to be similarly successful need to attend promotional film trade fairs. This is often the only opportunity to promote programs to acquisition managers from TV stations. Osak also makes it clear that a good sales agent plays a key role. *Agi Bagi* is currently represented by Your Family Entertainment from Germany.

Badi Badi studio was established in 2003 and initially focused on commercial productions, including ads and special effects. However, Tomasz Niedźwiedź, the creative producer, scriptwriter and director of *Agi Bagi*, had always wanted to make films for children. In 2011, he revisited this idea, when a call for projects was launched for a series addressed to children aged 2 to 5. Out of hundreds submissions Bartosz Słomka's idea, which had the working title *Agry Bagry*, was eventually selected. The main project development aspect consisted of checking whether the idea would work. This involved international consultations. Market requirements were studied, as well as the reaction of the target audience. "Preschool children were the experts whose opinions we sought at every stage of the development process," says Osak. "Children were shown the pilot episode and asked to comment. They usually had similar impressions. Sometimes, they openly admitted being afraid of a certain character, since they considered it dangerous, but really loved another one. Quite unexpectedly, a clumsy character called Bumbly stole the kids' hearts. The children's emotions were given absolute priority, regardless of how closely they matched the intuitions of the creators of the series. "My impression is that this really improved the quality of the animation. That's why it's loved by kids all over the world," she adds.

Creatures of no country

Agi Bagi was created with the international market in mind. There is nothing about *Agi Bagi* that refers to any specific culture. The authors wanted to make sure that viewers in Thailand, France, Poland and the UAE would understand the series in the same way. All the plant species were invented, and no props associated with any specific country were used. The only recognizable reference was the planet Earth.

Marzena Nehrebecka, one of the scriptwriters, emphasizes the need for a clear-cut protagonist and a meticulously created world as the setting for the series. There has to be some sort of conflict and a problem to be resolved. "The rules of writing scripts for children's films are exactly the same as those for adults," she says. "However, with children's films, the conflicts need to be really vivid. It also helps if some characters' traits and flaws are exaggerated or magnified. Caution is required, however, as kids can tell when you're lying and they don't forgive blunders. Children's films did not get their reputation for being the most difficult cinematic genre by accident," Nehrebecka adds. "We want to entertain children, but we also want to let them learn about some basic aspects of environmental protection without ramming it down their throats," adds Osak. Around 50

Most animation for preschoolers is made using 2D technology. Badi Badi decided to jump in the deep end and build fully-fledged 3D animation

seconds of each episode are dedicated to the educational part, which appears in the 3D world of Agingas and Bagingas as conventional 2D animation. The creators want to ensure that human beings are depicted as a part of nature, so when they care for the

environment, they are by extension caring for their own health and happiness as well. Another value promoted by the series is the importance of working together with friends.

Extra dimension

The creators of the series set themselves an ambitious goal. Most animations for preschoolers is made using 2D technology. Badi Badi decided to jump in the deep end and build fully-fledged 3D animation. "The most recent research shows that the youngest viewers absolutely love the vividness and the intense colors of the world we show them," says Osak. "Tomek Niedźwiedź's intuition is amazing. He has proven more than once that his ideas can be trusted, even if rules have to be broken or time and money constraints partially ignored. Tomek has persuaded me that the real world sometimes doesn't stand a chance in the clash between reality and creative imagination." Michał Migacz, Bartosz Drejewicz and Sławomir Fedorczyk also contributed to the artwork and the 3D animations. Marta Czarnecka created the 2D animations.

The producer of the series is Tomasz Paziewski. The budget for the first season (143 minutes of animation) was more than 3 mil. PLN. The funds were raised thanks to co-financing from the Polish Film Institute and the support of the co-producers: Spot Music Production

AGI BAGI

Director:
Tomasz Niedźwiedź.
Screenplay:
Tomasz Niedźwiedź,
Bartosz Słomka.
Producer:
Dominika Osak, Tomasz Paziewski. Production company: Badi Badi.

Studio, in charge of the sound design, dialogues and music (written by Łukasz Targosz, an excellent composer working with the studio), Zavand Studio in charge of the animation, the National Audiovisual Institute, and with the support of Animoon Studio. The series is only the first step of the children's journey into the world of Agingas and Bagingas. *Agi Bagi* is set to become a brand expanded by way of merchandising. There's an online store on the dedicated webpage (www.agibagi.com) where DVDs, children's books, stuffed toys and organic cotton clothes are available for purchase. It also features some intuitive games designed for iPads and smartphones: AGI BAGI Fun For Kids and AGI BAGI Meadow Flyer. The range will be extended once the third season of the series is released.

The Polish animation market, meanwhile, is growing markedly. "There are currently over thirty excellent studios with various profiles operating in Poland," says Osak. "Badi Badi has so far been focused on producing and promoting this series, but we're also planning to produce a feature-length animation. The industry is thriving, studios are collaboration-oriented, and they derive their strength from joint efforts," she adds. This strongly suggests that the whole world will be talking about Polish animation in a few years.

ADVERTISEMENT





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IMPOSSIBLE IS EASY

He may not work on the biggest European or American features, but **Artur Żurawski's** films probably beat them all hands down when it comes to laughter, tears and heartbreak

 **Darek Kuźma**

How's that? For several years now, he has been shooting for one of the biggest and toughest film markets in the world – Bollywood. He has already worked on four features – three as a cinematographer, and one as a second unit – infusing the visual extravaganza typically associated with the products of Bollywood imagination with a distinct European film look. All of his pictures have become instant hits in India, as well as a few non-Asian markets, but two of them hold a special place in Żurawski's heart.

Pradeep Sarkar's *Mardaani* was his first real contact with a Bollywood A-lister – Rani Mukerji. He had to think on his feet and come to grips with India's film culture. The project itself was atypical for Bollywood – a somber, poignant thriller about a cop who has to go deep into the world of child trafficking. “This was an entirely different animal, both for me and for them,” reminisces Żurawski. “Pure in form, difficult in meaning, it was meant to make waves. I needed to understand whether a scene was sufficiently grounded in reality and culturally relevant. I had to remember who I was shooting it for,” he adds, admitting that the feeling only deepened on the set of Ali Abbas Zafar's *Sultan*, which was, in Żurawski's words, “a 170-minute action-sports-melodrama with some hardcore Bollywood songs.”

“It was more grounded than a standard Bollywood production, but I was aware that it was a massive hit in the making,” says the filmmaker, explaining that *Sultan* became the 4th highest grossing film in the history of Indian cinema. “I was amazed how many people worked on the set. I had a number of assistants, so I had to learn to be precise in what and how I instructed them.” This, Żurawski clarifies, is typical for Indian films. “That is how they cope with challenges. For example, in India you most often go location-scouting so you can build exact replicas in a studio. Because you couldn't possibly shoot on location with a star. The

fans wouldn't allow it. It might seem crazy, but this is the way they do it, and they do it fast and furiously,” he adds with a smile. “With that much human power at hand, I learned to solve impossible problems in a matter of minutes. What? The star showed up late and we have to shoot the noon scene in one take at dusk? No problem. It's easy. Impossible is easy.”

You have to move forward

Before he became the go-to Polish cinematographer for Bollywood, Żurawski had built a solid reputation among Polish directors and producers, gathering experience in various fields, from shooting raw documentaries to making visually stylized TV series, commercials and music videos. But he never betrayed his love for cinema. “There's something utterly fascinating in sitting in a dark theater, watching someone's imagination come to life.” A romantic, then? “Sort of. I'm fascinated with the idea of perception. When you ask two people about what they saw, they can differ even in the most obvious things, like color. That is what the art of cinematography is for me – showing the usual in an unusual way, in my way, and then sharing it with others.” Which is, when you think about it, a quality of each artist, as a person who externalizes his/her thoughts to start a dialog. Or at least it should be.

Żurawski thinks of himself as more of a craftsman, though. “No false modesty in that. I'm here to help, to facilitate, hoping that the material will connect with the audience, whoever they might be and wherever they should be watching it,” he says, alluding to the rise of consuming art on various mobile media. “I understand that we have to move forward, and I'm the first to admit that we live in truly amazing times, with so many technological opportunities to look at everything with fresh eyes. We can't be afraid of doing new things, of trying new cameras, of feeling differently. But at the same time, small screens detract from a film, and impoverish it, or at least its reception, in some way,” he sadly notes.

Does that mean that while shooting, say, a 170-minute Bollywood blockbuster, he thinks how it might one day be watched on a smartphone? “Sure I do. That's my job. I might not agree with it, but I have to prepare as foolproof a film as I can, whether it's a big-budget Indian production, or a smaller Polish documentary.” How does he do that? “I have my bag of tricks. I don't want to give anything away, but it's a matter of details, color, framing, other stuff,” he explains. Remember, impossible is easy. What next, then? “I have no idea, I tend not to think about it before I get a plane ticket,” he says with a grin. “But I'm open to rediscovering myself once more. That would be nice.”

ARTUR ŻURAWSKI FILM PICKS



FIRST ONE:
Enter the Dragon



FAVORITE ONE:
Cinema Paradiso



ONE HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO WORK ON
The Promised Land



EAR THEM OUT

Toya Studios is one of the largest sound studios in Poland. But it's not their size that makes them so great

↳ Urszula Lipińska

"Sound is about people," says Michał Kosterkiewicz, a sound recordist from Toya Studios. "We believe in finding opportunities to pair established sound designers with young energy. We work with young sound designers, and students from the Łódź Film School or the Academy of Sound Engineering. This way of creating sound benefits both sides. The youngsters can enter the world of sound and learn from professionals. The established sound designers can absorb something new." Kosterkiewicz is one of the legendary Polish sound designers who works for Toya Studios, along with Piotr Knop, and Henryk Zastróżny, the best sound imitator in Poland.

Toya Studios has created sound for thousands of film productions. In the past five years alone, two hundred films have left the studio with the Toya label. This accounts for half the film production in Poland. Among them was *All These Sleepless Nights* by Michał Marczak (Sundance IFF 2016), *Illegitim* by Adrian Sitaru (Berlinale IFF 2016), *Klezmer* by Piotr Chrzan (Venice FF 2015), the acclaimed documentary *Call me Marianna* (2015) by Karolina Bielawska, *Little Crushes* by Ireneusz Grzyb and Alexandra Gowin (Rotterdam IFF 2014), and *Parasite* by Wilhelm and Anka Sasnal (Berlinale IFF 2014). At the same time, the studio has provided the sound for well-known Polish productions like the box-office hits *Planet Single* (2016) by Mitja Okorn, and *Jack Strong* by Władysław Pasikowski (2014), and successful arthouse films - *Papusza* (2013) by Krzysztof Krauze and Joanna Kos-Krauze and *Suicide Room* (2011) by Jan Komasa.

"We are flexible," says Knop, a sound mixer who works for the studio. "How we work depends on the requirements of the filmmaker, the techniques used to prepare the material, and the client's expectations. We have innovative programs like ProTools, HDX and 64-muffled console D Control, as well as the latest -S6." Knop adds that sound designers have everything they could possibly need here. Apart from film production, Toya provides sound, dubbing and voicover for commercials and TV programs.

When you look at their long list of collaborations, it's hard to believe that it all has started in 2003. In that year the company called Toya bought on an auction a very special building at Łąkowa 29. Since 1949 till 1998 it was a home for the acclaimed Wytwórnia Filmów Fabularnych (WFF). Its sound department employed the best sound designers in Poland and their offices were known as the Palace of Sound. After the decline of WFF the building was looking for new owner who would continue its past fame.

The building is safe and sound

Toya immediately began to build one of the largest and most innovative postproduction sound complexes in Europe. It was the first sound studio designed with the requirements of sound designers uppermost in mind. "This construction is called a box in a box," says Knop. "The studio is a massive building set inside another construction that 'sits' on huge silencers. This completely blocks sound from outside," he continues. "We have a lot of stories like these: one night the sound designers didn't notice an enormous hailstorm breaking windows and trees; the other day, no one heard the main road being resurfaced with heavy equipment nearby; no one heard a sound, but everyone felt the studio floor vibrating."

The original and distinctive construction of the studio ensured international recognition and prestigious certificates from Dolby Laboratories and THX. One of the sound rooms qualified for Dolby Premier and THX certification. This made Toya Studios the only sound studio in Europe to have acquired both certificates. There are currently five postproduction rooms, two sound recording rooms, and a large music studio.

"A sound designer is an artist," says Kostkiewicz. "It's the sound that determines how we interpret the scene. The way we mix the sound influences the mood of the audience. In that sense, we can call ourselves artists, because sound can make a different impression on different people in the same way that paintings, music and sculptures do. We have an influence on people."

COMBATING AUDIOVISUAL PIRACY AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY THEFT

LOBBYING FOR LEGISLATION FAVOURABLE TO THE FILM INDUSTRY'S DEVELOPMENT AROUND THE WORLD

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SUPPORTING POLISH FILM FESTIVALS AT HOME AND ABROAD

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THE INDUSTRY'S TOP PARTNER IN POLAND SINCE 1966
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POLISH FILM FESTIVAL
CO-ORGANISER
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KRAKOW FILM FESTIVAL,
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PUBLISHING MAGAZYN FILMOWY
(THE FILM MAGAZINE)
AND WWW.SFP.ORG.PL
VITAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION
FROM THE WORLD OF FILM

HOW TO FIND MONEY IN POLAND

1 OPERATIONAL PROGRAM FOR FILM PRODUCTION

Polish Film Institute

FOR PRODUCERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

Participation of Polish co-producer necessary

DEADLINES

There are three application sessions per year



REQUIREMENTS

You have to hire at least one Polish Head of Department (DoP, Set Designer, Editor, Composer);

To be eligible for consideration, applications must include the following i.e.: script, director's statement, synopsis, budget, estimated production costs, script rights agreement;

The Polish producer's own contribution must amount to no less than 5% of the expected cost of the Polish financing.

MINORITY CO-PRODUCTIONS

- A separate selection commission for minority co-productions;
- Bilateral treaty not necessary, even for non-European projects.

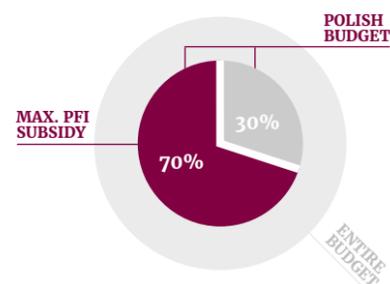
FINANCING

For a Polish co-producer, the maximum subsidy is:

PLN 2 000 000
approx. EUR 470 000

REQUIREMENTS FOR MINORITY CO-PRODUCTIONS

- For bilateral co-productions, the Polish contribution must be at least 20% of the total budget;
- For multilateral co-productions, the Polish contribution must be at least 10% of the total budget;
- At least 80% of the subsidy must be spent in Poland.

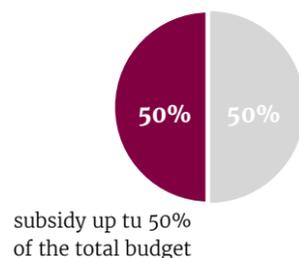


MAJORITY CO-PRODUCTIONS

FINANCING

For a Polish co-producer, the maximum subsidy is:

PLN 4 000 000
approx. EUR 932 000



WHO TO BOTHER FOR MORE INFORMATION: Robert Baliński, tel.: +48 22 42 10 387, email: robert.balinski@pisf.pl.

2 POLISH-GERMAN FILM FUND

Funding institutions: Polish Film Institute, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (MDM) and Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg



FOR PRODUCERS FROM

Poland | Germany

Applications may only be submitted on condition that a co-development (or co-production) agreement has been signed by at least one Polish producer and at least one German producer from the region in which MDM and Medienboard operate.

REQUIREMENTS

Two sessions per year in 2016 (application forms and application dates are available on the websites of the Fund's founders);

The budget of the film should not exceed EUR 750 000;

For: animated films, creative documentaries, low budget narrative films and/or first films and/or films that present an innovative approach;

Television projects are eligible in exceptional cases, with the exception of television feature films.

FINANCING

FOR DEVELOPMENT the maximum subsidy is:

EUR 70 000

FOR CO-PRODUCTIONS the maximum subsidy is:

EUR 150 000

Annual budget approximately

EUR 300 000

WHO TO BOTHER FOR MORE INFORMATION: Robert Baliński, tel.: +48 22 42 10 387, email: robert.balinski@pisf.pl.

3 REGIONAL FILM FUNDS

In general, the Polish regional film funds seek film projects by announcing competitions, usually **once a year**. One **basic condition** for entering a project for a competition is that it is related to a city or town in the region or to the region itself. Support is also contingent on the **spending** of at least 100% of the funding within the region; in some cases, the sum to be expended is 150%.

The Polish regional film funds differ in terms of the budgets they manage, **the forms of support** they provide and the sums which must be spent locally.

All the Polish film funds provide support of **up to 50%** of the film budget, although this may be higher in the case of documentaries and animated films.

Foreign producers are also welcome to submit projects, though preferably as partners to Polish producers.



TWO NEW REGIONAL FILM FUNDS

WILL START OPERATING IN POLAND IN 2017:

1. **PODKARPACIE FILM FUND** (with approx. 188 000 EUR budget)
2. **MAZURIA AND WARMIA FILM FUND** (with approx. 117 000 EUR buget)

1 GDYNIA FILM FUND

www.ckgdynia.pl

2 LOWER SILESIAN FILM COMPETITION

www.wroclawfilmcommission.pl/dkf

3 LUBLIN FILM FUND

www.film.lublin.eu

4 ŁÓDŹ FILM FUND

www.lodzfilmcommission.pl

5 KRAKOW REGIONAL FILM FUND

www.film-commission.pl

6 MAZOVIA FILM FUND

www.mff.mazovia.pl

7 REGIONAL FILM FUND POZNAŃ

www.poznanfilmcommission.pl

8 SILESIAN FILM FUND

www.silesiafilm.com

9 POMERANIA FILM

www.pomeraniafilm.pl

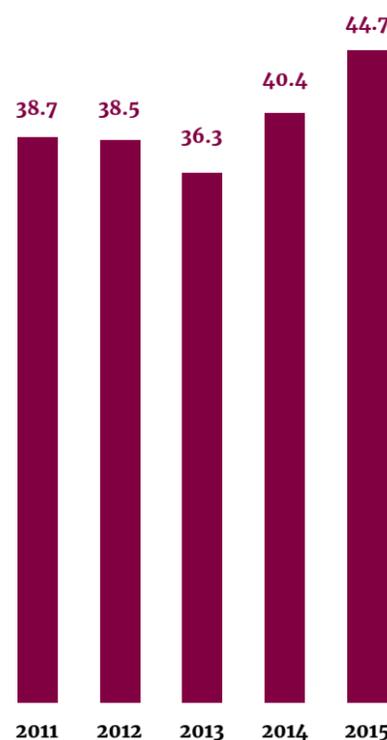
POLAND IN NUMBERS

Box Office 2015

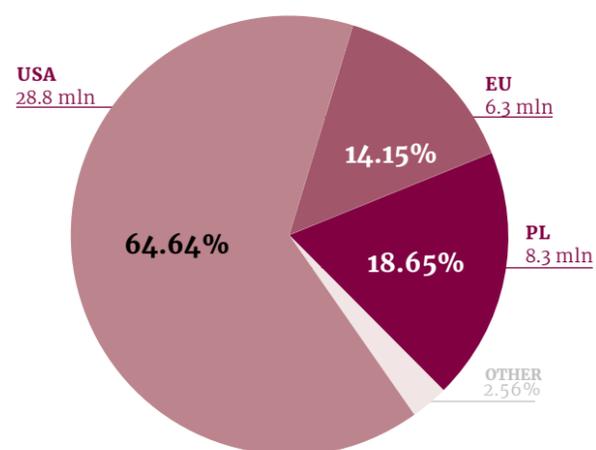
TITLE	POLISH DISTRIBUTOR	COUNTRY	GROSS IN EUR	ADMISSIONS	SCREENS	RELEASE
Listy do M. 2	KINO ŚWIAT	Poland	12 270 964	2 874 420	328	11/13
Star Wars: The Force Awakens	DISNEY	USA	10 457 281	2 058 857	601	12/18
Spectre	FORUM FILM	United Kingdom / USA	8 288 378	1 750 671	350	11/6
Fifty Shades of Grey	UIP	USA	8 228 777	1 814 116	305	2/13
The Penguins of Madagascar	IMPERIAL CINEPIX	USA	7 218 669	1 634 542	235	1/30
The Minions	UIP	USA	7 139 606	1 669 881	307	6/26
Hotel Transylvania 2	UIP	USA	5 131 966	1 154 354	213	10/9
The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies	FORUM FILM	New Zealand / USA	4 540 721	950 232	435	12/26 (2014)
Fast & Furious 7	UIP	USA / Japan	4 507 522	995 199	252	4/10
Inside Out	DISNEY	USA	3 900 257	952 617	217	7/1

1 EUR = 4,26 PLN

Admission over past years in mln



Breakdown of 2015 admissions by country of origin



Average ticket price



EUR 4.27

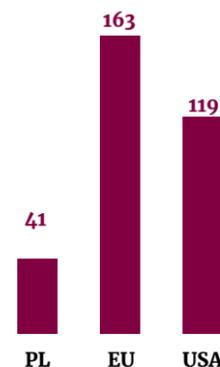
Gross in mln



EUR 193.1

Number of premieres in 2015

343



boxoffice.pl

KEY FILM FESTIVALS

in Poland

MAY

MAY/JUNE

NETIA OFF CAMERA International Festival of Independent Cinema¹

KRAKÓW This festival presents works by young filmmakers from all over the world.
www.offcamera.pl

Millennium Docs Against Gravity Film Festival

WARSAW A selection of the best feature-length documentaries.
www.docsag.pl

Film Music Festival

KRAKÓW A festival devoted to film music.
www.fmf.fm

Krakow Film Festival²

KRAKÓW An international festival presenting documentaries, animations and short features.
www.krakowfilmfestival.pl

JUNE

"Youth and Cinema" Debut Film Festival

KOSZALIN Festival for Polish young filmmakers with sidebar section with international debuts.
www.mlodziifilm.pl

PGNiG Transatlantyk Film Festival

ŁÓDŹ An event that combines cinema and music.
www.transatlantyk.org.pl

JUNE/JULY

Lubuskie Film Summer

ŁAGÓW A festival of films from the post-communist block.
www.lf.pl

JULY

Animator International Animated Film Festival

POZNAŃ Animated films from all over the world.
www.animator-festival.com

AUGUST

Two Riversides Film and Art Festival

KAZIMIERZ DOLNY An event that brings together film and other fields of art.
www.dwabrzezi.pl

SEPTEMBER

Gdynia Film Festival

GDYNIA Poland's most important festival of new feature films.
www.festiwalgdynia.pl

OCTOBER

T-Mobile New Horizons International Film Festival³

WROCLAW A round-up of films blazing the trail for new trends in cinema.
www.nowehoryzonty.pl

NOVEMBER

Etiuda & Anima International Film Festival

KRAKÓW Student films and animations are shown here.
www.etudiaandanima.com

Camerimage

BYDGOSZCZ This festival is devoted to the art of cinematography.
www.camerimage.pl

DECEMBER

Ale Kino! International Young Audience Film Festival

POZNAŃ Films for young viewers.
www.alekino.com

INDUSTRY EVENTS

1 NETIA OFF CAMERA PRO INDUSTRY

Professional film industry platform focused on networking and match-making Polish and international filmmakers. The core of the program are round tables, case studies and workshops.

2 Krakow Film Festival Industry Zone

A series of events dedicated to documentary and animated films, including Krakow Film Market, discussion panels, pitchings and co-production meetings.

DOC LAB POLAND, a program for Polish documentary filmmakers, focusing on consultation and pitching. Consists of: Docs to Go! (in progress) and Docs to Start (in development).

3 T-Mobile New Horizons Polish Days

Presentation of the latest completed Polish feature films and works-in-progress at closed screenings. Projects in development are also pitched here to the international audience and followed by one-on-one sessions.

4 Warsaw Film Festival CentEast Market Warsaw

Presentation of new Polish films and best works-in-progress from Eastern Europe. CentEast also organizes workshops for young film critics (FIPRESCI Critics Warsaw Project) and young filmmakers (Warsaw Next).

5 International Festival of Producers Regiofun Look for Fun

Look For Fun forum – one-on-one meetings provide opportunities of presenting projects to potential investors, co-producers and regional film funds. Accompanied by the open pitching preceded by professional training.

6 American Film Festival US in Progress

Event aimed at matching American indie filmmakers, who have nearly completed their films, with European post-production outlets, festival programmers, sales agents, distributors.



THE FAMTASTIC TOUR

Poland could be the destination for James Bond's next top secret mission, a setting for a corny rom-com, or a backdrop for dystopian sci-fi films. At least according to some Hollywood location managers

↳ Urszula Lipińska

This is the first such initiative organised by Film Commission Poland. Six location managers were invited for so called FAM Tour (Familiarization tour) to see some cinematographically attractive locations and to meet experts from the Polish film industry. "I've already seen at least two locations where an original opening scene could be shot for the next James Bond movie. And it's only my second day here," said Todd Christensen, who has worked on the sets of several films, including *Sicario* and *The Hunger Games*. "I was excited about the prospect of visiting the Wieliczka Salt Mine, but eventually the excitement accompanied me virtually all the time. I wish I could stay in Poland for more than just a week," said Lori Balton, who has worked with Steven Spielberg, Paul Thomas Anderson and Christopher Nolan.

The other four location managers were Becky Brake (*Star Trek*, *Men in Black*, *Mission Impossible - Ghost Protocol*), Robin Citrin (*Aviator*, *Jupiter Ascending*, *Planet of the Apes*), Dow Griffith (*The Bourne Supremacy*, *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, *After Earth*), and John Hutchinson, who mainly works in advertising. During their seven-day visit, they saw Poland's major cities, including Warsaw, Kraków, Łódź, Wrocław and Katowice, as well as some of its most interesting spaces and buildings. Wherever they went, they were allowed

© FILM COMMISSION POLAND, ANNA WYSŁIUK

to enter particular buildings, touch the walls and feel their textures, and see the structural details from up close. Sometimes, this meant roughing it. They had to wear special overalls and rubber boots to visit the sewers in Łódź, where Agnieszka Holland shot *In Darkness*. They also had to fly by helicopter to look at locations in Osówka and Duszniki-Zdrój. They surveyed Warsaw from the roof of the Intercontinental Hotel, and also saw the city through the backstreets of the Praga district and the area around the University. "The number of angles from which the Polish capital can be seen is amazing," said Griffith. In each of the cities they visited, the group met with local film commissions and Polish film industry representatives. "You have enthusiastic and hospitable, but above all, knowledgeable people in Poland. I'd love to work with them," said Christensen, browsing carefully through the pile of catalogues containing pictures and detailed information about each of the locations visited.

Indiana Jones and The Salt Mine

When asked about the most alluring locations they saw during their tour they seemed... lost. "I could give you a very long list of places," said Balton. "From the stunning depths of the sewers in Łódź and the Wieliczka Salt Mine, through beautiful forests and farmland, to castles and forts, Poland offers a rare diversity of unique locations. On top of that, there are industrial buildings, old factories turned into modern hotels, and places that served as the Berlin Wall in Steven Spielberg's *Bridge of Spies*. It's amazing how, in many of these cities, you can still feel the spirit of the past, but at the same time, stumble upon an original, contemporary structure just around the corner," said Balton.

She wasn't the only one impressed with Poland's mix of new and old. The first stop on the FAM Tour, Warsaw, surprised the visitors with its diversity. They particularly liked the precise reconstructions of buildings destroyed during World War II, and the Palace of Culture and Science. The group was impressed by the fact that the Palace has 3,288 rooms, a swimming pool and several lecture halls. They thought that the Palace's interiors alone could provide complete sets for a major film production.



1 Is it the Middle East? No, Wrocław, a city situated in Western Poland.

2 Nikiszowice area of Katowice: sombre but stylish city in the heart of the Silesia region

3 When you think of Łódź the word „tradition” comes to mind. But the city has also very modern and exciting.

According to Citrin, it's important that most of the locations they saw in Poland have never appeared on screen before. "We all like to feel like an explorer at work, and Poland gives us the chance to become one. Producers don't usually know what they want until you put some concrete suggestions on the table. I think that Poland could impress them," says Citrin. Christensen also wants to show photos from the FAM Tour to the producers and studios he works with and to encourage them to come and shoot here. Brake is currently working on a film planned to be shot in Morocco, Rome and Paris. "However, I now see that Poland could appear in it too, because many locations here could be successfully adapted to look like other European cities." It's also important that there are many places in Poland that have been only slightly modernised, and many have been left in their original form. "When we go to a country such as Poland, we want to work in settings that are as genuine as possible. We don't want to transform it all later, in postproduction," says Christensen.

Work and stay in Poland

The fact that Poland's landscape vary so much was significant to the visitors. This is another thing that Poland has going for it. What it means is that the crew won't have to travel too far too often. This saves time and money. "I find it hard to imagine a production that you wouldn't be able to shoot here," says Citrin. "Maybe a surfer flick. Apart from that, I don't see any limitations," she adds.

There is a blot on this landscape, however. The one thing location managers find lacking in Poland are tax credits for foreign film crews. They claim, however, that if they can make an influential director or actor warm to their ideas, no calculations will discourage them. "Especially since you not only have excellent locations, but also the infrastructure - hotels, transport, and motorways. It's easy to get from Point A to Point B, and that's what people are usually most afraid of when going to new places," says Hutchinson.

Tom Deehan from *The Location Guide* magazine, who participated in the FAM Tour, summed it up as follows: "Poland is definitely ready for the international production scene. I'm absolutely certain of this after spending a week here, watching your excellent locations from close up, and seeing the enthusiasm of the visitors from the US and the passion of the Polish film industry people we've met here."

BECOME A KING OF OUR CASTLE

Poland was a kingdom for more than 800 years. The country's rulers and nobility built impressive and stylish castles that attract film crews and... Harry Potter's fans'



1



2



3



4

1 Ogrodzieniec Castle was built between the 14th and 15th century in the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland. The castle is ruined but opened for visitors.

2 Niedzica Castle (also known as Dunajec Castle) in the Małopolska region was built in the 14th century.

3 The Castle of the Teutonic Order in Malbork was erected in a few stages between the 13th and 15th centuries. It stands in the Pomerania region.

4 Moszna Castle can be found in the Opole region. It was built in the 17th century and is a place where Harry Potter fans gather





5

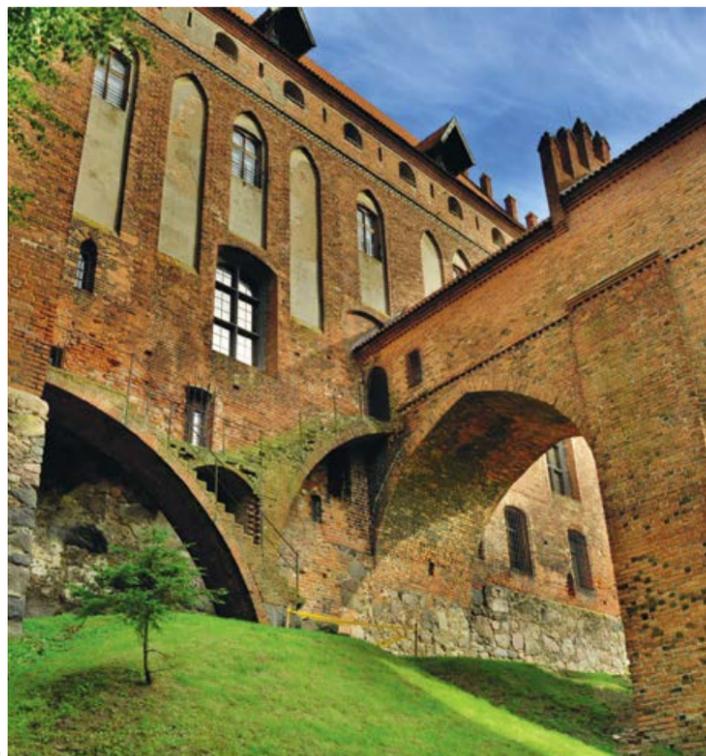
5 Czocho Castle stands in the Lower Silesia region on the border with Czech Republic. It was erected in the 13th century.

6 Kwidzyn Castle is situated in the Warmian-Masurian region of Poland. Built in the beginning of the 14th century, it witnessed many battles against the Teutonic Knights.

7 Kórnik Castle that stands in the Wielkopolska region was originally constructed in the 14th century. Its current shape comes from the remodeling done 19th century.



7



6



8

8 Książ Castle was erected in the last decade of the 13th century. It's one of the main tourists attractions in the Lower Silesian region.

9 Będzin Castle stands in the Silesia region. The stone castle was constructed in the 14th century but its wooded fortification are around 300 years older.



9



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If you want to learn more about Polish locations or shooting permits or find a location scout, see **LOCATION GUIDE POLAND**



available at
www.film-commission-poland.pl



POLISH CINEMA: THE WRONG QUESTION

 Will Tizard



A Prague-based *Variety* reporter takes closer look at international distribution of Polish film

There could hardly be a better time to be vexed by the eternal question of Polish film's struggle to export to the wider world – the Gdynia fest, the annual high water mark for national cinema, has this year showcased a collection of work that shows more depth, variety, stylistic and literary confidence than at any time in recent memory.

If this bumper crop isn't picked up by British or US sales agents and distributors, then what on earth will be?

"I'm sure it won't last," a good Polish friend darkly observed when hearing about the critical and audience successes screened in September at the fest's upbeat 41st edition.

Clearly, Poles are used to being depressed at the stark reality that no one outside the country generally sees the majority of films produced here. The very notion that this might be changing is unsettling to some, so familiar has the resignation become. The very assignment that prompted this article, the question "What is not working in Polish film?" illustrates how deeply the cynicism has penetrated.

What if, I dare to pose, the answer is "Nothing"? Or at least, nothing that isn't also dysfunctional in Czech film, French film or US film?

If the real question is, "Why don't films from Poland (or anywhere else) take up more screen space abroad?" then the answer is, perhaps, indeed depressing. But it's not one that leads to meaningful conclusions about how to do better at exporting.

If you take the US market as the be-all-and-end-all of success (itself

a dubious notion for any art film, which is more or less how the vast majority of European production is labeled in Hollywood), then it's best to take an honest look at the audience we're considering, which is probably the world's most insular.

In a country that regularly remakes even commercial European comedies with American settings and an English-speaking cast so that audiences don't have to read subtitles, the kind of success that any "foreign film" can achieve is, at best, limited to a short arthouse run, hopefully followed by pickups by cable TV channels or Netflix.

Taking risks pays off

Industry observers also note that of the few US shingles that take on foreign-language film, notably The Weinstein Company and Sony, both are doing less such business than ever. And the gold ring to winning distribution in the US, an Oscar win, is a remote chance for a creative, distinctive arthouse film; that's because the entire Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences now votes on this category, making it all but certain that only popular, more accessible fare will score the trophy.

Even a Sundance audience fave such as Michal Marczak's *All These Sleepless Nights*, a film that shows a masterful sense for mood, atmosphere and hyper-realist dialogue (one viewer in Gdynia said, "I feel like I'm drunk," after taking in the film's deeply layered portrayals of art students' vodka-soaked and substance-laced nocturnal misadventures), is far from a sure bet for even this kind of success.

The highest-ranking recent Polish film in terms of breakout success abroad, *Ida*, managed to win its Oscar after several fest successes, much of that credited to Paweł Pawlikowski's assured sense of noir, his willingness to embrace political and historic hot potatoes and his bold gamble on casting non-actor Agata Trzebuchowska in the lead. Indeed the film looks and feels like few other Polish films making the rounds of festivals three years ago, although it now seems to have opened the door to stories that take more nuanced stances on the dark legacy of communism, Judaism's complex role in Polish society and

even the tropes of Catholicism. (The church, of course, as with any institution so all-powerful and so filled with ritual and mysticism, can hardly stay off-screen long even if it's just there as a fantastical setting for a cheesy conspiracy thriller – but it has to be said that new Polish films transcend more and more the national cliché of cinema obsessed with morality plays involving questions of faith, guilt and sin.)

But film, even art film, is a business, let us never forget. The starring role of *Ida* as a film was only won after a year of savvy marketing, much aided by the Polish Film Institute. As the organization's Izabela Kiszka-Hoflik pointed out in a recent *Variety* story, this is a crucial step in the US market, where getting the word out about any given film is increasingly challenging thanks to the dozens of international film fests now running and a global output of indie films that's estimated to be well above 50,000 per year. It's

so important to Polish cinema's image abroad that the PFI spends some \$2.8 million annually on support and promotion of the country's films internationally, sending work and the filmmakers who wrought it around the world.

Then there are the campaigns for the major worldwide awards, including top international festivals, and the races for the Oscars, the European Film Awards and Baftas.

In this climate, even dedicated critics and festival scouts – who spend their year making the rounds of the best curated fests around – struggle to keep up with the most promising work. In an era when a hit art film such as *Tangerine*, another Sundance star, is just one example of the recent crop of work shot on iPhones, it's clear that the most liberating technological boom in history has opened the floodgates as never before.

So, as if finding the universal stories and characters in authentically local

Polish films wasn't challenge enough, even those who manage to square this circle still must fight to get noticed abroad. Perhaps, then, rather than worrying about what features of any national cinema might be barring its success abroad, filmmakers and those in the mighty European support network – a resource so glaringly absent in the US – should focus instead on a different question: How do we get skeptics like my friend, Polish or from anywhere, to accept that this level of brash, vibrant Polish film is not some rare, passing good year?

It seems that many in the newest Polish wave are already there, whether the makers of *The Last Family*, *Forest 4am* or *I'm a Killer* (photo on the left). Whether those further afield ever get to be touched by their vision is another matter – but one we are all learning how to crack together.

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