

# Karlovy Vary 2003

By Ron Holloway

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## KARLOVY VARY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2003

There's not a film festival in the world with more die-hard devotees than the Karlovy Vary. Kids backpack their way to this health spa, sleep in the parks if need be, and line up early in the morning to book tickets for the 300-odd films in 20 sections screened in 12 venues. In addition, there are the Cultural Events, which begin at noon and stretch until midnight. New hotels and restaurants in restored buildings welcome ever more guests. If you take the waters at this legendary spa with its hot springs, you can cut the taste later with an Oplatky sugar-wafer or settle your belly with a shot of Becherovka on the side. Receptions in the Grand Hotel Pupp are known to linger until dawn. A quaint tent - called the "Bioscope" - was erected right next to the Thermal Hotel flagship complex to provide extra seats and add a note of nostalgia for the fairground roots of the cinematic art. Daily musical interludes under the colonnades charmed the guest as well the tourist. And showcases of exquisite glass and porcelain can tempt even the most committed cineaste and festivalier away from the heavy diet of films from around the world.

The 38<sup>th</sup> Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (4-12 July 2003) was no exception to past traditions. On the contrary, it will go down in history as the best to date in its long and distinguished history dating back to the immediate postwar years (when it was held in nearby Marienbad, another spa frequented by royalty and prominence during the reign of the Habsburgs). Under the dual leadership of Jiří Bartoška (president) and Eva Zaoralová (artistic director), both celebrating their 10<sup>th</sup> year at the helm, the festival functions today like a well oiled machine with a veteran staff at each key post. No less than five non-statuary juries - Philip Morris (Central and Eastern European films), NETPAC (Asian films), FIPRESCI (International Critics), FICC (Film Clubs), and Ecumenical (Church Organizations) - complemented the work of the International Jury. Last, but certainly not least, an original festival trailer by Czech director Petr Zelenka, one that was linked to the opening-and-closing night stage-show, set the tone for KVIFF 2003 - a festival of fun as well as films.

Ferzan Ospetek's *La finestra di fronte* (*Facing Window*), an Italian-British-Turkish-Portuguese coproduction, was awarded the Crystal Globe, the festival's Grand Prix. A film with interwoven stories rooted in the past and stemming from the present, the main action takes place in two apartments with windows facing each other across a courtyard. The Special Jury Prize went to Lydia Bobrova's *Babusya* (*Granny*, Russia), the touching tale of a grandmother who has lost her meaning in life. It was Bobrova's second major festival award within a couple weeks, following her win at the St. Petersburg Festival of Festival at the end of June. An ex aequo share of the Philip Morris Prize was awarded to Boris Chlebnikov and Alexei Popogrebsky's *Koktebel* (proper name of a resort town in the Crimea), a debut feature about a father and son on an arduous journey by foot from Moscow to the Black Sea and the company they keep along the way. Had not the film been already programmed at the recent Moscow film festival - where it won the Special Jury Prize and the FIPRESCI Award - it would have been selected for KVIFF, confirmed Eva Zaoralová. No matter - *Koktebel*, a discovery, was still the best film seen at Karlovy Vary.

As for the Asian entries, an oddity occurred when both the NETPAC and the FIPRESCI Juries awarded the same film: Kim Ki-duk's *Haeansun* (*The Coast Guard*, Korea). One of Korea's most original and talented filmmakers, Kim Ki-duk appears to have picked up where he left off in *Soochwieen boolmtung* (*Address Unknown*, 2001), his portrait of a half-Korean, half-American youth whose brutalized existence leaves no doubt that this is a harsh consequence of the postwar American military presence in Korea. In *The Coast Guard* we encounter another fanatic: Corporal Kang Han-choi (Jang Dong-jun), whose strict army training has robbed him of his humanity. Kang is so obsessed with the desire to capture a border spy that he kills a civilian lad who had stepped into the forbidden zone for a romantic tryst with his girlfriend. Awarded for his misdeed by his officers, but hated by the girl who witnessed the murder, Kang cannot reconcile his conscience and gradually loses the respect of everyone - the civilian population, his colleagues, and his immediate superiors - as he sinks deeper into the hole and becomes a killing machine and walking time

bomb. Not the strongest in Kim's trilogy on dehumanized "phantom" figures, following *Address Unknown* and *Napoon namja* (*Bad Guy*, 2001), *The Coast Guard* nonetheless deserved the double recognition it received from peer juries at Karlovy Vary.

## References

### AWARDS

#### INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

**Crystal Globe - Grand Prix:** *La finestra di fronte* (*Facing Window*), Italy-UK-Turkey-Portugal), Ferzan Ozpetek

**Special Jury Prize:** *Babusya* (*Granny*, Russia), Lydia Bobrova

Best Director: Ferzan Ozpetek, *La finestra di fronte* (*Facing Window*, Italy-UK-Turkey-Portugal)

**Best Actress (ex aequo):**

Sylvie Testud, *Stupeur et tremblements* (*Fear and Trembling*), France-Japan)

Giovanna Mezzogiorno, *La finestra di fronte* (*Facing Window*, Italy-UK-Turkey-Portugal)

**Best Actor:** Björn Kjellman, *Se til venstre, der er en svensker* (*Old, New, Borrowed and Blue*, Denmark)

**Special Jury Mentions:**

Best Screenplay: Alain Corneau, *Stupeur et tremblements* (*Fear and Trembling*, France-Japan)

Best Feature Debut and Cinematography: Andor Szilagy, *A Rozsa enekei* (*Rose's Songs*, Hungary)

#### DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION

**Over 30 Minutes:** *Jesus, Du weiss* (*Jesus, You Know*, Austria), Ulrich Seidl

**Under 30 Minutes:** *Zonen* (*The Zone*, Sweden), Esaias Baitel

**Special Mentions**

*Vaveragroh* (*Documentarist*, Armenia), Harutyun Khachatryan

*Kroppen min* (*My Body*, Norway), Margreth Olin

*Portret* (*Portrait*, Russ.), Sergei Loznitsa

**International Critics (FIPRESCI) Prize**

*Haeansun* (*The Coast Guard*, Korea), Kim Ki-duk

**Ecumenical Prize**

*Babusya* (*Granny*, Russia), Lydia Bobrova

**NETPAC Award**

*Haeansun* (*The Coast Guard*, Korea), Kim Ki-duk

Don Quixote Award (International Federation of Film Clubs)

*Babusya* (*Granny*, Rus.), Lydia Bobrova

**Philip Morris Film Award**

*Koktebel* (Russia), Boris Chlebnikov and Alexei Popogrebsky"

*Edi* (Poland), Piotr Trzaskalski

**Awards for Outstanding Artistic Contribution to World Cinema**

Stephen Frears (UK)  
Jiří Menzel (Czech Republic)  
Morgan Freeman (USA)

**Prize of Town of Karlovy Vary**

*Haean* (*The Coast Guard*, Korea), Kim Ki-Duk

**Mladá Fronta Dnes Audience Prize**

*Buddy* (Norway), Morten Tyldum

**Author Information**

Ron HOLLOWAY (1933-2009) was an American critic, film historian, filmmaker and correspondent who adopted Europe as his home in the early fifties and spent much of his life in Berlin. He was an expert on the study of German cinema and against all odds produced, with his wife Dorothea, the journal *German Film*, keeping us up-to-date with the work of directors, producers and writers and the showing of German films around the world.

In 2007, Ron Holloway and his wife were awarded the Berlinale Camera Award. Ron also received the Bundesverdienstkreuz (German Cross of Merit), Polish Rings, Cannes Gold Medaille, the American Cinema Foundation Award, the Diploma for Support of Russian Cinema and an honorary award from the German Film Critics' Association.

Ron was also a valued contributor to *Kinema* for the past fifteen years.