



## Hungary John Cunningham

As hinted at in last year's review, the Hungarian film industry has been through some serious problems in the last twelve months or so. The Hungarian Parliament, where Viktor Orbán's right wing FIDESZ party holds a 68 per cent majority, has drastically cut funding for the Hungarian Motion Picture Foundation, some sources stating that the cuts are as much as 80 per cent. This has resulted in many film projects being cancelled or, at best put on hold.

The worst hit were those productions already underway when the news was announced and it is rumoured that as many as forty productions, at various stages of development, have stalled and are unlikely to resume. Some producers and backers have been left with large debts, which they are unable to repay. One of the casualties of this process was the annual Hungarian Film Week, usually held in late January/early February, which was postponed.

Andy Vajna, the former Hollywood-based producer of *Rambo* and *The Terminator*, has been appointed as a government commissioner to take charge of overseeing the film industry, a move which has not been greeted with universal enthusiasm within the Hungarian film industry. As an indication of the feelings generated by these moves, in February a group of Hungarian filmmakers signed a declaration condemning the new policy, part of which stated that, 'The Hungarian government has decided to replace a democratic self-governing structure ensuring pluralism with a one-person decision-making system'. Signatories included, Miklós Jancsó, Béla Tarr, Ildikó Enyedi and Márta Mészáros and they were supported by non-Hungarian luminaries such as Gus Van Sant and Tilda Swinton.



Kornél Mundruczó's *Tender Son* – *The Frankenstein Project*

When the 42nd Hungarian Film Week finally took place in May it was a much pared-down affair with relatively few films on offer and of these only a handful were worthy of comment. It was significant that two of the main films screened, Kornél Mundruczó's ***Tender Son*** – *The Frankenstein Project* (*Szelid teremtés – a Frankenstein terv*) and Ágnes Kocsis's ***Adrienn Pál*** (*Pál Adrienn*), had been released the previous year. The former walked off with the Best Director award while the latter won Best Film. Of the remaining films, the most notable were ***East Side Stories***, an omnibus film comprised of four excellent shorts by Csaba Bollók, Ferenc Török, Mark Bodszár and Szabolcs Hajdu, all of which, in one way or another, comment on the some of the social



Agnes Kocsis' *Adrienn Pál*



Gábor Dettré's *Antigone*

changes in Hungary in recent years. Gábor Dettré's minimalist but powerful adaptation of **Antigone** impressed many, while György Szomjas offered a delightful music documentary **Eastern Wind: The Film** (*Keleti szél: a film*). Another documentary of note was Gábor Zsigmond Papp's **The Enemy is Amongst Us** (*Az ellenség köztünk van*), which looked at the fates of three Hungarians who, in very differing ways, all become involved in some kind of spying activity.

Other than these films the 42nd Film Week was a rather sad affair. It looks as if the Film Week will now be permanently dropped, with talk of it being replaced by an International Film Festival. Whether or not this is viable, given the crowded film festival calendar in Europe, remains to be seen.

Since the Film Week, there have been other developments. In September a 'list' was published of filmmakers who will receive some financial support. Topping the list, rather predictably perhaps, was István Szabó, as well as funding for a bio-pic of Ferenc (Franz) Liszt. Szabó's film **The Door** (*Az ajtó*), an adaptation of Magda Szabó's book of the same name and starring Helen Mirren, has been in post-production for some time, but according to sound designer Christian Conrad 'it should be in cinemas worldwide later this year or early next'.

Béla Tarr's long anticipated **The Turin Horse** (*Turini ló*) has been released to great critical acclaim. It was also chosen to represent Hungary at the Academy Awards in the Best Foreign film category. However, given the kind

of film it is, its chances of it winning seem slight to say the least. In numerous interviews the director is sticking to his guns about this being his last film.



Béla Tarr's *The Turin Horse*

A few films were released after the Film Week. Péter Bergendy's **The Examination** (*A vizsga*) is set in 1957 and includes amongst its cast popular actor Péter Scherer. It has some parallels to the German film *The Lives of Others* and asks the perennial question about any country's secret service – who keeps an eye on the spies? Adaptations of the work of Sándor Márai are becoming more popular. The latest work to transfer to the big screen is **Adventure** (*Kaland*), a tale of love and deceit set in 1940, directed by József Sipos and starring German Gerd Böckmann and local actor Sándor Csányi. Another release, György Molnár's **In/Out Tawaret** (*Ki/be Tawaret*), details the odd-ball life of a female poet.

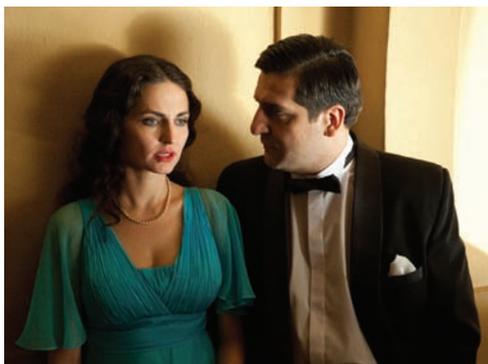


Péter Bergendy's *The Examination*

Although Hungary is not generally known as a destination for refugees, its geographical position means that, either temporarily or permanently, it acts as home for many people

from around the world. This little known aspect of Hungarian life is on display in Oszkár Viktor Nagy's documentary **Between Two Worlds** (*Két világ közt*), which follows the fortunes of four refugees as they attempt to carve a new life for themselves.

What the future holds for Hungarian filmmaking remains unclear and there are many unanswered questions, for example what will happen to the animation and documentary sectors? Some directors have already spoken about making minimal-budget films as their response to the lack of funding and even organising an alternative film festival. Others have moved abroad and it is possible that the Film Directors Guild may simply go into limbo until 2014 (the year of the next election). At the moment much remains at the level of speculation.



József Sipos' *Adventure*

### The year's best films

**The Turin Horse** (Béla Tarr)

**East Side Stories** (Csaba Bollók, Ferenc Török, Hajdu Szabolcs, Mark Bodszár)

**Antigone** (Gábor Dettre)

**The Examination** (Péter Gegrendy)

**Adventure** (József Sipos)

**Eastern Wind: The Film** (György Somjas)

### Directory

All Tel/Fax numbers begin (+36)

**Association of Hungarian Filmmakers,**

Városligeti fasor 38. Budapest, Hungary-1068,

filmszov@t-online.hu



Mark Bodszár's *East Side Stories*

**Association of Hungarian Producers,** Eszter utca 7/B. Budapest, Hungary-1022, mail@mpsz.org.hu, www.mpsz.org.hu

**Hungarian Directors Guild,** Ráday utca 31/K., Budapest, Hungary-1092, mrc@filmjus.hu, www.mmrc.hu

**Hungarian Film Alliance (Magyar Filmunió),** 38 Városligeti fasor, Budapest, Hungary - 1068. Tel: (1) 351 7760, 351-7761 Fax: (1) 352 6734. filmunio@filunion.hu

**Hungarian Independent Producers Associations,** Róna utca 174. Budapest, Hungary-1145, eurofilm@t-online.hu

**Hungarian National Film Archive,** Budakeszi út 51/E. Budapest, Hungary-1021, www.filmintezet.hu

**Hungarian Society of Cinematographers (H.S.C.),** Róna utca 174. Budapest, Hungary-1145, hsc@hscmot.hu, www.hscmot.hu

**MEDIA Desk Hungary,** Városligeti fasor 38. Budapest, Hungary-1068, info@mediadesk.hu, www.mediadesk.hu

**Motion Picture Public Foundation of Hungary** Városligeti fasor 38. Budapest, Hungary-1068 mmka@mmka.hu, www.mmka.hu

**National Film Office,** Wesselényi utca 16. Budapest, Hungary-1075, info@filmoffice.hu, www.nationalfilmoffice.hu

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