



Bulgaria Pavlina Jeleva

The financial instability of Bulgarian cinema that dominated 2010 continued throughout 2011. At the end of 2010, the tension within film circles reached breaking point and filmmakers, frustrated, took to the streets. They protested against the lack of transparency in the attempt to change the Film Industry Act, aiming to remove the legal guarantee of financial support for at least seven features each year. On December 22, 2010 filmmakers agreed on the establishment of a Film Fund with authorities. Furthermore, there was the promise of commitment to the preparation of a national strategy regarding the development of the Bulgarian film industry.

FERA (Federation of European Film Directors) president István Szábo supported the cause by writing to the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Boyko Borisov, calling on him to honour the Film Act and to 'secure the modest minimum of seven features'. Furthermore, he warned that 'the recent fine renaissance of Bulgarian cinema could be easily wiped out'.

Throughout 2011, the National Film Centre tried to partially cover the €10million obligation to various film productions. The suspension of the selection sessions from the beginning of 2010 continued until December 2011 when, under conditions of severe financial restraint, the only session of the year was held.

Against this background, the box-office takings of a few titles were relatively good. Three directorial debuts reignited interest in domestic product. Ilian Djevelevkov's **Love.net**, a seductive romantic comedy dedicated to IT obsessions, Viktor Chouchkov Jr.'s **Tilt**, a film that dealt with generational differences, and Ivan Vladimirov and Valery Yordanov's

Sneakers, in which six young people 'sneak away' to a lonely beach on the Black Sea coast, all impressed audiences.

However, the biggest surprise of the year was the eccentric comedy **Operation Shmenti Capelli**, written by and starring popular actor Vladislav Karamfilov-Vargala and directed by Ivan Mitov. Based on a popular idiomatic expression characterising people who like to shuffle and bamboozle others with superficial commitments, Karamfilov played two roles: the Big Guy, a brutal criminal linked to the secret service, and the Little Guy, an unemployed teacher crushed by the system. Audiences adored the amusing metaphor on economic and political power and sympathised with Karamfilov-Vargala's heroic effort of raising €500,000 by re-mortgaging his property in order to fund the film.



Ivan Mitov's **Operation Shmenti Capelli**

Audiences also responded kindly to Dimitar Kotsev-Shosho's **Lora From Morning Till Evening**, which was made with only €5,000 and shot on a Canon 7D. With the same 'low budget' Yassen Grigorov directed **Little-Big**, which drew on the various styles of Bulgaria's contemporary music scene. Atanas Hristoskov's debut and Bulgaria's first hip-hop film **NO.1** detailed the conflict between two schools located within the same building,

which transforms into a turf war. The film, shot on high definition, won the Golden Rose award at the Varna Film Festival in October.

Kamen Kalev's second film **The Island**, in which French and Danish actors Laetitia Casta and Thure Lindhardt appear in a love story set on a mysterious Black Sea island, provoked some bewilderment due the irrational blend of romance and the grotesque. Konstantin Bojanov's debut, **Ave**, was described as the 'most sincere film' after Kalev's adored debut *Eastern Plays*. The love story between two hitchhikers, young Ave who creates false identities for herself and the alienated art student Kamen, attracted sizable critical acclaim.



Konstantin Bojanov's *Ave*

Although the revival of Bulgarian cinema is now internationally recognized, the future of the industry is still uncertain. Neither the protests nor the commitment of the government led to the actual implementation of the Film Industry Act and the establishment of a Film Fund. The Ministry of Culture budget for film in 2011 was barely more than €5million and the scheduled €6million for 2012 remains insufficient.



Dimitar Kotsev-Shosho's *Lora From Morning Till Evening*



Ilian Djevelevkov's *Love.net*

The year's best films

Ave (Konstantin Bojanov)

Operation Shmenti Capelli (Ivan Mitov)

Love.net (Ilian Djevelevkov)

NO.1 (Atanas Hristoskov)

Lora From Morning Till Evening (Dimitar Kotsev-Shosho)

Directory

All Tel/Fax numbers begin (+359)

Ministry of Culture, 17 Stamboliiski St, 1000 Sofia.

Tel: (2) 980 6191. Fax: (2) 981 8559.

www.culture.government.bg.

National Film Centre, 2A Dondukov Blvd, 1000

Sofia. Tel: (2) 987 4096. Fax: (2) 987 3626

www.nfc.bg.

Bulgarian National Television, 29 San Stefano

St, 1000 Sofia. Tel: (2) 985 591. Fax: (2) 987 1871.

www.bnt.bg.

National Academy of Theatre & Film Arts, 108A

Rakovski Street, 1000 Sofia. Tel: (2) 9231 231/233

Bulgarian National Film Library, 36 Gurko St,

1000 Sofia. Tel: (2) 987 0296. Fax: (2) 987 6004 bnf.

bg/en/film_library/ or www.ceebd.co.uk/ceeed/un/bg/bg023.htm

Bulgarian Film Producers Association, Tel: (2)

8860 5350. Fax: (2) 963 0661. geopoly@gmail.com.

Union of Bulgarian Film Makers, 67 Dondukov

Bldv, 1504 Sofia. Tel: (2) 946 1068. Fax: (2) 946

1069 www.filmmakersbg.org.

PAVLINA JELEVA is a film critic and journalist, regularly contributing to many Bulgarian newspapers and magazines. Having been national representative on the boards of Eurimages and FIPRESCI, she is now artistic and foreign-relations director of her own film company.
