



Slovakia Miro Ulman

Despite a decline in cinema attendance by 10 per cent, Slovak cinema in 2011 was quite successful with the production of features doubling to eight films (excluding international co-productions). Whether there is anywhere to screen them is a different issue. As of 2010, there were only 162 commercial cinemas with 227 screens (66 of which were digital). At the end of 2011, the Minister of Culture granted €340,000 for the digitisation of single-screen cinemas, as so far only nine such venues have been digitised.

After a less successful 2010, last year saw Slovakian films once again screening abroad, but also attracting a more significant domestic audience. Moreover, the narrative features dominated.



Zuzana Liová's *The House*

Zuzana Liová's debut **The House** (*Dom*), an impressive chamber-piece about the clash between two generations, was selected for the Berlinale 'Forum'. The internecine strife between generations was skilfully employed as a metaphor for larger societal problems.

Martin Šulík's **Gypsy** (*Cigán*) walked away with four prizes from Karlovy Vary. Filmed with the director's signature poetic flair and making the most of its non-professional cast, the film



Martin Šulík's *Gypsy*

focuses on the story of a boy whose dreams of love and education are crushed by the cruel reality of Roma life.

Ivan Trojan, the lead actor in Peter Krištúfek's psychological drama **Visible World** (*Viditeľný svet*), picked up the Best Actor award at Bratislava. Trojan plays a misanthrope whose observation of, and irritation with, a local family's happiness results in his attempts to destroy their lives. It is a skilled performance that papers over the cracks in the script.



Peter Krištúfek's *Visible World*

Peter Bebjak's **Apricot Island** (*Marhuľový ostrov*) is a film about passion, love and the co-existence of various nationalities in one region in the south of Slovakia. It succeeds in telling a story without words – a unique achievement amongst Slovak films of recent years.



Peter Bebjak's *Apricot Island*

LÓVE, the second film by 24-year-old Jakub Kroner, offers up a story concerning two young thieves and a college girl, and has been seen as the director's defining statement on his generation. It examines the way that Hollywood clichés and contemporary culture's obsession with celebrity dominate these lives. It was seen by 108,000 viewers during its seven-week run and went on to become the fifth-most successful domestic release since the country gained independence in 1993. By contrast, the last of the narrative features, Juraj Nvota's **Confidant** (*Konfident*) is based on a true story from the time when the country was still part of Czechoslovakia, in 1968.



Jakub Kroner's *LÓVE*

Three Slovak documentaries employed fictional elements to complement or illustrate their subject. Peter Dimitrov's **Time of Grimaces** (*Čas grimás*) describes the circumstances surrounding the creation of the famous busts by F. X. Messerschmidt, an eccentric sculptor of the Theresian era. Gejza Dezorz and Jozef Páleník's **Massacre of Devínska** (*Devínsky masaker*) reconstructs scenes that detail the bloodshed in Devínska Nova Ves (part of Bratislava) in 2010. However, the film offers nothing new to the much-discussed topic.

Matej Mináč's **Nicky's Family** (*Nickyho rodina*), a sequel to the Emmy-award winning documentary *Nicholas Winton – The Power of Good*, once again explores the story of Sir Nicholas Winton, who saved the lives of 669 children at the outbreak of World War II by organising Kindertransport from Prague to the UK.



Matej Mináč's *Nicky's Family*

National elections will take place in Slovakia in March 2012. It is an event that could have a major impact on the filmmaking landscape. Before then, eight new films – an equal number of features and documentaries – from young directors are scheduled for release. They include Róbert Šveda's intimate story of love, sacrifice and death, **Angels** (*Anjeli*); Juraj Krasnohorsky's **Tigers in the City** (*Tigre v meste*), which offers some insight into the lives of young people on the threshold of their thirties; Palo Janík's **Take It Easy, or the Third Wheel on a Wagon** (*TAK FAJN, alebo tretie kolo na voze*), a light romantic musical comedy about three friends on a trip to the Croatian coast; and finally, the very first Slovak fantasy feature, **Immortalitas**, directed by Erik Bošňák.

The year's best films

The House (Zuzana Liová)

Gypsy (Martin Šulík)

Visible World (Peter Krišťúfek)

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