

EUROPA CINEMAS Label

Giornate degli Autori
Venice 2023

Ivan Ostrochovský and Pavol Pekarčík's PHOTOPHOBIA wins Europa Cinemas Venice Label

September 8 2023: Slovakian directors Ivan Ostrochovský and Pavol Pekarčík's **PHOTOPHOBIA** (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Ukraine) has won the Europa Cinemas Label as Best European Film in the Giornate degli Autori section of the Venice Film Festival, it was announced today by a jury of four Europa Cinemas Network exhibitors. 2023 marks the twentieth time the Label has been awarded in Venice.

In receiving the Label, **PHOTOPHOBIA** will benefit from promotional support from Europa Cinemas and better exhibition thanks to a financial incentive for network cinemas to include it in their programming schedule.

The Jury consisted of: Gerardo de Vivo (Modernissimo, Napoli, Italy); Lukas Berberich (Kino Usmev, Košice, Slovakia); Mira Staleva (Sofia Film Fest on the Road, Sofia, Bulgaria) and Priscilla Gessati (L'Entrepôt, Paris, France).

The jury issued the following statement: "Photophobia is a very original and beautifully observed film set today in an underground Kharkiv metro station in the middle of the war in Ukraine. But this is no miserabilist cliched war story. We see the way human beings – and the children in particular – learn to create a new way of living. There is hope here, and joy in the small things – the occasional luxury of feeling the sun on their faces for example. The film is exceptionally well made, with the cinematography a stand out. As it stands, this film has no international sales company attached. We strongly recommend that companies look at this film very quickly and get

to work. As exhibitors we are convinced that this film has a wide audience waiting for it. Our unanimous choice for the Europa Cinemas Label here in Venice is Photophobia.”

The film is a Punchart Films and Cinémotif Films production, co-produced with Radio and Television of Slovakia, Arthouse Traffic, Czech Television, Partizanfilm with the support of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, Czech Film Fund and the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic.

The producers are Ivan Ostrochovský, Albert Malinovský, Katarína Tomková, Tomáš Michálek Kristýna Michálek Květová with co-producers Helena Osvaldová, Denis Ivanov, Jakub Mahler and Pavol Pekarčík. Screenplay is by Marek Leščák, Ivan Ostrochovský and Pavol Pekarčík.

Cinematography is by Ivan Ostrochovský and Pavol Pekarčík; editing by Ivan Ostrochovský, Pavol Pekarčík and Martin Piga; music by Roman Kurhanand Michal Novinski; sound by Jakub Jurásek and Dušan Kozák

Cast includes Nikita Tyshchenko (Niki), Viktoriia Mats (Vika), Yana Yevdokymova (Niki's mother), Yevhenii Borshch (Niki's stepfather), Anna Tyshchenko (Anyá, Niki's sister), Vitaly Pavlovitch (Cowboy) and Tetiana Volodymyrivna Syrbu (doctor).

On a cold February morning, 12-year-old Niki and his family arrive at the Kharkiv metro station to take shelter from the terrifying war raging outside. For Niki's family, daylight is synonymous with mortal danger, and the boy is not allowed to leave the station premises, living under the constant glow of their neon lights. While aimlessly wandering around the abandoned cars and full platforms, Niki meets Vika (11), and a new world opens up to him. As their bond strengthens, the children find the courage once again to feel the sun on their faces.

"When we arrived in Ukraine with humanitarian aid in the spring of 2022, and settled into a life alongside the metro refugees, we realized that the eyes of the world would be on the front line. That was why we decided to find something most closely approaching "ordinary life" and preserve it to the best of our abilities: to find a moment of genuine humanity at a time of devastating horror. We decided to juxtapose the timeless, aimless life lived by Niki and his family with the chilling scenes playing out on ground level, using the format of Super 8mm film footage. We've filmed observations of a war-ravaged country that might seem as the distant ideas of a traumatized child – a fever dream from times long past – if only the audience did not know that this was the reality of Ukraine nowadays." [Ivan Ostrochovský, Pavol Pekarčík]

Ivan Ostrochovský and Pavol Pekarčík debuted with their feature documentary Velvet Terrorists (2013), which they have co-directed with Peter Kerekes and which won the Tagesspiegel Readers' Award at Berlinale's Forum. Pekarčík's solo debut feature was hybrid Silent Days (2019), presented at the Karlovy Vary IFF's East of the West competition, while Ostrochovský continued with the feature Koza (2015), returning to the Forum at the Berlinale once again. Ostrochovský's second feature Servants (2020) was presented in a world premiere at the then newly established Berlinale competition Encounters. Ivan is the author and co-writer of 107 Mothers (2021), which won the Orizzonti Best Screenplay at Venice IFF.

Filmography:

Ivan Ostrochovský

2023 Photophobia

2021 Cenzorka

2020 Služobníci
2015 Koza
2013 Zamatoví teroristi (doc)

Pavol Pekarčík
2023 Photophobia
2019 Hluché dni
2013 Zamatoví teroristi (doc)

Previous winners of the Europa Cinemas Label in Venice include:

2022: Dirty Difficult and Dangerous/Wissam Charaf
2021: Californie/Alessandro Cassigoli and Casey Kaufmann
2020: Oaza/Oasis Serbia
2019: Corpus Christi, Poland
2018: Joy, Austria
2017: M, France
2016 : Sami Blood, Sweden
2015 : A peine j'ouvre les yeux, France
2014 : I nostri ragazzi, Italy
2013 : La belle vie , France
2012 : Crawl, France
2011 : Présumé coupable, France
2010 : Le bruit des glaçons, France

Europa Cinemas in Venice: The 27 Times Cinema project returned to Venice this year for its fourteenth edition. Set up by Europa Cinemas in partnership with the European Parliament and Giornate degli Autori, 27 young film-lovers, representing each of the 27 EU member states and selected among the young audiences of the Europa Cinemas Network, were in Venice for the duration of the Mostra. The 27 filmgoers attended screenings and participate in debates about the films, along with directors, film professionals and Members of the European Parliament. They published articles and contribute to the Europa Cinemas social networks. Since 2014, the members of the 27 Times Cinema team have been assigning the Giornate degli Autori Award, forming one of the largest and most unusual juries on the international film festival scene.

Europa Cinemas in 2023:

38 countries / 744 cities / 3060 screens / 83 million admissions

Europa Cinemas is supported by Creative Europe/**MEDIA**, Programme of the European Union (Brussels), **CNC** (France), **Eurimages** (Council of Europe, Strasbourg), **Institut Français** (Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture, France)

Press Enquiries: Charles McDonald

charles@charlesmcdonald.co.uk +44 7785 246 377