Oscars 2017: Andrzej Wajda’s Afterimage

Wim Wenders and European desires

Poland on Hollywood’s radar
It has been a year since the special envelope for minority co-productions was created within the Polish Film Institute. 14 out of 93 submitted projects received financing, which is why I encourage you to cooperate with Polish producers on inspiring projects, with support from the Polish Film Institute. 2016 has brought a number of significant awards for Polish filmmakers. Young director Tomasz Wasilewski received the Silver Bear Award for Best Screenplay in Berlin for Unfinished. In this year’s Oscar race, Poland will be represented by the last film by the great Andrzej Wajda, whose recent passing we are still mourning. Wajda, one of the most acclaimed producers on inspiring projects, with support from the Polish Film Institute. The Korean Unfinished, the German Kate Water or the co-production The Valley of the Gods starring John Malkovich and Josh Hartnett are some examples of successful ventures in Poland. Locations are not the only critical point in being competitive in international markets. We have great postproduction outlets and — at the other end of the filmmaking career spectrum — a film family. The city of Wrocław will host the 29th European Film Festival, which premiered at the 24th Toronto International Film Festival, sadly marks the final chapter in his oeuvre. December 10 will mark an extraordinary event for our European film family. The city of Wrocław will host the 29th European Film Awards ceremony. The first ever award for Best European Film, back then known as the Felix Awards, went to Krysztof Kieślowski for A Short Film About Killing. This year we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the passing of this exceptional director. It is a unique opportunity to take a look at Kieślowski’s oeuvre and restate the questions he posed in his films. When accepting his Felix award, Kieślowski said “I hope that Poland is a part of Europe.” Today, when we see the growing interest of filmmakers from all geographic, cultural and professional backgrounds,” we invite you to the Polish Film Magazine.
THE ART OF WAR

Oscar–winning director Florian Heckel von Donnersmark shoots his new film in Poland

Van Donnersmark, who wrote and directed the enormously successful The Lives of Others (2006 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film) is returning with Werk Ohne Autor (Work Without Author). The film is a psychological thriller set in post-war Germany. A young artist, Kurt Barnet (Tom Schilling, Oh, Boy!) escapes to West Germany. However, he is still haunted by experiences from his childhood and early adolescence, a period which coincided with Nazi rule and the East German communist regime. When he meets university student Ellie (Paula Beer, Franz), he is convinced that he has just met the love of his life. He starts painting images that reflect not only his personal experiences, but also the trauma of his entire generation. Sebastian Koch (The Lives of Others, Homeland), Jasmin Rossendorf, and Iva Weisse play supporting roles. The DoP is Caleb Deschanel (The Passion of Christ). The crew worked on location in Germany (Berlin, Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia) and Poland (Lower Silesia, which stands in for Dresden). Polish services were provided by Tempus Film. Werk Ohne Autor is produced by Jan Mejto, Quirin Berg, Florian Henckel von Donnersmark, and Max Wiedermann. The production companies are Per-gamon Film and Wiedermann & Berg Film Production. The film was co-produced by ARD Degeto and Bayerischer Rundfunk and supported by Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, FFA, FFF Bayern, Film und Medienstiftung NRW, and MDM Mitteldeutsche Mediendõeserung. World sales are being handled by Beta Cinema.

Korean action film Unfinished wrapped shooting in Wroclaw and Legnica

The story revolves around a secret agent (Tiger Lee), who has to play a dangerous game for the sake of his family. The cast includes actress Park Joo-mi and Polish actor Robert Mika. The action takes place in the 1980s and the two Polish cities. The Wrocław Film Commission provided logistic support.

Skolimowski’s golden roar

Veteran Polish director Jerzy Skolimowski received a lifetime achievement award at the recent Venice Film Festival. The Golden Lion was presented by Paolo Baratta, head of the Venice Biennale, and actor Jeremy Irons, who worked with Skolimowski on Moonlighting. “I need to make a few more films in order to prove that I deserve this award, so that it’s not taken away from me,” Skolimowski said in his acceptance speech. He studied film directing at the Łódź Film School. In the early 1960s he co-wrote the scripts for Andrzej Wajda’s famous Sur- vivors and Roman Polanski’s Knife in the Water. In 1967, after his film Hands up! was shelved by the communist censors, Skolimowski left Poland and embarked on an international career.
Cold Baltic water

German Kalte Wasser wrapped filming in Poland. The film is based on the true story of an 18-year-old girl who fell overboard in unexplained circumstances. The script, written by Raymond Ley, is based on Dona Kujacinski’s popular book Unser Kind ist tot (Our Child is Dead). The cast includes Romanian actress Maria-Victoria Dragus (The White Ribbon, Graduation), who was named a Shooting Star in 2014 and won a German Film Award in 2010, German actress Lisa Holitska, Austrian actor Harald Schrott, and Polish actors Robert Gonera and Mieszko Baka. Baka plays a journalist reporting on the cruise who becomes unexpectedly entangled in the tragic events. Kalte Wasser (Cold Water) was directed by Raymond Ley and produced by Nico Hofmann and Marc Lepetit (UFA Fiction). The film was commissioned by NDR and ARD Degeto for Das Erste and funded by nordmedia Film and Mediengesellschaft Niedersachsen/Bremen mbH. The commissioning editors are Marc Brasse (NDR) and Christine Strobl (ARD Degeto). Production services in Poland are provided by Tempus Film, represented by Jacek Gaczkowski and Piotr Strzelecki.

Greek–Polish co-production Pity started shooting in mid–October

The story evolves around a man who feels happy only when he is unhappy, a man who needs pity, who is addicted to sadness and self-inflicts pain when fearful of its absence: Principal cast includes Yannis Drakopoulos, Evi Saoulidou, Makis Papadimitriou and Nikos Karathanos. The film is directed by Babis Makridis (L), who also co-wrote the script with Efthimis Filippos. The director of cinematography is Konstantinos Koskouilis.

Pity is produced by Amanda Livaniou (Neda Film), Klaudia Śmieja and Beata Rzeźniczak, who previously worked together on Sofia. The executive producer is Christos V Konstantinou. The film is also co-produced by the Greek company Beben Films and Faliro House. It is supported by The Onassis Foundation, Eurimage, the Polish Film Institute, the Greek Film Center, Greek TV channel ERT SA, Greek Company Foss Production and the Polish outlet Orka. Pity is to be released in 2017. The world sales are open.

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In 1988 the first European Film Award, named Felix back then, was presented to Krzysztof Kieślowski. You won an award for Best Directing for Wings of Desire. Do you remember that ceremony and its atmosphere? I remember it very well, and not only because I was in Berlin. Berlin, Germany, and Europe were still divided in democracy and opened borders, a new nationalism is taking over again in more and more countries, talking back to the dark ages, and ignoring human rights and European values. All the great achievements of the past few decades are at risk of falling apart. So politics is once more playing an important role in our Academy, which sees itself as a defender of freedom of speech, artistic expression, and human rights. Our commitment to European cinema goes way beyond its economic and cultural aspects. We strongly believe that cinema can play a vital role as an ambassador for freedom, peace, and tolerance.

European cinema is changing, for example the amount of international co-productions is growing every year. How would you comment on that? This strong sense of co-operation has always been there, only now it is so much easier to co-produce because there are many bi-lateral co-production treaties between various countries, and because there are European supporting schemes and funds like Creative Europe and Eurimages. International co-productions are not only an economic necessity if you want your film to be made. They also reflect the reality of our contemporary Europe. Making films about the people who live on our continent increasingly means telling stories about people on the move, about people living in a multi-cultural context. So there is a natural need for co-production, because even local stories now often involve characters from various cultural backgrounds. And since you ask what I think about it, I very much welcome it, both as a director and as president of the European Film Academy. I don’t even remember when I made my last film that was not a co-production. I don’t want to live in a country, or in a society, that does not open its doors and hearts to people from abroad. It doesn’t matter whether they are political refugees or simply people who wish to live in my country, for instance, because they like it or because they’re hoping for a better life. Not so long ago, around the time I was born, millions of Europeans were refugees and were on the move. I can’t believe that our memories are so short.

Case in point: your upcoming film Les beaux jours d’Arago that will be released in November is a French-German-Portuguese co-production. This is the first film I’ve shot in French, and I did so because my friend Peter Handke (with whom I’ve collaborated several times during my career) wrote it in French. He’s an Austrian who lives in France. I’m a German filmmaker who’s now shot his first film in a neighboring country, in a neighbor’s language that I like a lot, with a Belgian cinematographer, Benoît Debie, who has now shot my last three feature films, and with a Portuguese producer with whom I’ve now made half a dozen films as well. The other producer, Gian-Piero Ringel, is half-Italian and half-German. My lead actor is of Algerian descent. All these European ingredients made for quite a unique film – as if I’d never made one before. You see: I get along well in this European melting pot.

What are the main goals of the European Film Academy now? We want to be an open house for filmmakers from all geographic, cultural, and professional backgrounds. The EFA cannot support them with money, because it’s not a funding institution, but we try to support them morally, and help them when they are in danger of losing their voice, both as artists and as citizens. We have a special focus on the younger generation of filmmakers, for example, by bringing them together in master classes or weekend seminars like A Sunday in the Country (which we’ve been doing in Wroclaw for young critics for six years now). And we believe in film on film. Five years ago, we initiated the EFA Young Audience Award, which invites young audiences of 12 to 16 to become members of a pan-European jury. Young audiences in 25 European countries participated this year – they all watched the same three films on the same Sunday in May. And by the end of the day they had chosen the winner – like in the European Song Contest. This YAA is an incredible success story which proves that there is a young audience that is hungry to watch quality European films. It’s just that we have to take them by the hands and teach them how to watch these movies. This is a generation in danger of believing that “cinema” is synonymous with action and blockbuster movies.

If you – as a president of EFA was granted a wish from the genie from the bottle or a fairy which would you wish for European films? No such wish will ever be fulfilled without working hard to make it happen. (Actually, sometimes I feel that we have a lot of fantastic genies working in the EFA office!) Therefore my answer is very simple: If we want a prosperous future for European cinema we have to accomplish two things: first, make good films; and, no less important, take good care of our audience. Fortunately, there are many very committed people and institutions in Europe who see this the same way we do. I really appreciate the strong European network that has grown up over the past three decades and which is taking the future of our cinema very seriously.

This year’s EFA Award Ceremony will take place in Wrocław. Have you ever been there? I have to admit that I haven’t been to Wrocław yet. But I intend to spend some time there before my “official schedule” at our EFA weekend and our ceremony. But I can tell you an anecdote about my Polish colleague, the one and only Krzysztof Kieślowski. When he won the very first European Film Award for Best Films in 1988, he was asked what Europe meant to him. He gave a very memorable answer that somehow included me. He said that on that night of the ceremony he was suffering from a bladder infection which made him run to the bathroom every ten minutes. And every time, so the story goes, he ran into Marcellio Mastroianni, who was coming in to smoke a cigarette, and me, because apparently, I was washing my hands every ten minutes. That might well have been. I was very nervous that night, suffering from a bladder infection, Marcello with his cigarettes, and Wim washing his hands in the bathroom – this is the Europe I dream of. Yes, Krzysztof, if only you were still around and with us. This very human spirit and love for each other is still alive and can be felt every time we come together to celebrate the European Film Awards. Next time in Wrocław, the European Capital of Culture, on December 10.
It would be hard to imagine a filmmaker more Polish than Andrzej Wajda. His films are deeply grounded in Polish history and literature, but they are also indispensable part of European cinema.

Andrzej Wajda, who originally trained to be a painter, often alluded to iconic Polish paintings (the symbolist Jacek Malczewski, the realist Aleksander Gierymski, and the post-impressionist Ferdynand Ruszczyc). His palette was shaped by Polish landscapes, architecture, seasons, etc. Even Polish critics and film historians concede that Wajda can justifiably be regarded as a highly hermetic auteur. Indeed, some of his films (e.g. The Wedding and Pan Tadeusz) are so replete with references to Polish culture and history (fairly obscure to outsiders), that they might be incomprehensible to international audiences.

But on the other hand, along with Krzysztof Kieślowski, Wajda remains the best known Polish filmmaker outside Poland. Some of his features – especially Ashes and Diamonds and Man of Marble – can be found on many lists of Greatest films in the history of cinema. Directors like Martin Scorsese frequently declare their admiration for Wajda’s work. His films are studied all over the world by future filmmakers and film critics. Now that his oeuvre is closed, we can try to answer the following questions: What is the place of Wajda and his work in world cinema? What would a map of his global inspirations and influences look like?

The “War trilogy” and post-war cinema
Wajda’s international career began in 1957, when his second feature film, Kanał, won the Special Jury Award at the Cannes Film Festival, together with Ingmar Bergman’s The Seventh Seal. Kanał received positive reviews in French film magazines, such as “Cahiers du Cinéma”, and an especially enthusiastic review from Lindsay Anderson in the U.K. The period from 1957 until the early 1960s was an exceptionally good one for Wajda and other Polish filmmakers, e.g. Jerzy Kawalerowicz and Andrzej Munk, in the UK. Three of Wajda’s 1950s films, viz. Generation, Kanał and Ashes and Diamonds, comprise what is known as his “War Trilogy”. It was these films that established his reputation as one of Europe’s leading filmmakers. His early works, which came a decade after the classics of Italian neo-realism, e.g. Paisa and Germany, Year Zero, both directed by Roberto Rossellini, are in a sense the final chapter in the cinematic portrayal of the vacuum that World War II left in its wake in Europe. The post-war reality, which is immediate in Rossellini’s films, finds itself increasingly relegated to the distant past, to memory and phantasmagoria, in Wajda’s oeuvre.

The War Trilogy (and especially Ashes and Diamonds) is something of a synthesis of the whole post-war cinema, both European and American. Wajda himself referred to John Huston’s The Asphalt Jungle as the deepest source of inspiration for Ashes and Diamonds, but it is not hard to discern other American affinities. The mise-en-scène draws heavily from Citizen Kane and other early Orson Welles films - deep focus,
low-angle shots, strong contrasts, long shadows, and ba-
pressive images. According to Roman Polański, who is seven years Wajda’s junior, Wajda’s late 1950s films were also heavily influenced by Carol Reed. Old Man Out – a day in the life of a wounded IRA fighter in British Ulster, torn between duty and a desire for personal happy-
n – bears a strong resemblance to Ashes and Diamonds in terms of style and theme. Both directors employ flam-
boyant baroque images, often centered around Catholic symbols. The highly expressive photography of Robert Krasker (Reed’s director of photography) could easily fit into any of Wajda’s films from the 1950s. Reed, Wajda, Rossellini, and Huston all set their stories in a world epitomized by decay, absurdity, and a certain fatalism. Maciek Chetniewski, the protagonist of Ashes and Diamonds, is left dying in a junkyard in the end of the film. For him, death is the only way out. This symbolically brings the post-war period to a close - not just in Polish, but also in world cinema.

Nouvelle vague avant la lettre?
Ashes and Diamonds premiered in 1958. A year later, Fran-
cis Truffaut’s The 400 Blows screened at Cannes. The French New Wave soon flooded world cinema. It has been
French traditions and the rapid Americanization of post-

A close inspection of Ashes and Diamonds reveals just how

close it is to the sensibility of the New Wave. Wajda intentionally employed a variety of film clichés, counterbalancing the most sublime pathos with the most malicious irony. This unexpectedly places him in the

vicinity of Godard. Zbigniew Cybulski’s performance as

Maciek Chetniewski was visibly inspired by the James Dean style of acting, but it also suggests the future perfor-
mances of Jean-Pierre Léaud, the most iconic actor of both Godard and Truffaut.

At the same time, it is hard to argue with John Orr, who claims that Wajda was never really able to find his place in the cinema of 1960s, shaped as it was by succes-

sive New Waves. His films from the 1960s seem dated, and cannot hold their own against the modernist cinema of the day. Generally, the 1960s, with the exception of the black and white period drama Ashes, can be consid-

ered a “lost decade” for Wajda’s cinema.

The long 1970s
The 1970s, by contrast, was arguably Wajda’s best decade. He returned to international prominence with the Oscar-nominated The Promised Land, which won the Palme d’Or at Cannes in 1968. In the 1970s, political context was obvi-
ously important to the international reception of Wajda’s films. By the 1970s, it had arguably become crucial. Some of Wajda’s 1970s films seem to be less interesting (at least for audiences at the time) as part of the ongoing political debates than as part of the evolution of the aesthetics of world cinema.

Tapping into Poland’s turbulent history made Wajda a force to be reckoned with. His films from this period are set against the seismic social and political changes of the period, which historians now refer to as “the long 1970s”. This prolonged decade stretches from May ’68 to 1983 (the year of Marghera Thatchers’s first election in Britain). It is marked by political upheaval, the decline and fall of the radical, utopian ideals of ’68, and the final ideological bankruptcy of Eastern bloc state socialism as a viable alternative to Western liberal democracy. In Poland, 1968 marks the peak of anti-Semitic activity. The French Revolution is degenerating into a vicious cy-

cle of violence, accusations and counter-accusations, and quasi-totalitarian terror. On the one hand, Flaton depicts the revolution as per the conservative, revisionist interpreta-
tion that prevailed in French academia during the Mitterrand era. On the other hand, however, the film is an allegory of the communist revolution then underway in Eastern Europe. The final scene depicts a small child – the son of Robespierre’s maud – reciting “the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen”. Is this meant to be ironic, or does it contain a kernel of hope? Perhaps it can be read

as a prophecy of the democratic reforms in the former Eastern Bloc, which were made possible thanks both to the democratic opposition and to liberal-minded mem-
bers of the communist party. Could it be that, like Godard, Wajda was thinking about “a time after revolution”? Can the film be the chronicle of 1989 foretold? However messy, bloody and atrocious the history of the second half of the 20th century might be, it has finally ended in the victory of liberal democracy and human rights everywhere in Europe?

After the Wall
The fall of communism in Europe, along with its symbol, the Berlin Wall, was expected to open up new possibil-
ities for Eastern European filmmakers. For Wajda, the period after 1989 wasn’t his most successful. This was partly due to the fact that Western audiences had previ-
ously been curious to see what was happening behind the “Iron Curtain”. Once the Curtain fell, the countries that had been hidden behind it lost a lot of their mystique.

Wajda’s next decade began with the scandal surround-
ing Korczak. The film, which was presented at Cannes in 1990, attempted to depict the complicated relations-

ships between Poles and Jews before the war and during the Holocaust. The film was grossly misunderstood by several French critics and filmmakers, including Claude Lanzmann, best known for his monumental Holocaust documentary Shoah. Wajda was accused of anti-Sem-

itism, and of making a lachrymose spectacle out of the denouement of European Jewry. Most of the accusations were wrong, and were later addressed, but Korczak was never able to overcome the sort of impact that films like Ashes and Diamonds could take for granted. Ironically, Steven Spielberg’s multi-Oscar-winning Schindler’s List (1993) was made by Wajda’s uneven son.

Only a few of Wajda’s movies have been released outside Poland over the past 25 years. However, he still remains the main reference for anyone interested in the history of Polish cinema, or more generally, the history of Polish culture after the war. His honorary Os-
car in 2000 confirmed that position. In groups of New Wave released two years later, Martin Scorsese makes a clear reference to one of Wajda’s greatest films, The Promised Land, in a scene where he juxtaposes the Catholic and Protestant prayers of the characters played by Leonardo DiCaprio and Daniel Day-Lewis before their final battle.

While being a mentor and inspiration to younger col-
leagues, he never stopped directing himself. He always talked about his next projects. In 2009 he won an Alfred Bauer Award at Berlinale for Sweet Rush (2008), which tells the story of his retirement days are yet to come. His film Achron-

mage (see page 12) competes for an Oscar nomination. There is a lot more to Wajda’s oeuvre than politics and contemporary history. The Polish master was also an auteur with a vivid, surreal imagination. Some of the scenes in Lotna (1959), The Birch Wood (1970), and The Wedd

ing (1973), come close to Buñuel’s more oneiric age.

He also created subtle, psychological films like The Mask of Ilka (1979) or bitter, self-referential drama Everything For Sale inspired by Federico Fellini’s 8 1/2. For anyone keen to come to grips with Wajda’s films, there are plenty of surprising threads to ex-

plore.
Bogusław Linda gives a superb performance as Władysław Strzemiński (1)

Poland’s Oscar candidate film, *Afterimage*, is a love letter from one victim of communist censorship to another. Although Wajda came of age creatively during the Stalinist period, he rarely tackled this directly. *Man of Marble* (1977) came closest, but that was filtered through the lens of Władysław Strzemiński’s (1893-1952), Poland’s lead avant-garde painter, was facing the same strictures. At the same time, his license to buy paint is revoked (a legacy of World War I) powerfully underscores this impression of a man systematically being deprived of all he has.

*Unmistakably heartfelt*

*Afterimage* not only offers an impassioned defense of avant-garde impulses, but it is paradoxically one of Wajda’s most conventional films. It also comes as a surprise after the energetic, punk-scored *Wałęsa: Man of Hope* (2001). Although there are a few striking images, mostly revolving around strong color effects (notably an early shot of Strzemiński’s studio suddenly being bathed in blood-red light when a pro-Stalin banner is rolled down the side of the building - which Strzemiński vandalizes in order to let natural light back in), the film is content to simply tell the story of Strzemiński’s last four years in chronological sequence, focusing exclusively on his own experiences and viewpoint. While this is a great showcase for Bogusław Linda’s superb performance (he’s in almost every shot), it largely renders him a passive victim of decisions made offscreen, in stark contrast to the initial obliqueness of his personality, and his conviction that the practice and celebration of unfettered art offers the most certain path to a better future. We also learn nothing about his past, his relationship with his wife (which was what Wajda originally intended to focus on), and relatively little about his work. Anyone approaching the film with no knowledge of Strzemiński will have to take his reputation on trust.

But the film is also unmistakably heartfelt - a love letter from one victim of communist censorship to another. Although Wajda came of age creatively during the Stalinist period, he rarely tackled this directly. *Man of Marble* (1977) came closest, but that was filtered through the parallel story of a mid-1970s documentary-maker investigating the era, thereby establishing historical distance. Here, thanks to Paweł Edelman’s somber cinematography, Marek Warczewski’s production design, and some discreet digital effects, we’re transported back to the late 1940s, to a Poland still visibly recovering from the devastation of WWII, to a Poland where everything is strictly rationed – not least public displays of compassion.

The film’s recurring theme is that of dismantling - of Polish culture, of Strzemiński’s work and even his life. While fighting his artistic and professional battles, he first loses his estranged wife (the sculptor Katarzyna Koho, a major Polish artist in her own right) to cancer, and then his daughter to a children’s home. At the same time, his license to buy paint is revoked on account of his membership of the necessary artists’ collective being cancelled. The fact that we’re constantly reminded that Strzemiński is missing an arm and a leg (a legacy of World War I) powerfully underscores this impression of a man systematically being deprived of all he has.

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GET SHORTIES

The 2017 Oscar heat is already on, as many as five Polish short films stand a chance of grabbing an Academy Award nomination. Keep an eye out for them. You won’t be disappointed.

**Invisible**, dir. Zofia Pręgowska
The student short is Pręgowska’s debut in directing, but, needless to say, it has already established the young filmmaker on the international festival circuit – it has been screened on four continents, and has won awards at the New Orleans Film Festival and the All Shorts International Film Festival in the US, among others.

Invisible tells the story of Krystyna, an elderly, near-blind Polish poet who lives a quiet life in a small flat in Warsaw, and is completely dependent on other people. The film follows her inspiring comments and relevant ideas about life and poetry, thus presenting an energetic, intelligent and passionate woman who does not want to sit still, but wishes to reach a real audience with her poetry once more.

**The Dogcatcher**, dir. Daria Woszek
It’s only Woszek’s third short film as a director, but she has been simultaneously gathering experience in Polish TV, and assisting the late Marcin Wrona on his The Christening. The titular dogcatcher is a double dealer who returns the dogs he catches to their thankful owners, so as to claim rewards from them, but he eventually meets his match in a stray German Shepherd. The Dogcatcher has already had its North American premiere at the Palm Springs International Film Festival, and Woszek is currently working on another short, Bonjour, je suis Antek, which received a European Short Pitch award.

**Tenants**, dir. Klara Kochańska
The student short film Tenants by Klara Kochańska has already gathered some buzz after it received the bronze medal in the “Foreign Narrative” category at the Student Academy Awards. Tenants is a “be careful what you wish for” story. Justyna, a thirty-something Polish woman, buys a flat at a bailiff auction. Her troubles begin when she goes to move in and the keys do not fit the lock. The film, lensed by Camerimage-winning cinematographer Zuzanna Kernbach, is also gathering momentum from having received recognition at the Warsaw Film Festival, the Gdynia Film Festival, and the Global Chinese Universities Student Film and Television Festival in Hong Kong.

**Close Ties**, dir. Zofia Kowalewska
This short documentary by was screened in the competition at IDFA, and took home well-deserved prizes from the Kraków Film Festival and the T-Mobile New Horizons International Film Festival. It is a fly-on-the-wall study of the unconventional bond that defines a Polish marriage of forty-five years and which was broken for eight years on account of the husband’s infidelity. Zdzisław left Barbara for a younger lover, but moved back in with her after a while. Close Ties looks deeply into the day-to-day problems, as well as some of the unexpected joys, of their relationship. At 21, Kowalewska is the youngest of the five women filmmakers vying for the 2017 Oscar nomination.

**End of the World**, dir. Monika Pawluczuk
An amalgam of human stories brought together by the fact that, according to the Mayan calendar, the end of all we know is here. But if there are any disasters in this documentary, they are of personal proportions – the earth-shattering loss of someone dear, the expropriations of desperation and loneliness, the emergency ambulance service’s dispatcher race against time. One night in a big city pulsating with human interactions and conversations, or the lack thereof. Pawluczuk’s poignant project has already claimed an important win from the Hot Documentary Film Festival, and has Kitchen PR (US) and Radio Sales IP (Belgium) in its corner.

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**PFM 3/2016**
THE BEKSIŃSKI SHOW

If you like your biopics safe and by the numbers, then you would be well advised to stay away from *The Last Family*. This is Jan P. Matuszyński’s impressive feature debut and it follows its own rules

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The Beksiński family—Zdzisław, his wife Zofia, and their son Tomasz, a suicidal movie translator/music journalist. They live in two flats in two separate buildings, but they constantly influence one another. We get to know them through brief glimpses of their everyday lives, some filled with sudden bursts of emotion, others pulsating with silent heartbeat. Fast forward to 2005. As the film ends, we are not much the wiser as to how Zdzisław amazed the world with his painterly horrors (and he did), or why Tomasz was considered a genius translator (and he was). None of that matters, as the film is above all a universal cinematic essay on the beauty and fragility of family ties, and the endless negotiation of personal identity and integrity with an indifferent world.

“We aimed at universality of experience,” says Hickinbotham. “Zdzisław is celebrated in some circles for his surreal art, I know Donald Sutherland is a fan of *The Truman Show* to 2005. As the film ends, we feel that you have spent a lifetime with them, laughing, crying and experiencing a myriad of other emotions. The term “magic of cinema” was coined to describe just this.”

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**Tomasz and son**

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POLISH FILM THAT CARREYS AWAY

Far from his Ace Ventura days, Jim Carrey as Polish cop Tadek

It begins with a murder. You do not witness it because it was committed years before, but throughout the film you can see how it has affected the life of Jim Carrey’s Tadek, an honest Polish cop who decides to re-open the cold case of a murdered businessman in the hope of shedding light on corruption in the police force. He turns to David Grann’s article – it focuses on the cop character. That’s why it can be understood everywhere,” says the producer, adding that she hopes the film will show the film industry that working with Poland can be beneficial to their projects. “We still don’t have tax incentives. Everyone knows that. But I think we’ve demonstrated with True Crimes that we can make up for that in terms of budget and quality of work. We’ve made a film with American producers, and international stars, for a fraction of what it would have cost in the US or Western Europe,” says Puszczyńska, smiling: “You may or may not like the film, but as a co-production it was a win-win situation.”

“We had a great time in Poland. I’m working on two more movies there,” affirms Gerson. “The crews were some of the best I’ve ever worked with.” He’s not the only one who sees the opportunities in the rapidly developing Polish film industry, with its quality casts and crews, its variety of locations that can stand in for almost every part of the world, and its growing number of regional film commissions. Only this year Poland was visited by a group of American location managers and producers from China. The Hollywood action movie True Crimes was partially shot here, as was the legal drama Denial, starring Rachel Weisz and Tom Wilkinson. No wonder Ewa Puszczyńska is optimistic about the future and the scripts she recently got from the States. “One of them is a universal story that could be told anywhere, but they sent it to us. That’s partly because of True Crimes,” she reveals. “I’m an idealist who loves co-productions. I think they’re the best tools to integrate our different worlds and cultures, even if they require at least twice as much work. And they do. Every country is different, and has different laws and work ethics. But this is the best and most exciting thing about being a film producer – you get to cross borders with each new project.”


Based on real events, Polish-American True Crimes is a dark, gripping thriller about a cop who is fighting for justice – and doesn’t always win.

True Crimes certainly benefited from the Polish contribution, especially in outlining the sociopolitical context that complements the crime arc. Case is detrimental to his family life, his career, and to his sense of himself. This is where the script differs from Grann’s article – it focuses on the cop character. That’s why it can be understood everywhere,” says the producer, adding that she hopes the film will show the film industry that working with Poland can be beneficial to their projects. “We still don’t have tax incentives. Everyone knows that. But I think we’ve demonstrated with True Crimes that we can make up for that in terms of budget and quality of work. We’ve made a film with American producers, and international stars, for a fraction of what it would have cost in the US or Western Europe,” says Puszczyńska, smiling: “You may or may not like the film, but as a co-production it was a win-win situation.”

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**FAST AND MISCELLANEOUS**

Their films were screened in Berlin, Venice and Locarno. They work with Poland’s most edgy directors. They are Agata Szymańska and Magdalena Kamińska, the producers.

There are so many things that make them stand out, starting with the name of their jointly run business. Balapolis, set up five years ago is a portmanteau of the names of their previous individual businesses: Magdalena Kamińska’s Balabusta and Agata Szymańska’s Filmopolis. “We asked ourselves which director we would like to work with,” says Kamińska. “We chose Adrian Panek, whose film A Part we both rated very highly. We were unanimous in that decision and it brought us together five years ago. Agata invited me to produce Zbigniew Libera’s film Walter with her, and that collaboration consolidated our relationship.”

They both graduated from the Faculty of Radio and Television at the University of Silesia, with a degree in Film Production Organization. They started working very early on, and cheerfully admit that they like being active. “I feel more at ease and it’s more convenient to work in a team,” says Kamińska. “Working together means synergies, making joint decisions, and sharing the risks,” adds Szymańska, looking back at the decision she made five years ago. Risk is part of the duo’s DNA. You need only look at the line-up of films produced by Balapolis, both fiction and documentaries, to see that they’re interested in top-notch arthouse cinema. Films such as Michał Wnuk’s Agfa 1939. Podróż w czasy wojny, Balapolis, set up five years ago is a portmanteau of the names of their previous individual businesses: Magdalena Kamińska’s Balabusta and Agata Szymańska’s Filmopolis. The film was made as part of the Venice Biennale College – Cinema Program, and stormed its way through many prestigious film events. It has garnered numerous awards and special mentions, but has also polarized audiences and triggered heated debate. Baby Bump was intended to have been distributed by a large distributor in Poland, but the company closed its doors just before the film’s theatrical release. Kamińska and Szymańska initiated talks with several distributors, but eventually decided to distribute the film themselves. “We were really impressed by what Magdalena and Agata did,” says Czekaj. “They took on a tough assignment and passed with flying colors. Obviously, some things could have been done better, but we learned a lot from and nobody can take that away from us. For me, the main thing was that my producers never gave up.”

Talking with them gives the impression that their appetite keeps growing. They are never discouraged, they’re drawn conclusions and they constantly wish to extend the scope of their activity. “We want to make important, quality films of high artistic merit, but our current ambition is also to complement these aspects with other features, so that the films reach a broader audience,” says Szymańska.

Their next project is Panek’s Wilkołak. They could be called boutique producers in a certain sense, as they are currently concentrating on one film, rather than taking advantage of their success to run several projects simultaneously.

“The girls form a team, but there are three people on it, not two,” says Libera. “We felt that we were on the same side. I was able to focus on my work while they handled the most arduous and unrewarding stuff. On top of that, we didn’t make any distinction between the artistic team and the production team. It was a very precious film experience for a novice director, as I was back then. I wasn’t entirely sure what I wanted, but the girls respected that and gave me time.”

Ania and Wilhelm Sasnal also speak about Balapolis very highly. The company produced their films Pretty From a Distance and Pursuit, and is currently handling the distribution of the duo’s latest film, Sun, The Sun Blinded Me. The film premiered at the Locarno IFF, and other festivals have been queuing up to show it.

**Fight and never look back**

Kamińska and Szymańska are experienced in distributing their own films too. The first was Kuba Czekaj’s fiction feature, Baby Bump. The film was made as part of the Venice Biennale College – Cinema Program, and stormed its way through many prestigious film events. It has garnered numerous awards and special mentions, but has also polarized audiences and triggered heated debate. Baby Bump was intended to have been distributed by a large distributor in Poland, but the company closed its doors just before the film’s theatrical release. Kamińska and Szymańska initiated talks with several distributors, but eventually decided to distribute the film themselves. “We were really impressed by what Magdalena and Agata did,” says Czekaj. “They took on a tough assignment and passed with flying colors. Obviously, some things could have been done better, but we learned a lot from and nobody can take that away from us. For me, the main thing was that my producers never gave up.”

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**Agi Bagi** is the first Polish 3D animated series that conquered the world. It has been sold to television channels in fifty territories.

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**Anna Bielak**

The setting is a planet that has a green side and a violet side. One side is inhabited by the Agingas, and the other by the Baginas. Hardworking creatures who are curious about the world and who look after the plants that grow in the land of the Agingas. Whatever happens on one side of Agi Bagi immediately impacts the other side. Although the tribes don’t meet on a daily basis, they need to help each other maintain the balance of the planet’s ecosystem. Agi Bagi currently has 26 11-minute episodes. “Our target is 52,” says Dominika Osak, who produces the series.

The first 13-episode season of Agi Bagi has been sold to TV stations in forty countries. It’s a global success. Badi Badi Studio’s production is also the first Polish animated series that has been sold to television channels in fifty territories and conquered the world. It’s a global success.

Badi Badi studio was established in 2003 and initially focused on commercial productions, including ads and special effects. However, Tomasz Niedźwiedź, the creative producer, screenwriter and director of Agi Bagi, had always wanted to make films for children. In 2011, he revisited this idea, when a call for projects was launched for a series addressed to children aged 2 to 5. Out of hundreds submissions Bartosz Słomka’s idea, which had the working title Agry Bagry, was eventually selected. The main project development phase consisted of checking whether the idea would work. This involved international consultations. Market requirements were studied, as well as the reaction of the target audience.

“The preschool children were the experts whose opinions we sought at every stage of the development process,” says Osak. “Children were shown the pilot episode and asked to comment. They usually had similar impressions. Sometimes, they openly admitted being afraid of a certain character, since they considered it dangerous, or, but really loved another one. Quite unexpectedly, a clumsy character called Bumbly stole the kids’ hearts. The children’s emotions were given absolute priority, regardless of how closely they matched the intuitions of the creators of the series. “My impression is that this really improved the quality of the animation. That’s why it’s loved by kids all over the world,” she adds.

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**Creatures of no country**

Agi Bagi was created with the international market in mind. “There is nothing about Agi Bagi that refers to any specific culture,” the author explains. “The authors wanted to make sure that viewers in Thailand, France, Poland and the UAE would understand the series in the same way. All the plant species were invented, and no props associated with any specific country were used. The only recognizable reference was the planet Earth.” Marzanna Nehrbecka, one of the screenwriters, emphasizes the need for a clear-cut protagonist and a meticulously created world as the setting for the series. “There has to be some sort of conflict and a problem to be resolved. ‘The rules of writing scripts for children’s films are exactly the same as those for adults,’ she says. “However, with children’s series, the conflict needs to be really vivid. It also helps if some characters’ traits and flaws are exaggerated or magnified. Caution is required, however, as kids can tell when you’re lying and they don’t forgive blunders. Children’s films did not get their success.”

Another value promoted by the series is the importance of working together with human beings are depicted as a part of nature, so when they care for the environment, they are by extension caring for their own health and happiness as well. Another value promoted by the series is the importance of working together with friends.

**Extra dimension**

The creators of the series set themselves an ambitious goal. Most animations for preschoolers is made using 2D technology. Badi Badi decided to jump in the deep end and build fully-fledged 3D animation. “The most recent research shows that the youngest viewers absolutely love the vividness and the intense colors of the world we show them,” says Osak. “Tomek Niedźwiedź’s intuition is amazing. He has proven more than once that his ideas can be trusted, even if rules have to be broken or time and money constraints partially ignored. Tomek has persuaded me that the real world sometimes doesn’t stand a chance in the clash between reality and creative imagination.” Michał Bijas, Bartosz Dępiński and Sławomir Fedorczuk also contributed to the artwork and the 3D animations. Marta Ganczewska created the 2D animations. The producer of the series is Tomasz Pazieński. The budget for the first season (143 minutes of animation) was more than 3 mil. PLN. The funds were raised thanks to co-financing from the Polish Film Institute and the support of the co-producers: Spot Music Production Studio, in charge of the sound design, dialogues and music (written by Łukasz Targosz, an excellent composi-

**Most animation for preschoolers is made using 2D technol-

ogy. Badi Badi decided to jump in the deep end and build fully-fledged 3D animation**
He may not work on the biggest European or American features, but Artur Żurawski’s films probably beat them all hands down when it comes to laughter, tears and heartbreak

How’s that? For several years now, he has been shooting for one of the biggest and toughest film markets in the world – Bollywood. He has already worked on four features – three as a cinematographer, and one as a second unit – infusing the visual extravaganza typically associated with the products of Bollywood imagination with a distinct European film look. All of his pictures have become instant hits in India, as well as a few non-Asian markets, but two of them hold a special place in Żurawski’s heart.

Pradeep Sarkar’s Mardaani was his first real contact with a Bollywood A-lister – Rani Mukerji. He had to think on his feet and come to grips with India’s film culture. The project itself was atypical for Bollywood – a somber, poignant thriller about a cop who has to go deep into the world of child trafficking. “This was an entirely different animal, both for me and for them,” reminisces Żurawski. “Pure in form, difficult in meaning, it was meant to make waves. I needed to understand whether a scene was sufficiently grounded in reality and culturally relevant. I had to remember who I was shooting it for.” Żurawski admits that the feeling only deepened on the set of Ali Abbas Zafar’s Sultan, which was, in Żurawski’s words, “a 170-minute action-sports melodrama with some hardcore Bollywood songs.”

“It was more grounded than a standard Bollywood production, but I was aware that it was a massive hit in the making,” says the filmmaker, explaining that Sultan became the 4th highest grossing film in the history of Indian cinema. “I was amazed how many people worked on the set. I had a number of assistants, so I had to learn to be precise in what and how I instruct- ed them.” This, Żurawski clarifies, is typical for Indian films. “That is how they cope with challenges. For example, in India you most often go location-scouting so you can build exact replicas in a studio. Because you couldn’t possibly shoot on location with a star. The fans wouldn’t allow it. It might seem crazy, but this is the way they do it, and they do it fast and furiously,” he adds with a smile. “With that much human power at hand, I learned to solve impossible problems in a matter of minutes. What? The star showed up late and we have to shoot the noon scene in one take at dusk? No problem. It’s easy. Impossible is easy.”

You have to move forward

Before he became the go-to Polish cinematographer for Bollywood, Żurawski had built a solid reputation among Polish directors and producers, gathering experience in various fields, from shooting raw documentation to making visually stylized TV series, commercials and music videos. But he never betrayed his love for cinema. “There’s something utterly fascinating in sitting in a dark theater, watching someone’s imagination come to life.” A romantic, then? “Sort of. I’m fascinated with the idea of perception. When you ask two people about what they saw, they can differ even in the most obvious things, like color. That is what the art of cinematography is for me – showing the usual in an unusual way, in my way, and then sharing it with others.” Which is, when you think about it, a quality of each artist, as a person who externalizes his/her thoughts to start a dialog. Or at least it should be.

Żurawski thinks of himself as more of a craftsman, though. “No false modesty in that. I’m here to help, to facilitate, hoping that the material will connect with the audience, whoever they might be and wherever they should be watching it,” he says, alluding to the rise of consuming art on various mobile media. “I understand that we have to move forward, and I’m the first to admit that we live in truly amazing times, with so many technological opportunities to look at everything with fresh eyes. We can’t be afraid of doing new things, of trying new cameras, of feeling differently. But at the same time, small screens detract from a film, and impoverish it, or at least its reception, in some way,” he sadly notes.

Does that mean that while shooting, say, a 170-min- ute Bollywood blockbuster, he thinks how it might one day be watched on a smartphone? “Sure I do. That’s my job. I might not agree with it, but I have to prepare as foolproof a film as I can, whether it’s a big-budget Indian production, or a smaller Polish documentary.”

How does he do that? “I have my bag of tricks. I don’t think before I get a plane ticket,” he says, alluding to the fact that he tends not to think about it before he gets a plane ticket, “I’m open to rediscovering myself once more. That would be nice.”
“Sound is about people,” says Michał Kosterkiewicz, a sound recordist from Toya Studios. “We believe in finding opportunities to pair established sound designers with young energy. We work with young sound designers, and students from the Łódź Film School or the Academy of Sound Engineering. This way of creating sound benefits both sides. The youngsters can enter the world of sound and learn from professionals. The established sound designers can absorb something new.”

Kosterkiewicz is one of the legendary Polish sound designers who works for Toya Studios, along with Piotr Knop, and Henryk Zastróżny, the best sound imitator in Poland.

Toya Studios has created sound for thousands of film productions. In the past five years alone, two hundred films have left the studio with the Toya label. This accounts for half the film production in Poland. Among them was All These Sleepless Nights by Michał Marczak (Sundance IFF 2016), Illegitim by Adrian Sitaru (Berlinale IFF 2016), Klezmer by Piotr Chrzan (Venice FF 2015), the acclaimed documentary Call me Marianna (2015) by Karolina Bielawska, Little Crushes by Adrián Sitaru (Berlinale PP 2014), and Paraste by Wilhelm and Ania Samal (Berlinale IF 2014). At the same time, the studio has provided the sound for well-known Polish productions like the box-office hits Planet Single (2016) by Mitja Okorn, and Jack Strong by Władysław Pasikowski (2014), and successfularthouse films – Pieczona (2013) by Krzysztof Krauze and Joanna Kos-Krauze and Suicide Room (2015) by Jan Komasa.

“We are flexible,” says Knop, a sound mixer who works for the studio. “How we work depends on the requirements of the filmmaker, the techniques used to prepare the material, and the client’s expectations. We have innovative programs like ProTools, HDX and 64-muffled console D Control, as well as the latest -S6.” Knop adds that sound designers have everything they could possibly need here. Apart from film production, Toya provides sound, dubbing and voiceover for commercials and TV programs.

When you look at their long list of collaborations, it’s hard to believe that it all has started in 2003. In that year the company called Toya bought on an auction a very special building at Łąkowa 29. Since 1949 till 1998 it was a home for the acclaimed Wytwórnia Filmów Fabularnych (WFF). Its sound department employed the best sound designers in Poland and their offices were known as the Palace of Sound.After the decline of WFF the building was looking for new owner who would continue its past fame.

The building is safe and sound
Toya immediately began to build one of the largest and most innovative postproduction sound complexes in Europe. It was the first sound studio designed with the requirements of sound designers uppermost in mind. “This construction is called a box in a box,” says Knop. “The studio is a massive building set inside another construction that ‘sits’ on huge silencers. This completely blocks sound from outside,” he continues. “We have a lot of stories like these: one night the sound designers didn’t notice an enormous hailstorm breaking windows and trees; the other day, no one heard the main road being resurfaced with heavy equipment nearby: no one heard a sound, but everyone felt the studio floor vibrating.”

The original and distinctive construction of the studio ensured international recognition and prestigious certificates from Dolby Laboratories and THX. One of the sound rooms qualified for Dolby Premier and THX certification. This made Toya Studios the only sound studio in Europe to have acquired both certificates. There are currently five postproduction rooms, two sound recording rooms, and a large music studio. “A sound designer is an artist,” says Kostkiewicz. “It’s the sound that determines how we interpret the scene. The way we mix the sound influences the mood of the audience. In that sense, we can call ourselves artists, because sound can make a different impression on different people in the same way that paintings, music and sculptures do. We have an influence on people.”

EAR THEM OUT

Toya Studios is one of the largest sound studios in Poland. But it’s not their size that makes them so great.
HOW TO FIND MONEY IN POLAND

OPERATIONAL PROGRAM FOR FILM PRODUCTION
Polish Film Institute

FOR PRODUCERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD
Participation of Polish co-producer necessary

DEADLINES
There are three application sessions per year

- January 6, 2017;
- December 15, 2016;
- tba

SESSION 1
SESSION 2
SESSION 3

2017
December 15, 2016
- January 6, 2017;
- tba
- tba

REQUIREMENTS
You have to hire at least one Polish Head of Department (DoP, Set Designer, Editor, Composer);
To be eligible for consideration, applications must include the following i.e.: script, director’s statement, synopsis, budget, estimated production costs, script rights agreement;
The Polish producer’s own contribution must amount to no less than 5% of the expected cost of the Polish financing.

FINANCING
For a Polish co-producer, the maximum subsidy is:

PLN 2 000 000
approx. EUR 470 000

PLN 4 000 000
approx. EUR 932 000

MINORITY CO-PRODUCTIONS
- A separate selection commission for minority co-productions;
- Bilateral treaty not necessary, even for non-European projects.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MINORITY CO-PRODUCTIONS
- For bilateral co-productions, the Polish contribution must be at least 20% of the total budget;
- For multilateral co-productions, the Polish contribution must be at least 10% of the total budget;
- At least 80% of the subsidy must be spent in Poland.

MAJORITY CO-PRODUCTIONS
FINANCING
For a Polish co-producer, the maximum subsidy is:

PLN 2 000 000
approx. EUR 470 000

PLN 4 000 000
approx. EUR 932 000

WHO TO BOTHER FOR MORE INFORMATION: Robert Balinski, tel.: +48 22 42 10 387, email: robert.balinski@pisf.pl.

MINORITY CO-PRODUCTIONS
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RFM 3 000 000

FOR PRODUCERS FROM POLAND | GERMANY
Applications may only be submitted on condition that a co-development (or co-production) agreement has been signed by at least one Polish producer and at least one German producer from the region in which MDM and Medienboard operate.

REQUIREMENTS
Two sessions per year (application forms and application dates are available on the websites of the Fund’s founders);
The budget of the film should not exceed EUR 750 000;
For animated films, creative documentaries, low budget narrative films and/or first films and/or films that present an innovative approach;
Television projects are eligible in exceptional cases, with the exception of television feature films.

FINANCING
FOR DEVELOPMENT
the maximum subsidy is:

EUR 70 000

FOR CO-PRODUCTIONS
the maximum subsidy is:

EUR 150 000

WHO TO BOTHER FOR MORE INFORMATION: Robert Balinski, tel.: +48 22 42 10 387, email: robert.balinski@pisf.pl.

REGIONAL FILM FUNDS
In general, the Polish regional film funds seek film projects by announcing competitions, usually once a year. One basic condition for entering a project for a competition is that it is related to a city or town in the region or to the region itself. Support is also contingent on the spending of at least 100% of the funding within the region; in some cases, the sum to be expended is 150%.
The Polish regional film funds differ in terms of the budgets they manage, the forms of support they provide and the sums which must be spent locally.
All the Polish film funds provide support of up to 50% of the film budget, although this may be higher in the case of documentaries and animated films.
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TWO NEW REGIONAL FILM FUNDS
WILL START OPERATING IN POLAND IN 2017:
1. PODKARPACIE FILM FUND (with approx. 188 000 EUR budget);
2. MAZURIA AND WARMIA FILM FUND (with approx. 117 000 EUR budget).

REQUIREMENTS
- At least 80% of the subsidy must be spent in Poland.
- The budget of the film should not exceed EUR 750 000.
- For animated films, creative documentaries, low budget narrative films and/or first films and/or films that present an innovative approach;
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POLISH-GERMAN FILM FUND
Funding institutions: Polish Film Institute, Mitteldeutsche Medienföderung (MDM) and Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg

FINANCING
FOR PRODUCERS FROM POLAND | GERMANY
Applications may only be submitted on condition that a co-development (or co-production) agreement has been signed by at least one Polish producer and at least one German producer from the region in which MDM and Medienboard operate.

REQUIREMENTS
Two sessions per year (application forms and application dates are available on the websites of the Fund’s founders);
The budget of the film should not exceed EUR 750 000;
For animated films, creative documentaries, low budget narrative films and/or first films and/or films that present an innovative approach;
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POLAND IN NUMBERS
Box Office 2015

Admission over past years in mln

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Admission in mln</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>2012</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>40.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>44.7</td>
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Average ticket price in EUR

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<td>2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
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</table>

Gross in mln

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>30.5</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>38.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>44.7</td>
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</table>

Number of premieres in 2015

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<td>1,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1,750</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>1,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Breakdown of 2015 admissions by country of origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Admission in mln</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>14.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>18.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU 8.1 mln</td>
<td>64.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other 2.55%</td>
<td>4.41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Film Festivals in Poland

NETFA OFF CAMERA International Festival of Independent Cinema

KRAKOW This festival presents works by young filmmakers from all over the world. www.offcamera.pl

Millennium Docs Against Gravity Film Festival

KRAKOW A selection of the best feature-length documentaries. www.docag.pl

Film Music Festival

WARSZAWA A festival devoted to film music. www.fmf.fm

Lubuskie Film Summer

LAGO A festival of films from the post-communist block. www.ltf.pl

Two Riverides Film and Art Festival

KAZIMIERZ DOLNY An event that brings together film and other fields of art. www.dwaart.pl

Gdynia Film Festival

Gdynia Poland’s most important festival of new feature films. www.festivalgdynia.pl

Etinila & Anima International Film Festival

KRAKOW Student films and animations are shown here. www.etinilaandanimina.com

Camerimage

BYDGOSZCZ This festival is devoted to the art of cinematography. www.camerimage.pl

American Film Festival

WARSZAWA New American feature and documentary films. www.americanfilmfestival.pl

NETFA OFF CAMERA PRO INDUSTRY

Professional film industry platforms focused on networking and match-making Polish and international filmmakers. The core of the program are round tables, case studies and workshops.

MAJ/JUNE

Krakow Film Festival

KRAKOW An international festival presenting documentaries, animations and short features. www.krakowfilmfestival.pl

Youth and Cinema” Film Festival

WARSZAWA International Festival for young viewers. www.kinozrycmoja.pl

Octoberfest

WARSZAWA A festival of German films. www.octoberfest.pl

JANUARY

“Silver Screen” Film Festival

WARSZAWA International festival of animated films. www.silver-screen.pl

OCTOBER

Warsaw Project Market

WARSZAWA Special international market of animated film and video projects. www.warsawproject.org

JANUARY

The Lech Film Festival

WARSZAWA Festival of regional films. www.transatlantyk.org.pl

JUNE

“International Film Festival” in Wrzesnia

WRZESZYN A festival of regional films. www.interfilm.pl

JULY

Camerimage

Bydgoszcz A selection of the best feature-length documentaries. www.camerimage.pl

JUNE/JULY

OFF CAMERA NETIA International Film Festival

WARSZAWA Festival of independent cinema. www.netia.com

JULY

PGN Transatlantyk Film Festival

WARSZAWA An event that combines cinema and music. www.transatlantyk.org.pl

SEPTEMBER

Etiuda & Anima

KRAKOW International Festival of Animation. www.animator-festival.com

Call for papers

SUMMER

MICROFILM Festival

WARSZAWA A festival of short films. www.microfilm.pl

DECEMBER

Polish Days

POSTEP POLONIA An international festival of Polish films. www.polishdays.com

American Film Festival

WARSZAWA New American feature and documentary films. www.americanfilmfestival.pl

INDUSTRY EVENTS

1. NETFA OFF CAMERA PRO INDUSTRY

2. Krakow Film Festival

3. T-Mobile New Horizons

4. Warsaw Film Festival

5. International Festival of Producers Regiofun

6. American Film Festival
THE FAMTASTIC TOUR

Poland could be the destination for James Bond’s next top secret mission, a setting for a corny rom-com, or a backdrop for dystopian sci-fi films. At least according to some Hollywood location managers

Urszula Lipińska

This is the first such initiative organised by Film Commission Poland. Six location managers were invited for so-called FAM Tour (Familiarization tour) to see some cinematographically attractive locations and to meet experts from the Polish film industry. “I’ve already seen at least two locations where an original opening scene could be shot for the next James Bond movie. And it’s only my second day here,” said Todd Christensen, who has worked on the sets of several films, including Scorsese and The Hunger Games. “I was excited about the prospect of visiting the Wieliczka Salt Mine, but eventually the only my second day here,” said Todd Christensen, who has worked on the sets of several films, including Scorsese and The Hunger Games. “I was excited about the prospect of visiting the Wieliczka Salt Mine, but eventually the only my second day here,” said Todd Christensen, who has worked on the sets of several films, including Scorsese and The Hunger Games. “I was excited about the prospect of visiting the Wieliczka Salt Mine, but eventually the only my second day here,” said Todd Christensen, who has worked on the sets of several films, including Scorsese and The Hunger Games.

Indiana Jones and The Salt Mine

When asked about the most alluring locations they saw during their tour they seemed... lost. “I could give you a very long list of places,” said Balto. “From the stunning depths of the sewers in Łódź and the Wieliczka Salt Mine, through beautiful forests and farmland, to castles and forts, Poland offers a rare diversity of unique locations. On top of that, there are industrial buildings, old factories turned into modern hotels, and places that served as the Berlin Wall in Steven Spielberg’s Bridge of Spies. It’s amazing bow, in many of these cities, you can still feel the spirit of the past, but at the same time, stumble upon an original, contemporary structure just around the corner,” said Balto. She wasn’t the only one impressed with Poland’s mix of new and old. The first stop on the FAM Tour, Warsaw, surprised the visitors with its diversity. They particularly liked the precise reconstructions of buildings destroyed during World War II, and the Palace of Culture and Science. The group was impressed by the fact that the Palace has 3,388 rooms, a swimming pool and several lecture halls. They thought that the Palace’s interiors alone could provide complete sets for a major film production.

According to Citrin, “Poland is definitely ready for the international production scene. I’m absolutely certain of this after spending a week here, watching your excellent locations from close up, and seeing the enthusiasm of the visitors from the US and the passion of the Polish film industry people we’ve met here.”

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BECOME A KING OF OUR CASTLE

Poland was a kingdom for more than 800 years. The country’s rulers and nobility built impressive and stylish castles that attract film crews and... Harry Potter’s fans

1 Ogrodzieniec Castle was built between the 14th and 15th century in the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland. The castle is ruined but opened for visitors.

2 Niedzica Castle (also known as Dunajec Castle) in the Małopolska region was built in the 14th century.

3 The Castle of the Teutonic Order in Malbork was erected in a few stages between the 13th and 15th centuries. It stands in the Pomerania region.

4 Moszna Castle can be found in the Opole region. It was built in the 12th century and is a place where Harry Potter fans gather.
8 Książ Castle was erected in the last decade of the 13th century. It’s one of the main tourist attractions in the Lower Silesian region.

9 Bydgoszcz Castle stands in the Silesia region. The stone castle was constructed in the 14th century but its wooden fortification are around 300 years older.

If you want to learn more about Polish locations or shooting permits or find a location scout, see LOCATION GUIDE POLAND available at www.film-commission-poland.pl

5 Czocha Castle stands in the Lower Silesia region on the border with the Czech Republic. It was erected in the 13th century.

6 Krzyżanów Castle is situated in the Warmian-Masurian region of Poland. Built in the beginning of the 14th century, it witnessed many battles against the Teutonic Knights.

7 Kórnik Castle that stands in the Wielkopolska region was originally constructed in the 12th century. Its current shape comes from the remodeling done 19th century.
There could hardly be a better time a collection of work that shows more annual high water mark for national confidence than at any time in recent cinema, has this year showcased successes screened in September at the fest’s upbeat 41st edition. If this bumper crop isn’t picked up by British or US sales agents and dispelled, “I’m sure it won’t last,” a good Polish or anywhere to accept that this level of depression in the US market is a resource so glaringly absent even those who manage to square this circle still must fight to get noticed abroad. Perhaps, then, rather than worrying about what features of any national cinema might be barring its success abroad, filmmakers and those in the mighty European support network— a resource so glaringly absent in the US— should focus instead on a different question: How do we get skeptics like my friend, Polish or from anywhere, to accept that this level of brash, vibrant Polish film is not some rare, passing good year?

It seems that many in the new-Polish wave are already there, whether the makers of The Last Family, Forest 4am or I’m a Killer (photo on the left). Whether those further afield ever get to be touched by their vision is another matter— but we are all learning how to crack together.

POLISH CINEMA: THE WRONG QUESTION

A Prague-based Variety reporter takes closer look at international distribution of Polish film

There could hardly be a better time to be vexed by the eternal question of Polish film’s struggle to export to the wider world— the Gdynia fest, the annual high water mark for national cinema, has this year showcased a collection of work that shows more than ever, no one outside the country generally sees the majority of films produced here. The very notion that this might be changing is unsettling to some, that familiar has the resignation become. The very assignment that prompted this article, the question “What is not working in Polish film?” illustrates how deeply the cynicism has penetrated. Clearly, Poles are used to being depressed at the stark reality that no one outside the country generally sees the majority of films produced here. The very notion that this might be changing is unsettling to some, that familiar has the resignation become. The very assignment that prompted this article, the question “What is not working in Polish film?” illustrates how deeply the cynicism has penetrated.

If this bumper crop isn’t picked up by British or US sales agents and distributors, then what on earth will it? “I’m sure it won’t last,” a good Polish friend darkly observed when hearing about the critical and audience successes screened in September at the fest’s upbeat 4th edition.

LOWEST SILENCE — SHOOT YOUR MOVIE HERE!
Hundreds of big names in international cinema, including directors, cinematographers and actors, have visited the school over the years, participating in meetings and conducting workshops. Nowadays, the students attend international festivals, study at foreign universities, and take part in international projects organized by the School. Although meetings with filmmakers have become part of everyday life, they are still celebrated as exceptional events.

Kirk Douglas visited the School in 1966. At the time, Douglas was at the height of his popularity as an actor. The School’s archive contains a special memento of the visit, namely a short film titled Kirk Douglas shot as an exercise by Feridun Erol and Marek Piwowski. The dean (Jerzy Bossak) asked two aspiring directors to film the American star’s meeting with staff members and students. Piwowski and Erol were only too happy to comply. Not only did they record Douglas’s visit on film, but they also organized a happening around it, with the actor’s participation. In just one night, they moved a stage set for a Western movie from one of the theatres in Łódź where Erol was preparing to stage a musical, and set up a Wild West backdrop in the schoolyard. Douglas rode on horseback, fought a duel, and flirted with the girls. Piwowski recalled that Douglas had warned him that his producer had prohibited him from appearing in any film in Europe. “However, when he went out on the pitch and saw the arrest warrant nailed to the fence, saying ‘Wanted: Kirk Douglas, Reward $1,000’... right next to some barrels with ‘dynamite’ written on them, he really seemed to relax. And when he saw a galloping horse, he forgot about everything, and the fun started.” Piwowski and Erol filmed a true celebration of freedom and youth. Forty-five years later, the school authorities decided to award an honorary doctorate to Martin Scorsese. The director of Taxi Driver was greeted at the hotel by young actors from the school, made up as characters from his films. Jake LaMotta strolled in the lobby dressed in a shimmering boxing gown. The protagonists of Aviator were waiting at the stairs. All of a sudden, the youngsters made the director a part of their happening. On the way to the School, in Piotrkowska Street, Scorsese told the driver to stop the limo (leaving the security guards horrified), because he’d noticed some menacing and violent characters from Gangs of New York, wielding axes and cleavers. He jumped out of the car to give Bill “The Butcher” a big hug. Travis from Taxi Driver attended the ceremony at the school, and watched it intently. Scorsese looked at him every now and then while talking about his relations with Polish cinema and about his unrelenting love for it, which had begun while still a student in New York.

Łódź Film School has boasted an international profile pretty much since day one. The first foreign students appeared in the early 1950s. Initially, they were people from other socialist countries, but later, aspiring directors and cinematographers started to flock there from just about everywhere in the world. Agnieszka Osiecka, who studied directing there in the late 1950s, made the following cutting remark about the misogynistic attitude that prevailed at the time: “There were seven or eight people in each year. This usually included a woman and a Bulgarian.” Today, nearly half the student body in every year of every field of study, is from outside Poland - the Americas, Korea, China, Japan, Scandinavia, Germany, the UK, Spain, Ukraine, Belarus, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

GOODFELLAS OF ŁÓDŹ

Marcin Malatyński

Łódź Film School again landed on The Hollywood Reporter’s Top 15 International Film Schools list. The school’s Head of International Relations writes on its worldly character
POLAND
ZOOM IN

Stunning locations
Great service value
Highly-skilled talent base