

# EL PASO

by Zdeněk Tyc

in the *East of the West* competition at the 44<sup>th</sup> Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2009



# 2 Newsletter



## 1 PROMĚNY TURNOVER

D: Tomáš Řehořek  
CZ 2009 | 80 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Jan Zadražil, Dita Záborská, Petr Jeništa, Alena Ambrová  
Domestic release: April 30  
[www.changesfilm.com](http://www.changesfilm.com)

Four intertwined plots following the lives of ordinary people. A well-off couple dealing with infertility, which the slightly infantile woman finds very hard to bear. A struggling mother of two small children, fending for herself in the chaotic city. A middle-aged man, aware of his anti-social nature and need for a family after years of fanatical devotion to his work, and an elderly lady looking back on her life and searching for a new meaning for it. An unjust fate deals blows to the characters regardless of their social status, and how they deal with the results is up to them.



## 2 JMÉNEM KRÁLE IN THE NAME OF THE KING

D: Petr Nikolaev  
CZ 2009 | 100 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Karel Roden, Klára Issová, Jan Kanyza, David Prachař, Lukáš Vaculík, Markéta Hruběšová  
Domestic release: May 28

Oldřich of Chlum, a representative of King Přemysl Otakar II and the administrator of the Bezděz Castle, sets off to Vartemberk Castle on his lord's behalf. Here, there is to be a celebration of the betrothal of Knight Beneš of Dubá and beautiful Ludmila of Vartemberk, a union that should bring peace among rival noble families. During the journey, Oldřich comes across the corpse of a merchant who was attacked and robbed. He sends his squire Ota to hunt down the thieving murderers, but they manage to escape. At that point, nobody suspects the effect this crime will have on the ceremony, to be held together with a tournament the following day.

## 3 PŘÍPAD NEVĚRNÉ KLÁRY THE CASE OF UNFAITHFUL KLÁRA

D: Roberto Faenza  
I, CZ 2009 | 85 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Claudio Santamaria, Iain Glen, Laura Chiatti, Kierston Wareing, Aña Geislerová  
Domestic release: June 11

Luca, a talented young Italian musician, lives in Prague with Klára, of whom he is insanely possessive. Obsession induces Luca to hire private detective Denis to keep tabs on Klára to find proof of adultery. Denis is attractive and slightly ironic, the opposite of Luca. He and his wife Ruth have a very open relationship, in which Ruth makes no secret of her adventures with other men. Denis, on the other hand, is having a love affair with a colleague from the detective agency, Nina, a divorced mother of two children. Although the disconsolate Luca gradually gains Denis's sympathy, the detective starts to yield to Klára's charms and to abandon his own principles.

## 4 DOBŘE PLACENÁ PROCHÁZKA A WALK WORTHWHILE

D: Miloš Forman, Petr Forman  
CZ 2009 | 80 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Jiří Suchý, Petr Stach, Dáša Zázvůrková, Petr Piša, Tereza Hálová  
Domestic release: July 9  
[www.dobreplacenaprochazka.cz](http://www.dobreplacenaprochazka.cz)

Young Uli and Vanilla are getting divorced but are still living in one apartment, each in half. A lawyer arrives to inform the spouses of the divorce proceedings. The situation starts to get complicated when a postman delivers a mysterious telegram from Liverpool. Vanilla's rich aunt has died, and the couple's as yet unborn child stands to inherit one million pounds. In hopes of attaining great wealth, Uli and Vanilla attempt to reconcile. The jazz opera *A Walk Worthwhile*, by legendary writing duo Jiří Suchý and Jiří Šlitr, premiered in Semafor Theater in 1965. Directors Ján Roháč and Miloš Forman adapted the opera into a television film in 1966.

## 5 T.M.A. T.M.A.

D: Juraj Herz  
CZ, SK 2009 | 93 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Ivan Franěk, Malgorzata Kozuchowska, Lenka Krobotová, Michal Dlouhý  
Domestic release: July 9  
[www.tma-film.cz](http://www.tma-film.cz)

Marek moves to an old house near the village he grew up in. Eventually, he finds out that atrocities linked to secret rituals had taken place here over the ages, as did murders of Nazis at the end of the war. He begins to recall disturbing childhood memories relating to strange rituals that he practiced with his sister Tereza, who has been locked up in a psychiatric clinic for years. Marek begins having nightmares about a dramatic event, which deprived him his parents. He feels there is a link between the past tragedy, the place's eerie history and the strange, increasingly terrifying events taking place today.

## 6 OPERACE DUNAJ OPERATION DANUBE

D: Jacek Glomb  
CZ, PL 2009 | 95 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Jiří Menzel, Zbigniew Zamachowski, Boleslav Polivka, Marcin Stuhr, Marta Issová, Jacek Dušek  
Domestic release: July 23

The tragicomedy *Operation Danube* tells the story of one of the Polish tanks that arrived on the night of August 20–21, 1968, to "liberate" Czechoslovakia. The old tank, "Ladybird," is the last to leave the barracks, gets lost just over the border and coincidentally plows into a pub, where the retirement party for a certain Mr. Kulka is under way. Before they manage to repair the tank, the crew must share a common space with the honoree and his guests. In this tense period and within a very short time, a very special relationship develops between them...



## 7 OKO VE ZDI EYE IN THE WALL

D: Miloš J. Kohout  
CZ, SK 2009 | 80 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Jürgen Prochnow, Karel Roden, Catherine Flemming, Soňa Valentová  
Domestic release: July 30  
[www.oko-film.cz](http://www.oko-film.cz)

Our story takes place over three rainy and tepid days. Transcending time and national borders, this tale could happen just about anywhere, any time. Psychodramas occur regardless of borders; they do not exact their toll by nationality or race but by the fates of those involved. We meet Sophie and Vincent just as they enter a deserted house. Their curiosity leads them to the bathroom, and somebody locks them in. They have no idea who has locked the door or why. Watching them through a peephole in the wall is an eye, an eye that foretells nothing good...

## 8 AŽ ŽIJÍ RYTÍŘI LONG LIVE THE KNIGHTS

D: Karel Janák  
CZ 2009 | 95 min | 35 mm  
Cast: David Prachař, Pavel Kříž, Matěj Hádek, Martin Písařík, Zdeňka Žádníková, Tereza Voříšková  
Domestic release: August 6

Central Europe, 14th century. An imposing castle towers above a smaller neighboring fortress, both completely surrounded by dense woods. When the lord of the fortress, Martin of Vamberk, is called to war, he leaves the estate in the hands of his eldest son, Peter. Unfortunately, Peter's poor manners lead his subjects to grow discontent and cause his siblings to ensnare him in more or less successful traps. Meanwhile, Lord Albrecht of Krvenos devises a plot to overtake the fortress. The children's lives are turned upside down, as they fight for their livelihood and their castle.

## 9 KLÍČEK THE LITTLE KEY

D: Jan Novák  
CZ 2009 | 70 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Jan Přeučil, Norbert Lichý, Tomáš Šulaj  
Domestic release: August 13  
[www.klicek.com](http://www.klicek.com)

A teenage couple breaks into a deserted old baroque fortress, formerly a communist and Nazi prison, to spend a romantic night together. Later on they find they are not alone, and slowly realize that they have gone back in time to the Stalinist era in Czechoslovakia. Escape. Capture. Interrogation. Torture of the innocent by electrical current. The boy manages to make a dramatic escape from the prison and return back to 2009, while his girlfriend remains imprisoned in the past. Nobody believes when he tries to explain what happened. Finally he meets his girlfriend, who is now in her seventies.

## 4 MUŽI V ŘÍJI MEN IN THE RUT

D: Robert Sedláček  
CZ 2009 | 120 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Martin Trnavský, Martin Huba, Pavel Zedníček, Igor Bareš, Jiří Lábus  
Domestic release: August 20

The story takes place in the little Moravian village of Mouřínov, where the road ends. The inhabitants want the road to continue beyond the community and, because they've got a champion deer-caller among them, they invest their energy in having the European championship in this unique yet interesting discipline held in their village. The village comes alive with the preparations, and not just with them. Simultaneously, unspoken relationships develop among the residents, and as the preparations influence their lives, their relationships influence the course of the preparations. And one day the championships finally begin...

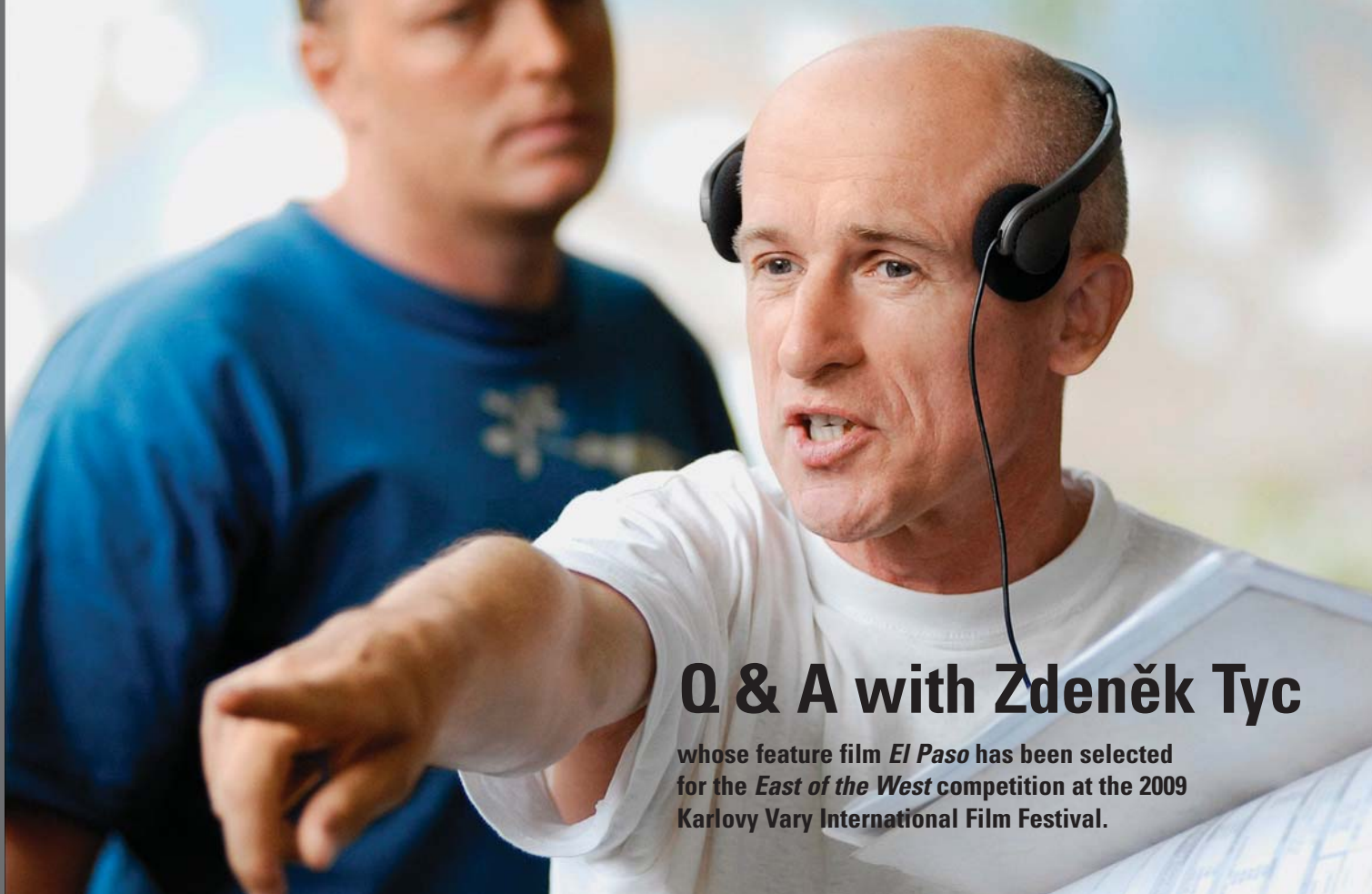
## 5 HODINU NEVÍŠ UNKNOWN HOUR

D: Dan Svátek  
CZ, SK 2009 | 94 min | 35 mm  
Cast: Václav Jiráček, Ivan Franěk, Stanislav Zindulka, Jana Krausová, Marian Geisberg, Zuzana Kronerová, Petra Nesvačilová  
Domestic release: August 27  
[www.hodinunevis.cz](http://www.hodinunevis.cz)

A film inspired by the case of a man known in real life as the "heparin murderer." What was the reason and what was happening in the mind of the young man who decided to perpetrate the most heinous of crimes, feeling he was actually doing good? What compels a promising and intelligent healthcare worker and commit evil against people? It is a frightful thought – that a man who you know well, meet every day and actually like, a man who is helpful, willing and devoted to all, even at the expense of his own comfort and personal concerns, is, in fact, a murderer.

And the first question that comes to mind when you realize you know such a monster is: Just how far was I or someone dear to me from becoming his victim? Yes, it could really happen to any one of us. It was not just "somewhere in the world." It was right here at home!





## Q & A with Zdeněk Tyc

whose feature film *El Paso* has been selected for the *East of the West* competition at the 2009 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

**People on the fringe of society, the aggrieved, outsiders – this is a great challenge and topic for art. And it is your subject, too. Have you reflected on why it interests you so much?**

I guess people on the fringe interest me because I myself feel best among them. I am just a self-confident outsider.

**How did you happen on the story of *El Paso*?**

Actually, by accident – at the same time, I like to say that there are no coincidences – I was sick, lying in bed, too tired to read books, thumbing through a newspaper and something caught my eye – the mention of a Romani woman who did not want to give up raising her nine children. And this is actually the whole plot of the movie! The individual against society, a subject that has been close to my heart since childhood. Predominance. Challenge. David against Goliath. Czechoslovakia against the Soviet Union...

**And how did the story of the Romani mother turn out?**

In real life, the mother remarried. Of course that would have seemed too cliché in the film...

**What is *El Paso*? Is it a secret? Is it the city? Is it Spanish for “step?” Won’t it be a misleading title?**

*El Paso* is a name both resonant and alluring. Relevant. “El paso” is a slang term for assault, and we – in a good way – want to assault the audiences a little.

**How did you manage to get inside the Romani mentality, which is so different, that you can even convey its specificity to “gadje?”**

For several years, I would go to visit the “real” mother to support her. For example, I would go shopping with her for big purchases. I would push the trolley, lift and put away the heavy things, I’d just help her. I witnessed the panicky reactions from the sales clerks and shoppers... In the lodging house, I never rejected the ghostly coffee with grounds in it (like that which awaits the main character’s friends in the film) and I would listen to her.

**How did you discover the impressive actress in the leading role – Irena Horváthová?**

The casting agency laboriously brought me perhaps all the Czech actresses who look Romani. They were mostly good, prepared, cooperative, but a cat is a cat and a tiger is a tiger and so I kept looking. We announced auditions and Irena Horváthová came to one. My instinct told me that she was the right one.



**Irena Horváthová reportedly improvised.**

**How did the actors and the rest of the team adjust to that?**

Irena Horváthová is a live wire. It is very difficult for her to learn lines from a screenplay, and she still changes them. Constantly. Almost to the point where you just don’t get it and you want to explode. And then you have to realize that it is almost beyond her capacity, for she is speaking a foreign language, i.e., Czech...

**What was difficult?**

Filming with children is tricky anyway, and with Romani children you can multiply that by ten. At least. These kids have no ambition, they become tired quickly, lose their edge, they stop enjoying the work and focus on destruction, preferably total. They engage in that full-throttle! The cameramen, who were nearest the children – and all the time – particularly demonstrated incredible patience and tolerance. Patrik and Jirka, heroes. The wardrobe assistants and make-up artists, too. Our little devils were constantly getting into something, falling, getting dirty... and then they would have to do it all over again. But they all believed in *El Paso* so they clenched their teeth and hung in there.

**Do you think xenophobia against Roma really exists in the Czech Republic?**

I believe it does, and it bothers me... not everyone is a thief, all you have to do is distinguish. Thinking is the way.

## CZECH REPUBLIC PRESENTED AT WORLD’S LARGEST FILM LOCATION MARKET

For the second year in a row, the Czech Film Commission, led by Ludmila Claussová, attended the annual Locations Trade Show held in Santa Monica, California, from April 16–18.

Like in 2008, the first time the commission attended, Claussová and staff manned a booth and assisted prospective filmmakers interested in shooting in Prague and the Czech Republic with informative brochures and audiovisual materials promoting the country’s long history in motion picture production and the services and infrastructure offered by the industry there.

Claussová, head of the country’s film commission since its inception in 2004, reiterates the significance of participating in the location expo, saying “thousands of film professionals attend this event, which spotlights 300 film commissions throughout the world. We had many visitors stop by our booth, several of whom



were fascinated by the prospect of filming in our country, and others well informed of what we offer to filmmakers.” Many film professionals attending this year’s LTS were very interested in the Czech Republic’s historic locations and how they would fit for stories that take place



in the first half of the 20th century. “Producers know and appreciate that they can find a range of diverse locations and scenery, architectural styles and historic periods close to Prague,” she adds.

The film commission was also pleased by the prospect of two independent film projects in development, both love stories, set in the Czech Republic – one in modern day South Bohemia, the other in 1989 Prague. As these projects hopefully progress, the office will assist with local contact information for production services and locations.

The Czech Film Commission’s participation at the Locations Trade Show was supported by the Czech Ministry of Culture and the Audiovisual Producers’ Association.

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