

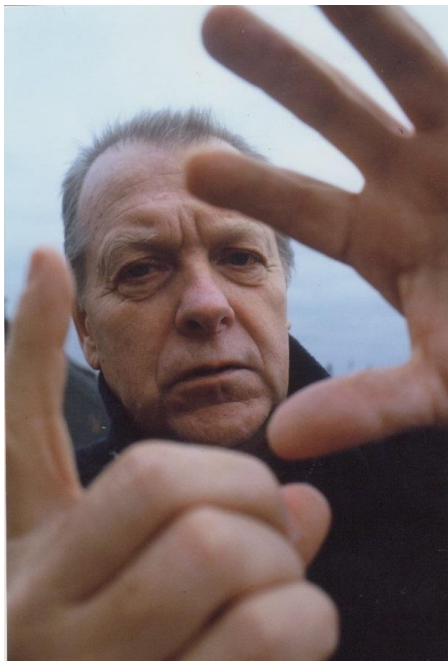
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Press release: **Jan Němec Retrospective at IFF Rotterdam**

Prague, January 25, 2017

Film Festival Rotterdam to honor legendary Czechoslovak New Wave director Jan Němec (1936-2016) with an extensive retrospective

46. International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR, January 25th – February 5th 2017) pays special tribute to renowned Czech filmmaker Jan Němec, who passed away last year. The retrospective of a key figure of Czechoslovak New Wave in the 1960s and important member of Central European avant-garde cinema is organized in partnership with the Czech Film Center (CFC) and Jan Němec – Film.



This is the most extensive retrospective of director Jan Němec ever to be staged on foreign soil. Together with the international premiere of his final feature film *The Wolf from Royal Vineyard Street*, which world-premiered in competition at Karlovy Vary IFF last year, the program features Jan Němec's entire body of work from the 1960s save for a few musical films, with screenings from archival 35mm prints of the masterful *Diamonds of the Night* and *The Party and the Guests*; a sampling of films he made in exile for various TV stations along with the rarely seen *The Czech Connection* and a documentary on the Munich Agreement *Peace in Our Time?* which he co-directed on commission of the British Channel 4.

Presenting all of Němec's feature films from the post-1989 era, including the international premiere of *Heart Beat 3D*, the festival will also screen a wide selection of the director's newly subtitled documentaries presented to an international audience for the first time. Finally, the festival will also present a documentary portrait of the director made for the illuminating series *Golden Sixties*.

//The enfant terrible of the Czechoslovak New Wave, Němec was actually never part of any legitimate film tradition. Even though his body of work is routinely associated with surrealism, absurdism and existentialism, his singular films do not necessarily fall within the traditional lines of European modernism. There is always something that strikingly detaches Němec, preventing him from fitting into those categories completely. A hardly definable 'shift', be it super-sharp editing, an extreme point of view or a sudden convergence of polarised images, undermines even the conventions of modernism in his films. An experimentalist by nature, Němec constantly challenged his own aesthetic principles as well, aiming to extract the essence of what he called 'pure film'. //

(IFFR catalogue, **Evgeny Gussyatinskiy, Irena Kovarova**).

"The idea of making a retrospective came up two years ago, after The Wolf from Royal Vineyard Street was presented in Karlovy Vary as a work in progress. (...) Still, we don't see the program as a postmortem tribute, or anything remotely like that. In fact, the incredible playfulness of Němec's work suggests that he himself would be opposed to any formal-type memorial. It's also the most extensive retrospective of his work ever assembled. Many of these films are being shown internationally for the first time, which we hope will trigger more interest in his diverse and very special oeuvre," says **Evgeny Gussyatinskiy**, IFFR programmer and Němec retrospective co-curator (together with Irena Kovarova, CFC North American representative; Comeback Company).

The retrospective is organized in partnership with the Czech Film Center, which has participated in the project since the beginning. *"The event has been organized in cooperation of many Czech and foreign institutions, such as Jan Němec – Film, Národní filmový archiv and others. I would also like to thank Iva Ruszeláková and Arleta Němcová for their help,"* says **Markéta Šantrochová**, head of the Czech Film Center. *"It's a bit like an incredible dream – when we were talking about it with Evgenyi for the first time, I hadn't even dared to hope that we'd succeed to such an extent. The preparations, dealing with copyrights and screening media, but also discovering some of the films, was an adventurous ride and I thank everyone, not only in the Czech Republic, but also abroad, who have helped us. It was moving to see how Němec's name opens the hearts of so many people. It is just a big pity, that this the most extensive retrospective will be held without the participation of the author,"* adds Šantrochová.

You can learn more about the retrospective [here](#).

The international premiere of *The Wolf from Royal Vineyard Street*

IFFR will present a wide range of Jan Němec's work, including the international premiere of *The Wolf from Royal Vineyard Street* (2016), his final film in which he playfully re-enacts



and reimagines his own life. This autobiographical film is loosely based on Němec's book *Don't Shake Hands with the Waiter*, which tells Němec's fateful adventures from the beginning of the 1960s to the present day. "There's a wolf in the movie's title, a wild, tricky and uncontrollable creature. A wolf in a lamb's skin and the other way round. You will get to

see crime scenes, authentic dialogues, author's commentary, archives both genuine and fake. All that you see in the movie really happened to John Jan. Even though, he sometimes blew his stories up a bit," said Němec in his director's note.

CFC and the festival will publish a booklet for the program with a translated chapter from Němec's book of quasi-autobiographical stories *Don't Shake Hands with the Waiter* (published by Torst, 2011), and references to the excellent monograph on Němec by Jan Bernard (published by NAMU, 2014/2017) and writings of important critics and the filmmaker's friends, together with an introduction to the retrospective by its curators Evgeny Gusyatskiy and Irena Kovarova.

The Czech Center Rotterdam has organized an exhibition of original posters from 1960s presented by Terry Posters and Pavel Rajčan. More information about the exhibition can be found [here](#).

[Jan Němec \(July 12, 1936 – March 18, 2016\)](#)

Czech director, film producer and teacher at FAMU. One of the leading authors of the Czechoslovak New Wave. He was partly banned from making films in 1966, definitively in 1968, when the Soviet army invaded Czechoslovakia. At the same time, the world was stunned by Němec's documentary about the Prague Spring and the invasion. In 1974, he was forced into exile. He lived and worked mostly in Western Germany, USA, UK and Sweden. In December of 1989 he returned home and to filmmaking as well. He produced

most of his films in company of his own, Jan Němec - Film, which he co-founded in 1993 together with Iva Ruszeláková, whom he later married.

Throughout his career Němec never stopped developing his nonconformist vision and challenging the boundaries of artistic freedom as well as the limits of film as a medium – turning to more autobiographical subjects in the last 20 years of his career.

Awards:

In 1969, he was named one of the best five directors of the world by British magazine *Film and Filming*. In 1989, he was nominated for an EMMY award for his film *Czesław Miłosz: The Poet Remembers* (1988). In 2002, Němec was awarded a Medal of Merit for his work in culture (by president Václav Havel). In 2005 he received the Czech Lion award for his lifetime achievement, and his outstanding contribution to the world cinema was awarded with a Crystal Globe at KVIFF 2006 and later, in 2011, also with the Prize of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. He also received Golden Leopard (Video section) at IFF Locarno for *Late Night Talks with Mother* (2001), Grand Prize at Mannheim-Heidelberg International Film Festival for *Diamonds of the Night* (1964) and many other prizes.

Critic **Eric Hynes**, in his *Time Out New York* 4-star review of *Diamonds of the Night*, writes: “Jan Němec’s debut stunner feels even more potent now that it’s been freed of the expectations and delineations of a national movement. In 64 fleet minutes, we’re utterly and overwhelmingly immersed in a Jewish fugitive’s singular experience, from hunger pains to hallucinatory reveries. Němec’s technique is as emotionally intuitive as it is masterful, purposefully scrambling past and present, handheld realism (a breathless opening tracking shot) and Buñuelian surrealism (fever-dreamed ants colonizing [the boy’s] angelic face). It’s a torrent of life—and cinema—in the face of death.”

Graham Fuller, in his article for *Blouin Artinfo*, pays special attention to Němec’s surrealist influences: “Significant among his later works are his self-portrait, *Late Night Talks with Mother*, and *Toyen*, about the eponymous Czech Surrealist painter and illustrator of feminist erotica who had sheltered her Jewish artistic partner Jindřich Heisler during the German occupation.”

Screenings at IFFR:

Diamonds of the Night

screens together with

Arnošt Lustig Through the Eyes of Jan Němec and A Loaf of Bread

Thu 26-1 18:30 Pathé 2

Mon 30-1 21:45 Pathé 2

Pearls of the Deep

screens together with ***A Memory for the Present***

Fri 27-1 22:00 Pathé 2

Thu 2-2 12:30 Pathé 2

The Party and the Guests

screens together with ***Ester Krumbachová Through the Eyes of Jan Němec***

Sun 29-1 12:00 Pathé 2

Fri 3-2 18:45 Pathé 2

Martyrs of Love

screens together with ***The Life of Singer Marta Kubišová Through the Eyes of Jan Němec***

Fri 27-1 12:00 Pathé 2

Wed 1-2 16:30 Pathé 2

Oratorio for Prague

screens together with ***The Strahov Demonstration***

Mon 30-1 09:00 LantarenVenster 6

Thu 2-2 12:00 KINO 4

Die Verwandlung

screens together with ***Between Minute 4 and 5*** and ***The Czech Connection***

Sun 29-1 19:00 LantarenVenster 6

Fri 3-2 20:00 KINO 2

True Stories: Peace in Our Time?

Sun 29-1 16:45 LantarenVenster 5

Thu 2-2 09:15 Cinerama 2

Flames of Royal Love

Mon 30-1 16:00 LantarenVenster 6

Sat 4-2 17:00 Pathé 2

Code Name: Ruby

Mon 30-1 14:30 Pathé 2

Wed 1-2 12:00 KINO 4

Late Night Talks with Mother

screens together with ***Mutter und Sohn***

Tue 31-1 16:30 LantarenVenster 6

Thu 2-2 15:00 Pathé 2

Landscape of My Heart

screens together with ***Golden Sixties: Jan Němec***

Sat 28-1 14:00 LantarenVenster 6

Wed 1-2 21:30 Pathé 2

Toyen

Tue 31-1 14:00 LantarenVenster 6

The Ferrari Dino Girl

screens together with ***Heart Above the Castle***

Wed 1-2 16:30 LantarenVenster 6

Sat 4-2 14:30 KINO 4

Heart Beat 3D

Tue 31-1 17:00 Pathé 2

Fri 3-2 17:00 Pathé 2

The Wolf from Royal Vineyard Street

Sat 28-1 19:30 KINO 1

Tue 31-1 16:45 Cinerama 2

Thu 2-2 16:30 Cinerama 6

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