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# I never imagined I would be doing this

Oscar-winner Timothy Hutton on his serendipitous career

Laura McGinnis

Here's the scandalous truth about Timothy Hutton: there's nothing scandalous about him.

In cargo pants and a blue button-down shirt, Hutton looks like the kind of guy you'd want to meet for coffee on a Sunday afternoon. Polite, friendly and relaxed, there's nothing in his behavior to suggest that he rocketed to fame at a young age, winning an Academy Award and a Golden Globe before his twenty-fifth birthday (in 1981 for his performance in *Ordinary People*). Here with friend and colleague Robert Shaye, who's receiving a Crystal Globe for Outstanding Artistic Contribution to World Cinema, Hutton met with the *Festival Daily* to talk about film, family and his first trip to Karlovy Vary.

■ **Your father, James Hutton, was also an actor. How influential was that in your own career decision?**

I don't know how influential it was because my mother and father split up when I was two so I didn't grow up with my dad. What he did for a living was not really something that we were all that much a part of, my sisters and I. I mean, it didn't seem unreachable, I guess, because there was a point of reference, having a father who did that line of work. But you know my mother was a school teacher and I was just as interested in doing that. I never imagined when I was a kid that I would be doing this.

■ **But you started pretty young.**

Well, yeah. It's all kind of relative. You know, I finished high school when I was 17 and then I was doing odd jobs here and there and did a play and somebody saw me in the play and asked me to audition for something. It was a television movie called *Friendly Fire* and that's what led to an audition for *Ordinary People*, so it just kind of hap-



Ordinary guy Timothy Hutton discusses his extraordinary career.

Photo: Lukáš Táborský

pened very smoothly, which was fortunate. I started young but when I was in high school I wasn't taking drama or anything like that.

■ **Is there a particular kind of role that's more fun or more comfortable to play?**

The parts that are most appealing are the ones that have the most di-

mensions to them, the most arcs to them. You know, all kinds of different parts are fun to play. It's fun to play the hero; it's fun to play the villain.

■ **You were in Karlovy Vary before, when you filmed *Last Holiday*.**

Yeah, a year and a half ago. We

were here for three and a half months, living here at the hotel, working at the hotel. You'd walk out of your hotel room and step into a scene.

■ **What are your best memories from the shoot?**

I don't know...Gerard Depardieu arriving with a lamb around his

neck and bringing it to a restaurant and asking them to cook a fresh lamb...He's very full of life. We just had a great time filming here. It was incredible to be at the Hotel Pupp. I understand that people now come to the hotel after seeing the movie and they think that there's some amazing ski area right next to this building.

■ **How did your initial impressions of the city compare to what you see now?**

Well, it was quite beautiful in the winter. There wasn't the same atmosphere obviously. Most of the shops were closed, the restaurants were closed, but it's hard to compare because we were here making a movie and a movie is its own little community. It was great yesterday just to walk down the street – all the people and music. It's nice. It's a lot more open.

■ **Your films *Off the Black* and *Stephanie Daley* recently screened at Sundance. And your directing debut, *Digging to China*, also played there in 1998. What do you think of Robert Redford's work with Sundance?**

It's incredible what he's done for the people who make film, the art of filmmaking, independent film as well as studio film. I think what he's done at Sundance has actually impacted the studio system. In the early days, for instance, of Miramax, Miramax would go to Sundance and pick up a film and it would end up being successful. I think that the studios woke up a little bit and said, you know we don't need to make these big action movies all the time. We can do very well with something else and have a certain mixture of film. So Redford did a lot obviously for directors, writers, people starting out in independent film, but I think he also had a tremendous influence on studios and what movies they were making at a time when they were shifting away from character driven story-telling. ■

## On the QT

As tensions mount ahead of the KVIFF awards night, nerves and wheeling and dealing have reached maximum orbit, as they tend to do toward the wrap-up of the Czech Republic's major film event of the year.

At a press conference Friday, emotions were clearly frayed, although all went quite according to plan at first: Actor **Timothy Hutton** and his director **Robert Shaye** cheerfully answered questions about a new sci-fi fantasy project of theirs, *Mimzy*. That is, until one English-speaking attendee pointed out that he could not understand questions posed in Czech. Such questions are translated into English for press conference audiences and speakers via headset, but the man seemed not to have picked up on this.

Moderator **Tomáš Baldýnský**, who, as a journalist, has attended many such press conferences himself, promptly berated the man's lack of a headset. A few minutes later, when the man asked a question of Shaye that turned into an interesting chat on cosmological film reviews, string theory and the visionary **Columbia University professor and writer Brian Greene**, who appears in *Mimzy* as a scientist, Baldýnský fretted that "You've now asked five questions."

No one else at the conference seemed troubled and most were fascinated to hear about the founding of Shaye's indie distribution company in the 1960s, which has proved so successful that he's now able to produce films such as the \$40 million *Mimzy*.

Ending on the up beat is always a good idea, at least in Hollywood movies, of course. And the KVIFF looks to be wrapping up this year in better shape than it's ever been. Visitors are looking as satisfied, excited and inspired as they have ever been – which is truly saying something in a fest that's in its 41st edition but is 60 years old – a neat trick of cosmology, of course.

## SEE YOU THERE

### Jiří Bartoška

KVIFF President

I'd urge people to try and see Gavin Hood's *Tsotsi*. We could say that the Karlovy Vary Film Festival discovered this director. One of his first films *A Reasonable Man* screened at the festival in 1999 and won the Ecumenical Jury Award. This is his second film to be shown at Karlovy Vary and we are glad that people keep coming back. The fact that it won this year's best foreign film Oscar is the best recommendation for people to go and see it.

*Tsotsi* screens today at 3.30pm in the Thermal's Small Hall.



## THE KNOWLEDGE

### So how did KVIFF actually begin?

Now that it's all over for another year, you may be wondering how the festival got going in the first place. Well it wasn't built in a day, that's for sure. Although KVIFF celebrated its 41st anniversary this year, the first festival actually took place in 1946. Each day a single film was screened three times in the town of Mariánské Lázně, and was then screened the following day at the new Open Air Cinema in Karlovy Vary. Films from Western countries as well as Czechoslovakia were shown that year and the next. However, in 1948 the Communist takeover heralded the beginning

of a period lasting several decades when the festival would be used as a propaganda tool for the "powers that were" at the time.

In 1950, the Crystal Globe went to director Micheil Chiaureli's *The Fall of Berlin I and II*, in which Stalin is depicted as a wise, kind, powerful (and downright handsome) leader. The following year the globe went to Yuli Raizman for *Kavalier zolotoy zvezdy*, which in the US was given the title *Dream of a Cossack*, prompting *The New York Times* in 1952 to comment: "Since its title is as explicit as it can be, one can't accuse the Soviet film-



Ken Loach at KVIFF in the 70s.

makers of hoodwinking their public." From 1958 the festival began to take place every two years, alternating with the Moscow IFF. During the 1970s and 1980s the festival continued to be used as a tool for meeting political ends during the period of "normalization", although several filmmaking heavyweights continued to attend, including Peter Fonda, Ken Loach and Bernardo Bertolucci.

The Velvet Revolution in 1989 meant the festival was finally free from political pressure and in 1990 filmmakers flocked to the festival, Robert de Niro and Miloš Forman

among them. After an unsuccessful year in 1992, which was marred by organizational problems, matters were taken in hand in 1994 by the Ministry of Culture, the Town of Karlovy Vary and the Grandhotel Pupp, which set up an independent foundation to oversee the future festivals. At that stage, Czech actor Jiří Bartoška took over as festival president and the current artistic director Eva Zaoralová got involved in putting the KVIFF program together. Together they have built the festival into the high-profile, well-oiled machine that you see today.