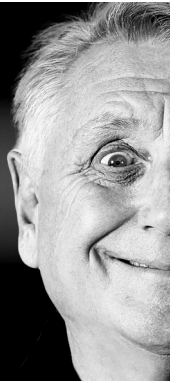


26th FESTIVAL OF CZECH FILMS | 21-27 APRIL 2013

REPORTER

finále
plzeň

Jiří Menzel, director

RICK MCCALLUM: CONTROVERSY IS DRAMA AND DRAMA IS CINEMA

Rick McCallum, the Chair of the international jury for feature film competition at this year's Finále Plzeň is one of the greatest contemporary stars of film production. He has collaborated with big name directors; he entered the history of cinematography by producing *Star Wars* directed by George Lucas. He also created the TV series about young Indiana Jones, and the film *Red Tails* by Anthony Hemingway. After leaving Lucasfilm, Rick settled in Prague (his wife Šárka is Czech) where he supports young directors and engages in talent-scouting.



Are there a lot of talented people in the Czech Republic?

Absolutely. I wouldn't be here if there wasn't. On the crew level, it can compete with Los Angeles or London. There is no country it cannot compete with in terms of technical achievement, the quality of crews, the acting and directing, locations ...

Does it show in the quality of new Czech films?

Absolutely, there is no question. The biggest problem for all European filmmakers is how to tell daring, controversial, provocative stories that are also entertaining. No country in Eastern or Central Europe is big enough to make a film that can compete with the rest of Europe without partnerships and co-productions. That is what makes this festival so important: we are all meeting each other, people from different countries, try to develop co-productions ... so it gives us the opportunity to have enough money – technically it allows us to compete with the rest of Europe. I think it is only beginning now to turn from small comedies to incredible dramas.

It seems you regard Czech film more highly than most Czech film critics. How much do you, as a producer, need critics?

When I started out, critics were absolutely crucial and essential to the very survival and me getting my next film. In the second phase of my life when I started doing *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* they meant absolutely nothing whatsoever. One of the difficult things about serious reviewing now is that a very few people read newspapers and get most information from the internet or television. So it has never had a huge impact on me. But here it is still important, especially if you are doing a difficult film that needs support. There are some wonderful film reviewers and they are losing the space and the opportunities to be able to express themselves ... they are passionate about film, they want to elevate filmmakers – that's the true, direct, real criticism – but unfortunately newspapers are giving them less and less space. Television is useless because it is more about soundbites than anything else. So I believe in the world of critics, especially the ones I really care about I read religiously.

What is the progress of the film *Zatím dobrý* (*So Far So Good*) by Tomáš Mašín, which you are producing?

We'll start filming towards the end of this year. It is a classic problem of how to deal with the rest of Europe. You have a very specific Czech story, it's been filmed in the Czech language, it takes place during a period that general audiences have no care about seeing – the last thing they want to learn about is Communism or collaboration, or they don't want to particularly see a period film. But this is really an interesting film because it also has a lot of action. It is an extraordinary adventure of five young boys between the ages of seventeen and nineteen and their chase throughout Europe to make it to Berlin while they are being surrounded by twenty thousand Soviet soldiers. So I think it has a chance of breaking out. Tomáš to me is a very exciting director. I've been able to work with him for the last year, and he is a collaborative, decent, wonderful talent and I hope you are going to see great things from him in the future.

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