

The Museum of Modern Art

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CONTEMPORARY YUGOSLAV CINEMA FIRST TIME IN USA

The contemporary Yugoslavian scene, as reflected on the screen in New Yugoslav Cinema by ten major filmmakers in twelve feature motion pictures, will be presented in mid-November by The Museum of Modern Art. The twelve-day series, starting November 13th and continuing through November 25th, is the result of several trips made to Yugoslavia by Willard Van Dyke, Director of the Department of Film, who has viewed the most recent Yugoslav production from which the present selection was made. All the films were produced in the past three years and have been sub-titled for this occasion.

Five Yugoslav directors will come to this country to participate in the Museum showings. Represented by their own works in the series, they are among the youngest and most conspicuous filmmakers in that country today: Boro Drašković, who filmed "Horoscope;" Želimir Žilnik, director of "Early Works;" Dušan Makavejev, who directed "Innocence Unprotected;" Živojin Pavlović of "Ambush" and "When I Am Dead and White;" and Branko Ivanda, whose film "Gravitation" will open the series. Prior to the opening a private reception will be given (November 12) in the Founders Room of the Museum to honor the Yugoslav guests.

"The new Yugoslav cinema is inquiring, doubting, enigmatic and sometimes deeply critical of the society from which it springs. Its heroes are the defeated, the bewildered, and the unsatisfied savage young," states Mr. Van Dyke in announcing the series. On his frequent trips to Yugoslavia in the past year Mr. Van Dyke saw as many as twenty films a day, viewing miles of film footage before arriving at his final choice. The films chosen have not been seen here* and offer the American public and critics the opportunity to evaluate the most recent cinematic developments in this Eastern European country.

The themes, according to Mr. Van Dyke, are beginning to embrace youthful protest and revolt. "Gravitation," for example, tells of a young man who returns from the army completely listless, undirected and passive, his life ebbing in a sense of futility except for a brief fantasy of revolt. "Early Works," which won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film

* with the exception of "Kaya, I'll Kill You" shown once at the Lincoln Center Film Festival.

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Festival, has as its heroes the same children "of Marx and Coca-Cola" who are utilized by Godard in his protest films. Outwardly, they are contemptuous and reveal a sense of alienation in a society to which they cannot relate. This film was made following the demonstrations of students in Belgrade in June of 1968 and was initially withheld by Belgrade officials.

"Horoscope," which has attracted attention in Europe, deals with some village do-nothings who hang around the railroad station waiting for something to happen. They finally precipitate an incident that turns into a violent tragedy, though originally they only hoped to get a glimpse of the world outside by staring at the tourists who passed through their life. The types in "Horoscope" resemble the disoriented Italian youth from the 'fifties, as shown in Fellini's "I Vitteloni." The film has been described by a Variety correspondent as having "a fine elliptical, revealing style, bright and incisive playing, and keenly observed direction, especially commendable in a first picture."

"The new directors are coming to grips with conflicts between art and a sociological and political need for justification of their society," declares Van Dyke. "They are frequently accused of trying to make things look worse than they are, but the filmmakers deny this, answering that they only seek to draw artistic material out of reality. Self-criticism, they say, is healthy."

The new Yugoslav films depart radically from the early parochial works that obsessed that nation -- the war with the Nazis and their own internal ethnic conflicts. Today the films have more universal application, as shown in "Kaya, I'll Kill You," made by Vatroslav Mimica. It was a headliner at the last London Film Festival. This picture is highly stylistic in treatment, and its characters are less important than its theme -- a descent into violence and anarchy as a church is attacked, paintings destroyed and books burned, during the Italian occupation of the Dalmatian coast. Based on an actual event, the story is symbolic in its exploration of man's inhumanity.

"Kaya" was made in 1967 by Mimica, whose clever cartoons were part of the Yugoslav Animation Show held a few years ago at the Museum. From animation Mimica moved into short subjects before essaying features. His next feature film, "The Event," has also been included in this

*To be released by Altura Films
**To be released by Walter Reade Organization

series. It is based on an Anton Chekov story and updated to take place in Yugoslavia today. The film makes a strong statement about evil, telling its story through the eyes of a little boy observing human guilt. "Its merits are notable," reports Variety from a foreign festival.

One of the first of the new Yugoslav school is Živojin Pavlović, who started working in film in the early 'sixties, and has two films in the current show: "Ambush" tells of the political disenchantment of a young man, and "When I am Dead and White" * deals with the feckless adventures of an unemployed orphan, who ends up being shot in a factory outhouse. The picture, which has received prizes abroad, derives its title from a poem by Wolfgang Borhart:

"When I am dead and white
I still somehow would like
To be at least some kind of light"

Of the same period is the director of "Innocence Unprotected," Dušan Makavejev, whose film within a film fuses past and present and uses newsreel footage. It will be shown as part of the present series and has been acquired for American release.** Its director, Makavejev is said to bridge the gap between Pavlović and the most recent crop of filmmakers.

The New Yugoslav Cinema will also introduce "Playing at Soldiers" by Bato Čengić, another former animator, whose film deals with war orphans placed in a violently charged situation that brings out their own repressed cruelty and hostility. "The Journey," made by Dorde Kadijević, is an anti-heroic saga of man's detachment and mere interest in survival. Its protagonist, a peasant, confines his affection to a pet calf. "I Have Two Mummies and Two Daddies," directed by Krešo Golik, probes the effects on children of divorced parents. "Crows" is the work of two directors, Gordan Mihić and Ljubiša Kozomara, and it tells a serio-comic tale of young predators who are also victims of their own hollow existence.

"In terms of technical equipment, the Yugoslav studios equal any of Europe," Mr. Van Dyke states. He also adds there is comparative freedom from economic pressures, since the film companies are subsidized by the government. An individual producing company has the freedom to work in several areas such as shorts, documentaries, animation, television commercials, as well as in feature production. "A successful feature may earn back its cost in that country alone," Mr. Van Dyke remarks, pointing to the system of rewards and subsidies

*Contemporary/McGraw Hill Release
**Grove Press

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to encourage producers to accept "off-beat projects." The directors are paid a salary, while actors are freelance and available to all of the directors.

In an explanation of why such a variety of talent exists, Mr. Van Dyke calls attention to the differences of language and religion that separate the six republics of Yugoslavia. In an effort to meet the diverse needs of the nation over a dozen film companies were formed and now have a flourishing existence.

The burgeoning of Yugoslav cinema may be attributed not only to the talent and vitality in that country but also to the interest that film elicits there. Tito is reported to be an avid film-goer who is enthusiastic about the artistic development of the film medium and has reportedly encouraged its growth, a fact not without historic precedent, since the first film school was started in Yugoslavia in 1922.

The New Yugoslav Cinema program follows:

All films have English sub-titles. Short films will supplement each program, and the total running time of a program will be ca. 90-120 minutes.

Thursday, November 13 at 2:00 and 5:30

GRAVITATION, or THE FANTASTIC YOUTH OF BORIS HERVAT, THE CLERK. 1968. Jadran Film, Zagreb. Directed by Branko Ivanda

Thursday, November 13 at 8:00

EARLY WORKS. 1968. Neoplanta, NoviSad. Directed by Želimir Žilnik. Mr. Žilnik will be present at the screening.

Friday, November 14 at 2:00 and 5:30

THE JOURNEY. 1968. Avala Film, Belgrade. Directed by Dorde Kadijević

Saturday, November 15 at 3:00 and 5:30

THE EVENT. 1969. Jadran Film, Zagreb. Directed by Vatroslav Mimica. Courtesy of Walter Reade

Sunday, November 16 at 2:00 and 5:30

I HAVE TWO MUMMIES AND TWO DADDIES. 1968. Jadran Film, Zagreb. Directed by Krešo Golik

Monday, November 17 at 2:00 and 5:30

KAYA, I'LL KILL YOU. 1968. Jadran Film, Zagreb. Directed by Vatroslav Mimica. Courtesy of Altura Films

Thursday, November 20 at 2:00 and 5:30

EARLY WORKS. 1968. Neoplanta, NoviSad. Directed by Želimir Žilnik

Thursday, November 20 at 8:00

HOROSCOPE. 1969. Bosna Film, Sarajevo. Directed by Boro Drašković. Courtesy of Trans-National Film Corporation. Mr. Drašković will be present at the screening.

Friday, November 21 at 2:00 and 5:30

WHEN I AM DEAD AND WHITE. 1968. Filmska Radna Zajednica, Belgrade. Directed by Živojin Pavlović. Courtesy of Contemporary/McGraw-Hill Film Corporation

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Saturday, November 22 at 3:00 and 5:30
CROWS. 1969. Avala Film, Belgrade. Directed by Gordan Mihić and Ljubiša Kozomara

Sunday, November 23 at 2:00 and 5:30
PLAYING AT SOLDIERS. 1968. Bosna Film, Sarajevo. Directed by Bato Ćengić

Monday, November 24 at 2:00 and 5:30
AMBUSH. 1969. Filmska Radna Zajednica, Belgrade. Directed by Živojin Pavlović

Tuesday, November 25 at 2:00 and 5:30
INNOCENCE UNPROTECTED. 1968. Avala Film, Belgrade. Directed by Dušan Makavejev. Courtesy of Grove Press. Mr. Makavejev will be present at the 5:30 screening.

Additional information and stills available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Lillian Gerard, Film Coordinator, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York. 10019. 956 - 7501, 7296.