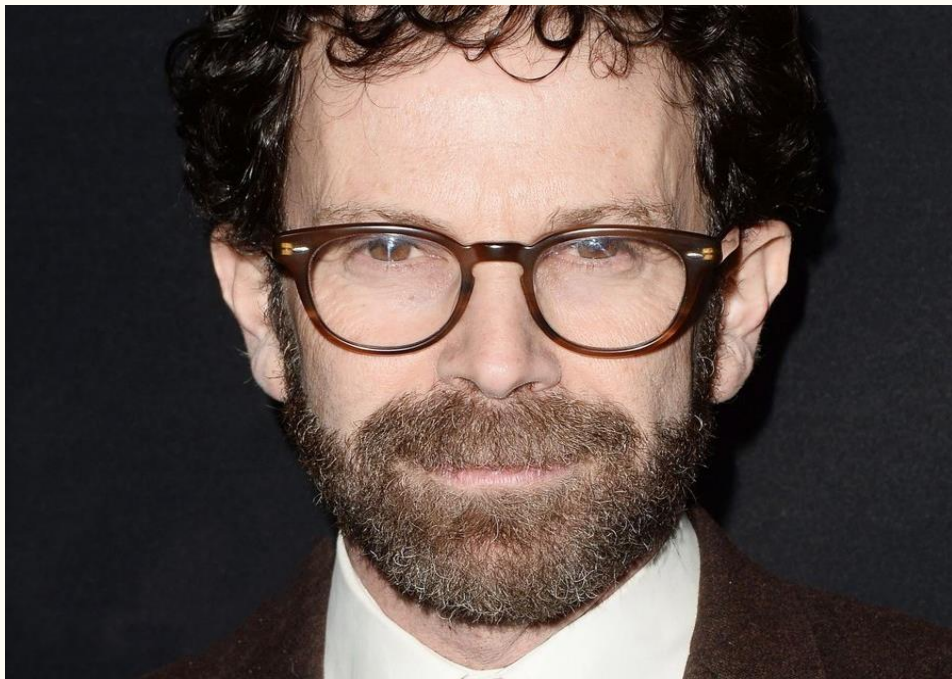




SARAJEVO REVIEW DAILY

Charlie Kaufman and the Heart of Sarajevo



Kaufman's style could be deemed 'screwball,' could be deemed 'surreality,' and should probably be called 'Screw Reality'.

William Bibbiani, August 13, 2023

Charlie Kaufman receives the Honorary Heart of Sarajevo at the 29th Sarajevo Film Festival, saluting a career spent writing and directing films that defied convention, and reclassified humor as a malignant form of sadness.

It's tempting to say that, while there are a lot of talented

screenwriters in the world, there is only one Charlie Kaufman. But that's a lie, and it's all Charlie Kaufman's own fault.

In the famed writer/director's screenplay for *Adaptation*, Kaufman invented for himself an identical twin brother, Donald, who gives into all the formulaic, Hollywood screenwriting clichés

[Continues next page](#)

COMPETITION DOCUMENTARY



SELF-PORTRAIT ALONG THE BORDERLINE

VERDICT: The personal and the political entangle in *Self-Portrait Along the Borderline*, Anna Dziapshipa's excellent essay doc about Georgian-Abkhazian relations through the lens of her own family history.

Ben Nicholson, August 13, 2023

In her 1932 painting *Self-Portrait Along the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States*, artist Frida Kahlo positions herself on a boundary stone with the backdrops of the two eponymous countries on either side of her.

But for Anna Dziapshipa's ranging documentary, the political and geographical divides are

[Continues next page](#)

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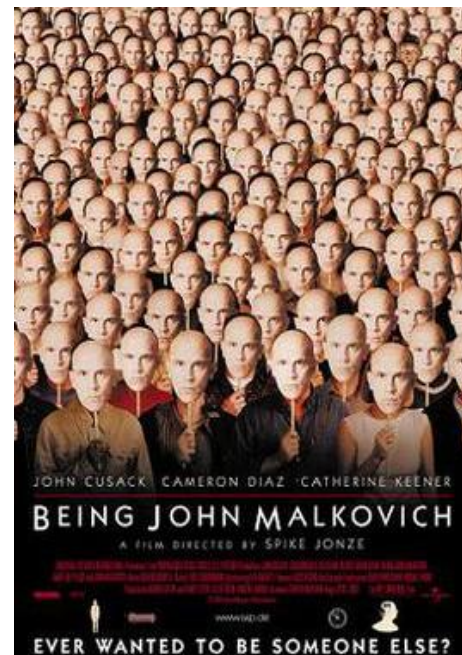
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SELF-PORTRAIT BEYOND THE BORDERLINE *(Continued)*

somewhat more complex and fragmentary. Born in Tbilisi to a Georgian mother and Abkhazian father, she has always had a complicated relationship with her identity and her surname. Her heritage became cause for anxiety during the conflict between Georgia and the unrecognised state of Abkhazia. Using a road trip to an abandoned family home as its basis, the film explores the geopolitical relations between the two nations from the perspective of someone attempting to balance two sides of their own identity. A prize-winner in the short and medium-length film competition at Visions du Réel, it now competes in the documentary section at this year's Sarajevo Film Festival.

Throughout this essayistic study, Dziapshipa returns to the motif of a house spider, a creature whose web is both its home and a tool for hunting – a trap. This duality recurs as she attempts to construct her own sense of a home, most obviously through the return to the abandoned holiday home, itself laden with cobwebs. The way that the filmmaker weaves this imagined landscape is through a constantly shifting collage of found footage, archival home videos, and newly shot material. Eschewing direct imagery from the war itself (which ran from 1992-93) but utilising soundscapes that evoke it, Dziapshipa engages in various ways with the more insidious implications of the long-term ethnic tensions.

[Full Review](#)

CHARLIE KAUFMAN *(Continued)*

that the rest of Kaufman's work deliberately eschews. Yet somehow Kaufman's films have found a large audience, not just critical acclaim. In a style that could be deemed "screwball," could be deemed "surreality," and should probably be called "Screw Reality," his stories explode our pre-conceived notions of narrative structure and conventional logic. And yet they still satisfy his audience's needs for emotional payoff and disarming whimsy.

There's method in Kaufman's madness, a deep understanding of all the rules he regularly breaks. Kaufman's films are challenging and cohesive treatises on modern existentialism, but not — as they may sometimes appear at a glance — confessions of a dangerous mind. A sad mind? Certainly.

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COMPETITION DOCUMENTARY



LIBERTATE

VERDICT: A chaotic power struggle plays out in 1989 Transylvania, in Tudor Giurgiu's cynical, directionless drama of civic breakdown and compromise.

Carmen Gray, August 13, 2023

Romania's Communist past, with its brutal decades of rights repression, surveillance and economic hardship under dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, has become a frequent theme of the nation's arthouse output, after films such as Cristian Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (2007), about an illegal abortion, helped defined the country's New Wave.

These days, amid Romania's raging divisions and rising nationalism, the Communist years have become a relatively safe subject in cinema; a target that is not too politically controversial to malign for citizens across the spectrum. That said, there are still many dark corners of the era not much examined. Tudor Giurgiu hones in on one lesser-known episode in his historical drama *Libertate*, which screens in competition at Sarajevo after its world premiere at the Transylvania International Film Festival in Cluj.

It plays out during the Romanian Revolution of December 1989. "It's done," is the only mention of the off-screen execution of Ceausescu and his wife Elena. Our attention, instead, is on Sibiu, Transylvania. After shots are fired (whether by police or the Securitate is to this day in official contention) on protesters and the military that had swapped sides to join them, a bloody clash ensues. The final tally was 99 dead and more than 500 citizens accused of being counter-revolutionaries were detained in an empty swimming pool.

It's the first time Giurgiu, who is behind lighter comedic fare such as *Love Sick* (2006) and *Of Snails and Men* (2012), has tackled nation-shaking events with a large-scale lens. He has bitten off slightly more than he can chew, bringing little analytical rigour or wider vision of what is at stake to reckon with the forces at play beneath this surface re-enactment.

[Full Review](#)

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VERDICT SHORT



A KIND OF TESTAMENT

VERDICT: This strange and engrossing short blends a surreal and slippery story about a bizarre online relationship with Stephen Vuillemin's glorious animation.

Ben Nicholson, February 22, 2023

A young woman goes online to purchase a web domain based on her name and comes across something deeply unsettling in Stephen Vuillemin's beguiling animation, *A Kind of Testament* which competes as part of the Berlinale Shorts competition. The unnamed woman (voiced by Naomi Yang) finds

that the website she wants already exists and, very unexpectedly, it is full of animated videos that are clearly based on her social media feeds. The rest of the film then takes the form of these unusual cartoons as they play out on screen while the young woman tries to understand why exactly someone has done this with her likeness.

Right from the opening sequence, the imagery combines a vibrant colourfulness and a bristling vitality with something altogether more sinister and menacing. The camera pans up over a bouquet of flowers, glowing in saturated reds, yellows, and violets – pulsating with life. It pans down again, an instant later, only to reveal them wilted, browning, and covered in flies. As the narrator begins to watch the videos on this bizarre website she finds a similar trend; a still image from her profile is transformed into a weird and often macabre vignette. A selfie in a boutique clothing store expands to show a skeleton creeping towards and then embracing her. A photo of the woman with her dog becomes a scene at a veterinary hospital in which she is faced with the decision of whether to have the dog put to sleep.

Vuillemin's animation often uses bright but slightly out-of-kilter colour combinations and takes a blocky and blotchy approach to shadow that makes the visuals striking while retaining the oddness of their supposed origins.

[Full Review](#)

The Film Verdict Publishes Its 100th Full-Length Short Film Review

Written by TFFV's Short Film Critic Ben Nicholson

THE FILM VERDICT MEET THE CRITIC



BEN NICHOLSON HAS JUST WRITTEN 'VERDICT SHORT' #100, A MILESTONE DURING THE SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL. BEN IS A WRITER AND CURATOR WHOSE WORDS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN *SIGHT & SOUND*, *MUBI NOTEBOOK*, *LITTLE WHITE LIES* AND *HYPERALLERGIC*, AMONGST OTHERS. HE HAS PROGRAMMED FOR SHEFFIELD DOC/FEST AND THE LONDON SHORT FILM FESTIVAL AND IN 2019 FOUNDED ALT/KINO, WHICH SCREENS AND DISCUSSES EXPERIMENTAL FILM AND ARTISTS' MOVING IMAGE. EARLIER THIS YEAR BEN BECAME THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE FIRST ALPHA FILM FESTIVAL – THE FIRST SHORT FILM FESTIVAL TO BE HELD IN THE METAVERSE, HOSTED BY THE FILM VERDICT.

COMPETITION DOCUMENTARY



BLACKBIRD BLACKBIRD BLACKBERRY

VERDICT: The deliciously wry, gently unfurling tale of a middle-aged Georgian woman who rejects small-town conformity and experiments with love after a near-death experience.

Carmen Gray, June 28, 2023

The choices of a middle-aged woman unwilling to fit in with the narrow expectations of a small Georgian town are the focus of deliciously wry but reflective comedy-drama *Blackbird Blackbird Blackberry*, screening in the Horizons section at Karlovy Vary after a world premiere at Cannes Directors' Fortnight. Director Elene Naveriani again embraces the feminist vein of her previous features *And I am Truly a Drop of Sun on Earth* (2017) and *Wet Sand* (2021), bringing us into the complex inner world of a woman who dares to think and live differently.

Etero (Eka Chavleishvili) runs her own business selling household and beauty items, and has long been single, following a daily routine that is predictable and requires little dependence on anyone. But one day unlike others, she slips while picking blackberries in a ravine. The near-death experience brings the existential questions that have

been bothering her as menopause approaches into urgent focus, and pushes her to take stock of her life. When product supplier Murman (Teimuraz Chinchinadze) stops by the store that afternoon, she makes a spontaneous pass at him, losing her virginity at age forty-eight and opening the door to love and a whole new relationship to sexuality and her own body.

Naveriani has adapted Tamta Melashvili's novel of the same name in a calmly deliberate, generous manner that allows the character of Etero a lot of space. This space is literal — the airy, sparsely frequented store she presides over is a room of refuge as well as her means to earn a livelihood — and psychological. After the initial accident, Etero's story unfolds gradually and ambiguously. Her conflicting emotions, introspections and tentative experiments in romance are untangled with droll humour.

[Full Review](#)



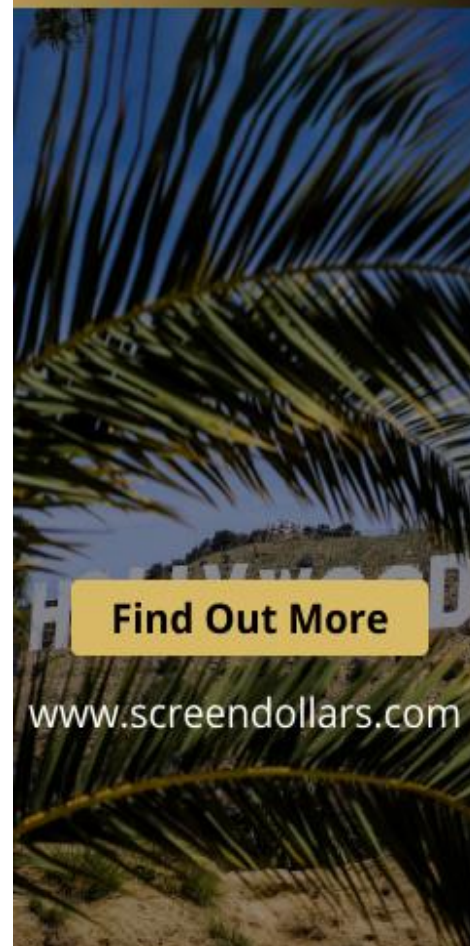
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Fallen Leaves Opens New Nordic Films



New Nordic Films is an annual Film Market for Nordic films, taking place during the Norwegian International Film Festival in Haugesund. *Fallen Leaves* won The Jury Prize at the 2023 film festival in Cannes.

VERDICT: Aki Kaurismäki's latest is a largely familiar but lovely new work.

Boyd van Hoeij
May 22nd, 2023

Some world-cinema auteurs are accused of making the same film over and over again as if that were a bad thing. But thankfully, watching *Fallen Leaves* (Kuolleet lehdet), the latest working-class tale populated with a handful of loveable sad sacks from Finnish auteur Aki Kaurismäki, confirms the idea that not only can it be a good thing, but it is the very familiarity of the filmmaker's world that can work like a balm. It's the cinematographic equivalent of that one comfy sweater

[Full Review](#)

*New Nordic Films takes place
Aug 22 -25*

Willie and Me to Open the 30th Edition of the Oldenburg International Film Festival



World premiere of German actress Eva Hassmann's directorial debut, starring alongside Willie Nelson and Peter Bogdanovich in his final performance.

Willie and Me tells the story of a German housewife who escapes a lifeless marriage to venture on an impulsive journey to Las Vegas to see Willie Nelson's farewell concert. Eva Hassmann's multi-hyphenated directorial debut (as writer/director/producer/actor) is a mix of road movie, drama and Golden Age irreverence.

During the script's development, Peter Bogdanovich served as her mentor. His classic "What's Up, Doc?" (1972) was itself a

celebrated homage to the great screwball comedies of Hollywood. Bogdanovich makes his final on-screen appearance in the film. Starring opposite Willie Nelson with a soundtrack featuring his timeless hits throughout, Eva Hassmann states, "We all have a Willie Nelson farewell concert that we absolutely want to attend." The festival welcomes Eva Hassmann, along with members of her team and cast, to Oldenburg—where she started her career on-stage as a teenager at the local State Theatre.

Oldenburg Film Festival takes place Sept 13 - 17



Locarno 76 Finishes Strong

The recently completed Locarno was 146,930 (86'530 in theaters and 60'400 in Piazza Grande), Festival sjpws growth over the previous year.

Total audience at all screenings up 14.3% as compared to 2022. Accreditations were up by 31%, reaching a total of 4,639. 1,530 were film industry representatives and 783 were journalists and photographers.

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