

DIVERSE DOCUMENTARY DISCOVERIES

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Fact-based film has been enjoying a global renaissance for the last few years and many audiences now turn to documentaries as a more ready source of complex, interesting characters, worlds, and situations than feature films. KVIFF fully embraces the quest for these surprising chronicles, seeking out those that challenge conventional views.

The fest's Martin Horyna, who has curated this year's documentary collection, says the conventions of non-fiction film are changing more and more, making the docu competition increasingly intriguing. The fest grants two Grand Prix awards and a \$5,000 cash prize to winners of both the short and long-form categories.

This year, 10 feature-length docus are competing, repping 14 nations spanning stories from Canada to Ukraine, complemented by six short docus from diverse places, including Chile, Israel and Latvia. Subjects range from Ukrainian shepherds to hair salon trash-talking to the moving story of an addict's quest to turn her life around, framed by Czech master documentarian Helena Třeštíková in *Mallory*.

Many of the docus will not screen again this week but those still coming include *Horizons*, Eileen Hofer's lyrical portrait of young Cuban ballerinas endeavoring to create beauty that transcends the daily grind of one of the world's longest-running dictatorships— and features an appearance by the legendary grand-dame vocalist Omara Portuondo,



Horizons looks at three generations of Cuban ballet dancers.

who has recorded work with the Buena Vista Social Club.

You can find another wonderfully off-the-wall story line in Tonislav Hristov's *Once Upon a Dream – A Journey to the Last Spaghetti Western*, which explores what's left of an Andalusian town that was once a favorite locale for the famous cowboy flicks of the title – and just may have a last shot at a comeback? Albert Meisl's Austrian entry *The Father Tapes*, meanwhile, delivers a tough, unvarnished account of a final parting.

Thoughtfully, KVIFF has packaged three of its diverse short docus into a single screening, making it a snap to catch Jon Bang Carlsen's *Cats in Riga*, Iris Zaki's British/Israeli talker *Women in Sink*, and Ursula Meier's Swiss child-star story *Kacey Mottet Klein, Birth of an Actor*.

Among the docu discoveries already screened this year but well worth scouting out at future events are Jan Foukal's tribute to

Czech tramping, *Amerika*; Alba Sotorra's Spanish/German look at the life of a video game-obsessed shooter, *Game Over*; Mark Cousins' tribute to a his troubled home, *I Am Belfast*; Ostap Kostyuk's Ukrainian look at the dying trade of Carpathian shepherding, *The Living Fire*; Cosima Spender's British/Italian chronicle of wild, bareback horseracing, *Palio*; and Noura Kevorkian's Canadian/Lebanese/UAE contemplation of the loss and nostalgia that go hand-in-hand with Parkinson's Disease, *23 Kilometres*.

Three other attention-getting short docus screening this year were Roberto Collío's Chilean look at soldiers stationed at a frozen outpost, *White Death*; Martin Hrubý's Czech portrait of a once-thriving communist get-away spot, *Resort*; and João Pedro Rodrigues and João Rui Guerra da Mata's Portuguese tribute to a once-mighty fireworks powerhouse in Macao, *IEC Long*. ■