

Karlovy Vary in the shade

The Czech Republic's premier film festival failed to truly shine despite the summer sun, says **Nick Roddick**

Jude Law came, did karaoke, smiled winningly at his press conference and left again. The sun (mostly) shone. But the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2010 failed to ignite. Of course, early July – six weeks after Cannes and a month before Locarno – is a nightmare slot for an 'A' festival. Over the years KVIFF's programmers have kept up the standard with inspired French, Scandinavian, Iranian and Far East selections. Sadly, none really delivered this year.

Olivier Coussemacq's *L'Enfance du mal* (*Sweet Evil*) took a promising subject – a respectable middle-class couple conned by a young delinquent – and buried it in improbable plotting and ludicrous character development. And Fardin Saheb Zamani's *There Are Things You Don't Know* proved that, notwithstanding Kiarostami's *10*, driving round Tehran in a taxi doesn't necessarily make for great cinema.

More promising was Pawel Sela's *Mother Teresa of Cats*, based on a famous Polish murder case, though its working backwards from the crime didn't help non-Polish audiences. But the trio of central performances – Ewa Szykulska as the murdered mother,



Cheer up: British stand-out film 'The Be All and End All' has had little UK attention

Mateusz Kościukiewicz (seen in Wajda's *Sweet Rush*) and Filip Garbacz as her increasingly out-of-control sons – almost redeemed it, with the latter two sharing the Best Actor Award.

Top prize went to Agustí Vila's *La mosquitera*, about a middle-class Spanish family in which 15-year-old Luis' odd behaviour gradually causes the whole house of cards to collapse. The result was more irritating than illuminating, but the opening scene, featuring the stray dogs Luis has brought home, is worth the ticket.

KVIFF has many sidebars, with 'East of the West' – films from

Europe's former communist countries – the most promising. This year it delivered a real discovery: Srdjan Koljević's *Woman with the Broken Nose*, a kind of Belgrade-set *Crash* that starts when the title character leaps off the bridge linking the old town to New Belgrade, leaving her baby in a taxi; the lives of three witnesses intersect in unexpected ways. The resolution of one of the stories is mishandled, but the film has a quintessentially Balkan energy, black sense of humour and faith in human nature.

Also intriguing was Basque film *80 egunean* (*For 80 Days*), found in a

sidebar called 'Another View'. Directed by Jon Garaño and José Maria Goenaga, it focuses on two former school friends who rediscover one another in their seventies and embark on a brief lesbian affair. Beautifully shot and sympathetic to its older characters, the film proved assured and often delightful.

The revelation for me, however, was a British film there as part of *Variety's* 'Critics' Choice'. *The Be All and End All*, directed by Bruce Webb, has toured the US festival circuit, was turned down by every UK festival and has no UK distributor – perhaps because it falls into that generic no man's land, the film for young adults. Webb's film certainly starts that way: its tale of two under-16 boys obsessed with losing their virginity could be mistaken for a young-skewed Judd Apatow spin-off. But those scenes are there for a reason and the film takes a very different turn when one of the boys is diagnosed with a fatal heart condition – thus becoming even more determined not to die a virgin. Thereafter, Webb walks the tightrope between comedy (the film is often laugh-out-loud funny) and emotion until the film reaches a climax that is deeply moving. Shot on a shoestring with only one name actor – a sublime Liza Tarbuck – *The Be All and End All* deserves to be rescued from oblivion. If someone reading this picks it up, I'll forgive KVIFF 2010 its longueurs.

THE NUMBERS

Sharing the secret

In a miserable week for new releases, Secret Cinema cleaned up, says **Charles Gant**

The date of 18 June 2010, exactly a week after the start of the FIFA World Cup, may go down in history as one of the worst days ever for new film releases in the UK. With studios saving their proper blockbusters until the football had ended, there were lean Hollywood pickings: *Killers*, *Wild Target*, *MacGruber* and *Our Family Wedding* competed for the hostility and disdain of the nation's critics and the indifference of cinemagoers.

Not recorded in the week's official box-office data was the £136,000 grossed by Secret Cinema's screening of *Blade Runner* at London's Canary Wharf, where 6,800 people paid a premium to watch an augmented

presentation of Ridley Scott's 1982 classic, featuring elaborate installations and 100 actors. That result would have placed *Blade Runner* 11th in the weekend's box-office chart, ahead of *Our Family Wedding* and *MacGruber*, both released on 100-plus screens.

Secret Cinema – an occasional presentation of an undisclosed film in an unusual location – has come a long way since it launched in December 2007 with Gus Van Sant's *Paranoid Park* under London Bridge. But it's merely a highly visible aspect of a cinemagoing trend: creating events is an excellent way of engaging viewer interest. The company's founder Fabien Riggall explains: "The more we become [physically] disconnected, with the internet and social media, the more people want to share experiences. The multiplex is

not dead, it's a great business model, but some people want a different cinema experience. They want to be challenged, they want to be inspired, they want a reason to connect."

June also saw the Edinburgh International Film Festival, with its traditional focus on new British cinema. How many of the titles competing for the Michael Powell Award achieve theatrical distribution in the UK remains to be seen, but the winner, *Skeletons*, is seeking audience engagement through distributor Soda Pictures' innovative New British Cinema Quarterly programme. Rather than a traditional release, NBCQ films benefit from a series of one-off screenings at cinemas, with talent supporting with live Q&As.

Soda's managing director Edward Fletcher says: "With the traditional model we were getting audiences

Secret Cinema's growing audiences

Film	Date	No.
Paranoid Park	Dec 2007	400
The Harder They Come	Jun 2009	980
The Warriors	Sep 2009	1,885
Alien	Oct 2009	1,000
Bugsy Malone	Nov 2009	1,429
Wings of Desire	Feb 2010	2,260
Blade Runner	Jun 2010	6,800

Figures show paid admissions, excluding press and guests

coming for the opening night Q&A, and then evaporating after that. Event-driven strategies are particularly relevant to British film, partly thanks to the availability of support from talent. It would be impractical to bring a film-maker to the UK and send them on a six-week tour. We are targeting an audience that's interested in, and maybe participates in, film-making. It's a sizeable community, but you've got to make an effort to engage it."