

Portorož, 17 October 2021

Jury for feature films: Primož Bežjak, Dana Budisavljević, Želimir Žilnik

Jury for short fiction, documentary, experimental, animated and student films: Robert Černelč, Matjaž Ivanišin, Hana Repše

VESNA AWARDS

Vesna Award for Best Feature Film

Bitch, a Derogatory Term for a Woman

Directed by: Tijana Zinajić

Production: December

Jury's comment: This is the film we found most surprising and fascinating. A film bursting with energy, life, and affection for its characters. Rather than playing the minimalism card trending in European arthouse cinema, it makes use of everything it has at its disposal—from torrents of words to silences, from dancing to sitting around a small kitchen, or junkies. And it does everything well. This is a dynamic film with a superbly directed cast and a whole new cinematic energy.

Vesna Award for Best Director

Darko Sinko

for **Inventory**

Jury's comment: Although at first sight this may seem an inconspicuous, restrained film, every minute of it is carefully directed, the filmmaker meticulously creating the rhythm and flow of the narrative. In its stylistic coherence and restraint, *Inventory* echoes the insecurity, frustration, and fear one feels as their life drifts into insignificance.

Vesna Award for Best Screenplay

Iza Strehar

for **Bitch, a Derogatory Term for a Woman**

Jury's comment: This is a screenplay that is both anarchic and analytical. Ironic and self-critical. Foul-mouthed and artistically ambitious. Feminist and phallic. Honest and deceptive. Sober and drunk. Doped and clean. Celibate and sexed-up. Just like life.

Vesna Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role

Liza Marijina for the role of Eva

in **Bitch, a Derogatory Term for a Woman**

Jury's comment: Liza Marijina has proven once more how strongly and accurately she can feel the anger of the generation seemingly unwilling to grow up despite having it all worked out. As Eva, Marijina goes about “killing” and “massacring” everyone around her with her inexorable bluntness and couldn't-care-less attitude, masking the underlying fear, insecurity, and profound yearning.

Vesna Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role

Radoš Bolčina for the role of Boris

in **Inventory**

Jury's comment: With his creative range and experience as an actor, Radoš Bolčina as Boris skilfully manoeuvres the fine line between Coenesque absurdity of an invisible man, realism, and intelligent humour.

Vesna Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role

Anuša Kodelja for the role of Nina
in **Bitch, a Derogatory Term for a Woman**

Jury's comment: Anuša Kodelja is enrapturing as Nina with her freshness, playful audacity, and an extraordinary sense of humour. She becomes our bestie, the soul mate we'd follow to the end of the world—or at least to Berlin.

Vesna Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role

Dejan Spasić for the role of Andrej
in **Inventory**

Jury's comment: The character of police inspector has seen so many repetitions in cinema that doing it in an original way is a challenge. In *Inventory*, Dejan Spasić manages precisely this. Working on a case that will never be closed, Inspector Andrej is a sensible, warm person who is here to close the case.

Vesna Award for Best Cinematography

Mitja Ličen
for **Small Body**

Jury's comment: The co-production *Small Body* presented Mitja Ličen with a huge challenge: the film is set more than a century ago. The director of photography shot this dramatic, emotional tale in which the main characters symbolically go through hell in their struggle to survive, in a way to make the audience feel part of this world gone by, its cruelty and redemption.

Vesna Award for Best Original Music

Matija Krečič
for **Inventory**

Jury's comment: For his brave use of strong musical emphases and departure from the kind of music that blends with sound design. Instead, music here assumes a role equal to other characters.

Vesna Award for Best Editing

Uroš Maksimović (editor), **Mariana Kozáková** (co-editor)
for **Reconciliation**

Jury's comment: A family tragedy, a traditional village high in the Albanian mountains. New lords and masters, priests and lawyers, and a film production that took six years. The editors managed to turn all this into a visually, dramaturgically coherent whole in which the protagonist – a girl who was killed in a family feud – remains present in the sorrow, silence, and eyes of her mother. Meanwhile, the male characters – neighbours, family members, officials, and priests – are occupied with macho issues: who is more important, and who has raked in more money. The system has changed, but patriarchy remains.

Vesna Award for Best Production Design

Neža Zinajić
for **Bitch, a Derogatory Term for a Woman**

Jury's comment: The award for best production design goes to Neža Zinajić for *Bitch, a Derogatory Term for a Woman*. Zinajić manages to seamlessly work the numerous locations – including many well-known vedutas of Ljubljana, student flats, galleries and party places, toilets and surgeries – into the eclectic style of the film, making all seem authentic, supporting the characters and the director's approach.

Vesna Award for Best Costume Design

Matic Hrovat

for **Bitch, a Derogatory Term for a Woman**

Jury's comment: The award for best costume design goes to Matic Hrovat for *Bitch, a Derogatory Term for a Woman*, for street fashion turned into film costumes that do an excellent job of portraying the characters stuck between childhood and adulthood.

Vesna Award for Best Make-up

Martina Šubic Dodočić

for **Oasis**

Jury's comment: Martina Šubic Dodočić's make-up design in Ivan Ikić's *Oasis* makes an extraordinary contribution to the real and specific nature of the film's environment, while never exploiting its protagonists.

Vesna Award for Best Sound

Julij Zornik

for **Murina**

Jury's comment: The name of Julij Zornik, the sound designer behind most of the films in competition, stands out prominently in the 2021 festival line-up. We could say that Julij Zornik is a nonpareil. Still, as we had to choose of the films he worked on as a sound designer, we decided to award him for *Murina*, directed by Antoaneta Alamat Kusijanović, for his splendidly designed sound atmosphere of the space below and above the sea, one very different from that most commonly found in Mediterranean films.

Vesna Award for Best Minority Co-production

Small Body

Directed by: Laura Samani

Slovenian co-producer: Vertigo

Jury's comment: We have seen some amazing arthouse films in this category, film that have toured festivals worldwide and are without doubt prime examples of European cinema. Therefore, selecting the winner of this award was a difficult decision, made somewhat easier by the rule stipulating that Slovenian filmmakers can compete for awards with both majority and minority co-productions, which we believe highlights their high quality. Ultimately, we decided to present the award for best minority co-production to Laura Samani's debut *Small Body*. This is a work of extraordinary visual power and corporeality, both virtually seeping off the screen. Transferring the audience to rural ways of life in the early 20th century, the film manages to avoid the sentimental romanticisation of our ancestors' lives, surprising the audience with subtle narrative twists and the use of Slovenian and Italian dialects on the way. Both gentle and cruel, this is by all means a wonderful film, which hopefully finds its way to Slovenian cinemas along with other outstanding minority co-productions.

Vesna Award for Best Documentary

Reconciliation

Directed by: Marija Zidar

Production: Vertigo

Jury's comment: Navigating through a complicated family feud, Marija Zidar paints a complex image of a patriarchal society. Using a meticulous, restrained observational technique, the filmmaker takes us into the very core of the two feuding families, creating a nuanced, poignant documentary.

Vesna Award for Best Short Fiction Film

Sisters

Directed by: Kukla

Production: A Atalanta

Jury's comment: In the short fiction film *Sisters*, the director critically explores the role of gender in society and the violence that results from this. Using an intense rhythm and a saturated mix of images, sound, and music, the film is a powerful journey from the very first to the last shot.

Vesna Award for Best Animated Film

Steakhouse

Directed by: Špela Čadež

Production: Finta

Jury's comment: In a poetic way and with a dose of black humour, Špela Čadež's animated short *Steakhouse* paints a rough reality of a romantic relationship, telling the story through a technically and substantially flawless work. Against the softness of the visual design comes a surprising finale, which stays with you long after the lights have come up.

Vesna Award for Best Experimental Film

Intrusion

Directed by: Matevž Jerman, Niko Novak

Production: Temporama

Jury's comment: Using a play of light and darkness, the experimental short *Intrusion* sets the collection of specimens preserved in formaldehyde in perpetual motion. The filmmakers manipulate abstract images, keeping them evasive for the audience. Together with sound, the images create a new endless imaginary space for the spectator's sensations.

Vesna Award for Best Student Film

(in)visible

Directed by: Anže Grčar

Production: UL AGRFT

Jury's comment: *(in)visible* is striking in its careful observation of asylum seekers and volunteers that meet at Ambasada Rog. We are fascinated by the young filmmakers' committed approach, and their insightful, subtle take on the topic.

Vesna Award for Special Achievement

Granny's Sexual Life

Directed by: Urška Djukić, Emilie Pigeard

Jury's comment: A Vesna Award for special achievement goes to *Granny's Sexual Life*, a solicitous animation that shows a short journey into the history of a grandmother's country life intimacy. The filmmaker's committed, ironic approach is delivered through simple, effective drawing and photography, creating a poignant documentary with a tinge of satirical humour. We have recognised its special achievement in its ingenious structure and a superb style of narration that subtly tackles a taboo subject from our recent past.

Vesna Award for Special Achievement

Penalty Shot

Directed by: Rok Biček

Jury's comment: A Vesna Award for special achievement goes to Slovenia's outstanding contribution to the minority co-production *Penalty Shot*. In its fifteen suspenseful minutes, with an original approach, great camera work and superbly directed young cast, the director, co-screenwriter, co-editor, and producer Rok Biček shows how seemingly innocent play can end badly. From start to finish, the film is like a slow match burning.

Special Jury Award / Special Mention

Sparks in Time – A Worldwide Computer Adventure

Directed by: Jurij Gruden

Production: Senca Studio

Jury's comment: *Sparks in Time – A Worldwide Computer Adventure* delivers facts and personal accounts of Janez Škrubej and his fellow electrical engineers who were among the first in the world to start developing a Slovenian and Yugoslavian computer. The audience learns about their global achievement as well as the circumstances and pressures dictating their innovation. This is an urgent story from the ignored and forgotten past.

Special Jury Award / Special Mention

Ameba

Directed by: Blaž Završnik

Production: Bandera

Jury's comment: *Ameba* deserves a special mention for its guerrilla approach to production. Used too rarely in Slovenian and regional cinema, such approach, as the film demonstrates, can yield very interesting results.

Vesna Audience Award

Bitch, a Derogatory Term for a Woman

Directed by: Tijana Zinajić

Production: December

Average score: 4.74

OTHER AWARDS

Slovenian Art Cinema Association Award

for feature film

Jury: Špela Mrak, Luka Vidic, Jure Matičič

Murina

Directed by: Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović

Jury's comment: The award goes to a film that dazzled us with its nuanced narrative, visual aesthetics, outstanding directorial achievement, and well-crafted acting performances. We watched wide-eyed and gaping, feeling first-hand the intensity of family relations, the unbearably rising tension, and the allure of an escape from paradise. The award goes to *Murina*.

Special Mention

Inventory

Directed by: Darko Sinko

Jury's comment: A special mention goes to *Inventory*, an equally superb debut that centres on a most usual man who finds himself torn between his own image of himself and his true self.

FIPRESCI Association of Slovenian Film Critics Award

for best Slovenian feature film in the Official Competition

Jury: Bojana Bregar, Rok Govednik, Simona Jerala

Reconciliation

Directed by: Marija Zidar

Production: Vertigo

Jury's comment: This is a clever film that gives an insight into neo-patriarchal structures. Tracing an intimate family tragedy, it subtly shows the stumbling of populism over democracy, while refraining from interfering with the audience's judgment.

Best Debut Award

sponsored by Iridium Film

Darko Sinko

for Inventory

Kosobrin Award for priceless below-the-line crew member

Presented by the Directors Guild of Slovenia

For 2020: property master **Rudi Požek**

For 2021: chief lighting technician **Drago Jarić**