

Review of the Festival of Ethnographic and Anthropological Film – Sofia, Bulgaria 2011

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On 15, 16 and 17th of December the Conference hall of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" once again hosted the Festival of Ethnographic and Anthropological Film (FEAF). After the opening of the festival in 2010, which was with a summary of the "the forgotten past", the emphasis during the second FEAF was on the vast range of things encompassed by the name "Balkans". The face of the Balkans was shown through different points of view by 20 selected productions from 6 countries from this region.

The focus during the three days of the festival was on the roma (gypsy) reality, the holy places of different confessional groups and the traditions in the modern society.



The beginning was set with two projects of the producers from AGITPROP and the television network HBO. The first one was Sofia Tzavella's "Paradise Hotel" about the emblematic (and no longer existing) concrete housing estate "Block № 20" in Yambol and the second was Yordan Todorov's film revealing moments of the everyday life of one of the wealthiest groups of Bulgarian gypsies – Kaldarash roma.

Todorov's film ("Concrete Pharaohs") provoked a broad discussion and many questions were addressed to the young director. The film is described by its creators as a "celebration of life in all its dimensions – here and in the afterlife". The film won the Award for best Debut in 2010 Bulgarian Documentary and Animation Film Festival "Golden Rhyton" and the Award for Best Director's debut in Documentary cinema from The Bulgarian Film Academy and it deservedly took all the applause of the FEAF's audience.

The media partners of the festival Television Tourism also had the opportunity to present their own productions in each of the days during the festival. The films it presented – "In Kavrakirovo with zurna song", "Old-time harvest", "Between the crescent moon and the cross" took the audience from the village near Petrich where makers of the zurna musical instrument live, on through the Radomir's field region to the Deliorman.



The last title was represented by the author – Stoian Radulov and also provoked the interest of the audience in the hall. The film, with a consultant Nevena Gramatikova – Bulgarian ethnologist, is telling the story of a less well known part of the Bulgarian population – Kazulbash who are alevii (alevism is a minority religious movement within Islam, in many respects close to its original, authentic appearance and close to early Christianity).

The viewers were immersed by various aspects of the traditional culture of the country with a few titles representing winter masquerade traditions and titles such as "The Distaff" and "The Henna" from the ethnomusicologist Veselka Toncheva. The traditions in the rest of the Balkan ethnos were shown with the movies "Devil`s Dance" (Serbia) by Tamara Popov, Sahit Kokoli's "The Last Gusle-Player" (Kosovo) and "Sister of Lilith" (Turkey) by Emel Celebi. A premiere for the Bulgarian audience was the film "Nestinari" (2010) made by Zlatolina Semova describing the modern state of an old ritual, wrapped in mysticism and included in UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage.

During these three days, the festival was free of charge and was visited by over 500 people.

FEAF 2011 was organized by the Association for cultural initiatives in partnership with the Academic Ethnology Association, the Department of Ethnology and "Vakon" Publishing House. Media partners were Television Tourism and "The Explorer" journal.