

**Kříženecký, Schweik, Cinderella  
and the carnivorous Adele -  
films known and unknown are  
born anew through digitization.**

The most extensive digitization project in the history of Czech cinematography will be launched on March 30<sup>th</sup> by the National Film Archive (NFA). Ten films, selected from two hundred motion pictures chosen by two committees from the Czech Ministry of Culture, are set to be digitally restored. The valuable compilation will include such gems as the comprehensive collection of film pioneer Jan Křiženecký's motion pictures from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Jiří Trnka's animated *The Czech Year*, *The Good Soldier Schweik* from the 50s in early color, *Three Wishes for Cinderella* and the detective parody *Dinner for Adele*. From April 2016, when digitization will be completed, all restored films will be available for release in theaters, television and at film festivals. They will also be issued in part on DVD and Blu-ray.

Digitization, conducted in the highest achievable resolution, was supported to great extent by Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway through EEA grants, equivalent to the better known Norway Grants. Grants from the three European Economic Area countries contributed to the restoration of Czech films for the first time ever. The remainder of the 26.5 million crown project budget was financed by the Czech Ministry of Culture while CESNET will contribute its technical capabilities and the Norwegian National Library its know-how.

#### Masterpieces of Film Reborn

"Once again, we will see selected films in their original form: not improved according to current fashion, but in the way our parents and grandparents laughed and cried at them in movie theaters," says Michal Bregant, director of the NFA. He compares the process of digitization to the restoration of a rare canvas. First of all, old films must be expertly inspected. Only then can they undergo digitization: with the aid of the most advanced technology, the effects of time must be delicately removed, returning to them the gloss and detail lost during the passage of years. At the same time, however, the software must not eliminate their distinctive patina - a coarser grain or quivering image characteristic of old motion pictures which, in addition to being historically authentic, add their own unmistakable charm.

According to Michal Bregant, films were chosen, not only to form a cross-section of cinematographic history, but also as samples of different genres, materials and techniques used in the shooting of the selected motion pictures. From two hundred films singled out by two committees from the Czech Ministry of Culture, the oldest black-and-white films of **Jan Křiženecký**, capturing, among other scenes, unique shots of old-fashioned life in Prague, were included in the final ten movies determined for restoration. **Takový je život**, a social drama by Karl Junghans from the end of the era of silent film and **From Saturday to Sunday** by Gustav Machatý, which elegantly uses both sound and music and benefited from the role the artistic elite played in its production, are also represented in this compilation. Set for restoration are also Trnka's winsome **The Czech Year** and the color film **The Good Soldier Schweik** with Rudolf Hrušínský, shot on East German Agfacolor. Also to be restored are the wide-angle musical, **Love Harvests in Summer**, the parable **Case for a Rookie Hangman**, **Postava k podpírání** by director Pavel Juráček, historical drama **Adelheid**, directed by František Vlácil, and the popular detective parody, *Dinner for Adele*. Christmas favorite, **Three Wishes for Cinderella**, which is well loved by Czech and Norwegian audiences alike, will not be excluded from restoration either.

## Digitization Prague - Budapest

The task of digitization will now belong to the laboratories affiliated with the largest Hungarian studio, **Magyar Nemzeti Filmalap**, which prevailed in the international contest. The renowned Hungarian workplace was responsible for restoring *The Exile* (A Tolonc), a rare silent film by Mihály Kertész who, some years later as Micheal Curtiz, made his name as the acclaimed director of **Casablanca**. These laboratories are now completing the digitization of Trnka's animated **Old Czech Legends** which will inaugurate the Finále festival in Plzen on April 26<sup>th</sup>.

"We were very pleased that our Hungarian colleagues made the journey to Prague to inspect the negatives personally, and also that they found the archived materials to be in very good condition. Their renewal can therefore be managed in a short period of time while achieving high quality results", says Section Manager for Audiovisual Collections at the NFA, **Anna Batistová**, according to whom the negatives of each archived film are priceless for their historic and artistic value.

All film reels, containing a total of 26 kilometers of tape, will now travel by special consignment to Budapest. Immediately upon delivery, they will make the journey to the digitization workplace. Restoration will take place frame by frame: Hungarian operators will click off a total of 1 365 000 of them. Due to the involvement of CESNET, work can be carried out in part via video conference. "We will be able to monitor and comment on the approach of the Hungarian restorer online from our offices in Prague", explains Anna Batistová from the NFA, an institution that has systematically attended to the archiving of films since 1943.

And it is precisely good archiving practices when dealing with fragile, often flammable or otherwise delicate materials along with meticulously processed documentation for each film that has enabled a portion of the initial funds set aside for digitization to be saved. From these savings, the NFA has decided to finance the digitization of four more motion pictures. In the coming years, we can look forward to **Skeleton on Horseback**, **Krakatit**, **Beg to Report**, **Sir** and the black-and-white cult classic **Voyage to the End of the Universe** also getting a new look.

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### Films to be digitally restored (by April, 2016):

The films of Jan Křižanek: 24 short films from the years 1898-1908  
*Takový je život* (1929), directed by Karl Junghans  
*From Saturday to Sunday* (1931), directed by Gustav Machatý  
*The Czech Year* (1947), directed by Jiří Trnka  
*The Good Soldier Schweik* (1956), directed by Karel Steklý  
*Postava k podpírání* (1963), directed by Pavel Juráček a Jan Schmidt  
*Love Harvests in Summer* (1964), directed by Ladislav Rychman  
*Case for a Rookie Hangman* (1966), directed by Pavel Juráček  
*Adelheid* (1969), directed by František Vlášil  
*Three Wishes for Cinderella* (1973), directed by Václav Vorlíček  
*Dinner for Adele* (1977), directed by Oldřich Lipský

### Digitální restaurování je nově naplánováno i pro snímky:

*Skeleton on Horseback* (1937), directed by Hugo Haas  
*Krakatit* (1948), directed by Otakar Vávra  
*Beg to Report, Sir* (1958), directed by Karel Steklý  
*Voyage to the End of the Universe* (1963), directed by Jindřich Polák