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Festival Brings New Films from UK To Moscow

By Jennifer Monaghan

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"Filth," based on the eponymous Irvine Welsh novel, is among the films.

Halloween may have come and gone, but the treats just keep on coming for fans of British cinema in Moscow.

Formula Kino Gorizont is playing host to the 14th New British Film Festival, which opened Oct. 30 and will run until Sunday, with two different films being shown at the venue every night.

The event has been organized by the British Council in collaboration with the Russian-based art group Cool Connections, and the outcome offers a varied mix of shorts, documentaries and feature films.

"The main criteria for the selection of the films is, of course, the quality. We literally go through all British productions from the last year and carefully select the most interesting

films," program director Alexei Layfurov told The Moscow Times. "We really worked hard to bring all those films together so everybody could see that British film is in great shape," he said.

The festival opened Wednesday with "Diana," a film that has received largely unfavorable reviews in Britain, where it premiered early September. Directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel and starring two-time Oscar nominee Naomi Watts in the lead role, Diana follows the life of the former British princess in the two years before her death. One moviegoer, Nikolai, seemed to reflect the overall mood in Britain, when he surmised that "It was a nice story" but that no film could do justice to real-life events.

Another sell-out showing was "Filth," a lewd, crude and rude tale based on Irvine Welsh's novel of the same name, which played at the festival Saturday night. Filth follows the descent into madness of Bruce "Robbo" Robertson — played by James McAvoy — a police officer searching for promotion while juggling an investigation into a murder inquiry. At times humorous, at times strangely dark, Filth is worth a watch for all fans of Welsh's most famous adaptation, the 1996 film "Trainspotting."

The festival also marks the feature-length debuts of several up-and-coming British directors. The pick of these has to be "Selfish Giant," based loosely on Oscar Wilde's short story, which plays Thursday this week. Selfish Giant details the story of two boys who get drawn into a murky world of copper theft and horse-drag racing, with unpleasant results.
The performances of young actors Conner Chapman and Sean Thomas have garnered rave reviews from critics.

For fans of documentary films, "InRealLife," which plays Friday, takes a closer look at the relationship between the Internet and the youth of today, asking if we can afford to stand by while children are being outsourced to the net. Should this question need further discussion, the audience will have the chance to discuss the film with its producer, Freya Sampson, after the viewing.

Indeed, one of the great things about this festival is the opportunity to interact with the people directly involved in the making of the films. Five guests, including three directors, have been flown out to Russia and will hold question-and-answer sessions following the showings of their films.

The first such session took place Sunday night with directorial duet Jones. In their film, "Everyone's Going to Die," the audience is introduced to Ray and Melani, two misfits who are able to find a kindred spirit in one another. While the film touches on serious topics, coming back to the idea of death several times throughout the picture, it manages to do so in a lighthearted way: "In [Britain], movies tend to be of a particular type. They can be quite gritty and social realist and quite hard-hitting, and we definitely wanted to make a movie that would ... make a dramatic point in a more humorous way," said Micheal Woodward, one-half of duet Jones, after the showing.

And, if all that was not enough for film buffs, lectures are also being held by all of the festival's guests at the Moscow Film School. On Tuesday, director Kieran Evans holds a talk entitled "How to Make a Film on a Provocative Topic," ahead of the evening showing of his film "Kelly and Victor," about two people who embark on a sexual relationship with one

another.

On Friday , Lynn Ramsay — who adapted and directed the film "We Need To Talk About Kevin" — gives a lecture entitled "The Secret to Directorial Success," and will also hold a question-and-answer session Saturday evening. All talks last for one-and-a-half hours and take place in English and Russian, with synchronized translation.

The New British Film Festival runs until Nov. 10 at Formula Kino Gorizont, 21/10 Komsomolsky Prospekt. Metro Frunzenskaya. 800-250-8025. Tickets cost from 250 to 350 rubles and films are shown in English with Russian subtitles. For the full schedule of films, talks and question-and-answer sessions, visit ukfilms.ru*.*

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