

MUNI
ARTS

Czech New Wave
CZS36

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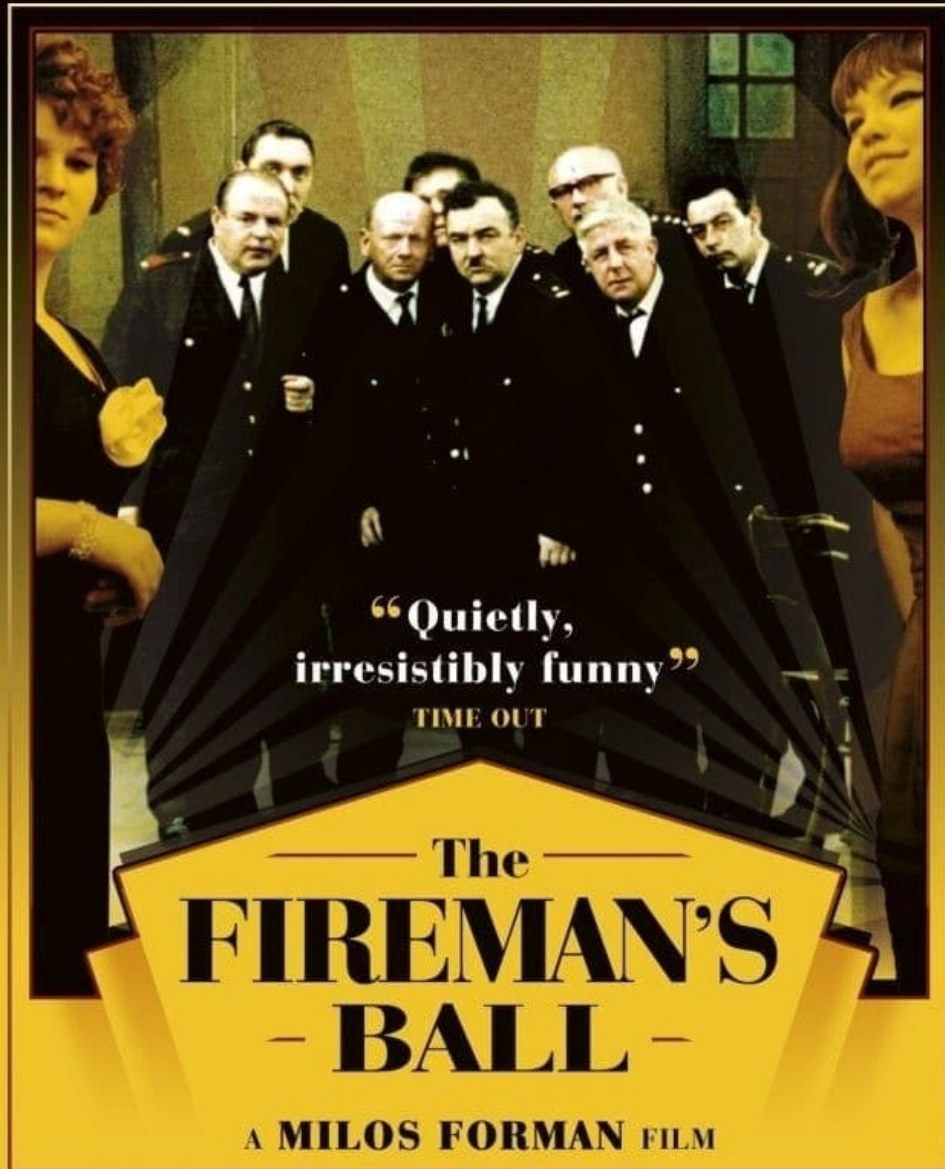
22. 11. 2022

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The Firemen's Ball (1967, dir. Miloš Forman)

“Film comedy, where drinking, dancing and theft takes place“

- Last Czechoslovak and most ambitious film of the trio and their collaborators
- CG Šebor-Bor, Screenwriters and story development: Forman + Papoušek + Passer, Cinematography: Miroslav Ondříček, Editing: Miroslav Hájek



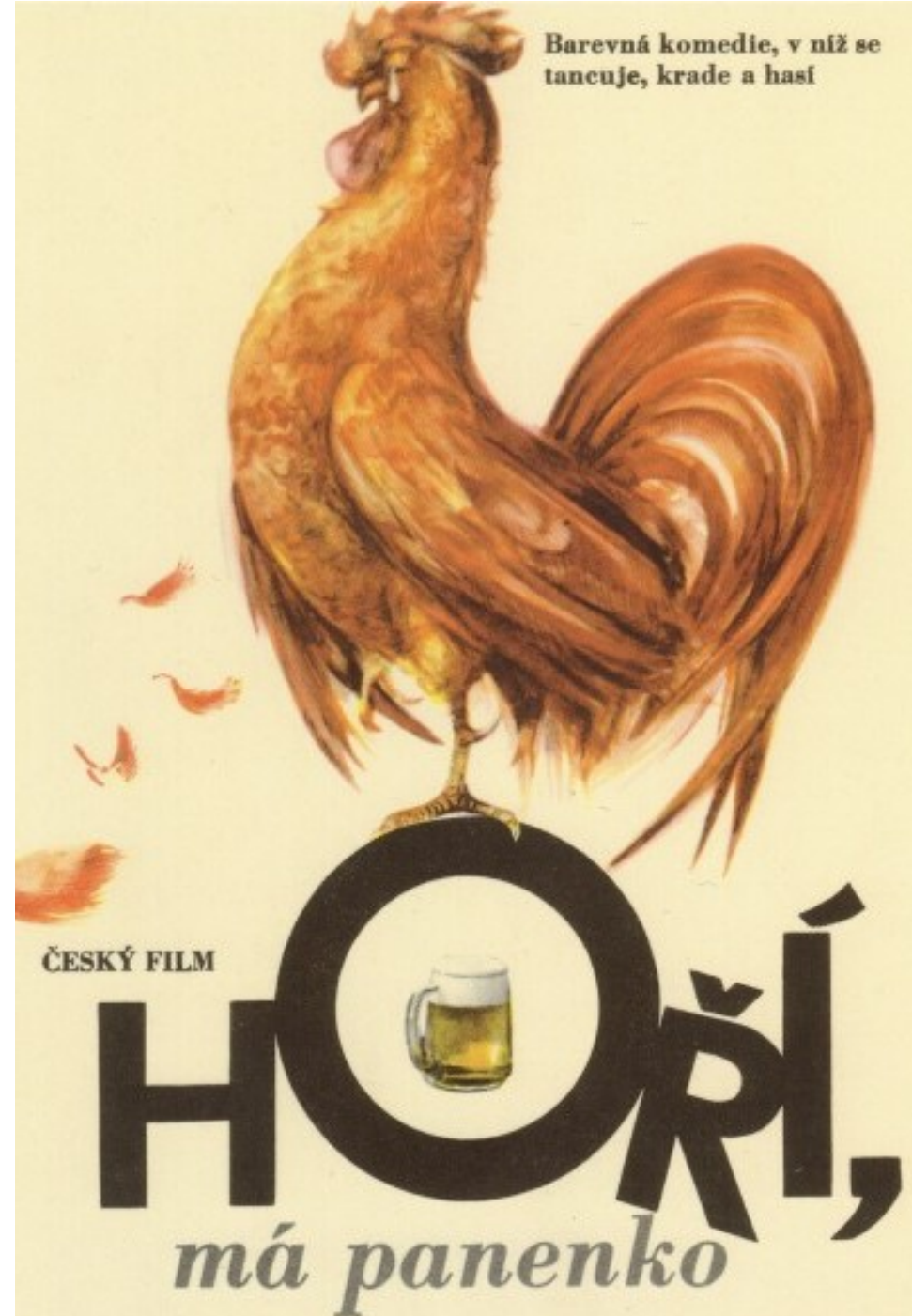
The Firemen's Ball – Questions

- 1. Period Czechoslovak reviews and even contemporary analytical essays have a tendency to view this film as a distorted mirror image of the national character (mainly negative views). Do you agree? Which topics and parts of the story have the potential to speak internationally – that is, to you?
- 2. Although we recognize some familiar faces not only behind the camera, but also in front of it, this film introduces new aspects in Forman's work. Can you name at least two aspects, which you feel are different from *Black Peter* and *Loves of a Blonde*?
 - „The schtick with the non-professional actors, we've seen that so many times! No more original. Still the same. For the first time it was something new. Not anymore.“ (anonymous viewer, quoted in: SOELDNER, Ivan. Světová gala premiéra ve Vrchlabí. *Filmové a televizní noviny*, 1967.)

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The Firemen's Ball (1967, dir. Miloš Forman)

- Forman's most ambitious and most expensive Czechoslovak film
- His image as the most successful director, who stays out of trouble, is shattered





- ***Firemen's Ball* smoothly passed through the pre-production and production phases (story development, screenplay, casting, location scouting, shooting), no negative feedback X strong opposition from the Czechoslovak Union of Fire Protection (CSPO – Československý svaz požární ochrany)**
- **Coproduction with the Italian company Sostar film – Carlo Ponti – he supports the project with 110 000 USD (color stock, plans for global distribution), in the end the coproducer backed out of the contract**
- **Opening night: 15. 12. 1967 + previous series of unofficial screenings**
- **„This film is not against the firefighters nor for them. It is not about the uniform. It is about every single one of us, about our character, about the relationships between various people in our society.“ – an opening title inserted in March 1968.**



!Change alert!

- Due to conflicting schedule I have to move our oral exam session to a different (much better!) date! Everybody will be available 😊
- **Tuesday 13. 12. from 10:00 till 12:00** (instead of our final lecture)
- Please send me your lists with preparations (10 film summaries plus one item of reading resumé) no later than midnight, Sunday 11. 12.
- The additional films with subtitles:
 - *Audition* (Konkurs) on YouTube, *The Cremator* (on Netflix)
 - Slovak films with subtitles
 - *The Sun in Net*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkSIs3-fL8I&t=1807s>
 - *Birds, Orphans and Fools*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6W78QYUueDo&t=2s>
 - *Boxer and Death*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0xSZEaBc2g>

Censorship 1965–1967

- „Control or censorship, financial or political, is in its consequences more or less the same. It breaks characters and talents. Financial control is slightly more consistent, because everything can be count to the last penny.“ (Ivan Passer)
- There is no universal model of art (X socialist realism), no unified audience >> filmmakers should take into consideration audience needs and the economic state of cinema
- November 1965: Czechoslovak film and television union (FITES) was established => allows the community to articulate unified stances vis-a-vis the development of audiovisual industry and reactions towards criticism; publishes its own influential newspaper *Filmové a televizní noviny* (a biweekly)
- Since January 1967: HSTD can intervene only when there is a risk of publishing state, economic and/or service secrets + censorship is legalized (before there was no legal framework)

Changes in censorship communication

- 1966–1967: both filmmakers and film critics prefer aesthetically demanding projects, realist impulses are used up X calls for realism in art production
- The box office results and cinema attendance of domestic films are alarmingly low >> the importance of economic criteria is accented and genre films are strongly called for
- New Wave projects are still important for export
- Censorship interventions in the years 1966 and 1967 are coming from the ČSF/FSB leadership. Also, the relationships between cinema management and party leadership are weakened and have a turn for the worse (CGs, their independence and lack of top-down control are the main target of ideologically motivated critique).
- Sharp reservations against individual projects; preproduction phases are suspended in case of *The Case for a Rookie Hangman* (dir. Pavel Juráček), *The Joke* (dir. Jaromil Jireš) or *The End of a Priest* (dir. Evald Schorm)

Consequences both symbolic and real

- Two pioneer films of the antirealist branch of the Czech New Wave: *Daisies* (caution in the preproduction phase) and *The Party and the Guests*
- May 1967: „Please, what kind of films are you making?“ >> famous interpellation of the deputy Jaroslav Pružinec in the parliament, where he criticized *Daisies*, *The Party and the Guests*, *Martyrs of Love* and *Hotel for Strangers*
 - His speech became a symbol of censorship oppression in the 1960s
- FSB reacted: less debuts and first feature films directors employed at Barrandov studios – comparing 1963 (9) and 1965 (8) we see a fall to cca 3 projects of this kind a year. Young filmmakers are evaluated as ideologically unreliable and have a tendency for obscure experiments.