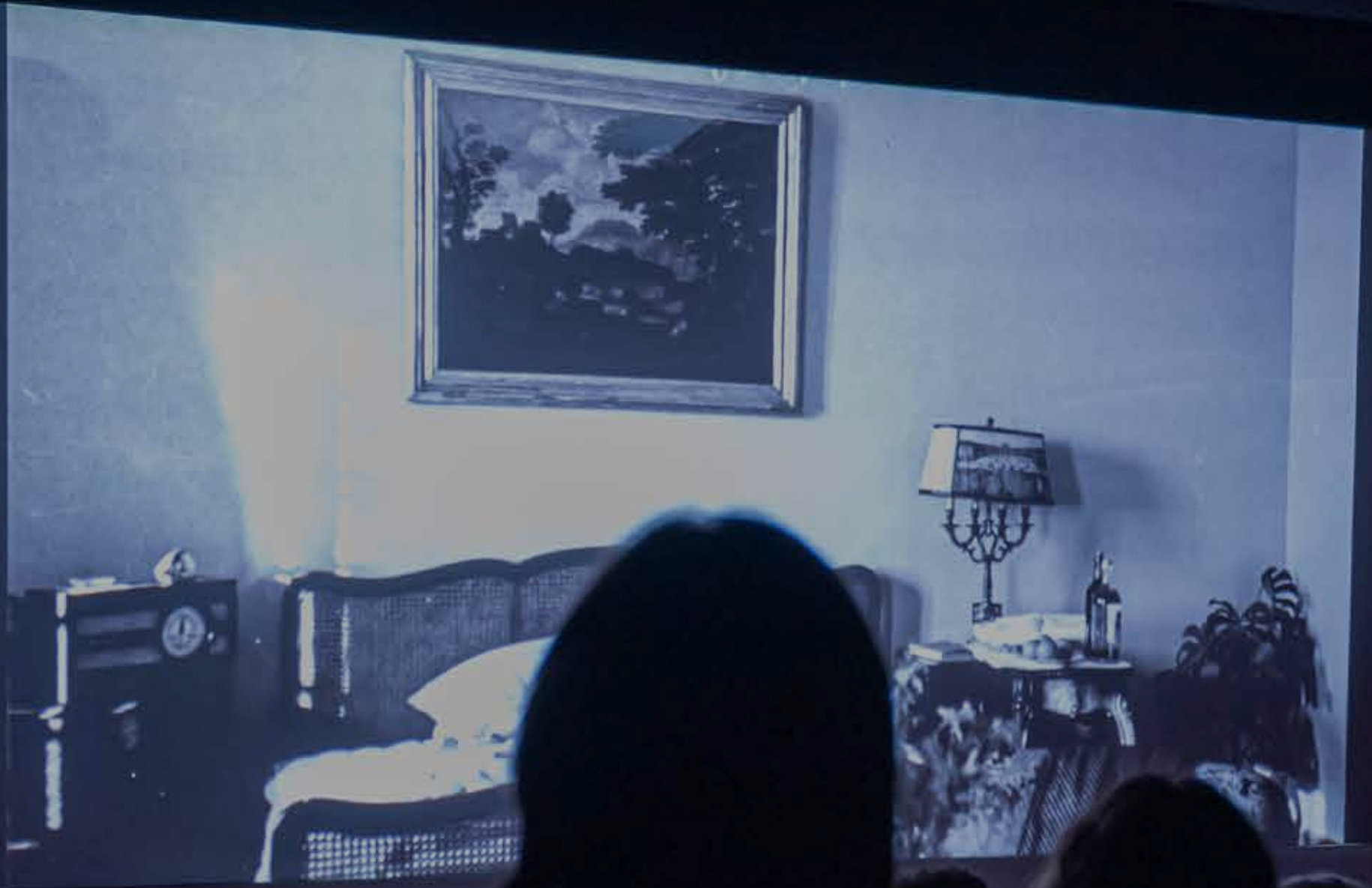


DOKUDAILY

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PHOTO: SUER CELINA

WATER FIRE YOU ME

There must be more to us than what we have written and said as a (un)progressive consequence of this historical debacle. What do I mean? I mean everything said is easier said than said twice. What do I mean? If we lose meaning in communication, it must be the inert ability to feel in that moment. However, to use words, this simple system of symbols and sounds we created, can save us.

When the world needed to invent fire, words were as simple as 'fire', 'water', 'stone', and then we needed to communicate how a dress was neither gold nor white. 'Shnosh' refers to a deeply regretful manner that I have to now live with for the rest of my life, it also claims the very opposite - a state of my good physical being.

So if I talk about fear, I mention the word 'fear', will you know exactly what I am talking about? Is it because you once feared something or is the one your brother warned you about? Are you thinking about your brother right now? And what if I'm not being honest? Much of this year's recapitulation includes censorship of words, so we ought to "reclaim language from manipulation", to have the simple desire to be told the truth.

Nothing but words, language, letters squeezed together have had the opportunity to be there - for better or for worse. So we commit to them, this anthropology of feelings, the only prayers that have worked. Seems like words are still a means of survival like when we simply needed to say 'fire', 'water', 'you', 'me'.

by Anita Morina

FOTO: ELMEDINA ARAPI



MENTAL VOID

FOTO: LUKA STRIKA

DAILY PICKS

FIUME O MORTE! / 112'
INTERNATIONAL FEATURE DOX



DOKUKINO 17:30

THE CORIOLIS EFFECT / 110'
GREEN DOX



DOKUKINO 19:30

I HAVE NEVER BEEN ON AN AIRPLANE / 68'
BALKAN DOX



KINO LUMI 20:00

ONLY ON EARTH / 93'
GREEN DOX



DOKUKINO PLATO 22:30

IBADET RAMADANI & BAND
DOKUNIGHTS

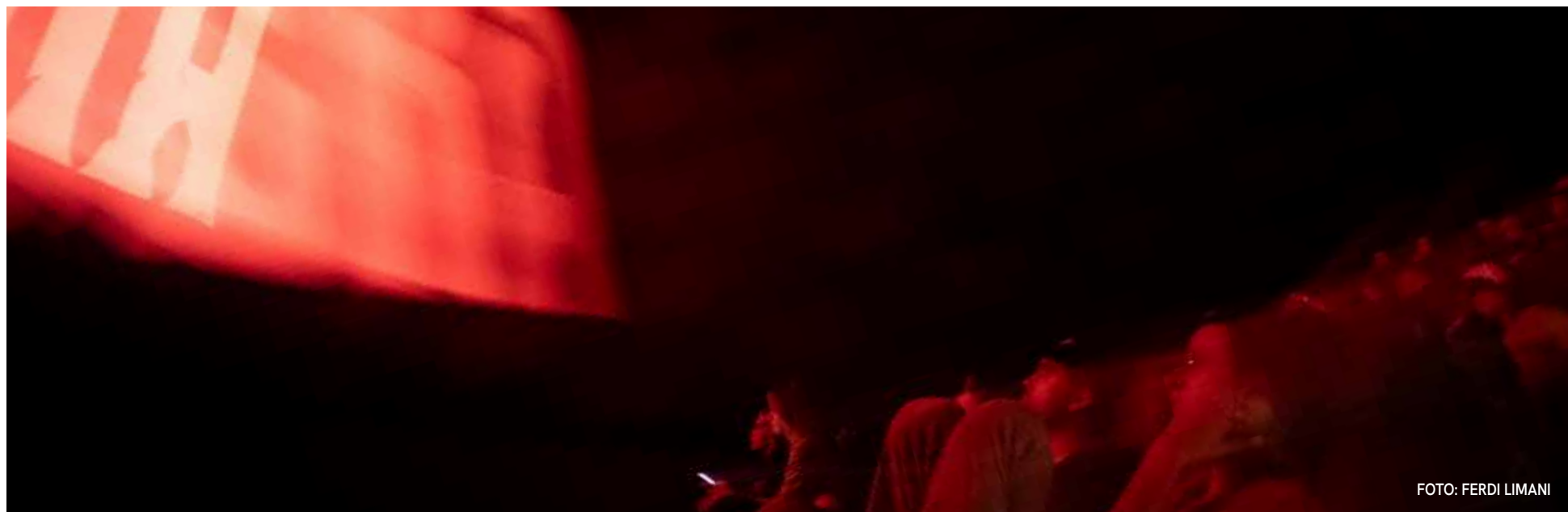


SONAR STAGE 22:30

INTERVIEW

Permanent Present

A conversation with Theo Panagopoulos



Meeting with directors is one of my favourite things, and today we have a special conversation for you. It is now a tradition to grab your coffee at Aca's, especially on a day like this, resembling a soulful morning, after a day of heavy rain. DokuDaily met Theo Panagopoulos, director of "The Flowers Stand Silently, Witnessing" competing in the International Short Dox Category in DokuFest. It is his first time in Prizren, and after a busy schedule from Glasgow to Tirana to Kosovo, we sit in at the coffee bar where we know what is going to happen. The Balkan intuition is on, the trucks that usually suffocate the narrow stone street, make their usual pauses and the conversation starts.

This Prizren coded scene is very familiar to him. Growing up in Greece gave him all the adaptability to conform with this setting. While talking in this semi-peaceful atmosphere, we talk about the competition, a curious theme that either unites or divides audiences but for Theo there is no need to compare. Directors can find themselves in different selections, and thinking about winning or losing adds nothing to the conversation that we should potentially have. In between shying away and thinking about documentaries in an industrial way, he finds himself in the middle or as he says: "It's a whole system of how, it makes the festival competitive to other festivals also. So, it's a whole industry in the way it works that way. But it's very nice to see how each festival does it in its own way. They also separate the documentaries from the fiction. And it's sometimes because documentaries also involve fiction. It feels like a bigger category, in my opinion, because it involves so many different types of films, like, either it's archive film or, like, hybrid film or observational and fiction tends to have its own formula, maybe a bit more. But, I actually just want to watch the films."

In his film "The Flowers Stand Silently, Witnessing", Theo had a curious moment of looking through the archives and finding a gem that would become the root of his film. He says that finding these archival footage of fields of flowers in Palestine was quite accidental. They just needed someone to look into them after sitting for more than 50 years in an archival room.

"I found this listing that said: Wildflowers of Palestine, somehow around the 1930s, 1940s but it wasn't, there was no image. And all the other films had images. But then, I reached out to them, and they didn't know they had that as well, those databases were created two decades before, and then people change all the time, and they don't really know they have it till someone tells them, oh, can I see this? It's still how it works."

Finding the footage shot by a Scottish missionary, with a hobby for capturing flowers on film, sparked a moment of reflection and a rooted interest in understanding his point of view. The director enunciates these as strikingly beautiful images but also very colonial and with a very British way of looking at things. And this is where the idea of reclaiming the footage as something that belonged to him. He applied at the Scottish Documentary Institute without actually knowing if this undeveloped footage would actually turn into something. And luckily it did. As he claims: "Just to find an archive around Palestine is so rare and so unique that there's an idea in it, there is value in it."

We talk more about how we can approach archives. Sometimes there is a sense of ownership, sometimes people project into them their own ideas. For Panagopoulos there is a sense of projections, but one can find also a sense of belonging. Especially because these materials are also history, but it is a history of the now, with what is happening in Palestine. The sense of ownership transforms into something personal, like finding your ancestors, some threads with a past that is being dismantled.

But in his film this historical material, this reality shifts into a poetic journey. And here is where fiction kicks in and melts the genre, building up for a very touching experience. Looking at how images can be manipulated today, approaching this archival material, required a level of attention as to create a sense of belonging and somehow in a way grieving. The director says: "I think you grieve anyway, and then you try to find a language through archives that translates that. I think this was the difficulty with the editing, because it needed to feel that way, also like I feel that way, but then the film needed to feel how I feel. The most difficult part was that I could have done hundreds of different films based on the same footage, with the same 45 minutes that I was working with. But then I knew that the film needed to translate how I'm feeling at the moment, while having immense grief for hundreds and thousands of people being killed."

The sense of nowness dissolves and repeats itself every time the film gets a screening. It lives in a permanent present that gets activated every day that something freshly horrible happens.

This film connects with time in a heartfelt and reflective way as to understand the history that is being erased, and there are ways to go and look back at it with a little bit of luck and curiosity.

You can see this film tomorrow, August 6, from 14:30 at the Small Hall at the House of Culture.

DOKUTALKS

Nobody's Buying Your Short: So What Now?



FOTO: GRESA NURIDINI

Monday's DokuTalks topic was aimed at helping creators and producers of short films, entitled "Nobody's Buying Your Short: So What Now?" Our panelists for the discussion were Laurent Crouzeix of the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival and Short Film Market, Theodoros Panagopoulos, filmmaker of 'The Flowers Stand Silently, Witnessing', Tam Dan Vu of 'TRAVELLING' short film distribution & sales and Sari Volanen, commissioning editor of short films at Yle (Finnish Broadcasting company). The topic was guided adeptly by Dea Gjinovci, our moderator.

Sari Volanen, who purchases short films for Finland television programming, gave an insider's view on what makes a successful short film. "I look for three main things when selecting a short film: relevance, power (it has to be touching), and values. However, everyone has their own criteria." She said she pays for films, but with a limited budget, and cannot buy many for her audience in Finland. Sari was asked how her audience has developed or grown in her decades in the film industry, she replied "Not much!", which elicited laughter from the room.

Laurent spoke about his festival in Clermont-Ferrand, and how they see many, many entries and have a lot to choose from in terms of numbers, but space and time are limited at his festival, so only a select few make the cut. He did mention that his festival is known for its catalogue of short films. This catalogue has become a valuable tool as a database and clearinghouse for short films, with other festivals and organizations showing the films they find useful or fitting in the catalogue, which gives the short film makers more exposure and a wider audience for their films.

All 4 panelists were asked what advice they would give to short film directors, and to those aspiring to create shorts. Tam stated that she asks short film directors "What is your goal? What are you trying to achieve? What does success mean to you?" She said that answering these questions, or at least considering them is important before starting a project. Sari stated "Try to be original, unique. But this is a hard thing to do, actually, because so many short films have been made. It's important to be passionate about what you are creating."

Tam echoed this sentiment, saying that "new short films should add to the discussion, add value and be worthwhile. It is not easy to create a good short film. Make it good!" A good point for our future filmmakers to consider! Many in the audience were aspiring or new short film directors, and had many thoughtful questions for the panel, such as questions about funding and distribution. The panelists said that short films don't have to be profitable, and this allows a certain level of freedom to follow a vision, but above all it needs to be interesting, and something that will hold an audience.

Dea said that DokuFest audiences have really enjoyed the short films at our festival, as there just are not that many avenues to see short films, especially on a large screen. She said audiences will naturally take a risk on a short, as it requires less time for them, and the subject of films can build excitement because they are often an unknown quantity.

Many filmmakers would agree that short films are harder to make, simply because there is less time to create depth, a character, a backstory. It takes less time to watch one, but they require a lot of skill to make well, so kudos to our short filmmakers for continuing to produce these projects.

Written by Scott Hoy

ON FILMS

Blast From The Past



FOTO: ELMEDINA ARAPI

Lumbardhi (Bistrica) Cinema, one of Dokufest's main venues, is currently undergoing restoration. In 2022, while celebrating the 70th anniversary of its opening, we digitized film screening lists we discovered in the Lumbardhi archives. We later conducted research on these films and curated the Blast From The Past program based on those listings.

Now in its fourth edition at Dokufest, Blast From The Past selects films each year that reflect the festival's main theme. This year, under the concept Endless Greed, Mental Void, we selected three films that express a strong criticism of the new world order, autocracy, manipulation, radicalization, and the leaders and systems that mock our intelligence. Despite being made in different times, each of these three films resonates deeply with today's political and social realities.

On August 2nd, we screened Nineteen Eighty-Four (1984), directed by Michael Radford and based on George Orwell's novel. As is well known, 1984 depicts not just physical, but also mental imprisonment: a state of psychological decay under constant surveillance and truth being rewritten endlessly. This cultivates a collective paranoia that undermines social sanity. It's not only a dystopia but also a call for political awareness and mental resistance.

On August 4th, we screened O-BI, O-BA: The End of Civilization, a reproach that came out of Poland in 1984. Like Piotr Szulkin's other works, this film offers a harsh critique of mental collapse and the exploitation of faith. It reveals how, after nuclear destruction, survivors are pacified with a fabricated myth of salvation—showing how mass trauma and helplessness corrode mental health. Claustrophobic spaces, decaying bodies, and a desperate wait emphasize that dystopia is not just political, but also psychological. Szulkin demonstrates how even hope can be weaponized by systems of control.

And finally, on August 8th, we will screen Lost Highway (1997), a film by the late master David Lynch, who passed away this year. Shaped by themes of trauma, guilt, and fragmented identity, the film sheds light on the repressed darkness of post-war American consciousness. The blurred lines between reality and dream, self and other, reflect not only individual, but also collective psychological collapse.

In an era marked by genocide in Gaza, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and an increasingly active nuclear arms race, the value of law is eroding and leader-worship is on the rise. Racism and fanaticism are being more openly endorsed, while ignorance grows with unprecedented confidence.

The three films featured in the Blast From The Past section, unfortunately, bear witness to the current state of our world.

Written by Bengi Muzbeg

REVIEWS

The Coriolis Effect (2025)



Did you know the Earth can breathe? It sure sounds like it’s breathing, even sighing, in this nature documentary filmed in Cape Verde islands. We get the sense that the earth is not only supporting us, but also watching us, as we scurry about, in our precious few seconds, like ants on a mission.

“If the Earth could speak, what would it tell us? Give me a little drop of water, just a little drop of water.” A young man is lamenting the lack of rain in Cape Verde. The irony is that although Cape Verde is surrounded by water, there are parts of the island in drought, desperately in need of rain.

This documentary is powerful because it not only has beautifully filmed nature and wildlife, but it captures human nature as well, as the locals seek to protect their land and beaches, but need to live as well. They need fish, rain, crops, and getting these is the eternal struggle with nature.

“In this archipelago, with the sea as the frontier on all sides, the wind and the clouds are the eternal travelers” says an old man who has watched the world and its forces from Cape Verde beaches. The wonder of nature causes him to wax philosophical: “Without a doubt, the planet is a profound being and we are visitors passing through.”

“Wind man, too much wind,” says one local. It can be hard to get comfortable on Planet Earth, especially if you are stuck outside. “We are here on a pilgrimage. Whether we like it or not, we’re on a pilgrimage. Our life is a pilgrimage. Whether we’re aware of it or not...everyone is on a pilgrimage.” Deep words, reminding us that life is short, we are visitors here.

The ending was touching, with some baby turtles being rescued from being stuck in ropes, and one turtle they named Jack. He makes it to the ocean, but only with help. A metaphor for life. Keep going. The ocean is out there somewhere, and it’s a big ocean. Hard to get to, but impossible to miss. And if someone offers you assistance, take it.

Deck 5B (2024)



This short film from Sweden shows us that ‘the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry’, as the famous poet reminds us. In this film, plans begin to change. Little Edvin is not going easily with his Mum on holiday. At the end, it looks like little Edvin’s non-cooperation has spoiled the day. He could not be made to agree, and now Mom is pissed. Mom puts him in the car, he has won this one, she won’t be taking a vacation with the new boyfriend, at least not today.

The film goes out to a happy Swedish tune about vacations, which is juxtaposed with her mood. She is sour, as her son did not cooperate with her vacation plans. The lyrics: “Come with me, say yes, not no...Here I come, now the party begins. It will be summer in Sweden again...Yes, a summer in Sweden again...” She was so close to having a good vacation, and we read the disappointment in her face. If you have kids, you know the feeling, faintly recall those less than perfect days. Sometimes your plans for a fun day, a happy family outing, can be ruined by the little monsters. C’est la vie!

DOKUNIGHTS

“Hello everybody. We are DakhaBrakha. From Free Ukraine.”

And so began last night’s incredible, ever-changing performance, as four phenomenal musicians (Marko Halanevych, Iryna Kovalenko, Olena Tsybulska, and Nina Garenetska—remember their names) took to the Sonar stage, decked out in traditional, ornate Ukrainian garb, wielding a powerful message of resistance in the face of tyranny.

A few friends asked me before the show how I’d describe DakhaBrakha’s music, and I always struggled to give an answer. I still do: the band term their style as ‘ethno-chaos’, mixing different instrumentals and melodies across cultures into a worldwide jam session, but that doesn’t quite do justice to their uncategorisable genre-flitting and incredible range. Initially beginning with an ominous onrush of harmonies, their performance transitioned from sweeping folk compositions to what they describe as ‘ethno-techno’ by way of mournful ballads and wonky scat. At one point you’re sipping coffee at a Parisian cafe, the next you’re jiving in a Bavarian bar, and then you’re slinking in the backstreets of a noir.

This diversity extended to the band’s mastery over a range of diverse instruments, including the cello, rhythmic hand drums, a twinkling keyboard, a series of tambourines, a bizarre device that mimics birdsong, and even that twangy mouth instrument nobody knows the name of. Only through DakhaBrakha will you dance to both an electric guitar and an accordion and it not come across as jarring—an eclecticism furthered by the band’s remarkable vocals on display. Halanevych swung from deep, raspy croons to heart-stopping falsetto, Garenetska offered up an energising flow caught between spoken word and rap, and Halanevych and Kovalenko each crafted gorgeous harmonies amid piercing, echoing shrieks.

HARMONIES FROM A FREE UKRAINE

Incredibly, this all felt seamless: regardless of DakhaBrakha’s chameleonic ability to shift in style and tempo, they keep a consistent throughline: heavenly vocal harmonies, toe-tapping instrumentation, and an emphasis on celebration as resistance. This latter element is important: by celebrating this cross-border mesh of cultures and styles, DakhaBrakha stand up to those who seek to homogenise—a potent political message reckoning with Russia’s invasion of their home country.

Shifting tempo to something more relaxed but no less contemplative and heartfelt, tonight, Ibadet Ramadani graces us with her presence once again, returning to Kosovo to share her folk-inflected self-titled album, aided by her band’s jazz-dappled melodies. Join us at Kalaja for a transportive experience that provides the perfect opportunity to sway, unwind, and lose yourself in her stirring songwriting and lush vocals.

Written by Gus Edgar-Chan



FOTO: LUCA STRIKA

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