

**A New Film by  
Jan Hřebejk and Petr Jarchovský**

# pupendo

**A Message to Future Generations!**

**Story by:** Petr Jarchovský **Based on:** Petr Šabach's books

**Screenwriter:** Petr Jarchovský **Director:** Jan Hřebejk

**Director of Photography:** Jan Malíř

**Music:** archives – period music, Oskar Petr, Marsyas, W. A. Mozart

**Sound:** Michal Holubec **Costume Designer:** Katarína Hollá

**Art Director:** Milan Býček **Editor:** Vladimír Barák

**Starring:** Boleslav Polívka, Jaroslav Dušek, Eva Holubová, Vilma Cibulková, Jiří Pecha,  
Pavel Liška, Boris Hybner, Bohumil Klepl, Zuzana Krónerová, Nikola Pešková,  
Lukáš Baborský, Matěj Nechvátal, Jan Drozda, Matěj Ruppert, Soňa Červená...

**Production by:** Total HelpArt T.H.A.

**Executive Producer:** Milan Kuchynka

**Producer:** Ondřej Trojan - Total HelpArt T.H.A.

**Coproducers:** Pavel Borovan, Jaroslav Kučera – Czech Television

**The film received a grant from the Czech State Fund for the Promotion and  
Development of Czech Cinematography**

**The film was realised in cooperation with Barrandov Studio**

**Release Date:** March 27, 2003

**Format:** (1:1,85), 122 min., 3.462m, Dolby Digital

[www.pupendo.com](http://www.pupendo.com)

**Fifteen years after the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, tens of thousands of people lived in exile. The country's western borders, guarded by Soviet troops, were closed. The cultural elite had their activities banned or were forced to collaborate with the communists. Václav Havel was in prison. There were only a handful of active dissidents. Most Czechoslovaks hated the regime, but learned to live with it. Elections were mandatory and candidates from one party were elected.**

### **Synopsis**

*Pupendo is an infantile ritual performed by small children. A metal coin is used for this little bit of torture, where no real danger exists, to cause a bit of pain and then the mark left on the stomach is bragged about...*

In this new film – a bittersweet comedy by the creators of **Cosy Dens** and **Divided We Fall**, we again travel back in time, finding ourselves on the cusp of Orwell's fateful 1984; a time when history in the Czech lands flows just as slowly as the muddy water of the Vltava River. The generation of the 1968 Prague Spring, who remember the violent end to freedom brought by the Soviet occupation, find their lives flowing through their fingers like the river's water and their former ideals covered by its mud. A time, when the air was stuffy and musty, just like the blind corridors and meanders of this central European river. The main character of **Pupendo** is sculptor Bedřich Mára, who lives with his wife, Alena, a potter, and his two sons, Matěj and Bobeš in a small apartment on Prague's river bank. For political reasons, he was forced to leave his job as the head of a studio at Prague's Academy of Art several years beforehand. His work is banned from being exhibited and he is deliberately overlooked for lucrative orders. His fishing rod is his companion during his lonely moments of contemplation...

The exact opposite of Bedřich's atypical family is the family of elementary school principal Míla Břeček. Comrade Míla and his ambitious wife Magda, who went to the Academy of Art with Bedřich Mára, swim in the main stream, in the center of the current. They collaborate with the communist system, which they denounce in private, but which they support through their actions. They rationalize their behavior using the traditional reasoning of the time, "Why should I just tread water, when everyone else is swimming freestyle?"

There is also a generation of older children besides the generation of parents, who are doomed to chasing after their piece of the pie. This generation of teenagers has its own opinions about their parents' efforts and beliefs. They don't believe in a change for the better and don't expect much from their parents' efforts, killing their time by dreaming of trips outside the everyday.

A famous Czech song says that everyone eventually reaches the ocean, some sooner and some later. Our heroes eventually reach that "ocean" together and after the season, although this is only the popular central European substitute for the ocean, Hungary's Balaton, which is laid out over the never-ending Hungarian plain...

**Pupendo** is related to **Cosy Dens** in its bitter comedic exaggerated storytelling based on a gradually intensifying series of comedic scenes which are not dependent on the realities of the time. **Pupendo**, in its attention to the gallery of various types of people, transcends into the present day because when conditions and contexts change, inner values and dilemmas, the same as generational conflicts, are eternal. The film is based on paradoxical situations, whose poetry, truth and humor is dependent on excellent work with actors. This was the case in all of the previous original films from director Hřebejk and screenwriter Jarchovský and **Pupendo**, with top Czech actors taking part, is no exception.

Petr Jarchovský

## About Pupendo

The environment into which the story of Mára and his family is set plays an important stylistic role in our film. In the center of Prague's industrial periphery of working-class districts, next to the harbor, exists, even today, an almost untouched area that seems as though it were an island in the stream. Beset on all sides by the Vltava River, this enclave exists almost without time and place, a sort of eye of the industrial storm that surrounds it. The island is built up with little wooden shacks of a gardening colony, surrounded by their gardens the size of larger handkerchiefs, playgrounds, tennis courts, little pubs, a dilapidated swimming area and a poetically faded boathouse with a canoe landing, all under the arches of ageless weeping willows, above which the ramparts of the city can be imagined.

This is where the lead character's studio is located. The fact that it is on an island, in a sort of strange village in the middle of a metropolis, symbolizes the spiritual state typical for the time; an inner isolation from the outside world, an inner emigration into one's own private life, a forced calm without ambition. And even this inner space is penetrated by the period and presents our hero with a Faustian temptation. I believe that this unique framework creates a most interesting backdrop for the resulting poetry of our film.

Another fundamental stylistic element of Pupendo and our previous films is my work with certain types of actors. I work with a more or less constant ensemble, that I am tied to not only because of the respect I hold for their experience, abilities and authority, but also human empathy, respect for their worldviews and similar views on experiences that enrich our cooperation. I work with a specific type of actor. Authors, whose nature is to add their own creative potential into the original material whereby the result becomes more than the sum of its parts. We write our material in such a way as to layout a playing field for this type of actor in order to give space to their own invention and imagination; for a mutual expedition into their own approaches to intelligent humor.

I see humor in our films as a poetic element; as a method of sharing often bitter common and personal fates; as a method of original cinematic storytelling. Just as in my previous films *Cosy Dens* and *Divided We Fall*, **Boleslav Polívka** (probably the most interesting phenomenon of Czech cinema in the last twenty years) and **Jaroslav Dušek** (one of the most original actors that Czech theater has ever seen) appear in the lead roles. Both these individuals have created some of their greatest roles in my films: Polívka as the Uncle in *Cosy Dens* and the role of Josef Čížek in the Oscar nominated *Divided We Fall*; Dušek used his surprising energy to enhance the roles of the obsequious teacher Saša in *Cosy Dens* and then especially the role of Czech-German Horst Prohazka in *Divided We Fall*.

**Eva Holubová**, who used her authenticity and sensitivity to sculpt the role of single mother Eva in *Cosy Dens*, and **Vilma Cibulková** with whom I have worked in Prague's Pod Palmovkou theater in Laclos's and Hampton's *Dangerous Relationships* and Woody Allen's *Bullets Over Broadway*, were cast in the female roles.

The role of the tempter Fábera was played by **Jiří Pecha**, Polívka's long-time original theater collaborator and a unique type of actor and comedian, whose deep personal contribution helped to create the role of the cowardly neighbor Šimáček in *Divided We Fall*.

As in *Cosy Dens*, the basic ensemble is completed by young adult and child actors, who were chosen after broad and rigorous auditions.

An interesting moment was the casting of a hearing impaired fifteen-year old in the role of the teenager Matěj. I believe that his handicap cannot be replaced by acting and the disarming honesty of his performance only proved this decision to be correct.

In *Pupendo*, just as in *Divided We Fall*, we used a hand camera even for static scenes. This method, extremely difficult for the cameraman, is liberating for not only the actors, but also adds flexibility to the filming process. This is enabled by cooperation with cameraman **Jan Malíř**, who has been behind the camera for all of my films. The use of this stylistic element has proven itself and allows for the possibility of mobility of the actors and

the camera and enhances my style of work with the actors which rests in filming entire scenes with long overlaps that gives the actors freedom of movement and improvisation, helps maintain tension in filming sequences and build up individual scenes. It also allows actors to offer new and innovative solutions, bring ideas and better understand their characters in individual scenes. The filming itself is preceded by long and intense rehearsals that save time and material during the filming itself. This method, either in exteriors or in the studio, uses contact sound, just as in my previous films.

The selection of archive and period music, which is an intrinsic part of my films, takes place at the same time as writing versions of the script and preparations for filming which helps provide the unique atmosphere of the period. We were able to find very interesting and high-quality recordings of bands and singer-songwriters that could not be released officially at the time and that could be used in the film after being technically processed. This is music that influenced our entire generation which we would like to honor and provides a breath of freedom into the stuffy atmosphere of the "normalized" Czechoslovakia in the 1980s.

Our hero, Bedřich Mára is a sculptor and we often find ourselves in his studio amongst his works. He is a talented artist who is a master of sculpting figures. He is not, however, a member of the avant-garde or a solitary artist with a deep personal style. We searched for this type of artist who in the past would have been exposed to the same temptation that our hero is subject to. An exceptional and respected artist whose own talent and conservative approach to the creative process of realistic sculptures exposed him to the pressures of the period more than the creator of abstract sculptures or installations.

In former Prague Academy of Visual Arts professor Stanislav Hanzík, we found an artist whose works cover the repertoire of our hero and whose own fate has known the peaks and valleys that we describe in our film. Stanislav Hanzík not only provided his own works for the needs of our film, but, what is most important, created the statues that Bedřich Mára works on in all their phases of realization and aided as a consultant during the actual filming.

The film itself was realized in August and September of 2002 in Prague's exteriors and in the studio, with one filming session taking place at Hungary's Balaton. The crew was made up of experienced professionals whom I have worked with on previous films. The production foundation was once again provided by Ondřej Trojan, Total HelpArt T.H.A.

**Jan Hřebejk – Director**

### **AN INTERVIEW WITH JAN HŘEBEJK**

**You were close to an Oscar with *Divided We Fall*. Did something change in your style of work or in your personal life?**

An Oscar, in spite of all that it means, is a bit of lottery. The difference lies in that everyone knows what an Oscar is, even people who are not interested in film, in contrast to all other prestigious film awards. Just a nomination brings a certain satisfaction.

I personally have *Divided We Fall* connected with the fact that it was not easy to produce. If *Big Beat* was more or less a warmly accepted debut, *Cosy Dens* had great success with filmgoers and brought us popularity, *Divided We Fall*, in connection with the Oscar nomination, gave us a dose of seriousness.

**Are you a director who gives actors freedom?**

Because actors are what carries the film's story, we rehearse even before we write the final script. In this, I try to be open, but it has to stay at that "try." It can be said that we very carefully prepare, then greatly improvise and finally arrive at the result planned for in the script.

**You worked with on the script with Petr Jarchovský again. How does your creative cooperation work?**

First, we decide what story we want to tell, what direction we want to go. Our cooperation is very close in this phase. We decide which scenes will be key. I bring practical things to the script, such as avoiding long parts without dialogue or avoiding long passages of the story happening at night and so on. And Petr writes. Ninety-nine percent of the dialogues are the result of his work. Many people ask me how much of a particular scene was developed by actors. Sometimes that is the case, but the truly brilliant dialogues are Petr's, for example in *Pupendo* it is the eleven-minute scene with the Voice of America, which was filmed almost word for word as Petr wrote it. Petr also participates in the filming, is often in the editing room and also helps with the music selection.

**The characters in *Pupendo* are very different from those in *Cosy Dens*, no heroic dissidents or convinced communists ...**

They're broken. The end of the sixties was a culturally and politically tense era so its protagonists were more dramatic than people at the beginning of the eighties. No one can call this period a highlight of our history. In *Pupendo*, we are not working with fringe characters or situations, be they social or personal.

### **AN INTERVIEW WITH BOLESLAV POLÍVKA**

**This is your third film with Jan Hřebejk following *Cosy Dens* and *Divided We Fall*. How was it?**

I don't want to say that it was business as usual, although that would probably be the most concise... But it is probably good that people work together over a longer period of time... I always believe theaters that are made up of people who are willing and able to cooperate with one another, they want to do such a thing, and something similar happened here, although it is rare in the film world... The same group may work on different parts, but not much has to be said because everyone more or less knows... I like that. In short I would say

that this was hunting in a wolf pack. On top of that, it can't be said what was the best because each film is completely different.

**Is director Hřebejk open to your improvisations when filming, or does he stick to the script? What ideas of yours are in the film?**

I don't think that it can be said like that... But a good director, and Jan Hřebejk is one, is a sort of fine screen, and I always say that the finer that this screen is, the better. It lets through only the things that are appropriate. He is open to improvisation when it is good for the film.

Many of the finest things that were created here happened with my youngest son in the film. You can suggest some things to a child, but he will react spontaneously so therefore the real improvisation was with him.

**Pupendo's slogan is "A Message to Future Generations." What is yours?**

It is simple: Don't let one's inner freedom to be taken away. And if I want to say it seriously, than I say it differently: Not to let yourself be shit on and follow the beautiful surrealistic saying, "It is forbidden to forbid."

## AN INTERVIEW WITH JAROSLAV DUŠEK

**Following Cosy Dens and Divided We Fall, this is your third film with Jan Hřebejk. How was this third project?**

Excellent. I think that cooperation with him is always good because Jan Hřebejk is an open person. This means that he is easy to work with and that he doesn't have some sort of stubborn vision, but that things are created together. He also has the good fortune that he has a good crew and that a person feels good with those people.

**Is director Hřebejk open to your improvisations when filming, or does he stick to the script?**

In those films, I can't remember who did what. Improvisation starts at rehearsals before filming even starts, then there is improvisation during the filming. Screenwriter Petr Jarchovský is usually there and he approves our ideas and that is how this beautiful collective work comes together.

I like it when I don't have to think about who made up what later, I basically don't think about it. Whether its Petr Jarchovský, or Boleslav, Eva, Vilma, Jiří Pecha, myself, basically everyone contributes something and that is something very pleasant.

**Pupendo's slogan is "A Message to Future Generations." What is yours?**

That's what I'd like to know, too. I'm curious about that, because I can't predict like that. I'm more interested in how people will react to it.

"Of course, communists are bastards." That's what I say in the film, and now I can't recall it exactly. "Communism is garbage and Bolsheviks are bastards." That is the message for future generations that Boleslav and I sign and wall in.

**JAN HŘEBEJK**, Film, Television and Theater Director, Screenwriter

**PETR JARCHOVSKÝ**, Film and Television Writer and Script Editor

**Petr Jarchovský** (\*1966) and **Jan Hřebejk** (\*1967) studied together at the Prague Academic Gymnasium and studied at the school of screenwriting and dramatic art at the Film and Television Academy of Musical Arts between 1987 and 1991.

Jan Hřebejk directed and produced his first two films during his studies: **EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX AND ARE AFRAID TO EXPERIENCE** (1988) and **YEAR 1948** (1989). In television production, he then directed his first short film **DON'T DO ANYTHING UNLESS YOU HAVE A GOOD REASON** (1991), all according to the scripts of his fellow student, Petr Zelenka. The films caught the eye of critics and viewers alike and many awards at student film festivals.

Petr Jarchovský debuted with the script to one of the stories in the **NON-MYSTERIOUS STORIES** series directed by another fellow student, director Igor Chaun.

Jarchovský and Hřebejk then wrote the script to a generational comedy set in a communist youth organization summer camp. The film **LET US SING A SONG** (1990) was also the feature film debut of director and current producer Ondřej Trojan.

In 1992, Jan Hřebejk directed a television adaptation of his own final thesis based on Egon Hostovský's novel **CHARITY BALL**.

**BIG BEAT**, an original feature musical comedy set at the end of the 1950s dealing with the birth of rock 'n' roll in the Czech lands premiered in 1993. Petr Jarchovský wrote the script based on the short stories of Petr Šabach, Jan Hřebejk made his feature film debut as director and respected cinematographer Jan Malíř was behind the camera. The film was a hit with moviegoers and received many prestigious awards, including the Czech Lion (given out by the Czech Film and Television Academy) for Best Director, Best Actor for Josef Abrhám, Best Original Music for Ivan Hlas and Best Film of 1993. Hřebejk together with Malíř then realized a children's television series titled **WHERE STARS ARE FALLING** in 1996, which was purchased in many European countries.

Another success for the duo Jarchovský - Hřebejk was the non-tradition approach to three original short stories for the **BACHELORS** television series which earned them the prestigious award for contribution to television production for 1997 given out by the Film and Television Association and the Literary Fund.

The creators of **BIG BEAT** formed a good creative-realizational team that then met again on the extremely successful **COSY DENS** (1999) and then again in **DIVIDED WE FALL** (2000), which was awarded five Czech Lions (Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actor and Best Actress), an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film, was an Official Selection of the 2001 Sundance Film Festival, a series of awards at international film festivals and was played in theaters practically around the world.

Director Jan Hřebejk also realizes a number of smaller works including music videos, commercials and documentaries.

In 1997, he debuted as a theater director with the play **DANGEROUS RELATIONS** by Christopher Hampton with Vilma Cibulková in the lead role. He also directed a theater version of Woody Allen's **BULLETS OVER BROADWAY** and a theater version of **AMADEUS**.

Screenwriter Petr Jarchovský currently teaches at the school of screenwriting and dramatic art at the Film and Television Academy of Musical Arts. In 1998, his book *Divided We Fall* was published by the Paseka publishing house and then adapted for the silver screen.

His script for the feature film **ZELARY** is currently being filmed by director and producer Ondřej Trojan which will premier in September of 2003.

The **Jarchovský – Hřebejk** duo has two feature film scripts currently prepared for realization: **LOOP THE LOOP** (original idea by Petr Jarchovský and Jan Hřebejk, screenplay

by Petr Jarchovský) and **I SERVED THE ENGLISH KING** (screenplay by Petr Jarchovský adapted from the novel by Bohumil Hrabal).

**PRODUCERS:**

**Ondřej Trojan - Total HelpArt T.H.A. film company**

**Feature films:**

**Cosy Dens**, directed by Jan Hřebejk, production by Total HelpArt, produced by Total HelpArt and Czech Television, 1999

**Divided We Fall**, directed by Jan Hřebejk, production by Total HelpArt, produced by Total HelpArt and Czech Television, 2000

**Out Of The City**, directed by Tomáš Vorel, production by Total HelpArt, produced by Vorel film, Czech Television and Total HelpArt, 2000

**Cruel Joys**, directed by Juraj Nvota, production by Alef Film and Media Group, produced by Alef Film (Slovak Republic), Slovak Television (Slovak Republic), Total HelpArt and Czech Television, 2002

**Pupendo**, directed by Jan Hřebejk, production by Total HelpArt, produced by Total HelpArt and Czech Television, 2003

**Zelary**, directed by Ondřej Trojan, production by Total HelpArt, produced by Total HelpArt, Barrandov Studio, Czech Television, Dor Film (Austria) and Alef Film and Media Group (Slovak Republic), scheduled release September 2003

**Loop the Loop**, directed by Jan Hřebejk, production by Total HelpArt, shooting autumn 2003

**Pavel Borovan – Czech Television**

**Feature films:**

**Saturnin**, directed by Jiří Věřčák, 1994

**King Ubu**, directed by F.A. Brabec, 1996

**Cosy Dens**, directed by Jan Hřebejk, 1999

**Divided We Fall**, directed by Jan Hřebejk, 2000

**Out Of The City**, directed by Tomáš Vorel, 2000

**Cruel Joys**, directed by Juraj Nvota, 2002

**Pupendo**, directed by Jan Hřebejk, 2003

**Zelary**, directed by Ondřej Trojan, scheduled release September 2003

**Jaroslav Kučera – Czech Television**

**Feature films:**

**Escape to Budín**, directed by Miloslav Luther, 2002

**Girle**, directed by Benjamin Tuček, 2002

**Cruel Joys**, directed by Juraj Nvota, 2002

**Small Town**, directed by Jan Kraus, 2003

**Forest Walkers**, directed by Ivan Vojnár, 2003

**Pupendo**, directed by Jan Hřebejk, 2003

**Zelary**, directed by Ondřej Trojan, scheduled release September 2003

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