

Rebel, Rebel, Rebel: Bowie, Cohen and Iggy Pop Take Center Stage at Beat Film Festival

Intimate portraits of rock legends, a hedonistic Warsaw docudrama and a bold art project starring Cate Blanchett top the bill this year

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The Russian premiere of 'David Bowie: The Last Five Years' is the highlight of the festival. **BEAT FILM FESTIVAL**

Moscow's annual Beat Film Festival is something of an eclectic beast, encompassing documentaries on a variety of topics from musicians' biographies and unlikely rave chronicles, to architecture and the urban environment. But music remains at the heart of the program, which Russian critics have rated highly for its focus on telling the stories of contemporary electronic artists.

Nastya Gulenkova, communications manager of the Beat Film Festival, hails the caliber of the

films at this year's event. The festival, which runs from May 25 to June 4, includes a landmark biography of the last years of musical shape-shifter David Bowie, a political "film installation" starring Cate Blanchett and what Gulenkova describes as an "astonishing film" about the Arabian aristocracy in Qatar.

Each year Beat presents new movies about contemporary culture, with organizers generally selecting films that have been released within the past two years and have never been screened in Russia before.

This year the team have made a few exceptions, though — "Bird on a Wire," a film about Leonard Cohen, was shot in 2010, and "Hype," a grunge-era documentary, dates back to early 1996. All films, except for the national competition program (in Russian) and "The Challenge," are screened in English with Russian subtitles, with some to be shown more than once.

The opening movie is one of the sensations of last year's Sundance film festival — the hedonistic yet melancholic "All These Sleepless Nights," which earned director Mikael Marczak a World Cinema Directing Award at the U.S. festival in the Documentary category. In a spellbinding manner characteristic of Terrence Malick, the film follows the present-day generation of 20-somethings in their constant movement between dusk and dawn, club and apartment, boredom and agony.

Occupying a place somewhere between feature and documentary, the film stars Marczak's friends, who play themselves as they seek adventure amid the vibrant nightlife of the Polish capital. The plot revolves around two young roommates from Warsaw, for whom life is just a reckless game until one falls in love with the other's ex-girlfriend, sending one of the protagonists into a spiral of one-night-stands and drug abuse. The film will be introduced by Marczak himself.

On May 26 the director will explore the topic in more depth during a discussion in English at Strelka (registration in advance): Marczak will talk about working with the hybrid genre of documentary and feature film, and why he enlisted his friends for a movie with a script just eight pages long.

From mainstream to underground

Contemporary art is represented at the festival by "The Challenge," a film about the exotic lifestyles of Qatar's rich kids, and the art blockbuster "Manifesto," in which Cate Blanchett recites the major artistic manifestos of the 20th century in the role of 13 different characters.

Several movies are dedicated to electronic music and its influence on audiences across the world. "Give Me The Future: Major Lazer in Cuba" is a documentary about an open-air

concert on the Caribbean island attended by half a million people last spring that shows there is no vast difference between youth culture in Cuba and the U.S. Meanwhile, “Raving Iran” uncovers the underground electronic scene in Tehran.

Two of the films are dedicated to rock ‘n’ roll greats. In “To Stay Alive: A Method,” Iggy Pop, who has just turned 70, reads Michel Houellebecq’s essay “To Stay Alive,” a lyrical and sincere manifesto about madness, survival and art — and recognizes himself in it. “Leonard Cohen: Bird on a Wire” is dedicated to the late poet and musician’s European tour of 1972.

Meanwhile, “Shot! The Psycho-Spiritual Mantra of Rock” offers an insight into the mind of an outstanding rock photographer. It tells the story of Mick Rock, the man behind iconic pictures of David Bowie, Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, Blondie and Queen.

The festival will be closed by the Russian premiere of “David Bowie: The Last Five Years,” the new landmark film produced and directed by Francis Whately as a follow-up to his acclaimed “David Bowie: Five Years” (2013). The new piece will feature a wealth of rare and unseen archive footage and early audio interviews never previously released. This includes the original vocal track that Bowie recorded for “Lazarus,” his last album, which has never been heard before.

The film tells the story behind the making of the albums “The Next Day” and “Blackstar,” along with the accompanying videos. It also sheds light on the Broadway production of the Bowie musical “Lazarus” and the blockbuster Bowie exhibition in London’s V&A Museum — Bowie’s final artistic campaign. The film will be only screened once. Entrance is free, however, special registration rules apply as the organizers have partnered with Rocketbank to present the movie.

The full program of the Beat Film Festival can be found on the official [website](#).

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