

## Document Citation

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# VOJTECH JASNÝ

Vojtech Jasny, considered by many critics as the best of the first generation of Czechoslovakian directors to emerge after the war, had a tremendous influence on the Czech new wave of the 1960s. His 1958 feature *Desire* has been described as 'the first real *auteur* film in Czech cinema' (Mira and Antonin Liehm) and his experimental and social ideas had a wide influence on younger directors. His 1963 film *That Cat* won a Special Jury Prize at the Cannes Festival and was widely acclaimed for its technical imaginativeness. In 1969 he won the Best Director Prize at Cannes for his masterpiece, *All My Good Countrymen*, which Czech critics also voted as the outstanding film of the year. If he is relatively less known to British filmgoers today, it is because none of his films is currently in distribution in Britain and the films he has made in Germany and Austria since 1970 have hardly been shown here at all, except for *The Clown* in the 1976 London Film Festival. This retrospective of most of his available work will give

British audiences a real opportunity to assess his career.

Jasny was born in Moravia in 1925 and was among the first and most important graduates from FAMU, the great Prague film school. He worked together with director Karel Kachyna from 1951 to 1956 and all but one of his Czech films were shot by the brilliant Czech cameraman Jaroslav Kucera. He first attracted international attention in 1958 with his second solo feature, *Desire*, which revealed his deep sense of poetry and pictorial imagination. He left Czechoslovakia in 1970 and worked mostly in West German television until 1975 when he returned to the cinema with *The Clown*, an adaptation of a novel by Heinrich Böll. He has since made other features in West Germany and Austria, continuing his interest in imaginative experiment. His later films, usually shot by British cameraman Walter Lassally, have a continuing theme of people attempting to return to their roots to learn about themselves, revisiting the scenes of their childhood in their homeland. — Ken Wlaschin.



Thu 19 Jul  
8.45

**Desire**  
(Touha)

*Desire* was the film that first made Jasny famous, a delicate and sensitive four-part examination of feelings at different ages, that led critics to describe him as a poet of the cinema. In the first story a child starts to mature with the arrival of a baby sister, in the second a young girl experiences her first love affair, in the third a peasant woman resists collectivisation and in the last an old woman teacher dies as her son's wife expects a baby. It was an enormously important film for Czechoslovakia at the time and contains the roots of many of Jasny's later films.  
Czechoslovakia 1959/With Jana Brejchova.



Fri 20 Jul  
8.45

### That Cat

(Az Příklad  
Kocour)

A delightfully lavish fantasy about a magic circus cat who arrives in a small town with a magician (Jan Werich) to expose deceit and hypocrisy. The cat has the ability to change people's colour to reveal their concealed vices so that for example liars turn violet and thieves become grey. Brilliantly photographed by Jaroslav Kucera, who utilised painting on film and other devices to obtain the special effects, *That Cat* was screened at several international film festivals (Cannes, Locarno, London) and won many prizes for its imaginative combination of poetry and satire. Czechoslovakia 1963.



Sat 21 Jul  
6.15 8.30

### Pipes

(Dymky)

Jasny's first big international film, shot partially in England and Austria and based on stories by Ilya Ehrenburg, is a three-episode satire on the man-woman relationship that includes many imaginative technical devices. The first story concerns an actor in the American silent cinema whose jealousy leads him to murder, as he confuses life and film. The second parodies *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, with an English Lord losing his young wife to a gamekeeper. Finally *St Hubert's Pipe*, the funniest of the stories, satirises *Heimatschmerz* with an over-romantic tale about a couple in the Austrian mountains. Czechoslovakia-Austria 1966.



Mon 23 Jul  
Tues 24 Jul  
6.00 8.30

### All My Good Countrymen

(Všichni Dobří Rodáci)

Jasny won the Best Director Award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1969 for this film which was also voted by Czech critics as the outstanding film of 1968. It relates happenings in a small Moldavian village over the period 1945-1968, mixing satire, drama and comedy with irony, with brilliant photography by Jaroslav Kucera and fine ensemble acting. It begins with children playing with firearms at the end of World War II and follows the village as it changes as the result of socialism and collectivisation. By the end of the film Jasny has created a lyrical epic in social realist form. Czechoslovakia 1968-9. Plus 1969 short *Czech Rhapsody*.

16 min  
Eng. titles

224



Not available  
for season

### Alexander März, The Schizophrenic Poet

(Alexander März, der  
schizophrene  
Dichter)

Jasny worked in German TV after leaving Czechoslovakia in 1970 and won the Prix d'Italia and a number of German prizes for this film. Based on an original screenplay by Heinar Kipphardt, it is the story of a 38-year-old German named Alexander März whose past life is slowly revealed from the Nazi period and World War II through to the present. The film parallels events happening to März and to Germany. West Germany 1974.



Thu 26 Jul  
6.30

**The Clown**  
(Ansichten eines Clowns)

35 min  
Eng. titles

*The Clown* is based on a famous 1963 novel by Heinrich Böll, a biting satire on the Catholic Church, and marked the beginning of Jasny's collaboration with the great British cameraman Walter Lassally. The story of the film covers one afternoon in the life of Hans Schnier, a professional clown but also a bitter existentialist and an aggressive loner with a hatred of Catholicism. He returns to Bonn where he grew up and the visit brings back memories of his childhood, his youthful first and last great love affair and his conflict with his parents. West Germany 1975.



Sat 28 Jul  
6.15 8.30

**Escape Attempt**  
(Fluchtversuch)

35 min  
Eng. titles

*Escape Attempt*, again photographed by Walter Lassally with a screenplay by Jasny and Austrian writer Walter Wippersberg, based on Wippersberg's novel, is the story of a 13-year-old Yugoslavian boy whose father and brothers are 'guest workers' employed as masons in Vienna. The boy dislikes Vienna and wants to return to his native village to escape from the lonely life he is leading. He decides to hitchhike home without passport or money along one of the most rugged roads in Europe. West Germany 1976-7.



Mon 30 Jul  
6.15 8.30

**Return**  
(Rückkehr)

Eng. titles  
35 min

Jasny's first Austrian film, shown at the Cannes and Montreal festivals in 1978, has an original screenplay by Jasny and consists of two stories about old men. *The Return of an Old Gentleman*, starring Burgtheater actor Attila Horbiger, focuses on an 80-year-old grandfather returning to the scene of his childhood on Christmas Day. *My Deceased Uncle* tells the story of a warm friendship between a boy of 15 and his highly cultured 60-year-old uncle who subsequently dies. Austria 1977.



Tue 31 Jul  
6.15 8.30

**Metamorphoses/ Impressions of Herbert von Karajan**

*Metamorphoses — Trees, Birds, Men* (West Germany 1975-77) is a 45 minute pictorial study written and photographed by Jasny himself without dialogue or commentary. *Impressions of Herbert von Karajan* (Impressionen über Herbert von Karajan West Germany-GB 1977/78) is a 60-minute documentary film made for TV to mark the 70th birthday of conductor Herbert von Karajan.