

actors in general have a long focal lens, while prey usually have a wide focal lens.

Chmielewski: The mouth can move a little bit, and that's all. Even with a minimum of facial expression, you can still read the emotions from the crab's body language.

It's not only about the eyes but also about the ears.

Piotr Kubiak (Sound): Piotr found it important to use original sounds that we created ourselves, instead of finding them in a sound library. And he forbade the use of dead animals, not even for Foley purposes. For a fish slapping its tail in the frying pan, we couldn't use a dead fish, so we used a banana instead. Bananas were allowed!

What did you use for the sound of bubbling water?

Kubiak: Bubbles! The problem was with the synchronisation. After we recorded the bubbles, I uploaded those sounds in my sampler and then onto a keyboard. Whenever we needed bubbles, I recreated them through the keys of the piano. At first we thought that was funny, but we needed so many of them that after a while I got totally grumpy with Piotr.

There is one particular sound that sent shivers down my spine. The film starts vaguely with a crab crawling around, and then suddenly... the striking of a match. That's when you know we're in a horror movie.

Chmielewski: We create tension, but there isn't much brutality to be seen in CRAB. It's not a vegan propaganda film. It's all about taking the perspective of the crab, not about making people feel guilty about eating it. Being inside the crab's head for eight minutes creates a certain empathy - you imagine how it would feel to be a different kind of being.

We met on an earlier occasion when the project in an early stage was pitched at the Visegrad animation forum, nowadays called CEE animation forum.

Kubiak: Piotr's pitch made a deep impression; the crowd seemed to totally believe in his project and everyone wanted to get him on board. As an award I offered him five work days in my Polish sound studio and my producer Wojciech Leszczynski offered him to produce the animation. CEE has been a crucial element in the creation of this film.

—
Gert Hermans

Elvira Dulaskaia about ICE BREAK

"It's impossible to find properly fitting hockey wear"

Alex is the only girl in a boys ice-hockey team, coached by her dad. He treats Alex like one of the boys, both on the ice and at home. With her short haircut and a body shaped through years of hockey training, Alex is a tough player, and that is how the world is treating her. But now that she falls in love with one of her teammates, this perception starts to bother her.

With the ice hockey arena as a battleground, I was surprised to find tenderness in a place where I mainly expected machismo.

Elvira Dulaskaia: Alex pretends to be tough, but she is actually a tender girl. Even when acting like one of the boys, cracking jokes, she feels different inside. That creates an inner conflict. What if you're doing everything to fit in, but still feel like an outsider? That is what ICE BREAK is all about.

Is an ice hockey locker room just

the same as any other sports locker rooms?

Dulaskaia: Ice hockey is all about teamwork; relationships within the team are of an utter importance. These relations are deepened after the game, inside the locker room. As strict as the discipline is on the ice, there players can unleash their stress. At the same time it is a very competitive, conflictual environment.

Especially when you have your father as a coach. Fathers and children in the same sports arena is seldom a good idea.

Dulaskaia: The main reason why Alex can be in the boys' team is because of her father; she is not treated like all the others, but neither is she treated like his daughter on the ice. For Alex this is very confusing. We had a stunt double on set who was in the same situation; I learned a lot from her.





The physical distance between father and daughter on the screen reflects their emotional distance.

Dulskaia: At first they're not used to having physical contact, not more like a friendly tap on the shoulder, just like with the boys in the team. But later on there is a motion, a gesture with her head to which he answers. That's a big achievement, and things can only get better from then on.

There is this scene of a girl looking in the mirror, and something changes inside her...

Dulskaia: That's my favourite scene! She is preparing for the game, but besides being a player she is also a girl,

the pretty girl that she sees in the mirror. For Alex it is a big achievement to simply see herself like that. Ice hockey is a tough masculine high-contact sport. In the Czech Republic, there aren't enough female junior teams, so girls often play with boys. Speaking with female players, I was fascinated by the inner conflict they faced by being accepted as one of them, but not as a "proper" female. Every girl playing ice hockey will at least once go through a phase of frustration, when she realises it's impossible to find properly fitting hockey wear.

Are teenage years just about surviving endless loneliness, or is there

more than that?

Dulskaia: Since no one understands you, it is indeed a time of loneliness, but sports can help you, like it helped me too. As a slalom snowboarder, I was the only girl among boys performing a tough sport, and many problematic situations that I encountered helped me to grow up.

Your producer Julietta Sichel also produced THE PACK, a feature film about hockey. Did you benefit from her earlier experience?

Dulskaia: We met when I was consulting her about her contacts and experiences, but then she liked the script and took us on board. We also consulted THE PACK's director Tomas Polensky and the DoP, which for our inexperienced students team was a great help.

How challenging was that technical part?

Dulskaia: The extras were hockey players from the Brno team and we had body doubles for some scenes that required more hockey skills. But there were other difficulties: the film was shot in the middle of the COVID pandemic so every day we worried about crew members falling ill. And we only had limited time on the ice; those were tough negotiations!

From now on you have bigger plans to focus on...

Dulskaia: ICE BREAK was my graduation film, now I'll start preparing my first feature. Short films often elaborate on one specific situation, you have to dedicate yourself to micro-elements. The feature format allows me to play with time, which is something I really like to do.

—
Gert Hermans

The full interview you can find as a part of the [Zlin Film Festival podcast](#) on Spotify.