

## Why THE PACK is an important film for Czech audiences



Producers Julietta Sichel & Jan Froněk (8Heads)  
© Zlin Film Festival

The city of Zlin might represent one of the strongest cinematic traditions in the Czech Republic, but never before it was such an outspoken film location as in the live action feature **THE PACK** (by Tomas Polensky, see ECFA Journal #3/2020). But how much does this film represent the lives of Czech teenagers today? We collected opinions from a group of 14 year old students from a local Sports Academy and confronted producers Julietta Sichel and Jan Froněk (8Heads) with the result.

When ice hockey goalkeeper David joins The Wolves, power dynamics

within the team are disrupted. David's position is weakened due to diabetes, a rival competitor, his father's burning ambition and flirting with a good looking fan. The bullying by the team becomes untenable. How did the young athlete students from Zlin evaluate this story?

**Jindra: "I often watch Czech movies but they are not made for young people. This one stands close to my everyday life."**

Juliette Sichel: We tried to tell a story that is relevant to a young audience. It is a long time ago since this was done in Czech cinema, which once used to be famous for it. We haven't had a film like this in years. During the script process we consulted youngsters about how they would behave in certain situations. They told us: we recognise these characters, and we know many boys and girls who are exactly like this.

Jan Froněk: All the time we kept telling ourselves: this is not a film for us.

We will ask the young people about what bothers them, what moves them and what worries them.

**Jakub: "I am not an ice hockey player but I had similar experiences in my football team. Maybe this film is a support for kids in such situations."**

Sichel: We were totally convinced we needed to set the film in an ice hockey environment. We are an ice hockey nation, just like our co-producing countries Latvia and Slovakia.

**Julie: "I think that boys playing ice hockey really behave like this. Things like this do happen all the time. Still I would love to date an ice hockey player."**

Sichel: There are two types of girls in the film, and both have their reasons to be like they are. Don't judge too quickly, try to understand their moti-

vations. Also the blond 'cheerleader type' is dreaming of a better life, and therefore uses the methods that she thinks are best. I know thousands of girls like her. The other girl is a much more classic youth film character, she is interesting and creative. But the schools are full of blonde cheerleaders, and all the boys want to date a girl like them.

Sichel: The story was written for Zlin from the very beginning, and was entirely shot here on location. Right when we were trying to get this movie financed, the Zlin county launched a programme for the support of audio-visual productions. We were one of the first projects supported through this programme. Many filmmakers have come here since and discovered a region that has a lot to offer; the city, the nature and the University that creates an active atmosphere.

Froněk: We thought opening up this region for film production was important.

–  
Gert Hermans  
© Zlin Film Festival