

MAMA EUROPA



When little Terra draws a map of Europe, it seems more complicated than the whole planet Earth.

A film by Petra Seliškar



WORLD PREMIER
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At **MakeDox** Creative Documentary Film Festival 2013



INTERNATIONAL PREMIER
On 19.AVGUST at 20.30
IN COMETITION



19.
Sarajevo
Film Festival



Synopsis

Mama Europa takes a look at Europe through the eyes of a six-year-old child, Terra. Born in the Balkans, but raised as a citizen of the world by her Cuban-Macedonian father and Slovenian mother, little Terra quickly learns about borders. She goes on a journey through former Yugoslavia with her family, encountering numerous remarkable characters with interesting stories and tells us her innocent but intelligent and already experienced view of the continent that is not at all as united as it would apparently like to be. Look at Europe through the eyes of a small child from the Balkans: she may easily shatter your preconceptions about where you live.

Director`s statement

I am Slovenian and my partner and cinematographer, Brand, is Macedonian. After Slovenia became part of the European Union and entered the Schengen zone, our nomadic life became quite complicated. Brand needed a visa for every country apart from his father's home, Cuba, and the Balkan countries, with the exception of Slovenia. The visa application procedure meant waiting in long queues in front of embassies that could last for days. Being able to travel with my partner became an endless struggle – even after Terra was born. But this never stopped us from traveling from one festival to another, finding shooting sets at some friends' places. When Terra was two months old, she has already had 14 stamps in her passport.

I have always wanted to make a film about our life through the borders. Observing my daughter and talking to her gave me the key to make a film avoiding the Balkan frustrations - it would have been another fairy tale. The family road movie triggers strong and deep political questions.

The characters we meet in the film are samples of the damages that borders can make to people. How can one express why are they needed and who are they protecting? As Terra says in the film, while making the map of Europe and learning about countries: "Borders exist because all the countries can't be in one country". With her compelling character, making her own conclusions, Terra became one of the scriptwriters as well as a narrator of MAMA EUROPA.

TERRA is 5 years old: "Mother Europe, but more important is the Earth."

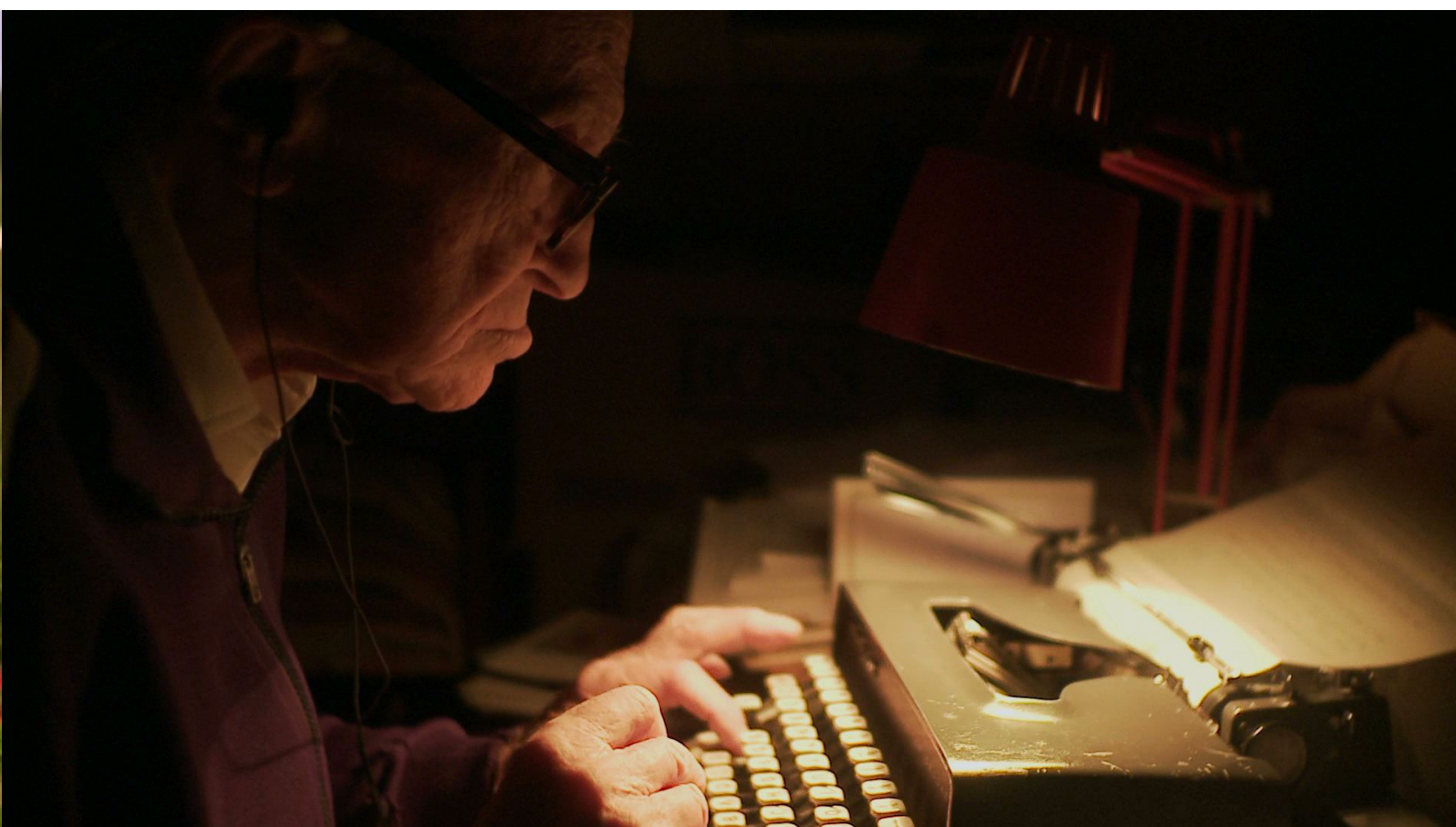
Terra is a curious girl who is discovering Europe we live in. Her genuine reactions to conversations with her mother challenge her mother - the director - to take her on another trip. The film uncovers delicate issues of "Mother Europe" that the two are discussing during the travel. Starting from their home, talking about Terra's nationality – understanding the meaning of borders, the politics, the use of history, the absurdity of bureaucracy, the mistakes of education – they take us on the road to Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and back. Terra and her mother meet incredible people with childhood stories but with the five-year-old's incredible imagination, Terra makes her own story of what she picked up on the way. "Mom and Dad took me to places, that's how I became so smart. I have had a marvellous time in every country" says Terra. Her thoughts are spontaneous reactions and impressions of what she experiences on the nomadic travel with her parents since she was one month old.





BORIS PAHOR - the oldest person who Terra met, he is 98 years old (this year he is turning 100) The author's lucid narration, combined with archive materials and Terra's animated drawings, takes us on a journey back in time to Trieste in 1918 where all the issues related to our border had started. Back then, Boris Pahor was a little kid that realized that the border changed his life. In his early age he had been forbidden by the fascist government to use his mother tongue in public. Overnight, many things changed for non-Italians in Trieste that once used to be the biggest multicultural trade city in Central Europe. Today, he is a Slovenian writer who is turning 100 this year. His detailed flashbacks of childhood memories, combined with some archive materials, bring us back to the beginning of fascism in Trieste. Looking at little Terra, his reflections pass on to the new generations. He suggests that it is time for this generation to make a real revolution – to change the laws - because changes are needed.

Terra's thoughts are far away from the 100 years old man, but she is fascinated by his age.

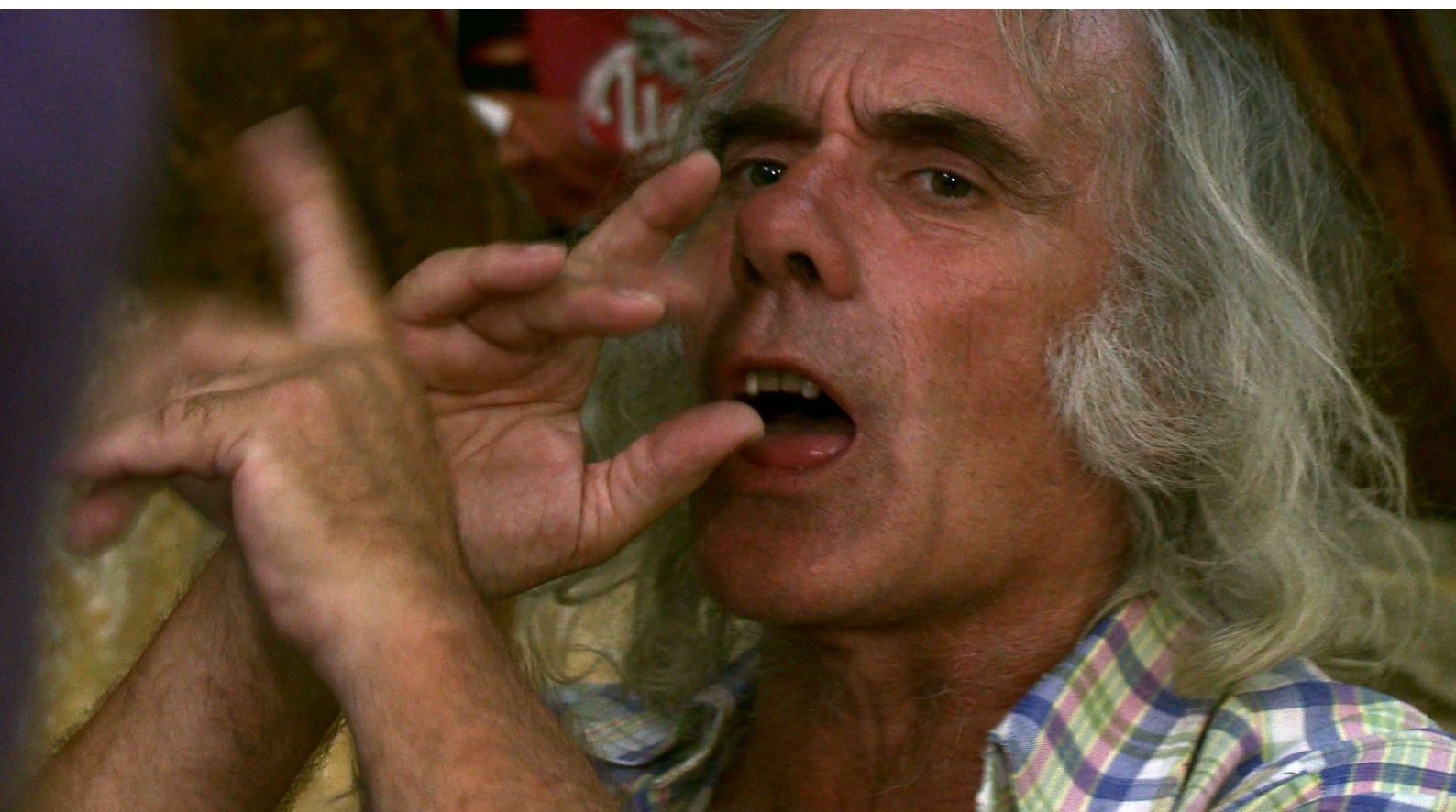




BRANKO BARIČ is Terra's nature lover friend, 64 years old.

In a village hidden far away from city, Branko Barič lives his life as a humorous nature lover, who as a child dreamed of becoming Tarzan. Born in a country that no longer exists, he tells us an incredible but funny story. His life shaped him into a nature believer who has much better relationship with his dog Max and his chicken Cvetka than with other homo sapiens – but he likes Terra and she likes him. Branko believes that there are only two nationalities: good human beings and "cunts". **"How great this world would be without human beings on Earth."** says Barič.

In the three-border zone nearby the Adriatic Sea, between Slovenia, Italy and Croatia, Terra explains to a fisherman in Savudria that we all have a common mother – mother sea. Conflicts are not needed because the sea belongs to all humans. It is the same with the Earth. The Earth belongs to everybody.





BERNAYS PROPAGANDA is Terra's favourite band. **TINA AND VASKO** are 29 and 34 years old

Terra seems very disappointed when she meets her great friends Vasko and Tina from the anarchic punk band Bernays Propaganda. She finds out that they are going through incredible bureaucratic procedures to obtain visas for their tour and a passport for their dog Chuckey. Terra helps sending the letter to the bureaucratic headquarters in Brussels.

All through the film Terra is drawing because she can express herself better when illustrating her point of view. After making a map from her home to her grandmother's place, she decides to illustrate her travel through all the European countries she has visited so far. Finally she draws a map of Europe, finding out that it is more complicated than drawing the whole planet Earth.



Credits



Produced by **Petra Pan Film & PPFP**

In co-production with **Restart Croatia, Restart Slovenia & RTV Slovenia**

Producers: **Petra Seliškar and Brand Ferro**

www.petrapan.com

Financed by :

Macedonian Film Fond

<http://www.filmfund.gov.mk/>

HAVC

http://www.havc.hr/index_h_box.php

Slo Film Fond

<http://www.film-center.si/>

Executive producers/co-producers: **Oliver Sertić and Bojan Mastilović**

Director: **Petra Seliškar**

Director of photography: **Brand Ferro**

Edited by: **Katrin Ebersohn**

Screenplay: **Petra Seliškar and Terra Ferro Seliškar**

Story: **Terra Ferro Seliškar, Petra Seliškar, Bernays Propaganda – Tina and Vasko, Boris Pahor, Branko Barič, Danilo Latin**

Original music by: **Vladimir Rakić**

Animations: **Daniel Freymuller and Katrin Ebersohn**

Sound Designer: **Vladimir Rakić**

Additional Photography: **Pablo Ferro**

Sound recordist: **Ivan Antić**

Production Details

original title: **Mama Europa**

English title : **Mother Europe**

Year: **2013**

Genre : **Creative documentary**

Length: **90 min.**

Country of production: **Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia**

Language: **Slovenian, Macedonian and English**

Subtitles: **English, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian**

Original Format: **HD (1080p/25fps)**

Available format: **16:9 DCP, HDCAM , BLURAY, DVD**

Sound: **Stereo & 5.1**

For More Info

Web site: **www.mamaeuropa.info**

Trailer: **<https://vimeo.com/52940166>**



Interview

with PETRA SELIŠKAR

How did the travel begin?

- The family is on a journey and this is an occasion for all of us to learn something. At first Terra was asking many questions. I was replying in a fairy tale style, trying not to make everything so serious. We met many people on the way. People would talk and she would listen, but not always, not everything was interesting. But she would be there, and after a while out of the blue, reflections of the past day events and stories appeared in her stories. This is how it all started. I started listening to her stories, and she liked mine.

Many times we as parents are too busy to listen, we do listen but also many times do not understand what the child is telling us. It is the same with children – a lot of our words don't have a meaning for them. On the road we had more time for in-between conversations. She was very young when we started shooting and by the age of five-six she was the most interested one in what we were doing. When she was six she became too much aware of the camera's presence – so we had to stop.

Why a kid as the main character? It's pretty unique as an approach, so how should it influence the film?

- The film changed simply because Terra entered in it spontaneously as you can see in the film. But this is Terra's third documentary. She changed the structure. That was the difficult part for her mama. The editor Katrin Ebersohn brought incredible strength to the film by simplifying it and adding animation.

What is the peculiar POV of Terra that convinced you to make her your main character?

- I have always wanted to tell stories in the most honest and simple way, so I made a decision to try and enter the child's world. It is impossible to enter, because they have their own world and I will never be able to enter there, but I tried anyway. We have been collecting her paintings and drawings since she was little. With the help of Katrin Ebersohn and Daniel Freymuller we made her vivid imagination stories alive while she was drawing by animating them. This became the key to her world. Because she loves animations she became so intense and interesting during those sessions that I realised it could easily be a film only about her. But I decided to pull back and complete the film we started. Perhaps the next one will be about her and the future – if she agrees of course.



You grew up in Yugoslavia, where there were no borders. Where is Terra is growing up?

- Terra is growing up in more or less the same place only the time is different. I was a traveling child myself... Borders have changed completely, we used to have all the borders to West, now we have all the borders to South.

The question of location is less important to her I guess. Terra is growing up in strange times. It used to be more relaxed, less fences. Even my preschool yard had no fences back then, well you should see it now. Terra goes to the same preschool like me. But this new kids are special. But now it has a lack of spontaneous moments. You should ask her about where she is growing up.

What I can say is that she is growing up with her parents. She is not so concerned about where we live. To Terra the place only differs by languages and if she speaks the language it is her place just as much.

When people from outside the Balkans ask you where you are from, what is your answer?

- I come from Slovenia, not many people know where it is or if they know it they have never been there. If I say Yugoslavia everyone knows, but then you get the war questions and after 15 years of living in different places, I use my creativity not to repeat myself everytime this question is asked. I am not that kind of person who is attached to one country. I am like the wild grass. I grow where you place me. But when it comes to my films I feel the connection and I feel like so much has to be done in this region. And then I am talking about this territory of ex-Yugoslavia, because I seriously understand it as a mutual cultural place that has a lot to offer.

I come from a beautiful country but I wish it was more open and connected to the rest of the world so I would not feel the need to explain so much where I come from each time.

In this film I gave myself a task to find out whether I feel that I come from mother Europe. Do I come from Europe – meaning the whole continent not EU only. I know I am not African, American, Australian or Asian.

What was the hardest part of making the film? The borders themselves?

- It took a long time to put it together. I had to change a few concepts while making the film. It was an incredible difficult task to be a mother, director and producer at the same time, but I guess I chose this way for a reason.

We (Brand and I) knew that time is limited, children are only open in this way at a certain age. Terra knew a lot about filmmaking and it was impossible to trick her. She would not cry as she usually does, when she is tired or wants something to be done her way. She would face the wireless microphone and start whispering to the microphone: "I don't want to do this anymore" directly to the soundrecordist's ear, who was her strongest ally. And the shoot would wrap up.

She felt happy because her mum, her dad, her uncle and her friend were the crew.

Also later on in the editing, she would come to the editing suite and talk to me and Katrin, the editor "No mum, you do not need this scene, I would cut this out!"

She was in charge and a filmshoot with a kid in charge could be hell, but it wasn't. We took time and sometimes we just played around and that was when the most beautiful things happened.

The other characters accepted her instantly, but with Boris Pahor was a difficult task, 98 years old man and a 5 year old girl, both strong characters. And Boris had never had a particular connection with children. Something happened the 5th time we shot with him. They had something to share...but unfortunately cameras are not on all the time. Later on, Terra told me she thought he was her Great grand grandfather.

How motherly Europe is, really?

- Mothers are different in every European culture.

As it is the film mother Europe needs to retire from her everyday duties to finally find the time for her family. Or else....



Reviews

"Does a child have a more honest and authentic kind of access to the world? Not necessarily. Can the child be used in a film to bring forth something a grown-up cannot? Yes, it seems so when watching *Mama Europa*. ."

DOX European documentary magazine

" *Mama Europa* is by no means a sentimental film. It's a warm, generous and often funny film depicting different generations and their stories related to borders..."

DOX European documentary magazine



"The reflections— not so much made by the characters in the film, as the people watching — comprise the real strength of *Mama Europa*. Do we believe in the notion of nations and borders? A scene in the film comes back to me: Terra and Petra walking near the sea and talking about how fishermen are fighting about who gets which amount of fish. Which fish is a Croatian fish and which one is Italian? How can you tell? Fish is fish and the sea is open to anyone. It reminded me of the great Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska whose poems should enlighten us about the ways we divide and limit ourselves. Szymborska gets the final word, a few lines from the poem "Psalm": "How leaky are the borders / we draw around our separate nations! / How many clouds cross those boundaries / daily, without even paying the toll!" And then the ending of her poem, and thus this review as well: "Funny, isn't it, how only what's human is truly alien? Everything else is just mixed vegetation, a few subversive moles, and the wind."

Steffen Moestrup



About the filmmakers

Petra Seliškar (DIRECTOR & PRODUCER & WRITER) and
Brand Ferro (DOP & PRODUCER)

Both passionate documentary filmmakers devoted their work entirely to documentaries and little life pleasures. Petra was born in Ljubljana, Slovenia, ten years after Brand was born in Skopje, Macedonia. They have been working in the film industry for some time. In 2003 they established their production company, Petra Pan Productions, in both Slovenia and in Macedonia. In 2010 they also established the unique festival of creative documentary film MakeDox in Macedonia.



Brand Ferro and Petra Seliškar have worked as a creative tandem ever since. Their creative strength can be seen in their documentary "The Grandmothers of Revolution", that was selected for the IDFA's (International Documentary Festival Amsterdam) Joris Evens competition and has travelled all over the world receiving many awards. Their previous film combines three different stories shot in Cuba, Macedonia and Slovenia – with different political and historical backgrounds in a truly creative way.

Their previous films include: Turkish Tea, The Grandmothers of Revolution, Mostar United. The current state of films in productions include, My World is Upside Down – a music documentary on the miraculous life of Fran Milčinski Ježek who is the Slovenian Charles Chaplin featuring incredible musicians from all over the world, and Food Junk, a film in development .

Selected filmography by director:

- 2001 **Con – Fusion**, a documentary
- 2001 **From the dust of the sun's rays**, short documentary fiction
- 2002 **Window, short fiction film**, Emotion film
- 2003 **Balkans – Blood and Honey**, documentary
- 2005 **Turkish tea**, six documentary series
- 2006 **The grandmothers of revolution**, documentary film, Petra Pan Film Production (IDFA Joris Ivens competition, Zagreb dox 2007 Gran prix for young author, Aster Fest Grand prix , around 40 festivals)
- 2011 **Actor and it's art multimedia** documentary museum of actors in Divača , Slovenia
- 2011 **20 Years of Macedonia** documentary series
- 2013 **Mama Europa** documentary

Petra Pan Film is a Slovenian and Macedonian film production company it was founded in 2003 by director Petra Seliškar and director of photography Brand Ferro. The company produces creative documentaries and art house fiction films focusing on the Balkans and the international market. Petra Pan's long term focus is developing creativity through education (Creative house) and promotion of documentary films (MakeDox Film Festival). It is composed by a dynamic and ambitious international group of people – creative people focusing on a strong author's signature and a high artistic profile in every field of filmmaking. Through its years of existence it is continually aiming to produce a high quality innovative films with sense of humor. With our films we are succeeding in finding the proper way to communicate and reach our audience, by expressing our vision on the world around us. We aim to create films beyond the norms of documentary film.

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Upcoming Festivals:

June:

22.8.2013

Macedonian premiere

MAKEDOX Creative Documentary Film Festival, Macedonia

August :

19.August

International premiere

SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL, BIH

(in competition)

23.August

Slovenian pre-premiere

Prizren **DOKUFEST**, Kosovo

(in competition)

30 August

Maribor **REVIJA SLO FILMA**, Slovenia

September:

11-15 September

Slovenian premiere

Portorož **FESTIVAL OF SLOVENIAN FILM**

(in competition)

17-19 September

Vienna **LET'S CEE** Film Festival (in competition)

November:

6-17 November

Ljubljana **LIFE**, Slovenia

7-13 November

Beograd **FREE ZONE**

January

Italian premiere

17-22 January 2014

TRIESTE FIM FESTIVAL

(in competition)

TBC:

Amsterdam **IDFA** October

Jihlava international documentary film festival 24-29 October

Leipzig 28.October - 3 November

Lisbon 24 October -3 November

Quotes from the film :

Petra: What color is the government?

Terra: Black, grey and brown, and a little hairy, too.

Petra: What about the law, what colour is it?

Terra: The law is golden.

Petra: Do you think birds know what a border is?

Terra: No.

Terra: Should the sea be open to everyone or should each have their own sea?

Terra: Politicians put people to prison if they are bad. Policemen also.

It all means the same thing, you know. But I don't feel like talking about politics.

Terra: The most important thing is planet Earth. "

Vasco: Communism for the rich, capitalism for the rest.

Branko Barič:

Now I have only two nationalities. You're either a cunt or a human.

Boris Pahor:

The only way for the new generation to win, is revolution. They should stay on the streets until the legislation is changed.

