

EDITORIAL

Editorial

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The scenario of a whole society locked up in their homes, with no place to go and no one to meet, seems like a dream come true for already dominant forces of modernday consumerism such as Amazon and Netflix. Home-shipped consumer goods and streaming services can be enjoyed from the “comfort” of your home, and have both seen an added surge in demand. Disney’s homegrown streaming service, whose European launch usefully coincided with lockdown policies, already counts 50 million paying subscribers. For the local cinema hall, the analogue to your mom and pop store, meanwhile, this dream of a city rid of life spells serious trouble, raising the question whether the future of society holds a place for public celebrations of cinematic culture. In this context, the fact that 20 global film festivals – among them Cannes, Venice and Berlin, once the untouchable elite – have announced the creation of a joint online event, seems mostly to expose (rather than meaningfully respond to) the gravity of the situation. The title of the festival, “We Are One”, sounds like a desperate call for unity in the face of a menace that is too big to handle.

For the cultural sphere, as for many spheres of public life, the crucial question is whether the debate about a fundamental reallocation of public resources that has long been overdue, will finally happen. Unfortunately, this is about more than reinvigorating antiquated institutions and reimagining a film culture as one not based on a self-sufficient cultural elite and revolving-door structures – all of which this journal has repeatedly called for. This time around, the question is whether any attempt at returning to a virtual (for non-existent) status quo will leave a cinematic culture behind for us to celebrate. As the downfall of journalism (incl. of film criticism) and concurrent rise of Google has exposed, corporations operating online need not sustain the content they offer guided access to – Google benefits from the very news whose advertising income it has drained out. If we pretend that everything can return to “normal” in a few months, with the state providing minimal (if any) support for the sustainment of culture, cinemas and other cultural venues will follow suit, and with it a lifeline for the cultural content they are supposed to showcase. To think that we possess a cinematic culture without a culture of film criticism is

already misguided. But to think that we can possess a cinematic culture without cinemas is an impossible thought.

For our April issue, Isaac W. R. Miller revisits Soviet Colonial ideology as exemplified by Vladimir Motyl's [The White Sun of the Desert](#), a widely watched comedy from Soviet times. Julia Weir revisits Marek Piwowski's [The Cruise](#), another 1970 cult comedy, though hailing from Poland and taking a much more critical stance towards state-ordered policies. Mariana Hristova examines [four animated shorts by Ülo Pikkov](#), focusing on the way they deal with traumas from the past. (Our Interviews section also features a [conversation with Pikkov](#) on the major themes of his films.) Finally, Colette de Castro compared [two recent films from Poland](#) that each deal with the role of religion in the 21st century.

We hope you enjoy our reads.
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Editors