

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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### PRESS QUOTES

*"Immaculately shot, gravely moving."*

**Variety**

*"A strikingly beautiful film."*

**Screen Daily**

*"An exceptional piece of filmmaking."*

**Robert Daniels, via Roger Ebert**

*"An artistic impulse and cinematic poetry in the face of universal despair"*

*"Confirms Vesnakov as perhaps the most profound thinker among contemporary Bulgarian filmmakers"*

**Cineuropa**

*"Deeply moving"*

*"A tender but hard-hitting social realist drama"*

**ICS (International Cinephile Society)**

*"The melancholy of "Windless" subtly and quietly inches itself under your skin"*

*"A Profound, Pensive Homecoming Drama Led by a Broodingly Excellent Fyre"*

**High on Films**

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### PRESS OVERVIEW

13 July 2024

#### **Letterboxd**

Film highlighted among the “Best of Karlovy Vary 2024”

[Best of Karlovy Vary 2024 · Journal · A Letterboxd Magazine](#)

08 July 2024

#### **Le Polyester (FR)**

Positive review

[Karlovy Vary Festival | Review: Windless](#)

08 July 2024

#### **High on Films**

Positive review

[Windless \(2024\) ‘Karlovy Vary’ Movie Review: A Profound, Pensive Homecoming Drama Led by a Broodingly Excellent Fyre](#)

05 July 2024

#### **The Hollywood Reporter**

Interview with Pavel Vesnakov and FYRE

[Bulgarian Rapper Fyre Realized He Played Himself, Kind of, in Claustrophobic Family Drama ‘Windless’](#)

04 July 2024

#### **Variety**

Positive review

[‘Windless’ Review: A Powerfully Evocative Portrait of a Reluctant but Redemptive Homecoming](#)

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04 July 2024

**Roger Ebert**

Positive review

[KVIFF: Loveable, Tiny Lights, Windless](#)

04 July 2024

**ODG Magazine (IT)**

Interview with Pavel Vesnakov

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)

04 July 2024

**East Journal (IT)**

Film announcement and recommendation

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)

03 July 2024

**Cineuropa**

Interview with Pavel Vesnakov

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)

02 July 2024

**Screen Daily**

Positive review

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)

02 July 2024

**Past Present Feature**

Interview with Pavel Vesnakov

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)

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02 July 2024

**Cineuropa**

Interview with Pavel Vesnakov

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)

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**Cineuropa**

Positive review

[Review: Windless](#)

01 July 2024

**ICS (International Cinephile Society)**

Positive review

[Karlovy Vary 2024 review: Windless \(Pavel G. Vesnakov\)](#)

01 July 2024

**The Film Verdict**

Positive review

[Windless](#)

01 July 2024

**Dirty Movies**

Positive review

[Windless](#)

27 June 2024

**Cineuropa**

Trailer and poster exclusive

[EXCLUSIVE: Trailer and poster for Karlovy Vary title Windless](#)

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## ARTICLES

13 July 2024

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### **From bitter divorces to pig slaughters and grumpy dads, Rafa Sales Ross rounds up the best of the 2024 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival with ten films to Czech out.**

The Karlovy Vary International Film Festival is a cinephile haven like few others. The public event sees hoards of all-ages attendees descend into the small Czech town to enjoy the festival's hundreds of screenings. It is not uncommon to see young adults down from the capital of Prague for a long weekend, where they'll sleep in the park by the fest's home of the Hotel Thermal, drinking and chatting films until the late hours of the night, waking up early and ready to queue for tickets at the box office at 7am sharp.

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Several rituals make Karlovy Vary unique, from carrying a small porcelain cup at all times to drink the dubiously flavored mineral water for which the spa town is famous, to standing by the sidelines at the beautiful Grand Hall until a buzzer alerts all waiting audience members that the non-taken seats are now a free-for-all. It is, of course, also a festival of riches when it comes to its vast program, which is known for platforming some of the buzziest Cannes titles (like Payal Kapadia's *All We Imagine as Light* and Miguel Gomes's *Grand Tour*) while offering viewers plenty of opportunity to discover new films to love each summer.

As I walked between the neighboring screenings at the Hotel Thermal, entering whichever session was about to start next, I was reminded of the glee of first realizing festivals are a land of possibility. I'm thrilled I get to share some of my favorite discoveries with you below.

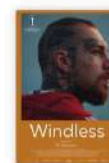


#### ***Windless (Bezvetrije)***

Directed by Pavel G. Vesnakov, written by Vesnakov, Simeon Ventaislavov, Teodora Markova, Nevena Kartova and Georgi Ivanov

"Really amazing in every aspect," says Stella of *Windless*, and, boy, is she right. We first meet Kaloyan (Ognyan Pavlov) as he arrives back in his home country of Bulgaria after years of working abroad in Spain. His homecoming is born out of bureaucratic necessity: his estranged father has passed away, leaving his son to sort out the sale of his flat. This bothersome yet mundane rite of passage triggers an unexpected emotional journey for the rough-looking expat, who must confront long-buried memories of his childhood while figuring out what lies ahead.

Shot in a tight 1:1 ratio, *Windless* is made of such inspired compositions, one would be tempted to stop each frame to make it last a little longer. Vesnakov pairs the brutalism of crumbling houses with rugged faces just as worn by time and hardship as Kaloyan walks through old streets he no longer recognizes as home. It is as visually striking as emotionally effective, with MJ calling this outstanding Bulgarian drama "a heartrending character study focused on the challenging process of plumbing the emotional depths of history and the importance of embracing even the most uncomfortable parts of one's past."



**Windless 2024**  
Directed by  
Pavel G. Vesnakov

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08 July 2024

**Le Polyester (FR)**

Positive review

[Karlovy Vary Festival | Review: Windless](#)

### Karlovy Vary Festival | Review: Windless

Published on July 8, 2024



After years of absence, Kaloyan returns to his native Bulgaria to sell his late father's apartment. What he initially considers to be a routine task devoid of emotion gradually turns into a journey into the depths of his being, where he will have to confront distant traumas.



**Windless**

Bulgaria, 2024

By Pavel G. Vesnakov

Duration: 1h33

Exit : -

Note : ★★★★★



## Press report *Windless*

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#### I WILL BE BACK

A man covered in tattoos returns to his native village in Bulgaria after years of absence. His frankly awkward appearance and the lack of explanation for his prolonged disappearance could lead one to believe that the protagonist is being released from prison, but in reality it is quite the opposite. After fleeing his country to live more freely in Spain, Kaloyan (played by Bulgarian rapper Ognian 'FYRE' Pavlov) does not return to his land for sentimental reasons: his father has died, and the family apartment is going to be razed. Kaloyan finds himself having to face alone a past and a country that he fled. What, in his mind, will be only a few administrative formalities, will turn out to be a more bitter and intense journey than expected.

*Windless* follows a similar logic, beginning with factual scenes that are apparently devoid of any feeling, yet ending in a poignant result. When the feature film begins, it is so hard that one might have the impression that it is turning its back on us, like this protagonist whose only visible part of his head is the back of his head, and who only shows his face after a while. Like a bittersweet metronome, the screenplay alternates between two types of scenes, both filmed in fixed shots. On the one hand, manual actions immersed in contemplative silence (destroying a box spring, driving a car), but highlighted by Orlin Ruevski's superb photography. On the other hand, monologues filmed in closer shots.

In these, it is almost never the protagonist who speaks, but those he meets during his thankless task of having to move the buried bodies of his parents. These people all have a story to share, an anecdote about Kaloyan's family or about life before. All these monologues (where the memories evoked gradually become harder and harder) have in common that they are all turned towards the past, as if it were impossible to live in the present. *Windless* has just had its world premiere at the [Karlovy Vary Festival](#), and like the big winner of the previous edition ([Blaga's Lessons](#)), this film depicts a Bulgarian society where there is no longer any room for human warmth, and where historical heritage is a prison.

With all this toughness on its shoulders and this narrative structure that sometimes borders on repetition, *Windless* is a very demanding, incisive drama. This is fortunately balanced by the aesthetic dimension of the film, at times so astonishing that it should actually be the very first quality that one evokes to describe the feature film. Filmed in a rigorously square format, Kaloyan's race in circles to make peace with his past becomes both more distressing and more human. In this world where horizons are cut off and blocked, the slightest close-up bursts the screen almost like a 3D effect. *Windless* is undoubtedly not a comfortable viewing, but it is an aesthetic success to be applauded.

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08 July 2024

**High on Films**

Positive review

[Windless \(2024\) 'Karlovy Vary' Movie Review: A Profound, Pensive Homecoming Drama Led by a Broodingly Excellent Fyre](#)



Silence in film acting is a potent thing. Often they are capable of conveying bright shooting angles of thought than entire reams of dialogue. But they also demand an actor who is sure in his skin and has a sound understanding of all the bodily tools he has at his disposal. The performance should be spare, and the subduedness of it only adds to the stifling weight his character may have to bear. Such an actor should know then where and how to draw out the maximum power when he does mutter his lines.

All such gifts are on abundant display in the lead performance of eminent rapper Ognyan Pavlov/ Fyre, making a subtle, emotionally effective debut in the formally accomplished "Windless," which is directed by Pavel G. Vesnakov. Pavlov and Vesnakov are in brilliant synergy in this film, which is an unlikely but remarkably successful match of material and an artist such as the former. They take you into an internal state with conviction, thematic coherence, and unflinching truth.

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Pavlov plays Kaloyan, a man returning to his native Bulgarian village when called on to arrange for the sale of his late father's house. To say that Pavlov has a fractious, aloof relationship with his home and father would be to understate it. He left his home years ago, moving abroad to Spain where work pays him more than what he'd ever get had he stayed back.

In the village he comes from, there's little to elevate life's prospects. There has been a stasis for a long period, but it is now being shoved over as its mayor seeks to push through a raft of redevelopment projects that purport to fully alter the village's nature and shape. There is promise of a flush of new businesses creeping up and employment opportunities opening up. But it also comes with its own costs.



A still from "Windless" (2024)

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To usher in growth and progress, homes are being razed over so that swanky golf courses and casinos can take their place. It's a huge moment of precarity and upheaval, with stakes for everyone, even if the responses are individual and varied. It is this maelstrom of reckoning that amps up Kaloyan's recalibrated understanding of his roots and specifically his father's generation and such ilk, whose ways of parenting were overbearing. Kaloyan knew he couldn't live and thrive in such an atmosphere where love was withheld to perpetuate some sort of iron-fisted discipline in children so that they could steer their lives confidently with due time.

Kaloyan didn't even return home to attend the funeral of his father. It has been a year since he last spoke to him. His mother also barely kept in touch. The family had drifted apart long before the father's death. When Kaloyan is asked for the details of his father and grandfather, whose remains will be shifted since the old cemetery will be mowed over to make way for the golf course, he shrugs in indifference and tries to entirely remove himself from any sense of responsibility. However, he is not quite able to put it all aside, especially as relatives, neighbors, and strangers dole around their memories of his father and hint at the loneliness he might have experienced before he passed away.

In still, measured long takes, without the camera even moving for several minutes, Vesnakov foregrounds a sense of decay, obsolescence that's washing over the old and the infirm as Kaloyan goes about helping them trundle out stuff for the revamping to settle into place, the disposability they feel gripped by in the wake of newness that may just erode their existence. There's a devastating scene when a long-suffering woman requests Kaloyan and his friend not to hospitalize her and let her surrender to death. She doesn't want to be a burden to anyone.

Greatly aided by DP Orlin Ruevski's cramped frames, the melancholy of "Windless" subtly and quietly inches itself under your skin. The past isn't quite as escapable as Kaloyan may have thought. But there is a sliver of grace and reconciliation to be found in his gradual embrace of all that he has ducked, from his memories to his roots.

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The Hollywood Reporter

Interview with Pavel Vesnakov and FYRE

[Bulgarian Rapper Fyre Realized He Played Himself, Kind of, in Claustrophobic Family Drama 'Windless'](#)



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# Bulgarian Rapper Fyre Realized He Played Himself, Kind of, in Claustrophobic Family Drama 'Windless'

He also recognized the very un-American way Eastern European parents encourage their kids, but didn't know director Pavel Vesnakov was using a square format to box in his protagonist.

BY GEORG SZALAI JULY 5, 2024 12:01AM



'Windless' COURTESY OF FILM SERVIS FESTIVAL KARLOVY VARY



"After years away Kaloyan returns to his native Bulgaria in order to sell his late father's flat. What at first seems like a routine task devoid of emotion gradually develops into a journey to the depths of his being, where he is confronted with distant traumas, yet he also strikes a new path towards self-discovery."

So reads a plot summary of director [Pavel G. Vesnakov's](#) new feature, *Windless*, which he co-wrote with others and which had its world premiere at the [58th edition of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival](#) this week.

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“While childhood is filled with sensations and the rustling wind, adulthood is a state of fragile, windless and fading memories of those closest to us,” the festival’s website notes. “Vesnakov delivers colourful existential reflections on the nature of family bonds and personal identity over the course of time. Yet he also muses on modern-day Bulgaria, where the cemeteries of its original inhabitants are being replaced by shady casinos, and where cultural memory is waning in a country deceived by an illusory vision of economic prosperity.”

Kaloyan is played by Ognyan Pavlov, better known in Bulgaria as the rapper Fyre.

Vesnakov and Fyre met up with *THR* global business editor Georg Szalai in Karlovy Vary to discuss the real-life experiences that they brought to the film, why the director chose to box his protagonist into a square format, and how parents in Eastern Europe differ from those in the U.S.

#### **I heard Fyre was greeted by a lot of fans at the airport in Bulgaria on his way here...**

**Vesnakov** He is a real celebrity in Bulgaria. But I chose him not because of that. He was looking quite similar to the main character in my previous film. We met a few years later when I was writing this script. I actually never do casting [calls] for my own films because I work in TV as well and know a lot of actors in Bulgaria. Most of the time, I just choose someone I know and feel will be suitable for the role. I remembered that he was very sensitive when we met the first time. You can see he looks tough. If you just see him on the street, you will maybe think one thing about him, but when you start to talk with him and listen to his lyrics and go a little bit further, you’ll see that there is a person that everybody knows, and behind this is another person that is very emotionally intelligent, even vulnerable.

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This is what I wanted to put in the movie. And it turned out, and I didn't know this when we began shooting the movie, that the story is quite personal for him. And this made the process very special.

**Fyre** I'm really playing me. A big part of the script is about my life. When he handed me the script, I was like, "The main role, the main character? I haven't graduated from academy or haven't taken acting classes." My first thought was that of an Eastern Europe child. Because in Eastern Europe, your parents are not encouraging you like maybe parents in the USA where they say, "Sweetie, you can do everything, we believe in you." In Eastern Europe, parents just say, "You are a piece of crap, you can do nothing, you will be nothing, you will end up in jail or in the streets." That's maybe the Eastern Europe style of encouragement because it drives something out of you. "I will make it. I will show you that I will not end up that way."

It was crazy because we had a scene where an old lady was dying. And she was taking her life in the scene. And while we were shooting our film, my uncle and grandmother were both going to hospitals –they were in bad health. And after shooting, I'd take my uncle to the hospital and called my grandmother and she was crying, so I went to visit her. She said: "My child is dying. I will take pills and I will end my life. And she is on the couch, and it's completely the same as the scene in the movie.

**Vesnakov** I didn't know this when we were shooting.

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**Fyre** So I was like: “Am I shooting? Am I living or am I shooting as an actor?” So was it hard to play this character? Actually no, because mentally and psychologically and emotionally I was in that space.

**There is humor in the film and hope but also a lot of bleakness. Can you talk about that a bit?**

**Fyre** I think that is how a lot of boys and girls in Bulgaria feel. All the surroundings, the people, and even the buildings and the whole structure of how things are built – they say to you that there is no future. This movie starts like this but, even if people say it’s dark and it’s tough to watch, at the end there is hope. The main character goes through this metamorphosis and actually something wakes up in him.

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**How early did you know how to end the film?**

**Vesnakov** I had the ending of the movie from the beginning. But for me, it’s very important not to look forced. When say that someone is going through a big change and metamorphosis, it’s like a cliché in a way. So how can you show what is changing inside of someone? You can do that only through very small details. That is also in his acting. He doesn’t want to do more than what has to be done. It’s rather minimalistic.

**You seem to like this minimalism...**

**Vesnakov** I want to escape this feeling that everything is so important. No, it’s not. This is the tragedy of the story. Nothing is important in your life. If you go to work, you will meet 50 people, and you don’t know what is happening in their lives and what is the big problem for them. Maybe it is some very small stories or very small decisions that they’ve made during their lifetime. And this is very interesting.

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Of course, it is important for me, it's emotional, it's personal, it is important. But I don't want to put it in the face of the viewers and to shout. "This is our miserable country, we are living the worst life." That's not the intention of the movie. I wanted to focus on the feelings, on the poetic vision of this grim reality. Because, actually, we live there and we don't live like miserable people. We like our lives, but we are open to criticizing the situation.



*'Windless'* COURTESY OF FILM SERVIS FESTIVAL KARLOVY VARY

**The main character struggles with his father's legacy and his relationship with his late father. Talk a bit about that aspect and how important it is.**

**Vesnakov** That's the second [theme] of the movie. If you don't know your father, you don't have memories, how can you replace the missing pieces, the missing moments of your life? This is an inner struggle for me.

**Fyre** That's another part of the script that is very much based on my life because I grew up in a single- mother household with my mother and grandmother. I actually never lived with my father. I knew him, we saw him maybe once in three months and went to eat maybe cake. He passed away when I was 10.

**Vesnakov** I didn't know that either when we started shooting.

**Fyre** The stories and the storyline that the main character goes through, I really felt it.

**And your character hears a lot of people speaking highly of his father whom he himself doesn't seem to know much about...**

It's about not trusting people. They are exaggerating the character of my father. And I'm like, "You're telling me stories about this super-human, this Superman?" And I don't know if he was that way or I don't remember. And I need more. At the end of the movie, I ask my mother: "What do you remember about him? What's the first thing that comes to mind?"

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**Vesnakov** And she doesn't answer because memories fade away.

**There is also a scene in which the main character and a friend discuss what may happen to this town and what may be there in the future. A golf course, a casino? How much is this a topic in Bulgaria?**

**Vesnakov** This is happening in Bulgaria and this is based on a real story. In the beginning, this was the main storyline in the movie, when we started developing the script. But, maybe naturally, it's changed a little bit and went into a second layer. And we focused more on the characters and the people who are going through this transition. I think there is this lack of communication between the generations. We have to go a little bit back to the end of Soviet Union.

In Bulgaria, when democracy came is a very interesting time to explore from a cinematic and literature point of view, because you still have this very old generation that spent its entire active lifetime during the Soviet Union. And on the one hand, you have their children who spent their life completely free, and they're open to what they need to have, and they can communicate their feelings. But the older people, they have feelings, they love you, and they take care of you. But they cannot communicate their feelings. They never say, "I love you want." This is not something common in Bulgaria.

**Fyre, your character says something about this, right?**

**Fyre** My grandmother was a very negative person. And I was like, "Okay, I will take care of you, I will come buy groceries, clean the house and everything. But I'm moving away because I cannot live with such negativity."

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One day she calls me and she's crying. And she says to me, "I love you. I love you. I'm very proud of you and what you are doing." I didn't know what to feel because I never heard those words from her. And I was like, "Why do you say this to me at 20-plus years old? Right now I don't need it." And she was like, "My parents and all the people around me taught me that way and that you only kiss a child when the child is sleeping." That's a very big problem in our country and maybe in all of the post-Soviet societies that a lot of children grew up without love, without the proper soil. And a lot of them become just old, scarred, traumatized people that end up beating their wives or becoming alcoholics and divorcing and all the typical stuff in our societies. And all of this is because they don't know how to show love and how to grieve.

**I have to ask you about the tight square screen format you use in the film. Pavel, how did you decide to use that. And Fyre, when did you find out about this?**

I like to work with restrictions. When you have restrictions, I believe you become more creative. And with the square screen, a very big restriction is that the camera is not moving. In the movie, there are only two times when it comes. The first time it moves to the main character's face when he receives documents about his father. And in the end, the camera is also moving. But this is very difficult when you go to the film set and do square static shots. But I wanted to focus extremely on the characters and on his face and on his character. It is very claustrophobic. You really spend some time with these people, and we don't use the beauty of the landscape. We were actually able to capture very beautiful shots, beautiful images, but we did not put them in the movie.

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I will be really happy if when you watch the movie, you think about your father, your family, your problems in your life, like you are looking into a mirror. That's why we also don't show a picture of his father. We don't see the image, we only hear the stories. Yeah. But you as a viewer can think of your father's face.

**Fyre** I found out [about the square format] at the premiere. I was wondering: "Why are they closing the curtains so much? What are they doing?" But I understood it. It's very beautiful and very authentic and a bit claustrophobic. But the focus is on details. And it lets you interpret. In a lot of the scenes, you wonder what are the other characters doing now, how are they reacting? And what are they thinking? It leaves room for your imagination. **FFFF**

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04 July 2024

Variety

Positive review

[‘Windless’ Review: A Powerfully Evocative Portrait of a Reluctant but Redemptive Homecoming](#)

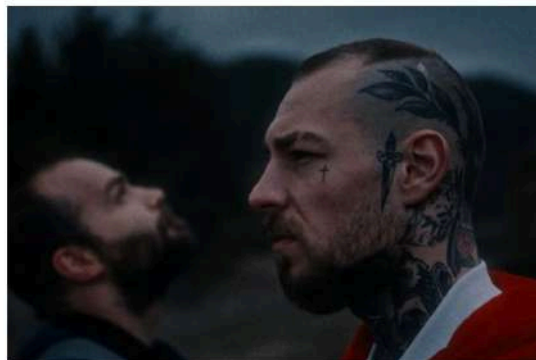
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Jul 4, 2024 9:41am PT

### ‘Windless’ Review: A Powerfully Evocative Portrait of a Reluctant but Redemptive Homecoming

Bulgarian rap star Fyre is a riveting, heavily tattooed presence in an immaculately shot, gravely moving story of a young man's return to his diminished hometown following the death of his estranged father.

By Jessica Kiang



Courtesy of Red Carpet, Karlovy Vary Film Festival.

Our striking introduction to Kaloyan ([Ognyan Pavlov](#)) in Pavel G. Vesnakov's potent and profound "Windless" is as an out-of-focus blur, smoking a cigarette in the foreground. Beyond him, trucks trundle down a highway, and bare trees throw their branches to the sky, while birds wheel and scatter against gray clouds.

It is the first of many eerily considered compositions, hemmed in by an audaciously claustrophobic 1:1 aspect ratio, to tell almost the film's entire story in miniature. Kaloyan is a man at odds with his surroundings — the Bulgarian village where he grew up and to which he has returned after a long, self-directed exile. It is as though the adult he has become is fighting for focus with the ghost of who he once was, the unhappy child who called these bleak, unwelcoming landscapes home. The past is always a foreign country, even if it's the one you were born and raised in.

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In his second feature after 2020's well-received "German Lessons," Vesnakov, abetted by some extraordinary shotmaking from DP Orlin Ruevski, has hit on a stylistic approach of such burningly poetic intensity that later scenes of a nighttime bonfire feel like inevitable catharsis — the pent-up energy of so much dense, exquisite, square-framed portraiture finally bursting into flame. It's all the more remarkable for adorning a simple story told with eloquent economy, accented by the desolate, twanging guitar of Ascari's Western-evoking score. Despite the input of five screenwriters (Vesnakov, Simeon Ventsislavov, Teodora Markova, Nevena Kertova and Georgi Ivanov), "Windless" is measured and quiet and anything but long-winded.

Pavlov, who plays the returnee Kaloyan, is a celebrated rap star named [Fyre](#) in his native Bulgaria, but here brilliantly embodies a taciturn character, whose silences and wordless responses are somehow more articulate than speech. Even the rapper's own heavily tattooed body becomes a visceral visual metaphor for his character's desire to erase, or at least overwrite his heritage, with his face, his neck, his hands and arms providing the canvas for a new, self-invented identity.

The body ink, including a Janus-like image of Julius Caesar covering the whole back of his shaven head, is also a red herring, projecting a tough-guy facade far removed from Kaloyan's actual introversion. Then again, his mission here is hardly a joyful one: he has returned to arrange the sale of his recently deceased father's house. But when carrying out some routine paperwork, he's informed that there is more for him to do.

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As part of a drive to attract new investment to this economically backward part of the country, a complex comprising a golf course, spa and casino is in the early stages of construction, necessitating the bulldozing of the town's cemetery. Not only will Kaloyan's father's remains be removed and reinterred, but those of his grandparents as well, and Kaloyan is the only relative on hand to make decisions about who will handle the reburial and how many plots the old bones should occupy. "Let the municipality do it," says Kaloyan brusquely to the peevish lady handing him forms and pamphlets. "Whatever. One grave."

This ruthless lack of sentimentality continues as Kaloyan, aided by his mother via Zoom, goes about clearing out his dad's old house. Furniture, ornaments and boxes of old photographs all meet the same response: "Throw them away." When he finds some old toys, she briefly thaws: "Aww, your grandfather brought them all the way from the Soviet Union," she reminisces, before adding, once again, "Throw them away."

But after he and a friend take on the task of helping other homeowners empty their requisitioned properties, the effort of all this summary disposal begins to take its toll on Kaloyan's reserve, as do the many tales he hears from old friends and neighbors, of his locally legendary, larger-than-life father's exploits – stories that are colored with all the warmth and admiration that Kaloyan found so lacking in his own troubled paternal relationship.

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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“Windless” does not deal in forgiveness, but it is about the beginnings of a tentative reconciliation between Kaloyan and the village he fled, the memories he suppressed and the father he “loathed.” Perhaps seeing his dad as the product of a tough-love generation who denied their offspring affection for fear of making them soft has helped. Perhaps it’s remembering overhearing his father’s heartbreakingly hard-headed advice to a friend: “Kiss your child only when they’re sleeping.” Or maybe it’s simply being back here, as ribbons of red-and-white hazard tape are stretched across the plundered cemetery and old lace curtains cast frilly patterns across Kaloyan’s tattooed face.

To notice the callous way the young and the living deal with the old and the dead is to understand that the only way to break a community’s cycle of lovelessness and decline is to treat the previous generation, however belatedly, better than they treated you.



## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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04 July 2024

**Roger Ebert**

Positive review

[KVIFF: Loveable, Tiny Lights, Windless](#)

Festivals & Awards

### KVIFF: Loveable, Tiny Lights, **Windless**

Robert Daniels July 04, 2024

Post

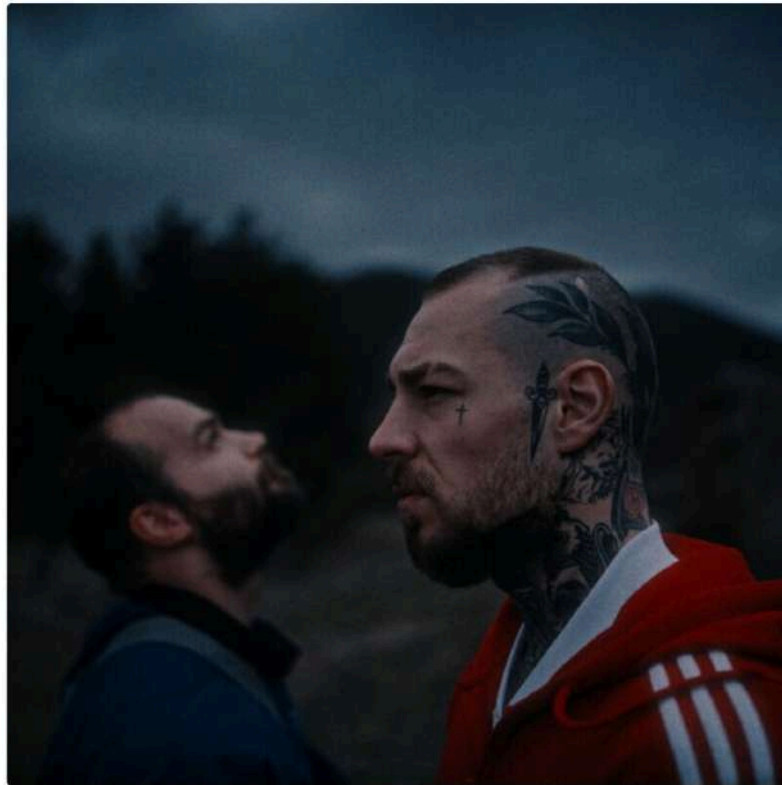


As I was writing up this second dispatch from Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, I couldn't help but think that this is probably the best collection of titles I've had this year in one of these write-ups. The three films here are about the death of families, of marriages, and of the places they occupy. They are sharp stabs at the heart intended to wound, if only to heal.

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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I am admittedly an easy mark for a story about a son parsing his relationship with his dead dad, but Pavel G Vesnakov's "**Windless**" is an exceptional piece of filmmaking. It sees Kaloyan (his friends call him Koko) returning home to his tiny Bulgarian town after living for years in Spain. He is there to sell his deceased father's former apartment. That story among the townspeople isn't necessarily unique. The new mayor is buying up properties that'll be torn down and redeveloped into a casino, a resort, and other high-end flats that he claims will revitalize the area. It sounds good to many people still living in what's quickly becoming a ghost town due to the older population not only dying but their children, like Koko (Ognyan "FYRE" Pavlov), moving overseas or to Western Europe. Everywhere Koko turns he is reminded of his decision to leave, and of his father—who everyone says was a good, honorable man. For what it's worth, he seems less well regarded by Koko.

## Press report *Windless*

### Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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Situated in the Proxima competition, “[Windless](#)” is a meditative character study that demands the viewer to listen. It does so through its vertical aspect ratio made even smaller by Koko often being framed in doorways and window frames. These tiny compositions also point to the initial myopia Koko displays—he wants to leave as quickly as possible, to the point of not wanting to settle the reburial of his relatives whose cemetery is about to be turned into a spa—and to the kind of snapshots of a place that may not exist in a hundred years.

Koko meets various people along the way: an uncle who imparts a “[Pulp Fiction](#)”-like story involving a wallet and other family friends—who tell him how amazing and how lonely his father was. Pavlov as Koko is exceptional at charting the emotional journey of a son beginning to confront his reasons for leaving his father and the wake he left behind. There is a longing under the many facial tattoos Koko sports, a depth of heartache that is only revealed in the many late-night zoom conversations he engages in with his mother and in his very act of quiet listening. By the end, “[Windless](#)” depicts how much has truly been lost: memories, pictures, furniture, heirlooms, cultural artifacts, and the very buildings that still hold the souls of loved ones. And yet, but so much is gained. When Koko says “I am here to care for my father,” it is a grasp to regain the time, the place, and the people who have slipped by and been demolished. It’s every regret you’ve ever had with a parent put into a movie, making for a beautiful reckoning.



#### Robert Daniels

Robert Daniels is an Associate Editor at RogerEbert.com. Based in Chicago, he is a member of the Chicago Film Critics Association (CFCA) and Critics Choice Association (CCA) and regularly contributes to the *New York Times*, *IndieWire*, and *Screen Daily*. He has covered film festivals ranging from Cannes to Sundance to Toronto. He has also written for the Criterion Collection, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *Rolling Stone* about Black American pop culture and issues of representation.

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

04 July 2024

ODG Magazine (IT)

Interview with Pavel Vesnakov

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)



**CAMBIO DI VENTO**  
INTERVISTA A  
**PAVEL G. VESNAKOV**  
A cura di Viktor Tóth

INT-75 04.07.2024

Con *German Lessons* (2020), il bulgaro Pavel G. Vesnakov si è fatto conoscere a livello internazionale. Presentata al Cairo International Film Festival, l'opera è sicuramente risultata interessante per il suo modo di inserirsi all'interno di una tipologia mainstream di cinema sociale dell'Europa Orientale. Il suo secondo lungometraggio, *Windless* (2024), rappresenta un cambio di rotta radicale: un lavoro dalla fotografia curata in un modo particolare, con un ritmo rallentato, pochi dialoghi, molti silenzi, che vede come protagonista un personaggio pieno di tatuaggi in volto - interpretato dal rapper Fyre - che potrebbe sembrare fuori luogo in un film che appartiene ad un cinema d'autore dalla matrice estremamente intellettuale, ma che invece funziona.

Presentato al Karlovy Vary Film Festival nella sezione parallela Proxima, *Windless* ha rappresentato una delle migliori anteprime mondiali della manifestazione ceca, ed essendo co-prodotto da Disparte verrà distribuito da Fandango nelle sale italiane a partire da oggi, 4 Luglio.

Abbiamo incontrato Pavel G. Vesnakov, e parlato con lui del suo ultimo lavoro.

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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*German Lessons* (2020)

Vorrei iniziare con "l'aspetto estetico" più appariscente, l'aspect ratio di 1:1, che immette un chiaro senso di claustrofobia, ma che sono sicuro sia stata una sfida immensa a livello tecnico, o per sviluppare le scene.

È stato certamente complicato, perché a parte l'aspect ratio, abbiamo anche deciso di usare inquadrature fisse in prevalenza. La macchina da presa si muove solo un paio di volte. È stato interessante da un punto di vista artistico, perché ritengo che con maggiori restrizioni si diventa più creativi.

*Windless* ha un'atmosfera sospesa nel tempo ma, nello stesso momento, parla di un paesino che sta per subire un cambiamento radicale, il titolo suggerisce un'assenza di vento ma nel film spesso vediamo le nubi in tempesta, percepisco sempre alcune contraddizioni intenzionali.

Penso che in Bulgaria, nella nostra società, abbiamo questa sensazione che il tempo si sia fermato e che niente stia progredendo. Al contempo, tutto si trasforma ed è difficile rendersi conto di cosa stia succedendo. Lo vediamo nella società, anche al di fuori della mia Nazione, ed è quello che volevo immortalare con questo film. Questo sforzo, questa lotta quotidiana con le persone locali e il modo in cui si rapportano con chi vive all'estero e ritorna a casa.

Anche il tema del ritorno a casa è stato spesso toccato nel cinema, ma *Windless* si distingue in qualche modo.

Volevo raccontare una storia semplice, alla quale molti si possano sentire affini anche se provengono da diverse culture o parti del mondo, ma anche trovare qualcosa di unico nel modo in cui racconto questa storia. Cosa c'è di speciale nella nostra società in Bulgaria? E penso che ho trovato questa prospettiva particolare nella rappresentazione visiva della storia. Il modo in cui usiamo le immagini nel modo più poetico possibile per questo tipo di narrazione, è qualcosa che è importante per me come autore.

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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*Windless* (2024)

**Parlando di immagini poetiche, in una sequenza ho notato una certa allusione ad Andrej Tarkovskij.**

L'ho incanalato molto, lo apprezzo particolarmente e abbiamo ripreso molte scene in questo modo, non era l'unica sequenza di questo genere. In fase di montaggio ci siamo resi conto che *Windless* stava diventando troppo simile ai suoi film. Ho quindi cercato di limitarmi, ma se fosse per me e se non mi importasse di compiacere il pubblico, riempirei il film di queste inquadrature.

**Al contempo va bene così, non ho avuto l'impressione che questo parallelo fosse così presente. E facendo un film lento è difficile non guardare a Tarkovskij.**

Si, si. Non puoi sfuggire alla sua influenza, è come se gli facessimo un piccolo omaggio.

**Dal tipo di *color grading*, ho avuto la sensazione che il film potesse essere stato realizzato in pellicola, avete girato in pellicola o in digitale?**

Abbiamo girato il film in digitale, ma nel mio tempo libero sono un appassionato di fotografia e con il mio DOP ci siamo ispirati a due grandi fotografi che lavorano in pellicola. Uno è William Eggleston, l'altro è Todd Hydo. Puoi vedere le loro influenze nel nostro uso del colore, molto saturato ma buio, che è qualcosa che trovo interessante.

**Per protagonista hai scelto Fyre, un rapper noto in Bulgaria, per un ruolo in un film inusuale per una celebrità associata, di solito, ad un ambiente diverso dal cinema d'autore.**

Ho deciso di parlarci ed ha accettato, ed a quel punto ho cambiato la sceneggiatura per accomodarla alla sua presenza. Ho scelto lui perché l'ho trovato intelligente e sensibile, non tanto per la sua fama. È un film che è molto personale rispetto a lui.

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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*Windless* (2024)

E forse c'erano aspetti improvvisati o personali nei vari monologhi dei personaggi secondari?

Sì, certo, in queste lunghissime inquadrature non penso sia possibile essere verosimili se non ci si inserisce qualcosa di personale. Tutti i personaggi seguivano la sceneggiatura, ma usando le proprie parole.

Ripensando al tuo film precedente, *German Lessons*, era molto diverso, più dialogato, dinamico, con un'aspect ratio da 2.35:1...con *Windless* hai cambiato strada.

Sì, il mio primo film, *German Lessons*, era ispirato ai miei cortometraggi precedenti ed all'epoca pensavo che, come regista, avrei continuato ad essere così com'è quel film, ma con *Windless* so di aver fatto dei cambiamenti drastici. Sono successe molte cose nella mia vita, e penso che questo lungometraggio sia più vicino all'approccio che adopererò in futuro.

Quale direzione prenderai dopo *Windless*?

Il mio prossimo progetto riguarderà un osservatorio astronomico situato su delle montagne. Sarà la prima volta che farò un film con personaggi non appartenenti al ceto operaio ma che invece sono degli intellettuali, astrofisici che esplorano il cielo. È di nuovo un film lento e un po' filosofico, sulla natura del tempo e su come affrontarlo. Possiamo tornare al passato, indietro nel tempo?



Il trailer di *Windless* (2024)

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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03 July 2024

East Journal (IT)

Film announcement and recommendation

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)



### CINEMA: WINDLESS BY PAVEL G. VESNAKOV IN THEATERS, A FILM NOT TO BE MISSED

👤 Victor Toth 📅 July 4, 2024

With *German Lessons*, Pavel G. Vesnakov directed a film that fits into a type of social cinema that is very widespread in Central-Eastern Europe, almost "mainstream". With *Windless*, a real and substantial change of direction occurs. The film apparently tells an already trite and hackneyed story: the return to his native country of a boy who emigrated to the West, who after the death of his father must sell his house. And yet, *Windless* is the most unusual thing you can see in contemporary cinema.

Starting from the unusual dimensions of the frame: an aspect ratio of 1:1 (even narrower than 4:3); the pace and the narration, a slow cinema of Tarkovsky derivation – an obvious homage halfway through the film makes this connection explicit. Few dialogues, many improvised, reflective monologues, and even more silences. A continuous and intentional contradiction: a film in which the suspension of time dominates, but which lingers on an episode of change; the title suggests a lack of wind, but the shots are dominated by stormy clouds; a tone of depth and reflection, but a protagonist played by a popular rapper, Fyre – a contradiction perceived even by himself, who wants to fight the stereotypes associated with his artistic category and demonstrates a sincere interest in this type of cinema.

*Windless* is also a truly stunning film, from a visual point of view, like very few films both at Karlovy Vary and in general on the European or international scene. Placed at the Czech festival in the Proxima section, dedicated to more "experimental" works, the film manages to hold its own even with works from the main competition. Pavel G. Vesnakov establishes himself as a very particular directorial-authorial figure, choosing to take a very personal path compared to the mainstream in which he placed himself with his debut film, a courageous, risky choice, but one that makes him a filmmaker whose future career is worth observing.

Co-produced by the Italian company *disparte*, it will be distributed in Italy by Fandango starting from July 4th, in a limited selection of theaters, for the next week only, according to the information we have received. We strongly recommend viewing it to anyone interested in Central and Eastern European cinema.



## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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03 July 2024

Cineuropa

Interview with Pavel Vesnakov

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)

**KARLOVY VARY 2024** Proxima

**Pavel G Vesnakov • Director of *Windless***

**“Hesitation is a burden, but it marks creative paths”**

by [MARIANA HRISTOVA](#)

🕒 03/07/2024 - The Bulgarian director decodes his second feature, which follows a young man who's detached from his past and his homeland as he deals with the sale of a family apartment



(© Veselka Kiryakova)

We spoke to **Pavel G Vesnakov** on the occasion of his latest film, *Windless* [+], world-premiering in the Proxima Competition, unspooling within the [Karlovy Vary International Film Festival](#). As the most promising director of Bulgarian arthouse cinema, Vesnakov sheds light on elements of his distinctive style by sharing his views on storytelling and his approach to characters.

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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**Cineuropa: In our previous interview (read [here](#)) you promised *Windless* would be more radical in form than *German Lessons* [+], and here it is, with its square format aspect ratio, penetrating close-ups, and fragmented shots of reality aligned with the main character's dispersed life. What were your intentions behind these aesthetic decisions?**

**Pavel G Vesnakov:** To date, I've strived for credibility in my films by incorporating documentary aesthetics, which have also imposed limitations on my work – no music, no extra lighting - in an effort to capture everything in the most realistic way possible. Such an approach inevitably prioritises content over form. It's been 15 years since my first short film, and I wanted to escape the comfort of well-versed cinematic expression – repeating the same patterns no longer made sense. That said, I did want the film to reflect how I felt. As a child, I lived in a tiny apartment for a long time. The place where the main character's father lived is very similar: an extremely claustrophobic space. I thought the square format was perfect for conveying the sensation of being trapped. When the character returns to his birthplace, the past overwhelms him and there's no way out. He finds himself forced into hearing stories about his deceased father. The film's dialogues and monologues aren't interrupted by editing either, so they remain as un-interfered with as possible. My aim was to offer a detached and more poetic view of an ultimately grim domestic reality.

**The plot is also radical as it deals with a cleansing of memory from both a personal and a societal viewpoint. Does a careless attitude towards the past explain the disintegration of Bulgarian society?**

That was the leitmotif in my head while filming. We began shooting just a week after the war in Ukraine started, and the preparation period, charged with global anxiety, greatly influenced the working process. It's intimately connected with the disintegration of the protagonist's family. However, the most important aspect of this collapse is in the private space. The initial script was cluttered with everyday details, so I wanted to clean it up to focus on the personal side and eventually make references to the bigger picture. Throughout filming, we followed the script in the mornings, and in the afternoons, we documented the reality around us.

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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**The overarching theme in *Windless* does seem to be the issues associated with private and collective memory - is this correct?**

Memory and the passage of time are indeed the central themes. *Windless*, as a title, refers to the frightening stagnation in the memories of young people, the lack of breath to ruffle the different layers. In fact, the film is inspired by **Anuk Arudpragasam's** novel, *A Passage North*, in which the main character returns to his native Sri Lanka for his nanny's funeral. The book is a kind of meditation set against a horrific socio-political backdrop of civil war, bloody crimes, and a wider harsh reality. However, the tone remains deeply poetical. I felt compelled to experiment with the language of film and to break with the established storytelling style in recent Bulgarian cinema. I aim to make viewers think about something beyond the narrative, as I find the mere act of narration too pragmatic. I also try not to involve my characters in sensational plotlines or genre frameworks, and I avoid exploring speculative intentions in the situations described. The social status of the protagonist in *German Lessons*, for example, could be higher, but he'd still be in the same mess with his friends and family. It's just that I grew up in these kinds of dodgy neighbourhoods, so it's the reality I know how to describe best.

**In *German Lessons*, your character is a hesitant non-leaver, and in *Windless*, he's a hesitant non-returner. Where is the intersection between the two of them, and where do you fit in in this context?**

My feeling is that both of them have never truly left, and I'm a non-leaver as well. I've been here the whole time, serving as a crosspoint between the characters. I identify with their uncertainty. Hesitation is a burden, but creative paths are marked by it. Assertiveness and confident statements in cinema annoy me. The search for cause-and-effect relationships in a given plot sets boundaries which the characters don't seem to be allowed to cross. I try to do the exact opposite. There's something beautiful and poetic about unexpected and illogical actions.

Beyond all logic, for example, I cast **Ognyan Pavlov "FYRE"** for the main role. He's a very popular and influential rapper but an outsider to the story, so I added aspects of his personality to the character. He's a non-professional actor but he has extensive experience in making music videos, which helped a lot for the film.

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

02 July 2024

Screen Daily

Positive review

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)

### REVIEWS

## 'Windless': Karlovy Vary Review

BY WENDY IDE | 2 JULY 2024



Bulgarian rapper FYRE is a returning emigrant forced to confront both his own past, and that of his country



SOURCE: KARLOVY VARY  
'WINDLESS'

Dir: Pavel G. Vesnakov. Bulgaria/Italy. 2024. 93min

From the moment that Kaloyan (Ognyan Pavlov, aka the rapper FYRE) returns to Bulgaria after a lengthy period living and working in Spain, it feels as though the walls are closing in. He's back to handle the sale of his late father's apartment, something he's eager to have done with as quickly as possible. But the embrace of his community exerts an unexpected pull, prompting him to explore his relationship with his childhood, his dead father and his country, in this cinematic, accomplished second feature from Pavel G. Vesnakov.

### MOST POPULAR



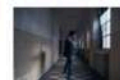
'Longlegs': Review



What does the UK film & TV industry want from the new Labour government?



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Locarno unveils 2024 line-up including premieres from Hong Sangsoo, Wang Bing and Ben Rivers



Teresa Moneo takes over Netflix UK film role; Bradley Quirk exits (exclusive)



Venice reveals 2024 competition jury



Vue is opening cinemas and investing in the future, says CEO Tim Richards

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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### **Depicts Bulgaria as being recklessly unsentimental about its own history**

*Windless* premieres in the Proxima competition in Karlovy Vary, the first stop on what should be a healthy festival run. And while the film will likely thrive within the festival circuit, it is also distinctive enough to attract interest elsewhere. Vesnakov cut his teeth with several well-received shorts, and his first feature film *German Lessons* (2020), which featured FYRE in a supporting role, premiered at the Cairo Film Festival and went on to win numerous prizes in its home region. *Windless* should, at the very least, match that reception.

It's clear from the outset that Vesnakov is a director with an assured and confident creative vision. The decision to shoot in a 1:1 aspect ratio is a bold one, but it pays off immediately. Put a face like Kaloyan's on screen (he's shaven-headed and inscrutable behind his numerous facial tattoos) and you immediately make a statement. Put him in a frame that constricts like a cage, and there's a tension and claustrophobia that all but squeezes the oxygen out of the cinema. Vesnakov further restricts his characters by shooting through door frames, slicing even more space from around Kaloyan. It is no wonder he seems ill at ease.

## Press report *Windless*

### Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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But for all the tension that results from the framing, this is a strikingly beautiful film. The composition of an extended family dinner, presided over by a blowhard uncle who frets that Kaloyan has nowhere to drain his cabbage barrels in Spain, resembles a renaissance painting. Yet while the physical space is restricted, Vesnakov is generous with the leeway he gives characters to speak. Everywhere Kaloyan goes, he runs into old men who want to toast his father's memory and share stories about the great man. Locked, long shots fill with meandering, rakia-sodden tributes. And Kaloyan listens, moved despite himself to hear about his father – a man that he didn't know or even like.

It is a picture which, while it shows Kaloyan exploring and coming to appreciate his past, also depicts Bulgaria as being recklessly unsentimental about its own history. A scene in which Kaloyan's mother tells him to throw away pretty much everything he finds in the empty flat, including boxes of photos and communist-era toys, has an element of comedy. But it also carries an echo of the town mayor's approach to the land – the cemetery is being cleared to make way for a golf course; whole blocks of residential buildings (including Kaloyan's father's apartment) are being levelled in order for a casino and entertainment complex to be built. And in the face of this brutal renewal, the older generation feel themselves to be disposable. It's no wonder that they cling to their stories, the remnants of a rapidly eroding past.

Production company: Red Carpet

International sales: Alpha Violet [info@alphaviolet.com](mailto:info@alphaviolet.com)

Producer: Veselka Kiryakova

Screenplay: Pavel G. Vesnakov, Simeon Ventsislavov, Teodora Markova, Nevena Kertova, Georgi Ivanov

Cinematography: Orlin Ruevski

Production design: Severina Stoyanova

Editing: Victoria Radoslavova

Music: Ascari

Main cast: Ognyan Pavlov, Veselin Petrov, Mihail Mutafov, Nadya Derderyan, Lidia Vulkova, Konstantin Trendafilov, Vasil Bine

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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02 July 2024

### Past Present Feature

Interview with Pavel Vesnakov

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)



### E8 • Keeping It Real • PAVEL G. VESNAKOV, dir. of 'Windless' at the Karlovy Vary Int. Film Festival



**Marcus Mizelle**  
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79 views 10 days ago Past Present Feature

Bulgarian filmmaker Pavel Vesnakov discusses his journey in the film industry and his film 'Windless'. He talks about the importance of World Premiering at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival - a significant milestone for him. He shares his early influences, including the films 'Taste of Cherry' by Abbas Kiarostami and '3 Iron' by Kim Ki-duk, which inspired him to pursue filmmaking. ...more

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

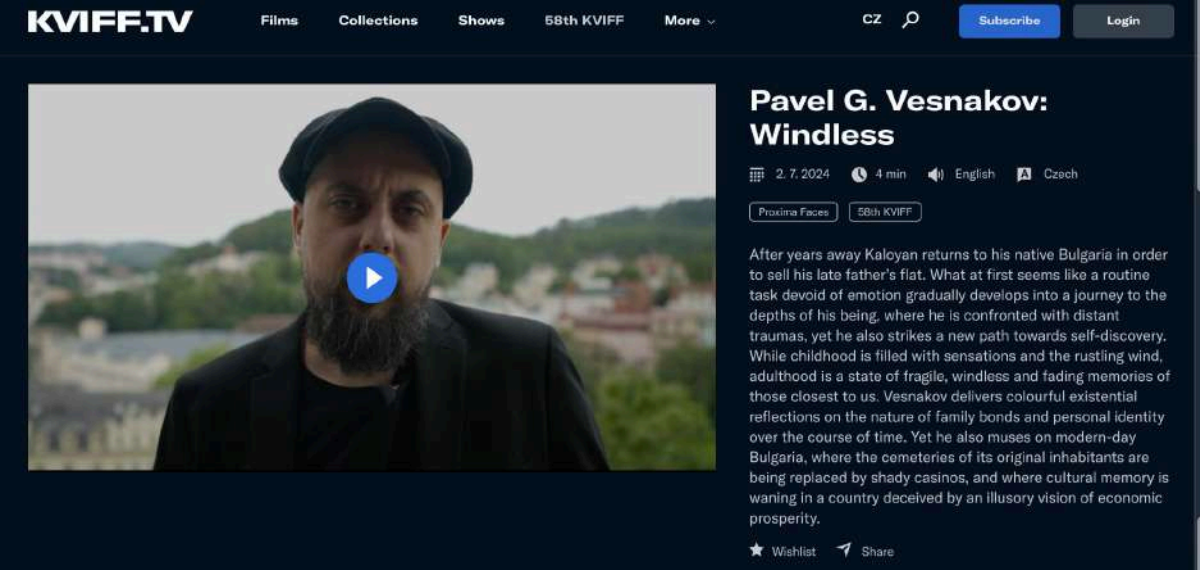
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02 July 2024

KVIFF

Interview with Pavel Vesnakov

[Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless](#)



The screenshot shows the KVIFF.TV website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'KVIFF.TV' on the left, followed by 'Films', 'Collections', 'Shows', '58th KVIFF', and 'More'. On the right side of the navigation bar, there are 'CZ', a search icon, a 'Subscribe' button, and a 'Login' button. Below the navigation bar is a video player. The video player shows a man with a beard and a cap, looking directly at the camera. A blue play button is overlaid on the video. To the right of the video player, the title 'Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless' is displayed. Below the title, there are icons for a calendar (2. 7. 2024), a clock (4 min), a speaker (English), and a flag (Czech). There are also two buttons: 'Praximo Faces' and '58th KVIFF'. Below the video player, there is a paragraph of text describing the film. At the bottom right of the video player, there are icons for 'Wishlist' and 'Share'.

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### Pavel G. Vesnakov: Windless

2. 7. 2024 4 min English Czech

[Praximo Faces](#) [58th KVIFF](#)

After years away Kaloyan returns to his native Bulgaria in order to sell his late father's flat. What at first seems like a routine task devoid of emotion gradually develops into a journey to the depths of his being, where he is confronted with distant traumas, yet he also strikes a new path towards self-discovery. While childhood is filled with sensations and the rustling wind, adulthood is a state of fragile, windless and fading memories of those closest to us. Vesnakov delivers colourful existential reflections on the nature of family bonds and personal identity over the course of time. Yet he also muses on modern-day Bulgaria, where the cemeteries of its original inhabitants are being replaced by shady casinos, and where cultural memory is waning in a country deceived by an illusory vision of economic prosperity.

★ Wishlist ↗ Share



## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

02 July 2024

Cineuropa

Positive review

[Review: Windless](#)

KARLOVY VARY 2024 Proxima

Review: *Windless*

by [MARIANA HRISTOVA](#)

02/07/2024 - Bulgarian director Pavel G. Vesnakov follows the awakening of a rootless soul amidst the remnants of an abandoned past



Ognyan "FYRE" Pavlov (right) and Veselin Petrov in *Windless*

Three years after his existentially sensitive debut, *German Lessons* [+], featuring a man hesitant about emigrating in order to escape his complicated life, **Pavel G. Vesnakov** has returned with the even grimmer and more contemplative *Windless* [+], in which a kind of mirror character unfolds – one who has emigrated and now returns to clear up the scattered remains of the mess left behind. But he also does so to piece together his fragmented memory and involuntarily catch up on key details he had missed, even if only through other people's stories. What connects both protagonists is not so much their threshold situation as their ongoing hesitation, for which there seems to be no firm solution. It is precisely on this state of mind, rather than on the way out of it, that *Windless* is focused, turning itself into a meditative experience. The film has just celebrated its premiere in the Proxima competition of the 58<sup>th</sup> [Karlovy Vary International Film Festival](#), building on the "miserabilism" of last year's Crystal Globe winner, *Blaga's Lessons* [+] (again set in the depopulated Bulgarian countryside), with an artistic impulse and cinematic poetry in the face of universal despair.



### trailers & videos

international title:	Windless
original title:	Bezvetrije
country:	Bulgaria, Italy
sales agent:	Alpha Violet
year:	2024
directed by:	Pavel G. Vesnakov
screenplay:	Pavel G. Vesnakov, Simeon Ventsislavov, Teodora Markova, Nevena Kertova, Georgi Ivanov
cast:	Ognyan Pavlov, Veselin Petrov

### main awards/selection

Karlovy Vary Proxima  
2024

### full film profile

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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*Windless* begins with a gloomy opening sequence, featuring solitary figures under an overcast grey sky, who meet in silence but have clearly been familiar with each other for a long time. Top-to-bottom tattooed Kaloyan (**Ognyan "FYRE" Pavlov**) has returned briefly from Spain to get rid of his family apartment, which will soon be bulldozed along with many other dwellings and the cemetery in this deserted former mining town, to make way for a casino, a spa complex, and a golf course. As he disposes of his recently deceased father's belongings and his mother conducts the process via video from Spain, he also visits neighbours and old acquaintances, and helps a childhood friend clean other soon-to-be-demolished apartments with soon-to-be-evicted elderly people inside. Discarding the remnants of the once bustling town wears down Kaloyan's indifference, as does the devastating sight of bones exhumed from the cemetery in plastic bags. Unexpectedly, even for Kaloyan himself, he begins to cherish the pieces of past lives that accompany each tossed-out item while listening to heroic stories about his estranged father.

The bold, somewhat startling cinematography, made of sharply cut close-ups in an airless square format, as well as the frames accentuating details rather than the whole picture, are achieved by Vesnakov's regular DoP collaborator **Orlin Ruevski**. This approach might look pretentious at first glance but gradually falls into place. Such a narrowed and fragmented viewpoint belongs to a character who has a hard time getting a grasp on and producing some kind of meaning for his dispersed life – between here and there, between then and now. Suddenly trapped within the building where he spent his seemingly joyless childhood by overwhelming stories from neighbours, his claustrophobic experience is subtly yet masterfully transmitted by this brave cinematic decision. As a result, the verbally shared pieces of a common collective memory, metaphorically summed up and visually embodied by the appearance of a home video excerpt towards the end of the film, combat the amnesia of a nation, preoccupied with its physical survival in the here and now while abandoning its roots and its ancestors' memories. Such a premise confirms Vesnakov as perhaps the most profound thinker among contemporary Bulgarian filmmakers, and one who doesn't hesitate to experiment with the film form in his search for the best means of expression to accompany his characters and ideas.

*Windless* was produced by Bulgaria's [Red Carpet](#) and was co-produced by Italy's [dispàrte](#). World sales are handled by [Alpha Violet](#).

## Press report *Windless*

### Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

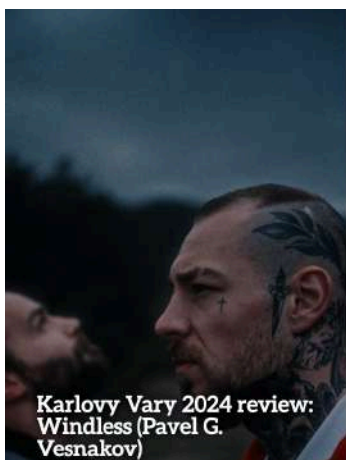
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01 July 2024

ICS (International Cinephile Society)

Positive review

[Karlovy Vary 2024 review: Windless \(Pavel G. Vesnakov\)](#)



HOME - NEWS - REVIEWS - FESTIVALS - ESSAYS - FEATURES - AWARDS - MORE -

"A heartrending character study focused on the challenging process of plumbing the emotional depths of history, and the importance of embracing even the most uncomfortable parts of one's past."



Coming home can be cathartic or challenging, depending on a number of variables that make everyone's experiences vastly different. For some, their childhood home or the town in which they spent their formative years can feel welcoming and instill a sense of comfort. For others, it can provoke memories of the past that many would prefer to keep hidden. This is the foundation of *Windless*, in which Pavel G. Vesnakov used his poignant sophomore feature-length effort as a chance to explore both sides of the conversation, creating a deeply moving portrait of the experience of returning to the place of one's childhood, and the challenges that emerge when we are forced to confront some of life's harsher truths. The film tells the simple story of a young man returning to the small Bulgarian village in which he was raised after the death of his father. He intends to complete some administrative tasks that have to do with their former home, but in the process begins to unearth secrets about his family history that he had not previously encountered, and which cause him to reconsider certain aspects of his upbringing. A tender but hard-hitting social realist drama carefully pieced together by a director whose simple approach carries the most weight, *Windless* is a powerful film about examining your personal history and liberating yourself from the sometimes unbearable burden of the past.

Vesnakov takes his cue from an established canon of films that all centre on the trials and tribulations of those who set out to return home, which can be a very emotional experience. *Windless* seeks to explore the past, primarily focusing on Bulgaria in the decades following the fall of the Soviet Union, and how the scars of the past still run deep in the country, held there by the collective memory of those who experienced it and passed on the generational trauma to their offspring. The protagonist voyages to the small town in which he was raised and discovers that a relatively simple administrative task of relocating the bodies of his deceased family members (as part of an effort to modernise the town by introducing a golf course) comes with many complications, some of them bureaucratic while others are deeply psychological. The film explores the culture through stories and anecdotes delivered by a bevy of characters that the protagonist encounters during his short return. The idea of relocating bodies or clearing out a childhood home is not inconsequential to the plot, since it points towards the theme of exhaling the remains of the past, a laborious and emotional process, albeit one that is necessary and can result in sheer catharsis once it has been overcome. Throughout the film, the characters make a conscious effort to remove the burden of the past through moving what is vital and disposing of everything that is unnecessary, whether remnants of their country's dark history, or personal artefacts that played an important role in their upbringing, but which are no longer important in their ongoing lives.

Every piece of commentary we find scattered throughout this film makes it quite clear that Vesnakov was not only intent on exploring the country's past, but also crafting a more intimate portrait of a complex protagonist, through whom each idea is filtered. There is more to the theme of homecoming than just the social and cultural component, and we find that *Windless* is as much about Bulgaria's past as it is a deeply personal account of a young man trying to find his way home, both literally and metaphorically. Kaloyan, affectionately known as "Koko" by those who knew him before his active attempts to embrace a harsher form of modernity, is a fascinating protagonist - at a cursory glance, he seems to have embraced a stereotypical image of masculinity, both in terms of appearance and demeanour. However, we soon discover that this coarse, overly aggressive persona masks his insecurities, his efforts to adopt a more callous appearance being a deliberate attempt to escape a traditional upbringing. Ognian "FYRE" Pavlov is astonishing in the role, taking on the layers of complexity that simmer beneath the surface of the character and reconfiguring them to be three-dimensional, rather than relying on archetypal tropes to play the part. Identity is as integral to the plot of *Windless* as the historical and social context, and it is through the exploration of Kaloyan's growing understanding of his past, as well as his underlying desire to find a place to call home, that the film makes some of its most poignant and heartfelt statements.

*Windless* is a fascinating film, primarily for how it openly embraces the more challenging aspects of its narrative. It is beautifully directed, with Vesnakov's attention to narrative detail equally matched by his visual compositions, which are simple but stunning. The tone of the film is intense but poignant, and it never seems impelled to include layers of hysteria to make its underlying themes more clear. Instead, it focuses on being an unfurnished, direct drama that explores the inner workings of a young man caught in a proverbial tug-of-war between tradition and modernity, eager to emancipate himself from the former, but knowing that only through embracing it can he truly come into his own identity. The film moves at a quiet and meditative pace, and much of the story revolves around conversations between individuals, particularly in the conflict that occurs when someone whose life is guided by the dismissal of traditions is suddenly confronted by those who have embraced the past and allowed it to form their worldview. The director makes his beliefs abundantly clear throughout the film - only by questioning the past are we able to understand the present and move towards the future. Gentle in some parts and callous in others, and driven by a genuine sense of wanting to make some bold proclamations about the past and the role it plays in forming one's identity, *Windless* is a heartrending character study focused on the challenging process of plumbing the emotional depths of history, and the importance of embracing even the most uncomfortable parts of one's past, since it is only through understanding where we come from that we can truly move forward.



## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

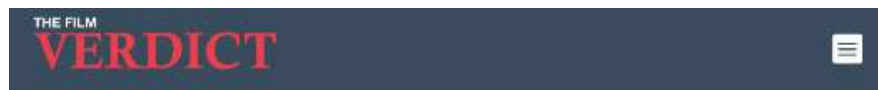
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01 July 2024

**The Film Verdict**

Positive review

[Windless](#)



[Home](#) - [Festivals](#) - [Windless](#)

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# Windless

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Bevretrije

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Film Series: Festival: Karlovy Vary

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**VERDICT:** A son returns to Bulgaria from abroad to settle the affairs of his estranged father in this confined drama about confronting the past and the act of memorial.

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[Ben Nicholson](#)

July 1st, 2024

## Press report *Windless*

### Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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The past is a stifling place for the protagonist of Pavel G. Vesnakov's sophomore feature, *Windless*.

Forced to return to his rundown hometown in Bulgaria having long since moved to Spain with his mother, Kaloyan (Ognyan Pavlov, otherwise known as the rapper "FYRE") is less than overjoyed to be there. He is visiting to handle his father's affair in the wake of his death, primarily the clearance and sale of his flat. When in an early scene someone asks Kaloyan why he wasn't at his father's funeral, his sullen silence tells us all we need to know about the state of their relationship – we later learn they hadn't spoken in more than a year. While dutiful in making the trip back, he evidently finds the place oppressive, his childhood memories the catalyst for a brick wall built to keep them at bay. It's this experience Vesnakov captures acutely in *Windless*, which premieres in the Proxima Competition of this year's Karlovy Vary Film Festival. It's an experience of being railroaded into reckoning with your past and having to wrestle with questions of if and how we honour it.

Kaloyan is a moody and reflective individual and Vesnakov embraces these characteristics to create the milieu of the entire film. This is the world as seen by the protagonist – from the muted coolness of the colour-palette to the notable 1:1 shooting ratio. We've seen that same boxy aesthetic used to convey a psychological claustrophobia in the past, most notably in Xavier Dolan's *Mommy*, and it is similarly effective here. It makes the world feel incredibly tight around Kaloyan. Each thing he interacts with that brings back unwanted memories fill the screen, as if he is being challenged by it, face on.

What is perhaps most interesting about this dynamic in *Windless* is that the memories being presented to Kaloyan are diametrically opposed to his own and so the tension comes not from the external stimuli but from our inference of the character's emotional state. Almost every person that discusses Kaloyan's father, Asen, in the film does so with a sense of reverence and depth of emotion that his own son long ago discarded. Old comrades speak of his bravery and selflessness, friends of his compassion and sense of duty to his family, others of his overwhelming generosity of spirit. The whole film is punctuated with anecdotes that create a portrait of a much-loved and respected man who was selfless to a fault. It is a testament to Vesnakov's skill as a filmmaker and Pavlov's impressive performance, that we feel a tightness in our gut at such kind words.

These conversations form a recurring motif in the film's structure, with Kaloyan confronted by a variety of people – typically of his father's generation or older – who either reminisce specifically about Asen or provide a broader context to the town in which Kaloyan was born and his father spent his life. With each one Kaloyan has another perspective to challenge or reinforce the one he already holds, of a town that offers few prospects and a father who never loved him. Late on, he tells his friend (Veselin Petrov) about overhearing his father once say that you should only ever kiss your child while they are asleep. Asen's tough love approach seems to have had more of an impact on his son that he could have imagined.

## Press report *Windless*

### Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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Between these conversations, the two friends rove around while Kaloyan waits for the money from the sale to clear. He helps out with odd jobs, doing rubbish clearances that are the result of a new casino and highway development that is seen as progress and opportunity by some and the destruction of a community by others. One such development involves the cemetery meaning that Kaloyan must arrange for the removal of the bodies of his father and grandparents. At the film's beginning, he wants this sorted with as little input from himself as possible, but as he sees the disregard with which people are treating the past, and he comes to have a nuanced view of his own, this gradually shifts. Films about homecomings and coming-of-age are all about arriving at new perspectives and this is absolutely *Windless's* central arc. Pavlov doesn't necessarily change the outward demeanour of his performance, but it seems to innately soften as he sees both the town and father he was thankful to have left behind with fresh eyes. In what is a quiet and understated film, it makes for a hugely compelling watch.

Director: Pavel G. Vesnakov

Cast: Ognyan Pavlov - "FYRE", Veselin Petrov, Mihail Mutafov, Nadya Derderyan, Lidia Vulkova, Konstantin Trendafilov, Vasil Binev,

Producer: Veselka Kiryakova

Screenplay: Pavel G. Vesnakov, Simeon Ventsislavov, Teodora Markova, Nevena Kartova, Georgi Ivanov

Cinematography: Orlin Ruevski

Editing: Victoria Radoslavova

Music: Ascani

Production design: Severina Stoyanova

Costume design: Marieta Spasova

Production company: Red Carpet (Bulgaria), disparte (Italy)

Venue: Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (Proxima Competition)

In Bulgarian

93 minutes

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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01 July 2024

Dirty Movies

Positive review

[Windless](#)

### Windless



Memories resurface and hell breaks loose when a man returns to his Bulgarian hometown to in order sell his late father's flat - from the 58th edition of Karlovy Vary

#### Director(s)

Pavel G. Vesnakov

#### Year of release

2024

#### Country of origin

Bulgaria, Italy

#### Starring

Ognyan Pavlov, Veselin Petrov

#### Rating



"Dirty gem"

#### QUICK AND DIRTY: LIVE FROM KARLOVY VARY

Returning home after a long absence is no easy feat. In Pavel G. Vesnakov's second feature *Windless*, there may not be much of a home left. Koko (Ognyan Pavlov, also known as rapper "FYRE") is back in his little Bulgarian hometown after living in Spain for 10 years. His visit is not a leisurely one. He must sort the inventory of his late, estranged father.

There is a quiet, reduced presence in Pavlov's acting, with an uncomfortable, deviant aura. It soon becomes evident that signing a few documents is only a fraction of the mammoth task ahead. His return collides with a general restructuring of the whole town. Out with the old squares, the historic buildings, the residences, and even the cemetery, in with the new. **This "new" is a capitalist dream-come-true:** A hotel, a casino, a spa, a golf clubs, and perhaps even a highway. The authorities hope to lure back the people who left. They need "liven thing up in that fucking country", as one old buddy of his dad puts it.

Koko has to clean out his dad's old apartment. The construction site barricade tape visible through the window. He also has to arrange for the relocation of his father's and also his

## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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### Dirty message

Memories are highly  
inflammable

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grandparent's bones. He finds the task overwhelming, just like s the 1:1 frame ratio. **There is a density to the scene, a feeling of inescapability.** The characters are taking up the frame, their obscure surroundings suffocating them.

As Koko goes through the belongings of his dad, there too seems to be little of value. Blankets - toss. Pots and pans - toss. Even old photographs of his grandparents are ready for the bin. The friends of the late man have a very different allegiance: they remember with with saint-like reverence, and place his mementos in a shrine. A childhood friend invites Koko to clean up some houses. Old furniture, family pictures, or busts of Stalin or Lenin burn in large bonfires. Suddenly, melancholia consumes Koko.

The elderly - whose house are being cleaned and sold - crumble under unbearable weight of trauma. **They are not prepared to cut ties with the past so quickly.** They don't see a future for them in a town adorned a casino and a golf club. Their identity is deeply rooted in their land, their memories, and the things that Koko is throwing out. Vesnakov paints this land in gloomy colours, strikingly cloudy skies and a mythical eeriness. The raw beauty is reflected in the old residents, many played by non-professional actors. **This is place in conflict with itself,** a battle that reflects Koko's inner turmoil. He too has to come to terms with his past.

How time will affect the town remains to be seen. It is hard to see the place being a magnet for gamblers and golf-lovers. An old man has a tragic premonition: "in a few years there will be no more town". In fact, in a few years there may be nothing to remember. **Memories too are endangered.**

*Windless* premieres in the Proxima strand of the 58th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.



## Press report *Windless*

Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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27 June 2024

Cineuropa

Trailer and poster exclusive

[EXCLUSIVE: Trailer and poster for Karlovy Vary title \*Windless\*](#)

### EXCLUSIVE: Trailer and poster for Karlovy Vary title *Windless*

by [MARIANA HRISTOVA](#)

🕒 27/06/2024 - Pavel G Vesnakov's fiction feature attempts to speak about Bulgarian society as a whole, but from the point of view of one young man



*Windless* by Pavel G Vesnakov

"Kaloyan returns home to handle the sale of his late father's apartment. At the beginning, the process starts as a routine, mundane task, but soon, it transcends this and turns into a journey of self-discovery that tries to track the connection between childhood trauma, memory and the passage of time." So goes the synopsis of **Pavel G Vesnakov's** second full-length film, [Windless](#) [+], set to premiere in the Proxima Competition of the imminent [Karlovy Vary International Film Festival](#) (28 June-6 July).

## Press report *Windless*

### Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024

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"I want to explore the stillness of memory and the muteness of a hidden childhood trauma. Kaloyan's return to his father's flat is a pilgrimage to a shrine of memory, a confrontation with the past that is as vivid as it is elusive. The furniture remains in the same place where it was left years ago, and the photographs still hang on the walls. Yet the warmth of those objects has long faded, and now they only evoke a distant echo of familiarity," Vesnakov elaborates.

The helmer is known for his LGBT short drama *Pride* (2014), which premiered at the Locarno International Film Festival, later won the Grand Prix at the Clermont-Ferrand International Film Festival and was nominated for the [European Film Awards](#). During the 2020 pandemic, his feature debut, [German Lessons](#) [+], celebrated its world premiere with physical screenings at the 42nd Cairo International Film Festival and won the Best Actor Award.

*Windless* was produced by Bulgaria's [Red Carpet](#) and co-produced by Italy's [dispàrte](#). [Alpha Violet](#) is overseeing its international sales.

Check out our exclusive trailer and poster for *Windless* below:

