

Oscar-winning Czech film uplifts viewer

By Nikki Okimoto
Entertainment Reporter

For a foreign film, winning an Academy Award usually leads to a wider release. In other words, people outside of Los Angeles and New York will actually have a chance to see the film.

Lucky for us, the Czech film *Kolya* won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film this year and is now playing at the Bijou.

Kolya tells the story of cellist Frantisek Louka (Zdenek Sverak), a middle-aged bachelor and full-time ladies' man. Set just before the 1989 Velvet Revolution, the film portrays the pressures of living under the communist system and Russian military occupation.

Louka, once a renowned cellist, is kicked out of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra because of a disagreement with the local Communist government. He ends up having to play with a band at funerals at the city crematorium in order to scrape by.

When Louka's grave-digger friend (Ondrez Vetchy) proposes that Louka enter into a marriage of convenience with his distant Russian niece (Irena Livanova) so he can pay off his debts, Louka at first refuses. He finally decides to go through with it, and he uses the money from the deal to clear his debts and to buy a car.

Shortly after the fake wedding, his new "wife" bolts to Germany to join her boyfriend. She leaves her 6-year-old son Kolya (Andrej Chalimon) behind.

REVIEW

Kolya

★★★
(foreign)

■ **WHERE:** Bijou

■ **STARRING:**
Zdenek Sverak,
Andrej Chalimon and
Irena Livanova

■ **DIRECTOR:**
Zdenek Sverak

■ **RATED:** PG-13

Louka ends up having to take care of him.

While fending off nosy immigration officials, Louka must try to figure out how to take care of a child who doesn't even speak the same language as him.

The premise of a bumbling bachelor trying to take care of an adorable child is by no means original. What makes *Kolya* different, however, is its use of symbolism to create a deeper and more moving story.

Little Kolya becomes Louka's own personal Russian occupation. The two are forced together and must learn to get along with each other. Louka eventually realizes that this child is not his enemy, despite the political climate in the country.

Kolya also makes Louka realize that his life of funeral services and womanizing is a dead end. Louka, who was before surrounded by dreariness and death day after day at the crematorium, is brought back to life by a needy little boy who teaches him the importance of really living.

Kolya is a truly beautiful and uplifting film. It's rare to find a sweet and sentimental film that makes you leave the theater thinking, "Wow, what an incredibly moving story...maybe people aren't as selfish and mean as they seem," instead of, "How sappy and unrealistic, but boy was that a cute movie."

Andrej Chalimon, who was discovered in a Moscow kindergarten, is perfect in the role of Kolya. Sure he's adorable, but his character runs much deeper than just the cute kid who melts the old bachelor's heart. He is incredibly sad to have been abandoned in a strange country, and he has to deal with his own feelings of loneliness. Chalimon poignantly expresses that sadness.

Producer/director Jan Sverak did a marvelous job with the actors, including his father, Zdenek Sverak, who also wrote the screenplay.

Don't miss your chance to see *Kolya* on the big screen.

Nexus: Club fills gap in Eugene music scene

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what kind of place he would have liked to have around when he was in college.

"I turned 21 in this town too, and I was an extreme barfly," Steele said. "Going to the normal rounds, things started to get boring."

Steele and his business partners wanted to locate their club closer to campus, but there wasn't a space available that would fit the strict city building codes for a dance club.

"Out of the blue this space came up, and since it was already set up for being a dance club, it was easier for us to get things started here," Steele said.

The Nexus Club offers several different theme nights throughout the week. On Mondays and Tuesdays, the normally 50 cent games of pool are free.

Wednesdays are quarter beer night, though the beers are actually 50 cents.

"Quarter beer is served all over town in 8 oz. cups, so for right now we are just doing 50 cent pints," Steele explained.

“

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— Jason Steele
Owner

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Thursdays are '80s nights at The Nexus Club.

"It's real popular," Steele said. "It's the best of New Wave '80s music from all those one-hit wonders."

There are often live bands featured on Fridays and Saturdays.

The dance floor always features a mix of everything from disco and '80s, to techno and underground. It's the underground music that Steele considers to be unique to his club in Eugene.

Although The Nexus Club hasn't been open for long, regulars come from places as far away as Portland and Roseburg, Steele said.

"We have people come down from Portland all the time," he said. "In their point of view, this place is better than places up there like Lotus or Panorama." Steele said he also thinks his club has a special appeal for University students who come from larger cities.

"There's a lot of people who come to the University that are from big towns and are used to the idea of an actual nightclub and the idea of there just being something else out there to do," he said.

The unique, relaxed atmosphere of the club is a large part of its appeal, according to Steele.

"If someone, like, spills a drink, we don't want them to go, 'Are they going to kick me out of here because I spilled my drink?'" Steele said. "No! Have fun, go dance, meet people, we don't care!"

The Nexus Club will host a special event in conjunction with MTV's "Singled Out" show on April 19. Contestants will play the game in the same format as the show to compete for prizes.

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