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# A Czech Comedy on How You're Only as Old as You Feel...

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Erasmus has its fifteen minutes of fame in the award-winning Czech film *Revival*, starring two ex-Charles University students from Finland, Siiri Lehtonen and Aleksi Korpijaakko.

Given an official rating of 7/10 on the accredited IMDB film reviewing site and labeled the "Czech comedy of the summer" by Cineuropa, I was expecting some good stuff and was not disappointed. Exhausted from class and happy hour on cocktails the night before, I was soon relaxed by this smooth, skippy comedy of childhood friends reuniting as middle aged adults to reform the band that rocked the charts and their youths. Motivated by Bridget Jones style depression and midlife crisis fears – lack of money, desire for fun, reliving their 20s, escaping an oppressive marriage – they get to work with their newfound energy to regain publicity, fame and fortune. The boys had been split up since the 1972 during the communist era, had followed their separate paths for 40 years and now were back in town.



The film, which was screened in Czech with English subtitles this March at the MAT cinema in Prague, is a lovable and classic tale of friendship and family and was a light and entertaining midweek perk. Winner of the Prize of the Public, the film featured as part of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2013 as the sixth successful script by Czech film writer, director and producer Alice Nellis, I was not surprised at the warm welcome it had already received by Czech viewers. Following an innovative band known as *Smoke*, who had a similar profile to *The Beatles* in their prime and interestingly sang in English (which I interpreted as a subtle protest to the communist regime but unfortunately this was not really explored by the plot), the film had a typical rom-com-feel recipe of tragedy and comedy.

The band members strangely reunite to play at a funeral, yet something beautiful emerges. Inspired and invigorated, bankrupt ex-keyboardist Milan conspires to a tour plan for the band – urging old fans to rush to the box offices by faking a terminal illness, in which he plots his last wish to be for the band to have one final encounter with their old crowd. He organises his band mates and a marketing team together, and soon their plan is in full swing. The storyline had a secretive and dark dimension, but was not exactly your average tissue-grabber. Instead it was jam-packed with wit, and a real must-see, lively contemporary Czech comedy with some musical jamming intervals to get you grooving.

Despite its jolly tones, the themes were subtle, complex and challenging; approaching the superficial and single-minded nature of the entertainment's industry, the fluid status of family and friend relationships, the turnovers of generations, societal fear and obsession of age, regrets, change, art and musical talent...all of which are taken with a pinch of salt and a touch of edgy humour. And, like any good movie, it left me with a few morals worth reflecting on: enjoy your youth and freedom, savour it, be true to yourself, ignore the restrictions of age and don't waste your time, because life is short. Cheesy, I know, but I think it fits quite well to our Erasmus motivations. Wouldn't you agree?

Most importantly, the two ex-Erasmus students did Charles University proud in their roles as arty filmmakers, who were set to shoot the band's promotion and music videos – what could be more fitting for the film cast than two Erasmus veterans themselves!



**Poppy Gerrard-Abbott** is an Erasmus student studying BA Humanities at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University and her home university is the University of Essex in England. She chose to write for the iForum to build on her journalism skills and meet other aspiring journalists; to grow closer to the social and creative life of Charles University and to learn more about Czech culture and life in Prague through attending local events and researching Czech issues and current affairs. Poppy saw the iForum as an exciting opportunity to pursue her interests in politics, culture and history whilst meeting other Erasmus students. She thinks it's a very worthwhile and fun experience that has brought some exciting opportunities her way, extended her writing skills and her knowledge of the Czech Republic, and hopes Charles University continues to offer such placements to future students.