



## BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

### **HEN** (15)

Director: György Pálfi

Starring: Ioannis Kokiasmenos, Maria Diakopanagioti, Argyris Pantazaras

Germany/Greece/Hungary, 2025, 1 hour 36 minutes, Greek/English/Italian with English subtitles

"It's a film that could easily be dismissed as a gimmick, following in the footsteps of festival faves Viktor Kossakovsky's *Gunda*, Jerzy Skolimowski's *EO* and Andrea Arnold's *Cow* which similarly foreground the experiences of farmyard animals to tell a wider story about humanity, but Pálfi's sense of humour and dogged determination (eight chickens were trained for the central role) grant *Hen* some clemency. Giorgos Karvelas' vivid cinematography emphasises Hen's plucky attitude and sense of curiosity about the world around her, but the film takes us to some surprisingly dark places as well, devolving into an unexpected third act where all hell breaks loose. It's a strange, uniquely compelling film, empathetic enough to make any carnivore think twice about their chicken nuggets while never becoming a screed about meat-eating or farming. Moreover, it's a great introduction of the irreverent eye of György Pálfi, who has just as unique a view on the world as his beloved hen heroine." Hannah Strong, **Little White Lies**

"Pálfi (*Taxidermia*, *His Master's Voice*) worked with eight hens on the production, determined to avoid animatronics or CGI and instead shoot with real animals in a natural environment. Trained by Árpád Halász, each chicken was able to shoot for around 30 minutes at a time; a painstaking process which required Pálfi to understand and play to each animal's strengths – some, he says, were flapping experts, others were particularly good at pecking. Seamless editing from Lehményi Réka also plays a crucial role.

"With *Hen*, Pálfi is drawing obvious parallels between mankind's ill treatment of animals and each other, critiquing a world in which living creatures are treated as nothing more than a commodity to be exploited. But he does so with a lightness of touch and an adroit dark comedy that avoids easy polemic. The hen is, of course, driven entirely by instinct – to feed, to protect her young, to survive – and has no understanding of events happening around her. Yet, as the cinematography, editing and music combine to imbue this hen with emotion and personality she becomes something of a silent Greek chorus, her absolute innocence throwing the horror of what's happening in the background into sharp relief." Nikki Baughan, **Screen Daily**

Notes compiled by Steve Freer (Borderlines Chair)

Preview courtesy of Conic

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