

P R E S S K I T

# PONGO CALLING



## LOGLINE

A Romany love story from contemporary Europe.

## SYNOPSIS

Štefan Pongo is a Roma lorry driver. Fifteen years ago, he emigrated from the Czech Republic to the UK with his family to shield them from the open racial discrimination there. The children have since graduated from university and the family is doing well. Mission complete. But hateful sentiments from the old country continue to have an impact.

When the Czech president claims that the Roma are work-shy, an angry Štefan asks other Roma to send him photographs on social media of them at work. Štefan receives thousands of photos and becomes a well-known media figure.

He starts producing video blogs, organizes anti-racism demonstrations and provides humanitarian aid to Roma settlements in need. He establishes a civic association and fights online battles with the 'haters'. All this comes at the cost of time spent with his family. Štefan's spirited wife, Iveta, has had enough.

Will this prominent Roma lorry driver be able to restore some harmony back into his life?

## FILM INFORMATION

Script, DOP, director	Tomáš Kratochvíl
Producers	Radim Procházka / Produkce Radim Procházka, CZ Barbara Janišová Feglová / HITCHHIKER Cinema, SK
Co-producers	David John Evans / BAK, UK Věra Krincvajová, Petr Kubica / Czech Television Tibor Horváth / Radio and Television Slovakia
Editing	Marek Bihuň
Music	Jonatán Pastirčák
Sound design	Michal Horváth
Dramaturgy	Vít Klusák, Ingrid Mayerová
Consultants	Vadim Jendreyko, Phil Jandaly
Featured in the film	Štefan Pongo, Iveta Pongová, David Pongo, Marek Pongo, Ivetka Pongová

## TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Year of production	2022
Country of production	Czech Republic, Slovakia, United Kingdom
Genre	documentary film
Length	78 minutes
Languages	Czech, Slovak, English, Romani
Subtitles	English, Czech, Slovak
Rating	15+
Aspect ratio	16:9
Distribution format	DCP
Sound	5.1
Resolution	HD
Financially supported by	The Czech Film Fund, The Slovak Audiovisual Fund, Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, The Fund for the Support of the National Minorities Culture
Distributor	Film Expanded
Webpage	<a href="http://pongocalling.com">pongocalling.com</a>
FB	@PongoCalling
INSTA	@pongo_calling_film
World premiere	June 24, 2022, Sheffield Doc Fest

## BIO TOMÁŠ KRATOCHVÍL – Director (born in 1983)

Tomáš graduated from The Faculty of Humanities at Charles University and subsequently spent a year at FAMU's Film Editing Department. He co-directed the feature film 'Hives' (2012) which was a collaboration between five European film schools and was introduced at the Pula and San Sebastian film festivals. Tomáš Kratochvíl made his mark as a documentary film-maker with 'Gadžo' (2014), a film diary of his six-month stay in a socially excluded Roma community. His feature film 'Czechs Against Czechs' (2015), a loose continuation of 'Gadžo', received the Special Jury Recognition Award at the Jihlava IDFF and won the top prize at AKE DIKHEA? in Berlin. Social and racial issues as well as wearisome legislative processes are the focus in his documentary 'Hostels' (2015). The film 'Refugees' (2016) depicts the situation on the Turkish borders and the Islamic State, as well as the smuggling business on the Turkish coast. The film-maker himself pretended to be a refugee and, using a hidden camera, captured complex negotiations with the smugglers and the journey across the sea on a rubber dinghy. The documentary 'Classmates' (2017) explores the division of Czech society through the use of dialogue between his former schoolmates from a rural comprehensive school. Currently, Tomáš Kratochvíl has completed a full-length documentary titled 'Pongo Calling' (2022) about a family of Czech Roma living in Britain. An observational documentary, it will premiere at the 2022 Sheffield DocFest. His eight-part series about experimental archaeology, 'Masters of Old Crafts' (2022), which he shot for Czech Television will premiere at the AFO Festival in Olomouc. Tomáš regularly shoots and contributes documentaries with environmental or historical content for Czech Television as part of a documentary miniseries.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

**What themes would you want the audience to gather from the film and how can your film contribute towards a public discussion?**

I'd like this film to bring Roma people into the public eye so that they can be seen as they are: middle-class people, working people, not just stereotypical images of them living on the breadline. They are people who would like to lead a normal life in the Czech and Slovak Republics but systemic racism doesn't allow them that. As a result, we lose many Roma to the west.

**What intrigued you about Štefan Pongo and his family, and why did you decide to make a film about them?**

Štefan and his family were open, sincere and candid from day one. At first I was worried about their excessive 'orderliness', and in my view, an exaggerated focus on their working life. I wondered if it might be a bit monotonous. But then came Štefan's activist role which unhinged the balance of their family life and created many dramatic scenarios.

**Do you sense a difference in approach to the Roma community in the UK, Czechia and Slovakia?**

Britain doesn't have 'an approach' to the Roma community. The Brits are incapable of differentiation in terms of the Roma community and others because of the many different minorities and diverse ethnicities that their country encompasses. The rules are the same for everyone. They are quite strict, but fair and transparent. Naturally, even the UK has its own set of dynamics which are not quite obvious to me as a visiting citizen. But it seems to me that the main differences are rooted in putting into practice anti-discrimination laws, an education system based on inclusion and the overall ethos of society as one that upholds an atmosphere of solidarity.

## PRODUCER'S NOTE

### Radim Procházka – Production Radim Procházka / Kuli Film

This film depicts how the Pongo family found a new home in Britain. Unlike in the Czech Republic, they feel safe in the UK, they work hard and are able to focus on their careers. I'd very much like for our film to contribute towards Roma people feeling like this in our own country as well.

### Barbara Janišová Feglová – Hitchhiker Cinema

The opinion of today's audience towards the subject of the Roma is overloaded with many clichés, each year an 'essential film' with this type of topic is made, yet we still know very little about them. We offer some sense of reality in which Roma speak perfect English, study, work and the main protagonist is also an impassioned activist.

### Dave Evans - bak

I was drawn to Tomáš' project because of its focus on a largely untold social phenomenon - the successful migration of many thousands of Roma from Central and Eastern Europe.

Pongo Calling is a truly unique story which deserves to be seen by as broad an audience as possible. We hope that its premiere screening in Sheffield will be the first step towards winning the hearts of audiences worldwide.



## EXPERT'S VIEW

Alongside efforts to disrupt the employed interpretational stereotypes of Roma ethnicity, we observe a family tale in a new homeland as they define anew their identity and find a role in an integrated Europe. Paradoxically, that involves providing aid to the very place they came from. Their own trek westwards is a typical migration route of many Roma. This intercultural filming experience offers film-makers, as well as the audience, a space to understand human diversity. From the point of view of humanity's experience, it is very important as well as natural, that images of others reflect our own.

- René Lužica, Institute of Romani Studies, Slovakia

## CONTACTS

**Radim Procházka** (radim@radimprochazka.com)

Produkce Radim Prochazka  
info@radimprochazka.com  
pongocalling.com

**Barbara Janišová Feglová** (boruska@hitchhikercinema.sk)

HITCHHIKER Cinema  
info@hitchhikercinema.sk  
hitchhikercinema.sk

**Dave Evans** (dave@wearebak.com)

Bak - Campaign Agency  
info@wearebak.com  
wearebak.com

## ABOUT

### Kuli Film

Film and television producer Radim Procházka founded Kuli Film in 2019 as a new professional background for his mostly arthouse documentary, fiction and animated films. This new company, continues its successful fifteen-year activity under the PRODUKCE RADIM PROCHÁZKA brand. The most recent THE YEAR BEFORE THE WAR, the second collaboration with Latvian director Dāvis Sīmanis, premiered in the Big Screen Competition at the IFFR 2021.

### Hitchhiker Cinema

HITCHHIKER Cinema is an independent production company founded by producer Barbara Janišová Feglová in 2012. HITCHHIKER Cinema's key interests include seeking non-commercial issues of regional social potential, developing creative author projects and producing documentaries mostly for broadcasting on public television and theatrical distribution.

**bak** is a UK-based international campaign agency and production company that works out of Cardiff, Istanbul and Berlin.

Creative director Memet Ali Alabora is a well known figure and activist in the world of film and TV in Istanbul and the UK. Dave Evans, bak's creative producer is an award winning (BAFTA) producer and director who has worked for all the major broadcasters in the UK. Bak focuses on projects which have the potential to create positive social impact.

# LOGOS

