



6-11 SEPTEMBER 2026 | RIGA

Where did the time go?

People, Facts, Anecdotes

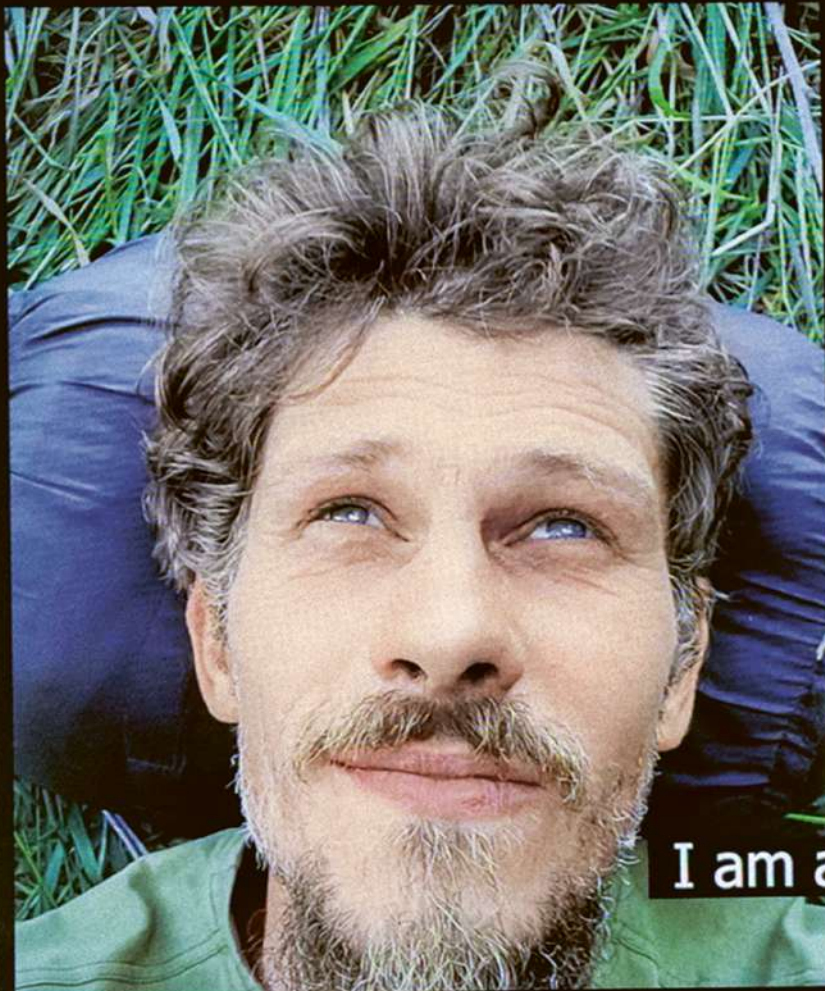
by Tue Steen Müller pp. 4-5

What the Numbers Tell You pp. 14-15

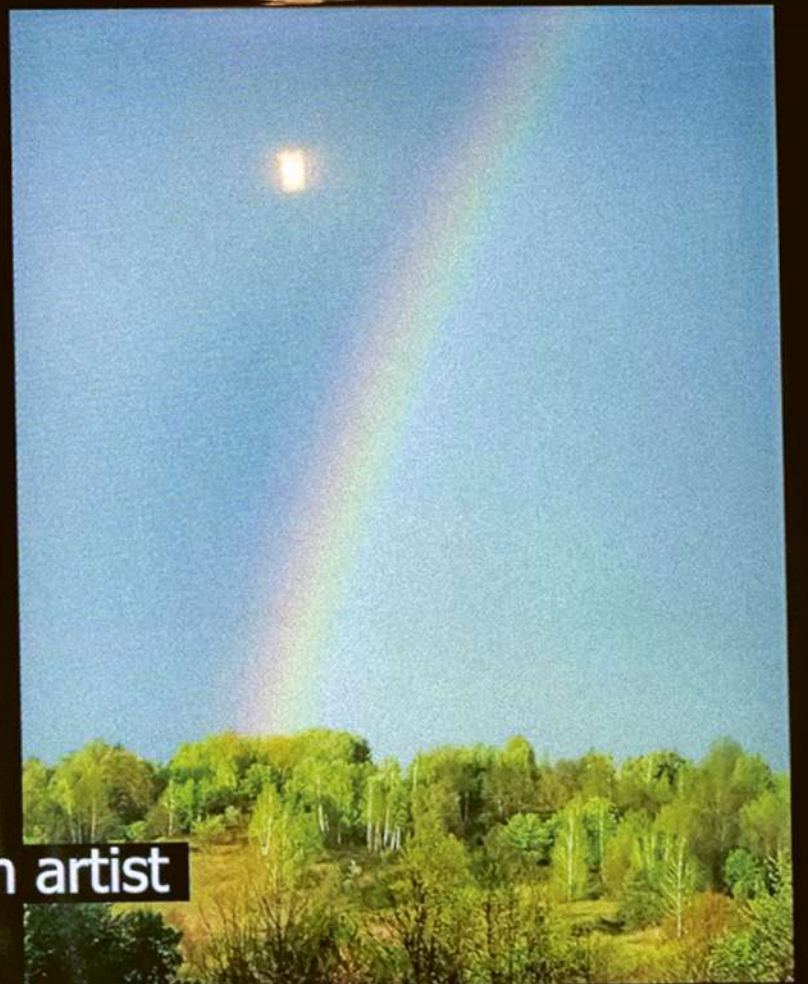
The Long Take:

BSD Timeline 1997-2026 pp. 6-9

Highlighted films pp. 10-11



I am an artist





For the first time the forum's pitching sessions take place at K.K. fon Stricka villa, 2023

10? – Only or Already

The current BSD manager reflects on her years with the forum

ZANE KRŪMIŅA

In this edition, there's a strong emphasis on numbers – which edition of the forum this is, how many projects, experts, countries, what happened in which year. This is very necessary, because although for those of us who will read this newspaper, the forum is familiar (for some more recently, for others already for a long time), our goal is broader and, hopefully, more comprehensive. We want to create an edition that would serve as a keeper of the forum's history, just as the book *Balticum Film & TV Festival 1990–1999* and the brochure *Footprints in the Future*, prepared for

BSD's 20th anniversary, can be considered such. It seems that the decade is a recurring motif – the first decade of Balticum, then two decades of the forum. Now another has been added to that. In this newspaper, subtitled "Where did the time go?," we have tried to look back at these three decades through an emotional, analytical, and numerical lens. As well as with a somewhat lighter and more playful view – read, judge, comment, we're ready to hear where some fact or memory has played its own games.

Thinking about numbers, I too would like to add my part. Ten – that's how many editions of the forum I have participated in organizing. In 2010, I put together the forum's film program; in 2018, I assisted Zanda Dūdiņa-Spoģe in leading



Team 2019: (from left) Zanda Dūdiņa-Spoģe, Lelda Ozola, Dita Rietuma, Pāvels Terentjevs, Agnese Zelčiņa, Zane Krūmiņa, Margarita Rimkus, Antra Gaile. Forum's reception at the Art Academy of Latvia garden

I HAVE TO SAY – EVERY YEAR THERE HAS BEEN SOMETHING UNEXPECTED

the forum project. But now, for the eighth year already, I have been the forum's manager. And I have to say – every year there has been something unexpected! It seems as though the forum avoids taking on a fixed form and each time encourages learning something new. Over these years I have met many wonderful people, and seen projects and films that have left their imprint on memory. May the forum continue into new decades, from which to look back again.



30 Years of My Life



Lelda Ozola during the workshop 2018, at Monika Centrum Hotels



Simon Drewsen Holmberg at the 25th anniversary reception of Baltic Sea Docs at the Rainis and Aspazija Museum

A personal reflection from the forum's long-time organiser, a constant presence behind the scenes at Baltic Sea Docs

LELDA OZOLA

I have a feeling of a New Year's Eve when you look back and think of the important things that happened in your life in that given year. Now I am trying to look back at 30 years of my life which turns out to be exactly half of the time I have spent on this earth. And this half of my life I have been close to the Baltic Sea Docs and all the wonderful people involved in it – founders, organisers, participants and colleagues at the National Film Centre of Latvia. At this point it is impossible not to mention Simon Drewsen Holmberg who, alongside Bent Nørby Bonde, was the founder of Baltic Sea Docs on the Danish island of Bornholm in 1997. Simon led an intensive work life ever since and travelled to another world way too early in May this year. However, he continues to live in the minds of Baltic documentary professionals (and beyond) forever.

This year BSD is celebrating 30 years anniversary. It is the most important documentary event in the Baltic countries – highly respected for its professionalism and loved for its friendly and inclusive atmosphere. Simon and Bent, alongside with John Marshall and Tue Steen Müller, were visionaries who saw that unknown Baltic stories are worth to break out in

the world. And they were so true. The event helped to shape and strengthen the concept of Baltic documentary film producer – a non-existent profession in the Soviet regime. They saw the value of creative documentary that had developed in the Baltic countries since the 1960s under the censorship of the Soviet Union where you had to tell the truth between the lines and be very creative visually. Today's internationally well-known Baltic documentary producers' names have developed all through the 30 years of Baltic Sea Docs. They are now creating co-productions with a great number of countries from East and West. Also Ukrainian, Georgian and Armenian producers are strengthening their international recognition. It is a mind-blowing journey started by a couple of men and their teams. It proves that every one of us can change the world. Simon has undoubtedly left his footprint in the Baltic documentary scene, and it cannot be erased. And we are sure that he'll continue to guide us as a guardian angel from the silver lined heaven – filled with light, harmony and a wonderful sense of humour. RIP.

BSD also shaped me as an administrative person devoted to assisting the creative crowd of filmmakers – as a part of BSD team in the earlier days and MEDIA Desk Latvia afterwards. Preparing each edition is like a sprint distance in sports. Everything hap-

THIS IS SIMON'S REFLECTION in 2016 on the beginning of BSD and the diplomatic skills necessary to convince funders to support establishing the Baltic Media Centre: "With my recollection let us travel back to the mid-90s, to meeting rooms in the European Commission. The tired eyes of the EU official smile as he repeats: "But Gentlemen, I am sorry, but there is no border between the three Baltic States and Denmark. If there is, please show it on the map." Hans Brask from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, raised his voice and his glasses and said. "Listen, you owe us something. This is perfectly reasonable and

makes sense for Denmark, the Baltics and the EU, so please reconsider". The Italian, who looked in need of many Martinis, pondered a bit and finally said: "Hmmm, okay, I think, that for the purposes of this programme, we can agree that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania do have a sea border with Denmark. And so be it." In a climate where the EU is often criticized, one must pay tribute to our common union and the fact that this Baltic Sea Forum with its impressive history and as impressive of a future would never have been born nor survived without the insight and "daredevilry" of this institution."

EVERYTHING HAPPENS IN A SHORT BUT SUPER INTENSIVE PERIOD OF TIME

pens in a comparatively short but super intensive period of time with lots of balls in the air – you have to do a million small things without losing the overview of the big picture. This inevitably trains you into someone result

oriented, finding solutions to a variety of different issues in no time. I have been privileged to go through this fantastic 'school' at the beginning together with Tue Steen Müller, then for many years also with Zanda Dūdiņa-Spoģe and Ilze Gailite-Holmberg. And since 2019 with Zane Krūmiņa (ex Balčus) who respectfully, professionally and with genuinely deep interest in documentaries is managing the BSD.

And last but not least, as I have said many times – one can be a fabulous organiser, however, the event is successful only when participants come to your fabulously organised event. A huge thank you to all the participants, decision-makers and colleagues from other industry events for coming to Riga every year at the beginning of September to celebrate documentaries! BSD

BSD 30 – People, Facts, Anecdotes

From the only person who has been part of every one of BSD's 30 editions, in one role or another

TUE STEEN MÜLLER

It's Forum time. The room is full of TV screens. Everyone present will be able to watch the pitching teams at the lectern and everyone can enjoy the trailers brought by the filmmakers. Including those financiers, who take part online. The technical side is run by Ivars Brauns and Alvis Lapiņš, nice chaps, true professionals, who have never made a mistake during the years of BSD being in Riga, 20 years it is. That also deserves respect and a celebration.

There wasn't any online, there were no TV screens in Gudhjem and Svaneke way back in 1997 and 1998, when the Balticum Film & TV Festival – initiated by Bent Nørby Bonde and Sonja Vesterholt from TV2/Bornholm and legally organised by BMC (Baltic Media Centre), set up by Bent – introduced a Pitching Forum after 7 years of film festival in Kino Gudhjem. With discussions and meetings at other venues on the wonderful island of Bornholm in the middle of the Baltic Sea.

The 1990–2000 festival changed my film life as it did for many others, and I am more than grateful to have met directors like Roy Andersson, Herz Frank, Juris Podnieks, Mark Soosaar, Jan Troell, Audrius Stonys, Arūnas Matelis, Henrikas Šablėvičius, Victor Kossakovsky, Sergey Dvortsevov, Marcel and Paweł Łoziński, Peter Watkins, Ivars Seleckis... and many others, who have a place in international documentary history.

The technical side of the four years that the Forum took place on Bornholm was taken care of by Jens Bager, a sound nerd who did not communicate a lot but knew his *métier* AND Andreas Steinmann, whose importance for the festival cannot be stressed enough. Andreas, who later with Kim Foss started the NatFilm Festival and CPH:DOX, managed three screening formats (35mm, 16mm, VHS) in the cinema halls in Gudhjem and in Svaneke, where Ivars Seleckis and the moderators, John Marshall and me, had problems inserting his VHS into the machine. But the clip from his *Crossroad Street 2*



Tutor team (clockwise from the center) Tue Steen Müller, Phil Jandaly, Alisa Kovalenko, Uldis Cekulis, Emma Davie, Salomé Jashi, Mikael Opstrup, and BSD manager Zane Krūmiņa in the workshop venue in Liepupe, 2023

I CAN ONLY COMPLIMENT BSD FOR MAKING THE BALTIC SEA WIDER THAN GEOGRAPHY TELLS US

(*New Times at Crossroad Street*) hit the cinema screen and was later picked for the IDFA festival by its director Ally Derks, who was in Svaneke.

And then, suddenly, the Festival after 11 years and the Forum after 4 edi-

tions had to leave Bornholm! There was no more funding from the Danish Government as it shifted its support focus from the Baltics to the Balkans. So what to do... the obvious (in retrospect crazy) solution was to make a festival for Baltic and Balkan filmmakers. So that's what was done! In June 2001, under the name – the 5th Baltic & SEE Forum for Documentaries. In Dubrovnik. To be fair, it has to be said that we had had Balkan visits at the festival in 2000, among them the now international star Jasmila Žbanić.

Beautiful Dubrovnik... As one of those who went to Dubrovnik for preparation of the festival and the Forum, it would be wrong to say that it was easy, very much so because of us Northerners ignoring the Southern way of life. How could we do film screenings at 2pm, siesta time, in June in the South.... No one came! They were all on the beach!

Anyway, thanks to local collaborators and the logistical and technical skills of event producer Ilze Gailite-Holmberga and Andreas Steinmann, a Pitching Forum was implemented that included the presentation of what became a masterpiece, Arūnas Matelis' *Before Flying Back to the Earth* (when finished, it won first prizes in both Leipzig and Amsterdam), Bulgarian Adela Peeva's *Whose is this Song?*, and Romanian Florin Iepan's film on Tarzan, aka Johnny Weissmuller. Furthermore, the father of Croatian documentary, Nenad Puhovski, pitched on this occasion, and a film he had produced won first prize.

At that time, I had been hired – as a side job to being director of EDN (European Documentary Network) – as consultant for BMC. I travelled with Lelda Ozola to the Baltic countries and St. Petersburg and with Ilze Gailite-Holmberga to the Balkans. Her husband, Simon Drewsen Holm-



Andrejs Apsītis and workshop participants on Bornholm, 1998



Audrius Stonys, Tue Steen Müller, and Arūnas Matelis at the 10th anniversary of BSD at the National Theatre in Riga, 2006

berg, was the one who invited me. Simon, who passed away May this year:

Simon was for 18 years Head of the Cultural Institute in Riga, covering the Baltic countries and beyond. On Bornholm he was for years the deputy of Bent Nørby Bonde at BMC and after Bent left, he was the managing director until BMC closed. He was a constant supporter of the festival and the Forum, indeed also from his post in Riga. Like many many, I have profited from his generosity and knowledge and kindness, a dear friend, he was, a humble man with style, always in a black suit, driving a Jaguar, a bon vivant, he will be missed!

After the adventure in Dubrovnik, we went back, not to Bornholm but to Riga, where producer Guntis Trekeris, Anita Reher and Lelda Ozola were the organisers of the Forum held in Hotel Riga in 2002 and 2003. A collaboration with EDN was established – again it's all about the people, and EDN's managing director Anita Reher included a Baltic Forum application to the EU's MEDIA Programme in the many activities of the organisation, first of all in the South of Europe.

Thus, Anita helped producer/director Riho Västriik to arrange a Forum in Tallinn and producer Rasa Miškinyte to do one in Vilnius. For 5 years the MEDIA application was sent in collaboration with EDN, after that it has

been handled by the National Film Centre of Latvia.

I remember we were many, who said: "But what about the festival!". Rasa had the same thoughts and introduced film screenings parallel to the Forum. And when the Forum came to Riga, the initiative was well received by the local audiences in *Kino Suns* and *Splendid Palace*.

Since 2006 we have been in Riga, in different venues, with "Zelda" (Zanda Dūdiņa and Lelda Ozola), Ilze Gailite-Holmberga, Jūle Rozīte and Margarita Rimkus as the driving forces until 2019, when Zane Balčus (now Krūmiņa) became the manager of Baltic Sea Docs. An academic who has proved to be the perfect cool and knowledgeable leader of the gang.

Since 2011 Mikael Opstrup and I have been moderating the Forum event, apart from last year, where my chair was given to Estonian Marje Toemäe, who for years was one of the loyal, invited editors at the so-called financier's table, creating an atmosphere of joyful provocation, preventing the sessions from being boring and full of repetitive comments.

Another regular – highly appreciated – BSD tutor is Phil Jandaly, who every year since 2014 has held sessions with participants to give inspiration and concrete advice on the trailers during the first days of BSD. I



Ivars Seleckis and Tue Steen Müller at the opening reception of BSD at Cydonia, 2023



Tue Steen Müller and Ellen Fønnesbech Sandberg at the BSD reception, Art Academy of Latvia, 2019

wonder how many pitching events offer that service...

The tutoring days are of great and useful importance. It is such a tutor privilege to meet filmmakers with their more-or-less developed projects to try to *help*. There is a lot needed, openness, you must listen, understand, ask questions, maybe/maybe not give answers. Be supportive.

Learning about the world... I can only compliment BSD for making the Baltic Sea wider than geography tells us. Already in 2006, a delegation of Georgians came to Riga for a workshop, probably an initiative of Simon; I remember it clearly – the welcome reception in a café, where my enthusiasm, that later became an addiction to *chacha*, the Georgian brandy, was born...toast after toast was performed like in the Audrius Stonys film *Ramin*. Consequently, I have been lucky to be in Georgia several times thanks to Anna Dziapsh-ipa, Salome Jashi and Ileana and Artchil from CinéDoc Tbilisi.

Today Georgian projects naturally attend BSD. More than ever the filmmakers from Georgia need help taking the actions of the pro-Russian government into consideration.

As do, of course, filmmakers from Ukraine, who are also highlighted this year. *Slava Ukraini!*

I'm sure that this newspaper also

mentions the co-productions that have come out of BSD, simply because filmmakers meet, exchange ideas and projects, and make arrangements to proceed or establish a collaboration.

"Unfolding the universal" as Karolina Lidin put it in the film book *Balticum Film & TV Festival 1990-1999* for which Andreas did the layout and I edited.

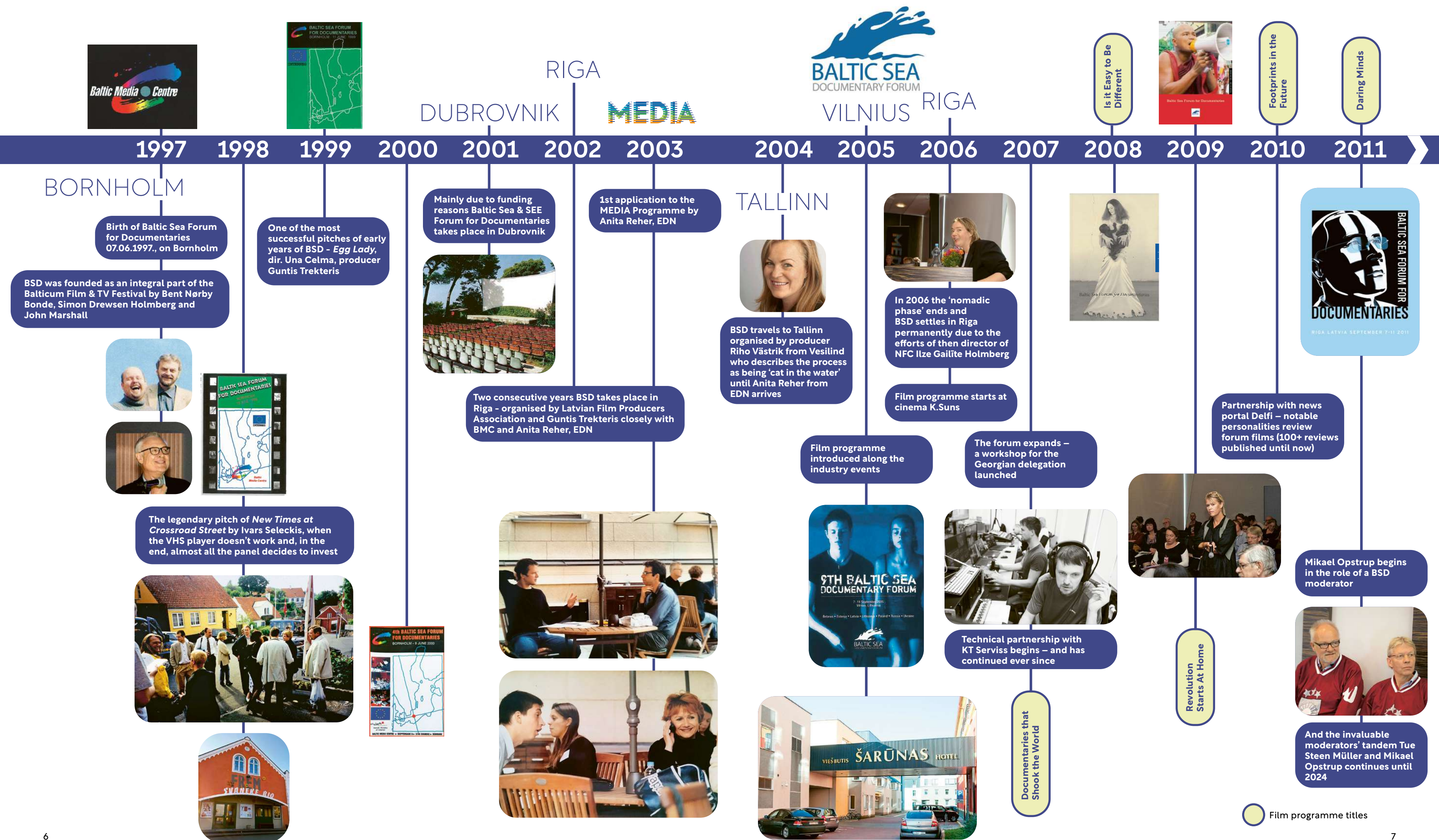
Let me end this insider-biased text with a conclusion full of love:

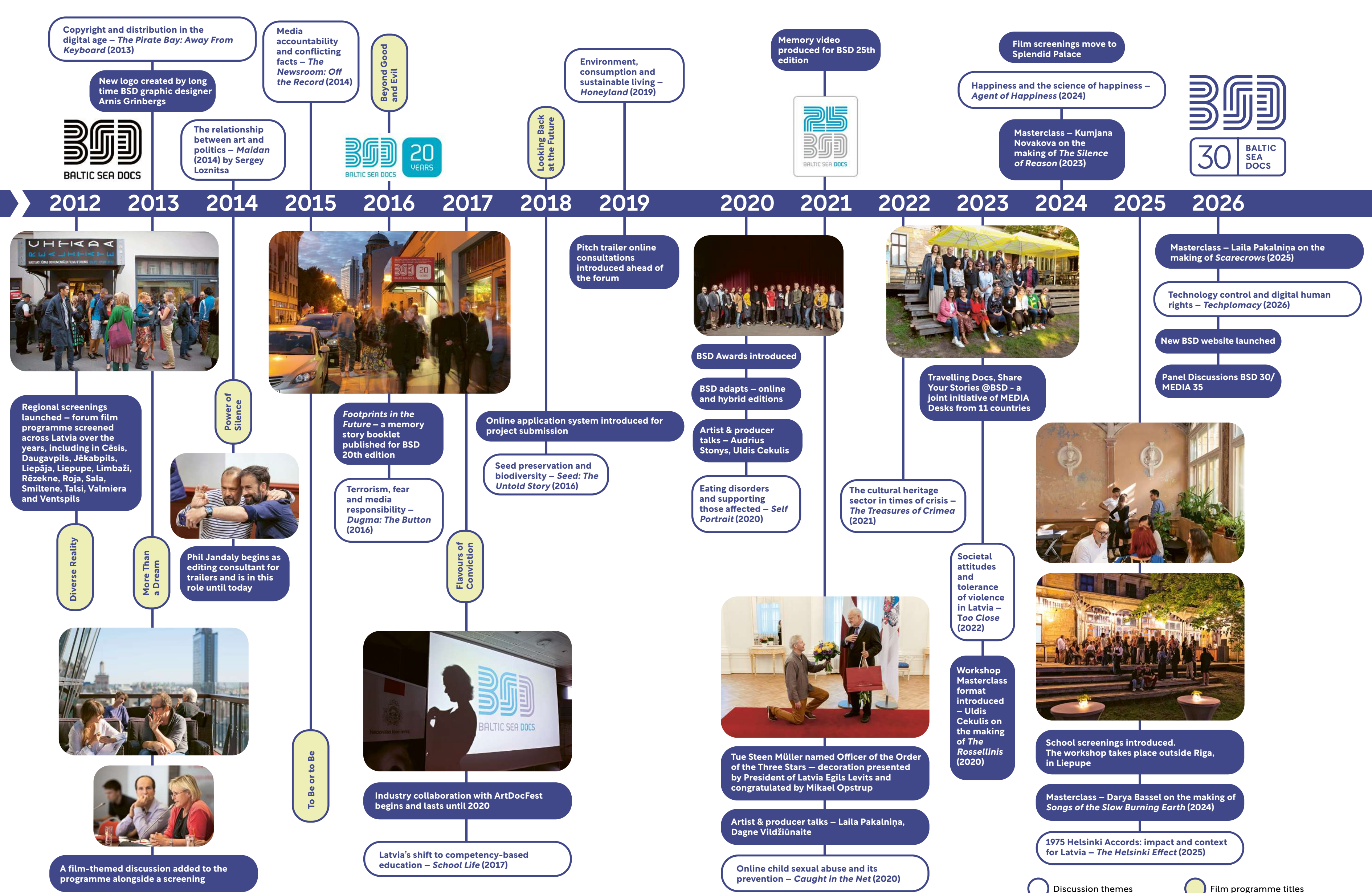
In the more and more commercialised international documentary film world, full of events that have funding as first priority, BSD stands out like a beacon of authenticity. Where the first question is not about money. Filmmakers meet with colleagues to ask: Do you understand where I want to go with my film? If not, maybe I should rephrase my intention or maybe I should stay with my doubts *and keep asking*.

Also, today I experienced something that I hope to understand tomorrow, as said the late Danish director Jørgen Leth.

In Gudhjem, when the festival opened in 1990, the cinema owner, grocer Hansen and his family, were on the stage to characterise the festival as an event of International Understanding. *Mellemfolkelig forståelse* in Danish. 

The Long Take: BSD Timeline 1997–2026





Highlighted Films



Russian Avant-Garde: A Romance with the Revolution, Dir. Alexander Krivosos | 1999 | 54 min | Denmark, Russia | Vesterholt Film & TV, Quadrat Film | BSD 1997

The dramatic story of Kazimir Malevich, Pavel Filonov and Vladimir Tatlin, together with their supporter Nikolai Punin, whose belief in the compatibility of revolutionary ideals and avant-garde art ultimately collided with the Soviet regime. The film premiered internationally at the Krakow Film Festival in 2000 and subsequently received the Best Documentary Award at FIPA in Biarritz. It went on to circulate at international documentary festivals, including later Baltic Sea Docs programmes.

New Times at Crossroad Street, Dir. Ivars Seleckis | 1999 | 85 min | Latvia | European Documentary Film Symposiums, Baltic Media Centre | BSD 1998

The film returns to the Riga neighbourhood portrayed ten years earlier in *Crossroad Street* (1988, European Film Academy award for best documentary), following the same residents as Latvian independence transforms their homes, relationships and everyday lives. The film premiered internationally at IDFA in Amsterdam in 1999 and subsequently received major recognition, including a Special Award at the Message to Man International Film Festival in St Petersburg and a Special Mention at the One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival in Prague. It was selected for a number of international documentary festivals, including IDFA, goEast and Yamagata.

Egg Lady, Dir. Una Celma | 2000 | 26 min | Latvia, Sweden | Kaupo Filma, Lats Film | BSD 1999

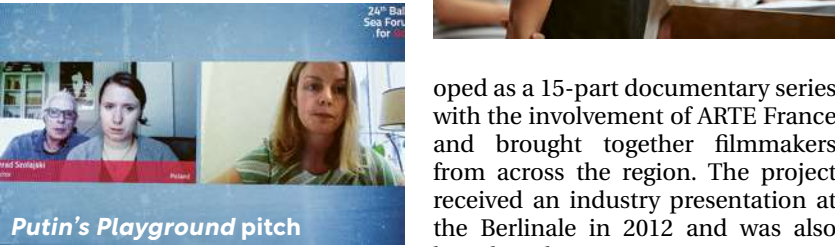
Aina, the “Egg Lady”, cracks thou-



en Dove at DOK Leipzig. It won major prizes at other festivals including Documenta Madrid, Brooklyn, Pärnu and ZagrebDox. The film was nominated for the European Film Academy Best Documentary Award of 2005 and was submitted for the 79th Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 2006, establishing itself as one of the most internationally acclaimed Lithuanian documentaries of its period. In 2007, Arūnas Matelis was honored with the Directors Guild of America (DGA) Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary.

Dreamland, Dir. Laila Pakalniņa | 2004 | 36 min | Latvia, Germany | Vides Filmu Studija, NDR/ARTE | BSD 2002

Bakhmaro, Dir. Salomé Jashi | 2011 | 58 min | Georgia, Germany | Sakdoc Film, ma.ja.de. Filmproduktion | BSD 2008

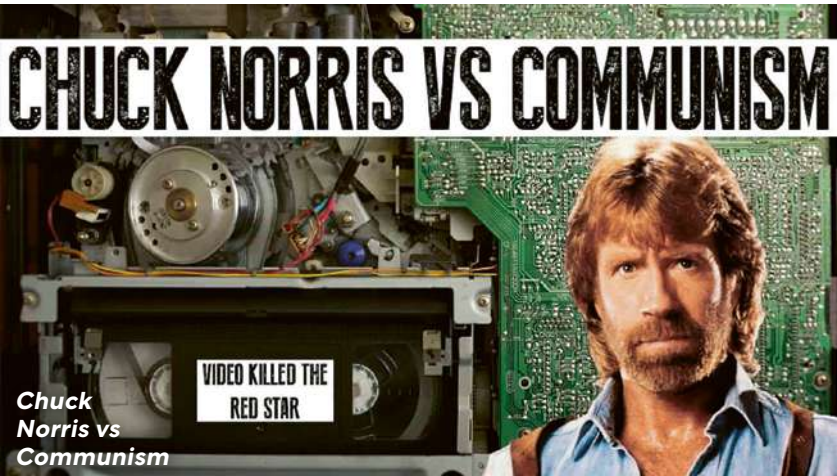


Beyond the Fear, Dir. Herz Frank, Maria Kravchenko | 2015 | 80 min | Latvia, Russia, Israel | Ego Media, Vertov Studio | BSD 2011

A decaying former hotel and restaurant in a provincial Georgian town becomes a microcosm of a society caught between stagnation and the constant expectation of change. The film had its world premiere at Silverdocs in 2011 and won Best Central and Eastern European Documentary at the Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival and received an Honorary Mention at DOK Leipzig, as well as a Special Mention at Golden Apricot. It travelled widely on the international festival circuit, including screenings at ZagrebDox, Krakow, Busan and Visions du Réel.

15 Young by Young – Contemporary Young Life in Post-Soviet Countries, Dir. Arman Yeritsyan, Alakbar Aliyev, Andrei Kutsila, Liina Paakspuu, Arian Levin, Salomé Jashi, Yerlan Nurmukhambetov, Chingiz Narynov, Dzintars Dreiberis, Giedrė Beinoriūtė, George Agadjanean, Svetlana Strelnikova, Iskandar Usmonov, Edwin Trommelen, Ruslan Tuhbatullin | 2012 | 15 x 13 min | Latvia, France | Avantis Promo, Alegria Productions, ARTE France | BSD 2009

Fifteen young filmmakers from countries of the former Soviet Union create intimate portraits of their generation, exploring everyday life and the social and political changes that followed the collapse of the USSR. The international project was devel-



oped as a 15-part documentary series with the involvement of ARTE France and brought together filmmakers from across the region. The project received an industry presentation at the Berlinale in 2012 and was also broadcast by ARTE.

Ukrainian Sheriffs, Dir. Roman Bondarchuk | 2015 | 88 min | Ukraine, Latvia, Germany | VFS Films, South, Taskovski Films | BSD 2012

Two unofficial village sheriffs deal with petty crimes and community disputes until the war in eastern Ukraine gradually reaches their remote community and transforms their everyday lives. The film had its world premiere at IDFA in 2015, where it received the Special Jury Award, and then won the Mayor of Gdynia Award at Docs Against Gravity. It was screened at numerous other international film festivals such as Docville, Hot Docs, DOK Munich, Sheffield Doc/Fest, DMZ DOCS, and Bath Film Festival. In 2016, it was selected as Ukraine's official submission for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, and became one of Ukraine's most internationally recognized recent documentaries.

The Jump, Dir. Giedrė Žickytė | 2020 | 85 min | Lithuania, France, Latvia, USA | Moonmakers, VFS Films, Faites Un Voeu, Naked Edge Films | BSD 2014

In 1970 Lithuanian sailor Simas Kudirka jumped from a Soviet vessel onto a US Coast Guard cutter and asked for political asylum, triggering a remarkable Cold War international incident. The film had its world premiere at the Warsaw International Film Festival in 2020, where it won Best Documentary Feature. It also

screened at other international festivals including Rome, DOC NYC and Tallinn Black Nights, and received the Grand Prix at the EBS International Documentary Festival, the Main Jury Award at Salem Film Festival and the Herz Frank Best Director Award at Artdocfest Riga.

The Earth Is Blue as an Orange, Dir. Iryna Tsilyk | 2020 | 74 min | Ukraine, Lithuania | Albatros Communicos, Moonmakers | BSD 2018

In the frontline Donbas, a single mother and her four children use filmmaking to preserve a sense of family, creativity and hope while war surrounds their home. The film had its world premiere at Sundance in 2020, where Iryna Tsilyk won the World Cinema Documentary Directing Award. It screened at Berlinale, IDFA, Hot Docs, CPH:DOX and more than 100 international festivals, winning more than 40 awards, including Best Cinematography from the International Documentary Association and major prizes at Seattle International Film Festival, ZINEBI and Millennium Docs Against Gravity.

Putin's Playground, Dir. Konrad Szotajski | 2024 | 92 min | Poland, Czech Republic, Norway, Germany | ZK Studio, Wrocław Feature Film Studio, Hypermarket Film, Doppelplusultra Filmproduktion, Red Dot Media, Isme Film, AGITPROP | BSD 2020

Two Polish filmmakers investigate Russian hybrid warfare and covert influence operations across Central and Eastern Europe, following evidence of political influence, covert operations and destabilisation campaigns. The film had its world premiere at the Krakow Film Festival in May 2024 and was selected for other international festivals including One World in Prague and Ji.hlava. BSD

In Their Own Words

A selection of voices from those involved with Baltic Sea Docs over the past thirty years — 1997 to today



KAROLINA LIDIN, producer, Balticum Film & TV Festival team, Nordic Film & TV Fund, Denmark

On my first trip to the Baltic countries in 1997, travelling to first Vilnius, then to Riga, Tallinn and lastly St. Petersburg, I leapt from timewarp to timewarp, experiencing aspects of filmmaking that in the West are being overshadowed by the tendencies of the progressing globalisation that in many respects is leading towards a monoform of sorts. But here I was simply overwhelmed – and deeply humbled – by a strong sense of cultural identity, historic consciousness, personal integrity and artistic candour.

(From *Unfolding the Universal*, in the book *Balticum Film & TV Festival 1990–99*)



SIMON DREWSSEN HOLMBERG, Managing Director, Baltic Media Centre, Denmark

As any other commercial market it is the intersection where interested sellers and buyers meet. It is hence very promising to see that today this market is not just a place where “Eastern” Producers meet “Western” buyers. It is also a place where “East” meets “East” and in the future we may also present “Western” projects for eager “Eastern” commissioning editors. We may finally conclude that the Baltic Forum is becoming in even more ways a beautiful Swan. But then not too much I hope – because if you are into film-production – you have to thrive with starting off as an Ugly Duckling each time....

(From the Baltic Sea Docs 2004 catalogue)



ILZE GAILĪTE HOLMBERG, BSD project manager (1999-2004) and Director, National Film Centre of Latvia (2004-2014), Latvia

There was a period when the forum was held consecutively in the three Baltic states, but subsequently, within the framework of the Baltic Films platform, it was decided that the venue would remain in Riga. Tallinn and Vilnius were not pleased about this, but we certainly were. However, ensuring the event gained international recognition was an ambitious goal. Unlike in the early 2000s, when the forum came to Riga, setting out to achieve this goal nowadays would be a much more difficult task – given the digitalisation of platforms, ways of thinking and payment methods, when there are completely different ways of attracting funding for films. However, the key to this forum's success lies largely in the fact that people can meet potential co-producers or buyers face to face despite the digitisation of the world. And this is an excellent opportunity for all creative minds.

(From a video interview, 2021)



IVARS SELECKIS, film director, Latvia

People from Crossroad Street wanted to raise money so we could film a sequel. We said it wasn't possible, because we had already said everything there was to say. But time passed, the social order changed, capitalism arrived, a new situation emerged on that little street, and the need appeared to make a second film – but we needed funds. Film wasn't very popular in government circles at the time, and then Bornholm came up, and we had to go and try to ask for money there. We worked up our courage and flew across the Baltic Sea in an old rattling propeller plane with no toilet, landing in wonderful Bornholm. Luckily there was a lady from Latvia there, Lelda, thanks to whose

efforts we got the money from the Jan Vrijman Fund (now known as the ID-FA Bertha Fund).

(From a video interview, 2021)



GUNTIS TREKERIS, producer, Ego Media, Latvia

In the late 1990s the Balticum film and TV festival on Bornholm celebrated its 10th anniversary. We were invited there as part of a small Latvian delegation, and as it happened, Herz Frank and I were staying in neighbouring rooms at the hotel. Then one evening, Andrejs Apsītis invited Herz from the neighbouring room to join us and Uldis Cekulis, and we sat there until about five in the morning. Herz had a fascinating way of telling stories, both about his own life and anecdotes in general, and in the midst of it all, he also mentioned that he would like to revisit the character of the boy seen in the film *Ten Minutes Older* (1978).

The next morning, I bumped into our mutual friend Tue Steen Müller, a Danish documentary film consultant and a very experienced lecturer, and I said to him: “Look, what a great idea Herz has, we need to do something about it!” And Tue replies: “Well, then do it!” It hadn't even occurred to me at that point that I could produce one of Herz Frank's films, but, step by step... it turned out that Herz and I made four films together.

(From *Producers pastāv mīļedarbībā*, Kino Raksti, September 21, 2020)



ANTRA CILINSKA, producer, Juris Podnieks Studio, Latvia

For Latvian documentary filmmakers, Bornholm was like a springboard to the outside world. It gave us a know-how package – knowledge of how the industry works, those long tables with commissioning editors, and the stern Nick Fraser. Many of us thought: what could we possibly tell them about our projects here? Bornholm was like a *godmother* to us, helping us step out into the international world. In the same way, Baltic Sea Docs lets us keep talking about

ourselves and build connections – the chance to present your project to a panel like that is irreplaceable. You get essential feedback, especially when it comes to international understanding and resonance for a project. The other thing Baltic Sea Docs has instilled in us is a serious approach — you have to be prepared to answer for every word, to find exactly those ten sentences you want to say. For a producer, it's a great privilege and gift that here, in Riga, in a very relaxed atmosphere, we can meet representatives of the international industry.

(From a video interview, 2021)



GINTS GRŪBE, producer, Mistrus Media, Latvia

The documentary and fiction film industries are very separate worlds. Thanks to Baltic Sea Docs, I had the chance to get to know that small circle of documentary filmmakers in Europe, and to keep close ties of friendship. There's no real explanation for the particular love for documentary film – there are always smaller budgets than in feature films, and much more work. But Baltic Sea Docs, and conversations with Tue Steen Müller and Mikael Opstrup, taught me to look at stories more broadly. Nick Fraser, who was at the time head of BBC's Storyville programme, came to one of the first forums, and I think he even stood up and said: “I'm tired of these marginal Eastern European stories of yours about helpless old men and women, and various border people. Where are your big stories?” That phrase was a cold splash of water on the documentary storytelling tradition of our region. It's a strong one – not a bad one – but whenever I think about a project's story, I always remember that phrase, and it helps me look at the story differently.

(From a video interview, 2021)



ULDIS CEKULIS, producer, VFS Films, Latvia

Baltic Sea Docs has never been just a pitching forum for me. It is a place

where, over these thirty years, professional relationships have formed that in many cases have grown into friendships. Producers, directors, cinematographers, sales agents and mentors met here have later become long-term partners on our films. The uniquely warm and hospitable atmosphere of BSD has played an enormous role in building these friendships. It is often in the conversations after sessions, over shared dinners and informal gatherings, where collaborations are born that continue for many years to come. For that, a heartfelt thank you to the fantastic BSD team.

(Interview, 2026)



MARIANNA KAAT, producer, director, Baltic Film Productions, Doc@PÖFF curator, Estonia

I can hardly imagine my professional life without Baltic Sea Docs. Coming to Riga in early September – when summer is clearly packing its bags and the long, dark Baltic autumn is already waiting around the corner – BSD feels like a gentle and friendly companion leading us into the new season.

It brings together old friends and new colleagues, inspiring projects, fresh perspectives, and the reassuring feeling that many of us are facing the same challenges. At a time of financial cuts, uncertainty, and the occasional professional disappointment, BSD always restores my energy and reminds me why I continue making documentaries.

I have missed only a few editions, and only when circumstances made it impossible to attend. I have pitched almost all my projects here and have also discovered films that I later joined as a co-producer. BSD has therefore played a truly significant role in my professional life. And Riga, of course, is especially gorgeous at this time of year.

(Interview, 2026)



ELLA SHTYKA, producer, director, Indie Media Polis, Ukraine

We first participated in the Forum in 2008. The collaborative discussions leading up to the pitching sessions were remarkably rigorous and multi-dimensional. Mentors and participants set an exceptionally high standard for analysing documentary projects and for approaching documen-

tary filmmaking as an evolving creative process rather than a production plan. Many projects seemed to come into being during those conversations in the Albert Hotel. By the time the discussions concluded, all that remained was to make the films.

Some years later we established a number of educational initiatives for documentary filmmakers in Ukraine, all of which were inspired by the collaborative discussions that took place at the forum. Those professional relationships, formed nearly two decades ago, have endured and continue to shape our work today.

And if you are looking for a place to share your work with supportive colleagues, this is it. Take your time, bring your project to Riga, and allow the conversations to happen!

(Interview, 2026)



MARIJA STONYTE, director, producer, UKU Films, Lithuania

Baltic Sea Docs has accompanied two very different stages of my professional life. In 2016, it was the first international forum where I pitched my debut feature documentary, *Gentle Warriors*, and stepped into the international documentary scene. It was an ideal place to begin: the tutors combined deep expertise with genuine sensitivity, creating a space where doubts and unfinished ideas could be shared openly. At BSD, I also presented the film to Cat&Docs for the first time; they later became its sales agent.

I returned almost ten years later, in 2025, now working as both a director and a producer. Among the participants, we jokingly called one tutoring room “the church” for its calm, wise atmosphere, and the editing room “the therapy room” because filmmakers would come in with dilemmas and leave with clarity. That joke captures something essential about BSD: it offers filmmakers not only industry access, but also the safety and care needed while a film is still discovering what it can become.

(Interview, 2026)



ZANDA DŪDIŅA-SPOĢE, forum manager (2006-2018), Latvia

The forum has helped us (Latvia) be part of a shared swirl. The forum is a swirl of ideas and emotions. As a viewer, you get emotions from watching really good films, and you get to

think about things you'd never have thought about otherwise. And for filmmakers, it helps them share their stories, and not be indifferent, and not stay on the sidelines. For me, the forum has been a chance to meet fantastic people – that's the forum's main value. My key words for Baltic Sea Docs are sharing and caring – everyone who takes part here cares, there's no indifference – whether it's the team, the tutors, or the participants, everyone cares about other people, cares about the stories, cares about the global environment, and we're all trying to make it better.

(From a video interview, 2021)



LĪVA EGLĪTE, forum team member (2006-2012), Latvia

The forum was my first official job. I'd just finished my degree, and the day after graduation I sent an email to every film studio saying I just finished my studies, had no experience, but would love to work with them (*laughs*). I thought I should also send one to the Film Centre, but that felt like – well, what would I do there with no experience... About three film studios wrote back saying “maybe later”, but the Film Centre invited me for an interview. That was a huge surprise for me. And that's how I ended up in the BSD's wonderful team. I learned that a team can pull an enormous load if everyone works together and is on the same wavelength. And the other important thing is humor, especially during all those tense moments. After finishing my studies, I thought the filmmaking process was just – snap, and done. But sitting in on the pitching sessions, I saw how long a process it really is, how cherished an idea is, how much work goes into it, how many changes it goes through. Film people are incredible grinders, who work things through to the end, patiently – like turtles who move forward slowly, but reach the finish line.

(From a video interview, 2021)



ARŪNAS MATELIS, director, producer, Lithuania

Baltic Sea Docs for me is one of the most important events of the documentary film industry. It's not because it's very big, but it is because it's very good.

(From a video interview, 2021)



MIKAEL OPSTRUP, documentary developer, Denmark

I also have a memory about Ivars Seleckis. It's from one of the first times I was a tutor. When you're a tutor, you're supposed to say something wise. Which is not always that easy. And I remember sitting with the group where Ivars presented his project. It was about 15 years ago. And I'm thinking: what on earth can I say? A tutor does not give advice to his own idol. That's not how it works.

(From a video interview, 2021)



LAILA PAKALNIŅA, director, Latvia

Once, when I pitched my project at the forum, I said I can't promise anything, because when you're making a film you're claiming to create art. But I can create either a piece of art or a piece of shit. And while navigating this narrow edge, I can't predict where I'll fall.

(From a video interview, 2021)



STEVE RICKINSON, Managing Editor, Modern Times Review, Romania

From war testimonies to playful experiments, BSD 2025 showed why Riga's compact forum punches above its weight in Europe's doc market landscape. BSD remains the Baltics' only dedicated documentary industry forum. The event convenes more than 100 professionals each year from the Baltic rim and its hinterlands, an intentionally compact community that favours real decisions and dialogue over industry spectacle. Riga keeps the circle tighter, one mentored selection, two pitch days, dense but navigable meetings. In a continent crowded with markets, Riga keeps its breathing space, and that space is what lets films arrive with clarity and leave with momentum.

(From *Baltic Sea Docs 2025: Cats on the Rooftops*, Docs in the Villa, Modern Times Review, September 21, 2025)

What the Numbers Tell You

Projects and companies over the years

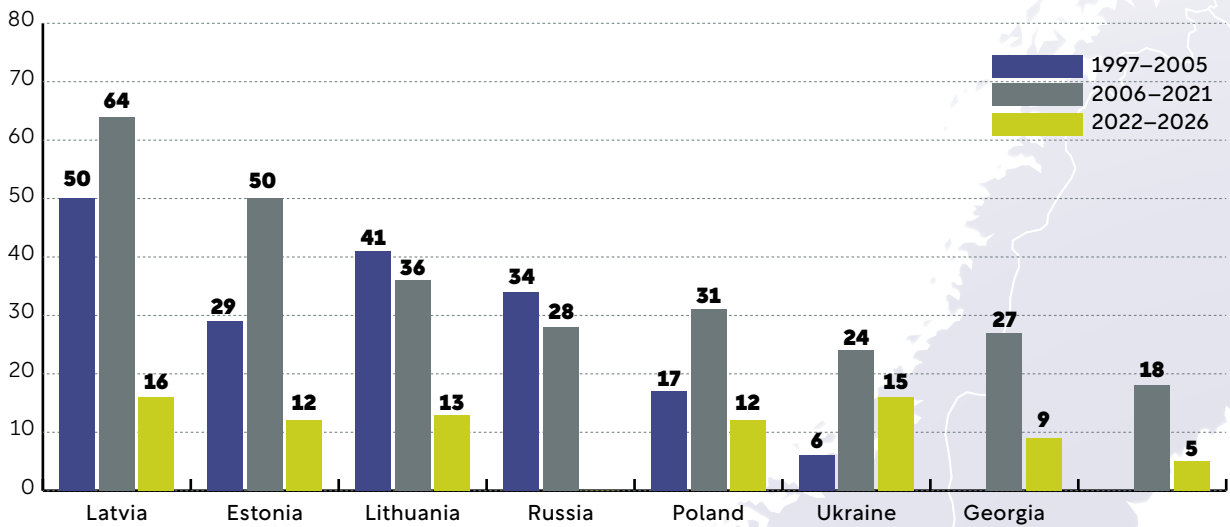
As we all know well, the forum is a platform where filmmakers meet potential project partners and financiers. These two sides are also represented by the overviews shown on this spread – how many projects, from which countries, and what their presence dynamics have looked like across different time periods. At the same time, we look at which countries and companies the decision makers have come from over these thirty years. The short summary: 668 projects from 41 countries (counting the main producing countries) and 510 decision makers from 31 countries. Explore the details yourselves!

1. PROJECTS

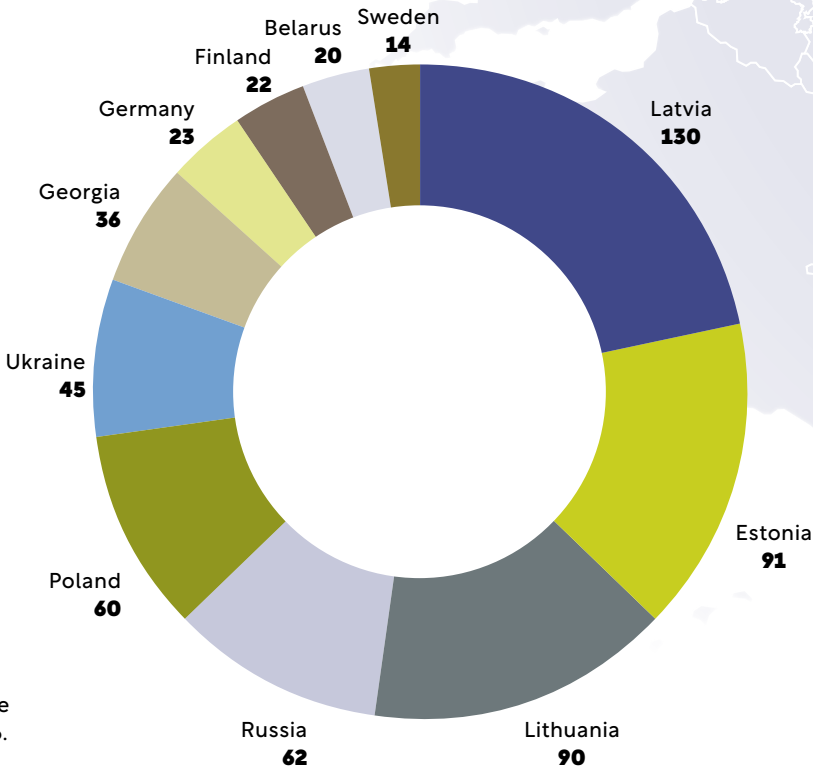
Latvia	130	Croatia	8	Romania	2
Estonia	91	Bulgaria	6	Yugoslavia	2
Lithuania	90	Albania	5	Austria	1
Russia	62	Czech Republic	5	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
Poland	60	Belgium	4	Greece	1
Ukraine	45	Hungary	4	Iceland	1
Georgia	36	Norway	4	Kazakhstan	1
Germany	23	UK	4	Kyrgyzstan	1
Finland	22	Ireland	3	Montenegro	1
Belarus	20	Italy	3	Serbia	1
Sweden	14	Macedonia	3	Slovakia	1
Denmark	9	Azerbaijan	2	Slovenia	1
France	9	Kosovo	2	Uzbekistan	1
Armenia	7	Moldova	2		

1.1. List of all participating countries and number of projects, 1997–2026. Total – 668 projects from 41 countries. In the first editions until 2000, the projects were submitted from 4–7 countries from the Baltic Sea region. Since the Dubrovnik edition in 2001 there is a greater diversity, covering a broader region. From 2013 onward, it's consistently 10–15 countries per year.

1.2. Projects from countries with above 10 selected titles based on the main production country, 1997–2026.



1.3. Top 8 countries by project numbers over three periods: 1997–2005; 2006–2021; 2022–2026 that reflect the shift in the represented countries and project numbers.

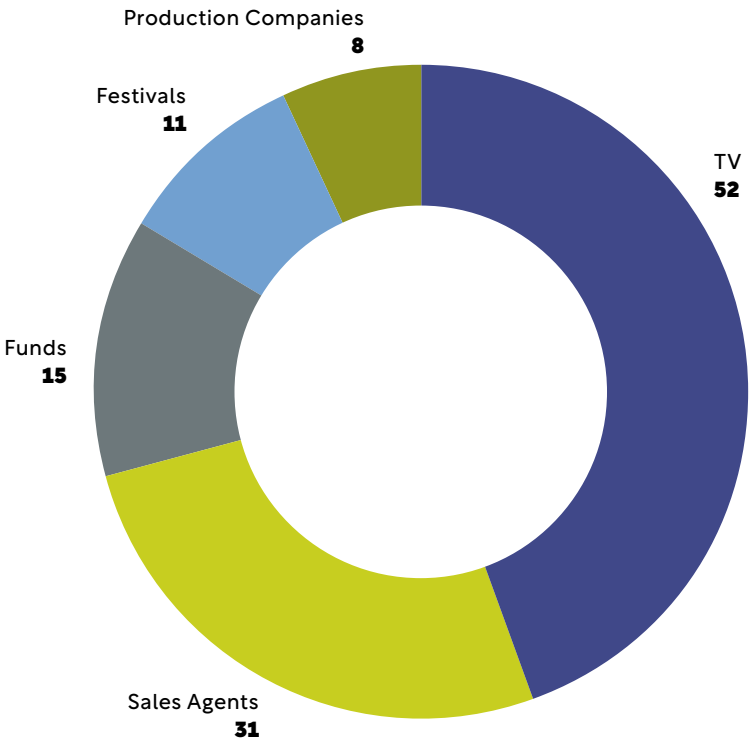


2. DECISION MAKERS

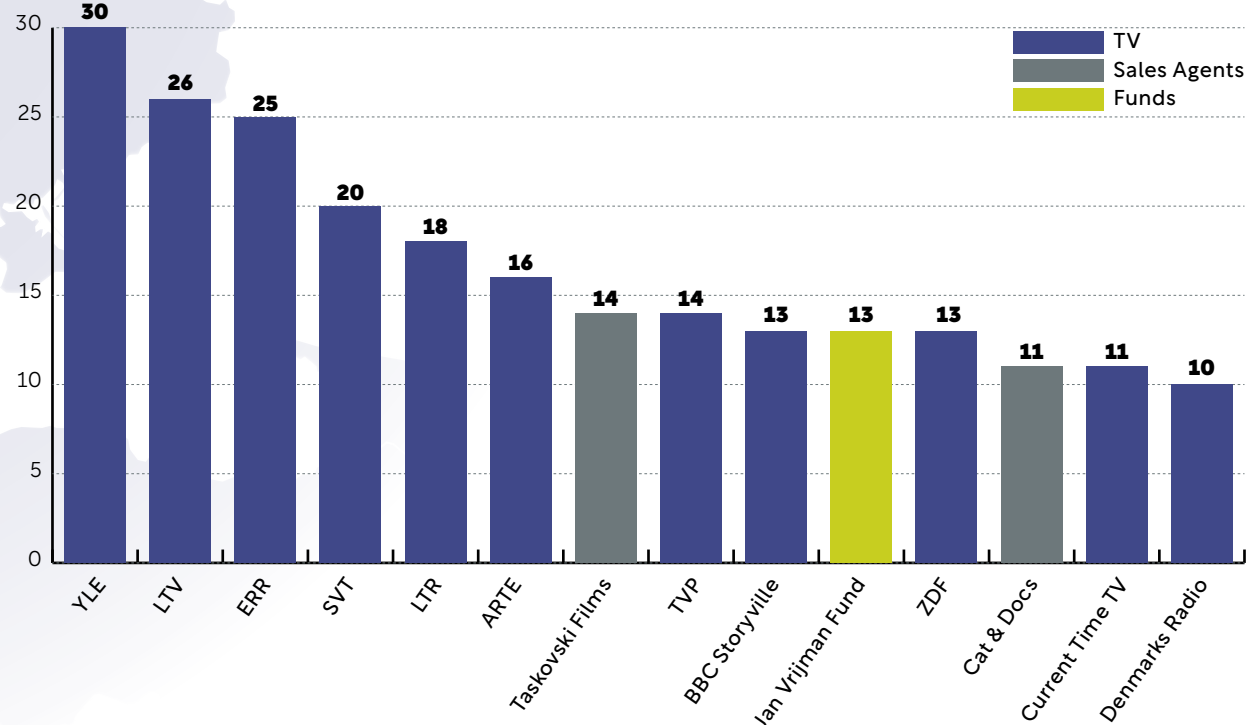
UK	15	Czech Republic	3	Hungary	1
Germany	13	Estonia	3	Ireland	1
France	10	Finland	3	Japan	1
Russia	8	Sweden	3	Lithuania	1
The Netherlands	7	Canada	2	Poland	1
USA	7	Croatia	2	Qatar	1
Belgium	6	Greece	2	Slovenia	1
Denmark	5	Italy	2	South Korea	1
Austria	4	Latvia	2	Ukraine	1
Spain	4	Norway	2		
Switzerland	4	Albania	1		

2.1. Countries and number of companies represented by decision makers on the forum's panel, 1997–2026. Total number – 117 companies from 31 countries.

2.2. Companies by their line of work represented on the forum's panel, 1997–2026.



2.3. Companies that have been present at the Baltic Sea Docs panel above 10 times since the very first edition of the forum in 1997 until 2026. YLE – we love you!



Baltic Sea Docs in the Transnational Documentary Industry Landscape

ZANE KRŪMIŅA
BAL TIC SEA DOCS MANAGER

A co-production on the one hand involves the creation of an institutional framework for cross-border creative collaboration; but on the other, it carries an important cultural function, as characterized by the Danish film scholar Ib Bondebjerg (2018). Transnational collaboration had long been an established feature of the European film industry; however, the institutionalisation of international cooperation in the cultural sector developed only gradually. It has been argued that this process became a defining principle of European audiovisual policy only with the establishment of the Eurimages fund in 1989, the launch of the MEDIA programme in 1990, and the adoption of the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production in 1992 (Bondebjerg 2018).

This can be traced to planning documents from the early 2010s, which articulate the idea of a European cultural network – one through which national and transnational narratives combine to create cultural events capable of transforming how European society, and Europe itself, is perceived. An analysis of EU cultural policy reveals a tension between two positions: on one hand, pragmatic considerations captured in the phrase “unity in diversity”; on the other, aspirations toward a more unified European culture. Institutions and individuals alike work to translate these aspirations into practice, allowing the national and the transnational to co-exist, with national culture retaining its own specificity and a degree of autonomy (Bondebjerg, 2018). Co-productions exemplify this dynamic, en-

abling national narratives to reach international audiences through creative collaboration and dialogue between funders and filmmakers. To foster such cross-border collaboration since the 1990s, industry events became platforms for connecting professionals with funders, and thus facilitating the creation of new productions, finding partners, and increasing visibility. It was in this context that the Baltic Sea Docs – then Baltic Sea Forum for Documentaries – was established.

The 1990s has been seen as a decade when network and systems theories started to gain prominence alongside globalization and the rapid development of information and communication technologies, enabling scholars to analyze cultural phenomena through interconnected structures. Building on Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which emphasizes the coexistence of human and non-human agents within networks, film festival scholar Marijke de Valck had proposed to understand film festivals as dynamic constellations of actors, including filmmakers, institutions, media, venues, and industry events (2007), and this has proved a popular concept within festival studies. In this framework, industry-oriented activities such as co-production markets, pitching forums, and training programs are integral components of festival networks. The growing importance of such industry-oriented components within festivals and also stand-alone events since the 1990s and 2000s reflect broader economic transformations, including the expansion of neoliberal market logic and the rise of global cities, which have stimulated the proliferation of festivals and industry platforms, also in the documentary film field (Loist 2016).

Film scholars have indicated the importance of the MEDIA pro-

gramme that has played a major role in the emergence of industry events within the festival framework. It can be perceived as a form of festival development dictated by the MEDIA programme itself, since industry events served as an instrument for securing a larger presence of industry representatives at a festival, which was in turn a criterion for receiving funding. The model that other forums came to follow was the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) Forum, launched in 1993 (festival in 1988), where filmmakers present their project ideas to potential funders. Alongside IDFA, industry events oriented toward a global circle of documentary filmmakers have emerged across Europe, such as DOK Leipzig in Germany (since 2001), Sheffield MeetMarket, the UK (since 2006), and Visions du Réel in Nyon, Switzerland (since 2006), while industry events focused on a specific territory or theme also have their own role to play, like Nordisk Panorama Forum (held since 1994), that is oriented toward a specific region – Nordic countries. Ilona Hongisto and colleagues propose dividing industry events into three tiers – from a regional focus, to a European context, and further to a global approach (Hongisto et al., 2020) that create a preconditions for selection of the projects and also their potential outreach.

Baltic Sea Docs belongs to the regional tier of the proposed categorization. Its formation and the access of regional – not only Baltic – filmmakers to the European documentary market must be seen as a deliberate strategy. As already has been noted elsewhere in the pages of this newspaper, after the restoration of independence in the early 1990s, for Baltic documentary filmmakers, integration into the international audiovisual landscape was facilitated to a considerable extent by



Screening of Salomé Jashi’s *Taming the Garden* at Liepupe Manor, 2023

THE PHRASE
“THE
INVENTION
OF NORTH-
EASTERN
EUROPE”
POINTS TO
THE NEW
CAPACITY TO
CONCEIVE
OF THE
REGION
OUTSIDE
COLD WAR
BOUNDARIES

a series of Danish initiatives. The establishment of the Balticum Film & TV Festival on the island of Bornholm in 1990 provided one of the first international exhibition platforms for Baltic documentary films (presented along

with productions from 6 other countries from around the Baltic Sea), and subsequently pitching forum followed several years later.

Hongisto and colleagues suggest viewing the rapid growth of documentary film festivals alongside the major and still-unfolding social and political shifts set off by the 1989 revolutions in Europe. As Cold War-era borders came down, these festivals emerged as public spaces where people could question, debate, and rethink how East and West, North and South related to one another. The phrase “the invention of northeastern Europe” points to the new capacity to conceive of the region outside Cold War boundaries – a reference not only to broader artistic attempts to reimagine the continent, but more specifically to the part documentary film festivals played in shaping those visions (Hongisto et al., 2020).

Balticum Film & TV Festival is a perfect example of this. It was formed at the time that is described as the third phase in film festival history – a period distinguished by non-profit organizations and specialized festivals – such as those dedicated to the documentary (Vallejo 2014; de Valck 2007). The festival became a significant meeting place for the filmmakers from the Baltic countries, Poland, also Russia, to come together, show their films and try to create a dialogue. The festival gathered well es-

tablished and emerging Baltic filmmakers – like Ivars Seleckis, Hercs Franks, Juris Podnieks, Arūnas Matelis, Audrius Stonys, Valdas Navasaitis, Mark Soosaar, and others who met there with colleagues from other countries around the Baltic Sea. The concept of the festival was to fill the gap and reestablish the former Baltic Sea region that was ruptured during the Soviet occupation.

In 1994, the Baltic Media Centre (BMC) was founded in Bornholm. Financed primarily by the Danish Ministry of Culture – which provided approximately half of its annual budget – and supplemented by various European Union funding programmes, the Baltic Media Centre operated with the broader objective of promoting peace, democracy, and international cooperation through the media. Its aim was to support the political and economic autonomy of the media in Baltic countries, near-Russia, and Poland (Baltic Media Center 1997). It became a significant instrument to provide professional training for media practitioners – including television professionals and documentary filmmakers – with the goal of strengthening professional qualifications, expanding knowledge of the changing media environment, and promoting international collaboration. Its training programmes placed particular emphasis on film producing, project development, and international co-

productions, also legal aspects.

While the Baltic Media Centre initially operated from Denmark, it gradually established national branches in the countries covered by its activities. In 1997, in cooperation with the Latvian Filmmakers’ Union, the Centre founded the Latvian Training & Co-production Centre; parallel institutions were established in Lithuania and Estonia (Baltic Media Centre, 1997). This coincided with a period of significant technological change, as the industry shifted from analogue to digital video formats, making access to training and technical resources especially important.

1997 was the first year when BMC along the Balticum festival established the Baltic Sea Forum for Documentaries (which has over the years transformed the name into a shorter version – Baltic Sea Docs). The Forum provided participants in co-production training programmes, as well as filmmakers selected for the festival, with the opportunity to pitch documentary projects to commissioning editors and representatives of international television broadcasters. In doing so, it facilitated the international circulation of Baltic and wider region documentary projects and enabled filmmakers to establish direct professional relationships with foreign broadcasters and potential co-production partners (Müller et al. 2016). The courses organized by Bal-

tic Media Centre and then participation at the Forum were essential for a successful integration of regional filmmakers in the European film industry, as the reflections of filmmakers published in this newspaper also confirm.

Now, 30 years later, we can look back at two large periods of Baltic Sea Docs history:

1997 – 2005 (the initial phase, with the first 4 years in Bornholm. In the first forum 25 projects participated from Denmark, Sweden, Baltics, Russia, Poland. In 2001 (Dubrovnik, Croatia) – Balkan projects joined, with Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, and others). 2002 – 2005 altering between Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius);

2006 – 2026 (forum takes place in Riga. Expands geographical outreach – workshop for Georgian filmmakers; post full-scale invasion by Russia into Ukraine, no more Russian projects accepted for the forum).

Over these years, as the statistics show, 668 projects have participated in the forum from 42 different countries as main producers. To gather statistics on the number of completed films out of these projects is our goal for the 35th anniversary – definitely something to look forward to. The demand from the filmmakers to choose to present their projects at the Baltic Sea Docs shows its relevance, resilience and durability.

At the same time the continuation of the Baltic Sea Docs throughout all these years shows a clear need for cozy and regional industry events that fit perfectly in the industry hierarchy – from the most sought-after forums like IDFA or CPH:DOX to more regional ones. Competition for a place at the industry’s central events is fierce, and for many filmmakers, the path from a smaller, regional forum toward that wider circulation is one of the reliable ways in. It is precisely here that regional events prove their worth: by giving these projects a stage of their own, that allow them to shine and develop further. ☞

References

- Baltic Media Centre. 1997. *Annual Report*.
De Valck, Marijke. 2007. *Film Festivals. From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam University Press).
Bondebjerg, Ib. 2018. Foreword. In: Julia Hammett-Jamart, Petar Mitric, Eva Novrup Redvall, *European Film and Television Co-production: Policy and Practice* (Palgrave Macmillan).
Loist, Skadi. 2016. The Film Festival Circuit: Networks, Hierarchies, and Circulation. In *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist, 49–64. (Routledge).
Müller, Tue Steen, Ozola, Lelda, Rimkus, Margarita, Gaide, Sarma, Dūdiņa, Zanda. 2016. *Footprints in the Future. Baltic Sea Docs 20 Years* (National Film Centre of Latvia, Creative Europe MEDIA desk Latvia).
Vallejo, Aida, Winton, Ezra. 2020. *Documentary Film Festivals, Vol 2: Changes, Challenges, Professional Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan).

Lighter side of thirty years

Before you close this anniversary edition, take a short detour into thirty years of the Baltic Sea Docs with some anecdotes and a laugh, as well as solid facts. Consider it a small thank-you for reading this far, and maybe even a way to settle a friendly argument at the next meeting.

Matching Game “Which title belongs to which director?”

Connect the correct answers with lines.

1. Giedrė Žickytė
2. Iryna Tsilyk
3. Jaak Kilmi
4. Ilze Burkovska-Jacobsen
5. Arūnas Matelis
6. Aliaksei Paluyan
7. Antonia Kilian
8. Olha Zhurba
9. Alisa Kovalenko
10. Konrad Szolajski
11. Laila Pakalniņa
12. Salome Jashi
13. Morten Traavik, Uģis Olte
14. Margit Lillak
15. Lilit Movsisyan

- A Outside
- B Before Flying Back to Earth
- C Becoming Roosi
- D Liberation Day
- E Home Games
- F Putin’s Playground
- G The Jump
- H Disco and Atomic War
- I Fight
- J Courage
- K The Other Side of the River
- L My Favourite War
- M The Earth Is Blue as an Orange
- N Bakhmaro
- O Scarecrows

Horoscopes. What the Stars Have Cut From the Final Edit

A five-year horoscope for documentary filmmakers and everyone else still waiting on that funding decision. Compiled for the Baltic Sea Docs 30th Anniversary Newspaper. Accuracy not guaranteed, funding still less guaranteed

♈ ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 19) You will pitch a project before it has a title, a budget, or, frankly, a second act — and somehow a commissioning editor will still say “send me the treatment.” The next five years bring one festival premiere, two format changes, and a rough cut that runs 40 minutes over. In 2029, someone in a pitching session will ask “but what does your protagonist want?” and you will, for the first time, not have an answer. Growth.

♉ TAURUS (Apr 20 – May 20) Slow cinema, slower funding. You will shoot for four years, edit for one, and insist the long takes are “structural, not indulgent.” A Nordic co-producer will fall in love with your rough cut in 2027 and disappear by 2028. Your patience will be rewarded in year five with a distribution deal that pays almost exactly what you spent on drone permits.

♊ GEMINI (May 21 – Jun 20) You will start three different films this year, finish none of them, and somehow still be the most productive person in the room. Expect a co-production credit you don’t remember agreeing to. 2030 brings a hybrid documentary-fiction project that critics will call “audacious” and your producer will call “a nightmare to insure.”

♋ CANCER (Jun 21 – Jul 22) Deeply personal, first-person documentary energy for the next five years. You will cry in at least one pitching session — possibly your own. A broadcaster will ask you to make the film “less about your grandmother and more universal.” Do not listen. In 2031, that same broadcaster will submit it for an award.

♌ LEO (Jul 23 – Aug 22) Main character energy, appropriately, since you direct. Your Q&A sessions will run longer than your films. A major festival will select you in 2028, and you will remind everyone of this for the following three years. The stars warn: your next protagonist may be more interesting than you are. Let them shine occasionally.

♍ VIRGO (Aug 23 – Sep 22) You are the only person in this horoscope who has ever delivered a rough cut on time. Producers will fight over you. In 2029, you will finally direct your own film instead of editing everyone else’s, and discover that other people’s chaos was easier to manage than your own uncertainty. It will still turn out beautifully — you’ll make sure of it.

♎ LIBRA (Sep 23 – Oct 22) Diplomatic co-production energy. You will hold together a five-country crew, three broadcasters, and one director who wants “just one more shoot.” Balance will be tested in 2029 when two funders demand contradictory final cuts. You will somehow deliver both and keep everyone speaking to you — a genuine superpower in this industry.

♏ SCORPIO (Oct 23 – Nov 21) Investigative instincts serve you well; so does your ability to hold a grudge against that one distributor. The next five years bring a film that makes someone very uncomfortable, a legal review, and — eventually — a standing ovation. 2030 is your year: the story you’ve been sitting on since 2019 finally gets financed.

♐ SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 – Dec 21) You will shoot on four continents and still somehow miss the deadline to submit the project to Baltic Sea Docs. Restless, expansive, allergic to sitting still in an edit suite. In 2028, a producer will beg you to “just finish this one before starting the next.” You will start the next one anyway. It will also be great.

♑ CAPRICORN (Dec 22 – Jan 19) You will become the de facto executive producer of at least three other people’s films this year, purely because someone has to keep track of the delivery dates. The next five years bring a modest, perfectly-budgeted film that comes in under schedule — a feat so rare that a commissioning editor will ask if you’re using AI. You are not. You just plan ahead. 2030 brings the offer to head a fund. You will read every application personally and regret it slightly by March.

♒ AQUARIUS (Jan 20 – Feb 18) Experimental form, unconventional structure, a runtime nobody can quite categorize. You will confuse programmers and delight juries in roughly equal measure. The next five years bring one genuinely groundbreaking hybrid work and at least one funder who asks, sincerely, “but is this a documentary?” You will not dignify that with a straight answer.

♓ PISCES (Feb 19 – Mar 20) You will fall in love with your subject, your subject’s dog, and possibly your co-director, all before the second shoot. Boundaries remain theoretical. The next five years bring a film so intimate that test audiences ask if it’s ethical for you to have made it, and you will insist it was the only ethical way. 2029 brings a broadcaster who wants “more distance from the material” — you will nod, agree, and change nothing.

Whatever your sign says, the industry’s real forecast remains constant: more pitching forums, more rough cuts, and — if Baltic Sea Docs has anything to say about it — another 30 years of regional filmmakers finding their way to the world stage.

Anniversary Quiz. For laughs and for the record books

1. According to Ivars Seleckis, how did he and his colleagues travel to Bornholm to look for funding for a *Crossroad Street* sequel?
a) By ferry, with a well-stocked bar b) In an old rattling propeller plane with no toilet c) By hitchhiking through Poland d) On Karolina Lidin’s private yacht
2. What was BBC *Storyville*’s Nick Fraser reportedly “tired of” hearing about at one of the first forums?
a) Long lunch breaks b) Marginal Eastern European stories about helpless old people and “border people” c) Latvian weather d) Subtitled trailers
3. In which year did BMC, together with the *Balticum* festival, establish what is now known as *Baltic Sea Docs*?
a) 1994 b) 1997 c) 1999 d) 2002
4. Why, according to Tue Steen Müller, did the early 2001 *Dubrovnik* screenings flop?
a) The projector broke down b) They were scheduled at 2pm, siesta time — everyone was at the beach c) It rained for a week straight d) There were no tickets printed
5. What nickname did participants give one of the workshop rooms at BSD 2025, according to director Marija Stonytė?
a) “The Church,” for its calm, wise atmosphere b) “The Bunker,” for its lack



Blissful moments from BSD track-record: Holy tutors, Dancing tutors & participants, Dream team technicians showing emotions, Sol Over Gudhjem event in Riga, 2006-2024



6. In Laila Pakalniņa’s memorable pitch-forum line, what might a film-in-progress turn out to be, besides a piece of art?
a) A pile of unpaid invoices b) A piece of shit c) A box of unlabelled tapes d) A blank screen
7. Which Georgian drink did Tue Steen Müller admit becoming “addicted to” after a 2006 welcome reception in Riga?
a) Chacha b) Vodka c) Saperavi wine d) Rakija
8. Who are the two “nice chaps” credited by Tue Steen Müller with running BSD’s technical side in Riga for 20 years without a single mistake?
a) Ivars Zviedris and Guntis Trekteris b) Ivars Brauns and Alvis Lapinš c) Andreas Steinmann and Jens Bager d) Phil Jandaly and Mikael Opstrup
9. In Simon Drewsen Holmberg’s 2016 anecdote, what did the weary EU official ask the Danes to do if a sea border between Denmark and the Baltics actually existed?
a) Show it on a map b) Sign a new treaty c) Pay an import fee d) Ask a different department
10. Who are named as the founders of the forum on Bornholm in 1997?
a) Zanda Dūdiņa and Lelda Ozola b) Tue Steen Müller and Anita Reher c)

11. What did Herz Frank want to revisit — an idea sparked during a five-a.m. hotel-room conversation on Bornholm — according to producer Guntis Trekteris?
a) His own childhood in Riga b) *The Egg Lady*’s bakery c) A remake of *Crossroad Street* d) The boy from *Ten Minutes Older* (1978)
12. What animal metaphor did Simon Drewsen Holmberg use to describe how every filmmaker must start out, again and again?
a) A Lone Wolf b) An Ugly Duckling c) A Sleeping Bear d) A Curious Cat

Project Curiosities. Categorized for no reason other than fun

Shortest BSD project title:

- P

Longest BSD project title:

- The Constitution of the New Era: Man Balancer of the Aerial and Aquatic World

Runners-up:

- Armenia Wants a Piece of the North Pole... and the South Pole too!
- We Are the Granddaughters Of The Witches You Couldn’t Burn

Embrace your wild side

- Man Horse
- Enjoy Your Fly
- My Mom is a Dolphin
- FCL – The Fabulous Cow Ladies
- House of Ants

- Scarecrows
- No Elephant in the Room
- Little Bird’s Diary
- Underling In Bird Kingdom
- The Camel Man
- Creaturama – Epic of the Animals
- Birdwatching

One-word Titles Club

- Rita
- Serozhik
- Mara
- Ahto
- Allan
- Tal
- Irena
- Roma

Questions the industry keeps asking itself

- How to Talk to Lydia?
- How to Fix Yourself?
- Is it Easy...? After 20 Years
- Who Robbed the Wreck?

Documentarians Love a Number in the Title

- 72 Hours
- 18° C
- 9-Month Contract
- 14 Cases
- 180 Beats Per Minute
- 36 Months
- 14,5 km Away From Our Dreams
- 80 Angry Journalists
- Forty Two
- 9 Months

- Five
- May 17
- 7 Conversations on Serious Topics
- The Class Photography – 10 Years Wiser

What’s Cooking?

- Sugar Roads
- Sveta’s Apples
- How to Re-establish Vodka Empire
- Living Among Herbs
- Cranberry Island
- Restaurant ‘Bakhmaro’ and Those Who Work There
- Spoon
- Eating an Elephant
- The Price of Meat



BSD Dream Team at random years starting from Riga 2006 – proudly devoting their time and energy to make BSD happen as a cosy & professional event (in alphabetical order):

Agnese Zeltiņa, Anna Pakalniņa, Anna Rozenvalde, Antra Gaile, Arnis Grinbergs, Asnāte Rībena, Dārta Ceriņa, Dita Rietuma, Elīna Šā, Emīlija Mikalauska, Evita Kļaviņa, Guntis Trekteris, Ieva Lange, Ieva Ūbele, Ieva Vaickovska, Ilze Gailīte Holmberg, Ilze Norvele, Inga Praņevska, Jūle Rozīte, Lelda Ozola, Liene Hapanioneķa, Līva Eglīte, Līva Vernere, Mairita Timrote, Margarita Rimkus, Pāvels Terentjevs, Terēze Brence, Undīne Buka, Viktors Freibergs, Zanda Dūdiņa-Spoģe, Zane Dzene, Zane Kauliņa, Zane Krūmiņa

Baltic Sea Docs 30th anniversary program in Riga and Jūrmala

SEPTEMBER 9, 17:00–20:00
Discussion: “Documentary Film Forum Baltic Sea Docs 30 & CE MEDIA 35”

Venue: Latvian Academy of Culture National Film School, Miera iela 58A, Riga

SEPTEMBER 10, 18:30

Artist Talk: Ukrainian director Roman Bondarchuk and screenwriter/producer Darya Averchenko, discussing film and reality, documenting the Kherson region, and the making of the film *Ukrainian Sheriffs* (2015).

Venue: ISSP Gallery, Berga Bazārs, Marijas iela 13, building 3, Riga

SEPTEMBER 11 – OCTOBER 2, 9:00–18:00 daily

Exhibition: “Ukrainian Sheriffs: Holding On to Home”
Venue: Art Station “Dubulti,” Zigfrīda Meierovica prospekts 4, Jūrmala

SEPTEMBER 12, 13:00

Screening of *Ukrainian Sheriffs* followed by a meeting with the filmmakers.

Venue: Jūrmala Culture Centre, Jomas iela 35, Jūrmala

Activities on the film *Ukrainian Sheriffs* are organized by the “Avantis” association in cooperation with Baltic Sea Docs

Newspaper editorial team

Editors: Zane Krūmiņa, Ieva Lange, Lelda Ozola, Margarita Rimkus, Elīna Šā
Layout: Dace Eglīte
Photos by: Agnese Zeltiņa, and others

Cover image:

Where Everything Disappears (Oleksandr Tkachenko, Ukraine, France, 2026) being pitched at BSD 2023

Thanks to claude.ai for assistance in preparing Fun pages
National Film Centre of Latvia, Riga, 2026
ISBN 978-9934-9196-8-8



National
Film Centre of Latvia



Ministry of Culture
Republic of Latvia

