

European 60s

# The Firemen's Ball 1967

(Horí, má panenka)

Monday, June 2 - Thursday, June 5, 2008



## Film Information

**Directed by**  
Milos Forman

**Language**  
Czech with English subtitles

**Running Time**  
71 minutes

## Film Notes

Milos Forman's *THE FIREMEN'S BALL* holds the unique distinction within this series of being the only film to have been "banned forever" in its home country. Released in Czechoslovakia in 1967, Forman's brilliant political comedy almost immediately drew the attention of government censors, though it would be the following year before it was fully criminalized. In 1968, Forman was in Paris when Soviet tanks burst into Prague to stamp out a popular, reformist uprising. What had been a short period of relative freedom and cultural prosperity (highlighted by a series of internationally celebrated films) was replaced quickly by the harsh rule of communist totalitarianism. Shortly thereafter, Forman, already an expatriate by virtue of timing, defected to the United States, where he's lived and worked ever since.

In an interview with *The New York Times* earlier this year, on the occasion of a MoMA retrospective of his work, Forman referred to the Czech New Wave as a movement born from the need in that country for some semblance of reality on the big screen—

for films that represented in some form what life was like for everyday citizens. Given that description (quoted in full on the reverse side), one might expect a dour, sober portrayal of Czech struggles, but what Forman produced in this Oscar-nominated masterpiece was a comedy of errors that manages to be humanist in its portrayal of individuals even as it skewers the system they collectively represent. It was a statement about Communism at the time, but its hilarious meditation on the un-wisdom and corruptive effects of bureaucracy more than holds up, long after the forces behind its "ban" have been cast away.

—Casey



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### **More Information**

**Screenplay by**  
Milos Forman

**Featuring**  
Milos Forman  
Jaroslav Papousek  
Ivan Passer

**Cinematography by**  
Miroslav Ondříček

**Original Music by**  
Karel Mares

**Film Editing by**  
Miroslav Hájek

**Country of Origin**  
Czechoslovakia

**Awards**  
Academy Award Nominee:  
Best Foreign Language Film

“These films [of the Czech New Wave] were provoked by the idiocy—by the absolute imbecility—of the film produced by the Communist studios in Prague and in Moscow, everywhere in Communist countries, where everything was so artificial, so far-fetched, so unreal and untrue that we only wanted to see some reality, some real people on the screen.”

—Milos Forman, February 2008

### **Also Recommended by Milos Forman**

- Loves of a Blonde 1965
- Black Peter 1964
- One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest 1975
- Amadeus 1984
- Man on the Moon 1999