

## Opponent Review – Pavel Jech

The films of Stefan Sidovski

Jane Spasik

In recent decades there has been a movement in Macedonia to revitalize national culture by reclaiming and rediscovering cultural legacies -- an effort which in certain cases has been more concerned with stimulating a contemporary mythology than providing a factual reckoning.

For his thesis diploma, Jane Spasik has elected to create a comprehensive catalogue of the amateur filmmaker and teacher of philosophy Stefan Sidovski, a living (now older), but not fully-recognized practitioner of alternative cinema. Thankfully, Spasik's aim here is not to create a hagiography but rather a legitimate catalogue that can be used as the basis for future scholarship.

While I have no way of assessing if this catalogue is complete, it appears that Mr. Spasik has put in the requisite effort to fully list all work. And while it is unclear how exactly he has arrived at the details regarding the listed films which are not available (perhaps from his interviews with Mr. Sidovski himself?), there is no reason to doubt the veracity of these claims.

The categories used to catalog each film appear to be useful and reasonable -- with one important exception. My suggestion would be for the descriptive sections at the conclusion of each entry to be further subdivided into three separate sections: description of the film, interpretation of the film, and (if even necessary) qualitative evaluation of the film. As currently written, Mr. Spasik's subjective opinions mix with the objective facts of the artefacts he catalogues. In the nature of this work, it is the objective quality of this project which is of most importance.

Mr. Spasik also provides interpretations at the conclusion of each decade (by which the catalogue is subdivided) as well as the conclusion of his thesis. In these sections, it would have been preferable to have less qualitative assessments (except when in

service of conveying a historical fact, such as explaining the impact of the amateur filmmaker employing a professional crew) and more attention to interpretation. In this regard, these conclusion chapters could have provided more interpretation -- not only of individual films themselves, but of trends, motifs and prevailing characteristics of Stefan Sidovski's overall work.

Not surprisingly, I must confess that I have never seen any of the films of Stefan Sidovski. Further, I am also surprised to learn that despite the excellent reputation of Macedonia's National Film Archive, a significant number of these films (which have been produced for television) have disappeared. After reading this extensive catalog by Jane Spasik, I am intrigued and eager to watch many of these films. And it is this desire to acquaint myself with these films which I consider validation of Jane Spasik's efforts, and my conclusion that he has achieved the primary aim of this diploma work. Consequently, I recommend to the committee that this thesis diploma be granted a passing qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pavel Jech'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping tail.

Pavel Jech