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# Perla Film Review: Love, Trauma, Resilience

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## **Rebeka Poláková shines in *Perla*, a gripping story of survival and sacrifice set against the backdrop of 1981 Vienna and communist Czechoslovakia.**

**Writer & Director:** Alexandra Makarová

**Genre:** Drama

**Run Time:** 108'

**World Premiere:** February 3, 2025

**Release Date:** TBA

**Where to Watch:** at the International Film Festival Rotterdam

In *Perla*, writer-director Alexandra Makarová crafts a poignant tale of **survival, sacrifice, and the lingering shadows of the past**. Set against the backdrop of 1981 Vienna and communist Czechoslovakia, the film follows exiled artist and single mother Perla (Rebeka Poláková), whose return to her homeland exposes deep-seated scars and upends her already precarious life. Anchored by a breathtaking performance from Poláková, *Perla* is a masterclass in storytelling, blending sharp social commentary with an emotionally gripping narrative.

Not only does Makarová deliver a powerful critique of the normalization of violence against women, but she also invites the audience into a world where **love and trauma collide in profoundly moving ways**.

Visually, *Perla* is **stunning**. The cinematography by Georg Weiss left me in awe. That opening lake shot? It's etched into my memory, perfectly setting the tone for the journey ahead. Weiss skillfully contrasts the muted tones of Vienna's urban struggles with the shadowy interiors of communist Czechoslovakia, mirroring the internal conflict of a woman caught between her daughter's future and the ghosts of her past. These visuals aren't just beautiful; they're **haunting**, amplifying the film's tension and emotional depth.

**Rebeka Poláková's performance** as Perla is nothing short of extraordinary. She brings such depth and nuance to the character that I felt every moment of her pain and resilience. Her chemistry with Carmen Diego, who plays Julia, is equally compelling. Watching their dynamic unfold, the love, the tension, the unspoken words felt **so authentic that it left me thinking about my own**

**relationships.** Diego's portrayal of Julia, a precocious young pianist yearning for stability, is tender yet fierce, adding another layer of emotional complexity to the story.

The tension ramps up as Perla embarks on her perilous journey to Czechoslovakia, where her ex-lover Andrej (Noel Czuczor) claims to be on his deathbed. What starts as an act of compassion quickly spirals into a confrontation with unresolved pain and systemic oppression. Czuczor's performance is chilling; he embodies the quiet, insidious control of a man desperate to reassert his power. The film's **critique of normalized violence against women is woven seamlessly into the narrative**, making it both unflinching and deeply affecting.



### **Rebeka Poláková in Perla** (IFFR)

As the story hurtles toward its conclusion, Perla's choices become increasingly reckless yet heartbreakingly human. The last 20 minutes of the film **hit me like a punch to the gut**. I don't want to spoil anything, but the emotional weight of those scenes left me on the verge of tears. It's rare for a film to evoke such visceral reactions, but *Perla* does so with grace, weaving love, trauma, and resilience into an unforgettable finale.

I can't stop thinking about *Perla*. It's not just a movie; it's an experience that invites you to reflect on **pain, survival, and the unbreakable bond between a mother and her child**. Makarová's writing and direction are brilliant, and Poláková's performance is a revelation. Watching this movie felt personal, almost uncomfortably so, but that's what makes it such a powerful journey. If you're ready to be moved, shaken, and utterly captivated, *Perla* is a film you cannot miss.

# PERLA MOVIE PLOT & RECAP

## SYNOPSIS:

In 1981, Perla, an exiled artist and single mother, risks everything to return to communist Czechoslovakia. As she confronts her past and her manipulative ex-lover, long-buried secrets emerge, jeopardizing her future with her daughter.

## PROS:

- Outstanding performance by Rebeka Poláková
- Stunning cinematography, especially the opening lake shot
- Emotional, gripping narrative with sharp social commentary

## CONS:

- Some pacing issues in the second act
- Andrej's character could use more depth

. . .

*Perla* had its World Premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam on **February 3, 2025**.

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