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LOCARNO 2019 Filmmakers of the Present
Review: *Space Dogs*

by MARTA BAŁAGA

12/08/2019 - Beware – Elsa Kremser and Levin Peter’s title is the scariest film of the year



For anyone who happened to grow up with a fun, brightly coloured image of Laika the dog, the real Soviet hero, **Elsa Kremser** and **Levin Peter’s** *Space Dogs* [+]
– shown in the Filmmakers of the Present section of the 72nd [Locarno Film Festival](#) – will be a bit of a brutal awakening. Mostly because





(The article continues below - Commercial information)

Also because the film isn't only about the heart-breaking outcome of Laika's imposed adventure, one that drove author Haruki Murakami to wonder about "the dark, lustrous eyes of the dog gazing out of the tiny window. In the infinite loneliness of space, what could Laika possibly be looking at?" *Space Dogs* is also about what led to her agony in the first place, a grim destiny shared by – it turns out – many others as the directors uncover the world of Soviet "space dogs", swept off the streets of Moscow right into small cages and even smaller capsules, petrified and, yes, to repeat after the Japanese writer, so very alone.

Uneven but engaging, like a real fairy tale *Space Dogs* makes your mind wander, imagining details that might be (or, let's face it, are) even harder to stomach than what makes it to the screen, especially since there is more to the film than the archive footage which had me sweating with anxiety within minutes. Indeed, the filmmakers' insistence on following the mongrels, as opposed to their captors, takes them all the way to the streets – the very same ones that once housed that "first animal to be fired into space" and her successors: dogs that didn't belong to anyone, and therefore to everyone, picked up one by one by scientists in what must be one of the most absurd images to be born in somebody's head.

Eager to take a closer look at their life before all the "glory", Kremser and Peter crouch down – only to discover a whole different planet. Loud and hostile, thumping with music that's always too loud and karaoke singing always in the wrong key, this perspective at dog level sees humans reduced to legs only too eager to administer yet another kick. This simple trick makes it easy to share the animals' confusion as they are forced into ridiculous situations, such as the chimpanzee forced to wear an uncomfortable golden hat, a nod to America's answer to Laika. Although the idea of literally following dogs around might seem dull, it quickly morphs into a scary thriller. If anyone wondered what actually happens when a dog manages to catch a cat, wonder no more – needless to say, mass walkouts are to be predicted in this film's nearest future. Somehow mirroring the dogs' past and their present, *Space Dogs* stayed with me well past the credits, although I was exhausted beyond recognition. Very much like that on-screen cat.

Space Dogs was produced, written and directed by Elsa Kremser and Levin Peter. A production by [Raumzeitfilm](#), in co-production with [It Works! Medien](#). Supported by ARRI International Support Program, [Austrian Film Commission](#), [Österreichische Kulturforum Moskau](#), [German Films](#). World

trailers & videos

international title:	Space Dogs
original title:	Space Dogs
country:	Austria , Germany
sales agent:	Deckert Distribution
year:	2019
directed by:	Elsa Kremser , Levin Peter
screenplay:	Elsa Kremser , Levin Peter

main awards/selection

Locarno 2019	Filmmakers of the Present
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Review: *Space Dogs*

Beware – Elsa Kremser and Levin Peter's title is the scariest film of the year ▶

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EXCLUSIVE: Trailer and clip for Elsa Kremser & Levin Peter's *Space Dogs*

The film by the Austrian filmmaking duo is set to world-premiere in the Filmmakers of the Present Competition at the Locarno Film Festival ▶

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The 72nd edition of the Locarno Film Festival will see a number of European films featuring in parallel sections of the event, but they will also make an appearance in the prestigious Piazza Grande ▶

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