



31 January
7.30pm Cine Lumière

Leto (2018)
by Kirill Serebrennikov

Kirill Serebrennikov's *Leto* deals with history that has a vital place in contemporary Russia's sense of itself and its relationship to the Soviet past. From the mid-1960s onwards, the Soviet Union thronged with fans of western rock music. In the cities, over what turned out to be the last two-and-a-bit decades of Soviet rule, lively music scenes developed. These scenes encompassed bands that mainly wrote and performed their own songs and that were denied opportunities to make records or publicise their music via state media, until the advent of Gorbachev and perestroika. By the late 1970s, the paradox of the obvious popularity some bands had nonetheless achieved and the haphazard circumstances in which their fans could access their music, spurred various attempts on the part of musicians and their supporters to establish a firmer footing in society.

The first lasting success on the organisational front was the Leningrad Rock Club, founded on Rubinshtein Street in 1981. Its foundation involved transforming rock music and the lifestyle associated with it into something acceptable. The Rock Club had a decidedly educational ethos. Rock groups had to meet certain standards in order to join, including vouching for the socially progressive intentions behind their repertoire; lyrics were typed out and checked for vulgarity or dubious allusions before a song could be performed; groups were sanctioned for inappropriate behaviour on stage, such as taking their shoes and socks off.

Rock music in Leningrad was never confined to the municipal premises on Rubinshtein Street, whatever the authorities might have hoped. *Leto* is intent on showing how the music and the life around it drift around the city— inside communal flats, out onto rooftops, spilling out into the streets and over to the beach on the Gulf of Finland. Much as their subjects did, the filmmakers derive joy from seemingly incongruous or meagre props and surroundings – a stylishly strong cup of coffee in a bone china cup is carried across town, a huge ripe tomato is proffered as a slightly suggestive treat; everyone swigs from cheap *portvein* bottles and smokes *papirosy*. The treasured artefacts representing western rock music – LPs, posters, magazine articles, copied-out lyrics, hand-drawn images, paintings – are placed onscreen with care and veneration. In the dialogue, the characters drop all the right names.

The soundtrack includes songs by both men, as well as some brilliant evocations of what might have happened in the characters' heads when they hummed songs by T. Rex, Talking Heads or Lou Reed. Tsoi's songs are somewhat better known than Mike's, but, as the film tells us, Mike was a huge influence on the development of rock in Russian. To his fellow musicians he, more than anyone else in Leningrad, seemed the embodiment of a kind of primeval essence of rock and roll – though aside from instinct this was something at which he studied hard: he sought out records, listened widely, he transcribed and translated lyrics, read everything he could get his hands on (as a result, his English was extremely good). His musical loves ranged from Chuck Berry to punk, and often what he created laid bare his influences for all to hear, in borrowed riffs and melodies, and sometimes in near-translations.

In the film, Mike's fear that Tsoi will supplant him creatively and personally combines with his anxiety of influence concerning his distant idols and the craft of song-writing; he knows that he is Salieri to Tsoi's Mozart. He also fears *for* Tsoi: as he expresses it to Bob (Grebenshchikov) the life events a young man may be faced with in this society are unlikely to be conducive to rock stardom. These dangers are real – but they did not play out in life quite as Mike in the film foresees. The choice to close the film with Tsoi on the verge of success is one of the ways in which this is a surprising take on a well-worn story.

The character called Skeptik, who speaks directly to the viewer and seems to have been transplanted from our present, pre-empted charges of faithlessness to historical record and foregrounds the curious – perhaps naïve, perhaps knowing – gaze of those who did not live through this. Skeptik often looks into the camera and sometimes reminds us in as many words that 'this never happened'. In a particularly memorable moment, he rails against these Brezhnev-era ghosts, shouting into their faces in disbelief at their apparent contentment with the bigger picture: 'What do you sing about, Mike? What's your rock'n'roll about?' Skeptik's rage is deliberately presented as an energy that is anachronistic and alien to this community, and this scene surely invites the viewer to step outside the world of the film and think of instances closer to our time when artists could be charged with being quiescent.

Programme Notes by Polly McMichaels from University of Nottingham. In conversation with Roman Bilyk.

MELODIA! DISCOVERING MUSICALS FROM RUSSIA & THE CAUCASUS

Melodia! celebrates the diversity and complexity of Soviet, Russian and Caucasian musicals. It gives UK and Russian speaking audiences a unique opportunity to explore an undiscovered musical tradition.

COSSACKS OF THE KUBAN (1949)

IVAN PYRYEV

A high colour high energy Romeo & Juliet style love story. Made at the height of Stalinism, the musical's glorification of the collective farm way of life is accompanied by gorgeous tunes from Isaac Dunayevsky.

Oct - Jan, BFI Southbank, Watershed, UPP Oxford

WE ARE FROM JAZZ (1983)

KAREN SHAKNAZAROV

Introduced by Peter Bradshaw

This film casts an eye back to the jazz's beginnings in 1920s USSR. Released into the harsh economic reality of the 1980s, it is an example of the loosening of censorship in the late Soviet film.

7 Jan 6.30pm, Cine Lumière

CHERYOMUSHKI (1963)

HERBERT RAPPAPORT

Introduced by Owen Hatherley

An adaptation of Dmitri Shostakovich's operetta, which subtly criticises Soviet life, raising intriguing questions about whether Shostakovich was a dissident or an ideologue.

Screening on rare 35mm.

8 Jan, 6.30pm, Cine Lumière

CARNIVAL NIGHT (1956)

ELDAR RYAZANOV

Introduced by Dr Maria Korolkova

A brilliant parody of Soviet top-down bureaucracy, Carnival Night satirised the appointment of a new director at a House of Culture, who threatens the New Year's party plans of his co-workers.

14 May, 6.30pm, Cine Lumière

MELODIES OF THE VERA QUARTER (1987)

GIORGI SHENGELAIA

Introduced by Mako Abashidze

A charming tale that clearly has its origins in folklore. The film's context is infused with marvellous Georgian music and dance and featuring performances from great Georgian actors Vakhtang Kikabidze and Sofiko Chiaureli, Melodies is a celebration of Georgian culture's vibrancy.

Screening on rare 35mm.

15 Jan, 6.30pm, Cine Lumière

KARINE (1969)

ARMAN MANARYAN

Preceded by expert panel discussion

Based on an operetta by Tigran Chukhajian, *Karine* includes everything an operetta is supposed to have. Performed in Armenian and released shortly after the 1965 demonstrations in Yerevan, it is important to see this film as a reclamation also of Armenian identity.

21 Jan, 6.30pm, Cine Lumière

A MAN FROM BLVD DES CAPUCINES

ALLA SURIKOVA

Introduced by Hope Dickson Leech

This rare red Western acts as an exploration into the nature of cinema. Lovingly playing with devices of American film and the birth of cinema, it is the only film in the season to be directed by a woman.

Wed 22 January 6.30pm, Cine Lumière

HIPSTERS (2008)

VALERY TODOROVSKY

Introduced by Stephen Coates

Todorovsky's musical provides a contemporary view on the 'Stilgyagi' counter-culture (parallel to the Beat Generation). A melange of 1950s music with contemporary score, this eclectic film contextualises Russian musical tradition within its Soviet past.

Sunday 26 Jan, 6.00pm, Cine Lumière

Kirill Serebrennikov

(1969-present) is a Russian stage, film director, theatre designer, as well as a professor at the Moscow Art Theatre School. Described as one of Russia's leading theatre directors, he has staged productions for the Mariinsky Theatre and the Bolshoi Theatre in Russia. His films have been screened at Cannes Film Festival, Rome Film Festival, and the Warsaw International Film Festival where his film *Yuri's Day* received the Grand Prix.

Roman Bilyk

Better known as Roma Zver, Roman is the lead singer of *Zveri*, the band he formed in in 2002. The Russian rock pop band were recipients of Muz-TV's Best Rock Act prize for six consecutive years. As well as starring in *Leto*, Roman won a prize for the film's soundtrack at Cannes 2018. Roman authored the book *Rain-guns*, writing about life before coming to Moscow. Most recently, he is GQ Russia's December cover star, and Man of the Year.

Dr Polly McMichaels

A lecturer in Russian and Slavonic Studies at the University of Nottingham, Polly's main project is the study of the phenomenon of rock stardom in the last decades of the Soviet Union. Her PhD focused on the development of rock music culture in Leningrad before glasnost and on the texts, performances and personas of the singer-songwriters Boris Grebenshchikov (Akvarium) and Maik Naumenko (Zoopark), the latter of whom Roman plays in *Leto*.

About Kino Klassika Foundation

Kino Klassika creates programmes of film restorations, publications, art commissions and events to educate audiences about classic Russian language and Eastern cinema. This includes a 2-year programme to spotlight the pioneering work of filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, and our first restoration project of Parajanov's *Hakob Havnatanyan*. Kino Klassika's trustees are Professor Ian Christie, Daniel Jowell QC, Roger Munnings CBE.

Kino Klassika Team

This evening's screening could not happen without the support of Joseph Andreyev, Nathan Dampier, Maria Egjeva, Tatiana Isaeva, Zoryana Mischiy, Seraphina Paisey, Talitha Piggott & Tom Rebour.

Support Us

Kino Klassika is a UK registered charity (1150791). We rely on the generosity of our supporters. If you want to encourage education and engagement with classic Russian language, Eastern and East European film, please support us by making a donation.

We are fundraising to complete a restoration of *Parajanov's Arabesques on a Pirosmeni Theme (1985)*. This short film about Georgian painter Niko Pirosmeni is a meditation by one Georgian artist on another. Parajanov, of both Georgian and Armenian descent, is considered one of the most lyrical and imaginative figures of 20th century cinema, developing the art form with unique, poetic vision, and leaving an influential legacy.

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