Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* was released nearly a century ago. In 1929 the Soviet avant-garde scene was, unbeknownst to Vertov, soon to draw to a forced, state ordained close. In the 1930s, socialist realism was imposed and Vertov's freewheeling experimentation ran at cross purposes to this new vision of Soviet art. Belated and prolonged recognition has posthumously situated Vertov as an enormously important figure in documentary film. Whilst Vertov has proven to be a true innovator and far too influential to be placed in the context of an artistic movement, rather he is pioneer and influencer in his own right, there is no doubt that the freedom of expression in the 1920s enabled him to develop the unique filmic language of Kino-Eye. This was a film language that developed through his earlier works and position as a newsreel editor, before synthesising into the visual self-reflexivity we see in *Man with a Movie Camera*.

A truly seminal piece, there are many threads running throughout Vertov's film. Immediately entertaining, we are swept up in its artistry and technical prowess. At second viewing we note how complete and composite it is; despite the thematic complexity, it hangs together seamlessly. All scenes relate to each other, and build a perfectly synthesised piece. After the proclamation at the beginning, 'Without the help of intertitles, without the help of a script...' the first image is of the so called 'Man', Vertov's camera operator and brother, Mikhail Kaufman, standing on a camera. Double exposure was revolutionary in the 1920s, and was made possible for Vertov by the technical prowess of his wife and editor, Elizaveta Svilova. This initial image relates not only to the revelation at the end of the film, that we are the cinema goers viewing the film we have seen made, but of the association of man and machine that is so integral to the theory of Kino-Eye. For Vertov and his collaborators, the so called 'kinoks', the camera's lens gives humans an objectivity they otherwise do not possess. Vertov's devotion to minimising intertitles and using a hidden camera, (later to become the inspiration for cinéma vérité), was because of his belief in superiority of the camera lens. In one astonishing sequence, Svilova's rolling eye is intercut with visions of the Soviet city space. This likens the eye to a camera lens before another double exposure, which results in the famous image of the eye inside the lens. Later, film techniques are used in sport scenes to both express the power of physicality and make it subordinate to film. Horses stop in their tracks and athletes are frozen in the most impressive of positions. The Bolshoi theatre is made to implode. Svilova's editing is cut parallel with scenes of work. Shots of her editing the very film we are watching, are interspersed with scenes of hair dressing, telephone operators and machine operated production lines. Again everything is interrelated and ultimately presided over by the camera. Roger Ebert commented on this, 'There is a gathering rhythmic speed that reaches a crescendo nearer the end. The film has shot itself, edited itself, and now is conducting itself at an accelerating tempo.' Interrelations and parallels run deeply throughout. Filmed across Moscow, Odessa, Kyiv and Kharkov it draws together a multitude of Soviet citizens and common experience. The film begins with the awakening of the city, or rather cities. The empty streets, closed shop fronts and machines not in use burst into scenes of life, death, birth, work, marriage and divorce. This multitude of experience is edited together. Split screens of two trams moving are merged together to highlight the simultaneity of action across the Soviet space, whether literally or metaphorically.

But, Vertov himself is aware of the irony present in his film. Despite his proclamations on the absence of intertitles and the lack of script; the film is obviously planned on many levels. This is made self aware by the insertion of the meta-narrative throughout. When considering Vertov, it is easy to get stuck in a conversation either about his self-reflexivity or the pure and objective aims of Kino- Eye. However, as *Man with a Movie Camera* clearly shows, he had developed a successful filmic language to polemicise and communicate complex thought. It is nothing short of tragic that Vertov's career was thereafter blighted by censorship and personal hardship that prevented us from seeing where an unfettered Vertov would have taken us next.
Dziga Vertov
Dziga Vertov (1896–1954) was born as David Kaufman in Bialystok, then a part of the Russian empire, to a Jewish family. His brothers were also deeply gifted filmmakers. Mikhail Kaufman was his cameraman and collaborator on his best known works and his other brother, Boris Kaufman went on to be an acclaimed cinematographer. A pioneer of documentary and early cinema, he and Mikhail conceived of 'Kino-Pravda', a film philosophy that believed in the objectivity of the camera. Their early use of hidden camera techniques directly influenced the ethos and practice of cinéma vérité. Vertov began his film career as an editor for a weekly film series. Experimental and preoccupied with montage, collage and perception from his early years, he adopted the moniker ‘Dziga Vertov’, which loosely translates to ‘spinning top’. He is best known for Man with a Movie Camera, which is consistently lauded as one of the best films of all time.

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, our first restoration projects including Hakob Havnatanyan, Arabesques on the Pirosmani Theme and Jirtdan (1969). We have recently completed Melodia! Discovering Musicals from Russia and the Caucasus, a screening season in partnership with the British Film Institute, Institut Francais, Bristol Watershed and Broadway Nottingham. The program celebrated the diversity and complexity of Soviet, Russian and Caucasian musicals. It gave UK audiences a unique opportunity to explore an undiscovered musical tradition.

Kino Klassika’s trustees are Professor Ian Christie, Daniel Jowell QC, Roger Munnings CBE and Justine Waddell. The patron of Kino Klassika is Ralph Fiennes.

The Kino Klassika Team
This screening could not happen without the unstinting support of the Kino Klassika team: Joseph Andreyev, Tatiana Isaeva, Zoryana Mischiy, Olja Miljevic, Seraphina Paisley and Talitha Pigott.

Upcoming Klassiki Screenings
Klassiki will screen a new film in our weekly curated series, every Tuesday from 2pm. Please check in with us on social media or via our website to access each week’s new screening. And please share the news with your friends!

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