



A reel treat for moviegoers

Russian film week a hit

FIRST THERE WAS Hollywood, then there was Bollywood and last week, the best of new Russian cinema was presented in New York during the fifth annual Russian Film Week.

Ten directors showcased their new films to the delight of Russian New Yorker audiences and American subtitles lovers, who flocked to the Directors Guild of America and Kent Theaters to see what's new in Russian film, literally.

From family comedy to post World War II drama, the 10 movies attracted thousands of viewers, whose moviegoing experience was enhanced by the presence of the directors who had traveled to New York to present their works and answer questions from the audience.

"We came to hear from you!" shouted one audience member to the director of "Dreaming of Space," Alexei Uchitel, who traveled from Moscow and was at the screening of his film.

"And I care what you think of my film," responded Uchitel, who then treated the audience to a bit of inside information. "When you watch the movie, remember, everything is real. When a character is hit during a boxing match scene, trust me, it hurt him very much every time he fell. And when the characters swim, the water is very, very cold — 8 degrees [on the Celsius scale, 46 degrees Fahrenheit]."

Uchitel's film, a story of premonition of the new, the unattainable and the forbidden takes place in 1957 and focuses on two men and two women, each with his or her own unique dreams and desires.

But it is foremost the story of the main character, Gherman, who dreams of going abroad but tells everyone he is planning to go into space. Ironically, the first is more unattainable than the latter.

"There are no Russian, German or American movies — there's only good or bad movies," said Uchitel, 54, whose picture, "His Wife's Diary," was nominated for an Oscar in the best foreign-language movie category in 2000.

"You know the places where the

BY VERONIKA BELENKAYA
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

audience is supposed to sigh or laugh, and those moments are mostly the same everywhere," he said.

While the directors scanned the viewers' faces for reaction to their films, moviegoers marveled at the rebirth of the Russian cinema tradition.

"I've lived in New York for 13 years, and for 10 years, I didn't watch any new Russian movies. And now I started watching again," said Marina Gaizidorskaia, 35, of Bay Ridge.

"My favorites this week were 'Dreaming of Space' and 'Escape,'" said Gaizidorskaia, an actress herself. "They reminded me of the old Russian films I know and love."

She was but one of thousands of Russian New Yorkers who, for the week, traded in Steven Spielberg for the likes of Uchitel and took to the theaters for a taste of the old through the new.

But the film week was as much a treat for the honored guests from Russia as it was for local audiences.

"I love coming to New York," Uchitel said. "Every streetcorner you turn, you discover something new."

This year's film week, which was co-organized by the Russian-American Arts Foundation and the Novoye Russkoye Slovo Publishing Corporation, may be over, but its return is already highly anticipated by viewers and filmmakers alike.

"It was great to see so many former mates here," said Sergey Lazaruk, head of the cinematography department of the Federal Agency for Culture and Cinematography. "Russian film has to exist here, in New York — and thanks to this week, it does."

vbelenkaya@nydailynews.com



LINDA OBUCHOSKA

Russian director Alexei Uchitel traveled from Moscow for last week's festival and the screening of his film, "Dreaming of Space," at DGA Theater on W. 57th St.

Tycoon in Siberian camp

MOSCOW — Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the jailed Russian billionaire who last week was reported to be in prison camp in the Volga region of Saratov, is now in a Siberian labor camp near the Mongolian border, a lawyer for the former Yukos Oil Co. chief executive said.

Khodorkovsky, 42, once Russia's richest man, with a fortune of \$15 billion, will serve the remainder of his eight-year sentence at a penal colony in Chita, 3,750 miles from Moscow, according to the lawyer, Genrikh Padva.

World Bank plea

MOSCOW — Russia must fight

growing corruption and improve its judiciary, World Bank chief Paul Wolfowitz said on Thursday after meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"There are many challenges still here and corruption is on the top of the list and, unfortunately, it seems to be growing, not shrinking," Wolfowitz told reporters during his first visit to Russia as the World Bank president.

In his policy speech in Washington last month, Wolfowitz — the former U.S. deputy defense secretary — said the bank would promote anti-corruption measures, accountability, good governance, education, health, infrastructure and agriculture.

Transparency International's 2005

Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Russia joint 126th on its list of the cleanest countries, on the same level as Sierra Leone, Niger and Albania, and down from 90th in 2004.

Prison riot

MOSCOW — A member of the Kyrgyz parliament was among four people taken hostage and killed by inmates during an inspection of a prison camp near the capital, Bishkek, RIA Novosti news service reported, citing the Interior Ministry.

Tymchbek Akmatbayev, president of the parliamentary commission on law and order, was murdered Thursday when inmates began to riot during his visit to the camp at the village of Moldavanovka, Novosti said.

NEWS FROM HOME

TAKE THE BUS TO

FOXWOODS
RESORT + CASINO

New Tours • 718-934-7644

Departures from
Brooklyn & Queens

★ Pay \$28 for your Bus Ticket and
Receive a \$54 Bonus Package!

Includes 4 (\$10) Match Plays and a Free Buffet.

Limit one Bonus Package per person. Must be 21 years of age or older.