



PRESS RELEASE March 2011

11/25

# KINO

## Russian Film Pioneers

**Kino Kosmos Sokurov**



This May **BFI Southbank** will unveil its most ambitious review of Russian cinema ever with **KINO, Russian Film Pioneers**, consisting of three two-month seasons across 2011, a national release, DVD distribution, education initiatives and special music events commissioned by the BFI. Starting with the grandfathers of modern cinema – visionaries such as **Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov** and **Vsevolod Pudovkin** – who have inspired filmmakers ever since the silent era with their boundary-breaking camera techniques and editing styles, alongside narratives dealing with equality and justice that challenged censorship laws. On 29 April BFI Distribution will release the restored version of Sergei Eisenstein’s seminal **Battleship Potemkin** (1926), announcing the first instalment of Kino and post-revolution film. A summer of science fiction will follow with **KOSMOS**, to mark the 50th anniversary of **Yuri Gagarin**’s epic orbit of the earth, a time when the race to outer space ignited people’s imaginations and a new genre of sci-fi film was led by the Soviet Union. Documentaries and feature films by renowned director **Aleksandr Sokurov**, best known for the award-winning **Russian Ark** (2002), will complete the celebration later in the year.

### **KINO, May – June 2011**

Today only a few ‘classic’ Soviet films and filmmakers are familiar to Western film fans, yet their influence on the writers, painters, designers and filmmakers of the West was immense, including directors such as **Alfred Hitchcock, Martin Scorsese, François Truffaut** and even **Walt Disney**. There are many films from post-revolution Russia that remain as vital and compelling on the big screen now as they did then. Many audiences will be familiar with **Protazanov**’s **Aelita** (1924), Eisenstein’s **The Strike** (1925) and **October** (1928) and Dziga Vertov’s **The Man with a Movie Camera** (1929), but titles such as **Bed and Sofa** (1927) by **Abram Room** – banned for many years by British censors for its depiction of a love triangle between two men and a woman – may come as an intriguing surprise. Kino draws on the power of the silent era, launching on 5 May with a special screening of Eisenstein’s **The Old and The New** (aka *The General Line*, 1929), accompanied by a live score performed by **Max De Wardnerer, Ed Finnis** and **The Elysian Quartet**, commissioned by the BFI, and inspired by Eisenstein’s original notes for a score, which he wrote on a visit to London in 1929. On 20

May Vsevelod Pudovkin's satire **Storm Over Asia** (aka *The Heir to Genghis Khan*, 1928) will be accompanied by **Yat-Kha**, who blend traditional Tuvan music with throat singing, and who topped the European World Music charts earlier this year, in what promises to be a mesmerising event.

Whilst these directors were revered in Russia and made a great impression in Europe, those who came after were discovered decades later by the West. When 'talkies' became the fashion, Soviet directors used them to educate audiences about the history of the revolution, as in the **Vasiliev's Chapayev** (1934) and **Kozintsev and Trauberg** 'Maxim' Trilogy. In **The Youth of Maxim** (1935), **Return of Maxim** (1937) and **The Vyborg Side** (1939) the life of a young man is traced, from an activist in 1910, to a strike leader in 1914 and finally a commissar. Films such as **The Deserter** (1933), by Pudovkin and Ermler's rarely-seen **Peasants** (1935) would also examine the changing mores of Russia under the Stalin regime. Two post-war films will conclude this first part of Kino:, the last of Grigori Aleksandrov's fantasy musicals, **Spring** (1947), starring his wife Lubov Orlova in a dual role, , and the film that proclaimed to the world a new 'thaw' in Soviet society, **The Cranes Are Flying** (1957), by **Mikhail Kalatozov**.

### **KOSMOS, July – August 2011**

Part two of KINO will be presented in conjunction with the 50th anniversary celebrations of Yuri Gagarin's momentous journey into space. KOSMOS will provide an introduction to Russian and Soviet science fiction from the periods leading up to and after Gagarin's expedition as the first human to orbit space. The season will offer rarely seen films and key documentaries in a programme that explores the impact of the Soviet space dream on the cinema from the 1950s and 60s, through the more dystopian 1970s and 80s and on to the present day.

The elaborate celebrations that greeted Gagarin upon his return to earth reflected the swell of national pride. Some of the most fascinating footage, such as **Peleshian's Our Century** (1982), will feature alongside stunning visions of man's voyage to outer space in 1950s films, created by Russian visual-effects pioneers, notably **Pavel Klushantsev** with **Road to the Stars** (1952) and the kitsch **Planet of Storms** (1962). **Kurt Maetzig's** classic **The Silent Star** (1958) was adapted from a novel by Stanislaw Lem and follows an international expedition to Venus, set in 1985, whilst in **Icarus XB1** (1963), by **Jindrich Polák**, cosmonauts, who dress in black-tie for cocktail parties, search for life on distant planets. The season would not be complete without both **Solaris** (1972) and **Stalker** (1979) by **Andrei Tarkovsky**, probably the best known titles in the West from this period. 2011 marks the 50th anniversary of Stanislaw Lem's original novel *Solaris* upon which the film is based.

### **Aleksandr Sokurov, November – December 2011**

KINO concludes with the first UK retrospective of the work of **Aleksandr Sokurov**, one of contemporary cinema's most innovative and internationally acclaimed living directors. Best known for **Russian Ark** (2002), his most commercially and critically successful film, a semi-documentary filmed in the Russian State Hermitage Museum and lauded for its arresting images, composed in a single, unbroken 'shot'.

Sokurov began his career in television, making documentaries, before winning the Eisenstein Scholarship to fund his studies at the prestigious Moscow film school, where he fell out with his tutors when his first film was not accepted as a graduation project (though it would later go on to win awards). He nevertheless managed to secure employment at Lenfilm, the second largest studio in Russia, and to win the support of Andrei Tarkovsky. Most of Sokurov's early films were banned by Soviet authorities, being deemed obscure or formalist. But after his public recognition by the reformed Filmmakers' Union in 1986, his films were representing Russia in film festivals across the world – **Mournful Unconcern** (1987), loosely adapted from George Bernard Shaw's *A Heartbreak House*, was nominated for the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival that year. And so began a

succession of nominations and awards including the FIPRESCI Award for **Father and Son** (2003) – the companion piece to his first internationally acclaimed feature film **Mother and Son** (1997) – and **Palme d'Or** nominations for **Taurus** (2001), *Russian Ark* and **Alexandra** (2007).

He has continued to be a uniquely prolific director of both features and documentaries. The late Susan Sontag included two Sokurov features among her ten favorite films of the 1990s, saying: "There's no director active today whose films I admire as much." Sokurov will appear, in conversation at BFI Southbank, in November to launch his season.

In addition to the many films to screen across the programme there will be a number of events and screenings for children and students. In the summer **Cosmonaut School** will see an 'out of this world' series of previews and sci-fi workshops for 11-14 year olds, based on the theme of Kosmos. And Lambeth schools' residency will see four groups of Lambeth Year 9 students, currently taking the Creative and Media Diploma, partake in a 5 days 'in residence' course at BFI Southbank from 20 June, creating and performing a set of audio-visual responses to Vertov's classic film *A Man with A movie Camera*. The work will be presented and performed on Friday 24th June.

Later in 2011, BFI Video Publishing will launch a new strand, 'The Soviet Influence'. A silent Soviet classic will be paired with a title, or titles, from British cinema history, in order to explore the impact which directors such as Eisenstein had on a group of British filmmakers during the early 1930s. The first release will be Victor Turin's poetic classic **Turksib** (1929) which had a profound effect on the shaping of such documentary classics as **Night Mail** (Harry Watt & Basil Wright, 1936), **Contact** (Paul Rotha, 1933) and **O'er Hill and Dale** (Basil Wright, 1932). **The Soviet Influence: from Turksib to Night Mail** will be mastered to High Definition from materials held at the BFI National Archive and released in a BFI Dual Format Edition (DVD and Blu-ray) during the Autumn.

Further details will be announced over the forthcoming weeks.

[bfi.org.uk/kino](http://bfi.org.uk/kino)

**Supporter:**



- End -

For more information contact:

Judy Wells, Head of Press and PR, BFI Judy Wells [judy.wells@bfi.org.uk](mailto:judy.wells@bfi.org.uk) or (020) 7957 8919  
Ilona Cheshire, Press Officer, BFI Southbank [ilona.cheshire@bfi.org.uk](mailto:ilona.cheshire@bfi.org.uk) or (020) 7957 8986

**About the BFI**

The BFI is the nation's cultural organisation for film, keeping the breadth of voices in moving image culture alive and known. Through its venues, festivals, film releases and online, the BFI inspires people to understand and enjoy film culture, ensuring that everyone in the UK can see the broadest range and choice of films, otherwise not provided by commercial cinema. The BFI reaches an audience of over 7.5 million in the UK every year.

## **Booking information**

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £9.50, concs £6.75 Members pay £1.50 less on any ticket. Website [www.bfi.org.uk/southbank](http://www.bfi.org.uk/southbank)

**Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment**

## **BFI Filmstore**

The BFI Filmstore is stocked and staffed by BFI experts with over 1,200 book titles and 1,000 DVDs to choose from, including hundreds of acclaimed books and DVDs produced by the BFI.

## **The benugo bar & kitchen**

Eat, drink and be merry in panoramic daylight. benugo's décor is contemporary, brightly lit and playful with a lounge space, bar and dining area. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip on a cocktail.

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

**\*\*\* PICTURE DESK \*\*\***

**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) under BFI / BFI Southbank / May 2011 / Kino**