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Wanted: Ads in Film

By Kevin O'Flynn

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Maxim is an NTV television producer whose cell phone number is written on the ground just outside the Tsvetnoi Bulvar metro station. He is advertising the fact that for only 50,000 rubles ($1,600), you can get the channel to show what you want.

This led me to hope, in the wake of recent political news reporting, that I could re-enact my favorite line from "Casablanca" on NTV: "I'm shocked, shocked to find that there is corruption going on in Moscow!"

Unfortunately, Maxim is not the man to see to spread wicked lies or hoary truths about various city heads, for he only has control of 1 1/2 hours that will be shown in January. The ad by the metro, crayoned in by what seemed to be a man with only two fingers, offers you the possibility of placing an ad in his film.

The film in question is a parody of "Sluzhebny Roman," or "Office Romance" — not the classic and very funny Soviet comedy, but the remake that is currently being filmed and will be released over New Year's. Maxim has gotten a script ahead of the remake before of its release and so, rather absurdly, plans to make a parody of an inane remake of a classic that

has yet to be seen by anyone, and show it on television next year.

If you want to advertise your product appropriately, Maxim said the price was 50,000 rubles for a brief appearance.

Product placement is nothing new. Some critics said "Irony of Fate 2," the glossy sequel to the Soviet New Year's favorite, was an advertisement with some film thrown in, and the James Bond movies are not slow in showing which car, watch and silencer are the spy's favorites (Aston Martin, Breguet and the IG-i3 suppressor, respectively).

The actor who currently plays Bond was seen reading The Moscow Times in "Archangel," a BBC television show, which inspired me to ask about how much it cost to get the MT in Maxim's film.

No problem. "We can get a character to pick up the paper on the way to work," he said.

But can you also feature our far more absorbent rival in the film, too? I'd like a character to use that paper to line his cat litter box. "Sure," said Maxim, with just the briefest of pauses, "but we should meet and talk."

Product placement is just the start if you want to pay into your films though.

"Didn't you see that film with Marat Basharov, where the actress was the wife of an oligarch?" Maxim said. She paid half a million rubles for the pleasure, he said.

Maxim, meanwhile, said he could reduce the price for MT placement to 30,000 rubles.

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