

Film, Show for Tsoi 20 Years On

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September 30, 2010



Offerings left by fans at a graffitied wall dedicated to Tsoi just off the Arbat. **Igor Tabakov**

Twenty years ago, Russia's only true rock martyr died in a car crash at the age of 27. Viktor Tsoi, lead singer of rock band Kino, left behind a brooding series of songs that still remain deeply popular among younger generations.

This fall, cinema screens are showing Tsoi once again in a remake of the cult film, "Iгла," or Needle, and on Oct. 7, musicians will play his songs in a concert titled "20 Years Without Tsoi."

Originally shot in the Gorbachev-era Soviet Union, "Iгла" tells the story of Moro, played by Tsoi, who goes to Alma-Ata to collect a debt. There he finds out that his ex-girlfriend Dina, a hospital nurse, is a drug addict, and he faces up to her drug dealer, a doctor called Artur, played by musician and actor Pyotr Mamonov.

When it was released, the film's dark tones seemed to match the fin de siècle of the Soviet empire. When it was first screened, Tsoi famously said to the premiere audience: "This film is

not for you.”

“It was very different from any other films that had come out. It was edgier,” said Joanna Stingray, an American punk who lived in Leningrad at the end of the 1980s and was close friends with Tsoi and his band. “It was a film young people could relate to.”

“Iгла” created a new ethos with its quick edits, odd characters who use catchphrases from cartoons, and its setting among the dark alleys of Alma-Ata and the dried-up Aral Sea.

Director Rashid Nugmanov said he wanted to update “Iгла” for a new generation with “Iгла. Remix” and that the original had lost close to 40 percent of its original content because of Soviet censors.

“I was asked to make a follow-up of ‘Iгла,’ and I was always against it,” Nugmanov said. “But then I saw there are a huge number of his fans, many of whom were born after his death. I think they deserve to see their idol on the big screen.”

Reaction to the film, which throws in manga comics, archival footage of Tsoi and new scenes with some of the original actors like Mamonov, has been decisively mixed.

Newspaper and magazine reviews have been overwhelmingly bad, and Kino fans have not taken to it kindly.

“It’s a catastrophe,” said Alisa Lyudinshina, 22, a philosophy student. “The imperfection of the previous version added a kind of charm to the movie that reflected the atmosphere of the 1980s in the Soviet Union. This has been completely taken away by Nugmanov’s new approach.”

Stingray, however, welcomed the remake. “It was such a classic film when it came out, it’s kind of cool on the anniversary of Viktor’s death to remake it. ... I think it’s great timing, obviously perfect, and I hope to see it,” she said in a telephone interview from the Los Angeles area.

If the film is not to your taste, then on Oct. 7, hard rock band Alisa, folk group Melnitsa, rapper Noize MC and symphony orchestra Globalis among others will interpret the glum angst that is quintessential Kino. Zemfira headlines.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/09/30/film-show-for-tsoi-20-years-on-a1867>