The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ministry Mulls Quotas on Foreign Films

By Lena Smirnova

October 03, 2012



Authorities want more films like Nikita Mikhalkov's "Burned by the Sun 2." **Vladimir Filonov**

Foreign films could become a rare delicacy for movie lovers if the Culture Ministry approves proposals to impose quotas on such films in local theaters.

The quotas were at the center of discussions Wednesday in the Public Chamber in a follow-up to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's suggestion last month that such measures be considered as a way to resurrect a crumbling domestic film industry.

The proposals come amid the Kremlin's efforts to isolate the country from foreign influence and promote an ideology focused on traditional local values.

State support for the local film industry has increased over the years to reach 5 billion rubles ($160 million) in 2012, about 1.5 billion rubles more than in 2010.

But the results of that support have been negligible. Sales of tickets for domestic films made up 16.7 percent of the total local sales in the first half of 2012, according to Romir Movie

Research.

Some industry insiders see foreign-film quotas as a way to save the business. At the Public Chamber meeting, film producer Alexei Krol proposed setting the quotas for foreign films at 10 percent.

He also proposed that state support for the industry be increased to between 20 and 30 times its current level to make the industry more competitive with its foreign counterparts.

"Here is the Russian industry, and here is Hollywood. Let's not have any illusions," Krol said. "We are not talking about pampering [film producers] here. ...We're saying that we are not competitive."

The country's recent entry into the World Trade Organization would not be a barrier to introducing foreign-film quotas or increasing state subsidies, said lawyer Lev Bardin. Many WTO members, including France and India, already have quotas on foreign films, so Russians would be able to argue against having a double standard on this issue.

The Culture Ministry has looked into setting quotas for foreign films but has not made any decisions yet, Yelena Gromova, a deputy head of the ministry's film department, told The Moscow Times.

The Culture Ministry is drafting a "road map" for reviving the local film industry. Some of the proposed measures include lowering ticket prices for domestic films, improving the electronic -ticket system and creating an expert council to oversee film festivals.

But not all producers support further state financing of the movie industry.

Some say the quotas would only increase the profits of DVD merchants and BitTorrent administrators. Movie critic David Shneiderov also warned that quotas could lead to widespread bankruptcy of movie theaters because there are simply not enough Russian films to fill the screens.

"[State] financing of the film industry promotes the deprivation of producers and leads to the absolute collapse of the Russian films' competitiveness," Shneiderov said.

Instead of these measures, Shneiderov encouraged the government to support the industry by giving potential investors tax benefits, setting up reward systems and enforcing strict audits of any state subsidies.

The money saved through this process could go toward building movie theaters in small cities and incorporating films into the education system, he said.

Related articles:

- 'Marriage of Figaro' Wows at Perm Opera Theater
- Music of Korolenko Defies Classification
- 'A Fine Place to Feed the Dogs' Hones In on Havoc

Original url:

https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/10/03/ministry-mulls-quotas-on-foreign-films-a18271