The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Depardieu to Appear in Russian Sitcom

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December 11, 2013



French expat actor Gerard Depardieu is slated to appear in the third season of TNT's hit sitcom "Zaitsev+1," which is scheduled to start running Jan. 13. Depardieu has become a household name in Russia since acquiring Russian citizenship in January.

The sitcom focuses on the life of a nerdy young student suffering from multiple personality disorder, and Depardieu will play the father of the main character.

The sitcom marks a return to Russian screens for Depardieu after the release of the film "Rasputin" in November, in which Depardieu had the starring role as the mad Russian priest.

President Putin had cited Depardieu's role in Rasputin as one of the reasons for giving him citizenship, and Depardieu claimed that he felt a connection to Rasputin on a spiritual level.

However, the role did not open doors for Depardieu in the Russian film industry — in fact, the star failed to even show up at the premiere. Most Russian critics panned the film, with particularly harsh words directed at Depardieu's acting.

"Rasputin is so bad, it is better to imagine it was a hallucination," wrote the Russian edition of Time Out. Gazeta.ru was equally cutting, saying that "[Depardieu] neither succeeds in playing the Siberian elder as infernal, nor does he manage to be comic."

The harsh reception of Depardieu's performance may have come as a shock after the months-long love affair that Russians appeared to have with the actor following his acquisition of Russian citizenship.

Depardieu has been given apartments in provincial towns such as Grozny and Saransk, as well as appearing for photos with President Vladimir Putin and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. However, his warm reception by Russian elites does not seem to have translated into business opportunities.

Indeed, Depardieu himself continues to be visibly more invested in work in Western Europe than his new home in Russia — the actor has also received Belgian citizenship and perhaps finds the smaller nation more familiar than Russia.

Depardieu recently announced that he would perform in the play "Love Letters" in Paris in the coming year, while also opening a chain of wine bars in Belgium. However, his performance in Zaitsev+1 gives room for the possibility that Russian may yet see more of the actor in 2014.

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Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/12/11/depardieu-to-appear-in-russian-sitcom-a30401