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Festival for Starting Filmmakers Opens in Moscow

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“Given in Exchange,” (Danny Vzamen) a documentary film from Sofia Geveyler, will be shown at Debut Film.

Do you live in Moscow and dream of becoming a big director? You may have your first film completed, but not know how to show it to a big audience. If so, welcome to "Debut Film!"

This week, Mos-Kino, a city-financed film organization, will open the seventh annual festival of short amateur films, "Debut Film" (Debyutnoye Kino). The festival is free for visitors and gives a unique opportunity to get acquainted with Moscow's up-and-coming young filmmakers.

Created seven years ago by the Moscow Department of Culture, the main goal of the festival is to give young directors a platform to break through to a mass audience. Debut Film is the only festival of this type in Russia, a one-of-a-kind opportunity for amateurs to show their films to regular viewers in a cinema.

The organizers of the festival decided not to invite a jury of famous professionals from film industry. Instead, the people who will judge the young filmmakers do not shoot their own movies, though they are well-known and all have connections to the world of film.

Mos-Kino head Vasilisa Orestova remembers that the first festival had difficulty attracting any participants, and they had to find them and recruit them on their own. Seven years later, they have had 300 applicants and have chosen the best 17 movies in the categories of feature, animation and documentary.

Though the festival was created to encourage Moscow directors, each year the organizers kept receiving dozens of applications from different regions, and finally they decided to create a noncompetitive program for young directors from outside Moscow. There are several noncompetitive entries this year, some from other countries including Armenia, the Netherlands, and New Zealand.

This year organizers have also included a special theater program, and one of the artists will represent a production that has been nominated for the Golden Mask theater award.
The festival will also include a lecture series that will allow visitors to hear about how Moscow has been depicted in different films and animation movies.

The festival can be proud of its winners from previous years, some of whom have gone on to have significant mainstream success. One of them is Mikhail Mestetsky, one of the authors of the movie "The Legend of No. 17" (Legenda No. 17) a biopic about Soviet hockey player Valery Kharlamov that became one of the most popular movies of 2013.

Vyacheslav Kirillov, one of this year's participants, became a director in Russia after living and studying in the U.S., where he studied at Virginia Military Institute. Kirillov previously dabbled in film, even taking part in Steven Spielberg's blockbuster "The War of the Worlds" starring Tom Cruise, where Vyacheslav had a role as an extra playing a soldier. He says that it was this experience that first led him to feel called to the film industry.

After coming back from the U.S., Kirillov decided to pursue a career in film, though he chose to become a director rather than continuing as an actor. After graduating from the prestigious Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography in Moscow, he worked as a third director's assistant with Timur Bekmambetov on the film "The Darkest Hour."

In the festival, Kirillov will be showing his film "Zombokalipsis," about a young director shooting a movie about zombies who encounter unexpected difficulties. The story is based on real events, Kirillov said. The film crew consisted of two people: Kirillov directed and acted as the main hero while his wife filmed.

Debut Cinema will be held in several cinemas, including the Khudozhestvenny, Zvezda, Fakel and others that belong to Mos-Kino. The application process is closed, but everyone who wants to show a short film can try again next year.

Organizers hope the festival will become popular among young Muscovites. If you do not become a participant, individuals can approach Mos-Kino on their own and ask to present their movies at one of cinemas that Mos-Kino manages. This is apparently normal practice in the Russian film industry, though a distribution certificate from the Culture Ministry may

still be required.

The Debut Cinema festival will be held from Dec. 19 to 24 in the Khudozhestvenny, Fakel, Zvezda, Saturn and Sputnik cinemas. For more information on the festival, see the Mos-Kino website: mos-kino.ru/msff.html*.*

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