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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Off-beat Films at Moscow's Amfest

By Ruth Moore

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Wiener-Dog (2016) **Annapurna pictures**

Films from across the pond arrive in Moscow this week as part of Amfest, a festival of independent American films organized by Cool Connections with the support of the U.S. Embassy.

Now in its 11th year, Amfest prides itself in a diverse and wide-ranging program that showcases films which might otherwise slip through the cracks in Russia's big movie theaters. This year's edition is no different, with offerings including: a mini-retrospective of the work of Ethan Hawke, a much anticipated Western-remake and a delightfully quirky romance-drama set in New York.

Check out our picks from the program, all of which will be shown at Formula Kino Gorizon in English with Russian subtitles.

Formula Kino Gorizont. 21/10 Komsomolsky Prospekt. Metro Frunzenskaya. Check

coolconnections.ru *for the full schedule. Films will show several times over the course of the festival, which runs through Oct. 9.*

Top Picks

The Magnificent Seven

An old classic that many younger film-goers may not have seen, the 1960 John Sturge western has been remade by Antoine Fuqua. While the consensus is still not out on whether or not it lives up to the hype, the promise of Denzel Washington, Ethan Hawke and Chris Pratt should be enough to draw crowds. The story follows seven gunmen in the Wild West who band together to defend a village from marauding bandits. Think shoot-outs, leather and plenty of horse-riding.

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Certain Women

Kelly Reichardt's "Certain Women" has an almost literary quality, such is the depth of the story-telling the director has accomplished. The ensemble cast features Kristen Stewart, Michelle Williams and Laura Dern as disparate, strong-willed women in the beautiful but bleak Montana landscape. The reflective script is sparse on words, proving that silence can, in fact, do the talking. The film is a powerful testament to female strength in stressful and often unforgiving situations. ⊠⊠

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Wiener-Dog

Love dachshunds and have an oddball sense of humor? Wiener-Dog could be just the film for you. Take one dachshund, several individuals struggling to deal with mortality, fading careers and depression — among other things — and you've got this off-beat comedy-drama directed by Rodd Solondz. The film premiered at the Sundance festival earlier this year and features an ensemble cast including Greta Gerwig, Danny DeVito, Ellen Burstyn and Tracy Letts. The wiener in question is played by two identically adorable smooth-haired dachshunds, and serves as the linchpin between the various chapters of the story. Spoiler alert: if you're a real dog-lover you might want to skip the final scene.

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David Lynch the Art Life

Art and life are one and the same for David Lynch, one of cinema's most distinct voices and the subject of this documentary film. Filmed over three years, Lynch talks in his trademark deliberate tones about his formative memories, post-war childhood, marriage and work. The documentary, directed by Jon Nguyen, goes on to discuss Lynch's early filmography and his

disturbing artwork. It's a must-see for any fan of the director.

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Maggie's Plan

Greta Gerwig is the charming, cardigan-donning protagonist in this heart-warming film about a 30-something New Yorker desperate for a child. Maggie (Greta Gerwig) meets John (Ethan Hawke) and they fall in love but John is already married to Georgette (Julianne Moore). Three years later, Maggie and John are in an unhappy relationship — with a child — and Maggie hatches a plan to get the former married couple back together. Sounds far-fetched? Just roll with it, trust us, it's worth accepting the quirky plot for the warm, funny and often quite touching scenes that ensue.

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