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Moscow TV Round-Up: Station for Two, Ivan Vasilievich Changes Professions and More

By Mark H. Teeter

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Station for Two (1982) **Mosfilm**

While this rainy September can't end soon enough for those who like autumn strolls and leaf-peeping in the Big Onion's parks, Moscow TV can at least fill the month's last week with warm and dry entertainment. With several memorable movies and excellent documentaries — including a classic railroad-station romance, two Russian-American geniuses and Ivan the Terrible running amok in 1973 — here's what to watch and when:

Start your TV week with ***"Station for Two"*** (1982), a classic of the "sad comedy" genre that director Eldar Ryazanov and writer Emil Braginsky perfected over several decades. The tandem's success here owes much to two of the great actors of the day: Oleg Basilashvili as the innocent but feckless Platon, a pianist detained by Fate at a railroad station, and Lyudmila

Gurchenko as Vera, the station cafe waitress who eventually gets him feckled — despite much hindrance from black market thug Andrei, so smoothly embodied by Nikita Mikhalkov that it made some viewers suspicious (though not any more). Voted Movie of the Year by *Soviet Screen* readers, "Station" led the nation at the box office and remains a favorite of millions, which should include you.

Station for Two Вокзал для двоих. Dom Kino, Monday at 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday is Russian-American Inventors Day, offering Moscow viewers a rare "documentary double feature" that profiles two famous sons of the Russian empire who took their genius to the United States. First, popular documentarist Leonid Parfyonov's award-winning ***"Zvorykin of Murom"*** (2010) traces the life and work of the man often called "the father of television," Aleksandr Zvorykin (1888-1982). Parfyonov succeeds admirably at the dual task of dispassionately outlining his subject's near-incredible life — illustrating it from locations in Murom, St. Petersburg, Moscow, New York, Pittsburgh and Princeton — and patiently laying out the mechanics of Zvorykin's brainchild for the scientifically-challenged among us. Tune in for great biography and great irony: TV explained on TV for a country now run by TV.

Right after Father Television, Kultura brings you the "father of the helicopter" in Igor Ushakov's ***"Igor Sikorsky and the Designs of Fate"*** (2009). A born mechanical genius who won international acclaim for Russian aviation before World War I, Sikorsky also left his homeland in the wake of 1917 for America and, like Zvorykin, had his greatest successes there. Sikorsky went through a hardscrabble period in the States ("We had 80 cents a day for food"), but his talent, dedication and good luck — including a timely loan from Sergei Rachmaninoff — all helped him become a showcase example of the American Dream. Buckle your seat belt and tune him in!

Zvorykin of Murom Зворыкин-Муромец Who's Who, Tuesday at 3:00 p.m.

Igor Sikorsky and the Designs of Fate Игорь Сикорский. Чертежи судьбы. Kultura, Tuesday at 4:45 p.m.

On Wednesday you have a choice: a good walk in the park or, if it's still raining, a good book. Oh, almost forgot: you *could* watch ***"Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears"*** (1979), a lingering, prosaic Soviet melodrama about provincial girls gone to the big city. The Oscar-winning success of this epic Vladimir Menshov soaper remains a mystery to millions — viewing it has been characterized as "two and a half hours that fly by like four" — but "Tears" also has legions of fans. Your call.

Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears Москва слезам не верит. Dom Kino, Wednesday at 9:25 a.m.

Earlier this month Russia's Supreme Court upheld the conviction of a blogger in Perm for reposting a statement it deemed a "public denial of the Nuremberg Trials" — a decision widely described as absurd on the face of it, but one that doubtless succeeded in sending a chilling message to Russian social media users. On Thursday Kultura is commendably rebroadcasting the best available documentary on the historic post-World War II tribunal, Christian Delage's ***"Nuremberg: The Nazis Facing Their Crimes"*** (2006). This is a two-fold

boon to Russian viewers, giving them a chance to consider (a) whether blogger Vladimir Luzgin actually *denied* anything in reposting the fact that the USSR invaded Poland in 1939; and (b) the "growing role of reproduced images in shaping history" — an abiding concern to director Delage, who records how the Nuremburg prosecution made their case using two American films (by John Ford) and a Soviet documentary (by Roman Karlen). In Moscow's brave new world of image-heavy, fact-light media representations, this trend is worth pondering more than ever.

Nuremberg: The Nazis Facing Their Crimes. Нюрнберг. Нацисты перед лицом своих преступлений. Kultura, Thursday at 11:50 p.m.

Leonid Gaidai's ***"Ivan Vasilievich Changes Professions"*** (1973) has been a national favorite for over 40 years and it's easy to see why. This classic time-travel switcheroo — in which Ivan the Terrible visits 20th century Moscow and modern Muscovites go back to Old Rus' — offers both terrific costume-drama parody and some of the funniest physical comedy you'll see this year (or any year). And you don't have to be a sociologist to appreciate the film's third hook — sharp satirical commentary on the society that produced it. Many late Soviet-era ticket buyers came back time and again just to re-enjoy lines like the famous Leonid Kuravlyov ad lib: "Citizens! Keep your money in the State Bank...if, of course, you have any."

Based on the Bulgakov play "Ivan Vasilievich," this is a must-see comedy from a seriously unfunny era that will amuse you and everyone you watch it with — even those without a kopek left in Sberbank.

Ivan Vasilievich Changes Professions Иван Васильевич меняет профессию. Dom Kino, Friday at 8:30 p.m.

Mark H. Teeter is the editor of **Moscow TV Tonite** *on* Facebook

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