The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Moscow TV Round-Up: Big Stars, Big Events and Big Brains

By Mark H. Teeter

February 26, 2017



Film icon Marlene Dietrich is celebrated in documentaries and feature films. **YouTube**

It's Big History,▣Big Stardom and Big Brainpower Week on Moscow TV, as small-screen viewers get some▣very good looks at the revolution of February 1917 as it actually happened; Marlene▣Dietrich, the iconic German-American actress and singer who inspired imitators▣from Lyubov Orlova to Marilyn Monroe; and Yury Lotman and Isaiah Berlin, two of▣the smartest white guys of the 20th century. Here's the where and when:

Monday marks the▣100th anniversary of the February revolution, a critical series of events in▣modern Russian history that was tenaciously misrepresented by Soviet▣historiography for most of the last century – which means that much of today's▣TV audience still has little notion of what actually happened and what it meant.▣Kudos to Kultura for bringing a comprehensible vision of 1917 a step closer with▣
"The Present Is the Past: The Provisional Committee at the Helm of the▣Revolution"

(2017), a documentary that combines critical images of the time (photographs, documents, newsreels, the press) with critical analysis from our era (five historians from various institutions).
A second installment in the Present-Past series, this one on Grand Prince Nikolai Mikhailovich Romanov (*"The Prisoner in Cell 207"*), airs Tuesday.

The Present Is the Past: The Provisional Committee at the Helm of the Revolution
Настоящее – прошедшее. Временный комитет у руля революции.
Kultura, Monday at 6:45 p.m.
The Present Is the Past: The Prisoner in Cell 207. ***Настоящее – прошедшее***. Заключенный камеры №207**.** Kultura, Tuesday at 6:45 p.m.

Monday also marks the beginning of an excellent five-part retrospective on the life and work of a cinema legend: *"Illusion: The Angels and Demons of Marlene Dietrich."* The series begins with Josef von Sternberg's steamy Spanish romance *"The Devil Is a Woman"* (1935), the very title of which supposedly fogged people's glasses. On Tuesday viewers get the classic George Marshall western *"Destry Rides Again"* (1939), in which Dietrich's saloon singer Frenchy is tamed by rule-of-law lovin' deputy Thomas Jefferson Destry (James Stewart). Wednesday brings the exotic René Clair comedy *"The Flame of New Orleans"* (1941), a big-budget costumer of the ante bellum South that Russians like even more than Americans (6.9/10 on KinoPoisk vs. 6.6/10 on the Western-weighted IMDB site). The film retrospective ends Thursday with Billy Wilder's *"A Foreign Affair"* (1948), a romantic comedy with serious political overtones that features Dietrich as an "ex-Nazi cafe singer" facing arrest and a labor camp sentence.

The four Dietrich films are supplemented by a good biographical entry on the star from social chronicler Vitaly Vulf (*"My Silver Sphere: Marlene Dietrich,"* 2004) and by a 1972 concert-film made for television that includes some of the star's classic numbers (*"An Evening With Marlene Dietrich,"* featuring "Lili Marlene" and "Falling in Love Again" in both English and German).

The Devil Is a Woman Дьявол – это женщина.
Kultura, Monday at 12 midnight and Tuesday at 3:15 p.m.

Destry Rides Again Дестри снова в седле. Kultura, Tuesday at 12 midnight and Wednesday at 3:15 p.m.

The Flame of New Orleans Нью-Орлеанская возлюбленная. Kultura, Wednesday at 12⊠midnight and Thursday at 3:15 p.m.

A Foreign Affair Зарубежный роман. Kultura, Thursday at 12 midnight and Friday⊠at 3:15 p.m.

My Silver Sphere: Marlene Dietrich Мой серебряный шар. Марлен Дитрих. Kultura, Thursday⊠at 12 midnight

An Evening with Marlene Dietrich Марлен Дитрих.⊠
Концерт в Лондоне.
Запись⊠1972
года. Kultura,⊠
Saturday at⊠12:45 a.m. and 2:35 p.m.

Tuesday is the⊠95th birthday of Yury Lotman, the celebrated philologist and philosopher who⊠from 1951 onward spent most of four decades creating and spreading a canon of Russian cultural scholarship⊠unique in his homeland and the world. Every Soviet intelligent⊠worthy of the name came to recognize Lotman (1922-1993), the big-mustachioed,⊠Einstein hair-channeling semiotician who emerged as an unlikely TV star late in⊠the perestroika period through his popular series of "conversations" on Russian⊠culture made for Estonian TV. Kultura honors the Lotman legacy this week with⊠the fine Genrikh Zdanevich documentary *"The Space of Yury Lotman"* (2012) and⊠the first four segments Lotman's classic six-part auteur production *"Pushkin⊠and His Entourage"* (1991). This cycle examining Russia's greatest poet through⊠the society around him is about as good as high-dome TV gets – and makes you⊠wonder how long Russian culture will have to wait for another televised⊠champion this perceptive and accessible.

The Space of Yury⊠Lotman Пространство Юрия Лотмана. Kultura, Tuesday at 10:50 p.m.
Pushkin and His Entourage Пушкин и его окружение. Kultura, Tuesday through Friday⊠at 2:00 p.m. (parts 1-4)

If Lotman's erudition⊠isn't enough, Wednesday night also offers an entry in the sadly-limited genre⊠of Television That Makes You Smarter: Tatyana Malova's excellent documentary *"Isaiah⊠Berlin: The Guest from the Future"* (2009) recounts the remarkable "cross-cultural⊠adventure story" of the two-day visit to Anna Akhmatova in 1945 paid by the⊠worldly Berlin, then a British diplomat. The semi-secret Leningrad⊠conversations between the poet and the Riga-born Oxford philosopher became the⊠inspiration for Akhmatova's "Poem Without a Hero" – and set the stage for her⊠equally unlikely visit to Oxford twenty years later to collect an honorary⊠degree. What these two great and greatly different minds had in common and⊠chose to discuss in the Soviet Union some four decades before perestroika is⊠revealing in itself and timely for viewers today. Tune in, be surprised

and▣entertained, and feel your IQ rise in the process.

Isaiah Berlin: The Guest from the Future Исайя Берлин. Гость из▣будущего.
Kultura,
Thursday at 1:20 a.m.

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

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/02/26/moscow-tv-round-up-big-stars-big-events-and-big-brains-a57270