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Eight Russian Films to Watch in 2018

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Yevgeny Mironov and Marina Neyolova do star turns in "Thawed Carp" about motherly love **Press Service**

The year 2017 was a fairly exciting one in Russian cinema. "Mathilde" by Alexei Uchitel caused a scandal before its release; "Loveless," a new film by Andrei Zvyagintsev, is heading to the Oscars; and "The Last Warrior," a Russian-made children's film from Disney, broke box office records. Is the Russian film industry going to keep up its successes?

From book to screen

One of the most anticipated films of 2018 is definitely "Dovlatov," a biopic of the rebellious writer who was forced to emigrate from the Soviet Union. It is directed by Alexei German, Jr., who was previously nominated for a Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival for his movie "Garpastum," a turn-of-the-century soccer drama. His new film will focus on Sergei Dovlatov's life in the year preceding his exile to Tallinn from Leningrad in 1971. Dovlatov is played by Milan Maric, a Serbian actor with an uncanny resemblance to the writer. It is expected to open on March 1.

“Selfie,” a new film by Nikolai Khomeriki, known for 2016’s “The Icebreaker,” is based on a popular book by Sergei Minayev. This is Minayev’s second book adaptation. The previous one, “Dukhless,” and its sequel “Dukhless 2,” were big box office successes. “Selfie” is a story of a writer being gradually pushed out of his own life by a doppelganger. The writer is played by Konstantin Khabensky, who is probably Russia’s most popular actor right now.

“Empire V” is another highly anticipated book adaptation, this time from Viktor Pelevin, one of the few Russian contemporary writers regularly translated into English. The story is about a young man who becomes a vampire. One of the main roles — the villain — will be played by Oxxxymiron, the famous Russian rapper. The director is the Russian-American Victor Ginzburg, known for another Pelevin adaptation, “Generation P.” Ginzburg seems to be on a Pelevin roll: After this film hits the screens by the end of the year, the director plans to take on another Pelevin book, “S.N.U.F.F.”

Sci-fi and sports

If you are into a more traditional kind of sci-fi, “Rough Draft” is the movie for you. Based on Sergei Lukyanenko’s best-selling book of the same name, it is the first film based on one of his books since “Day Watch,” which achieved almost a cult status in Russia and abroad. “Rough Draft” tells the story of a computer game designer who discovers one day that all the information about him has disappeared from the computers of the world. He finds that he has become a customs official in a portal between parallel universes. In this reality, present-day earth is just a “rough draft” of a reality in another universe. The film is set to debut in March.

The sports drama is a rare genre in Russian cinema, which is why there are high expectations for “Coach.” Directed by Danila Kozlovsky, who also plays the main role, it tells the story of a national soccer player who makes a mistake during a game and is forced to leave the team. He takes on the job of coaching a small provincial team. Making this team a winner becomes his new purpose in life. The cast also includes Irina Gorbacheva, famous for her role in the 2017 blockbuster “Arrhythmia.” It is slated to open in April just before Russia kicks off the World Cup.

The art house circuit

For independent cinema lovers, there is “The Humorist,” the directorial debut of Michael Idov. “The Humorist” is about a popular Soviet comedian favored by KGB officers but suffering from a lack of creative freedom.

“Thawed Carp” is an indie comedy with a great cast, including veteran Alisa Freindlikh and Yevgeny Mironov. An elderly woman in a provincial town suddenly finds out that she has a disease that could end her life at any moment. Not wanting to disturb her busy son, who works in a big city, she decides to organize her own funeral. The film opened in January.

Finally, historical movie fans might like “Sobibor,” a World War II film that is the directorial debut of actor Konstantin Khabensky. In October 1943, Sobibor concentration camp inmates led by Red Army lieutenant Alexander Pechersky (played by Khabensky) launched the only successful uprising in Nazi death camp history. “Highlander” actor Christopher Lambert plays, presumably, one of the bad guys. It will be released in April.

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