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Russian Roots Bring Sony Gold

Gennady Tartakovsky is the creator of the blockbuster "Transylvania" animated films

By Ali Sar

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Vampires passing for normal. **Courtesy Sony Pictures**

HOLLYWOOD—This week film director Genndy Tartakovsky's "Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation" arrives in thousands of theaters around the world, including in Russia.

The Moscow-born master of animation checks out of Hotel Transylvania for a cruise dream vacation that is costing more than $100 million — that's approximately what Sony Animation spent to make this movie. But the studio isn't worried, since Tartakovsky's first and second Hotel outings grossed about $1 billion.

A firm believer in animation that is "created for the entire family," Tartakovsky told The Moscow Times, "If we were going to do a third film, we had to take them [the monster family he created] someplace they've never been before— both physically and emotionally."

Tartakovsky says the inspiration for the new film came directly from his real-life experience — a family cruise.

Born and raised in Russia, he has achieved unparalleled success with the Transylvania franchise. In addition to directing, he co-authored the script and has a cameo part as a voice actor in his current film.

Producer Michelle Murdocca, who has teamed with Tartakovsky on all three films in the series, says she loved the idea. "It was a chance to get out of the hotel and go on a family adventure in a new way...That's what makes the movie connect all over the world." She, too, has a cameo in the story.

The "Transylvania" films are different from other animated features thanks to Tartakovsky's unique signature of exaggeration with sight gags and funny expressions. "Our characters are pliable, with a range of emotions from the cartoony to the subtle and humanistic." In this film, the new comic character is Blobby, a repository of lost and found objects. "You can sometimes discover an unexpected thing or two inside his gelatin body," explains Tartakovsky, who also provides the voice for his creation.

The cast of characters is the same, headed by Adam Sandler as Drac (short for Dracula), surrounded by Andy Samberg, Selena Gomez, Kevin James and Mel Brooks as Drac's father Vlad. In Russia the two leads are dubbed by actors Sergei Burunov and Polina Gagarina.

The director, winner of three Emmys for "Star Wars: Clone Games" and "Samurai Jack" for Cartoon Network, soon will be entertaining another adventure with Drac.

A trip to Russia, he told The Moscow Times, is not out of the question as he searches for story ideas.

The 97-minute "Hotel" is slated to open on July 13. Check The Moscow Times listings *for theaters and times.*

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