The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

From Russia With Cinema

A record number of Russian films are vying for Hollywood's awards

By Ali Sar

November 28, 2018



Konstantin Khabensky plays Alexander Pechersky, the real-life leader of an escape from a Nazi camp. **YouTube**

HOLLYWOOD—Russian filmmakers will set a record this awards season with six motion pictures competing for two best foreign language prizes.

Leading the pack is "Sobibor," Russia's official selection for the Academy Awards race, which will compete with more than 80 other foreign films for the top prize.

But at the Golden Globes competition, "Sobibor" will find itself not only competing against the same 80-plus foreign entries but also with five other Russian entries. The Academy allows only one official entry from each country for the Oscar race, but there is no limit of entries in the Hollywood Foreign Press Association's Golden Globe Awards.

"Sobibor" follows the harrowing journey of a young man's will to survive and help hundreds

of people escape from the Nazi extermination camp in 1943.

According to its director and star Konstantin Khabensky, "Sobibor" is the first Holocaust film released since Russia lifted its ban on Holocaust films, and it marks the 75th anniversary of the rebellion at Sobibor.

"This film exemplifies the rebellion of the human spirit against history's most notorious extermination machine," said Khabensky, who was introducing his film to Hollywood opinion-makers.

In addition to the official Russian entry, the Russian movies competing in the Golden Globes are "The Man Who Surprised Everyone," "Lord Eagle," "Unforgiven," "Dovlatov" and "Spitak," a Russian-Armenian co-production.

"The Man Who Surprised Everyone" tells the story of Yegor, a fearless Siberian forest guard, who is well-respected by his family and fellow villagers. When he finds out that he has cancer and two months to live, he chooses to hide from death by taking the identity of a woman. Will his family and the local population accept him? Directed by Aleksey Chopov and Natalya Merkulova, the 105-minute film stars Yevgeny Tsyganov, Natalya Kudryashova and Yury Kuznetsov.

Eduard Novikov's "Lord Eagle," won the Moscow Film Festival's prize for best film. Set in the 1930s, it is focused on northern Russian aboriginal people. It's the story of simple life of people who live with their cows, hunting and fishing. Life changes when an eagle flies into the garden of an old couple. The eagle, considered sacred by the local population, soon joins the couple in their home.

The Sarik Andreasyan-directed "Unforgiven" with Dmitry Nagiyev starring as Vitaly Kaloyev is based on the Uberlingen mid-air collision. It is inspired by real events involving an architect whose family died in the air disaster. He decides to find and confront the air traffic controller who he held responsible for the crash.

The year is 1971 as a Russian-Jewish writer named Sergei Dovlatov cannot get his work published. While most of his author friends have been forced into exile for their views, Dovlatov is determined to stay in the country with his family and write about the reality he encounters. Alexei German Jr. directed the film "Dovlatov," and Milan Maric, who looks remarkably like the real Dovlatov, plays the leading role.

Rounding out the entries is "Spitak." The Alexander Kott drama is a co-production entry in the Golden Globes race representing both Armenia and Russia. It was inspired by the devastating 1988 Armenian earthquake. It tells the story of Gor, who leaves his home country in search of a better life but returns after the quake in order to find his home.

Of the six, "Sobibor" appears to be well-positioned for the awards competition perhaps due to a well-financed and organized campaign.

Golden Globe nominations will be announced on Dec. 6. Oscar nominees will be revealed in January.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/11/28/from-russia-with-cinema-a63631