

The Year's Best in Cinema: "The Frenchman"

Andrei Smirnov's evocative film about the 1950s was autumn's hit.

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Antoine Rival as the French exchange student **WDSSPR**

"The Frenchman," directed by Andrei Smirnov – famed for his films "Belorussian Station" and "Autumn" – is an utterly captivating glimpse back in time to the year 1957 when a young French Communist student comes to Moscow on academic exchange. His topic is the ballet, but his real mission is to find his father, an aristocrat who disappeared into the camps in the 1930s. Shot in black and white, it follows Pierre to underground jazz clubs and apartment art shows, drinking vodka "in threes" with a local drunkard, falling in love with a haughty ballerina, and searching for his lost father. Camp survivors, poverty, privilege, fun, informants and tragedy that is somehow filled with hope.

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