

“Remaking Past or Present? The “Remeik” as Genre and the Politics of the Nation”

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In Hollywood cinema, remakes, reboots, sequels, and film franchises have been long employed by studios to produce box office blockbusters. While in Russian and Soviet cinema remakes of films were not unprecedented, they have become a more recent phenomenon, as the Russian cinema industry tries to cultivate an active domestic film watching audience. This paper traces the upswing of the “remeik” and its transformation of classic Soviet films. By identifying key generic elements and the inter-medial nature of the Russian remake, we can distinguish it from both its American counterpart and Soviet predecessors. Recent genre studies have approached the remake as a type of adaptation. The adaptation was a familiar stalwart of Soviet era filmmaking. It allowed filmmakers to easily craft scripts from ideologically sound texts already approved by state censors. Just as many Soviet adaptations loosely followed, or broke away from their guiding script, the Russian remake is not exactly a copy of its original. It can be a chance to rework cinematic language, narrative structure, or encoded ideologies. The paper closely analyses two films: Sarik Andreasian’s *An Office Romance: Our Time* (2011) and Maksim Voronkov’s *Prisoner of the Caucasus* (2014) amongst other examples. Why has the stagnation-era comedy been the dominant choice material for remakes? How do remakes deconstruct and reinterpret the genre of Soviet comedy? What does it mean for audiences to laugh at newly relevant jokes and new social content through familiar characters and well known plots? Is the remake an attempt to erase the past by reshooting a film? Or does the remake revive and celebrate the past by harkening back to its tethered material? Through this dual act of reference and erasure, I view how new representations of Russia are imagined and marketed to domestic audiences.