

Title: The Movie Diary of Alisa Rozenbaum/Ayn Rand: Evaluations and Inspirations
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While attending the State Institute of Cinematography (1924-25), Alisa Rozenbaum kept a record of the films she saw. She made note of the dates, theatres, directors, and actors; she also assigned ratings, with scores from 0 to 5+. She continued her “movie diary” when she left Russia in 1926, to begin her life as an American writer under the name “Ayn Rand.” This movie diary, with listings for hundreds of movies, provides evidence of her early esthetic preferences and judgments, which were fully consistent with her lifelong esthetic standards. Forty-two years later, for example, she still praised Fritz Lang’s *Siegfried*, which she had rated 5+ in 1925. This paper analyzes the principles implicit in her evaluations of several films, and traces specific connections between the films she admired and the work she herself did as a writer.

For example: Directed by Joe May from a script by Fritz Lang, *Das Indische Grabmal* [*The Indian Tomb*] features a brooding, elegant Indian ruler (Conrad Veidt), who kidnaps an architect to build a tomb—for a living woman, his wife. The architect’s fiancée (Mia May) plots and acts to rescue him. The high rating (5+) is supported by comments she made, years later, about the movie’s romantic spirit of adventure and its suspense—as well as by scenarios she wrote in Hollywood, e.g. *Bride of the Dragon* (1933) and *Red Pawn* (1934).

Her work in both film and fiction testifies to her enduring admiration for the films she loved when she saw them as a young Russian film student.

References

Rand, Ayn. *Russian Writings on Hollywood*. Marina Del Rey, CA: Ayn Rand Institute Press, 1999.

Taylor, Richard, ed. and trans. *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988.