



## *Kino-teatr.ru: contemporary cinephiles at work*

---

SUDHA RAJAGOPALAN

*Utrecht University*

**Abstract:** This essay has as its focus the cinephilic website kino-teatr.ru, whose aim is to facilitate film-talk among a large community of cinema aficionados on Runet. Central to the successful functioning of this online community is the transformed nature of cinephilia (a passion not just for film, but also the physical experience of a movie-theatre) that characterises contemporary movie habits. Kino-teatr.ru affords a space for downloading films, sharing movie-talk, contributing rumour, anecdote, fact and opinion, and creating and sustaining cinema/cultural memory. Such engagement with cinema is, therefore, transmedial (uses multiple media platforms for its expression) and is no longer singularly dependent on the physical setting of the theatre. Further, the interface and its interactions destabilise old institutions of film viewing and expertise, and efface boundaries between past and present temporalities. Kino-teatr.ru, thus, embodies a new 'digital cinephilia', pervasive on Runet.

**Keywords:** transmedia, cinephilia, memory, movie-going, film criticism, online community, Runet

---

Susan Sontag famously mourned the demise of cinephilia, a term that encapsulates a passionate interest in the movies as a medium and as an experience. She claimed its death knell had been sounded by home viewing technologies (Sontag 1996). But cinephilia is far from dead. Digital technologies have merely released it from its earlier dependence on the physical setting of the movie theatre and enabled it to become a decentred, participatory practice. Indeed, Runet has a rich network of web sites that include cinephilic blogs, communities and forums, where cinephilia, enabled by new technological affordances, is transmedial. Digital cinephilia, a term I use to describe the passion for the movies in this age of transmedia, involves the use of the internet and personal digital media to upload, share and contribute to popular knowledge about cinema.

This critical review is prompted by several visits over the past few months to the website kino-teatr.ru, whose name suggests that the practice of 'going to the movies' and 'being at the movies' has acquired new experiential dimensions in the age of digital media. This website illustrates that cinephilia is no longer simply the physical act of theatre attendance and

subsequent film talk, but the ability to watch films online at any given moment, create clips, remix, preserve online repositories and display expertise by reviewing films. Digital cinephilia, as exemplified by kino-teatr.ru, does away with the fixed temporalities of film shows of the past and disrupts old classifications of film critics and archivists as ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’.

**Figure 1.** Homepage of kino-teatr.ru.

Source: <http://www.kino-teatr.ru> (accessed 8 February 2011)

Launched in 2006, kino-teatr.ru is an ambitious site for engaging with and about cinema, and relies on members to contribute to its content. Links abound on kino-teatr.ru and allow you to author your own experience of the movies. Any movie-going experience begins with the actual film show. On kino-teatr.ru you have access to this core movie going experience by legally downloading pre-revolutionary Russian films, Soviet films, new Russian films and Russian DVD releases of world cinemas. This legal access is enabled by the partnership between kino-teatr.ru and Digital Video Network (DVN), the leading online distribution company for digital film and video production in Russia ([www.dvn.ru](http://www.dvn.ru)). The average cost of a film here is 30-40 rubles (about 1 Euro). Online payments can be made by credit card, in SMS transactions or through the safe payment gateways provided by Yandex.Den'gi and Webmoney. A successful transaction is followed by a prompt to download the film file to your computer. Note, however, that the legal structure of this business partnership does not permit those living outside the territory of the Russian Federation to download films. Thus,

the promise of a transmedial and transnational digital cinephilia is only partially fulfilled on this website, circumscribed as it is by international copyright law that regulates the circulation of audio-visual materials across national borders.

**Figure 2.** Page on kino-teatr.ru, offering films for download.

**СКАЧАТЬ ФИЛЬМЫ ЗА СМС**

Наш сайт является **партнером** компании DVN (Digital Video Network) - лидера на рынке распространения цифровой кино- и видеопродукции в Интернете.

Здесь Вы можете без регистрации **легально скачать фильмы, заплатив** за это с помощью электронных платежных систем **Яндекс.Деньги** и **Webmoney**, банковских карт **Visa** и **MasterCard** или отправкой **SMS-сообщений**.

Более подробную информацию и ответы на часто задаваемые вопросы вы можете найти **здесь**.

---

**РОССИЙСКИЕ ФИЛЬМЫ И СЕРИАЛЫ**

А Б В Г Д Е Ж З И К Л М Н О П Р С Т У Ф Х Ц Ч Ш Щ Э Ю Я ENG 0-9





Source: <http://www.kino-teatr.ru/download/> (accessed 8 February 2011)

Aside from the film viewing experience offered by the site, every film entry has links to viewership figures, stills, lyrics of the film's songs and press information, and also enables members' discussions of the films they have viewed. The site reinforces digital cinephilia's (albeit limited) transnational scope by allowing lengthy posts and entries on all cinemas of the world. This transnationalism derives from the site's content, rather than the composition of its membership, its linguistic affordances or, as we saw earlier, any unfettered distributive rights.

Kino-teatr.ru also informs the visitor/member in great depth about directors, producers, actors and other artists engaged in film production. The archive has film and theatre reviews authored by members, illustrating the worldwide trend of 'amateur' enthusiasts treading the previously exclusive terrain of film criticism.<sup>1</sup> On kino-teatr.ru, veteran film professionals are remembered with routine displays of homage. For instance, Leonid Bykov is memorialized in comment after comment for his stellar work in films such as *One-Two, Soldiers were*

<sup>1</sup> In the west, for instance, influential blogs such as [www.milkplus.blogspot.com](http://www.milkplus.blogspot.com) and chatrooms have become the primary setting of contemporary cinephilia.

*Going ... / Aty-Baty, Shli Soldaty ...* (1973, dir. Leonid Bykov).<sup>2</sup> Elena Shanina, famous for her role in *Twelve Chairs/ Dvenadtsat' stol'ev* (1976, dir. Mark Zakharov) earns affectionate remarks that address her as 'Lenochka' and thank her for many hours of viewing pleasure.<sup>3</sup> A striking illustration of the engagement with contemporary professionals occurs in the comments pages on the film *Vanished Empire/ Ischeznuvshaia imperiia* (2008, dir. Karen Shakhnazarov): a comment by a viewer, addressed to the film's screenwriter Sergei Rokotov, about certain historical inaccuracies in an otherwise 'flawless' film, is met with a warm, accommodating reply by Rokotov himself.<sup>4</sup> In this manner the site successfully transgresses different modes of authorship as well as temporalities because it holds within it past and present resources, whose meanings continue to be negotiated in the comments pages.

Kino-teatr.ru is a collaborative archive that is intended to provide visitors and members with all dimensions of the movie-going experience. The site has thousands of comments by guests, offering information or suggestions and correcting alleged misinformation on the site (see Figure 3). Further, members engage in long-winded discussions about cinema in the comments space below each review, film synopsis and theatre description. The processual nature of articulating, learning and remembering is in full evidence on this site and gives credence to the optimistic view that digital sites can function as a public sphere (or many public spheres). A lively interactive space, it is sadly riddled with an important design flaw. The space for conversation is not a forum interface but has the appearance of a narrow 'comments' column that is difficult to read at a stretch and is hardly conducive to expansive deliberations (see Figure 3). The fact that members, nevertheless, participate to the extent they do is a sign of their deep commitment to talking about cinema.

Finally, the manner in which cinephilia intersects with cultural memory on kino-teatr.ru should be of interest to historians. On the film history page, the administrators invite us to participate: 'Delve into your memories, your impressions, and you will find invaluable treasures. Our emotions and ideas, and yours, are fading ... and our beloved films, spectacles, artistes run the risk of fading with them. - send your articles, impressions, memories to this address on our site, which has its goal the forming of an extensive database of our collective memory. Create with us, and remember – we need you!'<sup>5</sup> The upshot is a rich network of film-related ideas and observations that range from critical commentaries to personal memories. The site provides the cultural tools to contribute to collective memory of old cinema. Members revisit and appreciate Soviet films for their aesthetic value (often expressed as the 'old cinema remains unmatched' sentiment), but Soviet films also act as mnemonic devices that trigger memories of other related experiences of the Soviet period. For instance, discussions of films become segues to recollections of childhood in the Soviet era. Further, the collaborative deliberation over old films also involves disenchantment and shared critical per-

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/director/sov/634/forum/> (accessed 15 March 2011)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/acter/w/ros/4811/forum/> (accessed 15 March 2011)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/movie/ros/hud/10420/forum/#683813> (accessed 12 March 2011)

<sup>5</sup> 'Pokopaites' v svoei pamiati, v svoikh vpechatleniiakh, i vy obnaruzhite bestsennnye sokrovishcha! Uvy, vse nashi i vashi chuvstva i mysli postepenno ukhodiat ... a s nimi vmeste nashi liubimye fil'my, spektakli, artistry. – prisylaete svoi stat'i, vpechatleniia, vospominaniia po etomu adresu na nash sayt, kotoryi stavit svoei zadachei formirovanie obshirnoi bazy pamiati nashikh sootchestvennikov. Tvorite vmeste s nami i pomnite – v vas nuzhdaiutsia!' <http://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/art/kino/> (accessed 7 February 2011)



spectives about films once loved, such as *Cranes are Flying / Letiat Zhuravli* (1957, dir. Mikhail Kalatazov).<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 3.** Segment of members' discussion about *I Walk Around Moscow / Ia shagaiu po Moskve* (1963, dir. Georgii Daneliia).

**ОБСУЖДЕНИЕ**

< · 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · >

версия для печати

№ 89 **Скорпион** (Шадринск) 2.02.2011 16:52  
 Я тоже люблю этот фильм. Он для меня ещё и о том, что не надо опрометчиво соваться в чужие духовные миры. Если человек православный, то не стоит заглядывать в мир буддизма или мусульманства. Потому что без опытных пастырей можно в них заблудиться или вообще не выйти. Да и в своей вере надо бы идти по ниточке (по гаечкам, то есть), чтобы не сбиться. Но это уже личные по фильму выводы.

сообщить модератору

---

№ 88 **Wagator** (Петрозаводск) 2.02.2011 15:05  
 Очень люблю этот фильм. Люблю за то, что когда его смотришь, в голову приходят мысли, которые очень редко посещают тебя в будничной жизни. Иногда кажется, еще немного и поймешь что-то главное, что-то очень важное для себя. Даже не по себе становится.  
 Только жаль что Гринько озвучен в этом фильме. Хотя мне нравится и Сергей Яковлев, но очень жалко, что не слышно характерного "папакарловского" голоса Николая Гринько.

сообщение было отредактировано в 15:06  
сообщить модератору

---

№ 87 **Татьяна Феникс** (Саратов) 5.01.2011 00:14  
 Потрясающий фильм. Книгу еще не успела прочитать, фильм в руки попал первым, но, если честно, я рада, так случилось. Наскоро нашла сюжет "Пикника на обочине" в Сети, книгу скачала, но пока не открыла.... Исходя из того, что я успела узнать, Сталкер из повести и Сталкер Кайдановского сильно отличаются друг от друга. Мне гораздо ближе Сталкер фильма. Александр Кайдановский замечательный артист, мне много фильмов с его участием нравится...  
 "Сталкер" заставляет рассуждать, чувствовать, сопереживать... В фильме нет ничего лишнего, ни слова, ни жеста, ни кадра. Без спецэффектов, все полностью держится на актерском мастерстве, режиссерской работе, но и сценарий сыграл немалую роль. Его ведь переписывали то ли восемь, то ли девять раз. И в одном из вариантов Сталкер добирался до Золотого круга, загадывал желание в полубессознательном состоянии, и оказывался дома. Дочка его была так же больна, у самого Сталкера-мешок денег, а Зона была уничтожена атомным взрывом. <http://rusf.ru/abs/books/mzh.htm> Мне такой финал вообще не нравится. В фильме остается Надежда, даже в конце. Я верю, что Сталкер все-таки продолжил ходить в Зону, это же его счастье - верить и надеяться...  
 Надоел бесконечный экшн, все сутками бегают с бесконечными патронами по фонащим Зонам, и им хоть бы хны, хочется уже тишины. Если и повесть такая же отличная, я буду только рада. Фильм не обязан быть достоверной экранизацией повести, он изумителен сам по себе.  
 Замечательный фильм!

сообщение было отредактировано в 00:37  
предложить дружбу · игнорировать · сообщить модератору

Source: <http://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/movie/sov/8201/forum/> (accessed 8 February 2011).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/movie/sov/3480/forum/f2/> (accessed 12 March 2011)

Kino-teatr.ru is a sophisticated website, remarkable for the scale, variety and depth of its content. Interaction is central to the functioning and success of the site, although its interface does not suggest that user participation is a priority. Notwithstanding this design flaw, kino-teatr.ru remains a valuable resource for those seeking cinema fact, trivia and opinion. Film-talk here is a transmedial, networked and collaborative practice, making the site rich in content and a great resource that offers insights into cinema memory and contemporary Russian reception of domestic and world cinemas.

## References

Kino-teatr.ru. <<http://kino-teatr.ru>> (accessed 7 February 2011)

Sontag, Susan (1996, 25 February). 'The Decay of Cinema', *New York Times*.

**SUDHA RAJAGOPALAN**, Sudha Rajagopalan is Research Affiliate with the Media Studies Group (Research Institute for History and Culture) in the University of Utrecht. She studied in the University of Bombay (India) and went on to do a PhD in Russian history in Indiana University, Bloomington, USA. Her doctoral work, a product of archival and ethnographic research in Russia, was an ethno-historical study of Indian cinema's reception in the post-Stalinist Soviet era and the first history of Soviet movie-going as cultural practice. The focus areas of her research (and publications) are fans/audiences/users/publics, new media, television, cinema, media and citizenship, celebrity, transnationalism and cultural memory. She has also worked as researcher in the International Institute for Social History (Amsterdam) and the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (Leiden). [e-mail: [s.rajagopalan@uu.nl](mailto:s.rajagopalan@uu.nl)]