

**FILM NEWS & NOTES - AMERICANS JOIN SOVIETS IN PRODUCTION COMPANY****Daily News of Los Angeles (CA)** - Friday, January 27, 1989**Author:** John H. Richardson

Americans are being given access to two Soviet military bases soon, but not for some kind of Pentagon on-site inspection. The Americans are from California, and they're going to make a movie.

At a press conference Wednesday in Universal City - a happy semantic coincidence - a group of Soviet and American filmmakers announced the founding of the first Soviet-American co-production company, Soviet-American Filmproduction.

"After the political and social process called perestroika follows more substantial changes in our economic policies," said Soviet playwright- screenwriter Rustam Ibragimbekov, head of the new company and secretary of the U.S.S.R. Filmmakers Union.

This means that the Soviet government now allows private Soviet companies to establish relations with foreign companies "without consulting the government," Ibragimbekov said. "We realize (glasnost) is the chance of our lifetime, and if we miss it, we'll never get another chance."

In the past, all such contacts were made by the official Soviet film arm, Sovinfilm. "It looked as if a Niagara waterfall was channeled into a small pipe which would burst," Ibragimbekov said. "At least now there are a few pipes. I represent one of them still not bursted."

The American members of the group are Sasha Schneider, a former producer of "Hill Street Blues," and Yasha Bronstein, a film director and Soviet emigre. Already the group has made several documentaries and a Pepsi commercial in the Soviet Union at significant savings, they said.

Not only that, but Soviet officials are going to allow the new company to pay no taxes on their profits for a minimum of two years - an example of unfettered capitalism mostly gone in the home of free enterprise itself.

In another bold step, the new company plans to make a politically charged picture called "Courage" that will tell the true story of a Soviet Christian who died in suspicious circumstances after being drafted into the army during the Brezhnev era. This first venture will actually be an American-financed production using the creative services of Soviet-American Filmproduction.

In the future, the company plans to make a series of films based on 19th- century Russian literary classics by such authors as Anton Chekhov and Alexander Pushkin. They will be made in English and Russian at the same time under the aegis of Nikita Mikhalkov, who won rave reviews last year for "Dark Eyes," a Chekhov adaptation starring Marcello Mastroianni.

All this sounds so high-minded, a skeptic might wonder whether Soviet filmmakers are really ready for the marketplace. Don't worry - the company also has plans to make a "Flashdance"-style movie set in the Bolshoi Ballet and an adventure film about some Alaskan kids who accidentally ride a hot-air balloon across the Bering Strait into Siberia. As an appropriate turn on the old film "The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming," the filmmakers plan on calling it "The Americans Are Here, the Americans Are Here."

Pleasant Harry: The most touching moment of the Los Angeles Film Critics Association award ceremony Tuesday afternoon was when Clint Eastwood introduced veteran director Don Siegal as the winner of the Film Critics Association's Career Achievement Award. Siegal, best known for the original "Invasion of the Body Snatchers," directed Eastwood in five films, including "Dirty Harry." But his brand of lean-and-mean action films has never been the kind that wins Academy awards or other accolades.

After a brief and affectionate introduction, during which Eastwood called Siegal his "padrone" and friend, Eastwood

stepped off the podium and stood watching Siegal. Throughout Siegal's entire - and very modest - acceptance speech, the legendary tough guy beamed with unselfish pleasure. He was so happy for his friend.

Cartoon fest: The largest animation festival in the world started Thursday in Los Angeles at the Wadsworth Theater. With 750 animated films from 35 countries, it's a spectacular chance to catch up with the latest and the best in this field. Tonight, for example, there's a special exhibition of the methods used by George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic to make "Who Framed Roger Rabbit."

In days to come, there will be tributes to filmmakers like Don Bluth ("The Land Before Time,"), a huge amount of children's cartoons, retrospectives of the work of national animation studios from places as distant as Zagreb and Shanghai, special seminars on computer graphics and 3-D animations and, as they say, much, much more. For information, call (213) 478-6379.

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## NETWORK BATTLE OVER LIBERACE STORY ESCALATES

Daily News of Los Angeles (CA) - Tuesday, August 16, 1988

**Author:** Marilyn Beck

The Liberace wars go on. Last month a suit was filed against Liberace's longtime personal manager, Seymour Heller, which centers on his involvement with a CBS biography of the musician - after he allegedly refused to help create such a project for ABC for the benefit of the Liberace Foundation.

Now Peter Locke - whose Kushner/Locke Productions is developing the CBS "Liberace" TV movie - says he has his attorneys investigating filing a suit against ABC.

Locke claims that ABC has done damage to his project about the late flamboyant star with a recent statement that ABC's "Liberace" project is the only "authorized" version.

"Authorized by whom?" blasts Locke. "Did Liberace read the script? Certainly our version, which is annotated by Heller, Liberace's manager of 36 years, is 'authorized.' Seymour spent more time with Liberace than anyone, and was the closest person in his life.

"Besides, CBS' attorneys have been very careful about who owns rights to the Liberace story. I don't know how much the ABC statement has already hurt us - but I'm very upset."

ABC, in its "Liberace" project press release, stated that "the fact that ours is the authorized version means we've worked with the cooperation of the Liberace Foundation and estate." Meanwhile, the authority of Liberace estate executor Joel R. Strote has been challenged in yet another suit filed in Nevada.

The ABC production, which stars Andrew Robinson and "Golden Girl" Rue McClanahan, is already before the cameras; the CBS production, with Victor Garber in the title role and Maureen Stapleton as the mother, is in pre-production in Montreal.

What a nightmare: An exhausted Robert Englund reports that prints of his "Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master" that opens Friday "will still be wet from the lab" when they're delivered to theaters.

Englund, who is back for his fourth go-around as "Elm Street's" Freddie Krueger, says director Renny Harlan has been frantically putting finishing touches on the film - which didn't wrap principal production until last month.

"Everything was so rushed we were editing as we went along," he notes. He adds, "The hours were horrendous and the heat (in Valencia) and specials effects totally draining."

Englund's work as Freddie hasn't stopped; he just wrapped production on an "Elm Street" music video with the Fat Boys, and he's now preparing for production of Lorimar's syndicated "Freddie's Nightmares" series.

He also reports that he and set decorator Nancy Booth will wed in October, but that they're planning no immediate honeymoon because of the series' shooting schedule.

Sorry 'bout that: Dina Merrill had to send regrets to Vice President George Bush about attending his luncheon today at the Republican National Convention in New Orleans. She's busy with the opening of her Pavillion production company in New York today - and with a dinner tonight at her East Hampton home for her house guest, U.S.S.R. Filmmaker Association chief Rustam Ibragimbekov.

Foreign affairs: Mike Tyson is planning to accompany wife Robin Givens to the Soviet Union when she heads there with her "Head of the Class" colleagues to tape a two-part segment of the show.

The word from Rome is that Marlon Brando's son Christian will soon be going before the cameras in an Italian remake of Fellini's "La Dolce Vita."

Alan Alda is off to Scandinavia and Spain for the unveiling in those countries of his "A New Life." He expects to also be beating the drum for the picture in the U.K., when it opens over there in the fall.

**Caption:** photo

Liberace ABC, CBS fight for biography

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## **Fight continues as CBS, ABC work on Liberace TV movies**

**The Orange County Register** - Tuesday, August 16, 1988

**Author:** Marilyn Beck

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Marilyn Beck is a syndicated columnist. Her Hollywood column appears Mondays through Fridays in Show.

**Caption:** BLACK & WHITE PHOTO

Liberace: Not forgotten. CAP= Englund: A nightmare. CAP= Merrill: Sorry George.

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## U.S. Producer's Advice for Soviets

**THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE** - Monday, July 20, 1987

**Author:** JUDY STONE, CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

Moscow

Lawrence Schiller has some tough-minded advice for the Russians: do your homework first and then talk production deals with the U.S. studios.

Schiller, who created, produced and co-directed the TV mini-series "Peter the Great," believes that no matter what co-production agreements were made during the Moscow International Film Festival, which ended over the weekend, no U.S. studio will put cash on the barrelhead until they see satisfactory scripts.

He's waiting for scripts to be delivered for three Soviet projects that he is planning to produce. One will star Meryl Streep and be directed by Nikita Mikhalkov. It is based on Mikhalkov's idea about a romance between an American tourist stranded on an isolated island with a Russian hunter. Although announcements were made earlier that Mikhalkov would direct the actress in "Anna Karenina," that project fell through at a Paris meeting last January.

Schiller met then with Streep, Mikhalkov and Jay Kantor, production chief of MGM. To hear Schiller tell it, the director and the actress "fell madly, artistically in love." However, the film language problems involving Tolstoy's novel seemed insurmountable. Mikhalkov solved it by coming up with a new story idea, Schiller said. Mikhalkov and his co-writer, Rustam Ibragimbekov, a playwright and member of the film festival jury, are now working on the script.

### THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

The question of language is fundamental, Schiller said. No English-speaking company is going to finance a major film unless it's shot in English. No Soviet director or writer will be accepted unless he can direct in the English language - and that's a couple of years off. It's one thing to show "Dark Eyes" in art houses, he said (referring to Mikhalkov's Italian production starring Marcello Mastroianni, which will open soon in the U.S.); it's another to get wide distribution.

"The creative people here want to learn English," Schiller said, but they have to be encouraged. Mikhalkov is studying English, as is Gleb Panfilov, whose film "Theme," about a compromising Russian writer, will soon be released in the U.S.

Panfilov has a controversial production of "Hamlet" here and is preparing to direct a film version for Schiller.

The third project is about a Siberian truck driver who inherits \$400,000 from an American relative and goes to the United States to collect it. It is a "fish out of water" story like " `Crocodile' Dundee," Schiller said -

hopefully. It is being written by Alexander Chervinsky, who did script for "Theme."

When the Russian scripts are finished, they still will require polishing by an American, Schiller pointed out. "So dealing with the Soviets in business is one thing. There are a lot of pieces to the puzzle. My feeling is that you don't do a picture here unless you can't make it anywhere else."

#### COPIES OF CONTRACTS

Schiller held English classes at the Gorky studio here for a year before production started on "Peter the Great." He's not just talking about homework: he brings copies of the contracts signed by the Writers Guild and Directors Guild of America, the rules and regulations of IATSE, as well as every issue of Variety.

"I'm interested in learning whether the Soviet Union is moving in a direction so that deals can be made," Schiller told me. "It hasn't happened yet, but I think it will happen very soon. The biggest change I've seen is that people here are talking emotionally about how they feel."

Using the phrase that Alexander Pushkin applied to Peter the Great's effort to modernize Russia, Schiller said, "Gorbachev is hacking a window to the west. It's scary because any time you do something so fast, there's a danger that the rubber band will break. When Peter died, the country went backward 80 years. The first step is the hardest, but the last is even harder."

#### THE LOCAL ANGLE

Everybody has a "local angle." Larry Clark of Oakland is working on a dramatic feature about the black Americans who came here in the '30s, stayed and married, and their descendants are now Soviet citizens.

An Australian producer is trying to get a co-production agreement for a film on a Russian scientist who married an Australian in the 19th century and became a spokesman for the aboriginals.

One of the films in competition here was Claude Berri's "Jean de la Florette." Gerard Depardieu was here causing Russian hearts to flutter, but not Yves Montand, once a great friend of the Soviet Union. He was invited to be part of the French delegation, but held out for a special invitation, which he didn't get. He wanted to be able to tell the Soviets: "I'll come if I can walk out of here with six Jewish dissidents."

The Russians, it seems, don't mind inviting "unfriendly" westerners, but they're choosier about sending invitations to "dissidents" in Eastern Europe.

Krystof Zanussi, the suave and talented Polish director who makes movies all over the world, was the cause of an inner-circle controversy when he was invited to the big international forum on peace held here several months ago. He considered his invitation to the film festival a victory for the liberal forces in the Soviet Union, but they're still not liberal enough to issue an invitation to Andrzej Wajda, who is now directing a film version of Dostoyevsky's "The Possessed." The Russians have given a script to Milos Forman to direct, which is certainly one indication of "glasnost," but the project is still up in the air.

#### NO BEATTY `REDS'

The fact that Warren Beatty did not bring "Reds" here is considered a victory for the old conservative hard-liners, led by actor-director Sergei Bondarchuk, who made his own movie, "Red Bells," about American revolutionary journalist John Reed.

(I saw the first part of Bondarchuk's film - it features the big blue eyes of Franco Nero and not much else.)

The new leadership of the film makers union, led by Elem Klimov, was in favor (it is reliably reported) of agreeing to Beatty's stipulation that English subtitles be used instead of the traditional - and impossible - voiceover translations which

are often substandard and/ or inaudible.

#### COPPOLA SCREENINGS

After being caught in the frightening crush of the masses pushing and shoving to get in to see Francis Coppola's "Gardens of Stone," I can reliably report that it was almost impossible to understand what the actors were saying. Producer Tom Luddy, who was here representing Coppola, said that Dolby sound is muffled if proper equipment is not used. Furthermore, the film was shown in the wrong ratio so that 25 percent of the image was missing from the screen.

However, so many people packed the entrance to the Rossia Hotel cinema that a second unscheduled show was presented at midnight to another overflowing house.

There was another triumph in a 500-seat Moscow theater when "Mother Teresa" won a standing ovation, was given an unscheduled repeat and, when a slot suddenly opened in the competitive section, was put into competition. The co-producing Ann and Jeanette Petrie were jubilant. In fact, all the American directors here were excited about the vast and enthusiastic crowds that have turned out to see their films.

If the spirit at this film festival is any indication, the spirit of free speech is in the air. Although all enthusiasm about glasnost is tempered with the anxiety that it may not last, there is a fervent feeling that the floodgates have been opened and the tide won't be turned back .

Just how it will affect the new movies won't be known for at least two years. It takes a long time to make a movie, east or west.

**Caption:** PHOTO (2)

(1) Yves Montand, once a great friend of the Soviet Union, held out for a special invitation, which he didn't get / NEW YORK TIMES PHOTO, (2) Lawrence Schiller is waiting for a Soviet script

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