



Ukraine Volodymyr Voytenko

Despite the crisis in Ukraine in recent years and slow growth in the number of new cinemas (there are currently 300), the box office has grown steadily. By September 2010, it had grown by 48% on the previous year, from US\$36 million to US\$53.85 million.

With the change in leader (the new President, Viktor Yanukovich, has been an implacable opponent of Viktor Yushchenko since the Orange Revolution of 2004), there was a shift in public policy and ideology, with a return to stonger Russian influence and its corresponding values. In film distribution, the preference for Ukrainian as the main language in the dubbing and post-synching of foreign-language films lost out to Russian. However, a regulation was passed stipulating that film prints should be post-synched and dubbed exclusively by Ukrainian companies.

The state support for filmmaking was miserable. By the end of October, the film industry saw its budget drop from US\$3 million to less than US\$1 million, elevating the importance of independent projects, often seen as a challenge to the frail state film policy. Such was the funding behind the portmanteau of 14 short films, **F***ers**.



F***ers. Arabesques

Arabesques (*Mudaky. Arabesky*), a collection of social satires. All films were shot on a low-to-no-budget basis and have had a good run at festivals. Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy's **Deafness** (*Glukhota*) was produced in the same way, going on to compete at the Berlin Film Festival. The same group of enthusiasts, led by Volodymyr Tykhiy, have already begun work on a new collection, **Ukraine, Good Bye**, looking at the levels of emigration out of the country and the reasons behind it.



Sergei Loznitsa's **My Joy**

Another breakthrough was the Ukraine-German-Netherlands co-production, **My Joy** (*Schastie moye*), the feature debut of documentary filmmaker Sergei Loznitsa. It was the first Ukrainian film to feature in competition at the Cannes Film Festival. It was a disturbing tale of the corrupting influence of power. The film's producer Oleg Kokhan also co-produced **Chantrapas**, directed by Otar Iosseliani, which reflects on the place of the artist in democratic and totalitarian societies.

Alexander Shapiro's **Dnipro** (*Dneph*) is a slight film poem, a peacen to the great Ukrainian river, with the director's footage intercut with official newsreels from the past. Dmytro Tyazhlov's documentary **I am a Monument to Myself** (*Ya pamyatnyk sobi*) tells the story



Dmytro Tyazhlov's *I am a Monument to Myself*

of an amateur sculptor whose work aims to reconcile a politicised community, constructing a number of monuments to former enemies of the people.

Three new films were co-productions with Russia: Alexei Lukanev's **Stradivari Gun** (*Pistolet Stradivari*), Vilen Novak's **Shoot Immediately!** (*Strelyai nemedlenno!*), and Leonid Gorovets' **My Widow's Husband** (*Muzh moyei vdovy*), an adventurous crime story with humorous elements that failed to convince audience and critics.

The only project made with some State support was the animated series **Ukraine is My Country** (*Moya kraina – Ukraina*), a collection of three-minute episodes that present the history of a particular geographical area, which succeeded in pleasing audiences and was artful throughout.

In the meantime, a number of feature films under-funded by the State are waiting for completion in 2011. In particular, Russian filmmaker Ilya Khrzhanovsky's biographical drama, **Dau**. It is the fateful story of the prominent physicist, Lev Landau, who worked in Ukraine during the 1930s.

Meanwhile, from January 1, 2011 changes to the 'Law on Cinema' come into effect. Investment in all stages of domestic films, from production to exhibition, will be exempt from tax for a period of five years. However, there is much doubt over how well this will work.

The year's best films

My Joy (Sergei Loznitsa)

F*ers. Arabesques** (Volodymyr Tykhiy, Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy et al)

Ukraine is My Country (Stepan Koval et al)

I am a Monument to Myself (Dmytro Tyazhlov)

Quote of the year

'The subject of f***ers (or assholes) can not be exhausted. We should shoot a sequel, like 'F***ers. Ukraine in Flames'. Being an asshole is the main way of life in the country. People don't give a damn for the past and future, they live only according to their whims.'

VOLODYMYR TYKHIY, *producer and director of F***ers. Arabesques.*

Directory

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National Oleksandr Dovzhenko Center (State Film Archives), 1 Vasylkivska St, Kyiv 03040.

Tel: 257 7698 Fax: 201 6547.

Central State Archives of Film, Photo & Sound Documents, 24 Solomyanska St, Kyiv 03601. Tel:

275 3777 Fax: 275 3655. tsdkffa@archives.gov.ua.

Institute of Screen Art, Kyiv National University of Theatre, Cinema and Television, 40 Yaroslaviv

Val St, Kyiv 01034. Tel: 272 1032 Fax: 272 0220.

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Ukrainian Cinema Foundation, 6 Saksahansky St, Kyiv 01033. Tel/Fax: 287 6618. info@ucf.org.ua www.ucf.org.ua.

Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Ukraine, State Cinema Service, 19 Ivan Franko St, Kyiv 01601. Tel/Fax: 234 4094, 234 6951. ros@mincult.gov.ua <http://dergkino.gov.ua/>.

Kyiv International Film Festival Molodist, 6 Saksahansky St, Kyiv 01033. Tel/Fax: 461 9803. info@molodist.com www.molodist.com.

Krok International Animated Film Festival, Suite 208, 6, Saksagansky St, Kyiv 01033. Tel/Fax: 287 52 80. krocfestival@gmail.com www.krocfestival.com.

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