

HIPSTERS

HIPSTERS

a film by Valery Todorovsky

a Leisure Time Features release
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HIPSTERS

CAST

MELS	Anton Shagin
POLLY	Oksana Akinshina
KATYA	Evgenia Brik
FRED	Maksim Matveev
BOB	Igor Voynarovsky
BESTY	Ekaterina Vilkova

CREW

DIRECTOR	Valery Todorovsky
SCREENPLAY	Yuri Korotkov (based on his book BOOGIE BONES)
CINEMATOGRAPHER	Roman Vasyanov
ART DIRECTOR	Vladimir Gudilin
COSTUME	Alexander Osipov
MUSIC	Konstantin Meladze
LIBRETTO	Valery Todorovsky Evgeny Margulis
EDITOR	Alexey Bobrov
PRODUCERS	Leonid Lebedev Leonid Yarmolnik Vadim Goryainov Valery Todorovsky

AWARDS

Nika (the Russian Oscar) for Best Film, Sound, Costume, Art Direction
Black Pearl Award for Best Narrative Feature, Abu-Dhabi Middle East
International Film Festival

FESTIVALS

Including: Toronto International Film Festival, Seattle IFF, Karlovy Vary IFF,
Chicago IFF, Cleveland IFF, Washington DC IFF

HIPSTERS (STILYAGI), Russia, Russian with English Subtitles,
125 minutes, 35mm Scope, Dolby Digital EX

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SYNOPSIS

Moscow 1955. Stalin has been dead two years, but not even Khrushchev's thaw can prevent Komsomol shock troops from hounding hipsters (stilyagi), fans of American jazz, culture and fashion. The student Mels (Marx-Engels-Lenin- Stalin), a Komsomol member, meets Poly, a hipster, while conducting a raid on a hipster hangout. Mels falls in love with Poly while his Communist comrade Katya, harbors romantic feelings for him.

Mel ingratiates himself into a Poly's group of hipsters who meet up on "Broadway" (Gorky/Tverskaya Street) and he begins adapting their extreme fashion and lifestyle. Soon, Mels is a hit on the dance floor and starts learning to play the saxophone. He is expelled from college, changes his name to Mel and has the beautiful Poly for a girlfriend. Katya tries to dissuade Mel from the hipster lifestyle but fails. Poly becomes pregnant and the couple's hipster lifestyle is threatened as members of their scene start abandoning their wild ways.

HIPSTERS is a lush rebel-with-a-cause musical full of intricately choreographed, toe-tapping numbers and plenty of satirical social commentary. Retro-musical scenes alternate with sequences in which the director presents with witty hyperbole the state of mind and lifestyle of various segments of the Soviet population. The cinematography often parodies the past cinematic style of Soviet realism.

The plot takes many unexpected twists and turns as it celebrates the uneasy Cold War romance between East and West and the desire for individual freedom pre-glasnost era.

A hit in its homeland, HIPSTERS danced away with the prize for Best Film at the Russian Nika (Oscar equivalent) Awards.

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FILMOGRAPHY

Valery Todorovsky - Director

Valery Todorovsky was born 1962 in Odessa, Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union. He studied screenwriting at the Russian State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) and is a director, screenwriter and producer. His films include:

Love (1992)

Katia Ismailova (1994)

The Land of the Deaf (1998)

The Lover (2002)

My Stepbrother Frankenstein (2004)

Vice (2007)

The Director's comments about making HIPSTERS (from an interview at the Seattle International Film Festival 2009):

About the idea to make HIPSTERS:

"I dreamed of making a musical all my life but everybody told me that this genre is not a Russian genre and Russian audiences don't accept any musicals at the theatre. I think this is the first real Russian musical since the 30s and 40s and I still wanted to make it.

I feel that the hipsters (stiyagi) of the 50s expressed themselves through music and dancing and not about just having a good time, but it was a position against the grey people around them, against the system which wanted to make everyone similar.

It took four years to develop and make the movie."

About the reaction of the real hipsters:

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“First of all I want to say that I met all of them. They are not that old. There are not that many of them. I spoke to them before I made the movie and they told me a lot of things. For example, the scene with the bulldog painted in different colors was a true story. It wasn’t just for fun. The hipster was painting it so that by going out in public he could show everyone that even my dog is colorful and you are grey.

However when the movie came out, they were a little upset because they wanted it to be more of a documentary, like the way it happened, ‘saying it was this or that way.’ But I was making a musical after all, and a musical is always a little bit of a fairy tale. That’s why they took it a bit coldly, but they didn’t beat me up.”

About the choice of music:

“I combined the hipster movement of the 50s with the Russian rocker rebels of the late 80s. I took their songs because I thought they were closely related and as a musical producer I reworked them and turned them into a musical. They all originally sounded different.”

About the choreography:

“I got two great guys, choreographers, but sometimes I felt like a choreographer too, cause I danced with the actors; it was impossible to stop myself. Every person in the crew had no previous experience making musicals, nobody, including the choreographers, music directors, actors and director.”

About the birth of John, Polya’s baby:

“I don’t know if you understand what it meant to give birth to a baby who was different in those times in Russia. It was like giving birth to an alien really. She gave birth to an extraterrestrial. Not a baby, or African American as they say here, but an alien. Everything was building to this though, because Mels wanted so badly to play sax with this black guy, merge with his culture and music; and we were simply giving him all this.”

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About Fred's words upon returning from America "There are no hipsters there":

"When Fred comes back from America and says "There are no hipsters there," he is lying. There were hipsters, he just stopped seeing them. He had already turned into the 'man in the suit.' "