

## **Interview with Mikhail Voronin (Analytical Note)**

### **Hannah Kitchen and Jessica Parks (2013)**

In July 2013 Jessica Parks interviewed Mikhail Voronin in St. Petersburg, Russia. The interview was transcribed and translated by Hannah Kitchen and Emilie Clark during the Fall 2013 Russian Movie Theatre Project.

At the time of the interview, Mikhail Voronin was a recent graduate from the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense's [Military University](#).

Mikhail Voronin is in his mid-twenties and was born in the city of Ufa, the capital of the semi-autonomous Republic of Bashkortostan in the Ural mountains. Voronin points out that Ufa is one of the cities in the former USSR and Russia today with a population at or exceeding one million people. Voronin's parents are divorced, and he seems to have been raised by his mother, a flight attendant who serviced routes primarily throughout Russia and occasionally the republics of the former USSR. Voronin lived in Ufa for 15 years prior to moving to Moscow for three years and finally moving to his current home in St. Petersburg where he has lived for 6 years.

Voronin's interview style is concise; he does not provide lengthy descriptions of moviegoing or movie theatres from his youth. However, as opposed to more senior interviewees, he shows throughout the interview his knowledge of English, often including English phrases such as "Old School" (4:49), or providing the English titles to films he had seen in Russian. Voronin also takes care to make Russian concepts more available to the American interviewer. He converts movie prices into dollars (4:08), and points out his knowledge of the American rating system for films (19:21).

Further, many of Voronin's comments provide insight into Russian society today. Our interviewee describes his personal interactions with females, and also points out where the holes in his knowledge of the Soviet past, specifically history of Russia cinema. For example, he does not know when synchronous sound arrived to the USSR, and provides a very confusing answer (22:54). Additionally and comically, he describes his own relationship with pornography as a teenager, and says that this behaviour is common among males in that age group. The other two genres that he mentions as his favorite are thrillers and comedies. In the scheme of research, his commentary might be useful in shedding light on gender roles among the Russian youth, and in the field of cultural memory.

Voronin's general apathy towards cinema should also be noted. He cannot describe thoroughly any movie-going experiences from childhood, nor does he remember concretely his first time at the movie theatre. It is possible that, due to his age, a lot of the films he watched were via digital media, such as the internet, rather than in a theater or on tv. He does however point out that in his youth he always went to the movies with women: his teachers, mother and in his teenage years, girls.

In Ufa, the movie theatre closest to Voronin was called *Spark* (*Iskra* in Russian). During his childhood, it was a typical Soviet movie theatre with a typical Soviet-style name. *Iskra* was the title of the underground Bolshevik newspaper, which was initially managed by Lenin. The theatre was recently renovated and Voronin now considers it a modern movie theatre.

From his description of his movie preferences, it does not seem that Voronin is a cinephile. In his youth, which was obviously post-Soviet, he enjoyed watching classical American animation tv shows, such as *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, on his tv and currently favors action films, including *The Godfather*, and Russian films spin offs of the gangster genre, such as Aleksei Balabanov's *Brother* and *Brother 2*. Additionally, he enjoyed the Russian gangster saga mini-series *The Brigade*. Voronin also states that he prefers films based on real-life experiences. Ironically as an example of a film based on real-life experience he mentions a Hollywood male fantasy *Chasing Mavericks*, with [Gerard Butler](#). Voronin only lists favorite actors popularized in American films, like [Johnny Depp](#), [Charlize Theron](#), and [Eddie Murphy](#).

During his interview, Voronin was asked for comparisons between movie-going currently and in the Soviet era. Given his age, Voronin was unable to answer these questions. At the conclusion of the interview, Voronin was asked if he could recommend anyone who might be interviewed for the Russian Movie Theatre Project in the future, he jokingly replied "Just not me!" (25:25), because he feels that he can only speak on recent moviegoing and is not particularly interested in cinema.