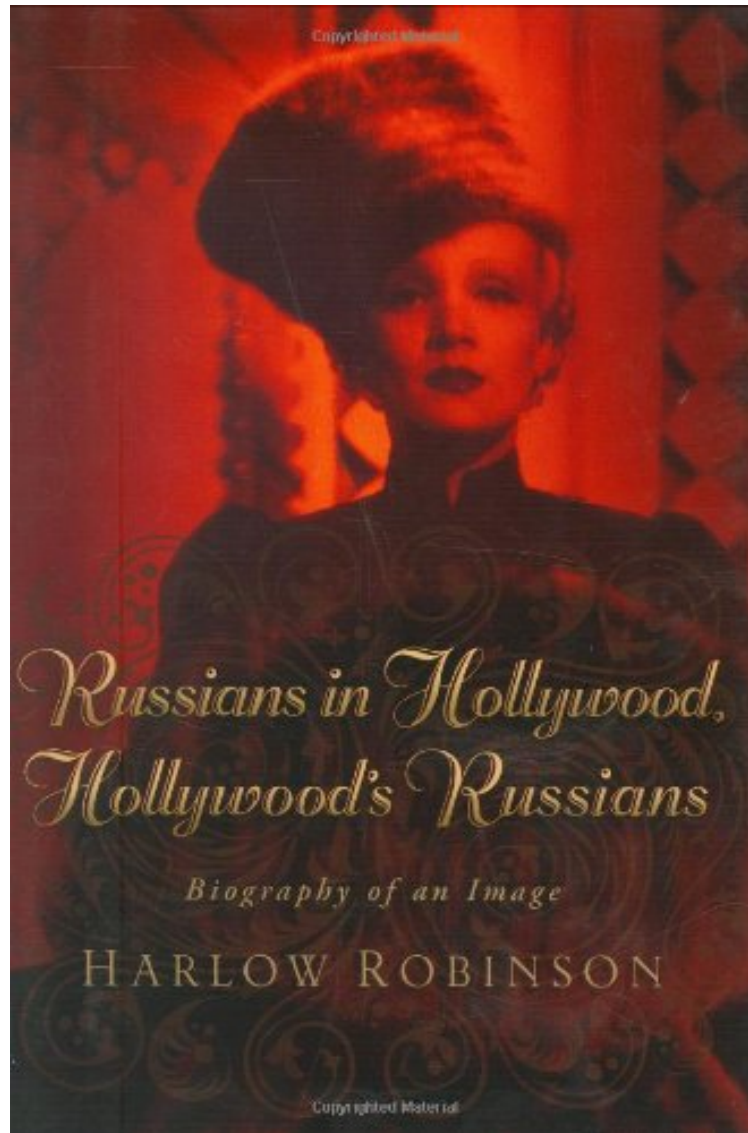


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Russians in Hollywood, Hollywoods Russians: Biography of an Image

Harlow Robinson

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Harlow Robinson : Russians in Hollywood, Hollywoods Russians: Biography of an Image before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Russians in Hollywood, Hollywoods Russians: Biography of an Image:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. "The Russians are Coming...The Russians are ComingBy Joseph R.

Calamia "Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians; a Biography of an Image" by author, Harlow Robinson is actually like the old Wrigley's chewing gum advertisement that had a catchy little tune that started out: "double your pleasure double your fun.. get two ..two gums in one" (or words similar there of). Harlow Robinson gives the reader two biographical sketches . One biography centers upon the films and imagery of the Russian actors who portrayed certain characters, and then...a biography of the real actor, and the events in his or, her life. Robinson takes the reader through the various images of Hollywood's portrayal of ..."The Russian", depending upon the political climate of the time period in which the movie came out. Sometimes Mysterious, sometimes mystical, sometimes seductive, sometimes bold, sometimes a friend, and more often an enemy but always..."A Russian." I was especially drawn to the biographical sketch of Maria Ouspenskaya who played the role of a gypsy in the 1940 film, "The Wolf man." Here was a woman who grew up in revolution, poverty, illness, death, and still managed to make her indelible mark on the celluloid and silver screens of America in the last 12 years of her life. Harlow Robinson's infatuation with Russia and the Russians is easily understood, but his knowledge of the subject goes far beyond the reaches of most people like myself. I am still reading this book (don't want it to end), but can tell you it is a book worth having for anyone interested in the history of film making or, the history of Russia. From Alexander Nevsky to "From Russia with Love", the information presented in this book is as extensive as the steeps of Russia itself. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Russia and Hollywood in Love and War By Russian Bride This book is a fascinating attempt to explore both how Hollywood constructed Russianness on screen and also how Russian exiles fared in Hollywood. The book contains a wealth of information about migr actors, composers, producers. It gives a lots of precises of both forgotten silent films and better known movies. It gives a great overview of Hollywood's ruthless treatment of these migrs and its cynical construction of `foreignness': the US's changing foreign policy is mirrored in the evolving depictions of Russia and its population. The middle chapters are terrific and a pleasure to read. The book's weakness is its lack of a strong central thesis: how to pull all these disparate snippets, plus a bit of political history, together, into a cohesive whole. It is thesis by default: well it's all sort of Russian. This makes the early and final chapters hard going. The problem of definition also lets the book down. What, after all, constitutes Russia and Russianness. In this book it is a loose and shifting definition. Perhaps that is inevitable. As an aside, a lot of the people and films eg. Wilder, Lubitsch, whom Robinson claims as Russian, are claimed as German/Austrian by Karen Thomas in her 2008 PBS doco Cinema's Exiles. Similarly how is Hollywood to be defined. Robinson resolutely and quite reasonably cuts out British films such as Knight without Armour and Demi-Paradise and doesn't even give a footnote to Monty Python's immortal `effing gondolas", yet the definition can be expanded to include non US films such as the James Bond franchise and Dr Zhivago when his analysis requires. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating history! By Paul E. Richardson One of the reasons film is so fascinating is that, perhaps more fully than any other art form, it allows its practitioners to fashion alternative worlds nearly independent of the view. Film (or television) is so vivid and fully realized a fantasy that the viewer's imagination is all but suspended, and full control is handed over to the filmmaker. This fact is all the more relevant when considering, as Robinson does here, the fascinating history of how Russia has been viewed through American film. Film offers propaganda opportunities unlike any other medium, and how filmmakers have employed this tool can be a telling reflection of political moods, the role of filmmakers vis-a-vis society, and more. Robinson shows that American filmmakers' portrayals of Russia has been greatly tempered by political events, from uncertainty in the early years, to overeager pollyanism during WWII, to knee jerk antipathy during the Cold War. This book is rich in detail and full of great production and behind-the-scenes stories. The plots of numerous important films are well-recounted (saving hours of viewing time!), and Robinson's profiles of some of the main "actors" and actors are excellent. Unfortunately, all too few of the films he references are available at the local vid store or via Netflix...

This book is the first look at the colorful yet largely unknown story of Russian emigres who worked in the American film industry, and the representation of Russians and Soviets in Hollywood movies. Among the artists who gravitated towards Hollywood in the 1920s and '30s were the legendary directors Lewis Milestone and Rouben Mamoulian, composers Dmitri Tiomkin and Constantin Bakaleinikoff, and actors Alla Nazimova, Akim Tamiroff, and Maria Ouspenskaya. Many had to overcome obstacles of heavy accents, being cut off from their cultural base, being forced to work beneath their talents, and taking roles that promoted ethnic stereotypes. As with most Hollywood stories, there are also great artistic and personal triumphs; many relished the opportunity to pursue their crafts largely free of political entanglements. In addition to the story of Russian emigres, Robinson also discusses the impact of such Soviet artists as Sergei Eisenstein and Sergei Prokofiev and their visits to Hollywood. The book is also an informed and entertaining analysis of the representation of Russians and Soviets in American cinema. Rarely has a country loomed so large in the American zeitgeist yet remained so unknown. As a result, it was mainly through the medium of film that Americans' images of and attitudes towards Russia were shaped. From the 1920s to the 1950s these depictions often mimicked the contemporary state of U.S./Soviet relations at that time: the anti-Soviet Ninotchka, establishing the trope of the seduction of a Soviet by Western charm; the WW II films such as Mission to Moscow and Days of Glory which lent a positive spin to the tribulations of our erstwhile ally. The Cold War brought a slew of Red-baiting genre

films (along with notable action and spy films), while the intermittent post-Stalin "thaws" are represented by such classics as David Lean's *Doctor Zhivago* and Warren Beatty's *Reds*. *Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians* is an original contribution to our knowledge of the early Hollywood film community and a lively blend of film analysis and social and political history.

Although numerous studies have treated individual emigres who acted or directed in Hollywood, Robinson is the first to take on the group as a whole . . . The select bibliography demonstrates the originality of Robinson's work . . . Highly recommended. Choice "Hollywood has long been a melting pot, drawing talent from around the world in response to wider changes in history. This proves a very appropriate starting point for Harlow Robinson's "*Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians*," perhaps the most comprehensive work to date on the place of Russian emigres in U.S. and world cinema. It also leads to Robinson's second, and more interesting, focus: how the image of Russia has fluctuated depending on political currents and allegiances." *Moscow Times* "Robinson fell in love with Russia watching "*Doctor Zhivago*" at the little theater in Elmwood, Conn., in 1965. For him, Russia would be forever after associated with "waltzes, wars, gigantic hydroelectric dams, endless train trips, ice palaces, flowering Siberian fields and humorless revolutionaries equipped with dramatic facial scars." Affectionately and in great detail, Robinson describes the careers of several Russian filmmakers, as well as Hollywood's changing portrayal of Russians, in all their poorly accented, grossly caricatured glory. (He also dwells at length on Russian scores -- a mysterious obsession until you remember he's written a biography of Prokofiev.) He shows how Hollywood has responded to the ideological battle between the free market and Communism with graceful films like "*Ninotchka*" (1939) as well as ludicrous ones like "*Red Dawn*" (1984), in which a former high school football player (Patrick Swayze) saves a small town from a Russian invasion. Not surprisingly, at the end of most American films about the Soviet Union, "steak, swimsuits and sex have prevailed over socialism." Today's Russian characters are liable to "sweat profusely and smoke far too many cigarettes," but Robinson predicts an ever-evolving characterization of Russians in future Hollywood films, one of which will apparently star Johnny Depp as the poisoned former spy Alexander Litvinenko. One thing's for sure: Depp is bound to do a better Russian accent than Sean Connery." *New York Times Book* "Robinson's plot summaries of dozens of movies--from blockbusters like *Dr. Zhivago*, *Reds* and *Gorky Park*, to sleepers such as *Forty Shades of Blue*--are entertaining and insightful, and his assured style guides the reader effortlessly through a sometimes convoluted subject. The depth of his research should also make this book useful for cultural historians." *ForeWord* A treat from start to finish, this lively and highly readable volume benefits from Harlow Robinson's unsurpassed historical rigor and gift for colorful observation, bringing to life the indispensable role played by Russian migr artists in the complex, exciting, and glamorous development of Hollywood. (Catherine Portuges, Professor of Film Studies and Comparative Literature, University of Massachusetts) That rare film survey that manages to be effortlessly engaging without shortchanging on scholarship, *Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians* is an essential cross-cultural synthesis of historical milestones and cinema iconography. (Jan Stuart, *Newsday*) About the Author HARLOW ROBINSON is Matthews Distinguished University Professor of Modern Languages and History at Northeastern University. He is the author of *Sergei Prokofiev: A Biography* (Northeastern 2002), *The Last Impresario: The Life, Times, and Legacy of Sol Hurok* (1995); and editor and translator of *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev* (Northeastern 1998).