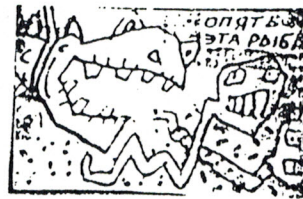


MOSCOW



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## Soviets stay underground

By Mikhail Brashinsky  
(Soviet critic)

SOVIET FILM since glasnost is not merely Little Vera and a string of shocking documentaries, as anyone who has been to the Independent screenings at PROK will have realised.

The Soviet 'underground' cinema was born at a time when the very word 'official' was anathema to intelligent people. It came out of the early 1980s, the low point of Brezhnev's era of stagnation.

At present, Soviet underground cinema has two homes: Moscow and Leningrad. Relations between the two are good, but each has a very different approach. The Muscovites, headed by the Aleynikov brothers in film and Boris Yukhananov in video, are fairly civilised and deal mostly with intellectual material. But the Leningrad ones are

a good deal more wild.

The leading Leningrad trend is 'necrorealism', which explores life after death in the shape of films depicting violently surrealistic relationships between living corpses.

The only thing that unites all these underground filmmakers is that they are, so to speak, all virgins. They set up the avant-garde movement as though nothing had ever been done before, working on 8mm, 16mm and video.

But perestroika has posed a serious threat to the underground, bringing an outburst of public relations and official interest, as attempts are made to drag it to the surface. But whatever the result — death, or simply loss of virginity — it will be the underground that decides where to move next.

An alternative and independent voice is something Soviet culture needs. Its loss would be painful.



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SCREEN INTERNATIONAL IN MOSCOW