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AUDIENCE CULTURE OF UZBEK CINEMA

Abstract. *This article analyzes the formation and stages of development of Uzbek cinema, as well as the audience's attitude to films created by national filmmakers today. The article evaluates the current position of cinema based on the opinions of viewers, their level of interest, and the situation in cinemas, using films created in recent years as an example.*

Keywords: *Uzbekfilm, audience, cinema, national cinema, cinematography, feature film, documentary film, filmmakers, film lovers.*

O'ZBEK KINOSI TOMOSHABINLARI MADANIYATI

Annotatsiya. *Mazkur maqolada o'zbek kino san'atining shakllanishi va taraqqiyot bosqichlari, shuningdek, bugungi kunda milliy kino ijodkorlari yaratgan filmlarga tomoshabinlarning munosabati tahlil qilingan. Maqolada so'nggi yillarda yaratilgan filmlar misolida tomoshabinlar fikrlari, ularning qiziqish darajasi va kinoteatrlardagi holatlar asosida kino san'atining hozirgi o'rni baholangan.*

Kalit so'zlar: *O'zbekfilm, tomoshabin, kinoteatr, milliy kino, kinematografiya, badiiy film, hujjatli film, kino ijodkorlari, kinosevar.*

A hundred ears ago, the present Uzbek film studio producing feature films – Uzbekfilm – was established. Its original name was Sharq Yulduzi (“Star of the East”), and in 1936 it was renamed Uzbekfilm. In the 1920s, films such as *The Second Wife*, *Under the Domes of the Mosque*, *Canopy Cart*, *The Wolves of Ravot*, and *The Tent* were loved by moviegoers. Writer Abdulla Qodiriy wrote about this: “I went to see *The Wolves of Ravot*. It is no regret, but destiny that I was satisfied and pleased with the first Uzbek...”

The Uzbek people are a nation of movie lovers. When the art of cinema first entered the world of arts, Uzbek creators showed great interest in it. Not only the

artists but also the society of that time were deeply engaged with this art form. Because of its strong influence on society, cinema differs somewhat from other types of art. Therefore, from the time cinema emerged to the present day, it has been regarded and utilized worldwide as a form of “great power.”

However, what is the current state of cinema – the art that once transformed societies and influenced state development through censorship and ideology? And are there still movie lovers as before?

According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy, which came into force on September 12, 2023, gives special attention to the cinematography sector within the sphere of culture and art. Specifically, it sets forth the following goals:

- To place national films on the world’s ten most popular internet platforms.
- Between 2024–2030, to produce a series of 50 film projects reflecting more than three thousand years of our statehood history and the scientific, cultural, and spiritual heritage of our great ancestors, and to present them abroad – particularly at film festivals and on television channels.
- To produce ten animated films and series about national heroes.

It is clear that the government is paying close attention to cinema. But what about the filmmakers – what are they doing? In 2024, a total of 123 film products were produced by Uzbek filmmakers, including 18 feature films, 54 documentaries, 32 short films, 8 animated films, 9 TV series, and 2 commercials.

However, did the funds allocated for these films – along with the government’s attention, time, and effort – truly pay off? To answer this question, we should turn to the opinions of audiences who came to watch these films in cinemas, as only their impressions can shed light on the matter.

“Today we came to watch the film *Ajiniyoz* (directed by Q.Atadjanov). The Uzbek and Karakalpak peoples have always been united as one. We saw that, despite the distance, many movie lovers from Karakalpakstan had come to watch the film. Despite the unfavorable weather, about two thousand viewers attended. Such

an event hadn't occurred for a long time. We are very happy. The life of this great poet can serve as an example for everyone. Many thanks to the filmmakers.” [1]

“We are a family of cinema enthusiasts. On weekends, we always go either to the theater or to the cinema. Frankly speaking, it is very difficult nowadays to find anything of quality on television. Although I am an employee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, I am deeply interested in art. Watching films and performances helps me relax and uplift my spirit – it has a very positive effect. Today, we watched the film *Three Heroes* (directed by Sh. Rasulov) about our profession with great interest. We enjoye...

“As a historian, I try not to miss any historical films. I love world-famous historical films like *Braveheart*, *Troy*, and *Gladiator*. One can learn a lot of history from them. Speaking of historical figures, Shukur Burkhanov's portrayal of Ulugbek in *The Star of Ulugbek* (directed by L. Fayziev) was outstanding. We film enthusiasts still look forward to such films. Today's film *Yalangtosh Bahodir* (directed by J. Akhmedov) turned out excellent. It was shot in a new interpretation – which is good. However, I ...

“For more than a ear, we studied online at home. At first, it was difficult, but later we adapted. Part of our student life coincided with the pandemic. Watching the film *Pandemic* (directed by A. Adamqulov) vividly brought back those days. The courage of doctors, the empty streets – everything was based on real events, which deeply affected me. We should indeed be grateful for having overcome such difficult times and for living peacefully today.” [3]

All these are the personal opinions of viewers and film lovers. Naturally, they differ significantly from those of cinema experts. Yet, it is evident that audiences are visiting cinemas. They eagerly await each premiere and watch with great interest. Moreover, not only on premiere days – even on ordinary days – many film lovers can be seen at the “Alisher Navoi Cinema Palace.”

However, this situation should not be confined solely to the capital. According to available statistics, there are currently around one hundred cinemas in the republic, although describing all of them as fully “functioning” would be an

overstatement. The operational status and material conditions of many cinemas remain unclear. It is evident that in a number of regions cinemas are either inactive or operate irregularly. Where cinemas do exist, they mainly serve urban populations. The unsatisfactory condition of regional cinemas represents one problem, while the complete absence of cinema facilities in remote and rural areas constitutes an even more serious issue.

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