

Art of Olive Green

Towards Art, an Ethics & a Laugh

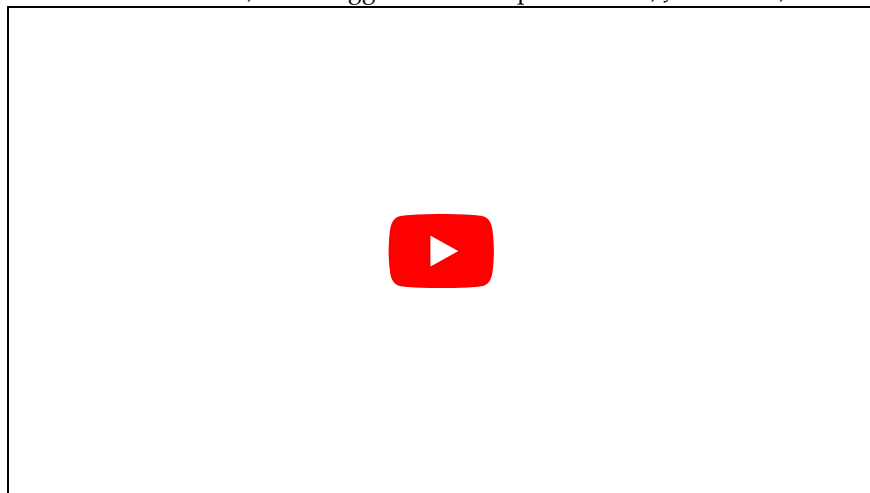
Archives

All posts for the month April, 2013

Adventures of a Dentist (USSR 1965)

Posted by [getraer](#) on [April 24, 2013](#)

Posted in: Culture crit, Film. Tagged: Dead Empire Cinema, Janteloven, Soviet. [Leave a comment](#)



[Похождения зубного врача](#)

👉: 7/10

This movie is a dark comedy with abstract musical elements and an occasional drifting quality. Director Klimov [describes it](#) (<http://www.kinoeye.org/04/04/woll04.php>) as ""The story of a man who reveals an extraordinary talent, and whom everyone tramples in the most friendly Soviet way." The titular dentist Chesnokov ("garlic") is played by Andrey Myagkov in his first role on the big screen: a dentist who can pull teeth without inflicting pain. He was the actor from the subsequent Soviet New Year classic *Ironiya Sudbiy* (*The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!*) and the still later adorable *Sluzhebnyy roman* (*Office Romance*). In these three films he specializes in endearing haplessness.

The Soviet musical tendency, which *East Side Story* contends comes from an aping of Hollywood and Broadway, makes an appearance through the rather abstract folk guitar and singing of Masha. I thought the songs less interesting than her facial expressions and quirky smoldering intensity.

“Get used to the fact that everyone knows everything in our town,” Chesnokov is told when he starts, and the story that unfolds seems like a cautionary illustration of Janteloven (Jante Law), the Scandinavian group tendency to belittle, criticize or discourage individual success—particularly in a small town milieu. “Janteloven” was coined by Dano-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose, and though I know of no equivalent in Russian culture, it’s interesting that neighboring countries with distinct cultures have a concept of it, and you’d think it would obtain in the collectivism of the Soviet Union. Functionaries’ justice and masses’ wisdom alike are muddied by Klimov’s portrayal, so the world is lucky this is on YouTube. Thanks to censors’ damning evaluation, it’s almost certain more will see it today than did in its time.