

Jews in hollywood

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What became widely accepted as the American dream was essentially forged in Hollywood by a handful of East European Jews. The stimulating feature-length documentary *Hollywoodism: Jews, Movies and the American Dream* were produced by two-time Emmy award-winning filmmakers Simcha Jacobovici and Elliott Halpern.

Many Russian Jews 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 dreams largely free of political entanglements.

In the story of Russian migrants, 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. As a result, it was mainly through the medium of film that Americans' images of and attitudes towards Russia were shaped.

The *Jazz Singer* (1927) was not the first Vita phone or in other words sound-on-disk feature, it was the first feature-length Hollywood film in which spoken dialogue was used as part of the dramatic action. It is, however, only 25% spoken with sound-synchronized, vocal musical numbers and accompaniment. This film opened doors to other directors and they used this as a prototype to construct their films. Using the *Jazz Singer* as a model the first film that was all dialogue is the gangster film *Lights of New York*.

Among the artists who gravitated towards Hollywood in the 1920s and '30s was the legendary director's Lewis Milestone who was an Academy Award-

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winning motion picture director. He is known for directing *Two Arabian Knights* (1927), *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), *The General Died at Dawn* (1936), *Of Mice and Men* (1940), *Ocean's Eleven* (1960), and *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962). The milestone was born in Kishinev, Bessarabia, Imperial Russia, and came to the United States just prior to World War I.

Another famous director Rouben Mamoulian, Born in Tbilisi, Georgia (ruled at that time by imperial Russia), Rouben relocated to England and started directing plays in London in 1922. He moved to America the next year to teach at Eastman School of Music and was involved in directing opera and theatre. In 1930, he became a naturalized citizen of the United States.

Russia also gave America some famous composers as Dmitri Tiomkin Hollywood's most distinguished and best-loved composers. Whether the genre was Westerns, drama, comedy, film noir, adventure, or war documentary, Tiomkin's instinctive, dramatic underscores helped bring more than 100 feature films to vivid life. The list of respected directors who constantly called on his services is impressive: Frank Capra, Howard Hawks, and Alfred Hitchcock among them. Constantin Bakaleinikoff was also a Russian-born composer. He studied at the Moscow Conservatory, and following the Russian revolution he came to America with his older brother, composer Mischa Bakaleinikoff. Constantin Bakaleinikoff worked as a conductor for the Los Angeles Philharmonic before beginning his Hollywood career as a freelance composer. When sound movies came in, the Bakaleinikoff brothers became studio maestros and Constantin became a musical director at Paramount Pictures and then MGM.

Russian actors also had a very important role in America especially in the 1920s through the 1930s. Alla Nazimova was Jewish and lived in Yalta,

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Crimea, then part of the Russian Empire. Nazimova's theater career blossomed early, and by 1903 she was a major star in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. She toured Europe, including London and Berlin, with her boyfriend Pavel Orlenev, a flamboyant actor and producer. In 1905, they moved to New York City and founded a Russian language theater on the Lower East Side. The venture was unsuccessful and Orlenev returned to Russia while Nazimova stayed in New York. She was signed up by the American producer Henry Miller and made her Broadway debut in 1906 to critical and popular success. She quickly became extremely popular even a theater was named after her and remained a major Broadway star for years, often acting in the plays of Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov. Other Russian famous actors were Akim Tamiroff and Maria Ouspenskaya.