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- RusCiCo ANDREI RUBLEV... anyone???

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**Author**

**Topic**

**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/04/2001 : 8:55:47 PM

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

Anyone got it yet?.. it's definitely doing the rounds...

>>>----->

**bhomatude**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/06/2001 : 11:49:08 PM

USA  
282 Posts

Yes. I have my paws on it right now. I've done a quick scan through a few chapters and am exceedingly happy to report that it is far far superior to Criterion's release (at least they tried)... I put in the Criterion disk and didn't have to even look very close to see how this Ruscico transfer and remaster is such a revelation in every way: Depth of Blacks, Sharpness, Image stability and frame 'waver' and an incredible 5.1 sound mix. I could go on...

The extras are similar to the Solaris release, in that you've got an interview with (T's sister?) and a short film on the making of Andrei Rublev - w/footage of T on the set and interview. I just glanced at this though. The standard filmography and Photography galleries with 'announcements' or trailers from future Ruscico releases including a trailer for Mirror and Stalker... both looking exceptional (the sound from the Stalker trailer though, sounded like it was from a mono optical print - very harsh and thin - I'm assuming it's a preliminary).

Oh and it is anamorphic - roughly equivalent to the letterboxed Criterion aspect ratio?? Upon hasty review, perhaps the Criterion was a tighter letterbox? Hard to tell. Anyway it's not hard to see how nice this anamorphic enhancement is on the Ruscico!

The one thing lacking, as with the Solaris release, is presentation. The menus are a bit cumbersome and you have to go through and choose Russian 5.1, otherwise you will get dubbed French by default - and of course, upon switching disks, you'll have to do this once more. Criterion's packaging and menu organization is superior.

Anyway, I'll watch this sometime this week or weekend and I'm sure everyone else will have lots to say :}

**peerpee**

Posted - 08/07/2001 : 12:01:17 AM



Posted - 08/07/2001 : 12:01:17 AM

Criterion Enthusiast

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

thanks bhomatude! I was holding off on it because I was worried by the white flashes that are between edits on the Rublev trailer that is on the RusCiCo SOLARIS disc - I assume the RusCiCo Rublev DVD doesn't have these! I will order it now!

I agree about the menus -- it's tough finding the trailers, etc -- you have to remember which disc they're on and whereabouts in the menus they are? (are they on the cast biogs or somewhere else??, etc)

>>>----->



**bhomatude**

Criterion Enthusiast

USA  
282 Posts

Posted - 08/07/2001 : 12:08:38 AM

I did not see white flashes on any cuts of the scenes that I quickly viewed... I did see on The Mirror trailer a couple of 'flashes'... I would assume that it is because of a workprint or quick answer print that was quickly struck for advertising purposes - but Rublev is clean.

Do not hesitate - get it now!

**Richard Malloy**

Criterion Enthusiast

256 Posts

Posted - 08/07/2001 : 2:14:10 PM

Great news - thanks, bhomatude!

I ordered mine from St-P's yesterday (online). Hope to have it by the weekend.

I'm glad to hear the Stalker teaser's on there, but I'd hoped to hear a sample of the new remix... ah well. I'm fairly certain it's an early 'workprint' sorta thing, as you say, since Ruscico's site seems to suggest that all their films are digitally restored and given 5.1 remixes. I'm usually an old fuddy-duddy on the remix issue, but I was so blown away by the Solaris track that I've since had a change of heart... and I really think Stalker would benefit from a tasty surround mix.

C'mon, US Mail...

**twomules**

Criterion Enthusiast

United Kingdom  
469 Posts

Posted - 08/07/2001 : 6:11:08 PM

Where can I find the Rublev trailer on the Solaris disc, then?

you ate sand?

**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

Posted - 08/07/2001 : 6:37:37 PM

i believe it's in Solonitsyn's biog on one of the discs - you have to scroll through the pages for it and it says "ANNOUNCEMENT" in GREEN... there's a few other little such "ANNOUNCEMENT"'s on both discs too... happy hunting!

>>>----->



**Jepthah**

Criterion Novice

10 Posts

Posted - 08/08/2001 : 2:57:20 PM

Wonderful to hear about the excellent quality.

HOWEVER, I want opinions on the 185 cut vs. the 205 cut. It was said that Tarkovsky preferred this version...what is missing or different? Would any scholars please chime in? This is one of the

great films of all time and I am happy to discuss it. 😊

Added to ask: how are the English subtitles? The Criterion's seemed to be quite good to me, do RusCiCo's provide a seemingly good translation without some of the annoying gaps other foreign films are prone to in subtitling?

Edited by - Jephthah on 08/08/2001 3:53:30 PM



**Donald Brown**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/08/2001 : 9:45:09 PM

USA  
107 Posts

quote:

HOWEVER, I want opinions on the 185 cut vs. the 205 cut.

Same here! I can't imagine it being improved by lopping off 20 minutes of it. What's missing? Has a long sequence been excised or has it been snipped at various points?

**Gary Tooze**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/09/2001 : 1:10:01 PM

Canada  
215 Posts

My review, which I hope to add to this weekend... if I have time, is here:  
<http://207.136.67.23/film/Reviews/andrei%20rublev%20ruscico.htm#ar>

<http://www.gary.dvdbeaver.com>



**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/09/2001 : 2:01:17 PM

USA  
159 Posts

quote:

HOWEVER, I want opinions on the 185 cut vs. the 205 cut. It was said that Tarkovsky preferred this version...what is missing or different?

Mostly bits-and-pieces-here-and-there type of cuts IIRC. They seem designed to make the censors happy with minimum compromise. Later Tarkovsky said he preferred the trimmed version but then let us not underestimate the powers of justification after the fact 😊

BTW, I suspect the quality of the Criterion DVD faithfully reflects that of the element they had to work with. Give them some slack and the credit for releasing this version at all. It's a miracle this cut has survived in the first place!

Jan  
[www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)



**MacGuffin**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/13/2001 : 08:47:14 AM

35 Posts

Where can one buy these RusCiCo discs online?  
Are they R1?

**Richard Malloy**

Posted - 08/13/2001 : 11:23:57 AM



I definitely prefer the 205 minute cut, but the image quality of the Ruscico release is head and shoulders above the Criterion DVD. I'm attempting to document all the changes, but this is a difficult process for me made even more difficult by the fact that there are some very subtle differences in addition to the larger ones. Let me list some of the more obvious differences and a few of the more subtle ones:

#### PROLOGUE (Balloon)

Let me begin with some of the more subtle differences:

1. There's a shot that begins with the balloon-flying peasant, Yefim, walking up from the river banks carrying his harness, through the church/cathedral from which he takes flight, setting down his harness in the little alcove/hall before traversing out the other side of the church.

An alternate take was used in the Ruscico version, but it's very difficult to note the difference. Let me say that again: *an alternate take was used!* Don't believe me? Check out the horse you see standing in front of the church as Yefim walks by - we see that same horse again through the doorway of the alcove where Yefim drops his harness. In the Ruscico cut, the horse is standing still and framed in the window/door. In the Criterion cut, the same horse is not there at first, but then walks through the frame. There are other minor differences in this shot (the peasant looking back over his shoulder at different points, a 'tighter' path for the camera in the Ruscico take), but there is no doubt: this is an alternate take.

2. Moreover, when the peasant, Yefim, takes flight, it appears to be the same sequence of shots in both versions, but now we're presented with an alternate audio track! The entire soundscape isn't different I don't think, but Yefim's exclamations as he takes flight are most definitely different in either cut. Indeed, I believe there's a different audio track during Yefim's entire flight, but I didn't confirm this for the entire sequence.

3. Now, we come to the first truly qualitative distinction - Yefim crashes to the ground and we cut to a slo-mo shot of a horse struggling to regain its feet (the shot used for Criterion's main menu screen). In the Ruscico version, the shot cuts as the horse is still struggling on the ground and lasts 13 seconds. In the Criterion version, the shot holds until the horse regains its feet and trots offscreen - the shot lasts 31 seconds.

In the Ruscico version, we then cut to a close shot of the balloon slowly disgoring its air into the river (bubbling). In the Criterion version, we carry the action over from the previous shot by cutting to a shot of the horse's legs running past the prone (dead?) body of Yefim who we see still strapped to the balloon. Then, in the same shot, the camera tracks over the body, the balloon, and then settles on the image of the balloon's air bubbling into the river (the shot that the Ruscico version cuts to immediately without showing Yefim's body, etc). This shot in the Crit. version is not as well-framed as in the Ruscico, with the air bubbling into the water mostly out-of-frame (whereas it's very noticeable and always in-frame in the Ruscico cut).

#### THE JESTER/THE BUFFOON

The first scene/shot of this chapter in the Criterion version is entirely cut out of the Ruscico version. Lasting a full minute, it's a single, unbroken take of the Father's messenger running down from the monastery after Danil, Andrei and Kirill and trying to stop them from leaving Troitsa for Moscow (and warning them not to come back begging for their posts). The Ruscico version picks up at the beginning of the second scene/shot as they're traversing a stump-ridden landscape and Danil is asked "Aren't there enough painters in Moscow without us?".

This scene is our first introduction to Andrei and the icon painters, and IMO it's important to show where their loyalties are (or aren't). Why do they leave their positions painting icons in Troitsa over the Father's objections for Moscow? Money? Ambition? To learn?

As their 'loyalty' to one benefactor or another become very significant to the plot of the film, this is a very unwise cut IMO.

Allow me to jump ahead to part 2...

#### PART 2: RAID / SACK OF VLADIMIR

I get the sense of many, many tiny cuts in the Ruscico version, and I think these cuts are solely for scenes of violence - this is essentially censored content being removed. What's worse is that they seem to have been removed without regard for the effect on the overall shot and editing. For example:

1. The shot in the Criterion cut that begins with the cow in flames and ends with the woman being speared is cut entirely from the RV (with the exception of the briefest snippet that registers so briefly that one can hardly make out what's on-screen, making the sequence seems confused and not at all like the careful editing we associate with Tarkovsky.)

2. A shot that begins as an overhead perspective - Tatar horses are racing around a path as geese fly at the edges (one goose has been trampled) and there's a horse lying on the ground to the right of the path. In the Criterion version, the overhead camera pans right to a woman being dragged along a high platform by two soldiers. She is dragged by her hair along a tall plank/catwalk and then is thrown over (you hear her screams as she falls all that distance to the ground below). The camera continues tracking right to a parallel road and a shot of the soldiers beating down the door of the church with the battering ram. It is an uncut take.

In the Ruscico version, however, we see the overhead shot begin and track right to the soldiers dragging the woman, and then -cut- the shot resumes as the camera pans to the image of the soldiers breaking down the door with the battering ram. There is no way to justify this cut other than as the editing out of a 'too violent' scene. And the resulting jump-cut resembles nothing like Tarkovsky's usual grammar.

3. Finally, IMO the most disturbing and "poetically violent" shot of the raid has been drastically cut in the Ruscico version. In the Criterion version, the shot begins with a horse tumbling down a set of ladder-stairs, crashing through a rail and falling to the ground below, spewing blood as he does. The horse struggles on the ground as the camera pans left to a shot of soldiers standing over a peasant woman, and then pans back right to the horse who has struggled to its feet and then falls over backwards, head over heels in the agony of death throes, before being lanced in the heart. We then cut to the interior of the cathedral as the peasants huddle in fear as the Tatars continue to pound at the door with the battering ram.

In the Ruscico version, we see the horse tumble from the top of the steps and then the shot immediately cuts to the interior of the cathedral as it hits the ground.

In the interest of wrapping this up, let me skip way ahead to a few differences I noted at the very end:

#### BELL/EPILOGUE

1. Just before the transition from the black and white of Rublev's world to the color shots of his frescoes, there's a shot of a pile of charred, burning wood (at the feet of Rublev and the young bellmaker). In the Criterion version, this shot is in black and white (appropriately enough it would seem). In the Ruscico version, it's tinted red (and difficult to distinguish).

2. The final shot of the horses (after the fresco montage) is in color on the Criterion version (green grass and blue water). On the Ruscico version, it's black and white (or almost completely drained of color). I'm convinced that the Criterion version has this correct, though I suppose Tarkovsky may have consciously decided to return the image to black-and-white.

Criterion (total time): 205:45 minutes (96:36 / 109:09)

Ruscico (total time): 174:24 minutes (81:04 / 93:20) - PAL speedup?

Edited by - Richard Malloy on 08/13/2001 11:42:48 AM

Edited by - Richard Malloy on 08/13/2001 11:42:48 AM



**Ashirg**  
Moderator

Posted - 08/13/2001 : 11:41:17 AM

So, does it worth a purchase? What about the extras?

USA  
845 Posts

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My DVD List



**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/13/2001 : 12:01:07 PM

quote:

256 Posts

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...worth a purchase? What about the extras?  
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Sorta thought this went without saying around here, but I definitely think it's worth a purchase. There is no doubt that I prefer the 205 minute Criterion cut, but the image quality of the Ruscico disc is an extraordinary improvement over the Criterion transfer. Just pick any scene at random, and you'll see - for example, take a look at the opening shot of the monastery (?) in *The Charity / Silence*. The improvement in image quality is simply astounding.

The 5.1 audio is not the revelation that the Ruscico SOLARIS was, but it's interesting and well executed nonetheless. As you can imagine, it's difficult judging the difference, so I can't really say whether or not you'll consider the audio a huge improvement. For example, during the raid of Vladimir, we cut to the interior of the cathedral where the peasants have sought refuge. On the Criterion version, you can hear the "bam!" "bam!" of the battering ram from the first shot of the sequence, but it gets buried in the Ruscico version, only becoming clearly audible a few shots later. A small difference, to be sure, but I think the Criterion track builds a bit more suspense (this is something I noticed on the first viewing, so it's not *that* subtle).

The extra features on the Ruscico disc - of which, I've only begun to scratch the surface - also place this squarely in the must-have category. You wanna know more about the Tatar invasion and the sack of Vladimir? Well, there's a documentary about it (one of the seven 'etudes' accessible through the chapter menu - these seem to be placed near chapters dealing with the same subject matter). You wanna know about the significance of icons to the Russian Orthodox religion and the attempts by the Soviets to destroy them? Again, there's a documentary. And there's a documentary on bells. And there are others that I haven't yet even looked at. There's behind the scenes/on-set footage from the filming of *Rublev*. Interviews, filmographies, Tarkovsky trailers, etc. Even having only seen a small portion of these, I already have a deeper understanding of the film and how it would have resonated with a Russian audience. For the Tarkovsky fan, this is must-have material.

And I think it's important to know what was cut from Tarkovsky's original edit - remember: the reputation of this film was built on the "cut" version. The 205 minute edit wasn't seen by Western audiences until Criterion's DVD.

**bhomatude**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/13/2001 : 12:43:35 PM



USA  
282 Posts

Nice job Richard - a daunting task especially with only 1 dvd player. I think for every film where there exists 2 or more versions, there will always be discussion. Which is better? Which is more concise? In my opinion, there will never be a final answer. To use the two versions of the Horse falling as an example: Some (I'm one of them) would say cutting at the moment of impact creates far more psychological tension than showing the impact. Others would say that by showing the suffering of the horse expands upon and sets up the TRUTH and REALITY of the scene.

For me, I think that the film as a whole - even scenes as a whole do not change to such an extent where a new message, or theme, or plot point layer is unearthed or hidden (not like for example, what happened in the 2 versions of Once Upon A Time In America)

What effects me far more is the quality of the transfer - After seeing Ruscico, I don't think I will be watching Criterion again (unless for scholarly editorial discussion). After dropping the Criterion into my player after watching a Ruscico scene - I was shocked at the difference. I felt like I was watching the Criterion through a muddy soup.

All this to say, the Criterion version is necessary for true Tarkovsky scholars - but when I watch Andrei Rublev on Wednesday night this week, It will be the Ruscico version.

**Donald Brown**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/13/2001 : 7:48:58 PM



USA  
107 Posts

Thanks for the follow-up responses, everyone. I've been on the fence about this release and I'd normally balk at buying a "less complete" version of something I already have, but the improved transfer and extras sound too good to pass up. And it's Tarkovsky. I wouldn't spare such expense on too many filmmakers. 😊

**Jepthah**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/13/2001 : 7:51:04 PM



10 Posts

Thanks very much Richard...sounds like I will definitely be buying the RusCiCo DVD. I do wish it came on 1 DVD instead of 2, although I guess they needed the room for the extras...both discs must be dual-layered, right?

Did people get this from St. Petersburg online store?

**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/14/2001 : 03:04:14 AM



United Kingdom  
877 Posts

Absolutely fantastic stuff Richard! Many thanks. My RusCiCo RUBLEV is due any day now -- this is as fascinating as the MIRROR trailer being made from shots that aren't in the film!

>>>----->

**Richard Malloy**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/14/2001 : 10:28:31 AM



256 Posts

Thanks for the replies, everyone - while I'd do this anyway, it's nice to know that at least a few other people care about this stuff, too!

I'll eventually publish a compendium of the differences between the two cuts as part of the disc review on Gary Tooze's site, DVD Beaver, but I wanted to give you folks a heads-up since I know there's a lot of fence-sitting about this disc.

To put as fine a point on it as possible, I think the Ruscico cut is a lesser film than the Criterion cut - and I don't believe for a second that Tarkovsky *really* preferred it - but the image quality of the Ruscico disc is light years beyond Criterion's. I'm not as crazy about the 5.1 remix, particularly as important audio information tends to get buried beneath the very active (overactive?) soundtrack, but it's an interesting re-interpretation that emphasizes the very odd musical score that often sounds like a cross between industrial and liturgical music.

(If you want to hear what a vast difference there is between the two audio tracks, check out the scene where Andrei stumbles upon the celebration of pagan rites - specifically, listen to the two audio tracks as he's watching/listening to Marfa/Martha and an unidentified man making love in the bushes, Andrei's robes catch fire, etc. In the Criterion version, the music is subdued and you

can hear the conversation between the two lovers; in the Ruscico version, the music is predominant and you cannot hear what is said. The effect is quite different.)

Some might take issue with my belief that the Ruscico cut couldn't be Andrei's preferred cut, but the more I watch, the more I'm convinced of it. I simply don't believe, for example, that he would destroy a beautifully composed, single take tracking shot by inserting a jump-cut, the only effect of which is to remove the portion when the woman is thrown from a catwalk. This is obviously an example of something snipped out solely for content (as though to achieve a particular MPAA rating). And calling this a 'jump cut' seems to imply that it's part of Andrei's grammatic arsenal, when in truth it just looks like a sequence of dropped frames... abrupt, distracting, and quite un-Tarkovskyesque.

There's another cut at the end of The Holiday / Celebration (Feast) section (the pagan rites) that's illustrative as it introduces a continuity error in the Ruscico version. Martha and her male companion have been captured at the river by the Grand Duke's men. Martha escapes (with a little help) and begins running away along the beach. She is wearing a burlap-looking smock. [-cut-] Martha is running into the water completely naked.

This cut doesn't give the impression of an ellipsis, rather it seems that her smock has just mysteriously disappeared in the space of a second. On the Criterion version, however, there's a wonderful little sequence that shows her running, caught, struggling, caught, struggling mightily, struggling so hard that her dress rips off of her as she finally makes her escape and heads to the river. It's a wonderfully edited sequence, taking only a very few seconds, demonstrating how desperate she is to escape... and, of course, it explains how she got nude, after all!

It's sorta like the conversation we're plopped into at the beginning of The Jester/Buffoon (our first introduction to Andrei, Kirill and Danill described in my previous post) - without the opening scene, I defy you to comprehend what they're talking about. Go ahead. Watch the Ruscico version first, then the Criterion. You'll see what I mean.

A bit more info about the Etudes:

Disc one

Etude 1 - fragment from Ivan the Terrible II

Etude 2 - brief docu on Theophanes the Greek

Etude 3 - brief docum on the Rublev memorial

Etude 4 - modern pagan rites

Etude 5 - "Union of Militant Atheists" (destruction of Orthodox icons and architecture under the Soviets)



These, of course, more or less match up with the content of the chapters they're associated with. Great stuff.

Edited by - Richard Malloy on 08/14/2001 10:30:57 AM



**stingo**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/14/2001 : 10:36:32 AM  

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Given that Criterion is going to release **Solaris** should I wait for that or buy the RusCiCo version?



195 Posts

my DVD library



**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/14/2001 : 2:00:10 PM  

USA

quote:



159 Posts

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I'll eventually publish a compendium of the differences between the two cuts as part of the disc review on Gary Tooze's site, DVD Beaver, but I wanted to give you folks a heads-up since I know there's a lot of fence-sitting about this disc.

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Richard - a big thanks! Looking forward to the full listing.

On a related note: anyone noticed how incredible the *Stalker* preview looks? Colour and sharpness are astounding, I never noticed how simply beautiful the *Zone* was. And it's so lifelike, that broken lightbulb at the end for example, you can almost touch it (isn't this an outtake, BTW? I'm pretty sure this scene wasn't in the film).

Back to Criterion transfer quality: it must be the source element, it seems overexposed in all of its B&W sequences: no blacks and not enough highlight detail. Notice the first fade-in: about half way through, the picture looks perfect! Freeze that frame! That's the exposure the print should have received! Unfortunately it keeps fading in and it's like one stop over throughout...

Jan  
[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)

Edited by - jan on 08/14/2001 2:29:36 PM



**firetree**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/14/2001 : 2:11:12 PM

USA  
215 Posts

quote:

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Jan  
[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)

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Oh, my God. I'd think I'll buy the RusCiCo disc if only for that trailer. No, but seriously, I'm just biding my time to buy "Andrei Rublyov". I just bought the "Dreyer Box Set". Maybe in a week or two.

\*\*\* the world would be a much better place if Criterion releases "Stalker" \*\*\*



**lunar**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/14/2001 : 7:59:52 PM

USA  
13 Posts

quote:

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On a related note: anyone noticed how incredible the *Stalker* preview looks? Colour and sharpness are astounding, I never noticed how simply beautiful the *Zone* was. And it's so lifelike, that broken lightbulb at the end for example, you can almost touch it (isn't this an outtake, BTW? I'm pretty sure this scene wasn't in the film).

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I finally received my RusCiCo Rublev today. I only had time to take a brief look at the film and view the *Stalker* preview before returning to work. Jan, you are right, *Stalker* looks fantastic! It looks like the majority of the preview is composed of outtakes. I think I am anticipating this release more than any other DVD this year.



Thanks Richard for the info on RusCiCo's Andrei Rublev. It was very informative. I am looking forward to reading your comparison on DVD Beaver.

lunar  
my DVD collection



**pancks**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/14/2001 : 9:19:46 PM  

USA  
61 Posts

A question, Richard, one scene that is included in the Criterion version that wasn't in the video by Fox Lorber, that I felt was really important, was the one that shows the younger Prince waiting at the door of the church to meet with his brother, the Grand Prince and the head of the church.

The footage that was included in the Criterion edition shows what the younger Prince is thinking/wishing - throwing Grand Prince down and stepping on his head - which is rather an important scene showing that his pledge to his brother was definitely coerced and helps explain why he ultimately does what he does, namely have his Tatar friends help him sack the city.

Is this scene also cut from the RUSCICO version?

It really is a quandry, better quality or neutered copy?



Too bad RUSCICO couldn't have printed the entire 205 minute film!

And Firetree, I'd love to hear what you think of the Dreyer set.

Jephthah, as far as subtitles go, RUSCICO's Solaris subtitles are far and away better than what was on the video. I understand they have a professor working with them to help with the correctness of the translation and it showed on Solaris, great big improvement!

**Richard Malloy**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/15/2001 : 11:06:22 AM  



256 Posts

pancks, you're talking about the cutaways to their forced reconciliation as the Prince's troops and the Tatar troops are preparing to raid Vladimir?

Offhand, I don't know. I'm still working on Part 1, though I have listed some of the more obvious changes I noted in Part 2 above (simply because they were so significant). As I recall from my initial complete viewing of the Ruscico cut, there are two cutaways to the 'reconciliation', and I think this is true in both cuts, but I don't recall whether the specific scene you mention is there. Thanks very much for bringing it to my attention, and I'll definitely be on the lookout for it when I get to that chapter.

BTW, although I know the film fairly well, I'm sure a lot has gotten past me. Your questions and observations are very valuable to me in this process. I only have the one DVD player and a DVD-Rom in another room - so, it's very hard to A:B them, scene to scene! This is made even more difficult due to the Ruscico cut having so many tiny, tiny edits.

For example, in the Criterion version after the shot of Andrei being 'crucified' by the pagan revelers, we cut to a panning shot following the revelers as they walk away, outside the window, leaving Andrei tied to the post. The pan abruptly stops when Martha enters the frame, surprising us by her presence. In the Ruscico version, the shot cuts directly from Andrei's 'crucifixion' to Martha's face, minus the brief pan - though, annoyingly, the very end of the pan is still noticeable, a little hitch to the right that makes it appear that the camera wasn't quite ready for the shot and quickly 'reframed'.

I wonder if I could get a little help from some of you Tarkovsky scholars (Jan)? What I'm looking

for is information regarding the history of the various RUBLEV cuts and any comments Tarkovsky may have made regarding these various cuts, his preferences, etc. As far as I know, the 205 minute cut was never screened in the West until Criterion's DVD - is this true? Was Rublev's reputation entirely built upon the Ruscico cut (or a more severe cut)?



Any help would be very much appreciated!

Edited by - Richard Malloy on 08/15/2001 11:09:03 AM



**firetree**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/15/2001 : 12:04:42 PM  

USA  
215 Posts

quote:

And Firetree, I'd love to hear what you think of the Dreyer set.

Pancks, there's an active thread on the Dreyer Box Set and I've shared a few on this.

here

As a whole, it's one of my greatest criterion purchases without a doubt.



\*\*\* the world would be a much better place if Criterion releases "Stalker" \*\*\*

Edited by - firetree on 08/15/2001 5:02:40 PM



**pancks**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/15/2001 : 2:08:32 PM  

USA  
61 Posts

Thanks Firetree, I'll head on over, I haven't seen a Dreyer film yet, but what I've read sounds fascinating.

Richard, the scene to look for in the Criterion shows the younger prince arriving at the church and as he starts to walk in he turns and paces and during the pacing the scene cuts to the scene he must be imagining, where he is attacking his brother and throwing him on the ground where his wife and children crawl over to him.

There are two other things in the jester chapter that weren't in the 185 minute edition on video, but are on the Criterion DVD. One is when the jester drops his drawers and walks on his hand and reveals the tattoo on his bottom, which is hysterical, can't understand why it was cut before. The other is the ultimate Tarkovsky long panning shot of all the people in the room, the 185 minute version definitely abbreviates it.

Look for a longer shot too when the 'holy fool' leaves with the Tatars.

As far as what Tarkovsky wanted, I'm reading his book right now, *Sculpting in Time*, and highly recommend it to anyone interested in film, but the key is the title - he 'sculpted' time and that 20 minutes off of the Criterion version was done more with a hatchet! I cannot imagine that he would have preferred the abbreviated film.

And I do think you are right that the 205 minute version wasn't available till the Criterion release. The film had a premier screening for the Soviet film industry in 1966, and met mixed critical reaction, an anonymous letter writer complained that it was an anti-Soviet film and that was enough to keep it from being released.




In 1969 the Cannes Film Festival requested in and was allowed to show it very late at night in an

out-of-competition unofficial screening, and proceeded to win the International Critic's Prize. Even with the critical acclaim it wasn't released officially until 1971.

This film has had quite a history and that is why the 205 version has to be my favorite, after all it is more than 12% more of the film! I'll probably get the Ruscico to 'see' more of it as far as quality of picture goes, but I'll probably sit down with the Criterion when I want to spend another evening with Andre!

**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/15/2001 : 2:35:20 PM   



United Kingdom  
877 Posts

quote:

I'm reading his book right now, *Sculpting in Time*, and highly recommend it to anyone interested in film,



Tarkovsky's book *SCULPTING IN TIME* is hands down the best book about film I've ever read. A remarkably honest, bullsh!t-free read.

>>>----->



**Richard Malloy**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/15/2001 : 3:13:07 PM  




256 Posts

Yes, *Sculpting in Time* has a permanent spot on my bedside table. I think I've reread those chapters more than any other book I own (possible exceptions: *Pale Fire*, *Lolita* and *Ada* or *Ardor*).

[Firetree, could you please "hide" the URL to your link under your phrase "an active thread" or something - it's so long that I have to scroll left and right and left and right in order to read everyone's posts. Thanks!]

**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/15/2001 : 4:06:11 PM   



United Kingdom  
877 Posts

I wondered what was causing the extra wideness in other posts too. I have a largish monitor in high res. and it's quite awkward for me - must be even worse for 15" monitors.... I always thought it was the "screensize" setting you can choose when you post a message...

>>>----->



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  - RusCiCo ANDREI RUBLEV... anyone???

Pages: 1 2 3 4 5

**Author**

**Topic**

**firetree**

Posted - 08/15/2001 : 5:04:39 PM

Criterion Enthusiast

USA  
215 Posts

quote:

[Firetree, could you please "hide" the URL to your link under your phrase "an active thread" or something - it's so long that I have to scroll left and right and left and right in order to read everyone's posts. Thanks!]

Sorry 'bout that.

\*\*\* the world would be a much better place if Criterion releases "Stalker" \*\*\*



**Richard Malloy**

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 10:52:20 AM

Criterion Enthusiast

Thanks, Firetree! :)

256 Posts

quote:

There are two other things in the jester chapter that weren't in the 185 minute edition on video, but are on the Criterion DVD. One is when the jester drops his drawers and walks on his hand and reveals the tattoo on his bottom, which is hysterical, can't understand why it was cut before. The other is the ultimate Tarkovsky long panning shot of all the people in the room, the 185 minute version definitely abbreviates it.

You're absolutely correct, pancks.

The more I explore this version, the more senselessly sliced and diced it seems. This film seems to have been cut by some crusading ninny without regard to cinematic effect. I'll never believe this is Tarkovsky's preferred cut.

Specifically, we miss the entire 'punchline' of the Jester's song about the de-bearded Boyar (who, without his breeches, looked the same at both ends). The Ruscico cut chastely cuts away before we see the smiley face painted on his posterior. And then cuts back just as he returns to his feet... without the 'punchline' shot.

Also, as you pointed out, the Ruscico cut destroys the wondrous 360-degree pan around the tavern, which begins with Kirill speaking disdainfully of the jester, and then slowly works it's way all around the room, finally returning to show Kirill now missing (having gone to inform on the jester). In the Ruscico cut, yet another single-take is destroyed, as it cuts from Kirill to a point approximately opposite him. So, you get about a 180-degree pan instead of the 360-degree one, and yet another broken long-take.

Doesn't sound like much? Exactly 29 seconds were cut from this amazing shot (it's only 46 seconds in the Ruscico cut as opposed to 1:15 in the unbroken take of the Criterion version). And the slow, 360-degree pan is something that Tarkovsky would utilize again, notably in the scene around the bathing pool in *Nostalghia*. This is very much a part of Tarkovsky's unique grammar, his signature style. Anyone who's seen many of his films (or read *Sculpting in Time*) knows the significance of achieving an actual imprint and rhythm of time within a shot. It's one reason why he utilized the long-take so often.

All these broken takes in the Ruscico version definitely diminish the hypnotic magic of Tarkovsky's work. And usually only to avoid a scene of bawdiness or nudity or violence.... or simply to pick up the pace, although the languid pace is one of the key characteristics of his films, one of the primary tools by which this master cast his spells.

Another minor point: I prefer the Criterion subs, and it seems that more dialog is translated in the Criterion version (including the Jester/Buffoon scene). Moreover, the Ruscico subs generally resort to much clumsier syntax - the worst possibly being the strained attempt at rhyming the Jester's song about the de-bearded Boyar.

#### SUPPLEMENTS ON DISC 2:

Etude 1: docu on the Mongol invasions of the 13th-14th centuries, focusing on the Icon of Theotokos, which supposedly and miraculously helped repel a Mongol invasion of Vladimir. Rublev may have had a hand in restoring this icon.

Etude 2: montage of frescoes (all Rublev's?) - gorgeous.



Etude 3: "Bells" in Russian cathedrals.

Edited by - Richard Malloy on 08/16/2001 2:42:58 PM



#### Jepthah

Criterion Novice



Posted - 08/16/2001 : 12:00:03 PM  

10 Posts

The more I read of Richard's descriptions, the more I start looking again at a comfy spot on the proverbial fence...arrgh...I suppose if I love this film as much as I do I owe it to myself to scrape together the cash and get my ultimate Tarkovsky educative fix...

#### Donald Brown

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 12:23:58 PM  



USA

107 Posts

quote:

---

The more I read of Richard's descriptions, the more I start looking again at a comfy spot on the proverbial fence...

---




\*sigh\* Yes, I've clambored back up there myself. I was concerned when I heard the Ruscico cut would be twenty minutes shorter than Criterion's, naturally wondering what could be excised that

would result in an improvement. I'd pounce on the Ruscico cut if Criterion's transfer was garbage, but of course it's very good, and having an untampered-with edit with a good transfer and a good translation is preferable to having a great transfer of an awkwardly edited masterpiece with an inferior translation and a remixed soundtrack that obscures dialogue.

Edited by - Donald Brown on 08/16/2001 12:25:24 PM



**Ashirg**  
Moderator

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 12:28:22 PM   



USA  
845 Posts

Why does everyone refer to this cut as Ruscico cut? As if Ruscico took the longer version from Criterion DVD and butchered it themselves. They got this cut from Mosfilm, which, understandably, doesn't have the Criterion's version in their vaults.

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My DVD List





**MacGuffin**  
Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 12:41:58 PM  

35 Posts

Anyone know how I can get RusCico discs in Canada? Or into Canada? Is St-P's the only distributor?

**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 1:07:14 PM  



256 Posts

quote:

---

Why does everyone refer to this cut as Ruscico cut?

---

Just the simplest way to clearly distinguish it from the "Criterion cut" (which, of course, was no more cut by Criterion than was the other one by Ruscico).

quote:

---

I'd pounce on the Ruscico cut if Criterion's transfer was garbage, but of course it's very good, and having an untampered-with edit with a good transfer and a good translation is preferable to having a great transfer of an awkwardly edited masterpiece with an inferior translation and a remixed soundtrack that obscures dialogue.

---

I agree that Criterion's transfer is a good one, even without the anamorphic enhancement. But the print Criterion had to work with is a far cry from the what Ruscico had, quality-wise. It's murky, pockmarked, and without any shadow detail. There are instances of dropped frames that completely disrupt the flow of the film.

For example, as the monks are leaving the Jester's tavern, they walk along a river. In the distance, you can see (the soldiers?) on horseback walking parallel along the other side. On the Criterion cut, there are two instances of severely dropped frames causing the final monk to "jump cut" his way across the frame, utterly destroying the poetic beauty of the shot and creating an effect not unlike the jerky, dropped frame look of an old, tattered Chaplin print.

Moreover, any shots that occur at night - for example, Rublev's curious look at the pagan revelers - are so murky on the Criterion cut as to render all but the very brightest details completely indistinguishable. The Ruscico disc is a revelation for these scenes.

Personally, I couldn't live without both DVD editions. But Rublev's one of my favorite films and

Tarkovsky's my favorite director. If there was a similar situation pertaining to a film/director for which I didn't care nearly as much as I do for RUBLEV, then I wouldn't feel the need to have both editions. Example: I'm not interested in the edited-for-content, overly-cropped new version of RoboCop, despite the improved image quality. I'm perfectly satisfied with the Criterion version.

But this is Tarkovsky. And the Ruscico cut is not only a vastly improved transfer, it's also of historical significance. Unless I'm mistaken, it's the cut upon which the film's reputation was established. Plus, the bevy of extra features focusing on historical and sociological aspects of pertinent Russian history - ideally selected, btw - as well as the on-set footage from Rublev, the interviews, etc., perfectly compliment the scholarly, film-school approach of the supplements on the Criterion edition, making the Ruscico disc a definite must-have for me for all these reasons.

And, once more, this is Tarkovsky, after all.

**bhomatude**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 1:10:26 PM



USA  
282 Posts

quote:

I'd pounce on the Ruscico cut if Criterion's transfer was garbage, but of course it's very good, and having an untampered-with edit with a good transfer and a good translation is preferable to having a great transfer of an awkwardly edited masterpiece with an inferior translation and a remixed soundtrack that obscures dialogue.

One has to remember that the Ruscico release is the same as what was released theatrically -- it's the version that I saw 4-5 times long before Criterion released their DVD. And I do have to say, if the Criterion release happened to have been Fox Lorber, people would have no problem calling it 'garbage' when compared to the Ruscico release. This is not a flame against Criterion or anyone else - but objectively speaking the Criterion transfer does look terrible compared to Ruscico's, and that is a fact... That's all they had to work with. I stand by my opinion that Ruscico's release is well worth having.

**Donald Brown**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 1:38:41 PM



USA  
107 Posts

Sure, I realize the Ruscico cut is the only one most people were familiar with prior to Criterion's 205 min. cut, but that doesn't mean the 185 min. version is the *correct* version. If Rich is to be believed, and I have no reason not to, the shorter version suffers from edits apparently made by a censor indifferent to the effect such edits would have on the flow of the film, cuts which make nonsense of certain scenes and destroy Tarkovsky's pacing.

Is a pristine transfer of a mutilated film better than a merely good transfer that restores the filmmaker's original intent and maintains his artistic vision? I strongly disagree that Criterion's transfer would be considered garbage if it were released by Fox Lorber. So far as I can tell, people generally critique bad transfers and praise good ones regardless of the company involved. Few are unduly harsh on Fox Lorber, just as few turn a blind eye to Criterion's flubs. The 205 min. cut of *Andrei Rublev* and the quality of its transfer is no flub.

Edited by - Donald Brown on 08/16/2001 1:41:01 PM



**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 2:08:46 PM

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

I've just spent the whole day with the RusCiCo RUBLYOV. Fascinating stuff with strange differences to the longer Criterion version. As Richard says, it's clear that the Criterion version is Tarkovsky's cut. There are so many cuts and awkward ones at that... as Richard has superbly



877 Posts

detailed.

The one that upset me the most happens soon on:

quote:

---

"Lasting a full minute, it's a single, unbroken take of the Father's messenger running down from the monastery after Danil, Andrei and Kirill and trying to stop them from leaving Troitsa for Moscow (and warning them not to come back begging for their posts)."

---

I visually love this sequence on the Criterion DVD. It's nowhere to be seen on the RusCiCo DVD.

-

This sounds really dumb, but where on earth are the documentary extras about bell ringing, etc?

On Disc One there's a repeat of Tarkovsky's sister's short interview from the SOLARIS DVD, and a few trailers (some repeated from SOLARIS); on Disc Two there's a short "making of" section of colour film set to some rousing music; an interview with Yuri Nazarov; and some stills...

where are the docus on the Tartar invasion, the docu on "bells", and the frescoes?

>>>----->



**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 2:35:43 PM

peerpee, the "Etudes" can be accessed through the chapter menus on both discs, with each Etude associated with a specific chapter.

256 Posts

I thought this was very odd initially, but I've discovered that the subject matter of the Etudes pertains to the chapter with which they're associated. It's an interesting way of presenting supplementary material and making the viewer aware that the individual supplements are intended to illuminate specific parts of the film.

**bhomatude**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 3:05:41 PM

I guess ultimately it would have been fantastic if we could have Ruscico's transfer quality of the 205' cut.

USA  
282 Posts

**peerpee**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/16/2001 : 3:42:56 PM

ahhhh! many thanks Richard.

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

-

bhomatude - I think it would be possible (and \*fantastic\*!!) for Criterion to strike a new anamorphic transfer of the "Scorsese" print. Jon Mulvaney has hinted that this may happen in his reply to the "ten questions".

>>>----->



**Jan**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 03:24:35 AM

USA

quote:

159 Posts

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I've just spent the whole day with the RusCiCo RUBLYOV. Fascinating stuff with strange differences to the longer Criterion version. As Richard says, it's clear that the Criterion version is Tarkovsky's cut.

---

I think one day we are going to find out why in interviews Tarkovsky insisted the 185 min. version was his preferred cut (I posted a typical quote on the thread "RusCiCo Rublev Review" some time ago). His wife also says this emphatically about *Rublov* in Leszczyłowski's *Sacrifice* documentary. My theory is that he felt it wasn't worth the risk to talk about it openly.

Jan  
[www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)



**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 11:13:31 AM

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quote:

256 Posts

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My theory is that he felt it wasn't worth the risk to talk about it openly.

---

Yes, I agree. We must be cognizant of the totalitarian system under which Tarkovsky created his art, and treat his statements accordingly. I think we owe it to his legacy to (at the very least) make an effort to establish what his true intentions were.

While there was certainly a slight thaw under Kruschev, this was short-lived. Tarkovsky may not have had it as bad as Eisenstein did in his later years - see the disturbing and demeaning 'confessions' Eisenstein was forced to make regarding Behzin Meadow (along with the complete destruction of the negative) - still, I think it would be a disservice to disregard the pressure he was under by the Soviet authorities and to consider his statements accordingly.

I think once the major (and most of the minor) changes have been noted, it will be a matter of scholarship to determine whether one cut better represents Tarkovsky's intentions. I think the changes fall under two broad categories:

- (1) Material cut solely to satisfy Soviet censors (and do we know specifics about the suppression of the original print?).
- (2) Material cut for the purposes of reducing run-time. This will be the most difficult to evaluate, as we can only refer to the internal cogency and flow of the narrative, as well as techniques and cinematic grammar that we associate with Tarkovsky's style (for example, the 360-degree pan is a device we associate with Tarkovsky, so the truncated version probably isn't his preferred cut).

Other issues - should the charred wood be tinted red or remain black-and-white before the transition to the color "fresco montage" (?); should the final shot of the horses be in color or black-and-white (?) - these may be more difficult to evaluate.

If I'm satisfied with my work on this, I may work up the nerve to approach Vlada Petric for his thoughts. He refers on several occasions to the "commercial cut" of Rublev in his commentary on the Criterion DVD, correctly noting the differences between the two, so much of this may be old-hat to him. I don't know if he's still actively teaching or whether he has office hours, but his contact information is still in the university system. I may make a general inquiry to his department to see whether he remains active, and then go about contacting him.

(UPDATE: I finished the section on Theophanes the Greek last night - many changes, including a scene in Kirill's room that's entirely cut in the Ruscico version - but I may not get much more done this weekend as my sister-in-law and her two young children will be spending the weekend with us in our tiny (er... "cozy") Boston apartment...);

peerpee

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 11:37:39 AM



Posted - 08/17/2001 : 11:37:39 AM

Criterion Enthusiast

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

As a sidenote, in response to Jan's last comments, I wondered how much of what Tarkovsky says in his diaries is "guarded". He occasionally shows signs of complete openness, and occasionally shows signs of watching what he's saying. The whole time I was wondering if he was worried about his diaries being stolen or read... In an atmosphere that included strange couples entering his house (who T was convinced were KGB) he must've been aware that his diaries could've been read and his true intentions and beliefs held against him.

I have the (castrated) Tarkovsky Diaries (Faber, English version) so I am very keen to hear all the uncut material that is in the Polish book version of his diaries.

>>>----->



**Ashirg**

Moderator

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 12:12:38 PM

USA  
845 Posts

quote:

I think one day we are going to find out why in interviews Tarkovsky insisted the 185 min. version was his preferred cut (I posted a typical quote on the thread "RusCiCo Rublev Review" some time ago). His wife also says this emphatically about *Rublov* in Leszczykowski's *Sacrifice* documentary. My theory is that he felt it wasn't worth the risk to talk about it openly.

I wonder why they still worry about KGB and what they say in Sweden in 1986? Another theory is maybe Tarkovsky didn't know about existence of the longer version, so he made excuses to himself about cutting it...

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My DVD List



**pancks**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 1:13:00 PM

USA  
61 Posts

quote:

I have the (castrated) Tarkovsky Diaries (Faber, English version) so I am very keen to hear all the uncut material that is in the Polish book version of his diaries.

>>>----->

Are the Polish diaries going to be translated and printed? OH please say, YES!!! Does anyone have a copy of *Time Within Time: The Diaries*, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair? I see at Amazon there are seven people waiting for any used copy to appear.

Jan & Trond from Nostalgia.com are printing some pages from the diaries, for which I send many thanks, and they also say that there is a great deal of interest in Tarkovsky in Europe at the moment. Seminars, classes, conferences are being held to discuss him and his work, one hopes that might mean more might become available in English.

**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 2:09:56 PM



USA

quote:

159 Posts

---

I wonder why they still worry about KGB and what they say in Sweden in 1986?

---

His son and his mother-in-law were still in Moscow trying to obtain the permit to leave. Under Communism a lot depended on this or that party official's personal whim or good will, it was an important skill not to say anything potentially annoying to those people.

quote:

---

Another theory is maybe Tarkovsky didn't know about existence of the longer version, so he made excuses to himself about cutting it...

---

He seemed quite critical in later years of his own films so I guess he probably wouldn't bother with any "cover up" for his *own sake*. Yes, it would be interesting to know whose initiative it was to save the original cut, or perhaps it was just some lucky bureaucratic mixup which the studio staff promptly exploited by, ah, "securing" one print?




Jan

[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)



**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 2:31:05 PM   

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

quote:

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Time Within Time: The Diaries, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair

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This is the castrated English version of his diaries, published by Faber (in the UK), that I was referring to. It is heavily edited.

>>>----->



**Jepthah**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 2:33:30 PM  

I just want to express a few thoughts here, on topic but more general...

10 Posts

I am so amazed by Russian cinema--actually, Russian culture in general. Here you have one of the most turbulent and tortured nations ever to be part of "Western Civilization," yet they produced some of the most incredible films, and art, ever seen.



I look at a film like **Andrey Rublyov** and the images alone amaze me to a degree that even \$250 million in computerized Hollywood dollars cannot...the genius of Vadim Yusov, the poetry of Tarkovsky...WHAT IS IT that made these works of cinematic art so special, in a country where the artist suffered untold political persecution, economic poverty, war...I suppose the answer is in the question.

But I am still amazed, and this thread alone is so fascinating and so helps my understanding of the unique magic of Russian and Eastern-European cinema.

Is there a good, unpretentious general book that I can read about EE and Russian cinema, its unique history and aesthetics? These films are SO advanced, it's almost scary.

**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 2:51:18 PM  



USA  
159 Posts

quote:

---

Are the Polish diaries going to be translated and printed? OH please say, YES!!!

---

The best thing would obviously be a direct translation from Russian, I suspect all that's needed is a publisher willing to put some resources into the project. (What I mean is that there appears to be no personal politics going on behind the scenes.) BTW, as far as I know to this day there is no Russian edition of any kind (except fragments published in film journals).

Jan  
[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)

Edited by - jan on 08/17/2001 2:54:59 PM



**aboo**  
Criterion Newbie

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 2:55:42 PM

5 Posts

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Many of you might disagree with me on this, but I actually find the Ruscico version to be, in some ways, superior, to the Criterion release. Yes, it is 20 minutes shorter--but I think the cuts made generally enhance the narrative of the film, making the purpose behind the various character's actions a bit clearer (to me, at least).

Take the Buffoon section, for instance. The long, circular shot that was cut down in the Ruscico version is a wonderful shot, but the key to that shot is the fact that Kirill leaves the "house" and goes outside to talk to the Prince's soldiers on horseback. We see Rublev, at one point, looking out the window at Kirill and the men on horseback. That's the key to this scene, and because the one long shot is shorter, more emphasis is placed on that fact (because, well, less time passes between that moment and the moment the soldiers arrive and carry off the buffoon). Sure, it's not as "artistic," but filmmaking is also storytelling, and I think Tarkovsky the storyteller probably preferred it when his audiences were less confused, not more confused (though I think that changed later in his career).



**peerpee**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 3:05:02 PM

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

---

I would like to add too that contrary to what (I think) Richard said, I think the sound is on the whole better on the RusCiCo than the Criterion. The sound is fuller to me, and better mixed. The balloon sequence at the start sounds more realistic (a completely different sound take?) and a lot of the dialogue sounds less wooden (in sound quality, not delivery) and less like it was overdubbed in a studio (even though it was) because I think the sound mix on the RusCiCo accentuates the sound of nature more than the Criterion.

>>>>----->



**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 4:00:05 PM

256 Posts

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peerpee, I was only referring to specific sections, not the soundtrack as a whole. I'd love to know your thoughts on the specific differences I've mentioned, such as the "lovemaking" scene during the St. John's Eve rituals (where you can't hear the lovemakers at all on the Ruscico disc, whereas you can hear their entire conversation on the Criterion).

I find certain aspects of the Ruscico mix to sound quite artificial (daresay, newly recorded?). Check out the background "chatter" during the Jester/Buffoon chapter (for example, during the 360 degree/180 degree pan about the room). To me, the chatter on the Ruscico disc sorta sounds like the canned audience tracks on TV sitcoms.

Clearly, the music is much *much* more in the forefront on the Ruscico disc... it may be that it's mixed so high that details like the lovers' conversation and the "Bam! Bam!" of the battering ram are simply drowned out. This may well be to your preference, but I'm solely concerned with whether it's a valid presentation of *Tarkovsky's* preference.

I hadn't mentioned it prior to this post, but I *am* just a little bit suspicious regarding the authenticity of some aspects of the Ruscico audio track. We know, for certain, that the Criterion track is nothing but a cleaned-up version of the original mono recording. With the extravagant remix for the 5.1 audio on the Ruscico DVD, however, there's plenty of room for re-jiggering and even re-rerecording. I'm just trying to ascertain whether and to what extent that may have been done.

**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 4:03:48 PM  






quote:

256 Posts

The balloon sequence at the start sounds more realistic (a completely different sound take?)

As I'd mentioned way back on page 1, Yefim's exclamations as he takes flight are *definitely* different on either version. Just as there was a different take of the second shot, I believe this is simply a different audio take. I'm not sure whether the rest of that sequence (or anything other than Yefim's dialog) is different from one version to the other, but the sound of the balloon ripping and the air beginning to escape is much more apparent on the Ruscico disc, though also clearly audible on Criterion's.

**Ashirg**  
Moderator

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 4:04:15 PM   






USA  
845 Posts

I wonder if there're any differences in content between Ruscico version and the one available in the US on VHS.

-----  
My DVD List

**peerpee**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 4:17:09 PM   



United Kingdom  
877 Posts

I will look at both versions more closely this weekend. Ashirg's point is a good one, one that I can't verify. We need to examine the RusCiCo soundtrack next to the old VHS version of what is purportedly the same cut.

If a film is "cut" it's not usually the case that the whole soundtrack is also rerecorded or remixed, so it'd be interesting to find out *\*why\** the soundtrack is so different - because it's not for censorship or editing reasons...



My guess is that the Criterion version is an early, basic sound mix/recording. Whereas the RusCiCo version has had more work on it.

*\*When\** this work on the RusCiCo version was done is the question I suppose.

>>>----->



**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 4:23:28 PM  

256 Posts

quote:

---

I think the cuts made generally enhance the narrative of the film, making the purpose behind the various character's actions a bit clearer (to me, at least).

Take the Buffoon section, for instance. The long, circular shot that was cut down in the Ruscico version is a wonderful shot, but the key to that shot is the fact that Kirill leaves the "house" and goes outside to talk to the Prince's soldiers on horseback. \* \* \* \* That's the key to this scene, and because the one long shot is shorter, more emphasis is placed on that fact (because, well, less time passes between that moment and the moment the soldiers arrive and carry off the buffoon). Sure, it's not as "artistic," but filmmaking is also storytelling, and I think Tarkovsky the storyteller probably preferred it when his audiences were less confused, not more confused (though I think that changed later in his career).

---

:)

That's a good point, aboo. It's certainly difficult and problematic whenever we seek to devine the intent of an artist on matters like this. Invariably, we end up substituting *our* preferences and perceptions to some extent. I think we must be very careful to try to ground our conclusions upon arguments based within the artist's work - arguing by example, essentially.

To illustrate, I might counter your argument by suggesting that the 360-degree, slow-pan is a tool that Tarkovsky employed on other occasions (at least the scene around the pool in *Nostalghia*). That example is certainly not decisive with regard to whether that was his preference for *Andrei Rublev*, but at least it provides some concrete grounding.

And I think you can argue that excising the first scene from The Jester/Buffoon or the scene in Kirill's room after he meet with Theophanes make for a more efficient narrative, but I'd counter that they make the scenes directly following them a bit less comprehensible. And in the example of Kirill's room, we lose insight into his personal philosophy ("to fear God and keep His commandments - for this is man's all") And (I believe) we also lose the only line that connects the dog Kirill kills as his own (I may well be wrong about this - I haven't closely reviewed that section beyond the coming of the messenger). But, nonetheless, you raise a very valid point regarding narrative efficiency.

On the other hand, I don't think we can justify another "class" of cuts - such as the buffoon's 'smiley' buns and the excision of certain scenes of violence and gore - upon any other basis other than having been censored for content. Perhaps Tarkovsky had second thoughts about these scenes, but I don't quite believe that...

**Deepy Sea**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 4:34:02 PM



USA

531 Posts

I haven't had the pleasure of obtaining Ruscico's disc yet, so even though I feel out of the loop on this thread, I wanted to commend everyone for such a detailed, thoughtful analysis of the two versions. Fascinating reading!

Regarding Tarkovsky's fears of incrimination -- couldn't some of his dismissals of "symbolism" in his films be thought of as guarded defenses of their content? We all know symbolism wasn't exactly a strong love of "social realism," or whatever they called it. I was also under the impression that was why Tarkovsky gravitated to SF -- to claim a scientific air while ultimately allowing him to deal with metaphysical themes?

quote:

---

WHAT IS IT that made these works of cinematic art so special, in a country where the artist suffered untold political persecution, economic poverty, war...I suppose the answer is in the question.

---

Indeed it is, Jephthah!

**Topic is 5 Pages Long:**   1   2   3   4   5



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- RusCiCo ANDREI RUBLEV... anyone???

**Pages:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Author**

**Topic**

**Jan**

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 4:43:24 PM

Criterion Enthusiast

USA  
159 Posts

quote:

---

Does anyone have a copy of Time Within Time: The Diaries, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair? I see at Amazon there are seven people waiting for any used copy to appear.

---

It's available at Amazon UK:

(I removed the URL as it causes some browsers to mess up the alignment of the whole board here... Sorry about that. Just go to [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) and search for Tarkovsky.)

Jan  
[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)

Edited by - jan on 08/18/2001 4:16:11 PM

**pancks**

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 5:46:38 PM

Criterion Novice

USA  
61 Posts

Many thanks, Jan, just ordered it!

"Tarkovsky Lives"

**aboo**

Posted - 08/17/2001 : 10:32:49 PM

Criterion Newbie

quote:

5 Posts

---

That's a good point, aboo. It's certainly difficult and problematic whenever we seek to devine the intent of an artist on matters like this. Invariably, we end up substituting *our* preferences and perceptions to some extent. I think we must be very careful to try to ground our conclusions upon arguments based within the artist's work - arguing by example, essentially.

---

I wasn't trying to divine Tarkovsky's intent in a scene from the film. Rather, I was proposing that storytelling is an important factor in editing, and Tarkovsky might have considered narrative when editing the buffoon scene. Of course, there are other ways of reading this scene, and the Criterion version is the more complete version. But complete doesn't always translate into better.

Again, your argument is valid and I'm not disagreeing with you. I simply think narrative needs to be addressed when discussing this, an extremely complex film.

**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

United Kingdom

877 Posts

Posted - 08/18/2001 : 02:22:20 AM



---

After watching both the Ruscico RUBYLOV on my main player and at the same time, the Criterion RUBLEV on an iBook, I have a few findings to report to add to Richard's observations:

Firstly, I think both versions are undoubtedly worthy of purchase for the fan of the film. The differences between both versions are \*huge\*. The amount of cuts in the Ruscico version are numerous and the amount of scenes that appear in a different order, in different places, is also quite extraordinary.

For example, at 1hr 33mins on the Criterion, there is a visually stunning shot that descends through a tree to show Rublev and his two travelling companions in the rain in the middle of a track in fields. This scene in the Ruscico version appears a whole 50 minutes later at 2hrs 23mins (halfway through disc two). It's threaded into (obviously) a completely different scene. Its appearance was quite startling as I'd given up on it appearing...

Furthermore, I've found one brief shot that is in the Ruscico version and \*not\* the Criterion. In the first chapter (the balloonist), as he's flying over fields, cows, etc, there's a shot in the Ruscico version of him flying over a village! - this is not in the Criterion version at all!

One of my most interesting finds was that the Ruscico actually runs faster than the Criterion. People's voices are higher pitched (in A-B comparisons of the actual same performance! (the whole first chapter (balloonist) on the Ruscico has a completely different (and better) soundtrack IMO.) So the music is in a different key - and within a longish scene that was identical in each version I timed it going out of sync by 3 seconds every minute. Which is quite a lot. I reversed the discs between iBook and my main player to check it wasn't in anyway the players and they were the same... so if we extrapolate that over three hours - that's over NINE MINUTES difference.

I noticed that the opening titles were white on black on the Criterion - and a complete inverse (black on white) on the Ruscico. (Same writing but occasionally additional names were appearing on some titlepages).

Another revelation was that the Ruscico version is framed at 1.85:1 and the Criterion is 2.35:1. However... the Criterion is 2.35:1 because it basically uses the Ruscico frame and lobs information from the top and bottom of the frame to make it 2.35:1. This is nothing to do with overscanning on a TV screen because this is vertical information.

On my 29" 4:3 TV there was literally 1" more visual information at the bottom of the frame and 1/2" more information at the top of the frame. This is whilst pausing both versions and comparing exactly the same shots over and over.

This made me realise how cropped the Criterion version is. Lots of the framing really does look sweet on the Ruscico version - whilst heads and legs are routinely "touched" by the edge of the frame on the Criterion.

One censored scene in the Ruscico (that I can't recall Richard mentioning) is when Kirill furiously

departs in the snow and his dog chases after him. He beats the dog to death and in the Criterion there is a separate shot of the bloodied dog whimpering. This shot is not in the Ruscico.

The whole scene with the "naked pagans" on St John's Eve has a clearly reworked musical soundtrack on the Ruscico. As Richard mentioned, it is quite loud and at one point drowns out the lovers, but it's interesting because it heightens the feeling of unease during this whole scene and I found it very effective. Firstly, on the Criterion soundtrack during this sequence the only music we hear is a low volume group of flutes/recorders/whistles blowing atonally. (The closest I've heard to this before is the indigenous music of Tonga (it is \*very\* similar)) -- However, on the Ruscico we have this but we also have a male/female choir singing wordlessly \*and\* an almost Bernard Herrmann-like strings arrangement. For the whole scene each of these three elements whirl around each other and get very loud, creating a wonderful disconcerting sense. The string refrain from this scene is picked up again later in the Ruscico version when Rublev is in a boat on the river and "Morfa"(?) runs naked into the river and swims past Rublev's boat. There is no music in the Criterion version during this scene.

I'll go through disc two tomorrow and see what I can find!

The thing that's really got me thinking is..... were all Tarkovsky's films cut like this by the authorities? The Criterion catalogue states that the forthcoming IVAN's CHILDHOOD features graphic shots that were censored from previous US releases. Was SOLARIS cut too? Is there a different version of SOLARIS out there? STALKER?

>>>----->

Edited by - peerpee on 08/18/2001 02:24:07 AM



**Donald Brown**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/18/2001 : 11:32:27 AM



USA

107 Posts

quote:

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The thing that's really got me thinking is..... were all Tarkovsky's films cut like this by the authorities? The Criterion catalogue states that the forthcoming IVAN's CHILDHOOD features graphic shots that were censored from previous US releases. Was SOLARIS cut too? Is there a different version of SOLARIS out there? STALKER?

---

This is an interesting question. It's entirely possible that these classics we know and love aren't the complete versions that Tarkovsky envisioned, but have been compromised in order to ensure their release. A terrifying proposition. Let's hope that if indeed these were meant to be seen in some other form that the footage still exists somewhere and can be reassembled in accordance with A.T.'s desires (assuming they can be divined). Thank goodness there are people like those at Criterion who care about such an undertaking.

**pancks**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/18/2001 : 1:37:57 PM



USA

61 Posts

peerpee, you've left me breathless with your excellent detailed comparisons of the "two Rublevs"! Thanks!

It seems the only way this is going to be corrected is to have some company take the best from each version and make the ULTIMATE RUBLEV for us all. Somehow it is all fitting that this should be the case with such a film, such an ultimate Rublev might just do us all in!

Jan, any ideas now on where to find the screenplay for Rublev? I checked for it at the amazonUK, but they don't even list it. I know Faber put one out, I have the one they published of all the other screenplays, but haven't been able to find this one yet.

Anyone read the book that his sister wrote about him?

"Tarkovsky Lives"



**twomules**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/18/2001 : 3:25:12 PM

United Kingdom  
469 Posts

quote:

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Another revelation was that the Ruscico version is framed at 1.85:1 and the Criterion is 2.35:1. However... the Criterion is 2.35:1 because it basically uses the Ruscico frame and lobs information from the top and bottom of the frame to make it 2.35:1. This is nothing to do with overscanning on a TV screen because this is vertical information.

---

Great comparison, but the framing on the RusCiCo looks more like 2.20:1 than 1.85:1. This was the frame ratio for a lot of widescreen processes in the '60's [ and later -- see the framing on the Apocalypse Now disc] that was then masked during projection to 2.35:1. The RusCiCo disc wisely transfers the frame almost open-matte [during the Buffoon chapter, you can see the rough edges and a bit of dirt on the top of frame].

Doesn't the anamorphic transfer look magically better than Criterion's? If they'd rereleased the disc with a new transfer, as they steadfastly refuse to do with any of their films, I don't think RusCiCo would have sold a fraction of what they have, and Criterion wouldn't be so unhappy with the competition.

you ate sand?



**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/18/2001 : 3:40:53 PM

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

quote:

---

Great comparison, but the framing on the RusCiCo looks more like 2.20:1 than 1.85:1.

---

I measured the Ruscico frame on a computer monitor (ie. no TV overscan) and the Ruscico frame is exactly 2:1. That's quite an odd ratio....

Yes it does appear openmatted. The dirt at the top of the buffoon scene is what alerted me to the extra visual information on the Ruscico version.

I'd like to add to my last comments that both the Ruscico and Criterion versions that I'm comparing are both NTSC versions - so there's no PAL issue behind the Ruscico speedup (unless there's some Ruscico PAL to NTSC conversion process at the mastering stage behind it).

>>>----->



**bhomatude**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/18/2001 : 4:32:12 PM

USA  
282 Posts

I just have one more thing to add and not specifically about Tarkovsky's work but the nature of any director working in the business. The key word here, being 'business'.

If it's politics or economics - there will always be an entity out there applying pressure to conform. There are very few directors - commercial and non-commercial, that are able to produce

their work without worrying about outside pressure 'guiding' them in another direction. This 'guidance' isn't always a bad thing - it can allow you a step back in objectivity to see if your 'vision' for a scene or shot is truly working. And a director's vision isn't always best for the film.

There are all sorts of confusion around the recent re-release of *The Exorcist* and the supposed director's cut or version you've never seen (which for a lot of people was worse)... And how many director cuts are there for *BladeRunner* now? I would say Spielberg needed somebody breathing down his neck to make some editorial changes with *A.I.* (in my opinion - a terrible film). Which brings up the question of Kubrick: someone with a single-minded VISION... but someone I think, particularly with his last couple of films, who needed a Producer or Writer he could trust to step in and say "Stanley, it ain't workin'... what about this...?"

Which brings us to directors who are no longer around, like the master A.T. We will never know his true intent. And one's intent can change over time. One thing for sure with A.T., I would bet that he was someone who worked best under that pressure. He was a problem solver and that's what making movies are all about: problem solving. Would his films have been the same had he been given free reign? What happened to German Cinema after the Wall?

Pressure is good. It forces you to CREATE.

**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/18/2001 : 10:28:34 PM



Great, *great* work, peerpee!

256 Posts

quote:

---

I'd like to add to my last comments that both the Ruscico and Criterion versions that I'm comparing are both NTSC versions - so there's no PAL issue behind the Ruscico speedup (unless there's some Ruscico PAL to NTSC conversion process at the mastering stage behind it).

---

I'd presumed that there was some PAL-related speedup on the Ruscico disc. Just like with *SOLARIS*, the disc actually times out at a shorter length than the package states. In the case of Rublev, here are the precise timings:

Criterion (total time): 205:45 minutes (96:36 / 109:09)

Ruscico (total time): 174:24 minutes (81:04 / 93:20)

Again, I'd presumed this was PAL speedup and your findings that the Ruscico track is pitched higher and your 9-minute extrapolation would seem to confirm this. And, again, this is also true of *SOLARIS*.

quote:

---

On my 29" 4:3 TV there was literally 1" more visual information at the bottom of the frame and 1/2" more information at the top of the frame. This is whilst pausing both versions and comparing exactly the same shots over and over. This made me realise how cropped the Criterion version is. Lots of the framing really does look sweet on the Ruscico version - whilst heads and legs are routinely "touched" by the edge of the frame on the Criterion.

---

Actually, cropping occurs on both discs - the framing is simply not consistent. Look at the very first shot of the film (the balloon in front of the cathedral). You'll notice that the Ruscico version cuts a somewhat substantial amount of information off the left-hand part of the frame (but not the right), though nothing of any real significance to the overall mise-en-scene. And the very last shot of that sequence (the balloon disgorging its air into the river) strikes me as being much better framed on the Ruscico version, because the actual bubbling out of the air into the water - the key image of this shot IMO - is mostly out-of-frame on the Criterion disc.

quote:

---

at 1hr 33mins on the Criterion, there is a visually stunning shot that descends through a tree to show Rublev and his two travelling companions in the rain in the middle of a track in fields. This scene in the Ruscico version appears a whole 50 minutes later at 2hrs 23mins (halfway through disc two). It's threaded into (obviously) a completely different scene.

---

Wow - good catch!

This kind of re-editing also occurs elsewhere. In the Ruscico version, the final sequence of Kirill's visit with Theophanes (preceding the scene in Kirill's room at the monastery which is cut from the Ruscico version) is also re-edited. The Criterion version shows Kirill absorbed in Theophanes' painting (as we hear Theophanes haranguing the mob outside), then cutting to a shot of the tortured man on the rack, panning around the crowd, and then fading to black. The scene in Kirill's room is next. In the Ruscico cut, however, we first see the man on the rack and the pan around the crowd (Theophanes' harangue is now heard over this shot), and then we cut to the shot of Kirill absorbed in the painting. The messenger's line "*The Prince commands you to come to Moscow...*" is superimposed over this shot, which then cuts to the shot of the messenger at the monastery who then finishes his line "*...to decorate the Annunciation Cathedral*". Presumably, this aural segue is intended to provide a smoother transition over the cut scene of Kirill in his room.

BTW, is that scene in Kirill's room - the one cut from the Ruscico version - the only scene that explicitly identifies the dog as Kirill's?

Peerpee, have you noticed any other alternate takes cut into the Ruscico version? I caught the first one totally by accident - it it weren't for the obviously different behavior of the horse, I'm sure I'd have missed it. As you're able to view the two cuts side-by-side, perhaps you'll notice other examples?

**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/19/2001 : 12:09:45 AM



United Kingdom  
877 Posts

quote:

---

Great, great work, peerpee!

---

Thanks! [Totally inspired by your work I might add! 😊]

quote:

---

In the Ruscico version, the final sequence of Kirill's visit with Theophanes (preceding the scene in Kirill's room at the monastery which is cut from the Ruscico version) is also re-edited.

---

Yes, this led me to wonder more about the nature of the Ruscico version. They're not just "cuts" for cuts' sake. It's not just a removal of nudity or violence. Completely different editing of sequences, like you describe above, create a sense that the Ruscico has been more deeply reworked.

quote:

---

BTW, is that scene in Kirill's room - the one cut from the Ruscico version - the only scene that explicitly identifies the dog as Kirill's?

---

I can't recall - I'll have to look again.

quote:

---

Peerpee, have you noticed any other alternate takes cut into the Ruscico version? I caught the first one totally by accident - it weren't for the obviously different behavior of the horse, I'm sure I'd have missed it. As you're able to view the two cuts side-by-side, perhaps you'll notice other examples?

---

I was specifically looking for alternate takes as I watched them side by side. I didn't spot any in disc one of the Ruscico (other than the balloonist). Watching them together was difficult as quite often the Ruscico would cut to another scene before the Criterion... except it would be a different scene.. so I'd cue them up again and the Ruscico would then cut to the scene from the Criterion (a scene that I'd assumed was missing from the Ruscico). When the sequence that I mentioned earlier - descending through the tree - appeared a whole 50 mins later in the Ruscico, I came to the conclusion that there was more than just "cuts" being made. It's a completely different edit - as if another editor has boldly interpreted the footage in another way. I will watch disc two back to back with the Criterion tomorrow night and make some more notes.

>>>----->

Edited by - peerpee on 08/19/2001 12:18:31 AM



**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/19/2001 : 03:38:10 AM

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

quote:

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I look at a film like *Andrey Rublyov* and the images alone amaze me to a degree that even \$250 million in computerized Hollywood dollars cannot...the genius of Vadim Yusov, the poetry of Tarkovsky...WHAT IS IT that made these works of cinematic art so special, in a country where the artist suffered untold political persecution, economic poverty, war...I suppose the answer is in the question.

---

I meant to reply to this the other day. I totally agree. I must say... even though I knew he was one of the best.... Vadim Yusov's camera work really shines in the Ruscico DVD of *RUBYLOV*. The Criterion version is constantly jumping around in the projector (most notable during titles, and at the beginning of the Tatar raid). Plus, the Criterion DVD looks like the film has a candle instead of a projector lamp.

The Ruscico DVD picture is *\*rocksteady\** and very well lit. (Does anyone technically-minded know if the Criterion version is "wobbly" purely because a poor projector/telecine was used when they made the Criterion transfer?)

There are many moments in the Criterion version where the only thing on the screen is a dimly lit face. The same scene on the Ruscico disc shows incredible detail in the shadows and indeed has a completely different look. However, I am quite fond of the particular look that the Criterion DVD has -- it's almost like an early Dreyer.. or Murnau or something... I don't get this sense from the Ruscico version as much -- I get more of a pristinely accurate feel (like *Last Year At Marienbad* for example). Oh well, I'm waffling now... ahhhhhh I *\*love\** this film....

<-----<<<



**twomules**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/19/2001 : 03:51:56 AM

United Kingdom  
469 Posts

It strikes me from these comparisons that the Criterion "complete" cut may well be a rougher version of the film. Is there any evidence as to whether Tarkovsky recut Rublev to make the 180 min version, or whether it was done by "the authorities"?

469 Posts

If he claims he preferred the 180 min version [which does seem to have more involved editing -- certain shots appear where they're more effective, not just where they fit a linear chronology], it would seem more appropriate to me to consider this a more definitive cut. What I'm trying to say is that since there seems to be serious artistic differences between the 2 cuts, and if Tarkovsky was involved in the shorter cut and claimed to prefer it, isn't it fair to assume that the Crit longer version was a work in progress, a rough assembly, and that the 180 min cut is the definitive?

you ate sand?



**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/19/2001 : 04:59:10 AM

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

twomules, this is exactly the conclusion I'm toying with. There's also the third possibility... that the Ruscico version is Tarkovsky's more "worked on" advanced edit but then \*it\* went and had stupid censorship cuts made to it by someone else.

I would like to know whether the Ruscico version is identical to the VHS version which has been knocking around for years. Can anyone confirm whether there is wordless male/female singing and a string score during the pagan night nudity on the VHS version? or any of the other Ruscico-specific qualities? are \*all\* the really violent scenes removed from the VHS too?

<-----<<<



**pancks**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/19/2001 : 12:58:54 PM

USA  
61 Posts

I just sold my vhs of Rublev on ebay, peerpee, but I've seen it recently enough that I can say I do believe all of the real violence was cut from it.

You see Kirill striking something and hear a dog yelp, but there is no scene of the dog lying there. There is no burning cow scene at all, even the horse falling down the stairs is not shown being killed, I mean you see the guy walk over with the spear, but you don't see the killing take place.

There are a lot of cuts in the sacking scenes, as you might imagine if the object is to remove the graphic violence. I still puzzle over the cutting of the jesters smiley buns, it couldn't have been to cut the nudity since the pagan scene is included. Though even there the scene of the gal walking over towards Rublev and then being called to by her lover is very diminished, which makes the significance of his skirt catching fire less meaningful.

Sorry I can't tell you about the music there, can't remember.

"Tarkovsky Lives"



**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/19/2001 : 1:10:37 PM

USA  
159 Posts

quote:

-----  
The Criterion version is constantly jumping around in the projector (most notable during titles, and at the beginning of the Tatar raid).  
-----

Yes, this is quite annoying. I think there is no excuse for it anymore as cheap shake removal software is available nowadays even for home video (starting at \$30). IMHO every video release should now be considered a candidate for digital stabilisation, this should be automatic with all old films: 1. remove scratches; 2. remove gate motion.



quote:

---

The Ruscico DVD picture is \*rocksteady\* and very well lit. (Does anyone technically-minded know if the Criterion version is "wobbly" purely because a poor projector/telecine was used when they made the Criterion transfer?)

---

I would be EXTREMELY surprised if it was Criterion's fault. Short of roof caving in with chunks of concrete falling into the telecine (with nobody noticing) I cannot imagine how this could occur. I'm pretty sure what we got here was an excellent Criterion transfer of a poor source, probably an answer print (i.e., complete picture and sound but uncorrected exposure). I wonder if a better element of the 205 min. version even exists?

NB: The Turner Classic Movies Tarkovsky Festival promises the 205 min. *Rublov*. Now, if their version turns out pristine, gorgeous, and all that *then* we'll have an interesting topic to discuss! 🤔



Jan  
[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)

Edited by - jan on 08/19/2001 1:26:03 PM



**bhomatude**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/19/2001 : 3:23:30 PM  

USA  
282 Posts

quote:

---

Sorry I can't tell you about the music there, can't remember.

---

I'm quite sure that the theatrical prints circulating around over the years is the same as the vhs - It's the one I've seen 4-5 times in the theater and a couple of times on vhs before Criterion released the 205' cut. And the music in the pagan sequence was always there. I find (the music) very effective. And let me just say again, SOMETIMES implied action (violence, sex, etc.) is far more powerful than showing it. This creates tension beyond the screen diagesis. Could it be possible that the 205' cut is a final rough cut - and the 185' cut is more accurately representative of what Tarkovsky wanted released? (I love playing devil's advocate) This does not in any way negate that there probably were censure cuts.



Oh and regarding quality of the 205' transfer - since the source seems to be a hidden print from under (the editor's?) bed... I would almost guarantee this was a 1 light answer print made from a workprint. In other words, just something to make editorial decisions from - Telecine from a film print (positive) is far less desirable than from an internegative (imo). It would be very difficult if not impossible to pull detail out of the blacks if none exists in the source. This being said, I still think that more care could have been taken with scene to scene timing during the video transfer to help some of the muddy looking scenes with better contrast.

Edited by - bhomatude on 08/19/2001 3:35:12 PM



**Richard Malloy**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/20/2001 : 09:20:47 AM  

256 Posts

quote:

---

It strikes me from these comparisons that the Criterion "complete" cut may well be a rougher version of the film. What I'm trying to say is that since there seems to be serious artistic differences between the 2 cuts, and if Tarkovsky was involved in the shorter cut and claimed to prefer it, isn't it fair to assume that the Crit longer version was a work in progress, a rough assembly, and that the 180 min cut is the definitive?




---

I just don't buy this. Perhaps the minor continuity errors and some of the more jarring transitions in the Ruscico edition might be explained by other aesthetic preferences, but how would you justify the cuts that seem to have been made solely on the basis of "objectionable" content, i.e., nudity, violence and bawdiness, especially in those instances when there wasn't even an attempt to "patch" the holes?

And we know that pressure was put on Tarkovsky, including the attempted suppression of the film entirely. I don't think you can presume that he was entirely free to fashion his film as he saw fit. It's history would seem to contradict this notion.

**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/20/2001 : 1:47:51 PM   



United Kingdom  
877 Posts




Richard, what do you think to the theory that the Ruscico version is a more advanced cut (by Tarkovsky) - but then at some point it had the violence/nudity cuts made to it?

<-----<<<



**Ashirg**

Moderator

Posted - 08/20/2001 : 1:54:49 PM   

USA  
845 Posts

I (terribly) translated some stuff from M. Turovskaya book "7 1/2 and Films by Andrey Tarkovsky" (1991). Perhaps Jan from Nostalgia.com will translate it soon. Here's a link to the text in Russian: <http://www.lib.ru/CINEMA/kinolit/TARKOWSKIJ/turtarkowskij.txt>

I'll try to find more about it in other sources.

From the interview with Yusov:

"The screenplay was too long for planned filmstock to be used in the film, but Andrei didn't want to shorten anything - he wanted to film everything. So we had a conversation in [city of] Vladimir when Andron [Konchalovskiy] arrived, he was also a screen writer. So I, professionally, thought that we don't have neither time nor filmstock to film everything, and later to decide what will be included in the movie. It's impossible to work like this, let's decide right now. Otherwise, everything will be much longer: five maybe eight thousand meters. Andrey said: "Do whatever you wish, I don't want to shorten anything" It was very agonizing process. We are filming, at the same time Andron sits, scribbles(?)... It was just like a struggle, but Andrey remembered it differently - he wrote that he threw away the scene of the hunt "for beauty". Of course, if he's the screen writer - he threw that scene away, not me. Now it's not so important. But the idea was to film everything, and then decide what to cut. For Andrey it was important - and I liked it - for scene to capture the flow of time, regularity of this flow, not the substitution of some moments with editing... Sometimes we filmed passing of time, but it was edited out. It was not always a mistake: you cannot establish such ideal, speculative view(?) to materialize it fully, but Andrey was trying to do it."

"I remember one conversation with him [Tarkovsky]. We were returning from filming "Andrey Rublyov" [in a car with other 6 people]... And suddenly Andrey said: "When filming is over and you all leave, I'll be left with the picture, be responsible for it, suffer for it. That's why I have a right to have certain demands."... Even though in real life he was nervous, sometimes suspicious, could be influenced by others, - even negatively - it never passed to his movies. No matter how much they tried to bend him over, what was against his principles, - from above or from the side(?) - he found strength to refrain from it, even with second thoughts and worrying. -For example? -Unacceptable modifications in "Andrei Rublev".

From Turovskaya text:

"When archives about history of censorship of "Andrey Rublyov" were published, the list of "changes" suggested by Goskino (those that were accepted by Tarkovsky and those that were rejected by him), must be analyzed on the historical conception of "Rublyov timeline", worked out

by the director. Definately, this conception must be also analyzed by the "Tarkovsky timeline": every historical object is made on the crossroads of those timelines.."

Unfortunately, Tarkovsky's quotes in the book about the film and interview with Tamara Ogordnikova don't mention the censorship and different versions. Editor Feiginova tells the story of the surviving print, but doesn't mention what Tarkovsky preferred.

-----  
My DVD List



**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/20/2001 : 2:17:01 PM

quote:

256 Posts

---

Richard, what do you think to the theory that the Ruscico version is a more advanced cut (by Tarkovsky) - but then at some point it had the violence/nudity cuts made to it?

---

I think certain aspects of the Ruscico cut can be defended on an artistic basis alone. But these seem to represent such a small percentage of the overall cuts that it seems to be of little overall consequence.

But, assuming this is true, we're still left with a version that may represent Tarkovsky's "tightening" of his narrative, but which was then subjected to the scissor-happy Soviet censors. It's still a problematic cut.

**pancks**  
Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/20/2001 : 3:34:32 PM



USA  
61 Posts

Just received my September Satellite Direct guide and immediately turned to each Friday evening when the Tarkovsky films and documentaries will be shown. Curiously, the listing for Rublev, which will be aired September 7th, 11pm Pacific (September 8th at 2am Eastern), the info is all in French???

Listed as Andrei Roublev, I turned to the movie info in the back of the guide and the whole paragraph on the film is in French! It says 210 minutes for film length. Now nothing else in this entire guide, including anything else of Tarkovsky's is listed in anything but English.

Did the guide simply make a mistake or is it actually going to be shown in French???

*Discerning film snob and proud of it.*



**Jan**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/20/2001 : 4:24:58 PM

USA  
159 Posts

quote:

---

Here's a link to the text in Russian

---

I have this book but it wasn't me who OCR-d the whole thing to the net, I swear! 😊 Thanks for posting the Yusov bit. We have to get our paws on those documents of the changes the censor demanded, IIRC the book "7 1/2" does not provide the reference.




Jan  
[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)

[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)



**Ashirg**

Moderator

Posted - 08/20/2001 : 5:32:18 PM   

USA  
845 Posts

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Jan, do you know where it can be found? I'm going to Moscow in September and I'll be in there for just 4 days, but perhaps, if I know where to look, I can track it down. Let me know by e-mail...

-----  
My DVD List



**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/20/2001 : 7:51:24 PM  

USA  
159 Posts

quote:

---

I just sold my vhs of Rublev on ebay

---

I had no time to check, but is the final scene (with the horses) sepia-toned on the VHS?



Jan

[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)



**bhomatude**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/20/2001 : 8:09:38 PM  

USA  
282 Posts

quote:

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quote:

---

I just sold my vhs of Rublev on ebay

---

I had no time to check, but is the final scene (with the horses) sepia-toned on the VHS?

Jan



[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)

---

I'm pretty darn sure it's in muted color not sepia - but natural.

**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/25/2001 : 04:25:56 AM  

USA  
159 Posts

quote:

---

The whole scene with the "naked pagans" on St John's Eve has a clearly reworked musical soundtrack on the Ruscico. As Richard mentioned, it is quite loud and at one point drowns out the lovers, but it's interesting because it heightens the feeling of unease during this whole scene and I found it very effective.

---

This may be splitting hairs but what I read recently in a 1962 interview with Tarkovsky reminded me of what you wrote about the music. Tarkovsky says:

*"We shall devote the last part of the film - which we intend to film in colour - to Rublov's icons. We are going to show them in great detail, as in a documentary. Every icon's appearance will be accompanied by the same musical theme which sounded during the scenes from Rublov's life corresponding to the period of the emergence of the idea for the icon."*

I have never noticed this connection and I'm not even sure if it exists in the finished film, I'd have to doublecheck but... perhaps that was something Tarkovsky had in mind when adding more music to that scene?

Jan  
[www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)



**pancks**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/25/2001 : 10:56:48 AM

I'll just have to watch it yet again and see if this is so, thanks Jan 😊

USA

61 Posts

*"Film is a great high art-form which I simply use for confession. It is an art which is my way of life, not some genre or other created for someone's entertainment." ~ Andrei Tarkovsky*



**pancks**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/27/2001 : 5:32:57 PM

Interesting Tarkovsky quotes from Jan & Trond's [www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com) and while they don't answer our questions, they may add to the discussion -

USA

61 Posts

[http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/TheTopics/On\\_Rublov.html](http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/TheTopics/On_Rublov.html)

Interview L'artiste dans l'ancienne Russie et dans l'URSS nouvelle (Entretien avec Andrei Tarkovsky) with Michel Ciment and Luda & Jean Schnitzer in "Positif" Oct. 1969 (109), pp. 1-13 [Pol. trans. Zygmunt Kwiatkowski and Adam Horoszczak]

**"Nobody has ever cut anything from Andrei Rublov. Nobody except me. I made some cuts myself. In the first version the film was 3 hours 20 minutes long. In the second - 3 hours 15 minutes. I shortened the final version to 3 hours 6 minutes. I am convinced the latest version is the best, the most successful. And I only cut certain overly long scenes. The viewer doesn't even notice their absence. The cuts have in no way changed neither the subject matter nor what was for us important in the film. In other words, we removed overly long scenes which had no significance.**

**We shortened certain scenes of brutality in order to induce psychological shock in viewers rather than mere unpleasant impression which would only destroy our intent. All my friends and colleagues who during long discussions were advising me to make those cuts turned out right in the end. It took me some time to understand it. At first I got the impression they were attempting to pressure my creative individuality. Later I understood that this final version of the film more than fulfils my requirements for it. And I do not regret at all that the film has been shortened to its present length..."**

Now from the description of the cuts between the Criterion and Ruscico versions, they don't seem to fit the description of "overly long scenes which had no significance." And instead of there being "some shortening of some of the scenes of brutality" some, such as the burning cow were cut totally.

It surely seems that the 185 minute version that Fox Lorber put out on video and seems to correspond closely with the Ruscico dvd, is not the 185 minute version that Tarkovsky approved. But his saying that he approved of a 185 minute version helps anyone who wants to cut the film to that amount of time, claim that their version is the approved one.

~"Bergman told me that every time before he made a new film, he watched Tarkovsky's, Andrei Rublev." Layla Alexander Garrett, interpreter and personal assistant on Tarkovsky's last film The Sacrifice~

peerpee

Criterion Enthusiast

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

Posted - 08/27/2001 : 8:52:55 PM



Further to **pancks'** trawl through Tarkovsky's quotes re: Rublev, I found this interesting snippet (at [www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)) which is from 1969 (earlier in this same interview he mentions about his three different versions, which is why the following quote is so interesting):

quote:

---

"Take the scene in which a man dies after an unsuccessful attempt to fly. A sad-looking horse is a silent witness to the scene. The presence of horses in the last, final scene means that the source of all art of Rublov was life itself."

from: Interview L'artiste dans l'ancienne Russie et dans l'URSS nouvelle (Entretien avec Andrei Tarkovsky) with Michel Ciment and Luda & Jean Schnitzer in "Positif" Oct. 1969 (109), pp. 1-13 [Pol. trans. Zygmunt Kwiatkowski and Adam Horoszczak]

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The shot of the horse walking away from the balloonist who has just plummeted is not in the Ruscico version. This is concrete evidence that the Ruscico version is not Tarkovsky's edit.

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  - RusCiCo ANDREI RUBLEV... anyone???

Pages: 1 2 3 4 5

**Author**

**Topic**

**bhomatude**

Criterion Enthusiast

USA  
282 Posts

Posted - 08/27/2001 : 9:50:03 PM

Tarkovsky: "...A sad-looking horse is a silent witness to the scene."

quote:

The shot of the horse walking away from the balloonist who has just plummeted is not in the Ruscico version. This is concrete evidence that the Ruscico version is not Tarkovsky's edit.

Well, yes and no. The shot of the horse is there in Ruscico (Broken record time: was always there in the theatrical release) But the horse does not get up after struggling on the ground. Baloon crashes. Horse struggles - dying. MS track over Balloon and hissing air. I let you be the judge what the difference between the two "cuts" are.

Which horse is *more* sad?

How would the statement differ between the 2 prologue "cuts" and the epilogue scene with the horses (as bookends)? What does that say about the arc of Andrei's character?

Edited by - bhomatude on 08/27/2001 10:20:03 PM



**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

Posted - 08/28/2001 : 01:14:27 AM

quote:

Well, yes and no. The shot of the horse is there in Ruscico (Broken record time: was always there in the theatrical release) But the horse does not get up after struggling on the ground. Baloon crashes. Horse struggles - dying. MS track over Balloon and hissing air. I let you be the judge what the difference between the two "cuts" are.

I was referring to the shot of the spluttering balloon immediately after the horse shot. Yes, the horse shot is chopped on the Ruscico - but in the next shot of the balloon a horse walks away from the balloon in the Criterion version. In the Ruscico version we cut to the



balloon later - so we don't see a horse in that shot.

I always assumed that the shot of the horse rolling around, getting up and trotting off was from another place and time - and not "just across from where the balloon landed". Which makes it interesting that the Criterion version shows a horse walking away from the spluttering balloon.

<-----<<<



**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/28/2001 : 09:34:47 AM  

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You both are right about the "horse shot" at the end of the balloon sequence.

256 Posts

Yefim crashes to the ground. Then, the film cuts to a slo-mo shot of a horse struggling to regain its feet (the shot used for Criterion's main menu screen).

In the Ruscico version, the shot cuts as the horse is still struggling on the ground and lasts 13 seconds. In the Criterion version, the shot holds until the horse regains its feet and trots offscreen - the shot lasts 31 seconds.

In the Ruscico version, we then cut directly to a close shot of the balloon slowly disgorging its air into the river (bubbling).

In the Criterion version, we carry the action over from the previous shot of the horse trotting off-screen/left by cutting to a shot of the horse's legs (match on action) running past the prone, dead body of Yefim, still strapped to the balloon. Then, in the same shot, the camera tracks over Yefim's body, the balloon, and then settles on the image of the balloon's air bubbling into the river (this is the shot that the Ruscico version cuts to immediately without showing Yefim's body, etc).

IMO, this shot in the Criterion version is not as well-framed as in the Ruscico, with the air bubbling into the water mostly out-of-frame on the Criterion (whereas it's very noticeable and always in-frame in the Ruscico cut).

Vlada Petric remarks on the two different cuts in his Criterion commentary (referring to the shorter "Ruscico" cut as the "commercial cut"). I can't recall his precise comments, but he does seem to prefer the longer sequence of the Criterion cut. Again, I need to refer back to his commentary, but I think there's a general (unspoken?) assumption on his part that the longer cut is more in line with Tarkovsky's intentions.

[BTW, I work at the same university as Professor Petric, and I'm considering approaching him with my comparison of the two cuts for his thoughts if I can work up the nerve. He's still listed in the university directory, but I don't know if he's still lecturing/keeping office hours.]

I also want to point out that there are several re-edited sequences that reveal a careful attention to detail above and beyond the mere censoring out of "objectionable" content or simply shortening each successive shot. While these seem to have been constructed only to speed up the narrative flow, that certainly could have been Tarkovsky's intention. Unfortunately, the re-edited sequences often come at the expense of some very carefully blocked and unbroken tracking shots that we'd generally consider more characteristically Tarkovskian. I presume that Tarkovsky, himself, recut these sequences, placing scenes in a different order (including one scene in Kirill's room that takes on a different meaning in the new context) and altering the audio track to create "aural segues" from one scene to the next. These recuts are often quite interesting, and there are at least two sequences that, on the whole, I prefer on the Ruscico cut. Whether Tarkovsky preferred the re-edits is much harder to say.



One thing that I plan to include with my comparison is a "viewing guide" for each cut. What this will do is alert you to scenes that are extensively recut or which have been removed entirely from one version or the other. As you watch, for example, the longer cut, you can then begin to gauge the effect of a particular scene in the context of the entire film and decide for yourself whether it contributes to the Tarkovskian spell or whether it causes the film to bog down. You can decide for yourself whether a particular scene of violence is too gory or too excessive. You can listen to the difference in the soundtrack - what's audible or not audible on either take - and decide which you prefer. Or maybe, like me, you might ultimately decide that they both have their charms.

I think we are very lucky to have both of these cuts. I think there's a fear out there of not having the "perfect version", when in fact we should consider ourselves very lucky to have two, so very different versions. I think this "fear" (which is perhaps closer to a frustration) may derive from not knowing what one is missing from one cut to the other - you sit there, absorbed in the Ruscico cut, enjoying the much-improved image quality, and yet there's this nagging in the back of your mind - what's missing here? Was there a scene cut out? Is this how Tarkovsky wanted me to view his film?

I think that once you see it all laid out, and are fully aware of the differences as you watch, you will begin to appreciate the particular beauty of each version (and, of course, the drawbacks of each).

I'm sorry that I haven't yet completed all this. I spent over an hour yesterday just comparing the final sequence in Part 1 ("The Last Judgment"). On the one hand, it's *very* tedious work timing out every single shot, accounting for PAL speedup, and trying to note every re-edit, soundtrack difference, cut scene, alternate take, etc. But, on the other hand, it's hugely rewarding. I think I understand the film and its themes better than I ever did, and I think I also understand Tarkovsky's craft better than I ever did before. To have both these cuts, carefully presented on two superior DVDs, is really more than one could ever hope for.

It's a gift, not a dilemma!

## Deepy Sea

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/28/2001 : 12:20:36 PM



USA

531 Posts

quote:

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I'm sorry that I haven't yet completed all this. I spent over an hour yesterday just comparing the final sequence in Part 1 ("The Last Judgment"). On the one hand, it's *very* tedious work timing out every single shot, accounting for PAL speedup, and trying to note every re-edit, soundtrack difference, cut scene, alternate take, etc. But, on the other hand, it's hugely rewarding. I think I understand the film and its themes better than I ever did, and I think I also understand Tarkovsky's craft better than I ever did before. To have both these cuts, carefully presented on two superior DVDs, is really more than one could ever hope for.

It's a gift, not a dilemma!

---

And a gift to those of us who get to read your comparisons. I wonder if Trond or Jan would be interested in posting a compilation of this thread on nostalgia.com?

## pancks

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/28/2001 : 1:06:01 PM



USA

Thanks for all the work, Richard, and I do hope you get to speak to the Professor, I have a feeling he would be delighted to discuss something that seems to be close to his heart too!

61 Posts

And since we don't have enough questions 🤔 here is another statement I found yesterday in my newly arrived copy of Time Within Time, (thanks Jan!) - Notation on April 6, 1973 - "Columbia (USA) have bought Rublyov. They have asked me to shorten it by fifteen or twenty minutes. I can certainly do so, starting with the balloon flight."

Did ya'll know that Tarkovsky once lost the manuscript for Rublyov? This same date entry tells the story, he left it in a taxi, when he realized what he'd done he was so miserable he went and got drunk. A few hours later when he was walking at the same intersection where he had left the taxi with the manuscript, a taxi pulls up and stops (breaking the law) and the driver hands him the manuscript through the window. As he says "it was miraculous"!

**Deepy Sea**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/28/2001 : 1:18:50 PM



USA  
531 Posts

Good grief, Pancks, that's a great anecdote!

**bhomatude**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/28/2001 : 2:38:46 PM



USA  
282 Posts

quote:

Notation on April 6, 1973 - "Columbia (USA) have bought Rublyov. They have asked me to shorten it by fifteen or twenty minutes. I can certainly do so, starting with the balloon flight."

That for me is the first real *evidence* I've seen (aside from conjecture) that supports the theory of alternative cuts for commercial reasons. I'm sold.

Edited by - bhomatude on 08/28/2001 2:40:13 PM



**Richard Malloy**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/28/2001 : 3:05:13 PM

Re the "Columbia cut", this was mentioned in Hoberman's excellent essay in the Criterion booklet:

256 Posts

quote:

Tarkovsky began shooting Andrei Rublev in September 1964, two years after his first feature, My Name Is Ivan, won the Golden Lion at Venice and two months before Nikita Khrushchev was deposed. By the time he wrapped in November 1965, the cultural thaw had frozen over. When Rublev was finally completed in August 1966, the ministry demanded deep cuts. The film was too negative, too harsh, too experimental, too frightening, too filled with nudity, and too politically complicated to be released - especially on the eve of the Revolution's 50th anniversary.

After a single screening in Moscow (the Dom Kino supposedly ringed with mounted police), Rublev was shelved. Trimmed by a quarter of an hour, a cut Tarkovsky would later endorse [NOTE: this, I presume, is the "Ruscico cut"], Andrei Rublev was scheduled for the 1968 Cannes Film Festival only to be yanked by the Soviets at the last minute. (As the '68 festival would be disrupted and shut down by French militants, this move was not altogether irrational.) The following year, thanks in part to the agitation of the French Communist Party, Rublev was shown at Cannes, albeit out of competition. Although screened at 4 A.M. on the festival's last day, it was nevertheless awarded the International Critics' Prize. Soviet authorities were infuriated; Leonid Brezhnev reportedly demanded a private screening and walked out mid-film.

With questionable legality and over strenuous objections by the Soviet Embassy, Andrei Rublev opened in Paris in late '69. Ultimately, the Soviet cultural bureaucracy relented, releasing the film domestically in 1971. **Two years later, Rublev surfaced at the New York**



**Film Festival, cut another 20 minutes by its American distributor, Columbia Pictures.**  
Time compared the movie unfavorably to Dr. Zhivago; those other New York reviewers who took note begged off explication, citing Rublev's apparent truncation.

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**Richard Malloy**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/28/2001 : 3:27:39 PM  

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256 Posts

I should mention one further thing - when I say "I presume" it's this cut or that cut, my primary difficulties arise because rarely do the various description precisely match the running times of the various versions.

For example, the Ruscico disc lists the running time at 185 minutes (86 + 99), which is 20 minutes shorter than the Criterion version at 205 minutes. Hoberman states that the second cut was "trimmed by a quarter of an hour", which by his math would make it 190 minutes.

However, the Tarkovsky diary entry (from the great nostalgia.com site, quoted by pancks above) states: "In the first version the film was 3 hours 20 minutes long (200 minutes). In the second - 3 hours 15 minutes (195 minutes). I shortened the final version to 3 hours 6 minutes (186 minutes)."

I don't think we can expect T's memory to be perfect on this, but clearly there's a 205 minute cut because that's what we have on the Criterion disc. The third cut he mentions above (the 186 minute cut) would seem to correspond to the "Ruscico cut".

However, all of this is complicated further by the fact that the Ruscico DVDs actually have a total run-time of 174:24 minutes (81:04 / 93:20). I've chalked up this discrepancy to PAL speedup and am assuming that it would otherwise be 185-6 minutes. (Does anyone know how to account for PAL speedup to confirm this?)

Hoberman suggests that the "Columbia cut" was shortened by another 20 minutes (and he states that it was the distributor who cut it). By his math, the Columbia version would be as follows: 205mins - 15mins - 20mins = 170 mins.




My belief is that the Criterion cut (205:45 minutes (96:36/109:09) is Tarkovsky's original and the Ruscico cut is the one produced after the Soviet ministry demanded cuts... and not the one cut further for Columbia pictures. However, Tarkovsky seems to suggest that there was another, intervening cut of approximately 195 minutes between the "criterion" and the "ruscico".

As you can see, it's all rather confusing! Any thoughts?



**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/28/2001 : 4:38:42 PM   

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United Kingdom

877 Posts

quote:

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However, all of this is complicated further by the fact that the Ruscico DVDs actually have a total run-time of 174:24 minutes (81:04 / 93:20). I've chalked up this discrepancy to PAL speedup and am assuming that it would otherwise be 185-6 minutes. (Does anyone know how to account for PAL speedup to confirm this?)

---

PAL is 25 fps (frames per second)  
NTSC is 30 fps

(which is why PAL DV camcorders are sought after by NTSC folk, (because PAL (25 fps) more closely resembles film speed (24 fps)))

...further complicated by the fact that NTSC is displayed at 60Hz and PAL at 50Hz... (or the other way round... I can't recall exactly).

What this means in reality -- \*i don't know\* -- surely they should last the same amount of time despite these figures....

I've been trying to work this out in my head, but my head hurts 🤯... I keep thinking about the fact that all VHS tapes are the same, except NTSC uses more VHS tape to record an hour... so American 4hr VHS tapes actually run for about 4:30 on PAL machines.... because of the 25/30 fps thing....

<-----<<<

Edited by - peerpee on 08/28/2001 10:26:42 PM



### Deepy Sea

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/28/2001 : 7:48:17 PM

USA  
531 Posts

Even if "Rublev" was shot at 5 frames *per second*, it should still run the same amount of total seconds no matter how many frame speeds you've got. On the other hand, Peerpee has mentioned that the sound seemed at a higher pitch for one of the versions, implying that the final film was transferred at a higher rate of speed... maybe 27 or 30 frames per second, who knows? Unfortunately, this makes accurate comparisons between shots and takes nearly impossible.

Edited by - deepy sea on 08/28/2001 7:49:25 PM



### Richard Malloy

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/29/2001 : 09:27:44 AM

256 Posts

When referring to "PAL speedup", I've seen the figure of 4% tossed around, that is, the PAL>NTSC conversion causes the film to speed up by 4%.

Does anyone know if this figure is correct?

If that's true, even a mathematically-challenged person like myself could probably figure out the difference. Would it go something like this?

The "Ruscico cut" has an *actual* running time of 174:24 minutes (81:04/93:20) - and I'm presuming we can trust the counter. If we convert 174 minutes and 24 seconds to approx. 174.5 minutes, and then multiply that by .04, we get 6.98 minutes. Rounding that up to an even 7 minutes and adding it back into our total gives us 181.5 minutes or 181 minutes and 30 seconds.

Is that right? And does anyone know if the "4%" figure is correct?

### onejune

Criterion Novice

Posted - 08/29/2001 : 9:56:41 PM

Republic of Korea  
78 Posts

PAL has 4% speedup. While the movie frame rate is 24fps, PAL is 25fps, so the difference is 4%. This is why all PAL version VHS or DVD of a movie runs 4% shorter than the actual film.(It also makes the sound halftone higher.)

Doing the math, it's quite curious... RusCiCo claims it is the 185' version, but considering the PAL speedup, it is actually 182' cut.

But RusCiCo's note on running time is not totally trustworthy. They claimed that

SOLARIS runs 169', but it is actually the 166' version. The actual running time of the DVD, due to speedup, was 159' which is 96% of 166'. I compared it to the 166' NTSC LD of SOLARIS, and it was exactly the same version. Therefore, RusCiCo has incorrectly noted the running time as 169', even considering the PAL speedup.

So we can assume that RusCiCo's RUBLEV is actually the 182' version. It "could" be a further censored version of the 185' cut that Tarkovsky claims to have made it himself.

Boy, this is getting exciting...

**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/30/2001 : 01:15:06 AM



USA

159 Posts

quote:

PAL is 25 fps (frames per second)  
NTSC is 30 fps

(which is why PAL DV camcorders are sought after by NTSC folk, (because PAL (25 fps) more closely resembles film speed (24 fps)))

Hmm... I don't know... One thing I intensely dislike about PAL is the 50Hz flicker (very noticeable).

**Jan**

[www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)



**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/30/2001 : 01:36:19 AM

USA

159 Posts

quote:

Thanks for all the work, Richard,

Hear, hear! This is fascinating (also never done before for publication).

quote:

Notation on April 6, 1973 - "Columbia (USA) have bought Rublyov. They have asked me to shorten it by fifteen or twenty minutes. I can certainly do so, starting with the balloon flight."

He mentions shortening his films for Western distributors several times in the diaries: "Rublov," "Solaris," "Stalker." It is a bit surprising, perhaps he felt it was OK as long as the original version remained available?

*I watched "Solaris" in the afternoon (at 4pm) for the Taormina show. A very odd impression. The actors play badly, especially Grinko. Badly edited. It would be good to make some cuts. If the film belonged to me (the distribution rights) I would still re-edit it. Inexact cuts. Lagging cuts. But never mind... I thought "Solaris" was worse. Still, there is something in it. Some portions aren't too bad. [15 July 1980]*

*I watched "Rublov" yesterday. It's all very bad. "Solaris," "Rublov"... My only excuse is that others make films that are even worse... [21 July 1980]*

*The French are opening "Stalker" in the autumn. But I think they have already sent a letter concerning my going to Paris to prepare the shortened version of the film. Pyotr Kostikov said Goskino would not object. [28 February 1981]*

Jan  
[www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)



**peerpee**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 08/30/2001 : 02:01:28 AM

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

quote:

quote:

(which is why PAL DV camcorders are sought after by NTSC folk, (because PAL (25 fps) more closely resembles film speed (24 fps)))

Hmm... I don't know... One thing I intensely dislike about PAL is the 50Hz flicker (very noticeable).

My comments about PAL DV cameras was in relation to making "films" shot on DV and then outputting the final product to film... the look of 25 fps PAL DV more closely resembles the speed and look of 24 fps film (more so than 30 fps NTSC DV) -- the 50Hz thing you refer to is purely when displayed on a TV.

<-----<<<



**Jan**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 09/03/2001 : 10:32:16 PM

USA  
159 Posts

I've just noticed the reply I posted here few days ago never appeared. So let me try again:

quote:

I get the impression that Tarkovsky had no backbone. Whenever someone asked him to recut or shorten his work, he seemed all too eager to do so. And his only excuse being: "others make films that are even worse." How lame an excuse is that? Look at what Gilliam went through for Brazil: far more admirable.

I don't think the two situations are really comparable. Gilliam only risked (perhaps) a dent in his Hollywood career but he had other studios to turn to in case Universal didn't like him. Tarkovsky's producer OTOH was the Russian government which besides funding films as a monopoly was also in charge of the KGB - how convenient - and imprisoned a film director too (Paradjanov). Tarkovsky fought as much as he could for his films but he apparently didn't feel too bad about adjusting films for Western audiences provided the originals existed and remained intact.

Jan  
[www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)



**TheFancifulNorwegian**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 09/03/2001 : 11:48:34 PM

427 Posts

quote:

I don't think the two situations are really comparable. Gilliam only risked (perhaps) a dent in his Hollywood career but he had other studios to turn to in case Universal didn't like him.

Not really -- Universal owned the U.S. rights to *Brazil* and wouldn't sell them back to Gilliam even though they had no intention of releasing it. Gilliam could've cut his losses and worked with another studio on his subsequent films, but Tarkovsky did pretty much the same thing -- he left the USSR.

-----  
Click here for boisterous mirth



**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 09/04/2001 : 01:01:59 AM

USA  
159 Posts

quote:

Gilliam could've cut his losses and worked with another studio on his subsequent films, but Tarkovsky did pretty much the same thing -- he left the USSR.

Leaving one's country of birth (and everyone you knew there) *forever* is simply not comparable to a minor career setback in LA. Besides, Tarkovsky did fight for his films in Russia just like Gilliam did except he was risking much more.

Jan  
[www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)



**TheFancifulNorwegian**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 09/04/2001 : 01:13:25 AM

427 Posts

quote:

Leaving one's country of birth (and everyone you knew there) *forever* is simply not comparable to a minor career setback in LA. Besides, Tarkovsky did fight for his films in Russia just like Gilliam did except he was risking much more.

Having your film butchered doesn't seem like a "minor career setback" to me. And besides, Gilliam *did* leave his country of birth, although it was before he started making films 😊

-----  
Click here for boisterous mirth



**pancks**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 09/04/2001 : 4:10:33 PM

USA  
61 Posts

quote:

I get the impression that Tarkovsky had no backbone. Whenever someone asked him to recut or shorten his work, he seemed all too eager to do so. And his only excuse being: "others make films that are even worse." How lame an excuse is that? Look at what Gilliam went through for

Brazil: far more admirable.

---

Any fair minded read of what Tarkovsky went through to make his films, as well as to survive in Soviet Russia, makes such a statement laughable. The quotes above from his diaries are his thoughts on a particular day and weren't for eventual publication, I suppose he isn't allowed a down day when he can make such comments about his work?

I have never read anything by any great director, Kurosawa for example, who didn't have days when everything looked bleak and when even the great films they had made looked flawed to them.

If Tarkovsky had had "no backbone", we would not have the wonderful films that he gave the world.

**peerpee**

Criterion Enthusiast

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

Posted - 09/04/2001 : 6:51:11 PM



---

Tarkovsky wasn't really in a position to say no to cuts -- if the cuts weren't made, the deal wasn't made, if the deal wasn't made the Soviet authorities didn't get paid. Tarkovsky got peanuts from the authorities for his films - he spent most of his time scrimping for money to make repairs to his house. I think you're seriously underestimating the significant pressure he was under from all angles by the Soviet authorities.

<---OZU---<<<<



**pancks**

Criterion Novice

USA  
61 Posts

Posted - 09/05/2001 : 5:04:22 PM



---

Super Ozu site, peerpee, thanks!

Dog Breath, I'm reading Tarkovsky's diaries right now and throughout you see time and again how much he fought for his films. To make them, to keep them true to his vision for them, to get them released, to get them to award shows to get the publicity he needed to make more, all were major battles that he fought relentlessly. So to hear someone say he had no backbone is just so unfair.

I think you need to place some of the quotes you are referring to in their entire context and to compare them with comments like this in his diary for the January 5, 1979 entry -

quote:

---

...I cannot go on like this. I don't know how I am to pay off my debts. Nor how I am to make Stalker. They obviously won't accept it (unless I make significant changes, which, whatever happens, I am not prepared to do) unless of course a miracle happens!

Or perhaps I have to believe that they will accept it, without any difficulty, and that everything will be all right?

All that I am left with is faith and hope... against all common sense. And then what? Yermash won't want to let me go to Italy to make Italian Journey (Nostalgia) unless I mutilate the film. He will even say that it's entirely up to me whether I go or not. And I shall be stuck here unable to do anything.....nobody is going to give me permission to leave before I have made the alterations to Stalker. So that amounts to two years of misery;...

---

He also makes comments about the fact that while he was in Italy he saw a screening of Mirror which had been terribly cut and edited, in fact they had been done by the common law wife of the head of the company that had bought the rights to distribute the film in Italy. He bemoans the fact that he had no power to keep such cuts from happening after the rights had been sold.



**Richard Malloy**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 09/06/2001 : 09:20:12 AM



Dogbreath, just read the back of the Criterion disc. And then the liner notes.

256 Posts



**pancks**  
Criterion Novice

Posted - 09/08/2001 : 6:03:19 PM

USA  
61 Posts

Well it seems the TCM Andre Rublev was the Criterion cut. Robert Osborne's comments were most interesting too, that one of the reasons the Soviets didn't release it for so many years was Tarkovsky's refusal to cut it for their requirements. I'd imagine that what they wanted edited was not what he eventually edited for Columbia.

*Juxtaposing a person with an environment that is boundless, collating him with a countless number of people passing by close to him and far away, relating a person to the whole world, that is the meaning of cinema. ~Andrei Tarkovsky*



**Tyler Durden**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 09/30/2001 : 08:50:35 AM

Finland  
135 Posts

Is the RusCiCo disc a flipper? The review seems to suggest that.

**French Knight:** You don't frighten us, English pig dogs! Go and boil your bottoms, you sons of a silly person! I blow my nose at you, so-called "Arthur King," you and all your silly English K-nig-hts.  
-Monty Python And The Holy Grail



**peerpee**  
Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 09/30/2001 : 11:40:57 AM

United Kingdom  
877 Posts

quote:

Is the RusCiCo disc a flipper? The review seems to suggest that.

The two RusCiCo Tarkovsky films currently available on DVD (SOLARIS and ANDREI RUBLEV) are both 2 x disc sets. None of the discs are double-sided.

<---OZU---<<<



**jsteffe**  
Criterion Novice

Posted - 09/30/2001 : 4:12:23 PM

USA  
10 Posts

I finally ordered Ruscico's DVD of *Andrei Rublev* and had the opportunity to compare it the Criterion DVD this weekend. While most everyone praises it to the skies, my reaction was decidedly mixed.

The black-and-white footage looks gorgeous, which excellent contrast and detail, clearly better than the print Criterion used. However, the image looks slightly squeezed compared to the fully unsqueezed Criterion transfer. (The old Fox Lorber VHS tape looks squeezed, too). One contributor said that he preferred the more open framing, but you can see dust flecks at the top of the black bars and even a bit of the frame line at the top of some shots. This sort of thing really ought to be masked off. Criterion's framing may be tighter, but it's more appropriate for a 'scope film and ultimately more professional-looking.

Unless I missed something, no one mentioned that the crucial color sequence at the end of

the film actually looks significantly better on the Criterion DVD. The Ruscico print is more faded (leaning somewhat toward pinks and browns) and unstable, whereas the Criterion color sequence is brighter and has truer reds and blues. Also, I'm mystified as to why the Ruscico DVD has the very last shot of the horses in black and white. It may not necessarily be incorrect, but I prefer the shot in color.

The sound on the Ruscico set is cleaner and the dialogue is often easier to hear, but it's still re-mixed from mono to 5.1, a practice I disapprove of unless the original sound technician and/or director supervised it. In some cases, I wonder if they added ambient sounds, but that would have to be verified. However, to be fair, it sounds more natural than some of Ruscico's other ersatz stereo remixes.

I'm not sorry I bought the Ruscico DVD, but I still like the Criterion when all is said and done since it has better framing, better color, an authentic mono track, plus the 205 minute version which I prefer. Now if Criterion does a new anamorphic transfer of the 205-minute version, I'll be truly happy.

James Steffen





**ehonauer**

Criterion Novice

USA

41 Posts

Posted - 10/03/2001 : 12:36:29 PM  

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I watched the Criterion Rublev over the weekend and was mindful of the differences from the 185 minute version I had seen on VHS earlier this year. I also read Tarkovsky's comments re: Rublev on [nostalghia.com](http://nostalghia.com), and the one below struck me:

"We shortened certain scenes of brutality in order to induce psychological shock in viewers and not a mere unpleasant impression which would only destroy our intent. All my friends and colleagues who during long discussions were advising me to make those cuts turned out right in the end. It took me some time to understand it. At first I got the impression they were attempting to pressure my creative individuality. Later I understood that this final version of the film more than fulfils my requirements for it. And I do not regret at all that the film has been shortened to its present length."

I know that Tarkovsky was under extreme pressure to keep his true feelings quiet. On the other hand, he was a fiercely independent thinker. Did Tarkovsky really like the 185 version? One can theorize endlessly about motives he had for convincing himself that the cuts were for the best - ego, a desperate hold on an illusion of self-determination in the face of repression, or a simple desire to stay positive/sane in the face of criticism (both external and internal - Tarkovsky could be very harsh on himself). The truth is we'll never know.

However, I feel the scenes of animal violence have an opposite effect from what Tarkovsky desired. I am taken out of the film by this violence. I begin to focus on their meaning as actual acts, rather than their contribution to the film's message. The spell is broken. I don't mind films that represent animal violence (after all, films are a reflection of life and in life animals are the subject of great cruelties), but when actual violence is committed a discomfoting line has been crossed. I know there have been denials that any cruelty occurred on the set, but several scenes look very real. I find the 185 minute version more palpable on that front.

One question I had was about the blinding of the masons in the wood - for some reason I found the Criterion version to be less effective. It may have been my mood to blame, but I'm curious if there are any differences from the 185 version.

Also, does anyone know why half the subtitles disappear during the scene where the Tatar

"courts" the Holy Fool (in both versions)? Is it because the Tatar is switching between Russian and another language?

I was able to recognize the restored scenes, and thought few of them added much to the film with the exception of the Jester's bottom and the scene where Andrei, Danil and Kiril are beseeched to return to the monastery.


As for which cut Tarkovsky preferred, a consideration is the mercurial nature of artists. Tarkovsky's preference shifted from year to year, and not necessarily as the result of outside pressure. This leads to a debate about the role of artists as stewards of their creations. Artists are generally thought of as "the experts" when it comes to their own work. However, some artists lack perspective and can't be trusted completely to evaluate their creations. Some (including our own Richard Malloy) think Coppola destroyed *Apocalypse Now* with the new edit - Coppola claims it's his preferred cut, in keeping with his vision. Directors are capable of butchering or improving through re-editing, and it's in the eye of the beholder as to which is which. The artist should always have the final say, but that doesn't mean he's right (or wrong). At the end of the day these are largely matters of taste.

We'll never know for certain which edit Tarkovsky preferred, and both versions certainly have their pluses and minuses. I'm going to withhold final judgment until I get my hands on the Ruscico Rublev, but that might be a little while - what with *Mirror* and *Stalker* coming soon.



**Richard Malloy**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 10/03/2001 : 4:04:11 PM 

256 Posts

quote:

---

I feel the scenes of animal violence have an opposite effect from what Tarkovsky desired. I am taken out of the film by this violence. I begin to focus on their meaning as actual acts, rather than their contribution to the film's message. The spell is broken. I don't mind films that represent animal violence (after all, films are a reflection of life and in life animals are the subject of great cruelties), but when actual violence is committed a discomfoting line has been crossed. I know there have been denials that any cruelty occurred on the set, but several scenes look very real. I find the 185 minute version more palpable on that front.

---

I'm so glad someone is discussing this. As I continue to work on my little paper, I've been frustrated by the limitations of having reference to only my own response - I want to know what others think! I've asked questions in my email groups and in this discussion and others without much in the way of response. I hope ehonauers' thoughts might serve to break the ice.

First, I don't think we should even beat around the bush on this - that horse was killed on camera. (And that cow was, almost certainly, set ablaze without any protection.) Whatever our opinions about the *depiction* of violence in films, I think we need to be up-front about the reality of that footage (at least regarding the horse). It was no mere *depiction*.

Here are the differences between the two cuts concerning the killing of the horse (fortunately, I happen to have my notes on this section handy):

In the Criterion version, the shot begins at 112:51 with the horse tumbling down a set of ladder-stairs, crashing through a rail and falling to the ground below, spewing blood as it does. The horse struggles on the ground as the camera pans left to a shot of soldiers standing over a peasant woman, and then pans back right to the horse struggling to regain its feet and then falling over backwards, head over heels in the agony of death throes,

before being lanced in the heart. We then cut to the interior of the cathedral as the peasants huddle in fear as the marauding soldiers continue to pound at the door with the battering ram. The shot lasts 45 seconds.

In the Ruscico version, the shot begins at 12:49/disc 2. We see the horse tumble from the top of the steps, and just as it hits the ground, the film cuts immediately to the interior of the cathedral. The shot lasts 11 seconds. More than 30 seconds are cut.

From Jan's great site, nostalgia.com:

**"[The] horse for me is a synonym of life. When I'm looking at a horse I have a feeling I'm in direct contact with the essence of life itself. \* \* \* \* The presence of horses in the final shot means that life itself was the source of all of Rublov's art." -Andrei Tarkovsky**

I withhold my opinion for now - I'd really love to hear yours!

quote:

---

One question I had was about the blinding of the masons in the wood - for some reason I found the Criterion version to be less effective. It may have been my mood to blame, but I'm curious if there are any differences from the 185 version.

---

There are some significant differences (unfortunately, I don't have my notes on this section with me). The scene originally ran approx. 3:45, from the first images of the artisans walking in the woods through the image of the (paint?) swirling in the water. As I recall, about 50 seconds are cut in the Ruscico version. The first shot, lasting just under 2 minutes on the Criterion version, has been cut into 3 or 4 separate, shorter shots in the Ruscico version (without my notes, I can't recall exactly). IMO, the long-take in the original version works much better and is more in keeping with Tarkovsky's style. (I do believe there's a single cut in that "long take", however, but it's a match-on-action cutting on a horse moving from left-to-right across the frame that really gives the impression of a single take - again, I wish I had my notes!)

In addition to chopping the long-take into several shorter ones (and deleting some footage in the process), the shot of the blinded artisan who stumbles on the ground, searching his way, has been cut from about 8-10 seconds to less than 2 seconds on the Ruscico version. Like many truncated shots during the raid on Vladimir, it registers so fleetingly that it seems quite unintegrated. It's not so quick as to be a "flash edit" or to suggest something in a mostly subliminal way - it just looks like bad editing to me!

quote:

---

Also, does anyone know why half the subtitles disappear during the scene where the Tatar "courts" the Holy Fool (in both versions)? Is it because the Tatar is switching between Russian and another language?

---

(First of all, is it "Tatar" or "Tartar" - which translation has it right, or are both correct?)

But I did notice the non translation of that scene you're referring to, and I presume it's a Mongol dialect or something. Maybe some of our Russian speaking members could confirm, at least, that it's *not* Russian he's speaking?

This might be a good opportunity to point out a terrible subtitling omission on the Ruscico disc during "The Bell" section. Generally speaking, this section is only very slightly cut in the Ruscico version with nearly all of those extraordinarily long, impossible seeming, tracking/craning shots left completely intact (thank God!). And there's some very

interesting re-editing going on (if you can't wait, just watch the two versions at the moment when the bell first sounds - the different choice of images is, again, *very* interesting).

But back to the subtitling omission and my primary grievance against the Ruscico version. This omission (which is a *disc* error), and various other deleted and truncated shots present on the shorter version, have the effect of severely undermining and diminishing our feeling of anxiety and understanding of the consequences that Boriska and the casters will face should the bell *not* sound. I'll go into this in much greater detail in my "review", but let me just quote the dialog that the Ruscico disc leaves untranslated/unsubbed.

As the clapper begins to swing, the Prince's men are heard speaking in the background:

quote:

---

"What do you think will come of this travesty? In my opinion, nothing good will come of this." "Excuse me, your excellency, but I think you are being deceived by appearances! What do you think of this dumb bell, this awkward scaffolding?" "I would sum it up and say that this bell will not ring. In fact, it can't ring." "Does your excellency wish to make a wager? I think you underestimate the situation these people are in. Besides, they were the ones who built it..." "That may be true, but I wouldn't volunteer to call that thing a 'bell'." "Excellency, they fully understand that the Prince will behead them if it doesn't ring." "Judging from the face of that youth, one could say that he is aware of the circumstances." "Excellency, have you heard that the Grand Prince beheaded his brother? It seems that they were twins."

---

There's more that's untranslated on the Ruscico disc, but that's the most important dialog, IMO.

Along with several other scenes cut from the Ruscico version, this omission seriously undermines the consequences to be suffered should that bell not ring. And it's also the only place where we discover that the Prince had his brother beheaded, a small, but certainly not insignificant detail.

But this exchange did raise a question in my mind - "your excellency" is *not* the same Prince from the rest of the film? If so, what to make of the line "Your Excellency, have you heard that the Grand Prince beheaded his brother? It seems that they were twins." Or is it another of the Prince's men who is referred to as "your excellency"... perhaps a church official? It's quite impossible to tell exactly who's speaking to whom since the conversation is only heard, not seen.

Finally, James, I also agree that the color sequence of Rublev's The Trinity looks better on the Criterion disc. I've been hoping that someone with a larger and anamorphically-capable display could confirm this. And I also *very much* prefer the final shot in color (like on the Criterion disc).

Edited by - Richard Malloy on 10/03/2001 4:30:51 PM



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- RusCiCo ANDREI RUBLEV... anyone???

**Pages:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Author**

**Topic**

**Dog Breath**

Posted - 10/03/2001 : 4:43:29 PM

Criterion Devotee

Kiribati  
3041 Posts

quote:

---

First, I don't think we should even beat around the bush on this - that horse was killed on camera. (And that cow was, almost certainly, set ablaze without any protection.) Whatever our opinions about the depiction of violence in films, I think we need to be up-front about the reality of that footage (at least regarding the horse). It was no mere depiction.

---

He's a f\*cking butcher is what he is. There's no plausible excuse for taking life in the name of art. There are a myriad of ways he could have simulated it without having killed anything and still got his point across.

I take it the dog was ACTUALLY beaten too?

And I presume if was alive today, he'd still want to kill/maim/torture these animals in the name of his art rather than resort to a digital effect (ala the very realistic killing of the cows in "O Brother Where Art Thou"?)?

--

Dog.

**DVD of the Month Club**

My DVD List

*To alcohol! The cause of, and solution to, all of life's problems.*



**Jan**

Posted - 10/03/2001 : 5:36:48 PM

Criterion Enthusiast

USA  
159 Posts

quote:

---

quote:

---

First, I don't think we should even beat around the bush on this - that horse was killed on camera. (And that cow was, almost certainly, set ablaze without any protection.) Whatever our opinions about the depiction of violence in films, I think we need to be up-front about the reality of that footage (at least regarding the horse). It was no mere depiction.

---

He's a f\*cking butcher is what he is. There's no plausible excuse for taking life in the name of art.

---

I agree. Even though the horse was taken from a butcher's shop (was to be killed the next morning) it's still inexcusable IMHO. The cow was protected by asbestos according to Tarkovsky, the production manager (Ogorodnikova), and IIRC his assistant director (Chugunova). Tamara Ogorodnikova said:

*Obviously the cow was not on fire - I was there at the shooting and it all happened in my presence. Just look at the film, forget the cow - there are people on fire there yet nobody thinks we really set them on fire; it's just regular cinema.*

quote:

---

I take it the dog was ACTUALLY beaten too?

---

**Extremely** doubtful. I know it's easy to get out on a limb here because of the horse incident and just start assuming anything we please (along the pat-on-the-back lines of "those Communist savages", etc. etc.)

quote:

---

And I presume if was alive today, he'd still want to kill/maim/torture these animals in the name of his art

---



Presume at your own risk 🤬 That was many years ago, Tarkovsky was young, nothing remotely approaching this appeared in his films again. I'd say he wised up. I still think there is no excuse for the horse.

Jan  
[www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)



Jan

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 10/03/2001 : 5:51:44 PM  

---

USA  
159 Posts

quote:

---

(First of all, is it "Tatar" or "Tartar" - which translation has it right, or are both correct?)

---

I think the real name is "Tatar", the word "Tartar" is a corruption although it's considered proper. Oh, here is what I found on Google (<http://www.m-w.com/wftw/00may/050500.htm>):

*The Tartars associated with the Golden Horde of Mongols were originally known (and in fact are still known) as Tatars. Tatar comes from a Turkic language, or perhaps from Persian; it is used for a member of any of a group of Turkic peoples found mainly in the Tatar Republic of Russia, parts of Siberia, and central Asia. When word of the Tatars' exploits reached Europeans, they associated the ferocious Tatars with*

*Tartarus, the Latin name for the part of Hell reserved for the punishment of the wicked. That association prompted their renaming of the Tatars.*

It's also "Tatar" in Russian and probably other Slavic languages?

Jan  
[www.nostalgia.com](http://www.nostalgia.com)



## Dog Breath

Criterion Devotee

Posted - 10/03/2001 : 6:56:06 PM

Well, let's hope you are correct concerning the other animals.

Kiribati  
3041 Posts

The thing that kills me about the horse is that at least via a butcher, its death would have been relatively quick and only a short amount of pain inflicted. That horse going down the stairs had to be wrought with much pain and anxiety on the horses part. I'm sure it didn't go down the stairs willingly.

I'm simply appalled at this.

I know sh!t like this happened all the time in the early days of film ... but I'd assumed it would have ended by the time of **Rublev**. I'm not picking on Tarkovsky here. If I'd heard similar stuff about any other director, I'd be equally pissed off.

--

Dog.

## DVD of the Month Club

My DVD List

*To alcohol! The cause of, and solution to, all of life's problems.*



## Jepthah

Criterion Novice

Posted - 10/04/2001 : 12:04:46 PM

10 Posts

It was always a wishful supposition on my part that the horse-killing was like this: it fell down the stairs accidentally and was subsequently killed to put it out of its pain and misery. The moment was captured on camera and then used.

I've never felt good about it either, obviously. If it was done intentionally, which is easy to agree with, it makes it even harder to watch.

## ehonauer

Criterion Novice

Posted - 10/04/2001 : 12:22:46 PM

USA  
41 Posts

Thanks everyone for your thoughts on the subject. I had heard the allegations of animal abuse in Andrei Rublev before I saw it. When I first watched the 185 minute version, I couldn't understand. The only problematic scene was the brief shot of a horse falling from stairs, which looked like an accident. The 185 minute version is what my high opinion of the film was formed from. After watching the extended Criterion version I've been forced to re-examine my impressions.

The Tatar raid was certainly intended to be a vision of Hell - Rublev's Last Judgment made flesh. It's fitting that the variation Tartar is derived from the Latin name for the part of Hell reserved for punishment of the wicked (thanks for researching that, Jan). Yet obviously Tarkovsky went too far in his depiction.

While I don't wish to defend or excuse animal abuse, I am willing to try to understand Tarkovsky's position. At the end of the film, Boriska the bellmaker can be seen as a stand-in for Tarkovsky the filmmaker - a young man in over his head struggling to oversee a massive project, a



creative act which has a purpose or reward beyond his understanding, where failure could mean death (the Soviets were not above executing artists, or at least imprisoning them for life). Boriska is not a likable individual. He is willful, disrespectful, demanding and cruel. Part of the message of Andrei Rublev is that great achievements take great sacrifice, that monuments are raised by many broken backs.

After reading the quote by Tarkovsky, "When I'm looking at a horse I have a feeling I'm in direct contact with the essence of life itself," one recoils at the disconnect between this thought and the horse's murder in Andrei Rublev. Is it possible that within the course of making the film (or perhaps in general) Tarkovsky could not keep art and life in the proper perspective - perhaps he was even a bit insane? Did Tarkovsky wish to make the Tatar raid so horrific that he engaged in behavior that was repellent even to him? Could he have believed that art was so important and so central to the good of humankind that it was worth the suffering of animals - much in the same way that people will tolerate animal torture in the name of scientific research? These are arguments that most of us will reject as exonerations - the act is unforgivable - I'm just trying to examine the apparent contradiction between Tarkovsky's thoughts and actions.

As to which scenes contain true animal violence, this is another subject up for debate. People abhor animal violence, so associates of Tarkovsky might try to minimize what really happened. If we accept that a horse was killed, I don't think it's crazy to entertain the notion that the cow was set on fire, or the dog was beaten. I would be interested in seeing more documentation from friends, associates, biographers and Tarkovsky himself on this. Jan intimates that even though Tarkovsky would brutally kill a horse, he would never beat a dog. Why not? Especially in light of his professed warm feelings for horses. I find artificial distinctions between animals strange, and they are generally cultural. Americans are horrified by Asians who eat cats and dogs, Indians are horrified because in the West we eat sacred cows. Are horses to be considered lesser creatures than dogs? And the fact that the horse was set to be slaughtered is immaterial. If I take a dog from the pound and strangle it, am I okay because it was going to be put to sleep anyway?

Andrei Rublev is a rich movie, so textured and with so many layers of meaning. It's a shame that, in some way, this film will always be diminished for me because of the scenes of animal abuse. They are issues that can't (and shouldn't) be reconciled. They raise many questions for me, not only about Andrei Rublev and Tarkovsky, but about human practice. I am an off-and-on vegetarian, and I struggle with our treatment of animals. Is life sacred or isn't it? Is suffering our greatest concern? Is it okay to kill animals as long as they don't suffer? Is it, as Neil Young said, "a kinder gentler machine gun hand"? Why are some animals "lesser" than others? What animal testing is justified? If you own a leather bag, wear makeup, or use eyedrops, your life has been made comfortable (most likely) by the torture and death of animals. Is it okay as long as we don't see it? If you know about it and partake anyway, are you as guilty of hypocrisy as Tarkovsky?

In a somewhat related aside, the first time I watched Andrei Rublev, my wife was pregnant for the first time. Watching the film in that context, one of my initial reactions to the movie was "Look at the crazy things men will do because they cannot bear children." Andrei Rublev is very much about life, creativity and what they mean in relation to each other. I saw in the film a certain subtext - that since men are removed from the cycle of the creation of life, they are driven to create in other ways, or become destructive. However, has anyone noticed that out of the very large cast only two women are predominately featured - one a sexpot and the other an idiot?

Richard, thank you for the rundown on the blinding scene. You're doing valuable work and it's much appreciated. Since you confirmed the difference I suspected, I do feel that the scene works better in the 185 minute version. At the time I saw it, I felt it was one of the most horrifying scenes of violence I had ever seen in a film. Not because of its graphic nature, but because of the quick, casual way in which the men's lives were destroyed. The faster editing seems to have relayed this more effectively for me. The slow pace and longer shot of the blinded artisan, while in keeping with Tarkovsky's style, inured me somehow - the fast flash of the 185 minute version was burned in my brain for days.

As to your question about the dialogue during the bell scene, I believe it is NOT the Prince's men

who are talking, but the foreign emissary and his aide mentioned earlier in the scene. The aide is apparently calling the emissary "Your Excellency". Again, we disagree on the suspense of the bell scene. The 185 minute version conveyed tension much better for me. Silence slows time, and the silence in waiting for the bell to be struck seems unbearable, eternal. Filling it with unnecessary dialogue lessens the impact. Boriska's fate is pretty clear should the bell not ring, given the brutality we have seen throughout the film.



I apologize for my recent blathering posts - Tarkovsky is a very rich subject for discussion.

Edited by - ehonauer on 10/04/2001 12:41:40 PM



**Richard Malloy**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 10/04/2001 : 1:13:14 PM  

256 Posts

I'm in the middle of a couple of meetings, and I don't have time to respond adequately to all the wonderful and fascinating posts... but let me interject one or two points.

As for the dog, one cannot help but think of Tarkovsky's relationship with his own dog, and how often "his dog" appears in his films. And we need not speculate as to what Tarkovsky thought about Kirill killing his dog after renouncing the monastic life. And consider the following from Lars-Olof Löthwall's diary entries from the set of THE SACRIFICE (again, thanks to Jan for the wealth of information on his amazing site, [nostalghia.com](http://nostalghia.com)):

quote:

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Sunday, 5th May 1985; Gotland

Early meeting with Erland and the producer in the hotel's dining room. Smalltalk, Erland dressed up for his role. T arrives, smiling he suddenly strokes Erland's hair, asking, "You slept in your stage clothing last night, right?"

None of us can figure out if he's being serious.

The weather is gray and cold, but T's barometer shows that improvement is on its way, which to him is not good. The producer tells about what Ingmar Bergman did when he was young, and her as well. "He walked about, pointed towards the Earth's interior, and said: 'I give You one day of my life if I get my weather - now!' He no longer gives such promises, he's become so much older. But he often did receive such 'help'."

T phones Moscow and talks with his dog, according to the interpreter. He has spoken with the part of his family that has been left behind, you see. He is incredibly fond of his son. He loves his dog.

The part about speaking to his dog... nobody laughs about that.



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I think Tarkovsky views the horse as the most sacred animal. I think that even when that horse was killed, Tarkovsky looked upon it as the most sacred animal. In no way can I or would I justify the killing of that horse - and I concede that it's quite possible that Tarkovsky was, if not quite insane, then at least utterly and perhaps dangerously obsessed with his theme.

I have always felt that in this scene we glimpse the pagan Tarkovsky, his adherence to the ancient Slavic mystic tradition that was absorbed into the Platonic idealism of Christianity. Just consider, from this perspective, the point of Rublev's twilight journey among the pagan revelers on St. John's Eve.

How can one say for sure what was in someone's mind, but I have always felt that Tarkovsky viewed the killing of the horse as a ritual of animal sacrifice. And, whatever his post hoc statements may have been, I believe he wanted the viewer to witness it as such. *As a ritual sacrifice.*

ehonauer

Posted - 10/04/2001 : 3:34:12 PM  



Posted - 10/04/2001 : 3:34:12 PM

Criterion Novice

USA  
41 Posts

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The pagan sacrifice angle is an interesting one. Although I'm an atheist, I believe that the creation or experience of art can be considered a "sacred act", with the artist taking on a shamanistic role. Just as religion is meant to, art can enrich and deepen our perspective on life, connect us to some larger "truth".

My admiration of Andrei Rublev stems greatly from how its themes echo these beliefs. If Tarkovsky felt that making a film was a religious act, it is possible that he viewed the death of the horse as a necessary sacrifice on the altar of creativity (which I suppose would make the cow a burnt offering - sorry, bad joke). This could lead to a whole other discussion about how to judge religious practices one finds morally reprehensible.

I'd still like to hear more info on the subject - such as Tarkovsky's mindset at the time of filming Andrei Rublev, and especially any mention of the horse's killing. With all the Tarkovsky scholars contributing to this discussion I'm sure that is soon forthcoming...

**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

 Posted - 10/04/2001 : 4:19:49 PM  



USA  
159 Posts

quote:

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It was always a wishful supposition on my part that the horse-killing was like this: it fell down the stairs accidentally and was subsequently killed to put it out of its pain and misery. The moment was captured on camera and then used.

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That has always been my hope too. The horse falling down the stairs certainly seems to have surprised the cameraman who rather unprofessionally jerks the camera back at that moment.




Jan

[www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)



**ehonauer**

Criterion Novice

 Posted - 10/05/2001 : 2:27:28 PM  

USA  
41 Posts

Jan,




Just wondering, what is the source of your mention that the horse was picked up from the butcher shop? It would seem someone had an idea the horse would come to a bad end - unless all the horses in Rublev were picked up at the butcher shop!

Edited by - ehonauer on 10/05/2001 2:28:07 PM



**Jan**

Criterion Enthusiast

 Posted - 10/05/2001 : 9:16:06 PM  

USA  
159 Posts

quote:

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Just wondering, what is the source of your mention that the horse was picked up from the butcher shop?

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It's Tarkovsky himself in an 1967 interview (which was only published in 1988).



Jan

[www.nostalghia.com](http://www.nostalghia.com)



**Ericc22**

Criterion Novice

Posted - 11/15/2001 : 5:46:02 PM  

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This is great information on the differences between the versions. Thanks to all for contributing!

66 Posts



I have just seen the Criterion version of Rublev -- my first time seeing it. I was blown away by it although the commentary went a bit over my head. I am seeking more information on the film and am envious for the features of the Ruscico version. Given that no video store near me has it for rental I am considering buying it.

What are your thoughts on the Etudes? Do you find them detailed and interesting or are they fairly brief and rudimentary? They are my primary interest and I was wondering how much you got out of them. Eg, did your view on bells and Tatars expand significantly or did you learn nothing more than what you would learn from a good encyclopedia? Any comments on them would be most appreciated!

Eric

**jla**

Criterion Newbie

Posted - 12/08/2001 : 11:48:27 AM  



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There is a UK release coming up. Rumours say that it's the same transfer as Ruscico's, but I don't have any good source for that. Sounds reasonable anyway, since the same company (Artificial Eye) is releasing *Solaris* on the same date.

8 Posts



Jesper (jla)

Edited by - jla on 12/08/2001 11:50:25 AM



**Richard Malloy**

Criterion Enthusiast

Posted - 12/10/2001 : 10:07:05 AM  

quote:

256 Posts

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What are your thoughts on the Etudes? Do you find them detailed and interesting or are they fairly brief and rudimentary? They are my primary interest and I was wondering how much you got out of them. Eg, did your view on bells and Tatars expand significantly or did you learn nothing more than what you would learn from a good encyclopedia? Any comments on them would be most appreciated!

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All are well-selected and interesting, but these are not in-depth "How do they relate to Andrei Rublev?" features. Some are rather on-point, others a bit more tangential, but they should all provide you with a bit more perspective and insight.

Disc one

Etude 1 - fragment from Ivan the Terrible II

Etude 2 - brief docu on Theophanes the Greek

Etude 3 - brief docum on the Rublev memorial

Etude 4 - modern pagan rites

Etude 5 - "Union of Militant Atheists" (destruction of Orthodox icons and architecture under the Soviets)

DISC 2:

Etude 1: docu on the Mongol invasions of the 13th-14th centuries, focusing on the Icon of Theotokos, which supposedly and miraculously helped repel a Mongol invasion of Vladimir. Rublev may have had a hand in restoring this icon.

Etude 2: montage of frescoes (all Rublev's?) - gorgeous.

Etude 3: images of "Bells" in Russian cathedrals.

Topic is 5 Pages Long: 1 2 3 4 5



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