



Filmmakers, children and Duvall wave goodbye to their Soviet counterparts via satellite yesterday; by AP

From Russia, With Pooh Bear

By Laurinda Keys

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO, July 20—Scores of American schoolchildren tapped into a Moscow film festival via satellite today, discussing "Sleeping Beauty" with Soviet kids and discovering that "Winnie the Pooh" can be a Russian bear.

The kids talked and sang with each other and the Soviet youngsters surprised the Americans by breaking into an English rendition of "Do-Re-Mi" from "The Sound of Music."

"It seems like they get educated very well," said Marc Laitin, 9, of San Diego. "They use a lot of big words."

The children—300 in a studio in Moscow and 105 in a recital hall at the University of California campus in San Diego—were given balloons and confetti to celebrate the closing of the 13th International Film Festival in Moscow.

The satellite hookup was put together by Vladimir Posner—the Soviet journalist Americans often see on TV as a spokesman for the Soviet Union—and communications professor Michael Cole.

They had only one month to plan the encounter, edit segments from children's movies and work out a script.

The Americans were children of faculty members and participants at a computer camp on campus. They were rounded up at the last minute because the Soviets weren't sure the trick could be pulled off until Saturday. Some of the filmmakers also joined in.

At 10:35 a.m. here—9:35 p.m. in Moscow—the American children plopped down on pillows and rugs in the recital hall.

The idea, said Shanta Herzog of the American Center of Films for Children, was to "show these children they can communicate and meet over many common grounds."

There were problems, however. Often, the questions the children in one country asked of their counterparts went unanswered, because of technical difficulties or because they were running out of time.

After seeing an American film about Curious George, the monkey who's always getting in trouble, the children were treated to an animated version of a Soviet "Winnie the Pooh."

Then a bespectacled boy in Moscow volunteered: "In the Soviet Union, we love animals. Almost every family has some pet, perhaps a dog or parrot. Now that teaches kindness. Do you like animals?"

About a dozen American kids raised their hands eagerly to respond to the juvenile attempt at international understanding.

However, Cole answered, "Yes, we like animals," and went on to the next scheduled segment.

The point wasn't lost, however. After the film clips, the explanations from their creators and the singing and celebrating were over, Lisa Vargas, 11, of La Jolla, concluded: "I thought they looked nice. They wanted to be friendly with us. They said they liked animals, and I do, too."

The Laitin boy was sitting in the front row and got to give his opinions to two Soviet filmmakers, who listened to him from 11,000 miles away.

"I thought it was scary and I like scary movies," he commented on Alexander Metta's fairy tale about a man who had the power to attract gold.

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After seeing a clip from Metta's film and from Shelley Duvall's production of "Sleeping Beauty," a Soviet boy commented: "There are some unifying threads [in the two films]—to teach mankind goodness, humanness, in order to destroy evil."

Karen Goidstein, 10, of La Jolla, noticed that the Soviet children "wore different clothes." The San Diego children cheered at surfing scenes and the Soviet children simply watched passively.

Children in both places seemed to laugh the loudest and poke each other the most when they watched Vladimir Grammatika's comedy film about children using a computer to program the skeleton in the Soviet children's anatomy class—and scare the wits out of their teacher.