

## Document Citation

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## By The Law (Dura Lex)

1926 90 min. Silent  
B&W Rental: \$35.00

Directed by Lev Kuleshov; screenplay by Victor Shklovsky and Lev Kuleshov, based on "The Unexpected" by Jack London; photography by Konstantin Kuznetsov, supervised by Alexander Levitsky; designed by Isaac Makhlis. With Alexandra Khoklova, Sergei Komarov, Vladimir Fogel, Porfiri Podobed. English titles.

An adaptation of Jack London's story "The Unexpected", *By The Law* was filmed on an extremely low budget, using only one interior set and five actors. The setting is Alaska, where three characters have been cut off from civilization by winter storms and spring floods. Kuleshov succeeds in building up an almost unbearable degree of physiological tension in following London's drama of three people who undergo inner turmoil as the result of their complicity in a murder. Most critics consider *By The Law* to be

Kuleshov's best film.

"In *Voices Of October* Joseph Freeman comes closer to the means by which the film's intensity was achieved: *By The Law* was worked out in the spirit of an algebraic formula, seeking to obtain the maximum of effect with the minimum of effort. The mathematical precision of every gesture and movement contributes to the total effect of each character and episode. Kuleshov taught his workshop that the hands, arms and legs are the most expressive parts of the film actor's body and we can observe that their movements create as much of the film's tension as does the facial expression. The same intensity of 'performance' by Khoklova and Fogel that amazed critics only proved how correct was Kuleshov's avoidance of 'performance.'

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This calculated isolation and intensification of significant detail and gesture, accumulated for totality of effect, Kuleshov had learned from Griffith and from Chaplin's *A Woman Of Paris*. It was his function as assimilator and analyst, apart from his considerable individual talents, that made Kuleshov's contribution so vital to Soviet film theory. The introduction to Kuleshov's 'Art of the Cinema,' signed by Pudovkin, Obolensky, Komarov and Fogel, concludes: 'We make films — Kuleshov makes cinematography.' " —Jay Leyda, *Film Notes, The Museum of Modern Art*. (TL, YB)

## Lev Kulidzhanov (1924- )

A graduate of the State Institute of Cinematography in 1954, Kulidzhanov was one of the many young directors able to exploit the liberality of the post-20th Congress years to introduce a welcome note of down-to-earth realism into stories from everyday life. His third feature, co-directed by Yakov Segel, *The House I Live In* (1957), was widely acclaimed, at home and abroad, for presenting sentiment that was direct

and real, for placing on the screen warm and recognizable human beings in a story which traces the interwoven destinies of a number of families over a 20 year period. His next films—*Our Father's House* (1959), *When The Trees Grow Tall* (1961), *The Blue Notebook* (1963), and *The Lost Photograph* (1967)—were not widely seen outside the U.S.S.R. However, his meticulously crafted adaptation of Dostoevsky's

*Crime And Punishment* (1970) was a great critical and popular success. In recent years, Kulidzhanov has devoted much of his energy to his tasks as First Secretary of the Union of Film-Makers. However, he directed a full-length documentary in 1975, *The Star Minute*—about Yuri Gagarin, the first Cosmonaut. (TL, YB)