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USSR 1927-8

October

Oktyabr

10.00 am Odeon Leicester Square

Director: Sergey Eisenstein

Production Company: Sovkino (Moscow and Leningrad)

Screenplay: Eisenstein, Grigory Aleksandrov

Photography: Eduard Tissé

British Distributor: Contemporary Films

Leading Players: Vasily Nikandrov, N Popov, Boris Livanov, E Tissé

Running Time: 120 mins (approx)

Original music by Edmund Meisel, restored and conducted by Alan Fearon. Performed by The Northern Sinfonia (Leader Paul Barritt). Presented by the London Film Festival in association with BFI Distribution

No-one who witnessed last year's sold-out LFF performances of *The Battleship Potemkin* should need persuading that *October* from the same team will be a memorable experience. Eisenstein had only a flying visit to Berlin to brief Meisel on his ideas for the accompaniment to *Potemkin* in 1926. But for his lavish commemoration of the Revolution's tenth anniversary he was able to bring the composer to Moscow. As with *Potemkin*, Eisenstein was working against a dead-



line to make sense of a vast quantity of film shot. Massive resources had been mobilised in Leningrad to recreate the storming of the Winter Palace, with up to 2000 extras toiling nightly under arc lights and hoses (to the irritation of those who remembered smaller crowds and dry weather in 1917). Fierce controversy surrounded his use of an actor to portray Lenin; while passages of 'intellectual montage', such as the famous 'God and Country' sequence, were condemned as elitist. The original scope of the film was reduced, so that it ends with Bolshevik assumption of power, and recent research suggests that some of Eisenstein's most daring ellipses were dictated by time and length. But *October* still emerged as both the definitive fresco-image of 1917 and one of the great treasure-chests of Modernist invention in cinema. Alan Fearon has reconstructed the massive score using original research by musicologist David Kershaw and his experience of Meisel's distinctive approach to film accompaniment. He believes that the score for *October* will confirm this as one of the greatest collaborations of the silent era.—Ian Christie.

The presentation of *October* with its original score is made possible by support from the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation. Tickets £9.95, £7.95 and £5.95.