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Author(s)	Gene Moskowitz
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Don Quixote 1957

(RUSSIAN; SCOPE; COLOR)

Cannes, May 21.

Lenfilm release and production. Stars N. Tcherkassov, Y. Tolubeiv; features S. Birman, L. Kassianova, T. Agamirova. Directed by G. Kozintsev. Screenplay, E. Schwaetz from the novel by Cervantes; camera (Scope, Sovcolor), A. Moskvine, A. Doudko; editor, M. Makhanrova. At Cannes Film Fest. Running time, 100 MINS.

Don Quixote N. Tcherkassov
 Sancho Panza Y. Toloubelv
 Aldonza L. Kassianova
 Alildora T. Agamirova
 Querasco G. Vitzine

Russians have beaten Mike Todd, Federico Fellini and Jacques Tati to the draw and come out with their version of the famed Spanish classic "Don Quixote." It is done in a process akin to CinemaScope and is a sprawling, faithful account of the book. It may make a social point, at times, but is basically the tale of the erratic knight whose purity and faith are a comic, even pathetic thing in a 17th world already fed up with chivalry and virtue. It has enough color, action, feeling that may make this palatable for U.S. art house situations.

Don Quixote, full of ideas of knighthood from his books, sneaks off from his home with his faithful retainer Sancho Panza to rid the world of its enslavement by an evil ogre who hides behind windmills etc. The adventures are recounted somewhat episodically at the beginning but then gain momentum and make a telling tale of the sad, aging would-be hero tilting at the world in his own world of illusion and fantasy.

N. Tcherkassov is touching as the old knight and makes him pathetic, brave, moving but never ridiculous. Y. Toloubiev is a fine foil as Sancho Panza. Color is uneven as is the Scope process, but the images have a faithful resemblance to preconceptions of the book.

It is well directed and such scenes as Panza's meting out of justice when he is made governor of a town as a joke, Quixote's mortification by the court and his tilt with the windmill and the strange knight are excellent film morsels although this is an uneven, at times "literary" feature.

Mosk.