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Reviewed

Andrei Tarkovsky

(ITALIAN-DOCU-COLOR-16m)

Hollywood, July 15.

A Ciak Studio production. Executive producer, Franco Terilli. Produced, directed, written, edited by Donatella Baglivo. Camera (Cinecittà color, 16m), Cualtiero Manozzi. Reviewed at the Nuart (Filmex), L.A., July 14, 1984. No MPAA rating. Running time: 100 MINS.

Features: Andrei Tarkovsky.
(In Russian and Italian: with English subtitles)

Although incomplete and unsatisfying on an informational level, this documentary on Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky is so in synch with the esthetics of its subject that one imagines it closely resembles the sort of self-portrait the director himself might have made had he been so disposed. Made for Italian tv, film had its world premiere at Filmex and is a good bet for repertory houses and college venues in non-theatrical distribution.

A highly serious, self-conscious film poet generally regarded as the leading contemporary Russian director, Tarkovsky has made only six films during his 22-year career, five in his native country and his most recent, "Nostalghia," in Italy.

Filmex screening of this documentary followed by just a few days Tarkovsky's difficult decision to seek asylum in the West. Perhaps understandably, given the director's in-between status at the time this filmed interview was conducted, politics and his own relationship with the Soviet regime are not mentioned at all, although he admits that, "I can't imagine living away from it (his homeland) for too long."

Filmmaker Donatella Baglivo, who produced last year's excellent Filmex documentary entry, "Montgomery Clift," has set her conversation with the director at the ultra-Tarkovskian setting of a wooded stream, and there Tarkovsky holds forth on his difficult, wartorn childhood and the important role his mother played in his life, given the absence of his father. Section is laced with clips from his first feature, the 1962 "Ivan's Childhood," and Baglivo has also included nifty footage of Tarkovsky receiving the Golden Lion that year at the Venice Film Festival.

Admitting his strenuous seriousness, Tarkovsky waxes philosophic about his art, opining that, "I believe only poets will remain in the history of the cinema."

Baglivo includes clips from his Russian films, "Andrei Rublev," "The Mirror" and "The Stalker" (although dubbed into Italian) and indicates total sympathy with his work, but asks no questions about their production, reception in the USSR (an apt inquiry, since not all of them were readily released there) and his standing in the industry.

Instead, she asks such faintly ridiculous questions as, "Do you like children?" and "Do you like animals?" As it happens, Tarkovsky is so eloquent and thoughtful that he can answer even this sort of query in an interesting manner, but surely there were more pertinent questions to be posed.

Docu is dedicated to the director's father, Arseny Tarkovsky, called by both his son and Baglivo the "greatest living Russian poet" (excerpts from his work are read on the soundtrack). Early in the film, Tarkovsky recalls how painful it was for him when his father

left his family when Andrei was a boy, and, given Tarkovsky's current expatriot status, one is left to ponder the irony of the director now repeating his father's behavior in leaving behind a son.

Baglivo poses her questions in Italian, and Tarkovsky responds in Russian. English subtitles are abbreviated, attempting to sum up ideas rather than to fully translate the words. —Cart.