**Man with a Movie Camera (1929)**

Together with *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (*Berlin: Symphony of a City*, Ruttmann, 1927), *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* (*Man with a Movie Camera*) is one of the best-known examples of a city symphony – a film genre that is also described as “city film” or “city poem,” combining elements of documentary, narrative, and experimental film. Made by Dziga Vertov, the film was shot in Moscow, Kiev and Odessa and depicts modern urban life on a single day. Focusing on the icons of urban modernity (industry, motorized traffic, anonymous masses, shop windows, mass entertainment), the film evokes the rhythms of metropolitan life by means of experimental techniques such as fast editing, split screens, fast motion, jump cuts, freeze frames, multiple exposures, and stop-motion animation. Moreover, Vertov introduces an element of avant-garde self-reflection, since the film also includes images of its own making: we look at the omnipresent man with the camera shooting the film, the woman editing it, the film operator screening it, and spectators watching it. Taking the pulse of the city and quite literally translating it into the rhythm of cinema, Vertov’s meta-film makes explicit the connection between film spectatorship and the stimulus-response mechanisms said to be produced by metropolitan modernity, with its dizzying kaleidoscopic atmosphere and sensory overload.

Further reading:

- Graf, A. (2007) “Berlin – Moscow: On the Montage Aesthetic in the City Symphony Films of the 1920s,” in Alexander Graf & Dietrich Scheunemann (eds.), *Avant-Garde Film*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 77-92.

- Tsivian, Y. (ed.) (2004) *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties*, Pordenone: Il Giornate del Cinema Muto.

- Turvey, M. (2011) “City Symphony and *Man with a Movie Camera*,” in *The Filming of Modern Life: European Avant-Garde Film of the 1920s*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 135-62.

Paratextual material

- 6 digital stills

- 2 Publicity Posters designed by Vladimir & Georgii Stenberg (1929)

- link to the film on Internet Archive:

https://archive.org/details/ChelovekskinoapparatomManWithAMovieCamera

Steven Jacobs

Ghent University, Belgium