

FILMS, VIDEOS & DVD's ON

# RUSSIA AND THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

## How Putin Came To Power

A Film by Tania Rakhmanova



In August 1999, Vladimir V. Putin, head of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), successor to the KGB, was appointed Prime Minister. On December 31st of that year, Boris Yeltsin announced that Putin would succeed him as President of the Russian Federation. **HOW PUTIN CAME TO POWER** traces the stunningly rapid ascension of this political unknown to leadership of the Kremlin.

The film documents the power struggle between the country's ruling oligarchs and a behind-the-scenes political deal that elevated Putin to power. Putin initially demonstrated his value to "The Family," the family members and wealthy businessmen around Yeltsin—including Russian billionaire Boris Berezovsky, now in exile in London—by blackmailing the Russian Prosecutor General who was investigating a money-laundering scheme that would have exposed government corruption. As Prime Minister Putin, aided by a suspicious series of alleged terrorist attacks in Moscow and the launch of the Chechen War, established a "law and order" reputation, which paved his way to election as President.

**HOW PUTIN CAME TO POWER** tells its story with archival footage, a clandestine blackmail video, remarkable recordings of government meetings, and interviews with many Kremlin insiders who offer firsthand testimony about these events, including Putin's campaign chief Ksenia Ponomareva, former Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov, General Vladimir Shamanov, journalists Elena Tregubova and Vlad Rabinov, and former U.S. Ambassador Stephen Sestanovich.



*"Essential for understanding the dynamics of Russian politics today, and probably for a long time to come."*—**Louis Menashe**,  
Professor of Russian History and Film,  
Polytechnic University

*"Sends a chill up one's spine."*—**Libération**

*"Tania Rakhmanova constructs her documentary like a police investigation... A must see."*  
—**Télé Star**



**Nominee, 2006  
International Emmy Awards**



**Official Jury Prize, 2005 Pessac  
International Festival of History Films**

52 minutes | color | 2005 | **Order #R7-01**  
Sale/VHS or DVD: \$390

# Forever Lenin

A Film by Xavier Villetard



This documentary explores how and why Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known as Lenin, became a mummy. After the 1924 death of the Bolshevik Revolution's leader, Stalin and other Soviet officials decided to preserve Lenin's body for public display in a mausoleum in Red Square. A team of scientists, biochemists and forensic pathologists, working in a laboratory beneath the mausoleum, developed a means to restore Lenin's temporarily embalmed corpse, which had begun to rot two months after his death, and a system of periodic chemical treatments to permanently preserve the body.



FOREVER LENIN chronicles this story through archival footage, a wry voice-over commentary, and interviews with Ilya Zbarsky (son of the mausoleum's original director, Boris Zbarsky), the contemporary director of Lenin's Tomb, Vladislav Kozeltsev, and Soviet historian Alex Gusev. The adventures of Lenin's mummy and the laboratory scientists are shown to reflect the tumultuous history of the Soviet Union, including the ideological development of the cult of Leninism, Stalin's bloody purges in the Thirties, the wartime transfer of Lenin's body to Siberia, the display of Stalin's body in Lenin's Tomb until 1961, and the continuing use of Lenin's Tomb as a political podium.

Today, after severe budget cuts, Lenin's embalmers support the upkeep of the mausoleum by offering their skills to the former communist nation's *nouveaux riches* and the Russian Mafia. Perhaps the most down-to-earth comments in FOREVER LENIN are those from a surprisingly sage Moscow gravedigger, nonplussed by the use of a corpse as the shrine for a political cult, who concludes simply that "dead people should be buried."

*"A singular documentary... which leaves the disagreeable taste of formula in one's mouth."*—**L'Humanité**

*"The surrealist anecdotes add up suggestively... Beneath its melancholy, disturbingly dreamlike surfaces, the film reveals, better than most, the absurdity of a regime gone mad."*

—**Télérama**



**2005 Pessac International  
Festival of History Films**

52 minutes | color | 2006 | Order #R7-02  
Sale/VHS or DVD: \$390

## Eisenstein: The Master's House

A Film by Naum Klejman, Marianna Kireyeva & Alexander Iskin

Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948), the renowned Soviet director, remains one of the greatest filmmakers of all time. His dialectical approach to editing stands as one of the most influential counterpoints to American cinematic practice, and his masterpiece *Potemkin* continues to appear on many lists of the best films of all time.

EISENSTEIN: THE MASTER'S HOUSE offers a biographical look at this visionary artist. Structured as a series of chapters, or "houses," each portraying a particular time and place in his life, the film vividly recreates the Zeitgeist which fostered Eisenstein's genius. The Riga of his youth, the St. Petersburg of his teens, and the Moscow of his artistic coming of age are all captured through rare documentary footage, photographs and, of course, Eisenstein's own filmic creations.



"Highly Recommended!... A truly indispensable work!"—**Educational Media Reviews Online**

102 minutes | color | 1998 | **Order #R7-03**  
Sale/VHS: ~~was \$440~~ now \$348

## Isaak Babel

A Film by Jack Janssen

The Russian Jewish author Isaak Babel (1894-1940) became famous overnight in 1925 upon the publication of his collection of stories *The Red Cavalry*. When he was arrested in 1939, his fate took an abrupt turn. He was executed the next

year. Interweaving fragments of Babel's stories with interviews with surviving family members, ISAAK BABEL pieces together a portrait of the writer.

Babel had children by three different women. Janssen tracked down three children and his only surviving widow, Anthonina Pirozkhova. They tell their own stories of Babel as a glamorous figure, but also as something of a tyrant. Pirozkhova and Babel's daughter shares memories and photos of herself as a baby with him; but his two other children recall more the mystery he represented in their lives.



 **1999 San Francisco Jewish Film Festival**

52 minutes | color | 1998 | **Order #R7-04**  
Sale/VHS: ~~was \$390~~ now \$298

# Sotsgorod: Cities For Utopia

A Film by Anna Abrahams



Siberia long served Russian Tsars only as a brutal wasteland to which to exile their enemies. But after the Revolution, the desolate steppes' abundant coal and iron became crucial in the Communist plan to finance a new utopia. Suddenly, huge cities had to be built to house hundreds of thousands of workers.

Contemporary Soviet architects could not design such cities: the old guard was politically suspect while young designers fantasized about flying cities. So, in the late 1920's and early 1930's, well-known Western European architects were invited to create the workers' paradises. In SOTSGOROD some of the last survivors are interviewed—including Jan Rutgers,

Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky and Phillip Tolziner—while those who have passed away—Ernst May, Hans Schmidt, Mart Stam and Johannes van Loghem—speak through their letters, articles and lectures.

By 1932, the Party decided it trusted no one. A cloak and dagger atmosphere dominated the next five years, as blueprints were stolen and the architects came under surveillance. In 1937 the Westerners were presented with a choice: become citizens or leave the Soviet Union. This film reveals the fate of the architects who stayed, as well as those who left and kept silent, and visits four of the cities that were built: Magnitogorsk, Orsk, Novokuznetsk and Kemerov.

*"Fascinating! A valuable historical document [and] probing, eye opener of a documentary."*—Archis

*"Will be of interest to historians of cities in general and of the Soviet socialist city in particular... social historians of the former Soviet Union and to students of architecture and design."*—Slavic Review

 1995 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam

 1996 Festival International du Film sur l'Art (Montreal)

92 minutes | color | 1995 | [Order #R7-05](#)  
Sale/VHS or DVD: \$398

# Magnitogorsk: Forging The New Man

A Film by Pieter Jan Smit

In the early Thirties, the bare steppes of the Urals were transformed at breakneck speed into a blast-furnace complex, and a city was raised out of the ground—Magnitogorsk. Volunteers from Eastern and Western Europe were involved (including many celebrated “shock-workers”), but most of the work was done by forced labor (35,000 people were deported to the site). Magnitogorsk was the model project to demonstrate the energy of the first five-year plan of the Soviet economy.

In 1932, Joris Ivens made a film about the building up of the Soviet Union. He chose Magnitogorsk as an example of how the new world and the new man were being forged. His film *Song of the Heroes* encapsulates the spirit of the prevailing ideology of the time.

MAGNITOGORSK: FORGING THE NEW MAN goes in search of the past and current ideals of the builders and residents of Magnitogorsk. With fragments from Ivens' film, MAGNITOGORSK refers to the Zeitgeist of those times. Telling the story of three generations, it shows us what became of the heroes of Ivens' film.

*“A fascinating examination... powerful and informative... Highly recommended.”*

—MC Journal: *The Journal of Academic Media Librarianship*

 1996 Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival

 1996 International Festival of Visual Arts (Hungary)

60 minutes | color | 1996 | Order #R7-o6  
Sale/VHS or DVD: ~~was \$390~~ now \$348



# Blockade

A Film by Sergei Loznitsa



The longest siege during World War II was that of Leningrad, which lasted for 900 days, from September 1941 to January 1944, when Hitler attempted to starve the Soviet city of three million people into submission. Estimates of the number of residents who died from starvation, disease or cold range from 641,000 to 800,000.

Comprised solely of rarely-seen footage found in Soviet film archives by director Sergei Loznitsa, BLOCKADE vividly re-creates those momentous events, featuring a meticulously reconstructed, state-of-the-art soundtrack added to the original black-and-white silent footage. The result gives viewers the eerie impression of being not just an observer but virtually a participant in the events as they unfold on the streets of Leningrad.

BLOCKADE is organized episodically, beginning with defensive measures, including artillery emplacements, anti-tank fortifications, trenches, and observation balloons; the devastating effect of artillery shelling and aerial bombing of the city; the marching of captured German soldiers through the streets, surrounded by taunting Soviet crowds; the corpses lying on street corners or dragged on sleds to mortuaries for eventual burial in mass graves; citizens desperately foraging for food, water and firewood; and the joyous celebrations upon the breaking of the siege.

*"Recommended! Very well done."*

—Educational Media Reviews Online

*"Absorbing... poignant viewing!"*—Variety

*"Remarkable! Loznitsa's haunting film presents many stark images of the conflict."*

—Cracow Life



Best Documentary, Russian Film Critics Association (2005)



Russian National Award for Best Documentary (2005)



Grand Prize, 2006 Cracow Film Festival

52 minutes | b&w | 2005 | Order #R7-07

Sale/VHS or DVD: \$390



# The Hermitage Dwellers

A Film by Aliona van der Horst

**NEW**  
RELEASE



THE HERMITAGE DWELLERS is as much about the people who work in Russia's renowned museum as it is about the glorious art works housed in this St. Petersburg institution. We meet with several "Hermitage-niks," including Olga, head of museum maintenance, icon curator Alexandra, museum attendant Valentina, and art handler Vladimir.

For Russians the Hermitage is regarded as a place of pilgrimage. For these workers, however, the Hermitage has been a safe haven from the tumultuous events of Russian history and the hardships of contemporary Russian life. Each of them explains how their personal traumas and difficulties have been transformed by having developed an intimate relationship with a favorite piece of art.

THE HERMITAGE DWELLERS also uses archival footage to reveal that while this revered institution has usually managed to keep twentieth-century history outside its walls—from the Revolution, the terror of Stalin, WWII, and the harsh post-Soviet years—these events have also left their indelible mark on the museum.

THE HERMITAGE DWELLERS reveals how this revered institution and its devoted curators and other workers have together endured what was unquestionably the most cataclysmic century in its long and colorful history.



*"A Must-See! Offers a fond (and often moving) glimpse behind the scenes at Russia's fabled Hermitage Museum."*—**Entertainment Weekly**

*"Highly Recommended! Bittersweet poignancy... Riveting!"*—**Educational Media Reviews Online**

*"What a powerful film this is! I can't recommend it highly enough."*—**Leonardo Reviews**

 **Grand Prize, 2006  
Montreal Festival of Films on Art**

 **Winner, Best Cultural Program,  
Dutch Academy Awards (2003)**

73 minutes | color | 2003 | **Order #R7-o8**  
Sale/VHS or DVD: \$398

Note: A 5 x 25' version of this film is also available.  
Inquire for details or visit our web site: [www.frif.com](http://www.frif.com)

# Deadly Enemies

A Film by Susan Lambert

DEADLY ENEMIES reveals the secret history of biological weapons from World War II through the end of the Cold War. It tells the story of how science, history and politics became partners in a dance of death.

Like the Atomic Bomb, germ warfare grew out the military labs of World War II. The U.S. and Soviets both recruited germ warfare scientist from Japan and Germany just as they had with atomic scientists. Japan had used these weapons to kill thousands of Chinese civilians and Germany had conducted experiments on concentration camp victims. Now this knowledge would be used in the escalating Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviets.

At the center of this story are the scientists who manipulated microscopic life for the purpose of killing. From early attempts to weaponize bacteria, to the advent of gene splicing and the creation of superbugs, they were engaged in a deadly scientific race that has delivered us the means of our own destruction. Some were driven by patriotism, some had deep reservations about the use of this knowledge, but all were drawn by the lure of scientific research on a grand scale.

DEADLY ENEMIES tells the story of scientists on both sides of the Cold War divide, including interviews with former Soviet biological scientists Serguei Popov and Ken Alibek.

Ken Alibek



Serguei Popov



“★★★1/2 Thorough... Revealing...  
Frightening... Riveting as both history  
and cautionary exposé.”

—Video Librarian

“Highly Recommended!”

—Educational Media  
Reviews Online



2005 Association for Practical and  
Professional Ethics Conference

51 minutes | color | 2004 | Order #R7-09  
Sale/VHS or DVD: \$390



# One Day In The Life Of Andrei Arsenevich

Video Footage, Narration, and Editing by Chris Marker

Through film clips, journal entries, and personal musings, ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF ANDREI ARSENEVICH is renowned French filmmaker Chris Marker's homage to his friend and colleague, Andrei Tarkovsky, who died in 1986.

Widely regarded as the most important postwar Russian filmmaker, Tarkovsky has achieved a mythic status with such visionary masterpieces as *Andrei Rublev*, *Solaris* and *Stalker*. His stylistic idiosyncrasies—minimal plots, fragmented narrative, and long takes—have become staples of the modern art film. His confrontations with the Soviet government, the censorship of his films, and his eventual exile only contributed to his mystique.

Close readings of Tarkovsky's films, and parallels drawn by Marker between Tarkovsky's life and work, offer original insights into the reclusive director.

★★★★

*A masterpiece!.. the best single piece of Tarkovsky criticism I know of, clarifying the overall coherence of his oeuvre while leaving all the mysteries of his films intact."*

—Jonathan Rosenbaum, *The Chicago Reader*

*"A sublime meditation on the poetic, surreal universe of Tarkovsky."*

—The Los Angeles Times



 2001 DoubleTake Documentary Film Festival

55 minutes | color | 1999 | [Order #R7-10](#)  
Sale/VHS: \$390

# The Last Bolshevik

A Film by Chris Marker


Based on the life and work of the Russian film director Alexander Medvedkin (1900-1989), THE LAST BOLSHEVIK is a tribute from one filmmaker to another. An archaeological expedition into film history that reveals new cinematic treasures, the film prompts a reflection on the relation between art and politics in the former Soviet Union.

The film captures the commitment, energy, struggles, illusions and disillusionments of a believing but never naïve Bolshevik. From Medvedkin's classic 1934 satire *Happiness*, and the 'film train' which he directed in the 1930s, to his sardonic comedies and bitter war newsreels, Chris Marker draws a panorama of the artistic, political, and moral universe of a life and a country.

*"This remarkable video (1993) is provisionally about [Marker's] friend and*

*mentor, the late Soviet filmmaker Alexander Medvedkin (1900-1989)... More profoundly, this is about the history of Soviet cinema and the Soviet Union itself, about what it meant to be a communist, about what these things mean now.... Not to be missed."*—Jonathan Rosenbaum, *The Chicago Reader*



 2001 DoubleTake Documentary Film Festival

116 minutes | color | 1993 | [Order #R7-11](#)  
Sale/VHS: \$440

# Perestroika From Below

A Film by Daniel J. Walkowitz & Barbara Abrash

Now on  
DVD



In 1989, at the height of Gorbachev's reform movement, a group of labor historians traveled to Donetsk in the Ukraine right after the first mass strike in the U.S.S.R. since the 1920s. Prepared to videotape interviews with retired workers, they unexpectedly gained access to the coal miners who had just concluded their historic strike.

PERESTROIKA FROM BELOW presents the miners' story through their own voices. With passion and remarkable candor, the strikers—often Communist Party members—express their dissatisfaction

with their corrupt union, providing sharp contrast to the propaganda films edited into this program. At the workers' last meeting, miners challenge their long-time union boss on vacations, housing, even refrigerators. Demanding accountability, workers attack their leaders for abusing their privilege. When they show little remorse, the miners take action.

*"A remarkable experience in oral and visual history-in-the-making."*—**Slavic Review**

52 minutes | color | 1990 | Order #R7-12  
Sale/VHS or DVD: ~~was \$390~~ now \$348

# State Of Weightlessness

A Film by Maciej J. Drygas

Often humorous, sometimes shocking, STATE OF WEIGHTLESSNESS answers questions about life in space that official space agencies simply will not address.


Cosmonauts ranging from Herman Titov, who in 1961 became the second man in space, to Valeri Polakov, who spent 241 days in orbit in 1988, disseminate heretofore publicly withheld knowledge on such subjects as the use of prunes in space, remedies for homesickness (flushing a toilet), Experiment M103K (24 hour urine collection), and in the case of men who undertook longer missions, how the Soviet Psychological Support Service would send "some nice, colorful movies to recover our will to act like a normal adult male."

But these men also divulge the equally hidden dark side of the space program: enormous fears of death as they left and returned to earth, and the rigorous medical

and psychological experiments that left many maimed for life. Edited together with startling and previously classified archival film chronicling the Soviet space program from its beginning to its end, these very human cosmic pioneers take viewers out to the mysterious world that exists over our heads.

*"A truly brilliant documentary in a class of its own."*—Peter Paterson, **Daily Mail**

 **2001 DoubleTake Documentary Film Festival**

 **Grand Prize, 1995  
Balticum Film & TV Festival**

 **Grand Prize, 1994  
Lodz Film Festival**

52 minutes | color | 1994 | **Order #R7-13**  
Sale/VHS or DVD: ~~was \$599~~ **now \$348**

Now on  
**DVD**



# The Battle Of Chernobyl

A Film by Thomas Johnson



On April 26, 1986, a reactor at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in the Ukrainian city of Pripyat exploded and began spewing radioactive smoke and gas. Firemen discovered that no amount of water could extinguish the blaze. More than 40,000 residents in the immediate area were exposed to fallout 100 times greater than that from the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan.

Based on top-secret government documents that came to light only after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1999, **THE BATTLE OF CHERNOBYL** reveals a systematic cover-up of the true scope of the disaster, including the possibility of a secondary explosion of the still-smoldering magma, whose radioactive clouds would have rendered Europe uninhabitable. The government effort to prevent such a catastrophe lasted for more than seven months and sacrificed the lives of thousands of soldiers, miners and other workers.

**THE BATTLE OF CHERNOBYL** dramatically chronicles the series of harrowing efforts to stop the nuclear chain reaction and prevent a second explosion, to "liquidate"

the radioactivity, and to seal off the ruined reactor under a mammoth "sarcophagus." The film recounts these nerve-racking events through newly available films, videos and photos taken in and around the plant, computer animation, and interviews with participants and eyewitnesses, many of whom were contaminated, including government and military leaders, scientists, workers, journalists, doctors, and Pripyat refugees.

The consequences of this catastrophe continue today, with thousands of disabled survivors suffering from the "Chernobyl syndrome" of radiation-related illnesses, and the urgent need to replace the hastily-constructed and now crumbling sarcophagus.

*"An epic documentary."* —**Variety**

*"Nightmarishly vivid... powerful."*

—**Louis Menashe, Professor of Russian History and Film, Polytechnic University**



**Best Documentary, 2006**

**Prix Italia Festival**

94 minutes | color | 2006 | **Order #R7-14**  
Sale/VHS or DVD: \$440



# The 3 Rooms Of Melancholia

A Film by Pirjo Honkasalo

This documentary reveals how the Chechen War has psychologically affected children in Russia and in Chechnya. Divided into three episodes or 'rooms,' the film is characterized by an elegantly paced, observational style, which uses little dialog, minimal voice-over commentary and a spare but evocative musical score.

Room No. 1, "Longing," set in a military academy in Kronstadt, near St. Petersburg, portrays the highly regimented lives of the young cadets who are being trained for future roles in the Russian army.

Room No. 2, "Breathing," filmed in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, shows the widespread destruction—both physical and mental—wrought by the Russian shelling and bombardment.

Room No. 3, "Remembering," filmed in the neighboring Islamic republic of Ingushetia, focuses on children in refugee camps and in a makeshift orphanage.

THE 3 ROOMS OF MELANCHOLIA illuminates the emotional devastation wrought on youngsters who have little or no understanding of the historical and political reasons for the bitter conflict. The film also makes clear how the seeds of hatred are being instilled in young minds that will likely fuel the conflict into the next generation.

*"Editor's Choice! ★★★★★ Extraordinary!"*

—Video Librarian

*"A beautiful, moving, mysterious film.*

*A prodigious, almost spiritual experience... Put this on your must-see list!"*

—Andrew O'Hehir, Salon.com

*"A MASTERPIECE! A profound meditation on the cost of war."*—Pat Aufderheide,

In These Times



📌 Seeds of War Award, 2005  
Full Frame Documentary Film Festival

📌 Most Innovative Filmmaker Award,  
2005 Chicago Documentary Festival

📌 Grand Prize, 2005  
Zagreb Intl Documentary Festival

104 minutes | color | 2004 | Order #R7-15  
Sale/VHS or DVD: \$440

# The Democratic Revolutionary Handbook

A Film by Tania Rakhmanova



As seen on CNN, the recent democratic revolutions throughout Eastern Europe—Serbia in 2000, Georgia in 2003, and the Ukraine in 2004—all seemed to follow a quick and easy pattern: the exposure of rigged elections, followed by massive street protests, and a regime that collapsed without a fight.

But **THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONARY HANDBOOK** reveals the lengthy and meticulous preparations behind these seemingly spontaneous demonstrations, showing how modern marketing techniques have combined with revolutionary politics to transform the region's governments, including those of several former Soviet republics.

In addition to news footage of the clashes between these pro-democracy political movements and the repressive forces of the police states, the film features interviews with founding members of the opposition political parties—OTPOR in Serbia, KMARA in Georgia and PORA in the Ukraine—who discuss the essential ingredients of their success, including uniting various opposition forces, the use of non-violent tactics, and a carefully considered political strategy.

The political desire to overthrow corrupt dictatorships and replace them with democracies, for example, is not enough by itself. These young political activists explain the importance of raising funds from Western foundations, marketing techniques, and especially the effective use of television, combining agitprop and public relations, to convey one's political message and to get out the vote or, when necessary, the protestors.

But the democratic revolutionary game plan doesn't always succeed. The film also documents the failed 2005 attempt in Azerbaijan, when the protest movement was violently suppressed. Having learned their lessons, however, the Azerbaijan activists explain they are already preparing for the 2008 elections.

*"An impressive documentary."*

—TV Grandes Chaines

*"A tremendous investigative work."*

—Télé 2 Semaines

52 minutes | color | 2006 | **Order #R7-16**  
Sale/VHS or DVD: \$390



# Russia's Wonder Children

A Film by Irene Langemann

During Stalin's reign, music education became an important state mission. Perhaps because of this, no other country has produced as many virtuoso musicians in the 20th century. Stalin's reign was also the period when the Central Music School (C.M.S.) at the Moscow Conservatory first opened its doors.

Even today, the Central Music School remains the most sought after institution to attend. The teaching methods that produced so many great musicians have not altered.

With contemporary concert footage and rare archival images, and in the words of parents, teachers, former and current students, RUSSIA'S WONDER CHILDREN informs us of the life of a prodigy, of their love for music, and of their will to sacrifice most anything for perfection.

*"Fascinating... makes a valuable and unique contribution."*—**Professor Alexander Ivashkin, Slavic Review**

*"Unearths some remarkable archival material... from the era in which the U.S.S.R. aimed to demonstrate its cultural superiority to the world. A subtle critique of the decaying state of music education in post-glasnost Russia."*—**City Pages**



**Golden Gate Award, 2000  
San Francisco Film Festival**

98/60 minutes | color | 2000 | **Order #R7-17/18**  
Sale/VHS: \$285/\$245



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