

International Film Maker Feels at Home in Nalchik

By [Marina Marshenkulova](#)

February 10, 2013



Documentary maker Vincent Moon tips his hat to Circassian traditions.

NALCHIK, Kabardino-Balkaria Republic — At first I agreed to meet with the 33-year-old independent French filmmaker Vincent Moon at a restaurant in the center of Nalchik. But then he rescheduled. He said there is another place, his favorite one in the city.

It's been only a week since he came to Kabardino-Balkaria, and he already had a favorite restaurant. Later he said that it has a soul.

Nodar, the Georgian owner of the cafe bar Horseshoe, which ironically is the translation of “nalchik” from Kabardian, one of the main local languages, greeted Moon as an often and loved visitor and offered him and his guests drinks.

Moon was dressed in a white, long-sleeved shirt and greenish trousers with suspenders. His wild eyes expressed more emotions than can possibly fit into one person. His hands made

different gestures and he constantly used two words more than others: “fantastic” and “basically.” It was contagious; you just wanted to mirror him — his coined words, energy and passion for life.

Moon, the maker of more than 300 short films and dozens of noncommercial Internet projects, and a dancer as it is noted on his business card, came to Nalchik in September as a part of his Russian Project. The project was Moon’s tour around some Russian regions to shoot a series of films on traditional culture and indie music and offer free screenings of his work and workshops on filming.

The tour lasted three months and wrapped up in November with the last screening and workshop at the club Gogol in Moscow.

Bulat Khalilov, a 25-year-old student who brought Moon to the bar and to Nalchik in the first place, looks almost like the filmmaker himself. They both have beards. Khalilov met Moon over the Internet. He had watched some of Moon’s works and wrote to the filmmaker, suggesting that he launch his Russian Project from the North Caucasus and from Kabardino-Balkaria in particular.

Our conversation went up and down, back and forth — to the memories, places and music. But, of course, we started with the food. As Moon said, every place has two important things about its culture — music and food.

“I raise my drink to those fantastic places around the world that still exist. They are very discreet most of the time. It’s hard to find them, but once they get inside of you they never leave,” he said.

We raised our glasses and drank the local beer while Julio Iglesias’ “Nostalgia” soothingly played in the background. That’s how it started, and after a short while our conversation went beyond the basic interview format.

Q: How did you find Nalchik?

A: It seems like Nalchik is a big park with few buildings around. There is something very peaceful about it.

I am not going to lie and say that Kabardino-Balkaria is the best place in the world. First of all, there is no culture better than the other one. That’s very important to point out. To me, it’s all equal.

Q: Why did you decide to make a film about Circassian music?

A: That’s what excites me the most: making films about traditional music because it really goes way beyond just the music. It’s the way of life, basically. Before there were musicians, there was music. And nobody was watching because everybody was participating in it. It was the way of being together.

Q: Do you play any musical instruments?

A: Camera only.

Q: Some locals say that Circassian music is dying out. What do you think about it?

A: In the past months, I've been traveling and finding cultures and representations of those cultures. In Indonesia, for example, that culture is very much alive. The whole country is the representation of that culture, by the people, for the people. And here in Circassia, most of what I found was the representation of that culture.

Q: When will the Circassian film about Circassia be released?

A: I love making films in a sort of way that I don't know when they are released. As long as there are big producers with lots of money involved, they put the "Hey, when will we be able to see the film?" pressure on you. I don't like that.

(Moon's films are released under the Creative Commons license. Everyone can watch them online for free. In fact, Moon emphasized that no one should ever use his films for commercial purposes. His motto is to share his work with as many people as possible.)

Q: You travel a lot. Do you think there ever will be a time when you will say, "OK, I've had enough?"

A: I don't plan my life at all. I am planning the next two weeks. That's it. This is the question that people like to ask me a lot, and I wonder why. It seems that they freak out seeing me traveling that much.

At some point several years ago I was really freaking out. I was traveling around the world, making so many films all the time and realizing that I was constantly in a rush. And I thought that I had no idea what I was doing. I was like, "I am just doing." But yes, I think it's a beautiful thing now. I really like it. I don't really know what my films are about. I just make them and people tell me about them. And sometimes I enjoy the final result.

Q: It's impossible not to notice the tattoos on your hands. One of them seems to be written in marker.

A: I love markers, and this one says everything that I have to do or shouldn't forget today. It's sort of my organizer. It's perfect!

Q: The one on your wrist is real, though?

A: Yes. It's "I see my world through you." And I have another one — across my arm — a poem by Omar Khayyam, "You will never know what's going to happen tomorrow. You will never understand anything in this world, so from now on enjoy your life and drink some good wine."

Contact the author at artsreporter@imedia.ru

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/02/10/international-film-maker-feels-at-home-in-nalchik-a213>

