

A New Movie Transports Anastasia Romanov to 1980s America. Russians Aren't Happy About It.

By [Samantha Berkhead](#)

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A new American film that turns the executions of Russia's last tsar and his family into a fantasy-tinged teen comedy has caused an uproar among Russians, who say the film mocks their history.

At first, the plot of "Anastasia: Once Upon a Time" sounds outrageous enough to rank among other so-bad-they're-good classics: As Vladimir Lenin looks to destroy the imperial family, the mystic Rasputin opens up a magical portal, saving Anastasia's life by sending her from 1918 to late 1980s Wisconsin. There, the Grand Duchess befriends an American girl and frolics around the shopping mall while trying to outrun Rasputin, who is now bound by a magic spell to kill her for the Bolsheviks.

Even the House of Romanov itself has put out a [statement](#) condemning the movie, saying it “considers the irreverent portrayal of the Grand Duchess offensive,” but added that it “doesn’t consider it necessary to ban such depictions or sue their creators.”

The fact that this movie was made by Americans certainly didn’t help its reception among Russians given their current sensitivity over Russian stereotypes in pop culture, Garner said.

“[The movie comes from] this very odd conservative American vision of ‘Russia is bad [and the] Soviets are bad’,” he said. “It really relates to what’s going on in the present moment, and this is probably giving the producers too much credit.”

The particularly harsh backlash among Russians also points to how painful of a topic the Romanov killings continue to be in modern Russia.

Nicholas II and his family were finally given a proper burial in St. Petersburg eighty years after their deaths in 1998, with then-President Boris Yeltsin [describing](#) their killings as one of the most shameful chapters in Russia’s history. The family members were then canonized as passion-bearers in the Russian Orthodox Church for their “humbleness, patience and meekness” in accepting their deaths.

Among the public, recent state-run polling [says](#) a majority of Russians aged 35 and older view the Romanov killings as “a heinous unjustified crime.”

“I personally consider this whole situation with the Romanov family a tragedy for Russia and its people,” Anna B., a Moscow-based visual artist, told The Moscow Times. “I think most people would agree with me. Nowadays we, I believe, feel sorrow for everything that happened to them. The fact that they were canonized certainly means something [significant].”

Some Twitter users [pointed](#) to the most famous American depiction of Anastasia — the eponymous 1997 animated movie starring Meg Ryan — as a better example of how to add elements of fantasy to history without being disrespectful.

“At least [director] Don Bluth's version was a product of a deliberate choice to remake 50s movie ‘Anastasia,’ which was inspired by the real person, Anna Anderson — the most famous Anastasia impostor [sic]. What's your excuse [sic], guys?”

As for “Anastasia: Once Upon a Time,” Garner strongly recommends doing literally anything else but watch it.

“Just stare at a blank TV for a while, it’ll be more entertaining.”

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