

VIDEO REVIEW

THE KREMLIN: A VIP Tour of Historic Moscow. 1990 ABC News Interactive videodisc. 30 minutes CAV format video. ISBN 1-55940-176-1, \$39.95. Distributed by The Voyager Company, 1351 Pacific Coast Highway, Santa Monica, CA 90401, (213) 451-1383.

The video material in "The Kremlin" videodisc was originally broadcast as an one hour ABC special narrated by Diane Sawyer and Sam Donaldson. The videodisc contains 30 minutes of video on one side recorded in the CAV format. A major portion of the video is in full motion; two sections at the end contain still images of the history of the Kremlin, and of czars and government leaders. In addition to the video, the videodisc contains three audio tracks. The viewer can listen to the narration either in Russian or in English. The third audio track contains CD-quality recordings of Russian classical music.

The video contents of The Kremlin videodisc are divided into thematically organized chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the disc. Chapter 2 contains the disc directory. From here the viewer can choose the order in which to view the disc. The full motion video portion of the disc is contained in chapters 3–30. Chapters 3–6 describe the area outside the Kremlin: Red Square, St. Basil's Cathedral and Lenin's Mausoleum. The narration provides short historical background on Red Square and the building of St. Basil's Cathedral and Lenin's Mausoleum. This section includes historical stills and video clips of activities around Red Square. The Kremlin grounds are described in chapters 7–11. Here we learn about the size of the Kremlin compound, the number and location of buildings, as well as some interesting details about the Czar Bell, the Czar Cannon and the Arsenal. The Kremlin palaces are described in chapters 12–15. In these chapters we get a video tour of some of the more opulent rooms in the Palace of Facets, the Terem Palace and the Grand Kremlin Palace. The Kremlin cathedrals and Cathedral Square are described in Chapters 16–20. The narration provides short details about each cathedral, accompanied by video clips showing details from frescoes, icons and external architecture. Chapters 21–25 give a tour of Lenin's quarters, providing several historical motion and still images of Lenin. Here the viewer is shown examples of Lenin's austere lifestyle: the simple kitchen, living room, bedroom and office. We learn of Lenin's fascination with telephones, as shown by the numerous phones on his desk. In these chapters there are several short video clips and still images of Lenin in his living room, sitting by the piano, playing with his cat.

The history and function of the government buildings in the Kremlin are described in chapters 26–30. Chapter 31 comprises motion and still images of the contents of the Armory museum, which include Faberge eggs, china, goblets, carriages, jewelry, royal headpieces, crowns, icons and bible covers. Chapter 32 contains 76 historical still images from the New York Public Library. Here are included images of old Moscow, old maps of Moscow, paintings of coronations of Russian rulers, several images of Napoleon in the Kremlin and numerous other paintings relating to the Kremlin. Chapter 33 has still images of Russian czars and government leaders, including the years of their reign. Chapter 34 contains three-dimensional still images of Kremlin maps. Next to each building on the maps is indicated the chapter number in which the building is discussed. The musical compositions found in the third audio track are indexed in chapter 35.

As a whole, the video material in "The Kremlin" videodisc is sparse both in the variety of video images and in narrative descriptions suitable for most academic courses. Since the laserdisc is pressed in the CAV recording format, each frame (from a total of 54,000) can be accessed and viewed individually. "The Kremlin" videodisc is most suitable for use in introductory courses on Russian culture. The instructor can select to use only those portions of the video appropriate for a particular lecture topic by first making a list of appropriate chapters and frames and then playing them in whatever order necessary. By turning off audio channels one and two, the instructor can provide his or her own narrative descriptions to accompany the video. For a lecture on Russian church architecture, for example, "The Kremlin" videodisc has an abundance of motion and still images that can be used to show external design, frescoes, the arrangement of icons on the icon wall, etc.

The Voyager Company has produced several other videodiscs that deal with world art and architecture: "The Louvre", "Michelangelo", "The National Gallery of Art", "Salamandre: Chateaux of the Loire", "Van Gogh Revisited", "The First Emperor of China", are some examples. Many of these videodiscs come with videodisc companion software programs (HyperCard stacks), that are specially tailored to the disc's content, and that give the user complete computer control of the videodisc. With a click of the mouse, the user can access articles and essays, or clarify confusing terms by instantly accessing glossary entries. The instructor can supplement the audio narration with his or her own texts. As of this writing The Voyager Company had not produced a companion software for "The Kremlin" videodisc, and they had no such plans to do so in the near future.

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