

Russian cinemas showing pirated Hollywood movies to beat sanctions
Jeff Parsons - Metro



Metro

Russian cinemas are turning to piracy to continue showing American films to customers.

Following Putin's invasion of [Ukraine](#), many of the top Hollywood studios announced the suspension of new film releases in [Russia](#).

The likes of Paramount, [Disney](#), Warner Bros and Sony canceled movie releases for the foreseeable future – leaving Russian cinema chains without US blockbusters to pull in audiences.

According to Russia's Association of Cinema Owners, the country's home-grown film industry isn't enticing enough to plug the gap.

Representing 700 cinemas and 2,600 screens across the country, the group said: 'We express concern about the high probability of liquidation of the entire film industry in the country in the context of the introduction of large-scale and unprecedented sanctions by a number of states against the Russian Federation, including those directly related to cinemas.'

'Unfortunately, the quantity and quality of Russian films released to the public does not meet the full demand of cinemas for content.

'In addition, the release of some Russian films, for reasons unknown to us, has been postponed from the next dates or completely canceled despite the fact that these films received state support for production.'

Turning to piracy

Of course, where there's a will there's a way and Russia has [seen fit to rewrite the rules when it comes to its own survival](#).

So perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that internet piracy seems to be the direction Russian cinemas are taking to get punters through the door.

Around the middle of April, posts started to circulate on social media sites popular in Russia like VK and Telegram that some theaters were showing Hollywood releases.

For example, on April 21, a special event at Moscow's WIP contemporary art center featured [a showing of The Batman](#) with tickets coming in at around 500 rubles (about £6).

The source hasn't been verified but, according to [TorrentFreak](#), the movie (complete with Russian dubbing) was downloaded from a torrent site. These sites allow peer-to-peer file sharing and are often a haven for illegal content.

And, at the time of writing, Russian cinemas are still listing [The Batman](#) as available to view.

The screenshot shows the Metro Cinema website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'ГРИНВИЧ СИНЕМА' logo and a phone number '+7 (343) 31-101-31'. Below the navigation, there are three movie listings:

- Бэтмен** (The Batman): 16+ rating. Genres: Военный, Криминал, Фантастика, Драма. 3 ч. 30 мин. Showtimes: 17:20 (400 P), 20:00 (350 P), 20:30 (400 P), 21:30 (300 P), 23:10 (300 P). Halls: Зал 4, Зал 3.
- Операция "Мясной фарш"** (Operation 'Meatloaf'): 18+ rating. Genres: Триллер, Военный, Детектив, Драма. 2 ч. 30 мин. Showtimes: 17:05 (400 P), 19:00 (330 P), 20:10 (330 P), 22:35 (240 P). Halls: Зал 4, Зал 5.
- Красное уведомление** (Red Notice): 12+ rating. Genres: Комедия, Боевик, Криминал. Showtimes: 19:20 (250 P), 20:45 (250 P). Halls: Зал 4, Зал 5.

At the bottom, there's a small disclaimer in Russian and a 'СЕРТИФИКАТ' button.

Metro A Russian cinema listing site showing timings for [The Batman](#) and [Red Notice](#) (Credits: Metro.co.uk)

Also showing is [Red Notice](#) – a Netflix action movie starring [The Rock](#) and [Ryan Reynolds](#). Which is interesting, because [Netflix has also confirmed it has pulled out of Russia](#).

And even if it hadn't, [Red Notice was never released in cinemas](#).

'The illegal public demonstration of pirated, or rather, stolen, copies of films in cinemas takes the Russian cinema business out of the legal arena and returns us to the dark days of the illegal business of the 1990s,' reads a statement from the Association of Cinema Owners.

Tech giants such as Microsoft, Apple and Dell have also suspended sales in Russia, while Ikea has closed its stores and Nike will no longer fulfil online orders.

American Express [has suspended all services in Russia and Belarus](#), following similar measures by [Visa and Mastercard](#).