

Anneli Lehtisalo

**The emperor arrives too late  
– *Tanssi yli hautojen* as a  
“Särkkä-like” “great man bio pic”**

*Tanssi yli hautojen* (1950) is one of the historical bio pics of great men produced by the company Suomen Filmiteollisuus. Like the films *Runon kuningas ja muuttolintu* (1941) and *Ballaadi* (1944) it describes an unhappy love story between a man of national importance and a young woman. The film's hero, Russia's Czar Alexander I is not Finnish, but he was believed to have had an important role in the creation of Finnish autonomy. All three films represent these men's important role in Finnish history in a way that implies that an unhappy love affair was their motivating force.

The screenplay for *Tanssi yli hautojen* was written during the war but because of political and economic difficulties the film was not completed until seven years later. The aim was, however, to promote the film in the same way as the great man bio pics of the war years: as a serious epic and spectacle. The film was also described as a love drama. This impression was supported by the romantic historical novel that was based on the screenplay and had been published already in 1944.

The film was popular but reviews didn't see it as an epic of importance like the other great man bio pics. The themes and the marketing of the film were related to war-time concerns. Seven years later the content and theme were no longer considered believable and successful: the film's patriotism and the innocence of the love story didn't fit in with the ideas of the 1950s. The symbolism in the relationship between Finland, the losing side of the war, and the emperor of Russia also seemed problematic at the time. After the war this great man bio pic, originally closely connected to the national project, was seen as “mere” romantic entertainment.

Antti-Ville Kärjä

**The Finnish Hit-Song Films:  
Furry-Finnish and Supranational  
at the Height of Spiritual  
Depression**

During the late 1950s and early 1960s some eight so-called hit-song films were made. They were films consisting mostly of musical performances, accompanied by a “fragile” narrative frame. These films can be seen as one attempt to cope with the film industry's economical difficulties at that time. They can also be viewed as the Finnish equivalents to the U.S. rock'n'roll films and as the film industry's first attempts to see whether or not youth entertainment was commercially viable. However, these films were made cautiously, and they were targeted not only at the youth.

It is the juxtaposition of such concepts as “hit-song” and “youth” that interests me in these films, especially in relation to the problematics of “national identity”. The national-romantic background of the Finnish hit-song tradition and youth as a new, strongly U.S.-influenced group of film consumers form an intriguing field of tension, at the heart of which lies the question of Finnish-ness. In what ways do these films, and especially the music in them, contribute to the definition and conceptualization of Finnish-ness and popular culture in general?

The economic success of the hit-song films was by no means high, and they were badly received in reviews. Also later on they have been labelled as poor examples of Finnish cinema. However, these judgements have been based on film theories and aesthetics favouring narrative development. These theories are somewhat ill-fitting, simply because the function of hit-song films, some of them working as promoting vehicle for record companies, is clearly different from mainstream narrative cinema. Thus, it becomes pertinent to ponder the ideological background of these judgements.

Thus they can be seen as one version of cultural protectionism, exemplifying the worry for the quality of national cinema.

This field of tension is, in my opinion, directly linked to the processes of globalization, or rather, glocalization. Basing on the theory of articulation, my argument is that the Finnish hit-song films have been and are a part of the processes that continuously redefine what it means to be Finnish. For most viewers they can be incoherent ragbags, but as they thus challenge the traditional theories of film narration, they challenge the traditional conceptualizations of Finnish-ness also.

Nonetheless, these films are part of the so-called popular culture, and hence there are limitations to the challenges they can make. Ideologically the hit-song films can be seen as safe and secure, and so the forms of Otherness they possibly represent are also secured. They may be exotic, but yet stereotypical, media-friendly, and not threatening.