

# COLD WAR (Zimna Wojna)

**Poland (2018)** 89 minutes

**Director:** Pawel Pawlikowski

**Cast:** Joanna Kulig, Tomasz Kot



**Screening 6 November 2019 at Swindon Arts Centre**

## Synopsis

In this passionate love story in the 1950s, a music director and a singer fall in love, after meeting in the ruins of post-war Poland. The musical director tries to persuade her to flee communist Poland for France. They are fatefully mismatched, and yet condemned to each other. An impossible love story in impossible times.

## Reviews



*Cold War* is a glorious throwback – a film made with a verve and lyricism which rekindles memories of the glory days of European New Wave cinema.

Notable as one of the few films in Cannes this year with any British involvement, this is decades-spanning romantic drama that never loses its ironic edge.

Polish-British director Pawel Pawlikowski invokes memories of Milos Forman, Jiri Menzel and François Truffaut at the start of their careers. He shoots in black and white and recreates both post-war communist Poland and 1950s and 1960s Paris in meticulous detail.

Any sense that the film is an exercise in sepia-tinted nostalgia is scotched by the wonderfully fiery and mercurial performance from Joanna Kulig.

*Geoffrey Macnab, The Independent*

Paweł Pawlikowski won the best director award at Cannes in May 2018 for this sweepingly intimate love story about a star-crossed couple falling together and apart, through the iron curtain of postwar Europe. It is inspired by his parents, whom Pawlikowski has described as “both strong, wonderful people, but as a couple a never-ending disaster”.

Yet while screen lovers Wiktor and Zula share names and character traits with the film-maker’s mother and father, their individual narratives are fictional and allusive, taking us from the countryside of Poland to the streets of East Berlin, from Paris to Yugoslavia, over 15 turbulent years – crossing boundaries that are musical, geographical, political and ultimately existential.

We open in rural Poland, 1949, where Wiktor (Tomasz Kot) and Irena are recording folk songs. They audition musicians and dancers to showcase the authentic sounds of Poland.

Into these auditions comes Zula (Joanna Kulig), an enigmatic young woman posing as a village girl who significantly performs a song learned from a Russian movie. Irena detects “a bit of a con” but Wiktor is smitten by Zula, who is whispered to have killed her father (“He mistook me for my mother, so I used a knife to show him the difference”). Soon Zula is one of the stars. When Wiktor spies a chance to defect during a 1952 engagement in East Berlin, he begs Zula to come with him. But are her pragmatic priorities in sync with his western-leaning dreams?

*Mark Kermode, The Guardian*

## Film Facts

- The turbulent relationship between the main characters was inspired by the director’s real life parents who did break up and get back together a couple of times.
- After seeing his performance in this film, Danny Boyle - who was briefly attached to directing the 25th James Bond film - wanted to cast Tomasz Kot as the villain. The Bond producers disagreed with his choice, wanting a more established name, so Boyle quit the project.

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