

## CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

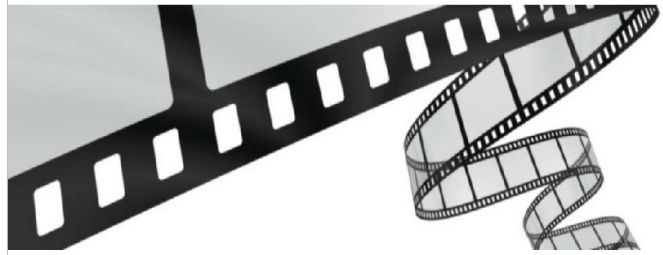
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### COLD WAR

Dir. Pawel Pawlikowski

Cast: Joanna Kulig (Zula); Tomasz Kot (Wiktor).

Music: Marcin Masecki. Cinematography: Lukasz Zal.

Pawel Aleksander Pawlikowski, born in 1957, is a Polish filmmaker who has lived and worked most of his life in the UK. He garnered much acclaim for a string of award-winning documentaries in the 1990s and for his feature films *Last Resort* and *My Summer of Love*, both of which won BAFTA and many other European awards. His film *Ida* won the 2015 'Oscar' for Best Foreign Language Film. This was the outstanding film of CFC's 2014-15 season. Tonight's film, *Cold War*, won the prize for Best Director at Cannes last year and was nominated for Best Foreign Language film at the 'Oscars'.

*Cold War* is an episodic film, set between 1949 and 1964, charting the political trajectory from the slow-but-sure imposition of communist ideology and methods on post-war society to the impossibility of living honestly in hardline communist Poland. Relationships are torrid and volatile: the film is rooted, however, in a love for music, despite ending sadly and being pessimistic about an authoritarian state's effortless ability to hobble personal relationships.

Pawlikowski wanted to make a film about his parents, named Wiktor and Zula (he described their relationship as "a never-ending disaster" |), both of whom died in 1989, just before the fall of the Berlin Wall began toppling East Europe's communist regimes. He said that the only way he could make it work was to turn both of them into fictional characters - although he still dedicated the film "to my parents".

Wiktor becomes a middle-ageing musician (having spent time in the West?) who rallies from the nightmare of World War II by somewhat half-heartedly joining a woman musicologist in recording regional folk songs and recruiting villagers to perform them in a new 'folk culture' troupe. In the opening scenes they are Poland's answer to Iona and Peter Opie, albeit more interested in love songs than nursery rhymes. The film's Zula becomes a survivor of sexual abuse who poses as a villager to infiltrate the auditions for the troupe; she is soon established as the star of its shows, as Wiktor's lover and, she freely admits, as a spy on Wiktor's attitudes and behaviour. The troupe itself, named Mazurek, is closely modelled on the real-life Mazowsze ensemble, which was forced into cheerleading for Stalinist policies in the 1950s and still exists today as a bastion of supposedly traditional folk culture.

So the two main characters suffer from the 'can't live together/can't live apart' syndrome. Divided by opposite temperaments,, incompatible ambitions and different responses to Poland's communist regime. For example, Wiktor wants to defect to the West at the first opportunity - it comes when Mazurek is invited to perform in East Berlin - but Zula doesn't see the need or point. Eventually marrying an unseen Sicilian to get an Italian passport that will allow her to join Wiktor in his attic in Paris, she doesn't rate her chances as a French chanteuse and finds Wiktor to be an enervated shadow of the man he was in Poland. For Zula, a further marriage is resorted to as a means of accessing 'connections' that will get Wiktor released when he returns to Poland and is thrown into jail for defecting. So in the end what really separates Wiktor and Zular is less the Iron Curtain but more an intractable cold war of the heart.

Like *Ida*, the film is shown in sumptuous monochrome.

Our next film: *If Beale Street Could Talk* - Tuesday 22 October.

