 **Barbican Cinema, Barbican Centre   
  
Smart Robots, Mortal Engines: Stanisław Lem on Film**  
11–16 Apr, Cinema 3  
  
[www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2019/series/smart-robots-mortal-engines-stanislaw-lem-on-film](http://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2019/series/smart-robots-mortal-engines-stanislaw-lem-on-film)  
  
  
  
Taking place throughout April 2019, **Smart Robots, Mortal Engines: Stanislaw Lem on Film** is a cinema season of lesser-known adaptations of the work of Polish author **Stanislaw Lem** (1921-2006). Artificial intelligence, virtual reality, nanotechnology and trans-humanism: Lem was thinking and writing about today’s hot topics many decades ago. He wrote across many genres: horror, detective procedurals, realism, essays; however in the West, he is best known for his science fiction.

The season opens on 11 April with a discussion with **the Quay Brothers**, the artists **Andrzej Klimowski** and **Danusia Schejbal** - who adapted two Lem short stories into a graphic novel - and **Dr Mark Bould** academic at the University of the West of England and author of the BFI Classics monograph on ***Solaris***. The panel, chaired by novelist and science writer **Simon Ings,** will discuss the legacy of Stanislaw Lem, and the challenges of adapting his work to screen. The discussion will follow a shorts double-bill of ***Maska* byStephen & Timothy Quay** and ***Roly Poly*** by **Andrzej Wajda.**

Other season highlights include ***The Interrogation of Pilot Pirx*** in which the commander of a flight to Saturn must decipher which of his crew are androids and which are human; schlocky East German-Polish space opera ***Silent Star***; and the rare 1968 TV version of ***Solyaris*** in which an astronaut is confronted with a replica of his dead wife, an emanation of the planet he is orbiting.

This season is curated by Barbican Cinema in partnership with **Kinoteka The 17th Polish Film Festival** and is part of **Life Rewired**, a Barbican cross-arts and learning season running throughout 2019, exploring what it means to be human when technology is changing everything.   
  
**Film Screenings & Events**  
**Lem Shorts Programme (12A\*) + ScreenTalk**Thu 11 Apr 2019, 18:45, Cinema 3   
The Stanislaw Lem season begins with a double-bill of short films that ask questions about identity followed by a discussion with **the Quay Brothers** and the artists **Andrzej Klimowski** and **Danusia Schejbal** and **Dr Mark Bould** academic at the University of the West of England and author of the BFI Classics monograph on *Solaris*. The panel will be chaired by novelist and science writer **Simon Ings.**

***Roly Poly*** (UK/Poland 1968, Dir Andrzej Wajda, 30 min)

Two rally car drivers Richard and Thomas end up in hospital after a crash. Richard survives, receiving vital organ transplants from his dead brother. So much of his body is replaced, in fact, that the insurance company questions his identity and refuses to pay out to Thomas’ widow on the grounds that he is ‘incompletely deceased’. This tragicomedy was adapted from a Lem radio play, marking a rare comedic turn from iconic director Andrzej Wajda.

***Maska***, (Poland/UK 2010 Dirs Stephen Quay & Timothy Quay 23 min)

Set in an alternate reality where advanced technology has developed alongside feudalism, a killer-robot in the form of a beautiful woman gradually discovers her true identity and, summoning all her will, tries to subvert her pre-programming and not kill the man she was made to destroy. This stop-motion puppet animation was scored by Krzysztof Penderecki and is an interpretation of Lem’s short story of the same name.  
  
***Silent Star*** (PG\*) (Poland/Germany 1959 Dir Kurt Maetzig 104 min, Digital presentation)  
Sat 13 Apr 2019, 16:00, Cinema 3   
  
Stanislaw Lem’s novel *The Astronauts* provided the basis for this deliciously schlocky, Polish-East German space opera. In the distant future of 1970, the world is a socialist utopia. A cylinder containing a message from Venus has been discovered in the Gobi Desert; when attempts to contact the planet are met with silence, an international expedition of eight scientists is dispatched to find out more.

A glossy production, filmed in gaudy Agfacolor and Total Vision (the GDR equivalent of Cinemascope), the film’s spaceship, the Cosmokrator, and the alien landscape it touches down on, all melted cities and crystalline forests, are a triumph of production design.

Just as striking, are the Cosmokrator’s mixed gender, pan-ethnic crew –  Chinese linguist, Japanese (woman) doctor, African communications officer – this, years before Star Trek.  
  
**Solyaris (PG\*) + introduction** by Sci-Fi author Adam Roberts  
USSR 1968 Dirs Lidiya Ishimbaeva & Boris Nirenburg ,142 min, Digital presentation  
Sun 14 Apr 2019, 15:00, Barbican Cinema 3  
  
A rare screening of the 1968 Russian TV version of ***Solyaris***.

When Kelvin arrives at the space station, just two of the original crew remain. They are haunted by replicas of people from their past, emanations of the mysterious planet Solaris they are orbiting. Soon enough, Kevin is visited by a woman outwardly identical to his dead wife. Can he resist the disturbing ambiance of Solaris, and the emotional pull towards the living, breathing likeness of the woman he loved?

Featuring some of the top actors from Moscow’s celebrated Vakhtangov Theater, this TV screen version of Lem’s masterpiece reimagines it as a psychological chamber piece, played out against a spare, expressionistic studio set, with an eerie electronic score and stylized black-and-white cinematography and pre-dates Andrei Tarkovsky’s 1972 adaptation.  
  
***The Interrogation of Pilot Pirx*** (15\*)  
Poland/USSR 1979 Dir Marek Piestrak 95 min 35mm presentation  
Tue 16 Apr 2019, 18:45, Barbican Cinema 3  
  
Based on Stanislaw Lem’s short story *The Inquest*, this 70s Polish sci-fi anticipates the anxiety of ***Blade Runner***: non-humans passing among us, unrecognised.

In an undefined near-future, a new, top-secret mission is announced: a test flight around Saturn to try out new automatic probes for passing through the Cassini Division.

Recruited to the mission, Pilot Pirx gradually comes to understand its covert purpose: to test a new kind of android being developed by a shady corporation and which, it is hoped, will come to replace human beings on space flights. Only some of Pirx’ five-person crew are human, the rest are robots: can he tell them apart, and can they be trusted?

Shot in part at various newly-built modernist locations including the Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, and featuring an edgy, percussive score by composer Arvö Part, the film combines sci-fi speculation with the look and feel of a 70s-era conspiracy thriller.  
  
**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors  
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 **Ticket prices:**Box Office: 0845 120 7527Standard: £10.50, Barbican Members: £8.40, Concessions £9.50,   
Young Barbican £5\* Local Classification

**About Life Rewired**

**Life Rewired** is the Barbican’s year-long arts and learning season exploring what it means to be human when technology is changing everything. Running throughout 2019, the season investigates the impact of the pace and extent of technological change on our culture and society, looking at how we can grasp and respond to the seismic shifts these advances will bring about.

**Life Rewired** demonstrates how artists are finding imaginative ways to communicate the human impact of unprecedented technological shifts and scientific advances, as well as finding creative new uses for Artificial Intelligence, big data, algorithms and virtual reality.

https://www.barbican.org.uk/liferewired

**About Barbican Cinema**

A fully curated programme of international cinema including thematic seasons, new releases, and special events presented in Cinemas 1, 2 and 3.

Our offer includes partnerships with film festivals, art & culture organisations, plus regular family screenings for young audiences and parent & baby screenings. The Event cinema programme presents the best of the performing arts on screen.  
  
**About KINOTEKA The 17th Polish Film Festival   
  
KINOTEKA The 17th Polish Film Festival** returns to London’s festival scene from 4 - 18 April 2019, bringing with it an exhilarating range of new Polish film and culture as well as highlighting lesser known gems ripe for rediscovery. As well as offering unique insights into Poland’s rich history and culture, the festival represents diverse and universal new works from exciting new filmmakers as well as those who have made a valued contribution and impact to the world filmmaking landscape. Hosted by some of London’s most prestigious and forward-thinking cultural institutions, this year also includes masterclasses, artist film screenings, workshops and musical entertainment.  
For more information please visit: www.kinoteka.org.uk

**About the Barbican**

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the Barbican pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts.

Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over 1.1 million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 staff work onsite.

The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas 1, 2 and 3, Barbican Art Gallery,   
  
a second gallery the Curve, foyers and public spaces, a library, Lakeside Terrace, a glasshouse conservatory, conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra; Associate Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra; Associate Ensembles the Academy of Ancient Music and Britten Sinfonia,   
  
Associate Producer Serious, and Artistic Partner Create. Our Artistic Associates include Boy Blue, Cheek by Jowl, Deborah Warner, Drum Works and Michael Clark Company.   
  
The Los Angeles Philharmonic are the Barbican’s International Orchestral Partner, the Australian Chamber Orchestra are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court and Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra are International Associate Ensemble.

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