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Corinth Films and Kino International

Present

Andrei Tarkovsky's

SOLARIS

The Complete Uncut Version

In Russian With English Subtitles

Released by Kino International Corporation

Corinth Films and Kino International
present

SOLARIS

A Mosfilm Studios Production

SPECIAL JURY PRIZE • CANNES FILM FESTIVAL 1972

Directed by.....**Andrei Tarkovsky**

Screenplay by.....**Friedrich Gorenstein**
Andrei Tarkovsky

Based on the novel by.....**Stanislaw Lem**

Cinematography by .....**Vadim Yusov**

Music by.....**Eduard Artemev**

Chorale Prelude in F Minor by.....**J.S. Bach**

Art Direction by.....**Mikhail Romandin**

Sound by.....**Semyon Litvinov**

Edited by.....**Ludmila Feiginova**

Special Effects.....**V. Sevostyanov**
A. Klimenko

Cinemascope and Color
Running Time: 167 minutes
No MPAA Rating

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CAST

Kris Kelvin.....Donatas Banionis

Hari.....Natalya Bondarchuk

Snouth.....Yuri Jarvet

Burton.....Vladislav Dvorzhetsky

Sartorius.....Anatoly Solonitsin

Gibarian.....Sos Sarkissian

Kelvin's Father.....Nikolai Grinko

Kelvin's Mother.....O. Yisilova

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SYNOPSIS

Andrei Tarkovsky turned to a novel by Polish science fiction writer Stanislaw Lem for his third feature, Solaris, completed in 1972. Critic Penelope Houston called the film "Russia's answer to 2001 not in its display of space hardware but in the speculative quality of its ideas." Tarkovsky was not attracted to science fiction per se, but instead to the ethical questions that arose in the novel. He even contemplated "transferring the entire story to Earth," which is "where" the film opens -- in the sylvan country home of a scientist, Kris Kelvin (Donatis Banionis), who lives there with his aging parents and child. Unusual phenomena have been reported on the planet Solaris, and he's been called upon to investigate.

Before departing, he is visited by his colleague Burton who, as a member of the original crew of the space station now permanently orbiting Solaris, had once been dispatched to search for a missing crew member. From the surface of the planet, an all-encompassing, dense, cloudy sea, he had discerned rising from its waves the figure of a monstrous human baby swollen to a hundred times normal size. But his report, of which Kris and Burton review taped proceedings, was never given credence. A committee of scientists dismissed it as an hallucination brought about by overstrain. Kris himself is non-committal, a technological man as unmoved by Burton's excitement and terror as by his own father's visible loneliness.

Arriving at the space station on the edge of the mysterious planet, which the authorities have contemplated closing down (but not before subjecting the planet's surface to a final, exploratory burst of radiation), he finds the vessel in a ramshackle, near-deserted state. Two of its resident scientists, the cynical Sartorius and the elderly Dr. Snouth, prove unresponsive to his questions and take refuge in their laboratories. Kris then learns that a third cosmonaut, his old friend Gibarian, has committed suicide and left behind a cryptic videotape, in which he denies any imputation of madness and suggests that his death has some unmentionable connection with the convoluted surface of Solaris. The amorphous surface of the planet turns out in fact to be a living entity that does not communicate directly, but rather materializes fantasies from human lives.

For Kelvin, Solaris conjures up a perfect double of his late wife, Hari (Natalya Bondarchuk), who had committed suicide after the failure of their relationship. Although Hari is only a hallucination, Kelvin tries to redress his mistakes in the past and renew his commitment to her. Delving even deeper into a fantasy world of his own moral conflicts, Kelvin sees at the end of the film an image from his childhood implying a reconciliation with the conflicts of his past -- he and his father in front of the family cottage, arising out of the surface of Solaris.

As a moral parable, Solaris has been interpreted in many different ways. British critic Philip Strick sees the planet as a "turbulent metaphor as much for an imperfect deity as for the psychoanalyst's couch." For whatever interpretation Strick finds Hari to be "the most seductively tragic other-worlder the cinema has yet shown us. And as a whole Solaris is "the nearest the cinema has come to capturing the complexities of science fiction, with its intermingling of time and memory, acute uneasiness, and emphasis on elegance and style."

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RELEASE HISTORY

In 1972 Solaris was awarded the Special Jury Prize at Cannes. It finally opened in New York at the Ziegfeld Theatre in the fall of 1976, but in a version cut by 35 minutes from the Cannes original. In a review in The New York Times, Richard Eder noted: "The narrative can be difficult to grasp...these drawbacks must be cited provisionally. Solaris, whose mystical, totally nonmaterialistic character has won it no other favor in the Soviet Union than the permission to exist, is here in a severely truncated form...the version shown at Cannes and elsewhere was two hours and 47 minutes. The version we are seeing here is down to two hours and twelve minutes and the distributors, who received it that way, say that they don't know whether Mr. Tarkovsky supervised the cuts." (The cutting was actually done in the United States by an independent editor hired by the local distributor, without the director's approval.) "Obviously," Eder continues, "it is impossible to judge the pace, the rhythms and the clarity of a film that is cut nearly in half. It is like a fresco partly eaten away by rising damp." More regrettably, a print circulating in recent years on the U.S. repertory cinema circuit consisted of cannibalized subtitled and English-dubbed footage, and an even shorter running time.

Those earlier distribution rights now having expired, this release of Solaris through Corinth Films and Kino International is the first theatrical exhibition in the United States of the complete, uncut version, in its original Russian language and aided by a new, more complete English translation for the subtitles.

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ANDREI TARKOVSKY (1932-1986)

Unlike the films of other contemporary Soviet directors, those of Andrei Tarkovsky demonstrate a personal and original vision that places him alongside Godard, Bergman and Fellini as one of the major European filmmakers of our time. Tarkovsky "makes movies with an ambition and intensity" which has been virtually "absent from Soviet film for over 40 years," writes J. Hoberman of the Village Voice. British critic Ivor Montagu compares the striking images of Tarkovsky's films to Breughel's paintings (which are themselves quoted in Solaris), finely detailed compositions that have "beauty, harmony and relevance...When one has seen any one of his films once, one wants to see it again and yet again." Tarkovsky's seven features and two shorts have each won numerous prizes at international festivals, including the Golden Lion at Venice, the Grand Prize at San Francisco, and at Cannes, the Special Jury Prize (twice) and the Grand Prize for Creative Cinema.

Andrei Tarkovsky was born in Moscow on April 4, 1932. His father, Arseni, was a well-known poet of the period. In Tarkovsky's own words, "During my high school period I attended the School of Music, and I did some painting. In 1952 I enrolled in the Institute of Oriental Languages, where I studied Arabic. All this wasn't for me." He left school to join a geological research group on an expedition to Siberia, where he remained for nearly a year and produced a whole series of drawings and sketches. Then, in 1956, he entered the State Institute for Cinema (VGIK), to study under Mikhail Romm.

While at film school, Tarkovsky made a short, There Will Be No Leave Today, and, for his diploma, the hour-long The Steamroller and the Violin which, he notes, "was very important for me because it was there that I met the cameraman Vadim Yusov and the composer Vyacheslav Ovchinikov, with whom I have continued working." The script was by another school friend, Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky, who later wrote Tarkovsky's Andrei Roublev and went on to become an accomplished director himself (Siberiade, Runaway Train). The hero of The Steamroller and the Violin is a twelve-year-old boy who yearns to be a steamroller driver while he studies to play the violin. The film's themes of dissatisfaction with art as an end in itself, and a rejection of art as an elite occupation, reappear in the director's more mature works.

Tarkovsky's first feature, Ivan's Childhood, appeared in 1962 and was greeted enthusiastically around the world. Critics heralded the arrival of a great talent in the Soviet cinema after decades of creative stagnation. The Ivan of the title is a newly orphaned twelve-year-old who volunteers to fight the Nazis during World War II. His "childhood" is, instead, a perverted adult existence: Ivan serves as a spy who crosses enemy lines, and who one day fails to return. An epilogue reveals, through a file kept by the Germans in Berlin, that he was condemned to death and hanged. Jean-Paul Sartre described Ivan's Childhood as "socialist surrealism," and praised the remarkably complex and unsentimental approach Tarkovsky used for his melodramatic subject.

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His next film, Andrei Roublev, completed four years later in 1966, is considered by many critics to be the one indisputable Russian masterpiece of the decade. Tarkovsky chose as his subject the life of Andrei Roublev, the great Russian icon-painter of the Middle Ages. Reliable historical information on Roublev is scarce, so Tarkovsky invented his own vision of the past, demystifying the reverence of popular legends. Shooting the film in widescreen black and white, he depicts Roublev as a despairing humanist in a brutal world. He observes shocking atrocities committed by feudal lords and invading Tartars, as well as an erotic pageant of uninhibited pagans, frolicking in the nude. In time, he abandons all hope, vowing to remain silent and to stop painting.

Many years later, when a local duke seeks a craftsman to build him a bell of unprecedented size, a young boy answers the call. Claiming to be the son of an artisan who taught him the secrets of the craft before he died, the boy (Kolya Burlyayev, who also played the role of Ivan) sets out to build his duke a masterpiece. Despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles, the bell is flawlessly completed, and it rings throughout his village. Overcome with joy and released anxiety , the boy confesses to Roublev that he had lied and that he had constructed the bell with no prior expertise. A greatly moved Roublev, breaking many years of silence, comforts the boy and tells him that as artists they will work together. A montage of his icons, in vibrant color, closes the over-three-hour film. Andrei Roublev was held up for general release by the USSR until 1971, causing a scandal and much speculation in the West. Some observers believe the Russian censors were shocked by the violence, eroticism and the obsession with religion, all unorthodox for the Russian cinema of the day. In 1969 the film won the International Critics Prize at Cannes, and in 1973 it made its US debut -- in a cut version later restored and released by Columbia Pictures but presently no longer available -- at the New York Film Festival.

Tarkovsky turned to a novel by Polish science fiction writer Stanislaw Lem for his third feature, Solaris, released in 1972 (see separate section for full details). Three years later, he completed The Mirror, a film more directly autobiographical than any he had made before or since. "It is the story of my mother and thus a part of my own life," he has said. "The film contains only genuine incidents. It's a confession." Tarkovsky's parents separated in 1935, and The Mirror has been seen as his way of exorcising repressed feelings from his childhood. Voice-over readings of his father's poems and other, unusually subjective associations lead the viewer through a labyrinth of scenes and images. Soviet authorities disapproved of The Mirror and its domestic release was restricted. While Western critics might point to the influences of Bergman and Resnais and their deeply introspective themes, or to Fellini's 8 1/2 as an example of a director's self-appraisal, Russian critics have no such vantage point within their national cinema.

Tarkovsky returned to science fiction in his next film, Stalker (1979), loosely based on a 1973 novel by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. The novel was set in North America; Tarkovsky transferred the story, without actually specifying its locale, unmistakably back to Russia. Taking place in the future, Stalker concerns a government-restricted, mystery-shrouded area known as the "Zone," at the center of which exists a "Room" where wishes are fulfilled. The hazards of the unpredictable Zone can only be avoided if one travels with a "stalker," who will illegally guide the uninitiated. Living on the Zone's periphery, with dirty clothes, shaven head and a decrepit family, Tarkovsky's stalker resembles a political prisoner in a work camp. He

is hired by two intellectuals, an unnamed scientist and a writer, to reach the Room. "In the end," critic Gilbert Adair writes, "the scientist, denouncing the false hopes the Room must encourage, toys with the notion of blowing it up, while the writer, who sought to spur his flagging creativity, contemptuously declines even to formulate a wish. To the wretched, by now half-demented stalker is left the Sisyphian task of sustaining a doubtful faith of which he is a humble priest but without which he is nothing."

Tarkovsky's next film, Nostalghia, was to be his first with footage shot outside the USSR and his first collaboration with a non-Russian crew. In the end, because of difficulties encountered with the state agency Sovinfilm, virtually all of Nostalghia was shot in Italy. Tarkovsky's cultural hybrid was greatly assisted by veteran Italian screenwriter Tonino Guerra, who spoke fluent Russian and whose wife is Russian. The sometimes elusive narrative concerns a Russian scientist (not coincidentally also named Andrei) who has come to research in Italy. His travels across the landscape, in the company of his guide, a tantalizingly beautiful young woman, are inevitably suffused with a growing sense of spiritual melancholy and "nostalghia" for his distant homeland. He meets a perhaps-mad recluse Domenico, played by Ingmar Bergman regular Erland Josephson, whose eerie, mystical pronouncements touch on the fragile nature of faith in the modern world, which he seeks to re-affirm in a shocking act of self-immolation. Andrei, both the protagonist and the filmmaker, attempt to emulate the spirit of Domenico's tragi-heroic act in a climactic scene of spectacular, severe beauty.

The Sacrifice, filmed in Sweden with Sven Nykvist behind the majestically tracking camera, and unveiled at the 1986 Cannes Film Festival, turned out to be Tarkovsky's last testament. Not unlike his previous film, its restless protagonist (again played by Erland Josephson) is confronted with the dilemma of just how strongly felt is one man's belief in his ideals -- is he willing to act on them? The onset of a nuclear war -- not seen but overheard via radio announcements and the sound of planes and rockets overhead -- compels him to an act of "sacrifice" that tears at the roots of his considered, almost bucolic daily life, yet also stands as a protestation of faith and hope for its future.

Andrei Tarkovsky died of cancer on December 28, 1986. Among the many posthumous tributes was one by Sight & Sound critic Peter Green, which concluded:

"A successor to his own Roublev, a commentator on our modern condition, an icon painter in film, and a man of profound belief, it was Tarkovsky's aim to bring the inward, spiritual world into a state of harmony with the outward, material world. Perhaps more than any other, he perceived the potential of film for charting the modern space-time dimension we inhabit."

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ANDREI TARKOVSKY
FILMOGRAPHY

1959 There Will Be No Leave Today (short)

1960 The Steamroller and the Violin (short)

1962 Ivan's Childhood

1966 Andrei Roublev

1972 Solaris

1974 The Mirror

1979 Stalker

1983 Nostalghia

1986 The Sacrifice

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STANISLAW LEM

The American re-release of Andrei Tarkovsky's Solaris should re-affirm the eminence of the movie's literary source -- Polish novelist Stanislaw Lem, whose work has been translated into 40 languages with sales exceeding five million. As British critic Philip Strick contended during the film's international release in the mid-70's: "It should at least confirm to a wider public the harsh brilliance of Lem's vision, in which surrealism and cybernetics orbit each other like twin moons."

Stanislaw Lem was born in Lvov, Poland in 1921. During World War II, when the Nazi occupation forbade university studies to Polish intellectuals, he worked as a garage mechanic and welder, maintaining sympathetic ties with the underground Resistance movement. After the war he studied medicine (both his mother and father had been doctors) and began writing on a wide range of subjects. His staggering variety of interests found expression in essays on medicine, cybernetics (the study of the human nervous system in comparison with computers), speculative philosophy and, of course, fiction.

Any mere summary of Lem's science fiction novels -- several of which, listed below, are still in print with meticulous English translations (Solaris, written in 1961, was the first to appear in the West) -- would be deceptively simple. Maintaining a deep interest over the years in the philosophy of science, he has fashioned works of rigorous complexity filled with startling stylistic devices worthy of the most prominent "non-genre" fictionalists. Yet there is at the same time a clarity of description which makes his far-fetched other worlds, such as Solaris, seem entirely credible and somehow familiar. But throughout his books, for all their chilling effects and often darkly humorous, even surreal outlook, there pulses a deep concern for human values (which no doubt engaged director Andrei Tarkovsky) and for finding a source of strength which will enable mankind to edge toward a non-hysterical future.

The author and critic Darko Suvin writes: "Obviously, Lem has been very aware of the U.S. science fiction of the 1940's and 50's. If the internal evidence of his books were not sufficient, a remark published in Austria in 1969 testified that he had in the 1950's read "people like Knight, Bradbury, Russell, Asimov, Clarke, Dick, Campbell, Heinlein..." Thus, Lem has had some of the same antecedents as British and Soviet science fiction after World War II: Verne, Wells, Stapledon, Capek and the "techno-sociological" anti-fascist U.S. science fiction of the 1940's -50's. Yet it is equally obvious that other antecedents, stemming from a different tradition and environment, have mingled with this common denominator or minimum treasury of all present-day science fiction, making for the specific creative method of a highly personal writer."

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The Stanislaw Lem novels which are currently in print in paperback in the U.S., through Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, include:

Chain of Chance
The Cyberiad -- Fables for the Cybernetic Age
Fiasco
The Futurological Congress
His Master's Voice
Imaginary Magnitude
The Investigation
Memoirs Found in a Bathtub
Memoirs of a Space Traveler
Microworld -- Writings on Science Fiction and Fantasy
More Tales of Pirx the Pilot
One Human Minute
A Perfect Vacuum
Solaris

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CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Donatis Banionis

The actor who plays the role of Kris Kelvin, the cosmonaut torn between action and introspection in Andrei Tarkovsky's Solaris has, like many of the Soviet Union's leading performers, divided his career between stage and screen work. In the 1960's and 70's he was a leading member of the Theatre of Militnis, Russia's most progressive, influential classical theatre group. Some of its more renowned productions of the period were from plays by Strindberg, Borchert and Duerenmatt.

Banionis' film work has included An Uncommon Thief (1966), directed by Eldar Ryazanov; and the stark 1971 Soviet version of King Lear, starring Yuri Jarvet (the burned-out Dr. Snouth of Solaris. In that same year, he was featured opposite Sean Connery and Peter Finch in The Red Tent, an epic Italian-Soviet co-production about a doomed North Pole expedition of the late 1920's.

In 1974, he was awarded the title "People's Artist of the Nation" by the Soviet government.

Natalya Bondarchuk

For her performance as the ethereal Hari in Solaris, British critic Philip Strick of Sight & Sound rhapsodied, "Miss Bondarchuk is the most seductive otherworlder the cinema has yet shown us." She is a graduate of director Sergei Gerasimov's Cinema Institute in Moscow, where she took on a remarkable variety of roles in workshop productions including Tolstoy's "Resurrection," Dostoyevsky's "The Idiot," Stendhal's "The Red and the Black," as Queen Gertrude in "Hamlet," and even as Fibby in an adaptation of J.D. Salinger's novel "The Catcher in the Rye."

It was upon seeing her portrayal of Queen Gertrude that Andrei Tarkovsky selected her for the haunting role of cosmonaut Kris Kelvin's wife in Solaris.

Miss Bondarchuk is the daughter of actress Inna Makarova and the renowned director Sergei Bondarchuk, best known in the West for his mammoth eight-hour adaptation of Tolstoy's War and Peace.

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VADIM YUSOV - CINEMATOGRAPHER

The cameraman responsible for the resplendent images of Solaris is a long-time collaborator of Andrei Tarkovsky, dating back to their formative years at the State Institute for Cinema (VGIK) in the late 1950's. He was behind the camera for Tarkovsky on the director's award-winning short The Violin and the Steamroller (1960) and his first feature Ivan's Childhood (1962). He describes their work on Andrei Roublev (1966) as "both a secret and a sacrament. In our work we have ventured into unknown territory. We tried to find equivalent terms to what is practically an unknown epoch."

On Solaris (1972), his last shoot for Tarkovsky, he noted, "Here, it was essential to create an awareness of actual problems. In a complex imaginary situation, man retains his human dignity."

Among Yusov's other credits was a well-known Soviet film of its day, Meet Me in Moscow (1964), directed by Georgiy Daneliya and starring now-famous director Nikita Mikhalkov.

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"My discovery of Tarkovsky's first film was like a miracle.

Suddenly, I found myself standing at the door of a room the keys of which had, until then, never been given to me. It was a room I had always wanted to enter and where he was moving freely and fully at ease.

I felt encouraged and stimulated: someone was expressing what I had always wanted to say without knowing how.

Tarkovsky is for me the greatest, the one who invented a new language, true to the nature of film, as it captures life as a reflection, life as a dream."

Ingmar Bergman

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