



**OUTSIDERS AND EXILES: THE FILMS OF JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI**

# **Hands Up! (Ręce do góry)**

Skolimowski's alter ego Andrzej Leszczyc returns for a final bow as one of five thirtysomething former colleagues whose reunion, taking place in an abandoned railway wagon, becomes a sombre reflection on both Poland's past and possible future. It proved too near the knuckle for the communist authorities, who not only banned it but effectively sent its director into a lengthy exile.

## **Jerzy Skolimowski on 'Hands Up!'**

*Hands Up!* is by far my best film. Everyone who has seen it says so. I had complete freedom to make it exactly as I wanted. Nobody saw the rushes and nobody tried to force anything upon me. Consequently I was astonished when it was banned, but I still hope it will be released in the uncut version. It is a very ambitious film which will be understood differently in Poland and abroad. It is a provocation about political and social problems in Poland: a black film, not very explicit, with lots of allusions. The story line is realistic and non-realistic at the same time, but difficult to talk about. It is a kind of trip in the imagination.

We meet an anonymous man who could be any of us. We start to examine his appearance – he has nice glasses, a valuable ring and a developing paunch. He is approximately 35 years old and graduated in medicine ten years ago. Then we take a look at the inside. What has he done with the best ten years of his life? He has lost them. He has lost all the ideals he had when he was a young student. The more established he has become, the more he has lost. His life consists of all the unimportant things surrounding him, and which he constantly replaces to achieve a kind of variation. He gets new cars, new houses, new wives. He is obsessed by owning things, not on a large scale like an American millionaire but on a small one. And this is typical of the generation he belongs to in Poland: the big ideas have been replaced by the little things.

Ten years ago we were young in Poland. We were making a revolution, we fought Stalinism, and we believed in the future. People were fantastic at that time. We wanted to create something artistically, scientifically, politically. The world was open to us and we wanted to conquer it. But the older we have become, the smaller the world. Where are the ideas and the rage to live? *Hands Up!* deals with these problems as well as other moral and political questions in Poland. Maybe that is why the censors are mixed up and are delaying its release. The film is both an accusation and an explanation of why it has become like this. It is at one and the same time a conclusion and an outcry. I suppose this sounds pretentious, but the film itself doesn't seem pretentious, that is why I can take the liberty of talking pretentiously about it.

The leading character in *Hands Up!* undertakes a train journey, not in an ordinary compartment but in a cattle truck. This is one of many metaphors in the film. He is travelling in a truck which is normally used only for cattle, and which was also used for the transportation of prisoners to the concentration camps during the war. If this happened 25 years ago and we were our

parents, we had to fight for our lives. But today we don't fight any more, today we have this horrible lack of passion and engagement. The fact that this man is a doctor is another metaphor. His medical training enables him to cure people physically, but they also need mental care. How can he treat other people for diseases from which he is suffering himself?

If I were to represent *Hands Up!* graphically, there would be very vehement and vigorous oscillations in the pattern, interrupted every now and then by soft and gentle wavy lines. People argue and quarrel a lot, and the points of view are brought up sharply against each other – not in *cinéma vérité* style, for I work in the very opposite way, although I too am a realist. The discussions tear along like a boxing match, and suddenly the film becomes quiet for a few moments, tender and lyric scenes with quiet music before the fight goes on. It is my best and most mature film, and it is not funny at all.

### **Jerzy Skolimowski in conversation with Christian Braad Thomsen, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1968**

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#### **HANDS UP! (RĘCE DO GORY)**

*Director:* Jerzy Skolimowski

*Production Companies:* Film Polski, Zespół Filmowy 'Syrena'

*Written by:* Jerzy Skolimowski, Andrzej Kostenko

*Director of Photography:* Witold Sobocinski

*Editors:* Jadwiga Ignatzenko, Grazyna Jasinska, Zenon Piórecki

*Original Music:* Krzysztof Komeda

*Music:* Krzysztof Penderecki, Józef Skrzek

Poland 1967/1981

80 mins

#### **Cast**

Jerzy Skolimowski (*Andrzej Leszczyc*)

Tadeusz Lomnicki (*Opel Record*)

Joanna Szcerbic (*Alfa*)

Adam Hanuszkiewicz (*Romeo*)

Bogumil Kobiela (*Wartburg*)

#### *1981 footage*

Alan Bates, Jane Asher, David Essex, Bruno Ganz, Karol Kulik,

Michael Sarne, Volker Schlöndorff, Margarethe von Trotta,

Fred Zinnemann

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#### **OUTSIDERS AND EXILES: THE FILMS OF JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI**

**The Shout** Tue 28 March 20:45 (+ intro by Jerzy Skolimowski); Wed 5 Apr 20:55; Fri 28 Apr 18:30

**Walkover (Walkower)** Wed 29 Mar 18:20 (+ Q&A with Jerzy Skolimowski); Sat 8 Apr 18:10

#### **Moonlighting**

Wed 29 Mar 20:45 (+ intro by Jerzy Skolimowski); Sun 9 Apr 13:00; Sat 15 Apr 18:20

**Hands Up! (Reęce do góry)** Fri 31 Mar 20:45; Mon 10 Apr 15:40

**Barrier (Bariera)** Sat 1 Apr 18:20; Tue 4 Apr 20:50 (+ intro by season curator Michael Brooke)

**EO** Sat 1 Apr 20:50; Wed 5 Apr 18:20; Fri 21 Apr 20:50;

Sat 22 Apr 18:20; Thu 27 Apr 20:45

**Dialogue 20-40-60 (Dialóg 20-40-60)** Sun 2 Apr 12:30; Sat 15 Apr 20:45

**Deep End** Sun 2 Apr 15:40; Mon 10 Apr 18:30; Wed 19 Apr 20:55

**Le Départ** Sun 2 Apr 18:30; Mon 17 Apr 20:40

**Identification Marks: None (Rysopis)** Mon 3 Apr 21:00; Sun 9 Apr 18:40

**Outsider and Exile** Tue 4 Apr 18:15

**The Lightship** Sat 8 Apr 12:15; Fri 14 Apr 20:40

**11 Minutes (11 minut)** Sun 16 Apr 12:30; Sat 29 Apr 20:30

**Four Nights with Anna (Cztery noce z Anna)**

Sun 23 Apr 12:40; Fri 28 Apr 20:50

**Essential Killing** Sun 23 Apr 18:40; Sat 29 Apr 14:40

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*EO* will be available on BFI DVD and Blu-ray from 3 April (available to pre-order at the BFI shop). *Identification Marks: None* and *Hands Up!* will be available on a 2-disc BFI Blu-ray from 24 April

*Walkover* and *Barrier* will be released on Blu-ray by Second Run later this year

Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit

Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email [prognotes@bfi.org.uk](mailto:prognotes@bfi.org.uk)

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