

Zespół Filmowy "X" przedstawia film Andrzeja Wajdy:

CZŁOWIEK Z ŻELAZA

Zdjęcia: Edward Klosinski, Występują: Jerzy Radziwiłowicz, Krystyna Janda, Marian Opuszcza

MAN OF IRON



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2026 OFFICIAL SELECTION
CANNES CLASSICS



SAF: Film Polski

FILM DESCRIPTION

Man of Iron is a sequel to Andrzej Wajda's Man of Marble, with which it shares some characters and themes. The action takes place in August 1980, at the very heart of massive anti-Communist protests that were the launch of the Solidarity movement.

The protagonist of the film is Winkel, a reporter from Warsaw, who is tasked by his bosses to travel to Gdańsk and record a radio programme discrediting one of the leaders of the strike committee at the Gdańsk Shipyard, a man called Maciej Tomczyk. Coming to Gdańsk, Winkel senses the atmosphere of political tension and social awakening. He attempts to insinuate himself into the world of protesters. The workers' strike in Gdańsk Shipyard is fast becoming a national symbol of the fight for freedom and dignity.



In the course of his investigation, Winkel interviews people closest to Tomczyk, including his old friends and colleagues, and his wife Agnieszka, who is in prison due to her anti-Communist activities. With each meeting, Winkel uncovers not only the story of the man he was sent to discredit, but also the truth about the emerging Solidarity movement and the moral strength of a society standing up to the oppressive system.

Confronted with the experiences and beliefs of the people committed to the fight for justice, Winkel gradually sheds the role that imposed upon him by his employers and changes sides. His personal transformation becomes a testament to the awakening of a human conscience in the face of history.

Man of Iron is a deeply moving fusion of political drama, moral dilemmas, and historical record. The film shows a pivotal moment in the recent history of Europe and presents it with extraordinary power. Its portrayal of the birth of civic courage is still topical today.

SYNOPSIS

Man of Iron is a continuation of Man of Marble. The second film comes back to the iconic characters from the earlier film, even though now they play more supporting roles. Man of Iron follows a radio reporter who, acting on the orders from his employers, comes to Gdańsk looking for compromising materials on one of the leaders of the Solidarity movement, a man called Maciej Tomczyk.

In a moving plot twist it is revealed that Tomczyk is the son of Mateusz Birkut, the titular “Man of Marble” from the first film. Tomczyk is also now married to Agnieszka, the intrepid film director who was the protagonist of Man of Marble and who uncovered Birkut’s story.

The main themes of Man of Iron include reclaiming dignity and agency of the workers and standing up to the Communist regime. During the tumultuous events that occurred in the Gdańsk Shipyard in August 1980, these ideas are not only philosophical goals, they become political and social reality.

The strikes at the Gdańsk Shipyard, which led to the signing of the August Agreements and the official creation of Solidarity, are shown by Andrzej Wajda with the air of exceptional authenticity. The audiences can feel that they are in front seats, witnessing history being made.



The film was shot almost simultaneously with the events it depicts, and the scenes of negotiations between workers and government representatives were filmed in the Health and Safety Hall of the Gdańsk Shipyard just days after the actual events took place in the same location, which guarantees an unprecedented level of authenticity.

In this way, Man of Iron is now remembered not only as an important feature film in Wajda’s artistic output, but also as an unparalleled social document tracking the political awakening and social mobilisation that changed the course of Polish and European history in 1980.

Regarded as one of the main achievements of Poland’s “cinema of moral anxiety”, the film is the second instalment in Wajda’s unique trilogy, which begins with Man of Marble (1976) and finishes, decades later, with Wałęsa: Man of Hope (2013).

Awarded the Palme d’Or and the Ecumenical Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1981, and nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, Man of Iron has become a powerful symbol of international recognition for Polish cinema in a dark moment of Polish history, when the joyous period which followed the launch of Solidarity was giving way to brutal repressions introduced by the Communists. Equally significant as the international recognition was an award granted to the film by Solidarity itself, acknowledging its truth and authenticity.

CANNES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 1981



RALPH GATTI/AFP/EAST NEWS

AWARDS

Cannes Film Festival - Palme d'Or 1981

Cannes Film Festival - Prize of the Ecumenical Jury 1981

**Academy Awards Nomination - Best Foreign
Language Film 1982**

New York Film Critics Circle - Special Award 1981

César Awards Nomination - Best Foreign Film 1981

Polish Film Festival in Gdańsk – Solidarity Award 1981

Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Iron* has secured its place in the history of world cinema as one of the most iconic achievements of Polish filmmaking. At the 34th Cannes International Film Festival in 1981, the film was honoured with the festival's coveted highest distinction the Palme d'Or, as well as with the Ecumenical Jury Prize, confirming its exceptional artistic and historical value.

For the Polish film industry it was a watershed moment: *Man of Iron* became the first Polish film ever to receive the Palme d'Or, opening a new chapter in the international perception of Polish cinema and cementing Andrzej Wajda's position as one of the most significant artists of European cinema.

Created as a raw and immediate artistic response to the events of August 1980 and the birth of the Solidarity movement, the film represented an act of remarkable courage. Its documentary-inspired style fits the hectic pace of political events that the film depicts. As a continuation of *Man of Marble*, Wajda's film united political urgency with profound humanism, producing a deeply moving portrait of social mobilisation and the fight for freedom.

Shot at extraordinary speed, almost in parallel with the events it depicts, the film achieved a rare authenticity and documentary force. The outstanding performances of Jerzy Radziwiłowicz, Krystyna Janda, and Marian Opania, combined with Aleksander Ścibor-Rylski's nuanced screenplay, all contributed to the creation of a film that has a special level emotional and political intensity.

The Ecumenical Jury at Cannes likewise praised the film for "opening new horizons for the art of cinema" and recognized its artistic courage, moral strength, and historical significance.

The triumph at Cannes was also confirmed on the broader international arena when *Man of Iron* received an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film in 1982.

Winning the Palme d'Or was not only an artistic achievement, but also an act of symbolic recognition for Polish culture, Polish society, and the power of cinema as a witness to history. To this day, the 1981 Cannes Film Festival remains one of the iconic instances of Polish cinema's international triumphs.

Andrzej Wajda (1926-2016) was a prolific film and theatre director and screenwriter, and one of the most prominent and recognizable members of the “Polish Film School”. He was the recipient of the Academy Honorary Award for lifetime achievement in 2000 and the Palme d'Or at Cannes for Man of Iron in 1981. The creator of such masterworks as Kanał, [AG1] Ashes and Diamonds, The Ashes, The Wedding, The Promised Land, Man of Marble, The Maids of Wilko, Danton, Korczak, Pan Tadeusz, and Katyń.

Apart from his work in film, he also worked in the theatre, proving to be a theatrical director of extraordinary vision. His notable stage productions include The Possessed, November Night, and Crime and Punishment, each of which premiered at the Stary Theatre in Kraków before touring internationally and achieving great acclaim. Andrzej Wajda was the son of Jakub Wajda, murdered by the Russian NKVD in a mass murder of captured Polish officers (which became the focal point of Wajda's 2007 film Katyń). The young Andrzej Wajda studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków and subsequently enrolled in the renowned Łódź Film School.

Wajda served as head of the "X" Film Studio in 1980s and as the president of the Polish Filmmakers Association, and became elected to the Polish Senate where he sat from 1989 to 1991.



As a committed proponent of culture and film education, he was the driving force behind numerous artistic and educational institutions, among them the Wajda Film School in Warsaw.

Together with his wife, set designer and costume designer Krystyna Zachwatowicz-Wajda, he founded the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology in Kraków. Before 1989, both Andrzej and Krystyna were actively engaged in the anti-Communist opposition and the Solidarity movement.

ANDRZEJ WAJDA

“What one felt when one passed through the shipyard gates was a sense of complete safety, complete freedom, and complete independence, which was shared by everyone inside. What astonished us was this: in Warsaw we had been living and breathing the current politics, obsessing about minor cabinet reshuffles and the minutiae of day-to-day political process. None of that interested the workers in the shipyard in the slightest. They were not trying to change the government, or replace the party leadership. These people were interested in something else entirely. They wanted to change their own fate and not someone else's. No one was listening to the radio. No one cared about television. It was there, for the first time, that we saw just how deeply deceptive the entire propaganda machine really was.”

And also how completely it can be ignored at a certain level of collective consciousness.”

From “Victory (with a small question mark): a conversation with Jerzy Biernacki”, 1981, in: Wajda mówi o sobie [Wajda on Himself], ed. W. Wertenstein, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1991 [2000], p. 139.





CREW

DIRECTION
ANDRZEJ WAJDA

SCREENPLAY
ALEKSANDER ŚCIBOR-RYLSKI

CINEMATOGRAPHY
EDWARD KŁOSIŃSKI

PRODUCTION DESIGN
ALLAN STARSKI

COSTUMES
WIESŁAWA STARSKA

MUSIC
ANDRZEJ KORZYŃSKI

EDITING
HALINA PRUGAR-KETLING

SOUND
PIOTR ZAWADZKI

CAST

JERZY RADZIWIŁOWICZ (MACIEK TOMCZYK/
MATEUSZ BIRKUT)

KRYSTYNA JANDA (AGNIESZKA)

MARIAN OPANIA (WINKEL)

IRENA BYRSKA (MS HULEWICZ)

BOGUSŁAW LINDA (DZIDEK)



STILLS



WFDIF FILM RESTORATION DEPARTMENT

RESTORING THE CLASSICS TO THEIR ORIGINAL GLORY

THE DOCUMENTARY AND FEATURE FILM STUDIOS (WFDIF)

HAS BEEN CARRYING OUT DIGITAL RESTORATION PROJECTS FOR MANY YEARS, RESTORING IMPORTANT WORKS OF POLISH CINEMA TO THEIR ORIGINAL CONDITION. WE PREPARE NEW VERSIONS OF FILMS FOR CONTEMPORARY THEATRICAL, FESTIVAL, AND DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION, WHILE PRESERVING THE FORM, CHARACTER, AND AESTHETIC OF THE ORIGINALS.

THE RESTORATION PROCESS BEGINS WITH THE SOURCE MATERIALS. THE 35MM FILM STOCK IS INSPECTED, PREPARED FOR DIGITISATION, AND, DEPENDING ON ITS CONDITION, CLEANED USING A VARIETY OF METHODS, INCLUDING BY ULTRASONIC MEANS WHERE NECESSARY. THE AIM OF THIS STAGE IN THE PROCESS IS TO PREPARE THE MATERIAL FOR SCANNING AS SAFELY AS POSSIBLE, MINIMISING THE IMPACT OF DIRT AND WEAR ACCUMULATED OVER THE YEARS.

THE NEXT STAGE IS 4K IMAGE SCANNING. THE DIGITAL CAPTURE OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL FRAME PRESERVES THE FILM'S TEXTURE, ITS NATURAL GRAIN, AS WELL AS THE NUANCES OF LIGHTING, AND THE COMPOSITION OF THE IMAGE. THIS FORMS THE BASIS FOR ALL SUBSEQUENT RESTORATION WORK, ALSO CARRIED OUT IN 4K.

THE DIGITAL RESTORATION ITSELF BRINGS TOGETHER TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS AND A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF FILM LANGUAGE AND CINEMA HISTORY. WFDIF TECHNICIANS STABILISE THE MATERIAL, REMOVE MECHANICAL DAMAGE AND VISIBLE DIRT FROM THE IMAGE, AND CARRY OUT COLOUR GRADING AND SOUND RESTORATION. EVERY STAGE OF THE PROCESS IS CONDUCTED WITH FULL RESPECT FOR THE ORIGINAL INTENTIONS OF THE FILMMAKERS AND WITH CAREFUL ATTENTION TO PRESERVING THE CHARACTER OF THE WORK AS IT WAS ORIGINALLY MADE. THE FINAL RESULT IS A FULLY RESTORED FILM IN 4K.

RESTORATIONS CARRIED OUT AT WFDIF SERVE TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE HERITAGE OF POLISH CINEMA. DIGITAL VERSIONS ALLOW FILMS TO RETURN TO CINEMA SCREENS, FESTIVAL LINEUPS, CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS, AND ONLINE DISTRIBUTION.

THIS CUTTING-EDGE, HIGHLY TECHNICAL WORK DRAWS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR TEAM, THE CAPABILITIES OF BEST AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY, AND A DEEP SENSE OF PRIDE THAT THANKS TO US, THE CLASSICS OF POLISH CINEMA ARE REACHING NEW GENERATIONS OF AUDIENCES.

CONTACT

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