

## BARBARELLA

France/Italy                      1967                                      98 minutes                                      Certificate X

Director:                                      Roger Vadim  
Producer:                                      Mario Garbuglia  
Cinematographer:                              Claude Renoir  
Writer:    Terry Southern  
Book:    Jean Claude Forest  
Music:    Bob Greave and Charles Fox

### Cast

Barbarella	Jane Fonda	Concierge	Milo O'Shea
Pygar	John Philip Law	President of Earth	Claude Dauphin
Black Queen	Anita Pallenberg	Prof. Ping	Marcel Marceau
Mark Hand	Ugo Tognazz	Dilo Dano	David Hemmings

In addition to being our contribution to mark Woking Borough Council's carnival, whose theme is "Millennium", this futuristic film is also being screened as a tribute to the director, Roger Vadim, who passed away on 11 February 2000.

Born Roger Vladimir Plemiannikov on 26 January 1928 in Paris of Ukranian-French descent, he served his apprenticeship in films between 1947 and 1955, as assistant to director Marc Allegret and also as an occasional screenwriter. In 1956 he made a sensational debut as a director with *And God Created Woman*.

The impact of that film is hard to judge now, however displaying of the nude body of his young wife, Bridget Bardot was a success, particularly in America. It was a daringly erotic film for its time, and it challenged the conventional views of romanticism.

The success of the film helped pave the way for other young filmmakers into the mainstream of French cinema and is said to have made possible the emergence of the New Wave. His subsequent films revealed an accomplished craftsman, with a highly visual content, which was often said to be at the expense of narrative.

Sexual relations were a recurrent theme, with plots often revolving around the beauty of his wives (Bardot, Annette Stroyberg and Fonda), as well as various mistresses.

Jane Fonda (born 21 December 1937) had married Vadim in 1965. This was their first collaboration, although in the early years of their relationship she had led two separate lives - making bubbly innocent comedies in America, such as *Cat Ballou* (1965) and *Barefoot in the Park* (1967), while living an unconventional life in Europe.

The plan was for Vadim to become a major Hollywood director, with Fonda as his star. In order to make tonight's film, she turned down what, in retrospect many regard as two of the best female roles of the decade, in *Bonnie and Clyde* plus *Rosemary's Baby*.

Barbarella was a sensation of a kind (perhaps mainly the wrong kind), and it marked the end of Vadim's prospects of a major Hollywood career, as well as effectively the end of their marriage.

It is clear that Jane Fonda now has some reservations about the film.....A few years ago, Fonda appeared at the San Francisco International Film Festival, for a retrospective tribute.

“Where was your head at, when you made Barbarella?” someone from the audience apparently asked, (I could not imagine a question being phrased in such a manner at a Guardian Interview at the National Film Theatre in London!)

“I don’t know – up my armpit, I guess” Fonda responded, “ We all make mistakes. In my case, I keep getting my nose rubbed in them.”

Barbarella was released in the same year as *If....* and 2001: A Space Odyssey. It was a time when sex and language barriers were evaporating on screen and films that broke ground won attention.

Perhaps in retrospect, Barbarella, instead of being a film to be ashamed of, gives a hint of what might have been had Fonda continued in comedic roles. It can also be regarded as a reflection of the attitude of its director to life, women and cinema as a visual art.

Upon the announcement of Vadim’s death, President Chirac mourned a man who “shook up all the prevailing attitudes”.

IAIN McGLASHAN  
CHAIRMAN