

DVD

## Stardust Memories: Socialist Sci-fi From East Germany

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If there's anything more beguiling to a true treasure-hunting cinephile than the old films of a lost nation—in this case, East Germany—it's that nation's idiosyncratic genre flicks. Socialist sci-fi! First Run is releasing three uncut films from DEFA, the GDR's premier production studio, all of them chintzy, freaky, conceptual space operas focused, surprisingly, on character and emotional fallout. The best and first, Kurt Maetzig's *The Silent Star* (1960), is set in a peace-and-harmony, post-Cold War future when a multinational mission investigating signals from Venus discovers a world poisoned by atomic war-making. "What does this remind you of?" a German asks a Japanese doctor as they space-buggy through the Venusian ruins; "Hiroshima," she answers. One of the very few East German features to be released here (badly edited and dubbed, as *First Spaceship on Venus*), the movie prioritizes the crew's sober intellectual and social intercourse. Of course, the science, acting, and special effects are all camp-ready nonsense. Likewise, *Eolomea* (1972) is a wackily dysfunctional galaxial mystery, in which scientists pursue the fate of missing space station ships with the help of cute robots, and *In the Dust of the Stars* (1976), a virtual explosion of rather un-socialist '70s cosmopolitanism, involves another investigation of a distant distress signal, emanating from a planet of humanoids with something to hide. Supps include tons of design art, interviews, and newsreels.



Primal beam: *The Silent Star*

photo: First Run Features

**The Silent Star**  
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