KINONIK

ON THE BEACH (1959)

Directed by Stanley Kramer

WEDNESDAY September 17th 7PM

SATURDAY September 20th 7PM



"Melbourne is the perfect place to make a film about the end of the world."

Contemporary apocalypse films usually betray their premise. If we are witnessing "the end of the world", how are we in the aftermath? While there are often staggering losses, human life continues, the "end" a flashback. Stanley Kramer's **On the Beach** (1959) takes the end seriously. World War III broke out, nuclear missiles were fired across the map, and now only Australia and those who managed to flee there survive. But the clouds of fallout are coming, bringing annihilation with them. As far as they know, they are the last people on Earth, living out humanity's last days. Who will they be in the end, and how will they choose to face it?

Absolutely stacked with talent: Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Fred Astaire, Anthony Perkins and Donna Anderson each struggle to grapple with the gravity of their situation in performances praised "uniformly excellent" (this was Astaire's first non-musical, dramatic role, and Anderson's debut). Loyalties to people and places that no longer exist haunt every decision, providing a powerful undercurrent to the plot as they try to find a way out the other side of this calamity. Yet this is not all dour–there is still time for hope, for new love, for personal victories and noble sacrifice. While there may be no grand tomorrow for humanity, the characters still wake up to tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, and live fully here, at the end.

The film was a passion project for Peck, who was a staunch pacifist and opponent of nuclear weapons. He, as did many who worked on the project and had long lived under the threat of nuclear war, felt that the only way to forward the cause of disarmament was by confronting the reality of possible extinction head-on. The first major Hollywood picture to deal with nuclear apocalypse, and the first Hollywood film to get a premiere in the Soviet Union during the Cold War, **On the Beach** wanted to invite audiences to face our destructive tendencies head-on to find a better way forward.