

CINEMA

Review: A Love in Germany

Directed by Andrzej Wajda; with Hanna Schygulla, Marie-Christine Barrault, Elisabeth Trissenaar.

A Love in Germany is Andrzej Wajda's second film to be made outside his home country. A Pole under pressure to make non-political films, he has turned to going out of the country, as with his last film *Danton*, a French production about the terror during the French Revolution. *A Love* is a French-German co-production about the German home front during WWII. As expected, these are not only insightful political documents, but they are thinly veiled allegories for the political situation back home in Poland.

This is without a doubt Wajda's most accessible film to date. Handsomely mounted, beautifully shot and intelligently acted, it stars Fassbinder regular Hanna Schygulla as Paulina Kropp, a German woman raising her son alone while running her husband's produce market while he is off fighting. Out of love and loneliness she becomes involved with Polish POW Stanislaw Zasada (Piotr Lysak), a worker staying with some neighbors, the elderly Melchior, as a stable hand and odd job worker. Paulina regularly "borrows" him, ostensibly to help with the heavy crates of product, but the town isn't blind to their actions. On the contrary, many of the neighbors find it disgusting and shameful, but they keep quiet because of the penalty for adultery between a German woman and a non-Aryan man.

Things become complicated when Paulina decides it is best to break off the affair, the night

before Stani is seriously injured by the horses in the stables. When Paulina learns he is in the hospital, she unthinkingly runs into his room and gives him a public display of her feelings, hard for the hospital personnel to ignore. At about the same time, her neighbor Maria (Marie-Christine Barrault) decides she would like to own the shop and schemes to leak the information to the Gestapo. The time is right when Paulina sends a letter to her best friend and bookkeeper Elsbeth (Elisabeth Trissenaar) to pass on to Stani. Somehow, and we are not quite sure how, the letter finds its way into Gestapo hands and the affair can no longer be ignored.

The story is constructed as a flashback. An elderly man and his teenage son travel back to the village of Brombach to unravel the events of the past, to dredge up the past that everyone wants so desperately to forget. When he walks into Paulina's old shop, he runs into Elsbeth's daughter. She rails against the man out of fright and demands he let the past be forgotten. Obviously both he and director Wajda believe just the opposite—that the past should never be forgotten, especially when the people who claim to be innocent bystanders of the Nazi atrocities were actually willing participants.

Wajda's vision of the past is truly frightening. The people of the village are not Nazis (except for a few SS officers) but they are totally indoctrinated with Hitler's idea of the master race. So many of the villagers blindly accept Stani's inferiority and treat him as a pariah. The only truly sympathetic characters of the film are Stani and Paulina, both brave, loving, kind people portrayed with dignity. Schygulla is especially powerful as Paulina; she practically glows in her role, subtly reacting to the townspeople and friends as they advise her to stay away from



Hanna Schygulla is Paulina Kropp in Andrzej Wajda's *A Love in Germany*.

Stani. Her finest moment occurs as she and Stani make love behind a partially open door of her cellar. Her young son comes down the stairs, and, not seeing Stani behind the door, smiles at his mother benignly. Schygulla is startled at first, but a smile slowly breaks across her face and she gently closes the door. It is a tender scene that only an accomplished actress could have pulled off believably, and Schygulla does.

A Love in Germany is a very good film with great scenes. Unfortunately for Wajda, the very few scenes in the present carry more immediacy and drama than the flashback sequences. It is as if Wajda found the attempts of the townspeople to forget their unpleasant part even more interesting than the events themselves. I would have liked to have seen more of the actual questioning than the flashback, but it is a minor quibble. Overall the film is well acted, beautifully constructed and very perceptive. Wajda has chocked up another perceptive drama of human affairs disrupted by repressive political doctrine.

—Sean Axmaker

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NOW SHOWING

Amadeus: Mozart's music becomes a character in this lavishly filmed (partly in the director's native Prague) adaptation of Peter Schaffer's acclaimed modern stage play. Directed by Milos Forman (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*), the conflict is between the playfully brazen child-man Mozart (Tom Hulce) his mediocre musical rival Antonio Salieri (F. Murray Abraham). Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Avenging Angel: Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Beverly Hills Cop: Shows with *Police Academy II* at Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Blood Simple: Bloody. A Texas tavern owner hires a sweaty private detective (M. Emmet Walsh) to kill his wife and her lover. The *S.F. Chronicle* calls this a "genuine spine tingler, crisscrossed with slashes of droll, offbeat wit." Pauline Kael calls it "pulp yet art conscious" and says there are plenty of "film noir in-jokes." Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Code of Silence: Chuck Norris blows 'em away at the Springfield Quad (726-9073). Shows with *Terminator* at West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Desperately Seeking Susan: A good girl-bad girl social satire that offers rock star Madonna as the Manhattan queen of sleaze whose glitter, street-wise lifestyle is coveted by a bored, virginal New Jersey housewife (Rosanna Arquette) who is married to a hot tub king. Someone aptly described this film as a "New Wave Alice in Wonderland." Susan Seidelman directed (her first film was *Smithereens*). Aidan Quinn (*Reckless*) plays the handsome projectionist Dez. Not a heavy message film, just a lot of fun. Mayflower (345-1022).

48 Hours: Comedy/violence. Eddie Murphy and Nick Nolte. Shows with *Witness* at the Oakway (342-5351).

Gotcha: A young American goes to Paris and falls in love with a girl who is supposed to be European but turns out to be American CIA. Stolen secrets get misplaced and the poor innocent guy has trouble he doesn't deserve. Linda Fiorentino (*Vision Quest*) co-stars with Anthony Edwards (*Revenge of the Nerds*). West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Just One of the Guys: A girl wants to be a football player. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Ladyhawk: Medieval Romance. Rutger Hauer (the evil replicant in *Blade Runner*) is the dashing swordsman Navarre who suffers from the unrequited love of the fair Isabeau (Michelle Pfeiffer, *Scarface*). John Wood (*Wargames*) is her rejected jealous lover who bestows a curse which transforms Isabeau to a hawk by day and Navarre to a wolf by night. Directed by Richard Donner (*The Omen*, *Superman*). Cinema World (342-6536).

The Last Dragon: Part satire, part cartoon of Bruce Lee movies and the video industry. The bad guys wear Ming Dynasty football uniforms. Shows with *The Slugger's Wife* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

Lost in America: Albert Brooks wrote, directed and acted in this funny, Winnebago-Easy Rider comedy about a Yupwardly mobile couple who quit their high-paying L.A. jobs, buy a winnebago with a microwave, and hit the road to "find themselves." Cinema World (342-6536).

A Love in Germany: Hanna Schygulla plays a dutiful married woman in war-time Germany who meets a much younger Polish prisoner-of-war and falls deeply in love while her husband is off fighting. The story involves a woman's sensual awakening, plus a conflict of self-vs.-the collective, as the Nazi's made the unlawful fraternization with POW's punishable by imprisonment for Germans and death for POW's. NY Times critic Vincent Canby called this film: "Political, erotic and romantic."

Polish director Andrzej Wajda (*Man of Iron*, *Man of Marble*, *Danton*, *Ashes and Diamonds*) brings his formidable talent to this best-seller novel by Rolf Hochhuth, and engages one of Germany's leading ladies, Hanna Schygulla (*Effie Briest*, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, *Lili Marlene*, *Circle of Deceit*), to create a memorable film work. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Lust in the Dust: Figure it out for yourself. McDonald (344-4343).

A Matter of Heart: C.G. Jung: Shows May 18-23. Made in 1983 by Mark Whitney. An inspiring portrait of the life of psychology giant Carl Jung. Interviews with those who knew him personally provide an exploration of the man and his work with psyche, soul and drama. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Martin's Day: Stars Bionic Woman Lindsay Wagner. West 11th Tri Cinema (342-4142).

Mask: Cher is the perfect biker mama in this "Elephant Man" (true-life) story about a teenage boy with a horribly disfigured face. Newcomer Eric Stoltz (*The Wild Life*) is sensitive and poignant as the misfit whose mother's love gives him the courage to live. Cher is tough and funny and sweet. The bikers give the film its comic relief, and provide a support community of misfits in which Mom and son live, work and play. National (344-3431).

Purple Rose of Cairo: An entertaining and thought-provoking parable from Woody Allen about the movies and what they are—for the creators and the audiences. Mia Farrow plays an insecure 30's waitress who is trapped in a marriage to a jerk, and rather than leave him, escapes at the movies. One day her film hero (Jeff Daniels) actually walks off the screen and into her arms. The rest is pure Allen cleverness and magic. Cinema World (342-6536).

Rocktober Blood: Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Rustlers' Rhapsody: Directed by Hugh Wilson (*Police Academy*, TV's *WKRP in Cincinnati*). A western spoof reported to be somewhat in the genre of *Blazing Saddles*. Stars Andy Griffith and Tom Berenger (*The Big Chill*). Cinema World (342-6536).

The Slugger's Wife: A baseball player goes into a slump when his wife support system redirects her energy from his career to her own. Light romantic comedy. Shows with *Last Dragon* at Fine Arts (747-2201).

Stop Making Sense: The Talking Heads concert film, Jonathan Demme directs this document of the enigmatic figure David Byrne and his band of contempo tribals. Bijou (686-2458).

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