



SCALA: SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK AND ROLL CINEMA

Taxi zum Klo

Taxi zum Klo

Director: Frank Ripplloh

Production Company: Filmwelt

Producers: Laurens Straub, Frank Ripplloh

Production Assistance: Karl Beckers, Hajo Corsten, Günther Kortwich, Christian Moldt, Knut Schaller, Andreas Höhne

Assistant Director: Peter Fahrni

Screenplay: Frank Ripplloh

Director of Photography: Horst Schier

Assistant Photographer: Hannes Geyer

Editors: Marina Runne, Matthias von Gunten

Cast:

Frank Ripplloh (*Frank*)

Bernd Broaderup (*Bernd*)

Orpha Termin (*female neighbour*)

Peter Fahrni (*garage attendant*)

Dieter Gödde (*masseur*)

Klaus Schnee, Bernd Kröger, Markus Voigtländer,

Irmgard Lademacher, Gregor Becker,

Marguerite Dupont, Eberhard Freudenthal,

Beate Springer (*teachers*)

Millie Büttner (*strange woman*)

Gitta Lederer (*mother*)

Hans Gerd Mertens (*1st leatherboy*)

Ulla Topf (*prostitute*)

Franco Papadu (*Italian*)

Tabea Blumenschein (*lady*)

Magdalena Montezuma (*doctor's assistant*)

Jürgen Möller (*skin doctor*)

Valeska Gerstenberg (*Irmchen*)

Brigitte Knigge (*travel agent*)

Hans Kellner (*taxi driver*)

Ric Schachtebeck (*2nd leatherboy*)

West Germany 1981

98 mins

Digital

The screening on Mon 8 Jan will be introduced by Scala usher Vic Roberts

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Taxi zum Klo is a largely autobiographical venture, with Frank Ripplloh and his former lover Bernd Broaderup reproducing their real-life situation. After a 1978 article in *Stern* in which he openly admitted to his homosexuality, Ripplloh left teaching when disciplinary action was taken against him, and devoted himself full-time to filmmaking. This, his first feature, was made on a shoestring but the result is a mature work, perfectly controlled and finely photographed. Its mainstay is an attention to detail rather than generalisation, whether it is the jar of vaseline next to the alarm clock, or the omnipresence of the media from TV morning exercises or *Liberace* to the taxi-driver's lurid tabloid. This is the manner of the opening sequence, where the visual exploitation of the badges and postcards on Frank's wall, overlaid with Ripplloh's pat autobiography, points to the multi-faceted and even contradictory portrayal which will follow.

This and the film's maturity and lack of drama recall *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, which examined similar questions of fidelity and homosexuality but in a vastly different milieu. Similarly, the subject of a gay teacher and the film's relentless realism – notably the night drives through the city – owe much to *Nighthawks* [Ron Peck, 1978]. But here the central situation goes deeper into the issues surrounding a loving relationship, and rather than plodding, the narrative rhythm varies between the gradual introduction of highly endearing characters and the irruption of a number of unashamed gags in which Ripplloh's comic talent is evident. Unlike the Peck/Hallam film, the sex scenes are explicit and vary from the tender (Bernd and Frank bathing and shampooing each other) to the brutal (sodomasochism with the garage attendant). Moreover, the relationship with the heterosexual world is not as self-conscious: there is no scene where Frank confesses and explains his homosexuality to a colleague – simply, for example, the conversation with Irmchen about relationships in general.

Confrontation is represented obliquely – the stable boy revealing that he would lose his job if his homosexuality were known, the mocking reaction of a woman passenger to Frank and Bernd in fancy-dress. This approach is true of the portrayal of politics as a whole – Frank deciding to go to the baths instead of a meeting on Chile, his amusement at a neo-Nazi on TV calling on homosexuals to be put in work-camps. The most sustained 'political' sequence is the projection of the anti-gay film – required viewing at Ripplloh's own school – which also reveals the director's assurance in his medium: the film-within-the-film combines with the favourite device of the cross-cut (often to-ing and fro-ing between Bernd and Frank) to show how Frank in the other room is trying, not to seduce his pupil, but to get him to pay attention to the dictation. The ending is not schematic: Bernd hugging a lamb in the countryside is the 'tender', couple-oriented homosexual; Frank is restless, but he does love Bernd, and the revelation of their reconciliation implies that nothing is really resolved. But the film's irony, though often self-directed, hints at the creatively subversive nature of the subject: when Frank 'comes out' to his pupils, the result is not a round of serious questioning but the manifestation of anarchic revolt.

Bill Marshall, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, January 1982

Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

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