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Katzelmacher (GERMAN)

Mannheim, Oct. 13.

An Alpha release of Antitater (Rainer Werner Fassbinder) production. Features entire cast. Directed and written by Fassbinder. Camera, Dietrich Lohmann; music Peer Raben; editing, Franz Walsch. Reviewed at Mannheim Festival, Oct. 12, '69. Running time, 90 MINS.

Marie Hanna Schygulla
Paul Rudolf Waldemar Brem
Helga Lilith Ungerer
Romy Elga Sorbas
Gunda Doris Mattes
Elisabeth Irm Hermann
Franz Harry Baer
Jorgos Rainer Werner Fassbinder

"Katzelmacher" is, after "Colder Than Death," German entry at the 1969 Berlin Film Festival, the second full-length feature of Rainer Werner Fassbinder. While this young director's initial opus didn't make too much of an impression, there is good reason to laud his second one. "Katzelmacher" emerges one of the most interesting and important young W-German pix of 1969. It captured the Prize of International Film Critics at the just-terminated Mannheim Festival. ~~It has already found a domestic distrib (Alpha) but it is rather doubtful whether this avantgarde type of vehicle will be a good bargain. Pic requires a very receptive audience, but if adequately dubbed, might be a welcome item for foreign arties.~~

"Katzelmacher" (whose literary translation would be "cat maker") is a Bavarian abusive word for "Gastarbeiter" — foreign guest,

workers in Germany. One of these, a Greek, is the central figure. He rents a room in the household of an unmarried young couple who, as often happens to foreigners here, overcharge him. There are several couples in this house, more or less all provincial-minded people, and their banal talk displays narrow-mindedness. Most of the time they feel bored. Occasionally they go out for drinking and there is also a girl who makes "it" for money in the house.

Arrival of the Greek "guest worker" interrupts their stupid boredom. The men have an immediate grudge against the foreigner and show their open dislike. Their ire grows bigger when he goes out with a German girl. They think him a criminal or a Communist, and finally find it more than justified to beat him up.

Fassbinder's film is a heavy attack against German intolerance and prejudice which, even in this aggressive form, is often very evident among narrow-minded people. It's an undisguised attack against Fascist-like behavior and mentality.

He doesn't deliver the story the conventional way. After all, he is a representative of Germany's anti-theatre movement. His entire film is stylized. Only a few props and often the players are just sitting against a white wall. Everything is spartanic about "Katzelmacher." There are brief, mostly staccato-type dialog sequences. But every scene contains dry humor and/or cold irony. The young director

maintains this difficult style with remarkable skill and conviction. He must be regarded as an unusual young talent. Not only did he write and direct this film, but also took over the role of the Greek. Good performances down the line, but none a standout, chiefly an ensemble achievement.

No matters are minced. Vulgar expressions galore, a good deal of nudity and bed sequences, even homosexuality finds its chapter. Fortunately, nothing has the flavor of speculation. Everything has its place here.

This production displays a very modest budget, but is technically competent enough. The score utilizes Schubert melodies which add to the mood in an amusing way. But it's the contents that counts most. Film should reach many German people for it is a very important film. Hans.

Oct. 15 '69

Winner of the 1970 West German Federation Film Award (Deutscher Filmpreis) for Best Production, Best Screenplay, Camerawork of Dietrich Lohmann and an award to Fassbinder's ensemble of Munich's so-called antitheatre group. (Best production award is a "Filmband in Gold" and 250,000 D-Marks.) (Also given the sum of 400,000 D-Marks for future productions).