

## Document Citation

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## Reviewed From Berlin Fest

### Die Sehnsucht Der Veronika Voss (Veronika Voss) (WEST GERMAN-B&W)

Variety

Berlin, Feb. 19.

A Laura Film and Tango Film production, in coproduction with Rialto Film, Trio Film and Maran Film. Executive producer, Thomas Schuehly (Laura Film) and Rainer Werner Fassbinder (Tango Film). Features entire cast. Directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder; screenplay, Peter Marthesheimer, Pea Frohlich; camera (b&w), Xaver Schwarzenberger; sets, Rolf Zehetbauer; costumes, Barbara Baum; music, Peer Raben; editor, Juliane Lorenz. Reviewed at Berlin Film Fest, Feb. 18, '82. Running time: 105 MINS.

Veronika Voss ..... Rosel Zech  
Robert Krohn ..... Hilmar Thate  
Dr. Katz ..... Annemarie Dueringer  
Josefa ..... Doris Schade  
Henriette ..... Cornelia Froboess  
Dr. Edel ..... Eric Schumann  
Max Rehbein ..... Armin Mueller-Stahl  
Herr Treibel ..... Peter Luehr  
Frau Treibel ..... Brigitte Horney  
Grete ..... Elisaveth Volkmann  
Chief Editor ..... Hans Wypraechtger  
First Editor ..... Volker Spengler  
Woman Doctor ..... Tamara Kafka  
Doctor at asylum ..... Karl-Heinz Von Hassel  
Propaganda Minister ..... Thomas Schuehly  
Saleslady ..... Sonja Neudorfer  
Film Director ..... Peter Zadek  
Police Superintendent ..... Rainer Werner Fassbinder

This return of Rainer Werner Fassbinder to his former days of directorial glory will be warmly greeted by RWF fans who have been disappointed with everything he's put on the screen since "In A Year With 13 Moons" and "The Third Generation." And don't be worried about the third appearance of the female name in his latest string of titles: "Veronika" (Voss) has little to do directly with "Maria" (Braun) and "Lola" — the two that preceded it in a kind of trilogy on postwar Germany.

To recap that trio: "Maria Braun" covered the years from 1945 to 1954. Then "Lola" seemed to edge the audience into a perspective of the late '50s and early '60s, the years of the "economic miracle" in Germany. If all were still in the chronological line, then "Veronika Voss" should have taken us from the approximate time of the student reform movement of the late 1960s up to the present or thereabouts.

This instead is a tale about an adored German actress who died in the late 1950s — Sybille Schmitz, a suicide from drug addiction. Another German director, Niklaus Schilling, dedicated his "Willi Busch Report" to S.S. — so RWF is not the first who has seen and admired her talent.

The film is, by Fassbinder's recent standards, a cheapie. It was made in four weeks on a modest budget, a definite step-down from his previous big-budget pics. But this is where he is definitely at home as a director — it could be a sellout at America's most prominent fests.

There's not much of a story line to relate. A fading film star is having trouble keeping her career together — in fact, no producer wants her any more even for "mother roles," and in one scene she muffs every easy line of dialog handed to her by a patient but knowing director. She's heavy into drugs and needs her clinic and "nerve-doctor" to keep her going over the rough spots. Of course, the clinic is only too willing to help her out, particularly if the rewards are the famed actress's home, apartment, and other property.

Veronika, played by Rosel Zech, needs admirers to give meaning to her life. It so happens that a sports reporter (Hilmar Thate) is mesmerized by her after holding an umbrella over her head one night in the rain. From that moment on,

Veronika Voss attempts a last love affair with the kindly stranger, who in turn is willing to go along despite having a girlfriend of his own and a job he pursues with some luck and satisfaction. The friend, however, suspects the worst with the clinic mistress in the background, and does some investigations on his own to discover the truth — for which he is murdered by the culprits.

The final scenes salute the thesp's career in a gala night in a nightclub with star on the stage in a bow-out tune. Then she is locked in a room with the proper suicidal tablets and no further recourse to the saving drugs. Her life flashes before her eyes in a great fade-out finale.

What works well is Xaver Schwarzenberger's camera. He makes this melodrama shine as a black & white series of overexposed or under-developed photos. Performances are reduced to a stylistic tick, which will probably continue into the next project if the signs and meanings in this quickie are any indication at all. A fest item, to be sure — but with proper handling, it could be Fassbinder's biggest hit since "Maria Braun."

But it's not a blue-chip on the art house mart. —Holl.

(Film won the Golden Bear, top prize at the just-concluded Berlin film fest.)