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Monday August 30 , 1982

A Tribute to R.W. Fassbinder (1946-1982):

Fassbinder & Sirk

Ali, Fear Eats the Soul 7:30

Manny Farber and Patricia Patterson on R.W. Fassbinder (1975):

"His tough-tender vision is expressed through ritual, whether...the filmed event is Petra's hypocritical phoning, Herr R.'s pompous tutoring of his little son, the Ali-Emmi dance that opens and closes *Fear*, these rituals serve to keep the world in place; other rituals...freak them out....

"...Fassbinder is about...

1. Humiliation; daily, hour by hour, in the shop, at breakfast, humiliation everywhere.

2. The shopkeepers of life treated without condescension or impatience.

3. Physical and spiritual discomfort: The essence of Fassbinder is a nagging physical discomfort.

"So Fassbinder has two sides, the operatic and the forthright brash.... His is the precision of a painter with space and color: he has a fantastic painter's eye (he's Mondrian with a sly funk twist) who knows how to angle a body, how much space is necessary to set it off. But his movie sails home on its lighting-color-pattern, a frontal, geometric poise that should make any hip painter envious.

"*Ali, Fear Eats the Soul*: the marriage between a 60-year-old charwoman, the widow of a Nazi, and a splendid Moroccan column of muscle is endangered because Emmi won't make couscous for Ali. Given all the possible problems that such a marital mismatch could incur, it shows Fassbinder's perversity that he drives them apart with a cracked wheat stew. Emmi, becoming chauvinistic and complacent, tells this catch of the century to go get his couscous elsewhere. The circular structure evolves back and forth between the Asphalt Pub, a hangout for Moroccan pals, their bosomy gals, and Emmi's cozy flat, subjecting the pair to endless prejudice bouts with the grocer, maitre d', that bitch who patrols the hallway, her gross beer-drinking lay-about son-in-law (played by the snarling camp-elion himself: Rainer Werner F.). This endless series of trivia gates overlorded by bigoted high priests causes Ali's stomach to rip...." (in *Film Comment*, Nov.-Dec. 1975).

• Directed and Written by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Photographed by Juergen Juerges. With Brigitte Mira, El Hedi Ben Salem, Barbara Valentin, Irm Hermann, R.W. Fassbinder. (1974, 94 mins, 35mm, color, English titles, Print from New Yorker Films)