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LARS VON TRIER

Born in 1956. A graduate of the Danish Film School, von Trier early showed signs of his inclinations - and promise - in his 1981 graduation piece, *Pictures of a Liberation*. His 1984 feature debut, *Element of Crime*, was announced as part of a trilogy; it won a technical prize at Cannes. The second part of the trilogy, *Epidemic* (1987), was the product of a bet between the director and film adviser Claes Kastholm Hansen, who claimed it was possible to make a film for Dkr 1 million (\$151,000); this was also screened at Cannes. *Europa*, which completes the trilogy, had its world premiere at Cannes this year, where it won a technical award. Von Trier has also done approximately 40 commercials for domestic and foreign customers, and various video promotion clips for rock bands.

FILMOGRAPHY

1981: *Nocturne*
 1982: *Befrielsesbilleder* (*Pictures of a Liberation/ Images of a Relief*)
 1984: *Forbrydelsens Element* (*Element of Crime*)
 1987: *Epidemic*
 1988: *Medea*
 1991: *Europa*



CREDITS

Dir: Lars von Trier. Prod: Peter Aalbaek Jensen, Bo Christensen. Scr: Lars von Trier, Niels Vørsel. Phot. (CinemaScope, b/w & colour): Henning Bendtsen, Jean Paul Meurisse, Edward Klosinsky. Ed: Hervé Schneid. Prod. des: Henning Baht. Cost. des: Marlon Rasmussen. Mus: Joakim Holbek. Sd: Per Streit Jensen. Prod. co: Gunnar Obel/ Nordisk Film & TV/ Gérard Mital Productions. Telefilm Munich. Export agent: VGC (Paris). U.K. dist: Electric Pictures. R.t: 113 mins. Lang: German, English.

CAST

Jean-Marc Barr (Leopold Kessler), Barbara Sukowa (Katharina Hartmann), Udo Kier (Lawrence Hartmann), Ernst-Hugo Järegård (Uncle Kessler), Erik Mørk (Pater), Jørgen Reenberg (Max Hartmann), Henning Jensen (Siggy), Eddie Constantine (Colonel Harris), Max von Sydow (narrator).

Our attitude to film can be described in so many ways and lead us in so many different directions. We can drape it in profound theories, we can climb aboard it and let ourselves be carried off on a voyage of discovery to unknown lands, or we can insist that film is the potion we use to influence our audience and make them smile, or weep and pay. All this sounds very convincing, and yet I don't believe it. There is only one excuse for having to go through, and force others to go through, the hell that is the creative process of film: the carnal pleasure of that split second in the cinemas, when the projector and the loudspeakers, in unison, allow the illusion of sound and motion to burst forth, like an electron abandoning its orbit to generate light, and create the ultimate: a miraculous surge of life. It is this, and this alone, that is the film-maker's reward, his hope, his claim. When the magic of a film really works and the sensuous feeling it creates sweeps through the body in orgasmic waves...that is the experience I seek; that, and that alone, has always been the driving force behind my work.... This is my confession, in black and white: I, Lars von Trier, am but a simple masturbator of the silver screen.... *Europa*, the third part of the trilogy, is without even the faintest trace of the smallest red herring. Purity and clarity have, at last, been achieved. There is nothing here to stifle reality under clinging layers of 'Art'..., no trick is too crass, no method too cheap, no effect too vulgar for this film...." *Lars von Trier, 3rd Manifesto* (1991).

The controversial Danish director has adopted the French philosophical tradition of confessing, using what he calls his *3rd Manifesto* as a way of examining and exposing his film-making ethos.... Set in 1945, the film follows a young American of German heritage who arrives in post-war Germany. Leo Kessler gets a job as night conductor with railway company Zentropa and, on his first trip, meets Katharina, daughter of the company's managing director. As he becomes increasingly drawn into the family, he is further embroiled in a web of intrigue involving the allies and Katharina, who was deeply involved with Nazi activities. Leo will discover too late the extent of his naïveté. While it took von Trier seven years to complete his trilogy, he has already begun his new film, which is scheduled to premiere on April 30, 2024. A thriller, with documentary elements, *Dimension* is intended as a monument of the future, to be shot in 3-minute segments - one every year - on different locations with the *Europa* team. Von Trier, who will be 68 in 2024, has already named a successor should he be unable to complete the film, while the actors have all given him sealed envelopes containing names of their own replacements.... *Jorn Rossing Jensen, Moving Pictures International* (12 May 1991).

Epic in conception, Lars Von Trier's **ZENTROPA** is many things. It is a superstylish thriller of intrigue, romance, and postwar disorientation in the tradition of **The Third Man** and **The Lady from Shanghai**. It is a wry satire of authoritarianism. It is an innovative experiment in the power of film to control the image and the spectator. And it is a visionary, hypnotic journey into the past and future of a changing continent.

The story begins in late 1945. Then, as now, the face of Europe is being redrawn. Boundaries are in flux, loyalties divided, identities confused, nationalities jumbled. The hero, Leo Kessler, is a man between: a German-American pacifist who ventures to Germany to fight the peace. He finds himself entangled with an ambiguous woman, American Occupation authorities, pro-Nazi terrorists, and Zentropa, a gigantic railway corporation which becomes the center of a power struggle crucial to the New European Order.

The setting of **ZENTROPA** is both historical and futuristic, postwar and postmodern. Taking the form of a massive, maze-like cage, enveloped in rain-drenched night and crisscrossed by ever-present trains, Von Trier's Europolis is a stunning dystopian conception that rivals those of Fritz Lang (**Metropolis**) and Ridley Scott (**Blade Runner**). The film's grandiose vision is spread across a Panavision canvas and augmented with dazzling technical innovations. Back projection, superimposition, and selective color are employed to create intricate composites with as many as seven layers at once. At moments of violence, tension, and passion, portions of the image may fragment, enlarge, revolve, change perspective, or burst into color.

The cast features distinguished performers familiar to connoisseurs of international cinema: Jean-Marc Barr (**The Big Blue**); a trio of actors known for their work with Rainer Werner Fassbinder -- Barbara Sukowa (**Lola**), Udo Kier (**Berlin Alexanderplatz**) and Eddie Constantine (**Beware of a Holy Whore**); and Max von Sydow as the narrator. The film was photographed by the Danish cinema-tographer Henning Bendsten, best known for his work on Carl Dreyer's late masterpieces **Ordet** and **Gertrud**. **ZENTROPA** was awarded the Jury Prize at the 1991 Cannes Film Festival. This predominantly English-language version is considered the authentic version of the film.

(Please note: this film was released in Europe as **Europa**.)