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Asphaltnacht
(Asphalt Night)
(WEST GERMAN-COLOR)

Berlin, Sept. 28.

A 'Tura-Film production, Munich, in collaboration with ZDF, Wiesbaden-Mainz. Features entire cast. Written and directed by Peter Fratzcher. Camera (color), Bernd Heini; music, Lothar Meid, editor, Fratzcher; tv-editor, Sibylle Hubatschek-Rahn; producer, Alena Rimbach. Reviewed at Kant Kino, Berlin, Sept. 28, '80. Running time: 90 MINS.

Cast: Gerd U. Heinemann (Angel), Thomas Davis (Johnny), Ralf Herrmann (Frank), Charly Wierzejewsky (L.A. Peters), Michael Zens (Kamikaze), Herbert "Rim" Rimbach (the Critic), Debbie Neon (Debbie), Gabriele Helene Ruttmann (Nelly), Christiane Plate (the Little Girl), Clemens Schkorski (84).

Another of those delightful low-budget pix (this one cost in the range of \$250,000) being made these days in West Germany, Peter Fratzcher's "Asphalt Night" is about rock 'n' roll, punk attitudes, and what's like to roam the streets of Berlin from dusk to dawn in a single night of adventure at various hot-spots, peep-shows, recording studios, and even churches

(to hear an organ played by a friend) in a common effort to nurse a song into existence. Fratzcher's other directorial credit of note was the ghost job he did on Udo Lindenberg's "Panic Times," which lensed and recorded the pop scene in Hamburg.

"Asphalt Night" is a film of mood and rhythm rather than a narrative entertainment movie, although it is also all of the latter. It begins with an aging devotee of rock, a 30-year-old guitarist who has lost his touch as a song-writer, on the verge of becoming a loser in the only profession he knows and likes. A bit down on his luck, Angel still has his drag-racer to cruise the streets, and he does just that to while the night away — only to constantly bump into Johnny, a punk-guitarist of 17 who keeps a wary eye out for cops who will collect him and send him back to his parents. Johnny is against everything and thus also a set-up for Hell's Angels types who refuse to take his lip sitting down. The two become reluctant, and then steadfast, friends.

Angel saves Johnny from pursuing cops, a motorcycle gang, and the punk-rocker's penchant for just getting into trouble with anyone he meets on the street. In return, Johnny bangs out a partial tune on his guitar, which inspires Angel to record the song he's been trying to shake out of himself all evening. In the meanwhile, there's plenty of humorous dialog and improvised scenes on original locations in Berlin. This is arguably the best pic on today's "Berlin Scene" made by young filmmakers.

Well acted by nonprofessional thespians, "Asphalt Night" overcomes its imperfections by aiming for the tastes of a young public and simply trying to entertain with the meagre means at its disposal. It's an entry in the San Francisco Film Fest. —Holl.

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