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World on Wires (1973)

Part 1. At the Institute for Cybernetics and Future Research, political, social and economic events of the future can be simulated exactly by computer, as if they were happening today. The director of the research project, Vollmer (Adrian Hoven) commits suicide under mysterious circumstances. His successor is his erstwhile closest colleague, Dr. Fred Stiller (Klaus Lowitsch), who doesn't believe Vollmer killed himself. He maintains that the security agent of the Institute has disappeared without a trace. Stiller must struggle against pressure from the Hartmann Steel Company, which wants information about the production of steel for the next twenty years. Eva Vollmer (Mascha Rabben), the professor's daughter, assists Stiller in his investigations into her father's death.

Part 2. Gradually, Stiller begins to understand. Even the seemingly real world in which he lives is only another simulation made by a computer. This realization makes Stiller dangerous, and his arrest is ordered. He flees. He meets Eva, who loves him. She tells him, "I am only the projection of a real Eva from the real world." She establishes contact between the two worlds. At the same moment in which Stiller is shot by the police in front of the Institute, he finds himself with Eva, who has transferred his consciousness to another world.

This complicated story, the ramifications of which are not fully rendered, is told in the film in an amazingly simple way, as a compact and very action-oriented adventure film. The world we see is hardly any different from ours: it is made of steel and glass, just as our own office buildings and institutes

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- Rudi Moller, ET AL

are today. As in Godard's *Alphaville*, of which the decor is reminiscent, this is not a future world, but our own, once removed, so that we are made to believe that it isn't real, but only a simulation, a projection, of the real world. It is only a paradigm, but similar (not just externally) to our reality, because it can not spring beyond the limits of human thought. In this sense, the film depicts, actually quite anachronistically, the lonely battle of an individual against corruption and terror, and salvation through love. Outer appearances are secondary. As Mascha Rabben commented, "Basically, Klaus Lowitsch plays Humphrey Bogart, and I play Lauren Bacall." Like the aforementioned film (Howard Hawks' *The Big Sleep*), Fassbinder's *World on Wires* makes a division between the density of the atmosphere and the intricacy of the story.

The novel, by Daniel F. Galouye, is more pessimistic; in it, the characters are more at the mercy of the system, of fate. Fassbinder has opposed this fatalism with the power of resistance.

1. Brochure, *Fernsehspiele Westdeutscher Rundfunk*, July-Dec., 1973, p. 69.

World on Wires (1973) (Welt am Draht)

Screenplay	Fritz Muller-Scherz/Rainer Werner Fassbinder (from a novel by Daniel F. Galouye)
Camera Operator	Michael Ballhaus
Editor	Marie Anne Gerhardt
Music	Gottfried Hungsberg/Archiv.
Set Design	Kurt Raab
Assistant Director	Renate Leiffer, Fritz Muller-Scherz
TV Adaptation	Peter Marthesheimer, Alexander Wesemann
Production	Westdeutscher Rundfunk

Cast: Klaus Lowitsch (Fred Stiller), Mascha Raaben (Eva), Adrian Hoven (Vollmer), Ivan Desny (Lause), Barbara Valentin (Gloria), Karl-Heinz Vosgerau (Siskins), Gunter Lamprecht (Wolfgang), Margit Carstensen (Schmidt-Gentner), Wolfgang Schenck (Hahn), Joachim Hansen

(Edelkern), Rudolf Lenz (Hartmann), Kurt Raab (Holm), Karl Scheydt (Lehner), Rainer Hauer (Stuhlfaut), Ulli Lommel (Rupp), Heinz Meier (Weinlaub), Peter Chatel (Hirse), guests: Ingrid Caven, Eddie Constantine, Gottfried John, Elma Karlowa, Christine Kaufmann, Rainer Langhans, Bruce Low, Karsten Peters, Katrin Schaake, Walter Sedlmayr, Elhedi Ben Salem, Christiane Maybach, Rudolf Waldemar Brem, Peter Kern, Ernst Kusters, Peter Moland, Doris Mattes, Liselotte Eder, Solange Pradel, Maryse Dellannoy, Werner Schroeter, Magdalena Montezuma, Corrina Brocher, Peter Gauhe, Dora Karras-Frank.

Filmed in 44 days in Cologne, Munich and Paris in January through March, 1973.

Running time, Part I: 99 mins., 25 secs.; Part II: 105 mins., 44 secs.; 16 mm, color.

Cost: 950,000 DM.