

Document Citation

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Title | Berlin Alexanderplatz |
| Author(s) | |
| Source | <i>TeleCulture, Inc.</i> |
| Date | |
| Type | press kit |
| Language | German English |
| Pagination | |
| No. of Pages | 22 |
| Subjects | Fassbinder, Rainer Werner (1945-1982), Bad Wörishofen, Bavaria, Germany Döblin, Alfred |
| Film Subjects | Berlin Alexanderplatz, Fassbinder, Rainer Werner, 1980 |

 **TeleCulture** inc.
presents



Berlin Alexanderplatz

a film by
Rainer Werner Fassbinder



BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

Telefilm in 13 parts
and 1 epilogue
based on the novel
by Alfred Döblin

*Fernsehspiel in 13 Teilen
und 1 Epilog
nach der Roman
von Alfred Döblin*

Script and Direction:
Buch und Regie:

Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Camera:
Kamera:

Xaver Schwarzenberger

Cast:
Besetzung:

| | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Franz</i> | Günter Lamprecht |
| <i>Reinhold</i> | Gottfried John |
| <i>Eva</i> | Hanna Schygulla |
| <i>Mieze</i> | Barbara Sukowa |
| <i>Minna</i> | Karin Baal |
| <i>Cilly</i> | Annemarie Düringer |
| <i>Lina</i> | Elisabeth Trissenaar |
| <i>Fränze</i> | Helen Vita |
| <i>Ida</i> | Barbara Valentin |
| <i>Frau Bast</i> | Brigitte Mira |
| <i>Herbert</i> | Roger Fritz |
| <i>Pums</i> | Ivan Desny |
| <i>Meck</i> | Franz Buchrieser |
| <i>Willy</i> | Fritz Schediwy |

Production:
Bavaria Atelier GmbH
for: WDR

Produktion:
Bavaria Atelier GmbH
für: WDR

Co-Producer:
RAI

Koproduzent:
RAI

Negative:
16mm color film

Negativ:
16mm Farbfilm

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

Since its publication in 1929, Alfred Döblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz has been considered one of the masterpieces of German prose. Combining realistic, expressionistic and mythological elements, Döblin captures the essence of the Berlin near the end of the Twenties — teeming with masses of people, full of unemployed and hungry riffraff, home to a hypocritical middle class—, its pre-fascist era. Out of Berlin's nameless "small people" comes the protagonist of Berlin Alexanderplatz, Franz Biberkopf. A prototype of the good-natured trimmer, Biberkopf is always choosing the wrong friends, and is, consequently, always being taken advantage of and bitterly disillusioned. The underlying statement of the novel is "A curse on a man who puts his faith in his fellow-men".

Franz Biberkopf, a manual laborer, has just been released from prison after having served a 4-year term for killing his girlfriend. Now he has decided to become a "decent man". He blunders through the confusion of the big city — its clip-joints, its hang-outs for gangsters and whores, its slaughterhouses and cheap amusement quarters. Biberkopf meets a pimp named Reinhold, and is soon devoted to his "best friend", not realizing that he is dealing with an unscrupulous criminal. Thus, he is unwittingly dragged into crime — in spite of his good resolve. At one point, Reinhold nearly kills him because he had become a liability. Biberkopf loses his arm from this encounter, but doesn't lose his resolve to be a "decent man". He meets and falls in love with Mieze, who also loves him. She supports him by walking the streets (without his knowledge), and becomes his mainstay in life. Now Reinhold strikes the cruelest blow possible: he attempts to seduce Mieze, and then murders her. Biberkopf's sole reason for living no longer exists. This time, he is finished.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder, one of the best-known German film directors, both directed and wrote this telefilm. Döblin's son, who presently lives in New York, was deeply impressed by Fassbinder's sensitive television adaptation; an adaptation which he thinks would have pleased his father very much.

For summaries and lengths of the different episodes, please refer to the pages that follow.

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 1: DIE STRAFE BEGINNT

PART 1: (PUNISHMENT WILL COME)

1928. Franz Biberkopf is released from the Berlin-Tegel Prison where he has been serving a 4-year term for killing his girlfriend Ida. Gaining a new foothold in Berlin is anything but easy for him, but he finally finds his way around again. He makes a solemn oath: From now on he will lead a decent life and never do anything against the law. His new girlfriend Lina will help him keep this vow.

Time: 81'15"



1928. Franz Biberkopf wird aus der Strafanstalt Berlin-Tegel entlassen, wo er wegen Totschlags an seiner Geliebten Ida vier Jahre einsitzen mußte. Er faßt schwer wieder Fuß in Berlin, aber schließlich gelingt es ihm doch, und er tut nun einen Schwur: Er will ehrlich bleiben, er will nie wieder etwas tun, was anständige Leute nicht tun. Und außerdem hat er die Lina kennengelernt, die wird ihm helfen beim Leben.

Laufzeit: 81'15"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 2: WIE SOLL MAN LEBEN,
WENN MAN NICHT STERBEN WILLPART 2: (HOW CAN YOU LIVE IF YOU
DON'T WANT TO DIE?)

Times are tough and work is scarce. One day at a lower-class amusement place, Franz Biberkopf meets a man who is able to get him a job -- and what a job it is! Biberkopf becomes a vendor for the Nazi newspaper "Völkischer Beobachter". It seems that his fortunes have finally taken a turn for the better, even though his cronies are less than enthusiastic about his standing at a street corner wearing an armband with a swastika on it and calling out the latest Nazi propaganda slogans. But what else can Franz do, since Lina is strongly opposed to his peddling sex literature?

Time: 59'00"



Die Zeiten sind schwer, und Arbeit gibt es wenig. Da lernt Franz Biberkopf in einem Vergnügungslokal auf der Hasenheide einen kennen, der verschafft ihm Arbeit -- und was für welche: Biberkopf wird Verkäufer des "Völkischen Beobachters". Endlich scheint es aufwärts zu gehen mit ihm, doch seine alten Freunde aus der Stammkneipe sind durchaus nicht froh darüber, daß er mit der Hakenkreuzbinde an der Ecke steht und nationalsozialistische Schlagzeilen ausruft. Und mit Aufklärungsschriften zu handeln hat ihm Lina verboten, was soll er also tun, der Franz!

Laufzeit: 59'00"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 3: EIN HAMMER AUF DEN KOPF
KANN DIE SEELE VERLETZENPART 3: (A BLOW FROM A HAMMER CAN
HURT THE SOUL)

Since Lina's uncle is making good money as a peddler, Biberkopf decides to accompany him when he hawks shoelaces from door-to-door. Business is just so-so until Biberkopf meets a woman who says that he reminds her of her deceased husband. They have coffee together and he uses this rare opportunity for understanding to confide in her. He tells his partner about that meeting, and consequently experiences his first major disappointment since his release from prison: his partner double-crosses him and blackmails the woman. Heartbroken, Biberkopf realizes that he has done something wrong in spite of his earnest efforts to become a decent man.

Time: 58'30"



Die Lina hat einen Onkel, der ist groß drin im Hausierer-Geschäft, und mit ihm verkauft Biberkopf jetzt Schnürsenkel von Haus zu Haus. Das Geschäft geht leidlich, bis Biberkopf einer Frau begegnet, die sich beim Anblick von Franz heftig an ihren verstorbenen Mann erinnert, fühlt. Sie macht ihm Kaffee und dann sonst noch was, und so hat der Biberkopf ein Erlebnis. Das vertraut er seinem Kompagnon an, und er erlebt die erste große Enttäuschung nach der Entlassung aus dem Gefängnis: Sein Kompagnon hintergeht ihn, espreßt die Frau, und Biberkopf steht schlecht da, obwohl er als ein guter Mensch gelten wollte. Das zerreißt ihn fast.

Laufzeit: 58'30"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 4: EINE HANDVOLL MENSCHEN
IN DER TIEFE DER STILLEPART 4: (A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE IN
THE DEPTHS OF SILENCE)

Biberkopf's disappointment in his now-former partner nearly drives him crazy. He retreats to a lonely room in a boarding house and refuses to see anyone. All he does is drink. Life passes by him and he watches it from a fog-shrouded distance. What is happening around him does not give him any encouragement to take his place in life again: his backyard window shows a world full of evil and malice where the wrong people benefit from what little justice there is.

Time: 58'33"



Der Franz Biberkopf wird nur schwer mit seiner Enttäuschung fertig. Er hat sich zurückgezogen in ein einsames Untermieterzimmer, er will keinen mehr sehen, und er säuft. Aus der Entfernung beobachtet er, was um ihm herum vor sich geht. Und auch das ermutigt ihn nicht gerade, wieder ins Leben zurückzukehren: Die Welt, die er von seinem Hinterhausfenster sehen kann, ist voller Schlechtigkeit und Bosheit, und die Gerechtigkeit setzt sich auch nur and den Falschen durch.

Laufzeit: 58'33"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 5: EIN SCHNITTER MIT DER GEWALT
VOM LIEBEN GOTT

PART 5: (A REAPER WITH THE POWER OF GOD)

Franz Biberkopf is back in his place again, determined to take up his old struggle against the odds of life. And where could he find a better place to do this than at his usual pub? At the pub, Franz gets to know Pums and his gang who deal in very unsavory affairs. He also meets another man there -- Reinhold, a stutterer with sad eyes. Is he an ex-prisoner like Franz? A prisoner, yes, but as a captive of his quickly passing infatuations with women. His affairs always follow the same pattern: scarcely has he begun to hold a woman in his arms when he becomes tired of her and looks for a way to get rid of her. Franz is someone who can take these women off his hands, and he is quite willing to be of help to his new friend. Together they set up a regular, flourishing "traffic" in girlfriends.

Time: 58'45"



Franz Biberkopf ist wieder da, entschlossen ist er, den Kampf mit der Welt erneut aufzunehmen; und von wo aus kann man das strategisch besser als von der Stammkneipe? Dort lernt der Franz die Bande vom Pums kennen, die sind ziemlich dick drin in Geschäften, fragt sich nur, in welchen. Und dann ist da noch einer: Reinhold, der Stotterer mit den traurigen Augen. Auch Gefängnis? Nein -- Reinhold ist gefangen von seiner allzu schnell ablaufenden Leidenschaft für Weiber, kaum hat er eine, ist er auch schon wieder leid, aber wie soll er sie loswerden? Franz hilft, und es beginnt ein schwungvoller Mädchenhandel, bei dem Franz einfach die Frauen übernimmt, die Reinhold nicht mehr mag.

Laufzeit: 58'45"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 6: EINE LIEBE, DAS KOSTET IMMER VIEL

PART 6: (THE PRICE FOR LOVE IS ALWAYS HIGH)

Franz Biberkopf is tired of swapping girlfriends and, besides, he feels that his is not really helping his friend Reinhold. Biberkopf becomes involved in one of the shady adventures engineered by Pums and his gang -- but Franz, naturally, has only a vague idea of what is going on. Now he has not only broken his oath of becoming a decent man, but almost loses his life because of it! He decides not to tell anyone about Reinhold's part in it since Reinhold is his best friend and Franz loves him.

Time: 57'58"



Franz Biberkopf hat den Mädchenhandel satt, zudem spürt er, daß dem Reinhold so nicht zu helfen ist. Mehr durch Zufall als durch eigenen Willen gerät Biberkopf in eine Aktion der Pums-Bande, ganz sicher eine kriminelle, aber so den richtigen Durchblick hat der Franz eben nicht. Jetzt hat er den Schwur, immer anständig zu bleiben, gebrochen, und das kostet den Franz Biberkopf auch noch fast das Leben, und welche Rolle der Reinhold bei all dem spielt, wird der Franz wohl besser keinem erzählen, weil er den ja liebt, den Reinhold.

Laufzeit: 57'58"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 7: MERKE: EINEN SCHWUR KANN MAN AMPUTIEREN

PART 7: (REMEMBER: AN OATH CAN BE AMPUTATED)

Franz Biberkopf is a cripple now; he has lost an arm, but the one that remains is all the stronger for that. It takes Biberkopf a long time to recover, but he finally regains his courage -- especially since Eva and her friend Herbert are taking good care of him and want to avenge the wrong that has been done to him. Franz doesn't want revenge; he wants to let bygones be bygones. When he hears Willy talking about politics, he even begins to consider the future.

Time: 57'38"



Franz Biberkopf ist nun ein Krüppel, einen Arm hat er weniger, aber der andere ist umso stärker. Es dauert lange, bis er sich wieder aufrappeln kann, aber er schafft es doch, weil auch die Eva und ihr Herbert sich um ihn kümmern und sogar rächen wollen, was ihm angetan worden ist. Aber das will der Franz nicht, weil er von gestern nichts mehr wissen mag. Und als er Willy, den Politisierer trifft, denkt er sogar schon an morgen.

Laufzeit: 57'38"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 8: DIE SONNE WÄRMT DIE HAUT,
DIE SIE MANCHMAL VERBRENNT

PART 8: (THE SUN WILL WARM -- AND
SOMETIMES BURN -- THE SKIN)

Franz Biberkopf is ready to reject his oath about leading a decent life. Then he meets a girl named Mieke. The mere sight of her makes the sun come out from behind the clouds! She's so tiny beside him that he could easily carry her off in his pocket. Franz falls in love, and his old strength and resolve return. One day a letter addressed to Mieke arrives and he cannot resist opening it: it's a love letter from another man who has fallen in love with Biberkopf's girl. Suddenly Franz is numbed by the fear that he might lose his little Mieke.

Time: 58'10"



Franz Biberkopf will seinen Schwur, anständig zu bleiben, vergessen. Er tut's und ihm geht's besser. Dann lernt er auch noch Mieke kennen. Als er sie sah, war ihm als wenn die Sonne aufgeht. So ein liebes Mädel, so ein gutes Mädel, ist so klein neben ihm, die kann er in seine Jacke stecken. Er verliebt sich er fühlt sich wieder stark. Dann kriegt er einen Brief in die Finger, an Mieke gerichtet, aber er öffnet ihn: es ist ein Liebesbrief, ein anderer hat sich in seine Mieke verliebt! Und Franz hat auf einmal furchtbare Angst, daß er die Mieke verlieren könnte.

Laufzeit: 58'10"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 9: VON DEN EWIGKEITEN ZWISCHEN
DEN VIELEN UND DEN WENIGENPART 9: (OF THE ETERNITIES SEPARATING
THE MANY FROM THE FEW)

Eva tries to reassure Franz that Mieke is a decent girl; if she is walking the street for him, he should take it as a token of her love for him. Franz goes to meet Mieke at her usual corner of Jean-Paul and Moses Streets. When he sees her standing there in the bright sunlight by a fence, his heart fills with a warm feeling from the knowledge that he is the one for whom she is really standing there. Suddenly he is aware of how much he loves her and how very much Mieke loves him. From this moment, Franz feels strong enough to face the man who had tried to kill him, Reinhold. Biberkopf takes an interest in politics; he is without work, so he goes to a political meeting which he finds very strange. "Isn't it funny," he muses, "that one can be both for and against a thing at the same time?"

Time: 58'11"



Eva hat versucht, den Franz zu beruhigen: seine Mieke sei ein grundanständiges Mädchen, und wenn sie für ihn anschaffen geht, dann könne man doch genau daraus ersehen, wie sehr sie ihn liebt. Franz macht sich mit einem Blumenstrauß auf zu Miekens Standplatz, Jean Paul/ Ecke Mosesstraße. Und wie sie da so steht vor dem Bretterzaun in der Sonne, so zart und schön, rührt es den Franz, daß sie eigentlich nur für ihn da steht, und er liebt sie so sehr und sie ihn ganz furchtbar. Jetzt fühlt der Franz sich auch stark genug, sich dem Reinhold wieder zu stellen, der ihn doch hatte ermorden wollen. Und auch für Politik interessiert er sich, wo er schon nichts anderes zu tun hat, besucht er eine Versammlung, die er sehr merkwürdig findet: "Ist es nicht komisch," rätioniert er, "daß man gleichzeitig für und gegen die gleiche Sache denken kann?"

Laufzeit: 58'11"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 10: EINSAMKEIT REIßT AUCH IN MAUERN
RISSE DES IRRSINNSPART 10: (LONELINESS CAUSES CRACKS IN
THE WALLS OF MADNESS)

Mieze has come up with a new idea: she wants to have a child from Franz, "a little Franz", because she loves him so much. Since Mieze cannot have any children, she wants Eva to have one in her place -- after all, it makes no difference who the actual mother is as long as Franz is the father. Mieze has become very independent in other ways: she wants to go on holiday for 3 days with one of her clients. Why shouldn't she -- the man will pay her well, and Franz is the person who will benefit from the money. Franz is desperate: 3 whole days without his little Mieze! In the end, everyone is so concerned about Franz and his well-being that he is not even asked what he really wants.

Time: 58'20"



Mieze hat einen Plan gefaßt: weil sie den Franz so liebt, will sie auch ein Kind von ihm, einen kleinen Franz gewissermaßen. Und weil die Mieze selbst keine Kinder kriegen kann, soll die Eva eins kriegen, das spielt doch keine Rolle, wo die Mutter ist, wenn es nur von Franz ist. Überhaupt ist die Mieze sehr selbständig geworden: Mit einem Freier will sie drei Tage in Urlaub fahren, der zahlt so gut und das Geld kommt doch Franz zugute. Franz ist verweifelt: drei Tage ohne seine Mieze, und vor allem — wozu ist er selbst denn noch gut, wenn die anderen immer die Pläne machen zu seinem Besten und er selbst noch nicht einmal gefragt wird aus lauter Fürsorge?

Laufzeit: 58'50"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 11: WISSEN IS MACHT UND
MORGENSTUND HAT GOLD IM MUNDPART 11: (KNOWLEDGE IS POWER, AND
THE EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE WORM)

Biberkopf feels entirely useless. All he wants is a chance to earn some money of his own. He joins Pums's gang, and they let him go along with them even though they don't really trust him. Now Franz is earning his own money, and his spirits are rising. In fact, he is so high-spirited that he has Reinhold hide behind his bed so that his friend may see what true happiness it is to be loved by a woman. Unfortunately, it is at this very time that the unsuspecting Mieke confesses to Franz that she loves another man. She does not want to leave Franz; after all, they belong together now. Franz is so stricken with grief that it nearly drives him out of his mind. He comes within a fraction of an inch of killing Mieke, his most precious love.

Time: 58'27"



Er kommt sich überflüssig vor, der Franz Biberkopf, er will endlich selbst Geld verdienen. So geht er zur Pums-Bande. Dort ist man zwar mißtrauisch, läßt ihn aber mitmachen. Franz verdient nun Geld und fühlt sich wohler. So wohl, daß er den Reinhold hinterm Bett versteckt, daß der mal sehen kann, wie glücklich einer dran ist, wenn er geliebt wird. Aber ausgerechnet bei dieser Darbietung gesteht die nachtahnende Mieke dem Franz, daß sie sich in einen anderen verliebt hat. Aber verlassen will sie den Franz nicht. Sie gehört doch zu ihm. Es fehlt nicht viel, daß er die Mieke, seine größte Liebe, aus lauter rasendem Schmerz umbringt.

Laufzeit: 58'27"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 12: DIE SCHLANGE IN DER SEELE DER SCHLANGE
PART 12: (THE VIPER IN THE SOUL OF THE SERPENT)

Although Franz nearly killed Mieke in a frenzy of grief, Mieke has forgiven him and is staying with him. Fate has yet another blow in store for Franz Biberkopf: Reinhold, who has been after Mieke for some time, has devised a clever plan to catch Mieke alone. Unaware of the trap which has been set for her, Mieke follows Reinhold into the lonely woods. She is almost taken in by Reinhold's attempts to seduce her, but when the attempts fail she is murdered.

Time: 58'43"



Die Mieke hat dem Franz verziehen. Sie bleibt bei ihm, auch wenn er sie fast umgebracht hätte in seinem Liebeslied. Doch da holt das Schicksal zu dem schwersten Schlag gegen Franz Biberkopf aus: Reinhold, der Mieke schon eine Weile nachstellt, hat einen schlaun Plan ausgeheckt, wie er Mieke treffen kann, und die vertrauensselige Mieke geht tatsächlich in den menschenleeren Wald und läßt sich beinahe verführen und wird ermordet.

Laufzeit: 58'43"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

TEIL 13: DAS ÄUßERE UND DAS INNERE UND DAS GEHEIMNIS
DER ANGST VOR DEM GEHEIMNIS

PART 13: (OUTSIDE AND INSIDE, AND
THE MYSTERY OF FEAR OF MYSTERY)

Franz Biberkopf is crushed. Mieke, the only person he ever trusted and loved in the world -- a world which has taught him that nobody is to be trusted and that love is a lie --, has deserted him. At least, he cannot find her anywhere, and nobody can tell Franz where she is. When Franz learns that Mieke has been murdered, he is unable to keep from laughing for, at least, she did not betray him after all.

Time: 58'15"



Franz Biberkopf ist aufs äußerste geschlagen. Mieke, der einzige Mensch, dem er vertraute und den er liebte in dieser Welt, einer Welt, die ihn gelehrt hatte, daß man niemandem vertrauen darf und es die Liebe sowieso nicht gibt, Mieke hat ihn verlassen — jedenfalls ist sie nicht da und niemand weiß, wo sie sein könnte. Als Franz erfährt, daß Mieke ermordet wurde, kommt aus ihm ein Lachen — so hat sie ihn wenigstens doch nicht verraten.

Laufzeit: 58'15"

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

EPILOG: RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER:
MEIN TRAUM VOM TRAUM DES FRANZ BIBERKOPF

EPILOGUE: RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER:
MY DREAM OF FRANZ BIBERKOPF'S DREAM

Franz Biberkopf is in an insane asylum. Not so very long ago he had promised to lead a decent life -- but how can a man keep such a promise without losing his mind? Now that he no longer needs to live his life, he can begin dreaming it. But the reflection he finds in his dream-mirror distresses him: he finds a man who is arrogant and ignorant and rude, and yet, at the same time, a coward and a weakling. Has he made a mess of everything by his obstinacy and arrogance? Has he made himself guilty for all of this? Thus, a new Biberkopf is born at the end of a long life: a broken man, but one who is fit for living.

Time: 111'06"



Franz Biberkopf ist in der Irrenanstalt. Er wollte anständig sein, aber wie kann einer das durchhalten, ohne verrückt zu werden. Jetzt, wo er sein Leben nicht mehr zu leben braucht, kann er es endlich träumen, aber wie steht er in seinen Träumen vor sich da, der Franz Biberkopf: er erscheint hochmütig und ahnungslos, frech, dabei feige und voller Schwäche. Hat er alles verpfuscht mit seinem Dickschädel und seiner Anmaßung und nun Schuld auf sich geladen? Also wird zum Ende eines langen Lebens ein neuer Biberkopf geboren, ein gebrochener zwar, aber endlich ein brauchbarer.

Laufzeit: 111'07"

THE DOCUMENTARY ON
BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

OBSERVATIONS DURING THE SHOOTINGS

For several weeks of the shooting, a small team of filmmakers watched Rainer Werner Fassbinder, his assistants and actors while they created the 14-part telefilm "Berlin Alexanderplatz". Thus, a "behind the scenes" report was made which documents the incredible amounts of discipline, precision and speed that are required to produce 15 hours of television in some 150 shooting days. This serial -- ARD's greatest television project -- provided the ideal occasion for the documentary team to get to know Fassbinder's much-discussed working methods, and also to correct several pre-conceived ideas about Fassbinder.

Running time: 44 min.

THE CRITICS ON BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ:

"Fassbinder's greatest and most compelling film, a savage and yet extremely disciplined masterpiece.....One of the best works in the history of German filmmaking."

- Die Zeit

"A monumental undertaking. Filmed by the most creative and imaginative German director of our time.....an exceptional experience."

- Kieler Nachrichten

"Berlin as a modern day Babylon...A colorful world of thieves, prostitutes and pimps. Günther Lamprecht is an outstanding performer. Uncommonly riveting...a unique film."

- Frankfurter Allgemeine

"Fassbinder is the most fascinating, talented, prominent and original young filmmaker in Western Europe."

- New York Times

"A remarkable achievement....Barbara Sukowa is an exciting discovery."

- Der Spiegel

"The extraordinary directing, exceptional acting and skillful dramatic treatment of the subject matter are of decisive significance."

- Süddeutsche Zeitung

"Fassbinder mobilizes the entire spectrum of his talent. Seldom have so many excellent actors been seen in one film...It is impossible not to be deeply moved by this work."

- Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung

RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER:

SOME THOUGHTS ON BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

As I read 'Berlin Alexanderplatz' it became clearer and clearer to me with each page that a huge part of myself, my behavior, my reactions, much of what I had considered to be me, was nothing but what Döblin describes in the novel. And then, at some point, because someone was writing a book about me, I saw all of my films again on three successive days. Once more I discovered, to my amazement, that there were many more quotations in my work, usually unconscious ones, than I had ever dreamed. I then read the novel again and came to the realization that this book, a work of art, had been decisive in determining the course of my life.

Actually, you'd have to tell someone asking about the plot of the novel that it frankly doesn't amount to much. On the contrary, it's more a loosely connected series of sordid little stories. What the novel has in common with other great novels of world literature is that its plot is not essential. What counts is how this incredibly banal and unconvincing tale is told, how the author deals with his characters, teaching the reader to see them and their mediocrity with great tenderness, and even to love them in the end.

All in all it seems to be nothing but a dime novel -- yet what gives this plot a quality of greatness? How it is told, of course. In 'Berlin Alexanderplatz' ordinary people are allowed to have the minute and simple emotions, longings, moments of happiness, satisfactions, pains and fears which in art are usually reserved for 'great men'.

ALFRED DÖBLIN

Alfred Döblin was born in 1878 in Stettin, son of a Jewish businessman. Döblin became a neurologist, practicing in Berlin. During the first world war he was a military doctor. In 1933 he gave up his German citizenship and emigrated to Paris. From there he fled to America in 1940, where he worked as a scriptwriter in Hollywood. In 1941 he converted to Catholicism.

Döblin began work on 'Berlin Alexanderplatz', his most ambitious novel in 1927. It was finished two years later and in 1930 it was broadcast as a radio series. The first filmed version appeared in the same year.

'Berlin Alexanderplatz' was Döblin's greatest achievement. It has been translated into various languages all over the world and has become almost synonymous with one of Germany's most fascinating eras.

Alfred Döblin returned to Europe in 1945, living at first in Germany. In 1953 he moved to Paris, where he died in a sanitorium 4 years later.



Alfred Döblin wurde 1878, als Sohn einer jüdischen Kaufmannfamilie, in Stettin geboren. Er praktizierte als Nervenarzt in Berlin und war während der Kriegsjahre 1914-1918 als Militärarzt tätig. 1933 emigrierte er nach Paris, von dort, 1940, Flucht nach Amerika, wo er anfangs als Filmtexter in Hollywood arbeitete. 1941 konvertierte er zum Katholizismus.

Döblin, der schon als Gymnasiast zu schreiben begann, arbeitete von 1927 bis 1929 an seinem wohl bedeutendsten Roman "Berlin Alexanderplatz". Schon 1930 wurde das Stück als Hörspiel gesendet und bereits das Jahr darauf verfilmt. In kürzester Zeit folgten Übersetzungen seines Werkes in verschiedene Sprachen. Dieser Roman war der erste, große und auch weltweite Erfolg seines Autors und ist inzwischen zu einem Synonym für Alfred Döblin geworden.

Alfred Döblin kehrte 1945 nach Deutschland zurück und starb 1957 in einem Pariser Sanitorium.

RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER

Rainer Werner Fassbinder was born in 1946 in Bavaria. The son of a doctor, his childhood was tumultuous. His parents had a large apartment in Munich and in the years directly after the war they often had as many as thirty people at a time living with them, in addition to the comings and goings of his father's patients.

Fassbinder's parents divorced when he was six and he was then raised by his mother, who worked as a translator (and who has a cameo role in each of his films). When the child disturbed her concentration, she sent him to the movies. Film, forced on him in this way, began to fascinate him and became the focal point of his life.

After a chaotic school career, Fassbinder dropped out to study acting. In 1967 he aligned himself with the 'Action-Theater' in Munich and in 1968, he and a few of his fellow actors left to form the 'Anti-Theater'. As actor, director, and finally as playwright, Fassbinder spent a year working with them in and around Munich.

In 1969 the 'Anti-Theater' was disbanded. In the same year Fassbinder shot his first feature film, 'Love Colder Than Death'. Although he continued his strong involvement with theatre, Fassbinder founded his own production company, Tango Film, in 1971. From then on, he was more and more committed to the film medium. From 1969 to 1979 he made more than thirty films for TV and theaters. He works fast and intensely, hates to waste time, and is known among his colleagues as a 'workaholic'.

Rainer Werner Fassbinder is perhaps Germany's most important, ambitious filmmaker, whose movies are seen and appreciated all over the world. 'Berlin Alexanderplatz', his biggest project to date, is the ultimate expression of his talents and commitment.