

Document Citation

Title	Engel aus eisen
Author(s)	Hy Hollinger
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1981 May 20
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Engel aus eisen (Angels of iron), Brasch, Thomas, 1981

Engel Aus Eisen

(Angels of Iron)

(W. GERMAN-U.S.-B&W)

Berlin, May 4.

A Joachim von Vietinghoff. Berlin, and Heiner Angermeyer. Independent, Munich. Film Production, in collaboration with Second Television (ZDF), Wiesbaden-Mainz. Stars Katherina Thalbach, Hilmar Thate. Written and directed by Thomas Brasch. Camera (black & white), Walter Lassally; music, Christian Kunert; art direction, Nikos Perakis; editing, Stefan Arnsten, Tanja Schmidbauer; tv-editor, Christoph Holch; production managers, Gerhard von Halem, Gerhard Czepe. Reviewed at Cinema Paris, Berlin, May 4, '81. Running time: 105 MINS.

Voelpel	Hilmar Thate
Lisa Gabler	Katharina Thalbach
Gladow	Ullrich Wesselmann
Frau Voelpel	Ilse Page
Schaefer	Peter Brombacher
Gabler	Klaus Pohl
Ridzinski	Hans Zischler
Herr Gladow	Horst Laube
West Kommissar	Juergen Flimm
Cahauffeur	Kurt Raab

Debut pic that landed in the competition at Cannes, Thomas Brasch's "Angels of Iron" will draw attention from film buffs and history lovers as a curiosity piece.

Here's a film made by a prominent German writer and dramatist, Thomas Brasch, who left the German Democratic Republic in 1977 to settle permanently in West Berlin. It also stars two former prominent East German actors, Hilmar Thate and Katharina Thalbach, whose careers began at the Berliner Ensemble; they too have left the East to settle in West Berlin. The rub, however, is in the story: "Angels of Iron" deals with the period of the Berlin Airlift, June 1948 to May 1949.

Berlin in 1948 was a time of heavy unemployment and disconcerting political unrest: it was a city "in the state of emergency." The various sectors had their control points, and the Soviets were doing everything possible to make the blockade work. The drone of airplanes overhead was a matter of fact, for up to 900 planes a day could, and did, land in the beleaguered city at intervals of every two or three minutes.

Into this state of confusion come three people: the young "Al Capone," 17-year-old Gladow with his band of toughs, who terrorize the citizens with nightly raids and daytime thefts; the former executioner, Voelpel, who tips Gladow off via his job at the police stations and splits the take, and Lisa Gabler, a kind of gun moll.

Lensed by former Oscar-winner Walter Lassally in black and white, "Angels of Iron" makes its impact mostly as an authentic case and period piece. The young Gladow was eventually caught and executed — the story of what happened to him and his gang made the headlines in 1948-49.

But Brasch, as a poet making his first film, also tries to extend the story to the level of a political metaphor. Each of the figures represent something more than just protagonists in a crime story. All of this could refer to current developments in a complex, conceived manner — for Brasch has said part of his own personality can be found in all three characters.

Film lacks a clear story line to hold the attention of even the most dedicated film buff for very long, but there are scenes that stand out nonetheless.

Thate is an accomplished actor who can convey thought in mime, while Thalbach has a personality that makes for laughs when the tale slows to a dirge. Should receive some support from "in" critics at Cannes and might find a playoff slot at art houses, but offshore chances in general are slim. Brasch, an accomplished dramatist, is far from being the same as a filmmaker. —Holl.