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Underground And -Emigrants

(WEST GERMAN-DOCU-
COLOR-16m)

Variety
9-29-76

Berlin, Sept. 29.

A Rosa von Praunheim production, in collaboration with the Berliner Festwochen and Sender Freies Berlin. Directed and narrated by Rosa von Praunheim. Camera (color), Edvard Lieber, Lloyd Williams, Scott Sorenson, Praunheim; assistant, Alice Carey. Reviewed at the Akademie der Kuenste, Berlin, Sept. 17, '76. Running time: 90 MINS.

Cast: Greta Keller, Ron Mullen, William Burroughs, Fred Neumann, Charles Ludlam, Tony Carrol, Mario Montez, Mary Boylen, Brenda Bergman, Bobby, Harvey Firestein, Taylor Mead, Cindy Doll, Slugger Anne, Alice Carey, Chinese Theatre Group, Nelly Vivas, Bob Wilson, Al Carmines, Elsie Bordon, Cherry Vanilla, Brenda Mitchell, Leslie Edgar, Stewart Sherman, Yvonne Rainer, The Family, Danny Partridge, Tom Eyen, Lil Picard, Diana Vreeland, Wolfgang Nephew, Etmar Kline, Belle Star, Lee Breuer, John Vaccaro, Lutze, Paul Venase, Gabi Lari-fari, Telly Brown, Alexis de Largo, Harvey Tavel, Minette, Jackie Curtis, Holly Wood-lawn, Ellen Stewart, Fernando Arrabal, Grete Mosheim, David Woodberry, Lee Gil-liot, Stephen Holt, Cyril Cyprian, Craig Hoke, Jessica James, Shusaku Arakawa, Lawrence Weiner, Steve Friedman, Jack Smith, Divine, Andy Warhol, Rosa von Praunheim.

Rosa von Praunheim's "Underground and Emigrants," made especially for the Berliner Festwochen (the Berlin Arts Fest) and SFB (the local tv web), purports to be an interview docu on the underground theatre-and-arts scene in New York, together with personalities among German emigrants who left during the Nazi period to settle in New York. In reality, the docu is just a surface job on friends of Praunheim in New York and, particularly, the gay side of the city instead of the art center of the world.

Although Praunheim has the right to film his own vision of New York's Underground movement, the pic was apparently inked by the Berlin autumn arts fest to say something about "SoHo — Downtown Manhattan" and its immediate surroundings, something that relates to the artists, dancers, actors, writers, and personalities who were invited to participate in this

broad, impressive salute to N.Y. as "the cultural capital of the world." It preemed at Berlin fest.

Instead, the docu stars Praunheim and accents his love for Yank improvization. The list of "personalities" includes a handful of the important figures in the city, and many who did consent to appear handle the helmer with antiseptic gloves. William Burroughs doesn't say a word, Ellen Stewart answers hazy questions with sarcasm, Fernando Arrabal conducts his interview in Spanish through a translator, and Andy Warhol is lensed from afar in a gallery as he speaks with others. That's about it for news from the Underground via the names who made it what it is.

As for "emigrants," Greta Keller and Grete Mosheim stir the blood as individuals who maintain a certain presence, but Praunheim treats them only slightly better than his otherwise customary, chummy back-slapping. New York is full of stories about the destinies of emigrating artists and writers (some of whom visit Berlin regularly); this helmer, on the other hand, is mesmerized by the heady atmosphere surrounding Greta and Grete.

The docu hits pay dirt on occasion, but seemingly by accident. Alice Carey's cable-tv report offers an easy-flowing history of Off-Broadway legit, and there are a few revealing insights to activity thereabouts last summer via chats with Ludlam, Carmines, Eyen, Breuer, Vaccaro, and Curtis. The rest is in-jokes, references to who's coming and going from N.Y. to Berlin on cultural grants (DAAD), and how miserable the cultural scene in Germany, in comparison, is these days. All paid for by the arts establishment in Berlin, of course. —Holl.