

JANUS FILMS PRESENTS



WORLD ON A WIRE

Director: Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Country: West Germany

Year: 1973

Run time: 212 min (Pt. I: 105 min; Pt. II: 107 min)

In German w/ English subtitles

Color / 1.37 / Mono / Unrated

JANUS FILMS

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SYNOPSIS

A dystopic science-fiction epic, *World on a Wire* is German wunderkind Rainer Werner Fassbinder's gloriously cracked, boundlessly inventive take on future paranoia. With dashes of Kubrick, Vonnegut, and Dick, but a flavor entirely his own, Fassbinder tells the noir-spiked tale of reluctant action hero Fred Stiller (Klaus Lowitsch), a cybernetics engineer who uncovers a massive corporate and governmental conspiracy. At risk? Our entire (virtual) reality as we know it. This long unseen three-and-a-half-hour labyrinth is a satiric and surreal look at the weird world of tomorrow from one of cinema's kinkiest geniuses.

ABOUT THE RESTORATION

World on a Wire was originally made for German television (WDR) in 1973 and was shot on 16mm reversal film material (Kodak/Eastman Ektachrome). The two-part film was shot in 44 days, from January until March 1973 in Paris, Munich, and Cologne. The first German TV broadcast was on October 14, 1973 (part I) and October 16, 1973 (part II).

The new Digital Master has been taken directly from the original 16mm A/B reversal rolls: they were scanned in 2K resolution on an ARRI Film Scanner and color-corrected on a Discreet Lustre System. Thousands of instances of dirt, debris and scratches were removed by using the MIT Digital Restoration System. The entire project was done under the supervision of director of photography Michael Ballhaus.

RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER on WORLD ON A WIRE

We are dealing with three worlds. World I, the overarching world, is the only real world. In order to better cope with its planning problems, it has created a simulation of itself—World II. This simulation must replicate conditions in World I as closely as possible in order to make reliable predictions. In fact, it must be identical with World I except for one crucial difference: its inhabitants cannot be aware of their true nature. However, since all other conditions are necessarily analogous, World I inevitably lays the foundation for World II to emancipate itself. World I programmed World II with intelligence, civilizational knowledge, and cultural and technological skills. These are, in turn, used by the inhabitants of World II to create a simulation that meets their own needs. Since they now have a system that is dependent on them, they learn a few things about dependencies and also realize that they themselves exist in someone else's name. The "simulated units" of World II become "identity units" for which World I no longer has any use.

Seen such, it seems only a question of the proper consciousness and view of one's situation ("The person who has recognized his own situation—how can he be held back?"). However, consciousness is not an abstract matter that Hall need only impart, as information, to the simulated units (listen, people, I have discovered something here!) in order to set them free. It must be shown how a person becomes conscious of his situation on the basis of concrete things. In other words, people must suffer from social conditions and ultimately decide to organize the world in a way that is suitable for them and not for some other authorities. This also means that they must now use, for their own needs, the simulator developed in their world, as opposed to allowing it to calculate the campaign for a new laundry detergent brand.

In the film World I looks like our world, and perhaps has a few features of its own that enable us to recognize that its dimensions are larger than those of our world. As far as World II goes, the question is whether it should not be depicted in two ways, from a subjective and objective point of view. In other words, as long as its inhabitants are "among themselves," it looks real since it is real in their consciousness. But if we find ourselves on the level of World I and observe World II via the screen, we might find, here and there, a few elements that are strangely incomplete: a street that continues to the horizon when viewed from level II, but that, after a cut to level I, suddenly ends exactly where the car has turned; or a room that is not as complete as World II's inhabitants might believe, perhaps lacking a wall; or something from World I that the control room quickly punches into a decoration in World II, with the process seen by the viewer. At any rate, something must be done along these lines, not only to physically illustrate the difference between World I and II, but also to show that people in World II are repeatedly fooled into believing in something that can be easily taken away if they have not yet appropriated it themselves.

The relationship between World III and World II is the same as that between World II and World I. Perhaps things seem technically less perfect and more improvised, especially since we only see World III from the perspective of World II and it has not yet developed a life of its own—it can be switched on and off as desired. We can perhaps imagine it like this: up to now World II has only been able to do very simple things with World III—that is, simple reaction tests involving stimulants, the effects of physical exertion, etc., but not complex intellectual tasks.

Ideology: Is it possible that World I has not only created World II as the subject of observation, but also puts it to work for its own purposes? In other words, once World I has become highly developed on the basis of its own achievements, it becomes parasitic since it has everything done for it by World II. This is why it is so interested in preserving World II. If World II were to stop performing its services and become independent, World I would teeter and collapse since it has long forgotten how to reproduce itself (or, for that matter, how to generate a new simulation). It is thus a parable of a master and his servant: as the master's needs become more refined and he increasingly relies on his servant to ensure they are met, the servant becomes more and more refined and the master increasingly stupid. Although the master cannot live without the servant, the servant can live without him. Seen historically, this is the equivalent of feudalism, which gave rise to the middle classes but was then abolished by them. The middle classes will in turn produce their own antithesis. The theoretical foundations of these thoughts are contained in the novel, but the practical consequences are completely ignored. For example, the normal areas of productive work are conspicuously absent. Since it would, of course, be absurd to think that, of 100 newly produced cars, half could suddenly disappear, we can perhaps imagine it as follows: World I, which is technologically more advanced, has fully automatic factories that produce everything it needs. However, all the corrections to the production process and all innovations, even the effective control of production, conform to what is manufactured in World II by people who are still directly connected to their work in a productive and intelligent fashion. If we imagine things in this way, the process can, incidentally, be shown in quite concrete terms: when a power plant fails in World I, the error is quickly programmed into a power plant in World II. Its inhabitants find a solution that is then adopted by World I.

World I must definitely appear as a real world and be shown in scenes in the film. After viewers are given a long look at World II, they must suddenly be shown a world that looks identical, but whose inhabitants, strangely enough, are amused by what happens on the screen, worry, intervene in some way, etc., without the audience knowing exactly what this means. At any rate, it is important that viewers notice that one world is up to something with the other (e.g., taking delight in the heroic Hall). But at a certain point they notice that this no longer works and the system goes haywire.

Hall, Lynch, Fuller (who must appear at the start and then die), and Jinx should appear both in World I and as analogous entities in World II, shouldn't they?

-- Rainer Werner Fassbinder

(undated; previously unpublished; from the RWFF archives; © RWFF)

RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER

Rainer Werner Fassbinder (May 31, 1945 - June 10, 1982) was born into a cultured bourgeois family in the small Bavarian spa town Bad Wörishofen. Raised by his mother as an only child, the boy had only sporadic contact with his father, a doctor, after the divorce of his parents when he was five. Educated at a Rudolf Steiner elementary school and subsequently in Munich and Augsburg, the city of Bert Brecht, he left school before passing any final examinations. A cinema addict ("five times a week, often three films a day") from a very early age, not least because his mother needed peace and quiet for her work as a translator, "the cinema was the family life I never had at home."

Fassbinder made his first short films at the age of twenty, persuading a male lover to finance them in exchange for leading roles. He also applied for a place at the Berlin Film School (dffb), but was refused. He acted in both his early films: DER STADTSTREICHER (The City Tramp), which also featured Irm Hermann (later often used in character roles); and DAS KLEINE CHAOS (The Little Chaos). In the latter, his mother - under the name of Lilo Pempeit - played the first of many parts in her son's films. Only after these amateur directing-scripting-acting efforts did Fassbinder take lessons with a professional acting studio, where he met Hanna Schygulla, his most important actress, who thanks to him became an international star. It was through Schygulla that Fassbinder turned his interest to the theatre.

In 1967 Fassbinder joined the Munich action-theater. He directed, acted in, and adapted anti-establishment plays for a tightly knit group of young professionals, among them Peer Raben and Kurt Raab, who along with Schygulla and Hermann, became the most important members of his cinematic stock company. Jean-Marie Straub directed the action-theater in an eight-minute version of Bruckner's *Krankheit der Jugend*, using part of this stage production in his short film DER BRÄUTIGAM, DIE KOMÖDIANTIN UND DER ZUHÄLTER (1968), with Fassbinder as the pimp. In 1968 Fassbinder directed the first play written by himself, *Katzelmacher*, a twenty-minute highly choreographed encounter between Bavarian villagers and a foreign worker from Greece, who with scarcely a word of German, becomes the object of intense racial, sexual, and political hatred among the men, while exerting a strangely troubling fascination on the women. A few weeks later, in May 1968, the Action theater was disbanded after its theatre was wrecked by one of its founders, jealous of Fassbinder's growing power within the group. It promptly reformed under Fassbinder's command as the antiteater, which pursued an equally radical and frequently provocative production policy.

The years from 1969 to 1976 were Fassbinder's most prodigious and prolific period. An outstanding career in the theatre (productions in Munich, Bremen, Bochum, Nurnberg, Berlin, Hamburg and Frankfurt, where for two years he ran

the "Theater am Turm" with Kurt Raab and Roland Petri) was a mere backdrop for a seemingly unstoppable outpouring of films, TV films, adaptations, and even a TV variety show (in honour of Brigitte Mira). During the same period, he also did radio plays and took on roles in other director's films, among them the title part in Volker Schlöndorff's Brecht adaptation BAAL. By 1976 Fassbinder had become an international star. Prizes at major film festivals, premieres and retrospectives in Paris, New York, Los Angeles, and a first critical study on his work appearing in London had made him a familiar name among cinephiles and campus audiences the world over. He rented a house in Paris and could be seen in gay bars in New York, earning him cult hero status but also a controversial reputation in and out of his films. Art house circuits avidly took up his films: because he had so many to his credit by the time he was 'discovered' with FEAR EATS THE SOUL, the rerelease of his earlier films, together with the steady stream of new work, made his extraordinary productivity seem even more phenomenal.

His flamboyant and at the same time seedy lifestyle, his openly displayed and well advertised homosexuality, and at the same time life and love to women, the scandals, public outrages and bouts of self-pity ensured that in Germany itself Fassbinder was permanently in the news, making calculatedly provocative remarks in interviews, which nonetheless were usually shrewd and to the point. His work often received mixed notices from the national critics, many of whom only began to take Fassbinder seriously after the foreign press had hailed him as a genius.

In 1972 Fassbinder began his collaboration with a highly experienced and successful producer at West Germany's most prestigious television network, Peter Märtesheimer of WDR. Under Märtesheimer's influence, Fassbinder turned with even more determination to recognizably German subject matter. Together they made, among others, the television series EIGHT HOURS DO NOT MAKE A DAY, and in 1978 cowrote THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN, Fassbinder's commercially most profitable film and the first in his post-war German trilogy (the other two were LOLA and VERONIKA VOSS). For many foreign critics, his crowning achievement was the 14-part television adaptation of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, much maligned by the domestic press. Although for VERONIKA VOSS Fassbinder received the Golden Bear at the 1982 Berlin Film Festival, a much-coveted Oscar nomination eluded him. As had often been noted, Fassbinder was the engine and motor (the "heart" in Wolfram Schütte's words) of the New German Cinema. His sudden death from a vicious combination of drugs and sleeping pills in June 1982 symbolically marked the end of the most exciting and experimental period the German cinema had known since the 1920s.

-- Thomas Elsaesser

CAST

KLAUS LÖWITSCH
MASCHA RABBEN
KARL-HEINZ VOSGERAU
ADRIAN HOVEN
IVAN DESNY
BARBARA VALENTIN
GÜNTER LAMPRECHT
WOLFGANG SCHENK
MARGIT CARSTENSEN
ULLI LOMMEL
JOACHIM HANSEN
KURT RAAB
RUDOLF LENZ
HEINZ MEIER
PETER CHATEL
RAINER HAUER
KARL SCHEYDT
GOTTFRIED JOHN
ELMA KARLOWA
BRUCE LOW
WALTER SEDLMAYR
EL HEDI BEN SALEM
ERNST KÜSTERS
LISELOTTE EDER-PEMPEIT

Special Guests
INGRID CAVEN
EDDIE CONSTANTINE
CHRISTINE KAUFMANN
RAINER LANGHANS
KARSTEN PETERS
CHRISTIANE MAYBACH
PETER KERN
RUDOLF WALDEMAR BREM
KATRIN SCHAAKE
PETER MOLAND
DORIS MATTES
CORINNA BROCHER
SOLANGE PRADEL
MARYSE DELLANNOY
WERNER SCHROETER
MAGDALENA MONTEZUMA

Fred Stiller
Eva Vollmer
Herbert Siskins
Professor Henri Vollmer
Günther Lause
Gloria Fromm
Fritz Walfang
Franz Hahn
Maya Schmidt-Gentner
Rupp, Journalist
Hans Edelkern
Mark Holm
Hartmann, Industrialist
Secretary of State von Weinlaub
Secretary of State Hirse
Inspector Stuhlfaut
Inspector Lehner
Einstein
Keeper of Cafeteria
Doctor
Janitor
Bodyguard 1
Bodyguard 2
IKZ Employee

Uschi, Secretary
Man in Car
Christine, Woman at Party
Waiter at Party
Guide at Editor's
Woman in Bar
Orderly 1
Orderly 2
Computer Lab Assistant
Employee
Employee
Employee
Marlene Dietrich Impersonator
Waitress at Cafe
Guest at Party
Guest at Party

PETER GAUHE
DORA KARRAS-FRANK
IVON WAK

Informer
Woman at Construction Site
Man in Phone Booth

CREW

DIRECTOR
SCRIPT

Based on the novel *Simulacron 3*

MUSIC

CAMERA

CAMERA ASSISTANT

PRODUCTION DESIGN

COSTUME DESIGN

MAKEUP

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS

CONTINUITY

EDITOR

PRODUCTION MANAGER

PRODUCERS

A PRODUCTION OF

Rainer Werner Fassbinder
Fritz Müller-Scherz
Rainer Werner Fassbinder
by Daniel F. Galouye
Gottfried Hüngsberg; Archives
Michael Ballhaus
Ulrich Prinz
Kurt Raab
Gabriele Pillon
Rosemarie Schönartz
Renate Leiffer
Fritz-Müller-Scherz
Corinna Brocher
Marie Anne Gerhardt
Fred Igner
Peter Märthesheimer
Alexander Wesemann
Westdeutscher Rundfunk

RESTORATION

A digital restoration of the original 1973 production by Westdeutschen Rundfunk

A PRODUCTION OF

DIRECTOR OF RESTORATION
LINE PRODUCER
ADMINISTRATION
ASSISTANT
RESEARCH / RWFF ARCHIVES
LEGAL
PRODUCER
FILM PROCESSING
SALES

Rainer Werner Fassbinder
Foundation
Michael Ballhaus
Frank Graf
Annemarie Abel
Bernd Hennig
Bastian Follmann
Stefan Mumme
Juliane Lorenz
ARRI Film & TV
Walter Brus

POST-PRODUCTION
PROJECT COORDINATION

TELECINE
COLOR TIMING

TIMING ASSISTANT
ONLINE
HD TIMING
TITLES
DIGITAL RESTORATION

SOUND EDITING

CHIEF ENGINEER
RE-RECORDING MIXER
STUDIO ASSISTANT
DELIVERY
POST-PRODUCTION MANAGER

Markus Kirsch
Felicitas Heydenreich
Alexander Klippe
Markus Mastaller
Traudl Nicholson
Andreas Lautil
Kathi Klippe
Marco Krinke
Manuela Jesse
Jan Mehlhase
Alexander Zebisch
Marie-Claire Renz
Rebecca Schünemann
Frederik Haas
Max Wanninger
Benjamin Kaczorek
Tassilo Kühn
Cine Postproduktion Bavaria
Bild & Ton
Rudi Neubert
Hubertus Rath
Wolf Müller
Babette Fürbringer
Manni Gläser

MUSIC

“Boys in the Backroom”
Music: Friedrich Hollaender
Lyrics: Frank Lösser
© by Universal Music Corporation

“Amara terra mia”
Music: Domenico Modugno
Lyrics: Enrica Bonaccorti
© 1971 by Universal Music Publishing Ricordi Srl.

“On the Beautiful Blue Danube”
Berlin Philharmonic, cond. Herbert von Karajan
from *J. Strauss II: An der schönen blauen Donau* P 1967 Deutsche Grammophon
GmbH
Courtesy Universal Music Classics & Jazz - a division of Universal Music GmbH

“Albatross”

written by Peter Alan Green

© Published by Crosstown Songs UK Ltd

Administered by Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd

Performed by Fleetwood Mac

Produced by Mike Vernon

P 1968 Blue Horizon Records

Courtesy Sony Music Entertainment Germany GmbH

“Café Mozart Waltz”

Music: Anton Karas

© by CHAPPELL & CO INC./CHAPPELL & CO LTD.

Courtesy of CHAPPELL & CO. GMBH & CO. KG

“Olé Guapa”

Music: Aari Maasland Malando

Performed by Alfred Hause & His Orchestra - P 1960 Polydor

© Editions Basart Mit freundlicher Genehmigung der Strengholt Musikverlag GmbH

Courtesy Universal Music Domestic Division - a division of Universal Music GmbH

“Hör’ mein Lied, Violetta”

Othmar Klose, Rudi Lukesch und Leone Sinigaglia

Mit freundlicher Genehmigung des

Verlages Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden

Performed by Alfred Hause & His Orchestra - P 1962 Polydor

Courtesy Universal Music Domestic Division - a division of Universal Music GmbH

“Lili Marleen”

Music: Norbert Schultze

Lyrics: Hans Leip

© by Apollo-Verlag Paul Lincke GmbH

Recorded in Alcazar, Paris

Performed by Solange Pradel

“Trouble”

Music and Lyrics: Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller

© Gladys Music Inc.

Courtesy Cherry Lane Germany GmbH und Edition Lesto

© Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC. (USA)

Performed by Elvis Presley

P Originally released prior to 1972. All rights reserved by BMG Music

15.01.1958, USA

Courtesy Sony Music Entertainment Germany GmbH

SPECIAL THANKS: Christian Berg, Alexander Farenholtz, Carmel Galouye, Gebhard Henke, Laurence Kardish, Dieter Kosslick, Kirsten Niehuus, Lutz Nitsche, Torsten Maß, Amanda Mecke, Karen Robson, Rajendra Roy, Oliver Schlecht, Hortensia Völckers, Erica Wiese

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The original German script published by Matthes & Seitz Berlin



Rainer Werner Fassbinder
Foundation

medienboard
Berlin-Brandenburg GmbH

KULTURSTIFTUNG
DES
BUNDES

The Museum of Modern Art

CinePostproduction
Bavaria Bild & Ton

ARRI 
FILM & TV

DD **DOLBY**
DIGITAL
IN BESTIMMTEN KINOS



Matthes & Seitz Berlin