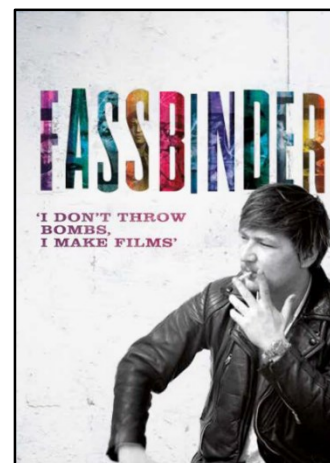


## **BFI Southbank celebrate fearless filmmaker Fassbinder with major retrospective 35 years after his death**

“Dead by 37, openly bi-sexual, constantly controversial: Rainer Werner Fassbinder was arguably post-war Germany’s greatest filmmaker” – BFI season programmer **Margaret Deriaz**

**Friday 17 March 2017, London.**

Running from **Monday 27 March – Wednesday 31 May**, BFI Southbank’s major **Fassbinder** retrospective will celebrate the constantly controversial and fearless filmmaker **Rainer Werner Fassbinder**, arguably post-war Germany’s greatest director. This extensive retrospective will feature most of the great auteur’s huge body of work, with 40 features, shorts and TV series, from gangster movies to melodramas, social satires to queer dramas. Fassbinder is perhaps one of the most prolific filmmakers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; his first 10 features were astonishingly made in less than two years, and he went on to make another 30 by the time he died young at 37. A fearless artist who knew no taboos, Fassbinder combined scathing social criticism with profound psychological insight.



A highlight of the season will be a special screening of *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978) on **Wednesday 29 March**; the film was the greatest critical and commercial success of Fassbinder’s career, and the ‘German Hollywood film’ he’d longed to make. We will welcome the film’s star **Hanna Schygulla** and Editor **Juliane Lorenz**, who is also President of the **Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation**, with whom the BFI has partnered with for the season, to discuss working with post-war Germany’s most prominent and controversial filmmaker. Another highlight of the month will be a UK-wide re-release of *Fear Eats the Soul* (1973) on **Friday 31 March**; playing on extended run during the season, this bold reworking of Douglas Sirk’s *All That Heaven Allows* was Fassbinder’s international breakthrough. The season will include an introductory talk *Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Wunderkind, Iconoclast, Star* by Martin Brady (King’s College London, GSSN), a *Fassbinderian Politics* Study Day and *The Bitter Tears of Fassbinder’s Women: A Symposium*. There will also be a Fassbinder collection available on BFI Player+ from 31 March, comprised of 10 of his best-loved films including *Fear Eats the Soul* (1973), *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (1972) and *Fox and His Friends* (1974). BFI and Arrow Films, who will be distributing the re-release of *Fear Eats the Soul*, have also worked together to make a number of the films available across the UK in new DCPs.

Fassbinder drew inspiration from the French New Wave and, later, from the Hollywood melodramas of Douglas Sirk and others. Alongside the season, BFI Southbank’s regular **Big Screen Classics** series will showcase some of these films; **Fassbinder’s Favourites** will include Sirk melodramas *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) and *Imitation of Life* (1959), pioneering French New Wave films *Vivre sa vie* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1962) and *Le Signe du lion* (Eric Rohmer, 1962), as well as Hollywood classics such as *All About Eve* (Joseph L Mankiewicz, 1950) and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Howard Hawks, 1953).

After having failed to get into film school Fassbinder decided to turn to the theatre where in 1967 he met **Ursula Straetz**, **Peer Raben**, **Harry Baer** and **Hans Hirschmüller**, who all become frequent collaborators; alongside actors **Hanna Schygulla** and **Irm Hermann** with whom he was already

friends, they formed the 'Anti-Theater' company under Fassbinder's direction. A charismatic presence in many of his own films, Fassbinder stars in his debut feature ***Love is Colder than Death*** (1969) as a petty criminal whose desire for freedom is undermined by his emotional needs. This will screen alongside ***The City Tramp*** (1966) Fassbinder's earliest surviving film, inspired by Eric Rohmer's *Le Signe du lion*, and ***The Little Chaos*** (1967) described by the director as 'a gangster film that ends well.'

Brutal and poignant, Fassbinder's adaptation of his own play ***Katzelmacher*** (1969) is still shockingly resonant, while ***Gods of the Plague*** (1969) is a melancholy thriller in which Fassbinder captures the late 60s Zeitgeist – its uneasy blend of bohemian dreams, bourgeois aspirations and subversion of the Third Reich. Fassbinder's first film in colour ***Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?*** (1969) is particularly dark – a black comedy of manners, shot in a wintry Munich. Fassbinder's fifth feature in only 10 months ***Rio das Mortes*** (1970) is surprisingly light-hearted and funny and was quickly followed by ***Whity*** (1970), an idiosyncratic western set in the American South of the 1870s. Following the defeat of the German student movement in 1968, Fassbinder considers whether revolutions are inevitably doomed to failure ***The Niklashausen Journey*** (1970).

***Beware of a Holy Whore*** (1970) is choreographed like a ballet to music by Peer Raben, Donizetti and Elvis and is a gorgeous ode to filmmaking, warts and all. The glorious re-working of Hollywood noir ***The American Soldier*** (1970) opens with the return of a German-American Vietnam veteran and soon-to-be contract killer, to the Munich of his youth. Fassbinder was much inspired by Marieluise Fleisser, a protégé of Brecht in the 1920s and in ***Pioneers in Ingolstadt*** (1970) he updates her brilliant, scandalous play about the impact of a newly arrived army regiment on the sexually frustrated young women of a small Bavarian town. Wonderfully written, acted and directed, ***The Merchant of Four Seasons*** (1971) is a heart-rending tale that was Fassbinder's first venture into popular melodrama; it was followed by the intensely autobiographical ***The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*** (1972) featuring a brilliant all-female cast, including Margit Carstensen and Hanna Schygulla.

Thanks to a new restoration which premiered at this year's Berlinale, Fassbinder's controversial five-part TV series ***Eight Hours Don't Make a Day*** (1972) can be seen again at last. Aimed at a mass audience, this entertaining soap opera of working-class life revolves around an extended family of three generations who struggle to balance the demands of the workplace with the pressures of family life. Now splendidly restored, the two-part sci-fi series ***World on a Wire*** (1973) is a real revelation – stylistically dazzling, disquieting and hugely enjoyable. Fassbinder's one foray into sci-fi anticipates *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix*, foreshadowing current anxieties around AI and VR. The epic TV series ***Berlin Alexanderplatz*** (1979/80) was the result of Fassbinder's lifelong obsession with Alfred Döblin's great city novel, bringing to life the twilight years of the Weimar Republic. Fassbinder embraced television as a medium and a platform, from ambitious series to TV-movie melodramas; the talk ***Fassbinder: Television Pioneer*** will explore how he exploited TV's artistic potential, how the funding it offered made his career possible (he would surely be making Netflix series today), and how he seized upon TV as a way of communicating provocative ideas to a mass audience.

One of Fassbinder's lesser-known masterpieces ***Martha*** (1973) is a ruthless dissection of a marriage reminiscent of the work of Sirk, while ***Effi Briest*** (1974) is an exquisitely subtle rendition of Theodor Fontane's great novel of 1896. Way ahead of its time, ***Fox and His Friends*** (1974) presents characters who are unproblematically gay. In ***Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven*** (1975) Emma Küsters (Brigitte Mira) is hounded by the press when her factory-worker husband goes murderously berserk after learning of impending mass redundancies. With echoes of *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Stepford Wives*, ***Fear of Fear*** (1975) is a disturbing account of one woman's struggle to conform, and deserves to be much better known, while ***I Only Want You to Love Me*** (1975) is based on a real-life interview with a

convicted murderer and ***Satan's Brew*** (1976) is a hysterical black comedy about a fashionable left-wing poet stricken with writer's block.

Fassbinder's first international co-production ***Chinese Roulette*** (1976) is drenched in gothic atmosphere, and is a deadly assault on the institution of marriage; there will be an event ***Philosophical Screens: Repression and Release in Fassbinder's Chinese Roulette*** in which we consider Fassbinder's spiky, provocative critique of German bourgeois values through a philosophical lens. ***Bolwieser (aka The Stationmaster's Wife)*** (1977) is an adaptation of a novel by Oskar Maria Graf which evokes the hypocritical atmosphere of a small Bavarian town where Nazism is on the rise. Fassbinder's first film in English ***Despair*** (1978) was brilliantly adapted by Tom Stoppard from Vladimir Nabokov's novel set in 1930s Berlin and starred an exquisite Dirk Bogarde.

The portmanteau film ***Germany in Autumn*** (1978) was the collective response of leading German filmmakers to the dramatic terrorist crisis of autumn 1977. In ***The Third Generation*** (1979), against the dystopian backdrop of West Berlin, a group of bourgeois activists style themselves as terrorists, although they lack any real political motivation; while very much of its time, this colourful, cacophonous farce speaks urgently to ours. ***In a Year with 13 Moons*** (1978) is a devastating elegy for doomed love is dedicated to Fassbinder's lover Armin Meier, who had recently committed suicide while ***Lili Marleen*** (1980) is Fassbinder's only film set in the Third Reich and chronicles the career of a recording star who wows the troops with her famous hit song while secretly pining for her Jewish lover.

***The Marriage of Maria Braun*** (which in addition to the special screening on March 29, will also screen in May) was the first of three superbly crafted chronicles of the 1950s and was followed by ***Lola*** (1981) and ***Veronika Voss*** (1982). *Lola* is a brilliant updating of Von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* which captures the sleazy vulgarity and sheer vitality of late 1950s West Germany, while *Veronika Voss* centres on the relationship between a young sports journalist and an ageing movie star who cannot accept that her career is over. Fassbinder's documentary about the 1981 World Theatre Festival in Cologne ***Theatre in Trance*** (1981), is an immersive montage of avant-garde performances. Fassbinder's final film ***Querelle*** (1982) is an adaptation of one of his all-time favourites, Jean Genet's homoerotic novel about a beautiful, opium-dealing sailor on shore leave.

Completing the season are three documentaries looking at the life and work of Fassbinder. ***I Don't Just Want You to Love Me – The Filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder*** (Hans Günther Pflaum, 1992) is an engrossing overview of Fassbinder's astonishing career. Commissioned by the Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation to mark what would have been the director's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, the new documentary ***Fassbinder*** (Annekatrien Hendel, 2015) features some previously unseen material and aims to introduce Fassbinder to a new generation. ***Fassbinder: To Love without Demands*** (2015) by Danish filmmaker Christian Braad Thomsen, one of the most perceptive commentators on Fassbinder's work who enjoyed an enduring friendship with the filmmaker, is an intimate portrait suffused with tenderness towards its subject. Neither a polemicist nor an ideologue, Fassbinder remains an extraordinary artist whose passion for truth-telling is now more important than ever.

In collaboration with:



Rainer Werner Fassbinder  
Foundation

**– ENDS –**

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**Full listings for the FASSBINDER season, as well as BIG SCREEN CLASSICS: FASSBINDER'S FAVOURITES can be found on the BFI website:**

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-rw-fassbinder-season-listings-2017-03-17.pdf>

**For more information on the Arrow Films re-release of *Fear Eats the Soul* please contact:**

**Codie Entwistle: [Codie@arrowfilms.co.uk](mailto:Codie@arrowfilms.co.uk)**

*Fear Eats the Soul* will open on Friday 31 March at BFI Southbank, Bristol Watershed, Curzon Bloomsbury, HOME Manchester, Irish Film Institute, Picturehouse FACT and Sheffield Showroom. A number of other cinemas across the UK will screen new DCPs of Fassbinder films including *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, *Fox and His Friends*, *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant* and *Katzelmacher*. For full details please contact Arrow Films.

### **\*\*\* PICTURE DESK \*\*\***

**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) under BFI / BFI Southbank / 2017 / April / Fassbinder**

## **About the BFI**

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

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- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £12.10, concs £9.70 including Gift Aid donation. Members pay £2.00 less on any ticket - [www.bfi.org.uk/southbank](http://www.bfi.org.uk/southbank).

Young people aged 25 and under can buy last minute tickets for just £3, 45 minutes before the start of screenings and events, subject to availability - <http://www.bfi.org.uk/25-and-under>.

**Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment**

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The BFI Player+ service sits within the existing BFI Player – home of the go-to VoD service for new pay-per-view independent film releases and the BFI's hugely popular Britain on Film archive collection.

### **About the Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation**

The Rainer Werner Fassbinder Foundation (RWFF), a nonprofit foundation, was established by Liselotte Eder, Fassbinder's mother, in Munich in 1986. In 1992 its headquarters were moved to Berlin, where ever since, it has been run as a private foundation by its president, Juliane Maria Lorenz. The RWFF holds all rights to Fassbinder's artistic estate, including the rights acquired since his death. These rights cover 14 original theater plays, six adaptations, four radio plays, 44 cinema and television films, the lyrics for 12 songs, numerous early writings, and the 50 film scripts written by RWF, including 13 with co-authors. Many of Fassbinder's works are now considered classics of international film and cultural history. They include films such as *Katzelmacher*, *The Merchant of Four Seasons*, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, *Eight Hours Are Not a Day*, *World on a Wire*, *Effi Briest*, *Martha*, *Fears Eats the Soul*, *Fox and His Friends*, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, *Lili Marleen*, *Lola*, *Veronika Voss* and *Querelle*.

[www.fassbinderfoundation.de](http://www.fassbinderfoundation.de)