

THE GERMAN SOCIETY'S

Friday Film Fest Series



Lola Rennt

Credits:

Director: Tom Tykwer;

Producer: Stefan Arndt;

Screenplay: Tom Tykwer;

Music: Tom Tykwer, Jonny Klimek, Reinhold Heil;

Cast: Franka Potente (*Lola*), Moritz Bleibtreu (*Manni*)

Production: Shot in various locations in Berlin

Released in August 1998 in Germany. Length: 81 minutes.

Tom Tykwer was born in 1965 in Wuppertal Germany. After finishing high school and performing his *Zivildienst*, he moved to Berlin where in 1988 he took over programming for the *Berlin Moviemento* chain. In 1991

he presented his first film, a short called "*Because*" at the Hof Film Festival and in 1993 his first feature film "*Deadly Maria*" was released. In 1994 he founded the *X-Filme Production Company* along with Stefan Arndt, Wolfgang Becker and Dani Levy.

Tykwer is considered one of the preeminent young directors in Germany. Among his many novel approaches to film is a penchant for experimenting with our perceptions of time. As he has noted: "Usually what film does is to tell a whole lifetime in 90 minutes...so I thought it would be interesting, especially in *Lola*, to stretch time out and tell twenty minutes in one and a half hours..."

Tykwer is noted for his use of a wide variety of techniques in filmmaking, such as slow motion, flashbacks in black and white which alternate with the main narrative in color, mixing animation sequences into live action, and including 35 mm and video in the same film. He refers to such techniques as "visual decisions." Tykwer has emphasized that whatever the technique, he always wants the audience to be very clear about the story being told. Tykwer is also a musician, although he makes little distinction between his two professions, noting that "...I'm a film musician. Music and film, I can't separate those from each other."

Although there are great differences between the two directors, Tykwer might be compared with Fassbinder in a couple of ways. Like Fassbinder, Tykwer prefers to make films about Germany, particularly in areas where he has lived. For him it is not only a question of a theme which grips him; it is an advantage to make the film in places where one has roots and where the area has made an emotional imprint on the filmmaker ("*Wenn man einen Film macht über Themen, die einen selber reizen, ist es natürlich auch toll, wenn man sich in einer Gegend aufhält, in der man emotional geprägt wurde, in der die eigenen Wurzeln liegen.*"). Tykwer has also, in the tradition of Fassbinder, gathered a regular team of actors and technical people about him. He emphasizes the importance of continuity and trust between the people who are making a film.

In the relatively few films he has made, Tykwer has demonstrated a willingness to experiment with the possibilities of telling a story on the screen. But his main goal is as he says, about people, about how to understand them, and perhaps grow fond of them. (*"Ich mag es, wenn die Aufgabe des Films darin besteht, die Menschen zu verstehen, ihnen zu folgen, sie ins Herz zu schließen."*)

Précis – Allen Krumm

When pondering as to why things happen the way they do, philosophers tell us that we can appeal to chance, necessity, or design. A poet advises us that we always end up back at the starting point anyway, whatever the initial impulse. But we don't need philosophers or poets. We have Lola, a well conditioned, good looking, red headed riposte to teleology, determinism and the hermeneutical circle. Lola demonstrates in triplicate that, time and again, in due time, timing is everything. Insistent tick-tocking and rumbling pendulums and cascading dominoes and a throbbing disco beat repeatedly remind us of this chronological imperative.

Although one would have to concede that she is an optimist of sorts, Lola does not seem to share Plato's conviction that the world is inherently intelligible. "Why do we believe anything at all?" "The ball is round, the game last 90 minutes...all the rest is pure theory." One of the laws of thermodynamics says that things become simpler over time. Lola would probably disagree with this postulate as well. Things can get very difficult in less than an hour.

Lola's boyfriend Manni is in big trouble because for once, Lola was not on time. Although Lola believes that love can do everything, Manni's drug dealing boss Ronnie does not share this conviction. He prefers cash, particularly the 100k belonging to him which Manni has just lost. Manni has twenty minutes to come up with the money. So in desperation he appeals over the phone to Lola, vowing to rob a nearby supermarket if she does not show up in

time. "I'll think of something" she assures him. "And then..." arms pumping, mane flowing, she is off and running.

This is a film that makes you do a lot of thinking. Too much, possibly. It can, if you let it, drive you to distraction. Because, as the detached omniscient narrator notes near the beginning, "how can we be sure of anything at all." Indeed there are a few constants in each narrative. Mama always needs shampoo, Papa needs a break and boyfriend Manni has an unfortunate tendency to indulge in random acts of kindness in the wrong place at the wrong time.

But Lola is the ultimate constant. She is a world class screamer and a world class catalyst, careening through space and time to produce and reproduce endless repercussions. During 20 minutes of one little hour of a particular day, Lola navigates three versions of her desperate cross town run to rescue Manni. Random or planned, she encounters the same cast of characters during her runs. Each encounter is pregnant with ramifications for Lola and those she figuratively or literally collides with. And running into Lola invariably triggers Tom Tykwer's patented "...and then" fast-forward forecast of that person's future. This technique should make every viewer thankful not to have such prophetic powers.

So we watch Lola run (a spectacle of surprising aesthetic dimensions in itself) and we wonder, is she merely ricocheting from one event to the next (chance), or is she propelled by an unseen guiding Hand (design) or given the initial sequence, did all subsequent events have to happen as they did (necessity). Lola's wonderful withering stare (which should serve as a caution to all security guards) littered through innumerable scenes, seems to infer she hasn't come up with the answer either.

Suffice it to say that whatever the ultimate explanation is, Lola has faith...faith that if she runs fast enough and thinks fast enough and acts fast enough, she will save Manni's miserable life, whatever the side effects. If there is a moral in this charming film, it is probably that one shouldn't have stupid boyfriends who make bad career choices. They never appreciate what you do for them anyway.