

**Das merkwürdige Verhalten geschlechtsreifer Großstädter zur
Paarungszeit
By Sharan Knoell**

Director: Marc Rothemund
Music: Reinhard Besser
Writer: Peter Gersina
Release: 1998, 89 minutes
Stars: Cosma Shiva Hagen (Sandra), Christoph Waltz (Charly),
Ann-Kathrin Kramer (Manuela), Isabella Parkinson (Birgit),
Oliver Korittke (Jimmy), Gudrun Landgrebe (Cornelia),
Tobias Schenke (Paul)

The Statistics:

According to the Federal Statistical Office in Germany, the number of single-person households in 1961 was 4 million, and that number climbed to 13.7 million in the year 2000. Similarly, in the United States, it was reported by eMarketer in 2001 that there were more than 91 million single adults.

The average age of marriage for German women is 28; 30 for German men* (European Social Statistics Demography 2001). Aside from getting married later in life, women are also choosing to postpone the formation of a family to a higher age – having their first child in their thirties – and therefore having fewer children in total.

Thus, the singles population in both Germany and the US is growing, as is the age range at which people are finally settling down with their special someone.

For today's singles in search of a partner, it is not uncommon for them to visit conventional marriage agencies, subscribe to internet-based dating services, respond to classified ads, attend or

*Age 25 for American women and 26 for American men
host singles' parties, and participate in dating programs on TV and radio.

In today's film, which literally translates to "The Strange Behavior of Sexually Mature City Slickers at Mating Season", the characters discover that one can often find his/her "perfect match" when least expected – on a rooftop, in school, at a mambo party, in the mall, etc.

The Plot:

Charly, a lifelong unpublished author with dreams of fame, brings his latest novel to a publishing company, which has just been taken over by the owner's inexperienced and childishly spoiled son. When publication of his book is denied ["no one is interested in love stories" is the cited reason], Charly storms out of the office, is mistaken for the owner's son, and comes into temporary possession of the publisher's red Ferrari.

Across town, Sven runs into his neighbor Birgit, who is babysitting for her friend Manuela. In a moment of genius, Sven offers Birgit – a student and known bookworm – a free pass to a local gym and offers to fulfill her babysitting duties while she's out. On the hunt for a girlfriend, Sven realizes he appears more sensitive and appealing to the fairer sex with a baby in tow, so armed with Manuela's daughter, he begins his prowl.

Jimmy happens to work at the gym where Birgit has earned her free pass. He has set his sights on Peter, a good-looking architectural student who loves to mambo. In order to orchestrate a meeting with Peter, Jimmy asks Birgit to be his dance partner in a local mambo contest...at which he finds out that Peter is straight and has newly-discovered eyes for Birgit.

Meanwhile, Manuela has gone out shopping and notices a man walking around the mall with her baby. In an effort to entrap him, she strikes up a conversation with the man (Sven), who she finds has renamed her baby girl "Robert". Even though she's upset at the fact that a stranger has her baby and is using "Robert" as a tool to meet women, she realizes Sven's sort of charming and very handsome.

While Manuela's out, Tamineh, her roommate, discovers she's pregnant by her loser of a boyfriend and decides to end it all. On the apartment balcony, contemplating her leap, she meets Marcello, a jilted Italian also working up the courage to jump. Tamineh finds a sensitive and loving partner in Marcello, and Marcello finds a beautiful woman who loves to correct his German in Tamineh.

All of the characters converge in Manuela and Tamineh's apartment in the end, after a parade with the Pope and an accident involving the Ferrari. This quirky comedy is pure entertainment and wraps up very nicely after its 89 minutes. If ever there were a feel-good German romantic comedy, "Das merkwürdige...Paarungszeit" would be it!