

a screenplay that was only twelve pages long. As noted, most of the dialog was improvised, and the third take was used for the movie.

What is the advantage of such an unusual approach to cinematography? For one thing, it yields a remarkable directness to the action. Each scene moves seamlessly into the next scene. The camera follows the actors so closely that the emotional reactions are extremely vivid. Real unity of time (the time of action in the movie is identical to the time it really takes places) intensifies the viewer's sense of participation far beyond what more traditional cinematic techniques would be able to achieve.



Obviously, traditional movie making has the advantage of compressing time and creating meaning via the juxtaposition and highlighting of images. One could argue that Schipper's approach bloats the running time in the beginning, when the protagonists meet and get to know each other. The first forty-five minutes of this movie would normally constitute perhaps twenty-five minutes of a film shot in the usual manner. Hence, the real-time shooting doesn't seem to advance the plot quickly enough, and if it were not for the playful, curious, and impulsive appeal of Costa playing Victoria, the viewer might lose interest very quickly.

We are left with this dichotomy: the ability of the continuous take approach to intensify the viewer's involvement with the action and sympathetic identification with the characters, versus the strengths of the traditional approach: a more coherent plot structure, and thus, more efficient and compelling explanatory power. As a director, which approach would you choose?

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Friday Film Fest Series



Victoria

By Sebastian Schipper

February 19, 2017

• 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

The German Society of PA

611 Spring Garden St.

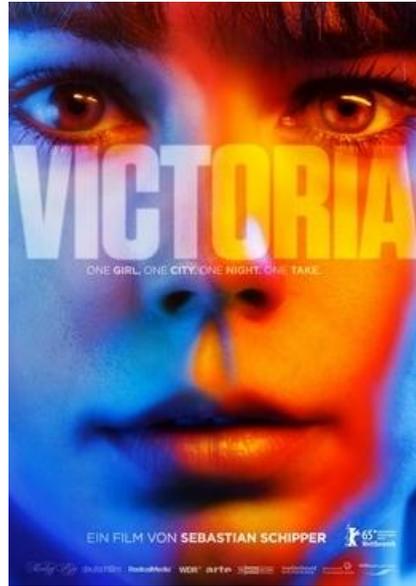
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Victoria (2015)

Director: Sebastian Schipper
Screenplay: Sebastian Schipper
Olivia Neergaard-Holm
Eike Schulz
Production: Jan Dressler
Sebastian Schipper
Music: Nils Frahm
DJ Koze, Deichkind
Camera: Sturla Brandth Grøvlen
Length: 140 Minutes
Cast: **Laia Costa** as Victoria
Frederick Lau as Sonne
Franz Rogowski as Boxer
Burak Yiğit as Blinker
Max Mauff as Fuß
André M. Hennicke as Andi
Commentary: Karl Moehlmann



Victoria was shot in a single continuous take on April 27th, 2014 between 4:30 and 7:00 in the morning. The shoot consisted of twenty-two locations in **Berlin-Kreuzberg** and **Berlin-Mitte**. Two other complete versions of the film had been filmed as rehearsals. The third shoot was completed without any cuts. The script consisted of only twelve pages, and most of the dialog was improvised.

The cameraman, **Sturla Brandth Grøvlen**, used a lightweight Canon C300 video camera with a single hand held focus to make all of the foregoing possible. He won the Silver Bear for **Outstanding Artistic Contribution for Cinematography**, and the movie received the German Film Award in six categories, including **Best Feature Film** and **Best Director**.

Victoria is a young woman from Madrid, Spain who moved to Berlin three months earlier and found a job in a café. She doesn't speak German, and she doesn't yet seem to know anybody in her new city. We first see her when she dances alone in a local techno club around four in the morning. On her way out of the club, she bumps into a group of four young German men. They introduce themselves as Sonne, Boxer, Blinker, and Fuß. Their

appearance and language, even more than their nicknames, stand in stark contrast to the sweet and soft-spoken Victoria.

You get the sense that these four young men either have criminal backgrounds or will soon get involved in such activities. They speak English with her, or at least they try to communicate in a language that they are all halfway familiar with, mixed with snatches of German that they throw at her. One of the four, Sonne, has a crush on Victoria, and he persuades her to accompany him and his friends to the rooftop of a nearby high rise building where they often hang out. They drink and smoke while whispering in order not to be conspicuous.

Tension spikes when Victoria walks to the edge of this open rooftop. She looks down and then sits down with her legs dangling off the building. Sonne tries to get her to come back, but she taunts him, challenging him to be daring and fearless like her. Foreshadowing things to come, Victoria begins to participate in the shady activities of the group. We learn that Boxer, who has recently spent time behind bars, owes a local gangster boss a favor for protecting him in prison.

Victoria impulsively agrees to be the driver for a bank robbery perpetrated by the group, and her daredevil perch on the edge of the building begins to pale in comparison to her new undertaking. It seems extremely improbable that such a well-educated young foreigner (she plays a brief Liszt piano recital for Sonne in the café) would so easily become involved in such criminal activity. We are given hints that her yearning for adventure (*Abenteuerlust*) and a feeling of shame from her school years are the sources of the courage and energy she begins to exhibit. Thus, it becomes easier (and perhaps a bit cathartic) to identify with her naïve slip-page into these criminal activities.

Kameraeinstellung und Einheit der Zeit

Whatever Victoria's motive for her involvement, after an hour of rather slow exposition of the main characters, the movie picks up steam and descends rather quickly into an action-filled nightmare in the early hours of a chilling morning in Berlin. The strong plot in the second half alone makes this film memorable. Couple this with the fact that the film was done in real time and with one take of one camera, and this movie stands in a rare category.

Alexander Sokurov's 2002 *Russian Ark*, a documentary tour of the Hermitage Museum, is one of the few other films taking this approach. Hitchcock's *Rope* and Iñárritu's *Birdman* come close, but fake the seamless one-shot film in some instances. No cuts, no lengthy rehearsals, no retake after retake – just three months of logistical preparation and practice with