

Wildwechsel

("Wild Game")

W German TV : 1972 : dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder : Intertel : 102 min

prod: : scr: Rainer Werner Fassbinder : dir.ph.: Dietrich Lohmann

[Eva Mattes](#)

Jörge Von Liebenfels; Ruth Drexel; Kurt Raab; Harry Baer; Rudolf Waldemar; Hanna Schygulla; Klaus Löwitsch

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	≠	M	♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5731	1.5	3	0	743	-	-	-	-	-	No	unseen

Bloomsbury Foreign Film Guide review:

"Although 19-year old Franz (Baer) and 14-year old Hanni (Mattes) are in love, he is sent to prison for seducing an under-age girl. When he is released a few months later, Hanni goads him into killing her repressive father (Liebenfels) . Franz Kroetz protested violently against Fassbinder's interpretation of his play, but by playing up the Nazism and incipient incestuousness of the girl's father, the director-writer gives an extra dimension to this depiction of distorted social values. The cool distance from which Fassbinder views his subject, and the somewhat stylised performances, allow the spectator to assess the rather melodramatic tale with a certain objectivity."

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Adaptation of the well-known play by Franz Xavier Kroetz (who called Fassbinder's film an outrage) about a fourteen-year old girl and a young labourer. The girl asks the boy to murder her father out of fear of his reaction to her relationship with the youth. Gripping and with precisely the right melodramatic tone. ***"

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"Fassbinder made this (for TV) right after "THE BITTER TEARS OF PETRA VON KANT", in the year that Godard made "TOUT VA BIEN". Like Godard's film, Fassbinder's is about a male-female relationship in a "political"

context, but here the boy is 19 and the girl only 14, so that their mutual love outrages more than one lower middle class taboo. Despite a final flourish of misogyny (the girl betrays the boy after he's laid his life on the line for her), Fassbinder's stance is very sympathetically unsentimental, and his mixture of caricature (her parents), materialism (the depiction of a factory production line), carefully stylised realism (the central relationship), and a bold physical frankness, is more than usually adroit. The movie created a censorship furore in Germany, not least because the author of the original play (Franz Kroetz) denounced Fassbinder's "obscene" depiction of his characters."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. From the little I've seen of Fassbinder's work, I would describe him as misanthropic rather than misogynist, and it's in any case absurd to write of "a final flourish of misogyny" merely because the central adolescent girl proves to be perfidious and manipulative. Only a sexist would hold that one should not portray a negative female character on the screen. Having recently watched "**LEON**", I was struck by the parallels (young girl seduces professional hit-man, and pressures him to murder the corrupt narcotic squad who killed her family), but the central love affair in that film is portrayed as wholly positive (ie: stopping short of sexual expression) and attracted just as much opprobrium for precisely that reason. Natalie Portman in "**LEON**" is a wilful, self-empowering young girl, also maltreated by a brutish father, and a congenital liar, but nevertheless capable of forming a warm and genuine attachment. Eva Mattes in this film is a less beguiling character, but I see no harm in that.

This is only one of a handful of paedophile relationship films to emerge from Europe in the seventies and early eighties – "**HET DEBUUT**" (Netherlands 77) was another – and it would be interesting to view them now that public outrage on the subject has gone ballistic, if only as a reminder that the present orthodoxy on that topic is itself only a fad (like McCarthyism) and not the Absolute Truth it holds itself to be. But it would be a brave TV station that broadcast these films today. Only *anti*-communist films are suitable for public viewing.

See subject index under [SEX & SEXUALITY](#), and under **CENSORSHIP / BANNED FILMS** for other titles which – frequently for the same reason – attracted controversy in their day.