Return to Go
Zurück auf los!

**Synopsis**

Sam (Sanoussi-Bliss) is a newly diagnosed HIV-positive, poor, black, East German man living in a run-down apartment in Berlin. Sam’s relationships with his friends and lovers comprise the support system that helps him through this difficult time. The viewer learns of Sam’s relationship with his ex-boyfriend Manne (Klein), who dies of AIDS-related complications. A constant companion and eventual roommate is Sam’s best friend, Basti (Freihof). Despite and because of serious events in the story, Sam forms new connections with a former and future boyfriend and friend, Rainer (Bach), who is later blinded in an automobile accident. Basti brings in his own love interest in the form of Mike (Gilling), a British artist who also moves into the decrepit apartment. Two nearly constant occupations of Sam’s are his work to record an album of trite East German Schlager (hit) songs, and his writing of a version of his and his friends’ narrative, which the viewer sees unfolding in the film. Towards the end of the film, the trio of Sam, Basti and Rainer drive to gay-friendly Denmark for a beach vacation. After contemplating life and its difficulties, the three friends drive back toward Germany, victorious and reinvigorated.

**Critique**

*Return to Go* presents a number of complicated social issues, which both the characters and the viewer must encounter over the course of the film: Otherness; race and racism; sexuality and homophobia; HIV/AIDS and the fear of the disease. Within and around these themes, binaries and the importance of time and space become crucial elements in the unfolding of the narrative. The two most prominent themes of the film are race and sexuality, and these are treated rather differently. The more prominent of the two is race, as it is the source of both implicit and explicit criticism. For example, racism is treated explicitly in a scene in which Sam directly confronts and challenges a gawking white grocery store employee. Implicitly, other scenes are visually constructed to point to the film’s goal of thematizing race; for example, only black faces appear on a TV that Sam is watching, or the stark contrast between Sam’s skin colour and that of a facial treatment mask. Sexuality, on the other hand, is treated with a greater sense of certainty in the world of the film. Whereas Sam faces ostracism due to his race, he finds security and comfort in the predominantly gay social scene depicted in the film.

The film also plays with time and space in a number of interesting ways. We see clocks running backward and characters barely missing each other. Through the introduction of non-urban Danish landscape, the film draws on a trope that is common in gay and HIV/AIDS-themed films; namely, a journey to the country as ‘balm’ for an ill person (Hart 2000: 67–80). Indeed, the film recalls other traits of HIV/AIDS films. For example, the trio’s time in Denmark is interspersed with shots of what appear to be home movies.
of the vacation. We are reminded of scenes from *Philadelphia* (Demme, 1993), for example, in which friends and acquaintances watch old home movies of the recently deceased protagonist. But despite these similarities, the film’s ending diverges from the typical AIDS-movie ending. *Return to Go* ends more or less happily and optimistically as the friends travel back to Germany, ‘back to go,’ as the title suggests. Critics praised the film, although a few expressed some unease at the lightheartedness with which the film’s themes are treated (Jahn 2001: 22). One of the few German films to thematize the experiences of black Germans, *Return to Go* uniquely shows the link between different kinds of marginalization like race and sexuality, while also repeating the social criticism (and AIDS satire) of film-makers like Rosa von Praunheim.

Kyle Frackman

**The Raspberry Reich/The Revolution is My Boyfriend (hardcore version)**

**The Raspberry Reich**

**Production Company:**
Jürgen Brüning Filmproduktion

**Distributors:**
GMFilms (Germany)
Strand Releasing (USA)

**Director:**
Bruce LaBruce

**Producer:**
Jürgen Brüning

**Screenwriter:**
Bruce LaBruce

**Cinematographers:**
James Carman
Kristian Petersen

**Editor:**
Jörn Hartmann

**Synopsis**

Set in present-day Germany, *The Raspberry Reich* narrates the contradictions and dreams of a Berlin wannabe terrorist group, who plan to liberate the masses from the bourgeois repression, including heterosexual monogamy, through a queer intifada. Gudrun (Sachse), the group’s leader and chief ideologue, forces her boyfriend, Andreas (Monroe), to have sex with another man, and ignites her followers with slogans taken from the writings of sexologist Wilhelm Reich and philosopher Herbert Marcuse. The radicals engage in urban guerilla activities and kidnap Patrick (Rupprecht), the son of a wealthy German industrialist. When they discover that their victim has been disowned by his father for his homosexuality, the terrorists start panicking. The tensions created by Gudrun’s despotic character causes the dissolution of the group: Patrick escapes with one of his guards and becomes a bank robber; Tche (Fettig) enlists in a terrorist training camp in the Middle East; Gudrun and Andreas start a family and have a baby girl, who they name after Ulrike Reinhard, one of the first generation members of the Red Army Faction (RAF) terrorist group.

**Critique**

The *Raspberry Reich* combines various genres, including political parody, satirical comedy and porn, with a high camp sensibility and an exuberantly transgressive video clip aesthetic, illustrated in the practice of pastiche flashing images, on-screen titles and driven montage. Its irreverent humour represents a cultural attempt to re-engage with the memory of the RAF from a contemporary perspective, but ultimately relies on established stereotypes. With this film, Canadian director Bruce LaBruce reveals how the 1970s West German terrorism is back in vogue in the new millennium, and how the traumatic memory of those events has been transformed into artefacts of popular culture, free from political meaning or historical