

THIRTY FRAMES A SECOND, TWO HUNDRED MILES AN HOUR

DIRECTORS LOUNGE'S GUY MADDIN SHORTS HEADING FOR ESSEN

No longer an upstart after seven consecutive years and scads of films of every conceivable genre, the Berlin International Directors Lounge (DL to the initiated) is still free of formula, corralling batches of like-minded works into presentable groupings but not bowing to predictability. No one knows quite what they are going to see here. That viewers can move freely about, mounting stairs and draping themselves over balcony railings to take in what's splashed onto the screen may add to the slightly helter-skelter atmosphere. Question-and-answer sessions with selected directors and performers can prove as offbeat as some of the offerings, and left field live performances take it over the top. For free. There is nothing else like this in Berlin, one of the hardest claims you can make in this city. DL, while still arriving, has arrived. Renowned artists such as Michael Nyman have chosen to reveal their newest visions here, and films are being sent for consideration by the hundreds from all over the globe, with their creators and stars often enough making the trip to see how it looks up there, larger than life. Add to that fast-appearing online reviews of films and audience reaction, and you've got the makings of a cult carnival waiting to be reborn on a yearly basis, like a child who enjoyed the process enough to want to give it yet another go.

It had to happen that Berlin's DL and Winnipeg's *enfant bizarre* Guy Maddin would come together, and this year marked the time, when the Berlinale jury member brought a handful of his short features to form the backbone of an evening dedicated to his peculiar view of things, as seen through the (filmic) eyes of the influenced, heard via live readings from his enigmatic book *From The Atelier Tovar* and not least declared by way of the master's aforementioned shorts themselves. A bit of everything was there. The giddy tomfoolery of *Nude Caboose*, the frenetic, fetishistic mock-punishment of *Sissy Boy Slap Party*, the industrial expressionism of *The Heart Of The World*. The house was full and imagination running at full tilt.

Directors Lounge is, with Mr. Maddin's blessing, showing these tasty celluloid morsels at C.A.R. in Essen, offering up a peak into many little worlds portrayed in a myriad of ways: playful, distressing, subtle, haunting, head-on. Maddin comes to DL comes to you, and you only need eyes and ears to make it work.

- *Kenton Turk*