
BERLINALE REVIEWS: BACK FOR GOOD AND THE TRAGEDY OF CELEBRITY

by admin



BERLINALE IS A GERMAN SHOWCASE, AND HERE IS A PRIME GERMAN EXHIBIT: *BACK FOR GOOD* IS A DRAMATIC YET TENDER EXPOSÉ OF CELEBRITY HIGH LIFE.

She's fresh out of rehab, she's just split up with her manager and ex; she's the talk of the town. Now Angie needs a place to stay for a while, and Angie's mum is the only one who's prepared to put her up. And even her own mother is not exactly pleased to see her.

A WOMEN'S WORLD

Thus begins *Back for good*, a dirty, fresh-as-a-daisy submmision from Mia Spengler. Released this year, it's only her third feature as a director, and it's a worthy addition to the *Wolf of Wall Street* or rather *Bojack Horseman* theme of ugly glamour.

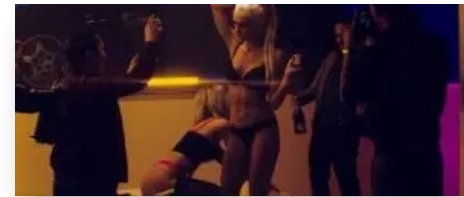
But these male-dominated commercial giants are heavy on hubris and Spengler delivers more than that: the human touch, especially with the focus on Angie and Kiki's sororal bond, ramps up the pathos. [Bechdel](#) would certainly be proud.

BRINGING BACK THE GLORY DAYS

Angie and her family live in the middle of Germany somewhere, the middle of nowhere. We watch her pleading with managers who have written her off, getting kicked out of E-lister parties; we see her wiping her tears, pepping her cheeks then snorting

a great big line of coke for her public. The powder on her nose is how she faces the cameras; the powder up her nose is how she faces herself.

The plot teasingly teeters between setbacks and steps forward. But all along the way there's a dark cloud lowering above: Angie's forced homecoming in the exposition chapters lends the meandering narrative a sense of inevitability, like an Aristotelian tragedy.



One of these doomed upturns comes when antiheroic Angie finds an anti-sidekick in the shape of a fellow small-time celebrity. The hapless has-been's been reduced to giggering in hardware stores and dumpster-diving for his daily bread – but somehow he's copped a coveted invite to guest-star a reality show “Promi-Zoo” (the *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here!* equivalent), and Angie's jealous. She tries to convince her new friend that they should go, as a couple.

“That’s selling your dignity”, he protests. “You’re dumpster-diving”, she points out, somewhat unkindly. That’s not uncharacteristic of her.

BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED

The film is a brightly-lit rollercoaster, rattling through the glitzy, sweaty, Bunny-infested world of reality TV, an auction of attention packed with clamouring bidders. They play each other off and drag each other down into disasters where it’s hard to tell what – and who – is real or fake, or even whether the reality would be worse.

Nonetheless, it’s an emotional ride. Angie’s heart-rending quest for love and validation is ridden with ridicule and shame. The plot is compelling enough to command this review, but in fact all-round execution goes beyond the delicately balanced narrative. You can’t do high society on a low budget, and this production doesn’t disappoint, down to each *haute kitsch* party costume.

It’s often hard to predict how much a non-Anglophone can achieve in international circles, and this is particularly the case for Germany. *Back for good* feels like more than just a festival hit; here at [indieberlin](#), we’re keeping our fingers crossed (and thumbs pressed) that Spengler gets the recognition she deserves.