

Illusive Tracks (Skenbart - en film om tåg)

Sweden | 2003 | 100 minutes

Credits

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| Director | Peter Dalle |
| Screenplay | Peter Dalle |
| Photography | Göran Hallberg |
| Music | Adam Nordén |
| Cast | |
| Gunnar | Gustaf Hammarsten |
| Henry | Magnus Roosmann |
| Marie | Anna Björk |
| Karin | Kristina Törnqvist |

One of the most original films to be produced in Sweden in years, "Illusive Tracks" is an oddity that transcends genre. Shot almost entirely in an ochre monochrome and set during a train journey between Stockholm and Berlin in 1945, the film is a comedy, thriller, drama and love story wrapped up in one. Popular cast, helped by good reviews, will give it a fair B.O. in Sweden on release Dec. 25. Exposure at a major fest also looks likely soon.

The picture's main character is a journalist, Gunnar (Gustaf Hammarsten) who, at the end of the second world war, quits his job to go to Berlin to see with his own eyes what happened there. At the Stockholm railroad station, he runs into a wounded soldier on his way home (top comedian Robert Gustafsson) and accidentally causes him further harm. This becomes the film's running gag, with the poor soldier more and more broken, bloodied and burned, while Gunnar can only apologize for his clumsiness.

Other passengers include Henry (Magnus Roosmann) and his mistress, Marie (Anna Bjork), who plan to kill Henry's wife, Karin (Kristina Törnqvist), who's also on the train.

Karin shares a compartment with Marit (Lena Nyman), an elderly lady who likes to give advice.

Gunnar shares a compartment with a gay couple, waspish Sixten (Lars Amble) and henpecked Pompe (Gosta Ekman). When Pompe mistakenly combines alcohol with his medication, he becomes quite a different person. Also featured are the train's conductor (helmer-writer Peter Dalle) and a coach full of despairing refugees from the Baltics who've been kicked out of Sweden.

Not all characters complete the journey alive. And when the train arrives at its destination, some of the survivors reveal their true, somewhat surprising identities.

Dalle previously directed traditional comedies, albeit often black and with a vitriolic edge. "Illusive Tracks" is his most ambitious film to date.

From the typography of the main titles, it's clear the film, which was lensed almost entirely in a studio, is an homage to films noirs of the '40s, as well as to latter-day movies like "Murder on the Orient Express." But where those films were straight dramas or thrillers, "Illusive Tracks" mixes the suspense of a murder plot with both physical and verbal comedy.

The picture's only letdown is that all characters are limned in a cold and uninvolved way, which makes it difficult for the audience to root for any. Compassion is just as important an ingredient in comedy as it is in drama. - *Variety*

Peter Dalle was born in Stockholm on December 5, 1957. Peter Dalle's extensive career in theater, radio and film started with directing shows in secondary school. After attending the University College of Acting in Stockholm he worked as an actor and director at numerous theaters in Stockholm. At the Vasan Theatre Peter Dalle performed in "Charley's Aunt" and directed "Not now, Darling". He played in no fewer than 314 performances of "Rumours" at the Maxim Theater, where he then continued with "Out of Order". Peter Dalle was one of the creators of the very popular TV-show "Lorry". He made his feature film debut as a director and co-writer with the box-office hit "The Dream House".

The following year he won the Swedish Gold Bug (Guldbagge) award for best screenplay (with co-writer Rolf Börj lind) for "Yrrol", a film he also directed and starred in. Peter Dalle recently made his directing debut at the Royal Dramatic Theater with "The Cripple of Inishmaan" based upon Martin McDonagh's play.

As the sharp-tongued Sixten, Amble gets most of Dalle's customarily pointed one-liners, and Gustafsson, in the role of the hapless soldier, does his usual physical schtick to perfection. A lot of the humor is refreshingly non-PC, especially the final fate of the refugees in their vomit-stinking coach. Other playing is fine down the line, and it's a treat to see veteran Ekman, among Sweden's finest actors, in one of his best perfs in years.

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