

## ***Cinema-soundbits from the world of uncanonical movie flops, weird German synchronisations/dubbings, blaxploitation and gipsyploitation, and authoritarian voiceovers***

In the foyer and the auditorium of Delphi tonight, you will hear some extracts from recordings made by Madeleine Bernstorff during film screenings at Sputnik Kino, Berlin in the mid-1980s, and only recently digitised. Below are some notes from Madeleine on the films you are hearing.

### **1 SYLVIA SCARLETT** (George Cukor, 1935, with Katherine Hepburn)

“I won’t be weak, and I won’t be silly, I won’t be a girl.”

Here is Hepburn’s decision to “become a boy” to help her father smuggling...

We showed this film numerous times in our ‘women in drag’-program at Sputnik, as a playful non-canonical piece (“one of the most unsuccessful movies of the 1930s,” Wikipedia says: sexual politics ahead of their time) where Hepburn becomes a beautiful boy, and later on (as that boy) transvests into a woman again, played out with shrill comic ‘girlish attitudes’.

### **2 HOT BLOOD** (Nicholas Ray, 1956, with Jane Russell and her German dubbing voice)

The German dubbing changes to the English original singing voice. Here we have a nice and rare intertwining of the dubbing voice and Jane Russell’s original voice. Jane Russell states in an interview she was very exhausted when she shot this film, as was Nicholas Ray who was at the same time working on REBEL...: “Now there’s a real tragedy. HOT BLOOD was based on the most thorough documentation of gipsy life in New York City ever assembled. ... I would have liked to have made an entirely different kind of film. What a title! It’s hard for me to say it.“ Writer Jean Evans had collected the documentation Ray refers to. Two pages of this material were the source for the film’s scenario.

### **3 VIVRE SA VIE** (Jean-Luc Godard, 1962, German version titled DIE GESCHICHTE DER NANA S.)

Anna Karina and her German dubbing voice. This audiotope lost its shape completely, but some rewinding helped. “Was spielt Geld für 'ne Rolle?/ Which role does money play?” The German dubbing of this film has been criticised a lot: ‘In Godard’s ‘Geschichte der Nana S.’ spricht im Original ein Philosoph zur Prostituierten Nana: “Man mußte den Körper in das philosophische Denken mit einbeziehen” — in der Synchron-Version äußert er eine Banalität: “Ich halte die Liebe für die vollkommenste Verständigungsmöglichkeit zwischen den Menschen ...” (Der Spiegel 26.4. 1971).

### **4 STEREO** (very early David Cronenberg film, 1969)

The Off-Voice (the voice of the God of the Academy of Erotic Inquiry) developing pompously on cybernetics and telepathic events has very much an echo in this cinema recording. I chose two parts. We showed these film prints from Canada in our cinema as part of the first David Cronenberg retrospective in Germany. I recorded the sound and made photographs of every shot, on the 35mm winder in the projection booth, since I was so fascinated by the shooting location: the film is set at John Andrews’ newly-built Scarborough College (1967) near Toronto, romantic concrete brutalism, one of the first satellite campuses. A giant educational machine, where 1500 students were meant to study.

### **5 SUPERFLY** (Gordon Parks Jr., 1972, music by Curtis Mayfield)

The German dubbing tries and fails to evoke the ‘street-language’ level. Recorded in the projection booth of our cinema, you can hear the projectors, and even once the ignition of the projector’s lamp. The song is titled *Pusherman*. Dialogue about black militancy (without mentioning the Black Panther Party in the German dubbing). And the cops-scene at the end, where short dialogues are entangled with a lot of music and street sounds. An interesting dubbing montage.

Darius James in his book ,That’s Blaxploitation! Roots of the Baadasssss ‘Tude. (Rated X by an All-Whyte Jury), 1995’ calls the film another example of “The Trinity of The Pusher, The Pimp and The Panther. ” The soundtrack is the real star: it was in the charts for 46 weeks, its two singles sold 1 million copies each.

N.B. The cinephile’s dilemma with all the derogatory words is awkwardly circumnavigated with some pinpointing clumsy censor beeps!