



Sommersturm

Summer Storm

Marco Kreuzpaintner

GERMANY, 2004
German

98 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
Production Company: **Claussen+Wöbke**

Filmproduktion

Producer: **Uli Putz, Thomas Wöbke,**

Jakob Claussen

Screenplay: **Thomas Bahmann,**

Marco Kreuzpaintner

Cinematographer: **Daniel Gottschalk**

Editor: **Hansjörg Weißbrich**

Production Designer: **Heike Lange**

Sound: **Florian Niederleithinger**

Music: **Niki Reiser**

Principal Cast: **Robert Stadlober,**

Kostja Ullmann, Alicja Bachleda-Curus,

Miriam Morgenstern

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Good times rule in a Bavarian high school as Tobi (Robert Stadlober) and Achim (Kostja Ullmann), best friends and rowing-team partners, prepare for the year's final national regatta. Tobi is definitely the less mature of the pair and he resents his best friend's increasing intimacy with his girlfriend Sandra, the star of the girls' rowing team. Meanwhile, Tobi fends off pretty Anke (Alicja Bachleda-Curus), a girl who has fallen for him, preferring to battle Sandra for more of Achim's time. Tobi is obviously attracted to Achim – he goes just a little far in their wrestling bouts – but has yet to self-consciously name his desires.

All that changes when the boys show up at the regatta to find the Berlin women's team – whose chests occupy the lewd fantasies of the team's macho members – has dropped out, only to be replaced by a gay teen male squad. The film then becomes a multi-layered free-for-all of crossed signals, predatory young gays, goofy sight gags, homophobes getting their comeuppance and Tobi's gentle shift into self-realization. The young German actors are uniformly good, making the film extremely successful popular entertainment – one can imagine teenaged audiences of all sexualities flocking to this – as well as an important contribution to the recently atrophied gay cinema.

Summer Storm sets itself apart from other coming-out films by adjusting the now well-worn young gay experience to the new realities on the ground. Completely

uninterested in Freudian repression, suicidal anxiety and gender confusion as explanatory metaphors, it posits sexual desire as intrinsically fluid and honestly confusing. Gay folks can be just as mean and insensitive as heterosexuals; straight boys are as likely to be accepting of others as anyone else. While the film does not belittle the consequences of Tobi's sexual self-discovery, it does suggest that actually, saying "I'm gay" has around the same gravity as choosing the right group of friends in high school. It also emphasizes that anger and ugly behaviour are often the result of hidden secrets and dishonesty rather than sexual desire.

How refreshingly contemporary. And it's really funny too!

■ **Noah Cowan**

Marco Kreuzpaintner was born in Rosenheim, Germany and studied art history at Salzburg University in Austria. He worked as an assistant director for Edgar Reitz before directing the short films *Entering Reality* (98) and *Der Atemkünstler* (01) and the feature *Breaking Loose* (03). *Summer Storm* (04) is his second feature.

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