

Berlin Playground (Hans im Glück)



As already mentioned here, this film is a documentary about post-Wall life in Berlin. Its singular focus is Hans Narva, a 40 year-old musician who spent half his life under socialism and half under capitalism. The well-handled documentary manages to convey something of Hans then and now. His punk days in bands on the wrong side of the regime—notably, Herbst in Peking—and his sombre new musical work suggest a discomfort under both economic and political regimes. As does his incarceration in both periods. Often, director Claudia Lehmann lets Hans wander around the city and tell stories as they walk. This is an effective way to get him talking—where he is somewhat uptight in talking head mode, he relaxes and narrates easily as he walks. Wandering into the prison-cum-apartments, he lays out the terrain—the yard where he once used to exercise, the cells where he spent solitary time. He hates "The New Berlin," as it is always called, for the stupidity of its planning, for the way old sites have been so quickly erased. His school is razed—for what new purpose is never exactly clear. "It could've been a cultural centre," he suggests. The Palast der Republik is the least of it. Yet, equally, the "Old Berlin"—the GDR one, the one seemingly beyond the scope of heritage marketing—is somewhere he never wants to revisit. For its value alone in illustrating this viable, ambivalent position, Berlin Playground is a worthwhile documentary.

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