

## **Illusion 2013**

Eight seemingly ordinary people come to a bar; six of them are married couples, two are single. Each one of them has their own story, their own interests, desires, fantasies and illusions where sex, domination and submission are all tangled. Their social status and psychological profiles are different. This night will either change everything or won't change a thing.

Anyhow, they are all there, together with the bar owner (master of ceremony of sorts), so it's for us to see how the communication, interaction and fantasies between them will play out.

Movies about sex, fantasies and fetishes can fall into a number of traps like banality or "artsiness". They often get lost in cheap shock or psychoanalysis, become too explicit or simply lifeless and boring. Sex is one of those topics everyone has something to say about: while courage is needed at first, elegance is essential for wrapping everything up later on. Sex is not just something private, it can be publicly discussed. Telling a story is especially problematic with an ensemble cast. With limited locations and time-frame, the story is bound to go nowhere fast. Shaky arguments or lack of them can push characters' acts, scenes and even the whole movie towards randomness. All of this can be seen in Roland Reber's *Illusion*, and all of this can be taken as a fatal error if you want to be a picky (re-)viewer. And that would be wrong. The catch is, however, that *Illusion* is not a stand-alone movie.

Roland Reber, Mira Gittner and the rest of the crew form a sort of a troop. This approach, so common in modern theatre, is a kind of oddity in filmmaking. Before *Illusion*, the troop did several movies together with more or less the same line-up. Themes and genres of their previous movies varied from horrors to thrillers to artsy dramas, but the crew stayed the same. Reber and Gittner both have cameos in *Illusion*. Gittner also leads the visual department (cinematography, editing and art direction); actress Nikola Antje Mönning is also a composer of the original score, while the other actress Marina Anna Eich is also a producer of the movie.

Theatrical approach in this movie is effective enough (regarding the differences between the film and theatre). *Illusion* is visually appealing and polished, both in the club and the "fantasy" scenes. Some of the takes are so precise and elaborate that they are almost poetic. Problem lies somewhere else: in the narrative. The movie takes the middle road between visceral experience, film of the state of mind and the classic narrative piece. In that sense, entangled characters' destinies are too random and convenient, even unnecessary.

Nevertheless, *Illusion* is the movie I can recommend to specific arthouse audience, especially to the fans of Roland Reber and his gang. It may seem obscure, but it's not completely true. Reber and his crew are the regular guests of film festivals and their work has somewhat of a cult status in some circles (not necessarily film ones). Anyhow, *Illusion* is a provocative experience, full of sex and anarchy.

reviewed by Marko Stojiljkovic <http://film-na-dan.blogspot.de/> June 2015