

Phoenix

Cert 12A Germany 2014 98 mins

Crew

Director	Christian Petzold
Screenplay	Christain Petzold & Harun Farocki
Cinematography	Hans Fromm
Film Editing	Bettina Böhler
Original music	Stefan Will

Cast

Nina Hoss	Nelly Lenz
Ronald Zehrfeld	Johannes ('Johnny')
Nina Kunzendorf	Lene Winter
Michael Maertens	Arzt
Imogen Kogge	Elisabeth

Synopsis

Berlin, the 1940s. Nelly, a German-Jewish nightclub singer, has survived a concentration camp, but with her face disfigured by a bullet wound. After undergoing reconstructive surgery, Nelly emerges with a new face, one different enough that her former husband, Johnny doesn't recognize her.

Rather than reveal herself, Nelly walks into a dangerous game of duplicity and disguise in the haunted shadows of post-war Berlin, as she tries to figure out if the man she loves may have been the one who betrayed her to the Nazis....



Booking Information

Distributor: Soda Pictures

DVD bookings:

0207 377 1407

info@sodapictures.com

www.sodapictures.com

Available: Now



Reviews

Life is a bombed-out, soulless cabaret in Christian Petzold's *Phoenix*, a haunting portrait of identity, loss and the search for answers in post-WWII Berlin. The sixth teaming of Petzold and his leading-lady muse, the extraordinary Nina Hoss, finds the duo once again refracting the social and political complexities of 20th-century Germany through the prism of American genre films — here, specifically, the rich strain of doppelgänger psychodramas (*A Woman's Face*, *Vertigo*, *Seconds*) that hinged on the immutable power of the human face. Like those movies, *Phoenix* demands a certain generous suspension of disbelief that may be more than some audiences are willing to muster. Still, this not-quite ghost story represents the fiercely talented Petzold's most broadly accessible work to date.

.... As in *Barbara*, the period detailing of Petzold and production designer K.D. Gruber is vivid and meticulous without seeming florid or unduly fetishised by cinematographer Hans Fromm's widescreen frames — a rare period movie that pulls you into a living, breathing world rather than suffocating you with decor. Composer Stefan Will's mellow jazz score (heavy on plucked upright bass) strikes just the right woozy, melancholic feel, as does the repeated use of Kurt Weill and Ogden Nash's gorgeous torch song, "Speak Low" — an apt title for Petzold's own beautifully restrained approach to melodrama.

Scott Fundas, Variety, January 2015

....Nina Hoss and director Christian Petzold have been working together for years and this is their best collaboration yet, a self-consciously Hitchcockian thriller that makes post-war Berlin look like the dark side of the moon.

Petzold disorients us with weird edits, such as multiple Nellys traipsing through hospital corridors. He uses one song several times, until it acquires the power to make us giddy with grief. As in Pawel Pawlikowski's *Ida*, what is being explored is empathy and its equal and opposite — indifference. Bleak, yet somehow brimming with hope, *Phoenix* feels like a one-off. Catch it while you can.

Charlotte O'Sullivan, Evening Standard, March 2015

FILM FACTS...

- ☆ The film premiered at the Toronto Film Festival 2014, and was nominated for the Best Film Award at the London Film Festival.
- ☆ The screenplay is loosely based on Hubert Monteilhet's 1961 novel 'Le Retour des cendres', which set the story in France. It was adapted for film before by J. Lee Thompson in *Return from the Ashes* (1965).
- ☆ Christain Petzold's last film *Barbara* (2012) also starred Nina Hoss and Ronald Zehrfeld in the leading roles.