

NEROSUBIANCO

“A Clockwork Orange” almost would have been like this film: When Paramount Pictures saw “Nerosubianco” in the late 1960s, they were impressed and flew director Tinto Brass to Hollywood to offer him that project. Only because of scheduling-conflicts, Tinto Brass declined their offer- and “A Clockwork Orange” was made by Stanley Kubrick for Warner Brothers a few years later. Until now, for decades, “Nerosubianco” could only be experienced in shortened, sometimes censored copies, often with degraded visuals. This changes in Hollywood in December, where the new restoration of “Nerosubianco” will have its world premiere screening.

The title “Nerosubianco” itself includes an (Italian) word-play that summarizes the story very quickly: The married (white = bianco) woman Barbara feels attracted to a handsome black (= nero) man she encounters in London. This was probably taboo-topic in the 1960s, and through stream-of-consciousness montages, the film explores many of Barbara’s thoughts about society and sexuality in a sometimes direct manner (it’s clearly written “Black on White”, “Nero su bianco”), sometimes indirect, sometimes comical (reflected in the comical wordplay “Black On White” = “Black (man) on white (woman)”), sometimes serious.

The range of topics the film addresses is vast, and reaches from the sexual revolution to Anti-war-movements, from Religion to statements against the racism in society at that time. A detailed analysis of the film can be found on my website: <http://www.alexander-tuschinski.de/analyses.html> .

In its original form, Nerosubianco was 89 minutes long at 24fps projection speed. When it was exported to the US, it was shortened to 80 minutes runtime – and that’s the version mainly known today.

When I browsed Tinto Brass’ archives, I got more and more excited with each discovery: Not only does he have multiple (different) copies of the film – each with different parts missing – but most exciting, he also owns an English dub completely unknown to scholars until now, featuring different dubbing than the known one in some places.

Utilizing the material in Brass’ archive, I was able to reconstruct the most complete English-language version of Nerosubianco available, using material from multiple prints: It now clocks at 84 minutes. I am still browsing the archive, and probably will find even more material for the December-premiere, but even as it stands, this version sheds new light on the film: It features one “new” song, and several moments with crucial narrative not found anywhere else.

The reconstruction took three months, and be assured: Shot-By-Shot, I chose the best possible material and fixed jumpcuts in the picture and audio by inserting material from different sources. Some prints were censored by putting psychedelic “black spiralling effects” onto the picture – which were not intended to be there by Tinto Brass. This new version completely avoids them, and thus makes the film uncut.

Indeed, with the improved picture-quality, the film becomes a very different experience: Until now, looking at often slightly blurry, faded and cropped copies, it was mostly possible to appreciate the film on an intellectual level – i.e. understanding the structure and style. But now, with almost pristine picture-quality for most parts of the runtime, the film engages the viewer on an emotional level as well – as its colourful images are of crucial importance for the emotional impact, allowing the viewer to be “swept away” in the mood.

It will be a fascinating experience to watch the new version in the “New Beverly Cinema”. Afterwards, you will be able to hear a Q&A with Tinto Brass, and I will be present as well to talk about the film and the restoration.

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