

MOVIE REVIEW

'Salmonberries' Goes Off the Beaten Path

By KEVIN THOMAS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Bavarian-born filmmaker Percy Adlon has a special knack for making believable and engaging the seemingly most unlikely friendships and romances.

In "Celeste" he explored a loving bond between the ailing Marcel Proust and his sturdy, unsophisticated but unswervingly devoted housekeeper. In "Sugarbaby" he delved into a romance between a zaffig and confident mortuary worker and a handsome subway train driver, and in "Bagdad Cafe" he established a devoted, mutually supportive tie between an unresourceful stranded German woman and the overworked African American proprietor of a ramshackle motel and restaurant.

Now in the endearing, remarkably assured and stunning-looking "Salmonberries," a kind of serious-yet-humor-spiked-counterpart of "Bagdad Cafe," Adlon takes on his greatest challenge yet, letting us wonder whether a friendship forged against all odds can turn into a romance. To tell his offbeat story—and just as unexpectedly evoke the need for reconciliation between the reunited Germans—Adlon has selected a locale even more remote than the desert roadside compound of "Bagdad Cafe." It's the actual north-

western Alaskan outpost of Kotzebue, a tiny community of utilitarian tar paper houses, converted barracks and house trailers.

For 21 years it has been home to the local librarian, Roswitha (Rosal Zech), now 45, an elegant, formal East German emigre who has suddenly become the object of the attentions of a youth inarticulate to the point of rage. Not until the youth stops knocking books off shelves and instead abruptly disrobes does Roswitha realize that her suitor is a woman, played by k.d lang (whose haunting song "Barefoot" is heard on the soundtrack). Abandoned in Kotzebue as a baby, she bears the name of the town itself.

Craving friendship, love and a sense of identity, Kotzebue is so doggedly persistent that she breaks down the severe Roswitha's resistance to the extent that she actually enables this remote woman to confront a tragic past that has had her in its thrall the entire time she's been in Alaska. Roswitha's only joy has come in gathering salmonberries, but her increasing reclusiveness means that her shelf-lined bedroom is now crowded with jars of the preserved berries that she had intended to give away. With the utmost sensitivity, Adlon raises crucial questions of cultural and sexual identity.

There are a couple of deft moments from the late Chuck Connors as Kotzebue's seedy foster father and a wrenching scene played almost wordlessly by German actor Wolfgang Steinberg, but "Salmonberries," gorgeously photographed by Tom Sigel, is by and large a two-character story, and novice actress lang is as impressive as the veteran Zech. After lang asked Adlon to direct a music video for her, he wrote the script of "Salmonberries" especially for her. Unaccountably, this prize-winning film has had to wait for more than two years for a theatrical release.

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'Salmonberries'

k.d. lang.....	Kotzebue
Rosal Zech.....	Roswitha
Chuck Connors.....	Wingo Check
Wolfgang Steinberg.....	Albert

A Rialto release of a Peimale FILM GmbH production. Writer-director Percy Adlon. Producer Eleonore Adlon. Line producer Jamie Beardsley. Cinematographer Tom Sigel. Editor Corrado Gonzalez. Costumes Cynthia Flynn. Music Bob Teison. "Barefoot" performed by k.d. lang. Production designer Amadeus Capra. In English and German, with English subtitles. Running time: 1 hour, 34 minutes.

At the Nuart, 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., West Los Angeles, (310) 478-6379, through Wednesday.



What's On

I N L O N D O N

April 8 — April 15 1992

70p

Tensions and tenderness

SALMONBERRIES

Metro

Percy Adlon's *Salmonberries* (Cert 12: 94 mins) offers something that is always pleasing and exciting when it happens. It is the awareness that one is seeing a film in which a talented director is doing something new and original which could nevertheless be the work of no other person.

This may seem a strange response to *Salmonberries* because, on the face of it, this is not something new at all. On the contrary, it might be thought that Percy Adlon was consciously seeking to rework his biggest hit, *Bagdad Cafe*, by reprising the idea of a story in which two very different women become friends. But, where the earlier film was done in bold strokes, a stab at an easily assimilated entertainment, *Salmonberries* is subtle and sometimes ambiguous. Personally, I find this stimulating but, despite winning the top prize at Montreal, *Salmonberries* has not pleased everybody. This divergence of opinion may be less to do with quality than the inability of those who adored *Bagdad Cafe* to accept something very different now.

This time the women meet in Alaska. They are the widow Roswitha, a librarian (Rosal Zech), and a younger person, a Russian foundling named Kotzebue (k.d. lang). Later the story involves a visit to reunified Berlin, where Roswitha's husband, a violinist, had died when the city was divided. Although clearly contrasted, our two heroines have to follow the same course. They have to come to terms with those things which will enable them to find themselves as individuals; Roswitha has to confront the past, whereas Kotzebue has to face what is within herself.

Certain Adlon characteristics present in *Salmonberries* are now constants. These include his concern for people, his rapport with actresses (k.d. lang's film debut is highly successful) and his experimentation with stylisation in general and colour in particular. But there's also in this film a blending of old and new pre-occupations as epitomised by the music used. *Salmonberries* features two pieces of memorable effect: lang's own song *Barefoot*, written with Bob Telson, and Beethoven's *Spring Sonata*. As for the visuals, unorthodox compositions and a striking sequence of what could be called short monologues are

welcome evidence that Adlon remains adventurous.

But, ultimately, what matters is the human dimension: *Salmonberries* is a film about friendship. There's no magic in the *Bagdad Cafe* sense but instead we are shown a friendship which involves tenderness, tensions, problems and real affection. And that, I find, is much more truthful and much more interesting.

MANSEL STIMPSON

MOVIES

Director mines northern gold with k.d. lang

By Craig MacInnis
TORONTO STAR

Not that he's boasting about it or anything, but Percy Adlon will gladly take some of the credit for *Thelma & Louise*.

Without the earlier success of Adlon's *Bagdad Cafe*, it's not likely that Susan Sarandon's and Geena Davis's summer road epic — a faux-feminist, shoot-'em-up adventure on wheels — would ever have been made.

Bagdad Cafe's far-reaching influence can also be felt in another current Hollywood "women's film," Fried Green Tomatoes, starring Kathy Bates and Jessica Tandy. In *Tomatoes*' parallel storyline, Mary Stuart Masterson and Mary-Louise Parker play Depression-era pals who open a restaurant called the Whistle Stop Cafe.

For those familiar with Adlon's film, Fried Green Tomatoes will seem like so much cleverly disguised plagiarism. But let it pass.

Bagdad Cafe, the German director's first English-language feature, was a sweetly anarchic essay about a German *hausfrau* (Marianne Sägebrecht) who leaves her husband in the middle of a vacation in the U.S. west and sets up housekeeping at a nearby motel/buickstop run by a black woman (C.C.H. Pounder) who has just chased her no-account husband off the premises.

The two women become fast friends and, eventually, business partners.

The movie was a surprise hit with North American audiences when it was released in 1988 and was later spun off into a short-lived television series starring Whoopi Goldberg. (Adlon had nothing to do with

the TV show.)

A year or so ago, when producer Ridley Scott went looking for a director for *Thelma & Louise*, he immediately called on Adlon, who demurred.

"I think the picture (eventually directed by Scott) is very well done," says Adlon politely. "But I couldn't accept all the violence."

"And," he adds with a chuckle, "I'm not good at directing cars."

In its subtle, visually arid way, *Bagdad Cafe* posited a world where women from different cultures could be drawn together to create a powerful new social arrangement.

Eschewing sexual politics and gender stereotypes, Adlon's characters were connected by a deep emotional bond, an elusive female language that transcended culture and borders.

Of course, *Bagdad Cafe*, for all its success on the art-house circuit, wasn't anywhere near the monster hit that *Thelma & Louise* and Fried Green Tomatoes have been. Is Adlon bitter?

"We innovative filmmakers who are risking our lives with these small pictures, we are the yeast for this entire industry," he says over the phone from his home in Westwood, Calif.

"You know, it only takes a very little bit of yeast for something much larger to rise up."

The 50-year-old Munich native, who moved to the States two years ago after a distinguished career in Germany, is the subject of a retrospective by Cinematheque Ontario.

The tribute begins tonight at the Backstage with screenings of *Salmonberries*, Adlon's latest film, which stars Canadian singer k.d. lang as a 20-year-old orphan trying to find her parents (and



PERCY ADLON: Cinematheque Ontario retrospective opens tonight with *Salmonberries*, starring k.d. lang.

herilently) in the grim twilight of an Alaskan winter.

The movie won this grand prize at last summer's Montreal Film Festival, but Adlon has been repeatedly frustrated in his efforts to secure a distribution deal for the offbeat film.

In addition to lang, who is appropriately pawky as the frustrated foundling, *Salmonberries* also stars former *Riflemen* Chuck Connors as a grizzled Arctic hingo caller and German actress Rusei Zech (Veronika Voss) as a firm

develop a strong friendship that seems headed toward lesbianism, but the anticipated romance fails to materialize. Instead, their relationship seems a lot like the one from *Bagdad Cafe*.

If anything, *Salmonberries* is a chilly, northern variation on the same theme, a literal case of polar opposites attracting.

Says Adlon: "If I could have made it, at the end, lesbians, this would be a controversial film and could be sold as a controversial film."

Shot in bleak, expansive Panavision, the movie conveys the mute endlessness of the snow plains and turns the Alaskan landscape into an important character in the story.

Just as important is lang's halting, awkward performance as Kotzebue, a witty, furtive woman whom the townsfolk mistake for a man. The Alberta-born singer has never acted in feature films before, and that made her perfect for the part, says Adlon.

"I was so fascinated by this androgynous but extremely tender and lovable person."

The two met when she asked him to direct the video of "So In Love," the Cole Porter standard she recorded for Red Hot And Blue, a 1990 AIDS benefit album.

Later, when he began planning *Salmonberries*, Adlon immediately thought of lang and called her up.

"I said to her: 'I don't know where you're from, but you're a country singer so I assume you're from Tennessee. My movie is about Eskimos and snow machines...'"

"And she said: 'That sounds like where I grew up! I didn't know she was Canadian.'"

If Adlon's work resembles anything that has gone before it,

it would probably be the mid-'70s movies (*Quintet*, *Three Women*) of Robert Altman. Like the American director, Adlon has made a career of setting his action in unusual environments and working with odd actor combinations.

Marianne Sägebrecht, for instance, has no formal training as a screen actress yet is one of Adlon's favorite collaborators.

Sugababy, his 1985 feature about a dull, middle-aged mortician (Sägebrecht) who finds redemption in the onns of a younger man, was written expressly for her.

In the rangy lang, Adlon says he's found another diamond in the rough. "This is my specialty, to get people who are not trained actors, to get them going."

But lang adds a dimension to *Salmonberries* that few other actresses — trained or not — could hope to bring. She sings.

The movie's theme song, "Barefoot," is a sad, penetrating melody that seems to summarize the strange yearnings of the plot, much as "I'm Colling You" did for *Bagdad Cafe*.

As rendered by lang, probably the greatest pop vocalist of her generation, "Barefoot" becomes a rich, mood-altering mantra, as important to the story as the stark visuals and surrealist twists.

It would be a shame if *Salmonberries* doesn't find an audience beyond tonight's Cinematheque retrospective. It's simply too good to be ignored.

□ Cinematheque Ontario's Percy Adlon series begins tonight with screenings of *Salmonberries* at 7 and 9:15 and continues Monday-Wednesday and Jan. 24-25 and 28-30 at the Backstage Cinema, 31 Balmuto St. Details: 923-3433.

Percy Adlon is a film-maker noted for his sympathetic presentation of women, the cause is easily identified. He is quite clear on this, as I found when I met him last November, the occasion being the London Film Festival screening of his latest film *Salmonberries*.

"My mother was the real world, the reality, the love and tenderness. I grew up with her; my father, a famous opera singer, just visited us. Also, I'm very faithfully married for 33 years. If you're one of those lottery winners who finds the right partner at a very early age, then I believe in this partnership of two people. So I lived the first part of my life with my mother and the second with my wife, so I was always close to women. And, fortunately, they're both very strong, emancipated and beautiful women. So, maybe, my knowledge of women comes from there."

Should you seek a further reason for Adlon's affinity with actresses, ranging from Eva Mattes



Percy Adlon, director of *SALMONBERRIES*

COLOUR, LIGHT & EMOTION

in *Céleste* to kid, lang in his new film and most famously represented by the trilogy of films which starred Marianne Sagebrecht (*Sugarbaby*, *Bagdad Cafe* and *Rosalie Goes Shopping*). Then his view of men may supply it.

"Although I know very nice and tender men, in my opinion we have destroyed everything: look at male politicians. Hopefully, in 200 years or so, there'll be a parliament with 80 percent women and 20 percent men. Maybe they're not as aggressive as we are, or as stubborn, or as career greedy. So let's try it: it's worth a try." He laughs as he says it, but the laughter reflects the humour which is part of his character and never calls into question the sincerity of his underlying sentiments.

Reverting to women's roles in his films, he adds this: "It's no trick, not that I wanted to do something different, it's just that I have a talent for writing good dialogue for women, and for communicating with them. They trust me. All of the women I directed as a film-maker were very comfortable with me directing them."

But, if this is a general truth about Adlon's work, the fact remains that, to an outsider's eye, his career falls into distinct phases, although he himself sees the links (he likens his films to children who, however different, belong to the same family and bear a resemblance accordingly). After work in radio and television where he displayed a special interest in documentaries and in arts related material, his first feature-length piece, *The Guardian and the Poet*, came

Mansel Stimpson talks to Percy Adlon about his wide-ranging career.

in 1978. He refers to his TV work about a writer and his guardian, to the brilliant *Céleste* centred on Proust and his housekeeper and to *Five Last Days* concerning two women in prison and describes these three films as his first set.

"It's more a period set and based on documents. And then you have the piece in between, *The Swing*, with a lot of people in it. I tried to learn more about feature film-making with that; I was not very successful, although I think the film does have some very good scenes.

"After that, I had to re-think what I was doing, and I had the desire to do my first contemporary story. And I found that there were two things which were very, very important to me. First, there was my feeling for personalities, as in my documentaries. In films I love that incredible experience of someone who's just there; they do not act, but are just there, and they do totally unexpected things. Like, for me, James Stewart. He never looks like an actor. He's always the unique personality, and I achieved that in doing *Sugarbaby* with Marianne Sagebrecht. It was Marianne Sagebrecht as James Stewart!" He laughs, and makes a mock apology for his joke.

As for the second important thing, that was his interest in contemporary design, which only came into his films through the photographer on *Sugarbaby*.

Johanna Heer, "She brought these extreme colours with her, and taught me what you can do with colour and light. I was waiting for that; it was what I wanted. Cameramen often tend to be old-fashioned, but Johanna was not like that. It was very, very challenging and very, very exciting. So this started another set of three films, the trilogy with Marianne."

Percy Adlon's future plans include more work with k.d. lang; but, rather than hinting at another trilogy, he speaks of wanting to develop something with her which could well be a theatre event. As regards a musical work for the screen, his dream is to create a really good film about the man he regards as the best composer of music written to entertain, Johann Strauss. Meanwhile, there's a project already in hand, and this emerges when I ask about Felix Adlon whose name is mentioned on the credits of *Salmonberries*.

"Felix is my 24-year-old son. He is a film kid. Even at the age of 12 on his summer vacation, he was a focus-puller on one of my documentaries. Now he's very knowledgeable and a young film-maker in his own right, having graduated from Itasca College in up-state New York. We just finished a screenplay together, my first written in English, since all the others were in German and then translated. We love each other very much, and this will be a father and son

story."

As for the switch from German speaking films to English language works, Percy Adlon has no qualms. "Interestingly, even when I was writing German I thought in English, and English is a more relaxed language which goes easily with images. Also it's the international language, our new Esperanto. And, although I am doing films in English, I'm not cut off from my German roots. I still tell German stories. *Salmonberries* is a German story, so to say. And, if I want to do that, I can do it with English or with German or with whatever language. He adds that adopting a new language and a new life-style (the Adlons now live in Los Angeles) is something which, at 56, he finds stimulating.

Yet, as his work ranges ever wider, he is conscious of the elements common to all of his films "There are certain themes which recur, like women or the use of music, and I tend to concentrate on the unity of story, time and location, using the classical concept of our 18th-century writer Lessing. Also, I avoid violence. I prefer to go for the heart, the hope for us as human beings. Instead of warning that humans were always cruel and that we will always be that kind of animal, I go more for a gentle look at our world. Although dialogue is o.k. in films - good dialogue is always beautiful - there is also something else I want. For me films are very much about colour, light and emotion."

Salmonberries opens at the Metro Cinema, Rupert Street on April 10. See West End listings.

'Salmonberries'

By HENRY SHEEHAN

The quiet darkness and glacial rhythms of northern Alaska provide co-writer and director Percy Adlon with a change of pace, though not of offbeat temperament, from his recent, more comic outings.

However, "Salmonberries," with its dramatic emotional plunges and sudden geographical shifts, is unlikely to resemble anything else in the marketplace when it reaches theatrical release. And, partly for that reason and partly due to the star presence of country-singing star k.d. lang and a surefire word-of-mouth line ("Wanna see k.d. lang naked?"), it should receive a warm critical reception and art-house commercial success to go along with its Montreal Film Festival first prize.

The action is set in the little town of Kotzebue, where a German emigre, Roswitha (Rosel Zech, skillfully

SALMONBERRIES

Director Percy Adlon
 Producer Eleanore Adlon
 Screenplay Percy Adlon, Felix Adlon
 Exec Producer Janis Beaulieu
 Cinematography Tom Sigel
 Editor Conrad Gonzalez
 Production designer Amadeus Capra
 Music Bob Telton
 "Barefoot" Performed by k.d. lang
 Sound Joe Aravena

Color

Cast

Kotzebue k.d. lang
 Roswitha Rosel Zech
 Nasyak Jane Lind
 Bingo Chuck Chuck Connors
 Botell Oscar Kawagley

Running time — 94 minutes

No MPAA rating

handling enough dialogue for two), is head of the small local library. Her quiet routine is disturbed by the disruptive appearance of a grown-up foundling, also named Kotzebue after the sign on the box in which she was found. Or he was found.

Most people take Kotzebue for a boy, and to keep her job in a remote mine, she does nothing to disabuse anyone of the notion, until she abruptly strips down for Roswitha's benefit during a visit to the library.

Kotzebue wants Roswitha to help her discover her past, but the emotionally reclusive, middle-aged German refuses, until Kotzebue's persistence leads to a strange, but deep friendship. Roswitha shares the sad story of her own past — an escape from East Berlin during which her husband was killed — and Kotzebue encourages her to return to Germany, a trip the two eventually make together.

In their Berlin hotel room, Kotzebue tries unsuccessfully to sleep with Roswitha, and this denial of emotional closure — one of the most provocative and wrenching scenes in a movie with more than a few — leads to a powerful, if inconclusive, climax back in Alaska, when Kotzebue has a fateful confrontation with a grizzled local character, Bingo Chuck (Chuck Connors), who runs the well-attended local bingo parlor.

Although in a largely somber mood, Adlon, whose co-writer was his son, Felix Adlon, has still left plenty of traces of his puckish humor. Roswitha has a comically enormous collection of jarred samples of the title fruit, the local vitamin C source, and the film opens with an elderly Eskimo (Oscar Kawagley) declaiming "Madame Bovary" from

memory. Jane Lind, as Roswitha's friend and Bingo Chuck's lover, Nasyak, also leaves a mark, not so much as comic relief as realist relief.

Similarly, although Adlon has taken his visual cues from the Alaskan twilight and, to a lesser extent, German daybreak, he still underlines dramatic epiphanies with sudden, barely explicable surges of light and color. Though for someone regarded as a stylist, he manages to drop in an enormous amount of information about daily life up North. The combination of mild surrealism and acute emotionalism is uniquely his.

MONTREAL FEST

SALMONBERRIES

(GERMAN)

A Weltvertrieb presentation of a Pelemede Film production. Produced by Eleonore Adlon. Written and directed by Percy Adlon. Camera (color), Tom Sigel; editor, Conrad Gonzalez; music, Bob Teisen, sung by K.D. Lang; sound, Jose Araujo; art direction, Amadeus Capra; costume design, Cynthia Flynt. Reviewed at Montreal Film Festival (competing), Aug. 31, 1991. Running time: 94 MIN.

Kotzebur K.D. Lang
Roswitha Rosel Zech
Also with: Chuck Connors, Jane Lind, Oscar Kawagley, Wolfgang Steinberg.

This exquisitely shot love story is an unusual, emotionally demanding tale about a young untamed Eskimo woman and her unfulfilled lesbian desire for an eccentric ex-Berliner. "Salmonberries" divided critics at its preem at Montreal (where it garnered top honors), and cinephiles either loved it or hated it.

Despite a frustrating windup, pic could build on word-of-mouth and controversy with careful handling. It will definitely garner fans and will find a second life in specialized homevid outlets.

Lenser Tom Sigel uses the bleak and beautiful Alaskan landscape as a canvas where the silent, violent 19-year-old orphan (starkly played by Canadian country singer K.D. Lang) goes searching for her roots. She falls in love with a recluse (German thesp Rosel Zech) who fled from post-war East Berlin to the "edge of the world" after her daring escape (when her husband was gunned down by Berlin wall guards).

Their unlikely, yet carefully nurtured, friendship peaks when they visit Berlin after the wall came down. Lang tries unsuccessfully to make love to Zech for the first time, but Zech says she's "not like that." Their rela-

tionship is never resolved, and their stifled physical love is one of pic's major problems.

Terrific title song "Barefoot" is a quiet, mournful tune showcasing the excellent range of Lang's crystal voice. Acting in her debut role, however, is extremely stiff, and she should stick to singing. Lang's perf pales beside that of Zech, who carries the film.

Zech shines as the recluse obsessed with picking and preserving salmonberries (salmon-colored arctic citrus berries) and covering her bedroom walls with hundreds of jars built into intricate patterns. She's a natural as a sexy but repressed and frightened emotional refugee who slowly blooms when loved.

Director Percy Adlon has once again developed characters as individual and eclectic as those in "Bagdad Cafe," but pic's homosexual subject will prove harder to market. "Salmonberries" contemplates a difficult, unresolved relationship in minute detail. — Susan Ayscough

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western Alaskan outpost of Kotzebue, a tiny community of utilitarian tar paper houses, converted barracks and house trailers.

For 21 years it has been home to the local librarian, Roswitha (Rosel Zech), now 45, an elegant, formal East German emigre who has suddenly become the object of the attentions of a youth inarticulate to the point of rage. Not until the youth stops knocking books off shelves and instead abruptly disrobes does Roswitha realize that her suitor is a woman, played by k.d. lang (whose haunting song "Barefoot" is heard on the soundtrack). Abandoned in Kotzebue as a baby, she bears the name of the town itself.

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Rosel Zech.....	Roswitha
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A Route release of a Peimels Film GmbH production. Writer-director Percy Adlon. Producer Elenora Adlon. Line producer Jamie Beardsley. Cinematographer Tom Sigel. Editor Conrad Gonzalez. Costumes Cynthia Flynn. Music Bob Telson. "Barefoot" performed by k.d. lang. Production designer Amadeus Copia. In English and German, with English subtitles. Running time: 1 hour, 34 minutes.

■ **At the Nuart, 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., West Los Angeles, (310) 478-6379, through Wednesday.**

SCREEN INTERNATIONAL

In his latest offering, film-maker Percy Adlon once again demonstrates his unique storytelling skills and consummate craft in *Salmonberries*, a decidedly feminist saga that is at turns comic and heartbreaking. Reminiscent of his *Bagdad Cafe*, *Salmonberries* should please his niche audience in all parts of the globe, following its world premiere at the Montreal festival.

The protagonists of the tale are Kotzebue (k.d. lang), a young androgynous female working the Alaska pipeline, and Roswitha (Rosel Zech), an emigre German librarian at a remote Alaskan outpost. They are an unlikely pair, but Adlon is at his best with off-centre material; here he is truly in his element.

Though slow to reveal its intentions, the film has a rigour that is close to mesmerising. Kotzebue arrives at Roswitha's library in search of her heritage. The mystery of her identity creates an immediate tension. Kotzebue's initial hospitality is gradually diffused and she develops a bond with the older Roswitha.

The independence of the two women crosses from the physical to the psychological. Roswitha is also wracked by an identity crisis. An escapee from East Berlin, she is plagued by unresolved elements of her past. Eventually, only a return to a now-unified Germany will rid her of her demons.

Considering the gravity of the material, *Salmonberries* never becomes oppressive or heavy-handed. Perhaps the unlikely nature of this friendship allows just the distance to provide a magical allegorical quality. Certainly the stunning visual landscape of Alaska and the characters' foibles lighten and broaden the dimensions of the story.

Beautifully crafted with a haunting score by lang and Adlon perennial Bob Telson, the film again places its filmmaker in a unique orbit. His unerring ability to hit an emotional nerve places him among the handful of accessible mavericks.