A new wave of horror is coming out of Germany, paying homage to the past while taking a very modern point of view. One of the key features in this trend is director Dennis Gansel’s WE ARE THE NIGHT, about a trio of beautiful female vampires—including former silent-film star Charlotte, played by Jennifer Ulrich—stalking the hotspots of Berlin.

Gansel discusses his movie in Fango #302, currently on sale, and here Ulrich talks about her character and the experience of becoming part of THE NIGHT.

FANGORIA: You have already starred in Dennis Gansel’s THE WAVE. How did your collaboration with him begin?

JENNIFER ULRICH: I did go to the audition for THE WAVE like anybody else. Dennis liked my interpretation of the role and hired me to play it. I got into the project the common way.

FANG: Who is Charlotte and how did she become a vampire?

ULRICH: Charlotte was a modestly talented, modestly successful silent film actress in the ’20s.

She met Louise at the premiere of the film DR. MABUSE in which she was starring. At that time, Charlotte was vivacious and hungry for life; like so many people of that era, she wanted to do it all and relish her newfound freedom. Louise promised all that to her and so Charlotte let herself be bitten voluntarily. And she certainly enjoyed being a vampire at first, but she quickly became bored of it, falling into a kind of depression and seeking refuge in literature, her sole source of peace and happiness. While the other fellow vampires are very emotional and impulsive, Charlotte is the more cool, rational and reserved of the four. She’s more the intellectual type, who isn’t looking for kicks, she’s a calm, collected observer, seeing through a lot of things quickly and accurately. She exudes tremendous serenity, acting mainly in the background, with a grace and poise that creates its own special elegance.

FANG: Is Charlotte based on any real silent film star?

ULRICH: I read a lot about Asta Nielsen, a famous Danish actress of silent movies who worked a lot in Germany. There are actually a few parallels between her life and Charlotte’s. I also thought of Angelina Jolie a lot, too. I think it’s fascinating how she manages to exude so much sex appeal while remaining extremely cool in a lot of her roles. She has a subzero sensuality, a calm and presence that can switch over into extreme aggression and energy at the drop of a hat. That’s a trait I saw in Charlotte, as well. She has this mysterious side I wanted Charlotte to have too. She can be warm-hearted and sensual in one minute and on the other she turns into an ice-cold killer like in WANTED. She is sexy, instinctive, mysterious and elegant, all traits I needed for my interpretation of Charlotte. A big inspiration was her black and white campaign for St. Johns. for example.

FANG: The movie has a lot of action, and Charlotte is a very demanding role. How did you prepare?

ULRICH: Oh yes, Charlotte was a demanding and fantastic role. She is not only a vampire, she is also from the roaring ’20s, which is such an exciting and fascinating era of time. On the one hand, I was watching a lot of vampire movies like INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE, UNDERWORLD or BLADE to get the sense of what it means to be a vampire, to find my own interpretation of what their needs are, how they move and what they are searching for. And on the other hand I read a lot about the ’20s, saw Fritz Lang movies and tried to find out about the 20th lifestyle. I also read a biography of Asta Nielsen, whose life was close to what we wanted Charlotte’s to be, and who had a big influence on me for my role. I love the research for roles and movies. You learn so much about people, history and daily life in other epochs.

FANG: Did you have to wear a lot of makeup and prosthetics?

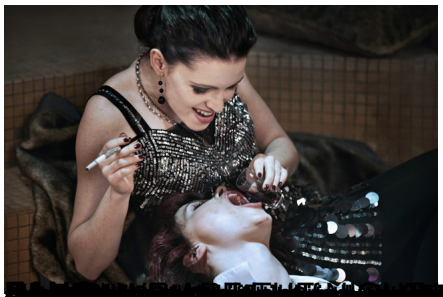
ULRICH: I got to transform in two ways. Into a vampire on one hand and then into a '20s movie star, my role had to have a lot of makeup, which is typical for the time she is coming from. Smokey eyes, lashes, lipstick and elaborately hairstyles. That took some time every morning. Then I had to wear vampire teeth in some scenes. In the first rehearsals, we had complete bridges, but they impede your speech and vampires with a lisp wouldn't have been quite so seductive. So that was when Georg Korpás, who did the makeups, decided to use glue-on teeth. After wearing them for a while you totally forgot you had these false teeth in your mouth. That was great. Two very new aspects for me, that both had interested me for a long time. The '20s clothes are a dream and the vampire teeth look very realistic.

FANG: Did you do some of your own stunts?

ULRICH: Of course, I love stunts. I love everything that challenges me, everything new that I have to work for and especially the things that people, or even I myself, would not expect from me. I played handball earlier, did standard dance for eight years and did bungee jumping before, so I am used to physical things. We had lessons in shooting; I have two pump guns and a shotgun in the movie, which were really exciting. We had special rigging training to learn how to fly around. You put on a harness, which is attached to the ceiling with ropes, and when they tug on the rope, you go flying up into the air. We soared five meters and jumped off the ceiling. It really feels like you have superhuman powers and are able to defy the laws of physics. I totally enjoyed that. I am very ambitious in things like that and love to just have fun doing crazy things. So I did everything I was allowed to do by myself. That cost me a lot of bruises!

FANG: Charlotte is very melancholic and nostalgic, the scene where she visits her daughter is very touching. Do you have anything in common with her character?

ULRICH: I must admit that I really like Charlotte and that I feel for her, but I do not see much parallels to me or my life. She is totally different to how I am. I am an open, communicative and social character, all traits that Charlotte once had but lost within her travels through time. I like her elegance and her dark humor, but I would never like to be that depressive, lonely and hurt like she is. Even her way to walk and talk is so different to me personally.



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