

# Mandragora

Czech Republic : 1997 : dir. Wiktor Grodecki :  
135 min  
prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:

Miroslav Caslavka; David Svec; Miroslav Breu; Pavel Skripal; Paavel Koci; Kostas Zerdolaglu;  
Karel Polisensky

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	☺	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5999	1.5	1	1	546	-	-	-	-	-	No	unseen



*You guessed correctly, it's yet **another** tell-it-like-it-is dissection of the squalid lifestyle of the contemporary boy prostitute (we must call them "rent boys" now, because commercial gay culture does) and a dime will get you a dollar that the hero – like all rent boys in recent cinema – may well play the pink oboe for a living, but is as heterosexual as the next street delinquent. If he enjoyed his work too much, we couldn't very well drape him in the cloak of "young victim", could we?*

Source: CVMC website

CVMC video retail/rental website review:

"Following a fight with his father, fifteen year old Marek (Miroslav Caslavka) races off to

Prague, there quickly finds himself engaging in hustling to survive. He and another boy (David Svec) buddy up, are soon ruling the streets, but their stunts are bound to catch up

with them in this city full of tough pimps, cruel "johns" and drug pushers. Realistic and often brutal; actual teen hustlers appear in the cast. Directed by Wiktor Grodecki, who previously brought us two documentaries on this subject; actor Svec helped write the script. "Mandragora," by the way, is, according to Indian Folklore, a plant which grows under the gallows of hanged men from their sperm.

Rated NR: profanity; moderate nudity; frequent violence; frequent sexual themes; intense adult themes [*sic*]; brief sexual scenes

Language: Czech (also some English) (with English subtitles)

Categories: Best Buddies, Boy Films, Adolescent, Drama, Gay & Lesbian."

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001"]

No further information currently available. Goodness me, well we've nearly got enough for a whole film season on boy whores now. Quite aside from Grodecki's earlier documentary on the same theme "**BODY WITHOUT SOUL**" (96), we have "**GOSSENKIND**" (Germany), "**SMUKKE DRENG**" (Denmark), "**J'EMBRASSE PAS**" (France), "**KOMMST DU MIT?**" (Germany), and we haven't even touched on the fleshpots of Thailand and the Philippines.

What this shows us is not that boy prostitution is some new phenomenon in Western city life (it certainly isn't), or that brave film-makers are at last able to tackle such a controversial theme (there's nothing remotely brave or controversial about it), but how eagerly film-makers across Europe will climb onto a passing tabloid bandwagon. The so-called "rent boy" has been a figure on the sidelines of American crime movies since the 1960s (there was one in "**DIRTY HARRY**" for instance – "My friends call me Alice and I *will* take a dare.."), but only since the growth of the Sex Abuse industry have they been rediscovered as latterday "lost boys".

One cannot criticise this particular film unseen, of course, and if Grodecki has immersed himself in the authentic predatory culture of the vice trade, he will have good reason to avoid glib stereotypes. What disturbs me about this trend is the implicit separation of homosexual prostitution from the (still very much controversial) question of adolescent homosexuality itself, and the recognition that such boys do actively seek older men for partners, whether they charge for their favours or not. The existence of a "party line" on prostitution (the prostitute is the one who is exploited) which transcends language and cultural barriers is a worrying reflection of the global reach of that same Sex Abuse industry, a kind of Interpol for social workers with an agenda rooted firmly in US social politics.

See subject index under **CRIME / DELINQUENCY**, **EASTERN EUROPE / SOVIET BLOC** and **SEX & SEXUALITY** for a section on adolescent prostitution.