



BALLOON (Ballon)

21st
Year!

Autumn
Season
2019

Release: 2018

Cert (UK): 12A

Country: Germany

Language: In German with English subtitles

Runtime: 2 hour 5 mins

Director: Michael Herbig

Writer: Kit Hopkins, Thilo Röscheisen & Michael Herbig

Cinematographer: Torsten Breuer

Cast: Friedrich Mücke, Karoline Schuch, David Kross



As the title suggests, the film is about a balloon journey, but this one follows two families trying to go from East Germany to West Germany in 1979... if they get it wrong, they risk imprisonment or even death.

Based on a true story, we follow the Wetzels family; inspired by a magazine article from New Mexico, they set about gathering up the materials (including one thousand square metres of cloth!) and building their balloon with their friends the Strelzyks, all in total secrecy



from the Stasi and potential informants. They spent

eighteen months preparing, watching weather forecasts and waiting for the ideal night with a strong Northerly wind to make the attempt; but the Stasi were on their trail...

Made in 2018, the release coincided with the 28th anniversary of reunification and has caused some controversy.

"In the year 2018, when many people are bickering over freedom, democracy and fractious GDR biographies, the cold war in which the balloon escape takes place seems very distant", von Uslar wrote [in Die Zeit]. "The land of desire, West Germany, for which thousands of refugees risked their lives between 1961 and 1989 no longer exists" - Kate Connelly, Observer. This hasn't stopped German audiences flocking to see the film, and visiting Pöbneck, the village where the balloon was built.