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Revisiting Ku'damm

3 days ago [Mansha Daswani](#)

The stunning German drama *Ku'damm 77*, the fourth installment in the iconic period series, had its world premiere screening at MIPCOM last week in the presence of several new and returning cast members. Following the screening, Annette Hess, creator and showrunner; Maurice Hübner, director; Marc Lepetit, executive producer at UFA Fiction; and Dr. Markus Schäfer, president and CEO of ZDF Studios, took to the stage of the Grand Auditorium to share the story of how the series came to be in conversation with *World Screen's* Mansha Daswani.

The series returns to follow the trials and tribulations of the Schöllacks and their Berlin dance school, first introduced in *Ku'damm 56* and revisited in *Ku'damm 59* and *Ku'damm 63*. The new series picks up the Schöllack story in 1977, a 14-year gap since the last installment.

For Hess, it all started with a desire to talk about what life was like for young women in Berlin in the 1950s. "My mother told me a lot about her youth—about her girlfriends and how they weren't allowed to go to rock and roll dances and things like that," Hess said.



The significant time jump was central to season four's *raison d'être*, allowing the series to introduce a third generation of Schöllack women as young adults.

"As a writer, you always have to find a new idea, a new vision," Hess explained. "I wanted to tell [a story] with a three-generation household where different characters with different opinions are living together, and they want to live together. That's why it works."

We all have a desire to be who we are, live together, love each other and strive with each other. That's why I needed a younger generation. And Germany—what happened in the second half of '77 was unbelievable," Hess said, referencing the horrific events of the German Autumn. "It's also the time of disco and women still struggling for emancipation," she said.

Re-creating the look and feel of 1977 Berlin was no easy feat, Lepetit said. The goal, he noted, was "to bring the '70s to life in a way that you can almost smell it. It's not like just having these moments where you have posters that say, 'It's 1977.' It is reacting to what happened politically within society. And the team who did the set design, the costuming, makeup, put so much focus on re-creating that time in detail."

Hübner discussed the environment he wanted to create on set among the new and returning cast members. "It was important for me to create an atmosphere that is free and safe," he said. "A safe space where they can take risks in their acting. These characters changed a lot in 14 years. We gave them a stage where they felt comfortable to try, or maybe fail. We worked closely with Annette, and she was always on set. There was a new energy in the room, and everyone felt that challenge; it made all of them do their best performances."

The series was a tremendous success for ZDF Studios, which licensed the show to 30-plus markets. "It's a universal story," Schäfer noted. "We have themes about identity, love and changes in society. We have three generations, so there is an appeal for every audience group you want to address as a broadcaster or a streamer. The fourth season can also stand alone. You do not need to know of the first three seasons. But, of course, we will also offer you a bundle of all four seasons if you want to have that!"

Schäfer also stressed the importance of "lighthouse" productions amid the rising dominance of YouTube and the creator economy. "This is brand-defining for ZDF but also for other clients we serve. I encourage everybody in the industry to go for strong stories, high production values, lighthouse productions, because this is the kind of show we all remember, that will unite, that will serve as a connection in society and foster discussions across generations."

Lepetit pointed out how the show can attract younger generations to linear broadcasters and catch-up services. "It's not just about how YouTube and Instagram are changing the market. We need to have these stories, these themes, these moments in linear storytelling, because people are still watching."