

## "Only a groomed woman deserves her name"

Fashion, utopia and stardom in Czechoslovak film musical *Lady of the rails*

The 1960s socialist Czechoslovakia witnessed a series of liberalization tendencies. Apart from relieving the political-ideological pressures, the decade also brought substantial changes in terms of lifestyle. Film musical *Lady of the rails* (*Dáma na kolejích*, 1966) addresses these shifts through female emancipation and fashion. Departing from earlier visions of a liberated woman through the notions of work, this movie offers an image of a strong, powerful heroine through her look. While delivering this compelling message on the importance of personal style and grooming, it also points to the limits of such position. Therefore we are going to argue that *Lady of the rails* articulates a utopian space of couture fashion as a vehicle for equality of the sexes. On one hand the seductive vision of a stylish, empowered lady was presented as accessible to any working class woman. On the other hand, the pages of period lifestyle magazines, the musical form and the bitter finale tell a different story of a very limited transferability to the everyday reality. Accordingly, casting proved to be central for negotiating these conflicting tendencies. Considered for the main part of Marie from the early start, Jiřina Bohdalová brought into the project her multifaceted stardom. As a leading Czech comedienne, associated mostly with television and radio, she supported the notion of Marie as an ordinary woman next door. Simultaneously, Bohdalová's histrionic acting and her ability to wear extravagant dresses contributed to her position of an exceptional star. Analyzing and contextualizing costumes and star performance in *Lady of the rails* will hopefully enrich our understanding of Czechoslovak cinema apart from the artistic discourse surrounding the new wave. Therefore we would like to bring more scholarly attention to the notions of entertainment, female emancipation and fashion, all of which ruled the 1960s in Central Europe as well.

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