



FILM: **LOLA**

FDG RATING: 3.5 😊😊😊😊😊

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Andrew Legge: *director*  
Emma Appleton: *actress, Thomasina*  
Stefanie Martini: *actress, Martha*

DATE: September 17, 2023

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **LOLA**

"Brilliantly original in concept and execution" is how one film discussion participant described the 2022 film, *LOLA*, a sci-fi war romance filmed in grainy black-and-white. It has also been praised as a thrillingly inventive found-footage mockumentary. The story is about two reclusive, brilliant sisters, Thomasina (Thom) and Martha (Mars), who live alone in their massive country estate in England. The year is 1941 and they have created a machine that can intercept broadcasts from the future. This delightful apparatus allows them to playfully explore the future as they dance to David Bowie, three decades before he had ever released an album.

But then they also see the horrible wave of death and destruction that is headed their way in the UK. Their machine — affectionately named *LOLA*, (their deceased mother's name) — shows what Hitler and his army will do to Europe, and how the world will suffer. By broadcasting a kind of pirate radio message, they begin sending clandestine tips to the British intelligence agencies when *LOLA* shows a bombing or some other tragedy will happen. The British gain a major advantage over the Axis forces but try to find the source of the broadcast messages. British intelligence eventually discovers Thom and Mars, and begin using *LOLA* with their help. Mars falls in love with a military man, which of course makes Thom jealous causing her to focus more and more on *LOLA*. She tries to find better intelligence to save lives during the war, ultimately coming to strict utilitarian conclusions — adjusting one specific thing will kill a hundred people, but will save two thousand others. This actually led to the sisters being accused of being German spies.

We see all this happening through a cache of scratchy film reels discovered in 2021 in the cellar of a country house in Sussex, England. The film appears to be a broadcast recorded in 1941, a self shot film in which Mars addresses her sister, Thom, through the camera, recounting the sisters' experiences together with their invention, *LOLA*. "It's a really Interesting way to tell the story, as if you were using the technology of the time period", noted one film discussion participant. It absolutely did invoke the time and place. "The handheld home movie format seems completely authentic," was another comment.

The total effect is an alternate reality told through two sisters' home movies. "*LOLA*'s use of archive footage is consistently inventive and largely flawless, to the point where you can't be sure if you're watching actual footage or something created especially for the movie (at least until Hitler shows up)", noted a published reviewer.

Definitely creative, original, quirky, delightful, eccentric, even idiosyncratic, (a term used by a discussion participant). On the critical side, it was a bit hard to follow, chopped up the present with the future, parts were murky and disturbing. But other discussion participants praised the choppy, imaginative time travel aspect. Lots of high marks were decimated by a single score of 1 bringing *LOLA* to a squally 3.5 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!  
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