

# Netflix, Amazon battle over German Cold War spy dramas

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Netflix has snapped up "Downfall" director Oliver Hirschbiegel's highly-rated new show "The Same Sky" about a Stasi secret police agent

Netflix and Amazon were facing off for a Cold War clash of two German spy series Tuesday after the phenomenal international success of espionage drama "Deutschland 83".

Netflix has snapped up "Downfall" director Oliver Hirschbiegel's highly-

rated new show "The Same Sky" about a Stasi secret police agent sent on a "Romeo mission" to seduce a middle-aged single mother working in an NATO eavesdropping station in West Berlin.

The series, written by Paula Milne, the British Emmy-winner behind "The Politician's Wife", got rave reviews after its premiere late Monday at MIPCOM, the world's biggest entertainment market in the French resort of Cannes.

Only hours earlier, Amazon had announced that it would premiere the sequel to "Deutschland 83"—the most successful German series of all time—on its streaming service.

Despite being a relative flop at home, the RTL series about a wide-eyed East German border guard who is sent to spy on the West was a record-breaking hit abroad.

"Deutschland 86" will pick up the story of reluctant spook Martin Rauch's life three years on, the producers said.

"The Same Sky" is set in 1974 when despite the thawing of relations between East and West, its producer said Berlin was a "hotbed of paranoia and spying, a covert frontline for both sides infiltrating every aspect of daily life."

## **Honey trap boy**

It opens in the Stasi HQ during a mind control class where one of its rising young agents is being prepared to sexually target a British-born intelligence officer played by Swedish star Sofia Helin of "The Bridge" fame.



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She works at the NSA's top secret Teufelsberg listening station and is struggling with her angry, off-the-rails son who is dabbling in radical politics.

Milne told reporters the series listens in on stories from both sides of the Berlin Wall.

"You have a family in the East imploding under the strain of their daughter competing in the Olympics while elsewhere a group of gays try to tunnel their way under the wall," she added.

Director Hirschbiegel said he was old enough to have lived with the wall and drew from his own experiences when making the six-part series for

the German public broadcaster ZDF.

"I have a lot of memories. I had a girlfriend and friends in the East. I experienced both worlds," he added.

"I crossed the border in every way: by car, by foot, by subway and tram. Back then Berlin was an island within this rigid East German regime, a hippie country where an unbelievable number of young people, students and men wanted to avoid doing military service."

The western half of the city was not quite the glittering advertisement for capitalism that many think it was, Hirschbiegel said.

"Many streets could have been mistaken for the Bronx with empty houses and dilapidated facades that weren't much different from the ones in the East. The main difference was the billboards and the neon advertisements."

"The Same Sky" will air next year while "Deutschland 86" will not hit terrestrial screens until 2018.

"Deutschland 83" was the first German series ever to be shown on a US network and had the highest ratings of a foreign-language drama in the history of British television, beating Scandinavian hits like "Borgen", "The Killing" and "The Bridge".

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