

What does Cinema know, that we don't know?

LOOKS
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PRESENTS



FROM CALIGARI TO HITLER

GERMAN CINEMA IN THE AGE OF THE MASSES



A FILM BY
RÜDIGER SUCHSLAND



WITH
FATIH AKIN
PROF. ELISABETH BRONFEN
PROF. THOMAS ELSAESSER
VÖLKER SCHLÖNDORFF
PROF. ERIC D. WEITZ



Written and directed by RÜDIGER SUCHSLAND. Produced by MARTINA WÄHRBACH. Edited by ANJA GRONBERG. Cinematographer: HARRIS SCHMIDT. PRANK HELMANN. Sound: TORALD SCHMIDT. THIBAUD LEBOU. Zacher: SEBASTIAN CARO. Casting: ANJA TRILMAN. Assistant: JÜRGEN SCHWITHEISS. Music Composer: MICHAEL HANSMANN. FÉLIX ALBRECHT. Narrator: BERGDA JUCKELAND. Hans-Jürgen Wöhrle. With: THOMAS GRIFFITH. JÜRGEN SCHMIDT. Actor: Prank Helmmann. Martin Sattler. Lutz Filmproduktion LMPA. Berlin. Production: WÄHRBACH TRILMAN. RÜDIGER SUCHSLAND. 2014. MITRA WOLZERTINE. CineFestProduktion. NIKOLAS BAUMER. CineFestProduktion. Head of Production: JAKO MÜLLER. Commissioning Editor: MARTIN PEIERL. Producer: MARTINA WÄHRBACH. GÖTTFRID BECK. In Collaboration with: FRIEDRICH-WILHELM-MORRIS-STIFTUNG. München. DEUTSCHE KINEMATHEK - INSTITUT FÜR FILM UND FERNSICHER. Berlin. DEUTSCHES FILMINSTITUT. Frankfurt. FILMUSEUM. München. PRÄSENS FILM. Zürich. Coproduction by LOOKS FILMPRODUKTIONEN LMPA. In Collaboration with ARTE. ZDF. German Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany for Cultural and Media, Bonn. German Film Fund, BfF. HISTORISCHE FILMWERKSTÄTTE. Supported with the MEDIA Programme of the European Union. Distributed by: REAL FACTION FILMWERKSTÄTTE.



FROM CALIGARI TO HITLER

Documentary Film by Rüdiger Suchsland, Germany 2014, 118min

With Fatih Akin, Elisabeth Bronfen, Thomas Elsaesser, Volker Schlöndorff, Eric D. Weitz

Written and directed by **Rüdiger Suchsland** produced by **Martina Haubrich**

Editor **Katja Dringenberg** DOP **Harald Schmuck, Frank Reimann**

Sound **Tobias Schinko, Enrico Leube** Colorist **Sebastian Göhs**

Compositing & Graphics **Anke Trojan** Online Editor **Julius Schultheiss**

Music Composers **Michael Hartmann, Henrik Albrecht**

Voices **Rüdiger Suchsland, Hans-Henrik Wöhler**

Mix **Tobias Fritzsch, Jürgen Schulz** Archive-Producer **Martin Sauter**

Lab **CinePostproduction GmbH, Berlin**

Post-production **Markus Thüne, LOOKS Volker Schulze, LOOKS**

Mitra Moezodine, CinePostproduction, Niklas Bäumer, CinePostproduction

Head of Production **Jan Müller**

Commissioning Editor ARTE **Martin Pieper**

Producers **Martina Haubrich, Gunnar Dedio**

In Cooperation with

Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung, Wiesbaden: Ernst Szebedits, Gudrun Weiss

Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum für Film und Fernsehen, Berlin: Rainer Rother, Anke Hahn

Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt: Claudia Dillmann, Hans-Peter Reichmann

Filmmuseum München: Stefan Drößler

Praesens Film, Zürich: Pete Gassmann

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Logline

The film tells the story of German Cinema in the Twenties between Expressionism and New Sobriety. This was the most important period of German Cinema, a time full of wonders and invention. The aesthetic foundations were laid for the "seventh art".

FROM CALIGARI TO HITLER is the first feature documentary ever on German Cinema of the Twenties. It shows well known films, but furthermore forgotten, never shown or totally unknown material.

This is an entertaining rollercoaster-trip to the best period of German Cinema and into the abyss of subconsciousness.

Synopsis

The Weimar Republic (1918 to 1933), was the freest state on German soil; a wild era characterized by disruption, crisis and cultural brilliance. It was also the most important period of German Cinema, a time full of wonders and invention. The aesthetic foundations were laid for the "seventh art"; Weimar's directors like Murnau, Lang, Lubitsch, Pabst, Wilder, Sternberg and Ruttman are still legendary today, their stars Marlene Dietrich, Louise Brooks, Emil Jannings and Conrad Veidt are unforgotten, and films like "Nosferatu", "The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari", "Metropolis", "M", "People on Sunday", "Berlin. Symphony of a Metropolis" and "Blue Angel" unfold their unique aura.

Cinema showed German society after World War One in a permanent dance on a volcano, between hedonist lust and latent fear of destruction – an explosive mixture.

Siegfried Kracauer described this epoch in „From Caligari to Hitler“, the best-known of German film books to date. It tells of shellschock-trauma, fear, crisis and the longings for a leader in German film – in other words: the way in which cinema presaged the era of fascism, anticipated its terror and the moral and political collapse of a liberal society.

What does cinema know that we don't know?

Investigating this question, and tracing the diversity and its beauty of early filmmaking, the film shows: Weimar cinema is more than ever an unknown continent still to be discovered. Far more than Expressionism, it was New Sobriety, escapist spectacle, thrill and fun - and it looked into the eye of crisis.

FROM CALIGARI TO HITLER is an entertaining rollercoaster-trip to the best period of German cinema and into the abyss of German subconsciousness.

Quotes

"I only discovered German silent films in Paris. That's where I saw films by Fritz Lang, Murnau for the first time - and I was instantly hooked. These were finally fathers we could identify with."

"The Weimar cinema was not as ideological as it was always portrayed. Starting in 1919 and until the invention of the talkies, essentially all of the genres had been invented and put into practice - and that, for me, is the Weimar era."

Volker Schlöndorff

"I like the harsh lighting in the German films of the 1920s - the summoning of the proletariat, the effects of the Russian Revolution, the waves this made go all the way into the film. You don't find anything like this today."

Fatih Akin

"Berlin today is a city with a pronounced employee culture. A culture created by employees for employees, and perceived as culture by the majority of employees.

They fill the cities, but they do not belong anywhere. The monthly salary, the so-called mental work and other meaningless features, are currently founding the existence of large parts of the population.

The building of bourgeois values has collapsed, its foundations having been eroded. The salaried masses are spiritually homeless.

Along with health, transport and gifts, the employees' cultural needs include, amongst other things, tobacco products, bars, and intellectual or social events.

Many employees' lives escape from their wretchedness into distraction, dissolving into the nocturnal void."

Siegfried Kracauer 1929

"These products of distraction factories are no longer individual girls, but indissoluble girl clusters, ornaments composed of thousands of bodies. The structure of the mass ornament reflects the contemporary situation. Like the pattern in the stadium, the organisation stands above the masses, a monstrous figure. The mass ornament is the aesthetic reflex of the rationality to which the prevailing economic system aspires."

Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament", 1927

Director's statement

Youth, freedom, irony, curiosity: Weimar is Modernity at its best and "the" time of German cinema: By far the prime and richest period of our filmmaking. Cinema mirrors the turbulent era of the Twenties. These movies had it all!

But more or less everything of it is forgotten, reduced to two or three footnotes. I wanted to take us all to an adventurous trip to this lost time, a trip which should entertain, move, surprise and remind us all to an open wound in our past.

Siegfried Kracauer, as well a forgotten genius of cultural critique, is the perfect guide to an era, which is fascinating in its contradictions. This fascination and, yes: my love for this time and its cinema, I hope to share.

Author and Director

Rüdiger Suchsland lives in Berlin. Studied History, Philosophy and Political Science; works now as a journalist, writer and cultural activist. Primarily a regular contributor and critic for print, radio and internet, he is also a speaker, instructor and author on the thematic subjects of film, history, theory, East Asia, zeitgeist and popular culture. He is a curator in the team of the film-festivals in Mannheim-Heidelberg and Ludwigshafen. Together with Josef Schnelle, he co-authored the book "Zeichen und Wunder: Das Kino von Zhang Yimou und Wong Kar-Wai." (2008).