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Was heißt hier Ende? Der Filmkritiker Michael Althen

Then is It the End? The Film Critic Michael Althen

Dominik Graf

Producer Joachim Schroeder, Christoph Fisser, Charlie Woebcken, Henning Molfenter. **Production companies** Preview Production (München, Germany); Studio Babelsberg (Potsdam, Germany). **Director** Dominik Graf. **Director of photography** Felix von Boehm, Till Vielrose. **Make-up** Ingrid Navratil. **Sound** Robert Richert. **Music** Florian van Volxem, Sven Rossenbach. **Editor** Tobias Streck.

DCP, colour. 120 min. German.

Premiere 13 February 2015, Berlinale Forum

World sales Preview Production

A film continues even after the final credits have rolled – when people talk about it and discuss it. Critic Michael Althen, who died in May 2011, knew how to get this sort of passionate dialogue with cinema going in the most beautiful manner with the texts he wrote.

Art and fairground, documentary and fantasy, everyday life and ecstasy – it was these contrasts that drew Michael Althen into the cinema. Colleagues, friends, directors, his wife, and even Althen himself all get to have their say and it's as if film history itself suddenly started speaking. Dominik Graf's endearing portrait of his friend gets its message across with hardly any film clips. Recollections of Althen's articles and quotations are enough to put images in motion in the mind's eye. Althen once said that he writes film reviews because he's incredibly forgetful, and that writing helped him piece together which emotions remained after viewing a film and why. He usually carried out this pleasurable reconstruction work until deep into the night. A colleague of his once said that perhaps the unconscious played a role in Althen's writing. A wonderful notion.

Anke Leweke

Obsessive cinephilia

Once upon a time there was a great emphasis. A never-ending enthusiasm for cinema, at all times. Growing up in the darkness of the movie theatre. Writing about film as if with blood. Writing about happy film experiences was an act of love. 'For film is not our life, but a wonderful alternative to what we consider life.' Michael Althen's writing and filmmaking was obsessive cinephilia, intellect and emotion and brilliant aesthetics, all of it always tied directly to life, to the everyday life of our feelings – the big picture and in detail. His early death is a devastating loss. *Was heißt hier Ende?* is an attempt at a biographical approach to him with his colleagues, friends, family and texts.

Dominik Graf

"Always late but then brilliant"

How did you meet Michael Althen?

Joachim Schröder: His parents visited my parents, some time around 1978. I was thirteen; he was two years older and already enthusiastic about American movies. As a lazy child in England and later Bavaria, I had seen many old Hollywood films on television. So back then, I could keep up with him, at least at first.

How would you describe Michael Althen? What made him unmistakable?

Michael was 'a real Mensch', as Jews put it, full of quiet, laconic, sometimes mischievous humour. Warm-hearted, intelligent, vulnerable, melancholy – sometimes lugubrious. His whole attitude was that of a great, old-fashioned romantic. Most of his reviews and obituaries are poetic, astute, and sensitive reflections about life. They touch the heart, the mind and the soul. That's why, in his texts, Michael will never be forgotten.

*In 2007, you, Michael Althen and Hans Helmut Prinzler produced the film *Auge in Auge* – Eine deutsche Filmgeschichte. How did you experience Michael as a filmmaker during work on the project?*

Always casual, always lovable, always slightly ironical, always working until late at night, never early, always late. But then always brilliant!

*The idea for *Was heißt hier Ende?* is based on your initiative. Was Dominik Graf the man who was to be director, from the start?*

Actually it was conceived as a continuation of *Auge in Auge* – with Michael and Hans Helmut Prinzler as co-authors again, but this time about women in German film. After Michael died, I had the idea that a film ought to be made about this unique man. During a conversation with his widow, Bea, she suggested Dominik Graf as the right director. Dominik, too, was close friends with Michael and had made two films with him. Dominik agreed after we talked in person. He was the right choice!

What void does Michael Althen's absence leave in your life and in the German film landscape?

As a friend? As always when people we love disappear from our lives, it leaves behind a wound; a scab gradually forms and you learn to live with it, at best, but it never heals. The loss remains for the rest of your life. For the German film landscape? Our film answers that question.

At the end of the film's closing credits it says: 'We'll remain in loose contact!' What does that mean?

That was Michael's standard goodbye – coupled with a warm-hearted, mischievous smile.

Source: Preview Production

Joachim Schröder is one of the producers of *Was heißt hier Ende?*



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Dominik Graf was born in Munich in 1952. He studied in the Film Department of the University of Television and Film in Munich from 1974 to 1980. He made his first film, *Der kostbare Gast*, in 1978. Since then, Dominik Graf has made more than fifty films for cinema and television. In addition to working as a director and writer, he is also a professor of Feature Film Directing at the Internationale Filmschule Köln (ifs).

Films

1975: *Carlas Briefe* (28 min.). 1979: *Der kostbare Gast* (60 min.). 1979: *Familiientag* (TV series, 2 episodes, each 24 min.). 1982: *Das zweite Gesicht* (101 min.). 1987: *Die Katze* (117 min.). 1988: *Tiger, Löwe, Panther* (TV film, 97 min.). 1990: *Spieler* (111 min.). 1992: *Die Verflechtung* (TV film, 100 min.). 1994: *Der Sieger* (134 min.). 1995: *Tatort* (TV series, episode "Frau Bu lacht", 89 min.). 1995: *Reise nach Weimar* (85 min.). 1995: *Sperling* (TV series, episode "Sperling und das Loch in der Wand", 92 min.). 1996: *Dr. Knock* (TV film, 93 min.). 1996: *Das Wispern im Berg der Dinge* (TV documentary, 59 min.). 1997: *Sperling und der brennende Arm* (TV film, 96 min.). 1998: *Bittere Unschuld* (TV film, 89 min.). 1998: *Deine besten Jahre* (TV film, 89 min.). 2000: *München – Geheimnisse einer Stadt* (essay film, 120 min.). 2001: *Der Felsen* (117 min.). 2002: *Die Freunde der Freunde* (TV film, 94 min.). 2002: *Hotte im Paradies* (TV film, 118 min.). 2005: *Der rote Kakadu* (128 min.). 2006: *Eine Stadt wird erpresst* (TV film, 89 min.). 2007: *Das Gelübde* (TV film, 89 min.). 2010: *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* (TV series, 10 episodes, each 47 min.). 2010: *Polizeiruf 110* (TV series, episode "Cassandras Warnung", 89 min.). 2011: *Dreileben* (TV film, part 2 "Komm mir nicht nach", 89 min.). 2011: *Lawinen der Erinnerung* (89 min.). 2011: *Das unsichtbare Mädchen* (TV film, 105 min.). 2013: *Die reichen Leichen. Ein Starnbergkrimi* (TV film, 89 min.). 2013: *Tatort* (TV series, episode "Aus der Tiefe der Zeit", 89 min.). 2014: *Die geliebten Schwestern* (140 min.). 2014: *Es werde Stadt!* (TV film, 143 min.). 2014: *Polizeiruf 110* (TV Series, episode "Smoke on the Water", 102 min.). 2015: *Was heißt hier Ende? Der Filmkritiker Michael Althen / Then is It the End? The Film Critic Michael Althen.*