



Offene Wunde deutscher Film

Open Wounds – A Journey through German Genre Films

Dominik Graf, Johannes F. Sievert

Producer Johannes F. Sievert, Jan Löffler. **Production company** Augustin Film (Berlin, Germany). **Written and directed by** Dominik Graf, Johannes F. Sievert. **Director of photography** Hendrik A. Kley. **Editor** Patricia Testor. **Music** Florian Van Volxem, Sven Rossenbach. **Sound design** Andre Bendocchi-Alves. **Sound** Sergio Campanese.

Black/white & colour. 116 min. German.

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We already know just how wild, unpredictable, sensual, audacious and bursting with life German cinema can be from the film essay *Verfluchte Liebe deutscher Film*. Now Dominik Graf and Johannes Sievert continue their archaeological adventure tour to the margins, the underbelly, but also to the heart of German film and television, posing some valid questions along the way: why does public television no longer commission such prescient science fiction films as *Smog* (1973)? Why isn't German cinema able to establish a more audacious relationship to genre? As in Carl Schenkel's *Abwärts* (1984), for example, all it takes is a lift that gets stuck in an office building to make a claustrophobic psycho-thriller. Why do young directors not follow in the footsteps of the unruly Klaus Lemke, who simply shoots his films from the hip? And why do those who do get denied funding? The excerpts from these film and television marvels – such as *Slavers – Die Sklavenjäger* or *Liebling – Ich muss dich erschießen* – certainly make one want to run out and see them at once. Sadly, in many cases all that's left of these lost treasures are the trailers or posters.

Anke Leweke

Contributors

Mario Adorf, Peter Berling, Achim Bornhak, Artur Brauner, Peter F. Bringmann, Wolfgang Büld, Klaus Doldinger, Werner Enke, Gundolf Freyermuth, Roger Fritz, Dieter Geissler, Lisa Gotto, Jürgen Goslar, Gisela Hahn, Ralf Huettner, Roland Klick, Rainer Knepper, Jürgen Knieper, Christiane Krüger, Klaus Lemke, Stefan Lukschy, Kai Meyer, Olaf Möller, Martin Müller, Niki Müllerschön, Wolfgang Petersen, Eckhard Schmidt, Irmin Schmidt, Eberhard Schoener, Thomas Schühly, Günter Schütter, Robert Sigl, Frank Tönsmann, Mike Wiedemann

There is hope for genre film

Offene Wunde deutscher Film could stand below the headline: German 'superegos' repress the demons of the subconscious, that is: art house cinema displaces genre film. Since the post-war period, German film has reeled between euphoria and an inferiority complex, always frantically seeking to be 'world-class'. It is still afraid to touch commercial thriller genres, even after the twists and turns depicted in *Doomed Love: A Journey through German Genre Films*. But on this bumpy road, there are some wonderful cinema and television swamp flowers, and recent years have increased hope for genre film, albeit by means of the makers' radical self-exploitation.

Dominik Graf

'Heimat' film, subculture, and experimental work

When Dominik Graf and I embarked upon our journey through German film history, we didn't expect it to be so emotional and gripping. But after we set off, we realised with each interview how imprecise our 'maps' were and how much new territory there was to discover: fascinating in-between realms of 'Heimat' films, subculture, experimental works and genre cinema opened up, and – perhaps our best and most fascinating discovery – we saw an oeuvre emerging with much love behind it; an oeuvre that wanted to breathe, grow and develop, to become a real trip through German film and the many treasures it holds.

Johannes Sievert

Systematically forgotten

We – Dominik Graf and Johannes F. Sievert – have both been explicitly interested in German genre films for years. We love them, from the beginning of German cinema to today. Among them are works of art, grand and not-so-great orgies of tastelessness that the official cinematographic rubbish separation throws into a stinking bin far away from the canonical films of German cinema. But the history of German genre film is, first of all, that it was systematically forgotten (except for the unavoidable great-grandfather of German horror film, *Nosferatu*): in the Land of Political Correctness, one is ashamed of it, doesn't take it seriously and allows its old copies to deteriorate in cellars, if they aren't already long since destroyed anyway. In the 1990s, the genres were once and for all assigned to television, where only the police film genre survived, as *Tatort* and *Polizeiruf* and in dozens of detective series. By the mid-1990s, German body cinema was also over for good.

Klaus Lemke originated the sentence, 'If He didn't want them to be shorn, God wouldn't have turned German film directors into sheep.' Thus, in the 1980s at the latest, the sheep, all of us, migrated bleatingly, so to speak, to television. But we would see how, as if under the motto 'Only one survived', wonderful gaffes could repeatedly occur in German film and, in ever rarer cases, can still occur today – we are trying to research that, too.

Thomas Elsaesser wrote, 'What is special about national cinema is probably most accessible through the genres.' With *Offene Wunde deutscher Film*, we set off on another archaeological journey to the quarries of another history of German film. It is the attempt to present genre film – especially action and horror again – from 1945 to the present.

The suppression of the more violent genre movies today can be equated to a (self-?) censorship of German cinema. The well-behaved superego rules, and the darker pleasures are stamped out, as in Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*. And if the view of genres quoted above is correct: could it be that these nightshade species express our culture better and make it more understandable than the canon of 'correct', 'good' and 'important' films does? If truth likes to hide itself, why not look for it where we least suspect it: in the action and gangster film, in the seemingly trivial, in the genre films.

Johannes Sievert, Dominik Graf



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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).



Johannes F. Sievert was born in Bielefeld, Germany in 1968. He studied Film and Television, Theatre, and Political Science at the Ruhr University in Bochum, as well as in Cologne and Berlin. After graduation, he worked as a unit manager and assistant director for international television, film, and advertising productions, among other jobs. From 2002 to 2005, Sievert studied

Directing at the International Film School in Cologne. In 2011, he founded the production company Augustin Film. Along with Dominik Graf, he is the co-editor of the publication *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens: Fernseharbeit am Beispiel einer Serie* (In the face of crime: Television work using the example of a series, 2010). In 2015, Johannes F. Sievert directed his first feature film, *Rewind. Offene Wunde deutscher Film* is the sequel to the documentary *Verfluchte Liebe deutscher Film*, directed with Dominik Graf.

Films (selection)

Dominik Graf: 1979: *Der kostbare Gast* (60 min.). 1982: *Das zweite Gesicht* (101 min., Berlinale Neue Deutsche Filme 1983). 1987: *Die Katze* (117 min.). 1990: *Spieler* (111 min.). 1994: *Der Sieger* (134 min.). 2001: *Der Felsen* (117 min., Berlinale Wettbewerb 2002). 2005: *Der rote Kakadu* (128 min., Berlinale Panorama 2006). 2010: *Im Angesicht des Verbrechens* (Berlinale Forum 2010, TV series, 10 episodes, 47 min. each). 2011: *Dreileben* (89 min., part 2 „Komm mir nicht nach“, Berlinale Forum 2011), *Lawinen der Erinnerung* (89 min., Berlinale Forum 2012). 2014: *Die geliebten Schwestern* (140 min., Berlinale Wettbewerb 2014). 2015: *Was heißt hier Ende? Der Filmkritiker Michael Althen* (120 min., Berlinale Forum 2015). 2016: *Verfluchte Liebe deutscher Film* (90 min., Berlinale Forum 2016). 2017: *Offene Wunde deutscher Film / Open Wounds – A Journey through German Genre Films*.

Johannes F. Sievert: 2005: *KomA* (11 min.). 2009: *Junge Hunde* (70 min.). 2010: *Sinan G* (20 min.), *Gangsta Fiction – Im Angesicht des Verbrechens: Making of* (30 min.). 2015: *Von Zeit zu Zeit* (100 min.). 2016: *Verfluchte Liebe deutscher Film / Doomed Love – A Journey through German Genre Films* (90 min., Berlinale Forum 2016), *Rewind* (100 min.). 2017: *Offene Wunde deutscher Film / Open Wounds – A Journey through German Genre Films*.