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Author

Zelechowski, Jamie

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Heiduschke, Sebastian. *East German Cinema: DEFA and Film History.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.

Sebastian Heiduschke has written *East German Cinema: DEFA and Film History* in order to initiate the curious into the esoteric world of East German cinema. Despite the presence of scholarship on GDR cinema, Heiduschke claims that there are no basic introductions to GDR film. In order to gain a basic understanding of this particular national cinema, Heiduschke insists that one must become familiar with it on several dimensions, including: East German history, culture, and politics at large, as well as the history of DEFA. In addition to covering this wide swath of territory, Heiduschke envisions a book which is able to establish a canon of films that spans the entirety of DEFA's existence (1946-1992), illuminates the fates of GDR films after the dissolution of the state, and is concise and affordable. In this slim volume, Heiduschke has achieved his goal by crafting an excellent entry point for the GDR film novice.

The book is composed of two parts, the first of which introduces the reader to DEFA, its existence as a state institution, and its legacy. The title of the second part, "Freezes and Thaws: Canonizing DEFA," aptly summarizes both Heiduschke's summation of GDR cultural history and the intention guiding his analyses. For Heiduschke, East German film history is marked by a series of "freezes and thaws" which alternatively restrict and permit filmic experimentation, innovation and cultural-political critique. As the chapter titles indicate (e.g., "The Rubble Film, Wolfgang Staudte, and Postwar German Cinema: *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (*The Murderers Are among Us*, Wolfgang Staudte, 1946)"), each film should represent and serve as the starting point from which to elucidate a particular set of cultural, historical, and sociopolitical issues. Kurt Maetzig's *Der schweigende Stern* (*Silent Star*; 1960), for example, represents the genre film as such and sets up the discussion of the topic. In selecting *Der schweigende Stern*, Heiduschke is able to discuss other topics both relevant and tangential to the film, including the nature of international co-productions, the use of new technologies, and the material difficulties of production particular to sci-fi films. The second part of the book thus attempts to establish a canon which includes both typical and exceptional films useful for elucidating the intricacies of GDR film history.

In both Part I of the book as well as in his discussion of the individual films in Part II, Heiduschke provides a wealth of information regarding the conditions and the politics of production and distribution. As he makes clear, the book is only intended to be an introduction to GDR film, and as such he recognizes that the fulfillment of this intention results in generalizations. *East German Cinema: DEFA and Film History* should provide a basic framework for understanding the history and the content of East German cinema. The very generalizations and omissions inherent in such an endeavor should provide the impetus for further study and publications. In only touching very lightly upon aesthetic issues in the critical reception of the films examined, Heiduschke clearly points the way toward avenues

of critical analysis and the theoretical frameworks which may be fruitful for deeper filmic analyses. As such, *East German Cinema. DEFA and Film History* fulfills its purpose as an introductory guide for both novices to the world of GDR cinema and to those scholars looking for points of entry for further study.

Jamie Zelechowski *University of California, Los Angeles*