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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

**STARS  
IN EAST GERMAN CINEMA**

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**FACULTY OF ARTS  
SML/GERMAN**

**SEPTEMBER 2002**

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON  
ABSTRACT  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
SML/GERMAN  
Doctor of Philosophy  
STARS IN EAST GERMAN CINEMA  
by Claudia H.L. Fellmer

Even though stardom in national cinemas has become a rapidly expanding field since the mid-1990s, scholarly attention has so far largely neglected to consider stars in socialist film production contexts. This is particularly the case with East German cinema, which only recently has become the subject of studies within the field of popular culture. This thesis aims to at least partially fill this gap and is devoted to the analysis of stardom and stars in East German cinema.

I suggest that the concept of stardom was discursively appropriated in the East German cultural-political and social context so that it would fit in with the model of a society living under socialist, and above all collectivist principles. Unlike star images and perceptions of stardom in commercial cinema which are governed by a paradox (the balanced concurrence of ordinary and extra-ordinary elements), the East German discourse primarily cultivated the ordinary elements (those that the star would share with the 'collective' of East German society).

In order to assess why East German film stardom emerged and declined during a period which can be dated almost precisely between 1960 and the mid-1970s, the impact of social, cinematic, and national cultural political factors will be investigated. The opening chapter analyses the discourse on acting and the context of international cinematic trends on the emergence and decline of East German film stars, the most significant factors being: the influence of Neo-Realism and the rejection of star culture, the revival of popular genres and stars in film, and the decline of film stardom due to a re-focussing in popular culture from film to music. For each period a case study (Günther Simon, Armin Mueller-Stahl, and Erwin Geschonneck) will illustrate the specific strategies of the time in establishing stars. Chapter 2 discusses the contentious perceptions of stardom within the GDR, particularly in the popular press, and then analyses a number of elements which contributed to the cultivation of the ordinary. The destabilising effect this had on the status of the star as 'star', but also the integrating effect it had for the star as part of East German society are discussed. A case study (Manfred Krug) exemplifies these issues. Chapter 3 investigates the promotion of film stars, the impact of economic factors and how the stars' insufficient recognition had a destabilising effect on their existence and that of stardom. Again, a case study (Chris Doerk) exemplifies the issues discussed.

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# INTRODUCTION

In der DDR gab es keine Stars,  
nur ein Kollektiv konnte ein Star sein.

(There were no stars in the GDR,  
only the collective was allowed to be a star.)

The above statement, made by the actor Gojko Mitic in a television interview in May 2002, is symptomatic of the way stardom is usually dealt with in the context of East German cinema.<sup>1</sup> A sweeping denial of its existence is given a seemingly self-explanatory cause. Mitic's claim is surprising as it is revealing – not only was he himself the biggest ever East German film star, but also he seems intent to preserve the internal discourse of star denial of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), as he accepts and disseminates the assumptions that are imposed on East German cinema from the outside.<sup>2</sup> His reference to the "collective" is highly significant. The term stands to represent socialist ideology and its core aspect, namely that it proposes itself as an ideology of the masses. In socialist society the individual is expected to subordinate its subjective needs and desires to the collective interest of society. Stardom, conceptualised as an expression of individualism, prioritises values which are diametrically opposed to those of socialist ideology. From this mutual incompatibility follows a widespread assumption: stars cannot exist in socialist cinema.

As the title of my thesis suggests, this project sets out to revise these assumptions. Not only did East German cinema have its stars but throughout a long period they were also a decisive element in the production and reception of domestic films. I argue that the historical context of everyday reality in the GDR, with its internal social conditions and cultural conventions and practices as well as social and filmic influences from the outside shaped a need and demand for stardom among East German audiences. As a consequence, stardom was appropriated within the frameworks of the GDR's ideological discourses, the discourse within the lines of imposed socialism being the most determining of them all. The discourse around stardom and the recurrent contradictory functions of stars in GDR cinema point

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<sup>1</sup> Johannes B. Kerner Show, ZDF, 29 May 2002.

<sup>2</sup> In the same interview Mitic does also admit to having been an exception, "in my case, something must have shaped by itself, probably something that they [the authorities] did not particularly like. But the audience affinity was there and they could not prevent it".

towards an inconsistency within dominant socialist ideology and the existence of ideologies running contrary to official proclamations. I would argue that stars in socialist German cinema assumed a position precisely at the nexus between dominant and conflicting ideologies, for they had to recreate and embody qualities which supported collective alongside non-collective qualities. This was particularly relevant for the construction of their image in subsidiary media, such as press reports or interviews, where the focus on collective qualities frequently led to a point at which East German stars were hardly recognisable as stars.

The failure to acknowledge stardom as a crucial factor in East German cinema has been determined by the way DEFA (Deutsche Film AG – the state-owned and country's one and only film production company) has been positioned in film historical accounts. In the past, the limited availability of East German films abroad – determined by how the GDR state authorities decided to represent their country through film exports – shaped an image in which DEFA films came across within the traditional conventions of European art cinema, carrying a high culture legitimisation through auteurs and individual artistic masterpieces.

To a large extent such critical frameworks still define DEFA cinema. Thus, auteur-directors such as Konrad Wolf, Frank Beyer, Kurt Maetzig, Egon Günther, or Heiner Carow, to name but the most prominent ones, have dominated the representation and perception of East German cinema. *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992*, an excellent collection of essays, is indicative of this, as it devotes nine out of sixteen essays (including one interview) explicitly to individual DEFA directors.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the collection of essays on DEFA cinema published in *New German Critique* Winter 2001 (originally presented at a conference in 1997) focuses mostly on elements related to art cinema, such as reflections on societal negotiations of generation, or stagnation. Even though Thomas Elsaesser and Michael Wedel detect mainstream idioms at DEFA, they still focus on the auteur Konrad Wolf, arguing that their point about an international intertext at DEFA could not have gained credibility "if our examples were merely drawn from popular genre films".<sup>4</sup> Among all essays only Gerd Gemünden devotes his attention to the popular genre of the *Indianerfilme* (DEFA's idiosyncratic Westerns).<sup>5</sup> The essays published recently in

<sup>3</sup> *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992*, ed. by Seán Allan and John Sandford, Oxford: Berghahn, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Elsaesser and Michael Wedel: "Defining DEFA's Historical Imaginary: The Films of Konrad Wolf", *New German Critique: East German Film*, vol. 82, Winter 2001, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Gerd Gemünden: "Between Karl May and Karl Marx: The DEFA *Indianerfilme* (1965-1983)", *New German Critique: East German Film*, vol. 82, Winter 2001, pp. 25-38.

*Millennial Essays on Film and other German Studies*, either firmly base their approach in an auteurist paradigm or, even if they are dealing with popular film (such as Julie Gregson and Gabriele Müller), focus on aspects other than those that might place DEFA within the context of mainstream cinema.<sup>6</sup>

Another important aspect that has determined DEFA's perception is its relation to issues of national identity and political history.<sup>7</sup> This has become particularly relevant after the GDR ceased to exist and films formerly kept in the 'poison cabinet' of censorship were finally made available to the public. Academic attention became overtly devoted to subversive and oppositional films, above all those forbidden by the SED (Socialist Unity Party, governing party of the GDR) at its 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum in 1965 or those that surprisingly did pass censorship despite touching on controversial subject matter. Hans Joachim Meurer's recent study on national cinema in West and East Germany exemplifies this particular research focus, as it concentrates on four socio-critical art films, while completely disregarding the contribution of popular films or stars to the conceptualisation of East German national cinema.<sup>8</sup> In this respect, studies on DEFA were in line with the body of research on the GDR in general. Hermann Weber in 1997 warned of an unbalanced picture that was being constructed of the GDR, for the majority of research projects was devoted to aspects of dictatorship, church politics, opposition, state security, and cultural politics which led to a neglect of social history and everyday life.<sup>9</sup> Although Weber does not explicitly mention the neglect of popular culture, we may assume that it would be included in the sphere of everyday life.

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<sup>6</sup> *Millennial Essays on Film and other German Studies*, CUTG Proceedings vol. 3, ed. by Daniela Berghahn and Alan Bance, Oxford, Bern, et.al.: Peter Lang, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> The whole body of research on DEFA's antifascist films is relevant here. See for example Christiane Mückenberger: "The Anti-Fascist Past in DEFA Films", in *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992*, ed. by Seán Allan and John Sandford, Oxford: Berghahn, 1999, pp. 58-76; *Leit- und Feindbilder in DDR Medien, Medienpaket 5*, ed. by Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1997; Daniela Berghahn: "Liars and Traitors: Unheroic Resistance in Antifascist DEFA Films", in *Millenial Essays on Film and Other German Studies*, ed. by Daniela Berghahn and Alan Bance, Oxford, Bern, et. al.: Peter Lang, 2002, pp. 23-40.

<sup>8</sup> Hans Joachim Meurer: *Cinema and National Identity in a Divided Germany 1979-1989, The Split Screen*, Lampeter, Lewiston, NY, et. al.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> cf. Hermann Weber: "'Asymmetrie' bei der Erforschung des Kommunismus und der DDR-Geschichte? Probleme mit Archivalien, dem Forschungsstand und bei den Wertungen", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 26, 1997, pp. 3-14; the asymmetry continues, as the projects and publications on GDR history of the *Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung* (ZZF) in Potsdam indicate. (To name but a few: Arnd Bauernkämpfer published on rural society and communist dictatorship, Thomas Klein on internal organs of party control, Sonja Häder on socialisation under dictatorship; the ZZF's four project groups deal with: Berlin and the Brandenburg region in the East-West conflict, Socialism as a social question, Ideologies and mentalities during the Cold War, and Legitimation of power and history in the competition of the systems, cf. <http://www.zzf-pdm.de.>)

Since the late 1990s such neglect has begun to be overcome and aspects of popular culture and everyday life have entered the scholarly analyses and debates.<sup>10</sup> In the wake of this new trend, DEFA research recently has refocused, and questions of popular genres – most of all on DEFA's *Indianerfilm* – have been raised at conferences.<sup>11</sup> These new approaches attempt to revise the perception of East German cinema not as *sui generis*, but instead as a cinema which always existed in, and was informed by, its international context.<sup>12</sup> Yet, despite this new engagement with the popular, there are still numerous areas that remain underexplored: film stardom being among them. In some studies, DEFA film stars have occasionally been mentioned, for example in Gerd Gemünden's aforementioned investigation of popular film culture. His essay, however, clearly underestimates the relative autonomy of stardom in East Germany when it regards the phenomenon merely as imported, "The star cult [...] is reminiscent of that of [...] famous Hollywood stars – yet another indication how a capitalist phenomenon successfully penetrated socialist culture".<sup>13</sup>

The absence of stardom as a subject in the body of DEFA research is surprising, because stardom in national cinemas elsewhere has become a rapidly expanding field. Since the mid-1990s, a number of studies have been undertaken on the phenomenon within a German context. Knut Hickethier has analysed the early beginnings of the star system in Germany and its relation to theatre.<sup>14</sup> A research group around Werner Faulstich, Helmut Korte and Ricarda Strobel has paid particular attention to the phenomenon in a contemporary context and with regard to television, while studies of stars in Weimar, the "Third Reich", and the post-war period have been provided by Joseph Garncarz, Erica Carter, Sabine Hake, Brian Currid and Andrea Winkler-Mayerhöfer.<sup>15</sup> Most recently *The German Cinema Book*

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<sup>10</sup> See for example the collection of essays in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 28, 1999 or Georg Maas and Hartmut Reszel: "Whatever happened to ....: the Decline and Renaissance of Rock in the Former GDR", *Popular Music*, vol. 17:3, 1998, pp. 267-77.

<sup>11</sup> Most notably at the Society for Cinema Studies conference in Washington, DC, in May 2001: Rosemary Stott on genre film and Western genre imports, Franz Birgel on the *Indianerfilme*, Stefan Soldovieri on the musical genre at DEFA.

<sup>12</sup> see Thomas Elsaesser and Michael Wedel (2001).

<sup>13</sup> Gerd Gemünden (2001), p. 35.

<sup>14</sup> Knut Hickethier: "Theatervirtuosinnen und Leinwandmimen. Zum Entstehen des Stars im deutschen Film", in *Die Modellierung des Kinofilms. Zur Geschichte des Kinoprogramms zwischen Kurzfilm und Langfilm (1905/6-1918), Mediengeschichte des Films*, vol. 2, Munich: W. Fink, 1998, pp. 333-57; Knut Hickethier: "Vom Theaterstar zum Filmstar. Merkmale des Starwesens um die Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert", in *Der Star: Geschichte – Rezeption – Bedeutung*, ed. by Werner Faulstich and Helmut Korte, Munich: W. Fink, 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Werner Faulstich and Helmut Korte: *Der Star: Geschichte – Rezeption – Bedeutung*, Munich: W. Fink, 1997; Ricarda Strobel and Werner Faulstich: *Die deutschen Fernsehstars*, Göttingen:

(2002) devoted one of its five sections exclusively to film stars.<sup>16</sup> At an international level, gaps in the critical perception of stardom in the non-American context have begun to be filled with Ginette Vincendeau's work on French stardom, Geoffrey Macnab's study on British stars and increasing work on Asian stars.<sup>17</sup>

Many of these studies attempt to explain the "[odd] marginalization [of non-Hollywood star systems] in popular and academic star studies".<sup>18</sup> According to Vincendeau the "supremacy" of Hollywood stars on cinema screens is largely responsible for the fact that most star studies are still "devoted overwhelmingly to Hollywood", and thus accounts for the neglect of non-Hollywood stars.<sup>19</sup> At a more general level, James Donald speculates that it may be "our own fascination with [stars], which can prove disturbing of apparently objective analysis. [... and is] too embarrassingly banal for serious academic study".<sup>20</sup> In the context of East German cinema, the obstacles for the 'serious academic study' of stars are, if anything, doubled. On the one hand, the theoretical paradigms and cultural frameworks that have informed the definition of German cinema almost exclusively as 'high culture' prevented a shift towards a popular agenda. Only over the last decade this standard perception has been challenged on a number of fronts.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the assumed binary opposition between socialist and Hollywood cinema appears to have prevented the mere acknowledgement of socialist stars.

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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998; Joseph Garncarz: "The Nationally Distinctive Star System of the Weimar Republic", unpublished paper delivered to Popular European Cinema Conference 3, March 2000, University of Warwick, UK; Sabine Hake: "Heinz Rühmann und die Inszenierung des 'kleinen Mannes'", *montage/av. Zeitschrift für Theorie und Geschichte audiovisueller Kommunikation*, 7, 1, 1998, pp. 33-56; Erica Carter: "Marlene Dietrich – The Prodigal Daughter", in *The German Cinema Book*, ed. by Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk, London: British Film Institute, 2002, pp. 71-80; Brian Currid: "Es war so wunderbar!" Zarah Leander, ihre schwulen Fans, und die Gegenöffentlichkeit der Erinnerung", *montage/av. Zeitschrift für Theorie und Geschichte audiovisueller Kommunikation*, 7, 1, 1998, pp. 57-94; Andrea Winkler-Mayerhöfer: *Starkult als Propagandamittel*, Munich: Ölschläger, 1992.

<sup>16</sup> *The German Cinema Book*, ed. by Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter and Deniz Göktürk, London: British Film Institute, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Ginette Vincendeau: *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema*, London, New York: Continuum, 2000; Geoffrey Macnab: *Searching for Stars: Stardom and Screen Acting in British Cinema*, London: Cassell, 2000; Shelley Stephenson: "'Her Traces Are Found Everywhere': Shanghai, Li Xianglan, and the 'Greater East Asia Film Sphere'", in *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*, ed. by Zhang-Yingjin, Stanford, CA : Stanford UP, 1999, pp. 222; Preminda Jacob: "From Co-Star to Deity: Popular Representations of Jayalalitha Jayaram", *Women: A Cultural Review*, 8 (3), Autumn 1997, pp. 327-37.

<sup>18</sup> Ginette Vincendeau (2000), p. vii.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> James Donald: "Stars", in *The Cinema Book*, ed. by Pam Cook, London: British Film Institute, 1985, p. 52.

<sup>21</sup> cf. Tim Bergfelder: *The Internationalisation of the German Film Industry in the 1950 and 1960s*, unpubl. PhD thesis, University of East Anglia Norwich, UK, 1999, p. 15.

It is thus exactly the socialist variety of stardom which is still largely absent from the body of star studies. Richard Taylor's article "Red Stars, Positive Heroes and Personality Cults" is an exception in devoting some attention to "red stars".<sup>22</sup> Yet, although he suggests that the Soviet star system was largely, though not directly, built upon the Hollywood model, the brevity of his article keeps him from analysing that difference in sufficient detail.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, Taylor points towards the primary difference between Hollywood and Soviet stars, which was that the latter did not function in a market economy, but rather in a "centralised administrative-command economy" where ideological requirements played a much larger role.<sup>24</sup> I would argue there is more that can be said about stars and stardom in socialist cinema. Nonetheless, Taylor's use of the star terminology suggests that the theoretical findings of star studies, which have so far been based on Hollywood cinema, can be transferred to a non-commercial cinema.

My aim in this project is to at least partly fill the gap through an investigation of stardom in socialist German cinema. Not only do I want to deconstruct the myth that there were no stars, but also try to understand how stardom was discursively appropriated in a socialist context. I shall be guided by the following questions: Why did East Germany have film stars? How did they come into existence? How did socialist ideology try to negotiate the connotations of stardom? Where and how did stars escape the appropriation and facilitate subversive readings of their image? How were they different from other international stars, or how much did they resemble these? How did the star images reflect and feed into collective mentalities, but also established viewing patterns of the East German audience?

Given that my investigation into East German film stars perceives them primarily as a social phenomenon, several methodological approaches and resources present themselves. Film stars expand from their textual manifestation in films into a multitude of epiphenomena such as reviews, reports, gossip, and publicity stills. As Richard Dyer's seminal work *Stars* has documented, film history in its conventional sense, which prioritises (if not limits itself to) the film text cannot do justice to such a multimedia phenomenon.<sup>25</sup> In other words, in the creation of stars and their image the film text is by no means always, or predominantly, the most important aspect.

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<sup>22</sup> Richard Taylor: "Red Stars, Positive Heroes and Personality Cults", in *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*, ed. by Richard Taylor and Derek Spring, New York, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 69-89.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 75, 77.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Dyer: *Stars*, London: British Film Institute, 1979.

The acknowledgment of non-filmic sources as a crucial aspect in the interpretation of star images and their wider social function has clearly informed the material selected for this project, and has determined the methodology with which individual star images are read. Though this thesis undertakes a certain amount of close textual analysis of DEFA films and individual stars' performances, my analytical engagement will be primarily based on empirical evidence from subsidiary texts, in particular press articles and documents by cultural authorities. The foremost aim of this thesis is thus to map out East Germany's discourse on stardom (and other discourses interrelating with it), because only on this basis can we understand the specific appearance of DEFA stars' images off- and on-screen.

One of the major criticisms of a text-only approach towards star analysis results from its either implicit or explicit claim to provide a fixed, objective and uniform interpretation. Since Post-structuralism, however, the impossibility of defining a coherent and complete signifying system with regard to cultural production has been acknowledged. Arguably, given the multimedia nature of film, an 'objective' interpretation of supposedly inherent meaning is even less likely than, say, in literary texts. Different from the written text, for example, intonation and pitch of a sentence, accent of the speaker, facial expression, as well as film-specific practices such as cinematography, *mise-en-scène*, editing, etc., all change an interpretation to the point of indeterminateness of, or in contradiction to, the written word. Moreover, a film is arguably not the product of one single author (of course, orthodox auteurist criticism depends precisely on this premise), but the product of a multitude of creative personnel. It is thus legitimate to conclude that it is impossible to determine a fixed meaning or claim a single, 'correct' interpretation.

The logical consequence of this impossibility, which is suggested by communication and early reception studies is to turn attention from production to reception; and rather than focusing on an inherent meaning to analyse the recipient's process of interpreting the text. In the 1970s, academic emphasis shifted indeed toward the reader, who was hypothesised as an idealistic entity, unspecified by criteria such as circumstances of era and culture, age, gender, race, or ethnicity, or in the words of Michael Riffaterre, "emptied of idiosyncrasy-oriented [...] and goal-oriented responses".<sup>26</sup> Janet Staiger rightly suggests that such an allegedly 'neutral'

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Riffaterre: "Describing Poetic Structures: Two Approaches in Baudelaire's 'Les Chats'" [1966] reprinted in *Reader-Response-Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. by Jane P. Tompkins, Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1980, p. 37, quoted in Janet Staiger: "Reception Studies:

reader is in fact often modelled "after the critic's own reading ego" and thus far from being neutral.<sup>27</sup> The historian assumes that the coherence arising from their own reading of films and cultural representations also applies to audiences generally (a homogenising notion), although no theoretical or historical evidence is likely to justify such a claim.<sup>28</sup> However, different readings and interpretations of films are a matter of fact.

This leaves us with the question why particular interpretations occur and why different recipients reach different interpretations. Communication studies in the 1960s, and reception studies research as it emerged since the 1980s, suggested that the field of investigation must be drawn much wider so that it encompasses the context that surrounds production and reception. Over the past decades contextual information has increasingly been acknowledged in contributing an important factor in determining the meaning and interpretation of filmic texts, in other words, social formations and historical conditions influence the way texts are produced, perceived and interpreted.

So what is understood by context, as far as the medium film is concerned? Film historian Robert C. Allen identifies four overlapping components: exhibition, audience, performance, and activation.<sup>29</sup> Regarding his first category, exhibition, his suggestion is to investigate institutional and economic dimensions of reception. Considering his second category, audiences, Allen argues for a proper acknowledgement of the differences caused by demographic criteria such as gender, age, profession, race, education, or social strata and class. He also advocates investigating the social meaning attached to cinema-going, an aspect which clearly overlaps with his fourth contextual component: activation.<sup>30</sup> Research into activation allows assumptions about "underlying structures of reception, their interaction, variability, modification over time or resistance to change", or in short, how the "cultural repertoires" of audiences activate filmic texts.<sup>31</sup> For other researchers, in

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Death of the Reader", in *The Cinematic Text. Methods and Approaches*, ed. by Barton R. Palmer, New York: AMS Press, 1989, pp. 353-67, p. 356.

<sup>27</sup> Janet Staiger (1989), p. 356.

<sup>28</sup> cf. Janet Staiger: *Interpreting Films. Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Robert C. Allen: "From Exhibition to Reception: Reflections on the Audience in Film History", *Screen*, 31:4, Winter 1990, pp. 347-56.

<sup>30</sup> ibid., pp. 351f..

<sup>31</sup> ibid., pp. 353f.

particular Barbara Klinger and Janet Staiger, this contextual component is considered the most significant one because it encompasses, permeates and defines all others.<sup>32</sup>

Barbara Klinger perceives context to be central to any film-historical study. She backs her approach with Fernand Braudel's spirit of a *histoire totale*, in which complex interactive environments and parts of society involved in the production of an event are investigated, and a historical synthesis with an integrated picture of change is effected.<sup>33</sup>

[A] totalized view provides a sense, not of the ideology the text had in historical context, but its many ideologies. By placing a film within multifarious intertextual and historical frames – the elements that define its situation in a complex, discursive and social milieu – the film's variable, even contradictory meanings come into focus.<sup>34</sup>

Klinger suggests a subdivision of contextual areas similar to Allen's, but in addition and in line with *histoire totale* puts stress on the necessity of two superordinate categories, *synchronic* and *diachronic* levels of meaning. Her synchronic areas include cinematic practices, intertextual zones and social and historical contexts, all of which inform the distribution of meaning at any given historical moment. Klinger's diachronic areas cover revivals, retrospectives, revised reviews, academic theory and criticism, television rebroadcasts on specific historical situations, video and laserdisc reproduction, fan culture, cross-cultural reception and biographical legends. All of these latter areas determine how meaning is constructed across historical periods, and how categories of meaning change over time. Klinger argues that all of these fields of meaning must be considered within "existing systems of professional taste and social and aesthetic ideologies".<sup>35</sup> Social and historical circulation is thus extremely pertinent to the way Klinger conceptualises reception studies, and she clearly stresses the historicity of meanings beyond origins.

In *Interpreting Films*, and the essay "Reception Studies: The Death of the Reader", Janet Staiger too relocates meaning from text to context. In her own conceptualisation of reception studies she discusses the influence of social discourses as the most decisive factor in film reception. She argues that the "contextual discourses derived from our social formation are critical in the reading strategies

<sup>32</sup> Barbara Klinger: "Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies", *Screen* 38:2, Summer 1997, pp. 107-28 and Barbara Klinger: "Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture, *Cinema Journal* 28:4, Summer 1989, pp. 3-19; see also Janet Staiger (1989) and (1992).

<sup>33</sup> cf. Barbara Klinger (1997), pp. 107-28, p. 108f..

<sup>34</sup> ibid., p. 110.

<sup>35</sup> ibid., p. 124.

available to individuals".<sup>36</sup> An essential part of her argumentation is based on the assumption that objects (such as films, press articles, reviews, and scholarly essays) do not have immanent meaning as their meaning is always "constituted in historical context", hence variations occur among interpretations.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, these variations are not random as they are connected to "available discourses and interpretative strategies and to the real conditions of existence in a specific social formation".<sup>38</sup> This also applies to individual interpreters, who themselves are again determined by "constructed self-identities and the relation of those identities to apparent textual address determined by available interpretative strategies and discourses about the Self".<sup>39</sup> These different self-identities – which are mobilised by categories such as occupation, life-style, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preferences, and nationality – contribute to the interpretation simultaneously or successively.

Like Klinger, Staiger argues that interpreting meaning is never permanent and stable, and instead is determined by specific conditions surrounding the act of interpretation. Unlike Klinger, however, Staiger suggests a "meta-interpretative" move and posits the possibility to go beyond contextualised meanings.<sup>40</sup> She not only wants to analyse context and discourses to derive meaning, indeed she is more concerned with the process rather than the result. In tracing interpretative strategies Staiger aims to provide "a historical explanation of the **event of interpreting** [my emphasis] a text".<sup>41</sup> The biggest advantage of this emphasis is that questions of aesthetic or political value become themselves contextualised and are no longer a matter of a text's intrinsic characteristics.<sup>42</sup> Allen, Klinger and Staiger all acknowledge the utopian notion of attempting an all-encompassing contextual explanation.<sup>43</sup> Klinger rightly wonders how large the potential of reception studies really is to adequately recover a film's past and its relation to social and historical processes, and whether a researcher can uncover everything and provide a comprehensive view of all factors involved. The concept of *histoire totale* acknowledges the problem of unattainability but at the same time asserts the benefits of pursuing such an ideal goal.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Janet Staiger (1992), p. 210.

<sup>37</sup> ibid., p. 211.

<sup>38</sup> ibdi..

<sup>39</sup> ibdi..

<sup>40</sup> Barbara Klinger (1997), p. 112.

<sup>41</sup> Janet Staiger (1992), p. 81.

<sup>42</sup> cf. Barbara Klinger (1997), p. 112.

<sup>43</sup> Robert C. Allen (1990), p. 354, Barbara Klinger (1997), p. 108.

<sup>44</sup> cf. Barbara Klinger (1997), p. 108.

Many of the above premises suggested by Allen, Klinger, and Staiger have formed the theoretical foundation on which this thesis builds its argument. Thus, my thesis contributes, in Klinger's terms, to both a synchronic and diachronic understanding of the phenomenon of East German stars. A diachronic dimension enters my argument insofar as I will draw on academic work on DEFA and the GDR that has been undertaken over the past decade and thus has a certain distance to the subject matter. At the same time, my aim is to expand the same critical parameters, by shifting current perceptions of DEFA cinema, which are primarily determined, as argued previously, by an emphasis on auteurist frameworks or on a mode of analysis which sees cinema as an illustrative adjunct to political history. The focus in this thesis, on the other hand, is to explicitly address the issue of popular entertainment.

At a more specific level, however, my thesis sets out to primarily engage in synchronic contextualisation. In this, my approach owes a debt to Janet Staiger's work, in particular her reading of Erich von Stroheim's *Foolish Wives* (1922) in which she analyses the reception context through a discourse analysis of contemporaneous reviews and audience responses.<sup>45</sup> Hence a significant part of my investigation will take the form of an engagement with secondary texts such as film reviews, criticism, interviews and audience/reader responses, as they appeared in the popular press, as well as ephemera such as brochures accompanying the film screenings. The specific focus on the hitherto under-researched area of public discourse between press and film audiences or journal readership makes my research different from the main body of DEFA studies so far, and has also determined the sources I am using. The largest section of my primary empirical evidence comes from the popular press: specifically the film magazine *FilmSPIEGEL* and the teenager magazine *Neues Leben*. The material that was published in these magazines can be divided into two main categories: on the one hand are articles and reviews written by journalists who more often than not represented an official position, on the other hand there are the letters from cinema-goers, who expressed an often more personal opinion on films, stars, and the stardom debates initiated by the press. Given an environment that repeatedly involved control through state censorship, some caution in taking these readers' letters at face value is appropriate. Thus, reader letters have been denounced by some as "a farce staged by the SED", deliberately invented and written by editors on the order of the SED, or occasionally written by 'real' people,

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<sup>45</sup> Janet Staiger: "'The Handmaiden of Villainy': *Foolish Wives*, Politics, Gender Orientation, and the Other", in Janet Staiger: *Interpreting Films*, pp. 124-38.

but only after these had been told what to write, and with the texts closely monitored by the local SED secretary.<sup>46</sup> Other commentators, though, have suggested that reader letters were real and frequently served as a niche of public communication that could otherwise not be found on a national level.<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps the most realistic assessment of the form of the 'reader letter' has been offered by Gunter Holzweißig, who claims that a certain number of letters were manipulated, some were spontaneous, but that the publication of any letter remained under the control of the SED secretary of agitation.<sup>48</sup> Taking this context into account, the reader and viewer responses published in *FilmSPIEGEL* and *Neues Leben* have to be treated with care. But even if they do not reveal a 'true' subjective opinion, they do indicate directions of the wider public discourse on a particular subject. For my investigation into the phenomenon of East German stars, reviews, reports, and reader responses thus serve a crucial function. Through close readings of such subsidiary texts I shall be looking at the negotiations of authorial intent (i.e. what journalists and readers tried to communicate to other recipients), how audiences were guided to preferred meanings and how the terms in which the phenomenon of stardom was discussed and evaluated in public were established by extra-filmic texts.<sup>49</sup>

The project's strong focus on the negotiations of stardom in the press faces exactly the dilemma of having to accept the subject's limitations that Klinger in particular addresses in her work. At this stage, a full exploration of DEFA's production practices, which illuminate how stars were created, and how they functioned within the day-to-day structure of the studio, is for example not feasible. Most of the company's production files on individual films have not been made accessible yet, and those which are available to researchers, contain little information on how a particular script was suggested, how and by whom exactly casting decisions were made, or which economic decisions were made by whom, where and when. Despite the East German administration's reputation for red tape, at DEFA many decisions appear to have been arrived at through verbal arrangements.

<sup>46</sup> Ellen Bos cites Franz Loeser, until his emigration in 1983 professor for philosophy at the East Berlin Humboldt-University, cf. Ellen Bos: *Leserbriefe in Tageszeitungen der DDR: zur "Massenverbundenheit" der Presse 1949-1989*, Studien zur Sozialwissenschaft 113, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Ellen Bos refers to Sabine Loreck: *Leserbriefe als Nische öffentlicher Kommunikation*, Münster, 1982, cf. Ellen Bos (1993), p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> cf. Gunter Holzweißig: *Massenmedien in der DDR*, Berlin (West): Verlag Gebr. Holzapfel, 1983, p. 81-3.

<sup>49</sup> see also Barbara Klinger (1997), p. 117f..

Nonetheless, extensive press collections and an enormous wealth of other material could be found at the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, at the SAPMO (Staatliches Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR) at the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde which stores the document files of former GDR Ministries, the SED and other mass organisations, the libraries of the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen "Konrad Wolf" in Potsdam-Babelsberg, the Staatsbibliothek Berlin and the Mediathek of the Library of the Universität Oldenburg. Furthermore, I received first-hand information from the former DEFA-director Frank Beyer and actress and DEFA star Annekathrin Bürger whom I was fortunate enough to interview in 1999 and 2000 respectively. I have also used television documentaries on DEFA and present-day television interviews with former DEFA actors and filmmakers. As yet, some filmic texts are not particularly easily available, as DEFA productions have only begun to enter the commercial video and dvd market. Since its inauguration in 1997, *Icestorm* has brought some 160 DEFA films (out of a total production of some 750 feature films) to the home and academic video market.<sup>50</sup> Hence I had to rely mostly on broadcasts of DEFA films at the television stations that supply the territory of former East Germany, namely MDR and ORB/RBB.<sup>51</sup> These two stations which, after having broadcast at first auteur and oppositional films that GDR censorship had prevented from exhibition are now increasingly selecting popular films.

The discourses in the filmic and non-filmic materials are contextualised against the specific historical socio-political background of the GDR by means of original documents and (diachronic) scholarly research in this field and against a background of more specifically intertextual relations with relevant international cinemas. Large parts of this contextualisation are based on an acknowledgement of a prevailing of socialist ideology. I am aware that the classic Marxist concept of dominant ideology among reception studies researchers has been replaced with the concept of an "ensemble of discourses [...] that exist in a contested ideological space

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<sup>50</sup> It is interesting to see in which order *Icestorm*, a commercial enterprise, brought certain topical and generic groups to the market: starting with a fairly predictable children's market: fairy-tales and the *Indianerfilme* (though *Blauvogel*, the one least within the boundaries of the popular genre followed considerably later), which were followed by literary adaptations and the so-called Berlin films from the 1950s. The focus on entertaining genres such as the musical but also the Cold War spy films reached its peak around the years 2000-02.

<sup>51</sup> Whereas MDR shows a DEFA film about once per week (usually after the main feature on weekday nights, starting too late for the working population), West German regional stations select a DEFA film not more than once or twice per year. ORB merged with SFB in spring 2003 and is now called RBB.

in the throes of uneven development".<sup>52</sup> Yet, the GDR appears to be a specific case where the state imposed ideology was highly explicit and ubiquitous in its autocratic claims. My depiction of ideological interests will then almost invariably use terminology such as dominant, state imposed and counter readings will refer to those that go against the grain of socialist ideology as it was interpreted and imposed in the GDR.

One of the central questions this thesis poses is why DEFA stars were so readily accepted by East Germans at a very specific moment in history. Enno Patalas has argued that certain historical contexts create a general demand for role models, whereas others can do without them.<sup>53</sup> I suggest that in the case of DEFA stardom the socio-political context in the late 1950s created a need on the part of the East German populace for particular types of role models which were provided by a few selected actors. This in turn fostered a mutual determination by the state, filmmakers and the wider public which led to the emergence of these actors as stars.

Even though East German society took over much of the power structures from its predecessors it went through a rather unstable period during the 1950s, an instability which was particularly associated with the country's political leadership. To explain why people at this point turned to film stars for guidance, I use the notion of 'charisma' as developed by Max Weber in his sociological theory on the three types of legitimate power.<sup>54</sup> Weber's theory on charisma has been related to film stardom by Richard Dyer, Robert K. Merton, Charles Eckert and William R. Brown and most recently in the German context by Peter Ludes.<sup>55</sup>

The three types differentiated by Weber are: *rational power*, which is based on the belief in the legality of set rules, *traditional power*, which is based on the common belief that things have always been in a particular way, and *charismatic power*, which is the belief in the extra-ordinary, heroic and exemplary power of a person.<sup>56</sup> Ludes draws particular attention to the latter category, because it is based on the notion of extra-ordinariness and therefore provides a strong link to stardom.

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<sup>52</sup> Barbara Klinger (1997), p. 122.

<sup>53</sup> cf. Enno Patalas: *Sozialgeschichte der Stars*, Hamburg: von Schröder, 1963, p. 116f.

<sup>54</sup> Max Weber: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriß der verstehenden Soziologie*, (1<sup>st</sup> edition 1922), 5<sup>th</sup> revised edition by Johannes Winckelmann, Tübingen: Mohr, 1980.

<sup>55</sup> William R. Brown: *Imagemaker: Will Rogers and the American Dream*, University of Missouri Press, 1970; Charles Eckert: "Shirley Temple and the House of Rockefeller", *Jump Cut*, no. 2, July-August, 1974, pp. 17-20; Richard Dyer (1979), pp. 34-7; Peter Ludes: "Aufstieg und Niedergang von Stars als Teilprozeß der Menschheitsentwicklung", in Werner Faulstich and Helmut Korte (1997), pp. 78-98.

<sup>56</sup> cf. Max Weber (1980), p. 124.

An acknowledgement of charisma, so Weber argued, can be psychologically explained as born out of a situation in which need, hope, and enthusiasm collide.<sup>57</sup>

Human societies have frequently experienced periods in which rational and traditional execution of power have complemented each other, stood in mutual opposition, or have been displaced by the extra-ordinary and charismatic power which is bound to specific individuals. In this respect charismatic power can assume compensatory, complementary and integrational functions.<sup>58</sup> Owing to the transformations toward a socialist society, everything in East Germany was new and still required to be tested. What used to be traditional power had been abolished. Likewise, the socialist system had not succeeded in convincing all members of society of the legality of its new rules, so that rational power was only beginning to gain ground. Martin Sabrow claims that the GDR with its

[...] rapid social change, a partially de-professionalized administration and numerous novel and informal stabilizing mechanisms [...] could *never* [my emphasis] meet any of the requirements formulated by Max Weber in his ideal types of legitimate rule.<sup>59</sup>

In the GDR Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (for some time also Stalin) were used to legitimise the new power structures of socialist society through charismatic images and often awe-inspiring descriptions of their lives and achievements. More specific to the East German context were Ernst Thälmann, leader of the Communist Party during the Third Reich, Wilhelm Pieck, the first president, and Otto Grotewohl, the first prime minister of the GDR.<sup>60</sup> Every public place (classrooms in schools, factory canteens, courts of justice, shopping windows) included at least a portrait of one of these, looking firmly or paternally down on the citizens. On Labour Day rallies, portraits were carried through town alongside propagandistic slogans on placards.

Pieck and Grotewohl in particular, who had effected the union of communists and social-democrats into one socialist party in 1946, and in October 1949 had become the first heads of state, symbolised the beginning of a new Germany in the East. Ehrhart Neubert suggests that their popularity must be seen against the background of Soviet occupation, where the newly established East German

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>58</sup> cf. Peter Ludes (1997), p. 79.

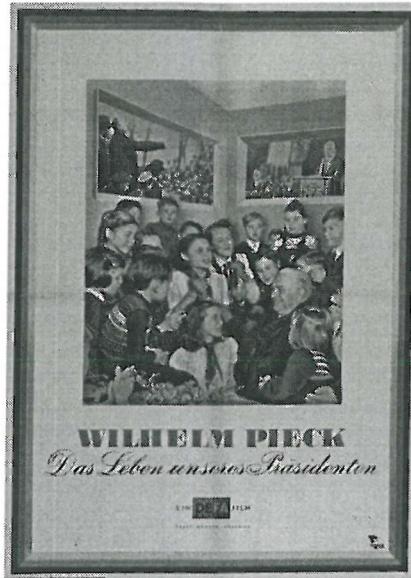
<sup>59</sup> Martin Sabrow: "Dictatorship as Discourse. Cultural Perspectives on SED Legitimacy", in *Dictatorship as Experience*, ed. by Konrad H. Jarausch, Oxford, New York: Berghahn, 1999, p. 196.

<sup>60</sup> Women were part of the GDR's personality cult to a far lesser degree, Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin heading a very short list.

government demonstrated independence and regained power.<sup>61</sup> Pieck and Grothewohl principally were perceived as heads of state rather than heads of the Party and their policies were as fairly liberal and tolerant, consequently their charismatic appeal was rooted largely in this context.<sup>62</sup> Many of the young generation fell for the appeal of these 'father' figures.<sup>63</sup>



Wilhem Pieck with young admirers  
in the early 1950s<sup>64</sup>



filmposter DEFA documentary  
*Wilhelm Pieck – Das Leben unseres Präsidenten*

Images such as the two above, where Pieck is surrounded by young school children and hugged by young people reinforced Pieck's popularity. Many such images were used in the hagiographic 'documentary' *Wilhelm Pieck – das Leben unseres Präsidenten* (Wilhelm Pieck – The Life of Our President, 1951/52) a film which was mandatory viewing in schools. While the photographs may have been genuine in their content, their selection and assembly shaped the myth. Andrew and Annelie Thorndike, the filmmakers behind the 'documentary' on Pieck, conceded,

We couldn't allow ourselves any description of actual states of affairs. They would have been too sad. Our task was to track down the new, which had to make its way in a constant

<sup>61</sup> cf. Ehrhart Neubert: *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949-1989*, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1997, p. 46f..

<sup>62</sup> This is not to deny the resistance that existed against the regime. For a detailed analysis of the opposition in the GDR see Ehrhart Neubert (1997).

<sup>63</sup> cf. Ulrich Mähler and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan: *Blaue Hemden – Rote Fahnen. Die Geschichte der Freien Deutschen Jugend*, Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1996, p. 9f..

<sup>64</sup> GDR magazine cover [exact source and date unknown], was used in *Der nackte Osten. Erotik zwischen Oben und Unten*, television documentary by Ute Kolano, 1994, recorded on MDR 9 June 2003.

struggle against doubt, narrow-mindedness, and the stalling and suffocating tactics of reactionary forces.<sup>65</sup>

By 1953 Pieck fell seriously ill and was able to perform only the symbolic functions of his office as president. When he died in September 1960 and Grotewohl likewise had to resign from his office as minister president in November 1960 due to illness, the young country lost its two most important leaders at the same time. The succeeding heads of state, Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker respectively, quickly earned a reputation for more repressive politics. Even though they used similar strategies of mythmaking as their predecessors (their biographies stressed working class origins and communist resistance against the Nazi regime, portraits were abundantly present in public places), neither had sufficient natural charismatic potential nor could they prove so through their openly repressive activities.<sup>66</sup> Throughout the 1950s, with the exception of the worker's rebellion on 17 June 1953, Pieck's and Grotewohl's charismatic powers could successfully compensate the absence of rational or traditional legitimacy of political power. With their resignation and no similar leaders being available, however, the mode of power legitimised through charisma collapsed. This is likely to have contributed to a sense of being without guidance among the GDR populace.

Thus around 1960, the socio-political situation of East Germany represented almost precisely the context of need, hope and enthusiasm suggested by Weber as a prerequisite for the emergence of charismatic figures. The feeling of uncertainty was widespread as the experiment of a socialist German society had not proved entirely successful. The material supply of everyday goods was low when compared to the standards of West Germany, for the state had focused on rebuilding branches of the heavy industry rather than on the production of consumer goods. Freedom and democracy left much to be desired. The dissatisfaction was so strong that

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<sup>65</sup> Andrew Thorndike in *Filmdokumentaristen der DDR*, published by Institut für Filmwissenschaft, Berlin (GDR): Henschelverlag, 1969, p. 15, translated and reprinted in *Cinema in the Federal Republic of Germany*, ed. by Hans Günther Pflaum and Hans Helmut Prinzler, Bonn: Internationes, 1993, p. 169.

<sup>66</sup> Among the most contentious developments were the establishment of the Ministry of State Security in 1950, the enforcement of the doctrine of socialist Realism in the arts in 1951, the forcing farmers into joining co-operatives from 1952 onwards, the suppression of the workers' uprising in June 1953 by military force, and the treaty in 1957 which ensured that the Soviet Army would remain permanently stationed in the GDR.

considerably many East Germans emigrated to West Germany, an average of 200,000 refugees per year until 1961.<sup>67</sup>

The feeling of 'need' was further enhanced by the final separation of the two Germanys with the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. This move made the head of state Walter Ulbricht instantaneously highly unpopular, as only two months earlier at a press conference he had still assured the population that "Nobody intends to build a wall".<sup>68</sup> The separation created desperation among many East Germans not only because of the feeling of abandonment by the Western Allies, but also because the option of emigration was no longer viable. At the same time, the Wall also consolidated East German identity by stabilising its cultural and social demarcation from West Germany, and by fostering the international acceptance of the GDR as an independent German state.<sup>69</sup> For a short period the enthusiasm and hope for a new beginning of the immediate post-war years was revived.

East German filmmakers of the time, especially those of the younger generation which were just starting out at DEFA, embraced the idea of a new beginning and expressed the "passionate will to achieve a renewal [...] of socialism" and the "desire for change and democratisation [which] could be found among a vast number of people".<sup>70</sup> Through their charismatic appeal, DEFA's young, energetic film actors and their inspiring heroes signified an East Germanness which was highly attractive, and could thus contribute to a positive sense of national identity. In addition, they could satisfy a demand for leadership. Their characters, if only on a fictional level, offered stability and solutions to the uncertainties of everyday reality because they presented ways to deal with the present. In turn, audiences wanted to see more of these actors, so that the specific social context of the early 1960s contributed to the change of DEFA actors into DEFA stars.

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<sup>67</sup> The GDR and FRG give different numbers, cf. Matthias Judt: "Deutschland- und Außenpolitik", in *DDR-Geschichte in Dokumenten*. ed. by Matthias Judt, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1998, p. 545.

<sup>68</sup> cf. Hans Georg Lehmann: *Deutschland-Chronik 1945 bis 1995*, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1996, p. 170-3.

<sup>69</sup> Matthias Judt argues that, rather than the year 1949, when the GDR was officially inaugurated, the separation of the Berlin Wall constituted the "true" foundation of the East German state, in that 1961 marked the actual moment from which on many East Germans began to make themselves at home in their country. cf. Matthias Judt (1998), p. 17f., this view is shared by others, among them Sabine Hake (2002), p. 119 and Hans Georg Lehmann (1996), p. 173.

<sup>70</sup> Translated from Erika Richter: "Die Verbotsfilme der DEFA", in *Der geteilte Himmel, Höhepunkte des DEFA-Kinos 1946-1992*, vol. 2, Vienna: Filmarchiv Austria, 2001, p. 52. Richter quotes Rolf Richter [GDR film scholar and head of the commission that reissued the forbidden films in 1989] in an interview with Hannes Schmidt: "Kritik ist nur wirksam, wenn sie umfassend ist", *Katalog des 20. Internationalen Forums des Jungen Films*, Berlin 1990, Informationsblatt nb. 15.

Following this brief introductory exposition, my thesis will approach the phenomenon of DEFA stardom from a number of different angles, extending from a historical-chronological approach in Chapter 1, a discursive approach in Chapter 2 to an economic one in Chapter 3. My opening chapter devotes particular attention to the developments and key moments in East German film history that prevented or facilitated the emergence of indigenous film stars. First I shall discuss how East German stardom was framed by bourgeois notions of acting, and specific hierarchies between stage and screen, which precede the foundation of the GDR. A major argument of this chapter is to revise the generally accepted periodisation of DEFA cinema with respect to indigenous stardom. Three case studies on DEFA stars (Günther Simon, Armin Mueller-Stahl, and Erwin Geschonneck) will exemplify the issues connected to the specific historical periods. I will provide explanations for why film stardom began to decline rapidly after 1976, and argue that even though this decline was predominantly owed to suppressive cultural-political decisions by the East German state authorities, global leisure trends and changing audience preferences contributed to the disappearance of film stars in the GDR.

Chapter 2 discusses the tensions and ambiguities of denial and approval that surrounded the phenomenon of stardom in East Germany. I will particularly analyse the influence political criteria had on the perspective on stardom, and how stardom and egalitarian principles of socialist society were negotiated in the popular press. What will become evident is the simultaneous and dialectical existence of ordinary and extra-ordinary elements in the construction of East German stardom, which, as I will argue, particularly cultivated the ordinary over and above the extraordinary. This affected a number of specific aspects relating to star images, including the off- and on-screen personae of stars, and questions of stars' private and public lives. Drawing on empirical evidence from film journals the chapter discusses both the positive and negative impact the GDR-specific discourse on stardom had on the consolidation of an indigenous star system. The case study of Manfred Krug will illustrate the tensions between ordinariness and extraordinariness in specific detail.

Chapter 3 situates East German stars within economic factors, as their relationship to issues of production and consumption are conventionally seen as a vital part of stardom. Whilst a number of promotional measures were evident at DEFA, the entirely subsidised nature of film production and DEFA's relatively stable market-share prevented a full exploitation of star potential. Although financial gains were

never completely ignored, the ideological-educational expectations toward cinema always assumed priority. As in a commercial film industry, however, it was important to reach as wide an audience as possible, but the desired result rested clearly in the educational. An important aspect in this respect is the use of stars to stimulate and regulate modest consumption and 'self-production' in order to make up for the shortages faced by the GDR industries. A case study on Chris Doerk will exemplify these issues.

All translations from German in this thesis are, unless otherwise indicated, my own. Film titles in Italics indicate the original release title, for the majority of DEFA films there are as yet no English release titles. If an English release title existed or a translation has already been established in scholarly research, it was used, otherwise the translations are my own.

# CHAPTER 1: A History of DEFA Stardom

## Introduction

Over the past two decades the history of the East German film studio DEFA has been subject to a significant amount of critical analysis. The first seminal publication after the decline of the GDR and DEFA *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg, 1946-1992* has so far not been surpassed by any other in depth and detail; it has set the direction and manner in which research on DEFA is structured – its focus is on films within their cultural-political context (with a particular emphasis on issues of censorship), and on filmmakers (especially directors).<sup>1</sup> This approach enables an understanding of films, their narratives, and the messages they aim to convey or conceal in relation to state politics, and particularly significant for GDR cinema, on the shifts between tighter and more relaxed periods of state control over film production. These periodical shifts were defined by key moments which introduced crucial changes in the development of DEFA cinema and which also informed the history of indigenous film stardom. However, on closer inspection, it is possible to discover that a periodisation for the history of DEFA stars should be set differently, because different key moments were relevant than those for a more general history. For example, events that seriously endangered the production of influential and critical films at DEFA instigated a turn to popular genres (and less contentious subject matter) which ultimately actually boosted the star phenomenon. This chapter, concentrating specifically on film stars within the East German cultural-political and the international cinematic contexts, sets out to revise the general periodisation and to shed light on how the above contexts shaped the emergence, existence and decline of film stardom in East Germany.

In general, the periodisation of DEFA cinema is informed by the following key moments and periods: the foundation in 1946; the increasing impact of socialist ideology in the early 1950s; the most decisive moment, the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the SED in December 1965 which resulted in the most devastating impact of state censorship on socio-critical films DEFA ever encountered; and 1971, the year from which it is possible to date a new era of openness for the arts, a year which led to a second phase of more challenging films. Throughout the 1980s, films once again gradually

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<sup>1</sup> *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg. DEFA-Spielfilme 1946-1992*, ed. by Filmmuseum Potsdam and Ralf Schenk, Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1994.

retreated into less contentious subject matter and the growing import of Western European and US American productions contributed to decreasing attendance figures for domestic films. Around these key moments and periods distinct cinematic and cultural-political developments were taking place that influenced the content but also aesthetic appearance of DEFA's products, such as an overly aesthetic, at times surreal and expressionist style during the 1960s or the documentary-influenced style during the 1980s.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of East German stardom, however, was less affected by the cultural-political climate that applied to DEFA cinema as a whole so that the periodisation becomes more straightforward. Whereas cultural politics in general shifted more or less every half decade between being liberal or restrictive, the development of stardom was more stable, and encompassed three major phases. The years from 1946 to 1960/61 can be characterised as the 'star-less' phase, as it was a time when DEFA relied on aspects other than stardom to attract audiences. Only towards the late 1950s, did the first signs of indigenous stars begin to appear, partly due to European stars gaining an international reputation. The second period, from 1960/61 to 1976, was the core phase of film stardom, as a league of star actors began to emerge rapidly. Film stardom flourished until the mid 1970s, when the political impact of the expatriation of GDR songwriter and singer Wolf Biermann and its wide repercussions in the cultural sphere put an abrupt end to it. However, the sudden decline was also aided by wider international trends in pop culture, which shifted audience interest from film to music. The final period, from 1976 until the liquidation of DEFA in 1992, saw a return to the star-less phase, as the system was unable to recover due to internal cultural-political and social, as well as global changes in film star reception.

DEFA's star culture was diverse from the beginning and never constituted a distinctly separate East German identity that was untouched by outside influences. Through the import of foreign films, the re-release of old, star-studded, but ideologically acceptable Third Reich films, and the broadcasting of West German television, East German actors were always consciously or unconsciously constructed by filmmakers, and perceived by their audiences vis-à-vis these influences. The

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<sup>2</sup> *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg. DEFA-Spielfilme 1946-1992* discusses DEFA history in decades, which happens to coincide with the film historical developments. Only the 1960s are treated differently, as the year 1965, with the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum, provides a significant caesura.

phenomenon of DEFA stardom developed as a reaction to traditions and contemporaneous trends, a dynamic of incorporation and disavowal that was already characteristic for stars in Third Reich cinema.<sup>3</sup> A number of DEFA stars seemed to be partially modelled on alter egos from the international film context. Dancer-actor Christel Bodenstein is a case in point, providing some resemblance to Ufa star Marika Rökk, who herself was partially modelled on Hollywood's Eleanor Powell.<sup>4</sup> Bodenstein also conveys the erotic look of the contemporary Brigitte Bardot, though whether she herself or the filmmakers consciously took Bardot as an example is open to speculation.<sup>5</sup> At times, DEFA stars were even explicitly compared with an international star, as was the case for Angelica Domröse with Brigitte Bardot.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, audiences abroad associated East German actors with stars more familiar to them. GDR actress Karin Schröder was known as the 'Doris Day of the East' at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1964 when she presented the DEFA comedy *Geliebte weiße Maus* (My Beloved Traffic Policeman, 1964).<sup>7</sup>

### **Acting and Performance: Discourses, Traditions, and Hierarchies**

A highly significant contribution to the dynamic of disavowal and incorporation of indigenous stars came from the values associated in East Germany with acting, which were rooted in traditions that in some cases preceded the emergence of the GDR as a state. In order to understand the conceptual underpinnings of the East German star system, it is thus necessary to first map the canonisation and prioritisation of certain paradigms on acting in the GDR. Cultural conservatism among most of the SED's officials, and the adoption of Socialist Realism as the guiding principle in the arts, prevented a broader range of developments when cultural policies were first implemented in the Soviet Occupied Zone and later in the GDR. Important strands of German performance tradition, such as expressionism and the proletarian theatre, were widely ignored and rejected. Conflicts between progressive and experimental artists and conservative cultural authorities came to the fore for the first time in the so-called formalism debate (priority of contents over

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<sup>3</sup> cf. Erica Carter (2002), p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> ibid..

<sup>5</sup> For a comparison see photographic images of Bodenstein and Bardot on page 53 of this chapter.

<sup>6</sup> cf. "Neues Leben besuchte den Filmliebling 1962, Angelica Domröse", *Neues Leben* 4, 1963.

<sup>7</sup> cf. interview Karin Schröder in *East Side Story. The Story of the Socialist Musicals*, [documentary] directed by Dana Ranga, script Dana Ranga and Andrew Horn, Anda Films/WDR, Germany 1996.

form and rejection of allegedly content-free experimental forms) in the early 1950s.<sup>8</sup> In this context, Konstantin Stanislavsky's performance method gained the status of a "canonised system" in East Germany on stage and screen, as it was declared the only suitable way to perform art within the principles of Socialist Realism.<sup>9</sup> It needs to be said though, that acceptance of Stanislavsky's method to such an extent was only possible in a context in which traditions of realist and psycho-realist theatre (and film) had always been strong.<sup>10</sup>

Stanislavsky himself had developed his expectations towards actors and performance under the influence of theories of psychology and physiology.<sup>11</sup> He considered it important for actors to find their subconscious sources of inspiration, that actors should be guided by their internal nature. An actor becomes credible through understanding and living the motivations and emotions of the character. An often underestimated aspect is that even Stanislavsky had incorporated an alienation effect into his system – though never terminologically referred to it in this way – in that only those actors would be masters of their art, who in a further step could play *with* the character's fate that they had internalised before.<sup>12</sup> Manfred Jäger suggests that Stanislavsky's theories were vulgarised to such an extent that they served Stalin's and Shdanov's cultural conservatism and that Stanislavsky's authority was used to administratively restrict experimental theatrical practices (otherwise referred to as formalistic).<sup>13</sup>

The theatres of the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) readily accepted the Stanislavsky approach – the influence of the Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) is not quite clear.<sup>14</sup> After the Stanislavsky conference, held in East Berlin in April 1953, his performance methods were enforced at all stages of the GDR and only

<sup>8</sup> cf. Axel Goodbody, Dennis Tate, and Ian Wallace (1995), p. 153 and Manfred Jäger (1994), pp. 57-68.

<sup>9</sup> cf. Werner Hecht: "'Der Pudding bewährt sich beim Essen'. Brechts 'Prüfung' Stanislavskis 1953", in *Brecht & Stanislavski – und die Folgen*, ed. by Ingrid Henschel, Bundesgemeinschaft Spiel und Theater, Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1997, p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> cf. Peter von Becker: "Nach-Wirkungen von Brecht und Stanislavski im zeitgenössischen Theater", in Ingrid Henschel (1997), p. 16f..

<sup>11</sup> cf. Karin Jansen: "Stanislavskis Methode der physischen Handlung. Ein wissenschaftlicher Diskurs für die Schauspielpraxis", in Ingrid Henschel (1997), p. 48.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Anatoly Smeliansky: "Ein neues Stanislavski-Bild im Vergleich mit Brecht", in Ingrid Henschel (1997), p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> Stanislavski died in August 1938 which prevented him from having an influence on the (mis-) interpretation of his works.

<sup>14</sup> Already in 1945 a small booklet *Aus den Erfahrungen des Sowjet-Theaters* (From the Experience of Soviet Theatre) was published, with a clear rejection of formalist tendencies. Two years later the publication of *Das deutsche Stanislavski-Buch* (The German Stanislavsky Book) by Ottofritz Gaillard further established the firm position of the method. Cf. Werner Hecht (1997), p. 59.

Bertolt Brecht's *Berliner Ensemble* remained the one notable exception. This is not to say that Stanislavsky's performance methods were not used elsewhere, in fact, it is widely acknowledged that Lee Strasberg's appropriation of his ideas had an important influence on Hollywood cinema.<sup>15</sup> In the GDR's drama schools, stages and film, however, the doctrinal dominance of Stanislavsky's methods set a different environment.

The criteria used to distinguish Stanislavsky's performance methods from those by Brecht were: being natural, close to the people and emotionally engaging. Brecht was accused of over-intellectualisation and coldness, and a distancing through alienation. Whereas Brecht sought to elicit thoughtful involvement through breaking with the conventional presentation of characters as psychologically 'sound', Stanislavsky's method, as it was vulgarised, continued to present them as 'natural', 'whole' and 'sound' within well-rounded narratives. As I will argue in the next chapter, such categories as 'natural' would play a fundamental part in aligning East German stars with notions of 'ordinariness'.

The opposition between film and stage acting, and between character actor and star was pertinent to the construction and perception of East German stars, and again was built on a long history of mutual scepticism and dislike between stage and screen on one hand, and of overlaps and similarities on the other. Recent research has acknowledged the significance of theatre in the construction of star images, and perceives theatrical stardom as the immediate predecessor to stardom in cinema.<sup>16</sup> The practice of centring a whole stage production around one particular performer, were noticeable as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the Shakespearean actor Richard Burbage, and were well established in Europe by the late 18<sup>th</sup> and Northern America by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

For the German context, Knut Hickethier's work has provided a most thorough and valuable account of the transitions from stage to film stardom. Hickethier argues that unlike in the American context where a continent divided the Broadway theatres from Hollywood's film studios, in Europe stage and cinema often existed in close proximity to each other. Almost from the beginning, famous theatre actors crossed over from stage to film. In France, Clément Maurice was making films with stage stars Sarah Bernhardt, Coquelin and Réjane as early as 1900, Alice Guy

<sup>15</sup> cf. Sharon Marie Carnicke: "Lee Strasberg's paradox of the actor", in *Screenacting*. ed. by Alan Lovell and Peter Krämer. London, 1999, pp. 75-87.

<sup>16</sup> see for instance Josef Garncarz, Knut Hickethier for the German, Ginette Vincendeau for the French context.

filmed café-concert star Mayol and opera tenors, and music hall star Maurice Chevalier appeared on screen as early as 1908.<sup>17</sup> According to Richard Abel, the *film d'art* movement successfully attempted to recruit French stars from the legitimate theatre, in order to "redefine cinema and attract a white collar and bourgeois audience".<sup>18</sup> In Berlin, actors of the famous Max Reinhardt-Ensemble, among them Albert Bassermann, Paul Wegener, and Alfred Abel, appeared on-screen as early as 1913 in a similar move by the industry to render the new medium more respectable to middle-class audiences. Because silent film required performances different from those of the stage, and specific characteristics of the voice were lost, the transfer of famous theatre stars remained limited at first.<sup>19</sup> In the long run however, the

crossover between theatre and film remains typical for actors in the German-speaking context [which distinguishes them] from [those in] the USA, where a difference began to emerge between theatre stars and film stars at an early stage. The German film does not know any specific film stars, apart from Henny Porten. The majority of German film stars have always been connected to theatre. They are defined by multimediality, a specific characteristic, which emerged at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup>

Although the crossover between film and theatre has remained a typical feature for actors in the German-speaking but also wider European context, the discourse on acting has valued the two spheres of stage and screen differently. This is due to various reasons – the theatre has been longer established and is often considered more demanding because of the immediate and unmediated nature of the performance, and the immediate audience feedback. Therefore stage acting tends to be granted a higher status. To compensate for the "disadvantages" of screen acting the artistic value of a film and film performance is often legitimised through explicit or implicit references to the theatrical sphere in the subsidiary texts. Already Asta Nielsen, a big star of early German silent film period, was advertised as "the [Eleonora] Duse of cinematic art", and Henny Porten, another big star of silent film, also attempted to style herself as a 'legitimate' artist.<sup>21</sup> It appears that in such a context the 'true' professionalism of actors could only be legitimised through performances on stage, and film needed the reference to theatre to gain cultural respectability.

<sup>17</sup> cf. Ginette Vincendeau (2000), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Abel: *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema 1896-1914*, Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, p. 40, quoted in Ginette Vincendeau (2000), p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> cf. Knut Hickethier (1998), pp. 348f..

<sup>20</sup> Translated from Knut Hickethier (1997), p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> ibid., p. 43.

Hickethier's point on multimediality also applies to East German actors, as many of them were simultaneously or diachronically involved in theatre, television, film, the dubbing of foreign films and cabaret-style life concerts. Most actors were primarily employed by one of the many theatres in the GDR, and came to DEFA for individual film projects. In East-Berlin, the 'theatre capital', the four major stages *Berliner Ensemble*, *Deutsches Theater*, *Volksbühne*, *Maxim Gorki Theater*, and the Potsdam *Hans-Otto-Theater* were the primary sources for DEFA castings, as they were geographically located closest to DEFA's studios in Potsdam-Babelsberg, south-west of Berlin. The dense theatre infrastructure of Berlin with its many venues and audiences provided an ideal basis for crossovers between stage and screen, a situation similar to that described by Vincendeau for Paris.<sup>22</sup>

Among those actors who generally worked for the stage, but gained nationwide popularity with DEFA productions were: Annekathrin Bürger, Angelika Domröse, Eberhard Esche, Winfried Glatzeder, Jutta Hoffmann, Armin Mueller-Stahl, and Rolf Herricht. Günther Simon and Erwin Geschonneck started off on stage, but later concentrated on television and cinema. The list of prominent actors who belonged to the stock DEFA-Ensemble is much smaller, among them were Christel Bodenstein, Marita Böhme, Regina Beyer, Helga Göring, Hans Klering, Wilhelm Koch-Hooge and Gojko Mitic. These actors had occasional guest performances on stage, as for example Gojko Mitic, primarily known as DEFA's Indian chief, who played at the summer open-air theatre of Thale in the Harz Mountains; or Marita Böhme who was for years famous as Eliza Dolittle in *My Fair Lady* at the Dresden state theatre. An early exception from these conventions was Manfred Krug, who worked free-lance in mostly film, television and some stage musicals from 1957 onwards.<sup>23</sup> This brief list shows the closeness of stage and screen acting in the GDR, unlike conventions in Hollywood and similar to those in other European countries. Small geographical distances between studio and stage, a mode of employment which had never clearly separated theatre and cinema, and also a shortage of suitable actors in the GDR kept the intermingling of stage and screen alive.

Despite the established cross-over practices, DEFA frequently had to take a back seat in getting a particular actor, confirming the different rankings between the performing arts.

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<sup>22</sup> cf. Ginette Vincendeau (2000), p.7.

<sup>23</sup> In the 1980s more actors began to work free-lance, as did for instance Karin Düwel.

In our country there are more than a few excellent actors and actresses, who do not need to shy away from international comparisons. Therefore they should be given [a chance for] regular artistic [expression] in film [...] but this appears not to be as easy as it sounds. [First, t]here are the theatres. Filmmakers say the artistic directors protect their ensemble like a mother-hen its chicken. [Secondly, t]here is the radio, the dubbing studios. All of these need the good actor, and everyone knows that we have not got enough [...] And most of our best actors are not engaged at DEFA but at the theatres.<sup>24</sup>

DEFA's secondary position in making casting decisions may also have been affected by East German discourses on acting. These discourses continued to argue along lines of different levels of cultural respectability and ascribed a higher value to non-filmic arts such as theatre, as the examples below indicate.<sup>25</sup> This is surprising in a context which is otherwise characterised by a strong orientation toward Lenin's definition of film as the most important of all arts to reach and educate the masses. Despite the official, ideologically founded promotion of mass art, the GDR's conceptualisation of culture was largely determined by bourgeois values and conventions. The following paragraph from a 1946 cultural-political speech by Anton Ackermann does not consider at all film art as part of the goal of bringing cultural education to the workers.

We want our workers to be given the opportunity to go to the state opera and to the best theatres. We also want that the best art exhibitions and concerts take place in proletarian districts, so that our workers get the best art available [...].<sup>26</sup>

Ackermann not only completely ignores the tradition of proletarian film or the educational potential of film, but also ignores film as an art form in its own right. Although in the following years film gained more weight within East Germany's cultural politics, it took time before it was considered as an essential part of the cultural heritage. In early film adaptations – such as Erich Engel's *Der Biberpelz* (The Beaver Coat, 1949) based on Gerhart Hauptmann's novel, Wolfgang Staudte's

<sup>24</sup> Translated from Horst Knietzschi: "Brauchen wir Stars?", *FilmSPIEGEL* 7, 1976.

<sup>25</sup> Strikingly, the different evaluation of film is also reflected in the rather late institutionalisation of its workers outside DEFA. Although the *Kulturbund* (Cultural League) had several members who worked in film, and the first conference of German writers in October 1947 was paralleled by the *1. Film-Autoren-Kongress* (first conference of filmmakers) in June 1947, the next major cultural-political step was only taken in 1952, when the SED Politbureau published its resolution "For the advancement of progressive German film art" just a few months before the second film conference in September 1952. The different attitude toward film and literature appears particularly obvious, when one compares the foundation dates of the *Schriftstellerverband* (Association of Writers) in 1952 with that of the *Verband der Film- und Fernsehschaffenden* (Association of Film and Television Workers) in 1967. Admittedly, the Association of Theatre Workers happened just as late in 1966.

<sup>26</sup> Translated from Anton Ackermann: "Unsere kulturpolitische Sendung", [speech at the KPD cultural meeting in April 1946], Berlin, p. 32, quoted in Manfred Jäger (1994), p. 20.

*Der Untertan* (The Kaiser's Lackey, 1951) based on Heinrich Mann's novel, or Artur Pohl's *Corinna Schmidt* (1951) based on Theodor Fontane's novel *Frau Jenny Treibel* – cinema functioned as a means to revive the classical and realist traditions of German literary history from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The focus on bourgeois cultural heritage was evident throughout, encompassing literature, music, painting and sculpture. Manfred Jäger's proposes that among

[...] leading functionaries of the first hour, [...] in particular those with a proletarian origin, [the accessibility of] human culture to many people was regarded a matter of course [...] Those were by no means cultural tactics of the transitional period [after the war], intended for some strata of society that [the functionaries themselves] did not even belong to. The leading elite itself, notwithstanding its political goals, had long since absorbed the standards of bourgeois culture with which it had grown up.<sup>27</sup>

Functionaries' personal preferences were moreover theoretically justified through the work of the highly influential Marxist literary historian, theoretician and critic Georg Lukács, who proclaimed universally valid aesthetic norms which he had deducted from German Classicism and Realism. Lukács provided the ideological-aesthetic norms against which East German cultural politics were set up from the period after the war until the late 1960s. According to Jäger, these 'norms' ignored the proletarian-revolutionary literary traditions of the Weimar Republic, and the few attempts to revive such traditions, such as the *Bitterfelder Weg*, had no lasting effect on GDR literature.<sup>28</sup> Under the impact of these attitudes film continued to be considered less of a high-brow art form than literature and theatre.

A statement made by Christel Bodenstein reminiscing on her career as a film star is very telling in this respect. Bodenstein describes the pressure she received from her colleagues at a point where her career had not yet involved any stage acting. She remembers that her colleagues ascribed a higher value to theatrical acting, when they defined screen acting literally as 'worthless'.

<sup>27</sup> Translated from Manfred Jäger (1994), pp. 20f.; others suggest tactical concessions made to intellectual strata by party officials, see for example Günther Rüther: *'Greif zur Feder, Kumpel!': Schriftsteller, Literatur und Politik in der DDR 1949-1990*, Düsseldorf: Droste, 1991, p. 30; or Wolfram Schlenker: *Das 'kulturelle Erbe' in der DDR*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977.

<sup>28</sup> The *Bitterfelder Weg* was a movement inaugurated by the SED, in which a specific East German national culture was to be established by encouraging workers to become creative writers and by sending authors to the production lines so they would portray the 'real' life of 'real' East German workers. It started with a writers conference in 1959 in the town of Bitterfeld under the slogan *Greif zur Feder Kumpel, die sozialistische Nationalkultur braucht dich!* [Grab your pen mate, the socialist national culture needs you!], a second conference was held in 1964. The failure of this movement caused the cultural authorities to discontinue. cf. Manfred Jäger (1994), p. 21; see also *Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch* (1978), entry "Bitterfelder Konferenzen", pp. 110-12.

**Christel Bodenstein:** In particular during my early years colleagues tried to give me much advice, and that I should go to the theatre. There were certain *Vorbehalte* [prejudices], someone who had not stood on a stage *tauge nicht viel* [was not much worth] as an actor. I took this advice very seriously. Today I think differently about it. If [actors] can make a good film, this really contributes to their profiling. [On stage], you perform one role over many, many evenings. Sometimes you have a good day, sometimes you don't. You can also change things from one performance to another. This is impossible in a film. Each frame has to be precise. However, I wouldn't want to miss my theatrical experience.<sup>29</sup>

Such an explicit expression of a higher valuation of theatrical acting rarely occurred in the contemporaneous GDR discourse on acting. Instead it comes across in subtle ways, in particular in the personal expectations of the actors towards themselves. For them, professional artistry can only be gained through acting on stage. A 1964 *FilmSPIEGEL* article on drama schools and their teaching approaches highlights the different ranking between screen and stage acting. The secondary position of film and television is apparent through the author's call for more training for screen purposes,

[...] all three drama schools [discussed in the article] need a syllabus, which pays attention to the rapid technical development, in particular of film and the mass medium television.<sup>30</sup>

Although the article's main focus is to criticise the insufficient practical training and scarce involvement of students in real projects outside the school, the following statements from both students and lecturers sharply reflect the higher status ascribed to stage acting.

**drama students of the HFF (Academy of Film and Television) Potsdam-Babelsberg:** 'Primarily, actors are trained for the stage ...'

[...]

**Dr. Piens, lecturer at the Berlin-Schöneweide Drama College:** 'I had the impression that Renate Blume had forgotten everything after the making of [the DEFA film] *Der geteilte Himmel* [The Divided Heaven, 1964] [...] She had to learn again how to speak. I think it is too early to put first year students in front of a camera. A professional actor can learn film [acting] within three days!'

[...]

**Werner Wieland, drama lecturer at the HFF Potsdam-Babelsberg:** 'We do not accept anyone who cannot work in film and we [only] enrol [people] who are also good [on stage].'<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Translated from "Christel Bodenstein im Gespräch mit Alexander Iljinskij", television interview on MDR, 09.03.1994, published in *Zwischentöne. Gespräche mit Schauspielern und Regisseuren*, ed. by Barbara Molsen, MDR, Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 1996, p. 106f..

<sup>30</sup> Translated from Bert Kiefel: "Schauspieler aus der Backröhre?", *FilmSPIEGEL* 22, 1964, pp. 6-9.

<sup>31</sup> ibid..

There are three points relevant in these statements: first, a difference is postulated between stage and screen acting, secondly, actors should be able to handle both types of acting, and thirdly, screen acting is rated secondary to stage acting. Although students are to become professional in both types of acting, stage acting is clearly considered superior to screen acting, as the statements by lecturers Piens and Wieland highlight. Particularly striking is Piens', who considers the ability to perform well only in front of the camera a deficiency, notwithstanding the fact that Renate Blume was widely praised by critics, while audience polls confirmed her popularity.<sup>32</sup> He even goes so far as to dismiss screen acting as so undemanding that it can be learnt within "three days". The only statement to stand out is that by Kiefel, although one cannot help but once again detect the implication that students have to be good on screen as an addition to stage. This different evaluation was also implemented in the career trajectories expected of the average drama student – usually they started their work experience at one of the smaller (provincial) theatres after having graduated. This practice was common even for those who were trained specifically at the drama section of the Academy of Film and Television in Potsdam-Babelsberg.

Likewise established DEFA actors, who had received critical acclaim through their filmic performances, reflect this cultural 'pressure' and need to legitimise the quality of their artistry through references to theatrical work.

**actress Christine Laszar in 1965:** "I would really like to do a guest performance on stage. But basically, I want to stick with film."<sup>33</sup>

**about actress Angelika Waller in 1966:** "Recently, she has joined the Berliner Ensemble. [...] To deepen her knowledge, she currently studies the roles of all young women in the repertoire of the Berliner Ensemble."<sup>34</sup>

**actress Marita Böhme about shooting *Lots Weib* (Lot's Wife, 1965):** "As on stage, whole scenes were rehearsed with the entire decoration and all props. [...] The effect of the frame was tested carefully before the shooting. I think this is great. Especially, because like this one of my old dreams came somewhat true, to always [...] play theatre."<sup>35</sup>

**about actor Gojko Mitic in 1976:** "At the open air theatre in the town of Thale Gojko Mitic played Spartacus with style and élan in front of an audience filled with enthusiasm – it was the first time on stage in his life."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> in the 1964 popularity polls of both *Neues Leben* and *FilmSPIEGEL* Blume reached the 5<sup>th</sup> rank, see Appendix I.

<sup>33</sup> Translated from "Drei Wünsche zum neuen Jahr", *FilmSPIEGEL* 12, 1965.

<sup>34</sup> Translated from Ilse Schuhmann: "Interviews vor dem Erfolg", *FilmSPIEGEL* 15, 1966, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Translated from "Zwei Fragen an Marita", *Neues Leben* 6, 1965.

<sup>36</sup> Translated from "Dreimal ganz anders. Neues von Gojko Mitic", *FilmSPIEGEL* 16, 1976.

In all four cases, the reference to theatrical acting is used to legitimate the professionalism of the actor, even for those with a film-only career (Christine Laszar and Gojko Mitic), marking the stage experience as an essential formative part of a GDR star.

Conversely, film actors were used to promote the theatre. To attract rather theatre stubborn young audiences whose opinion about going to the theatre expresses itself as, "What should I do there? It's boring", a *Neues Leben* article counters with a reference to Arno Wyzniewski. Wyzniewski was one of the leading actors in the highly popular film comedy *Ach, du Fröhliche* (Goodness Me, A Very Merry ..., 1962) and the article aims to use his popularity to draw young audiences to the stage of the *Hans-Otto-Theater* "where he performs regularly".<sup>37</sup> The actor's on-screen popularity is to be transferred into an on-stage popularity to achieve the cultural-educational goals set by the authorities. Not only is such a reference intended to attract larger audiences into the theatre for educational purposes (role models and materialising the state's cultural policies of the widely knowledgeable socialist personality), but references such as these moreover secure the high status of theatrical art. Interestingly, bourgeois traditions and their continuously strong impact among the cultural elite, were not shared by the audiences. Cinema-goers and readers of popular magazines showed no interest in the peculiar differences and evaluations between screen and stage acting.

## 1946-1959: A New Beginning

DEFA's immediate predecessor, Ufa, relied heavily on popular cinema because it could position ideology through a commitment to pleasure and entertainment.<sup>38</sup> Sabine Hake states, "Third Reich cinema was from the beginning a cinema dominated by [stars]. Famous stars established patterns of identification, imitation, and admiration beyond individual films [...] and [they] became closely identified with the cinema's national and international ambitions."<sup>39</sup> Hake further points out that Ufa stars were markers of national identity but at the same time also provided elements (with their extravagance and glamour) that were subversive to 'official'

<sup>37</sup> Translated from "Hans-Otto-Theater", *Neues Leben*, 11, 1963, pp. 37-41.

<sup>38</sup> cf. Sabine Hake: *German National Cinema*, London, New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 67, and Sabine Hake: *Popular Cinema of the Third Reich*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

<sup>39</sup> cf. Sabine Hake (2002), p. 68.

culture. Within this context, Third Reich stars predominantly had educational functions, in that their aim was to disseminate Nazi ideology in their position as role models. Moreover, their films also had an escapist function to boost morale during the war.<sup>40</sup>

The political significance of stars explains why many of them were forced to continue working right until the end of the Second World War. Heinz Rühmann, one of the top ranking stars was still busy shooting when the Red Army was within 50 km of Berlin's borders. Star Harry Piel also left Berlin at the last minute.<sup>41</sup> It was only four days before Soviet tanks rolled into East Germany's largest film studio complex at Babelsberg, southwest of Berlin, that the Minister for Propaganda Joseph Goebbels had given order to cancel all film production.<sup>42</sup> After that, very few film stars stayed in Berlin; most of the acting elite had escaped to the Western zones of Germany under British, French and American Allied occupation, obviously dreading the less easily 'comprehensible' communist enemy. Even though all of the Allied Forces were eager to eradicate manifestations of Nazi ideology it might have been to their advantage to stay as cultural life recovered much more quickly in the Eastern zone.

Unlike the Western Allied Forces, SMAD authorities in the immediate post-war years were not convinced of a 'collective guilt' and Stalin's distinction between 'Hitler and his clique' and the German workers brought upon more reconciliatory policies in the Eastern zone. Consequently, SMAD relied more heavily on its German partners and refrained from general ideological vetting processes.<sup>43</sup> However, they did react to black lists and hints from the population, which of course bore the danger of being rather arbitrary at times.<sup>44</sup> The highly prominent actor Heinrich George died in the former concentration camp Sachsenhausen, which was then used as an internment camp by the Soviets. Others, like film maker Arthur Maria Rabenalt who had directed films with strong tendencies of 'anti-bolshevist' and anti-Semitic propaganda, such as ... *reitet für Deutschland* (... Riding for Germany, 1941) or *Achtung, Feind hört mit* (Beware! The Enemy Is Listening!, 1940) were quickly rehabilitated. The role of the SMAD in the cultural renewal of the SBZ is

<sup>40</sup> cf. Andrea Winkler-Mayerhöfer (1992), p. 111.

<sup>41</sup> cf. Holger Theuerkauf: *Goebbels' Filmerbe. Das Geschäft mit den unveröffentlichten Ufa-Filmen*, Berlin: Ullstein, 1998, pp. 39 and 99.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> cf. Jaimey Fisher: "Who's Watching the Rubble-Kids? Youth, Pedagogy, and Politics in Early DEFA Film", *New German Critique*, vol. 82, Winter 2001, p. 92.

<sup>44</sup> cf. Holger Theuerkauf (1998), p. 124.

viewed ambivalently among scholars. Whereas Séan Allan and Christiane Mückenberger stress the positive effects of the quick and uncomplicated re-establishment of cultural life, others, like Andreas Trampe point to the fact that the Soviets used their advantage of control over the Western Allies, who arrived slightly later in Berlin.<sup>45</sup>

I agree with Allan and Mückenberger who stress the advantageous coincidence that SMAD's cultural officers were led by Colonel Sergej Tulpanov and Major Alexander Dymshitz. Both men, "blessed with an intimate knowledge and understanding of German culture", not only granted the unproblematic re-opening of theatres and cinemas, but also encouraged long-term investment into culture, for example the training of young actors.<sup>46</sup> Studying the biographies of GDR actors, a large number started their career straight after the war in drama schools such as *Schauspielschule des Deutschen Theaters Berlin*, *Deutsches Theaterinstitut Weimar*, or *Theaterhochschule Leipzig*, to name but a few.<sup>47</sup> The fact that these drama schools existed at all, seems very surprising amidst a climate of starvation and rubble. It reflects the Soviet agenda to utilise art as a medium of re-education, which itself was evident in the Soviet assumption that cultural matters should fall under the responsibility of the education department.

Although the re-opened cinemas showed mostly Soviet productions at the beginning – the first dubbed film to be screened was Sergej Eisenstein's *Ivan Grosny* (Ivan, the Terrible, 1945) – SMAD soon supported a revival of the German film industry. A *Filmaktiv*, a team of filmmakers (communists or those with a politically clean record), was established in order to prepare a new beginning of German cinema. The pressure to establish a 'proper' film enterprise in the SBZ was high, as the *Filmaktiv* feared that many of the "best-known directors and actors might go into the other occupied zones, as they were losing faith in the establishing of a film industry in Soviet occupied Berlin".<sup>48</sup> When on 17 May 1946 the festive inauguration of DEFA took place, SMAD Colonel Tulpanov's key note stated,

<sup>45</sup> cf. Séan Allan: "DEFA. An historical overview", in Séan Allan and John Sandford (1999), p. 2; Christiane Mückenberger: "Zeit der Hoffnungen, 1946 bis 1949", in Filmmuseum Potsdam and Ralf Schenk (1994), p. 10f.; Andreas Trampe: "Kultur und Medien", in Matthias Judt (1998), p. 294.

<sup>46</sup> cf. Séan Allan (1999), p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> The training of actors and actresses specifically for the film industry only began in the late 1940s.

<sup>48</sup> Translated from Herbert Volkmann: "Situationsbericht des Filmaktivs der DVV über Filmvorhaben in den Westzonen" Bundesarchiv, R-2, No. 1038, Bl. 14, quoted in Christiane Mückenberger (1994), p. 13.

DEFA faces a number of important tasks. Of these, the most crucial is the struggle to restore democracy in Germany and remove all traces of fascist and militarist ideology from the minds of every German, the struggle to re-educate the German people – especially the young – to a true understanding of genuine democracy and humanism, and in doing so, to promote a sense of respect for other people and other nations.<sup>49</sup>

The key note set the direction for future DEFA productions, in which the major focus would lie on educational objectives, and thus actually continue an element that had been important in Third Reich cinema. But few realised these notions at the beginning and the general sensation among filmmakers was that of an enthusiastic *Aufbruch* ('departure').<sup>50</sup> Among actors, however, the situation was slightly different. Firstly, they had a minor, or rather more 'passive', involvement in the revival of the German cinema as they hardly contributed to the establishment of its institutional structures. Their participation only began to set in during the late 1960s, when some aimed at a more direct engagement with cultural politics in the *Verband der Theaterschaffenden* (Association of Theatre Workers), and the *Verband der Film and Fernsehschaffenden* (Association of Film and Television Workers). Secondly, about ninety percent of the Ufa film studios at Potsdam-Babelsberg, once the biggest film metropolis in Europe, had gone up in flames or was plundered after the bombings.<sup>51</sup> An area of the arts, which needed so many technical devices and had been bereft of most means of production apparently could not raise too much trust among actors. Only few contacted the *Filmaktiv*, and owing to the long established crossovers between theatre and film, they seem to have considered the stage the safer option in the immediate post-war years. Many returned to theatre and toured the country with small open-air stages on convertible wagons.<sup>52</sup> Dubbing foreign films offered a fairly 'safe' first occupation in the film business. Among those actors who lent their voices to the synchronisations of productions originating in the home countries of the allied forces were former popular Ufi stars like Carl Raddatz, Paul Klinger or O.E. Hasse.<sup>53</sup>

The decisive element, however, for the reduced visibility of former Ufi actors was not that they were sceptical about film in the SBZ, rather the new *zeitgeist* which called for a dissociation from Third Reich cinema also prevented them from

<sup>49</sup> quoted from Seán Allan (1999), p. 3, who translated from *Deutsche Volkszeitung*, 6 December 1945, reproduced in Albert Wilkening: *Geschichte der DEFA von 1945-1950: Betriebsgeschichte des VEB DEFA Studio für Spielfilme*, vol. 1, Potsdam, 1981, pp. 32f..

<sup>50</sup> cf. Christiane Mückenberger (1994), p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> cf. Christiane Mückenberger and Günter Jordan: '*Sie sehen selbst, Sie hören selbst...*' Die DEFA von ihren Anfängen bis 1949. Marburg: Hinteroth, 1994, p. 26.

<sup>52</sup> cf. Holger Theuerkauf (1998), p. 123.

<sup>53</sup> They were working for the Film-Union GmbH at Potsdam-Babelsberg, a dubbing studio which had already existed under the Ufa. cf. Christiane Mückenberger and Günter Jordan (1994), p. 374.

returning to their former status. The Western military authorities in particular were intent of breaking the continuity between Nazi and a new post-war German cinema.<sup>54</sup> Actors that were associated with the old system were not trusted in carrying the message of a new, democratic and tolerant Germany. Hence particularly exposed film stars were barred from shooting films, among them Zarah Leander, Kristina Söderbaum or Werner Krauß.<sup>55</sup> But in general, a clear dissociation from Nazi cinema proved difficult as continuity of personnel was prevailing at all levels of production. As suggested above, the Soviet authorities showed themselves to be more relaxed about denazification, as they did not request thorough interrogations or questionnaires, and for those in the film business it was sufficient to vouch for an individual's character and history during the Nazi period.<sup>56</sup>

Much more important, however, was the filmmakers' own intent to break with the past. They were aware that in order to get the new *zeitgeist* across, they required fresh faces. The cast of Germany's first post-war production, *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (The Murderers Are Among Us, 1946) was exemplary in this respect. It did not feature any popular actors from the Nazi period, but instead relied on unknown faces, for example leading actress Hildegard Knef.<sup>57</sup> Although she had appeared in three films made before the end of the war, this was her first appearance as a lead actress.

The aim to distinguish DEFA from Nazi cinema at the casting level ran parallel to an international cinematic trend towards realistic, documentary style representations. Particularly relevant in this context was the influence of Italian Neo-Realism. Ideologically born from the same need shared by the German filmmakers, "to break with the cultural heritage of fascism and in particular with rhetorical artistic schemata which seem to bear no relation to life as it was lived", the Italian filmmakers committed themselves to the "representation of human reality".<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> The Western allies even attempted to trigger a shift in the German film star system: Marlene Dietrich was on the cover of the first edition of *Film-Revue* in September 1947. Yet, the German audiences showed not quite as much interest in her after the war (which could suggest a continuing impact of the negative propaganda surrounding Dietrich during Nazi times) and instead chose former Ufa star Marika Rökk (but admittedly also Stewart Granger) as winners of the first popularity poll a year later in 1948. cf. Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, Hans Helmut Prinzler: *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, Stuttgart, Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 1993, p. 535.

<sup>55</sup> Hans Albers, however, was an exemption from this regulation, his integrity was hardly debated (his Jewish partner Hansi Burg returned to him and Albers had never occupied any political functions). Cf. Michaela Krützen: *Hans Albers. Eine deutsche Karriere*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed., Weinheim, Berlin: Quadriga, 1996, pp. 286 and 294.

<sup>56</sup> In borderline cases the Berlin *Kammer der Kunstschaaffenden* got involved. cf. Christiane Mückenberger and Günter Jordan (1994), pp. 369f..

<sup>57</sup> Knef was 20 years old at the time *Die Mörder sind unter uns* was premiered.

<sup>58</sup> cf. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith: "Italy and Neo-Realism", in *The Cinema Book*, ed. by Pam Cook, London: British Film Institute, 1985, pp. 36f..

Although this movement did not translate into precise stylistic dogma, visual authenticity was a central characteristic and manifested itself in on-location shots (partly dictated by the desolate conditions of the destroyed studios) and the use of lay actors rather than professionals.<sup>59</sup>

Under the influence of similar ideological and material circumstances, but certainly also under the direct impact of Neo-Realist films – Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città apperta* (Rome, Open City, 1945) and *Germania – anno zero* (Germany - Year Zero, 1947) were screened in East German cinemas – DEFA filmmakers were soon producing films which stylistically resembled Italian Neo-Realist cinema.<sup>60</sup> These films had no place for either stars or star glamour. Though DEFA scriptwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase who gained a reputation with neo-realist style films such as *Alarm im Zirkus* (Alarm at the Circus, 1954), *Eine Berliner Romanze* (A Berlin Romance, 1956), *Berlin- Ecke Schönhauser* (Berlin – Schönhauser Corner, 1957), does not belong to the generation of immediate post-war filmmakers, his statement reflects the general mood of the time.

My interest in film arose from the experience of the destroyed city of Berlin [...] At that time I was very much fascinated with Italy's Neorealism while before that time, cinema had been, for me, something totally separate from reality, with splendour, pomp and glory, now I started to imagine a totally different cinema.<sup>61</sup>

The first five post-war productions were all shot on location amongst the rubble of Berlin and the cast lists reveal that no leading role was ever performed by the same actor twice. In terms of cinematography, DEFA's early films wavered between rediscovering the traditions of expressionism and realism, but also continuing the softening and glamourising lighting often used in Ufi films. Compared with the hard-lit, high-contrast shooting of the rubble, Hildegard Knef's face in *Die Mörder sind unter uns* has an elegant and star-like radiance, in such a way that it appears like a "heaven of light".<sup>62</sup> Her publicity stills of the time clearly followed old Ufi

<sup>59</sup> ibid., p. 37.

<sup>60</sup> cf. Christiane Mückenberger and Günter Jordan (1994), pp. 71 and 162.

<sup>61</sup> Translated by Sigrun D. Leonhard from an unpublished interview with Wolfgang Kohlhaase, 3 April 1987, cf. Sigrun D. Leonhard: "Testing the Borders: East German Film between Individualism and Social Commitment", in *Post New Wave Cinema in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Daniel J. Goulding, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989, p. 77.

<sup>62</sup> I would also agree with Erica Carter who sees this style of lighting as plot immament, because it contrasts the clear conscience of Knef's figure with that of the male protagonist Mertens "an erratic figure plagued by guilt and moral indecision", whose face is always darkened by shadows. Erica Carter: "Sweeping up the past. Gender and history in the post-war German 'rubble film'", in: *Heroines Without Heroes. Reconstructing Female and National Identities in European Cinema, 1945-51*, ed. by Ulrike Sieglohr, London: Cassell, 2000, p. 91, 96.

conventions as can be seen in the publicity still below. Devices like these clearly helped in building up Knef as a star, even though her plain dress style and unfussy behaviour broke with the tradition of Ufi's glamorous star images.<sup>63</sup> At the same time the anti-star approach filmmakers subscribed to, worked against further exploiting Knef's star potential, or in fact that of any other actor. The combination of different visual styles would continue throughout the 1950s when the doctrine of Socialist Realism was beginning to gain ground. The latter doctrine was instrumental in further reducing the visual and narrative elements conventionally used in the construction of stars and their images.



*Die Mörder sind unter uns*



1946 publicity still  
Hildegard Knef

The post-war *zeitgeist*, embodied in the commitment towards a Realist aesthetics, thus initially neither revived the old German film star system, nor encouraged the development of new ones. Whilst filmmakers concentrated on unknown faces, the audiences, however, reacted differently to these well-meant intentions. Owing to their realist depictions of harsh, everyday post-war life, and lacking glamour or stars, the films on the whole had little appeal at the box office. The following quote from a letter to a radio station is very telling:

'Why don't you want to get back to the German cinema as it was? Our films and actors were good (like *Träumerei* (Dreaming, 1944) or *Es war eine rauschende Ballnacht* (That Night at the Ball, 1939). They are still attracting people and the screenings are sold out. Why do you think that is? They bring pleasure and entertainment. We do NOT want to see films about contemporary politics, which remind us of our everyday worries.'<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> cf. Ulrike Sieglohr: "Hildegard Knef: From Fallen Woman to Rubble Woman", in *Heroines Without Heroes. Reconstructing Female and National Identities in European Cinema, 1945-1951*, ed. by Ulrike Sieglohr, London: Cassell, 2000, p. 116.

<sup>64</sup> cf. Christiane Mückenberger and Günter Jordan (1994), p. 71, quoting Fr. Damrow-Roth: *Der deutsche Film*, 2: 116, 21 May 1947, p. 45f..

As this comment indicates, audience expectations were clearly directed towards escapism – a preference which was perceived as a serious problem at the *Erster Filmautoren-Kongress* (First Conference of Film-Makers) in June 1947. Subsequently, DEFA focused on more conventional, popular genres such as comedies and contemporary dramas. But even successful films such as the circus tragedy-love-revival story *1-2-3 Corona* (1948), the family comedy *Die Kuckucks* (The Cuckoos, 1949) or DEFA's first opera adaptation of Mozart's *Die Hochzeit des Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro, 1949), which satisfied the desire for escapism and entertainment, lacked stars. One of the main reasons for this situation had to do with the absence of continuity among actors. In each film a different actor was cast in the leading role, and so audiences in return were unable to build up their personal preferences.

The 1950s continued to be a decade with only few and short-term traces of East German film stars. Three films that the state authorities considered important with respect to their educational message, the adaptation of Heinrich Mann's 1914 novel *Der Untertan* (The Kaiser's Lackey), a critique of German bourgeois obedience to state authorities, and the two biographical films about the leader of the German Communist Party, Ernst Thälmann, were widely distributed and the educational and cultural authorities had implemented compulsory viewings for them. The films' massive cultural promotion helped the lead actors Günther Simon and Karla Runkehl to gain considerable popularity among audiences, or in the case of Werner Peters to consolidate it.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, the need to dissociate from what was considered the 'falsehood' of Third Reich cinema persisted among filmmakers, and the increasing impact of Socialist Realism, but also the rejection of all aspects related to American culture (including rock 'n roll, jeans and film stardom), provided a climate unsuitable for indigenous stars. Stars and socialist culture seemed incompatible and the process of how to achieve an adaptation of the concept of stardom within socialist conceptions of culture was just emerging. At the same time, however, two factors paved the way towards the emergence of indigenous stars. On

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<sup>65</sup> Their popularity was further fuelled by other productions, for Peters in films such as the comedies *Anna Susanna* (1953), *Sommerliebe* (Summer Love, 1955) and *Star mit fremden Federn* (Star in Borrowed Plumes, 1955). Simon throughout the 1950s appeared in two to three films per year on average and received further attention with *Treffpunkt Aimée* (Meeting Point Aimée, 1956) a film on the theft of chemical products from the GDR, and the comedy *Meine Frau macht Musik* (My Wife Wants to Sing, 1958). Runkehl further profited from her role in the popular *Schlösser und Katen* (Palaces and Huts, 1957), which dealt with the re-location of émigré Germans from regions that had come under Polish and Czech government after the war and the re-distribution of property in the East German farming land reforms, a topic that directly concerned many East Germans.

the one hand, international trends in cinema were encouraging a revival of stardom as films became once again increasingly marketed and associated with their stars. On the other hand, the internal socio-political processes of East German society, in particular the mentalities created by political instability generated a climate that made the existence of charismatic leaders necessary, a concept which could be applied to the function of stars.

Within the parameters of Socialist Realism, set as the binding aesthetic paradigm by the GDR cultural authorities, art and artists were to be functionalised; they were expected to find "the appropriate formal means to convey simplistic messages about the successful construction of socialism [...]"<sup>66</sup> What needed to be achieved was to use film stars in the same way as art was – as an instrument of the state; and to use their potential as role models to contribute to the construction of a new society.<sup>67</sup> In accordance with the proclamations of the new leading class, in particular the working class and peasant hero/heroine gained cultural significance. The numerous historical and contemporary accounts of working class heroism produced by DEFA served as a legitimisation of the first dictatorship of the German proletariat and thus contributed to a system stabilising consensus. The archetypal worker from proletarian cinematic traditions – as to be found in early Soviet and German proletarian films such as *Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück* (Mother Krause's Journey to Happiness, 1929) and *Kuhle Wampe oder wem gehört die Welt?* (Kuhle Wampe, 1932) – was revived and adopted by DEFA filmmakers: the good-hearted, wise and ideologically educated, yet down-to-earth worker of physically stocky dimensions.

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<sup>66</sup> Axel Goddbody, Dennis Tate, and Ian Wallace (1995), p. 153. Very striking in this context is the national-socialist terminology that was used by the GDR's cultural authorities to attack modern art: *Entartung* (degeneration), *Zersetzung* (decline), or pathological. cf. Manfred Jäger (1994), pp. 34f.

<sup>67</sup> cf. Wolfgang Gersch: "Kino in der DDR. Die verlorene Alternative", in Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes and Hans Helmut Prinzler (1993), p. 332.

### Case Study: Günther Simon

The revival of proletarian archetypes, and their function in ideological education, can best be demonstrated with the historical biopics about Ernst Thälmann, *Ernst Thälmann – Sohn seiner Klasse* (Ernst Thälmann – Son of His Class, 1954) and the sequel *Ernst Thälmann – Führer seiner Klasse* (Ernst Thälmann – Leader of His Class, 1955) both directed by Kurt Maetzig.<sup>68</sup> Thälmann, leader of the German Communist Party under the Nazi dictatorship, was one of the key figures in the GDR's political heritage and in the state's strategies of legitimization. Having been executed by the Nazis in the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1944, he "conveniently" provided a positive identity, as Peter Monteath puts it – that of a German, working class leader and resistance fighter to the fascist regime.<sup>69</sup> Thälmann's mythologisation and concomitant idolisation among East Germans during the 1950s can be compared to that of Lenin in the Soviet Union. All East Germans within the reach of party, schools, trade union and other work place organisations were ordained to watch the Thälmann films; those factories which did not get all its workers to watch them were publicly reprimanded in the press, as happened to the *Abus* factory in Dresden because it had only ordered 16 tickets for 800 staff.<sup>70</sup> It shows how important the state officials rated this part of German history, and also the impact they expected from the medium of film. In the wake of the Thälmann films we can detect first traces of the phenomenon of stardom in East German cinema with the actor Günther Simon who portrayed Thälmann. Benefiting from the ideological significance the films carried and the measures taken to promote them, Simon's status as an 'actor' changed into that of a 'star'.

<sup>68</sup> cf. Sandra Langenhahn: "Ursprünge und Ausformung des Thälmannkults. Die DEFA-Filme *Sohn seiner Klasse* und *Führer seiner Klasse*", in *Leit- und Feindbilder in DDR-Medien*, Medienpaket 5, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1997, pp. 55-65.

<sup>69</sup> cf. Peter Monteath: "Narratives of fascism in the GDR: "Buchenwald and the 'myth of antifascism'", *The European Legacy*, 4:1, 1999, p. 104.

<sup>70</sup> cf. brochure *Filmagitator: Führer seiner Klasse*, Ag 02/55, published by Progress, [Filmmappe *Ernst Thälmann – Führer seiner Klasse*, Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv].



Ernst Thälmann  
(with the characteristic cap)



Günther Simon as Thälmann on *Progress* brochure  
accompanying the first Thälmann film

The pre-existing presence of Thälmann in East German everyday life through narrative forms (e.g. stories, biographies, songs and poems) and visual media (photographs in class rooms and at work places, posters on demonstrations) provided the actor Simon with the high visibility needed for the transition from actor to star. Both films received an unprecedented promotion by the distributor and publicity in the press after a meeting at DEFA had developed numerous strategies. According to these strategies, the ministry of education was to make the film obligatory for all educational institutions; previews were also to be offered in all 15 regional capitals, "extensive photo reports" were to be published in an impressive plethora of weekly and fortnightly magazines, including *NBI*, *Wochenpost*, *FilmSPIEGEL*, *Illustrierte Rundschau*, *Der Rundfunk*, *Frau von Heute*, *Zeit im Bild*, *Freie Welt*, *Das Magazin*, as well as the Sunday edition of the daily *Berliner Zeitung*. In addition, the printing quality of brochures accompanying the film was of a higher standard, consisting of 16 pages (quadruple the normal number) and printed in four colours (as opposed to the normal two). In order to maintain the normal purchasing price of 10 Pfennigs, each brochure required a subsidy of 21 Pfennigs.<sup>71</sup>

Affinity and affection among audiences were not only generated by the publicity surrounding the film, the films themselves and the way the Thälmann figure was portrayed (caring, considerate, unjustly imprisoned) created a public affection for the actor Simon as well, who was also made up to physically resemble Thälmann. Younger audiences were particularly susceptible to this; hence it should not be surprising to read that children of the youth organisation *Junge Pioniere* soon

<sup>71</sup> cf. confidential minutes of the "Sitzung zum Einsatz des Thälmann-Filmes am 11. Januar 1954", Bundesarchiv DR 117/5221.

"greeted [...] Günther Simon enthusiastically".<sup>72</sup> Given the ubiquity of the Thälmann myth, and the high publicity for film and actor, the three different personae began to merge: the historical Thälmann, the Thälmann figure on screen and the off-screen persona of actor Simon. Incidentally, youth magazine *Neues Leben* contributed to this construction when it reported about a visit to the West German Hamburg.

Hamburg: Writer Willi Bredel, well-known to all people in Hamburg and the Berlin actor Günther Simon were expelled from Hamburg [...] by the authorities responsible for the *Verfassungsschutz* (state security/defence of the constitution). [...] actor Simon had wanted to take a personal look at the place where Ernst Thälmann used to live and work, because he will soon play the role of Ernst Thälmann in the DEFA-film. It was [the decision of] the Hamburg police to arrest the performer on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, exactly 20 years after the real Thälmann had been arrested by the Gestapo.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to such explicit attempts to draw comparisons between Simon and Thälmann, more subtle means were used as well. Thus for example information about the petit-bourgeois origins of Simon (less desirable than a working class family background) was suppressed and rarely ever part of the press contributions on him. What Simon, but also the historical Thälmann did for GDR audiences was to open history from below, to provide a figure of identification from within their own 'ranks'. The larger share of Simon's, and also Thälmann's charisma was also connected to that, as their images were constructed through the notion of integrity, the faith in their cause, the fighting for it against all odds and the selfless care and protection of others.

On the whole, the need to promote the Ernst Thälmann myth as part of the legitimization of the GDR's political existence contributed to the high visibility of actor Günther Simon, who must be considered East Germany's first indigenous star. Although Simon refused to be type-cast in future roles and only performed once again as Thälmann in the children's production *Das Lied vom Trompeter* (The Song of the Trumpeter, 1964), subsequent press reviews and promotional material continuously used the Thälmann role as a reference point to new performances.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, Simon's rise to stardom occurred with changes in the international cinema landscape.

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<sup>72</sup> Translated from *Filmagitator: Führer seiner Klasse*, Ag 02/55, published by Progress.

<sup>73</sup> Translated from "In der Rolle Ernst Thälmanns", *Neues Leben*, 3, 1954.

<sup>74</sup> Other DEFA films in which Simon performed as a representative of the pre-war working class are *Das Lied der Matrosen* (The Song of the Seamen, 1958) and *Einer von uns* (One of Us, 1960).

## The Internationalisation of East German Cinema in the 1950s

By the mid-1950s, Western European film production had refocused on conventional and popular genres, a development which had also began to revive the phenomenon of stardom. These changes did not go unnoticed among East German audiences, as numerous Western European productions were screened in the cinemas, despite official Cold War policies.<sup>75</sup> Wolfgang Gersch argues that the Western films that were imported in the GDR did not pay attention to, let alone criticise, the rather unsteady East German path towards wholesale acceptance of socialism. Hence, these film imports were officially seen as an "acceptable compromise". Particularly welcome were productions which criticised the reality of West Germany's *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) such as *Das Mädchen Rosemarie* (The Girl Rosemarie, 1958), which chronicled the murder of a prostitute and the political corruption among the economic elite of West German society; or *Wir Wunderkinder* (Aren't We Wonderful, 1958), a satire on the emerging consumerism and the re-establishment of conservative middle class values in the Federal Republic. Incidentally, both were films which had experienced problems with West German censorship.<sup>76</sup> I would agree with Gersch's argument that aspirations to create a democratic Germany in the GDR supported the rather liberal criteria in choosing which films to import.

GDR audiences readily took to Western stars. A 1954 *Neues Leben* poll reveals that Gérard Philipe and Maria Schell were the two most popular actors for East German audiences, with 1008 and 859 votes respectively. Both were by far outdoing the top DEFA actors Günther Simon (131 votes) and Karla Runkehl (124).<sup>77</sup> The case of Gérard Philipe is particularly interesting, because in France he had signified the move from theatre to film, thus bringing to film a sense of cultural legitimacy. In this respect, he was a different kind of star who was not directly related to commercial cinema, which enabled an official acceptance of Philipe in the East German context.<sup>78</sup> Such was his popularity and credibility in the GDR that a

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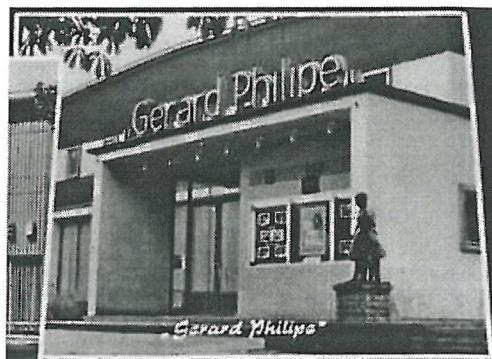
<sup>75</sup> Far fewer DEFA films were distributed in West Germany, as governmental restrictions had to be passed, and distributors were uncertain about their success on the private cinema market.

<sup>76</sup> cf. Wolfgang Gersch "Die Verdoppelung der Ferne. Notizen von der anderen Seite", in *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Westdeutscher Nachkriegsfilm 1946-1962*, ed. by Hilmar Hoffmann and Walter Schobert at Deutsches Filmmuseum Frankfurt am Main, Frankfurt/Main: Deutsches Filmmuseum, 1989, pp. 102f.

<sup>77</sup> cf. *Neues Leben*, 2, 1955.

<sup>78</sup> cf. Ginette Vincendeau (2000), p. 6.

cinema in East Berlin was named after him (see photo below).<sup>79</sup> This is significant, as to my knowledge, no cinema was named in honour of one of DEFA's own stars.



Gérard Philipe cinema in East Berlin (Treptow) during the 1960s

The popularity of other international stars such as French Michèle Morgan, Brigitte Bardot, and Marina Vlady, Italian Marcello Mastroianni and Gina Lollobrigida, or West German Walter Giller and Sonja Ziemann in imported films also had an impact on audiences and filmmakers, and it informed the manner in which indigenous actors were perceived. The appeal of Western stars for East German audiences resided in various elements. On a political level, the imported films' popular subject matter hit a nerve with audiences that lived in an otherwise highly politicised context in which slogans, rallies and public meetings promoting the socialist society prevailed. In this respect, Western films provided an escape from the state's expectation for constant engagement with the socialist cause. Meanwhile, on a social level, films imported from Western Europe and the United States offered the attraction of the forbidden, as in the GDR's official statements on demarcation and identity construction the capitalist world served as the negative counter-image. Among East Germans there was a never-ending curiosity about what the world of the 'enemy' was like, but also a desire not to be left out of international fashions and trends. Moreover, Western films had the reputation of being more glamorous, more adventurous, more professional – which to a certain extent was true – so that even the reputation itself offered an escapism from the material shortages of the GDR economy. However, watching a Western film and admiring its stars offered not only escapism from East German everyday reality, it also had an – admittedly very subtle – subversive potential as it served as a means of expressing dissatisfaction with the state's politics.

<sup>79</sup> Gérard Philipe cinema at Karl-Kunger-Straße. My thanks goes to Alexander Praefke who owns this postcard with Berlin cinemas in his collection of theatre venues.

DEFA cinema at that time had a rather international outlook, evidenced in its co-productions beyond national boundaries. Casting West German actors was still a common practice, although admittedly their numbers were small, as many of them faced obstacles upon returning to Adenauer Germany and its strictly anti-socialist policies.<sup>80</sup> Quite naturally Berlin – as the German metropolis with the highest population, and a place where two different social systems existed directly side by side – was the centre of this personnel transfer. Among those performing in East German productions were above all very young actors who sought to establish their repertoire and reputation: Sonja Ziemann, Lutz Moik, Götz George, Ruth-Maria Kubitschek, and also those already established such as Reinhard Kolldehoff, Rudolf Wessely, and Leny Marenbach, as well as Germany's first silent film star Henny Porten.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, failed contacts include Weimar and Third Reich star Olga Tschechova, who approached DEFA (no project materialised though); and Brigitte Horney who was asked by director Wolfgang Staudte to film for DEFA (she refused to work in the GDR). On the other hand, some highly prominent Third Reich stars such as Heinz Rühmann and Ilse Werner were never considered by DEFA out of principle.<sup>82</sup> Even where cooperation occurred, the relationship between East and West German actors were not always particularly friendly, as Western actors, in particular their privileges (free access to West Berlin, luxury products and part of their wages in hard currency) met with resentment among East German actors.<sup>83</sup>

On the whole, as some of above cases indicate, casting West German actors occurred primarily on the individual initiative of DEFA filmmakers, who either refused to accept the emerging cultural separation of the two countries or who had specific actors in mind for their projects. DEFA's casting manager Erwin Reiche, for

<sup>80</sup> cf. Ralf Schenk: "Mitten im Kalten Krieg 1950 bis 1960", in Filmmuseum Postdam and Ralf Schenk (1994), p. 87.

<sup>81</sup> Sonja Ziemann in *Die lustigen Weiber von Winsor* (The Marry Wives of Windsor, 1950), Lutz Moik in *1-2-3 Corona* (1948) and *Das kalte Herz* (The Cold Heart, 1950), Götz George in *Alter Kahn und junge Liebe* (Old Barge and Young Love, 1957), Ruth-Maria Kubitschek in *Senta auf Abwegen* (Senta Lead Astray, 1959) and *Der schweigende Stern* (First Spaceship to Venus/Spaceship Venus does not Reply, 1960), Reinhard Kolldehoff in *Bürgermeister Anna* (Mayor Anna, 1950) and *Die letzte Heuer* (The Last Job, 1951), Rudolf Wessely in *Letztes Fach unten rechts* (Last Drawer, Bottom Right, 1955), Leny Marenbach in *Geheimakten Solvay* (Top Secret Files Solvay, 1953), *Wer seine Frau lieb hat ...* (Who Loves His Wife ..., 1955), Henny Porten in *Carola Lamberti – eine vom Zirkus* (Carola Lamberti – Always With the Circus, 1954) and *Das Fäulein von Scuderi* (Mademoiselle de Scuderi, 1955).

<sup>82</sup> cf. Ralf Schenk (1994), p. 100.

<sup>83</sup> cf. letter from Reiche to Besetzungsbüro 10 March 1956; it states that West-Berlin actress Maly Delschaft repeatedly complained about the small wages, which created tension among other actors. Her role in *Schlösser und Katen* was re-cast, cf. file *Schlösser und Katen*, Bundesarchiv, DR 117/3184/8/65.

instance, tried to secure the transfer of staff and co-productions and in a meeting with Werner Fuetterer, the West German deputy director of the Association of German Film Actors in October 1953 both agreed that,

[they shared] the urgent wish to ignore the separation of German actors in East and West [...] it should be the most normal thing that German actors would want to work and be allowed to work in both [states] [...] to actively promote the *Einheit* [unity] of German film acting.<sup>84</sup>

In 1953, the West German producer Artur Brauner of CCC film was approached by DEFA. Brauner was very keen and negotiated thirteen projects ranging from literary adaptations to nuclear war films. DEFA was supposed to provide studios, costumes and film material, CCC in turn promised scripts, actors and directors. However, the pressure of the West German government to withdraw additional funding and the resistance of the East German government to approve of such joint-ventures prevented the realisation of any of these projects. The only German-German co-productions that were realised in the 1950s were *Leuchtfeuer* (Light House Signal, 1954), *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* (Mademoiselle de Scuderi, 1955), *Spielbank-Affäre* (Casino-Affair, 1957), and the unfinished *Die Schönste* (The Most Beautiful, 1957), all of which were produced under the cover of the Swedish *Pandora* studio.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the political difficulties of co-productions with the West, DEFA consciously set out to internationalise the studio's reputation, as it sought to involve international personnel and set up co-productions with other European studios, in particular French and Italian ones.<sup>86</sup> The origins of these links still require detailed scholarly attention, and for the time being we may only speculate that émigré links dating back to the Third Reich or even before may account for some of these contacts, or that French actors may have become interested to work in East Germany after Bertolt Brecht toured Paris with his *Berliner Ensemble* in 1954. Some actors had come specifically to work with Brecht, as for example the American-Mexican actress Rosaura Revueltas who had gained her reputation with the US production *Salt of the Earth* (1953).<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the material resources offered by DEFA must have been an incentive filmmakers could not resist. After a number of successful films, however, the GDR cultural authorities put an end to the co-productions. The

<sup>84</sup> Translated from letter Erwin Reiche to Albert Wilkening, 9 October 1953, DEFA-Betriebsarchiv, A 061, excerpt reprinted in Ralf Schenk (1994), p. 87.

<sup>85</sup> cf. Ralf Schenk (1994), pp. 87-90.

<sup>86</sup> A list of DEFA's international co-productions and stars involved is given in appendix IV.

<sup>87</sup> cf. "Abgebrochene und nicht aufgeführte Filme", in *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg, 1946-1992*, ed. by Filmmuseum Potsdam and Ralf Schenk, Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1994, p. 538.

reasons given included that hardly any GDR actors were featured in these films, that the East German authorities could not assert sufficient political and ideological influence on the scripts, and that finally DEFA's contribution was not enough publicised abroad.<sup>88</sup>

Nevertheless, for some time at least, world-famous actors and actresses worked at the Babelsberg studios: Gérard Philipe, who played the lead in, and directed, the co-production *Die Abenteuer des Till Ulenspiegel* (The Adventures of Till Owlglass, 1957)<sup>89</sup>; Simone Signoret and Yves Montand in *Die Hexen von Salem* (The Witches of Salem, 1957); Jean Gabin, and Bernard Blier in the French-Italian-East German co-production *Die Elenden* (Les Misérables, 1959). While being a short-lived practice in the 1950s, these co-productions were to have a lasting effect in matters of film imports. Throughout the 1960s, and again later in the 1980s, French and Italian films persistently led the import lists of Western films ahead of West German or the US American and if Western stars 'decorated' magazine covers, they were mostly French or Italian.<sup>90</sup>

The import of star-studded European productions created a demand for indigenous stars among audiences, as a first press debate "Sind Stars gefragt?" (Are stars in demand?) revealed in September 1955. It is important to realise that this debate was first and foremost a reaction to the international trends I outlined above. In the first popularity poll organised by *Neues Leben* in 1955, no distinction was made between East German, other socialist or Western stars. In this way, and through press photos or reports which showed popular DEFA actors side by side with international stars, domestic stars were presented within an international context. The following article on East German actress Christel Bodenstein reflects the pride the GDR press felt about the acceptance of domestic stars abroad, while at the same time casting suspicions on a phenomenon associated with too much publicity.

[...] at the First Moscow Filmfestival young DEFA actress [Bodenstein already belongs] to those who are surrounded by [masses of] press, radio and photo reporters from all countries. And that certainly means something next to the pulling power of publicity-locomotives such as Giulietta Masina, Nicole Courcel, Marina Vlady and Dawn Adams.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> cf. Ralf Schenk (1994), pp. 93-7.

<sup>89</sup> Although the legend is generally known as that of Till Eulenspiegel, the film uses the dialectical variant Ulenspiegel.

<sup>90</sup> This applies for my own research on the GDR film magazine *Filmspiegel*.

<sup>91</sup> Translated from "Christel Bodenstein", *Filmspiegel*, 23, 1959.

The visual appearance of popular DEFA actors in the 1950s occasionally, and sometimes strikingly, resembled European stars. The young Rolf Ludwig, for example, looks similar to Gérard Philipe, and Christel Bodenstein can radiate a sensuality similar to that of Brigitte Bardot.



DEFA actor Rolf Ludwig in *Drei Mädchen im Endspiel* (Three Girls in the Finale, 1956)<sup>92</sup>



French star Gérard Philipe in *Die Abenteuer des Till Ulenspiegel* (1957)<sup>93</sup>



DEFA actress Christel Bodenstein in *Beschreibung eines Sommers* (Description of a Summer, 1963)



French star Brigitte Bardot in *Et Dieu... crée la femme* (And God Created Woman, 1956)

The star debate and the first popularity poll of 1955 both point toward the changes that would bring East German stardom to the fore in the next decade. Whereas the mid 1950s poll is composed mostly of stars in their forties and fifties – at DEFA represented by actors such as Günther Simon (though born in 1925 he was made to look older for the Thälmann role), Willi A. Kleinau (\*1907) and Wilhelm Koch-Hooge (\*1916) – toward the late 1950s this would change and a younger generation would take over the top ranks. Unlike the former, who appeared mostly in films with historical subjects, the younger actors starred in films whose themes were related to contemporary topics. It was the decade which would strengthen the genre of the *Gegenwartsfilm* (contemporary drama), with stories in the specific context of the

<sup>92</sup> photographer Wenzel.

<sup>93</sup> photographer Waltraud Pathenheimer

GDR, often focusing on social relations at work, but interspersed with elements of other genres, such as comedy, romance, adventure or musical.

In the 1950s, contemporary drama largely focused on the ongoing *Aufbau* (construction) of the GDR, and on promoting the advantages of living in East rather than West Germany. Unlike historical accounts of the working class, many of the *Aufbau* films presented a woman as the central character.<sup>94</sup> These female protagonists took up the type introduced by Hildegard Knef in *Die Mörder sind unter uns* – strong, energetic, consciously and calmly organising life. An important element of these figures was the aspect of learning, the acquisition of knowledge that was necessary to achieve the great advantages of the socialist society.<sup>95</sup> The dominance of female heroines was certainly an effect of East German politics which aimed to change the traditional role of women. The new woman was to be like a good comrade: strong, conscious of the collective, in line with the party, working, never unfair and convinced of the great cause.<sup>96</sup> Most important was the integration of women into the work process. For once, because work was the central ideological aspect of defining the socialist personality, but also because the war and the continuing migration of refugees to West Germany led to an acute lack of work force. The young on-screen heroines reflected these developments and at first their direct reflection of official politics and straightforwardly socialist personality appealed to audiences.<sup>97</sup>

By the late 1950s, however, a saturation of these state approved 'ideal' role models set in, grounded in the simple fact that reality still behaved differently than the ideal promised by the state. With the suppression of the uprising of GDR workers in June 1953, and the violent suppression of the Hungarian uprising in autumn 1956, socialist society had proved to be much more oppressive than it had previously proclaimed itself to be. Neither the promise of democratic liberties nor that of material well-being could be fulfilled, rendering the officially approved role models obsolete. Through the influence of international cinema trends a different kind of

<sup>94</sup> Such as Marianne in *Der Kahn der fröhlichen Leute* (The Barge of the Happy People, 1950), Anna in *Bürgermeister Anna* (Mayor Anna, 1950), Agnes in *Roman einer jungen Ehe* (Novel of a Young Marriage, 1952) or the four women in *Frauenschicksale* (Women's Fate, 1952).

<sup>95</sup> cf. Petra Gruner: "Die Neulehrer: Schlüsselsymbol der DDR-Gesellschaft", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* vol. 38, 1999, p. 25.

<sup>96</sup> cf. Hannelore Scholz: *Die DDR-Frau zwischen Mythos und Realität*, Schwerin: Frauen- und Gleichstellungsbeauftragte der Landesregierung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 1997, p. 20.

<sup>97</sup> Typical among such characters are Karla Runkehl as Änne in the Thälmann films and as Annegret in *Schlösser und Katen* (Palaces and Huts, 1957), or Annekathrin Bürger as Uschi in *Eine Berliner Romanze* (A Berlin Romance, 1956).

hero was gaining popularity: the young rebel. This type had come via the film roles of Marlon Brando and James Dean into West German cinema, where an indigenous version was created with the film *Die Halbstarken* (The Hooligans, 1956).

Compared to the associations of the English term 'young rebel', the German term *Halbstarker* carries slightly more pejorative connotations. Although these films were not distributed in the GDR for obvious reasons, East Germans could still see them in West-Berlin cinemas and some DEFA filmmakers took up the discourse on the rebellion of the young GDR generation. These GDR films did not show an aggressive and 'complete' clash between the different generations and though they were not patronising, their narratives served overall to support the GDR. Most openly this discourse of a frustrated and rebelling youth surfaced in the highly popular *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* (Berlin-Schönhauser Corner, 1957), and to a lesser degree in the contraband thriller *Ware für Katalonien* (Goods for Catalonia, 1959), in which Manfred Krug – who was soon to become one of the top GDR stars – appeared as well-behaved and well-combed *Halbstarker*.<sup>98</sup> The reality of East German society was less moderate. The crime rate (especially among the younger generation) rapidly increased from 1957 onward, and youth gangs in leather jackets and *Nietenhosen* (studded jeans) were more frequent than the state was willing to admit.<sup>99</sup> This divergence from socialist ideals nevertheless combined with an affirming attitude toward the goals of socialism, which was to determine role types in the following decade. Actors who had the versatility to oscillate between the poles of rebellion and affirmation were likely to develop into stars.

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<sup>98</sup> Compare the publicity still shot for that film on page 94, Chapter 2.

<sup>99</sup> cf. Andrea Guder: "Jugendkriminalität" im DDR-Kriminalfilm", in *Kriminalität in den DDR-Medien. Arbeitsheft zum Medienpaket 7*, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1998, p. 26f..

## The 1960s: The Rise of Indigenous Film Stars

The 1960s witnessed an increasing divergence between the GDR and West Germany which brought forth a more distinctive national identity and culture. Nonetheless, much of the self-definition continued to be based on the opposition to the Federal Republic.<sup>100</sup> The GDR shifted its focus and began to intensify its cultural contacts (DEFA's co-productions) with other countries of the socialist block, rather than with Western Europe. Much of this shift originated in the one event which was to have a lasting impact on the German-German, but also European history: the building of the Berlin wall which began on 13 August 1961.

It may appear to be a paradox, but most accounts of DEFA's response to the events of August 1961 were positive. Artists felt that now the GDR government was able to concentrate on internal politics they could enjoy a greater degree of autonomy. Klaus Wischnewski, at the time *Dramaturg* (script editor) with DEFA, noted a few years later, "Now that that border has been made secure, at last we can get down to the business of intensifying the critical aspect of our cinema."<sup>101</sup> As an end was put to the stream of émigrés, the GDR's economic but also political situation began to consolidate.<sup>102</sup> In this climate, DEFA filmmakers were able to take a much more critical approach to the shortcomings, problems and conflicts of GDR society. Still, DEFA was actually slightly behind the times, for the relaxation after the XX<sup>th</sup> party meeting of the Soviet Communists with Chrushev's critical speech (1956), had caused noticeable turns in other socialist cinemas. Soviet films like *Ivanovo detstvo* (Ivan's Childhood, Andrej Tarkowski, 1962) or *Letjat zhuravli* (The Cranes are Flying, Katalosow, 1957) left an impression of DEFA's filmmakers. Erika Richter states that DEFA took up a new and wider variety of genres, yet its productions remained somewhat 'harmless' when compared to the Soviet, Hungarian or Polish 'New Wave' of the time.<sup>103</sup> That was also true for the wider variety of conventional genres East German filmmakers began to experiment with, as for instance when tackling a new (or established, depending on ones perspective) genre for the first

<sup>100</sup> cf. Axel Goddbody, Dennis Tate, and Ian Wallace (1995), p. 167.

<sup>101</sup> cf. *Neues Deutschland*, 6 January 1966, translated by Seán Allan (1999), p. 11.

<sup>102</sup> There were, however, still people illegally emigrating the GDR to settle in the Federal Republic. In 1962, 21,365 left, in 1963 42,622, and in 1964 41,866 emigrees, reflecting on the dissatisfaction with the system. Data taken from Matthias Judt: "Deutschland- und Außenpolitik", in Matthias Judt (1998), p. 545.

<sup>103</sup> cf. Erika Richter: "Zwischen Mauerbau und Kahlschlag 1961 bis 1965", in Filmmuseum Potsdam and Ralf Schenk (1994), p. 171.

time: the *Indianerfilm* – DEFA's version of the Western – clearly trying to meet audience requests for more entertaining films.

Under the impact of the newly intensified need for self-definition and distinction from West Germany, but also influence of international cinema trends, the previous anti-star attitude began to change rapidly during the 1960s. The discourse on stardom now was focused on the creation of indigenous stars. In line with the prevalent discourses of Anti-Americanism it moreover appropriated the concept of stardom increasingly through oppositions to Hollywood stardom, which I will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter. At the same time, stars from other socialist countries were increasingly promoted,

[...] some may believe, that it does no longer fit into our social system to publicly declare the popularity of actors [...] And yet, one only needs to mention the examples from the Soviet Union and Czech Republic, where among others Boris Andrejew and Jaroslav Marvan became true national film heroes.<sup>104</sup>

This example from youth magazine *Neues Leben* reflects the general dependency of GDR authorities on Moscow for any kind of decision-making process. Any Soviet cultural trend generally could be used to legitimise the same in the GDR.<sup>105</sup> But in this article, there is also a sense of irony about this dependency.

More decidedly than before, measures were taken at DEFA to boost the emergence of indigenous stars, and the transformation from actors into stars was accompanied by more consistent casting decisions. This change in practice of allowing the same actor to consistently play the leading character inevitably produced a public following. The transformation was owed to personnel changes at the DEFA studios, when in the late 1950s a new generation of filmmakers emerged. Directors Frank Beyer, Ralf Kirsten (both of whom had graduated from the famous Prague film school FAMU), and Konrad Wolf (who had graduated from the Moscow film school), brought along new ideas, and were joined by other directors who had graduated from the GDR's own film academy: the *Hochschule für Film- und Fernsehen* (HFF) at Potsdam-Babelsberg.<sup>106</sup> These young directors were interested in experimenting with new styles and forms, and more importantly in relation to stars,

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<sup>104</sup> cf. *Neues Leben*, 9, 1955, p. 8.

<sup>105</sup> At least until perestrojka set in.

<sup>106</sup> Among them Egon Günther, Herrmann Zschoche, Roland Gräf, or scriptwriters Ulrich Plenzdorf and Helga Schütz.

they were aware of the necessity to have a stable leading cast in order to build up a consistent relationship with the audiences.<sup>107</sup>

Simultaneously with the new filmmakers a wave of young actresses and actors arrived, who also had just graduated from HFF and other drama schools throughout East Germany. Both groups belonged to the generation born in the 1930s. When they came together, they established a climate full of "the self-assurance of the young ones and the self-confidence of a straightforward political and philosophical attitude and a creativity which demanded its space".<sup>108</sup> In addition, the ideas of the young directors and the performance of their young cast obviously met with the expectations of a predominantly young audience.<sup>109</sup> One of the actors who were part of this second generation of DEFA filmmakers and who embodies the transitions in DEFA stardom in the early 1960s was Armin Mueller-Stahl.

### Case Study: Armin Mueller-Stahl<sup>110</sup>

Mueller-Stahl began his career in East Germany in the 1950s, and many of his roles – in particular those with anti-fascist topics – at first appear to contribute to the official self-construction of the GDR as it was imposed by state and party authorities. At second glance, however, his performance style and the range of his roles allowed audiences the possibility of unofficial readings.

Before Mueller-Stahl came to acting, he had studied violin and musicology for almost five years. A first enrolment at the Berlin-Schöneweide drama school was unsuccessful, at the end of the first year he was asked to leave due to his "insufficient

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<sup>107</sup> Stated in unpublished interview with DEFA director Frank Beyer, made by Claudia H.L. Fellmer in November 1999.

<sup>108</sup> Translated from Erika Richter (1994), p. 159.

<sup>109</sup> Young people in the teens and twens were the primary audience. Although statistical data about the audience composition (70% were 14-25 years old, 16% 26-35 years, 8% 36-45 years and 5% older than 45) was first gathered in 1980, we can assume that the distribution was similar in the 1960s. Data taken from Elizabeth Prommer: *Kinobesuch im Lebenslauf: eine historische und medienbiographische Studie*, Konstanz: UVK Medien, 1999, p. 141.

<sup>110</sup> Armin Mueller-Stahl stands out from all other DEFA stars because his star status in the GDR was only the beginning of an acting career that has spanned three production contexts (East German, West Germany, and Hollywood), which are different in political, economic and cultural terms. In the wake of the Biermann events Mueller-Stahl expressed his criticism of the GDR regime more openly and after insurmountable contradictions with the cultural authorities decided to emigrate to West Germany in 1980. There he continued his career in television and cinema, working with renowned auteurs of the New German Cinema such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge and Volker Schlöndorff. Since 1986, Mueller-Stahl's career has taken him from Europe to Hollywood and beyond. Even though he performed in a few leading roles, his major function is to act alongside established Hollywood stars.

talent". Against the odds Mueller-Stahl was able to take up an acting career, when in 1952 Fritz Wisten, artistic and managing director at the "Theater am Schiffbauerdamm" recognised his talent and asked him to join the company.<sup>111</sup> In 1954, when the reconstruction of the *Berliner Volksbühne* was finished, Wisten and his ensemble moved into the building. This stage remained Mueller-Stahl's primary engagement throughout his East German career.<sup>112</sup>

His first screen appearance at the age of 26 was in *Heimliche Ehen* (Secret Marriages, 1956), a comedy about architects who had to be convinced that designing a socialist pig farm is just as valuable as designing a block of flats for the city. By that time he had already performed in classical plays such as Gerhart Hauptmann's *Die Weber*, William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and various contemporary plays at the *Berliner Volksbühne*. However, he only received wider attention when he became part of the emerging national star system of the 1960s. His breakthrough came in 1960 with Frank Beyer's *Fünf Patronenhülsen* (Five Cartridges) and the television production *Flucht aus der Hölle* (Escape from Hell, 1960) both of which were films within the adventure genre. After 1960, Mueller-Stahl appeared more frequently on screen, increasing his visibility to at least one cinema and one television film per year. He became soon very popular because most of his early 1960s films were using generic elements of the adventure film (action, suspense, exotic locations) which proved to be attractive for the audiences. These narrative elements were in all likelihood helped by his physical features and mannerisms: blue eyes, an inscrutable gaze, sensual lips, and the low pitch and timbre of his voice.

Interestingly, three of these 'adventure' style films have a plot that is set against the background of the anti-fascist resistance: *Fünf Patronenhülsen*, *Königskinder* (Star-Crossed Lovers, 1962), and *Nackt unter Wölfen* (Naked Among Wolves, 1963). Anti-fascist resistance was a key theme in East Germany, since it served as a primary source for its self-definition and, as in many other European countries, was the 'basis of post-war claims to political and moral legitimacy'.<sup>113</sup> The topic was particularly suitable to generate a distinction from West Germany, which was seen not to have broken with the Nazi past. As Cora Stephan puts it,

<sup>111</sup> Fritz Wisten (né Moritz Weinstein) had been a prominent director during the Weimar period and head of the theatre group of the *Jüdischer Kulturbund* [Jewish Cultural League]; in 1945 he had directed *Nathan the Wise*, the first German theatre performance after the war.

<sup>112</sup> cf. Renate Seydel: *Schauspieler in Theater, Film, Fernsehen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition, Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1974, entry "Armin Mueller-Stahl, pp. 201-03.

<sup>113</sup> Sarah Farmer (1995), p. 98.

The state ideology of antifascist resistance [...] exonerated East Germans from guilt [for] Nazi crimes since, according to the [anti-fascist] myth, their country was free of malefactors, the high-level Nazis having fled west at the end of the war. Since the roots of fascism had been eradicated in the GDR, where antifascists had won out and established a state committed to peace, there was nothing to apologize for. This sense of distance from the Nazi perpetrators and of moral superiority [over] the Federal Republic permitted some in the post-war generation of East Germans to develop a sense of national pride rare among their West German counterparts.<sup>114</sup>

The positive depiction of the East German past was based on foregrounding political persecution and *active* resistance, even though there had actually been far less active resistance among Germans than the East German narratives suggested.<sup>115</sup> To an extent, Mueller-Stahl's depictions of adventurous anti-fascist resistance fighters contributed to the official myth of active resistance, and they offered audiences an embodiment of the ideals and myths of a socialist German society. Assigned the traits of a popular action hero (an individualist fighter, who is courageous, fast-thinking and successful), Mueller-Stahl's persona provided a successful synthesis between an anti-fascist role model and a screen type based on established generic conventions. Through historical references to the anti-fascist past he provided a timely confirmation of the GDR's post-1961 identity struggle. Moreover, he was a highly suitable representative of the young generation, as all of his anti-fascist heroes represented minor players in the course of history. What Mueller-Stahl achieved was to advertise the East German social system as attractive, establishing the promise of 'achievability' through individual traits in his screen characters.<sup>116</sup>

Yet at the same time, the heroes he portrayed retained some ambiguity. They had flaws: his Krämer in *Nackt unter Wölfen* is about to betray the anti-fascist resistance of the concentration camp when he is threatened by the guards. Krämer is also shown as heartless because at first he does not agree to hide the child, and in *Königskinder* his Michael at first is not clever enough to escape the Nazis. His heroes do not always selflessly throw themselves into fighting for the 'cause'. Mueller-Stahl's own term for these figures is "broken heroes"; and his performance *Fünf Patronenhülsen* is a paradigmatic example.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Cora Stephan: "Die DDR, das 'bessere Deutschland'. Ein historisches Gutachten", *Kursbuch 3*, February 1993, pp. 99-110; translation quoted from: Sarah Farmer (1995), pp. 102-4.

<sup>115</sup> cf. Herfried Münkler (1998), p. 21 and Peter Monteath, (1999), p. 102.

<sup>116</sup> cf. Harry Blunk: *Die DDR in ihren Spielfilmen*, Munich: Profil, 1984, p. 124.

<sup>117</sup> Translated from Armin Mueller-Stahl: "Aus den Gesprächen der Herausgeber mit Armin Mueller-Stahl", in *Filmland DDR. Ein Reader zur Geschichte, Funktion und Wirkung der DEFA*, ed. by Harry Blunk und Dirk Jungnickel, Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1990, pp. 59-70, p. 65.

Set during the Spanish Civil War, the film centres on five men fighting for the International Brigades. The more physical stress the five experience, the closer the camera gets. These close-ups function on several layers: the 'close' depiction of suffering creates a high potential for empathy among the audiences. Empathy merges with identification, as the 'close' depiction of perseverance provides potentially effective role models. Simultaneously, the close-ups 'introduce' the faces of five aspiring actors to their audiences, establishing their potential role model function for future films.



Armin Mueller-Stahl in *Fünf Patronenhülsen*

In the figure of Pierre, played by Mueller-Stahl, the conventional, purely positive representation of an anti-fascist is 'broken' and rendered imperfect by the character's weakness. Overcome by thirst, Pierre carelessly, and against the warnings of his comrades, approaches a well and is shot dead. This outcome is anticipated in shot (Pierre alone)/reverse shots (the other four men) which indicate the separation of Pierre from the group. The figure of Pierre thus functions on two different levels for the spectator. First, Pierre as anti-fascist provides identification with a normative figure. Secondly, he offers identification through 'sameness', as the 'ordinary' audiences are invited to identify with the imperfection and true-to-liveness of the ideal.

His role as Pierre made Mueller-Stahl popular as a star. Not only did he come third in the popularity polls in 1962, but also the year after the release of *Fünf Patronenhülsen* a high proportion of East German babies – more than double as many as the year before – were called Armin and Pierre. The same happened again in 1973, after the first episodes of the highly popular *Das unsichtbare Visier* (The

Invisible Visor, 1972-76) were broadcast on GDR television.<sup>118</sup> At the time there was no other actor or sportsman of the same name, so that the higher occurrence of the names of Armin and Pierre can be seen as a direct indicator of Mueller-Stahl's popularity.<sup>119</sup>

table 1: popularity of the name 'Armin' in the GDR

	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	
Armin	3163	1365	1665	2123	1173	1530	1545	3054	
Pierre	0	1819	3331	6370	1466	6121	3089	2036	
	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Armin	6527	6085	6030	2022	2079	1787	1945	5856	0

one in x new-borns was called Armin (Pierre),  
i.e. the smaller the number the more boys carried this name

In the late 1960s, Mueller-Stahl's characters became increasingly more ambiguous. This was partly due to typecasting him more frequently as characters with a bourgeois background, such as the crime psychologist Dr. Achim Engelhardt in the comedy *Ein Lord am Alexanderplatz* (A Lord at Alexanderplatz, 1967) or Jürgen Leßtorff in the television serial *Wege übers Land* (Paths Across the Land, 1968), a man who keeps his distance to the lower social class whenever it suits him. Particular figures such as Leßtorff or the blind man in *Der Dritte* (The Third, 1972), are causing pain and disruption to the life of the other characters. Mueller-Stahl's 'negative' characters gain significance because his performance establishes them with likeable traits. His heroes were never fixed at either end of the dichotomies of good and evil. This was underlined by the performance style he developed during his East German career: understated and restrained acting, small gestures and fixed gazes instead of verbal expression. Such gestures were open to different interpretations and ambiguity. Mueller-Stahl's figures embodied diversity, functioning as socialist role models and simultaneously as the very subversion of them.

At first, the ambiguity of his figures worked against granting him a secure star status. In the 1970s, however, his subversive roles encouraged more explicit audience affinity when social disillusionment set in in the mid-1970s. In particular

<sup>118</sup> assembled from Bernd Kleinteich: *Vornamen in der DDR: 1960 – 1990*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992.

<sup>119</sup> The increase in 1964 may have been caused by Mueller-Stahl's leading roles in the two adventure films *Preludio 11* (1964) and *Alaskafüchse* (Alaska Foxes, 1964).

*Das unsichtbare Visier*, in which Mueller-Stahl was conceptualised as an East German secret agent who rescues the world from capitalist evil similar to the way James Bond rescued it from communist evil was highly popular with GDR audiences, which is reflected in his top positions in the popularity polls in 1973 and 1975. Even though *Das unsichtbare Visier* was supposed to promote the GDR Ministry of State Security, an unpopular institution in the GDR, Mueller-Stahl's lieutenant Achim Detjen often disobeyed the orders of his superiors, which allowed audiences to read these narratives as subversive of state authorities. Likewise, Mueller-Stahl's character in the television production *Geschlossene Gesellschaft* (Private Party/Closed Society, 1978), an allegory about the stagnation of GDR society, on the one hand represented the scepticism that dominated the relationship between most East Germans and their state system at the time, but on the other also showed the comfort that can be gained from opportunism.

The ambiguity that defined his on-screen image was also apparent in his off-screen persona. The cultivation of ordinariness proved particularly difficult in his case, as Mueller-Stahl had neither a proletarian background (his family had upper-bourgeois and aristocratic origins), nor had he learnt a manual labour profession. His aristocratic background was mentioned in the GDR press for the first time in 1973.<sup>120</sup> But even here this information is downplayed and the article describes the desperate attempts of Mueller-Stahl's father, who was a simple bank accountant, to be recognised by his aristocratic relatives. In order to integrate Mueller-Stahl within the principles of socialist society, press reports focus on his modesty, honesty, and they frequently mention his refusal to join the German army during the last days of the war.<sup>121</sup> A 1964 article of a regional daily newspaper reports on his conversation with workers of the VEB Großmaschinenbau 7. Oktober in Berlin-Weißensee, thus providing the close relationship to the working class that was otherwise difficult to construct.<sup>122</sup> Generally, information about his private life was more scarce than with other DEFA stars, so that for audiences he always remained somewhat mysterious. This contributed further to the aura of ambiguity generated by his screen roles.

Nonetheless Mueller-Stahl remains an embodiment of the central issues during the rise of East German stardom. On the one hand, he brought with him the cultural legitimacy from theatre, and he was a young and adventurous representation

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<sup>120</sup> cf. Ottilie Krug: "... und geigt noch immer", *Filmspiegel*, 2, 1973.

<sup>121</sup> cf. "Geschichten aus ...", *Filmspiegel* 20, 1962; "Man spricht über Armin Müller-Stahl [sic]", *Tribüne B*, Berlin, 08 September 1962.

<sup>122</sup> cf. "Vor der Kamera: Armin Mueller-Stahl", *Mitteldeutsche Neueste Nachrichten*, 24 May 1964.

of nation-building myths of anti-fascism. On the other hand, his on-screen images were often subtly ambiguous, tending to subvert officially proclaimed, clean-cut ideals of the socialist hero, which made them more authentic and accessible to the East German audiences.

### From the 1960s to the 1970s: Consolidation of the Star System

Next to cinema, television was a medium that supported the emergence of stars because it provided another base for frequent appearances.<sup>123</sup> Actors benefited from the close links between theatre and cinema which had always existed in Germany, which expanded into television after regular broadcasts in the GDR started in December 1951. For some actors television helped to boost their popularity on the cinema screen. Rather unusual perhaps, during the early years of DFF (Deutscher Fernsehfunk – East German television broadcaster) some television productions were slightly altered and released at the cinema, such as *Flucht aus der Hölle* (Escape from Hell, 1962) featuring Mueller-Stahl. Such unusual transfers from television to cinema screen were necessary due to the shortage of television sets at the time. Needless to say that in the long run, East German cinema was not spared globally changing patterns of spending leisure time, where increased numbers of home television sets contributed to the decline of cinema audiences. These figures are provided in the appendix II. However, due to the high visibility provided through performances on television and cinema screen, many DEFA stars continued to benefit from the wide exposure. Popularity polls reveal that some owed a top position to a television production, among them Jürgen Frohriep in *Ohne Kampf kein Sieg* (No Victory Without Battle, 1966) or Manfred Krug in *Wege übers Land* (Paths Across the Land, 1968).<sup>124</sup>

From the mid-1960s onwards, DEFA directors began to cast a number of Eastern European actors and stars. This particular form of socialist internationalism was partly caused by the new generation of film directors who had started at DEFA in the late 1950s, in particular those who had either studied at the Prague and Moscow film schools. The focus of their education and personal experience extended

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<sup>123</sup> DFF's first broadcasting experiments started 21 December 1952, parallel to the beginnings of permanent broadcasting in West Germany. The official programme started 3 January 1956, for this year 70,000 television sets were registered. cf. Konrad Dussel: "Unterhaltung im Sozialismus. Hörfunkprogramme in der DDR der fünfziger Jahre", in *Deutschland Archiv*, 31:3, 1998, p. 405.

<sup>124</sup> For further examples refer to Appendix I.

beyond the GDR so that unlike the older generations, they were more willing to shift the focus of their interest eastward. At the same time, the involvement of other socialist stars must be seen as an attempt to compensate for restrictions which resulted from the enforced Western border of the GDR since 1961. When articles reported about the acknowledgement of GDR stars abroad, the illusion of an open and un-restricted world was maintained.

Another dilemma faced by GDR filmmakers was the small number of suitable indigenous actors, most of whom had triple engagements at theatre, television and DEFA. Eastern European talents were called in to fill the gap. This was for instance the case with Polish Krystyna Stypulkowska in the female lead of *Spur der Steine* (*Trace of Stones*, 1966), because the originally cast GDR actress Jutta Hoffmann – who in the end dubbed the voice – was busy shooting *Karla* (*Carla*, 1965).<sup>125</sup> If the 'imported' talent could not speak German, they performed in their native language and the voices were later dubbed by other DEFA actors. In other films, a foreign actor's accent could be used to enhance the notion of exoticism, as happened with Anna Prucnal in *Reise ins Ehebett* (*Journey into the Wedding Bed*, 1966), where her Polish accent contributed significantly to her assigned character.

Exchange of actors occurred primarily with neighbouring countries of Poland and Czechoslovakia, and also the Soviet Union. Further examples for Eastern European actors appearing in DEFA films include Larissa Lushina, who due to her popularity with East German audiences in the Soviet *Na Semi Vetrakh* (*Seven Winds*, 1962) was cast in the GDR television productions *Dr. Schliuter* (1965/66) and *Begegnungen* (*Encounters*, 1967).<sup>126</sup> The involvement of Polish actors in DEFA productions is particularly significant. For example Leon Niemczyk, Anna Prucnal and Barbara Brylska were cast more than once in East German productions.<sup>127</sup> By contrast, DEFA stars went abroad less often, Wilhelm Koch-Hooge and Jürgen Frohriep being the major exceptions. Unlike the imported actors from Poland, the

<sup>125</sup> cf. Frank Beyer: *Wenn der Wind sich dreht. Meine Filme, mein Leben*, Munich: Econ, 2001, p. 129.

<sup>126</sup> cf. *Neues Leben*, 5, 1964.

<sup>127</sup> Niemczyk, renown from Roman Polanski's *Nós w Wodzie* (*Knife in the Water*, 1962), was cast in *Die gefrorenen Blitze* (*Frozen Flashes*, 1967), *Verdacht auf einen Toten* (*Suspecting a Dead Man*, 1969) or *Zeit zu leben* (*Time to Live*, 1969) and continued to appear on East German television and cinema screens throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Anna Prucnal who had started her career in Polish films as a teenager played the leading role in the opera adaptation *Der fliegende Holländer* (*The Flying Dutchman*, 1964), the musical *Reise ins Ehebett* (*Journey into the Wedding Bed*, 1966), and the highly popular television serial *Wege übers Land* (*Paths Across the Land*, 1968). Barbara Brylska had received wide attention within Eastern Europe with the Polish historical drama *Faraon* (*Pharaoh*, 1966), and was cast in *Mord am Montag* (*Murder on Monday*, 1968) and *Spur des Falken* (*Trace of the Falcon*, 1968).

Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia who took on a diverse range of roles at DEFA, their East German counterparts were primarily cast in Eastern European productions as stereotypical Germans (often soldiers) in films dealing with the Second World War. Within these parameters, Koch-Hooge was cast in the Czechoslovakian *Zbabelec* (The Coward, 1961), and the Yugoslavian films *Most* (The Bridge, 1969), *Valter brani Sarajevo* (Walter defends Sarajevo, 1972) and the Czechoslovakian-Yugoslavian co-production *Sarajevsky atentat* (Assassination in Sarajevo, 1975).<sup>128</sup> Frohriep appeared as a German soldier in the Soviet drama *Shchit i Mech* (Shield and Sword, 1968) and as German Emperor Wilhelm 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Czechoslovakian co-production *Evropa tancila valcik* (Europe Danced the Waltz, 1989).

One highly pertinent element that contributed to the awareness of stars in the 1960s was the emergence of popularity polls in the press, which appeared regularly from 1960 onwards, and which I will refer to in greater detail later.<sup>129</sup> Such means of publicity, which had not existed to this extent before the 1960s, clearly established a highly supportive context in which a league of DEFA stars rapidly began to take shape. The actresses comprising the star league were Christel Bodenstein, Angelica Domröse, Annekathrin Bürger, Christine Laszar, Doris Abesser, Marita Böhme, Jutta Hoffmann, Angelika Waller and Renate Blume, and amongst the actors were Günther Simon, Ulrich Thein, Jürgen Frohriep, Manfred Krug, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Erwin Geschonneck and Gojko Mitic.

While the press contributed to the discourse on stardom and created off-screen visibility for stars among audiences, the biggest share in generating popularity came from the DEFA productions themselves. Due to more liberal cultural policies, the early 1960s saw a move toward more engaging, socio-critical, self-ironic works of art, which often embarked upon controversial subject matter. Literature and film left the ordained track of the positive hero of socialist Realism, they denied a celebration of labour, they presented the problems of East German everyday reality and the 'real' conflicts in the construction of socialism.<sup>130</sup> Their heroes and heroines had moral 'insufficiencies', (e.g. committing adultery), and expressed their scepticism about the SED party and the government's economic planning system, they rebelled

<sup>128</sup> In *Sarajevsky atentat* Koch-Hooge appeared side by side international actors such as British Christopher Plummer and Austrian Maximilian Schell.

<sup>129</sup> see Chapter 2, p. 101ff.

<sup>130</sup> The three most important works of literary fiction were Karl Heinz Jakob's *Beschreibung eines Sommers* (Description of a Summer, 1961), Christa Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* (The Divided Heaven, 1963) and Erik Neutsch's *Spur der Steine* (The Trace of Stones, 1964). All of them were adapted for the cinema screen soon after publication.

against the point of stagnation that socialist society was approaching. Actors who portrayed such controversial heroes, and became popular through such roles, were Christel Bodenstein and Manfred Krug in *Revue um Mitternacht* (Revue at Midnight, 1962) and *Beschreibung eines Sommers* (Description of a Summer, 1963), Manfred Krug in *Auf der Sonnenseite* (On the Sunny Side, 1962), Renate Blume and Eberhard Esche in *Der geteilte Himmel* (Divided Heaven, 1964), and Marita Böhme in *Lots Weib* (Lot's Wife, 1965).

A rebellious element, linked to notions of 'illegality and opposition' enhanced the attraction of the actor by boosting and stabilising the audiences' self-esteem toward the decreasingly popular state authorities.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, because the possibility of rebellion was raised, performers were perceived to be more authentic and unaffected by a usually controlling establishment. This established a notion of truth and authenticity around the actor's persona, increasing the appeal among audiences. In this respect, the rebellious heroes and heroines of socio-critical DEFA productions in the early 1960s set an immensely appropriate starting point for star careers in East Germany, because these roles hit a nerve with the contemporaneous mentalities among the populace.

However, by the mid-1960s, party authorities in a disastrous clamp-down returned to repressive cultural policies. The 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED in December 1965, which banned 12 films, was the most serious and most direct blow of censorship that DEFA ever experienced.<sup>132</sup> The cultural authorities, fearing an impact on the loyalty of the wider GDR population, had for some time sceptically watched the liberal and critical tendencies in literature and film art. They felt that the artists were evading their control and accused them of a "cult of doubt on everything that makes our socialist society".<sup>133</sup>

At the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum, film directors, writers, publishers and cultural officials in particular "were disciplined where they were seen to have dwelt on the shortcomings of everyday life in the GDR and expressed doubt as to the Party's ability to lead."<sup>134</sup> The careers of several directors effectively ended with the suppression of their films, the Minister and Deputy Minister for Culture, but also DEFA's director and senior

<sup>131</sup> cf. Erika Richter (1994), p. 185.

<sup>132</sup> The most widely accepted interpretation for the reasons of renewed repression is that the cultural clamp-down of the party "served to divert public attention" from the far-reaching negative implications of the New Economic System which had been introduced in June 1963 to improve the country's productivity, Axel Goodbody, Dennis Tate, and Ian Wallace (1995), p. 174.

<sup>133</sup> Translated from Alexander Abusch, quoted in Manfred Jäger (1994), p. 120.

<sup>134</sup> Axel Goodbody, Dennis Tate, and Ian Wallace (1995), p. 174.

script editor were amongst those relieved of their official duties. Not even established filmmakers like Kurt Maetzig, who had directed the ideologically significant Ernst Thälmann films, were spared from condemnation. The 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum had a lasting impact on the aesthetic and content of GDR cinema as scriptwriters and directors withdrew to the ideologically 'safe' areas of light-weight comedies and historical dramas.

Unlike filmmakers who suffered directly and severely after the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum, actors were affected in a more indirect way. We can only speculate on how the forbidden films could have enhanced the rise of DEFA actors to stardom by the popularity with which they were received upon belated release in 1990. Manfred Krug, who had appeared in the top three ranks of popularity polls the years preceding the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum had three of his films withdrawn. His leading roles in *Spur der Steine* (The Trace of Stones, 1966) and *Wenn du groß bist, lieber Adam* (When You're Older Adam, 1965) and his off-screen narration in *Fräulein Schmetterling* (Miss Butterfly, 1965) had been particularly suitable for him, and might have further established him as the witty, ironic rebel with a good, honest heart. In the case of Jutta Hoffmann, whose career as a leading actress was just about to take off, her rebellious heroines who aim to resist the stagnation of the educational system in *Karla* (Carla, 1965) and *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* (Just Don't Think I'm Crying, 1965) were never seen by contemporary audiences. Other upcoming stars, like Angelica Domröse, Annekathrin Bürger, Christel Bodenstein, Marita Böhme, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Ulrich Thein or Jürgen Frohriep were not involved in any of the banned productions.

Erika Richter claims that the foundations of popular cinema fell apart after the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum, as did a meaningful relationship between artists and audiences. I do not agree with her argument and would suggest that the historical development can be interpreted in a different way. Even though films produced after the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum no longer had characters which showed an open scepticism toward and criticism of GDR society, DEFA's transfer to lightweight entertainment was well received by audiences.<sup>135</sup> In an attempt to avoid further restrictions from the cultural authorities, filmmakers turned to safer ground and concentrated on popular genres, such as comedies, musicals, Westerns, or historical adventures. Films such as these enabled

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<sup>135</sup> After an initial decline, audience figures actually stabilised for the first three years after the Plenum. See Appendix II, audience figures for the years 1966-1968.

DEFA stars to recover swiftly from the potential damage the loss of the banned productions had done and for a short period audience figures stabilised again.<sup>136</sup>

In the early 1970s, the GDR went through a number of changes, all of which contributed to a climate of new openness for artists and intellectuals, but also stimulated a general feeling of content among people. The SED tried to regain more flexibility and scope for action in both economic and cultural strata by easing the tensions that had built up since the mid-1960s. Manfred Jäger points out that "the change [towards more liberal attitudes] remained prescribed from 'above' and was still embedded in the dogma of 'correct' politics, which allegedly only needed an adaptation to the current stage of [socialist] development".<sup>137</sup> The system of control and censorship over the arts was not abolished, but handled more flexibly. The SED also gave up the idea of unified, homogeneous interests in a socialist society. This is important because it had an impact on DEFA's representation of its heroes and heroines, who were continuously getting more individualistic and in such a way reflected more closely the expectations and needs of their audiences.

DEFA's productions revived the genre of the contemporary drama. In the new liberal political climate controversial subject matter could once again be dealt with. Films of the time anticipated and reflected the opposition to an active involvement with socialist ideals; often the new heroines and heroes rejected being educated or the films purveyed a sense of stagnation that even higher education cannot prevent. I am referring here to films which are rated among the most successful in their opening year, all of them starring actresses who had emerged in the early 1960s. Particularly significant were Angelica Domröse as Paula in *Die Legende von Paul & Paula* (The Legend of Paul & Paula, 1973), Jutta Hoffmann as Margit in *Der Dritte* (The Third, 1972) and as Ric in *Die Schlüssel* (The Keys, 1974). Paula and Ric are women of a limited education, but neither of them expresses the need to move on from their manual labour job. Both have a much clearer and honest vision of life than their intellectual partners who keep trying to push them up the academic ladder but cannot explain what would change afterwards. Whereas in many 1950s DEFA films women had represented the rapid social changes and the departure from old roles and conventions, by contrast, women in 1970s films represented role types which ran contrary to proclaimed ideals and which symbolised the stagnation of society.

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<sup>136</sup> Please refer to audience figures given for DEFA films by Wiedemann in Appendix I and general audience figures at GDR cinemas in Appendix II.

<sup>137</sup> Translated from Manfred Jäger (1994), p. 139.

Individualism was given a more prominent place, as heroes and heroines refused to be a small cog in the machine and broke out by trying to achieve something great for themselves. Klaus Wischnewski states, "political and social relevance, the 'direct interference' is no longer of primary importance. Things are more intimate, indirect, more private."<sup>138</sup> Audiences reacted particularly well to the changed focus of the private and individual as they felt that DEFA's contemporary dramas once again got to the core of their current dispositions, perceptions and feelings. Nonetheless, they continued to prefer popular genres, and the top box-office films were those that presented controversial contemporary subject matter very closely within generic conventions. This was the case with the comedy *Der Mann, der nach der Oma kam* (The Man who Came after Grandma, 1972) which established Winfried Glatzeder as a star; and the historical comedy *Till Eulenspiegel* (Till Owlglass, 1975).

The renewed success of DEFA productions had positive repercussions on stardom. The changed evaluation of individualism was not only evident in the on-screen image of stars, but was also reflected in the press, where stars were no longer explicitly and predominantly integrated into the idea of the collective. The new positive context of individualism contributed to a different legitimization of stardom, through references to nonconformist behaviour of both the fictitious characters on-screen and reports about the stars' off-screen life. This was perpetuated through articles which put more attention to details which made the star different from the crowd. All these processes instigated a higher interest for stars among audiences, and the number of people participating in the popularity polls rose rapidly in the early 1970s. Whereas in 1971, a mere 5,049 people voted for Heidemarie Wenzel (and the following ranks had 3,664 and 2,785 votes), in 1974, 12,683 people expressed their admiration for Angelica Domröse (and 11,655 and 10,428 for the second and third rank).<sup>139</sup> Unfortunately, DEFA soon began to suffer from a familiar problem – the output of challenging and potentially popular scripts was insufficient. Already by 1974, the audience figures dropped massively – as the table below for the two top-grossing films each year indicates – and with it dropped the interest in star popularity polls.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Translated from Klaus Wischnewski: "Träumer und gewöhnliche Leute 1966 bis 1979", in Filmmuseum Potsdam and Ralf Schenk (1994), p. 240.

<sup>139</sup> cf. popularity polls in Appendix I.

<sup>140</sup> Data by Dieter Wiedemann, quoted from Elizabeth Prommer (1999), p. 343.

table 2: declining box-office numbers of DEFA films during mid-1970s

		spectators:
1973	<i>Apachen</i>	1,774,000
	<i>Die Legende von Paul und Paula</i>	1,713,000
1974	<i>Ulzana</i>	1,396,000
	<i>Für die Liebe noch zu mager</i> (Too thin for Love)	694,000
1975	<i>Blutsbrüder</i> (Blood Brothers)	1,154,000
	<i>Lotte in Weimar</i>	724,000
1976	<i>Hostess</i>	995,593
	<i>Im Staub der Sterne</i> (In the Dust of Stars)	863,295

DEFA had a serious problem, as it was losing its audiences. DEFA filmmakers ignored their target audience. Over two thirds of cinemagoers were under 25, and so it was hardly surprising that the first domestic production which once again attracted over one million people was the teenager romance *Sieben Sommersprossen* (Seven Freckles, 1978).

### Case Study: Erwin Geschonneck

Erwin Geschonneck makes a perfect case study with regard to the issues of this core phase of DEFA stardom, for in his persona most of the elements pertinent to East German national identity construction combined. As he was someone who originated in the working class, and was moreover a living proof of anti-fascist mythology he could be used as an integrational support of the ideologies sustaining the system.<sup>141</sup> At the same time his persona and his figures often contained a strong potential for subversion of the official line, so that Geschonneck was attractive both for the Party and for the populace at large. The most obvious proof of this may be the vast number of articles which have been written about him, more than one hundred.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>141</sup> He was granted various awards. The following long list will give an idea of how important Geschonneck was to the GDR officials. The *Nationalpreis* (National Award) was given five times to Geschonneck (1954, 1960, 1961, 1968, and 1975). In rank the *Nationalpreis* was only superseded by the *Karl-Marx-Orden* and the *Vaterländischer Verdienstorden* (Order of Merit), the latter was awarded to Geschonneck in Silver in 1965 and in Gold in 1976. Rather strange, but typical for East German film stars, was the number of military awards such as the silver *Verdienstmedaille der NVA* (Order of Merit of National People's Army) in 1969, or the *Theodor Körner Preis* (awarded by the Ministry of State Security for merit in the defence of the GDR) in 1974 and the *Medaille für Waffenbrüderschaft* (Award for Comrade-in-Arms in Warsaw Pact countries) in 1975. In 1993 he was awarded the *Filmband in Gold* (Film ribbon for his life's work) by the Federal government of Germany. GDR awards taken from *Film-Archiv 1: Auszeichnungen in Film und Fernsehen der DDR*, Berlin (GDR): Staatliches Filmarchiv, 1979.

<sup>142</sup> Most of them can be found in the folder 'Personenmappe Erwin Geschonneck' at the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv Berlin.

In 1960, the GDR press described him as a "new kind of star" and almost 30 years later a Hamburg newspaper referred to him in the superlative as "the socialist superstar".<sup>143</sup> Both articles claim for him a stardom which was, at least in the first place, not so much defined through Geschonneck's on-screen images, but rather his off-screen persona. GDR film critic Heinz Hoffmann had argued that Geschonneck's real life experiences made him a star long before the fictional lives of his on-screen heroes would, and concluded that it would be "worth writing a role for this new kind of star".<sup>144</sup> Geschonneck's biography contained all the necessary ingredients to become an 'ideological celebrity' in socialist Germany: he came from a working class background and had joined the Communist Party in 1929. During the war he had been incarcerated in concentration camps at Sachsenhausen, Dachau and Neuengamme for his activities in the Communist resistance. His experience and involvement in times of historical impact had made Geschonneck an embodiment of the ideal socialist personality.

On the other hand, he was the *Querkopf* (the awkward cuss/individualist) who was never asked to take on an official key position, because he was too troublesome.<sup>145</sup> Press coverage as well as his autobiography testified that he was a Communist from the bottom of his heart, who strongly supported the socialist path of East Germany and the other socialist countries. Geschonneck was referred to as a Communist not only in the sense that he was a person who strongly supported the establishment of the future classless society, but even more so because he actually had been a member of the Communist Party during the Weimar Republic and Third Reich.

It is known, however, that so far all countries which have set up a political system based on the Marxist-Leninist model have experienced a wide gap between the political theory and the political practice of state socialism. To keep control of developments, the shaping of collective interest was made subservient to the party's assessment of the prevailing situation. That meant that the SED all too often decided what people were allowed to know and what should be kept from them, in order to reinforce rather than endanger the sense of community and belief in the cause. In this respect certain elements of Geschonneck's biography but also his criticism of GDR

<sup>143</sup> cf. Heinz Hoffmann: "Star neuer Art: Erwin Geschonneck", *Neues Deutschland*, Berlin edition, 07.08.1960; "Vollgesogen mit Schicksal", *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 03.02.1988.

<sup>144</sup> cf. Heinz Hoffmann (1960).

<sup>145</sup> cf. Rosemarie Rehan: "Erwin Geschonneck", in *Vor der Kamera. Fünfzig Schauspieler in Babelsberg*, ed. by Ralf Schenk and Filmmuseum Potsdam, Berlin, Henschelverlag, 1995, pp. 62-7, p. 63.

society were breaching taboos. Geschonneck's occasional deviations from the party line provided a dilemma, as the party had to glorify him publicly, and simultaneously had to prevent the dissemination of 'unacceptable' elements about his persona. As a consequence, parts of the original text were deleted from Geschonneck's autobiography and not all of his statements were published.<sup>146</sup> In relating such 'taboo' elements to the public, they contributed to the emergence of Geschonneck's star status.

Drawing on Jan Assmann, who argues for a distinction in collective memory between communicative and cultural memory, I would suggest that Geschonneck's authentic status as a worker, resistance fighter and professional actor allowed him to contribute to both facets of collective memory.<sup>147</sup> The term collective memory itself was coined by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in order to explain what forms the cohesion of human beings in a group – or on a bigger scale, what imbues a nation with a sense of identity. Halbwachs argued that shared memories are the most significant element to create cohesion. The process itself is 'reflective': memories stabilise the group, but at the same time the group stabilises the memories by keeping them alive.<sup>148</sup> Consequently, the collective memory is bound to a group within the limits of space and time – if the group dissolves, memory will dissolve as well.<sup>149</sup>

Political mythologies are part of collective memory; they create meaning for the community by linking the past with contemporary contexts. The majority of scholars have argued that anti-fascism functioned as one of the most central political myths – the founding myth – in creating a sense of national identity in the GDR. On the one hand, the myth of anti-fascism served the differentiation of the GDR from the past; from the Weimar Republic, but more importantly, from Hitler fascism in the Third Reich. On the other, it served the policy of demarcation from West Germany, which allegedly had not broken with the recent German past. These references helped to legitimise the political power of Communists after the War and later also of

<sup>146</sup> Erwin Geschonneck: *Meine unruhigen Jahre: Lebenserinnerungen*, Berlin: Aufbauverlag, 1997 (4<sup>th</sup> edition of revised 1992 version, originally published Berlin (GDR), Dietz, 1984). The revised edition of *Meine unruhigen Jahre* (1992) includes the previously deleted or partly changed chapters as well as an interview with Geschonneck which was never broadcast on GDR radio.

<sup>147</sup> I take up an approach suggested by Herfried Münkler: "Antifaschismus und antifaschistischer Widerstand als politischer Gründungsmythos der DDR", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 45, 1998, pp. 16-29.

<sup>148</sup> As pointed out by Aleida Assmann, Halbwachs' constructivistic-functional approach does not allow for erratic or dysfunctional memories. cf. Aleida Assmann: *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München: C.H. Beck, 1999, p. 131.

<sup>149</sup> cf. Maurice Halbwachs: *Das kollektive Gedächtnis*, Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1985, p. 72f.

the SED as their successor and ruling party.<sup>150</sup> As Herfried Münkler has pointed out, the descriptions of anti-fascism in public texts created the image of a continuous, broad participation of the German public in anti-fascist resistance, although in fact only small, secluded Communist cells had operated during the first years of National Socialism.<sup>151</sup> Thus the SED officials 'distorted' historical reality, and exploited the anti-fascist past for their own goals, in order to enlarge and stabilise the loyalty of the community by granting identity through anti-fascism as the founding myth.

Münkler suggests that the 'founding myth' of anti-fascism – which he argues to be the most significant one – was accompanied by several additional myths, all of which are part of a whole system of myths of the liberation of suppressed classes, such as the Peasants' Wars and Reformation (1522-25) and the Anti-Napoleonic Wars of Liberation.<sup>152</sup> One of the functions of such additional myths was to provide East Germany with a 'prehistory' of revolutionary workers and peasants that would reach back into the Middle Ages. Contrary to Münkler, Monika Gibas has argued that anti-fascism was not the major *topos* for the self-definition of East Germany. Instead she asserts that the *topos* of the first self-created German state of workers and farmers was far more predominant, as can be seen from the GDR's conception of history (an emphasis on the prehistory of the suppressed classes in the Peasants' War, the 1848 and 1918 Revolutions – defined by Münkler as an additional myth) and the construction of representational symbols (both the flag with hammer and sickle as well as the national anthem foregrounded the working masses).<sup>153</sup> The two myths are by no means mutually exclusive; rather they are interrelated, and the conflict merely lies in prioritising one over the other.

Erwin Geschonneck serves as a reference point for both these myths. His working class background and his membership of the Communist Party, his participation in the anti-fascist resistance movement resulting in his incarceration in concentration camps, combined both myths in one person. Geschonneck's off-screen

<sup>150</sup> cf. Herfried Münkler (1998), p. 20. For other relevant research on the anti-fascist myth see: Wilfried Schubert and Thomas Schmidt: "Sieger der Geschichte". Verordneter Antifaschismus und die Folgen", in *Der antifaschistische Staat entläßt seine Kinder. Jugend und Rechtsradikalismus in Ostdeutschland*, ed. by Karl-Heinz Heinemann and Wilfried Schuberth, Cologne, Paprossa, 1992, pp. 12-28; Manfred Wilke: "Antifaschismus als Legitimation staatlicher Herrschaft in der DDR", in *Bedeutung und Funktion des Antifaschismus*, ed. by Bundesministerium des Innern, Bonn: 1990, pp. 52-64.

<sup>151</sup> cf. Herfried Münkler (1998), p. 17.

<sup>152</sup> ibid.

<sup>153</sup> cf. Monika Gibas: "Die DDR – das sozialistische Vaterland der Werktätigen!" Anmerkungen zur Identitätsgeschichte der SED und ihrem sozialistischen Erbe", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 39-40 1999, p. 30.

persona extended to the on-screen images of contemporary workers who in numerous DEFA and television films illustrated this aspect of East German identity. In DEFA productions he played roles such as a coal miner in *Sonnensucher* (Sun Seekers, 1958), an aviation mechanic in *Leute mit Flügeln* (People With Wings, 1960), a welder in *Karbid und Sauerampfer* (Carbide and Sorrel, 1964), and a foreman in *Bankett für Achilles* (Banquet for Achilles, 1975) to name but a few. Geschonneck's workers often were simultaneously also resistance fighters such as his character in *Nackt unter Wölfen* (Naked Among Wolves, 1963) or the communist coal miner in *Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog* (The Flag of Kriwoi Rog, 1967).

Jan Assmann has developed Halbwachs' idea of the collective memory further by differentiating between two modes of memory: communicative and cultural.<sup>154</sup> Communicative memory covers the recent past, memories that a person shares with his or her contemporaries. Everyone can contribute to communicative memory, which accounts for its informal and potentially contradictory character, but also makes the reports of eyewitnesses highly credible. Cultural memory focuses on fixed points in the past and transforms them into symbolic figures which then provide the frame for memory. It is distributed by particular carriers – authorised representatives of knowledge – such as priests, teachers, artists, scientists, which makes it a more likely subject of political control – and is expressed through speeches, press and literary texts, through monuments, frescoes, wall murals, or posters, slogans and portraits carried at demonstrations.<sup>155</sup> Münkler makes a case for film as the medium with the highest potential to affect because it combines visual with narrative and ritual ways of delivering myths.<sup>156</sup>

Erwin Geschonneck is particularly significant, because he was a carrier of both kinds of memory, communicative and cultural. I would claim that he was the only DEFA film star whose real-life experience as a worker and resistance fighter could be linked with his performance in films to contribute to the anti-fascist mythology. His loyalty was always to the working class; his upbringing in the poor, proletarian district of Berlin Wedding was an invariable feature of biographical descriptions. Later, these roots among the ordinary people would establish his image

<sup>154</sup> This is similar to Michel Foucault's ideas on popular memory, but as his ideas focus more on the destruction of popular memory, rather than the construction of cultural memory, Assmann's concepts prove more fertile in this case. cf. Michel Foucault: "Film and Popular Memory" [interview], *Cahiers du Cinéma*, July-August, 1974, pp. 251-2.

<sup>155</sup> cf. Jan Assmann: *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 1997, pp. 50-52; cf. Herfried Münkler (1998), p. 21.

<sup>156</sup> cf. Herfried Münkler (1998), p. 21.

as a *Volksschauspieler* (people's or vernacular actor), and his contemporary film characters would further support this notion.

Herfried Münkler stressed that the GDR's anti-fascist myth-building relied particularly on the public appearance of those fighters who could report their personal experience of *active* battles and armed resistance.<sup>157</sup> Geschonneck served this myth in two ways: as a Communist (he became a member of the party in 1929) and concentration camp internee his recollections contributed to the communicative memory. In his autobiography he describes his resistance against the fascist regime on various occasions. He mentions how, as soon as the Nazis gained power, he was subject to regular house searches. At the end of 1933, he joined an Agitprop theatre with a group of Jewish actors and emigrated to Poland, Czechoslovakia and finally the Soviet Union. As far as this narrative went, his private memory was in line with the officially 'sanctioned' constructions of history. As an actor his embodiment of symbolic figures such as resistance fighters Krämer in *Nackt unter Wölfen* and Kommissar Wittig in *Fünf Patronenhülsen* (Five Cartridges, 1960), or the working class leader Wilhelm Liebknecht in *Die Unbesiegbaren* (The Invincibles, 1953), contributed to cultural memory. Yet, in order to fit into official constructions of history, parts of Geschonneck's autobiography and interviews were censored, thus restricting communicative memory and making cultural memory more dominant. Geschonneck's statements on Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and those on Communist wardens who selected criminals rather than Communists to be sent to the death camps, contradicted and subverted the official version of history.

An early victim of Stalin's domestic policies, Geschonneck belonged to those immigrants who were expelled from the USSR in 1934. The Stalinist purges in the USSR and the Soviet Occupation Zone had always remained a taboo subject in the GDR, and any mention of these events would not be part of the cultural memory.<sup>158</sup> Reasons for this must be seen in the role model function of the USSR for East Germany, which any admission of the 1930-40s Stalinist purges would have endangered, and consequently knowledge about them and its dissemination were

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<sup>157</sup> Hence, the Spanish Civil War and the alleged self-liberation of the concentration camp Buchenwald were the two major links to active heroic resistance. cf. Herfried Münkler (1998), p. 21.

<sup>158</sup> German victims of Stalinism have only begun to receive public assessment since the collapse of the SED regime and after the German reunification in 1990. Today concentration camps such as Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück, which after the war functioned as concentration camps of the Soviet/socialist regime, are facing the problem of how to organise the commemoration of both periods of repression. cf.. Sarah Farmer: "Symbols That Face Two Ways: Commemorating the Victims of Nazism and Stalinism at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen", *Representations*, 49, 1995, pp. 97-119.

suppressed. Even the revelations and distanciation from Stalin made by Chrushev in his 1956 speech did not stimulate a wide and open criticism of the Stalinist system in East Germany.<sup>159</sup>

In this respect, it comes as a surprise that Geschonneck was allowed to mention his expulsion from the USSR in his autobiography – a fact which had been missing from all former publications about and by him before 1984. One small paragraph at the end of the chapter on his Soviet emigration was used to explain the purges as a personal mistake of Stalin.

The mistakes and injustice which I encountered [like others], were analysed and corrected by the Communist Party of the USSR at the XX<sup>th</sup> party assembly [...] all those decisions [...] which were based on a wrong theory by Stalin. The Soviet Party has since then reinstated the Leninist principles and has rehabilitated those who were unfairly sentenced [to imprisonment].<sup>160</sup>

As the facts were embedded in such careful excuses and justifications, any potential for criticism was cut short and re-assurance about the deep and *lebensnotwendig* (vital) friendship with the people of the Soviet Union became foregrounded. Nevertheless it is important to see that by the mid-eighties Geschonneck had gained so much prominence that this part of his private recollections could become a legitimate part of the cultural memory.<sup>161</sup> Other aspects, however, were not mentioned for they ran counter to the official lines on cultural memory. Two incidents during his time in the concentration camps of Sachsenhausen, Dachau and Neuengamme, where he was imprisoned from 1939 till 1945, are noteworthy in this

<sup>159</sup> cf. Stefan Wolle: *Die heile Welt der Diktatur. Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971-1989*, Bonn, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1999, p. 87f.

<sup>160</sup> Translated from Erwin Geschonneck (1997), p. 75.

<sup>161</sup> It proves problematic to trace the origins of the somewhat relaxed attitude of the early 1980s, as several factors can be considered, none of which directly explains the new 'openness' about Stalinism. As Barton Byg phrases it, the GDR had 'achieved a degree of historical and political legitimacy' – evident in a growing independence from Soviet politics – so that criticism of this kind became possible. (Both Germanys became members of the UNO in 1973, both signed the Helsinki CSCE treaty in 1975, the German-German rapprochement was increasing from the mid-1970s onwards, further stimulated by the huge state loan negotiated by Franz Josef Strauß in 1983). cf. Barton Byg: "Konrad Wolf: From Anti-Fascism to *Gegenartsfilm*", in *Studies in GDR Culture and Society*.

*Selected Papers from the Tenth New Hampshire Symposium on The German Democratic Republic*, ed. by Margy Gerber et. al., New York, University of America Press, 1985, p. 122. The Soviet Union itself went through a period of transition with the demise of Brezhnev and the new General Secretary Andropov after November 1982, which also introduced a period of new openness in Soviet Cinema. For instance Alexej German's *Moi Drug Ivan Lapshin* (*My Friend Ivan Lapshin*, 1983/released 1985) dealt with the sensitive period of the Stalinist collectivisation and purges, although it clearly remained an exception among films of the time. cf. Anna Lawton: "Toward a New Openness in Soviet Cinema, 1976-1987", in *Post New Wave Cinema in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Daniel J. Golding, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana UP, 1989, pp. 26f. and 38.

respect. In his autobiography, Geschonneck relates how one day he lost control and his loud shouting of the otherwise heroic slogan "Down with fascism!" at a line-up actually endangered the life of many comrades in Sachsenhausen.<sup>162</sup> In Dachau, he and his comrades changed the lists of names, so that instead of Communist comrades, criminals would be deported. "In a situation like this, you tend to be selfish" was Geschonneck's retrospective comment.<sup>163</sup> In a radio interview, he described occasional moments of *Schadenfreude* about the weakness of others. These elements did not fit into the official story of a thoughtful, considerate and humane resistance fighter. Thus the could not be broadcast until after the fall of the Berlin Wall.<sup>164</sup> In the GDR, the primary distinction rested in the humanity of the persecuted and the inhumanity of the Nazi persecutors, and Geschonneck's memories introduced an unwanted complexity. Geschonneck insisted on this complexity and argued against the one-sided, purely heroic *Übermenschen*-like depiction of those who were imprisoned. He legitimately argued that the younger generations would not be satisfied with the usual simplifications.<sup>165</sup>

What was Geschonneck's appeal for GDR audiences? I would suggest that it resided in the fact that he was 'authentic' in at least two ways. Not only had he been a *real* resistance fighter, someone who had actually survived the concentration camps, but also the notion of authenticity was increased because his alternative version of resistance was more credible because of certain 'flaws' i.e. discrepancies and deviations from the official line. Something similar applied to his status as an embodiment of work, which he could authenticate through having been a real manual labour worker, but also through the 'flaws' with which he provided his fictional characters. These characters gained 'authenticity' through a discrepancy from the idealist construction of the positive hero of socialist Realism. It was precisely this verisimilitude which defined his appeal to his audiences.

Magazines occasionally dared to make use of Geschonneck's alternative appeal – the press campaign for Kurt Maetzig's anti-fascist film *Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog* was very telling. To attract audiences to come and see what at first sight was a film in the usual dull, official 'genre', the article described an unusual act of

<sup>162</sup> Erwin Geschonneck (1997), p. 92.

<sup>163</sup> ibid., pp. 324, 95 and 92.

<sup>164</sup> The interview was recorded in January 1987 and broadcast in December 1989. It is telling to see how the interviewer Thomas Heise constantly struggled to limit Geschonneck's range of thoughts and statements. cf. 'Widerstand und Anpassung – Überlebensstrategie, Erinnerungen eines Mannes an das Lager Dachau', reprinted in Erwin Geschonneck, *Meine unruhigen Jahre*, 312-27.

<sup>165</sup> cf. Erwin Geschonneck (1997), pp. 326 and 334.

disrespect towards working class tokens, such as the red flag from the Ukrainian town of Kriwoi Rog. It lay wrapped up in a corner while Otto Brosowsky (performed by Erwin Geschonneck) handed out beer to his comrades. The reporter states: "Hello, I wonder. How can this happen in a DEFA-Film? I look around and am more and more surprised."<sup>166</sup> In the interview given at the shooting, which the article briefly quotes, Geschonneck presents an attitude that stands in opposition to official requirements and practices.

In case you want to write the usual, duty, honour, politically important, great and so on, then please leave my name out of this. I do not like to be labelled. We have to stop this [sincere approach] and need more fun and entertainment when depicting the battles of the working class.<sup>167</sup>

The complexity of Geschonneck's persona found reflection in the roles he played. In part this was possible because from the beginning of his film career he resisted being typecast in the role which might have been the obvious choice: the worker and the anti-fascist resistance fighter. In fact, in his first three films he featured as an antagonist of socialist ideals: a crafty bourgeois in *Der Biberpelz* (The Beaver Coat, 1949), the cruel giant who gives gold for a living heart and replaces it with a stone in the fairy tale adaptation *Das kalte Herz* (The Cold Heart, 1950) and the petit-bourgeois butcher who executes four communists for the Nazis in *Das Beil von Wandsbek* (The Axe of Wandsbek, 1951). Although these characters were conceived in thoroughly negative terms, Geschonneck was capable of attaching a notion of tragedy even to these dark figures, a nuance of which some cultural officials did not particularly approve. *Das Beil von Wandsbek*, for example, was forbidden a month after its first release and was not shown again until 1974.<sup>168</sup> In fact, only in four films was he type-cast as a heroic anti-fascist resistance fighter. Among them *Nackt unter Wölfen*, a film about Buchenwald concentration camp, provided the most direct link between Geschonneck's personal experience of concentration camps and the on-screen figure of the camp warden Krämer he portrayed in the film.

From the 1960s onwards Geschonneck more often performed in *Gegenwartsfilme* (films about contemporary society), most of which created a feeling of being at home in the GDR, even while they were criticising the country's shortcomings. The critical potential of the films was enhanced by the characters

<sup>166</sup> Translated from "Otto, Erwin und die ganze Wahrheit", *Neues Leben*, 8, 1967.

<sup>167</sup> Translated from *ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> The film clearly resonated with audiences, within the month it was shown in 1951, 800,000 people had gone to see it. cf. Ralf Schenk (1994), p. 69.

presented by Geschonneck, as these increasingly deviated from and contradicted official expectations. The adaptation of Socialist Realism for works of art in the early 1950s had required a new kind of leading protagonist: the 'positive hero', who, in contrast to those in bourgeois modern art, would not be isolated, paralysed and extinguished by society. Instead the positive hero was to change the world through stimulating social activity and creativity with his scientific knowledge and historical consciousness. The positive hero was to come from a working class background and should strive for a better future together with the collective of the revolutionary workers' movement. He was to feel responsible for society as a whole, to lead others onto the right path, and to continuously broaden his knowledge.<sup>169</sup> In short: the positive hero was the fictional embodiment of an accumulation of virtues. Contemporary debates revealed that even scholars had a problem with such a wealth of positiveness, as the heroes were often criticised for being colourless, even boring, so that their role-model function was not accepted by the masses.<sup>170</sup> Moreover modes of identification were endangered, as no real human being could live up to the standards set by such a figure. Numerous essays and articles in the discourse on East German cultural politics defended the positive hero and tried to cover up the problem of stasis, claiming that the hero achieved inner growth through 'internal and external battles'. The term 'development' was very prominently foregrounded.<sup>171</sup> Although in fact only a few heroes in film and literature embodied the whole canon of positive features, recipients had gained a knowledge of what a positive socialist hero was to be and used it as a template to detect transgressions and deviations.

The majority of Geschonneck's contemporary protagonists diverged from the canon of virtues attached to the positive hero. Some were diametrically opposed to the socialist role model, such as the horse thief in *Alarm im Zirkus* (Alarm in the Circus, 1954) or the reactionary estate bailiff in *Schlösser und Katen* (Palaces and Huts, 1957), or the fisherman who illegally wants to defect the GDR in *SAS 181 antwortet nicht* (SAS 181 Does Not Reply, 1959) all of whom were individuals

<sup>169</sup> cf. Helga Herting: "Zum Heldischen in der sozialistisch-realistischen Literatur", *Weimarer Beiträge, Sonderheft zum 20. Jahrestag der Gründung der DDR*, 1969, in *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED*, ed. by Elimar Schubbe, Stuttgart, Seewald Verlag, 1972, pp. 1563 and 1566-7.

<sup>170</sup> cf. Egon Rentzsch: "Die Entwicklung der Kunst unter den Bedingungen des Sozialismus", *Einheit, Sonderheft*, November 1952, reprinted in Elimar Schubbe (1972), p. 255.

<sup>171</sup> cf. Willi Lewin: "Probleme unserer literarischen Entwicklung", *Einheit*, 2 (1960), reprinted in Elimar Schubbe (1972), p. 608; Willi Lewin: "Auf dem Wege zur hohen künstlerischen und ideologischen Qualität unserer sozialistischen Literatur", *Einheit*, 3, 1961, reprinted in Elimar Schubbe (1972), p. 1565.

sabotaging and endangering the socialist community. But neither did his characters who supported the GDR fit entirely into the frame of the 'positive hero'. His Communist in *Sonnensucher* (Sun Seekers, 1958/72) stands by an old friend who has become a prostitute, and celebrates the end of the working week with heavy drinking bouts replete with vulgar language and bawdy songs. But most significantly, only very reluctantly does his character take over the function of the party secretary. Over the years, Geschonneck's figures were becoming increasingly economical with any facile praise of the GDR, turning into sceptical, often grumpy old loners, who would hide their acceptance of the socialist system beneath criticism and rejection. Achilles in *Bankett für Achilles* (Banquet for Achilles, 1975), who will be dealt with shortly in more detail, is one such example. Geschonneck's divergence from and subversion of the positive hero were welcome among audiences because they humanised an abstract ideal of virtues, which in general appeared unachievable.

Gibas' argument, which established the narrative of the first workers' and peasants' state as the dominant one, can be used to understand why Geschonneck's shift to contemporary figures was part of his success. Recognition of their very own contemporary life may have created a larger appeal than the ubiquitous heroic depictions of working class history. Nevertheless, the same complexity which characterised his villains and anti-fascists gave his contemporary figures a momentum which in a way subverted the officially-tinted view of socialist reality. This is true for the figure of welder Kalle in *Karbid und Sauerampfer* (Carbide and Sorrel, 1963) whose cleverness even tricked the not-so-honest Soviet Army. Thanks to this film, Geschonneck topped polls for popular actors in the year of the film's release.<sup>172</sup>

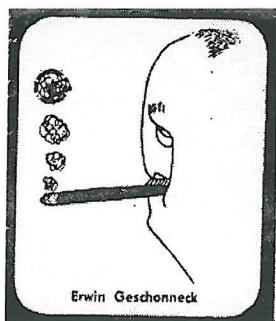
A less well-known film in which Geschonneck plays the part of a worker and anti-hero is Roland Gräf's *Bankett für Achilles*. In the film, the persona of Geschonneck and the figure of the protagonist Achilles seem to merge; most notably on the visual level. The cigar, the bodily movements, and the *Mutterwitz* (native wit) all of which had become familiar key features for Geschonneck's audiences, were used to create Achilles. Rosemarie Rehan, one of the GDR's most popular film critics, aptly titled her review: "Bankett für Geschonneck" (Banquet for Geschonneck), as the film was indeed an *hommage* to the prowess of the actor.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>172</sup> The première of *Karbid und Sauerampfer* was in December 1963, so that the film was screened mostly in 1964. For 1964, Geschonneck ranked third in the actors' popularity poll, see Appendix I.

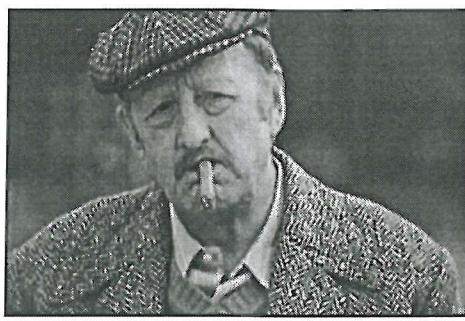
<sup>173</sup> cf. *Wochenpost*, 50, 1975.

The script was written with Geschonneck in mind and Achilles in a way reflects Geschonneck's favourite literary figure: Ole Bienkopp from Erwin Strittmatter's novel of the same title.

The cigar, the bodily movements and the allusion in Rehan's article conflate the off-screen persona Geschonneck with the figure of Achilles. A caricature published in 1967, eight years earlier than the film, and a frame from *Bankett für Achilles* illustrate my claim.<sup>174</sup>



Caricature, *Neues Leben* 9, 1967



still from *Bankett für Achilles*

The film describes the last day before foreman Karl Achilles (performed by Geschonneck) begins his retirement. Achilles has built up the chemical combine at Wolfen-Bitterfeld since 1945 and has always made sure that the machines work properly – he knows the combine inside out. He feels responsible for his work but realises that he falls short of the qualifications which are needed now. Achilles to a certain extend fulfils a socialist ideal, for he defines himself almost entirely through his work and work place. He hardly communicates with his wife, takes his last day at work seriously and the little gardening he does cannot outbalance the screen-time that displays him at the chemical combine.

There are a number of elements in the figure of Achilles which subvert the conventional depiction of working class heroes in socialist realism, and I shall point out a few. First, the figure of Achilles is constructed along the lines of the uneasy, obstinate hero, who rather grumpily and stubbornly defends his claim for useful work and the position he has kept at the combine for the last 30 years. He does not seem to be overtly open-minded, and is instead rather sceptical, but he does appear to have a deep understanding of life. Through his engagement with work and the work sphere, Achilles should be a monument, an *Aktivist der ersten Stunde* (activist of the first hour, i.e. role model of activist movement) – but he rejects the hymns of praise

<sup>174</sup> cf. *Neues Leben*, 9, 1967.

which are recited to bid him farewell. His uneasiness about having to leave indicates the significance productive and meaningful work has assumed in his life, he wants to stay on, he wants to be needed every day. Nevertheless, Achilles also realises that in a way his efforts have failed. The construction of his chemical combine was accompanied by the mutilation of nature. Bitterfeld is shown as a place more or less destroyed by pollution. His name, Achilles, is an allusion to this contradiction – the ancient Achilles was a hero with a flaw, who, because of his mortality, could not become one of the gods. As one of the activists who built the GDR, Karl Achilles should naturally be one of the socialist gods, yet refuses to accept idolisation, because he is aware of the insufficiencies in himself. The film supports these notions in various ways. When the audiences catch their first glimpse of Achilles, he is lying in bed in a pair of pyjamas – and thus does not live up to the glorifying images of workers in blue boiler suits that ubiquitously greeted down from posters and murals. His face looks tired and expresses bitterness and disillusionment.

Achilles' desire for a better, even perfect world is moreover reflected in a reference to Novalis' Romantic novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.<sup>175</sup> Achilles desperately tries to cultivate blue flowers, his bedroom wall is full of paintings of blue flowers, but he never succeeds. A colleague explains to him: "This will never happen here, you can only breed yellow ones." These yellow flowers are a pessimistic concession to the heavy chemical pollution of the soil around Bitterfeld, and seem to suggest that the work ethic and technological progress have failed as they destroy the perfection of nature.

There is a further feature which is rather unusual in the GDR context, a flaw which distances Achilles from the image of the perfect socialist hero, yet actually makes him more authentic as a real-life GDR citizen. The farewell speech given by the BGL (factory trade union) representative recites a long list of Achilles' contributions in the *Aufbau* years (years of post-war reconstruction) and his social activities. Yet a small detail is missing and might almost go unnoticed in the flow of laudatory words all too familiar to people in the GDR. Achilles is not a member of the Socialist Unity Party, which is surprising in the biography of the figure but reflects the actual facts of Party membership in East Germany. With more than 2 million members, roughly 12% of the whole population were members of the SED,

<sup>175</sup> With this Roland Gräf also alludes to the extra-cinematic re-assessment and 'acceptance' of the romantics into the canon of traditional heritage in the GDR which began in the mid to late 1970s. cf. Daniela Berghahn: "Re-Evaluation of Goethe and the Classical Tradition in the Films of Egon Günther and Siegfried Kühn", in Seán Allan and John Sandford (1999), p. 229.

clearly fewer people than one might have expected. Nevertheless membership was a passport not only to social but also to economic advancement: parents' party membership helped their children to get enrolled at universities for desirable subjects, and higher official positions could hardly be gained without joining the SED, which explains why membership among the cohort between 31-42 years was particularly high at 42.5%. The Party was a very powerful part of everyday life, but many avoided active involvement.<sup>176</sup>

All these features would seem likely to create a rather pessimistic impression, were it not for the music of the film. It offers slightly subversive discrepancies, because a saxophone and violin, not a 'proletarian' trumpet, feature as the leading instruments in a cheerful Hungarian title-motif. The music fluctuates between characterising an Achilles full of humour beneath his rough exterior and simultaneously alludes to Geschonneck's well-known playful, twisted wit.

A number of moments in *Bankett für Achilles* actually gain their subversive meaning from the fact that they can be interpreted against a backdrop of cultural memory. Audiences were aware of what they should actually see in a film produced to sustain a particular version of the official memory – the story of the socialist, heroic working-class activist. But the film and the figure of Achilles transgressed against the prevailing images and enriched them with a disturbing complexity. In this respect it is hardly surprising that *Bankett für Achilles* was not allowed to participate in the *Tage des sozialistischen Films* (socialist film festival in the GDR), as this would have reinforced its inclusion in cultural memory.<sup>177</sup>

I would argue that this complexity and divergence from the official, biased views of socialism appealed to audiences. The depiction of their working-day reality appeared authentic and true if compared to the glorious front page 'facts' of *Neues Deutschland*, the national daily published by the SED. Their sceptical attitude was reflected, but also their hopes, and their laconic optimism that the socialist Germany could be put into practice. At the end of the film, a huge helicopter arrives with fresh soil. The poisoned earth of Bitterfeld will be recultivated – Achilles watches with a cautious but nevertheless approving smile. Taken beyond the immediate horizon of the film, this moment provides a confirmation of the notion of *Meine Heimat DDR*

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<sup>176</sup> The membership figure was valid for May 1976, and the share of the particular cohort for 1981. cf. Stefan Wolle (1999), p. 108.

<sup>177</sup> cf. Erwin Geschonneck, untitled speech at the Vth Congress of the Verband der Film- und Fernsehschaffenden, 1988, reprinted in Erwin Geschonneck (1997), p. 333.

(my homeland, the GDR), a favourite GDR slogan in shop-window displays and on wall newspapers.

This positive notion of a life in and for the GDR can be found in all of Geschonneck's contemporary figures. But the figures are never overtly supportive of the system; instead they make mistakes and are full of a sceptical wit which makes them believable. Audiences appreciated these anti-heroes and chose them for their role models. For the officials Geschonneck would have made the perfect link with the anti-fascist past – yet he avoided and escaped a thorough exploitation of his life. Erwin Geschonneck was bound to achieve star status as he directly linked the communicative with the cultural memory. Nevertheless, even key icons like him were subject to political appropriation to serve the official line of cultural memory. The boundaries between icon and *Störfaktor* (disturbing factor) were rather blurred – both in the real-life Geschonneck and the characters he played as an actor.

## 1976-1992: The 'Biermann-Affair', Pop Music and the End of East German Film Stardom

By the mid-1970s, when Party and state officials felt that the economic burden of the socialist project had become once again difficult to bear, the experiment of liberal cultural policies was aborted rather abruptly. Manfred Jäger suggests the 1972 German-German *Grundlagenvertrag* (treaty about the mutual acknowledgement of sovereignty and good-neighbourly relations between East and West Germany) had contributed to such a rapprochement between the two countries that the old ideological concept of West Germany as the archenemy was falling apart. Fearing the loss of control as a consequence of these developments the authorities reacted with a renewed clampdown on the arts and critical voices, thus completely disrupting the climate of mutual trust that had begun to build up.<sup>178</sup> The cultural-political retrenchment began with the expulsion of critical author Reiner Kunze from the GDR Association of Writers, which served as a threat and warning to other writers and soon afterwards culminated in the Biermann-affair.

Poet and songwriter Wolf Biermann had already experienced restrictions after the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum and was accused of class betrayal (not only in general but also specifically because his father was a communist). His poetry – witty, sharp, critical yet in the end always affirmative about socialism in the GDR – was accused of

<sup>178</sup> cf. Manfred Jäger (1994), p. 163.

sexual primitivism, obscenity, anarchism and even 'cesspit-ism'.<sup>179</sup> Although after 1965, Biermann was banned from public concerts and publishing his texts in the GDR, he still saw himself as a communist and wanted to stay and continue his political activity in the country. To the SED leadership Biermann had become a nuisance they were trying to get rid of. While performing at a concert in the West German Cologne in November 1976, he was expatriated on the grounds of having damaged the GDR's reputation.<sup>180</sup>

Manfred Jäger points out that this interference of the authorities was interpreted by many prominent authors and artists as a restriction which would also affect their own ideas about the status of literature, theatre and film in a socialist society. Many remembered that expatriation had been a policy of the Third Reich. It would have gone against their self-respect but also credibility not to protest against this deterrent strategy of the authorities.<sup>181</sup> A critical open letter of disapproval was written and signed by many prominent GDR artists which requested the government to reconsider the decision.<sup>182</sup> Among the artists who signed the petition were many DEFA filmmakers, actors and also film stars: Jutta Hoffmann, Katharina Thalbach, Manfred Krug, Rolf Ludwig, Eva-Maria Hagen, Angelica Domröse, Eberhard Esche, Jutta Wachowiak, Armin Mueller-Stahl, and Barbara Dittus.

The consequences for what was considered state treason were severe as the SED reacted not only with Party-penalties, or expulsions from the Party but also subtle restrictions on the artists' work. Authors were banned from publication and actors noticed that they were only offered unchallenging, supporting roles as a punishment. Some films were circulated with a reduced number of prints. Many became so frustrated that they decided to emigrate and some 100 artists left the GDR. DEFA experienced the largest exodus ever of popular actors. The first film star to go was Manfred Krug in June 1977, others, such as Angelica Domröse, Katharina Thalbach and Armin Mueller-Stahl followed in 1980.

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<sup>179</sup> "... der seine Kloakenbegriffe benutzt zur Besudelung der Partei der Arbeiterklasse...", Alexander Abusch, from the Ministry of Culture and Education at the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the SED, quoted in Manfred Jäger (1994), p. 128.

<sup>180</sup> Already in May 1974, Biermann had been offered to give up his GDR citizenship (which he rejected) and the decision to expel him had already been made when he applied for the Visa to go to West Germany. cf. Manfred Jäger (1994), p. 165.

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> The letter had been sent to the GDR press, but was not published there so that it was forwarded to and published by the West German daily *Frankfurter Rundschau*, a decision which the GDR government officials used to accuse all those who had signed as traitors to the GDR.

But it was not only the actors' emigration which brought East German star culture to an abrupt end. The state authorities undertook numerous measures to dissociate the public from its film stars. Without any explanation popularity polls in the press were discontinued in 1977 and only resumed in 1980, so that certain unwelcome names of dissidents would not appear. Allegedly the GDR state security infiltrated public communication with rumours that cast a negative light onto those stars which had decided to leave the country.<sup>183</sup> For once West Germany proved helpful for the East German authorities. As all knowledge about the actual circumstances that had forced artists into emigration was suppressed in public, they merely appeared as someone who had opted for the easier choice in life.

When Manfred Krug left the GDR, a meeting of the SED group at the Academy of Arts decided that the East German public should be informed "objectively" by the East and not the West German press. One DEFA director suggested that "it would not be wise to state that we separated from Krug [... but rather] that Krug distanced himself from our socialist society".<sup>184</sup> To make a clear point, but also to reduce audience affinities to a minimum, films with Krug were either no longer circulated or with a very limited number of prints.

For Krug's last DEFA film *Das Versteck* (The Hideaway, 1977) an elaborate plan was developed which consisted in not providing advertising posters for the film, and not organising an opening night. The film was to reach as few audiences as possible, so it was suggested to screen it either for a few days between 23–28 December (i.e. the Christmas season when people would not think about going to the cinema) or broadcast it on the second television channel at a time when the first channel would keep the audiences distracted. In this way, in this way officials could argue that *Das Versteck* had been shown but that only few people were interested.<sup>185</sup> Krug was not the only one who was treated in this way. The authorities clearly feared that the audiences might associate, let alone identify with and imitate, stars who were officially deemed traitors. The cultural-political decisions made in the aftermath of

<sup>183</sup> Allegedly rumours about a Swiss bank account were spread by Stasi about Manfred Krug. cf. "SOFORT AUF DEN TISCH", report from Rat des Bezirkes [district council] Erfurt, Dr. Krebs, Abt.-Ltr. Kultur to Hans-Joachim Hofmann, dated 3 February 1977, SAPMO-Bundesarchiv, DY 30/IV B 2/9.06/95 fiche 2; also confirmed by Manfred Krug in interviews e.g.: "Auf die alten Tage noch ein paar schöne Filme machen", *Schweriner Volkszeitung*, 15 November 1990.

<sup>184</sup> Translated from letter from Ursula Ragwitz to Kurt Hager, 22 June 1977, Bundesarchiv, SAPMO, DY 30 /IV/ B2/ 9.06/42, fiche 1.

<sup>185</sup> cf. report from Ursula Ragwitz, to Kurt Hager ZK der SED, 27.9.78, Bundesarchiv, SAPMO, DY 30/ IV B2/ 9.06/ 84 fiche 2.

the Biermann-affair were a serious blow to DEFA's star league, and caused it to crumble.

Nonetheless, other factors contributed to the decline of DEFA's star system as well. By the mid 1970s, DEFA's star system had been in place for a decade and a half, and the context under which most of the stars had come into existence began to change. Positive affirmations of living in East Germany had waned, and images that would openly subvert official doctrine and might thus appeal to the audiences would not pass censorship. The GDR was in a state of stagnation which denied the enthusiasm necessary for stardom. But most importantly, the audiences had changed completely. As more than two thirds of cinema-goers were in their teens and twenties, audiences and stars had increasingly diverged in age, and audiences increasingly saw few connections between themselves and the aged heroes of the screen.<sup>186</sup> The 'new' young audiences had a need for role models of their own, but DEFA was insufficiently prepared and had neglected to gradually and continuously develop new stars. A few promising talents had emerged, but casting decisions were too inconsistent to build up a lasting affinity with the audiences. The popularity polls reflected this situation with ever changing names.

The problem of 'over-ageing' did not only apply to actors, but also to film directors and scriptwriters. Notwithstanding, some of DEFA's established filmmakers presented wonderful stories on adolescence such as *Und nächstes Jahr am Balaton* (And Next Year at Lake Balaton, 1980), or *Solo Sunny* (1980) which were popular with audiences, yet younger filmmakers might have captured the concerns and problems of their generation even better. But the new generation of film directors which had begun to emerge during the early 1980s was hardly given a chance to experiment and make their own films.<sup>187</sup> Not only did DEFA not have the capacity to finance personnel and film projects on top of existing ones, but one was also concerned that the ideas of the young might not find the approval of the state authorities and subsequently cause negative repercussions on other projects. Elke Schieber assumes that DEFA's established filmmakers feared "the results of a co-operation between people of the same age, which could express different experiences and values than those of the established generation of filmmakers".<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> cf. Lothar Bisky and Dieter Wiedemann: *Der Spielfilm. Rezeption und Wirkung. Kultursoziologische Analysen*, Berlin (GDR): Henschelverlag, 1985, pp. 12f..

<sup>187</sup> Michael Kann, Jörg Foth, Peter Kahane, Dietmar Hochmuth, Lothar Großmann, Maxim Dessau

<sup>188</sup> cf. Elke Schieber: "Anfang vom Ende oder Kontinuität des Argwohns 1980 bis 1989", in Filmmuseum Potsdam and Ralf Schenk (1994), p. 281.

A further element that contributed to DEFA's crisis was owed to the government's 'bread-and-circuses' policies that were implemented during the 1980s. Within the context of domestic political and social stagnation, but also the unsettling climate of independent political movements in Eastern Europe – such as Solidarnosc in Poland since 1980, or perestroika and glasnost introduced by Soviet head of state Gorbachev since 1985 – the authorities felt the need to divert attention from anything that would destabilise their position. To keep the population at least superficially content, a large number of unpolitical entertainment features were imported from Hollywood and Western Europe. The GDR's cultural authorities considered these imports a safe bet as they diverted the public's attention from the approaching crises of East German society. For financial reasons, most of the films were shown a few years after they had been released on the Western market. Among them were *The Golden Voyage of Sindbad* (1974/GDR release 1980), *C'era una volta il West* (Once Upon a Time in the West, 1968/1981), *Piedone d'Egitto* (Flatfoot in Egypt, 1979/1983), *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1981/1984), *Krull* (1983/1985), and *Greystoke – The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* (1984/1988). For US imports such as *The Towering Inferno* (1974/1981), *The Electric Horseman* (1979/1981), *Blue Thunder* (1983/1984), *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan* (1982/1986), *Amadeus* (1984/1987), or *Out of Africa* (1985/1987) even the state's former strict anti-American attitude was abandoned.<sup>189</sup>

At the same time, controversial films from Poland, Hungary, the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia were kept out. This practice of controlled imports enabled the authorities to suppress unwanted role models and to distract from the insufficiencies of the socialist system. Western entertainment features were readily accepted by East German audiences, not only because they had already been 'conditioned' to prefer such feature films by West German television, but also because they were part of a culture of subversion. Notwithstanding the high entertainment value of the imports, to watch a capitalist film had once again become a way of expressing one's protest against the system in public.

DEFA stars stood only a small chance against the continuously strengthening competition from these Western imports. We must assume that at first Western film stars replaced East German ones in popularity. During the early 1980s, many of the imports were still star based and featured in particular French comedians Louis de Funès and Pierre Richard, Italian action-comedians Bud Spencer and Terence Hill,

<sup>189</sup> GDR release taken from Dieter Wiedemann's box-office rankings, cf. Appendix I.

and the Danish 'Olsenbanden'. West German comedians Otto and Mike Krüger but also the French Asterix and Obelix animation 'stars' pushed their films into the top positions at the East German box-office. The new openness of the East German cinema landscape to Western imports enforced the decline of indigenous film stars, as audiences gave preference to these more exciting films and faces. Moreover, Western film and television officially continued to be treated with rejection so that watching a Western film expressed a (admittedly tame) rebellion against the style political power exercised by the state.

It is certainly a reflection of the stagnation of East German society, that those few DEFA films which could compete with Western imports at the box-office dealt with the past. *Die Verlobte* (The Fiancée, 1980) which received international critical acclaim, *Der Aufenthalt* (The Stay, 1983), *Das Haus am Fluss* (House on the River, 1986) or *Die Schauspielerin* (The Actress, 1988) were thoughtful, melancholic accounts that presented an unseen view of the anti-fascist resistance that was remote from the officially preached hero-worship. The actresses and actors of these films, among them Katrin Saß, Jutta Wachowiak or Christine Schorn, and Corinna Harfouch were striking in their fractured, austere beauty and powerful in their performance. Even though the actresses' performances received critical acclaim, none of them reached a level of admiration, press coverage or consistency in being cast that could establish them as film star with the audiences.

In the mid 1980s, another development contributed to the final decline of film stardom in the GDR. In the West, the phenomenon of stardom had already shifted from film to the pop music star during the 1970s. The music industry had discovered that audio-visuality, which makes for a large part of the attraction of the film star, could be transferred to singers and bands, and television and music video clips became a new way to achieve a large scale dissemination of its commodities. The reorientation of the young generation was also felt in the GDR, where bands and singers were gaining immense popularity. The East German youth press reacted accordingly and replaced posters and reports on actors with those of pop musicians. The star postcard was revived for pop singers but assumed a new shape in order to fit audio cassette covers. When *Neues Leben* resumed the popularity polls for actors and films four years after they had been aborted in the aftermath of the Biermann-affair, it did not take long before they were replaced by the "Interpretenpreis" (polls on pop singers and bands). Pop musicians began to displace film stars and after 1982, there

were no more polls on DEFA's actors or films. The fate of East German film stars was sealed.

By the early 1980s, film stardom thus died in East Germany and the political changes in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall in autumn 1989, the German re-unification in 1990 and the subsequent liquidation of DEFA in 1992 did not leave either time or the desire to start a new cycle of stars. Audiences enjoyed their unlimited freedom to choose from a global film market and no longer wanted to see DEFA products. Since the mid-1990s, however, things have begun to change and television (less often cinema) productions are increasingly using actors with an East German background. The most recent example in this respect is the comeback of DEFA actors Katrin Saß and Michael Gwisdeck in *Goodbye Lenin* (2003). This is well-received with audiences in the former East German regions, an aspect which prompts further questions on the representative and identificatory functions of stars.

# CHAPTER 2: The East German Star Discourse

## Introduction

Do we have our own film darlings? Without any doubt! But it is an affection which comes from the heart as a recognition of and gratitude for good artistic performance. [...] Some may believe that it does not befit our [socialist] society to declare actors as audience darlings in public. But we only need to mention the examples from the Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Republic [...] who have their] true national film heroes [chosen by] the audiences.<sup>1</sup>

As can be suspected from the erratic trajectory outlined in the previous chapter, stardom in East German cinema occupied an ambiguous position. The above quote from a *Neues Leben* article entitled "Are Stars in Demand?" paradigmatically reflects that stardom was rejected to the point of denial but also promoted, that it was scathingly criticised and that yet immense efforts were taken to appropriate it within the specific context of socialist Germany. Undoubtedly, DEFA films had their stars, they were popular with the audiences, they appeared in outstanding roles, and they were promoted in similar ways to stars in commercial film industries; e.g. through live appearances, posters, collectible star postcards and biographical booklets. As these materials will form a significant resource for my argument in this chapter, I shall briefly map the context of their production and circulation.

The studio's influence on star promotion was minute and the deliberate construction of images rested with the press. It was a construction that appropriated the stars' images for the specific GDR context and financial profits were not the primary aim. Most of the information on DEFA films and stars came from reports and interviews in the press which were not directly related to, let alone controlled, by either DEFA or the national and monopolistic distributor *Progress*. *Progress* itself had rather limited capacities to have large amounts of promotional material produced and even though it had the financial means, the GDR's national production often could not supply sufficient amounts of basic materials such as paper or ink. It was also hampered by pre-set quota of paper and ink expenditure which could not be exceeded even if demand existed.

Promotional material sold by *Progress* included collectibles such as star postcards and so-called 'film programmes', (brochures accompanying each film with information on plot, cast, and photo stills from the film) which one would buy on the

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from "Sind Stars gefragt?", *Neues Leben*, 9, 1955.

day of the screening (like a theatre programme), and monthly magazines which announced upcoming films.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally film posters could also be purchased by the audiences. An expansion of the star postcard was the so-called *Künstlerportrait* (portrait of the artist), a small two-page cardboard brochure with some biographical data and a filmography into which a star postcard was glued. These collectibles were extremely inexpensive, with 0.15 Marks for a star postcard, 0.10 Marks for a film programme and 0.30 Marks for the portrait of the artist.<sup>3</sup> Both the film programme, which itself has a longer German tradition, and the portrait of the artist are rather paradoxical, in that as collectibles they are clearly a concession to popular culture but at the same time also display the attempt to legitimise cinema as high culture.<sup>4</sup> As the film programme is a reference to the theatre programme, and thus to 'high art', likewise the portrait of the artists presents the 'pin-up' of the star in a context that attempts to suggest artistic professionalism and therefore also a connection to 'high art'. Both reflect the ambiguous status popular culture was granted in East Germany. Later, film programmes changed and no longer accompanied a specific film, taking on a more promotional character. They were published monthly as a preview for on-coming attractions.

Since 1959/60, *Neues Leben* contributed to the rather small supply of collectibles when it began to publish a version of the star postcard, the so-called "Steckbrief" ('Wanted'). A short career and hobby description or interviews were accompanied by a publicity photo (usually in medium close-up). The example shown below presents emerging DEFA star Manfred Krug and Soviet Tatyana Samojlowa who had received the Golden Palm at the Cannes film festival for *Letjat Zhuravli* (The Cranes Are Flying, 1957).<sup>5</sup> The photos were printed on separate, often stronger and higher quality paper, so that these collectibles could be cut out of the magazine.

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, *Progress* started publishing more of such monthly previews in the mid-1960s, among them *Filmvorschau* (until 1965), *Film für Sie* (1965-1979), later called *Progress Filmprogramm* (1979-1991), or *Film heute und morgen* (1966-1969), later called *Treffpunkt Kino* (1969-1977), later called *Progress-Sammelprogramm* (1978-1990), there was also *Kino für Kinder* (1983-1990); a catalogue of all *Progress* filmbrochures published between 1945-1975 was assembled by Herbert Holba: *Filmprogramme in der DDR, 1945-75. Dokumentation*, ed. by Dokumentationszentrum ACTION and Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR, Berlin: Verlag des Dokumentationszentrums ACTION, 1976.

<sup>3</sup> For example the brochure *Aus der Welt des Films. Das Künstlerportrait Christel Bodenstein*, VEB Progress-Filmvertrieb, Ag 500/25/65 (32933) 19, in "Personenmappe Christel Bodenstein", Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv.

<sup>4</sup> Filmprogrammes were also available at West German cinemas.

<sup>5</sup> "Steckbrief", *Neues Leben*, 1, 1961.

But they did not live up to the high-quality gloss paper of star postcards sold by *Progress* at the cinema ticket boxes.<sup>6</sup>



"Steckbriefe" Manfred Krug and Soviet Tatyana Samojlowa, *Neues Leben* 1, 1961

Occasionally, the texts accompanying such press collectibles explicitly debate the ambiguous and controversial position not only of the stars but also of the collectibles themselves. An excellent example is the calendar *Kino und Fernsehen* 1977 which presented large photos of stars for each month which on the back were accompanied by information on other stars, films, genres and directors. Among the stars displayed in size A3 poster form were four DEFA actors (Winfried Glatzeder on the cover, and Simone von Zglinicki, Katharina Thalbach and Jenny Gröllmann, three actresses at the start of their film careers). Four established Western stars (Claudia Cardinale, Robert Redford, Jean-Paul Belmondo and Marie-José Nat) and five in the GDR hardly known actors from socialist cinemas (Soviet Oleg Widow and Irina Mirochnitschenko, Czech Milan Beli, and Polish Daniel Olbrychski and Halina Golansko) completed the list. Significant is the publisher's attempt to justify the existence of this calendar with a ca. 650 word essay on a separate page at the beginning.

#### As a Preface

For the first time the Henschel publishing house offers all friends of cinema and television a large sized calendar. [...] the demand for such a calendar, especially among young people, encouraged us [to produce one].

[...] Film [...] can serve distraction, lies and confusion of thought and emotions – and it can make people more intelligent, more sensitive, courageous and honest. There is no need to

<sup>6</sup> For example, the article "Schauspieler zu verkaufen" explains the bad quality of the Steckbriefe with unexpected production temperatures below freezing, *Neues Leben* 7, 1956, p. 41.

state which of these tendencies corresponds to the humanist ideal and reality of our socialist life [...].

A phenomenon of its own is certainly the popularity of actors, which occasionally even turns into idolisation, the passion to collect photo stills and portraits. How can we explain this passion? Certainly different motivations merge: admiration of a unique talent to impersonate other people, aesthetic aspects, ethic and erotic ones, above all certainly the search for a freely chosen role model, an ideal personality, which often is a strange mixture between the individuality of the artist and the characteristics and actions of the roles. The twelve [...] portraits [...] show actresses and actors who became known throughout the 1960s and 70s through their talent, through their roles, as well as the manner and quality of the films in which they performed, through which they gained the affection and approval of the audiences. [...] The text [each month] aims at information and orientation, but not completeness and analysis [...]. Perhaps it encourages [...] to find out more about films, directors and actors, about film history in [film studies] books and specialised magazines [...].

The publisher [...] hands this calendar over wishing that the *user* [my emphasis] can enjoy it [...].<sup>7</sup>

Pure affection or idolisation is criticised, yet the calendar legitimises interest in film stars if it leads to a serious educational engagement with cinema. A ranking is suggested which clearly places actors (the word star is avoided) behind films and film directors. The attempt to present the calendar as something 'useful' moreover differentiates it from collectibles in the conventional sense.

Despite the variety of information that was available, stars and audiences alike often complained about the insufficient supply of promotional material, clearly realising that the popularity of stars could be further increased.<sup>8</sup>

**Klaus Müller** [*FilmSPIEGEL* reader]: "What do we know about them [actors]? – Nothing. Once in a while there is a tiny photo still from some film – that's certainly no publicity." [he uses the English term]<sup>9</sup>

The discrepancy of insufficient supply of commodities for the film spectator's private pleasure and the otherwise vast supply of posters, newspaper space, flags etc. for political purposes must have been very apparent for East Germans.

The largest share of information that initiated and supported the emergence of film stars came from magazines, journals and daily newspapers. The major publication for a broad audience was *Neue Film-Welt* (1947-1953), later renamed *FilmSPIEGEL* (1954-1991). This was a fortnightly magazine which enjoyed great popular appeal, started off in black and white print, but from the 1970s onward also partially used colour printing. Heavy subsidies allowed to keep its price at a meagre

<sup>7</sup> Translated from calendar *Kino und Fernsehen* 1977, ed. by Joachim Reichow and Klaus Wischnewski, Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1976.

<sup>8</sup> cf. Horst W. Lukas: "Um den Film bei uns: haben wir keine Stars?", *FilmSPIEGEL* 25, 1964.

<sup>9</sup> Translated from Jochen Reichow: "Lesermeinungen: Um den Film bei uns", *FilmSPIEGEL*, 19, 1965.

0.40 Marks, but *FilmSPIEGEL* suffered from restricted paper quota as well, so that not everyone who wanted to buy the magazine could. Other regular film specific publications included *Prisma: Kino- und Fernsehalmmanach* which was intended for a more scholarly and expert readership. There was also *Neues Leben*, a youth magazine, which from 1960 onwards regularly featured DEFA films and actors, and thus contributed immensely to the emergence and also perception of GDR actors as stars.

Numerous texts in *FilmSPIEGEL* specifically initiated the emergence of stardom in East German cinema, as the exemplary article below on upcoming stars illustrates. "Interviews before success sets in" was a series in the mid-1960s which introduced new actors and starlets and tried to generate curiosity and interest among audiences. The introductory paragraph states why it is worth paying attention to the two actresses featuring in the article.<sup>10</sup>

Angelika Waller [...] and Monika Gabriel [...] have the promising attributes of young actresses: they are young, good-looking, talented and no longer unknown among the audiences. They won their first spurs and soon again we will see them in new film and television productions.

Written in an interview style, the body of the text is focused entirely on the professional aspects of the actresses' career development and their artistic achievements. The accompanying visual images, however, with their pin-up style postures in which eyes and lips are accentuated, run contrary to what the text tries to achieve. Instead of confirming the professional artistry, the starlets are very conventionally manufactured as visual spectacle and presented for their sex appeal. In this respect, the visual images could fulfil long established audience expectations toward stars.

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<sup>10</sup> Ilse Schumann: "Interview vor dem Erfolg", *FilmSPIEGEL* 15, 1966, p. 10f., another example is "Interview vor dem Erfolg" about Madeleine Lierck after her television debut with *Irrlicht und Feuer* (Will o' the Wisp and Fire, 1966), *FilmSPIEGEL*, 22, 1966, p. 10f..



article on Angelika Waller and Monika Gabriel in *Filmspiegel* 15, 1966

For established stars, "Fragen ? Antworten" (Questions ? Answers), later called "Filmspiegel Interview", which regularly appeared on penultimate page of *Filmspiegel*, stabilised a continuous awareness of DEFA stars among the audiences. Similar to the upcoming stars, questions covered a wide range of topics that were nonetheless all related to professional perspectives on acting, culture and politics. For example, actress Helga Göring was asked, "The lack of good female roles is mourned by many actresses [...] do you share your colleagues' opinion that there are too few roles for women in their 40s?" and "What kind of responsibility do actors carry for their role?".<sup>11</sup> Brigitte Krause responded to "Is the musical a foster child [at DEFA]?" and "What draws an audience to the theatre?".<sup>12</sup> Questions such as these required the star to show an active approach towards the topic and presented them as DGR citizens who engaged with their work seriously.

Christine Laszar is an interesting case in point, because she moved from West to East Germany for her first DEFA film *Geschwader Fledermaus* (Squadron Bat, 1958), one of the few actors to do so.<sup>13</sup> Laszar belonged to those Germans resettled from Polish and Czech territories at the end of World War II and at first lived in Ahrenshoop and Rostock in East Germany. As a young teenager she thought that "everything was better in the West" and moved to Munich where she disliked art

<sup>11</sup> Translated from "Gefragt, gesagt, notiert", *Filmspiegel* 9, 1966.

<sup>12</sup> Actually *Stießkind* (step child) is used. Translated from "Fragen ? Antworten, Brigitte Krause", *Filmspiegel*, 22, 1965.

<sup>13</sup> Another prominent actress was Christel Bodenstein, who came from Munich to study ballet in Leipzig in 1952.

being a mere commodity and the uncertainty of the acting profession and came back to the GDR.<sup>14</sup> *Neues Leben* reported on the gossip that surrounded Laszar's decision to work at DEFA, "Did you know she's from Munich? Perhaps she just wants to *absahnen* (make a killing)?", and then proudly mentioned that the actress "went further than the girl in the film" when she settled for good in the GDR a few months later.<sup>15</sup> A 1966 *Filmspiegel* interview takes up this topic and makes enquiries into the actress's private life, but rather than focusing on gossip about her private life, makes a strong point of presenting a Laszar seriously involved with East German everyday life and politics.<sup>16</sup>



feature on Christine Laszar in *Filmspiegel* 7, 1966

The major part of the text describes the actress in her local community of the provincial town of Teltow. Laszar was also asked to comment on the GDR's politics of the *Bitterfelder Weg*, where she rather diplomatically evades a clear answer and implicitly contradicts the official view that everyone can be an artist. The tone, and the visual image of the Laszar article are both much more serious and less subversive of the official star discourse than the example quoted above for emerging stars, making the educational message stronger. This was obviously the case because she was an 'outsider' to the East German system and consequently had to prove her convictions to a larger degree.

In the 1960s, the contextualisation of stars underwent a subtle shift. In the 1950s, and again later in the 1970s, Western stars, as outlined in Chapter 1, were an almost equal part of the star discourse, whereas information on them decreased

<sup>14</sup> cf. Dieter Borte: "Neues Leben sprach mit Christine Laszar", *Neues Leben*, 2, 1959.

<sup>15</sup> Translated from "Neues Leben sprach mit Christine Laszar", *Neues Leben*, 2, 1959.

<sup>16</sup> "Filmspiegel Interview Christine Laszar: Keine Scheu vor Zeitproblemen", *Filmspiegel* 7, 1966.

during the 1960s. Press publicity drew public attention to socialist stars, and presented them in a positive light. This was a reaction to the general perception and popularity of Western stars and their films. Although it was rarely expressed directly, there seems to have been general agreement among East German audiences that Western films are 'better'. However, the criteria according to which Western productions were perceived as being 'better' were rarely specified. The discourse of the press aimed to 'correct' such a view and more or less openly criticised negative opinions about the GDR's own films and stars. A *FilmSPIEGEL* article inaugurating an audience debate under the title "The pros and cons about DEFA" stated,

There is the proverb, a good name speaks for itself [...] there are some [East Germans] who [think of DEFA and] claim with a certain bitterness 'The name promises more than it can keep'. [We want to find out] whether DEFA films are preferred without any prejudice amongst millions of spectators, or if the number of those who turn their backs to the Babelsberg production studio – often based on unjustified prejudice – has indeed increased.<sup>17</sup>

The article further reports a test that the journalists made when they secretly swapped the West German colour film *Der Sänger von Capri* (For the First Time, 1959) with DEFA's black and white *Julia lebt* (Julia Lives, 1963) at an open-air cinema in Leipzig. Apparently, no one complained, and "in breathless silence 800 pairs of eyes eagerly followed the plot". However, when audiences were asked directly after the film whether they would have chosen to watch *Julia lebt* in the first place, "more than half of them spontaneously replied 'No'".

This preference of Western films was also expanded to their performers when East German audiences preferred Western stars. A *FilmSPIEGEL* reader reports that his 16 and 18-year-old daughters could not be bothered to go specifically to the cinema because of a DEFA actor, with the exception of Manfred Krug. But they always go when "Liselotte Pulver, Jean Marais or Polish Zbigniew Cybulski can be expected on screen".<sup>18</sup> A box-office employee from the *WeltSPIEGEL* cinema in Finsterwalde reported a list of the top ten of the 2200 star postcards she sold between July and December 1964: Jean Marais, Lilli Palmer, Liselotte Pulver, Manfred Krug, Johanna von Koczian, Christel Bodenstein, Mario Lanza, Peter van Eyck, Christine Laszar and Alain Delon. The list, which contains only the three DEFA actors Krug, Bodenstein and Laszar, reflects the general preference of Western stars among East German audiences. But even DEFA's own actors expressed such evaluations, as was

<sup>17</sup> Translated from "Um den Film bei uns", *FilmSPIEGEL*, 24, 1964.

<sup>18</sup> Translated from "Meinungen" [reader responses], Walter Lehmann, Leipzig N21: "Die Lilo und der Zbigniew locken", *FilmSPIEGEL* 3, 1965.

the case with Angelica Domröse who would assign the connotation *echter Star* (real star) only to French, Italian and American actors.<sup>19</sup>

The GDR press tried to counteract these perceptions and gave preference to socialist cinema and its stars in both contents and cover photographs. The following tables, assembled from the 24 *FilmSPIEGEL* issues in 1965, may serve as an indication of the imbalance between the amount and text volume of articles devoted to socialist and Western cinema. Evidently, *FilmSPIEGEL* favoured Eastern talent, and the same was true for *Neues Leben* which conformed to these practices and to the unbalanced East-West ratio:

table 3: number of articles devoted to socialist and capitalist film and stars in 1965 *FilmSPIEGEL* issue<sup>20</sup>

↓total	details ⇔	origin	full page articles	small articles
articles about socialist actors/stars 104	GDR		42	18
	USSR		5	9
	socialist/developing countries		5	25
articles about Western actors/stars 54 <sup>21</sup>			9	45
articles about films from socialist production 350 +1 co-production	GDR.		53	59
	DEFA socialist co-prod.		8	16
	USSR		10	60
	socialist/developing countries		22	122
	DEFA Western co-prod		1	-
articles about films from Western production 186	Western		12	125
	West German		3	46

<sup>19</sup> ibid.

<sup>20</sup> I counted these figures myself to get an impression of how much home-grown talents and products were favoured over Western ones. The remaining 174 articles dealt with film history, film festivals, and professions in the film industry.

<sup>21</sup> In 1965, French (Jean-Paul Belmondo, Alain Delon, Jean Marais) and Italian (Sophia Loren, Claudia Cardinale, Marcello Mastroianni) stars dominated, the only West German actress who received a full page feature was Nadja Tiller, whose film *Das Mädchen Rosemarie* (The Girl Rosemarie, 1958) had been heatedly debated and almost banned from screening at the Venice film festival in August 1958 by the West German office of foreign affairs. The film's criticism of West German society made it very interesting for distribution in the GDR. cf. Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, and Hans Helmut Prinzler (1993), p. 540.

table 4: list of origins of actors who appeared on front covers of the 1965 *FilmSPIEGEL* issues<sup>22</sup>**12 DEFA actors**

Marita Böhme  
Klaus-Peter Thiele  
Annekathrin Bürger  
Manfred Krug  
Helga Piur  
Helga Labudda  
Horst Schulze  
Rolf Römer  
Lissy Tempelhof  
Eva-Maria Hagen  
Renate Blume  
Jürgen Frohriep

**7 actors from socialist cinemas**

Hungarian Marian Moór  
Soviet Anastasia Wertinskaja  
Soviet Sinaida Kirijenko  
Polish Krystina Stypolkowska  
Polish Zofia Slaboszewska  
Soviet Ludmilla Saweljewa  
Soviet Ludmilla Kasjanowa

**5 Western actors**

French Juliette Gréco  
French Veronique Vendell  
Italian Sophia Loren  
French Jean-Paul Belmondo  
French Alain Delon

Another way of channelling awareness of stars in the press was through popularity polls, which appeared regularly from 1960 onwards. In their appearance these polls underwent two changes, the very first and one-off list for 1954 (published in *Neues Leben* February 1955) makes neither a differences between female and male actors, nor according to the actors' national origins. From 1960 onward polls were published regularly, and the list for 1959 categorises male and female stars as well as domestic and foreign actors. Interestingly, Soviet Sergej Bondartschuk is listed on the second place in the foreign actors category, though without the number of votes. One can assume that he was included to balance the otherwise Western European dominated list.<sup>23</sup> From 1964 onwards the polls were confined to a domestic range and no longer included foreign actors. Audiences was no longer asked "Who are your favourite actors and actresses" but instead "Which GDR [my emphasis] actor and actress showed the best artistic performance?".<sup>24</sup> The separation between DEFA's own actors and those from abroad was an attempt to achieve a positive valuation of the concept of an East German nationality. Although this distinction in the polls was imposed from above, audiences showed genuine interest in DEFA's actors, as reader responses of the time reveal. At first, the polls were only subtly directed as photos of relevant stars were printed along the call for readers to contribute, but readers were free in their choice. In 1971, *Neues Leben* began to list the names, so that readers only had to tick their three favourite actors. Even though at the end of each list was an empty row for readers to add a name, the polls took on a much more controlled

<sup>22</sup> The year would begin and finish with a DEFA star. The ratio continued more or less like this, in 1975, *FilmSPIEGEL* presented 11 DEFA actors/stars, 9 socialist stars and 7 Western stars on the front cover.

<sup>23</sup> see Appendix I.

<sup>24</sup> Translated from *Neues Leben*, 12, 1962.

manner. The magazine had to analyse increasing quantity of responses (between 10,000 and 25,000 letters) and using pre-set lists proved a more efficient way to cope with the demand. The popularity polls, however, found a rapid end in the wake of the Biermann events and between 1977 and 1981 no polls were organised by the magazines. The attempted revival lasted only for two years, after 1983 there were no more polls on actors and DEFA films. The increased import of Western productions and changes in popular cultural trends rendered them obsolete.

Despite all the above mentioned strategies of promotion and publicity that existed in the GDR to support an indigenous star system, numerous factors worked against it. It is striking that many popular East German magazines raising the concept simultaneously questioned it, as can be seen in the following headlines: "Are stars in great demand?", "It would be great to be a star [but] what of tomorrow?", "Don't we have any stars?", "Does the film star need a consistent ensemble?", "Do we need stars?".<sup>25</sup> Questions such as these, rhetorical as they may appear, reflect the ambiguous attitudes toward stardom and indicate that it was never granted a firm position within the East German context. The answers given in the articles to the questions posed by their headlines are rarely a clear "yes", but rather cautious affirmations which read like a "yes, sort of, but not entirely". Stefan Soldovieri has aptly described this stance as "heterogeneous and contradictory, with anti-Western posturing coexisting uneasily with the publicity [...] and relatively light-handed coverage" known from the commercial press.<sup>26</sup> A large part of the discourse on what stardom was supposed to be was shaped by the European divide along the Iron Curtain, setting up the political East-West dichotomy of stardom alluded to in Soldovieri's characterisation.

The following quote from a 1964 *Filmspiegel* article points towards the influence of these prevailing political dichotomies and is one of many that attempt to distinguish Western from Eastern stardom:

Haven't we got any stars? "No, we haven't" some reply, and "yes, we have" say others. Perhaps the two opposing views are inherent in the word "Star"? [Perhaps it is linked] with diverging definitions – due to the often unpopular side-effects, which seem to devalue the term. One should separate the word 'Star' from the unwanted meanings like *Rummel* [fuss]

<sup>25</sup> Translated from Heinz Linde: "Sind Stars gefragt?", *Neues Leben*, 9, 1955; Myriam Sello Christian: "Star müßte man sein ... was wird morgen?", *Neues Leben*, 5, 1958; Horst W. Lukas: "Um den Film bei uns: Haben wir keine Stars?", *Filmspiegel*, 25, 1964, and audience response in *Filmspiegel*, 1, 1965; "Um den Film bei uns: Lesermeinungen", *Filmspiegel*, 19, 1965; "Braucht der Filmstar ein beständiges Ensemble?", *Filmspiegel*, 4, 1967; Horst Knietzsch: "Brauchen wir Stars?", *Filmspiegel*, 7, 1976.

<sup>26</sup> Stefan Soldovieri (2002), p. 62.

and *Allüren* [arrogance] – at least here, in our socialist countries. One should keep in mind what this term originally referred to: the *Publikumsliebling* [audience darling].

Our 'manufacturing of a star' is vastly different from practices in the capitalist film industry. Here, no actress needs to jump into a swimming pool in full evening gown to get any attention. And no actor needs to dye his hair green for advertising reasons. *Bei uns* [In our country/society] the performance, the artistic achievements dominate the affection of audiences, gained with the *eigene Wesen* [innermost nature], the natural, appealing attire.<sup>27</sup>

Political oppositions become apparent through the explicit reference to the "capitalist" production system, and rigid oppositions are set up between 'us' and 'them'. During the core period of DEFA stardom, between 1960/61 and the mid-1970s, the politics of mutual demarcation between Northern America and Western Europe on one side and Eastern Europe and the USSR on the other led to at times sweeping dismissals on both sides of everything that was stated or produced by the 'other'. Since stardom was primarily associated with Hollywood and the United States, it tended to be officially rejected in the GDR.

**Ulrich Jansch, Berlin [Filmspiegel reader]:** I think we have a number of very good actors, of a high profile and competence. However, we should not refer to them as *Stars* [he uses the English term], this would be like a disregard of their *schauspielerische Leistungen* [acting performance]. The term 'Star' as a recognition of good performance is strongly *verflacht* [devalued] under the influence of the capitalist film industry. Especially in the Western *Ausland* [his use of 'abroad' doubles the dissociation], were this term was blown up, it is distributed not according to acting performance and competence, but refers particularly to those actors and actresses as stars who look good, have a great figure and as many curves as possible and who create the essential scandals. And this is something we definitely do not want *bei uns* [in our country/society].<sup>28</sup>

In East German and other socialist cinemas ('our'), stardom was defined through positive connotations such as honest, serious work, and rightfully gained popularity. In the case of stardom in Western cinemas ('them') the same phenomenon was defined through negative connotations, such as artificiality, lack of professionalism and dishonestly gained popularity. *Westlich* (Western) was a frequently used term in East German language which carried a broad but clearly politicised meaning that had gained high significance under the impact of the Cold War. In general, 'Western' referred to the political opponents of the capitalist world in Western Europe and North America. Within a cinematic context, however, it was also used to denominate film production which functioned according to financial imperatives. For 'our' cinema, which included other Eastern European cinemas, educational and non-commercial imperatives were foregrounded. Interestingly socialist cinemas were

<sup>27</sup> Translated from Horst W. Lukas: "Um den Film bei uns: Haben wir keine Stars?", *Filmspiegel*, 25, 1964.

<sup>28</sup> Translated from "Lesermeinungen: Um den Film bei uns", *Filmspiegel* 19, 1965, p. 16.

hardly ever referred to as *osteuropäisch* (Eastern European), and the direct counterpart to *westlich, östlich* (Western, Eastern) was not used as it already had 'orientalist' connotations. The political divide that determined so many aspects of the GDR's self-definition also expanded into the self-definition of GDR cinema and the concept of stardom.

In this respect, one could argue that East German stardom was primarily defined *ex negativo*, circumventing the need to provide a positive definition of what socialist stardom could entail. The following quote from a *Neues Leben* article, which initiated the first cycle of the debates and reader responses during the 1950s, is paradigmatic for its use of almost all the negative categories (underlined below) that were commonly associated with Western film stars.

'Heroin addict film stars in Hollywood', 'Rita Hayworth still in love with Adi Khan', 'Marlene Dietrich adopts émigré child' – in such and other ways Hollywood's press bosses advertise their stars. Time and again, Western film journals present articles and reports on petty sensations which Hollywood stars plunge into, or which are made up by able managers. Stars must not be forgotten by the audiences. To be forgotten means to be unemployed. The result of such sensational advertising tricks is then called popularity. Obviously such kind of favourite actors are born from the swamp of obscene press releases. The popularity of these actors cannot always be equal to the value of their performance. Admittedly there are artists even there [in Western Europe], who gained their *echte* [authentic] popularity and fame in a different way [...for] they have earned their audiences' love through their high artistic work.<sup>29</sup>

The rather simplistic dichotomies at work throughout this article are naturalness and modesty versus artificiality and excess, or in their essence the opposition is between 'truth' and 'falsehood'. The core criticism of Western stars resides in the accusation of 'falsehood', defined as an undeserved recognition by film audiences who are cheated into liking stars by cheap tricks. This is contrasted with the appreciation of a 'true and honest' performance by a 'professional artist'.

The contrast between 'true artistic professionalism' and 'false commercial' work constituted a large part of stardom discourse in the GDR, and the artistic debate in turn fed back into the political one, stabilising the demarcation between East and West. This discourse was used in presenting East Germany as a better place to be for an actor, because only a non-commercial cinema would allow an actor to become a 'truly professional' artist. The discussion of the insecurity of artistic production within a free market economy tied in well with the GDR's propaganda of its own planned and supposedly stable economy.

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<sup>29</sup> Translated from Heinz Linde: "Sind Stars gefragt?", *Filmstpiegel*, 9, 1955.

In 1958, the *Neues Leben* article "It would be great to be a star" takes up this topic and dramatises the dangers of Western commercial production even further. The article begins by suggesting that some people (actors or cinema-goers) might believe that big commercial studios constitute a fairy-land of plenty:

Among some of our young talents there is the wishful thinking that at Cinecitta in Rome or even at Hollywood everything is much more interesting, more bright than over here, and the streets are paved with gold. But what does it really look like over there?<sup>30</sup>

In dispelling this wishful thinking, the author of the article then relies on two arguments, firstly on one that had already been firmly established and served as a means of national identification in the East German context: the security of employment and workplace. The second argument, rooted in a traditional understanding and evaluation of the German concept of 'Bildung', is that artists must gain artistic merits before they can be accepted in their field, and that personal success can only occur where individuals fulfil their inherent professional potential. By quoting famous and internationally renowned Western actors Ingrid Bergman and Bernard Blier and their respective criticism of film production practice in the West, the message gains comprehensive verification. The stars' statements display almost the entire array of negative criteria associated with Western cinema and thus support the author's intent to correct what are defined as misconceptions of living like a star.

**London: Ingrid Bergmann:** [...] films are made] under difficulties hardly imaginable, because money is spent only on easy, entertaining films which are drawing the audiences [...] If an actor finishes his [sic] film at Cinecitta – the huge fear about tomorrow and the day after sets in. How long are my recently earned wages going to last? When will I get another chance in a film or theatre performance? In a month? In a year?

[...]

**Paris: Bernard Blier:** [...] It is fantastic how well [the GDR] looks after new talents! Do you know how things are in Paris? Drama schools are not only very expensive, but also only few can enrol, because [during school term] there is no more time to earn money. [...] Perhaps there will be an agent, who likes your type, he [sic] will dress you, organise a role for you and then wants your wages afterwards. Sometimes [you become popular] and for years you pay off the agent for what he [sic] has invested in you. But many remain a photo model for years or end up at the corners of the Boulevards.

[...]

**London: Michael Mellinger:** [...] This is the beginning of a new artistic period for myself [...] I had no reason to complain, I did perform in leading roles at good London theatres (such as the St. James Theatre, Drury Lane, Her Majesty's Theatre etc.) [...] but the never ending hunt for an engagement [...] being dependent on greedy agents, the obligatory parties, [and] public appearances are detrimental to the development of a serious artist. There is an

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<sup>30</sup> Translated from Myriam Sello Christian: "Star müßte man sein ... was wird morgen?", *Neues Leben* 5, 1958, pp. 34-6.

English proverb, 'It doesn't matter what you know – but who you know!' And for the professional development nothing is done for an artist in London.<sup>31</sup>

By giving space to Western stars' complaint that within their own commercial context 'true' art is not possible, the article suggests that under non-commercial conditions (i.e. an implicit reference to the GDR in all of the statements, explicit with Michael Mellinger's) this contradiction would be solved. What is understandably not stated in this argumentation is that even though art may have been less dependent on financial aspects in the GDR context, it was still very much dependent on ideological ones. Precisely such ideological aspects in turn determined the allocation of financial support – art projects not in line with the view of state ideology could not expect any or very little support.

The Western stars' complaint that the commercial nature of their employment prevents them from becoming 'truly professional' artists is paralleled by descriptions of the favourable conditions experienced by guest actors in GDR art production. The argument can implicitly be extended to indigenous East German actors who then almost ubiquitously become associated with the notion of artistic professionalism.

At times the rigid division of 'their fake' and 'our true' actors proved problematic, as the following quote from an article on Angelica Domröse indicates. It disclaims her newly gained star status a year after *Neues Leben* readers voted her 'most favourite actress' in 1962, for reasons usually associated with Western stars.

Angelica Domröse is happy about this honour [being voted most favourite actress] [...]. But she also knows that she did not receive the honour for her *schauspielerische Reife* [professional maturity] but rather more for roles which were very popular with the audiences. 'This is where such a poll reaches its limits,' she states. 'There are some great actors in the GDR who hardly ever get to the top positions of such polls.'<sup>32</sup>

In an attempt not to put Domröse in line with 'fake' Western stars (through mere popularity with the audiences), the reference to her insufficient professional maturity suggests that she will one day be a truly professional artist. This particular emphasis on professionalism and stardom continues throughout the decade, and a similar rhetoric resurfaces in an article on Domröse in 1972,

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, Mellinger, a minor British actor of German origins, had – according to the article accepted a long-term contract with GDR television; whether he actually spent any time at all in the GDR remains uncertain. He certainly appears to have continued his career in British and international films unbroken.

<sup>32</sup> Translated from "Neues Leben besucht den Filmliebling 1962: Angelica Domröse", *Neues Leben*, 4, 1963.

Since 1959 [...] the actress Angelica Domröse has been [appearing] on the cinema screen. [...] since then she has asserted her uninterrupted popularity, and has been in demand among audiences and experts alike. [...] Early on she had been handed the crowns [...], several times given to her by the audiences as a sign of recognition for being the most popular among the popular, before she ever entered a stage. To show that she deserved to carry [the crown], she reduced her income and went for 400 Marks per month to the Berliner Ensemble. [...] In this respect the Domröse did not have it the easy way, because she chose not to have it the easy way.<sup>33</sup>

Once again, popularity in itself is considered an inappropriate path for an actor towards recognition. Only critical acclaim from 'experts' for the artistic performance justifies an elevated status even though the films the articles refer to were made for GDR audiences and expected to be successful with them. Domröse's rejection of being associated with popular culture seems absurd in a society which had taken up the cause of the masses. However, popular culture was seen as linked to commercial industries and the Western opponent, which explains Domröse's own attempt to distance herself from these contexts.

Because they played a major part in the GDR discourse, political factors are usually accepted as the central explanation for the contentious nature of stardom in the East German context.<sup>34</sup> However, I would argue that other factors were in the end more decisive.

The primary goal of political socialisation in the GDR was educating the socialist personality, a personality which was willing to put their knowledge and talents to full use in the cause of the socialist society. In 1958, Walter Ulbricht, head of state and SED, presented the "Ten Commandments of Socialist Morality", a rather peculiar biblical allusion to specific virtues officially required of the socialist personality.<sup>35</sup> In these commandments, solidarity, the collective, and socialist consciousness are the primary keywords, but also far more traditional civic 'virtues' are called upon, such as sense of duty, thriftiness, discipline, and responsibility, all of which contribute to the well-being of society as a whole. The focus clearly rests on a community spirit, i. e. the integration into, some would argue subordination, of the individual under the community.

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<sup>33</sup> The German use of the definite article in front of the surname ascribes an actress with diva status of a Marlene Dietrich. Translated from "... und möglichst immer besser", *FilmSPIEGEL*, 21, 1972.

<sup>34</sup> see for example Stefan Soldovieri (2002).

<sup>35</sup> Walter Ulbricht: "Der Kampf um den Frieden, für den Sieg des Sozialismus, für die nationale Wiedergeburt Deutschlands als friedliebender, demokratischer Staat [speech which included: Die zehn Gebote der sozialistischen Moral]", in Protokoll 1958: Protokoll der Verhandlungen des V. Parteitags der SED, 10. bis 16. Juli 1958 in der Werner-Seelenbinder-Halle zu Berlin", reprinted in Ralph Jessen: "Partei, Staat und 'Bündnispartner': Die Herrschaftsmechanismen der SED-Diktatur", in Matthias Judt (1998), pp. 54f..

Values of egalitarianism and collectivism were not only imposed from without. Ordinary East Germans accepted and internalised these ideals and accordingly shaped expectations toward their own society. After all, throughout history the utopia of a society free of hierarchies has always had an appeal to those without access to power. In particular those elements of socialist ideology that focused on egalitarian principles determined East German collective mentalities and perceptions of social processes. Though I do not intend to draw a direct parallel between Germany's national-socialist and East Germany's socialist model of society, arguably the advancement of the *kleinen Mannes* (the 'small', i.e. powerless citizen), and similar utopian ideas overlapped in both systems. In fact, as with the notion of *Bildung* referred to earlier, the idealisation of the *kleiner Mann* is in its essence a specifically German petit-bourgeois ideological construct that spans more than just the political contexts of the Third Reich and the GDR, and emerges as one of the ideological constants of German society.

Although the GDR's *Gleichschaltung* (forcing everyone into line) never reached the scale of Maoist China or the USSR under Stalin, we need to presuppose a much wider consensus among the GDR population with regard to egalitarian values than has so far been acknowledged, even if narratives of opposition and resistance to dictatorships are currently more 'appropriate' and 'acceptable'. In fact, much of the resistance that manifested itself in the GDR against the government – as for example of grammar school students, or farmers and petit bourgeois crafts- and tradespeople in the 1950s – resulted precisely from a neglect of the proclaimed egalitarian principles and the discrimination of certain social strata.<sup>36</sup>

It is exactly at this point where the ideologies of socialist society and stardom are diametrically opposed to each other. Stardom is a phenomenon which depends on the masses, which requires that many people must show significant interest in the star, and that they must be able to recognise themselves in the typical characteristics and typical behaviour embodied by the star. At the same time a star also needs to be a highly specific and individuated representation of the typical. The star needs to stand out from the crowd in order to be noticed, which is often achieved by assigning the star a superlative dimension.<sup>37</sup> The association with superlatives makes the star unlike the average person, so that he or she is individually excellent: more beautiful, more intelligent, more noticed by others, wealthier, stronger in pursuing and

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<sup>36</sup> On opposition in the GDR see Ehrhart Neubert (1997).

<sup>37</sup> cf. Violette Morin: "Les Olympiens", *Communications* 2, referred to in Richard Dyer (1979), p. 49.

achieving goals in life and as a character on screen and so on. Thus the star essentially embodies an ideology of individualism, which causes problems in any society that either plays down individualism or that champions collective values.

Such was the case in East Germany, where the individualism of stardom stood in direct opposition to the ideological values proclaimed and also widely accepted for socialism. The East German discourse on stardom itself never explicitly discussed the incompatibility of stardom and socialist society in terms of individualism and collectivism. The contemporaneous discursive participants seem to have been unable to exactly identify this problem as artistic and political arguments prevail. However, with hindsight we can see that the strategies in the appropriation of stardom and star images tried to resolve exactly this incompatibility.

## The Paradox of Stardom

The co-existence of ordinary elements (shared by most other members of a given society) and extra-ordinary ones (unique and outstanding) is the central paradox of the star image. The star is someone like you and me but at the same time different from you and me. The fascination of the star image lies exactly in this paradox, the simultaneousness and concurrence of contradictory elements which unfold from various angles. This paradox is the key to an understanding of stardom in socialist German cinema, although it has been equally important in discourses on acting in other historical and social contexts.

Already in 1778, Denis Diderot's *The Paradox of Acting* discussed the contradictory position of the actor between reality and illusion.<sup>38</sup> The image of the actor oscillates between being artificially, intentionally created and mediated and yet conveys the impression of being immediate, natural and unmediated. According to Knut Hickethier this phenomenon intensified with the technological progress of audio-visual reproduction in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup> Closely related to the paradox of illusion and reality is the notion of authenticity: whether stars come across in their image as 'real'. Only an image that appears authentic becomes credible and is accepted by the recipients.

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<sup>38</sup> *The Paradox of Acting* was written 1773-78 and first published in 1830.

<sup>39</sup> cf. Knut Hickethier (1997), p. 32.

A valuable expansion on the phenomena of illusion and reality is provided by John Ellis in his essay on the 'photo-effect' of 'presence yet absence' in cinema. Ellis transfers to cinema Roland Barthes' proposition in *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* that the essence of still photography is the ability to signify the prior existence of something now absent. The effect of presence-absence feeds into the paradox, the star is available for desire (visibly and audibly on screen) and yet unattainable (as a real touchable person).<sup>40</sup> Ellis argues that the star image provides a foreknowledge to the fiction offered in cinema. When this information enters subsidiary forms of circulation (press, television, gossip) it can be confirmed or exceeded and contradicted before it feeds back into future performances.<sup>41</sup> Ellis claims that the image is always incomplete outside the film text, because it lacks the synthesis of voice, body and motion offered by film. But because of the presence-absence effect, the film is also never a completion of the image, it only promises that the performance will be more complete than the extra-filmic image.<sup>42</sup> Each new text adds to the completion of the star's image, yet paradoxically, a completion can never be achieved.

A star is someone who offers himself or herself to the audiences, but whose existence also depends on the interest of the audiences in their persona. Stars stand at the intersection between public demand and producer initiative.<sup>43</sup> Everything hinges on whether the audiences accept someone as a star; or as Hickethier puts it, whether an auratic relation can develop between the actor and the audiences which goes beyond mere performance and impersonation. He adds that a person only becomes accepted as a star when an audience can recognise characteristics which it also ascribes to itself, even though they are heightened and idealised in the performance.<sup>44</sup> While a star is highly individuated, she or he is never wholly unique.<sup>45</sup> The star shares many features with other people in society, features that make him or her appear typical. At the same time, the star is set apart from society through exceptional features, such as immense beauty, social success and material wealth.

In addition to this dependency on the audiences the star is also bound to a particular cultural and historical moment. Stars rise and fall in popularity and

<sup>40</sup> cf. John Ellis: "Stars as a Cinematic Phenomenon" (first published 1982), in *Star Texts, Image and Performance in Film and Television*, ed. by Jeremy. G. Butler, Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991, p. 303.

<sup>41</sup> ibid., p. 311.

<sup>42</sup> ibid., p. 304.

<sup>43</sup> cf. Richard Dyer (1979), p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> cf. Kunt Hickethier (1997), p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> cf. Paul McDonald (2000), p. 7.

acceptance, they are fashionable at one time and no longer at another, some continue or are revived long after their death. Only when they reflect current social meanings, will they find resonance in the audiences. At the same time, however, they can also define fashion by fixing a type of beauty and defining the 'norms' of attractiveness. A star may be popular at one time but not at another, and some stars transcend history, location, or even different social systems, as was the case with some East German film stars. Examples include Manfred Krug who kept his rebellious image when he moved from East to West Germany, and Armin Mueller-Stahl who had many different facets in his East German, West German and international productions. This is the point at which ideological criteria of a society gain significance because they determine the way stars are produced and consumed because the "social meaning" of star images modifies along with society's changes.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, it is important to interpret the production and reception of stars in the specific context of their cultural historical context.

## The Cultivation of the Ordinary

Unlike the equilibrium between ordinariness and extra-ordinariness in conventional stardom, the East German notion of stardom as it was established in the official discourse differed significantly from Western conceptions in so far as socialist ideology emphasised specific elements. The extra-ordinary elements of star images had to be attenuated in favour of the ordinary ones – the value attributed to wealth and individualism, for example was rejected in favour of the value of modest living and integration into the socialist community. The East German discourse on stardom determined the image construction in such a way that 'extra-ordinary' attributes were continuously played down, occasionally to the point where they were completely denied and excluded, resulting in a phenomenon I will call the 'cultivation of the ordinary'. This proved the most useful discursive tool in the appropriation of stardom in socialist German cinema. What distinguishes DEFA stars from those of commercial cinema, is that the various elements of supporting a perception within notions of 'ordinariness' are not only dominant, but usually also combined and present at the same time, in particular in the off-screen image.

However, at the same time as this dominance of the ordinary determined the way stardom was defined, it also endangered its existence. This is particularly

<sup>46</sup> cf. Richard Dyer (1979), p. 14.



apparent in those cases where the cultivation of the ordinary achieved a perception of East German actors as picture personalities rather than stars, as I shall discuss later in this chapter. Thus the unbalancing of the paradox of stardom through a shift towards the ordinary explains why stars are more difficult to detect in DEFA cinema, and arguably in socialist cinema in general.

### Issues of Terminology

In the GDR, the disapproval of the English term *Star* (only adapted through capitalisation) formed an important part of the discourse.<sup>47</sup> Through its origin in the English language and close association with Hollywood's cinema industry, *Star* was commonly associated with an ideologically objectionable influence of the imperialist archenemy America and hence its use remained limited in officially approved language. Nonetheless, rather sporadically the English term was used for domestic stars without the pejorative connotations that were generally attached to it. The German translation *Stern* was considered less problematic than *Star* and was consequently preferred, as in the case of *Unsere Filmsterne* (Our Filmstars), a book containing photographs and short biographies on popular GDR actors published in 1962.<sup>48</sup> The book's introduction by Hans Rodenberg, deputy minister of culture, highlights the distinctions in star terminology:

Even if this book is called *Unsere Filmsterne*, this is by no means a call for *Star-Überheblichkeit* [star-arrogance] and *geschminkter Gottähnlichkeit* [likeness to God achieved through make-up], as we can sadly find them so often among the top actors of Western film.<sup>49</sup>

If 'Star' was not replaced by the German translation 'Stern', the discursive context generally set the distinguishing parameters and negotiated the connotations towards the ordinary. Often the Star was then described in categories that allowed no comparisons with Hollywood stars; or the English term was used in inverted commas to mark an ironic dissociation. Yet at the same time collectibles used the term unquestioningly for the *Starpostkarte* (star postcard) and *Star-Parade* (a collection of

<sup>47</sup> Terminological distinctions between popular Hollywood actors and popular European actors were mobilised throughout all epochs in German and European discourses, see for example Knut Hickethier (1998), p. 334, or Ginette Vincendeau (2000), p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> *Unsere Filmsterne. Jahrbuch Neues Leben Magazin der Jugend*, Berlin (GDR): Verlag Junge Welt, 1962.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid*, introduction.

colour slides with publicity stills).<sup>50</sup> Letters to film journals from ordinary audience members often conformed to the official direction of the terminological discourse, and aimed to distinguish between Hollywood stars and DEFA 'stars',

**[Filmspiegel reader]** Petra Ditges told us about her film darlings – she preferred not to use the term 'star' for its notorious connection to fuss about Western stars – [...].<sup>51</sup>

**Helmut Richter, Leipzig [Filmspiegel reader]:** The term 'star' is hardly ever used in connection to our DEFA. And rightly so. We have got plenty of good actors, but none of them is fussed about in a way a star would be.<sup>52</sup>

Other readers explicitly criticised the ambivalent and restrained use of the English term, and the immobilising effects this had on stars in the GDR context.

**Günter Striegler, Berlin-Pankow [Filmspiegel reader]:** For years we have given the word star a wide berth, engaged ourselves in intricate manoeuvring. On the one hand, we don't want things to be like on the other side [i.e. West Germany] – who would want that anyway – on the other hand, we don't know what things should look like over here. Right now over here nothing looks like anything [...].<sup>53</sup>

The most favoured term to cover the notion of star in GDR-German was *Publikumsliebling* or *Filmiebling* (audience darling or film darling). Reader responses repeatedly declared: "Not stars – but darlings" and some explained their preference,

**Helmut Richter, Leipzig [Filmspiegel reader]:** The Western countries use the term *Filmstar* a lot. Time and again new stars appear, and the old ones try to have their share [in the attention] as well. [...] We have plenty of good actors, [...] For us, only their *Können* [ability/professionalism] is relevant. Nevertheless, I assume that all cinema-goers have got their own *Lieblinge* [darlings], who they like to see in a new film [...] Our actors should not agree to perform in mediocre or bad films. In this way, our *Lieblinge* could directly improve the production [of films].<sup>54</sup>

DEFA's stars themselves, when asked how they would define a film star often incidentally also favoured *Publikumsliebling* thus following the generally accepted practice of the discourse,

**Christel Bodenstein:** I don't think much of someone who is declared a star [by the industry]. I think, here we only have audience darlings. [...] the audience needs its darlings.  
[...]

<sup>50</sup> "Meinungen: Stars und Werbung", *Filmspiegel*, 3, 1965, p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> Translated from Horst W. Lukas: "Um den Film bei uns: Haben wir keine Stars?", *Filmspiegel*, 25, 1964.

<sup>52</sup> Translated from "Meinungen: Stars und Werbung", *Filmspiegel*, 3, 1965, p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> Translated from "Meinungen: Haben wir keine Stars?", *Filmspiegel*, 1, 1965, p. 16.

<sup>54</sup> Translated from "Meinungen: Stars und Werbung", *Filmspiegel*, 3, 1965, p. 16.

*FilmSPIEGEL*: Do you think that DEFA needs film stars [uses the English term]?  
Günther Simon: Most definitely, the audiences wants their *Lieblinge* [darlings].<sup>55</sup>

With regard to the notion of professionalism the preference of *Publikumsliebling* is actually rather paradox. 'Audience darling' does not explicitly imply outstanding acting and performing qualities. Instead, it alludes to mass popularity, and suggests a close, emotional and one-to-one relationship between actors and their audiences. This in particular made the term highly suitable within the collective-focused GDR context, as it contributed to the cultivation of the ordinary. As acting qualities and professionalism were reflected upon in every single press article, these connotations too became part of the semantics of *Publikumsliebling*. Interestingly, the one place where one would expect the term audience darling to have been used liberally, in the press popularity polls, it is absent. Although the purpose of the polls was to find the most popular actors, the calls for contribution were framed by high-brow artistic criteria. Neither *Publikumsliebling* nor *Star* were used, but instead actress and actor. The standard call went as this: "Which GDR actress and actor showed the best artistic performance?", and in the result the "winners of the film award of our youth magazine" were presented.<sup>56</sup> By presenting the top stars with an award, the poll could be legitimised through high art and not mere mass popularity.

The term *Publikumsliebling* ideally served the concept of egalitarianism, and including attributes such as being 'down to earth' and accessible for everyone it provided the antithesis of a 'star'. In this way, the decision to use a specific terminology contributed to the construction of the ordinary.

### The Construction of 'Ordinariness'

Many press articles place their presentation of a star explicitly within a discussion of ordinariness. An example is the following feature on actress and upcoming star Marita Böhme, published in 1966.

A *ganz gewöhnliche* [absolutely ordinary] story

She thinks her story is ordinary, considers her artistic development normal, lacking sensational events and hence rather unsuitable to write an article about all this. And she certainly is not toying with this idea [of pretending her life his ordinary], which I come to realise when I sit opposite her in her Berlin flat. She seems almost embarrassed not to have any interesting anecdotes, or something 'special' to offer. [...]

<sup>55</sup> Translated from Horst W. Lukas: "Um den Film bei uns: Haben wir keine Stars?", *FilmSPIEGEL*, 25, 1964.

<sup>56</sup> cf. *Neues Leben* 12, 1962, 2, 1970 and 12, 1971.

And while she is telling me all this, without any trace of being aloof as it would befit a star, I begin to think. Is there really nothing sensational about her story? I guess Marita Böhme is right. It is a 'normal' story of much work and her reward, of smaller and bigger successes, a story which many young people could tell, who find their way naturally in our society. A really ordinary story ...<sup>57</sup>

The headline introduces the core argument which is taken up throughout with repeated usage of the word 'normal' and a negation of the terms 'special', 'sensational' and 'interesting'. The actress herself is described in terms of her modesty and her rejection of being extra-ordinary. Nonetheless, underneath the *gewöhnliche* an underlying irony (note the suggestive three dots at the end) and the journalist's eagerness to discover some outstanding information about the actress actually signify some sense of extra-ordinariness.

As the extract on Marita Böhme above indicates, many press reports on GDR stars either refer to the reporter 'checking' the DEFA star for any notions of eccentricity or aloofness, or to the stars' own unawareness of their exceptional status. Thus in another example in a *Neues Leben* feature on Angelica Domröse from 1963, the actress is described as having gained not the slightest bit of arrogance.<sup>58</sup> That the reporter should have 'checked' Domröse for such a criteria, is only deductible against the background of the star discourse where such behaviour is ascribed to Western stars. The feature asserts that Domröse, who "despite" having already appeared in five DEFA productions, in four of them in the leading role, and despite having been voted into the top rank of the popularity polls for 1962, was still a normal, modest actress "[whose] success in film did not go to her head".

Another strategy of confirming star's relation to ordinariness, which can be found in press articles, is the practice of letting the stars speak for themselves and explicitly reject being treated as a star, as in the following instance the actor Stefan Lisewski,

An almost everyday encounter

[...]

Since *Lied der Matrosen* audiences have kept an eye on him, and in black and white [as a photograph] he is decorating the walls of many a teenage girl. (I know, he also finds this very strange.) But he is a favourite with the audiences. So he has to live with this, also with the fact that today we are going to publish four close-ups [for our readers]. "Do you really have to do this?", he says [...].<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Translated from "Eine ganz gewöhnliche Geschichte", *Filmspiegel*, 3, 1966.

<sup>58</sup> Translated from "Neues Leben besuchte den Filmliebling 1962 Angelica Domröse", *Neues Leben*, 4, 1963.

<sup>59</sup> Translated from "Eine beinahe alltägliche Begegnung", *Neues Leben*, 10, 1962.

The main focus here is Lisewski's star status in terms of modesty and rejection of notions of the extra-ordinary. While fandom is accepted and supported with epiphenomena (the four close-ups accompanying the *Neues Leben* interview), it is also ridiculed through the article's ironic tone. The manner in which the reporter mocks the teenagers' worship of Lisewski as something that should not be happening in East Germany serves as a corrective measure. Fandom itself is legitimate, but not in an 'obsessive' manner.

Where stars were perceived to move away from what they shared with the crowd, corrective criticism was raised alongside the obligatory elements that would signal ordinariness, as the following extract from a feature on Angelica Domröse indicates.

By the way, Angelica not only likes to play young girls of our times, she is also a typical representative of GDR youth. She aims to provide quality in her field and is critical of other people's work. And many more things she shares with other young people. She lives in her own small one-bedroom flat, plans how to best make ends meet for the month to come, saves money for her next holiday and still does not have her own car. She worries about being able to handle her work efficiently so that she can have some free hours for her records or a good book. [...] Yet, one can also get the impression that critical acclaim from her colleagues means more to her than the opinion of her audiences. But after all, she does create her roles on stage and screen for the people in the stall seats [and should not ignore them].<sup>60</sup>

In this case, then, Domröse is criticised for having lost touch with her East German fans, and is reminded of her obligations. This reminder reflects the utilitarian notion of art in socialism, where art was not to be an aesthetic creation for its own sake, but instead expected to be of *persönlichkeitsbildende Wirkungsweise* (of an effect to shape the personality).<sup>61</sup> Domröse's alleged reliance on solely professional criticism associates her with the notion of art for art's sake and dissociates her from 'real life', an error which must be duly corrected.

The explicit discussion of 'ordinariness' outlined above characterised the GDR's discourse on stardom and the creation of individual DEFA star images to a significant degree. More often than not, however, the construction of 'ordinariness' functioned at a more implicit level. The following sections of this chapter will analyse these aspects in greater detail.

<sup>60</sup> Translated from "Neues Leben besuchte den Filmliebling 1962 Angelica Domröse", *Neues Leben*, 4, 1963.

<sup>61</sup> cf. entry "Kunst", *Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch* (1978), p. 428.

## Social Immobility

'Social immobility' is meant here as a contrast to the term 'social mobility' suggested by Francesco Alberoni and Barry King as one of the preconditions of stardom. Alberoni and King argued that the increased mobility of the bourgeois social system offers everyone, in principle, the opportunity to become a star.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, only few people actually manage to achieve this goal, so that social mobility is simultaneously ordinary and extra-ordinary. In the GDR social transformations brought upon by the empowerment of workers and peasants generated an unseen social mobility. This mobility involved a move 'upward' into positions of power for those from the formerly suppressed classes (workers and peasants), and a move 'downward' in the sense of losing positions of economic and political power for the aristocratic and bourgeois classes. At the same time, East German society was also characterised by growing social immobility. This was partly due to the egalitarian principles that were put into effect by the state's policies, but also because during the 1960s, the GDR "became a stagnating society in two different ways. It was blocked from without by the Wall, and blocked from within by a frozen, rigid social structure [...] in which 'channels of mobility' [became] closed."<sup>63</sup>

The principle of egalitarianism had a significant impact on the construction of DEFA star images in that initial social mobility changed into social immobility. This would imply that an actor was depicted as someone who rose from being a normal worker to being an acknowledged star wherever possible. In a second step the egalitarian principle was taken further when DEFA actors were shown to have changed neither their life-style, nor their social status and personal attitudes since the 'rise' to stardom. This contradictory phenomenon is characteristic of socialist society as a whole: the doctrine of equality inevitably impeded social differentiation so that initial social mobility turned into social immobility the closer the society developed towards its goal of egalitarianism, i.e. an equal society by definition should not and could not have stars.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Francesco Alberoni: "The Powerless Elite: Theory and Sociological Research on the Phenomenon of the Stars", in *Sociology of Mass Communications*, ed. by Denis McQuail, London: Penguin, 1972, pp. 75-98; cf. Barry King: "The Social Significance of Stardom", unpublished manuscript, 1974, quoted in Richard Dyer (1979), p. 8.

<sup>63</sup> Ralph Jessen: " Mobility and Blockage During the 1970s", in Konrad H. Jarausch (1999), p. 346.

<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the younger GDR generations suffered from a massive reduction of their social mobility. This, however, was not entirely based on advanced egalitarian developments, but rather on the simple fact that decisive positions were occupied by those who had gained them in the post-war and early GDR period. cf. Martin Kohli: "Die DDR als Arbeitsgesellschaft? Arbeit, Lebenslauf und soziale Differenzierung", in *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, ed. by Jürgen Kocka and Hartmut Kaelble, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994, p. 53.

Recent sociological studies have described the GDR variously as either a homogenous society, in the sense of being de-subjectivised, de-differentiated, and classless, or as a *Ständegesellschaft* (society of class and rank), or a society which operated through *Funktionsmacht* (functional power).<sup>65</sup> Both interpretations acknowledge the attempts of the GDR authorities to provide social and material equality for all East Germans, which resulted in a significant, though by far not complete, levelling out of social status. However, whilst social mobility was supported to a certain level, stagnation (in the sense of insufficient dimensions of individual differentiation) did inevitably occur, where it was ascribed positive evaluations using the rhetoric of egalitarian objectives.<sup>66</sup>

How was this positive notion of social immobility integrated into the construction of star images? The star had to be shown as being part of the ongoing social changes and rise of the working class, but also as being part of a community of equals. References to the star's working class background, or in case he or she did not have one, references to a manual labour training and descriptions of a life-style with average material wealth were used to integrate the star into the collective of all East German workers. A few examples from press articles will serve to illustrate this dimension.

### **In touch with the Working Class**

An ideal embodiment of the working-class star was Eva-Maria Hagen, because she combined an appropriate family background with an apprenticeship typical of this social milieu.

The former metalworker apprentice [Eva-Maria Hagen] at the Rail-Repairment Combine Wittenberge actually wanted to become a technical draughts-woman, well actually! But when visiting the World Festival in Berlin in 1951, she suddenly came much closer to her secret dream: the world of the stage. [...] Eva-Maria is a working-class child. But most film directors see her in different roles. That's too bad!<sup>67</sup>

Name and location of Hagen's former workplace confirm the reference to her working class background, which serves as an indicator of social mobility: the simple

<sup>65</sup> It is not the task of this project to discuss these theories. cf. Frank Adler and Rolf Reißig, Artur Meier, or Sigrid Meuschel, all discussed in Martin Kohli (1994), pp. 35f.; Kocka, Jürgen: "The GDR: A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship", in Konrad H. Jarausch (1999), pp. 17-26.

<sup>66</sup> cf. Martin Kohli (1994), p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> Translated from "Steckbrief Eva-Maria Hagen", *Neues Leben*, 3, 1962.

worker who has achieved her goal of becoming a respected actor and star. At the same time, the article conveys pertinent issues of its socio-political context. The 1950s were a time when due to an immanent shortage of labour force (caused by the war, by the stream of refugees to West Germany, and by slow domestic technological improvements) SED and GDR government tried to enforce a "promotion of women into production" into technical areas, and many women began to take on professions traditionally taken by men.<sup>68</sup> Hagen as a female metalworker is one such example and symbolises the transition of women in the workforce. But she also functions here as a role model for other East German women, as traditional perceptions of typically male or female professions persisted and many women were reluctant to move into technical occupations and manual labour. The manner in which Hagen's rootedness in working class origin is combined with artistic aspiration moreover marks her as a symbol of the cultural goals of the *Bitterfelder Weg*. She embodies the state's attempt to bring together the spheres of manual labour and art.

If a star could not claim such roots, a working class origin was discursively replaced with reports of live appearances which presented the star in close contact with factory workers. DEFA stars would get in touch with workers in several ways, such as visits and face-to-face encounters with audiences after film screenings, which are known from commercial film industries as well. More pertinent for the specifics of GDR audiences contact are visits of stars to factories and production lines – not all of these visits were preceded by a film screening. A typical example is the following report on Christine Laszar. Significant is the attention given to Laszar's active engagement with the East German public, since she was, as previously noted, one of the few actors to migrate from West to East Germany during the late 1950s. Not only was she West German, but also in her first roles at DEFA had portrayed Americans and West Germans. In *Geschwader Fledermaus* (Squadron Bat, 1958) she was an American secretary at an US Airbase in Vietnam, and in *Weiβes Blut* (White Blood, 1959) the daughter of a West German banker and wife of a Federal army officer. To counter her perception as West German, the article went to great lengths to point out Laszar's integration into GDR society:

She certainly does not lack an insight into our life. Over the past six months she was a guest at FDJ groups many times, went to public discussions and nationally owned factories.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> cf. Hannelore Scholz (1997), p. 22f..

<sup>69</sup> FDJ was the Free German Youth, the socialist youth organisation for teenagers and people in their early twenties. Translated from "Steckbrief Christine Laszar", *Neues Leben*, 5, 1961.

The article explicitly mentions the youth organisation and nationally owned factories, which were not only two major institutionalised structures of socialisation in the GDR, but also structures that clearly distinguished it from West Germany. A later feature integrates Laszar even more thoroughly with East German everyday life and social institutions, when it describes her involvement in local parliamentary responsibilities:

She is a member of the city council in the town of Teltow. Together with the citizens she took action and knuckled down to turning the town's Konsum restaurant into a well visited centre of culture. Here, her idea of the educated nation takes shape. Moreover she holds an active position in the *Wohngebietsausschuss* [housing and district committee] – and as we all know – a rather active position on film and television as well.<sup>70</sup>

In relating Laszar with workers and the GDR's specific social institutions, the 'flaw' of her West German background is erased. Reports such as these also created excitement among workers: if a star was visiting so many other factories, she or he might turn up at their own workplace at some point. Unfortunately detailed information on the frequency of such 'production' visits is as yet not available.

Even more unusual than visits to factories are the *Patenschaften* ('godparenthoods'), in which many DEFA stars were assigned a specific *Patenbrigade* (workers' brigade) that they were expected to be in regular contact with, i.e. meet them at their workplace and for social gatherings. Such a system of *Patenbrigaden* was prevalent throughout GDR society.<sup>71</sup> The correspondence between Erwin Geschonneck and a team of tram maintenance workers from Straßenbahnhof Nordend in Berlin from November 1967 exemplifies such a *Patenschaft*. The text below was sent to Geschonneck on a postcard at a spa where he recovered after an illness.<sup>72</sup>

1 November 1967

Dear Mr. Geschonneck,

we hope that you have received our [first] postcard [and] thank you for your own nice postcard [which you sent to us from Bad Elster]. We hope you were pleased with the visit two of our colleagues paid to you. [It would be our pleasure] to know that this visit has proved to you how much we *schätzen und verehren* [honour and admire/worship] you. The

<sup>70</sup> Bert Kirte: "Filmspiegel Interview. Christine Laszar: keine Scheu vor Zeitproblemen", *Filmspiegel* 7, 1966.

<sup>71</sup> The practice was particularly common for kindergarten groups and school classes, which each had their 'own' *Patenbrigade*. These brigades accompanied or organised school trips and of course visits to the production line, in turn school classes invited them for coffee and cake, and often representatives of *Patenbrigaden* were present when the annual school results were handed out.

<sup>72</sup> Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, (Nachlass Erwin Geschonneck), Signatur 319.

film *Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog* is another example that you have achieved a *glanzleistung* [sic, brilliant performance] on which we congratulate you with our whole heart. Looking forward to seeing you soon *bei uns* [at our factory].

Your brigade<sup>73</sup>

This postcard documents the regularity with which meetings between specific workers and actors took place (a rather unusual practice in the Western star context), and shows that Geschonneck shared even rather personal matters (his illness) with them. Meanwhile, style and tone of the message also indicate the awe with which the DEFA star was approached. Despite the knowledge of Geschonneck's working class origin, these workers retained a respectful, admiring distance to their idol, which in this particular case was not lessened by the real-life-contact envisaged by the state authorities.

### The average life-style

Much of the GDR press coverage on DEFA stars concentrated on the simple life-style and living conditions of DEFA stars, such as that they have small flats, no central heating, or live in a run down neighbourhood. The following extracts from 1961, 1963 and 1983 may serve as examples. They were taken from features published on Angelica Domröse, Annekathrin Bürger and Gojko Mitic in regional and national dailies.<sup>74</sup> All articles describe a moment of the stars' life style which supports the notion of ordinariness.

Where and how does Angelica Domröse live? In student halls at the Academy of Film and Television, sharing her 'digs' with a fellow student. Anyway, she does not appreciate balls and night clubs too much. She ensures us that studying is her major focus for the time being.<sup>75</sup>

The *Königskind* (king's child) Magdalena is no princess [...] Annekathrin Bürger's dressing room at the Babelsberg studios is small, economical, and practical.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Archiv der Akademie der Künste (Ost), Berlin, Nachlass Erwin Geschonneck.

<sup>74</sup> Before the publication of these articles Angelica Domröse had gained recognition with her leading role in the highly popular *Verwirrung der Liebe* (Confusions of Love, 1959) and the television production *Papas neue Freundin* (Dad's New Girl-Friend, 1960). Annekathrin Bürger had performed leading roles in *Eine Berliner Romanze* (A Berlin Romance, 1956), *Verwirrung der Liebe*, *Guten Tag, lieber Tag* (Good Morning, Dear Day, 1961), and *Königskinder* (Star-Crossed Lovers, 1962).

Moreover Bürger had continuously reached one of the top three ranks in the popularity polls of *Neues Leben* since 1960. Gojko Mitic, due to his stunning performances as DEFA's Indian chief, was voted into the top ranks of popularity polls between every year between 1967 and 1976.

<sup>75</sup> Translated from Edmund Feuerstein: "Was macht *Papas neue Freundin*?", *Berliner Zeitung*, Berlin, 25 January 1961.

<sup>76</sup> Translated from Norbert Kai: "Das 'Königskind' Magdalena ist keine Prinzessin. Senftenberger Gespräch mit Annekathrin Bürger vor ihrem Wechsel zum Fernsehfunk Ensemble", *Norddeutsche Neueste Nachrichten*, 13 July 1963.

His green grocer from the corner-shop [in his *Kiez*] knows exactly whether he is in or not - "The car!" Gojko Mitic offers a bottle of beer to everyone, and appears rather unheroic. In morning gown, smiling and barefoot. On the *Kachelofen* [coal oven] are various awards for best actor from the popular magazine *Neues Leben*. "Well, cheers, Gojko!" [...] <sup>77</sup>

All three texts construct an image of modest living and hard working ethos – the lack of space is emphasised in the case of Domröse, who has got to share her room at the student halls, or Bürger's small dressing room at the film studio. In Mitic's case it is highlighted that he lives in a traditional (at that time somewhat run-down) proletarian district of Berlin, in a flat which lacks the basics of modernisation.<sup>78</sup> Admittedly, the majority of the GDR's prominent actors did not share such a simple life-style as they lived in detached houses in the leafy suburbs of Berlin (like Pankow, Niederschönhausen and Köpenick) and in the country. However, their houses by no means surpassed the normal, average standards of GDR 'luxury'. In this respect Mitic was more suitable than his star colleagues to be visited at his home. His life style was surprisingly distinct from the material comfort of most other prominent DEFA stars, but not distinct from the average GDR citizen, which explains why he was chosen for a report of this kind.

Drinking beer from bottles and calling Mitic by his first name further stresses the equal footing between the star and his visitors, journalists who are to be seen as representatives of the ordinary East German. Particularly the first two texts invoke the negative connotations of conceptions of commercial stardom such as glamour (i.e. excess) and moral decline (i.e. arrogance). Domröse sharing her bedroom and Bürger's simple dressing room are positioned as a contrast to the luxury for which Hollywood stars are renowned. Moreover, the headline of the Bürger article "The *Königskind* (king's child) Magdalena is no princess", is a complex pun on the off-on-screen persona of the actress. Using the reference to her latest film *Königskinder*, whose literal translation is 'king's children', the actress is introduced as being neither a princess in her film roles, nor in real life, where her name Bürger – which translates as citizen – contributes further to the notion of ordinariness.<sup>79</sup>

In all of the above text excerpts from press reports, the stars in question were claimed to be ordinary. The rejection of 'excess', and the retained unity with their

<sup>77</sup> Translated from "Zu Hause bei: Gojko Mitic [as an autograph]", *Junge Welt*, 09 July 1983.

<sup>78</sup> At that time Mitic lived in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg.

<sup>79</sup> To my knowledge, Annekathrin Bürger was one of the very few East German actresses to have changed her name, as most GDR actors performed under their normal given names. Originally she was called Annekathrin Rammelt, Rammelt being a rather undesirable surname in German, as to *rammeln* is a rather vulgar version of saying 'to have sex'.

social background blends them with the crowd and functions as a proof that East German society is what it claims to be: a society of few social differences. Consequently, these image constructions can also serve educational purposes – the modesty of stars is to function as an example for everyone else, as if the articles are trying to say, 'if such well-deserving talents are modest, so should you'.

### **Private Versus Public Lives and the Notion of Authenticity**

According to Richard deCordova, the distinction between picture personality and star is marked by the knowledge about an actor's professional and personal life.<sup>80</sup> A picture personality is identified by a name and

the form of intertextuality, the recognition and identification of an actor from film to film [it designated]. [...] The site of interest was to be the personality of the player as it was depicted in film [and so] knowledge was restricted to the player's professional existence – either to his/her representation in films or to his/her previous work in film and theatre.<sup>81</sup>

With the star, however, the knowledge extends beyond their professional existence and expands into the private area of the actor's life. Details are given about how stars live, what kind of clothes or food they buy, if they are in love and with whom and so on. According to deCordova it is through the respective degree of professional and private information, that star and picture personality become distinguishable.

The star is characterised by a fairly thoroughgoing articulation of the paradigm professional life/private life. With the emergence of the star, the question of the player's existence outside his/her work in films entered discourse. [...] The private lives of the stars emerged as a new site of knowledge and truth. [...] private and professional become two autonomous spheres [...]. It is important to note, however, that these two spheres are constituted in what might be called an analogous or redundant relation. [...] The private life of the star was not to be in contradiction with his/her film image – at least not in terms of its moral tenor.<sup>82</sup>

I would argue that within the East German context the relative absence of knowledge about an actor's private sphere foregrounded the perception of the actor as picture personality rather than star and through this contributed to the cultivation of the ordinary. Incidentally, such a distinction between picture personality and star was also made by East German audiences,

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<sup>80</sup> Richard deCordova: "The Emergence of the Star System in America", in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. by Christine Gledhill, London, New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 17-29.

<sup>81</sup> ibid., pp. 24-6.

<sup>82</sup> ibid., pp. 26f..

**H. Jahr, Gera [Filmspiegel reader]:** It all depends on the personality [...] There have always been few 'stars' in Germany. They were almost like an exception. Because of their *Können* (ability) and personality, however, many of them developed into *versierte* (professional) film actors, [...]. So the correct way to ask would be: Haven't we got any film actors [and not haven't we got any stars].<sup>83</sup>

Knowledge about the private lives of DEFA actors (e.g. details about partners, marital status, or children) was generally scarce. Children were occasionally mentioned, but only in order to portray actresses as energetic mothers who handled the double burden of family and working life well.<sup>84</sup> Partners were usually only mentioned if they were actors or involved in film production, so that in this way the private could be related to the professional sphere. Generally, it was considered sensationalist and unprofessional to refer to the private sphere of actors. This respect for stars' private lives was itself also rooted in established German perceptions of actors as people whose private life was irrelevant for their professional artistry. By contrast Hollywood, in its handling of public relations, was frequently chastised as an industry which prioritised scandals over professional artistry merely to gain attention. The following extract from the youth magazine *Neues Leben* reflects this point by claiming a disregard of the professional life of Western actors in their domestic press:

Time and again the Western film magazines provide articles about petty sensations, which Hollywood stars throw themselves into, or which are made up by efficient managers. [...] [This] is not always comparable to the value of [the stars'] professional performance.<sup>85</sup>

It is clear from this criticism, that similar 'sensational' reports about East German actors would not be published. To a certain extent, however, the press was in a dilemma, as it could not entirely withhold knowledge about the private life of actors. Such knowledge authenticates a star image and was thus necessary to support the perception of stars as 'real' and ordinary people. Likewise such knowledge was necessary to construct an image which differentiated DEFA stars from their counterparts in commercial cinema. Hence, the release of information about stars' private lives was characterised by two features: 'sensational' aspects were withheld; while any private details published were invariably tied to a more professional

<sup>83</sup> Translated from "Meinungen: Haben wir keine Stars?", *Filmspiegel*, 1, 1965, p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> An example would be "Jenny zwischen sechs und acht" about actress Jenny Gröllmann, *Neues Leben* 12, 1975, pp. 30-5.

<sup>85</sup> The German original uses 'Sensationchen', a diminutive which carries connotations of sensationalism and 'Wert ihrer Leistungen', which I translated as professional performance. Translated from "Sind Stars gefragt?", *Neues Leben*, 9, 1955, p. 7.

aspect. The following extract from a 1961 "Steckbrief" article on actress Marita Böhme exemplifies these aspects.

So far, her name could not be found on DEFA's film brochures. Marita Böhme has been studying at the drama school Berlin for the past three years. [...] She was cast for the leading role of *Auf der Sonnenseite*. [...] She remembers the construction workers at Vetschau and the time when she became friends with them [when they at first had not believed she was the] leading actress. [...] After having performed with the amateur drama group of her secondary school and thinking she might be an actress one day [...] she became a state examined kindergarten teacher, because she liked being with children she had long since decided for this profession. [...] Now she is engaged at the regional theatre Parchim. She knows that she can lay the foundations [for her professionalism] here. [...] Quite often Marita Böhme travels to smaller towns and villages nearby for performances. [...] Before the general elections on 17 September she [and the theatre group] helped with the cultural programmes to prepare for the elections. Marita is a member of the FDJ [Free German Youth] and so she regarded it as a matter of course to contribute.

The actress has little time for her hobbies. She used to do gymnastics at the Sport Club Motor Dresden [...] now she goes swimming as often as she can. [...] Moreover we can report that Marita wants to get married soon and be a kindergarten teacher to her own children. As an actress she would like to get good character parts.<sup>86</sup>

Less than ten per cent of the article relates knowledge about Böhme's private life and ninety per cent are connected to her profession. The information given places Böhme clearly within the GDR's social institutions – the youth organisation, the state organised sport club, and her support of the election campaign and links many of these to her work and profession as an actress. Böhme as the rising film star is not even privileged with a position at one of the Berlin theatres, but has to work her way up at the provincial town of Parchim. Her wish for children of her own and a husband and having to make sacrifices in the sphere of work (i.e. travel through villages, perform on a small stage) put her on the same level as the ordinary East German citizen and integrate her into the East German community, ensuring her function as a role model.

In comparison to the relatively conformist tenor of the preceding extract, a full page article on starlet Angelika Waller in 1966 gives a more ambiguous impression.<sup>87</sup> The text is similar to the previous description of Marita Böhme insofar as it adheres to the conventions and describes Waller's daily routine entirely within the boundaries of stage and film work. Her current rehearsals and performance in Brecht's *The Days of the Commune* at the Berliner Ensemble, her training at the television studios, her more than 25 television appearances are cited. Surprisingly, even her first DEFA film, *Das Kaninchen bin ich* which was forbidden by the 11<sup>th</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Translated from "Steckbrief Marita Böhme", *Neues Leben*, 11, 1961.

<sup>87</sup> cf. Konrad Dohrnow: "Angelika Waller", *Neues Leben*, 10, 1966.

Plenum of the SED before it reached any audiences, is mentioned because it marked her entry into the prestigious Berliner Ensemble.<sup>88</sup> The actress is described as being "open, natural [...] the type of the young, capable person of our times, objective, critical, searching for honesty without compromise [...]" Her creative productivity and intellect, which enabled her integration into the team of Berliner Ensemble, are praised. The author does not describe how she came to be an actress, and details of Waller's private life are completely omitted. On the other hand, the accompanying photograph can be seen to completely contradict the content of the text and its focus on Waller's serious professional work. Photographed in a dreamy pose, with tousled hair and lips slightly apart, assuming a pin-up posture known from Marilyn Monroe or Brigitte Bardot (the neck length hair reminding more of Monroe) Waller does not in the least represent the image the article is aiming for.

In presenting her in a conventional pin-up, or star body posture, only modified by an uncontrolled, dreamy gaze away from the camera, a private person seems to be offered. The visual image allows the reader speculations (her erotic appeal, appearing to need protection etc.), and in doing so also evokes speculations about her private life.



photograph accompanying article on Angelika Waller, *Neues Leben* 10, 1966

<sup>88</sup> The Berliner Ensemble was set up by Bertolt Brecht which since 1954 resided in the "Theater am Schiffbauerdamm". With respect to theatrical practice and socio-critical and political performances it was for a long time the most advanced in the GDR.

The necessity to release at least selective information about a star's private life was pertinent to establish the star as a 'real' (ordinary) person. According to Richard Dyer, knowledge about the star as a real living and private person is related to the general notion of 'authenticity'.

It is these qualities [sincere, immediate, real and so on] that we demand of a star if we accept her or him in the spirit which she or he is offered. [...] Authenticity is both a quality necessary to the star phenomenon to make it work, and also the quality that guarantees the authenticity of other particular values a star embodies (such as girl-next-door-ness etc.)"<sup>89</sup>

Apart from the film text, where immediacy, spontaneity and improvisation can generate a notion of authenticity, subsidiary texts and our knowledge that stars exist outside of these texts in real life – referred to by Dyer as built-in-means of authentication – generate such a perception. Dyer makes it clear that each image production (staged shot, snap-shot, without make-up etc.) is "an infinite regress by means of which one more authentic image displaces another [...] [yet all of them] anchoring the whole thing in an essential, uncovered authenticity, which can be then read back into the performances, the roles, the pin-ups."<sup>90</sup> More relevant for my argument on the cultivation of the ordinary is Dyer's proposition that authenticity is established "by the use of markers that indicate lack of control, lack of mediation and privacy".<sup>91</sup>

In 1955, cinema-goer and *Neues Leben* reader Margot Steinborn contributed to the East German star debate with the following comment,

**Margot Steinborn [Neues Leben reader]:** We do not want to know how many times a film actress was divorced, and neither do we want to know which lotion or clothes she prefers, we want to know simply – well simply everything else! It is interesting, if Werner Peters [at the time a prominent DEFA/West German actor] likes to play chess, what he thinks about mathematics or which foreign languages he speaks – something which rounds off the image, that we have of the person Peters. What are Sonja Sutter's [also prominent DEFA/West German actress] film plans for the next year, how does she arrange her hard working day?<sup>92</sup>

Two things are noteworthy about Steinborn's letter as they explicitly reflect the East German discourse on stardom: a foregrounding of ordinary elements and modulation

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<sup>89</sup> Richard Dyer: "A Star is Born and the Construction of Authenticity", in Christine Gledhill (1991), p. 133.

<sup>90</sup> ibid., p. 136.

<sup>91</sup> ibid., p. 137.

<sup>92</sup> Translated from "Stars gefragt?" [reader response to "Sind Stars gefragt" two issues earlier], *Neues Leben* 11, 1955, p. 36.

of the private into the professional. While she rejects sensationalist information as the material released on Western stars, which centres on gossip on marital life, or functions as consumerist tie-ins, she still demands details which serve to authenticate the image she has got of actor Werner Peters, or as she herself says, to round off his image. What she defines as "everything else!" are qualities and pastimes which integrate Werner Peters into the collective of ordinary people. Everyone does maths and languages at school, and chess used to be a common leisure time activity not only in the GDR during the 1950s. Similarly the reference to actress Sonja Sutter shows how the interest in private and professional information overlaps, marking Sutter as a picture personality (ordinary and hard working person) and not a star.

Another strategy to establish the star with traits of authenticity was to refer to the notion of naturalness. This authenticity of being 'natural' (i.e. 'real') could then feed back into both the on- and off-screen images, and supported the cultivation of the ordinary. First, 'being natural' further defined the opposition to Western stars, an opposition based on the aforementioned presumption that these were fake and artificial. In being natural and unlike Western counterparts, East German actors came across less as stars and more as ordinary people. Secondly, the term 'natural' in German also carries connotations of 'being created by nature', which implies 'being like everyone else', or 'being ordinary'. The following examples, from 1960 and 1973 indicate that naturalness was of vital importance in the construction of star images throughout the pinnacle of DEFA stardom.

80-100 autograph requests per week speak of the fact that the friends/patrons of film see [Annekatrin Bürger] as the young natural woman of our times<sup>93</sup>

[Gjoko Mitic] has a charming natural appeal.<sup>94</sup>

The comment about Annekatrin Bürger is particularly telling, as it seems to suggest that the reason for her popularity rests entirely with her being natural, which in this specific context clearly means being ordinary like her fellow citizens. This of course creates a paradox insofar as it suggests that an exceptional situation (receiving up to 100 autograph requests per week) can be explained by ordinariness which in turn would logically imply that every 'natural' (i.e. ordinary) person should receive such

<sup>93</sup> Translated from "Das aktuelle Porträt: Annekatrin Bürger", *National-Zeitung*, Berlin, 06 February 1960.

<sup>94</sup> Translated from "Mehr als ein 'Chefindianer'", *Thüringer Tageblatt*, Weimar, 04 July 1973.

attention. A similar suggestion surfaces in the statement on Gojko Mitic, where again 'being natural (i.e. ordinary)' is linked to popularity.

The results of the cultivation of the ordinary within press accounts on stars were twofold. On the one hand, it was successful in bringing DEFA stars in line with the average East German, and created strong bonds between audiences and their favourites. GDR stars were particularly liked and respected because their representation made them appear so much like East German audiences themselves. This however, also put an immense pressure on DEFA stars to constantly live up to their image. Annekathrin Bürger with hindsight reflected on that,

[to be a star in the GDR, where the attention was put to differentiate Eastern from Western stars] did not mean that you could not own a house. [...] of course at some point we had our own house, and of course you had a bad conscience about this now and then. There was always this *soziale Empfinden* [social awareness]. And this, even though [Rolf] Römer [her husband, himself an actor and director] was a bricklayer. He always did everything himself, built a wall, and worked and so on with all of our friends. I mean everything was a little bit difficult in the GDR, you know, like until you managed to get a bag of cement from somewhere. Sometimes, perhaps because you were Ms. Bürger or Mr. Römer, you were given the cement. But it was also a way of being around people. If you treated them [with respect] like any other person, they liked you. [...] [As a DEFA star] you did not boast [with what you had, or who you were]. I remember, I went to a health spa once, and I simply went out for drinks and joined the people at a village feast, did some *Saufen* [binge drinking] with the men. And the women really liked it, too.<sup>95</sup>

Keywords in Bürger's retrospective reflection are "bad conscience" and "if you treated them with respect". Her feelings of guilt about material possessions points to a social awareness that has incorporated the values of egalitarianism and her uneasiness about a potential 'exclusion' from that society (no longer being liked by the fans, no longer having access to scarce products). Her second comment points to the corrective power structures and perceptions of power that were in place in GDR society. Only if she acknowledged other East Germans as equals (i.e. treated them respectfully) would she be accepted and granted access to scarce products. In other words, the average East German was not willing to accept social structures, hierarchies and privileges that would distinguish stars from ordinary citizens.

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<sup>95</sup> Annekathrin Bürger in unpublished interview with Claudia H.L. Fellmer, Berlin, 7 September, 2000.

## Counter Readings and Taboos

Despite the efforts to create an 'aura' of ordinariness around the star images, articles and reports were always open to different kinds of reading. In such readings the DEFA star comes across as subverting the cultivation of the ordinary. This occurred through close associations with elements of 'Western' stardom and elements that expressed what a star actually is: unique and individual. The following images, which accompany a feature on Annekathrin Bürger, are a case in point. Initially, the photos are aimed at presenting her as an ordinary woman: she is shown with her every-day food shopping, whilst seeming to have a problem with her shoe or stocking; her hair is being messed up by the wind. The photo headline comments, "Looking dishevelled – is this [photo] going to look all right?"<sup>96</sup> The article then mentions that the first thing the male reporter notices about Bürger is a problem every woman has encountered, " [...] a ladder on her right stocking, just above the knee". But then it continues, "Faltering a little, I begin asking my questions", indicating a sense of awe and perhaps even erotic attraction on part of the journalist.



1964 *Neues Leben* article on Annekathrin Bürger

<sup>96</sup> Here and hereafter translated from "Klingeln in der Morgenstunde und ... Eckart Krumbolz besuchte Annekathrin Bürger", *Neues Leben*, Extra, 1964 [date uncertain, probably January], photographer Manfred Uhlenhut.

Even though the text goes into some length about Bürger's view on the responsibility of artists and actors for their performance, the honesty and maturity of East German people, and the advantages of the socialist society, the photos and certainly the author's own personal (erotically charged) comments about the ladder undermine the more serious statements about the actress's professional career. Bürger's posture in front of the supermarket reminds one of Marilyn Monroe, casually elegant, yet helplessly trapped by some minor disturbance. In the second image, her tousled hair and slightly apart lips provide an energetic and self-confident erotic image. Here, Bürger resembles the classic glamour beauty as it was known to East German audiences from Hollywood and Ufa cinema, but she combines it with the fresh naturalness of the 'stars' of the French New Wave, such as Jean Seberg or Jeanne Moreau. Such an implicit support of extra-ordinary elements (extra-ordinary because they make her stand out and link her to international stars) of her image opens up possibilities for readers to decode the contradictory messages and re-functionalise them for their own purposes.<sup>97</sup>

Although the construction of star images in the GDR press focused on notions of ordinariness, equality, and social immobility, it cannot be ignored that some stars actually gained a very privileged social status and material life-style. Even though these privileges could be interpreted as negligible if compared to those gained by big stars in Hollywood, one must be aware of their implications in the GDR context. Any information disturbing the image of actors as ordinary GDR citizens had to be kept from the public. This was the case for Angelica Domröse's living situation which by the 1970s had changed dramatically compared to descriptions of her shared bedroom as a student in 1961 and her small one-bedroom flat in 1963. When in the late 1970s she and her partner, actor Hilmar Thate, were given two already fairly large flats to be joined into one big seven-bedroom flat in Berlin, this information was never disseminated in public "because the citizens would not approve" in a country with a considerable shortage of housing and proclaimed equality.<sup>98</sup> The main flaw, however they had committed and the reason for this letter being sent to the party authorities was that Domröse and Thate had not voted in the general elections, which were officially praised to have a participation of 99%. GDR elections, though officially a secret ballot, were means of exercising control over citizens when

<sup>97</sup> cf. Stefan Soldovieri (2002), p. 57.

<sup>98</sup> Report [about Domröse and Thate not having handed in their votes at the mandatory elections] from Siegfried Henkel to Genossin Ragwitz, Abt. Kultur, Berlin 23 May 1979, Bundesarchiv SAPMO DY30/IV B2/9.06/94, fiche 1.

participation was checked against lists of those eligible to vote. Not voting was practised by some as a means of expressing a protest against the system, but could bring along personal disadvantages (such as losing rights to a bigger flat, permission to build a house, travel visas etc.) and for some even an entry into the MfS (Ministry for State Security) files.<sup>99</sup> The letter reporting on Domröse's disobedience was sent to Ursula Ragwitz, senior executive at the Department of Culture at the Central Committee of the SED, obviously because the sender was concerned about the abuse of privileges, and that the actors no longer seemed to fulfil their role-model function as socialist personalities.

Censorship always reigned over one specific type of knowledge, which has remained a taboo until the very end of the GDR and into the present day. No GDR journalist ever revealed accounts of artists' actual wages at DEFA or stars' annual incomes to the East German public, unless these were well within the boundaries of average incomes. This practice still lives on, and while former GDR stars are now shown in their well established weekend houses (thus displaying material wealth), neither their previous nor current income is discussed.<sup>100</sup> Chapter 3 will go into more detail on the issues of salaries of DEFA stars.

### On-Screen Constructions of Ordinariness

While the previous sections have shown how specific discursive strategies, in line with the imperative of ordinariness, shaped the perception of DEFA stars in extra-filmic material such as press reports, photography, and reader responses, the following pages shall analyse how these perceptions equally informed stars' on-screen images and personae. With regard to choice of characters, temporal and spatial setting or *mise-en-scène* many elements corresponded to the off-screen image construction. Even a cursory investigation of DEFA's 1960-1965 productions with regard to setting and social origin of the leading heroes reveals a striking dominance of films dealing with current GDR life and with a plot revolving around working class heroes.

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<sup>99</sup> For a brief discussion of issues of state election in the GDR see Stefan Wolle: *Die heile Welt der Diktatur. Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971-1989*, pp. 18-21.

<sup>100</sup> See for example Jürgen Drews: "Von Ost nach West und zurück" [on Angelica Domröse], *SuperIlli* 13/2001, pp. 28f., or Anett Zimmermann: "Ohne Utopien lebt sich's schlecht", *Märkische Oder-Zeitung*, 3 June 2002, p. 11.

**table 5: distribution/allocation of DEFA films according to social background of leading hero/ine**

	DEFA films on contemporary GDR issues (including films for children)		history of working class	historic topic and fairy tales		various other (e.g. films about West Germany, operettas)
	working class hero/ine	non-working class, such as teachers or engineers		poor leading hero/ine	rich leading hero/ine	
1960	8	3	4	3	1	5
1961	9	4	1	3	2	6
1962	5	11	2	2	1	4
1963	7	5	2	1	1	5
1964	4	3	2	2	1	3
1965	5	5	2	0	1	3

Films discussing contemporary East German society are dominant and apart from 1962, films featuring a working class hero or heroine are leading the table. It is not clear how much cultural officials were involved in the choice of production, but the purpose appears obvious. DEFA's reflections of transitions and changes of the new German society showed that with time and consideration and committed involvement problems in setting up the new society could be overcome. Most important in this was the idea that workers and farmers should be their own heroes, as Johannes R. Becher (later minister of culture) had stated at the second Congress of Writers in 1950, "the life we want to build is indeed simple, beautiful in its simplicity, simple in its humanity".<sup>101</sup> Coupled with the principle of Socialist Realism to portray "typical characters under typical circumstances" – simple and typical both being terms which should be read as 'ordinary – everything was streamlined towards ordinary working class heroes. In the films, they were shown at the work place in work clothes, and their material circumstances were average. At home they were modestly furnished, their means of transportation was not car but a bicycle or train. Apart from their working clothes, male characters usually had not more than one suit and shirt and they did not spend much time grooming their beauty. This is different for female characters, who show slightly more variety in their out-side work appearances.<sup>102</sup> Typical of these figures is also a physical alertness, they take action and do things (and don't give orders to somebody else) if a problem occurs at the production line,

<sup>101</sup> Translated from Johannes R. Becher, speech at II. Schriftstellerkongress in Juli 1950, published in *Aufbau*, 8, 1950, p. 703, reprinted in Manfred Jäger (1994), p. 33.

<sup>102</sup> This is more the case in the 1950s, when the GDR was still concerned in keeping up with the consumer developments of its Western counterpart and glamorous evening gowns were displayed, as was the case in the comedy about a competition between two nationally owned fashion producers *Model Bianka* (1951).

and they are shown in various sport exercises (such as winter sports in *Silvesterpunsch* or volleyball in *Das verhexte Fischerdorf* (The Bewitched Fishing Village, 1962)). Sportive activities had always been a strong part of the proletarian movement, because it ideologically connected to physical labour and the idea of a sound mind in a healthy body. Moreover, on the practical side the Communists had used many sport clubs during the Third Reich as a cover-up. All of these elements were frequently displayed in DEFA films, bringing to the fore a connection through notions of ordinariness between audiences and fictitious characters.

This strong presence in DEFA films of labour and work-related issues was rooted in the GDR's societal conceptualisations. The high significance of labour is aptly expressed by Martin Kohli, who has defined it as the *Vergesellschaftungskern*, i.e. the 'central element that created the bonds of East German society' for it structured interests, institutions and identities.<sup>103</sup> The conceptualisation of socialist *Arbeitskultur* (culture of work) expanded beyond traditional criteria such as "efficient", or "purposeful" to include criteria that are not related to material values, such as "more pleasurable", "richer in contents and experience".<sup>104</sup> Work was no longer defined as a material necessity, but rather as a need shared by all members of society.

The sphere of work expanded beyond its traditional boundaries into a number of other spheres of the average citizen, for the workplace organised a wide array of activities not related to labour. Among these were, for example, further education, housing, child care, cultural events, sport activities, holidays and access to limited consumer products. Owing to the "central structural and ideological significance" assumed by "the area [and concept] of work" and their expansion into traditionally unrelated spheres, film stardom became strikingly affected.<sup>105</sup>

The revaluation of the working class and labour in general as well as the national ownership of means of production – best expressed in the term *Volkseigentum*, which literally means 'owned by the people' – actually induced a re-

<sup>103</sup> Here and in the following cf. Martin Kohli (1994), p. 39. Claus Offe suggests that within the post-war European context, work and economy served as the most suitable modus of integration for the GDR, since both the existence of the West German state and the inheritance of the Third Reich denied an integration as a national society. Claus Offe: "Die Integration nachkommunistischer Gesellschaften: die ehemalige DDR im Vergleich zu ihren osteuropäischen Nachbarn", in *Lebensverhältnisse und soziale Konflikte im neuen Europa*, ed. by Bernhard Schäfers, Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1993, p. 811.

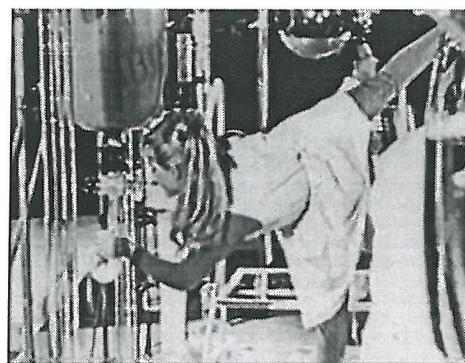
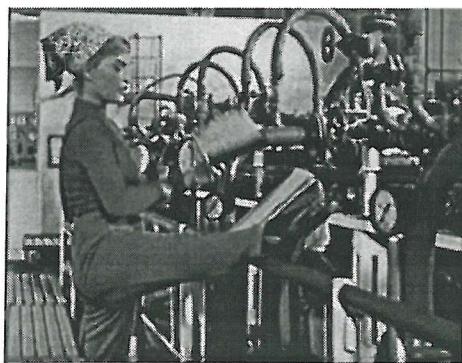
<sup>104</sup> Here and in the following references to this paragraph cf. *Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch der DDR*, entry sozialistische Arbeitskultur, pp. 44-7.

<sup>105</sup> Peter Hübner (1999), p. 286.

conceptualisation of the two spheres in the GDR context. Work became defined differently, because everyone shared ownership of the means of production and hence could determine what was to be produced. Against this background everyone becomes part of society's instrumental power, and consequently the opposition between the spheres of work and leisure, or instrumental and expressive goals would be undermined.<sup>106</sup>

DEFA films reflected these transitions, and thus further contributed to the expansion of the work sphere. Stars contributed to these processes. Most characters were defined through their work as the majority of contemporary plots centred around the work sphere. A very striking example in this respect are DEFA's musicals, which negotiate a heightened blurring between the sphere of work and the sphere of leisure.<sup>107</sup>

Three films starring Christel Bodenstein, *Maibowle* (May Punch, 1959), *Silvesterpunsch* (New Year's Eve Punch, 1960) and *Revue um Mitternacht* (Revue at Midnight, 1962), perfectly illustrate this discourse of work and leisure. The plots of the former two films are set around a family and work team in a chemical combine. *Revue um Mitternacht* centres around the kidnapping of three DEFA filmmakers who will not be released until they have produced a good musical, an allusion to DEFA's real-life problems with producing entertainment genres.



Bodenstein in *Silvesterpunsch* at the factory (left) and the figure skating revue (right)

An overlap between work and leisure is of course evident already in some Western subforms of the genre, such as the 'backstage musical', where singing and dancing are associated with professional training and thus hard work. In DEFA musicals this

<sup>106</sup> To speak of a merging is actually imprecise, as the ideological emphasis on work led to its dominant permeation of all other spheres of life. Cf. Jürgen Kocka (1994), p. 549; Martin Kohli (1994), pp. 38-55.

<sup>107</sup> This is true for many other socialist musicals, see the documentary *East Side Story. The Story of Socialist Musicals* by Dana Ranga and Andrew Horn.

overlap is even more pronounced as the characters are not professional dancers, but instead 'real' production workers who dance in addition to their regular jobs and, more significantly, who rehearse at the workplace next to machines and assembly lines.

In *Silvesterpunsch*, Bodenstein's character Suse, who is a chemical apprentice, practises her leisure time activity at her work place, where she dances ballet whilst reading a book and looking after the machines. Dressed in a boiler suit, she happily practises all three activities simultaneously amidst pipes and tubes. Later, the story takes the work team to a skiing holiday resort, where everyone argues whether to devote their time to cultural events (such as concerts) or exercise outside (skiing). Toward the end of the film, when after many obstacles a musical ice-skating revue is put together that reconciles sport and culture (or body and mind), Bodenstein is dancing on stage first in a lab-apron, later in a fluffy tutu, amidst artfully recreated imitations of chemical reactions and big letters symbolising chemical formulae. Through narrative, costume, and mise-en-scène Bodenstein exemplifies a reconciliation of work and leisure. The convergence of work and leisure here goes beyond what can conventionally be expected from image constructions for stars in commercial cinemas, and serves as an identity marker for GDR nationality more generally.

While the close association between work and DEFA stars was a fundamental aspect of their on-screen personae, this aspect had at the same time a detrimental effect on their popularity. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, cinema-goers frequently expressed their dislike of seeing their own hard working life in DEFA productions.

**Karl-Heinz Zessin, Berlin-Lichtenberg [Neues Leben reader]:** I'd rather learn to knit than go to the cinema. [...] I don't want to see any more DEFA films, not until our production company can come up with entertaining films, which do not talk about *Arbeit, Planerfüllung und Politik* [work, fulfilling the plan, and politics] the whole time [...] Expecting to see my letter fly into the waste basket, best wishes [...]<sup>108</sup>

**Cinema-goers interviewed by *Filmstpiegel* at the open-air screen in Lübben:** When we are going to the cinema, we don't want to see dry brigade reports and meetings. We've got plenty of this every day.<sup>109</sup>

**Young people interviewed on the streets of Potsdam by *Neues Leben*:** Nee! Wenn einer so'n Ding schreiben würde, wie's wirklich ich, [...] wie wir wirklich sind, auch mit jute Musik vielleicht – da kann denn ruhig 'Arbeit' mit drin sein [...].<sup>110</sup>  
 [No, really! If someone were to write something, of how it really is, how we really are, maybe even with good music – then it would be all right to have some 'work' in it.]

<sup>108</sup> Translated from "Aufruhr im Kintopp", *Neues Leben* 4, 1956, p. 42.

<sup>109</sup> Horst W. Lukas: "Um den Film bei uns", *Filmstpiegel* 24, 1964.

<sup>110</sup> Translated from Klaus D. Schwarz: "Hans Otto Theater und seine Jugend", *Neues Leben* 11, 1963

Reader Zessin's comments are confirmed by box-office tables (see Appendix I), which clearly show that preferences among audiences lay elsewhere. Rather than burning issues raising from the construction of Germany's socialist society and its working class heroes, comedians and historical adventurers were among the audience's preferred film protagonists.

It was more generally due to the foregrounding of ordinariness that DEFA stars were often perceived as bland, and without individual trademarks.

Let's think back a few decades. Back then we said: a Hans Albers film, a Heinz Rühmann film [...] Back then you did not go to the cinema because of [the revue film] *Der Kongress tanzt* (The Congress Dances, 1930), but because Lilian Harvey and Willy Fritsch were in it [...] Not once did we hear about a Domröse, Bürger or Bodenstein film, not once did we hear that Günther Simon or Armin Mueller-Stahl were connected to the titles of their films.<sup>111</sup>

**Wolfgang Benndorf, Dresden [Filmspiegel reader]:** What DEFA basically lacks are actors of the profile of an Adele Sandrock, a Theo Lingen, a Heinz Rühmann.<sup>112</sup>

**Botho Seyring, Erfurt [Filmspiegel reader]:** When I see [a new face] again, I am often disappointed, and the good memory [of the first appearance] of that actor is gone. It is often not the fault of the artist, but the role [...] the qualities of a performer are often *erstickt* [suffocated/suppressed] by the type and character he [sic] has to play.<sup>113</sup>

Most audience responses do not directly refer to actors but blame DEFA scripts instead. They indirectly confirm the dangers of foregrounding ordinariness in the construction of fictitious characters:

**Ruth Dünkler, Schwedt [Filmspiegel reader]:** It is not the fault of our actors, that we haven't got any stars, but the topic of the films, which often prevents us from recognising the personality of the performer.

[...]

**Elisabeth Morgner, Wismar [Filmspiegel reader]:** What we need is more persons of character, people with an internal poetry, who nonetheless are down-to-earth. That of course requires the right role, so that an artist can develop convincingly.<sup>114</sup>

These cinema-goers clearly point towards the problems of de-differentiation that a foregrounding of ordinary elements entailed. According to their opinion DEFA actors did not stand out, lacked striking characteristics, types or performance styles and hence were unable to create a lasting impression..

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<sup>111</sup> Translated from Horst W. Lukas: "Um den Film bei uns: Haben wir keine Stars?", *Filmspiegel* 25, 1964.

<sup>112</sup> Translated from "Meinungen: Noch mal über Stars", *Filmspiegel* 2, 1965, p. 16.

<sup>113</sup> Translated from "Lesermeinungen: Um den Film bei uns", *Filmspiegel* 19, 1965, p. 16.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*

The egalitarian values of GDR society thus posed a potential threat to the existence of stardom in that they would render DEFA stars insufficiently distinguishable from ordinary citizens. The reader response page of a 1976 issue of *FilmSPIEGEL* is an exemplary point in case. It contains a dry and unenthusiastic report of a FDJ group from VEB Formenbau Schwarzenberg which went to see *Hostess*, as social drama and comedy starring Annekathrin Bürger. Bürger herself is not mentioned at all, the report is above all concerned with problems encountered by the group when finding a date to see the film and the discussion with the cinema manager "which explained once again the intentions and representation of this new DEFA production".<sup>115</sup> The same page contains a report about a "stimulating poster discussion" between a Karl-Marx-Stadt film club and graphic designers. In the so-called *Sammelerecke*, where fans could get in touch to exchange their epiphenomena, only Gojko Mitic and Dean Reed, who had five requests out of twenty-three, and Rolf Römer, who had one request are sought after.<sup>116</sup> More importantly, a larger number of fans want to sell their collected *Progress* film programmes, star postcards, and autographs rather than enlarge their collection.

### Case Study: Manfred Krug

While East German audiences did not mind to see their own social class on screen, a self-reflective and witty use of this background ensured far more popularity. An almost perfect example of this was actor Manfred Krug. During the 1960s, in only eight out of his twenty-one DEFA productions he portrayed a non working-class character (underlined in table below). Some of these – an engineer, composer, or police detective – are still rooted in the working class and show the upward movement that was made possible by socialist society.

table 6: DEFA films casting Manfred Krug between 1960-1969

film title	role played by Krug
<i>Leute mit Flügeln</i> (People With Wings, 1960)	young rebel, working class parents
<i>Fünf Patronenhülsen</i> (1960)	Polish soldier for anti-Franco brigades
<i>Professor Mamlock</i> (1961)	<u>SS-Soldier</u>
<i>Guten Tag, lieber Tag</i> (Good Day, Dear Day, 1961)	apprentice
<i>Auf der Sonnenseite</i> (On the Sunny Side, 1962)	steel worker
<i>Revue um Mitternacht</i> (Revue at Midnight, 1962)	<u>composer</u>
<i>Minna von Barnhelm</i> (1962)	servant and soldier

<sup>115</sup> "Dank an Kino-Kollektiv", *FilmSPIEGEL* 10, 1976.

<sup>116</sup> Dean Reed was an US American political singer, who had emigrated to the GDR in 1972, he appeared in four DEFA films, as for example as Mitic's co-star in *Blutsbrüder* (Bloodbrothers, 1975).

<i>Der Kinnhaken</i> (The Knockout, 1962)	Kampfgruppen soldier
<i>Königskinder</i> (Star-Crossed Lovers, 1962)	Wehrmacht lieutenant
<i>Beschreibung eines Sommers</i> (Description of a Summer, 1963)	construction engineer
<i>Mir nach, Canaillen!</i> (Follow Me, Scoundrels, 1964)	shepherd
<i>Die antike Münze</i> (The Ancient Coin, 1965)	school teacher
<i>König Drosselbart</i> (King Thrustlebeard, 1965)	king who teaches princess to respect poverty
[ <i>Nichts als Sünde</i> (Nothing But Sin, 1965)]	voice of court-jester]
<i>Wenn du groß bist, lieber Adam</i> (Once You Are Grown Up, Dear Adam, 1965)	priest [film forbidden]
<i>Spur der Steine</i> (Trace of Stones, 1966)	carpenter [film forbidden]
<i>Frau Venus und ihr Teufel</i> (Madame Venus and her Devil, 1967)	troubadour
<i>Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog</i> (The Flag of Kriwoi Rog, 1967)	worker
<i>Hauptmann Florian von der Mühle</i> (Lieutenant Florian of the Mill, 1968)	miller
<i>Käuzchenkuhle</i> (1969)	police detective
<i>Weite Straßen, stille Liebe</i> (Long Roads, Quiet Love, 1969)	lorry driver

A typical example with respect to establishing and emphasising notions of ordinariness around Manfred Krug and his on-screen image is *Auf der Sonnenseite*, a film which is also remarkable in how it literally catapulted Krug's career forward.<sup>117</sup> He had played young rebels in *Ein Mädchen von 16 ½* (A Girl of 16 ½, 1958), *Ware für Katalonien* (Goods for Catalonia, 1959) and *Leute mit Flügeln* (People With Wings, 1960), none of which, however, brought out Krug's distinctive personality. His characters in these films were rather shy and awkward young men, who tried to gain respect and appear cool but did not fully succeed. *Auf der Sonnenseite* finally managed to accentuate Krug's unique persona, which was to become his trademark throughout all films to follow. Particular characteristics include his conspiratorial bonding with the audiences, his dry wit and brashness, anti-authoritarian pranks, and a strong virile physical presence.<sup>118</sup>

*Auf der Sonnenseite* is moreover remarkable because it adapted Krug's own real-life story, the ups and downs of his personal transition from steelworker, creating a biographical film (he was in fact involved in writing the script) **before** he had actually become a star. The story presents a close fit between the actor's persona and the character, and succeeded in establishing Krug as a star. *Auf der Sonnenseite* narrates the story of Martin Hoff (Manfred Krug), a steelworker who is also a member of an amateur dramatics group. Although his acting is not very impressive, he is the best amongst his peers and his factory delegates him to attend a drama

<sup>117</sup> *Auf der Sonnenseite* was the top box-office hit of 1962.

<sup>118</sup> Translated from Fred Seeger: "Manfred Krug", *Neues Leben* 8, 1974, p. 36.

school in Leipzig. 'Delegating' people to party meetings, congresses or further education was an important aspect of the GDR's cadre advancement, and the film clearly shows the career opportunities this practice opened up. At the drama school Martin cannot satisfy the unreasonable demands of his lecturers and soon gets expelled for being rebellious (as did the real Krug from the drama school in Berlin-Schöneweide). Whenever there is an occasion to sing, Martin takes out his guitar and performs jazz, blues and proletarian songs – such 'jazzed-up' songs would form a trademark element of Krug's future films. After his expulsion Martin works as a builder at a large industrial construction site, where Ottolie Zinn (Marita Böhme, incidentally Krug's wife was also called Ottolie), the woman he loves is also his boss. By the end of the story, and after some misunderstandings and obstacles have been removed, Martin is discovered by the artistic director of a 'real' theatre and resumes his acting career.

At the time of its release *Auf der Sonnenseite* tied in perfectly with the *Bitterfelder Weg* that had officially been inaugurated in 1959. On the one hand, the film worked within the ideas of the movement: the plot revolved around a blue collar worker whose innate talents helped him to become a successful artist; the plot was set on a large construction site typical for the GDR at the time; it presented a leading heroine as a construction site manager in a traditionally male occupation and the hero as the small but vital cog in the machine who through his personal commitment contributed to making the idea of the new society come true. On the other hand, the film clearly puts the *Bitterfelder Weg* into perspective when it presents the failures of turning the worker into an artist and mocks the continuing aloofness of many artists and intellectuals towards "working class talent".

Right from the start of the film the working class environment is established: the initial credits are followed by an on-location shot of scaffolding, pipes and tubes, and the camera tracks down to a smelting furnace with Martin/Krug shovelling metal into the hot open door.<sup>119</sup> He wears dirty clothes and has a greasy and sweaty face. He immediately walks over and addresses the off-screen audiences by looking straight into the camera, "Good evening, would you care to come along for a bit?". This direct bonding with the audiences was to become a set feature in many other DEFA productions with Krug. The initial direct address, a rupture in classical narration, gives way to the more conventional device of a voice-over narrator

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<sup>119</sup> Later on the film again uses on-location shots on the gigantic construction site of the power plant at Vetschau.

(Martin/Krug telling his own story), although the direct address resurfaces at the end of the film. Martin's narrating voice is omniscient because it can already allude to what is going to happen, and yet continues to bond with the audiences through confessing mistakes and flaws. When rejected by the heroine Ottilie, the voice-over comments,

**Martin Hoff (voice-over):** Bad luck from beginning to end, my dear vanity was treating me harshly. I would have done the most stupid thing to rebuild my self-confidence. Don't look at me like this!

[later] The fate I seemed to have escaped caught up with me, with a derisive smile the abyss [having abused Ottilie's trust] opened up in front of me.

Throughout the film invites the audiences to bond with Martin because of his 'flaws'. His vain attempts at gaining Ottilie's attention and love make him an anti-hero. Even in his incompetence, Martin represents the ordinary man and guy-next-door, he makes the same mistakes and loses control. While we watch him change out of his work clothes into suit and shirt, Martin's voice-over begins to narrate in a parody-like manner that mixes fairy-tale elements with the 'requests' of the *Bitterfelder Weg*:

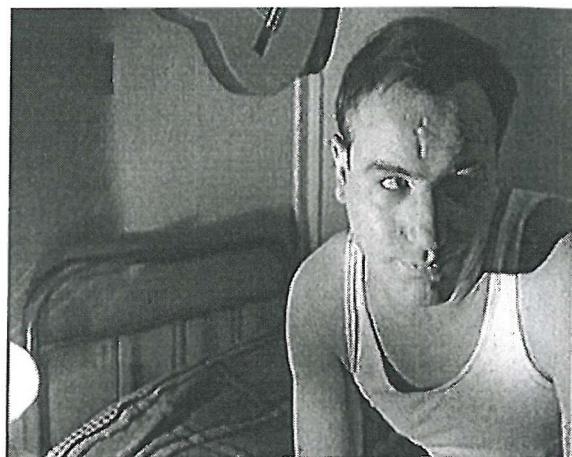
**Martin Hoff (voice-over):** Once upon a time there was a steel-worker, and that was me. And [I was] also a poet. In the steel-works I had written a play about steel-works, in which steel-workers worked with steel. I played the leading role in a steel-works play.

On the one hand, the repetitive use of the word "steel-worker" is indicative of someone whose expressions are to the point rather than eloquent. On the other hand, this repetitiveness simultaneously satirises the ideals of simplicity and ordinariness that the *Bitterfelder Weg* had demanded, and the occasional bizarre results it produced.

Martin's depiction as a working class character is further underlined by Krug's physical appearance – his massive hands, the ruggedness of his face with a large, dominant nose, thick lips and short "easy-care" hair-cut, but most of all the striking scar on his forehead which he had received when a piece of molten steel had dropped on him when working as a steel-worker in Brandenburg. Whereas a streak of his hair is combed slightly forward and casts a shadow on the scar on his first DEFA publicity still in 1959, *Auf der Sonnenseite* emphasises this working class symbol, which is no longer covered-up and instead lit brightly in almost every single close-up.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> See "Steckbrief Manfred Krug", *Neues Leben* 1, 1961, reprinted at the beginning of this chapter, page 94.



Manfred Krug in *Auf der Sonnenseite*, note the striking scar on his forehead

His working class status is continuously confirmed through his pleasure in movement – with much wild jumping, dancing and loud singing he orchestrates his own expulsion from drama school; at the bar where he first meets Ottolie he is the most energetic dancer of them all; he single-handedly carries a pram; climbs onto roofs, jumps over the window sill; and his stage performance involves all sorts of climbing, jumping and wrestling. Krug's body, however, does not display the well-toned muscles of an athlete but rather the bulky, fleshy and slightly undefined shape of a hard-working person. The film frequently uses shots that display his torso in a shirt, casually unbuttoned at the collar and with the sleeves rolled up, or even just in a simple white vest (pictured above), a traditional sartorial signifier of proletarianess. The film generally accentuates the political significance of clothes. Over more than half the film he is dressed in his work clothes, an old pair of trousers, a shirt and a hat mark him as a member of the working class. All these visual elements authenticate him as a typical worker, and through marking Martin as a member of the largest social group in the GDR, construct him along the lines of ordinariness.

The film's most pertinent affirmation of ordinariness is achieved through the contrast between Martin and the caricatured intellectuals at the drama school. In this environment Martin is presented as the only 'natural' and 'down-to-earth' person. When in the courtyard new students recite in an artificial, declamatory manner, only Martin approaches them with the colloquial "du", to which some reply in a formal "Sie". The drama school building, a 19<sup>th</sup> century bourgeois villa with tall white ceilings and elegant stucco, provides a stark contrast to the steel factory and its make-shift assembly hall, and to the huts made out of compressed wood in which Martin resides on the construction site.

None of the five professors of the admission committee are enthusiastic about Martin's witty recital on the happiness of marriage. During his performance they nibble food and drink coffee, one of them impatiently taps a pencil on his knee, thus indicating their disrespect. One professor pretentiously uses the word "Etüde" (étude) and does not explain to Martin that it means short scene. When he performs his ideas, the professors keep interrupting him in a superficially polite, yet patronising manner. Medium shots of Martin in action on stage are contrasted with medium close-ups of the stiff and immobile professors, revealing their self-satisfied and smug attitude. The scene comes to a climax when Martin's potential for imagination is to be tested. The following dialogue takes place between one of the professors (played by comedian Gerd E. Schäfer) and Martin, shot in medium close-ups, reverse shots between the professor's pinched face and Martin's growing disbelief at this pseudo-psychological nonsense.

**Professor:** Have you got imagination?

**Martin:** I believe so.

**Professor:** Imagine, Leipzig Central Station, spring time, square in front of station, people on their way to work, happy, young girls. Can you imagine that?

**Martin:** Yes...

**Professor:** Thanks. Leipzig Central Station, autumn, trees loosing their leaves, rain, people are shivering, collars turned up protectively. Can you imagine that?

**Martin:** Yes.

**Professor:** Leipzig Central Station, winter, fresh snow, dusk, subdued neon-light, purple. Can you imagine that?

**Martin:** Yes:

**Professor [turning to his colleagues, indicating approval]:** Imagination present.

While the camera is on the same level as Martin's face during this sequence, the reverse shots on the professor are taken from a slightly lower angle, looking up to his face. The potential authority such a low angle tends to create is completely turned upside down through the dialogue. This scene brings out notions of the ordinary through a striking and clichéd contrast between the worlds of the blue collar worker and the white collar intellectual. Martin's puzzlement and rebellion aligns him with the world of the ordinary working person. Instead of being beaten by this system, Martin succeeds through a detour and his acceptance in that respect symbolises the triumph of the ordinary.

The construction of Krug's image as set off by *Auf der Sonnenseite* and consolidated in future productions met with definite approval from cinema-goers, as the following audience responses exemplify:

Through *deine* [your in the personal form] films and songs you have become so familiar to me, that I cannot address you as *Sie* [you in the polite form].

[...]

On 5 April I shall have my *Jugendweihe* [...] [you are invited] and would not have to fear any *Menschenansammlungen* [big crowds]. We are celebrating in a small private party.

[...]

We really like your films. [Whenever we watch them] on board of our ship, it feels as if you would be amongst us as a colleague. Well, actually, why only would be? It is nice were we are, and our ship leaves for our fishing grounds near Greenland next week.<sup>121</sup>

All three letters express the desire of the fan to be close to the star, a phenomenon that is well-known from the star-fan dynamic in other cinemas. Parallel to that, however, runs a more unique trajectory. Rather than wanting to be close to Manfred Krug and getting a more detailed insight into his life, these East Germans want Krug to become part of their everyday reality of work and celebrations. Within the GDR star-fan dynamic, audiences saw themselves as giving rather than taking, as active rather than simply consuming. They offer the star to be on familiar terms with them, not the other way round. The desire is to integrate the star into audiences' everyday lives because they are so much like themselves. East German audiences do not desire to reach 'up' in order to become like the stars, but instead they want the stars to come 'down' to be one of them. Audience responses as the ones above reflect how much the egalitarian impact of the state's policies had led to social de-differentiation and social homogeneity.

Naturally, Krug's image was composed of more than one element, and a large part of his appeal was rooted in characteristics that subverted the official line. Krug's connection to jazz music is highly significant here, for jazz met with much rejection by the GDR's state authorities during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The following ad for a state book publisher, involving Manfred Krug and his Jazz band, plays out these conflicts through its subversive potential.

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<sup>121</sup> *Jugendweihe* is a non-religious rites-of-passage ceremony, in which fourteen-year-olds are given adult status. It was practised by the German workers movement throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, forbidden in the Third Reich and revived in the GDR in 1946 and made obligatory in 1954. All fan quotes from Rosemarie Rehan: "Manfred Krug", in Ralf Schenk and Filmmuseum Potsdam (1995), p. 157.



advertisement for book publisher with Manfred Krug and his Jazz band in *Neues Leben* 12, 1964<sup>122</sup>

At the first peak of his career, Manfred Krug and his music band *Jazz-Optimisten* placed an advert in *Neues Leben* for books from the nationally owned publisher *Verlag Volk und Welt, Kultur und Fortschritt*.<sup>123</sup> This publisher concentrated on educational books and fiction for teenagers and young adults, but occasionally also published a few less conformist authors.

The advert covers a full (size A5) page with a photo of the band, all men in suits.<sup>124</sup> Manfred Krug stands in the background, but in fact gains more prominence thanks to his sunglasses, hat and summer shirt. Part of the subversive potential of this ad rests in the knowledge that Manfred Krug, as an actor renowned for his irreverent, anti-authoritarian and rebellious image, advertises one of the most prominent state publishers. The subversion is further increased through the allusion to jazz. Jazz and Beat music – scathed as decadent, nihilistic Western influences – had experienced

<sup>122</sup> The caption translates as: Manfred Krug and the Jazz-Optimisten Berlin read books from the Verlag Volk und Welt Kultur und Fortschritt 108 Berlin, Glinkastr. 13-15. We will be pleased to put you on the list of our free monthly magazine "Der Bücherkarren".

<sup>123</sup> That this advertising campaign of Verlag Volk und Welt and Jazz-Optimisten was rather unusual, was evident in a *Neues Leben* report on Manfred Krug, which mentions it 10 years later. cf. *Neues Leben*, 8, 1974, p. 39.

<sup>124</sup> *Neues Leben*, 12, 1964, p. 47.

several cultural-political restrictions in the 1950s and throughout the 1960s, an aspect which is evident in the somewhat tongue-in-cheek name of Krug's band as "optimists". The unusual tolerance of Krug's jazz, primarily owing to Krug's popularity, was officially justified by the explanation that he performed original and 'true' Jazz.<sup>125</sup>

The educational and commercial issues negotiated in this advertisement point toward a contextual background that will be dealt with into more detail in the following chapter. Indeed, the ambivalence in the discursive appropriation of stardom and cultivation of the ordinary continued in the promotion of DEFA films through stars and educational and 'consumer' tie-ins.

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<sup>125</sup> During the early 1950s Reginald Rudorf, social historian at the University of Leipzig, had gained an official acceptance of jazz by arguing that there was 'real/true' jazz, as an expression of Afro-American rising up against the oppression of black people, and 'falsified' jazz, which was the modernised, commercial decadent version that had developed out of true jazz. Although Rudorf also scathed particular jazz styles and saw them as an attack on female and male respectability (in the dancing for instance), he nevertheless managed to set off an official acceptance of jazz music, evident in a large number of jazz clubs (and regional jazz magazines) established in the mid-1950s. His very restricted concept of jazz music (the 'true' negro music, which covered blues and spirituals) was to dominate music culture in the GDR for a long time. For a full account of the details cf. Uta G. Poiger: "Amerikanischer Jazz und (ost)deutsche Respektabilität", in *Akten. Eingaben. Schaufenster. Die DDR und ihre Texte. Erkundungen zu Herrschaft und Alltag*, ed. by Alf Lüdtke and Peter Becker. Berlin, 1997, pp. 119-36.

## CHAPTER 3: East German Stars and the Economics of Production and Consumption

Under commercial modes of film production, the film industry aims to sell its products for maximum profit so that returns can be reinvested to produce better and more films to further maximise profits. As capital that can be invested stars have a firmly established role in this process. Due to their drawing power they can attract large audiences and thus increase profits. They provide audiences with a certain amount of predictability, because each of them is commonly associated with a specific type of entertainment (crime, musical, social drama etc.), and with the specific way each individual star presents such generic entertainment. The resulting stability shapes audience expectations, which in return are fulfilled by the star's performance. Even where a star's performance runs contrary to expectations, such contradictions tend to be based on previous typecasting. Thus, the star serves as a means of branding and differentiating the film product from others within the context of market competition.<sup>1</sup>

Stars are not only important for the financial success of the films they appear in, they can also stimulate the sales (and maximise profits) of film related subsidiary material, such as star postcards and fan magazines, and beyond that a wide range of other commodities. While stars can be used to advertise specific goods, their lifestyle itself exemplifies and thus promotes the values of a consumption-oriented economy.<sup>2</sup>

My central question in this chapter will be how this relationship between stars and consumption manifests itself in an industry that is conceptualised differently. What economic function did stars have within the overall strategies of DEFA? Were DEFA stars used, similar to stars in the West, to advertise consumer goods, and if yes, were there significant differences in the advertising strategies and rhetoric?

Officially, film in a socialist context was primarily defined as an educational medium. It was considered particularly suitable to reach the masses, was to serve historical progress, and film makers were to devote themselves consciously to the social advancement of mankind.<sup>3</sup> In such a context, the principles of the market economy, in particular capital and investment became redefined. Instead of aiming to

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Alice Evans Field: *Hollywood USA, from Script to Screen*, New York: Vantage Press, 1952, p. 74, quoted in Richard Dyer Stars, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> cf. Paul McDonald (2000), p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> cf. *Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch*, entry: Film, pp. 201f..

maximise financial profits, socialist film should provide a blueprint of what a socialist society could and should be like. It was to disseminate the spirit of socialist ideology as widely as possible. Stars thus became ideological rather than economic capital, because they were a means of asserting particular ideas to as large an audience as possible. The same quality made stars at the same time a dangerous element, as the ultimate process of star reception (namely individual or collective interpretations of star images) remained to some extent outside the control of the state apparatus. Compared with stars' ideological capital, more concretely economic criteria were less central – while audience attendance figures were occasionally reported in the GDR press, box-office returns were never divulged, or related to a star's performance.

The assumption that stars were ascribed little financial value in a state subsidised film industry appears to have been widely accepted, but has not been proven. The following section will explore this in some detail with the help of exemplary figures.

### **DEFA Stars and the Production Budget**

Notwithstanding the fact that DEFA was entirely state subsidised, financial aspects did matter to some extent. However, achieving a box-office success did not mean that the same production team, or a similar film of the same genre subsequently were given higher amounts than the average production budget of one million East Marks per film.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the casting of a star – who could draw more audiences and secure higher revenues – would not be reflected directly in a higher production budget. In most cases the level of expenditure for a DEFA film depended on the reputation and experience of its makers, in particular its director and cinematographer. Of equal importance was the subject matter of the film proposal. Understandably, ideologically relevant topics, i.e. those contributing to the identity construction of the GDR, were given considerably higher budgets.

One of the rare exceptions from the principle of box-office return unrelated investment were the *Indianerfilme*. In the first instance they were a response to the hugely popular West German Karl May series (1962-68), US Westerns such as *The*

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<sup>4</sup> The average production cost was estimated from compiled figures given in the *Anträge auf Filmzulassung* (the application for approval for film exhibition) handed in by DEFA at the Ministry of Culture. cf. Filmmappen [on microfiche] at Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv.

*Magnificent Seven* (1960), and the Italian spaghetti Westerns such as *Per un pugno di dollari* (A Fistful of Dollars, 1964).<sup>5</sup> DEFA's venture into this genre tried to differentiate itself from its competitors by offering an alternative version of historical events, and specifically by focusing on the struggles and suppression of North American native tribes. Gerd Gemünden has aptly described DEFA's Westerns as being torn "between Karl May and Karl Marx":

[t]heir ideological goal was to articulate an unspoken critique of colonialism and racism that fuelled the westward expansion of the United States. By paying more attention to historical detail, the producers and filmmakers were hoping to infuse what state officials considered a sensationalist and escapist genre with an enlightening and educative purpose, thus creating politically correct entertainment.<sup>6</sup>

Gemünden claims that the surprising success of these films suggests that they were able to articulate

deeper-seated processes of identification that resonated with post-war constructions of national and cultural identity; they attest to what it means to be East German in the 1960s and 1970s. The *Indianerfilme* thus emerge as a discursive site where meanings of national and cultural identity were negotiated and contested, paradoxically staged both as escapes from and confirmations of state-prescribed national identities – a battleground not only between whites and reds, but also between state ideology, studio fantasy production, and spectatorial identification.<sup>7</sup>

The popularity of DEFA's *Indianerfilme* had an impact on the company's financial strategies. After the first two films had turned out to be massive box-office hits, subsequent entries in the genre were given considerably higher budgets, as the following table shows:

table 7: production costs and expected box-office return  
for the first and third of the *Indianerfilme* with Gojko Mitic<sup>8</sup>

	productions costs	expected return
<i>Die Söhne der großen Bärin</i>	ca. 2.5 million Marks	national: 1.2 million Marks international: 150,000
<i>Spur des Falken</i>	ca. 3.4 million Marks	national: 3.6 million Marks international: 300,000

What this table indicates is an increased level of confidence at DEFA in the economic potential of the genre. Each *Antrag auf Filmzulassung* (application for

<sup>5</sup> cf. Sabine Hake (2002), p. 128.

<sup>6</sup> Gerd Gemünden (2001), p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> cf. Filmappe *Die Söhne der großen Bärin*, Antrag auf Filmzulassung, Teil I, Berlin, 13 December 1965, (fiche 186-302), Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv; Filmappe *Spur des Falken*, Antrag auf Filmzulassung Berlin, 8 March 1968, (fiche 181-284), Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv.

approval of film exhibition) DEFA submitted to the Ministry of Culture was obliged to list the production costs and estimated box-office returns from national and international distribution. The main export destination was Eastern Europe, and the films were particularly successful in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania and the USSR.<sup>9</sup> Strikingly, most other (i.e. non-*Indianerfilme*) applications estimated a much lower return than the production costs. In the case of the *Indianderfilme* with Gojko Mitic, however, filmmakers began to anticipate higher returns and dared to risk higher investment strategies. Given Mitic's popularity, it would be interesting to know to what extent DEFA perceived the success of the *Indianerfilme* as rooted in the appeal of the genre, and how crucial they saw Mitic's star status. The archival documents unfortunately don't provide conclusive answers to this question. In any case, if Mitic was primarily responsible for the films' success, he certainly was not rewarded accordingly.

Whereas in Hollywood stars have always amounted to a "major portion of a film's budget", at DEFA they featured to a lesser extent in financial considerations.<sup>10</sup> To remain with the case study of the *Indianerfilm*: for *Söhne der großen Bärin* Mitic was contracted for 250 Marks per day and 86 days, which amounts to a total of 21,500 Marks. For *Spur des Falken* his daily salary of 500 Marks amounted to a total of 25,000 Marks.<sup>11</sup> Although wages made up a large share of the overall production costs, the star's share – in this case Mitic's – was only less than 1% in each case.

This was due to DEFA's limiting salary policies. In addition to their regular monthly salary at their main employer (a theatre, the DFF television studio, or DEFA) actors received project-related wages for each day of shooting, which ranged from 150 Marks (drama school students) to a maximum of 1,000 Marks per day (well established actors).<sup>12</sup> The level of this so-called *Tagesgage* was individually negotiated and depended on an actor's status and former contracts, and it made no difference whether the actor was performing in a major leading or minor subsidiary role.<sup>13</sup> Actors could apply for a rise to DEFA's salary commission which had the

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<sup>9</sup> see Mitic's account on encountering fans, Gojko Mitic: *Erinnerungen*, Frankfurt/Main, Berlin: Ullstein, 1996, pp. 74f..

<sup>10</sup> Richard Dyer (1979), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> cf. File *Söhne der großen Bärin*, list of wages, Bundesarchiv 3188/3/340; Files *Spur des Falken*, list of wages, Bundesarchiv, DR 117/ 870 and Bundesarchiv, DR 117/3189/37427.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Dirk Jungnickel: "Produktionsbedingungen bei der Herstellung von Kinospielfilmen und Fernsehfilmen", in *Filmland DDR. Ein Reader zu Geschichte, Funktion und Wirkung der DEFA*, ed. by Harry Blunk and Dirk Jungnickel, Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1990, p. 50f..

<sup>13</sup> ibid..

reputation of accepting such applications rather reluctantly.<sup>14</sup> A salary increase depended primarily on established professional experience.<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, the maximum salary of 1,000 Marks imposed a limit on what a star could earn, and it reduced the differentiation between a star and a supporting actor. Even though the daily salary of 1,000 Marks was more than the average monthly GDR income, it was average within the context of DEFA. Mitic's salary in *Spur des Falken* may once again serve as an example. The cost calculation estimated 25,000 Marks for Mitic, 14,400 for Rolf Hoppe (the second leading role), and 8,550 for Barbara Brylska, the female lead. The director Joachim Kolditz was to receive 17,000 (plus an extra of 16,500) and the photographer Hanisch 14,195 Marks (plus extra of 10,500).<sup>16</sup> This gives evidence of a practice which in principle did not reward stars.

It is significant that only professional experience or political merits had an influence on salaries, while revenue figures were not taken into account.<sup>17</sup> After his politically relevant role in the Ernst Thälmann films, Günther Simon quickly advanced to the highest salary level, while Erwin Geschonneck probably rose to the highest salary level already at the beginning of his film career not only because he was an excellent performer (Bertolt Brecht praised him) but also because of his past as an anti-fascist resistance fighter.<sup>18</sup> Audience popularity, by contrast, had no discernible influence on salary increases. Annekathrin Bürger, who had reached the top in popularity polls several times during the 1960s, confirmed in an interview that popularity was never a decisive factor for her own salary negotiations.<sup>19</sup> Mitic's case is once again indicative of this practice – after 10 highly successful years of having performed in *Indianerfilme* he still had not reached the highest daily wage.<sup>20</sup>

As far as DEFA was concerned, stars were acknowledged in contributing to the success of a given project, but they were not considered a major element. Salaries did, however, contribute in more oblique ways to the process in which stars were discursively constructed and perceived. The tables given below on actors' incomes

<sup>14</sup> Annekathrin Bürger, unpublished interview by Claudia H.L. Fellmer, Berlin, 7 September 2000.

<sup>15</sup> cf. Dirk Jungnickel (1990), p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> cf. File *Spur des Falken*, Filmvorkalkulation 13 June 1967, Bundesarchiv, DR 117/ 870.

<sup>17</sup> cf. Armin Mueller-Stahl: "Aus den Gesprächen der Herausgeber" [Interview with Armin Mueller-Stahl], in *Filmland DDR. Ein Reader zu Geschichte, Funktion und Wirkung der DEFA*, ed. by Harry Blunk and Dirk Jungnickel, Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1990, p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Brecht to Geschonneck, 1951, reprinted in Erwin Geschonneck: *Meine unruhigen Jahre*, Berlin: Aufbau, 1997, p. 163.

<sup>19</sup> Annekathrin Bürger, unpublished interview with Claudia H.L. Fellmer, Berlin, 7 September 2000.

<sup>20</sup> For the year 1977 he was registered with 800 Marks per shooting day, still 200 Marks short of the possible maximum salary. cf. file *Ich will euch sehen*, Bundesarchiv, DR 117/3444/1.

for a single film and average wages in the GDR reveal why exact figures for wages earned at DEFA were kept out of the public domain.<sup>21</sup> The data clearly shows that DEFA actors (the same also applied to other top ranking film makers such as directors, photographers and composers) received considerably higher wages than the average GDR citizen, some of them even an 'ordinary' full year's salary within a single month. Nevertheless, these wages were minute if compared to those received in commercial cinema, even more so, when the 'soft' and hard currency ratios are taken into account.<sup>22</sup> It is thus no surprise that star salaries were only published in the press where they conformed to an average citizen's income.<sup>23</sup>

**table 8: selected wages of individual DEFA actors for specific film projects  
highest paid actor listed first**

<i>Fünf Patronenhülsen</i> (1960) <sup>24</sup>	<i>Auf der Sonnenseite</i> (1962) <sup>25</sup>	<i>Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog</i> (1967) <sup>26</sup>
Erwin Geschonneck 1000.- per day (total = 16,000 Marks)	Manfred Krug 400.- per day (total = 23,200 Marks)	Erwin Geschonneck 1000.- per day
Ulrich Thein 550.- per day (total = 13,750 Marks)	Marita Böhme 150.- per day (total = 4,575 Marks)	Manfred Krug 700.- per day
Manfred Krug 300.- per day (total = 14,100 Marks)	Heinz Schubert 450.- per day (total = 7,875 Marks)	Eva-Maria Hagen raised from 400.- to 450.- per day
Ernst-Georg Schwill 100.- per day (total = 4,700 Marks)	Rolf Herricht 200.- per day	Harry Hindemith 600.- per day
Armin Müller-Stahl [sic] 300.- per day (total = 12,600 Marks)	Werner Lierck 500.- per day	Ernst-Georg Schwill 250.- per day

To allow a comparison what follows below is a table of the average monthly gross income of full-time employees and workers in the GDR's nationally owned companies.<sup>27</sup>

**table 9: average monthly GDR income**

1949	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1989
295.-	439.-	558.-	640.-	762.-	897.-	1030.-	1140.-	1280.-

<sup>21</sup> These data were assembled from DEFA production files, kept at the Bundesarchiv Berlin.

<sup>22</sup> Although the GDR officially proclaimed a 1:1 ratio of East and West German Mark, the market tended to fluctuate on a ratio between 5:1 and 10:1.

<sup>23</sup> This was the case with the aforementioned quote on Angelica Domröse, which stated that after film work at DEFA she went to the theatre stage for reducing her income to a meagre 400 Marks per month, "... und möglichst immer besser", *Filmspiegel* 21, 1972, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Data taken from "Vorkalkulation" (pre-calculation) 4 July 1959, SAPMO-Bundesarchiv, DR 117, 1933.

<sup>25</sup> Marita Böhme received 100.- per day before she finished her drama school degree, data taken from typed list of wages, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde DR 117/0358a and DR 117/3186/4/294.

<sup>26</sup> Data taken from handwritten list of wages (no date), Bundesarchiv Berlin, DR 117/3189/1/402.

<sup>27</sup> cf. *Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR* 1989, ed. by Staatliche Zentralverwaltung für Statistik. Berlin: Staatsverlag der DDR, 1989. (34<sup>th</sup> year), p. 129.

The discrepancy in income between film actors and ordinary GDR citizens is significant and as such any revelation of this information in contemporary press coverage would have undermined the notion of ordinariness about stars. At the same time, stars' relatively extra-ordinary buying-power had no equivalent outlet in terms of consumer choice, as shortages in commodity supplies presented limits to what standard of living could be realised in the GDR. Paying double or triple the price for a product – something which only high earners such as film stars could afford – was an option. On the whole, however, the GDR's economy was essentially based on unequal exchange values: car tyres were exchanged for bathroom tiles, fresh cherries for spare parts for a car. In this respect production shortages curtailed excessive consumerism and material wealth and kept the difference to the average citizen limited.

The taboo over any publication of outstanding wages and salaries of film stars and film makers extended into the GDR's statistical yearbook which was vague about providing exact data on types of employment and income. The reasons for these strategies resided in the self-definition of socialist society as egalitarian. The state had established a fairly balanced wage and salary scale between manual and non-manual labour, but privileges for certain strata (the "service class" of top SED and government functionaries) and some individuals (academics, artists) continued to exist. As the notion of ordinariness had to be maintained perpetually, its disruption would have been highly damaging. Understandably, East Germans suspected that party and government officials but also artists received wages above the average, but such rumours were never officially confirmed and always remained on a speculative level.

There were, however, occasions where it was convenient for the cultural authorities that rumours or knowledge on material privileges circulated in public, in particular to discredit a 'disobedient' artist. This happened after the Biermann affair in 1976, especially to Manfred Krug, who allegedly owned an US Dollar account in Switzerland. When Krug himself learnt about this rumour he reacted violently, striking the person who had raised this insinuation, and shouting "do you believe every word of what those from above tell you [...] do you listen to those criminals?".<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> cf. Bundesarchiv, SAPMO, DY 30/IV B 2/9.06/95 fiche 2, information/letter from rdb [Rat des Bezirkes/Regional Council] Erfurt, Dr. Krebs, Abt.-Ltr. Kultur to Hans-Joachim Hofmann [minister of culture] "SOFORT AUF DEN TISCH" 3 February 1977; "Auf die alten Tage noch ein paar schöne Filme machen", *Schweriner Volkszeitung*, 15 November 1990.

The incident was duly reported back to the Ministry of Culture. It is unclear whether governmental authorities had spread this particular rumour, its effect however, certainly benefited a state which was trying to disown a star turned dissident.

## Stars and Film Promotion

Overall, the East German film market was very protected. DEFA's market share was fairly stable at 20%, the other 80% were foreign imports and a few German films produced before 1945.<sup>29</sup> As pointed out in Chapter 1, the most serious competition came from capitalist imports. Distributor *Progress* aimed to provide GDR cinemas with about 150 new releases each year, of which 20-25 were made by DEFA.<sup>30</sup> Unsurprisingly, the ratio of socialist to non-socialist films in GDR cinemas was generally in favour of the former, but more Western productions were shown than might be expected. The table below indicates quotas for the years 1956/57 and 1960, which clearly show that Western films contributed a third of all releases<sup>31</sup>:

table 10: origin of films selected by *Progress* for GDR cinemas in 1956/57 and 1960

origin year	GDR	USSR	socialist countries (without USSR)	Western Europe	FRG	USA
1956/57	43	53	46	58	18	2
1960	13	41	37	22	8	2

At the same time, it needs to be noted that Western imports were always pre-selected and chosen in accordance with requirements of socialist ideology. Hence none of the imports would promote anti-socialist views, and most of them were either films criticising the social conditions of the capitalist world or ideologically uncontentious love and crime stories. In this way, Western productions did not always offer a significantly different kind of entertainment to the socialist films on offer. Nonetheless, their appeal rested to a great extent in the attraction of what was officially 'forbidden'.

<sup>29</sup> cf. Hans-Rainer Otto: "Kinoalltag und Kinokultur in der DDR", in *Der geteilte Himmel. Höhepunkte des DEFA-Kinos 1946-1992*, ed. by Filmarchiv Austria, Vienna: Filmarchiv Austria, 2001, p. 179.

<sup>30</sup> cf. Hans-Rainer Otto (2001), p. 183.

<sup>31</sup> I assembled them from a catalogue of all films in distribution and redistribution available that year which was given to cinemas by distributor *Progress*, cf. *Progress-Filmkatalog 1956/57*, 1 January 1956 till 31 December 1957 and *Progress-Filmkatalog 1960*, 1 January 1960 till 31 December 1960.

Distribution plans guaranteed domestic productions a minimum number of exhibition slots. It did not matter how few people went to see a DEFA film, such numbers did not have an impact on distribution slots for the next film. In the mid-1960s, however, a debate in the press among cinemagoers, exhibitors, and stars commenced about the need to improve the status (one could say competitiveness) of DEFA films. Much of the criticism of current practices was directed at an insufficient use of stars in advertising strategies. In 1964, *Filmspiegel* made enquiries into this matter and reported,

[At the *Weltspiegel* cinema in Finsterwalde] Mr. Sickert shows us a selection of film posters, of which only a few seem to invite the spectator into the cinema – and of these few even fewer use the 'film face' which is needed to make a star popular. 25 out of 30 spectators from a Cottbus cinema told us that often they do not even know who performs in the leading role. [...] only three [among 28 older people we interviewed] could name the leading role of a DEFA film from the past two years. [...] In none of our interviews anyone mentioned a Domröse-, Bürger, or Bodenstein-film, not a single time we heard somebody refer to a film title in connection with Günther Simon or Armin Mueller-Stahl, not to say that anyone would have put their name in front of the title. This happened in only one single case: Manfred Krug! His films are – at least most of them – inseparably bound to his name. [...]<sup>32</sup>

In the same article *Filmspiegel* also asked the stars themselves,

**Filmspiegel:** Do you believe enough is done to make a DEFA star popular?  
[Günther] **Simon:** No! But unfortunately this falls entirely into the hands of *Progress* in our country, and I believe this is wrong, because the methods of two businesses – one which produces them and one which advertises them – will always be contradictory.  
[...]  
[Christel] **Bodenstein:** It is by far not sufficient. We haven't got anything like real publicity. Only sporadically, now and then a film uses it.  
[...]  
[Angelica] **Domröse:** Not at all. Simply because *Progress* advertises in intervals.<sup>33</sup>

The *Filmspiegel* article cited above had asked readers for their opinion on stars and advertising, and the feedback in the following *Filmspiegel* issues showed similar concerns and criticism about the insufficient use of stars in advertising DEFA films.

**Barbara Kurz, Erfurt [Filmpspiegler reader]:** No, we have not got any stars yet, but we do have actors who could be stars! It does of course take some effort, to make them known. Our current advertising strategies are absolutely insufficient!<sup>34</sup>

**Wilhelm Kanis, Greiz [Filmpspiegler reader, he seems to be employed at the local cinema]:** [In Greiz] advertisement for the cinema can only be found in the display case with some photo stills directly next to the cinema. Otherwise we only get a measly newspaper ad each week which must cost not more than 78 Marks. A nice and big display case for film

<sup>32</sup> Translated from Horst W. Lukas: "Haben wir keine Stars?", *Filmspiegel*, 25, 1964

<sup>33</sup> ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Translated from "Meinungen: Haben wir keine Stars?", *Filmspiegel*, 1, 1965.

photos at the train station has not been used for months. Upon enquiry [...] I was informed that there was no money to make use of this excellent display. [...] I consider it wrong in commercial terms to save money on advertisement. Without sufficient advertisement, there is no turnover at the cinema.

[...]

**Günter Striegler, Berlin-Pankow [Filmspiegel reader]:** 'Lieba nischt vadieren, aba kulturell sind wa!' [We prefer no to have any profits but are highly cultured, n.b. Striegler mockingly uses the Berlin working class dialect] Once again this is about film posters. They might be considered artistically valuable, but they are certainly not tempting anyone into the cinema. Actually, they occasionally prevent people [from going to a film].<sup>35</sup>

All these comments suggest that DEFA actors would be real stars and more popular if only they were advertised more thoroughly and 'properly'. In order to understand what audiences were arguing against, it is worth investigating at this stage some typical DEFA advertising material in more detail. Many Progress posters used a deliberately 'artistic' form of graphic design which did not emphasise the stars who performed in the film. This strategy extended to imported, in particular Western European, films, as it was often cheaper for Progress to design posters rather than purchase them from the original distributor. Cinema-goers criticised this strategy as futile,

**Harry Schulz, Berlin-Lichtenberg [Filmspiegel reader]:** '[...] And one more tip – concerning the film poster: [they] should not be drawings all the time. Could you not use montages in which the actors can be seen?

[...]

**Walter Lehmann, Leipzig [Filmspiegel reader]:** 'film posters without faces are useless.'<sup>36</sup>

Film programmes, by contrast, often used photographic depictions of the star(s) on the front page. In this respect, the advertising potential of stars to attract audiences remained underexplored, and even their exploitation for the programmes did not help significantly, as these programmes were primarily on sale for cinemagoers who had already bought their tickets. But at least the latter catered towards star recognition and functioned to some extent as a star collectible. The advertising material for the film *Nelken in Aspik* exemplifies this ambivalent promotion strategy. The poster completely ignores the potential of film stars, instead drawing on a well-known illustration from a 19<sup>th</sup> century German moral fable for children. Armin Mueller-Stahl, who performs the leading role in this comedy, is merely mentioned in small print along the other actors at the right hand bottom side of the poster. On the cover of the film programme for the same film, however, Mueller-Stahl features prominently.

<sup>35</sup> Translated from "Meinungen: Stars und Werbung", *Filmspiegel*, 3, 1965.

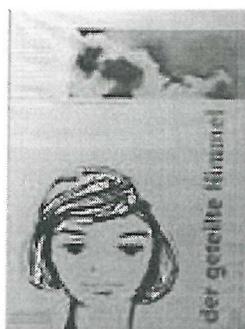
<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

**Posters**



*Kabale und Liebe* (1959)

**Programme  
brochures**



*Der geteilte Himmel* (1964)



*Nelken in Aspik* (1976)



A further example is provided by the different approaches to advertising posters for *Spur der Steine*, a film which had been forbidden since December 1966. For the 1989 re-release Manfred Krug's star status (though at that time generated more by West German television than by his previous GDR career) featured much more prominently to advertise the film than on the original.

*Spur der Steine* (1966)

Poster of original release in 1966    Poster of re-release in 1989    programme brochure 1966



The half-hearted approach towards star-focused advertisement not only originated with the film distributor, but was also caused by the disparate images individual stars projected across different films and across different media. A good example is Annekathrin Bürger, whose screen persona was that of a restrained and often intellectual beauty, but who was also known as a witty and bawdy comedian on the stage, and who additionally performed as a socio-critical chanteuse in live-concerts. The ability to get absorbed in completely different roles, personae, and genres was rated positively, with the effect that the stability of the star image became undermined.

A similar uncertainty how to use star images can be found in DEFA's and Progress' official publicity stills of the 1960s, which are a peculiar mixture of portrait and snapshot in that they present seemingly unprepared, un-made-up faces and natural poses against a background that clearly indicates a photo studio. In this the partially unstaged style of DEFA photo preceded a trend which came to Hollywood only during the 1970s.<sup>37</sup>

The publicity stills below of Doris Abesser, Eva-Maria Hagen and Armin Mueller-Stahl, taken in the early 1960s illustrate this point. The images are qualitatively different from the glamour of publicity stills from the classical Hollywood or Ufa period which were known to East German audiences. Arguably, Hollywood and Ufa also produced publicity stills which focused on the ordinariness a star would share with the man or woman on the street, but the large majority of publicity stills aim to capture the glamour and exceptionality of the star. In these exemplary DEFA photos a plain, simple hairstyle and everyday clothes (striped T-

<sup>37</sup> It was somewhat behind the French nouvelle vague though, which used completely unstaged shots, see for example Ginette Vincendeau (2000), chapter on Jeanne Moreau, pp. 110-35.

shirt, pullover and jacket where the sleeves are casually pushed up) and a relaxed body posture enforce a perception of these actors within the notions of ordinariness.<sup>38</sup> Plain clothes are typical for DEFA publicity stills, and to my knowledge there are no glamorising stills for DEFA stars, apart from a few stills for actors from the very early 1950s, on which the clothes worn (ball gown, suit) and the standing position suggest a more festive atmosphere.



DORIS ABESSER



eva-maria hagen



ARMIN MUELLER STAHL

The three actors look like any other East German. The lighting for Abesser is chosen in such a way as to emphasise a rather soft and plain face, and without any significant features. The calm expression with which she looks into the camera underlines this impression of ordinariness. Mueller-Stahl's most striking facial feature, his 'steel-blue' eyes, get completely lost in the shadow of his eyebrows, while his genuine smile is partially covered by the dark. Hagen's portrait by contrast, stands out, as her posture accentuates the cheekbones (a highly significant sign of beauty, for instance in the case of Marlene Dietrich) and the contrast between her dark hair and dark eyes against her white skin give her portrait overall a more striking impression. In fact, her bright, sparkling eyes and their suggestive gaze into the camera may even remind one of a pin-up. On the whole, however, the particular style of photography employed in these portraits primarily aims at an identificatory potential through strong notions of ordinariness, and to level the actors with their audiences. The suggestion seems to be that any other East German could replace the person in the photograph.

Only a handful of DEFA stars were actually typecast for specific parts and images; these include, apart from the previously discussed Gojko Mitic, Manfred

<sup>38</sup> Steckbrief Doris Abesser, photographer Hoffmeister, *Neues Leben*, 1, 1962; Steckbrief Eva-Maria Hagen, photographer Denger, *Neues Leben*, 3, 1962; Steckbrief Armin Mueller-Stahl, photographer Kiesling, *Neues Leben*, 10, 1961.

Krug, and the comedian Rolf Herricht. Herricht performed exclusively in slapstick comedies that showcased his comic talent against the background of contemporary East German society. In three of his films, *Der Reserveheld* (The Hero in the Army Reserve, 1965), *Der Mann der nach der Oma kam* (The Man Who Came After Grandma, 1972) and *Der Baulöwe* (Lion of his Building Site/The Constructor, 1980) his roles involved a self-reflexive negotiation between his on and off-screen personae, as Herricht's was cast as a famous and popular GDR comedian (in the first film his screen character is even called Ralf Horricht). The features that characterised his film figures were the same as those used on stage. Due to his specific talent and the nature of his performance, Herricht probably had the most consistent image of all GDR film stars. Other East German stars might focus on certain role types, such as the young intellectual (Armin Mueller-Stahl), the 'child woman' (Angelica Domröse and Jutta Hoffmann) or the stubborn old man with the good heart (Erwin Geschonneck), but generally a diversity of genres and roles, as well as crossovers into different media dispersed notions of consistency and prevented lasting distinctions from other domestic and also international stars. This in turn complicated advertising stars along the lines of clearly defined iconographies and personae, as is common in Western cinemas.

## Educational Tie-Ins

Given the educational aspirations of socialist cinema, stars' potential as 'ideological capital' was highly significant, as their drawing power could be used as a means of reaching many people in order to convey messages important to the state. This was not only reflected in the cultivation of the ordinary in the star images but also the use of stars for politically significant films on national identity – a strategy well known from Soviet or Third Reich cinema.

The significance of conveying ideological messages becomes particularly apparent when stars were used in films that contributed to the identity construction of the GDR. A good example is *Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog* (The Flag of Kriwoi Rog, 1967), the story of communist resistance against the Nazis among miners of the Mansfeld coalfields. The film's topic was highly significant for East German identity construction, because references to the anti-fascist resistance served as a means of differentiating the GDR from its predecessor the Third Reich, and also from its West German opponent. In addition, anti-fascist resistance was depicted as primarily

having originated with the working class, so that the state of workers and peasants could historically legitimise its contemporaneous structures of power. For these reasons, films on this topic were expected to reach large numbers of people and it was often obligatory for whole schools and factories to watch them.

One way to increase the appeal of such projects was to use popular actors. In the case of *Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog*, established and well-known actors Erwin Geschonneck, Eva-Maria Hagen and Manfred Krug were cast not only for their specific talent to portray a character, but because they were highly popular with East German audiences. Reports on the film tended to focus on the cast rather than the contents of the film, as if journalists were trying to make the film 'palatable' to the audiences despite the topic. The ubiquity of anti-fascist narratives in all aspects of everyday GDR life had led to a certain saturation among the populace, especially among younger generations who had not shared the experience of the Third Reich. Obviously, this saturation was not explicitly discussed in the articles, but it seems as if the journalists tried to counter the perception of *Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog* as state-imposed by focusing on the cast. One feature which advertised the film in *Neues Leben* with a five-page report two months before its nationwide release started off on Erwin Geschonneck, and how enthusiastic onlookers during the shooting greeted him.<sup>39</sup> An announcement in a later issue listed all DEFA stars involved in the film without mentioning the film's content.<sup>40</sup> As it turned out, the film became a box-office hit, and with 2.772 million spectators reached second place after the *Indianerfilm Chingachgook, die große Schlange* (Chingachgook, the Great Snake) among the top ranking films of the year 1967.<sup>41</sup> *Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog* is thus a good example how DEFA clearly and deliberately used stars as ideological capital towards educational purposes and towards supporting the identity construction of the GDR.<sup>42</sup>

The belief in the educational impact of stars was paralleled by an equally strong fear of an undesired effect they might exert. Following the Biermann affair,

<sup>39</sup> cf. "Otto, Erwin und die ganze Wahrheit", *Neues Leben*, 8, 1967.

<sup>40</sup> cf. "Film. Kurz vor der Premiere", *Neues Leben*, 9, 1967.

<sup>41</sup> cf. Appendix I, column: national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann, as quoted in Elizabeth Prommer (1999), p. 345.

<sup>42</sup> Other films which used popular actors for political topics include *Königskinder* (Star-Crossed Lovers, 1962) with Annekathrin Bürger and Armin Mueller-Stahl; *Einer von uns* (One of Us, 1960) with Günther Simon; *Tiefe Furchen* (Deep Furrows, 1965) with Erwin Geschonneck; *Brot und Rosen* (Bread and Roses, 1967) with Günther Simon and Eva-Maria Hagen; *Septemberliebe* (Septemberlove, 1961) with Annekathrin Bürger and Ulrich Thein; and *Der Tod hat ein Gesicht* (Death Has Got a Face, 1961) with Günther Simon.

film which featured stars who had criticised the GDR were no longer exhibited so as not to convey ambiguous messages to audiences. The first prominent case was Manfred Krug, for whom not only his most recent productions *Das Versteck* (The Hideaway, 1978) and *Feuer unter Deck* (Fire Below the Decks, 1976/released 1979) were prohibited from exhibition, but also older ones such as the highly popular *Mir nach, Canaillen!* (Follow Me, Scoundrels, 1964).<sup>43</sup> A continued exhibition of his films would have officially sanctioned his decision to leave the country. In addition, Krug was highly popular with his GDR audiences as his rebellious, authority-disobeying roles hit a nerve with a population that became increasingly dissatisfied with the way the state implemented its power. The cultural authorities feared Krug's potential to instigate imitation among GDR audiences, and decided to drastically reduce his presence.

### Stars, Advertising, and the Principle of Moderate Consumption

Apart from their function in conveying specific political messages, stars also contributed in other ways to the promotion of the socialist society, and, as in the West, they became tools in advertising more generally, albeit with some crucial differences. In commercial film production the tie-in is seen as a profitable use of stars in advertising other products to the public – above all commodities (clothes, cars, furniture, holidays). In this context stars are generally emphasised as "idols of consumption".<sup>44</sup> Richard Dyer has pointed out that 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism has "shifted decisively from an economy based on production to an economy based on consumption".<sup>45</sup> His suggestion that "the idols [express] in ideological form the imperatives of society" appears to find verification through its negative in socialist society.<sup>46</sup>

One way to reduce the distance between audiences and stars is through commodity purchase, through which audiences are offered, and themselves obtain, a cultural connection when they imitate their stars' clothing and lifestyle.<sup>47</sup> One can define the commodities displayed by the stars in their films and off-screen life as having two sides. In terms of the reception of these signifiers, Jackie Stacey has

<sup>43</sup> cf. Bundesarchiv, SAPMO, DY 30/ IV/ B2/ 9.06/42.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Dyer (1979), p. 45.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> cf. Jackie Stacey: *Star Gazing. Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*, London, New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 237.

argued that audiences are involved in "mechanisms of introjection, the absorption of the qualities of the good other into the self".<sup>48</sup> In terms of production, product tie-ins can stimulate the market by creating new commodity demands. In the following pages I want to focus on the interrelationship between these factors of production, reception, and consumption and star images, as this is likely to reveal different results in the comparatively weak economic system of the GDR.

In the GDR, stars functioned as idols of a planned, functional and restrained ideal of consumption which tied in with the socialist principle of a planned economy. Arguably, the insistence on restraint had its reason primarily in the state's incapability to meet consumer demands, demands which were triggered to some extent by images from West-German television and magazines smuggled into the country by relatives or bought in Czechoslovakia or Hungary.<sup>49</sup> Thus criticism of the excessive consumerism of Western film stars, and conversely a commendation of Eastern stars' 'sensible restraint' was a recurring element in the rhetoric of the East German star discourse. The following statement by star Christel Bodenstein is exemplary,

Dear Friends,

A few days ago, I was paid a visit by two West German journalists [who asked my about my plans for the near future]. I told them, I was sent as a delegate to the VII<sup>th</sup> Parliament of the FDJ youth organisation – huge silence. 'We thought, you are an actress', they said. Then they asked me, what kind of animal fur I would prefer, what kind of jewellery I owned and what kind of shoes I had. – I really had to disappoint them. I have no interest in fur, apart from a watch and a small ring I do not own any jewellery, and as for shoes, like any normal person I have four to six pairs. [...]<sup>50</sup>

Even though the GDR attempted to move beyond consumerism, advertisements and product placements existed until the early 1970s in printed matter and television advertisement.<sup>51</sup> Andreas Ludwig has aptly described product advertisement as somewhat "dysfunctional" in the GDR, as the country was not only lacking a competitive market but also an adequate supply of products.<sup>52</sup> He and Katherine Pence point out in their studies of East German consumer culture that advertisements presented an idealised version of the successful achievements of socialist economy –

<sup>48</sup> ibid.

<sup>49</sup> These countries had not put a ban on the magazines and imported them mostly for West-German and Austrian tourists.

<sup>50</sup> Translated from: "Ich gehöre zu euch ...! Die Schauspielerin Christel Bodenstein auf dem VII. Parlament", *Das freie Wort*, 8 June 1963.

<sup>51</sup> GDR television advertisement ceased in 1976.

<sup>52</sup> cf. Andreas Ludwig: "Objektkultur und DDR-Gesellschaft. Aspekte einer Wahrnehmung des Alltags", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 28, 1999, p. 7.

"products were used as a visible link between production output and the promises" made.<sup>53</sup> In this respect, the framework for advertising campaigns extends beyond a regulation of consumer behaviour, and becomes related to explicitly ideological issues.

Both these functions can be detected in product placements in the popular film press. Advertisements in film journals addressed their readers simultaneously as cinemagoers and potential consumers in a wider sense. The implicit reference to stars in the ad for an AKA Electric hairdryer published in *Filmspiegel* is a case in point. The slogan "A well-groomed appearance is no privilege of VIPs" not only signals that certain beauty products are available on the market, it also educates consumers to become active (by taking care of their appearance). The play on the cliché of the ever-immaculate appearance of stars suggests that stars too are ordinary people, and that every ordinary person can look as extra-ordinarily 'groomed' as a star. At the same time, this particular advertisement may also have been aimed at the younger generation, who at that time were imitating the hairstyles of Western idols such as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, and who were thus admonished to get back in line with more conventional appearances.



Generally, advertisements in *Filmspiegel* focused on beauty products, photographic equipment and music. The ads reprinted below are from *Filmspiegel* 10, 1965, which, in its mode of address, indicates a predominantly female readership, as do most of the products that are advertised – a *medi 17* cream-soap, a *Plumol* body hair

<sup>53</sup> cf. Katherine Pence: "Schaufenster des sozialistischen Konsums: Texte der ostdeutschen 'consumer culture'". In: *Akten. Eingaben. Schaufenster. Die DDR und ihre Texte. Erkundungen zu Herrschaft und Alltag*. ed. by Alf Lüdtke and Peter Becker. Berlin, 1997, pp. 98-102.

epilating device and facial lotions with the peculiar brand name *Exlepäng*. The subjects depicted in the remaining ads for photographic equipment (a female athlete and a group of children playing on the beach) are also related to a more female sphere of influence.



advertisements from *Filmspiegel* 10, 1963

As far as fashion and clothing was concerned in the GDR in the 1950s and 1960s, the key word was moderation. Consumers were informed about the merits of 'timeless' styles (positively valued against the 'fast-changing' fashions of the West), which could be combined over and over again. *Praktisch* (functional) was one of the key features of GDR clothing, but clothes were supposed to nevertheless look neat and *adrett* (smart).<sup>54</sup>

On the whole, DEFA stars comparatively rarely engaged in fashion tie-ins with the GDR's fashion industry, exceptions include Christel Bodenstein modelling for the East Berlin clothing outlet "Treff" in *Filmspiegel* in 1963.<sup>55</sup> A *Filmspiegel* fashion advertisement with starlet Karin Ugowski underlines the value placed on functionality, but also projects the prevailing contradictions on the subject of fashion

<sup>54</sup> cf. Annette Kaminsky: "'Mehr produzieren, gerechter verteilen, besser leben' Konsumpolitik in der DDR", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 28, 1999, p.17.

<sup>55</sup> "Treff bei Treff", *Filmspiegel*, 2, 1963, quoted in Stefan Soldovieri (2002), p. 58f.. Future research, however, could prove otherwise, as this project did not look into the GDR's woman magazine *Für Dich* and the fashion journal *Sybille*.

in the GDR media. In the article Ugowski is asked, '*Haben Sie Modesorgen?*' (Do you worry about fashion?). The actress then rather unexpectedly defends material wealth, "Who owns a well filled wardrobe is by no means a snob".<sup>56</sup> However, the suggestion of consumerist pleasures is immediately corrected by a rhetoric focused on functionality.

A well assembled wardrobe is something functional (*von Nutzen*) and gives pleasure. [...] I love pullovers, slim silhouettes, skirts with a slight A-line, décolletés and 'womanly soft' fabrics – all of which I find in Polish fashion.<sup>57</sup>

The reporter's initial question seems to refer implicitly to the situation with regard to fashion in the GDR – that there were neither enough clothes supplied nor products which reflected current styles and trends. Ugowski's reference to Polish fashion relates to its perception at the time as being the most elegant, most luxurious and closest to Western trends. In this respect, Ugowski's statement can be seen to actually undermine both the indigenous fashion manufacture, and, more subversively, the GDR's emphasis on functionality over elegance and luxury. Fashion adverts, by their very nature, were subverting the non-excessive-consumerist policies propagated by the state authorities, and were thus one of the more curious anomalies of the system.

### Case Study: Chris Doerk

In order to further illustrate and discuss in greater detail some of the aspects laid out in the this chapter so far, the career of pop singer and short-term DEFA star Chris Doerk is instructive. Her trajectory exemplifies an unprecedented convergence of different media in order to introduce and built up new talent. Chris Doerk was a pop singer with notable success since 1964. The biggest leap in her career came when she met pop singer Frank Schöbel in 1966, who was to become her husband, composer and duet partner. Doerk's records were played on the radio, she modelled fashion in the GDR's youth magazine *Neues Leben*, and performed leading roles in the DEFA musicals *Heißer Sommer* (Hot Summer, 1968) and *Nicht schummeln, Liebling* (Don't Cheat, Darling, 1973). She was given her own youth and fashion programme on television in 1971, and the birth of her son was celebrated as a 'multimedia' event.

<sup>56</sup> Translated from "Karin Ugowski", *Filmstanz*, 9, 1965.

<sup>57</sup> ibid.

This may all seem quite natural in the context of Western commercial music and film production; within the context of East Germany, however, the attention devoted to Doerk clearly stands out as an exception. She is not only an exception if we assume a clear distinction between commercial and non-commercial cinema – a distinction which is far less acute than commonly thought – but also within the context of other East German music and film performers at the time.

Her high visibility through frequent and regular appearances in a variety of media worked in her favour and her success became evident in popularity polls, when she reached an astonishing fourth place in polls following her second film *Nicht schummeln, Liebling* in 1973, which added to her leading position in the pop singer rankings of the year before.<sup>58</sup> Doerk's national career as a singer and actress experienced a rapid decline from 1973 onwards, when she discontinued working with her partner Frank Schöbel after their divorce.<sup>59</sup> The main reason was probably that she lost Schöbel as her composer, and on her own could not live up to the expectations established by their performances as a duo. By 1979, the cultural authorities at the Central Committee of the SED became concerned about her professional abilities and debated how to drop her.<sup>60</sup> While Doerk's career went into freefall, Schöbel continued to be highly successful in the pop music charts, and at least one of his songs made it into the top three of the GDR charts for every year between 1977 and 1990.<sup>61</sup> However, neither of them appeared again in a DEFA feature film.

It would be wrong to describe Doerk's career as deliberately constructed, as there was no central institution to fully control these processes. Yet, the depiction of Doerk's off-screen persona appeared rather conformist and the cultivation of the ordinary seems more prominent in her image if compared to other film or music stars of the time. The major reason for Chris Doerk's popularity was certainly her appeal to younger audiences. It began with her pop songs, employing catchy melodies similar to West German *Schlager*, and included beat and Rock 'n Roll rhythms. Her two films dealt with the turmoil and fun of falling in love for the first time, and were clearly tailored to a teenage and adolescent audience.

<sup>58</sup> cf. *Neues Leben* 2, 1968; 4, 1974, and 8, 1972.

<sup>59</sup> Toward the end of 1973, only a few months after the release of *Nicht schummeln, Liebling*, a press release was published about Doerk and Schöbel no longer singing together. Fans reacted with disbelief and sent letters to the party and cultural authorities demanding to prevent the split-up. Cf. Frank Schöbel: *Frank und frei. Die Autobiographie*. Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 1998, p. 227.

<sup>60</sup> Kurznotiz 12.9.1979, [material on Chris Doerk], Ursula Ragwitz to Kurt Hager, Bundesarchiv, SAPMO, DY30/IV B2/9.06/94, fiche 1.

<sup>61</sup> Frank Schöbel (1998), pp. 718f..

In *Heißer Sommer*, two groups of young people, one of them 11 girls, the other 10 boys, by chance end up in the same fishing village on the Baltic Sea. Between the four leading characters Stupsi (Doerk), Kai (Schöbel), Brit and Wolf a Midsummernight's Dream situation evolves, when both boys fall in love with Brit, who plays the *femme fatale* and teases both of them. Stupsi develops an unrequited crush on Kai. After a number of pranks, a campfire, and a lot of dancing and playing on the beach, the two men fight over Brit. The group interferes and restores morality and order, and *Heißer Sommer* ends with the perfect union between Brit and Kai, while Stupsi and Wolf remain 'empty handed'.

*Nicht schummeln, Liebling* has a similar plot, as a boy's football team and a group of girls from a technical college battle for money from the town mayor's budget. The boys (supported by the mayor and led by Bernd/Frank Schöbel) want to advance into the premier football league, the girls want to build their own youth club. Barbara, headmaster of the college, sets up a girl's football team (led by Brigitte/Chris Doerk), which is so popular with the town's people that the mayor can no longer justify his decision to give all money to the boy's football team. After a lot of teasing, and dancing on the streets, common sense reconciles both groups. Brigitte and Bernd, as well as Barbara and the mayor end up as couples.

Both films were highly popular (*Heißer Sommer* was fourth and *Nicht schummeln, Liebling* third in the box-office rankings), not only because of their generic narratives and the concomitant entertainment value, but also because they featured GDR's 'dream couple' of pop music. The films' soundtracks integrated the latest East German pop hits, while in *Nicht schummeln, Liebling*, the popular GDR rock band *Puhdys* contributed a number of songs. All these elements hit a nerve with young East German audiences, and facilitated the crossover success of Schöbel and Doerk from pop music into film. Even though crossovers between television, film, stage and concert hall were quite common among East German stars during the 1960s – actors Manfred Krug, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Annekathrin Bürger and Christel Bodenstein regularly toured the country with readings and concerts – a cross-over from music to film and above all into leading roles, as in Doerk's case, was quite unusual.

Chris Doerk's off-screen image tied in perfectly with the notion of the East German star as a 'hard worker'. A feature which was published just before the release of Doerk's second film pointed out how she had worked hard to achieve her aim with singing lessons, travelling around with amateur bands and participating in

singing competitions.<sup>62</sup> Personal discipline appears regularly in relation to descriptions of her approach to work. *Heißer Sommer* director Joachim Hasler said about her,

It was a pleasure to see how harmoniously and disciplined [she] integrated [herself] into the collective [of the film team].<sup>63</sup>

An article preceding the 1973 release of *Nicht schumeln, Liebling* states,

But wherever discipline is required, she does what she is asked to do without moaning. After having produced two films and numerous television productions at home and abroad she knows how [different] directors work and accepts even their strangest orders.<sup>64</sup>

Descriptions such as these, emphasising her hard and disciplined work, thus validated Doerk as being an 'honest' and 'artistic' performer. The notion of hard work moreover cultivated the ordinary elements in Doerk's image by putting her in line with the average East German worker. Other pronounced references support this construction, such as the mention of her '*solider Beruf*' ('safe' and manual profession) in which she was trained as a window-decorator alongside descriptions of her down-to-earth lifestyle.



Chris Doerk at home in her bedroom



Chris Doerk and husband Frank Schöbel doing housework

A photo of her bedroom, reprinted above from the "Chris & Frank" article in *Neues Leben* 6, 1969, shows a simple sofa-bed, depicts her engaged in the everyday duties of the average housewife (ironically heightening her 'burden of everyday life' as her husband Frank pretends not to help her), it is mentioned that they do not own a car, and the sentence "while shopping, she waits patiently in the queue and talks to the

<sup>62</sup> cf. *Neues Leben*, 4, 1973.

<sup>63</sup> Translated from "Wer ist Frank Schöbel? Zweiter Teil", *Neues Leben*, 10, 1972.

<sup>64</sup> Translated from "Keinen Tag geb' ich her!", *Neues Leben*, 4, 1973.

other customers about problems of everyday life" clearly marks her as a mere part of the crowd, exposed to the same rigours as all other East Germans.<sup>65</sup> Some of Doerk's and her partner's songs actually included depictions of housework.<sup>66</sup> Elements such as these cultivate the ordinary side of the star image in presenting the (allegedly chosen) social immobility of a highly successful singer.<sup>67</sup>

The cultivation of Doerk's image was further intensified when she was presented as a young mother. Rather unusually, a 1968 East German TV entertainment show presented a live link-up to Doerk's home.<sup>68</sup> From there she talked to the show's audience (and her partner Frank), and those watching at home and presented her newborn baby Alexander. To my knowledge, this was the first time in East Germany that the child of a star was presented to the country in such a multi-media event. Considering the fact that press coverage was usually free of detailed information on the private life of stars, it is a most surprising concession to the audience's curiosity.

Implicitly, however, this television appearance also raises another issue, and highlights the problem of emancipation and the well-established fact that despite the GDR's state regulations, gender equality was not achieved within work and family relations. With Doerk minding the child at home and her partner singing in the show, the show clearly conveys traditional images of mother equalling childcare and father equalling earning power. Doerk's pregnancy, followed by her unusual television appearance, occurred at a time where the increased professional qualification of women had led to a considerable decrease of birth rates in the GDR, which dropped from 17.0 in 1960 to 13.9 in 1970.<sup>69</sup> Although the TV show concentrated on the young mother and did not directly present her as a *working* mother, later features in *Neues Leben* did.<sup>70</sup> Chris Doerk thus can be seen to have represented an ideal combination of work and motherhood as aspired by the state. Although the

<sup>65</sup> This reference occurred more often, cf. "Chris & Frank", *Neues Leben*, 6, 1969 and "Keinen Tag geb' ich her!", *Neues Leben*, 4, 1973.

<sup>66</sup> For instance in the film clip to Frank Schöbel's song "Ich geh vom Nordpol zum Südpol zu Fuß".

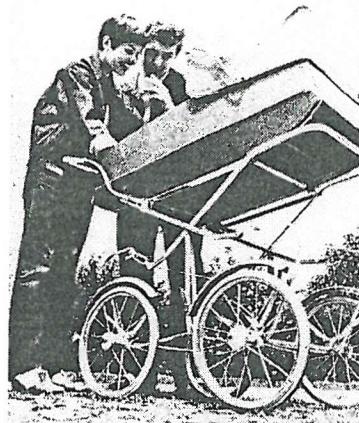
<sup>67</sup> Frank Schöbel stated in an interview on the MDR television channel that he kept a simple life-style because otherwise he would not have been *glaubwürdig* (credible) for the ordinary worker who came to see his concerts. Cf. *Guten Abend*", television interview with Frank Schöbel, presented by Juergen Schulz, MDR, no date.

<sup>68</sup> DFF (Deutscher Fernsehfunk, GDR television broadcaster), *Da liegt Musike drin*, 1968, in "Guten Abend", television interview with Frank Schöbel, presented by Juergen Schulz, MDR, no date.

<sup>69</sup> cf. table "Geburtenentwicklung und Versorgungsgrad mit Kindereinrichtungen 1950 bis 1988" (based on *Statistisches Jahrbuch der DDR 1989*), in Matthias Judt (1998), p. 204.

<sup>70</sup> cf. "Chris & Frank", *Neues Leben*, 6, 1969.

propagation of the working mother was a recurrent element within the East German context, the TV show referred to above remains unique.



Chris Doerk and Frank Schöbel as young parents, *Neues Leben*, 6, 1969

Among all music and film stars in East Germany, Chris Doerk appears to have been the one most involved with fashion. In 1967, around the first peak of Chris Doerk's success as a pop singer with the single "Liebe mich so wie dein Herz es mag" (Love Me the Way Your Heart Wants to), and at a time when the shooting for *Heißer Sommer* had already begun, *Neues Leben* launched two articles on clothes designed by the GDR's state fashion institute which were presented by Doerk.<sup>71</sup> After that, fashion was to remain an integral part of Doerk's image which eventually led to her own television show *Mode und Musik* (Fashion and Music).<sup>72</sup>



Chris Doerk presenting holiday fashion in *Neues Leben* 6, 1967

<sup>71</sup> Doerk sang "Liebe mich so wie dein Herz es mag" together with her partner and pop singer Frank Schöbel.

<sup>72</sup> Together with her partner Frank Schöbel, in 1971 the show was renamed into *Mode mit Chris und Frank* (fashion with Chris and Frank).

The holiday fashion presented by Doerk in the second *Neues Leben* article (pictured above) is a complex mixture of 'neat', functional and clean-cut, but also glamorous elements. Whereas the text accompanying the photos stresses that holiday fashion should be appropriate and functional, Doerk's extrovert and exhibitionist body postures stand in stark contrast to this emphasis. In visual terms, East German fashion is thus made more exciting than the general perception suggested, while the implicit references to Western stardom and consumerism also undermine the cultivation of the ordinary which is more pronounced in the article.

One significant aspect about the Chris Doerk fashion tie-ins is their focus on production rather than on consumption. The fashion items she presented by her were to be understood as 'prototypes' and could not be bought in any of the GDR's department stores. Since East Germans knew about the latest fashion trends from West German television and magazines and catalogues brought to them from their Western relatives, the demand for such commodities was high, but it could not be satisfied by domestic production. One solution was for East Germans to sew their own clothes. GDR fashion magazines, but also articles in various other popular magazines, such as *Neues Leben*, encouraged the reader to become a producer.

Various articles as well as her television show emphasised Doerk's ability to design her own dresses and to do crocheting and knitting.<sup>73</sup> Apart from the fact that creating one's own fashion was one of the solutions to the shortage of (luxury and up-to-date) commodities in socialist Germany, Doerk as the producer fits in nicely with the natural and down-to-earth image of East German stars.

Her *Neues Leben* fashion articles not only served to stimulate 'home production' of garments, they moreover aimed at a kind of regulation. In general, appropriateness and functionality were core elements to set GDR fashion apart from the detrimental glamour of commercial fashion. For the garments worn by Doerk it was suggested: "[...] we will need not more than one suitcase, if we pack *zweckmäßig*" [functionally and in an appropriate manner] "[and do not forget] the *praktische* [functional] costume".<sup>74</sup>

The patronising tone reveals a lot about the attitudes towards fashion in the GDR at the time. The intention was to counterbalance the influence of Western European fashion – at the time characterised by increasingly longer haircuts, brightly

<sup>73</sup> *Neues Leben*, 9, 1969, *Neues Leben* 5, 1971.

<sup>74</sup> *Neues Leben* 6, 1967, p. 53f.

patterned clothes, and unisex styles – by setting 'GDR standards'. Studies undertaken by the GDR Institute for Market Research reveal the attempts in encouraging restrained fashion consumption with a timeless style that would be independent of the rapidly changing *westlicher Konsumterror* (Western consumerist terror).<sup>75</sup> Jeans in particular were disapproved of by the state and experienced enforced sale restrictions. The official rejection of jeans is to some extent ironic, given that they were originally created as working clothes. As such, they not only conformed to the GDR's preference for functionality, they also should have been a welcome signifier of working class status. However, the East German state and party authorities perceived them primarily as signifiers of Western decadence and unruliness. Unsurprisingly, jeans quickly became a highly desired commodity among younger East Germans.

It is against this context that I wish to reconsider Stupsi, the character played by Chris Doerk in *Heißer Sommer*. By not wearing jeans and making fun of the fuss that everyone seems to make about them, Doerk's character supports the official disapproval of this garment. Her attitude towards jeans moreover confirms Stupsi's function in *Heißer Sommer*: she is the principle of order, the 'intellectually mature' leader of her group, in opposition to the boyishly immature Kai (Schöbel). At the beginning of the trip she informs the girls of the holiday schedule and warns them of the inappropriate behaviour which is to be expected from the boys in the song "Männer, die noch keine sind" (Men who aren't men yet). When the two groups 'borrow' (they did not ask permission) a fishing boat for a romantic night trip, Stupsi is the only not to join them and to later inform the local fishermen. She is the one to interfere when the group cohesion is threatened by the love affairs. Her appearance underlines Stupsi's narrative function: she is the only one with a short, functional haircut and comparatively deep and authoritative voice. It is revealing that subsidiary press articles also projected this role as the more mature person onto her off-screen image, again in opposition to Schöbel.<sup>76</sup>

Despite all these dimensions to Doerk's on and off-screen image, which can be seen as being affirmative of norms and social order, in order to understand her popularity, one must investigate the possibility of an alternative appeal, of another side to Doerk's image. With this aim in mind, let's have another look at *Heisser*

<sup>75</sup> cf. Karl-Ernst Schubert, 'Zur Aufgabenstellung des Modeschaffens in der DDR', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Marktforschung*, vol. 2, 1963, p. 64, quoted in Annette Kaminsky (1999), p. 17.

<sup>76</sup> cf. "Chris & Frank", *Neues Leben*, 6, 1969.

*Sommer*, especially at the ultimately ambivalent trajectory of Doerk's character Stupsi in the film. Although she generally represents the positive values ascribed to the socialist personality (conforming to principles of morality, law and order; prioritising group values over those of the individual), Stupsi is not rewarded for her behaviour at the end of the film. Although she remains popular with her group of girls, within the film's central romantic scenario, she ends up without a partner. The notion of the character's punishment and isolation is further intensified by the audiences' extra-textual knowledge that Stupsi does not even get together with the character played by Doerk's real husband. Since East Germans were aware of Doerk's and Schöbel's marriage, and their reputation as a 'dream couple', her isolation adds an element of ambiguity to the proceedings of the film.<sup>77</sup>

This ambiguity is equally evident in the content and performance style of some of the film's musical numbers. One of Doerk's songs, for example, can be seen to provide a subtle criticism of a GDR which during the late 1960s was going through a phase of stagnation. In terms of rhythm and musical genre, the song in question, "Was erleben" (I want something to happen), is essentially a march, but influences of beat and pop counterpoint the main principles of the march, order and control.



stills from *Heißer Sommer* when Doerk sings "Was erleben"

Control falls further by the wayside when Stupsi and her friends begin to mock-march all over the beds across the room, throwing their legs and arms into the air. The choreography clearly recalls Richard Dyer's notions of community, energy and intensity, which he sees as central in creating the feeling of utopia in the musical genre.<sup>78</sup> Energy and intensity are apparent in the choreography, and in the lyrics of Doerk's song,

<sup>77</sup> Chris Doerk alludes to their status as the dream couple of the GDR in *East Side Story*, directed by Dana Ranga, Germany, 1996.

<sup>78</sup> cf. Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', in Bill Nichols (ed.), *Movies and Methods*, Berkely, Los Angeles, U of California Press, 1985, pp. 222ff..

Was erleben

Brav sein kann ich alle Tage,  
dafür hab' ich immer Zeit.  
Jetzt aber kommt das nicht in Frage  
ich bin in Stimmung  
darum will ich heut' was erleben  
was erleben  
was erleben  
was erleben was nicht jeden Tag passiert,  
einmal möcht' ich meinem Affen Zucker geben  
was erleben,  
was erleben  
was erleben was mir imponiert!  
Heut' bin ich für was zu haben  
aber Vorsicht bitte sehr  
denn will sich einer von den Knaben  
zu viel erlauben  
Junge, Junge dann kann er  
was erleben  
was erleben  
wenn er frech wird  
werde ich ihm eine kleben  
was erleben,  
was erleben  
kann er gerne wenn er das riskiert.  
Heute hab' ich gute Laune,  
alles ist mir heut' egal  
heut' stoß ich mal in die Posaune  
hau auf die Pauke  
denn ich möchte wirklich mal was erleben  
was erleben  
was erleben was nicht jeden Tag passiert  
mal ins Schwarze treffen oder dicht daneben,  
was erleben  
was erleben,  
was erleben dass mir jeder dazu gratuliert!

I want something to happen

I can be a good girl everyday,  
there is always time for that.  
But not right now  
because I'm in the mood [for adventure]  
that's why I want to see things happen today  
really happen  
really happen  
things which don't happen every day,  
for once I really want to let my hair down,  
to see things happen  
really happen  
to see things happen that I'll never forget!  
I'm really up for something today  
but woe betide  
if one of those small boys  
dares to be too cheeky  
Oh, then he will see something  
happen  
really happen  
if he's cheeky  
I'll belt him one  
and he will see something happen  
really happen  
if he's going to take the risk.  
Today I'm in a good mood,  
I don't care about anything  
today I'll blow my own trumpet  
paint the town red  
because I really want to see things happen  
really happen  
things which don't happen every day  
to hit the bull's eye, or thereabouts  
to see things happen  
to actually happen  
so that everybody can say: Congratulations!

The lyrics give a forceful impression due to the use of the modal verb '*will*' which in German implies much more of a 'must' than a 'want'. The word '*einmal*' (only once) is similarly striking, because it suggests that the song's narrator is under much self-restraint and obedience otherwise. 'At least once' she wants to break free. The almost infinite repetition of '*was erleben*' intensifies the escapist urge to break away from every day stagnation.

Throughout the film, music is among the prime elements in transporting, or at least negotiating, the 'rebellious' potential of musical forms such as beat. In this respect, the film has much in common with contemporary youth musicals in other Western cinemas, in particular the West German *Schlagerfilm*. Nevertheless, in the GDR popular music faced a more hostile environment than in most Western societies. The SED had outlawed rock and beat music because of its American origin and because it was seen as a symbol of capitalist decadence. At the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the SED, which had proved so fatal for many DEFA-films, Erich Honecker openly condemned the morally damaging influence of Western beat music,

Over some time, DT64 [GDR youth radio station] has propagated nothing but beat music in its programme. In an unacceptable manner the broadcasts of this radio station [...] have neglected issues of education and knowledge on a wide range of art and literature of past and present times. [...] the Central Council of the FDJ has misjudged beat-music. [...] It was overlooked that the [Western] enemy uses this kind of music to incite young people into excess. The damaging influence of such music on the thinking and acting [as well as moral destruction] of young people has been fatally underestimated.<sup>79</sup>

In general the younger generation ignored the SED's musical dictates, and listening to beat music became akin to a protest against the state authorities.<sup>80</sup> For Chris Doerk and her partner the performance of Western style music not only on the radio but also in film had become possible because their songs avoided direct political statements and represented the singers as clean-cut citizens who happily submitted themselves to the requirements of society. For the state authorities, their clean-cut image seemed sufficiently remote from any morally damaging Western influence. Among audiences, the combination of affirmative and subversive elements must have had a strong appeal, as their catchy songs were enormously popular and audiences went to watch *Heißer Sommer* several times, granting the film cult status, and contributing to Chris Doerk's, albeit brief, star career.<sup>81</sup>

The ambiguities of Doerk's on and off-screen persona worked particularly well in a social and political environment where most East Germans had to square their belief in the ideal of a socialist society with a reality in which the state authorities betrayed these very ideals. Doerk's contradictory image could thus appeal to those who, whilst criticising certain aspects of life in the GDR, nevertheless supported their country and its striving for a fair and egalitarian society.

<sup>79</sup> Translated from Erich Honecker: "Bericht des Politbüros an das 11. Plenum des ZK der SED, partially published *Neues Deutschland*, 16 December 1965, quoted in Matthias Judt (1998), p. 337f.

<sup>80</sup> cf. Georg Mass and Hartmut Reszel: "Whatever happened to ....: the decline and renaissance of rock in the former GDR", *Popular Music* (Cambridge UP), 17:3, 1998, p. 267.

<sup>81</sup> cf. interview Brigitte Ulbrich (frequent cinemagoer during GDR times) in *East Side Story* (1996).

# CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to challenge certain assumptions about stars in socialist German cinema. The way East German cinema often presented itself to the outside, and also the way it was perceived abroad has until now prevented the acknowledgement of its popular cultural elements. In particular, East Germany's own rejection of Western film stars and stardom for political reasons (where during the Cold War the notion of stardom was associated with the West) has determined a retrospective perception of GDR cinema as 'star-less'. This thesis has shown how significant a part of everyday cinema culture indigenous (and also foreign) stars were in East Germany.

As I have outlined in this thesis, the emergence of East German film stars in the early 1960s was accompanied by a discursive appropriation of the phenomenon of stardom. From the outset this appropriation was associated with a political demarcation from Western and commercial cinema; owing to a certain incompatibility socialist collectivism and the ideology of individualism inherent in stardom, the East German star discourse had to renegotiate certain qualities so that they would no longer stand in opposition to collective interests. In particular, textual and extra-textual images of individual stars were constructed in such a way that ordinary elements outweighed extra-ordinary ones.

In order to cultivate the ordinariness of stars, The East German press drew on a wide range of elements. The four most prominent explored in this thesis were firstly, star terminology and the preference for words that would not explicitly carry associations with stardom in commercial cinema and the notion of extra-ordinariness, in particular the term *Publikumsliebling*. Secondly, through the notion of social immobility. Here, stars were depicted as continuing to share the same social background and social status as the average East German, i.e. through moderate consumption, simple life-styles, hard work, and feeling responsible for their contribution to society. A third strategy in cultivating stars' ordinariness was the restricted knowledge about private lives which led to a dominance of information about the professional sphere.

To a certain degree, East German fans were no different from Western counterparts in aspiring to be close to their stars. However, instead of wanting to participate in the star's life and get 'up' to the stars' social level, East German audiences often expressed the wish for the star to come 'down' and participate in their own ordinary lives. The social levelling that characterised GDR society as whole was reflected in the way East Germans defined their relationship with indigenous film stars.

The notion of ordinariness was not only apparent in the construction of star images, but also in the actual way stars were dealt with within their production context – where their salary share was an insignificant proportion of the overall production costs. Filmmakers and cultural authorities were aware of the ideological capital film stars could offer – in attracting large audiences and serving as role models – and at times used it for films significant for processes of legitimisation and identity construction of the GDR. At the same time, the potential of DEFA stars was often neglected in advertising strategies. Because they were considered as an ordinary part of the film production, stars were not given any outstanding position.

In exploring the question as to why East German stardom began to emerge and decline, my thesis has explored the correspondence to developments in international cinema and changes in leisure time occupations. At first, the star-defined appearance of international cinema shaped a demand for indigenous stars. Later, changes in popular culture, in particular a shift away from film toward popular music and an increasing age gap between DEFA stars and their audiences triggered the decline of the star league. The most significant reason for stars' accelerated decline came from the oppressive cultural politics imposed by the authorities in the wake of the Biermann affair in 1976.

This thesis is only a first step into studying stars in East German and socialist cinema, and tries to raise issues for further debate. In particular the influence of international cinemas and their stars needs to be investigated in much greater detail with respect to how they informed specific individual stars in East German cinema,

as well as audience preferences. Even though this thesis aimed to include the perception of stars through audiences wherever possible, this is definitely still a *terra incognita*. Whilst the exploration of contemporaneous documents can go into more depth with reader responses that have not been published in the popular press and are waiting to be discovered in the archives, there is also still the opportunity to study actual spectators who were fans of DEFA stars at that time. Likewise the perception of DEFA stars abroad within the trajectories of well-known Western stars offers an interesting research area.

I would like to conclude with a dialogue excerpt from the DEFA comedy *Der Reserveheld* (Hero of His Army Reserve, 1965), which exemplifies once again the ambivalent position of stars in East German cinema.

**She:** But don't you think that a [film star] should be treated differently?

**NVA army Captain:** No, not at all. He is a person like anyone else, and a citizen who has to fulfil his legal duties [toward society].

# APPENDICES

## Appendix I

### Popularity polls of *Publikumslieblinge* and box-office rankings of DEFA films in the GDR

The popularity polls were accumulated from annual polls in the monthly youth magazine *Neues Leben* and the fortnightly film magazine *FilmSPIEGEL*. The column 'box-office ranking according to Wiedemann' reflects the actual box-office hits; they were included in the tables to reflect discrepancies and similarities between films that were actually successful and those actors and actresses that were voted as most popular. These box-office rankings were collected privately by GDR film sociologist Dieter Wiedemann from the contemporaneous GDR press, they were quoted in Elizabeth Prommer: *Der Kinobesuch im Lebenslauf: eine historische und medienbiographische Studie*, Konstanz: UKV Medien, 1999, pp. 337-49. Whenever top ranks of actors and films overlapped, this is indicated in red font. Different are only tables for 1955-58, where I added a column to give this information from my own judgement. So far there is no official source for the box-office returns or audience figures of DEFA films in the GDR.

Please note: only if the number of votes was printed in the magazines or audience figures were listed by Wiedemann, they are given in the tables below. Where applicable, countries of origin were added for non GDR productions and actors (e.g. FRG = West Germany). At times the tables may continue on the following page. For imported films the original title is given, for some, however, it could not be verified.

Printed in blue are all tables that have no relation to popularity polls of the press, but which contain relevant information on box-office rankings and the participation of DEFA stars.

NL = *Neues Leben*, youth magazine published monthly

FS = *FilmSPIEGEL*, popular film magazine published fortnightly

JW = *Junge Welt*, daily newspaper for young people, published by FDJ Zentralrat

1954	NL voted in 2, 1955 East-German actresses and actors in bold	number of votes	box-office ranking according to Wiedemann
1	Gérard Philipe (F)	1008	<i>Ernst Thälmann – Sohn seiner Klasse</i>
2	Maria Schell (FRG)	859	<i>Alarm im Zirkus</i> 3,600,000
3	Margot Hielscher	267	
4	<b>Günther Simon</b>	131	
5	O.W. Fischer (FRG)	126	
6	<b>Karla Runkehl</b>	124	
7	Anna Magnani (I)	116	

<b>8</b>	Ursula Burg	102	
<b>9</b>	Alla Larinowa (USSR)	56	
<b>10</b>	Hardy Krüger (FRG)	52	
<b>11</b>	Curt Goetz (FRG)	29	
<b>12</b>	<b>Wilhelm Koch-Hooge</b>	28	
<b>13</b>	Werner Peters	27	
<b>15</b>	<b>Eduard von Winterstein</b>	27	

<b>1955</b>	no polls	box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	participating upcoming stars, no poll in press
<b>1</b>		<i>Ernst Thälmann – Führer seiner Klasse</i>	Günther Simon, Karla Runkehl
<b>2</b>		<i>Der Ochse von Kulm</i> (4,100,000)	
<b>3</b>		<i>Sommerliebe</i> (3,700,000)	

<b>1956</b>	no polls	box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	participating upcoming stars, no poll in press
<b>1</b>		<i>Genesung</i>	Karla Runkehl,
<b>2</b>		<i>Eine Berliner Romanze</i> (2,800,000)	Annekathrin Bürger, Ulrich Thein
<b>3</b>		<i>Der Hauptmann von Köln</i> (2,600,000)	Erwin Geschonneck, Christel Bodenstein, Rolf Ludwig

<b>1957</b>	no polls	box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	participating upcoming stars, no poll in press
<b>1</b>		<i>Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser</i> (2,400,000)	Ekkehard Schall
<b>2</b>		<i>Vergeßt mir meine Traudel nicht</i> (3,000,000)	Eva-Maria Hagen, Günther Simon
<b>3</b>		<i>Schlösser und Katen</i> (3,000,000)	Erwin Geschonneck, Ekkehard Schall, Karla Runkehl

<b>1958</b>	no polls	box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	participating upcoming stars, no poll in press
<b>1</b>		<i>Meine Frau macht Musik</i>	Günther Simon
<b>2</b>		<i>Das Lied der Matrosen</i>	Günther Simon, Hilmar Thate, Stefan Lisewski

<b>1959</b>	NL voted in April 1960 (note that Soviet actor Bondartschuk is listed without voting figures, so assumingly he was included to balance the list with a socialist actor)			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	<b>best DEFA actress</b>	<b>best DEFA actor</b>	<b>best DEFA film</b>	<b>best DEFA actress</b>	<b>best DEFA actor</b>	<b>best DEFA film</b>		
1	Annekathrin Bürger 816	Jürgen Frohriep 474	Weißes Blut 884				1	Die Elenden
2	Christine Laszar 649	Günther Simon 359	Verwirrung der Liebe				2	Verwirrung der Liebe
3	none given	none given	Sterne				3	
	<b>best foreign actress</b>	<b>best foreign actor</b>					4	
1	Liselotte Pulver 699 (FRG)	Yves Montand 538 (F)					5	
2	none given	Sergej Bondartschuk (USSR)						

<b>1960</b>	NL voted in April 1961			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	<b>best DEFA actress</b>	<b>best DEFA actor</b>	<b>best DEFA film</b>	<b>best DEFA actress</b>	<b>best DEFA actor</b>	<b>best DEFA film</b>		
1	Christel Bodenstein 1057	Günther Simon 830	Der schweigende Stern 619				1	Der schweigende Stern (2,100,000)
2	Annekathrin Bürger 666	Ulrich Thein 407	Das Leben beginnt 520				2	Seilergasse 8 (1,800,000)
3	Doris Abesser 534	Stefan Lisewski 404	-					
	<b>best foreign actress</b>	<b>best foreign actor</b>	<b>best foreign film</b>					
1	Tatjana Samoilowa (USSR) 841	Gérard Philipe (F) 977	Ballada o soldate/Ballade vom Soldaten (USSR, 1959) 490					
2	Liselotte Pulver (FRG) 808	Horst Buchholz (FRG) 418	Le Comte de Monte-Cristo/Der Graf von Monte Christo (F, 1955) 424					
3	Mari Töröcsik (HUN) 506	Jean Marais (F) 348	none given					

1961	NL voted in April 1962			FS voted in issue 1, 1962			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Doris Abesser	Günther Simon	<i>Gewissen in Aufruhr</i> (tv sequel)	Christel Bodenstein	Ulrich Thein		1	<i>Professor Mamlock</i>
2	Annekathrin Bürger	Stefan Lisewski	<i>Professor Mamlock</i>	Annekathrin Bürger	Stefan Lisewski		2	<i>Der Mann mit dem Objektiv</i>
3	Christine Laszar	Erwin Geschonneck	<i>Fünf Tage – fünf Nächte</i>	Christine Laszar	Günther Simon			
	best foreign actress	best foreign actor	best foreign film					
1	Liselotte Pulver (FRG)	Jean Marais (F)	<i>Le Bossu/Der Gejagte</i> (F, 1959)					
2	Tatjana Samoilova (USSR)	Sergej Bondartschuk (USSR)	<i>Serjoscha</i> (USSR)					
3	Jana Brejchová (CSR)	Gérard Philipe (F)	<i>Das Spukschloß im Spessart</i> (FRG, 1960)					

1962	NL voted in 3, 1963, NL listed the polls of the daily <i>Junge Welt</i> alongside its own			FS voted in issue 1, 1964			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Angelika Domröse JW: Kati Székely	Jürgen Frohriep JW: Jürgen Frohriep	<i>Das grüne Ungeheuer</i> (tv) JW: <i>Das grüne Ungeheuer</i>	Christel Bodenstein	Ulrich Thein		1	<i>Auf der Sonnenseite</i>
2	Kati Székely JW: Annekathrin Bürger	Manfred Krug JW: Manfred Krug	<i>Königskinder</i> JW: <i>Auf der Sonnenseite</i>	Annekathrin Bürger	Jürgen Frohriep		2	<i>Ach, du Fröhliche ... (300,000)</i>
3	Annekathrin Bürger JW: Marita Böhme	Armin Mueller-Stahl JW: Armin Mueller-Stahl	<i>Auf der Sonnenseite</i> JW: <i>Oh, diese Jugend</i> (tv)	Angelica Domröse	Manfred Krug		3	<i>Revue um Mitternacht</i>
	best foreign actress	best foreign actor	best foreign film					
1	Natalja Fatejewa	Michail Uljanow	<i>Schlacht unterwegs</i>					

	(USSR)	(USSR)	(USSR)					
2	Brigitte Bardot (F)	Alain Delon (F)	<i>Rocco e i suoi fratelli/Rocco und seine Brüder</i> (F/I, 1960)					
3	Marianne Koch (FRG)	Alexej Batalow (USSR)	<i>Klarer Himmel</i> (unclear)					

1963	NL voted in 4, 1964 5894 readers participated			FS voted in issue 8, 1964			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Angelica Domröse	Manfred Krug	<i>For eyes only</i>	Christel Bodenstein	Jürgen Frohriep		1	<i>The Magnificent Seven</i> , USA(3,118,309)
2	Christel Bodenstein	Jürgen Frohriep	<i>Der andere neben dir</i> (tv)	Angelica Domröse	Manfred Krug		2	<i>The Appartement</i> , USA (1,276,813)
3	Annekathrin Bürger	Günther Simon	<i>Nackt unter Wölfen</i>	Annekathrin Bürger	Ulrich Thein		3	<i>Glatzkopfbande</i> (1,284,535)
	best foreign actress	best foreign actor	best foreign film				4	<i>For eyes only</i> (1,058,557)
1	Brigitte Bardot (F)	Jean Marais (F)	<i>Le Capitan</i> (F/I, 1960)				5	<i>Nackt unter Wölfen</i>
2	Simone Signoret (F)	Horst Buchholz (FRG)	<i>Judgment at Nuremberg/ Das Urteil von Nürnberg</i> (USA, 1961)				6	<i>Karbid und Sauerampfer</i>
3	Jana Brejchowa (CSR)	Alain Delon (F)	<i>Die drei Musketiere</i> (unclear, probably <i>Le Masque de fer</i> , F, 1962)				7	<i>Husarenballade</i> , USSR (803,186)
							8	<i>Auf den Spuren der Verräter</i> , YUG (752, 393)

1964	NL voted in 4, 1965			FS voted in issue 8, 1965			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Angelica Domröse	Manfred Krug	<i>Mir nach, Canaillen!</i>	Angelica Domröse	Manfred Krug	<i>Mir nach, Canaillen!</i>	1	<i>Der geteilte Himmel</i>
2	Annekathrin Bürger	Ulrich Thein	<i>Der geteilte Himmel</i>	Annekathrin Bürger	Ulrich Thein	<i>Der geteilte Himmel</i>	2	<i>Mir nach, Canaillen!</i>
3	Christel Bodenstein	Erwin Geschonneck	<i>Das Lied vom Trompeter</i>	Christel Bodenstein	Erwin Geschonneck	<i>Der Lied vom Trompeter</i>	3	<i>Geliebte weiße Maus</i>
4	Doris Abesser	Horst Jonischkan		Doris Abesser	Horst Jonischkan			
5	Renate Blume	Eberhard Esche		Renate Blume	Eberhard Esche			
6				Karin Schröder	Jürgen Frohriep			
7				Monika Woytowicz	Arno Wyzniewsky			
8				Marita Böhme	Otto Mellies			
9				Jutta Hoffmann	Armin Mueller-Stahl			

1965	NL voted in 2, 1966			FS voted in issue 10, 1966, NOTE: this film poll refers to previous 20 years			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film over past 20 years		
1	Angelica Domröse	Klaus-Peter Thiele	<i>Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt</i>	Annekathrin Bürger	Günther Simon	<i>Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt</i>	1	<i>Solange Leben in mir ist</i> (2,728,000)
2	Annekathrin Bürger	Otto Mellies	<i>Doktor Schlüter, (tv sequel)</i>	Angelica Domröse	Erwin Geschonneck	<i>Solange Leben in mir ist</i>	2	<i>Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt</i> (2,364,000)
3	Marita Böhme	Arno Wyzniewski	<i>Wolf unter Wölfen, (tv)</i>	Christine Laszar	Otto Mellies	<i>Nackt unter Wölfen</i>	3	<i>Der Reserveheld</i> (1,469,000)
4	Helga Labudda	Horst Schulze	<i>Solange Leben in mir ist</i>	Christel Bodenstein	Manfred Krug	<i>Thälmann-Films</i>	4	<i>Mörder auf Urlaub</i> (666,000)
5	Erika Dunkelmann	Wolfgang Langhoff	<i>Lots Weib</i>	Marita Böhme	Jürgen Frohriep	<i>Mir nach, Canaillen!</i>	5	<i>Ohne Paß in fremde Betten</i> (594,000)
6		Jürgen Frohriep	<i>Die Mutter und das Schweigen, (tv)</i>	Helga Göhring	Klaus-Peter Thiele	<i>Der geteilte Himmel</i>	6	<i>Nichts als Sünde</i> (578,000)
7				Erika Dunkelmann	Horst Schulze	<i>Chronik eines</i>	7	<i>Die antike Münze</i> (553,000)

8				Doris Abesser	Hans-Peter Minetti	<i>Königskinder</i>	8	<i>Chronik eines Mordes</i> (506,000)
9				Monika Woytowicz	Ulrich Thein	<i>Professor Mamlock</i>	9	<i>Entlassung auf Bewährung</i> (505,000)
10				Karla Runkehl	Armin Mueller-Stahl	<i>Sterne</i>	10	<i>Lots Weib</i> (486,000)
11						<i>Kabale und Liebe</i>		
12						<i>Lots Weib</i>		
13						<i>Karbid und Sauerampfer</i>		
14						<i>Ehe im Schatten</i>		
15						<i>Geschwader Fledermaus</i>		
16						<i>Fünf Patronenhülsen</i>		
17						<i>Die Mörder sind unter uns</i>		
18						<i>Der Untertan</i>		
19						<i>Verwirrung der Liebe</i>		
20						<i>Stärker als die Nacht</i>		

1966	NL voted in 2, 1967				FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film			
1	Larissa Lushina (USSR)	Otto Mellies	<i>Dr. Schlüte</i> (tv sequel)				1	<i>Die Söhne der großen Bärin</i> (4,870,000)	
2	Angelica Domröse	Gojko Mitic (YUG)	<i>Ohne Kampf kein Sieg</i> (tv)				2	<i>Reise ins Ehebett</i> (1,799,000)	
3	Madeleine Lierck	Jürgen Frohriep	<i>Die Söhne der großen Bärin</i>				3	<i>Schwarze Panther</i> (927,000)	
4		Gunter Schoß	<i>Geheimkommando Bumerang</i> (tv)				4	<i>Flucht ins Schweigen</i> (396,000)	

5		Alfred Müller	<i>Irrlicht und Feuer</i> (tv)				5	<i>Lebende Ware</i> (253,000)
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1967	NL voted in 2, 1968, only first positions clear, the others were mentioned in the order represented below			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedeman	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Jutta Hoffmann (poll mentions that performed in <i>Kleiner Mann was nun</i> )	Otto Mellies (performed in <i>Begegnungen</i> and <i>Der schwarze Reiter</i> )	<i>Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog</i>				1	<i>Chingachgook, die große Schlange</i> (2,877,000)
2	Larissa Lushina (USSR)	Erwin Geschonneck	<i>Begegnungen</i> (tv)				2	<i>Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog</i> (2,772,000)
3	Angelica Domröse	Arno Wyzniewski	<i>Kleiner Mann – was nun</i> (tv)				3	<i>Geschichten jener Nacht</i> (1,008,000)
4	Eva-Maria Hagen	Gojko Mitic (YUG)	<i>Chingachgook – die große Schlange</i>				4	<i>Meine Freundin Sybille</i> (990,000)
							5	<i>Hochzeitsnacht im Regen</i> (832,000)
							6	<i>Die gefrorenen Blitze</i> (802,000)
							7	<i>Brot und Rosen</i> (750,000)
							8	<i>Ein Lord am Alexanderplatz</i> (748,000)
							9	<i>Das Mädchen auf dem Brett</i> (550,000)
							10	<i>Frau Venus und ihr Teufel</i> (442,000)

1968	NL voted in 2, 1969, only first positions clear, the others were mentioned in the order represented below			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Ursula Karusseit	Manfred Krug	<i>Wege übers Land</i> (tv sequel)				1	<i>Spur des Falken</i> (3,201,000)
2	Evelyn Opoczynski	Jaecki Schwarz					2	<i>Ich war neunzehn</i> (2,509,000)

3	Marita Böhme	Jan Spitzer					3	<i>Die Toten bleiben jung</i> (2,169,000)
4	none given	Alfred Müller					4	<i>Heißer Sommer</i> (1,971,000)
5	none given	Gojko Mitic					5	<i>Hauptmann Florian von der Mühle</i> (1,547,000)
							6	<i>Abschied</i> (909,000)
							7	<i>Schüsse unterm Galgen</i> (900,000)
							8	<i>Heroin</i> (822,000)
							9	<i>Leben zu zweit</i> (592,000)
							10	<i>12 Uhr Mittags kommt der Boß</i> (571,000)

1969	NL voted in 2, 1970			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Angelika Waller	Gojko Mitic (YUG)	<i>Hans Beimler, Kamerad</i> (tv)				1	<i>Weisse Wölfe</i> (2,804,000)
2	none given	Jürgen Reuter					2	<i>Zeit zu leben</i> (2,110,000)
3	none given	Horst Schulze					3	<i>Jungfer sie gefällt mir</i> (1,222,000)
							4	<i>Mit mir nicht, Madame</i> (983,000)
							5	<i>Im Himmel ist doch Jahrmarkt</i> (587,000)
							6	<i>Das siebente Jahr</i> (391,000)
							7	<i>Nebelnacht</i> (299.000)
							8	<i>Seine Hoheit – Genosse Prinz</i> (278,000)
							9	<i>Verdacht auf einen Toten</i> (205,000)
							10	<i>Weite Straßen – stille Liebe</i> (192,000)

1970	NL voted in 2, 1971			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Regina Beyer (performed in <i>Hart am Wind</i> )	Gojko Mitic (YUG) (two old films, <i>Chingachgook die Große Schlange</i> <i>Weitspähender Falke</i> are mentioned)	<i>Ich – Axel-Cäsar Springer</i> (tv)				1	<i>Unterwegs zu Lenin</i> (2,599,000), probably mandatory viewing
							2	<i>Tödlicher Irrtum</i> (2,339,000)
	best new talent: Christina Reinhardt in <i>Sommer – Anfang ohne Ende</i>						3	<i>Im Spannungsfeld</i> (1,485,000)
							4	<i>Netzwerk</i> (1,243,000)
							5	<i>Meine Stunde Null</i> (885,000)
							6	<i>Hart am Wind</i> (878,000)
							7	<i>Signale – ein Weltraumabenteuer</i> (746,000)
							8	<i>Dr. med. Sommer II</i> (463,000)
							9	<i>He, Du!</i> (379,000)
							10	<i>Weil ich dich liebe</i> (263,000)

1971	NL voted in 3, 1972			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Heidemarie Wenzel 5,049	Gojko Mitic (YUG) 5,236	<i>Artur Becker</i> 5,671 (tv)				1	<i>Osceola</i> (2,131,000)
2	Regina Beyer 3,664	Jürgen Zartmann 2,079	<i>Der Sonne Glut</i> 4,609 (tv)				2	<i>KLK an PTX – die rote Kapelle</i> (2,117,000)
3	Angelica Domröse 2,785	Frank Obermann 1,391	<i>Rotenknechte</i> 4,293 (tv)				3	<i>Goya</i> (1,104,000)
4			<i>Osceola</i> 4,028				4	<i>Liebeserklärung an G.T.</i> (1,060,000)

5			<i>Salut Germain</i> 3,655 (tv)				5	<i>Zeit der Störche</i> (643,000)
6			<i>Die Verschworenen</i> 3,154 (tv)				6	<i>Husaren in Berlin</i> (638,000)
							7	<i>Du und ich und Klein-Paris</i> (530,000)
							8	<i>Verspielte Heimat</i> (509,000)
							9	<i>Anflug Alpha 1</i> (421,000)
							10	<i>Mein lieber Robinson</i> (374,000)

1972	NL voted in 4, 1973			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Jutta Hoffmann 6,069	Gojko Mitic (YUG) 9,942	<i>Trotz alledem</i> 7,620 tv: <i>Das Geheimnis der Anden</i> 11,112				1	<i>Der Mann, der nach der Oma kam</i> (2,046,000)
2	Annekathrin Bürger 6,084	Manfred Krug 5,532	<i>Tecumseh</i> 6,848 tv: <i>Das Licht der schwarzen Kerze</i> 7,806				2	<i>Tecumseh</i> (1,936,000)
3	Renate Geißler 5,010	Rolf Herricht 4,800	<i>Der Dritte</i> 6,204 tv: <i>Jule, Julia, Julianne</i> 6,858				3	<i>Trotz alledem</i> (1,926,000)
4	Marita Böhme 4,422	Horst Schulze 4,119	<i>Reife Kirschen</i> 5,754 tv: <i>Die Verschworenen</i> 6,198				4	<i>Reife Kirschen</i> (1,091,000)
5	Juliane Koren 3,498	Erwin Geschonneck 3,384	<i>Der Mann, der nach der Oma kam</i> 4,202 tv: <i>Die Bilder des Zeugen</i>				5	<i>Die gestohlene Schlacht</i> (840,000)

			<i>Schattmann</i> 5,592					
<b>6</b>	Traudl Kulikowsky 3,078	Ingolf Gorges 2,352	<i>Leichensache</i> <i>Zernik</i> 3,162 tv: <i>Florentiner</i> 73 5,298				<b>6</b>	<i>Der Dritte</i> (649,000)
							<b>7</b>	<i>Eolomea</i> (633,000)
							<b>8</b>	<i>Lützower</i> (551,000)
							<b>9</b>	<i>Januskopf</i> (150,000)
							<b>10</b>	<i>Laut und leise ist die Liebe</i> (106,000)

1973	NL voted in 4, 1974			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
<b>1</b>	Angelica Domröse 12,683	<i>Gojko Mitic</i> (YUG) 12,351	tv: <i>Den Wolken ein Stück näher</i> 12,559				<b>1</b>	<i>Apachen</i> (1,774,000)
<b>2</b>	Angelika Waller 11,655	Manfred Krug 8,779	tv: <i>Das unsichtbare Visier</i> 11,636				<b>2</b>	<i>Die Legende von Paul und Paula</i> (1,713,000)
<b>3</b>	Renate Blume 10,428	Winfried Glatzeder 7,257	<i>Legende von Paul und Paula</i> 11,293				<b>3</b>	<i>Nicht schummeln, Liebling</i> (1,270,000)
<b>4</b>	Chris Doerk 7,756	Frank Schöbel 6,266	tv: <i>Rotfuchs</i> 11,219				<b>4</b>	<i>Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts</i> (1,270,000)
<b>5</b>	Agnes Kraus 3,124	Jürgen Zartmann 5,124	tv: <i>Dona Juanita</i> [sic] 10,432				<b>5</b>	<i>Elixiere des Teufels</i> (596,000)
<b>6</b>	Jenny Gröllmann 3,007	<i>Armin Mueller-Stahl</i>	<i>Apachen</i> 8,329				<b>6</b>	<i>Die Hosen des Ritters von Bredow</i> (415,000)
							<b>7</b>	<i>Copernikus</i> (162,860)
							<b>8</b>	<i>Das zweite Leben des Friedrich Wilhelm Georg Platow</i> (15,000)

	NL 4, 1975, separate poll for of top of every year between 1965 and 1973		
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tvfilm

1965	Angelica Domröse	Klaus-Peter Thiele	<i>Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt</i>
1966	Larissa Lushina (USSR)	Otto Mellies	tv: <i>Dr. Schlüter</i> , sequel
1967	Jutta Hoffmann	Otto Mellies	<i>Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog</i>
1968	Urusla Karusseit	Manfred Krug	tv: <i>Wege übers Land</i>
1969	Angelika Waller	Gojko Mitic	tv: <i>Hans Beimler</i>
1970	Regina Beyer	Gojko Mitic	tv: <i>Ich, Axel Cäsar Springer</i>
1971	Heidemarie Wenzel	Gojko Mitic	tv: <i>Artur Becker</i>
1972	Jutta Hoffmann	Gojko Mitic	<i>Trotz alledem</i> tv: <i>Das Geheimnis der Anden</i>
1973	Angelica Domröse	Gojko Mitic	tv: <i>Den Wolken ein Stück näher</i>

1974	NL voted in 4, 1975; 21,561 readers wrote			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Simone von Zglinski 11,408	Gojko Mitic (YUG) 14,315	<i>Für die Liebe noch zu mager?</i> 11,621 tv: <i>Aber Vati</i> 15,809				1	<i>Ulzana</i> (1,396,000)
2	Renate Blume 11,344	Jürgen Zartmann 9,765	<i>Liebe mit 16</i> 11,216 tv: <i>Der Leutnant vom Schwanenkietz</i> 12,441				2	<i>Wer die Erde lebt</i> (1,018,000)
3	Agnes Kraus 8,951	Ingolf Gorges 7,218	<i>Ulzana</i> 9,953 tv: <i>Neues aus der Florentiner 73</i> 9,407				3	<i>Für die Liebe noch zu mager</i> (694,000)
4	Angelika Waller	Dean Reed (USA)	<i>Zum Beispiel Josef</i>					

	8,184	5,766	6,067 tv: <i>Visa für Ocantros</i> 7,068					
5	Marianne Wünscher 4,433	Erik S. Klein 5,537	... verdammt, ich bin erwachsen 5,785 tv: <i>Hallo, Taxi</i> 6,757					
6	Monika Woytowicz 3,472	Manfred Krug 5,482	<i>Wie füttert man einen Esel?</i> 5,493 tv: <i>Die Frauen der Vardins</i> 3,213					

1975	NL voted in 4, 1976			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/ GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Agnes Kraus 11,091	Gojko Mitic (YUG) 13,513	<i>Blutsbrüder</i> 17,035 tv: <i>Bin ich Moses?</i> 14,515				1	<i>Blutsbrüder</i> (1,154,000)
2	Nina Hagen 9,125	Dean Reed (USA) 7,809	<i>Till Eulenspiegel</i> 8,829 tv: <i>Das unsichtbare Visier</i> 12,757				2	<i>Lotte in Weimar</i> (724,000)
3	Marianne Wünscher 6,404	Armin Mueller-Stahl 6,704	<i>Lotte in Weimar</i> 7,746 tv: <i>Schwester Agnes</i> 10,842				3	<i>Till Eulenspiegel</i> (708,000)
4	Lilli Palmer 5,282	Walter Richter- Reinick 4,452	<i>Jakob der Lügner</i> 5,663 tv: <i>Heute ist Freitag</i> 5,914					
5	Annekathrin Bürger 4,705	Dietmar Richter- Reinick 4,407	<i>Looping</i> 5,597 tv: <i>Geschwister</i> 4,825					

6	Jenny Gröllmann 3,515	Winfried Glatzeder 3,071	<i>Ikarus</i> 4,595 tv: <i>Broddi</i> 3,732					
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NL 1977 till 1979 neither popularity poll on actors nor on films,  
probably because of Biermann affair in November 1976

1977

	national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	DEFA stars involved in this production
1	<i>Die Alte Neue Welt</i> (documentary) (2,154,089)	
2	<i>Mama, ich lebe</i> (1,428,894)	
3	<i>Ein irrer Duft von frischem Heu</i> (749,773)	
4	<i>Ein Katzensprung</i> (511,610)	
5	<i>Die unverbesserliche Barbara</i> (309,182)	Cox Habbema, Eberhard Esche
6	<i>Trini</i> (children's film) (299,910)	
7	<i>Die Flucht</i> (275,112)	Armin Mueller-Stahl, Jenny Gröllmann, Simone von Zglinicki
8	<i>Unterwegs nach Atlantis</i> (251,857)	Rolf Hoppe
9	<i>DEFA Disco 77</i> (158,495)	Rolf Herricht, Chris Doerk
10	<i>Gala unter den Linden</i> (52,564)	

1978

	national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	DEFA stars involved in this production
1	<i>Sieben Sommersprossen</i> (1,163,975)	Kareen Schröter, Barbara Dittus
2	<i>Severino</i> (935,633)	Gojko Mitic, Leon Niemczyk
3	<i>Sabine Wulff</i> (733,052)	Karin Düwel
4	<i>Anton der Zauberer</i> (697,242)	Ulrich Thein, Erwin Geschonneck, Barbara Dittus
5	<i>Ich will euch sehen</i> (571,413)	Walter Plathe, Leon Niemczyk
6	<i>Brandstellen</i> (546,409)	Dieter Mann, Heidemarie Wenzel
7	<i>Hiev up</i> (425,683)	Regina Beyer, Madeleine Lierck
8	<i>Achillesferse</i> (321,992)	
9	<i>Einer muss die Leiche sein</i> (197,524)	Karin Schröder, Herbert Köfer
10	<i>Jörg Ratgeb, Maler</i> (196,020)	Rolf Hoppe

1979	NL voted in 5, 1980; 28,153 readers wrote			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA/GDR tv film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Marijam Agischewa 6,921	Jürgen Heinrich 5,431	<i>Bis daß der Tod euch scheidet</i> 9,201 tv: <i>Marta, Marta</i> 8,151				1	<i>Sindbads Siebte Reise</i> , (unlcear, probably <i>Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger</i> , GB, 1977) (2,123,736)
2	Angelika Waller 3,416	Erik S. Klein 4,792	<i>Ein April hat 30 Tage</i> 3,472 tv: <i>Aber Vati</i> 5,976				2	<i>Il mio nome è Nessuno/Mein Name ist Nobody</i> , (I, 1973) (1,518,011)
3	Agnes Kraus 3,344	Walter Platthe 1,913	<i>Lachtauben weinen nicht</i> 2,953 tv: <i>Das unsichtbare Visier</i> 4,768				3	<i>La zizanie/Der Querkopf</i> , (F, 1978) (1,416,269)
4	Katrin Saß 2,345	Herbert Köfer 1,632	<i>Einfach Blumen aufs Dach</i> 2,169 tv: <i>Die Rache des Kapitän Mitchell</i> 1,736				4	<i>L'Animal/Ein irrer Typ</i> (F, 1977) (1,397,815)
5	Angelica Domröse 1,953	Dieter Mann 1,412	<i>Zünd an, es kommt die Feuerwehr</i> 1,427 tv: <i>Die lange Straße</i> 1,280				5	<i>Il signor Robinson, mostruosa storia d'amore e d'avventure/ Robinson Jr.</i> , (I, 1976) (1,134,655)
6	Jessy Rameik 1,712	Martin Seifert 1,407	<i>Blauvogel</i> 1,424 tv: <i>Rentner haben niemals Zeit</i> 1,247				6	<i>Capricorn One/Unternehmen Capricorn</i> (GB/USA, 1978) (946,427)
		best new talent Dirk Wäger					7	<i>Im Banne des Unheimlichen</i> , (FRG, 1968) (941,264)
							8	<i>Bis daß der Tod euch scheidet</i> (883,511)
							9	<i>Lachtauben weinen nicht</i>

								(863,989)
							10	<i>Männer ohne Nerven</i> , (unclear, perhaps <i>Silver on the Sage</i> , USA, 1939) (816,645)

1980	NL voted in 6, 1981; 25,305 readers wrote			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
1	Jutta Wachowiak 5,505 (performed in <i>Die Verlobte, Glück im Hinterhaus, Muhme Mehle</i> )	Horst Drinda 4,056 (performed in <i>Unser Mann ist König</i> )	none given				1	<i>Sindbads gefährliche Abenteuer</i> unclear, probably <i>The Golden Voyage of Sindbad</i> (GB, 1974) (1,746,066)
2	Agnes Kraus 3,717	Ulrich Thein 3,517					2	<i>Le Gendarme et les extra-terrestres/Louis' unheimliche Begegnung mit den Außerirdischen</i> (F, 1978) (1,390,115)
3	Barbara Dittus 3,304	Heinz Rennhack 2,609					3	<i>Je suis timide... mais je me soigne/Ich bin schüchtern, aber in Behandlung</i> , (F, 1978) (1,339,193)
							4	<i>Vivi o, preferibilmente, morti /Frijß oder stirb</i> , (I/E, 1969) (1,262,137)
	best new talents						5	<i>Und nächstes Jahr am Balaton</i> (1,102,463)
	Kareen Schröter 3,316 (performed in <i>Sieben Sommersprossen, Und nächstes Jahr am Balaton</i> )	Jürgen Trott 929					6	<i>Solo Sunny</i> (1,087,438)
		Harald Rathmann 520					7	<i>Die Verlobte</i> (996,964)

							<b>8</b>	<i>California Suite/Das verrückte California Hotel</i> , (USA, 1978) (823,613)
							<b>9</b>	<i>Sindbads siebte Reise</i> (unclear, see above) (704,585)
							<b>10</b>	<i>Grauadler</i> , (original title unclear) USA (669,147)

1981	NL voted in 7, 1982; 26,565 valid votes			FS no poll			national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	
	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film	best DEFA actress	best DEFA actor	best DEFA film		
<b>1</b>	Katrin Saß 4,936	Hilmar Eichhorn 7,996	<i>Bürgschaft für ein Jahr</i> 10,319 tv: <i>Jockey Monika</i> 16,455				<b>1</b>	<i>C'era una volta il West/ Spiel mir das Lied vom Tod</i> , (I, 1968) (1,684,438)
<b>2</b>	Annekathrin Bürger 4,891	Walter Plathe 2,821	<i>Sing, Cowboy, sing</i> 9,875 tv: <i>Verflucht und geliebt</i> 2,222				<b>2</b>	<i>Olsen-banden deruda'/Die Olsenbande schlägt wieder zu</i> , (DEN, 1977) (1,310,947)
<b>3</b>	Agnes Kraus 4,833	Dean Reed 2,478	<i>Asta, mein Engelchen</i> 1,862 tv: <i>Hochhausgeschichten</i> 1,714				<b>3</b>	<i>Le Gendarme et les extra-terrestres</i> , (F, 1978) (1,277,463)
							<b>4</b>	<i>Le Guignolo/Der Puppenspieler</i> , (F, 1979) (1,199601)
	best new talents						<b>5</b>	<i>Concorde Affaire '79/ Concorde Affaire</i> , (I, 1979) (953,989)
	Kareen Schröter Britt Gülland	Ralf Kober					<b>6</b>	<i>The Main Event/ Was Du willst nicht?</i> , (USA, 1979) (928,177)
							<b>7</b>	<i>Sing, Cowboy, sing</i> (849,173)
							<b>8</b>	<i>Wilde Betten</i> , (original title unclear) (I) (829,887)
							<b>9</b>	<i>The Towering Inferno/Flammendes Inferno</i> ,

								(USA, 1974) (770,301)
							<b>10</b>	<i>Electric Horseman/Der elektrische Reiter</i> , (USA, 1979) (768,388)

NL 2, 1983 results Interpretenpreis (female, male singers, bands, amateur groups/bands, 51,631 valid votes)

NL 1983, introduction of young talents continues, NL 10/83 call for Interpretenpreis, lists with suggestions)

NL 1984 no poll

NL 1985 no poll

NL 1986 no poll

NL 1987 no poll

NL 12, 1988 last cover /back page: "Stars '88" photo and short biography on backside: Micheal Jackson, Bros, Bruce Springsteen, CITY (GDR rock band), Cher, Michael Douglas, Christopher Lambert, Katharina Witt (GDR figure skater), Sergej Bubka (USSR athlete), Petra Felke (GDR athlete), Steffi Graf (FRG tennis player), Ulf Timmermann (GDR athlete)

NL 1989 no poll

NL 1990 no poll

NL no poll Jan 91 till Jan 1992

In the following blue section the GDR box-office hits are given, DEFA productions are printed in **bold**.

## 1982

	<b>national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann</b>	<b>DEFA stars involved in this production</b>
<b>1</b>	<i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i> (GB, 1981) (1,559,489)	
<b>2</b>	<i>The Towering Inferno/Flammendes Inferno</i> (USA, 1974) (1,239,276)	
<b>3</b>	<i>Green Ice/Grünes Eis</i> (GB, 1981) (1,130,104)	
<b>4</b>	<i>Piedone d'Egitto/Plattfuß am Nil</i> (I, 1979) (1,028,425)	
<b>5</b>	<i>Fleisch</i> (FRG, 1979, originally tv production) (1,004,493)	
<b>6</b>	<i>The Band</i> (USA, original title unclear) (996,385)	
<b>7</b>	<i>Hot Times/Heißer Asphalt</i> (USA, 1974) (815,758)	
<b>8</b>	<b><i>Sonjas Rapport</i></b> (691,440)	Rolf Hoppe, Karla Runkehl
<b>9</b>	<i>Highpoint</i> (CAN, original title unclear) (629,345)	
<b>10</b>	<i>Tegeran-43/ Teheran 43</i> (USSR/F/CH/E, 1980) (581,145)	

1983

	national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	DEFA stars involved in this production
1	<i>Piedone d'Egitto/Plattfuß am Nil</i> (I, 1979) (1,504,870)	
2	<i>Olsen-banden overgiver sig aldrig/Die Olsenbande ergibt sich nie</i> (DAN, 1979) (1,353,974)	
3	<i>La collina degli stivali/Hügel der Stiefel</i> (I, 1969) (1,108,748)	
4	<i>Old Surehand</i> (FRG, 1965) (997,748)	
5	<i>Il bisbetico domato/Der gezähmte Widerspenstige</i> (I, 1980) (947,011)	
6	<i>Race for the Yankee Zephyr/Ein Teufelskerl</i> (AUS/NZ, 1981) (865,939)	
7	<i>Fort Apache</i> (USA, original title unclear) (817,920)	
8	<i>Seems Like Old Times/Fast wie in alten Zeiten</i> (USA, 1980) (652,289)	
9	<i>Cobra – Tod eines Mannequins</i> (JAP, original title unclear) (575,874)	
10	<i>Der Ölprinz</i> (FRG, 1965) (575, 645)	
	best DEFA on 12: <i>Der Aufenthalt</i> (519,992)	

1984

	national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann	DEFA stars involved in this production
1	<i>Blue Thunder/Das fliegende Auge</i> (USA, 1983) (2,297,412)	
2	<i>Le gendarme et les gendarmettes/Louis und seine verrückten Politessen</i> (F, 1982) (1,933,643)	
3	<i>Monster Island/Das Geheimnis der Monsterinsel</i> (E/USA, 1981) (1,592,768)	
4	<i>Tootsie</i> (USA, 1982) (1,580,836)	
5	<i>Ärztinnen</i> (1,489,175)	West German Judy Winter, Inge Keller, Rolf Hoppe
6	<i>Ach du lieber Harry</i> (FRG, 1981) (1,239,503)	
7	<i>Wo andere schweigen</i> (1,130,495)	Rolf Ludwig [probably officially organised viewings as it is a film about Communist Clara Zetkin]
8	<i>Olsen-bandens flugt over plankeværket/Die Olsenbande fliegt über die Planke</i> (DAN, 1981) (908,092)	
9	<i>Drei Männer müssen sterben</i> (F, original title unclear) (843,656)	
10	<i>Il bisbetico domato/Der gezähmte Widerspenstige</i> (I, 1980) (687,745)	

## 1985

	<b>national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann</b>	<b>DEFA stars involved in this production</b>
<b>1</b>	<i>Les douze travaux d'Astérix/Asterix erobert Rom</i> (F, 1976) (1,959,552)	
<b>2</b>	<i>Das Jahr 1945</i> (documentary) (1,517,375)	
<b>3</b>	<i>Beat Street/Beatstreet</i> (USA, 1984) (1,504,123)	
<b>4</b>	<i>Clash of the Titans/Kampf der Titanen</i> (GB, 1981) (1,422,902)	
<b>5</b>	<i>Ach du lieber Harry</i> (FRG, 1981) (1,143,461)	
<b>6</b>	<i>Der Garten Eden</i> (I, original title unclear) (1,016,305)	
<b>7</b>	<i>Close Encounters of the Third Kind/Unheimliche Begegnung der dritten Art</i> (USA, 1977) (929,311)	
<b>8</b>	<i>Blue Thunder/Das fliegende Auge</i> (USA, 1983) (833,770)	
<b>9</b>	<i>Krull</i> (GB, 1983) (804,974)	
<b>10</b>	<i>Seksmisja/Sexmission</i> (POL, 1984) (693,951)	
	<b>first DEFA film in ranking: <i>Ete und Ali</i> (576,250)</b>	

## 1986

	<b>national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann</b>	<b>DEFA stars involved in this production</b>
<b>1</b>	<i>Otto – der Film</i> (FRG, 1985) (4,472,132)	
<b>2</b>	<i>Astérix le Gaulois/Asterix der Gallier</i> (F, 1967) (1,101,440)	
<b>3</b>	<i>Partners/Zwei irre Spaßvögel</i> (USA, 1982) (851,013)	
<b>4</b>	<i>The Wrath of Khan/Star Trek</i> (USA, 1982) (835,324)	
<b>5</b>	<i>Astérix et Cléopâtre/Asterix und Kleopatra</i> (F, 1968) (724,260)	
<b>6</b>	<i>Das Haus am Fluss</i> (717,976)	Katrin Saß, Rolf Hoppe
<b>7</b>	<i>Krull</i> (GB, 1983) (714,683)	
<b>8</b>	<i>Aerobic nonstop</i> (USA, original title unclear) (698,275)	
<b>9</b>	<i>Männer</i> (FRG, 1985) (651,328)	
<b>10</b>	<i>Der Hut des Brigadiers</i> (638,539)	

## 1987

	<b>national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann</b>	<b>DEFA stars involved in this production</b>
<b>1</b>	<i>Beverly Hills Cop</i> (USA, 1984) (2,120,298)	
<b>2</b>	<i>Seitenstechen</i> (FRG, 1985) (1,322,157)	
<b>3</b>	<i>Out of Africa/Jenseits von Afrika</i> (USA, 1985) (1,246,786)	
<b>4</b>	<i>Amadeus</i> (USA, 1984) (876,886)	

5	<i>Lepota poroka/Die Schönheit der Sünde</i> (YUG, 1986) (866,474)	
6	<i>Otto – der Film</i> (FRG, 1985) (852,937)	
7	<i>Astérix et la surprise de César/Asterix – der Sieg über Cäsar</i> (F, 1985) (712,844)	
8	<i>Johann Strauß – der ungekrönte König</i> (GDR/A, 1987) (709,123)	Rolf Hoppe
9	<i>Astérix et Cléopâtre/Asterix und Kleopatra</i> (F, 1968) (693,414)	
10	<i>3 hommes et un couffin/Drei Männer und ein Baby</i> (F, 1985) (612,356)	
	<b>first DEFA film in ranking: 15 <i>Vernehmung der Zeugen</i></b> (424,907)	

## 1988

	<b>national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann</b>	<b>DEFA stars involved in this production</b>
1	<i>E.T. – The Extraterrestrial/ET – Der Außerirdische</i> (USA, 1982) (2,600,00)	
2	<i>Der Name der Rose</i> (FRG/F/I, 1986) (2,300,00)	
3	<i>Didi auf vollen Touren</i> (FRG, 1986) (1,400,00)	
4	<i>Einer trage des anderen Last</i> (1,544,255)	
5	<i>The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes/Greystroke – Herr der Affen</i> (GB, 1984) (1,200,00)	
6	<i>The Jewel of the Nile/Jagd nach dem grünen Diamanten</i> (USA, 1985) (no figures)	
7	<i>Ödipussi</i> (FRG, 1988) (no figures)	

## 1989

	<b>national box-office ranking according to Wiedemann</b>	<b>DEFA stars involved in this production</b>
1	<i>Dirty Dancing</i> (USA, 1987) (5,200,00)	
2	<i>Crocodile Dundee</i> (AUS, 1986) (3,200,000)	
3	<i>Otto – der neue Film</i> (FRG, 1987) (3,000,000)	
	<b>first DEFA films in ranking: <i>Der Bruch</i></b> (609,862)	Rolf Hoppe, West Germans Götz George and Otto Sander
	<b><i>Grüne Hochzeit</i></b> (487,087)	

## Appendix II

### Statistical data relevant to evaluate the situation of cinema in the GDR

Included were the number of cinemas, film screenings (DEFA and imports are not separate), audience figures, numbers of television sets per household and television broadcast hours from both the GDR television DFF (Deutscher Fernsehfunk) and the West German ARD and ZDF as these could be received in most parts of the GDR. The increasing number of television broadcasts, and especially programmes explicitly designed for East German audiences (after 1961 specific broadcasts by ZDF in the morning)

compiled from *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* years 1956, 1960/61, 1965, 1975, 1979, 1981/1989, and *Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* years 1962, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1990 and *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das vereinte Deutschland* 1991

	number of cinemas in the GDR	number of screenings in GDR cinemas	GDR audience figures	television sets owned per 100 GDR households	hours of GDR television broadcast per year	hours of West German television broadcasts per year (only ARD and ZDF, regional programmes and private channels were not considered, selected years only)
1951	1,494	1,126,098	188,546,800		no data	
1952	1,414	1,342,960	197,476,100		no data	
1953	1,486	1,495,474	211,359,600		no data	
1954	1,447	1,845,672	272,215,700		no data	
1955	1,423	1,887,171	266,439,800	0.2	786	no data
1956	1,409	2,080,129	286,889,600	1.1	1138	
1957	1,391	2,323,052	315,922,800	2.5	1448	
1958	1,404	2,420,265	273,084,000	5.1	1855	
1959	1,389	2,562,254	258,641,000	9.6	2539	
1960	1,369	2,538,091	237,906,000	16.7	3007	2664.48
1961	1,327	2,259,900	218,961,600	23.5	3259	
1962	1,277	2,046,600	191,129,500	30.5	3420	

1963	1,206	1,664,166	157,778,900	38.4	3807	
1964	1,024	1,513,730	140,607,500	45.2	3767	
1965	973	1,264,360	118,953,000	48.5	3774	4883.71
1966	941	1,163,312	102,022,800	54.0	4142	
1967	924	1,108,796	99,205,600	60.0	4514	
1968	887	1,049,712	100,558,400	63.6	4642	
1969	864	995,301	93,301,100	66.3	5193	
1970	858	973,235	91,355,400	69.1	6028	5714.76
1971	849	948,091	83,422,700	71.7	6038	
1972	838	962,221	81,547,500	75.3	6402	
1973	835	951,616	84,471,300	77.6	6360	
1974	831	912,126	79,311,000	79.6	6634	
1975	833	922,153	76,973,400	87.9	6851	5895
1976	833	938,522	79,710,200	92.1	7020	
1977	837	917,484	84,119,400	96.8	6905	
1978	839	859,115	80,334,000	99.7	7290	
1979	826	822,799	80,841,100	103.5	7283	
1980	826	861,784	79,496,700	105.0	7704	6876
1981	832	839,691	76,489,000	108.8	7610	
1982	832	799,913	72,372,000	111.4	7716	
1983	824	815,462	72,753,500	114.1	7962	
1984	830	799,330	73,419,400	115.5	8163	
1985	819	787,095	70,719,200	117.6	8265	8339
1986	823	786,963	70,802,500	118.9	8320	
1987	821	768,350	69,185,600	121.6	8706	
1988	808	736,180	69,255,100	125.2	9194	8909
1989	805	691,156	64,700,000	no data	no data	9002

## Appendix III

### Filmographies accompanying the case studies

#### Chris (Christa) Doerk (\*24 February 1942, Königsberg)

- trained and worked 5 years as graphic designer and shopping window decorator
- 1963 first television appearance at talent show *Herzklopfen kostenlos* with "Summertime"
- 1966 member of Erich-Weinert-Ensemble (orchestra and choir of GDR army)
- 1967 professional licence as pop singer, first hit in duett with Frank Schöbel with "Lieb mich so wie dein Herz es mag", 1966-1974 married to Schöbel, who also composed most of her songs/texts; 1969 first LP record (with Schöbel), 1969 New Year's Eve appearance of Slovak television; 1970 Cuban festival at Varadero, audience darling in Cuba
- 1970-73 presenting tv shows *Treff mit Chris und Frank*, *Mode und Musik/Mode mit Chris und Frank* (ca. 8 per year) and *Disko-Treff*, successful at pop music festivals
- since mid-1970s (after divorce from Frank Schöbel) stagnation of career

1967 Hochzeitsnacht im Regen (sings voice-over for leading actress Traudl Kulikowski)

1968 Heißer Sommer

1972 Nicht schummeln, Liebling

1997 East Side Story (documentary on socialist musicals)

## Erwin Geschonneck (\*27 December 1906, Bartenstein)

- grew up in Berlin, various jobs (servant, messenger), agit-prop theatre in Berlin, member of Communist Party
- 1933 emigration to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union, touring with German-speaking group of actors
- 1939 imprisoned by Nazis, survived concentrations camps Sachsenhausen, Dachau and Neuengamme
- 1949 Hamburger Kammerspiele, 1949-mid 1950s Berliner Ensemble
- worked mostly for GDR television and DEFA, 1984 autobiography *Meine unruhigen Jahre*

1947 In jenen Tagen (West-Germany, British Zone)	1963 Nackt unter Wölfen	1977 Schau heimwärts, Engel! (tv)
1948 Finale (West-Germany, British zone)	1963 Der andere neben dir (tv)	1978 Anton der Zauberer
1949 Die letzte Nacht (West Germany, British Zone)	1964 Karbid und Sauerampfer	1978 Rentner haben niemals Zeit (tv)
1949 Liebe 47 (West-Germany, British-Zone)	1964 Asphalt -Story/aka Nachfahrt zu zweit (tv)	1978 Die Entdeckung (tv)
1949 Hafenmelodie (West-Germany, British-Zone)	1965 Tiefe Furchen (tv)	1978 Des kleinen Lokführers große Fahrt (tv)
1949 Der Biberpelz	1965 Berlin und um die Ecke (forbidden, released 1987)	1978 Rentner haben niemals Zeit (tv)
1950 Das kalte Herz	1967 Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog	1979 Abschied von Frieden (tv)
1951 Das Beil von Wandsbeck	1967 Ein Lord am Alexanderplatz	1979 Herbstzeit (tv)
1952 Schatten über den Inseln	1967 Geschichten jener Nacht, Episode IV: Der große und der kleine Willi	1979 Plantagenstraße 19 (tv)
1953 Alarm im Zirkus	1970 Jeder stirbt für sich allein (tv-sequel)	1979 Verlobung im Hollerbusch (tv)
1953 Die Unbesiegbaren	1970 Wir kaufen eine Feuerwehr	1979 Das Ding im Schloss
1955 Stacheltier – Das Haushaltswunder (short film)	1972 Täter unbekannt (tv-sequel)	1980 Friedhelms Geburtstag (tv)
1955 Stacheltier – Es geht um die Wurst (short film)	1972 Geheimnis der Anden (tv-sequel)	1980 Circus Maximus (Hungary)
1956 Hauptmann von Köln	1974 Ein Freudenfeuer für den Bischof (tv)	1980 Levins Mühle
1957 Die Abenteuer des Till Ulenspiegel	1974 Polizeiruf 110 – Der Tod des Professors (tv)	1981 Asta, mein Engelchen
1957 Schlösser und Katen	1974 Der Untergang der Emma	1981 Wir stellen vor: Morgens in der Kneipe (tv)
1957 Puntilla und sein Knecht Matti (tv recording of Brechts choreography at Berliner Ensemble)	1975 Bankett für Achilles	1981 Meschkas Enkel (tv)
1959 Die Geschichte vom armen Hassan	1975 Im Schlaraffenland (tv)	1982 Benno macht Geschichten (tv)
1958 Der Lotterieschwede	1975 Looping	1982 Das Graupenschloss (tv)
1958 Sonnensucher (forbidden, released 1972)	1975 Jakob der Lügner	1982 Der Mann von der "Cap Arcona" (tv)
1959 Stacheltier – Ohm contra Watt (short film)	1975 Feigenblatt für Kuhle Wampe oder Wem gehört die Welt	1985 Goethe in D oder die Blutnacht auf dem Schreckenstein oder wie Erwin Geschonneck eine Hauptrolle spielte (documentary West Germany)
1959 Stacheltier – Herzlichen Glückwunsch! (short film)	1976 Tüzoltó utca 25 (Feuerwehrgasse 25) (Hungary)	1986 Lebenszeichen (tv-documentary)
1959 SAS 181 antwortet nicht	1976 Das Licht auf dem Galgen	1986 Ein Wigwam für Störche (tv)
1959 Die Musterkaben	1976 Ein altes Modell (tv)	1987 Wie die Alten sungen
1960 Leute mit Flügeln	1977 Die Insel der Silberreiher	1988 Mensch, mein Papa
1960 Fünf Patronenhülsen	1977 Tambari	1995 Matulla & Busch (tv)
1961 Gewissen in Aufruhr (tv-sequel)	1977 Die Millionen des Knut Brümmer (tv)	
1962 Ach, du fröhliche ...		

## Manfred Krug (\*24 February 1937, Duisburg)

- his father moved to GDR in 1950, trained and worked as steel welder in Brandenburg
- 1954/55 drama school Leipzig, eleve at Berliner Ensemble, since 1957 free-lance actor
- jazz singer and composer, numerous successful public concerts in the GDR
- 1977 emigration to West Germany, very successful in tv productions

1957 Die Schönste	1966 Guten Tag – das sind wir (narrator, documentary short-film)	1974 Wie füttert man einen Esel
1957 Mazurka der Liebe	1967 Frau Venus und ihr Teufel	1974 Kit % Co.
1957 Vergesst mir meine Traudel nicht	1967 Die Fahne von Kriwoi Rog	1974 Frauen in der Landwirtschaft (documentary, short-film, narrator)
1958 Ein Mädchen von 16 ½	1967 Hochzeitsnacht im Regen (song)	1976 Daniel Druskat (tv sequel)
1959 Ware für Katalonien	1968 Hauptmann Florian von der Mühle	1977 Feuer unter Deck (forbidden until 1979)
1959 Reportage 57	1968 Abschied	1977 Abschied vom Frieden (tv sequel)
1959 Das zweite Studium	1968 Wege übers Land (tv sequel)	1977 Trini (children's film, dubbing voice)
1959 Bevor der Blitz einschlägt	1969 Käuzchenkuhle	1978 Das Versteck
1960 Leute mit Flügeln	1969 Mit mir nicht, Madam!	<b>emigration to West Germany</b>
1960 Fünf Patronenhülsen	1969 Was uns interessiert – Pionierjournal: Flugsport (documentary, short-film)	1977-1995 Auf Achse (tv sequel) (tv)
1960 Was wäre, wenn ...?	1970 Weite Straßen – stille Liebe	1978 Paul kommt zurück
1961 Professor Mamlock	1970 Meine Stunde Null	1979 Die Faust in der Tasche (tv)
1961 Drei Kapitel Glück	1970 Netzwerk	1981 Fächenbrand (tv)
1961 Guten Tag, lieber Tag	1970 Junge Frau von 1914 (tv sequel)	1982-1983 Sesamstraße (West German children's tv series)
1962 Auf der Sonnenseite	1970 Paule – Porträt eines Jungen (documentary, short-film, narrator)	1983 Wer raucht die letzte? (tv)
1962 Revue um Mitternacht	1970 Der Oktober kam (documentary, short-film, narrator)	1983 Konsul Möllers Erben (tv sequel)
1962 Königskinder	1971 Husaren in Berlin	1984-2001 Tatort (40 episodes with Krug)
1962 Minna von Barnhelm	1971 Die Verschworenen (tv sequel)	1986-98 Liebling Kreuzberg (tv sequel, 58 episodes)
1962 Der Kinnhaken	1972 Die gestohlene Schlacht	1986 Whopper Punch 777
1963 Beschreibung eines Sommers	1972 Das Lachen soll euch nicht im Halse stecken bleiben (pop tunes, presenter and narrator)	1986 Detektivbüro Roth (tv series)
1963 Nebel	1972 Er, Sie, Es (tv, dubbing voice)	1990 Rosamunde
1963 Boxer a smrt (CSSR)	1972 Eolomea (dubbing voice)	1990 Neuner
1963 Der andere neben dir (tv)	1973 Die Stülpner Legende (tv sequel)	1994 Wir sind auch nur ein Volk
1964 Mir nach, Canailen!	1973 Die sieben Affären der Doña Juanita (song)	1994 Der Blaue
1965 Die antike Münze		
1965 König Drosselbart		
1965 Wenn du groß bist, lieber Adam (forbidden until 1990)		
1966 Fräulein Schmetterling (forbidden, unfinished)		
1966 Spur der Steine		
1966 Der kleine Prinz (song, tv, never broadcast)		

### Armin Mueller-Stahl (\*17 December 1930, Tilsit)

- resettled to northern Germany after war, 1948 moved to Berlin, Music College, 1951 drama school (not finished), 1952 Theater am Schiffbauerdamm (later Berliner Ensemble), 1953 until emigration to West Germany at Berliner Volksbühne
- 1967-68 concerts in Helsinki, Oslo, Algeria, Vienna, Warsaw, Cairo and West Berlin, 1967-76 regularly concerts throughout the GDR
- 1976 signed Biermann petition
- 1980 emigration to West Berlin, 1985 settles in Sierksdorf, West Germany, 1992 moves to Maria del Rey later Pacific Palisades, California
- author of *Verordneter Sonntag* (1980), *Drehtage* (1991), *Unterwegs nach Hause* (1997), *In Gedanken an Marie Louise* (1998)
- directed and performed in *Conversation with the Beast* (1996)

1956 Heimliche Ehen	1970 Tödlicher Irrtum	emigration to West Germany
1958 Rose Bernd (tv)	1970 Kein Mann für Camp Detrick (tv)	
1958/59 Ich selbst und kein Engel (tv)	1971 Die Verschworenen (tv sequel)	1980 Die längste Sekunde (tv)
1960 Flucht aus der Hölle" (tv sequel)	1971 Frauen (documentary, short-film, narrator)	1980 Ich möchte fliehen (tv)
1960 Fünf Patronenhülsen	1972 Der Dritte	1980 Ich werde warten (tv)
1962 ...und deine Liebe auch	1972 Januskopf	1981 Collin (tv sequel)
1962 Die Letzte Chance (tv)	1972-76 Das Unsichtbare Visier (tv sequel)	1981 Der Westen leuchtet
1962 Königskinder	1973 Die eigene Haut (tv)	1981 Ferry oder Wie es war (tv)
1962 Nackt unter Wölfen	1973 Die Hosen des Ritters Bredow	1981 Ja und Nein (tv)
1962 Das Mädchen ohne Mitgift (tv)	1973 Die sieben Affären der Dona Juanita (tv sequel)	1981 Lola
1963 Christine (unfinished)	1973 Die Stülpner-Legende (tv sequel)	1981 Eugenie Marlitt und die Gartenlaube (tv)
1963 Rauhreif (tv)	1973 Die Elixiere des Teufels (dubbing voice)	1981 Der Sonderbotschafter (tv)
1963 Der Andere neben dir (tv)	1974 Jakob, der Lügner	1981 Die Rache eines V-Mannes (tv) 1982 Un dimanche de flic/Zwei Profis steigen aus 1 1982 An uns glaubt Gott nicht mehr (tv) 1 1982 Der Fall Sylvester Matuska (tv) 1 1982 Die Flügel der Nacht 1 1982 Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss 1
1964 Alaskafüchse	1974 Kit & Co	
1964 Preludio 11	1976 Nelken in Aspik	
1964 Wolf unter Wölfen" (tv sequel)	1976 Die Lindstedts (tv sequel)	
1966 Columbus 64 (tv)	1977 Die Flucht	
1967 Ein Lord am Alexanderplatz	1978 Geschlossene Gesellschaft (tv)	
1967 Kämpfer und Sieger (tv)		
1968 Wege übers Land (tv sequel)		
1969 Die Dame aus Genua (tv sequel) 1		

## Mueller-Stahl filmography continued

1982 Flucht aus Pommern (tv)	1988 Tagebuch für einen Mörder	1997 12 Angry Men
1982 Ich werde warten (tv)	1989 Das Spinnennetz	1997 Tanger - Legende einer Stadt
1982 Viadukt	1989 Music Box	1997 The Assistant
1982 Ausgestoßen (tv)	1989 Schweinegeld - Ein Märchen der Gebrüder Nimm	1997 The Game
1983 Eine Liebe in Deutschland	1990 Avalon	1997 Project Peacemaker
1983 L' Homme blessé/Der verführte Mann	1990 Bronsteins Kinder	1998 The Commissioner
1983 Ruhe sanft, Bruno (tv)	1991 Kafka	1998 The X Files (cinema version)
1983 Trauma	1991 Night on Earth	1999 Die Bibel - Jesus (tv)
1983 Die Mitläufer	1992 Far from Berlin	1999 Jakob the Liar
1984 Glut	1992 The Power of One	1999 Pilgrim (tv)
1984 Rita Ritter	1992 Utz	1999 The Third Miracle
1984 Morgengrauen (tv sequel)	1993 Der Kinoerzähler	1999 The Thirteenth Floor
1984 Stellen Sie sich vor, man hat Dr. Prestel erschossen (tv)	1993 The House of the Spirits	2000 Mission to Mars
1984 Tatort - Freiwild (tv)	1994 Holy Matrimony	2000 The Long Run
1984 Tausend Augen	1994 The Last Good Time	2001 Die Manns - Ein Jahrhundertroman (tv)
1985 Bittere Ernte	1995 A Pyromaniac's Love Story	2001 Geiger, Gaukler, Gentleman (tv documentary on Mueller-Stahl)
1985 Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit	1995 Taxandria	(2003 The Dust Factory )i
1985 Hautnah (tv)	1995 Theodore Rex	
1985 Oberst Redl	1996 Brennende Liebe	
1985 Unser Mann im Dschungel (tv)	1996 Conversation with the Beast (German, directed by Mueller-Stahl)	
1985 Vergeßt Mozart	1996 Jetzt ist Sonntag (tv documentary about Mueller-Stahl)	
1986 Auf den Tag genau (tv)	1996 Der Unhold	
1986 Gauner im Paradies (tv)	1996 In the Presence of Mine Enemies (tv)	
1986 Momo	1996 Shine 1	
1986 Abenteuer in Bangkok (tv)		
1987 Amerika (USA tv sequel)		
1987 Der Joker		
1987 Franz (German tv)		
1987 Jokehnen oder Wie lange fährt man von Ostpreußen nach Deutschland? (tv sequel)		

**Günther Simon** (\*11 May 1925, Berlin † 25 June 1972, Berlin)

- lay theatre as grammar school student and in prisoner of war camps
- 1947 drama classes at Berlin Hebbel theatre
- 1947-1952 theatres of Köthen, Schwerin, Dresden and Leipzig, afterwards mostly DEFA and tv productions

1952 Das verurteilte Dorf	1961 Der Fremde	1970 Weil ich dich liebe ...
1953 Anna Susanna	1961 Der Traum des Hauptmann Loy	1970 Zwei Briefe an Pospischel (tv sequel)
1953 Jacke wie Hose	1961 Der Tod hat ein Gesicht	1971 KLK an PTX – Die rote Kapelle
1954 Ernst Thälmann – Sohn seiner Klasse	1961 Eine Handvoll Noten	1970 Jeder stirbt für sich allein (tv sequel)
1955 Ernst Thälmann – Führer seiner Klasse	1961 Das Kleid (forbidden, released 1991)	1971 Junger Mann (tv)
1956 Drei Mädchen im Endspiel	1962 Ärzte	1972 Der Regimentskommandeur (tv)
1956 Lied über dem Tal (unfinished)	1962 Mord ohne Sühne	1972 Gefährliche Reise (tv sequel)
1956 Das Traumschiff	1963 An französischen Kaminen	1972 Reife Kirschen
1956 Treffpunkt Aimeé	1963 Nebel	1972 Amboss oder Hammer sein (GDR/USSR/BULG)
1956 Damals in Paris	1963 Geheimarchiv an der Elbe	
1957 Tinko (children's film)	1964 Preludio 11	
1957 Vergesst mir meine Traudel nicht	1964 Schwarzer Samt	
1957 Sheriff Teddy	1964 Das Lied vom Trompeter	
1958 Meine Frau macht Musik	1965 Wenn du groß bist, lieber Adam (forbidden, shown 1990)	
1958 Der Lotterieschwede	1965 Der Frühling braucht Zeit	
1958 Das Lied der Matrosen	1965 Der Reserveheld	
1958 Geschwader Fledermaus	1965 Lots Weib	
1958 Sonnensucher (forbidden until 1972)	1966 Alfons Zitterbacke	
1959 Der kleine Kuno	1966 Reise ins Ehebett	
1959 Senta auf Abwegen	1966 Irrlicht und Feuer (tv sequel)	
1959 Eine alte Liebe	1967 Brot und Rosen	
1960 Der schweigende Stern	1967 Heroin	
1960 Einer von uns	1969 Verdacht auf einen Toten	
1960 Die heute über 40 sind	1969 Der Maler mit dem Stern (tv, narrator)	
1960 Der Moorhund	1969 Die Zeichen der Ersten (tv sequel)	
1960 Kein Ärger mit Cleopatra	1969 Krupp und Krause – Krause und Krupp (tv sequel)	
1961 Die Liebe und der Co-Pilot		

## Appendix IV

### Table of DEFA's international co-productions and stars involved

Actors are listed in the "international stars" column if they were well-known or had a noticeable number of performances before they worked for DEFA.

Year	Title	Origin of Co-producer	International Stars involved
1954	<i>Leuchfeuer</i> (Light House Signal)	Sweden	n.a.
1955	<i>Das Fräulein von Scuderi</i> (The Lady of Scuderi)	Sweden	West German Henny Porten and Dorothea Wieck, French Roland Alexandre
1957	<i>Die Abenteuer des Till Eulenspiegel</i> (Les Aventures des Till L'Espiègle/Adventures of Till Owlglass)	France	French Gérard Philipe
	<i>Spielbank-Affäre</i> (Casino-Affair)	Sweden	Austrian Rudolf Forster., West German Getrud Kückelmann, Jan Hendriks (I)
	<i>Die Hexen von Salem</i> (The Witches of Salem)	France	French Simone Signoret, Yves Montand
1958	<i>Jahrgang 21</i> (Born in 21)	Czechoslovakia	n.a.
1959	<i>Die Elenden</i> (Les Miserables)	France, Italy	French Jean Gabin, Bernard Blier
	<i>Sterne</i> (Stars)	Bulgaria	n.a.
1960	<i>Der schweigende Stern</i> (First Spaceship to Venus/Spaceship Venus does not Reply)	Poland	French Yoko Tani, West German Ruth-Maria Kubitschek
	<i>Trübe Wasser</i> (Murky Waters)	France	French Jean-Claude Pascal, French Madeleine Robinson
	<i>Begegnung im Zwielicht</i> (Meeting at Twilight)	Poland	n.a.
1961	<i>Fünf Tage – Fünf Nächte</i> (Five Days – Five Nights)	Soviet Union	Soviet Vsevolod Sanayev
	<i>Die goldene Jurte</i> (The Golden Yurt)	Mongolia (children)	n.a.
1962	<i>Igelfreundschaft</i> (My Hedgehog Friend)	Czechoslovakia (children)	n.a.
	<i>Menschen und Tiere</i> (Humans and Animals)	Soviet Union	n.a.
1963	<i>Koffer mit Dynamit</i> (Suitcase full of Dynamite)	Czechoslovakia	n.a.
1964	<i>Preludio 11</i>	Cuba	n.a.
1965	<i>Die antike Münze</i> (The Antique Coin)	Bulgaria	Bulgarian Grigor Vachkov
	<i>Eine schreckliche Frau</i> (A Terrible Wife)	Czechoslovakia	n.a.

	<i>Mörder auf Urlaub</i> (Murderers on Holiday)	Yugoslavia	Jiri Vristala
1966	<i>Hamida</i>	Tunisia (children)	n.a.
1967	<i>Die Heiden von Kummerow</i> (The Pagans from Kummerow)	West Germany (children), (DEFA not mentioned in credits, but provided personnel, locations and technical devices)	Theo Lingen, Ralf Wolter, Paul Dahlke
1969	<i>Weiße Wölfe</i> (White Wolves)	Yugoslavia	Barbara Brylska
1970	<i>Unterwegs zu Lenin</i> (Travelling to Lenin)	Soviet Union	Michail Uljanov
	<i>Signale – ein Weltraumabenteuer</i> (Signals – a Spaceadventure)	Poland	Romanian Iurie Darie,
1971	<i>Goya oder der arge Weg der Erkenntnis</i> (Goya)	Soviet Union	Soviet (Lithuanian) Donatas Banionis, Yugoslavian Oliviera Vugo, Bulgarian Tatyana Lolova, West German Wolfgang Kieling
1972	<i>Schwarzer Zwieback</i> (Black Bread)	Soviet Union	n.a.
	<i>Die gestohlene Schlacht</i> (The Stolen Battle)	Czechoslovakia	n.a.
	<i>Amboss odet Hammer sein</i> (To be Anvil or Hammer)	Bulgaria and Soviet Union	n.a.
1973	<i>Copernicus</i>	Poland	n.a.
	<i>Elixiere des Teufels</i> (The Devil's Elixir)	Czechoslovakia	n.a.
1974	<i>Drei Haselnüsse für Aschenbrödel</i> (Three Hazelnuts for Cinderella)	Czechoslovakia (children)	n.a.
	<i>Schüsse im Marienbad</i> (Shots in Marienbad)	Czechoslovakia	n.a.
1975	<i>Abenteuer mit Blasius</i> (Adventures with Blasius)	Czechoslovakia (children)	n.a.
1976	<i>So viele Lieder, so viele Worte</i> (So Many Songs, So Many Words)	Soviet Union	n.a.
1977	<i>Insel der Silberreiher</i> (Island of Silver Herons)	Czechoslovakia (children)	n.a.
1979	<i>Der Katzenprinz</i> (The Prince of Cats)	Czechoslovakia (children)	n.a.
1980	<i>Ernste Spiele</i> (Serious Games)	Hungary (children)	n.a.
1981	<i>Zwei Zeilen, kleingedruckt</i> (Two Lines, in Small Print)	Soviet Union	n.a.
	<i>Peters Jugend</i> (Young Tzar Peter)	Soviet Union	n.a.
1982	<i>Die Mahnung</i> (The Admonition)	Bulgaria, Soviet Union	n.a.
	<i>Alexander der Kleine</i> (Alexander the Small)	Soviet Union (children)	n.a.

1983	<i>Der Scout</i> (The Scout)	Mongolia	n.a.
1985	<i>Der Sieg</i> (The Victory)	Soviet Union	n.a.
1986	<i>Eine zauberhafte Erbschaft</i> (A Magical Inheritance)	Czechoslovakia (children)	n.a.
1987	<i>Johann Strauß – der ungekrönte König</i> aka <i>Johann Strauß – Der König ohne Krone</i> (Johann Strauß – the King Without a Crown)	Austria	West German Karin Dor, Matthieu Carrière, American Zsa Zsa Gabor, Mary Crosby
1988	<i>Dschungelzeit</i> (Jungle Time)	Vietnam	n.a.
1989	<i>Pestalozzis Berg</i> (Pestalozzi's Mountain)	Switzerland	n.a.
	<i>Wir bleiben treu</i> (We Shall Remain Faithful)	Poland, Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Hungary	n.a.
	<i>Die Besteigung des Chimborazo</i> (Climbing Mount Chimborazo)	West Germany	n.a.
1990	<i>Lasst mich doch eine Taube sein</i> (Why Don't You Let Me Be a Dove)	Yugoslavia	n.a.
	<i>Rückkehr aus der Wüste</i> (Return From the Desert)	Algeria	n.a.
1991	<i>Der Tangospieler</i> (The Tangoplayer)	(West German regional television)	n.a.

# GLOSSARY

ARD	Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland [Co-operation of public/state broadcasting companies of the Federal Republic of Germany], West Germany's first state television station; ARD broadcasts started 25 December 1952
DEFA	Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft [German Film Joint-Stock Company], East Germany's national (and only) film production company; entirely state subsidised, existed 1946-1992
DFF	Deutscher Fernsehfunk [German Television-broadcasting Company], East Germany's two television stations (DFF 1 and DFF 2); DFF 1 began broadcasts on 21 December 1952, DFF 2 in October 1969, DFF ceased to exist in December 1991
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend [Free German Youth], socialist mass organisation for young people between 14 and 25; founded 1946, ceased to exist with the decline of the GDR in 1990, although officially some former members continue as fdj.
GDR	German Democratic Republic [DDR – Deutsche Demokratische Republik], East Germany, founded 7 October 1949, ceased to exist from reunification with the Federal Republic of Germany [West Germany] on 3 October 1990
HFF	Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen [Academy for Film and Television] in Potsdam-Babelsberg, the GDR's only film school, founded in 1954 as Deutsche Hochschule für Filmkunst [German Academy for Filmart], since 1955 also acting/performance training, in 1967 renamed as Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, in 1985 "Konrad Wolf" was added to HFF in honour of the late DEFA film director Konrad Wolf
MDR	Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk [Middle German Broadcasting Company], regional state television since January 1992, provides mostly for the southern part of the former territory of the GDR
MfS	Ministerium für Staatssicherheit [Ministry for State Security], The GDR's state police, largely responsible for internal affairs, continuously investigated large numbers of the population
ORB/RBB	Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg/Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg [East German Broadcasting Company Brandenburg/Broadcasting Company Berlin Brandenburg], regional state television since October 1991, ORB merged in May 2003 with Berlin's regional station to become RBB, provides mostly the former GDR territory around Berlin

SBZ	Sowjetische Besatzungszone [Soviet Occupied Zone], German territory under Soviet ally government after 8 May 1945 until foundation of the GDR in 1949
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands [Socialist Unity Party of Germany], socialist governing party of the GDR
SMAD	Sowjetische Militäradministration [Soviet Military Administration] which had governing power after 8 May 1945 on the Soviet occupied territory of East Germany until the foundation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949
Ufa	Universum Film AG, film production company founded in 1917 with contribution of the state, Ufa was located at Potsdam-Babelsberg so that after the war much of technical equipment and staff was taken over by DEFA
Ufi	Universum-Film GmbH, in 1942 all German film production was incorporated in a state-controlled Ufa, which is dubbed "Ufi" to distinguish it from Ufa
ZDF	Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen [Second German television], West Germany's second state television station, broadcasting since April 1963

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