

Press Release



Berlinale *Retrospective* 2013:

"The Weimar Touch. The International Influence of Weimar Cinema after 1933"

This year's *Retrospective* is entitled "The Weimar Touch" and is devoted to how cinema from the Weimar Republic influenced international filmmaking after 1933. It will focus on continuities, mutual effects and transformations in the films of German-speaking emigrants up into the 1950s.

Weimar cinema flourished not least because of the democratization of society and art between 1918 and 1933. Works from this period are greatly diverse - and marked by both popular narrative forms and a desire to experiment stylistically. The films deal with social hardship in the cities and a subversive reversal of gender roles, and know slapstick and verbal wit, laughter and shuddering. From a tension of contradictions, Weimar cinema got its creative energies. At the same time, it benefitted early on from a lively international exchange and the activities of German filmmakers abroad.

But then with the Nazi takeover in 1933 the German film industry was forced to align with Party politics. Only at the beginning were some films released that still drew on Weimar traditions. More than 2000 individuals from the film industry, for the most part of Jewish descent, had to emigrate in the next years. Many of them sought a new start in Europe and the USA, or re-established existing relationships there.

"The cinema of the Weimar Republic as well as film in exile and emigration are major focuses of the collections and research at the Deutsche Kinemathek, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2013," comments Rainer Rother, Section Director of the *Retrospective* and Artistic Director of the Deutsche Kinemathek. "We have compiled what is probably the world's most extensive collection on these topics and made them accessible in what have become standard works of film history. Like many of the *Retrospectives* in the past, 'The Weimar Touch' will continue this tradition while calling attention to films for their rediscovery."

Thirty-three films are to be presented in five chapters: "Rhythm and Laughter", "'Unheimlich' - The Dark Side", "Light and Shadow", "Variations", and "Know Your Enemy". Under the heading "Rhythm and Laughter" are works that draw on sound film operettas, music films and comedies - genres of Weimar cinema that were significantly influenced by Jewish filmmakers. Here audiences will find *Peter* (Austria/Hungary 1934) by Hermann Kosterlitz. In this pointedly socially critical comedy with touches of a sound film operetta, Franzisca Gaál gives an unconventional and stirring performance in the title role, a so-called "trouser role". Another rediscovery

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is the recently restored Dutch film, *Komedie om Geld* (1936) by Max Ophüls. The cameraman was Eugen Schüfftan, who later went on to win an Oscar. The *Retrospective* would be hard to imagine without Billy Wilder, whose film *Some Like It Hot* (USA 1959) put the subversive humour and frivolous travesty of Weimar cinema into an American context.

"Unheimlich' - The Dark Side": In the 1930s, intensely scary crime films concentrated on the dark side of the human psyche and society. In post-war USA, these works contributed to shaping the genre of film noir, whose directors were for the most part German film emigrants. For instance, Robert Siodmak made the film *Pièges* (*Traps*, France 1939) while he was exiled in Paris.

Remakes of classics from the Weimar Republic and films modelled on films from this period will be screening under the heading "Variations". This includes Joseph Losey's 1951 adaptation of Fritz Lang's work of the same name, *M* (1931); and Victor Saville's *First a Girl* (GB 1935), which is based on Reinhold Schünzel's *Viktor und Viktoria* (*Viktor and Viktoria*, Germany 1933).

"Know Your Enemy" will show films that took a stand against the Nazi regime. Ernst Lubitsch's classic *To Be or Not to Be* (USA 1942) will be presented alongside Ludwig Berger's almost unknown work, the Dutch film *Ergens in Nederland. Een film uit de Mobilisatietijd* (*Somewhere in the Netherlands*, 1940). This melodrama about a relationship focuses on the threat of a German invasion that actually came to pass in May 1940. With its brilliant cast of predominantly European actors, *Casablanca* (USA 1942) by Michael Curtiz is indisputably the most popular of all emigrant films.

Berlinale Director Dieter Kosslick is very pleased with the *Retrospective*, which is being curated jointly by the Deutsche Kinemathek and the Museum of Modern Art, New York: "During the Weimar Republic, the relevance of film for society and art was discovered, and film history written. At the *Retrospective*, the impact of this film epoch on international cinema will become evident."

Alongside Laurence Kardish, former Senior Curator of Film at MoMA, many thanks go to another external member of the Curatorial Board, film historian Hans-Michael Bock (CineGraph - Hamburgisches Centrum für Filmforschung). The films of the *Retrospective* will be screened in the CinemaxX at Potsdamer Platz and the Zeughauskino. The programme will be accompanied by a series of events organized by the Deutsche Kinemathek. A brochure will be published on the *Retrospective*. Beginning in April 2013, films from the *Retrospective* will also be shown at the MoMA in New York.

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