

Constructing Consensus: teamWorx's Event Movies and the Cinema of Consensus

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This article compares the German production company teamWorx's television event movies with the so-called "cinema of consensus," as defined by Eric Rentschler in his influential article "From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus" (Rentschler, 2002: 260-277). While teamWorx's event movies are television productions first and foremost, they are designed to be cinematic and can therefore be analysed in the context of a new wave of historically minded German cinema. It is also extremely important to focus on the specific medium of television, asking how these event movies are inspired by and inspire trends in historical television. Finally, this article considers how the event format might aid a coming to terms with Germany's difficult past and create a new consensus between history and entertainment. Though much less has been written on recent German cinema than other periods of German film history, particularly the critically favoured New German Cinema, many efforts to deal with the past two decades of German filmmaking still define themselves against Rentschler's scathing denunciation. Television movies have been further ignored, with academics only very recently acknowledging their importance to debates on German history. This article seeks to address this oversight by analysing the characteristics of television event movies that assist in their communication of historical themes to a wide audience.

Let us first discuss Rentschler's article that criticises post-unification German cinema as a "cinema of consensus" (2002: 260). Rentschler cites the comedies *Abgeschminkt* (1993), *Stadtgespräch* (1995) and *Das Superweib* (1996) as prominent examples of the cinema of consensus, which, he argues, consists of "a formula-bound profusion of romantic comedies, crude farces, road movies, action films and literary adaptations" (2002: 262). Furthermore, Rentschler claims that the cinema of consensus seeks to "engross and accommodate," to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, and in doing so "systematically skirt[s] the 'large' topics and hot issues" (2002: 262, 264). In other words, the cinema of consensus is neither politically motivated nor provocative. Rentschler further criticises modern German filmmakers for looking to Hollywood for inspiration and for their reliance on Hollywood conventions. Thus, according to Rentschler, unlike the New German Cinema of the 1960s to the 1980s, the cinema of consensus refuses to adopt a national voice (2002: 266, 274-275). However, Rentschler's article has several questionable elements. Amongst them is an overarching expression of loss regarding the New German Cinema. Rentschler would seemingly

prefer that the *Autorenkino* was still in operation, producing films that were critically celebrated but seen by very few people. In addition, when describing German filmmakers' reliance on Hollywood conventions, Rentschler does not discuss New German Cinema's occasionally troubled but ever-present relationship with American filmmaking. Similarly, despite bemoaning the film funding situation in unified Germany, which prevents such auteurist films from being produced, Rentschler does not make it clear where this policy comes from, or how post-wall German filmmakers might escape the constraints of these funding regulations. Finally, despite Rentschler's criticisms, at the very end of his article he lists no less than eighteen filmmakers he does not consider part of the cinema of consensus, including Christoph Schlingensief, Rosa von Praunheim, Wolfgang Becker, Thomas Arslan, Tom Tykwer, Hans-Christian Schmid, and Fatih Akin. According to Rentschler, these filmmakers have preserved New German Cinema's "incendiary potential," though they are apparently among a minority of directors working "in the shadows of the more prominent 'cinema of consensus'" (2002: 275).

Looking at a more recent German cinema, the films that have performed well in both domestic and international markets stand in stark contrast with the apolitical, ahistorical consensus films Rentschler criticises. Since his article was published, two German films dealing with serious historical issues have won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, namely *Nirgendwo in Afrika* (2003) and *Das Leben der Anderen* (2007). Indeed, serious history has been a prominent theme in recent German cinema. Numerous productions have been hailed for their representations of the Third Reich, such as Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Der Untergang* (2004) and Stefan Ruzowitzky's *Die Fälscher* (2007) (both of which were Oscar nominated). Similarly, *Das Leben der Anderen* prompted more earnest appraisals of the GDR past, while directors such as Fatih Akin have explored issues of multiculturalism in modern Germany to great acclaim. Moreover, directors of the so-called Berliner Schule, including Christian Petzold and Thomas Arslan, have been widely credited with continuing New German Cinema's auteurist tradition. Though Rentschler's article is significant in characterising aspects of the cinematic landscape since unification, his arguments are somewhat neutralised by a recent proliferation of socially engaged yet popular and economically viable German films.

This article considers the extent to which teamWorx's event movies conform to Rentschler's theorised cinema of consensus. Their status as events indeed suggests a desire to attract a large audience, and they do not shy away from using devices from popular cinema to achieve this aim. However, their depiction of historical issues—combined with filmmakers' desire to educate audiences and come to terms with Germany's past by breaking taboos and encouraging debate—suggests these event movies

have distinguished themselves from Rentschler's romantic comedies, crude farces and road movies. To explore this distinction, this article discusses examples of event movies, the opinions of teamWorx's filmmakers (including an interview with chairman of the board Nico Hofmann), and critical reactions to the films.

First, it is important to understand what kind of productions teamWorx makes and how it positions itself within the German media landscape. Founded in 1998, the television production company is best known for its "event movies"—feature-length big-budget TV films designed to keep audiences talking for days. TeamWorx has become one of contemporary Germany's most important television producers. According to its press release, teamWorx is "Europe-wide market leader in event productions" (11 Jahre, teamWorx). In the past eleven years, teamWorx's event movies have focused predominantly on historical subjects and almost exclusively on twentieth century German history. TeamWorx has produced films on the National Socialist past, such as *Stauffenberg* (2004), *Dresden* (2006), *Nicht alle waren Mörder* (2006), and *Die Flucht* (2007); on the history of the GDR, such as *Die Mauer—Berlin '61* (2005), and *Das Wunder von Berlin* (2008); on German terrorism, *Mogadischu* (2008); and on other moments in German history, including the Berlin airlift in *Die Luftbrücke* (2005), and the 1962 flooding of Hamburg in *Die Sturmflut* (2006). TeamWorx has also made a number of films on historical figures. For example, *Der Mann aus der Pfalz* (2009) is about former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, while the docudrama *Dutschke* (2010) recounts events from the life of eponymous student leader Rudi Dutschke. Alongside these features, teamWorx has also produced a small number of non-historical event movies. These include the disaster films *Tornado: Der Zorn des Himmels* (2006) for Pro 7, and *Vulkan* (2009) for RTL, which were CGI-driven two-parters, depicting the imagined effects of a tornado hitting Berlin and a volcanic eruption in Germany's Eifel region, respectively.

Before comparing teamWorx's event movies with the cinema of consensus, we must understand the function of historical television in Germany, the differences between television and cinema productions, and how teamWorx navigates between these media to enjoy the best of both worlds. The introduction in 1984 of private broadcast channels such as RTL and Sat 1 greatly influenced the media landscape teamWorx inherited. Funded by advertising, and therefore reliant on viewer ratings to make a profit, these channels needed to attract as many viewers as possible. The public channels ARD and ZDF, which until then had enjoyed a monopoly on viewer attention, were forced to fight back by using the same methods to attract audiences. This strategy was criticised by many at the time as "downward convergence" (Lersch and Viehoff, 2007: 12), with many more "worthy" and "niche" programmes including prime-time

history coverage being shed in the desperate competition for ratings (Kansteiner, 2006: 111). At this point, public channels invested in the idea of an emotional melodrama as a weekly TV movie. Often scheduled on a Wednesday evening opposite the football on another channel, these TV movies targeted women and were the forerunners of teamWorx's event movies today. Due to these less than prestigious origins, the TV movie is a much-maligned form. John Ellis (2002: 122) argues that "The made-for-TV movie has an inferior cultural reputation in relation to the cinema film." While this is perhaps less marked in Germany than in the UK and USA, teamWorx often compares its films with cinema productions and seeks to distance its work from other German TV movies.

The popularity of historical programming on German television has considerably influenced teamWorx's event movies on historical subjects (Wolf, 2004: 28; and Cippitelli, 2009: 8). This is especially true of the "Histotainment" genre, which responds to the twin demands of education and emotion as well as a need to capture a younger audience. The term "Histotainment" is a portmanteau of the words "history" and "entertainment," and is used to describe film or television productions where historical themes are presented in an entertaining way (Wagner, 2006). Another major trend in recent German historical programming is the rise of the "event." TeamWorx does not claim to have introduced historical event movies, but is nevertheless their most visible proponent. However, teamWorx has undoubtedly influenced many other productions that could be described as event movies. [\[1\]](#) As with other examples of "Histotainment," teamWorx's features are characterised by emotionalisation, personalisation and sentimentalism, and are accompanied by documentaries and online resources providing information about the subjects depicted (Raff, 2008: 292, 469). Despite event movies' big budgets, feature-length running times, and Hollywood-esque filmic devices, teamWorx is first and foremost a television company. However, its filmmakers are keen to point out that these television movies are of no less quality or importance than films produced specifically for theatrical exhibition. Indeed, numerous teamWorx producers have claimed that the company makes "cinema for television." TeamWorx chairman Nico Hofmann (2010) states that "Cinema for television is about filming with a certain effort, regarding the camera, regarding the production, that you basically make the same effort that you would for a cinema film."

Though teamWorx is primarily a television company, its productions' relationship with cinematic features reflects a greater fluidity between the two forms in Germany today. Analysing the various benefits of choosing television over cinema helps us explore how teamWorx's event movies seek to come to terms with history specifically as television productions, and how they distinguish themselves from the cinema of consensus.

First, the choice of TV over cinema may be wise for economic reasons. Due to German funding structures, a film made for television will usually receive considerably greater financial backing than one made for theatrical exhibition. *Der Untergang*, for example, produced by Hofmann's former colleague Bernd Eichinger, was originally made for German television as a two-part drama, but later sold as a cinematic feature. Had the film been made exclusively for theatrical release it would not have received a fraction of the funding it did (Fuhr and Rodek, 2009). TeamWorx's event movies are usually funded by numerous regional television companies and boards, with the individual stations contributing much of the money. Further funding is acquired through sales of the film on the world market, highlighting the importance of event movies' global reach (Hofmann, 2010). In addition to these economic factors, Hofmann feels there is more freedom working in television than cinema. Hoffman describes TV as "more exciting and innovative than cinema" and states that "at the moment filmmakers can work in television much more securely and with significantly fewer market controls" (quoted in Gebauer, 2004). In recent years, the relationship between television and cinema in Germany has become considerably more fluid. There has been a rise in the number of so-called "amphibious" productions—films made for television and theatrical exhibition such as *Der Untergang* (Fuhr and Rodek, 2009). TeamWorx's producers wanted greater involvement with such productions, and *Der Tunnel* had already been shown in selected cinemas (*Ibid.*). One reason for the choice of TV over cinema relates to viewing figures. Television viewing figures frequently outstrip cinema attendance. For example, the first part of *Dresden* attracted nearly 13 million viewers, while the fifth most successful film in German cinemas in 2004, *Der Untergang*, was seen by 4.5 million viewers in its year of release (Filmhitliste: Jahresliste [international], 2004). In short, TV movies can reach and influence a considerably larger audience.

Let us now return to Rentschler's criticisms of the cinema of consensus and ask how these can be applied to teamWorx's event movies. Rentschler criticises post-wall German cinema and those who champion it—such as directors Dorris Dörrie, Dominik Graf, and Sönke Wortmann—for their desire to "engross and accommodate," for wanting the cinema to be "a site of mass diversion, not a moral institution of a political forum," and for attempting to "cultivate familiar genres and cater to popular tastes" (Rentschler, 2002: 264). The very concept of the event movie suggests that teamWorx wants the whole country to watch, and its films are explicitly designed and marketed with this in mind. Hofmann (2010) states of teamWorx's productions that "An event is only something which really engages people for two or three days. Otherwise it is not an event. An event is created only through public attention, through viewer interest and through the ensuing national debate." It cannot be denied that

teamWorx explicitly chases as wide an audience as possible and takes pride in its films' enviable viewing figures. *Dresden* and *Die Flucht* each broke viewing figure records, receiving around 12 million and 13 million respectively, which represents roughly thirty percent of the potential audience share (11 Jahre teamWorx). TeamWorx's other event movies regularly attract millions of viewers. [2] These event movies are supported by high-profile cross-media advertising campaigns. For example, in the weeks running up to the broadcast of *Hindenburg* (2011) on RTL, images of the iconic airship disaster were omnipresent on billboards and Morris columns in Berlin. The event movies are often screened alongside documentaries on the issues depicted. *Die Luftbrücke* was followed by a documentary on the Berlin airlift. A new Guido Knopp documentary on the bombing of Dresden was also broadcast the day before and the week after the broadcast of *Dresden* to raise awareness of the movie and its subject. Hype is also created through photographs of the cast in glossy magazines, or talk show appearances in the days leading up to broadcast. One of the stars of *Schicksalsjahre* (2011), Maria Furtwängler, also appeared on the popular German game show *Wetten, dass* the day before the first part of the event movie was shown.

Rentschler's claim that cinema of consensus filmmakers "believe in Spielberg" (2002: 266) can certainly be applied to the teamWorx project, especially since the company's name was explicitly inspired by Spielberg's US production company DreamWorks (Cooke, 2008: 280). Rentschler's description of the consensus filmmaker is one who supposedly wants to work in an American idiom, following in the footsteps of German directors such as Roland Emmerich and Wolfgang Petersen, who after learning their trade in Germany moved to Los Angeles to direct genre-defining Hollywood blockbusters. Emmerich directed *Independence Day* (1996), *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), and *2012* (2010), while Petersen directed *The Perfect Storm* (2000) and *Troy* (2004). However, Hofmann denies that he is influenced by mainstream Hollywood, preferring to take inspiration from more independent American productions such as Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* (2008) and the Spielberg co-produced mini-series *Band of Brothers* (2001). Interestingly, Hofmann uses such dramas as inspiration for how to combine an impression of historical authenticity with a modern, authentic look (Hofmann, 2010). It has even been suggested that the very concept of the event movie was brought back to Germany by Hofmann after his time studying at UCLA, and teamWorx is clearly influenced by American filmmaking (Crolley, 2002). Hofmann attributes much of teamWorx's popularity to the so-called "global aesthetic" his films use, referring to the slick visual style of US productions. Indeed, Hoffman has stated that "German reality isn't sexy enough" (Teamworx vor Neuausrichtung). Rentschler would surely consider this viewpoint typical of the cinema of consensus.

Furthermore, the majority of teamWorx's event movies employ a "conventional appearance and structure" (Rentschler, 2002: 275). Much like the cinema of consensus, their films recall classical Hollywood cinema's stylistic and generic conventions. Despite the serious history purportedly depicted, teamWorx's event movies borrow heavily from classical Hollywood melodramas. Peter Brooks states of melodramas that "Within an apparent context of 'realism' and the ordinary, they seemed in fact to be staging a heightened and hyperbolic drama, making reference to pure and polar concepts of darkness and light, salvation and damnation" (1976: ix). Indeed, dramatic and emotional narratives are played out against a backdrop of real historical events in teamWorx's films. Thomas Schatz describes Hollywood melodramas as "Popular romances that depicted a virtuous individual (usually a woman) or couple (usually lovers) victimized by repressive and inequitable social circumstances" (1981: 222). This is most clearly suggested by the use of a love triangle, a classic melodramatic device. Love triangles feature in several of teamWorx's event movies, including *Der Tunnel*, *Die Sturmflut*, *Die Luftbrücke*, *Dresden*, and *Die Flucht*. In many of these the motif of forbidden love adds an extra melodramatic element. In the World War II drama *Dresden*, the main protagonist Anna falls in love with a British bomber pilot. In the similarly themed *Die Flucht*, the lead character Lena falls in love with a French prisoner of war. The use of women as central characters in the majority of teamWorx's films conforms to the demands of melodrama, because they are told almost exclusively from a woman's point of view. Finally, Brooks (1976: 11) identifies an "indulgence of strong emotionalism" in melodrama, which is echoed by Hoffman's (2010) assertion that "The key issue is emotionalisation. The key issue is really what emotions [the film] evokes."

Much like mass-market genre productions, teamWorx's event movies use popular German television and cinema stars, including Maria Furtwängler in *Die Flucht* and the more recent *Schicksalsjahre*, Nadja Uhl in *Die Sturmflut* and *Nicht alle waren Mörder*, and middle-aged heart-throb Heino Ferch in *Der Tunnel*, *Die Luftbrücke*, *Die Mauer—Berlin '61*, *Der geheimnisvolle Schatz von Troja*, and *Das Wunder von Berlin*. This star-driven approach is similar to the cinema of consensus, which Rentschler claims was reliant on such "familiar faces" as Katja Riemann, Til Schweiger, Joachim Król, Maria Schrader, Martina Gedeck, and Meret Becker (2002: 262). Many of teamWorx's event movies include sophisticated special effects, which are specifically employed because viewers are used to watching Hollywood blockbusters (Butzek, 2005: 27). This is most noticeable in films such as *Dresden*, for which an enormous set was constructed that could withstand temperatures of up to 3,000 degrees. *Dresden* depicted the 1945 Allied bombings of the city and led one reviewer to claim that "The scenes of the bombing attacks prove that special effects and pyrotechnics from Germany are currently able to be

compared to any international standard" (Weichert, 2007: 72). TeamWorx's proficient use of CGI in *Dresden* continued in *Hindenburg*, the finale of which depicts the explosion and downing of the airship in impressive, spectacular detail.

Despite conforming to Rentschler's definition of the cinema of consensus in certain ways, other important aspects of teamWorx's event movies are the antithesis of the typical consensus film. Most importantly, Rentschler's allegation that this cinema "studiously and systematically skirt[s] the 'large' topics and hot issues" in contemporary Germany is not true of teamWorx's event movies. Rentschler agrees with writers such as Georg Seeßlen, Andreas Kilb and Kraft Wetzel, who describe German cinema of that period as "vapid and anaemic, [and] devoid of substance, conviction and deeper meaning" (Rentschler, 2002: 262). From its inception, it has become evident that teamWorx is preoccupied with working through Germany's past and its relevance to German society today. As Marcel Rosenbach wrote in *Der Spiegel*, "teamWorx stands for coming to terms with the past through film," and the company prides itself on its ability to open up the past anew to the German public (2005:152). Furthermore, teamWorx is aware of film's power when dealing with this past. This is particularly true of teamWorx's films on the National Socialist past. Hofmann (2010) describes the company's event movies on the Third Reich as a kind of national psychoanalysis, allowing the audience to understand and discuss issues that were previously taboo. In fact, teamWorx claims it has broken taboos on numerous difficult issues (Hofmann, 2010), such as the effects of the Allied bombing campaign in *Dresden*, the plight of the expellees from the East at the end of the war in *Die Flucht*, and even the events of July 20, 1944 in the feature-length film *Stauffenberg*. Hofmann (2010) maintains that teamWorx's event movies are crucial in allowing the audience, including those who lived through these periods and their descendents, to discuss and work through this history. In his words:

There are big topics in Germany, which for years were not spoken about, not even in families. Take something like flight and expulsion, in almost every German family there is an example of flight and expulsion in the family's own history, sometimes these are very painful, amongst them stories of mothers who were raped. So there are very many taboo topics in families. And to show these and to talk about them, that's what I mean with coming to terms with the past, it's a bit like filmic psychoanalysis, that the film's constellation of characters creates an emotionalisation, that people watch a film and open themselves up and are in the situation to talk about it emotionally.

The aims of teamWorx's historical event movies are apparent, particularly those dealing with the National Socialist period. TeamWorx not only wishes to entertain viewers, but also to educate and help them come to terms with the past, and the company does not shy away from mentioning how its films can have a positive effect on modern German society. In addition, Hofmann claims that teamWorx initiated a "memory wave," an increase in public discourse on the legacy of National Socialism. When asked about this memory wave, Hofmann (2010) stated that "We are indeed responsible for it, we launched the wave. We didn't join in afterwards, we actively pushed it." The DVD edition of *Dresden* was sent out to schools along with packs of teaching material, and a website was set up for a number of the films with promotional pictures, cast interviews, and background information on the wider history involved. For example, the regional broadcaster Südwestrundfunk's (SWR) website for *Nicht alle waren Mörder* featured facts about the Holocaust, the so-called "Stille Helden" [silent heroes] featured in the film, while highlighting problems with anti-Semitism in Germany today (*Nicht alle waren Mörder—das SWR.de-Special zum Film*). Moreover, Hofmann claims with pride that after watching *Nicht alle waren Mörder* his friends were inspired to seek out contact with Jewish life, stating that "What pleases me the most are the concrete effects" (quoted in Gangloff, 2006). *Nicht alle waren Mörder* and *Stauffenberg*, both directed by Jo Baier, highlight the importance of "Zivilcourage" [civil courage] in society (Keil, 2006), and *Dresden's* anti-war message is reinforced by several members of the production team in promotional material. The importance of the film in questioning current bombing wars is highlighted by historical advisor Richard Overy, who states that "I hope the film will remind people exactly what they're doing when they drop bombs on a big city" (*Das Making of Dresden*, 2006). TeamWorx's efforts to educate viewers, encourage them to come to terms with the past, and draw moral lessons from historical events is something unthinkable for the supposed cinema of consensus.

Another aspect of the cinema of consensus was its failure outside Germany. Rentschler describes the cinema of consensus as "too German and yet not German enough," and further criticises it for failing "to speak as a prominent and privileged voice of [the] nation" (Rentschler, 2002: 274). Conversely, teamWorx is proud of its films' international success. *Dresden* was sold to 95 countries outside Germany and several other event movies have won awards at international film festivals, for example at the Shanghai Television Festival 2007 (*Die Flucht*), the Festival de télévision in Monte Carlo 2007 (*Nicht alle waren Mörder*), and New York Festivals 2009 (*Das Wunder von Berlin*). TeamWorx has enjoyed similar success in America, where *Der Tunnel* was shown in cinemas and was the best-received German film since Wolfgang Petersen's *Das Boot* (Hanfeld, 2002). Contrary to the cinema of consensus's supposed lack of national

voice, Hofmann is proud of communicating “A different, richer image of Germany,” and a Germany not afraid to confront its recent past in front of the whole world (quoted in Schlink, 2007). Hofmann (2010) claims it is the distinct German flavour of teamWorx’s productions that attracts such international popularity, stating that “In recent years I have always had the impression that a strong national product from Germany, which tells its story authentically, sells the best on the world market.”

In this respect, teamWorx relies on transnational filmmaking conventions to create a larger impact both domestically and on the world stage. Due to the success of Germany’s relationship with Hollywood, particularly since the 1970s, German cinema has developed an even greater transnational perspective, with many films created to succeed internationally without losing their national specificity, including teamWorx’s event movies. Along with an increased look to Hollywood, it is important to remember that links with other European filmmaking nations have strengthened, largely as a result of German unification (Halle, 2008: 7). The adoption of a transnational perspective is the only way companies can ensure profitability. As Halle points out, “European filmmakers cannot afford to produce films solely for Europeans in the way that Hollywood can still produce films for the US market” (2008: 93). Similarly, a focus on specific national themes, such as national mythic heroes, could alienate the rest of the indispensable European market (Halle, 2008: 93). In transforming these national stories into transnational narratives there is a danger of losing specificity or eroding “national myths” (De Wever, 2007: 7). Many of Germany’s post-unification transnational historical films feature more universal concerns, including “love, family, lesbianism, cancer and youthful rebellion” (Halle, 2008: 96). However, they are still able to focus on specific German stories, while at the same time using “the language of popular cinema” familiar to international audiences to tell their stories (Halle, 2008: 112). These films can focus on national themes, safe in the knowledge that their use of international filmic devices means they will not alienate viewers (Ibid.). It is also worth noting that, like teamWorx, there are companies in Germany whose directors do not wish to head to America at the first chance, but who are intent on balancing box office and critical success, negotiating the demands of an international film market, and remaining true to their national roots. The film production company X-Filme was set up by producer Stefan Arndt and director Tom Tykwer and has enjoyed international success with films including *Lola Rennt* (1998), *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003), and *Das weiße Band* (2009). X-Filme rejected the 1990s “cinema of consensus” wave of comedies and instead chose to make auteur films “more in the tradition of the American independents,” but which also tackle “really authentic German stories that are set in Germany and are about Germany” (Halle, 2002: 43). Thus, in contrast with the cinema of consensus, teamWorx’s event movies feel German yet

not too German, while dealing with German issues but using a global aesthetic to appeal to foreign audiences as well.

In light of the points noted above, teamWorx could be criticised (and certainly has been) for exploiting serious history merely as a source of material for its melodramatic and derivative romance stories, for making films about the most difficult periods of German history because they always sell, and for jumping on any passing bandwagon simply to improve their viewing figures. For example, *Das Wunder von Berlin* was made when positive films about the GDR were becoming popular, primarily thanks to *Good Bye, Lenin!* Likewise, *Dresden* and *Die Flucht* were produced while Germany was gripped by debates about the depiction of Germans as victims. Hofmann regards the past as a rich storytelling resource just waiting to be mined, or as Gebauer (2004) puts it, "A rich pool for complex stories." Similarly, many critics have noted teamWorx's obsession with ratings and feel its event movies chase higher viewing figures to the detriment of historical accuracy. Hofmann is extremely aware of the importance of ratings and edits each film to target a specific market, often younger viewers (Freitag, 2006). This has led to complaints from several critics. For instance, Rainer Karlsch (2006) wrote of *Dresden* that "Here only one thing is right: the viewing figures." Amory Burchaud (2007) asked the following question about *Die Flucht*: "Is the price of depicting history in this way so high? You get 13 million viewers but they have a partially skewed vision of history in their head?" The undeniable similarities between the majority of teamWorx's event movies, namely romance against an historical backdrop, suggests they are not motivated by a desire to come to terms with these periods of history per se, but are simply searching for new, fashionable backdrops for their conventional narratives.

However, the reverse could also be true. It can be argued that teamWorx employs the conventions of mass entertainment and devices of the so-called cinema of consensus to achieve something Rentschler's unfavoured filmmakers never managed, namely an attempt to come to terms with the past, thereby facing large issues and hot topics head on. Hofmann has crusaded for recognition that television can be just as artistically complex as any other medium, and that quality and popularity need not be mutually exclusive. In his words, "Education and entertainment can never be separated" (quoted in Freitag, 2006). During a speech awarding Hoffman the Schillerpreis der Stadt Mannheim, respected writer Bernhard Schlink (2007) stated that "He insists on the freedom to focus sometimes on ratings and sometimes on art and sometimes to make ratings with art." Similarly, Hofmann sees the melodrama as a way to make history accessible to as wide an audience as possible, including the younger generation, stating that "Where previously didactic, guilt-filled inhibition ruled, now only emotionality is allowed. In this way history becomes

more accessible to a wider audience, and a young one too" (quoted in Falkner, 2007). This perspective reflects a change in attitudes towards the teaching of the National Socialist past. As previously discussed, the emotionalisation of the past is integral to understanding it. Indeed, Hoffman believes this emotionalisation allows viewers to feel and understand characters and events from the past, explaining that "All the stories are constructed in such a way that they lead into the actual historical drama and you experience the drama with the characters" (2010). Finally, it is the use of these emotional devices and a "global aesthetic" that allows teamWorx to showcase its irrefutably German view of the past on the world stage, thereby reasserting a German national voice precisely because of its recourse to conventional, consensual filmmaking practices.

With its event movies on historical subjects, teamWorx has managed to create a new concept of consensus in German film. While using devices from mass-market genre television and cinema, and explicitly taking inspiration from American movie-making (a practice criticised by Rentschler), teamWorx tackles difficult periods of history head on, creating and contributing to debates and proudly representing German history to the rest of the world. These characteristics of event movies do not contradict each other. Rather, it is through their emotionalisation and use of spectacle that these films attract such large audiences, thereby breaking taboos and encouraging debate. It is through the use of a global aesthetic that teamWorx's event movies sell so well abroad, yet they remain specifically German because of their subject matter. Similarly, teamWorx harnesses the trend toward more "amphibious" productions to create a consensus between television and cinema, using cinematic technical and narrative devices to engage viewers, while following the trend of "Histotainment" to deal with serious history and using television's power to reach a much wider audience. In this way, teamWorx is at the forefront of this new consensus in German historical filmmaking.

Notes

Translations from the original German are the author's own.

[1] For instance *Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger* (2006), made by Aspekt Telefilm-Produktion GmbH and Joseph Vilsmaier's *Die Gustloff* (2008), made by UFA Film- und Fernsehproduktion.

[2] The average 2010 market share for ARD is 13% and for ZDF 12.7%. See <<http://www.agf.de/daten/zuschauermarkt/marktanteile>> [Accessed 4 December, 2011].

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