**Wenders, Wim (b. 14 August 1945)**

Wim Wenders is a German filmmaker, author, and photographer, widely regarded as one of the most important directors of the New German Cinema.

Wenders was born in Düsseldorf. Unlike his contemporaries Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Werner Herzog, who received no formal training, Wenders attended the University of Television and Film in Munich. During these years, Wenders also worked as a film critic for a variety of publications, including the daily newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the national magazine *Der Spiegel*. By the time that he graduated in 1970, he had already made several short black and white 16 mm films. These early efforts bear traces of what would become Wenders’s signature style: minimal dialogue, long takes, plot and visual elements borrowed from the American western, and extensive use of rock and roll. In many essays and interviews, Wenders would emphasize his great admiration for Classical Hollywood filmmakers John Ford, Howard Hawks, and Nicholas Ray and his enthusiasm for popular music.

  After a 1973 adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel, *The Scarlet Letter,*Wenders made three low budget “road movies” that won him international acclaim: *Alice in den Städten* (*Alice in the Cities*, 1974), *Falsche Bewegung* (*Wrong Move*, 1975), and *Im Lauf der Zeit* (*Kings of the Road*, 1976). This Road Trilogy began his long-term collaboration with the Dutch cinematographer Robby Müller and with the Austrian playwright Peter Handke, who wrote the script for *Wrong Move*—a modern day update of Goethe’s canonical Bildungsroman, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*). Handke and Wenders would co-author the screenplay for *Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*, 1987), for which he won Best Director at the Cannes Film Festival. Wenders also worked with the American playwright Sam Shepard (*Paris, Texas* [1984], *Don’t Come Knocking* [2005]).

Like many filmmakers associated with the New German Cinema, Wenders borrows extensively from literary sources and from other films. He also uses a range of devices to draw attention to images *within* his films, putting photographs, televisions, and cinema projectors on screen, in order to compel his viewers to reflect critically upon them. Wenders has argued that the Nazi dictatorship had logically lead Germans to mistrust images and stories and characterized the plotless feel of many of his own films as attempts to resist dishonestly manipulating his audience.

Perhaps the strongest theme uniting Wenders’s oeuvre is a sense of masculinity in crisis. His male characters are usually adrift, unable to find fulfilment in their work, or to sustain intimate relationships. Many viewers, including Wenders himself, have traced their shiftlessness to their sense of being part of a “fatherless” generation.

In the latter phase of his career, Wenders has moved away from these postwar German themes. Starting in the 1980s, he began making documentaries. These include *Tokyo-ga*(1985),an homage to the great Japanese director Ozu Yasujirō, *Notebook on Cities and Clothes*(1989), about the Japanese fashion designer Yamamoto Yohji, and *The Buena Vista Social Club* (1999), about a group of musicians in Cuba. He has continued to publish books of writing and photography. Since 1996, he has also been president of the European Film Academy in Berlin.

References and further reading:

Gemünden, G. (1999) *Framed Visions: Popular Culture, Americanization, and the Contemporary German and Austrian Imagination,* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Kolker, R. P. (1993) *The Films of Wim Wenders: the Cinema as Vision and Desire,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenders, W.; Hofmann, M. (2001) *Wim Wenders on Film: Essays and Conversations*, London: Faber & Faber.

List of works:

[Filmography]

*Alice in den Städten* (*Alice in the Cities*) (1974)

*Falsche Bewegung* (*Wrong Move*) (1975)

*Im Lauf der Zeit* (*Kings of the Road*) (1976)

*Tokyo-ga*(1985)

*Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*) (1987)

*Notebook on Cities and Clothes*(1989)

*The Buena Vista Social Club* (1999)

[Books of photography]

(2013) *Places Strange and Quiet*, Hatje Cantz.

(2010) *Once*, D. A. P./Schirmer/Mosel.

(2006) *Pictures from the Surface of the Earth*, *Schirmer/Mosel.*

Paratextual materials:

*Alabama* (1969), a short 16mm film that experiments with many devices that would become signature features of Wenders style, and particularly reflects his fixation on American westerns and American rock and roll music, is available on YouTube.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CFKpdp2Zls]

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