



Last Features (Screen Cultures: German Film and the Visual)

Reinhild Steingröver

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Last Features is the story of forgotten films made during the time of German unification. With leftover GDR funds and under chaotic conditions, a group of young East German filmmakers produced around thirty stylistically diverse films. Most of these films were lost in the political upheaval of the Wende, disappearing until the 2009 Wendeflicks festival in Los Angeles brought them back for an international audience. Now available on DVD, these films provide unique insights into the generational struggle in the DEFA studio, East German youth culture in the 1970s, women directors at DEFA, the relationship between the artist and the state, and the protests of 1989. Last Features focuses in particular on the production group "DaDaeR," the creation of which in 1989 fulfilled a longstanding request by the last generation of DEFA directors for freer production conditions. Drawing on archival research and interviews with the directors, writers, and editors of the films in question, each chapter examines specific films from the last year of DEFA, contextualizing the analysis of these "last features" with a comprehensive discussion of the directors' overall oeuvres, the historical changes in the studio and the country, and the lasting importance of these films today. Reinhild Steingröver is Associate Professor of German and Film Studies in the Department of Humanities at the Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

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