



## Germany

Andrea Dittgen

As part from Til Schweiger's continuing success with yet another lukewarm comedy, the related issues of 3D and digitisation of cinemas shaped German cinema in 2011. While American audiences have become more discerning, Germans have clearly embraced the format despite the higher ticket prices, with 20 per cent of all tickets sold going to 3D films, while on the production side, 3D has become the domain of documentaries and kids entertainment.

The finest example of a 3D film made in Germany was Wim Wenders' **Pina**, an homage to the great German choreographer Pina Bausch. Composed without a story line, Wenders shows her contemporary pieces of performance art carried out by her favourite and closest dancers on stage and, for the first time, also outdoors. The result is a landmark in German film history: effects of remarkable depth in an artificial movie, which still manages to come across as natural. With its 500,000 admissions in Germany alone, the documentary made the top ten of domestic productions for the year.



Werner Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*

For **Cave of Forgotten Dreams** (*Die Höhle der vergessenen Träume*) Werner Herzog also chose 3D to create a unique and exclusive journey through the Chauvet caves in Southern France, capturing the oldest pictures of mankind on the narrow sided rocks. It was rewarded with more than 200,000 admissions in the film's first week.



Christian Ditter's *Vicky and the Treasure of the Gods*

The children's film **Vicky and the Treasure of the Gods** (*Wickie auf großer Fahrt*) by Christian Ditter, the sequel to 2009's *Vicky the Viking*, also went 3D – and even though its effects were far from the technical mastery Wenders and Herzog exhibited, the cute new adventure of the little red-haired Viking boy attracted more than a million viewers.

Four other 3D productions made the cut:

**Berliner Philharmoniker: A Musical Journey in 3D** by Michael Beyer, which documented the famous orchestra's trip to Shanghai with eight 3D/HD cameras; the animated **Laura's Star and the Dream Monsters** (*Lauras Stern und die Traummonster*), which catered to the youngest film goers; the abysmal independent horror thriller **Iron Doors** by Stephan Manuel (a man wakes up, locked in a bank vault, with no way to escape) and the co-production **The**

**Three Musketeers**, filmed all over Germany by Paul W. S. Anderson (1.2 million admissions). Digitisation in Germany is not at the same high level it is in France – even the multiplexes have yet to completely transfer to digital – therefore the German Federal Film Board launched a special programme, first for art-house theatres and smalltown cinemas only, to finance the new technology with €15million, to be followed by €4.5million for multiplexes.



Tim Fehlbaum's **Hell**

The rise of genre films, which began in 2010, led to promising horror films such as Tim Fehlbaum's **Hell**, with Hannah Herzsprung, which surprised the audience with its extraordinarily stylish look. The sun in this post-apocalyptic film is so bright and hot that survival of the fittest becomes the norm, which leads to cannibalism. Acclaimed director Roland Suso Richter set his children's film **Jungle Child** (*Dschungelkind*), based on the book of the same title, in the woods of Papua New Guinea and created an exotic drama about a little German girl caught between warring clans. Other children's films included the sequel



Andreas Dresen's **Stopped on Track**

**Lilly the Witch – The Journey to Mandolan** (*Hexe Lilly – Die Reise nach Mandolan*) by Harald Sicheritz, which was a cross between reality and 2001 Arabian nights, and attracted 650,000 admissions. The animated **Princess Lillifee and the Little Unicorn** (*Prinzessin Lillifee und das kleine Einhorn*) by Hubert Weiland and Ansgar Niebuhr, in which a young girl joins forces with a helpless little unicorn, also attracted 600,000 viewers. In a way, the third comedy in a row by notorious German actor/director Til Schweiger, **Kokowääh**, is a children's film too, thanks to the presence of his daughter, who dominates the story. It ended its run with 4.3 million admissions.



Yasemin Samdereli's **Almanya – Welcome to Germany**

The German-Turkish comedy **Almanya – Welcome to Germany** (*Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland*), which tackled the story of Turkish immigrants in Germany with a welcome mix of intelligent humour and subtlety, became another box-office hit, racking up 1.2 million admissions. Other notable entries were Chris Kraus's beautifully photographed period drama, **Poll**, set on the brink of World War I in an Estonia populated by Russians and Germans alike; Andres Veiel's well-intentioned but muddled **If Not Us, Who?** (*Wer wenn nicht wir?*), about the earliest beginnings of the Red Army Faction; and Andreas Dresen's **Stopped on Track** (*Halt auf freier Strecke*), a harrowingly realistic cancer-drama.

Late in the year, Roland Emmerich, the German king of disaster movies, tried something new with a medium-budget project filmed back home in Germany.



Roland Emmerich's **Anonymous**

**Anonymous** attempts to re-write the history of Shakespeare and his output, which the film argues may have been written by another.

In 2011, the market share of domestic productions maintained the level of 20 per cent, while the box office for the first six month went up to 61.5 million admissions (up two per cent on 2010, which was already a good year). Sales reached €453million, second only to 2002's figures.

After the death of Bernd Eichinger, the leading German producer of the last thirty years, it wasn't long before another producer stepped up to the mark. Stefan Arndt raised €100million to shoot the literary adaption **Cloud Atlas** (*Der Wolkenatlas*), the biggest German production ever, with Tom Tykwer and Andy and Lana Wachowski co-directing. The film, starring Tom Hanks, Susan Sarandon and Halle Berry, will hopefully hit cinemas around the world in 2012.

### The year's best films

**Pina** (Wim Wenders)

**Stopped on Track** (Andreas Dresen)

**Hell** (Tim Fehlbaum)

**Cave of Forgotten Dreams** (Werner Herzog)

**Almanya – Welcome to Germany** (Yasemin Samdereli)

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### German Films Service & Marketing GmbH,

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### Münchener Stadtmuseum/Filmmuseum,

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### New German Film Producers Association,

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Wim Wenders' **Pina**

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