

# Festive Premiere of the First German Movie (October 16, 1946)

## Abstract

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Wolfgang Staudte, the director of *Die Mörder sind unter uns* [English title: *Murderers Among Us*], made the film not only to reckon with Germany's past, but also with his own. Staudte had acted in the film *Jud Süß*, considered to be one of the most notorious antisemitic pieces of propaganda that the Nazi regime ever produced. After the war, some people who had been involved with the film stood trial as part of the denazification process; most insisted that they had only participated in the film under substantial pressure and even threat. Even so, their involvement in a piece of propaganda that had certainly contributed to the inflaming of antisemitic sentiment in Nazi Germany would surely have led to a personal moral reckoning for many, including Staudte.

## Source

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### *Murderers Among Us*

#### Festive Premiere of the First German Movie

DEFA, which produced this first German movie made since May 8, 1945, invited a select public to attend the premiere at the German State Opera in Berlin. In attendance were a large number of people from the film business—directors, actors and actresses, authors and many personalities from Berlin's cultural life, as well as members of the occupying forces. After the latest newsreel *Der Augenzeuge* (The Eyewitness), as well as a musical prelude and a prolog by Erich Weinert, who briefly outlined the significance of this day of rebirth for German cinema, we watched Wolfgang Staudte's film *Murderers Among Us*.

We watched a serious film, as serious as our everyday lives, a film in keeping with the profound seriousness of the German situation, which after scarcely a year and a half is already showing worrying signs of oblivion—oblivion that could pave the way for new catastrophes.

This film, whose idea, screenplay and directing are the work of a young director who understands his craft but also the psychology of our time, catapults us, and all those who are especially affected, out of this oblivion. This film was made by people who experienced the human and political catastrophe on the deepest level, but who at the same time have drawn the hard and necessary conclusions. This film is not amusing, even if the cinematography offers delightful and charming inspirations that lighten the earnest performances; it is a very thoughtful film drawn from reality that encourages us to reflect and still more to empathize. Its great strength is its emotional quality.

A detailed review of this truly splendid effort and highly promising start for a new German film industry will be published in the next issue.

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