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What actually is a good film?

The question of quality is a very touchy one. A film is made by people. There is an author and a director – sometimes one person – and there are actors. A film-maker must know exactly what he is doing, and he must also have something to say.

In Switzerland, there is nothing like Cinecittà, Hollywood or Babelsberg. Have Swiss films any chance at all from the professional point of view?

Speaking frankly, there are too many film-makers in Switzerland, making too many pointless films – documentaries excluded. There are too many people fighting for a cake which is much too small. In the last twenty years inexperienced people have been given opportunities to make feature films too soon. Most of them have fallen on their faces badly before both the critics and the public. This problem cannot be solved by means of film schools alone, for these produce unemployed film-makers too, and many of their graduates simply enter television.

How would you define a successful film-maker?

Film-making needs passion. A film-maker is giving his life to his film. It is a matter of love, but to this we have to add the ominous word, talent. And another: patience. I sit at my writing desk more often than I stand behind a

camera. You also have to be prepared to take risks. In this very expensive profession, you must be able to take more responsibility on your shoulders than in almost any other field.

The film which has impressed you the most, Mr. Lyssy?

There isn't one. I refuse to establish a list of that kind. But a cinema father figure who has influenced me greatly is Billy Wilder, who incidentally was actually born in the same year as my father. Wilder showed that a film – whether a comedy, a thriller or a melodrama – could entertain and put over a message at the same time.

What message would you like to put over?

I think as an anti-fascist. I try to tell stories keeping this basic attitude in mind. I have hit my target if people feel a little bit changed when they come out of the cinema.

What are you working on at present?

My next film is called 'Swiss Paradise'. It takes place in the United States in a fictitious place called New Schwyz, and it tells the story of how we Swiss, who seal ourselves off from each other, wish, can and should open ourselves up to others . . . ■

"Alpine Fire"
by Fredi M. Murer,
a successful
Swiss film.
(Photos: zvg)



The 50th Locarno Festival

Films in the piazza

Where can you find evening after evening 7,000 people under the stars being enchanted by moving pictures shown on a giant screen 26 metres wide

Fred Zaugg*

by 14 metres high? And where is a festival of the seventh art made available to the population in the main square, the Piazza Grande, right in the middle of town? In Locarno, naturally.

The Locarno International Festival, to be held for the fiftieth time on August 6–16, is the second oldest after Venice. It has the reputation of being the most original as well as the most informal, although with about 150,000 partici-

pants it is only the sixth biggest in the world.

The Locarno Film Festival started in the gardens of the Nobelhotel Albergo Grande. In 1971, it moved to the Piazza. From the very outset, Locarno wrote movie history. Among the prize winners at the first festival in 1946 were René Clair's American film, 'And Then There Were None' and Sergej M. Eisenstein's 'Ivan Grozny' (Ivan the Terrible). Since that time, many film-makers from all over the world have started their careers in Locarno, for the festival has always paid particular attention to films by young directors and films from little-known and new film countries.

According to tradition, during the jubilee festival the future-oriented international competition amongst 16 to 18 of the most important films will still be the

biggest part. But it goes without saying that with justified pride Locarno will this year be looking back on its past. A section entitled '50+1 Years of American Films' is planned, in which well-known contemporary film directors will select important films from the USA which were not sufficiently appreciated when they came out. Publication of a book, a hiking event with stopovers throughout Switzerland, and a Locarno Federal Festival, which will amount to a Festival Birthday Festival, will also take place.

The festival family will be the same, or so it is hoped, growing bigger yet getting younger and younger all the time. For 51 years Locarno has given films a future (in 1951 there was no festival, so this is the 50th). The jubilee edition will surely demonstrate the festival's ability of moving with the times. ■

* Fred Zaugg is the film critic of the Berne daily, 'Der Bund'.