

## **Film offers more than great landscape shots.**

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Thomas Hönemann has set up on the Net a digital monument to the Heimat Trilogy

**Rhein-Hunsrück.** The broadcast of Heimat 1 in 1984 fascinated Thomas Hönemann from Rietberg in East Westphalia so much that he wanted to set up, in his own words, a “digital monument” to the epic. His excellent website [www.heimat123.de](http://www.heimat123.de) is a must for everyone who is looking for detailed information on Edgar Reitz’ Trilogy. Our paper’s forum for views on Heimat 3 induced him to make a comment that we reprint here:

Opinions about Heimat 3 are divided, that is evident not only from the countless comments of your readers here, but I myself see it too every day in the reactions on my website for the Heimat Trilogy. I would like to concentrate the discussion and the forming of opinion around two aspects that in my view are worth considering.

Firstly: Heimat 3 was produced under massive restrictions and encroachments on Edgar Reitz’ artistic freedom by the public corporations which were co-sponsors. Not to mention the unspeakable cuts that, as Eva Maria Schneider has already pointed out [in the paper’s forum mentioned above; E.M.S. is the actor who played Marie-Goot in HEIMAT, Th. H.], reduced the TV version to a shadow of the original film, but also the massive influence exercised by the television authorities on the filmscript, originally laid out in eleven parts. In their fixation on the ratings, the TV bosses not only did a great wrong to Reitz and to us as viewers, but also shot a fatal own goal: so many confirmed friends of Heimat and DZH may have turned away from it, since the (crucial) first film in particular, on account of the narrowly drawn conditions, was not strongly enough rooted in the substance of the much loved Reitzian narrative tradition. And the interest of viewers, who did not know Heimat and DZH, could hardly be aroused by the perforce very hastily sketched outlines of the characters. Had Reitz been allowed to follow his own ideas, especially had he been given time, we could now be discussing the outcome in quite another way.

Secondly: In Heimat 3 Reitz is not doing anything different from what he did in Heimat and DZH. He is drawing a portrait of people and their life situations in a particular time period. In Heimat 3 this is the decade of the 1990s, a period that is still very present in our memory. So Edgar Reitz, more than in the past, holds up to us a mirror, which it is certainly not always easy to bear looking into. But I hold Reitz’ picture of the nineties to be in no way at fault, when he depicts a nation which, from the euphoria of reunification and the World Championship, is falling more and more into a vortex of pessimism, lethargy and resignation. I think this makes his stories just as original and believable as they ever were: the upheavals in the East, immigration, company bankruptcies, greed, narrow-minded politicians, broken marriages, sickness, the Church’s loss of meaning, and again and again the search for a morsel of happiness.

Reitz makes use of the material of soap opera, but in no way of its style and method. Reitz has the courage to use as themes the cares and problems of our time, be it the increasing lack of direction and perspective, the creeping decay of values, or the loss of a nest in society that we call “Heimat”. And thereby he lays a finger on our most sensitive wounds. But is Heimat 3 a bad film because of that? It is surely not by chance that Heimat 3, in the Netherlands for example (where by the way it ran in the unmutilated version), has been received in an entirely different spirit, and judged in quite another way.

In short: Heimat 3 is for me a film that from the ground up is lovingly conceived and produced, whose qualities reach far beyond “pretty landscape photography”.