

Henry Fonda for President Pressestimmen international (Stand: 21.3.2024)

PRAISE FOR "HENRY FONDA FOR PRESIDENT"

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"The monumental film of the edition: the one for which this festival will be remembered because it will leave an immanent record in memory. It is titled *Henry Fonda For President*." (Jose Luis Loza, *La Voz de Galicia*)

"Deserved acclaim for a near unique piece of cinema." (Meredith Taylor, *Filmuforia*)

"I have no hesitation in stating that it is one of the most beautiful biographical (and not only) documentaries seen in recent years. A highly cultured film and actually also light and entertaining." (Matteo Galli, *Close Up*)

"An ambitious and rich work that combines film history and political analysis." (Diego Lerer, *Micropsia*)

"In three exciting and inspiring hours of film, [Horwath] not only delivers a portrait of the outstanding actor, he also unfolds the complex and ambivalent history of the United States." (Jens Hinrichsen, *Der Tagesspiegel*)

"Horwath crafts an elaborate cinematic testimonial to both Fonda – a president who never came to be – and the US." (Tara Karajica, *Eye for Film*)

"A triumphal work." (Benedikt Guntentaler, *Artechock*)

Auszüge englischsprachig bzw. ins Englische übersetzt

"I have no hesitation in stating that it is one of the most beautiful biographical (and not only) documentaries seen in recent years. A highly cultured film and actually also light and entertaining. (...) What makes this documentary **truly exemplary**? The presence of a triple narrative line that is handled and intertwined with absolute ease, without – this is the main flaw of many documentaries – the creator being overwhelmed by the mountain of available material, but dominating it with great mastery." (Matteo Galli, *CLOSE-UP*)

"On the final day of this unsatisfactory Berlinale, **the monumental film of the edition appeared. The one for which this festival will be remembered because it will leave an immanent record in memory. It is titled *Henry Fonda For President*** and it is a cinematographic essay on the unrepeatability of the actor as a figure in which the best soul of North America beat. Because the film is a cinephile approach to Fonda. But, in a much more complex layer of reading, what is built around his aura and his myth is a detailed political history of the American 20th century and its antecedents. Because in deepening of who he was and how he sculpted his career as an ethical and spiritual code of the land of the free and the just, *Henry Fonda For President* first chooses the actor's roles that intersect with the birth of the nation and the conquest of the west. John Ford printed the legend, and Horwath is in charge of putting things in their place with Ford's nuclear actor." (Jose Luis Loza, *LA VOZ DE GALICIA*)

„*Henry Fonda for President* may be a heady film essay about a troubled nation, but it’s also **a cinematic delight that contains more than a few moments of unexpected transcendence that only movies, and the magical art of editing, can provide.**” (Sean Erickson, INDIEKINO)

“One thing that unfortunately happens to me less and less often is to watch an essay film and be overcome with the same feeling that I get when I read a book. Namely, **an encounter with a text** (in the most generous sense of the term) **that opens up in front of me like a bouquet of both lightning-fast and meticulous, neat thoughts which surprise with each argumentative turn** – not just as a demonstration of a hypothesis, but **a sample of sophisticated thinking and rhetoric, able to cross and connect both history and the contemporary, the political and the aesthetic, the thematic and the formal.** Alexander Horwath's *Henry Fonda for President* **reawakened all those feelings – and I dare say it's one of the event films of this decade.** No other film of its kind has impressed me so much since Thomas Heise's *Heimat ist ein Raum aus Zeit* – not just because both films exceed the symbolic three-hour mark, but because they are real history lessons. They combine the archive and the immediate image, the absence and the presence, the past and the present, with much formal elegance. (...) With *Henry Fonda for President*, [Horwath] not only cements his life's work in the service of cinema, but almost instantly joins its canon. This debut film, released after almost four decades of career (!), summarizes through its central figure not only the 120-and-a-bit years of cinema, but the entire history of the United States of America itself.” (Flavia Dima, SCENA 9)

“**As the Berlinale is coming to an end, Henry Fonda was the best.** (...) There was a lot of cinema to highlight in Berlin that didn't make it to the red carpet at the Berlinale Palast. *Henry Fonda for President* (Forum), a documentary by Austrian Alexander Horwath, is certainly one of the most important cases.” (Francisco Ferreira, EXPRESSO)

“**An ambitious and rich work** (it lasts three hours) that combines film history and political analysis, *Henry Fonda for President* works as a documentary about the career of the famous Hollywood actor with a focus on the progressive political positions of many of his characters and, by extension, of the interpreter. The starting point may seem capricious but it is not...” (Diego Lerer, MICROPSIA)

“What *Henry Fonda For President* is most definitely not is a documentary on the level of a BluRay extra which is what most documentaries that look at iconic figures resemble these days and are devoid of **ambition or intellect; two things that this film has in spades.** (...) Horwath has had a long career in the trenches as what Werner Herzog would describe as a ‘true soldier’ of cinema. With this, his debut film, he has stepped out from the dusty confines of academia and bravely put his head above the parapet and opened up to eventual brickbats by the deluded and **most deserved acclaim for a near unique piece of cinema.** The film may be titled *Henry Fonda For President*, but it is as much about Fonda as it is about the American century. America is the force field of the film and is always waiting to be rediscovered. (...) Bertolt Brecht once said, ‘Unhappy the land that is in need of heroes’, that is what stayed with me after over three hours sitting with this epic piece of work. Both then and more importantly the present.” (Meredith Taylor, FILMUFORIA)

“*Henry Fonda for President* owes a lot to James Benning or to Thom Andersen (that voice-over capable of combining erudition, poetry and irony), even though Horwath insists that his film speaks about the United States from outside, from another cultural tradition. (...) Horwath knows how to take advantage of everything, even the most unexpected anecdotes or relationships. **After the critic and the archivist, a major filmmaker has been born.**” (Jaime Pena, CAIMAN – CUADERNOS DE CINE)

“Through a punctilious study of many of Fonda’s films, Horwath creates a **comprehensive canvas that encompasses both the past and the present of the US.** Ironically enough, Fonda’s disillusion in America is conjured up precisely by the magic of cinema, and this is exactly how **Horwath crafts an elaborate cinematic testimonial to both Fonda – a president who never came to be – and the US.** (...) An intriguing lesson in and interpretation of film history and of the life of a major Hollywood icon, *Henry Fonda for President* takes us on a journey to an imaginary conglomerate of people, periods and places called ‘The United States of Fonda.’ Film buffs and fellow film historians will find this well-researched unconventional retelling of Fonda’s life a **very enjoyable watch.**” (Tara Karajica, EYE FOR FILM)

“Documentaries on cinephile topics, such as restorations of film classics, are usually a balm within the festival programming. Most of the time these types of documentaries tend to be formally square, merely educational and do not add much, but **other times a miracle happens and some end up being transformed into a great film. As is the case with *Henry Fonda for President*,** by critic Alexander Horwath. (...) Horwath is a brilliant essayist who associates ideas in an always original way, although sometimes scattered and capricious, but without ever falling into the biographical obviousness of this type of work. In the film, which is not all archives and memories of classic films, he is accompanied by the experimental filmmaker Michael Palm (author of *Cinema Futures* and *Low Definition Control*), to add images (some as arbitrary as they are beautiful) to **a film that is real cinema, in the good and true sense of the expression.**” (Marcelo Alderete, A SALA LLENA)

“**The most educational film of the Berlinale** was the three-hour documentary epic *Henry Fonda for President* shown at the Forum.” (Stas Tyrkin, STYLE RBC)

“Generational transition also figures in near the end of another movie-themed documentary at Berlin, *Henry Fonda for President*, directed by the Austrian film curator Alexander Horwath. The title comes from a 1976 episode of *Maude* in which Bea Arthur's character is determined to get Fonda, who appears in the episode as himself, drafted as a candidate. The episode, Horwath's documentary notes, aired two weeks before *Taxi Driver* opened, and the societal changes as Fonda's Hollywood gave way to Scorsese's are among the many subjects of **this idea-rich three-hour film.** (...) Broadly speaking, *Henry Fonda for President* uses Fonda as an avatar for exploring how America has viewed itself.” (Ben Kenigsberg, ROGER EBERT.COM)

Auszüge deutschsprachig

„*Henry Fonda for President* ist keine schöne Biopic-Reportage, sondern ein im Wortsinn mehrstimmiges, trotz des Chronologiegerüsts oft abbiegendes Essayroadmovie, **kurzweilig, uneitel, so klug wie unangestrengt politisch aktuell.**“ (Tilman Schumacher, CARGO)

„Das Kino als Reenactment, in dem Fiktion und Realität verbunden werden, die Vergangenheit befragt wird, um die Gegenwart zu verstehen. **Diesen Ansatz setzt der Film meisterhaft um.** (...) Dabei zeigt sich: Das Kino ist – in sämtlichen Formen – mehr als eine Annäherung an das Reale, es zeigt immer mehr als da ist, lässt das Unmögliche erahnen. **Ein triumphales Werk.**“ (Benedikt Guntentaler, ARTECHOCK)

„**Von unbändiger Assoziationslust getrieben: eine Zentrifuge des politisch-kulturellen Weltwissens,** eine Illustration auch der Ahnung, dass alles, wenn man es nur genau genug betrachtet, mit allem zusammenhängt.“ (Stefan Grisseemann, PROFIL)

„Mit seinem Essayfilm *Henry Fonda for President* gräbt sich der Wiener Filmhistoriker Alexander Horwath tief in die fiktionalen Sedimente der US-Kultur ein. **In drei auf- und anregenden Filmstunden liefert [er] nicht nur ein Porträt des Ausnahmeschauspielers, er faltet auch die ambivalente Geschichte der USA auf.**“ (Jens Hinrichsen, DER TAGESSPIEGEL)

„*Henry Fonda for President* **wird selbst zum Argument für die Form des filmischen Essays.** (...) In dem Moment, in dem man selbst noch einmal Fondas entschlossenen Gang in *Früchte des Zorns* auf der großen Leinwand sieht, die schockierend babyblauen Augen als Bösewicht bei Leone, den Schweiß auf seiner Stirn in *Fail Safe*, geht man jeden von Horwaths Gedankengängen mit.“ (Katrin Doerksen, CULTUREMAG)

„**Kino, Leben, Zeitgeschichte: Alexander Horwaths großartiger Essayfilm *Henry Fonda for President*** im Forum-Programm.“ (Frank Arnold, EPD FILM)

„Das nonchalante ‚Nein‘ deutet der Filmessay von Alexander Horwath **in einem komplexen, keine Minute langweilenden Bilder- und Gedankenstrom** als eins der zahlreichen Beispiele für Henry Fondas charakteristisches Understatement, mit dem er nicht zuletzt in fünf Filmen als amerikanischer Präsident zur Projektionsfläche für die Sehnsucht nach Integrität und Glaubwürdigkeit wurde.“ (Claudia Lenssen, TAZ)

„**Selten war ein Geschichtsunterricht so spannend wie dieser Film!**“ (Max-Peter Heyne, KULTURA)

„**Mein persönlicher Lieblingsfilm der Berlinale 2024** heißt: *Henry Fonda for President*. In dem über dreistündigen Denkmal charakterisiert der Österreicher Alexander Horwath mit Hilfe der Filme von Henry Fonda auf einmalige Weise die USA. Mit Hilfe der sezierend gründlichen Recherche durch Regina Schlagnitweit und in Zusammenarbeit mit dem für Kamera, Montage und Ton verantwortlichen Michael Palm ist Horwath **ein Meisterwerk** gelungen.“ (Peer Kling, FILMPOST)