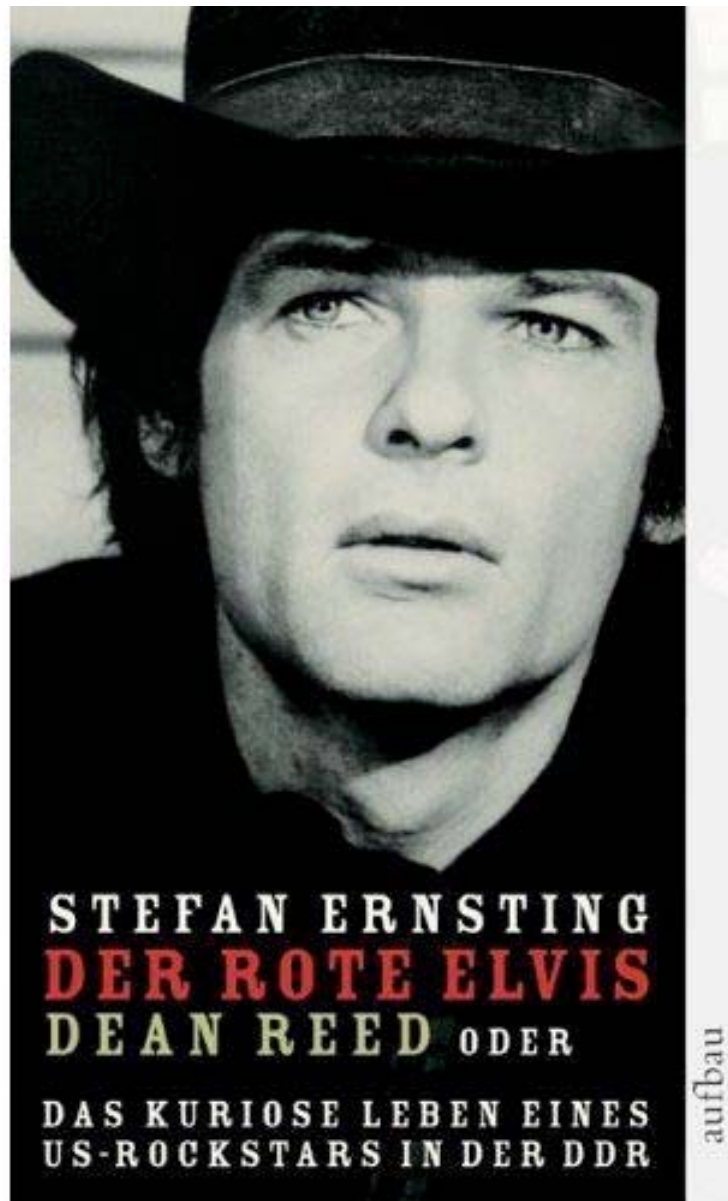


BOOK INFO

Stefan Ernsting : The Red Elvis or The strange story of Dean Reed, socialisms biggest popstar

**Stefan Ernsting**

**The Red Elvis or  
The strange story of Dean Reed,  
socialisms biggest popstar**



Publishers:

Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, Berlin, Germany, 2004, Hardcover  
(22,50 € ISBN 3-378-01073-8)

Aufbau Verlag, Berlin, Germany, 2006, Paperback  
(7,95 € ISBN 3-7466-2261-1)

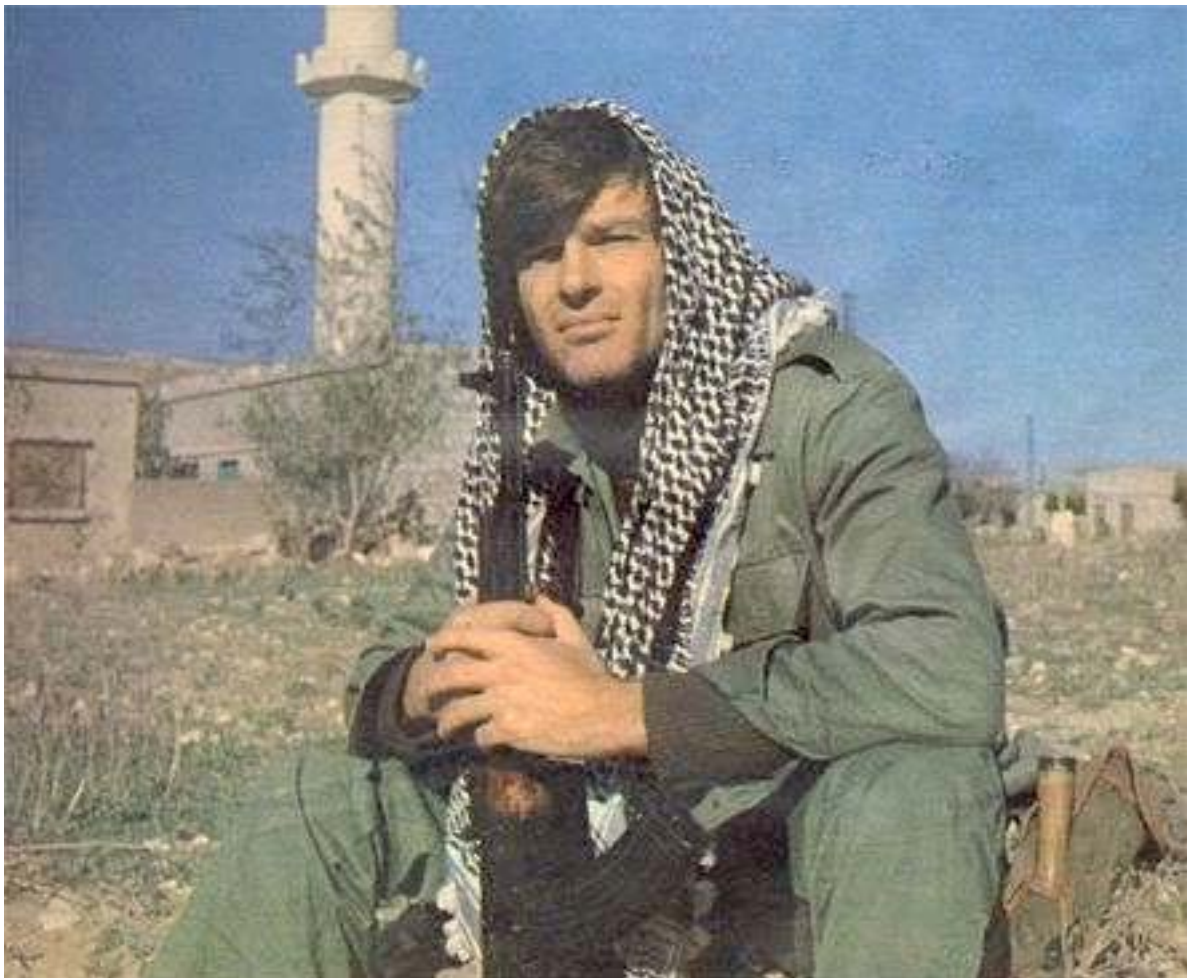
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“From the Berlin Wall to Siberia – Dean Reed from Colorado is the biggest star in popmusic. Reed is called the most prominent American after President Ford and Henry Kissinger by Russians and other East-Europeans.”  
(People’s Magazine, 1976)

On the 17th of June 1986 a man is dragged out of a lake in the outskirts of East Berlin. He turns out to be the American singer and actor Dean Reed, one of the most mysterious legends of global pop culture during Cold War times. Dean Reed became the protagonist in the former eastern bloc’s favorite conspiracy theory and his myth survived until today. In the Western World hardly anybody ever heard of him, although Dean Reed once had been a famous star in South America and the Eastern Bloc.

Dean Reed was a good friend of Salvador Allende, Daniel Ortega and Yasser Arafat, throughout the whole world he protested against military regimes or the Vietnam war and mobilised for universal peace. He appeared in 20 movies, produced 17 LPs and gave concerts in 32 countries. Dean Reed acted in spaghetti westerns in Italy, he was the first US-American to tour across the Soviet Union, he sang country songs on GDR television and posed for photographs in Lebanon with a machine gun in his hand.



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„The red Elvis“ composes the mosaic of a life in-between tragedy and success, political engagement and naivety. As a young man from a small town in Colorado he moved to Hollywood to record a handful of singles. „Our Summer Romance“ conquered the charts in South America. Dean Reed was a cowboy and an entertainer, he was admired like a teen idol and a heartthrob, he was a freedom fighter and a rebel, who travelled around the globe with endless energy – thereby not only challenging his own limits, but also the boundaries of the contemporary map of ideologies. When he moved to the GDR in 1972, Dean Reed was a celebrated star of socialism. He was a political idealist who enjoyed simple entertainment, a showman, who lived in the socialist GDR, a womanizer who sought for affinity.



Dean Reed remains a phenomenon and his death has kept amateur detectives busy ever since 1986. The Stasi claimed, Reed accidentally drowned after hitting his head when he was trying to wash his hands after having had a little accident with his car. East Germany's Head of state Erich Honecker personally supervised the investigation and glossed over the real story. The exact details of Dean Reed's death remained unknown. Crime didn't exist under socialism. Nobody in the east believed the official version. Rumors about a mysterious last letter and a wet job carried out by either CIA, KGB, Mossad or Stasi started to spread at the same time.

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“The Red Elvis” is the first complete biography of Dean Reed with striking new facts about his mysterious death. The book is based on three years of research and interviews with former friends and colleagues of Dean Reed and Ex-officials of the GDR who used Dean Reed for their state-propaganda, including his second wife Wiebke, Peter-Michael Diestel (formerly minister of interior in the GDR in 1990), Egon Krenz, last state-leader of the GDR and former head of the youth-organisation FDJ, Eberhard Fensch, formerly in charge of East-German TV-entertainment and also a former friend of Reed. The author also managed to get hold of large parts of Dean Reeds lost Stasi-files, personal documents and his last letter which was locked in the personal safe of East Germanys former state-leader Erich Honecker until 1989.

„The Red Elvis“ got a lot of attention and great reviews when it came out in Germany. Please check out the german info for a complete list of reviews with quotes.

The book is accompanied by a CD („The red Elvis“, Bear Family Records) and a documentary, directed by Leopold Grün, distributed by Neue Visionen and produced by Totho Productions. A dvd with lots of extra-material will be released in early 2008.

In 2007, Tom Hanks has announced a movie about Dean Reed for Dreamworks in 2004. He blocked Reed’s widow Renate Blume and hist first wife and daughter in California for any kind of interview. Stefan Ernsting and Leopold Grün had been working on the project together for two years at this point. Hanks never returned their phone calls.

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### **THE RED ELVIS – ROCKSTAR, COWBOY, SOCIALIST (Documentary, Germany, 2007)**

Director: Leopold Grün

Producer/Photographer: Thomas Janze

Music: Monomango (Soundtrack „Los Revolucionarios“ available on iTunes)

Editor: Dirk Uhlig

Vfx: Nomann Petkau

Idea and consulting: Stefan Ernsting

Produced by Totho Productions

DigiBeta/HDV, 90 Minutes

The film has been enabled by the support of Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg and DEFA foundation. Further support came from Sony Deutschland GmbH.

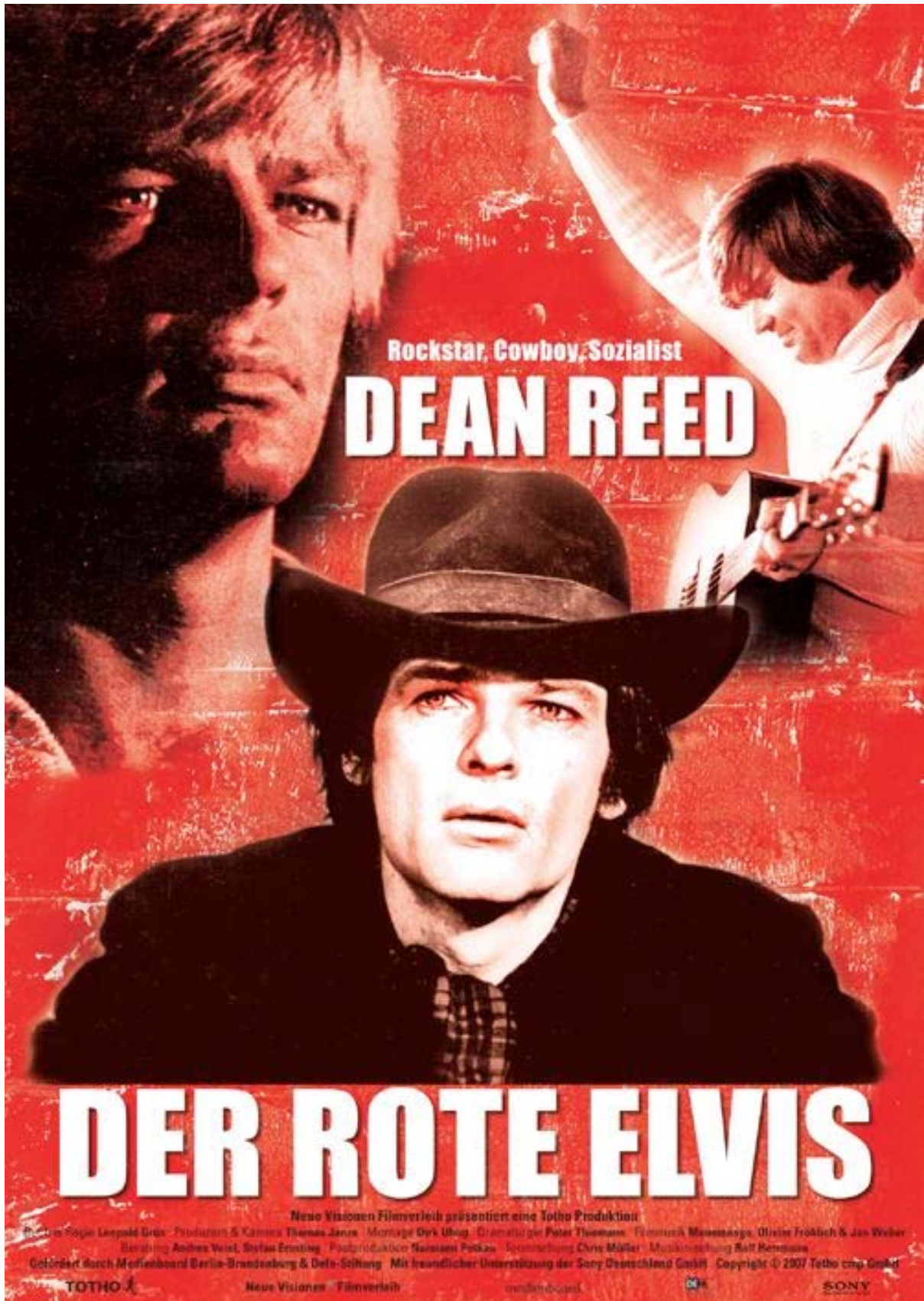
The movie is not a biography like the book. Leopold Grün portrays Dean Reed by carefully balancing the different episodes. Among others Isabel Allende Bussi, Armin Mueller-Stahl and GDR director Günter Reisch express their experiences with this fascinating rebel. „The Red Elvis“ is a heartfelt, but at the same time also critical documentary about an exceptional phenomenon, trapped between success and tragedy, between political engagement and naivety. Furthermore, the unique soundtrack makes the memory of the „Red Elvis“ utopia not only sensitively tangible, but also shows its emotional liveliness.

The documentary premiered in the „Panorama“ section of the 57th International Film Festival Berlin (Berlinale 2007), where it got raving reviews from every major media in Germany plus a lot of international ones („Variety“, „Guardian“, „The Times“, „Svenska Dagbladet“, „La Nacion“, „La Guachaca“...). Germany's no. 1 news program „Tagesthemen“, BBC Radio 2 and NPR did long specials.



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Poster for the Documentary

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## LINKS

Spiegel International: Dean Reed, The Iron Curtain Elvis

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,466847,00.html>

[www.theredelvis.com](http://www.theredelvis.com)

[www.myspace.com/theredelvis](http://www.myspace.com/theredelvis)

[www.Totho.de](http://www.Totho.de)

[www.Deanreed.de](http://www.Deanreed.de)

All Reviews

<http://deanreed.de/ueberdean/totho.html#presse>

## INTERNATIONAL SCREENINGS

57th International Film Festival Berlin (Berlinale)  
February 2007

4th Planete Doc Review, Warsaw  
11.-20.05.2007

29. Moscow International Film Festival  
21.-30.06.2007

Film Festival Athen  
20.-30.09.2007

Festival deutschsprachiger Filme Prag, Brünn  
04.-12.10.2007

12e Édition du festival du cinéma allemand, Paris  
10.-16.10.2007

MOFFOM. Music on Film - Film on Music, Prag  
18.10.-22.10.2007

Deutsche Filmwoche Rom in Zusammenarbeit mit German Films  
21.10.2007

STARZ Denver International Film Festival  
08.-18.11.2007

German Films Go North! - Kopenhagen  
26.-29.11.2007

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International Film Festival Turin 23.11.-01.12.2007

International Film Festival Bratislava  
30.11.-08.12.2007

Tallinn Black Nights International Film Festival  
30.11.-09.12.2007

Goethe Institut Washington  
10.12.2007

Goethe Institut San Francisco  
Filmfestival Berlin & Beyond 10.-16.01.2008