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# **Die Grosse Ekstase Des Bildschnitzers Steiner**

**(The Great Ecstasy of the Wood-  
carver Steiner)**  
**(WEST GERMAN-COLOR)**

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Berlin, July 6.

A Werner Herzog Production. Written and directed by Werner Herzog. Camera, (color), Joerg Schmidt-Reitwein; music, Popol Vuh. Reviewed at Berlin Film Fest (Forum, noncompeting), July 5, '75. Running time: 45 MINS.

Cast: Walter Steiner.

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Werner Herzog's approach to cinema is to take people seriously and integrate their vision into the make-up of a film. In his docu, "The Great Ecstasy of the Woodcarver Steiner," the subject is Walter Steiner, a woodcarver from Switzerland, and his great ecstasy is the encounter with fear in the precarious sport of ski-jumping. Made for the TV series "On the Border," Herzog focuses on the meaning of fear and a man's concept of freedom realized on the borderline of human frailty.

The docu is divided into quiet and tense moments that offer contrasting views to both the man and the sport. Steiner tells of his youth and a pet raven he had to kill, because it suddenly could not fly and the other birds picked on it. It reflects his own philosophy in challenging world jumping records, and the thirst of crowds demanding even greater feats of daring. Steiner falls, but returns to jump again to face his fear and maintain the freedom of a man briefly alone in space.

The jumping shots in slow motion are extraordinary, far above the cut of the typical sport coverage lensing. Herzog's own commentary pays tribute to the man as a person and an athlete, without in any way being condescending or superficial (the unpardonable sin of most sport shows). The visual ecstasy of the viewer is given full support in many memorable lyrical images not soon to be forgotten. —*Holl*.