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# **Albert — Warum?**

**(Albert — Why?)**

**(WEST GERMAN-B&W-16m)**

Hof, Oct. 28.

A Munich Film & Television Academy diploma film. Features entire cast. Written and directed by Josef Roedl. Camera, Karlheinz Gschwind; sound, Hans Roedl; assistant, Angela Kifmann. Reviewed at Hof Film Fest. Oct. 28, '78. Running time: 115 MINS.

Albert..... Fritz Binner  
His Father..... Michael Eichenseer  
Hans..... Georg Schiessl  
Eva..... Elfriede Bleisteiner

The highlight of the Hof Film Festival, Josef Roedl's "Albert — Why?" is a 16m diploma pic financed on a low budget by the Munich Film & Television Academy and lensed in

the small village of Darshofen/Oberpfalz in Bavaria near Regensburg, where the young helmer was born and raised. Roedl worked two years on the two-hour pic, using lay-actors from the village playing themselves and a small, intimate team of friends forming the production crew.

The title refers to a hulking giant of a man, a gentle soul who stutters when he speaks and can barely control the movements of his gangling body — he may or may not be slightly retarded, but in any case he is treated like an outsider, one who has spent some time in a "nut-house." Strangely enough, he has the movements and countenance of a Boris Karloff, but in fact he symbolically stands for the typical dimwit common to village life and city neighborhoods. This is a true story.

Pic begins with Albert released from a mental asylum and picked up at the railroad station by his father with the farm tractor and trailer; his problem was drinking rather than "madness," caused principally by being an outsider in a cold, indifferent world. The main thread of the story deals with Albert's relationship to his family, relatives, and villagers, some detailed more than others in viewing him as a social misfit. Albert, however, is not too dumb to know that his gestures of kindness are returned with mockery and pranks, particularly by the young to whose company he gravitates for some kind of companionship and understanding.

He also understands that, during his absence in the asylum, his aging father has signed over the farm to a family relative — and his cared-for pets are no longer there. In protest Albert refuses to live at home, taking quarters instead in a kind of chicken-coop where he keeps rabbits. Now more of an outsider than before, he become the village clown although some relief comes with "playing house" with small children. He takes to drinking again, is tantalized one day by a girl who bares her breasts to him, becomes more and more isolated — then hangs himself with a rope to the church bell which tolls his merciful passing from this world.

This is a document, not a fiction film nor a documentary. It tells the true story of Fritz Binner who plays the lead role himself and, indeed, died shortly after completing the film by drinking himself to death. Helmer Roedl was one of his few friends (thus the title), who shared a desk with him in his youth at the village school. The idea for the film came naturally and was developed slowly over a period of time (the dubbing of Binner's voice was necessary at the film's completion). It's as though often the camera just happens to be "there" as a scene takes place with little or no cuts or editing.

"Albert" deserves some kind of festival or forum to launch it, but it's so well done that it could find its way into a German Film Week and thereafter get recognition by film buffs nourished on Bresson and Dreyer, as well as the Flaherty tradition of the story-documentary. Here, too, is solid evidence that shortly the young directors in West Germany will be crowding Werner Herzog and others for a share of the spotlight. —Holl.