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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE--

WERNER HERZOG, CONTROVERSIAL WEST GERMAN FILM

DIRECTOR IS SUBJECT OF LES BLANK DOCUMENTARY "BURDEN OF DREAMS"

A NON FICTION TELEVISION PRESENTATION FRIDAY, JUNE 11, OVER PBS

Set in the Peruvian Amazon, "Burden of Dreams" is Les Blank's revealing new documentary about Werner Herzog, the controversial West German director whose films include "Aguirre, The Wrath of God," "Kasper Hauser," "Stroszek," and "Nosferatu." Amidst the terrors of the South American jungle Herzog struggled for nearly five years to film a surreal action-adventure called "Fitcarraldo." Blank, who spent many weeks filming Herzog during two separate trips to the Amazon, has captured the director's death-defying determination to complete his work.

"Burden of Dreams" will be televised on the NON FICTION TELEVISION series Friday, June 11 at 9pm over the Public Broadcasting Service.

Starring Klaus Kinski and Claudia Cardinale, with a cast of 500 local Indians, "Fitcarraldo" is the story of a turn-of-the-century European visionary who has a steamship pulled over a mountain to reach a rubber field and make enough money to realize his dream: opening an

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*Please consult your local listings for area broadcast time and date.

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opera house in the Amazon town of Iquitos and bringing Caruso to perform there.

Despite a series of production nightmares, including torrential rains, outbreaks of dysentery, the loss of leading actors and the outbreak of war between Peru and Ecuador in the region where they were planning to film, Herzog vows, "If I abandon this project, I would be a man without dreams, and I don't want to live like that. I live my life or I end my life with this project."

Les Blank's documentary shows Herzog's increasing frustration and strain as the series of endless problems take their toll.

Herzog lost his first leading man, Jason Robards, after almost half the film was completed, forcing him to begin shooting again with Klaus Kinski in the lead. Mick Jagger, who played a major supporting role, had to drop out when delays in shooting made it impossible for him to meet other commitments. Herzog rewrote the script eliminating the role Jagger was to have played.

There were a series of incidents with the native Indians with whom Herzog was working, culminating in an attack on the film camp by a tribe resisting Herzog's intrusion on their territory. Herzog had to move his entire production 1500 miles south to another location.

As much a dreamer as the Fitcarraldo character of his movie, Herzog also insisted on moving a 320-ton steamship up a 40-degree slope and over a mountain. "If I show a plastic ship going over a plastic mountain, it will be just a Hollywood movie, a cheap movie, and everyone will know it," Herzog claimed.

Herzog was the subject of an earlier Blank film, "Werner Herzog

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Eats His Shoe," a short feature in which Herzog does just that-- eats his shoe, to keep a promise. The shoe was cooked beforehand with onions, garlic, chili, Tabasco, rosemary and salt.

Les Blank is an acclaimed documentarian whose off-beat films are portraits of people and cultures. The body of his works includes "Spend It All," "Dry Wood," and "Hot Pepper," about Cajuns in Louisiana; "Chulas Fronteras," about Tex-Mex country and border music; "Always for Pleasure" on street celebrations in New Orleans during Mardi Gras; "Garlic Is As Good As 10 Mothers," a celebration of the glories of garlic and good food, and portraits of Lightnin' Hopkins, Mance Lipscomb, and Dizzy Gillespie.

Maureen Goslin, editor of "Burden of Dreams," has worked closely with Les Blank since 1972 as both sound recordist and editor.

Programs in NON FICTION TELEVISION are made possible by grants from the Independent Documentary Fund (IDF) which was created in 1977 to encourage the production of new and innovative documentaries by independent film and video makers in the U.S. for national broadcast on public television. "Burden of Dreams" received additional funding from SDR, German Television and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Administered by the Television Laboratory at WNET/THIRTEEN, New York, the IDF has been funded since its inception by the Ford Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, with the addition of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the PBS Station Cooperative (SPC) in 1980.

David Loxton, director of the Television Laboratory, is the executive producer of NON FICTION TELEVISION. Kathy Kline is the coordinating producer.

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April 15, 1982