

## Document Citation

Title	<b>'Woyzeck' at Cinema Center</b>
Author(s)	Kevin Thomas
Source	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>
Date	1979 Nov 02
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	Part IV, p.30
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Woyzeck, Herzog, Werner, 1979

## MOVIE REVIEW

# 'Woyzeck' at Cinema Center

BY KEVIN THOMAS  
Times Staff Writer

Germany's Werner Herzog has always been a demanding director but with "Nosferatu the Vampyre" and now "Woyzeck" (at the UA Cinema Center) he's becoming even more challenging with his increasing solemnity and stylization. There seems in Herzog an increasing purity of vision that becomes compelling in itself.

Although now considered a forerunner of naturalism, expressionism and the theater of the absurd, "Woyzeck" consisted of 28 unassembled scenes when its prodigious author Georg Buchner died at 23 in 1836. The play did not begin to gain its influential reputation until the 1920s when it was finally published in coherent form and had inspired the Alban Berg opera.

### Bourgeois Complacency

It's easy to understand why Herzog, with his fascination with the extremes of human experience and his scorn for what his "Nosferatu" associate Beverly Walker calls "bourgeois complacency," was attracted to "Woyzeck."

Klaus Kinski stars. His Woyzeck is a desperate, haunted army private stationed in a picture-post-card town, where he is a virtual slave to his captain (Wolfgang Reichmann) and has subsisted on a starvation diet as a guinea pig in a

### 'WOYZECK'

A New Yorker Films release of a Werner Herzog Filmproduktion. Director Werner Herzog. Adapted by Herzog from the drama fragment by Georg Buchner. Camera Jorg Schmidt-Reitwein. Music Antonio Vivaldi, Benedetto Marcello, performed by the Fiedelquartett Telc. Production designer Henning von Gierke. Costumes Gisela Storch. Film editor Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. Featuring Klaus Kinski, Eva Mattes, Wolfgang Reichmann, Willy Semmelrogge, Joseff Bierbichler. In German, with English subtitles. Running time: 1 hr. 22 min. Times-rated: Mature.

crazy experiment by the local doctor (Willy Semmelrogge). The captain prattles on about the importance of virtue and morality, something Woyzeck dares to point out that the poor can ill afford. Both the captain and the doctor embody the hypocritical spirit of Nazism foreshadowing the hideous concentration camp experiments.

### Engulfed by Tragedy

It is Woyzeck's particular curse to be able to think, which the captain advised him not to do. Although his hellish life is relieved momentarily by his love for a young woman Marie (Eva Mattes), it is this love that renders him vulnerable.

This description doesn't begin to suggest the nightmare quality of the film. As in an opera, Woyzeck and Marie speak poetically of their anguish, their longings and their despair as they are inevitably engulfed by tragedy.

"Woyzeck" is actually a film of the utmost simplicity and starkest imagery. Yet Herzog can galvanize us with



**IN THE SERVICE**—Klaus Kinski as a desperate army private in Werner Herzog's 'Woyzeck.'

the sheer intensity of his compassion for Woyzeck, whose agony is expressed by Kinski with stylized eloquence. (In the presence of authority, Kinski's Woyzeck can actually seem like a puppet on strings.) Fevered bravura is what we have come to expect of Kinski, he of the haunted eyes and stricken, bony visage. But Mattes is a revelation. The plump, sullen teen-ager in the title role of Fassbinder's "Jail Bait" is here a svelte, commanding presence. (Mattes won the best supporting actress prize at Cannes for her Marie.)

More than anything else, "Nosferatu the Vampyre" and now "Woyzeck" (Times-rated: Mature) suggest that Werner Herzog is currently drawing his inspiration from the great German silent cinema of the '20s. But finally both films are entirely his own.