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Author(s)	Gene Moskowitz
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## Herz Aus Glas

(Heart of Glass)

(WEST GERMAN-COLOR)

*Varity 12-1-76*  
Paris, Nov. 30.

Cine-International Filmvertrieb release of Werner Herzog Film Produktion production. Features entire cast. Written and directed by Werner Herzog from a book by Herbert Achternbusch. Camera (Eastman-color), Jorg Schmidt-Reitwein; editor, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus. Reviewed at Paris Film Festival, Nov. 13, '76. Running time, 93 MINS.

Shepherd ..... Sepp Bierbichler  
Owner ..... Clemens Scheitz  
Man ..... Stefan Guettler  
Maid ..... Sonja Skiba

Werner Herzog, the most private and independent of the promising crop of new West German film directors, languished as a film fest and buff name until his hallucinating look at Hispano Conquistadores in Peru, "Aguirre, Scourge of God," did well here commercially and he copped a top award at the Cannes Fest in '75 with his poetic "Kasper Hauser." (Both fared poorly in the U.S.).

Here he seems to mix the two in an enigmatic, hypnotic tale of collective hysteria in a small artisanal town in the early part of the 19th century that may try to probe the German psyche, but still manages not to be portentous. However, this is a bizarre yet gripping film aided by unusual lensing, mood and atmosphere.

A small Bavarian town, living on glassware, has lost the secret of ruby glass by the death of a foreman at the factory. The owner is ready to do anything to find it including murder, digging up corpses, ransacking the man's house. The townspeople are also infected and

only a mystical shepherd, who foresees apocalypse and destruction, can stand apart from the happenings as the factory is finally burned down.

Reportedly, Herzog literally hypnotized many of the non-pro players before each shot. There are glazed looks and strange comportment that enhance this dip into past German Expressionism as murky fears, desires and hopes bubble up from the characters to be pictured in their strange attempts to cope with their predicaments.

There is the goading desire of the young owner of the factory to carry on and find the formula, the following by the workers no matter what he does and then the dire forebodings of the clairvoyant whose prophecies of hell fire are pictured through scenes of a volcano in action.

Film remains specialized, but its unusual fixation on the characters and their predicaments, and its refusal to compromise with more realistic explanation, make this more for specialized spots abroad and of course the fest circuits.

Handled with care it could find selective audiences on its plastic beauty, its theme of almost occult guilt and responsibility and its often beautiful visual aspects. Herzog is one of the more original filmmakers today, a visionary with fairly pessimistic outlooks for humankind if tempered by a saving particle of hope. —Mosk.