

## Document Citation

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## Leibenszeichen

(Signs of Life)

(WEST GERMAN)

Paris, May 12.

Herzog-Junger Deutscher Film release and production. Features Peter Brogle, Wolfgang Reichmann. Written and directed by Werner Herzog. Camera, Thomas Mauch; editor, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Herzog; music, Stavros Xardrakis. At Cannes Film Fest. Running Time, 90 MINS.

Stroszek ..... Peter Brogle  
Meinhard ..... Wolfgang Reichmann  
Nora ..... Athina Zacharopoulou  
Becker. Wolfgang Von Ungern-Sternberg

There have been flashes of a West German film renaissance at past fests, but they are usually not followed up. Now comes just an extremely personal film that unveils a new talent, that but no signs of a New Wave or a new unfurling of talents with something to say. It is a lively sign of filmic life that "Signs of Life" should have enough to give it some art interest abroad albeit its fragility and poetic qualities require good placement and handling.

A wounded German soldier and two others hole up on a little Greek farm in the midst of an old ruined fort and castle during the last war, somewhat isolated from the German garrison in a nearby village. They are cared for by a young girl who becomes the mistress of the wounded man as he heals.

It concerns their daily life as one, an archaeologist, deciphers ancient writings on the stones that abound around them; the ex-wounded man seems preoccupied with his thoughts; and a robust, ordinary chap goes about catching fish and trapping large cockroaches in a Rube Goldbergish trap.

But the old and recent past are there and the film makes this subtly palpable. The good-natured insect trapper executes the ones he catches with distaste but his attitude of unawareness to human war crimes makes a statement on how supposedly "ordinary" people just seemed to accept it. The wounded man runs amuck one day, chases them off and holes up in the fort shooting off harmless fireworks.

The 24-year-old director, Werner Herzog, is a poet and has been, or is, studying to be an archaeologist. He did not know the war, except as a tiny child, but the film seems to make a statement about the past still needing to be felt and understood by man in general, be it old Greek ciphers or recent wars.

No didactics here, but a deceptively simple look at soldiers at rest and their reactions and the sudden flurries of action in one that may be madness or an unconscious reaction to his inability to cope with his own premonitions thing that also reduces man to a of futility or to act against some-cipher.

Calm and warm lensing, expert character delineation and a sharp poetic-tension mark Herzog as a budding talent to be watched and even nurtured. Poets are rare in films, especially in the German cinema, so this needs careful placement but might be worth it.

Film was yanked from the Critic Section at the last minute due to intransigence by the Berlin Film Fest which wants it also. Berlin would not countenance a Cannes screening even though it is non-competing and the Venice Fest has taken pix from it at times for competition. Film was caught previously by this reviewer.

Mosk.