

**New Yorker Films Presents**

# **MY BEST FIEND**

**KLAUS KINSKI**

**A film by Werner Herzog**

*Official Selection – Cannes 1999*

**Press Contact:**

Sasha Berman  
New Yorker Films  
16 West 61 Street  
New York, NY 10023  
Tel. 212-247-6110 x 206  
Fax 212-307-7855  
email: [info@newyorkerfilms.com](mailto:info@newyorkerfilms.com)

## **CREDITS:**

Camera	Peter Zeitlinger
Sound	Eric Spitzer
Editor	Joe Bini
Assistant Director	Herbert Golder
Assistant Camera	Erik Söllner
Assistant Editor	Thomas Staunton
	Thad Povey
	Renate Hähner
Continuity	Anja Schmidt-Zäringer
Audio Editor	Josh Rosen
Re-recording Mixer	Hubertus Rath
Photographer	Silvia Vas
Additional Camera	Les Blank
Archival Research	David Silberberg
Administration	Monika Kostinek
Music	Popol Vuh
Production Manager	Ulrich Bergfelder
Executive Producer	André Singer
	Christine Ruppert
Producer	Lucki Stipetic
Directed and Narrated by	Werner Herzog

## **WITH:**

Claudia Cardinale, Eva Mattes, Beat Presser, Guillermo Rios, Andrés Vicente, Justo Gonzalez, Benino Moreno Plácido, Baron v.d. Recke

1999 95 min 35mm Ratio:1:66 Sound: Dolby SR

## **SYNOPSIS**

A chain of coincidences brings the 13-year-old schoolboy Werner Herzog together with Klaus Kinski in the same apartment in Munich. In an unabated 48-hour fit of rage, Kinski immediately proceeds to lay waste to all the furniture, only one of many such fits to follow. Herzog therefore knows what awaits him when, some years later, he engages Kinski to work with him on AGUIRRE, THE WRATH OF GOD, their first film together. Four more films will follow.

MY BEST FIEND – KLAUS KINSKI, is a film about the love-hate relationship between Werner Herzog and Klaus Kinski. This relationship, which is utterly puzzling to outsiders, was about the deep trust between an actor and a director, and their independently and simultaneously hatched plans to murder one another.

## DIALOG EXCERPT

“There were times when Kinski would behave more instinctively and noticed that he was going too far, and in those moments, thank God, he became cowardly. There was one occasion on the Rio Nanay, at the end of the AGUIRRE shoot, and as usual when he didn’t know his lines properly, as so often, he was looking for a victim. Suddenly he started shouting like crazy: “You swine!”, meaning the camera assistant, “He was grinning!” He told me I should fire him on the spot, but I said “No, of course I’m not going to fire him, the whole crew would quit out of solidarity.” So he just went and packed his things – he was absolutely serious about leaving at once, that he would just walk off the set; he packed everything into a speed-boat. And I knew he’d broken his contracts 30, 40, 50 times already. So I went up to him very calmly – by the way, I didn’t have a gun, he just made that up later to cast a better light on himself. So I went up to him and said, “You can’t do this, the film is more important than our personal feelings – and it’s even more important than us, mere mortals. It’s impossible to do something like this. You can’t do it.” I told him I had a rifle, and he would only make it as far as the next bend in the river before he had eight bullets in his head – the ninth would be for me.”

- *Werner Herzog*

## WERNER HERZOG ON KLAUS KINSKI

(on the occasion of the release of NOSFERATU 1978)

One can hardly define the notion of sheer genius – for it is above all a romantic idea and, as such, must be handled with caution.

I daresay however, that Klaus Kinski is a genius, despite the “instinctiveness” of such a statement: one can see it, one can feel it from the moment he appears (I remain convinced of it, although I know many talented, exceptional actors). I can perhaps name other geniuses, such as Marlon Brando and Orson Welles when they were young.

Kinski possesses something that soars beyond talent, beyond knowledge, beyond professionalism, something unique yet inexplicable. One only has to see AGUIRRE, WOYZECK or, for example NOSFERATU: how a man, by his physical presence alone, can secrete fear. Kinski doesn't even appear on screen for the first half-hour, then we see him for a few seconds, and we feel fear. A fear that settles in and perpetuates itself, even beyond the actual screening of NOSFERATU.

Kinski's sensitivity is exaggerated, inconceivable for us. And because this sensitivity is more developed, it is more reactive and its expressions are more intense. This is naturally frightening to us, for we are not used to it: it is not meant to happen in our society. Kinski wasn't “meant to happen”.

It is a historical – and immutable tradition that considers this kind of sensitivity to be abnormal.

The criticism that Kinski is “insane” can only be justified from a petty and mediocre standpoint – I believe in fact, that it is others who are “insane”.

Kinski unites incompatible contradictions for us – the wildest – least imaginable polarities.

I am convinced that Kinski's tremendous power is a result of these opposing contradictions, these colossal force fields in motion.

Kinski exudes an intense erotic radiance, but what fascinates me above all is his dramatic aura.

I judge him only in front of the camera: he is the most fascinating actor I know.

# WERNER HERZOG

## BIOGRAPHY

Werner Herzog (real name W.H. Stipetic) was born in Munic on September 5, 1942. He grew up in a remote mountain village in Bavaria and never saw any films, television, or telephones as a child. He started traveling on foot from the age 14. He made his first phone call at the age 17. During high school he worked the nightshift as welder in a steel factory to produce his first film in 1961 at the age of 19. Since then he has produced, written and directed more than forty films – such as AGUIRRE, THE WRATH OF GOD (1972), NOSFERATU (1978), FITZCARRALDO (1981), LESSONS OF DARKNESS (1991), LITTLE DIETER NEEDS TO FLY (1997), - published more than a dozen books of prose, and directed as many operas.

## FILMOGRAPHY (selected)

1967 SIGNS OF LIFE  
1968 MIRAGE (Fata Morgana)  
1969 EVEN DWARFS STARTED SMALL  
1970 HANDICAPPED FUTURE  
1971 THE LAND OF SILENCE AND DARKNESS  
1972 AGUIRRE, THE WRATH OF GOD  
1974 GREAT ECSTASY OF THE SCULPTOR STEINER  
1974 THE MYSTERY OF KASPER HAUSER  
1976 HEART OF GLASS  
1976 HOW MUCH WOOD WOULD A WOODCHUCK CHUCK  
1977 STROSZEK  
1978 NOSFERATU  
1978 WOYZECK  
1981 FITZCARRALDO  
1983 WHERE THE GREEN ANTS DREAM  
1984 BALLAD OF A LITTLE SOLDIER  
1987 COBRA VERDE  
1991 SCREAM OF STONE  
1991 LESSONS OF DARKNES  
1992 BELLS FROM THE DEEP  
1994 THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD INTO MUSIC –  
BAYREUTH  
1995 DEATH FOR FIVE VOICES – GESUALDO  
1997 LITTLE DIETER NEEDS TO FLY  
1998 WINGS OF HOPE  
1999 MY BEST FIEND – KLAUS KINSKI

# KLAUS KINSKI

## BIOGRAPHY

Born in Berlin, of Polish parents, Klaus Kinski was first a renowned stage actor in Germany. He has performed all the great classic roles as well as eminently successful poetry recitals. He claims that turning to film was a strictly financial decision, and that, for many years, he selected his roles only according to the fees that went with them. He turned down parts in pictures by Fellini, Visconti and Pasolini because, as he says “they expected me to work for the glory”.

Later on, he had been living in Paris where the success of Werner Herzog’s AGUIRRE, THE WRATH OF GOD (which made him world famous) drew to him a number of directors who had ignored him until then.

In 1976, he published “I’m So Wild About Your Strawberry Mouth”, his autobiography, in which he describes his personal as well as his professional life.

Klaus Kinski died in 1991.

## FILMOGRAPHY (selected)

1955	KINDER, MUETTER UND EIN GENERAL	by Laslo Benedek
1957	A TIME TO LOVE AND A TIME TO DIE	by Douglas Sirk
1960	LUDWIG II	by Helmut Käutner
1965	GUERRE SECRETE	by Terence Young
	PER QUALCHE DOLLARI IN PIU	by Sergio Leone
	DOCTOR ZHIVAGO	by David Lean
1967	COPLAN SAUVE TA PEAU	by Yves Boisset
1972	AGUIRRE, THE WRATH OF GOD	by Werner Herzog
1974	L’IMPORTANT C’EST D’AIMER	by Andrzej Zulawski
1975	UN GENIO, DUO COMPARI E UN POLLO	by Damiano Damiani
1976	NUIT D’OR	by Serge Moati
	MADAME CLAUDE	by Just Jaeckin
1977	MORT D’UN POURRI	by Georges Lautner
1978	NOSFERATU	by Werner Herzog
	WOYZECK	by Werner Herzog
1981	FITZCARRALDO	by Werner Herzog
1987	COBRA VERDE	by Werner Herzog
	PAGANINI	by Klaus Kinski