

AGUIRRE, WRATH OF GOD
(Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes)
Directed by **Werner Herzog**



**Now newly restored and back on the big screen
from 7 June 2013**

**Opening at BFI Southbank, Curzon Soho, Filmhouse Edinburgh
& selected cinemas nationwide**

10 April 2013 – On 7 June 2013, the BFI brings back to the big screen, newly restored and in venues nationwide, ***Aguirre, Wrath of God*** (1972), the third feature and international breakthrough film of legendary German director **Werner Herzog** (more recently acclaimed for *Grizzly Man*, *Rescue Dawn*, *Encounters at the End of the World*).

Shot entirely on location in the wild Amazonian jungle, Herzog's ambitious film of doomed adventure and stunning, savage beauty remains one of his most extraordinary achievements. Herzog has described it as "a very personal film and still part of my life".

Aguirre will be a highlight of a two-month retrospective of the director's work at BFI Southbank, running throughout June and July. A second Herzog masterpiece, ***The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*** (1974), will follow with a UK cinema release on 5 July.

The volatile German star **Klaus Kinski**, later described by Herzog as "probably the most difficult actor in the world to deal with", was his inspired and only choice for the role of Don Lope de Aguirre, a power-crazy explorer in sixteenth-century South America who leads a band of conquistadors through the Amazon in search of El Dorado. Beset by the physical and mental challenges of the terrain – dangerous rapids, whirlpools, floods, starvation, mutiny, disease and deadly Indian snipers – the men begin to hallucinate and fantasize. They are overpowered by the murderous intent and descent into absolute madness of Aguirre, who declares himself the "wrath of God".

Herzog intended to create a commercial film for the general public. The story – largely the director’s invention – was based on a brief outline of real-life adventurer, Lope de Aguirre, that Herzog was fascinated to read about in a children’s book. He wrote the screenplay – a prose text with some hints of dialogue – in two or three days and set off for an area of jungle near Machu Picchu – which at the time offered few if any tourist amenities – with a cast and crew of around 450.

Continually putting his life on the line as he struggled to deal with the flooded rainforest and torrential river, Herzog – constrained by a very low budget – had to work fast, fearlessly and spontaneously. The 5-week shoot was plagued with danger and difficulty throughout. According to Herzog, cast and crew suffered so badly from a lack of food that the director was on occasion forced to sell his ‘boots or wristwatch’ to buy breakfast.

This was the director’s first of five tempestuous collaborations with Klaus Kinski who gave what is arguably his greatest ever performance as Aguirre. With his sinister, tilting walk and demonic gaze, Kinski endows Aguirre with an eerie restraint, a threatening unpredictability.

Two of Herzog’s other long-standing collaborators were integral to the film – the cinematographer Thomas Mauch and composer Florian Fricke of Krautrock band Popol Vuh who wrote the hypnotic score. The film’s soundtrack, which also featured birdsong (recorded and then carefully choreographed) and pan pipes played by a beggar whom Herzog encountered on the streets of Cusco, contributes hugely to the film’s atmosphere.

Although ***Aguirre, Wrath of God*** was a slow-burn when it was released, it took off in Paris – playing in one cinema for two and half years – and gradually acquired cult status worldwide. Today, its potency and importance are widely acknowledged and it always ranks highly in critics’ polls.

The BFI’s re-release will give the director’s longtime followers the chance to experience this wonderful restoration on the big screen; for first-time film-goers whose curiosity has been whetted by Herzog’s later work, it will surely prove a revelation.

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www.bfi.org.uk/releases

Running time: 93 mins

Cert: PG TBC

Notes to Editors

- A Dual Format Edition (DVD and Blu-ray) of *Aguirre, Wrath of God* will be released as part of the BFI’s forthcoming Werner Herzog collection.
- *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974) will be released in cinemas nationwide on 5 July.

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences