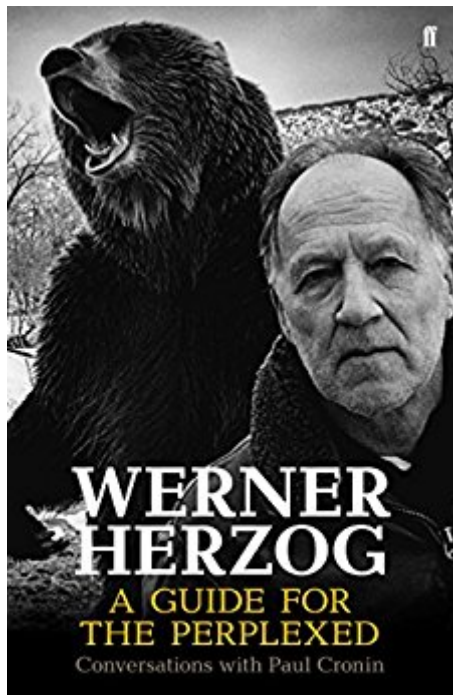




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# Werner Herzog – A Guide For The Perplexed: Conversations With Paul Cronin



## Synopsis

This edition of Herzog on Herzog presents a completely new set of interviews in which Werner Herzog discusses his career from its very beginnings to his most recent productions. Herzog was once hailed by Francois Truffaut as the most important director alive. Famous for his frequent collaborations with mercurial actor Klaus Kinski - including the epics, *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* and *Fitzcarraldo*, and the terrifying *Nosferatu* - and more recently with documentaries such as *Grizzly Man*, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* and *Into the Abyss*, Herzog has built a body of work that is one of the most vital in post-war German cinema.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you are hoping to gain some deep insight into the process by which famous directors plan their storyboards and ensure that they have adequate coverage of their angles from this book, save your money and buy a different one. If you want to discover more about Herzog's private life, you should look elsewhere. If though, like me, you are captivated by the power of Herzog's films, the poetry of

his landscapes, the direct and fearless assault he makes on subjects as diverse as the aftermath of the Gulf War, Sky-Fliers, Death Row, the McMurdo research station, and want to know a more about his ideas and his work, then this book is invaluable. This book is an expanded and revised version of Cronin's earlier "Herzog on Herzog" (Faber & Faber, 2003). It consists of a series of interviews between Cronin and Herzog, edited by them both, that took place over the 10 years to 2012. Cronin prompts; Herzog explains, elucidates, reformulates, expounds, recaps and explains again. Herzog's philosophy is clearly stated throughout. Simply put, he believes that real life is everything, and it is through intimate and committed contact with real life that we discover true understanding and meaning. The quote from its pages that brought me to this book was: "The best advice I can offer to those heading into the world of film is not to wait for the system to finance your projects and for others to decide your fate. If you can't afford to make a million-dollar film, raise \$10,000 and produce it yourself. That's all you need to make a feature film these days. Beware of useless, bottom-rung secretarial jobs in film-production companies. Instead, so long as you are able-bodied, head out to where the real world is. Roll up your sleeves and work as a bouncer in a sex club or a warden in a lunatic asylum or a machine operator in a slaughterhouse. Drive a taxi for six months and you'll have enough money to make a film. Walk on foot, learn languages and a craft or trade that has nothing to do with cinema." There is a vast amount of fascinating material in this book about the adventures he endured making his films, but what left the most indelible impression on me was rather the strength of his passion for all the incredible situations and people that he has noticed over the years. Situations and people from the real world that a thousand others could have noticed, but didn't. Situations and people for which he had the vision and perseverance to capture on film and to transform with his unique insight and provide us with understanding and meaning through his films. An essential book for anyone who lives, or wishes to live, in the real world.

This was a fascinating and inspiring read for me, although I have one reservation which I'll save for last. I loved hearing about how Herzog had come to start his own production company, and how he had managed to keep it afloat over the years. I also really enjoyed the technical discussions behind each film, even though many of them I have never seen. Herzog's blue-collar approach to all aspects of filmmaking seems correct to me -- the filmmaker must be the engine of the production, even if that involves performing surgery on a crew member in the jungle. My one reservation is that, as an aspiring filmmaker myself, I felt that looking at Herzog too closely might restrict me from learning my own production process. As much as I admire his process, it is uniquely his and simply staring at it does not transfer any of his abilities or sensibilities to me. In fact it would be hard to

imagine Werner himself reading such a book as this. It's a Yoda-like situation, the difference between thinking (reading) and doing. I also find Werner's Rogue film school to be contradictory in that respect -- can one attend this school and still be considered a rogue of any sort? Finally I will say that after reading this one can wonder if Werner is simply playing a part now, the role of the eccentric filmmaker. I suspect there is a little of that but mostly I think he is genuine. With that in mind I highly recommend this book.

There are many \*good\* books out there which do a fine job of teaching you something new. There are \*great\* books that compel you to change your behavior, or take up a new hobby. And then there are \*extraordinary\* books which can potentially change the course of your life. This is such a book. Werner Herzog is an original. As a youngster, he taught himself how to make films. When no one would fund his movie-making habit, he started his own production company at age 17. When he needed to get through the Peruvian jungle for filming "Fitzcarraldo", he forged official-looking documents for safe passage (they worked). For every film, he did a thousand things to get the shot. He once won a poetry contest four times by entering under five different names, and directed major operas when he couldn't read music. Reading the book, I came to have deep respect for his unstoppable and uncompromising vision. There is a certain methodical madness that should inspire all of us to roll up our sleeves, listen to that inner voice of creativity, and just do what needs to get done. It also compels the reader to look beyond the strictures of university degrees, schools of thought and ossified convention to forge one's own idiom. It's an incredibly powerful, freeing notion for any artist, exemplified by this passage: "While at work on this book, Werner explained he wanted something done a particular way. I suggested to him that 'the publisher doesn't usually do that.' He absorbed what I told him, paused, then said softly, 'I'm not interested in how things are usually done. I want it done this way.'" Any one of Herzog's stories would be enough fodder to establish an average person's badass status for life: the making of "Aguirre" in the implacable jungle; filming a scene for "Fitzcarraldo" of a steamship going up a steep mountain in the by actually pulling a steamship up a mountainside in the ; having near-death experiences in Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, and Kuwait on a daily basis; filming in Antarctica, Andean peaks, or prehistoric caves sealed for 32,000 years; and craziest of all, working with the madman Klaus Kinski on five different films. But Herzog has made 60+ movies, half of which probably endangered his life, making him a permanent member of the Badass Hall of Fame. The author Paul Cronin does an excellent job with his unobtrusive, lucidly thorough style. Even though the book weighs in at 500+ pages, the stories are gripping enough to make it a quick read. I particularly appreciated the

unforgettable characters in the stories: Fini Straubinger, one of the blind and deaf subjects of "Land of Silence and Darkness

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