



## Rescue Dawn

### Werner Herzog

USA, 2006  
English

120 minutes ■ Colour/35mm

Production Company: **Gibraltar**

**Entertainment & Production LLC**

Executive Producer: **Kami Naghdi, Jimmy DeBrabant, Michael Dounaev, Elie Samaha, Nick Raslan, Gerald Green**

Producer: **Steve Marlton, Elton Brand, Harry Knapp**

Screenplay: **Werner Herzog**

Cinematographer: **Peter Zeitlinger**

Editor: **Joe Bini**

Production Designer: **Arin 'Aoi' Pinijvararak**

Sound: **Paul Paragon**

Music: **Klaus Badelt**

Principal Cast: **Christian Bale, Steve Zahn, Jeremy Davies**

Production: **Gibraltar Entertainment & Production LLC, 9000 West Sunset Boulevard, Suite 412, West Hollywood CA 90069 USA. T (310) 247-9222 F (310) 247-9227 info@gibraltarfilms.com**

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(see page 430)

Werner Herzog's 1997 documentary *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* tells the extraordinary story of a German-born American Navy pilot, Dieter Dengler, who crash-landed in Laos during the Vietnam War. He was imprisoned in a POW camp and brutally tortured. He then engineered an extraordinary escape with the other inmates, both American and Vietnamese. Near starvation and overwhelmed by the forces of nature closing in on him, Dengler was rescued at last by United States choppers that happened to be flying over the area.

Christian Bale plays Dengler in *Rescue Dawn*. It is one of this accomplished actor's most breathtaking performances. From all-American wisecracker to beaten-down victim to Messianic, rifle-toting outlaw, Bale inhabits his character with such a fierce and passionate intensity that one recalls the similarly riveting performances of Herzog's muse, Klaus Kinski. More to the point, the film's survivalist snarl, its intense anti-heroism, Dengler's Sisyphean attempts to overcome predatory Mother Nature, and Herzog's abiding love of freakish wise men echo the filmmaker's earlier masterpieces, *Cobra Verde* and *Fitzcarraldo* in particular.

Bale is matched step for step by a group of accomplished character actors, including the wonderful Steve Zahn and Jeremy Davies as fellow POWs who help Dengler hatch his plans. The camerawork is characteristically stunning, although simpler and more direct than in Herzog's past films; the script is equally propulsive.

This clarity actually is a blessing. It al-

lows a ruminative viewer to quickly intuit Herzog's motives for making the film at this historical moment – although it's not that tough to do the math. After all, Dengler is captured during a "secret war" waged to extract America from a quagmire abroad. He encounters brutal hostility from the Laotian guards and villagers he encounters. And he is tortured, contrary to the Geneva Conventions. Sound familiar?

■ **Noah Cowan**



**Werner Herzog** was born in Munich. He made his first film, *Herakles* (62), when he was nineteen and went on to direct dozens of shorts and features both fiction and documentary, as well as writing prose and directing operas. His extensive filmography includes the canonical titles *Signs of Life* (68), *Even Dwarfs Started Small* (70), *Fata Morgana* (70), *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (72), *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser: Every Man for Himself and God Against All* (74), which won the Grand Prix Spécial du Jury at the 1975 Cannes Film Festival, *Straszek* (76), *Heart of Glass* (76), *Nosferatu* (78), *Woyzeck* (79), *God's Angry Man* (80), *Fitzcarraldo* (82), which won the best director prize at Cannes in 1982, *Where the Green Ants Dream* (84), *Cobra Verde* (87), *Lessons of Darkness* (92), *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (97), *My Best Fiend* (99) and *Grizzly Man* (05). *Rescue Dawn* (06) is his most recent feature.

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