

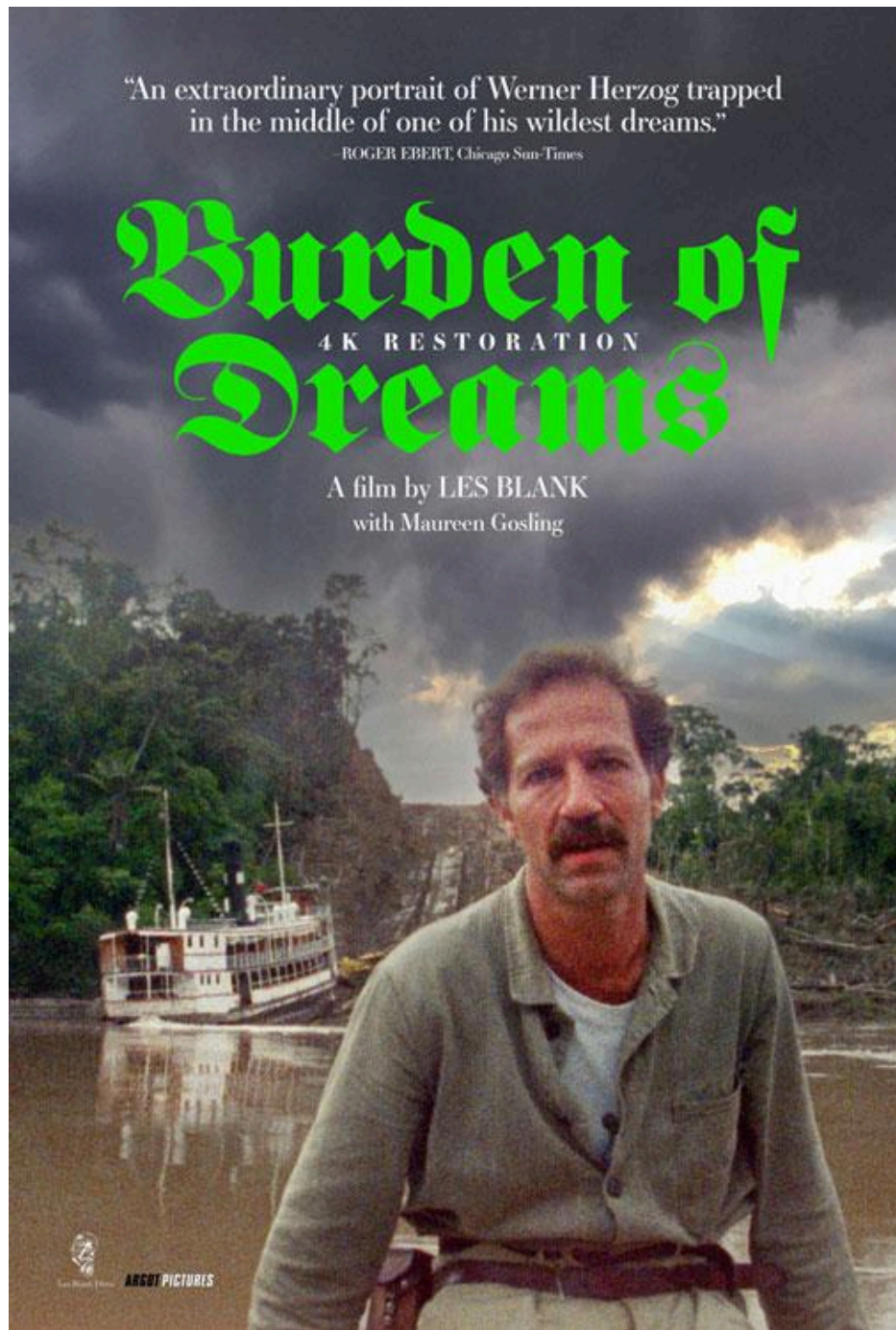
Burden of Dreams

Directed by Les Blank with Maureen Gosling

1982/2024, 94 min, Documentary

Starring Werner Herzog, Klaus Kinski, Claudia Cardinale

In English, Spanish & German with English subtitles



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Synopsis

Burden of Dreams captures legendary director Werner Herzog's filming of his most ambitious film *Fitzcarraldo*, in which an entrepreneur (Klaus Kinski) endeavors to push a steamship over a mountain to build an opera house in the Amazon jungle, one thousand miles away from civilization.

Featuring visceral interviews with Herzog, *Burden of Dreams* which was held by Roger Ebert as "one of the most remarkable documentaries ever made about the making of a movie" depicts the full range of Herzog's unflinching vision spanning four years of production, despite all odds, such as the lead actor (Jason Robards) who had to leave the set after 40% of the shoot was completed and ultimately was replaced by Herzog's muse, Klaus Kinski. Most notoriously, the film features a jaw-dropping sequence featuring Herzog requiring hundreds of native Campa, Machiguenga, and Aguaruna people to pull a full-size, 320-ton steamship over a small mountain. The result is an extraordinary document of the filmmaking process and a unique look into the single-minded mission of one of cinema's most fearless directors.

Blank's interviews with Herzog, bring context and backstory to his personalized style of "ethnographic filmmaking," which values Peru's native, Campa, Machiguenga, and Aguaruna people and their Old World culture as much as it does Herzog's perilous enterprise.

Blank's appreciation for the jungle comes through in his uninflected photography of insects, birds, and even the feet and faces of his Peruvian subjects - as frequently set against the classical music that Herzog used in *Fitzcarraldo*.

Herzog was energized by the story of Carlos Fermin Fitzcarrald, an aspiring Peruvian rubber baron who forced hundreds of Amazonian natives to disassemble a steamboat and portage its pieces over an isthmus in the Madre de Dios Mountains. Once on the other side, the boat was reassembled so that Fitzcarrald could transport the rubber down the Ucayali River to be sold. For his self-penned narrative, Herzog made his leading character an Irishman in love with opera — specifically with the Italian tenor Enrico Caruso, for whom Fitzcarrald aspires to build an opera house in the Iquitos jungle, where he plans for Caruso to perform someday. During the filming, Herzog's leading actor Jason Robards came down with amoebic dysentery and was forced to abandon the film. Robards's co-star Mick Jagger followed suit due to scheduling constraints. Herzog called in his reliably tempestuous muse Klaus Kinski to fill the role of Fitzcarrald and scrapped Jagger's sidekick character.

Although Blank only visited Herzog's remote shoot twice — for several weeks at a time — he and his editor/sound technician Maureen Gosling capture the full range of Herzog's tribulations. Violent conflicts between hostile natives and the jungle's chaos present Herzog and his multicultural skeleton crew with exotic challenges.

For all of the attacks that Herzog endured from tribal factions, critics, and Mother Nature herself, the imperturbable director proves himself as much a man of the people as an uncompromising filmmaker.

About the restoration

The 2024 breath-taking 6.5K frame by frame restoration and remastering of *Burden of Dreams* which features 5.1 sound, and involved replacing all pre-recorded and live music, spanned 2 years of meticulous work.

The restoration was executive produced by Harrod Blank, Les Blank's son, and financed by Les Blank Films, Inc. a non-profit that the director created before his death.

The picture was conformed by Anthony Matt, color corrected by Paul Cope and then cleaned and restored using Diamant software by Anthony Matt.

Maureen Gosling, who recorded and edited the original film also worked on quality control and assisted in the mix and audio tweaks.

All of the audio restoration work was done by Nick Bergh.

Biographies

Les Blank - Director, Producer (1935-2013)

An internationally renowned, independent filmmaker, whose poetic work offers intimate, idiosyncratic glimpses into the lives, culture, and music of the passionate people at the periphery of American society. His film topics have included Cajun, Mexican, Polish, Hawaiian, and

Serbian-American music and food traditions, Afro-Cuban drummers, Texas blues men, Appalachian fiddles, “flower children”, gap-toothed women, and the garlic plant.

Blanks is best known for *Burden of Dreams* (1982/2024), documenting the chaotic production of fellow director, and friend, Werner Herzog’s 1982 film, *Fitzcarraldo* in the jungles of South America. Honored with a Criterion DVD edition, and a British Academy Award, Roger Ebert called *Burden of Dreams*, “...one of the most remarkable documentaries ever made about the making of a movie.”

Another of Blank’s best-loved works is *Garlic Is As Good As Ten Mothers* (1980), a seminal film featuring culinary pioneer Alice Waters, and the Gilroy Garlic Festival. This film, notorious for its mouthwateringness, was initially shown in “Aromaround” with garlic simultaneously roasted in-theater.

Les Blank enlisted a handful of talented people to help with his films, beginning with Skip Gerson, followed by Maureen Gosling, Chris Simon, Susan Kell, Marianne Yusavage, David Silberberg, son, Harrod Blank and Gina Leibrecht.

Maureen Gosling- Co-Filmmaker, Editor & Sound Recordist

A documentary filmmaker since 1972, Gosling has served as a director, producer, editor, sound recordist, distributor. She is best known for her 20-year collaboration with the late Les Blank on over twenty films, including the British Academy Award-winning *Burden of Dreams*, *I Went to the Dance*, *Garlic Is As Good As Ten Mothers* and *Gap-Toothed Women*. She directed, produced, and edited the feature documentary, *The 9 Lives of Barbara Dane* on jazz/blues/folk singer activist Barbara Dane; *This Ain’t No Mouse Music!*, with Chris Simon, on the legacy of American roots music record producer, Chris Strachwitz; and the short *Bamako Chic*, with Maxine Downs PhD. She directed, edited, and produced *Blossoms of Fire*, on the Zapotecs of southern Oaxaca, Mexico.

For the last 16 years she has worked with producer, Jed Riffe, on nine films, including *Leistocene Park*, now streaming on VICE-TV; and *The Long Shadow*, broadcast on PBS. Her films have been broadcast nationally and internationally, shown theatrically, and distributed educationally.

In April 2023, Gosling was honored at the Centre Pompidou’s cycle “Americana: Les Blank & the Ross Brothers” and in 2024, at the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley’s Les Blank Retrospective. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture, Arts and Sciences.

Bruce “Pacho” Lane -Interpreter, Second Camera (1938 – 2023)

A visual anthropologist, Lane was a volunteer in the first Peace Corps group, Colombia One, from 1961-63. He traveled widely in Latin America, Europe, and Asia, and was fluent in six languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, and German. He taught at five universities, including Rhode Island Institute of Technology, and was an emeritus professor at the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos in Cuernavaca, Mexico. His production company, Ethnoscope Film & Video, produced and distributed documentary films about traditional and popular cultures and the spirit that inspires them. Lane directed 15 documentaries (including *Stony*

Knows How and *Tree of Life*) and was the only Westerner to film in Afghanistan during the Soviet intervention. He focused primarily on Mexican indigenous culture, and eight of his films are about Mexican Indians. His most recent film, *Warriors of the Sun* is about the revival of the 2500-year-old ritual of Los Voladores (the Flyers).

Michael Goodwin a.k.a. Michael Oliver-Goodwin -Writer, Camera Assistant (1941-2018)
Oliver-Goodwin spent his life in America's three great bohemian cities: New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans. He was *Rolling Stone's* first film critic, and eventually wrote for *American Film*, *Take One*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and other important journals including *OffBeat Magazine*. During his San Francisco Bay Area years he also worked for Francis Ford Coppola, and ended up co-writing an unauthorized biography of Coppola with his first wife, Naomi Wise. He was an important chronicler of Louisiana culture in prose and film, an interest launched when he hooked up with Les Blank, assisting on Blank's New Orleans cultural documentary, ALWAYS FOR PLEASURE. Oliver-Goodwin spent the last 25 years of his life divided between Oakland and New Orleans. He self-published a savvy book of his New Orleans adventures, "Heaven Before I Die," and co-produced Trinidadian CDs (he was a huge fan of that culture, marrying the love of his life, Trinidadian-American, Jennifer Oliver-Goodwin).

Credits

Director	Les Blank
Sound	Maureen Gosling
Editing	Maureen Gosling
Producer	Les Blank
Cinematography	Les Blank
Interpreting, interviewing, and camera assistance	Bruce "Pacho" Lane
Interviewing and camera and sound assistance	Michael Goodwin

Narration written by Michael Goodwin

Narration spoken by Candace Laughlin

Editing assistance and office management Chris Simon, John Lumsdaine

Research Chris Simon

Translations Francisca Wentworth, Inez Reider, Richard
Becker