

Die Siebtelbauern

Director: Stefan Ruzowitzky
Script: Stefan Ruzowitzky
Producer: Danny Krausz, Kurt Stocker
Production Year: 1998
Cast: Simon Schwarz (Lukas Lichtmeß), Sophie Rois (Emmy), Lars Rudolph (Severin), Tilo Prückner (Großknecht) and Ulrich Wildgruber (Danninger)



Summary prepared by Ed Cohen

Inexpensively made—blown up from 16mm—"The Inheritors" fared much better with critics and other movie business insiders, than with the general public. Besides its excellent reviews, it won first prizes in the Max Ophüls Festival, the Flanders International Film Festival, and the Ft. Lauderdale International Film Festival.

Chris Wiegand, staff film expert at the BBC, wrote:

"Jealousy, hypocrisy, greed and revenge run rampant on the farm in 'The Inheritors,' a witty and often abrasive class satire from Austria.

"Writer-director Stefan Ruzowitzky's jet-black comedy about land and liberty is ostensibly set in the 1930s, yet the narrative feels better suited to a much earlier era. The film's unwieldy cast of distinctive characters would seem perfectly at home in a Zola novel or a painting by Breughel.

"It all starts with a murder. When the cantankerous and tyrannical farmer Hillinger is found dead, everyone expects that his inheritance will go to the church and end up being divided among

the other local farmers. However, Hillinger leaves the land to his long-suffering peasant workers instead, in the vindictive hope that they will die fighting over it.

"At first Hillinger's plan is successful, as the peasants squabble among themselves and consider selling the farm to make a quick buck. When the resilient Emmy (Sophie Rois) refuses to sell up, her fierce stance slowly influences the love-struck foundling Lukas (an impressive Simon Schwarz) and the other unlikely inheritors. The peasants eventually overcome their initial fears to become "Siebtelbauern" (one-seventh farmers) but their progress is jeopardized by some cloak and dagger activity from the enraged locals.

"For all its earthy humor, lusty activity and comic grotesquerie, The Inheritors retains an impressive emotional depth throughout, thanks in large part to the powerful performances of its leading players. Moving between the extremes of high comedy and high drama, Ruzowitzky gives this cyclical film a refreshing *joie de vivre* and there's real delight to be found in the peasants' burgeoning sense of independence.

"A delirious modern spin on the *Heimatfilm*, a potent national genre, The Inheritors was Austria's official Oscar entry in 1998."

Stefan Ruzowitzky (b. 1961) became a theater director and writer of radio plays after university studies in Vienna. Tonight's film was his second feature. His subsequent horror films, *Anatomie* and *Anatomie 2* are fairly well known in the USA.

Lars Rudolph (b. 1966) had bit parts in "Run, Lola, Run," and "The Princess and the Warrior. He played Philip Melanchthon in "Luther." We shall be seeing more of him soon, in several films in production.

Sophie Rois (b. 1961) is primarily a stage actress in Vienna. Perhaps the best known of her film roles, besides tonight's film, was as Erika Mann in the 2001 TV mini-series, *Die Manns—Ein Jahrhundertroman*, with Armin Mueller-Stahl, Monica Bleibtreu, and Katharina Thalbach. Ms. Rois is also the singer in a rock band, "Straight from the Heart."