

The Sounds of Silents - Der Stummfilmpianist

Ilona Ziok (director)

CV Films, Berlin (production)

The Wiesbaden Film Appraisal Office (*Filmbewertungsstelle Wiesbaden*) has awarded the film its highest distinction.

From the evaluation:

Willy Sommerfeld was already famous during the era of silent film. When silent film was rediscovered in the 1970's for contemporary cinema, Sommerfeld, by then retired, returned to the piano and became a legend. As the last remaining participant and eye-witness of the silent film era, he is a true landmark of film history. Ilona Ziok's film is a dignified monument to the man as well as to the art of silent film, and it is absolutely worth seeing.

As with any filmic biography, archival research is one of the most important tasks. Ilona Ziok mastered this "material aspect" admirably, presenting old film footage so carefully and sovereignly that contemporary viewers can only be taken by the beauty of the silent films. One of the achievements of author and director Ilona Ziok is that she shows the viewer not only sequences from silent film classics like "Metropolis" and "The Last Laugh," but also excerpts from rarely shown films and other previously unknown footage, for example scenes from by-gone days in Berlin. Deserving of particular praise is the montage of interview segments and contemporary scenes with historical material into a masterful blend of images with lovely contrasts, for example of weddings and children playing.

The picture of the pioneer is rounded off by the affectionate and informative commentary by companions such as Ulrich Gregor, Karl Prümm, as well as by the event organizers Rudolf Brünger and Juppy.

Ultimately, this documentation is a film of utmost importance in terms of the history of cinema, and it will hopefully make Willy Sommerfeld a household name among a large audience of contemporary cinema and television viewers.

Wiesbaden, June 2nd, 2006
FBW Filmbewertungsstelle Wiesbaden
Managing Director

The official press release of the Wiesbaden Film Appraisal Office:

Distinction "particularly valuable" ("*besonders wertvoll*")
for

The Sounds of Silents - Der Stummfilmpianist

FRG/Czech Republic 2005 - 84 min - Author/director: Ilona Ziok

What director Ilona Ziok preserved on celluloid for posterity is nothing less than a sensation of cinema history. Her intimate and insightful portrait of the now 102 year-old silent film pianist Willy Sommerfeld invokes the spirit of the by-gone era of silent film. The well-chosen historical film excerpts, the masterful montage and the music of the agile pianist come together to thrill the hearts of cinemagoers.