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★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ FAIR ★ POOR



By Michael Phillips  
Tribune movie critic

CHICAG

## Portrait of a poet, out of control

**'Wojaczek' ★★★★★**  
Poland; Lech Majewski, 1999

There's a lot of heat behind the new biopic "Control," an austere beautiful take on Joy Division's front man Ian Curtis, being shown in this year's Chicago International Film Festival. I have to say, though, it's

### REVIEW

pretty pale compared to "Wojaczek," a far more intriguing black-and-white portrait of a poet careening to the edge of self-annihilation.

This is a superb and surprisingly witty impressionistic biography, one of seven films di-

rected by Lech Majewski being shown at the Gene Siskel Film Center. Concerning the poet Rafal Wojaczek (Krzysztof Siwczyk), who died in 1971 at the age of 26, the film operates on a deadpan comic tone established by its achingly beautiful sense of visual composure, revealing the faces and alleys and alluring

decrepitude of one writer's homeland. Much of it makes you laugh uneasily; some of it is slapstick that you rarely get in any biographical realm, in any country. Majewski will introduce the Saturday screening.

In Polish with English subtitles. Screens 6 p.m. Sat., 8:15 p.m. Thu. at the Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St., 312-846-2600, [siskelfilmcenter.org](http://siskelfilmcenter.org).

—Michael Phillips

No MPAA rating.