

arthousefilms

this virgin orphan as a human sacrifice to intercept a death ray from Saturn, as prophesied by their 300-year-old master on his deathbed.

Fantastic as the setup for "Angelus" may sound, it's inspired by an occult commune founded in 1920 by a Silesian miner and painter. "Angelus" was made in 2000 by Polish director Lech Majewski, an all-around auteur with co-credits as this film's writer, composer and set designer. Sporting a succession of precisely lit tableaux, the sur-

real "Angelus" is part of "Lech Majewski's Landscape of Dreams," a seven-feature retrospective.

Like Emir Kusturica's "Underground" and Volker Schlöndorff's "The Tin Drum," "Angelus" offers a sardonic, off-centered lens on decades of strife in Eastern Europe. Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin make cameos. The stubborn true believers here confound whatever regime is in charge as they seek mystical fixes for society.

Their late master's teachings

serve better than official church or party doctrine. Sect members emerge from their shifts in the mines, stand in a circle in a meadow, raise their arms to the sun, absorb its energy and then paint at their easels. Majewski bathes his viewers in that same strange light for a comic history lesson.

No MPAA rating (brief sex; bath-related nudity). Running time: 103 minutes. In Polish, with English subtitles. Screening at 5:45 p.m. Sunday and 8:15 p.m. Sept. 20 at the Gene Siskel Film Center.

'Angelus' ★★★

A boy who sees winged, white-robed guardian angels narrates this appealingly peculiar tale. A sect of seven coal miners picks

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