



BF 109

LOGLINE

Sicily, 1943: Battle-weary Luftwaffe pilots fight to defend the island against advancing Allied forces.

SYNOPSIS

BF 109 is the story of a diminishing squadron of ace Messerschmitt fighter pilots who attempt to defend Sicily at any cost.

Led by a veteran of Stalingrad, Rudolf Ziegler, the men endure nightly bombings, poor equipment, failing aircraft, loss of working airfields, the contempt and inefficiency of their superiors to doggedly follow orders to keep Sicily under German control.

The film is a fascinating insight into the bravery of a select group of young men who continue to fight in spite of the knowledge that certain defeat is hurtling towards them.



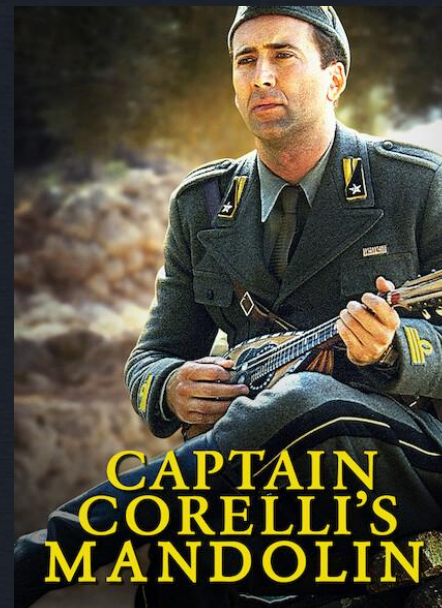
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MEETS





RUDOLF ZIEGLER

MAIN CHARACTER

Handsome, charismatic and highly admired by his peers, Rudolf Ziegler is an ace fighter pilot and veteran of the Battle of Britain, Stalingrad and North Africa.

Charged with defending Sicily from Allied advance, he experiences defeat for the first time in his illustrious career. His men are disillusioned and exhausted, and it falls on his shoulders to boost their morale, even as his own resolve wavers.

Only sheer mental grit enables him to risk his life daily for a cause he no longer believes in.

HANS FISCHER

MAIN CHARACTER

Fischer is a young, athletic addition to Ziegler's 77th Fighter Group. Formerly one of Germany's leading athletes, he is jovial in spite of their dangerous circumstances and laughs often.

When local Sicilian Bianca catches his eye, his easy nature enables him to form a bond with her in spite of her distaste towards the German occupation.

As defeat at the hands of the Allies looms closer, Fischer loyally fights to the end at Ziegler's side.





CAPTAIN SCHNEIDER

MAIN CHARACTER

Schneider is Ziegler's right-hand man, a born pilot with incredible skills behind the controls of a Messerschmitt.

Eccentric and not one to follow the rules, he insists on wearing sandals instead of boots, well aware that if he had to bale out of an aircraft in an emergency he would break both his ankles.

As 1943 progresses and it becomes clear that their mission in Italy is an impossible feat, an overwrought Schneider, nerves shot by the relentless bombings, begins to drink increasingly heavily.



BIANCA

MAIN CHARACTER

Bianca, like many Sicilians, resents German occupation on her beloved island. Formally a resident at the German-occupied villa, she and her grandmother have been forced to live in outhouses while the German pilots reside in her former home.

Defiant, slightly headstrong, and waiting in anticipation for Sicily's liberation, Bianca gradually becomes charmed by Hans Fischer's good-natured character and ends up secretly falling for him.



PLOT

BF 109 opens in Sicily, 1943, during the savage heart of the Second World War. A car judders noisily through the narrow streets of Trapani towards its horseshoe-shaped port, a seemingly idyllic setting of white houses and glittering Mediterranean sea. As the car approaches the beach, however, we see rusting machinery and ugly oil slicks lurking on the surface of the water.

The car draws to a halt and General Rudolf Ziegler, ace fighter pilot for Germany's Luftwaffe, jumps out, followed by his colleague, Schafer. They strip off their crumpled, oil-stained uniforms and lie down on the sand, the shedding instantly transforming them into carefree young men. Peace reigns for a brief, deceptive interlude.

Ziegler eventually grows uneasy, a sixth sense warning him that all is not as it seems in spite of the peaceful setting.

He sits up, listening carefully, then jumps up and abruptly races towards the dunes. Schafer follows. Soon afterwards, they hear the air raid warning signal and the drone of approaching enemy aircraft. The two men hastily dress, scramble into the car, and speed back through the streets. Bombs pelt the nearby slopes of Mount Erice as they race back to their base. The other pilots are sheltering in olive groves and slit trenches.

Ziegler's Squadron, the 77th Fighter Group, are based at an airfield outside Trapani. As night falls, and the officers dine at a pink-hued Villa surrounded by a lush vineyard, we are introduced to the main characters. Youthful Lieutenant Hans Fischer, eccentric sandal-wearing Captain Schneider, the mess cook and orderly "Tubby" and others gather around the table. While jovial and full of banter, the men

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look weary. There is a strong sense that they are fighting a losing battle against the Allies.

As they are eating, the electricity fails, plunging them into darkness. Plates and glasses rattle, chairs rock and shutters burst open as the Wellingtons begin to drop bombs around the airfield, their intention to destroy the German pilots' rest. The men evacuate to the grotto for safety. Two local Sicilian women, Bianca and her grandmother, are also taking shelter. It is clear that they dislike the Germans. Captain Schneider attempts to put his arm around Bianca, but she wriggles away. She meets Fischer's eyes and reads the silent apology in them.

Colonel Dürer visits the base as daylight breaches another disturbed night, much to the disgruntlement of the men. Ziegler leads him to a semi-circle of deckchairs beneath

the olive trees, a symbol of the many hours spent waiting for battle. They discuss the lack of pilots, fighter planes, the inability of radio operations to detect imminent attack, and their difficulty in defending Sicily. Aware of his men's increasing apathy and disillusionment in their cause, Ziegler bitterly reveals that Reichsmarschall Göring is contemptuous of the fighter pilots and unjustly believes that they are not doing enough to defend the south.

As Dürer and Ziegler converse, three rounds of anti-aircraft fire shatter the deceptive peace. Engines roar over Mount Erice and explosions pepper the earth. The men dive for the slit trenches as bombs rain over the base. Dürer and Ziegler press their faces to the ground, covered in dirt and debris. Men scream in agony and cry out for stretcher bearers. The scene is one of destruction and carnage.

PLOT

Ziegler and his men are ordered to scramble into the sky and intercept a formation of Allied bombers to the north of the island. The pilots take off, a hundred men flying into battle. Due to high pressure, haze distorts their vision. They fly blind, unable to see any approaching bombers. Then, suddenly, pantechnicons appear behind and beneath them. Ever valiant, Ziegler engages with the enemy planes, losing altitude fast. His formation splits. Chaos rains. Fuel supplies diminish. The Messerschmitts are forced to return to Trapani, beaten. They only manage to shoot one Allied plane down. Ziegler is aware that they are doing the impossible in trying to defend the island.

A shocking teleprint arrives from Reichsmarschall Göring, warning that a fighter pilot from each wing will be tried by court martial for cowardice in the face of the enemy. Ziegler is bitter. As the men eat around the table that night, all are dirty, weary and disillusioned. Defeat hangs

heavy. Schneider is furious, declaring that Göring is still stuck in 1917.

The habitual night bombings begin, their deadly explosions herding the men into the grotto. Bianca is already huddled inside with her grandmother. Fischer notices her and hands over some leftover bread from their meal. She takes it, expressing her gratitude.

Over the following weeks, the Germans and Allied forces tussle over Sicily's skies in a deadly game of tug-of-war. The number of German fighter pilots and planes diminish, with no replacements. Airfields and headquarters are decimated by Allied bombs. Rumours abound of an impending Allied invasion.

Ziegler is instructed to take a Storch and seek alternative landing grounds. Fischer helps him to start the ancient plane, streaming with sweat as he cranks the

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propeller, jumping in after as the engine finally springs to life. Ziegler and Fischer take off to reconnoitre the island. Just as they locate various meadows and thin strips of land suitable for landing, they suddenly spy shadows of aircraft swooping across the fields beneath them. Horrified, Ziegler and Fischer look up to see that their Storch is surrounded by Kittyhawks. Another squadron follows behind. Ziegler performs an emergency landing in a maize field and they sprint for cover. Miraculously, the Americans do not spot their plane.

In the face of constant loss and defeat, Ziegler's mental state deteriorates, as does that of the other pilots. Schneider is drinking heavily and voices what the others are thinking, that soon there will be no aircraft left to defend the island with. They are aware that their future is bleak.

Once more, their diminishing group of Messerschmitts take off for battle, their silhouettes emerging from the dust. Against common sense, Ziegler dives to attack two Spitfires flying beneath him. The British fire at him, puncturing the shell of his aircraft with bullets. Fluids leaking, Ziegler begins to spin downwards. The slopes of Mount Etna lurch towards him. Somehow, he manages to land in a rock-strewn field. He passes out, a sharp pain in his spine. He attempts to radio for help. Eventually Fischer comes to rescue him in the Storch.

For safety, Ziegler orders the few remaining men and aircraft to relocate to a farm with a parched yellow strip of field. Twenty Messerschmitts land with great skill on the short landing strip. Two others circle above, ready to land. Ziegler guides them in via the radio. One of the less

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experienced pilots prepares to land, travelling too fast. The aircraft somersaults. Fuel begins to leak. The pilot tumbles out of the plane. A spark ignites the fuel and a wall of fire shoots up into the air. The pilot sprints towards them, on fire. They douse the flames and place him on a stretcher, hair and skin melted. Ziegler is left traumatised.

Another battle in the skies ensues and only twelve of the Messerschmitts return. Schneider is reported missing, harming morale further. Ammunition is scarce. Direr still, Kittyhawks unexpectedly fly over the farm and shoot at Ziegler and his men. They take cover behind the walls of the farmhouse, opening return fire with their rifles. Ziegler is relieved that the Americans do not spot the few remaining aircraft camouflaged beneath the trees.

The Americans and British are on the verge of landing in

Sicily. A final evacuation is ordered. Tubby makes Ziegler and his men a sumptuous final meal. They dine at the villa, seated around the table for the last time, ignoring the Wellingtons' bombings. In a festive mood, they invite a Canadian and British POW to join their banquet. Afterwards, Fischer arranges to meet Bianca in the villa's garden. Emboldened by wine, he says goodbye to her and promises that one day he will return.

Ziegler travels to Trapani airfield for the last time. Valuable equipment is being destroyed in preparation for the Allies' arrival. Ziegler is the last of his Squadron to evacuate. His Messerschmitt is waiting for him on the runway. He carries his tattered leather case over to the aircraft, revelling in his usual methodical pre-flight preparations.

Ziegler takes off for the last time, his plane soaring over the arid landscape and glimmering sea far beneath him.



THE FILMMAKERS

DIRECTOR - ARI TAUB

Ari has been working in the film industry for over 30 years. His films have been screened around the world, covering many themes and genres, and showcased on HBO, Arts and Entertainment, Showtime and the Disney Channel.

In addition to being praised by the likes of Roger Corman, Roger Ebert and the Los Angeles Times, Ari has received over 50 awards for the films he's directed and produced, working with stars including, Harrison Ford, Sigourney Weaver, Sandra Bernhard, Edward Furlong, Eric Roberts and Tony Lo Bianco.

Ari's directorial debut, WWII feature *The Final Sacrifice*, won Best Film and Best Director, as well as the Audience Award at the Milan International Film Festival and The Best New Director Award at the Brooklyn International Film Festival.

THE FILMMAKERS

WRITER - CHERYL NEVE

Born on the south coast of England, Cheryl initially studied Spanish at King's College London before embarking on a career in the film industry.

Cheryl has produced and written a wide range of feature films, ranging from WWII to drama, espionage, sci-fi and westerns.

Recent projects include 1960s spy movie *Cheating Charlie*, for which she won Best Writer, Best First Time Director and Best Producer, and music video *Love Should Not Hurt* starring Spice Girl Mel B and choreographed by *The Greatest Showman's* Ashley Wallen.





SCRIPT SAMPLE

EXT. GARDEN/ VILLA/ ITALY - DAY

SUPER: 1944

The garden is bursting with summer flowers, the air heavy with the warmth from the afternoon sun. The misty, jagged peaks of mountains and dark cypress trees rise in the distance.

The CHILDREN are gathered in crooked rows on the grass, bony limbs crossed beneath threadbare clothes. VIOLET stands in front of them, jiggling a BABY on her hip.

VIOLET

And again! This time with a bit more enthusiasm. We want your beautiful voices to carry all the way to the mountains.

Obediently, the children begin to sing, their sweet voices filling the garden. Violet smiles, then freezes. In the distance there is the distinct RUMBLING of an approaching lorry.

Violet leaves the children and hurries over to the wall. She is in time to see an Opel Blitz T3.6S lorry pulling up in the courtyard. It is full of armed GERMAN SOLDIERS.

Doors SLAM as the troops jump out. Their hobnailed boots tramp across the courtyard as they march towards the garden.

The children continue to sing sweetly.

The first soldier, hard-faced and brandishing an MP40, enters the garden. Violet blocks his path, still holding the baby. She tries to hide her fear.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?



TONE

The movie will be an ode to the lush golden beauty of Sicily and its azure waters, as well as a gritty account of fighter pilots during the Second World War and all such a precarious lifestyle entailed.

The visual tone will reflect the era in which the film is set, with the colour palette of movies such as "Jojo Rabbit" and "Saving Private Ryan".

The soundtrack will transport the viewer to the heart of wartime, both poignant and dramatic as the story unfolds, while firmly sticking to the narrative's Italian roots.



BF 109

DIRECTOR: Ari Taub, Hit and Run Productions, 65 Roebling St,
Brooklyn NY 11211, USA

T: (+1) 718 809 9057

E: stotlebotl@aol.com

WRITER: Cheryl Neve, Red Typewriter Pictures Ltd

E: cheryl@redtypewriterpictures.com