

History Nov 3, 2016

Where is Untersöchering?

Siegfried Rauch is one of Germany's most successful actors. He landed the role of a lifetime as a race-car driver in the movie *Le Mans*, starring Steve McQueen. Their working relationship turned into a true friendship.



What is the first thing that comes to mind when you reminisce about the film?

Steve was an absolute perfectionist. During the pit-stop scenes, we had to take off our helmets and look like we were sweating. So the makeup artist sprayed some water onto our faces. But Steve objected. "No, no, no – that won't work!" He jumped into the car and drove two laps like a madman, then removed his helmet and said, "See, Siggie, now I'm sweating for real. And no makeup artist can make the veins throb on my forehead." For Steve, everything had to be authentic, which is something I've always admired.

How exactly did you meet?

It was about a week after we had started shooting *Le Mans*. So far, we hadn't exchanged a single word. Everyone on the set wanted to talk to him, but of course that wasn't possible. So I thought I'd leave him in peace and just let him do his work. That seemed to impress him. Finally he came over to me and said, "How come you never talk to me?" So I told him, and he thought that was great. From then on we hung out together all the time, from morning to evening.

How did you learn how to drive fast?

I bought a Porsche 914 at the time. It had a rear-axle engine, just like my race car in the movie, which was a Ferrari 512 S. And then I trained with this Porsche on the course in Le Mans in order to develop a feel for it.

You stayed in touch with McQueen after the movie was finished. What did the two of you share?

Sometimes you meet someone for the first time and think, "Hey, I feel like I've known this guy for ages." That was what it was like for Steve and me. Our childhoods were similar: we both grew up in modest circumstances – he in America and I in Bavaria. He also had a straightforward personality and didn't act like a star. When the movie was finished, he asked if I'd like to go on a short trip with him to Paris. We did that and had a whale of a time.

And then you went your separate ways?

No, when our trip to Paris was over, he stood in front of me and didn't say anything. But I understood him anyway, and sensed that he really wanted to come to southern Germany. "You'd like to visit me in Bavaria, right?" I asked. "Yes," he said.

The godfather of your son Benedikt, he came to Untersöchering for the baptism, but showed up late.

Steve really wanted to find our village on his own. He managed to make it as far as Murnau, and then he got lost. So he asked a girl for directions. She was struck speechless, however, and could only keep murmuring, "Steve McQueen." So he ended up arriving half an hour late.



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Info

In Siegfried Rauchs book „Unser Le Mans“ (Our Le Mans), he tells the story of the movie and his friendship with Steve McQueen.

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