

ZABRISKIE POINT - - - - -

Like his other major opus, *Blow Up*, Michaelangelo Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* attempts to open up the guts of a society that is externally flourishing, but internally botching the whole trip. Whereas Mod London in the Sixties was the target of *Blow Up*, this film looks at America, 1970 (well, sometimes). And while *Blow Up*, with all of its complexities, did strike vital chords, *Zabriskie Point* fails to do so.

The problem is Antonioni's misinterpretation of what this country is today. He spent little time in this country gathering information and seeing what is really happening. It appears that he got only a smattering of what it all means.

Zabriskie Point is a film that makes issues out of the wrong things; it studies illness only in terms of superficiality, using trite metaphors and bad puns to make its illustrations. The film centralizes on the plasticity of American life, but it rarely delves into why it exists or how it effects.

The film begins with a revolutionary rap session (which includes Kathleen Cleaver, Eldridge's old lady). The kids talk about shutting down a university (the setting suggests Berkeley, but the action clips used are from S.F. State). There is a disagreement among the students as to how far they are willing to go (Are they willing to die?) This portion is convincing, because of its realism; we see Black and White revolutionary ideologies clash. A Black militant ends it by saying that "White radicalism is a mixture of bullshit and jive." This sequence is one of the few truly honest moments in the film.

From there, the film centralizes on three characters who represent the major motifs Antonioni explores: the (quasi) revolutionary (who seems to be in it for the hell of it), the middle-grounder, who splits time between hip and square, and the flashy, plastic businessman.

We see Mark, fed up with revolutionary rhetoric, wanting some kind (and kind) of action. He splits from the meeting and buys guns. Next day, at a demonstration, acting alone, he kills a cop. He flees, steals a plane, and heads for the desert.

Meanwhile, in between Antonioni's use of the billboard as a major symbol of this country's decadence, we meet Daria, a young, pseudo-hip chick, who runs around frustrating her big-time boss/lover (? - the relationship is never fully explained) and looking for a "groovy place to meditate." We also see a big tycoon (Rod Taylor - remember Hawaiian Eye?) wheeling and dealing.

Somehow (karma, I guess), Mark and Daria meet in a secluded desert spot, after he has buzzed her car with his plane. They rap, go sight-seeing (they are at Zabriskie Point), she blows some grass, he doesn't ("The people I'm in with are on a reality trip"). They get down to making it - right there in all that erotic desert sand - and suddenly a whole mountain side of lovers appear, and an extended communal cosmic bash follows.

Later Daria discovers that Mark has killed a cop (he denies it) and stolen the plane. He wants to return the plane. So, they paint it freaky and write weird slogans ("Suck Bucks" - clever, eh?). Off Mark goes, "because he digs the risk involved."

The cops are waiting and they nail Mark. Daria, now at her boss's desert hideaway, hears of Mark's death. From there, fantasy takes over, as Daria sees the huge plastic complex explode at least fifteen times. All kinds of fragmented apparatus fills the air in a kind of crass culture ballet: tv sets, frozen turkeys, Wonderbread, etc. It's really a fantastic bit of footage, but like much of the film, it obviously and quickly makes its point, and then subsides in interest.

But *Zabriskie Point*, for all its failings, is a film you should see. It does say something about this country. Although he overdoes it, Antonioni shows the excessive banality in which we live. The film is most successful in the presentation of Antonioni's fantasies of America. But, ultimately *Zabriskie Point* lacks the kind of symbolic power and the technique that made *Blow Up* so forceful. There he crept into the eye of Mod London, inspected it, understood it, and dealt with it. Here, we get only the pretense of that sort of vision and it won't do. No where in the film is there an understanding of the substance of revolution. No where is the hint of what all those ugly, grotesque symbols mean. Indeed, no where does Antonioni acknowledge the real shallowness of both the establishment AND the revolution. Here, in 1970, Antonioni gives us a film that even ends on a sophomoric, idealistic key of optimism, totally disregarding the existence of Chicago and white racism. *Zabriskie Point* has no sense of reality and turns into an intellectually dishonest piece of work. (It might be that Antonioni is putting us, via high camp, but I doubt it; he seems too serious).

It's a shame in a way, because this film will stand as Antonioni's statement about America. And it could have been so much more significant had he spent time perceiving, not just observing. Unlike *Blow Up*, which

A REVIEW

BY MIKE FERGUSON

had a deep sense of awareness, *Zabriskie Point* merely pretends to know.

WOODSTOCK

A REVIEW

BY KATHLEEN FITZGERALD

Three days and nights of shooting at the Woodstock Fair in August of '69 produced 120 hours of film and sound. After six months of editing, supervised by Director Mike Wadleigh and producer Bob Maurice, a 3-hour and 45 minute film of the pilgrimage to Bethel N.Y. by 400-500,000 New Age Children crystallized, and Warner Bros. released a documentary titled simply, *Woodstock*.

Woodstock is a tremendously moving film, it captures the essence of the Woodstock Fair as the Fair captured the essence of this generation's culture.

Thematically, there are two currents in *Woodstock*. The first theme, music - rock music - as vital to the movement as water is to life, hits you as soon as the song "By The Time We Got To Woodstock" (Crosby, Stills Nash and Young) opens the film. The legend begins.

The performers in the film are Baez, Joe Crocker, Country Joe and The Fish, Arlo Guthrie, Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young, Richie Havens, Jimi Hendrix, Santana, John Sebastian, Ten Years After, Sha-Na-Na, Sly and the Family Stone and The Who. Their performances are recorded in their entirety. This captures the overwhelming excitement of the audience-performer relationships. The sound quality is excellent; although the music was recorded live there is no feedback, just pure, joyous sound. Thunder and rain, music and raring applause and more music - it's all there on four-track stereo and split screen in *Woodstock*. Not all of the electricity ran through the amps and the microphones, it ran through the minds and bodies of the crowd and across their faces.

The second theme is of sociological impact, i.e., this is a film about young people - their life style, the validity of their ideals and culture and the survival and success of same.

In three days 500,000 people confine to a few acres of land discovered that they could have it any way they wanted, and in this freedom they chose true peace and love. It was a tribal festival an agape romp. It was a positive energy statement on what we feel and how "together" we can be without food or shelter, with only each other.

This film is a beautiful pre-

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