

*Movie Review***Antonioni Lauded**

"Zabriskie Point" is scheduled to open Wednesday at the Strand Theater. It is rated R—restricted, persons under 17 require accompanying parent or adult guardian.

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Michelangelo Antonioni's "Zabriskie Point," a portrait of youth in America today, has finally arrived after months of preparation, filming and eager anticipation.

It seems to me, after two viewings on successive evenings, to be the best picture since "Easy Rider" of an embattled generation trying to find a meaning and purpose to life in a nowhere time and place.

Antonioni is an artist who is as much concerned with the visual as the ideological. In the amount of sheer beauty and awesome splendor he can place into each frame of film, he is without peer.

"Zabriskie Point" is one of the most gorgeous pictures ever made.

His young hero and heroine stride hand in hand, not in a Garden of Eden but through primeval mountains and deserts and jungles of the city, in a world of billboards, coaxial cables, exhaust pipes and frenetic freeways, from the City of Angels to the Valley of Death, not into a beautiful sunset, but to a roseate, apocalyptic doom.

And while the eye blinks in wonder and the heart skips a beat at the awesome grandeur of Antonioni's vision, the mind rebels. At least mine did, the first time I saw the film.

I looked for flaws and found them. Antonioni is not always concerned with being scrupulously fair or, for that matter, lucid.

His story is very simple. Mark is a young, death-marked revolutionary who is searching for a revolution, an idealist seeking an ideal. He is involved with a group of young activists who are involved in a protest at a Los Angeles university.

When the Black Panthers have installed themselves in the Administration Building and the armed "pigs" outside stand ready with the tear gasses and guns and a battle is imminent, Mark is instinctively roused to some kind of action.

When the battle begins, he may or may not have killed a cop. We never know, for sure. This is one of Antonioni's trademarks. Remember "Blow Up?"

Mark steals a Piper Cub and flies out of Los Angeles into the desert where he buzzes Daria, the young and nubile Eve of the film, who is driving towards Phoenix and an appointment

with her boss, a land development punjab who creates suburban paradises out of the desert sands. She, too, is looking for a meaning to life.

Out of gas, Mark lands and Daria meets him at Zabriskie Point, the entrance to Death Valley and the lowest point of elevation in the United States. Get it?

Surrounded by mountains and dry beds of antiquity where still, some flowers grow, they make love, but he will not stay. They paint the plane in psychedelic colors, he flies off to his very real doom, and she, to her appointment in Phoenix, where she has her apocalyptic vision of doom.

While her boss, the cohorts and his customers are buying and selling parcels of dirt, she sees the end of that America, with all of the deep-freezes and sundeck furniture and color teevees and Wonder Breads and consumer goods and billboard dreams, exploding into flames and being blown sky high, floating finally, elegiacally into the void.

It is only a vision. Those things still stand, they still exist, but she leaves to look for a better something somewhere.

The flaws are obvious, the naive is obvious, the romanticism is obvious. Why does a boy go off to certain death? Is suicide so beautiful and the answer? Are ALL cops really Fascist pigs? Is Rod Taylor, who plays Daria's boss, a nice mediocrity who is as caught up as anyone else, REALLY responsible for all that's rotten the world?

The second time I saw the film, on the following evening, these things were still there, but they no longer bothered me. I was carried away and swept along by Antonioni's vision.

I forgot about the occasional awkwardness of Mark Frechette and Daria Halprin who have never acted before, and simply sat back and admired their beauty and allowed them to escort me through Antonioni's Inferno, along the byways and freeways and country roads and city gutters of the heaven and hell of our time and lives.

I permitted my mind to be blown and my heart, moved, and my eyes, dazzled. Why think? Why analyze? Why ferret out flaws? Has that ever made anybody happy?

I took a trip to "Zabriskie Point" and I suggest you do the same. The Under-Thirties will and the Over Thirties should.