

'Zabriskie' A Good Puzzle

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FILM DIRECTORS don't come with much better credentials than those accumulated by Michelangelo Antonioni.

The Italian hit with "L'Avventura," about the problem of identity in a changing world. Then such films as "The Red Desert" (his first picture in color; he repainted streets and buildings) and "Blow-Up."

The man with the eye to the puzzles of life now is represented by his first movie made in America, "Zabriskie Point," new at the Valley Theater.

IT IS SIMPLE, yet complex. Simple because it narrates the attitudes of today's American youth in their struggle to both find themselves and lose The Establishment. Complex because the film, after all, was made by an Italian who was in America for the first time.

On the surface, "Zabriskie Point" makes obvious points.

Young people today are concerned with the racial situation, as portrayed by a campus meeting of white students with Black Panthers (not as well handled as the white reporter's trip to a black apartment in "Medium Cool"); by the

sexual revolution, as shown in the easy way the boy and girl couple in the desert; and by the kill-them attitude of authorities, as shown when the boy returns the plane he has stolen only to be pointlessly gunned down by police (with the casualness of the deaths in "Easy Rider").

IT IS IN THE symbolic moments that Antonioni really says what he has on his mind in "Zabriskie Point." The Italian shows complicated photographic expenses of San Francisco business signs, representing the obsession for money-making in America.

He suddenly fills up a desert scenic spot (from which the picture takes its name) with an orgiastic landscape of people making love.

And in the final sequence, the young girl imagines the plush desert home of her boss and impaled lover being blown to bits. Inside that blow-up, Antonioni has a smaller explosion in which the home's material goods — TV set, books, clothes — fly to pieces in slow motion almost like the death of Bonnie and Clyde.

And it is in such a fantasy that Antonioni forces you to re-think the entire film. You realize what some of the small moments have meant in the early part of the picture. You know now, why the girl so hated the affluence of the people around her and why she wandered off into the desert.

THE GIRL AND the boy she meets are film unknowns—Daria Halprin and Mark Frechette. Rod Taylor has a small role as a busy tycoon.

"Zabriskie Point" is as meandering as this review. But when you put the pieces together it makes a lot of sense. It is the America of today, about to be blown apart—if only in the minds of the young—for its faults that blindly pit habit against ideals.

It is a film that will appeal more to the young and the movie buff than one-sided oldsters. But if you enjoy putting together the pieces of a challenging puzzle, it's there to be dug.