

<http://blogcritics.org/video/article/dvd-review-the-point/>

Quick pop culture quiz. Name the first full length animated feature produced specifically for television. Need a hint? It was based on an album of pop songs, and first aired in 1971. Unfortunately I wouldn't be surprised if you've never heard of either the movie or the man who wrote the music it was based on. [The Point](#), based on the album of the same name by American song writer [Harry Nilsson](#) and directed and animated by [Fred Wolf](#) first aired on ABC with a cast that included Dustin Hoffman in the lead role.

Like its creator, the film has unfortunately almost been forgotten, existing only as a faint memory for those who remember one of the times it was broadcast. However, with the movie being given a new life on DVD by the [MVD Entertainment Group](#), hopefully both Nilsson and *The Point* will gain some of the recognition they richly deserve. After the initial broadcast Hoffman's voice had to be overdubbed out of the production due to contractual conflicts. So the voice you now hear in the key role of narrator/father is that of former Beatle [Ringo Starr](#). Aside from that, you'll be seeing the movie just as it was originally broadcast.

To today's sophisticated audience, I'm sure the animation will look excessively primitive, for everything was still drawn by hand in the early 1970s. So instead of the detailed and lifelike cartoons we have grown accustomed to thanks to computer-generated animation, this has a very rough sketch-like quality to it. Backgrounds are primarily washes of colour while foregrounds and characters seem like crude drawings compared to today's offerings. However, once you allow yourself to become wrapped up in the story, you'll find the technical details won't matter. In fact, the rather surreal quality they create actually helps heighten the fantastical atmosphere that is part of the movie's charm.

Told as a bedtime story by a father (Starr) to his son, *The Point* recounts the adventures of Oblio and his dog Arrow. Oblio is born in the town of Point, which gets its name from the fact everybody and everything has a point. From the pyramid shaped buildings to the tops of each person's head there's not a round object in the place. That is until little Oblio is born without a point. Naturally his difference is quite the talking point (get used to it, there are any number of plays on words around the word "point" employed in the movie) but things only come to a head when Oblio and Arrow show up The Count's son in a game of ring toss. The Count forces the King of Point to banish Oblio to the Pointless Forrest for being in contravention of the law stating everybody in Point must have a point.

So little Oblio and Arrow venture into the Pointless forest where they meet with all kinds of strange and mysterious individuals. From the beatnik "Rock Man", a large creature made of stones who espouses a kind of hip philosophy of acceptance, to the triple headed pointed man, each help the young boy see that you don't need to be pointed to have a point. As Nilsson had originally told the story on his album *The*

*Point*, the action of the move is aided and accentuated by his music. Sometimes whimsical and often fantastic, when combined with the animator Wolf's visuals the songs are what give this movie its real magic.



Whether simply expounding on the relationship between a lonely boy and his pet with "Me And My Arrow", expanding on the themes of the story, "Think About Your Troubles", or exploring the differences between reality and fantasy in "Are You Sleeping", the songs both help tell the story and

create an emotional bond between the viewer and Oblio. Like the movie itself the music never lectures or pontificates, instead it helps us see there is more than one way of looking at the world. In the town of Point Oblio was subject to the law that different is bad. However, out in the rest of the world he discovers there are all sorts of creatures without points but that doesn't prevent them from having a point.

What's nice about this movie is the time it takes to allow Oblio to make his discoveries. Over the course of the movie, we watch as he comes to the realization that different is not bad and therefore he is of worth. Unlike a lot of stuff today where everything is about the quick fix, this movie understands we all need time to accept new things and to learn how to appreciate them. Especially when it comes to learning new things about ourselves that go against everything we've been told. If you've been made to feel different or odd all your life learning to like yourself and understand you have value is not easy. Watching Oblio take this journey will be edifying for anyone, young or old, who has ever felt out of place and different.

The DVD includes several special features. Hopefully the biographical details about Nilsson and the testimonials to his talent included in these features will encourage a new generation of people to explore his music. Unfortunately, he pretty much stopped recording after the death of his great friend John Lennon in 1980, and instead worked on trying to get tougher gun laws passed. Still, when he died of heart failure in 1994, he left behind a legacy of 13 studio albums and four movie soundtracks, including the soundtrack to Robert Altman's *Popeye* starring Robin Williams.

The special features also include an interview with animator Fred Wolf who not only describes the process they went through to create the movie, but how Nilsson managed to convince ABC to make it. After many fruitless attempts to make an appointment with the head of the studio, Nilsson learned that the man was taking a plane from Los Angeles to New York City. Nilsson proceeded to phone airline after airline until he found out which flight the the exec was on and then booked the seat next to him. By the end of the flight he had convinced the studio head that the network should produce and air a cartoon that hadn't yet even been scripted.

To eyes used to today's high-tech computerized animation, *The Point* will look decidedly primitive. However, the message of tolerance conveyed by the music and the movie is still as relevant today as it was in 1971. There's also a certain amount of charm and wonder to be found in watching something that was entirely drawn by hand and then filmed frame by frame as this was. Take the time and sit down with a child and watch *The Point*, you might be surprised to find out how much you both enjoy it.