

FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 2013

DVD Review: The Point (Harry Nilsson / Ringo Starr)

Text © Robert Barry Francos / FFanzeen, 2013

Images from the Internet



The Point: The Definitive Collector's Edition

Directed and animated by Fred Wolf

MVD Visual

74 min, 1971 / 2012

MVDvisual.com

The 1970s was a key point in cinema animation, with works by Ralph Bakshi (*Fritz the Cat*, *Wizards*), Martin Rosen (*Watership Down*) and Ralph Lafox (*Fantastic Planet*). At the same time, weekly television cartoons went from 24 frames per second to 18 (e.g., *The Jackson 5ive*, *Nanny and the Professor*).

Undeterred by the growing maturity of the medium, *The Point*, drawn by Fred Wolf, was bravely released into the world and shown on ABC television as the first animated "Move of the Week" in 1971. Using simple line drawings that looked an [Alka-Seltzer commercial](#) from the '60s (which had been drawn by RO Blechman), it went out to touch a wide-reaching audience for various reasons.

Blog Archive

▼ 2013 (3)

▼ January (3)

DVD Review: David Bowie Under Review - The Calm Be...

DVD Review: The Point (Harry Nilsson / Ringo Starr...

DVD Review: Ike & Tina: On the Road 1971-72

► 2012 (36)

► 2011 (100)

► 2010 (151)

► 2009 (78)

► 2008 (70)

► 2007 (22)

About Me

Robert Barry Francos
Currently living in Saskatoon (email at RBF55@msn.com for address). From 1977-88, I used to publish a print version of a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). Now I write this blog, and have a column at jerseybeat (dot) com (slash) quietcorner (dot) html. And the beat goes on.

[View my complete profile](#)

[Some of my photos](#)

[Jersey Beat magazine](#)

[Life and Blog of Gary Pig Gold](#)

[Lethal Dose by Donna Lethal](#)

[Blitz! Magazine: Mike McDowell](#)

[Tom Bingham's blog](#)

But first, this message: Narrating the story-within-a-story is Ringo Starr, as the dad who reads the story to his young son, who is more into watching television (“my shows”) than books (sound familiar?). Starr’s easily recognizable voice rambles along, up and down tones in a slight sing-song manner that he’s known for, which is, of course, endearing. Note, however, the original airing on television used Dustin Hoffman’s voice, and Ringo was added for the video release years later. The songs that accompany the story are by Starr’s cohort and real-life close friend, Harry Nilsson (d. 1994), known for the likes of “Without You” and “Everybody’s Talkin’”. One from the film, “Me and My Arrow,” even became a somewhat hit. Nilsson also wrote and pitched the story idea. And in typical post-Beatles music-related animation, there is a bit of a psychedelic feel to the colors and flow. I wouldn’t go as far as to call it derivative as much as influenced.

The story told is about a little boy, Oblio, and his dog Arrow, who live in a land where everything and everyone has a triangular shape, or a point (for people, it’s at the top of their heads, possibly inspiring the Coneheads. And yet, no one’s pointy-headed life has any point. Yes, the double meaning is purposeful in the story, especially when Oblio is born with a round head (like us). Nearly everyone else in the story is also *The Simpsons*-ish orange (perhaps Snooki?), though occasionally to make a point, some are other colors, such as a crooked politician being purple. Yes, it is very *Yellow Submarine* in that way, with the meanie being a darker hue of blue.

Due to the machinations of said politico, inspired by his bully of a son who is Oblio’s school mate, Oblio and Arrow are cast away into the “Pointless Forest.” There he meets a series of people or creatures, some having some kind of trinity about them. First there is a slimy character with three heads who consistently points out that all those who Oblio meets in the forest are pointless, to which he disagrees. Then there’s three obese women bouncing around like beachballs (reminding me more of a post-blueberry Violet Beauregarde). Among others, there is a fashion industry manufacturer tree waiting to bring out the next season’s line (“Careful! Leaves don’t fall on trees, y’know!”) and an obviously African-American Rock man (“Dig?”) that has a rear-view mirror touch of Semitic and Black-hep stereotyping, among many others.

Oblio is voiced by 10-year-old Mike Lookinland, who is better known to that generation as the youngest boy Brady, Bobby. Other voices include animation stalwarts Paul Frees (who narrated many films and cartoons, as well as playing both John Lennon and George Harrison in the Beatles cartoon; d. 1986), Lenny Weinrib (he voiced both Scrappy-Doo and H.R. Hufnstuf, among so many others; d. 2006), and voice-queen Joan Gerber (d. 2011); also child actor Buddy Foster (who played Mike Jones on both the Andy Griffith Show and Mayberry RFD; he’s also Jody’s older brother).

But the most important voice, however, is Nilsson’s as he croons the Greek-chorus songs that weave throughout the story. This can almost be seen as a happier version of *The Little Prince* meets *Alice in Wonderland*, where the child has many exciting and sometimes dangerous adventures on his way to find truth, meaning, and yes, the point of life. Then there is the consistent looking for the positive in everything like *Candide*.

And what happens when round-headed outcast Oblio returns to the

[G-Mole: Bruce Farley Mowat](#)

[Suburban Voice: Al Quint](#)

[Blog of Lance Strate of General Semantics/Media Ecology Association](#)

[Who Really Cares blog of Craig Davison](#)

pointed land? Well, that is the - err - point, isn't it...

This really is a charming story and well told. It will appeal to children with the art and music, and there is enough double entendres that will keep the adults interested. And those Nilsson songs. Even with a few major hits, it is true that he was underrated for his voice and writing. This film, as a Nilsson legacy, is something to be treasured, even though it has become a bit dated over the years in some of its categorized characters. The story, however, remains true, and that's what matters in the end.

The extra is a 27-minute documentary broken into four parts: "Who is Harry Nilsson?", "Pitching *The Point*," "Making *The Point*," and "Legacy of *The Point*." It's consistently interesting, about how Nilsson brought the film to fruition. Some of the oral history is presented by the likes of director/ animator Fred Wolf, Mickey Dolenz of the Monkees, Terry Gilliam who animated Monty Python's Flying Circus, John Lennon's consort May Pang, and Harry's last wife, Una and adult kids Annie and Beau. Shame they couldn't get Lookinland to discuss his role.

Posted by [Robert Barry Francos](#) at 9:27 PM 

Labels: [Animated Film](#), [Animation](#), [Beatles](#), [Brady Bunch](#), [Cartoons](#), [FFanzeen](#), [Fred Wolf](#), [Harry Nilsson](#), [psychadelia](#), [Ringo Starr](#), [Robert Barry Francos](#), [The Point](#)

Reactions: interesting (0) cool (0) informative (0)

No comments:

Post a Comment