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The Gods Of Times Square (2007/BrinkDVD Set)

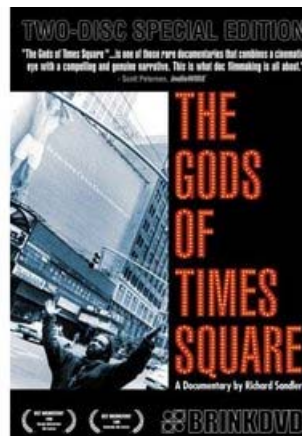
Picture: C+ Sound: C
 Extras: C+
 Documentary: C+

Richard Sandler gets my respect for spending the time and having the combination of patience, tolerance and endurance to make what has become the documentary **The Gods Of Times Square** (2007) by taping people all over the place in a period of six years. The significance of the timespan is that it marks the transition when the area went from being wild and raw with all kinds of unique people and more than a few disturbed ones, to its clean-up and takeover by entertainment corporations that put new businesses and buildings there, reviving the once red-light district to make it more family friendly and profitable.

That worked, but the question asked is, at what price to the local culture and those who did not have the money to stay? It is a legitimate question and it brings up the usual argument of if some people should be left alone, left to be who they are no matter how hateful or disturbing and what right people and companies with money have to move in/buy in to a given area. Since it was coordinated with Rudy Giuliani's administration, this extends to the government.

However, whatever the moral answers or ethics, the main documentary deals more with the people acting nuts than those who do not who are not talking hate or obviously sick, except for maybe a guy running a local eatery. In this, Sandler totally misses the other big story and one that could offer the larger argument he may have been making against the big companies becoming more invested there.

If the argument is that multi-national corporate presence covers up real life debate, this piece does not achieve that. The deconstructionist argument noted is nothing new and even sick people who have fallen through the cracks is the subject for another work trying to find answers to helping them if that. This work ignores that too, making it an



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interesting work at best, even if any sense of direction it offers is limited.

The 1.33 X 1 image is surprisingly consistent considering the long period of taping, but the same machine makes the same image, especially in video. The Dolby Digital 2.0 sound is all the location sound and to Sandler's credit, it is a little cleaner than expected, but cannot escape its many flaws. Extras include two update pieces that follow along the same lines on a bonus disc with a progress report and more of those interviews from the main feature on DVD 2. It is worth seeing, but know it nearly becomes exploitive, until Sandler makes himself part of the story.

- Nicholas Sheffo



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