



The Committee (DVD/CD Set) □

Picture: C+ Sound: C+ Extras: C+ Film: B-

Peter Sykes is an interesting and distinctive British filmmaker and one of his early successes was the long-out-of-circulation **The Committee** from 1968. The film begins with a simple conversation between a car driver and the hitchhiker he picks up, taking a surrealistic turn and going from there. Paul Jones (aka the music artist Manfred Mann) turns in one of his little-known acting performances as the unnamed main character in this tale of a near-future Britain where murder, the state and the individual are looked at in a new way.

The twist here in the Max Steuer/Peter Sykes screenplay (from Steuer's original story) is that the hour-long film that wants to question the idea of the individual insofar as that one is not flawless. This is in the face of State power and it is something worth looking at, though it eventually brings one to the slippery slope that because individuals are flawed, they deserve to be ruled by a bureaucracy or worse. The film does not go there, but it unfortunately leaves that door more open than one would like. The film is slightly left of center in all this, reminding us that the title entity is involved with all state and corporate power.

Sykes went on to do a few episodes in the final season of **The Avengers** (reviewed elsewhere on this site), followed by some memorable Horror genre films like **To The Devil... A Daughter** (also reviewed elsewhere on this site), **Venom**, **Demons In The Mind** and **The House In Nightmare Park**. He is a really good director who did not get to work as often as one wishes he could have, but this is maybe the toughest of his works to find. How great it is now available on DVD.

The 1.33 X 1 full frame image is not bad, shot by cinematographer Ian Wilson, B.S.C., who shows he can handle black and white as well as he handles color. This is the film that helped to put him on the map, only his second, going on to lens **And Soon The Darkness**, **Fright**, **Captain Kronos – Vampire Hunter**, Derek Jarman's **Edward II** and the fourth series of **Quatermass** (reviewed elsewhere on this site). Wilson and Sykes would work together several more times, making for one of the less-known but very effective British director/cinematographer teams.

The Dolby Digital 2.0 Mono is not bad for its age, with about 17 minutes of music by no less that Pink Floyd (without vocals, around the time they would also contribute to Michelangelo Antonioni's **Zabriskie Point** (1970) before coming into their own). The only extras include the three-song CD that includes Jones new recording of the title song and two instrumental re-recordings by The Homemade Orchestra of *Bird* and *Here Comes The Flood*, as well as an interview with Sykes and Steuer that runs 51:05 and is well worth your time AFTER you watch the film.

One other thing that makes the film interesting is that it is a portrait of a future England that is not **A Clockwork Orange** or **Brazil**, part of a cycle of such films that are too little scene. Now that it's on DVD, **The Committee** will be discovered by a whole new generation of film and music fans. A terrific portrait of the 1960s as well, it is highly recommended.

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