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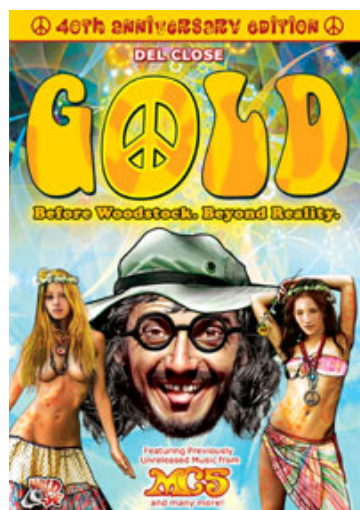
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## MOVIE REVIEWS



***Gold: Before Woodstock. Beyond Reality.***

This is an odd little curio from the late 60s. Even the coming attractions trailer does not seem to know what to make of the film. "It's a western. It's a comedy. It's a nudie. It's a drama. It's a musical. It's a revolution. It's a manifesto. It's a movement. It's a happening. It's a freak-out."

Actually, it's kind of all of those things and yet not really good at being any of them. There seems to be no real idea what is going on here. At different points, the story seems to be taking place in the old West, the 20s dust bowl and the then-current late 60s - and sometimes all three at the same time.

What it is really is a film improvised by a whole bunch of stoned (and often naked) hippies. There is sort of a storyline here, but it is mostly a very, very heavy-handed political allegory

**GOLD: BEFORE WOODSTOCK. BEYOND REALITY (1968)**

Starring Del Close, Garry Goodrow, Caroline Parr, Sam Ridge, Orville Schell and Dorothy Schmidt.

Directed by Bob Levis and Bill Desloge.

Distributed by MVD Visual. 90 minutes. Not Rated.

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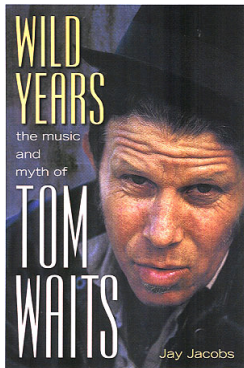


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about standing up to the man.

And what the hell is the deal with the clown on the motorbike?

It stars early improv comics Del Close (his name is misspelled Del Clos in the opening credits) and Garry Goodrow (also misspelled as Gary) who went on to form the comic troupe The Upright Citizen's Brigade. This group really didn't become big until the 90s and members like Amy Poehler, Matt Walsh, Adam McKay and Horation Sanz came to prominence - though Close was a mentor to these comics and had a long and respected career as a comedian and writer/producer for *Saturday Night Live*.

Goodrow plays (very broadly) the figure of authority. He comes upon a small town where gold has been found and sets about taking over all the power over the locals - eventually stealing the gold and imprisoning or killing anyone who did not follow his strong-arm rules.

At least, I think that was what was happening.

Close plays an apparently mental hobo who travels the backwoods, constantly jabbering on as he stumbles upon naked hippies and official injustices. Eventually he dresses up as Che Guevara and tries to start a people's revolution.

And what exactly was the revolution looking to achieve? Well, it seems the hippies were passionate about all men (and women-folk) sharing the land equally and most importantly having the God-given freedom to skinny-dip.

Believe me, I'm all for public nudity, but after the opening credits pay photographic tribute to such then fresh hot-button

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topics as the Kennedy assassinations, Vietnam, Martin Luther King and Kent State you expect the political discourse to be a little deeper than a treatise for streaking.

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Besides, this film - released just as the Hays commission ban on film nudity was ending - is rather explicit sexually for its time, but the nudity is mostly of the common people, so you have lots of hair and cellulite and wrinkles on display.

Back in this time, X-Rated adult films (which I assume was the rating *Gold* must have received during its very short theatrical run) were actually able to tell interesting, *nuanced* stories - such as the next year's Best Picture *Midnight Cowboy*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Last Tango in Paris*. *Gold* does not really fit into that company.

So why is it getting a release on video after all these years when so many better-known films from its era are long forgotten? (And why is it being released as a special 40th Anniversary Edition when it is 42 years old?)

Well, one reason it is getting the chance to be seen again after all these years of obscurity probably has to do with the music. There are a few never-released songs by the legendary cult rock band The MC5 (though they are referred to by their more formal moniker The Motor City Five in the opening credits) as well as some music by Ramblin' Jack Elliot and also the group Sailcat, soon to be a one-hit-wonder for the early-70s single "Motorcycle Mama."

However, the commentary tracks (and believe it or not, there are two sets of commentary by four people) sort of put *Gold* into perspective. Apparently on the heels of popular psychedelic films

like *Easy Rider* and *Yellow Submarine*, director Bob Levis was able to get a studio give him money to spend a month in the woods with a bunch of friends, get high, make music, have sex and occasionally, when they got around to it, work on making a film. It was almost completely improvised and only had a vague plot - and they just hoped they'd get enough footage of interest to sustain a movie.

*Gold* was probably a whole hell of a lot of fun to make. Too bad it's not nearly as much fun to watch.

**Jay S. Jacobs**

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