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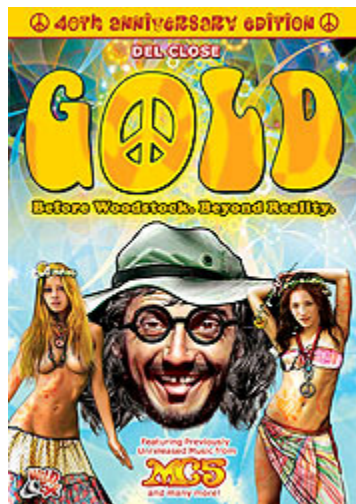
GOLD: Before Woodstock, Beyond Reality DVD

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By **Matt Keeley**

GOLD: Before Woodstock, Beyond Reality is a 40-year-old lost film starring a comedy hero, Del Close. Like another film by a comedy hero, *Savages* (a Merchant-Ivory film written by Michael O'Donoghue), it's a noble failure.

These two films are, however, noble failures in opposite ways. *Savages* had a great idea, but was directed without any panache resulting in a boring film (except for one great setpiece, "Steppin' on the Spaniel"). *Gold*, on the other hand, has a muddled idea (Del Close's character picks up a moose turd and declares "Gold!" which for some reason causes a hippie gold rush of sorts, and a couple guys try to take control of the commune that develops . . . or something.), though it's put together pretty well with lots of great music from the era.



Gold might not be as pretty as *Savages*—which stands to reason since prettiness is Merchant-Ivory's stock in trade—but its collaged style keeps the film going, even when it might not make the most sense. The film seems to be a mix of scripted and improvised; the dialogue often has the feel of improv, though most of the dialogue has been dubbed in, due to poor recording. That combination adds to the muddled feeling of the film, with dialogue that doesn't match the lip movements, but which also isn't honed in any way to make it sound and feel as if it's something some hippies put together as a lark. This isn't surprising, as the filmmakers just went off for a month and came back with the movie.

In a way, I'm not sure if I'm in the target demographic for this film any longer. I'm sure I would have liked it a lot better when I was 14; the absurd editing, sophomoric humor, and copious amounts of naked, busty ladies would likely have been much more intriguing then. Still, for comedy geeks, it's at the very least interesting.

Del Close, like I said, is a comedy god, being one of the founders of the modern improv comedy scene and having worked with troupes including Second City and the Upright Citizens Brigade. There is also a pile of bonus features on here as well, including a commentary track by Matt Walsh and Ian Roberts of the aforementioned UCB. Even aside from the bonuses, MVD Video did a wonderful job on the disc: the transfer is excellent. To look at the disc, you wouldn't expect the film to have been lost for 40 years.

Is *Gold* a good film? No, not really. But is it a bad film? Again, not really—I've seen a lot worse. The worst thing a film can be is boring and the worst it can do is vacate the brain immediately after viewing; neither applies to *Gold*. From the cool soundtrack (including the MC5!), the strange visuals, and the occasional splicing in of Serious Imagery amongst the silliness (including Vietnamese casualties, JFK in Dallas, and Martin Luther King, Jr's funeral), it's an odd cocktail that'll stick with you, whether you want it to or not.

GOLD: Before Woodstock, Beyond Reality was released via *Wild Eye Releasing* and *MVD Visual* on July 27 and is available to order online from [Wild Eye Releasing](#) or [See Of Sound](#).



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