

Naked Angels Shuck

Bob Fleck

1969

(by Bob Fleck, with a little help from his friends—Alfie, Acid, Dena, Nancy and Barb)

“Naked Angels” is the worst movie we have seen. It’s a hype, a ruse and a shuck on the audience that only serves to exploit the image of bikers and titillate the over-40s. And what’s worse, three issues back, Art Johnston did a lyrical piece heralding this flick as the vision of our culture’s rise to total freedom.

It just ain’t so, Art. It’s too unreal—a typical low-grade piece of shit made by people who don’t know anything about motorcycles or the people who ride them. How is it phony? Let us count the ways:

The story concerns the prez, named Mother, of the Angels (that’s all their colors say besides “California”) returning from some unexplained hassle in Las Vegas to his club in California.

Some now-typical reunion scenes, the call to arms for the club to go out and deal with the Nevada dudes, and flash—they’re on the road in downtown Vegas. Locate a cat from the other club (who’s conveniently hanging around), whomp him till he tells where his people are out in the desert, go out to groove on the liter and sites of the strip and end up hassling with some mafia types and the pigs in a stand-off.

On the road again, crash for the night—some of the nicest photography is in this sequence as well as some pretty shots of the neon madness back in the city—and zap—they’re in the desert, running low on gas, water, dope, and good vibes. Dudes begin to spill one by one:

Mother presses on, heavily, even past growing uptites from the strung-out club. Finally, one cat dumps, and Mother demands that they leave his cycle behind. Too much—mutiny. He’s been coming down too heavy on his old lady too and she says no more.

So off alone, down the road, to hunt down the bunch that had vamped on him. He gets lost, strung out, goes through a weird thirst-lunacy that ends up in him getting bailed out by a grizzled old loner (who also just happens to rescue his bike restoring it to shining perfection over night—maybe he’s Harley’s chief mechanic in exile?).

Some vague conversation between motorized gypsy and desert hermit touches on guns, society, and loneliness, but is neither revealing or enlightening. It simply occurs, neither one leaving a mark on the other—perhaps the director intended it to be “arty?”

Meanwhile, the breakaway gang has run out of gas in the middle of nowhere when lo, suddenly there appears a gas tank truck that can handily take care of pouring into a 2” gas tank mouth.

Whatever, the gang and Mother arrive at the rival’s camp at the same time. But wait—where were (1) the other club’s bikes (2) their water? No matter. The Angels charge up, a chick gets blown back 10 feet (“Yeah, she’s all right some confusing maneuvers follow, ending in one dude neatly discovering a case of dynamite and caps which look like tinfoil when he ties them on the side of the sticks.

He’s somehow managed to avoid the gunfire to calmly toss a number into the bad guys’ (we never did find out why they were so evil) lair. Fagrooom. Out they run (whhhaaaaat???) and commence to fist it, club it, kick it, and generally beat it out.

The gun has mysteriously disappeared and the baddies fall right off. One makes a break for” he Angel’s bike, gets pursued and caught in the desert. Mother whomps on him, only to have the surly vice-prez of his own former group vamp on him, who also gets whomped. Off into the sunset.

Now, why did the club damn near kill itself gettin’ to ‘em and then just thump on ‘em a little? Offing the dudes would have been more real.

The movie was exploitative on several levels. The women were not shown as liberated, revolutionary, or even human. One even had the stereo-typed tatoo on her ass, “property of...” Mother frequently wailed his old lady’s ass, and nary a peep from her until the club (all men) back her up. If that’s society, then it should be criticized—heavily, not documented for thrilling the porkchop audiences.

The dope scenes used the usual greasy-looking stash keepers. Hell, one scene had an argument cooled out by seedy “stash” offering joints to the other two. People complained too bitterly when the weed ran out and a lame attempt at heaviness fell flat when stash offered up some “blue Owsley” and reverted back to his native N.Y.U.-educated dealer accent.

The acid orgy happens at night, right on schedule.

And that’s the worst part of the movie. The dialog sounds like it was written by a narc from Council Bluffs, Iowa, who took a tour through the Haight. It constantly slips in and out of character, along with the accents. “Ain’t” and “not” and “none” mix in with “I don’t believe so” to give a truly phony effect. Why the hell can’t scriptwriters spend some time living what they write instead of reading or imagining it?

Now why, Art, did you quote Brando and Fonda from their respective flicks when you were hyping “Naked Angels”? You can’t lend quality or truth by sneaking in a fake between two real ones. It’s like trying to give a transfusion to a corpse.

Not once does this flick attempt to point out the real conflicts of our emergent culture scene. Bikers, violence, sex, dope, freedom—they’re all given a surface exposure, just enough to tantalize the warped heads of Amerika. The violence is contained among the bikers, a poisonous practice many people are trying to halt; the sex is unreal and peak-a-boo; the dope gets the same cheap thrills treatment as Anslinger gave it in 1930.

The bikers are shown as a bunch of animals devoid of any brains or human feeling and the freedom is empty sky or loneliness—the message is clearly that the bikers aren’t real brothers—which just ain’t so.

In short, the whole crippled movie is summed up in one of its own scenes portraying a fear-crazed timorous gas station Walter Mitty, so uptight with Mother that all he can do is crouch in a corner, sobbing and gasping about “raping animals” while he jacks off his gun. He ain’t even using the right tool.

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