

CINEMA

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Koyaanisqatsi

Directed by Godfrey Reggio, presented by Francis Ford Coppola. 1983.

Koyaanisqatsi takes its title from the Hopi word for "life out of balance" or "a way of living that calls for another way of living." It is a film without individual characters or dialogue, unless you consider the occasional chanting of voices on the soundtrack as dialogue.

Koyaanisqatsi is a version of the Hopi worldview, although there are no Hopi people in the film. In that worldview, present-day America is on a collision course with doom, and the Hopi prophecies say that what will prevail is a time of great winds with clouds like "cobwebs in the sky," a time of "ashes from the sky" raining down on us, altering and destroying the "civilization" we have constructed. This alteration is seen as an inevitable consequence of our living out of balance.

The film version of this Hopi worldview contains great visual and musical drama. Ron Fricke's cinematography is exceptional, from the first frames that focus on Hopi rock paintings to the closing scene that returns to those ancient symbols.

The first part of the film presents the natural world of the Great Basin, as it must have appeared to generations of Hopi: there are breathtaking scenes of buttes and canyons, eroded by wind and water to display repetition of form in rock and sand. The patterns of cloud, water, and earth mingle with light and shadow to reveal a world of mystery and awe.

Heightening the visual drama is a Dolby soundtrack consisting of voices that chant and sing in accompaniment with a keyboard instrument (organ? synthesizer?) of dynamic power.

The second part of the film presents our technological civilization in its various negative aspects. We are given panoramic scenes of industry and commerce on the landscape—strip mines, power plants, pipelines and pylons, freeways, skyscrapers—

and are witness to the frenzy and disconnectedness of urban life, and to the human and social cost of our way of living.

The subject is familiar; the film reminds us of what we already know. But it is the way in which we are reminded that is so stunning. There is a sequence of a United airliner in flight, slowly drawing nearer the camera, that is shot out of focus. The huge white shape with orange and blue markings is purposely blurred as it slowly edges closer and finally it looms before us in detail, a monstrous flying machine. It is the white man's magic, an unbelievable sky god, transforming the sky.

Other scenes include aerial views of Los Angeles and New York, in daylight and darkness, with the traffic speeded up. At night the blurs of light from freeway traffic resemble the frenzied nervous system of a culture gone mad on fossil fuel.

And there are scenes of the South Bronx, acres of deserted apartment buildings in a landscape of rubble. Through the camera's eye, the buildings are monolithic presences in the sky, tombstones already on the horizon.

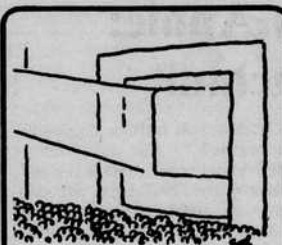
The music continues to dramatize the visual events in this second part of the film, and the effect of sound and image powerfully conveys the film's vision of a world out of balance.

Koyaanisqatsi is a vision without a program; an unabashedly moral tale without an ideology. No one cause or movement or institution is blamed, but rather it is the entire thrust of our present culture that is implicated.

Failure to change our way of living may well result in consequences beyond human control, be they nuclear explosions—"ashes falling from the sky"—or great winds carrying clouds "like cobwebs in the sky," which will forever alter the living world we inhabit.

Koyaanisqatsi leaves your human choice of action, given our present course toward cataclysm, entirely up to you.

—Tim Volem



MOVIES THIS WEEK

All the Right Moves: Cinema World (342-6536).

Big Chill: A group of old college friends meet for one friend's funeral and spend the weekend together. National (344-3431).

Dead Zone: Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Deal of the Century: Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Educating Rita: Stars Michael Caine and debuts Julie Walters as a working class woman who's also a part-time student at the university. Valley River Twin (686-8633).

Koyaanisqatsi: A Hopi word meaning "life out of balance." This film with no characters or dialogue shows us, through image and sound, what America was and what it has become. Bijou (686-2458).

Mr. Mom: Dad stays home to raise 3 kids while Mom pursues her career. Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Never Cry Wolf: Cinema World (342-6536).

Never Say Never Again: Sean Connery returns to the James Bond role. McDonald (344-4343).

Night Shift: Stars Henry Winkler. Showing with Vacation. Fine Arts (747-2201).

Now and Forever: Springfield Quad (726-9073).

Osterman Weekend: A spy thriller. Cinema World (342-6536).

The Prodigal: Oakway Cinema (342-5351).

Richard Pryor Here and Now: Richard Pryor as Richard Pryor, on stage. Mayflower (345-1022).

Rocky Horror Picture Show: Classic kink. Wed-Sat. Bijou Late Nite (686-2458).

Running Brave: Robbie Benson stars. Cinema World (342-6536) and Springfield Quad (726-9073).

To Begin Again: The story of a Nobel prize winning Spanish professor who returns from the U.S. to his native Spain for an emotional reunion with his past. Cinema 7 (687-0733).

Under Fire: Two journalists (Nick Nolte and Joanna Cassidy) in Nicaragua during the 1979 revolution (345-1022).

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Brainstorm

The name Douglas Trumbull may not ring a bell under the subject of director. That's because he is best known as a special effects man. Trumbull worked on 2001: A Space Odyssey, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, and Bladerunner.

Trumbull's first film as a director opened at Cinema World two weeks ago. *Brainstorm* is the story of a group of artificial intelligence researchers who come up with a machine that can transfer thoughts and feelings from one person to another. There is some conflict as to how this discovery will be used. Christopher Walken wants it used for research into ways of improving the human condition. Cliff Robertson wants to sell it to the Pentagon.

While all this is going on, Walken is working his way through a romantic triangle with Louise Fletcher and the late Natalie Wood. There is supposed to be some kind of connection between Walken's struggle with the Pentagon and his struggle with his love life. But the connection is not well made, and the romance seems tacked on. This may be a result of the

fact that the film wasn't finished when Miss Wood died. Whatever the cause, it doesn't work.

The main plot about the Pentagon is also weak. Since it's almost a given in films these days that the Pentagon is the bad guy, you know right from the start how the film should end—and that's the way it does end. Walken beats the generals to the Brainstorm Machine.

The high points of the film (as you might have guessed given Trumbull's background) are the moments of special effects. The opening title sequence is the most impressive as a series of random objects come together and fall apart as Walken tries to use his mind to organize a series of computer generated images.

None of this saves the movie. As in so many of these heavy special effects movies, the stories remain conventional, robbing them of whatever originality they have.

So what we've got in *Brainstorm* is a special effects storm that rains a light show down on the viewer's head. But when it's over and your brain dries out, there's nothing left but rust.

—John Mitchell

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