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Reviews

THX 1138: THE GEORGE LUCAS DIRECTOR'S CUT

By Buzz McClain 8/25/2004

HIT: The sound separation of the other-worldly dystopia of the future is as good as you expect from a process named after the movie.

MISS: The sort of nasty student film *Bald* that shows some of the actors having their heads shaved is grainy and jumpy. Couldn't it have been cleaned up?

The movie that launched the career of George Lucas and nearly bankrupted the American Zoetrope film company resurfaces with a shiny new transfer, a new director's edit and a commentary track with Lucas and co-writer and sound designer Walter Murch. Those who have seen the 1971 film only on TV or VHS will be startled by the clarity of the production, which was shot mostly with available light on borrowed locations in and around San Francisco. As for the soundtrack, since the disc is produced by the company that created THX stereo technology, it's no surprise that the mix is outstanding. Among the bonuses, those industrial sounds that give the dystopia its brooding mood are isolated in a track called "Theatre of Noise" on the first disc. **The second disc contains Gary Leva's new superb hour-long documentary about American Zoetrope, *A Legacy of Filmmakers*, which includes interviews with filmmakers Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, John Milius, cinematographer Caleb Deschanel and others. Leva also made *Artifact From the Future*, a highly detailed half-hour recap of the making of THX.** Also on tap are *Bald*, a kind of cruel production short showing cast members having their heads shaved and their subsequent reactions, along with 1970's *THX 1138: 4EB*, the 15-minute student film that Coppola and others say sparked the Zoetrope troop into helping create the modern independent movie movement. A 20-city theatrical re-release of *THX 1138* beginning Sept. 10 no doubt will heighten awareness of the DVD.

Warner, two discs, color, R, 88 min. plus supplements, Dolby Digital 5.1, widescreen, Street: Sept. 14; First Run: L, March 1971, \$2.5 mil.

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