



### Electra Glide in Blue

**Director:** James William Guercio  
**Production Company:** United Artists  
**Producer:** James William Guercio  
**Production Co-ordinator:** William Maldonado  
**2nd Unit Director:** Bill Hickman  
**Assistant Directors:** Tom Shaw, Carl Beringer  
**Screenplay:** Robert Boris  
**Original story:** Robert Boris, Rupert Hitzig  
**Director of Photography:** Conrad Hall  
**2nd Unit Photographer:** Richard Kelley  
**Special Effects:** Candy Flanagan  
**Special Effects (Chase Sequence):** Joe Lombardi  
**Editors:** Jim Benson, John F. Link II, Jerry Greenberg  
**Music:** James William Guercio  
**Music Director:** Jimmie Haskell  
**Sound Recording:** William Randall  
**Sound Re-recording:** Robert Knudson  
**Stunt Co-ordinator:** Bud Ekins  
**Stunt Riders:** J.N. Roberts, Rock Walker, Alan Gibbs, Scott Dockstader, Mickey Alzola, Ron Rondell  
**Cast:**  
Robert Blake (*John Wintergreen*)  
Billy 'Green' Bush (*Zipper Davis*)  
Mitchell Ryan (*Harve Poole*)  
Jeannine Riley (*Jolene*)  
Elisha Cook Jr (*Willie*)  
Royal Dano (*coroner*)  
David J. Wolinski (*VW bus driver*)  
Peter Cetera (*Bob Zemko*)  
Terry Kath (*Killer*)  
Lee Loughnane (*Pig Man*)  
Walter Parazaider (*Loose Lips*)  
Joe Samsil (*Sgt. Ryker*)  
Jason Clark (*L.A. detective*)  
Michael Butler (*truck driver*)  
Susan Forristal, Lucy Angle Guercio (*ice cream girls*)  
Melissa Green (*Zemko's girlfriend*)  
Jim Gilmore (*detective*)  
Bob Zemko (*The Beard*)  
USA 1973  
114 mins  
Video

Moviedrome transmission date: 15 May 1988

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**SIGHT  
AND  
SOUND**

## Moviedrome: Bringing the Cult TV Series to the Big Screen

# Electra Glide in Blue

'What is a cult film? A cult film is one which has a passionate following but does not appeal to everybody. Just because a movie is a cult movie does not automatically guarantee quality. Some cult films are very bad. Others are very, very good. Some make an awful lot of money at the box office. Others make no money at all. Some are considered quality films. Others are exploitation.' From 1988 to 2000 *Moviedrome* was presented by Alex Cox and then Mark Cousins. Across that time, more than 200 features were shown, and generations of movie fans and filmmakers would be informed and inspired by the selection, alongside the wit and wisdom of the introductions that preceded each screening. *Moviedrome* was a portal into the world of weird and wonderful cinema. This two-month season features some of the most notable titles screened and wherever possible they are preceded by the original televised introduction.

Nick Freand Jones, season curator and producer of *Moviedrome*

**Alex Cox:** 'Electra Glide' is the name of a full-dress Harley Davidson motorcycle that was manufactured in the United States. A few years back, all motorcycle cops over there used to ride Harleys, but in the 1970s, the Harley Davidson MC Corporation fell upon hard times, and now most American cops ride Japanese bikes, which they call 'rice burners'.

No matter – this is a fairy story about the last honest motorcycle cop in Monument Valley.

Monument Valley is on the Navaho Indian Reservation in northern Arizona – a sacred place.

John Ford discovered it and shot his westerns there; nowadays, they use it to shoot car commercials. *Electra Glide in Blue* was directed by an American, James William Guercio, formerly the manager of the mellow rock band Chicago. It stars Robert Blake, who is the same height as Alan Ladd to the quarter inch. It was filmed by Conrad Hall who also shot *Fat City*. Today Conrad Hall shoots bank commercials in Monument Valley.

The film is an interesting one. It's sort of the cops' response to *Easy Rider*, particularly at the end. It was also very influenced by a gay film, *Scorpio Rising*, directed by Kenneth Anger. Guercio never made another film after *Electra Glide in Blue*; he retired to a ranch in Colorado and was not seen again. A pity, because this is a good film, especially if you like motorcycles.

Alex Cox's original introduction for *Moviedrome*. Also published in *Moviedrome: The Guide* (BBC, 1990). With thanks to [moviedromer.tumblr.com](http://moviedromer.tumblr.com)

### A contemporary review

Signalled by glowing, apocalyptic images from Conrad Hall, *Electra Glide in Blue* takes possession of Monument Valley, casting out the ghosts of Ford's historically idealised past and moving in the meagre props – a few motorcycles, a VW bus, some weaponry – of an a-historical present. Ford's mythology gained substance through the veneration and nostalgia that surrounded its relics; his ideals of order and community had the reality of an unquestioned belief that men could work together and build. Some chill winds, by comparison, are blowing through the canyons in *Electra Glide*. Veneration is

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### Johnny Guitar

Fri 1 Aug 20:30; Sun 10 Aug 14:45;  
Tue 19 Aug 18:10

### The Harder They Come

Sat 2 Aug 15:00; Fri 8 Aug 20:45; Sat 23 Aug 18:10  
**Yojimbo**

Sat 2 Aug 20:45; Mon 11 Aug 18:15;  
Sun 24 Aug 12:30

### What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?

Sun 3 Aug 14:45; Sat 16 Aug 12:00;  
Thu 21 Aug 20:25

### Mommie Dearest

Sun 3 Aug 18:20; Thu 14 Aug 20:30

### Carnival of Souls

Wed 6 Aug 18:40; Fri 15 Aug 20:50

### The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Thu 7 Aug 19:00; Sun 10 Aug 17:30;  
Sun 24 Aug 17:30

### The Girl on a Motorcycle

Fri 8 Aug 18:30; Sun 17 Aug 15:40

### Badlands

Sat 9 Aug 12:30; Sat 16 Aug 18:10;  
Tue 26 Aug 20:50

### Performance

Sat 9 Aug 18:20; Mon 18 Aug 20:50

### Diva

Sat 9 Aug 20:30; Tue 19 Aug 20:40;  
Fri 29 Aug 18:15

### Escape From New York

Mon 11 Aug 20:45; Sat 23 Aug 20:50;  
Thu 28 Aug 18:20

### To Sleep with Anger

Tue 12 Aug 20:35; Sat 16 Aug 15:10

### Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters

Wed 13 Aug 18:20; Mon 25 Aug 14:50;  
Sat 30 Aug 20:40

### White of the Eye

Wed 20 Aug 20:40; Sun 31 Aug 15:10

### Electra Glide in Blue

Thu 21 Aug 18:15; Fri 22 Aug 20:45

### With thanks to

Sue Deeks, Simon Chilcott, Carl Davies,  
Josephine Haining and Andrew Abbott

reserved, in one lushly ironic sequence at the beginning, for lonely superman symbols of power as John Wintergreen, pint-sized Arizona motorcycle cop, zips, buckles and buttons himself into his uniform; and when he puts a tentative foot on the ladder of success, partnership turns out to be as bankrupt an illusion as 'Manifest Destiny'.

It is not merely the epic treatment of the familiar craggy buttes and rolling plains which suggests that James William Guercio, making his first feature, is out to replace the old mythology with a new one. For all its sympathetic portrait of a gentle, well-intentioned cop caught in a crossfire of misunderstanding, *Electra Glide in Blue* rattles with grand oppositions not really connected to local problems of law and order. The confrontation of Wintergreen (Robert Blake) and his patrol buddy Zipper Davis (Billy 'Green' Bush) with the motorcycle freaks who at one point come roaring through the Valley becomes a chase as exhilarating (and as finely shot and edited, forgetting the snatches of slow motion) as a cavalry versus Indians skirmish in Ford. Except that time has contrived to scramble the values, so that it is no longer clear which side represents what in the struggle of civilisation against savagery. And time has also closed down the battlefield: the land looks deceptively, breathtakingly, as if it must go on forever, but the hardest struggles are now waged in men's minds and become increasingly bizarre, frightening and phantasmagoric.

*Electra Glide* slides in and out of black comedy with the same ease that its characters turn into highly coloured cut-outs of their own fiercest ambitions: Harve Poole, the superdetective who takes Wintergreen in tow, elevates paranoia to a religion and turns police work into a pantheistic mystery ('The night is talking to us, Wintergreen. Sit down and listen'); Zipper Davis idles away his duty hours in the shade, adding details to his vision of the perfect motorcycle. The theme of 'You've got to have a dream', announced with due solemnity by Wintergreen as he anticipates trading his black leather for the cool suit and stetson of a detective, is given the precise absurdity of a comic-strip. It is Zipper who reads aloud from the exploits of Buck Rogers and Co. (space rangers guarding the cosmos ...). The past has been disconnected, but the beautiful technology of the Electra Glide machines is a link with a possible future.

Richard Combs, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1973-74

## Moviedrome: Welcome to the Cult

*Welcome to the Cult*, made for BFI Player by filmmaker Nic Wassell, explores *Moviedrome's* history, its impact and its legacy. We talk to the show's creator, Nick Freand Jones, its original host, Alex Cox, and fans including broadcaster Samira Ahmed and comedian Stewart Lee.

Watch now at [player.bfi.org.uk](http://player.bfi.org.uk)