



Trash! The Wildest Films You've Ever Seen

Trash

Trash

Directed by: Paul Morrissey

©/Production Company: Score Movies

Production Company: Factory Films

Presented by: Andy Warhol

Produced by: Andy Warhol

Screenplay: Paul Morrissey

Director of Photography: Paul Morrissey

Editor: Jed Johnson

Sound: Jed Johnson

Cast:

Joe Dallesandro (Joe)

Holly Woodlawn (Holly)

Jane Forth (Jane)

Michael Sklar (Mr Michaels, welfare investigator)

Geri Miller (go-go dancer)

Andrea Feldman (rich girl)

Johnny Putnam (boy from Yonkers)

Bruce Pecheur (Jane's husband)

Diane Podlewski (Holly's sister)

Bob Dallesandro (boy on the street)

Sissy Spacek (girl at bar) *

USA 1970©

110 mins

35mm

A BFI National Archive print

* Uncredited

The screening on Thu 9 Apr will be introduced by
Jaye Hudson of TGirlsonFilm

At first sight *Trash* is unmistakably a very good film; re-seen, it has sections at least when it looks like a great film. What it takes on along the way is subtlety and density; far from being improvisatory and hit-or-miss, like most of the films by the Warhol group, it proves on examination to be, like *Flesh*, very tightly plotted, scrupulously constructed to make even the smallest passing comment pull its weight in the overall dramatic argument. In this the two films are defiantly the work of Paul Morrissey, who emerges in them from a period of anonymity as general cinematic odd-job man of the Warhol factory to make films which are not only highly personal but in several vital respects the antithesis of Warhol's theorising about the gratuit, impersonality in filmmaking, and the beyond boredom principle.

The true subject of *Trash* is presented neatly, as a sort of formal statement of theme, in the opening sequence, during which Geri Miller (the girl who was considering having her breasts inflated with silicone in *Flesh*, and has now apparently done so) tries everything she can think of to excite Joe Dallesandro, who remains resolutely, and not too concernedly, as unaroused by her manipulation as by her elaborate go-go dance. Geri is worried in an almost maternal fashion about Joe; the trouble, she says, is the drugs he takes. Why can't he trip on sex instead: it's cheaper, nicer and a lot healthier. Can you trip on sex? asks Joe. Of course, says Geri; isn't it great when you come? No, says Joe; it's over.

The comment resounds through the rest of the film, one way and another. Behind practically everything that happens and is said there is a quiet, almost suppressed anguish over the evanescence of experience, the search for something that lasts, and the retreat, most evidently in Joe's case, into drugs as a deadener, as something which, in removing the desire for everything more lasting than the next fix, removes also any capacity, physical or mental, to do or experience anything else. (In this respect, incidentally, the film should be, from the censors' point of view, one of the most evidently moral on the subject of drugs; and their arguments for refusing it a certificate, based almost entirely on its drug aspects, seem more than usually ludicrous, indeed totally incomprehensible.)

In each of the major sequences of the film the themes stated at the opening are restated with variations. In all of them the basic situation is that characteristic preoccupation of the Warhol group, first clearly presented in *My Hustler*, the way that apparent communication often shows itself when examined to be merely the bouncing of one's own feelings off someone else who happens to be around at the time. In this case, because of his complete impotence, in every sense of the word, Joe is the sounding-board for other people's fantasies. There is the crazy lady who carries round a bag full of toys and is searching desperately for LSD, which she is against all reason convinced Joe must have concealed somewhere on his person. There is the rich young wife who finds Joe trying half-heartedly to burgle her nearly empty apartment and nurtures hopeless fantasies of rape. There is even the man from the Welfare who does not really connect with anyone else at all, pursuing relentlessly his fantasy of the silver Joan Crawford shoes and their self-evident suitability for conversion into a chic and unusual lamp.

Become a BFI Member

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

Sight and Sound

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info:

sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk/subscribe

SIGHT AND SOUND

BFI Player

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

Trash! **The Wildest Films You've Ever Seen**

Trash

Mon 30 Mar 18:10; Thu 9 Apr 20:30 (+ intro by Jaye Hudson of TGirlsonFilm)

Reefer Madness

Mon 30 Mar 20:45; Sat 11 Apr 15:10

Multiple Maniacs

Tue 31 Mar 18:20; Sun 26 Apr 18:20;
Thu 30 Apr 20:40

Trash! Season Introduction:

**Some Films Are Trash, Some Have
Trash-Ness Thrust Upon Them**

Wed 1 Apr 18:10

Normal Love

Wed 1 Apr 20:20 (+ intro by Professor Dominic Johnson, Queen Mary University of London);
Mon 13 Apr 20:30

Blood Feast

Thu 2 Apr 18:05 (+ intro by writer Virginie Selavy);
Wed 15 Apr 20:45

Sins of the Fleshapoids

Thu 2 Apr 20:30; Sun 12 Apr 18:10

Hold Me While I'm Naked, George Kuchar!

Fri 3 Apr 18:20; Mon 13 Apr 18:00 (+ extended intro by Professor Juan A. Suárez, author of *Experimental Film and Queer Materiality*)

Thundercrack!

Sat 4 Apr 17:20; Sat 25 Apr 20:00

Pink Flamingos

Sun 5 Apr 18:30; Fri 10 Apr 18:00

Plan 9 from Outer Space

Tue 7 Apr 18:10 (+ extended intro by BFI National Archive preservation and curatorial staff, and writer Ken Hollings); Tue 21 Apr 20:55

Ed Wood

Tue 7 Apr 20:25

Salvation! + pre-recorded intro by Beth B

Wed 8 Apr 18:15; Tue 28 Apr 20:30

Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!

Thu 9 Apr 18:20; Thu 23 Apr 21:15

Another Day, Another Man

+ Elevator Girls in Bondage

Sat 18 Apr 18:00; Wed 22 Apr 20:20 (+ intro by film scholar and critic Dr Elena Gorfinkel)

Super 8½

Sat 18 Apr 20:45; Thu 30 Apr 18:05

I Was a Teenage Serial Killer

+ A Family Finds Entertainment

Fri 24 Apr 18:30; Mon 27 Apr 18:30

25 & Under

We want to open up great independent and classic film and TV for all, making it as accessible as possible. If you are under the age of 26, you can get discounted tickets for BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. BFI Southbank cinema tickets are £4, with festival tickets £6, so you can enjoy the very best of cinema from around the world at an affordable price.

Sign up today and verify your age online, and you can start enjoying discounted tickets immediately.

But above all there is Holly Woodlawn. Holly, needless to say, is one of the Warhol drag queens. And it really is needless to explain: first time round one may be intrigued at the outset by the problem of what exactly she is, but before long one accepts completely that she is what she says she is, a woman. It does not matter what she was born as and may still, for all we know, anatomically be. She is a woman giving a performance, and a performance which is by any standards mesmeric. Apart from Joe, she is the only recurrent character in the film; he shares a room with her, and is the object of her concern and often exasperated resentful affection. We see her gathering junk, with and without Joe's assistance, and in a very funny, very sad scene in the first half setting about seducing a high-school lad who is desperately eager to establish his own complete sophistication and has been dumb enough to think he can buy some grass from Holly (which is not what he gets at all).

The character gradually builds, though, and comes into her own in the final scenes, when her sister's pregnancy gives her the idea that she and Joe will impose on the Welfare as parents-to-be. Unfortunately she comes home one day to find Joe attempting (ineffectually, of course) to ball her sister, and launches into a really great scene of entirely illogical recrimination. After which comes the terribly funny scene with the man from the Welfare, broken up finally when the cushion she has stuffed under her sweater drops out in a moment of mobile fury. She and Joe are left exactly where they were at the start, with no money, no prospects, and no chance of communication even on the most elementary, physical level; yet, for however much or little it may count, with each other.

It is in these final scenes that the point of Morrissey's method really shows itself: they resume and pull together the film and build dizzily to a succession of climaxes, and to the final anti-climax, with complete certainty and economy. In them Joe is, as he has been established, the still, dead centre round which other people's passions revolve, while Holly is the dynamic element. And while what she says and does is often fiercely funny, she does bit by bit acquire her own dignity. Morrissey's treatment of her is masterly. How far what he elicits from her is properly speaking a performance could be argued at length, quite fruitlessly; what we get is what nearly all cinema ultimately is, the physical embodiment of private dreams. And it works here so immaculately because the people are so scrupulously respected in their quite possibly crazy integrity.

Paul Morrissey's is a cinema of complete human acceptance: however odd the characters are, they are never patronised, never made fun of, never presented as material for a quick camp giggle. The angle of regard is the most important thing in *Flesh* and *Trash*; the fact that the technique is in its own way stunning seems pretty incidental. Indeed, essentially it is incidental – Morrissey belongs to that select band who make films in such a way that the film becomes a transparent envelope, through which we can enter, telepathically, their minds. And the experience is, as they say these days, mind-blowing.

John Russell Taylor, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1971/72