

FILM REVIEWS

Kendall's film treats of a creative community in isolation; gathered, outfitted, transported to a work site and abandoned for the several months of a spring planting season. Once arrived, the crew assembles and builds its own living and cooking quarters. Here, the blaze from a wood stove and an absence of electricity register a Spartan atmosphere. Unlike a logging crew, the tree-planters live at the site, and are of both sexes. The work is shared equally and a flat rate of ten cents a tree makes arduous labor nicely remunerative, if one considers an average daily planting to be in the area of 400 to 1000 trees by a single individual.

Most of the planters are west-coast young people and they are from widely different backgrounds. They are (or have been) musicians, artists, loggers, transient construction workers. These reflective individuals, each in their fashion, tend to describe tree-planting as a "feeling" act - a positive and necessary work. Their concern for the trees they plant is whether they will thrive - whether, in fact, there is sufficient mineral in the soil of a burned-out site to enable a sapling to take root. They are the 60's generation with some of its metaphysics scrubbed off. For all of them, tree-planting is a source of dependable income, just as for all of them these few months in a wilderness appear to provide an opportunity to stretch themselves, for a time, away from the rest of their lives. "Do it with joy" sings one of the crew as he strums a guitar at the work site. They do.

Nicholas Kendall's documentary employs a kind of filmic text of the trees. His camera habitually seeks out those elements necessary to the nurturing process, and that is what this documentary is all about. Implicit, of course, is the contrasting function of the logger. Beginnings (not endings) are highlighted in this film, and an initiatory process is juxtaposed, at least by implication, with a logging operation's terminal aspect. Visually, elements essential to gestation and growth take precedence in Kendall's selective imagery. In such a context, even the planters' comparative youth and search for lifestyle contribute to a "beginnings" motif, paralleling, strengthening - indeed framing the film in terms of its ideas. Its title, **Do it with Joy**, correctly gauges Kendall's tonal approach to his material, while at a more obvious

level, it serves to indicate the tenor of this tree-planting subject, alone.

A well-articulated work, the film prominently features the spacial reality of the site itself, the river bordering it, and a wide expanse of sky - a constant backdrop to the timber stands edging the valley in which the work progresses. The motions of planting are closely observed and their rhythm is noted - hand: to dig in the earth, foot: to seal a planted sapling. Again and again - eight feet apart - these motions are repeated through the long days. The camera adopts and retains the planters' rhythm. Its lens, reluctant to give up its focus, trains once more on hand foot and earth, no matter that the planter rests for a time from his work. His physicality, no less than the topography of his work site, is a thing to be observed in contemplation of the nature of both.

It is a Bazinian notion that for the cinema reality must consist of those things that are tangibly, physically real - things like Kendall's B.C. saplings and the planters that tend them. Their growth, like Bazin's ethos, is contained by this physical reality, but too, elements of reality's transcendence are present. **Do It With Joy** mirrors these.

Alice Smith

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