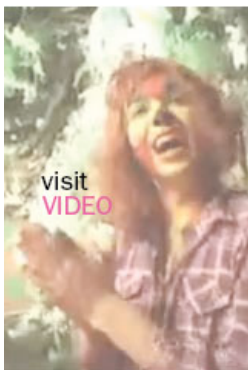




FILM

RECENT | ARCHIVE

- Nicolas Rapold on *Thief*
- Andrew Hultkrans on Timothy Carey
- Ed Halter on Segundo de Chomón
- Graham Fuller on *Nowhere Boy* and *LENNONYC*
- Aram Moshayedi on Sarah Morris's *Points on a Line*
- Michael Joshua Rowin on *S&Man*



NEWS | DIARY | PICKS

Newest Headlines

- Ai Weiwei's Turbine Hall Installation Shut Down, Modified
- Whitney Museum Sells Six Brownstones
- Tate Acquires Five New Works at Frieze
- Lombard Freid Projects Opens New Space
- AA Bronson Resigns from Printed Matter
- Christophe CheriX Appointed Chief Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books at MoMA
- Robert Goodnough (1917–2010)
- Charges Dismissed Against Ex-Getty Curator by Italian Judge
- Egyptian Ministry Officials Jailed over Van Gogh Theft
- Jan Krugier Gallery Closes New York Branch

Carey On

10.12.10



Left: **Timothy Carey**, *The World's Greatest Sinner*, 1962, still from a black-and-white and color film in 35 mm, 82 minutes. Right: **Stanley Kubrick**, *The Killing*, 1956, still from a black-and-white film in 35 mm, 85 minutes.

SOMETHING LIKE THE CRISPIN GLOVER of his era, the eccentric, explosive character actor Timothy Carey lent his genuinely off-kilter presence to films as varied as the swampsploitation C-movie *Poor White Trash* (1957), Stanley Kubrick's *The Killing* (1956) and *Paths of Glory* (1957), and John Cassavetes's *Minnie and Moskowitz* (1971) and *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* (1976). Along the way, he sprayed beer in Brando's face in *The Wild One* (1953) (Brando, as director of *One-Eyed Jacks* [1961], later paid Carey back by stabbing him with a pen), was attacked by Elia Kazan on the set of *East of Eden* (1955), parodied his own menacing, maniacal image in *Beach Blanket Bingo* (1965) and the Monkees's *Head* (1968), and turned down offers to act in *The Godfather* (1972) and *The Godfather: Part 2* (1974).

The Brooklyn-born Carey was physically imposing—a strapping 6'4"—making him ideal for roles as brutish heavies, and he resembled a love child of Nicolas Cage and John Turturro. His penchant for improvisation—bizarre dancing, unscripted outbursts, mumbled nonsense—often got him into trouble with directors and other actors, but made lifelong fans of Jack Nicholson (who wrote *Head* and likely borrowed elements of Carey's persona for his performance in *The Shining* [1980]); Cassavetes (who claimed Carey had the "brilliance of Eisenstein"); and Quentin Tarantino, who considered Carey for the role of crime boss Joe Cabot in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992).

For mondo video devotees, Carey sealed his immortality with the self-written/produced/directed oddity *The World's Greatest Sinner* (1962), which can be characterized as Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) as directed by Ed Wood Jr. The film, which has some of the same proto-John Waters tackiness of *The Honeymoon Killers* (1970), tells the tale of a bored insurance salesman who becomes an early Elvis-style rockabilly sensation. Noting the frenzy he inspires in his audiences, he begins calling himself "God," founds a religious cult, and runs for President. Carey and his singularly untalented "band" played their own detuned rock 'n' roll in the concert scenes, but the film was scored by a young, pre-Mothers of Invention Frank Zappa. Narrated by the devil and featuring the real God at the climax, *Sinner* was admired by Elvis himself (who asked Carey for a print) and remains one of Martin Scorsese's favorite rock 'n' roll films.

Carey was equally enraptured by flatulence and Dalí, and both influences are evident in the unfinished pilot of his proposed TV series *Tweet's Ladies of Pasadena*, which he began shooting in 1968 and which, along with many of the aforementioned films, will get a rare screening at Anthology Film Archives's Carey retrospective. Concerning an idiot man-child named Tweet Twig (Carey) who works for the "Don't Drop a Stitch" knitting club (old ladies, some played by men in drag) and seeks to rescue every stray animal he can find, this truly surreal labor of love was partially funded by Cassavetes and was sporadically worked on through 1982. Unsurprisingly, it got nowhere with network executives, but probably resides in the bootleg VHS collections of Waters, David Lynch, and Harmony Korine.

The saying, "They don't make 'em like they used to," generally applied to things, perfectly sums up Tim Carey. Joaquin Phoenix merely wishes he were this weird.

— Andrew Hultkrans

links

