HEAD AKA - The Monkees HEAD

Growing up in the sixties I remember The Monkees TV show with fondness. The Monkees was a show about four musicians, Davy Jones, Peter Tork, Mike Nesmith and Mickey Dolenz, struggling to make ends meet and make it big. In the show they never did. In real life they became one of the biggest groups to hit the teen scene since The Beatles. When we think of the The Monkees we tend to think of three things. First that the show was a family show that appealed to the young people of the time. Second, they were, at first, primarily a vocal group. They added their voices to music tracks recorded by others. Even though there were many vocal groups around at the time that did just that because the show was about a band, we felt somehow betrayed when we found this out. By the time their third album came out and they had taken control and played their own instruments the damage had been done, the public had largely turned on them and the show was headed for cancellation. Third, a fact that falls in line with the second, they were manufactured. Prior to the show these four people did not know each other and they were hired to play a band with the hope that they would become one.
This brings us to the movie HEAD . The Monkees wanted to break out of their image and become more relevant. They joined together in a hotel room with show creator Bob Ralfelson and a then unknown actor by the name of Jack Nicholson and came out with the movie HEAD . Although the boys were very involved with the script history repeated itself and their names were not listed on the credits. By the time the movie came out the show had been off the air for a number of months and they had lost their standing as musicians. The film failed completely. It has since become a bit of a cult film and is worth seeing. The film is disjointed by intent and there are no opening credits. Although that's not totally true, it's just instead of putting them on the front of the film they used them to close the film. Head is an interesting look at the sixties. In some ways more honest than many films that were made during the time and surprisingly it holds up better than many of those as well. The film is filled with references to drugs, meditation, and eastern philosophy and yes, the craziness that was The Monkees. It is also filled with anti-war messages, something all four of The Monkees felt strongly about. It is the drug references and anti war messages that move HEAD from the family fare that was The Monkees TV show to a slightly more adult film. Perhaps its strongest moment is footage of an actual execution. Some of you may remember the famous LIFE magazine picture from the Vietnam War of a kneeling man being shot in the head execution style. What some might not know is there is actual film footage of this event. The Monkees included that footage in HEAD . It is a short clip, but not for the faint of heart.
HEAD deserves a look today even though it is not going to appeal to everyone. It is a look at four men struggling to overcome the illusion that had been built up around them and show who they really were. They were four very different individuals and it shows in the film. At times I found the movie boring, but then the next scene would grab me. Like a lot of things in the sixties, you will like some of it, be indifferent to some and find parts of it enjoyable.
Just to pass on some Monkee trivia that you might find interesting: The Monkees were the first band to release an album with a Moog Synthesizer as part of the musical track. Mickey Dolenz was thought to be one of the best Synthesizer programmers of the time. Prior to The Monkees he played guitar and sang with his sister as part of folk duo. Peter Tork was friends with Stephen Stills and a very capable musician who played banjo, bass, drums and keyboards better than many of the musicians that played on their first two albums. Mike Nesmith was an accomplished

songwriter and several of his songs became hits for others, he was also the only married member of the band. He went on to release several records and was the founder of Pacific Arts Video which handled the original release of many PBS shows. Prior to The Monkees, Davy Jones was nominated for a Tony Award for his role of the Artful Dogger in Oliver. During early performances of The Monkees he often took over the drums from Mickey so Mickey could come down and actually be seen by the audience while he sang.

Sights and Sounds [2] Information, Answers & Reviews [3] Comedy [4] DVD [5] Head [videorecording] [6] Humor [7] Music [8]

Posted by Keith C. on May 11, 2012

- [9]
- [10]
- [11]

Links:

[1] http://mcpl.monroe.lib.in.us/search/searchresults.aspx?ctx=1.1033.0.0.7&type=Keyword&term=Monkees%20Head&by=TI&sort=RELEVANCE&limit=TOM=dvd&query=&page=0
[2] http://mcpl.info/moviemusicblog
[3] http://mcpl.info/category/blogs/information-answers-reviews
[4] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subjects/comedy
[5] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subjects/dvd
[6] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-titles/head-videorecording
[7] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subjects/humor
[8] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subjects/music
[9] http://mcpl.info/print/printpdf/blogs/sights-and-sounds/head-aka-monkees-head?page=1
[10] http://mcpl.info/print/mail/printpdf/blogs/sights-and-sounds/head-aka-monkees-head?page=1
[11] http://mcpl.info/print/pdf/printpdf/blogs/sights-and-sounds/head-aka-monkees-head?page=1