

WALKABOUT

AUSTRALIA, 1970

NICOLAS ROEG



TECHNICAL DATA

Director: Nicolas Roeg
Producer: 20Th Century Fox
Composer: John Barry
Cinematography: Nicolas Roeg
Cast: Jenny Agutter, Lucien John,
David Gumpilil, John Meillon
Runtime: 100 Min

SYNOPSIS

Based on the novel by James Vance Marshall, *Walkabout* deals with a teenage girl and her younger brother who are stranded in the Australian outback after their father kills himself. Abandoned in the harsh Australian outback they must learn to cope in the natural world, without their usual comforts, in this hypnotic masterpiece from Nicolas Roeg. Along the way, they meet a young aborigine on his "walkabout," a rite of passage in which adolescent boys are initiated into manhood by journeying into the wilderness alone. Forming a non-verbal friendship—they don't understand a word of each other's languages, other than "water" after some effort—the black boy toughens them up and helps get them back to the civilisation. Roeg's *Walkabout* is a thrilling adventure as well as a provocative rumination on time and civilization and its messages are clear enough: the awesome power of nature (every other scene appears to involve cuts to small animals of some kind), and how technological ingenuity breeds an unhealthy reliance.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Nicolas Jack Roeg (born 15 August 1928 in London) is an English film director and cinematographer. Contributing to the visual look of *Lawrence of Arabia* and Roger Corman's *The Masque of the Red Death*, and co-directing *Performance*, he would later become the guiding force behind such landmark films as *Walkabout*, *Don't Look Now* and *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.

Roeg's films are known for having scenes and images from the plot presented in a disarranged fashion, out of chronological and causal order, requiring the viewer to do the work of mentally rearranging them to comprehend the storyline. They seem, in the words of one critic, "to shatter reality into a thousand pieces" and are "unpredictable, fascinating, cryptic and liable to leave you wondering what the hell just happened. . . ." Roeg displays a "freedom from conventional film narration," says another, and his films often consist of, at least, an "intriguing kaleidoscopic multiplication of images." Often, Roeg will edit his stories in disjunctive and semi-coherent ways that make full sense only in the film's final moments, when a crucial piece of information surfaces; they are "mosaic-like montages [filled with] elliptical details which become very important later." These techniques, and Roeg's foreboding sense of atmosphere, have influenced later filmmakers such as Steven Soderbergh, Tony Scott, Ridley Scott, Christopher Nolan, François Ozon and Danny Boyle. His later films, however, have received a colder reception by critics and the viewing public.

Roeg's influence on cinema is not limited to deconstructing narrative. The "Memo From Turner" sequence in *Performance* predates many techniques later used in music videos. And the "quadrant" sequence in *Bad Timing*, in which the thoughts of Theresa Russell and Art Garfunkel are heard before words are spoken, set to Keith Jarrett's piano music from the Köln Concert, again stretched the boundaries of what could be done with film.