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Americana (U.S.-COLOR)

Cannes, May 26.

David Carradine and Skip Sherwood release and production. Stars David Carradine, Barbara Hershey. Directed by David Carradine. Screenplay, Richard Carr; camera (Scope-Color), Michael Stringer; editor, David Kern; music, Craig Hundley, Carradine. Reviewed at Cannes Film Fest (Director Fortnight-non-competing), May 16, '81. Running time: 91 MINS.

Soldier David Carradine
Girl Barbara Hershey
Garage Man Michael Greene

David Carradine reportedly spent a lot of time in a small Kansas town making this familiar tale of a stranger in town. The company lived off the land. The film does have its toes in the dust and is mainly for grass roots payoff on its observant sympathy for Americana types who remain sketchy rather than stereotypes.

Carradine seems to be doing a sort of film spinoff of his noted vid-series, "Kung Fu." However here it is 1973 and he is a Vietnam veteran who supposedly had some rough experiences. He comes to a town where he decides to rebuild a broken down merry-go-round that was once the pride of the place.

He at first meets hostility, a little acceptance and then curiosity. An ex-biker who runs the filling station gives him a job and begins to get people to help with this seemingly harebrained but dedicated task of just putting the merry-go-round back in action.

Human nature intervenes when the garage man turns on Carradine for being afraid to attend his Sunday cockfights in a disaffected church. His work is broken up. Carradine goes off and finds his car which had been in an accident to don his uniform and collect his discharge check.

Then back to finish that merry-go-round. Barbara Hershey-(ex Seagull) is the town roundheels who helps him with tools. Carradine realizes she needs to be attended to by some local young turks and keeps out of it. He goes on doggedly and now only needs a special part which the garage man has. For this he has to fight a dog. Carradine wins and places the dog in the carousel as he starts it and goes off as he came.

Carradine is his usual reserved self intimating some seething things underneath that could be unleashed. Michael Greene, as the sadistic, preening but helpful then greedy garage man, is the most complex character in this simple, rambling tale of a man and an obsession that could have tv legs, too. Carradine did get close to the land in this but still did not go beyond an already well worn theme of a man doing something for others to help himself. Technically acceptable down the line. —Mosk.