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Executive Producer: Angelo Rizzoli; produced by Antonio Cervi; directed by Michelangelo Antonioni; screenplay by Antonioni and Tonino Guerra; photography by Carlo Di Palma; music by Giovanni Fusco. With Monica Vitti, Richard Harris, Carlo Chionetti, Xenia Valderi, Valerio Bartoleschi. Italian dialog with English subtitles. Prints by Technicolor.

Golden Lion Award as Best Motion Picture: Venice, 1964

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"The story was born when I went to Ravenna, which I had not seen for some time. The film was born on the spot and the color was born with it--the industrial ambience of the film...My intention was to express the beauty of this world where even the factories can be very beautiful...The line, the curves of the factories and their chimneys are perhaps more beautiful than a line of trees, of which the eye has already seen too much." Such is Antonioni's own comment regarding "The Red Desert."

In his first color film, Antonioni follows the neglected and neurotic wife (Monica Vitti) of an electronics engineer (Carlo Chionetti). She is unsettled by the severe depression and nightmarish factory noises of the town where they live, and still suffering shock from an earlier automobile accident. She meets a mining engineer (Richard Harris) and they are mutually attracted. The young woman compels her new acquaintance to become her lover, but abruptly breaks off the relationship when she finds he isn't a cure for her mental state.

The story is ~~MM~~ actually of secondary importance, though it does have moments of excitement. It is told in a fragmentary way with situations never quite conforming to the traditional rules: they often have no beginning, or resolution. Primary consideration is given to the thoughts and feelings of the characters--a concern for the individual in relation to his surroundings. It is in this respect that

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Antonioni has made a remarkable and unique use of color: white-washed woods, creamy grass and pink houses are subtle gradations of a mist that constantly surrounds and separates the main characters. In one instance Antonioni had the streets painted and the trees and grass sprayed to achieve the desired effect and to reflect the mood his characters felt at the time.

"RED DESERT is at once the most beautiful, the most simple and the most daring film yet made by Italy's masterful Michelangelo Antonioni, a director so prodigiously gifted that he can marshal a whole new vocabulary of cinema to reiterate his now-familiar themes...Never has so bleak a vision of contemporary life been projected with more intensity, from craven yellow and life-brimming green to violet, passionate crimson and the grey of total despair." --- Time

"Michelangelo Antonioni's highly touted RED DESERT has arrived to offer us more of the maestro's staples--Monica Vitti, cinema for its own sweet sake, alienation in excelsis and inertia in excess...has its strikingly beautiful color moments but these are hardly compensation for two hours' worth of pointlessness in the too-familiar Antonioni ambience. Except, of course, for the cult." --- Judith Crist, N.Y. Herald Tribune

"He has caught the disturbing grotesqueness of the modern industrial scene. He has captured in graphic compositions the strange oppressiveness of a modern home. And he has sensed, too, the oblique strain of poetry in this throbbing space age." --- Bosley Crowther, New York Times

"With RED DESERT, the art of the film advances...The story is both dry and full, austere and intense. It is a series of incidents with sufficient but minimal connection, not cumulative drama of well made scenes; yet each of these incidents is more than a skin-and-bones gesture (a la Bresson), it is implicative and

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revealing...I know of no film in which a greater tension exists between the movement of the story and the places through which it moves...it is the best use of color I have ever seen in a film, exquisite in itself. It would be quite a wrong emphasis, but one could say that the film is worth seeing for its color alone. I have now seen RED DESERT three times, and each succeeding time it has not only seemed lovelier in color, it has had an increased sense of motion forward." --- Stanley Kauffmann, New Republic

"Antonioni is exceptionally creative in his use of color, which is enough in itself to consume the attention of the viewer. How he was able to control this medium of expression and relate it so tangibly to the drama as it unfolded is worthy of extensive analysis and discussion. It is but one facet of this director's complete dedication to his art. (A-IV)." --- Catholic Film Newsletter