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## ARCHIVE

# THE VELVET UNDERGROUND AND NICO

*Variety* Nov 14-20, 1994

A film by Andy Warhol. Music by the Velvet Underground. Reviewed at Sundance Film Festival, Park City, Utah, Jan. 28, 1994. Running time: 66 MIN.

With: Lou Reed, John Cale, Sterling Morrison, Maureen Tucker, Nico, Ari Boulogne.

**R**evived at the 1994 Sundance Festival as a midnighter, Andy Warhol's 1966 "The Velvet Underground and Nico" records a jam session of the popular Velvet Underground, when the

band's main musicians were Lou Reed and John Cale. Centerstage is Nico, a statuesque, blond German model who sits on a stool as the musicians form a semicircle behind her.

Short pic was made during the height of Warhol's creativity as a pop artist and filmmaker; between 1963 and 1967, he made more than 50 films, ranging in length from four minutes to 25 hours. Among other things, this work challenges the myth about Warhol's passive and mechanical aesthetics — as if he just turned on the camera to record what was in front of it.

Film consists of two reels of long, uninterrupted takes. At first, the camera just records, sort of playing with the music, but then it begins to behave erratically, panning and zooming in an arbitrary manner. Changes in speed and camera angles were crucial to the minimalist technique of Warhol who, as painter-turned-director, was interested in exploring the continuity in both space and time of an actual experience.

Footage also includes a glimpse of the police officers who arrived on the scene after neighbors complained, as well as of Warhol himself. Overall, pic attests to Warhol's aversion to editing and his preference for just splicing together reels. As with Warhol's other films, it's impossible to tell where his technical ineptitude ends and innovative philosophy begins.

One can only speculate about the silence that prevailed at the sold-out Sundance screening — and the relatively small number of walk-outs. It could be that the audience, which was composed of very young viewers, was simply baffled by Warhol's minimalist, yet audacious technique, the likes of which is almost non-existent today but was integral to the exploratory nature of the 1960s.

—Emanuel Levy