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# *'Brother from Another Planet'*

## Spaced-out, strung out

**THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET.** Written, directed and edited by John Sayles. Photography, Ernest Dickerson. A Cinecom International Film Release. At the Bridge Theater, SF, and the Fine Arts Theater, Berkeley.

**SAN FRANCISCO**

**THIS IS** an admirable accomplishment: a fine competent cast, from leads to walk-ons; a production that was put together for only \$200,000 (it would have been 50 times as much from a major company).

But the film is a combination of what seems like arrogant indifference to continuity of story, logic, motivation and dramatic conflict. (Sayles has shown something of this tendency in a couple of his past films that I've seen.) In this, not only has he written and directed, but taken on the editing. I'm forced to assume that an experienced editor would have been baffled by the lack of continuity. As a result, he used three or four "assistant" editors. The jump cuts, from inconclusive scenes to unrelated film and characters, is baffling.

The Brother, played by Joe Morton, lands on earth from outer space one black night, with little to be seen but a sign saying Ellis Island, Immigration and the Statue of Liberty gloomily in the background. He makes his way to Harlem; while he is a mute he seems to understand

English quite well.

While he looks at modern Harlem with its TVs and 25 cent electronic games in seeming amazement, he is really a kind of Superman. Without a tool of any kind, merely with the magic of his hands which cause a red glow to appear, a broken videogame is repaired.

Somewhere about half way into this two hour long draggy film the villains appear. They are, it eventually turns out, "bounty men," here from Brother's planet to bring home this escaped slave. Well dressed, perfect English speaking, one wonders of course, at the expense of sending them millions of miles for one escaped slave. But before the violence begins there is the obligatory sex scene with a jazz singer (Dee Dee Bridgewater) with whom brother falls in love once he hears her sing.

**VIOLENCE NOW**, plenty of it, but finally the folks of Harlem unite to force the white men from another planet to retreat. But not before the hero tries dope and has all the nightmare effects.

This is not supposed to be a realistic film, and in that it succeeds; experimental, subjective impressionism. I couldn't help, while watching it, think of the great painter in the '40s and '50s, Jackson Pollock.

—LESTER COLE