

Review of miscellaneous films from the Pyramid collection

Basic Computer Terms      by Sheldon Renan      1976      16 min

humorous, narrator says words of actors, quite effective in the sense that it allowed you to concentrate better on the content of the narration (Doe thought it was condescending in tone though)

the clearest intro to basic computer terms that I have seen, they didn't go too far, but the ones that were mentioned were clearly developed , both in graphics and narration.

In the Beginning      Kenneth Clark      BBC      1976      27 min  
~~there~~ is also a long form of 58 min, Readers Digest Film

some good science at beginning - explanation of the Nile's key role in the development of Egypt

terrible politics, harps continually about permanence in the universe as opposed to change

good photography

In Search Of Mayan Mysteries      Nimoy/Landsburg      1978      23 min

recreation in intro of primitive man placing rocks was quite welcome and looked fairly believable (you can see here how powerful it could be to show how people actually struggled to survive and advance. later recreations of religious ceremonies looked quite hokey - largely I think because the acting was not good, the people didn't look like they believed in what they were doing; they looked like kids dressed up in a grade school play

basically pop archaeology, little science, much claptrap  
( 'Jesus spoke Mayan up on the cross' 'When the Mayans disappeared from their cities they went to the Middle East)

World of Franklin and Jefferson      Eames      1977      28 min

it really is possible to run down the high points of someone's life in a film and tie the visuals effectively to the narration - done here almost entirely with stills - definitely makes a nice overview and introduction (rich visuals)

not clearly focused in intent though, ie. what is the central point, why do we keep going back and forth from Jefferson to Franklin etc. - gets tedious after a while, although I think that is mainly because of the lack of focus, rather than the technique itself.

Two Baroque Churches      Eames      1955      11 minutes

states purpose clearly at beginning and then proceeds to give you eleven minutes of stills with baroque music in the background - wonderful to watch linearly- with videodisc you could put explanation on one track with music on the other; you could freeze whenever you wanted to study something

continuously varies subject of stills - floor, wall, windows, altar, artifacts, etc. etc.    from one to the other

with music it gives you a sense of motion (almost)-certainly one of style and grace and incredible beauty

however how would it be to be able to walk through church - could you get a significantly greater sense that way - ie. of what its really like to be there, a sense of the whole , not just a sum of the parts (you know the feeling when you walk down the aisle of some magnificent church - could you get that or some of that off a video presentation (on a small 525 line screen)

this is not bad however, if motion is prohibitively expensive for similar subjects

Gallery      Rudolph      1971      6 min

could be a disc as is - stills with lively music, mostly baroque chronologically chronicling the development of art from cave drawings to the present. painting, sculpture, stained glass windows (great stuff) etc.

if you were going to redo this for videodisc I think it would be nice to 'walk' around sculpture, show paintings from various perspectives and distances

problem - this is nice to watch linearly, but if you put it on a disc as is, you would have several frames of each shot making it cumbersome to use step frame (I think), but if you reduced it to one frame per shot I think you would lose your value as a linear film. this may be a forest and trees question, since there is definitely value in seeing the whole sweep, you'd hate to lose it