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FILM REVIEW: The Sheriff of Mars

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Jason Ressler has uncovered a treasure trove of outlaw country music and is bringing it to the world via the big screen in a heart-warming, soul-touching film, *The Sheriff of Mars* about Daniel Antopolsky, a cohort of legendary country singer/songwriter Townes Van Zandt. After watching Van Zandt nearly die from an overdose, Antopolsky, kept Van Zandt alive getting him to emergency care minutes before what would have been a fatal overdose. The experience left the sensitive Antopolsky shaken and he not only left the music business, he left the country landing in France where he took up farming. All the while, he wrote songs secretly hoping someone would â??discover him.â?• By the time Ressler found Antopolsky in Franceâ??s Bordeaux region, Antopolsky had written 500 songs.

Ressler was taking a break from filmmaking when his path crossed with Antopolsky. Hearing the song â??Sweet Lovinâ?? Music,â?• Ressler soon realized he had discovered the missing link between the outlaw country music of Willy Nelson and Kris Kristofferson and the hard country anthems of lifeâ??s difficulties. Ressler persuaded Antopolsky to submit a sample of his work to Nashville. Grammy nominated producer Gary Gold was stupefied at what he heard and brought Antopolsky to his home recording studio to begin recording an album.

And, despite forty years having passed, Antopolsky, â??kept on keeping onâ?• dealing with each obstacle and hurdle he encountered in a manner consistent with his life philosophy honed from Jewish schooling and his time spent with nature on the farm. He feels he always has a choice between anxiety and patience realizing patience allows life to work situations out much like a seed germinating and growing to maturity. And sometimes, he has to pull some weeds. Antopolsky struggled more managing to release four albums, gaining national media attention and has been playing all over the world after the age of 65.

Hats off the Ressler as heâ??s able to capture Antopolsky at work, driving his truck, interacting with his wife and twin daughters as he spent time uncovering a self-claimed â??closet musician.â?• Moreover, Ressler manages to dislodge difficult childhood experiences that impacted Antopolsky way of life revealing a wonderful, lovable character. In several heartfelt moments, Antopolsky appears emotionally

touched at memories and at the beauty around him. In addition, Ressler weaves the early years Antopolsky spent with Van Zandt and questions Antopolsky about Van Zandtâ??s â??Poncho and Lefty,â?• a Grammy winning song Willy Nelson and Merle Haggard covered. Humble to the bone, the left-handed Antopolsky stated he didnâ??t know if the song was about him or not.

As with any good documentary film, Ressler interviews those who orbited in Antopolsky space including his brothers, Nashville music executives and a live 1972 radio interview with Townes Van Zandt where the main topic seemed to be Antopolsky. And, Ressler adds some subtle touches to elevate the work such as his Hitchcockian cameos and including Antopolskyâ??s humorous first music video as Antopolsky pays homage to the silent film era with text tiles and antics reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin.

In the end*, The Sheriff of Mars,* with a run time of 93 minutes, is an entertaining, â??uplifting story of the musical redemption of a complex artist and character who exudes a magical and unique authenticity.â?• The film is co-directed by Matthew Woolf. Highly recommended!

*The Sheriff of Mars screens October 7th, 2019, at 1;30 P.M. at the 50th Anniversary of the Nashville Film Festival, Regal Hollywood 27 Theater 5.

Category

1. Nashville Film Festival

Date Created
October 6, 2019
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