



DAKOTA RESOURCE COUNCIL

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Since 1978

DATE: September 14, 2015

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***NORTHERN LIGHTS* – Short Film Synopsis**

Northern Lights, winner of the *Camera d'Or* for Best First Feature at the Cannes International Film Festival and many other prizes around the world, is a classic American independent film. Against a backdrop of a bitter winter on the Dakota prairie and the equally brutal economic forces of 1915, a story unfolds which pits small Midwestern farmers against “the powers that be” - bankers, railroad men, big grain dealers and an entrenched political machine. Based on the fictional diary of farmer Ray Sorenson, *Northern Lights* chronicles the struggle of these small farmers as they fight to save their farms, their families and their very way of life. By banding together in a grassroots movement - the little known Nonpartisan League - Ray and his cohorts confront great odds and Ray’s own personal doubts and dilemmas in his love for the beautiful Inga.

Using beautifully spare means, directors John Hanson and Rob Nilsson have fashioned a film abundantly rich in human emotion, drama and intimacy. And through their heartfelt tale, they have produced an enduring anthem to the strength and the triumph of the human spirit.

NORTHERN LIGHTS – On Prairie Public Television’s “Prairie Mosaic Shorts” on July 8, 2014

Prairie Public Broadcasting YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5V2rI8pKK4>

***NORTHERN LIGHTS* – Selected Reviews**

“Northern Lights is one of this year’s real discoveries...a small miracle on a smaller budget.”
Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times, November 11, 1978

“N.L. knocked me out. It is one of the moving truly American films I’ve seen in years. It is a classic case of truth and art fused into a thing of beauty. A must see.”
Studs Terkel, after seeing the film at the Chicago International Film Festival

“Subject has been handled with great sensitivity and compassion...a solid artistic achievement...”
Variety, November 15, 1978

“The direction of Hanson and Nilsson is tight and economic and effectively alternates closeups and sweeping long shots to give the movie an epic quality.”
William Arnold, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, April 27, 1979

“It is a raw, refreshingly honest slice of Americana, celebrating a time when people still cared about their neighbors.”

Judy Stone, San Francisco Chronicle, September 27, 1979

“Northern Lights a miracle on a minuscule budget”

Headline, The Globe and Mail, Toronto, September 7, 1979

“The starkness of black and white adds power to ‘Northern Lights’”

Headline, The Philadelphia Inquirer, January 28, 1980

“...this is a film of power, heart and pride.” “...it is Judy Irola’s haunting photography that gives this film its inescapable impact. Every frame is like a steel engraving...”

Bill von Maurer, The Miami News, January 14, `980

“Survival is the subject of Hanson and Nilsson’s impressive movie, which is filled with strong, poetic images.”

Ernest Leogrande, New York Daily News, March 2, 1981

“Judy Irola’s photography, using black and white film, makes an invaluable contribution to the project, capturing vividly the physical and emotional environment that reeked of struggle and loneliness.”

John J. O’Connor, New York Times, March 30, 1982

“...spectacularly real and moving.”

Archer Winsten, New York Post, March 3, 1981