

Spirit of Baraka

Celebrating nonverbal films like Baraka, Koyaanisqatsi, Microcosmos and the people who made them

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Koyaanisqatsi

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Koyaanisqatsi was director [Godfrey Reggio](#)'s debut as a film director and producer. **Koyaanisqatsi** is the first film of the **Qatsi** trilogy, and was released in 1983. **Koyaanisqatsi** was the first full-length commercial nonverbal film. **Koyaanisqatsi** cinematographer and editor [Ron Fricke](#) captures 90 minutes of stunning visual images of **North America**, set to a moving score composed by **Philip Glass** .

Koyaanisqatsi is a Hopi Indian word meaning 'life out of balance'. Created between 1975 and 1982, **Koyaanisqatsi** is an apocalyptic vision of two different worlds - urban life, and technology versus the environment. **Koyaanisqatsi** is a sort of **documentary**. There are no actors, there is no plot and there is no script. All of the images in **Koyaanisqatsi** are of **real life**. The subject of the images vary greatly. They are presented in such a way to show the contrast between human's and nature. The images provoke a thousand thoughts.

Ron Fricke was the principal **cinematographer** on **Koyaanisqatsi**. Ron Fricke later went on to create [Baraka](#), as well as [Chronos](#). Many of the techniques that work so well in **Koyaanisqatsi**, such as the **slow motion**, **time-lapse**, and moving vehicle shots, are found in many later films such as [Baraka](#) and [Dogora](#). Some of the scenes seem to be **existing footage**. The explosions and **space rocket** launch are unlikely to have been filmed by Ron Fricke or other members of the crew.

 [Write your own review of Koyaanisqatsi](#)

The idea of **Koyaanisqatsi** is to make the viewer compare the things found in nature against those things that humans have created. **Koyaanisqatsi** is suggesting humans are out of balance with nature. Although **Koyaanisqatsi** contains no dialogue, the word 'koyaanisqatsi' appears in chants during the film. **Koyaanisqatsi** took **6 years** to make, including three years shooting. **Philip Glass** and **Godfrey Reggio** then spent three years composing the musical score and editing the film to fit the new score.

Koyaanisqatsi has always been popular, considering its style. However, lack of commercial demand and complicated rights disputes saw **Koyaanisqatsi** go out of print. **Godfrey Reggio**'s Institute for Regional Education owns the original film copyright, originally licensed to Island Entertainment, which was sold to Polygram, which was sold to Metro-Goldwyn Mayer. The constant change of administration resulted in non-payment of royalties to the film makers. The IRE sold DVD versions of the film to help fund the legal costs. The IRE then reached an agreement with MGM which has allowed us to purchase the enhanced DVD version now. **Koyaanisqatsi** was re-released on DVD in 2002.

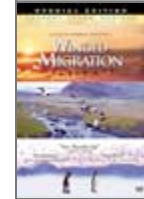
Koyaanisqatsi was then followed by [Powaqqatsi](#) and [Naqoyqatsi](#). **Powaqqatsi** is similar in style to **Koyaanisqatsi**, whereas **Naqoyqatsi**'s content is all stock footage, with a very technological edge.



Dogora



Winged Migration



Chronos



Powaqqatsi



Microcosmos



Naqoyqatsi



March of the

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The United States Library of Congress deemed Koyaanisqatsi "culturally significant". Koyaanisqatsi is now preserved in the National Film Registry.

Images



Penguins



The Blue Planet

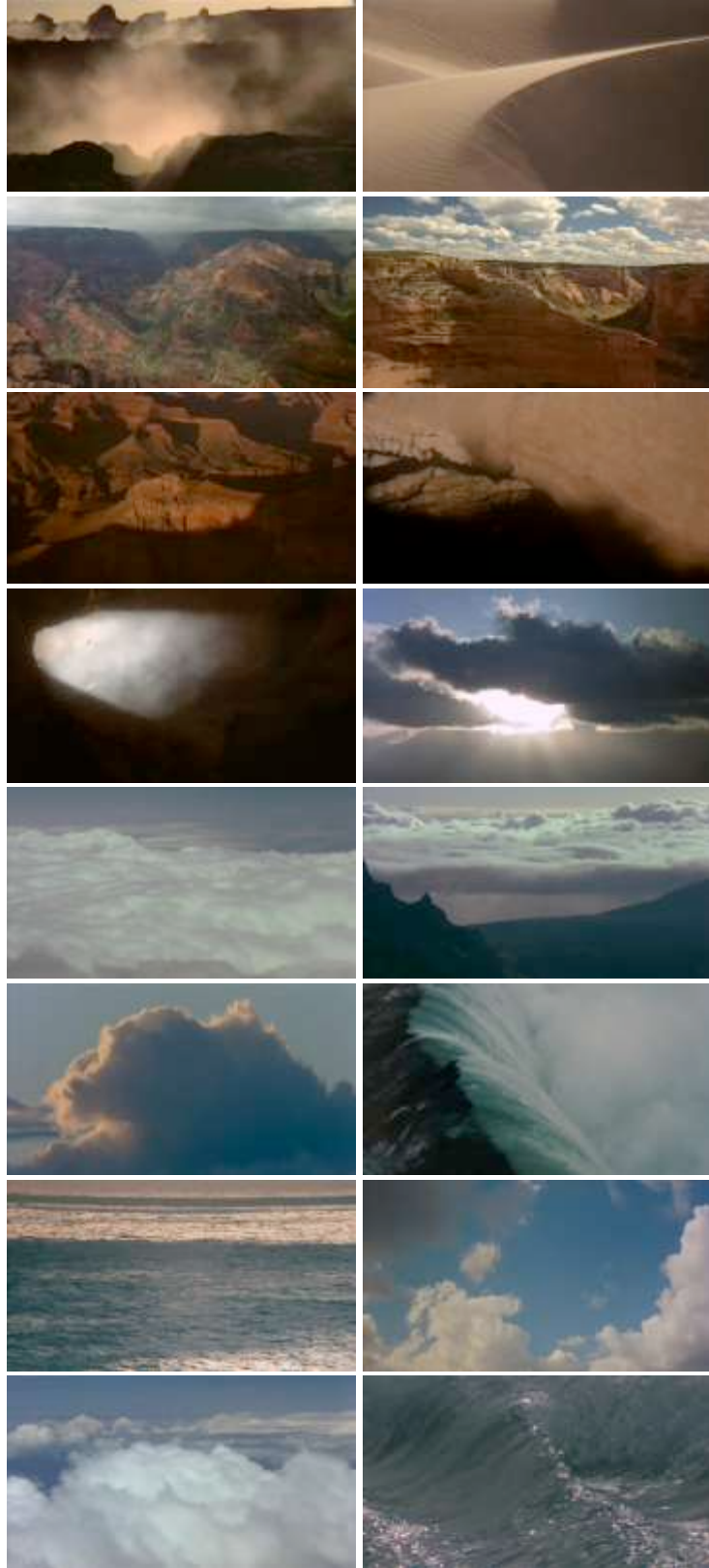


1 Giant Leap

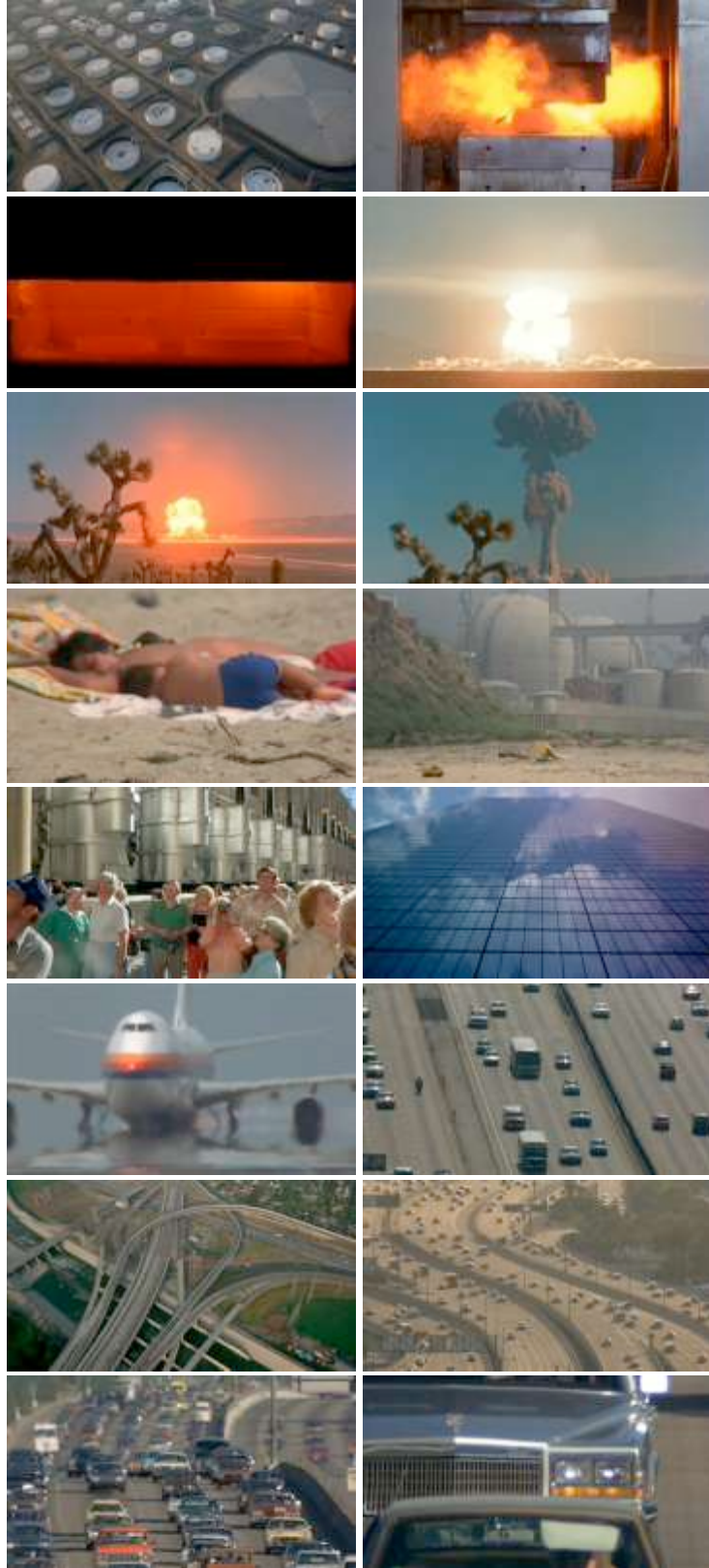


What the Bleep Do We Know!?









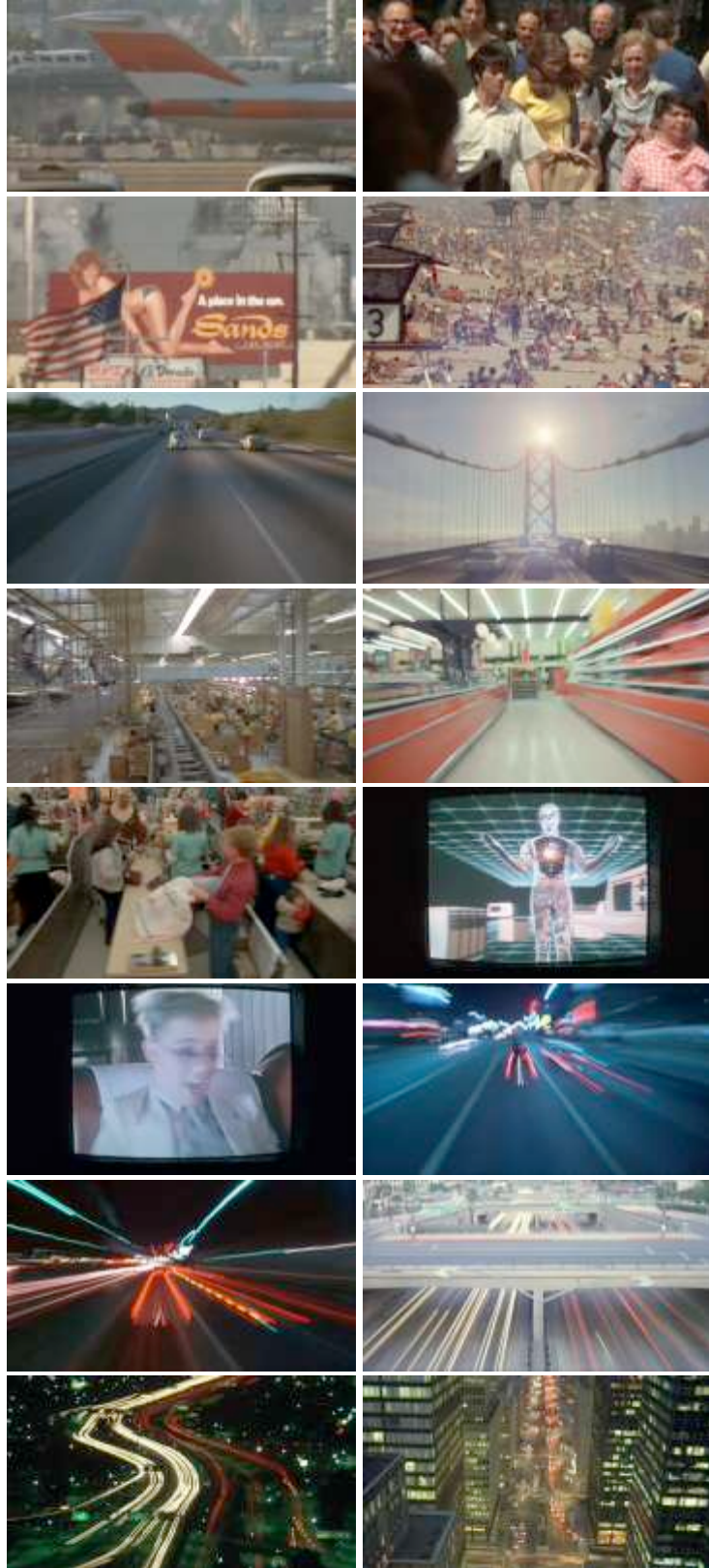
















Overview

Being the first film of its type Koyaanisqatsi really is ground breaking. Some of its work goes back 30 years. In interviews Reggio explains that the whole idea about Koyaanisqatsi is that you interpret it yourself, but he thinks that if we continue to change as we have then one day we will all speak the same language and wear the same clothes. Identity is being lost.

The content of Koyaanisqatsi is very broad. But generally shows the stark contrast between man and nature, and beauty and war. It is always very effective. Ron Fricke's contribution seems essential to make Godfrey Reggio's idea work, especially since the release of Fricke's own films. The first film of this style, and for many the best, but Koyaanisqatsi will always be a true classic.

Credits

Produced & Directed by Godfrey Reggio
 Filmed by Ron Fricke
 Edited by Alton Walpole & Ron Fricke
 Music by Philip Glass
 Music director & additional music: Michael Hoenig
 Original release: 1983
 Running time approx. 87 minutes

Trivia

- The rocket taking off in the beginning of Koyaanisqatsi is the Saturn 5 rocket, from the Apollo 12 mission.
- In the closing scenes is a modified and unmanned Atlas rocket from the Mercury-program from the early 1960's. Both are stock footage.
- Demolition footage of the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex features greatly in the film.
- Koyaanisqatsi was mentioned on the Simpsons, in the episode. Home oversleeps and a fast motion scene plays with music early identical to that in the film.

Images include

- Cave paintings
- Desert landscapes
- Waves
- Cloud formations
- Mines
- Traffic formations
- Commercial passenger aircraft
- Demolition
- Desolate urban landscapes
- Rocket explosions
- Crashing waves
- Sausage factory
- Rush-hour workers
- Escalators
- Cityscapes
- Integrated circuits
- Canyons

- Fields
- Earth movers
- Dams
- Explosions
- Aircraft
- Slums
- Machinery
- People

Links

www.koyaanisqatsi.org - The official Koyaanisqatsi web site

Keywords: Koyaanisqatsi, Koyaanisqatsi, Koyanisqasi

Comments

Please [leave your own comment about this page](#)

Full-Screen DVD - Rick from Pittsburgh - 16-Apr-2007

Prior to the agreement with MGM, Reggio's Institute for Regional Education solicited donations for the legal effort to regain the film rights, and gave to donors a limited number of DVDs with the fullscreen format of the film. They pop up on ebay now and then, though you can expect to pay a lot for one.

Apect Ratio of Home Video Releases - Peter Stoller from New York - 18-Mar-2007

The earlier VHS and Laserdisc releases of Koyaanisqatsi were presented in full-frame/pan & scan which suits the archival footage comprising much of the film. The DVD release is presented in widescreen which does not restore lateral image areas but instead crops the frame top and bottom, obscuring some of the image.

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