

How could someone near-60 have not seen Vanishing Point?

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Real life imitating art imitating real life. Vanishing Point was one of the truest examples of "Cinema Verite", or at least as close as an existential car chase movie could possibly come. Many thesis have been written about the tiny gap between bulldozer blades that Kowalski was aiming for. It was pretty obvious though; the light shining between them was the light of freedom. Vanishing Point was one of the highpoints of the early 70s for me. I may have seen it at Palo Alto's New Varsity theater, on University Avenue, with Paul Duncan, a good friend of mine whom I've kind of lost track of over the years, despite both of us still living in the Bay Area. This would have been the type of film that 16 year olds spend too much time thinking about the meaning of. We discussed such things during late-night walks on the pathway alongside the SP train tracks (now Caltrain), heading south for an hour or so, then heading back.

1971 was a really good year for existential car chase films; Duel, Spielberg's first commercial movie, about a guy in a sedan apparently being chased by a large tanker truck (and you never see the face of the tanker truck driver). The absurdity being that a sedan can easily outrun a tanker truck, especially climbing into the hills. It was probably inspiration for The Terminator where Arnold Schwarzenegger's cyborg was more tenacious than fast.

The most surprising thing about both Duel and Vanishing Point is that two of my favorite movies featured cars, and I'm the guy who didn't even get a driver's license until 18.

Looking at the picture of the bulldozer on West Old LaHonda, you can see where the connection between this morning's ride and Vanishing Point comes from. Had George been flying this morning, we might have seen sparks and explosions, but we were all taking it pretty easy today, so plenty of time to slow down and avoid carnage.

It was as nice as you'd have expected it to be, and finally, it wasn't just myself and Kevin, or myself, Kevin & Kevin. George showed up, fresh from the infamous "morning" ride which, today, had apparently been an easy pace. George and Kevin kept each other company on the climb up Kings, finishing about 4 minutes ahead of me.



I could have shown yet another beautiful photo from West Old LaHonda, but didn't want competition for the bulldozer photo. We did have one more photo op though; at formal end of climbing, right where the annoying stop light is found on Skyline, just north of Old LaHonda, somebody had dumped a couple couches by the side of the road, with the requisite "free" sign attached (as if they

were anything anyone would want). Seemed like the perfect opportunity to take a break. Glad nobody's done that half-way up Kings. Or a third. Or even a quarter maybe. Might be tempted!