

SUPER-8

THE NEWSLETTER-MAGAZINE OF THE MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM GROUP

No 1 MAR 1986

EDITORIAL

This is the first issue of 'Super-8', the newsletter-magazine of The Melb. S8 Group. Its aim will be to complement the Australian Super-8 scene, by disclosing news on screenings, etc. and also by giving the opportunity to theorists and film-makers to talk about Super-8 and what it means to them.

It is hoped that this magazine will help create and sustain an active S-8 scene in Melbourne (the city in which it is published.) In Sydney the Super-8 scene is alive and well, in Melbourne not so. But that can be rectified.

We are looking for writers interested in contributing to this publication. If you are interested in Super-8 in any way (whether to write about it or to organize screenings, etc.) then we would like to hear from you. Contact the Melb. Super-8 Group at P.O. Box 1150, Richmond North, 3121 or ring Bill Mousoulis on 419-6562.

Meeting Reported

The Melbourne Super-8 Group's first meeting/Open Screening for the year happened at the Glasshouse Meeting Room on February 10th. The turnout was very good - about 25, 30 people came along. For the first half of the evening there was an open group discussion, which, despite an uneasy, uncomfortable start (because I hadn't actually prepared anything), proved quite interesting and fruitful.

The question of cheap stock reared its ugly head once again. It somewhat saddens me to think that this is the first thing on people's minds. Still, I guess it's quite important to cut down the costs, and even though the Melb. S-8 Group can't get stock at half-price or whatever, we can at least make it available tax-free (i.e. a 20% or so reduction) to members. Another possibility mentioned during the meeting was that the

S-8 Group could strike up a friendship with Mediavision and obtain for its members a discounted rate on Mediavision's facilities, etc.

The meeting continued with everyone briefly mentioning the particular kind and area of film-making they're good at/interested in. A wide variety of concerns emerged and some hope was expressed that lots of films would be made this year, and that people would help each other out with them. I believe that the Melb. S-8 Group, as well as getting on with its other activities like organising screenings etc. can function as a sort of production company; referring people, providing equipment, etc.

The second half of the evening saw the screening of several films. Each film was introduced by its maker and there was a brief question-and-answer session as the subsequent film was being set up. The first film to be screened was Mehmet Raif's visual extravaganza On a Midnight Trip to Katmandu. Scratched film, bleached film, pixillation - this film has got it all. The images are haunting ones - there is a definite 'midnight' mood here.

Nick Donkin showed his film Experimental Animated Cartoon, in which we see the animator at his desk interacting with his characters. It is a well-made and humorous film, with a twist at the end. Noel Lloyd's Out-Dated is another film with a twist at the end. It's



a narrative comedy that isn't quite to my taste however. The same for Ian Kerr's Cut-ups in Canberra, a film I've seen several times now. Although I have no great objections to these two films, they are very indicative of the bland style of Super-8 film-making that exists in Melbourne, as opposed to Sydney film-makers' explorations of film aesthetics and meaning in film.

Speaking of meaning, many

people wondered what Peter Nathan's Untitled meant. Nothing much seems to happen in this film and, as Peter himself has mentioned, the film's narrative is quite unclear. Still, the atmosphere in the film has a terrific sense of disquiet about it, somewhat reminiscent of Peter Weir's work.

The last film shown for the night was John Calder's Imagex Three. It's a three-screen film, and I was absolutely fascinated by

it. The second half of it, set around public transport, is particularly effective and engrossing.

And so the first meeting of the year went pretty well. Hopefully these monthly Open Screenings will become a feature of the Melbourne film scene and provide an outlet and an inspiration for Super-8 film-makers in Melbourne.

Bill Mousoulis.

NEXT MEETING

Glasshouse Meeting Room, RMIT; Tuesday, March 11, 7:30p.m. - 10:00p.m.

At 7:30 p.m.

A talk by John Calder entitled "How the Camera Works"

The simple, commonsense rules that no-body seems to know.

Focus, exposure, good sound quality, and a few points of style.

At 8:30 p.m.

Super-8 films, to be individually introduced by their film-makers.

To be guaranteed that your film will be shown on the night, you must ring Bill Mousoulis on 419 6562 by the day before.

WHAT IS SUPER-8?

In the recent Super-8:1986 Yearbook several writers were asked "What is Super-8? Where does it come from and where does it hit?"

Here are a couple of replies that didn't quite make it to the Yearbook:

from John Calder

Super-8 is access film. Nothing else covers so many film-making bases, and yet is simple and cheap enough to run independently of the baggage of commercial organization. It is something of a cinderella of a medium. Cheap enough to be used and abused by all, Super-8 only rarely finds a partner sympathetic, sensitive and aware enough to bring out its true possibilities.

But those possibilities are wide enough to challenge and extend the most high-powered creative talent. Distill the essence of your ideas into the Super-8 frame and your art/writing/performance can participate by post in Festivals all over the world. Special projectors exist that can screen Super-8 films in commercial cinemas. Television broadcast is possible. And at the other end of the fame and glory spectrum, small group screenings in schools, workshops, cafes, tents, caravans, communes, flats and houses are the way to get experimental and special interest work appreciated.

It is all too common for film-makers to blame any lack of success in their work on technical limitations of the medium. I venture to suggest that Super-8's biggest problems are in the ideas and inspiration departments. Too much technical playing is being done without enough thought going into the value and impact of what the camera is pointing at. To get the best from Super-8, a lot more work needs to be done on discovering and using its unique advantages.

Super-8 - Nature of the Medium

(draw your own conclusions)

1. FILM-BASE

Use of original film-base! This means that the film you roll through the camera is the one and the same film you cut, edit, and project. The commercial attitude is one of horror at the risk but this approach keeps Super-8 projected image quality high at a low cost - video and 16mm suffer horribly from cost escalation due to the need to

copy as part of the editing and/or sound editing processes.

2. IMAGE QUALITY

My measurement is 480 line pairs fitting across the screen (asa 40 film stock). This is obtained by filming and projecting line charts rather than sitting around arguing about it.

Comparable figures are: Video 240
16mm 550
35mm 900

3. LENS PERFORMANCE

The small image size is a theoretical disadvantage, partly beaten by the laws of Physics which apparently make it easy (and cheap) to build superb lenses to serve such a small target. Super-8 cameras commonly feature "f/1.2" zoom lenses. To the uninitiated, "f/1.2" indicates these things are like optical vacuum cleaners, sucking up every scrap of light to deliver the movies even in low-light situations. It means being able to use "real-life" sets and move in for the kill quickly and unobtrusively without need to cart along a lighting truck.

4. IMPRESSING THE PLEBS

Super-8 does *not* allow you to wave enormous clunking great pieces of equipment around to impress the plebs. Very simply the technical process can happen as the means to a creative end - if you'll let it!

Super-8 doesn't hit where it should. "Where should it hit?" would be a better question! Film is a fascinating creative medium in the challenge it throws down to excel in a wide range of skills to make it work. The opportunities for creative growth are there for the taking - and Super-8 is the best way I can find to take them. Now all it needs is for you drongoes out there to make the same discovery so I can be the guru of a Super-8 subculture.

from Michael Hutak

What is Super-8?

Super-8 : is the only star in heaven
is the password granting entry to a world of lost events bathed in the light of memories of an irrelevant past, present and future
is the only star that shines
is every instant of purity realised à merveille, and so it is across a lifetime, any lifetime - yours, mine
doesn't follow fashion, "that'd be a joke"
traverses the gutter and the fast lane, embraces meaninglessness without guilt, refuses confession, is indifferent to absolution, assumes grace

is the night converging like a sentence, is sex descending like drama, is the 'sex which is not done', is a "good fuck", S & M, Romantic Love

is The Wild One (1954), Rebel Without A Cause (1956), Performance (1970), Saturday Night Fever (1977), The Great Rock'n'Roll Swindle (1980), Rumblefish (1983), Purple Rain (1984) and Beat Street (1985)

Citizen Kane (1940), Touch of Evil (1958), The Conversation (1974), The Man Who Fell To Earth (1976), Eureka (1983)

Dead Zone (1982), Blade Runner (1982), La Dolce Vita (1959), Funeral Parade of Roses (1969), In the Realm of the Senses (1976), Vertigo (1958), Body Double (1985), Rope (1948), Broken Mirrors (1985).

Dirty Harry (1971), Lust For Life (1956), The Violent 4 (1967).

"...and since finding out what something is is largely a matter of discovering what it is like, the most impressive contribution to the growth of intelligibility has been made by the application of suggestive metaphors." ¹

Super-8 is like metonymy; rhizomatic, unintelligible, ridiculous, nostalgic, regardless, useless, misunderstood, stupid.

Super-8 isn't anything really.

Where does Super-8 come from?

Super-8 : comes from 1969, 1982/3, 1984 and the year 2000

the inner city, the city fringe, the art schools, university life, the squats, etc., warehouses, etc., terraces, etc., parties, clubs, right, yeah, right funk, punk, disco, pop, the cinema, Hollywood, Paris, Vogue, Stilleto, Crowd, Art & Text, Tension, On the Beach, Frogger Colless, Martin, Finnane, McAmley, Lowing, Burchill, Gibson, Titmarsh, Crawford, Periz, Butler,

outa nowhere, the past, here, now.

Sydney and Melbourne, then Brisbane, then Sydney, then Melbourne again, also LA, San Francisco, Ann Arbor, Montreal, and New York City.

Super-8 is living out the "'beyond the end of all things'" in a daring gamble 'that this very end will come about.' ²

Where does Super-8 hit?

Super-8 is a ghetto; it only hits itself.

Footnotes: ¹ J. Miller, "The Body in Question" p9
² R. Butler, "Chronopolis 2", from Frogger 19, Nov. 1985.

In production at the moment is Peter T. Nathan 's script of Dulcie's Love. For this film The Melbourne Super-8 Film Group is providing Peter with a working crew of four people to help him realize the project. If you have an interesting idea for a film but feel that you haven't the people or resources to help you make the thing, then please contact Bill Mousoulis on 419 6562.

Fringe Network's fortnightly Open Screenings are going strong. This is an outlet for independent film-making on any gauge, including Super-8. The next Fringe Open Screening is on Monday, March 17th, at 7:00 p.m. at the Grierson Cinema, 17 St. Andrews Place, Melb. For more information contact Fringe Network on 419 9549.

The Melbourne Eight Millimetre Club's annual collection of "Australia's Ten Best on Eight" is on once again, March 6th and 7th at the AMP Theatrette (535 Bourke St. Melb.) at 8:00 p.m.

The Sydney Super-8 Film Group will be presenting a screening of work from women film-makers at the Chauvel Cinema on March 14th. For more information contact the Super-8 Group on (02) 332 4674.

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This newsletter-magazine is published monthly by The Melbourne Super-8 Film Group

Contributions are welcome

Edited by Bill Mousoulis 419 6562

Layout by Matt Holden

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If undeliverable return to:
Melbourne Super-8 Film Group
PO box 1150
Richmond North 3121.

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

CHRIS WINDMILL
6/158 CHAPEL ST
BALACLAVA 3183