

SUPER EIGHT

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

NO. 11 FEB '87

1986~87 REPORT

I write this article with bleary eyes and mulled senses. At the time of writing Anne-Marie, myself and the committee are busy typesetting and laying out the 1987 magazine. We are pleased with the result and hope you all will be to. It will be on sale at the first Open-Screening for the year for \$2- a copy.

I will briefly capitulate 1986. The year saw a really incredible amount of Super 8mm activity in Melbourne. The 1st Melbourne S8 Film Festival was a great success as was the super 8mm component in the Melbourne Film Festival and the Spoleto Fringe Festival. MIMA, Fringe, ACCA, Channel 9 and the ABC have all been supportive of super 8mm in their own ways. Grants for super 8mm film-makers are available from Film Vic. and the AFC which should aid production.

Numbers at our Open-Screenings are increasing and this is something we hope to build upon in 1987. This year will see the Second Melbourne Super 8mm Film Festival around mid August. The Melbourne Film Festival will again be having a large Super 8mm section.

The Group will most probably be applying for funding to run our festival and to run the group itself. Your comments in this area are welcome.

1986 had much more super 8mm activity and so to will 1987. These are the highlights as I saw/see them, albeit rather compressed. The results for the voting for the committee at the AGM in December means that we have 3 new committee members. They are:

John Thomson	417 5193
Ron Olthof	798 1278
Noel Lloyd	481 5832

There is still a position vacant and this will be voted for in the February meeting.

That's all for now. Here's hoping that 1987 produces some really good super 8mm films and that the level of activity increases and consolidates.

Sarah Johnson.



Birthday Boy

DECEMBER MEETING

(Bill Mousoulis)

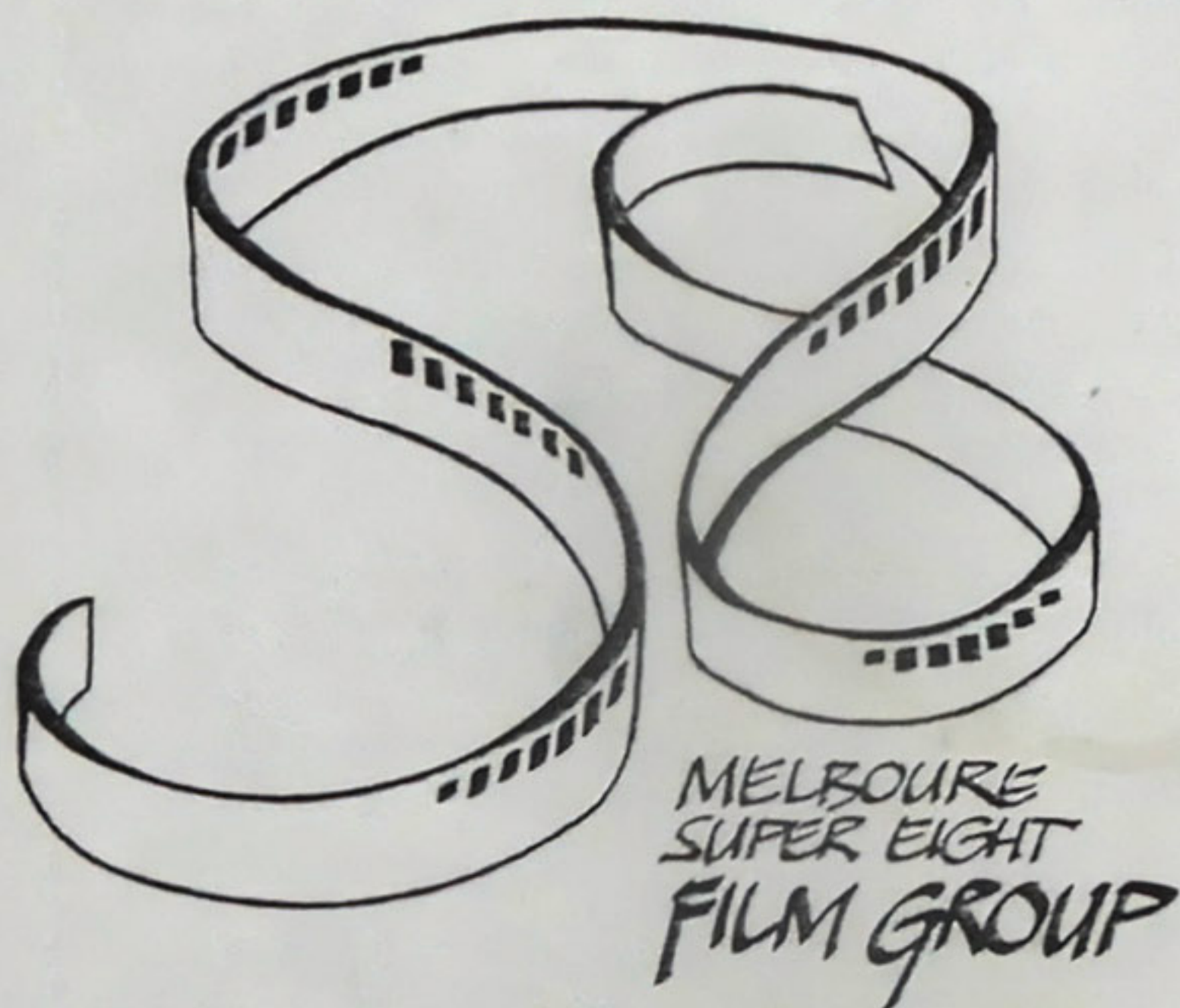
The last Open Screening of the year kicked off with the group's Annual General Meeting. Barry Branchflower, John Calder, Brett Cameron and Peter Nathan all left the committee, whilst Noel Lloyd, Ron Olthof, and John Thomson came onto it, joining Anne-Marie Crawford, Sarah Johnson, Matthew Rees, and myself. It should be noted that whilst the group does have an AGM each December, it doesn't really believe in a hierarchical structure between the committee and the members (or even within the committee.)

Thus, the Melbourne Super-8 Film Group encourages its members to become more involved with the group, on any number of levels. If you feel you have something to offer in regard to whatever, then come along to a committee meeting and tell us about it (ring me or Sarah to find out time and place of committee meetings.) Become a committee member! (Having many committee members is not necessarily impractical - sub-committees, for example, could be formed.) And if you think that all this is just talk - well, try us out.

Getting back to the December meeting, it was flooded with food, drink and people. There were films as well. First up, as is his wont to do, John Calder showed us the filmed results of the previous month's workshop. Never one to shirk invention, he projected two different images on the one screen: actors playing a glass blower and the forming glass, complete with blue and red filters respectively (it was black and white film.)

Continuing with John, a compilation film called This is Super-8 was shown, containing humorous odds and ends: unfinished group projects, John interviewing a dog, Matthew Rees' Thorald Glitch character, etc. Speaking of Matthew, his Birthday Boy was next up: a racy 4-minute comedy starring another of Matthew's characters, Ima Vessel, being let loose (or, rather, being trapped) in Fitzroy St. with a \$50 note.

P.T.O.



MELBOURNE
SUPER EIGHT
FILM GROUP

WINNING ENTRY OF LOGO COMPETITION
Winner Jane Dennis

Cont....

I showed the second part of my trilogy using images of (post) modern models from magazines accompanied by pop music. Called Fun Girl, I was more upset over the cassette not being in sync with the images rather than the guarded reception it got. Needless to say, the feminists in the room were quite enraged..

Following on from Birthday Boy, two other entries to "Hey, Hey, it's Saturday"'s Canned Film Festival were shown: Nick Donkin's Party, Party, which is even livelier (but less touching) than his celebrated One Night in Chippo; and the irrepressible John Calder's The Photocopier, of which maybe John himself (at the meeting) described the best: "A little bit gross."

The best film of the night was the debut from youngster Liam O'Donnell - Smoke Gets In Your Eyes. The low sound recording made it impossible to follow the narrative unfortunately. Still, this homage to pop sub-cultures is a beautiful film, with lazy images (a film-maker that dares to be lazy. Great!) and wonderful music. A film-maker to watch out for.

And so that was it, the last meeting of the year. But, good golly miss molly, this year's meetings are about to start up! So make those films and get ready to show them. We don't hold meetings for nothing, you know.

WHY 16mm IS UNWORKABLE

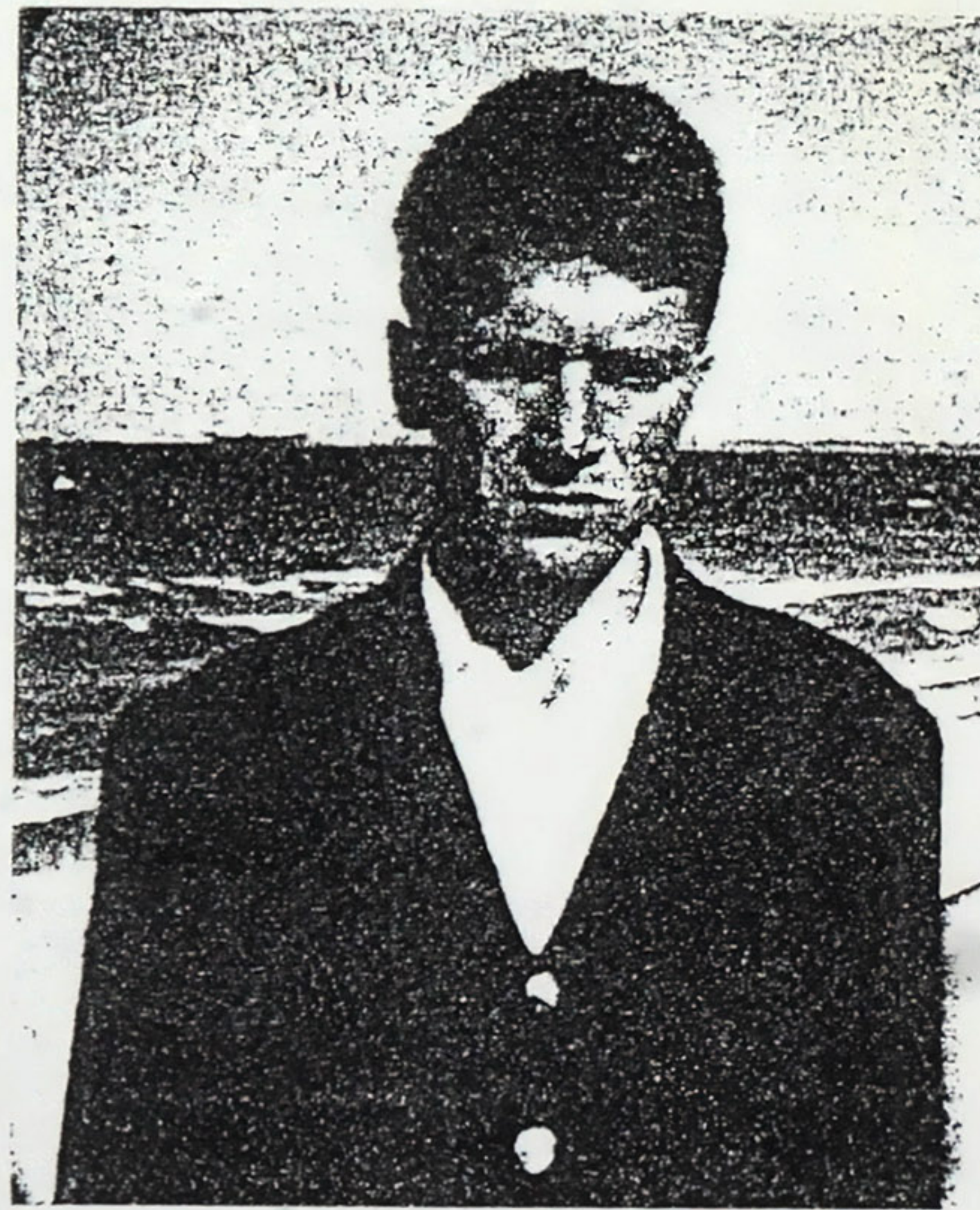
by Professor Lynton T Scrotum

Professor Scrotum's paper is a well-timed piece of analysis, coming, as it does, amidst the rumours and speculation about the existence of a film-making system using 16mm wide film. Scrotum, the superb theorist always, has transcended his total lack of experience with 16mm by focussing his incomparable powers of thought and logical deduction on what little information is available to us. It is with a heavy sense of destiny that we publish the Professor's article, as his opinion is so widely respected that this may well spell the death of the 16mm experiment.

The idea of 16mm has an all too familiar ring to it. How often it is that we see our political and business leaders make poor decisions as a result of fixating on one obvious factor and failing to consider the rest of the network of cause and effect it is linked to. Now it seems our film-makers are rushing to emulate the same kind of foolishness. The obvious factor with 16mm is "bigger is better", and the simple-minded will argue that a frame nearly 2x the Super-8 size should resolve twice the detail. Alas, 16mm for various technical reasons loses most of that advantage, and the loss of flexibility and ease of use that comes with larger and more complicated equipment is likely to hamper the creative film-maker in a maddening variety of ways. 16mm is a potential economic disaster too, with a possible cost increase factor of 10 due to technical factors alone, before even considering the flow-on effects to other aspects of film production. I consider the technical aspects first, then discuss the effect of 16mm on the creative process. A brief look at economics concludes the analysis.

Technical Aspects

In trying to imagine what a 16mm camera would be like, let us first consider the film gate. The Super-8 cartridge effectively gives us a brand new, clean film gate every re-load. Not so 16mm where the same old gate is re-used posing wear and maintenance challenges. 16mm must also travel through the camera at twice the speed, and being a greater moving mass has far greater inertia, thus subjecting the mechanical parts of the camera to traumatic levels of stress. The designers must be getting desperate as all of them are cutting the shutter angle down to 150 degrees or less to give the movement more time



to stabilize the film, and some are even inventing extra moving parts such as "registration pins" to try to fight back the forces of physics. The extra size and weight of the film I will comment on later, but let us now move to the lens. To cover a greater width of film is more difficult to design for. Something's got to give and aperture is the loser. Zoom lenses for 16mm typically manage f/2.2 at best compared to the f/1.2 we now take for granted in Super-8. The only way to work with wide apertures is to remove the lens (unbelievable but true!) and substitute a fixed focal length unit. At this point the design philosophy of 16mm starts to collapse like a badly thrown together card house. The separation of lens from body weakens the camera design and makes it vulnerable to dust and distortion - the latter would be very hard to diagnose. Fitting of viewfinder systems becomes difficult and through the lens light metering almost impossible. Pity the poor light ray trying to reach the 16mm frame, and doubly strangled along the way by the limited lens aperture and the small shutter angle. As a result 16mm film-makers are forced to use film stock of higher a.s.a. rating (and therefore poorer resolution). 125 at least and even 400 to 500 is not uncommon. And in that one fell stroke is most of the original size advantage lost. Add to this the lack of proper light metering and we find 16mm camera operators going through the futile exercise of using separate light meters with so little success that nearly all 16mm camera footage is impossible to project and it all needs to have the exposure mistakes corrected via a copying process. Some users are even trying the horrendously expensive negative-positive approach, presumably because it is especially kind to bad exposures.

In summary: Horizontal line resolutions:
Super-8 450 line pairs
16mm 550 line pairs

The 16mm superiority is not enough to be worth the trouble, especially when one notes that the 16mm maximum performance is more difficult to achieve under actual working conditions.

---SUPER~8---SUPER~8---

Two nights of Super-8 at the Glasshouse.

Thursday, February 12, 7:30 p.m.

SYDNEY SUPER-8: A selection of films from the 7th Sydney Super-8 Film Festival (Nov.

Friday, February 13, 7:30 p.m.

BERLIN SUPER-8: A program of films from West Germany's Interfilm 3 Festival (1985) (Presented with the assistance of the Goethe Institute.)

VENUE: Glasshouse Cinema, RMIT.

ADMISSION: \$5 and \$3 concession

Super-8 Group members get in at the concession rate

MORE INFO: Ring Bill on 419 6562.



The Foxicle

Effect on the Creative Process

The restrictions imposed by the size and weight of a larger camera are almost too horrible to contemplate. Gone in an instant would be the days of hand-holding the camera and letting it express the soulful flowing movement of your body as it becomes one with the experience you film. I imagine us needing all manner of wheeled and geared contraptions to get the same effect. And what of sweeping vertical shots up and over a scene? With Super-8 it is so simple to grip the camera with your teeth and climb a ladder. How can 16mm possibly match that?! A far more sinister threat comes from the emergence of a "high priesthood" of technicians and experts, with an "expertise", consisting merely of the ability of making such a clumsy and unattractive medium only just workable. Their demands in terms of resources, time and probably ego as well are likely to hamper the real creative work - that of actor, artist, director and writer. An even worse possibility is that of a complex film medium generating an industrial complex around itself. This includes possible control of production and distribution by managers, accountants, and those most tragically dehumanised products of the consumer society - the "marketing experts". The likely result would be a repetition of bland formula films produced by an entrenched elite, with the greater mass of emerging creative ideas denied expression in film form. Compare this to the Super-8 achievement of enabling and encouraging access to film for all, and carrying the leading edge of creative expression to the screens of a world-wide community of interest.

Economic Factors

16mm has an unfortunate fascination for the technically obsessed - one may term this the "pulling cars to bits" syndrome so prevalent in our society that amounts to an excuse for diversion from facing the challenge of working with ideas. (and Super-8 Sound has something of the same problem as compared to the superior form of the Super-8 Silent film - but I

digress..) I ask those of you attracted by 16mm to be fully aware of the economics -including the less obvious likely "follow-on" costs..

- * **FILM** - at least 3 X Super-8 cost for the original camera rolls, and the greater need to print etc in the lab raises to at least 10 X
- * **SOUND** - separate soundtrack needed during editing. High studio recording fees and hire fees for the elaborate editing machinery needed..
- * **EQUIPMENT** - usually hired, more planning needed to use it well in limited time - less easy to change plans because of weather etc - extra equipment needed at extra expense
- * **TIME** - 16mm is clumsy and slow in use, and "time costs money" even in the most alternative of films where the cost creeps through in more subtle ways.
- * **TRANSPORT, FOOD, DRINK, WORKING SPACE, PHONE CALLS, STRESS, HIRED "EXPERTISE"** - more required of all of these..
- * **RISK FACTOR** - compared to a Super-8 project, the equivalent 16mm one has more to go wrong, AND is more VULNERABLE to crashing when the problems hit. You run a high risk of landing yourself with an expensive unfinished project.

In Summary

Image quality comparison of 16mm over Super-8 :

1.2 to 1

NOTE if you choose to make use of the higher sharpness of Super-8 black and white film, the 16mm advantage disappears altogether.

Cost advantage of Super-8mm over 16mm :

15 to 1 - at least!

Artistic or intangible advantage of Super 8 over 16mm: (estimate)

200 to 1

"Small is beautiful" applies to film-making and the answer is still Super-8 !!

NEXT MEETING

The first Open Screening for 1987 is upon us!

Venue: Glasshouse Meeting Room, RMIT,
360 Swanston St. Melbourne.

Date: Tuesday, February 10.

At 7:30 p.m. OPEN DISCUSSION

An open discussion on the workings of the Super-8 Group. If you have anything to contribute, you would be most welcome to. We will be discussing the goals of the Group for 1987.

At 8:30 p.m. SUPER-8 FILMS

Including:

Enthusiasm by Simon Cooper
Something to Hide by Ron Olthof
The End of the World by Bill Mousoulis

There is also room for BYO films, but the spaces are filling up. Ring Bill on 419 6562 to book your film in.



1987 PREVIEW SCREENINGS

In 1987 MIMA is planning informal preview screenings on a regular basis at the A.F.I. Theatre, ground floor, 47 Little La Trobe Street, Melbourne.

- * NEW WORKS
- * OLD WORKS
- * WORK IN PROGRESS

These are open to all artists & film/videomakers who wish to show their work. Just bring Super 8, 16mm or tapes (1/2" or 3/4").

6:00 PM, MONDAY, FEB. 23.
MIMA. Telephone:- (03) 663 1953

Contact numbers for group

Sarah Johnson 534 4344
Noel Lloyd 481 5832
Bill Mousoulis 419 6562
Ron Olthof 798 1278
Matthew Rees 387 9292
John Thomson 417 5193



Resource Pool (give and/or get)

Equipment (call Bill)
Crew (Bill)
Actors (Matthew)
General (Sarah)

Newsletter layout and editorial: Matthew Rees and Ron Olthof
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super eight

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