


Super Eight

Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group Inc.

Issue 110, February 1996



Oooh ja, das ist
Wahnsinn. Wiiiiee super 8!

1995 IN REVIEW

TECHNICAL TIPS:
Hand Processing
Reversal Films

**NICK OSTROVSKIS
INTERVIEW**

**Tropical Super 8:
Darwin Screening Review**

notes from the answering machine

administrator's report

1996 heralds the 11th year of operation for the group, and we have started with a makeover for the Group's trademark logo, thanks to Irene Proebsting.

Planning is already underway, with a Planning and Policy meeting held on January 13th, putting in place a structure to work from for the coming year. This year we will be looking for a later festival (possibly November-December?) with the first meeting of the festival committee being held on Tuesday February 27th. Anyone interested in being on the committee should contact me at the group. Those who are interested should be aware that a certain amount of commitment is required, with meetings held on the fourth Tuesday night of each month, and additional meetings leading up to the festival.

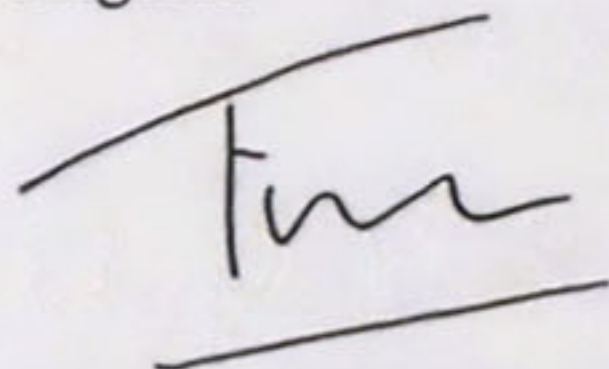
The group now has a new projector for hire, it is a Eumig Super/Standard 8 projector with both magnetic and optical sound options.

The group is also missing a Wurker Splicer, so if any members have any idea of the whereabouts of this vital piece of equipment, please contact me ASAP. On the subject of splicers, WURKER SPLICING TABS ARE BACK!!! After a few months without any, the shipment finally came through from Germany, where we are now importing them direct. We ARE the cheapest around, only \$10 per pack of 50. Available at the group.

There are quite a number of members with outstanding membership fees. Please note that we will be getting more strict with overdue fees. If you don't pay, you don't get your Newsletter!

1996 Office hours are:
Tuesdays & Thursdays 1pm-5:30pm

Regards



The 'new' logo by Irene Proebsting

HORRORSPHERE-8

MELBOURNE CINÉMATHÈQUE

June 5th 1996, 7pm, State Film Theatre

The Melbourne Cinematheque are, as part of their tribute to shock-horror, presenting a program of Super 8 horror/fear based films to be organised by Tim Patterson and Barry Brown. Any members wishing to make a film based around perceptions of fear, and the horror genre, or in fact already have completed films should contact the group.

The final program will be a selection from those presented, due to time constraints. Films should be about 3 minutes in duration, silent or sound, with soundtracks on either cassette or stripe.

The deadline for completed films is Tuesday 14th May (May Open Screening).

ADVERTISING

Advertising space in SUPER EIGHT is available at the following rates:

Quarter page - \$35.00

Half page - \$60.00

Flyer insert - \$20.00

(flyers provided by advertiser)

Members who wish to place small classifieds, are welcome to do so, providing they are of a minimal size. Contact the group for further information.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 6pm. Members are welcome to attend. The next Committee Meeting will be held on:

Tuesday 20th February 1996

at the Group's office

1st Floor

207 Johnston Street, Fitzroy

phone (03) 9417-3402.

SUPER EIGHT - The Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group Inc.

Issue 110 - February 1996

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This newsletter is published monthly by the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group Inc. All contributions accepted. Deadlines are as follows:

March Issue - Fri. 23rd February April Issue - Fri. 22nd March May Issue - Fri. 26th April

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Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the editor, or the committee of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group, and no responsibility shall be taken there unto.

1/ HOW DID YOU GET INTO FILMS (RMIT STUDIES etc) AND WHY FILM AND WHY SUPER-8?

I got into S-8 film-making in 1982 at RMIT. I was studying an insipid Fine Art Painting course part-time. The Artist on Campus at the time was Chris Knowles and he was running inspirational Super-8 workshops. I did a Super-8 workshop, quit my Fine Art course and became addicted to the lean gauge for several years.

WHY FILM? Because anything with sprocket holes makes me feel like we've progressed out of serfdom.

WHY SUPER-8? Because I Lurve, Lurve, Love it as much as my pet flathead.

2/ YOU HAVE WORKED IN 8mm, 16mm, 35mm. CARE TO DISCUSS THIS AND THE DIFFERENCES YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED. ALSO YOUR 8mm TO 16mm BLOW-UPS.

The gauge you work with is really irrelevant - ideas are the important thing. I can make films on 16mm like I do on Super-8. I had a Super-8 to 35mm blow-up done at Interformat, USA.

3/ YOU ARE AN ORIGINAL MEMBER OF THE MS8FG. HOW HAS IT EVOLVED IN YOUR TIME & HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AND YOUR FILMS IN ITS DEVELOPMENT?

I'm not an original member. The group started in late 1985. At the time B.M. was doing some serious networking on the phone to build up the group. After some Mousoulis pestering I attended one open screening in 1986. In mid 1986 I showed my film West Gate Bridge at the first MS8FG Festival. I started to attend regularly in 1987. I felt encouraged by the fact that some people liked my films. Apart from MIMA, MS8FG was the only place where I could show my films.

I don't think the group has changed much in 10 years. Maybe there are fewer narrative style film-makers today. For some reason narrative film-makers feel its an experimental film group - an 8mm MIMA and therefore they feel abit intimidated. Eg. - one narrative film-maker who was purchasing my S-8 camera through the Trading Post commented regarding the MS8FG that "those people will sit and watch anything that moves on the screen".

I say that the group hasn't changed much because its always been OPEN. Whatever has been presented has been shown. Its only by showing narrative films that narrative film-makers can redress the balance.

I don't see my films as part of the MS8FG's development. I see my films as part of a development of my own body of work, which sometimes uses the MS8FG as a stage.

4/ MOST OF YOUR FILMS ARE SILENT, BUT A FEW DO HAVE SOUNDTRACKS. DO YOU HAVE A PHILOSOPHY FOR SOUND/IMAGE DYNAMICS?

I don't have any philosophy for sound/image dynamics. When I want music composed for a film, I get a time coded VHS copy made and I say to the musician - "here's the film, do whatever music you want".

5/ YOUR FILMS CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE ARE TRIPPY LIKE JOURNEYS. WHAT INFLUENCED YOU TO MAKE THEM THIS WAY & WHAT FILM-MAKERS INFLUENCED YOU? IS STOP MOTION FILM-MAKING FOR YOU A STEP INTO THE MYSTERIOUS COSMIC REALITY OF EVERYDAY LIFE?

In the early 80's the film-makers who influenced were local Melbourne film-makers - Chris Knowles, Michael Lee, Dirk de Bruyn. Other Artists don't influence me at present, the body of work seems to influence itself. Its possible that someone may inspire me to a different direction.

Stop motion filming for me is a way of achieving interesting visual effects for my films. I don't like the word cosmic. I'm not interested in being esoteric or pursuing the meaning of life through film-making. I just want to use the camera like a visual stun gun to impart something to the audience which is beyond words. Not necessarily a message, but a mood or even an experience.

6/ THE PACE OF SOME OF YOUR FILMS AND THEIR MOMENTUM IS PRETTY RELENTLESS. WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT PERCEPTION AT THIS BREAKNECK SPEED, IS IT JUST HOW THE COLORS ARE OPTICALLY MIXED BY THE VIEWER & PROJECTOR COMBO?

Brain Surge, the film you had in mind, maybe is relentless to some as a silent film - but I'm very happy when its screened with Chris Knowles music. I've been really disappointed with it at the times it has been projected even fractionally out of focus (music or no music) - it ruins the whole experience and its best not shown.

I don't know how to answer the last part of your question even with a brewed coffee surged brain and Tahbilk Port combo, Jimbo!

7/ WHATS YOUR FAVORITE FILM AND WHY?

Flower Animation. I hit the nail squarely on the head. It just worked.

8/ IS IT TRUE YOU ARE SELLING ALL YOUR FILM EQUIPMENT AND GOING BACK TO YOUR PAINTING? ANY GRIPEs ABOUT THE GROUP, SCREENINGS, FILM SCENE ETC... WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE, MISS ETC...?

I've sold most of my super-8 equipment - my optical stables are nearly bare. For awhile I didn't use anything, so I decided to sell. I'm actually looking for a good super-8 camera to expose a few more reels. I have a few new films in mind. I'm also making alot of paintings and drawings.

I have no gripes.

I would like to see open screenings on every day at 7.30pm and since Tuesday is such a sacred cow 8mm day, we could have an open screening at 7.30am as well as the evening screening on Tuesday. That would REALLY PURIFY THE FLOCK.

I would also like to see more rabid in-fighting.

I hope your stone fruits went well.

Thanks

Nick Ostrovskis

EDITORIAL

by Tim Patterson

TONY WOODS • TONY WOODS •
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(only joking Tony! Count how many times your name appears in this issue!)

Mountainous Indifference

"Last night to the flicks. All war films. One very good one of a ship full of refugees being bombed somewhere in the Mediterranean. Audience much amused by shots of a great huge fat man trying to swim away with a helicopter after him, first you saw him wallowing in the water like a porpoise, then you saw him through the helicopter's gunsights, then he was full of holes and the sea around him turned pink and he sank as suddenly as though the holes had let in the water, audience shouting with laughter as he sank"

No. Not a scene from Mad Max, Lethal Weapon 7, Die Hard 23 or new Nintendo game release number 1000 but a quote from George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four. More grist for the mill, that good old Spectacle that has us in its spell, that has us in the palm of its hand.

I heard Eva Cox talk about sport in The Boyer Lecture Series on 3LO, talking about, amongst many other things, the need to enhance community sport, get everyone involved, build some fibre into our culture instead of the hyped up franchised out circus of "professional" sport which estranges us from our own accomplishments. I thought of my kids playing baseball at the local Moorabbin Baseball Club and my 13 year old son coaching the 7 year olds in the T ball team, but I also thought of the Super 8 group fulfilling a similar function within film culture, in the way it embraces its members, what gets screened and the reactions to these screenings. The Melbourne Super 8 Group's part in the world may be small but it is still important. In a lot of ways the whole idea of the gauge is emblematic of that, like those pixel vision cameras and the accessibility of the home video formats is of video.

I also thought about that ex-actor, that next Mel Gibson, who so tragically lost his future and acting career in a car accident and who lately has played out some zombiesque bit part on the 6.30 news. (as you can see I am well and truly plugged into the one way flow and not living in the seventies). And all that media hype about the 30/44 million pay out beaming into the homes of all those citizens whose futures and dreams have been unravelled in a multitude of unjust and unexpected ways and who, of course, got, and continue to get; fuck all. What were they being told about the value of their lives in relation to those participants in the Spectacle and that obscene access to money that it guarantees.

And in all those homes
Next to all those TV's and Raydios

NO ONE BLINKED

The Situation: SPECTACLE or no spectacle.

(that is the Quest/ION)

The every day is being disengaged again and again as rerun after rerun of a mediated circus reaches such a critical mass that it feeds on itself. It has been doing so for a while now. This is post modernism's most unfortunate legacy. But this is old-news. It should be no surprise when, on a TV magazine type program, the "John Lennon" singer in the Beatniks, a Beatles cover band is interviewed and offers that the audience looks at them as if in a daze, as if they are watching a movie. And then there is also, at another floating location in the land of simulacra, thanks to the wonders of the Technopoly, a spruced up husk of John in both sound and image, in that revisionist "Anthology" doco singing "new" songs from the grave. This is the old-new. And my generation is supposed to be responsible for it. Well not me. And not Tony Woods either, who this sketch is supposed to be about. He has taken a path to understanding that has travelled through Dante's deep dark wood and come through the other end with will intact, camera in hand and some telling exposures left to capture the

epiphanies of an ongoing journey. He is not mesmerised by the spectacle in any of its revisionist forms.

The Technopoly as Neil Postman describes it, grabs at you with "buy me" affectation. Its surface offers a satisfaction seldom met beyond an initial transaction, its initial aura. Who can take up arms against a sea of amusements? (Neil Postman in "Technopoly") How can one survive creatively and feed one's psyche in such a place?

To come to terms with this state of things some commit suicide.¹ Some look to signs from other cultures, traditions like the writing of the Haiku or the practice of Tai Chi. Some harness the Tai Chi to bring movement and seeing and focus back to a self regulated time, somehow internalised in one's own body. To bring back control to one's self.

Tony Woods has taken a similar path with his camera. To bring back control and knowledge, real knowledge, to his self. I am aware of his body and psyche when I watch his films. He has turned to his camera/s and created some mandalic films, haikus perhaps, that stand as epitaphs against the devalued state of things. The images breathe as we breathe, as we sit and breathe, as he sits and breathes. The films flow from the ordinariness of his everyday life and from an eye that continually looks outside of the excrement of the regurgitating dream factories.

Bird on A Wire, like most of his time based work is shot from and around his studio. There is a sequence in the film with, funnily enough, a bird on a wire, a bird on one of a group of powerlines arranged in such a way as to suggest musical notation which in its turn suggests the bird's song. This song is free and unrestricted but unheard. This song is suggested by the image but given back to the cityscape in which it exists and makes sense. There is something of the same respect in this that you find with the fisherman who throws back his catch. It is more, though, than the hunter who shoots and captures with a camera rather than a gun. For in that case there are still trophies involved. In Tony's work there are no trophies involved, only atrophies: the shedding of expectation. There is no bracing for the crash, the jolt, the flash, the shout that the spectacle uses to catch our attention.

And in this shot of the bird on the wire: what a succinct image to get across the idea of visual music. There is a point in this film where the world of symbolic language is turned back on itself and a vista of time and space re-opened for contemplation.

Like the parting of curtains from a window

Like the opening of an eye

Early in the morning

Kneeling to the Sun: Mandalas

According to Jungian Psychology Mandalas are said to depict the basic pattern of the psyche from which emanates the web of life. Mandalas can be used to restore a lost inner balance or to consolidate the inner self and bring one to a point of departure for deep meditation. This seems similar to the creative process that Woods would have refined in and through his painting over the last 30 years.

The sun and its light (sometimes substituted by its symbol, the light globe) provide the primary and initial mandalas for his super 8 and 35mm slide investigations. *Reel Light 92 (7)*

¹ This seems to be the final solution that Guy de Bord, le Situationist Originale, found for himself late last year- and then Deleuze followed hot on his heels, perhaps for different reasons, perhaps not.

minutes) dissects the refracting process registering various reflections, refractions and beams of light within his studio environment. Unlike the manipulations of the Whitneys and the cosmic art of Jordan Belson undertaken in the 60's, which are informed by film texture, its surface, animation and deeply grounded in Technique, Woods works deal more closely with real time and is more diaristic in its exposition. Technique is a necessary tool rather than a focus for celebration. His films rhythms are more directly dependent on *where* he films with available phenomena and more directly dependent on his own breathing. Technology is kept at a minimum, though his film about Samuel Beckett (*Beckett and Woods 95*, 7 minutes) toys with the ideas of animation as he slowly assembles and constructs mandalic images out of paintings of Beckett's face.

Beckett also marks a more comprehensive use of Tony's own voice, used as the complete antithesis of the documentary voice over. Incomplete sentences are mumbled more in intimacy than authority reinforcing the contemplative pace of the film. The voice, in its own offhanded way helps keep the viewer's approach to the film open, some how this lack of boisterousness pricks one's interest and motivates one to examine more, settle into the film's schemetry.

It is a reflection / extension / manifestation informed by the artist's internal state and mediated by external living / studio space. We must not underestimate where it is that Tony lives out his daily existence and why he has chosen to do that when we look at his work.

The Jungian circle or sphere is a symbol for the self, expressing all aspects of the psyche, including the relationship between man and all of nature. In works like *Sunism*, *Wattism* and *Optiks* Woods elaborates circles of light pulling out of them crystalline structures, moving mandalas that give us insights into an almost scientific nature of things but also refer back to an inner self, the psyche. There is something factual and real about these ephemeral structures. There is a dialogue here between technology and intuition, science and creativity. They are a manifestation of the unconscious, that same space where those flashes of insight come from that become solidified as scientific discoveries and later still, become incorporated into the logical matrix of scientific knowledge.

The Vid and Conscientiousness

"And when we participate when we attempt translation of our personal content into the acid like solution of electronic media we convince ourselves we must use the existing dominant position."

Bruce and Norman Yonemoto in *Illuminating Video* p246

Not Tony. Perhaps it was the decades of working with the brush, contemplating and constructing the image in a sweet stretched out time that inoculated him against such a temptation. There is a child like simplicity about his films that has taken 3 decades of continuous investigation to reach out for. His videos *Light and Colour on the Wall* (1995 15 minutes), *Colour Wheel* (1995 30 minutes) and *Windows* (1995 15 minutes) are even more so.

"the consumer society exemplified by television, is obsequious in its attentions and promises you all happiness. Whereas the mountain is indifferent"

The Age of Missing Information

He examines the indifference. We are a witness to this examination. It was apparent at an open screening at the Cafe Bohemio when he showed *Colour Wheel* from his video series. It went for a half hour-the length of the tape, with a short voice over introduction giving the time and place of the recording, like an entry in a notebook. The video continued in real time following the wind and subtle changes of light in one of those spinning plastic colour wheels on a stick, and another mandala. Every now and then he would change exposure or filter. To engage I had to come down from the hyper I was in. organising

the night, and more than once I thought not enough was happening so that I wanted it to stop. Some people afterwards said it was boring, just a live recording, that he should have said how long it was so that the audience could have been prepared. What Tony had delivered, of course, was a slice of ordinary time focused onto a place that gives him pleasure and a contemplative moment. In the context of the discordant voices of the night he offered us the indifference of the mountain. A number of us were not ready for it.

From the beginning stillness comes motion, always slow but never monotonous, rising and falling with a natural rhythm like the ocean.

Tai Chi Chuan; The Technique of Power. p31

This quote, which reflects an essence of the Tai Chi discipline, aptly describes *Windows* as the camera scans and moves over glass, through its various distortions in his studio revealing and contorting an abstracted landscape, allowing the camera to dwell and allowing us to witness and construct our own personal images and discoveries in the mosaic.

"The most important part about tomorrow is not the technology or the automation, but that man is going to come into entirely new relationships with his fellow men. He will retain much more in his everyday life of what we term the naivete and idealism of the child. I think the way we see what tomorrow is going to look like is just to look at your children."

R. Buckminster Fuller offered these wisdoms in the 60's and though they may say something about Tony Woods' work they do not cover much else that has transpired in these austere 90's. In retrospect Fuller put too much import on naivety and childlike idealism, an innocence that will always be lost, even in less austere times. Woods films and videos are not an ode to lost innocence either, their simplicity is an informed, attained simplicity rather than an innocent one.

Yet there are elements of intent and vision in Tony's films that connect them back to Youngblood's Expanded Cinema². But it is technique pared down to the bone, to the bare essentials rather than a celebration and anebriation with new technologies. This is not necessarily a bad thing, is it? -And this is in keeping with these more austere times, isn't it? This austerity allows for a certain distillation and a re-affirmation of the creative process. It relies on a honed intuition that sees a use for science without being taken over by it.

The anebriation, the hyperbole, the big statements now belong to the Interactive media, CD Rom, the internet, hyperspace, where the big bucks are, for the moment. Small remains beautiful and hands on contact remains important as:

"modern technology has deprived man of the kind of work that he enjoys most, creative, useful work with hands and brains and given him plenty of work of a fragmented kind, most of which he does not enjoy at all. P124 *Small Is Beautiful-* a study of economics as if people mattered by E.F. Schumacher 1973 Abacus. U.K.

And meanwhile back on the ground, back at the studio, Tony is becoming a one man cottage industry. I do not see that many around him doing the same, though those that are are likely to be found showing their little stabs of insight at Super 8 Open Screenings or the Allgauge at the Cafe Bohemio.

Dirk de Bruyn Dec 1995/Jan 1996

² An expansive American tract about alternative film that arose out of the idealistic 60's and from which the Fuller quote was taken, and which discusses the work of Belson and the Whitneys.

10 years after

Was it 1990 or 1991? When Bill Mousoulis rang me in early November I couldn't even tell him how long it was since I'd last been to a Super 8 Group screening. Probably 1991. Back in the Glasshouse meeting room days - Trams rumbling past, car headlights flickering across the curtains. So when Bill told me November's meeting was to be a 10th Anniversary type screening I thought it might be interesting to bring along an old film and see how the group was going in it's new (well newish) home. Down Johnston Street way.

In some ways nothing seems to have changed much, a few familiar faces looking a bit older (has Bill lost some weight? Has Matthew lost some hair?) and the usual collection of mostly studentish looking types. The number of people in attendance (20-30?) seems much the same as I remember.

The atmosphere of a proper thetrette to show the films in makes for a better screening environment, though the seperation of theatre and reception/coffee/counter area perhaps means people don't mix as well as in the one room situation we had at the Glasshouse. It makes it easier for people to form their cliques in a multitude of corners, Making the place perhaps less friendly seeming to a one-off or first time visitor.

Anyway, as to the films shown on November 14th, the evening saw 15 roll through Tim Pattersons hands into the projector. Unfortunately one of these had to be rolled straight out again. (See below)

Roughly in order of production the films were :

1) Cut-ups in Canberra by Ian Kerr. 1985. This cut out animation film of mine, in which the Thunderbirds save Bob Hawke from the ruins of Parliament House, screened at the very first meeting of the group in February 1986. I mentioned how it had received a damning review by Bill Mousoulis in the first issue (or was it the second?) of the newsletter. The audience seemed to take Bill's opinion to heart as the films humour was met with a resounding silence.

2) The Foxicle By Chris Windmill. 1986. Chris wasn't present, being up in Darwin, but he sent along this early film of his which I remember well from '86. It holds up pretty well in its strange tale of plastic irons and walkie talkies as used by the Prince and Princess of Monarco.

3) Physical World By Bill Mousoulis. 1986. I've often had mixed reactions to Bill's various efforts but this one is quite well done. Two people, separately, get up and go to work (?) in the same building in the city. The audience expectation from conventional narrative is that they will meet and something click. But Bill, of course, is playing Goddard in the mirror and doesn't let that happen.

4) The Big Freak Show By Mark Freeman. 1988. The title of this film is written out on a long plank which a couple of men walk through the opening shot (a rural landscape) and the closing shot (a number of people acting silly). Unfortunately I'm writing these reviews a couple of weeks after the meeting and can't for the life of me remember what happens in between. Sorry Mark.

5) Flower Animation By Nick Ostrovski. 1988. In the first half of this film Nick does quick zoom ins on various slides, mostly of flowers. In the second half he goes into reverse and does quick zoom outs. It sounds simple when written out like that but the results are (to use a cliché) dazzling. With colours pouring towards us and then away, in a psychedelic cornucopia. As in all of Nick's early films the absence of a soundtrack puts all the attention on the visuals, there are no distractions.

6) The Polka! By Gary O'Keefe. 1988. In his intro Gary said this was mostly shot in his backyard, some of it using an old turntable. The results are more expansive than that background implies. I can still see the images in my head but can't quite describe them. A non-narrative experiment in movement. Good stuff, if a fraction long.

7) M for Murder By Robert Jankov. 1988. A retake of "Psycho", except with a man in the shower taking the place of Janet Leigh and an ax murderer standing in for Anthony Perkins.

8) Pandas By Ian Poppins. 1988. Bill Mousoulis gave this film a little intro in which he called it an example of how the group supports all sorts of film makers. Ian Poppins touched with the ironic reply that he'd noticed how his films are often "saved" to be played last at open screenings. This particular example of Ian's work was filmed at Melbourne Zoo when the Chinese pandas were on display. I actually thought the most interesting part of the film not the pandas themselves but the shots taken inside the zoo shop showing shelf after shelf groaning under the weight of dozens of panda toys and products.

9) White Woman (30 sec. excerpt) By Anne-Marie Crawford. 1988. Unfortunately 30 seconds or so was all we saw of this film before

the damaged nature of the print made it impossible to continue. A shame, as Crawford (or Marie Craven as she is now known) was one of the few female voices in the early days of the group.

10) ...In a few words... By George Ray. 1989. Begins with someone saying "I feel as if I'm becoming a ghost" and ends, sort of, with Mark Zenner on the soundtrack mumbling "Everything I touch turns to shit". Between these we have a collection of images that, like "The Big Freak Show" seem to have left little impression.

11) Guitar Hero By Laki Sideris. 1989. A hopeless guitarist goes into the city and tries to make some money as a busker - to complete failure. An amusing episode.

12) Astral Plane By Jenny Pignataro. 1990. A video-clip type effort made to the extremely garage band sounding song by Jonathon Richmond.

13) Motorcycle Ride by Moira Joseph. 1992. Seems to be an exploration of animation as we see a slow series of still images of a man getting on a motorbike. Between each still image is a short period of black. The film ends with a conventional cut-out animation shot of the man and bike riding through grass.

14) Agung gives Ivor a Haircut By the Cantrills. 1992. A straight document film as we see the Cantrill's son Ivor getting his hair trimmed in an Indonesian backyard. The simple nature of what we see was given a serious political and social background by Corrine's introduction detailing why the student Agung had to make extra money cutting hair and his difficulty getting scissors for the job.

15) Spiral USA BY David Cox. 1992. Cox is currently working on a high budget film he's got a grant for. (Being produced by one time group president Sarah Johnson). In his intro to "Spiral" he spoke of how his contact with the group and its members had expanded his horizons, He also had a dig at the "dictators" who run the group.

"Spiral USA" itself was in two parts. The first part was a roll of 16mm found footage Cox had edited while staying in San Francisco. The footage seemed to mostly date from the '50's and included clips from science fiction features, police training films and whatever. The second part of the piece was a super 8 film diary Cox had filmed while travelling up the west coast of North America from San Francisco to Vancouver. In it we see a collection of quick (1-3 second) shots of the landscapes and cities he travelled through and a few brief shots of the people he travelled with.

As someone who grew up on American TV and comics I found this film extremely interesting. Cox films all sorts of things which his American hosts probably took entirely for granted but which as filmic images build up a picture of a country which is still quite different to Australia.

And that was it. How well did this retrospective represent the groups history? I'm not sure. Only someone who knows that history better than I could say. But overall I think the films probably showed pretty typically the range of approaches the groups film makers have taken over the years.

But are there any new approaches left to be taken in Super 8? Has the "cutting edge" of imagery moved on from a super 8 film threading its way through a projector in front of 20-30 people? Is each "generation" of film makers which go through the group just re-inventing the wheel in a ghetto the internet will leave behind?

Almost 10 years ago 20-30 people went to the first meeting. In November 20-30 went to the latest. The group may have survived but has it grown? Is it unhealthy shape or has it just been treading water for 10 years? It seems to me that the number of ex members of the group might now far outweigh the number of current members. Perhaps in a high enough proportion to raise serious questions about the groups effectiveness. In 10 years no more than half a dozen people have stayed in the group for any length of time. Why do so few people hang around?

IAN KERR

the climate utters thickly

the climate utters thickly
a stencil of meandering
casts a plywood decade
across the cave loosens up
onto the upper was ist das
of an inclined odour whyche
like a remark gone hasty
severs its own imprint
on a portable ocean

An Article for the Super 8 Newsletter:

THE TROPICAL SUPER 8 THING:

On a Thursday in December, lovely bride Jennifer and I walked in to 24 Hour Art, and set up our projector. We were eager to see the Super Kiosk 8 touring programme, and unconcerned about Thelma from the gallery's warning not to expect more than a handful of (ie. five) audience members to turn up, Sixteen enthusiasts fronted, only 20 minutes late, just as the seriously heavy rain started to belt down. Audience numbers may have been helped by the screening of local video artist, Val Stuart's prize-winning student work "Road", interesting overexposed staccato details of cars and shadows, filmed from a pedestrian overpass.

"This is an OK audience" said Yetholme (or "Thelma" when I am spelling more successfully). And let me tell you, I saw a one day cricket match up here between New Zealand and the Northern Territory, which only had a few more spectators.

Two examples of hard-core formalism in "The End" and "Rattlestack" hit the screen first. Then came the humanist "Palm Lodge", and a chance to appreciate the seductive look of first generation black and white film. In fact the first nine minutes of the programme had defined the two opposite margins of film, from white leader to human beings.

Tim's Japanese diary film was next up, an interesting example of this genre, but strangely thin, the significance of a lot of the imagery ambiguous.

"Friendly Visitor from Space" followed. It was a very flimsy film to sit through, seeming to promise a rules-do-not-apply anarchy, while serving up lots of home-made B-movie cues that cried out for a bit of old-fashioned, totalitarian order.

Reel 2 leapt up onto the screen, our audience now down to ten, but they were true believers, and their belief was rewarded. Maeve's "Feathered" is such a charming Scratch-film. Scratch-films can look a bit the same, but the quality of the hand making the marks shone through. I took a lot of pleasure in "Unjustified". Creating something enthralling from anti-compositional framing, and misogynist babble impresses me a fair bit. Maybe it was also the closest thing to a character-based narrative on the programme.

Sadly, "Green to Green" could not be shown, because its cement splices had lost the will to hold the film together. Nick Ostrovski's "Trance Mosaic" is another compelling reworking of Nick's almost unchanging palette of images and motion effects. I don't remember seeing Nick's negative self-portrait, or the interiors of the house before. I find the repetition of the other images, from film to film, perversely rich, and the introduction of any new image into Nick's work seems strangely laden with emotion, though I've no idea why.

Another reel change. The faithful audience of ten stand on the porch, smoking cigarettes, puzzling over the technicalities of Nick's film, while the rain still sheets down. "poss (s) bathtub" was another hit, very simple, very elegant. "Newport Open Day" also very simple, direct, sharply articulated images.

"Hopetown": Gary O'Keefe provides a lot of moments of capital "C" Cinematography. He has an eye for light falling in big spatial scenes, that I don't think I've seen on Super 8 before. In an rambling semi-structured way he also provided a telling documentary portrait of a desolate town.

Heinz's brooding "3 Short Passages" had so much of the flavour of his earlier film set around the props department of "Gallipoli", that it exposes my flaw of sometimes seeing the film-maker and not the film. There's a sense of the pleasure of alienation.

I was enjoying "Open Your Eyes", but writing about it the next day, after, it seems to have evaporated leaving just an image of a man?/woman? in bed.

Jennifer tells me it was reminiscent of European avant-garde cinema from the glorious 1930's, radiant with light and form.

"The Pause between Frames" was an intriguing film to watch in Darwin, being set in our backyard, and half the audience being swathed in Indonesian garments. The moment when the lily pads paused to normal speed was like being put under a spell.

I've read a lot about Tony Woods in the Newsletter, and I think this is the first time I've seen one of his films, so expectation was intense. I am also prepared to admire long uncompromising, perversely conceptual films. "Round a bout" is a film that does what David Cox's "The Onus is on us", sought to do: It forces the audience to participate, because it is an imprisoning experience. Questions the P.O.W's asked included: "What part of Melbourne is that?" My guess: "North Carlton."

Another hostage remarks: "The longer it gets, the better it gets."

And another exclaims delightedly: "Red Cellophane."

The same, a bit later: "Blue!"

This is a very strong film, with some awful magnetism to recommend it, probably the same attractive/repulsive signal which has occasionally driven me to swim in ice cold water.

Ten of us thank the super 8 group, all the film-makers, Tim for organising things, and Thelma from 24 Hour Art, for her enthusiastic support. I hope we can stage something similar in the future, I think we could get a few more people along. The ones we had were quite into it.

Chris Windmill

1996 – A Celebration of 25 Years of Cantrills Filmnotes

I don't know whether 25 years of publishing *Cantrills Filmnotes* is a milestone, or a millstone around our necks, but whichever, it is an important achievement in Australian film culture. Issue #79/80 has just been published, and it has some excellent documentation of some of the films shown at SUPER KIOSK 8 last September. These are John Harrison's *Vena Cava*, SILT'S *Kuch Nal* (from San Francisco); Heinz Boeck's 3 short passages, and Tim Patterson's *Nostalgia*, *Narcissism*, *Natsukashii – Part 2*, *Japan*.

There is also a four-part contribution, *Sensory Topographies*, from the four members of the Perth-based group, RETARDED EYE, on their approach to video. Their work was shown in Melbourne last May. Barry Brown and Irene Proebsting write on their intermedia ensemble *Industrial Vesper #11* which was shown at the VIRTUALITIES Exhibition at the Science Works Museum last year. We interviewed Michael Buckley about his interactive CD-ROM, *The Swear Club*, and he describes how he went about constructing this work, and its relation to his sound poetry with *Arf Arf*, and to his filmmaking. John Conomos has written an article challenging ideas about the new multimedia, and then describing some of the new work in the field which he found interesting. Paul Winkler writes about one of his recent films, *Green Canopy*. The MCA in Sydney ran a retrospective of Paul's work last year, for which Paul set up his studio at the Museum and worked there every day for a couple of months on a new film. Merle Thornton describes a series of videos, *Living Maths*, which she has produced with and for the Yolngu community at Yirrkala in the Northern Territory, which incorporate Yolngu concepts into an approach to Maths teaching. All this, plus the New Books section. The colour in this issue is breathtaking – absolutely glowing and vibrant, and makes such a positive statement about where we are at in experimental work.

We are already at work on issue #81/82 to come out round late May, and some celebratory events on the occasion of our 25th anniversary of publishing the magazine are being planned.

— Corinne Cantrill

1995 - The Year in Review

by Bill Mousoulis

1995 was the Melbourne Super-8 Film Group's 10th year in existence, and one of its very best. In a time when artistic culture is dominated by slickness (big budgets, new technologies, media profile), the Super-8 Group continues to stand alone as a vibrant and accessible organisation, showcasing artistic works which bypass and/or subvert dominant production codes and ideas (both formal and thematic). In an age of cyber-reality and hyper-stylistics, Super-8 films are an aesthete's delight. And whilst multi-media productions give the user "choice", Super-8 technology (\$50 for a camera, etc.) allows for maximum "choice" - you can make your own production.

All this will be heightened in 1996, which is shaping up as a repeat of 1995 for the Group: the same funding, the same aims and objectives, the same activities. Which isn't a bad thing, although the Group will have to continue to be successful and/or adapt to changing needs in order to continue into the 21st century. But that is for the future. For now, though, a little look back at 1995.

The monthly Open Screenings (2nd Tuesday of each month bar January) are the main focus of the Group's activities. The screenings are beautifully structured, with the first hour being devoted to BYO films (all genres except 'packaged' films accepted). The 7:30 p.m. slots last year featured Chris Windmill, Chris Knowles, Maj Green and Ewan Cameron, "Sonic Eight" films, John Harrison, Mike Brown, Nick and Dan Flood, Virginia Fraser and Dianne Duncombe, "Deca" films, "10th Anniversary" films, and the AGM. As for the BYO sections, there were more films brought in by film-makers last year than in any other year. Some practitioners were prolific, others less so, but they all had an audience of 40 or so to show to. There were a couple of technical glitches in the projecting of films, but otherwise the venue (the Erwin Rado Theatre) is excellent, with the films looking and sounding good (when both aspects are functioning).

1995 also saw the presentation of the 8th Melbourne Super-8 Film Festival (titled "Super Kiosk 8") in September at the State Film Theatre over three days. It was a high-quality showcase of Australian and overseas material, though the audience numbers (the average per session being only marginally more than the Open Screening attendances average) were disappointing. The Group also curated several other screenings, for other organisations, though one hopes more of this will happen this coming year.

The other main activity of the Group - the monthly newsletter/magazine **Super Eight** - was also a success in 1995, but not an unqualified one. Written on a completely volunteer basis, there was something to read in every issue (especially the 32-page 100th issue in March), but a number of issues were marred by ugly personal attacks. In a perverse way, this is a tribute to the Group's "open", non-censorial policy, but something must be done to eradicate these personal criticisms, for nobody comes out of them looking any good.

Now for some more obviously qualitative comments. Sticking to the newsletter, I must say that it was disappointing that the Open Screening films were not regularly reviewed in its pages. Jim Bridges did his best, four times providing thorough (every film!) reviews, whilst Steven Ball also contributed, reviewing some of the films in several impressive "thematic" articles (e.g. on themes of superficiality, perception, masturbation). Steven also compiled a thematic issue - the May issue containing thoughts on "sound in film" from numerous contributors. Other standout articles were Christos Tsiolkas writing on John Harrison's films, Dirk de Bruyn on Steven Ball's films, Heinz Boeck on the festival, and some lovely short pieces by Tony Woods, Pete Spence, Barry Brown and Jenny Leach in the 100th issue (writers who, unfortunately, seemed to then put down their pens!). The newsletter also had much news and info in its pages, which must have come across as deep relief at times!

As for the actual films that were made (or, more precisely, shown) in 1995, one can barely give a decent account (even in overview form) here. I especially cannot, for I missed three of the Open Screenings and the entire festival. Still, here goes.

I believe 1995 was an excellent year for the quality of Super-8 films made in Melbourne, though probably not as good as 1994 or 1989 (two years that stand out for me). Some film-makers seemed to lose interest, giving us only one or two tokens of their talent, whilst others realised their potential and/or began their particular forays into cinematic exploration with the "skinny gauge" (as Julian Dahl used to call it). The following comments

are purely subjective ones, okay? You can write in the newsletter and say what you think - the very next issue if you like.

For me, the crowning achievement of Melbourne Super-8 last year was the work of Tony Woods. He made many films last year (some unshown), all of them totally engaging (except **Samuel Beckett**, which dragged a bit). It's hard to keep up with them - he adds to them, re-edits them, doesn't show them, etc. He has a 'Midas touch': he is the perfect embodiment of Astruc's classic "camera stylo" vision. (Even **Private Eye**, where the camera is away from Tony's eye, resonates with personal expressivity.) He is a 'naive artist' (but consciously), obliterating any need for technical perfection (even competence) as he magically records the reality around him. But as in the best of Sandy Munro's work, there is an uncanny intelligence at work in the films' "recording". In Tony's case, it is the formalist sensibility which dominated his earlier work (**Reel Light**, **Wattism**, **Sunism**, etc.), functioning in the recent work as either a self-reflexive marker (e.g. the "mirror" shots in **Frames '95**) or an intensifying device (the concentration on a single location in **Round-a-Bout**, **Bird on a Wire**, **Mobile Colour**). Tony is better known as a painter, but his body of film work deserves to be treasured: there is no better film-maker at work today in Australia.

There were several other film-makers who also seemed to step up a gear and/or consummate something in their work last year. Like Tony Woods, Peter Lane made around 10 films. The rest of us are green. Actually, Peter is the green one, the green textad one. He has staked out a genre all for himself (hand-coloured/drawn animations/narratives). Unfortunately, all his films outstayed their welcome, despite their quality - they are all 2 minute ideas stretched to 4. Barry Brown also had a fine year, creating numerous aural/visual experiments (his partner Irene Proebsting also stepped-up her own work). David Kusnir was another who spent the year diligently and creatively, producing several films which had both technical virtuosity and interesting ideas in them. Even the Cantrills stepped-up a gear, if that is possible in a 35-year career, by making their first feature-length film on Super-8 (they've made several on 16mm.), **Ivor Paints**. Another long-time avant-gardist, Dirk de Bruyn, also chipped in with a couple of films. (Word has it that the great Michael Lee is also now using Super-8: we await the results with anticipation.)

Several (relative) newcomers made a mark in 1995, Hector Hazard topping the list. Hector went on a film-making frenzy, creating, amongst one or two other things, **Under the Steel Wheels** (65 mins) and **The Deadly Variation** (about 45 mins). These two films are pretty much straight documentaries, though with one or two fictional and/or formalist touches. The films may have questionable subject matter/subjects (especially the second one), but their energy is undeniable. Other newcomers (though not first-timers with a camera) who also provided a much-needed contrast to the abstract/impressionist/structuralist films that dominate the Super-8 Group, were: Deborah Warr with the lovely **Palm Lodge** and exquisite **Natalia**; Peter Clements with the punky **Life in Hell** and obscene **Ten**; and Rohan Zerna with the slick **Wait** and watchable **Letter**. Jennifer Leggett also made a follow-up to her first film, whilst a few others managed to get to that interesting "debut" stage: Helen Mihajlovic, Ray Gemmel, Milan Sousa, Tony Figallo, Natasha Stellmach.

At the other end of the scale, quite a few of the Group's established film-makers seemed to have lesser years than previous ones. Steven Ball still managed to present several films, but they seemed somewhat uninspired compared to his previous work (although I didn't see **Difficult Beauty**, his major work for the year). I myself also had a lean year, making just four very short films. Moira Joseph likewise, although the S-8 to 16mm. blow-up of **Pearl** occupied her time early in the year, and two of the shorts she made (**Open Your Eyes** and **Ten Days Without You**) were actually pretty stunning. Others to also have pretty average-to-lean years were Ian Poppins, Pete Spence, Macve Woods, Gary O'Keefe, Perry Alexander, Jim Bridges, Heinz Boeck and Nick Ostrovskis. Still, all managed to show at least one film last year, so that ain't too bad.

If I have left anyone out or made a factual error or two in this overview, forgive me. There is one sure way you won't be left out of next year's "review": do a "Hector Hazard" this year - go out and make some films.

(My personal faves of 1995 were: 1. **Frames '95** - Tony Woods. 2. **Natalia** - Deborah Warr. 3. **Tumbling in a Field of Dreams!** - David Kusnir. 4. **poss (s) bathtub** - Barry Brown. 5. **Open Your Eyes** - Moira Joseph. 6. **The End** - Pete Spence. 7. **Deca** - Peter Lane. 8. **Life in Hell** - Peter Clements. 9. **Under the Steel Wheels** - Hector Hazard. 10. **Hopetown** - Gary O'Keefe.)

And so, that was 1995. There were other things too, of course, like political intrigues and what have you, but they're not important for inclusion in these pages. They're not important full stop.

For the Melbourne Super-8 Film Group belongs to you.



Technical Bits...

collated by Tim Patterson

It has been noted that there is a definite lack of technical information in the newsletter as of late. Occasionally articles, like Corinne Cantrill's piece on cleaning films (Issue 108, Nov.1995), and editing (A New Approach to Editing Super 8 Film? - Issue 105, Aug.1995) do emerge, but on the whole, it would be more useful, especially for newer filmmakers, to include as much technical information on a regular basis as possible. So this month I am starting to collate a monthly technical corner. I ask that any members with relevant material (magazines, manuals, books, personal insight, etc.) send it in so it can be included. Share the knowledge...

This month is an article sent in by Pete Spence from B&T's Little Film Notebook #14, May 1995 on Hand processing...

Hand Processing Super 8 Color Reversal Film by Steve Westerlund

It all started when my Dad sent away for a Reg. 8 daylight tank and chemicals from Superior Bulk out of Chicago in 1965. My brother and I were into making war films with the neighbourhood kids and documentaries about animals on the Wisconsin farm we were living on. We would process the films ourselves and make some popcorn for the big show that same night. Many years later as a film student at U.W.-Milwaukee, I continued to "bucket-process" both Super 8 and 16mm films.

After a few years of making more traditional narrative and documentary films, I found myself wanting to work on more abstract and personal projects, so I've returned to hand-processing. So if you're interested in doing some of your own hand processing, here are a few basics to get you started.

First the processing container: This can be a real home processor like the Morse G3 Developing Tank or Superior Super 8 Daylight Tank (I've found both of these at Garage sales or at Goodwills[Op-Shops - Ed.] or it can be a dishpan or a bucket (but you have to process in total darkness then) or a metal photography developing tank which is what I like to use these days.

Next, the chemistry: Although expensive, I have found the smaller 'hobby' type kits work well for runs under 10 rolls of film. They are made by Kodak, Beseler and Uicolor for the E-6 slide process and the C-41 negative process. The larger kits are more cost-effective but the chemistry will go bad after a couple of weeks so unless you have a lot of film to do, get the small ones. Also I prefer the Rapid E-6 kit because it takes less time to process with less steps than the Kodak E-6 process does.

Now the process: with the S8 Ektachromes you need to remove the anti-halation backing before you process. This is done by removing the film from

the carriage in total darkness into a bucket with at least half a gallon of water with 2 or 3 tablespoons of Sodium Carbonate. Then pull the film through a sponge or cloth into a bucket with fresh water. Next place the film into the processing tank or developing can. I recommend you follow directions from the chemistry for the first roll of film you do and after analyzing your results, change the process as needed. As you use the chemicals you will need to process your film longer or at higher temperatures as per the chart in the instructions. After the film has been processed, the hard part is to hang up 50 or more feet of film around your bathroom, or wherever, to air dry and later to get the knots out as you roll it up onto a reel. If you want to solarize your film, start by flashing it 1/2 way through the first developer for about 2-5 seconds with a small flashlight, then finishing the development. I have also developed b&w with T-Max positive kits for b&w reversal films. One more thing, as always when working with photochemicals, use gloves and masks and be sure the ventilation is good. If you have any questions or comments, please write me at:

MMAAC, 2388 University Ave.

St. Paul MN 55114 USA,

or send me a video copy of your work. I would love to see it. Happy processing!!

Two thoughts: To reduce scratches, open the S8 carriage fully (best with a real carriage opener, a hard to find item) or press in the pressure plate and pull the film carefully down, not out. Disregard this if scratches are part of your desired aesthetic (in fact, for more scratches, pull out, not down!) Never use a hair-dryer or other hot-air source to speed up drying, as drying it hot will curl or shrink or worse, destroy you film. Let it air. Have fun. TT - Ed. (B&T's Film Notebook)

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- Calling Mr. Valentino - Gary O'Keefe, 3 mins

☛ Next Open Screening: Tuesday February 13th, 1996

at 7:30pm

The Films of Melanie El Mir

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Friends, Cinebums, Supereightretrogrumpys...

News has just reached this ear of the demise of Paul Harris' JRRR radio program, *Filmbuffs' Forecast*. After 14-plus years, its clear that Paul neither backstabbed or fell on the knife. Rather, like the Japanese film *The Ballad of Narayama*, it was time for one of our elders to settle affairs, and head off to where the crows live...

As radio in its own right, *Filmbuffs'* was a special act; one of the key elements that made the RRR jug boil. Like Lewis and Martin, many thought that the format would not survive the breaking up of *Filmbuffs'* original smooth 'n smoker's-cough-rough double act, when John Flaus left a few years back (Flaus, again was not stabbed in the back but just understood that he'd said all that he had to said). But, now hinged on Harris' professionalism, feverish punning and Byzantine knowledge (how many times have overseas guests sounded transparently surprised at his knowledge of the embarrassing recesses of their career), *Filmbuffs'* evolved from entertaining verbal slapstick into a tolerant Derby for local film culture. It was *Our Show*. Whist the format never went commercial, Paul has had to. Like Flaus before him, he's found it necessary to concentrate on the things that pay rather than the things we do for love.

From his lairs at the E.G. and the *Green Gulde* Paul will continue to be an advocate (if the media gamekeepers allow) for something a little more enduring in film culture than this year's Tarantino. But even if this death is not untimely, it is still feels diminishing and premature to us. What is to come after and what is to come in the name of all the squeaky little places in film culture (like the Super 8 scene) that still need to be heard? The Harris style is irreplaceable. But there is the dreadful suspicion that nothing of substance will take its place. Of course, one hopes that nothing and no one will continue in a pale imitation of the *Filmbuffs'* name. It is time for new formats and new alliances for making noise about the sort of film that we like and we think others might like if only they knew about them. I know that Paul's personal tastes were not concerned that much with experimental or alternative styles and formats. But his ecumenical approach and sense of duty to local film culture - indeed the concept of these things existing - may be irreplaceable. Or they may not be permitted replacement.

The Super 8 Group, the Cinematheque, MIMA, student film events and boutique film societies had a place they could only find elsewhere in the "Cutting Room Floor" column of *Filmnews*. But then *Filmnews* imploded; and now *Filmbuffs'* has retired. Considering the state and mood of professional publication about film, other radio programs about media and the general cultural state of mind about cinema in Australia, there is no promise that we will have another platform in these medias. Paradoxically, it seems that just as cinema has moved, New Grub-Street-like, into the cultural centre, and film reviewing has become everyone's party-trick, an apprehensible sense of the historic and multi-farious whole of cinema is being destroyed. - *Quentin Turnour*

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Super Eight



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