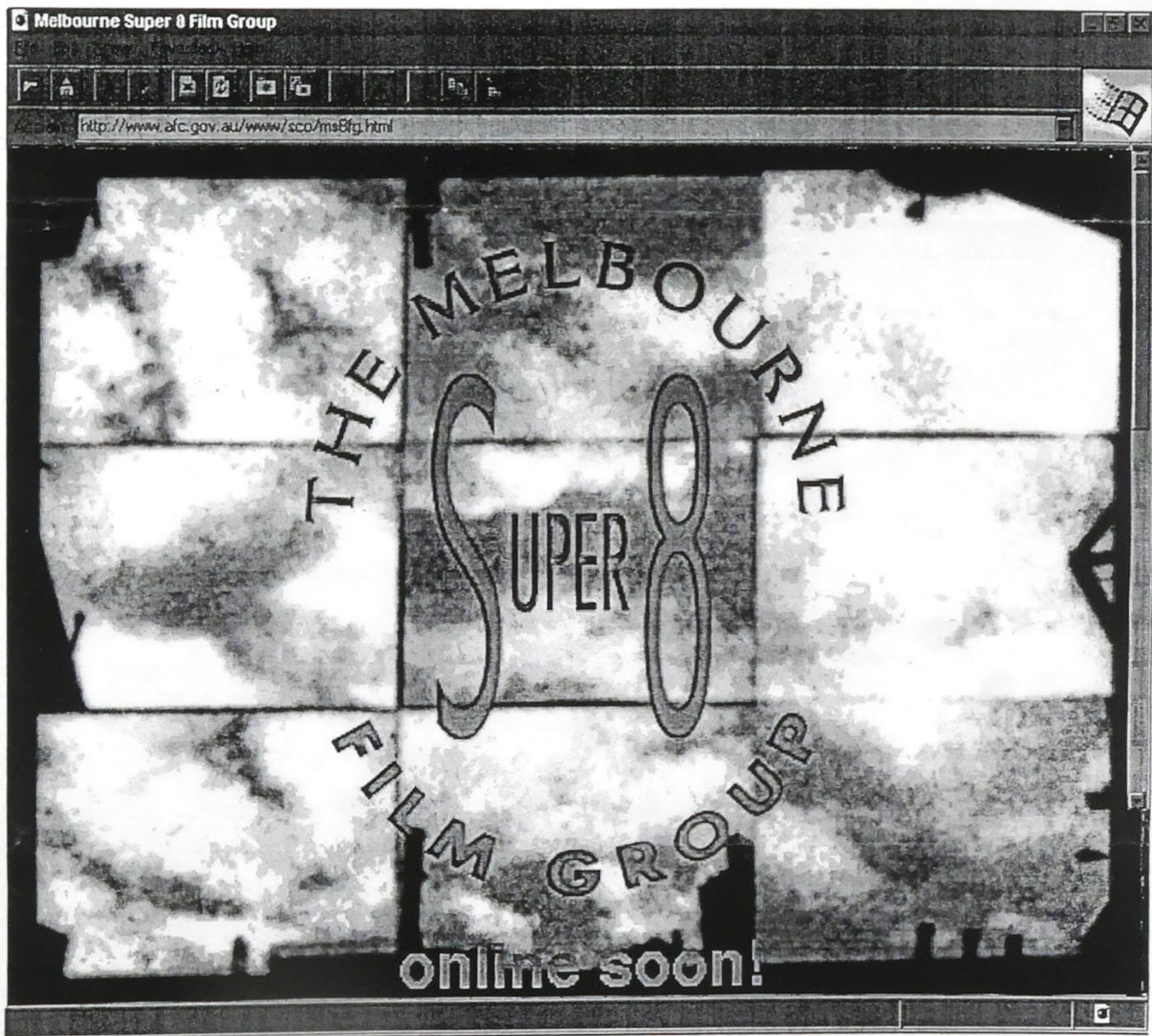


Super Eight



*Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group Inc.
Issue 116 August 1996*



**SUPER 8 GROUP
ON THE INTERNET**

All Advertising Enquiries, contact the Group on (03) 9417 3402.
The opinions and views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group or its committee, and no correspondence shall be entered into.

notes from the
answering machine
administrator's report:

END TRANSMISSION...

<ERROR; MACHINE FAULTY:
standby for system upgrade>

pete spence - catch ya' lata' mista!

pete spence, a member of the Group since 1989, and a Committee member since 1991, recently handed in his resignation as a committee member, after 5 years service to the Group. Pete has always been a keen, animated and integral part of the committee and will be missed. His visual poems and films have always been a highlight of the Group's Open Screenings and festival programs. His work has shown worldwide at such prestigious festivals as Oberhausen in Austria. Pete is busy working on other projects and cannot commit further to the Group. Thanks Pete for your continued support, effort and your stringent 'watchdog' approach, and all the best for future projects. See you later mister...

Tim Patterson

TIM PATTERSON THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE GROUP HAS RESIGNED

Tim began in July 1994. After 2 years Tim has decided it is time to move onto other challenges. He assures us however he will remain involved in the group.

Tim has proven to be a very dedicated employee of the group. Like those before him, Tim has contributed far more than the remuneration reflects.

Some of Tim's achievements have been, involvement in the AFC screen summit, Festival Co-ordination and organising the groups computer(s).

The committee wishes Tim well in what ever he moves on to do.

The group is currently recruiting a new person for the position.

Matthew Rees

Committee Member MS8FG July 1996

The Melbourne Super 8 Film Group
can now be found on the internet at:

<http://minyos.its.rmit.edu.au/~rpytp/>

Home Page Image By Irene Proebsting

The smouldering flame... a personal view

It was during my 1994 film shoot in Japan, that I suddenly, at one of my destinations in rural Japan, received an international express post package with a job description for the position of administrator of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group. I wondered at the time, how the hell did this guy, Steven Ball, track me down here!

Anyway, I got the job and started officially on Aug 1st, but came in for my first 'training' day on July 26th. Two years to the day later, I have resigned, relieved, frustrated, and just bloody glad that I've finished. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that it was a bad job, but a thankless, tasking, demanding, challenging, learning, infuriating two years. I have to firstly apologise to all the members for the last 6 months, for my lack of enthusiasm. I should have called it quits at the end of '95, I realise that now, but hey, retrospect is a wonderful luxury. I thoroughly enjoyed the first 12 months, and like to think I put into action a few organisational things that have strengthened the group. But now I look at what the group is circa 1996. Is the group suffering from post-anniversary blues? Is the group in serious danger of becoming irrelevant? Is it the end of an era for this gauge? (As I write this I am imagining the reaction at the next committee meeting)

I think the current committee has to seriously look at their structure and their role in the group before things get way out of hand. The group is in real danger of isolating the membership, just as another well-known abbreviated media association did. The difference is that 'other' group still has funding. There are problems in the group. Why deny it. Everyone is saying it over a beer across the road. The group needs to reinvent itself. Of course the major frustration is that any proposed reinvention costs money, and we're not going to get any more funding unless we transform somehow, so it's a Catch-22 situation.

One of the major problems is, I hate to say it, a committee without any sort of unified plan or direction. This has been a major reason for my dissatisfaction with the group, that lead to my resigning. As an employee of the committee, I have felt at times a lack of support for what I tried to accomplish, that has made my position, well... (not trying to sound repetitive, but) frustrating. There seems to be a struggle between those who want the group to be progressive, and to move ahead, and those who wish to rest on the laurels (and yes, they are impressive!) of what the group has achieved. Okay, the group is unique, it has kept on continuing-on in what it does for almost eleven years. It has managed to maintain a healthy audience and profile both in Australia and overseas. But let's face the facts; There are less films being made, by fewer filmmakers. The stock is getting harder to find and more expensive. There are a significant number of services and products that have disappeared in the past 18 months even (sound prints, Plus-X stock, local supplier of Wurker slicers) and more cuts to come with Kodak's announcement of a timeline to phasing out certain Super 8 stocks (see Newsletter issue 113 - May 1996 page 6-7 or look up SMALL MOVIES at <http://www.city-net.com/~fodder/index.html>). So, the group needs to band together and strengthen their resolve, and politically, the group should be pro-active in lobbying Kodak or demanding services.

The group requires some sort of radical change to survive. Being a practitioner based group, it requires the involvement of the practitioners it serves to represent. If members are really concerned about the group, and want to see it as an ongoing relevant group, then ultimately the responsibility lies in the hands of those practitioners. Super 8 will for many years continue to be produced and admired in some form. But Super 8 as an exhibition gauge is becoming less and less practical. Those who use Super 8 as some component in their work (video/ installation/ sound) are in an artistic no-man's land. I feel the group is letting such practitioners down in some respects.

Anyway, I wash my hands of all this. I seriously hope the group continues and progresses and wish all the best to my successor. I get the feeling things will plod along as they've always done, but there's not much wax left in this candle...

Thanks Super 8 Group. It's been an experience. (does that sound too bitter???)

Tim Patterson 26.7.1996

The **Melbourne Super 8 Film Group**
in association with **Melbourne Cinémathèque** presents

NAKED 8

The 9th Melbourne International Super 8 Festival

Thursday 24th, Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th October 1996

STATE FILM THEATRE, 1 Macarthur Place, East Melbourne

After numerous venue changes and date swapping, the details for this year's Super 8 Film Festival have finally been confirmed.

Presented in conjunction with Melbourne Cinémathèque, NAKED 8, The 9th Melbourne International Super 8 Festival is going to prove to be a truly international event, with entries likely to be coming not only from all over Australia, but from as far away as Japan, U.S., Canada and England to name a few. We are still, however, hoping for a large local contingent.

NAKED 8 is proving to be one of the most important events for Super 8 filmmaking in the world. This is a fantastic opportunity to be part of a truly worldwide culturally important event.

Entry Deadline:

The deadline for the submission of entries is Tuesday September 10th:: Still enough time to get everything finished.

Selection Panel:

Any members wishing to be on the selection panel for NAKED 8 should register their interest by calling the office on the number below. Places are limited, and any member will be considered. Please be aware of the time commitment required. Traditionally, screenings have been on Sunday afternoons leading up to the festival, so bear that in mind when registering your interest.

Finally, any more information you need can be obtained by ringing either myself or our new administrator, again on the number below.

Good luck!

Mikael Brain

Festival Co-ordinator

NAKED 8

Melbourne Super 8 Film Group

PO Box 2033
Fitzroy MDC
Victoria 3065

Ph: (03) 9417-3402

Fax (03) 9417-3804

Ballarat Super 8 Film Group

by Erin McCuskey

THERE has always been a strong alternative art scene in Ballarat. Not a movement, as this needs similarity of theme or direction – not a school, as this necessitates conscious thought. Definitely a scene, and probably due to geography: there are only one or two pubs of the fifty established in Ballarat that are worth frequenting – one recently established community theatre space – two community arts officers prepared to defend most innovative projects to the Council, regardless of format – and finally the 110 or so kilometres that separates us from the metropolis. And finally there is the Ballarat curse that effects all artists: 'you can never leave'. Of course people leave physically, but they are destined to return regularly as they are spiritually handcuffed (fluffy though they may be) to a town most people hate to love.

Thankfully filmmaking in the country is not just a Ballarat issue – thought it sometimes feels like that. I've been making films for about six years using both Super 8 and 16mm film. In 1994 the Ballarat East Community House invited me to teach a short course in Super 8 filmmaking. In that ten weeks the group produced four films (and extended the course by another ten weeks.) The group wanted to continue making films together and individually and decided to create the Ballarat Super 8 Group. While Super 8 film is the main priority, there is a great acceptance of the idea of 'alternative' and 'shorts' which includes filmmakers using video or 16mm.

The Group aims to:

- encourage the use of Super 8 stock;
- provide opportunities for local country and rural filmmakers to screen their work;
- share skills, knowledge and equipment, and
- reintroduce the 'short' as a legitimate art form –

all this within the country context. The idea was to provide opportunities for artists who were not just happy to live in the country but were inspired by it.

Being so removed and isolated from the contacts and resources of Melbourne has meant some very creative solutions to particular problems faced by the group. We have run joint projects with other groups and individuals with audiences running in very respectable numbers; we have

organised funding from the City Council for equipment, we have infiltrated the local TAFE College and run modules in filmmaking via the Performing Arts course, and most recently have run a program of short films in a rural filmmakers' competition called 'Celebrating the Short' as part of the Buninyong Film Festival. A competitive format was agreed to reluctantly as the Group had no money to pay filmmakers to screen their work and thought that as an inaugural event the excellent and appropriate prizes provided by local businesses would entice those who lack confidence to show their work. We finished with thirteen entries from eight people (four women and four men). We consider the event a success – and the Group got a few extra members also.

For those in the local area, the Group meets regularly at each others' houses, or at the pub (one of the two mentioned earlier) and offers:

- informal screenings of works and works in progress;
- willing cast and technical crew;
- shared and low-cost cameras, projectors, lights and screens;
- organised special screenings, and
- contacts and connections with other Super 8 groups and festivals.

Contact: Dona Pentland, (053) 331645.

Living in the country has provided us with fresh air, great landscapes, and an isolation that has given a unique take on films and filmmaking. We hope that you will experience this take at the August meeting and screening of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group at which we have been invited to screen our work. While the program is still being confirmed, it will include some of the following:

The Blue Teapot by Verity Higgins

Vinyl Demise by Dona Pentland

Suddenly Seeing the Light by Melissa O'Garey

Heartbeat by Tim Block

Trainboy by Tim Block

Distractions by Erin McCuskey

Assorted by Graeme Stables.

We look forward to meeting some of you there and making stronger links that can bind our groups. We also look forward to receiving some of the support that is so elusive in country areas.

THE FILMS SHOWN AT THE LAST OPEN SCREENING

by heinz boeck

1. Peter Lane's film "Frolic".

Deep Black Tri X, night-city scapes. Wide pans across rows and grids of lights of tower blocks and streets- familiar vistas. Rows of lights form words. There are the sounds of traffic in the city. But it's based around the music. The music, a foot tapping, ho-down country song.

Now, close-ups of individuals feet, moving feet, shoes tapping the tune. City night-life, perhaps a club. We only see the floor- the calves of legs and the shoes. Self conscious moccassins, the restrained white high-heels, some impetuous steps. Interspersed with these images, the mauled, white face of a doll that rolls its eyes like a ventriloquist's dummy - a lewd, grotesque gesture.

Restricted to only 3 types of shot, 3 textures. The black of the wide-night-shot is so wide but our visibility so restricted by the night. There's some anxiety in that. Contrasted to the clarity of the close-up - the lighted interior, the cosy interior, in the company of people, but people obliquely viewed - the feet stand in for the people and anticipate the possibility of dancing. The song is a foot-tapping song. We, the audience viewing this film, can't see our own feet under our seats. But the feet on the screen can vicariously stand in for our own feet tapping to the song. This feels somewhat disorienting. And the broken face wryly ogles our trick - the closed circuit self deception.

***(((((()))))...)

Tony Woods must be about the most prolific filmmaker around at the moment. There seems to be a new film available for each monthly open screening.

Tony's films are very distinctive. He has an incredible eye for close observ-

ation. From the banal settings of the everyday, Tony is able to glean moments and fine details that are generally overlooked. These images are typically endowed with a deep, enigmatic and often dark expressive power.

The images in Tony's films are not lightly exploited. His camera's gaze is sometimes sustained in a narrow field of variations until all the possible nuances come to be drawn from the depths of our perception.

The film - You/me/us/them is a film in 3 sections, the first of which is made up of a collage of colour, still, photographic negatives. In these images the colours are of course reversed from the colours we naturally expect. This kind of disorientation is enough to make it very difficult to distinguish recognisable features and thus creates a kind of invisible barrier to our perception - a distance is established that is similar to the vagaries of memory or the nature of dreams.

In the second section, the image is of looking down into the corner of a room - or a stairwell, perhaps. Two human shadows on the wall gesticulate and voices argue. Each individual's shadow has its identical obverse on the adjoining wall and when their source walks, the identically opposite shadows simultaneously converge on the common corner, meeting each other head-on.

This is extremely uncanny and continues to occur for some time, as ghostly images of people are also superimposed over these shadows. This space of echoes and shadows conjures up an overwhelming allusion to the hollow tunnels of memory and to feelings of loss. Not a static effect but a reflective one.

The final segment frames a roughly oblong shadow with a variegated texture. The netted, delicate interior quivers like a living, organic membrane. One senses a deep isolation in this ghostly trace of a presence.

What seems to me so interesting in this film is the use of visual tropes to allude to the absence of a material subject - i.e. to the ghosts of a past life now entrusted to a flawed memory.

.....

"Lucifer gets hammered", Daniel Kotsanis's film consists of a single, static, tripod mounted wide shot looking into the corner of a back yard. A protagonist wields a steel bar with which he methodically destroys a television set. One can't escape the wry humour in this symbolic act of vengeance as we must all at times feel constricted by the endless visual and aural babble that floods our lives from the ubiquitous 'box'. When finally the set is pulverised he turns around and drags another set into position.

It's not often we see this kind of static tripod shot used for the duration of a film, but it is rather reminiscent of the method often used to document performance pieces, which is in a sense what we have here.

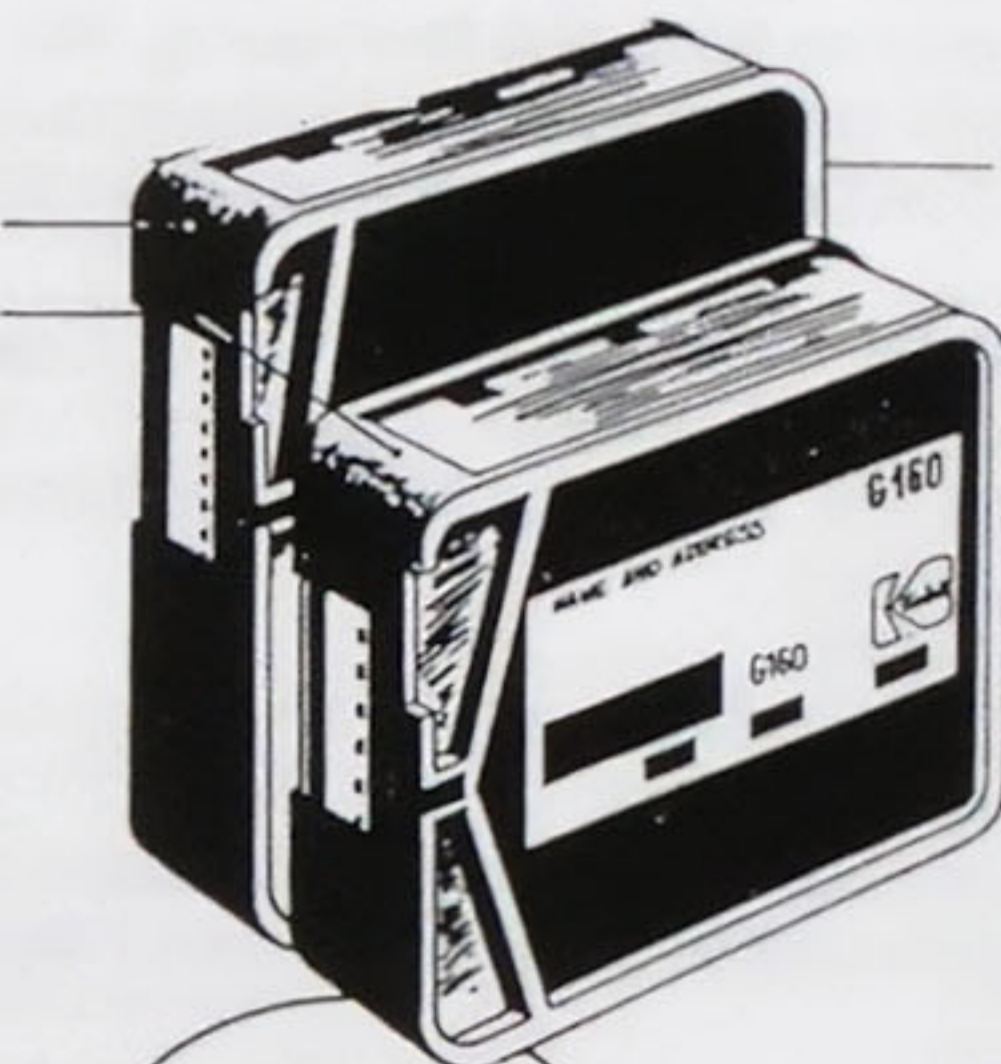
The film also reminds me of all those debates we've all heard by enthusiastic filmmakers arguing the superiority of the film medium over television/ video - a point, here, albeit bluntly put.

My first impression actually, brought to mind Méliès films from the very earliest days of cinema. A similar static wide shot frames many of Méliès theatrical fantasies. In this context Daniel's film has something of the quality of an act from 'Punch and Judy', the television set standing in as an inanimate devil, perhaps?

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Arthur and Corinne Cantrill's film has more to it than it's name would suggest - "Ivor's Exhibition". Yes, the film documents an exhibition of Ivor Cantrill's paintings. The paintings are very colourful, detailed and ordered designs taken from life. Some have the quality of folk art. Certainly, engaging paintings with a peculiarly raw

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YOU CAN
RECORD SOUND
AND PICTURE
TOGETHER WITH
A SPECIAL FILM
AND CAMERA.



vision.

It is interesting how patterned a behaviour visiting an art gallery generally is. You go in, do the once around, maybe have another look at your favorite exhibits and then leave. "Ivor's Exhibition" starts out by setting up this pattern of expectation - but then you don't get to leave; this is a film after all and it's duration is beyond your control. But it is at this point that the film's magic comes into it's own right. From merely passively documenting the exhibition, the camera affects an active role in reconfiguring our impressions of the representations of time and light in the space and in the paintings themselves.

Sunlight in the shape of a window grid, slowly but perceptively, moves across the face of a painting. The light so bright we can no longer make out the details of the painting.

In another shot we see a row of paintings on a wall, the image wildly swinging between overexposure and a more natural light and back again - the paintings bleach out completely before the colours bleed back - the light sources in the room become excessively highlighted.

In another section the entire surface of a painting vibrates with an agitated energy - bright cells of pure colour jumping off the surface to the extent that the original design is indistinct.

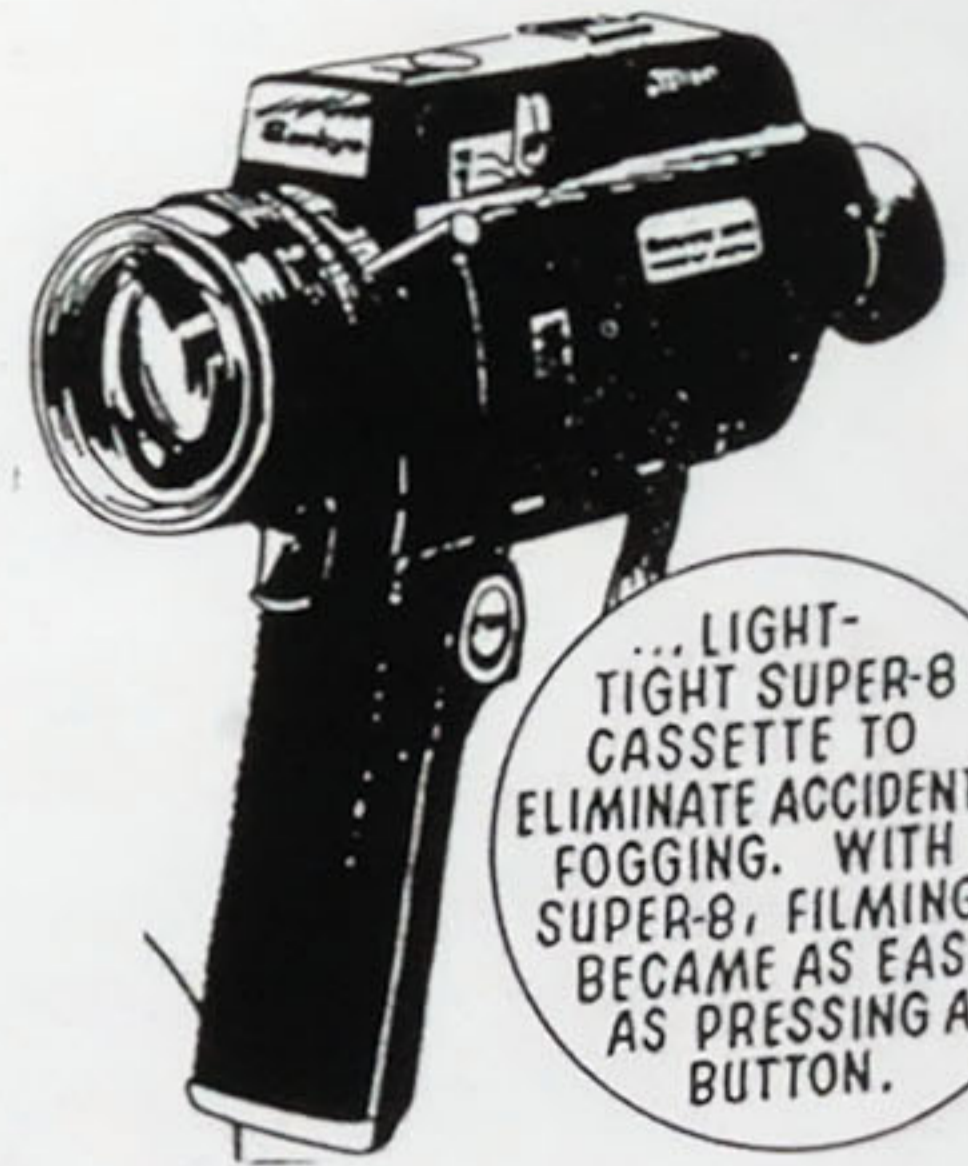
Some of these techniques remind me of the 'structuralist-formalist' approach to film making, here used to lend an expressive edge to the theme of the exhibition, an edge that the paintings already possess.

- - - - -

"Forest Embassy" by Perry Alexander Perry introduced this film by telling everybody how terrible it was. When it comes to Perry's films it's hard to know whether this kind of remark is self-deprecatory or a self-congratulation because his films are usually the very worst attempt at filmmaking that anybody ever saw. (Ed Wood eat your heart out!) Of course this is always precisely the point. Perry's films parody the technical virtuosity, "good taste" etc. that the blockbuster film world aspires to. The plot is flimsy at the best of times and always premised on the schlockiest cinematic cliches. Props are as shoddy as a rummage through the junk room could hope for, and special effects as pathetic as a soggy boot. Unbearably great stuff - lots of energy with some amazing camera work and a freaky imagination. Having said all that, "Forest Embassy", wasn't at all like any of that. A documentary of sorts, it documented a demonstration of protest by conservationists camping out on the lawns in front of the new federal parliament house in Canberra.

Perry's camera work shows a fantastic range of virtuosity. Lots of movement and shot choices set up a captivating rhythm. The crowd of demonstrators were generally young alternative/ neo hippy/ feral types with multi coloured, tie-dyed banners. So the soundtrack is a masterful choice - that retro, Hendrix anthem from the sixties - Purple Haze, is revamped in a more recent version by 'The Shower Scene From Psycho' (I think). Where as Hendrix's version has a spiralingly seductive tone to it, this newer version has a more plaintive, frantic chaos about it, which, to my mind, lends itself to say something about the character of such confrontations today, and at the same time, facilitates an echo of reference and contrast to a past tradition of political protest. And there's a shot driving past the old parliament house - now compare that to the eminently more grandiose, corporate looking structure of the newer seat of power.

ZZZZZZZZZZ



ROBIN WALLACE-CRABBE

ART MONTHLY AUSTRALIA

The Error of My Ways by Edward Colless. IMA, 233pp, \$19.95.

'We have been told so often these days to look on the bright side of alienation. To see it as not just the fearful breakdown and painful loss of identity, but also to welcome it as a liberating indifference of man towards his work and work towards its man, the indifference of the experience of being decoded by exchange value; and that this indifference deconstructs psychic and political intelligibility by opening us onto perpetually mobile, fluid identities, an endless play of multiplicities, a semiotic sea.' Alors! That was written in 1981 by Edward Colless.

I have an idea that Colless is now teaching in Tasmania, maybe this is wrong. Wherever he is, all the institutions where he isn't may regard themselves as diminished by his absence. He is comfortable with ideas. Reading him is like watching someone on the dance floor who is feeling the rhythm. And his ideas attach to the main philosophic currents of our time without distorting awkwardly in imitation of them. He looks at works of art, at an individual's exhibition or at some new and ghastly mishmash such as a biennale, and he sees what he sees.

This book contains pieces written by Colless since 1980, so it may be treated as a history of ideas relating to the arts in

Australia since then. *Perspecta* exhibitions are subjected to his scrutiny, as is the emergence of Super 8 as a democratic alternative to larger film formats. 'Super 8 secures its cultural place by rhetorically outbidding the prodigality exhibited by the 16mm political and aesthetic avant-gardes of the 1960s and 1970s, hardly exhorting departure so much as simply announcing its arrival: the advent of Super 8 is the occasion of an avant-garde-arrivé.'

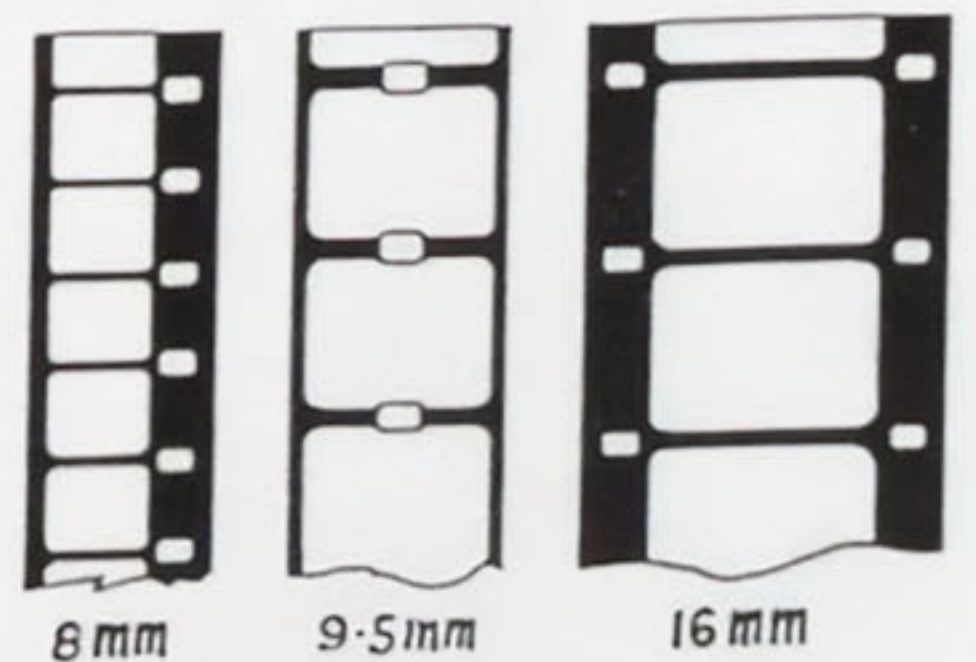
The writing style is high and elegant and Colless is often positioning himself as the iconoclast of a would-be iconoclastic arts establishment. But never does he play this

role with feet set in cement. He is too subtle a thinker to operate just one life game and thus permit the reader to anticipate what will flow from his mind when yet again confronted by the presumptions of art.

The whole piece on Super 8 quoted above is very good indeed: 'Nor', he writes, 'can the eccentricity of Super 8 be claimed as the expression of cultural innocence or regression: efforts at celebrating the so-called folk artists of the medium - isolated and submerged communities of hippies, squatters, queens, junkies, perverts, or just plain weirdos whose use of Super 8 develops from privatised motives - these attempts at enabling artistic savagery without sociological condescension are anachronisms, desperately applied analgesics for the nostalgic leftist critic or theorist pained by the sight of a commodified professional product.'

There is too much here to precis in a brief review, so sprawling is Colless's range of subjects. This book is a must to read.

The above may interest the members of the M.S.B.F.G. It did me! T. Woods



LAST OPEN SCREENING

TUESDAY JULY 9TH
AT CAFE BOHEMIO.

7.30 HORRORSFEAR-8

8.30 OPEN SCREENING

Films Screened

Frolic Peter Lane 5 min
you/me/us/them Tony Woods 13min
On Lucifer Gets Hammered Daniel Kotsanis 3min
Ivor's Exhibition A & C Cantrill
Forest Embassy Perry Aleander 4.3 min

NEXT OPEN SCREENING

At the Irwin Rado Theatre
Tuesday 13 August

Films Of The Ballarat Super 8 Film Group
(see inside)

Editorial and Layout by Matthew Rees

Contact Number: 03 9417 3402

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Super Eight



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NAKED8
The 9th Melbourne International Super 8 Festival
COMING SOON