

Super Eight

Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group Inc.
ISSUE 146 May 1999



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Matthew Rees: Retrospective

Workshops: Camera! Action!

Imaginary moments

by Virginia Fraser

Until the April MS8FG screening, the last time I'd seen any of Paul Fletcher's films was nearly twenty years ago when they were among the first super eights I ever watched. My visual recall of that experience is compressed into one emblematic, and at least partly imaginary moment — I am in a small cinema occupied by a deep and velvety darkness so complete even the projector beam casts no light into it. The only evidence that I'm not alone is a line of still, silhouetted heads decking the bottom of the bright screen. This hint at scale suggests a room with the dimensions of a puppet theatre, an impression supported by the moving image in front of me. I remember small dolls vastly enlarged, a domestic scene, vivid colour, weird shifting light, supernatural movement, accompanied by a very strong non-visual sense of compounded playfulness, banality, and menace.

Seeing some of these films again it was obvious that, apart from these shards of an impression, I had barely remembered them. I'd completely forgotten what ground

they covered, including the irritants driving their discursive narratives — the naive ethnocentrism of the visiting Japanese business executive, Mr Tsuzuki's Australian neighbour, the creepily rendered African reminiscences of the veiled, train-travelling colonialist, and the distortion of sexual scale in a doll world populated by big brisk 'female' characters and small maimed 'male' ones. I'd also forgotten how determined, abandoned, and fluent was the bricolage used in assembling them, and the way that the dolls and other toys cast in the animations seemed to occupy the same general territory as the cartoony treatment of people in the pixilated actuality footage of the Queen opening the now defunct Melbourne City Square; though formally they were very different.

In notes for the screening (Super 8 #144), Paul Fletcher quotes Adrian Martin's observation that watching his films "can be exhilarating and even scary, because they are a form of 'fast fiction' that works very close to the unconscious processes of thought and feeling". As dreams do, his films employ bricolage, which my dictionary says is "the use only of the materials or tools at hand to achieve a purpose". This can mean makeshift, like the use of comic strip word balloons handwritten on cut-out paper shapes, and stuck onto the set behind the

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From The Office

Welcome to New Members:

MS8FG welcomes new members Madeleine Griffith, John Tsialos, Kelly Gillett, Nick Dimitriou, Robert Sharkey, Bernard Stahr, and Fiona Symington. These new members have joined the group during March/April.

Group website:

A temporary website has gone live with updated information on the workshops and Open Screening program. A much larger, fully functional site is being developed and should go up sometime towards the end of May.

Open Channel

The planned relocation to Open Channel has hit some snags, however members of the committee and staff at Open Channel are still working to come up with a solution as soon as possible. Even if the office were to be relocated to OC, the issue of finding a venue for the Open Screening still remains. This is being investigated.

Group Publicity

RMIT's Public Relations course co-ordinators have been contacted so the group can take on one of their students as a volunteer publicist for the group. There has been some encouraging responses, and it is hoped we will have someone running a focussed publicity campaign for the group by the end of May.

Meetings

MS8FG Committee Meeting

Tuesday, May 17th, 6:00pm at the group's offices. All members are welcome to attend.

Festival Planning Meetings

Held on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 6:30pm in the group's offices.

Classifieds Advertisements

Any members wishing to advertise for the sale, swap or purchase of film equipment please contact the office for details.

Festival Report

Planning is progressing well for a festival now scheduled for mid-November. Applications for funding etc will be made shortly, and full details (if successful) will be published in the newsletter and on the internet.

New Committee Member

Gary O'Keefe was voted on to the group's committee at the last meeting, held on Tuesday, April 20th.

Democracy in the Digital Domain

Experimenta Media Arts has extended an invitation to the second instalment of Convergence, a four part series of critical, provocative and energising forums exploring digital and cultural dilemmas at the sharp end of the 20th Century.

The forum features Bruce Shearer (Researcher, Communications Law Centre), Cameron Gould (Director of IndigiNet), and Paula Sheldrake (GreenNet) and will probe the role of DIY media activism and the widening gap between information poor and information rich in global communities.

The forum will be held at the OPENChannel Studio, 13 Victoria St Fitzroy, on Thursday 6 May from 7.30pm. The cost is \$5 full and \$3 for Experimenta/OPENChannel members. Call Vanessa Pigum at Experimenta on 9525 5025 for further details.

Film Striping

Word has it that the Elizabeth St Pharmacy has sold the last of its sound stock. But don't despair because sound striping is still available, even if you do have send your film overseas. Contact:

E.v.T. Industries
Havenhurst, Ticehurst, Nr. Wadhurst
East Sussex TN5 7HE
United Kingdom

Tel: 01580 200528

Classifieds

Singer Graflex 16mm Projector needs repair, \$75. Please ring Cathy Johnstone: 9417 3443

350ft Plastic Reels and Cases, \$5. Phone Bill: 9376 2546

Don't forget to make a film for Postcodes II.

Screening in the 7.30 slot of the July Open Screening

3032



3250

3065

3007

3013

3011

Postcodes

The Super 8 Films of Matthew Rees

7:30 pm Tuesday 11th May 1999
ERWIN RADO THEATRE
211 Johnston Street Fitzroy

A few notes from the film maker:

I've been mucking around with Super 8 now since the late 1970's. I remember clearly the first time I looked into a Super 8 camera at Boort High School in Year 7. In 1982 I was accepted into the Melbourne State College Film & TV course, my film teacher was another MS8FG member Arthur Cantrill. I became involved in the Super 8 Group at it's very beginning following a call from Bill Mousoulis in 1985.

I have always had a passion for the moving image and story telling, my work always seems to approach the narrative, not always tightly structured however. I have two ways of working, I either write and story board the film very precisely, or I just take a camera out and shoot, constructing the film latter on the editing bench.

For this screening I have selected a cross section of my films which are indicative of the styles and approaches.

In more recent times I have been working exclusively on video, primarily because of the accessibility of the technology, as well as more control over the editing and sound of the finished product.

I have included at the end of this program a video, LIVING DOLL my most recent effort, (April 1999) this film has themes and indeed actors that harp back to my earliest Super 8's.

1. Gerry Gee Jnr. 8min 1983

The story of a ventriloquist doll searching for his lost father. I had a Gerry Gee Jnr doll and wanted to make a film with it. I bumped into a friend who lived next to the REAL Gerry. So the film was born. Darron Davies helped on this film, if you look closely you can see his arm at one point.>>>>>>



2. Twister 5Min 1986

Right hand red. A girl, a park and another game from Ideal. Another weekend with time on my hands. I really like some of the images in this film. The Elton John sound track comes from the fact that I can never understand the words people are singing in songs.

3. Video Search 15min 1984

A girl goes missing from her suburban bedroom. Look out for a young Melbourne newsreader, Mal Waldon. I think I might have been a bit too obsessed with TV in this period of my life. >>>>>>



4. Bardot 5min 1987

A pensive girl and a man in a hat. Shot this film one weekend with Sue Chapman, keep an eye out for the daggy film maker in the Spanish hat

5. Normal Bias 8min 1986

The morning after the night before. Turned up at Georgina's house one morning with a Super 8 camera and a couple of rolls of TriX. When I edited the film I used one piece of music, I then tried it out with another. I couldn't make up my mind as to which piece of music I liked. >>>>>>



6. Roma Home 3min 1993

A trip down memory lane. Constructed from previously shot footage for the P+ors screenings. Pixilated shots through the window of a campervan driving on the back roads of GB. Intercut with images of a Brunswick street festival.

7. Birthday Boy 5min 1986

A boy, \$50 and a trip to Fitzroy street St. Kilda. This film was made for a competition, I won a camera which I swapped it with my sister for a bed. Look closely you will see a slightly younger and chubbier Tottie Goldsmith and a slightly thinner Super 8 film maker. <<<<<<<<

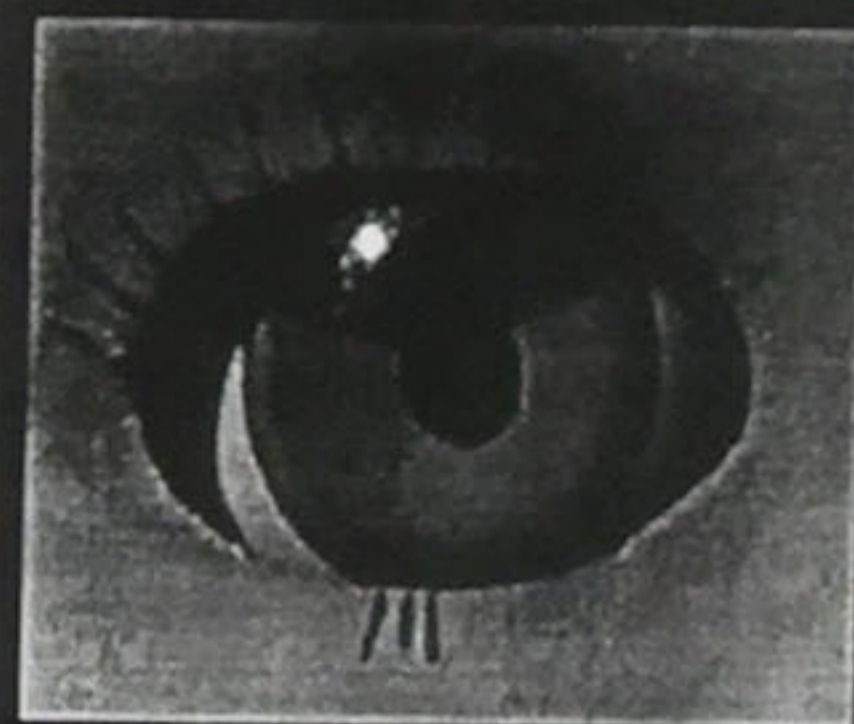


8. Cow Samui 3min 1996

A cow and a motorbike. While on holiday in Thailand I shot some pixilated footage from a motorbike. This is intercut with some other footage from a holiday at the Murray River. I recorded the sound track, including the quizzical voice over.

9. Living Doll 5min 1999 MINI DV

A girl, a singles magazine, a laser pointer and a ventriloquist doll. Another one of my doll stories, this time not one, but two dolls. Gerry is brought to life by one very sick individual (Adam May). Includes Gerry's first raunchy bedroom scene. >>>>>>



This screening is dedicated to Chris Griffiths (Knowles), the boy featured in Video Search who sadly is no longer with us.

Best & Worst

Gary O'keefe

In March this year Elizabeth St Pharmacy sold its last remaining supply of Kodachrome K40 sound film which means a chapter closes on the work of the local filmmakers who utilised this versatile and unique film stock. This will have interesting implications for the more narrative inclined filmmakers who relied on the voice sync. as integral to their work and it implies a further marginalisation of Super 8 filmmaking generally as the gauge slips ever more steadily from view.

Already Super 8 filmmaking is located outside of the main body of film art discourse and yet, like a stubborn zombie, it refuses to lay down and die. A reason for this longevity is the fact that all aspects of film craft can be bought to bear on a single roll of film but with the demise of the sound stripe, strictly speaking, that is no longer the case.

Perry De Valera aka Perry Ness aka Perry Alexander aka Perry Laird has a reputation in Super 8 circles for his creative and thorough exploitation of the sound stripe and I would be surprised if the demise of the sound film wasn't a plot hatched by the western industrial military establishment to silence him.

There are elements within Perrys films that reject any possibility of a conventional appreciation and it may be that he will find some perverse encouragement from his film falling into this "worst of" category.

This most recent film *Fuego* is the third of the **Joe Public** series and it opens with Joe, played by Perry himself, stumbling out of the surf on a Northern Territory beach and making his way to the anti uranium blockade at Jabiluka. Seizing on the opportunity to revitalise his fading charisma, Joe sets about ingratiating himself to the ratbag community of protesters who, recognising Joe as the first among them to wear a suit and carry a comb, fall in behind. Feeling wanted and liked Joe indulges in displays of shallow rhetoric and studied heroism against the arrogant North Ltd. North Ltd. for their part, are quick to capitalise on this apparent weakness within the environmental movement leadership and so the battle lines are drawn for a showdown in a Melbourne city carpark where North Ltd are defeated in a wildly spectacular pyrotechnic shootout. Perrys measured and capable screen presence is augmented with fine performances from his fellow hams and the settings for the action are characteristically well chosen. He is deceptively good at placing the camera and the sound quality varies from

adequate to very good - uneven in other words. Some courageous programmer will eventually screen the three **Joe Public** films together but by then Perry will most likely be off somewhere with another name staging an even more incredible farce. No Stars.

An adventure of more modest proportions was that of a shaggy terrier named Jock in *Jock's Big Adventure* by Jay Robinson. Can a dog really have an adventure? That depends on the extent of the animals consciousness and its ability to recognise its role as appendage to human experience. The film begins sweetly enough (if we ignore the clawed and half eaten condition of Jock's doggy box) as Jock takes a tethered walk through town. Wheels roll by and pedestrians pass as Jock pulls eagerly on his leash. Something appears to be wrong with Jock when he refrains from pissing on lamp-posts or shitting on nature strips and things get scary, for Jock that is, when (mysteriously untethered) he goes after a startled cat. If Jock was going to defecate, we might have expected one when the cat becomes a snarling dog halfway up a tree and turns on the hapless Jock who has disappeared from screen. If that wasn't enough adventure for one day Jock, probably spying another cat across the road, runs under a semi-trailer and we watch as he is dragged and bounced along the road.

This scene obviously raises serious ethical questions about the treatment of animals in popular entertainment. A more humane way to "kill" Jock might have been to substitute the live dog at some point for a stuffed copy or use a homeless stand-in from the lost dogs home, but then a filmmaker can't be expected to think of everything, especially on her first film.



Workshop Program

All prices for workshops include tuition, film, and materials. Unless otherwise specified, participants are expected to bring their own camera equipment - camera, tripod and cable release. The Melbourne Super 8 Film Group does hire some cameras and accessories, refer to the equipment hire schedule for prices and hiring requirements.

Workshops are run on a first in - first served basis. Enrolment fees must be received at the office no later than seven working days prior to the commencement of the workshop for your enrolment to be accepted. Money Orders and Bank Cheques are our preferred method of payment. Personal Cheques are acceptable but an additional five days (clearance time) must be added to the payment deadline.

In order to keep costs down, workshops are designed to operate with a minimum required number of participants. In the event of us not having enough participants to run a workshop, it is cancelled and those enrolled are given the option of defaulting to the next workshop on that topic.

Pre-requisites:

It is a pre-requisite for all practical workshops that participants have completed Basic Camera Skills, or have equivalent experience.

Discounts:

Discounts of \$10 per workshop are available for members - including those buying a new membership on enrolment - when they enrol in two or more workshops at the same time.

Workshops:

Basic Camera Skills on a Location Shoot:

Learn the functions of your own and other Super 8 cameras and learn how to use them effectively: single frame shooting; effective camera movement (zooming/panning); exposing the film (auto and manual exposure, over and under exposure, low-light shooting); depth of field, focus and diopters; film speed; editing in camera; filters.

Also look at the features of more advanced cameras:

slow motion; intervalometers; fades and super-imposition; electronic and manual cable releases.

1x4 hour session (location shoot), 1x2 hour review session

Generally timetabled to run on the last Sunday of each month - check the schedule for definite dates and start times.

Cost: \$130 (\$80 for members)

Pre-requisites: None

Narrative

An overview of putting together a narrative project: scripting; where to get cast and crew; scheduling and shot lists, planning the shoot effectively.

1x4 hour session

Check the schedule for start times and dates

Cost: \$80 (\$30 for members)

Pre-requisites: None

Editing and Projecting

Making the final cut. Effective editing is an art in itself. Get tips and techniques on: the different methods of editing (viewer/lightbox etc.); using splicers; different types of

splices (cement, tape - different types of tape splices); splicing techniques (so the film doesn't come apart in the projector!)

Then learn the common functions of a range of popular projectors so you can show your films:

threading the film (as opposed to shredding); checking and cleaning the gate; variable projection speeds; wiring for sound

1x4 hour session - no equipment needed

Check the schedule for start times and dates.

Cost: \$110 (\$60 for members)

Pre-requisites: Basic Camera Skills

Animation:

How to make cut-out animations using simple techniques and readily available materials: develop themes through movement; planning to establish the narrative; cost saving studio setup; creating improvised characters and backgrounds; in camera editing; scene making; quick story boarding

2x3 hour sessions - no equipment needed

Check the schedule for start times and dates.

Cost: \$130 (\$80 for members)

Pre-requisites: None

Cameraless Film-making:

Make a film without a camera? Give your films true texture and learn how to draw, write and scratch on the emulsion using a variety of sharp instruments including: hobby knives; scalpels; pen nibs; pins; sandpaper; pens; inks; dyes and bleaches

Looks at the particular qualities of filmstocks - exposed and unexposed.

1x3 hour session - special requirements (check enrollment details)

Check the schedule for start times and dates.

Cost: \$80 (\$30 for members)

Pre-requisites: Basic Camera Skills

Lighting the Set:

Getting the subject lit effectively and consistently from take to take and shot to shot can turn a shoot into a nightmare. This workshop looks at the different types of lights available, and how to use them to enhance the mood and style of your film. Also looks at things like metering (both camera meters and hand held meters), the effect film speeds and fps can have on exposure, and the use of colour filters and gels.

2x3 hour sessions

Check the schedule for start times and dates.

Cost: \$130 (\$80 for members)

Pre-requisites: Basic Camera Skills

Sound

A finer appreciation for the merits of a good sound recordist is gained when that first film looks great but sounds terrible. This workshop looks at the different methods of sound recording available, and also looks at

Workshops continued...

methods of synching sound to your film, finishing your sound and mixing.

2x3 hour sessions

Check the schedule for start times and dates.

Cost: \$130 (\$80 for members)

Pre-requisites: Basic Camera Skills

Home Processing

Learn how to set up your own lab using photo processing chemicals, baths, and a little ingenuity. Processing films at home can achieve interesting and unexpected results.

1x4 hour session

Check the schedule for start time and dates.

Cost: \$110 (\$60 for members)

Pre-requisites: Basic Camera Skills

Other workshops in development:

As these workshops are scheduled, full details will be posted on the group's website, and interested participants will be notified of start dates, cost, and locations.

+ and - (Forum based workshop)

This workshop looks at the differences between reversal and negative stock, and the benefits and limitations of each.

Telecine (Forum based workshop)

Looks at the process of transferring film to video. Details the Telecine facilities within Australia that handle small format film, the best quality available, and the costs associated with cine transfer.

We also welcome suggestions for any other workshop topics.

If you would like to enrol for any of the scheduled workshops, please fill out the enrollment form and return with payment to:

Melbourne Super 8 Film Group
PO Box 2033
Fitzroy MDC
Victoria 3065

Workshop Schedule:

Note that some workshops will require participants to do some preparatory work up to six weeks in advance.

Participants will be notified of the location and equipment availability when they enroll.

May

Saturday 22nd & Sunday 23rd.

Editing & Projection/Sound

Times to be confirmed

Tutor: Rodney Bourke

Saturday 29th & Sunday 30th

Basic Camera Skills on a Location Shoot

1:00pm - 4:00pm

Tutor: Moira Joseph

Saturday 29th & Sunday 30th

Animation

1:00pm-4:00pm

Tutor: Christos Linou

June

Saturday 5th & Sunday 6th.

Editing & Projection/Sound

Times to be confirmed

Tutor: Rodney Bourke

Saturday 12th.

Narrative

1:00pm - 5:00pm

Tutor: Bill Mousoulis

Saturday 19th.

Home Processing

1:00pm - 5:00pm

Tutor: Moira Joseph



Melbourne Super 8 Film Group Inc.

Workshop Enrolment

Please complete the details below and return it with your payment..

Money Orders or Bank Cheques are our preferred method of payment, however personal cheques are acceptable (will take longer to process).

All payments should be made out to *Melbourne Super 8 Film Group*.

I would like to enrol for the following workshops (please list):

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email: _____

Would you prefer we contact you via (please circle):

Email Telephone Post

Please list any other workshops you would like to participate in:

I enclose \$ _____ enrolment fee.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Office Use:

Received Member

If you have something to sell or swap, or a looking to buy a piece of S8 gear, put it in the S8 classifieds. Line advertisements are \$3 for members and \$5 for non-members.

continued from p1...

characters' heads for instant dialogue without sync sound. In another way, bricolage functions here as symbolic language, each barely transformed transplanted object or refilmed grab from tv bluntly asserting (or vibrating with) some of its familiar associations, while also acting apparently independently of them as a plausible elements in the filmmaker's own inventions. The assortment of cheap dolls cast as living creatures bring to their roles the implied qualities of toys — amusement, harmlessness, familiarity, cuteness, dumbness — while their animation in dystopian scenarios by the mostly invisible hand of the filmmaker invests them with unnatural and sometimes eerie expressiveness. The images become thick with ambiguous suggestion, colliding inflections and innuendoes.

But Paul Fletcher's films hooked into me in another way. Despite having 'forgotten' them, as they unrolled on the screen at the Erwin Rado, I recognised them as clearly as if I'd once known them off by heart. (Not like the time I revisited Cairns Harbour after twenty or so years, and recognised so little in it of my visual and emotional memory of it that it was more familiar when I wasn't looking at it.) More startling in watching these films again, was seeing a small scene from one of my own films in one of his, like glimpsing yourself unexpectedly in somebody else's home video. This scene, of a door repeatedly opening without closing, is perhaps also partly imaginary, and must have appeared in his film well before it appeared in mine; but it's an emblem for the encouragement, impetus and permission I realise I got from my rapport with his films in first making super 8 films myself.

Plastic actors

The advantages of working with plastic actors should also be mentioned — among them an obedient, always available cast of any size that you can pack into a bag when you've finished, sets you can fit onto a table top or the living room floor, and incredible stunts involving no danger to anyone. After interval, with the synchronicity that seems to characterise open screenings, two other films humourously visited this borderline between 'real' and 'imitation'. Jay Robinson's film, Jock's Big Adventure, starred what looked like a deflated dog suit on a lead (the dog originally cast in the role having been run over during filming). This substitute hound's progress along the footpath on it's empty furry stomach drew some laughter. The improbable animated flight from it of a stuffed toy up a tree — inflexible limbs splayed as if frozen and propelled by fear — provoked a lot more. Perry De Valera's Fuego, a fantasy docu-comedy about the evils surrounding the Jabiluka uranium mine, also included a toy scene — the filmmaker as Joe Public rising naked, like Aphrodite, from a lagoon in Kakadu, and vigourously wrestling and defeating a very small toy crocodile.

And perhaps in the same breath, one might mention the latest episode in Tony Woods' chicken meat series, 3 '79 Reels, shot in 20 year old Kodachrome from which all colour but magenta had evaporated. Every now and then with Tony's assemblage films, it's occurred to me that they are sometimes about something other than pure looking, and that moments of apparent symbolism are more than coincidental. As his camera licked back and forth over suggestively vulval crevices in the slick pink meat, I have to say the idea came to me again — that where others might cast from the toyshop, Tony is casting from the poulterer.

Other worlds

As though from a completely different world was John Harrison's Untitled, a handmade, largely abstract animation over faintly detectable filmed images projected at 9 fps. At this speed, even the leader he incorporated had a kind of aesthetic gravitas. This beautiful, allusive, painterly and probably physically fragile work whose crystalline patterns resulted from bleach sprayed and left on the film under a layer of fixative, was a response, he

said, to the music of John Cage whose voice and (I guess) music supplied the accompanying sound. (John Cage, a little bit of reading reminded me, was a proponent of random techniques in a method he named indeterminacy, which has a strong visual equivalent in certain kinds of experimental filmmaking.)

From a different world again, were two documentary films by Moira Joseph who is unusual in making an occupation out of super 8 and photography as both teacher and practitioner. Phoenix Park records the rapid construction by a team of hundreds of volunteers of an adventure playground in the city of Stonnington. It is factual, focused and linear in construction, and the use of pixillation and time lapse photography both uncomplicates the explanation of the project and adds an whimsical gloss to it. The second film, Clock, assembled from 10 sec clips from camera test and point of view exercises which Moira set for a CAE class and finished with some hand tinting, was a great example of artfulness and pedagogy supporting one another. Eventually

This has got a lot longer than I meant it to. As Perry said, introducing his film: "I hope you like it. If you don't, it'll work itself out eventually."

SAT AUGUST 21st

GIANT BEER

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Last Open Screening:

Tuesday 13th April 1999

Phoenix Park - Moira Joseph

1999, 18 minutes, 18fps, stereo cassette

Clock - Moira Joseph and CAE Students

1999, 3mins 40 secs, 18fps, stereo cassette

Untitled - John Harrison

1999, 9fps, stereo cassette

Fuego - Perry De Valera

1999, 14 mins, 18fps, soundstripe

Three 79 reels - Tony Woods

1999, 10 minutes, 18fps, stereo cassette

Jock's Big Adventure - Jay Robinson

1999, 2mins 30 secs, 18fps, silent

Next Open Screening:

Tuesday 11th May

ERWIN RADO THEATRE

211 Johnston St Fitzroy

7.30pm—Matthew Rees Retrospective

Followed by The Open Screening

Byo take-up reels please

ISSUE 146

website: <http://www.cinemia.net/super8>

email: super8@netspace.net.au

Become a Member!

For those of you who are not currently members, JOIN NOW, and receive to your doorstep, hot off the press, the monthly newsletter, plus enjoy the benefits of cheap equipment hire, and the Open Screenings, with feeling that you are contributing to the ongoing success and continuation of one of Australia's most prolific and energetic independent filmmaking groups!

1 year's membership: full \$25.00 / concession \$20.00/ overseas \$35.00

contact the group at the address below

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Super Eight

S8

SURFACE
MAIL



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