

Super Eight

Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group Inc.
ISSUE 147 June 1999

S8

June Feature Screening—Jim Bridges



Jim Bridges

CINE ANGST CINCH

(35 min, 1993, Super 8,

Struggle between cinema and real life. The three horsemen of the cinematic apocalypse (Hollywood, experimental and home-movies) fight it out with the forces of reality, with our hero's sanity the prize.

Travel — Through time to the 1960s and '70s!

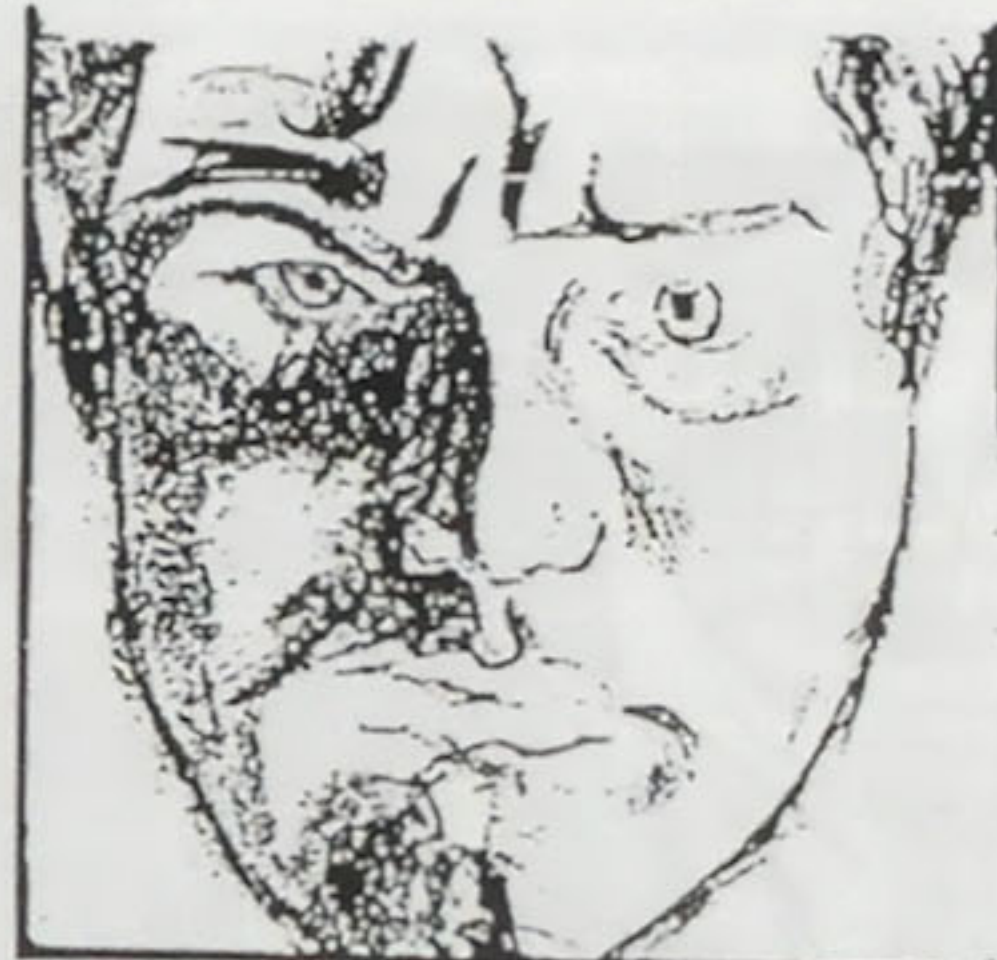
Share — A seizure with Van Gogh!

See — Sex scenes murdered with metaphor

Witness — A male pregnancy

Experience — The angst

and Feel — The cinch of life!



Welcome to New Members:

MS8FG welcomes new members Lisa Settineri, Gordon Snow and Nicole Stott. These new members have joined the group during April/May.

Publicity and Sponsorships:

We are in the process of identifying businesses we can approach for advertising and/or sponsorship. It would be appreciated if members could contact the office (via fax/phone/email or post) with details of businesses that have anything to do with the film trade ie: camera suppliers/repairers, processing labs, film stock suppliers, peripherals suppliers (reels etc), facilities/equipment hire and so on.

Suppliers:

Tom Schiller has recently sold up his Elizabeth Street Pharmacy. The new owners are at this stage, going to continue selling Super 8 stock, however they can no longer obtain S8 at the prices previously available.

Meetings

MS8FG Committee Meeting

Tuesday, June 15th, 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.

Financial Report:

Despite some claims of gloom and doom, the group is travelling quite well to date. We have actually recovered some ground financially during the first quarter of 1999, thanks largely to a substantial rise in the number of both new and renewing members at the new membership rates. Large audiences at recent Open Screenings—May in particular—have also seen a sharp rise in box office. The committee are still putting a lot of time into trying to find cheaper alternatives from which to operate the group, including Open Channel and Trades Hall.

Information Resources:

Most of the group's information resources have been recently updated thanks to the efforts of Anthony Ciach, a non-member, who volunteered his time to ensure all prices and information on supplies and servicing are current, and Rod Paterson.

Workshop Program:

There has been a lot of interest in the workshops, however very few people have actually enrolled—apparently due to personal timetable clashes with the existing schedule. As the current system of having a 'schedule' doesn't appear to be working, the system used in 1998 will be adopted instead ie: once there are the numbers needed to run a workshop, all participants will be contacted to set a mutually agreeable time and date to run them.

experimental, narrative, garage sale find,
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May OpenScreening

The Super 8 Films of Matthew Rees

The problem with taking on the role of both door bitch and film reviewer at the same Open Screening is that you face the dilemma between staying at the door and missing the first few films, or bolting the door against late comers and getting into the theatre on time. Last month I chose the first option and waited around at the 'box office' for those people who were made late by the promise of free wine at the exhibition opening at the gallery next door. As a result I missed Matthew Rees's first two films on the program: Gerry Gee Jnr and Twister. However, given the rest of the program, I reckon that they must have been pretty good.

Matthew's audience managed to fill the Erwin Rado and when I finally entered the darkened theatre I got the feeling that we had all been transported into the 1980's. It was the collection of characters on screen with their gaudy costumes and the soundtracks borrowed from New Order and Alison Moyet that did it.

In fact Video Search, a documentary about a girl obsessed with her VCR, reminded me of that classic 80's song - Video Killed the Radio Star, and of the battle still being played out between Super 8 and video. It seems that in Matthew's eyes the battle has finally been won, having shot his latest film (Living Doll) on the sophisticated Mini Digital Video format.

Matthew has a good eye for the gag and the ability to sustain the humour throughout the piece. This was shown to perfection in the film Birthday Boy, about a daggy 18 year old who visits Fitzroy St, St Kilda with \$50 and an urge to spend. His costume alone (tight white shorts, white socks and shoes) was enough of a

Open Screening

It would be unfair to review my own film, Bath Toy, which was first off the mark at the Open Screening. Perhaps Gary O'Keefe will have put it in the worst of his Best and Worst column so you can read about it there!

There were only three other films shown at the May Open Screening: Fountain Gate, Untitled, and Eye & Ear.

Fountain Gate, by Gary O'Keefe, followed a woman on a bus as she made her way (presumably) to Fountain Gate. The symbolism of the bus's journey and the use of the name 'Fountain Gate', coupled with the flashes of children, suggested a winding path through suburban memory.

Untitled, a first film by Duncan Grant was another journey. We followed a man down a European street, camera held loose and easy, and then all of a sudden we're in a forest following the same but now half naked man. Interesting changes in place and time helped by a heavy and grinding guitar track.

Tony Woods once more gave us a piece of gritty inner city life in Eye & Ear. This time with a found voice over that seems to have

gag, let alone the scene with the prostitute and the use of polaroids throughout.

Normal Bias had an entirely different feel. A touch of erotic tension as we followed a couple's '...morning after the nightbefore.' as Matthew describes it in his program notes. We saw this film twice, once with (I think this is right) music from Yazoo and a second time with a piece that felt vaguely operatic. For me the first choice worked best, perhaps because it felt right amongst Matthew's other pieces.

Bardot was good too, except the heroine was more like Cyndi Lauper than Bridget - forgive me if I have missed the references. There was a lot of standing around in this film, and a mysterious man in black. I guess that this is what people did in the 80's, waiting for something better to come along.

Cow Samui was interesting. Shots from a motor bike in Thailand, and lots of cows standing about near the Murray River. Added to this was a voice over, seemingly recorded while having a counter meal. You know the thing: 'Number 34, your steak is ready...', something that has carried through from the 80's and into the queue at the supermarket delicatessen.

I liked the films, but it seems that Matthew has committed to a marriage with the younger and flashier Mini DV, so perhaps we will see less of his work. Here's hoping that he will occasionally come back to Super 8 - that older and more wilful mistress.

been lifted from a psychologist's counselling couch. It's the soothing voice of a woman giving relaxation instructions to a client and it seems so personal it's invasive. Tony's camera goes everywhere - we watch three girls in long conversation before they finally say goodbye. We also view Tony's favourites - flowers and insects, as well as a new and intimatedi version to (as the title suggests) eyes and ears. Tony's pieces are complex and not for the faint hearted, but they reward the viewer with some beautiful images and voyeuristic insights.

I look forward to next month's screening - lets hope that people come early so I get to see all the films.

Rod Paterson

Super 8 finishing.

By Anthony Ciach.

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Best and Worst

By Gary O'Keefe

Coming at the end of a long and fairly exhausting programme of films; from Matthew Rees' diverse eclecticism and Tony Woods' sharp observations to a film by myself and Deb Warr and various other tandy introspections, came a film by new comer, Duncan Grant.

This 3-minute film, as yet without a title and apparently incomplete—we can expect another two minutes he informs us—aroused some interest with its blatant articulation of a fundamental humanist ideal. In it we follow a drab horde of Saturday morning shoppers as they dutifully cross at the lights and shuffle towards their weekly chore. Into this depressing scene is cut a sequence of a guy walking naked through a forest. We cut back and forth a few times presumably for the idea to coagulate, anticipating Desmond Morris or Pink Floyd. I remember very little after this. I have vague reflections of grotesque dwarfs and enormous Maoris sniggering in the row of seats behind me.

I then found myself standing with Bill Mousoulis and Duncan Grant was explaining how he had achieved a similar effect by punching holes through the film, presumably with a sharp pin or needle, and described his fascination watching a frame burn in a jammed film gate. Bold manipulation and stark dualities confront S-8 audiences regularly. Emulsion has been attacked with acid, drowned in buckets of chlorine, it has been graffitied and gouged and abused in every imaginable way. A stabbing was inevitable. For some this is a balm for the clever and meandering, carefully measured feelings and over indulged sensibilities that suffocate as in the guise of creativity? Is this Perry De Valera's hardcore? Duncan Grant was immediately invited to screen his film without a name at the upcoming Best and Worst showcase gala event in November. Best and Worst films are difficult to find. A classic 'worst' film, on the virtual admission of the man himself, was Bardot by Matthew Rees. It is self conscious and shallow and attempts little more than to convince us that Matthew and this woman can be good looking when they really try. Trouble is though, Matthew does cut it as the macho Spaniard-in a campy sort of way. He positions himself for the cute but plain 80's chick with aberrant C&W hairdo, tight blue jeans and baggy jacket, she's trying to look cool and uninterested, doing the self absorbed walk through canal and overpass locations, balancing on the curb with a feigned nonchalance. Then the Horney Spanish guy steps up the pace, positioning himself in the woman's field of vision and by now it is very obvious that he is stalking her. I expect Matthew's 'method' back then was to first spend the day filming women he fancied and so life would follow art even if things got a little trashy in between.

Surveillance and confession sets Tony Wood's film Eye and Ear apart also. His hidden camera gazes longingly on a group of three interesting young women standing in the street opposite his hideout. They are animated and friendly, laughing then serious, obviously very fond of the friendship, then doubts begin to surface as the implications of the 'found soundtrack' become clear. This consists of a therapist's taped advice to her female client. The inevitable associations fix themselves to our perceived understanding. All is not well. Masks appear and suspicion prevails and nothing is clear and uncomplicated. I would have preferred the film to end about the time that the audio cassette finished. The remaining footage dissipates a previously tight and unconventional narrative and once again, I'm just waiting for the reel to run down. This film is real 'Voyeur'—its strange to learn that this footage was left over from that film.



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SURVEY-ART X 4

SIMON FORD'S CHOPSTICKS

This pathetic drivel, a navel gazing waste of film, reminded me of all the filmmakers that should give the game away and go home to mum and titty and stay there, where the cruel nasty world that never satisfies can be shut away. Cooper, Touhy, Zeener and Bill M all seem to have the rights to this impotent genre. You lot make me sick.

Ford's pap featured some skinny prat who finds some chopstix then promptly loses them. (DEEP STUFF) She walks around the city sulking sraring at hell until a beggar returns them. (Yeah right) I don't know who Ford is nor do I care, but this bleak and retarded mess of male wank deserves nothing but the tip. Sorry boy, but you're dealing with the hardcore now, not a circle of back patting arsewipes. I give this crap two weeks to get out of town.

I won't review Bill's Desire, because all I saw was some terrible Z-grade porn movie sex scenes, mildly ok postcard shots that had no bearing on the plot and the usual wooden, dull and inspiring dialogue that Bill delivers.

REVIEWED BY PERRY DE VALERA.

(...) Parts I, II, and III

Films by Stan Brakhage
At Anthology Film Archives
February 12 and 13

BY J. HOBERMAN

HOW MUCH TIME does it take to get a painting? Does one devote 10 seconds to a Jackson Pollock canvas? Two minutes? An hour? Decades? It's a question that naturally arises in the case of Stan Brakhage, a film artist whose work is often believed to be unnaturally demanding.

Brakhage's new series of scratch-and-stain films, known as (...) or *ellipses*, are, among other things, a visual analogue to Abstract Expressionism.

The onrushing imagery and the spatial conundrums it creates evoke not only Pollock but also the work of Franz Kline, Willem De Kooning, and even Mark Rothko—that is Pollock et al., at 24 frames per second. Eschewing the camera, Brakhage scrapes away the film emulsion to create a thicket (or sometimes a spider's web) of white lines and rich, chemical colors. Some segments of the original footage appear to have been printed on negative stock or perhaps solarized—so that the blue and pink lines are inscribed on a white field. In any case, (...) is a cosmos. Rich without being ingratiating, the effect is one of rhythmic conflagration.

A second 20-minute reel is more staccato—mad chicken-scratch calligraphy fluttering out of a yellow void, sketchy lightning bolts or fireworks interrupted by a sudden field of turquoise. The third and shortest section reintroduces camera-derived imagery and, minimal as it may be (sunlight shimmering on water, seagull wheeling in the sky), it's still a shock to see "something." Brakhage continues to play with surfaces, layering the image with scratch bursts and soft-focus superimpositions; sentiment arrives with representation.

For the most part, though, (...) is predicated on a strategy Brakhage introduced as long ago as his cut-and-paste collage *Mothlight* (1962). The camera may be abandoned, but the projector-technology remains. Like the "impossible" presentations of his peer Ken Jacobs, Brakhage is reveling in the considerable power of the individual frame as it collides with other disparate frames. The simple 16mm projector that shows (...) is a hallucination machine, producing flickers and afterimages where none objectively exist.

February 16, 1999 VILLAGE VOICE 143

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.

Normal Bias

That people should think of Matthew Rees as having been the rock of the Super 8 Group Committee and nothing more is a normal bias, but a bias nonetheless. Sure, Matthew's film career in the 90's has seen just a trickle of films produced, but the past cannot be discounted that easily - his 80's work, as evinced by last month's screening, is an impressive body of work.

For one, it defies categorisation. It would be wrong to simply dismiss Matthew as an opportunistic, dilettantish film-maker, what with all his pop culture references, love of celebrities, playing with nerdy humor, etc. He'll let that stuff flow in something like *Birthday Boy*, which indeed played on Hey Hey It's Saturday in a competition, but then he'll go all experimental with *Normal Bias* or abstruse with *Cow Samui*.

The first film, *Gerry Gee Jnr*, is a bona fide classic. It sears with emotion. A doll, *Gerry Gee Junior*, is alive, walks around, has existential concerns, cries blood. Corny? Camp? See it and you too will believe. (The last film shown, *Living Doll*, from this year, sees an evil incarnation of *Gerry* prowling around. Girls beware!)

Of course, *Gerry* is Matthew's signature character, but, well, I prefer humans. And the girl in *Twister* is lovely. An Elton John song ("Christa"?) propels the images, sending them into outer space. This is a sweet, lyrical, free film. A similar pop song strategy is used in *Bardot*, *New Order* droning away. Matthew himself, and the *Twister* girl (Sue), pose and walk around respectively. It seems kinda arch, but a genuinely nice feeling comes across. Whilst *Twister* is happy, *Bardot* is sad.

In *Video Search*, Matthew really triumphs in getting a celebrity to appear: Steven Spielberg! (Well, almost.) What starts as a simple mockumentary becomes a fascinating metaphysical exploration - TV, sibling connection, the world beyond. The truth is out there, but its meaning is obscure.

The play with meaning reaches its apotheosis in *Normal Bias*. A simple idea, the same piece of film run twice, with different music, but the results are inspired. It's not just that the two sections in an overall sense are different, what's truly glorious is the way particular details change their meaning (or, at the least, their shade of meaning).

And that's why, dear readers, I love Super 8 films. For me, Australia's best film-makers are its Super 8 ones. Speaking of which, has anyone apart from me noticed the great new cycle of films Gary O'Keefe seems to be on currently? Already, I want to see a retrospective of his late 90's work. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. For the moment, well done Matthew. And as for the rest of you, pull your fingers out and put them on those triggers! Shoot!

BILL MOUSOULIS

Classifieds:

Super 8 Camera, 'Canon Auto Zoom 518' (Silent). In original case & manual with... 'C-8' Wide angle lens also in original case. Price: \$100.00

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Super 8 400ft reels, 'Stoko' in air tight container \$3.00 low on stock. 'UN' 400ft reels in card board box also low on stock \$2.00

More reels are on order and should be in around September, Sorry.

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Last Open Screening:

Tuesday 11th May 1999

Bath Toy—Rod Patterson

1999, 4 minutes, video, stereo sound

Eye and Ear—Tony Woods

1996—1998, 25 minutes, 18fps, stereo cassette

Fountain Gate—Gary O'Keefe and Deborah Warr

1999, 6.5 minutes, 18fps, stereo cassette

Untitled—Duncan Grant

1997—1998, 3 minutes, 18fps, stereo cassette

Next Open Screening:

Tuesday 8th June

ERWIN RADO THEATRE

211 Johnston St Fitzroy

7.30pm-Films by Jim Bridges

Soundscape: Remix by Jamie Sutherland

Followed by The Open Screening

Byo take-up reels please

ISSUE 147

website:<http://www.cinemedia.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 \$45.00 / concession \$30.00/ overseas \$35.00 (Aus)
contact the group at the address below

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Super Eight

S8

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