

Super Eight

Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group Inc.
ISSUE 150 September 1999

S8

Jennifer Pignataro

Soft came about after I'd lost all enthusiasm and motivation to make films. I was blocked. Soft was trying to get back to a state where I was unstressed: everything would be beautiful, life would be pleasant.

It was a crisis point in my professional life, I felt that I needed to unblock creative energies. So I took days off from work, took drives to Frankston, listened to Iggy Pop, drank chocolate milk-shakes, thought about what I could film around the house and smoked. I tried to focus on how I could suggest truth and beauty in film.

For the next three days I exiled myself in the living room and went crazy with my camera filming cherished objects.

The shots of the hands in Soft were photocopies of photographs of April's hands. She'd developed a series of Tarot cards for the blind. The hand signs would be illustrated on the cards with an embossed braille translation. I felt that the hand signs suited the atmosphere and intentions of the film.

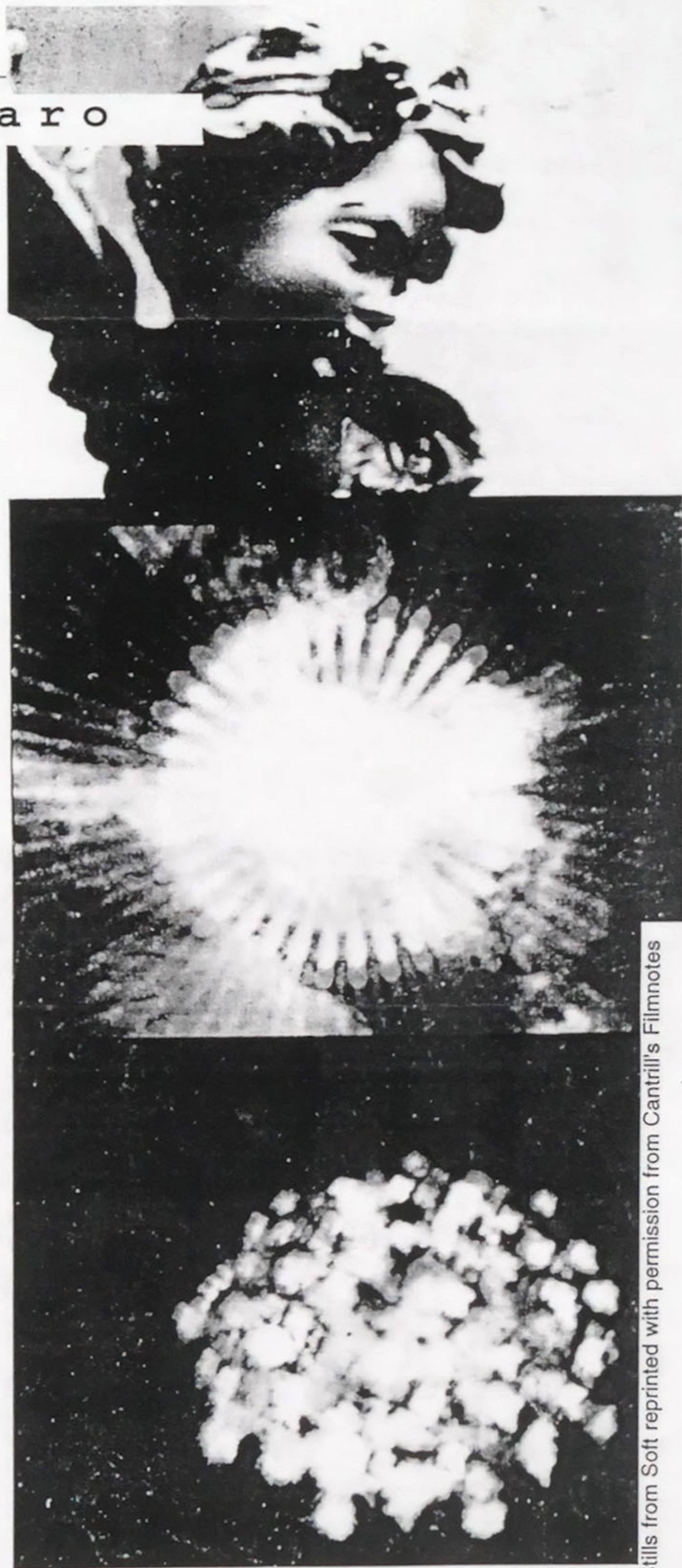
I sent the film to Kodak for processing and sent myself to a deserted beach in Thailand for deprogramming. I imagined ways to edit the film during blissful reverie, gazing into the tranquil blue horizon.

On returning to the drudge of my working routine I began to work on editing the film.

But it needed a soundtrack.

A neighbour had expressed an interest in making a soundtrack. I wanted an ambient softness. He produced a piece of music that we were thinking of using, but we needed more sounds. We took a drive to Castlemaine and visited some friends of mine who have built their house on a block of land in the bush. He spent most

(Cont'd P2)



Stills from Soft reprinted with permission from Cantrill's Filmnotes

(Cont'd from P1)

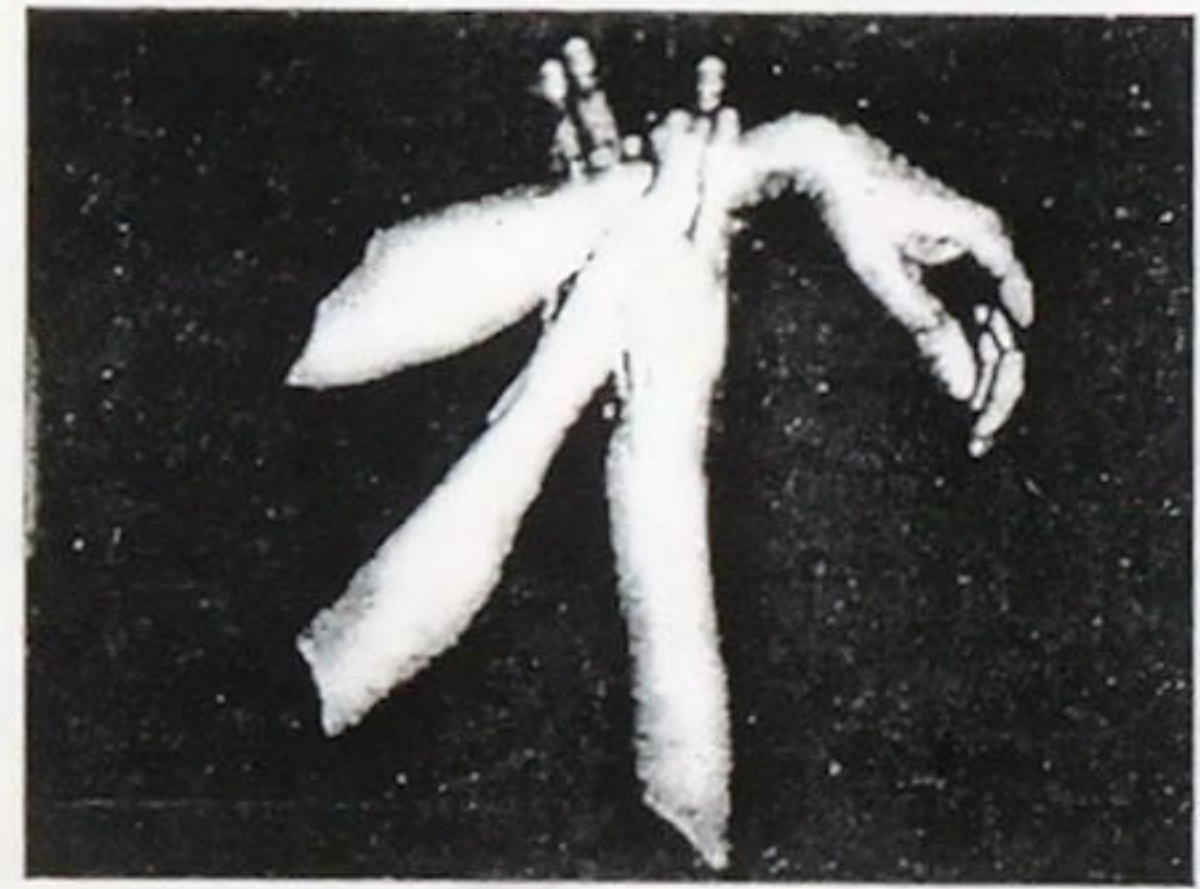
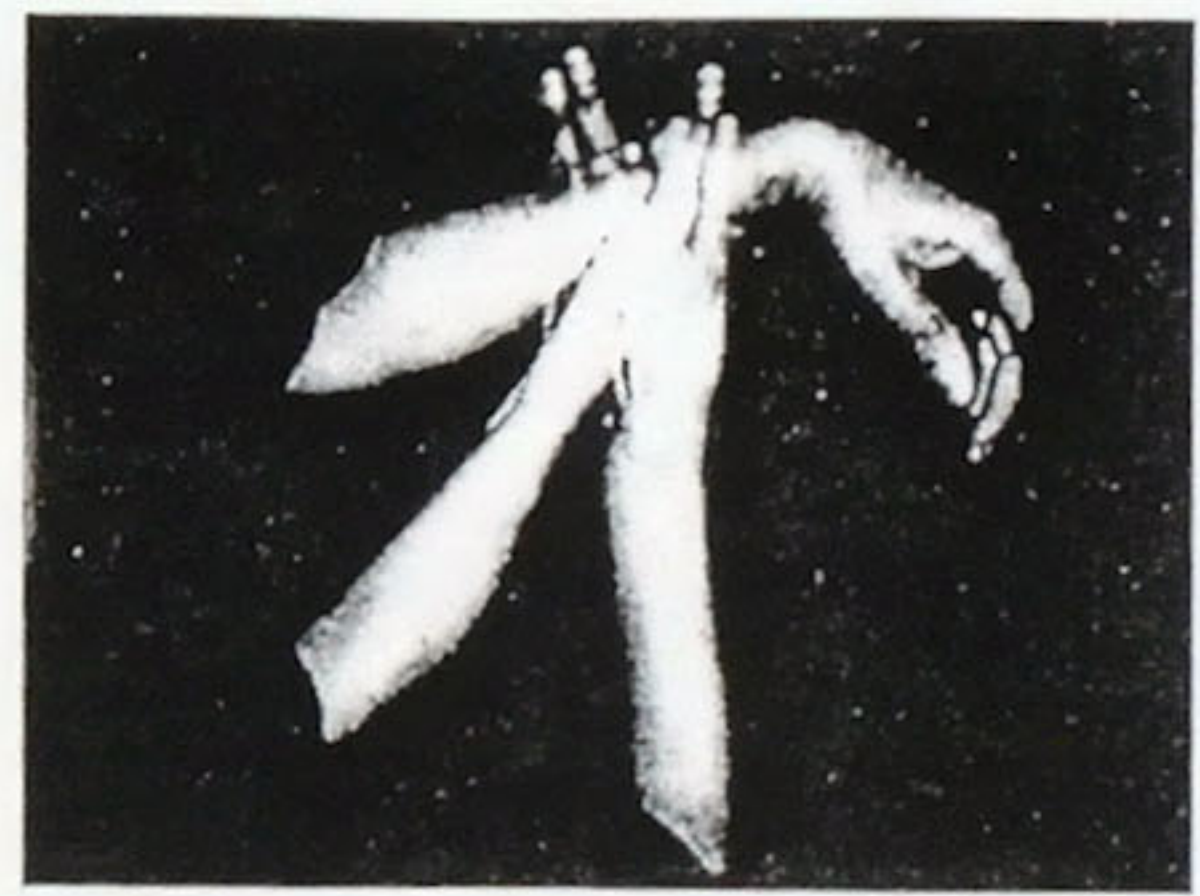
of the day wandering around with a tape recorder recording sounds of creeks, insects and frogs. When we returned to Melbourne he mixed these in with the music. This was the soundtrack.

All these things came together in one film, *Soft*. It is an accumulative document of all the elements of that time.

In my first two films *Wild Day* and *Face Job* I was filming events that interested me at the time. *Wild Day* was a film of a football game and *Face Job* of a friend who visited a beautician. In *Astral Plane* I used the song by Jonathon Richman with film shot around my home environment.

On reflection, the films I have produced thus far have been a cathartic process. At the completion of the films I've come to a better understanding of aspects which, previously, may have confused me. Ultimately they have shaped and transformed a past reality leaving me more informed, vulnerable too; 'soft', you could say: absorbed in impressions.

I intend my next film *Pluto Lesson* to consolidate these experiences, filmic and otherwise, catapulting into even more mysterious realms - of film and contemplation.



Stills from *Soft* reprinted with permission from Cantrill's Filmnotes

The 10th Melbourne Super 8 Film Festival

Entries are now invited for the 10th festival to be held by the group. Full details, including entry forms and terms and conditions of entry are available for download from the group website, or call the office and ask for an entry form to be sent to you.

Entries close Friday 15 October 1999.



July and August Open Screening

by Gary O'Keefe

It is interesting to note the similarities between the two first up films of the July Open Screening. *At Five in the Afternoon* (13 mins) by Lee Smith and *Reel Abstract* (12 mins) by Tony Woods had aesthetic attitude. The method used in both films is carefully controlled, they work to a plan and have clear objectives. They both use a stationary camera and film in close up for the films' duration. The difference between the two films is merely that of duration of shot if we exclude the actual subject that each chooses to build upon. *At Five in the Afternoon* is a rapid animation or pixilation (I'm not sure which) of aerosol graffiti filmed in sharp focus and kept to a steady rhythm. It is lively and vivid, and what begins to emerge is an idea about these shapes having life and movement rather than it being the actual result. The camera has cut through the graffiti like a pair of scissors and removed some inherent quality from the original art in the process. Just as a Picasso or Rembrandt couldn't stand up against this type of assault, neither can the stuff that's sprayed onto your back fence.

Lee Smith has set high expectations by his excellent earlier work, in particular *Luna Soma*, one of those rare hand-made films that work beyond us noticing the manner or technique, existing instead as artistic or transcendent moments.

By coincidence Tony Woods has also encountered the paradox that filming graffiti presents but he has counterpointed the backstreet Fitzroy tags and emblems with the broader filigree he has found in cracked masonry, wrought iron foundry work, spiders webs, window frames, layers of reflections, roller doors etc. and brought the subjects to life as elements of landscape. The film he screened in July however, follows another trend that is to study the interior space he shares with insects, junkies, the light affected surfaces of the interior walls, grimy windows and worn floors of his Fitzroy studio. *Reel Abstract* is about illusion and subtraction. A small blob of reflected light plays and pulsates against a surface that could be fly wire screen or a fine cloth. This protoplasm emits a tired groan over and over as if it wants to get free of the netting or

dissolve back into the pond from which it came as the stray reflection. The scenario is engaging as a confused visual riddle. I searched for an explanation and then decided to let go and be content with that thing on the screen. That said, I did not engage with this film for the length of time that it ran. After a few minutes I was starting to wonder what time I would get home if I managed to catch the 10.27 tram on Brunswick St. I couldn't detect any progression and being the hopeless narrative junkie, I was half hoping for an explosion or partial eclipse to change in some way the parameters of the exercise.

The next film was the only Postcodes entry for 1999 by Bill Elliot called *3031* (3 mins) which bought with it my narrative fix. *3031* is a delightful late afternoon wander through the back streets of Kensington. It is a wayward and shining poem bathed in soft light and written on worn surfaces. The camera roams along collapsing fences and over rusting roofs. Backyard fig trees and tangled powerlines that throw long shadows across faded traffic lines on black tarry roads. It's an aimless and complete existential journey. We finish on the main drag and like a dream there is a carnival - pink, overweight women and crossdressers in fishnets, G strings and feathers have emerged from the forest to feed from our tired and enfeebled senses - this lasts only a few moments and the film ends.

Jump cut to the Sun Cinema in Yarraville for the August Open Screening and Bill Elliot, who has the appearance of the generous and dependable neighbour from a T.V. soapie, has another film called *Demolition*.

First or early films seem to have soul. - like first novels and first record albums, as if this person has been working on the particular thing, whatever it is, all their lives. *Demolition* could get the usual once over - machinery, like rampaging insects demolish Housing Commission flats in Kensington - and not come close to describing this film. A more difficult thing to relate is the personality of the film. The naive quality that we find in these films is resistant to conventional modes of critical understanding. Roger Cardinal in 'Primitive Painters' describes it as 'in a sense illegitimate - not entered on the official register of acceptable art within our culture -

(continued on P5)

In Brief

New Members:

MS8FG welcomes new member Gabriella La Verde, who has joined the group during August.

St Kilda Film Festival:

A last minute rush to put together a stall for the St Kilda Film Festival Industry Day managed to give the group some much needed exposure to a larger cinema going public. Tony Woods ripped around during the preceding week to get all the paraphernalia together, and myself, Rod Paterson, and Virginia Fraser staffed the stall for most of the day. Matthew Rees and Moira Joseph did a presentation on the group to a small but captive audience. A combination of bad weather and the fact this was the first such event for the festival meant there weren't huge numbers, but it was busy enough to keep us all yakking most of the time. There was a lot of interest from the general public, as a lot of them had access to Super 8 equipment and/or had a keen interest in making films on Super 8, they just weren't aware that we existed.



Our Festival:

Has now slipped up a couple of gears. Jessica Friedman from RMIT's Public Relations course has made some significant progress in drumming up support and sponsorship for the festival. Entries for the festival open on Wednesday, September 1st and close on Friday, October 15th. Full details are now available on the group's revamped website.

Interim Planning Meeting:

The Open Channel Studio has been booked for Saturday, September 18th, to hold an interim planning meeting. This will be an opportunity for all members to look over the Open Channel facilities, put questions to Open Channel staff, and vote on the proposal to move the group's operations from MIFF to Open Channel. A full copy of the proposal is presently being distributed to all members, if you haven't already received one, you can expect it shortly.

The Interim Planning Meeting will also be geared towards trying to develop strategies that will see the group move forward, develop new possibilities for members, and hopefully start getting some more people involved in the operation of the group.

Group website:

A new, more cohesive website went live this week. Continuing updates are planned including a resources section with links to suppliers, repair services, and finishing services both in Australia and overseas. We are also presently investigating the logistics of Surelink enabling the site to allow both local and international visitors to the site to join over the internet. Also planned are a mail order service for film stocks, the newsletter online (in part), member profiles and feature spotlights on a different member each month, showcasing their work, be it drawing, painting, filmmaking etc.

A comprehensive plan for the website will be distributed with the agenda for the Interim Planning Meeting.

Meetings:

MS8FG Committee Meeting:

Tuesday 21st September, 6:00pm in the Group Office.

Festival Meetings:

These will now be held every Monday night at 6:30 pm in the group offices.

Thanks to Gary O'Keefe and Rodney Bourke we now have some Wurker splices and another Wurker Splicer. These are now available for hire.

Ben Ryan and Moira Joseph at St. K. f.f.



16 at The Sun

by Ben Ryan

The beauty of using The Sun Theatre as a venue for a 16mm program is in the sheer size of the screen, the clear, 'rattle you to your bones' sound system, and the stadium style seating. Such a venue provided these films with the opportunity to be seen in an atmosphere that is just a little difficult to recreate in someone's lounge room. The pity was, only a small audience was there to see it.

From the first frame of Craig Lindley's **Neomagesteriad** there was little doubt as to where the audience's attention was. Giant images twenty feet tall, blood red pillars of cloud and jagged cliffs loom as an ominous introduction to the somewhat sinister sequences to follow.

A young woman masquerades in the bush, ignoring the increasingly frantic gestures of a semi-naked male beckoning her attention. The images grow dark and as night envelopes the setting, rituals primal and primitive follow, culminating in the sacrifice of life at the feet of a demonic apparition. Thumping electronics give this grim sequence a detached reality that connects both the past and present of human evolution, illustrating the bizarre marriage of our distant ancestry with our self-imposed higher morality.

Moira Joseph's **The Light** was as hypnotic as the subject. A pulse of bright light sweeps across the frame at regular intervals. As insects caught in a wayward beam, tiny scratches and divots in the film buzz with life as each light passes. Flashes of illusionary colour the after effect of staring into a globe. In the background, the sounds of the natural world reverberate.

Downpipe has Gary O'Keefe in his element, cramming multiple short span sequences and jump cuts, this film motored along on a range of levels. Dark, brooding imagery and regular returns to the relentlessness of rain on a tin roof, all combine to build a sense of impending flood. Gary's skill for whittling his films down to the bare core are in evidence as the influence of Melbourne and it's weather seems to have seeped into the images on the screen.

Gordon Snow's films were his first, and relatively striking for a first-up. '**Flower Painting**' consists of simple animations of flower heads marching across his paintings, igniting a 3D dynamic to otherwise static and momentary imagery. It was good to see some of our newer members finally putting up their work for the group to see.

The film that perhaps struck me most, was Bill Elliot's **Demolition**.

At one point, it even shared a fate similar to that of the subject matter, and for a moment the images became turbulent and then self destructive as the celluloid melted in the gate. The Kensington Housing Commission towers are destined to be part of another tollway somewhere, and Bill captured the goings of the towers with a keen eye. Shot over several days, we see the relative ease with which solid structures and landmarks pass into nothingness. Slowly at first, and filmed almost in real-time, the demolition men carefully assemble the cranes and lift the cutting equipment to the roof.

Piece by piece the building comes apart as if it were a giant Lego assembly. With an increase in the rate of descent, so too does the pace of the film. Jump cuts and timelapse take on a sense of urgency as Bill shifts his POV with increasing frequency. Shadows sneak across the ground, creeping up on the final few floors of the tower as CATs armed with jackhammers and hydraulic claws make short work of the remaining blocks of home destined to be rubble.

The significance of these towers being removed comes sharply into focus through a number of quick shots of locals peering through the temporary fencing, somewhat bewildered that a landmark - albeit an ugly one - is disappearing from their landscape.




(continued from P3)

that it has attached to itself a reputation of inadequacy and is often seen as a pathetic aberration, or at best a trivial curiosity.' This is outsider art in that there is a reluctance to participate in the dominant screen culture.


Zoo by Jake Wilson (1999) and **Jacks Big Adventure** by Jay Robinson (1999) are two good examples of how these films succeed in communicating an original idea with considerable power. **Demolition** uses a favourite S-8 technique (stop motion) to make a film that is genuinely creative.

16 AT THE SUN BY MS8FG


MUM.. SOUNDS LIKE A WESTERN. MY DAD LIKES WESTERNS... WHAT THE HELL...
 PRESENTED BY MS8FG
 JESUS CHRIST!! FULLY SPONSORED BY A FOOD ADDITIVE! WHAT HAPPENED TO PRODUCT PLACEMENT? I PREFER COKE!



HEY! THIS AIN'T... WHERE'S CLINT?... THIS IS ABSOLUTE... WELL...



.. BRILLIANCE! INSURED GENIUS! EJACULATING WOODEN PENIS?! AH, BUT IT'S ALL IN CONTEXT..



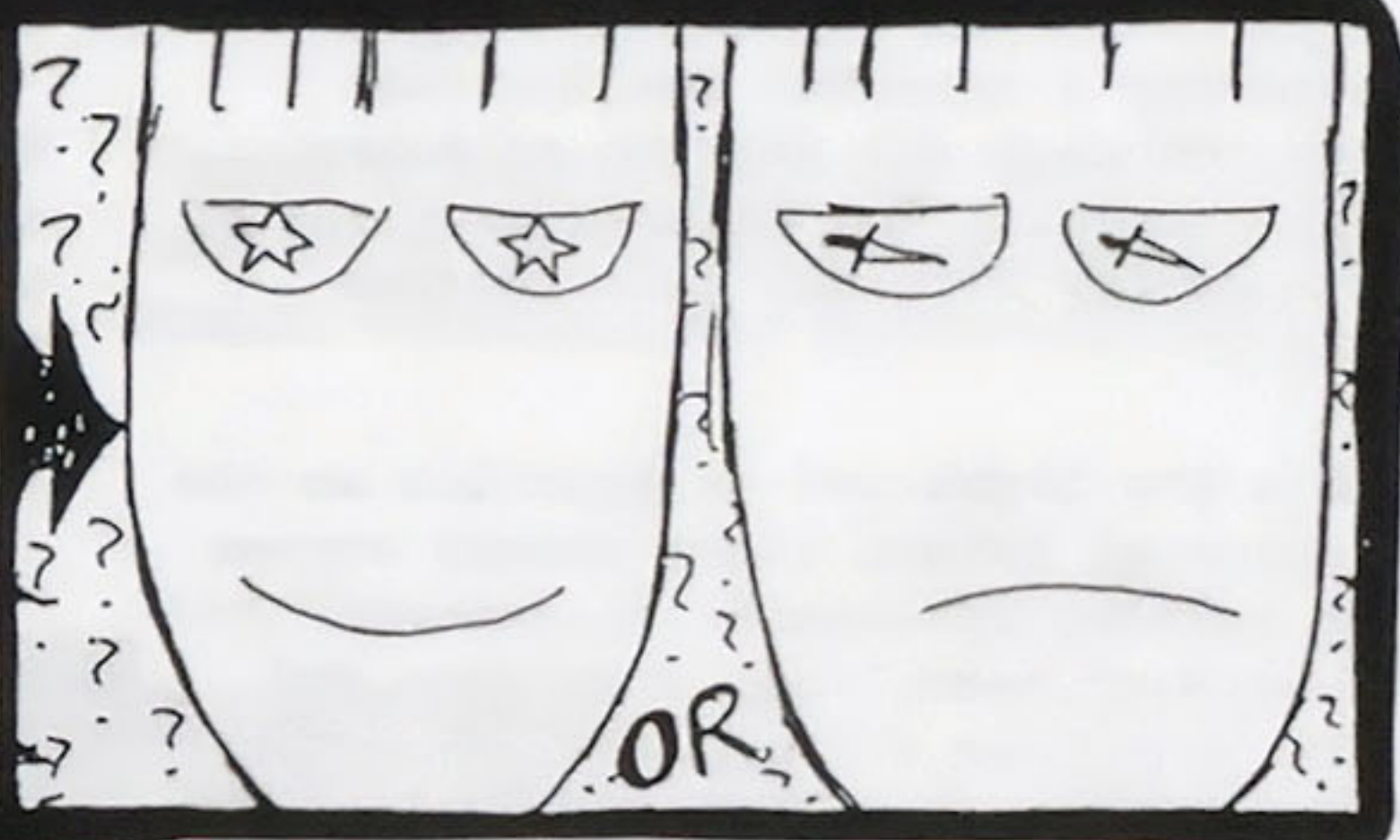
IF JIM MORRISON WAS THE 'DOORS' THEN THESE PEOPLE ARE DEFINETLY THE 'WINDOWS'

.. NO I'M NOT A MEMBER! HOW MUCH IS IT?
 THAT'LL BE \$6 THEN PLEASE.

HAVE YOU SEEN IT YOURSELF?
 NO, BUT I KNOW THE FILMMAKERS
 YEAH? MY AUNTIE USED TO LIVE NEXT DOOR TO DELVINE DELANEY!
 I HAVE A STRONG FEELING THAT THIS CHAP HAS NEVER KNOWN SB - EVEN SUPERFICALLY
 THAT'S FAIR ENOUGH. SEEMG AS I USUALLY GO TO TIGHT ARSE TUES DAY, \$6 IS A BARGAIN

LATER THAT NIGHT...

MUM, DAD, I WANT BE A FILM MAKER!!
 OH MY GOD! ITS HAPPENING!
 BUT DONT FEAR MUM & DAD. I'M GOING TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY - REALLY!!
 ... SON.. WE MUST HAVE A SERIOUS TALK...
 WILL PHIL BE EN-OR DIS-COURAGED? FIND OUT IN OCT.



OR

THE ADVENTURES OF PHIL KERR

BY R. RUDD.

6 AT THE SUN BY MS8FG



F#*%ING TICKET INSPECTORS!
 I WAS IN A RUSH, FOR CRIST'S SAKE, FOR THE 'IMPROVE YOUR AUSTERITY SEMINAR' IN SOUTH YARRA TONIGHT & THE ~~CHANGING~~ TICKET MACHINE WAS ~~CHANGED~~ & WHEN I GOT TO FLINDERS ST I HAD TO RUSH FOR THE CONNECTING TRAIN & IT WAS THE WRONG ~~FUCKING~~ TRAIN BECAUSE THEY DON'T TELL YOU WHICH STATIONS THEY STOP AT UNTIL YOU GET ONTO THE ~~CHANGING~~ PLATFORM &... F#*%!! I RUSHED ONTO THE WRONG TRAIN!! F#*%ING QESTAPO. \$100 TO END UP IN YARRAVILLE INSTEAD OF SOUTH YARRA!
 LIFE SUX. WHERE IS THE MEANING? THERE IS NONE! ALL THINGS GOOD ARE FLEETING. ALL THINGS BAD LEAVE SUCH STAINS IN MY MEMORY... WHAT IS THE ANSWER? YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW - WHAT IS THE QUESTION? OH, WOE IS ME!

Kelly Auty & Rocky Dabscheck

Kelly & Rocky are seasoned performers offering an original acoustic, guitar and vocal repertoire. Together they have supported David Gates and Ted Mulry; played at the Woodford Folk Festival and performed locally around Melbourne.



Kelly is well known on the Melbourne circuit and won the 1994 Lithgow Blues Award for best new female artist in 1994. She has performed and recorded with Geoff Achison, Boris Conley, Alex Burns and Nick Charles, Ross Hannaford, Kevin Borich, Louis McMannus & Singers Jo Jo Smith & Kerry Simpson. Festival engagements to Kelly's credit are Maleney Folk, Tanawah Blues, Brunswick Music, Ballarat Blues, Wangaratta Jazz, Broadford Rock Concert, Apollo Bay, Port Fairy, Kingston & Geelong Waterfront.

Rocky has always played his own compositions and has been commissioned to compose and musically direct several reviews. He played at the Sunbury Festival, has toured extensively around Australia and has performed with John Martyn, Steeleye Span, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGee to name a few.

Presently, this Dynamic Duo have completed an EP CD to be released in the near future. 'Angel on his Shoulder' is a beautifully produced, haunting, vibrant & Roots based acoustic recording, which is sure to attract the attention of music lovers everywhere.

Kelly Auty - K.A. Productions
 P. O. Box 1134, Thornbury Vic 3071
 Tel./Fax: 9484 8110 - Mobile: 0419 138 918

CUT TO...

BRAD (looks at 'Alan' on the list. As he recollects we hear thoughts)
I know what you were thinking but..it isn't true..

CUT TO...

ALAN (pov toward Brad after his own RMIT question. With Alan's thoughts)
This guy's got to be a full on bogan.

CUT TO... (cross Alan off list)
 (He moves to Nadia on the list) *Your thoughts were obvious.*

CUT TO...

NADIA (in work attire)
 (standing at the entrance she examines the room. She did not expect this nor is she repulsed by it but her expression may read. "I don't think I am going to move into here")

BRAD (attempting to salvage some hope)
 I probably should clean it more often.



NADIA

Forget about it. Don't worry.
 (looking at Brad then around the room with her thoughts)
I know you've just cleaned it, you dork. I'm just looking around to make you believe that I believe that it may be possible for me to move in here.

CUT TO...(cross Nadia off then move to Mick on the list) CUT TO...

MICK

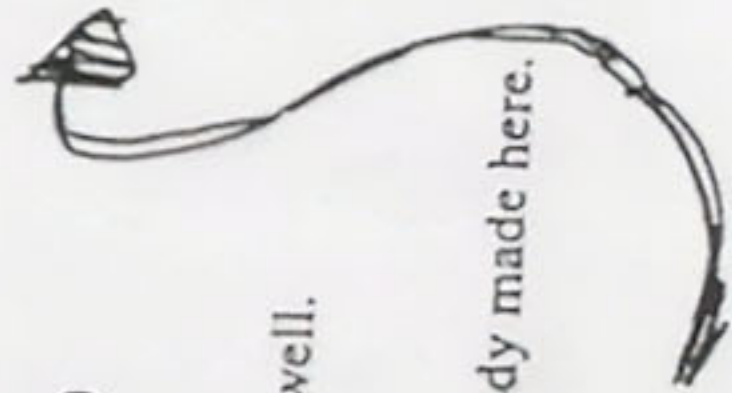
(looking out the spare room window)

BRAD

...handles Melbourne weather pretty well.

MARK

Of course it would, mate. It was bloody made here.



BRAD

(quickly) Yeah, of course.

MICK (staring out the window with narration)

Doesn't even have a fools knowledge of building. He's probably gay.

CUT TO..Cross Mick off list then move to Sherylin & Hal, CUT TO...

SHERYLIN & HAL (They are walking out of the spare room)

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Last Open Screening:

Tuesday 10th August

flower painting - Gordon Snow

1999, 2min, 18fps, sound

Dorothy's Dream - Gordon Snow

1999, 2min 20secs, 24fps, silent

Light on White - Tony Woods

1999, 7min, 18fps, stereo cassette

Demolition - Bill Elliot

1999, 10min, 24fps, silent

? - Virginia Fraser

1980, 18/24fps, 16mm, sound

Next Open Screening:

Tuesday 14th September

ERWIN RADO THEATRE

211 Johnston St Fitzroy

7.00pm-Soundscape by Kelly Auty
& Rocky Dabscheck

7.30pm-Films by Jenny Pignataro

Followed by
The Open Screening

Byo take-up reels please.

ISSUE 150

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



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