

SUPER EIGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM GROUP NO. 16 JULY '87

MEETING REPORTED

THREE FILMS BY CHRIS KNOWLES

Welcome (1986, 10 mins.)

Refilmed TV shots which strobe slowly throughout. Dominant images where a cartoon demon and a metallica female wrestler with a blow torch - solarisation and close-ups added an eerie dimension which didn't appeal to me. Other images - dentist, newsreader, composer, foreign correspondent, Tutu, riots, a burning car, zealots bowing to Mecca, snippets of Excerpt (red sky, brown trees). A complex cyclic computer-based sound worked well in a decorative way. Influenced by Glass? An evolving film - not as spectacular as Excerpt or Cine-Melodie, nevertheless convincing.

Excerpt (1983, 8 mins.)

Rephotographed and home-processed. Cinematic use of 'White King'. Solarisation. Shadows go deep blue with amazing green pulses at instances. Blue skies turn red. People and trees go light brown.

Street scenes of Melbourne - city baths, RMIT, people walk dazed, powerlines, trees, suburbia. Like Cine-Melodie there's an atmosphere of imminent catastrophe.

The sound seemed to have three layers: (1) a levitating ethereal background sound, (2) a random, rhythmic portentous high-pitched sound, (3) obscure radio commentary (warnings?) The film worked brilliantly! Concludes with a very memorable scene where a street pole disappears in a sea of red - similar to Cine-Melodie's shot where children in a Housing Commission playground are engulfed by an inferno of white.

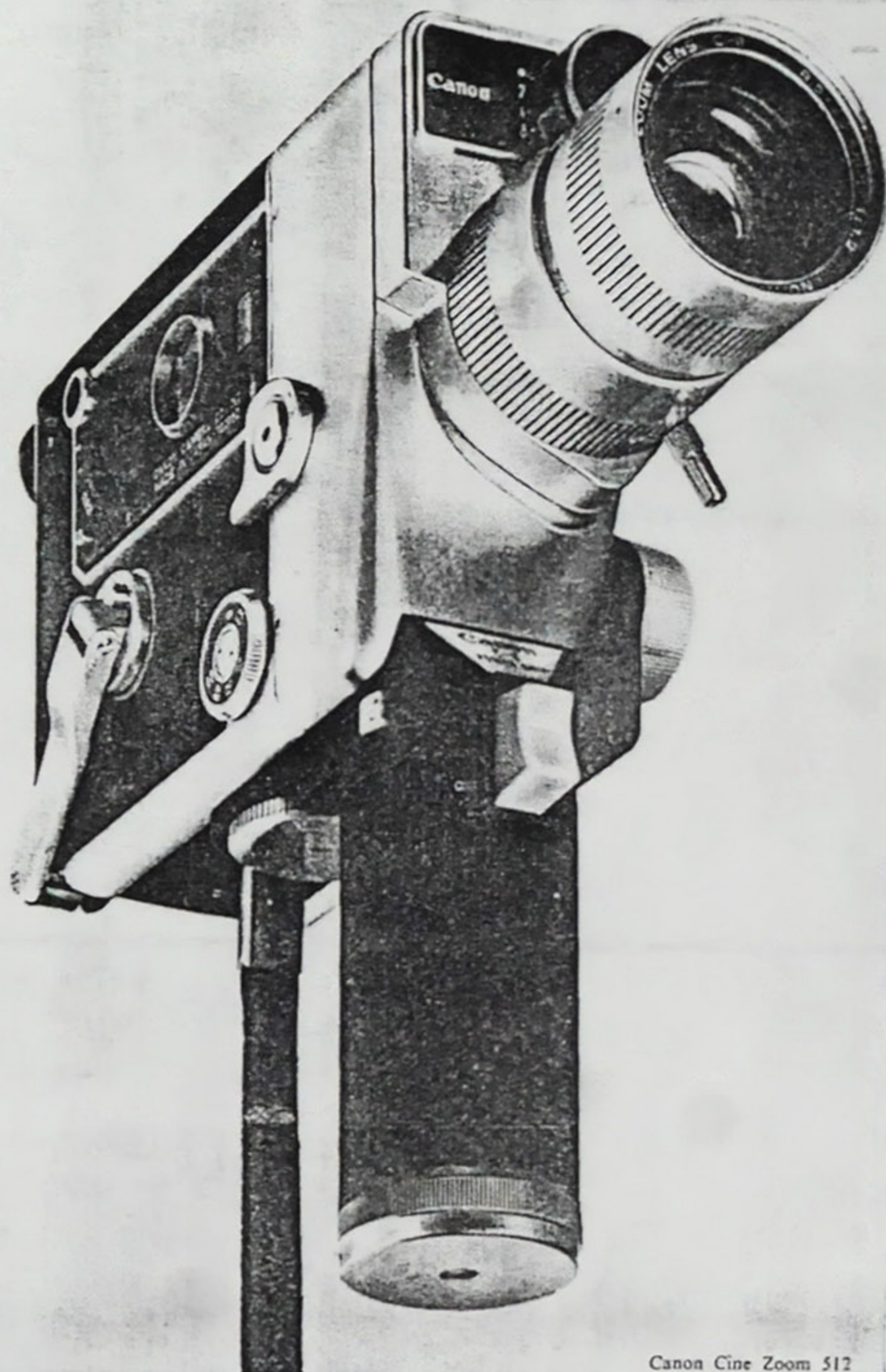
Cine-Melodie (1979, 25 mins.)

Wasn't shown at the Open Screening. I saw it five years ago - it's my favourite. Mainly filmed from the Fitzroy flats. Photography is beautiful - Exhibition Buildings at sunset, a bird in mid flight, spinning machinery. Some shots reminded me of Jeff Smart's paintings - ominous clouds and brightly lit foregrounds. Due to rephotographing however, colours diminish.

To me it's a silent film with the volume turned up since sound is neither dialogue, natural (ambient) or decorative (music). The brooding, heavy synthesizer sound is really the aural equivalent of the slow motion, swirling emulsion grain. Very structural. The loud sound also drowns any auditorium noise therefore allowing an exclusive concentration on the visuals.

It was made using an antediluvian standard 8mm. camera. It showed me what simplicity could achieve.

(Nick Ostrovskis)



Canon Cine Zoom 512

Are 16 mm movie cameras becoming obsolete?

When you see the many new features on the 8 mm Canon Cine Zoom 512 you'll think so. Consider the wide 8.5-42.5 mm zooming range of its F 1.2 standard lens. A tele-converter (optional) extends this range to 14-70 mm, while maintaining the same F stops. Now, sight and shoot, and you'll appreciate another feature on the Canon 512—single lens reflex viewing and focusing. See your subject *right through the lens*... at full brightness. To determine the aperture opening, just match two needles in the viewfinder. The EE system does everything else for you, automatically. More? The Canon 512 can produce such special effects as fade-in, fade-out and overlap, thanks to unique film rewinding and variable shutter control capabilities. Its extra-large crank-wound spring motor transports four meters of film with a single winding. And a power grip (optional) incorporates both shutter release and power zoom controls into a single, convenient unit to double the operating versatility of the Canon Cine Zoom 512.

Canon

SUPER EIGHT FESTIVAL

Work on the 2nd Melbourne Super 8 Festival is well underway. The Group has applied to the AFC for funding this year and there should be news about that in early July. Information and application forms have been sent around the country, and we already have a couple of entries from overseas. Now is the time to enter your film in the Festival. The deadline is July 17th, and you can either give your film(s) to one of us at the Open Screening or send it with full technical details and a short synopsis to:

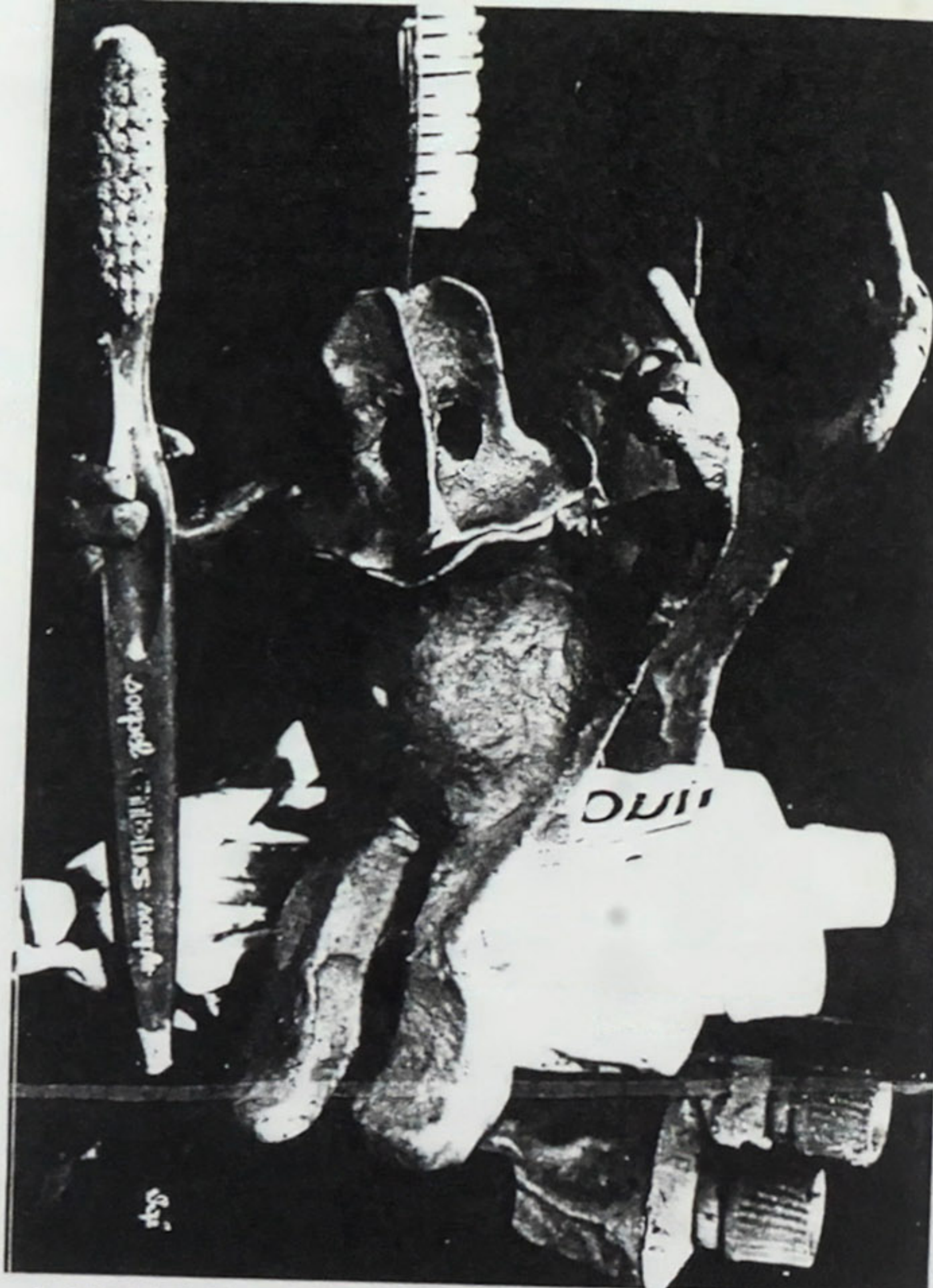
P.O. Box 1150
Richmond North
3121

OR for more information phone Anne-Marie(527 8496), Sarah(534 4344), or John(417 5193).

Stills from Belgian Festival Entries:

from Bogus by Ghislain Honore and Jacques Iezzi →

from Le Miroir Vivant by Norbert Barnich ↓



VIDEO COMPILATIONS

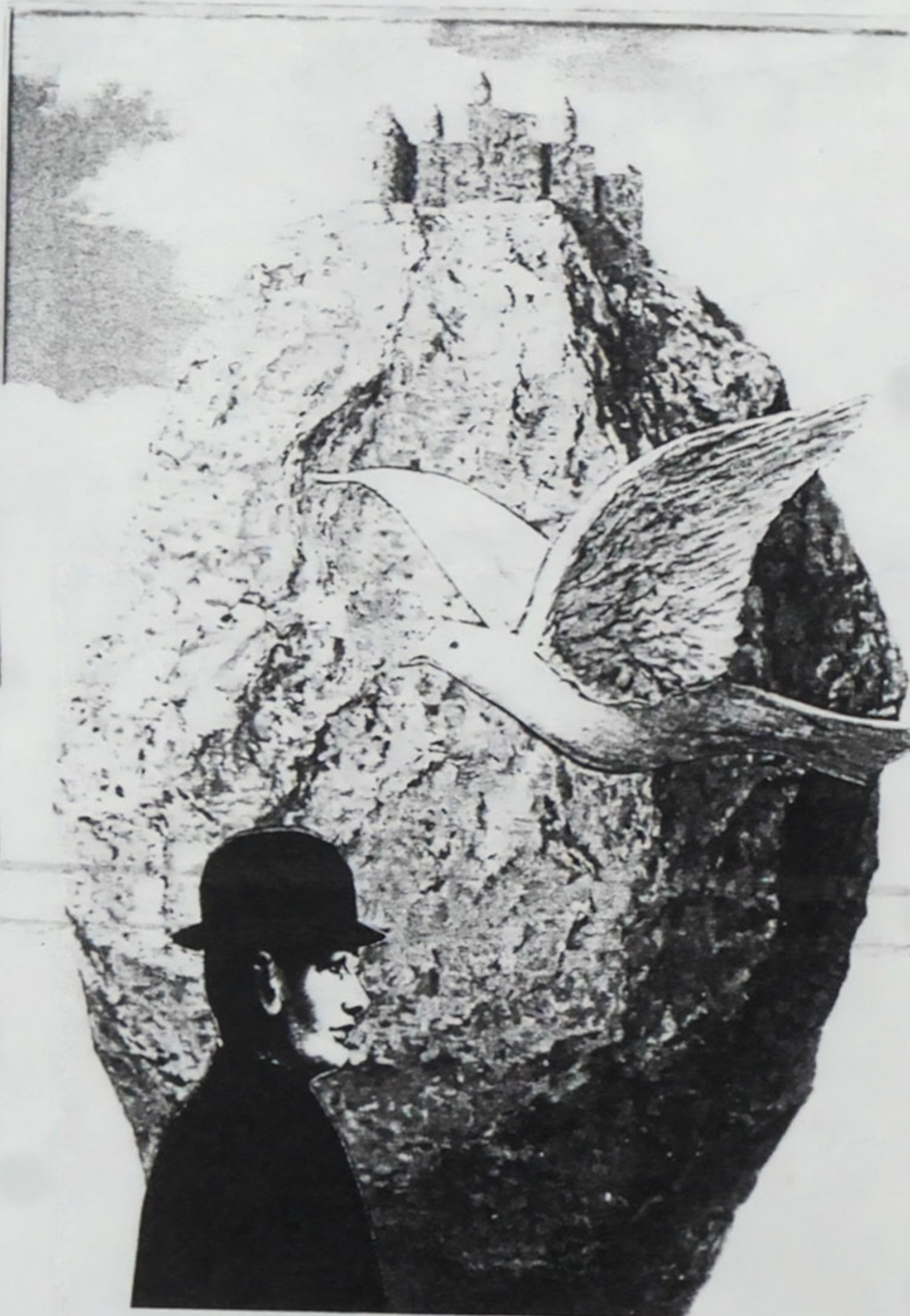
The first hour of the video compilation has been completed. We plan to make these transfers a regular thing as they will be useful in a few ways: for archival and reference purposes, and also to avoid excessive wear and tear on films needing to be previewed (for example in Sydney or maybe for TVU.)

If you would like to have your film included in the next transfer, talk to Matthew or Ron (or any of the others on the committee) at the Open Screenings or phone one of them. (Matthew: 489 4183, Ron: 798 1278).

The films included in the first transfer are:

NORMAL BIAS (Matthew Rees)
VISITING THE GREATEST FILMMAKER (Noel Lloyd)
CONTINENTALLY YOURS (Chris Van Der Craats)
MALADAPTION NO.3 (Peter Napier)
MIDNIGHT TRAIN TO KATHMANDU (Mehmet Raif)
THE THIRD STROKE (Ian Kerr & David Wood)
THE END OF THE WORLD (Bill Mousoulis)
THE SON AND THE HEIR (Piero Colli)
THE PERILS OF PAULA (Damien Grant/Peter Schuller)
MADE (Roland Gallois)
MUSTAPHA BANANA (David Cox et. al.)
UNTITLED (Rolando Caputo)
UNTITLED (Damien Grant)
MR. & MRS. TUMBLETUM TAKE A WALK
(Heather Shimmen)

If you would like to borrow a copy of the tape, also see or phone Matthew about that.



A SHORT WHINGE ABOUT EXPERIMENTAL FILMS

It seems very fashionable nowadays to denigrate and dismiss films with a flick of the wrist as too conventional or Hollywoodian, as if the only (or even most) desirable quality in a film is originality.

I don't really see what is so admirable about so called "originality", and being different for its own sake, if that is all that is achieved. Okay, I admit that originality and breaking new ground is desirable in that it makes films unpredictable and therefore more interesting, even exciting, to watch. But I believe that far too much emphasis is placed on it by many people at the expense of other highly desirable qualities. There is very little credit in achieving originality if the audience gets nothing more out of it than surprise.

Often, the only effect of making something totally original is to put the viewer in a position where he/she doesn't have a clue what is going to happen next; and I don't feel that this is a very great achievement because it is so easy to achieve. There are so many films shown at the Melb. SF Film Group screenings that can only be described as a long series of unrelated images. This is due to there being no common or recognisable thread running through the film or between the images, so to describe the film to someone who hasn't seen it becomes very difficult or even impossible. You have to see the whole film yourself to know what was in it.

I'm sure that some people would see this as indicative of some great achievement; that the audience "experiences" the sensations and visual and aural aspects of the film rather than just sits through it (or whatever they would describe happens with a conventional film). Well, I say "So what!" We are all constantly experiencing visual and aural sensations from things like the fridge and the washing machine, yet I'm sure that these would make boring subjects for a film.

Film is above all a method or means of communication. We make films and show them to people in order to communicate ideas or emotions. Although this may sound too dogmatic, and some people will doubtless dispute it and affirm that they are not interested in anything as arrogant or intellectual as "communication" when they make films, it is nevertheless the truth. You might prefer to say that you merely want people to "get something" out of your films, but I believe that this is just a more obscure, possibly more fashionable, way of saying "communication". You might be communicating anything from an emotion to an idea or even a story, but communication is without a doubt what is happening. (If you don't want people to "get something" out of your films then it sounds as if you're only making them as a form of therapy, and therefore you wouldn't really care if no one saw your films.)

No one who has made any mark in the history of cinema has totally ignored or scorned the conventions or language of film that preceded them. That is why these great filmmakers have made an impression; they used those conventions which were useful and succeeded, but also created and invented some new things of their own. The effect was that the audience could still comprehend what was being communicated but could also appreciate the new way in which it was achieved.

The style of film language associated with Hollywood may not seem very impressive because we have all grown up with it. We see it everyday on television and in the majority of cinemas, and because we are familiar with it, it is tempting to assume that it is so simple that anyone can do it. But this isn't true. It is a developed skill like any language and shouldn't be taken for granted (which is why I strongly disagree with Bill Mousoulis' offhand dismissal of "One Step Ahead" in these pages - last March).

If you start from scratch and create something totally original, the chances are that no one will understand it and you will have failed to communicate what you intended. The same applies to film language. If you want people to understand your films, or even just have an emotional reaction to them, you must build on the film language we have all grown up with. Otherwise, it is like writing a novel in a language that you have invented yourself.

This, however, does not mean we must make virtual copies of films that we have seen, and then change tiny details here and there to qualify it as an "original" film. I merely mean that you must make allowances for the language and conventions that people are used to, and ensure that your films are accessible.

For example, I admire many of Nick Ostrovski's films, yet I believe that several of them walk a fine line between fascination and tedium. What manages to anchor them to the former is that, at the very least, there is always a visual thread running through them; although they often flicker and pulsate like the worst experimental films, they also rely on constantly repeated images and shapes that allow the eye and brain

Ostrovski has almost invented his own film language, but I believe he has developed it from aspects of film that we are familiar with, such as the graphic match, and this allows us to assimilate and cope with the overabundance of imagery (My God, I'm starting to sound like Bill Mousoulis).

On the other hand, some two-minute experimental films I have seen have seemed to go on forever. They just flicker and pulsate continually; as if the only aim of the filmmaker is to induce an epileptic fit in as many members of the audience as possible.

The trouble with these films is that there is no thread which the mind can grab onto. If I see 4 completely different images on the screen every second for two minutes, I will most likely fall asleep rather than be fascinated, because they have not been on the screen long enough to register on my brain as either an emotion or an idea or anything. I suppose the filmmaker believes that the rhythm is important, or some sort of special achievement; but a refrigerator has a rhythm, and so does a washing machine, and you know what I think about them.

I'm sorry, but I just don't agree that rhythm plus colour plus movement, with a pop-music soundtrack necessarily equals an interesting film; and certainly doesn't equal unique, difficult, or special, cinematic achievement. Most of the time I feel that it's equivalent to having someone bang your head against a brick wall; it feels great when it stops.

So There!

Mill Bousoulis (alias Pen-Prick)



JULY PROGRAM

FRI 24TH, 9:30PM;

SAT 25TH, 5:30PM;

CAR AND THE CULTURAL ARTIFACT

INCLUDING a selection of film/
performance works from the
"Automania at the Drive Inn"
program.

AND John Cumming's film,
Obsession.

SUN 26TH, 7:30PM:

PETER TAMMER'S TRIPTYCH OF FILMS:

My Belle (1983)

Hey Marcel (1984)

Queen of the Night (1986)

A VIDEO BY PHILIP TYNDALL:

Someone Looks at Something

VENUE: State Film Theatre
MORE INFORMATION: 663 1953

* (also alias Ron Olthof)

REVIEWS

WELCOME by Chris Knowles
(screened at last Open Screening)

A plethora of fast-cut images united by their relation to an individual perception. The visible touch of home-processing enhances one's sense of the filmmaker's presence at the centre of this orbit of (mostly) TV images. The music, more directly 'expressive' than the visuals is also a thread drawing the images together. Welcome evokes a personal experience of the cultural environment.

EXERPT by Chris Knowles
(screened at the last Open Screening)

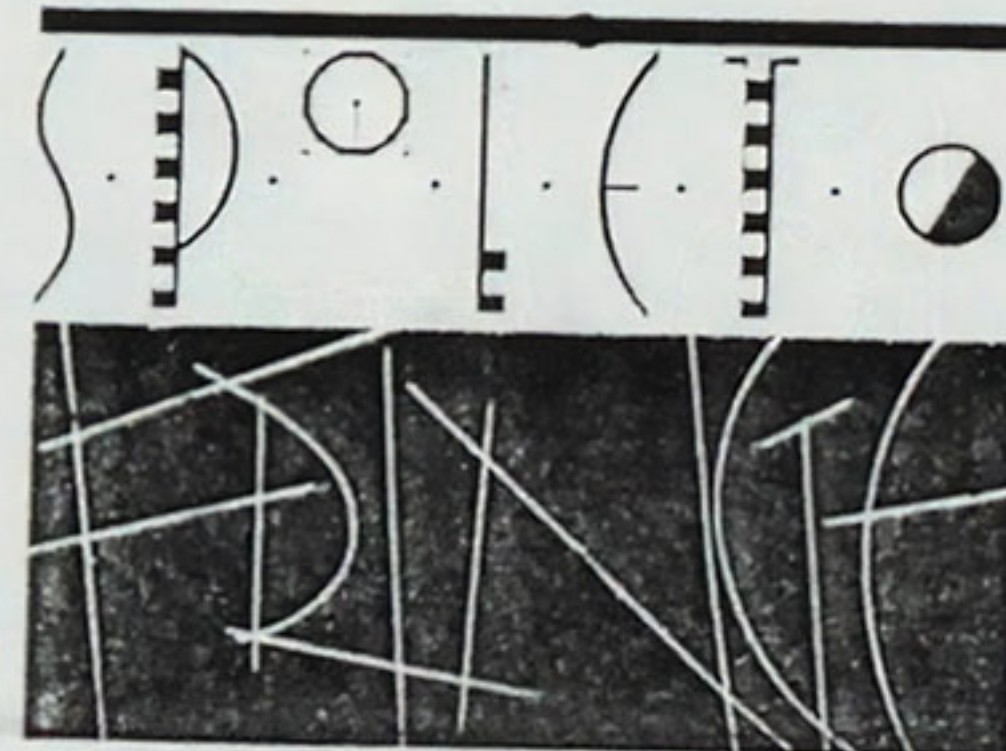
Ordinary images of people on a street, power lines and trees are imbued with an intense energy through brilliant home-processing. The swirling, solarized, grainy film surface contrasts with the image content suggesting a material world brimming with unseen energy. The shots of power lines join with the 'sci fi' voice to hint at possible themes concerning technology and harnessed energy. Mechanical musical rhythms suggest this too. Whilst, in counterpoint, the random pulses of the processing effects evoke a wilder, uncontrollable energy: the energy of Life itself?

THE HOCKEY PLAYER by Nick Ostrovskis
(screened at Melbourne Film Festival and the April Open Screening)

A film of breathtaking formal purity. Without introduction, and in silence, single frame, still, and slow motion images frenetically stream in superimposition onto the screen. The hypnotic flickering forms invite a trance-like state, whilst the single driving idea of the film is relentlessly sustained until the images finally disappear as suddenly as they arrived.

The single frame images fly past like the infinity of seemingly random mental images flowing through one's consciousness at any moment. The recurring still images of the filmmaker's father and family, and the slow motion recordings of everyday life, evoke a different plane of consciousness: that of memory perhaps. Grainy negative images, (one of which is a hockey player), also seem to suggest this. All these images are quite particular to the filmmaker's own life, yet the film is also very evocative of all of our pasts and presents. It is a sublimely distanced rendering of a personal state of consciousness.

This film, (along with all of Nick Ostrovskis' work), is silent, displaying the filmmaker's sole concern with the visual aspects of the medium. He seems particularly interested in the photographic properties of film - both aesthetic and formal. This is most simply apparent in his literal reproductions of slides, prints and negatives. His interest in the aesthetic quality of the photographic image is perhaps more evident in the intensely beautiful



film and video festival

The Spoleto Fringe Film and Video Festival is coming up in September. The closing date for the submitted works category is JULY 10TH. So if you want a film or video (any format) included, drop it in to the Fringe Office NOW (201 Brunswick St. Fitzroy) or phone 419 9549 for more details.

open screenings

Fringe also has Open Screenings on the first Wednesday of every month so:

BYO FILM OR VIDEO (ANY FORMAT)

GRIERSON CINEMA 7:30PM

1ST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH

INFORMATION: 419 9549

cityscapes of some of his other films, (Rialto and City By A River, for example), but is also an underlying aspect of The Hockey Player. The film's rapid successions of single frame images have the effect of emphasizing film's formal basis as a stream of single photos. It is at this point that one finds another essential element of the work: that of looking behind the illusionist qualities of the medium to expose and explore its more abstract possibilities.

The sequences of rapid-fire single frame images, for example, take to an extreme the kinetic properties of film. These same sequences also seem to inhibit the illusion of three dimensional space, exposing the film image's physical flatness. Some interesting perceptual complications also occur with the use of superimpositions. One may find oneself focussing, for example, on a sequence of single frame images, responding to the space and rhythm of that plane, whilst being only subliminally aware of the other superimposed slow motion images. Suddenly one's eye may be attracted by an image from the other plane, and one's concentration may be diverted into that other apparently three dimensional space of quite different rhythm. Finally one may

(cont. →)

REVIEWS (cont.)

find oneself visually detached from either plane, simply appreciating the combination of images as a series of abstract changing forms. In this way, the images seem to advance and recede and melt together, giving an interesting complexity to the film's spatial and rhythmic dynamics.

Chris Knowles spoke at the Open Screening about relying a great deal on intuition in his approach to his work. Nick Ostrovskis seems to be working in a similar way. In fact, I think there are a number of super 8 filmmakers working like this, (particularly here in Melbourne). Jo Hampton's Gold, Green, Black, Mehmet Raif's Midnight Train To Kathmandu, and Roland Gallois' Made are a few recent examples of this sort of autobiographically oriented abstract film. In all cases, there is an attempt at a direct communication between filmmaker and audience without the mediation of story or overwhelming idea. The making of such films seems to indicate a naive faith, or perhaps just hope or desire for the possibility of communicating moods and feelings; a "gestural wishfulness" for "...the transference of emotions, emotional states...(a) dream of collectiveness... (a hope that) the viewer engages in the same processes as exist in the film, in order to reach it: wonderment, openness, association, integration...".¹

Perhaps the smallness and lightness of super 8 make it suitable to such intimacy in approach. Economically the gauge is comparatively very accessible to this kind of work. Perhaps there is even something in the historical origins of the gauge as a home-movie medium that makes it sympathetic to the style. For it seems that, although this form of filmmaking probably has its roots in a largely 16mm tradition of 50's and 60's American avant garde, super 8 is a particularly suitable medium to use in this way.

(Anne-Marie Crawford)

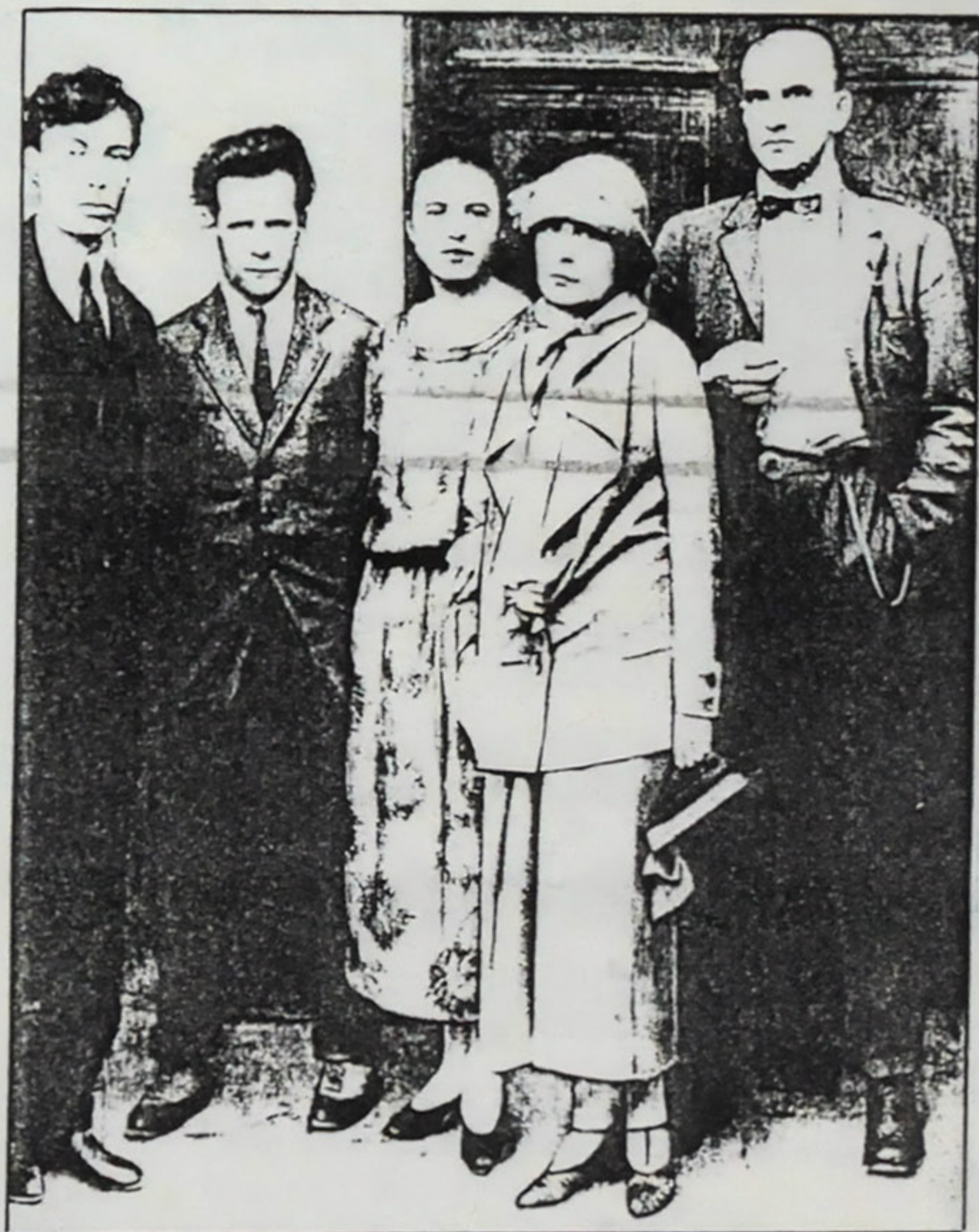
1. Bill Mousoulis, "Breathless Wonder", in Super 8 No. 13, May 1987.

FILM VIEWS

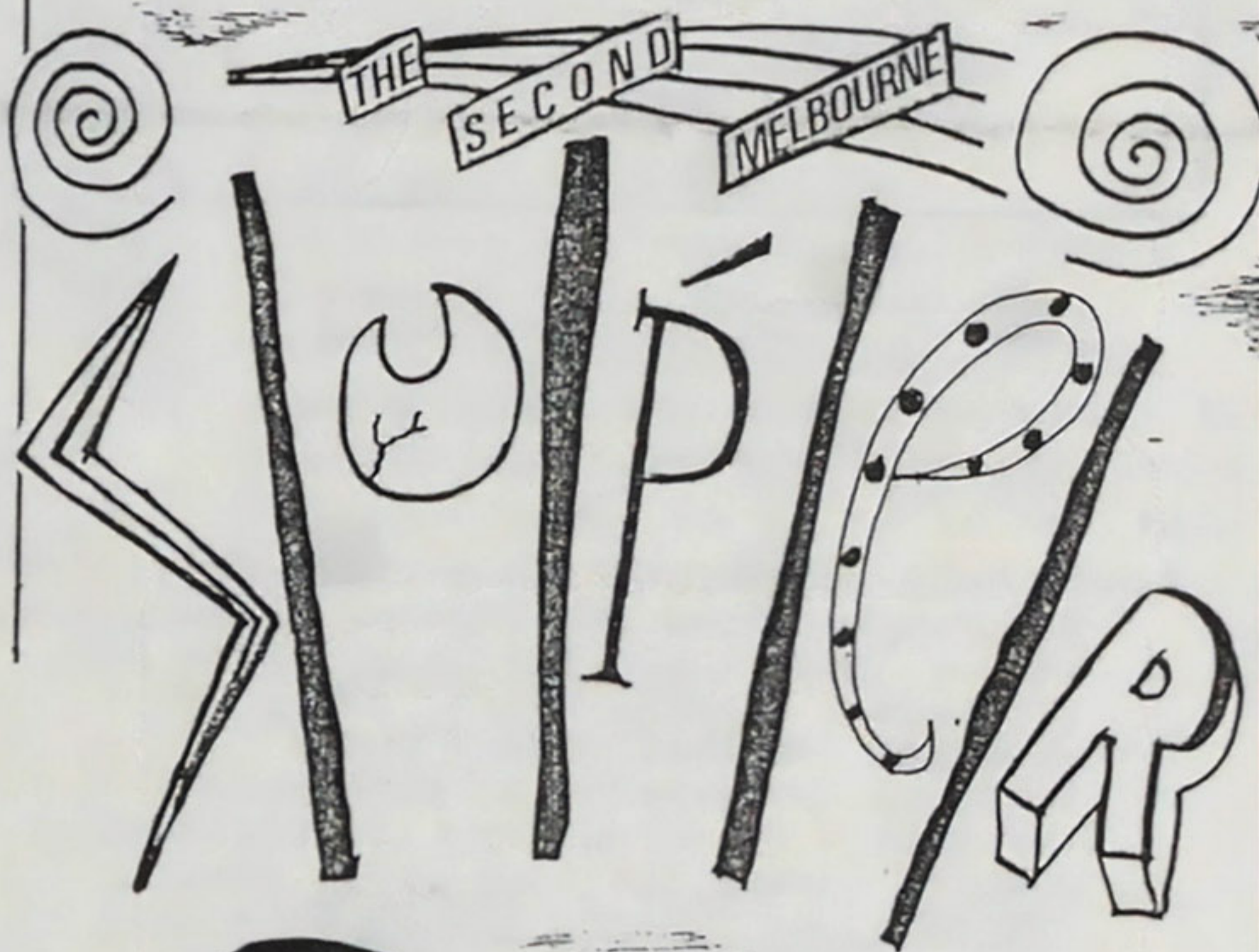
The winter issue of Filmviews is out now. Included is a review of the Metaphysical TV program of Sydney super 8 which was screened recently in Melbourne, and one of Sydney super 8 maker Stephen Cummins' Le Corps Image screened at the Melbourne Film Festival and also to be seen at B&H Galleries, 15 Mc. Killop St. from July 13th to August 3rd.

Filmviews has an ongoing commitment to publishing reviews and articles on super 8. If you are interested in writing for the magazine, contact Anne-Marie (527 8496) or Bill (419 6562).

P.S. You can get a copy of the mag at Mc.Gill's in the city.



DON'T FORGET TO SUBMIT
YOUR FILM FOR :



AUGUST 13-15 GLASSHOUSE CINEMA R. M. I. T.
FILMS WANTED (DEADLINE) JULY 17
MELBOURNE SUPER8 FILM
G R O U P WE LOVE YOU.

MEETING REPORTED

(cont. from front page)

THE FILMS AT THE LAST OPEN SCREENING WERE:

7:30 CHRIS KNOWLES

Welcome

Exerpt

8:30 OPEN SCREENING:

Untitled

(Maj Green)

Little Willie

(Alexander Vozarcic)

Boats in the Bay

(Nick Ostrovskis)

The White Tree

(Nick Ostrovskis)

Mustapha Banana

(David Cox/David Kaneen)

Best Man

(Steven Hope)

Fire By Night

(Michael Siu)

Arc I20

(Michael Siu)

REVIEWS (cont.)

CONGRATULATIONS GAZELLE HEAD

by Chris Windmill

screened at the Grierson Cinema

21st May 1987

(super 8 to video)

Chris Windmill's latest film Congratulations Gazelle Head can have many labels attached to it. These include surrealistic, absurdist, or satiric. The film's structure is nevertheless quite conservative. Chris is able to mix conventional skills of editing, dialogue, framing and a complex soundtrack to sustain a sense of mystery.

Congratulations Gazelle Head centres around strange forces within an up market clothes store - customer performing weird gestures, leaving mysteriously, a saleswoman's lack of bodily control, another's to explain to herself and to friends what is strangely transpiring.

What is of interest in this film is Chris Windmill's ability to integrate the film's visuals and soundtrack to its theme of unexplainable force. Rarely did my attention drop out of this film. Its laughter, though black, does not always draw attention to the film's surface - one that can be potentially close with the sound/editing problems common to super 8.

The film's careful direction maintains a degree of reality even when snifting to surreality. It covers up what is an understandable yet at times perceivable self-consciousness; one of a newly funded film-maker having to deal with the complexities of direction.

Although not a great film, Congratulations Gazelle Head is from a promising director insofar as it knows and points to an internality when it could have so easily, and one-dimensionally, measured satire only with satire, not sincere attempts to construct a number of levels.

(Darron Davies)

broom, (no, that's no good), he juggles a tin and an orange, (no help), he looks - just looks! - at a packet of snail killer. It's a great, wonderful scene. In the end Chief does get his imagination back and trots off to his friends.

Esther Haskell's film is above average due to several factors: the lack of causation in the events shown; the languid, non-narrative pace of the film; the displacement of the characters from any strict social context; and the refusal to valorize anyone or anything. All these things attest to the film's anti-determinist philosophy and dream-like essence - the film plays like a sad and beautiful dream, utterly changeable, yet utterly serene. And that's a rare feat for super 8, let alone a student work.

(Bill Mousoulis)

THE BEST IMAGINATION AROUND

by Esther Haskell

screened at Linden Audio Visual

Extravaganza

17th May 1987

Social function has always been a favoured theme for student film-makers (just check the repertoires of Swinburne, Rusden, etc.), and a catalyst for some pretty corny cliches: the freedom of punk versus the stasis of normality, the peaceful country versus the busy city, etc. The Best Imagination Around is a film from an RMIT student, and a good example of how a creative individual, whether intentionally or not, can play with and then transcend cliché and simplicity.

The film concerns itself with the story of Chief, a sublime jester-type who keeps his equally colourful friends in raptures with his stories of magical faraway red deserts (a curious land mysticism is developed here - this is a delightful surprise because the content of the scenario is punky and the mood frolicsome). Chief is then suddenly stopped in his tracks, his bright clothes change to ultra-straight dull ones, and his friends just don't want to know him. Sadly, Chief now no longer has the best imagination around. At home in his back yard, he tries in vain to make his imagination return, with a

BITS and PIECES

(FROM LUBI)

"THE CINEMA IMPLIES A TOTAL INVERSION OF VALUES, A COMPLETE UPHEAVAL OF OPTICS, OF PERSPECTIVE AND LOGIC. IT IS MORE EXCITING THAN PHOSPHOROUS, MORE CAPTIVATING THAN LOVE."



"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?"
-Robert Browning, poet.

"They might hate me on the set",
said William Wyler, "but they'll
love me at the premiere."

Arthur Penn on Bergman:
"Bergman's (Ingmar) willingness
to enter into what must be
enormously painful areas of his
life, again and again, in order to
understand them and find the truth
of them seems to me to be the very
essence of the poetic experience."

Jean-Luc Godard:
"We are the children of Marx and
Coca Cola."

"An actor is there to fulfill the
desire of the director", said
Joseph Von Sternberg.

"Thank God I'm an atheist!"
-Luis Bunuel.

Professional filmmaking does, usually
what it says -

It professes anal - (ly).

Who puts the 'super' in super 8?

You!

Baudelaire once had a suit made of
billiard cloth, said Picabia.

Exploit what is there.

Come to the super 8 group and use its
resources. Stop complaining and start
acting - if you don't like the way
it's run - say so. If you have any
ideas for future events - contribute.

If everyone brought one or two friends
to each meeting, we could expand.

MELBOURNE IS ONLY AS BORING
AS YOU MAKE IT!

Next Meeting

TUESDAY JULY 14th

A Temporary Change of Venue

Due to another booking in the meeting room, we will be in the Bistro, upstairs from the Glasshouse for this meeting

7:30 -DIRK DE BRUYN-

For those who aren't familiar with Dirk's work, he has been involved in (16mm) experimental filmmaking for many years. He will show a film and talk about a few things including his experiences overseas at the Ann Arbour and Montreal Festivals, and about the historical ties he believes super 8 filmmakers should be aware of.

8:30 BYO FILMS!!!

CONTACT NUMBERS FOR THE GROUP

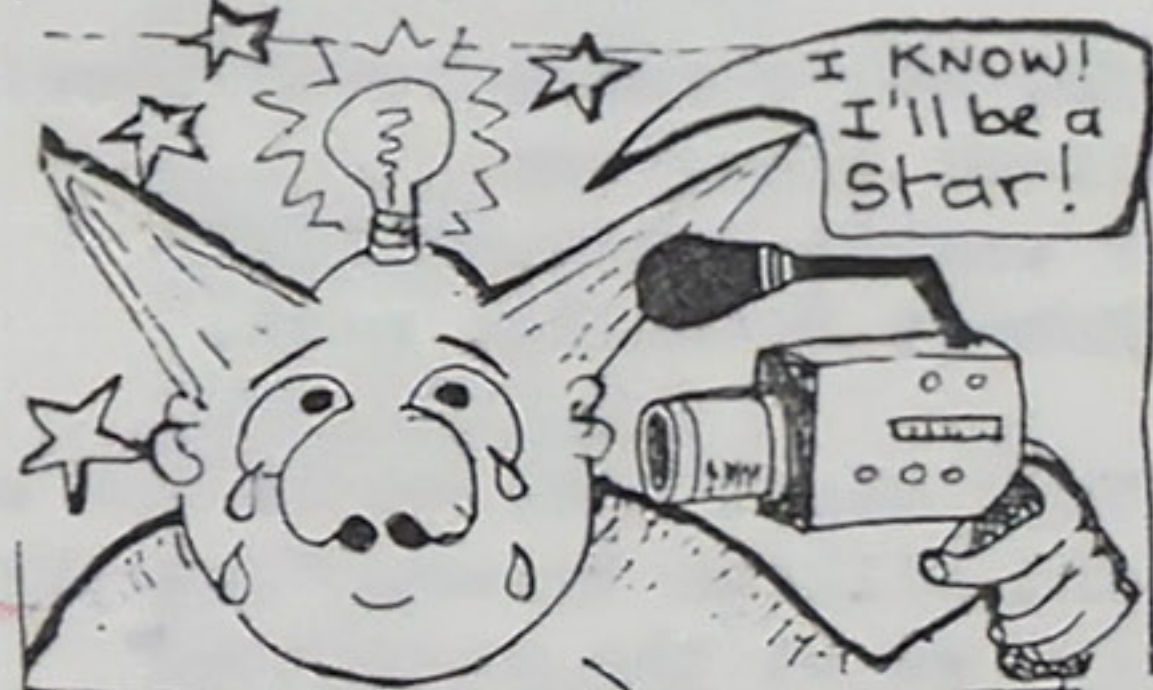
| | |
|---------------------|----------|
| Anne-Marie Crawford | 527 8496 |
| Sarah Johnson | 534 4344 |
| Ian Kerr | 859 1683 |
| Noel Lloyd | 481 5832 |
| Bill Mousoulis | 419 6562 |
| Ron Olthof | 798 1278 |
| Matthew Rees | 489 4183 |
| John Thomson | 417 5193 |

RESOURCE POOL

| | |
|------------------|-----------|
| Equipment & Crew | (Bill) |
| Actors | (Matthew) |
| General | (Sarah) |

1987 magazine

The Group's 1987 Magazine is on sale at every Open Screening and is also available at the RMIT Union Shop for \$2. For postal orders, send \$2.50 (the extra is for return postage) to:
P.O. Box 1150
Richmond North
3121



CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

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This newsletter is published monthly by the Melbourne Super-8 Film Group.

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SUPER EIGHT

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