

# SUPER EIGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM GROUP NO. 18 SEPT '87

## ONUS ON US

On August 11 the place of the groups regular monthly open screening was taken over by a screening/performance of David Cox's ambitious piece Onus on Us.

ONUS ON US by David Cox (approx. 90 mins.)

At best, I feel ambivalent towards this sprawling work. This ambivalence is an inevitable response to the film's own split nature - its mechanism is one of political critique revealing (and hence smothering) cinematic endeavour (especially its own.) In other words, I like what the film's saying, but not what it's doing.

Onus On Us, as its title suggests, takes and places the responsibility of the cinema upon us, politically (we must seize the means of communication and make films) and ideologically/semiotically (we must recognize and reject dominant cinema's signs and meanings.) A lot of the points the film makes are valid and necessary, but certain objections need to be made.

Firstly, Dave states in his commentary that mainstream films are "items for consumption". It is really only from a capitalist perspective, however, that such a view can be held. Every film has an economic context (even yours Dave) - so what? I guess Dave's point is tied-up with notions of passivity in film viewing. But that renders every commercial film worthless (not to mention what it does to the act of movie-watching) and some of the best films have been the commercial ones (the films of John Hughes and Steven Spielberg, for example.) John Cumming (in the coffee shop) may rave and wish everyone to "embrace looking", but surely it's all more than just a futurist manifesto? Hasn't it been going on for years and years?

Of course, I'm over-reacting ("ways of looking" at/in cinema should always be changing/improving) - it's just that blanket criticism inevitably results in blanket defense. Indeed, at its lowest, Onus On Us deserves a kind of utter contempt, or at least a huge dismissal. When, at the end of the interesting myriad of ideas and images, Dave pronounces "One solution - revolution", you know it's just a stupid cliché, a malformed stance. If you can't transform a negativity into a positivity, then forget it - it's all twisted.

Along the way to this conclusion (replete with other rhyming slogans too) however, there are some nice touches. The film is beautifully poetic in some places, and beautifully natural in others (Sarah and Jo just walking down the

street is one of my favourites.) Then there's that whole idea of "looking" that John Cumming alludes to, and that Dave Cox pursues - "In my car I can view the world as it appears to be" (the egotist triumph of this is a bit worrying, though.)

All in all, I wish Dave would (and this is my advice to everyone) leave the big picture alone, look at the small things (he says "All of life is somehow cinematic", but doesn't follow that through) and create his own dreams, moves, movies (rather than criticising everyone else's.) In Raising Arizona (just another mass product, I hear), Nicolas Cage says "It's a hard world for small things" - surely these small things are worth fighting for. Right, comrades?

(Bill Mousoulis)

Post-mortem

THE SECOND  
SUPER-8  
FILM FESTIVAL

See P.4  
for reviews

AUGUST FOR  
GLASGOW 527 8442/531

### CONTENTS

- p.1-2: David Cox and Onus on Us
- p.4-6: Film Festival Reviews
- p.7: Some Films You Didn't See
- p.8: Mainstream Film of the Month
- p.9: More on a Political Super 8



# SLOW TRAIN COMING

David Cox's recent article "Toward a Political Super-8" not only runs the risk of sounding idealistic, romantic and seductive, it also questionably blazes a trail for itself amongst the trivialized ruins of what is seen to be contemporary cinema. As if forging an identity for itself - a saviour that rises out of the ruins - such an alternative cinema practice fails to recognize the richness and complexity within commercial cinema. It fails to acknowledge a relationship to other cinema practices and states its independence like an angry offspring.

In his article David Cox proposes that mainstream film is "bourgeois." This is a cunning device. It attacks the reader with a supposedly all knowing "fact"; one that only exists because of its non-reflexive appeals to reinforcement. This form of arguing dangerously works upon a theoretical basis that is seen to be historically worked and therefore all powerful. My criticisms are seen to be coming. I will be categorised as "bourgeois." Myself, commercial narrative film and many other factors are defined. Within a political ideal that sees commercial cinema as already defined David Cox rushes towards a utopian vision by-passing all the complexities of so called "bourgeois" cinema. Contemporary cinema - or any other non-individualistic cinema - is burnt to ashes during the journey. It is only within this burnt, supposedly newly fertile space that a political Super-8 can stake its claim.

With his pseudo theory moving more towards a belief, lived and reinforced, narrative film is emptied of richness. Gone are: the development and internal changes within genres, the complex link between acting/sexual/societal roles, inconsistencies between private desires and social/moral responsibilities, etc. David's alternative film practice naively rejects the long aesthetic and sociological nature of commercial cinema. Film is framed and an egotistical space for personal expression is made. The many types of film practices, their histories before, with or without us, and after us, are romantically dismissed.

David Cox seems only able to define Super-8 in terms of a pseudo-political potential. It can only find an identity in terms of a repressive formalism (simple use, home movie feel) The relationship between a "political Super-8" and its audience even, and ironically, becomes a prostituted version of a much richer and far more complex engagement within narrative cinema. Cox implicitly believes that the audience can be manipulated. With what is a laughable misreading of cinematic viewing Cox sees the laughs or concentration of the audience as politically identifying or educational. Cause becomes effect becomes action/reaction. This relationship, nevertheless, appears to be more of one that is laughed at.

Films such as Onus On Us or even Savage's Squatters, like numerous independent films, do not necessarily make jokes or comments on society or the audience. Instead they backfire on the film-maker who sees himself/herself to be directing a presumably dumb and repressed audience into potential political action. These romantic gestures are more mapped than the personalities within the audience.

It is David Cox's gestures during his films - "speak up if you want to" - which clearly demonstrate his attitude to the audience. The audience are seen to be in an unthinking void. Verbal expression and not thought itself is seen as a saviour. (Please accept David that I think during your films. So does everyone else. I am not in a void and my desire to not call out during a screening is not because of some bourgeois hypnosis. Instead like others I am basically thinking, intently trying to understand film: before words.)

We should be asking such questions as "What is narrative cinema?", "What are its faults and riches?", "How does Super-8 exist in relation to it?" These are the sorts of questions that I am sure film-makers such as Napier and Mousoulis try to address at the same time as recognizing the complex changes within the not easily defined, numerous Super-8 and 16mm practices. Furthermore they are intent to recognize and explore a variety of filmic techniques and philosophies.

It is about time that more criticism was levelled towards certain Super-8 practices. Not only David Cox, but I think a number of alternative film-makers see themselves as individualistic and therefore politically opposed to the mainstream. Wrapping their ideas within rhetorical and illogical over-estimations of effect and "the norm", as if rejecting English language - its complexities, history and changes, not to mention its continuation after us - some alternative film-makers speak only in the words that are understandable within the syntactic meanings of English. They are not as radical as they believe. Editing, framing, mise-en-scene, narration, etc, are still adhered to. The establishment, expression and reinforcements of identities refer to the mapping of some long lost or utopian landscape, not to mention the quality of the map.

A truly political Super-8 takes into consideration filmic meanings and their histories. Film-makers like David Cox are intent to map a journey - toward a political Super-8 - one that is unplanned and without scale. Dave Cox's journey has not really begun. Others have greater more systematic journeys. His train has not really left the platform. Its passengers are too busy arguing over the journey, the train driver, what engine to use, when it will leave, the size of the gauge.



58



# RIOTS ROCK CITY CENTRE



FILM GROUP

HELBORNE SUPER-8

# WALLED CITY

PREMIERE  
 An INVITATION to the Cast and Crew and Super-8  
 Film Group members and friends...

SAT NIGHT 10th OCT  
 films start 8:30

VMNC Hall, 2 Napier St, Fitzroy  
 Admission FREE, but please bring something for  
 the PARTY !!! RSVP to John 429 5473

Sponsored by HAZCHEM and STATESLOTTO.

7. Super-8  
 1. It's only for the purpose of...  
 2. M. Williams...  
 3. In what...  
 4. 'Safe state...'  
 5. 'Fore Ign...'  
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# FILM FESTIVAL

For three days last month the Melbourne Super-8 Group left its usual confines of the Glasshouse Meeting Room and instead took over The Glasshouse proper for three nights of "Superating".

As well, this event was to be the first time the group had received funding for its activities - a grant of 1300 dollars came through from the Australian Film Commission to help with the festival costs. Thirty-eight films made up the screenings, mostly from Australia but a healthy number of films from overseas were included as well. An unprecedented number of members and visitors have put pen to paper to record their thought on the festival, so without further adue lets get on with it.

In case you missed the festival completely here is what was shown.

Thurs. 13 August:

Forever Can Start Tomorrow. - Michael Hutak  
Danki. - Yoshio Fukuma  
All Those Hours in the Paddyfields. - Candy Guard  
Gumsmere. - Ljubica Tomic  
TV Reporter. - Ian Haig  
Congratulations Gazellehead. - Chris Windmill  
Le Corps Image. - Stephen Cummins  
Dualogie. - Manuel Gomez  
Nights of our Lives. - Kim Sansaveni  
Robin's Mouth. - Fiona Trigg  
Faith. - Bill Mousoulis

Fri. 14 August:

City by a River. - Nick Ostrovskis  
Mr and Mrs Tumbletum take a Walk. - Heather Shiman  
Proposition 15. - Damian Cox  
Jailers Eye. - Mehmet Raif  
Queensland Junk Culture. - Drew Waters  
Autoportrait. - Simon Cooper  
Green, Gold, Black. - Joanne Hampton  
Seven Impossible images. - Robert Malengreau  
Hotel Imperial. - John Campetelli  
Untitled. - Damian Grant  
Perils of Paula. - Damian Grant  
Nobodies Home. - Denise Lloyd  
Best Man. - Ian Eccles-Smith  
Bigger than Life. - Ian Haig



Sat. 15 August:

The Living Mirror - Norbert Barnich  
Maladaption Number Four - Peter Napier  
Polka Fox - Hannelore Kover and Jonnie Dobeles  
It's All True - The Marine Biologists  
Calanture - Anne Rutherford  
Final Cut - Matthias Muller  
Morena - Anne-Marie Crawford  
Do It - James Mavor  
Consumer Society - Mark Freeman  
Made - Roland Gallois  
Vision - Stephen Mc Clould  
Fat Man - Mag Green  
The Bowell Houndromat - Chris Windmill

from Simon Cooper:

Well, Ian Kerr asked me to write something for the newsletter before I left Melbourne. So here are some thoughts on the Festival, the kind of thoughts that occur the day after. Overall, I could say the Festival was quite good, the venue a little dubious, and the forum entirely dubious. Basically though, I'd like to mention some of the concerns of Super-8 that cropped up in discussions.

There were complaints of the pacing or editing in the films which I feel are misguided (and also relate to the question of video) - the films often seem slow, but in fact they are too fast, with no use of cinematic time or space such as establishing shots, atmosphere, inter-cutting (i.e. building up a scene, creating a tension, etc.) and other elements of structure. They just flow on from A to B, which seems to me an approach derived from TV rather than film, particularly News or Pop Clips or Ads. So there shouldn't really be too many worries about Video 8, surely? The problem of Super-8, to me, lies in this lack of montage skills. When people talk of editing only in terms of post-production or shortening films, there's something missing. And Festivals always highlight the fact that a 3 to 6 minute film can be "slower" than a 15 to 20 minute one, for those very reasons.

Indeed, festivals highlight too many weaknesses. The programming of films can make a big difference - many people seeing films for the second time saw them quite differently to the first time (I found this with Danki, having just seen it for the third time and never liking it till now.) In Sydney, thematic screenings are more the norm these days, as they give films a much easier time (and the audience too, who don't have to keep guessing what type of film might be on next.) The more appealing films at festivals tend to be the comedies (All Those Hours in the Paddy Fields, Do It, Nights of our Lives, The Bowel-Houndromat, parts of The Fat Man and Best Man), and the more elegant of the structural, seductive, aesthetic, or transcendental ones (favourites vary with these, mine were Danki, Morena, City By a River.) Longer narrative films, if successful, can go well (Congratulations Gazelle-Head, Faith) - my favourite, and for me the most pleasant surprise of the Festival, was Nobody's Home which used episodic structure and the immediacy of Super-8 to good effect. It also had an easy naturalness in performance which wasn't there in other films (not consistently anyway.) Notably, like Faith, it had little dialogue - composed dialogue scenes in Super-8 always seem too mannered. That's my view anyway. I know a lot of people didn't like Nobody's Home. I also tend to like films about memory - I rather enjoyed the "home movie"ish look and feel of the first half of the Friday programme (on the subject of Friday - it seems even Super-8 films are starting to repeat: Queensland Junk Culture was a bit too much like Big Things.) And Robin's Mouth I liked.

In criticism, I'd like to say that "lovers of platform things" might have liked quite a number of the films apart from Seven Impossible Images. Using old forms can make films seem old and overly tedious (apart from the fact that these forms have been worn out years ago, as various Sydney forum members wanted to emphasise) I don't think you can deny that films like Do It or Forever Can Start Tomorrow seem much livelier, concise, and, all in all, more interesting than, say, Vision, Consumer Society, TV Reporter, or Made. Irony isn't the same as cynicism either, as a lot of people seem to think. Often it's a bit of a pose, but at its best Super-8 does it well. Super-8 doesn't make for good forums, though - I felt like I was, in spirit, in the middle of All Those Hours in the Paddy Fields. \*

# Unto a Greasy Pig

John Calder

Some "Experimental Films" in the Super-8 Festival

I find the average film of the "experimental" genre like unto a greasy pig. I have a general dislike of such a beast, but it's hard to grab it and pin it down for critical examination. The idea of a liberating escape from conventional film form is very attractive, but I wonder how many film-makers are using that as an excuse to liberate themselves from working hard at crafting their films?

I know myself that I have a dangerous tendency to over-rate my work - I get too close to it and cannot judge its worth clearly. It is a very natural, human, egotistical, way to be. And that's with a Super-8 approach where I use relatively conventional film form as a carrier for unusual or minority-interest ideas, so I'm wide open to comparison, criticism, and learning the hard way. But can the experimental film-makers amongst us develop and grow in the absence of yardsticks, and in a field where so little feedback is happening? When I talk to such film-makers, their arguments are beautifully glib, or even condescending. I only wish I could admire the films as much as the arguments, defences and philosophies surrounding them.

Occasionally I am struck by some very imaginative and stimulating experimental work, but most of my viewing is a dreaded chore, a boring grind I undergo for the sake of lending my support and encouragement to the Super-8 Movement. And far too much of this year's festival was like that for me!

One of the bright moments does, however, stand out.

ROBIN'S MOUTH by Fiona Trigg used many of the oft-repeated experimental images - especially the one where a rephotographed Super-8 image gives an effect of distance in time and perception. But Trigg has CRAFTED these around the centre of a tiny personal incident, and makes one little part speak volumes about the whole. This film uses the unique properties of Super-8 as advantages and it explains itself to the audience with a lucid narration, subtly backed-up by intelligent and witty choice and editing of image. A gem - and a yardstick for comparison. At last I get a handle on some of those greasy pigs!

AUTO PORTRAIT by Simon Cooper is the first pig. It should have everything going for it. Similar approach to ROBIN'S MOUTH but instead of one tiny incident, Cooper has structured this around his entire life story! Concern therefore for poor Simon when the camera starts wandering around in circles.

JAILER'S EYE by Mehmet Raif. As an admirer of other Raif work, even experimental(!), I was disappointed by this. The video-quality image gave a bleak other-worldliness to this essay in fear, haunted looks, pursuit and death, but the novelty wore off quickly as JAILER'S EYE got very repetitively into territory long since lost to commercial TV. A strange mixture of experimental and conventional, which could well be more effective if it had another level of comment-on or play-with that contrast.

GREEN, GOLD, BLACK by Joanne Hampton consists of the usual cliché shots of found footage glimpsed darkly through a viewer and thrown together in a meaningless mish-mash. I would almost give it my greasiest pig award, but that honour goes to...

GUMSMERE by Ljubica Tomic. I don't class this as even an experimental film, merely a sham and a rip-off made on the basis that anything incomprehensible enough may get mistaken as art. Tomic's method of generating meaningless rubbish is to load b/w film, attach a fish-eye lens, and wave the thing around in front of a TV monitor. Purely formula, no effort, no originality, no work done and no effect gained.



HOTEL IMPERIAL by John Campetelli. You can at least look at this pig without getting sore eyes. But a few city images taken in b/w from the street are just not enough. Too easy, and Campetelli gives me nothing I can't and don't do much better with my own eyes as I walk. A nothing film.

MORENA by Anne-Marie Crawford. Little or nothing is given to this poor seeker after truth, of devices or even clues to point to the "thread to connect diverse experiences and suggest something essential that exists beneath the surface of things". This quote from MORENA's programme note better applies to ROBIN'S MOUTH where a surface sketched so much more deftly points more effectively to that "thread". I suspect that MORENA may well have a structure or linking theme, but one locked up too tightly in Crawford's mind and not enough of it given to the audience.

ONUS ON US by David Cox. This bloated pig is a sad come-down from previous Cox performance-art pieces. Images appear to be included on the flimsiest of pretexts so as to pad out the length to 90 minutes!! ONUS has little or nothing of the parallel lines of image, theme, idea that I have admired in Cox's earlier performances. The only bright moments are thanks to Sarah Johnson whose devastatingly normal behaviour in a silly filmed discussion leaves the on-screen Cox literally gasping.

I feel that this year's festival has given us a less stimulating and exciting programme than in 1986, and I note too that audience numbers did not grow over the 3 nights to last year's level. My theory: too many experimental greasy pigs.

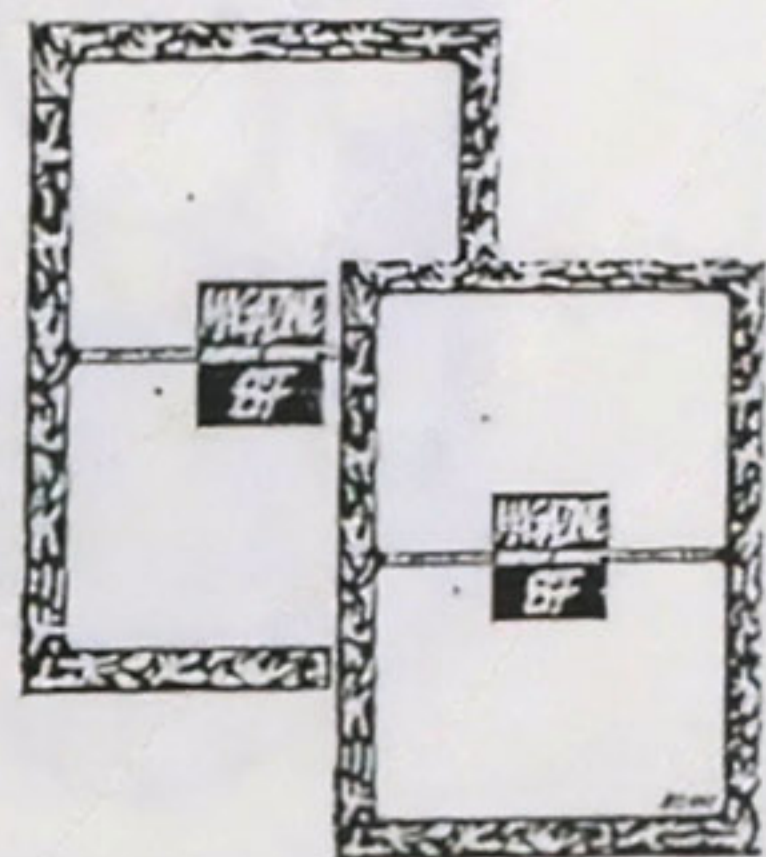
I remember the children's story of "The Emperor's New Clothes" where "swindlers" sold the Emperor thin air on the grounds that only intelligent and aware people could see "these clothes". No one dared argue or protest. Are we getting an "Emperor's New Clothes syndrome" with experimental film? Are these films really pigs in emperor's clothing? Am I the only one who feels reluctant to criticise what I don't like? And is it too much to ask the experimental film-makers to put some WORK (oh that dirty word!) into giving something of their creative talent to their audiences?

1987 MAGAZINE

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~~\$1.50~~

~~\$1.00~~  
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Discussion in Super 8 circles has sometimes addressed the issue that we "ghettoise" ourselves by grouping our films for screening purely on the basis that they've been made in Super 8, with nothing else in common. (The old argument being that the Melbourne Film Festival is not called the Melbourne 35mm Film Festival.)

Animated cinema suffers from a similar effect of haphazard grouping. Most animated films have nothing in common aside from the fact that they are made a frame at a time. And in fact the five animated films shown at the festival explore very different areas of physical production and final effect.

The Belgium film The Living Mirror (Norbert Barnich) was probably the one I found the most interesting. The film maker has made an exploration of the paintings of the surrealist artist Rene Magritte, using not only animation techniques but dissolves and double exposures as well. Although some of the cut out animation is quite crude some of the other effects, combined with a haunting soundtrack made for occasional moments of true poetic wonder.

Another Belgium film was Dualogie (Manuel Gomez), which started with a pixilated sequence of an animated face (presumably the filmmakers) caught in various strange expressions. From here it moved on to a mixed bag of animation ideas, the details of which have unfortunately slipped my mind but which I remember liking at the time. (One of the problems of non-narrative is having nothing to hang your memories on.)

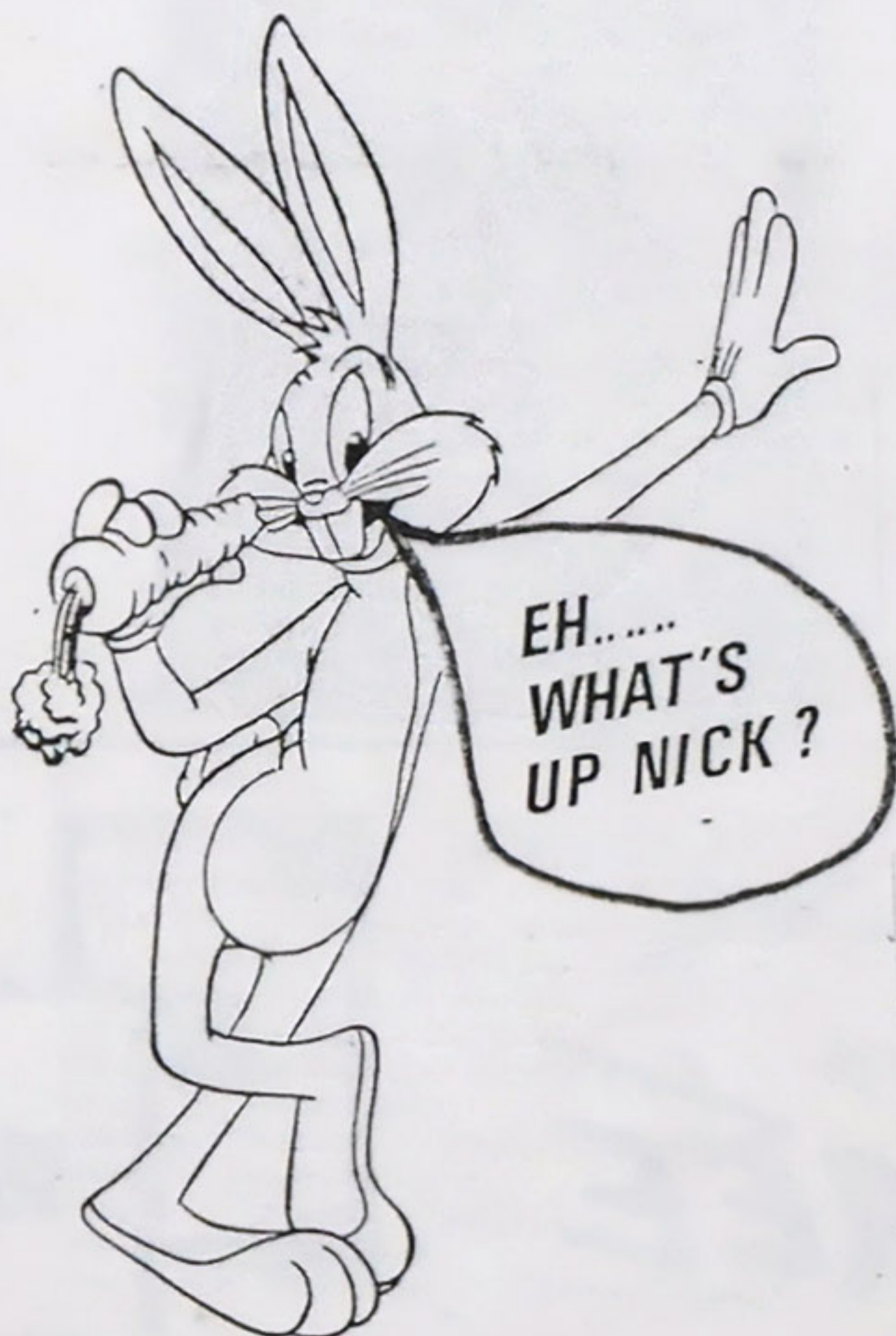
Nights of our Lives (Kim Sansaveni) starts with a quite well executed cell animation scene of a couple of punks out for a drive. Amusing voices make this sequence reasonably funny. (It includes a technicolour yawn out the side of the car). Later the film moves into animation of 3 dimensional objects. A G.I. Joe type figure whinges hysterically about his dole bludging neighbour upstairs. Said dole bludger eventually sends a robot down to pay a visit and disintergrate G.I. Joe. This sequence got a few laughs from the festival audience, and it was certainly better than some efforts I've seen utilizing plastic figures.

City by a River (Nick Ostrovskis) is a completely different type of film to the others. It uses time lapse animation of views from Nick's 16th floor city workplace. Compressing time this way makes for unique images possible in no medium other than frame by frame photography.

This after all is the reason people animate. To show us things impossible in the real world. This is the true magic of Bugs Bunny and all the others - making the unreal viewable.

The weakest animation of the festival was in Mr and Mrs Tumbletum take a Walk (Heather Shiman), a pointless film in which anything lying around the house has been dumped on a table and pushed around in front of a cardboard backdrop. A random collection of plastic horses, chess pieces, candles, cut-outs and so on. Boring. Boring.

IAN KERR \*



from Mark La Rosa:

To film a life. No - to film LIFE.  
to wake up beat, yet reach for a camera.  
to walk the streets in a vain search.  
to realize emotions reside in people, not places.  
to survey the past and find an emptiness (and admit it).  
to experience the flux and call it "complexity".  
to appreciate the allusiveness of things.  
to know not always to try to know.  
to expose the limit of sight, and  
to go on to show us invisible things.  
to speak for silence.  
to acknowledge the futility of planning, and still laugh  
and finally,  
to communicate it all to others.

I think Simon Cooper has done and this and more in Auto-Portrait.

from Chris Windmill:

The passing of the 2nd Melbourne Super-8 Film Festival leaves me feeling bewildered. In 6 hours of screen time I've visited 40 different planets, from the inspired Beatnik London of Do It to the insipid world of 70's pretence of Seven Impossible Images. My favourite film remains strongly etched in my memory: Candy Guard's fastidious portrait of a mind driven to disarray by boredom, All Those Hours in the Paddy Fields, is a film I've wanted to make for the last one hundred years.

Ian Haig's TV Reporter is another film relying on incisive commentary. It delivers a humorous diatribe analysing television's omnipresent ear-bashers.

Other films spoke while scarcely invoking a word. Bill Mousoulis' Faith is a gripping, austere depiction of a couple moving mechanically from point to point as if under the spell of predestination.

Nick Ostrovskis' City by a River compresses the city into rhythms and textures of weather and light. Stephen Cummins' Le Corps Image is a magic choreographic merging of flesh camouflaged by ambiguous projections of image.

Polka Fox, Nights of our Lives, Forever Can Start Tomorrow, It's All True, Robin's Mouth, Vision, Morena, and The Fat Man all deserve extensive comment. But I suppose it is more important to generalize about some emerging trends the festival illustrates and to compare it to last year's festival. Regrettably, dearly beloved, it is past my bed time, so I hope someone else undertakes this impossible duty. \*

from Vikki Riley:

SEVEN IMPOSSIBLE IMAGES, SEVEN RIDICULOUS SCENARIOS

Interesting, after seeing this major aberration of "responsible" Super-8 film-making, to look back on the program notes and reflect on the audience response this film received (i.e. laughter in the contagious, mocking sense.) And without premusing too much, it would appear that its cynical (non) appeal lies in the simple fact that this film is a cultural relic (and apparently an irksome one) of pre-Super-8 history as we here in Melbourne know it, and in the broader spectrum, a nasty reminder of values our supposed modern age of liberalism and obsessions with zeitgests has supposedly overcome, revised, redressed. Hence the current vogue and fascination with all things seventies in all the arts, especially rock music, which reinvents the seventies minus the "me" focus but compensates with large doses of the "shared experience" (great populist example here is Bon Jovi.) In the realm of film-making though its certainly not a big issue, as structuralism and "deconstruction" of narrative codes (which is what I recall, or more rightly have learnt to associate with any notion of bundling together "seventies" cinema in the avant garde sense) has more or less disappeared, along with a utopian land of radico/femino/politico practice, and mutated into diverse and bizarre and very "me" generation personal manifestoes (The Marine Biologists, the "texts" of David Cox, Michael Hutak.)

This probably doesn't have much to do with Seven Impossible Images if you saw it, like I did, out of the context of a Super-8 film festival, because for me, its intensity and bravado (remember it was made in '79, not '75, and I think even then, to contemplate "sexuality" meant a bit more than displaying a couple of pretty naked boys titillating each other in the privacy of a bedroom) is nonetheless inspiring and leaves no bones to pick about its effectiveness (unlike the many "experimental" epics: Calanture, Final Cut, Gumsmere which whose exit points lead to nowhere). Despite that too, its a well made film, the style changing vaguely throughout in accordance to the famous stylists it touts as its inspiration (Hockney, Pasolini et al.) and the first Impossible Image, is indeed impossible, a montage of no less than six or seven periods of war history, with the very last stills being that of the hijacking of Somoza's palace led by a team of female Sandinistas just prior to the overthrow of the dictatorship in Nicaragua. Sure it's a corny and universal message being translated here about the horrors of war as indictments against the individual, but only corny through the caustic eyes of hindsight, and in any case a complex message which sublimely celebrates resistance, terrorism. As for the subsequent Impossible Images, they appear as kind of lost segments of forgotten "real" seventies art films, the Bath image the best example, all erotic message and slow fuck technique which, in a "real" film might be followed by an argument in the kitchen over possessiveness and lost freedoms or careers. Other Images, such as the Hockney tribute, is nothing more than a tribute to a trite artist and as for the final Image, well it looks like this is the Godard homage - kill your characters (or in this case the humans) and introduce the final element crucial to the whole plan - life goes by, no-one gives a fuck anyway. Now that's a real relic of an idea isn't it? \*

## SOME FILMS YOU DIDN'T SEE

The selection panel considered approximately sixty films for inclusion in the Second Melbourne Super 8 Festival, of these 38 made it to the Glasshouse screen. The films that didn't make it turned out that way for a number of reasons: some were too long to fit in; some filmmakers submitted a number of films, of which we picked the one we considered best; and of course some films we just didn't like.

A number of films split the panel and led to long arguments which at times got a little heated. Seven Impossible Images, one of the most controversial films screened during the three nights got in the final programme only via a 12.30 a.m. 3/2 vote one week before festival opening night. The film which probably would have occupied its place in the programme was Papa Gringo a 20 minute, subtitled, documentary from South America about a man formerly from the U.S. now working with the poor, often homeless, youth of some nondescript third world city. This film of social conscience saw most of the selection panel too guilty to speak against it, but in the final selection it was deemed a little long and perhaps its subjects attitude toward the children he helped was a little condescending. But maybe it should have been shown because it was so different from anything else that was submitted. Low budget documentaries seem to have become mostly the domain of video and it is a neglected Super 8 genre. (The main problem I personally find with video documentaries is a tendency to be much longer than they need to be. With the ease of video you loose the discipline of film.)

Two animated films from Belgium which didn't make it into the show were Night Rites of Isis by Manuel Gomez and Bogus by Chislain Honore and Jacques Iezzi. Night Rites covered similar territory to Gomez's Dualogie which was selected to be shown. However I personally felt Night Rites was better. Like Dualogie it begins with a pixilated face. The rest of the film consists of animated flipbook gags. One very clever shot featured drawings which had been done on a roll of toilet paper, which was then unwound from its wall holder a little at a time to create the effect of an animated figure seemingly holding his place on the roll as it is unwound. Bogus (see picture) was a film in ways similar to the work of Nick Doonkin. A plasticine man comes out of a drain and plays around in a bathroom before going through the mirror into a strange, much grimmer world next door. Parts of this film were quite interesting, but at 10 minutes long it was a little lengthy, not to mention some panel members being viciously against its inclusion.

Richard Perdrian, responsible for the photography of Denise Lloyd's Nobodies Home, submitted a film of his own, Squatters, about a pair of youths who move in and take over peoples homes while they're on vacation. This film had a quirky sense of humour which unfortunately for Richard didn't touch some of our harder to please selection panel members, who seemed to think it was meant to be taken seriously.

Another suburban comedy which didn't make it to screening was Richard Clarke's Eggshell on Ice in which a nervous guy asks a girl to dinner with problematic results. The inclusion of a Beatles song on the soundtrack had Bill Mousoulis energetically stamping his feet, but such a straightforward narrative was always going to have problems getting past others on the committee.

City Thoughts was a strange film by Noel Lloyd and some of his friends. Most of it consists of excellently shot and edited footage of people/trams/cars/etc in inner Melbourne, footage which could easily grace any Vic. Govt. tourist ad to be shown interstate. Intercut with this material however are some weird shots of Noel and his mates jumping up and down and running around. A strange film, which because of its city shots might have made an interesting festival opener.

Simon Cooper put in several films for consideration. We selected Autoportrait as the best; the other ones being Day by Day and Seduced and Abandoned. The latter of these covered familiar "experimental" territory such as rephotographed TV images and shots of a girl wandering around car wrecks.

Driven by Pamela Brown and Elizabeth Drake was a 20 minute epic mostly consisting of shots out the front of a car driving around the outback. Some members of the panel seemed to feel that this film was revolutionary in its faithful recreation of the hypnotic effect of long mundane drives. Other members failed to see the fascination of something they were so familiar with. Such films are probably better suited to open screenings than paying audiences.

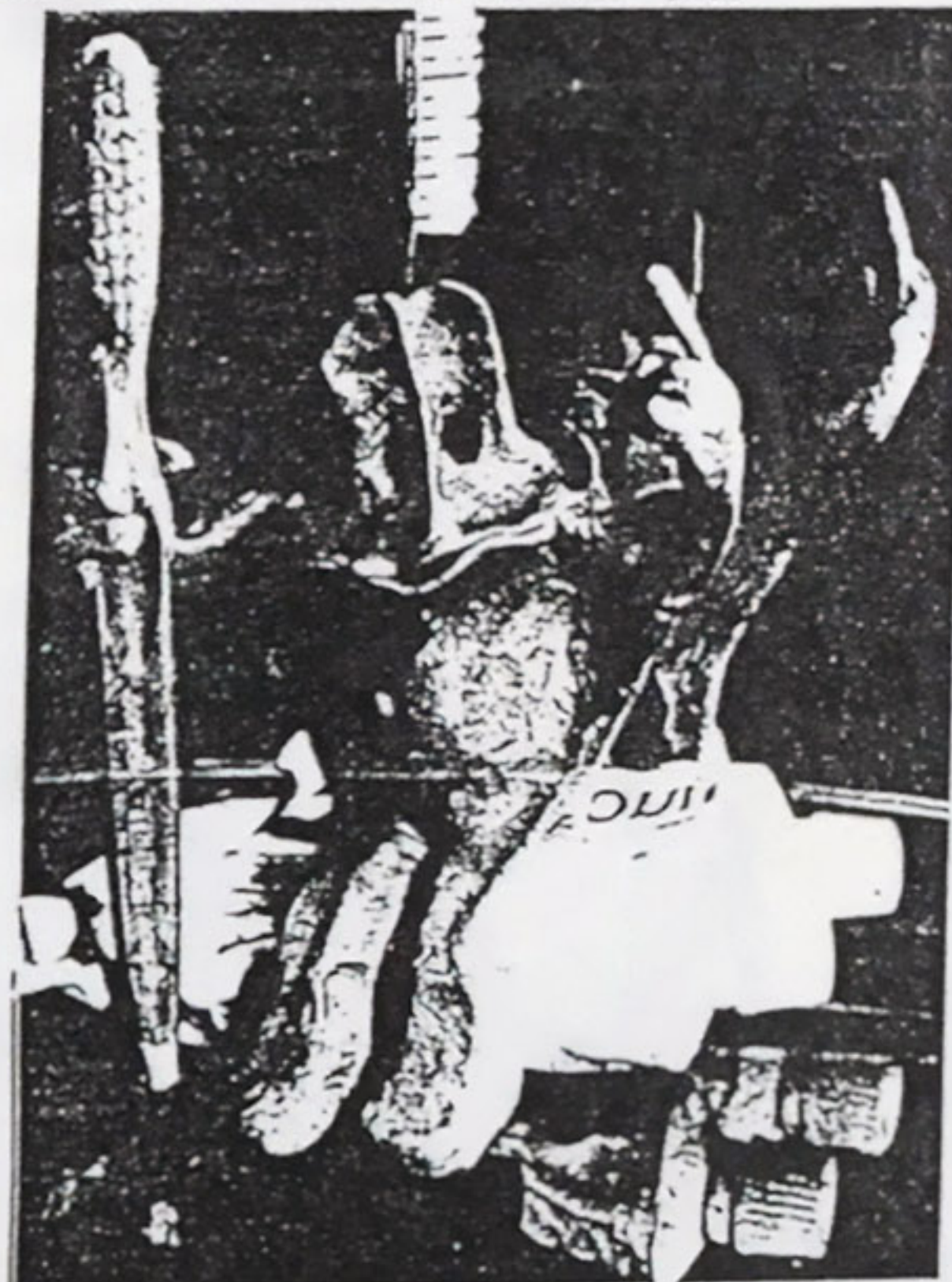
David Cox submitted his feature film/performance Onus on Us for consideration. Due to its length there was little chance of its being shown as part of the festival. One or two of the panel felt an excerpt might be included but ultimately this too was nixed and David was given a consolation prize of being able to show the work in place of a normal group meeting/open screening on the Tuesday before the festival, in the Glasshouse meeting rooms. (See reviews elsewhere in this issue.)

Mag Green, whose Fat Man was shown of the last night of the festival, also gave us Merry go Round, Egg, and Can Man. These three films seemed more of value for their characters costumes than for any filmic qualities. (Although one of them did include a brilliant send up of household chores - ironing the cat being the most amusing)

Apart from these there were others which were considered but I've used far too much space as it is. I'll just finish by saying that if you didn't like the festival, (or even if you did), there's nothing stopping Super 8 Group members from being involved with selection committees for screenings such as these. Just keep your ears open. Certain committee members like to keep selection panel positions for themselves and their friends, but all group members have the right to be involved.

IAN KERR

(With thanks to Ron Olthof for his thoughts on Driven and for reminding me of the "ironing the cat" gag) \*



In this still from Bogus the lead character is perhaps giving his opinion of the Festival selection panel which failed to include his film for screening.

# river Mainstream.

## FILM OF THE MONTH

RIVER'S EDGE (U.S.A., Dir: Tim Hunter)

River's Edge is what I would call a mature film. By this I mean that it creates its drama via an internality of action, emotion, thought, etc., as opposed to an externalized diegesis pumped by stock situations or stereotypical characterizations. For example, there's a scene in this film that just wouldn't appear in any other teen movie: Layne bangs on Clarissa's window late at night and as she walks through the house to go out to him her mum asks "Is that you, Clarissa?" from her room, to which the girl replies "Yes" and keeps on going. In any other film, that question would have signified (for the girl) "Oh, oh, I've been caught." Thus, this film dissolves the extreme/natural schism so prevalent in American cinema (a line started in 1976 with Taxi Driver's 12-year-old pro) - in this film everything is (seen as) natural.

Of course, one could say that this toughness is a result of the film's verisimilitude, but I don't think so; what verisimilitude the film does attain is more an effect than a cause. River's Edge shows life as unremitting as a river. As well as proffering a psycho-analytical reading of the state of things, the generational structuring of the characters contextualizes them all. And the film's message is this: things are bad, and they are getting worse. These 80's teenagers (and elders) are drug-ridden, violent, amoral, unfeeling, but thankfully not totally void. There's a truly painful scene where Matt confronts his young brother Tim over his meanness to their younger sister, shakes him and asks him "Why? Why?" It's a way of confronting his own (and his friends') similar cruelty.

In fact, Matt is the film's only bright spot (maybe Clarissa and her teacher too.) Cynics would say the Matt's character is a cop-out in the disturbing vision, that he's there as a point of identification, as a good (sensitive) guy. But why does a bleak vision have to be entirely bleak? (The film has a life-like quality: everything is shit, sure, but there still exist spirited individuals.) Like I said before, River's Edge is a mature film - the characterization of Matt is not a commercial concession (the same goes for the film's love scene), but one part of a happy coincidence. Which is more than can be said for the film itself - there's nothing happy or chancy about this number. This isn't the film of the month, it's the film of the year.

(Bill Mousoulis)



Ronald Reagan and Samuel Beckett pondering the setting of Tim Hunter's The River's Edge.

X: River's Edge seems to be a bit trite according to what I can make of the plot.

Y: Yeh, its only about a few issues : the inconsistent values the characters hold and live by, a mundanity of experience, a loss of spirituality amongst a group of teenagers. A film that tries to explore the banal surface to life, its complex bubbling subconscious not defined in simplistic psychological terms. Characters' pasts are explored: guilt, regrets. Characters change. Some go round in circles. Nervous systems have been impaired- cool flies out the door. Characters search for escape and expression. To some spirituality is lost, to others it can be found within the rubble; at the river's edge. Rich metaphors of the river- the traditional family spot, the cleansing area for rebirth, the river of life, the isolated spot, that which rises and floods. An independent sensibility has crept into the film. Strange things are happening in American cinema: River's Edge, Blue Velvet, Something Wild. A rich iconographic use of Hopper and Nicholson. References to the 60's. References to films of the 60's. References to the 60's values. What relationships and developments can be seen between contemporary American cinema and 1960's independent cinema?

X: Yeh, sounds like a pretty simple film. Some old cliches. Heh, seen Wenders' new film?

(Darron Davies)



JON OF THE I.S.U.

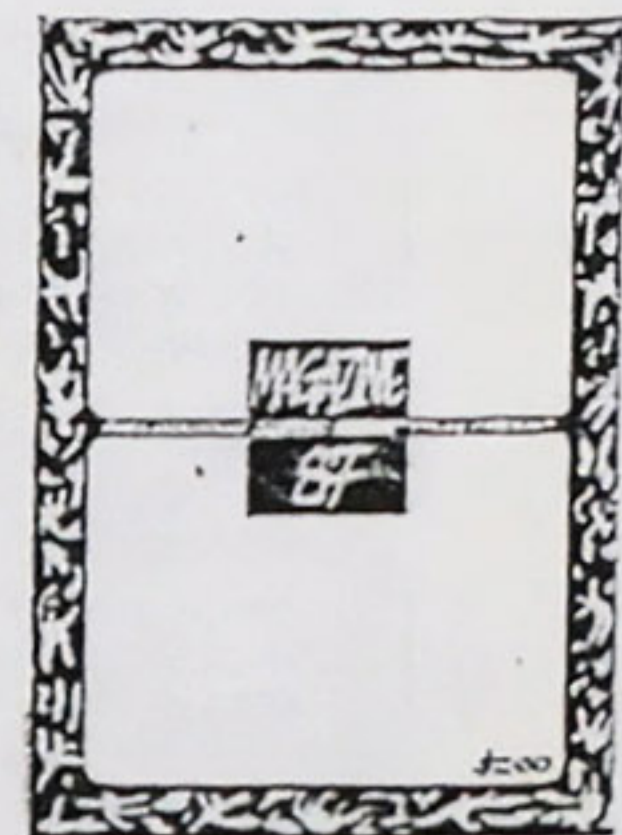
Those of you present on the last night of the festival may recall seeing a sculpture/performance piece being done just in front of the Glasshouse doors by a Sydney visitor, artist Jonathan Deeble. The finished plaster-of-Paris artwork he entitled Superating, (Super 8-ing, get it?) and it was quickly purchased by Super 8 Group President Sarah Johnson, and now graces a corner of her living room. Although he has now probably returned to Sydney Jon assured us he will be returning to Melbourne at regular times over the next few months and has expressed interest in sculpting/performing, (or just plain acting) in Super 8 productions. So if you feel you could use Jon's talents in one of your films why not drop him a line at the address below.

Jonathan Deeble  
744 Darling St  
Rozelle 02 8104975  
AUSTRALIA: MEAT

1987 MAGAZINE  
Have you bought a copy of it yet?

You have?

SUCKER!





The following thoughts I wrote before I saw David Cox's *The Onus On Us*, yet a lot of what I was trying to say relating back to this film. Perhaps an example of Jung's synchronicity. I'm sure David and I would like to think so. In films they are called trick effects.

**MOR(e) ON A POLITICAL Super 8**

Here are a few points about the political nature of an alternative cinema.

One line of argument concerns a political perspective for alternative film *outwardly* not dealing with any political issue or any narrative issue. Such films may confront the way we as consumers are taught to see things in a passive way. In mainstream cinema we are taught to take it all in in exactly the way the auteur wants you to. And I do not just mean hollywood. When there is ambivalence in a story it is prepackaged ambivalence. And it is always a story. The story gives the viewer something to clutch onto. The viewer needs to be cast adrift. Freedom for the viewer! This is needed if the viewer is to achieve his/her own sense of achievement through viewing and perhaps achieve some insight that no-one else in the audience has achieved. An insight that the film maker can never hope to understand.

To this end I say that it is good to drift away from a film with your own thoughts which may give you, the viewer the feeling of having done something momentous which is more than the pleasure you feel inside from having eaten a nice little bit of cheese (which is something endemic in a scene saturated with short films). The former is for those that seek change and the latter is for a conservative bourgeoisie. The former are the films that you have to work at as a viewer to understand, sit through etc. Viewers have to work to watch films like *Corpse, Harry Hooton, The Skin of Your Eye, Erratica, Space-Time Structures, Turnaround, Sunshine City, Hoddle Street Suite, Experiments, Bark Rind*.

Also with the dominance of television, the ad and the film clip our film culture has moved away from the difficult long film. (Money has probably got something to do with it too.) Our attention spans have been eroded and along with it, our freedom. So is it time for super 8s political arm to produce some difficult long films? Is not changing and challenging the way that people see is the most powerful political act that a film maker can do in our information exploding communication dominated society?

Otherwise we are faced with

*"they sentenced me to twenty years of boredom for trying to change the system from within"*

Here are some more comments more pertinent to the subject at hand, perhaps even the beginning of a "new" manifesto..... The following quotes have been taken out of the writings of Dziga Vertov from the 1920's as they appeared in Annette Michelson's *Kino-Eye*. The *slanting writings* are my additions.

Kino-eye means the conquest of time (the visual linkage of phenomena separated by time). Kino-eye is the possibility of seeing life processes in any temporal order or at any speed inaccessible to the human eye and at any level from the abstract worlds of the neutron and the galaxy and everything in between.

Kino-eye makes use of every possibly kind of shooting technique: acceleration, microscopy, reverse action, animation, camera movement, *home processing, refilming, drawing-bleaching-scratching directly on the film surface, pixilation, time-lapse, s8-35mm-16mm-etc, found footage*, the use of the most unexpected foreshortenings-all these we consider to be not trick effects but normal methods to be fully used.

Kino-eye uses every possible means of montage, comparing and linking all points of the universe in any temporal order, breaking, when necessary, all the laws and conventions of film construction.

So that is what I wrote before *The Onus On Us*, but it leads into this film because it is a long super 8 film with various political levels. The least interesting to me of these levels is the one where David uses all sorts of political slogans to press the viewer into action. The structure of the film and often its visual content are much more potent in challenging the viewer to a non mainstream way of viewing film and David's use of T.S. Eliot's *We are the hollow men, our heads are filled with straw* invoked the memory in me of the Hollis Frampton story in which H.F. explains to an audience, on being challenged that his films did not entertain, that he was not their to fill their empty heads and empty souls. This suggests the need to give to the work which David highlighted by placing a microphone in the audience and asking people to make comments into it during the screening. It is a commendation on our conditioning and a condemnation of our free will that no-one took him up on the offer.

I also found it interesting that a film purporting to be about political action was so devoid of people and had so much more in common with landscape. Here we had a related landscape to the one which in *Life Without Steve* signified depression and isolation is here trying to solicit political action. Political action in film in my mind has long been associated with violence and the movement of masses of people. Yet here we had a few friends walking around an urban landscape, sitting in a cafe, a camera eye travelling on a train into the city, or in a car; there was lots of movement through landscape to and from people that live distances from each other. This is the reality of urban life today and this realisation provides the fabric of the film as the camera explores this reality to give it contemporary political life as our society sinks slowly into a new conservatism.

Dirk de Bruyn \*

BLAME ON US

While we're on the subject of David Cox, the editors of the August newsletter must apologize to him for losing some lines of his article Toward a Political Super8 which appeared as the middle page spread. Two lines were lost from the bottom of the first column on page 4. This section of the article should read:

The myth of S8 being outside "broadcast quality" criteria imposed by TV stations serves the interests of larger format film makers to sell their wares to this sector. In fact Super 8 is used frequently on TV in situations where large cameras prove difficult.

(The underlined words are the ones lost last issue.)

CHRIS KNOWLES

will be performing live  
MUSIC AND FILM  
AT THE  
STATE FILM CENTRE  
1 Macarthur St.

Melbourne  
Saturday 5th September  
& Monday 7th September  
5.30pm

\$6.00/\$3.50 conc.  
Bookings and Info Ph: 651 1301

**SPOLETO FRINGE FESTIVAL**

12TH SEPTEMBER - 3RD OCTOBER

SPOLETO FRINGE FESTIVAL

The Spoleto Fringe Festival this year should include lots of alternative film and video. Watch the papers for details, or phone Fringe on 4199548.

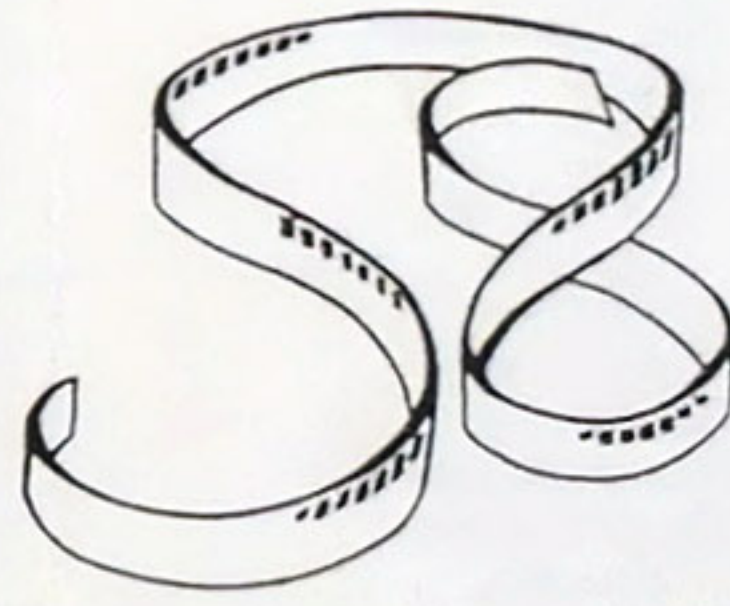
# Next Meeting

The next Open Screening will be on:  
Tuesday the 8th of September.

Venue: our usual haunt The Glasshouse  
 Meeting Room, RMIT.

At 7.30pm: Historical Experimental Films.

At 8.30pm: Open Screening (please bring 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	481 4157
Matthew Rees	489 4183
John Thomson	417 5193

## ★ BILL MOUSOULIS QUOTE OF THE MONTH ★

"People should try to expand themselves. Well, I've expanded myself; everyone else just has to catch up."

18/8/87  
 (MSEFG Committee Meeting)

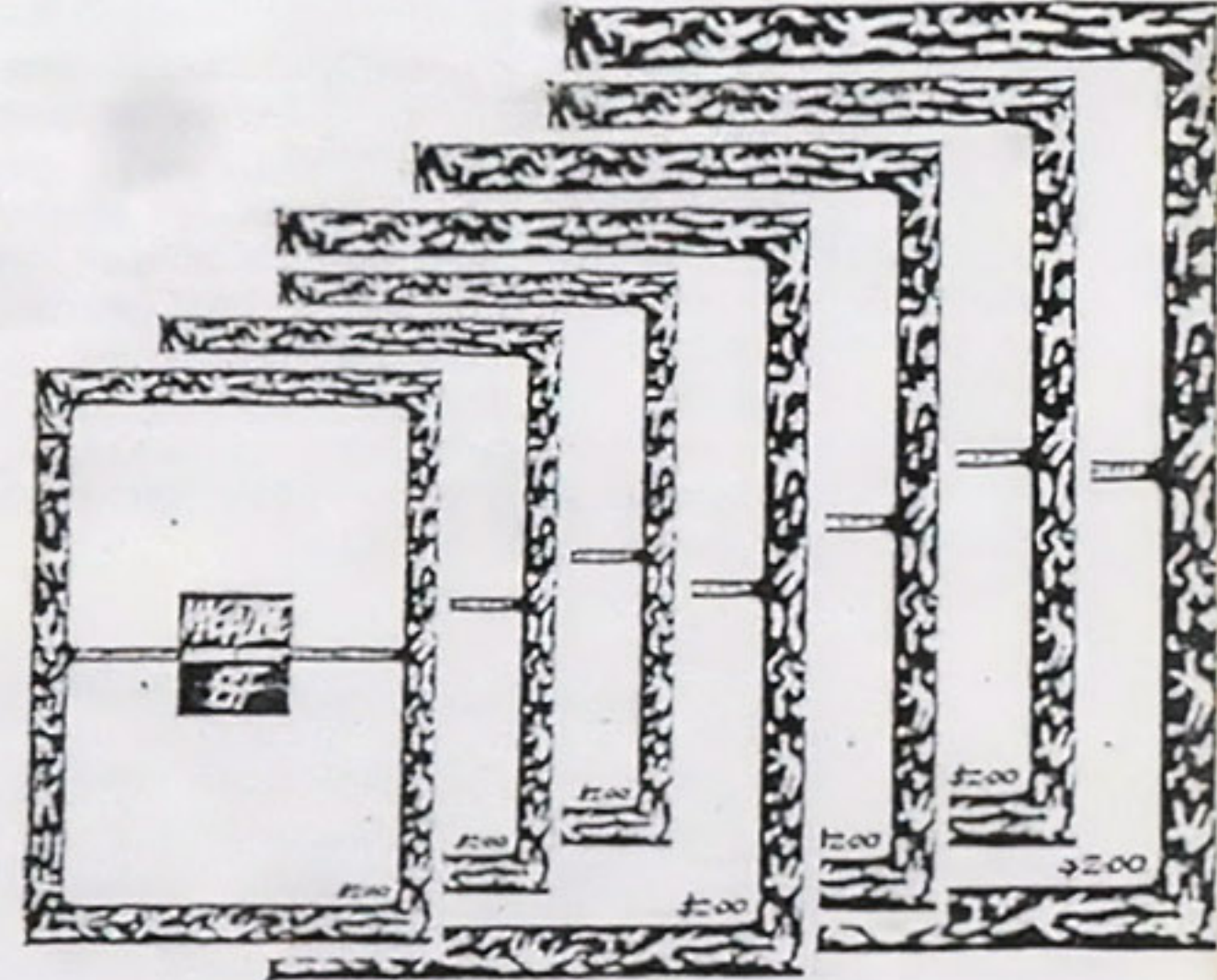
## RESOURCE POOL

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

## 1987 MAGAZINE

Yes, it's still available. Fortunately, only a limited number were printed. It's very versatile: read it, analyse it, discuss it..... best of all, wrap fish with it.

FREE, FROM YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD  
 OPEN SCREENING.



### FOR SALE

1. Movie Camera. Super 8, Bauer C1, 3 speeds-12, 18, 24 fps. Zoom 9" to 36mm
2. Gakken editor with 2x 400' spools and 5x50' spools.
3. Splicer

\$400 the lot. Contact Rolf Damm  
 4 Mc Neilly St.  
 Bunderberg, 4670.  
 071 721710

This newsletter is published monthly by the Melbourne Super 8 film group. Contributions are very welcome. (If you're making a film why not take a few stills and sent one into us. We also are in desperate need of a regular artist who could do cartoons and stuff for us to fill in the spaces between all this deep and meaningful discussion of film which fill these pages. If you can help please do. Our deadline is the 4th monday of each month. But we usually run late)

Membership of the Group costs a mere \$10 a year. This gets you into all our meetings, a subscription to this newsletter, and other obscure benefits.

Editorial and layout on this issue by:

*Ron Olthof*,  
*Ian Kerr*, *Nick Ostrowski*

# SUPER EIGHT

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