

SUPER EIGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM GROUP NO. 20 NOV '87

WALLED CITY AND JOHN CALDER

Both John Calder and his latest film WALLED CITY have prompted a response from at least one of our members. The use of false names in reviews is in this editor's opinion, gutless. The editor would like to thank Ian Kerr however, for his outstanding amount of contributions to this month's newsletter. We should all feel so inspired!!!!



WALLED CITY PREMIERE REPORT.

Those of you who watched the A.F.I. Awards on Channel 2 on the night of October ninth would have been unaware of a desperate plight of the cameramen and editors covering the event. They spent much of the night trying to find angles which would disguise the fact that half the seats at the awards were actually empty. The explanation of this amazing lack of attendance is that those expected to attend were actually saving their money for a much more prestigious event on the following night. Even though tickets were highly priced there was no shortage of people clamouring for entry to the world premiere of perhaps the most important film made on Super 8 in 1987. I talk of course of John Calder's Walled City. The most awaited film of the year.

The tension on the night was electric. Cast and crew arrived at the cinema in Rolls Royces driven by chauffeurs wearing the spectacular "guardian" masks seen in the film. As the hour of 8.30 approached Mr. Calder was seen circulating in the crowd wearing a dazzling sparkly purple green jacket which could only be described as chic.

The supporting features for Walled City had been carefully selected by John from among dozens of anxious filmmakers who had shoved at him over the past few weeks, hoping that their films might share the glory of that night. Finally John settled on just three, all of which he said bore some relation to Walled City and the people who worked on it.

The first film shown was actually a video clip which John proudly announced has been produced entirely on Super 8. However the editing on this clip had obviously been done entirely on video, although the footage itself was evidently Super 8. The song was "Eureka" by No Virginia, a band I've never heard of, but seeing they're friends of John's they're bound to go far. The clip itself mixed strangely coloured shots of the band members wandering around landscapes, with a busy mix of cut-out animation of photos of the band combined with B&W period photos of Australia. As is standard for video clips the words and music didn't make a whole lot of sense. However there were some nice bits of animation.

Apparently this clip's connection to Walled City

is that it was partly filmed by John and that the members of No Virginia appear as extras in one of Walled City's crowd scenes. (Probably the scene at the city gate)

The remaining two featurettes were Maladaptation's Number 3 and 4. The former of these suffered from a projectionist who couldn't decide where to focus, thus almost destroying the entire film. Maladaptation Number 4 came up better. John explained that it was while acting as photographer on these films that he met Ian Ecclesmith and Jacinta Leg-Wash who were to go to become the leads of Walled City.

During intermission the audience was surprised to find itself caught up in a carnival type atmosphere when John called for one of the "guardians" from the film to bring out the actual Stateslotto machine that had been used as a prop. He then proceeded to attempt a live draw for a door prize. Each ticket to the night had been numbered and as the balls were drawn from the machine, (usually desperately chased across the floor by John) tension mounted to see who would win the chocolates that three numbers would get you. Having drawn three numbers a flushed John found that no one had them. Thinking quickly John lowered the required numbers you needed to two and drew another ball or two. This insured about half the audience deserved chocolates, leading to a pitched battle when it was discovered there weren't enough to go around.

This brawl was finally broken up and the screening we'd all been waiting for could go on.

John made an introductory spiel - one so modest and humble I only wish it had been taped so I could quote it here. Then the lights faded and it started.

Words fail me to describe the response of the audience during the film. We laughed, we cried, we cheered. All carried along by the sheer artistry of Calder's brilliance as a filmmaker. If any doubted this man's brilliance they were not present that night. I'll say no more but let you see the film when it no doubt makes a return engagement.

But let me tell you. The cheer that went up when Calder announced Walled City II at the post screening drinks was something I'll remember forever.

Pen Prick Three

As I write these words it is almost eight months since the title *Walled City* entered the consciousness of the Melbourne Super-8 world. It was (believe it or not) at the very first group meeting this year that John Calder first enlisted aid to make up the crew and extras for a projected epic of his which would enter areas of narrative hitherto denied to mere Super-8. He told us of his vision of a silent B & W film which would tell of a time in the far future when the unemployed are kept in a *Walled City*, and the only way out is to win a "Stateslotto" draw. The prize of which is a job.

Well that was back in February. It is October 11 as I write this and last night for the first time the world at large at last viewed the results of John Calder's dream (a dream which has I suspect become his nightmare.)

Forty to sixty people made their way to the hall of the Victorian Movie Makers Association in Fitzroy to view the product of Calder's labours.

What we saw was no epic.

A couple of months ago John talked in these pages of "experimental greasy pigs" which were causing his frustration at the August Super-8 festival. Rest assured *Walled City* is no greasy pig.

It is a turkey.

In the last newsletter Anne-Marie Crawford and Ljubica Tomic poured scorn upon Calder and his methods of criticism and film-making. Maybe they should kick themselves for not having waited a few more days to have vented their anger - *Walled City* would have given them a feast of riches for their perusal, and ammunition for their abuse.

So what went wrong?

I suspect that John's problems started before the cameras even rolled. The script he has developed into a silent film seems to have been simply not suitable for such a treatment. Whatever he wanted to get across just doesn't make it in the final film. Obviously he started with too many ideas for a silent film; even one of 45 minutes or so as this one is.

Walled City doesn't make sense!

John misled us all by showing a "trailer" at the September meeting. But this was not really a trailer. Rather it turns out it had been simply the first five minutes of the film. These first few minutes of the film take the form of almost a newsreel type lucid explanation of how the *Walled City* came about. This opening sequence is the film's best. Afterwards such lucidity disappears and the narrative becomes at best muddy, at worst incomprehensible.

The viewer is left with a number of unanswered questions at the film's end:

- What is the meaning of that entire, badly lit scene in the middle of the film in which the main character is dragged about in a sack and seduced by a woman in a pig-like mask? What's more, why is it his wife who has been wearing the mask?

The film isn't helped by a chase scene in which the lead character is chased down stairs and around alleys by a bunch of crooks out to steal his winning ticket of the Stateslotto draw. This badly acted sequence (acting dishonours must go to Calder himself as a hyperactive little weasel) looks like something out of a high-school film-making project.

With problems like this it's no wonder John has been reluctant to show his film and has kept us waiting so long for its premiere.

I can't help feeling that a few more explanatory titles spread throughout the film would have helped enormously. I know Calder was out to make a "silent" film, but even classic films of the 20's often had frequent breaks to explain any obscurities in the action. John might argue that using more titles would have broken up the lyrical/visual quality of the film. But *Walled City* is photographed so routinely and generally uninterestingly that a little more words of sense at necessary points would have done no harm.

A film of *Walled City*'s length, with such problems of narrative was always going to need an outstanding musical score/soundtrack to pull it all together. And indeed there has been some very good music (mostly electronic keyboards and percussion) composed by Ian Eccles-Smith, who also appeared as the main character in the film. The underground sequences are made bearable by a gradually building Arabian type dance theme which works well. And the Stateslotto draw has a suitably game-show type electric organ accompaniment. But I can't for the life of me think why the First scene in the film proper (that following the tightly edited introduction) has been left entirely without music. This seems a serious mistake as the scene itself was overlong. A gag in which the man puts his Hand, head, etc. through a Hologram image to amuse his child lasts for about two minutes. Presumably John Calder was so pleased with himself over his superimposition effect he couldn't bear to part with a single frame of it.

However, overall, Calder himself seems dissatisfied with the film's form at present. After the screening he was heard to be planning to cut it down to 20 minutes and add additional explanatory titles. I wish him luck with this exercise and hope his future version of *Walled City* can gain a success the present version surely never will.

Francois True-Foe

P.S. October 16: I am told that during the storyboarding discussion at the Oct. 13 meeting Calder suggested my compatriot Truffaut's suggestion for learning to make films - look at your favourite film five times. Might I suggest people wishing to learn how not to make films view Calder's *Walled City* 5 times.

IN DEFENCE OF JOHN CALDER

Having gone out on a limb in the September newsletter and criticised certain films much prized by certain of the inner circle of the Melbourne Super 8 Group it was inevitable that some of the darlings would get out the claws and lash into him in the pages of our October issue. Luckily John has pretty thick skin and can bounce back pretty easily. But I for one feel he needs some support. While his original "greasy pigs" article was perhaps a little vicious I think what he said needed to be said. I have noticed a number of people who flitter through our meetings never to return, perhaps John is simply saying what these people would say if we stopped to ask them why they never return. Let's face it, there's nothing special about super 8. There's no reason why we can't admit we don't like some of the films that are shown at our festivals and meetings. What's more there is no reason why "experimental" films can't be judged as good or bad. It's only very vain people who feel they are capable of querling their gut level responses.

SARAH JOHNSON INTERVIEWS DAVID COX (and discovers that we are all really united behind the "Common Enemy" - Kennedy Miller).

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This interview took place at 3.30am on Sunday 1st November. By the time you read this Cox should have departed our shores and will be well and truly on his way to fame in Brussels. Read on.

SJ I'm sitting with David Cox whose about to depart Australia for Brussels, David could you explain where you're going and why you're going

DC Alright, I'm going to Belgium to take place in the ninth International Festival of Super 8 and Video and ah I'm going c/o of the Multi Media Diffusion which is a Brussels based film group.

SJ Now how did you come in to contact with these people?

DC Well John Calder went over there earlier this year and told them about me and they made arrangements through the Foreign Affairs Department to give me a grant to fly out. They elaborated for a while and it was given to the Australia Council who gave it back to foreign affairs and foreign Affairs were the ones who agreed to pay at least half because the Australia Council couldn't afford it after the budget.

SJ So what have they come up with? Just the fare or...?

DC Yeah \$1200 towards my fare.

SJ So the rest of it you'll pay yourself. How long are you going for?

DC Two weeks. I've been invited to do some performances on stage two of which I've done at the super 8 group last year - IMMEDIATE BREATH and FOR THE LOVE OF FLIGHT ITSELF and others which I've developed since then and also done at the super 8 group. ONUS ON US . but RED MEANS GO is one that I did at the Lyndon Mutli Medi Day and it's a political one with film of a friend walking up the steps of parliament house and violent chanting of left wing slogans reverberating around the room and the audience been whipped up into a mad frenzy ..

SJ Did this happen at Lyndon (the audience frenzy)?

DC Yes

SJ And do you expect it will happen at Brussels give the language problem?

DC Yeah - no problem

SJ So how do you go about preparing yourself for this trip.

DC Well um I'm collating all my material from all my past performances combining it with film and tape and am using a digital electronic sound keyboard I've been dedicated a cinema in Brussels for my work and also to deliver some lectures. The themes of the lectures are the solidarity between the northern and southern hemisphere super 8 users so its a chance for me to spread the super 8 word politically.

SJ. If we could perhaps discuss that more fully, the liason between as you call it the "Northern and southern hemisphere super 8 filmmakers".

DC Well as we know the European seems to be a lot more dedicated to the use of super 8 as a political weapon.

SJ Why do you say that?

DC Well there in a much more of a difficult situation most of the time getting a message across on film is a matter of necessity for them for us its a luxury.

SJ What filmmakers in particular - what countries in particular?

DC I'm thinking mainly of like the German squatters super 8 movement and more recently the new ah ... um... what I'd describe as the, what could be acutely be described as the new german experimental scene.

SJ And that's overtly political?

DC Not overtly political, not necessarily but it has its origins in political cinema. I mean I'm talking about super 8 as the means by which people can communicate ideas with general freedom with economic liberty.

SJ And you don't think that happens so much in Australia?

DC I think its difficult because we feel preoccupied to ask the government if what were doing is ok so that they can give us support through funding. I think we're encourage to pander to governments to do what we ought to be able to do anyway.

SJ From what I know the Brussels group is so big because it gets such an enormous amount of government funding.

DC Belgium had something close to a socialist government for a while and some of the socialist policies that were enacted were rather munciple kind of decision making legislation. Papers went through enabling the Belgium government to see Super 8 and independant filmmaking as viable subject for government funding which I think isn't a bad thing but its important to keep it context. To fund something in a European environment is different to funding something in Australia.

SJ How are they different?

DC Europe has a much longer history of a sence between government and people in place like Belgium where you see a strong dynamic at work in the whole political system it tends to change ... the flow of the dynamics of politics of different countries so close together creates a kind of current or tide or opinion and ideas which is impossible for somewhere so removed and isolated such as Australia geographically and culturally.

SJ Do you think that really relevant to Australia now, today?

DC Well whether it is or isn't I'm prepared to have a look at Europe simply on the basis that I'm interested in European films because Europe in on the axis of history Europe, European films are on the axis of history at the moment. Jean Pierre Gorin said that when he came out here recently. So I want to export ONUS ON US and I want to export all this stuff as ideology.

SJ So you want to export

DC I want to export ideas more than things.

SJ For you super 8 filmmaking is always intrinsinctly tied up in your political thoughts.

DC Not necessarily. Lately more so

SJ Why more recently?

DC Because its taken me a long time to come to terms with the idea that to make a film is an overtly political act just in the same way as putting your socks on is if your dedicated if you feel some kind of commitment to the social change, and I think that film is so powerful a medium in our culture that we should seek ways to repossess it to take it back from the owners and the bosses and the capatalists who'd like to make money out of it and give it back into the hands of people who can actually use it in a cultural sence and use it in a social sence to help reinforce the idea of daily existance and daily experience so often the medium of film in this culture the western culture, seek to reienforce a view of people that affectively denies them a view of themselves. We're constantly encourage to model ourselves on examples rather than to seek individuality or independance. In this way capitalism is very constrictive and it affords freedom only to a very very limited few.

SJ Getting back to super 8 and to tie in with some of what you've just said, a lot of your films, performance articles you've writtern for the newsletter have come under fire and have been very contensious and have received a lot of negative feedback, what's your reaction to this?

DC Um well it doesn't worry me. Its interesting that people react in the way they do but so what. At the same time its interesting for me to see a simple idea by which I try to ... I think politics enters my world through the back door. If you look at the article for example its just like something someone might think at a lunch time when he's got no film left and suddenly wishes that Kodak film was free. If you've ever been in that situation where you know you had a great idea and if ou could go out that minute but you couldn't because of the elaborate constraints placed upon you. And I think the constraints arn't just physical or economic there cultural. I'm asking a question why do we make films? I think its important to ask that question before you pull the trigger. I'm just anxious that the super 8 group isn't becoming too middle class in its approach to film .. it risks the danger of getting to caught up in its own identity the group dynamics of the club tend to distract members form the issue at hand which is for me and for most of us is to make films. It doesn't help when you get you get very dominant and outspoken members of the group claiming one position as if it were gospel and by suggestion

drawing everyone into the same conclusion. I think that for example the decision to fund the group is a mistake and that it leads to more complications than is necessary. But then again I'm not the group I'm a member but I do feel obliged as a paying member to ..

SJ Why paying... do you have any more power because youve paid..

DC Well if I'm paying I'm assuming that somehow the monetary value of my membership is translated into somekind of framework. But as I said I think the club exists for its own sake the virtue of the club is that it exists for its own right and shouldn't seek rationalisation or institutionalisation that I think funding will introduce. I think that as soon as the Super 8 group becomes funded it will rapidly become less interesting and less diverse.

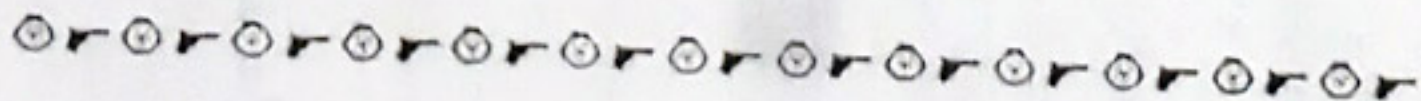
SJ Well maybe I think the point is though that if the Super 8 group doesnt get some sort of funding the Super 8 group wont exist half way through next year.

DC Well maybe thats ok. Maybe it will change and become something else. I dont think we should be afraid of change .

SJ Its not change, its extinction.

DC Well I think extinction is only one form of change.

And on it went into the very small hours, Cox explaining that we should all stand up up against our common enemy the capatalist cinema moguls - KENNEDY MILLER etc., I guess that ones tolerance rapidly burns out the later it gets, and what remains of this interview, frankly isn't worth repeating.



Anne Marie Crawford criticises John for lumping together too many films under the term "experimental". I agree "experimental" is a bad term, maybe "non-traditional" is more suitable. This too however is a very clumsy term but it's as good as anything for the moment. Into this area could go diary, TV image, political and lyrical films etc etc. Such films shouldn't exist in some vacuum they can be compared to each other and judged.

As such, let us say there are good "diary" films such as Robins Mouth, and there are not so good diary films, such as Autoportrait.

There are good TV image films -such as TV Reporter and The bowel-houndromat, and there are mediocre TV image films such as the work of Michael Hutak etc.

There are good "personal" films such as (sorry) Midnight Train to Kathmandu, and there are mediocre personal films such as Morena.

And so on.

Anyone who's been around the super 8 scene as long as John Calder has seen a hell of a lot of super 8, enough to be able to tell good from bad. His got as much right to his opinions as anyone else has.

I suppose some will attack me for having given no basis at all for my good/mediocre judgements above. Well unfortunately I must let them stand. I cannot explain why I like or dislike a particular film, or at least not always. It's something that clicks or doesn't click. At least I don't try to over-analyse my feelings about film and come up with the sort of pseudo-intell-

## WE NEED YOU

There has been some comment that the workings of the group, the Committee Meetings, are somewhat like a secret society, and that you, the general membership, is only aware of what goes on after the meetings have taken place. For your information Committee meetings are held exactly one week after the Open Screenings at Sarah Johnson's flat - 8/40 Burnett Street, St Kilda, 7.30pm. All members are welcome to attend. The success or failure of the group will ultimately rest with the membership. If you do not like the direction in which you feel the group is heading, in fact if you have any constructive comments to make about the group, please either raise them at the Open Screenings, write in to the Newsletter or come along to the Committee Meetings. I would also like to add that members can become involved in certain areas of the Groups activities like the Newsletter, Festival, Open Screenings etc. It is not necessary at all to be on the Committee to be involved in one or more of these activities. The Newsletters editors change every month and it is usually done by two people - one committee person and one general member. Please contact any one on the committee if you'd like to become involved in this, or in fact any of the groups other activities. Further to this, the 2nd AGM of the Melbourne Super 8 Film group will take place at 7.30pm on 8th December (Glasshouse meeting room) - so do give being on the committee some thought. 1988 will be an exciting year for the group.

Sarah Johnson.

## OCTOBER MEETING

After John Calder's Storyboarding workshop, there was an Open Screening:

Monsieur Bonhomme from Brussels

China by Adrian Reeves

The Maybe Cage by Chris Windmill

A Question of Faith by Bill Mousoulis

That's the Way by Richard Perdriau

Manhandled by Robert Ratti

actual claptrap Bill Mousoulis, Anne-Marie Crawford and others occasionally contribute to our film review columns. Their writings are sometimes so overwritten as to be meaningless. As for Lubica Tomic, here's a writer so lacking in confidence in her own opinions she has to cite McLuhan, Koestler and Vernon Lee, (all in the course of one page) just trying to convince us how widely readshe is. You say Gumsmere was a "Poke at stylistic elements of the video clip". Well that may be what you intended but there are no marks for intentions only for final product. And what you produce looks like what everyone else produces when they point a camera at a TV. Why don't you do something really different? Hopefully your second film, (is it coming soon?) will some day contribute "to a wider visual language."

IAN KERR

## FILM REVIEW CREW

Contemporary mainstream and independent film reviewed.  
By Darron Davies, Bill Mousoulis, and Adrian Reeves.  
Every Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. on JRRR-FM 102.7

### TRANSCENDENTAL SUPER-8

A program of films revolving around the theme of transcendence.  
Featuring Bill Mousoulis' Faith, Chris Windmill's The Maybe Cage, Rolando Caputo's Untitled and others.  
VENUE: Glasshouse Cinema, RMIT  
DATE: Friday, November 13  
TIME: 7:30 p.m.  
COST: \$5 or \$3 concession.  
(Special offer to Super-8 Group members: Admit two for the price of one.)  
Enquiries 419 6562

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held in our normal venue, the Meeting Room next to the Glasshouse Cinema.

Tuesday, November 10

At 7:30 p.m. -

A special programme of Super-8 films **BETWEEN YOU AND ME** curated by Bill Mousoulis, featuring films revolving around couples.

The list of films will be available on the night.

At 8:30 p.m. -

OPEN SCREENING

BYO film!

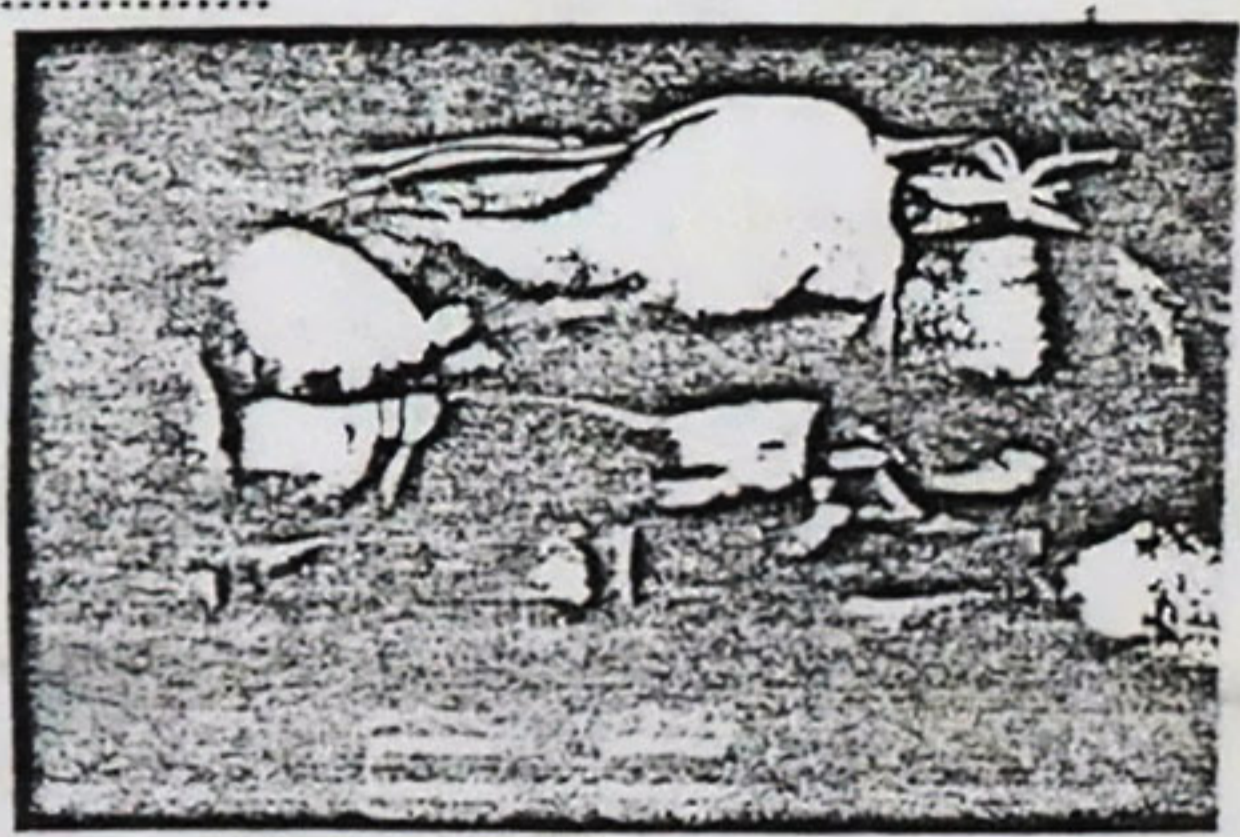
M.I.M.A. presents **THE IMAGED BODY** as the final programme for 1987.

**THE IMAGED BODY** enters the realm of sensuality, eroticism, titillation, seduction and physical aestheticism.

Some of the Films and Videos included are:

- SHADOWS -Royden Irvine
- ADAM & EVE
- HOLY WORD -Randelli
- KNIFE IN THE HEAD, SPOOKY -Catherine Lowing S8
- BIG ROADS MEAN BIG LORRIES -Brett Houghton
- MUSCLE -Kelly Hoare S8
- TURNING AWAY THE AFFECT OF A MYSTERY -Simon Burton
- BOOBS A LOT -Aggy Read
- LE CORPS IMAGE -Stephen Cummins S8

PLUS A Surprise!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



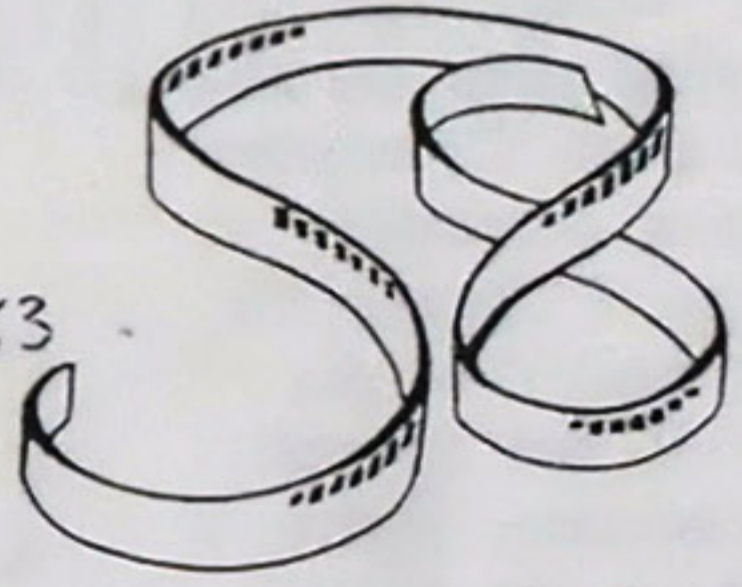
Screening Times:  
 FRIDAY NOVEMBER 27 9.30 PM  
 SATURDAY NOVEMBER 28 5.30 PM  
 SUNDAY NOVEMBER 29 7.30 PM

At the State Film Theatre - 1 Macarthur Street, East Melbourne. 3002.

For further inquiries please contact Judy Schreiber at MIMA on 6631953.

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RESOURCE POOL

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

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# SUPER EIGHT

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