

SUPER EIGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM GROUP NO.26 JUNE '88

MARTIN: SACRED OR PROFANE

by Bill Mousoulis

"Private Island, Physical World, and Embrace are all films about 'spiritual' - not physical - contact; as a matter of opinion, I think they elevate some woolly 'mystical' realm completely above the 'merely' physical. Nothing personal, guys, but experience leads me to believe that such a demented 'world view' comes strictly and directly from a profound sexual frustration (the root, also, of the intermittent misogyny, and the male-buddy spiritualism descended from Spielberg, often weirdly homo-erotic.) I'm damn sick of these mystical, magical, purely imagined 'connections'! Give me some sex!"

- Adrian Martin, last newsletter

"Embrace is concerned with the dream and act of 'connection' - how people spiritually embrace each other."

- Bill Mousoulis, last newsletter

Cut the crap, Adrian! For someone who's (and I say this without qualification) the best film critic we've got, you can be pretty simplistic at times. From where comes this absolute material/spiritual demarcation and its insistently superior tone? Why shield yourself by calling it all 'opinion'? I think that perhaps you've seen Wings of Desire one too many times...

But let's examine the issue at hand a little more slowly. Now, the word 'spiritual' has certain connotations, of course, and I knew I was taking a chance when I wrote that line about how we "spiritually embrace" each other. It was an intended use of a misnomer, however, to playfully suggest that 'spirituality' is not a condition, but an effect. Let me state simply and clearly that I believe fucking to be a very spiritual thing.

Okay, that sounds crazy, but let me divulge something: I have for a long time now been cynical of learnt representation, signification, codification, etc. In films of mine like Embrace, Faith, Fun Girl, and others, I have consciously dispersed most of the relevant signification processes and invented a few of my own (qualification: as much as that is possible.) The point I'm making is that even with my writing I do a similar thing. So when I say 'spiritual', hey, watch out!

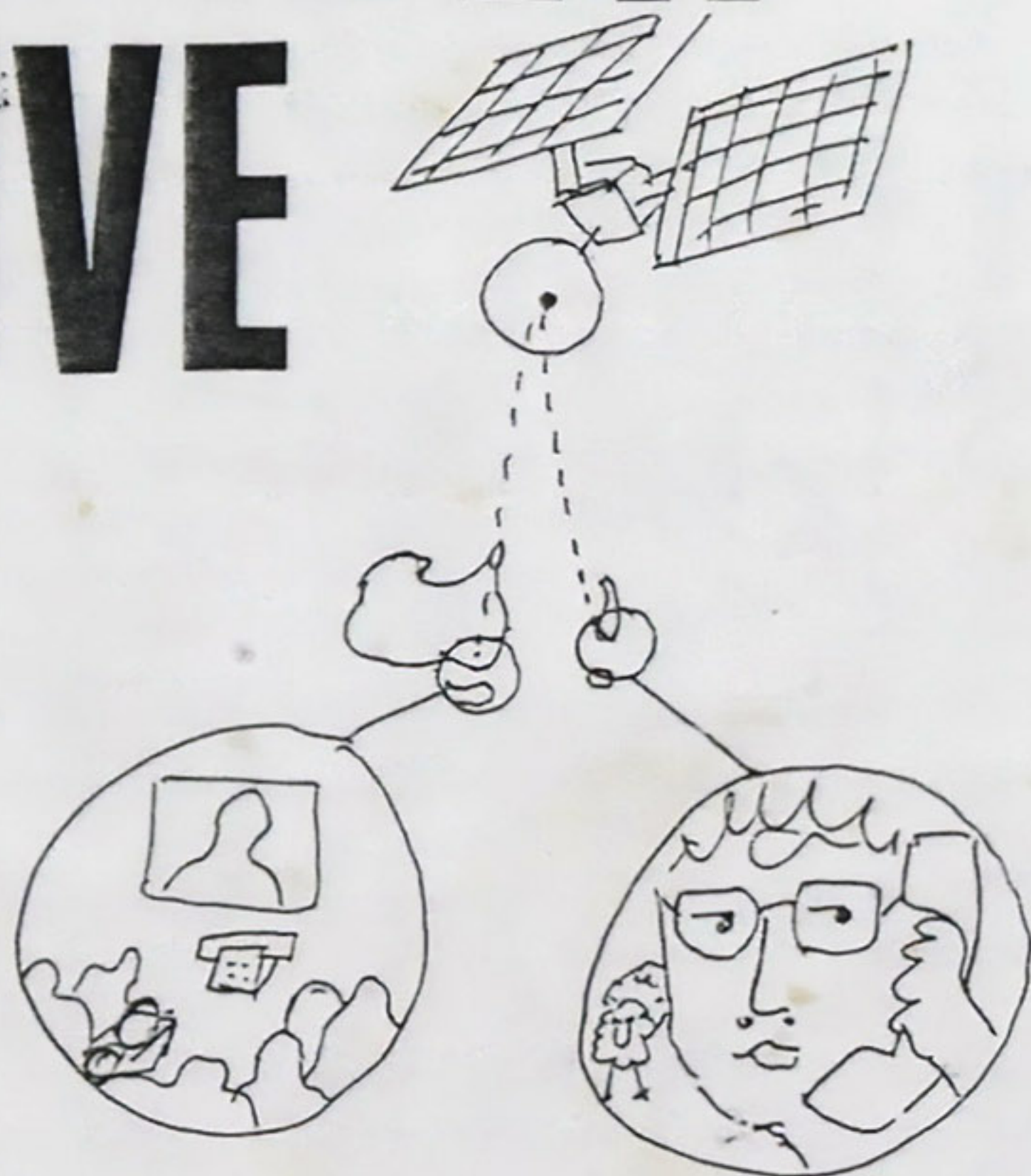
Attendant to this material/spiritual split is a clear-cut reality/dream split. I've heard this a million times before: Stop dreaming, Bill, and start living in reality. What they mean, of course, is 'pipedreaming'. I reject that and pronounce that dream and reality are separated only by achievement. As I say in my film Knowing Me, Knowing You, "the heaven of dream will be a heaven on earth." There's another aspect to this reality/dream problem, however: the emphasis on dream supposedly creates stasis. But surely life is composed of both reality (action, connection, movement, etc.) and dream (reflection, longing, planning, etc.)

Now to the sex. How a causal relationship is formed between sexual frustration and the valuing of the mystical over the physical I've no idea. I'm not averse to any sublimation theories (if proposed positively), but this is just outrageous. The thing that kills me is that this sexual frustration somehow leads to misogyny and homoeroticism. You've got a twisted mind, Adrian!

One final thing, my friend - what do you mean you're sick of imagined connections? We are talking about the cinema, remember. I lament this disrespect to the notion of experience, in, of, and beyond the cinema. But I lament even more greatly the implied death of possibility - the mystical can't become the physical, dream can't become reality, and so on.



JOHN CALDER LIVE



That's right John Calder live. (Who said he was dead?)

Thanks to OTC Telecommunications John Calder's voice will be present at the next Open Screening (14th June)

John Calder will be presenting a film made especially for this MEGA MEDIA experience.

Not only will you witness this historic event, but you will also get the chance to personally speak to Him (John Calder). Maybe you would like to ask him what film stock he used??

Films at last Open Screening

Dreams Come True by Jane Stevenson
...Olympic Games... by Philip Brophy

(these two films were shown as part of Adrian Martin's talk on Melbourne Super-8 of the early 1980's.)

Rubbish Games by Joanne Hampton

Excavation by Joanne Hampton

rushes by Dirk de Bruyn

Knowing Me, Knowing You by Bill Mousoulis

Where are you going?... Hurrying to get somewhere else by Heinz Boech

A SIDES / B SIDES Asides and besides.

This article are a lot of bits and pieces (asides and besides) relating to S8 film practice. I'm really a new boy to S8 but I've always felt an affinity with the low/no budget side of S8 as I believe that my approach to 16mm which started in the 70's has a lot in common with this approach. Another reason I wrote all this stuff down was my interest in the different levels of the film making process from the theory, the group politics and strategies and personal filmmaking itself to an understanding of the technical aspects of the medium. For me they are all intertwined and I offer this as an excuse why they come out in the one breath in this ramble.

Strategies to Keep the Medium Going.

There seems to be a change of emphasis happening to s-8 in Australia personified by the advent of Splash. Overseas some international festivals are doing the same, opening the door to video 8, and Montreal S8 Festival for example, has changed to a Young Film Maker's Festival on all gauges. Yet a new international festival purely for S8 emerged in New York this year whose judges were curators from Film Culture, Millenium, MOMA, and the Collective for Living Cinema- all organisations exhibiting their own programs in film art. The festival seems to be a recognition of the significant film art work coming out of the gauge -and the amount of it.

In the States those working in S8 seem to be developing strategies to stem the impending withdrawal of the medium from the labs and the camera shops...(am I being too pessimistic) and giving S8 even more of that 'underground' flavour. Kodak will need to be convinced to keep the tap dripping. Brodsky & Treadway (The Independent July 87) talk of seeking out camera stores to see what they have in their back rooms and any 'finds' relayed into a national film maker network. They also relate their dealings with Kodak in North America and how all s8 processing now goes through one lab in Palo Alto (we don't know how lucky we are here in Melbourne). Direct liason by letter and phone with Kodak by the film makers helped improve the service. They also mention ther difficulty of buying spools when you need them (know the feeling). Yet community organisations (not s8/film groups but special interest groups interested in harnessing the media.) have also been successful in obtaining equipment from members to run workshops. To cut the pessimism short, this decline is focused on camera shops and labs as ,interestingly enough, exhibition on film or video continues to increase.

Direction of the Super 8 Group

Should the S8 group make similar moves? To plug into what Ian Poppins said in the May Newsletter, I believe that its the networking "moves" that are the most relevant to the group. Finding where used equipment is available and matching it with what film makers require (to make it worthwhile it would need to go beyond what the Trading Post offers - which when all is said in done is sufficient anyway). --- In the Trading Post why is it that the best deals always occur in the outlying* suburban sprawl for used s-8 equipment? I reckon its because those that want the equipment find it hard to get to the places. Most of the demand being in the inner city by those without sophisticated transport. Also this equipment is usually the best to buy because it is often hardly been used, having been bought as a whim on an overseas trip.

Running super 8 workshops with member's equipment could provide revenue for the group. St kilda Council has run super 8 and animation workshops successfully and (a few years back now) Chris Knowles ran some through RMIT Union , organised by John Smithies.(and there is sure to be other that I do not know about). Perhaps the S8 group can run some direct because not everyone studies media or goes to art school. On the renting out of equipment perhaps the group could be a clearing house for the renting out of member's equipment by arranging for insurance cover for this equipment and taking a fee. Thus confronting the bugbear of some nerd/nerdine breaking your precious camera, lights, viewer etc, while also avoiding the problem of the group buying equipment for itself (where does the money come from).

In West Germany the Winkelkotte brothers set up a mobile cinema "Mirona" by buying a truck and putting a screen in it with space for 20-25 people and almost constantly touring the country.(The Independent March 87) I remember Jo Hampton at the Independent Forum in 87 suggesting this as a possible strategy.(its a belated comment/aside-another one- but it was interesting that the only participants willing to do anything as a result of that forum were the young film makers like the ones from the s8 group). Anyway... the truck idea; its probably something very suited to a compact culture like Europe where driving from cultural centre to cultural centre requires no great superhuman effort.

Super 8 Distribution

The greatest money spinner could/should be the distribution of super 8 work. Whether as a video yearbook or as a thematic program on s-8 made available to schools for a fee, with written back up material. Its also the area where the AFC is likely to come to the party because its seen as getting bums on seats, getting the work shown to a wider audience, which continues to be the greatest hurdle for Australian independent film culture generally. I felt last year and again now that the Melbourne S8 Film Festival could spawn a quality "Best of " tape, with critical writing/reviews of the works by members. the beauty, I think, of coupling it to the festival is that it minimizes the all consuming selection process. The selection structure only needs to be set up once. Such a compilation would/should interest distribution organisations like AFI Distribution, Ronin or Oceania. The right tape could interest the National Library, State Film Centres (and secondary schools with media departments at the right price.) The Victorian State Film Centre could/should be approached to see if they are interested in acquiring multiple copies for their regional

libraries network. The MIMA yearbooks, for example, have sold, and these contain what the wider community would see as more esoteric work than the 'right' s8 compilation. (Hot off the press.... things are on the move on this option. Sarah knows all about it.)

Re S8 distribution in West Germany, Reinhart Wolf and Christiane Schauder run KOB-8 (The Independent March 87) and have set up a passive distribution program to compliment the Newsletter and workshops they run. They bought prints from film makers and pay a fee per minute per screening. Money from a student organisation helped pay for prints.

Super 8 to Video Transfer.

S-8 to video transfer, seeing that it is such a well worn path to getting work 'out there', whats the quality like? There are strong aesthetic arguments against film makers having their work distributed on video, especially in such work where the nature/texture of film is a front-line concern. Video definitely does change the work, it is a different medium after all. It may be, however, in some cases at least, that this difference is not worse, just different. Brodsky and Treadway (The Independent Nov 86-again-) favour transfers and mention some of the traps to getting good transfers done. They point out that the high contrasts of s-8 stocks, developed for projection purposes and the small tonal range of video results in a loss of tonal range when S-8 is transferred and underexposed film often does not transfer well either. Kodachrome because of its lack of grain transfers best(naturally). So much so that there is no reason to shoot on 16mm if you're going to video. Why are there no production companies seriously using s 8 for their productions with this stock? Is it because of the transfer of sound, the fact that you cannot shoot at 25 fps (perhaps there are cameras around, probably those expensive Beaulieus)? Maybe the stock is not fast enough for flexible shooting? Maybe the writing is on the wall now with no new equipment coming onto market and how long will there be Kodachrome available anyway? Its such a nice stock when shot with plenty of sunlight.

With Black and White the lowest grain Plus-X transfers best to video. In the transfer 10% of the film image is cut off the edges so that anything on the edge of the frame, any important action is lost and can effectively destroy one's work. Nam Jun Paik the video artist made some films where he only had images outside the TV safe area so that transferred to video all you would see was black. It's also interesting to ponder the effect this 'cut off' has on films shot for television. that is, it becomes difficult to venture your action to the edge of the screen, and thus use the whole screen, if you're continually shooting the action in 'TV Safe' as people call it.

Super 8 is Still Cheap

S-8 is still cheap. Stop complaining (who's complaining? I'm not. Are you?). Its cheaper than buying a \$2000 video camera etc. Thats whats being bought on those overseas trips out of suburbia now. Wait for the next instalment on buying VCRs cheap from suburbanites who have moved on to the next big thing. At the moment they're still falling off the back of trucks (VCRs, not suburbanites). Only a penniless artist would steal a super camera. A thief would steal a VCR.

Super 8 is still cheap. Just compare it to 16mm. Its all relative. Why waste \$2000 of your own money getting a print of an avant garde 16mm feature which will not get shown anywhere when for the same money you can make 10 new super 8 features. Who's got \$2000 anyway. Still, scraping together enough for one s-8 feature is within the realms of the family man (that's me). But, hell, then you're still stuck with the whole exhibition dilemma.

Some Comments About Super 8 As a Film Maker.

It can be an imposition having to wait two weeks to receive film back from Kodak but this delay can become part of the strategy of one's film making. It can be helpful when working in a diary mode because you end up getting stuff back in the mail at a time when you are shooting three rolls on: Memory comes into play. You gain a distance from what you have shot. You use realisations you get from your rushes in a different way in what you shoot next than you would otherwise. When I put that film in the mail I let go of what I've created a lot more easily and this seems to affect the approach of what I receive back.

The flexibility of these light cameras that you can hold above your head at arms length etc open up so many 'new' possibilities. Also the idea of sticking the camera on a fishing line and lowering it down buildings and stairwells while shooting. Some Canadian film maker that shows their work through Funnel does this. The time lapse possibilities as exemplified through Nick Ostrovskis' work is so complimentary to the equipment available on S8. You can hide your camera in the bushes, tape it to a wall. It is no gigantic (big maybe but not gigantic) deal if someone pinches it cos you can always pick one up cheaply. Having these time lapse switches directly on the camera means you can switch from real time (18/24/36 fps) instantly to a frame every second/2 sec/10sec/30sec and thus react quickly to what you are filming and get this feeling of filming everything, this contraction and expansion of time (perhaps in the same way that we experience time, which, with attention shifts and excitement etc, also speeds up and slows down); Don't take your eye off the subject, just a flick of the wrist. Its these sorts of things that interest me in my own film making in super 8. The diary form has so much freedom (as has the S8 medium) and allows you to go off at tangents(as I've done in this whole ramble, probably.) yet I try to keep my ear to the ground to find out whats happening and is possible with exhibition and distribution. I believe its part of being a responsible film maker. Thanks for listening.

DIRK de BRUYN 1988

3rd Melbourne

SUPER 8

FILM FESTIVAL

GLASSHOUSE CINEMA

25, 26, 27 AUGUST

Phone - Mark Freeman - 428 0699
ENTRIES WANTED - CLOSE 29th JULY

ADS

ADS

FOR SALE: Chinon Silent Camera 612 XL Macro
18 and 36fps and single frame capability
Excellent condition - \$130

Chinon Sound Projector ST-330
Excellent condition - \$130

Focal Editor/Viewer
Excellent condition - \$40

Ring 721 2311 between 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. and
ask for Stephen Hessels.

FOR SALE: Canon 514 XLS Sound Camera
18 and 24fps and single frame capability
Excellent condition - \$220

Ring Liam on 489 2325

NOTICE: A shop on the South side of Grey St.
St. Kilda, just West of Barkly St., called
REZOUND/SCAN I think, rents out videos of
amateur films or videos.

The film-maker gets a proportion of the money
and their work gets seen. (They also rent
out sound and video equipment and sell same,
and a few books and magazines.)

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

Financially the Super 8 group is pretty FUCKED. So if you want us to keep on keeping on, pay up NOW!

A current list of paid up members will be published in the next news letter. If your not on it LOOK OUT! Super 8 Heavies will be around to extract your \$10.

Next Meeting

JUNE OPEN SCREENING

14th June, 1988

7.30pm

AFI THEATRETTE

47 Lt. La Trobe St

MELBOURNE

7.30 - 8.30 JOHN CALDER "LIVE"

9.00 pm onwards BYO FILMS

MIMA

film & video

NIGHT

TUESDAY 28TH JUNE

1988
GREIRSON CINEMA
7.30 PM

* Michael Leggett Live
from London Film-makers
Co-op. (+ films)
* Robert Greer films from
Nat. Library

BYO FILMS TOO.

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

Contributions welcome (deadline: 4th. Monday of each month).

Membership to the Super-8 Group is \$10 per 12 months.

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SUPER EIGHT

Registered by Australia Post
Publication No. vbg 7570

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