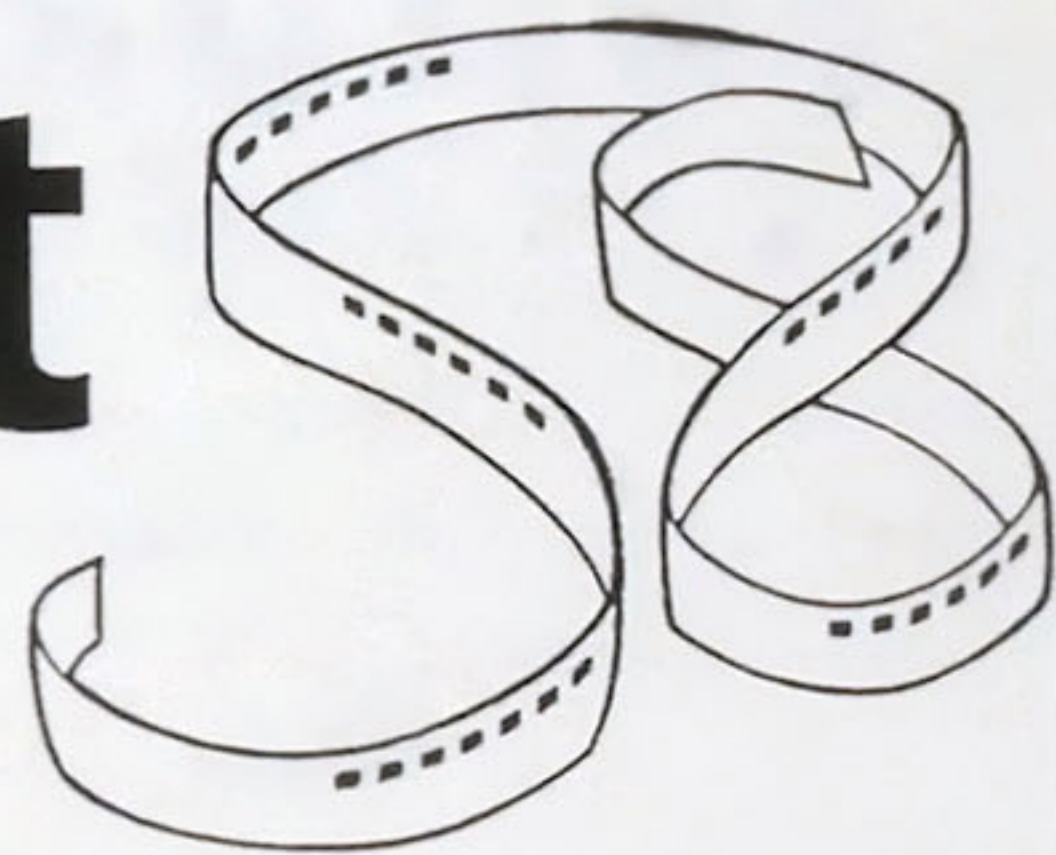


Super Eight

Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group



Issue 51 September 1990

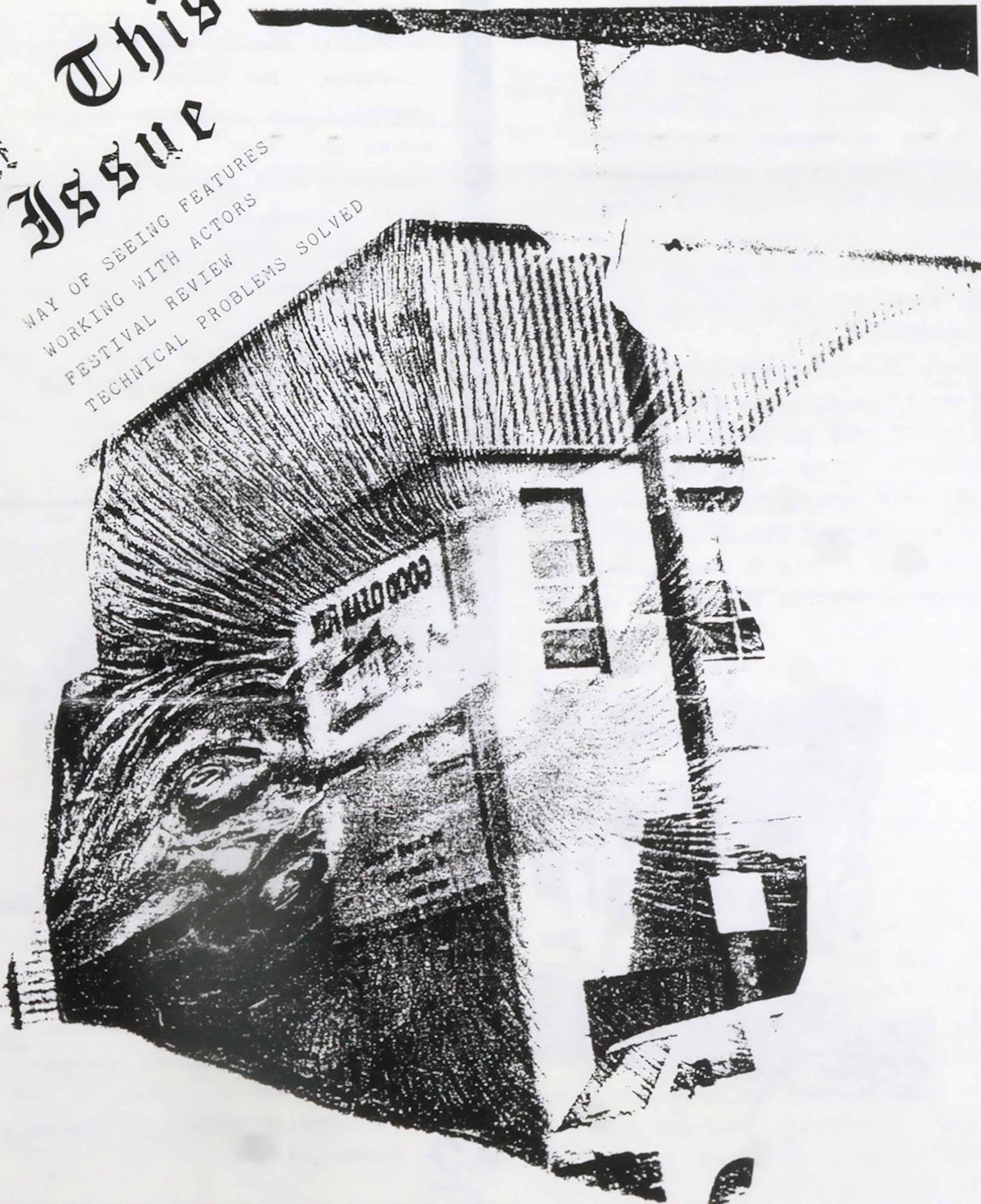
In This Issue

WAY OF SEEING FEATURES

WORKING WITH ACTORS

FESTIVAL REVIEW

TECHNICAL PROBLEMS SOLVED



EDITORIAL

This is the first 'new look' issue of MS8 designed to spark the eye, pique the mind and explode the consciousness.

As a recent arrival to the molten plasticity of 8mm celluliod, I have found no greater challenge than the creation and communication of A Way of Seeing.

As guest editor I hope to establish the strengths and differences of Super-8 from the video age and the mainstream cine-collosus. It is only through stretching the bounds of the 'given' contemporary consciousness that we can explore the distant lands of dream and vision, and drive the propellor of filmic innovation.

It was with this intent that I wrote "Towards a New Super 8 Aesthetic". I seek to encourage a lively discourse of ideas, film visages and philosophies. Through establishing our our own unique character as a Super 8 Film Group, we may better understand who we are and in which direction we wish to travel. This is not to try and impose an ideology or aesthetic standpoint, but merely to encourage ideas, perspectives and debate.

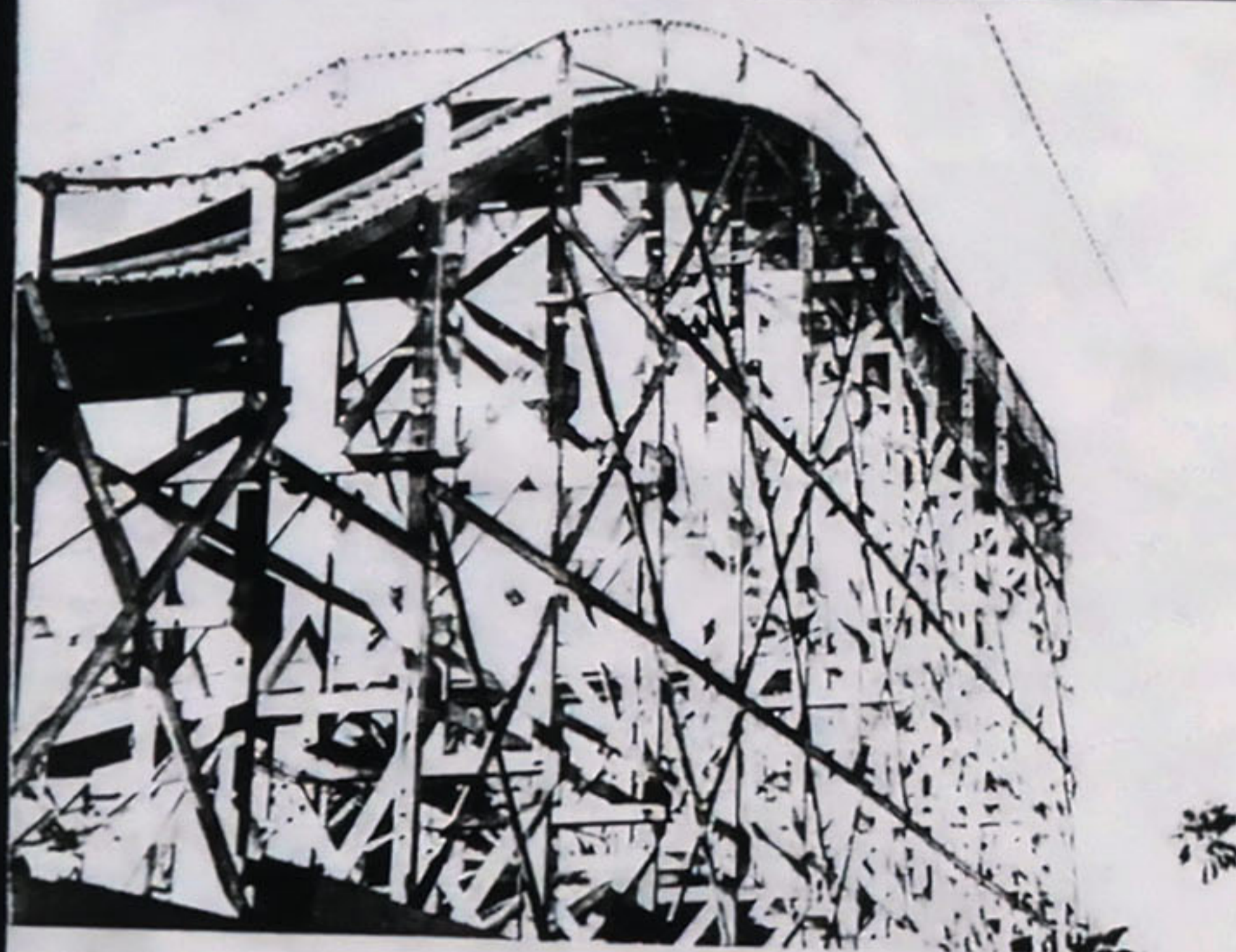
Mute apathy and commercial emulation will cast S8 into obscurity. Creative fervour and dianoetic interest will light the fire within, and ensure S8 remains at the leading edge of "that shining scalpel eye".

This is the Newsletter of the MELBOURNE SUPER 8 FILM GROUP. Works published reflect the opinions of the authors themselves, and not necessarily those of the Committee or the Film Group as a whole.

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- stills, graphics, photos, letters reviews and articles are sought for MS8 No. 52. SEE PAGE 8 for details.



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FOR SALE FOR SALE FOR SALE

3 Kodak 40 200' sound cartridges
(they fit in the Braun Nizo, or Bill's Elmo.)
Only \$60 each - a real bargain.
Ring Mark La Rosa on 429 9847.

FRAMES Film and Video Festival, Adelaide,
September 1990.

Congratulations to Damien Grant and Laki Sideris
for getting their films into this festival.

Of the 15 or so we submitted, the following
three were chosen:

The Verdict of the Rational in the Face of the Absurd
and Enter Frame/Exit Frame by Damien Grant
and madonna by Laki Sideris

CANTRILLS FILMNOTES IS OUT NOW!!

Issue nos. 61/62 is currently available from
Readings Bookstores or cinema foyers.

Of particular interest to Super-8 group members
would be an article by Bill Mousoulis on his
non-narrative films, an article by George Ray/
Random on his films, and a review by Adrian
Martin of the "Six Secrets" film program (films
by Richard Tuohy, Sandy Munro, George Random,
George Ray, Phil Kanlidis, Mark Zenner.)

WHO NEEDS A SPLICER?

by Ian Poppins

Who wants a new splicer? Well, if you do,
I've come across a shop which has about 20
new ones, hidded away in the back of the shop.

Some have splicing tape and some don't. Many
brands are represented. The shop is:

Elliot's Photo Centre
116 Glenferrie Rd.
Malvern 3144
Phone: 509 6786

Give them a call or go in. The owner has said
he is prepared to let them go cheaply, so he
can get rid of them. This may be the way
to obtain that cheap splicer that you always
wanted.

SUPER-8 HITS THE BIG TIME

by Ian Poppins

According to the May issue of the new magazine
"Amateur Cine Enthusiast", Tony and Beryl
Shapps of the Widescreen Centre in London have
said that the commercial use of 8mm. film is
increasing. They say that it had limited use
in the feature **Black Rain** while the Hollywood
production **Roger and Me** was shot entirely on
8mm., then blown up on 35mm. for cinema projection.

Meanwhile in Melbourne, Paul Cox's latest film
Golden Braid has some shots in it which look
suspiciously like Super-8 blown up to 35mm.
Paul Cox has used Super-8 in some of his
previous films.

Who knows, someday perhaps the Melbourne Super-8
Film Group may make a feature on Super-8, and
have that blown up to 35mm. for exhibition
purposes.

EQUIPMENT

All items are for borrowing
unless otherwise stated.

Everything to be booked with Bill
on 429 9847.

BRAUN NIZO 6080 sound camera (\$15 per day)
sharp lens; intervalometer; wide angle
lens; crystal sync pulse; various speeds.

BRAUN NIZO 6080 sound camera (\$15 per day)
sharp lens; intervalometer; wide angle
lens; crystal sync pulse; various speeds.

SANKYO sound camera
basic sound camera, 18 or 24 fps.

DAWN BROWN MEMORIAL CAMERA:
CANON 814 silent camera
excellent camera, but silent

ELMO ST-180 projector (\$5 per day)
twin-track. basic, but solid, machine.

MILLER Junior tripod
currently without pan handle

small tripod

screen

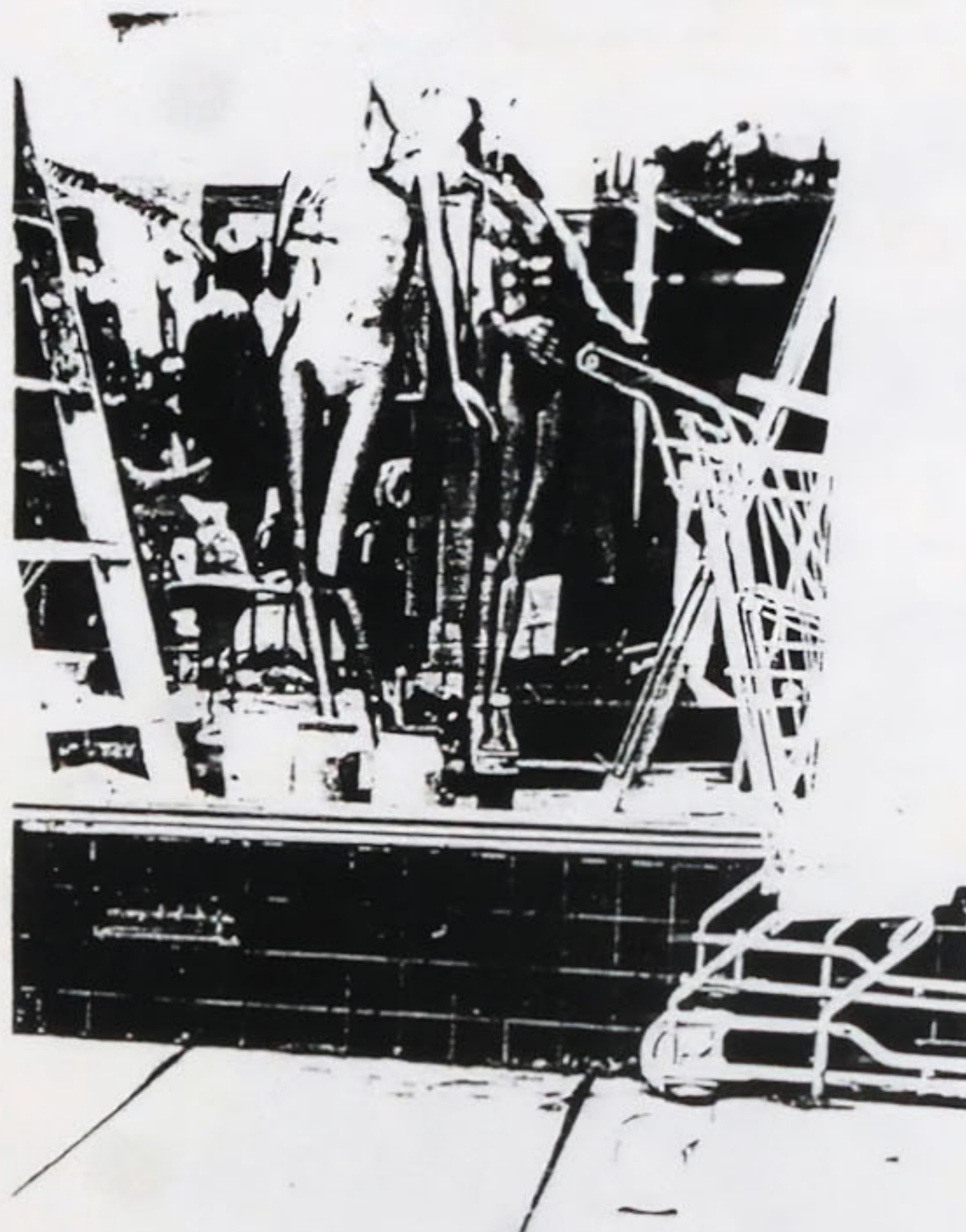
2 editor/viewers

2 WURKER splicing machines

WURKER splicing tapes, 50 per pack, \$6 per pack.

Thanks to Sonia Leber for arranging the donation
of the Canon camera to the group. Dawn Brown
lectured in Communications in RMIT, and died
recently.

Also thanks to Brendan T. Murray for arranging
the donation of some lights to the group from
actor Michael Pate. Hopefully we'll have
them in working order soon. Check with Bill
on the progress of that if you need them soon.



Way of Seeing Feature!

"THE MAGIC IN HER LITTLE GIRL EYES"

(Some notes on the medium of Super-8.)

BY BILL MOUSOULIS

"To each his own, it's all unknown,
if dogs run free."

- Bob Dylan, "If Dogs Run Free".

At the risk of playing the sober intellectual reminder in the midst of a Super-8 festival afterglow, or, worse, the insistent canvasser of ideas in the midst of a rash of Super-8 film activity, I offer, yet once again, some thoughts on the nature of Super-8. Once again, because, like the medium itself, there is, and should be, an air of instability surrounding the theoretical and analytical formulations attached to the medium. But this instability should and does not, of course, preclude the actual results of that formulation process. And so:

Freedom. Freedom has been headily polemicized and valorized in writings on Super-8, which is fine, but it has also been unnecessarily romanticized. This narrow visualization is practically a plot, an all-too-easy assigning of a place to Super-8 within the overall film picture. The implicit belief is that Super-8 is free, exciting, undergroundy, whilst 35mm/16mm is stale, prescribed, prestigious, and that never the twain shall meet - kind of like a moral victory to Super-8. Well, this 'moral victory' can come and suck my dick!

There is no logical reason (don't be fooled, punters) why a narrative feature film cannot be as free as the freest Super-8 film. And at this point I do not wish to join in the chorus of the adolescent acceptance cum acclamation of films such as *Robo-Cop*, *Blue Velvet*, or *The Abyss*. I will leave that to hipper-than-hip critics who seemingly perversely enjoy the process of finding the good in the bad and vice versa. One must reluctantly leave this system (I myself would have to forego *That's Life!*, *She's Having a Baby*, *River's Edge*, etc.) and go directly to the guts. And that spells only Jean-Luc Godard, who not only considers but practices no-budget film-making alongside his 35mm. features. That is the acid test. And: there is no need to romanticize someone like Godard, for he is there, for real, for certain, for ... the cinema.

There is a moment in Godard's *Une Femme Mariée*, which is ridiculous yet sublime. The woman, shot in close-up, is speaking to her husband and saying something like "I want to know people." And then she says "I want to know them all", and looks directly into the camera for an instant. I don't find this a Brechtian, distancing device; I read it as an assertion that the cinema can only be worthy if it transcends itself. Godard says "one should put everything into a film." The spirit of Jean-Luc Godard, no doubt, is in his breathless enthusiasm for the cinema, and in his freedom (that word again) from it (the years of exile). What he does is truly magical. Work to love. Love to work. Passion.

But I better get back to Super-8, hadn't I? (As if I ever left it!) But I will not, because I believe that the crucial things are not medium-specific. And I mean medium, not necessarily film medium. Let me continue ...

Freedom. Freedom from what, to do what? Well, just freedom actually, freedom from constraint, from limitation, from duty. And freedom to ... be free. For nothing is to be prescribed, by anyone, let alone this writer. Although, to the word freedom, I would like to add the words love, innocence, openness - words like that. Michael Leunig says "there are only two things: love and fear." And, surely, love is its own reward, its own justification. What else can explain the phenomenon of sport, where the winners feel joy simply because they have been committed to, and achieved, what? Putting a ball through a hoop? See what I mean ...

The great intangibility within and of such an argument does not inspire confidence in people, people (we're talking Western people) who are conditioned on 'logical' systems of perception and understanding. In the formula 'I love x', it is not 'x' which is important, it is 'love', although this does not mean 'x' is limitless. One cannot love 'hate' for example. As for what love is, or what to love is, that cannot be said, by its very nature. It is magical, a magical, mysterious process, and different for everyone. That is not a cop-out; it is a fact.



In his book *The Meaning of Culture*, John Cowper Powys has a vision of "what is left over after you have forgotten all you have definitely set out to learn." That echoes Charles Bukowski's sentiments of destroying what education, religion, etc. have taught over the years. These scenarios suggest that the crucial thing in life is to nurture some inner, pure, individual essence we all have.

In an article entitled "Love: Elusive Elixir of Life" that appeared recently in *The Sunday Herald*, Jan Morris says: "One aspect of love is its terrific fun - none of your sour satire or incomprehensible surrealism, but the plain knockout entertainment, which is essential, in my view, to life itself." She finishes with a suggestion: "Is there eternity to love? Is there love after life?" She knows she cannot prove it, and she does not try. I like that.

Tying all these bits together, one could say freedom, love and self-expression (expressing something that is uniquely one's own) are all profoundly connected. As well as the idea that to love others one must firstly love oneself. If you're having trouble following all this, all I can do is direct you to the eyes of someone who loves. Look at the eyes; look at how they exude warmth, empathy, innocent joy. And feel privileged for every moment of that look (yours and the person's). That person, in loving, is giving of him/herself. You can then either accept or betray that look. And that's the story of Super-8.

PRINCE FARI MEETS THE CHILLBILLIES WHILE SEARCHING
FOR THE PREACHER'S COOKBOOK - Peter McLennan
(New Zealand) July 29.

Writing. Words. Explanation. A question of relevance.
Spitting out, emitting something; not just a receptacle for other
peoples half assed visions, conformed to the traditional capitalist
California script model. The art movie, the farce of Hollywood.
The films that leave the greatest impression on me are the ones i
fail to comprehend. That is, films that present a vision i cannot
parallel with any previous cinema experience. Narrative closure is for
simpletons and academics and people who eat too much spaghetti.

Why do i do this? Why create? Consume, presume, some
form of sanity/insanity? The self doubt is a fun part of it too;
thats the bit i go to town with. Isolation is a form of seclusion,
yet also a source of inspiration. I have no one to tell me how my
films should fit in, where they slot into the realm of the independent
art cinema, the film artist. Theres virtually no tradition of it
here, and its only practised in dark rooms and dingy basements,
talked of in whispered voices by passing strangers in seedy coffee
houses. It is frowned upon, sneered at, or considered something
one grows out of, like sucking your thumb, or believing in Santa
Claus.

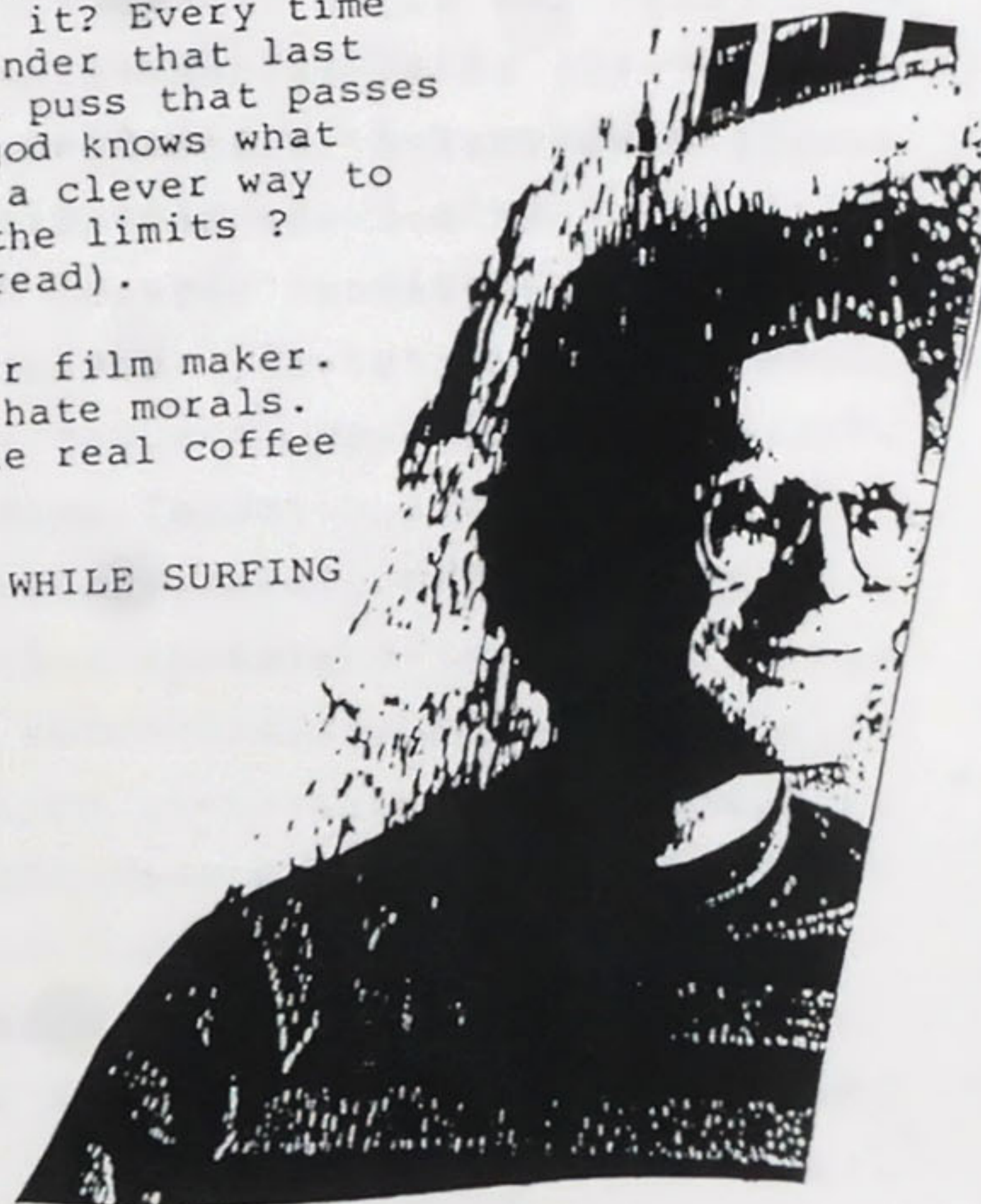
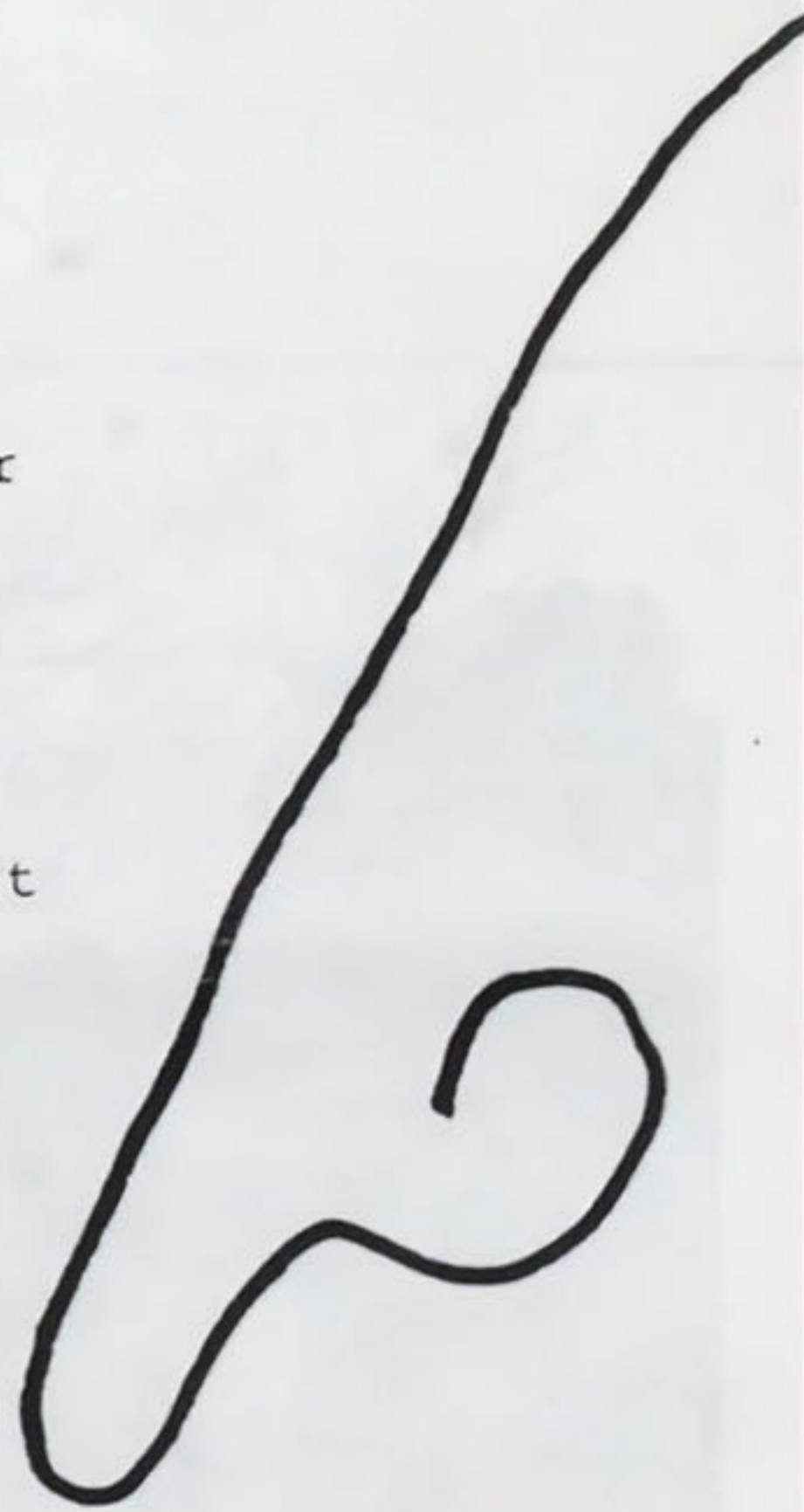
You sit in the land of the Gods and moan; hey, you want to buy
super 8 film, you go to the shop, me i have to fork out mega bucks
and get a bank draft and buy the stuff from offshore (corporate-
speak). Theres no fight in what you create, its all too easy for
you. And theres better spaghetti. At least the pizzas here are good.

A quick burst of reality. What goes boom biddy boom biddy boom
boom boom? The drum machine sitting in the corner of my room, (when
its plugged in). Does a mean rumba too. Thats what really gets on
my nerves; films with too much beat and not enough soul. Music instead
of ideas; silence is golden, the Tremeloes were right LESS IS MORE.
Best use of sound i've seen recently is Night Cries, Tracy Moffatt,
real spooky shit. Ah, the delightful sound of a baby screaming its
lungs out, how sweet it is. Sugar pie honey sweet. Honey, sounds
like a film, don't it? Oh yeh, one of those films i never get
to see; kinda hard to get to the open screenings from this side
of the pond.

Sound is what you hear, its not cinematic padding, seeing it used
as polyfiller is sickening, but how often do you see it? Every time
you check out a normal movie (i smell a minefield under that last
term), Hey, the big question, do you see the visual puss that passes
as mainstream? (i mean everything from Robocop to god knows what
they throw at the silver screen). Now, wasn't that a clever way to
get out of a tight corner, i mean, am i gonna set the limits?
Hell no, i'm gonna get me some pizza (and garlic bread).

MORAL; Garlic bread is soul food. Makes you a better film maker.
Chocolate, however, just makes you better. i hate morals.
a vision shared is a vision wasted, just like real coffee
with milk. Eat more garlic bread.

Next installment; PRINCE FARI CATCHES ZENNERPHOBIA WHILE SURFING
THE SIDEWALKS OF ST. KILDA.



BOOK REVIEWS



Sheldon Renan, The Underground Film,
E P Dutton & Co., 1967.

This lively and accesible introduction to the early American underground movement leads the reader through the major experimental films of the 60's. It describes in detail a variety of filmmakers, their work and methods including Kenneth Anger, Jordan Belson, Stan Brakhage, Robert Breer, Ed Emschwiller and many more.

Chapter Two, "What is the Underground Film" gives a lucid approximation of the avant garde filmic voice and intent. As well as an historical perspective, Chapter Six indicates future directions in "Expanded Cinema". A useful handbook for those who wish to view the American avant-garde movement at its zenith.

Parker Tyler, Underground Film: A Critical History, Secker & Warburg, 1971.

This absorbing and excellently written panorama surveys and analyses the avant-garde film movement as a whole. In short, imaginative chapters, Tyler develops his own critical aesthetic through discussing the images and thematic intent of several filmmakers. A few examples; The Underground Versus the Taboo on Reality, Popularising Peep-shows: the Infantile Gimmik, Can the Technician Escape the Pad?, and the Abstractness of Avant-Gardes. A clutch of quality still reproductions and an extensive list of the most important underground films made up to 1971 compliment this clear, lively and accessible introduction to apertures with subversive intent. A must. (Held at Melbourne city CAE).

J H Mathews, Surrealism and Film,
University of Michigan Press, 1971.

This informative though circumlocutory work describes the emergence and bloom of the surrealist consciousness in film since the seminal works, L'Age d'Or and Chien d'Andalou. The style is a little rambling, often sinking into solid academicese. However, intriguing source material, primary references and a detailed professional biography of Luis Bunuel make this a useful tool of enquiry. (Held at Melbourne city CAE, opp Flinders St Station).

TECHNICAL Q & A

QUESTIONS AND ADVICE ARE SOUGHT
FOR MS8 No. 52.

Q: I often find my Kodak Tri-X over-exposed in daylight conditions at auto exposure. Why is this and how can I counteract it? Signed, Snowy.

A: Tri-X is a 'fast' B&W film for low light conditions. It has an exposure indexed ASA rating of 200, whereas most daylight colour film is 160 ASA. This means that most S8 cameras will 'read' light conditions in through-the-lens light meters at 160 ASA. The best remedy is to experiment with bracketing shots using manual exposure controls $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 f-stop below the automatic light meter reading.

Q: An old film of mine, upon recent showing, drove the projector into clattering epilepsy. Why is this so? S-s-signed F-f-f-flicker.

A: After some years, tape splices will stretch and cause the sprockets to be out of alignment. Upon projection, the film will 'jump' at each faulty splice.

Q: What are the pros and cons of wet and dry splices?

A: Wet splices are most commonly used in 16mm and professional work. The spliced area is considerably smaller and is less likely to stretch with time. Tape splices are most suitable for S8, are easy to apply, and less likely to become brittle over time.

Q: I am considering making my first film. What is the minimum equipment required and where can I obtain it at the most reasonable cost?

Signed, Noddy.

A: The most basic equipment is, of course, a camera, preferably with mike and sound function. For fixed camera shots, a tripod is highly recommended. If you are to be doing any editing, then you will need an editor viewer, splices and a projector. The Trading Post usually offers the best deals.

Q: I have difficulty in keeping the filmed subject correctly focussed. Could you suggest tips to remedy this this? Signed, Hazy Stacey.

A: Split level focussing systems are pretty reliable if the subject is perfectly aligned. A common fault is failure to set the diopter (viewfinder) focus. To set- with distance ring at maximum, and zoom at maximum telephoto, focus on a distant object such as a telephone pole, and align. A long tape measure and a static subject also help.

Q: I have made a B&W film recently to which I would like to add a musical score. What are the sound options of B&W?

CONTRIBUTIONS

A: The easiest is to simply select or make a sound cassette and play on a tape deck in synch with the screening. More 'wholistic' solutions are to add a sound stripe (Contact Cineservice or send to Home Talkie Co. in Sydney), or copy onto colour film and dubb in sound through the projector.

Q: I have a video camera and projector. How do I go about making a copy of my film?

A: Quite good results can be obtained from projecting the film onto a screen at 18 fps, using a very small image. Place the video camera less than 5' away and record.

Q: I am told S8 film is more durable than video. What is the lifespan and tonal retention of each medium? Signed, Tonal Retentive.

A: S8 is widely recognised as archival, with a lifespan of over 50 years. A standard VHS video tape, however, will begin to lose quality after 5-7 years- bearing in mind S8 has far superior tonal density and sharpness from the start. The only way to preserve video is to transfer onto professional grade optical disk at enormous expense.

- are sought for the following:
BOOK REVIEWS (past and present)
TECHNICAL Q&A - Have your problems solved!

READER'S FORUM- Vent your mind, not your spleen.

FILM REVIEWS- 8mm and beyond.

WAY OF SEEING FEATURES- What is Super 8, where is it going, what could it become?

TECHNICAL FEATURES- eg. "How to Make Quality Direct Sound on 8mm".

FILM NOTES- Let the Philistines know what your film really means!

FESTIVAL REVIEWS

FASCINATING FILMIC FACT FILE- or 'Interesting S8 Facts I Heard on the Bus One Day'.

ALSO- STILLs, PHOTOS, GRAPHICS, POEMS.

AND REMEMBER- We're open to suggestion!

Send your CONTRIBUTIONS, typed, single spaced A4 split columns (if possible) to:

The Editor

Melbourne Super 8 Film Group

Newsletter

PO Box 1150

Richmond North, VIC 3121.

EXPRESS YOURSELF!!!



Way of Seeing Feature



TOWARDS A NEW SUPER EIGHT AESTHETIC

by Julian Dahl.

"Confined from early childhood in a world that almost everything he ever hears or reads will tell him is the one and only real world and that as almost noone, on the contrary, will point to him, is a prison, man-l'homme moyen sensuel- bound hand and foot not only by those economic chains of whose existence he is becoming ever more and more aware, but also by chains of secondhand and second rate ideas, the preconceptions and prejudices that help to bind together the system known (ironically as some think) by the name of 'civilisation', is forever barred except in sleep from that other plane of existence where stones fall upwards and the sun shines by night, if it chooses, and where even the trees talk freely with the statues that have come down forever from their

pedestals- a world to which the entrance has generally been supposed, up till now, to be the sole privilege of poets and other madmen"(1).

As a buzzing martian dragonfly perchance blown into the anamorphic scope of the 8mm frame, I have found the considered construction of philosophical and aesthetic positions, (aside from gaseous ego inflation and personal rapacious negation), to be a most absorbing part of this newsletter. For aspirant auteurs nervously awaiting the triumph of torpid video-scapes, it is essential to establish our filmic difference from the tube and the cine-collosus alike. Co-conspirators! Sweaty vuoyeurs! We need to find new ways of looking and new countries of aesthetic

sensibility upon which to gaze. With this intention, I now turn to Michael Filippidis' article "Espresso Duo" (ED) which featured in last month's newsletter.

The article appears to view the world through a kind of monocular materialism. It is posited that humankind apprehends "reality" through two planes: raw data from the "primal" sensory level is processed within a linguistic, conceptual framework. Art is perceived as the attempted unity of these two planes. Language (and the filmic voice?) are assumed to be agreed, objectively verifiable signifiers of what 'is'. Therefore, "it is impossible to express something that is unique and particular to the artist".

What this view overlooks is the personal, subversive of the Super-8 medium. Financial accessibility and editing malleability make S8 an ideal tool for the self-expressive signature.

Of course language is culturally and materially determined, yet our construction of meaning (and films) can be as much a function of empirical cliches as original inspiration. The creation of new meanings beyond the ken of classical notions of "beauty" or "truth" fuel the metamorphic turbines of cultural progression. I would disagree with the view that Super-8, formed and used within the current cultural melange, is necessarily a function of current conceptual shorthand. It is the uses to which the tools are put and not the tools themselves which define the product. From this perspective, it is futile to canonise criterion such as "beauty", "truth" or "reality". Language, at best, is

only a codified approximation of human commonalities constructed and used through the filter of personal connotation.

Generally accepted terms and devices in modern cinema are commonly used to reassure the viewer through the opium of verisimilitude. However, S8 is the pariah of the wide screen and the video age alike. The probing 8mm pinhole is a poor conduit for the mainstream movie machine. Its real strength lies in its conversational tone, mobile plasticity and experimental potential, freed from the dictates of bottom-line-logic. Its form is the personal kaleidoscope. Its motor is auteuristic passion.

ED undermines this perspective when it refers to Hitchcock's Vertigo and its "premise of reality blurred by a psychopathic denial of the present reality". This "present reality" and its hackneyed baggage are the foundations upon which the Commercial Beast rests. Any experimental divergence from the Beast is often branded "psychopathic" ie. amoral, licentious, possibly violent and definitely anti-social. Hollywood, Universal, Crawford et al. can be seen as the creators of the 'given reality', the contemporary consciousness. Cliche factories are in the business of manufacturing and reflecting the dominant mode of seeing, directed to and by the widest market for the highest price. Therefore, to refer to THE reality is to submit to the assumptions of soap opera caricatures.

It is the widely accessible Super-8 format which can allow us to from mainstream monism towards different fragments of being. From squatter's home movies of

barricade tactics to verité vuoyeurism, to dad's docu-dramas: S8 can promote the individual's attempt to make sense of this cosmic riot and to communicate approximations of new forms to others. This is why I would argue S8 is a major playground of the avant-garde, ardent auteurs and the foaming revolutionary.

I would agree with ED in that "It is one of the defining traits of art that (sic) it attempts to ensure the future out of the remnants of the past within the present". The reflective, descriptive power of art can illuminate new understandings of human experience. It is prescriptive inspiration which glimpses what can be.

At one point wanton grappling with pure definition sinks into exasperation when admits that "all our attempts at defining such truth...via our art fall perilously close to an exercise in communal solopsism".

But this is only a momentary lapse in a work swathed in "the cinematic language system" and its bed-rock-steady realities. The article is replete with "systems", defined in one dictionary as "a methodical or coordinated assemblage of parts, facts, concepts" (2). One might also add, "finite".

We are then told that "it is ridiculous to consider the role of the artist in putting that meaning out there of a need to express something as it does not matter in the long run who the artist of the work (sic) was ..(because) sooner or later another director will direct a film that way and come up with the same meaning".

"Espresso-Duo" overstates the potency of clear, generally verifiable meaning within cultural signifiers.

What it fails to acknowledge is the notion that authoritative decrees of meaning do not necessarily enforce transparent import. Accepted terms or devices can be seen as extrinsically derived benchmarks particular to, and constructed from the vagaries of personal perception.

ED then takes the next logical step by inferring that language and filmic device, based on a codified shorthand of common human experience, cannot then express an exclusively personal experience. This article has attempted to point out the flaws in this logic through emphasising the idiosyncratic nature of personal meaning construction. Inspiration, creative madness and the pinhole of our own perceptions are used to imply the impossibility of fixed realities and to speed their redundant demise.

ED then concludes with the view that "it is the system which owns the films, not the directors". If a film is entirely confected from the current system of words and other films then it will be "owned" by the system and not the director (as exclusively punitive the connotations of 'ownership' may be)*. The reactionary, limiting assumptions behind notions of ownership and 'the system' are most relevant to an analysis of commercial film rather than the perilously permissive 8mm highwire.

Words, systems and devices are useful to apprehend meaning from absurd confusion. We use them to re-create our own images of existence and to understand our place within them. But this soon becomes an exercise in damage control. These comforting definitions allay our fears and confusions and fool us with contrived certainties. But life moves on while

our revered systems have become cliched platitudes. They may comfort us, but they also inhibit critical thinking. If we are to push the boundaries of the small frame, we must assume nothing and reject the 'given' to create our own dictionary of being.

If Reality does exist, it would be necessary to ignore it as irrelevant.

NOTES

(1) page ix, David Gasgoyne, A Short Survey of Surrealism, Frank Cass & Co. 1970.

(2) p 145, Collins English Dictionary, 1981.

(*) Perhaps a ready contention such as "Is a film owned by the film-goer or the film-maker?" could be discussed in the next issue of MS3? ●

FILM NOTES FOR:

"End of Beast- Going Cheap".

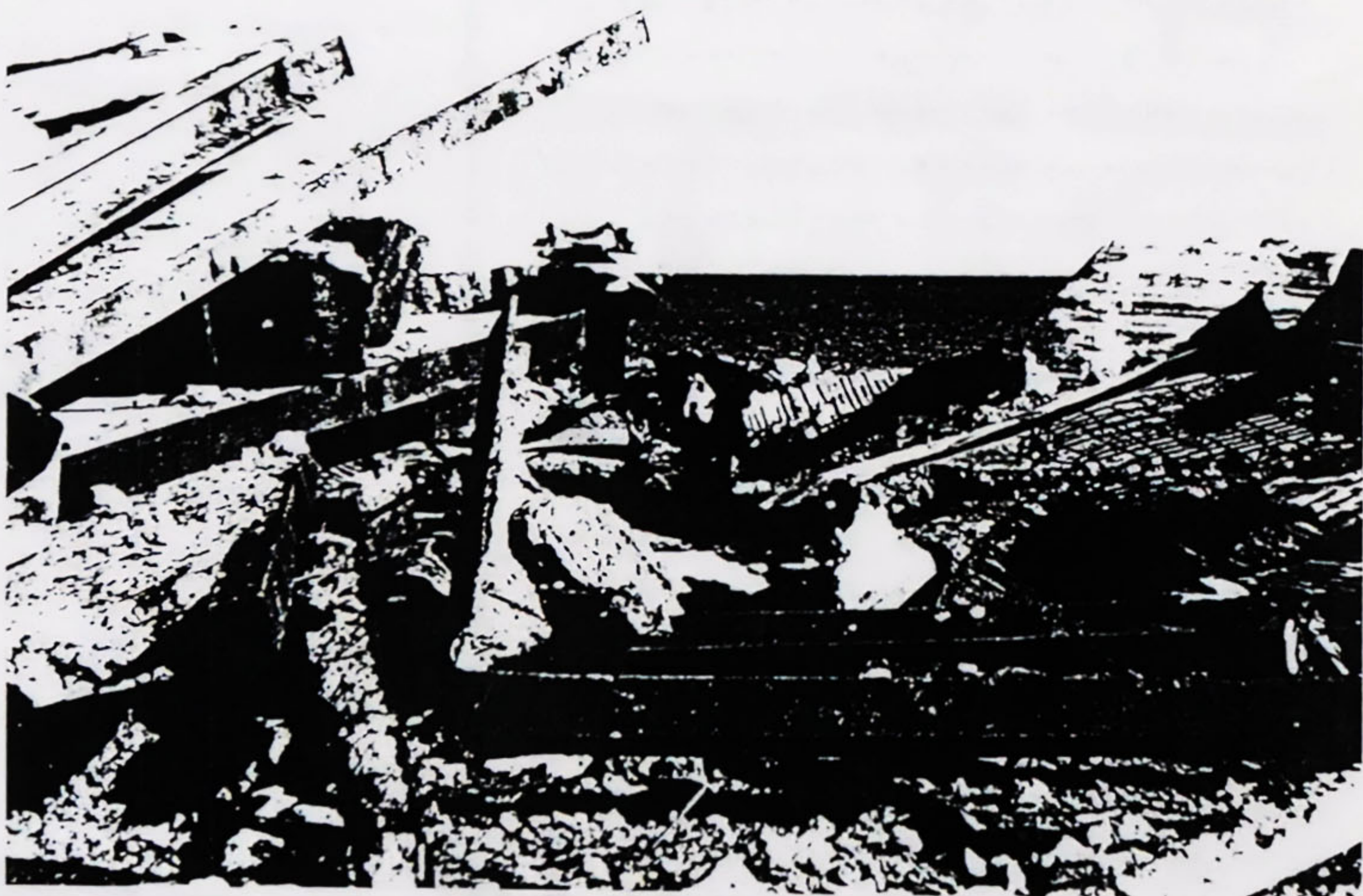
Who shall buy the butcher's waste?
Heart, lung, pickled tongue
These cast mute, a hobbled race
Blackened hands and dreams unsung
Slash your brother, a meal to make
Hungry hordes, a rabble meant
To buoy the cream above the rest.

But what implies this power design?
Where herds assent to toil: resigned
Millions yearn, a thousand bloat
Our choice, they say, consumptive gout
The sylvian lie flows down each throat.

So who shall buy the butcher's waste?
Congealed blue and sawdust flecked
Cut from the beast by machine unclean
The crumpled shufflers of violet face
Brocken stares and fallen grace
The battling fodder taught to repeat
For those who eat prime fillet meat.

by Julian Dahl 1990

THE
MAN WHO
NOSE



notes on acting

Collected by Mark La Rosa.

'We have already talked about the fact that the playwright gives us only a few minutes out of the whole life of his characters. He omits much of what happens off the stage. He often says nothing at all about what has happened to his characters while they have been in the wings, and what makes them act as they do when they return to the stage. We have to fill out what he leaves unsaid. Otherwise we would have only scraps and bits to offer out of the life of the persons we portray. You cannot live that way, so we must create for our parts comparatively unbroken lines.'

We don't really know much about how to get at the many layers, the variations within one human being—how to tap the resources. So is it the actor's work to do it on his own? Actually I think there is a rehearsal technique, or in film, a technique of filming that can encompass that. In a rehearsal you can break apart a scene layer by layer, okay this time just play it for this, and do it a few times so it gets beyond just being an exercise, so that it really becomes internalized, and then after you've done that a few times, say okay let's play it this way a few times, let's bring out this level of conflict. Each time you try a new way, there's an overlay of the last way or ways that you've tried it. So by the time you're come to the tenth take or so, you have all these different layers going. Although you're only concentrating on one. I love that way of work. I found it is very releasing.

Try always to begin by working from the inside, both on the actual and imaginary parts of a play and its setting. Put life into all the imagined circumstances and actions until you have completely satisfied your *sense of truth*, and until you have awakened a *sense of faith* in the reality of your sensations. This process is what we call *justification* of a part.'

When they are spoken the words come from the author, the subtext from the actor.

How does the film actor maintain spontaneity and naturalness in take after take?

I think the way you keep what you're doing is by not trying to keep what you're doing. By thinking of each take as a new thing. Certain things, just by the logic of the scene, are going to come out the same, or at least have the same value or meaning. If you try to exactly repeat the moment or the behavior, it goes completely dry on you, I've found.

So you try not to repeat?

You don't try not to repeat, you rewind and go back to the beginning. You try to stay alert to what's happening, alive to what's happening between you and who you're playing with.

The actor must realize that no matter how much he thinks he knows about his role, he is only thinking of the external reality of the character. Once the actor is awakened, he can also see the dream inside the character. What the character really is. Then you have a connection.

'Unfortunately, that unbroken flow is all too rare. Most actors, if indeed they are aware of it at all, use it only when they are saying their own lines. But let the other actor begin to say his and the first one neither listens nor makes an attempt to absorb what the second is saying. He ceases to act until he hears his next cue. That habit breaks up constant exchange because that is dependent on the give and take of feelings both during the speaking of the lines, and also during the reply to those already spoken, and even during silences, when the eyes carry on.

Such fragmentary connection is all wrong. When you speak to the person who is playing opposite you, learn to follow through until you are certain your thoughts have penetrated his consciousness. Only after you are convinced of this and have added with your eyes what could not be put into words, should you continue to say the rest of your lines. In turn, you must learn to take in, each time afresh, the words and thoughts of your partner. You must be aware today of his lines even though you have heard them repeated many times in rehearsals and performances. This connection must be made each time you act together, and this requires a great deal of concentrated attention, technique, and artistic discipline.'

"To an actor a word is not just a sound, it is the evocation of images. So when you are in verbal intercourse on the stage, speak not so much to the ear as to the eye."

Do you see any differences between the function and technique of the actor in film, and the actor in the other forms of drama?

Film's prerequisite: not to act at all—to be "caught" behaving a certain way. Eyes important. Stage—
projection of character via voice



WORKING WITH ACTORS

...So you have an idea for a film you wish to make. To realize this you need people who will behave in a certain way in front of the camera. If these pre-determined patterns of behaviour spring from the motivations of personae dreamed up by you, then you are presented with the problem of casting.

"I should cast Brenda. She is exactly like the character of Lucinda. Exactly! In fact I wrote the part based on what I know of Brenda. But Brenda won't act for me. She is shy, and hates film. Bad luck! ...What about Fay! She is not the Lucinda type, but she's keen, she's a good friend, and she will act, no worries."

Yes, using friends to act for you is a fine idea. They will work for free. They trust and understand you. They are willing to go with your ideas, not because they necessarily understand them, but because you seem so passionate about it all.

And you know and understand them. Through shared experiences over time, you have amassed a bank of information about them, enabling you to loosely predict how they would react in any given circumstance. If appropriate, you can even incorporate their traits and mannerisms into your written character, in an attempt to 'bring the character to life'.

"But what about the character of Ben. It is a complex part. Peter and Frank are completely wrong. Sammy's close. But he's a real dropkick, and will only ham it up. I need someone who will do it properly. I need a real actor!"

You have nothing to lose by consulting the yellow pages and ringing acting agents. Because you cannot afford to pay for their services, most will not be very helpful. Others, however, will listen to your character breakdowns over the phone and give you names and phonenumber right there and then.

Young actors need experience and a showreel. You can provide these. Older actors are more difficult to entice, but if you present yourself well and they see quality in the script (and they have the time), they may agree to do this unpaid work.

Whoever you finally get, be generous with them. Provide much; petrol money, meals, and try to meet any other expenses that they come up against while working on your project. Try to work your way around their timetable as well as yours. No doubt they have jobs, school, family, and other commitments, so their time with you is precious. Don't waste it by calling them in two hours early so that they sit there watching the lights being set up. Be productive with them. They have come to act! Among the 346 worries and distractions plaguing you during pre-/production don't forget your obligations to these people.

So now you have made contact with a 'legitimate' actor. They have acted in soapies/commercials/fringe theatre/educational videos etc...They have taken singing and dancing lessons. They have directed a one act play. They have a resume with a smiling portrait of themselves attached. On first meeting they seem courteous and keen. You know little about them and they about you. They have unanswered questions:

"Is he from Swinburne? Is this film going to part of some course or job? What does he mean by Super 8? Has he made films in the past? If so, let

me see them. Why is he spending so much of his own money on this caper? Does he one day want to make real films and become famous? Where will this current film be screened? Will it be screened?"

Speak about yourself openly and honestly. Don't shy away from boasting about true achievements. By the same token, don't hide your doubts. For me hiding behind the pose of director (that you adopt to cope with the experience) closes the door to so much. Soon, in the rehearsals, both of you will be exploring the gooy, mysterious, contradictory, terrifying stuff that flows through human beings. You may as well let down your guard right away.

A concern over the quality of the film as a whole necessitates a concern over each major element of the film. Hence a concern over the quality of the performances, and hence time and effort devoted to rehearsals. (Let me point out, though, that you can feed the bloke down the street his lines a minute before shooting and he may come up with something brilliant on screen.

THOROUGH PREPARATION + SKILL + TALENT = GOOD ACTING. Beware, this is a formula, and the only rule in art is that there are no formulas for success. You define your success and you must contrive the means to obtain it.) Nevertheless, if you wish to lean on tradition, you can rely on rehearsals as a means of fusing the filmic idea and your actors potentials.

Rehearsals, when imaginatively and intelligently used, can achieve a hell of a lot. Games help relax cast members and familiarize them with each other. Improvisations force the actor's mind to zero in on any given subject or circumstance, and can often reveal the birth of cliché. Swapping roles during readings can lead to a deeper understanding and interaction between actors and may result in more dynamic ensemble acting. Running through the same scene while stressing different emotions and motivations each time can help an actor to appreciate the subtextual layers.

All these methods are at the director's disposal to use and swap. And swap you should. Just as a farmer rotates his crops. Keep moving in that crazy dance between actor, text, and director whereby you provoke, encourage, disrupt, step back, until the actor is awakened to the part.

Good luck!

Mark La Rose

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OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS - PUBLIC
TELEVISION AND SUPER-8
AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!!!

THE SUPER-8 FESTIVAL

The super-8 festival was the usual mixed bag.

Alot of unnecessarily violent films. Did the selection committee really pick them to show the broad cross-section of super-8 activity? Or are the members of the selection committee just a bunch of closet psychopaths who gave these excessively violent films blood-curdling yells of approval?

The Shack by Mark Savage was the most savage film. An unwanted baby is dumped at the beach in an abandoned old shack on top of a cliff. The words "18 years later" appear on the screen and the audience sees the baby suddenly grown up, in sack cloth fending for itself. Anyone who walks below the shack is murdered. The film becomes more and more brutal as it goes on.

Surface Tension by Doug Mason from South Australia was an interesting portrait film. It looked at subtle underwater effects and surface reflections which I have not seen before.

Pause by Raffi Ghazarian was my favourite. Its a B/W rephotographed film. Swirling grain, Portraits of Richard Tuohy, Raffi, Raffi's parents and others. Very abso_rbing.

Flashing Flesh and Bones, Part II by Maeve Woods was abit long. Here interesting juxtapositions of foreground and background were explored. Alot of it seemed to be out of focus though. The best shot was a close-up pan of a flying seagull with people on the beach in the blurred background. Another shot was what I thought to be an interesting slippery-looking, dark-brown Henry Moore sculpture; as the camera zoomed out, I realized that the image was of friendly neighbourhood dog plops. The film includes a James Bond cat with steel choppers!!

I went to two and a half sessions out of five. I missed films like A Distant Relation, Sucked, and The Cuttock-Heads. I noticed that Mark Freeman trimmed his film Sucked by 8 min. I don't think this was necessary. When I saw Sucked at the Cinematheque last year it looked fantastic!! I hope the 'haircut' hasn't spoiled the film.

I attended the Sunday afternoon film-makers forum: "Super-8 Film-Making in the 1990's" at the RMIT function room. I arrived abit late and the room was so packed that I couldn't find a seat. Alot of young people (students/optic youth) were there. They asked alot of questions and seemed very interested in Super-8. The panel members - Simon Cooper, Marie Raven and Richard Tuohy were all very articulate. Bill M. chaired it like a pro. The workshops look very promising!!!

• open screening •

NEXT OPEN SCREENING

Tuesday, September 11

Glasshouse Function Room
RMIT, Swanston St. City.

At 7:30 p.m. -

OPEN SCREENING ... OPEN SCREENING ... OPEN

For this month, the whole evening will be devoted to an Open Screening. Which means it's time to show that film! People whose films were rejected by the Super-8 festival (and that means 34 of the 76 films submitted) should bring their film along (we won't, of course, announce that the film was rejected.) Even if you've got something from the past - if it hasn't been screened, bring it along. Tell your friends, tell your friends - this month it's OPEN to people, to anyone.

From 7:30 till 10:30 - lotsa time!!

LAST OPEN SCREENING

At the last screening there was a retrospective of the films of Simon Cooper.

Trouble in Paradise (1985, 20 mins)
The Big Parade (1986, 6 mins)
Auto-Portrait (1987, 15 mins)
I Walked With a Zombie (1987, 12 mins)
Shadow of a Doubt (1988, 8 mins)
Like This For Years (1981, 13 mins)

There were only a few films brought in for the actual Open Screening, no doubt because everyone had their stuff in the festival:

End of Beast - Going Cheap by Julian Dahl
Dignity by Charles Jameson
Bugs Bunny Rides Again brought in by
Ian Poppins

Photos

Editorial & Layout By: Julian Dahl

Contact Number: Bill Mousoulis 429 9847

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Super Eight



If undeliverable return to:

Melbourne Super 8 Film Group
PO Box 1150
Richmond North
Victoria 3121

SURFACE
MAIL

POSTAGE
PAID
Richmond North
Victoria
Australia 3121

Chris Windmill
6/158 Chapel Street
BALACLAVA 3183

1009