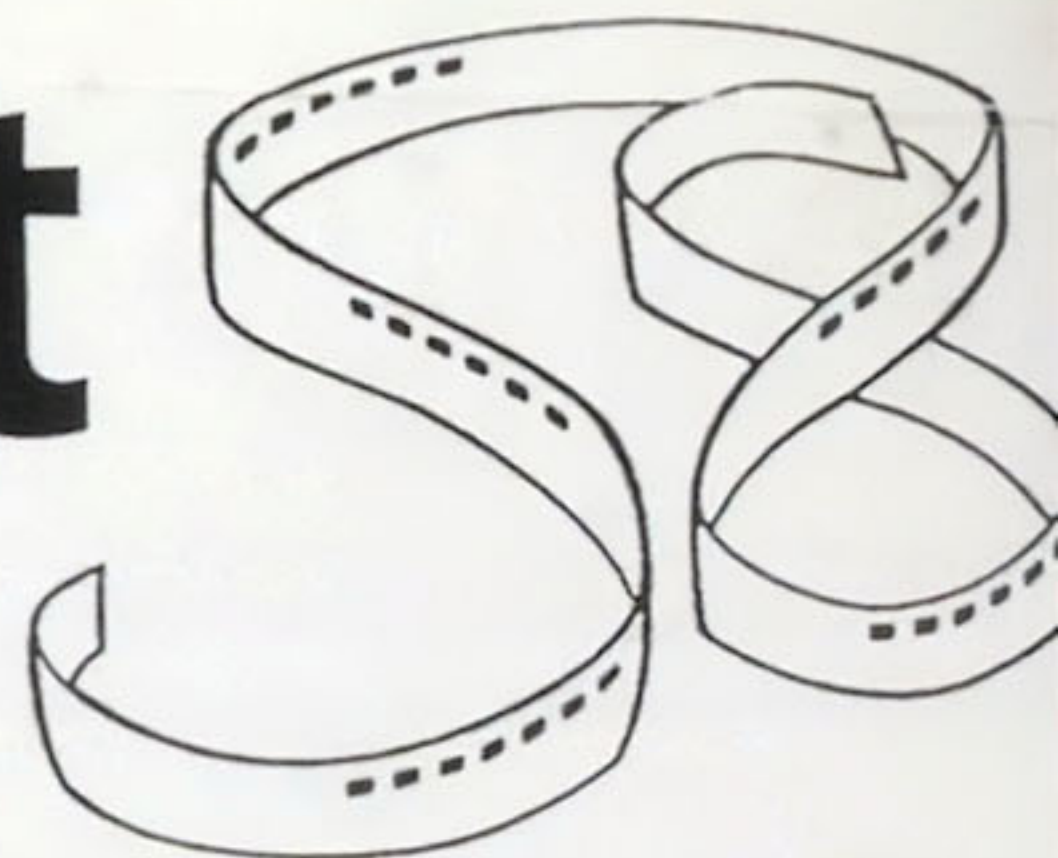


# Super Eight

Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group

Issue 62 September 1991



**VAN BAR**

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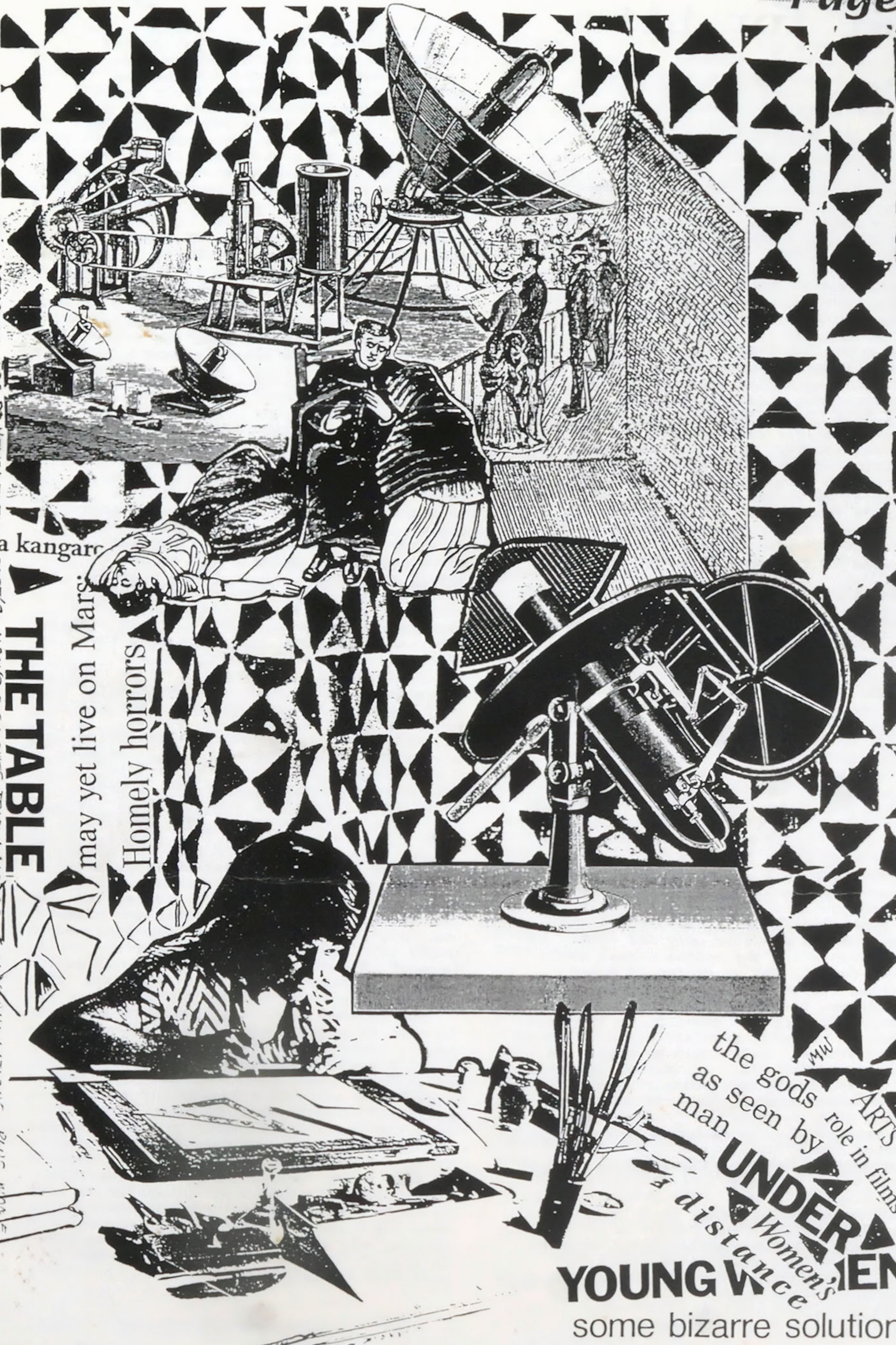
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THIS COLLAGE AND COVER DESIGNED FOR SB NEWSLETTER SEPT '91 USING ELEMENTS FROM: A. ALBERTS, PACAIA MID LATTIGUE, PUEC, WMAE



may yet live on Mars

Homely horrors

# THE TABLE

a kangaroo

the gods role in films  
as seen by  
man

# UNDERWOMEN

distance  
YOUNG W  
some bizarre solutions

# Lust for Life

An essay on the ontological implications of the film medium of Super-8.

by Bill Mousoulis

Perpetually and increasingly, Super-8 stands as a potent reminder of The Naked Truth. It is - in the medium of film - the only answer to the most important question we are asked in life. You know, the question that people ask at parties: What do you do?

To argue for individual, creative expression over Working-for-the-Man has been a long-standing passion of mine; a passion that will hardly abate now. But I hope my ravings aren't seen as just romantic folly. Jaspers, for one sensible philosopher, clearly sees Reason and Existenz (loosely, Passion) complementing each other. There is surely a method to my madness.

Let's clarify one thing first: for all intents and purposes, working as an assistant to an assistant on a big feature film is the same thing as working in an office. (You are part of a workers' union, for example.) I'm arguing for the individual expressing him or herself, in creative expression. (Building, making, forming; and in any field, not just the arts.) There's nothing worse than those methodologies of depersonalization prevalent in society, which produce automata, not people (for example, the Treasurer's Budget reading was criticized by one minister as being "un-aesthetic".)

The assumption I'm working from here, of course, is that all people would rather make films than work for somebody else; that it is better, more fulfilling, etc., to do so. Most people would agree with this, I guess.

The dispute I would have with voices of criticism would no doubt be centred around the idea that not all people can be free, individual, creative artists. That that is possible only for some. In the sense of: "The social fabric would break down." But of course it would! Working-for-the-Man only encourages the insidious, global exploitation and oppression of people. Super-8, in the film area, is the only popular/folk art medium in existence. Life could be happy and productive for all. It is not, because, as Billy Graham passionately lamented in a famous speech, "there's something wrong with human nature!" Greed leads to injustice. Unless human nature can change dramatically (i.e. I'm taking 'nature' to be non-intrinsic here) we will never be happy-little-artists-running-around. (Inge: "The proper time to influence the character of a child is about a hundred years before he is born.") The only hope in sight is the environmental crisis, which could resolve in new lifestyles and values. More bank scandals would help.

The other point a critic would raise to me would be that such a paradisiacal concept is unrealizable because, even if everyone were to achieve freedom and artistic expression, there would still be many tasks that would need to be performed (i.e. just to be able to live or function) that are far from creative, and in fact, are downright menial. I would respond by saying that these tasks, in an ideal world, would be shared by everyone, completely equally. (Co-operative movements of whatever kind have shown this to be possible. But only small ones. Communist governing, for example, continually fails in this regard - the leaders pervert their natural and healthy sense of responsibility into a manic power-exercise. You can't employ a great system with the same bad blood running through the same sickened hearts.)

As things now stand, the worker's lot, that is, on a profound 'soul'-level, is surely not a happy one. Like Nietzsche (see *The Dawn*, section 173), I tend to view the average person's emphasis on leisure-time as a betrayal of how much he or she hates his or her work-time. Thus, the solace-impulse, or what is fashionably known as "the pleasure principle", comes into play. (And all manners of vicarious living, even to the absurd extent of having politicians as practically soap stars - e.g. "What will Kennet say next?" I mean, who the fuck cares?) And so people fill their lives with holidays, cars, clothes, knick knacks, etc., ad infinitum, trying to plug the empty space which is their Very Soul. The attitude is: "Oh well, I can't have everything. I'll just enjoy myself the best I can." My question is: "Why can't you have everything?"

The answer that an artist would give, struggling to pay the rent, is: "Because I have to pay the rent." We have to acknowledge something here now, though. An artist (given that creativity is 'better' than menial work) is more enlightened than a non-artist. This is not elitist. The ugly truth is that the greatest dream many people have is to reverse the tables that life has presented them with - to be powerful, rich, successful themselves one day. And so beaten children turn into child-beaters. As Socrates would say, if they do the bad, it's because they don't know the good. (Knowledge = Virtue.) And that's why I say "enlightened."

The dilemma of finding money to live is real enough, though. I myself, supposedly someone who is "successful" because I get grants, have just had to go back on the dole right now, and, with no savings, it's quite hard living off \$140 per week. The pay-off is that, apart from two small aberrations, I have managed for ten years of adult life to do my own thing. Remember what the ideal is: not to make money from film, but to make film. (What they call "artistic integrity.") To manage both would be a bonus. And, more importantly, it is imperative to attempt such. (Rather than having to go on and off the dole or having to take part-time work, etc.)

So, how is this done? It is done, I believe, by thrusting yourself in at the deep end, but gradually, if that makes any sense. Let me explain.

For a start, nothing happens overnight. The level of commitment required is measured in years, not months. Young adults would be advised to live with their parents' for several years first, building their careers. Film-making is a whole world and the funding bodies' books are crammed with names of unsuccessful applicants, i.e. one-timers. Fools! The funding bodies would give you money just to shut you up for awhile!

DIVE IN! The number of people who hold back is just extraordinary. I've heard the excuses, the so-called "reasoning" (which has everything but reason!), a million times. The things people say to themselves and to others, to keep themselves going, to stop from despairing ... Things like: "I'll have money to do something" (said by those working full-time). Or: "This way I've still got lots of time" (part-timers). Or: "It'll give me something to fall back on" (degree-hunting students.) And what happens to these people? Respectively, they have money but no time, time but no inclination, and neither time nor money nor inclination.

Okay, I know that everyone knows what life is about and the application that is needed and that it is all very difficult. I know that difficulty from experience, past and current. I fail myself often. I wish I didn't. The crucial thing is, I believe, to see failure as failure. That's what the people in limbo-land (half-artists/half-workers) don't do. They should despair. They should feel every little bit of their failure; only that will create movement, and progression. What these people are acting under now, is what Sartre calls "bad faith." Shackles? What shackles? "Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie, which we ascribe to Heaven." (Shakespeare - the first existentialist!)

Now to the important part, for, remember, it is the artistic expression and the freedom of and to do such that is Priority One. And it is much harder to adjust the mind to that than it is to adjust the body to near-poverty standards. The hindrances are mainly social ones, the valuing of variations on the old work ethic or prestige/money or even just sheer visibility. These pressures can be very subtle: for example, an artist can be castigated for being unprolific. I say it is a sublime artist indeed (I myself cannot do this) who mulls over an artwork for an eternity! Slogan: PROCESS NOT PRODUCT. Only philistine artists separate their work from their lives (viz. just like any other Working-for-the-Man man or woman would.)

To nurture that germ of an individual idea in art is a very fragile business. Michael Lee (the Australian experimental film-maker) once told me that it took him 15 years to feel really confident with his work. The process is totally heuristic: you have to live in your work,

breathe it, love it; the way a mother loves her child. (Godard, quoting Van Gogh: "Does it make me any less of a human if I make art rather than babies?") And it is yours, made with your love, etc., etc. (Pukesville.)

Once the initial step of commitment is taken, the journey that follows is extraordinary. If you do it properly, the dream of being a full-time artist will be killed immediately; it will then be a reality, a given. (I, for example, just cannot even picture myself doing a normal job at the moment.) Other dreams will develop, and be consequently realized: to develop in your art, to do something different, etc. A series of dreams and achievements. The artist who rests on his or her laurels and/or lives on the fame thrill is most definitely a dead artist. The sense of security that prestige offers is the same sense of security that your average suburban couple lives off. It is stasis. Stasis of the Soul.

And in that is my warning to you, fellow journeyers. There is little security in being an artist, and virtually none in being a great artist. Freedom, after all, is freedom. It means living in the present, constantly reinventing yourself, having a Buddhist-like detachment from things, etc. It's what Nietzsche called "the philosophy of the dangerous perhaps." And the danger doesn't stop there! As if this vortex of freedom wasn't enough in itself, it contains a dark corner. That corner where Kierkegaard, for example, lived his life out in a state of manic melancholia, where he contemplated "the unending question about what I am." Sartre had his own version of this: "nausea." It seems that freedom itself can be too much of a good thing! To sum up, it's all really scary. But really exciting too.

And there it stands. It hasn't gone away in all this rambling of mine. Super-8. The Big, Fat, Ugly, Beautiful, Awful Truth. It's even a way into mainstream directing, if that's what you want (albeit through the back door.) But what it really is, is the Magic of your Soul, the Flame of your Life. And there's only one person stopping you from doing it.

B.M. 21/8/91, 7 p.m. - 12:00.

For Anna Ziginis, Maris Rocke, and many, many others.

## Membership Super 8 Group

Cost only \$15, \$10 Concession annually, which includes a copy of **Super Eight** each month, opens doors to open screenings, a wide selection of equipment hire.



# CANTRILLS

TEAMWORK --- TWO TRAVEL FILMS BY ARTHUR AND CORINNE CANTRILL.

LAST OPEN SCREENING

When a week or so has elapsed between viewing and writing a different perception of the event emerges, diverse emphases colour that remembered experience. I find my thoughts running over both films and also introduction and presentation the night that Arthur and Corinne showed their Super8 explorations of Berlin and of Bali.

It is during the introductory ceremony, their 'song and dance act' that one realises how committed Arthur and Corinne are to this idea of a joint work and a shared consciousness. Their debating even continues un-selfconsciously in front of the audience as details are recalled and clarified. I have for a long time been interested in work that is produced within a small team and in the context of a long standing man and woman partnership this is particularly fascinating. So much has been written about the uneven power relations yet so little has been theoretically resolved. Indeed this partnership is interesting in so far as they overturn standard notions of exploitation by a practical demonstration of their co-operative working methods.

Just as neither film-maker appears to exploit the other film-maker, so do they even handedly deal with their subject matter. People are not conspicuous in Cantrill films but the Cantrills have ways of suggesting the human trace, their artifacts and marked environments which obliquely tell of the human passing through. The Cantrills are also conscious of the reflection in others of their own journey, their own passing through a place. This was emphasised in the BERLIN NOTES by a soundtrack with repeated references in German to the fact that Arthur and Corinne were staying in the city and making films.



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Thursday 12th September 7pm. Fringe Film and Video Festival

A Super 8 Group curated screening of recent Melbourne films including: 'Gritty' by Maeve Woods, 'Bridget among the ten thousand things' by Mark La Rosa, 'Sides of Sea on the shortest day of the year' by Sandy Munro, 'Event Horizon' by Sarah King, '253M' by Les Hillis and 'Ordinary Flux' by Richard Tuohy. Don't Miss. At the State Film Theatre.

Without the tripod's constraints the Cantrill camera in this statement about Berlin succeeded in bringing the viewer into contact with the film-makers'puzzlement and sense of mystery in the superb park, the floating gilded angel, the strangely apprehensive expression on a turning monumental figure with moustache. The camera, never as coloniser but always tentative, explored the old tall buildings with their hints of memory. The camera found the ambiguities of the scars not yet repaired from WW2. The camera took us into the apartment with it's width and height and slanting light. We visited another less formal park with great trees and and a sunset: interrupted, tremulous, the mixing of dark trees over a fuzzy orange orb.

In the Bali film there was a sense of ease and pleasure and the feeling that the Cantrills were allowing themselves to enveloped by sensations. Many shots were the familiar travelling along a road images but there were special qualities. The camera was low down, not the more frequently employed elevated view of a land surveyed from plane or train or mountain top. These fluid shots were fluttering with palms, blurring with fields, sunlight, shifts. A bridging device was introduced in the form of some brown and white batik cloth and some seeds that were filmed at variable speeds so that they shimmered. This linked vistas. This brought together foliage and sea ringed rock temple and market place. The Gamelan played on throughout.

Maeve Woods.

## FILMPLUS

- \* 16mm AND SUPER 8 PROCESSING  
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and VHS video)
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FAST TURNAROUND

40 PRINTS

## Editorial

Last month there was a lively open screening following the Cantrill's program. I particularly enjoyed the short computer designed Super8 cartoon by Peter Schuller called 'Pongo Checks the mailbox'....Members of the group will be showing films at the MELBOURNE CINEMATHEQUE on 4th September. As part of FRINGE FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL The Melbourne Super8 Film Group will be curating a program which will include some films to be shown for the first time. For the next open screening we are promised a new film by Gary O'Keefe (He will also be providing notes and interesting working diagrams concerning this film in the next Newsletter!). We have a very interesting 7:30 screening from the Cutts family : Graeme Cutts's 1974 colour film "The Wreck of the Hesperus" and Michael Cutts's two films "A-Love-Apparition" (1978)with "Lamour que j'ai.." (1979). Michelle Ryan has taken over the management of our equipment hire from Richard. Michelle can be contacted on 537 2552. You can hire the Braun Nizo Sound Camera for only \$15 per day or \$75 per week. There are other good cameras, Editor Viewers for as little as \$1 per day, Wurker Splicers also for \$1, a Miller Tripod Junior and an Elmo St-180 Projector for \$5 per day or \$30 per week.

The SUPER 8 FILM FESTIVAL 1991 will be held at the STATE FILM THEATRE on the weekend of 22nd, 23rd and 24th November. Get your films ready. Enter them in plenty of time. Make it one of the best festivals yet!

## Last Open Screening

SUPER 8 FILMS BY ARTHUR AND CORINNE CANTRILL.....

"NOTES ON BERLIN" , 1986.

"BALI FILM" 1991.

## Open Screening

BEETLES FOOTAGE.

"PONGO CHECKS THE MAILBOX" by Peter Schuller.

"THE WEDDING" by Perry Laird.

"ROOM TO LET" by Jordan Strbuc.

"JILL MORRIS/OUR CLASS '88" by Sandy Munro.

## Next Meeting

Tuesday 10th September  
Glasshouse Meeting Room  
RMIT, 360 Swanston Street.

## At 7.30 pm

SPECIAL PROGRAM OF FILMS BY GRAEME CUTTS AND MICHAEL CUTTS

"THE WRECK OF THE HESPERUS" colour, 20mins., 1974, GRAEME CUTTS.

" A- LOVE- APPARITION " , 6 mins., 1978, MICHAEL CUTTS.

" L'amour que j'ai " , 6 mins., 1979. MICHAEL CUTTS.

## Open Screening

OPEN SCREENING WHERE ALL FILMS ARE SCREENED TIME PERMITTING

at 10 pm

**Editorial & Layout By:** *Maeve Woods.*

**Contact Number:** Jenny Pignataro 531 4783

This newsletter is published monthly by the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group.  
Contributions are welcome (deadline 4th Monday of each month).  
Membership of the group \$15 (\$10 concession) annually.

# Super Eight

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