

# super eight

THE NEWSLETTER-MAGAZINE OF THE MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM GROUP NO.8 OCT 1986

## FESTIVAL

THE 1ST MELBOURNE SUPER-8 FILM FESTIVAL

On the final night of this year's Super-8 festival, as well as the cinema being packed and other goings-on (see Barry's cartoon), several films had their premiere screenings:

### The Son and the Heir by Piero Colli

A real surprise this one; containing that naive awkwardness that's in all our first films (this is Piero's first), but also containing something else, something genuine. The first shot is beautiful, stunning and some of the others are haunting, transcendental. If anyone is willing enough to call the cinema of the Melbourne Super-8 scene brave and new, then the name Piero Colli has to be at the top of their list.

### The Third Stroke by Ian Kerr and David Wood

Purporting, perhaps, to be a mood film (there is atmosphere, but no mood), this film leaves me indifferent, feeling nothing. All I see are just shots; a shot of this, a shot of that, a shot of this. What's more, the notion of the everyday is brought up only to be used as part of a cute joke, rather than considered and refurbished itself.

### Untitled by Rolando Caputo

Could Rolando possibly be crossing over from essay film-making to story film-making? No, I guess he'll always be stuck somewhere between the two. Still, that charge of emotion glimpsed (briefly) in Cine-Romance and Futur\* Fall: Where the Sidewalk Ends has come to the fore with this new film, oh boy has it come to the fore. Merryn Gates' wondrous idiolect still guides us, but more space is given to those irrational things of cinema: gestures, the framing, music, etc. What more can I say? Film of the year.

### The Foxicle by Chris Windmill

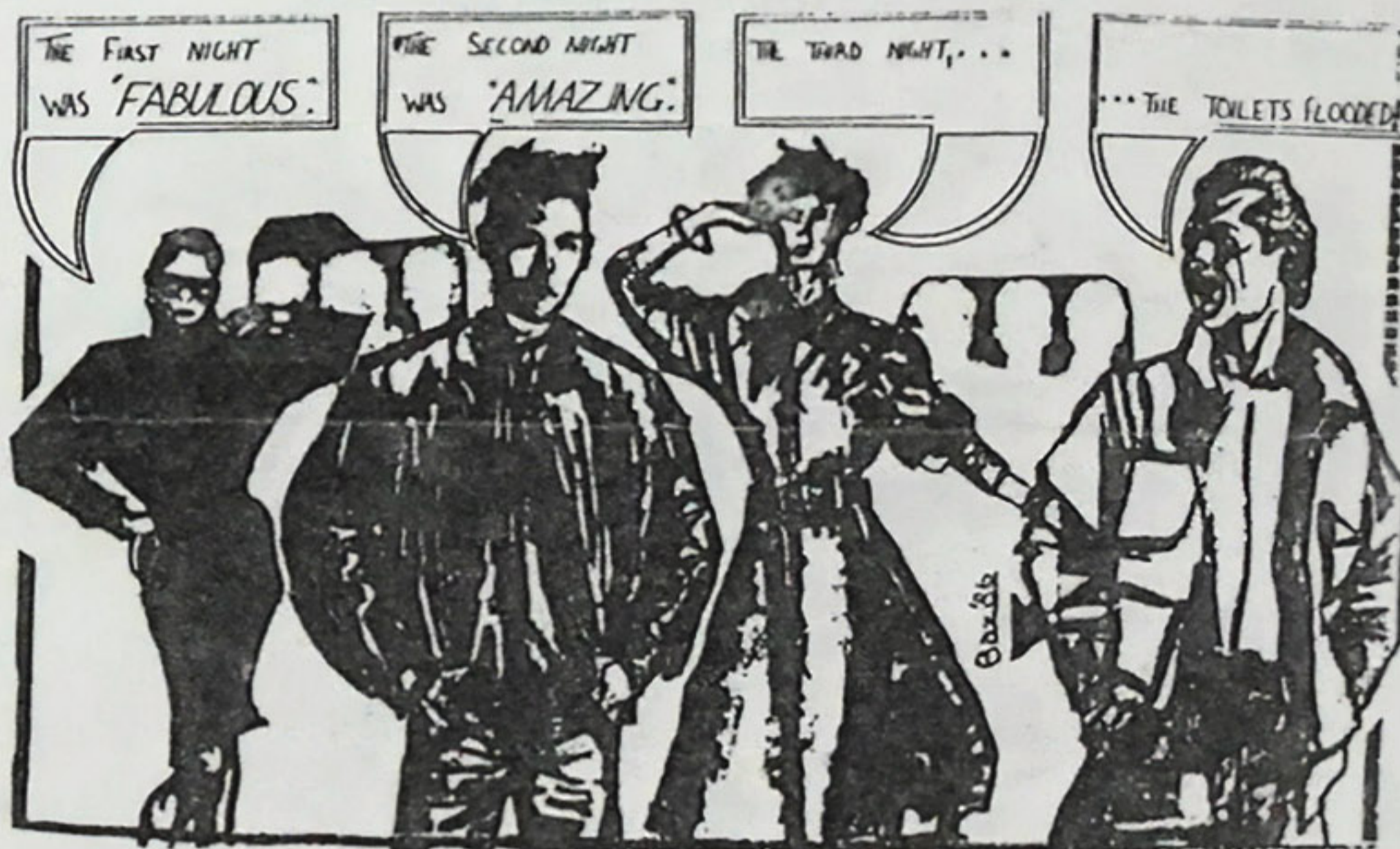
Foxhead Windmill has done it again: he has given us a zany, enjoyable film. The dialogue scenes in particular are great to see/hear; but don't ask me what it all means.

### Plasmo by Chris Ott

Chris is the first pupil of the Nick Donkin School of Plasticine Animation, or so it seems. And who's complaining? Not me... There's at least one magic moment in here: the little creature mimicking Peter Garrett's movements at the same time as him, in front of the TV. You might be eating your heart out soon, Nick...

Bill Mousoulis

### OUR CARTOONIST LOOKS AT THE 1ST MELB. SUPER-8 FILM FESTIVAL.



## RESISTING THE 35MM TEMPTATION

by Mark La Rosa

Any writing on Super-8 reduces the complexities of the subject into simplified, fixed ideas; this article is no different. If it serves any purpose at all, I hope it is to contribute something to the discussion about the nature of the gauge and provoke further thought on the topic.

A little over a half a century ago a "film factory" in a suburb of California, U.S.A. was churning out "talkies" in the style of what can be called "classical narrative". An exhaustive analysis of how this phenomenon came about is beyond me, but you can be sure it had a lot to do with making money. Hollywood's concern was with making profit, not art, and so it perfected a form of entertainment which was guaranteed to put bums on seats.

How can this twentieth century pastime of "going to the flicks" be explained? What makes these stories told in pictures so popular? Well, we can begin to answer such questions by asking ourselves why we bother getting in our cars, driving into town, paying \$6.50 and sitting down for two hours? Of course, we want to be entertained. But it goes further than that. Theatre, cabaret and concerts all entertain, yet draw comparatively small crowds. Movies succeed because they provide an escape into other worlds. Film is unique in being able to present an illusion of reality so impressive that for two hours audiences partake in panavision adventures where their fantasies can be lived out to the full. When watching an illusionist film we are encouraged to live with (and sometimes to be) the characters on screen. Like a drug the big screen works on us by inducing belief in the non-existent, carrying us along on an emotional roller-coaster ride as we laugh and cry with the hero and heroine.

To succeed, illusionist cinema has special requirements: 1) Money and resources. Acting, lighting, props and music are all essential ingredients in the creation of the illusionary worlds. In Hollywood the big production companies had the finances to contract the best craftsmen/women in the country. 2) The film product must have wide appeal. It is simple economics that if you wish to make a profit your returns must be greater than your outlay. 3) The product must pose no threat to the audience. Filmgoing should be a pleasant experience. Controversial and confrontational films are definitely out. 4) The form it takes must be clearly comprehensible; an audience needs to understand before it can empathize. It uses the conventional film language that we were all brought up on. 5) The illusion should never be broken. Any reminders that it was watching a film (e.g. catching sight of the film crew reflected in a mirror) would immediately distance an audience.

I do not mean to debase the Hollywood system by pointing out that its main concern was with financial reward rather than art. Of course the big cigar smoking producers wanted to make a buck, but that doesn't mean that what their companies finally churned out wasn't art. During its golden years Hollywood produced some of the most outstanding works of art of this

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New members (for the months of August and September): Drew Waters, Mike Muntisov, John Hardy, Chris Ott, Greg Broszczyk, Liam O'Donnell, John Thomson, Greg Wood, David Brownstein, Phillip Morris, and Noel Lloyd.

# MEETING REPORTED

REVIEWS REVISED by Barry Branchflower

Big changes have taken place in this column since it began several months ago. Now is your chance to contribute to the review column. Your assignment: to express your impressions of one or more of the films shown at next months open screening. If you disagreed with past reviews but felt restricted in expressing your review, unshackle your inhibitions and "Liive"! (Gooch from Mame). Or, more accurately, "Wriite"!

## THE SEPTEMBER FILMS

BERLIN WALL - Jo Hampton

Wonderful.

THE SOPWITH AND THE SOLDIER - Brett Cameron

Wonderful.

SMITH'S-FAT(Ad parody) - John Calder

Wonderful.

SPOLETO GARDEN PARTY INTERVIEWS - John Calder

Wonderful.

GOD BLESS CHARLTON HESTON - Ian Haig

Wonderful.

THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN TO KATHMANDU - Mehmet Raif

Wonderful.

STILL - Bill Mousoulis

Wonderful.

THE THIRD STROKE - Ian Kerr and David Wood

Wonderful.

What did you think? Address all contributions to P.O Box II50  
Richmond North  
Vic. 3121.

Do you think the reviews should be left to one person or should we have open contributions from anyone? I would be interested in your view. (Barry Branchflower: phone 818 7442).

Until next month, hoping your filmmaking is wonderful. If it is not, you will be hearing from me.

## RESOURCE POOL

### "NOW IN PRODUCTION"

The Melbourne Super-8 Film Group is continually looking for ways to service its members.

The latest will suit all those film-makers who don't want to be fussed with the non-artistic problems that face any project.

If you have a script and the need to transference it on to celluloid... (This is going to sound like a sales pitch!)...we can help you. From further script development, casting and crewing, to scheduling. In short: Production Management.

Please call me if you wish to talk about the service.

The aims of the Group aren't to make profit from its members - only to push (in a helpful way) the production of Super-8 movies for those who want to learn from it, and those who want to better it.

Peter T. Nathan 850 1329

### Contact numbers for the Group

Sarah Johnson 534 4344  
Barry Branchflower 818 7442  
Bill Mousoulis 419 6562  
Matthew Rees 387 9292  
John Calder 428 1072  
Peter Nathan 850 1329  
Brett Cameron 569 5142

### Services (give and/or get)

Crew (call Bill)  
Equipment (Bill)  
Cast (Matthew)  
Production (Peter)  
General (Sarah)

## WORKSHOP REPORT

Ross Doonan

"Music - David Cox".

Could it be that he is the musician of all time.

From his child-day crap taping to camp Batman, esoteric quoted phrases and his introductory contradiction against his concluding analysis "All sound is music" mumbo jumbo, (Oh arn't I just the greatest), "Sound isn't music". Cox, Cox and more Cox. What a treat. But hang on, he is talking about music and that's exactly what he was asked to do. The question to me was to whom. It was supposed to be related to Super 8mm film. Well if you can squeeze in a 16mm about brother Paul (not the same Paul as "Man of Flowers" of which David cries every time he sees it). And of course to show it on video really makes no difference because it was a film first.

I unfortunately expected to see David demonstrate with equipment on hand where we as an audience would become the audio. Wrong properly to assume. But I was one of the few who knows very little about Super 8mm film and even less about incorporating sound. I never really understood why the sound was delayed and how if one takes Super 8mm professionally, gets around it, if it's possible. I even thought once the film was processed that's it, it either has sound on it or it doesn't and that you couldn't change it. I am a true lay person when it comes to film and here my problem lay. When David handed out the sheet I thought well this is great - step by step introduction to sound. I mean I was keen, I was thinking how I would incorporate sound into my own adventures into Super 8mm. But once the hand-out was out we didn't hear from it again until the end of the lecture. Who is to say where it should have come in, considering no demonstrative example was to be set.

We were eased into a musical history tour with quotes from the century, cords with indisputable intention apparently minor chords are nothing, but sad. I was told Batman was camp and an interruption by an audience member, "Was that a Chinese influence I heard", (on one of David's tapes), was met with a short "no" as it's reply.

But true who would have thought the Blue Danube a suitable piece of music for a sci fi film. But of course who would say minor chords will always be sad. David would because he is the maker. We do get back to technical application of sound, we even get back to the hand-out. We are suddenly shown all you need is this and that with 2 female bits and 1 male bit (!!!). Just start doing it and it just falls together. Sounded simple really and with the hand-out where could you go wrong?

David is a performer and he did it well. He kept us all entertained and let us know that the sky is the limit when it comes to making sounds. It was well received by all the audience and really came together in the end with a true example from Jo Hampton's film "Berlin Wall" - showing just how effective music can be.



## MEMBERS CARD

Associated as Unlimited Television

Valid from 30.9.86 to 30.9.87  
Name: MELBOURNE SUPER 8 FILM GROUP  
Signature: Matthew Rees

TELEVISION UNLIMITED  
P.O. Box 263, Brunswick East, 3057.  
ph.1031 419-5111 weekdays 11am-4pm

The super 8 group has become a member of TVU, the new proposed community access TV station. If you would like to become involved, Your help and individual membership would undoubtedly be appreciated.

# COMPETITION

- ☆ The M.S.8.F.G is running a competition for the design of a new logo for the group in 1987.
  - ☆ Anyone is eligible to enter.
  - ☆ The only requirement is the title, Melbourne Super 8 Film Group, be incorporated into the design.
  - ☆ More details as to prizes and who to send your entry to will be given in the next newsletter.
  - ☆ So get out those crayons & textas and have a go !!!!
- ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

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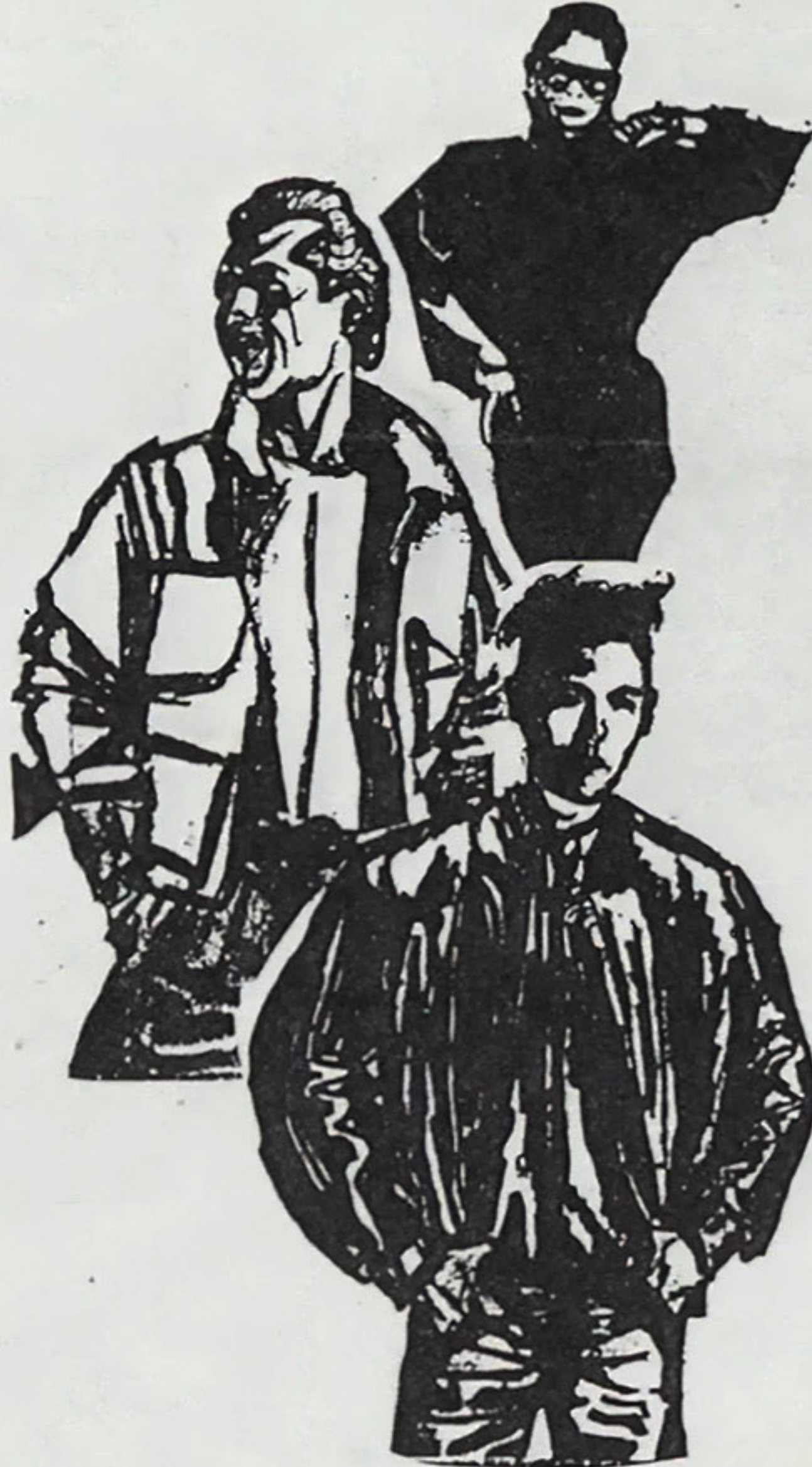
century. Over the ages the art that mankind has produced has often only been a means to an end. Much of it had a spiritual purpose, to glorify a god/s (sacred art) or to be used in magical practices (primitive art.) Then there is art that glorifies the state or court or merely a wealthy patron. It is only in comparatively recent times that there has emerged an art that is entirely self-reflective, that is in the service of nothing but itself; an "art for art's sake". This art is often experimental in nature and allows the artist complete freedom for pure self-expression.

Hollywood served an aim born of the industrial age; the profit motive. Tied in with this is the fact that it also offered various writers and directors a means of self-expression. Men and women of vision and talent created outstanding works of cinema by transcending the constraints of the studio system that they were working within. Super-8, on the other hand, has no such constraints. Super-8 falls into the category of purely self-expressive/experimental art. Now here could lie the basis for an argument that says constraints actually benefit the artist and that complete freedom is a hindrance because it leaves the filmmaker with no direction. This argument becomes even more appealing when we consider that much Super-8 material is lacking in real creative force and originality. However this argument doesn't completely hold up when we realize that many of the greatest Hollywood pictures were made by rebels and mavericks who, through the pursuit of a personal vision, introduced innovations to the tried and true formula of the system. I believe that given more freedom these individualists would have made even better films.

Before the advent of television, the movies served as the number one form of mass entertainment. Being primarily a product of big business, it is disturbing that illusionist cinema has gained a prominence in film circles over all other types of film-making. Film criticism in print and on radio is almost exclusively devoted to discussing this type of cinema. When people generally talk about film they are most likely talking about illusionist cinema. What bothers me even more is that

even among Super-8 film-makers there is the delusion that the "real" film-making is happening "over there" in the big film studios.

If the film medium itself is looked upon as a potential art form (disregarding how it has actually been used), it can be seen that the Hollywood product is ill-deserved of the phenomenal attention it has received. Illusionist cinema is just one form a film can take; a form that will evolve no further because of its very nature, i.e. the restrictions placed on it by being a marketed product. Super-8 is completely free from any commercial



considerations whatsoever, and therefore has the freedom of following any sort of radical style or content it so desires, yet it rarely realizes its potential because it often looks to illusionist cinema (and especially Hollywood) for inspiration.

This admiration of Hollywood by Super-8 film-makers is reflected in their work, sometimes self-consciously, other times unintentionally. Amongst any crop of Super-8 films which may be shown at a screening there is sure to be a homage or satire on a Hollywood genre. These are conscious attempts at making use of Hollywood, sometimes by poking fun, other times respectfully, more often than not a mixture of both. Then there are those that unintentionally reflect a preoccupation with Hollywood. Often this reveals itself in its use of Hollywood cliché in its characters and situations, or sometimes merely in the clichéd manner in which a scene is handled. Occasionally even the very subject of the film is a Hollywood cliché. Lastly, and worst of all, there are those attempts at making a Hollywood movie on Super-8 - this is Super-8 pretending to be something it isn't.

From the examples I have seen don't regard Super-8 as being particularly suited to illusionist cinema. Because of a lack of resources Super-8 productions usually employ second rate actors, lighting, sound etc. Often this results in a breakdown of the illusion, and we are constantly reminded that we are watching an "amateur" production perhaps even made by the person sitting next to us. For me this is the fundamental difference between 35mm. and Super-8. With the former the audience loses itself in the illusion presented, with the latter it does not. This doesn't mean that successful illusionist films cannot be made on Super-8, they can and have been. What I am proposing is that Super-8 is to find a character in its own it should not search in the direction of illusionist cinema.

Perhaps this preoccupation with Hollywood denotes a lack of creativity and drive in Super-8 filmmakers. Perhaps it is years of movie viewing which has established their minds set ways about what a film should take. It may be something deeper, a sign of the weakness of our culture which sees those fast paced American movies on the box as the most exciting thing around.

In any case what we have in the Super-8 scene is a group of filmmakers who secretly aspire to enter the industry where they believe that "real" film-making is happening. With this attitude prevalent it is no wonder that Super-8 is used as a stepping stone to "bigger and better" things. It is often the case that when someone makes a few successful films in Super-8 he/she immediately sets his/her sights on moving on to 16mm. As a result our most talented film-makers are lost to the professional film-making scene where they are swallowed by the industry and made to learn conventional film language. How can Super-8 hope to reach its potential when it is continually being drained of talent. Those film-makers who remain in the Super-8 scene are often frustrated feature film directors who regard themselves as working in an inferior gauge. An art form cannot grow if its practitioners believe that art form to be sub-par and constantly look to established art forms for direction.

Of course, there are other, more practical considerations; economic and social conditions discourage the pursuit of serious Super-8 film-making. There are no financial rewards, only costs. One is forced to make a living and practice film-making on the side. Due to the nature of the gauge it is difficult to get material widely exhibited.

However, a truly passionate Super-8 film-maker will make these sacrifices to remain committed to the gauge, treating it with the respect it deserves and seeing it as a valid art form with a potentially wider range of possibilities than anything being done in 35mm. I'm sure that if the current Super-8 scene comprised of such earnest film-makers the gauge would thrive and we would begin seeing films that were more original, more intelligent, more relevant, wider in scope and bolder in idea.



# SUPER 8 NEWS

## SYDNEY FESTIVAL

Contributions are now being accepted for the 7th Sydney Super 8 Festival. This event has been the focus of 'super 8 film culture' for several years. The closing date for submissions is Nov. 3rd. You can write and get an application form or just send the film with relevant details to:

SYDNEY SUPER 8 FILM GROUP  
P.O. Box 424  
Kings Cross  
N.S.W. 2011  
PH: (02) 332 4674

## BRUSSELS FESTIVAL

The group has been invited to put together a program of films to send to the Brussels Super 8 Festival. If you would like a film considered for inclusion, phone John Calder on 428 1072.

## VICTORIAN MOVIE MAKERS SCREENING

As mentioned in the last newsletter, there will be a program of films selected by the super 8 group at the Victorian Movie Makers theatre.

WHEN: Wed. Oct. 6th 7:30  
WHERE: 2 Napier St. Fitzroy.

## Film Processors

75 NORTH EAST ROAD, COLLINSWOOD  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA 5081

There has been some interest in B&W super 8. We recommend that it be sent for processing to Film Processors in Adelaide. The cost is \$6- per cartridge plus -80c return postage. They also sell raw film stock as well as providing various other lab services. For more info, write and ask for a price list. The reason we ran this unpaid advertisement is that the results from the (very few) other labs handling B&W super 8 have been not so pleasing.

## super eight

Newsletter layout and editorial: Anne-Marie Crawford and Brett Cameron  
Newsletter photocopying: Matthew Rees

This newsletter-magazine is published monthly by The Melbourne Super-8 Film Group

Contributions are welcome

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

# ARTICLES, REVIEWS, GRAPHICS

## NEWSLETTER

We'd like to stress again that contributions to the monthly newsletter are very welcome. If you're interested, the editors for next month are Brett Cameron(569 5142) and Peter Nathan(850 1329). We are also trying to make the reviewing of films very open. If you feel inspired to write about any or all of the work at the open screenings, (be it a few lines or a lengthy discussion), please do. Barry Branchflower(818 7442) will receive all contributions in this area. We try to publish everything we receive.

## YEARBOOK

In keeping with the 1985 tradition, a 1986 super 8 yearbook will be published around February next year. Now is the time to start considering articles, graphics, and "top ten" lists of super 8 films to submit. More info about this in coming newsletters.



## NEXT MEETING

The next open screening will be on Tuesday Oct. 14th. A really interesting night is planned, with a forum/discussion at 7:30, a retrospective of super 8 from 1982-83 at 8:30, and the usual open program from about 9:30 onwards.

## FORUM

The Making of Super-8  
- What are the current approaches to Super-8 film-making?

PANELLISTS: John Thomson, Rolando Caputo, Peter Napier  
CHAIR: Bill Mousoulis

## RETROSPECTIVELY

*Years*  
super 8  
1982-83

A program of super 8 from 1982 and 1983 was recently screened at the Chauvel cinema in Sydney. A selection of these films will be shown from 8:30 till 9:15 at the next open screening. Included will be some memorable films from Sydney as well as Melbourne filmmaker Jane Stevenson's Dreams Come True. Come along and (re)experience something of those 'Golden Years' of super 8.

# super eight

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