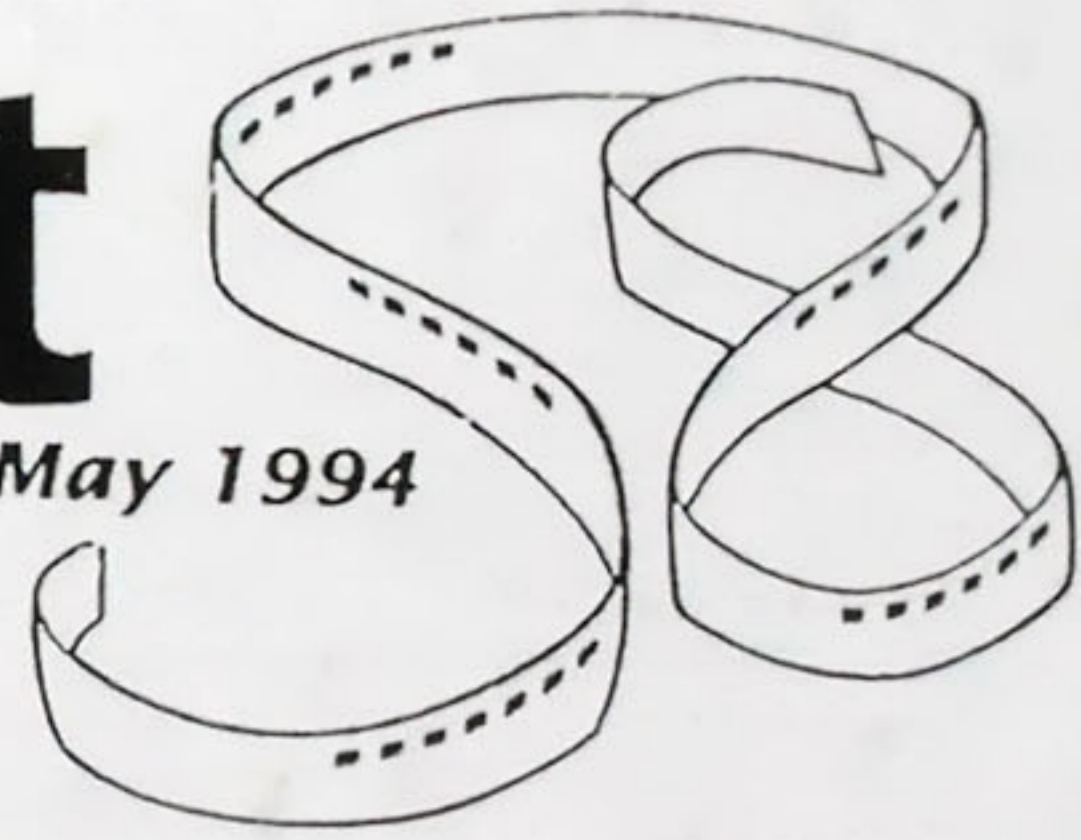


Super Eight

Issue 91 May 1994



Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group

GARY O'KEEFE FALLS

- The films of Gary O'Keefe, April Open Scr.

Every time Gary O'Keefe commits a cinematic sight and sound to celluloid, he falls. He has the strength to do that - to stand sturdily on the spot, and give himself over. He wants to see what he, and we, are made of. He is an inquirer into the human soul. And he accepts everything he finds, even if that which he finds is a nightmare (Subtopia's ending).

Many artists (and that means many of the Super-8 Group's members) would consider Gary's films to be nothing more than wanking. They cringe at authorial presence in artworks, preferring to work only in "objective" genres. They are the real wankers, however, for they think that they can escape themselves. Their argument that their personality is within their work is merely a lip service, for they are defensive when confronted with "subjective" works. Some people are simply scared of themselves. Gary isn't.

But Gary's presence in his films is not earnestly direct. He never uses first-person narration, and his tongue is firmly in his cheek whenever he does appear on screen. The self-reflexivity is always playfully undermined. And rightly so - that is another objective genre which pretentious "artists" use. No - Gary is more concerned with the people around him, the places they inhabit, etc. Gary O'Keefe, as a person living on this earth, becomes visible by his very absence.

The 8 films that Gary showed at the last Open Screening can be categorized according to known genres (hybrids of genres, etc.). I'm not interested in doing that for this review. I'm not a film critic, anyway. I'd just like to list a few favorite moments of mine from the films, because even though Arnold West (co-directed by Deborah Warr, and not shown at the screening) is Gary's masterpiece, the 8 films shown last month are really something, really worth getting enthused about.

Some of my absolute favorite moments are when the sound and image abruptly change. This is practically one of Gary's stylistic trademarks. In Subtopia it reaches new heights, managing to express the very essence of life in the process. Life is mysterious, and that is expressed in unexpected ways - in the cuts between shots, or in that sublime moment when Colette and Chantelle cuts to black and then simply ends. (Something gains meaning by being framed.) Of course, a film like Zero Falls actually takes the thematic of "life is mysterious" and plays with it, having great fun (heightening/stylizing the natural images and sounds found in the other films). I prefer the quieter approach in Katoomba and Subtopia. Sure, it's a typical "spiritual", "Eastern" effect, but, by Jesus, it's genuine. Gary O'Keefe is one of the rare film-makers in the world who understand that one doesn't have to try too hard to be expressive.

Whilst Gary manages to express the mystery of life (which is art's highest attainment), he also manages to express a few other things. Joe and Michelle contains a number of them. It's extraordinary, in fact, how many things the almost-wasted young couple in the film have in common with both Gary and ourselves. Concerns are human concerns, and everyone has them. Joe and Michelle are simultaneously banal, comic, and tragic. But also totally inspiring: many pearls of wisdom come from their mouths. As for the audience members who nervously-cum-derisively laughed at Michelle and her desires re: children, your arrogant prejudice is unworthy of you. (I am normally against political correctness, but sometimes incorrectness is just way incorrect.)

One of the key themes in Joe and Michelle is freedom. They compare themselves to children. Their tragedy is that they're overdosing on too much of a good thing - they are also adults. The kids in Ormond are not only not overdosing on anything, they're sharing their lemonade exactly half-half! Bike-riding, singing, playing - these kids are truly free. Are Colette and Chantelle free? Is Gary free? Are we free? It's not an important question Gary's cinema transcends it. No-one knows what the fuck life's about - and Gary knows that more than most. He lives it, observes it, shares it with us. As Mick Jagger once sang, "What more can a poor boy do, except play in a rock'n'roll band?"

Bill Mousoulis



PROLIFIC FILM REVIEWER BILL MOUSOULIS OUTSIDE THE IRWIN RADO THEATRE FOR A QUICK PUFF

JIM'S BIT

Hi! my name is Richard Thruely, I'm a private eye. I got a call from a Pete Spent, he wants me to go downtown and check on a stray cat called O'Keefe. Say's he's a dangerous dude, trying to cause trouble in suburbia, (Hallelujah brother!), says he's some kinda sicko insurgent who needs to be watched. Anyway I take the case, as I,m between Dames, exams and I know there's more to life than film.

This guy O'Keefe, hangs out in a hole in the ground called the Prado Club, it's downtown fitzroy, and they open early, but people start leaving straight away, so I figger what's the point?

I step into the lobby and see the usual dropkicks who frequent these slime pits. The talk is about "Subtopia", my ears prick at this, as I see a baby being fed out of the corner of my eye. Why would anyone want to bring a baby to this cultural trash heap? A short semi balding man comes out and rings a bell! Quasimodo? I walk into the theatre, passing a portrait of such intense ugliness, that I,m filled with revulsion and want to heave then leave. There are more of the same, sitting down, waiting for the films to begin. Jeezus! there is a child seated in the front row, with more or less her mother next to her. Why in gods name, would she bring her own flesh and blood to a place like this?

I try to find a quiet spot away from the cultural cockroaches, I take a seat where I can see the exit, and who comes and goes. A fat, red haired, and blotchy faced man, sits next to me and start's writing as soon as the lights go down- Jeezus! what freaks! The films are really sick, they're all deliberately set in suburbia and I begin to think that Spent was correct!

Lots of colour and movement passes by on the screen, and the audience keep getting up and going and coming, for no apparent reason? One of the films is about a russian bug, who scuttles around with a camera on its back, talk about low-life, still the music was better than most of the stolen soundtracks they flog off as original, in these cheap non union dives. Anyway this ruskie bug can really sing, and I'm starting to tap my feet when I hear someone whisper the word "Gary!" The lights go on, and the man who was ringing the bell, is now working the film machine at the back of the hall.

He's sweating, and I figger he's got a story to tell. I make my way along some curtains and I feel mattresses behind the blood red curtains? My mind is sickened by the thoughts of what they use them for!

He is rewinding film on the machine, I offer him a light, "Sorry I don't drink! I'm English!!" I ignore the attempt at humour and enquire "What's the word on Subtopia?" "It's on next!" he says as the lights are killed and Subtopia gets splattered all over the screen.

Spent was write again, this was subversive and dangerous stuff. A baby is born, it's head floats in a glass swimming pool of beer, and gets wrapped up in a plastic bag, and its mother wakes with black and blue bruising, as my train of thought gets lost in the darkened room.

I ask around, does anyone know a Gary O'Keefe?... "Yes ? but No"! are the polite answers. This case is no love job for me, as another semi balding man comes over and grabs my arm in a vice like grip and spits in my ear, the word "Ozu"!!! he then jumps on his bike and races out the door, knocking an old man over, Jeezus what creeps! I decide to follow him, but I trip over another man in the hallway. When I get back on my feet, I realize that the man I fell over was humping a 87 year old frenchman, and at the point of ejaculation gasps "Bresson"! I figger it's french for orgasm!

I stumble out into the street, but the semi balding biker has long gone, but he's left a clue. It's a soggy handbill with Cinemadamp printed on it, it's hard to read because of the skidmarks. I turn it over, the word Subtopia is written next to a telephone number..... I cross the road for a drink and to wash the bad taste the Prado has left in my mouth.

I try to call, but a man wearing a McIntosh continually uses the phone. Finally he leaves and I make the call. Bingo! it's Gary O'Keefe, he invites me around for a quick polka! and being a curious cat, I go, little suspecting the danger.

He lives on Dejevuish street across town. He turns out to be a guy I saw at the club, with the woman who was feeding the baby. His woman looked familiar, but no bruising! He offered me a drink and I shit myself, as the beer is in the same swimming pool (only smaller) that was in the film. I move on and ask him about his film. "It's about drama!" he says as he tinkers with gadgets and stands on little dollies that litter the floor like film, coming off the take up reel. "Is'nt it a bit too dangerous and quirky and anti-social"? I hear myself asking. "Yeah, well?, its really about everyday life, with just a pinch of drama chucked in to validate my classical education!" I stiffen at his answer, as he has just done an impersonation of 2 black swans, copulating and talking as if sex was a game that people paid for! I stifle

MONTHLY SCREENINGS

When I joined the Super 8 Group I found the 7.30 screenings a most informative piece of programming. It stills performs this function. These screenings have shown me the works of past members, the oeuvres of current filmmakers, trends/genres/styles of Super 8 and defined some of the possibilities of Super 8. Thankfully, when the filmmakers are in attendance there is also the opportunity to talk with them about various technical aspects of their films and to reassess critical appraisals of the films. What was once reviewed, can be seen again, compared and changing perceptions sometimes result.

While viewing a number of works by one person highlights the filmmaker, it critically focuses our attention. The attentive gaze could be beneficial for the filmmaker as they are forced to "sit through" their own films. The Open Screenings have their place as introductory showings. However, just because something has been filmed, does that mean it should immediately command our attention?

Michael Kelleher

OPEN SCREENING DEBATE

I like Open Screenings more than the 7.30 slot because people who haven't made many films yet (like myself) don't have enough films to be a guest speaker.

The Open Screenings have a lot more variety than the 7.30 slot. I have enjoyed the open screenings that I have been to.

I wish I could see more Open Screenings, but they finish too late!

Tegan Mel
(Kitty Productions)

MORE OPEN SCREENINGS!

I look forward to the Open Screenings with bated breath. Who knows what little gem will transport us and uplift our souls to places and dreams yet unseen.

Open Screenings are the time and place for the filmmaker to screen his/her work for the first time in front of a "real" audience and gain a response and reaction.

Because the Open Screenings often start late and there is a dwindling audience towards the end of the evening, many filmmakers do not receive the full audience they deserve.

Many Super 8 members who come along to the screenings unfortunately have to leave before the final film is shown, cosequently sometimes missing the best part of the evening.

I feel that every second meeting should be entirely devoted to Open Screenings, starting at 7.30, so that an opportunity is given to view such a diverse range of new and upcoming talent, that may otherwise not be seen.

More Open Screenings!

Moira Joseph

NEXT OPEN SCREENING

At 7.30pm a programme of films by Marcus Bergner and Juanita Custance & Mark O'Rourke. Including **We Were Lead Astray** and **Magnified Crumbs of Kindness** (Bergner) and **Memory of an Unknown** (Custance/O'Rourke) amongst others. Followed by the usual Open Screening (BYO films, all welcome, first on first in, you know the rest...).

Not to be missed.

Also not to be missed is **Kiosk 8** on Friday May 13th. Details elsewhere in this issue.

I AM A JAZZ MUSICIAN....

"I am a jazz musician (saxophone) with some experience in Super 8 film soundtracks. I'm interested in contributing composed and/or improvised music to any Super 8 film projects (no money involved)."
Michael Timcke, ph: 481 7591

FOR SALE

Fujica Frame Enlarger for 35mm enlargement from 16mm or 8mm films. \$79. John Cad ph:419 6818

Super 8 Projector. Elmo ST1200, Mag. and opt. sound, 1200ft. spool capacity, excellent condition \$300. Camera. Chinon XL555. Silent, various fps and time-lapse, manual & auto exposure, exc. cond. \$100. Various cement splicers (x 5) \$5 - \$20. Nick Ostrovskis, ph:391 8438

LAST OPEN SCREENING

Films by GARY O'KEEFE

followed by:

- SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER SHOOT THE ROLL (6 mins) by Tony Woods
- SHOPPING (7 mins) by Tegan Mel
- ROUGH GEOMETRY (7 mins) by Nick Ostrovskis
- HOLIDAY (3 mins) by Jeff Norris
- RINGER (3 mins) by Jeff Norris
- STUFF (3 mins) by Roderick McDonald
- THE RIVER AND THE CITY (6 mins) by Ben Sheppard
- UNBURNT MATCHES (PART 2) (9 mins) by David Kuszniir
- DREAM LINES (6 mins) by Peter Lane
- HOME MOVIE IV (3 mins) by Daniel Crooks

NEXT OPEN SCREENING

7.30pm TUESDAY 10th MAY
Erwin Rado Theatre
211 Johnston Street
Fitzroy

at 7.30pm:

FILMS by MARCUS BERGNER,
JUANITA CUSTANCE
& MARK O'ROURKE

followed by:

OPEN SCREENING |||| ||||
BYO Super 8 films, all screened
(time permitting)

PLEASE NOTE:

The screening will begin at 7.30pm exactly. You are advised to arrive early to avoid the disappointment of missing any films.

Editorial & Layout By: N.O.

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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.

ISSN 1039-5288

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