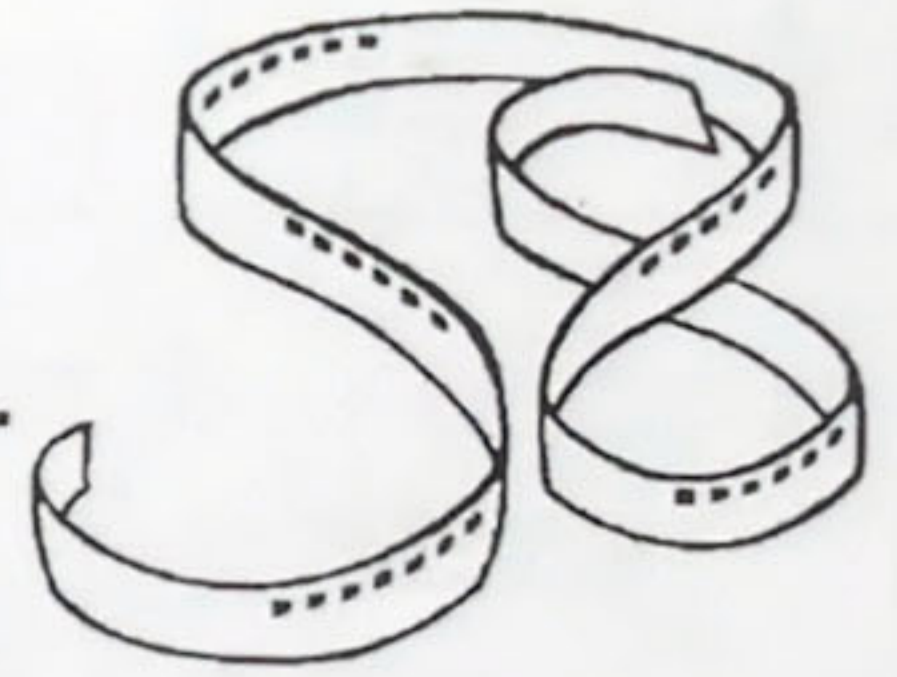


Super Eight



Newsletter of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group Inc.

Issue 99 January 1995



by Salvador Dalí, K.M

The opinions and views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of The Melbourne Super 8 Film Group or its committee.

notes from the answering machine

(THE ADMINISTRATOR SPEAKS)

Yes folks, I have actually gotten my shite together, and sorted out the OFFICE HOURS! So here they are:

Monday 12 noon - 4 pm
Tuesday 2 pm - 6 pm
Friday 2 pm - 6 pm

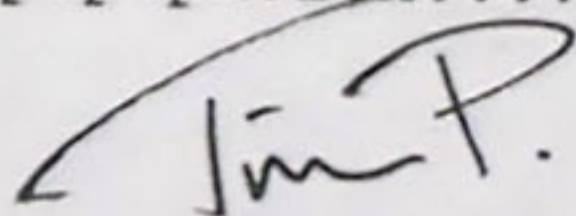
Remember, Open Screenings are held on the second Tuesday of every month, with Committee meeting being held on the third Tuesdays (Yes, we love our Tuesdays. It's a pity I have to tape *Seinfeld* though...)

The 1995 Planning meeting was held on Saturday 21st January, with quite a reasonable turnout. A lot of decisions were made for the direction of the group. (more on that later..) Our constant struggle for money with our GOD, (so named because that's what I'm always yelling, as in, 'Oh GOD, we need more money') the AFC, was again made clear. We need a new projector, so are looking into that.

It looks as though we will be returning to the familiar single-event Festival format to mark our 10th year, and planning is underway for the 100th issue of the newsletter, and a possible book, marking ten years of the MS8FG is under discussion. Jim Bridges announced his resignation from the Committee, and I would like to thank Jim for his concerted effort during his term.

Working Committees for both the 100th issue magazine, and the 1995 festival have been put in place, and any other members interested in participating, should contact me.

'Till next month (the 100th issue, I'm so excited, I can't wait, I'm bursting with anticip.p.p.p.ation...!)



ATTENTION!

ALL GAUGE OPEN SCREENING

Do you want to meet / see / mix - with work / workers of other gauges as well as Super 8? A group of artists is organising an Open Screening of Super 8, 16mm and VHS Video at:

THE ERWIN RADO THEATRE

(211 Johnston Street Fitzroy)

MONDAY 27TH FEBRUARY

7:30 PM

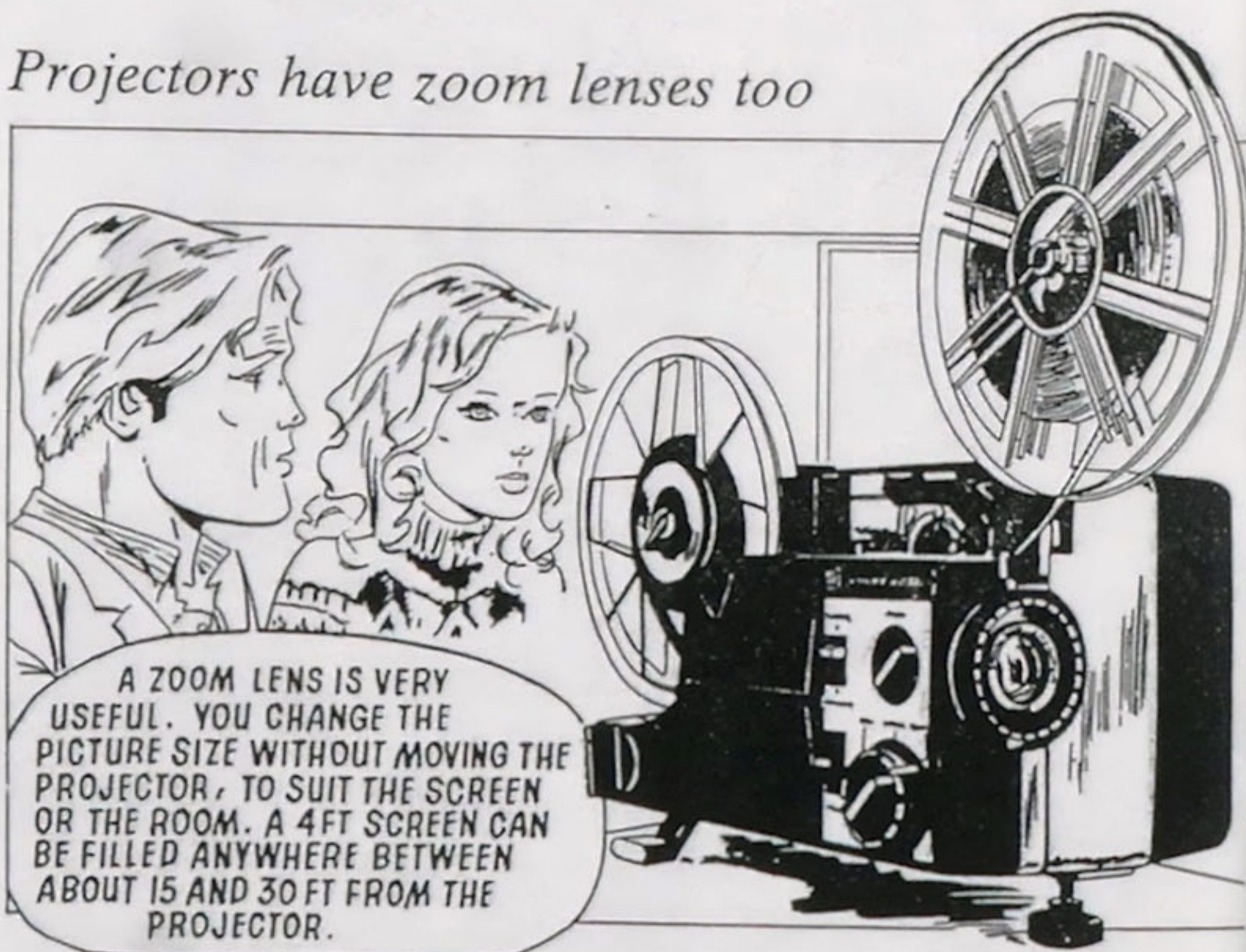
Bring your own work in Super 8, 16mm or VHS.

ALL WELCOME!!!

(FOR A BIT OF CROSS - POLLINATION)

She: "That's perfectly true. We haven't half enough close-ups in our reels."

Projectors have zoom lenses too



THE MOOMBA INTERNATIONAL AMATEUR FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL 1995

Open to films on the following formats: VHS/VIDEO 8 (Pal or NTSC), Standard 8 or SUPER 8 film.

Closing date for entries: 15th February 1995. Entry Fee: \$5.00

For further Information, or entry forms contact Tim at Melbourne Super 8 Film Group, or:
THE MOOMBA INTERNATIONAL AMATEUR FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL, C/- DUDLEY HARRIS
PO Box 286, Preston VIC 3072. Telephone 03-470-1816

"THE RULES DON'T APPLY"

Super 8 = Ephemera?

Super 8- As cinema "The Rules don't apply"

The Super 8 group is an Oasis in the Video world

It cleanses the eye and mind. To think that fingernail frame technology is accessible to anyone who walks into any cash converter shop with so bucks.

The super 8 group endlessly fascinates with it's big dipper ego's and it's many shy violets all sitting down to the last super of super.

These, disciples of quality visual access, wandering in the video wilderness "The rules" don't apply!!!!

Super 8- The software is more expensive than the hardware. A technological first?

The super 8 group are re-inventing an already invented chemical?

Super 8 is a billabong in the history of cinema.

"Dreams come true" in little yellow bags.

'As film passes through the projector, these are the grains of our lives'

Looking for film stocks makes us Mad Max's of the cinema. The search for fuel.

Super 8 -not in the main stream but hopefully not going over the falls.

He: "How to Make Good Movies"—here's the book we want to read, all right."

She: "Our movies seem pretty grand to me just the way they are. Why bother about reading a book?"

NEXT OPEN SCREENING

Tuesday 14th February 1995

Films by **Chris Windmill**

For the open screening, I offer you:

"Mr Benevolent"

"Heresies Ancient and Modern"

"O Elusive Sparrow" and

"The New Shoes are the old Shoes".

The last one had a cassette soundtrack which I've mislaid, but believe me it was very good. This one is a home movie travel thing about my most favourite shoes. Shot in 1993, edited in '94, soundtrack made and lost in '95.

Most of the films have an arbitrary quality of wanting to use stuff that is close at hand, eg., Alan Bond things, Scraps of film, Friends, Shoes & Tourist sights. I've selected the films on the same basis; they were the closest to the front of the cupboard.

PS. I hope this small offering atones for my absence from this holy place for about 2 years.

Regards, cfh windmill.

NATURAL BORN KILLERS:

Super 8 Goes to the Big Screen.

Director Oliver Stone and cinematographer Robert Richardson, ASC speak on the inclusion of a wide range of film and video gauges to create a cinematic kaleidoscope.

Violence has always played a prominent role in American cinema, but pure carnage - and the psychotic mindset that accompanies it - has never been conveyed as hyperrealistically as it is in *Natural Born Killers*.

A satirical joyride through what director Oliver Stone terms "the schizophrenic madness of modern society," *NBK* tracks the bloody exploits of ruthless, romantically entangled serial killers Mickey and Mallory Knox (Woody Harrelson and Juliet Lewis) as they cut a savage swath across America.

Although *NBK* echoes the themes of such previous films as *The Wild Bunch*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Badlands*, *Taxi Driver*, *Network* and *Wild at Heart*, its unique visual style is a striking example of cinematic experimentation. In crafting the film's garish, eye-popping psychological mind-scapes, Stone and cinematographer Robert Richardson, ASC combined a wide variety of shooting formats (colour and black & white 35mm, 16mm, **Super 8**, Hi8 and Beta), with front- and rear-projection photography, bits of heavy-metal animation, stock footage and clips from other films, including several of Stone's previous projects. The filmmakers further enhanced this hallucinatory brew with offbeat lighting schemes, unusual angles, subjective camera techniques, a fractured, stream-of-consciousness editing style and a daring soundtrack that serves as an aural collinder by juxtaposing wildly diverse musical samples (in one particularly inspired moment during the film's first scene, a snippet from a

Puccini opera is stitched to the guitar-heavy grunge of the rock group *L7*).

With its array of shifting perspectives and flash cuts, *NBK* has led a number of pundits to conclude that Stone's visual style was intended to simulate an evening of channel surfing. While Stone confirms that this was part of his intent, he explains that the overall visual plan for the picture was more ambitious, involving some key dramatic transitions. "At the beginning of the movie, these two young people are really desensitised to violence," he notes. "The concept is that they live in a TV world and don't realise the consequences of their actions. They also live in a world of rage and anger because of their abusive parents and because the nature of the Twentieth Century has been very violent. We incorporated those ideas into the movie by using rear-screen images. We wanted to give a sense of the schizophrenic madness of the century, and to convey the feeling that the characters' minds are hopped-up and speedy. That style prevails in the first part of the film; it's a thrill ride, and it's supposed to be fun. As horrible as it sounds, these characters enjoy killing."

Stone and Richardson conceptualised the use of various film formats to maintain an overarching sense of organisation. "One of the ideas we came up with was to break the film down, piece by piece, into textures," says Richardson. "The most obvious way of doing textures is with production design - walls, colours, and so forth. But that always left me with a fear that financially, or simply because of logistics, we wouldn't be able to control those textures to the degrees that were necessary. And a lot of locations were not allowing us to get beyond the simply bland or slick walls. What started to get driven in as these locations unfolded, and as our minds got stretched further and further, was going back to 16mm black & white, and figuring out how we could utilise the grain structure, how we could break down into Hi8 or **Super 8**."

A good example of this strategy in action occurs during a scene in which Mickey and Mallory, under the influence of psychedelic mushrooms, have an argument about fidelity in the midst of a desert expanse. "Although we were at a beautiful location, we tried to find some visual opposition to represent the characters' conflict," says Richardson. "One of the decisions we made with that particular sequence, was to punctuate it with silky 35mm landscapes, which we then tore apart with some highly improvisational **Super 8** shooting. The **Super 8** footage was extremely grainy, but still managed to reproduce the elements of colour in the location, which was mostly reddish.

As the argument progressed, we went a little wilder with the handheld black & white.

"Moments like that were how we found out, as we went along, that some dramatic elements worked better with certain formats. But it wasn't like **Super 8** always represented a 'breakdown'. Some of the loving material, such as Mickey and Mallory's impromptu wedding on the bridge, was also shot on **Super 8**. For that scene, we shot **Super 8** footage of them kissing, with one piece of black & white mixed in. We decided to go with **Super 8** because it had a 'home movie' quality that felt extraordinarily real for that moment; going back to 35mm right there would have felt too commercial, and not as genuine in spirit. So there was no set 'recipe' for the formats - we never said to ourselves, '16mm black & white is gritty and rough, so it's meant for abusive moments.' Our strategy wasn't that easily defined.

In rendering the different looks, Richardson made use of a number of photographic systems. 35mm footage was shot in the 1.85 format using a Panavision camera and Primo prime lenses, as well as 11:1 and 4:1 zooms and a Cooke zoom. He also had an Aaton 35mm camera on hand. His 16mm package consisted of an Arriflex camera and Zeiss lenses. **Super 8** scenes were shot with a Beaulieu system, and Hi8 was accomplished with a Nikon camera. For a major sequence intended to have the look of a television sitcom, Richardson employed an Ikegami Beta system.

The cinematographer's 35mm stocks were Kodak's 5248, 5293, 5296, a bit of 5297 and some 5298 (the 98 stock only became available at the tail end of the shoot). 16mm stocks were Tri-X (high speed) and Plus-X, as well as some Kodachrome and a bit of Ektachrome. For **Super 8**, he shot mainly Kodachrome with some Ektachrome, as well as high-speed black & white.

Both Stone and Richardson felt that the mixed formats helped them overcome logistical difficulties, such as a short schedule and sudden shifts in the weather, while also allowing them to take advantage of unforeseen photographic opportunities.

Reproduced in part, from an article by Stephen Pizzello, *Natural Born Killers Blasts Big Screen With Both Barrels*, published in the November 1994 issue of *AMERICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER*. pp. 36-54.



The Super 8 Yellow Taxi!

In the late sixties (when everyone was waiting around for the revolution to start) Robert Crumb did a cartoon of some black panthers taking over rubbish tips, a case of too little, too late.

Super 8 is like those blacks who made a stand, and the question on our minds and on our lips, is, as Super 8 devotees, are we all General Custers in the Battle of the Little Big Gauge? Will Kodak wipe out every last Super 8 fighter?

Well, according to the laws of probability and the general history of technology - Yes!!! But as you know, the show must go on, and I'm reminded of people like my brother, who adored 9.5mm as a gauge (gauges run in the family!) and he told me of individuals, not corporations, who have continued to make the stuff available, 30 years after it's demise.

So if Kodak do pull the plug, I'm sure Super 8'ers will find a way to reincarnate film, to make those thin strips that carry our dreams, still accessible.

Piano rolls are still being manufactured, and a company in the U.S. is splitting 35mm bulk film down to Super 8 gauge, with an expanded choice of stocks available.

As we celebrate 10 years of the Melbourne Super 8 Film group, musicians are buying up vinyl record producing plants, to continue their tradition... the bloody economics make it work!

As addicts of Super 8, we are all not technological luddites, or Super 8 'Lemmings' waiting to go over the side, but people, filming until something as good as Super 8 comes along. I'm sure it will, but in the meantime - like the existence of the Melbourne Super 8 Group itself, enjoy and reflect, and produce, because "because you don't know what you've got, 'till it's gone"

Jim Bridges

SUPER EIGHT Filmmaking Course

Are you a newly inspired aspirant optic as yet to realise the dream?

Are you a not-so-new Super Eighter whose zeal is subverted by logistical or technical constraints?

Then this is the course for you!

The student will be accompanied through the realms of basic photography, camera technique, lighting, sound, editing and capturing the idea. The course includes a three hour location shoot and guest seminar/screenings from three of Melbourne's most renowned Super 8 filmmakers.

CONTACT:

Marion Butt

Council of Adult Education Centre

256 Flinders Street

Melbourne 3000

phone: 652 0611

Melbourne Super-8: 1994 into 1995

by Bill Mousoulis

At the AGM in December, one of the Super-8 Group's members asked the committee a question about the "Super-8 Club". "Group", Steven Ball quickly corrected.

That exchange pretty much encapsulates where Melbourne Super-8 film-making is at the moment. And why the AFC won't give the group more money. And why it just may, pretty soon now.

For, whilst most people outside the group (and some inside it) consider it (still?) akin to an amateur/hobbyist group (and therefore not deserving of any comparison with legitimized film and video practices), most people inside the group know what's going down, and this "something that is going down" is slowly being revealed to the outside world. For example, in MIMA's recent "Experimenta" festival - a survey of experimental work of all gauges and from all Australian states - Melbourne Super-8 films accounted for a healthy 16 of the 45 Australian titles.

Three "considerations": (1) Melbourne Super-8 films are now considered a big part of Australia's avant-garde/experimental scene; (2) Australia's experimental film and videos are considered a small part of "Australian Cinema" overall; (3) All no-budget narrative films (on whichever gauge) are considered not as worthy as funded narrative films (whether shorts or features).

These considerations are the general ones, i.e. the ones held by the "general" population. They (can) change, of course. Sound-image history (both in Australia and overseas) furnishes us with numerous examples. This change invariably occurs from within, so the relevant question is: How do we consider ourselves?

A pertinent example highlights this dilemma: when Pete Spence and Norma Pearse showed their 25-minute **Perren-ting** at an Open Screening about 12 months ago, some viewers in the audience began shuffling and murmuring. 25 minutes of "home movie" shots of Pete and Norma's baby. My point is this: even if Pete and Norma weren't

"artists", shouldn't we as an audience be able to ride with whatever is presented to us, to work with it, to discover its particular riches? The simple distinction between home movie = amateur = worthy of derision and experimental/narrative = sanctioned = worthy of attention is just too simple.

It all comes back to how we see ourselves. Hobbyist groups which make home movies, travelogues, narrative parodies/homages, etc. do see themselves as something other (something lesser) than officially sanctioned groups which make features, documentaries, avant-garde works, etc. They might not say as much, but their actions occur within a solid insularity. (The day **Perren-ting** plays at the Kino will be a day of true enlightenment.)

If we see our activity as "real", "serious", "professional", etc., then others will also see it in that way. Eventually. Not all others, but at least some of them. (Most people will still go see **Pulp Fictions** than Super-8 films.)

And, we have to practice that which we bemoan the lack of. We bemoan that the general film audience (brought up on mainstream TV and cinema) doesn't willingly (try to) engage with our work, and yet we don't willingly engage with some of our fellow sound-image makers' work. Crucial mistake: belief in oneself as concomitant with unbelief in others. **YOU MUST TREAT EVERY FILM OR VIDEO YOU SEE WITH RESPECT, AS IF IT WERE YOUR OWN.** And if you can't like the work you're watching, simply tolerate it, tolerate its existence, its right to exist.

What we - Melbourne Super-8 film-makers - are doing is "real", "serious", "worthy", "innovative", etc. The year 1994 certainly showed that. Not that terribly more films were made than in 1993 or 1992, but a certain strengthening of the quality and vision in the films was definitely apparent.

Once again (this has been the case since about 1990) it was the experimental (it's a very general and vague label, I know) film-makers at the fore. Steven Ball left the Group's administration position this year, but one wonders how he can possibly make any more or any better films than he's doing already. He made no less than five masterful films this year, including the exciting **Protein**, the rigorous **However**, the **Autodidact**, and the major opus **Microphone** (give us a feature-length one, Steven!). However, the autodidact Tony Woods made seven films. I think he has, um, discovered film-making. Other "artist" types also

kept doing their thang: Pete Spence, Nick Ostrovskis, the Cantrills (just how many decades of Australian film do they plan to span?). Moira Joseph also continued her foray into Super-8 film-making, this year with the simple but ambitious **Pearl**, an indication of the desire of Melbourne Super-8 filmers to develop and grow. Another visual artist, Maeve Woods, made a comeback to Super-8 film-making after a quiet 1993, with **Past and Scrammy 'And** (one of the year's best technical achievements). George Goularas also reappeared after a (longish) time-out, with **Fingerprints of You**. Other active "experimental" film-makers were David Kusnir, Barry Brown, Marcus Bergner.

Going from the extreme left to the extreme right, 1994 was a reasonable but by no means strong year for narrative film-making within the Group. The major narrative film made was by myself, **Ladykiller**, an 80-minute long piece. Whilst that is an accomplishment, I wish I weren't alone - all the other narratives (as well as non-narratives) were short films. Ian McIntosh developed with **A Kind of Calling**, as did Michael Kelleher with **Under a Liquidambar**, both film-makers trying out some new (for them) formal strategies. That anarchist Perry Alexander also expanded on his talents, **The Last Train to Heaven** being a full 30 minutes long. Sharing some traits with Perry's work, Maj Green and Ewan Cameron's **Coal Fever** (made in Berlin) surely deserves bonus points for being so out-of-sync with all the major current stylistic and thematic trends. Narrative films were also made and shown by Jeff Norris, Darryl Veitch, Aris Gounaris, Lucian Chaffey, and several others (I'm afraid I can't remember some of the films screened at the Open Screenings).

Between the strict structuralist/materialist/formalist films and the more accessible narrative films there existed a whole bunch of other stuff made last year. Or, in the case of Jim Bridges, 20 years ago. Hey, Jim, make something new. (For those of you who haven't seen it, I have to start spreading the news: Jim's **Cine Angst Cinch**, completed in 1993, has got to be one of the all-time Melb. Super-8 classics.) The incredible Gary O'Keefe chipped in with just one short work, **Subtopia**, but a good one. Likewise Mark La Rosa with **Summer Slide**. Perth film-maker John Harrison made a splash (in-joke for Kiosk 8 selection committee) with several interesting but long-winded films. Peter Lane also made his presence felt, with the

fun **Traffic Lights** (**Dream Lines** was also of interest). A number of new film-makers appeared during the year, which was heartening: Jennifer Leggett, Peter Clements, Tim Patterson (our new administrator), Tegan Mel (from the cradle to the camera!), Ben Sheppard. Numerous others also showed films at the Open Screenings, and you know who you are. But I - and others - don't know who you are. Please keep coming, and keep showing your work. We should all get to know each other and our work, and support each other.

(The list of my personal favourite films of 1994 runs thus: 1. **Summer Slide** - Mark La Rosa; 2. **Fingerprints of You** - George Goularas; 3. **Masquerade** - Lucian Chaffey; 4. **Coimbra Prison** - Marcus Bergner; 5. **Microphone** - Steven Ball; 6. **Subtopia** - Gary O'Keefe; 7. **Under a Liquidambar** - Michael Kelleher; 8. **Samuel Beckett** - Tony Woods; 9. **Pearl** - Moira Joseph; 10. **Sueno de Cafe** - Bohemio Cine Collective.)

Finally, a mention of Mark Zenner. The creator of **Original Copy** (1989, 23 mins), arguably the best Melb. Super-8 film ever made, this enigmatic film-maker continues to make unshown and/or uncompleted films. Dark, brooding, violent narratives, the list is extraordinary: **3 a.m.** (1990, ~50 mins), **The Confessor** (1991/2, ~40 mins), **Nada** (1993/4/5, ~70 mins). Maybe 1995 will see these films hit the silver screen. Even I myself - a close friend of Mark's - haven't had the privilege of seeing them yet.

Later in the year (November) it is also the Super-8 Group's 10th anniversary. I remember the exact date a number of us met and formed the Group, picking its name: November 19, 1985. The first Open Screening wasn't until February 1986, but the ball was rolling by that meeting (we had all been operating within RMIT as the RMIT Super-8 Club, but had to make a break away). One whispered suggestion I've heard re: 10th anniversary celebrations is this: to disband the

Group. Is this a joke? If it's not, I'm on its side. But only if the Group flowers into another Group. The Group, currently, is gaugeist. And as much as I prefer the aesthetics of S-8/16mm/35mm, we live in an age where there also exist electronic/digital forms of creating sound-image works. I know this is more MIMA's area, but MIMA

We should not be afraid to grow, to develop.

We should take ourselves seriously.

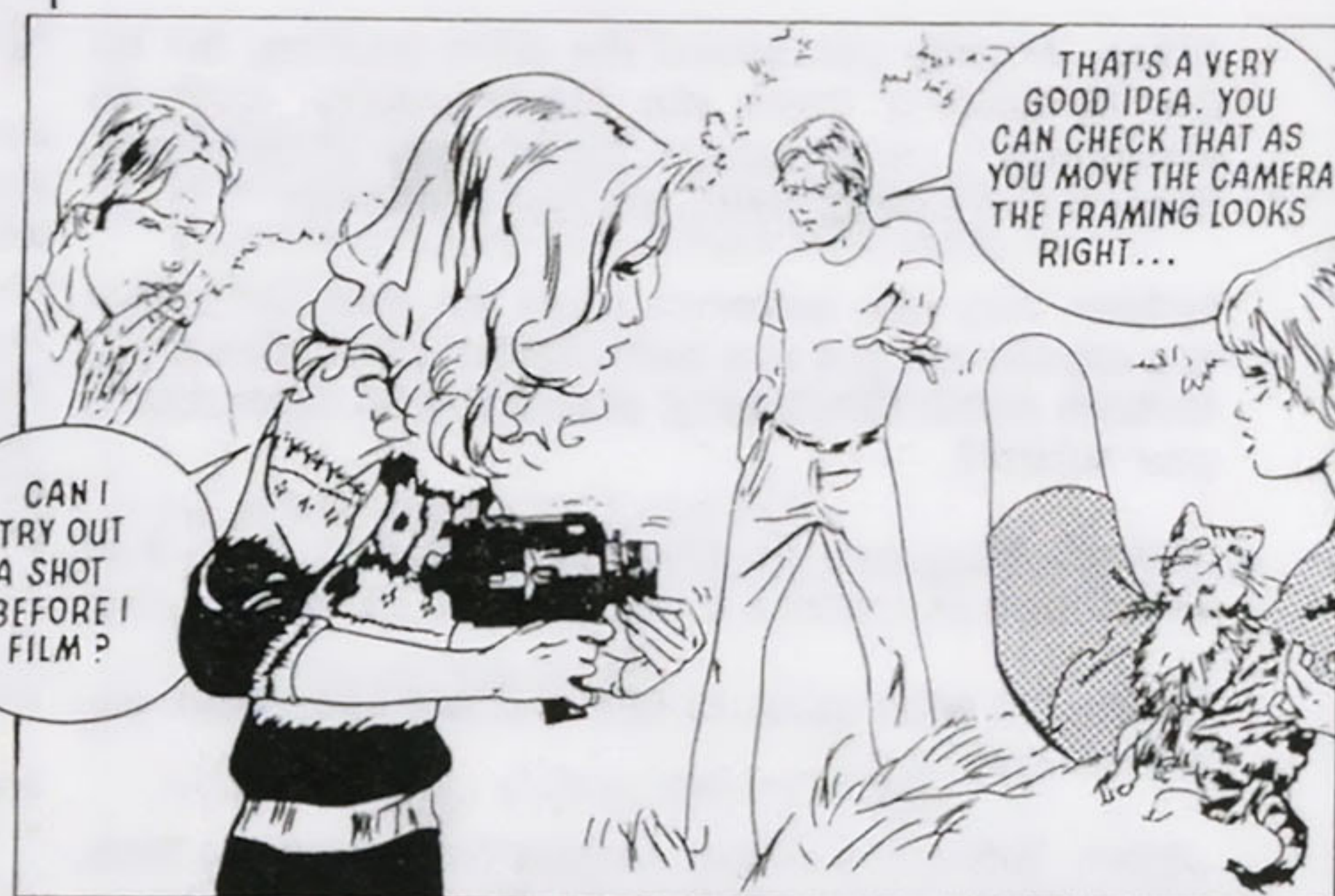
Yes, this is not a "Club".

(For Jim.)

Super 8 Equipment Hire

Equipment	Description	per day	per week (7 days)
Sankyo Sound Camera 1 XL-620 Supertronic	6x Zoom, Lap dissolve, single-frame, slomo, 18 or 24 fps. With mic.	\$5.00	\$30.00
Sankyo Sound Camera 2 XL-620 Supertronic	6x Zoom, Lap dissolve, single-frame, slomo, 18 or 24 fps. With mic.	\$5.00	\$30.00
Canon Silent Camera 1014	10x Zoom, Lap dissolve, slomo, 18 or 24 fps.	\$5.00	\$30.00
Silent Cameras (various)	Various types. Simple, in various condition. Good for beginners.	\$2.00	\$10.00
Editor / Viewers	Various.	\$1.00	\$5.00
Wurker Splicers	Good, reliable and easy to use.	\$2.00	\$10.00
Splices to suit above	Available for purchase by members. Cheapest price in town. Only covers 1 frame either side of cut, leaves both stripes free.	\$8.50 per packet of 50.	
Miller Tripod Junior	Fluid head.	\$2.00	\$10.00
Elmo ST-180 Projector	Sound, Twin track.	\$5.00	\$30.00
Fujica Frame Enlarger	For taking still photos from Super 8 and 16mm frames.	\$2.00	\$10.00
Sony Telecine Adaptor	For transferring film to video. Requires Projector & Video Camera. Can be used to copy film-to-film.	\$3.00	\$15.00

NOTE: Prices shown are member prices. Prices differ for non-members.



He: "Well I'll be hanged. And I thought that you could only make color movies in bright sunshine!"

John Wynn Tweg Interview

by Helen Mihajlovic

John Wynn Tweg is a very attractive, talented and extremely busy producer/ director, who has just opened his own film school. Even though he has such a hectic schedule he gave me the time to interview him. The interview took place over dinner at a Greek restaurant in Hawthorn. We talked of topics such as film schools, directing, producing, photography careers and casting actors. Mr Tweg is a multi-talented man whose skills range from directing, producing, editing, cinematography etc...

Helen: I've heard that you've recently opened your own film school. For those people who want to become filmmakers and are looking for a school to undergo formal training, where is your school, and what does it offer.

John: The school is located in Olinda in the Dandenongs. The name of the school is 'Institute of Lens Arts Australia' (for more info, see last paragraph). People can study 16mm and Super 8 filmmaking, video and still photography. Students direct a 16mm film and crew on four others in major roles. Students have the opportunity to create a showreel of work they've directed, worked on as first assistant director, sound recorder, lighting and Director of Photography. At the end of the course, the students receive a Diploma of Screen Arts.

Helen: Can anybody be accepted to your school?

John: Anyone can attend the short courses, but for the full diploma there are pre-requisites, such as experience in related areas, for example photography, Super 8 filmmaking, video, painting or music.

Helen: Just say, someone came you that didn't have any experience, but was enthusiastic and really wanted to learn about filmmaking, would you let them attend your school?

John: They can do short courses first, then they would have experience to apply for the Diploma course.

Helen: In what areas of film and television have you worked in?

John: Television drama, feature film, corporate films, documentaries, as producer, director, cameraman, cinematographer, lighting director, researcher, editor.

Helen: Which role is most rewarding, and why?

John: The most rewarding are lighting, directing and editing. The beauty of directing is that your own ideas

take form in front of you. Lighting allows you to emphasise and obscure aspects of the image, so that you can alter reality to suit your imagination. Editing is the last opportunity to remake the film, it's almost as important as directing.

Helen: Which job pays more?

John : Producing and Directing pays more, but it depends on the project.

Helen: Do you have any formal training?

John: Yes, I attended the Australian film, television and radio school in Sydney, Prahran College, which is now Swinburne (Paul Cox was my teacher). I also attended RMIT where I studied Fine Arts.

Helen: Was it hard to get into a prestigious film school such as the AFTRS?

John: Firstly I filled in an extremely thorough application form, where we were required to write statements about ourselves, our philosophies, what we thought we could contribute to film./ Then they contacted me and told me I had reached the interview stage, the interview was in Melbourne. Again, it was very thorough, and I was asked to light a scene. Also they wanted us to make a visual story from a selection of photographs. They assessed any folios we had, poems, photographs and films. Then I was told I had reached the next stage of application which included directing professional actors. They sent a script to me and said to gear up to direct it. They flew me up to Sydney, where I had to direct scenes from selected plays. A month or so later, they told me I was accepted.

Helen: Why do you think they accepted you? What was in your application that was so impressive?

John: One reason was that they were particularly impressed with my lighting in another applicants film, which I had crewed on. I spent more than a month on my application, as the questions were intelligent and thorough. I think they chose people who have strong social/aesthetic philosophies, they want people with a strong point of view about issues, people who have ideas on how to express them, for example on women's politics. The attitude of the school is 'You don't have to know how to make films; we teach you that, what we need you to have are topics and ideas that you passionately want to express.

Helen: When did you first become interested in film?

John: When I was at art school, in painting class, I realised images were more cinematic than painterly, so I bought a camera; a Bell and Howell 627.

Helen: When did your professional career begin, at what age?

John: I was in Sydney, writing for a photographic magazine, having tried for thirty film jobs. I returned to Melbourne and was offered a directing job by Bob Weis at Open Channel Productions, on a kids show called 'STAX'. I was recommended by someone who knew me. I was 29 years old when my career began seriously.

Helen: When you were an ABC producer and director, did you choose the actors who you worked with, and if so, what did you look for when you were casting?

John: Yes, when casting for parts, I looked for their understanding of the script, their interpretation of the character, their physical suitability for the role, their attitude to the work, professionalism, someone who can stop on a mark, learn their lines, co-operate with others and who can take direction. Above all, bring some magic to the role. The form of the audition, was a screen test, work shaping, reading, and usually the actors were recommended by agents.

Helen: How long have you worked in the industry?

John: 17 years.

Helen: What do you think is the reason for your success and longevity in such a fickle industry?

John: I've got ideas, I can co-operate, I see the value in other people's jobs, and I have a reasonably wide range of skills, that's one of the strengths of film school training; solid training in 5 major crew roles.

Helen: What motivates you to keep doing what you've been doing for such a long time?

John: Filmmaking is such a demanding multi-disciplinary activity, that it can use every skill, talent, interest, desire, you have, you never have to go beyond filmmaking.

Helen: What sort of films do you like? What film would you go and see which is screening at the moment?

John: Films about ordinary lives. One film that I would like to see at the moment is 'BAD BOY BUBBY' because I think the idea is interesting, it had sixteen cinematographers, and the script was written and directed by someone I studied with.

Helen: What sort of photography do you like to do when you get that sort of work?

John: My personal photographic interest is landscape and portraiture. Most of the photographic work I have is through word of mouth.

Helen: What significance is there in Super 8 filmmaking?

John: I think it is extremely important. Super 8 can be the cutting edge of new ways of seeing. It's cheap, it's accessible and has none of the big finance and organisation of 16mm and 35mm. It allows for a raw creativity of the single artist. The image is beautiful compared to video of the highest quality.

Helen: What advice would you give to a person who is just starting out and would like to enter the film industry?

John: Make your own films on Super 8 or Video, get experience working on your own, and other people's films, then do a course. Once you've been making your own films, you want to know more and further understand what they teach you at film school. Then apply for basic jobs with production companies, even if you offer your services for nothing because you get experience and this will look good on your CV. You will also begin to get a showreel together, and this is what will get you work. Industry people are quick to see whether you're serious or not. You know you're on your way when a crew member you've been helping for some weeks (probably for no money) says "You'll be on the next one."

INFORMATION ON JOHN WYNN TWEG'S FILM SCHOOL:

Institute of Lens Arts
PO Box 177
Kalorama
Ph (03) 728 1150

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SUPERFICIAL 8

Super 8 in the Digital Age

- a series of speculations resulting
in a non-conclusion
by Steven Ball

•

“*Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.”

Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia*

• •

The end of a year is an arbitrary point, but it serves as a between point from which to reflect and to consider the future. In the context of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group 1995 is also a convergence of a number of other between points: it is the ‘official’ centenary of cinema, it is also the thirtieth anniversary of the introduction of Super 8 film and furthermore the tenth year of the existence of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group. Arbitrarily or not 1994 seemed to be a transitional year in the activity of the group and a year of shifts within the broader area of cultural production.

• • •

Let’s talk about metaphysics. In 1994 metaphysics became directly embodied in government cultural policy through Paul Keating’s *Creative Nation* statement. Not since Hitler, Mussolini or Stalin has cultural production been so specifically determined by government policy and many government funded cultural organisations will be bending over backwards to get a slice of the money by aligning themselves with Keating’s, and his team of ‘expert’ advisers’ “... great ambition... to bring cultural issues into the mainstream of our national life, and national decision-making.”, and to offer “...specific assistance to foster film agencies’ move into multi-media.” However, “The Government recognises in this statement that as the opportunities are created by developments in communications technologies, content will be the defining element.” What does ‘content’ mean exactly. If ‘content’ is to be the defining element then ‘content’ itself needs to be defined. In view of the fact that “The AFC’s New Image Research Program will be extended to develop experimental multi-media

projects work...”. How much will this leave those filmmakers whose interest is not specifically in ‘multi-media’? There are already rumours that certain film and video cultural organisations are denying access at the programme planning stages to anything but those artists whose works falls into the areas variously known as ‘new media technology’, ‘multi-media’ or ‘digital media’, and that this is as a direct result of explicit instruction from government funding bodies. The message to funded film and video organisations is fairly unambiguously to toe the line or forfeit the funding.

The problem here is not just the simple dichotomy between ‘new’ and ‘old’ technology but, also, where this notion that it is up to government policy to be the guiding force of cultural production is likely to lead. Such intervention is pernicious totalitarianism and there is real danger of institutionalised philistinical avant-gardism, censorship, exclusivity and wilful ignorance of existing cultural production.

Where the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group, super 8 filmmakers and other film and video makers whose interest is in areas other than can be accommodated by this new technologies push sit in this context is a matter for not inconsiderable speculation. To date my assumption, has been that it is the responsibility of film and video makers and the groups that purport to represent them to be largely self-determining, to set their own ‘agendas’ and to make representations to and lobby government for funding. The individuals and groups who make and represent the work are best placed to determine and form what could be termed the ‘national cultural agenda’. Of course there is a certain naivety in assuming that the government is genuinely interested in ‘cultural development’, in itself, apart from the dictates of trade, etc. The latest version of the ‘cultural cringe’ is that cultural production only has value when it can be linked with the economy, can be exported, will make money. Opposition to this is as much to achieve a negative alignment with the policy, a cynicism that recognises the price of everything and the value of nothing: battle not with cynics lest one become a cynic oneself. Rather than to draw conclusions or worse still battlelines, I’ll just let this issue float for a while as a matter for speculation and reflection, for I don’t want to get drawn into opposing one fascism with another.

The metaphysics is interesting though. When *Creative Nation* talks on one hand about ‘content’ and on the other ‘technology’ it is

making an artificial distinction. It doesn't take much more than a basic grasp of the granddaddy of media theory Marshall McLuhan to realise the inextricable nature of technology and content. The 'philosopher of cyberspace' Michael Heim has said "Now we are facing such things as 'presence'. What it is 'to be present', somewhere, as a human being? What is to be, in a human being? Presence as the existence of an entity is a crucial question in the building of virtual reality technology." This is not an existential issue but one thrown up by the proliferation of technologies that create metaphysical environments: notions of cyberspace or virtual reality, out there wandering around the Internet or 'interacting' with a CD (ROM). The revolution of these technologies is that what was previously a cerebral philosophical or religious issue is now embodied in a (virtually) real metaphysical technological environment. If technology is an extension of the body, this technology is further an extension of the imagination: metaphysical and metacognitive. The most alarming thing is the utopian zeal with which it is being seized.

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The 'new technology' demands a recontextualisation of every other area of production in relation to it. To talk of 'content' is irrelevant, but to consider form, shape, resonance and relationship is crucial. The implication for existing or 'traditional' forms of technological production is, however, not so much frightening as potentially liberating. For centuries artists working in technologies, be they 'two dimensionally' text, visual or time-based, or any combination of the above and others, have struggled with notions of metaphysics and the problematic limitations of illusionism or representation. Illusion of depth has simply been layers of surfaces, enmeshed lines of flight. The digitisation of metaphysics in virtual reality provides an opportunity for metaphysicians to have access to a technology of their own which is ideally suited to their project of transcendence. This opens up the area of linear technology, liberates it to no longer worry about illusionist representation of depth but to concentrate on what it has always consisted of: surfaces and material. It is a waste of time to churlishly argue about the relative *merits* of one medium or technology over another, but rather more productive to consider the *potential* of one in relation to the whole, a whole which is, of course, not a universally perceivable environment, but one that is in constant flux, shifting and changing with each perceptual relation.

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To oppose the current changes and to protectively guard territories is counter-productive and conservative. Paul Keating is undoubtedly an idiot and his 'vision' blinkered but his policy is not going to change. One must feel sorry for those poor souls who are investing everything in this 'new technology' and to gently, carefully point out to them that there is a larger cultural field in which work exists in relation, not opposition, to it.

Against this background the work exhibited in 1994 by the group can be seen to exist in a constantly changing relationship to the broader cultural shifts. If, in the late twentieth century religious metaphysics has been replaced by a bewildering patchwork of esoteric 'new age' secular metaphysics, transcendental or illusionist art has found a new home in a technology that has caught up with and overtaken its practitioners, then linear technologies can be the field of enquiry for non-metaphysical practice. Virtual reality was pre-figured by notions of 'video space' in video art, and yet this was a more conceptual space, and image space still hinged upon the old laws of perspective to create the illusion of space and depth. The concerns of filmmakers in the 'digital age' is not with depth but with surface. In a local context this is specifically occurring in Super 8 film practice. That is not to say that these enquiries are not happening in any other media in Australia, simply that there is no other regular forum, no other comparable concentration of activity by any other modern image makers.

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The German media theorist Norbert Bolz has coined the term 'Surface Philosophy' to describe the phenomenon of how in contemporary media the contemplation of appearances, surfaces, dominates. It is no longer necessary or relevant to look for any depth 'beneath' the surface. The surfaces form a kind of mosaic that is perceived and constructed by the viewer by means of 'resonant intervals'. In terms of experimental filmmaking this is perhaps not a particular revelatory theory but Bolz applies it to all media and makes no distinction between art and communication media asserting that communication that does not artistically reflect on its own form is nonsensical. This is a formulation that links a variety of works in an unlikely alliance from most of Pete Spence's films to Bill Mousoulis' *Ladykiller* to the David Letterman Show to just about anything I've seen this year.



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Within the group there has often been an uncritical dichotomy expressed in simplistic notions of 'experimental' versus 'narrative' or 'abstract' versus 'representational' and other generic or form based distinctions. Opinions have occasionally come close to paranoia in defence of the chosen piece of territory and yet they are usually applying the same form of justification: whether defending classic narrative or experimentalism it comes down to a fundamental conservatism in preserving one or another historically 'justifiable' status quo. These kind of discussions do not seem to have emerged so much in 1994, although occasionally one heard murmurs of it.

What is more interesting is to trace the layers, the surfaces at work within particular films and filmmakers work. Whatever the filmmakers intentions the films eventually manifest themselves as surfaces and layers, or regimes of surfaces of image and sound multiplied by time. It is the resonance of these surfaces as perceived by a viewer that gives the film its dynamic form. In some films the number of layers are multiplied and the final form emerges from a complex weaving. Three films shown in 1994 in particular interest me as being manifestations of this weaving effect: *Scrammy 'And* by Maeve Woods, *Summer Slide* by Mark La Rosa and *Ladykiller* by Bill Mousoulis.

Scrammy 'And (made for the *Bush Studies* project and shown in *Kiosk 8's Bush Settings* programme) gives the appearance of discreet pieces of material worked over and woven together in a particularly stylish fashion. As a response to a particular extant text (one of Barbara Baynton's *Bush Studies* stories) Maeve took a similar line to the one I took with my *Bush Studies* film *Billy Skywonkie*, and yet with quite different resonant results. Whereas I largely retained a textual basis, Maeve's film uses the text as a launching point and flies with it. Flies, indeed, have a large presence in this film! The weaving of images and music with a voice-over that refers directly to the film and its maker, becomes a piece of work that does not restrict itself to interpretation of originating material. It creates its own context and one that is not concerned with depth of significance as much as surface resonances.

Mark La Rosa's *Summer Slide* employs another collagic layering of sound and image. Again there is 'original' material which is perhaps more clearly perceived than in Maeve's film: a re-shot black and white movie; repeated snatches of voice from presumably the

same movie; images which, I'm told, come from an abandoned 'narrative' film; snatches of bleached and coloured film which reminds one of the material surface. Yet knowledge of the original intention of this material (i.e. being made for another film) is incidental to the poetic flow of the film. The significance of these films is their flight from signification.

Ladykiller is far more complex on many levels. It locates itself quite consciously, generically as a 'feature length narrative' about a serial killer. By doing so it signals a number of expectations as to what one would expect from such a familiar form. However its lack of success in terms of these criteria (which would be along conservative notions of 'quality' and would require comparing the film to more conventionally 'professional' productions) does not diminish other more important elements of the film. Like *Open City* before it, with *Ladykiller* Bill has successfully achieved his aim of making a feature length film by clocking up an 80 minute duration. Duration is, beyond a doubt, one of the most important factors in defining what is feature length. In addition the film chooses as its subject the contemporarily fashionable serial killer, and does all the usual dramatic things with characters, plot development and so forth. I would suggest that to manage to clock up ticks against the check list of what identifies a 'feature' film is all that is required of such a project. It is a film that is all surface, made up of surfaces, there is little evidence of attempts at psychoanalysis in the treatment of the serial killer character, it is amoral and non-judgemental. Although there is something baroque about its concern with presenting the appearance of being a narrative feature, surface appearances which signal its intentions, it is not decorative. It has profundity in its superficiality and yet it is not pastiche or parody. Its significance is that it indicates a welcome departure from qualitative notions of depth, meaning or indeed significance. The title of the *Kiosk 8* programme that *Ladykiller* was presented in, *Beneath the Surface*, seems ironical in retrospect. The other film in that programme, *Under a Liquidambar* by Michael Kelleher, is a juxtaposition of layers of image and sound that add up to an intriguing construction as much for what one doesn't see as for what is there. The shots of trees and buildings, the lack of human images, become a semi-*tabula rasa* for the voice over weaving its tale. The image of the tree is sort of ironic as the film becomes root-less and is more like aerial photography roving around its ostensible subject. The question of whether there is something going

on 'beneath the surface' is irrelevant. These kind of mannerist narratives have a strong relationship with the work of that other grand master of superficiality Richard Tuohy, whose *Ordinary Flux* becomes a convenient reference point for reflection on formal narrative in Melbourne Super 8.

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The work of Super 8 filmmakers is not archaeology, it is not important to understand the precedents, the histories of the practice; one doesn't any more need a familiarity with Ozu or Bresson to watch a Richard Tuohy film, than one needs to be aware of the work of Bob Brown or Carol Stetser to 'read' a Pete Spence film; references to histories and structures, official, alternative or secret, are hindrances; individual political agendas lead to criteria against which a work can be judged, compared, compartmentalised and are inherently reactionary. Of course each of us is a multiple, a convergence of countless influences and imitations, mimesis is unavoidable, but it is the sum and the difference of all of these that is what we are and the Super 8 Group is the sum and the difference of all those resonances, a model that is itself, not a reproduction of other models.

.....

The gauge specificity of the group is, in some senses, irrelevant. It seems that the gauge choses the filmmaker which is not so surprising given the lack of any other context for local film or video makers. Many of the films made last year such as the fluid abstraction of Barry Brown's *4 Pitches for Saxophone*, or Pete Spence's *Visual Poems* or Tony Wood's study of light perception *Sunism '94*, and a number of other films could have been achieved, albeit perhaps differently, on any number of other media. Yet, if the current situation where artists are denied access on technological grounds in line with Keating's policy continues, in Melbourne super 8 film is going to be the only realistic option available. The group will be the only conceivable context, but is it necessary to make a fetish of the gauge? For the time being it is still viable but it is ultimately the economic dictates of the film manufacturers that will determine the gauge's existence, not a handful of filmmakers. There will come a time when to be too precious about the gauge will cancel out the potential for the continuation of the work.

.....

It is perhaps in the recent work of Arthur and Corinne Cantrill that super 8 film is used in its 'purest' way. In *The Walking Track* (shown in the *Kiosk 8 Bush Settings* programme) the qualities of the medium, the camera's portability, the zoom lens, the colour resolution of Kodachrome 40, combine to produce a sublime experience when accompanied by the beautifully recorded and produced soundtrack full of buzzing insects which, in the rounded acoustical form of the Grierson Cinema, zipped around the room as though released from the speakers, untethered by simple stereo. It is one of the most direct and unpretentious atmospheric Super 8 films I have seen since Sandy Munro's *Sides of Sea on the Shortest Day of the Year* (1991).

.....

If references to surfaces seem to be perversely superficial this is not altogether accidental, though it is not an ironic perversity. This concentration on a concern with surfaces and a radical disavowal of the importance of depth philosophy is fundamental. The currency of the practice is in the current practice and not based in any mutually held and exclusively adhered to philosophy or policy. It is not necessary to refer to precedence or roots, it is dangerously dogmatic to privilege one convention over another, it is necrophiliac to turn from being an artist into being an archivist; it is more interesting to look at surfaces, to see things where they are in the *between* of the present. If ten years of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group has any meaning it is in what is being achieved continuously, month by month, not by what has been achieved in the last ten years. The collection of a number of people looking at projected images moving on a reflective surface once a month is a continual renewal, between things, a multitude of beginnings.



PRISMATIC OSMOSIS

Alice looked at the camera lying on the desk. She appreciated it's colour, it's weight, and it's lens capacity. She slumped down into the chair as she couldn't for the life of her, think of what to do with it. It had a full tank of film, and the batteries were all new. It sat there like a piece of shrapnel, waiting to be picked up and utilised, but be buggered if she knew what to do with it!

She sat there, hour after hour, just staring at the camera. Out of profound boredom, she pulled out the desk drawer, and picked up two jars marked NAIVETY BLOCKOUT 15+ and the other, GOE CREAM.

She rubbed some of the naivety blockout on her arm, she instantly grew smaller. She then rubbed some Goe cream on the other arm, and she instantly shot up taller, larger than life, in fact.

She then found, that as if by magic, just by looking at the camera, way down there on the table, she knew what she wanted to do with it.

So she rubbed a bit of Goe cream on the small camera, and it too shot up in side, to fit into her hand, as if they were made for each other.

She then got up and went through the looking glass, armed with her camera.

She found that from then on, she always knew what she wanted to film, and that everything she ever filmed, had her somewhere reflected from the looking glass, in each frame...



He: "Ouch! I think I know now why those few Kodachrome beach shots we made last month are a bit washed out. We made 'em with the same exposure we gave to the shots of the car as we started the trip."

MELBOURNE SUPER 8 FILM GROUP

FINANCIAL REPORT Jan - Dec 1994

Income

Grants	10,000.00
Membership	1,085.00
Equipment Hire	732.50
Advertising (Newsletter)	170.00
Other (Film hire, Bank Interest etc)	1341.50

GENERAL ORGANISATION TOTAL 13,329.00

Kiosk 8 8791.00

GRAND TOTAL 22,120.00

Expenditure

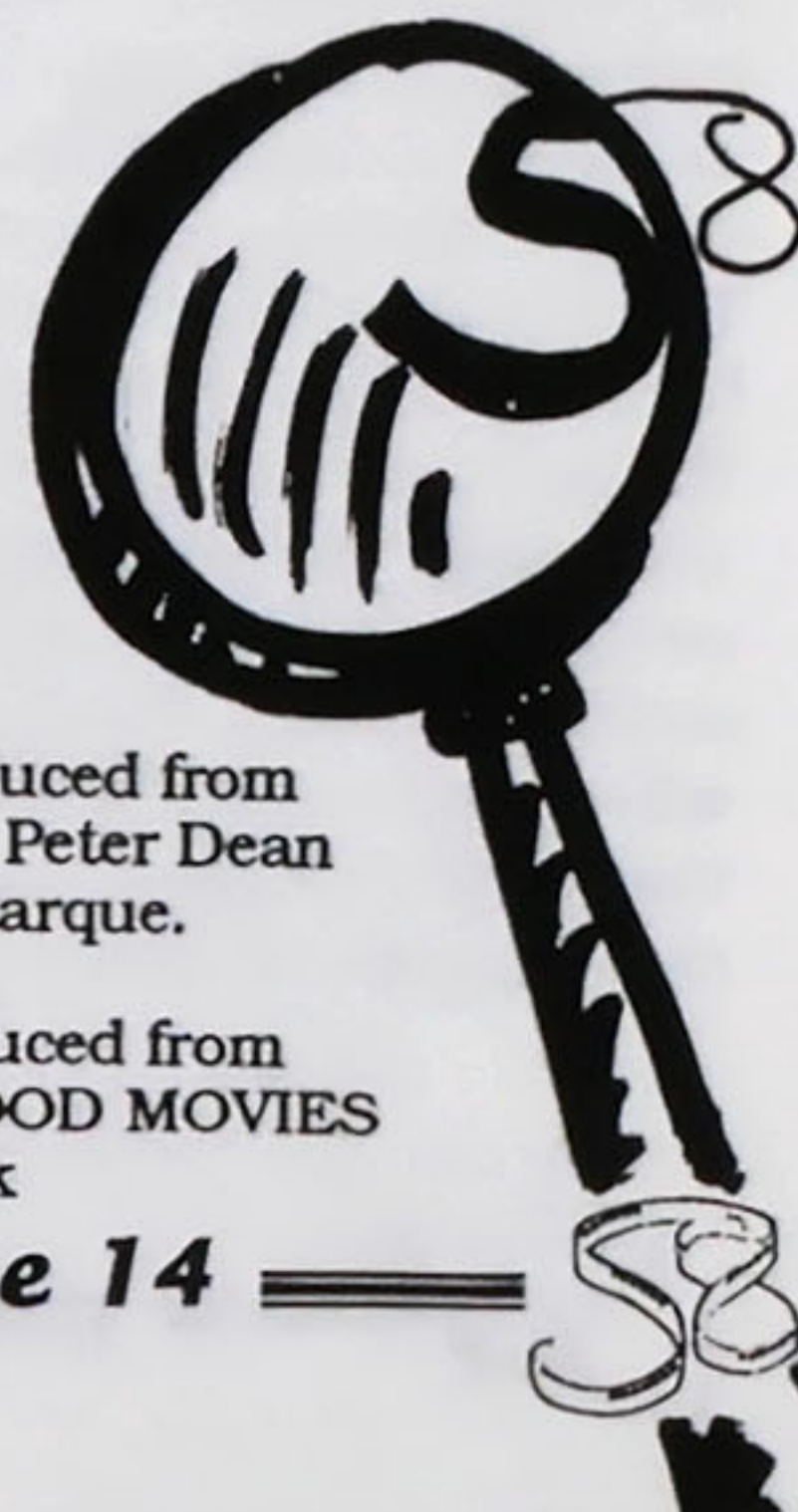
Wages	5,880.00
General Admin	963.78
Newsletter (inc. Printing & Postage)	1,426.15
Open Screenings	225.00
Equipment	443.98
Phone	793.65
Rent	2,422.53
Other (inc Filmmakers fees, Bank Charges maintainance, Insurance, Incorp fees etc)	2,405.07

GENERAL ORGANISATION TOTAL 14,571.84

Kiosk 8 6,683.34

GRAND TOTAL 21,255.18

Following the Annual General Meeting at the last open screening the above is the wrap up of the group's income and expenditure for 1994. There has been a certain amount of confusion surrounding the election of committee members both during and following the meeting. As a consequence the committee is currently attempting to clarify the situation and you will find details of the outcome of this in the seperate page inserted in this newsletter.



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HOW TO MAKE GOOD MOVIES
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**At the start of 1995 -
Thoughts about the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group.
by Corinne Cantrill**

Late last year I was feeling uncertain about aspects of the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group - the disappointing November KIOSK 8, the fiasco about the fees from the Melbourne Cinemateque for the group's programs, and a sense of 'powerlessness', that things were being done for us without enough consultation with group members.

But on further reflection, it's clear that if I have such doubts, then the remedy is to take up the offer to attend Committee meetings and to be involved in the work of the group. Perhaps we have all sat back and left things to the committee and the Administrator, If a handful do the work, then of course they will make the decisions for us.

With this in mind, I attended the 1995 planning meeting of the group, on January 21st - an eight hour marathon (admirably chaired by Matthew Rees) which attempted to review the main areas of the group's activities. The meeting was well attended by about 16 people. The tone of the discussions on many different issues was strong, intelligent and engaging. I came away from this meeting feeling encouraged about the group and the prospects for the year ahead.

1995 should be an interesting year for the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group - its 10th anniversary, with special projects planned. Thinking back over the past 10 years of the group, they have been 10 years of real achievement in Australian film culture, and carried through on next to no money or funding. (Compare this with MIMA, which also has been running for almost 10 years. This body has drained \$1,000,000 - more or less - of funding in this time, given fewer programmes, and has managed to alienate almost every independent filmmaker in Melbourne.)

It is extraordinary that the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group still exists - so many bodies have come and gone over the years, with much energy lost in internal struggles and power plays. Of course, the Melbourne Super 8 Film Group could still fall into that trap.

The Melbourne Super 8 Film Group has probably shown more Australian films, by more filmmakers in its 10 years than any other comparable film organisation, and that is a real achievement.

However, let's not get complacent. I'm concerned at how close to the edge the group is financially, and it's good luck that the Group has managed to get through so far.

As we are at the start of a new year, I would like to see some changes: and encouragement of non-members attending monthly screenings to pay a small admittance charge or 'suggested' donation; that we all pay for our coffee and biscuits, and that urgently, the rental charges of the equipment pool reflect the cost of the items/servicing/repair and replacement eventually. It's unrealistic that for our tiny membership fees we get 11 newsletters, 11 screenings/meetings, free coffee and biscuits, and non-members get all this as well! The group needs a new projector for screenings, and that won't come cheaply. In 1994, the group spent well over \$100 on free refreshments - that money could be going towards repairs and new equipment.

One reason the group is now not charging for coffee/biscuits might be because there is no-one to do it. Perhaps we need a roster of members to do this.

We need to be more astute. Because things have run along OK last year, they may not continue this way, even if it is the 10th Anniversary Year!

Practical problems aside, I have a good feeling about the group in 1995. The range and diversity of the members of the Group is impressive, and this is reflected in the work being shown.

As the group is now the only organisation in Melbourne with any regular program of showing Australian films, it has a responsibility to ensure that it's various activities - it's 7:30 pm programs, the annual S8 Festival, etc. are intelligent, serious and well thought out. We are no longer just showing our films to one another, but we are carrying on the only consistent venue where Australian film work is frequently shown. It's an extraordinary situation that this is where we've come to in Melbourne, in Australia, in film culture, in this, the Centenary of Cinema!

LAST OPEN SCREENING

Tuesday 13th December 1995

AT 7:30 - Annual General Meeting

AT 8:30 OPEN SCREENING FILMS:

Gestures, Pete Spence (3 mins)

Three chords for twelve guitar, Barry Brown (3 mins)

Classified

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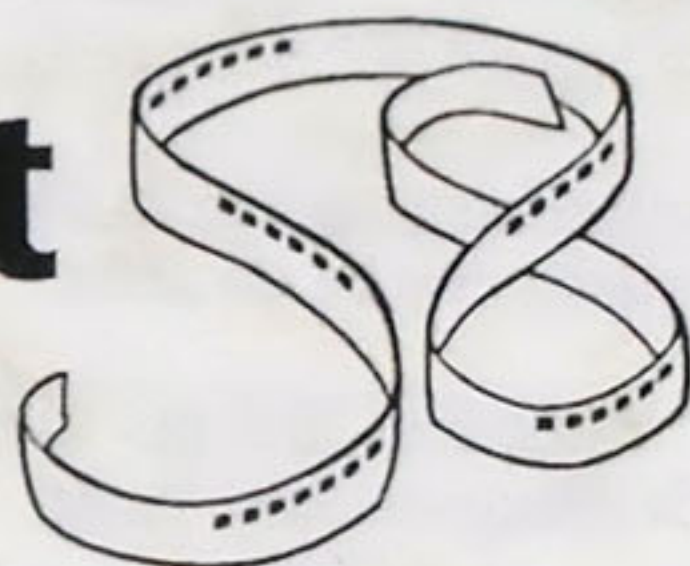
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Super Eight



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Melbourne Super 8 Film Group

PO Box 2033

Fitzroy MDC

Victoria 3065

Chris Windmill
6/158 Chapel Street
BALACLAVA 3183

**NEXT
OPEN
SCREENING**
**Tuesday 14th February
1995**
at 7:30 pm
Erwin Rado Theatre
**211 Johnston Street
Fitzroy**
AT 7:30
FILMS BY Chris Windmill
(See article on Page 30)
followed by
OPEN SCREENING
BYO Films
All Welcome. FREE Entry!!!

*He: "Well, I'll be hanged! I never
thought that little camera of ours
could tackle these subjects."*

**The Melbourne Super 8 Film Group is funded
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