

OPTERYX PRESS

\$3.50
\$5.25 Canada

Vol.2 No.2 a.k.a.
Summer 2001

#4

MICROFILM™

The Magazine of Personal Cinema in Action

Whatever
Indie Film
Gets You
Through the
Night!

EXISTO

FAUST

BALLYHOO

**FREE
RADIO**

**SUPER
STARLET
A.D.**

Comix on
Film

Chicago's
Alternative
Venues

Reviews

and more!



"Move over Ted Bundy...
and make room for
Bucky!"

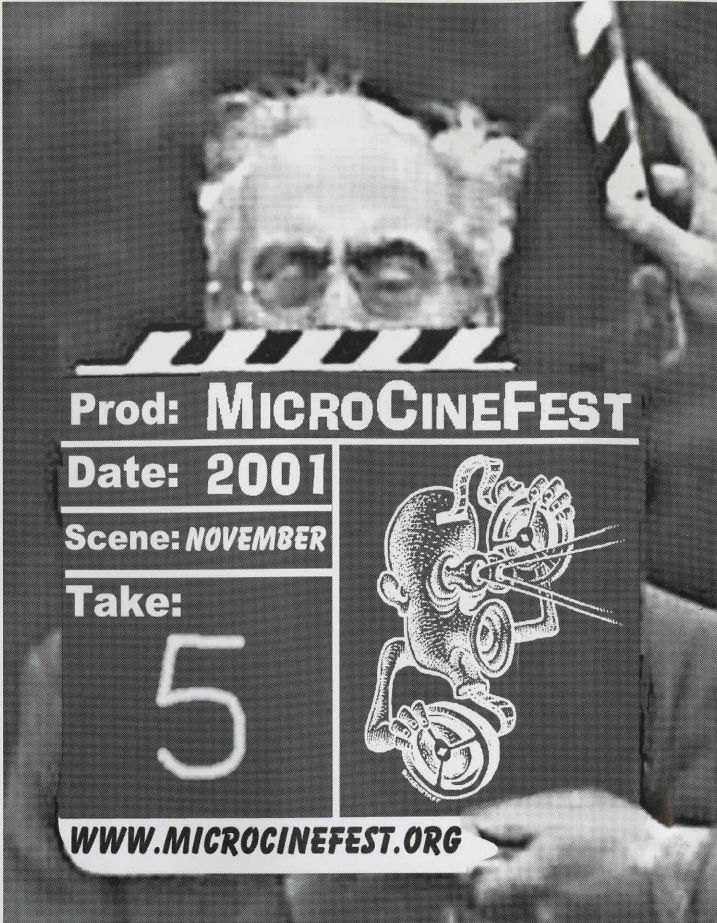
A New Comedy
by Mike Trippiedi,
director of
"Dogs in
Quicksand"

Steve Davis
is

BUCKY McSNEAD

It's the First Slasher Film
Told in Rhyme!

Only \$10.00! Send cash or check to:
Shut Up and Do It Productions
802 Frank Drive, Champaign, IL 61821



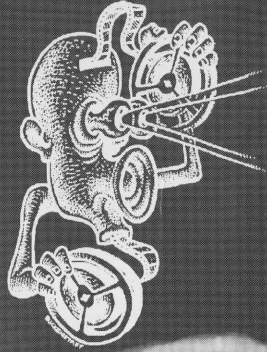
Prod: **MICROCINEFEST**

Date: **2001**

Scene: **NOVEMBER**

Take:
5

WWW.MICROCINEFEST.ORG



Three great places you shouldn't have to live without...



Independent, Cult,
Classic, International,
and otherwise
Great Films on
Video Tape & DVD

516 East John Street, Champaign
(217) 384-0977

801 South Lincoln, Urbana
(217) 384-6077

www.rentertainment.com



**the world's greatest
independent music
mail order place
(check us out)**



www.parasol.com



Espresso Drinks,
Sandwiches, Soups,
and Much More.

801 South Lincoln, Urbana, IL
(217) 384-6066

page 6 NOT NECESSARILY THE INDIE FILM NEWS: Cub reporters Joseph Alexandre and Kelly Stevens dish the backstage details about SPLIT SCREEN and BALLYHOO, two television productions concerned with behind-the-scenes looks at non-mainstream cinema and other alternative culture.

page 8 PUTTING THE "A.D." IN BIGBROADGUERRILLAMONSTER: Mimeozone editor and man-on-the-fringe L. Rob Hubbard sets aside rocket sciency to divulge the naughty pleasures of aiding pop kop John Michael McCarthy on his latest "exploitation art" epic, SUPERSTARLET A.D., deep in the heart of Femphis.

page 10 UNDER THE FCC-"FREE" SKIES: Novice indie filmmaker Kevin Keyser broadcasts quite clearly to good listener Paul Riismandel about his desktop documentary FREE RADIO, demonstrating how the micro-watt half lives through the struggles of idealistic Stephen Dunifer and other so-called "radio pirates."

page 12 LAKE MICHIGAN FREEZES OVER, FILM AT 11: The assured pen of Nicole Bernardi-Reis aims to claim the Windy City's stake as the hub for Midwestern independent film, while Jason Pankoke profiles one of Chicago's celluloid prizefighters, BULLET ON A WIRE director Jim Sikora.

page 14 PRESENTED IN "EXISTO"-VISION: It's not often that an exciting black comedy/musical/head trip/progressive fable comes our way. Director Coke Sams and actor/writer Bruce Arntson tell us why EXISTO is all that jazz and much, much more. Interview by Jason Pankoke.

page 17 FOUR COLORS AND A FILM DEAL: Comic book aficionado Chuck Koplinski steps into the worlds of recent indie flicks based on indie comics, including Brian Yuzna's FAUST, Terry Zwigoff's GHOST WORLD, and Matthew Balthrop's low-budget take on STRANGERS IN PARADISE.

page 21 C-U CONFIDENTIAL #4: Unleashing the truth that must be told, MICRO-FILM once again hedges its bets that our free-thinking readers will learn a thing or three about homegrown movie-making from the case study of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. This time out, elder teen heartthrob Jason Pankoke focuses on the little film things that mean a lot in his own abbreviated diary.

page 4 EDITORIAL: In journalist-speak, "-30-" means the end of the story. So, does turning 30 mean the end of the innocence?

page 27 REVIEWS: REQUIEM FOR A DREAM shocks the system, LITTLE SISTER gleefully strikes back, and URBAN FLESH shivers ever-so-lightly in this issue's lineup. Also, Rusty Nails, Evan Jacobs, and Mike Legge tell us "What It Takes," A.J. Michel examines the work of Jill Godmilow, and Jeff Sartain looks back at stylized German cinema.

page 35 INNER CINEMA: What price is indie film glory? John Weaver would love to know the answer to that one.

page 36 CAST & CREW: These kids write and create the darndest things.

Quote of the issue "Actors have sparked revolutions, ended wars, entertained kings and queens, and kept the huddled masses laughing during their darkest hours ... and died for their beliefs. Actors are *honorable*, Dusty. You're a cowboy, right? You know how to use one of these?" - film director Sondre Zinx (D. Mason Bendewald), talking thespian Dusty Riggs (Matt Saunders) into proving loyalty with a gun in Bendewald's NICE SHOT.

COVER



Front (normal edition): Bruce Arntson in EXISTO. (Hometown Productions)

Front (comix edition): (Main) Mark Frost and Monica Van Campen in FAUST (Fantastic Factory/Trimark). (Inserts) Mike Allred artwork for ASTROESQUE (Dark Horse), Matthew Balthrop and Katie Lawson in STRANGERS IN PARADISE (G14), Thora Birch in GHOST WORLD (UA).

Back (clockwise, from top left): Mark Frost in FAUST (2001, normal edition), Kerine Elkins in SUPERSTARLET A.D. (courtesy JMM), Bruce Arntson in EXISTO (comix edition), David Yow in WALLS IN THE CITY (courtesy Jim Sikora), Anne Deason of BALLYHOO! (courtesy Jason Neff), Emil Jannings in FAUST (1926, courtesy Kino on Video), William H. Macy in PANIC (Roxie Releasing/courtesy Roger Ebert's Overlooked Film Festival).

page 13



page 22



page 27



THANK YOU: Mike Allred, Bruce Arntson, Matthew Balthrop, Jason "Faust" Brown, Howard Browning-Stone, Jennifer Browning-Stone, Julianne Buescher, Joe Carducci, Dan Clowes, Christopher Coppola, Anne Deason, Shawna Ervin-Gore & DHC, Eric Fisher, Clarke Gallivan, Skip Huston, Kevin Keyser, Jenny Kreiseder, Johnnie May, Melissa McKillip & REOFF, John Michael McCarthy, Robyn Moore & Abstract Studio, Jason Neff & CFFV, Robin Peters, David Quinn, Eric Reynolds & Fantagraphics, Jay Rosenstein, Coke Sams, Jim Sikora, Mike Trippiedi, Ursi Van der Herten & Fantastic Factory, Dennis Neal Vaughn, David Ward, Bill Yauch & PPG, Brian Yuzna.

ALSO: Mom & Dad & Eric & Jamie & Grandma Ski & roly poly bouncing baby Hope, Teddy Veatch, Danielle Cloutier, Inga Mucha, Peter Zielinski, Emily Eggan, Scott Rankin, The Octopus, Los Bros Tinchers & The Ides of March, Brad Bugos, WEFT 90.1 FM, Chris Sharpe & Eyeball, Mike White & Cashiers du Cinemart, Scott & That's Rentertainment, Melissa Merli & The News-Gazette, G-Mart, Jill & TJ & LIX, Ward & The Highdive, Nate Kohn, Tim & Abigail & Lisa & Jamie & Becca & Drew & Jenny & Heather & Radio Maria, Eric Tucker, Ubiquity, Stephen Bentz & Pages For All Ages.

THIS ISSUE DEDICATED to The Shooting Gallery (1991-2001).



The Magazine of
Personal Cinema in Action



Vol.2, No.2
Summer 2001

Publisher & Editor
Jason Pankoke

Proofreading & Research
Erin Anadkat
Holly Rushakoff

Contributors
Joseph Alexandre
Erin Anadkat
Nicole Bernardi-Reis
Grace Giorgio
L. Rob Hubbard
Chuck Koplinski
Jeff McCoy
Marty McKee
A.J. Michel
Paul Riismandel
Jeff Sartain
Kelly Stevens
Mike Trippiedi
Mike Watt
John Weaver

Graphic Design
Jason Pankoke
Dave Powers
Kathy Wright

Layout
Jason Pankoke

MICRO-FILM (ISSN # 1528-2562) is published on an irregular basis by Opteryx Press, P.O. Box 114, Champaign, IL 61824-0045. Entire contents are © 2001 Opteryx Press, all rights reserved. No parts of this issue may be reproduced in any form without prior written consent from the publisher. All correspondence can be forwarded to the above address or e-mailed to micro-film@artisticunderground.com.

Subscriptions: 3 issues for \$10.00 (U.S.), \$14.00 (Foreign). Sample copies are \$3.50 postpaid (U.S.), \$5.00 postpaid (Foreign). Please make personal checks and money orders payable to "Jason Pankoke." Well-concealed cash is acceptable. U.S. funds only, please. Film schools and film societies should inquire about special bulk purchase rates.

Advertising rates are available by sending a SASE to the above address or e-mailing us and placing "Ad Rates" in the "subject" header. Rates and policies are subject to change without notice. Deadline for booking your ad in MICRO-FILM #5 is December 15, 2001.

Contributions are welcome from film journalists and filmmakers alike! However, we accept no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts and materials. Please include a SASE with ample postage if you wish your materials to be returned to you. All correspondence is considered submitted for publication.

Printed by Crouse Printing, 3102 Research Road, Champaign, IL 61822, (217) 356.9115, fax (217) 356.1381. Distributed by FM International, Tower Records, and Ubiquity Distributors.

micro-film@artisticunderground.com
www.micro-film-magazine.com
office phone: (217) 352.1312

MICRO-FILM, the Opteryx Press indicia, and the All-Powerful Film Girl are trademarks of Jason Pankoke.

THIS IS NOT JUST MOVIES. IT'S YOUR LIFE.

OPTERYX PRESS
the evolution of expression



"NO PLAY, NO GAIN"

i. Short Subject

30 is as 30 does, right?

Every time I walk into the Secret MICRO-FILM Headquarters and think I've accidentally broken into a college student's trashed apartment, I have to wonder.

It's a feeling that's crawled up my spine many times over the past few years. Where are the wife, the children, the dog, the mortgage, the dental insurance, the station wagon, and the in-laws battling for their kids on the holidays? True "domestication" doesn't exist in my world; if it did, then MICRO-FILM as we know it most likely wouldn't. Such is the confusion of this newly branded thirtysomething who hit the golden birthday back in December.

I've temporarily sidelined the norms of what society—and, I'm sure, President Bush and his self-righteous cronies—avidly supports. I have as much in common with my longtime friends and my brother as with the college kids that swarm the University, the townies that seat-warm the cafés, the hipsters that haunt the bars, and the hard-working folk who read and inspire this publication. I guess I'm a cross-platform "crazy uncle" type still in search of grand adventure and exotic discoveries. I guess I value that freedom.

A similar predicament faces the independent filmmakers of the world as the Digital Revolution tempts them to engage in widespread artistic freedom. Because traditional filmmaking has been so dependent on the art of the money-wrangling deal, how many people truly know what to do once they actually get their hands on all that power cooped up in a DV camcorder and a desktop computer? Just like many others, I'm as scared and as anxious to find out what can be accomplished in a medium only fractionally explored since Edison conjured up the concept a century ago.

Hopefully, I can afford to push that "settling down" part further down the road of life so I can squeeze in quality DV play time along with the rest of you.

Just as long as I remember to pick up my room.

ii. Feature Presentation

January of last year, I experienced the video art of Bill Viola at the Art Institute of Chicago, coming away with fresh insight into the possibilities of multimedia production. This past January, I returned to Chicago in an attempt to set aside learning and self-achievement (and MICRO-FILM) to momentarily recapture some things from my youth I sorely missed. The Windy City's famous historical storehouse-on-the-lake, the Field Museum, hosted two particular exhibits that surely would have blown me away on my last visit, circa 1980. I hoped they would do the trick now.

This was the second-to-last day of the exhibit, "Star Wars: The Magic of Myth," originally

land owner, "Sue" the Tyrannosaurus Rex is one of the most complete dinosaurs found to date. Well, complete as dinosaur *skeletons* tend to go. Scientists don't really know if Sue is a he or a she—it's named after Sue Hendrickson, the woman who found the bones in 1990.

I remember when dinosaurs were the coolest. What little child, boy or girl, wouldn't look heavenward to a reconstructed beast in pure awe, not just at the tangible fossilized remains but also at the mind's eye imagination of how the thunder lizards moved, breathed, and looked? Back when I was a pint-sized paleontologist, the best fabrications of the past that we had existed in colorful artists' renditions and the inspired interpretations of FANTASIA and Ray Harryhausen films.

Sue's hulking 42-foot-long frame had been posed in a gait that made it look like she could

have pounded a hole through the wall at full speed ahead. Young and old alike leaned in as far as the guardrails would allow to get a good look at her remains, especially those enormous teeth! Although the Queen of the Cretaceous held her own quite nicely, one couldn't help noticing some peculiar 2001 amenities. Similar to my initial reaction as I entered the famed Notre Dame Cathedral of Paris—

only to find a gift shop in the corner—I was amazed at the commercial overtures that had invaded the Field.

Next to her highness, a "Save Sue" booth detailed the Field's valiant attempt to lobby Illinois government for funds to improve wheelchair accessibility, underground storage, and above-ground exhibit space. Upstairs, the entranceway to the renovated "Life Over Time" exhibit had been transformed into Sue Central, under the corporate auspices of McDonald's. Apart from the typical wall-sized placards detailing every theorized aspect of Sue's life, a monitor bank projected a looped program of scientist interviews elaborating on all matters dinosaur, with CGI images appearing concurrently across multiple screens. Behind a long, glass-and-metal facade, several white-coat assistants picked away at fossil



(Left) My younger brother Eric and I stand in front of the Field Museum's old Gorgosaurus display, circa 1980.



(Right) In its place today looms enigmatic "Sue" the Tyrannosaurus Rex, a popular all-ages attraction. (Photo: JaPan)

curated by the Smithsonian Institution in 1997 as a way to illustrate Joseph Campbell's much-lauded deconstruction of the hero/quest mythos through the STAR WARS trilogy. Or, at the very least, to cross-promote the re-release of Lucas' digitally enhanced movies that year. Accompanied by the studious "Professor" Howard Browning-Stone and his wife Jen, we somehow got past the Stormtrooper hiding just inside the south entrance to begin our excursion. And, yes, he was a bit short for a Stormtrooper.

First things first, however. Hovering in the distance at the far end of Stanley Field Hall stood a 65-million-year-young lady I had heard and read many things about but hadn't yet met. Acquired through auction by the Field in 1997 after a prolonged court battle between a commercial fossil hunting expedition and a



Ranting & Raving @ 24 Frames Per Second

...the micro-film editorial...

bones, demonstrating how it takes meticulous care to excavate, clean, and prepare them for exhibit. On the floor were displayed several spare Sue parts that had been cast in fiberglass for use in the full skeleton on the main level. Finally, let's not forget the inevitable Sue Store, stocked with every imaginable tie-in product, much of it designed in stylish red-and-black. (Is it a coincidence that said color scheme happens to also be the former team colors of that other Chicago titan in retirement, Michael Jordan?) Upon sifting through the merch—very little of it educational—I walked out with nary a Tyrannosaurus trinket on me.

That neat little Triceratops figure, on the other hand, had to come home. It's the plant-eating, three-horned herbivore always depicted as squaring off with T. Rex, most famously in the Field's prehistoric mural painted by Charles R. Knight. Yes, I side with the underdog. Like you didn't see *that* one coming?

After chowing on some high-priced Panera bread product in the ground floor

café, we wandered to the basement for our late-afternoon meeting with The Force—along with a long, long line of fellow procrastinators who wanted to see STAR WARS costumes, props, production sketches, and script pages.

I remember when STAR WARS was the *shit*. What little child—okay, mostly boys this time—didn't want to look skyward at the silver screen time and again to relive one farm boy's heroic transformation from young gun to interstellar hero amidst a parade of fantastic creatures, robots, hardware, and Dark Lords of the Sith? We had no concept of sci-fi stories like *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers* (until the STAR WARS-inspired remakes made their appearances), so George Lucas' universe was a brave new world to us.

Because the exhibit concentrated so heavily on tying in STAR WARS' subtext with Campbell's writings, it was rather lean on the "how-to" aspect of special-effects moviemaking. Maybe some of this was included on the compact disc audio tour one could rent for the walk-through. It seemed like so many people got too caught up in punching the right track numbers at the right times for the right anecdotes, creating an inadvertently stressful walk-through experience for all. Just as well, does anybody realize that shooting flash photography in an exhibit comprised of artifacts behind glass is about the same thing as pissing away rolls of film? The mind boggles.

for the rest of the dinosaurs on display and see many old friends I vaguely remembered from 20 years ago), and then closing time arrived. I actually did have fun that brisk January day, but failed miserably in my quest to experience unadulterated, non-adult nirvana as would have been the case were I still 10 years old instead of 30.

Poop.

iii. Tacked-on Happy Ending

Back in the real world, I would be remiss not to apologize for my lateness. You will see over the course of this issue that I've discovered plenty of cinematic distractions on the side. It's

a good thing—despite the blown print schedule—because my tangents have improved my understanding of independent and student filmmaking, and should result in good reading for all of you in the near future.

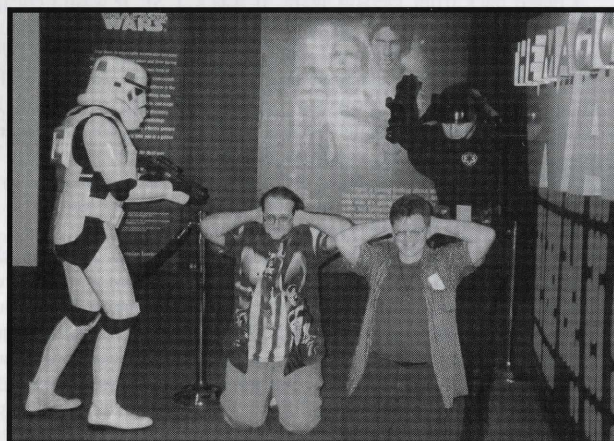
Besides, if MICRO-FILM had come out on schedule, I wouldn't be able to share these Hollywood-related zingers which, oddly enough, relate to my editorial:

Hey, did you hear the one about FARGO actor William H. Macy complaining about all that inconvenient rewriting on the set of JURASSIC PARK III? *Guess the dinosaur ate their homework!*

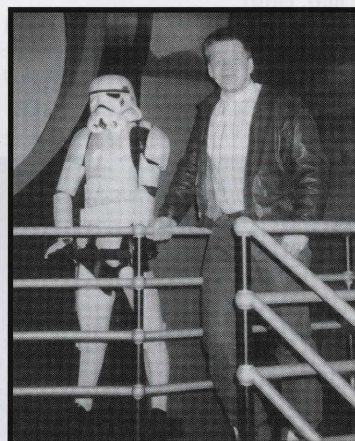
Hey, what do you get when you cross STAR WARS: THE PHANTOM MENACE with a home computer piloted by a bunch of disappointed fans bent on streamlining George Lucas' epic? *A movie less jar-jarring!*

I'll spare you further anguish and stop right there. Turn the page for some much-needed indie film remedy.

Jason Pankoke
July 2001



(Left) Howard Browning-Stone and I prepare for a brutal licking at the hands of this Stormtrooper and Imperial officer in front of the Field's STAR WARS exhibit. Tip: Never mouth off to men with blasters. (Photo: Jen Browning-Stone) (Right) A more peaceful Stormtrooper greets the editor at London's Museum of the Moving Image in January 1992.



Maybe way more superfluous than the Sue Store, the gift shop at the end of the STAR WARS exhibit only smacked of money-grubbing. Most of the merchandise offered nothing new to those who religiously haunt every imaginable collector's hovel for STAR WARS stuff. Okay, to be fair, partial or total sales most likely went to the Field. But, just like Fox's token re-release of THE PHANTOM MENACE in Fall 1999 to benefit charity, this gesture seems way overdue given the countless, for-profit millions earned by this franchise during the past quarter-century.

Other than Sue and "The Magic of Myth," we took a look at the Egyptian artifact exhibit in the basement and rushed through "Life Over Time" upstairs (as an excuse to beeline

MICRO-FILM NEWS-REEL: If you're one of the very first to get this issue, then waste no time in looking for M-F at Wizard World Chicago (Rosemont Convention Center, Rosemont, IL, August 17-19) and the Chicago Underground Film Festival (Biograph Theater, August 16-22) ... Issue #3 of Chris Sharpe's media zine, *EyeBall* (www.eyeballmagazine.com) will feature the first-ever, full-length interview with your editor ... JaPan also reviewed Ebertfest 2001 movies for the next *Cashiers du Cinemart* (www.cashiersducinemart.com) ... the revamped M-F site, www.micro-film-magazine.com, should be up in mid-September ... next issue, we'll announce the first non-M-F projects from Opteryx Press!



Boob Tube Babylon

Channel One:
MAKING A
REAL MOB
EPIC

by
Joseph
Alexandre

My film, **BACK HOME YEARS AGO: THE REAL CASINO**, started as a commissioned segment for indie film guru John Pierson and his Independent Film Channel (IFC) show, **SPLIT SCREEN**. It aired as part of the 18th episode, second season, where **THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT** first saw the light of day. As you'd guess from the title, **REAL CASINO** is about the real people from Chicago and Milwaukee whose lives inspired Martin Scorsese's mob epic **CASINO**, starring Robert DeNiro, Sharon Stone, and Joe Pesci. I spent a significant amount of time in both cities, and came to know some of those "connected" to this story from working in some "outfit" joints. Certainly, my maternal grandfather being *Neapolitan* or *paisan* didn't hurt, either.

In the spring of 1996 I purchased Pierson's book, *Spike, Mike, Slackers & Dykes*. I digested it fully and made mental notes about Pierson's likes and dislikes, particularly his sense of humor. Not long after,

was on my answering machine. In my career as a filmmaker, this kind of thing *never* happened to me. Unfortunately, he liked my letter more than my film, but mentioned the possibility of doing something for his new show **SPLIT SCREEN**. I immediately started to think of ideas.

After several pitches with no avail, I realized I should propose this **CASINO** idea. I heard back from Pierson that summer, explaining the show was on hiatus but he liked the idea for the spring 1998 season. In the meantime, I spoke to **SPLIT SCREEN** producer Howard Bernstein to get a feel for the show, and what kind of money we would be talking. Then, I put together a budget and sent it out with a treatment.

I heard back from Pierson again. It was a great conversation, as I discovered what Kevin Smith meant when he said Pierson could slip into his deal-making mode. He explained that Universal Pictures released **CASINO** and while I could use 15 seconds of free footage under the fair use clause in copyright, I had to be very judicious. He also gave me the number of Eureka Pictures, the show's production office located in Manhattan, and told me to hammer out the details with Bernstein.

It was agreed the budget was to be in the \$3,500 area. However, I was going to have to pay more for my small crew. Combine this with the tribute for some of the "boys" and my budget started to expand. I'd spoken with another filmmaker who had contributed to **SPLIT SCREEN** and been given five grand. After faxing the updated budget to Bernstein, I called the next day to see what he thought, and Pierson immediately stepped in to set the record straight.

"Look, I already sent a check for \$3,500 that I'm ready to cancel [if] this thing is too much of a hassle," he said. "We have a lot of filmmakers doing

a lot of good pieces and this isn't going to change the world. If you want to make it work for that, by all means, and if this works there will be other episodes." *Well!* I felt like a kid who had just been sent to the principal's office. A few days later the check would come with a note from Pierson saying, "Don't spend it one place." Now the reality hit me. Here's a guy who's never met me in person (which is still the case) and he's just sent me a check for \$3,500. How many times does *that* happen, let alone from the guy who wrote Spike Lee a check? I was in pretty good company.

The first cut I sent to Pierson, after we filmed several harrowing anecdotes in Chicago in January 1998, was a little shy of 12 minutes, and I included a note stating this was the cut I wanted. I got a message on my machine from him, saying that the bottom line was seven minutes period, end of story. (He also said he had just gotten back from the road and was a little cranky, as that season the **SPLIT SCREEN** crew traveled across the country in an RV looking for stories.) The broadcast cut of **REAL CASINO** would eventually run seven minutes, 21 seconds.

The sobering time then came to add up the receipts and see how much I spent. Not only did I exceed the \$3,500; I spent a grand total of \$5,700. I shot a lot of Super8 footage and had it transferred to Betacam SP. It wasn't cheap, but added quite a bit of texture and production value.

REAL CASINO finally aired Monday, May 25, 1998. Pierson gave me the best intro to any of the pieces thus far, as this segment originated from Kansas City. He stood outside the Villa Capri, which is where the bosses actually divided the skim from Las Vegas, also well documented in the film. The show would air again that August on Bravo. I checked the Grainy Pictures web site to see if there were any comments on the message board, but no luck, as the site had been consumed with everything **WITCH-y**.

In the end, I was thrilled to death to work with someone of John Pierson's stature. He was the first person to give me a break and legitimize my career with some financial backing and national exposure, and also give me a taste, on a smaller scale, of what it was like to make a film with someone in the industry. I think I gave him a pretty damn good piece with **REAL CASINO** for a damn good price, in which we see a side of life most know only from movies. Unfortunately, although I was told Pierson liked the piece, there were no other episodes for me.

I was saddened to learn **SPLIT SCREEN** was recently canceled by IFC; however, my film still lives on. I cut a 30-minute version that screened at New York City's legendary Anthology Film Archives, and then whittled it down to 24 minutes for a licensed broadcast on WTTW, Chicago's PBS affiliate. Also, I sold a 14-minute version to Hypnotic.com and have had screenings in 11 different festivals, including the Sacramento Festival of Cinema and a July screening at Gerry Fialka's Documental festival in Santa Monica.

The longer version of **REAL CASINO** adds context and texture to Scorsese's **CASINO**, attempting to tarnish some of the "sheen" from Hollywood's version of the Mafia. Added details include how members of Tony Spilotro's (Joe Pesci) crew extorted money from "joints" back in Chicago, as well as how one of Tony's desperados shot his own brother in a bar room beef.



(Above) A shadowy interviewee dispenses tales of mob-related racketeering and harassment at his Chicago business. (Photo: JFA Films)

I decided to pick up Nicholas Pileggi's *Casino*, to compare the source material with the film. When I read *Casino*, I was surprised that I actually knew, or knew of, many of the real people who formed the basis for the picture.

The address and phone number of Grainy Pictures, Pierson's company, was included in his book. I sent him my most recent effort at the time, a no-budget indie called **IN HOCK AND STAYING THERE**, with a hand-written letter that was as witty as possible. In April of 1997, exactly one week to the day I mailed my package, Pierson's voice



These television programs pry the lid off the universe of indie filmmaking and its mischievous purveyors.



For the last three years, a dedicated group has been working overtime to introduce the world of short films to a prime-time cable television audience. The group, Orlando-based Ballyhoo Television, has developed a creative angle that updates a retro concept they feel is certain to attract attention and ratings.

BALLYHOO is a program that promotes independent film using a fast-paced, variety-style format and a sexy burlesque theme. "Burlesque is not about nudity. It's about improv and attitude," says BALLYHOO producer Jason Neff, whose plan is to mix short films with other entertaining segments to attract the mainstream. "It's no different than a SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE experience. Short films are like skits, they're adventurous and entertaining without a lot of commitment." BALLYHOO addresses today's on-the-go audiences; after all, as Neff points out, "Who has time for a feature every night after dinner?"

During each hour-long episode, host Anne Deason, a five-foot, nine-inch blonde bombshell with a mouth like a sailor and tattoos to match, takes the audience on a tour of unusual live events, intimate filmmaker interviews, behind-the-scenes escapades, and film festival parties in between the short films. Deason uses her gift of gab as a magnet to uncover energy and attract wacky personalities. "My diverse background makes me a natural chameleon," explains Deason. "I've done everything from promotions to theatre, band management to publishing an all-girl zine called *Bitch Rag*. People are always pushing me out front because I love to talk."

Neff originally created BALLYHOO to promote the Central Florida Film & Video Festival (CFFVF), of which he was executive director. His goal was to provide a forum for filmmakers to show their work. The show enjoyed a 26-episode run on Time Warner Communications (TWC) and was seen in Orlando, Tampa, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Austin. Last year, however, TWC forced BALLYHOO off the air for showing a controversial episode where Deason dressed up in drag. TWC deemed the show "too burlesque," and removed it without so much as a wink or a dollar in the ole G-string.

The production did not take the news lying down. After creating a mini-media frenzy,

Neff became fed up with the conservative politics of the local marketplace. He adopted the fitting tagline "short film burlesque" as his own, and decided to create a new pilot episode that is being used to solicit national distribution for the series.

Creating the pilot turned into an arduous process. This new episode is no cheap floozy like its past brethren, produced on a shoestring budget with donated TWC editing time. This time around, hours upon hours were spent refining the concept and the look. Neff focused on a higher caliber of editing, illustrators, animation, graphics, sound, scripting, camerawork, and short-film quality. "I wanted this episode to be tight. I was tired of compromising," Neff says.

The team now consists of freelancers who work for, *ahem*, free. BALLYHOO allows them to push their creative boundaries, normally restricted by Orlando's common theme park production jobs. Although his high expectations have been met, Neff is now a victim of scheduling and is in competition with the freelancers' paying jobs. "It is difficult for me to give up control to other people's schedules, but I have to be patient if it's to be done right," he explains.

The word "ballyhoo" actually means "outrageous promotional antic"—the kind of outlandish come-ons you'd find at an old-time circus. Who *wasn't* tempted by the freak-show barker heralding the bearded lady? BALLYHOO uses events like Elvis Fest in Memphis and Miami's Winter Music Conference, a huge gathering of cutting-edge club DJs, to create this attention-getting effect. "This is where the host personality is most important," Neff says. "Anne will walk up to anyone and in five minutes will know their whole life story, sex life included."

This quality can be hazardous to your health, as Deason recounted a classic moment at Daytona's Harley-filled Biketoberfest. "I was interviewing an S&M dressed granny, who promptly bent me over her Harley and proceeded to whip me! The camera was rolling so I just went along with it, looked into the camera and introduced the next film!"

The BALLYHOO crew maintains that they will never cover the typical Hollywood film. "Sacrifice, risk, and struggle are synonymous with independent film, not films with big budgets and dedicated PR teams," says Neff. "BALLYHOO has experienced many of the same pains as filmmakers and can identify. The show focuses on the undiscovered and offbeat which need recognition and, frankly, are more interesting."

Viewers can see this angle during an interview with HABIT and WENDIGO director Larry Fessenden, standing in front of a graffiti-tagged wall in New York City. As he talks about the trials and tribulations of making his

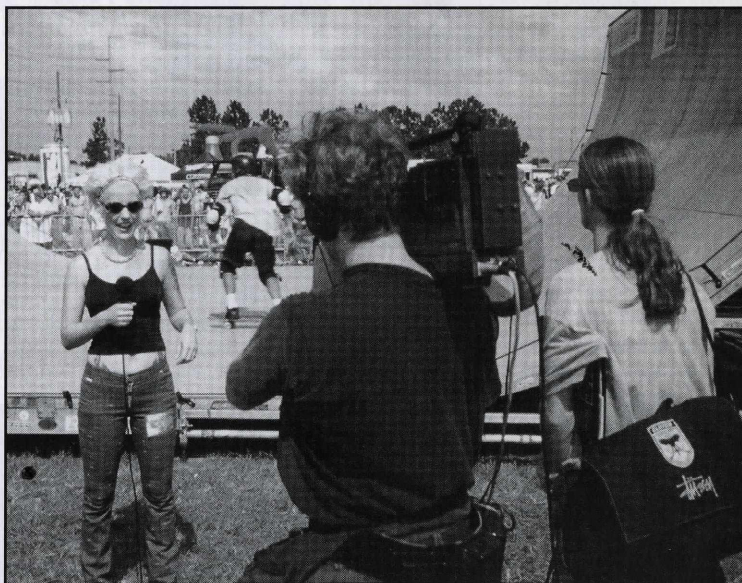
latest movie, the setting not only matches his weathered appearance but also, somehow, accentuates his struggles. Another example took place at the Independent Feature Project (IFP) in NYC, where the camera crew shot inside a bathroom, giving new meaning to the phrase "in the can." "We had a hard time tracking this film critic down," Neff remembers, "so we followed him into the bathroom, and decided to stay and interview him inside. It was an old 1950s deco bathroom and it seemed to fit his quirky personality."

The new episode opens with a raw, swanky, stripper tune played against a background of Vegas-style neon signs, which buzz and flicker off and on as if someone didn't pay their electric bill. Big flashing arrows with the odd burned-out bulb push multiple viewing screens around, and animated curvy broads *a la* Betty Page appear for whimsical burlesque effect. The show uses five segments carrying seductive names like "Uncovered," "Eavesdropping," "Exhibition," "Peep Show," and "Voyeur" to serve as interest-arousing introductions.

Now, Neff banks on the burlesque, but not for financial gain. The entire purpose for doing the show, like CFFVF, was to help filmmakers get their work seen. "It gave me great satisfaction knowing I created an opportunity for them," he says. Nonetheless, the timing

Channel Two:
BURLESQUE,
SALOON
STYLE

by
Kelly
Stevens



(Top left) Host Anne Deason chats up Christopher Walken. (Above) Deason and the BALLYHOO crew cover a skate event.

(Photos courtesy Jason Neff/CFFVF)

seems right, as the growth of film festivals and the Internet have given shorts new popularity and visibility. Neff hopes to prove that shorts deserve their time in the limelight.

Currently, the show is in post-production, with completion scheduled for early fall. Neff is already talking with distributors across the country and is optimistic about a recent meeting with MTV, who is interested in viewing the pilot upon completion. Whatever the future holds, BALLYHOO will make a nice calling card for Neff. "This year, I'm lucky," Neff says. "Not only are shorts booming, but burlesque is back in style."



Memphis Underground

If the post-apocalyptic opus *SUPERSTARLET A.D.* ever goes down in the history books, it's because John Michael McCarthy actually makes 'em like they used to.

Article by L. Rob Hubbard.

"The exploitation genre is an acquired bad taste ... it is the uncanny ability of exploitation film as a medium for personal expression that places it beside underground comix, punk rock, and, in my humble opinion ... Art."

— John Michael McCarthy

In a place not too far from where you live, yet another universe away, you'll see a lot of strange things. Here, the required modes of transportation are hot rods and motorcycles. Buxom women roam the streets—some in lingerie, some in leather, all armed with artillery and attitude. The grindhouse, burlesque shows, and drive-ins of yore never did die, and neither did *The King*. Or some aspect of him, anyway, as evidenced by glimpses of his presence every now and then. You can call this place "Femphis," although it really doesn't have a name.

It is also the world of Memphis-based filmmaker John Michael McCarthy, originally noticed for comix work such as *Kid Anarchy*, *Supersexxx*, and *Cadavera*. JMM jumped into indie/underground film in the early 1990s with his independent production company BigBroadGuerrillaMonster, cranking out the likes of *DAMSELVIS: DAUGHTER OF HELVIS* (1994), *TEENAGE TUPELO* (1995), *THE SORE LOSERS* (1997), *SHINE ON SWEET STARLET* (1998), and music videos for Guitar Wolf, The Oblivians, and The Makers.

My first JMM exposure came in 1997, watching *THE SORE LOSERS* in Kansas City, Missouri, one of the stops in his "Vice Party" tour exhibition. A year later, I contacted JMM about the possibility of an interview.

He replied, saying he was starting production on *SUPERSTARLET A.D.*, an apocalyptic feature envisioned as "BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES meets BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS." By the time I responded he was maxed out on crew, but he said that I should come down anyway. That sounded okay to me! Although I'd worked on various films already, I hadn't done a bona-fide, balls-out exploitation film before. So, I headed down to Memphis with a full tank of gas, a bag full of clothes, and my equipment bag.

Little did I know...

Arriving in Memphis, I knocked on the door, expecting to find a couple of production assistants at the house. Surprisingly, JMM was there, along with most of the main crew. It didn't take me long to realize that he had no idea who the hell I was or what I was doing there, and that something strange had occurred well before I arrived.

As I came to find out later, the first week of *SUPERSTARLET* had been quite eventful and extremely grueling. They'd completed shooting in an abandoned movie theatre in 100-degree weather. Additionally, the actress origi-



Author L. Rob Hubbard poses with the *SUPERSTARLET A.D.* crew on the Replay Lounge set. (From left) Hubbard, Steven Oatley, John Michael McCarthy, Mike Miller, Robert Knowles (kneeling), Vinnie Campbell, Emmy Collins, and a man called Wheat.

Stephen Buckley a.k.a. "Wheat" (sound), Emmy Collins (assistant director), Victoria Renard (stills and *Starlet*), Kelly Ball (*Starlet* and production associate), Steven Oatley (director of photography), and Mike Miller (executive producer and camera operator).

I settled in at the crash pad where most of the crew slept—a neighbor's guesthouse with no bathroom, but there *was* an air conditioner. Then I received a copy of the script to help me start inventory on props and get an idea of the story. After about 20 minutes, I grasped the fact that it took place in some future nowhere land, but beyond that I was lost.

This much was clear—Women were the only survivors of an unnamed Apocalypse, except for a few remnants of Man, who had devolved into Neanderthals. The women were divided by hair color into beauty cults: blondes (PhayRays), brunettes (Satanas), and redheads (Tempests). Clothed only in lingerie, the cults battled it out with machine guns, and all attempted to avoid the Neanderthals.

Cool! I decided to hold on and enjoy the ride until I got thrown.

Shooting commenced in the afternoon and continued well past midnight, first at a local used clothing store where Jezebel (Kerine Elkins), leader of the Tempests, stalks Valentine (Katherine St. Valentine), then at a residence where more stalking was filmed. After a dinner break at JMM's, we loaded up vehicles for a trip to Guntown, Mississippi—JMM's hometown and our next location, 70 miles away. All the props went with me, naturally, consisting of several wigs and other items, including the prop guns.



Michelle Carr (left center) leads the Satanus into the Replay Lounge for a word with Tempest matriarch Jezebel (Kerine Elkins, not pictured). (All photos: Victoria Renard/courtesy JMM)

nally cast to play blonde renegade "Rachel" ditched the production with the props-master, so there was some discussion about how to continue the project. Also, JMM's wife had just informed him that they were expecting their first child.

I become the new props guy. Gradually I was introduced to everyone present:



Stashed in my trunk and backseat.

Driving into Mississippi.

In the middle of the night.

Since it struck me as not a smart idea to drive alone, I grabbed one of the Chicago guys to accompany me. (As a recipient of production funds from the Chicago Underground Film Fund, JMM agreed to bring Windy City personnel onto this film. — ed.) We traveled to Guntown with most of the pack going about 90 mph and me last in line. Luckily, we made it with no police interference. Most of the actresses had already arrived at his parents' home; we literally waded through bodies in order to find some vacant corners. I gave up and crashed in my car.

Four hours later...

Rose for the next day's shooting, mainly at a junkyard in nearby Baldwin. This was the first film that I'd been involved with where the majority of the cast was women (22 total, with two "cavemen") and the crew was basically all male. Many of the actresses were recruited from the SORE LOSERS "Vice Party" tour, and some are celebrities in their own right. Michelle Carr, who plays Verona, leader of the Satanas, was co-owner of the L.A. club Jabberjaw. Marne Lucas a.k.a. Gina Velour, who plays Rachel's lover Naomi, also starred in Jacob Pander's THE OPERATION. Rita D'Albert, who plays UltraMame, leader of the PhayRays, was a member of The Pandoras.

I took any available moment to get things sorted out for the rest of the week. The prob-

lem of the missing actress would be dealt with by having other actresses play her character. The disparity of faces wouldn't be a problem, in theory, because it would be a sign of Naomi's mental instability.

Whatever. I thanked God that I wasn't doing continuity on this film.

The night was much cooler, but just as hard. We split into two units, one going to a drainage ditch 15 miles north of Tupelo to shoot Rachel (now Alija Trout) encountering PitchGirl (Kristen Harvey). Dawn broke as the ditch guys arrived back at the house, just as the other unit completed the last shot of their scene. Two hours of sleep, and then it was more junkyard scenes and PhayRays on horseback.

The next few days were spent filming in the basement of Memphis' 24-hour cafe, The Map Room, which became the Replay Lounge for the musical numbers in the film. With lights, the amount of people, and no ventilation, the basement quickly became a sweatbox. Fans ran constantly just to keep the air circulating, and if the heat became too much, one could run upstairs for a quick blast of cool air-conditioning.

Gradually, things fell into place as the actresses got into makeup and wardrobe. After a little bit of rest and food, one gets very nonchalant about large-breasted women walking around in underwear, heels, and wigs while carrying guns, although the occasional civilian just *had* to sneak a peek.

The next few days were a blur of heat, sweat, and lots of driving. Through this relentless fever dream, crew and cast plodded onward, motivated by JMM. SUPERSTARLET was probably the hardest shoot that I've been involved with to date, and even after (or in spite of) the experience, my initial impression of JMM is still very favorable.

JMM makes art films masquerading as exploitation flicks. All the trappings of typical drive-in fare—the convoluted plots, hot rods, and lots of girls in various states of undress—can divert you from noticing the verbal and visual allusions to various pop culture ephemera. His main strengths are a solid regional influence and the ability to consistently present the worlds he creates for his comix work in the film medium, with the budgets he has to work with—something that can't be said of studio films adapted from or influenced by comics. He has a definite vision of what he wants onscreen that keeps him going. In an increasingly homogenized corporate culture with a memory span of five minutes, there's plenty room for

misunderstanding and open disdain, as JMM's ironic description of his work as "unpopular culture" implies.

SUPERSTARLET A.D. is currently on the festival circuit, as is JMM's DV short ELVIS MEETS THE BEATLES, a confabulation of what could have occurred at the August 27, 1965 meeting between The Beatles and Elvis Presley, all "based on what someone else says is true." He is also planning to film CADAV-ERA, his pet project based on one of his comix, with veteran Starlet D'lana Tunnell in the title role.

Background model: TJ.

JMM SPEAKS!

Prior to SUPERSTARLET A.D.'s screening at South by Southwest 2001, JMM took some time to answer a few questions:

What's your take on the current indie/underground film scene?

I DISREGARD THE UNDERGROUND, THE INDIE, AND THE MAINSTREAM. I AM UNPOPULAR.

You toured Europe with SSAD and EMTB last year. How did that go?

CONSIDERING THE BLACK PLAGUE AND THE INQUISITION IN THEIR BACKGROUND, I GUESS I KNOW WHY THERE WEREN'T MORE CHUCKLES. MY OVERALL THOUGHT ON SCANDINAVIA IS THAT I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY WHITE PEOPLE IN ALL MY LIFE.

How does SSAD fit in with your overall mythology? Could this possibly be the start of your own "APES saga?"

AS YOU KNOW, IT'S THE FIRST SEQUEL TO A MOVIE WITHIN A MOVIE ("TRASHUS TRAILERUS" IN "TEENAGE TUPELO"), BUT I THINK YOU'RE SEEING TOO MUCH INTO THIS. I URGE YOU TO GET OUT MORE AND SEE THIS SEX AND VIOLENCE THING UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL.

Can you describe the indie filmmaking community in Memphis and your place in that community?

TO QUOTE THE CLASH, "BASICALLY, WE HATE EACH OTHER."

What's next for BigBroadGuerrillaMonster in 2001?

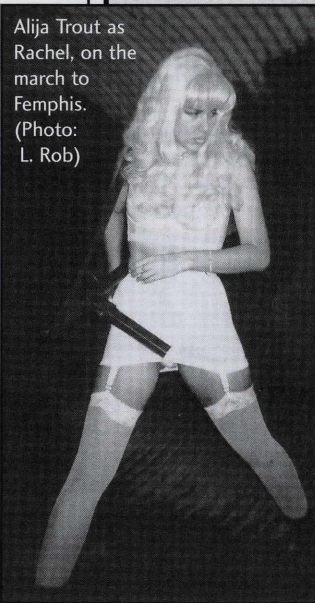
PAYING MY LIGHT BILL.

— L. Rob Hubbard



Obsessive brunette Naomi (Gina Velour) roams the countryside with her lover, blonde Rachel, forever in search of her grandmother's stag loops. When not ducking the beauty cults, the women have to contend with de-evolved Lo-Brow Man (Hugh B. Brooks).

Alija Trout as Rachel, on the march to Femphis. (Photo: L. Rob)





A Micro-Revolution with Global Effects

In an appropriately self-reflexive parallel, filmmaker Kevin Keyser uses consumer desktop tools to document the low-power movement in FREE RADIO.

Interview by Paul Riismandel.

Latter day global capitalism is a funny and paradoxical beast.

Multinational corporations are negotiating with governments to create a so-called global marketplace. Meanwhile thousands, if not millions, of people actively protest this movement. They believe that their voices and opinions have been ignored, that globalization as it is happening is fundamentally undemocratic and fashioned only to benefit the wealthy few at the expense of the rest of the world.

And these opponents of global corporate control are using the very products of multinationals against them.

In the aftermath of the WTO protests in Seattle, the cellular phone has become viewed by authorities as not just a technology of convenience, but a dangerous weapon in the arsenal of the protestor. Police may have pepper spray and rubber bullets, but the folks on the street have the tools of near-instantaneous global communication. Activists put to use digital cameras, mobile phones, minidisk recorders, and the Internet, products for which they can thank the likes of Sony, AT&T, Motorola, and Microsoft.

Seattle also saw the convergence of two more technologies that have been embraced by independently minded citizens hell-bent on communicating to a larger audience: digital video and unlicensed, so-called "pirate" radio. On the streets, citizen-journalists wielding inexpensive digital camcorders gave a global audience images of a radically diverse and united front of demonstrators, who met with an ultimately violent police force. All the while, unlicensed radio stations served the protestors on the streets and the residents of an embattled Seattle.

In his documentary on the unlicensed radio movement, FREE RADIO, independent filmmaker Kevin Keyser brings us inside Studio X, a station set up for the protests. We watch the operators broadcast breaking, unfiltered news on clashes with police, along with announcements for the arrested and injured, as they watch live coverage on television. At that moment, we also see a grassroots newsroom paradigm being born.

Keyser, a former assignment editor and news segment producer at a San Francisco television sta-

tion, got turned on to free radio while doing a story about Stephen Dunifer of Free Radio Berkeley (FRB), a major figure in the world of unlicensed broadcasting. Keyser says that Dunifer taught him "a bit about the history of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and how one of their original ideas about FM radio was to keep the airwaves open and accessible to all people."

The unlicensed broadcasting movement is commonly said to have started with Mbanna Kantako, a blind African-American man living in the projects of Springfield, Illinois. Recognizing a need to communicate with his neighbors, all poor African-Americans, Kantako put a very small radio transmitter on the air to organize his audience and educate them about their rights. Yet, Kantako quickly found out that the FCC would never make him a licensed broadcaster—especially since the Feds wouldn't give licenses for radio stations operating at under 100 watts of power.

Kantako didn't let this stop him, choosing to build his own one-watt transmitter—what he would term a "micropower" station—to broadcast Black Liberation Radio, later called Human Rights Radio. Inadvertently, he also touched off a grassroots media revolution.

Inspired by Kantako, Dunifer created FRB and challenged the FCC head-on. He scored a minor victory for micropower broadcasting when he and FRB won a temporary injunction preventing the FCC from shutting down the station while their case was in trial. The situation also brought national attention to the movement.

Meanwhile, Dunifer and his cohorts became one of the chief suppliers of low-cost radio transmitters and equipment to the microbroadcasting community. The same advances in microchip and integrated circuit design that make camcorders and laptop computers possible also make simple, cheap radio transmitters a reality. You still can't buy a one- or 10-watt radio station at your local Best Buy—though you can buy a tiny one to play your portable CD in your car stereo—but the parts are out there, and only a little harder to find.

Dunifer appears throughout FREE RADIO, but Keyser also takes the viewer on a virtual nationwide tour of micropower radio sites. These include Micro-Kind Radio in San Marcos, Texas, Studio X in Seattle, Kantako's Human Rights Radio, and a

demonstration in support of low-power FM held in front of the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington, D.C. Keyser shows us the studios of unlicensed broadcasters, some of which are clandestine, and some of which are also homes.

Keyser says that gaining access to unlicensed stations and broadcasters was one of the toughest parts of producing FREE RADIO. "It was difficult at first to gain the trust of free radio station operators because they had legitimate worries about being shut down and having all their equipment confiscated by the FCC. It was also hard to get in touch with these people, since they do their best to 'keep out of the public eye,'" he explains.

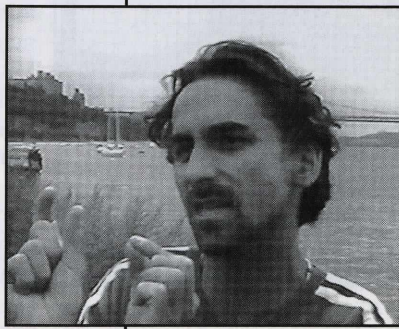
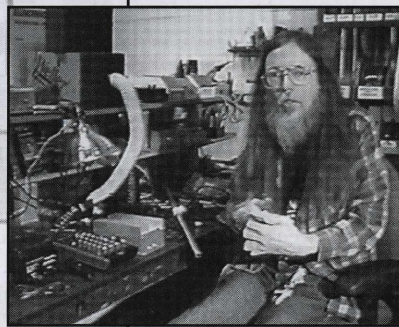
But once he was actually doing the interviews, he found them to be easier than expected. "Most of the people I talked to had a lot to say about microbroadcasting and free speech," he continues.

"The interviews ended up being very interesting for me and I was never at a loss for questions." In the documentary, Keyser lets the broadcasters speak for themselves, relating their diverse motivations for going on the air without a license. We also get to spend time in their studios, observing an uninhibited type of radio that most communities can only dream about.

Keyser takes us to the Texas border community of San Marcos, and what looks like an ordinary home is also the studio of Micro-Kind Radio. The station is unique because its operators practice an open-door policy, allowing anyone with a message to communicate to be on their station. In one scene, a local laborer makes a plainspoken testament to his job and union, and then turns the microphone over to a clearly inebriated cohort who makes a relatively incoherent shout-out, oblivious to the non sequitur. Further north, Keyser visits Free Radio Austin, whose engineer encased their transmitter in oil and buried it six feet in the ground, both to help dissipate the Texas heat

and make it difficult digging for the authorities.

The far-flung geography of the stations that were willing to cooperate with Keyser made producing the documentary more difficult than if he had simply covered Bay Area stations. "I ended up maxing out a few credit cards and sleeping on a lot of couches to make it happen," he admits.





Asked what he might have done differently, he reconsiders visiting so many people and stations. "I would have tried to focus more on one or two peoples' stories instead of talking to 20 or so people," he says. "I think viewers are more interested in a film that focuses on one or two people. They come to care more about those characters and thus more about the issues they are talking about."

But that depends on what story you're trying to tell. Although FREE RADIO doesn't paint a detailed portrait of any one microbroadcaster or station, it succeeds in creating a vivid collage that portrays the diversity of people, motivations, and ideologies behind micropower stations, while also drawing out the threads of unity that make these stations part of a broader movement. Almost universally, the microbroadcasters Keyser interviews say that they're fed up with bland, homogenized corporate radio stations, and that they believe there are important voices and truths that are left out of the airwaves. Microbroadcasters see their free radio stations as a way to counter the corporate media, and even the increasingly corporate-minded public media.

This reaction is not lost on Keyser, who sees a fundamental similarity between independent filmmakers and micropower broadcasters. "Both are trying to work in a world dominated by corporate media, and both are trying to do things that often go untouched by the corporate giants. They are both pushing the envelope of free speech and access, and they are both forced to do things on the cheap, since they don't get all those corporate dollars. They are like the last mom and pop diner in a town full of McDonald's and all the other nasty fast food giants," he says.

Perhaps the ultimate test of a documentary film is how well those intimate with the subject matter receive it. Will they see it as an accurate reflection of reality, or a media-fantasy that romanticizes or vilifies its subjects?

"The people who came out and saw it seemed to like it, especially the people involved with micro-broadcasting," continues Keyser. "I think a lot of them were worried that an outsider like me wouldn't portray their story very well, but I tried to do my homework and talk to all the right people." Clearly, the experience of making FREE

RADIO had a direct effect on Keyser. "I also stopped being an outsider," he admits. "I started doing a show on Berkeley Liberation Radio after I finished the film."

FREE RADIO has probably gotten more exposure than most documentaries shot independently on digital video and edited on a home computer, garnering positive reviews from the likes of Seattle's alternative weekly, *The Stranger*, and About.com's film reviews. In addition to screenings, Keyser says that the film "made it onto several television stations around the country" and it is now available in the AK Press catalog.

But just like a free radio station, an independent documentary is not undertaken to be a moneymaker. The film cost \$10,000 to make, and has recouped \$4,000 through video sales over the Internet. Keyser jokingly attests that his resources for making the film included "credit cards and Ramen noodles." He also relied upon a Canon XL-1 digital camcorder, a so-called "prosumer" unit costing just a little bit more than most of the camcorders at your local electronics store. Keyser says that he "really like[s] that camera and would recommend it to anyone looking to do something like this. It's the most affordable way to get professional-looking results."

As the opening frames of FREE RADIO inform, in January 2000 the FCC decided to take on the initiative of licensing low-power radio stations for the first time since the late 1970s. For some, like author and micropower radio activist Greg Ruggiero, this was an indication that the FCC had actually heard the arguments made by unlicensed broadcasters.

Since FREE RADIO was completed, and after a year of intense lobbying by the National Association of Broadcasters and National Public Radio, the FCC's original plan for licensing low-power radio stations was effectively eviscerated by Congress.

Most indicative of the political and economic intentions of the broadcasting industry and its well-paid Congressmen, most urban areas would be ineligible to have new low-power radio stations under the new rules, conveniently ruling out many of the areas in need of such stations. Citizens looking for more democratic radio in hotbeds of unlicensed free radio activity, like Austin, Seattle, and San Francisco, continue to only have radio pirates to look to.

In some of these cities, the ranks of unlicensed broadcasters have actually been thinned. The FCC got their opportunity in October 2000 to do some digging when they raided and shut down Free Radio Austin and their underground transmitter.

This happened only a month after a court order forced Micro-Kind to cease operations, in what looked like an FCC sweep in Texas. Around the same time, the Feds raided the home of Mbanna Kantako, also seizing his station. Authorities visited Kantako again when he went back on the air with a new transmitter one month later.

Still, FCC action against unlicensed broadcasters doesn't seem very effective in stopping the movement. Unfazed after two FCC raids, Kantako returned Human Rights Radio to the air in the spring of this year. In other cities, like Austin and Los Angeles, new stations take to the air quickly to fill the void left by ones that are shut down.

When a new micropower radio station can be put together for under \$1,000, there's less disincentive for a committed would-be broadcaster to try his hand at the airwaves, or for a shut-down station to make another go of it. The same is true when a near-broadcast quality digital camcorder can be had for less than a month's rent in a

major city. There's little to hold back the average citizen from becoming the new filmmaker, documenting everyday realities.

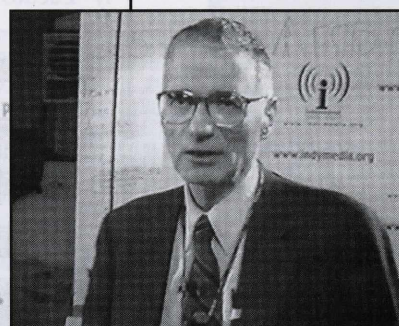
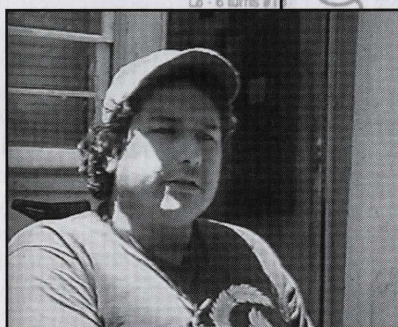
Modern technology has created an opportunity that the law has difficulty stopping. This can be seen vividly in the growing protest movement demanding economic democracy across the world. Since Seattle, no large political or economic organization, from the World Trade Organization to the Democratic Party to the G8 summit, can meet without enduring

well-organized opposition armed with their own video cameras, radio stations, and Internet feeds.

Keyser thinks that "independent media is getting more and more popular as people look for alternatives to the boring stuff you see put out by corporations." There is a new media happening, whether the old media likes it or not. Independent filmmakers, with inexpensive digital camcorders in their hands, join unlicensed free radio broadcasters at the front lines—the streets of Quebec City, the airwaves, the minds of restless audiences.

Does this mean Sony will stop selling camcorders? Not as long as we're buying them.

© 2001 Paul Riismandel. Used with permission.



(Opposite page, from top) Mbanna Kantako; Stephen Dunifer; police arrest NAB protestors in Washington D.C.; Greg Ruggiero. (This page, from top) Dunifer welds a circuit board; Ralph Nader; Skidmark Bob of Free Radio Santa Cruz; a union worker on Micro-Kind radio; Michael Moore in Seattle during the WTO. (Video captures by Bill Yauch/Prairie Production Group)



INDIE FILMS, CHICAGO-STYLE

In the first of a series covering a wide array of film-related resources in the Windy City, we take a look at organizations that unspool the riches of non-commercial cinema.

Article by Nicole Bernardi-Reis.

While Chicago, Illinois is continually on the brink of its own film renaissance, it offers a seemingly endless stream of independent film from the anomaly of the "megaplex art house" to once-in-a-lifetime screenings sponsored by local organizations and universities. With three film schools and an average of two notable fests a month, it's no surprise that cinephiles of any aesthetic tribe can find programming to their liking. Places like the Gene Siskel Film Center, the University of Chicago's Doc Films, and Facets Multimedia constantly provide solid alternatives to the Lowes/Cineplex empire, but Chicagoans are finding that some of the most interesting film events are created especially to assist the city's filmmakers.

Understanding that finishing a film is only half the battle, Chicago organizations new and old are providing venues for rarely seen work by both emerging and established artists. Here's the low-down on a few of the more active groups.

Chicago Community Cinema

Celebrating their one-year anniversary this July, Chicago Community Cinema (CCC) takes its middle name very seriously. Founded by filmmakers Michael Kwilford and Mark Battaglia (currently a board member of the Independent Feature Project/Midwest), the organization runs a monthly event at Excalibur (632 N. Dearborn).

Held the first Tuesday of every month, this event attracts filmmakers and film lovers alike, eager to see a mix of local and national work. Recent crowds have witnessed the likes of BERT AND ERNIE, Chicago filmmaker Willie Lazlo's hilariously disturbing take on SESAME STREET's dynamic duo, and AMERICAN JEDI, one of ifilm.com's highest-rated shorts.

While each program has been a mixture of shorts and feature presentations, Kwilford notes that CCC is considering becoming an all-short venue, to be more in line with the event's social surroundings. If that's the case, then additional, feature-length screenings are sure to follow.

One of the unique aspects of the event is the networking hour preceding the screening. For a reasonable fee, local vendors, organiza-

tions, and artists can purchase a table and hawk their wares. The reason behind the expo? Simple—the more people you know, the more likely you'll be to get your film made. CCC also subscribes to that view outside their events. Making their home within indie-friendly Zacuto Films (401 W. Ontario), both Kwilford and Battaglia view themselves as a (non-monetary) resource for filmmakers.

For more information on the event, submission guidelines, or other resources, call Chicago Community Cinema at (312) 863.3451 or visit www.chicagocommunitycinema.com.

Chicago Filmmakers

The *grand dame* of Chicago film organizations, Chicago Filmmakers (CF) offers a variety of classes, an active co-op, the second oldest Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in the nation, and a wide variety of screening series, from the experimental to community activism and beyond.

Recent programs have ranged from Austrian filmmaker Dietmar Brehm's psychosexual six-film cycle BLACK GARDEN (1987-1999, 16mm) to a program of youth-produced media, which was co-sponsored by Video Machete. March's "Program 2" looked at the idea of community through documentary and experimental works about neighborhoods and family, and included work by Indian Island School/Maine Alliance of Media Arts, Community TV Network, and the Asian-American Writer's Workshop.

One of its newer series, "Reeling 2001," is a monthly presentation based on the group's ever-popular Gay and Lesbian film festival. Film lovers can treat themselves to an eclectic sampling of queer cinema, such as the recent screening of underground pioneer George Kuchar's SECRETS OF THE SHADOW WORLD. CF also put together a program featuring rare 16mm experimental and abstract animated films from the collection of their rental division, the Distribution Project. Works such as PASADENA FREEWAY STILL (1974, 6 min.) by Gary Beydler, 3/78 (1978, 6 min.) by Larry Cuba, EUCLIDIAN ILLUSIONS (1979, 10 min.) by Stan VanDerBeek, and OFFON (1967, 10 min.) by Scott Bartlett were on the bill.

Having been at the community organizing game for more than 25 years, it makes sense that the group occasionally offers up events where people are the center of attention. The end of March brought about an

informal potluck dinner and open screening for, well, Chicago filmmakers. The best part of the event—filmmakers could screen their works in a variety of formats: 16mm, Super-8mm, 1/2-inch video, and 3/4-inch video.

For more information about Chicago Filmmakers, check out www.chicagofilmmakers.org or call (773) 293.1447.

Chicago Underground Film Festival

Rapidly entering its adolescence—in its 8th year, the Chicago Underground Film Festival (CUFF) is an early bloomer—our city's sauciest film festival has become one of its most provocative year-round programmers. 2001 has already seen two well-received CUFF events: the sold-out February world premiere of Jessica Villines' documentary, PLASTER CASTER, and a rare presentation of work by German media artist Philipp Virus.

Screened at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema (2828 N. Clark)—I'm sure the suits didn't have plaster penises in mind when they greenlighted the artie-plex concept—PLASTER CASTER gave hometown audiences the opportunity to a preview Villines' film before it hit the festival circuit. Afterwards, attendees got to shake their things at a post-screening after-party at the Elbo Room (2871 N. Lincoln), featuring Chris Connelly (The Bells, ex-Revoluting Cocks), Chris Ligon, and Marydee Reynolds.

March's event displayed the opposite end of CUFF's spectrum. Held at Charybdis, the 14,000-square-foot former bowling-alley-turned-performing-arts-facility on the city's Northwest side, *The Virus Has Been Spread: A Digital Hardcore Retrospective* was the first Midwest retrospective of Digital Hardcore videos by German DJ and video artist Virus. A digital filmmaker from Berlin, Virus has collaborated with Atari Teenage Riot, Alec Empire, Shizuo, DJ Mowgly, EC8OR, Hanin Elias, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, and Nintendo Teenage Robots.

The event gave an eclectic crowd of hipsters, technophiles, ravers, and those in touch with their inner punk the rare opportunity to see both videos and short films by the artist, as well as experience a mesmerizing display of live audio/visual mixing by Virus himself.

To keep tabs on the Chicago Underground Film Festival, frequent www.cuff.org or e-mail info@cuff.org. This year's annual opus will take place August 16-22 at the historic Biograph Theater (2433 N. Lincoln).



Charybdis

Philipp Virus isn't the only thing you can catch at Charybdis (4423 N. Milwaukee). This multi-arts complex houses a weekly screening of its own. A mixture of local works and all-around favorites, their Wednesday night film screenings give audience members a chance to watch the big screen while kickin' back, relaxin', and chillin' on one of many couches. The fact that they have paintball, "Centipede," pool, and a giant climbing net doesn't hurt the cause at all.

For more information, call (773) 427.9970 or check out www.charybdisarts.com.

Women in the Director's Chair

More proof that Chicago can sustain a growing and diverse filmmaking community, Women in the Director's Chair (WIDC) has offered thought-provoking, politically aware, community-minded programming on their own—as with their recent, 20th annual film festival and an ever-popular Dyke Night—and through co-sponsorships with organizations like Video Machete. Keeping their focus on the question of access, WIDC creates programming that examines identity and community in differing social contexts. Highlights from this year's festival included "On and Off the Rez:

New Work from Native American Directors," "Media Grrls: New Work by Young Women," and a special reception/Chicago premiere for STRANGER INSIDE, a women-in-prison story directed by Cheryl Dunye (WATERMELON WOMAN) and co-written by Chicago's Catherine Crouch (STRAY DOGS).

Further information on Women in the Director's Chair can be found at www.widc.org, or call (773) 907.0610.

Lake Shore Drive: Jim Sikora

by Jason Pankoke

Shattered dreams grind to a pulp on weathered sidewalk concrete. Salient black humor wafts high above the droning ordinary. Stiff drinks swelter in the long afternoon. Strong images these, inspired by the work of a Chicago filmmaker known to crack wise and hard when it comes to making his films—raw yet polished, somber yet funny, instantaneous yet well thought out. Welcome to Jim Sikora's side of the street and all the Chicago-style cinematic grit that you can swallow.

Sikora didn't seriously consider making movies until after being discharged from the Army. He returned to Chicago and attended Columbia College for a short spell in the early 1980s before spinning off into his own filmmaking trip that has never ceased. "All of my early shorts are rather surrealistic, absurdist, collisions of the comedic and tragic," says Sikora. These collisions included BRING ME THE HEAD OF GERALDO RIVERA (1989, 8 min.), an in-your-face satire on talk shows, STAGEFRIGHT CHAMELEON (1988, 14 min.), an offbeat adventure in a railroad yard, and WALLS IN THE CITY (1994, 63 min.), a triptych of seedy inner-city stories.

Then came BULLET ON A WIRE (1998, 83m), Sikora's first feature and a refinement of the urban decay prominent in his earlier films. "If you've spent any time on the West Side of Chicago, where I grew up and live, you would understand," explains Sikora about these qualities. Shot in seven days on black-and-white 16mm in 1996, BULLET explores how the irrational actions of insurance salesman Raymond Brody (Jeff Strong) affect those around him, including sister Norma (Paula Killen), greaser Eddie (David Yow), and boiler room scam king Dave (Rex Benson). "It's very hard to put into words," the director maintains. "I do it better with pictures."

Indeed, BULLET is notable as much for its crisp compositions and extensive master shots as it is the naturalistic characters. Along with Sikora regulars Strong, Killen, Yow, and Benson, earthy Lara Phillips (THE ROAD TO PERDITION) stands out as Tanya Strickland, wayward stepdaughter of a retired police chief coerced into gunplay thanks to a prank call placed by Strong's Raymond. "We share a certain indefinable sensibility and humor," says Sikora of working with these actors, drawn from Chicago's theater and music scenes. "I like their faces; they are always surprising me ... I just love them as people, for who they are."

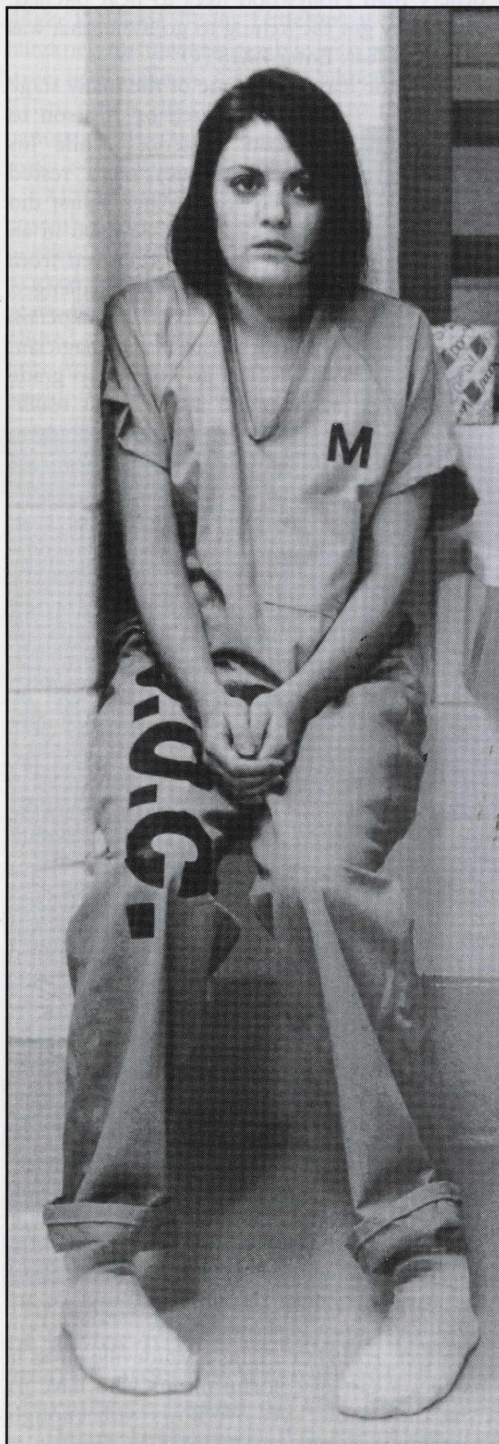
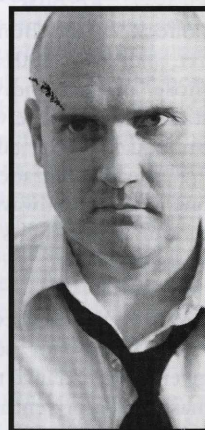
ROCK AND ROLL PUNK (1998, 79 min.) would seem a left-turn in Sikora's themes as well as production methods. Shot later the same year as BULLET, this upbeat tale of a garage band from suburban Elgin, Illinois, is more overtly humorous. Smartly pairing up real-life members of Midwest bands like Hüsker Dü, Poster Children, and Jesus Lizard to play the movie's troupe and lend an authentic feel to their jamming and verbal banter, Sikora chose to capture the mayhem with Digital Video. "I was drawn to this new format because of its digital sound capabilities, to capture the immediacy of the live sound element," says the director. "[as well as] its sharpness and portability." Sikora co-wrote PUNK and BULLET with Joe Carducci, a founder of SST Records and head of Wyoming-based outlaw video label Provisional.

Sikora's MY CHAR-BROILED BURGER WITH BREWER (2000, 45 min.) starring Jack Brewer and Mike Watt in a diner booth dialogue about punk rock history, has been playing festivals as he slaves away on post-production for CRITICS. "It was shot quickly with the original cast fresh from the theatrical run," describes Sikora about his current film, based on the Adam Langer play concerning theater critics at an alternative newspaper. "CRITICS is about those desperate souls who, in the heat of battle, resort to firing on their own troops. They believe they are fighting the good fight, though it's often impossible to tell what they are fighting for."

With all this activity, one may not be surprised that Sikora has felt secure to maintain a home front near Lake Michigan as opposed to testing his mettle near the oceans of California or New York. "Chicago is an inexhaustible cross-to-bear for me," the filmmaker says in a statement dripping with sarcasm. "Nelson Algren put it best: 'Loving Chicago is like loving a beautiful woman with a broken nose. There's never been a beauty so real.'" And when Sikora steps around a broken bottle to enter a musty bar and share brewskis with the next war-torn Charles Bukowski type as a third-rate rock band hammers it out in the background, we know he is at home.



(Clockwise, from above) Karl Alvarez, Jack Hammond, Bob Rising, and Dave Diebler in ROCK AND ROLL PUNK; Jeff Strong in BULLET ON A WIRE; David Yow, Jim Sikora, and Strong on the set of WALLS IN THE CITY; Lara Phillips in BULLET. (Photos: Jen Chien (PUNK) & Jim Newberry/courtesy Jim Sikora)





“Existo” Explains it All

In possibly the least brilliant Hollywood career move ever, Coke Sams and Bruce Arntson have created an astoundingly energetic, acerbic, insightful, and original film—EXISTO!

Interview by Jason Pankoke.

Can artists change the world?

Probably one of the toughest questions ever posed regarding creative expression (after, of course, “What is poetry?”), we have to wonder how valid any given answer can be in an era where fast-food technology and the information superhighway run right through our collective consciousness. Knowledge is the 21st Century lifeblood, as our society uses facts, formulas, and faceless automation to effectively cattle prod its people. Although a creative marketing front purports that all industry great and small allows for pluralistic human creativity and experimentation, look below the shallow surface and find how much of it breeds mass mediocrity instead.

It’s not just about the “thinkers and poets” eloquently crying wolf in their textbooks and chapbooks. It’s about a progressive subculture taking concrete steps to defy the mainstream, looking to the audacious figureheads of the recent past who successfully broke through the brick wall: Burroughs, Kubrick, Coltrane, Thompson, Lennon, Fellini, Ginsberg, Warhol, Cage, Welles, Picasso, Kerouac, DuChamp, Pollock, Dali, Buñuel, Zappa. Yet, here in 2001, where are those unique individuals who stand above all else with an idealism equal to their talent?

Rest easy, comrades, for there *is* one man who unwaveringly fights for our artistic rights with reckless abandon:

Existo!

What? You’ve never heard of him? That’s not so surprising, given his reluctance to play to the mass media or venture into homogenized suburbia. Even in this day of activist restlessness, you will not see him picketing the White House on CNN, or hear him performing spoken-word songs with Ani DiFranco and Utah Phillips, or read his posted rants on Independent Media Center web sites. At least, not *yet*.

Existo—the gangly, shock-haired art revolutionary of the underground—does not exist. But, if any fictional character can be defined by the qualitative sum of its parts, then credit Coke Sams and Bruce Arntson with turning the man’s imaginary exploits into the biting

“anarcomedy” EXISTO. Starring Arntson in the title role, this hyper-charged extravaganza follows Existo as he emerges from self-imposed exile to lead a host of artistic eccentrics—including soul mate Maxine (Jackie Welch) and elder compatriot Marcel Horowitz (Jim Varney)—into battle with America’s right-wing ruling class.

Considering how real-life political muckrakers have been preying upon entertainment and the arts as of late, there may be no better time

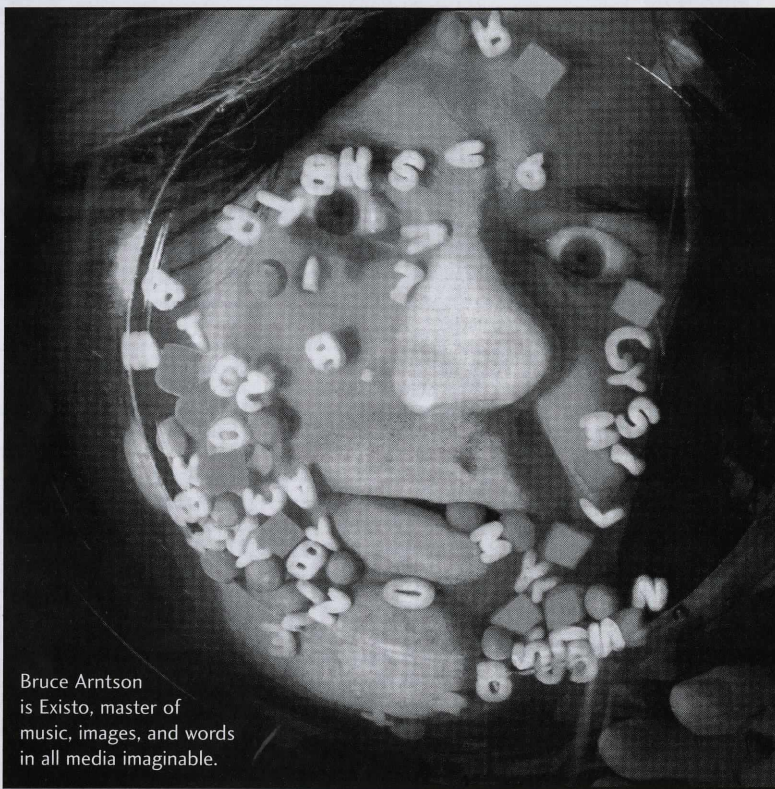
Arntson. Apart from collaborating on dozens of stage shows in the Music City’s theater scene, the duo had previously co-written scripts for family films and worked on several “Ernest P. Worrell” films with comedian Varney. In the backs of their minds, however, lingered other stories much harder to categorize and more ornery than Hollywood likes to hear pitched. Once they got the itching to go indie, that was that. Exit fear. Enter EXISTO.

Or, at the least, enter one of the many stage personas created by Arntson to entertain audiences while his rhythm-and-blues band rested between sets. “When I first did [Existo],” begins Arntson in an assured voice far removed from his alter ego’s octave-challenged ramble, “he was a magician. A failed, existentialist magician, who would go around to grade schools and junior highs teaching children the hopelessness and meaninglessness of life through the wonders of magic, and it wasn’t much more than that.” Ironically, the character’s substance would lie in the band’s “political rant” songs, written and performed by Arntson. “[Coke and I] just merged the two of these,” he continues, “and the character changed to accommodate our broader goals.”

Unlike the average SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE character dumped into a generic, feature-length scenario, Arntson and Sams grasped Existo’s worth as a vessel through which could emerge commentary about art, society, and freedom. “Existo is a way for Coke and I to [air out]

a lot of our idiosyncrasies,” says Arntson, “a sort of classic catch-all character that belongs to the surrealists, to the Beats, to the Yippies, to every political and artistic movement of the last century.” Much of the film takes place in The Sewer, a dank underground club setting that provided Arntson with an appropriate pulpit—the stage—where Existo could speak to the artistic bohemia through performance art and bizarre musical showstoppers.

In fact, EXISTO attains a vaudeville air as it parades a cast of colorful misfits who have to “put on a show,” yet overflows with enough contemporary piss and vinegar to distance it



Bruce Arntson is Existo, master of music, images, and words in all media imaginable.

“So, belly up comrades! It’s high noon and the atomic clock has an erection the size of the Washington Monument!” ~ Existo

for this film than right now. EXISTO (that’s eggs-EES-toh) goes to lunatic lengths to demonstrate that Art is mightier than the Sword (or Money, or Government, or Organized Religion). At the same time, it proves that smart filmmakers can successfully meld together music, dance, spoken word, design, sarcasm, intelligence, anarchy, and a touch of slapstick without imploding into one giant mess.

Produced by Clarke Gullivan and Peter Kurland for Hometown Productions in Nashville, the movie marks a high point for director Sams and writer/musician/actor



tremendously from minstrel shows of yore.

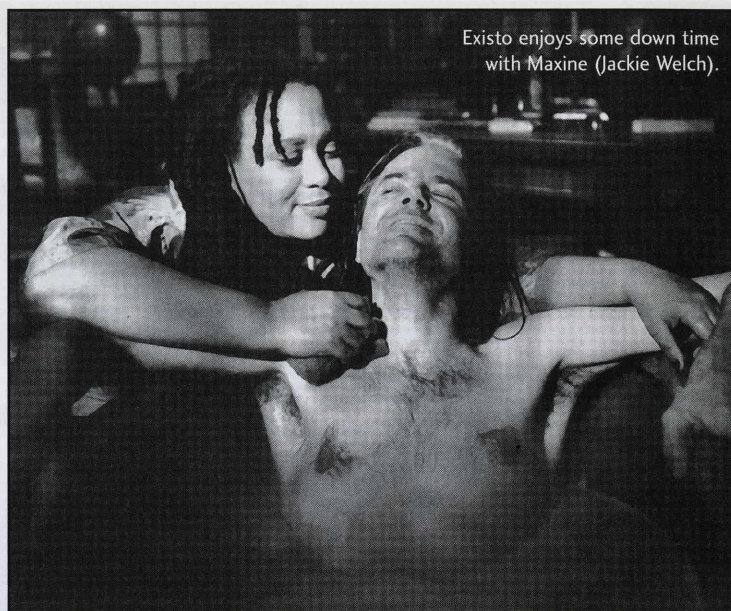
After Existo and Maxine seek shelter from The Sewer's flamboyant hostess, Colette Wachuwill (Galiard Sartain), word spreads through the underground on up to the highest ranks. Dr. Armond Glasscock (Mike Montgomery), a portal of "family values" rhetoric, confides in the supremely smarmy Roupen Dupree (Mark Cabus) to make some waves in The Sewer. Having turned stool pigeon the last time the government performed a "purge" on the artistic subculture, Roupen is welcomed with ice-thin tolerance by Maxine and the others as they figure he's up to no good. Their fears prove founded when Roupen distracts Existo's libido with "white bred" singer Penelope (Jenny Littleton) as the artists blitzkrieg the unwitting public with provocative street performances. Glasscock's hope is to turn Existo into a *faux* prodigal son to parade on national television, muting his stature and effectively eviscerating the uprising.

EXISTO's success lies largely in its engaging ensemble cast. Beyond the seamless chemistry between Arntson and co-star Welch, who have worked together in theater for more than 20 years, the production culled a bevy of accomplished local actors—all SAG, believe it or not—to inhabit The Sewer's helter-skelter world. "That roomful of revolutionaries were

all our buddies, making it doubly fun," says Arntson of the squabbling idealists searching for the right "concepts" to throw the pigs, including Mo Deek (Denice Hicks), Bernard Ozak (Barry Scott), Jacques Patou (Matt Carlton), Lahlo (Mary T. Bailey), and the endearing Vigo (Ray Thornton). Sams feigns in mock sorrow that, "We had the most overqualified background actors and extras in the history of film!"

Toward the front lines of the conflict, actors Montgomery and Cabus play archetypes yanked from today's headlines—the holier-than-thou hypocrite manipulating perspectives and the high society gland hand always looking for an easy out. "Mike Montgomery really is a good guy," jokes director Sams, "but he has that same voice (*Think the monotone of reason in Catholic confessional*. – ed.) and there are times where you see him, and he loves to play golf, and you just want to smack him!" Glasscock and his cronies echo the league of current politicians who have intited "faith-based" programs and liberally smeared political correctness across the board. "With Bush coming in [to office, and] Rudy Giuliani and his decency panel [in New York City], all these things continue to play into the art and anarchy [of EXISTO]," continues Sams.

The movie's primary catalysts are Arntson's songs, which not only keep things lively and unpredictable (witness his first performance, the amusing ditty "Fuckin' A"), but open things up considerably on an intellectual level. "Part of that comes from the tradition of musical theater," explains Arntson, "where the songs are moving the plot, the ideas, and the



Existo enjoys some down time with Maxine (Jackie Welch).

"Is this a set-up for the same cosmic punchline? 'Hey, folks listen to Existo, he's got the answer! There's more to life than just work-eat-sleep-eat-chew-swallow-poop!'" – Existo

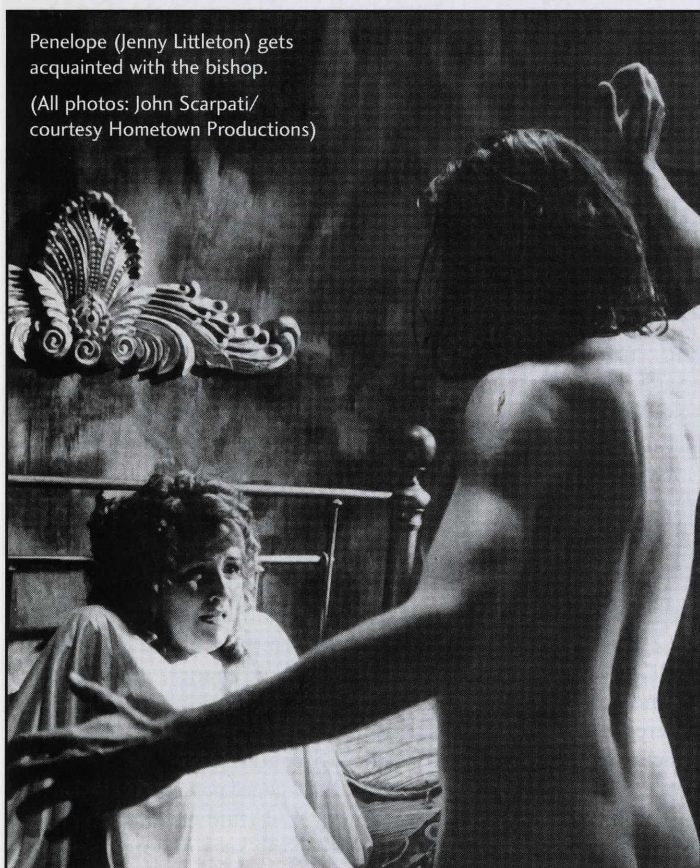
character development along, rather than just being little added-on numbers. [For instance] I would write the 'call to arms' song where I'm in chains and singing to the revolutionaries, [and that] was very specifically done for that scene." Existo also fronts a band, the Rhythm People, who materialize when a musical flourish is required, and the artists employ everything from toilets to a particular appendage-shaped pogo stick to help, um, get the point across. "That's the good side of it taking a year to raise the money," quips Sams about EXISTO's abundance of creative flourishes.

What also becomes clear is that Existo communicates far better through his art than on the sidelines; even his pillow talk with Maxine borders on the incomprehensible. "He's conceived as half a brain because Maxine, in a way, is the lucid part of him," says Sams about the characters' pairing. "She keeps things rolling along—'Here's our agenda, here's what we're doing!'—but Existo, he's in, he's out, he's [spouting] one non-sequitur after another. It was kind of exploring a bipolar relationship," one tested to the limits when Maxine threatens to make an example of Existo's wayward romance, using Mo Deek's production design, Vigo's technical expertise, and some good old-fashioned dynamite! Relax, comrades, for one of the few predictable things about EXISTO is that Maxine and her man are destined to regain equilibrium and trump Glasscock in the end.

Existo's lack of linear discourse will certainly throw some viewers, particularly since the film barely touches on his past. "The idea of Existo, to some extent, is that he's been lobotomized," explains the director, "either self-lobotomized or in a government institution. There are synapses that just don't function anymore, but there are others that come through brilliantly!"

Penelope (Jenny Littleton) gets acquainted with the bishop.

(All photos: John Scarpati/courtesy Hometown Productions)



"At approximately 8:15 this morning, a busload of junior-high students on their way to a school prayer meeting were exposed to a drive-by performance based on the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe..." – Dr. Armond Glasscock



Arntson and Sams actually shot a prologue during the film's principal photography in late 1997, setting up the previous "purges" and Existo's trauma, but this sequence hit the cutting-room floor along with others to prune the running time. "Jim Varney—the late, great Jim—had a couple of good scenes up front that did in fact explain a bit more about how things came to be," continues Sams. "At some point, I think we went for more of a hallucinogenic assault, where you find yourself at this club, and, there you go!"

More relevant to the movie than a backstory is Existo's attack on class and privilege, aired out profusely through his words and music. In a daring decision, EXISTO spares no quarters. "We wanted to show the left from the point-of-view of the right as extremely as we could, and vice versa," points out Arntson, "so then, what about middle America? What about the Reagan Democrats, the blue-collar people who get duped time after time, election after election?" Pesky budget cuts forced the filmmakers to be frugal in depicting the actual "art wars" and those caught in the middle, but one offbeat solution speaks volumes. Every so often, the film cuts to a single husband and wife watching the events unfold on television, periodically removing their scalps to dip their chips into their craniums or to scrape in leftovers!

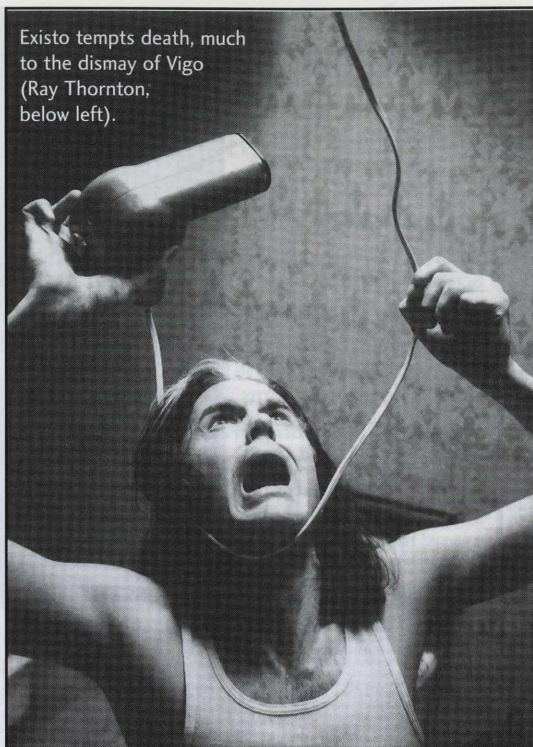
Lid or no lid, enthusiastic audiences have been making mental notes about EXISTO, which has played film festivals and limited theatrical engagements since its completion in 1999. "We've had wonderful parties, a lot of people wandering across the country to different screenings," says Sams, as many popular events like the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival, Chicago Underground Film Festival, Vancouver Film Festival, and MicroCineFest in Baltimore have programmed EXISTO.



Marcel: "Didn't I tell you cats about nailing your text before you go into action?"

Vigo: "We told him! I said that stream-of-consciousness shyte's gonna get us all killed!"

Existo tempts death, much to the dismay of Vigo (Ray Thornton, below left).



"If you have to go out and you see art, do not—I repeat, do not—try to interpret it yourself. Call 911 and let the Art Squad diffuse it."

— reporter Dirk Beverage

"There's a certain poetic momentum to it that I'm tickled with, and having watched audiences respond to it, it really helps a lot of the internal insecurities go away."

The next major step, of course, is landing distribution for a movie that certainly takes some explaining. While EXISTO's base *modus operandi* resembles that of John Waters' CECIL B. DEMENTED, and its bawdy spirit

recalls THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW, Sams and Arntson are closely watching the performance of another kindred film currently in release—John Cameron Mitchell's gender-bending ode to glam rock, HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH. "Let's face it," admits Sams, "[EXISTO is] a rock-and-roll musical, and there just aren't many of them out there. It begs for its own special handling." Whether Fine Line can turn HEDWIG into a hit remains to be seen, but one hopes that a savvy executive—preferably, one that recognized HEDWIG's emergence as a Sundance favorite last

winter—will pick up on EXISTO's comparable, crowd-pleasing traits amidst the giddy anarchy.

In the meantime, Arntson and Sams have returned to Existo's roots, developing a stage-bound extension of the movie's events that incorporates an interactive slant. "We've been working on a live show for Broadway with some of the EXISTO characters," says Sams, who sees plenty of life left in the revolutionary. "It's multimedia, but it's kind of deconstructing multimedia, doing some songs prerecorded and playing them as if they're real, and then other segments that are played more like in a regular performance, and then playing off of that convention." A year in development, the partners hope to mount this production near the release of EXISTO while continuing their work on spec scripts featuring other characters in Arntson's imaginative stable.

Whatever EXISTO's fate, the filmmakers' hearts remain in Nashville. Although music video production is commonplace, feature film work usually crops up only when productions swing through town, and homegrown features are rare. "It makes everything [we] do have a bit of a hothouse aspect," says Arntson. "It seems less influenced by the [film] business ... I just go insane when I'm in New

York or Los Angeles for very long, trying to think of us as business people and not artists." Further anchoring the duo is a dependable network of performers with whom they hope to involve in future projects. "We have the deepest talent pool since I've been here," says Arntson, who left his native Minnesota to make it as a musician before settling in Tennessee two decades ago.

Sams, himself transplanted from Atlanta, feels that his EXISTO experience couldn't have been more conducive to fulfilling their dream project. "It's been the absolute best group that you could ever ask for," says the congenial director, referencing everyone from the talent to the production crew to the investors, all based in Nashville. "Everyone is totally supportive, no one's impatient, everybody's happy, and no one says, 'I didn't know you were going to make a movie like *that*!'"

And hopefully, that relationship between the partners, their contemporaries, and their city will jive as future productions get underway. "This is what we'd love to do," concludes Arntson with a hypothetical ideal that should ring true for nearly every person active in independent film. "[We'd] find an odd little niche of our own that we can keep mining until we're old and gray."

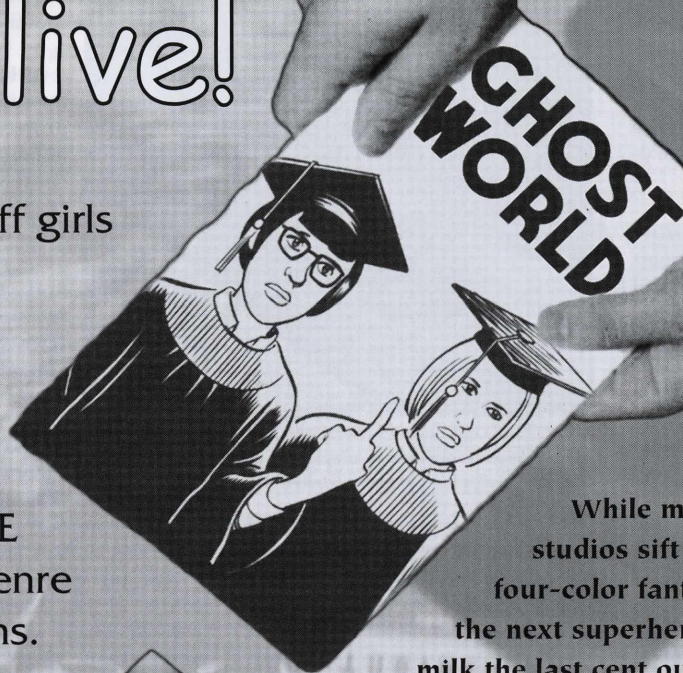
Until then, comrades, we must rely on the wild silver locks and equally silver tongue of the great Existo to keep the artists and activists in step and to repel those who oppose our freedom of expression.



Comix Come Alive!

It's high time that the buff girls and boys in spandex are given a rest, as *FAUST*, *G-MEN FROM HELL*, *GHOST WORLD*, and an amateur version of *STRANGERS IN PARADISE* liven up the movie subgenre of comic book adaptations.

by Chuck Koplinski
with Jason Pankoke



While major Hollywood studios sift through piles of four-color fantasies in search of the next superhero franchise or milk the last cent out of ones they already have, a small group of dedicated comic creators and fans have taken matters into their own hands.

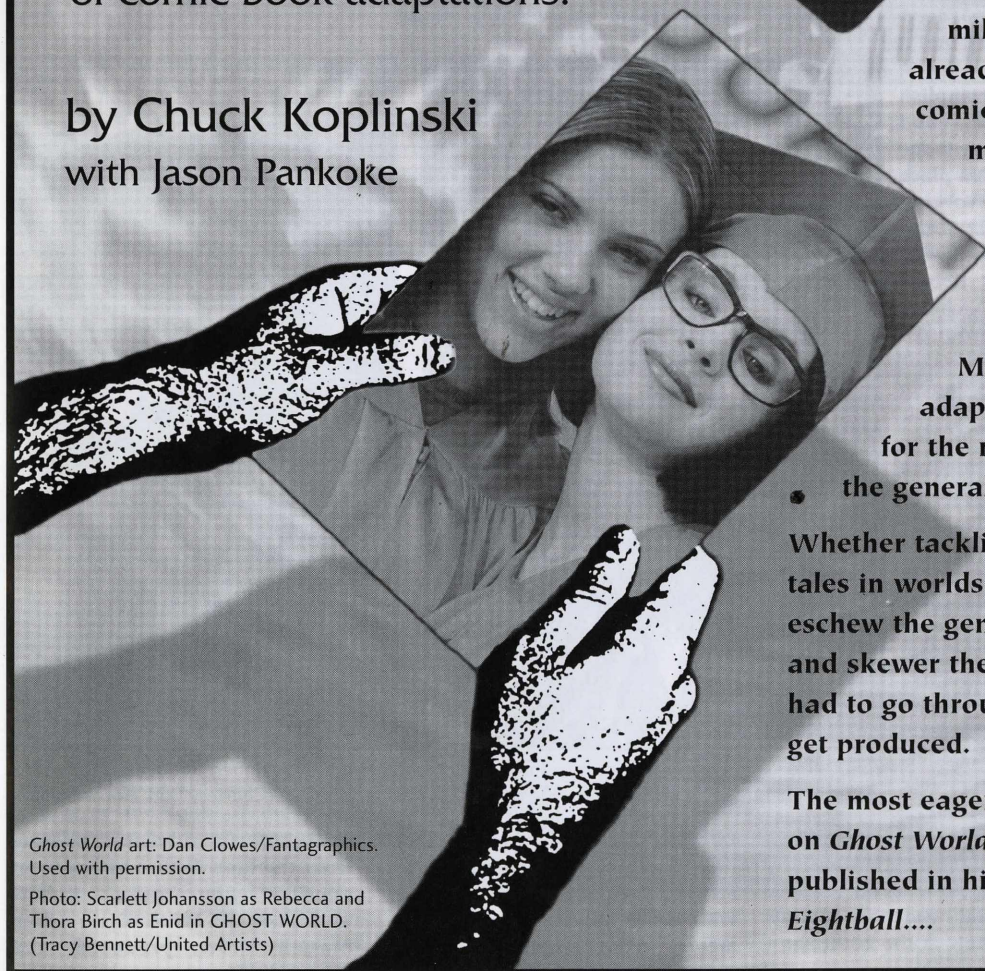
Movie directors Brian Yuzna and Christopher Coppola, authors Dan Clowes and Mike Allred, and novice filmmaker Matthew Balthrop have all helped adapt small press comics that have, for the most part, gone unnoticed by the general public.

Whether tackling adult themes or setting their tales in worlds of extreme violence, these films eschew the genre conventions of the comic book and skewer them with glee. No wonder each had to go through the back door in order to get produced.

The most eagerly anticipated of the lot is based on *Ghost World*, Clowes' series of backup stories published in his cult Fantagraphics book, *Eightball....*

Ghost World art: Dan Clowes/Fantagraphics. Used with permission.

Photo: Scarlett Johansson as Rebecca and Thora Birch as Enid in *GHOST WORLD*. (Tracy Bennett/United Artists)





Ghost World chronicles the everyday adventures of Enid and Rebecca, two teenage girls struggling to come to terms with themselves and the world around them. Hardly an original concept, but the issues Enid and Rebecca wrestle with have a resonance that is lacking in similar works. Sex, drugs, and peer pressure are just a few of the themes tackled by Clowes, but there is a realistic sense of loss, anger, and frustration that makes for compelling reading and sets *Ghost World* apart in comics, if not the entire tradition of teen angst storytelling.

In the upcoming United Artists release, directed by Terry Zwigoff (CRUMB), Enid (Thora Birch) and Rebecca (Scarlett Johansson) search for the perfect apartment in order to distance themselves from high school and their parents. While Rebecca takes an odd job to help realize this dream, Enid enrolls in a summer school art class to help nurture her talent. There, Enid takes on another project in the form of Seymour (Steve Buscemi), the target of everyone's derision who she is determined to help. However, the presence of Josh (Brad Renfro) provides a distraction for both girls, as he becomes the object of their sexual fantasies.

As Clowes relates, getting studio heads to come to terms with his story was a struggle. "People who've read the script, they think we're making GUMMO, some totally incomprehensible art film. It really isn't at all. It's not a John Hughes film either, but it's closer to that than an art film. It's something teen-age girls would enjoy, as would 50-year-old men like Terry and myself."

Devotees of the comic have voiced concern that Zwigoff might impose a documentary feel on GHOST WORLD. Clowes considered that and discussed it with the director. "I think it's the fear a lot of producers have, that we see it as a gritty faux-documentary thing. We envision it more as ... a sort of Woody Allen film, whose films have long master shots where you see the entire scene and there's not much cutting within the scene." At the least, Zwigoff and Clowes co-wrote the screenplay, which hopefully preserves the essence of Enid and Rebecca.



Ghost World creator Dan Clowes, who had an unusually active role in the acclaimed movie adaptation, directed by CRUMB's Terry Zwigoff. (Tracy Bennett/United Artists)

Far away from the world of teenage girls are Mike Allred's "G-Men from Hell," two government agents from the 1940s who have been sent to Hell for their many misdeeds. However, they eventually find a way back to Earth, striving to accomplish a string of good deeds that they hope will earn them a place in Heaven. Working from the *Grafix Muzik* story, "Ghoulash," screenwriters Robert Cooper and Nicholas Johnson, producer Rick Albert, director Christopher Coppola (BEL-AIR), and their team have turned Allred's concept into a full-fledged feature.

Starring William Forsythe and Tate Donovan as the Men, along with Vanessa Angel, Zach Galligan, Bob Goldthwait, Barry Newman, Gary Busey, Charles Fleischer, Paul Rodriguez, and Robert Goulet (as Lucifer!), G-MEN FROM HELL has yet to be released domestically. "It's a sweet, weird little movie," says the soft-spoken Allred, recalling his initial reaction upon screening G-MEN at the 2000 San

Diego ComicCon. "10 years ago, it would have been a huge hit on the midnight movie circuit—great cast, very different, very unique. It looks like a black-and-white film that's been colorized. Christopher made a cool movie!"

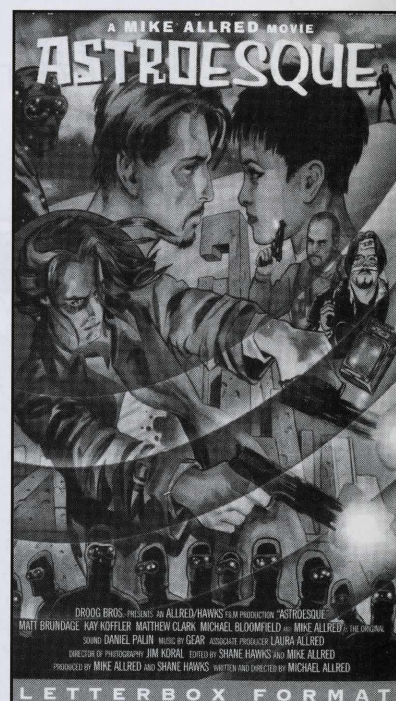
Although a director-for-hire on the project, Coppola immediately found G-MEN to his liking. "I really admired Mike Allred for what he was doing," praises Coppola, a self-described maverick who also runs Plaster City Productions, an independent "digi-movie" company situated in Hollywood. "I liked that all his characters were heroes, yet they all had problems such as low self-esteem. I liked his wife's use of primary colors of his comics." Coppola worked closely with cinematographer Dean Lent (GAS FOOD

it," he continues, "was to put in a little of that 'hot-rod,' Robert Williams mentality, and [Earnest] knew that world really well. Like, when you go to Hell and see neon signs that say 'Hot Chick'—that kind of thing!"

Beyond capturing the bold style of Mike and Laura Allred's comic book art, Coppola had his work cut out for him reigning in that talented cast. "Bill Forsythe is great," says the director of his lead actor, who once stood on the other side of the four-color law as Flattop in Warren Beatty's DICK TRACY. "He's got the hardest part—he's the straight man." Extremely hard, considering the presence of supporting players Rodriguez (A MILLION TO JUAN), Goldthwait (ONE CRAZY SUMMER), Fleischer (WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?), and the affable Busey. "Gary Busey really steals the film," Coppola beams, as the veteran actor portrays an amalgam of multiple characters found in the *Grafix Muzik* stories. "He just got into the skin of this gay detective. I put lip gloss and a leather coat on him, and he's quite hilarious yet also very real and believable."



(Left) Mike Allred's *Madman*, currently a pet project for EL MARIACHI's Robert Rodriguez. (Collection of the editor) (Right) *ASTROESQUE*, Allred's experimental feature film. (Courtesy Dark Horse Comics)



LODGING) and production designer Randal P. Earnest (GUNSHY) to faithfully translate *G-Men* with some minor visual amendments. "What I wanted to do with

Taking an adventurous cue from the laserdiscs and books of guerilla film guru Robert Rodriguez (EL MARIACHI), Allred himself wrote, produced, and



Father of FAUST by Mike Watt

David Quinn is best known as the writer and co-creator of one of the most violent comic book series ever, *Faust*. With extreme artwork by Tim Vigil, *Faust* tells the story of a man, John Jaspers, who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge and power. He's returned to Earth as a murderous demon with razor-sharp talons on each hand, decides that being a minion of Hell isn't all it's cracked up to be, and ultimately tries to get his soul back. "And comedy ensues," Quinn says with a laugh. "It's one of the oldest legends. You make a certain compromise and you have to live with it. Okay, so it's a huge compromise."

Faust, which has enjoyed a healthy run as a series of illustrated books, has been adapted by director Brian Yuzna (BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR), and stars Mark Frost, Isabel Brook, Monica Van Campen, Junix Nocian, and genre vets Andrew Divoff (WISHMASTER) and Jeffrey Combs (THE RE-ANIMATOR). Currently playing in Europe, FAUST will soon be released on video in the United States by Lions Gate Films.

"The film script was a compressed version—almost a synopsis—of the original story line," says Quinn. "I haven't seen all of the final film yet. Vigil saw it and



Rebel Studios' *Faust* #1, 1991. (Collection of Jason Brown)

he was kind of impressed. We're always going to be the hardest critics. We have the whole movie in our heads. Just as Brian Yuzna, I'm sure, still has a version in his head that's very different from the one he managed to get on film."

This isn't the first time someone has tried to bring the elaborate project to the big screen. In 1992, FAUST was a personal project of RE-ANIMATOR director Stuart Gordon. One of the best-known images from that period is a teaser poster drawn by Vigil featuring a blood-soaked image of cult actress Brinke Stevens. The movie ultimately never got off the ground.

"I guess it was too big budget and too shocking at the time," Quinn explains. "THE CROW [movie] hadn't happened yet, and a lot of things about the [FAUST screenplay] were scaring people; no person or company would come up with that ever-important first million-dollar commitment which allows 11 other people to fork over their million."

And the project languished for years until, Quinn continues, "Stuart showed the script to Brian, who felt that it had the perfect mix of horror, detective, and romance genres to start off his new company, Fantastic Films, through Filmax in Barcelona. He read the script and, though he wanted to play with it a little bit, he liked it enough to have me do a re-write instead of bringing a team of writers to change it. There was just no time for me to do the final polish I'd asked to do, so what you actually see filmed [is] basically my script. Along the way, Yuzna discovered the comic book and he was very interested in some of [Faust's] images. As far as I can tell, they show in the final print of the film."

Quinn has nothing but good to say about the casting, particularly Divoff, who plays the devil character "M." "Andrew does a great job.

We had him read for M, and he was very good. The casting director wasn't working the day Andrew came in and I got to read opposite him. I can't wait to see his final performance. Jeffrey Combs, 'The Re-animator' himself, appears in the film as Captain Dan Margolies. I was also fortunate enough to meet him. I really like his work a lot. He's well known for adding a jolt. [Their presence] should be fun for fans."

The film's trailer has been available on the Internet for a full year, and fans have stated that it looks like Yuzna stuck close to the actual book. Those fans will soon have ample ways to savor Faust. Along with his appearances in books published by Avatar Comics of Urbana, Illinois, Quinn and Vigil recently announced the resurrection of Rebel Studios, their original independent imprint, under which *Faust* will return in an all-new series.

Hopefully, the wait won't be too long in the States before the live-action FAUST wreaks havoc as well.



Below: FAUST director Brian Yuzna.

Background: Mark Frost as John Jaspers.

All FAUST photos: A. Pijuan/Fantastic Factory

directed a movie in his native Oregon called *ASTROESQUE*. Told in an elaborate weaving structure, the film focuses on an angel/alien (Allred) and a mortal (Matt Brundage) who are haunted by the same visions of past and future in which they are on the run from a local renegade militia. "It was very heavily influenced by *DON'T LOOK NOW* and *THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH*, two Nicholas Roeg films," says Allred, who also counts Alejandro Jodorowsky's cult western *EL TOPO* as an inspiration. "Since I didn't have access to talented actors that had been proven to me, I thought I would make something ambitiously ambiguous, kind of arty."

Other than enjoying the experience working with family, friends, and fellow cineaste Shane Hawks on *ASTROESQUE* ("I'm really proud of the look of the film," continues Allred. "There's some great shots and moody atmosphere ... it was a blast!"), the project failed to accomplish an underlying goal. Allred intended

to use the \$10,000 film as a résumé piece, of sorts, to convince Universal Pictures that he "had an eye and could tell a story," thereby qualifying him to direct the movie version of *Madman*, his signature character. After Universal's

rights lapsed, Allred's friend Rodriguez optioned *Madman* from the author, but that collaboration will have to wait at least until the filmmaker finishes his *MARIACHI* follow-up, *ONCE UPON A TIME IN MEXICO*.



In *GHOST WORLD*, Enid (Thora Birch) befriends quirky Seymour (Steve Buscemi), a character invented by Clowes and Zwigoff for the film. (Tracy Bennett/United Artists)

While *G-MEN*'s characters attempt to escape from Hell, David Quinn and Tim Vigil's *Faust* is firmly entrenched there. Jammed with images of excessive violence and pornographic sex to thrill the book's prepubescent fan base, it has established a loyal underground following that clamors for the latest adventure of its title character, a hell-spawn avenger that metes out his own brand of hard justice. Imagine an unrepentant Batman with demonic powers, and you'll have a sense of this story's tone. Yet, it didn't dissuade Brian Yuzna and company from turning *Faust* into a live-action movie starring Mark Frost as John Jaspers/Faust and Andrew Divoff as the devil.

Yuzna, no stranger to the horror game with *SOCIETY* and *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD 3* under his director's belt, kept FAUST consistent with the feel of the book. Yuzna explains that, "We did, early on, decide that we were going to not make the movie for children just because it is a caped superhero. That was probably the



biggest risk we took and I don't believe a U.S. company would have agreed to it. Filmax, being a Spanish company, didn't question the decision and released the movie uncut in theatres in Spain last February to good results." FAUST is the first co-production between Filmax and Yuzna's boutique horror label, Fantastic Factory.

Perhaps the main obstacle Yuzna and screenwriter David Quinn (see sidebar) had to contend with was translating the over-the-top graphic feel of *Faust* to the screen. "The biggest difference is that the movie has a lower level of violence and sex, as well as a simpler plot. Some of the characters [from the comic books] have been lost, simplified, and/or made more sympathetic," the director says. "We choose to have the Faust suit grow right out of Jaspers' skin, rather than have it appear in an expressionistic way as in the book. This looks great in graphics where the superhero is always in a dramatic pose and the cape is flowing dynamically, but in a movie it can have the look of the old BATMAN television show." Lions Gate Films will release FAUST straight to video in August.

Besides anxiously awaiting the next issue of their favorite book to hit the stands, perhaps the only other thing that causes comic fans more anxiety is waiting for their favorite book to hit the screen. Matthew Balthrop got tired of waiting and took matters into his own hands, adapting the first

story arc of artist/writer Terry Moore's Eisner Award-winning book, *Strangers in Paradise*, into a low-budget film.

Strangers follows the adventures of two friends, opposites that somehow attract and help each other survive the confusion of everyday life. Francine Peters is a slightly overweight, innocent 25-year-old from Memphis who longs to be married, have children, and live a life of suburban serenity. Katina Choovanski is a mercurial 26-year-old lesbian from Chicago, who is as temperamental as Francine is calm and seems to have a chip on her shoulder toward the entire world, belying her nickname, "Katchoo." Together, these two have formed a friendship that helps them weather the many emotional storms and closeted skeletons that Moore throws their way.

Though not nearly as cynical as *Ghost World*, *Strangers* is realistic and buoyed by solid writing and a sense of humor that appealed to Balthrop. Hoping to jump-start his filmmaking career, the Virginia native was in search of a project that was manageable yet compelling enough for him to invest the time and energy necessary to complete it. "I needed a good, solid, simple story to film with strong characters. As I picked up a copy of [*Strangers*], it hit. I could do the first trade paperback as a film," says Balthrop. "I would do [it] as a kind of tribute to Terry's work." This story, introducing readers to Francine, Katchoo, pal David, and the lecherous Freddie Femurs, appeared as a three-issue series in 1993 and has since been collected under Moore's own imprint, Abstract Studio.



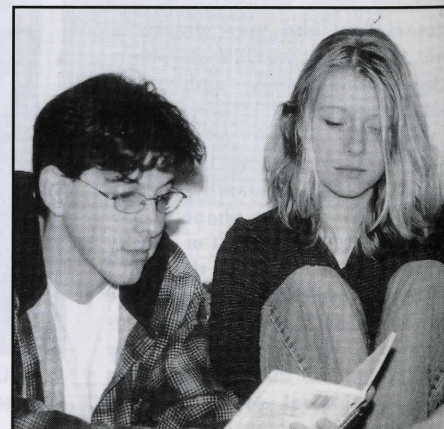
Katina Choovanski and Francine Peters, *Strangers in Paradise*. (Art: Terry Moore/Abstract Studio. Used with permission.)

Balthrop went ahead and lensed the project, but not without his share of problems. "The biggest difference between the comic and the movie is the exclusion of some of the vignettes in the book. It's two different [media], comics being one where everyone who reads it has a different interpretation of the material, film being one where the actors provide their own interpretation in keeping with mine." Not only did he encounter problems with casting, simply because the roster of actors who auditioned was small, but key player Katie Lawson (Katchoo) came down with mono during production. Still, the filmmaker persevered and is in the midst of putting the final editing touches on the film, which also features Balthrop as David, David White as Freddie, and Corrine Dame as Francine. The film was produced by Balthrop, White, and Kelli Audibert.

Though Moore has not issued any official statement about Balthrop's work, the author is currently writing a screenplay based on the same story arc. Whether an "official" *Strangers in Paradise* movie ever comes to fruition, there looks to be no pause in the onslaught of comics-derived movies. As Bryan Singer did last year with X-MEN, energetic young guns Sam Raimi, Darren Aronofsky, and the Hughes brothers look poised to reinvigorate the Hollywood comic book film with SPIDER-MAN, the next BATMAN, and FROM HELL, respectively. Live-action versions of THE TICK and WITCHBLADE battle the baddies on television, while Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman look poised to return the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to big-screen glory under the watchful eye of John Woo. Yet, when will the next indie comic characters spring to life? Only time and fateful deal making will tell.



(Left) Katie Lawson as Katchoo and Corrine Dame as Francine in Matt Balthrop's low-budget take on *Strangers in Paradise*. (Above) SIP producers David White, Balthrop, and Kelli Audibert. (Right) Balthrop as David, with Lawson. (Photos: courtesy Matt Balthrop)



C-U CONFIDENTIAL

Hear the howl of the lone wolf wandering the dog days of summer!
Part Four by JASON PANKOKE

THIS IS IT, BENNY. I can feel the tension mounting in my slowly maturing bones and the tingly nerves throughout the rest of my body. Something's not quite right about this case but I'll be damned if I risk less than everything.

Any good bartender should know to give each and every nodding customer a gracious, verbal pat on the back, reassuring that the problems will go away with a few sips of the spirits. Since you're one of the best in this town, Benny, I know I'll get treated right by you, regardless that you still know me just like you knew me back in the old days when I warmed this very seat on a regular basis.

You're one of the few whom I call a friend who distinctly understands the deal that goes down in this life I live. I sure as hell remember your tales of big-city bohemia living with the artists and the thinkers, and it's that segment of society I am to serve as well. I can tell your heart is still in it, old hoss. Look at all those yellowed pictures hanging on the wall behind you. Roy Lichtenstein! Jack Kerouac! You're a walking documentary in the making.

Speaking of ... ever show you this? Chicago, 1978. This little man in the plush winter coat looking stone-faced at the camera? Yeah, that's my younger brother. I think neither of us at that point saw historical artifacts as history, just neat old things. I don't know, Benny, we don't look *that* much alike....

And *this* one! The nation's capital, maybe a decade ago. That's my father, standing among a gallery of ornate buildings stuffed to the gills with amazing discoveries. So wonderful, yet when I look, I instead see the man who today would have trouble walking across one exhibit, let alone an entire campus.

You haven't seen this, I gather. Just a few years ago, on a beach in California, I took this picture of myself to prove that I discovered a little heaven on earth. Somewhere along the rocks, I lost my lens cap but it didn't really matter. Even if I had left it on the camera, I *still* wouldn't be photogenic.

That's the entire point, isn't it, Benny? Preserving the important memories of our lives and accomplishments for down the road, when the noggin becomes cloudy and the twilight dims. You're lucky to have this musty temple as your museum. Mine fits into my back pocket because that's the best I can do when I'm forever on the run.

Did I ever tell you that I've been seeing that old adventurousness of mine in the gal and the kid? They seek the hunt relentlessly when I've been through the motions so many times. There is no glory anymore in dreaming, or tinkering, or learning. It's a matter of doing and being done. Gone are the endless summers and eternal Santa Claus vigils and breathless anticipation of making the grade. I have to be who I am and help others become who they need to be. Same goes for you, there behind the counter for what seems like an eternity. It's our job.

My, that drink looks pretty. Thank you, Benny, but you know I can't indulge. Give it with my regards to your Irish crony down at the end of the bar and we'll call it even. As always, I value your seasoned ear and open mind, my friend, and I'll stop in when I'm finished with my business.

Here, take these things I recently scribbled down, some crib notes about case studies I'll record for posterity's sake in due time. In a way, they do what the pictures in my billfold have always done, reminded me of the good memories in life and provided me with stories to tell.

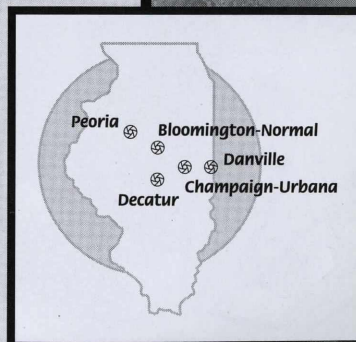
But my billfold is only so big. Enshrine this for me, Benny. My past might just become everyone else's future.

CHAPTER X:

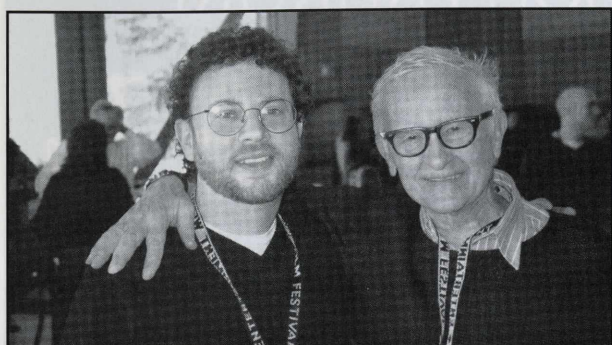
Where the brotherhood of filmmakers in Champaign-Urbana offer changes of pace for their friends and allies....

NOTES:

Where an avalanche of goodies alights....



CHAPTER 10: "A Year in the Life"



(Top) Local filmmaker Jay Rosenstein meets Albert Maysles (GIMME SHELTER) at Sundance 2001. (Courtesy Jay Rosenstein) (Above) Elizabeth Kennedy reads from her script for SAMARIA. (Photo: JaPan) (Below) Julianne Buescher, whose autobiographical short film RESCULPTING VENUS played at Freaky Film Festival last fall. (Photo: Jon Renfield/courtesy New Venus Productions)



In remembering that all good things progress in steps and stumbles, I decided to compile some Champaign-Urbana experiences from the past year that I think are indicative of grassroots filmmaking culture. Several personalities have already appeared in these pages, while several others will make a return visit soon. — Jason Pankoke

May 28, 2000 – West Champaign

Thanks to the Day Job, I had little choice but to work on Memorial Day and squash all fleeting intentions of a genuine break. However, a timely invite from local filmmaker Mike Trippiedi of DOGS IN QUICKSAND (see MICRO-FILM #1, p.18. – ed.) helped prevent the holiday-weekend-that-wasn't from being a wipeout.

Driving into Trippiedi's archetypal middle-class subdivision, replete with two-car garages and shade trees, one would be hard-pressed to believe that one's neighbor might have a pastime that didn't involve cars, sports, or home repair. Even more so, one might dismiss the sight of two grown men videotaping two other grown men having a conversation on the front lawn as an educational project. Look closely, though, and you'll see that the hefty one weeding the garden just doesn't seem *quite right*. Listen closer, and you'll hear the older one chastising the gardener completely in *rhyme*.

On that brisk, sunny day, I stood on the sidelines as Trippiedi and sound man Scott Cimarusti taped a dysfunctional family quarrel for the short, BUCKY McSNEAD: THE FIRST SLASHER FILM TOLD IN RHYME. This scene depicted how put-upon Bucky (Steve Davis) lays waste to his prim-and-proper father (Will Ridenour) and white-trash mother (Traci Nally) with a pistol, kicking off his comedic killing spree. The solitary moment of over-the-top bloodshed, as the red stuff covers Bucky while riddling the father with bullets, is faked in the garage at afternoon's end—much to the dismay of Davis, who endured several aborted takes.

July 15, 2000 – Downtown Champaign

It was torrid that Saturday afternoon as I took the short walk I'd taken hundreds of times before to downtown Champaign. In its few square blocks, you will find bars, grills, coffee-houses, restaurants, and novelty shops. However, one of downtown's great attractions is that which is not easily seen—the studio apartments.

Filmmaker and soccer-loving hooligan Johnnie May had invited me to witness the dialogue recording session for SAMARIA, his stop-motion animated fairy tale, in the recess of sound engineer Joseph Donhowe's loft. I rapped on the metal door set between Dan's Hat Shop and Johnson's Sport Shop. Donhowe let me in and led me up the creaky stairwell to his place, where I was greeted by many friends among oodles of equipment.

A big part in bringing such material to life is solid vocal talent, of which I heard plenty during the six-hour recording session. SAMARIA author Elizabeth Kennedy played the pointed Princess Sophie, while Mark Poremba gave a hearty reading as suitor Michael. Bob Henne (as her father, the earnest King), Scott Kimble (as a squirmy Crone), and Kevin Sandridge (literally chewing scenery as Prince Otgoth) ran with the most colorful parts. Charles Schoerman put his theater training to good use as Michael's magic-practicing cat, Fergal. Along with Andrea Appleton as maid Sophie, one could visualize their miniature counterparts speaking in their tongues.

September 13, 2000 – University of Illinois engineering library, Champaign

I surfed over to the University of Illinois' web site one evening and found among the hundreds of student organizations an "Illini Film & Video Club." I hadn't heard about IFV before, but soon earned an invitation to their first official meeting.

Engineering students Michael Stone and Andrew McAllister explained that they launched IFV to provide video services for other campus groups and events, and also to serve as a central hub from which could spring independent student productions. On-campus screenings would be thrown into the mix, as well as training sessions to verse members in handling camcorders and computer editing suites. Stone and McAllister came across as bright, energetic, and pretty determined. *Admirable enough*, I thought. *Let's see what happens.*

Maybe a dozen people attended that first meeting, with eight or nine at each of the following three. I then abstained for a time due to MICRO-FILM duties, thinking that the boys were in for a long dry spell. When I returned in November, however, mobs of 20-plus

If you're not making movies, then get thee keister to your local filmmaking scene. You'll forge friendships, amass ideas, and maybe even score a screen credit or two!



students now filled the room on a regular basis, reviewing footage from IFV commissions and planning future schemes. *Right on*, I thought. *This is the way it should be.*

October 4, 2000 – North Champaign

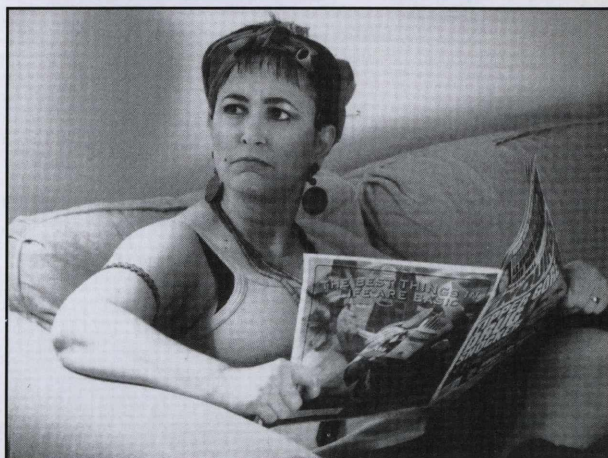
I rounded the service road near the highway at dusk to attend a casting call for a modern "biker noir" called LINK. Not that I had designs on flexing my thespian might, mind you. A traumatic experience in Catholic grade school where I, as the Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*, got my tail caught in a desk for several embarrassing moments, cured me of all future designs on an acting career. This was simply on a journalist's whim.

Just off the service road, I entered the lobby to Dreamscape Design, a multi-media company run by Robin Peters of nearby Monticello. I took my seat and filled out two forms, and then watched the lobby fill up rather quickly. A handful of older gents beamed of genuine biker-ness, but most of the others looked too green or prettied up for such an undertaking. A pair of equally green *Daily Illini* reporters stopped in to cop quotes from hopefuls as to why they wanted to be in an independent film. Strangely, they never got around to asking me.

An assistant eventually called my name and whisked me back to a room sporting a photographer's drop cloth, small studio floods, and a MiniDV camcorder to record the actors for later review. Peters then stepped in and greeted me, asked me to say my name and other assorted bits on camera, and then walked me back up front to exchange me for the next DeNiro in line. I didn't even have time to build up butterflies in my stomach.



(Above) Steve Davis as Bucky McSnead, hedging between life, death, and an old-fashioned killing spree. (Below) Director Mike Trippiedi and assistant Scott Cimarusti tape a scene with actors Davis and Will Riednour, as Bucky's father. (Bottom) Tracy Nally, a lawyer in real life, dresses down to play Bucky's mother. (All photos: JaPan)



November 1, 2000 – Downtown Champaign

As Halloween 2000 came and went and I found myself deep in a production rut at the Secret MICRO-FILM Headquarters, I barely got to enjoy or volunteer for the film festival that inspired me to do this publication! Not helping matters any was the extra load I took on to help produce a special Freaky Film Festival edition of our alternative paper, *The Octopus*. Everything worked out, of course, except that my first day of Freaky was the festival's last. Strangely, it went a little something like this:

6 p.m. – I walked down the street to Church Street Square, a commercial space across from the New Art Theater, home of the Freaky Film Festival (*M-F #2*, p.23), where a film-making discussion was to take place. I was a few minutes late, so I had expected to walk in with a conversation just underway. As it turned out, nobody showed up for the discussion, so it was canceled.

8 p.m. – A large crowd gathered for the "best-of" show that concluded the festival. Naturally, I had seen most of the award winners in preparation for the *Octopus* coverage. These included Don Hertzfeldt's ribald animation, REJECTED, Ben Lohman's faux-classroom film, MATH AND YOU, Julianne Buescher and Daniel Vecchione's well-done "comedy about breast cancer," RESCULPTING VENUS, and Mamie McCall's bittersweet Southern fable, THE GEORGIA PEACH BOY, which won Best of Fest. This program also included the giddy, three-minute burst that is Nate Pommer's MONKEY VS. ROBOT, based on the kids' book by alternative cartoonist James Kochalka, "Superstar."

10 p.m. – Upon exiting the New Art, a couple of Freaky Film people told me they were going over to Boltini, a downtown bar, to grab a martini before heading to the nightclub, The Highdive. I decided to go right to the 'Dive, thinking I would run into the other Freakaholics as the evening wore on. After all, that night's show was billed as the closing-night party for the festival.

Spacey trip-hop duo Amphibian took the stage soon after I arrived, and then Salaryman gave the sizeable crowd many reasons to groove the night away with their hybrid dance-rock instrumentals. When Salaryman front-woman Rose Marshack thanked the Freaky Film Festival for inviting the band to close the event, I scanned the crowd for Freaky faces. As far as I could tell, there were none. Nada. Zip. Zero.

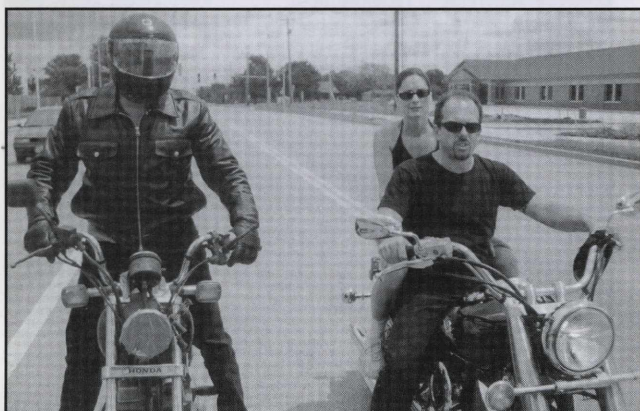
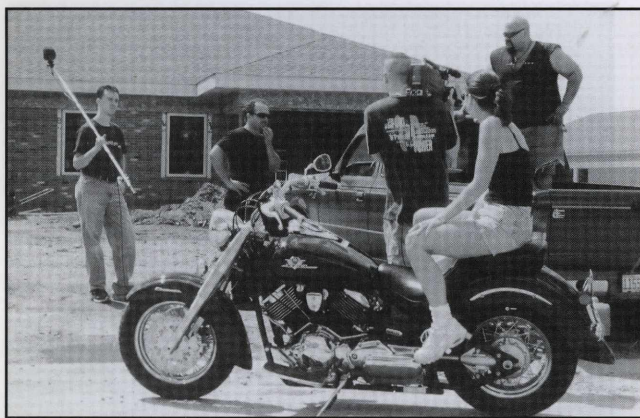
I felt embarrassed for all of us. Moral of the story? It ain't over until the Salaryman plays.

December 4, 2000 – Downtown Champaign

I received the news from *Octopus* arts editor Jenny Southlynn that ERASED, an experimental short by local filmmaker Jay Rosenstein of IN WHOSE HONOR? (*M-F #2*, p.21), had been accepted into the Sundance Film Festival. ERASED uses home movie footage and answering machine recordings of Rosenstein's mother to dramatize the effects of memory loss and old age. I nodded in agreement that it was a good thing.



(Top) Jason Cox replays LINK's motorcycle stunt. (Below) Director Robin Peters (center) confers with Jason Brown (boom), Cox (camera), Amy Martinkus (lead actress), and an extra. (Bottom) Stunt driver Marvin Harris pulls next to Martinkus and Peters. (All photos: JaPan)



February 15, 2001 – West Urbana

I used to drive to and from Bloomington-Normal or Decatur on any given weeknight to hang with my friends, only to show up for work the next day beat as a sloth. Not quite the smartest habit in the world—and one I eventually discarded—but that didn't stop me from tempting fate once again.

Call was 11 p.m. that particular Thursday at an apartment complex where U of I students Anthony Fiorentino, Jenny Kreiseder, and Abby Emmett were shooting scenes for their independent project, *CHEMISTRY 101*. After passing through the courtyard, I made my way up the staircase to a third-floor landing where Kreiseder and Andrew McAllister had been arranging lights and camera. Plans were to film two scenes where trio Chris (Cara Regina Mantella), Jesse (Nanette Hennig), and Amy (Elizabeth Biondi) arrive at a party, and then storm out with good-guy Stan (Matt Mueller) at their heels. Prior to this scene, Stan had been working up the nerve to ask Chris out, and looks poised to blow it.

With extras planted along the railing, McAllister taped the scenes and then reminded Kreiseder that he had to leave. Since the camera, a Sony MiniDV 3-chip belonging to IFV head Michael Stone, was still foreign territory to Kreiseder, I suddenly became the new cameraman! All went well, however, as we moved inside to shoot inserts of the girls enjoying the party, and an amusing "male auction" emceed by Stan's best friend Joe (Nick Ferrin). I also taped a bedroom tryst between Joe and an English exchange student (Mary Foran) that appears earlier in the film. After all was said and shot, I hit the sack at 3 a.m. Boy, did *that* hurt the next day at work....

March 19, 2001 – West Urbana, near campus

At the beginning of the year, I had been invited to an "art party." Although I'm not particularly interested in wading between bopping undergrads and too-old hipsters, I went anyway and wound up spending my time hanging out in the first-floor bedroom of Marcel Fauci. Painted from ceiling to floorboard with brightly-colored waves, faces, animals, and rubbery phallic symbols, I knew I had to do something creative in this room before the housemates moved out at the end of summer.

Enter former Champaign-Urbana resident Hart Fisher (*M-F* #2, p.25), who told me soon after that party that he was flying to Chicago from Los Angeles in mid-March to take care of Windy City business. I suggested that he come down to C-U to tape an interview to use as promotional material for his horror film, *THE GARBAGE MAN*, and that we do it in Fauci's surreal domain. Fisher agreed and, after clearing out much of the young lad's furniture, the room became a makeshift set just right for the occasion. With his black-and-silver attire, Fisher stood out ominously from the whimsical decor as he told funny tales of first-time indie filmmaking.

April 21, 2001 – The Highdive, downtown Champaign

Having just written an article on local self-publishers for *The Octopus*, I suggested to Jenny Southlynn that we host a "zine show/art show" in her gallery space. This would be in conjunction with a mass art opening sponsored by the paper that would involve galleries, coffee shops, bars, and restaurants in downtown. The resulting show, *Zineophilia*, gave our titles a rare public platform. Featured were A.j. Michel's perzine, *Low Hug*, Brad Bugos' music/humor zine, *Silly Little Trouser Monkees*, Bryan and Dann Tincher's art/poetry zine, *The Ides of March*, and MICRO-FILM. To fulfill the "art" quotient, Dann invited several *Ides* contributors to display their paintings.

Around that time, an announcement had been posted on the Freaky Film Festival web site, claiming that the event had moved away from Champaign-Urbana. This prompted my decision to attempt a "micro-cinema," a low-budget film screening done in a non-traditional space. I knew I could legitimately tie it in with *Zineophilia*, as well as promote it through the paper I conveniently worked for, so I arranged for The Highdive to host the inaugural *Micro-Film Vérité* the day after the art opening, April 21.

The first show, "On Illinois Soil," consisted of films made in the Land of Lincoln. Jim Sikora's early experimental short *STAGEFRIGHT CHAMELEON* (see p.13) was followed by Johnnie May's animated *ISOLATION* (*M-F* #1, p.26), Rusty Nails' live-action *SANTIAGO VS. WIGFACE*, Mike Stone and Andy McAllister's IFV promo film, Pete Zielinski's spoof *S.U.R.V.I.V.O.R.*, and Mike Trippiedi's *BUCKY McSNEAD*.

The second show, "Movies & Mayhem," featured shorts with an edge. D. Mason Bendewald's *NICE SHOT* (see p.29) kicked it off, followed by Jason Christ's music film



CURVEBALL: PILE OF JUNK (*M-F* #3, p.28), the collaborative thriller Y2K: SHUT DOWN DETECTED (*M-F* #3, p.31), scenes from BALLYHOO! (see p.7), and Cory McAbee's music/performance hybrid, THE KETCHUP AND MUSTARD MAN.

The final show, "Against the Grain," showcased movies with truly independent voices. After a preview of THE GARBAGE MAN came Mike White's collage piece WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE FOOLING?, Marc Moscato's ZINED! A DOCUMENTARY (*M-F* #1, p.15), and the Oregon teen drama GOOD GRIEF (see p.27). On the final leg of his DIY film tour, GOOD GRIEF director Andrew Dickson arrived in Champaign to present his film. While fatigued from the trip, Dickson was more than willing to hang out and talk shop.

I thank everyone who came out to support *Micro-Film Vérité*, including Dickson, Trippiedi, Zielinski, and unofficial IFV mascot Bear Suit Man (no relation to Stan Brakhage's DOG STAR MAN). I certainly learned some valuable lessons about putting on a micro-cinema and hope to do it again.

April 26-29, 2001 – The Virginia Theater, downtown Champaign

In its third incarnation, Roger's Ebert Overlooked Film Festival has become anything but overlooked. The famous Chicago film critic returned once again to host his hand-picked selection of independent, art house, and small-budget studio films that he felt didn't get the theatrical support they deserved. As the average attendance peaked just over 1,000 per screening, it was no question that Overlooked 2001 qualified as a success.

Featured features included 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY in 70mm and the new Stanley Kubrick documentary, A LIFE IN PICTURES, the British/Canadian drama about life in an Indian apartment complex, SUCH A LONG JOURNEY, the surreal Swedish opus, SONGS FROM THE SECOND FLOOR, the William H. Macy/Donald Sutherland black comedy, PANIC, a restored print of F.W. Murnau's NOSFERATU, a revival of Robert Altman's 3 WOMEN, the boxing documentary, ON THE ROPES, and Sam Raimi's acclaimed "Midwest gothic" thriller, A SIMPLE PLAN. Ebert also presented MARYAM, GIRL ON THE BRIDGE, THE KING OF MASKS, JESUS' SON, and Woody Allen's EVERYONE SAYS I LOVE YOU.

Even on the sidelines, I had my work cut out for me. Not only did I get to see a rough cut of CHEMISTRY 101, but also the long-lost 1970s U of I student film SHOT (*M-F* #3, p.24), a student two-act play by Christopher Denham called *In Film*, and SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE, the E. Elias Merhige film re-imagining the making of NOSFERATU. It was a weekend of full-on film!

May 27, 2001 – South Champaign

Thanks to the Day Job, I had little choice but to work on Memorial Day and squash all fleeting intentions of a genuine break. However, a timely invite from local filmmaker Robin Peters helped prevent the holiday-weekend-that-wasn't from being a wipeout.

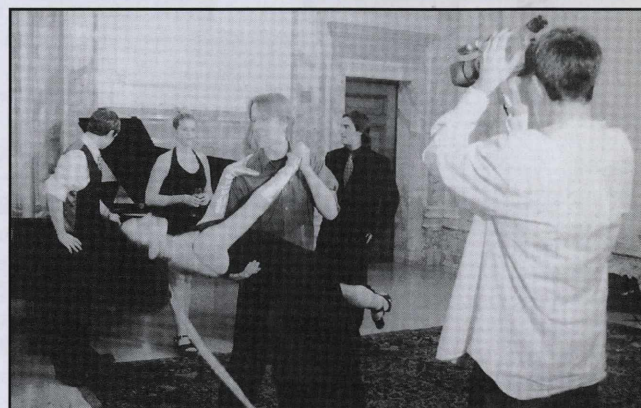
Sound familiar?

Luckily, circumstances improved somewhat in 2001, as I didn't have to touch the paper over the weekend. But, given that I'm a workhorse, I couldn't resist tagging along with Peters and the production crew of LINK, the biker tale I "auditioned" for, as three months of on-and-off filming had already gone by without a single on-set appearance from yours truly.

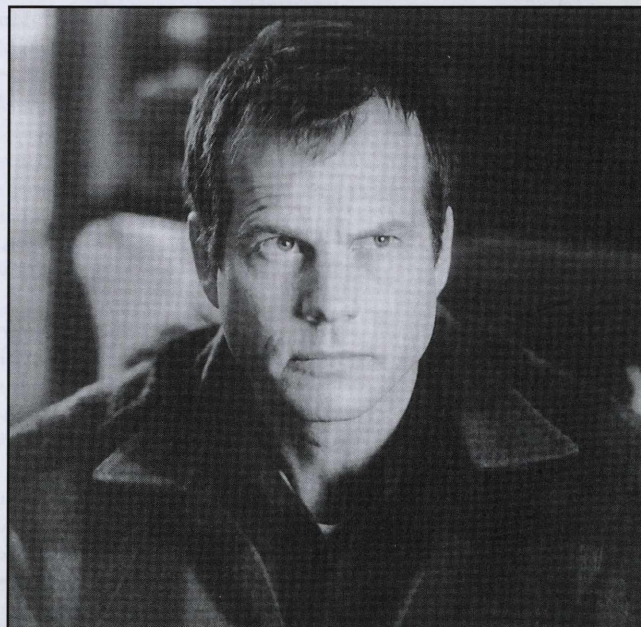
My all-day experience consisted of watching the filmmakers stage a chase scene as Link (Peters) and temperamental Jamie (Amy Martinkus) get buzzed by a rogue biker (Marvin Harris). After yelling one-liners at each other, Link ramps into macho mode and kicks the biker off the curb and into a moat. Much of the footage was captured by cinematographer Jason Cox from the back of Peters' truck, driven by soundman Jason "J.B." Brown, as a group of "planted" drivers surrounded us like a convoy to prevent interference from civilians.

Once finished, we returned to the drop-off point at Galen and Windsor roads to shoot a short scene where a trio of heavy metal types catcall Jamie from their truck, only for Link to—once again—chase after them and give them the business. Then, off to Monticello we drove to stage a stunt where Harris plows into a man-made pond. With little more than his costume buffering the splash, Harris zoomed off a makeshift ramp, nailing it in one take! After a round of applause, a towing crew latched onto the stunt Honda with a winch and pulled the poor thing back to shore.

More to come....



(Top) Hart Fisher sits among the nightmarish swirl of Marcel Fauri's room. (Photo: courtesy David Ward) (Above) Andrew McAllister shoots a dance sequence for CHEMISTRY 101 with leads Cara Regina Mantella and Matt Mueller. (Photo: JaPan) (Below) A SIMPLE PLAN's Bill Paxton, a featured guest at Roger Ebert's Overlooked Film Festival in April. (Photo: Melissa Moseley for Paramount Pictures/courtesy REOFF)



FOR C-U EYES ONLY

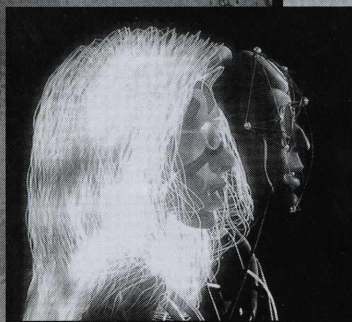
ARCHIVAL TAKE ON DECATUR: Discovered a quarter-century ago on the dusty shelves of a junk shop, *OUR DECATUR*—1955 provides a rare, hour-long peek into the Soy Capital's past. Most likely created by a production entity based many miles from central Illinois, this community "infomercial" paints a quaint portrait of the blue-collar city as an agricultural boomtown just waiting to happen. Quality of life is a prime focus here, as *OUR DECATUR* documents neighborhoods, churches, and schools while devoting much of its running time to local businesses—most of them long gone—who possibly kicked in cash for the privilege. The film currently resides in the collection of Skip Huston and the Avon Theater in "delightful" downtown Decatur.

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD: Illinois Wesleyan University alumnus Frankie R. Faison reached a career peak back in February with featured roles in the top box-office hits *HANNIBAL* and *DOWN TO EARTH*. Raised in Virginia, Faison graduated from the theatre department of Bloomington-based IWU in 1971 before working his way through teen and B-movies to earn roles in movies such as *MISSISSIPPI BURNING* (1988), *DO THE RIGHT THING* (1989), and *CITY OF HOPE* (1991). The burly character actor is also the only actor to appear in all three "Hannibal Lecter" films—as orderly Barney in *HANNIBAL* and *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS* (1991) and Lieutenant Fisk in *MANHUNTER* (1986).

"A CLOSE SHAVE," INDEED: On the cusp of the computer revolution, former University of Illinois employee Robin Bargar collaborated with Alias/Wavefront artist Chris Landreth on *THE END* (1995), a whimsical seven-minute film about an animator's futile attempts to impress his digital creations. Not only did *THE END* get selected for the ongoing "Spike & Mike" traveling exhibition of animated shorts, but it picked up an Academy Award nomination for Best Animated Short, the only known Oscar nod given to a film with Champaign-Urbana roots. In the spring of 1996, Bargar and Landreth lost the award to Nick Park's *A CLOSE SHAVE*, the third "Wallace & Gromit" clay-animated film from Britain's Aardman Animations.



WRIGLEYVILLE ONCE REMOVED: The city of Danville is known more for its working-class essence than anything on the artistic front. Located 40 miles due east of Champaign-Urbana, next to the Illinois-Indiana border, Danville still received its token brush with Tinseltown thanks to *THE BABE* (1992), a biography of legendary New York Yankees slugger Babe Ruth starring John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, and Bruce Boxleitner. Although director Arthur Hiller and his crew did film in Chicago, the production traveled south to transform Danville Stadium into storied Wrigley Field, setting the stage to depict Ruth's famous home run shot where he pointed to the bleachers exactly where the ball would land moments later.



GIRLS JUST WANNA MAKE FILMS, PART 4: Lo and behold, romance is *not* dead! So say filmmaking novices Christina Gosnell and Kaye Melody of Peoria and Richard Thornton of Bloomington, who plan to eradicate the dearth of female-centered cinema with *RAYS FROM SPACE* AND *THE SECRET KISSING EXPERIMENTS*. In what reads as a serialized, secret society melodrama set in 1959, the trio promise that *RAYS* will give women a chance to "engage their emotions" with a story that manifests their dreams. In other words, not play out in the typical, male-centric, Hollywood, bone-headed sort of way. For more information on how to join the *RAYS* "movement," visit www.raysfromspace.com.

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE "ENIGMA": For those filmmakers who think they can't go home again, Dennis Neal Vaughn has proved the contrary. Last October, Chicago-based Vaughn ventured south to his hometown of Minier, situated near Bloomington-Normal, to produce the DV short subject *AN ENIGMA*. Excerpted from an original screenplay that updates Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, *ENIGMA* depicts the fateful meeting between high-school graduate Ed Rex (Michael Moran) and a palm reader called the Sphinx (Sandra Zielinski), who prophesizes Ed's future sins. Also featuring Dustin Hamilton and Matt McMahon, *ENIGMA* premiered at the Normal Theater in March. Vaughn plans to shoot *OEDIPUS* in central Illinois under his Axis Mundi Films banner.

(Top) Michael Moran and Sandra Zielinski in *AN ENIGMA*. (Courtesy Axis Mundi Films)

(Above) Digital beings in Landreth & Bargar's *THE END*. (Courtesy Alias/Wavefront)

EPILOGUE: "C-U Confidential" is about "the locals" past and present, whose business and weekend activities revolve around cinema. For various reasons—income, family, education, simple preference—these folks live or lived in and around Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, located 130 miles due south of Chicago, 130 miles due west of Indianapolis. It is a comfortable little island in the middle of the Midwest where many people make a living as employees of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Beyond academia, we have a heavy concentration of computer, industrial, and agricultural vocations that dominate our marketplace, with little room for anything resembling an economically healthy arts community. However, film-related flourishes do pop up from out of nowhere, and you will get to read all about them in this novel collection of stories, curiously disguised as a novel.



Reviews

Micro-Film Style

Want your film/film music/film zine/film book reviewed?
Please send a single, non-returnable copy to:
MICRO-FILM, P.O. Box 45, Champaign, IL, 61824-0045. Attn: Reviews.
Print sources for all works can be found at the end of this column.

Cinema

AGENT 15

An It's a Chick Production film series
2000, 16mm, Color, 3.5 minutes per episode
Directed, produced, and written by Augusta
Starring Paget Brewster, D. Elliot Woods, Sam Bologna, Jimmy Dore
Reviewed on VHS (Episodes 1-4)

Lightweight vignettes created by husband-wife team Don Spiro and Augusta feature lean, slinky Paget Brewster (THE SPECIALS) as the title super-agent, adept in escaping sticky situations. It's no mystery that this series takes its cue rather closely from the early James Bond films, going so far as to echo their bold color schemes, bravado music cues, gadgets in disguise, and dry wit. Surprisingly, AGENT 15 doesn't play with the gender-reversal of Brewster as the go-to spy and Jimmy Dore as partner Agent 33, seen only in the second and third episodes, as the emphasis here is on stylish *homage*. These ultra-short outings offer little beyond clever dialogue and brief action scenes, frankly, but I gather the target audience will be film festival attendees and Internet *cineastes* looking for a quick espionage thrill. To that end, AGENT 15 accomplishes her mission. Platinum blonde Rita D'Albert of SUPERSTARLET A.D. appears as a femme fatale in Episode #2, "A Good Day for Revenge." — *JaPan*

EYES TO HEAVEN

A Dark Horse video release of a VisionTone Productions/Droog Bros. film
1999, 16mm, B&W, 87 minutes
Directed and written by Shane Hawks
Produced by Mike Allred and Shane Hawks
Starring Matthew Clark, Amy Erenberger, Kaitlin Olsen, Matt Brundage, Mike Allred, Peter Lawson
Reviewed on VHS

Feeders

Fall 1999, 32 pages, standard comic, glossy
Written by Shane Hawks
Illustrated by Mike Allred
Published by Dark Horse Comics

This creepy encore to ASTROESQUE (1998) once again finds comics artist Mike Allred (*Madman*) and filmmaker Shane Hawks teaming up in their native Oregon country. While EYES TO HEAVEN derives much of its technique from prior film history much like its predecessor, it thankfully avoids ASTROESQUE's half-baked intellectualizing in favor of a consistent, dreamlike aura. An unnamed painter (Matthew Clark) has been fighting artist's block, severe enough that his tough-guy agent (Matt Brundage) threatens a nasty visit as compensation for the product drought. Elsewhere, a woman (Amy Erenberger) lures a young lass (Kaitlin Olsen) into a bathroom. The woman slices open her wrist, and convinces her near-victim to drink her *white* blood. Across the room, the seductress' brother (Mike Allred) draws them in their embrace prior to the kill. After the brother and the artist take their respective refuse—the victim's body and a painting torched in disgust—to the nearby woods for burial, the artist stumbles on the human grave as the victim bursts from the ground, spouting white goo into his eyes and mouth. And then, wouldn't you know it, he starts seeing dead people. *Everywhere*. Needless to say, the artist has multiple run-ins with the sibling serial killers, the ghosts of their victims, and another spirit subset called "feeders" who lie in wait for hell-bound souls. Shot by cinematographer Dave Klein (CLERKS), the evocative use of black-and-white is the film's strongest quality, as Hawks relies on stark imagery and a relative lack of dialogue to define this haunted world. The prudish can easily spot influences a mile away—TETSUO, THE IRON MAN's hyper-motion, CARNIVAL OF SOULS' caked white specters, ERASERHEAD's organic symbolism, German Expressionism galore—but give this gang credit for making a left-field concept click under its own modest terms.

For those who want substance in their EYES TO HEAVEN viewing experience, Hawks and Allred have also drawn up a comic book "prequel" called *Feeders*. It explains how the brother became the rubber glove-wearing ghoul seen in the film. Allred's distinctive brush style seems ill-suited here, as much as I like it in

his other books. Falling somewhere between the shadow-heavy work of Mike Mignola (*Hellboy*) and the grotesqueries of Charles Burns (*Black Hole*), it just seems too "friendly" for the subject matter at hand. — *JaPan*

CHILDREN OF THE SKY

2000, Video, Color, 109 minutes
A Brimstone Productions video release
Directed, produced, and written by Jeff Forsyth
Starring Paul Cook, Tom Minion, Christina Ungerter, John Lacasse, Doug Walls
Reviewed on VHS

You don't see too many science fiction films made today on a shoestring budget—especially ones that deal with alien abduction, corrupt government assassins, spaceships taking babies from their mothers' wombs, and brain surgery to remove alien tracking devices. Why? Because if the filmmaker doesn't have the budget to pull it off, there is a real good chance the film will look amateurish and stupid. Well, writer/director Jeff Forsyth is a brave man. He's also quite talented. He wrote a script that should've had a Hollywood budget, but was able to pull it off without the wizardry that only money can buy. The result is an ambitious, well-made science-fiction thriller. CHILDREN OF THE SKY is the story of two people who were abducted by aliens as children and put back on Earth with tracking devices so that the aliens can monitor their every move. That is, until one of them has a vasectomy and then all hell breaks loose. In films of this nature, you can usually count on wooden acting, but the performances are surprisingly good. Paul Cook and Christina Ungerter are perfectly cast as the put-upon heroes and Doug Walls gives a standout performance as the doctor caught in the middle. It was really nice to see older actors instead of the usual twentysomethings. Complimenting the actors and the script are the incredible special effects by Robert McMaster and Forsyth. From huge spaceships appearing out of nowhere to dreamlike alien images, these are the best effects I've ever scene in movie with this type of budget. The film is not without flaws, though. The sound is rough in spots, some scenes are a little too dark, and the film takes a while to really get going. However, once the audience gets caught up in the whole plot, CHILDREN OF THE SKY will not disappoint. — *Mike Trippedi*

GOOD GRIEF

A Suede Productions film
2000, 16mm, Color, 77 minutes
Directed and written by Andrew Dickson
Produced by Jason Blalock, David Gray, and Andrew Dickson
Starring David Gray, Beth Mack, Alexandra Coleman, Al Burian, John Toderoff, Carrie Morgan, Richard Meltzer
Reviewed on VHS

Moderately likable drama follows Chuck (David Gray), a snippy Portland high-school senior obsessed with playing "Monsters & Mayhem." While fellow students Sylvian (John Toderoff), Darcy (Beth Mack), Payton (Carrie Morgan), and Sylvian's snobby big sister Loris (Alexandra Coleman) still game with Chuck, it's clear that more mature pursuits have begun pulling them away from the 20-sided die. Loris is smitten with college boy Magnus (Al Burian), Darcy and Payton are sweet on each other, and Sylvian has discovered recreational drugs. Chuck's world is soon dampened at the news that he'll have to attend a local community college—and deal with all the jock bullies of his youth—instead of Michigan State if he wants a higher education. Irrked to no end, Chuck becomes intolerable until Sylvian suggests that they spend spring break on a treasure hunt. Seems a reclusive fantasy author (Richard Meltzer) hid directions in one of his books to a fabled gold statue that has yet to be found, inspiring a road trip to rural Idaho paralleled in the battle sequences of Chuck's mind. First-time director Dickson obviously sympathizes with his characters, all inductees into the early twenties "freaks and geeks" crowd alienated in the face of the Real World, and this segment of our population will be the one most likely to embrace GOOD GRIEF. The film's awkwardness suits the proceedings, but also smacks of much inexperience from the principal film crew on down, most apparent in the underdeveloped script, anemic acting, and stilted "Monsters & Mayhem" dream sequences. An overt enthusiasm shines through the haze, however, so here's hope that GOOD GRIEF signals the mere beginning of Dickson's progression as a moviemaker. For those taking notes, Burian contributes to *Punk Planet* and publishes *Burn Collector* zine, and Meltzer once wrote rock music journalism for the likes of *The Village Voice*, *Creem*, and *Crawdaddy*. — *JaPan*

INCUBUS

A Fox Lorber Films video release of a Contempo III Productions film
1965, 35mm, B&W, 76 minutes
Directed and written by Leslie Stevens
Produced by Anthony Taylor
Starring William Shatner, Milos Milos, Allyson Ames, Ann Atmar, Eloise Hardt, Paolo Cossa
Reviewed on VHS

This oddity has the distinction of being the only feature film ever shot in the "universal" language of Esperanto. But unlike most films based on failed

Reviews

Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style



AGENT 15



GOOD GRIEF



EYES TO HEAVEN



Artistic Lives: Two Films from Jill Godmilow by A.J. Michel

Jill Godmilow has spent her career creating films that capture artists and the emotional turmoil associated with the creative process. Currently a professor at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, Godmilow escaped from New York to San Francisco in the 1960s to work with the Grand Central Station collective and has produced films ever since. While they have received critical praise and recognition, such as an Academy Award nomination for *ANTONIA, PORTRAIT OF THE WOMAN* in 1974, she is not as well known outside the indie scene as other women filmmakers, like Lizzie Borden, Julie Dash, and Nancy Savoca. However, Godmilow is finally accessible to a much wider audience as the majority of her work has been re-released by Facets Video.

WAITING FOR THE MOON (1987) is an exploration of the relationship dynamics between Gertrude Stein and her companion, Alice B. Toklas. Godmilow and screenwriter Mark Magill take creative liberties with their lives, the most prominent example being that Stein and Toklas have a child. In the Facets press notes, the filmmaker states that, "There's nothing I abhor more than biopics." Therefore, *WAITING* strives to capture the aura of the Stein/Toklas dyad, rather than simply report, "...and then this happened...."

Transcending the confines of the biopic, Godmilow and Magill showcase the personalities of these two women, and how they worked together so well professionally and personally. The success of this fictionalized portrayal is due to the performances of Linda Bassett as Stein and Linda Hunt as Toklas, both elegantly illustrating the quirks of these women. Although it weaves together different time periods in the women's lives, Magill's script flows seamlessly. Godmilow's direction is also fluid, utilizing lovely shots that exhibit the unspoken bond between Stein and Toklas. A touch, a glance, a witty retort is all that is needed to express their feelings for each other.

Ultimately, *WAITING FOR THE MOON* is not so much about the creative process—we never actually see Stein writing, for instance—as it is about those who must live (and often suffer horribly) alongside the creator during that process. Along with the suffering, though, comes the support of the artistic community and of loved ones. This film expertly embodies both.

At the opposite end from narrative filmmaking is *ROY COHN/JACK SMITH* (1995), a film of artist Ron Vawter's performances at New York City's The Kitchen in late 1993. This will appeal to a very targeted audience—fans of performance art willing to watch performance art on film. Yet, *COHN/SMITH* is not a simple recording of this piece; the odd relationship between the characters and the performer adds to its cohesiveness. Roy Cohn served as prosecutor for Senator Joe McCarthy during the "Red Scare" of the 1950s, and was a vocal anti-gay activist despite the fact that he was a closeted homosexual himself. Jack Smith was an avant-garde filmmaker best known for *FLAMING CREATURES* (1963) and very much out of the closet. Vawter was a gay performance artist and actor. All three men died of AIDS-related illnesses.

It is important to know that Godmilow's *COHN/SMITH* does not reflect the original order of the live performance. On stage, Vawter first portrays "Roy Cohn," giving a speech to the American Society for the Protection of the Family in 1978. Since there was no transcript of Cohn's real-life address that night, playwright Gary Indiana imagines what Cohn *might* have said, placing it in the context of his hidden homosexuality. Vawter plays Cohn to the extreme in a bad velvet suit coat and with an exaggerated Jewish affect. Then, Vawter changes into a flamboyant harem outfit, the stage is transformed into a decorator's Middle Eastern nightmare, and the actor "re-interprets" Jack Smith's famous performance piece *What's Underground About Marshmallows?* with an equally exaggerated, queer affect.

In the film, Godmilow showcases her editing prowess by combining the two halves of the show into one, juxtaposing scenes that, separately, would seem dissimilar. Watching "Roy Cohn" suppress his homosexuality, while "Jack Smith" revels and celebrates his own homosexuality, creates a unique viewing experience that would have been impossible to perform on stage. Technically, it is well done, and Godmilow reduces some of the potential haphazardness of this experiment by overlapping a few seconds of the audio of each character when switching between the two.

What *ROY COHN/JACK SMITH* attempts is almost too large and abstract for film, yet we are able to see all three men together—Cohn, Smith, and Ron Vawter—thanks to the actor's performances and Godmilow's editing, each negotiating their own interpretations of creativity, be it stifled or ostentatious.

WAITING FOR THE MOON. 1987, 35mm, Color, 85 minutes. A Facets Video release of an American Playhouse Theatrical Films production. Director: Jill Godmilow. Producer: Sandra Schulberg. Writer: Mark Magill. Cinematographer: Andre Neau. Production Designer: Patrice Mercier. Costume Design: Elisabeth Tavernier. Editor: Georges Klotz. Music: Michael Sahl. Originally released by Skouras Pictures. Starring Linda Bassett, Linda Hunt, Bernadette Lafont, Bruce McGill, Jacques Boudet, Andrew McCarthy.

ROY COHN/JACK SMITH. 1995, 16mm, Color, 90 minutes. A Facets Video release of a Good Machine / Pomodori Foundation / Laboratory for Icon & Idiom production. Director: Jill Godmilow. Producers: Ted Hope, James Schamus, Marianne Weems. Writers: Gary Indiana, Jack Smith. Cinematographer: Ellen Kuras. Editor: Merrill Stern. Music: Michael Sahl. Director of Original Stage Production: Greg Mehrtens. Executive Producer: Jonathan Demme. Originally released by Strand Releasing. With Ron Vawter, Coco McPherson.



(Above) Ron Vawter. (Below) Vawter as Jack Smith. (Background) Linda Bassett and Andrew McCarthy in *WAITING FOR THE MOON*. (All photos: courtesy Facets Multimedia)



gimmicks (3-D, "psychedelic" films), *INCUBUS* stands on its own as a minor masterpiece of surreal dread. In the village of Nomen Tuum, "a place of dark miracles," people travel from afar to sample the miraculous healing waters of a local "deer well." The well attracts the vain and corrupt as well as the infirm, and is thus the stalking ground of demons. One, a succubus named Kia (Allyson Ames), tires of luring twisted souls to their deaths and sets her sights on a heroic young soldier named Marc (a pre-Kirk William Shatner). However, Marc turns the tables by seducing Kia and carrying her into a church, from which she flees in terror. Her sister demon (Eloise Hardt) vows revenge for Kia's "holy rape" and together they summon the Incubus (Milos Milos), a male demon that immediately targets Marc and his innocent sister, Arndis (Ann Atmar).

INCUBUS hearkens back to earlier films that whisper and hint, rather than shout and batter. It may remind film connoisseurs of early Bergman or the films of Jacques Tourneur (*CAT PEOPLE*), where atmosphere and unease are more highly prized than overt shocks. Not that *INCUBUS* is without shocks. The demons' cat-and-mouse games generate suspense, and Marc and Kia's final confrontation with the Incubus manages to unnerv with a minimum of effects. To his credit, Shatner reigned in his usual hammy impulses, although some of his grimaces and contortions still induce chuckles. Director Leslie Stevens (co-creator of *THE OUTER LIMITS*) brings an almost European sensibility to potentially campy B-movie material. However, the film's real star is probably Oscar-winning cinematographer Conrad Hall (*AMERICAN BEAUTY*). His beautiful black-and-white photography creates a mood of wonder and menace out of the majestic woods and sea cliffs of California's Big Sur. Images of a bat-winged Devil beckoning from a fog-enshrouded bridge and the Incubus rising from the earth will linger long in my memory. *INCUBUS* is cryptic, creepy fun. — Jeff McCoy

LA BALANCE

A Home Vision/Janus Films video release of a Les Films Ariane-Films A2 production 1982, 35mm, Color, 104 minutes
Directed by Bob Swaim
Produced by Georges Dancigers and Alexandre Mnouchkine
Written by Mathieu Fabiani and Bob Swaim
Starring Nathalie Baye, Philippe Léotard, Maurice Ronet, Richard Berry, Bernard Freyd, Christophe Malavoy, Jean-Paul Comart, Albert Dray, Florent Pagny, Tcheky Karyo
Reviewed on VHS

A pack of News cigarettes, on a table next to a handgun. Misfit biker-gear clad French punks in an arcade, bearing resemblance to the Outsiders. Among hoodlums, prostitution, and gangs in Parisian society, "la balance" is the police informer—or an "informer rat," in rough translation. After a known "la balance" is shot and killed, Palouzi (Richard Berry), the head of the police vice squad, goes on a mission to crack down on the Belleville street gang, responsible for the murder of several "la balances." The police also hunt for Massina (Maurice Ronet), the gang's elusive leader. Along the way, they track down a hooker, Nicole Danet (Nathalie Blye), and a pimp, Dédé Laffont (Philippe Léotard), whom they force to comply as new "la balances" because of their sketchy history with Massina. Class and society lines are thinly drawn when the police bust Laffont's pimp ring and become involved in the street life dynamics. The tension builds between the lovers, as they must decide whether to withhold what they know about Massina's business, or to remain together as partners in crime and risk a never-ending shadow by the police squad. Protecting Massina proves to be a heavy burden on their tragic relationship, as the couple struggles from falling deeper within the ill-fated societal cracks of a pimp's-and-ho's life. Though there is that certain *je ne sais quoi* of 1980s flair—cops in red pants and headphones, for example—*LA BALANCE* is an interesting twist on the typical cop film. Bad music and occasionally weird dialogue aside, the plot moves in a fairly arresting sequence of action. Although the police are more amusing than intimidating, one feels sympathy toward the wayward couple. Overall, the movie is a decent streetwise escapade, with more provoking scenes than rancid moments of police brutality. This edition is subtitled with a special bonus after the close of the film—a thoroughly entertaining commercial dubbed over in English. — Erin Anadkat

LETHAL FORCE

A Divergent Thinking Productions film in association with Rose Pike Productions and Piranha Pictures
2001, 16mm, Color, 70 minutes
Directed and written by Alvin Ecarma
Produced by Kent Bye, Cash Flagg, Jr., and Alvin Ecarma
Starring Frank Prather, Cash Flagg, Jr., Andrew Hewitt, Pat Williams, Allison Jacobson, Eric Thornett, Patrick Collins
Reviewed on VHS

A message to the people that made *LETHAL FORCE*—*get this movie out there*. Send it to any film festival you can. Set up screenings in your hometown. Submit it to any zine that will review it. Promote the movie on the web or in print. If you don't, then *LETHAL FORCE* could very well be one of the great films that people never see. *LETHAL FORCE* is like watching only the best parts of the films of Roger Corman, John Woo, Jack Hill, Blaxploitation films of the 1970s, and the Hong Kong cop movies of the 1980s. The plot is fairly simple—a man betrays his



hit-man friend in order to save the life of his kidnapped son. The plot, though, is really unimportant because what really make this movie rock are the non-stop action sequences that are unbelievably clever, exciting, and fun. There is never a dull moment, and just when you get so caught up in the action, something out-of-the-blue happens that makes you laugh out loud. Director Alvin Ecarma, along with action director Eric Thornett and editor Ronald Edwin Hunker, have successfully created a film that manages to walk a very fine line between action and slapstick, adventure and goofiness. Every character large or small adds to the movie's success, for there is not a performance that doesn't ring true for this type of film. Of the actors, though, the one that stands out from the crowd is Cash Flagg, Jr. as the hunted and abused hit man, Savitch. Flagg manages to combine the coolness of Chow Yun Fat, the calm of Clint Eastwood, and the ass-kicking of Pam Grier into one likeable anti-hero. The score by Mike Branum and Vincent Van Go-Go is the final perfect fit in this filmmaking ensemble. If you like your movies fast paced, mixed with thrills, laughs, and an incredibly intense finale, then look no further, for LETHAL FORCE has arrived. — Mike Trippiedi

LITTLE SISTER (ZUSJE)

A Facets Video release of a Grote Broer Filmwerken CV production
1996, 16mm, Color, 88 minutes
Directed by Robert Jan Westdijk
Produced by Clea de Koning and Robert Jan Westdijk
Written by Robert Jan Westdijk and Jos Driessen
Starring Kim van Kooten, Marijn Zuidewind, Roeland Fernout, Ganna Veenhuysen, Hugo Metsers III
Reviewed on VHS

I simply do not understand why filmmakers think 20-year-olds lead the most filmable lives—certainly my life at the age of 20 was not worth filming—but this is the fare we keep getting from indies and Hollywood alike, so what's one more film? Produced in the style of the current indie trend—digital video vérité, Godard-esque jump cuts knocking out wasted running time—LITTLE SISTER deploys the trusted tool of truth-seeking, the video camera, to unearth the hidden incestuous relationship between brother and sister. Naturally, in the process, the camera reveals more than this little bit of nightmare; it disrupts friendships and romance, removes manic masks, and rewrites the already written, reconfiguring truth and history. How does the camera, especially the video camera, perform this vital cultural work? Not by itself, asserted Laura Mulvey in ages gone by, when she described that hideous camera companion, the male gaze. And as in so many other films about 20-year-olds and their desires, problems and angst, the male gaze controls the film's narrative. Yet, in post-post modern good taste, this film takes on this monster in soothingly satisfying ways. Martyn (Martijn Zuidewind) makes a surprise visit to his younger sister, fashion school student Daantje (Kim van Kooten), camera in tow. Relentlessly, he follows her intimate life, stalking her camera-loving lover, Ramon (Roeland Fernout)—revealed in a sickening kiss—and wreaking havoc all around. What makes this trope of truth-telling so interesting is how Martyn's command of the gaze transforms from Mulvey's classic male gaze of displaying women who want to be displayed to a gaze demanding Daantje take it over. Only when she does (note Ramon's dictates on women and filmmaking) do both brother and sister gain control over an obsession with sex, lies, and videotape. LITTLE SISTER, though at times too familiar in its genre and theme, produces an uncanny viewing experience especially for those of us whose lives—as thirtysomethings—are still not worth filming. — Grace Giorgio

ME & ISSAC NEWTON

A Home Vision Cinema video release of a Clear Blue Sky Productions film
2000, 35mm, Color, 110 minutes
Directed by Michael Apted
Produced by Eileen Gregory and Jody Patton
With Gertrude Elion, Ashok Gadgil, Michio Kaku, Maja Mataric, Steven Pinker, Karol Sikora, Patricia Wright
Reviewed on VHS

When nuclear physicist Michio Kaku asserts that doing science is like reading the mind of God, you wonder. Is that what we were doing in the tenth grade when we had to dissect those poor, dead frogs or sit in a circle and "chat" physics? Reading God's mind seems a tall order for high-school kids, yet the documentary ME & ISSAC NEWTON showcases how scientists in their multiple shapes and forms attempt to do this every day. Even if you're like me and don't give a hoot about science until you need it, this film is a must-see. Though traditional in format, ISSAC breaks stereotypes about those "aloof, socially inept beings" and encourages us to think about our own contributions to the public good. As we learn how a cancer specialist, an AI (artificial intelligence) developer, an environmental engineer, and other researchers commit their lives to scientific exploration, we witness the human side to science. This film also challenges dominant narratives of scientific discovery—it is by chance, luck, the "Eureka!" moment that saves the world. Hollywood, give it up! These scientists' daily efforts, trials and errors, and struggles with institutional powers tell the real story. We also learn how audacious they can be. Primatologist Patricia Wright defies convention by convincing an eccentric benefactor to give her uneducated ass (sans

degree) big bucks to study male monkey parenting practices. After hearing this story, we believe Wright just might succeed in trampling the rainforest invaders she currently battles. The film's point is that science is more than the individual pursuit of ego satisfaction; that the noble and strong commit their life's work to doing good in the face of political opposition. Environmental engineer Ashok Gadgil poignantly reminds us how technology is limited by political machinations; we can make clean, drinkable water for the poor, but there is no guarantee that it will get to them. Though the film drags toward the end (filmmakers are notorious for not letting go of their precious footage), viewing ME & ISSAC NEWTON is well worth your time. — Grace Giorgio

MEMENTO

A NewMarket release of a Summit Entertainment/Team Todd production
2001, 35mm, Color, 113 minutes
Directed and written by Christopher Nolan
Produced by Jennifer Todd and Suzanne Todd
Starring Guy Pearce, Carrie-Anne Moss, Joe Pantoliano, Mark Boone Junior, Steven Tobolowsky, Jorja Fox, Harriet Sansom Harris, Callum Keith Rennie, Larry Holden
Reviewed at the Beverly Cinemas, Champaign, IL

If every contemporary independent filmmaker trusted enough in the intelligence of its audience to stick with unconventional storytelling technique, then we might someday see more creative examples akin to Christopher Nolan's MEMENTO. Starting with a shot of a Polaroid fading away as opposed to developing, we're dumped headlong into the fragmented life of former insurance rep Leonard Shelby (Guy Pearce), on the track of his wife's killer. Shelby bears a rare condition that wipes out short-term memories older than 15 minutes, forcing him to use pictures, notes, and tattoos to keep track of the clues he discovers. He can remember vivid details prior to the home invasion during which the murderer's accomplice slammed Shelby's head to the ground, hence his "condition" and the drive to avenge. With that point made, Nolan dares to tell the story backwards as Shelby encounters several shady characters, including sultry bartender Natalie (Carrie-Anne Moss), drug dealers Dodd (Callum Keith Rennie) and Jimmy (Larry Holden), and an ambiguous everyman named Teddy (Joe Pantoliano) who may be a snitch, street seller, or undercover cop. Even though we expect these strangers know much more than he, Shelby is ultimately the loser with the tragedy being that what he doesn't know actually can't hurt him—but it *should*. Half the fun is arriving at that ultimate revelation on how Shelby's predicament truly came about, and although MEMENTO scores by involving the audience from beginning to end (or, is that end to beginning?) without losing them, the film still suffers from dramatic indifference. Nolan concentrates so much on balancing truths and red herrings that he doesn't bulk up the characterizations or mystery with enough meat to make them worth investigating. Pearce's sprightly performance notwithstanding, the cast does a credible job without having much to do except service the central conceit. That might be the puzzle piece thwarting MEMENTO's near-success—dress it up how you like, but only the best cinematic hat tricks survive being more than just a gimmick. Otherwise, don't forget to give this crafty modern noir a look. — JaPan

NICE SHOT

A Mini Mace Pro Pictures film
2000, 16mm, Color, 19 minutes
Directed and written by D. Mason Bendewald
Cinematography by Don Argott
Starring Matt Saunders, D. Mason Bendewald, Stacie Renna, Rick Kiley, Mary Jackman Carpenter, Barbara Winters Pinto
Reviewed on VHS

It's the ultimate nightmare from both sides of the fence: the control-freak auteur picking through a wave of mediocre, break-starved thespians during a casting call, with the hopefuls unaware of the brick wall they're about to hit. This scenario plays out in NICE SHOT, the first dramatic short from Philadelphia outfit Mini Mace Pro, with moments of spark interspersed with that "demo reel" air that team leaders D. Mason Bendewald and Don Argott can't quite shake. With his production crew sitting idly aside in a rented loft, steely-eyed director Sondré Zinx (Bendewald) puts dozens of actors through the ringer in the effort to find the leads for his next film. It looks like Desperation City for the gang until last man waiting Dusty Riggs (Matt Saunders, sympathetic and expressive in a nice contrast to Bendewald's cool-as-ice demeanor) walks through the door and demonstrates flashes of talent and initiative. Zinx jumps on it, challenging the actor to a duel of desires by handing him a "prop" gun that might just be for real. And then, Zinx coerces Riggs into putting the nozzle to his own temple...

While the opening stabs at humor between production assistant Don (Rick Kiley) and waiting-room prima donnas fall flat, the main loft sequence at least has potential for high drama. However, the filmmakers pull on their strongest punch—Zinx, played by Bendewald with precision but not enough passion—before hitting a punchline that's a tad calculated. Generally good acting and slick production values can't overcome the obvious script, although it allows more than enough room for Bendewald to hurl some juicy,

Reviews

Micro-Film Style

Reviews

Micro-Film Style

Reviews

Micro-Film Style

Reviews

Micro-Film Style

Reviews

Micro-Film Style

Reviews

Micro-Film Style

Reviews

Micro-Film Style



INCUBUS



LETHAL FORCE



LITTLE SISTER



What it Takes: "ACNE" by Rusty Nails

As a teenager I was constantly writing. I always wanted to act in films but I figured the best way to get acting jobs was to write and direct films that I could put myself in. During a trip from Boston to New York when I was 17, I came up with the idea of this huge mountain-like head with a giant acne on top and a helicopter that would fly over it, spray the surface, and pop it. That thread of an idea would expand into a full story, take five years to produce, and teach me how to make films.

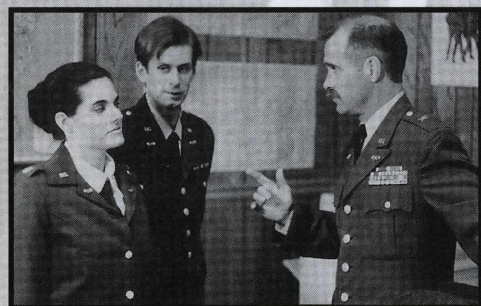
When I started *ACNE*, I wanted to create a project, unlike other horror/sci-fi films, where the lead characters would still be "victims" of a horrific situation, but they would be strong and independent and question and try to deal with what was happening to them. The female character "Franny" couldn't be a screaming girl who would fall down and lose her shirt in the process of running away from a knife-wielding psycho, either.

I combined three different stylistic elements for the lighting of the picture: film noir, the French New Wave, and 1950s B-movies. A noir look would be used for the military personnel—heavy shadows, expressionistic lighting. The main characters, Franny (Tracey Hayes) and Zooley (Rusty Nails), were shot using New Wave (natural lighting) and horror/sci-fi film methods (flat lighting, uneven cinematography), depending on the setting and intent of the scenes. I relied on natural exteriors for most of the teenagers' parts, to identify them with nature and pit them against nature at the same time.

Most of the "horror/sci-fi" in the film is based on something that could happen and in many ways does—corporate chemical manipulation of our ecosystems. For me, this makes the story more horrific, realistic, and urgent to the viewer.

I started with \$3,000 I had made from being a bag boy for a natural supermarket and poured every cent I made into the film until it was finished. I also held six punk rock benefit shows for the film which brought in \$1,600. I asked for donations from friends and tried to sell most everything I owned on the front lawn of one of my apartment buildings. The final budget—pre-production, production, and post-production—came to \$14,000. In addition to that, I was going to college full-time, and paying for food and rent.

I took out free ads in the *Chicago Reader* and on the Illinois Film Hotline and held casting calls. In the end, my actors (around 90 total) were a mixture of "real" actors, friends, and an occasional passerby. I think they all did a really good job; sometimes, the best person for a part is someone who has never acted before. Ultimately, more than 250 people worked on the project for no pay. The only exception was Jason Dummeldinger, the make-up artist, who I gave \$225 so he could continue to help and not have to look for a job during a crucial week of production.



The latex "zitheads," which Dummeldinger made from a basic mold, took 30-45 minutes to apply. When there were scenes with multiple zitheads, other crewmembers would help do make-up.

Major Catastrophe (Mary Luckritz) and Major Diver (Timothy Hutchings) confer with General Minneburg (Jim Darley) about how to handle the rampaging teens.

permits for any of our locations and were thrown off of roads by police in both Illinois and Wisconsin!

We used more than 70 locations, and only two were paid for: 1) \$25 for a bowling alley for most of the night, and 2) \$100 for a convenience store, which all of the actors stole food from while we moved lights around. We didn't obtain permits for any of our locations and were thrown off of roads by police in both Illinois and Wisconsin!

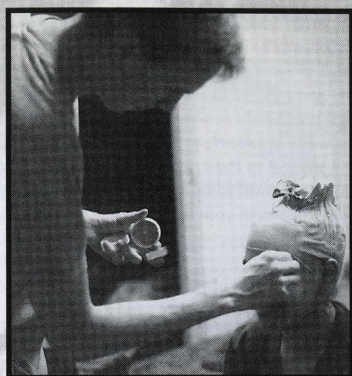
I edited the film over the course of five years. The process was slow going because I had to shoot additional scenes to clarify certain ideas and get rid of other whole scenes. But, the newer scenes added a lot and strengthened the story. I would have been sorry if I hadn't made the changes.

During production and editing, I approached bands such as The Dead Kennedys, Tilt, Devo, and Alice Donut, whose music I liked and felt would work with the story, and obtained permissions for their use in the film. Because of my dealings with Tilt (from Berkeley, California), I ended up shooting a video for their song "Animated Corpse" while they were on tour. Scott Lamberty and Lisa Brandt composed all the orchestral music for *ACNE* in an atmospheric 1950s/1960s, horror/sci-fi style.

Since *ACNE* was completed in 2000, it has played at festivals in New York, Chicago, Boston, and other cities and will be in more festivals soon. In the end, very few people gave me hassles, and the ones that did weren't much of a problem. Since I produced the film myself, I never had to change my original ideas unless I thought it was necessary or I wanted to experiment, but I would often ask my cast and crew for opinions or ideas and I would sometimes use their suggestions. I think the film won in the end because of that.

ACNE. 2000, 16mm, B&W, 68 minutes. A New Eye Films video release. Writer/Director: Rusty Nails. Directors of Photography: Richard Menzia, Dave Russell, Damon Furberg. Production Coordinator: Scott Walker. Music: Scott Lamberty, Doug Stevens, Lisa Brandt. Special Effects Makeup: Jason Dummeldinger. Starring Rusty Nails, Tracey Hayes, Jim Darley, Timothy Hutchings, Mary Luckritz, Randall Stanton, Matthew Falkowski, Meg Arader, Michael Zoll, Peggy Queener, Anna Mancini.

Contact information: Rusty Nails, 1400 W. Devon Ave., #409, Chicago, IL 60660. E-mail: rustythenails@hotmail.com. Web page: www.undershortsfilmfest.com.



Makeup guru Jason Dummeldinger applies an exaggerated zithead to actress Tracey Hayes. (All photos: courtesy Rusty Nails/New Eye Films)

artist-laden pretension at his prey, while the effort to squeeze as many cinematic techniques into the film as possible—dollies, slo-mo, montage, etc.—becomes rather apparent. *NICE SHOT* proves that Mini Mace Pro themselves have the drive and knowledge to make the films they want; now, they need to step it up and exude no fear.

Otherwise, a shout-out: "Hey gang, nice shot." —JaPan

PLASTER CASTER

A Fragment Films production

2001, Digital Video, Color, 103 minutes

Directed by Jessica Villines

Produced by Jessica Villines, Jeff Economy, Brian Johnson, and Melanie Villines

With Cynthia Plaster Caster, Bill Dolan, Jello Biafra, Camille Pagila, Wayne Kramer,

Chris Connelly, Paul Barker, Ian Svenonius, Momus, Eric Burdin, Pete Shelley,

Danny Doll Rod, Margaret Doll Rod, Miss Mercy, Pamela Des Barres, Jon Langford,

Noel Redding, Ed Paschke

Reviewed on VHS

PLASTER CASTER is a documentary on the work of Chicago-based artist/groupie Cynthia Plaster Caster, the former ringleader of "Plaster Casters of Chicago," an infamous artistic debauchery during the 1960s. As an art school student, Cynthia developed a talent for immortalizing musicians' most personal body parts with plaster casts. Not only did this score her easy backstage access to the likes of the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Frank Zappa, she and her cohorts actually plastered Hendrix's penis—#003 in the ongoing series, and an undoubted behemoth among the rest. The film takes a look back with Cynthia at her earlier involvement with the rock music scene, including interviews with Eric Burdon of The Animals and Noel Redding of the Experience, and although Cynthia is now sans the other "Plaster Casters," she and her work still go strong. Throughout the documentary, she propositions and later casts "artistic subjects" Bill Dolan of Five Style and Danny Doll Rod of the Demolition Doll Rods, going so far as to stage Danny's session in the same place Hendrix had his Cynthia experience—Room 1628 of the Congress Hotel in downtown Chicago. Penis art seems to be a tawdry affair, but the interviewees mostly find humor in the artist's work while others take a stab at analyzing its deeper significance within the rock scene. The main gist is a day-by-day *en route* with Cynthia, as she prepares her "sweet babies" to be formally recognized at a New York City gallery showing on Broadway Street. Reactions to the exhibit are mixed but animate. Momus, one of the featured monuments in the show, comments that he appreciates Cynthia making a statement that "rock is flaccid," referring in jest to "British post-modern" artists like himself. Cynthia Plaster Caster's work seems more the artistic passion of an experienced groupie, rather than a standing moment in rock. Nevertheless, the film nicely depicts an entertaining facet of the Chicago art scene in all its erect glory. —Erin Anadkat

POLLOCK

A Sony Pictures Classics release

2000, 35mm, Color, 122 minutes

Directed by Ed Harris

Produced by Fred Berner, Ed Harris, and Jon Kilik

Written by Barbara Turner and Susan J. Emshwiller

Starring Ed Harris, Marcia Gay Harden, Amy Madigan, Jennifer Connelly, Jeffrey Tambor,

Bud Cort, John Heard, Val Kilmer, Stephanie Seymour, Tom Bower, Robert Knott

Reviewed at the New Art Theater, Champaign, IL

One of the few things I distinctly recall from my college art history courses is the Jackson Pollock movie. In the summer and fall of 1950, filmmaker Hans Namuth visited the artist at his Long Island home. Out on the property, Namuth filmed Pollock's rhythmic routine of circling his canvases as he scattered threads of paint over them with long brushes, and then had "Jack the Dripper" perform his technique over large panes of glass with the camera lens aiming through the bottom. It's kinetic, dreamy stuff, and one wishes such unbridled energy and focus had made its way into *POLLOCK*. Ed Harris' biopic that huffs and puffs but never blows the house down. Harris, a good Hollywood actor who has never quite gone Hollywood, stuck with this project for over a decade to make it happen; for that, he should be commended. We are unfortunately presented with another portrait of an artist as a drunken, misunderstood bastard. Restricting the New York art scene to little more than a backdrop, *POLLOCK* delves into the love/hate, dysfunctional/isolationist relationship between Pollock and fellow artist Lee Krasner (Marcia Gay Harden), lasting from the late 1940s to Pollock's death by car crash in 1956. Even with the brief, well-executed interludes of Harris interpreting the artist's "action painting" movements, we get the distinct sense that the filmmakers wanted a deep character study to emerge, a tricky goal for a movie about a man who could relate better with his canvas than any other human beings. At least the stellar cast, including Amy Madigan as patron of the arts Peggy Guggenheim and Jeffrey Tambor as art critic Clement Greenberg, keeps this monotonous story watchable amidst the drab period design, leisurely pacing, and lackluster screenplay. Summing up my frustration with *POLLOCK* is the scene where Namuth (Norbert Weisser) attempts to photograph the artist before the sun goes down. The session comes to an abrupt close when Pollock decides to make an ass of



himself back at the house as his extended family prepares for a dinner party. Namuth can't believe it. The talented guy abandoned the art for the melodrama. Ditto for Harris, with all due respect. —JaPan

PROJECT OMICRON

1999, Video, B&W, 60 minutes

Directed and produced by Jared Whitham

Written by Jared Whitham and Chris Higgins

Starring William Maier III, Ryan Scott, Alex Carpenter, Charles Finley, Mump-dase,

James Pitts, Sir Millard Mulch, Roger Milott, John Vidas

Reviewed on VHS

With **PROJECT OMICRON**, writer/director Jared Whitham and co-writer Chris Higgins have attempted to create an *avant-garde* experiment in the mode of Kenneth Anger and David Lynch. Unfortunately, the results resemble the bumbblings of Ed Wood. It starts out with amusing credits that lead to a tape-recorded, Wood-style monologue. The narrator, Will Walker (William Maier III), flashes back to a disturbing childhood incident, where he and his father witnessed the landing of an alien spacecraft. The pilot, resembling a tall, skeletal version of a Martian from **MARS ATTACKS!**, exits the craft and is promptly shot dead by Will's father. Jump ahead about 20 years. Having distinguished himself as a pilot in "the War," Will is assigned to oversee the "scientific examination" of this same spacecraft. The scientific team utters cryptic phrases and performs inexplicable experiments involving bread, socks, and silverware. Eventually Will is sent on an ill-conceived space flight, where mysterious energy from the craft transforms him....

Whitham loads his film with striking images and intriguing ideas, but it just doesn't add up to a satisfying whole. I'll forgive a lot in an experimental film: wooden acting, a spacecraft that's an obvious drawing, the dangling strings of a puppet alien. But one thing I can't ignore is tediousness. **OMICRON** is filled with strange behavior, bizarre references, and arresting camera effects. Whereas films like **PI** and **BEING JOHN MALKOVICH** use such things to make a creepy-funny philosophical statement, no such statement is evident here. Or maybe I just didn't "get it," but I don't think so. There's a fine line between cryptic and confusing, and **OMICRON** descends into a morass of "look how weird this is," surrealistic wanking. This is a shame given all the work and imagination that Whitham has obviously put into it. He could have a real talent for this material if he can move beyond gratuitous effect to find an emotional truth worth exploring. —Jeff McCoy

REQUIEM FOR A DREAM

An Artisan Entertainment/Thousand Words release of a Sibling/Protozoa

production in association with Industry and Bandeira Entertainment

2000, 35mm, Color, 101 minutes

Directed by Darren Aronofsky

Produced by Eric Watson and Palmer West

Written by Hubert Selby, Jr. and Darren Aronofsky

Starring Ellen Burstyn, Jared Leto, Jennifer Connelly, Marlon Wayans, Christopher McDonald,

Louise Lasser, Keith David, Sean Gulleter

Reviewed at the New Art Theater, Champaign, IL

Brooklyn native Darren Aronofsky hit the critical jackpot three years ago with his \$35,000 freshman effort **PI**, an intriguing character study propelled by intellect and style. Aronofsky could have entertained any number of big-ticket, Hollywood projects for an encore, but instead invested his time, talent, and passion into adapting fellow Brooklyn native Hubert Selby, Jr.'s cult novel, *Requiem for a Dream*. Thanks be to the man's investors for allowing him the necessary budget and creative freedom to do the material justice, for **REQUIEM FOR A DREAM** ranks as one of the most definitive knockout punches in recent independent film history. This balls-gripping meditation on obsession and addiction switches off between two stories set in the ageless confines of Selby's Coney Island heritage. As fresh-faced Harry Goldfarb (Jared Leto) and streetwise Tyrone Love (Marlon Wayans) attempt to strike gold selling drugs, Harry's mother Sara (Ellen Burstyn) embarks on a crash-course diet prior to an appearance on the television show of will-power guru Tappy Tibbons (Christopher McDonald). Along with Harry's "most beautiful girl in the world," Marion Silver (Jennifer Connelly), we watch this foursome descend into hell as their chemical and environmental dependencies grab hold. **REQUIEM** infers that *anything* can dominate us if our consumption goes without moderation. Witness how Sara not only becomes hooked on prescription weight-loss pills, but also on television as an electronic window to the world and personal artifacts as mental triggers to long-lost glories. Aronofsky and his electric lead actors allow us to readily sympathize with these characters, making their inevitable downfall and humiliation all the more harrowing. Dressed by James Chinlund's spot-on production design, cinematographer Matthew Libatique's lush duotone palette, and an offbeat techno/orchestral soundtrack by Clint Mansell and the Kronos Quartet, **REQUIEM FOR A DREAM** devastatingly depicts an ultimate nightmare that sends chills down the spine, accented by ever-so-faint glimmers of hope. —JaPan

SIX DAYS IN ROSWELL

A Synapse Films video release of a Benevolent Authority Production in association with Neo Art and Logic

1998, 16mm, Color, 81 minutes

Directed by Timothy B. Johnson

Produced and edited by Roger Nygard

Starring Richard Kronfeld

Reviewed on DVD

From the makers of **TREKKIES**, a surprisingly affectionate documentary about rabid **STAR TREK** fans, comes **SIX DAYS IN ROSWELL**, filmed in Roswell, New Mexico in 1997 during a week-long, 50th anniversary celebration of the alleged flying saucer crash. Host Rich Kronfeld, who appeared in **TREKKIES** with his homemade Captain Pike wheelchair, plays Rich Kronfeld, a Minnesota native who makes the trek to Roswell in hopes of being abducted by aliens. Whom he meets instead are the best parts of this pseudo-documentary, from the crusty geezer who rents Rich his trailer for \$200 a night to teenage girls portraying scientists in a space-age "passion play" to real-life UFO experts like *Communion* novelist Whitley Strieber. Most bizarre of all is a community theater's **WAITING FOR GUFFMAN**-style musical rendition of the notorious Roswell crash. The big drawback for me was the insertion of staged events and character backstory into the documentary approach, which left me wondering whether I was part of the joke. In fact, some of the footage was shot an entire year later at Roswell and seamlessly blended into the narrative. Kronfeld is a cheeky presence, reminding me of Michael Moore in his method of interacting with his often-befuddled subjects. The DVD contains eight deleted scenes, a 19-minute making-of featurette, three trailers, a photo gallery, and filmmaker bios. The most interesting section contains several early short films and public access television works by Johnson, Kronfeld, and producer Roger Nygard. The three also participate in an informative and entertaining feature-length commentary, pointing out the staged bits and confirming that, yes, Kronfeld does indeed collect old filmstrips and outdated audio equipment! —Marty McKee

SPACE PSYCHOS

A C.J.S. Films production

2000, Video, Color, 76 minutes

Directed, produced, and written by Carl J. Sukenick

Starring Carl J. Sukenick, Dave West, Lisa Aaron, Victoria Rong, Donald Johnson,

Sabrina Peaches

Reviewed on VHS

When Universal Pictures released the Milos Forman picture **MAN ON THE MOON** two years ago, it seemed that the general public was more concerned with it being "a lesser Jim Carrey movie" rather than an interesting portrayal of the late Andy Kaufman. Other than exemplifying society's obsession with the expectations of modern celebrity in the entertainment world, it also demonstrates society's avoidance of the unusual and difficult, which Kaufman embodied empirically during his short-lived career. Everything beyond his famous Latka Gravas character from **TAXI** smacked of the performance artist-come-"comedian" keeping one step ahead of his audience. As the abrasive Tony Clifton in comedy clubs, as the bizarre Elvis impersonator on **SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE**, as the "bad guy" in his "intergender wrestling" stunts, Kaufman confronted head-on, much to his private amusement if not anyone else's. Under a veil of wishful thinking, one could make the case that New York denizen Carl Sukenick is the B-movie world's equivalent to Kaufman—a talented rascal who so *out there* that only the most post-modern hipsters can claw through the facade to grapple with his demented genius. Falling under the other 99.9 percent layperson population of the world, however, this reviewer can only see **SPACE PSYCHOS** as a terrible amateur talent show thinly disguised as a non-existent alien invasion movie. —JaPan

STRAWBERRY ESTATES

A Sub Rosa Studios video release

2000, Digital Video, Color, 101 minutes

Directed and written by Ron Bonk

Produced by Ron Bonk and Jerry O'Sullivan

Starring Jason Reed, Chrissy Frick, Bob Fullenbaum, Lisa Chelenza

Reviewed on VHS

Decades of tragedy and mystery mark the Smith-Garrett Building, an abandoned fortress in Eaton, New Jersey that at different times served as an asylum and as a home for the wayward. In the present day, Syracuse University professor Jonathan Laurel (Bob Fullenbaum) yearns to prove that paranormal activity overruns the grounds, now called "Strawberry Estates" by the housewives and teenagers. Along with a professional associate, the clairvoyant Jennifer Braham (Lisa Chelenza), his student assistant Sarah Richmond (Chrissy Frick), and several technicians, Laurel invites a young videographer named Jason Knowles (Jason Reed) to venture into the Estates with him for a weekend. As the professor's delusions of academic grandeur clash with Braham's increasing hesitation to see the experiment through, their explorations reveal that the deceased will walk the Earth if an interdimensional

Reviews

Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

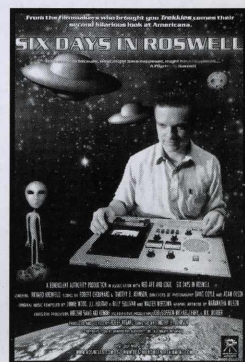
Reviews
Micro-Film Style



PLASTER CASTER



POLLOCK



SIX DAYS IN ROSWELL



Three Weimar Classics

by Jeff Sartain

In the last 100 years, few national cinematic movements are able to equal the German Weimar cinema in terms of artistic vision and long-term impact. The Weimar Republic was the elected German government from 1919 until 1933, when Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany. During this period, many of the most influential films in the world came out of the great German studios, which employed such visionary directors as Robert Wiene, Karl Grune, Fritz Lang, F.W. Murnau, and G.W. Pabst. Weimar cinema is unlike any other because of their pioneering work.

Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's expressionist classic, *THE LAST LAUGH* (1924), is one of the most significant films in all of cinema. It shows Murnau's cinematic vision at the height of his power and signals the apex of silent cinema for it is an entirely visual film. There are no intertitles, except for the preface before the improbably happy ending. Technically, the film is a flawless example of subjective camerawork utilized so the audience can experience things through the main character's eyes, universalizing his struggle. From the opening shot that moves from the elevator through the hotel lobby to the street outside, the fluidity of the camerawork is the engine that drives the film. The climax of the film's technical competence comes when the main character, the doorman, becomes drunk and the camera appropriates his point of view, reeling and blurring in his stupor.

LAUGH also has an astute social consciousness, revealing the despair and hopelessness plaguing Weimar Germany in the 1920s during the post-World War I economic depression. The doorman, played by the great Emil Jannings, reminds us of the economy's desperate state at the time, and the German working class' futile hope for upward social mobility. Contributing to the film's brilliant realization was acclaimed cinematographer Karl Freund, who would later shoot Fritz Lang's *METROPOLIS* (1927) and John Huston's *KEY LARGO* (1948), and direct the classic Universal horror movie *THE MUMMY* (1933) with Boris Karloff. *THE LAST LAUGH* was screened with live musical accompaniment at Roger Ebert's Overlooked Film Festival last year, recognizing its enduring place in world cinema.

FAUST (1926), Murnau's adaptation of Johann Wolfgang Goethe's story, comes at the height of Murnau's power in the German studio system. After the worldwide successes of *NOSFERATU* (1922) and *THE LAST LAUGH*, Murnau earned complete artistic autonomy on *FAUST*. What results is an amazing visual cornucopia of special effects wizardry, utilizing all the cutting-edge techniques available at the time—model work, miniatures, make-up, multiple exposure photography—and making it the equivalent of today's biggest Hollywood blockbusters.

At its heart rests an archetypal story of good and evil, based on the German folk legend of a doctor who makes a deal with the devil, and the redemptive power of love. The story is effectively conveyed by the actors, but the only real standout is Jannings, convincing as the scheming Mephisto.

Georg Wilhelm Pabst portrays a touching story of love in the midst of intrigue and betrayal in *THE LOVE OF JEANNE NEY* (1927). This is one of his lesser-known films, and has only been rediscovered recently. It is an enthralling blend of many different cinematic styles, drawing upon early German, Russian, and American films to accomplish its goals. The actors are very convincing and thoroughly entertaining. The most remarkable technical aspect of this film is its truly mobile camera, which seems to flow through the scenery with a dexterity that is very rare, even in the best silent films. Pabst lets his shots slide easily between objectivity and subjectivity, and his framing and editing are so intuitive that one forgets the construction of the film by getting lost in the compelling story and beautiful imagery.



Emil Jannings in *THE LAST LAUGH* (above) and *FAUST* (background). (All photos: courtesy Kino)

Kino on Video has done a remarkable job transferring all three films for DVD release. For being three-quarters of a century old, the films have remarkably clear image quality. All three are accompanied by impressive modern scores, composed and conducted by Timothy Brock. The DVDs themselves, though, are a little disappointing. Only *FAUST* boasts any extras, a short essay in the liner notes and a still photo gallery on the DVD. Despite the lack of royal treatment, Kino's most important service has been mastering and distributing these hard-to-find films, ensuring that they will survive the ravages of time for future generations to experience the artistic genius of these great directors.

THE LAST LAUGH. 1924, 35mm, B&W, 91 minutes. A Kino on Video release of a UFA production. Director: F.W. Murnau. Producer: Erich Pommer. Writer: Carl Mayer. Cinematography: Karl Freund, Robert Baberske. Art Direction: Walter Röhrig, Robert Herlth. Assistant Director: Edgar G. Ulmer. Starring Emil Jannings, Maly Delschaft, Max Hiller, Emilie Kurz, Hans Unterkirchner

FAUST. 1926, 35mm, B&W, 116 minutes. A Kino on Video release of a UFA production. Director: F.W. Murnau. Producer: Erich Pommer. Writer: Hans Kyser. Cinematography: Carl Hoffmann. Art Direction: Walter Röhrig, Robert Herlth. Costume Design: Georges Annenkov, Walter Röhrig, Robert Herlth. Starring Gösta Ekman, Emil Jannings, Camilla Horn, Wilhelm Dieterle, Eric Barclay, Hanna Ralph, Werner Fuetterer

THE LOVE OF JEANNE NEY. 1927, 35mm, B&W, 113 minutes. A Kino on Video release of a UFA production. Director: G.W. Pabst. Writers: Rudolf Leonhardt, Ladislav Vajda. Cinematographers: Fritz Arno Wagner, Robert Lach. Art Direction: Otto Hunte, Victor Trivas. Editors: G.W. Pabst, Marc Sorkin. Starring Edith Jehanne, Uno Henning, Fritz Rasp, Brigitte Helm, Adolf E. Licho, Eugen Jensen



Edith Jehanne and Uno Henning in *THE LOVE OF JEANNE NEY*.

portal is opened at the right time within the Estates. In other words, they're blindly wandering the Gates of Hell! It seems mere coincidence to compare *STRAWBERRY ESTATES* to other recent "reality" thrillers, as director/writer Ron Bonk (*THE VICIOUS SWEET*) conceived this film several years prior to the hype. Somewhere in Sub Rosa's vaults sits indefinitely shelved footage for an earlier attempt starring Debbie Rochon. I, for one, would lobby the filmmaker to consider releasing both versions on a dual-layer DVD. Comparing that original take—with its more literal depiction of demons and horror—to the Year 2000 model—cast ever so closely in the mold of *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT*—might make for invigorating viewing that offers lessons aplenty to those interested in the B-movie arena. What Bonk and company have settled on is a fairly dry opus with better than average acting that falls short of its potential, *precisely* because of its skeletal relationship to the smash hit—not to mention bare-bones production values, flinching point-of-view shots, too much exposition, and too little haunting. —JaPan

23 HOURS

A Piranha Pictures film

2000, 16mm, Color, 87 minutes

Directed, produced, and written by Eric Thornett

Starring David Stewart, Jason Waller, Duane Rouch, Mica, David Gebhard, Jen Dunkelberger
Reviewed on VHS

Nick Miles has problems. He has few friends, a dead-end job, and no social life. Things should be pretty dull. Yet why is he missing an hour every night? Does it have something to do with his efforts to stop smoking? Who is the mystery woman in his head? What about that corpse in the other room?

The answers lie within the science-fiction *noir* feature *23 HOURS*, a tale of high-tech body snatching that feels like an *OUTER LIMITS* episode with aspirations to be a John Woo film. Despite an excruciatingly dull start, the film takes off as Nick comes into possession of a mysterious suitcase (what thriller would be complete without one?) and is pursued by assassins in sunglasses and black trenchcoats, and by seemingly normal citizens who abruptly transform into Kung Fu killers. This leads to a series of chases, fights, and shootouts whose kinetic energy carries through to a gripping conclusion. Thornett elevates this generic material and mostly cardboard characters through his enthusiasm and sense of fun. His fight scenes are surprisingly well choreographed, with fluid/jerky camera moves, rapid editing, and just enough absurdity to push things over the top. At first the baby-faced David Stewart seems a poor choice as *schlub*-turned-action hero Nick, but he acquaints himself quite well to the stunt work, and exhibits flashes of style, resourcefulness, and even pathos. This is nicely fleshed out in the climactic confrontation with the conspiracy's mastermind, who, in a bit of *noir*-style Existentialism, tries to talk Nick into giving up his identity. His cynical evaluation of Nick's life (or lack thereof) has a nasty ring of truth, thus making Nick's eventual response all the more satisfying. *23 HOURS* starts as a snoozer, but develops into a surprise sleeper. —Jeff McCoy

TRIUMPH OF THE WILL

A Synapse Films video release

1935, 35mm, B&W, 120 minutes

Directed and produced by Leni Riefenstahl

Written by Leni Riefenstahl and Walter Ruttmann

Reviewed on DVD

Leni Riefenstahl's vaulted classic, *TRIUMPH OF THE WILL*, evades easy categorization. It was shot with an unlimited budget to document the power and supremacy of the Nazis during the 1934 Nuremberg Nazi Party Rally. Supposedly a documentary, the film is really pure propaganda for the Nazi party. Riefenstahl's remarkable imagery is undercut by the realization that she is portraying the perpetrators of the most hideous and inhumane crimes of the 20th Century; it is very disturbing to the modern viewer to watch men like Hitler and Goebbels portrayed sympathetically. The DVD treatment by Synapse Films lives up to its title of "Special Edition." The transfer is almost flawless, with wonderful picture quality worthy of today's high-end home entertainment systems. The mono sound is clear, and the subtitles are well translated for an English-speaking public. The audio commentary by Dr. Anthony R. Santoro is also a nice extra, although the billing on the packaging leads one to believe that he will be providing historical background. Dr. Santoro lapses a bit in this mode by simply describing shots, but is complemented with an insert in the packaging that contains a marvelous informative essay, shedding light on the filming of *TRIUMPH* as well as contextualizing the film historically. Another nice extra is the inclusion on the DVD of Riefenstahl's hard-to-find short film, *DAY OF FREEDOM*, showing the Nazi army practicing in war games.

Two things make the film worthy of a modern re-release, despite its support of the horrific Nazi regime. First, it is an inarguable achievement of cinematic art. Riefenstahl's images leave a lasting impact on the viewer and have had a lasting impact on cinema for decades. They show her true talent as a filmmaker, yet at the same time reveal what some have argued are her political and moral shortcomings. Second, it is important because this film must be examined in light of what it truly is—rhetoric to promote the Nazi Party—and is vital to our general



education about the events surrounding World War II. **TRIUMPH OF THE WILL** helps us understand how men like Hitler can gain power and how the power of cinema can leave its indelible stamp on history. — Jeff Sartain

URBAN FLESH (rough cut)

A Helltime Studio film
1999, Video, Color, 97 minutes
Directed by Alexandre Michaud
Produced by Jef Grenier and Alexandre Michaud
Starring Martin Dubreuil, Marc Vaillancourt, Marie-Eve Petit, Anthony Pereira,
Mireille L vesque, K.M. Lavigne
Reviewed on VHS

Grimy. Ugly. Sleazy. Nauseating.

I'm sure these choice adjectives are some of the many that the people behind horror flicks like **URBAN FLESH** love to see in reviews, letters, and other editorial about their work. Not just for the thrill, but for the sheer pleasure drawn from the realization that their work got underneath somebody's skin. Well, folks, mission accomplished! Don't raise your barf bags in celebration just yet, though, because amidst the purposeful wordplay of this writing I have a few bones to pick with you. We've seen keen social commentary dressed up in horror trappings before in movies like Wes Craven's **THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS**, George A. Romero's **DAWN OF THE DEAD**, and **VIDEODROME** from your fellow Canadian, David Cronenberg. We've also seen how unapologetic, gross-out elements pass for "cutting edge" without meaning, such as another fellow Canadian, Tom Green, demonstrated in his purported comedy **FREDDY GOT FINGERED**. Other than openly trudging in the footsteps of balls-out European horror, **URBAN FLESH** wishes to be a trend-setter that gnashes at the gut while disturbing the mind. This morbid tale of a quartet of fine young cannibals roaming the streets of Montreal instead calls undue attention to the filmmakers' laborious efforts to shock its audience with unmotivated violence and splatter—one of the very few things done well here. Is that telling us something? Even in the underground, there's a difference between this and other films like **THE MUTILATION MAN** and **SCRAP-BOOK** that did indeed shock, but had the intelligence and context behind them to justify the effort. You and your fellow gorehounds have the right to wallow in surface grotesqueries if that's what constitutes an effective horror movie to you. All others, beware the stench of **URBAN FLESH**. — JaPan

Print

Cashiers du Cin  art #12

Fall 2000, 96 pages, magazine, offset
Published and edited by Mike White

CduC is truly a film magazine you can sink your teeth into—solid content and little filler pack all 96 pages of issue #12. Most enjoyable in this installment are the many travelogues from film festivals and conferences. Joseph Gervasi (of Exhumed Films) contributes a long report from the Toronto International Film Festival 2000, including reviews of the movies he saw, as well as information about the city and the people that he met. Next up, Andrea Freeman writes about the San Francisco International Film Festival 2000. Mike Thompson tips it in with a report from the Writers' Festival portion of the Austin Film Festival 2000, giving us a glimpse into the oft-neglected world of the screenwriter. If all that film festival coverage isn't enough for you, editor Mike White and wife Andrea write two highly enjoyable viewpoints of the Underground Publishing Conference 2000 in Bowling Green, Ohio. Whew! In addition to all the trip reports, there's a bevy of other goodies here: a new view of William Shatner's "Letter 'I' Oeuvre" (that's **INCUBUS**, **THE INTRUDER**, and **IMPULSE**), a discussion of gambling films, the television work of Sid and Marty Kroft, and an overview of rap and hip-hop movies. Multiple film, book, and music reviews round out this issue. Overall, the writing is sharp, witty, and concise, and the layout is refreshingly clean and uncluttered, resulting in a wonderful package of filmy goodness. Highly recommended for even the casual film geek. — A.J. Michel

Cinemad #4

Fall 2000, 56 pages, magazine, offset
Published and edited by Mike Plante

Mike Plante's publication **Cinemad** revels in obscure and underground filmmaking while providing a well-rounded selection of interviews, case studies, and opinions. Behind a passionate editorial by Plante expressing the joys of finding interesting, non-mainstream work—and the mystery of how the "boring public" willingly gorges itself on "boring studio" product—issue #4 puts the preach into practice. In two of the more intriguing features, African-American director Charles Burnett (best known for **TO SLEEP WITH ANGER** with Danny Glover) talks about the confinements put on him in the business, while landscape film artist James Benning reveals the difficult trials associated with a career of non-commercial, experimental work. On the funkier side, festival favorites Jeff Krulik (**HEAVY METAL PARKING LOT**) and Craig Baldwin (**SPECTRES OF THE SPECTRUM**) discuss living on the fringe, as stuntman Jeff Jensen (**MIS-**

SION: IMPOSSIBLE 2) details breaking a leg for Hollywood. Two other features give this issue an international bent, as Minda Martin relates her filmmaking sojourn to Cairo during January 2001 and Theron Patterson travels through the Republic of Georgia to find a museum dedicated to the late Russian filmmaker Sergei Paradjanov (**THE COLOR OF POMEGRANATES**). Filled out with several other short pieces, movie and zine reviews, and funny asides, **Cinemad** shines because it exudes a genuine interest in the subject matter without becoming too philosophical or detail-intensive about it. These film stories function as people stories, in a language that readers can easily understand. — JaPan

Eyeball #1 (formerly IndyMedia)

Winter 2001, 44 pages, magazine, offset
Published and edited by Christopher Sharpe

No-budget filmmakers, or anyone who does anything with their creative talent for that matter, are always looking for new magazines in which they can either promote their backyard classics or read about the trials and tribulations of other artists like themselves. When a new magazine comes around, you can guarantee that if it is good, it will be read from cover to cover. With **Eyeball**, I did just that. Publisher Christopher Sharpe has filled his first issue with entertaining, informative, and interesting articles and interviews with filmmakers and cartoonists. The highlight of #1 is a seven-page interview with cult director J.R. Bookwalter in which he describes his life before and after his classic Super8 zombie epic, **THE DEAD NEXT DOOR** (1985). The interview also tells us the real story behind the rise and fall of his nationally distributed magazine, **Alternative Cinema**. The interview alone is worth the three dollars **Eyeball** costs. The last 15 pages are dedicated to reviews of all types of media. The film reviews range from semi-known titles like Ron Bonk's **STRAWBERRY ESTATES** to more unknown fare like **THE MEGAN MILLER PROJECT**. There are also many reviews of various comics, CDs, and zines. Sharpe and all involved with **Eyeball** obviously care about providing a forum for the media artist. This one has it all and is definitely worth checking out. — Mike Trippiedi

The Independent Film and Videomaker's Guide

1998 (2nd ed.), 488 pages, softcover
Written by Michael Wiese
Published by Michael Wiese Productions

Having more than 30 years of experience as an independent filmmaker, producer, and publisher, Michael Wiese would easily be a good candidate for recording his words of wisdom. Realizing that himself, the Champaign native partially used his experiences filming **COYOTE'S HONOR** (see **MICRO-FILM** #1, p.19. — ed.) as field research for this tome, an informal walk through the process of realizing one's cinematic dreams. The title doesn't accurately describe the content, as Wiese focuses not on the nuts-and-bolts of movie-making but the development and promotion of products that will have a fighting chance in the overcrowded marketplace. Using his own projects as case studies—ranging from the documentary **DOLPHINS** (1977) to the infamous short film parody **HARDWARE WARS** (1978) to myriad projects produced at Vestron Video to more recent items like **HONOR**—the author employs a mix of anecdotes, hard data, visual devices, and self-empowering attitude. Some readers will find Wiese's prose more idealistic than practical, and at times he seems prone to putting the cart before the horse (e.g. distribution contracts prior to investor prospectus), but the patient will take away valuable knowledge and common-sense rationale. If nothing else, **The Independent Film and Videomaker's Guide** makes for an entertaining read that will scare and entice the thrill-seekers in all of us who yearn to forge a living in the entertainment industry. Appendices include sample contracts, a self-quiz, contact information for theater chains, and print and Internet sources for information on the production process. — JaPan

Scary Monsters 2001 Yearbook

a.k.a. Monster Memories #9
January 2001, 132 pages, magazine, offset
Published and edited by Dennis Druktenis

Back in the 1950s, Forrest J Ackerman's **Famous Monsters of Filmland** was a horror fan's dream, packing dozens of movie reviews, tantalizing photos, and cringe-inducing puns into each issue. Dennis Druktenis' **Scary Monsters** is a worthy successor to **FM**, focusing on science fiction and horror films of the 1930s to 1950s from a fan's point of view. The 2001 yearbook is no exception, boasting 132 pages of all-new material—no reprints! Articles include salutes to RKO producer Val Lewton and horror host Zacherley, Bela Lugosi's 1951 British stage tour of **Dracula**, Michael Bogue's top 40 genre films of the 1950s (hey, where's **THE ANGRY RED PLANET**?), an interesting appreciation of non-Warren horror magazines, comics, reviews, and more. As a child of the 1970s, I must admit that much of **Scary's** appeal is lost on me. I love the films

Reviews

Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

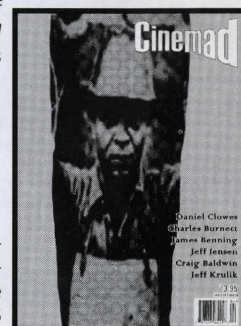
Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

Reviews
Micro-Film Style

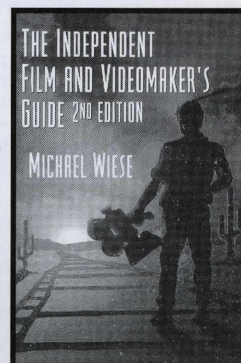
Reviews
Micro-Film Style



Cinemad #4



Eyeball #1



The Independent Film and Videomaker's Guide



What it Takes: "CURTAINS"

by Mike Legge

CURTAINS was originally an award-winning short, shot on Super8 in 1981. Being raised Catholic, I wondered what a comic version of Purgatory would be like. Since it was kind of a holding zone for Heaven with suffering involved, I imagined Purgatory as being stuck in the back of a pick-up truck that circles the block forever. From there it turned into an anthology in which the riders in the back relate what led to their deaths. The new, feature-length CURTAINS is the same basic premise, except Purgatory is now the generic Limbo and the riders' stories have been changed.

In the little Massachusetts town I live in, people have gotten used to us over the 20 years we've been making our comedies, spoofs, and satires. When they see us running around with cameras doing strange things, we don't get much attention. There's still the rubberneckers, but we're more likely to pick up extras rather than hecklers. Area businesses let us use their facilities for free, just for the fun of taking part in a movie. Not having a Hollywood budget forces me to be creative, so it's the old story—when you have lemons, make lemonade.

CURTAINS is our third movie shot on video. I cut it like it's film, shot-by-shot. The main reason for this is to reduce the generation loss. Since I have all my movies mapped out on paper, I don't have to experiment with editing, especially since I had to work with an analog S-VHS system. My master tape is an S-VHS filmlooked version, and making a DigiBetacam dub master from this resulted in little quality loss. But, this process will be history now as I start my next feature, HONEY GLAZE, which will be a digital production from start to finish.



(Above) Robbin Joyce and Mike Legge in CURTAINS. (Courtesy Mike Legge) (Background) Evan Jacobs in SCHUSTERMAN LEVINE. (Courtesy Evan Jacobs)

CURTAINS. 2000, S-VHS, Color, 70 minutes. A Sub Rosa Studios video release of a Sideshow Cinema production. Writer/Director: Michael Legge. Camera: Robert Legge. Sound: Jay Washburn. Lighting: Todd Miller. Starring Steve Mullahoo, Bruce Adams, Cherry Lynn Zinger, Michael Legge, Phyllis Weaver, Robbin Joyce, Diane Mela, Michael Lydon.

Contact Information: Sideshow Cinema, 26 Emerson St., Mendon, MA 01756. Web site: www.b-movie.com or <http://people.ne.mediaone.net/sideshowmike>.

What it Takes: "SCHUSTERMAN LEVINE"

by Evan Jacobs

This "mock documentary about the worst amateur fighter ever" was started in 1996 with a \$2,000 budget, but simply getting it *in the can* was \$2,050. When we telecined the first 12 rolls of film, I was convinced the movie was ruined because there was a light leak all over the footage. I got a company to do a "best light" transfer of the footage for \$2,000. I then spent another \$2,000 on an aborted edit of the film that I wasn't happy with. Some good friends with an AVID cut the film for \$1,000. Four years later, when Sub Rosa Studios picked it up, the budget was around \$12,000!

Making SCHUSTERMAN LEVINE was a lesson in humility and risk. I am very glad that I did it and proud of myself for never giving up. For instance, an interview with Vincent Gallo (BUFFALO 66) and the book *Notes* by Eleanor Coppola, about the filming of APOCALYPSE NOW, made me realize that just because my film may have looked ruined, it wasn't. Also, Mike Ness of the band Social Distortion was supposed to do the soundtrack. Alex Desert (SWINGERS) was slated to narrate the film. It took me so long to get the film to post-production that by the time I was ready to use their services, they both had moved and I couldn't find them! But, Derek Harry's voiceover and Iceburn's music in the final version worked.

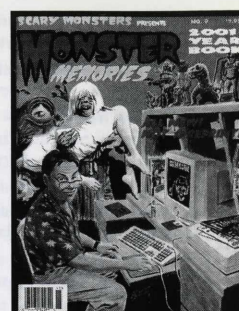
Getting it out there has produced interesting results. I sent a tape cold to producer Gill Holland (HURRICANE STREETS, DESERT BLUE) and he liked the film so much that he agreed to help me produce my next movie. SCHUSTERMAN LEVINE played in the Lost Film Festival, and the festival director liked it so much that he passed on another of my scripts to his cousin, a producer in New York who is now optioning it from me. I went on THE WALLY GEORGE SHOW, hosted by the controversial, ultra right-wing Republican (and estranged father of Rebecca De Mornay), to promote the movie when it played in the Southern California Film Festival.

All the companies (Fine Line, New Line, Next Wave Films, etc.) who expressed an interest in the film during pre- and post-production passed on it when they saw the final version. How frustrating was it? It took a certain home video company three months to view my film and then another three months to pass on it. After everything I went through, I couldn't be happier that I finally found good distribution. I had originally shot footage of real boxers (Donald Curry, Kennedy McKinney, Genaro Hernandez, etc.) talking about Schusterman Levine as if they knew him. I also shot a lot of video footage that I later scrapped, but *all* of it will be appearing on the DVD.

SCHUSTERMAN LEVINE: A BOXING FABLE. 2000, 16mm, B&W, 47 minutes. A Sub Rosa Studios video release of an Anhedonia Films production in association with NA Entertainment. Producer/Writer/Director: Evan Jacobs. Executive Producers: Noah Geary, Darren Doane, Gill Holland. Editor: Chris Wicke. Director of Photography: Jim Brown. Music: Iceburn. Starring Evan Jacobs, Chris Lohman, Zoli Teglas, Andy Barnett, Todd D. Trout, Jeff Banks, Michael J. Vogelsang, Amy Legrand. Narrator: Derek Harry.

Contact Information: Anhedonia Films/Evan Jacobs, PO Box 20375, Fountain Valley, CA 92728. E-mail: Anhedonia@hotmail.com. Web site: www.b-movie.com.

and subjects discussed here, but I prefer the hipper style of Michael Weldon's *Psychotronic Video* and the sophistication of Tim Lucas' *Video Watchdog* to the juvenile approach taken by Druktenis and his staff. I agree wholeheartedly that this material is not to be taken too seriously, but I just can't get into filling pages with grainy stills of homemade 8mm backyard monster movies, outdated "news," and "interviews" with the dog from THE WOLF MAN! For older readers, however, *Scary Monsters* is a friendly reminder of a more innocent time. —Marty McKee



Contact Information

AGENT 15: It's a Chick Production, P.O. Box 1068, Burbank, CA 91507-1068, pager (800) 508.2193; www.whoisagent15.com

Cashiers du Cinemart: Cashiers du Cinemart, P.O. Box 2401, Riverview, MI 48192; www.cashiersducinemart.com

CHILDREN OF THE SKY: Brimstone Productions; www.lindenmuth.com or TRANSTILL@aol.com

Cinemad: Cinemad, P.O. Box 43909, Tucson, AZ 85733-3909; www.cinemadmag.com

EyeBall: EyeBall, P.O. Box 21141, Oklahoma City, OK 73156; www.eyeballmagazine.com

EYES TO HEAVEN, Feeders: Dark Horse Comics, 10956 SE Main St., Milwaukie, OR 97222, (503) 652.8815; www.darkhorse.com

FAUST, THE LAST LAUGH, THE LOVE OF JEANNE NEY: Kino International, 333 West 39th St., Suite 503, New York, NY 10018, (212) 629.6880; www.kino.com

GOOD GRIEF: Andrew Dickson, P.O. Box 12324, Portland, OR 97212, (503) 872.9792; www.goodgriefmovie.com

INCUBUS: Fox Lorber Films/Winstar Home Video, 419 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016; www.winstarhomevideo.com

The Independent Film and Videomaker's Guide: Michael Wiese Productions, 11288 Ventura Blvd, Suite 821, Studio City, CA 91604, (818) 379.8799; www.mwp.com

LA BALANCE, ME & ISSAC NEWTON: Home Vision Entertainment, 4411 N. Ravenswood Ave., 3rd Floor, Chicago, IL 60640-5802, (773) 878.2600; www.homevision.com

LETHAL FORCE: Divergent Thinking Productions, P.O. Box 60261, Potomac, MD 20859-0261, (301) 299.9269; www.lethalforcethemovie.com

LITTLE SISTER, ROY COHN/JACK SMITH, WAITING FOR THE MOON: Facets Multimedia, 1517 W. Fullerton Ave., Chicago, IL 60614, (773) 281.9075; www.facets.org

MEMENTO: www.otnemem.com

NICE SHOT: Mini Mace Pro Pictures, 1124 Walnut St., Suite 4, Philadelphia, PA 19107, (215) 238.0663; www.minimacepro.com

PLASTER CASTER: Fragment Films, 930 Washington St., #2E, Evanston, IL 60202; www.plastercaster.com

POLLOCK: Sony Pictures Classics; www.spe.sony.com/classics/pollock/

PROJECT OMICRON: Ed Furniture Company, P.O. Box 3240, Venice, FL 33493; www.edfurniture.com

REQUIEM FOR A DREAM: Artisan Entertainment, 2700 Colorado Ave., Santa Monica, CA 90404; www.artisanent.com

Scary Monsters: Dennis Druktenis Publishing & Mail Order, 348 Jocelyn Place, Highwood, IL 60040; www.scarymonstersmag.com

SIX DAYS IN ROSWELL, TRIUMPH OF THE WILL: Synapse Films, P.O. Box 1860, Bloomington, IL 61701, (309) 661.9201; www.synapse-films.com

SPACE PSYCHOS: C J S Films, 305 W. 28th St., Suite 12D, New York, NY 10001, (212) 633.2982.

STRAWBERRY ESTATES: Sub Rosa Studios, P.O. Box 5515, Syracuse, NY 13220; www.b-movie.com

23 HOURS: Piranha Pictures, 5437 Ruby Dr., Fairfax, VA 22030, (703) 222.5045; www.piranha-pictures.com

URBAN FLESH: Alexandre Michaud, 5664 Sherbrooke West #2, Montreal, Quebec, H4A 1Z7, Canada; www.fortunecity.com/lavender/halloween/829/urbanmain.htm



inner cinema

visions and ruminations from the filmmaker inside you

"To Push or to Plod" by John Weaver

Who am I? Why am I here?

The philosopher inside me rears its ugly head.

What am I doing with my life? Where am I going? What am I doing to get there?

This happens to me every now and then. I'll be relaxing, either watching the Discovery Channel or playing *Mario Bros.* on the NES, and my conscience will wake up from whatever it was doing to keep itself busy. And for some reason, these questions seem like good ones to ponder.

This usually ends with depressing evenings of me telling myself that, if I keep it up, I'll never reach my goals. I want to reach my goals, and it's terrible to think that I may not be able to. But I can do anything I put my mind to, right?

I'm a filmmaker. At least, that's how I identify myself. I figure, you are what you say you are. I went to college, studied film production, and have made a movie. Therefore, I *am* a filmmaker. I've made a film. Yeah God!

But *now* what?

I "graduated" (got my diploma in the mail) in August of 1998. I finished my movie, *RESOLUTION*, in March of 1999. It got some play, and even made it to New York (cost a lot to get it in the fest, but I think it was worth it). In April of last year, I met a guy with an idea to make a TV show for independent filmmakers. We formulated a concept, and finally got someone to listen to us. Hopefully, *AMERICAN INDIE* will someday be seen by millions of people. But a contract's been signed and it's now out of my hands, so what am I going to do next?

I was recently unemployed for three months. My choice. I quit the physical labor job I was performing, and endeavored to find something closer to my chosen field. People around me thought I was crazy to give up a perfectly good, paying job. I'm 27 (almost 30!), getting married, and should be doing something serious to make some money. Not to mention I have to deal with everyone around me wanting to know what I'm doing, what the latest project is, and how long it'll be until I'm rich and famous.

Well, I'm working again, but for a temp agency. I've put my résumé up online, and have actually gotten some responses. There's always room for more file clerks and telemarketers. But you never know who's going to find you. I got an e-mail from an "Executive Recruiter." Oooh boy. I let it sit for half a day before I admitted I was too desperate for work. Turns out he represented a television program that was looking for someone to assist their producer. My résumé looked good, so he wanted to know if I wanted him to pass it along to the producers. Hell yeah!

Two weeks later, still no call. Story of my friggin' life.

But it's episodes like this that fuel my desire to make it on my own. Why *would* I want someone telling me what to do? I can do whatever I want, whenever I want, and no one can stop me!

The problem is, I haven't done it yet, whatever it is.

Some people have the drive to constantly push, push, push. Others, like myself, are prone to plod along the path to our dreams, never rushing, but always with our eyes on the horizon. I know what I want to do. And whenever I find myself acting toward those goals, I'm a machine. You'd think I'd try to make those opportunities occur more frequently.

And that's my problem. I spend too much time thinking about it, and not enough time *doing* it. It seems like there's always something else I can do to divert my attention to, video games being the most likely distraction.

Well, admitting you have a problem *is* the first step....

This was the mood I was in the other day when I tossed down the Nintendo paddle and said, "What the fuck am I doing? I've had three months to do something, and I have nothing to show for it." (I did, however, beat the latest *Zelda*). As I sat and pondered what I could do, my eyes fell on that book I stole from my grade school and have read close to 10 times. A light bulb went off in my head and I actually flinched in pain. That book would make a *great* film! So I grabbed it and marched off to the computer. Once again, motivation had taken hold of me.

So now I get to the heart of the matter. I am not constantly motivated. I want to be a successful producer, but I just can't seem to actively pursue it 24/7. Maybe there's a term for whatever's wrong with me, but if there is, I would rather not know it. I'd hate to feel bound by some psychological profile or use it like a crutch.

"Gee, I'd love to take that position as producer of your show, but right now I'm motivationally challenged."

I know I'm not the only one who goes through this. I've made opportunities available for people to show off their talents, but there are some who don't take advantage of them. I guess we each decide for ourselves what's most important on our agendas. Who am I, or anyone else for that matter, to say that a person isn't doing enough to get to where he or she wants to be? Why should I feel pressured by my family or peers to spend every minute acting like a producer?

I know who I am and where I'm going. I don't feel the need to explain myself to every person who judges my actions. I am a filmmaker. I will be successful. So stand back and let me do my thing.

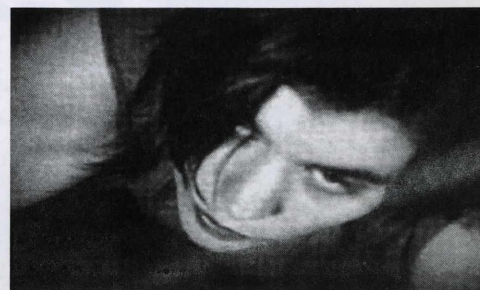
the sidelong glance

MICRO-FILM covers the independent film works of other people, yet I've let leak the realization that I want in the game, too. I become amazed when I see how others crank out their media of all stripes, one after the other. Many think I'm talented and prolific, but I also have to really work for it. We all do. No one illustration is perfect upon its rendering, no one essay is pristine upon its writing. In the past, I have started many as-yet-unfinished things. They now collect dust because of my commitment to this publication, and for every passing year, those projects look more like artifacts than art. I want to resurrect them for the sake of ending what I began—give them a "proper burial," at the very least.

When I did my first micro-cinema in April, I already knew one particular item that I had to finish for the show. It was the Super8 "trailer" that I shot in early 1999 with my friend, Cecilia Lucas. Teddy Veatch, another friend that I currently work with, bought an iMac primarily to cut his teeth on video production. He agreed to take a stab at editing together the trailer if I organized all the elements for him.

I dumped my choice cuts in sequential order on a Hi8 tape and gave Ted my storyboards as a visual guide, along with typed-out titles and a song from a defunct local band, The Suede Chain. After four weeks, Ted brought in a copy of the final version. I rushed home on my lunch hour and showed the tape into the player....

April 4, 2001 - Downtown Champaign: Two years to the day after I shot the last footage with Cecilia, it was finished. It was final. And it was good. What's also good is that I have absolutely no intention of abandoning this cinema crusade, brothers and sisters, as we see the light via MICRO-FILM #5! In our next enlightened tome, we'll sing songs of praise for Illinois-made indie films, including William Pace's *CHARMING BILLY* and John McNaughton's classic thriller, *HENRY!* Say "amen" to MICRO-FILM #5 this winter! - Jason Pankoke





CAST AND CREW

ASTROESQUE (p.17) – Writer/Director: Michael Allred; Producers/Editors: Michael Allred, Shane Hawks; Director of Photography: Jim Koral; Associate Producer: Laura Allred; Sound: Daniel Palin; Music: Gear. A Dark Horse video release of a VisionTone Productions/Droog Bros. film.

Cast – Matt Brundage, Kay Koffler, Matthew Clark, Michael Bloomfield, Michael Allred.

Specs – 1998, 16mm, Color, 86 minutes

Contact Information – Dark Horse Comics, 10956 SE Main St., Milwaukie, OR 97222. Telephone: (503) 652.8815. Fax: (503) 654.9440. Web page: www.darkhorse.com.

BACK HOME YEARS AGO: THE REAL "CASINO" (p.6) – Producer/Writer/Director/Editor: Joseph F. Alexandre; Camera: Matt Ehling; Sound: Steve Fletcher; Associate Producer: Tracy Reiss; Production Assistant: Dan Tagatz; Executive Producers: John Pierson, Janet Pierson. A JFA Films production in association with Grainy Pictures.

With – Nicholas Pileggi

Specs – 2000, Video/Super8, Color, 24 minutes

Contact Information – JFA Films, 763 1/4 Sunset Ave., Venice, CA 90291. E-mail: jfa42@aol.com. Web page: www.jfafilms.com or www.b-movie.com.

BALLYHOO! (p.7) – Directors: Phil Mastrella, Jason Neff; Producer: Jason Neff; Writers: Jason Moseley, Anne Deason; Camera Operators: Troy Durrett, Greg Jones; Production Coordinator: Maia Monasterros; Production Assistants: Gabi Light, Ryan Riley; Editor: Hector Lopez; Illustrator: Greg Rebus; Animator: Wayland Strickland. An Ox Tail production.

Host – Anne Deason

Specs – 2001, Video, Color, 60 minutes

Contact Information – Ballyhoo, 2420 E. Jefferson St., Orlando, FL 32803. Telephone: (407) 898.7111. E-mail: festival@ccffv.org.

BUCKY McNEAD: THE FIRST SLASHER FILM TOLD IN RHYME (p.22) – Producer/Writer/Director/Camera: Mike Trippiedi; Sound: Scott Cimarusti; Boom: Traci Nally; Editor: Bill Yauch. A Shut Up and Do It Productions film.

Cast – Steve Davis, Barbara Evans, Floyd Bundy, Michael Morgan, Jennifer Bechter, Traci Nally, Will Ridenour, Ben Miller, Alicia Cross, Gary Holben, Barbara Ridenour, Tim Mitchell, Sue Trippiedi, Mindy Manolakes, Dan Bechtel, Amy Eckert, Judy Wood, Judy Hutton, Deb Gang Feinen. Narrator: Gary Ambler.

Specs – 2001, Digital Video, Color, 19 minutes

Contact Information – Mike Trippiedi, 802 Frank Dr., Champaign, IL 61821. E-mail: miketrip@soltec.net.

BULLET ON A WIRE (p.13) – Producer/Director: Jim Sikora; Writers: Joe Carducci, Jim Sikora; Cinematography: John Terendy; Editor: Chris Butler; Sound: Gary Day; Music: The Denison-Kimball Trio, The Handsome Family. A Provisional release.

Cast – Jeff Strong, Lara Phillips, David Yow, Barry Killen, Richard Kern, Rex Benson, Robert Maffia.

Specs – 1998, 16mm, B&W, 83 minutes

Contact Information – Provisional, 215 1/2 S. First St., Laramie, WY 82070. Telephone: (307) 742.3418. Fax: (307) 742.3047. E-mail: carducci@wyoming.com.

EXISTO (p.14) – Director: Coke Sams; Producers: Clarke Gallivan, Peter Kurland; Writers: Bruce Arntson, Coke Sams; Director of Photography: Jim May; Editor/Script Supervisor: Scott Mele; Production Designer: Ruby Guidara; Associate Producer: Mike Weesner; Costume Designer: Stephen K. Randolph; Songs and Music: Bruce Arntson. A Homelown Productions film.

Cast – Bruce Arntson, Jackie Welch, Jim Varney, Galiard Sartain, Mike Montgomery, Mark Cabus, Jenny Littleton, Ray Thornton, Connye Florance, Denise Hicks, Brian Russell, Barry Scott, Matt Carlton, Mary T. Bailey, Garris Wimmer, David Alford.

Specs – 1999, 16mm, Color, 94 minutes

Contact Information – Homelown Productions, 4610 Charlotte Ave., Nashville, TN 37209. Telephone: (615) 298.5818. Fax: (615) 292.0204. E-mail: info@existo.com. Web page: www.existo.com.

FAUST: LOVE OF THE DAMNED (p.17) – Writer: Brian Yuzna; Producers: Julio Fernández, Brian Yuzna; Writer: David Quinn; Cinematography: Jacques Haitkin; Editor: Luis De La Madrid; Production Design: Isidre Prunes; Music: Xavier Capellas; Sound: Dani Fontrodona, Salva Mayolas; Makeup Supervisor: Anthony C. Ferrante; Makeup Effects: Screaming Mad George. A Trimark Video release of a Fantastic Factory production in association with Filmmax/Castelao Productions/TVC/Via Digital.

Cast – Mark Frost, Isabel Brook, Jeffrey Combs, Monica Van Campen, Junix Nocian, Andrew Divoff, Ronny Svensson, Marc Martínez.

Specs – 2001, 35mm, Color, 92 minutes

Contact Information – Filmmax, Miguel Hernández, 81-87 Polígono Pedrosa, 08908 L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Barcelona, Spain. Telephone: (93) 336.85.55. Fax: (93) 263.46.56. E-mail: filmmax@filmmax.com. Web page: www.filmmax.com or www.fantasticfactory.com.

FREE RADIO: A DOCUMENTARY (p.10) – Producer/Director: Kevin Keyser; Assistant Producer: Kat Williams; Still Photography: Shara Ferrari; Music Arrangement: Tony Lunn; Additional Music: PBR StreetGang, Rage Against the Machine, JR Ryan, Top Cat.

With – Stephen Dunifer (Radio Free Berkley), Greg Ruggiero (Microradio & Democracy), David Fiske (FCC), Skidmark Bob (Free Radio Santa Cruz), Reckless & Ferel (Free Radio Austin), Will Henning & Captain Fred (Berkley Liberation Radio), Michael Moore (ROGER & ME), Ralph Nader (Green Party), Bob Bagdikian (ex-UC-Berkley), Mbanna Kantako (Human Rights Radio, Springfield, IL), Dennis Wharton (National Association of Broadcasters), Bill Mandel (ex-KPFA), Ron Sakolsky (Seizing the Airwaves), Mike Townsend (UI Springfield), Alan Korn (Paper Tiger TV), Joe Plak & Zeal Stefanoff (Micro-Kind Radio, San Marcos).

Specs – 2000, Digital Video, Color, 103 minutes

Contact Information – E-mail: freeradio2@aol.com

GHOST WORLD (p.17) – Director: Terry Zwigoff; Producers: Lianne Halfon, John Malkovich, Russell Smith; Writers: Daniel Clowes, Terry Zwigoff; Cinematography: Affonso Beato; Editors: Carole Kravetz-Aykarian, Michael R. Miller; Original Music: David Kitay; Production Design: Edward T. McAvoy; Art Direction: Alan E. Muraoka; Costume Design: Mary Zophres; Makeup Department: Emjay Olson, James Ryder; Sound: Mark Weingarten. A United Artists release of a Mr. Mudd production in association with Granada Films/Jersey Shore/Advanced Medien.

Cast – Thora Birch, Scarlett Johansson, Steve Buscemi, Brad Renfro, Illeana Douglas, Bob Balaban, Stacey Travis, Charles C. Stevenson, Jr., Dave Sheridan, Tom McGowan, Debra Azar, Teri Garr.

Specs – 2001, 35mm, Color, 111 minutes

Contact Information – Web page: www.mgm.com/ghostworld/ or www.ghostworld-themovie.com.

G-MEN FROM HELL (p.17) – Director: Christopher Coppola; Producers: Richard L. Albert, Joseph Vittorie; Writers: Robert Cooper, Nick Johnson; Cinematography: Dean Lent, Guido Verwey; Editor: Robert Gordon; Production Design: Randal P. Earnest; Art Direction: Brad Douglas; Set Decoration: Tracy Fisher; Costume Design: Nikki Siegenberg; Original Music: Greg De Belles. A Sawmill Entertainment film.

Cast – William Forsythe, Tate Donovan, Bob Goldthwait, Barry Newman, Zach Galligan, Vanessa Angel, Paul Rodriguez, David Huddleston, Karl Wuhrer, Charles Fleischer, Gregory Sporleder, Gary Busey, Robert Goulet, Joann Richter.

Specs – 2000, 35mm, Color, 98 minutes

Contact Information – Telephone: (818) 752.2776. Fax: (818) 752.7471.

STRANGERS IN PARADISE (p.17) – Writer/Director: Matthew Balthrop; Producers: Matthew Balthrop, David White, Kelli Audibert; Camera: David White. A G14 Productions film.

Cast – Corrine Dame, Katie Lawson, Matthew Balthrop, David White.

Specs – 2001, Digital Video, Color

Contact Information – Telephone: (703) 200.3248. E-mail: info@g14productions.com or balthrm@hotmail.com. Web page: www.g14productions.com or www.geocities.com/sipmovie.

SUPERSTARLET A.D. (p.8) – Producer/Writer/Director: John Michael McCarthy; Assistant Director: Emmy Collins; Director of Photography: Steven Oatley; Cinematography: Mike Miller, Steven Oatley; Director of Lighting: Vinnie Campbell; Sound Design: Wheat; Editors: Wheat, Erin Hagee, Chris Brewer; Production Manager: Kelly Ball. Music: John Stivers, Shelby Bryant, Tim Feleppa, etc. A GuerrillaMonster production.

Cast – Kerine Elkins, Gina Velour, Michelle Carr, Rita D'Albert, Katherine St. Valentine, Alija Trout, Kelly Ball, Jodi Brewer, Dagmar O' Doom, Victoria Renard, Elle Livesay, Ralph Handy, Claudia Ploderer, Katherine Greenwood, Kitty Diggins, Hugh B. Brooks, Jim Townsend.

Specs – 2000, 16mm, B&W, 68 minutes

Contact Information – John Michael McCarthy, 1910 Madison Ave., PMB 3577, Memphis, TN 38104. Web page: www.bigbroad.com or www.guerrillamonster.com.

Joe Alexandre is currently shopping his script WISEACRE, loosely based on the making of THE REAL CASINO, which has gotten interest from Oliver Stone and Harvey Keitel. Show your interest at jfa42@aol.com.

Erin Anadkat is a 2001 graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a degree in News-Editorial Journalism. Hoping to score as a documentary filmmaker, she is a Leo and likes the color orchid. If anyone needs a contributor for an expressive zine or entertainment publication, e-mail eanadkat@aol.com.

Nicole Bernardi-Reis has worked for Chicago's Screen magazine and volunteered for the Chicago Underground Film Festival.

Grace Giorgio is an adjunct professor in Speech Communication at the University of Illinois. She sometimes makes films and videos and is co-director of Champaign-Urbana's Freaky Film Festival. All of this responsibility overwhelms her, and presently she aspires to having a long, fruitful life on a farm.

L. Rob Hubbard works in film/video production as a script supervisor and edits MIMIZINE, an occasional publication (<http://community.webtv.net/RLHubbard/MIMIZINEmuhzeen>), when not plotting world domination. Otherwise, contact him at blackrose@valise.com.

Chuck Koplinski has been writing and reviewing films for The Octopus, the alternative weekly of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, for seven years. His reviews can be seen at www.cinema-scoping.com.

Jeff McCoy liked INCUBUS so much that he kept the review tape so he could watch it again. Hope that doesn't interfere with the time he needs to spend working on his novella.

Marty McKee finally found someone who will pay him to write—Horizon Hobby in Champaign, Illinois. Anyone else who wants to throw a few bucks his way in exchange for quality entertainment-related prose can reach him at mmckee@soltec.net.

A.J. Michel is the editor and publisher of Low Hug, a popular culture perzine that examines cultural artifacts and people's obsessions with them. For the most current issue, send \$3 to PO Box 2574, Station A, Champaign, Illinois, 61825-2574, or e-mail lowhug@yahoo.com for more information.

Jason Pankoke has nothing to say about himself because he bequeathed everything interesting for his interview with Eyeball head honcho Chris Sharpe. Oh, yeah, his e-mail is japan@pdnt.com.

Paul Riismandel is a true radio geek, having worked and volunteered in college, public, and community radio for the last 11 years. When he's not on the radio, he does audio/video work and pursues a Ph.D. in communications. His thoughts about independent media can be found on www.mediageek.org.

Jeff Sartain is a published poet and aspiring novelist. He is currently working on several articles for literature and cinema journals. He is also working on his master's degree in contemporary American literature. If you want to contact him, write nuclearjello@hotmail.com.

Kelly Stevens has been busy linking her conflicting business and creative sides with the help of film, art, and writing. This issue's BALLYHOO article is her writing debut.

Mike Trippiedi is the writer/director of several films including DOGS IN QUICKSAND and BUCKY McNEAD. He is also an actor and can be heard in the CD-ROM game FREE SPACE II with Stephen Baldwin, Robert Loggia, and Ronnie Cox. He'd love to hear your comments about indie films at miketrip@soltec.net.

Mike Watt is currently in post-production on his first feature film, THE RESURRECTION GAME, and also edits Scan magazine for Draculina Publishing. Smile when you write happycloudpictures@hotmail.com.

John Weaver performs freelance work for film productions in Chicago when not pursuing his own projects. If you'd like to pursue his talent, send a message to john_weaver@hotmail.com.

Place a classified ad in MICRO-FILM! Cost is 5 cents per word, 50 word minimum; boldface words are 10 cents each. Display ads are \$7.00 per column inch (2.5 in. x 1 in. = 1 column inch). Please send to: MICRO-FILM, c/o Opteryx Press, P.O. Box 45, Champaign, IL 61824-0045. Please make personal checks or money orders payable to "Jason Pankoke." Fee should accompany ad; no exceptions! Display ads need to be provided as an electronic file on a PC Zip disk or CD-ROM.

www.micro-film-magazine.com
BOOKMARK IT THIS SEPTEMBER!



the
truth
is
in
here.

... next summer ...

... comix from opteryx press ...



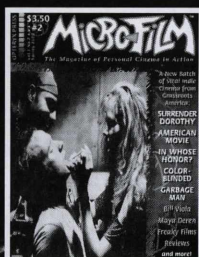
Fourth Annual
Roger Ebert's
 Overlooked Film Festival

April 24-28, 2002

A special event of the
 College of Communications at
 the University of Illinois

www.ebertfest.com

Photo courtesy of Buena Vista Television



BACK ISSUES!!

Got Indie? Got Vision? Get MICRO-FILM!!!

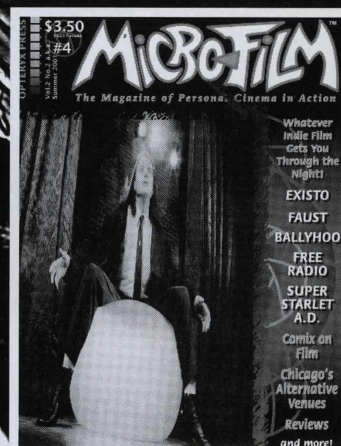
MICRO-FILM #1, Fall 1999: Bruce Campbell in *RUNNING TIME*, Eric Stanze's punk-horror opus *ICE FROM THE SUN*, Aaron Downing's dreamy *pURE KILLjoy*, Sundance, SXSW, film zines, more! ONLY \$3.00 POST-PAID!

MICRO-FILM #2, Spring 2000: Chris Smith on *AMERICAN MOVIE*, Kevin DiNovis' taut *SURRENDER DOROTHY*, Mark Pirro's *COLOR-BLINDED*, Maya Deren, Bill Viola, Freaky Film Fest, more! ONLY \$3.50 POST-PAID!!!

MICRO-FILM #3, Fall 2000: Vince Pereira on View Askew's *A BETTER PLACE*, punk power in Esther Bell's *GODASS* and Katie Nisa's *THREAT*, Troma's *TERROR FIRMER*, Eric Brummer, Ross Hagen, reviews, more! ONLY \$3.50 POST-PAID!!!

MICRO-FILM #4, Summer 2001: Coke Sams and Bruce Arntson on *EXISTO*, pirates vs. the FCC in *FREE RADIO*, John McCarthy's *SUPERSTARLET A.D.*, Brian Yuzna and David Quinn on *FAUST*, indie movie teevee, more! ONLY \$3.50 POST-PAID!!!!

Photo: Inga "Whole Lotta" Mucha



SUBSCRIBE!!!

3 issues = \$10.00. That simple. That cheap!

Please send your hard-earned dough to:
 MICRO-FILM, P.O. Box 45, Champaign, IL 61824-0045.
 Personal checks, money orders, and well-concealed cash are acceptable; please make your pc's and mo's payable to "Jason Pankoke." U.S. funds only. Any Q's, e-mail micro-film@artisticunderground.com!



DR. SQUID!

THE WAY COOL ZINE OF B-MOVIES, CULT FILM & POP CULTURE!

MENTION MICROFILM SPECIAL: Get your hands on a sample copy for just \$2 (within USA only) from Joe Sherlock, PO Box 856, Corvallis, OR 97339

www.proaxis.com/~sherlockfam/drsquid.html



"This Shit Rocks!"
-Axl Rose, GnR

"Cinematic Skateboarding."
-Earl Dunk, farmer

"The Best Video Ever."
-Mark Hamilton, Actor

"I Kick Your Ass!"
-sun yoon, fuzzhater

fall 2001

thefuzz

thefuzz_clothing@hotmail.com



"Eyeball Magazine distinguishes itself as a bright star in the independent media scene... *Highly recommended.*" -Invisible City




EYEBALL #2 features almost 100 reviews of the newest zines, comics, independent films and music.

Also: interviews with Kevin Lindenmuth, Jordan Crane, Clamor Magazine and the latest independent media news. A Sample issue is only \$3.50 ppd.

eyeball
MAGAZINE

The Guide to Independent Media
P.O. BOX 21141, OAK OAK 73156
www.eyeballmagazine.com



Protecting what *they* want to destroy.

INSOUND

www.insound.com

cds
vinyl
zines
film
books

Carl J. Sukenick's SPACE PSYCHOS

Send \$35.00 to:

C.J.S. Films
305 W. 28 St., #12D
New York, NY 10001

We accept all methods of payment.

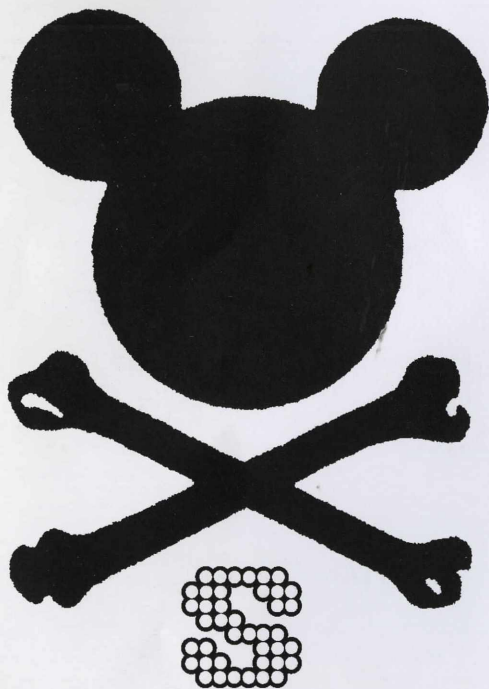
RUNNING WITH THE DEAD...



EMAIL: 4thfloorpictures@roundsmail.com

WEB: <http://www.angelfire.com/pa2/4thFloorPictures>

4TH FLOOR PICTURES



unpopular culture www.supersphere.com

supersphere.com

independent film, music, print, media & politics

provisional

**KEEPING THE UNDERGROUND
UNDERGROUND SINCE 1991!**

These catalog titles now \$15 each postpaid

"Incredible
late 80s
videos.
A major
event."
- Forced
Exposure



WEATHERMAN '69
Raymond Pettibon

Thurston Moore
Kim Gordon
Mike Watt



SIR DRONE
Raymond Pettibon

Mike Watt
Mike Kelley
Joe Cole



**JUDGEMENT DAY
THEATER**
Raymond Pettibon

Robert Hecker
Mike Watt
Pat Ruthensmear



CITIZEN TANIA
Raymond Pettibon

Pat Ruthensmear
Der Cadena
Shannon Smith

"A terrific
piece of work!"
- Film Threat



**WALLS IN
THE CITY**
Jim Sikora

Paula Killen
David Yow
Bill Cusack
Tony Fitzpatrick

"One of the best
underground films
of the Decade!"
- Film Threat



**BRING ME
THE HEAD
OF GERALDO RIVERA**
Jim Sikora

Paula Killen
Lori Jackson
Craig White

"Rachel keeps
the spirit of
Lower East Side
filmmaking alive."
- Jim Jarmusch



WHAT ABOUT ME
Rachel Amodeo

Richard Edson
Johnny Thunders
Dee Dee Ramone

"It's a small gem."
1999 Top Ten
- L.A. Times



**BULLET ON
A WIRE**
Jim Sikora

Jeff Strong
Paula Killen
Lara Phillips
David Yow

"A genuine,
convincing sense of
creeping paranoia.
A winner."
- Your Flesh



THE BLIND LEAD
John Covert

John Harriman
Jennifer Shattuck
Martin Bedoian

"A terrific
obsessional
documentary
about the 8-Track"
- Video Eyeball



**SO WRONG
THEY'RE RIGHT**
Russ Forster
Dan Sutherland

David Greenberger
Michael Hurley

"I loved every
second of it!"
- Alternative
Cinema



**THE ADVENTURES
OF EL FRENETICO
& GO-GIRL**
Pat Bishaw

Charlie Pellegrino
Frances Lee
Madoka Raine

"An unflinching,
artistic view."
- Philadelphia
Weekly



**THE SPEED
OF MIND**
Patrick Hasson

Louis Greto
Matt Gorfidin

"I saw the film.
I liked it."
- Flipside



BORN TO LOSE
Doug Cawker

Joseph Rye
Elyse Ashton
Francis Fallon

These new releases now \$30 each postpaid

"A beautiful,
gloomy short that
pays homage to
silent film."
- L.A. Weekly



REST IN PEACE
Rachel Amodeo

Dame Darcy
Rachel Amodeo

Give us blood,
Let us rock!



HORROR GIRL
Raoul Vehill

Ghettty Chasen

All new no-budget
spy thriller
action-adventure
extravaganza!



**THE GIRLS
FROM H.A.R.M.**
Pat Bishaw

Tina Lee
CC Won
Any Nunez
Soomi Kim

"Heartfelt and
creepy as hell!"
- Shock Cinema



ZERO
James Fotopoulos

Matthew Buckley

also available Soundtrack CD \$15 postpaid



Soundtrack
**The Adventures of
El Frenetico & Go-Girl**
featuring Special Pillow and more

send payment to:
provisional

Laramie, Wyoming 82073-0757

soon come: www.site-zero.com/provisional

conformity
passivity
apathy
hypocrisy
malevolence
fickleness
ignorance
is not bliss
antidote ...

micro-film.





OPTERYX PRESS

Opteryx Press

P.O. Box 45

Champaign, IL 61824-0045

micro-film@artisticunderground.com

www.micro-film-magazine.com

