

INDEPENDENT-UNDERGROUND FILMS

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One of four catalogs from the Jack Stevenson Film Archive

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Note: we distribute the films of **KENNETH ANGER, GEORGE & MIKE KUCHAR, CRAIG BALDWIN, CORY McABEE, DANNY PLOTNICK, BOB COWAN, TOM PALAZZOLO, HARROD BLANK, JON MORITSUGU, GIBBS CHAPMAN, MARTHA COLBURN** and many others.

FORMAT: ALL FILMS ON THIS LIST ARE 16mm OPTICAL (LIGHT) SOUND

The individual descriptions of films here are longer than in our other catalog lists which owes to the fact that underground films are more unknown to the general public and need more contextualization. This is a main feature of this list: more sustained and thoughtful texts about the films together with helpful links that provide background on the filmmakers. A number of the films below are fairly unknown or have only previously been written about in the most cursory fashion, so we've tried to provide real insight on each film to give programmers a meaningful basis for selection. Even hardened veterans of avant-garde cinema will find something new and refreshing here, and it is in that spirit of discovery that we have assembled this particular list. (Remember to ask for our three other catalog lists: "Compilation theme Shows," "Commercial Feature Films" and "Illustrated Lectures.")

FILMS OF KENNETH ANGER

Kenneth Anger, who made his first short film in 1947, is one of the best known proponents of American underground filmmaking, his achievement and celebrity rivalled only by filmmakers such as Andy Warhol and Stan Brakhage. Anger remains as of this writing based in Los Angeles and still active as an artist.

Those unfamiliar with Anger are encouraged to seek out one of the many online biographical sources.

SCORPIO RISING - 1963, 29 min., color. Perhaps the single most influential underground film of all time, *Scorpio Rising* explores through found footage and

montage the homoerotic rites of motorcycle cultists and their flirtation with public icons such as James Dean, Marlon Brando, Christ and Hitler. With its episodic construction based on contemporary pop songs, its at times satiric spirit and its mythic stylization, *Scorpio Rising* anticipated the modern music video and earned Anger the largely unwelcome tag as “Godfather of MTV.”

INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME - 1954, 38 min., color. Based on one of Aleister Crowley's rituals, this bacchanalian masquerade features lush, dreamy superimposition and possesses the magic of both silent movie expressionism, opera and old Hollywood musicals. The cast includes an interesting line-up of cult celebrities, among them Sampson DeBrier, Anaïs Nin, Renate Druks and Curtis Harrington.

THE MAN WE WANT TO HANG – 2002, 12 min., color. An evocative remembrance of Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), the legendary occultist, as told entirely through his paintings. With the classical music of Anatol Liadov providing mood-enhancing accompaniment, Anger's lens glides over the mystic-pagan images and the viewer is left to discern their meanings without aid of narration or text. Functioning both a languid contemplation and a suitably sinister tribute, this was Anger's last film on 16mm.

FILMS OF GEORGE & MIKE KUCHAR

*Twin brothers from The Bronx born in 1942, Mike and George have created a do-it-yourself cinemamatic style that celebrates the common man but does so in style oozing with “kitchen sink” Hollywood excess. Starting in the mid-50's with a string of shorts shot on the regular-8 format, they switched to 16mm around '65 and began making their own films but continued to collaborate closely (George appears in many of Mike's films.) They drew upon a small circle of non-actors and friends such as Bob Cowan, Donna Kerness, Maren Thomas and Hope Morris who can be seen in most of their work. George invented a kind of diarist style with himself as the on-screen focal point before it was popularized by video while Mike chose to explore fantasy & science-fiction themes with an erotic subtext always close to the surface. Most phases of their filmmaking are represented in our collection. (Note: Jennifer Kroot's excellent documentary from 2009, **IT CAME FROM KUCHAR**, would provide an ideal basis to do a*

proper Kuchar series or focus. Check www.kucharfilm.com) In chronological order:

SINS OF THE FLESHAPOIDS, 1965, 43 min., color, by Mike Kuchar.

Without question a major work of 60's underground cinema. The story transpires a million years in the future, after "the Great War" has depopulated the earth. Those few humans who have survived have grown lazy and decadent. They dedicate themselves to greedy indulgence in all pleasurable, carnal sensations and leave the work to be done by a race of enslaved robots, the "fleshapoids". One robot (Bob Cowan) rebels against his evil human master, prince Gianbeano (played by George). He attempts to seduce a human woman who rejects him and whom he then kills. Soon he is able to consummate his passion with a female robot - by touching fingers while sparks fly. Thus the "fleshapoids" become capable of sexual desire and gain the ability to ... sin! This was to be Mike's best-known and most popular film. Its spirited twist on science fiction conventions, its comic book vibe and the way it made 'superstars' out of non-actors captured the spirit of the day. It figures as the most significant and creatively realized embodiment of the 60s underground "camp" aesthetic.

HOLD ME WHILE I'M NAKED - 1966, 15 min., color, by George Kuchar. One of the best loved films of the 60s underground, a playful satire of motion picture making that leads to existential contemplations on the meaning of life. Here the fantasy of Hollywood glamour collides with the reality of loneliness in the Bronx and wicked turns of fate like when your leading lady quits the movie in the middle of shooting. This really happened so George just wrote it into the script. This was the first of his so-called "diarist dramas" where he himself is the main focal point, and together with *Sins of the Fleshapoids* help popularize Mike and George with a wider audience.

THE SECRET OF WENDELL SAMSON - 1966, 30 min., color, by Mike Kuchar. A personal story of inner turmoil is told in the vocabulary of science fiction, expressionism, and pop-fantasy, entertaining yet sincere and soberly conceived. Mike's achievement here is to integrate camp stylings in a serious and contemplative story, and in this sense it deviates from *Sins of the Fleshapoids* which plays out on a single narrative and aesthetic plain. Starring the artist Red Grooms, *The Secret of Wendell Samson* stands as Mike's overlooked masterpiece, a work that entertains and invents and yet delves deeply into

sombre emotional territory, testifying to the fact that underground cinema was personal cinema.

THE CRAVEN SLUCK, 1967, 23 min. b/w, directed by Mike Kuchar. This film concerns itself with the sordid domestic routines of a typical Bronx married couple, Adel and her office worker husband, Brunswick. Adel, played with over-sexed verve by Floraine Connors, flees Brunswick (Bob Cowan) to seek escape in the arms of a secret lover, Morton, played by George Kuchar. To complicate matters, Morton is married, to a rotund, pill-popping frump called Florence, played by Bob in a cheap wig (that at one point falls into the toilet.) Yet all these complications of the flesh are suddenly rendered inconsequential by a squadron of attacking UFOs that vaporize the leading lady and bring the plot to an sudden halt. The skillful use of music in the Hollywood tradition makes the story come alive and seem almost believable. ... For many years Mike shied away from showing this film as its looseness and unhinged quality grated against his perfectionist tendencies, but the hilarity with which audiences reacted to it on a 1996 tour of the UK changed his opinion and the film as experienced something of a revival. It is precisely this casual quality which makes this gloriously tacky stew of cheap sci-fi and domestic melodrama come to life.

ECLIPSE OF THE SUN VIRGIN - 1967, 10 min., color, by George Kuchar. This is something of an evolution of the diarist style George employed in the earlier *Hold Me While I'm Naked*, and familiar themes of loneliness, futility and the burden of a Catholic upbringing crop up here as well, but it is somewhat more free-form and has a sharper edge to it – literally sharper, as the film ends with found footage scenes of a tracheotomy operation. The main subject again is simply life in the Bronx and the desire to jazz up a drab existence by remaking everyday existence into a movie.

COLOR ME SHAMELESS: 1967 , 30 min., color, by George Kuchar. This film was a psychological exploration of George's longtime friend, Bob Cowan, who plays a lonely, dysfunctional artist searching vainly for companionship and unable to connect with women or interpret their intentions. Increasingly given to bouts of voyeurism, he stumbles and crashes through the world of friends, acquaintances and parties with the oafish, overbearing gait of a silent-era comedian. But despite playful distractions such as the collage of pop-music on the soundtrack and some physical horseplay, this is no comedy but rather a study of the self-loathing and despair produced by the repression of desires.

He is out of place in this world, and the closing scene where he attacks his own painting with a knife seems like a genuine meltdown. As George writes, "This movie was made when I was a bit depressed ... but Bob also happened to be depressed so we had a wonderful time working together." The film was a departure for George who to that point was best known for diarist films like *Hold Me While I'm Naked* (1966) in which he himself was the focal point. In this film he does not appear at all. People who do appear include Bob Cowan, Maren Thomas, Donna Kerness, Hope Morris, Gina Zuckerman and Carla Liss. Also appearing is noted underground filmmaker Ed Emshwiller and Warhol "superstar", Edie Sedgwick who clowns with Bob during a party scene, flashing some of her storied charisma.

TALES OF THE BRONX - 1969, 15 min., b/w. by Mike Kuchar. A tribute to Mike's home town, The Bronx, that oscillates between sexy, sweet and vulgar. Scored with the pop music of the period and cast with his troop of regulars, this plays out as a series of carefully photographed and stylized comic skits. We encounter the kind of everyday scenes that mark the cinema of Mike and George: people taking out the garbage, women looking sexy in a 50s way and the neighbourhood dog humping your leg or taking a dump.

THUNDERCRACK! 1975, D: Curt McDowell, 120 Min., b/w. This 16mm print is generally in good condition. (George did not direct this film but contributed heavily in just about every other capacity from script to acting to make-up and lighting.) Probably the 70's most unique cult film. It resonates with echoes of *Night of the Living Dead*, *The Old Dark House* and *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane* but also includes several hardcore heterosexual scenes (and one gay), reflecting the spirit of sexual anarchy rife in 70's San Francisco. The story involves a group of lost travelers who become stranded one dark stormy night in an old prairie mansion and get together in various combinations (and positions). Fuelled by George Kuchar's melodramatic dialogue, this plays as an ode to the dark delights of voyeurism rather than an essay on the attributes of sexual liberation. Marion Eaton steals the show as the drunk widow of the house and George submits an indescribable performance as a gorilla keeper pursued by his charge. It was a regular feature for years at London's late great Scala cinema in King's Cross. "Genuinely erotic and genuinely frightening"- *Sight & Sound*

MONGRELOID - 1978, 13 min., color, by George. A tribute to George's dog, Bocko, who appeared in so many of the brother's films and was undoubtedly the best known dog in underground cinema. Scored with a lush selection of show tunes, pop songs and unclassifiable audio novelties that hints at George's vast record collection, the film also doubles as a snapshot of his mojo in the late 70's by which time he was comfortably settled in San Francisco. Brief guest appearance by Curt McDowell and others.

BLIPS - 1979, 20 min., b/w, by George Kuchar. A melodrama that depicts the psychological effects of UFOs on unsuspecting San Franciscans. *Blips* is more interested in how UFOs effect personalities and sex-drives than on clichéd scenes of science-fiction mass destruction. Some special effects make an appearance but the focus of this picture is more on melodramatic situations and dialogue, much of it eloquently recited by Marion Eaton. This was part of George's series of films about the UFO phenomenon.

HOW TO CHOSE A WIFE (SIC) - 1980, 10 min., color. Since the early 70's George has taught filmmaking at the San Francisco Art Institute (SAI) where he made a film with every class, one a year. These were essentially exercises in getting everyone in the class involved and on screen in some way although some of these class films defied their humbled budgets and achieved something greater. This one was supervised by George and Deborah Koons and directed by Dan Valentine, with Sam Rojas, Claire Merrill, Joe Tokar, Maxine Carlin and Larry Puchalsky. It can be described as a loose meditation on the rituals of social interaction as dictated by commercial images and religious dogmas. A great 4- minute scene where an earthquake of Biblical dimensions wrecks havoc on a wedding party stands out, and here George's genius with lighting effects, staging and sound becomes apparent.

ASCENSION OF THE DEMONOIDS - 1986, 46 min., color, by George. "A big colorful tapestry of dramatic skits and snatches of images and dialogue that bear on UFO activity - A loose story line weaves in and out of the UFO phenomenon." This was the last of George's UFO films and despite some magical special effects it's full of odd *non sequiturs* – at one point George's mother recites her receipt for pot-roast – and treats the topic in a very free-associative way. This is a very intuitively constructed film and would be of most value in a context that emphasis the evolution of George's filmmaking rather than in a "UFO" program.

FILMS OF BOB COWAN:

Bob is a Canadian artist creating in different mediums. During the 60's he moved to New York where he met and collaborated with George and Mike and where he was also a part of the extended Warhol crowd. He now lives back in Toronto.
Check: http://www.station16.dk/prev.screen.html#Robert_Cowan

For the definitive text on Mr. Cowan

SOUL FREEZE, 1967, 25 min. b/w, A priest is torn by the temptations of the flesh in this exploration of repressed desire. Thematically it is something of a companion piece to *Color Me Shameless* and many of the same people worked on both films (Donna, Hope, Mike and George etc.). There are also stylistic similarities, most notably the fact that it – like most underground films of the period - was made with non-sync sound, meaning that the soundtrack was recorded separately from the images. This compelled filmmakers to rely more on symbolism and associative montage and films were by necessity more abstract in their mode of expression. (About the only way to impose a narrative structure on a film in these circumstances was with – as per *Sins of the Fleshapoids* and *The Craven Sluck* - voice-over narration, which was inherently more 'camp' and would have been ill suited to what Bob and George were attempting to achieve with these two films.) *Soul Freeze* also at times employs techniques that go back to silent cinema, particularly the use of florid hand gestures and facial expressions, somewhat in the style of Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* although executed with less artistry and elaboration here. The 'old fashioned' feeling is further enhanced by the plentiful use of old pen-and-ink drawings of scenes of sex and violence. ... And there is a party scene. Clearly to make an underground film at this point was a social experience, even if the film itself was intended to express an anti-social psychology. It was all about using all your friends and acquaintances as actors, getting good-looking girlfriends to undress (a true act of bohemian daring in 1967) ... getting people over for a party, and shooting and editing intuitively rather than according to the conventions of pre-scripted narrative. ... The film ends with a rapid-fire montage evoking all that (in the priest's mind) is both alluring and grotesque about the nature of flesh. (Note: At one point a grotesque and ludicrous hobo-type figure rolls in the grass attempting to rape a girl. It's a

brief sequence and the figure is unrecognizable but appears to be Bob. If so this constitutes his only appearance in the film.)

ROCKFLOW: 1968, 9 min. color. This 9 minute film is constructed largely of footage Bob shot at The Electric Circus (in NYC) in connection with the opening of a boutique there at which the Chambers Brothers rock band played. Mod fashions are on display as folks pack the dance floor, including Donna Kerness in her trademark antenna headgear and Hopeton Morris who designed their outfits. But what appears to be a straightforward if experimental fashion/dance/rock document changes mid-point into a psychedelic nightmare as the mood turns ominous via an escalation of eerie music. The images grow more hallucinatory and the editing quicker. Donna now reappears in a solitary setting in close-up, swinging giant earrings and staring at the camera as if she's casting a spell. The effect is sinister and trance-like as special effects bombard the screen. A perfect inclusion for any series on the psychedelic craze, the 60's or 60'd rock.

FILMS OF CRAIG BALDWIN:

The San Francisco-based Craig Baldwin is one of America's leading practioneers of "found-footage" filmmaking. Check

[http://www.station16.dk/prev.screen.html#Strange Magic](http://www.station16.dk/prev.screen.html#Strange_Magic) and scroll down for bio info on Craig Baldwin

TRIBULATION 99 - 1991, 48 min., color. This is a found-footage masterpiece that draws snippets of old horror, sci-fi and ed films into its apocalyptic web. 99 mini-episodes of conspiratorial madness pack this 48 minute film, resulting in a tangle of political satire and black comedy which also at times reeks with a sense of real doom. "Craig Baldwin's virtuoso rant is a homemade sci-fi cheapster about U.S. domination of Central America - and one of the most exhilarating underground movies in recent years."(J. Hoberman – *The Village Voice*)..."A kaleidoscope of often hilarious images, *Tribulation 99* will take you on a stunning journey along the planet's collision course with the coming apocalypse" (*Premiere Magazine*)..."Excellent!"(*The Face*)..."A frenetic montage of sampled pulp footage...a political primer masquerading as hyperventilating psychobabble about space aliens and Third World Pinko Flesh-eaters (*Time Out / UK*)

SPECTRES OF THE SPECTRUM - 1999, 90 min., color. Firmly in the Baldwinian mould, this piece deals with the issues of power and control, from the discovery of electricity to the atom bomb and beyond – again focusing on the struggle between individual freedom and corporate domination. The story involves two “telepathic revolutionaries” from 2007 engaged in a battle with the new electromagnetic order. Baldwin injects his experimental narrative with a imaginative platter of found footage delights and surreal plot twists, but more weight is given to narrative coherency here than in *Tribulation 99*.

FILMS OF JON MORITSUGU:

Jon is counted by some as a member of Nick Zedd’s New York based “Cinema of Transgression” of the 80’s, but he never fit neatly into that school. His punk shorts of that decade and subsequent features through the 90s share a similar love of subversion and trash pop-culture, but are much more fully realized, marking him as one of the most intriguing underground filmmakers of that era. With their punk and indie-rock soundtracks, his works are a must for inclusion in any punk festival or focus on teen rebellion.

Check http://www.station16.dk/prev.screen.html#john_moritsugu for bio info.

DER ELVIS - 1986, 23 min., color. Starring Hanna Davidson, Sandra Hamburg, Heidi Mattson and Lisa Guay, with guest appearance by Golden Joe Baker, the world’s most grotesque Elvis impersonator. This wilfully sloppy butchering of the Elvis myth is one of the rawest and most ragged punk films ever made, attacking its subject with all the hack-n-past fury of a fanzine. The film slips and lunges about with the same blind fury that typified Presley’s imagined daily attempts to climb out of the bath tub. It seeks to depict the biology and velocity of his legendary top-heavy crash with grainy images of raw meat, a dead killer shark hoisted onto a dock and food slopped onto a plate. Ironically we have The Kodak Corporation to thank for giving the world one of the most aggressive and caterwauling assaults ever foisted on a movie audience. After Moritsugu had almost completed filming, Kodak, in their corporate arrogance, discontinued their 16mm color reversal print stock without notifying a soul. It seemed *Der Elvis* would never be made until Jon found a round-about way to print it - albeit with a sound loss. "To compensate for this", Jon recalls, "I did a very aggressive

experimental sound-mix - boost the treble, everything "in the red" - by which the sound became a major character in the film." Yikes!

SLEAZY RIDER - 1987, 23 min., b/w. A mangled story of two punk biker chicks taking drugs and terrorizing the innocent. Some brief XXX footage in this disrespectful satire of *Easy Rider*, stars Hanna Davidson, Sam Grisdale with Nancy Versaci as Cruella, Wendy Edwards as The Virgin Mom, Collin Cheer as Addict and Lisa Guay as Tattooed Teen. (Temporarily withdrawn for repair)

MY DEGENERATION, 1989, 67 min., color. An all-girl rock group, *Bunnie Love*, turns corrupt and sells out to the meat industry in Jon's awesomely primitive grunge-punk feature debut. As Michael Weldon's *Psychotronic* notes: "Amanda Jones, the blond bass player, narrates, has visions of cottage cheese and falls in love with a real Pig's head that thinks out loud. The group has a hit with "Beef Rock" on the LP, "Meat is Love" and go on to appear on talk shows and star in comic books. The music (by Vomit Launch, Government Issue, etc.) is great. The experimental techniques (dialogue loops, scratched film stock, negative scenes, crude animation) are effective and the humor is very on target." – In the end Amanda gets killed by a bolt of lightning and her lover is eaten by a dinosaur. A hallmark of punk cinema that makes *Pink Flamingos* look slick in comparison, this functions as both a satire and an homage to the corrupt world of teen music and contains some really rockin' scenes. Jon's most uncompromising work.

TERMINAL U.S.A., 1993, 54 Min., color. Says *Variety* (21-27/02/94) "San Francisco filmmaker Jon Moritsugu turns the American sitcom family on it's head with this post-punk, psychedelic picnic brimming with wholesome depravity and playfully twisted stereotypes. Part of the Independent Television Service's *TV Families* series, this rambunctious volley of flagrantly tasteless humor could whip up a minor cult following, especially in the U.K. and Europe." ...Provocative, perverted and not to say politically incorrect, the finished product gave the producers fits and it was banned from broadcast in most cities, and yet, in that it is Jon's slickest and most technically polished piece, it is probably his most "audience friendly".

MOD FUCK EXPLOSION, 1995, 70 min., color. This heavily stylized tale of teen rebellion (a recurring theme in Jon's work) features a great indie-rock soundtrack, more rotting meat (see *My Degeneration*) and a great dream

sequence. “If Dada artist, Marcel Duchamp and schlock-movie meister Roger Corman got together to make a film, it might come out something like this”... “A wickedly self-conscious send-up of teen angst and the cultural manipulation/exploitation of it...draws inspiration from badly dubbed Japanese films, public service ads and biker gang-movie clichés.” (*LA Weekly*). It offers up gang rumbles, incest, far-out set designs and plot twists that take us into left field. It’s as pretentious, inarticulate and fumbling as teendom itself but never calculated or cynical. To the contrary, it’s actually quite naive and heartfelt with Amy Davis and Desi del Valle submitting memorably nonchalant performances. A film that wanders aimlessly and brilliantly.

FAME WHORE, 1997, 73 min., color. This straight-forward satire on America’s culture of ego presents three different but interwoven stories about the hunger for fame harbored by a pro tennis player, a rich kid and a dog pound worker. Won both “best feature” and “festival choice” awards at the 1997 edition of the New York Underground Film Festival. “*Fame Whore* has enough sight gags and punchy, raunchy pop-dialogue and syncopated filmic rhythms to grab the sophisticated as well as the unsophisticated viewer,” (*Seattle News*)...A guerrilla counterpart to Woody Allen’s *Celebrity*, it’s the most conventional of Moritsugu’s films to date, but not to worry – it’s funny and on the mark...crude, edgy and energetic.” (*Los Angeles Times*)...“Campy, funny, stupid, scary and a lot more real than we’d like to believe.” (*Entertainment Today*)

FILMS OF CORY McABEE:

(Bio from IMDB) “In 1989 Cory McAbee and Robert Lurie formed a partnership called BNS Productions. BNS Productions was the moniker under which their combined efforts were created. The unique nature of their work is represented by a broad range of mediums including live musical performance, recordings, story-telling, live action and animated films, hand-crafted artwork and printed material.” Cory has focused more on film and over the years has built up a global cult following.

THE KETCHUP & MUSTARD MAN – 1994, 33 min., color, D: Cory McAbee. This is a series of musical fables about whimsical creatures that dwell on the fringes of a disturbed imagination, cute but in a very disturbed way. Entertaining, bizarre and oddly infectious. Songs performed Include “Maple Bar,” “Fickey,”

and “Chicken Story.” (Note: Cory was the lead singer in a band known as The Billy Nayer Show which also stood behind a number of underground films including the cult classic listed below, *The American Astronaut*.)

More info at: <http://www.billynayer.com/films/films.shtml> ...& scroll down

THE AMERICAN ASTRONAUT, 2001, D: Cory McAbee, b/w, 35mm with no subtitles and also a print with French subtitles. This slapstick science-fiction musical has gone on to achieve cult status and festival play around the world. Says the *NY Times*: “It’s a terrifically enjoyable piece of filmmaking that demands that you laugh while your jaw drops”... Says the *LA Weekly*: “A sort of musical Indie space-western...beautifully photographed” ...Says *The New Yorker*: “The film is filled with psychotic Astaire-style musical sequences, Three Stooges-esque humor, slimy nightmare imagery and hilarious Flash Gordon inspired space scenes.” A perfect off-beat item for late-night programming slots Lobby posters available. Click on www.americanastronaut.com for more info.

STINGRAY SAM, 2009, D: Cory McAbee, 61 min., 35mm print in new condition. A dangerous mission reunites *Stingray Sam* with his long lost accomplice, The Quasar Kid. Follow these two space-convicts as they earn their freedom in exchange for the rescue of a young girl who is being held captive by the genetically designed figurehead of a very wealthy planet. This film is currently making the rounds of Fantasy film festivals where it has been well received. For more info click on: www.stingraysam.com)

FILMS OF DANNY PLOTNICK:

Plotnick is one of pioneers of modern American grassroots filmmaking. Shooting his first shorts on Super-8, the Michigan native travelled the road showing work in bars, galleries and warehouses, ending up in San Francisco where he continued to shoot film as well as teach workshops, do radio and generally encourage a sense of creative activism. His work here, blown up to 16mm when required, covers a broad range of sensibilities from his early comic and nativist shorts to the silent-moviesque Pipsqueak Pfolies to the transgressive Pillow Talk and the super-stylish and retro-savvy Swinger’s Serenade.

SKATE WITCHES - 1986, 3 min., color, A casual slice-of-life

take on a gang of female skate-boarders taking over the town park. As Danny explains it, "A gang of female Skate Boarders and their pet rats terrorize all the boy skate boarders in town. Shot in an afternoon on glorious Kodachrome."

SUGARBUTTS - 1987, 3.5 min., color, A walk-about tour of a summer outdoor happening with a central focus on ... people's butts. Says Danny: We spent all day filming people's butts at a Midwestern art fair. We shot one roll of film over the course of an afternoon. All the edits were done in camera. The sound was recorded via a 2 track film recording function on my Chinon projector.

DUMBASS FROM DUNDAS - 1988, 7 min., color. "In the middle of the Nevada desert two lunkheads get tossed out of separate cars by their so-called friends. They don't like each, they have problems and they also have a long walk back to town. This film really resonated in the alternative film scene in the late 80s. Very few artsy fartsy film folk were shooting narrative, especially of the angst-filled variety. There was a hunger for this stuff. This predates, but anticipates, the underground film movement that would blossom in the early 90s."

DEATH SLED II: STEEL BELTED ROMEOS - 1990, 10 min., color. Two dim-witted, lead-footed guidos from Bayonne, NJ bust through stoplight after stoplight in their hotrod car terrorizing fellow motorists in this macho fantasy of road-rage American style.

FLIP ABOUT FLIP - 1990, 3.5 min., color, by Danny Plotnick. Inventively manipulated man-on-the-street montage pays tribute to the popular love (or at least awareness) of comedian, Flip Wilson. Says Danny, "A loving tribute to comic genius Flip Wilson. Back before mini dv, making films was a long, arduous, expensive proposition. In reaction to that, I liked making very short films in between longer projects. The idea was that in order to keep the chops honed I would make smaller projects that could be shot in an afternoon on one or two reels of films, thus keeping the costs down. Flip is one of these endeavours. This film was shot in an afternoon with the assistance of Chris Enright handling all the interviews. All told we shot three rolls of film. I think the total cost for the film was \$60, a shockingly low budget for the time."

PILLOW TALK - 1991, 18 min., b/w. A tormented apartment dweller screams at top of her lungs and literally tears down the walls as loudly fornicating and

fighting neighbors drive her to insanity in this claustrophobic slice of urban life. Plotnick's most transgressive work. Screened as part of the Museum of Modern Art's Super-8 retrospective entitled *Big as Life*. Perfect for any series on city life or mental instability.

PIPSQUEAK PFOLLIES - 1994, 24 min., A twisted tale of bad-behavin' children terrorizing a buffoonish adult in the style of silent slapstick comedies, score by Alison Faith Levy. Pipsqueak chronicles in painstaking detail all the crap little kids can get away with. Young at heart and mean in spirit, it's a 24-minute joy-ride. A good physical comedy that won special recognition for surrealism at the Humboldt film festival.

SWINGER'S SERENADE - 1999, 24 min., b/w, Paging through an old copy of an armature film-making magazine from 1960 called *Better Movie Making*, Plotnick found a film script within its mouldy pages and filmed it himself. The finished product comes to life as a steamy low-budget suburban musical complete with fabulous period music and 60's home décor. A do-it-yourself detective story, racy sexual fantasy and lesson in home movie making all wrapped in one. Click: <http://www.hi-beam.net/mkr/dp/dp-bio.html#swingers>

FILMS OF MARTHA COLBURN:

Martha specializes in attack animation – very short, chaotic visual assaults scored to soundtracks of garage band chaos and rant poetry. Based at time of writing in NYC, she is still ultra active. "Her visual spew of punk rock poetry and corrupt collage, rendered in scabrous animation is a perfect marriage of Monty Python and Heironymous Bosch." – *The San Francisco Bay Guardian*.

Check: <http://www.station16.dk/prev.screen.html#Strange> Magic for bio info on Martha
Check her own site as well: <http://www.marthacolburn.com/> which has stills too

ASTHMA – 1995, 2 min., color. An early collage piece on the subject of smoking that incorporates a dizzy rush of found-footage imagery and leaves the viewer wheezy. Says Martha, "A pro-smoking film for non-smokers made from an old smoking film and other footage. Hand-colored/cut-up SUPER smoking while a youngster complains in song form about his parents attempts to control him. A

gasping tune by the Jaunties.” *Exhibition (selected): Museum of Modern Art, NY; Impakt Film Festiv; Utrecht, Holland*

EVIL OF DRACULA - 1997, 1.59 min., color. Ghoulishly grinning talking-heads sprout fangs and leer with a fiendish intensity as they wait for a chance to suck your neck and wallet in this tribute to the evil of Dracula that lurks behind the smiling facade of everyday life. As Ms. Colburn muses, “This animated film in *fangtastic* color is enough to cause a line-up at your local Blood Bank. It was made with home-spun special effects of funnel-vision and hand-colored film and features a blood draining soundtrack by the legendary Lyrical Monster Song Master Jad Fair and musical madman Jason Willett.” One of Martha’s most intense shorts, perfect as a top-off for any Halloween show or focus on vampires..

WHAT'S ON? - 1997, 1.45 min., color. The perverted nature of disposable TV culture seems to be the theme here. As Martha clarifies, “This film is set to the chaos-poetry of New York poet *99 Hooker*. It is a hyper-speed rant on the evils and absurdities of American television. An over-the-top tumble in a TV mindscape in which there are attacking baboons, a mutating Michael Jackson, game shows based on body parts and more. *What's On?* is a flat puppet-collage-paint and hand colored-animated film.”

THERE'S A PERVERT IN OUR POOL! - 1998, 2.09 min., color. Famous modern-day celebrities and politicians are exposed as perverts in this animated clip-art masterpiece that takes place in a virtual swimming pool (with great water effects). Says Ms. Colburn, “This film is set to the crooning rants of Baltimore poet Fred Collins. Lots of nasty and funny events take place in a pool of perverts. The perverts include Bill Clinton, Edgar G.Hoover, dogs, penguins, giraffes in bondage and more. It makes use of Flat puppet/ collage animation.”

LIFT-OFF - 1999, 3.06 min., color. “I was inspired to make this film by a radio talk show suggesting that outer space exploration is little more than man’s desire to fertilize. Through super impositions and animation outer space is seen to be inhabited by luscious female astronauts. Pulsating and floating through the darkness, occasionally encountering phallus-like rockets. Set to a wonderfully spacey electronics song by Jad Fair and J.Willett.” (Note: this distinguishes itself in Martha’s filmography as a “double-screen projection” work. It does stand out

as something different in terms of the materials and processes and has a somewhat more languid & dreamy pace.)

SPIDERS IN LOVE – 2000, 2.30 min., color. A gloriously chaotic take on sex, spiders and various other mutant hallucinations in Martha's traditionally hyperkinetic animated style. As she elaborates, "This is a very complex animated film of the world of the she-spiders. They dance and dash about with ghoulish and gorgeous expressions of lust and consuming hunger. Parts of this film could appear as if Busby Berkley made a nature film as there are so many fabulous legs and complex dance routines. Indications of death and life abound. Musical soundtrack by Red Balune and Jad Fair and J. Willett."

FILMS OF TOM PALAZZOLO

From the 60's through the 80's Tom functioned as Chicago's roving bolex-wielding diarist, recording civic events, parades, ceremonies, riots, protest rallies and other happenings. He also had a soft spot for the host of unusual characters that inhabited the city's mean streets and found ways to document their existences, be it in curious fleeting glimpses or in more sustained portraits such as manifest in Jerrys. His work mixed politics, good cheer, an eye for bizarre juxtapositions and a playful sense of anarchy. In the 70's he turned more toward documentary approaches, investigating various local institutions and cultural phenomenon, always with an engagement and refreshing lack of irony.

"The love of events that bring people together, revealing at once the absurdities and tenderness of the human comedy, plus a sharp eye for Americana, characterize and permeate the Palazzolo films." - Kevin Thomas, The Los Angeles Times

Check more on http://www.lightmillennium.org/biographies/tpalazzolo_bio.html

Tom's films in chronological order:

THE BRIDE STRIPPED BARE - 1967, 12 min., color. A casually-paced portrait of Chicago in action, its stirrings and rhythms, with a focus on the unveiling of Chicago's five-story Picasso. This strange civic ceremony, presided over by the infamous Mayor Daley and the city fathers (and mothers), is captured in a deadpan style. "Symbolically the event was a marriage of the virgin Art to

Politics. His honor winds up the event by publicly raping the statue. The film includes a beautiful 6'8" blonde, Mayor Daley caught with his finger stuck in his ear, and the filmmaker treed by the police, and finally a breathtaking coda, Chicago's final tribute to Picasso and his statue." As is often the case, Tom makes the filmmaking process a part of the story.

AMERICA'S IN REAL TROUBLE: 1967, 15 min., color. This free-wheeling reportage from the street captures all the disconcerting contrasts of patriotic Vietnam-era parades as they move in lock-step through the poverty-ridden ghetto of Chicago's Near Northside. The soundtrack is exclusively composed of music that was heard over the radio that very same moment in time, mostly hillbilly songs that celebrate the arch-conservative virtues of God and Country. The result is an unmediated 'snapshot of the moment' that almost resembles a home movie in its naive pacing and composition, but it is precisely this casual and spontaneous approach that manages to capture the mood, the mentality and the contrasts of the day more effectively than all the staged Hollywood spectacles.

CAMPAIGN: 1968 / 12 min., color. As Tom relates, "...uses the neo-Roman architecture of Chicago (Coliseum, Amphitheatre and Elks Temple) to build an atmosphere of institutional calm, beauty and strength. The benevolent despot, played by Mayor Daley (seen in the film crowned with a green hard hat) staves off the attempted coup of his regime by militant anarchists mistakenly publicized by the press and TV as a protest against the war and the Democratic Convention. Filmed on the streets of Chicago during the '68 Convention."

THE TATTOOED LADY: 1968 (?), 14 min., color. An affectionate tribute to Riverside Park, the Chicago amusement park that catered to generations of Chicago's working class citizens. With an imaginative visual style ahead of its time, the film sets its focus on the story of the Park's tattooed lady. Says Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, "Palazzolo's camera moves from morning to night as the beautiful love story of the tattooed lady and the sword swallower unfolds. He sets the story against the humid atmosphere of the park. From a psychological point of view, this is probably the most complete and emotional of all his films."

LOVE IT / LEAVE IT: 1970, 15 min., color. This film fluidly weaves sound and image together to create an hallucinatory montage of urban America at the height of anti-war demonstrations, but it's as much a salute to the candy-coated excesses of pop-culture as it is to the militarism and divisive politics of the day. Along side police riot-control manoeuvres it includes scenes from a nudist competition and auto show conventions, and pictures inner-city front yards bristling with garish Christmas decorations. Clearly it's more than just a political manifesto. Like most of Tom's work it is light on overt editorial comment and full of contradictory visual sequences which are left to the viewer to sort out. It's a foot-loose search to capture the spirit of the times in all it's ambiguity without imposing the filmmaker's own political agenda, and sometimes that can be done with a single overpowering image - in this case the smiley-faced water tower that is glimpsed toward the end. *Love it / Leave it* also features a hypnotic sound collage that samples Merle Haggards redneck anthem, *Okie From Muskogee*, from which it takes its title.

RICKY AND ROCKY - 1971, 15 min., color, made with Jeff Kreines. This is sociological reportage from the backyard of an inner-Chicago suburb where a wedding shower takes place. "Ricky (Italian) and Roxanne (Polish) arrive at a 'surprise' wedding shower given by Ricky's side of the family. The gifts they receive are held up for the approval of the relatives (who along with the gifts steal the show from the young couple). ... "Palazzolo and Kreines bring compassion and wit to their film about a lower middle class backyard wedding shower; *cinema verite* can be a treacherous form, lending itself to facile and often cruel distortion They respect the well-meaning spirit of the occasion and the genuine gratitude of the honored young couple, yet let us see the rich humor in social gatherings." - *Kevin Thomas, The Los Angeles Times* ... Awards: Ann Arbor Film Festival; Prize from James Broughton, Bellevue Film Festival. Exhibition: Robert Flaherty Film Seminar

HOT NASTY - 1972, 15 min., color. Here Tom casually investigates another institution of Chicago street culture: the massage parlour. Interviews with working girls cast light on their daily routines. Says Tom, "A day at your local massage parlor (Big Bertha's) in Chicago. While talking about the hang-ups of their customers some of the girls act out their own. They also tell their feelings about this sort of work (one of the few 'non-skilled' jobs that pay women a 'decent' wage); although, like waitresses, their salaries are almost all in tips. Through all the strange tales (about their customers) we come to feel a genuine

affection for the girls, and begin to realize that perhaps they are in some way sexual social workers who perform a necessary (?) service for people”

JERRY'S: 1974, 9 min., color. Hilarious action portrait of Jerry Meyers, the last angry man of the American lunch counter who became renown in Chicago for grabbing, pushing, shoving and yelling at customers. “For 29 years Jerry Meyers has screamed and yelled at the customers who came into his deli - the film attempts to explain why people keep coming back for more”. .. “To have captured the essence of Jerry and his deli-in-action proves this filmmaker one of the few who can make the documentary a high art form, comparable to the best portraiture painting; and taking it, possibly, one step farther.” - Larry Jordan, *Judge* ... Awards: Ann Arbor Film Festival and Tour; First Prize (short film category), Bellevue Film Festival.

HE: 1975, 8 min., color. A speed-motion look at the homeless wanderers, misfits and eccentrics that populated Tom's beloved old Chicago - without pity or patronizing. As Tom writes, “Some of the myth-heroes, folk personalities and superstars who have appeared in some of my past films pulsate to the rhythms of Jerry Lee Lewis, Sam the Sham and Bee Bumble and the Stingers. The nude beach scene done in five-below weather was the first film in Chicago to exploit the beauties of the male body (and was for a time censored here).

HEY GIRLS: mid-1970?, 5 min., color, based on a comic strip by Heather McAdams. Heather stars along with her film students in what functions as a light-hearted ‘anti-harassment guide for women.’ ... “This funny look at how women can battle back at creepy guys who ogle them in traffic mixes innocence and street smarts to produce hilarious results.” - Lynn Voedisch, *Chicago Sun-Times*

GAY FOR A DAY: 1976, 10 min., color. A straight-forward documentation of the 1976 edition of Chicago's gay pride parade. The festivities kick off in a party spirit as the camera assumes many points-of-view. Tom takes measure of the participants and floats as well as the crowd reaction and his own involvement as a recorder of the event - at one point he is hit in the face by an egg hurled by a

malcontent spectator. The film ends on a high note with a rousing version of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*, and our founding fathers (in drag) appear in proper Colonial finery, this being America's *Bicentennial*. All very patriotic. Like most of Palazzolo's films, there is a natural pacing and casual sense of observance here, he just shoots what looks interesting and in the process captures the emotional ebb and flow of the day.

SNEAKIN' & PEAKIN': 1976, 15 min., color, made with Mark Rance. "We traveled to Indiana back roads to see and shoot the annual Miss Nude Universe Contest held at a "notorious" nudist camp. They wanted \$15 a head at the gate so we parked down the road and crawled through the brush. Once in, we encountered truckers and hundreds of Sunday photographers straining for a shot at the contestants. Afterwards we joined the quest for stray women willing to pose. After a quick success we headed home with our catch in the can. (This film also contains shots of the Mr. Nude Trucker Contest.)"

I WAS A CONTESTANT AT MOTHER'S WET T-SHIRT CONTEST - 1977, 25 min., color. A hand-held voyage to the center of *Mothers*, a working-class Chicago nightclub that specialized in the fine art of the Wet Tee-Shirt Contest.... "high speed 7250 - sometimes pushed to 3200 ASA – film was used to record three nights at Mother's, a Chicago lounge. The film is both a record of the events there and of my own presence and gradual gaining of access. The last two thirds of the film deals with what was termed the "World's Series" and consisted of winners from previous contests. The second place "loser" (there was only one prize) turns out to be the most interesting person on camera - she speaks philosophically about life as the management fondles money."

RITA ON THE ROPES: 2002, 12 min., b/w. Tom's daughter, Rita, recounts her bad luck with boyfriends, jobs, apartments with a mix of humor, irony and resignation.

FILMS OF GIBBS CHAPMAN

In his capacity as a projectionist, cameraman, negative cutter and sound engineer Gibbs is an essential figure of San Francisco's flourishing independent film scene. His own films tend to be poetic, meditative,

metaphorical reflections on various states of spiritual drift, often spiced with a twist of surreal humor.

Check <http://www.gibbschapman.com/Filmography%20of%20gibbs.htm> for biography and filmography

Check: <http://www.gibbschapman.com/gibbs%20chapman.htm> for stills on the lower three films.

MEET THE THINKIN' FELLERS – 1992, 7 min., b/w, A portrait of the legendary San Francisco band, *The Thinkin' Fellers*. Members of the band appear in fleeting vignettes as the group's music provides the musical accompaniment. No dialogue or narration. Gentle, poetic, surreal, humorous...

THE INTELLECTUAL – 1996, 3min., color. A found film of a British sewer worker is transformed into a more profound questioning of the human spiritual condition. As Gibbs states, "There are but a few brave men willing to explore the dangerous ideas that can bring them down. When opening Pandora's boxes, one must adhere to the appropriate safety procedures or face certain fatal falls. ... This short film has participated in many programs of re-contextualized found material and screened at San Francisco's Castro theater as part of the Docker's Independent film festival 1998, The Minna street Gallery's *pretty but stupid* series in 1998 and is included in most of Mr. Chapman's body of work shows. It also screened at the SF Cinematheque's post-industrial speculations, March 13th, 2003

YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK, 1997, 3 min., "Occasionally, one wonders what 'democratic' processes accomplish. In *Your Tax Dollars at Work* a moment of legislative nonsense prompts the obvious follow-up question: What are we paying these people for? In addition, the precision razor applied to this found material is meant to draw attention to the changing nature of evidence in our mediated and technological times. ... This short film has participated in many programs of re-contextualized found material such as *Outsiders 16* at Filmhuis, Arnhem Holland and *Doverfest*, Belfast Ireland, *Zoobizarre*, Bordeaux France and also screened at the SF Cinematheque's post-industrial speculations, March 13th, 2003.

TURBINE: RUSSIAN SCISSORS, 2002, 4 min., color. Apparently unconnected street scenes from San Francisco's inner Mission district play out to an intriguing low-key musical score which ends as an umbrella takes flight. All original photography. As Gibbs relates, "A commissioned alternative 'music video' for (firstly) DVD release, to accompany a musical piece called *Russian Scissors* by the euro-trash parody techno ensemble, *Turbine*. The band's only suggestion was that the piece visually contain some reference to a pre-elite-seized San Francisco, and with this in mind, "out came the box of miscellaneous SF singularities and urban landscapes."

UNDERGROUND DOCUMENTARIES:

THE WEATHER UNDERGROUND: 2003, D. Sam Green, color, 35mm print is in excellent condition. Thirty years ago a group of young American radicals announced their intention to overthrow the U.S. government. Fuelled by outrage over the Vietnam War and racism in America, they went underground during the 1970s, bombing targets across the country. They fought pitched battles with police on Chicago's city streets, bombed the U.S. Capitol building and broke acid-guru Timothy Leary out of prison. They attempted to incite a national revolution while successfully evading one of the largest FBI manhunts in history. Nominated for an Oscar in the documentary category, Sam Green's film interweaves extensive archival material with modern-day interviews to present a balanced and nuanced examination of the group. As former members reflect candidly about the idealistic passion that drove them to "bring the war home," these troubled and revolutionary times come back into focus and unexpected parallels to the current world situation are drawn. The film also delves into related movements, such as The Black Panthers. More info on www.theweatherunderground.com

THE YOUNG LORDS FILM (aka EL PUEBLO SE LEVANTA) – 1971, b/w, 42 minutes, by the newsreel group. By the 1960s one-third of the population of Puerto Rico had moved to the United States in search of the American dream, drawn by US propaganda that promised them a better life. Instead they found slum housing, poor education, low-paying jobs and constantly rising

unemployment in a society that was determined to destroy their cultural identity. This film traces the history of the Puerto Rican struggle by focusing on the The Young Lords Party, a Chicago street gang that became increasingly more political and took up the cause of their people in various American cities. A Newsreel crew in New York City worked closely with the Lords for a year and a half to make this film, participating in and recording the events. The occupation of a church in Spanish Harlem, which was later retaken by the police, serves as the narrative focal point of this deeply political yet also entertaining and life-affirming movie.

PEOPLE'S PARK: 1969, 25 min., b/w, made by the San Francisco newsreel group. This is a fiercely and unapologetically partisan version of the People's Park protests of May 1969. It not only captures the famous incident – the street battles between the people of Berkeley intent on defending a park they had created and the police and national guard acting on behalf of the property owners – but does so in a radical style of filmmaking that sought to shed light on aspects of the story ignored by the major media outlets. "Protest cinema" at its most incendiary.

MISCELLANEOUS FEATURE FILMS BY OTHER FILMMAKERS:

HIGHWAY OF HEARTACHE, D: Greg Wild, 1994, 86 min., color, Canadian
Greg Wild's massively entertaining Country-&-Western drag musical is infused with a love of camp but also doubles as a scathing comment on a conservative Christian Right not so far removed from Sarah Palin (who the lead character resembles to a vague degree). To put it bluntly it's a film about bigotry, racism, hypocrisy, sexual guilt and misogyny that you can dance to. Employing the Sirk-style conventions of 50s melodrama, we follow Wynona Sue's as she suffers tragedy after tragedy in a low-budget never-never land of whacky expressionist sets. Though her life is one constant nightmare, her eternal optimism coupled with an undying love for God and a good heartbreak country song keeps her a goin'. Full of eye-popping costumes and set designs and offering up some genuinely fabulous music, *Highway of Heartache* was a hit at its Toronto Film

Festival launch and would be a perfect inclusion in any series on gay or camp cinema or any focus dedicated to oddball musicals..

HATED: G.G. ALLIN & THE MURDER JUNKIES, 1992, D: Todd Phillips, 52 min., color. This film documents the life and loner philosophies of America's last real punk, the notorious G.G. Allin. By incorporating rape, (simulated we assume but not for lack of trying) defecation and self mutilation (not simulated) into his performances, GG attempts to break down the barriers of rock-n-roll. "My mind is a machine gun, my body is the bullets and the audience is the target" he rhapsodizes at one point in the film. Misfit, outcast, convict and close friend of serial killer John Wayne Gacy, Allin embodied everything punk professed to be about. The film is a gripping recreation of the chaos of his musical performances and the nihilism of his life. A definite must for any series on punk or rock music or underground documentaries... "Wryly funny at times, all-too-frighteningly real at others... *Hated* makes *Cocksucker Blues* look like *Bambi*" (*Screw*)... "A compelling study of self-loathing and violent transformation" (Chuck Stephens/*S.F. Bay Guardian*)
(**Note:** to stretch out *Hated* to feature film length we often screen it with *Lonely Boy*: see our "Compilation Theme Shows catalog.)

SABBATH IN PARADISE: 1996, 85 min., color. D: Claudia Heuermann. With appearances and music by John Zorn, Michael Alpert, Frank London, Andy Statman and others. This is a documentary about orthodox Jewish musical traditions on the Lower East Side of New York and how these traditions have been updated and reconstituted by a generation of young Jewish musicians who form part of the avant-garde jazz scene. On one hand we experience Klezmer music, which represents one aspect of orthodox Jewish culture, and on the other we experience jazz and avant-garde music as an expression of another Jewish consciousness that is not necessarily tied to religion or conventional tradition. The film examines the frictions between religious and personal identity and the way these contrasting values play out in the arena of musical expression.

WILD WHEELS: D. Harrod Blank, 1992, 62 min., color. A comic, revealing and at times touching (and always entertaining) exploration of "art cars:" personally customized automobiles which reflect the individualistic spirit of their owners. Traveling across the country in his own wildly decorated WV bug, Blank

– son of Les Blank - discovers a memorable cast of real-life characters who are obsessed with transforming their cars into mobile works of art. We witness 46 different cars that have been customized in an astonishing variety of ways that reflect the strange mental conditions and emotional histories of their drivers, from a man who has covered his car with a living layer of grass to one who has turned his into a temple dedicated to his dead wife. With a feel somewhere between David Byrne's *True Stories* and Werner Herzog's *Stroszek*, but told in an orthodox documentary style, *Wild Wheels* is a sympathetic, deadpan celebration of oddball Americana. "One of the most joyous movie experiences in some time...lots of fun" (*San Francisco Chronicle*: "Exhilarating..." (*Village Voice*) "An entertaining and often hilarious road movie that also touches upon the extremely personal and sometimes sad tragedies that lie at the base of this obsessive behavior." (*Miami Herald* 11.92)

Note: IN THE LAND OF THE OWL TURDS, Blank's earlier featurette is also available. Made in 1987, it is 30 minutes long and also on 16mm. An eccentric comedy about a mal-adjusted neurotic seeking the right woman, it premiered and was well received at the Berlin film festival.

MISCELLANEOUS SHORT FILMS FROM VARIOUS DIRECTORS:

MEET THE MONTOYAS – 1988, D: Andy Podell, 20 min., color. This surreal satire is set in one of New York City's Latin 'hoods. It deals with family life and the disappointment of a mother whose son's obsession with an opera diva threatens to destroy her carefully crafted illusions of middle-class normalcy. A joyously stylized and luridly colored fable on repressed desire, pic also boasts excellent sound design and music. This is a very polished and professionally crafted film and would be a perfect addition to any focus on opera, camp cinema or modern expressionism.

BUMP AND GRIND: 2006, 14 min., b/w, by Ian Sundahl. A trip to San Francisco's Market Street porn cinema turns into a process of sensory overload and deterioration. Pornography as an all-consuming black hole perhaps. A disorienting experience scored to a soundtrack of old school blues... intense

and intensely dirty if ever ambiguous, *Bump and Grind* contributes at no point to political discussions about porn. No actual explicit footage is shown.

HATED: G.G. ALLIN AND THE MURDER JUNKIES - 1992, 55 min., D: Todd Phillips. (See more extended description above) Graphic documentary about the life & crimes of America's last real punk rock anti-star. "Wryly funny at times, all-too-frightening real at others...*Hated* makes *Cocksucker Blues* look like *Bambi*" (*Screw*)..."A compelling study of self-loathing and violent transformation"(Chuck Stephens/*S.F. Bay Guardian*)

SIAMESE TWIN PINHEADS – 1972 / 6 min., b/w, D: Curt McDowell. McDowell and pal Mark Ellinger do their Siamese twin pinhead act – perverse, repulsive, perhaps even oddly enchanting in a very skewered way. The two were active participants in San Francisco's rebellious underground film scene of the 70's (McDowell also directed *Thundercrack!*)

BEHIND EVERY GOOD MAN – 1966, 8 min., D: Nikolai Ursin, b/w, This home movie style docu-drama about a day in the life of a negro transvestite is at once heartfelt and naive. Shot in mid-60's Los Angeles, it exudes a low budget "on the street" authenticity and figures as a poetic ode to love affairs that start in donut shops and end in heartbreak. Primitive in the best sense with a soundtrack composed of confessional narration and pop songs that seem to have been recorded off a transistor radio.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF BONNIE CONSOLO – 1975, 17 min., color, D. Barry J. Spinello. Touching yet startling documentary treatment of a day in the life of Bonnie Consolo, a woman born without arms but who manages to become a normal suburban housewife. Nominated for an Oscar (in 1976)

HARDCORE HOME MOVIE – 1987, 6 min., b/w, D: Greta Snider. This energetic fast-motion document of San Francisco punk scene in 1987 contains a fractured mix of verbal testimonials and mug-shot style portraits of concert going punks, and brief footage of a Bad Brains concert. Captures the youth and anarchy of the scene. Brief, potent.

BABY DOLL – 1982, 3 min., b/w, D:Tessa-Hughes Freeland. Impressionist document of New York's strip club, The Baby-Doll Lounge.

PLAYBOY VODOO - 1991, 10 min., color, By Tessa-Hughes Freeland and Ela Troyano. Public sex culture meets personal desire/response in a lubricated experimental stew of super-imposition, slide dissolves, double exposures and other optic effects - with soundtrack by John Zorn. The film has had a fairly long gestation period and was originally was simply known as *Playboy*. As Tessa states, "it was originally intended to be a loop film (played in a) peep show where people would enter a booth, insert money into a slot and watch various sections of film. ...I wanted to have a booth with a rubber curtain and a mirror and then this film – so the viewer could see themselves watching it (a kind of parody of a porno peep show booth) – it is a suggestion of a dream or a hypnotic fantasy ... the basic theme is that of voyeurism and violence; exploiting them in such a way that certain humorous elements are brought to the fore. By not using any self-made footage but carefully choosing certain visual clichés, such as the angst-ridden face or an anticipating female face, and combining them with old porn films, boxing films, Westerns and adventure and horror films, the specificity of the act of violence attains a level of generality whereby it no longer has an impact – as it may in isolation – but becomes reduced to a gestural code. The images themselves become more important for their cinematic impact than for their meaning. "*Playboy* has a very throwaway look to it. Knowing that re-photography always includes a certain degree of image deterioration, I deliberately chose films that were already slightly deteriorated in some way or another; bleached, scratched, etc. The left-in leaders, the backwards words and the mixing of b/w and color film and the use of gels are (meant) to indicate a fleeting look towards disposability and disrupted chaos, as exists in dreams." ... In 1991 *Playboy* was reworked with Ela as an Expanded Cinema piece and became *Playboy Voodoo*. During this period they had been doing lots of multiple projection shows together in various clubs and spaces around New York, "using projectors like musical instruments." Ela was old friends with the avant-garde musician John Zorn and had for years been doing mixed-media gigs with him. As she explained in Jack Sargeant's *Deathtripping*, "the way I work manipulating projectors is a direct result of playing his musical compositions on slide projectors with a "trio" of visual artists in the early 80's." It was Zorn's sound composition *Spillane* that was used to score the film, or rather a 10 minute segment of it. Some x-rated moments.

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF 9413 - A HOLLYWOOD EXTRA - 1928, 10 min., b/w, music on CD supplied. This famous surrealist short by Robert Florey and Slavko Vorkapich is the first of the American films to show the influence of

German Expressionism and the French avant-garde films of the Twenties. It's a satiric fantasy about a man who wants to become a Hollywood movie star. He gets a number - 9413 - stamped on his forehead and begins his career. In spite of visions of grandeur he is a failure. He dies of starvation and ascends to heaven where an angel wipes the number from his forehead and he again becomes human. Slavko Vorkapich, later renowned for his montage work with major studios, designed the sets in the style of *Caligari*. Gregg Toland who would go on to photograph *Citizen Kane* assisted Vorkapich in shooting, and Robert Florey who wrote the screenplay for *Frankenstein* and directed *Coconuts* and *Beast With Five Fingers* co-directs with Vorkapich from their own screenplay. "This avant-garde experimental short was shot largely in Vorkapich's kitchen using cut-out miniatures; it is a masterpiece of low budget art and a timepiece of Hollywood cynicism." -*Pacific Film Archive*.

MYSTERY OF THE LEAPING FISH - 1916, 20min., b/w. Scenario by Tod Browning, Supervised by D.W. Griffith. Douglas Fairbanks Sr. stars as "Coke Ennyday" in this bizarre & wildly entertaining "drug comedy" that was broadly revived in the seventies on the Midnight Movie circuit. It was very much a movie of its time: Fairbanks plays an unhinged Sherlock Holmes style sleuth who tracks down dope dealers in Chinatown and rescues the white woman, Bessie Love, from miscegenation as she's on the brink of a forced marriage to "Fishy Joe" - a chinaman. ... Fairbanks hilariously overplays the role of hopped-up dope-addict detective, constantly injecting himself with a giant hypodermic when his energy tarries. He eats gobs of opium with relish, blows small hills of powdered coke around, and, at a seaside resort, goes zooming off across the water after the villain on a rubber fish after injecting it with coke. This film is always a hit with audiences. A CD soundtrack of up-tempo old jazz numbers comes with the print.

SWELTER IN VOGUE - 1991, 10 min., b/w, by Galen Young. An atmospheric tribute to the power of pain, pleasure, voyeurism, S&M and the daily exchange of goods and services in the modern age of instantaneous video recordings. Soundtrack by Blackhouse, starring Joe Hermann (of the Jim Rose Circus), Mark Arm (of Mud Honey), Timmi Harrop and Amenda Trevor.

IN THE LAND OF THE OWL TURDS - 1987, 30 min., color, D: Harrod Blank. An eccentric comedy about a mal-adjusted neurotic seeking the right woman.

Was well received at the Berlin film festival. (Blank's better known WILD WHEELS about weirdo car culture, is also available)

LONELY BOY – 1962, 27 min. b/w, Produced by Canadian Film Board, directed by Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroiter. With Danish sub-titles. A landmark *cinéma-vérité* style documentary that seeks to explore the world of boyish pop idol Paul Anka. Anka plays concerts, meets his fans and philosophizes. While he croones up on stage teenage girls weep and shake in spasms of joy at the sight of their idol. *Lonely Boy* attempts to capture the irreverent spirit of the pop lifestyle and its loose spontaneous feel would come to influence almost every subsequent rock documentary. Perfect for any focus on documentaries, rock music or youth culture. (**Note:** We often play this film with *very* different *Hated* to make a feature-length show on the phenomenon of rock stardom. See “Beauty Meets the Beast” in our Compilation Theme Shows list.)

TERMINUS – 1961, 45 min., b/w. John Schlesinger’s unmediated documentary of the daily comings and goings at London’s Waterloo train station. The film won first prize in its category at the Venice Film Festival and proved to be the kick-off to Schlesinger’s career.

O DREAMLAND – 1953, 13 min., b/w, D: Lindsay Anderson. Produced by the British Film Institute, photographed by John Fletcher. This documentary about a day in the life of the “funfair” (aka amusement park) in Margate, England was an important contribution to the British “Free Cinema” movement of the fifties but Anderson’s intentions with the film are hotly debated. Was he paying affectionate tribute to the joys of the working class or is it a scathing critique on the shabbiness of modern life with all its fakery and bad food? You decide...

ASSEMBLY LINE: 1961, 30 min., b/w, written & directed by Morton Hellig. This intimate and starkly photographed narrative tells the tale of factory worker Eddie Ryan who throws himself into the neon glitz of downtown Philadelphia on his night off, thinking a wallet full of cash will buy him excitement, companionship and meaning in life. To his distress he finds all the invitations and come-ons to a good time are a con and a fraud. He can spend his money but it buys him nothing - he manages to connect with no one and meaningful interaction with other human beings eludes him. An early protest against the emptiness of consumer culture.

BUSTER KEATON: Four “2-reelers,” each one 20 minutes long, b/w with musical soundtracks and introductory texts telling about the historical significance of Keaton: titles: **THE BALLOONATIC** (1923), **THE BLACKSMITH** (1922), **ONE WEEK** (1920) and **COPS**. All 16mm.

DOUBLE-SCREEN PROJECTION PREFORMANCES:

(1) EROTIC HOME MOVIES: AN AMBIENT COMPOSITION IN 4 ACTS

Composed of four (creditless) films from 1968, in total runs approximately 70 to 80 min., vivid colors on display with all sound provided on CD.

Synopsis: This program celebrates the armature soft-core sex cinema that briefly flourished in San Francisco at the end of the 60’s. It was a fleeting point in time when censorship barriers were falling and anyone with a 16mm camera who could get their friends or lovers to disrobe could make films and get them shown in theatres to a paying public. Shot in living rooms, backyards and on a secluded stretch of beach, they represented the nexus between risqué home movies and the commercial hardcore fiction features that would soon follow and render them obsolete. Infused with a playful, armature spirit and the awkwardness of real life, they take on added charm when accompanied by the lush lounge and pop-music soundtrack that we have custom designed to heighten the sense of pure mood & atmosphere. This is a historical look back 40 years ago to a more innocent time and what was truly a “people’s cinema.”

Synopsis of individual films follows:

A DAY AT THE BEACH, 6 min. Two naked girls spend a day on a beautiful California beach exploring the possibilities... **COSMETICS SALES LADY COMES A CALLING**, 8 min, A lesbian drama unfolds as a sales lady drugs unsuspecting housewife and ties her up. In the end it appears our victim wasn’t so unsuspecting after all... **A GIFT FOR SANTA**, 8 min. A lady wakes up to find Santa has arrived. He plies her with sexual aids and suggestive food goods like bananas and salami. Great 60’s home decor is on display along with one of the tackiest Santa’s in memory... **PUMPKIN AT THE HALLOWEEN PARTY**, 48 min. A large cast of guys and gals celebrate Halloween at a backyard pool party. They bob for apples and dance and goof around, quickly shedding their bizarre

costumes to engage in nude swimming and amorous interactions that eventually lead to simulated sex acts. Fluid camera work, lurid colors, and good looking go-go dancing girls make this film stand out. The double-screen format, (see *technical specs* below) imbues the film with a free-floating and at times kaleidoscopic quality while the music turns it back into the “party film” that it actually was to start with. An authentic document of the liberal attitudes of the period that oozes with a 60’s vibe.

The Music: The first 3 films are scored with lounge music simply to enhance mood. The last film (*Pumpkin...*) features a cast of about 10 guys and gals and has more of a danceable party vibe. For this we have chosen the kind of rock, pop and movie music of that very same late 60’s period that we imagine these groovy semi-hippie (biker-chick? go-go dancer?) gals and guys might have been listening to anyway.

Previous Screenings: cinemas and galleries in London (Horse Hospital), Birmingham (7-Inch Cinema), Copenhagen (CPH documentary festival), San Francisco (Yerba Buena Arts Center) & Los Angeles (The Silent Movie Theater) with upcoming shows scheduled at The Nova cinema in Brussels and at Rotterdam’s WORM multi-media gallery in October of 2009.

Technical specifications: show starts with one image full screen, then after about 35 minutes a second image appears of about 1/3rd screen size, centered/lower, and both play in this combination until the original image ends, and then the second smaller image is enlarged to take up the full screen. All sound is loose-sync music on CD.

(2) RUMINATIONS ON LSD

Main film is from 1968, total duration of program is about 40 min.,

Synopsis: In 1968 the U.S. Navy filmed a sergeant lecturing to (unseen) sailors about the perils of LSD. Our “expert” drones on. He knows little about his subject. He quickly seems to lose concentration and interest and drifts off into an absurd monologue. This plays on screen left with sound. ...On screen right a diverse onslaught of found-footage plays, including a condensed version of the puppet-toon classic *Karius and Baktus*, volcano eruptions, the grinning visage of a smoking test-dummy, surgical films, monster movie outtakes and much more. All of this speaks to screen right in some intuitive and completely happenstance fashion, at times complimenting the confused state of mind of the lecturer and at times creating new unrelated associations. This loose stream of footage also mercifully gives the viewer something else to concentrate on when needed, and

at times perhaps hints in free associative fashion at the absurdity, horror and wonder that might (or might not) be bound up in the LSD experience. The horror movie footage is not without precedent in this context, echoing Roger Corman's *The Trip* where a drugged Peter Fonda wanders amongst the sets of campy old horror movies, discovers his own corpse, etc. The metaphor is all too obvious: while in a drugged state people become possessed, they change into Frankenstein's and Wolfman's and they become zombies, enslaved by evil unseen forces.

Technical Specifications: Two equal sized images play side-by-side on the screen with sound coming only from machine projecting screen left.

END INDIE-UNDERGROUND FILE