ISSUE 12
VOL. 2

one one

Filmmakers Journal

TRASH! EXPLOITATION! CULT!

Free

Issue 12: Trash, Exploitation and Cult Volume 2

Where volume one focused on Exploitation cinema and the appropriation of its tropes in commercial and art cinema, this volume changes tact, exploring themes of film exhibition and the Carnivalesque.

The first two articles are dedicated to the former theme. In these articles James Riley and Amelia Ishmael explore the exhibition of underground cinema. From the film festival to the ad hoc DIY screening, these articles adventure into the sometimes foreboding landscape of film screenings. The following articles explore the topic of the carnivalesque, both as an expression of working class culture and queer excess. Frances Hatherley opens up this theme with an article on the TV show *Shameless* exploring the demonisation of the working classes in Britain and mode of politicisation and defiance embedded in the TV show itself. Through Frances' article, we discover in *Shameless*, not the somber working class of Mike Leigh or Ken Loach, but the trailer trash of John Waters. Appropriately, therefore, this articles is swiftly followed by a discussion between James Marcus Tucker and Juliet Jacques on Rosa von Praunheim's *City of Lost Souls*; a film that wallows in the carnivalesque decadence of queer life. *City of Lost Souls* is a film that springs from a tradition of queer cinema with obvious parallels with the works of Paul Morrissey, Jack Smith, George and Mike Kuchar and John Waters. In these films the life of queers and freaks are not sanitised and "politically corrected", but celebrated in their debased glory. Continuing our homage to this tradition of queer carnivalesque exaltation we pay tribute to two of its extraordinary female stars. Melanie Mullholland and Bradley Tuck interview Mink Stole to discuss her acting, film roles, theatre and music. Melanie Mulholland follows this with a tribute to the recently deceased Susan Tyrrell, star of *Forbidden Zone* and *Cry-Baby*, which is accompanied with art work by Jonny Negron. Finally we close this issue with two articles focusing on a film director, who could arguably be seen as the consummation of this tradition, Bruce LaBruce.

Our journey into the depths of trash, exploitation and cult cinema has brought us to a vast cacophony of different films: gore, commercial exploitation homages, the spaghetti western, blaxploitation, portraits of the working classes in British TV shows and queer cinema. What unites these films is not that they are all utter rubbish (some of them are, in fact, great films), but that they challenge our conventions of taste. In light of this, *trash cinema* is not so much bad low budget movies, but emerges alongside commercial and art cinema, often interplaying and influencing each other. If films like *Jaws* and *Kill Bill* are exploitation films gone mainstream, the films of Paul Morressey, Rosa von Praunheim, Ralph Bakshi and Glauber Rocha appropriate trash aesthetics and exploitation tropes for artistic and political commentary. In this respect trash is not so much a genre, but an emphasis; a way of looking at film that persistently calls us to address and reassess the meaning of taste, pleasure, class and culture. Trash is persistently caught between entertainment and experimentation; between reaction and subversion. Trash is a fluid category that calls for persistent critique and dynamic thought. Enjoy!

Contents

04
White Walls and Empty Rooms:
A Short History of the Fleapit
James Riley

12
The Chicago Underground Film Festival
Amelia Ishmael

24
Defensive Pleasures:
Class, Carnivalesque and Shameless
Frances Hatherley

31
City of Lost Souls
An interview with Juliet Jacques
James Marcus Tucker

39
From Cult to Cabaret:
An Interview with Mink Stole
Bradley Tuck and Melanie Mulholland

48
Tyrell & Back
Susan Tyrell Obituary
Melanie Mulhullond

51
Gerontophila
Bruce LaBruce

58
Interview with Bruce LaBruce
Nick Hudson

Issue 12 Volume 2
Published December 2013
Cover image by Melanie Mulholland
Logo and template design: Benoit Schmit, www.buenito.com
Website Design: Mikolaj Holowko
Layout: James Marcus Tucker
Editors: James Marcus Tucker, Bradley Tuck, Nick Hudson
Thanks to Greg Scorzo and Hazel Hay for their work with proof reading

Search Facebook for One+One: Filmmakers Journal or tweet us @OnePlusOneUk
Email: info@oneplusonejournal.co.uk

One+One has been produced collaboratively by a group of Brighton-based filmmakers, with internationally based contributors and writers and is a not-for-profit project. Visit our website at www.oneplusonejournal.co.uk for back issues and our regularly updated blog.

White Walls and Empty Rooms:

A Short History of the Fleapit

James Riley

Poster of The Wild Angels (1966)

The best and most exciting films are, beginning with Melies and Fantomas, the films shown in local fleapits, films which seem to have no place in the history of cinema.

-Ado Kyrou, Le Surréalisme au cinéma (1963).[1]

Strange Projects

In 2003 Headpress published *Land of a Thousand Balconies*, a book by "film archaeologist" Jack Stevenson. It wasn't a genre book or film-guide but a personal history of cult movies, film exhibitions and the strange circumstances that arise when film and space collide. Stevenson, a self-confessed film 'purist', is a writer, film-collector and projectionist. From the late 80s onwards, he was involved in the underground film scenes of various American and European cities, specialising in "one-off film happenings"; guerrilla screenings that involved strange films, beat-up projectors and the walls of whatever basement or ballroom he'd been able to blag for the evening. These events - part film show, part concert – inhabited the post-modern grey area of 'sleaze' and 'trash'. Existing somewhere between the barroom and the art gallery they were low brow offerings of "porn and gore" programmed with the scholarly eye of the film historian. Too extreme for 'normal' cinemas, and too populist for the avant-garde, the shows occupied a troubling fold somewhere between these polarities.[2]

According to the book, Stevenson started putting on film shows when he was living in Boston after attending events organized by the local film group Rear Window. On one occasion their screening of *The Wild Angels* (1966) at "Chet's Last Call" (a rough downtown bar) started late, much to the vociferous annoyance of the biker contingent in the audience. "I thought it was great," remembers Stevenson, "real Hell's Angels threatening to beat-up the projectionist. This was excitement. I was ready to book shows, make flyers and lose lots of my own money into the bargain."[3]

> **" low brow offerings of 'porn and gore' programmed with the scholarly eye of the film historian "**

Soon after reading this I started to do events too. Using the name Fleapit, I put on screenings of what my posters hyperbolically called "the very best in bad movies": trash horror films, B-movies, Japanese creature features, weird infomercials and kung-fu epics. For 6 years (2003-2009) I showed this stuff in pubs, cellars, lecture theatres, art spaces and old factories. I notched up two low-budget film tours, developed an unhealthy obsession with the work of Ed Wood and experienced all the trials and tribulations that Stevenson recounts: bad nights, hostile crowds and empty pockets.

"Why?" This was the question I'd hear most often when I was trying to convince some provincial film-club to let me turn-up and show *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959). It was also the question I'd ask myself when, after finally managing to set up the gig, after driving for a few hours to get to a clubhouse in the middle of nowhere, after setting up all the equipment, I'd invariably end-up alone in a small room of empty seats waiting for an audience that was never going to show up. What follows is a brief attempt to answer this question. I've called it a "history", but I mean this more in the sense of a self-administered "case-history".

Still from Plan 9 from Outer Space

The quotidian details of this type of project are boringly administrative: phone-calls, e-mails and paperwork. What's more interesting is the strange mindset that these screenings depend upon and make manifest. Obsessive, self-curated events, particularly those of the under-the-radar, interstitial variety are very rarely about attracting and pleasing an audience.

Still from The Smallest Show on Earth

Still from The Street Fighter's Last Revenge

Consciously or not, they have more to do with vanity, narcissism or the introspective flipside of these personality traits. Film projection in these hermetic contexts is invariably a simultaneous act of psychological projection: the selection and exhibition of a film that serves to externalise a facet of the curator's psyche. As Stevenson notes of Rear Window, it wasn't "a service or organization or club in any normal sense" but an "obsession, a phantom, a state of mind", a "crease" in the brain of its chief organizer David Klieler.[4] Any audience that this type of demonstration attracts sees a film but also enters into an entire worldview, a domain in which they have no choice but to sit and observe the emergent tulpa.

Cultural fold to neuronic crease. By offering my own project up for analysis along the line of this continuum I'm conscious that I'm venturing into the realms of subjective indulgence. I do this cautiously but also intentionally. Looking back to Fleapit in the light of the film culture that influenced it and the similar screening groups I've since encountered – either first hand or through research – foregrounds a peculiar consistency. The exhibition and consumption of what can be broadly termed 'cult cinema' is in part characterized by a recurrent concatenation of 'bad' films, unconventional spaces and a loser aesthetic of disastrous events, failed events and events that pass by unnoticed. If we are to understand *cult* cinema as a form that, by definition, invites 'worship' then its consideration needs to attend not just to the 'text' projected or observed but also to these wider zones of experience that allow the project of worship to take place.[5] My discussion of Fleapit is offered in the spirit of this strategically subjective mode of enquiry. More specifically, I guess I'm still trying to understand the viral effect of Stevenson's sub-clausal reference to "excitement". What does this mean and how can it offer a bridge between witnessing someone else's chaos and the irresistible urge to repeat it for yourself?

Cinema Space

'Flea-pit' is British slang for a shabby, low-rent "allegedly verminous pace of public assembly".[6] It's been used to describe theatres since the turn of the century and began to be widely applied to cinemas in the 1930s. In this context, the word worked as an index of the transformations occurring in the cinema industry as a whole. In the years following the First World War, urban and suburban cinemas peppered the UK leading to the emergence of three main franchises by the mid to late 1930s: ABC, Gaumont and Odeon. These companies operated chains of cinemas and in doing so dominated the distribution of first-run film titles. In the face of this competition, smaller companies and independent cinemas were unable to maintain the increased standards of auditorium size, opulent interiors and luxury facilities. As a result, they faced either closure or relegation to "secondary status".[7] Basil Dearden's *The Smallest Show on Earth* (1957) captures this market division in its presentation of the family run "flea-pit", the Bijou Kinema facing off against the aggressively mercantile Grand (in reality, the former Gaumont Palace in Hammersmith).[8]

" not just low standards of architecture and maintenance but also an analogous sense of artistic and moral decrepitude "

For those that managed to survive this competition, existence within the 'relegated' zone depended upon diversification. Particularly in the post-1945 period, 'classic', 'revival' and 'repertory' cinemas emerged as well as cinemas showing newsreels and cartoons. These specialized cinemas carved a separate sector of film exhibition that offered an alternative to the major product streams. In the case of Soho's Corniche Cinema Club and the Eros Cinema this specialization extended to sex and exploitation films. It was this programming style coupled with the reputation of venues like the Eros for acting as pick-up joints that caused 'flea-pit' to signify not just low standards of architecture and maintenance but also an analogous sense of artistic and moral decrepitude.[9] As with parallel terms like 'grindhouse', associated with the cinema milieu of 42nd Street in New York, 'flea-pit' came to signal a material as well as an aesthetic specificity: a certain *type* of cinema that one visited to see a certain type of film.[10]

It was exactly this mix of subcultural atmospherics and lowbrow stylistics that I was attempting to conjure in my own use of the term. The first show I did under the Fleapit banner was a screening of Shigehiro Ozawa's *The Street Fighter's Last Revenge* (1974) in an old lecture theatre on the campus of Lancaster University. I was a student there at the time and, wanting to avoid the miles of red tape that went with starting an authorised society, I used a false set of details to book the room. The English Department where I was studying had a dormant Literature society that

Still from The One-Armed Boxer vs. the Master of the Flying Guillotine

was still technically active. A bit of poking around had revealed that when the last committee had drifted into apathy and graduation a couple of years before, no-one had bothered to officially remove the society from the Student Union's club list. I made a booking in their name, spuriously claiming that it was a screening of the BBC's version of *Titus Andronicus* (1985). This gave me a key to a lecture theatre and all the projection equipment it contained. To be fair, this cover story wasn't that far from the truth. Both films are excruciatingly violent in their depiction of revenge; it's just that Ozawa's film makes up for Shakespeare's unfortunate lack of badly dubbed trash talk.

Undeterred by the fact that in the event, *Last Revenge* only drew a crowd of two, the 'success' of this first screening set a precedent for the next year. As the 'Literature Society' continued to work their way through Shakespeare's cinematic oeuvre, a parallel fly-poster campaign advertised the mirror image of this schedule. Bookings ostensibly made for *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* yielded screenings of *The Killer Shrews* (1959), *Godzilla vs. Gigan* (1972), and *The One-Armed Boxer vs. the Master of the Flying Guillotine* (1976). Each screening was booked into a different venue and when nothing was officially available, I'd set something up in a student kitchen. This nomadism was in part pragmatic, born out of the necessity to avoid the visibility of a regular venue. It was also a key part of the project's strategic intent. By showing films in different locations, Fleapit attempted to highlight the importance of what Stevenson called the "glancing intangibles" that underscore the "rapidly disappearing" sense of place in contemporary cinema consumption.[11]

A cinema is an exhibition space, but it becomes a place when it is used and inhabited. Place, according to the anthropologist Marc Augé is that which is relational, historical and concerned with identity.[12] Place is the *organization* of space into a specific location: the street, the town square, the market place. One speaks of 'my place', for instance, when making the distinction between a house and a home. The cinema fits into this definition when it is understood as a building that works as a fixture of the urban / suburban landscape; one that adds to or reflects the psychogeography of an area by virtue of its architecture and programming. Add to this environmental particularity a cinema's interior ambience and a resonant feedback loop emerges. For example, the Elgin in New York was the perfect place to screen John Walters' *Pink Flamingos* (1972) on account of the theatre's art-house credentials and clientele drawn from Manhattan's hipster milieu. The success of the film and its subsequent longevity at the cinema mirrored the Elgin's extended run of *El Topo* (1970) and set a template for their exhibition of *Eraserhead* (1977). In turn, this leftfield programming conferred upon the Elgin the enduring mantle of the 'home' of the midnight movie.[13]

The contemporary cinema experience has all but lost this potent combination of context, content and particularized consumption. Peripheral multiplexes, built to the specifications of distinct corporate identities replicate themselves across identical concrete leisure (i.e. retail) 'parks'. Situated next to or within supermarkets and adjacent to major motorway junctions, cinemas have largely become what Augé would term 'non-places', service zones of transit and exchange where communality is replaced with homogeneity.[14] Buildings that are designed to "stress neutral environments" play uniform programmes that aim to successfully clone an experience that can be had in any one of a given company's national outlets.[15]

In mounting its intimist response to this corporate culture, Fleapit did not intend to establish itself as an independent cinema. Instead, it aimed towards the reignition of the aesthetic sense of place in the act of viewing film. The shows were designed to remove the audience from their comfort zone, first by physically removing them from expected cinematic spaces and second, by exposing them to examples of the forgotten and neglected body of work that constellates around a term like 'cult'. Fleapit's main aim then, was to enact a process of foregrounding. It didn't seek to critically evaluate or denigrate the films it screened, but it instead attempted to use the screenings to highlight the functional variables that are at play in normative cinema exhibition. 'Seeing' a film is not just a visual experience. Cinemagoers bear witness to a series of interconnected factors ranging from place and location to the production values of the films shown and the cultural consensus such material promotes. A 'good' cult movie can be used

Still from El Topo

to shed light upon this hegemonic mechanism. That's to say, watching *The Day the World Ended* (1955) in a biology lab is an experience vastly different to that of watching *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) in a multiplex. In explaining what the former does that the latter does not, the parameters of contemporary cinema consumption to begin to emerge.

Still from The Silver Darlings

Road Movies

After a year or so of film shows in and around Lancaster, the next step was to organise events further afield. During 2005 and 2006 I undertook two film tours across the UK, each running for around 3-4 weeks. These consisted of me driving a not so secure car loaded with all kinds of video equipment from one venue to another. I had pitched this enterprise to various film societies, clubs and independent cinemas as an Ed Wood double bill (*Plan 9* and *Glen or Glenda*) that would play alongside a specially selected trailer reel and a few other short films.

The original plan was to set up a string of gigs running from John o'Groats to Land's End. I liked the idea of taking the "worst film of all time" on a terminal journey from the top of the island to its farthest point. I had visions of Wood's burning flying saucers playing out against an open backdrop of the raging Atlantic. Unfortunately, this scenario was nixed very early in the planning stage. After a few phone calls I was informed that the visitor's centre and theme park currently occupying Land's End had neither the facilities nor for that matter the slightest bit of interest in my cinematic apocalypse. Amazingly, the John o' Groats show almost came together. The sticking point was the choice of film. The owner of the only two possible venues (the hotel and the village hall) was enthusiastic about the idea of a film show but only if I was prepared to find a print of and screen *The Silver Darlings*, a classic herring movie from 1947.

In the end, 6 months of phone-calls and e-mails netted a zigzag arrangement of events at universities and nightclubs as well as a few gigs as a sort of sideshow at one or two festivals. Both tours were guerrilla affairs that came together on the basis of some frequently shaky DIY logistics. The university shows were all straightforward as they took place in lecture theatres and classrooms, the kind of place where you could expect to find projectors and VCRs. The nightclub shows were rather more chaotic, involving negotiations with promoters, managers and sound engineers.

In Glasgow, the promoters I was working with decided to offer free admission to anyone who came in Ed Wood-related fancy dress. We'd arranged for the club to open at 7 for an 8pm start which would leave us time for bands and DJs to do their thing until 1am. On the night, 7pm came round as did a large crowd of Tor Johnsons, Vampiras and angora wearing transvestites. It was at this point that the club owner informed us he would not be opening until 11. We had to decamp our now fairly sizable entourage to a nearby pub (which was clearly not expecting an influx of retro-goths) and keep them occupied for a few hours. When the event finally got going it then ran all night until the club's "new" closing time of 5am. As I stood in the alleyway dawn watching the last of the transvestites stagger into a taxi, I couldn't help but once again ask myself, "Why"? What was the purpose of this weird mission and where would it end?

I had a lot of time to think about this when I was driving between venues. I also had a lot of time to get lost. One night in Cardiff I was trying to find the hostel I'd booked for the evening. It was late and I'd been driving round the same streets for what seemed like hours. Stopping at a pub to ask for directions I found that the only people around were two "worse for wear" students. We got talking and they ended up drawing out an epically complicated street map that ran over a series of beer mats. It was a perfectly functional map to the hostel but one that was geared specifically to the driftings of the perambulatory drunkard. I still have it and out of all the detritus I collected during the tours, this is the piece that comes closest to summing up the whole Fleapit project. Beyond the spurious theorizing, the idea of projecting films in different spaces was essentially an attempt to impose my own mark on those spaces. Extended into a road trip, the buried motivation was similarly egotistical: an attempt at re-mapping. Exactly why I thought this was necessary is clearly a question for my therapist. What I can say is I was excited by the idea of a film tour aimed at discovering and connecting the hidden screening groups that peppered the UK. What emerged was not a map of corporate locations shadowing motorway junctions but something more exciting. A series of small rooms – some empty, some not – that contained the same kind of material: a subculture of cult film.

1. Ado Kyrou, Le Surréalisme au cinéma (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1963), pp.90-91.
2. Jack Stevenson, Land of a Thousand Balconies (Manchester: Headpress / Critical Vision, 2003), p. 138.
3. Ibid, p.140.
4. Ibid.
5. OED. See also Umberto Eco, 'Casablanca: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage', Substance 14.12 (1985), pp.3-12.
6.OED
7. See Allen Eyles, 'Cinemas and Cinemagoing: The Rise of the Cinemas' viewable at http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/cinemas/sect1.html
8. For more on The Smallest Show on Earth see Alan Burton and Tim O'Sullivan, The Cinema of Basil Dearden and Michael Relph (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p.23.
9. Information about the Corniche and the Eros can be found at http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/13073. See also James Morton, Gangland Soho (London: Hachette, 2012), p.75.
10. For more on 42nd Street and the grindhouse context see Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008).
11. Stevenson, p.76.
12. Marc Augé, Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995), p. 77.
13. For more on the Elgin, see Stuart Samuels' film Midnight Movies: From the Margin to the Mainstream (2007).
14. Augé, p. 102.
15. Stevenson, p. 76.

On the 20th Annual Chicago Underground Film Festival

Amelia Ishmael

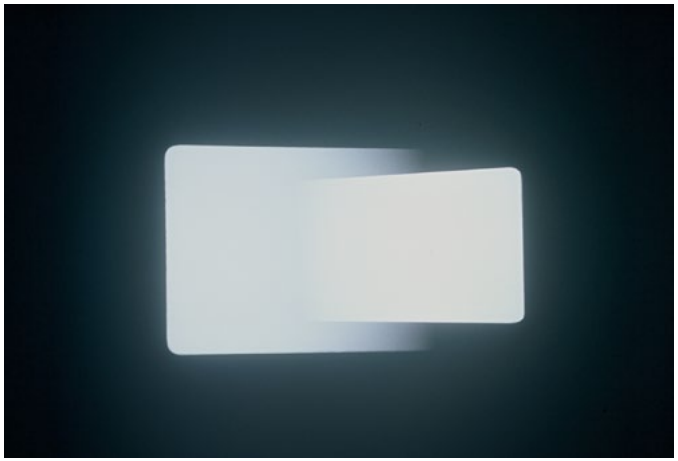
Twenty years ago, Chicago Underground Film Festival founders Jay Bliznick and Bryan Wendorf met at a screening hosted by the Chicago Psychotronic Film Society. PFS is a B-movie appreciation group that supported a growing community of artists, fans, and critics through regular screenings in Chicago bars and a newsletter. Proving an alternative to art gallery exhibitions and commercial theaters, it provoked interest in "the masterpieces, the misfits, and the misunderstood […] cult movies, trash film, underground flicks, alternative cinema, and camp outings."[1] Soon after they met, Blizneck went to a horror-film convention and came back to Chicago absolutely possessed with the wild notion to produce something like PFS's events, yet much much bigger and significantly more ambitious. He was determined to organize a Chicago film festival, yet instead of recreating the stale, market-driven, and elitism of the international film festivals already in place, Bliznick wanted a festival that was younger, independent, and inclusive: a festival that was actually fun. He insisted that Wendorf help.

The first Chicago Underground Film Festival [CUFF] was started in 1993. (Consequentially the same year as the New York Underground Film Festival.) It was a 3-day weekend event held at Bismarck Hotel in downtown Chicago (right around the corner from where the Gene Siskel Film Center now stands). The original model for CUFF was a filmmakers' convention: there were video and film screenings, as well as dealer and merchandise tables. The programming was inspired in part by the underground zines *Film Threat* and *Film Threat Video Guide* (started in 1984 and 1991, respectively). It offered a mix of horror movies, avant-garde films, documentaries, and experimental cinema submitted by a call for entries. It was a wild success, and Bliznick and Wendorf made a new festival the next year. By the 3rd year CUFF moved to a performance space, got rid of the convention format, and became closer to the film festival we know today. The projection expert James Bond was hired to offer technical support, guests such as Richard Kern and Roger Walters were in attendance, and honorary awards and monetary prizes were established to support the filmmakers. Blizneck left 1998 and Wendorf has been leading CUFF ever since. As "underground film" has become more of a self-reflective (and academically-defined) genre, CUFF has thrived by maintaining extremely muddied boundaries—between underground, experimental, art house, and commercial film and video—and progressively allowing the festival to adapt to the needs of the works featured. It is largely because of this enduring flexibility that CUFF continues to grow. In Chicago, CUFF has built a devoted audience and is surrounded by scores of ambitious emerging artists, critics, and professionals (many who teach or study at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, University of Illinois Chicago, Columbia College, University of Chicago, or Northwestern University). It seems to do what Chicago does best, stands with one foot rooted deeply within the local and regional communities, and the other foot running to or from O'Hare International Airport (where every two years a significant portion of Chicago's community disappears and arrives).

> **"CUFF has thrived by maintaining extremely muddied boundaries—between underground, experimental, art house, and commercial film and video"**

This year, taking place from March 6-10, the Chicago Underground Film Festival celebrated its 20th anniversary with 100 screenings and about 1700 guests. The 2013 program included the Chicago premiere of Sandra Gibson, Luis Recoder, and Olivia Block's expanded-cinema performance *Untitled*. It also included world premieres of six features (including Stephen Graves's *A Body Without Organs* and Jon Moritsugu and Amy Davis's *Pig Death Machine*), and four retrospective shorts programs curated by Wendorf, Bliznick, Amy Beste (CUFF programmer from 1998-2003), and Jack Sargeant

(Revelation Film Festival program director and underground film scholar). In between each screenings there were professional interviews, moderated discussion groups, and after-parties, all reinforcing the remarkable experience of being-here-and-now.



Still from Untitled

***Untitled* (2008-2012), by Sandra Gibson, Luis Recoder and Olivia Block**

CUFF opened on March 6th with the Chicago premiere of the 50-minute expanded-cinema performance *Untitled* (2008-2012) by Sandra Gibson, Luis Recoder and Olivia Block. Wendorf described Untitled as a "subversive thing to happen in this space" (i.e. the Logan Theater, an independent theater designed to host traditional forms of cinema such as the film *Zero Dark Thirty* which played in the adjacent theater). By opening the festival with this performance, Wendorf invited CUFF's audience to consider avant-garde forms of cinema that continue outside of popular exposure largely because they are snuffed by theater houses due to technical and administrative limitations. The live performance of *Untitled* was an event; the artists were all necessarily present to perform the artwork; the audience was immersed in a cinematic experience that pushed off of the screen to include the entire room as a cinematic and acoustic space.

> **" a cinematic experience that pushed off of the screen to include the entire room as a cinematic and acoustic space "**

Untitled was originally released in 2008 as a high-definition DVD projection, which premiered in 2009 at the Sundance Film Festival and was screened later that year at the Expanded Cinema symposium at TATE Modern. Live performances of *Untitled* are rare, but have occurred at the Electronic Arts Festival at Bozar (Brussels, 2012) and 25 FPS International Experimental Film and Video Festival (Zagreb, 2012).

During *Untitled*, Gibson and Recoder manipulate light using two prepared 16mm film projectors, and Block composes a sound score from the back of the theatre. The three artists work from a skeleton score, based on cues rather than strict notations. This allows each of the artists the freedom to adjust their performance in relation to the specific spatial and acoustic conditions of the venue.

The first section of *Untitled* (about 20 minutes in duration) begins with the introduction of two rectangles of white light (the full-frames of the projectors) emitted onto the screen, joined with delicate whirring white noise. There is no film in the projectors, and the sound is being created live as Block uses a telephone pickup to amplify the electrical static and clicks of a running CD player.[2] Light drifts slowly across the screen's surface and edges, its vibrancy altering as Gibson and Recoder subtly expand and contract the projectors' apertures.[3] At one point, the light of one projector moves directly over the other in the center of the screen, offering a layered rectangular frame, which seems to recall Josef Albers's *Interaction of Color* (a seminal theoretical portfolio from 1963 that examined how the perception of colour and light alters in relation to its surroundings). In front of each projector, a pane of glass is installed above a humidifier. As the moisture gradually fogs the glass, light is released from its rectangular perimeter and diffuses throughout the theater, with phantasmagoric effects that are accentuated by Block's inclusion of layers of long tones and recordings of ambiguous vocal whisperings. The first part of *Untitled* provides a calming and meditative effect, which seems to key the senses and a center of concentration, before rapidly turning chaotic within the second part of the performance. Suddenly, film loops are introduced into the projectors. Abstract images, coming from white splotches of bleach on black leader, are quickly fired across the space in flashes of light that catapult off of the screen and theater walls. Loud and distorted rhythms are introduced, visually and sonically, that pound and penetrate the eyes and ears. Block uses "overdrive methods (essentially turning the music up way too loud) to transform clean textural sounds and make them distorted, harsh, noisy and crackly."[4] Her score additionally includes sound recordings of film projectors, which are played back in speakers set behind Gibson and Recoder's analogue film projectors to magnify these mechanical tools which are now transformed into musical instruments. *Untitled* submerses its creators and audience within a ceremonial cinematic space where every stimulus is composed of light and sound. Abruptly, the piece comes to a halt. The 20th CUFF was thus initiated.

> **" phantasmagoric effects that are accentuated by Block's inclusion of layers of long tones and recordings of ambiguous vocal whisperings "**

By opening 2013 CUFF with *Untitled*, audience members were encouraged to consider the structural qualities of cinema, the particularities of the theater, and underground cinema's perchance for experimentation and immersive experiences. Many articles have been written in the recent decade about the death of analogue cinema and what it means to artists, programmers, and venues. During CUFF, the 16mm projectors were present throughout the festival, operated by Festival Coordinator/Programmer (and expanded-cinema artist) Lori Felker. These projectors made themselves known as the most straightforward and reliable projection format, even though (as we know) video has gained a reputation for its convenience and has become the industry standard.

Yet, for those who sat through the entire festival 5-day festival, it was notable that there were no less than three times when screenings had to be delayed while the festival's able staff quickly troubleshot unexpected computer and digital video files issues. In one rare instance, a video short was postponed to a screening the following day, while the two programmed 16mm films championed on.

A Body Without Organs by Stephan Graves

World Premieres of five features were included at this year's CUFF, including *A Body Without Organs*, *Pig Death Machine*, *Hit & Stay*, *All the Memory in the World*, and *See You Next Tuesday.*

A Body Without Organs (2012), an 81-minute video directed by Stephen Graves, won the CUFF jury's "Most Visionary Award", and went on to screen at Sydney Underground Film Festival (SUFF) in September. It exemplifies how sometimes the most difficult and uncomfortable things to experience in life are the depths of others' pains. *A Body Without Organs* is a documentary that shares the personal story of the filmmaker's father, who had his colon and part of his intestine removed as the effect of a rare medical condition. The traumatic operation resulted in the father putting an end to his practice as a physician, and the mother becoming a full-time care-taker to the father and son (the director/son was 8 years old at the time of the operation).

The video begins by placing the viewer directly in front of the intimate details of the father's daily life. We watch him wake up. The colostomy bag connected to his abdomen has slipped off in the night and leaks out across his body and the white sheets. He nearly sleep-walks to the toilet. He drains the remaining excrement out of the colostomy bag, and washes off. After the first few moments of seeing and hearing the contents of this person's colon emptied into the toilette, the video became personal for me. My stomach began to revolt and I had to fight every impulse to briskly walk out of the theater. As the

Still from A Body Without Organs

cinema blog Screen-Space described, it is like a "physical-horror chronicle"[5], yet it transcends shock and horror. Watching the film, I start to care about this stranger, wondering how many other people live with similar hardships, and curious to learn how he finds his strength to continue on despite it all. We watch him crushing and inhaling pain-relievers. But the most painful aspect of this opening sequence was the realization that this is really happening to another human; a man who was sitting just three rows in front of me with his wife. Watching *A Body Without Organs* is, as the Chicago Reader described, "a challenge to the spectator's empathy."[6] It is a confession of the awkwardness and frailty of the human body. After these opening scenes, the father and mother each give testimonies to the camera. We are shown how their lives have changed since the operation: they do not often leave their house, each continuously spins through cycles of pain, anger, regret, sadness, humiliation, despair, and pain. Yet there is also love, strength, and resilience. In the second half of the memoir, we begin to witness their compassion for one another as they help each other tell stories about their lives and their pasts together. They talk openly about their previous social life in New York, where they was part of a polyamorous commune of artists for about 12 years (which included some recognizable names in Ab-Ex art history), and we learn that the mother was a popular young woman wooed by this man's charm. He was kicked out the group because of his medical training, which they feared might expose him to the AIDS virus, and she left with him. There is a scene of the couple discussing the effect of the operation on their intimate relationship. How does one retain the confidence to continue being physically intimate? How does the other retain their attraction? There is a tender sex scene that evidences that, despite the situation, the couple continues to be sexually active. There are scenes of the father in his studio; he continues to make art. He continues; they continue; together.

The introduction of *A Body Without Organs* to its first large audience through CUFF was meaningful. CUFF is, after all, an underground film festival, a celebration of transgressive cinema; *A Body Without Organs* is one of the most transgressive videos I have ever seen. Yet, rather than being exploitative, *A Body Without Organs* take a step towards societal reparation. It boldly holds a mirror to its audience, forcing us to confront the brutality (and luxury) of averting our eyes, our ears, and our hearts. A couple barely leaves their house, so the filmmaker goes in. Suddenly an understanding begins to grow; we want in. After the screening, this couple stood alongside the filmmaker to answer questions, and we had lots of them. When Graves was presented with CUFF's "Most Visionary Award", Sargeant described its merit: "for re-imagining the personal documentary, exposing souls, exploring human suffering and the value and meaning of true love wiithout forgetting the values that inspire underground filmmakers: experimentation and unique personal stories." Indeed.

Pig Death Machine by Jon Moritsugu and Amy Davis

Jon Moritsugu started making videos just a few years after the Cinema of Transgression movement began and is described by Wendorf as a "post-transgression" filmmaker, who has "always had this irreverent, low budget sensibility."[7] His first screening at CUFF was Mod Fuck Explosion in 1996, and in 2002 he showed

Still from Pig Death Machine

Skumrock, which won CUFF's Best Feature and a Post-Production Grant. Skumrock was created around the time that hi-definition video was the new filmmaking standard, so Moritsugu shot with super-low grade hi-8 video (and edited on linear VHS). Moritsugu's videos have an obvious reference to 1980s underground and punk cinema, but trade any seriousness, social commentary or critical perspective in for raw fun and humor.

Pig Death Machine is the first feature from the two in a decade, and received its World Premiere at CUFF. It is an 84-minute video that tells the story of two women—the lead played by Davis and co-star Hannah Levbarg (of the art-rock band Venus Bogardus)—who both eat contaminated "pink pork" at a classy restaurant in Santa Fe, New Mexico and are subsequently imbued with super-human powers. When they realize what has happened, they go back to the restaurant, only to discover that the city's health inspectors have since shut it down. Desperate for more of the magical pork, they dig through the trash cans behind the restaurant and find small plastic baggies of the meats which, upon digestion, prompt a series of psychedelic encounters. Davis has gained elevated IQ levels and goes straight to the casino, earns beaucoup denaro, and moves into a resort hotel to ponder her new intellectual abilities. Levbarg, who plays a misanthropic-phytophilist, gains the ability to hear her beloved plants talk, which goes from a gift to a nightmare as they begin tormenting her with their insistent demands for sunlight, water, and attention. Both women end up escaping the city and wandering into rural New Mexico.

Preceding and following this main story are short scenes which tell a side-story of a sexy foreign woman who breaks into an exclusive club, seduces a group of men, knocks them out cold, steals a purse full of white powder, and prances into a dark alley where she encounters a seductive woman wearing a pink pig mask while simultaneously covered in glitter and donning golden pasties. The first woman proceeds to lick this "piggy" up and down, before arranging a rendezvous between the sexy-piggy, herself, and her "twin sister" (a stripper, played by Moritsugu).

The meaty horror and humor of *Pig Death Machine* culminates with an absolutely spectacular 4-minute sequence of a miniature Davis-figurine wandering through a pueblo, populated by glittery pom-pom trees and colorful toy ponies that gets flooded with raining piles of different meats (bacon, ham, sausages, ground beef) and tons of glitter. "It was all stop-motion animation," described Moritsugu, "and it took hours to get the bacon to slither, the sausages to worm around, and the wall of hamburger to engulf the little ponies […]. We wanted it to be beautiful, repulsive, and funny, like life itself."[8]

Still from Taken by Storm: The Art of Storm Thorgerson and Hipgnosis

Pig Death Machine was shot by the New Queer Cinema veteran Todd Verow and is steeped in references to underground cinema, yet demonstrates how Moritsugu and Davis have successfully engaged this style in new and innovative ways, which earned them the Lifetime Achievement Award at CUFF 2013. The screening was followed by a performance of Moritsugu and Davis's noise-rock band Low on High at the Chicago's Township.

Notable New Features

Taken by Storm: The Art of Storm Thorgerson and Hipgnosis (2011) is a documentary by Roddy Bogawa, focusing on Storm Thorgerson, one of the most-recognizable artists in rock history (think Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* and *A Momentary Lapse of Reason* albums). This 95-minute video features interviews with the artist (who passed away in April 2013) and images from the archives, to recount Thorgerson's artistic processes (such as how he and his crew once dragged 765 iron beds to the beach to photograph original tableaus). By bringing in interviews with Thorgerson's colleagues as well, and including some discussions of the negations Thorgerson was forced to make between artistic vision and commerce, Bogawa offers abroad and unforeseen view of Thorgerson's achievements.

Mark Covino and Jeff Howlett's *A Band Called Death* (2012) premiered at the 2012 Los Angeles Film Festival. It is a documentary that tells an amazing story of a little-known pre-punk band from Detroit, formed by three brothers (David, Dannis, and Bobby Hackney) in the early 1970s. Set in the era of Motown and disco, Death released their first demo in 1974. After encountering endless dissents to both their name and the fact that they were a group of black men playing "white boy music," they disbanded before ever completing

Still from The Sight

an album. In the late-2000s, their demo resurfaced through the internet and has since gained much-overdue recognition. This 98-minute video includes interviews with living band members, their family and community, and recent fans. It deservedly won CUFF's Re-writing History Award.

Notable New Shorts

Dinosaurs (2012) a 12-minute video by Terra Long, features the voice of an adult male who shares a book of dinosaur drawings he made when he was five-years old. As the man analyzes the physical attributes of the dinosaurs, he begins to describe the psychological attributes associated with aggression or protection, which leads him into accounting extremely disturbing memories of his life under the rule of a tyrannically abusive father, from whom he was finally able to escape (with his mom and brothers) when he was 16.

Jeremy Moss's hand-processed, 16mm film *The Sight* (2012) provided delicious moments of mad love for experimental film, recalling Gibson, Recoder, and Block's opening performance. Unfortunately, this piece was only screened on video at CUFF, yet its washy-kaleidoscopic colors, layered images and sounds still provided at least 4-minutes of affirmation that celluloid poetry is not yet dead.

Set in post-colonial ruins in Jakmel, Haiti, Gabriel Abrantes's *πουλιά* [*Ornithes*] (2012) features a theatrical adaptation of Aristophanes' ancient Grecian play *The Birds*, featuring costumes made by local artisans and dialogue in Creole and Attic Greek.

Four Curated programs

Throughout CUFF #20, Wendorf, Beste, Bliznick, and Sargeant presented four retrospective short programs that highlighted the best-of CUFF's twenty years of programming. Each set presented a different perspective of underground film that the guest curators had helped to create (in their current or previous roles as programmers for CUFF). Rather than episodic navel-glazing, the four curated retrospective programs which presented a well-deserved opportunity to celebrate the 20-year festival which has had a real effect in the exposure, career, and culture of underground film, both nationally and internationally. Many of the works screened were notably described as being part of a scene that came into existence in part due to CUFF.

Still from The Fabulous Stains: Behind the Movie

Wendorf's program on March 7th included nine videos and films, many of which have a strong tie to Chicago's own history and culture. One of the included works was Sam Green and Sarah Jacobson's short video *The Fabulous Stains: Behind the Movie* (1999), which tells the story of Ladies and Gentlemen, The Fabulous Stains, a failed Hollywood film made in 1980 about an all-female punk-rock band, directed by Lou Adler and written by Nancy Dowd (with Caroline Coon as the on-set "punk rock expert"). In 1985, the film screened at a few art houses throughout the US (including Facets in Chicago) where it bombed horribly, described as "unbelievable, "predictable" and "cliché."[9] A decade after its making, the unreleased and shelved film was screened on late-night cable TV and drew a cult fan base that interacted with the riot grrrrl movement. In 1998 it returned to Chicago for CUFF, where it screened to a packed house. The subsequent documentary includes interviews with the film's cast, crew and critics who are asked to piece the film's history back together after years of trying to blot the whole thing out of memory. In 2008, the DVD was finally released. Following the screening, Wendorf gave a quick remembrance of Sarah Jacobson, whose annual memorial grant continues to support fierce women directors.

Sargeant's retrospective program on March 9th spanned two decades of gore, sex, and violence with eight films and vid-

Still from The Operation

eos. Affirming the relation between the post-punk underground film scene and transgression, the program was introduced with a citation of Nick Zedd's infamous Cinema of Transgression manifesto: "There will be blood, shame, pain and ecstasy, the likes of which no one has yet imagined. None shall emerge unscathed." Of the included works were Jacob Pander and Marne Lucas's *The Operation* (1995), a 13-minute porn video shot with an infrared camera in an operating theatre. As Sargeant has poetically described in an interview with the artists originally published in Fringecore magazine, The Operation is "an exegesis of fuck manifested via a thermo-physiological cartography of the body."[10] Here we see a couple, observed by a medical audience, engage in the act of coitus on a gurney. Yet, through the infrared image, the pornography has been re-imagined. Through its focus on heat rather than flesh, it seems doubly anti-explicit and super-explicit, sterile yet hyper-intimate. We watch as heat builds, transfers from one body to another, and resides. It questions what is sexual, what is concealment, what is intimacy.

Unfamiliar Territory

Which brings us back to what the 20th celebration of CUFF is. One of the most fascinating aspects of CUFF is certainly that it has been able to maintain its "underground" identity through re-imagining each year what hosting an underground film festival could be, live in front of a captivated audience. Unlike mainstream festivals, CUFF's programmers are more interested in the internal heat rather than the superficial flesh. Entries are not determined by who the artist knows, or what awards they have, or what their backgrounds are. And it is this reason that audiences keep coming back year after year. By continuing to keep the programming based on a call for entry format, there is little predicting what will be submitted, and how this year will be different from the last. Of course this means that everyone will not love everything. I hated many things this year. But you can disagree with me. (There were 100 films in this year's program, of which I am only selecting 10 to highlight.) Rather than trying to strictly keep itself to a definition of underground cinema, CUFF takes a lot of risks in order to find and share and encourage and support works that its programmers found deserve the attention. Resolutely there is a vast freedom in CUFF's support of new works, which means that programmers must continuously refresh, and dispose of broader ideas of what CUFF ought to be. It is continuously unfamiliar.

The 21st CUFF is already in the works, and will take place April 2-6, 2014.
www.cuff.org

1. "About PFS," Psychotronic Film Society http://psychotronic.info/about/. Originally from Carol A. Schwartz and Jim Olenski's intro of VideoHound's Cult Flicks & Trash Pics (Visible Ink Press, 2001).

2. Email interview with Olivia Block by author, August 26-27, 2013.

3. "Interview, Sandra Gibson, Luis Recoder, Olivia Block," 25 FPS, December 4, 2012 http://vimeo.com/54849141 and email interview with Olivia Block, August 26-27, 2013.

4. Email interview with Olivia Block by author, August 26-27, 2013.

5. Simon Foster, "Suffocation: the Katherine Berger Interview" Screen-Space, August 22, 2013. http://screen-space.squarespace.com/features/2013/8/22/suffocation-the-katherine-berger-interview.html

6. Ben Sachs, "An interview with Stephen Graves, director of A Body Without Organs˜" Chicago Reader, March 7, 2013. http://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleader/archives/2013/03/07/an-interview-with-stephen-graves-director-of-a-body-without-organs

7. Interview with Bryan Wendorf by author, September 16, 2013.

8. Zach Clark, "A Conversation with Jon Moritsugu (PIG DEATH MACHINE)," Hammer to Nail, May 31, 2013. http://www.hammertonail.com/interviews/a-conversation-with-jon-moritsugu-pig-death-machine/

9. Lynn Van Matre, "Fabulous Stains` Only A Mild Punkish Blot Of A Movie," Chicago Tribune, April 26, 1985. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-04-26/entertainment/8501250443_1_punk-fabulous-stains-band

10. Jack Sargeant, "The Cinema of Transgression in the Cyberpunk Garden," jacktext.net http://www.jacktext.net/index.php?id=2,8,0,0,1,0

Defensive Pleasures:

Class, the Carnivalesque and Shameless

Frances Hatherley

In a time of fevered class hatred, of socially acceptable "chav"-shaming, the demonisation of the working class is typical fare on television and in the media. While millionaires like Jamie Oliver moralise about poor people's eating habits, and the Tory Government shame them, tax them and generally try to eradicate their existence, it's worth returning to reassess the representation of the working-class in a TV show that may have looked like it conformed to the old stereotypes of moral deviance, fecklessness and criminality, but actually played with these notions and more often than not turned them on their heads and showed them to be false.

The British Channel Four comedy/drama series *Shameless* did not speak from a position of bourgeois good taste and middle-class sensibilities - no, *Shameless* was concerned with the inherent pleasure of disrupting these values: the delights of the low, the base, the excessive and the filthy. The pleasures offered were those of the carnival, that brief interlude when the supposedly normal social order breaks down, when feasting, fucking and fighting break out. But the transgressions that took place within *Shameless* were not those of the anti-social, survival-of-the-fittest, amoral "meaningless trash entertainment" that it has wrongly been taken for. As we will see, it was a show that expressed a level of class-consciousness and an awareness of the history of British politics that is rarely seen in contemporary British television.

Shameless has unfortunately run on far too long and turned its characters into caricatures and grotesques, but for a moment forget the crazy mess that has come since - I'm interested in the first two series of the show, which beautifully balanced the base pleasures of transgression with sly jabs of critique against British politics and society. The show centres around the Gallagher family: six children of an alcoholic father and unseen mother who's done a bunk with another woman. The kids are brought up in Chatsworth, a fictional Manchester council estate, by the oldest daughter Fiona (Ann-Marie Duff), later helped by her middle-class "flash twat" boyfriend Steve (James McAvoy). *Shameless* made famous these two actors who have since gone on to much classier roles, managing to successfully transcend the grubbiness of Chatsworth Estate and the stigma of being, or playing, Shameless. The first two series are extremely filthy, bawdy, excessive and funny, and at the same time sharp, class-conscious, anti-police and anti-establishment. Despite the accusation often levelled at the series that it celebrated selfish hedonism, it in fact explored the intersecting lives of the whole community, instead of focusing on the individualistic exclusivity that other sitcoms present as standard – the exclusivity of the middle-class parents and 2.4 children living in suburbia.

> **"The pleasures offered were those of the carnival, that brief interlude when the supposedly normal social order breaks down"**

Too often, the lifestyle presented to us on television is one of quiet privilege, in which the middle -classes in their domestic, highly gendered and heteronormative relationships are gently sent up, alongside the quirks and passive-aggressive contempt of their neighbours. As we watch these phantasmagorias of safe middle-class banality, we are reassured that this is how we all live in Britain - right? And if we don't, we wish we did - despite secretly wondering why these people never seem to go to work, and yet have the "big house", the "big family car", and enjoy endless hours in which to argue over utterly meaningless bollocks with each other. The fact is, no one really lives like that in constant leisure-time, except maybe the super rich - and they wouldn't be caught dead living in a dull semi in some naff suburb. This is also not the life many of us aspire to, the quiet, tasteful mediocrity of BBC-represented Middle England. As Owen Jones points out in *Chavs*, "too much of our television consists of promotional spiel for the lifestyles, desires and exclusive opportunities of the rich and powerful. It is all part of the redefining of aspiration, persuading us that life is about getting up that ladder, buying a bigger house and car and living it up in some private tropical paradise. It is not just that ordinary people watching these shows are made to feel inadequate. Those who do not strive for such dreams are thought of as 'non-aspirational' or, more bluntly, failures."[1]

Shameless is the antithesis to the above, offering up the Boschian nightmare flip-side to programs like *My Family*: a cornucopia of crime, debaucheries, benefit fraud, broken marriages, single-parent families, drug abuse, alcoholism, teenage sex, gay teenagers, arranged marriages and mental illness - oh my, how truly awful! It is a lifestyle that even in the comparatively tame first and second series, was taken to be fantastical, an exaggerated spoof of working-class life. Perhaps it was easier to watch it that way, the humour less double-sided and bitter-sweet if it was believed to be

all a fiction. The show often presented bizarre scenarios, the kinds of things you wouldn't see happening every week, but despite this these episodes packed in more truthful observation than all of the middle-class domestic sit-coms combined. On top of this, *Shameless* was just richer, ruder, more audacious, smarter and funnier.

Shameless used the stereotypical tropes of carnivalesque working-class behaviours to reject the dogma that all pleasures that do not cultivate distinction and good taste are meaningless, wrong or signs of moral degeneracy. It also unapologetically recognised the everyday pleasures of cigarettes, getting drunk or eating takeaways. The current trend of millionaires moralising about the diets of the working-class is dealt with here: the world that *Shameless* shows is one in which, when you haven't got any money, the pleasures of foreign holidays, weekends away, trips to the theatre, dinners in nice restaurants and decent bottles of wine are denied to you. Therefore at the end of the week you may wish to get a takeaway and experience a treat, some ounce of pleasure. The same can be said of smoking: it is one pleasure, one break from the necessity of living on a budget and only experiencing "the essentials" that are available to people with low or no incomes. There is a great scene in the first series where Steve the new boyfriend joins the family as they all sit round with chip-shop chips. After sorting out everyone with the right orders of sausage in batter etc., the news comes on. Steve watches in surprise as the whole family pause what they are doing to watch intently as the news item discuses some new government bill that will affect families on low incomes. This juxtaposition of the familiar cliché with the jolt of the real disturbs the assumption that this family isn't interested in politics: the point being made is that a family on the breadline has more reasons than most to pay attention to and worry about the actions of the government.

In some ways the character of Steve stands in as a proxy for the viewer, who discovers with him that their preconceived attitudes are false. His presence is also an example of the way the show inverts negative stereotypes heaped against the working-class. One such stereotype is that of the joyriding boy-racer, the laddish car thief. Steve we learn, comes from a wealthy family of doctors and himself trained in the profession before dropping out (although not before getting a young woman pregnant and abandoning her and the baby). Steve then turned his hand to stealing high-end cars, changing their number plates, re-spraying them in different colours and changing their appearance in order to sell them on. The inversion here plays on negative representations of young working-class males, of a criminality that is presented as linked to poverty, a recklessness due to a lack of education.

But what *Shameless*attempts to show is that it is Steve's middle-class position that leads to his recklessness: he has grown up with the knowledge that he is safe, protected against risk and dangerous consequences by family support and privilege. This is not to say that people who are poor never commit crime, but that they are more likely to get caught and their crimes used against them to justify their demonisation by the government and media. To the Gallagher family, the realities of crime and its effects are a lived reality, not something to indulge in as a form of teenage rebellion against one's family and medical school.

"This is not to say that people who are poor never commit crime, but that they are more likely to get caught and their crimes used against them"

Some audiences have reacted with shocked distaste to the depiction of family in *Shameless*, due to the absence of active parents and the unruly behaviour of the children. As the father Frank says in the show's opening titles: "Now, nobody's saying the Chatsworth Estate is the Garden of Eden, but it's been a good home to us, to me - Frank Gallagher - and me kids, who I'm proud of! 'Cause every single one of them reminds me a little... of me. They can all think for themselves! Which they've me to thank for". And yes, the reason why the children can "think for themselves" is because they have had to become very independent due to their parents' absences. Not pampered or sheltered from the realities of everyday struggles, the children in Shameless are, com-

pared to those in much British television, anomalies of self-possession and determination; in reality, they are much like any children who have had to grow up fast. In *Shameless*, children are not put in middle-class bubbles of management and protection: they are not special.

A drunken Frank in the pub tells an unlistening bystander, "Darwin had the right idea, just leave the little buggers to fend for themselves". This may sound like abuse, and in many ways Frank is presented very much as a neglectful and unfit parent, but the real horror for many people doesn't seem to be directed against him but against the freedom and independence of the kids themselves: their very feralness. And yet they are also shown as quite moral young people, defending each other, cooking and cleaning, with the two older teenagers Ian and Lip chipping in for bills out of their part-time/weekend jobs. The presentation of children in *Shameless* is in conflict with the bourgeois sensibilities of anxious aspirational parents who infantilise children, moulding and monitoring their every action as protection against undesirable elements: the bad influences of music, films or "rough" kids at school. The show plays with the public's fear of chaotic, carnivalesque childhoods - of the rabble - yet *Shameless* exposes this moralising panic as bogus, demonstrating that these kids are intelligent, sensitive and able to "think for themselves" and express a healthy distrust of authority figures and bureaucracy. For such authorities, it is working-class children out of their control that pose the real threat.

Shameless doesn't discriminate in its depiction of men and women's equal keenness to pursue pleasure, their equal desire to go out, get drunk and get laid. The scenes of Fiona and best mate and next-door neighbour Veronica getting pissed and cackling with laughter at each other's dirty jokes are some of the funniest and most spot-on representations of the liberatory pleasures of the carnivalesque, of being crude and debaucherous. An example of this is Veronica saying how funny she found something: "I laughed so hard I thought I'd wet myself...well actually I did a bit". The connection between humour and bodily functions that are usually reserved for men is one of the key features of the women's drunken scenes together. To the show's credit, the figure of the now much-shamed "Ladette" is eschewed: the social transgressions taking place are more in the vein of a joyful rejection of a feminised discreetness, in favour of openness and amusement over one's body and sexuality.

The portrayal of the mother's desertion is also atypical. Granted, Fiona as the oldest female steps in to take on the maternal role, but what is interesting is the show's examination of failed masculinity in the figure of Frank. The loss of industry is mentioned as a reason for Frank's displacement - no jobs and therefore the traditional role of male breadwinner is denied him. This is not to defend or apologise for the countless shit fathers out there, but to try to think of the impact the loss of industry had on the self-esteem of many working-class men.

An interesting comment on the often problematic gender roles within left-wing politics is also flagged in the first series. During a dreaded visit by Frank's father, who reprimands Frank that his politically active mother would be ashamed of him if she were alive to see him now, the father rounds off a tirade against Frank as a child with the comment "I didn't realise you weren't autistic till you called me a cunt in suspiciously fitting circumstances". To get his dad off his back, Frank fakes having a job: nicking a window cleaner's sponge and bucket, he proceeds to wash the windows of a house at random. While the woman who lives there calls out of the window that she isn't interested, Frank is caught by his father who after an altercation proceeds to have a heart attack. All this is played in highly over-the-top fashion, but as with much of *Shameless*, the ridiculous and carnivalesque is paired with the startlingly real; while his father lies on the ground clutching his chest, Frank - suddenly emboldened by his father's weakened position - goes into a tirade against him, saying how Frank's mother used to call him a "sanctimonious old goat and devious old cunt...coz she knew she was better than you, so did everybody in the TUC. Three years younger and she was flying way beyond you, which is the only reason you got her pregnant, and that's the only reason you smiled when I was born, 'cause you knew you'd slowed her down." This brief outburst contains so many threads which are never taken up in contemporary British television: the connections between the working-class and radical politics, the difficult position for politically active women in left-wing politics during the 1960s and 1970s and their conflicts with left-wing men who often despite their politics preferred their wives to remain within the domestic sphere.

" The connection between humour and bodily functions that are usually reserved for men is one of the key features of the women's drunken scenes together "

Another episode shows how much Britain is still under the grip of Thatcherite attitudes. The council sets the residents of Chatsworth estate a scam competition, offering a year's free rent to the household with the cleanest exterior. This turns out to be an excuse for a free clean-up for the council, with the competition rigged to be won by the household most in arrears on

its rent. This pitting the tenants against each other is very much a reference to Thatcher's valuing of the individual over the collective (as her famous line goes: "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families"), and of course leads to bitter fights and confrontation among the neighbours. Hurt that Fiona and Steve's place has been done up so well because they've got more cash (funded by Steve's high-end car theft), Veronica kicks off and so falls out with her best friend. This is finally resolved hilariously by Veronica's partner and his mate, who works for the council and, feeling he's been done out of a job by the free-clean-up, decide to steal the furniture and plants from the Princess Diana memorial garden.

What I wanted to avoid here is a list of all the "gross-out" moments, the most scandalising stories, the dirtiest jokes and the funniest lines. It's not my intention to prove that *Shameless* is deliciously filthy and funny, because it is. Rather, the point here is to encourage a reassessment of its status as an example of working-class lives shown on screen that are thoughtful, intelligent and politically minded as well as raucous, rowdy, the lives of people who "know how to throw a party". The pleasures described by *Shameless* are familiar to anyone who has ever struggled to make it to payday. It's important to defend such pleasures against the insidious desire of the government and media to denigrate and moralise on the lives of the working-class. After all, supposedly the number one abuser of alcohol in Britain is middle-class women - yet this is with "a good bottle of Chateau Neuf du Pape". In *Shameless* it'd be cider or Lager - but what other than the price of the booze is different, besides the bourgeois assumption that any pleasures that are not expressions of class and financially-based distinction of "good taste" are to be sneered at and judged. I wonder how much of what gives *Shameless* the label of "trash television" is down to where it's set and who it depicts. If the BBC made a series about the debaucherous, drunken escapades of smoking, drinking, fighting and fucking Oxford students, for example, would it be thought of as "shameless", or must the idea of something being "trash" always have a classed dimension?

1. Owen Jones Chavs, The Demonisation of the Working-Class (London,Verso 2011 p.133)

All images are stills or promotional images from Shameless.

City of Lost Souls

Rosa Von Praunheim's film about Berlin Burger-Joint Misfits

A discussion with Juliet Jacques

James Marcus Tucker

James Marcus Tucker: In a blog post for One+One recently, you mentioned that *City of Lost Souls (1983)* was ahead of its time in featuring trans performers, and of course, the star Jayne County is one of the first trans people in rock music. How do you feel this film led the way for further representations of trans people in film or films dealing with trans issues – such as *Paris is Burning*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* and TV shows like *My Transsexual Summer*?

Juliet Jacques presents a double bill of Flaming Creatures and City of Lost Souls at Eyes Wide Open, Dukes At Komedia, Brighton

Juliet Jacques: It's not that *City of Lost Souls* was ahead of its time in featuring trans people per se – Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey's films included that trio of superstars, Candy Darling, Holly Woodlawn and Jackie Curtis, with the latter also appearing in Dušan Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism.*

Where it was ahead of its time was in explicitly addressing issues specific to gender-variant living. In *City of Lost Souls*, two of the key characters – Angie Stardust and Tara O'Hara – have what we'd now think of as transgender identities. Angie identifies as transsexual, having taken hormones and living full-time as female, and this put her into conflict with Tara O'Hara, who identifies as 'transvestite', which signifies a more non-conformist gender – she describes herself as "third sex" and urges Angie to do the same, before they agree to think of themselves as "new women".

I'm not sure the film did too much in itself to lead the way for further trans representations – it was not widely reviewed and was often described more as a 'gay' film than one dealing with gender iden-

tity. I think the presence of Jayne County – who actually plays a cisgender woman in the film, being the only member of the cast who's not essentially playing herself – was a bigger influence on *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, which is the only film I can think of that seems to have been directly influenced by *City of Lost Souls*. And even then, what makes *City of Lost Souls* so captivating is the sincerity and depth with which it covers transgender living, and I don't see so much of that in *Hedwig.* Indeed, Jordy Jones's critique of *Hedwig*, which argues that John Cameron Mitchell uses transsexualism as a metaphor in a gay male coming out narrative, is worth reading: I shared Jones's ambivalence towards the film.

I think *Paris is Burning* and *My Transsexual Summer* are interesting points of comparison: the latter certainly wasn't influenced by *City of Lost Souls* and I'm not sure the former was either. Rosa von Praunheim's film is interesting because it's nominally a narrative film, but ends up occupying this interesting middle-ground between that and documentary – *Paris is Burning* and *My Transsexual Summer* were documentaries, although they sprang from a similar spirit of curiosity and observation.

JMT: The film is often very funny and played for laughs. Scenes are over-the-top and ridiculous, particularly Jayne County's performances. Whilst this style is synonymous with trash, do you think that this early representation of trans characters could have been risking ridicule and a misrepresentation of trans life and experience?

JJ: The trans-identified characters and their experiences are never ridiculed, except gently, by each other, in arguments – Jayne is 'over-the-top and ridiculous' but as I said, she's not playing herself, or a trans woman. Indeed, the trans characters come across as more nuanced, sincere and respectable by comparison: Derek Malcolm's Guardian review said that von Praunheim's sympathy with the idea that "for every exhibitionist there's a quite ordinary human being screaming to get out" was the film's main strength, and I think he was right.

JMT: Like *Cabaret* – also set in Berlin – *Hedwig, Paris is Burning, Jubilee* (in which Jayne County also has a role) and *Wild Side* (2004) – *City of Lost Souls* makes heavy use of music and musical performance to communicate its themes including transsexual and/or gender-bending experience. This film seems very much part of a tradition in that sense also.

"what makes *City of Lost Souls* so captivating is the sincerity and depth with which it covers transgender living"

JJ: Yes, but at the start of it, as far as film is concerned at least – the films by Jack Smith, Warhol and Morrissey, Pedro Almodóvar and others that featured trans people or actors weren't musicals, with Jarman's Jubilee the main exception, and of course County appeared in both.

On a wider level, the stage was always a safe space for people to experiment with gender, and one wonders (probably pointlessly) how many people in the old music halls, Shakespearean stages and other such places had some sort of gender

identity issues, and this attitude crossed into pop music, notably in glam but also aspects of punk, which rather got played down in its documentation. But County's experience in punk subculture was double-edged: the impression I got from her autobiography, *Man Enough to be a Woman*, was that it was accommodating of her exploring ambiguity but less tolerant when she came out as transsexual, which makes sense when you consider the depth of opposition to transsexual women in 1970s feminist, socialist and counter-cultural circles.

The film's musical core comes from the casting of Jayne County – with Tron von Hollywood, County and von Praunheim worked material from her stage musical *U-Bahn to Memory Lane* into the film. County was blazing a trail on her own for a long time, though: I can't think of many other transsexual or transgender-identified pop musicians besides her until the last few years, although Wendy Carlos and Angela Morley were working in other fields.

Again, though, the gender identity issues aren't part of the music – the songs drive the (rather flimsy) narrative forward and provide a lot of comic relief.

JMT: The film deals with themes that occur in many Trash films as well as Queer/Trans. One example is the adulation of glamour and Hollywood – we see it in *Paris is Burning* and in numerous John Waters films. In *City of Lost Souls*, Angie Stardust dreams of Hollywood in her drab, rundown burger restaurant. Maybe you could comment on this ironic concurrence – a desire for an outsider life yet a longing for the life valorised by Hollywood and big capital.

JJ: The stage has often attracted all sorts of outsiders because of its relative tolerance and indulgence of diverse people and lifestyles, and because it offers potentially limitless possibilities for self-expression. In some of these trash films, the adulation of glamour and Hollywood is caustic or ironic, with its stars and structures being rendered absurd or shown in their full brutality, as in Paul Morrissey's *Women in Revolt*, which concludes with Candy's rise to stardom being exposed as the result of sexual exploitation and family estrangement.

For a transsexual woman like Angie, the cabarets of major cities offered a good chance of finding a community, love and adulation, and made stars out of a few people – April Ashley, Coccinelle, possibly Amanda Lear and others – who were excluded from many other sections of society due to their gender presentation or history, or for other reasons. They epitomised this tension between outsiderdom and desire for stardom that underpinned many queer lives, which Jennie Livingston captures strongly in *Paris is Burning*, and which comes across in more mainstream films such as *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert.*

This leads to a wider irony, in many creative fields: if you articulate an outsider critique well enough, you eventually stop being one. This happens to Jayne County's character in *City of Lost Souls* – she stops being an outsider in the capitalist West and becomes famous in East Berlin, despite her hysterical hatred of Communism.

JMT: Politically, despite its trashy aesthetic, the film is an early example of intersectionality. Not only does it deal with trans issues, but the black trans character Angie talks about her experience of racism in 1980s Berlin, Gary the black drag dancer is arrested and threatened with deportation by racist police men, and in one scene two Jewish women talk about the lingering anti-Semitism in German life. The experience of racism seems to be also very important in this film.

JJ: Rosa von Praunheim very consciously looked for outsiders in Berlin – specifically American ones, and County said in her book that von Praunheim knew very well that he could get easy laughs from German audiences by taking the piss out of Americans. Whether or not that was his intention, the resultant film ended up being far more serious when it deviated from its scripted elements, due to von Praunheim's Warhol-esque practice of letting the camera roll with his ensemble cast improvising.

> **“ the Nazis' treatment of racial, sexual and gender minorities, was one of von Praunheim's biggest concerns ”**

Given who's included – not just Angie, but also the Jewish trapeze artist Judith Flex and Gary, an African-American – it's not surprising that the film deals with race, especially as the legacy of Nazism, and the Nazis' treatment of racial, sexual and gender minorities, was one of von Praunheim's biggest concerns. The discussions of racism work in a different way to those around gender – they seem to confront the audience more directly, rather than allowing the audience to work out the answers to certain problems of outsider living as the characters do, which is what happens in Angie and Tara's conversations about gender variance.

The film also deals with the related issue of xenophobia and border control: it's about being an outsider in lots of ways, and as you say, it looks at how certain prejudices intersect when people belong to more than one oppressed group. It does all of this without any advanced theory, suggesting that what we call 'intersectionality' is strongly rooted in an intuitive understanding of the problems for people who experience several types of discrimination.

JMT: Like other Trash films, *City of Lost Souls* represents the idea of outsider communal living. Unfixed familial and working structures and sociality. It is celebrated in the film, but there is also a sense of melancholia – Angie Stardust sings about her longing to return to America and Harlem where she grew up. This aspect – the celebration and the melancholy – is a very recognisable aspect of queer life, often represented by Trash.

JJ: Absolutely – I think of it as defiance and sadness, something that was exacerbated by the AIDS crisis, which was just taking hold as *City of Lost Souls* was made. I think if filming had begun even six months later, it would have been a very different film. This sense pervades the film throughout, however, particularly in its ending, with the characters singing and dancing as the Burger Queen restaurant burns and several of them are killed.

Rosa von Praunheim made his trilogy of AIDS films soon after *City of Lost Souls*, and Tron von Hollywood died of the disease. My favourite character in the film, Tara O'Hara, personified this mixture of celebration and sadness: she seems the most liberated in her gender identity, and this seems to have been the case in her everyday life, but she died in 1993 after she was kicked into a coma in a women's

bathroom, and could not be revived – by this time, she too had contracted HIV.

JMT: In one scene Tara and Angie discuss what it is to be a woman. Tara wishes to forgo surgery and considers herself as "third sex" – unable to settle on one side of the gender binary. Whereas the older and more experienced Angie is deemed "old school" for having undergone surgery and moulding her body into something perhaps more recognisably "female". For me, the film highlights the debate (still unsettled) surrounding normative genders and roles; how much one's body – and specifically one's genitalia – should be considered as a marker for one's gender identity. Tara insists to the straight man she has been dating, "what you've got (between your legs) doesn't make you a man" – and is ultimately successful in persuading him to sleep with her.

JJ: This is the strongest scene in the film, I think. It taps into debates that had been raging for a couple of decades, although Tara O'Hara and Angie play it out as if it's taking place for the first time: the film gives us no reason to assume that they're particularly aware of any previous discussions of this, nor does it attempt to resolve anything – it respects the differing positions taken by Tara O'Hara and Angie, without judgement. In the three decades since *City of Lost Souls* was released, I think we've moved closer to a non-essentialist conception of gender identity: really, people's gender identities are what they say they are. This remains contested within the transgender community and outside, but is gaining some traction – Tara O'Hara persuading the man to overcome his 'homosexual panic' that her unconventional gender identity raises in him and sleep with her is a small triumph for this idea.

JMT: I love how the film wittily plays

with the politics of contemporary Berlin. Jayne County is persuaded to move to the East and sings her now iconic "I Fell In Love With a Russian Soldier" but is concerned because her mother hated communists. There is the sense that Rosa is trying to make the point that even in the "free" West, life isn't as hunky-dory for outsiders as the propaganda makes out whilst also poking fun at strict, dogmatic ideological divides.

JJ: Absolutely. Rosa von Praunheim clearly believed in unrestrained immanent critique, as the controversy around his breakthrough film, *It is Not the Homosexual Who is Perverse, But the Society in Which He Lives* (1970). The title suggests an attack on homophobic 'mainstream' norms, and the gay characters in that film are placed in such a context, but *It is Not the Homosexual* savages certain sexual and social conventions within gay culture, and continues to raise heated debate within the community even now.

A similar dialectic is at play in *City of Lost Souls*: we know that East Germany and its Stasi-operated state was an awful place to live in many ways, but von Praunheim does not fall into lazy thinking about the 'free' West and the 'totalitarian' East. Western liberalism means that all sorts of prejudices go unchecked at social and official levels, which makes life far more difficult for the film's American characters, and the East-West opposition is, of course, a result of the collapse of the Third Reich. This divide is also explored in *I Am My Own Woman* (1991), von Praunheim's documentary about Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, the transvestite curator who lived in Nazi Germany and then settled in the East.

In some ways, this is very serious – witnessed in Judith's conflicts with immigration services, and her discussions of anti-Semitism – and of course it's also caricatured in Lila (County)'s songs, and rise to fame in the East, watched with considerable jealousy by the others. These scenes wittily undercut both Western and Eastern propaganda, both of which are made to appear as ludicrous as each other.

JMT: Finally, a more general question: do you think it is appropriate to consider *City of Lost Souls* a 'trash' film? Is it up to the maker, or the audience to make such distinctions between 'high art' and 'low art'? Do its serious political elements enable a much more sophisticated reading?

JJ: I think the film ends up being too sincere to qualify for 'trash' – it's silly in places but it's never ironic, really, and there are enough serious scenes to move it out of that category, although I don't think it really aspires to be 'high art' either. By the early Eighties, these boundaries had been torn down by post-war, post-modern artists.

The way that *City of Lost Souls* was exhibited was really interesting: the cast would often perform songs and dances at screenings, which turned into parties afterwards – so it did not offer the typically solemn, detached experience of sitting in the dark and judging a piece of work, or at least not just that. So I think the audience were discouraged from considering the film as 'high' or 'low' art, or even as cinema.

In any case, von Praunheim's improvisational composition takes us away from the auteur concept that film as 'high art' often rests upon – that idea that there is a controlling genius behind the camera who has an overarching vision for a film or a cinematographic practice. In collaborating with a group of people who came from outside the artistic discourse, von Praunheim places the film outside it, and it's far more interesting for that.

All images are from Stadt der verlorenen Seelen (*City of Lost Souls)*.

The film remains unreleased in the UK, but is available to purchase along with many of Rosa Von Praunheim's films at www.rosavonpraunheim.de

From Cult to Cabaret

An Interview with Mink Stole

Bradley Tuck & Melanie Mulholland

Mink Stoll, by Melanie Mulholland

Mink Stole is an iconic cult megastar of underground cinema, whose output spans film, theatre and music. Her first film appearance was in 1966 in John Waters' *Roman Candles* and she has continued to appear in all of his films right up to his latest, *A Dirty Shame* (2004). In this respect she is part of the dreamlanders, a group of regular players who appeared in John Waters' film, such as Edith Massey, Divine, David Lochary, Mary Vivian Pearce etc. In these films, Mink Stole would often act as the nemesis to Divine in a depraved descent into queer perversity, trash sensibilities and bad taste. Through these films she has brought us many unique and epochal characters, from Connie Marble, a red haired upper-class pervert and criminal vying for the title of filthiest person alive (*Pink Flamingos*) to Taffy Davenport, Divine's Bratty and abused daughter (*Female Trouble*) and Peggy Gravel, the delusional, neurotic middle-class snob on the run after killing her husband (*Desperate Living*) but to name a few.

In addition to this she has acted in films such as *Lost Highway*, *Anarchy TV*, *All About Evil*, *But I'm a Cheerleader* and many more. But Mink's talents don't stop there. She is currently starring in a theatre adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *The Mutilated* and has recently released her first album, *Do Re Mink*, which includes, for example, her reworking of the title song from *Female Trouble*, "No Nose Nanook", a song she performed in the early 70s with The Cockettes in a show called *Vice Palace*. She describes the album as "Swingy, bluesy, rocky, poppy, a little bit sweet, a little bit sad, and plenty of attitude." We were fortunate enough to talk with Mink and discuss her many different projects.

♥

Mel: Was acting something you always wanted to do or was this something you just "fell into"?
Mink: I fell into it. I mean it was the sort of thing that as a child I thought would be a great thing to do; I have a lot of drama in me. I was a drama queen as a kid, but I fell into it. I'd done nothing to make it happen. I met John Waters when I was just 18 years old and he offered me a part in a movie and I said yes, and he offered me another part and I said yes again. So I discovered that I really did like it. I enjoyed doing it very much and I had a knack for it. So it was an easy thing for me to get into.
Brad: Who inspires you as an actor?
Mink: Well I guess if I had to go back to the women in film that inspire me I'd have to say Bette Davis of course. And Barbara Stanwyk, Marlene Dietrich to a certain extent, Joan Crawford not quite as much. I would think Bette Davis most of all, she could play anything. She wasn't afraid of looking ridiculous.
Brad: Because you always play a lot of different types of parts over your career, whether it's Connie Marble or Dottie Hinkle. I suppose, like Bette Davis, you play a vast array of parts?
Mink: Well I wasn't typecast yet. I was typecast later in my life. But when John was using me he always cast me as the foil for Divine, originally, but he gave me such different parts to play.
Mel: And that's an actor's dream really. Isn't it?
Mink: Yes it was.
Mel: Your early films with John Waters and Divine look like a lot of fun. They were also provocative and challenging. What is interesting about these films is that you get the feeling you're not just being told a story, but also getting a feel of the culture and friendships upon which the films were made. It is not a documentary, but feels like it documents a group of people at a particular time. What was it like to be one of those people?
Mink: Well it was great, but they were really not documentaries (laughs). I mean I cannot tell you how many times people have asked me if I still lived in the trailer and y'know first of all I didn't live in the trailer in the movie. The trailer was actually burnt down. But yes, people actually did think that's us playing ourselves. And we were SO not playing ourselves. There's nothing about any of our characters that's really remotely like us as people except for me and Taffy. Taffy was based, not entirely on me, but partly on me, so, I had a relationship with that character that was different from my relationship with the other characters. But you could tell that we were all friends off screen. I think you could tell from watching the films that we enjoyed what we were doing.
Mel: I think that's part of the joyfulness, and the rambunctiousness of those films. You can really tell that everyone is doing this for the love of it and that there are friendships there.
Mink: Yes, absolute friendships there and for those of us that are still alive, we are still friends.
Mel: Oh that's wonderful.

Stills from Multiple Maniacs and Mondo Trasho

Also as a fan that's lovely to hear.
Brad: How do you prepare for a role?
Mink: I don't really! I don't in the sense of making up a back story or having an interior monologue that I work on. The only role that I actually prepared for in any actory sense was Peggy Gravel in *Desperate Living*. And what I did was y'know, I wore a leg brace in that movie, which was never explained. It was never discussed, I just wore it. I never had any idea why I was wearing it, I just wore it. But one day I thought well, I should prepare, I should learn how to deal with this and one day I got on a bus and went into downtown Baltimore wearing the leg brace, and I walked around for a few blocks, and then I felt totally ridiculous and I got back on the bus and went home. When I'm doing theatre I do a lot of preparation, but I don't do the same amount for film. There's an immediacy with film. I do very little in preparation. I like to get my shoes, my costume. I gain a lot psychologically from what I look like when I do a character. I take in what they do with my hair, what they do with my clothing and then I sort of adjust my body posture to the character. From the body posture comes the character, and the vocal inflections and all sorts of other things. My film characters in particular come from the outside in as opposed to the inside out.
Mel: John Waters also seems to have given you some of your most notorious roles. In his films you really see your talent as a character actor. I'm thinking of Connie Marble, Dottie Hinkle, Taffy Davenport, Peggy Gravel and your brief cameo as Hatchet's mother.
Mink: Well Hatchet's mother actually had a bigger part. What you see in the film is me in an iron lung. Before that it was Troy Donahue, who was my husband selling cigarettes with me out of a truck to high school students. So there was a set up and then the iron lung was the punch line. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, those set up scenes got cut. So you didn't get the full impact of the joke. Which was unfortunate because it was funny.
Mel: I'd never heard of an iron lung before, I was a kid when...
Mink: That was for polio victims. They were used for you know, people with polio who couldn't breathe on their own. They were put in the iron lungs. And the very strange thing about an iron lung, and it was an interesting experience, is that when you're in one of those things you have absolutely no visual contact with your own body. You can see nothing of your own self, there was a mirror above my head, but that was for me to see other people. So it's very interesting to be completely out of visual touch with your own person. I mean my

hands worked, my body worked, but it was still very odd.

Mel: Yes, surreal even.

Mink: It was very surreal. I was in it for hours.

Mel: Oh gosh! You must have felt totally discombobulated after you got out of it.

Mink: It was very disconcerting. It gave me a lot of empathy for people who are in that position of great physical inability. I felt very bad for people who actually had to be in them. I don't know if anybody's in one now. I don't know if they're still in use.

Mel: I remember watching it as a kid and just hearing this really hoarse voice, and then there was this machine, and then just your head.

Mink: It was the hoarse voice of a smoker!

Mel: Yes! (Laughs)

Mink: And the whole set up is that I was a smoker and that I sold cigarettes, and even when I was in an iron lung I was still smoking!

Brad: So what would be your ideal role?

Mink: Actually I'm kind of working on it right now. I'm doing a play. It's a Tennessee Williams play called *The Mutilated*, He wrote it late in life. It was written in the 60s and it's about two women who have a dysfunctional relationship, but the character I play has had a mastectomy. The play is set in the 50s when nobody talked about this sort of thing. This was a very shameful thing and the way she deals with the mastectomy and she has a friend who kind of blackmails her. You know, to keep the secret, she's confided in only one person and that person's her blackmailer. It's a very complicated role because it has to do with shame and friendship and sexuality. She picks up a sailor in order to get over her fear and her shame. She picks up a sailor and the whole thing goes very bad you know - it does not work out the way she wants it to. The play also deals a little bit with religion because both of these characters are religious, and there's a miracle. I mean it's a really rich, rich, character and I've been working on it since June for a November run in New York. So I feel very fortunate because it's one of the chewiest characters I've ever done. She's all over the place emotionally. It's only a one act play.

Mel: That must be so much fun.

Mink: It really has been fun. I'm very excited about it. We're part of a festival in Provincetown. There's a Tennessee Williams festival there every September and

Still from Female Trouble

Still from Pink Flamongos

we're performing it and work-shopping it there. I'm very excited about it, it's one of the best roles I've ever had. Because its so challenging and alluring, it's kind of scary. But I like something that makes me scared.

Brad: Do you like having lots of challenges, and trying new things?

Mink: I don't get challenges that much. A lot of the things I'm offered and the roles that I've played over the past few years have been very gay oriented movies and I've played the mother of the gay, or the grandmother of the gay, or the aunt of the gay (or something like that). My role is generally to be an understanding straight woman, you know what I mean? And they're not big roles and they're not terribly challenging. I enjoy doing them but they're not big challenges. So, when something like this comes along and I have a wonderful director and a really strong co-star, it's exciting. Do you know Penny Arcade?

Mel: I do, yes

Mink: Well she's my co-star. It's, you know, we are such very different people and our characters are so different in this play that there's a lot of energy that goes between us. So you know, yes, I'm very happy at the moment about this because I don't get challenges like this very often.

Mel: Your early films are often associated with queer politics, but this is a relatively new term. They are often compared to punk too, but in many ways they are proto-punk and proto-queer. Do you think you were those things? How did you embrace those terms? How did you view what you were doing at the time?

Mink: I was having the time of my life! I've thought about this a lot because people ask this a lot of me. People say that we were brave and, you know, politically forward, and we get attributed with characteristics that I really don't deserve. I wasn't being brave. I had nothing to lose. I embraced gay culture when I was exposed to it because I had always been an outsider, and I was exposed to another group of outsiders and they liked me. So I liked them. Up until then my life had always been about just not fitting in anywhere. To find a place that I fit in with other people who also hadn't fit in just made me feel like I was coming home, you

Still from Cecil B. Demented

know? It felt like I'd finally found the family that I was supposed to be born into as opposed to one that I actually was born into. So I wasn't being particularly brave. We were pre-punk but I'm not sure that I was consciously doing any explicit kind of political activism. I also don't think I was trying to be political because it was fashionable. I suppose, thinking about it, I was perhaps trying to make a vaguely political statement in some way. This was, of course, the late 60s and early 70s. There was a lot going on politically, so, anything that one could do to set oneself apart from the political mainstream was a good thing, and of course it was important to make some sort of statement to that effect. "I am not like the rest of you, I am different, I am more liberal, my politics are better," all of that stuff, but I wasn't really conscious of it. But I wasn't a hippy because I never identified with the hippies. I was certainly anti-war and anti-Nixon, but that was easy, everybody I knew was anti-Nixon and anti-war. But I never set out to be a fashion icon or a political icon. John may have been. That's a question for John, but I wasn't. I was just having a great time. This morning I was thinking about *Pink Flamingos*. When you talk about proto-queer politics that reminded me of how in *Pink Flamingos* I sold a baby to the lesbian couple. To me, that wasn't the shocking part. To me, the shocking part was how I obtained the baby. It's not shocking that it went to lesbians. That wasn't shocking to me at the time. I didn't over intellectualise any of it. I didn't examine it intellectually at all. I read the lines and I laughed. I said, "Oh John, how did you think this stuff up?" I did the part and had a great time.

Brad: So, John Waters has cast you in every one of his films and it reminds me of when you're watching one of the later Hitchcock films and then suddenly Hitchcock appears. You can find yourself looking for the Hitchcock moment and I sort of do the same when I'm watching a John Waters film. But I'm looking for the Mink Stole moment!

Mink: Oh, the Mink Stole moment! That's funny. I mean there were a few films that I have very tiny parts in. My part in *Pecker* is small and my part in *Cecil B. Demented* is very small. I don't know why I got such small parts in those movies (laughs). You'll have to ask John about that! I would certainly like to have been in them more. It wasn't deliberate on my part to be typecast. I always wanted to be on screen as much as possible. I always liked having the bigger parts because when you have a larger part then you actually can create a fully fleshed out character and things happen. Things progress in the gestalt of the characters. But when there's just a cameo in a John Waters film, it's definitely a Mink Stole cameo. Not just anybody could play it. I mean, anybody technically could have, but I try to give it the "Mink Stole" treatment.

Brad: What do you think happened to trash and bad taste cinema in a culture in which *American Pie* is mainstream, and you can see all sorts of things like that on the internet. Can *Pink Flamingos* and other such films still be as shocking and provocative?

Mink: I don't know. Really I haven't seen any movies that even remotely shock me like *Pink Flamingos* shocked other people. I haven't seen anything like that. I'm not a fan of horror movies, I'm not a fan of gore films. I've been in a couple but they were more funny than scary. I'm unshockable pretty much you know. It's really difficult to embarrass me.

Mel: Right, that's the perfect candidate to be a John Waters actor.

Mink: I guess so, although back in those days I was a little more easily shocked. I had an almost typical, middle-class suburban upbringing. What shocks me is meanness. I don't like meanness.

Mel: I completely agree. If I see any real violence, that's what shocks me. I can watch anything in jest, with comedy.

Mink: I don't like angry comedy. I don't like mean comedy, I just don't. I find it distasteful and unnecessary, so I mean sometimes it's funny but a lotta times it's just nasty. I don't know where taste is these days. I mean we kind of don't have it any more. There's so much crap in the world, all the junk that's sold to you in big discount stores. People don't know what kitsch is anymore because everything is kitsch. No one cares enough about taste anymore to even use a concept like kitsch. The idea of kitsch in mainstream culture seems to have stopped somewhere in the mid 20th century.

Mel: Many of your recent films have continued this tradition of being underground or cult cinema. I'm thinking about films like *All About Evil* or *Anarchy TV*…

Mink: Well I'm seeing Joshua Grannell soon. I love him. He's a very good friend.

Mel: ...or sometimes they are gay and lesbian films

Still from Eating Out

Still from But I'm a Cheerleader

(*But I'm a Cheerleader*, *Eating Out*). Are these films you are drawn to or do these films pick you?

Mink: The films have picked me. I'm pretty open about that. I have one more film like that planned that's called *Hush Up Sweet Charlotte*. It's being made by Billy Clift. We're doing it early next year. He made a movie called *Baby Jane* which is a drag take on *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*. It's black and white, hilarious, he did a terrific job on it. This movie is a drag version of *Hush… Hush, Sweet Charlotte* and I'm going to play the Agnes Moorehead role. I'm very much looking forward to it. But I've stopped now doing most of these low budget independent films; they're hard on me. They've chosen me you know. I think I said earlier that I got typecast in the gay films as the mother of the gay, the aunt of the gay, and in *But I'm a Cheerleader* I'm the mother who sends my daughter away to a "make-you-straight" camp which ironically enough is run by RuPaul. He's running it as a man! So I have absolutely no problem with these. I have no problem with being in gay movies. What I have a problem with is that they just don't have enough money. Working conditions are too hard. That's basically why I'm calling a halt to it. These films are physically quite demanding and they're long days and they don't have the money to make me comfortable. I've nothing against them and I wish them all the luck in the world, I really do. But I just can't do it any more. My days of finding a corner of the room to sit in while I'm waiting for my next shot are over.

Mel: What do you value in cult, trash, underground and independent cinema and what differentiates them from other kinds of cinema?

Mink: I don't have any idea. I always value a good story whether it's an independent film or a major huge budget film. The story is everything. For instance, a movie I saw recently, *Blue Jasmine*, was a Woody Allen film that I really liked. I thought it was a really well told story. So while I understand that's not really an independent film or a cult film, it's also not a big blockbuster. It's just a well told story, and that I think, is what's most crucial. I think that's the important part of the success of any film, and I don't care what the story is as long as it's being well told. Who cares if it's a blockbuster or a cult film.

Brad: Recently you've moved into music. Is that something you've always wanted to do or is it something new?

Mink: Well it's relatively new, I always was a shower singer. A few years ago I was doing Shakespeare with the LA Women's Shakespeare Company and I was playing a singing peddler in *A Winter's Tale*. A friend of mine who's a musician, his name is Brian Grillo, came to see me and said, "I'm putting together this club, a once a month event, at a leather bar and would you sing for me?" So I said "yes", and he gave me a couple of musicians to work with and gave me a song that he'd written and I sang it and I just had the most wonderful time. It was really really fun and the audience was very responsive. So after that he put together a small band for me and I started doing gigs and I was awful! I just didn't know what I was doing, and it's very different to be yourself on a stage when all you've ever done is play other people. So you know, I had a major learning curve that I went through, but I really liked it, and then, you know, the band evolved, got different musicians added and subtracted and got other material to work with and started doing shows that felt more like me. They were concerts; it wasn't just a gig. I liked to sit up there with the band. I told stories you know, I made an evening of it. I just loved doing it. So, this record that I just made took me three years to make and it's a kind of a combination of the last 10 years of music in my life. I just love to sing, and I feel very fortunate that I have a wonderful group of musicians to work with who not only enjoy working with each other, but also enjoy working with me. So this CD is the very first thing in my entire life that I've ever done where I'm the driving force behind the project at hand. It's something I wanted to make and I overcame so many obstacles to do it and I never gave up on it. So it evolved and I re-did it and re-did it for countless hours in the studio, working to make it as good as I could. The production values on it are wonderful. But it was my very first. I mean as late in my life as it is, it was the very first thing I did that was really mine. So it's been an amazing experience for me to make it, and I love performing it. I truly love getting up in front of an audience with a microphone. Very different to be yourself, to present yourself as yourself on a stage when everything else you have always done involves playing with other people's words. It's my words now. I didn't write any of the songs but uh, a lot of them were written by people I know and people I worked with. But yeah, I love it, I really do: It's terrifying and liberating. The first time I decided to do a one woman show when I was still in LA and I was clueless! I had no idea but I booked it and thought I'd better do it, and I did it. I was nervous till I stepped out on to the stage and the minute I stepped on the stage I was like, hey, I like this!

Tyrell & Back

Words by Melanie Mulholland
Artwork by Jonny Negron

As a little girl, every Saturday morning my parents would take me to the town Library with my cousins. They liked to think they were enriching our minds by taking us to a library on a Saturday but suffice to say, we rarely ever looked at the books. While the matriarchs were engrossed in Stephen King's current best seller or flapping through tattered old Reader's Digests, my two cousins and I would frenziedly flip through the VHS section. Even though 2 out of 3 of us were in single digits, we couldn't give two shits about what cartoons they had. We wanted movies! Movies for grownups! The more PG13+ the better! I remember it vividly, flipping through each video cover encased in plastic, all these cinematic gems laid out in alphabetical deliciousness. It was filled to the brim with 80's and 90's American classics like *Ghostbusters*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Hudson Hawk, Uncle Buck, Predator, The Goonies, the Ernest movies, Beetlejuice, Die Hard*, and a bunch of Woody Allen films. One particular random Saturday was especially special to me. While flipping through the films on offer trying to separate the fresh meat from the countless movies we had already seen, we found *Cry-Baby*. We sat and just stared at the cover racking our brains as to what the film would be like. The image of a leather clad, devastatingly sexy Johnny Depp was awakening our unknown desires. We took the video to our parents and as usual, they just let us have it even though it was out of our age range. To this day I am thankful my parents let me watch PG13+ movies. Alone. With the lights off. At 3am if I wanted to.

My cousins and I scrambled home and immediately set to watching *Cry-Baby*. That movie awakened more in us than we all bargained for. While I was very excited by watching Johnny, I was more excited with how the women were as characters in the film. I was especially impressed with Susan Tyrrell as *Cry-Baby's* crass hick-with-a-heart Aunt, Ramona Ricketts. I had never seen women portrayed like this before, it was absolute trashy madness! I wanted to be like Susan Tyrrell, I didn't want no slick, Vaseline-on-the-screen hero coming to save me; I wanted to swear, raise hell, and have fun! Susan Tyrrell and John Waters' women really awakened that in me, implanted it in my head at a very young age that it's OK to not fit in. You can be batshit crazy and have loads of fun. You don't need to wait for your knight in shining armour because he's probably a fucking square anyways.

As you grow older, interests come and go but my love for John Waters' films (*Crybaby, Serial Mom, Hairspray*) stayed firmly. I often looked for Susan Tyrrell in other films but we're talking about a pre-internet age here. This stuff was rarer than hens' teeth. There have been countless times I've acted out sections of *Cry-Baby* with friends and I only ever memorised Susan Tyrell's (and Mink Stole's) lines. Tyrell was and is just pure class to me. She is the epitome of bad taste. A champion of personality, drama and wit.

"I wanted to be like Susan Tyrrell...I wanted to swear, raise hell, and have fun!"

When the internet happened I looked her up on IMDB. Oh, the movies I had missed! There were even some films I had seen and not realised it was her. There were characters she had voiced in cartoons such as *Cow and Chicken* and *I Am Weasel* which I loved. She had worked so much and so eclectically, with roles ranging from *Tales from the Crypt* to *Powder* (also a beloved film of mine in the library). She's been in everything from Andy Warhol's *Bad* to *Starsky and Hutch.*

The trail of her career links with many key figures from cult, trash and exploitation cinema. She has a miscarriage in Paul Verhoeven's medieval action film *Flesh+Blood* (1985). She's an eccen-

Clockwise from top left, Susan Tyrell in Far From Home, Flesh+Blood, Cry-Baby and Forbidden Zone

tric artist and landlady in Robert Vincent O'Neill's cult film about teenage prostitution *Angel* (1984). She is responsible for the narration in Ralph Bakski's *Wizards* (1977). Her appearance as a psychiatric patient in Anthony Page's cult film *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (1977) is especially captivating.

Over the years as I watched many different types of cinema, I never forgot my love of Tyrrell. However, I wasn't prepared for it to kick up a billion notches when I first watched *Forbidden Zone.* That film blew my mind. Her rich, evil, wonderful, ugly, beautiful conniving bitch portrayal of the Queen of the 6th Dimension is utterly sublime. Each line is delivered with such gusto, spat out in reckless abandon. Dressed in a split-to-the-thigh sparkly dress, a huge beehive hairdo streaked with a quiff of white reminiscent of *The Bride of Frankenstein*, she tore through the screen oozing trash from every pore.

In this article I could have sat here and given you a Wikipedia roll off of facts but I felt I had to speak from a personal standpoint about Susan as she, for some reason, feels like a friend, a family member, a big part of my own personal history and those of the trashy wonderful people I grew to know via a love of her movies.

Even though Susan passed away in 2012, she'll never really be dead. Her spirit didn't die to me and it never will. A performer, a personality so powerful and brash doesn't just disappear once its heart stops beating. That is a mere formality. Susan sowed the seeds of her own immortality just by being herself, and aren't we so fortunate to have experienced it.

Susan, I want to say thank you to you for enriching my life and countless others and for enriching cinema as a whole. I don't know how much I owe you for that, but I'm sure it's aaaalllooottta hubcaps.

Gerontophilia

Bruce LaBruce

Gerontophilia is the tragic-comic story of Lake, a kind of saint, a sensitive boy whose empathy for old men, and whose love of one old man in particular, is so strong that it becomes a sexual urge. When he develops a strong bond and relationship with the old man, Mr. Peabody, who teaches him a great deal about life and the bigger world,

he begins to question not only his sexuality, but also the meaning of love and sex and life itself. Although Lake's actions may ultimately contribute to the old man's demise, he rescues him from a purgatory of over-medication and loneliness, and allows him to live again and experience happiness before he dies. In the process, Lake takes a stand and asserts himself; he grows up, overcoming his fears and self-doubt.

Gerontophilia is a modern story of teenage rebellion, combining elements of particular movies that involve characters who challenge societal and sexual conventions, and who transgress boundaries, sexual or otherwise, in order to express themselves and

assert their individuality and their love. Think *Harold and Maude* meets *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,* or a reverse *Lolita*.

Gerontophilia takes as its inspiration the style of independent films of the sixties and seventies such as *A Taste of Honey*, *Scarecrow*, and *Rachel, Rachel*: films with a gritty, kitchen sink realism combined with a lyrical romanticism. But the film also makes stylistic reference to more modern idioms, using a straightforward and frank approach to depict the sex lives of contemporary youths. Set largely in Montreal, *Gerontophilia* also pays homage, in style and content, to some of the great Quebecois films about strong,

willful and sexually rebellious teenagers, including nods to such great works as *Act of the Heart*, *Sonatine*, and *Les Bons Debarras*.

All images are stills from *Gerontophilia*

Bruce LaBruce

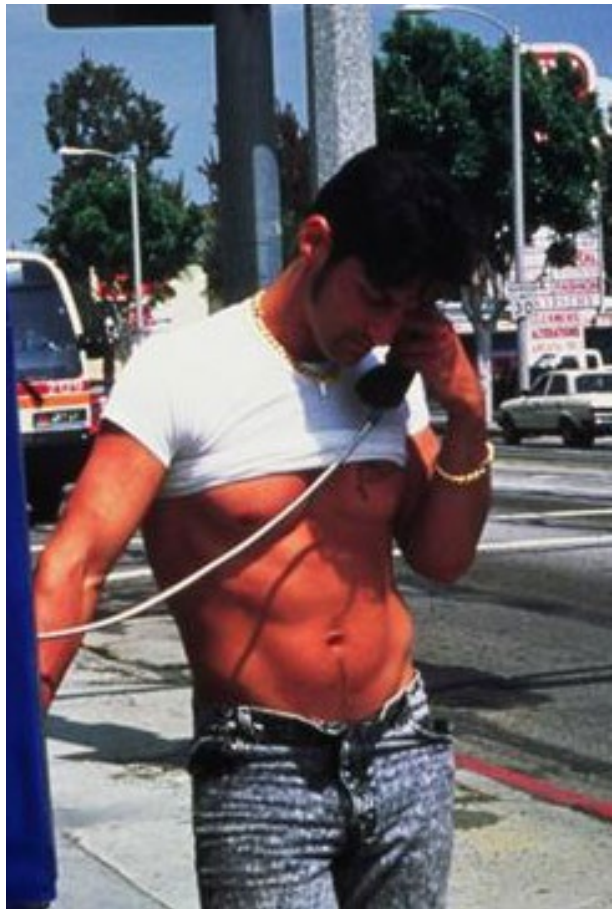
Interviewed by Nick Hudson

Nick Hudson: First off, how are you?

Bruce LaBruce: It's hectic!

NH: *Gerontophilia* premiered at the Venice film Festival recently - congratulations, and how was the general reception? What first prompted you to make a film exploring that particular -philia?

BL: *Gerontophilia* opened the Venice Days section with a bang. There were 1300 people at the world premier and they had to turn 200 away! The audience was very warm and gave it a standing ovation. The overall critical response to the film was mostly positive. I've met a lot of people who tell me that their first sexual experience was with an older - sometimes much older - person. I've also made a film called *Hustler White* about male prostitutes on Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles that featured younger hustlers having sex with much older men for money. I've spent a lot of time in hustler bars, and I've discovered that even though a lot of these young men aren't gay-identified (they're "gay for pay"), they still enjoy having sex with older men. Sometimes they also have very strong, emotional bonds with these older men, or are mentored by them sexually or intellectually. With *Gerontophilia*, I wanted to explore the same kind of relationship, except the boy doesn't want or need to be paid for having sex with older men. It's his personal fetish. In that sense, the film is a kind of "reverse Lolita".



Still from Hustler White

NH: You used crowdfunding to secure some of the budget for *Gerontophilia* - what did this enable you to do?

BL: Actually the majority of the funding for the film was from Quebec Telefilm and SODEC, which are government film financing agencies in Canada. We only topped up the budget with a small amount of crowdfunding, largely to be able to afford more music rights at the end of the process.

NH: In the *Gerontophilia* text, you mention that the protagonist, Lake, comes to learn that the residents of the care home are being

Still from L.A Zombie

over-medicated, and that Lake starts to wean Mr. Peabody off of the drugs. Is this in fact a closeted third zombie movie in your canon?! I'm reminded of Otto beginning to experience memories of his boyfriend in *Otto; or Up with Dead People*. The waking of the doped masses...?

BL: Sure, in some ways old people in institutions do become zombies of a certain kind. They are often over-medicated both to make them more manageable and to control their sexual urges. With cuts to health care and decreased staff and funding, this is becoming almost a kind of epidemic. When Mr. Peabody is weaned off his medication, he comes back to life. It's a bit similar to my movie *L.A. Zombie*, in which the alien zombie fucks dead bodies back to life. The L.A. zombie is a kind of Christ figure or saint who resurrects people, and Lake, the young boy in *Gerontophilia*, is represented in much the same way.

NH: Revolution seems to run like blood through your body of work (see what I did there) - in the choices made by your characters, in their mode(s) of sexual expression, etc. And yet you also satirise radical groups in *The Raspberry Reich* (Baader Meinhof), and *Otto* (agit-prop filmmakers) for instance - do you think of revolution as an individual act, or is the lampooning of these groups purely for directly-comedic effect? Or neither, or both!

BL: I often represent revolutionary characters in my films - from *No Skin Off My Ass* to *The Raspberry Reich* to *Otto* and *Gerontophilia*. And you're right, I do often satirize these self-styled revolutionaries, although I always take what they're saying quite seriously as well and present them as intelligent and idealistic characters. I think any revolutionary who has extreme ideas about radically changing the world is destined to run into a lot of murky and difficult moral and ethical issues; it's just the nature of the beast. The road to hell is paved with good intentions, as the saying goes! But also, it's difficult to be extremely idealistic in the world we live in, and especially to live out those ideals without contradicting yourself here and there or failing to practice what you preach. Sometimes, in the worst case scenario, the oppressed even becomes the oppressor! So I try to present revolutionaries as flawed, morally ambivalent characters who face all of these difficult issues. But I always present them with affection, and they're quite often my own strongest point of identification in the film. Desiree in *Gerontophilia* is no exception. She's a smart, idealistic, unapologetic feminist (rarely portrayed on the big screen these days!), but her desire for revolution also entails her admiring female terrorists and serial killers! But ultimately she has a good heart and she's a smart cookie. She articulates Lake's fetish for him, and supports him in his fight against conventions and nature. She thinks he's a revolutionary!

NH: Is there a part of the filmmaking process which you enjoy the most?

BL: Shooting is always the most fun, as stressful and difficult as it may be. *Gerontophilia* provided me with my first opportunity to work more within an industry context, working with a union crew, and shooting a film in a more "industry standard" way with my largest budget to date. I

Top: Still from Otto; or Up with Dead People
Middle and Bottom: Stills from The Raspberry Reich

learned a lot and really enjoyed the process. Writing is usually torturous for me, and editing can be as well, although I enjoy both in different ways.

NH: Toronto seems to be something of a febrile petri dish for pretty radical, DIY, queer artists. Obviously the JD zine you co-founded with GB Jones paved something of a way for this. But, do you think there's something specific to Toronto that makes it conducive to such a rich and diverse array of radical voices?

BL: Toronto is the largest metropolis in Canada, so a lot of people from all over come here from both inside and outside of the country, which makes it one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world. It's also pretty laid back as big cities go, so people have more time and money for hanging out and quality of life, which makes a big difference (although this is rapidly changing with the "Manhattanization" of the city). There have always been a lot of very creative and unorthodox and radical artists I've admired who've started out in Toronto, and who I've been fortunate enough to be friends with - from AA Bronson of General Idea to G.B. Jones to Will Munro to Chilly Gonzalez to Peaches to Ladyfag and on and on. There's a certain idealism to Toronto, and a kind of self-conscious and somewhat ironic attitude toward celebrity and "success" that sets them apart. They never seem to forget or appreciate where they came from.

NH: Which of your films so far did you find most difficult to make? Why so?

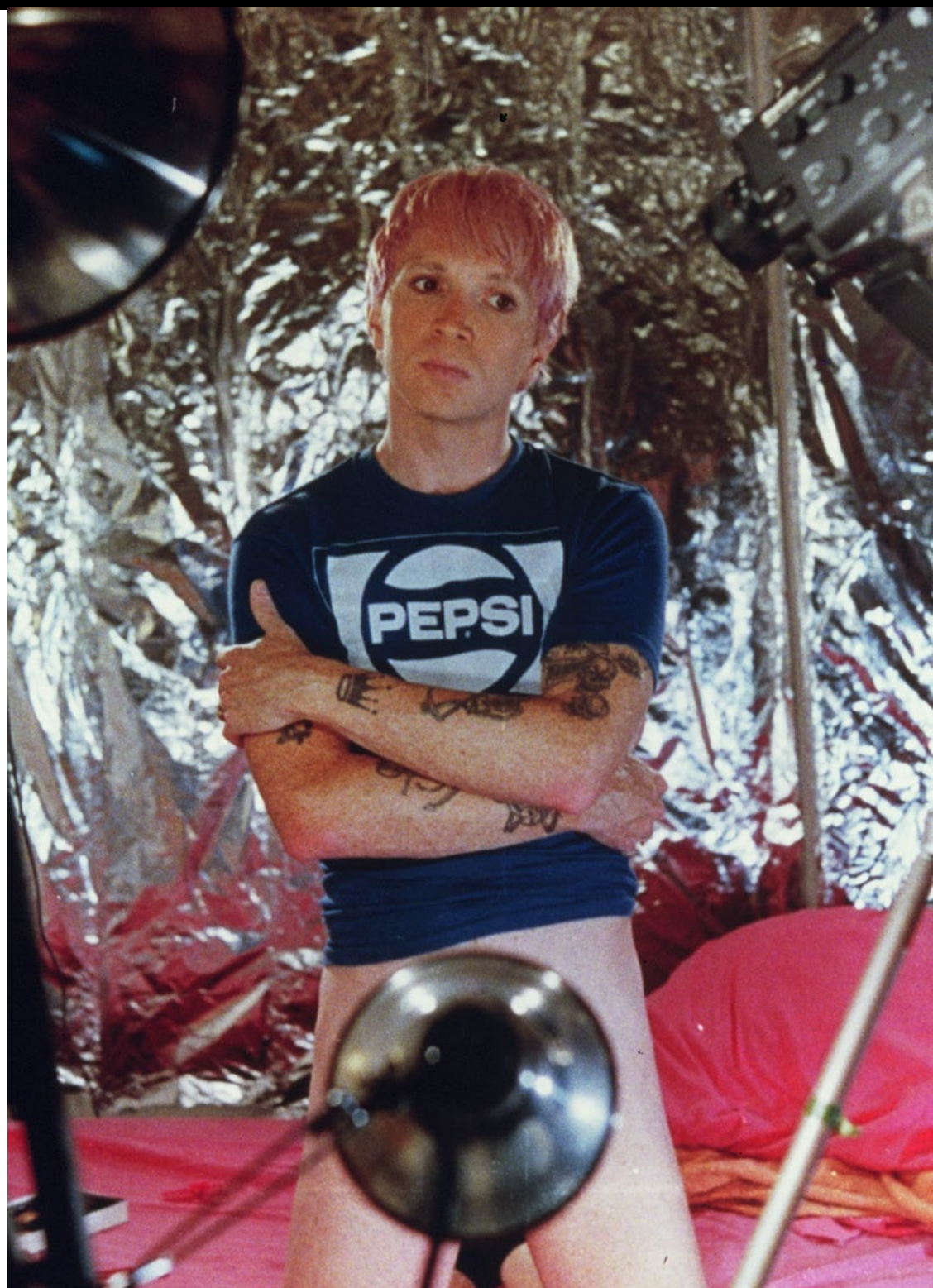
BL: The most difficult film I did was *Super 8 1/2*, my second feature film, which I refer to as my red-headed stepchild. It was my first 16mm film, largely made by trial and error, and although had some financing from my Berlin producer, Jurgen Bruning, I also had to bar-tend and wait tables and use my own money to make it. I shot it on and off for a year, whenever I had the time and money, and it took two years to complete. So when it finally ended up at the Toronto Film Fest and Sundance and many other international film festivals, I was gob-smacked! I also made it completely in the pre-digital era, shooting and cutting on film, which was a great experience.

NH: When might we expect to see *Gerontophilia* in the UK?

BL: I'm not sure yet!

NH: What other projects do you have lined-up/ in-development...?

BL: I have several films in development, as they say. And I'm just finishing up an experimental film based on the stage adaptation of Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* that I did several years back at the Hau Theater in Berlin. I got some financing from the Ontario Arts Council to make an experimental film using some of the stage footage and some additional footage I shot on location in Berlin. It should be out early next year.



Opposite:
Bruce LaBruce in *Super 8 1/2* (1994)

One+One is looking for writers and articles

Articles can be theoretical or practical; however, we are not 5 stars reviews based. We want to encourage a thorough and critical analysis of filmmaking and its social and cultural effects and implications. Contributors should not write from a consumer perspective, or merely a theorist. All articles should be influenced by the act of filmmaking to a greater or lesser extent. We encourage a wide variety of articles whether autobiographical, journalistic, historical, philosophical, socio-political or whether they are manifestos, letters, diaries, sketchbooks or interviews. However the perspective of the filmmaker or the critical re-invention of film, as a theme, is of central importance.

One+One always tries to tread the fine line between straight up academic prose and popular writing, we encourage articles which can reach a popular audience of filmmakers, artists and intellectual laypersons without becoming anti-intellectual.

- Filmmaking practice (including articles written from a practical viewpoint)
- Broader social, cultural and economic issues for filmmakers
- Underrated or under-acknowledged filmmakers or acknowledged filmmakers who have radically and experimentally broken boundaries in some way
- Social and political issues in films
- Contemporary Independent and World Cinema (This could include little known or important films or filmmakers from all over the world)
- Film piracy, the internet, new technology and its social, cultural and economic implication
- Art, underground and cult cinema
- Expanded cinema, video art, installation
- Trash and exploitation cinema
- Radical Politics, Activism and Filmmaking
- Science and cinema
- Pornography and sex in cinema
- Redesigning cinema space and film experience
- Filmmaking and film in relation to cultural theory such as psychoanalysis, phenomenology, psychogeography, queer theory, body & identity politics and Marxism

The desired length of articles is under 3000 words. However, longer and shorter articles are negotiable. Please send a 200 word proposal before submitting to submissions@oneplusonejournal.co.uk

Further information on submissions, and a downloadable PDF of the journal can be found on our website www.oneplusonejournal.co.uk