

What lurks in these rooms

Richard Zywockiewicz

Within the confines of a modest, brick building at 507 King St. East, lies Canada's only truly experimental theatre. This old, abandoned warehouse is home to the Funnel, a 100-seat theatre, darkroom, office and equipment room with a flatbed editing table.

The darkroom and film rooms hold relics from film history, including a 16 mm processor, little used since the outset of color film. The Funnel's 20 members use the darkroom for stillwork and graphics for their films.

Beneath founder Ross McLaren's softspoken exterior rests a serious enthusiasm for the preservation of the "experimental cinema" which, according to McLaren, has been around since the beginning of film. McLaren feels that exhibiting films are just as important as making them.

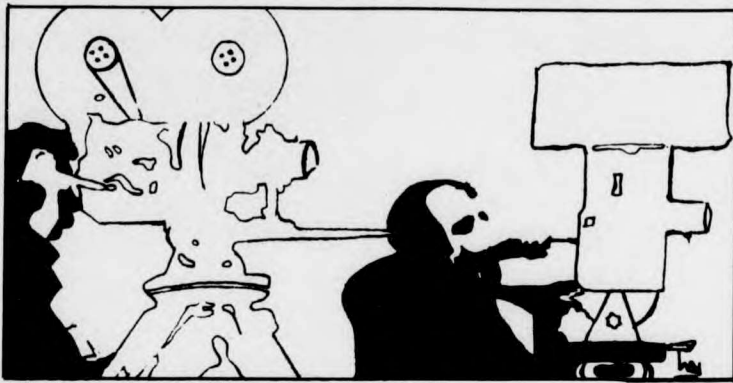
McLaren used to screen films for friends in the basement of his home until 1977 when he found a larger basement and converted it into the Experimental Arts and Communication Centre at 15 Duncan St. In December of 1978, McLaren, along with 20 other filmmakers, founded the Funnel Theatre, which saw 40 programs in its first year. Filmmakers in the community turned up voluntarily to paint, renovate, and restore the old warehouse. Approximately 100 seats were acquired from the old Imperial Theatre. "We're totally a cooperative and volunteer organization," points out McLaren.

The Funnel works in conjunction with a network of experimental exhibitors found in institutions, colleges and art galleries throughout the United States. It instigates and circulates newsletters, reviews, travel

sheets and exchange programs with other centres, which allows the Experimental Networks to "keep in touch."

"We have regular showings Wednesdays and Friday nights," mentions Ann Gronau, a sculptress-turned-filmmaker who is the Funnel's office administrator. She pointed out that on one occasion, during the recent Warhol series, as many as 140 people showed up to see the films and meet some of the stars.

"The film screenings are the theatre's priority," stresses Ross McLaren. Filmmakers throughout North America and Europe show up with their films for screenings and discussions, two nights a week. The discussions are recorded and stored in the archives.



The Funnel: unleashing the next Murnau.

The Gallery space is used for performances, photography, music and art exhibitions. Also offered are showings of older films twice a month with free admissions. Open screenings take place on the last Wednesday

of every month, to which the public are encouraged to bring their Super 8, 8mm, and 16 mm films for public exposure.

For further information, call 364-7003.

Ann Arbour; 11-16/3/80

John Q. Baumann

I could have lied to him and said we were just going over to Detroit to get laid or buy shoes or something; he might have waved us through. But I didn't: I told him we were on our way to an experimental film festival in Ann Arbour, Michigan. Minutes later, as I was pulling down my pants for the immigration man, I wondered what it was that had aroused his suspicions. Was there something subversive or revolutionary in "experimental" films. Would I ever get to Ann Arbour, and would the films be worth all this?

The 18th Ann Arbour Film Festival wound up six days of screenings last Sunday by showing 35 films, selected from about 350 as the best of the festival. Now "experimental" film probably conjures up an image of the filmmaker sitting,

contemplating his broken shoelace or something; perhaps a genre characterized by shaky cameras and self-indulgence. If so, revive the word and discard the notion. The winners at Ann Arbour prove it isn't so:

City Slickers, a fantastic dream-sketch of bar life in the big city, was probably the single most impressive piece, dazzling in its use of montage and superimposition to create figures that floated and images that flowed together in a melodic visual synthesis. A tiny dancer does a rising pirouette from the bottom of a bubbling beerglass and dances the length of the bar. The piano man swings into some hot jazz and the mood lifts from alcoholic melancholy to exuberance, as a grapefruit moon looks down on the city.

The festival's top prize was awarded to filmmaker Rufus Seder who had two other

winning films: **The Laughing Cop** (who gets run down for his sense of humour), and **Miami**, a lyrical montage portrait of that city of palm trees, condos and bosoms in bikinis.

One flick entitled **A Different Drummer**, a documentary about jazz drummer Elvin Jones (the man who fucks his drums), might have seemed out of place if not for the fact that so many of the films already seen had used jazz soundtracks, a reminder of the affinity of the music for creative visuals, and of jazz musicians for other imaginative people. On the subject of imaginative people, the festival's founder and current director happens to be York's George "Wanna buy a poster" Manupelli.

Lucky for us. This year's festival was the most successful ever, so try to get there next year. But remember what to tell them at the border.



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