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PERFORMANCE



THE VIDEO ISSUE

Video Aesthetics
Pirate TV
Television & Community
John Wyver Interviewed
Video Art

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HOME WORK 2

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Gary Stevens: Different Ghosts

8 - 12 March
Intimate Strangers: Time to Go
 15 - 26 March
Axis Mundi: The Haunting Tree

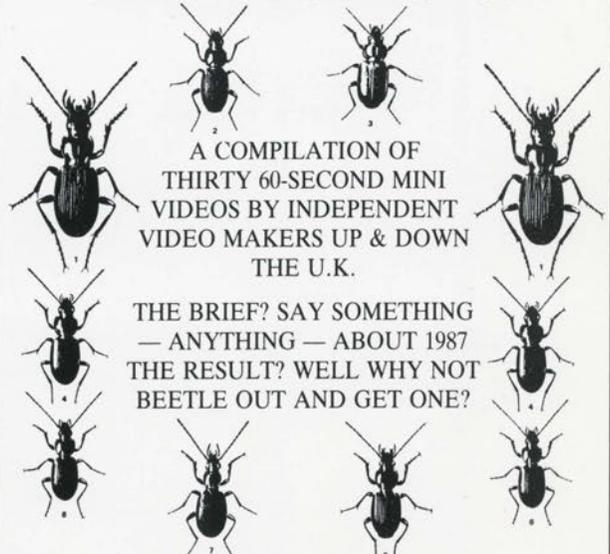
1 April
Dogs in Honey plus **Images of Purdah**
 2 April
Dogs in Honey

ICAW The ICA's Home Work season is proving a stimulating performance showcase, which rightly raises as many questions as it answers about the identity and value of artists in the front line. Financial Times 1987

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MONA HATOUM
 So much I wanted to say
 Changing Parts

Wednesday 24th February (8.45pm)
SIMON HERBERT
 To Poker to Poker

Wednesday 2nd March (8.45pm)
ROSE ENGLISH

Wednesday 9th March (8.00pm)
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88

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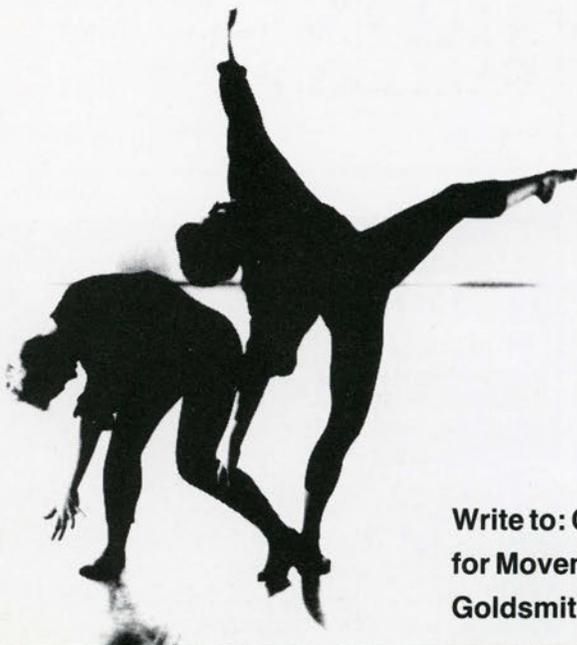
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- **PHOTOS** ● FRONT COVER: Taken from *Light Head*, a video installation by Leigh Cox (see page 12)
- Contents Page Taken from *There is a Myth*, a video by Catherine Elwes

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PERFORMANCE MAGAZINE LTD

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Special Thanks to Betsy Ho for assistance in putting this issue together.

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ISSN No. 0 144 5901



GUEST EDITOR + NIK HOUGHTON

Every so often someone asks why it is that a magazine which goes under slogan 'live art now' regularly gives space to video art. There are many reasons. For a start, many video artists are also performance artists. An important theme in twentieth century art has been artists attempts to find ways of working outside of the traditional and pure forms of painting and sculpture. Video, like performance, is neither traditional nor pure. Video art lies somewhere between painting, television and film enjoying a less than comfortable relationship with each of these. Performance lies somewhere between painting, sculpture and the performing arts. They both use the more traditional media as their reference points and have a rhetorical dialogue with them. As a result video shares with performance a marginal position in the structure of arts production and distribution. By being outside the mainstream there are obvious problems but there are advantages too. There are no, or only just nascent, traditions

which might restrict formal experimentation.

There is considerably less chance of coming up against the problems of commercial success and the compromises which it can throw around the artist. In short, it can be radical in both the ways it is produced and the relationship it has with its audiences.

Being new forms, both performance and video have been particularly attractive to artists who for reasons of gender, race or sexual orientation have been largely excluded from the structures of the traditional arts. This means that video and performance also share the potential for being radical in content to.

There are also pragmatic reasons for including video in our regular brief. Like performance, video has very few platforms and all too often a video artist work will remain unnoticed by the media. Performance Magazine exists partly to provide information and criticism of those areas of the arts which would otherwise receive no

media coverage. Video is just such an area. The response to our as yet rather minimal coverage of video has been a demand for more. This is something we will respond to and in future we plan to include not only the video news section and the occasional review but also features and interviews. Inevitably space is restricted and there is always more work that deserves coverage than we can manage but even if we can't actually increase the number of pages (although this is anticipated over the next six issues) there are ways to include more.

Nik Houghton has been contributing our Video News section for some time now as well as reviews. He has also written extensively on video elsewhere. By editing this issue he will automatically become a member of the magazine's Editorial Advisory Group. His presence at those meetings will ensure that there is a bigger voice for video in the planning of future issues.

Steve Rogers
Managing Editor

PERFORMANCE NEWS

+ **Gary Stevens'** new show *Different Ghosts* (reviewed Performance 49) tours throughout February and March. Traverse, Edinburgh Feb 18-21; ICA, London Feb 23-March 5; Trent Poly, Nottingham March 7-8; Chapter, Cardiff March 10-12; South Hill Park, Bracknell March 15; Leeds Poly, March 17/18; Pegasus, Oxford March 19; Joliffe Studios, Swindon March 24; Green Room, Manchester March 30-31; Brewery Arts, Kendal April 7. ●

+ **Axis Mundi**, comprising ex-members of Impact Theatre and Forced Entertainment, have a new show called *The Haunting Show* (see reviews), touring to Woughton Centre, Milton Keynes Feb 12; West Bowen Community Centre, Bedford Feb 13; Trent Poly, Nottingham (where the show was originally developed) Feb 15-16; Leicester Poly, Feb 17-18; ICA, London March 14-27. ●

+ **Annie Griffin's** new show is a collaboration with the sculptor **Laura Ford**. *The Deadly Grove*, has been commissioned by the amazingly creative team of Kathryn Standing and Simon Mellor at south London's **Battersea Arts Centre**. It will run at Battersea March 2-19 before touring to Manchester and Glasgow. I can't resist saying it, even though I probably don't need to, but, don't miss this. Details: 01 223 2223. ●

+ **Texture**, the new Glasgow based group (see reviews), will mount the *Second Phase* at the **Third Eye Centre**, April 28-29. Glasgow does appear to be developing a highly individualistic, strongly visual group of performers. **Transmissions Gallery** continues to stage a range of events and groups like *Texture* and *Tradition*:

Debilitation are a sign that after years of being a performance black spot things are changing. Third Eye Details: 041 332 7521. ●

+ **Graeme Miller's** film within an opera, *Dungeness* (reviewed Performance 50) is in Manchester, Under the Arches, April 14-16, and at the Arnolfini, Bristol the week beginning April 18. ●

+ **Kumiko Shimizu**, best known for her environmental sculpture works, is developing a project with the **Tom Allen Centre** in East London. The installation will investigate the symbolic and mystical potentials of ordinary domestic, particularly kitchen, equipment. Until Feb 20, details, 01 555 7289. ●

+ **Humberside College** which for some years now has been the focus for a quiet but imaginative series of performance events has earned some recognition recently in the form of funding support from the Arts Council. They are mounting performances by **Sue Perks**, Feb 15 and by **Tim Brennan & Simon Orvry** on March 10. ●

NEARER THE EDGE

+ After the highly successful if somewhat chaotic **At The Edge** festival last year **London's Air Gallery** there is to be an **At The Edge 2** in March. The highlight of this mixed programme of installations, performance and videos will be *The Video Labrynth*. Developed by the German National Film School this is an interactive video installation which enables you the viewer to take a part in a Dallas style soap as well as 'acting' in other narratives via a keyboard. The season runs from March 9-23. See Ads for details. ●

SHEFFIELD

Sheffield seems to be the place to be these days. Firstly, the **Leadmill**, which as reported is fast growing as a performance base, has a new season starting Feb 3 with **Bow Gamelan** and continuing with **Oscar McLennan**, **Mona Hatoum**, **Simon Herbert**, **Rose English**, and a programme of student work from the area. (See ads for details). Also in March is the second of the revived **Sheffield Media Shows**. This year's programme includes performance, music and videos by **George Barber**, **Brett Turnbull**, **Marian Urch**, **Paul Burwell** and others. (See ads for details). Sheffield is also the home of the quaintly named **PADSY**, which stands for Performance Art Development South Yorkshire. They are commissioning work from performance artists as well as offering a schools residency. They are now inviting proposals for a conference and for a workshop programme. Details: 0742 761769. ●

HOME WORK 2

+ The **ICA** is running another season of British performance work which includes **Gary Stevens**, **Axis Mundi**, **Dogs in Honey**, **Dianne Esguera** and **Khan**, and the new show from **Intimate Strangers**. *Intimate Strangers*, despite being very popular in Europe have never quite clicked with British audiences. Their last show *Chine*, was that most rare of things, a performance that totally resisted explanation. It held a kind of irresistible logic and fascination yet remained inexplicable. The new show *Time To Go* has music by Manjunper **Glyn Perrin** and is performed by **Melanie Thomson**. A long awaited treat. ●

BRIGHTON FESTIVAL

88

The Brighton Festival is now starting to rival Edinburgh for the role of Britain's major arts festival. This year's theme is *Voyage and Vision* which allows a programme of work relating to Australia and to William Blake. A mind boggling concept maybe but the programme, still being finalised, has some highlights for performance audiences including **Teatro Mascara** from Florence, our own **Forkbeard Fantasy** and the multinational group which grew out of the **Magdalena Project** at Chapter Cardiff. This year's festival will also include a film and video programme. The festival runs throughout May. More details next issue. ●

STATION HOUSE OPERA for Bastille?

+ For the four hundredth anniversary of the **Bastille** the city of **Paris** invited submissions for large scale works in any media from artists of any nationality. Amongst the shortlist of internationally renowned painters and composers there are only two British names, one is **Station House Opera**. All of the shortlisted proposals are on exhibition in Paris before going before a highly distinguished panel for the final selection. We wish them luck. ●

PHOTO / SPENCER ROWELL



PERFORMANCE

NEWS

Annie Griffin swings into action again with Laura Ford, in *The Deadly Grove*

FESTIVAL OF PLAGIARISM

Details have only recently arrived of a wide ranging series of events in London around the issue of plagiarism and copying. Running throughout February the programme includes performances, exhibitions and installations, videos and 'events'. Unfortunately we missed their wittily subversive **National Home Taping Day** which invited audiences to "help kill the music industry". No phone number for details is available but the festival seems to be centred round Community Copy Art at Culross Buildings, Battle Bridge Rd, London NW1. ●

ARTS COUNCIL NEWS

Two events of importance to Performance have taken place at the power centre in recent weeks. Firstly the **abolition of the Combined Arts Department** which looks after performance art and Performance Magazine. In future performance art will be a function of the **Art Department**. Jenni Walwin the performance art officer, currently on maternity leave, will retain responsibility for the same activities as before. The idea is that being part of a large department with large budgets could mean more titbits for performance art. The second is the preparation of the new **Progress Funding** scheme which is the Council's response to the recent government announcement of an additional 17% increase in funding over three years. Progress funding is designed to encourage funded organisations to increase their earned income by matching with one to every two pounds of increase for approved development plans. So if you've been considering **making a donation to performance magazine** please wait till we've been accepted onto the scheme. ●

JOB NEWS

It's the time of year when arts workers play their version of musical chairs. **Di Robson** who managed only a very short stay in Glasgow as Director of MayFest has been tempted back to London by the post of Director of **Riverside Studios** performing arts programmes. **Charlie Hanson** who has managed to present a consistently varied and interesting programme there for the past three years is going back whence he came, namely freelance directing and producing. Michael Morris' replacement as director of ICA Theatre, **Bob Wisdom**, has taken up the job now and if his first event, a conference called *Whose Home Work?* is anything to go by, we should be seeing some radical changes in policy there. The conference will consider the highly charged and difficult subject of multicultural arts in the context of the ICA. (Details see ads). ●

VIDEO NEWS Compiled by Nik Houghton

+ As intimated in the 50th issue of PERFORMANCE the **LVA-London Video Arts** — are currently organising a joint video project with **Interim Arts**. The project will be touring the UK later this year with the title **Genlock** and will attempt to "... bring together both old and new video tapes that explore ... the presentation of monologues, confessionals or testimonials". The works will be selected from open submission — by the time you read this the selection process will be well under way — and enquiries should be directed to **LVA (01) 734-7410**. ●

+ Brief mention of the last **Bracknell Video Festival** which, this year, had a distinctly international flavour with packages on show from Europe and the States alongside UK works. Nearly all the screenings were packed with eager viewers and, generally, the mood was a lot more positive than last year. (This could be because I didn't have a hangover unlike the previous festival). Personal faves include **Sender — The Movie** from **Battersea Arts Centre**, a tape featuring Geordie comic **Vic Reeves** passing comment on clips from videos featured in the original exhibition, and **Steve Littmans** bluntly powerful *Name of the Gun*, a five monitor set up. ●

+ **BFI News**: Having organised a short series of video programmes as part of the **London Film Festival** at the ICA **Ben Gibson**, the BFI's Video Officer, is currently faced with the unenviable task of fund raising for a larger festival, as part of 88's LFF. Some people, however, weren't too happy with the ICA presentations. **Simon Biggs**, video artist and critic currently situated at **Middlesex Polytechnic** on a placement involving computer technology and state-of-the-art video, complained that the supposed "world premiere" of the **Time Code** programme was nothing of the sort. "I'd seen that programme a month earlier at the Hague Festival", commented Biggs. Last seen presenting a seminar at Bracknell's video festival Biggs was also critical of the lack of interest in international video — "British video artists can't seem to be bothered to attend the big European festivals ... I think it leads to a kind of insularity in UK video culture". ●

+ Internationally renowned video artist **Bill Viola** has been on location in the Arizona Desert and Death Valley for five months shooting new tape. ("And basically trying to keep outside of more than a 500 mile radius of all art critics", states Viola). Other activities include Viola setting up an exhibition at MOMA in New York — "into the wilderness — more dangerous than the Arizona outback!" Viola will be in the UK at the **Riverside Gallery** in **September 88**. ●

+ **Living Inner City** is the title of a new tape from **Annarres**. Inspired by Coppolas cult-movie **Koyanisqaatsi** the work was produced for **Islington Council** to document a "day in the life" of the Council. "They had in mind the usual documentary, which we thought would fail to catch the public attention . . . Instead we made INNER CITY using 16MM film time-lapse techniques", say Annarres. The telecined results will be on view later this year and will be shown in libraries, sports centres and neighbourhood offices with an intended audience of 10,000. Watch this space for further details. ●

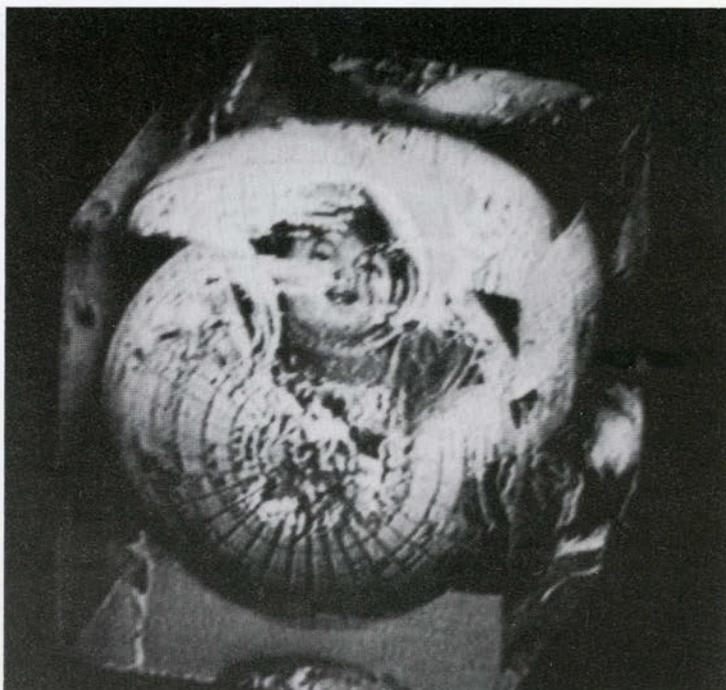
+ **Chapter Arts Centre** will be screening a programme of independent films and videos by women entitled **Women Make Movies** on **Jan 28th**. The screening is part of a series of training workshops, discussions and related events for women which will run throughout Jan and Feb. **Details: Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff 396061**. ●

+ Pop pickers might like to note that **Activision** is currently distributing a "compilation scratch-come-pop-video" tape to promote themselves. The tape features pop videos of **Pere Ubu**, **Easterhouse**, Irish indie band **The Shrubs** and proto-rockers **Head** amongst others all made at Activision. **Details: Activision On (01) 833-4488**. ●

+ Now available is the **LVA's new Distribution Catalogue**, an invaluable document for programmers, medianiks and vid-heads everywhere. The catalogued features a number of individually selected programmes alongside a full listing and description of LVA tapes and is available through the LVA at £1.25 per copy. **LVA (01) 734-7410**. ●

BR THREATEN LFMC

+ With **Britrail** threatening to evict the **LFMC** from their Camden premises in March the Co-op is now seeking **letters of support** for its campaign to fight the eviction. Meantime LFMC Members are currently prowling the streets of London in search of suitable premises should the eviction come to pass. Ideas on this and support for the Co-op, after all the only real venue in London for grass roots experimental work, should be sent to **The London Film Makers Co-op, 42 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1 Tel: 586-8515** . . . Further to this story is the information that the **LVA** is in a similar if



less dramatic position as their **Frith Street** lease is due to expire in the not-to distant future. Possibilities of a joint shared premises seem strong despite the failure of a bid to establish a media centre at the **Coin Street development** which both the LFMC and LVA were to have been involved in. ●

+ Noticeable at the recent **Arts Council** press night shindig for **The Elusive Sign** (see reviews) — a retrospective package of 10 years of avant-garde film and video — was a dissident faction giving out broadsheets from the **Institute of Experimental Cinematographers** claiming that the selection was a "shameful distortion of the history of avant-garde film in this country". Citing "sexism, agism and ignorance" against the selectors — Mike O'Pray, Tamara Krikorian and Catherine Lacey — the broadsheet suggests artists included in the programme publicly withdraw and argues that the work was "selected by private recommendation and in almost total secrecy". The debate looks set to continue . . . ●

+ As an update to the **Nine a.m.** showing at the **London Film Makers Co-op** in November — a 15 monitor installation largely regarded as "groovy" — comes the news that two members of **NINE A.M.** are headed for Tokyo in April to launch a new tape entitled **'Saboten Boi'** (Cactus Boy). **Clive Gillman** and **St. John Walker**, who have already enjoyed success in the Land-Of-The-Rising-Sony with **'Electrical Crash Monster'**, are looking for a satellite relay of this new work which looks to be something of a global project. "The tape will have contributions from work done with school groups, including Chinese and Asian kids, so it'll be something of a multi-cultural bash", said Walker. Is this what McLuhan was talking about with his "global village" concept? ●

+ Following their video festival in September 86 the **French Institute** continues its role as a new video space with screenings each month. Each month a different guest selector will present a programme of works alongside a selection from French curator **Jean-Marie Duhard**. Next screening on Tuesday 16th February at 6.30pm with Anna Ridley as guest programmer; **French Institute, 17 Queensbury Place; London SW7. Phone 589-6211**. ●

+ Amongst the commissions from the **Channel Four/Arts Council Illuminations** initiative screened in January and February is a production from George Snow which may sound strangely familiar to the informed viewer. Snows 'Man Of The Crowd', described as a "bold adaptation of Poe . . . which communicates the essence of Poe's ideas", will, no doubt, bring to mind the name Wilcox. Mark Wilcox, in particular, whose major production for 1986 was 'Man Of The Crowd', a 26 minute video drama piece. Edgar Allen was unavailable for comment at the time of writing despite the fact that Wilcox's work was similarly based on the authors story. ●

GUEST EDITOR

The next issue, No 53, April/May will be edited by Chrissie Iles. Chrissie has been a regular contributor to Performance Magazine and was the first guest editor in March 1987. This will not be a theme issue and will instead have a broad range of features which will take a generally more theoretical approach to their subjects. There will also be the usual mixture of News, Previews and Reviews. Copy deadline for the issue is March 1, except News which is March 8. ●

Taken from *Strange Fruit* by Liz Power

Thank you to everyone who returned the readership survey form. There has been a surprisingly high return rate which makes the results more accurate and useful than expected. If you haven't already returned your form please keep sending them — it all helps.

We have made no attempts as yet to interpret the results but they are as follows.

Age: 4.5% Under 21, 66.6% 21-30, 15.5% 30-40, 6.6% 40-50, 6.6% Over 50.

Occupation: 10.6% Students, 46.8% Artists, 31% Employed, 10.6% Unemployed.

How often do you read Performance Magazine:
62.2% Every Issue, 26.6% Most Issues, 11.1% Occasionally.

Which Sections Do You Read:
82.97% News, 74% Reviews, 70.2% Interviews, 78.72% Features, 55% All.

Which Areas Interest You Most:
55.5% Performance Art, 48% Theatre, 35.5% Music, 24% Video.

How Often Do You Go To See:

	Often	Occasionally	Never
Performance Art	50%	45%	5%
Experimental Theatre	45%	43%	12%
Mainstream Theatre	14%	57%	29%
Experimental Dance	20%	66%	14%
Modern Dance	16%	48%	36%
Ballet	5%	30%	65%
Classical Music	5%	45%	50%
Experimental Music	20%	52%	28%
Rock/Pop Music	30%	43%	27%
Artists Video	18%	55%	27%
Independent Video	14%	48%	38%
Artists Film	30%	52%	18%
Commercial Film	50%	50%	0
Art on TV	75%	16%	9%
Exhibitions	59%	41%	0
Opera	7%	14%	79%

How Often Do You Drink in the Average Week:
20% More Than 3 times, 44% 1-3 Times, 36% 1 or 0.

How do you rate Performance Magazine Standards:

	Good	Fair	Poor
Writing	45%	55%	0
Design	48%	48%	4%
Printing	80%	18%	2%

Range of arts covered: 35% Not Broad Enough, 65% OK.

Geographical Spread of Coverage: 48% Not broad enough, 52% OK.

Would you prefer

More Pictures/Less Text	20%
More Text/Less Pictures	14%
Balance OK	66%

Do You Think Performance is Good Value For Money:
76% Yes, 24% No.

Your Favourite Magazines are:

The Face, Time Out, City Limits, N.M.E., Artscribe, Art Forum, Art Monthly, Listener, Dance Theatre Journal, New Dance and Artists Newsletter. In that order.

Your Favoured Book Reading is:

Contemporary Fiction, Classic Fiction, Art Theory, Poetry, Biography, Art History, Junk, Plays, Politics, Philosophy, Sociology, Sexual Politics, Feminist Literature, Literary Criticism, and Theatre. In that order.

Comments/Suggestions:

- The most common topics for your comments were
- A) That it tends to be the same writers every time.
 - B) The difficulty in buying the magazine outside London.
 - C) Why not include an events calendar
 - D) More theoretical discussion.

We will be taking all the results and suggestions into account and after we have had time to analyse what the results show about what is needed from Performance Magazine we will be doing our best to implement these. In the meantime, a few quick answers to some of the comments/suggestions.

WRITERS

We are ALWAYS looking for new writers, especially outside of London and abroad. It has been suggested that since we now have guest editors and plan further ahead we could announce theme issues well in advance and request materials for consideration. Agreed. The following theme issues are being considered/prepared.

- 1) Artists Processes. An issue which will look at the way artists in various experimental media actually work. June/July 1988.
- 2) Black Artists and Experimental Media: Why are there so few black artists involved in performance art, experimental theatre etc? Or do they exist but are not seen? Or are we wrongly using Eurocentric criteria to decide what is experimental. No dates fixed.
- 3) The Hardcore Issue: A look at the use of physical, emotional and moral extremes in various art practices. August/September 1988.
- 4) Art & Technology: Looking at such areas as Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Computers, new telecommunications etc. No fixed date.

Distribution/Availability

Distribution has always been the real Achilles Heel of small magazine publishing. We do need to distribute more widely. We do follow up on suggested new retail outlets, so if you know of appropriate retailers in your area who do not stock us please let us know and we will contact them.

Events Listing

We do have plans to enlarge the current News Section, and we have proposed to the Arts Council that we take over the production of their Performance Events listing to which we have as yet had no definite reply beyond their agreement that it would be a good thing.

THEORY

We hope to achieve a balance of theoretical and more journalistic writing. We will be looking for more theoretically based articles in future and we always consider unsolicited submissions seriously.

We will be returning to the results of the survey in the next issue. The statistics are themselves interesting and so are the comments which will be implemented where possible. ●

Steve Rogers
Managing Editor

READERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

LIFE AFTER LIVING



An early Surrealist experiment with Club Boring



Three heads are better than one — The Tryptych Man

IT HAS OFTEN been observed that one of the fundamental differences between Britain and the United States is that in America the collective consciousness acts like the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader Squad urging you on to success whilst the British id encourages you to 'go for it' but is secretly hoping to see you land on your arse with a bang. Those who succeed in Britain do so despite the 'will to fail' and often blindly and unconsciously. To even bring the word success within the vaguest proximity of the word art is considered at best bad taste, and at worst sheer blasphemy.

Steven Taylor Woodrow's Living Paintings were, by any definition, a popular success. They were seen 'live' by tens of thousands of people around Europe, and on television by, literally, millions. As a result of their success, Steven was invited to perform in a Royal Gala at the Coliseum, he had constant offers of lucrative work from advertising agencies as well as from art galleries in Britain and around the world, he even got two pages in the 1987 Blue Peter Annual. He reckons he could go on doing the Living Paintings for several years to come and earn an extremely good living from them. He wouldn't even have to do much himself. There is no need for him to perform in them himself. He could hire performers and send them off to open a boutique or hang on the walls of a Japanese department store and take his cut of the earnings. But after their appearance at the New Museum in New York next month the Living Paintings will be, finally, killed off.

When Steven first conceived the Living Paintings he had absolutely no idea how popular they would become. How could he? As with his other performances and like all other performance artists he could only expect the work to be seen in a handful of venues by a few dozen people, if he was lucky. And if he was very lucky he might, just might, get a review in Performance Magazine. So when the TV offers started and the media circus got rolling and the lucrative advertising deals started he had nowhere to turn for some received wisdom on how to handle the situation he found himself in. It had never happened before.

Things were made harder by the reaction of the art world. The price he paid for his popular success was that his colleagues treated him with at best suspicion and at worst an open hostility. One dealer called him the 'Les Dawson of performance art' which, surprisingly, was not meant as a compliment. Other artists and loyal performance art stalwarts didn't go to see the

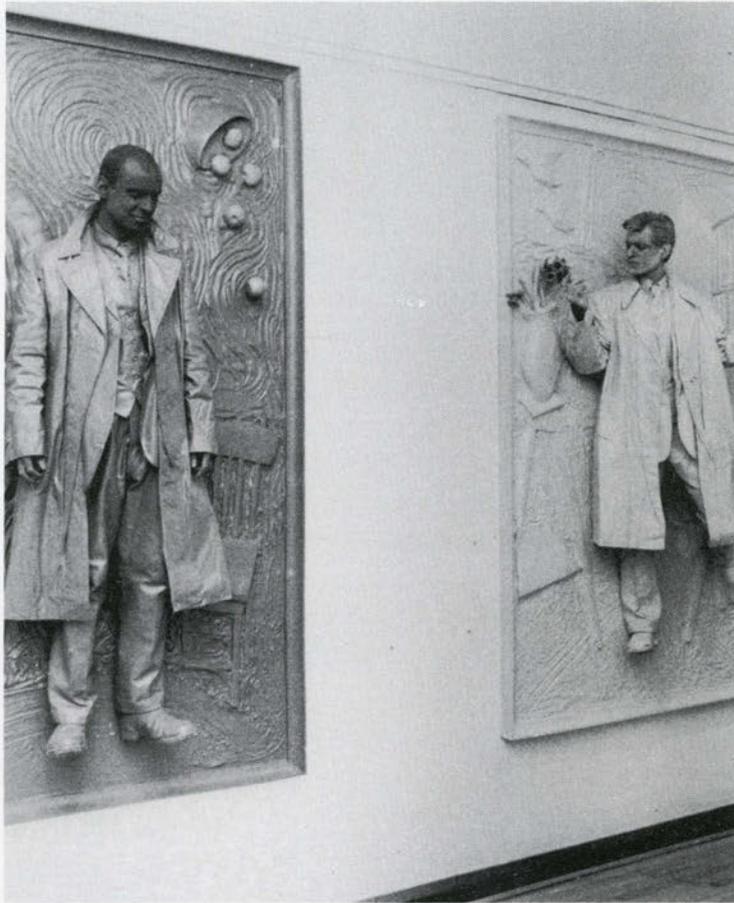
work and Performance Magazine barely mentioned his name let alone attempted to assess this phenomenon. At the time Steven was quite happy to do without the art world. After all, who needs it when you're doing so well? Now, however, he's not so sure. When I asked him whose opinion he cared most about, the audience or other artists, he paused, took a deep breath and admitted that he wanted the respect and support of other artists. This desire to be 'accepted' is part of his reason for finishing off the Living Paintings.

Apart from the unnaturally natural hostility that some sections of the art community has to success the specific objections to the Living Paintings and Steven are, mostly, unfounded. He has been accused of merely recycling, in an openly populist (read opportunist) fashion, Gilbert & George's Living Sculptures and a number of other artists work. But the Living Paintings don't come from out of nowhere. As with all artists they came out of Steven's earlier works. Immediately prior to working on the Living Paintings he was performing his Tryptych Man. This involved three performers attached together, back to back, and moving as one three-headed animal. His very early work with the group Club Boring, also engaged in similar surrealist manipulations of the human figure and its normal behaviour and appearance. The Living Paintings came about as a development of themes already well established in his work combined with a desire to investigate the possibilities of painting. An arcane practice which still dominates the fine arts and which he hadn't been involved with for many years. The Living Paintings have been criticised for their lack of any referential content. Yet this has been a familiar theme of performance art from the beginning as has the idea of physical endurance which is also involved in the Paintings. In fact the Living Paintings fulfill all the criteria of visual arts performance as well as some of theatre, they are also quite hypnotically fascinating as well as being entertaining in a straightforwardly, comic way. The hostility to the Living Paintings comes from a reluctance to accept that anything so obviously simple and, indeed, simplistic, could possibly be so effective as art. Steven is himself clear of his aims. "I want to be popular, not populist." This is an important distinction and it's one that many of his critics have not appreciated.

The opinion of the art community was not the only motivation behind finishing the Living Paintings. Performing the Paintings was not

Steven Taylor Woodrow hit the headlines last year with his Living Paintings performances. STEVE ROGERS talked to him about the pleasures and problems of success.

PERFORMANCE
PREVIEW



The Living Paintings popular hit, critical miss

easy. It caused considerable physical and mental pain, (the intense boredom of long periods of inactivity). Also the increasing demand for the work and the growing media response put unbearable pressures on the performing group. The result was a tension between the performers which threatened to destroy the work at any moment. But, perhaps, the most important reason Steven decided to end the paintings was that he wants to make new works. He not only, understandably, doesn't want to spend the rest of his career being known as 'Steven Living Paintings Taylor Woodrow' but he has other works he wants to make. He is bored with the Paintings and the weeks of being suspended on gallery and TV studio walls has given him time and opportunity, not to mention the incentive, to develop his ideas for his next work.

I suspect that his disquiet at the reaction of the art community is partly responsible for the nature of his new work, as yet untitled, which makes it virtually impossible for it to have the kind of easy popularity of the Living Paintings. The work, referred to for the time being as the Living Furniture, is formally an altogether bigger and more ambitious work than his recent pieces. It is an installation/performance that requires a large gallery space with theatre lighting and a blackout. It involves rows of institutional beds, a mobile trolley supporting a huge, grotesque talking crow's head and a statue of St Sebastian. It will be more concerned with atmosphere than a specific visual focus and with more complex, less specific ideas than his previous works. He is hoping to be able to exploit the success of the Living Paintings in getting this more difficult and expensive project booked into galleries around the country. I'm not sure this is a particularly helpful strategy since it can lead to bookers being disappointed and dis-satisfied with performance generally and it looks like exactly the kind of cynical opportunism that he was accused of in making the Living Paintings. Steven is neither cynical nor opportunist, he is quite pragmatic and exceptionally open and unmythifying when talking about his work. I just don't feel that the strategy of openly using the reputation of the Living Paintings to promote an altogether less accessible work will be successful but then in the past it has been success that has been the problem. ●



A drawing towards the new performance — a reaction against success?

Steven Taylor Woodrow's new installation/performance will be at Leeds City Art Gallery, April 26-May 1.

THE VIDEO ISSUE

With video art steadily establishing a place for itself both on television and, more generally, in UK culture this seems a particularly good time to take a longer look at video and television than is usually possible here. Given the opportunity to do "The Video Issue" it might have been tempting to attempt a definitive statement of the current condition of video and television. I felt however that since Video is not the principle focus of Performance Magazine and that the bulk of its readers will probably only have a passing, general interest in Video this opportunity could best serve the interests of the medium by offering an idea of the range of ideas, practices and

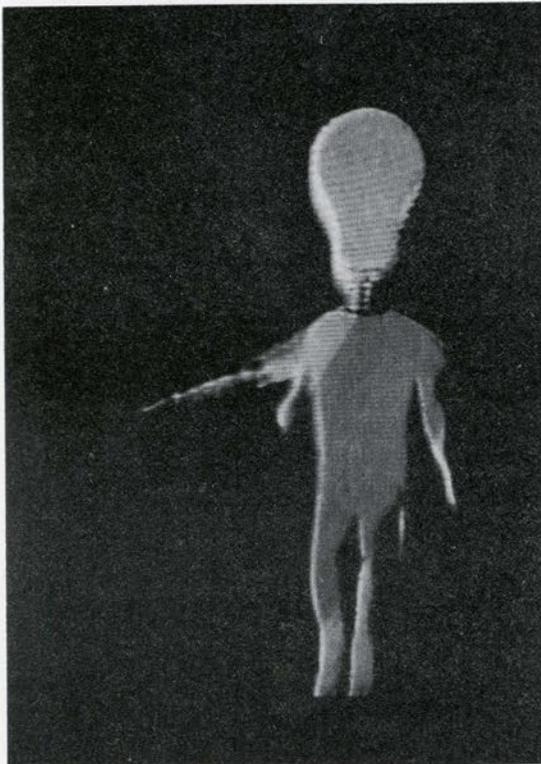
problems which concern video and television artists. As I have tried to show in my article 'Resistance, Rewind and Rant' the inescapable reference point for all video practice is broadcast TV. The range and scope of the other articles reflect this. Greg Loftin introduces the hidden history of guerilla television and the continuing spirit which pits tiny Davids against the ever growing Goliath of authorised broadcast. Saun Cubitt offers an overview of the central role of television in proscribing our culture and art. Jez Welsh's contribution on video aesthetics argues that the obsession with new technology threatens the potential of video to

resist television. Betsy Ho talks to John Wyver, arguably Britain's most influential producer of video art on television. Alongside this there is a very basic introduction to video resources in Britain intended to assist those who have little knowledge of video but want to have more.

The range of discourse and ideas is, perhaps, an echo of video art's pluralist strategy and the medium's development into a fullblown art form in the twenty years of its existence — From Portapac to Paintbox as a recent festival stated. ●

NIK HOUGHTON

LIGHTHEAD



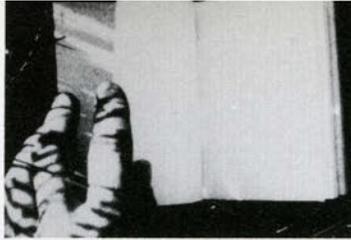
The five minute tape, *Lighthouse*, has been constructed from a twenty minute multi-channel video installation called *The Size of Things* which I made in June 1987. All of the imagery in the tape is entirely camera generated and not computer drawn or animated. The sound track is a digital construction composed of fragments of sound ranging from a Japanese bamboo flute to power eject noise to manipulated human voice.

Lighthouse is a creature in search of an unknown reason. He flies around the vacuum of the tube unaware of a lurking aeroplane and the nearness of the screen. ●

LEIGH COX

Lighthouse is available from LVA, 23 Frith St, London W1V 5TS.

Guy Sherwin's
Messages



Video Art in the '80s
NIK HOUGHTON looks at some of the forces at work in the shaping of video art.

RESISTANCE, REWIND AND RANT



Cerith Wyn Evans'
Epiphany

THROUGHOUT THE 60's and 70's video artists have generally held television to be nothing less than a child conceived of capitalism as the destroyer of culture. Television became the focus for a thousand projects, strategies, essays and theories. It was in short, the enemy. Then, of course, optimism and idealism was easier. On the upswing of radical social change the founding of a new 'alternative' anti-establishment, oppositional culture seemed an achievable scenario. In 1988 things look different.

"Sometimes I think, what's the point of making these tapes when only a few people are going to see them . . . I think that's why video artists are so excited about television — if offers a

ready-made mass audience." The voice of a new realism become the criteria for the future.

Abandoning its formalist principles in the mid-70's for a more pluralistic, pleasurable and intertextual direction, video art — and experimental practice in general — now occupies a position wherein television is not only the target but also the goal. Similarly both film and video artists now engage in a two-way relationship with the 'culture industry' which sees film/video makers working commercially whilst at the same time operating in the more rarified, and less lucrative, sphere of experimental practice. (The Duvet Brothers make clips for TV; film/video artists shift in and out of the pop-

promo circus; film makers like Jarman, Potter, Greenaway and Woolen 'soften' their formal experimentation and splice it to narrative styles for a growing cinema audience.)

For the die hards of structuralist/formalist practice the late 80's might well signal a period of "selling out" and an abandonment of the difficult struggle engendered by experimental practice. Yet for a new generation of artists and audiences this shift toward the "pleasure principle" is an instinctive response to the arid formalism of the preceding, and now dominant and institutionalised avant-garde culture. "Now in the Post Everything 80's politics has grasped the pleasure principle and art has gone

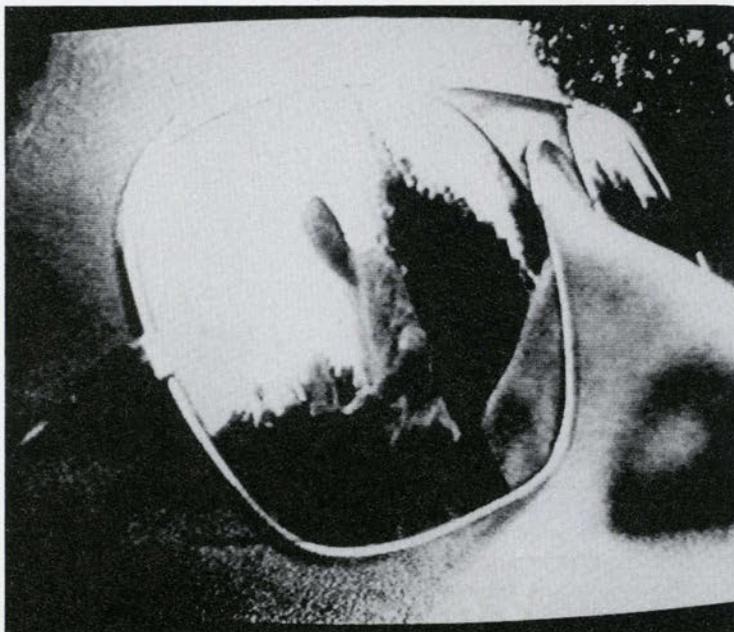




RESISTANCE, REWIND AND RANT



Mark Wilcox's *Man in the Crowd*



Ian Bourne's *The End of the World*

looking for a broader audience", as Jez Welsh suggested in programme notes to one of his tapes (*'Reflecting'* — 1986). From the p-p-p-pop art stutter edits of 'scratch' through the video drama to the hi-tech imagery of state-of-the-art abstraction the reinstatement of pleasure in video art has become a powerful motor.

Video art's interface with both the commercial sector primarily the leisure industries of rock culture and television and its increasingly complex pluralism begin to realise post-modernism's promise of a fastmoving and responsive art form and signals an unconscious yet dramatic break with former definitions and limitations of what constitutes art practice. Over the last few years these factors have seen scratchers re-cycling the supposedly neutral texts of television; techno/wizardry employed to produce highly spectacular and visual works; politics presented in oblique and new ways and documentary and theatrical styles explored. Alongside this it is also noticeable that television itself has quickly absorbed and adopted many of the devices and mannerisms of video art. (The response of advertising agencies to 'scratch's fastcut style was to adapt and upgrade the devices of scratch to its own ends while more recent adverts attempt the status of art, with all the attendant implications of taste and culturally refined consumerism, through an abstract use of imagery and sound. I'm thinking here of the latest Sony and Ferguson ads, certain perfume ads and the sly sophistication of the Pils and Moosehead campaigns).

As the gaps between independent practice and the mainstream close, however, questions present themselves as to the defined function of video art and quite where it fits into the cultural scheme of things. While there are strong arguments for video art maintaining its integrity, its experimental courage in the face of pressures to "get popular", equally strong voices insist that in order to reach a wider audience the medium must, at least partly, drop its pretensions.

But if this connectedness to the more accessible forms of mainstream tv and film has been partly defined by the need to address a wider audience a certain failing accompanies the strategy.

While the work itself may be more attractive, visually appealing, slick and spectacular the fact remains that it is a largely hidden art form never quite



Derek Jarman's
Imagining October

connecting with its wider audience.

A failing, perhaps, not of video artists themselves but of the mechanisms which determine how and where video art is viewed. Video art is still largely unknown by the public it seeks to address. In this situation it is, of course, inevitable that artists engage with television yet this too has its problems. Primarily this is concerned with the extent of television's interference with the radical nature of video art and the point at which video artists begin to compromise their work. (This was recently brought home to me by a video artist of some repute who stated that he thought there was no problem with producing

pure entertainment as long as it was popular). The schism here is between television offering itself as a neutral transmitter of artists work and actually intervening and shaping the state of the independent arts field.

The issue is further focussed by the increasing amount of interaction between Channel Four and film and video makers as relatively high budgets are handed out for commissioned work and the lure of broadcast beckons. The extent to which this newfound source of funding and mass audience will affect the video and film art is yet to be determined as the notion of context raises its bleary head. "Context", as Stuart Brisley once stated "is 50% of an



Tina Keane's *Shadow of a Journey*





RESISTANCE, REWIND AND RANT

art work” and this is nowhere more relevant than in video art where past contexts, the gallery, exhibition space or one-to-one viewing situation, are now extended by the possibilities of television transmission, home viewing on VHS and cinema screening via sophisticated video projection systems. Each separate context requires a sometimes radical response and change of emphasis and this, in its way, further complicates video arts plurality by adding the issue of ‘how will this work be seen’ to more fundamental considerations — what is this tape about and how shall I handle the ideas in it? Video artists formerly limited to only one or two possible contexts — the intimacy of group viewing, the gallery situation — now face a wide range of possibilities each with their own parameters. Video projection, by example, allows for a more cinematic style to be explored which might well translate badly to the small screen of a monitor; similarly a tape which one experiences under controlled circumstances in, say, a gallery, as powerful and intimate might well seem weak and dull when viewed in your sitting room where concentration

is fractured by telephone calls, the hiss of the coffee pot or those noisy neighbours.

Perhaps what’s being suggested here is that in order to fully explore the range of possibilities which present themselves video artists must begin to understand the mechanics of context and adapt themselves accordingly. (Stateside the concept of “television artist” as opposed to ‘video artist’ is now much favoured. Closer to home the indications are that many video artists, particularly, the “new breed” of makers are already coming to terms with the range of situations. For many tape makers this spectrum of possibility is already on their agenda as they deftly move from multi-monitor installation works to more linear single screen formats.

Within this area there have, of course, always been artists who are ‘known’ for their particular or specialised concerns — the installation tapemaker; the scratcher; the dramatist or the agit-prop artist — but this echoing of the high-cultures notion that artists must be skilled in only one specialised sphere is here undercut by both the adaptability of the artists and

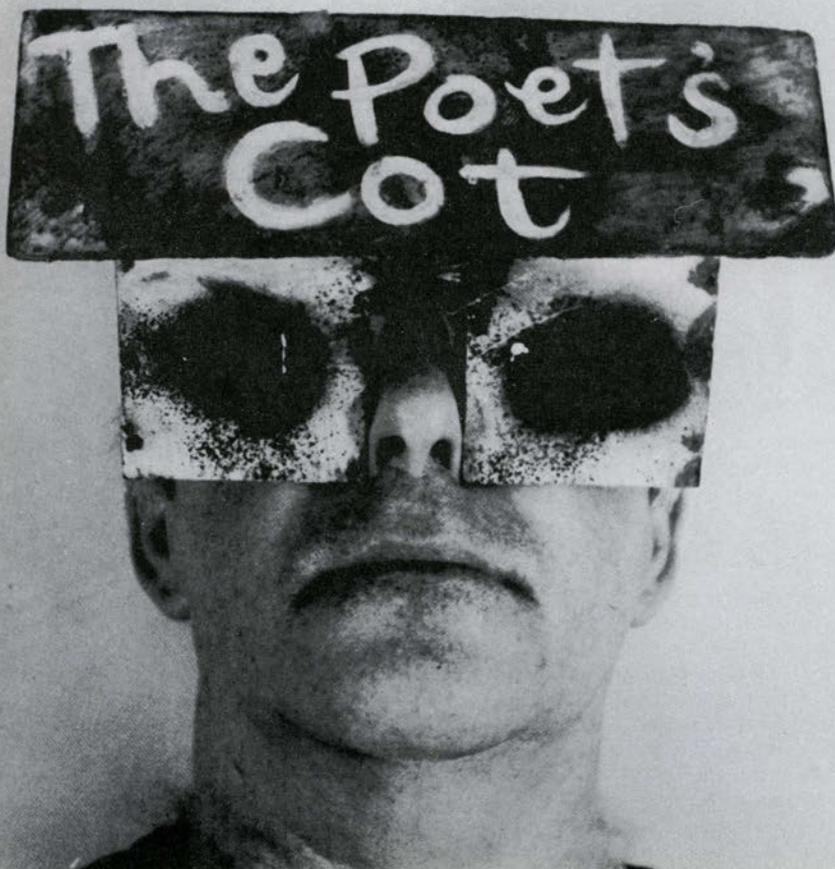
their interaction with other art forms. (Mike Stubbs working as a ‘sculptor’; Mona Hatoum and Jez Welsh — amongst many — seeking to explore the field of performance art; Steve Hawley producing semi-narrative films and Simon Robertshaw functioning as an installation artist).

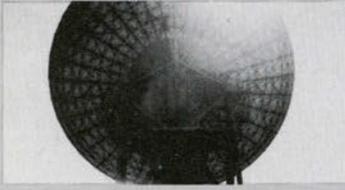
Thus in both its plurality of content and context and its fracturing of rigid definitions of what constitutes an artist, video art presents itself as a disjuncture with more accepted artistic practice. This is, in many ways, its strength yet also its weakness as it attempts to straddle numberless scenarios without fully exploring any of them. Delivering everything from the kitsch charm of Liz Powers video animation work to the poetic minimalism of Sara Feurneaux’s *Lessness* and the bleak force of Steve Littman’s *Name of the Gun* video art continues to scramble expectation and refuse definition yet often seems to falter in following through on its experiments. To see this as a crisis in video practice is far from the truth. In a form which is inherently ‘post-modern’, having no history nor tradition to break with, the chop-and-change inconsistency of many practitioners does seem to indicate a slight wobble in the forward motion of the medium.

Whilst the notion of rigidly defined specialisation remains a restrictive and limiting device I suppose that what I’m positing is the idea that in order to achieve work of lasting quality all artists need to fastidiously explore their chosen area in order to arm themselves with the necessary technical and ideological tools. At present the magpie mentality of many video makers results in a medium which, for all its intriguing angles, corners and side roads, occasionally seems lacking in work of real and lasting impact. Balancing a commitment to a band of style of ideas with the vitality of its plurality, video art currently manages the act with surprising results. Nonetheless if this notion of a wide ranging and eclectic medium is to build on its victories and successes it may be necessary for a more critical and analytical response to develop in relation to the potential spaces available for screening work.

So far the signs are that video artists will take these newly developed contexts on board in much the same way as they have quickly adapted to constantly updated technologies — with a dash of style and a quick perception of the potentialities. ●

Jeff Keen's *Victory Through Film*





GETTING TO GRIPS WITH GUERRILLA TV

GREG LOFTIN looks at the past and future of Pirate TV and finds that the spirit of Radio Veronica still shines bright.

A WARM VOICE wished everyone good night. It was that close-down moment when the broadcasters push a black duvet against the screen and go to sleep.

She was reading a book and only faintly aware that the cathode glow had dimmed. Two minutes later it flickered on again and she looked up to see an irradiated vision of a poppy field. This was followed by some apparently random sequences from an American film she didn't recognise. There was no sound but the colours were vivid. The pictures began to form into digital mosaics. Then they were gone, swept away on a pounding wash of static. Someone had sent her a cryptic message late at night in East Ham. She stayed up on the following night but was not contacted again.

Was this the first signal of East Ham Rebel TV? More probably it was the work of boffin engineers . . . Pirate TV, unlike its radio counterpart is extremely rare in this country. This rogue transmission was picked up in November 87 at a time when Britain's only pirate TV station, Network 21, was off the air.

The policing of radio transmissions is soft as marshmallow compared to television. The disparity speaks volumes about the politically sensitive nature of the medium. The structures of television are built around the 'acoustic' demands of the dominant voice; every section, every limb is made to vibrate within a given political frequency. Television product, when it arrives in our homes is silent about its journey through this system of control and censorship; we hear only the seductive whispers which demand no more than our compliance and passivity. Television is largely a medium of benign repression; only rarely does a subversive message slip through the cordon. With de-regulation of the airwaves imminent, is it likely that things will change or will it be party hats again for the cartels?

While pressure groups continue to campaign for access could pirate TV serve as the 'armed wing' of the struggle? Since the mid-60's the technology jamboree has been

providing increasingly cheap and sophisticated weapons with which to counter consent.

Like many of its European antecedents London's Network 21 also operates a radio station. It is in pirate radio that the TV rebels find their inspiration. Although the majority of pirate TV stations work on the advert-dross-and-profit principle others, like Network 21, emerge from a separate tradition of 'guerilla TV'.

This impulse finds its origins in 1965 when American artist Nam June Paik brought one of the earliest video portapacks on the market and declared — 'television has been attacking us all our lives, now we can attack it back'. In the same fighting spirit activists across America began exploring video as a tool for disruption and campaign. Of the groups which emerged the most influential and prolific was Raindance Corporation who also published *Guerilla TV* which was something of a manifesto. Headed by Michael Shamberg, Raindance were committed to a plural assault on the mass media.

Certainly there can be no doubt that the wide ranging activities of these 'guerillas' hastened the advent of public service stations. However, whenever these activists took to the airwaves it was always legitimate. In America 'pirate TV' usually means the theft of signals rather than illicit transmissions. Subscription TV has engendered a lively black market dealing in every gadget to beat the bill collector — decoder boxes, microwave antennae, downconverters and satellite dishes.

Nevertheless there have been a number of whacky satellite assaults. In April '86 Captain Midnight made the first of several 'appearances' during Home Box Office film shows to complain about the subscription charges. More recently, in November '87, a Max Headroom fetishist, naked from the waist down, gate-crashed the signals of 'Dr Who' . . .

But interrupting satellite signals requires some very expensive gear. At less than \$800 dollars an hour it's cheaper to rent satellite time. This possibility has been embraced by many

as an alternative strategy to piracy. Paper Tiger TV, for example, is a collective which, with the minimum of resources and budget, manages to put out a weekly programme on the culture industry. They feature the likes of Herbert Schiller probing the New York Times — '712 pages of waste' — alongside other features. In keeping with this most satellite companies and access stations make scant technical demands on the maker — if you can front the money they'll transmit your VHS campaign tape.

In Europe, though, the pattern of piracy responds to quite different structures of broadcasting. There the impetus for airwave trespass is mostly commercial. From the earliest TV pirate, Radio Veronica — they built their own transmitter and began broadcasting from international waters in the 60's — there followed a plethora of Dutch cable and terrestrial imitators. (By 1982 about 100 illicit operators were broadcasting old movies and porn, often sponsored by local butchers and sports shops).

Perhaps more excitingly Ronan O'Rahilly, founder of Radio Caroline, made an approach in 1969 to the London 'guerillas' TVX to assist in a flying pirate TV venture. With a rich backer O'Rahilly was to buy a Flying Fortress and broadcast from the aircraft along the East Coast of England. However, the technical difficulties of aerial transmission scuppered the project. (Dennis Hopper is rumoured to be considering a film based on a similar 'aerial TV' scenario which occurred in the States — Editors Note.)

Across Europe in the 70's pirate TV was becoming a flourishing business despite these setbacks and the rise of alternative stations was particularly noticeable in Italy. Here the stations borrowed the 'community TV' tag but often this simply meant that the cables were local. Once in a while 'guerilla' stations would open up — the Topia in Bologna and Rabonik in Amsterdam. Indeed Rabonik built a cult following as the programme was picked up and re-transmitted to other countries. A Dutch punk station Rabonik was a magazine styled transmission about





GETTING TO GRIPS WITH GUERRILLA TV

Amsterdams sub-culture squatting, drugs, music, clubs and spectacle forming the content. (It has since been granted a license.)

Meanwhile back in France Eric Fery was travelling from city to city with a lightweight 20-watt plug in transmitter. He made the first of his 200 illegal broadcasts in Toulouse on 18th June '83, featuring a mix of experimental films, video and political diatribe. Others sprang into life in '84 — Antel, T.I.M.E. and Canal 35. Out of these by far the most enduring and successful was Canal 35. Run by a lawyer, Jean-Louis Bessis, the station prompted the Government to take Bessis to court where he quickly became a cause celebre when the Government lost their case.

William Kemper who intend building a 1,000 foot TV mast on Roughs Tower in the North Sea (the old Radio Essex base). They expect to reach an audience of 12 million and threaten — 'No News, no politics — just Fun, Fun, Fun!' Currently up'n'running, though, is Network 21 who first started broadcasting at midnight on Friday 4th April 86 from a secret location near Crystal Palace. With a little fine tuning you could find them close to the ITV signal yet the transmissions were radically different to ITV's. In their first programme the transmission of half hours duration styled itself an art magazine collage of some twenty items ranging from experimental films by John Maybury through 'scratch' video — including Thatcher with the

CONTINUED

'The experience of pirate radio has been to increase pressure for the commercialisation and privatisation of radio . . .'

For Britain, though, the 80's have seen little pirate activity. Several pirates spluttered into life in '84 but were extinguished before anyone knew about them. One of these, Telstar, was a Birmingham based pirate which began broadcasting in January '84 using a transmitter built by radio hams. Once a week they screened a programme largely comprising video shop features and pop promos, sometimes broadcasting from a car. Later the same year Channel 36 and Thameside TV took to the airwaves with a similar diet of off-the-shelf videos. Both were associated with pirate radio stations Invicta and Thameside Radio and the activities of Channel 36 turned out to be an affront to the Department of Trade and Industry who had ignored an application from Channel 36 to test their newly developed 'Wave view' transmitter. (The D.T.I. finally relented in December of that year).

More recently extravagant noises have been made by Roy Bates and

stammers — to interviews with the likes of Fridge Club owner Suzanne Carrington and Marguerite Duras (the French writer and film maker) talking of love. Additional material came in the shape of Diamanda Galas in concert at the Albany, an animation film by Bob Lawrie and a performance by Germanic shock rockers Einsturzende Neubaten. Like the programmes that followed the presentation of this material was intensely active. Items are crash-edited without formal links or voice overs and the camera work is restless and, at times, almost epileptic.

Originating material on Video 8 (donated by the Sony Corporation) the Networkers exploit the formats synthetic and two-dimensional qualities as a positive style while in the editing suite talking head interviews are cut up and injected with electronically generated colour, the voice trafficked through an echo machine. Stray sounds and music erupts on the audio track making the whole experience an attack on the

notion of 'passive viewing'.

Network 21, who began broadcasting again in December '87 are a loose collaboration of some twenty activists. Camera in hand they roam the galleries, clubs, music and fashion venues of this sad metropolis and produce roughly half their programme content through this means. The remaining 50% is offered freely by artists or else plucked from 'archives'. Vivid stuff this may be but who does the programme address? Bruno, co-founder of Network 21, points to the back of his head where the pleasure motors reside and says 'everyone who watches'. (They reach an audience of about 50,000 Fulham to London Bridge.)

Bruno is a French graduate and with his German partner they invest the project with distinctly European perceptions. Uninterested in anarchic intervention they instead propose alternative broadcasting and programming structures. Currently campaigning for 'narrowcast' transmission as a future for television they are also preparing a 'cultural handbook for the 1990's'. Stating that 'cable is a corpse' and that the advertising motor of satellite will actually de-limit its international potential they see low powered TV as a strategy against cultural erosion. They want community, access and special interest stations to form the pattern of de-regulation. (When the G.L.C. was bulldozed Network 21 advised the stricken grant-aided sector to sell everything except their cameras and buy transmitters. Although illegal it's still possible to come by a transmitter for £2,000 to £3,000 — with a video playback machine you can take this basic equipment to a high spot in the city, plug in and sing out. The penalty if you're caught by the D.T.I. is a £2,000 fine, confiscation of equipment or imprisonment).

Many of the euphoric predictions that Network 21 would begin a wave of rebel TV stations have not so far been realised and the community video workshops who have fought so hard to build legitimate structures of funding, access and distribution are least likely to embrace the idea. The campaign for Press and Broadcasting freedom are likewise reluctant: 'The experience of pirate radio has been to increase pressure for the commercialisation and privatisation of radio . . . with this in

Photos commissioned
for Battersea Arts
centre's Sender
Exhibition

PHOTO
HELEN UNDERWOOD







GETTING TO GRIPS WITH GUERRILLA TV

CONTINUED

mind we would be slow to support pirate TV'.

However, this attitude ignores the grass roots support for many of the radio stations which in the 60's were playing music neglected by licensed radio. The advent of Radio One was the establishment response to the enormous popularity enjoyed by Radio Caroline and Luxembourg. In a similar way black music pirates like Invicta and LWR sprang up to address listeners the white stations forgot.

But perhaps one of the biggest doubts about TV rebels stems from the kind of savage deregulation that took place in Italy in the 1970's. Here TV piracy was rampant and the Italian government, unable to quell the tide, effectively opened the flood gates to all comers. One of the first sharks at the feast was media baron Silvio Berlusconi who, benefitting from a loyal audience established by the pirates, instituted a new band of low-powered, low-content television. The imperatives of advertising and quick profits produced a thin soup of quiz shows, pop videos, soap opera and porn. Nonetheless, despite the poor quality of much of this 'new TV', by 1982 over 1,000 private stations had developed to service 46% of Italy's viewing audience. The effect on the public channels of Italian-Radio-Television (I.R.T.) has been dramatic and aware of the threat to its license fee sponsored popularity I.R.T. was obliged to join the ratings war.

By extending its service without increasing its budget I.R.T. was forced to go shopping for low grade but popular material from America and Japan to supplement its own impoverished diet.

But if the Italian model offers little hope of a radical TV form then Network 21, video bandits and scratch artists offer at least some possibility of intervention. As Jon Dovey, scratch artist puts it: '... technology showers down upon us making it easier to produce and, more crucially, reproduce information'. Dovey's statement highlights the major contradiction in the Western communications market between the hardware and software manufacturers. This is a contradiction between the Japanese led technology industries and the information industries who own or supply the TV networks. With a proliferation of video equipment, transmitters and satellites many programme makers are increasingly losing control of the means of distribution of their product as the material become recycled, pirated and stilen.

Indeed developments in TV transmitters and their availability on the European market — Germany and Italy are the biggest producers — may yet pose the most serious threat to the media empires. By example at the Olympia site of the 'Great Home Entertainments Spectacular' in September '83 one exhibitor was openly offering all that a potential TV

pirate needs for £1,000: '... a high performance UHF TV transmitter using the latest in micro technology ... at last your very own portable colour TV transmitter — the CB of the video'.

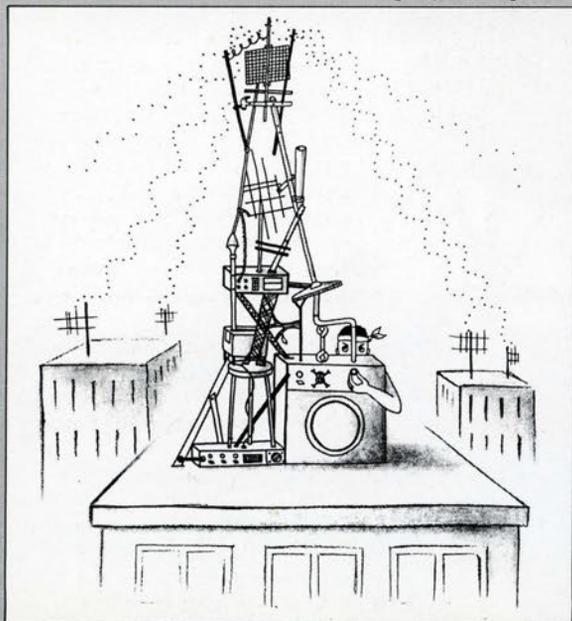
Trespassing the confused tangle of copyright and censorship, pirate TV could learn from the Italian experience and push for a radical change. Standing outside the law guerilla tactics could deliver more than a sting to the basking media reptiles in Thatcher's garden. Whether that attack amounts to more than an echo of the Italian experience or something more extreme culturally innovative remains to be seen. ●

(Special thanks to Phil Hayward and Sean Cubbitt for additional information).

Network 21 Radio broadcast on 89.6FM and the TV transmissions can be found by tuning to somewhere around the ITV channel from midnight on Fridays or Saturdays.

The Free the Airwaves Campaign for Radio can be contacted through the Community Radio Organisation. Phone 0272 555438.

Technical and Hardware Information on Guerilla TV is contained in the 1982 Professional Video Yearbook. (All you need to know about becoming a pirate, of course, this magazine in no way encourages you to pursue this activity.)



A sense of humour helps in Pirate TV

SPINNING WILDLY OR STANDING STILL

The 1980's have seen major advances in video technology and its accessibility. Yet JEZ WELSH finds that some of the most important new video art rejects the delights of the edit suite. The backlash starts here?

IF VIDEO IN the present decade has been characterised by an expansion of the technological possibilities, means of distribution and dissemination, and by a diversification of styles, subjects and artistic intentions, is it any longer possible to discuss the notion of a 'Video Aesthetic'? If we reconsider the work of the early 70's then we can describe the 'look' of video art as something quite distinct from the 'look' of television, but as the two forms that were once considered to be polarities on the spectrum of electronic visual culture move closer together, this distinction is diminished or lost altogether. However, it can still be argued that there is a specificity of the medium and it is precisely this specificity that informs the development of many contemporary video artists who have grasped the possibilities afforded by rapid technological developments to begin to define a language of the electronic image that owes little if anything to cinematic conventions. The 'space' of such work is not the pictorial space of post renaissance painting, the naturalistic space of proscenium arch theatre whose conventions have passed over into much of television, nor the perceived space of the camera/viewer in cinema. Rather, it is a hyperspace of indeterminate dimensionality that is nonetheless contained within and defined by the frame of the TV screen. It is a space that video art shares with advertising and pop video.

So far, so good; the theory can take account of work that is constructed electronically through sophisticated post production or the use of computer imaging systems, but what about all of those tapes that reject the use of electronic trickery and instead exploit qualities of stillness, slowness,



'the tape accelerates and abstracts to the point where it could no longer "Carry a meaning."'

duration, as an antidote to the rapid fire image saturation of media culture? It can equally be argued here that a specificity of the medium is at work here, but rather than a technologically determined specificity, it is an attitudinal specificity whose genesis is in the minimal/conceptual work of the early seventies.

To reduce all of contemporary video to these two tendencies is of course a fatuous exercise, but it can be illuminating to consider examples of both as a means of fixing points on the map of video's aesthetic territories.

A tape that perfectly exemplifies the technologically defined aesthetic is Ingo Gunther's *Rotorama*, recently screened in Channel Four's Eleventh Hour European Video slot. It is a tape in which the output of American television is the raw material, and the tools are state of the art digital video effects used to the point of overkill such that the image bombardment of consumer culture is focussed directly on the viewer throughout the seven minutes of the piece. Images appear then flip, twirl or tumble out of vision so quickly that only a residual haze of recognition imprints itself upon the retina. However, through this torrent of detached signifiers, two elements stand out and provide us with a key to the reading of the work: the recurring images of eyes looking back at us as if our own reflection had become incorporated into the image, our gaze deflected from its subject and turned back on itself; and secondly, television's fetishisation of its own technologies as expressed in consumer product advertising. Where the names of manufacturing corporations or of specific items emerge as the most significant and recognisable ikons in a symbolic language of auto suggestive





SPINNING WILDLY OR STANDING STILL

imperatives. So completely does *Rotorama* define the form of Video-as-appropriated-reprocessed-deconstructed-designed information that it almost negates its own project. While the central comment about the media's power emerges as a now familiar argument, the tape accelerates and abstracts to a point where it could no longer 'Carry a meaning'. Perhaps this is a crystallisation of the ultimate nature of television, perhaps just a

contemporary obsession. However, it posits the very real problem; where do we go from here?

If *Rotorama* exists as the apotheosis of the media artist's twin obsessions, technology as the prime determinant of working practise, and television as the all enveloping cultural environment of post modern society, then the works of Yugoslav artists Breda Beban and Hrvoje Horvatic exist in a parallel universe. Shunning all

temptations to explore the delights of the edit suite, they draw their inspiration from Central Europe's rich cultural heritage from Byzantine painting to body art. And unlike much contemporary art, their use of imagery and symbolism from their cultural history is not simple pastiche, but an attempt to situate their own work within a cultural perspective that has a past as well as the eternal present inhabited by consumer societies.



Taking On A Name

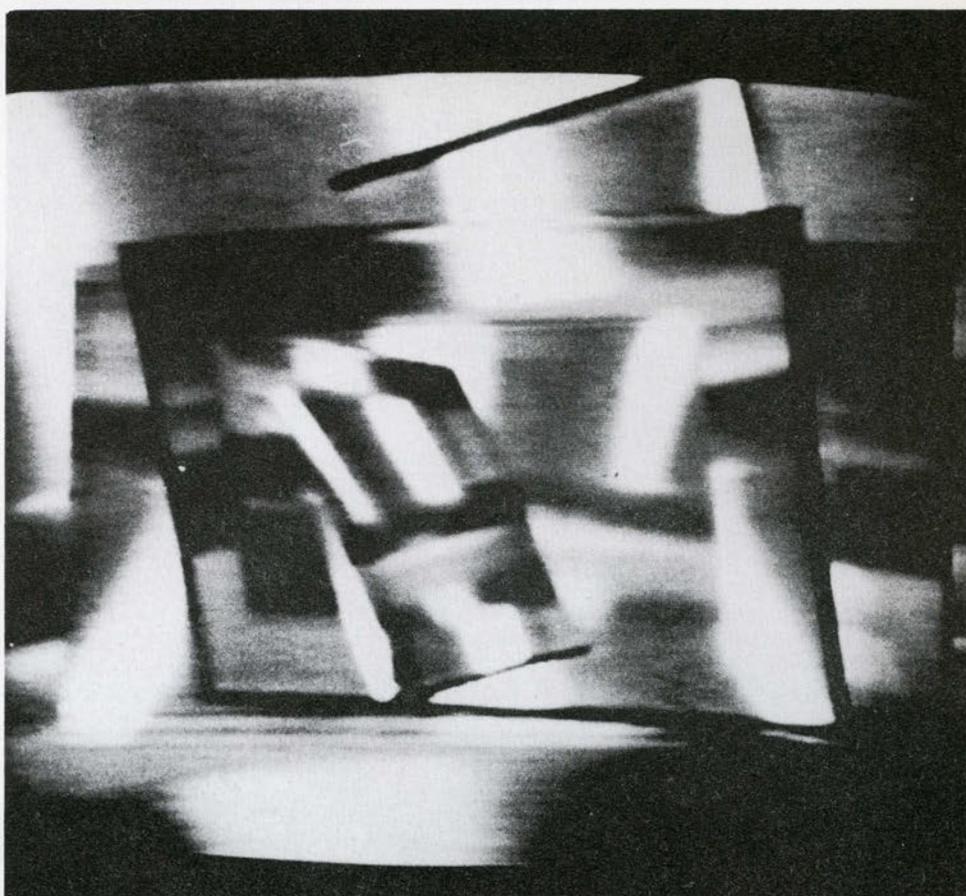
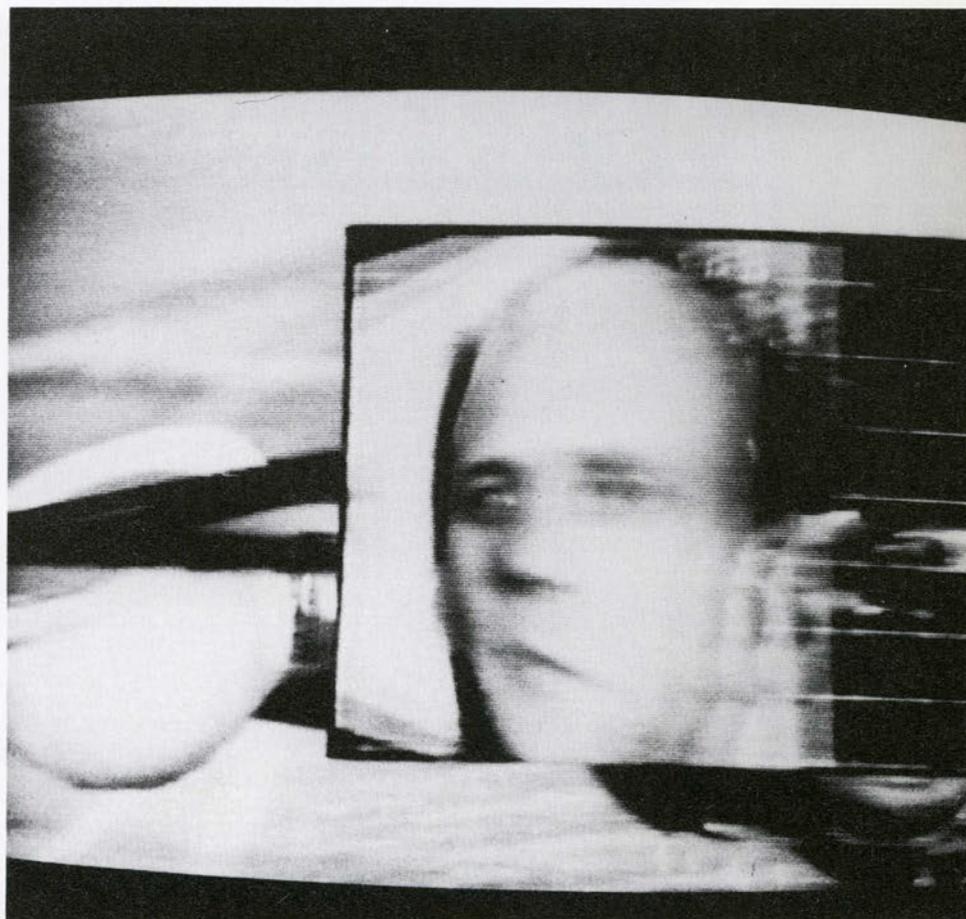
Remarkably, several of their slow, gradual and for video, long works, have been produced by and for Yugoslav television. Unlike British broadcasting which tends to be centralist and monolithic, TV in Yugoslavia is regional and relatively open. It is now becoming a regular feature of TV output in Belgrade, Skopje, Sarajevo and Ljubljana to present works by artists, even at peak viewing times.

Their most recent work, *Taking On A Name*, was produced by TV Skopje, and is a slow, evocative and meditative piece on our perceptions of time and place. Breda Beban is a painter and performance artist, influenced by minimalist and conceptual art, while Hrvoje Horvatic trained as a film/TV director. *Taking on a name* is characterised by long shots, fixed camera and subtle changes of light and tone, accompanied by a soundtrack that begins with a repeated three note sequence played on bass guitar and is gradually augmented by a shimmering chorus of sustained electronic tones.

The images are of water, of a woman standing on a lake shore in a robe like a priest's vestment, slowly extending and then lowering her arms like a moth opening and closely delicately patterned wings. The actions are both ritualistic and sculptural. An earlier work, *Bless My Hands* (1986) takes place in an empty room, lit by a single window, and centres upon the simple action of burning a sheet of white paper and spreading the ashes over a golden circle on the floor. The actions are performed in silence, the only sounds being those outside the room, and a voice that speaks the lines 'Bless my hands, let me be good, let me be loved' like a litany at the beginning and end of the piece. Presented as a homage to a Yugoslav conceptual artist, it is a moving and powerful work whose simplicity and discipline have an engrossing quality. This work in particular exists as a contemporary extension of video art's beginnings, but the grainy grey austerity of the early works is here supplanted by a cool and sensuous wash of pastel colours.

As yet, their works have not been exhibited outside Yugoslavia, but in the coming year we can expect to see them alongside other exponents of video's new minimalism. ●

Rotorama



STATING THE ART

John Wyver, producer of *Ghosts in the Machine*, talks to BETSY HO about video art, rip offs and audiences.

WORKING THROUGH THE independent production company ILLUMINATIONS John Wyver has been responsible for two series of the international video art showcase *Ghosts In The Machine* and the controversial *State Of The Art* series in 1986 which focused on contemporary art and visual culture. A key figure in the transmission of video art and new initiatives in commissioning works for TV, Wyver holds a position of singular power in relation to the way video art is seen. Arguably, it is his choices and decisions which affects the most public face of video art.

HOW GHOSTS CAME ABOUT: I'd always been interested in the tradition of video art both in this country and abroad but that was focused by going to the American Film Institute's international video festival in 1984. I felt that the work I saw there was extremely rich, interesting and engaging and should be seen on television. It was my expression of this enthusiasm to Channel Four's Michael Kustow which led to 'Ghosts' . . . It wasn't the only initiative going on though — both Anna Ridley and Triple Vision were also engaged in similar sorts of projects. (Editors note; Triple Vision presented Video I, II and III on Channel Four in 1986 while Anna Ridley's production company, Annalogue, has been responsible for producing works in collaboration with Michael Nyman and Ian Breakwell, amongst many others, for transmission by the Channel).

ON INTENTIONS AND FORM: My intention with the first 'Ghosts' was to give people an idea of the traditions of video art, to introduce the work but not to explain it and to find a way of packaging all this work in a presentable way . . . When I'm selecting, my primary criteria is really that the work should astonish me or interest me but there's also an attempt to account for the range of work in the video arts tradition. The success of the first 'Ghosts' series seems to suggest that that's quite a good criteria and I think the Channel was surprised at that success. There were something like 1.2

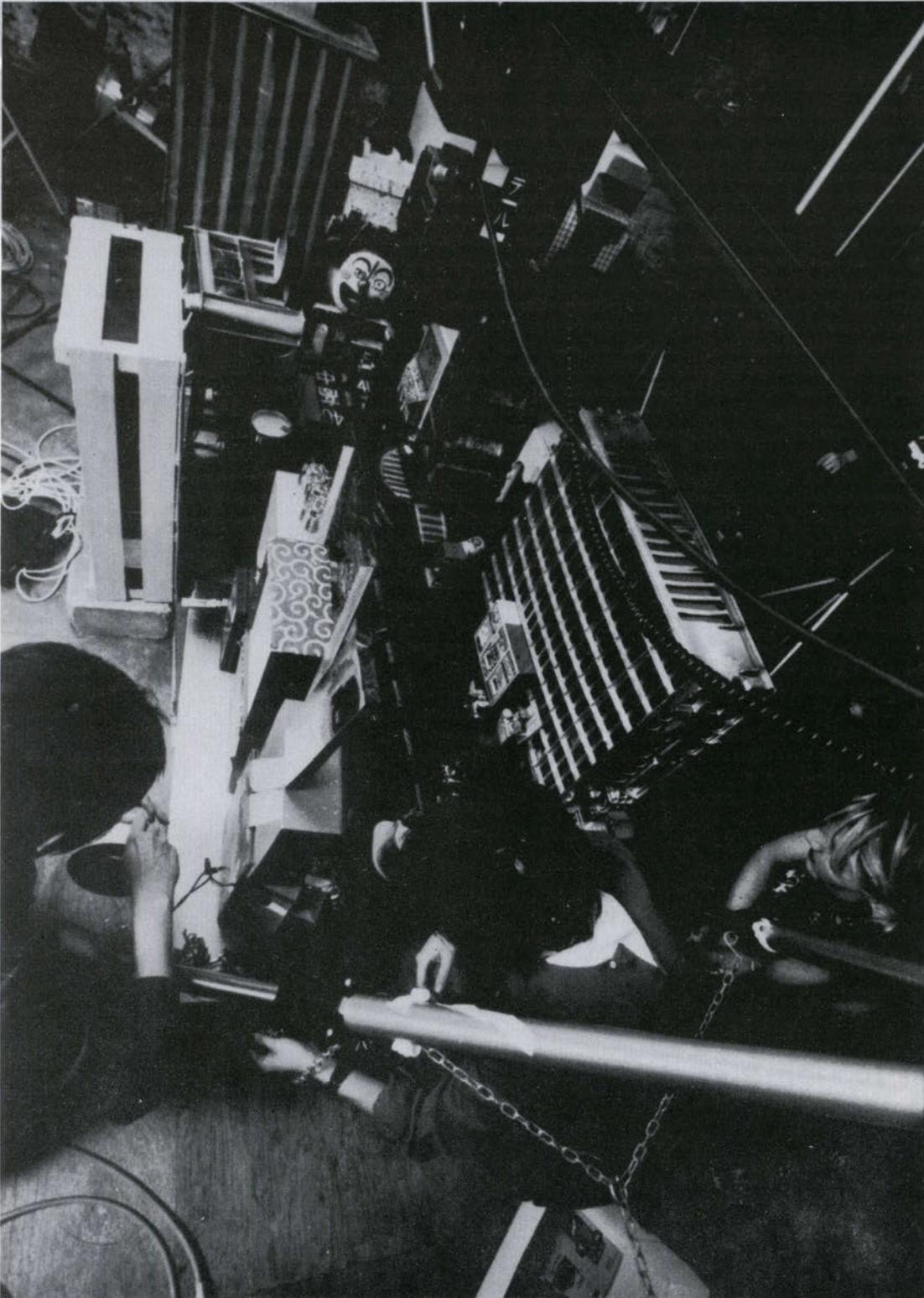
million viewers who watched the programmes all the way through. That's a lot of people and I think it's a vindication of the strength of the work itself, work which was previously only seen by a very small audience in museums and galleries and so forth and seen mostly by a hermetic audience of already informed people.

I mean I hope that the series reflects what's going on in video and the works have an engagement with content beyond the sort of surface flashiness of a lot of videos. The pieces should astonish but I'm also looking for a very real content too. It's very easy to make something startling but that's not enough — it's got to be about something as well.

ON CONTEXTS: 'Ghosts' isn't about video — it's a programme of video. My feeling is that you should show the work and allow it to create a context for itself. In a way it has to fight with all the other bits of television which surround it . . . What I'm primarily interested in is getting the work made and getting it seen not explaining its processes or context. I think too that you need to recognise that audiences are exceptionally sophisticated and they don't really need to be led by hand into the "strange world of video art". Too often I think television tends to smother things in explanation — audiences are very knowing, they don't always need that.

ON GHOSTS II: After the success of the first series I argued that having recognised the traditions of video art we should be looking to extend and develop that tradition by making funds available for new productions and not simply using existing works. Out of this a project came about between Channel Four and the Arts Council whereby we founded 10 productions at the level of £4,000 with four of those productions going on to further develop as commissions for transmission. The Arts Council gave a third of that money while the Channel fronted the other two thirds. In some ways this initiative was a way of putting something back into the video art community which we'd taken in the first series.

ON CROSSOVER: I think we have to recognise that while it was important to protect and nourish video art for its first twenty years or so we should be less careful about it. The crossovers which are occurring between commercial works — pop



Japanese-American Toy
Theatre of London

promos and adverts — and video art are extremely interesting. The coming together of these different currents is potentially very exciting. It's vital that video art doesn't remain in an 'Art' ghetto.

ON RIP OFFS: After the first 'Ghosts' there was a lot of interest from graphic designers and promo people who wanted more information

on the artists we'd screened and access to view their tapes. In a sense these people from the commercial sector of the industry are looking to rip off the techniques and ideas of those artists. While I'd hope that those commercial interests would pay artists for whatever they take or use I don't think it's bad that this happens. To think that it's somehow 'beyond the pail' that ad

agencies take ideas from artists seems daft to me and doesn't recognise the sort of world we live in. I suppose that when it comes to it no-one can copyright an idea but perhaps artists should be more aware of what they can and can't do in this situation . . . Artists often seem very suspicious of television institutions and I suppose part of my job is to ease that clash





STATING THE ART



The new 'Ghosts' season opens with the collage feature 'Steps'

between artists and the full force of the institution. Eventually I think that we'll have a situation similar to the one in America where artists are far more geared up about things like contracts and so forth — John Sanbourn, an American video artist who does a lot of TV work probably now knows all there is to know about that aspect of things! In future I think artists will begin to take all that on board and begin to work directly with institutions like Channel Four, I won't be needed to mediate.

ON THE FUTURE: Undoubtedly

the Channel is getting more and more into the possibilities of video art but there's also things going on in other ways. By example the BBC transmits a programme called Tele-Journal which is an edited version of a French broadcast presented in a sort of language-teaching format and they've featured French video art. Also I was recently talking to the producers of a BBC comedy series and they are looking at either using existing video art material or commissioning new works . . . I think there's a problem here though in the fact that the

'mainstream', as it were, of the industry doesn't fully recognise the full range of possibilities. There's been a limited development of video drama and searching for a video aesthetic for drama. Some people have attempted to explore this but it's still a potentially rich and interesting area for development. ●

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE II begins on Friday 22nd January. Four 25 minute pieces and 16 11 minute works will be shown over 20 consecutive nights at 11.30pm. Most of the works shown were especially commissioned for 'Ghosts'.

SEAN CUBITT searches for a role for television in the struggle for Community autonomy

IF MODERNISM WAS the culture of the city, postmodernism is the culture of the suburbs. Consider the classical Hollywood narrative cinema of the thirties, the modernist form par excellence, with its delight and trepidation in the face of urban life. Consider, in particular, the sequence from the 1939 RKO production of *The*

of the early twentieth century, the world of the cities. When Balla painted his homage to the electric street light it was because it was *new*. When Eliot — petty little snob that he was — wrote *The Waste Land*, he wrote of London. When Pound recalled the greatest moments of his civilisation from the death cells at Pisa, he wrote of restaurants in Montmartre. Perhaps the greatest critic of modernism, Walter Benjamin, wrote much of his greatest work in pursuit of Baudelaire's Paris and his own Berlin. The sculpture of Epstein, the plays of Brecht, the nightmare visions of Kafka, from

Proust to Pollock the experience of modernity is the experience of the city.

For some, this experience was a reason to retreat: into mysticism, into solipsism, into pastoral. The solutions of Kandinsky, Gottfried Benn and Bartok are still solutions to the crisis of modern existence: the city.

It is essential to grasp what the city was — especially if we want to understand what it has become. This was the era of the train, of Metroland, of commuters, of 'A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many I had not thought death had undone so many'. It is also the age in which the

THE CITY AND THE SUBURBS CARNIVAL, TELEVISION AND VIDEO ART

Hunchback of Notre Dame in which the crowd — and the audience — first see the face of Laughton's Quasimodo in the middle of the Feast of Fools. What delight we still can share in the crashing together of classes and cultures in this American dream of the Middle Ages, the kindly king, the thousands of commoners' faces etched in celluloid with the dexterity of a Breughel and the guarded faith in humanity of a Capra. The delight in the poet's claim to be 'the greatest fool of all' because he praises beauty; in Quasimodo's wordless assumption of the crown; in the peasants who salute him with their bums. Though it is a purely imaginary community that Hollywood creates, it is significant that it should be a community.

This is the world — the fictive and imaginary world — of modernism, the mental space it occupied. It was, most of all, for the artists and the audiences



old monarchs died, in a conflagration that also took the experience of the city into the fields: the mass movements of World War One, the 60,000 dead in a single battle, the logistics of that. It was an era of commonality, of a period in which Goebbels could say 'Whoever can conquer the streets can conquer the State', of Ellis Island.

And it was an era of mass movements. The politics of modernism are dominated by communism and fascism: the mutinies of 1917, the Russian Revolution, the Spartacist Revolution, the Augsburg Soviet, the Popular Front, Mussolini's March on Rome, the General Strike and the Unemployed Workers Movement, the burning of the Reichstag and the Nuremberg rallies, the free state of Catalonia. The crowd dominates social thought for half a century, from the flaneur to the provocateur, from





THE CITY AND THE SUBURBS CARNIVAL, TELEVISION AND VIDEO ART

Conrad's *Secret Agent* to Jennings' *People's War*. It is that fact that dominates the imaginary landscape of *Notre Dame*.

Taking the end of World War Two as a date, we could say: something changed. After Auschwitz, no more innocence; after Hiroshima, no more utopias. America was, after the first war, Europe's creditor for the first time. After the second, capital embraces the globe. And the mass leisure of the first half of the century gives way to the domestic leisure of the second half. As much as the advent of television — after all, not bound technologically to domestic reception — it was suburbanisation and the rise of the private car that destroyed the cinema, spectator sport and the local shopping street. The city centres became the alien Other against which to pitch the new normality of the suburban life; the birth of the bogey of the inner city.

Frank Abbott's films are eloquent histories of that process: not judging, but observing the necessary shift from the amateur entertainments of the first radio broadcasts — after radio's two-way potential had been stifled by the monopolists of telephony — to the slick professionalism of the future. In *Workers' Playtime* (1970) he has a character give a naive but generous description of the telecoms potential of the living room furniture: radio, cassette, telephone. At the end of the sequence a Chinese take-away, phoned for earlier, arrives: global capital at the turn of a dial. The world of the car is the suburban semi worn as a carapace. There is no more need there for the eloquent urbanity of the tube map, measured by speed, not distance as any city was. Instead, you take your house for a walk, bringing along all the personal hi-fis, heaters and nuclear family company you require. The commonality of the train is left to the inner city people, the Others. And the transit of people gives way to the transit of information. The crowd, that most dangerous and most policed of modernisms, is policed into submission — or rebellion.

The festival of life in carnival is not the spurious flag-waving of marshalled Christians. Bakhtin and Burke agree: carnival is the permission to excess. Drink, food, sex, violence: excess. The football match (deprived of sex because it cannot acknowledge anything between physical love and friendship among men) is a carnival. It is not necessarily pleasant. It is dangerous. The Hippodrome is carnival curtailed: ugly, cheap, promiscuous and still subversive. Carnival stretches the boundaries of the social, to reaffirm

them. That is why it is, specifically, *permission* to excess. Television offers its paltry shadows: of community in British soaps, of carnival in *Top of the Pops*.

The representation of carnival is never enough. Carnival is not a text to decipher. It is the assumption of power by those who have never known it. It is occupying the streets that otherwise are only colonies of global capital: shop windows on consumer paradise. You cannot watch carnival: you take sides. The uprisings in the inner cities of the last few years are carnivals of the oppressed, traced eloquently in Black Audio Film Collective's *Handsworth Songs*. The Black custodian of the museum of industrial history speaks of histories evacuated from the cities. Modernism is alive and well in the old centres. It is the postmodernists who have driven off to celebrate the shopping malls of Brent Cross, Hackney, Brixton and Notting Hill are their Third World, as alien as the streets of Trenchtown, and as essential to police precisely *because* they are communities.

Which brings me by a circuitous route to the issue of video. TV's characteristic gesture is the simultaneous drawing and erasing of a line, the electron scan that fades even before the whole screen is completed, a gesture of obsessive desire and equally obsessive anxiety. Broadcast recuperates this gesture through its endless flow, in which it promises that it, at least, is live. Video offers some escape from the legitimating flow, from the endless 'hellos' and 'thank you for welcoming us into your homes'. But only at the price of certain risks. Video has more in common with the telephone than with broadcast TV: the sort of call that has you asking: 'Are you still there?'. There are no guarantees. The risks of its — narcissistic? — pleasures are the risks of solipsism. Out in the lonely suburban living-rooms, the TV at least guarantees that there are still people out there, and they are still in control. Video has no such safety net.

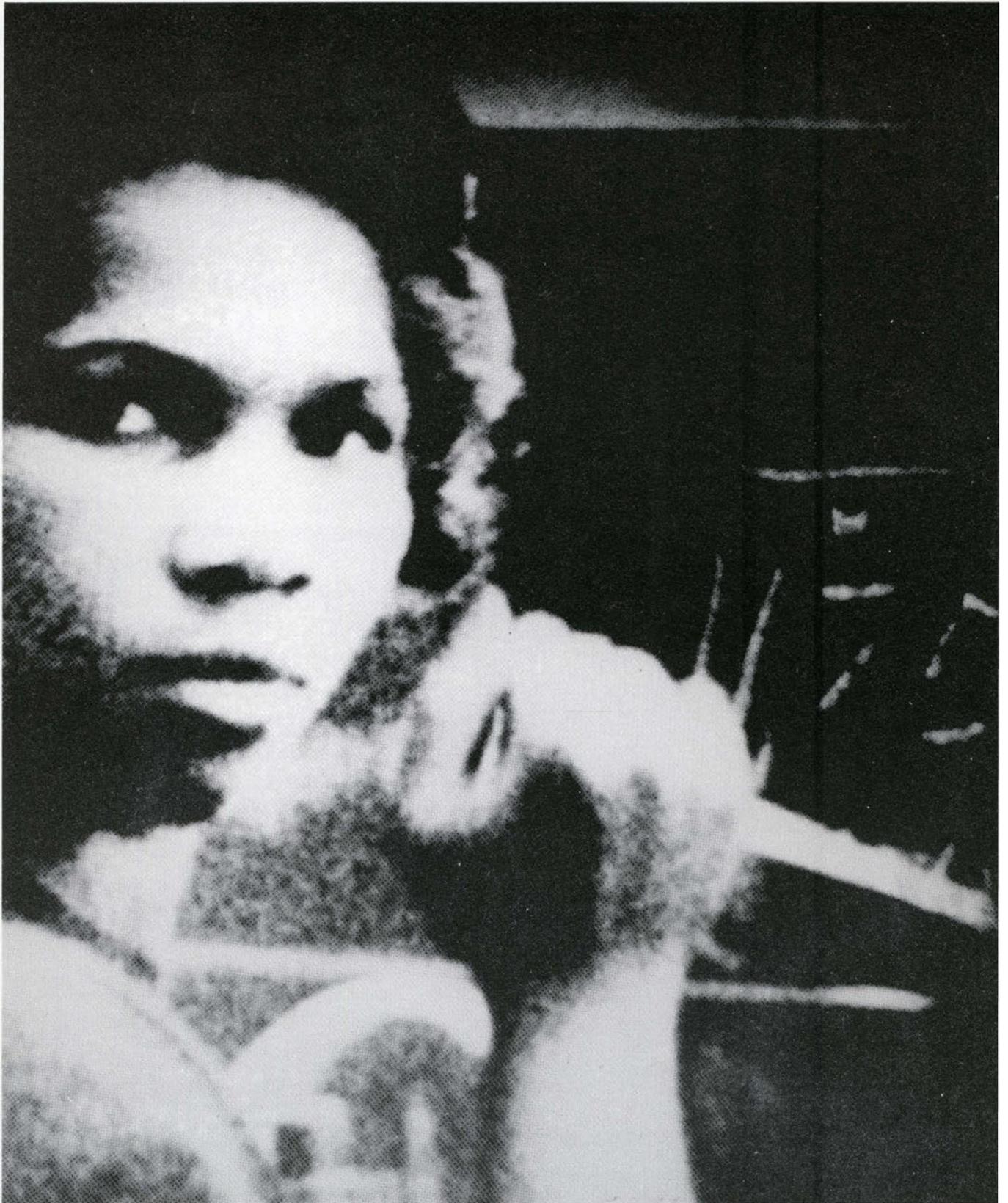
The Dire Straits *Money for Nothing* video, with its computer generated animation of workmen condemned to unload microwave ovens while the gilded stars play on MTV, is a classic moment of postmodern culture. Built on mutual suspicion, fear, and hatred between pop stars and proletarians, and a shared homophobia, the image track has the 'boy' drawn into the maw of the set: TV as enemy in the home, drug, disease. Meanwhile Knopfler sings the words of the heavy, a paean of ignorance and spite against the singer. Quoting the MTV logo (oh

ecstasy of self-reflexiveness), the tape offers the workmen a glimpse of sex in the fast lane, another MTV clip of half-dressed woman. Trapped by the song in fruitless labours, lusting after the dangling carrot of the unobtainable, the workers are the Other. We, the preferred audience, are with Knopfler, above all this, enjoying the very sexism and illusion we affect to despise. Closed loop, double-blind, *Catch 22*: very postmodern.

I think it is the cleanliness of the Cucumber Studios tape that offends me. Like those 'new man' ads that propose a cult of youth in living to the minimum (smileless, cool) by stripping the body of all the markers — clothes, scars, lines — that tell us that it has lived. In place of the decentred subject of modernism from Mallarmé to Frank O'Hara, we get no subject at all: vacuous, superficial without the hard-earned superfluous of Hemingway or Toland, passionless, commodified. The culture of the shopping mall.

Which perhaps I should grow accustomed to. The question remains for me: what about power? What, even more, about carnival, the dangerous transgression beyond the sociable? What kinds of pleasure to go beyond the cosy, familiar joys of telly and shopping? It is not that I'm against TV or Sainsbury's: on the contrary, when my struggle is over and I pop my socks, I will be carted off to a supermarket with *Star Trek* playing in every aisle. But till then, for me the stuff of life is struggle. The question, rephrased is *how* to struggle in a world whose parameters are largely those of the living room, the nuclear family and the car. What becomes of 'the spaces between where we live and where we work', in the words of a song in Abbott's 1985 film *Magic Hour*?

After such cataclysms, it will seem bathetic if I add another voice to the praises of scratch video. Yet the dirtied streamlining, the dragging out of implicit meanings through the visual and verbal assumptions of TV and its creatures, seems to me more than a politics of opportunism. It represents a hard-worn and slender optimism about justice. And it speaks, in the Western culture of the hegemony of pessimism, for a democracy of the image. Enzensberger's dream, in the generation of '68, that every receiver become a transmitter, is a possibility in what Paul Gilroy calls the overdeveloped nations. What broadcasting offers, however pleasurable, is inadequate to our needs. As the computer buffs are finding out, what is needed is not more and faster hardware, it is new software and new ways of networking. If we must speak



of micro-audiences, then let us do so on our own terms, and not as they are imposed by satellite from New International, Mirror Group Newspapers and Central Office. As a small step, let me propose lobbying local government to stipulate a

percentage of local, independent and Third World programming before they license any place of entertainment. And continue working on education and the library service. The people in the schools, pubs and clubs are the next generation of TV fanatics. ●

*This article is based on a lecture given in Coventry in association with *The State of the Nation*, an exhibition at the Herbert Art Gallery.*

Black Audio Film
Collective's Handsworth
Songs

VIDEOPEDIA

As video art and practice develops and becomes more accessible and popular the need for a thorough handbook of resources and facilities will grow. Also, video is already in danger of suffering the same fate as performance art, namely that its history, particularly its early years, will be inadequately documented and will be left to the mercies of anecdote and hearsay. There is no existing catalogue, index or centralised archive of video documentation, texts and criticism. As an ever larger number of students have the opportunity of turning to video as an option they will need access to information and critical writings to inform their learning and experimentation. As yet there is no principal source or centre for this.

It is ironic that a medium in which, at least theoretically, there is no such thing as an original and a copy and which can last, more or less, for ever should be in danger of having its history distorted. What follows is intended only as a very simple introduction to some of the resources currently available. It is not intended to be exhaustive and the selection of information to be included was made on a more or less subjective basis.

WHERE TO SEE VIDEO ART

THE ICA, LONDON has a videotheque facility open on Sunday afternoons where visitors can choose tapes to view at 50p per half-hour. The library includes a wide range of video art, pop videos, documentation of live work and documentaries. *ICA, The Mall, London SW1. 01 930 0493* ●

LONDON VIDEO ARTS has viewing facilities for researchers, critics and curators who want to view material from their comprehensive library of tapes. They publish a catalogue of tapes held all of which are also available for hire or sale. Viewing is by appointment only. *LVA, 23 Frith St, London W1V 5TS. 01 437 2786* ●

ACTON SCREEN, London has regular video projection screenings to complement its film programme. *Details: 01 993 2558* ●

LONDON FILM MAKERS CO-OP are increasingly featuring video in their programmes. This year they hosted some video programmes as part of the London Film Festival. *Details: 01 586 4806* ●

Many regional arts centres, galleries and film/media centres have showings of videos. The best way to find out who in your region shows videos is to contact the film/video officer at your Regional Arts Association

DISTRIBUTORS

CINEMA OF WOMEN, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London E1 01 251 4978

CIRCLES (Womens Work in Distribution), 113 Roman Rd, London E2 01 981 6828

ALBANY VIDEO, Douglas Way, London SE8 01 692 0231

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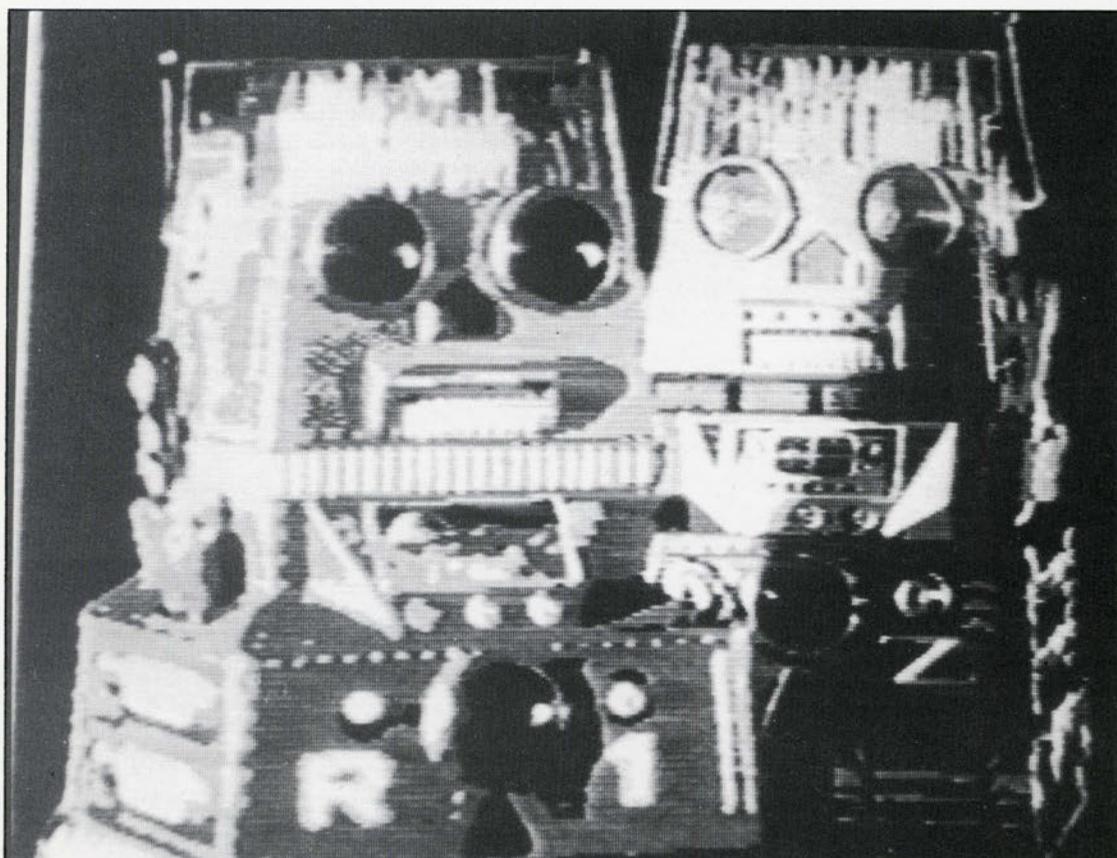
MEDIAMATIC MAGAZINE is a glossy, attractive quarterly video arts journal. Published in Amsterdam all articles are printed in Dutch and English. It covers the international video arts scene and contains interviews, features and theory as well as news and tape reviews. Available from *Performance Magazine, 61A Hackney Rd, London E2 7NX 01 739 1577* or direct from *Mediamatic at Binnenkadijk, 191, 1018 ZE Amsterdam, Holland. Price £3.* ●

THE GOOD VIDEO GUIDE, published by the ICA, London contains descriptions of tapes held by the ICA Videotheque as well as some useful accompanying articles. *ICA, The Mall, London 01 930 0493* ●

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Taken from
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NEWSLETTER OF WOMENS FILM TV VIDEO NETWORK, 79 War-dour St, London W1 01 434 2076 ●

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CAMPAIGN FOR PRESS AND BROADCASTING FREEDOM publish various reports on television and media. 9 Poland St, London W1 01 437 2795 ●

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Arts Council of Great Britain, Information Department. A useful resource for tracking down information or publications. 01 629 9495 ●

ALMOST PERSUADED

Annie Griffin, ICA, London.
 Reviewd by MARJORIE
 ALLTHORPE-GUYTON.

AFTER TWO VIEWINGS of this show (the first at AIR in March) Annie Griffin seems ever more luminous as a performance artist. So much so that one member of the audience this time shocked me and probably Annie herself, by asking who 'Directed' her. The fact that the autonomy of the performance artist is not widely understood — that there is no Director, no choreographer (no wardrobe mistress or stage manager either) leads to the frequent disappointment in presentation that theatre audiences feel with much performance art. Annie Griffin is one of a growing number of artists who attempt to meet those expectations. Some see this as a sell-out, as an unacceptable compromise. But Annie Griffin is one of the few — Neil Bartlett is another — who mine theatre with discrimination and succeed not only in opening new territory for performance art but in engaging a new audience. And Griffin is scrupulous — she looks and sounds good and her 'props' — those tapes, that mike, those chairs — are never allowed a mind of their own. She never subjects the spectator to that failure of nerve which makes for sweaty anticipation of things not going quite as they should. She is, dare I say it, a *professional performance artist* — which she prefers to be known as, because as she says herself, the audience then expects to look for meaning. (While often theatre audiences are happy for meaning to fall out of the sky, so long as they are well entertained.) *Almost Persuaded* delivered on both counts: it meant a lot and it was funny and it was moving. It had, though, changed since the earlier show; with a larger space the ideas became more direct, more obvious and overall suffered some loss of power. At AIR the spectator shared the same space, it was hot, claustrophobic, which reinforced the hard emotional tension of the piece. At the ICA this was inevitably relaxed by providing the breathing space of an interval. The main thrust though remained sharp in both parts. In the first Annie Griffin offers that curiously dated look of the girl hanging about for the man. In her hip hugging outfit — white satin and fringes — teetering on her red sparkle shoes, she is all pony-tail girlishness, all nervous play with hand-bag and lipstick. The Tammy Wynette song of the title states a simple moral dilemma faced by us all (however long ago): should I or shouldn't I — get picked up? Griffin points up the imagery of the song with some wicked lines 'he looked real good . . . from the back'. But she stitches the piece through with jagged recall of her own girl-childhood and the shattering of illusions (with much collapsing of chairs): 'Mom, How do I get what I want?' becomes later on in a male world 'DO I WANT THIS THING? DO I NEED

THIS THING?' But as her mother ever told 'always behave as if He's watching you'. The anger, the hope and the self-parodying humour of this half (you're an American, you can do anything you want to) are stalled by an abrupt change of gear in the second. At AIR this was tighter. There was no change of scene or dress: *She* simply became the woman with the kids, the farm, no rain and no man: 'seems like it ain't rained since you left. . . I guess the nighttime is the hardest time'. (Now you understand why

Tammy Wynette, having left the third of three abusive husbands wrote *Stand By Your Man* — because on your own it's even worse.) This time in her red evening dress, alone, she nurses her drink, lights her cigarette and plays the record — The Judds, mother and daughter — and you get a lump in your throat even though you know it's banal, it's cliché; this is a stereotype. But it is stereotypes — male and female — which Griffin scrutinises and reveals them as more complex, more important than we like to think. And country and western, exploitation novel and film, say this in ways which are crushingly clear. What Annie Griffin shows us is that the difference in content — in spite of the form — between a song by Wynette and, say, a novel by Anita Brookner, is not so great. Both deal with sexual power, male and female, and its destructiveness. The difference lies in the focus: on those who live perpetually engaged the battle, or on those who try their hardest to avoid it. ●

Annie Griffin battling
 against Persuasion



PHOTO / LEAH GORDON

4D AT HOME

Leadmill, Sheffield.
 Reviewed by
 TIM ETCHELLS



4D AT HOME was a showcase for new performance work held at the Leadmill, Sheffield. Most of the performances were by students from Psalter Lane College of Art. Like all the showcases I've seen it was a very mixed affair and almost impossible to speak about generally.

The first and last pieces I found very disappointing. The first, *Death of a Leaf* by Z of Research tried to suggest three locations: factory, park bench and kitchen but did this unconvincingly using minimal and tacky theatrical set and props. The factory was a length of plastic drainpipe held at 45°. Into this pipe one woman fed potatoes whilst another packed them into shoe boxes. Above them a shadow-puppet capitalist (complete with telephone and cigar) gazed down. As a joke at the expense of theatrical representation or crude politics these things might have been alright but Z. of Research was in earnest. They moved from one poorly defined area of the stage to another in blackouts, as if we were meant to take their changes of location as 'real'. Only when they pulled a funny papier maché dog across the stage on fishing line did any sense of irony emerge.

The performance style was as chaotic as the space. It included flowery dance like movement, naturalistic dialogue, repeated poetic text and mime without any real sense of why or how those things might work together. One was left with the impression that a simple political point was being badly expressed. Either way it was a pretty dissatisfying experience.

The last piece, *The Edwardian Wig* by Rick Buckley had similar problems although it's performance and use of the space were better. In the piece two men lectured simultaneously about 'the new system' or 'the new book'. 'Believe in the new system' we were told 'and it will give

PHOTO / DAN WOOTAN

LET ME SPEAK

Theatre Nova, Leeds Polytechnic. Reviewed by PIPPA CORNER.

IT IS A mark of the success of the performance community's liberalism of self-definition that Theatre Nova can invite a reviewer from this publication, to my mind on false pretences.

We have steadfastly resisted traditional attempts to attach labels, to draw boundaries, to name names and at times even to discriminate. It is, we proclaim, the nature of the work to be idiosyncratic, maverick, unpredictable, unfamiliar, ground-breaking, eccentric, motley, diverse and quintessentially independent. We have deemed it inappropriate to legislate, to set down in advance what is and what isn't. Within the field we talk in terms so vague or so general at times that we appear to be in command of the

ultimate in inclusive language. It is the rejection of the mainstream desire to control and define through force of habit. It is the protective wing embracing a large and errant brood.

This contract of artistic liberty has its loopholes. Theatre Nova appear to have found one of them. Their claim to our attention was made on the basis that they are 'theatre of images'. Humph. Not so sure about that one, but we ought to check it out.

In two halves the show, performed by Pynchlines (four Christian Movement female performers as seen in this instance), bullied the audience with the life stories of two Bolivian revolutionaries, a man and a woman. The company do not intend to be 'overtly political' I was told, which makes their choice of subject matter rather mystifying and frankly offensive. The dramatic ingredients of the piece were masks, mime, stylised movement, structured in a distractingly large number of short scenes presenting us with a series of significant moments in each woeful tale. The main vehicle, emotional

and factual, was text. Text delivered in unerring declamatory. Translated from original first-hand accounts, the interpreters had contrived to dehydrate the luxurious Spanish language so utterly that one could respond only with a perverse admiration. It was very tiring and untheatrical. It was perfectly horrid. The only glimpse of irony in the whole piece, which evidently passed by the director undetected, was their ability to reduce the horrors of Latin American fascist dictatorships to the level of a Pollocks Paper Theatre rendition of the death of little Nell. Oh dear.

In conversation with the company it transpired that they see the sort of work that graces these pages, they are aware of the companies in this field, but simply cannot have any sort of analytical approach. They had no set to speak of, the design was cunningly disguised as no design, most of the lighting was in the wrong place, the masks were badly made and disunited in concept, the content was narrative and smugly didactic, the images were the bits where they stood still, helpfully set within the parenthesis of regular blackouts. What's more it had a happy ending.

I attended the show optimistic, hoping that here would be a company that could provide a pleasant surprise, putting performance theatre to such a specific use. I think it is crucial that new companies are given the benefit of the doubt, and they should be afforded reasonable attention, and we should be prepared to accept that it will not always reap high dividends. ●

you gifts'. 'The new system', unsurprisingly, was a television and video upon which played a scratch tape mixing *Casino Royale* with various adverts. This material was slowly replaced by crude homemade video parodies, again of TV advertisements.

As the tape played the lectures continued. 'Everyone wants to be up here!' said one performer continuously, pointing at the roof, 'Not down there! Not down there!'. 'Buy!' said the other 'Buy! Buy! Buy More!'. In it's satirical way *The Edwardian Wig* was telling us how awful western consumer capitalism really is and that we're all being turned into mindless zombies by our TV sets. And of course the only people sensitive enough to work this out are artists like these two.

Such attacks seem quite pointless to me. They perpetrate a reductive and insulting view of the way we take in the media culture, and of our relationship to it; a view that is patronising, outdated, wrong and worst of all, boring.

By contrast Alan McLean's *And the Bank Just America* (now called *The Ratman*) was a fifteen minute glimpse of another New England; complex, bound up with the USA and still half in love with it, thank Christ. There was a genuine engagement with the subject matter both emotionally and intellectually. It was funny without being a joke, moving without ever being cloying.

It took place in front of three video cameras which simultaneously relayed images to monitors on the back wall. The piece was a miked and wired up monologue from a persona that combined northern stand up comic, talking head, psychotic, stream of consciousness, rambling and TV evangelist. Sections and phrases of the text were returned to, repeated and intertwined so that at times it looked and sounded like scratch video, only live:

'I've come to this meeting
But you know if I do my weightlifting
I find it keeps the hammers
And screwdrivers kept tightly
Under the seat.

EDWINA. RIFLE. CRAM.

I've come to this meeting and I've got my
shit head on, you know the one I learned
from someone a little older than me.

THIS NEGATIVE.

AMERICA.

KISSINGER. KISSINGER. POWER YOU
KNOW ULTIMATE APHRODISIAC.'

Alan McLean isn't a naturally captivating performer and there was clear influence from David Byrne, in terms of movement, and from The Fall. None of this stopped the piece from finding an original and effective voice of it's own. It balanced a reassuring air of control (movements and inflections were assured and precise without being staid) with a hint of danger (here was a man who looked slightly out of control). As the persona became more animated; gesticulating, shouting and rocking, one was very aware of Alan struggling to keep up; sweating, wiping his brow, and gulping down juice to quench his thirst. My only real criticism was that this central performer/persona relationship seemed to need more work.

Third up was John Jordan performing *I, Icarus*, which has already been reviewed by Steve Rogers (Performance 50). In it the performer stripped naked, smearing himself with mud and feathers before breaking light bulbs again and again, lit mainly by a film loop of the *Challenger* space shuttle disaster. It was done with care, intelligence and an undoubted performance skill but I didn't find it resonant. The combination of modern technology and shamanic ritual seemed contrived, and the tone was over ear-

nest. It would have benefitted from a good dose of humour or irony.

Rod Edge performed next with a piece entitled *The President Speaks* which combined text with movement sections using three oil drums as props. He's a very watchable performer, moving with confidence investing everything he does with a certain importance and ambiguity. The disappointing thing was that his performance and use of space were much better than his material. The piece began with the classic opening line 'I'm rich, very rich ...' and this worked well because one had no idea how seriously to take it. As things went on, however my hopes of finding anything below the initial crudeness of the words dwindled. Despite some good jokes the text became a well tried attack on militarism and religion. Only the visual side of the piece remained effective; images like rice bouncing high on the tops of oil drums as he marched or his prone figure lying slumped across the barrels at the start went a good way to creating a rich and poetic subtext to the words.

This autumn Caroline Bottemly and Graham Wrench at the Leadmill have done a good deal to up the profile and the credibility of the venue's performance programme. Although they've struggled with a space that is far from perfect they've promoted a coherent season that's brought artists like Annie Griffin, Dogs in Honey and Ralf Ralf to the city. Once here, they've played to large and appreciative audiences. 4D at Home was the last night of the season and once again both the attendance and the work were encouraging. The platform was a laudable gesture of faith on the part of Caroline and Graham; in some small way helping to sow seeds for the future seasons and for future work. ●

Alan McLean
a glimpse of another
New England

'I'VE FORGOTTEN MOST OF IT BUT I REMEMBER BUGS BUNNY DYING'

Robin Whitmore and the pupils of Sheringfield Primary, Battersea Arts Centre, London.

Reviewed by NEIL BARTLETT

BATTERSEA CONTINUES to make strikingly inventive use of its education budget and of its ex-Town Hall premises. This time they've persuaded the Sir John Cass' Foundation to fund Robin Whitmore as artist-in-residence for a term at a local school. Offered a choice of schools ranging from primary to art school, the outfit opted to work with a group of 25 8-10 year olds at Sheringfield Primary, Southfields. What Whitmore got was one day a week of paid work for a term, plus a chance to give free reign to the childish techniques and enthusiasms which underpin his own work even at its most violent and serious. What the kids got was a crash course in the techniques and indeed the confidence required to make truly modern art that any foundation student might envy. In just eight weeks Whitmore had them exploring the possibilities of the Xerox machine by creating life-size xerox portraits; making cartoons on super-8; making an animated fire sculpture for November 5 (massive and terrifying when lit); using paint, sound and projection to create an installation in an art gallery; rehearsing, costuming, building and performing a theatre-installation and documenting their own work on sound tape and video. The end result was a three-part installation at BAC of quite astonishing confidence and pleasure, a worthy successor to Kathryn Standing's commissioning of *SENDER* and Keith Piper's *ANOTHER EMPIRE STATE*. The foyer (well, it was Christmas) featured a flock of life size portraits of the artists swooping down from clouds of white fairy lights. The first

gallery (through a door mysteriously labelled THE SIX DEADLY SINS) featured the artists themselves in performance. Six gilded cardboard booths were labelled with a sin each; put a penny in the slot (or a ten pence piece, unless you wanted to be verbally abused by a ten year old for your stinginess) and a curtain would be pulled aside, revealing for a moment personifications of the sins themselves — *Gluttony* a small boy made giant by a cardboard stomach, *Sloth* two small boys moaning and whining amidst a litter of grey beerbottles, eyes narcissistically glued to a TV screen showing one of their own cartoons — almost bursting the bright confines of the tiny stages with their renditions of fragments of the masque in Marlowe's *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*, intercut with their own original texts (Envy; "I hate books! I hate books! If I can't have them then no one should have them!") The second gallery, appropriately entitled THE DREAM ROOM was covered from floor to ceiling in hallucinatory blow-ups of the kids original drawings, all in day-glo colours and shining under UV light. A giant green mosque disentangled itself from a pink car crash, while a taped voice-over relayed fragments of the artist's dreams . . . 'I've forgotten most of it but I remember Bugs Bunny dying.'

This was real art in education — Art, because Whitmore was able to use his placement to explore further his own obsessions with cheap technology, cheap colours and vibrant images on the edge of cheerful collapse; Education, because the installation was free from telltale signs of a teachers tidying or finishing hand, and gave the young artists a genuine opportunity to release the confidence and vigour with which they grasp new techniques; and Art again, because amidst all the paint splashes and fairy lights and little girls wearing cut up bedsheets and raucous recitations of half-learned lines there was real pleasure, real beauty, real excitement about painting and performing and filming and speaking for yourself. ●

PROBLEM: HOW DO YOU go about representing 10 years of avant-garde film and video practise in one retrospective package? How can you hope to cover the breadth and range of UK work in a programme which will come to define the recent history of film/video as it sets out on a three year world tour to the globes museums, cinemas and galleries?

For the Arts Council this problem has been partly resolved by the appointment of three selectors — Mike O'Prey, Catherine Lacey and Tamara Krikorian — and a resultant package which ranges from the high theory of Peter Gidal through the homo-eroticism of Jarman to Steve Hawley and George Barbers pop art videos. Inevitably in a 'broad survey' such as this the 'history' is determined by personal taste and inclination. (What the selectors here deem to be representative of a decade of film and video practise, from 1977 to '87, is bound to clash with other peoples overview.) Nonetheless what's slightly unsettling about the package, and more specifically, the video programme is the number of lengthy works of questionable influence and importance included which push aside shorter and more vital pieces. David Larchers *EETC*, by example, runs to just over an hour and is, in fact, a film which happens to utilise video effects — badly, I tend to think — yet here occupies valuable space on the video programme, taking up almost a fifth of the allocated time slot. Similarly Jayne Parkers *Almost Out*, which runs to 105 minutes seems to have been included, somewhat perversely, because of its length rather than its impact on video art.

This seems particularly crucial when one begins to look more critically at the programme and see's that one of the major debates in video art, that old chestnut technology v content, art v entertainment, is barely represented. The only real reference is Steve Hawleys colourised joker of a tape *Trout Descending a Staircase*. (Surely a more interesting and representative picture might have emerged with the inclusion of seminal state-of-the-art tapes from Jez Welsh or John Goff — *I.O.D.* seems highly representative of the 'turning point' for some video artists.) What's also noticeable is the absence of explicitly political works. Where in the film programme this aspect of experimental work is represented by *Handsworth Song*, from the Black Audio Film Collective in the video selection the absence of, say, Luton 33's *Guerilla TV* or Vulture Videos pop-politics tape *Lo Pay, No Way* indicates a significant error which

2AM EROTIC TIME

Dogs in Honey, Powerhouse, Nottingham.
Reviewed by FRAN BAWDEN.

DOGS IN HONEY. The dissolution of the individual? Rubber facial make-up? Sodomasochism? No. *2am Erotic Time* presents a new face for Dogs in Honey: a third performer, positive identities and a different format — they are not predictable.

It is an exaggeration of '80's culture: decadent and defiant, jigsawed together theatrically with cabaret and performance emancipated from meaning: art for art's sake.

The set is cluttered with '80's memorabilia: a TV, a tape deck, a Video, a clothes rail, coloured lights, grass, microphones, 'The Face'. The image is glitz and glamour: a girl in a sexy dress and two men in suits and cuban heels — rugged and cool.

They ridicule the dictates of the fashion press, whilst absorbing selected elements from its culture, as the woman exploits her femininity to the audience: 'Hello, good evening. This is the dress. I feel fucking brilliant in it. These are the cream plastic boots . . .' but, for the two men on stage her desires remain non-sexual: 'We are not sleeping together — the thought hasn't even crossed my mind,' as their concern is sexuality

and not sex.

Cabaret-style stories stressing the cultural significance of many nights spent in pubs and clubs are successfully juxtaposed by the media's increasingly sinister influence on one of the men, who believes he is Jesus with designer labels, after a hypnotic transmission on the TV giving orders to: 'Believe in yourself and your life will be so much more wonderful from now on . . . success can be yours, success will be yours.'

Theatricality is stressed as they introduce themselves and the performance to the audience, before a climatic 'initiation' ceremony — a momentous event with gluttonous swigging of Perrier and acrobatic crashes to the floor.

The mythical world of 'erotic time' is expressed with exuberance in a dramatic finale involving sparklers emitting tremulous light: echoing

ELUSIVE SIGNS OR WASTED TIME?

10 Years of Avant-Garde Film and Video at the Tate. Reviewed by NIK HOUGHTON.

is never quite balanced by the sexual politics of Catherine Elwes work or Brett Turnbills chest baring revolt-into-style video, *Total State Machine*.

But if these lapses in the video programme are, in some ways understandable the film programme fares rather less well as the 'names' of the avant-garde are paraded to the exclusion of many new, and younger, film makers. Certainly there's a feeling here that this sometimes stodgy project might have been enlivened with a few riskier selections and the sense in which the selection looks back to the late 60's and early 70's for its points of reference tends to validate the argument that this is a selection limited by a past history. (The broadsheet which was distributed at the Tate's private view from the Institute of Experimental Cinematographers which calls the programme a 'shameful history of the avant-garde' is overstating the case but one can see what they're driving at beneath a somewhat sour rhetoric rant.)

With these not insubstantial problems aired, however, *The Elusive Sign: British Avant-Garde Film & Video 1977-87* offers a serious, if somewhat lopsided, perspective on experimental practise over a decade of changing styles and concerns. Personal doubts apart what's further encouraging is to see the 'independent sector' properly recognised both by the Tate — who are hosts to the programme through January until it goes on tour — and the Arts Council who organised the project. ●

'The Elusive Sign' catalogue contains articles from Mike O'Pray, Tamara Krikorian and Catherine Lacey alongside copious notes on the works selected and biographies of the artists involved. Cost £4.50.

the world of neon culture before a defiant exit through the studio door. They have 'bought' their culture, they have seen their light.

This is hardly a characteristic performance for Dogs in Honey, but it is an experimental, innovative and interesting one, involving a considered balance between performing and purpose. They began to reject a culture which they regard with disgust, but learn eventually to live with it, to use it and to amalgamate it with their own.

It is a broadminded piece from a broadminded trio, who are refusing to play safe and rely on a style for which they have already received acclaim. The piece is both stimulating and confident and where it lacks in finish it is amply compensated by an influx of energy and original thought: a hallmark which Dogs in Honey can call their own. ●



Jayne Porter's *Almost Out* — included because of its length?

THE HAUNTING TREE

Axis Mundi, Green Room, Manchester. Reviewed by PIPPA CORNER.

THE PROPER TERRITORY of the piece is the silted river bed, the quality of its elements is that of things washed up on the beach which have a seductive pattern of randomness.

At first sight the set was something of a disappointment, but like the other aspects of the show, it grew on me. It comprises seven large cubes, each with a 'driftwood' object hidden under a faded red velvet drape, and a certain amount of dark earth around the space. Oddly, the tree itself is out on a limb at the back, and seemed something of a perfunctory concession to the title. As the piece progresses through a series of announced acts the boxes are turned and manoeuvred into a gradual opening out of the space, which reflects with a degree of attractive simplicity the exposition of the text.

Ray King's text is complex and eclectic, and is performed with deliberation, as if it too has been turned up by the tide, remaining difficult and unfamiliar. Relationships are tried out and moved on, Piscator and Viator, Mr Crabtree and Peter, Mr Crabtree and his fantasy world; they are examined in the light of their effect on their environment and vice versa. I found that it provided a wash of atmosphere rather than a detailed landscape, and that its reflection created a sense of buried pasts rising to the surface in muddled fragments.

The individual performances are essentially character based, with the firm anchor of more or less narrative lines; the roles played out within the relationships are consistent, the key being

Rena Vet's voice of Order and Disorder. As yet the performers were not absolutely in control of their personal material, but I feel that they will be so in time. Within that criticism, it must be said that there were moments of great accuracy in the piece, and of excitement. Sue Bradley's special contribution is literally an enthralling coup de theatre, which left the rest of the show standing, despite a number of nicely organised images and well executed 'life or death struggles'.

The lighting is pretty, the costumes deliberately dreary and uniform, the ambient soundtrack uninspiring.

The piece is simple in its structure and in its aims, as yet specific delineations between the concerns of its content are hazy, and the text does not help. As a whole it combines a pleasantly personal world view with the fabric of tried and trusted performance work. It is not exactly a compliment, but certainly no insult, to say that Niki Johnson and Richard Hawley are more than capable of taking reminiscent ingredients and making them work economically, and on their own terms. Good things can be expected of them as a new company of old friends. ●

Axis Mundi — tried and trusted techniques



PHOTO / CHARLOTTE MACPHERSON

AS A PERSON

Texture

Third Eye Centre, Glasgow

Reviewed by MALCOLM DICKSON

TEXTURE, FROM GLASGOW, are a 'collaborative group of artists working together in the field of audio-visual performance' and they boast credits within that for performers, film direction, set and costume design, make-up and sound 'design', most of whom were invisible and in the case of film were underused on this occasion.

As *a Person* explores the atmospheric messages pervading the globe through the technology of computers, space travel and the flickering world of cinema. Two passages from the handout on the night sum up the underlying conceptual intent of the piece, one a quote from Jung on the cinema as the electronic embodiment of our suppressed desires, and the other; "Life as a waking dream. The eye as a camera. The cinema as ritual. Two performers find themselves in an environment of confused reality. Images and sounds merge with fragments of memory as each try to find a way to communicate as a person." It is an elusive piece, and though not as spectacular as the press release might suggest, it was fairly elaborate.

On entering the space one confronts what at first appears to be a mock sci-fi movie set, or maybe even some nightclub setting, synthesizer jingles are playing and two performers are in attendance on the set, both motionless. The performance space is marked out by postcard racks covered in polythene on the boundary, within which there are five TV sets, a small stairway up to a platform over which is draped a huge piece of canvas cloth which stretches over the whole area. On the platform two chairs covered in tin foil face two TV sets, each one on either side of the stairway, and lengths of wooden planks stretch from the platform to the ceiling there-by suggesting some sort of veranda structure, or cage.

What followed was broken into three sections, marked by changes in music. *Splendid Isolation*, comprised of textured sounds and images; slides of abstract marks, rain, pebbles, waves, to the sound of the sea and rain. The woman performer, has traced a circular shape on the floor by walking on tip-toe, or as if she were on a tightrope, whilst she holds an umbrella above her head. She recites a broken version of Patsy Klien's *Fall to Pieces*, whilst a period movie comes up on the video of a woman caressing a man, who might be on his deathbed (the monitors are

too small to make out details).

Train of Thought, the second section, resembled a collection of anecdotes culled from movies, from songs and maybe from the performers own lives. Since there is no narrative structure, only fragments are remembered; 'The city of Paris is where we begin'/'There is no place in your heart for me any more'/'The terrible thing about dying is that you can do it only once'. As this stream of broken narratives continue, it seems not unlike the effect one imagines from depriving yourself of sleep whilst watching American TV with a remote control gadget constantly switching channels, catching snippets of storylines, an embrace, or satellite photographs of the moon. *Casablanca* appears on screen and the set adjusts itself to the ambiance. She is sitting reclined, whilst the other performer, a man, shines a torch on the screen above the platform, and as the sound of an aeroplane passes, she reads a departure announcement to New York. In what might be a momentary lapse of amnesia, he stands confused in his surroundings, wipes the sweat from the back of his neck. They continue their confused lines as she recounts a visit to a photographers whilst he pretends to be taking photographs of her.

The pace builds up in the third section *Brave New World* around a slow drum machine beat and synthesizer. We are welcomed to the world of Word-Star computers as images of silicon chips and aerial photos of a skyscraped city appear on the monitors. She is still reclining as he begins to dance slowly to the music, his words becoming the lyrics as the music builds up. The cold electro-synth sound, with the references to Computerworld, not only reminded us of Kraftwerk, but sounded like them too. It became too musical and too predictably the finale. The performers, smiling, holding hands and clutching their travel holdalls, cast a glance back at the set then exit to another zone. Had they found their true identities? Who knows. I exit into the banal pre-Xmas night where I'm dwarfed by giant neon-lit Santa's, and where the jingly piped muzak wafting up the near deserted pedestrian precinct made this world more alien than the one Texture had only slightly referred to in their performance.

Their randomness was not helped by the arbitrary use of Super 8 projected slightly to one side of the set, of Glasgow urban scapes and streets. More use could have been made of the videos to set a time-structure, pacing the piece, synchronising certain actions or in engaging interest when it flagged between the words and movements of the performers. This was held together by the soundtrack which was, at times, intoxicating.

Some effective moments stick in my mind, such as the use of an echoed voice as sound backdrop to the broken narratives which had a dreamlike quality. The performance was at its best when they deliberately confused snippets taken from their own lives, as they appeared lost in a conundrum of fiction and trivial auto-biographical observations. ●

Rose Garrard NGBK, West Berlin Reviewed by KEN GILL

IN THE PRESENT conservative climate Rose Garrard is something of a maverick spirit; sculptress, video, performance and installation artist. And she is taken seriously when working in any of these media. Her recent NGBK show provided as good a collection of her work over the past four year as any, including three multi-media installations; *Tumbled Frame, 1985; Casting Room II, 1986; the new Redressing The Balance; and a free-standing sculpture, Spirit of Painting Reclaimed, 1987.* In addition, half a dozen large wall works were included as well as a comprehensive programme of her video works and performances reworked for video.

What this major showing clearly demonstrated is the didactic nature of her work. Her concerns are absolutely consistent throughout, and great lengths are gone to to foreground contentious and important, political lessons. Despite the fact that she often deals in images taken from Art History, painting in particular, she is neither an aesthete nor a formalist. The issues are always her first concern. When necessary, she may compromise the medium, but never the mes-

IVAN

Rosemary Branch, London reviewed by STEVE ROGERS

HAIRDRESSERS, SATIRISTS, PROSTITUTES and drag queens have a lot in common. For one thing they share the practice of being known only by a christian name. Hair by Sebastian; French Lessons by Susie; Cartoons by Jak; Drag by Adrella. Ivan is rapidly finding himself a cult following by combining parts of all of these noble professions into the far less noble one of performance. Although he made his performance debut in Neil Bartlett's provocative "Pornography" it was his solo performance as Myra Hindley that earned him the accolade of being banned from most London venues, and the doubtful benefits of being a Time Out cover feature.

Myra Hindley remains in Ivan's catalogue of hated women along with Imelda Marcos, Barbara Cartland and Mrs Betty Sheridan the woman who leads the parents organisations trying to prevent Haringey council from presenting positive images of gay men and

REDRESSING THE BALANCE

sage. For people already familiar with her work the issues are well known. Perceptions and representations of women in a male-ordered world; the way women have been, and continue to be, misrepresented culturally, either as artists — where they are ignored — or as exploitable subject matter. Specific attention is drawn to the relationship of the male artist to the female model, both in painting and on page 3. The forgotten or ignored women artists; the role of women artists in modernism; and the myth of Pandora are all constant themes. In all of these issues she constantly returns her examination to herself and her own idea of herself. In every work she implicitly or explicitly seeks to locate herself in relation to her subjects and her products. The questioning of the manipulative role of the artist is not a process she excludes herself from. Indeed there is a strong sense of someone, a woman artist, searching to find out where exactly she can fit in. The problem with the three dimensional work, installations and sculptures, is that it becomes mere illustrations of her arguments. The form of the works are contrived,



PHOTO / PHIL BRYCE

Rose Garrard's Casting Room II, the Bride Stripped Bare — message before medium

chance has no role to play here. The works are like stage sets, waiting to be occupied by a drama which never begins. The materials she works with are never allowed a life of their own. They are merely means to ends. This is shown clearly when seen against the videos and performances which are her best works. The 1984 production *Tumbled Frame* is an excellent synthesis of Garrard's many parallel themes. The reason this and her other "live" pieces work so well is that she herself is in them. She plays several roles, director, editor, artist and narrator, and in so

doing can locate her own ambiguous relationships with her subjects. Here the static works have their potential fulfilled, they provide both the context as well as the props for her many layers of meaning. Her physical presence gives her work the dramatic and emotional charge they need.

This retrospective shows that Rose Garrard is primarily a performance artist. In her static work her presence is always implied, and when she is present, as in her videos, she becomes the central communicator, not the objects she makes. ●

women to school children. A small time bigot distorted into a national monster by the passing of Clause 27 of the Local Government Bill which prevents the 'promotion' of homosexuality. Ivan's technique is to give these characters a seductive but superficial glamour. Hindley appears as a celebrity released from jail and roped in, as all celebrities seem to be, to playing in panto. Hindley, appealing and sexy, plays a wolf in Little Red Riding Hood. There's also sing-along-a-Marcos with Imelda leading a participatory rendition of *I Have a Dream*, the audience issued with shoes to wave along with the song.

There is no attempt at pathos or ambiguity, these women are both horrible and attractive. The effect is totally bewildering until the final incarnation in which Ivan clad in Monroe style, bleached and wiggly, tells us his own story. Son of a miner, transvestite, with a passion for black men, caught in the double bind that offers the role models of glamorous femininity and denies him the freedom to follow them. But follow them he must. Yet he is no victim, he confronts his own situation and that of everyone that does not fit with an honesty that is both powerful and frightening. There are all too many people who spend most of their lives telling themselves that things really aren't that bad. Ivan knows just how bad it is and is going to stand up and say so no matter what. As a result he has few supporters on left or right.

What Ivan understands intuitively is that bad taste can be an extremely powerful weapon. It confronts the very core of socialised behaviour which keeps us all in check.



PHOTO / RICHARD H. SMITH

Ivan — when you look this good you don't have to care what people think

Its like the airline passenger who knows with an absolute certainty that the flight they are about to go on will crash but goes on the flight anyway because they don't want to look foolish. Ivan doesn't care what he appears like to others he has had enough of

other people to know that the only person he can trust is himself.

Go and see Ivan if you get the chance, but we warned, if you take along with you your baggage of 'good taste' and 'civilised feelings' you will be offended, deeply. ●

BRUNO'S LEG

Richard Layzell, Tate Gallery Clore Auditorium, London. Reviewed by MARK CURRAH.

RICHARD LAYZELL'S SMILE sticks in my mind. Like the grin on the Cheshire Cat who Alice meets in Wonderland it hangs around longer than its owner. A haunting smile, an overlarge, fixed smile; a deceptive contraction of muscles. The smile appeared quite a bit in Layzell's new performance *Bruno's Leg*.

Designed for the Tate Gallery's shiny new Clore extension — specifically its lecture theatre — *Bruno's Leg* is a set of narratives under the generic theme of journey. The stories are mostly personal — principally the failure of Layzell's marriage last year — blended with lighter anecdotes: the Baseball player who started to bark; Bruno the man with the broken leg.

For over an hour Layzell stood alone, narrat-

ing to the illustration of slides and video; an accomplished performance. He grasped his audience's attention with the assurance of a magician, yet here was no sleight of hand, just an understanding of how long a performer can hold interest before the need to change tempo or mood. Only once did I feel he had lost his watcher's interest, only once did I detect the shifting of bums on seats. And never did I hear the contented laughter of relaxation: Layzell doesn't want his audience to sink into complacency; the smile on his face is never relaxed.

It is a way for the performer to test the water, to see whether his audience are laughing at him or with him, how playful he can be without letting slip the serious intent of his work.

At one point he acted out a manic solitary dance, explaining how he had shocked the locals in a French disco. In other hands it would have been hysterical, but here we could never escape the loneliness which prompted Layzell's deliberately alienating act.

But with the supreme fluidity and control of technique that Layzell possesses comes a concurrent difficulty. A difficulty highlighted by this work's surroundings. Performed on a stage be-

fore banked and comfortable seats the artist's skill seemed distant, hermetically sealed. Once he left the stage to take a brief and delightful excursion around us, picking out faces with a flashlight like the usherette who would pick out troublemakers in the cinema of my youth. But this was the only occasion on which he broke through the shell of expertise surrounding him.

Layzell's message was personal, a public airing of private grief, but its relevance was distanced. He might have grounded it in the present by reference to his surroundings — the Tate, Turner, British art. Many of his audience would have been new to performance, drawn from the Tate's day-trippers, the young, eager for culture, who calculate that a day at the Tate is an efficient way to take in a good dollop of Culture. Having foot-slogged their way through rooms of aloof and polished paintings and sculptures 'Bruno's Leg', which began at 4 pm, was the ideal finale. Here they might have found a more accessible artform, but Layzell failed to break the auro of High Art, and for someone of his skill not to demonstrate that performance was the ideal tool to achieve such a breakthrough was a badly missed opportunity. ●

STIFFED BY DAVID GALE

Dear Performance

David Gale's piece in your last issue was a classic example of his art, an eloquent mix of wit, vitriol and fantasy. It did occur to us that some might not realise that it was written from the necessary limited perspective of compere working for the event, and might for that reason be less than even-handed.

The evening was an ambitious celebration of the extraordinary wealth of talent that has been presented at the ICA over recent years. Incidentally it demonstrated the importance of the ICA as a platform and commissioning agent for experimental work. The scale of the evening with over a hundred artists performing in 3 venues was quite unique. The standard of performance and the professionalism of the artists in dealing with the logistics of such a complicated event was truly impressive. David was unable to be involved in the weeks of preparation that preceded the event but had he done so, we are sure he would have appreciated the complexity of the event and the skill of the stage management staff.

To be honest we are not surprised that David claimed to have overheard some negative comments from the TV crew. They were more accustomed to capturing the Horse of the Year Show (sic) than a one-off art event. We overheard many favourable comments and of course some criticisms. For some people the main problem was that there was too much to

see — not the complaint of someone who has been overcharged. It was an ambitious evening offering a very wide programme. We would have been naive to assume that we could please all of the people all of the time.

One of our principle regrets was that neither David Gale as compere nor his company Lumiere and Son's excellent Blue Duck appeared on the televised version.

Neil Butler, Bill McAlister, Michael Morris, Dave Reeves.

REVIEW POLICY

Dear Performance

Whilst I am pleased to see that the number of reviews in Performance has increased over the last year the range stays the same. The last issue, No 50, is a good example. Of the ten reviews two were of shows by ex-members of Impact Theatre, one of IOU Theatre, two of prestigious foreign theatre companies, one of the ICA's birthday party which was made up almost entirely of theatre artists. Why this emphasis on theatre? I accept that experimental theatre and performance art are closely linked (and becoming more so), and I accept that Performance Magazine should cover both but surely performance art should be given as much space if not more than theatre.

Reviews in a bimonthly magazine cannot be directly related to selling

tickets since usually the work is over and finished by the time the magazine appears. Reviewing must then serve a different purpose. Part of this must be to draw national (international) attention to events which would otherwise receive no media attention at all. I am sure that most, if not all, of the theatre works reviewed in Issue 50 will have received reviews in many other publications.

There is a great deal of low profile performance work going on in galleries and alternative spaces all over the country, mostly outside of London. It is the responsibility of Performance Magazine to give these artists its support by reviewing their work. How else will they have any chance of having their work seen by a larger number of people?

Paul Andrews, Bristol

COVER BLOWER

Dear Performance Magazine,

Yes, I'm sorry, I admit it's true . . . all of it. I WAS at Documenta and as far as I know (well it was the last time I looked) I am British.

I shall do my best to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Ever so humble,
Niall Monro

IMPORTANT P.S. For six months I have managed to keep by sordid actions in Kassel a secret, then Ian Smith blows my cover. THANKS A BUNCH, IAN.

VARIANT

issue 4 **ART + IDEAS** Winter/Spring '88

Roland Miller on public perceptions of Live Art 60s-80s, 'AVE '87' in Holland, Post-Modernism Debate in Britain; Video at the N.R.L.A., Alistair MacLennan interviewed, Andrej Dudek-Durer, Jo Spence, Critical Realism, Einsturzende Neubaten, Cecil Taylor, Screen and Projection in Performance.

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CLAUSE 28 AFFECTS YOU!

Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill due to become law in June will make it illegal for local authorities to "promote" homosexuality. In addition to the misery this will cause to gay men and women it will have devastating repercussions for the arts.

Local authorities are one of the principal supporters of the arts. Most theatres, arts centres, museums, galleries and local cinemas receive local authority funding as do most performing arts groups and virtually all libraries. Under the terms of the Clause classic works of literature, *THE COLOR PURPLE*, *GIOVANNI'S ROOM*, *MAURICE*, could be banned from libraries. The films of *PASOLINI*, *FASSBINDER*, and the Oscar-nominee *MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE*, the plays of Genet and the works of *GAY SWEATSHOP*, *NEIL BARTLETT* and West End hits like *THE NORMAL HEART*, *BREAKING THE CODE* and *BENT* could not be presented. Clause 28 is censorship of the arts.

Already many famous names from the arts have joined an Arts Lobby to protest against the Clause. *SIR MICHAEL TIPPETT*, *SIMON CALLOW*, *TOM STOPPARD*, *SIMON RATTLE*, *MAYA ANGELOU*, *SHEILA HANCOCK* are just some of the artists who have given support to the Lobby.

YOU CAN HELP

Write to any member of the House of Lords urging them to reject the Clause. Write to your MP or to Richard Luce, Minister for the Arts. Or if you think you can make a contribution to the Lobby they can be contacted on 01 358 9490.

STOP CLAUSE 28

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NEW COMMISSIONS IN LIVE WORK

Projects U.K. (Newcastle Media Workshops) has been commissioning new works in performance throughout the Eighties. In order to broaden currently accepted views of performance, Projects U.K. invites artists and/or groups to submit ideas for new live works that – through both form and content – encourage radical approaches to both process and practice.

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We are interested in established artists and newcomers who wish to extend public, critical and artistic perceptions of what live work can be.

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Please include: a full c.v., a project description, a budget, a full list of technical and equipment requirements, plus relevant supporting material (for return of material include S.A.E.).

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