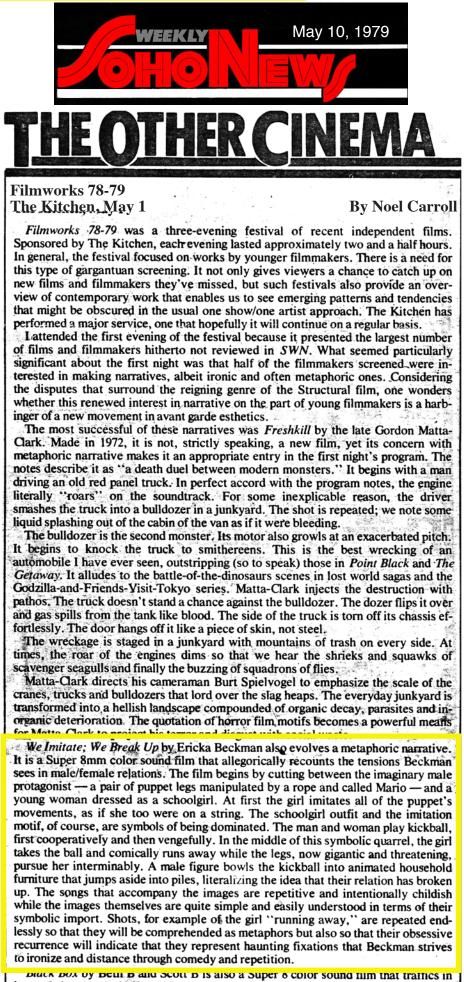
THE KITCHEN

VIDEO, MUSIC AND DANCE



irony. It is an exercise in punk esthetics. A blond boy, probably in his early 20s, is kidnapped, hot from his girlfriend's arms, in front of an apartment building

CENTER FOR VIDEO, MUSIC AND DANCE

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somewhere in the East Village. He is brought to a torture chamber where the minions of a secret religious organization plan to purify him using knouts, cudgels, chains and electric shocks. The film looks like an adaptation of Kafka by the Kuchar Brothers in collaboration with George Romero. Available through B-Movies Productions, it is a homage to sleaze and to adolescent images of evil. The villains, portrayed with boisterous local accents, recall shrill parental nagging more than the stage diction of the evil-doers of traditional B's. Mixed with the comedy are typical sado-masochistic fantasies as the boy is beaten by his maniacal neighborhood captors. I suppose that the tortures are meant to titillate but at the same time they are meant to be comic until finally the naked, bleeding, bound captive is thrust into the black box where he and the audience are assaulted at length with abrasive electric sound waves which provide an effective, horrific symbol of totalitarian repression.

The levels of irony and ambivalence in the film are complicated. Banality in both film and life is alternately embraced, celebrated and satirized while the sadomasochistic themes signal an unresolved fascination with sexual repression at the same time that it is attacked. The sophomoric irony itself becomes an ironic disguise for a great deal of pain which is symbolized through the vacillating attitudes apparent in acting out the pop myth of victim and victimizer.

Mrs. Wong by Viktor Vondracek is a parody of a TV news special report. A Hispanic newsman visits Mrs. Wong to interview her about the recent robbery of her apartment. the spectacle of a clumsy news team stumbling through rooms almost as messy as my own is humorous enough, but Mrs. Wong's exaggerated New York monolog — including a complaint about dog piss leaking through her ceiling — is so close to the familiar and yet so incongruous within the framework of TV news that it provokes constant titters. Nevertheless, Mrs. Wong is so much like a student film perennial that I wonder why it was included in this group of ostensibly avant garde films.

Klaus Wyborny's Six Little Pieces on Film is the type of work that one is more accustomed to see in Soho showcases. It is a Structural film comprised of five or six sequences. Within each, there are a set number of shots or kinds of shots which are repeated with variations in camera speed, shot length and processing. Wyborny's subjects include a harbor, a house, an urban street and industrial sites. At times the images fly by so fast that we struggle to recognize them. When the cutting slows down, we can begin to get a sense of place but then the editing will speed up again and the images are turned into elaborate rhythmic patterns. The kinds of perceptual experiences the film affords are characteristic of the Structural genre rather than innovative, but pleasurable nonetheless.

Similarly, Jack Goldstein's three very short films address themselves to perception rather than narration. Each is technically beautiful, exploring a single idea with elegance. *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer* features the company's leonine logo on a rich red field. The lion roars, but no fiction follows. Instead the animal roars again and again and again. Sometimes it gives two snorts; sometimes three. The repetition calls our attention not only to the quality of the sounds but to how the lion tilts his head with each resonant grumble. Goldstein forces us to look closely at a familiar, usually ignored, cultural symbol while also making a joke about the MGM musical as the king of the beasts delivers his famous aria.

Like Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, The Jump is luminously colored — indeed the intensity and brightness of each of Goldstein's pieces make them very arresting sensously. In The Jump, a glaring yellow rotoscoped figure on a red background dives through the air, presumably into a pool. As the figure completes its fall it disappears into the redness. The abstraction involved is tantalizing — we not only identify the figure but through that identification we are tempted to conceive of its disappearance as it's falling into water. In Bone China, a yellow cartoon-bird with redtipped wings flies around the edge of a white dish on a black field. It flaps its wings slowly — we hear what sounds like a blanket being unfurled in the wind. Then the bird begins sqeaking and its pace picks up. As the bird rushes ahead, it appears to swoop down to the dish, momentarily causing the illusion that the dish is a bowl. Goldstein is an excellent craftsman with a delightful talent for provoking delicate perceptual shifts.

Note: Sheila McLaughlin's Inside Out and Ernie Gehr's Untitled, both of which have already been quite favorably reviewed in SWN, concluded the May 1 program.

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