

FILM

By J. Hoberman

Stakeout on 65th Street:

*Consumer Guide to the
21st New York Film Festival*

The Cool and the Crazy

Along with *The Golden 80s*, *Sifted Evidence* is one of the most formally exciting movies in the festival but there are others to suit cine-sophisticated consumers with a taste for *mishigas*. Godard's *Passion* certainly qualifies as an avant-garde extravaganza; that it's paired with super-8 filmmaker Ericka Beckman's

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first 16mm opus, the ineffable **You the Bettor**, sets the stage for a potential audience riot.

Mani Kaul's *Dhrupad*—an avant-garde documentary by a third world filmmaker—is an austere *gesamtkunstwerk* synthesizing Indian classical music, aesthetic texts, architecture, popular dance and image making. With few concessions to the Western viewer, *Dhrupad*

concentrates mainly on the ecstatic performances of the legendary Daga brothers while making an overall metaphoric link between music, architecture, and cinema. (All three seem to be sculpted out of the air.) Kaul, one of the most interesting filmmakers to emerge from India's "parallel cinema" has created a substantial body of work over the past dozen years. *Dhrupad* is his first film to get any New York attention since *Duvidha* was screened at the 1976 "New Directors."

The Golden 80s, *You the Bettor*, *Dhrupad* are an impressive trio of avant-garde musicals. (Some might include the Resnais film here as well.) But the most spectacular musical event of the festival is **The New Babylon**. An exuberant near-masterpiece of 1920s Soviet futurist-expressionist-constructivist filmmaking produced by the Moscow-based Factory of the Eccentric Actor, *The New Babylon* gets the *Napoleon* treatment—one mondo screening at Radio City with a 21 piece orchestra playing Dmitri Shostakovich's recently rediscovered original score. In fact, mark down October 3 as "Red Monday." Back at Alice Tully Hall the *New Babylon* screening is preceded by a single showing of **Red Love**, German film-activist Rosa von Praunheim's outrageous adaptation of Alexandra Kollontai's