

# More Progress. Less Process.

By Andrew James Patterson

Yes Mary, Super 8 is portable and practical and accessible and very low budget. Also my dear, you can do some serious walking with those cameras.

But guess what? Mini-DV has all the same conclusive adjectives. Like the double bass, it's easy to walk. And it's not that much more expensive.

It's digital while Super 8 is the analogue of analogues. I work in both formats and I certainly don't see any serious binarism here. I understand the attraction to low budget and hands-on and feet-first. Super 8, Regular 8, camcorders and even Hi 8 have been useful for people who like to sit delicately on that very thin fence between performance and documentary -not necessarily omitting all that melo-drama, folk..

Once upon a time, speaking of narrative, when I was already too old to be a teenager let alone a punk, Super 8 folks and Video artisans didn't intermingle all that much. Wasn't the legendary Funnel Film Experimental Theatre doing it right on the wrong side of Queen? The Funnel was way out there on King East around the corner from what is now generalized as The Distillery District. There's a lot of history there and somebody involved back then should run out and get a publishing contract.

The people I knew in the late 70's and early 80's who were working with the lowest gauge format were folks like My Favourite Postman John Porter. And there were those queerer-than-queer Juvenile Delinquent or JD members - G.B. Jones, the ubiquitous Ecurb Al Ecurb and all their too-punk-for-the-gay-ghetto cronies. None of those brats and curmudgeons were making calling cards. Match edits were verboten and if there was any synchronized sound it was the band playing too loud.

The JDs and the gang persevered and persevered. I remember a JDs night at the old Purple Institute (that neo-anarchist gallery who eschewed state funding and became fetishized by neo-con art writers against state funding). This was in May 1990. It was presented by the still-fresh Pleasure Dome and billed as an evening of neo-punk films. All the films starred Suzy Richter nee Sinatra. Is it just me who sometimes thinks time has stood still?

It hasn't. Super 8 has always looked grainy, which means grungy, which means that not only MTV and CITY-TV but even the CBC have co-opted its surface. Let's not even consider commercials imitating music videos utilizing Super-8 with its Aura of Authenticity but actually plagiarizing commercials. In the early 90's it was impossible to watch MTV and Much Music and avoid 'alternative bands' using those grainy surfaces. It took too long for MTV to find their inner anti-Duran Duran and when they did they really over-compensated.

Meanwhile a funding coordinator at Trinity Square Video read an essay by Dot Tuer (a writer and historian far smarter than Yours Truly) in TSV's collection catalogue Tuer accurately stated that video art's innovations -parallel to those of experimen-

tal film- had been absorbed by the music video industry. Well, duh. So the employee of an artist-run cooperative decided that artists who didn't switch to music videos were die-hard modernists. Double duh!

Of course Super 8, experimental film and video art (what about performance art?) have been co-opted by the music video and its host medium -advertising. But don't let the ship go down because the cat can only catch a few of the stowaway rats. It may be strenuously argued that Super 8 is further distanced from any host mediums, even the highly portable Mini-DV. Super 8 may be used by behemoths like Oliver Stone but it's not like the format is haunted by his ghost. Photography is the ghost of Super 8. And it barely, if at all, references persistent host mediums like production-model film and television.

It wasn't until the late nineties that I became attracted to the material or the medium or format or process. I had watched enough films and tapes that really cranked my noggin by not using synch-sound and by problematizing the relationship between image and sound rather than catering to Obvious Narrative Strategies. Su Friedrich, Chris Marker, Gary Kibbins, Steve Reinke and more than a few others tweaked my realization that Literalness really was a hollow cube.

I discovered my inner documentarian, and decided that walking the camera was the way to go. I accepted an invitation from the unjinxed sophomore Splice This! Festival to make a short film about being flawed -one of those perennial thematic

## *"Photography is the ghost of Super 8."*

call for submissions. Of course I'm flawed. According to an anti-materialist friend who thinks anybody who talks about money is by definition a capitalist. I always talk about money because I usually don't have very much of the green stuff. My Super-8 pelvic affiliate Jim MacSwain was coming to town so I told him that he could stay with me on the condition that he brought his camera. I walked that camera as The Walking Philosopher and many other inverts made their obvious inversion and remembered their own adventures on Philosopher's Walk. That reading is accurate but hardly definitive and now a lot of my work is shot edited and even shown on Super 8. This still too frequently dismissed gauge sees and records but it also walks -just like my feet, in fact my entire body. Super 8 walks that walk and talks that talk. I even made one in colour recently.

Are these Super-8 movies certifiable art-objects? Yes and no and does it matter? Super 8 films of such relative brevity are slices of life. They are intense sexual encounters. They can also be part of a collage, even a narrative. They are instant performances and valuable records. The films are events in their own right as well as being part of Some Serious Larger Zeitgeist.

But enough process and more progress. Splice this film or don't splice it. To quote one of my favourite walking philosophers - the esteemed Robert Lee - Fuck Us!

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