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REVIEW**DVD Review: *Cut Shorts - A Collection of Short Films and Music Videos by David Markey from 1974-2004***

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Modern Pea Pod

David Markey is not a film director. He is the kid down the street who is always trashing the neighborhood and chasing his clown-masked friends with a Super 8 video camera. He is the Southern California boy who was surrounded by moviemaking as a child, and who couldn't think of any other way to have fun during the long, balmy summers. *Cut Shorts*, a compilation of Markey's work, reeks of amateurism and mindlessness; but despite this (or because of it), it still captures the director's narrow area of expertise and does it well.

Though the DVD is billed as a collection of "short films and music videos," and Markey's underground rock cred is well established (think *1991: The Year Punk Broke*), *Cut Shorts* is comprised primarily of his short films - so if it's music videos you're looking for, expect to be disappointed. Not that a collection of shorts by any third- or fourth-tier director is necessarily uninteresting; it's just that Markey's tend to be sluggishly so.

There are certain recurring themes: shaky, handheld Super 8 footage; cheap and hastily-assembled cyan titles; popcorn; California hippies; endless irony pertaining to the degradation of youth through marijuana consumption or recklessness; masturbating clowns; men in rabbit masks; carnivals and circuses; Markey's friends playing the primary roles; unlicensed music; uncomfortably shallow dialogue. The list could go on. This may sound exciting and fascinatingly eccentric today, especially with Adult Swim and Wolphin

and other such outlets releasing low-key, mindless short films and cartoons.

But Markey's films are certainly not exciting. They're hardly even eccentric. Each film loses its rigor within the first twenty seconds, and the next four minutes tend to be frustratingly ugly.

Take, for example, "Lou Believers," a short film during which Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth slaps a magazine cover featuring Lou Reed on his face and taunts various Los Angelenos. This sounds funny and all, and probably would be if my friends and I did it today. Markey's film, however, is amateurish and monotonous. His friends and those who were present during the joke would probably find it hilarious, a work of real genius. But I don't care about it. And it's not just because the film is amateurish - there is a fine line between amateurism and genius, after all. But Markey falls way below that line. His film is, simply put, annoying.

This same analysis could be applied to 15 out of the 17 short films presented on this compilation. Two of the films are mildly interesting, one because of its content and the other because it approaches a level of professional surrealism that his other work only lazily grasps for. The first is "Grunge Pedal," and consumers may find it interesting because it features illustrious movers and shakers of the alt-rock scene - the aforementioned Moore, his bandmate Kim Gordon, Julia Cafritz of Pussy Galore and Mark Ibold of Pavement - doing a mock endorsement of the then-new Grunge Pedal. But so what. The second captivating work, on the other hand, is "Adolf 1990," a triple-projection piece that features a man in an Adolph Hitler mask dancing on rocks and coastal ruins to the sounds of "The Happy Song" by Johnny Chingas. This is just too weird to pass up.

Finally, the compilation contains a total of three true music videos: The Posies' "Ritchie Dagger's Crime," Eyes Adrift's "Alaska," and Sonic Youth's "I Love You Golden Blue." Unfortunately, Markey learned little from all his years toying with a camera. The videos are

disconnected and staccato, and contain no real captivating content. They simply capture the band at play whilst the scenery changes or the camera wanders to dancing clowns, California hippies, a carnival, etc., etc. during their performance. The best of the videos is "Golden Blue," a fascinating song and long one of my favorites of Sonic Youth's large library. The video juxtaposes concert footage with Super 8 home movies of children at play, which combine hauntingly with the ethereal music and melancholy lyrics.

Despite my harsh treatment, however, *Cut Shorts* is not without its charm, and those who are interested in this sort of thing - amateurish short films, Thurston Moore, Sonic Youth, etc. - will find the collection remotely engaging. I probably won't watch it again any time soon; but who knows, I may have an urge to see that dancing Hitler once more.

Written by Geoffrey George

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