

## Llik Your Idols

Directed By Angelique Bosio  
(2007) Le Chat Qui Fum / MVD DVD

"I'm flesh of your flesh. You're just as disgusting as me!"—Lung Leg in Richard Kern's *You Killed Me First* (1985)

For anything creative to stay vital and fresh, there has to be upheaval. Like a snake shedding its skin, it is a completely natural and needed thing. Otherwise you're just buried underneath layers and layers of dead, scaly skin. This is where art movements come in, whether it is the Impressionists, Dada, or the Cinema of Transgression. Even though it was only a little over thirty years ago, the Cinema of Transgression movement is not that well known outside the circles of underground film enthusiasts and pretentious art school-snot rockets, which is why seeing a documentary as bold and objective as Angelique Bosio's *Llik Your Idols* is a real treat.

The Cinema of Transgression began in the early 1980's. Rooted in the New York underground art movement, the movement involved a cross pollination of writers, artists, musicians, actors, and filmmakers. All of these people were united by a DIY ethic and a deconstruction of artistic convention by appropriating film into a hyper real yet stylized world. NYC has a great history of underground film, most famously with artists like Andy Warhol, Jack Smith and the Kuchar Brothers.

Ironically, the Cinema of Transgression had more in common with the late 60's roughie sub genre than anything else. The roughies filled the screens with stark imagery. They were often set to unique, pseudo-Velvet Underground music and built their infamy on the blatant exploration into the dark underbelly of humanity—especially the psychosexual realm. Whether or not any of the Transgressive alumni were aware of this similarity is debatable, but like it or not, the roughies are the phantom fathers here.

While the pre-origins of the Cinema of Transgression aren't really explored in *LYI*, the meat of its existence is—to an often beautiful and raw effect. Bosio's integration of the various film clips along with recent (mid-late 2000's) interviews are well thought out. The film is divided into sections by each patron saint of the Transgressive underground—namely Richard Kern, Lydia Lunch, Joe Coleman, and Nick Zedd.

In addition to the main players, there are additional interviews with film writer Jack Sargeant, musicians Thurston Moore and Jarboe, and, Canadian underground filmmaker Bruce LaBruce, among a few others. A good interview is a fine art. There are few things more annoying than seeing great artists get asked poor questions. Thankfully, that is avoided here with Bosio taking a backseat to her array of human heroes. By doing this, she does the right thing and lets the people shine, inform and just be. She does such a good job that I had no idea that she was even French until I watched the 20-minute interview with her that is included as one of the extras.

Speaking of which, all the main people come across well. Kern seems surprisingly quiet and studious, not unlike a slightly pervy English professor. Lydia Lunch is, well, Lydia Lunch, meaning her interviews are highly intelligent, acerbic, and captivating. Coleman comes across like a haunted man who knows too much. Yet, in a lot of ways, it is the figure of Nick Zedd that proves to be the most striking of them all, partially by the director's choice and also due to his refreshing, almost childlike lack of pretension. Which is a

good thing, especially given how burnt and jaded some of the other participants come across. Zedd does seem a little weary but overall un-jaded. It is no surprise that he is one of the very, very few from the movement that is still active in film and video. There are certain artists who are part of that rare, tenacious breed who will always make movies no matter what the circumstances are. Nick Zedd is one of those guys, along with such diverse figures as Werner Herzog, the late, great Ray Dennis Steckler and Jess Franco.

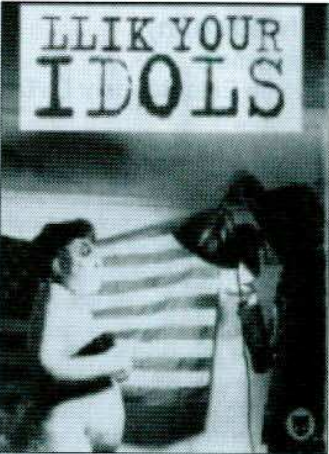
The choice (and variety) of clips is perfect. While the usual suspects are included, like Kern's *Fingered* and Zedd's *Police State* (1987), there are some lesser known but equally fascinating works included too, like Tommy Turner's *Simonland* (1984), Jon Spencer's (yes, that Jon Spencer) *Shithaus* (1986), and even Lung Leg's *Worm Movie* (1985). Bosio is liberal with the use of clips, which is all the better for the viewer. Nothing is held back, either, so if violence, un-simulated sex and rampant nudity bother you, then what are you doing watching something called *Llik Your Idols*?

One of the best things about this documentary is that it is uncompromisingly informative. Due to the subject matter and title, some may confuse it with the extremely uneven No Wave documentary *Kill Your Idols* (2004), which would be a grave mistake. If anything, *Llik Your Idols* atones for the sins of that film. There's no need to throw in bands and artists that are new and ill fitting, just to attract the "kids" and the uninformed. The worst thing any communicator can do is to assume ignorance on their audience's part. There's a way you can educate someone without either going over their heads—or, even worse, treating them like they are stupid. This documentary does neither, and is instead straightforward, making it fun for both the curious and the enthusiasts.

The only real complaint is the short running time, clocking in under 80 minutes. Given how dense the material is, it easily could have been almost twice that length. Bosio states in her interview on the disc that she had to keep it brisk to appease her distributors and producers, which is a shame. There are also some key people missing, including J.G. Thirlwell (Foetus, Steroid Maximus, etc), Kembra Pfahler (The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black and star of many of the films featured in *LYI*), and Michael Gira (Swans). Both Thirlwell and Gira appeared in *Kill Your Idols* and were, by far, the highlights of that film. It is mentioned that Thirlwell intentionally backed out of this project. This is too bad, because he's always a great and interesting interview.

The extras are very nice, including the aforementioned interview with Bosio. The real highlights would have to be the inclusion of Zedd's groundbreaking *Police State* and the banned in Canada short, *War is Menstrual Envy*.

Overall, it is great to have a well-made and visually rich document of this fragment of cinematic history. Hopefully, any budding videographer out there will watch this and realize the beauty of DIY and create something that is completely their own.



Heather Drain