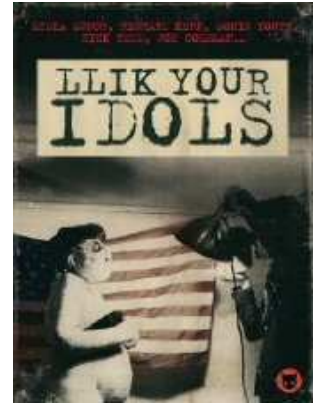


LLIK YOUR IDOLS

Not to be confused with Scott Crary's 2004 documentary KILL YOUR IDOLS, which looks into 30 years of the New York punk movement. Rather, this is Angelique Bosio's 2006 examination of an equally subversive and engrossing subject: the Cinema of Transgression.

During the scratchy opening credits, onscreen text fills us in briefly on the early history of transgressive cinema - how the "No Wave" punk ethic gave birth to a culture of underground New Yorkers filming sleaze on Super-8mm, guerrilla-style. We also learn that Nick Zedd gave it a name when he created a "manifesto" in 1985 ... thus creating the "cinema of transgression". Okay, it's like reading an extraordinarily condensed version of Jack Sargeant's excellent "Deathtripping" book (I might as well mention it, it gets a brief plug towards the end of the film).



And then the film begins proper, with Joe Coleman and Lydia Lunch appearing in separate interview footage to muse on why they feel their work appealed to young people of the time. Coleman reckons people need a God - be it Jayne Mansfield or Princess Di. Lunch is perhaps a little more on the ball, reasoning that kids have always held a fascination with what lurks in the dark.

The real fascination here though is not only how aged Lunch now looks, but getting Nick Zedd on screen to offer his thoughts. Crikey, this man was so fuelled with drugs the last time I saw him interviewed, he should surely be dead by now. Not only is he alive, but he looks exceedingly good here!

But this is just the beginning, and once a brief montage of startling clips from a host of transgressive shorts passes (YOU KILLED ME FIRST, KING OF SEX, NYMPHOMANIA, FINGERED, POLICE STATE etc) the film settles into a more fluent documentation of the controversial 1980's scene, even offering onscreen titles to tell us who everyone is.

Sargeant turns up at frequent intervals to offer his invaluable knowledge, adding what can almost be described as a narrative link to the enjoyable but admittedly random musings of Zedd, Coleman and co.

As the scene was heavily linked with underground musicians of the time, it's great to see the likes of Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth), Richard Hell (looking like a bank manager!) and Jarboe (Swans) included, offering their own memories of events. From their perspective, it sounds like a great social gathering.

There's an element of tragedy as the film progresses, as we learn of how quite a few players have died in the meantime. Eerily, these poignant facts are echoed by the clips shown from various shorts, which perfectly reveal how this was a generation of disaffected youth who felt the need to collectively scream.

Richard Kern of course gets interviewed too (his films are the most heavily featured in terms of clips, too), and - along with the comments from Sargeant - his remarks prove to be the highpoints of the film. He is toned, youthful in appearance and delivery and very intelligent: the man appears to be clean, clever and completely sussed.

Sargeant does his bit in convincing us how a more recent generation of filmmakers have been

influenced by the films of Kern and Zedd, but what you take away and believe is debatable.

Aside from Sargeant and Kern, it's difficult to pick up much from the others that is worth digesting. But that doesn't mean they're not entertaining - David West's anecdote about Kern being a drug dealer is one of the early fun points.

This is a highly enjoyable, briskly edited and commendably comprehensive documentary that covers the entire scene tremendously well within a tight 72-minute timeline.

Clips from key films are presented at frequent intervals, making this an excellent starting point for novices - and a fantastic nostalgia trip for all those already familiar with this bizarrely

Aside from the films already mentioned, some of the films that are featured in clip-form are LORD OF THE COCKRINGS, THE EVIL CAMERAMAN, SUBMIT TO ME NOW, THE BITCHES, X IS Y, GOODBYE 42ND STREET, MY NIGHTMARE, THE WILD WORLD OF LYDIA LUNCH, THE SEWING CIRCLE, GEEK MAGGOT BINGO and I WAS A QUALITY OF LIFE VIOLATION.

Great clips, albeit a little too brief to be truly illuminating, and truly wonderful interview footage - not just the stuff you want to hear from Sargeant and Kern, but the weirdly engrossing stuff offered by Zedd, Lunch, Moore etc too. LLIK YOUR IDOLS is an extremely worthy watch for anyone with even a passing interest in the cinema of transgression.

Furthermore, it's graced with a great soundtrack by the likes of Ddamage.

The main feature is presented in its original aspect ratios of 1.78:1 (the interview footage) and 1.33:1 (the film clips). It's not the sharpest or brightest of transfers, but given the nature of the beast it looks perfectly suitable for it's subject.

The audio is provided in a perfectly good English mono offering.

Beyond the eye-grabbing animated main menu page, you won't find a scene-selection menu - but the film does contain remote access via 5 chapters.

In terms of bonus features, we get a decent interview with director Bosio. At 20 minutes in length, this is a good opportunity to get to know the intelligent, pretty director well. She speaks of how she got to know Richard Kern through her love of Sonic Youth albums (he shot the covers for a couple of their albums, as well as directing the video for their brilliant "Death Valley '69"). Not how you'd imagine your average "cinema of transgression fan" to look like, Bosio sits in her tidy study and speaks politely in her native French. Optional English subtitles are provided.

Next up are two films from Zedd: POLICE STATE and WAR IS MENSTRUAL ENVY.

POLICE STATE was previously available on the BFI's superb VHS compilation, simply titled CINEMA OF TRANSGRESSION. The short is a great black-and-white potboiler in which Zedd gets hauled into a police station and abused simply for being a youth. It's a decent 18-minute film, with dialogue. An odd choice for this disc though, as it is perhaps the least "transgressive" film Zedd has made.

The version of WAR IS MENSTRUAL ENVY is the abridged 14-minute version, consisting mainly of a genuine burns victim being de-bandaged then fondled by a couple of women in weird garb (significantly, Kembra Pfahler). It's colourful and boasts good music, but makes no sense and comes across as hideously pretentious. Whether or not it's a shame that this isn't the full 75-minute cut of MENSTRUAL ENVY depends upon your personal tolerance threshold.

Both shorts are presented in their original full-frame and look as good as could be expected. They're also both already available on DVD, on the patience testing **ABNORMAL: THE SINEMA OF NICK ZEDD**.

If you like the cinema of transgression, or even if you're curious, this is a great buy. Ideally, it's a fantastic companion-piece to the excellent **RICHARD KERN HARDCORE COLLECTION**. Which, if you don't have, you owe it to yourself to check out.

It's great that you get **POLICE STATE** as an extra on this disc too, as there really is no other Nick Zedd film worth seeing ...

No Lung Leg on the documentary though. What a shame. I wonder whatever happened to her ...?

Review by Stu Willis

Released by Le Chat Qui Fum

Region 1 - NTSC

Not Rated

Extras :

see main review

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