



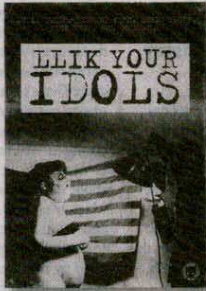
# EVERY PIXEL TELLS A STORY

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## Llik Your Idols

[MVD Visual]

Reversing the old punk slogan "Kill Your Idols," French filmmaker Angelique Bosio's 2007 documentary *Llik Your Idols* features plenty of licking (along with just about every other imaginable form of depravity) as well as numerous idols, including such interview subjects as Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore, punk icon Richard Hell, and Jarboe from The Swans, along with vintage live performance footage of The Bush Tetras and DNA. The film's new DVD release even raises the ante on both counts with a weird bonus feature in which Kembra Pfahler (from the shock-rock ensemble The Voluptuous Horror of Karen Black) and porn star Annie Sprinkle take turns sharing their protuberant talents with an unwrapped mummy, with a soundtrack of old Ronnie Spector records.



*Llik Your Idols* devotes most of its 73-minute running time to exploring the twisted history of a New York-based underground film movement which came to be known as the Cinema of Transgression. One of this movement's central figures was actor/filmmaker Nick Zedd, who claims he first coined the phrase, although artist/actor David West credits an entirely different source during his own on-camera interview. The documentary further defines the Cinema of Transgression as taking place between 1984 and 1991, ignoring antecedents in the films of Salvador Dali, Kenneth Anger, and Amos Poe, and stopping short of acknowledging later, better-known practitioners such as Joe Christ and Charles Pinion. Pinion appears on-screen in hardcore clips from Richard Kern's *The Bitches* but, curiously, is never interviewed. Neither is musician Jon Spencer, whose early work as a confrontational filmmaker is briefly sampled.

So what exactly was the Cinema of Transgression? Judging from *Llik Your Idols*'s numerous film clips, it was a bunch of audacious kids shooting crude, provocative, violent, and often quite grotesque short subjects, usually

using little Super 8 movie cameras and often working in black-and-white. Their subjects ranged from raunchy (*King of Sex*) to brutal (*Police State*) to mixtures of both (*They Eat Scum*). In many ways *Llik* does its viewers a hugely valuable service by showing so many scenes from these films, which is certainly preferable to seeking out and enduring them in complete form.

This is particularly true in the case of Zedd's *Geek Maggot Bingo* (its title is a distortion of *Beach Blanket Bingo*). Oft rumored to be an essential cult classic due to the participation of Richard Hell and horror host John Zacherle, the clips in *Llik* expose *Geek Maggot* as ludicrous nonsense in which Hell, playing a "cowboy" who wears toy cap guns, maunders around "western" sets so cheap they'd embarrass a kindergarten production of *Pecos Bill*.

In attempting to trace the Cinema of Transgression's source and inspiration, documentarian Bosio attributes the movement to NYC's No Wave music scene (a fad that was pretty much over before '84) and unrest over the reign of President Ronald Regan (which she illustrates with an effigy of Jimmy Carter). Poet/musician/actress Lydia Lunch more convincingly argues that the Cinema of Transgression arose from disappointment over the failed promises of '60s counterculture. In general, Lunch is the most well-spoken of Bosio's interview subjects, despite using "sophisticate" as a verb.

Also presenting himself well is filmmaker Richard Kern, whose sexually bold, unsettling imagery appears to have had a major and enduring influence on upscale fashion photography. Kern cast Sonic Youth in one of his films back in 1986, and band spokesman Thurston Moore tells of a memorable live showcase at CBGB, wherein the startling scenes of Kern's projected video backdrops overwhelmed the band's own performance.

*Llik Your Idols* ultimately gives the impression that the Cinema of Transgression consisted of ambitious but nearly talentless filmmakers, one

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or two with an artistic eye for imagery but none with any real knack for narrative. Other fledgling directors working elsewhere, apart from this movement, managed to parlay daring short subjects into major movie careers (John Waters and David Lynch, for example), but the Transgressors did not. However, the notoriety associated with the Transgression cachet allowed certain members to segue to solid careers in other fields, such as Jon Spencer in music and Richard Kern in still photography for adult websites. The notably less talented Zedd continued floundering about, eventually finding a niche creating X-rated satires of work by genuine auteurs, such as his 2002 project *Lord of the Cock Rings*.  
—Gregory Nicoll