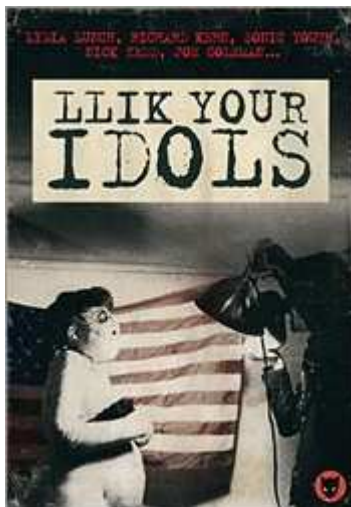


<http://www.thedigitalbits.com/articles/adamjahnke/jahnke060109.html>



[Adam Jahnke - Main Page](#)



2007 (2009) - MVD Visual

I have long been fascinated by New York in the 80s, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that, living in Montana at the time, I was about as far away from New York City as you could get, both geographically and philosophically, and still be in the United States. Like most people, I suppose, I was first attracted to the music: Sonic Youth, Ramones, Television and the like. This led me to discover some of the other radical new movements sprouting up in art and filmmaking at the same time, which was always easier said than done. The films were virtually impossible to track down and even information about them was spotty at best.

Recently, a documentary subgenre has sprouted up to archive memories of the scene before it's too late (a scary but not unrealistic thought). But while there have been several films about the punk scene and individual bands, some of which have been quite good, the underground filmmaking scene has remained a mystery. Going a long way to filling that void is this new documentary, cleverly titled

Director Angelique Bosio dates the underground film scene from roughly 1984 to 1991 and focuses her attention on four main players: photographer/filmmaker Richard Kern, artist/performer Joe Coleman, performance artist/actress Lydia Lunch and

filmmaker/actor/provocateur Nick Zedd. Kern and Zedd get the most screen time, as it should be since their films really were at the heart of the whole movement. Bosio is a skilled interviewer, getting candid responses from her subjects even when it seems they might prefer not to talk about their past work. Also present are NYC musicians like Thurston Moore from Sonic Youth and Richard Hell, artists and filmmakers like Bruce La Bruce, and critic Jack Sargeant, whose book _____ remains one of the definitive accounts of the movement.

Bosio does a good job laying the groundwork and the clips she uses from films by Kern, Zedd and others are well-chosen to illustrate the "cinema of transgression". The film would benefit from more of an outsider's perspective. By the end of the movie, it's still not entirely clear how anybody outside of New York ever even heard of these films, much less got to see them. I would have liked to see Chris Gore, for instance, whose magazine _____ provided my introduction to movies like Zedd's _____. Even so, _____ offers a good introduction, with an excellent balance struck between context and example.

The DVD itself is full frame, which suits the original format of the underground movies although the new interview footage is all letterboxed. It looks fine for what it is. Extras include an informative video interview with Angelique Bosio and two of Nick Zedd's short films: _____ and _____. The former is an amusing Kafka-esque piece. The latter is far more bizarre and, judging by the end credits, is likely an excerpt from a longer feature. I'm glad both were included... there's a substantial difference between seeing clips from these movies and actually sitting through one in its entirety.

While the underground scene documented in _____ has faded away, it hasn't quite disappeared altogether. Nick Zedd continues to make no-budget movies and public access television in New York. Richard Kern focuses primarily on photography these days, where he has been undeniably influential, if still somewhat controversial. Lydia Lunch still performs and writes, while Joe Coleman's artwork is extremely well-known to fans of the macabre and unusual. _____ is a long overdue retrospective and a solid introduction to these fascinating artists.

ajahnke@thedigitalbits.com