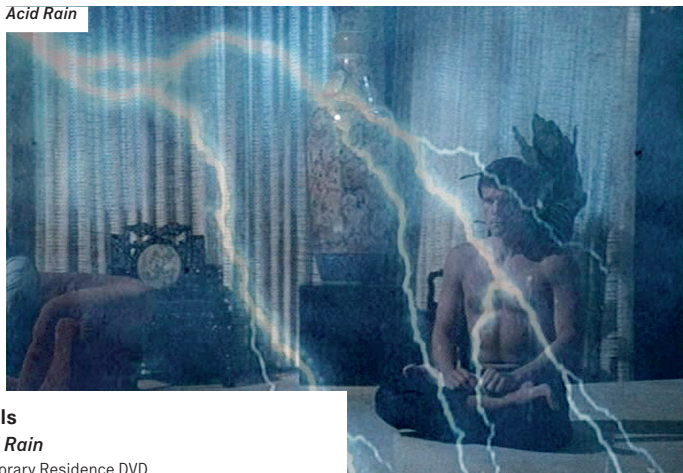


On Screen

Films & DVDs

Acid Rain



Grails

Acid Rain

Temporary Residence DVD

Grails are an instrumental rock quartet from Portland, Oregon with a recording and performance CV that stretches back to 2000. Their last album, *Doomsdayer's Holiday*, was a giant step forward for the group as they expanded on their leaden signature Doom Metal drone sound to take in aspects of psychedelia, global music and jazz. Shot through with eccentric sound samples from diverse sources and moody musical interludes, *Doomsdayer's Holiday* had a movie soundtrack aura about it, albeit for a film that had never been made.

With *Acid Rain* (a DVD overview of their mission so far), the group's cinematic aspects are explored in greater depth, via concert footage from a 2007 show in New York, film from the group's archive, and six videos produced and assembled by drummer Emil Amos. While seeing them perform and record is an absorbing enough musical treat, it is Amos's video songbook that gives *Acid Rain* its bite. Vapour-trailing Ambient rock anthems like "X-Contaminations", "The Natural Man" and "Take Refuge" are accompanied by a selection of recycled cinematography – a collage of clips from 1960s European horror movies, Satanic nude flicks, government information films, apocalyptic evangelist videos and other obscure source material. For example, historic footage of Jimi Hendrix kneeling before his burning guitar at the Monterey Pop Festival is spliced next to weird scenes of children cleaning and polishing human skulls. Like the sprawling musical jumble of Grails, such images may sound mismatched but somehow they lock together perfectly. Edwin Pouncey

Rachel Shearer

Fakerie

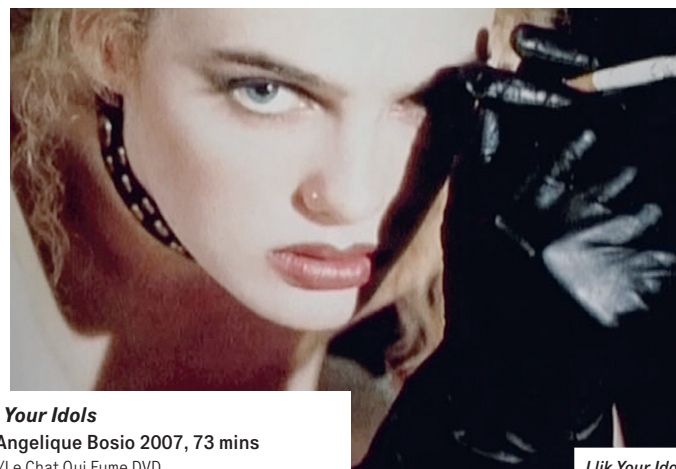
Family Vineyard DVD

Starry, starry night: Rachel Shearer's *Fakerie* explores a triangular relationship between sound, light and image, clustering seven lights in a constellation against a black, void-like backdrop, intensifying and fading them at intervals, in cautious tandem with the work's soundtrack. Shearer's background is in New Zealand indie rock of the Xpressway/Flying Nun ilk. More recently she has operated solo as Lovely Midget. Half short film, half video artwork, *Fakerie* moves her closer to work suitable for gallery installation.

For the first half of *Fakerie*'s 22 minutes, Lovely Midget's signature opaque hum remains intact, though it's peppered with brief bursts of activity, acoustic flourishes and flashes of melody which seem to trigger the lights in a schematic way – the lights get brighter when sounds emerge or the volume increases, and fade when either dies away. In the second half, the music tenses, shifting towards disquieting, higher pitched tones. The relationship between the soundtrack and the lights is disrupted, and the lights begin to dim and blaze at contrasting speeds and apparently of their own volition.

Though *Fakerie* at first seems so simple as to be almost banal, coded associations gradually drift free: from the folksy nostalgia of children's nursery rhyme "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" to the use of stars as mapping devices in the practice of celestial navigation, and the minimalist purity of the lights' repetitions. Their gentle pulsing initially seems welcoming and friendly, but after 22 minutes they take on the character of searchlights, probing and warning. As though controlled by and connoting some mysterious force, they lure the viewer into their void with a seductive blend of threat and enticement.

Nick Cain



Lik Your Idols

Dir Angélique Bosio 2007, 73 mins

MVD/Le Chat Qui Fume DVD

If it's true that less and less art can shock as time passes, then the Cinema of Transgression's legacy as a rebellious movement is likely secure. Perhaps the underground films of Richard Kern, Nick Zedd and others aren't as alarming now as when they first lit up New York City's downtown screens in the early 1980s. But there's something persistently bracing about their rash takes on sex, violence, and dementia.

Smartly, French director Angélique Bosio avoids overselling the shock aspect of the movement in her impressively rich documentary on its history, *Lik Your Idols*. According to Bosio, the title tweaks the punk rock slogan "Kill Yr Idols" that she saw on T-shirts as a teenager, perhaps inspired by the 1983 Sonic Youth 12" of the same name). Alternately defining the scene and tracing its roots, she pays homage without coming across as a biased sycophant. She even adds new insight to the story of film maker/artist Joe Coleman, already well documented by Robert-Adrian Pejo's film *Rest In Pieces*.

Key to Bosio's success is her excellent set of interviews, especially those with Kern and his always quotable star, Lydia Lunch. "How do you sophisticate your rage enough to create something that is not simply another scream into the black hole of your imminent death?" she asks at one point. With its careful delineation of influences and socio-cultural milieu, *Lik Your Idols* makes a convincing case that the Cinema of Transgression found answers to Lunch's eternal question.

Which is why the film's one glaring omission is so disappointing. No Wave Cinema, a late 1970s New York movement led by Beth and Scott B, Vivienne Dick, James Nares and others, explored themes of nihilism and degradation that the Cinema of Transgression clearly built upon, taking them to new extremes. Yet *Lik Your Idols* only includes a few vague references to this vital precursor – a baffling blind spot in a film that otherwise brings its subject into sharp, compelling focus.

Marc Masters

1,2,3, Whiteout

Dir James June Schneider 2007, 70 mins

Zeromoon DVD+CD

Film maker James June Schneider is best known for his collaboration with Washington DC's The Make Up on 1997's *Blue Is Beautiful*. Schneider, a proponent of video/audio sampling, or 'vampling', describes his films as "experiments, mobile pieces of a developing whole", and his propensity for seeking meaning via recontextualised fragments is evident in the microcosmic form of this 70 minute science fiction feature.

1,2,3, Whiteout occupies a believably shabby, exhausted-looking industrial near-futurescape suggestive of the world which eventually crumbled into that of Tarkovsky's *Stalker*. The bleached-out look of the film recalls the very early work of David Cronenberg circa *Stereo* and *Crimes Of The Future*, while exploring a theme somewhat related to the Canadian auteur's rather more hysterical *Videodrome*. Like Cronenberg, Schneider is interested in the effect of technology on human neurology, focusing on man-made light as a metaphor for capitalism's constant flow of distracting data.

Much of the film's effectiveness depends on the inventive use of sound, including the avant pop commentary provided in the film by Sonig recording artists A&E (Stock, Hausen & Walkman's Andrew Sharpley with Emiko Ota), and extending to the way the sparse dialogue works in tandem with the drones and field recordings of the soundtrack. These pieces, sourced by Schneider and collaborators Elmapí, Richard Harrison and Michael J Schumacher from locations in Scotland, China, France, Holland and the US, comprise the contents of a bonus audio CD. Experienced in isolation, the soundtrack acts as a spectral mnemonic for the film as a whole. It is perhaps only in listening to these tracks without visuals that one appreciates just how integral they are to Schneider's vision.

Joseph Stannard