

# SWITCH

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## Resfest 2002: San Francisco, Palace of Fine Arts, September 18-22

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## Issue 18

### Interface: Software as Cultural Production

## Resfest 2002

San Francisco, Palace of Fine Arts, September 18-22

Michael Chernobrod on Mar 10 2003

issue 18

**Great film offers an opportunity for the viewer to immerse oneself in the world of a filmmaker's creation. The digital video scene came up like a tsunami wave, induced by the fast development of the broadband internet. This gave us a new perspective on the digital arts medium. Attention to short films has increased dramatically over the last five years as it continues to push artistic and technical boundaries.**

With San Francisco in the mid 90's as it's birthplace, Resfest witnessed the fabled boom and bust of digital video. It is an annual event held in seven countries this year. Works presented at the festival are divided into thematic programs, including audience favorites, such as, the design film program, the Directors Club, a showcase of rarely seen personal work from top directors, and the extremely popular Cinema Electronica, a collection of innovative music videos.

Every year Resfest gives audience a chance to recognize exceptional filmmaking. This is no easy task, with the festival's expanded shorts and music video programming this year. It's hard to pick just one favorite. Resfest 2002 included ten separate screening sections, spread over a five day period. The venue this year was the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco. The festival had an exceptional price of \$10 for each screening.

One of the sections is dedicated to feature films, and this year there were two full length movies presented. First one was called "Breath Control-History of the Human Beatbox" (US, 2002, 75:00). The film centered around musicians who used their voices as their only instrument. Director of this feature, Joey Garfield, has an obvious passion for the musicians and their history. This helped him tell this amazing, but, overlooked story of a truly original art form. The second full-length feature, "Fulltime Killer" (2001, 100:00) comes from Hong Kong. Directors Johnnie To and Wai Ka-Fai tell us a story of a lonely assassin, who is an epileptic hit man caught in a rivalry with his brooding nemesis. The filmmakers throw in innumerable plot twists and bizarre characters, making Fulltime Killer a powerful update of the action movie genre.

A major portion of the festival is dedicated to short film. Art and life clash and mingle in the mix of amazing shorts called "State of the Art". With this mixture, things are bound to get crazy. Cinema becomes reality, lust creates erotic specters, violence gets hyper-stylized, and the city goes berserk. In short, the world gets just a little bit more interesting. "State of Art", featuring thirteen exclusive pieces, from six different countries, creates a breathtaking roller coaster ride into deep artistic imaginary of directors and screenwriters.

Some days of the festival are definitely better than others, as is evident in the collection of shorts called "Bad Day". Chronicling the mishaps and mayhem that plague us, making life sometimes just a bitch. Works from five different countries are presented in this section, featuring traditional DV technical and innovative 3D/2D animation with special effects. An exceptional piece called "The Deadline" (UK, 2001, 2:32) by Stefan Marjoran. The film is an Aardman retrospective, and it is designed to show the company's continued stop-motion heritage and amazing skills in Alias

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"Drive Me Crazy" is a combination of 11 pieces that all fit so called "road-movie" genre. In some ways, the road movie retooled the Western's celebration of the lone individual, adapting the genre for a culture and generation on the brink of all-out rebellion. Though all shorts are combined by the similar thematic, the perception and environment where story is taking place differs from one piece to another. Works include mini DV techniques, 16mm stop motion model animation, 3D and compositing tricks.

This year the show returns with a new group of design oriented shorts that illustrate the genre's key obsession, "By Design." Look for films that take ironic inspiration from the grids and graphs of the corporate realm, the boxy squares of offices and city streets, and the disjunction between the human shape and the containers we inhabit. It presents work from leading pioneers of digital design realm, including new works from WDDG's Matt Anderson called "Anamorph." "Anamorph" is an amazing thrill of computer effects and digital imaginary. Filmmaker Johnny Hardstaff calls his short "an exercise in emotional extraction." An original and cool looking piece, "Pulk/pull revolving doors & like spinning plates", features music from Radiohead. "Prelude" from Japanese director Sei Hishikawa borrows patterns from Chinese and Japanese culture, exploring their cultural and historical significance. Taken together these kaleidoscopic explorations result in an ethereal, color-drenched short. Beautiful minimalistic style of "King Pylon" animation from UK's director/ animator Ed Hildsworth is telling us an original and unsettling tale of the future. French director duo H5 (Herve de Crecy and Ludovic Houplain) take us though a day in the life of a young female clerical worker, deconstructing in the style of an educational film, performed in highly fashionable vector graphic style.

The "Director's Club" section features two movies both from American directors. The multit talented Mike Mills presents a film about honesty, shot in his trademark low-key style and boasting his sustained interest in the idiosyncratic foibles and quirky charm of everyday people. "Hair, Shoes, Love and Honesty" (US, 1998, 40:17). Spike Jonze gained national notoriety in 1999 with his crazy hit film "Being John Malkovich". This year he creates fake documentary "What's Up, Fatlip" (US, 2001, 38:00). After shooting a music video for Fatlip and realizing he had enough extra material in more than 10 hours of footage, he decided to make a short film. In the film, Fatlip plays a series of characters, from the hilarious to the pathetic, each one riffing on the rapper's image.

Sex is often a mix of laughter, desire and anxiety, as shown in this program of erotic shorts called "In the Bedroom". Proving that live nude girls are not the only things that excite. Arnaldo Galvao generates plenty of heat with his frolicking animated couple in "Souls in Flames" (Brazil, 200. 10:00). In this film, wet noodles, sticky starch and adorable tiny dwarves suggest the unexpected flights of fancy shared by these inventive filmmakers.

Another short program, "True Stories", demonstrates how the real world can be amusing and obstreperous at times. Among the desperate characters found in these unusual documentary shorts, are the rough denizens of a New York City bar and a women named Lucy Who. Despite decades in the film business, Who makes her first appearance on screen. You will also witness the ways in which digital tools are helping reinvent documentary storytelling with Stefan Nadelman's "Terminal Bar" (US, 22:00, 2002). This short is a tour de force project made largely from still images.

Two sections of the festival are dedicated entirely to music videos. This section is showcase of various music videos all united by their staggering diversity of visual styles. Ranging from the cartoonish child's play of "Extra Track II" (Canada, 2:12, 2002), by Monkmus to the Disney-classic grandiosity of "An Eye for an Eye" (UK, 6:20, 2002) by Oil Factory productions in UK. It also included animated verisimilitude of "Destiny" US, 3:46, 2002), by Tommy Pallotta, the ultra-reality of "Pagan Poetry" (UK, 4:01, 2001), by Nick Knight, and the ultra-unreal "Hayling" (UK, 3:53, 2002) by Lynn Fox. This program demonstrates that electronic music video can have a heart.

The major part of the program was a special screening: Chris Cunningham Retrospective. Well known for his mind blowing music videos for Aphex Twin, Autechre, Madonna, Squarepusher and Bjork. Cunningham is definitely one of the finest art masters of digital video domain. He started his professional work early, working with directors such as Stanley Kubrick, and leading special FX crew for David Fincher's "Aliens 3." Cunningham's works, from the auto-erotic robots for Bjork's "All is Full of Love" to the nakedly bloodies, battling bodies who inhabit the short film "Flex" the frenzied mob of genocidal children who wear the morphed, leering features of Aphex Twin's Richard James in "Come to Daddy" are bound by the viscera of the Cunningham manifest, a synchronization of sound and vision so tight, so strong, you can taste it with your skin, hear it with your eyes.

That's all for the Resfest 2002. Don't miss it next year!

## Resources:

<http://www.resfest.com>  
<http://www.ifilm.com>  
<http://www.sputnik7.com>



## ::CrossReference

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