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Club Motherfucker!

...Reviews

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My FILM week... MOUTH TO MOUTH EXISTENCE

Canada House on the west side of Trafalgar Square is one of those big majestic buildings around London's West End that you ignore. But last week, for the first time in my life, I walked up the steps and into the spacious classical entrance hall, before being taken in a lift up to a little comfy cinema with armchairs....



Screening here was a special preview of the debut feature by Canadian born (from Halifax, Nova Scotia) filmmaker Alison Murray, called "Mouth to Mouth". The film is about Sherry, a teenage girl with an attitude and a lip-ring who, bored with school, hooks up with a bizarre collective called Spark and heads off across Europe in a camper van packed with kids and teenage prostitutes. I'm sure there's an autobiographical feel to the film, as Alison herself ran away to Europe at 15, and it's been a project that she's been nurturing for a while.

I first came across Alison about 10 years ago when she was just graduating the Royal College of Art film school - she'd had some success with her student film, the bizarrely named 'Pantyhead', and I saw earlier works with titles like 'Kissy Suzuki Suck' and 'Wank Stallions'. All these films dealt with movement and choreography, as Alison had initially trained in dance and had used video as part of her performances; they also pushed sexual images in your face, literally in 'Pantyhead'! She then made a series of dance related pieces for various funding bodies - films like 'Bloody Mess', 'Teenage Rampage' and 'Horseplay', while also directing some big-name big-budget promo vids for names whom she probably wouldn't want me to mention. This was followed a couple of years ago with some time out to shoot her amazing personal travelogue 'Train on the Brain', as she spent a few months crossing North America in boxcars and trains with hobos and the homeless. It's a powerful film, and her dedication to the project is incredible as she's nearly arrested and beaten up.

"Mouth to Mouth" is similarly uncompromising. The paedophilic nature of the Spark collective comes to the fore as we realise the leaders are mis-treating and abusing the kids both mentally and beyond, and Sherry comes to realise she's exchanged her own family for a far more sinister one. The low budget nature helps to create an uncomfortable tension, and there are strong similarities to Larry Clark's films.

It's also a truly Euro affair, as we recognize Camden Lock Market in the opening scenes, plus old bits of the Berlin Wall, and the hot

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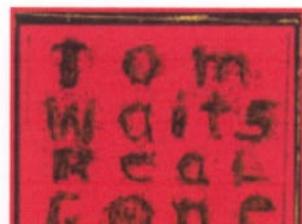
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6. Electric Shocks - Shake The Hands
7. Motormark - We Are The Public
8. Negative For Francis - Save Your Money
9. Generation X - Day By Day
10. Help She Cant Swim - Sensitive Youth
11. Wire - Pink Flag
12. The Fever - Ladyfingers
13. The Swear - Advert Boy
14. Blues Explosion - Fuck Shit Up
15. Pixies - Broken Face
16. New York Dolls - Trash
17. The Dirtbombs - Livin' For The City
18. Clinic - Cement Mixer
19. Sludgefeast - James # 1
20. Trouble Everyday - Camden
21. The Nosebleeds - Ain't Bin To No Music School

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America in boxcars and trains with hobos and the homeless. It's a powerful film, and her dedication to the project is incredible as she's nearly arrested and beaten up.

"Mouth to Mouth" is similarly uncompromising. The paedophilic nature of the Spark collective comes to the fore as we realise the leaders are mis-treating and abusing the kids both mentally and beyond, and Sherry comes to realise she's exchanged her own family for a far more sinister one. The low budget nature helps to create an uncomfortable tension, and there are strong similarities to Larry Clark's films.

It's also a truly Euro affair, as we recognize Camden Lock Market in the opening scenes, plus old bits of the Berlin Wall, and the hot sunburned landscape of a Portuguese vineyard where most of the film is set. Ellen Page, as the teenage goth Sherry who shaves off her long black hair, leads a cast of unknowns from the UK, America and Europe, including Beatrice Brown coming on like a younger Samantha Morton. Based in London, Beatrice's own band Beastellebeast is signed to Horseglue, home to Selfish Cunt.

Given my mention of Alison's dance background, there's a number of scenes where cast members do break into choreographed sections; OK, it's not Busby Berkley or a Bollywood spectacular, and I'm sure some audience members will wonder why these protracted scenes with strange movements are in the film - it's only if you know Alison that these are explained. But they do act as surreal interludes, and help to create a feeling of closeness between the characters involved.

The film will not be realized until well into 2005, and it's currently doing the film festival rounds, including hopefully Berlin. But keep an eye out for 'Mouth to Mouth', and in the meantime check Alison's website at www.hellhound.com

Phillip Halloween

- City
- 18. Clinic - Cement Mixer
- 19. Sludgefeast - James # 1
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