

FACING THE CLASSROOM. At a Parisian cinema concert, Batman and Harry Lloyd are Neck to Neck

Cinema's Bad Guys



■ Harold Lloyd in Fred Neumeyer and Sam Taylor's *Never Weaken*.

Hakim is ten years old and doesn't like silent movies. Reason #1, which he reveals without anyone asking: "They're in black and white." Reason #2, even more categorical: "Instead of talking, they move around too much, gesticulate, it doesn't look right." Hakim is in 4th Grade at the François Truffaut elementary school in the 7th district of Paris, and isn't familiar with Truffaut's films. Better to ask Acram, sitting next to him, twelve years old, Honoré de Balzac middle school, knows a bit more about the nouvelle vague, and cites *The 400 Blows*, on the first try.

On this Friday October 31st, Hakim, in his brown wool sweater and Adidas sneakers and Acram, curly hair and black frames, are at a movie theatre. They are sitting next to each other, tenth row on the left, in the large Lincoln theatre, two steps away from the Champs-Élysées. Before the projection starts we chat about recently released films.

They were taken with *The Dark Knight*. Mostly Acram. Hakim hasn't seen it, but it's as if he had, his best friends told him all about the bravura, and the "crazy" special effects. He doesn't even need to see it on the big screen anymore. To tell the truth, if we add it up, Hakim

doesn't go to the movies so often, once a year, max. He'll wait to see the sixth episode of the Batman saga on DVD.

So, there we were, listening to Hakim luxuriously describe to the journalist of "Cinema's Bad Guys" (Acram laughs,) the bat's incredible dive into the unknown (a scene that he didn't actually see, but that he loves,) adding made up details and feverish gestures, when resounds a tune on the double bass. These are the first notes of a cinema concert around three short films interpreted by Harold Lloyd, an initiative called "My First Festival", the event for "young audiences" organized by the city of Paris for the fourth year. At this exact moment we were expecting the worst. Not so sure that the transition would be smooth between the adventures of a tortured twenty-first century hero, who is not even the main character of his own films anymore, and those of a romantic during the roaring twenties, who steals the screen.

Unexpected Calmness

We've already written about cinema concerts in the past, for the re-release of *The Adventures of Prince Ahmed*, the sneak preview in Dunkerque (Northern region of France) featured an electro-

music accompaniment by two artists (*Cahiers* no.629/e-#9). The screening allowed very young spectators to be confronted with a great animated film, but also familiarized them with the geography of a movie theater. Getting up from their seats, walking down the hallways, caressing the carpeted floor. In Paris, there was no solitary exploration of the area. The Harold Lloyd effect glues the moviegoers to their seats, even the tiniest ones, in their not-so-comfortable high chairs. An immobile public confronted with the "gesticulations" that Hakim and Acram so dreaded.

A hypothetical estimation to comprehend the unexpected

calmness: so taken with the collective euphoria, nobody wanted to miss a tidbit of the perfect chases, pursuits and confusions of *Get Out and Get Under!* (1920), *An Eastern Westerner* (1920), and *High and Dizzy* (1921). The more so as the three short films are boosted by an energetic live trio (pianist, double bass player, drummer.) Other explanation: that these young spectators who grew up with the likes of Spiderman, the Hulk and Batman, not always so heroic, who arose from the dark waters of post 9/11 America, find in Lloyd the image of a real, old fashioned hero.

Ludovic Lamant

Translated by Chloe Rhys

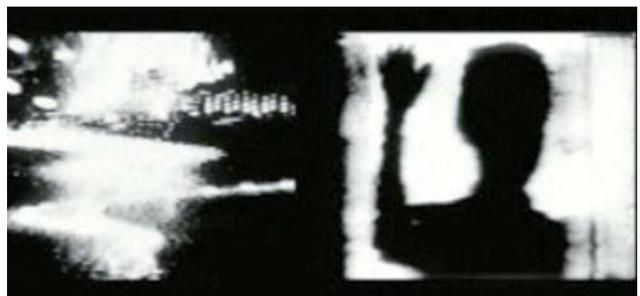
ACTIVIST IMAGES. Through the years, many artists have tried to gather images of the History and riots of African-Americans.

Presence of Archives

Electronic tools generate technologies that flow and erase: which is a major problem for activists as for historians. At the crossroads between these two disciplines, many filmmakers invent categorical blueprints to activate images, display their political significations, and revive debates, whether or not they have already been archived before this memorial gesture. "People's history is a powerful tool. Put in the hands of the oppressors, History is twisted and caricatured. In the revolutionary arsenal, it helps us to learn painful lessons, of past fights, and to identify the forms of resistance, (...) The true History of the United States is almost completely unknown to the American people, the most important parts have been buried, falsified, hidden

from our view," reminds us *Prairie Fire. The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism* (1974, p. 44). This manifesto of the Weather Underground inspired Emile de Antonio to direct *Underground* in 1976.

The synoptic of the Weathermen's fight (which includes Bill Ayers, recently famous for his links to Barack Obama) extended the program established by Malcolm X in a conference held on June 24th 1965 to the totality of conflicts surrounding class, ethnicity, sex, and imperialistic war, casting the foundations of a then inexistent African-American history. Malcolm X's project was immediately put into practice and to film by Edouard de Laurot in *Black Liberation / Silent Revolution*



■ Aldo Tambellini's *Black Plus X*, Italy, 1966.

(1967), with editing inspired by Alain Resnais and Chris Marker's *Statues Also Die*, and with Ossie Davis, writer, actor and director, as the narrator. Emerging from such necessity, the story of images has since woven a chain stitch: it just so happens that every decade a new artist has brilliantly activated the same iconographic bank, the scenes of the Black Panthers and the black community's fights. In 1968 Aldo Tambellini, directed the split-screen film *Black TV*, itself accompanied by a manifesto: "Time shoots its video rifle/ the images are bullets hitting the screen/ TV, the murderer of reality/ is a weapon pointed at your soul/ images recorded on the video disc of a re-convoled soul." In 1988, Tony Cokes reworked the images of Watts and of the repression in: *Black Celebration, A Rebellion Against the Commodity*, then directed his masterpiece *Fade to Black*, a history

of the figurative slander of African-Americans by Hollywood (1990). In 1996, in a scene of *Vertical Air*, Robert Fenz put in images of Malcolm X's pilgrimage to Egypt, one could consider as an activist gesture. We are still impatiently waiting for the interventionist of the 2000's.

Nicole Brenez

Translated by Chloe Rhys

Next Episode: Hold-Up.

Links :

Bill Ayers: www.billayers.org/

Mark Rudd: www.markrudd.com/

Aldo Tambellini: <http://aldotambellini.com/film.html>

www.experimentalcenter.org/history/tools/ttext.php?id=29&page=1

Tony Cokes: www.brown.edu/Departments/MCM/people/cokes/tony.html

Robert Fenz: www.disinfo.com/archive/pages/dossier/id441/pg1/index.html

A TOUR OF SCREENS. Since 1973, the Studio Galande, a small theater nestled behind Maubert street in Paris, gives time to movies. A luxury.

A Cult Temple

January 11, 1973: Marc O's *The Idols* launched in spectacular fashion, the career of the destined to become legendary Studio Galande theater.

Thirty-five years later, the 83 fake leather seats have become the official temple of cult films. Small, big, knighted, underground or universally celebrated: *Blade Runner*, *Easy Rider*, *Death in Venice*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Brazil* or *Nine and a half weeks* were shown for many years. More recently, *Black Cat*, *White Cat* or *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* (still playing since its re-release in 2007) have provided the relay. But for almost thirty years the main attraction has been *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, shown twice a week. A large audience of fans and curious people transform the film into a pagan celebration with singing, dancing, and throwing of rice and water.

"Some people think that this is all we do, that apart from these two

screenings the Galande is closed the rest of the week," jokes Rodolphe Cobetto-Caravanes, projectionist and in charge of special programming. A stage has for a long time been arranged for the team of actors that ensure the show, and, a few weeks ago a protective sheet was put up to protect the projection screen from water splashes or lipstick marks.

Aside from this weekly orgy, the Galande, classified as an Art House theater, provides second release films. "We renamed it the second chance theater," explains Rodolphe Cobetto-Caravanes. "We recuperate films on the brink of disappearing to give them a second wind, because of the numbers or because of our own desires." Mohamed Ben Mohammed, who has been in charge of regular programming for more than twenty years, relies on unpredictability. "A film that we have hardly heard of, Bab'Aziz by Nacer Khemir, played for quite a long time.

People just kept coming for months without us ever really understanding why," says Rodolphe Cobetto-Caravanes. Other viewers are naturally attracted to the theater: the tourists from the Latin Quarter come to see *Paris je t'aime*, or *Paris*, just as they would visit the nearby Notre-Dame cathedral. Even more surprising is the hoard of elderly men that are responsible for the longevity of the film *Fuck Me*, "probably because the viewers find an anonymity here that is missing

elsewhere." And if the competition from video, cable and satellite TV was close to hitting its final blow on the Galande from 1995 on, making turnout drop 40%, the theater, acquired by Bernard Mainguy in 1988, has stayed independent. With its 40,000 monthly visitors and twenty weekly screenings, the Galande embodies the unfortunately tarnished term of "cult film" laboratory.

Vincent Malausa

Translated by Chloe Rhys

BOOKS. Louise Brooks, *Lulu in Hollywood*. (Translated to French by René Brest as "Loulou à Hollywood – Mémoires", Tallandier, "Téxto" collection.)

On the Fringe of the System

Carnage of old age requires, ancient Hollywood memories dry up at the source. But deferred translations and timely reprints still reserve some surprises. These texts, written by Louise Brooks, were collected three years before her death in 1985, and reappear now in a history collection lead by Jean-Claude Zylberstein, publisher and lawyer specializing in the film industry. Published alongside Louis XVI and Painter's Proust. The simplicity of this thin volume and the absence of photographs are full of Brooks' sense of style: direct and precise. Not preoccupied with feeding her myth (*Lulu* mostly allows her to specify Pabst's acting direction,) the actress doesn't delight upon her path from Witchita county fair child-dancer to Saveli's New York hair salon, the creator of her black helmet hair.

Brooks draws from her career, shortened by her disgust of Hollywood, a study of her surroundings and some unkind portraits of Humphrey Bogart, W.C. Fields, Lillian Gish and Greta Garbo. In 1956 she lived among the reels, with her lover, curator of the Rochester film archive. A puzzle that she asks herself: how is it that she had never heard of Victor Sjöström's *The Wind*, a magnificent 1927 MGM film with Lillian Gish? As a historian of the wall-streetisa-

tion of Hollywood in the twenties, she uncovers a plot, orchestrated by the studios to devalue Gish at the Box Office, putting her up against Garbo and provoking a general decline in actor's wages, undermining the Star System.

Through these brief memoirs, we also learn the physical price paid by some second rate stars like Barbara Bennett, sister of Constance and Joan, "whose only success was to succeed in her fifth attempt at suicide," or Pepe Lederer, the bulimic lesbian niece of Marion Davies who threw herself out the window at 25. There again, her writing was triggered, she, herself was addicted to "bottles of yellow sleeping pills." Brooks understood in 1973, by reading Pepi Lederer's name in the index of Marion Davies' biography that she had never written about her friend "because she had failed in Hollywood," and consequently that herself "a 36 year old washed up actress" had always believed in her own failure. Brooks, the writer, is the rebirth of an *American Venus*¹ as a thinking subject. Pandora, master of her box.

Charlotte Garson

Translated by Chloe Rhys

1. Title of her second film, directed by Frank Tuttle in 1926, since lost.