

Review of Donald O'Finn Bar Tapes

by Madeleine Gallagher

In Bar Tapes, Donald O'Finn uses one only channel of video and sound, but within that channel is a barrage, your eyes and ears are under total bombardment, like you're suddenly displaced as the main character in Kubrick's 'A Clockwork Orange'. In just 30 seconds the sound and imagery is so complex, it feels like 20 video quartets piled up in a toxic dumpster. O'Finn's tapes even carry the warning "beware- may cause Seizure" written on it. But O'Finn's tapes are a first hand example of the psychosis of our culture, where everything, every image, sound bite, sign, and conversation is fragmented layered and referencing something else. The Bar Tapes images include clips from Donnie Darko, Godzilla, Japanime, WWII Propaganda, Singing in the Rain, Carry Grant, Bettie Page, Cabaret, Burlesque, Sunday Afternoon 80,s movies, B movies, Busby Berkley, After School Specials, rock video and Sex Ed diagrams - my goodness my Guinness! Shot to shot, shooting cowboys and Indians and a little Marlene Dietrich, 70,s feel good dance with white socks and polo shirts, from disco to horror movies and a lot of car crashes- somehow the cuts between images don,t feel forced, The shots may shift out of calibration, the control track may break, the sounds scrub forward and back- but you endure with it and follow through the infomercials, 50,s TV ads, documentary footage, talking heads, elegant transitions, and cheesy radial wipes - searching for that epiphany. It a TV addicts fantasy, with the funniest shots you,ve never seen, fast forwarded, warped and pixilated for your viewing pleasure.

O'Finn,s economic means of single channel production rely on our intelligence as visual surfers and our ability to adapt to trying to see everything at once. O'Finn uses the layers of the sound on his bar tapes to serve differently than his bar screenings, which are at the mercy of the jukebox at Freddy,s Bar and Backroom, where O'Finn shows his videos every evening and also where he also works. The audio on the tapes at the gallery is more political, more aggressive than

what you think you are getting at the bar.

O'Finn gives an image of seduction as easily as he retracts it with a cheeseburger or a fat reduction infomercial. For this reason, I see O'Finn as a more responsible artist in exercising his position in relation to the wonders and problems of the video age. O'Finn gets off on being a cathode ray cock tease, he makes you work for it, flirts with the imagery only alleviating your over stimulation with humor and the juxtaposition of the whimsical, self-aware innocence drowning in the undercurrents of maliciousness. O'Finn doesn't bother servicing, or numbing it down for the audience.

For me O'Finn,s montage is similar to Ditzza Vertoz in The Man with the Movie Camera, but this time the man with a movie camera isn,t in Russian guy documenting the rise of industrialization. Instead its O,Finn living like a post apocalyptic caveman, sitting in his living room, with the cable TV and the radio on full blast - among a garage swarming full of obscure footage pieced together by a second rate editing system made out of recycled technology. O,Finn is like a madman watching and cheering at the collapse of media machine, spurting off and heckling at the contradictions of the omnipresent camera with it,s male gazing, quest for female desire, addiction to aggression, violence and repression.

Has shown his videos at
S.F. Art Institute
Anthology Film Archive
Galapagoes (Sp?)
Parkers Box
The Mastel Gallery
various Cable access shows
A Cult fixture @ Freddy's
Core member of Multi-Media Group Rev-99
