

**Olivia Erlanger**

*Dripping Tap*

16.09. - 18.10.2016

Opening reception: 15.09.2016 6-9 PM

The Bijou

Kevin Champoux

About 45 minutes into *Life as a House*, Irwin Winkler's 2001 melodrama, Hayden Christensen's teenage character Sam is sitting in a red car with Ian Somerhalder getting prepped on how to receive oral sex from a john parked in a nearby vehicle. Sam is set to make three hundred dollars, money he needs to continue the weed addiction he's nursed since the age of twelve. Moments after he's entered the john's car, the police show up in an increasingly tense situation (helped along by Somerhalder's curt and discourteous attitude) that culminates in Sam, pants around his ankles, tumbling down a wooded hill as he evades capture.

The Bijou Film Forum Center, a basement sex club and single-screen cinema on Fourth Street and Second Avenue, advertises its selection with a simple, four-item list: Foreign Art Documentary, American Classics, Repertory Films, and American Independent. There is no website to list the coming attractions or showtimes so to visit is to chance seeing any movie currently available on DVD that could conceivably fit its loose criteria. It is also unclear at what point these films start, so there is a very high likelihood that you could, for instance, walk in 45 minutes too late to see Christensen-as-Sam's almost-foray into the world of gay hustling.

On a weekday night there are no more than six people there. None are watching the film, which *The Globe and Mail's* Rick Groen generously retitled "*Life in a Basement Apartment with Bad Light and a Dank Smell.*" You can imagine what Groen would think seeing it here, then! In all honesty, the smell is not bad and the light is reasonably bright for a place that provides two of the dimmest forms of entertainment. You can easily make out the wet footprints on the tile floor or the posters informing you of its days as drag venue Club 82, back when Elizabeth Taylor would visit often and Errol Flynn once played the piano with his penis. Waitresses dressed as men carted trays of pink ladies and greyhounds for the 800 or so guests who piled in for three shows a night.

At the Bijou, as in any proper movie theater, you can't bring any outside beverages; there is a bar in the back of the theater that sits empty and there's no concession stand or any sign that there ever was. The silent man at the ticket counter will hold your bottled water or juice for when you're ready to leave (preferably through the back door). You're reminded that they don't allow re-entry. But even for thirteen dollars, there's no need to stay until the movie is over if you missed the first forty-five minutes.

The orange-painted lobby gives way to the small set of steps and back to Fourth Street. Somebody is edging around the doors, looking like maybe he will go in. Are they playing something else tonight or does *Life as a House* just run on repeat? Neither of you have any way of knowing. The Bijou is open from 8pm to 4am so one could conceivably show the film four times in one night, but that seems unlikely. Walking briskly, the drink? Beverage lasts until Houston Street, where you can see the marquee for Sunshine Cinema. A hundred years ago, as the Houston Hippodrome, it was the site of one of the first instances of someone yelling "fire!" in a crowded theater.

The street on either side is torn up from a construction project that has lasted five years. Shop owners from First to Second Avenue complain about decreased revenue from all the dust and distraction; one tavern claims business is down 40%. At the Bijou, that would mean only three and a half people buying tickets there tonight. It's hard to tell under what circumstances you'd get into the Bijou at half price but Elizabeth Taylor probably never paid in full.