

DEREK JARMAN, *Early Films: Super 8mm*

X Initiative is pleased to present a survey of films by Derek Jarman (1942-1994), one of the most important and groundbreaking figures of British Independent cinema. Although his work crossed a range of media boundaries including literature, painting, set design, gardening, and activism, Jarman is best known for his film work, producing over 80 films from the early 1970s until his untimely death in 1994. His full length features such as the homoerotic *Sebastiane* (1976), one of the first films to represent gay sexuality and the first to be shot entirely in Latin, *Jubilee* (1977), arguably the first punk film, and the poignant *Blue* (1993) established Jarman as one of the primary catalysts for an entire generation of artists and filmmakers. His early work produced in Super-8, a medium he returned to throughout his career, reveals the style and sensibility of his unique artistic vision, which is marked by a visionary, dark and subversive imagination, as well as the range of approaches he would employ in his better known feature-length films.

Highly personal and poetic, Jarman's super-8 works fall roughly into two, overlapping categories: documents of his immediate environment as seen in *Studio Bankside* (1970/1973) and *Andrew Logan Kisses the Glitterati* (1973), and imaginative experiments in film-making that express emotion through images rather than acting as seen in *Death Dance* (1973) and *Sebastian Wrap* (1975). Initially screened for small audiences composed of Jarman's close friends (many of whom served as the actors in the work), the super-8 films express Jarman's personal concerns and interests rather than reflect popular trends in mainstream narrative cinema. Although rarely seen, Jarman regarded the super-8 films as important and as accomplished as his feature works.

Technical experimentation abounds in these films through Jarman's use of differing film speeds, colored gels, and the superimposition of images. He would often recycle whole lengths of earlier, short films in the creation of longer, more complex works. Thus, images from the early works reappear in several of the later works presented in the exhibition at X. Although the majority of these super-8 films were silent, Jarman often screened his films with music that ranged from classical pieces to ambient sounds. This history is reflected by the inclusion of musical scores by Simon Fisher Turner and Throbbing Gristle, with whom Jarman collaborated in later years.

All films have been transferred from Super-8mm to DVD

All films courtesy of and with thanks to James Mackay, London. Music on 2nd floor courtesy of and with thanks to Simon Fisher Turner, London. Additional thanks to Throbbing Gristle.