



New Left Note (1968-82)

Saul Levine: Politics and Vision

6 Films, 1967-89

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THE BIG STICK/AN OLD REEL (1967-73), 16mm blow-up from Regular-8mm, B&W, silent, 15 minutes; RAPS AND CHANTS, PART ONE (1981), Super-8mm, color, sound, 12 minutes; NOTES AFTER LONG SILENCE (1989), Super-8mm, color, sound, 14 minutes; NEW LEFT NOTE (1968-82), 16mm blow-up from Regular-8mm, color, silent, 25 minutes; A BRENNEN SOIL COLUMBUS N MEDINA (1976-84), Super-8mm, color, sound, 15 minutes; PREVIEW (1989); Super-8mm, color, sound, 10 minutes.

The films of Saul Levine are tenacious works which command respect at the same time as they sear notions of what is acceptable film practice. The technical rawness of the work flies in the face of such distinctions as are made between “professional” and “amateur,” while confronting the viewer with a style that refuses to



The Big Stick/An Old Reel (1967-73)



Notes After Long Silence (1989)

be easily accessible, or to produce easy conclusions. However, Levine's is not a cinema of negation: it is a direct response to the world and Levine's vision of that world. The tenor of this vision is gritty and aggressive, to be sure, but also humorous and sad as well.

Levine's films are frenetic tapestries created by a radical juxtaposition of images — often with lightning speed — and his employment of the visual and aural lacerations that arise from using the “smaller” gauges of Regular- and Super-8mm. In the end, it is these lacerations that help shape the dominant impressions one gathers from these films, for they epitomize both the violence and displacement of Levine's experience. The splice marks that divide the frame in both *The Big Stick/An Old Reel* and *New Left Note* are on one hand symbolic of the frenzied activity of the events depicted, while also reflective of a tenuous attempt to make some cohesive statement about a contradictory society.

With the addition of sound, Levine has gone one step further in dislocating his films (and consequently the viewer) from any easily legible reading. The disjunction of sound and image that occurs when editing single-system Super-8mm sound is the aural complement to the splice bars of the earlier Regular-8mm films. The lack of a synchronous relationship between sound and image goes directly to the center of what Levine's “music” is all about: how to sift through the multiplicity of viewpoints one is bombarded with, while keeping in sync with one's identity.

Within the conviction of these films there also lies a sense of frustration, and it is this sense which renders the insistency of Levine's style more of a revelatory gesture than a didactic attack. In the end, these “notes” by Saul Levine reveal that they are the product of an idealism that just won't go away, and as such, they are both tenacious and tenuous.