

RUBBER MONSTERS AND LOVE HOTELS

Sabotein Boi, 9 AM. 46 minutes, 1988

Product of the hard-working video group **Nine AM**, in this instance Clive Gillman and St. John Walker are the key figures in the project. *Sabotein Boi* is a curious hybrid of a tape, part catalogue of children's myth, part celebration of the world as electric playground and partly a strange tale of funny monsters in Tokyo.



Constructed in six parts - ranging from an opening section titled *Sabotein Boi* to a closing section called *In The City Of Satellites And Beacons* - the piece is high on production and post-production values with each image bright, clean and carefully framed by a host of vivid effects and techniques which, for the most part, seem in keeping with the overall feel of the work. (One of the most pleasing aspects of Nine AM is simply the attention they pay to the technical side of their productions and the sense of professionalism apparent in their work). Although the central "storyline" is, frankly, muddled - what happens in the tape is, one learns from the accompanying leaflet, the result of two children discovering a broadcast tuner and calling down "rogue signals from pirate satellites" - at its end it's the overall mood and pace of the tape which is more important. Taking in everything from scenes of parents storytelling to their children in a range of languages through footage of Pigumon, a rubbery mournful looking man-monster, bumping along the streets of Tokyo and innocently visiting an S and M "love hotel" complete with ankle straps and dentist's chair, it's a tape with a quirky playful edge to it which, while

it doesn't actually make a clear statement or deliver a "message", presents an intriguing picture of a media age where children's imaginations take on a global rather than localised aspect. Signalling this through a section which looks like a playground pop-promo for Transformer toys and a series of often startlingly visual devices employing shifting perspectives and a "wheele" camera style, *Cactus Boy* - to give the tape its English language title - builds image on image, word on word to create a work which, for all its energy and monster myths, has an undercurrent of sadness about it as though innocence of childhood is under threat from the electronic bombardment of an information network close to overload.

Avoiding the twee sentimentality of a "kids world", *Cactus Boy* is one of those curious and rare tapes which occasionally surface from the murky depths of video art which are difficult to define. (Cultural analysis? cartoon character narrative? pop age entertainment?) While, for this viewer the work isn't entirely satisfactory, it's pleasing to at least encounter a tape which attempts to cover as much territory as *Cactus Boy*. (Equally of interest here is the ques-

tion of quite how kids themselves would react to the tape).

Overall then, *Cactus Boy* comes as another welcome addition to the body of Nine AM's work. A sometimes awkward mix of monster romp and media age consciousness, it's a tape which further testifies to Nine AM's collective ability to move forward. If sometimes that process involves risks and the odd failed experiment, then you get the feeling that Nine AM are willing to deal with that rather than remain trapped in the often limiting ghetto of high art tape making.

Sabotein Boi is available on both VHS and U-matic formats. For details of the tape, call Clive Gillman on 01-521 7397 or St. John Walker on 0533-515144. The tape was partly made possible by a sponsorship deal between Nine AM and Fairlight Vision, the UK distributors of the new Fairlight CVI (Computer Video Instrument). Paul Howards of Fairlight Vision is keen to develop links with the independent sector and enquiries about the Fairlight should be made to him by calling 01-265 0268.

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