

SAN FRANCISCO  
CINEMATHEQUE

## Crazy Rays Science Fiction and the Avant-Garde

Curated by Ed Halter

Thursday, November 8, 2007 at 7 pm— Roxie New College Film Center

**Crazy Rays:** Six riffs on the intersection of science fiction and experimental cinema, featuring: utopian scheming, techno-skeptical apocalypses, brooding bio-terrors, tail-finned space kitsch and investigations of alien consciousness.

Crazy Rays, Program Three

### Anne McGuire's *Strain Andromeda The*

Anne McGuire In Person

Anne McGuire re-edits Robert Wise's 1971 film *The Andromeda Strain* (based on Michael Crichton's novel) into *Strain Andromeda The* so the shots run backwards, end to beginning, creating an awesome and spellbinding film that throws everything from story structure to character motivation into question. (Ed Halter)

***Strain Andromeda The*** (1992) by Anne McGuire; video, color, sound, 120 minutes, tape from Video Data Bank

"misprint a not is title The. Space outer from pathogen a about *Strain Andromeda The* 1971 Wise's Robert of reedit video 1992 McGuire Anne is This. Title the hence—reversed is shots the order of the but, motion forward normal in shot each with, here is film original whole The. Organization narrative of forms traditional, questions seen, already events of causes for looks one flipped causality narrative with virtues: it has Hollywood mainstream of 'deconstruction' playful somewhat This" (Robert Beck Memorial Cinema program note, "excerpted and inverted" a review by Fred Camper published in the *Chicago Reader*, October 1999)

"With *Strain Andromeda The*, video artist Anne McGuire has created an awesome and spellbinding film that throws everything from story structure to character motivation into question. Put simply, McGuire has taken Robert Wise's entire 1971 virus from outer space classic *The Andromeda Strain* and re-edited it shot-by-shot precisely in reverse, so that the last shot appears first and the first last, though nothing is actually running backwards. As the film unfolds (or reverts?), more and more information about how the characters and their surroundings came about is revealed to us. While initially confusing, the film quickly takes on an ominous and mesmerizing quality that defies description. The original film plot is one filled with tension in a 'race against time' which only adds to this effect." (Michael Sippings, Brighton Cinematheque)

"It develops its own wonderfully absurd and perplexing level of suspense." (Chicago Filmmakers)

"...every action is followed by its stimulus, every comment by its query, you find yourself in a dizzying spin, grasping desperately for causal certainty, yet firmly held by the reversibility of suspense." (Steve Seid, Pacific Film Archive)

# Crazy Rays

## Science Fiction and the Avant-Garde

Curated by Ed Halter

Thursday, November 8, 2007 at 9:30 pm— Roxie New College Film Center

**Crazy Rays:** Six riffs on the intersection of science fiction and experimental cinema, featuring: utopian scheming, techno-skeptical apocalypses, brooding bio-terrors, tail-finned space kitsch and investigations of alien consciousness.

Crazy Rays, Program Four

### **Ximena Cuevas' *Cinepolis, the Film Capitol***

with

### **Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America***

Craig Baldwin In Person

In *Cinepolis, the Film Capitol*, Mexican artist, Ximena Cuevas, spins a video from the other side: a meta-metaphor of American economic imperialism, told through CGI multiplex trailers and masochistic Hollywood fantasies. Culled from Bay Area legend Craig Baldwin's infamous personal archive of obscure cinephemera—gladiator flicks, newsreels, travelogues, James Bond films, B-grade horror and Mexican thrillers—*Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America* implodes an SF universe into the hot core of the New World Order psyche. (Ed Halter)

***Cinepolis, La Capital Del Cine (Cinepolis, the Film Capital)*** (2003) by Ximena Cuevas; digital video, color, sound, 22 minutes, tape from Video Data Bank

"Perhaps Cuevas' most chilling work, *Cinepolis* forecasts an image-driven invasion of everyday life, picture-perfect and unnoticed. This alien intrusion comes in the form of a fully branded consumerscape that cheerily foists fast food along with the fantasy. Irreverent and biting, Cuevas fights back with the only weapon available—images of the enemy, and the enemy's images." (Steve Seid, Pacific Film Archive, 2004)

***Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America*** (1991) by Craig Baldwin; 16mm, color, sound, 48 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"With its dryly narrated, whispering soundtrack told through 90 per cent "found" footage, Baldwin's *Tribulation 99* lets the audience in on a National Enquirer-type conspiracy, in which invading aliens called Quetzals have come to take over the minds of US decision makers in a battle for control of both Central America and the Earth's core. Watching the film, you will recognize bits of *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*, *Dr No*, various Mexican B-grade movies, *The Creature From the Black Lagoon* and *War of the Worlds*. There are strange out-takes from 1960s documentaries on plutonium waste-disposal and magnetism. There are video clips from news coverage of the invasion of Grenada. Viewing this wealth of material, one imagines the feelings that went into its creation—ecstatic delirium mixed with moral panic and political outrage.

"It was curious the way that certain ideas were between the official, political history and the very unofficial paranoid version of things. There were often these weird alignments. Sometimes it was easier to believe the UFO stuff than it was to believe the CIA story that was used to justify our intervention in some country. So I lined them up, superimposed them in a way. I tore out bits of paper and taped them together. The material organized itself. I took real,

political material and retrofitted it with the fantastic, wacko literature." "I was continuing my projects against US intervention in Latin America,' says Baldwin." (David Cox: "Media Meltdown." [www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/13/baldwin-meltdown.html](http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/13/baldwin-meltdown.html))

Dirk deBryn: [...]Let's get to *Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America*. How long did that take to put together, compile?

Craig Baldwin: I can say three years but it was more of a lifestyle. I was collecting this stuff for many years. The real thing about *Tribulation* had to do with Iran-Contra, when Reagan was sort of tinkering with the mercenary fighters in Central America. That was a period of American history that angered me and moved me to organize the material that I had to make an attack on it. Not by a normal social democratic filmmaking style which is guilt tripping, hand wringing getting interviews with the victims, blah blah blah. Again, which is fine, but I wanted to make more of a comic book approach that would appeal to my peers, what I would consider to be people who were into visual language, using humour parody, satire.

deBryn: You seemed to be immersed on a daily level in that way of looking at things.

Baldwin: This is my sensibility. It's just my way of looking at the world which is critical, by the way, but my strength was, sure I can do research, write scripts, but it was this idea of giving over to this energy of the visual mix. Trying to draw some kind of lessons out of this political cartoon.

deBryn: I remember someone saying that the profession of this digital age is the archivist, the ones with the power to speak. And it seems to me there is a very archival part to the process of making your films. This long process of collecting, ordering, which brings out a particular slant or meaning.

Baldwin: Archives are extremely important now. Many many works you see now both in the art world and the advertising world by the way include found footage and the price of found footage has gone up very dramatically. It is generally recognized that it is a real gold mine. At the same time there is this tons and tons of stuff that is dumped, simultaneously. There is so much out there. There is a style, a type of documentary that uses found footage to talk about a certain period in history but, again I acknowledge that tradition, but my films aren't really made out of archival footage, they are FOUND footage, even though there is an overlap but there is more of a Dada element going on with my work because I cannot necessarily access the image that would be the "correct" image. I don't want to do that, don't you see, I want to open this space of irony and metaphor. I make what I have work, I call it 'availabilism'. (Craig Baldwin interviewed by Dirk DeBruyn: "An Evening on Baldwin's Mountain." [www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/13/baldwin-mountain.html](http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/13/baldwin-mountain.html))