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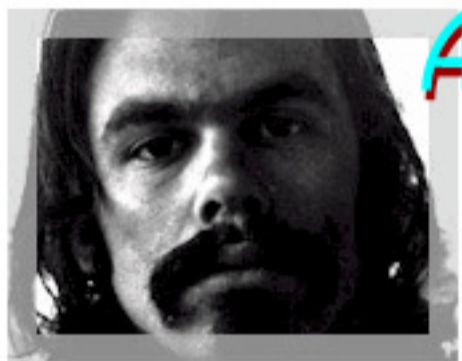
DocFest SAN FRANCISCO DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL

by John Stackpole

This offspring of the Indie Fest came about, we were told, because there were just too many good documentaries to accommodate; ergo the DocFest. I love their motto: The truth, the whole truth, or something like the truth. That sounds appropriate for these times. But don't try to lure me with politics and/or religion. I get enough of those on TV. Screenings were divided between the small Roxie annex and an auditorium in the Woman's Building which is worth a visit in itself just for the magnificent murals of famous women that cover its entire outside.



What did pleasure me was **Mana—Beyond Belief**, a worldwide look at what are called power objects, things in every culture that hold some sort of charm over the people. Peter Friedman and Roger Manley have made an impressive collection of these...well, totems hardly seems the word to span Elvis and Rembrandt; Satan's mummy and the hand of Poe. A gold leaf boulder in Burma; an emerald-colored lowrider in New Mexico; a funeral in Malaysia that sends you to heaven in a flaming paper Mercedes-Benz. To embellish their wide-ranging adventure, which has been called a crossing of **Rivers and Tides** with **Koyaanisqatsi**, they have had the services of six camera operators who might be joined by blood, their combined artistry is so...what is the word today?...awesome. A mud hut holds a star made of feathers and stones. "What are cherry blossoms without saké?" My jaw was agape at Buddhas with electric auras. An ancestor's ghost whirled his cape to reveal a huge penis. The Shroud of Turin on display. Then from agog to aghast when we were shown how our government authenticates Stars & Stripes flown over the capitol building. In this era of belief, look out for pickpockets.



Anyone who has ever been associated with live theater must put **The Loss of Nameless Things** at the top of their must-see list. Bill Rose has constructed a gripping biography of Oakley Hall III, pieced from little more than interviews and memories, all regarding this actor, playwright and cofounder of the Lexington Conservatory Theatre located in upstate New York. As a young student he was recognized as a magnetic wildchild genius, son of famous writer Oakley Hall with whom he had little contact. "Tad," as this punk *enfant terrible* was called, pushed the LCT beyond "Let's put on a play!" status by renovating a ramshackle building and barn, writing "Grinder's Stand," a play about Meriwether Lewis, directing a projectile hemorrhaging "'Tis Pity She's a Whore" and adapting "Frankenstein" to the stage. Everything he did spawned raves from New York. He was obsessed with Alfred Jarry and his "Ubu Roi." Then...! Aside from this magnetic if misguided personality, we learn what these small independent theater groups are really like when not performing, living off peanut butter and pot. So strange coming from those rosy-cheeked narrators so many years past their tragedy. The direction, editing and landscapes add charm; the stills and stage shots add luster; the construction as a whole results in something almost mythic. There is a lot of mystery that I haven't even mentioned, so theater lovers seek it out!

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