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THE SHARPER READ FOR MEN

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TECHNOLOGY *review*

PROJECT AND SURVIVE

THE CAR BOOT CYBERPUNKS GIVING A NEW LEASE OF LIGHT TO SUPER 8 AND SLIDE CAROUSELS

“When I was a kid, I always found my grandad’s Super 8 films magical. But he’d never let me touch the projector, so when I was older I went out and bought one, then another. Now I’ve got about 50.” As one third of visual collective The Light Surgeons, Chris Allen’s collection is unlikely to go to waste. Allen and fellow Light Surgeons Andy Flywell and Andy F use junked projectors and slide carousels to transform the barren walls of dark nightclubs into multi-layered Technicolor backdrops by mixing visuals from anything such as early George Lucas films to Japanese toy robot manuals. Alongside tours with The Propellerheads and Bentley Rhythm Ace, they’ve also made videos for bands including Cornershop and are doing artwork for a Sneaker Pimps remix album. Not bad going when you’ve picked up most of your equipment from car boot sales.

“Skip raids and jumble sales, car boots... Our ethos lies in rooting out old technology and doing something new with it,” explains

Chris. “Scavenging, picking up on obsolete stuff: that’s what the cyberpunk thing is about.” But it’s not only the financial logistics of using an obsolete medium that make Super 8 systems and slide carousels more appealing than souped-up Silicon Graphics machines. “You don’t get the image quality from an LCD projector,” says Chris. “We use Macs and play about on new equipment, but it’s far more satisfying to see the results projected through celluloid. It’s got that magic. And it’s ephemeral, it decays, gets scratched. All our

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machines have faults and that adds to their charm. They’ve got a soul that new technology doesn’t.”

With plans afoot for more installations to add to earlier works at London’s ICA and The Blue Note and a desire to move into title sequence design, the future looks bright. But though they’re unlikely to limit themselves to lo-tech methods in the future, The Light Surgeons have proven that you don’t need high-end computers to produce amazing visuals. “A Super 8 projector is so simple,” says Chris. “You only need a pair of eyes to download the information. There are media out there that don’t require money or operating knowledge, and this is one of them.”

DANIEL PEMBERTON

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