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By Lina Dzuverovic-Russell

The Showroom Cinema, Saturday afternoon: a room full of kids ecstatically construct scenes for Lego animations. In a corner, people crowd around computer screens filled with sound toys and interactive games by the likes of John Maeda. Down the corridor, the bar hosts an endless succession of DJs and post-screening discussions. Fast-forward a few hours and you are watching a performance by the Fluxus pioneer Yasunao Tone, just after being exposed to a full sensory attack administered by a Sicilian laptop fiend, Massimo.

Welcome to Lovebytes 2002: a concoction of animation, digital music and all things DV coupled with DJs sets, talks and artists' presentations. With audiences ranging from pre-school digital media enthusiasts to laptop electronica *aficionados*, Lovebytes has grown into a thriving platform for digital media creativity across the board.

The 'Search Engine Cinema' screening was compiled by trawling the net for digital video. Showing classics of online office entertainment including the *Truth in Advertising*, in which a group of ad execs actually say what really is on their minds during a meeting ('Bob, can I pop by your office to lick your ass at about 5 pm?'), the screening was a melange of general DV abstraction, flash cartoons, slick animations and dark tales of post-apocalyptic worlds.

Meanwhile, an army of Warp fans ensured that a screening of Warp Shorts got repeated, making it by far the best attended festival event. Showcasing the 'best of' videos received in response to an open call for submissions, Warp Shorts did indeed serve as a display of Warp fans' technical proficiency but the disappointing succession of techno-celebratory eye-candy had little to offer in the way of original content.

The seven artist commissions reflected the scope of the festival ranging from DVD works and short films to interactive installations and sound pieces. In *Genitron*, Butler Brothers (of Workgroup Alpha fame) created a DVD piece mixing spoken word, electronic tonalities and abstract visuals. Steve Hawley's film *Amen ICA Cinema* was a testament to the artist's obsession with all things palindromic via a tale in which the script, imagery and sound all work backwards and forwards. Vicki Bennett (aka People Like Us), ventured into the world of single screen video with her first stand-alone piece *We Edit Life* while Wolfgang Muench and Furukawa Kiyoshi's installation *Bubbles* provided an amusing if simplistic environment in which the audience could interact with the projection of bubbles onto a screen.

However, it was the classics that stole the show. The Calculated and Electronic Pioneers screenings provided the much-needed contextualisation through a glimpse into the history of computer animation. Focusing on the work of two key artists – the Whitney Brothers and Lilian Schwartz – the screenings made for an outstanding survey of the development of mechanical and electronic abstract animation.

Unlike most digital media festivals, Lovebytes cares about its audiences more than it does about pleasing the insiders. Not allowing itself to become wrapped up in tech-speak, the festival provided a thorough and an inclusive programme focusing on the work not the technology. A much needed weekend for all involved in electronic arts.

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