

BB Optics

Preservation History *We Imitate; We Break Up* by Ericka Beckman

July 29, 2010

In January 2009 Bill Brand's NYU-Moving Image Archiving and Preservation (MIAP) Film Preservation Class began a class project to restore and preserve *We Imitate; We Break Up*, a 1978 color Super 8mm sound film by Ericka Beckman. The project was supported by a grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation. *We Imitate; We Break Up* is one third of a trilogy of films that also include *The Broken Rule* (1979) and *Out of Hand* (1980). These later two titles have been subsequently funded for preservation by the NFPF through Anthology Film Archives and Bill Brand, BB Optics will complete these projects outside the context of the NYU-MIAP course.

Prior to this preservation project for *We Imitate; We Break Up*, the film had been scheduled for inclusion in the "Pictures Generation" exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and Ericka Beckman had on her own already begun creating a video version of the film. In that effort, Ericka Beckman had located original sound sources for the track and was preparing to remix the sound rather than use the inferior quality Super-8mm magnetic stripe. Our preservation project was able to take advantage of her prior effort with the sound track and joined efforts for the task thus serving both purposes simultaneously.

In his 1998 book *Interpreting the Moving Image*, Noël Carroll describes the film as follows:

The theme of play pervades the films of Erika Beckman, a leading figure in the return to expressive or qualitative imagery. In *We Imitate, We Break Up* (1978), a super-8 color, sound film, Beckman allegorically portrays the tensions she sees in male/female relationships through juxtaposed imagery. The film begins by cutting between the imaginary male protagonist – a pair of puppet legs manipulated by a rope and called Mario—and a young woman, played by Beckman, dressed as a schoolgirl. At first the girl imitates all of the puppet's movements as if she too were on a string. The schoolgirl outfit and the imitation motif are symbols of being dominated. The man and woman play kickball, first cooperatively, the vengefully. In the middle of this symbolic quarrel, the girl takes the ball and comically runs away while the legs, now gigantic and threatening, pursue her interminably. A male figure bowls the kickball into animated household furniture that jumps aside into piles, literalizing the idea that the relationship has broken up. The songs that accompany the images are repetitive, like childish chants, while the images themselves are quite simple and easily understood in terms of their

symbolic import. Shots, for example, of the girl “running away,” are repeated endlessly so that they will be comprehended as metaphors. But also, their obsessive recurrence expressively indicates fixations that Beckman strives to ironize and distance through comedy and repetition. Yet the childhood references and the clarity of exposition give the piece an overall feeling of lightness rather than of brooding.

For this preservation we created a new preservation polyester 16mm b-wind 3272 internegative (I/N), a 16mm polyester preservation optical sound track, a 16mm magnetic protection track, a polyester a-wind color positive silent answer print, polyester a-wind color positive sound correction print and polyester a-wind color positive sound release print. For the purpose of mixing and synchronizing the soundtrack, we also produced a telecine to Digital Betacam. Preservation credits for the National Film Preservation Foundation and NYU-MAIP were added to the head of the negative and each print. The NYU-MAIP credits read as follows:

Preserved in 2009
by Bill Brand and graduate students in the Film
Preservation class of New York University's Moving
Image Archiving and Preservation Program (MIAP)
part of the Cinema Studies Department,
Tisch School of the Arts.

Students	Gwan Yong Jeong John Migliore Peter Oleksik John Passmore Crystal Rangel Kimberly Tarr Steven Villereal Audrey Young
Project Assistant	Alice Moscoso
Thanks to	Anthology Film Archives Andrew Lampert Dan Streible
Laboratory	BB Optics Colorlab Corporation Mercer Media Trackwise at Full House Productions

At her own expense, Ericka Beckman produced an additional release print from the internegative and was provided a 10-bit uncompressed Quicktime file of the uncorrected video transfer. BB Optics produced the internegative on the optical printer. Colorlab Corp. in Rockville, MD developed the internegative and produced all positive prints, the telecine transfer. The sound was mixed by Bill Seery at Mercer Media and the optical negative track was created by Trackwise at Full House Productions.

In making the optical blow-up from the Super 8mm reversal original to the 16mm internegative, and at Ericka Beckman's instruction, we skipped a frame on either side of each splice. There are approximately 100 such splices where 2 frames were removed. This did not adversely effect the sound synchronization since the track already needed to be fitted clip by clip in the mix. Ericka Beckman worked closely with Bill Seery at Mercer Media to assemble and mix the sound track.

On June 2, 2010 the following elements were delivered to the Anthology Film Archives:

- Reg. 16mm b-wind color I/N blow-up from Super-8mm color reversal original with preservation optical negative sound track (in 1000 ft. 35mm metal film stock can)
- Reg. 16mm a-wind color positive answer print from I/N (in 1200 ft. plastic reel in 1200 ft. 16mm Tuscan archival can)
- 16mm magnetic protection sound track.

On May 25, 2010 the following item was delivered to New York University, Tisch School of the Arts Film Studies Center:

- Reg. 16mm a-wind color positive release print from I/N (in 1200 ft. plastic reel in 1200 ft. 16mm Tuscan archival can)

The original color reversal Super-8mm film will be returned to Ericka Beckman upon completion of the preservation of all three films in the trilogy.

Bill Brand, BB Optics