

Grrrls, Uninterrupted

BY KIMBERLY CHUN

Tapping into the in-your-face feminism and punky daring of riot grrrl, *Grrrls, Uninterrupted's* nonstop collection of shorts add up to a provocative, sexy snapshot of Asian lesbian filmmaking, in all its thoughtful and artful incarnations.

Curated by Lisa Asagi and hima b, *Grrrls* goes one better than *Girl, Interrupted*. There's no rescue fantasy from an asylum of women going mad trying to zip themselves into traditional gender roles. Instead, Tejal Shah and Anuj Vaidya's *Chingari Chumma* puts a sexually explicit, woman-centered spin on the hackneyed boy-rescues-girl scenario of Bollywood or Indian mainstream cinema. In *The Basement Girl*, award-winning Toronto filmmaker Midi Onodera tackles the pain of breakup in the multimedia millennium by splicing together a hilarious, pop-culture-savvy, cross-cultural bricolage of 16mm and Nintendo Game Boy digital camera footage, French narration and clips from *Bionic Woman*, *'That Girl'* and *Mary Tyler Moore*.

The more familiar girl-meets-girl story is the focus of Jean Joson's *Reunion*, while San Francisco multimedia artist Wendy Fong's *Artificial Intimacy* focuses on the complexity—and superficiality—of the chatroom relationships played out in Internet cafes and apartments of the city's Mission district.

Queer desire gets a stylish, hardcore spin in Kat Pankam and Amber Horning's *Playing With Ourselves*, in grainy, choppy and gorgeous black-and-white, with music by the Dog-Face Hermans. Directed by Angela Leonino, *Lady Sunbeam* waxes nostalgic over sex, showers and old-school dildos to the



Scene from *Blackmail Material*.

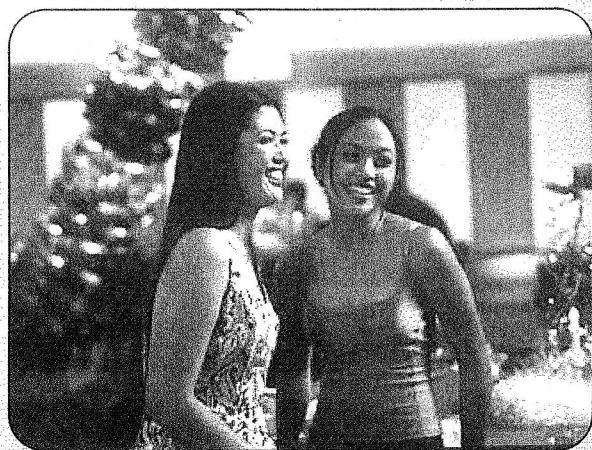
tune of Duran Duran's "Girls On Film." Yvette Choy's *Blackmail Material* teases out the tangled relationship between the observer/director and the observed/actor, as JJ Chinnois AKA Lynne Chan tries out pinup poses.

Sex isn't the only thing on these grrrls'

minds. Bay Area Video Coalition post-production coordinator Michella Rivera-Gravage shoots San Francisco's Highway 280 in blurry, saturated postcard-colors and meditates on memory, roads less traveled and places revisited in the graceful, elegiac

video *Raining Ash*. Los Angeles filmmaker Antonia Kao fashions a lustrous alternative creation myth in *Lullaby*, and Kathryn Xian remembers artist Samantha Ann Maeshiro in award-winning short documentary constructions.

Closing Night



Gene Cajayon's *The Debut* inverts Pulido's formula in the closing night film, with protagonist Ben Mercado (Dante Basco) rejecting Filipino culture and defying his immigrant father's wishes that he study medicine. Ben's decision to attend art school, bitter family history, and Filipino identity issues all collide at sister Rose's debutante party where Ben begins to question

his choices amid an onslaught of overly attentive aunts, wannabe gangsta party crashers, and a blossoming of love and Filipino tradition.

Along with a best feature film audience award from the 2000 Hawaii International Film Festival, *The Debut* has the distinction of offering the four talented Filipino American Basco brothers their

first opportunity to appear together onscreen as an ensemble, along with a supporting cast of distinguished Filipino actors, including Eddie Garcia as the patriarch. General audiences will have the opportunity to sample *The Debut's* celebration of Filipino American culture when it opens in theaters March 16.



Above: Anabelle and Ben (Dante Basco).

Left: Rose (Bernadette Balagtas) and Annabelle (Joy Bisco).