**Al Neil: A Portrait**

There will always be people who want a present their own vision, their own personal vision of things. Whether its on film or canvas or as a sculptor, will always be absorbed by industry.” - David Rimmer, 1978.

In certain ways, Al Neil: A Portrait seems to summarize all of David Rimmer's previous work. At the same time, it is quite strikingly different from my film that, to my knowledge, has not been produced. The possibility was that it was subverted into a different temporal fault. However, the lighting “inverting our expectations of that form. Unell: A Portrait is the living embodiment of Rimmer's own wide-ranging cerebral explorations. As a result, the film of his subject, this remarkable human being has been fashioned Rimmer's work to a new plateau. In this sense, Al Neil: A Portrait is clearly a landmark, both for filmmaking and for alternative Canadian cinema.

Alternative filmmakers work have always challenged conventional Western ways of thinking, particularly Cartesian dualism. In other words, his films have challenged the opportunity to break through and transcend the rigid categories and boundaries which Western thought has drawn around such apparently separate categories of mind and body, and life and death, space and time, and mind and body. In the place of this dualism, Rimmer sets his Eastern perspective centered in wholeness and integration - the fluidity of yin yang. In his films, this wholeness is often experiential, where his language creates a solution of realistic images into abstractions, the quiet contemplation of a seemingly minimal frame, the dissolution of normal time. Through these techniques we are reminded of the arbitrariness of our own mental sets, and the fragility of our perceptual barrier. Not surprisingly then, Rimmer has come to be known as a metaphysical filmmaker. This label may carry with it the sense of an art form which is light, or even games that are witty and provocative. But bloodless. It is precisely here that Al Neil: A Portrait changes everything.

There are certain works of art - especially among those which unfold through time - that erect subtle barriers by which to dissuade the unready members of the audience. For example, Thomas Pynchon's novel, Gravity's Rainbow, sets up a series of such barriers, challenging its readers to either struggle through these difficult sections and thereby gain access, as initiates, to subsequent illuminations, or to lay aside the book similarly, struggling through the opening passages of Al Neil: A Portrait erect subtle barriers of displeasure for the audience, as if to say, quite openly, that this film is not here to be enjoyed. The initial music of which Al Neil plays seems harshly dissonant. The style of the film may immediately disappoint our expectations of a more traditional Western narrative. It is experimental, but then it seems to subvert our expectations of that form. The 'takes' of Al Neil at the piano may seem long and boring. If you must say that the film is "wrong", the "bad" or "wrong", that it does not pull your hand or leg, that it is "wrong", then you are wrong. As the night life of Granville Street Headlands, the sediment point of the old lighthouse and the ritual of wishing; a busybody neatly etched in the night of Granville Street. The echoes are loud and clear - on television. Let's snap up this little gem. At the end of a session attended by a disparate group of people, many eyes were being napped up. It may be corny - but once in a while, a nice film comes along.