

"Ridin' Dirty Face"

Thursday, August 30

"Ridin' Dirty Face"

In the hierarchy of wayward youth, those who ride the rails instead of a patch of sidewalk on Haight or Telegraph streets hold an exalted position. If they get drunk enough, they can argue they are upholding a unique American tradition. Perhaps, but Depression-era men took to the hobo life because they couldn't work, not because they couldn't work at Jack in the Box. And few old-timers sealed their fate by giving themselves facial tattoos. @cal body 1:Photographer Mike Brodie feels right at home in boxcars and forested shacks, given that his friends currently reside there. As "the Polaroid Kidd," he had the slam-dunk notion to start taking pictures of them. His solo exhibit "Ridin' Dirty Face" features addictive portraits of the modern downtrodden, from hobos and punks to carnival folk and the heavily soiled. His pictures are so raw and greasy, you can almost smell them -- depending on who shows up at tonight's closing, you just might. In November, Brodie has a show in Paris with Swoon, and we're guessing he'll come back a hero, given how the city collapsed over JT LeRoy (the French just adore their American outcasts). Tonight's meet-and-greet features Brodie and musician Dr. Cambells, aka "Soup." Soup also appears in the exhibit, turned out like a 1900s dockside musician while squatting in a grimy room so demoralized it's probably haunted. [Needles & Pens, 3253 16th St. \(at Guerrero\) , San Francisco](#)



Shakespeare: Un-Scripted

Friday, August 31

Shakes ... beer?



If you thought improv was pretty much confined to smoky nightclubs populated with hack comics -- or that rare talent displayed at performance festivals -- then you're obviously unfamiliar with the Un-Scripted Theater Company. Yup, it's all improv, but not the regurgitated, off-the-cuff, see-how-smart-I-am stuff that makes most people wince at the mere thought. After all, these guys have their own theater company, and they do the regular six or seven plays a season, but with a catch: It's all extempore, baby. **Shakespeare: Un-Scripted** ups the ante on the Bard's verbal gymnastics and dramatic gravitas, but considering the genre, it's more of a loose homage than a strict adaptation. Borne along by a tide of audience suggestions, the players act out completely improvised plays each night while drawing on Shakespeare's leitmotifs of flesh, death, and star-crossed lovers. And no element is too small or too random -- spiders, trapeze artists, Q-tips ... you tell 'em, and they'll somehow smash it all together into a full-length masterpiece, iambic pentameter and all. Even after several seasons of the show, Shakespeare's turbines are still whirring. [SF Playhouse, 533 Sutter \(at Powell\) , San Francisco](#)

San Francisco Underground Short Film Festival

Saturday, September 1

Christ Almighty

Labeling your film fest "underground" is not much of a lure, since movies created down there can often be uninspiring, uninteresting, unwatchable -- hence its location. But put your faith in the **San Francisco Underground Short Film Festival**. It's a Peaches Christ deal, and that lady knows a thing or two about hosting sordid cinema, having presided over *Midnight Mass* for years. She's packaged a unique batch of films with co-organizer Vinsantos, including T. Arthur Cottam's *Filthy Food*, in which a woman with red lipstick has massive oral sex with her lunch (bananas, hot dogs, cookie dough) and then gets squirted by heavy cream. It's like porn with food, with a heavy emphasis on the porn. Laura Dean's *Arnold Hearts Hummer* concerns what the governor does to his SUV when he's feeling randy (and we do not mean he washes it). Sadie Lune, local sex artist/performer/model extraordinaire, directs *Yum*. We don't know what *Yum* is about, but we do know what Lune is about, so scoot low in your chair and get comfortable. And then there's Placenta Ovaries' *No Fatties*, which appears to be about vomiting. OK!



Aside from the sex and vomit, other highlights include electro-genius Torsten Kretchmar, who gets doted on in Steffen Frech's *I Know What Girls Like*. And Jose Montesinos' *The Winds of Time* features the homemade karate battles of the Stunt People, who also appear at the 4 Star on Thursday. The show starts with a rock performance by Vinsantos' band Evolution Rainbow, with Christ on the mic. We've kept the festival's good-time-guarantee clause for last: No film is over 15 minutes, and most don't even get near 10. **Bridge Theatre, 3010 Geary (at Blake), San Francisco**

Wattstax

Sunday, September 2

Black Power (Pop)



Dedicated to "the black people who made themselves heard," the film *Wattstax* documents a 1972 concert of Stax Records artists (some of the most scintillating live soul acts on the planet) at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. The event was dubbed "the black Woodstock," and though peace, love, and music is palpable in the reels, the concert had a more clearly defined purpose: to commemorate the '65 Watts riots and the progress made by the black community in the seven years that followed. MC Jesse Jackson refers to it as the shift from "burn baby burn" to "learn baby learn." His impassioned oration alone (which Public Enemy would later sample) demands repeat viewing. And while a documentary of the show would have been transcendent -- what with the superb soul delivered by the Staples Singers and the Bar-Kays -- much of the movie's power lies in the candid, conflicted words of community members detailing life, love, and the struggle in Los Angeles and America as a whole. Additional performances, such as the Emotions' singing in a church and Johnnie Taylor's fevered club set, make the film less focused on the event and more, as Richard Pryor puts it, "a soulful expression of the black experience." **Red Vic Movie House, 1727 Haight (at Cole), San Francisco**

Aeneas Wilder

Monday, September 3

Falling Down

Artist Aeneas Wilder has a steady hand. He builds towering sculptures by stacking strips of wood, one after the other, without the use of glue or nails or any binding agent save sheer willpower. His delicate creations can take weeks to build, with Wilder perched on a ladder or crane, slowly raising a wavy building, a hollow sphere, or an airy dome, often to the height of a gallery or museum ceiling. And then, when the last strip of wood is in place and the delicate structure is having its Jenga moment, Wilder descends his ladder, takes his first unguarded breath of the duration, goes up to his piece, and fucking kicks it. He boots it. A sharp little Beckham strike to the shins. It all comes crashing down, like a house of cards that's 30 feet high, made of wood, and sitting in gallery -- and you know the price art fetches once it makes it into a museum.



From July 17 to 26, Wilder could be seen assembling a huge sphere at the Exploratorium, and *Untitled No. 133* has been balancing there quietly ever since, a nervous smile on its face, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible. Today, it's reckoning time. Although Wilder will sadly not be around to give it his customary thwack, a public raffle will let three lucky people grab ropes and yank it down. The breaking ceremony starts at 4 p.m. **Exploratorium, 3601 Lyon (at Marina), San Francisco**

Devon Williams

Tuesday, September 4

Devon Cream



Recently, singer/songwriter Devon Williams appeared on the cover of the L.A. Record, yawning over his first cup of coffee, parodying the cover of Harry Nilsson's classic album *Nilsson Schmilsson*. Though the paper routinely photographs its subjects in the setting of an old cover shot, the choice of Nilsson is especially fitting for Williams' music and sensibility: The late popman's rumpled, hungover appearance contrasts with his highly arranged, often melodramatic fare. Likewise, Williams refuses to take himself seriously while crafting sweet pop gems that are like shots of pure oxygen in today's rather stale musical air. Although the American music underground is largely populated by noise mavens intent on aurally replicating a TV on the blink and folk wood-nymphs and their Manson-bearded boyfriends, Williams continues to slog it out. His painfully pretty songs wouldn't sound out of

place alongside early Nilsson or on Paul McCartney's first album. "Elevator," from his new 7-inch, is earnest, unassuming, and benefits from a slightly haunted string arrangement.

Devon Williams opens for Colossal Yes and the Mantles. [Hemlock Tavern](#), 1131 Polk (at Post) , San Francisco

"Paintings and Woodcuts"

Wednesday, September 5

Playing for Keeps

Billy Childish, the musician/artist/poet/novelist whose immense body of work darkens the sky over our 10-song bands of the day, has been busy. No surprise there. The Englishman's legendary output includes more than 30 collections of poetry, 1,000 paintings, and 100 records with acts such as the Pop Rivets, Thee Milkshakes, and Thee Headcoats. (A line on his Web site sums it up best: "Every five years or so Billy splits his group up and starts again from scratch.") His myth, already fattened thanks to 12 years on the dole starting in the '80s, got a high-art shine in 1999 when he founded the Stuckism art movement, championing a return to old ideas such as figurative painting. ("Artists who don't paint aren't artists," reads a properly inflaming line in the manifesto.) A funny aside occurred in 2006, when he embarked on a media spat with Jack White. After White, landing what he probably thought was a devastating blow, dubbed Childish a "bitter garage rocker," Childish sent an open letter to *NME*. "I have a bigger collection of hats, a better moustache, a more blistering guitar sound and a fully developed sense of humour," it read in part. Score one for the bitter Englishman.

For the past few years, however, his lifelong practice of art, which has never been tainted by the establishment (he got kicked out of art school), has resulted in something that seems low-key: woodcuts. But his themes naturally lean toward the sordid and gritty, with a little sex thrown in. Most are portraits or feature people engaged in ordinary activities, from the profane (sex) to the mundane (bicycling). All have a dark, haunting look, including the self-portraits, which feature his landmark moustache. It not so much resembles a handlebar as a push broom that's been used for decades to tidy up a pub's sticky floor.

An opening reception for "Paintings and Woodcuts" is Sept. 5 at 6 p.m. [Needles & Pens](#), 3253 16th St. (at Guerrero) , San Francisco



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