Craig Baldwin is a San Francisco-based filmmaker and subcultural icon whose recombinatory works sample the immense archive of twentieth-century film and television. Baldwin’s films may be described as speculative remixes that drive audiovisual language towards its limits, where causal narrative structures collapse, instead allowing spectators to affectively experience the proliferation of what Baldwin—following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari—calls “transversal” relations, which may be defined as relations made across distinct (and self-organizing) material systems in space and in time. In other words, Baldwin’s audiovisual language, like William S. Burroughs’s cut-ups, is materially immediate and tends toward networked collaboration.

In Baldwin’s found-footage films, there emerges a polyvocal otherness resistant to discursive compartmentalization and amenable to the generation of new meanings. Spectators encounter the residue of found film, which is creatively reorganized into disorienting and challenging new compositions. For Baldwin, the archive itself is a nonhuman other with which he collaborates to create films that problematize and enrich our understanding of history. Baldwin’s audiovisual language is representative of a West Coast punk, DIY ethos that finds joy in vertigo [ilinx]. He embraces an energetic and playful filmmaking style that embodies the schizophrenia of channel surfing and evokes hallucinatory landscapes riddled with the detritus of dead media.

Insofar as they raise many questions vis-à-vis unexpected juxtapositions, Baldwin’s films are critical of the totalizing effects of hegemonic discourses. Wild Gunman (1978) parodies Western frontier ideology and toxic masculinity by

Baldwin also conceived *Other Cinema*, a thriving microcinema for film, video, and performance in San Francisco’s Mission District, and *OtherZine*, a multimodal zine (that just published its 31st issue) dedicated to showcasing “Artists’ Projects and cinema-related writings that critique, support, influence, and produce high levels of artistic experimentation.”

I met Baldwin in the spring of 2015 at the University of California, Riverside. He gave an exhilarating presentation on the interrogative mode as it manifests in audiovisual language to members of the UCR Speculative Fictions and Cultures of Science research group. Now, I say “presentation,” but it might be better described as a live performance, as he was continuously switching between VHS and DVD to share clips from his archive of film materials. He also brought a pile of print materials for us to explore while he set up. I then caught up with Baldwin on the phone, and we discussed history, activism, archives, anachronisms, subcultures, trash, science fiction, and sound-image relations. Our discussion quickly opened onto a much larger network of adjacent ideas that I’m excited to share below.

With this interview, I have attempted to simulate Baldwin’s filmmaking style and collaborative philosophy—which together evoke a polyvocal otherness—through the use of hyperlinks. I hope these may encourage readers to click around, to drift [dériver](#), and perhaps even to lose themselves a bit to psychogeographical exploration.

**Sean Matharoo:** In your films, you critically reappraise the past by recycling found materials excavated from various archives to create new collages. Does interfacing between such materials—for example, between individual samples, between analog and digital technologies, or between found footage and original footage in the cases of *¡O No Coronado!* and *Spectres of the Spectrum*—offer you a unique vantage point from which to address historical processes?

**Craig Baldwin:** Well, I understand history to be a dialectical process. My filmmaking process is both a deconstruction and an analysis of history. I create stories, but they’re self-consciously constructed. My compositional strategies are an effort to simulate the complexity of historical reality—endlessly interrelated, complicated, and not unified in any way. From my perspective, there’s no molar truth. My attempt is to break things down to the molecular, the personal, and, within the personal, the subject itself, which can also be deconstructed. In other words, my process is a granular breakdown or a constantly corroding process. So, I see an isomorphism between my process and historical processes themselves.
Further, my filmmaking is part of historical processes. Collage, for example, precedes me and is part of film history. Collage is major and not marginalized at all, by the way. And, yeah, there are old movies that we can break down for material parts. But, more important than the material residue of cinema is the proliferation of meanings, which can be remixed into historical discourse. Of course, there are many things that are accidental. The heterogeneity of my process tries to live up to the heterogeneity of history.

SM: By depicting human struggle in a self-reflexive mode—for example, the geopolitical nightmares Wild Gunman and RocketKitKongoKit—your films open up spaces for the emergence of alternative meanings and, thus, carry ethical and political valences useful to activism. How important is conducting research to your consideration of historical events?

CB: Well, I think that research is my responsibility. As an historian, I’m obligated to do my best to figure out what happened. But, I can’t be an expert on history and make films at the same time, because films can’t come close to the level of nuance and complexity of historical literature. Rather, I put images and sounds together to create beauty and possible meaning. This is the path I’ve taken for myself as a subject of history. And, my skills are particularly adapted to audiovisual language, which I use as a platform to share ideas and perspectives about historical processes. Wild Gunman has to do with Manifest Destiny; RocketKitKongoKit has to do with neocolonialism in Africa. I approach these geopolitical figures and arenas through audiovisual language, so I’m able to reach a different kind of audience: movie-goers. Cinema and historical literature are different discourses. So, research is my responsibility, but I also acknowledge that history is complex. A film could hardly do justice to that complexity. I just point to larger structures of power.

I suppose I approach journalism, but I don’t consider myself to be a journalist. I’m more of an essayist. I try to make an argument, but, again, through the particular qualities of cinema. Now, history can be told in a physical or beautiful way. I also consider myself to be a poet and, in California, I’m swimming in a vast pool of cinema to which I have access. That is, my work is distinct from straightforward agitprop, such as Dziga Vertov’s montage films or Frank Capra’s Why We Fight (1942-45). In my work, there’s more play and irony, which agitprop doesn’t always tolerate. There is, as in poetry, more joy in my films. They have internal light; they’re animated in a way. Ideas come to life in motion pictures, and so these parts are all in oscillation against and within each other. There are layers and layers of meaning. But, my films are also blows made against the Empire, and their ideas resonate and extend the discussion.

SM: What kinds of archives are important to your process and why?

CB: Hmm...it’s about how language is understood, and I’m very much indebted to language. My first film, Wild Gunman, doesn’t have a script, but it consists of plenty of language in the form of found sounds that together create a polyphony of voices. My approach is promiscuous, transversal, Cubist, fragmented, refractory, and avoids omniscient narration. As a latter-day Californian, I’m accustomed to the barrage of
pop culture and art. Andy Warhol inspires me and I, too, see that there can be tremendous depth in surfaces.

I create my own ways of breaking up hegemonic discourse, and I’m always hungry for all sorts of material... the world is my archive. Often, I pull things in from the street. This is my proclivity and my choice. Meaning, I don’t limit myself to any one archive. Practically speaking, however, I mainly work out of and frolic in my own 16mm film archive, which has something like 3,333 films. I’m in there everyday. I got most of these films by diving into dumpsters or accepting them from libraries and friends.

SM: How do you think dealing with archives differs from collecting?

CB: Well, collectors don’t necessarily cut up film! Of course, I don’t deny that films can be objects of value, but collecting for the sake of collecting is just not my approach. I would much rather screen parts of films or pull out a part of a “bad” film, use it, play it negative, or run it backward. They’re parts of a language that I’m constantly re-conjugating. Obviously, there are official film archives, and I respect those. And, I prefer film to video, as I can work with it with my hands.

I also use public libraries. When I was doing the research for ¡O No Coronado!, for example, I went to my public library once a week for something like twenty weeks. There’s a lot about the history of the Conquest in there. And I believe it’s very important to browse the stacks as an intellectual  flâneur to drift through adjacent materials via associational thinking.
Anyway, I’m one collector who chooses to cut up his films. I don’t fetishize objects. I prefer to figure out how things were made, to dissect as if I were performing an autopsy.

SM: In *Mock-Up on Mu* (2008), you interweave historical fact with numerous anachronisms, thereby offering revealing and hilarious portrayals of countercultural icons Jack Parsons, L. Ron Hubbard, and Marjorie Cameron. You also place rocket science alongside Aleister Crowley and the occult, challenging the presumed division between “fact” and fiction. What role do you think anachronisms like these play in your films and how do you think intersecting discourses, genres, and modes of thinking affect our understanding of the past?

CB: Hmm, your question reminds me of Alex Cox’s film *Walker* (1987) and Bruce Sterling’s theory of “atemporality.” I also think it’s always an anachronism for someone in the present to make a film about the past. This is why, from my point of view, historical period dramas are kind of funny. Take, for instance, Peter Watkins’s seven-hour film *La Commune (Paris, 1871)* (2000). Why not seventy-seven hours? Now, a film like this ought to be made insofar as it allows for spectatorial immersion while giving access to large audiences. But, such films necessitate a suspension of disbelief that, as a skeptic, I can’t help but find preposterous. This is why, in my films, I announce—consciously or not—that they’re products of their own time. In other words, one can see the hand of the maker. It’s not like I can fully lose myself and identify with any of my characters, anyway. Of course, Hollywood has nonetheless managed to accomplish this with lighting, camerawork, etc. But, such immersion demands a lot of money, and I’m just working on another plane. I prefer to problematize and to enrich. There’s a difference between my films and historical period dramas, but there’s continuity between them, as well.
With regards to genre, “experimental” and “avant-garde” are problematic terms, to be sure, so I want simply to say that there’s attention given to form in my films. There are many folks who make films about history. What I’m trying to do is generate a principle about history. My films aren’t so much about telling history, but about articulating something useful to the writing and narration of history. They serve, I suppose, a historiographic purpose. In Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film (2005), UC Berkeley professor Jeffrey Skoller writes about my film Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America and asks, “How is it that history is narrated?” As a filmmaker, I ask this exact question in my films.

I’m reminded here of Walter Benjamin’s image of history as a relentless, one-track train and a pile of debris (see Theses on the Philosophy of History (1940) and Paralipomena to ‘On the Concept of History’ (1940)). For Benjamin, following Marx, revolution amounts to passengers pulling the train’s emergency brake. All of these figments are broken up, but they’re part of us, too. We have, for instance, inherited the tradition of colonialism in our thoughts and in the ways in which we live. Racism. Slavery. These things certainly prevail in our nation and in our political sensibilities. Academics and artists don’t work in circumscribed environments. Because we have insight into these forms and processes at the historiographic level, I believe we can make a difference. Perhaps we can even figure out ways to change people’s thinking.

To loop back to your question, my use of anachronisms plays a Brechtian role of estrangement (Verfremdungseffekt). It distantiates, alienates. It’s not Gone with the Wind (Victor Fleming 1939). It stands outside the narrative a little bit. And, it’s critical. It takes a critical position vis-à-vis the flow of images and sounds. I argue that one can see and hear the “cut” rather than the “suture.” Newsreels, without being self-conscious, are “avant-garde,” by the way. Consider, for example, Vertov’s History of the Civil War (1922), which uses variously sourced footage to create coherency. The materials came to him and didn’t necessarily conform to his intentions. Newsreels are a lost art, I think. To put anachronisms together into one is the basic idea of editing...I do this very self-consciously...and I do this to problematize and to enrich our critical understanding of the past.

SM: I first encountered your work in a graduate seminar on digital media and technoculture. Before watching Spectres of the Spectrum, our class read William S. Burroughs’s The Ticket That Exploded (1962) and considered the importance of radio technologies to post-war media culture. When I watched Spectres, its rhizomatic rhythms reminded me of the effects of Burroughs’s cut-ups, although it’s a totally different medium. This got me thinking about how the surface noise of your films might, like Burroughs’s writings, resonate with Beat and punk politics of culture-jamming and re-mediation. This is further emphasized by the frankness with which you treat bigotry, unchecked consumerism, and the omnipresent threat of co-optation. How do you think your films—in both content and form—relate to fringe cultures resistant to the status quo?

CB: Well, thanks for that question because I do prefer to talk about my films in terms of subculture rather than in terms of capital “A” Art categories...though I don’t...
outright disavow these categories. My experiences of living with artists in film communities have led me to consider social understanding more than formal understanding, although these are not mutually exclusive.

So Burroughs, of course, is the granddaddy and the lightning-rod of the post-war culture in literary terms, but he broke out of that. While I haven’t read *The Ticket That Exploded*, I do recognize and thank Burroughs for his ideas about the cut-up, which itself came out of his discussions and collaborations with expatriate painter Brion Gysin at the Beat Hotel. I’m definitely interested in Burroughs’s dissection of language into autonomous parts, and also, of course, the cut-up’s generation of new meanings.

Still from *Mock-Up on Mu*

These meanings aren’t in the ink, by the way, but in our heads. With the cut-ups, codes are broken, and new rhythms, patterns, and orders of letter-forms, phrases, and sentences emerge. So, a lot of readers might not get through Burroughs, though many of his ideas have obviously moved into the mainstream. *The Ticket That Exploded* can be found in a special part of the library. But, subcultures like the Beats or punks pick it up.

With regards to “surface noise,” well, it comes with the territory, both literally and metaphorically. Often, the sounds of my films are noisy, but, in any given montage, the conversations invoked by each element create, by extension, a surplus or excess of meanings. One will never be able to exhaust it all, as in a poem. Poems rub words up against each other for certain kinds of meaning. There’s a musicality or lyricism in poetry that opens up spaces to which one is invited for possible meanings.

I’m part of what I see as a braided strand of a non-linear and multiple history of culture-jamming, and the time for culture-jamming is now. Take, for instance, Don
Joyce’s work in Negativland\textsuperscript{30}…or Dada artist John Heartfield\textsuperscript{31}…or Ivan Stang’s work in the Church of the SubGenius\textsuperscript{32}…Re-mediation is always going on. For me, however, re-mediation itself isn’t good enough. My work aspires to something more responsible, historically.

Yeah, but, how might the center and the periphery work together? Working with the center’s leftovers is an expression of what I call “cinema povero” (impoverished cinema). Here I’m following Arte Povera\textsuperscript{33}, an Italian art movement of the 1960s. After the War, who could afford to invest in marble for statues? It was so much more appropriate for artists to work with common and distressed materials, such as rebar, concrete, cardboard, paper, etc. We’re able to scavenge the stuff that’s on the side of the cultural road. Cinema povero is an idiolect or specialized language for those who are removed from the mainstream and who look at it in a very critical way. In my case, though I don’t claim to speak for the punks, it’s fair to say that I’m part of that movement. And I’m certainly a marginalized person working with those materials that are available in an urban milieu.

I elected to take this path of poverty, which I call the “masochism of the margins.”\textsuperscript{34} This means that, if I weren’t really ready to take a little bit of punishment, I would’ve taken an easier route. There’s certainly a lot of pain at the margins, but I’m happy that there is still fringe culture. From my perspective, however, there really is no center, which is an ideological construction. Only as long as everybody has an idea of consensus, there’s such a thing as the United States.

Look, I’m not a complete nihilist, and I recognize that there are obviously times that call for consensus. But, for the most part, consensus drives consumerism…then again, it’s hard to imagine a more polarized moment in recent American history than now. No one even agrees with each other!

\textbf{SM:} You currently reside in San Francisco’s Mission District, a subject about which you write in “From Junk to Funk to Punk to Link” (2011).\textsuperscript{35} In this essay, you trace the historical developments of the found-footage film with respect to the Bay Area. You write, “Concomitant with a cautionary acknowledgement of—and negotiation with—image overload, ours if a refreshing affirmation of relative autonomy, personal ingenuity, and creative agency to discover and share our own uses for things.” With this in mind, do you think your films respond to and engage with the particular environment in which you are working? I’m thinking of the significance of trash aesthetics to the Bay Area.

\textbf{CB:} You know, there were and are trash aesthetics in L.A., too. Rebecca Solnit\textsuperscript{36} writes about this in her first book Secret Exhibition: Six California Artists (1990), which reaches back to the Beat artists, and I’m a big fan of Beat cinema. Anyway, Trash did not happen in some global, unified way, as if there were a singular gesture. Trash wasn’t limited to L.A. and San Francisco. The times, however, did allow for the generation of fields of possibility in which certain kinds of art forms could emerge. One was a reaction against Abstract Expressionism, which was considered to have become elitist, humorless, sexless, and devoid of any historical reference.
In response, there was a movement, which in France was called *nouveau réalisme* (new realism). An iconic example would be the crushing of cars into perfect cubes (see César Baldaccini’s “compressions”). Other developments came out of Black Mountain College just outside of Asheville, North Carolina, which offered refuge to European artists fleeing from the Nazis, and was dedicated to fostering freedom of thought and responsibility towards the social. Other rejoinders were made by Fluxus artists Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, and Ray Johnson, who all worked with distressed materials without fetishizing objects as if they should be on a museum wall. Johnson, for example, is known for his work with mail art, which emphasizes the networking process whereby the postcard moves from hand to hand.

![Still from Spectres of the Spectrum](image)

The point is that, especially on the West Coast, there was a certain freedom from the academic formalism of Abstract Expressionism...there was an embodied freedom of being outdoors in the city at night. Here, we find again the notion of the drift, of picking things up and understanding them for their beauty. And surfaces were scarred, rusted; these markings were the traces of these objects’ authentic passage through time. By the way, Beat artist George Herms (who was actually born in Northern California and who became famous in Southern California) has a piece called “*Clocktower-Monument to the Unknown* (1987)” at MacArthur Park in L.A. They’re huge, industrial buoys from Long Beach. They’re all screwed up and show the experience of life itself. That’s part of my idea of beauty. It’s not something we decide beforehand because people have designed a particular color relationship or whatever. It’s beautiful because it’s real. It shows its own passage through space and time.

This notion of realism was taken up by the Beats, another subcultural group, who dropped out of straight Eisenhower society. In San Francisco, Bruce Conner came...
to the fore. He had a group called the "Rat Bastard Protective Association," who would basically dumpster-dive. At the time, the Beats were living on Fillmore and Divisadero Streets because they were the cheapest areas in town. Redevelopment happened in the 1950s and early 1960s, and so these old Victorians were torn down to make way for freeways. When that stuff was thrown into the dumpster, the Rat Bastards would go on expeditions and come back with these magnificent things, which they would piece together. People started to call this kind of sculpture-making “assemblage,” which wasn’t about finding the form in a block of marble, but about going the other way around, by putting together disparate, heterogeneous components together into a new “whole.”

It was also called “junk art.” Most of the material was found and it was used in funny, refreshing, and thought-provoking ways. Conner, you know, was obsessed with sex and death. Very famously, he made an assemblage called CHILD (1959-60) to protest the capital punishment of Caryl Chessman. It wasn’t supposed to be pleasing. Some people would call it ugly. It was supposed to be shocking. So, this is the tradition of “the junk to the funk,” of finding beauty in ugliness. Recall that the word “Beat” itself carries a double meaning. On the one hand, it means “beat down.” And, on the other hand, it means “beatific.” To draw from Jack Kerouac, this is the figure of the holy bum. By looking down for a cigarette butt, he finds something else, such as a beautiful thimble perfect for sculptural use. It’s almost an act of redemption.

This tradition has lived on in the works of San Francisco filmmakers. Take, for example, Conner’s found-footage film A Movie (1958), which is a self-conscious act of parody, or the films of Robert Nelson, who is associated with the West Coast “funk school,” which isn’t necessarily careful or precise, but energetic and embodied. Ingenious art that retrofits, consciously or unconsciously. We’re working from the streets, and we resist academization. We’re interested in outsiders, losers, and visionaries. Collage is possible in San Francisco because the streets are very active here. People are in cafés and on the sidewalks. Often, there’s the material refuse of culture left on the sidewalk just outside my studio. It fills me with joy to retrieve these things from my neighborhood. I use them or give them to friends.

**SM:** Aside from your sampling of science-fiction film footage in your work—Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America, Spectres of the Spectrum, and Mock-Up on Mu first come to mind—there seems to be a formal dimension in your films one might call speculative insofar as they resist simple mimesis. The speed of your editing, for example, often dislocates traditional cinematic time and permits a wider range of freedom to the spectator. Given science fiction’s emphasis on extrapolation, do you find that the science-fictional images and sounds with which you work affect your negotiation of cinematic time?

**CB:** Well, my films aren’t really about science or technology. In fact, I want to get out of the trap of fetishizing technology! So, “speculative” is a better word than “science fiction” to describe my films, because they open up other worlds, other possibilities. Mimesis is just not my thing. My films thwart the mimetic mode. They make one think rather than just kick back and let the movie flow over oneself. Instead of diving inwards, as in Abstract Expressionism, they strive towards exteriority.
My films leave behind the notion of the personal diary. I’ve never been able to take myself so seriously as to spend a lot of time mucking about in my own Freudian problems, anyway. Rather, I deliberately go out into not only the material world around me, but also into other times in history, which science fiction does, as well.

This movement could be described as quantum, if you like. It could even be called time travel! As I’ve said before, I reject any kind of permanent, unified, ideal world. Science-fictional mise-en-scène invites spectators to extrapolate and to consider raw otherness. In this context, I especially adore the related notions of invention and creativity. Philip K. Dick’s vast powers of imagination help explain why a lot of his books have been made into films. With regards to Spectres, I was particularly drawn to Nikola Tesla and Philo Farnsworth. I tend to include in my films historical figures who were basically punished by the larger society for being so visionary. There’s pathos in that.

![Still from Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America](image)

Even if I weren’t working in science fiction, the editing process is not *a priori*. It’s recursive. When I comb and re-comb through my own work, I find new directions to take. It’s very high-speed. Science fiction doesn’t necessarily have a special place in this process. But, it does allow me to take a greater leap. Take, for instance, the concept of time travel, a plot device that appears in much science fiction. Essay films, you know, likewise simulate speculative processes of thinking. Generally speaking, I’m interested in bringing storytelling closer to speculative thought.

**SM:** In Spectres and in *Mu*, you argue against techno-utopianism, technodeterminism, scientific rationalism, and positivism. Unlike the more optimistic visions of Gnostic redemption depicted in some streams of cyberpunk and in countless other dreams of disembodiment, your films refreshingly assert the very
real materiality of film-in-itself. What can you tell us about the materialism of your filmmaking process? For instance, why do you prefer 16mm film?

CB: Well, my understanding of Gnosticism is that it expresses the existence of another world beyond this one. There's an anti-rationalist, hippie strain in it. But I'm a big defender of Reason. I've never been able to totally enter that world of belief...but it makes for good movies, it's part of storytelling, and I use it as a device. We have the right to get out of our bodies and to go into other historical time periods, and it's definitely part of my cinematic palette. My films require viewers to negotiate cinematic time and space in a very radical way. This is a rebuttal of positivism. I always say that the philosophical flaw of realistic photography (and not just in cinema) is that "seeing is believing."

This brings us to the notion of the interrogative. In language, the writer or speaker can add a question mark or raise her voice at the end of a sentence, and people understand that she is searching for knowledge. In terms of photography, too, perhaps things can be conjugated in such a way to evoke an interrogative mode. Without the interrogative, one runs the risk of reaffirming the status quo.

I edited Mu on digital video, but it's still made out of 16mm film, which lives on in live projection performances, you know. The thing about editing 16mm is that you immediately see what you have. There's the freshness, the funk, the gestural, the lived, the explosive, and the energized sense of generosity. It's right in front of your eyes and you hold it in your hands. It's far more sculptural, I suppose.

There are many ways of telling any particular story. I couldn't possibly exhaust all those possibilities! Being in the cluttered, rich environment of my studio, however, the answer is often within arm's reach...my style is additive...my obsessive nervous system is reflected in my filmmaking...working with 16mm found footage is cheap, tractable, and easier to work with than computer-based modes.

SM: Recently, I listened to Coronado without looking at the images and felt like a narrative formed à la Orson Welles’s 1938 radio drama adaptation of H.G. Wells's The War of the Worlds. This is due, I think, to the meticulous sound editing. In other words, the relations between the originally recorded dialogue, the sound effects, and the music samples create a surge of images on their own. Can you speak to the importance of sound-image relations in your films?

CB: I've always just assumed that the soundtrack would have the same rate of cutting speed as the picture track. This is where I cross the line, I think, by asking a lot of the viewer. Now, in the soundtrack itself, there's a self-consciously created architecture of quotations. That is, I quote from musical history and film soundtracks in order to appropriate their meanings. So, my soundtracks have a figurative quality. They stop short of narrative, but there's a development through time in terms of musical figures and motifs.

Sound in my films is discursive. It's not background. It takes the lead in trying to create courses of thought. The conventional approach is that sound is just a reflection of the image. In my films, however, sound and image are often at war with
each other. Sometimes it works, but, often, it's hard to keep up with both sound and image, and you get asynchronicity. So, there are two things that the spectator has to think about at the same time, which encourages self-reflexivity.

Still from RocketKitKongoKit

I use music that has an ironic reference. This is what I mean when I say “meta-cinematic.” My movies are compressed or condensed like Castle Films, which I used to order through the mail. With the advent of video, people grew up thinking that sound and image should be married. But, they don’t have to be. I prefer to create just as much activity on the sonic plane as I do on the others.

When one hears a sound sample in a new mix, one hears its original residue and trace, but with new meanings. I sometimes use the metaphor of a fractured mirror to describe the affective encounter with these residues and traces. For me, sound represents another problem because it’s not simply a reflection of the image. It has relative autonomy.

SM: Building off of that, what are some of the limitations you have found when negotiating sound-image relations?

CB: I’m definitely constrained by material circumstances in the real world! I don’t always have my choice of possible imagery. So, the material that I have in front of me is going to affect the way that I can make films. However, language allows me to fill in gaps by somewhat explaining things in voice-over, dialogue, or even text, as in Coronado.
I generally don’t start with music *per se*. I start with language, such as voice-overs. I then add more narrative and historical detail to construct space-times from scraps. Sometimes, I find something that increases the humor. This doesn’t add realism but, rather, editing complexity, as if it were another part of the puzzle that helps hold things together.

Still from *Sonic Outlaws*

**SM:** Alongside your work with Other Cinema, your group’s online journal *OtherZine* is a [multimodal](#) interactive, and collaborative archive for research on experimental film. Within your group’s sensibility is the Fluxus aesthetic and that group’s mobilization of Dada as a means of combating the sacralization of art. I’m also thinking of Neo-Dadaist art, such as analog zines, photocopy art and, of course, the mixtape. *OtherZine*, too, resists the format of traditional text-based journals by accommodating, on one hand, informal discourse and, on the other, media-rich entries. How do you think the use of *OtherZine* and other similar multimodal archives might alter the ways through which filmmakers and scholars do research in light of today’s information surplus?

**CB:** First, let’s consider the value of collage art today. Now, this isn’t to exclude literature. In Other Cinema shows, we’ve left the idea of the feature behind and moved towards a collage of short films. One can talk about reproductive rights, transportation, or tattooing through a short narrative, a short animation, a short documentary, a found film, an old educational film, a live-action film, scratched-on film, hand-processed film, etc. All modes can be aggregated together in a program so that one would explode and open up themes and questions towards dissonance, pluralism, polyphony, and diversity.

We take the idea of polyphony for granted in urban environments in the twenty-first century, and we refuse to keep the arts ensconced and separate from them...we
celebrate multimedia. We don’t put ourselves above minimalism, but it’s hard—if not futile—to keep the world out.

So, OtherZine started more simply and then, as we got a little bit more sophisticated and handy with the internet, we just added picture and then picture and sound and then motion picture and then loops, etc. Having gone to undergraduate and graduate school in film studies, I can see why it would be an attractive destination for media scholars. Visual pleasure is a very important part of art, by the way. Eye candy, obviously, isn’t a substitute for research. But, our focus is on the transversal rather than the vertical. Our moment has to do with cross-disciplines. We don’t wish to isolate people into segregated disciplines and niche specializations. We open up to others.

Like the Lettrists and Situationists, we’re also interested in the materiality of the text. Language, after all, is a way to concepts. The Dadaists did this, too, by the way. In resisting the ideology of spectacle, such artists made collages out of words and text. Take, for instance, Isidore Isou’s film Traité de bave et d’éternité (1951) or Guy Debord’s film essay La Société du spectacle (1973), which is an adaptation of his 1967 book of the same name. Like the Dadaists, Lettrists, and Situationists, we’re not just interested in nihilism. We’re interested in text as a visual form. This is what I mean by materiality. I’m reminded here of the hyperlink and random access memory. Increasingly, video has moved towards the “hyper,” as well. I'm still very much for literature and text, but the twenty-first century human body is used to sensory overload. Other Cinema and OtherZine share a maximalism appropriate to such sensory overload. And, like punk art—also maximalist—we share a belief in democracy and inclusivity.

SM: Finally, what can you tell us about your work in progress, Invisible Insurrection?

CB: Oh, we can easily place Invisible Insurrection in the terms of my previous answers. Ultimately, I want to return to language in the interrogative mode. How might we ask questions using audiovisual language? As I’ve already indicated, what I’m trying to do is develop a critical audiovisual practice. Invisible Insurrection, then, is an essay film about post-war ideas that questions the notion of spectacle while crossing international borders. It’s an opportunity to talk about subcultures of Europe and America coming together around Burroughs’s Naked Lunch (1959) and Debord’s La Société du spectacle (1967). These people were recognized as iconic figures of two countercultures, but were living in miserable, wretched conditions. Invisible Insurrection celebrates the seedy and sordid lives of Burroughs and Debord, who lived in the same neighborhood, but never met. But, I want to use the idea of collage (including quotations by characters from French noir and horror films) and cinematic “ventriloquism” to stage a dialogue between them.

By the way, you should check out the works of Scottish expatriate Alexander Trocchi (and David Mackenzie’s 2003 film Young Adam). Trocchi was a fantastic outsider figure who was a Beat challenge to the old literary guard in Paris. He edited Merlin magazine in the 1950s, later advocating for psychedelics and free universities in the streets. He moved into the literary world in Paris and courted the
new American writers. After the War, people could hang out in Paris, which was a crucible where a lot of weird connections could be forged.

Similarly, Mock-Up on Mu is about L.A. and Southern California after the War. Anyway, the idea is to trace a kind of historical genealogy of anti-art that we’ve inherited. Invisible Insurrection\(^6\) tries to bring the academic, literary, and textual ideas of Debord back to cinema and to deal with them in an audiovisual way...Debord’s ideas are very corrosive. I’m trying to invent a system to accomplish this through ventriloquism, collage, montage, voice-over, chiseling film itself, etc. With the help of my archival resources, rich in history and affording a spectrum of different rhetorical forms, this will be less difficult to do.

**Notes**

1. For the reader without immediate internet access, we have decided to include the text for each hyperlink in the essay. This is the only use to which endnotes have been put in this interview. For the future reader in a land of rising seas and broken links, we can offer no recourse. We are only as future-proof as the internet itself. This first link is: [http://www.othercinema.com/cbfilmography.html](http://www.othercinema.com/cbfilmography.html)
2. [http://www.rhizomes.net/issue20/reviews/sanyal.html](http://www.rhizomes.net/issue20/reviews/sanyal.html)
3. [http://www.inflexions.org/n4_intro.html](http://www.inflexions.org/n4_intro.html)
14. [http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm](http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm)
15. [http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/2](http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/2)
16. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwzcGtuV7Is](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwzcGtuV7Is)
17. [https://www.britannica.com/topic/agitprop](https://www.britannica.com/topic/agitprop)
19. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mm3GsSWKyo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mm3GsSWKyo)
23. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KlvQ1nUdIs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KlvQ1nUdIs)
25. [http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html](http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html)
28. [https://www.nytimes.com/books/00/02/13/specials/burroughs-ticket.html](https://www.nytimes.com/books/00/02/13/specials/burroughs-ticket.html)
29.[http://briongysin.com/]
30.[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzcQdqE5CBU]
31.[http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/heartfield/]
32.[http://www.subgenius.com/]
33.[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/16/arts/design/you-dont-know-what-arte-povera-is-they-can-change-that.html?_r=0]
34.[http://www.incite-online.net/polta.html]
35.[http://www.movingimagesource.us/articles/from-junk-to-funk-to-punk-20110110]
36.[http://rebeccasolnit.net/]
38.[http://www.theartstory.org/school-black-mountain-college.htm]