Subway Riders, written and directed by Amos Poe, showing Oct. 24 & 25 at Center Screen.

Ever wonder how Manhattan must look through the eyes of those fellows who lie on the sidewalk with a constant hangover? Panoramic grime, harsh sounds, broken dreams and ugly lights, life lower than it was ever meant to be. It's easy to see why Amos Poe is not on television singing, "I love New York!"

Subway Riders is not a film about mass transit but rather it is about the big city alienation which is so manifest down in the tubes. A psychotic saxophone player who lures pedestrians with his music then shoots them down provides the tenuous plotline. But the narration derours rather widely to include the rambling failure stories of a few other characters who are among the truly seedy. These include the upstairs prostitute whose sex practice is disturbed by his sax practice. Then there's the dullard cop who is having domestic problems with his wife the heroin addict. Eventually the murder/manhunt story becomes secondary to the neurotic revelations of all of these lost souls.

Saxophonist John Lurie was cast as the murderer. Lurie exudes an eerie screen presence with his despondent face and faraway eyes. Give him a horn to vent his suffering and you've got the essential lone soul like Pruitt in *From Here to Eternity.* Before the film was completed, however, Lurie was forced to return to his band The Lounge Lizards. This group provided much of the score with the "fake jazz" sound which is beginning to fill the void in New York's No Wave music scene. In a bizarre directorial move, Amos Poe himself stepped in to play the lead without reshooting. Lurie's scenes, hence, have two actors in the same role.

Who is this Amos Poe anyway? Currently he is just another avant garde filmmaker, an aspiring Godard. His early films were New Wave and punk docu-concerts, only a notch above the quality of home movies. Now he appears to be headed for bigger budgets and more marketable scenarios. *Subway Riders* is his first film to employ paid actors and it shows some creative potential.

Be warned, however, that this film was shot in ten days with almost no money. Editing, sound quality, camera work and acting all rate a solid half star. The script itself is just one man's vision of despair, so it is apt to sacrifice entertainment for self-indulgence. It may not make for a fun evening but if Amos Poe becomes the next George Lucas you might wish to recall that Poe investigates the debris of society like a detective picking through trash.

Peter Thompson

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Down in the Tube Station

Constrained by a meager budget, he resorts to simple lighting imagery, one character always framed in red, another in yellow, the killer always mired in darkness. He exhibits an obvious sense of humanity gone sour as he dozes stylistically on the junkie's delirium then explores the numb rage of the Chapman/Hinckley syndrome. Poe investigates the debris of society like a detective picking through trash.

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