

MOVIES

By CARL LINDER

Animation as fine art

Larry Jordan's "Hamfat Asor" has a setting that remains constant through the film—an etching with cliff and ocean, and a flat space in the foreground. From the cliff stretches a tightrope on which a man on crutches is walking; then a disproportionately enormous bird appears in the foreground—a predatory symbol, which turns into a watch, a timepiece . . . The bird has been acutely characterized.

And we see these metaphorical elements in relation to the man walking on the tightrope. Many things happen—transformations, cuts, disappearances, flocks of images that invade the setting, and interact—too many things to describe coherently.

The images Jordan uses are made with illustrations from old magic, astrology and anatomy books—and in many instances fine reproductions, or etchings from the Romantic period.

Like any serious artist, Larry Jordan is not especially interested in having public attention for its own sake, and for this reason, he is a relatively unknown film-maker even in San Francisco. But recently, Jordan did come from San Anselmo to premiere "Hamfat," for many friends—including Robert Duncan and Kenneth Anger.

'Hamfat'

shaping the medium

Jordan, who could double for Jack Palance—is probably the most prolific film-maker in the West, having made over 35 short films. Like Jordan's other work, "Hamfat Asor" employs animation of turn-of-the-century magazine cut-outs, with a soundtrack of bebop music and drums—but this time with more than usual skill.

Jordan is one of the collage-ists, and animators of film who can produce a significant vision. It's hard. Animation creates its own problems. Everything generally tends to look shaky and comical, arriving from the McLaren and Van derbeek tradition. Animated cut-outs always seem tricky by the very nature of the materials. As a way of working with experimental film animation too often attracts film-makers with glib, comic sensibilities—entertainment or social comment being their chief objectives.

But Jordan, in "Hamfat" particularly, is resisting the medium and shaping it his own way—instead of yielding to the

kind of farcical gesture that putting different funny heads on people produces, he gives his animated subjects character and purpose.

The point is that Larry Jordan is finding a way to work seriously with animation, in a form which has very serious handicaps. Robert Breer is the only other artist I can think of who has attempted to work complexly (in a graphics sense) with collage animation—and it appears that after his last successful attempt—"Jamestown Balloos," he has given up in favor of cartooning.

Jordan is, however, starting to significantly develop animation as a fine arts mode. For this reason, one of the theaters here should show San Franciscans his best work soon.

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