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Against The Grain

Australia 1981. Dir: Tim Burns. Prod: Nightshift Prods. Script: Tim Burns. Photo: Louis Irving. Cast: Michael Callaghan, Joy Burns. 80 mins.

Burns is a 34-year old Australian who uses a jagged, disjunctive film vocabulary based on extreme close-ups and sudden camera movements. His narrative — solitary terrorist detonates a smoke bomb in Sydney, then goes underground, all the while tracked by a government computer-video rig — is secondary to his digressions, which include pastiches of Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, tracts on sexist advertising, and a diatribe against Australia's uranium industry. Intercut with tinted newsreels and scored to a paranoid buzz of news reports and indigenous punk. *Against The Grain* is replete with geopolitical references (West Germany, Northern Ireland, Vietnam, Italy, East Timor). Despite, or rather because of this chaos, *Against The Grain* achieves a potent immediacy — it's like a cross between *Newsreel's America 1969*, Godard's *Numero Deux* and B-movies' *The Offenders* — with a jolting style that keeps you working and thinking throughout. — J. Hoberman, *Village Voice*.