

Document Citation

Title	The Atomic Cafe
Author(s)	Binn.
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1982 Mar 17
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	The Atomic Cafe, Rafferty, Kevin, 1982

Wednesday, March 17, 1982

The Atomic Cafe
(B&W/COLOR-DOCU-16m)

An Archives Project, Inc. production and release. Produced and directed by Kevin Rafferty, Jayne Loader, and Pierce Rafferty. Edited by Loader and Kevin Rafferty. Archival research, Pierce Rafferty; sound editor, Margie Crimmins; music coordinator, Rick Eaker; music consultants, Richard Bass, David Dunaway, Charles Wolfe; production consultants, Obie Benz, Susan Kellam, George Pillsbury. Reviewed at the Gramercy Theatre, N.Y.C., March 11, 1982. Running time: 92 MINS.

Shortly after the U.S. dropped the newborn atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thus ending World War II, the attention heaped upon this apocalyptic form of warfare permeated U.S. society up until the early 1960s. "Atomic" became a widely used synonym for anything big, fast and powerful. Pop musicians recorded songs like "Atom Bomb Baby" and "Atomic Cocktail."

Using those songs and others on its soundtrack and taking its title from one of many businesses that adopted the "atomic" adjective, "The Atomic Cafe" exposes alternately silly and chilling positions the Federal authorities expounded throughout the first two decades of the atomic age.

Architect/filmmaker Kevin Rafferty and journalist Jayne Loader spent the better part of five years editing the material that archival film researcher Pierce Rafferty gleaned from various public and private film libraries. Their result begins with a look at the destruction of the unsuspecting Japanese cities, including an interview with the first A-bomb pilot Paul Tibbets theorizing about America's "guilt complex" following the bombings.

The predominantly black-and-white film is sprinkled with familiar faces of second string Hollywood actors moonlighting in these government projects and of American politicians. While Richard Nixon, Lyndon Johnson and Harry Truman are depicted as dangerous buffoons, viewers will find an element of sanity in Dwight Eisenhower's grim statement about scientific advances outpacing emotional and intellectual growth.

Film funded by a phalanx of activist orgs (the Media Network and Film Fund among them) documents samples of sea and land A-bomb tests. Aftermath of one test was inadvertent contamination of a South Pacific island, its people and its fish supply which was either destroyed or exported to Japan and San Francisco.

Thematic tactic of mixing the comic with the tragic is used throughout. One military film narrator allows that an A-bomb test site area would make "a poor picnic site," but the overall risk equals any home mishap. Civil defense how-to procedures, such as "duck and cover" advice and home bomb-shelter blueprints, are laughingly/frighteningly outdated. Pic ends with a simulated nuclear attack emergency with a fearsome look at civilians scrambling for bomb shelter intercut with missiles spitting out from underground silos.

The filmmakers, while searching and considering pickup deals with major and indie distribs, have begun booking theatrical engagements as well as showcasing the pic at activist-oriented benefits. Later tactic could help generate word-of-mouth.

Film, set for Filmex in L.A. later this month, looks to be a tricky sell despite its amusing and provocative content. Traditionally, marketing budgets are tight for this kind of docu, so the benefit event strategy is a good way of attracting an audience, which will easily see "The Atomic Cafe's" link with current nuke war concerns. —*Binn.*