

SCREEN SLATE

Tuesday, March 24 | A Crackup at the Race Riots at Elizabeth Dee

BY SCREENSLATE



Featured Screening: A Crackup at the Race Riots at Elizabeth Dee. Post by David Bartner:

For their first feature length film, the Belgian collective Leo Gabin adapted Harmony Korine's experimental novel of the same name, appropriating amateur videos from YouTube that would delight any fan of his musings; there are underdressed teenage girls performing for webcams, remixed pop songs, glistening rims on beaten up Cadillacs, derelict shopping malls, and plenty of palm trees and sunsets. Korine's novel is sampled throughout the film primarily as a series of suicide notes that appear both as on-screen text and as a computer-created robotic voice-over. Leo Gabin and Harmony Korine are known chums, with Korine discovering the Belgian group, and the trio later providing Korine with online videos to inspire the writing of *Spring Breakers*, but here lies a welcomed new front of their artistic bond: A dada novel remixed into feature film collage.

Like many Korine-associated projects, PC types will be quick to cry foul. There's a long take where a nearly naked midget aggressively humps the floor as onlookers slap her ass and toss her dollar bills. Onscreen there is a list of unrelated, non-sensical text: "Mae West go east," and later, "Louis was proud he had Armstrong." There's a leggy sorority girl firing an AK-47, followed by a shot of a drunk girl passed out of the floor. There's a long montage of teenage girls in their underwear pinching their bellies and thighs to expose their body fat. Yet, the filmmakers don't give the sense that they are mocking or exploiting their subjects, just extremely fascinated by them. *A Crack-Up at the Race Riots* isn't insensitive, it creates a reading room for someone who might want to think about the ways popular media influences loneliness, boredom, and leisure in heavily landscaped, economically devastated areas of America.

The filmmakers create new meaning out of seemingly banal videos and toy with ideas of true/false in user-created content by altering speed and juxtaposing audio and image from separate online videos. Teenagers dancing in their driveway is slowed down to seem ritualistic and meditative. Audio effects change the pitch and tone of the subject's voices, at times rendering the human voice nearly robotic. A bedroom covered in Taylor Swift memorabilia is accompanied by a radio host passionately arguing that the actual content of Robert Frost's poetry is vastly different than how his poetry is publicly perceived. A camera pans and tilts across an uzi as a novice solo-piano rendition of Miley Cyrus' "Party in the USA" provides the soundtrack. Something about the echoing, out of tune upright piano, hearing the page turns, the amateur pianist missing notes and struggling through the pop anthem as we gaze at an automatic weapon: it's a winning combination. —David Bartner