

The cream of Bailey

EXHIBITION

The Sixties are being revisited courtesy of an exhibition by photographic dynamo, David Bailey. **Bob Johnson** went to have look.

Perhaps more than any other, dynamic photo guru David Bailey was the most representative, contemporary and innovative artist in Sixties Britain. Like Charles Dickens before him, Bailey and his work helped to create a popular conception of modern London.

Birth of the Cool focuses on 1957-1969, the earlier period of Bailey's career, when he erupted onto the fashion scene with his captivating images of models such as Jean Shrimpton and the doe-eyed Penelope Tree. In this semi-retrospective, Bailey guides us through pictures of his native East End, Vogue fashion shoots and into the heyday of Sixties Britain.

His work – especially the sharp fashion pictures and portraiture – is persistently cool, clever and chic. A combination of detached observation and innovative shapes shows just how important this man was in shaping modern photography. There's little doubt that Bailey was the most consistently fashionable photographer of

the time, and this exhibition perpetuates his inspirational status. Bailey's famous pictures of Michael Caine, The Rolling Stones and The Beatles helped to define pop culture, whilst his images of the Krays captured the glamour of violence.

It isn't all about taking snaps of celebrities, though. Birth of the Cool takes time to remind us that David Bailey can take photos of people who aren't drowning in their own popularity. Although elegant camera work is his trademark, there are some clever observations of East End life through the Sixties.

This display is followed by a series of pictures which document the blood-soaked, placenta-drenched births of Bailey's children. The two sections help to keep the artist located in a world which hasn't completely forgotten its roots, and occasionally makes you wonder why he hasn't earned more commissions of this type.

There are a few disappointments on show here, however. For all their elan,

Bailey's colour photographs falter when compared to his brooding compositions in black and white. Similarly, his still life work doesn't have the trademark character.

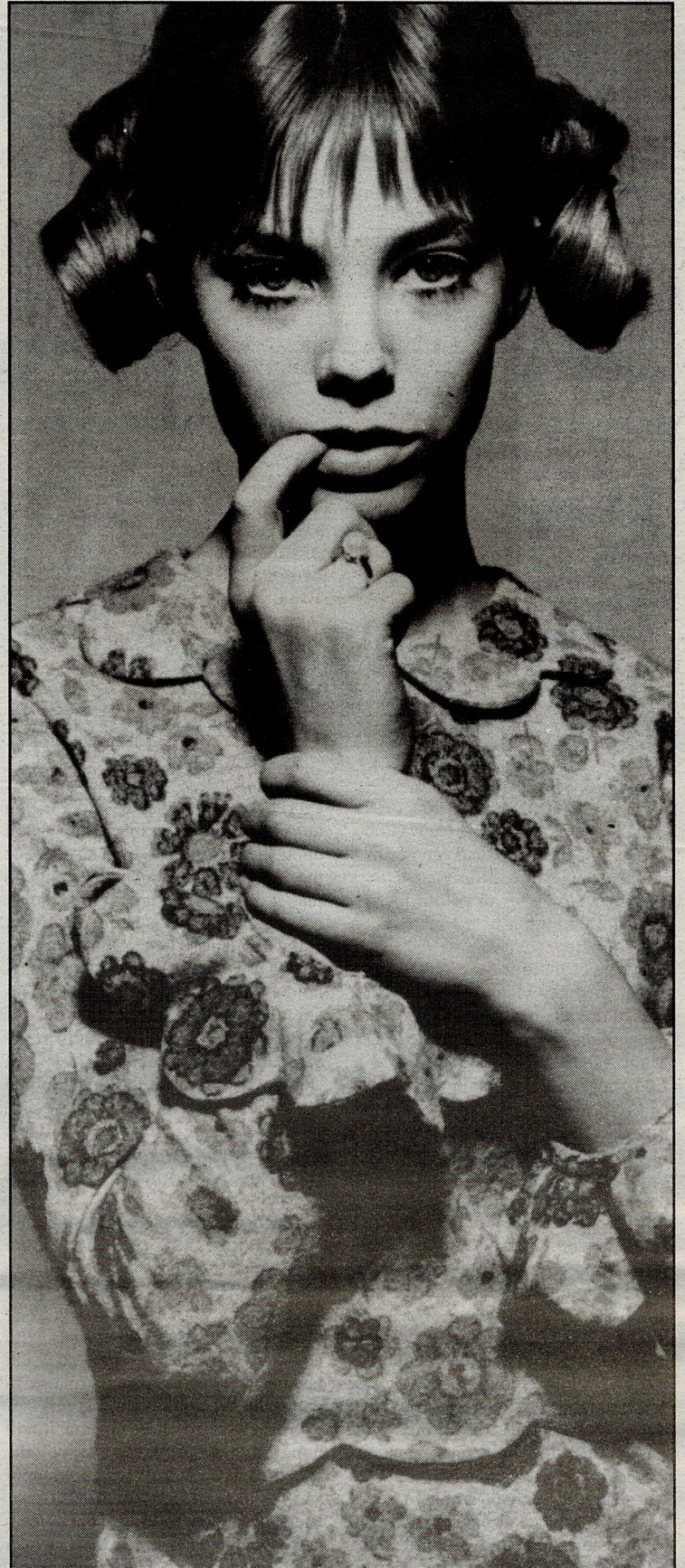
A display of contrasting portraits from the Sixties and the Nineties is meant to show a continuity of style. Modern pictures are placed beside similar examples from the early days – for example the Gallagher brothers and the late Oliver Reed. But rather than displaying Bailey's continuing stylistic integrity, they highlight how little his method has progressed; there's no doubt that he does what he does very well, but you might end up thinking that he's a one trick pony.

All that aside, this exhibition really captures the essence of Bailey's work, and will be sure to give amateurs some good ideas

Birth of the Cool
@ Barbican Gallery EC2
until 27 June
£4 NUS



Françoise Dorléac and Catherine Deneuve decide that they aren't quite up to the Lara Croft standard yet.



Serge Gainsbourg's famous friend, Jane "Oui, Je t'aime" Birkin, gets the Bailey treatment.

FILM

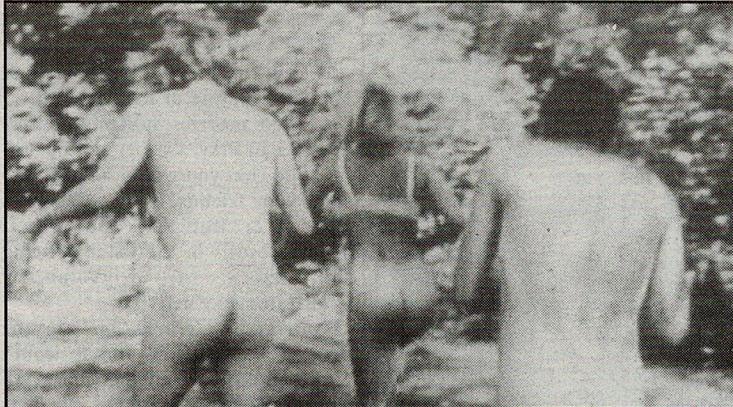
Festen by Dogma '95

Friend or Foe? Do we need another group claiming great innovation in a 'dead' film industry? As a general opinion, one could say that anything furthering our experience in film and giving us new kinds of material to enjoy and work on, is welcome. But how new, or indeed, dogmatic, is Dogma '95?

This group of mainly Danish film-makers is fronted by two famous names. Lars von Trier is especially known for his 'arty' film, *Breaking the Waves*. The other director, who has since gathered fame outside his native country, is Thomas Vinterberg, director of *Festen* ("The Celebration"). Now, why either of these would want - regrettably - to write up a set Manifesto of 'liberating' restrictions is a good question.

Lars von Trier, for example, has long been known for his raw-styled experimentation in film, not dissimilar to the astoundingly popular David Lynch, but the idea of setting rules of better film-making is something which will inevitably date. This, however, doesn't seem to be a problem for the film-makers in question, since this is seen as an impermanent remedy to the present ailment of an anaemic film community. In addressing this community, however, they seem to ignore a huge amount of film made around the world, setting the credibility of the venture slightly at stake.

The film community, when ques-



Idiots, the new film by the deadly serious Dogma '95.

tioned, turns out to be, not surprisingly, the bourgeois Hollywood system, but also the 1960's New Wave(s), which with the auteur concept and "foundations rooted in the bourgeois conception of art", has perverted itself and become 'false'. While we shouldn't perhaps deny the Dogmatists their point where it's due, it is amazing how they only loosely adhere to their ten commandments and how we are to avoid fetishising on their visual eccentricity and their sensationalism - in other words why should we be deeply influenced about either their novelty, purity or political convictions, for that matter?

To *Festen*, then. This is actually quite a good, gripping film. I rather

liked it. But, easy on the viewer it is not. The film shows what happens when old skeletons are drawn out of the closet at highly dramatic inopportune moments, like say, at the family reunion of your Father's 60th birthday - the big secret being family incest and rape. Christian (Ulrich Thomsen), the eldest son, leads the way in turning the family to finally admit to the truth about the Father, which led to the death of his sister, as well as to his personal misery. The film deals with several themes from racism, friendship and the supernatural in a most unnerving way, the audience learning from their reactions to taboo subjects, but to call it very Dogma, is unimportant.

DIMITRY TOLONEN

BOOKS

Vittorio the Vampire by Anne Rice

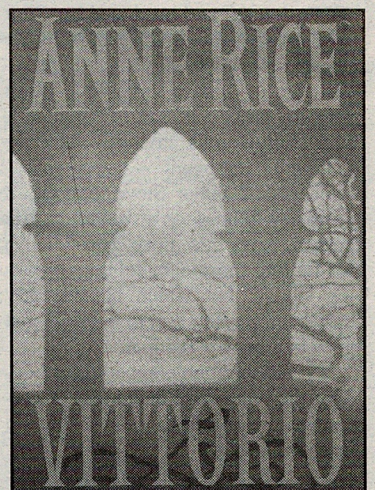
A friend of mine has loved vampire stories for years. When I first got to know about her obsession, I was sceptical. Isn't that vampire stuff a bit silly, just creatures of the night seeking to feed upon some human blood?

"It's not the vampires themselves, it's the allegories that count", my friend advised me. "It's all symbolic; you can look at vampires as an allegory of human relationships, of how some people feed on others, and it's also about the fight between good and evil."

Keeping this knowledge in mind, I set out to find what Anne Rice's latest is about. Since 1976, she's released some fifteen vampire books, and has established a crowd of faithful fans. Is she worth her fame?

I was not disappointed by this book. *Vittorio the Vampire* is no masterpiece, but it does its job. Rice's style is beautiful, it's with unbeatable fluency that she guides the reader from one page to the next. If the book's main purpose is to entertain, then Rice's novel certainly meets these criteria.

And luckily, there's more to this book than just fluent writing. Taking my friend's advice, I didn't ponder too much if Rice's descriptions of cutting off people's heads or sucking their blood were credible. This book embraces a number of



immortal themes that are much more important: questions of love and beauty, passion and cruelty, sacrifice and faith. In the name of love, Vittorio throws away his chance to survive and his chance to save countless human lives. Is he mad? Should we respect him for his love or despise him for his folly?

Of course Anne Rice's book is naive by today's cynical standards. But those urging questions she sets about human nature will not cease to puzzle some of us mere mortals.

TAPIO NURMINEN