

SAN ANTONIO VIVA THE DEAD

CURRENT DAY OF THE DEAD

ARTSPACE

FILM

Any which way they can

BY NICK BURNS

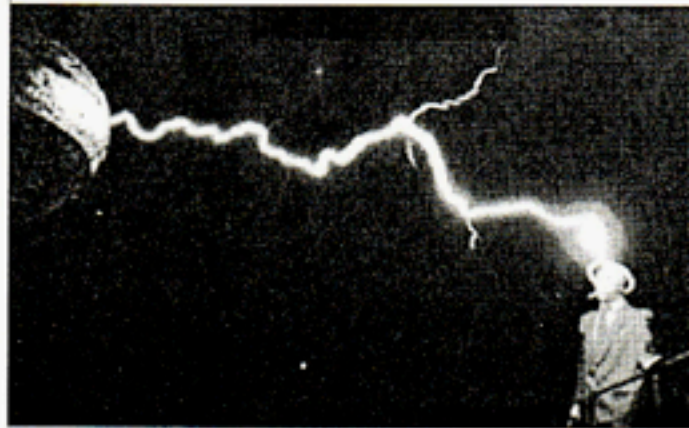
Electrum

A visual buzz with a techno beat is *Electrum*, the new film by Alberta Chu chosen as one of six "Official Selections" by the DocSIDE Festival panelists/judges. This interview film is about the 50-foot-tall electric sculpture, *Electrum*, by the late Eric Orr. When switched on, its Tesla coil sucks the energy equivalent of about 1,200 TV sets, instantly generating 3 million volts and whipping out 40-foot bolts of lightning. It's a decided treat for those standing nearby.

The film *Electrum* documents the sculpture's conception, design, and production, before shipping and final installation in a residential sculpture garden "40 feet from the house," Orr chuckles. Full of snappy nighttime images of purple-white, blazing light, bizarre footage actually shot inside the contraption, and testimonials

during the sculpture's testing, this film is a document of a subculture few could imagine. A high-voltage engineer says he quit his job to work on the project. A groupie's day job is electrical engineer with Pacific Gas & Electric. Also meet Peoplehater and San Francisco's Survival Research Labs.

Chu, who worked as a field producer on another DocSIDE film, *The Jaundiced Eye*, said *Electrum* was a "labor of love, [but] I'm making up some of the debt with home video distribution [at] www.futureculture.org." (That's Chu's Web site devoted to cybernetics, human brain/computer links, and the medical



ELECTRUM,
ALBERTA CHU,
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uses of chip implants.) To other filmmakers she says, "Just do it! With [the lower costs of] digital video ... the financing bottleneck has been greatly reduced."

Built around the conventional talking-head interview format, *Electrum* offers the wildest cutaways imaginable, from a '60s light show arcing out of the top of a four-story tower, to Orr actually perched inside while Zeus rocks.