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The beat goes on

BY [FELICIA FEASTER](#)

Pull My Daisy, the first, the *only* production straight from the bowels of the Beat phenomenon, debuted in November 1959 at New York's Cinema 16 series on a double bill with John Cassavetes' *Shadows*. Featuring narration and a script by grand pooh-bah Beat Jack Kerouac and direction by photographer Robert Frank, *Pull My Daisy* was like an underground class project studded with a wealth of Beat luminaries and friends, including Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Larry Rivers, David Amram and Alice Neel.

Pull My Daisy has a narrative arc that would do the boys of *Jackass* proud. It's founded on adolescent eros colliding with killjoy mommyism in the form of scowling beauty Delphine Seyrig. A legion of Beats, including Rivers, Corso and Allen Ginsberg, pull a Bowery loft invasion on a bedraggled, sax-playing railroad man and drag him away from disapproving wife, Seyrig. Despite the usual Beat dismissal of women, *Pull My Daisy* is infectiously merry, with some of the joking, casual wit provided by Kerouac's voice-over narration.

In an ode to the Beats, Atlanta musician/performance artist Andy Ditzler has put together a screening at Eyedrum's monthly film night of the seminal *Pull My Daisy*. That film is being paired with Beat documentary *This Song for Jack* from 1983, which records a Beat reunion (including William Burroughs) marking the 25th anniversary of the publication of Kerouac's *On the Road*.

While the New York underground film community was lukewarm on the Cassavetes film, a number of the artists, critics and intellectuals in attendance at the 1959 screening -- Parker Tyler, Paddy Chayefsky, Kenneth Tynan, Arthur Knight -- went ga-ga for *Pull My Daisy*.

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Avant-garde filmmaker/critic Jonas Mekas raved like an underground Susan Granger in the *Village Voice* that *Pull My Daisy* "has a visual beauty and truth that is completely lacking in recent American and European films." Decades later, offering a field-guide synopsis of Homo Beatus, critic David E. James detected certain native characteristics in the film, such as "spontaneous poetry performance, modern jazz, reference to Buddhism, smoking marijuana and homosexual bonding." Crazy man.

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The Beat Cinema Series curated by Andy Ditzler screens Pull My Daisy and This Song for Jack Jan. 24 at 8 p.m. \$6. Eyedrum, 290 MLK Drive. 404-522-0655.

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