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Scott Murray

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Recommended Citation
Description
Articles and Interviews
Tim Burstail: Interview Scott Murray 490
Australian Women Filmmakers Part 4: Jeni Thornley and Martha Ansara Barbara Aysen 497
Currents in Japanese Cinema: Nagisa Oshima and Sachiko Hidari interviewed Solrun Hoaas 500
Yves Yersin: Interview Scott Murray 508
Australian Television: Why it is the Way it is Julie James Bailey 510
Crawford Productions: A Brief History Albert Moran 520
George Miller: Interview Peter Westfield 527
‘C’ Television Patricia Edgar 530
Features
The Quarter 488
The 1979 Cannes Film Festival Jan Dawson 504
Film Censorship Listings 533
The 1979 Melbourne Film Festival Keith Connolly 534
The 1979 Sydney Film Festival Meaghan Morris, Barbara Aysen, Sue Adler 537
Guide for the Australian Film Producer: Part 16 Antony I. Ginnane, Ian Baillieu, Leon Gorr 541
Picture Preview: Breaker Morant 542
International Production Round-up Terry Bourke 543 Box-office Grosses 545
Production Survey 553
Production Report The Sullivans and The John Sullivan Story David Stevens 547
Film Reviews
The Last of the Knuckiemen Keith Connolly 563
My Brilliant Career Brian McFarlane 564
Days of Heaven Meaghan Morris 565
Tim Dorothy Hewett 567
My Survival as an Aboriginal and Robin Campbell — Old Fellow Now Bobbi Sykes 568
Fedora Richard Brennan 568
The Plumber Jack Clancy 569
Thirst Geoff Mayer 571
Book Reviews
The Australian Journal of Screen Theory Adrian Martin 573
Recent Releases Mervyn R. Binns 575

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North Sydney, NSW 2060, Australia
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European/UK Representative
Australian Film Commission Office
Canberra House
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Telex: 27565

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All this, because communication without film just isn't on.
Contents

Articles and Interviews

Tim Burstall: Interview
Scott Murray
Australian Women Filmmakers Part 4:
Jeni Thornley and Martha Ansara
Barbara Alys
Currents in Japanese Cinema: Nagisa
Oshima and Sachiko Hidari interviewed
Sorun Hoaas
Yves Vernin: Interview
Scott Murray
Australian Television: Why it is the
Way it is
Julie James Bailey
Crawford Productions: A Brief History
Albert Moran
George Miller: Interview
Peter Westfield
'C'-Television
Patricia Edgar

Features

The Quarter
The 1979 Cannes Film Festival
Jan Dawson
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Meaghan Morris, Barbara Alys, Sue Adler
Guide for the Australian Film Producer:
Part 16
Antony L. Ginnane, Ian Baillieu, Leon Gor
Picture Preview: Breaker Morant
Terry Bourke
Box-office Grosses

Production Report

The Sullivans
Production Report: 547
The John Sullivan Story
David Stevens

Nagisa Oshima
Interviewed: 500

Film Reviews

The Last of the Knucklemen
Keith Conolly
My Brilliant Career
Brian McFarlane
Days of Heaven
Meaghan Morris
Tim
Dorothy Hewett
My Survival as an Aboriginal and
Robin Campbell — Old Fellow Now
Bobbi Sykes
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Richard Brennan
The Plumber
Jack Clancy
Thirst
Geoff Mayer

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Mervyn R. Binns

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Front cover: Tim Burstall's The Last of the Knucklemen (see pp. 490 and 563).
The Prisoner television series, produced by the Sydney-based Grundy Organization and premiered in Los Angeles last month, is fast becoming one of the most popular importations of the ABC and CBS Networks. The series increased its ratings in its second showing, more than doubling the ratings of KTTL Channel 5 and receiving rave reviews from American critics.

The television series is certainly not new, having been the subject of much media speculation for the past several months. The creator of the show, Reg Grundy, is a well-known figure in the Australian television industry, and his production company, Grundy Organization, has a long history of producing successful Australian television content.

This year, for the second time, an Australian film was selected to participate in the official Competition at the Cannes Film Festival. The film, titled "Prisoner," was directed by Lynda Keane and Gerard Maguire in a documentary format. Another six feature films are planned for 1980-81.

The enthusiasm of many film producers — as was evidenced particularly given the sorts of films now being produced. The film festival certainly did not contribute to the success of Max in the foreign market; it had already sold well in foreign markets. It is also demand to keep up with the other more commercial Australian films at Cannes this year. Finding the figures, "Cathy's Child," "Tom, the Odd Angry Shov," "Snapped," "Thirst," and "My Brilliant Career," would not have been just一项由外国代理人独家拥有的工作。

The Australian Film Commission now represents a 25 per cent share of the ABC's top network station; even in this case we were only beaten in the second half by an episode of "Charlie's Angels" that had Ferran Fawcott-Majors, strangely enough, in a story about women politics. "A 25 share in Australia would not be as sensational as it is here where we only have four stations, but here a 25 share is just spectacular. ABC Network planned from New York today to KTTL and said, 'What do you have on last night to get a 25 share?' They couldn't believe the figures.

The success of "Prisoner" coincides with the announcement that Reg Grundy will retire as president of the Grundy Organization, the organization's managing director, Ian Holmes, will take over as the new president, while Grundy will continue as chairman of the Australian operation.

In the 19 years since the founding of the Grundy Organization, Reg Grundy has been responsible for production of some of the most successful television series and series ever made in Australia, including the game shows, "Great Temptation," "The Price is Right," "Celebrity Squares," and the series "The Restless Years: Prisoner; eight tele-features and numerous documentaries. Another six feature films are planned for 1980-81."

The AFI's board of directors also selects a film to receive the Raymond Longford Award for a significant contribution to Australian filmmaking. There are also $280,000 worth of cash prizes, including $25,000 for the best film and $10,000 for the best documentary, as well as special Jury Prize for an innovative film.
COPYRIGHT REPORT

After a two-year delay, the Australian Film Commission has published a summary of the papers and discussion from a seminar, "Aspects of the Law on Film — Copyright", held at its Sydney offices on August 5 and 6, 1977 in conjunction with the Australian Copy­
right Protection of Cinematograph Films." The Seminar was held at its Sydney offices on August 5 and 6, 1977, with the following topics covered:

1. **The Flaherty Seminar** (held in New York each year, to honor the famous American documentary filmmaker, Robert Flaherty, as part of the seminar, outstanding documentary filmmakers are invited to attend and present their films. This year, Esie Coffey has been invited to present her film, *My Survival as an Aborigine*. Coffey, the first Aboriginal woman to become an academic is recognized for her work with the Aboriginal and Rouben Mamoulian awards, at the 1979 Sydney Film Festival for "Best Documentary Feature Film" and "Best Short Film". Her work has been significant in promoting indigenous stories and culture.

2. **Marketing P-O-W-W**

The director of the Australian Film Commission, Alan Wakefield, called a meeting with overseas marketing representatives to discuss the progress of the AFC's overseas operations, and plan strategies for the coming year. Present were Jim Henry, the North American representative based in Los Angeles, Ray Atkinson, the European representative based in London, and Gordon Carr, the Asia/Pacific representative.

During his stay, Jim Henry told Cinema Papers that a lot of work has been made in the American market. He said there was more Australian product being imported into America than ever before, and that he expected this trend to continue. He also mentioned the importance of promoting Australian films through festivals and other events, such as the Flaherty Seminar, to increase awareness of Australian cinema in North America.

3. **MERGER**

The Australian Film Institute and the National Film Theatre of Australia, two cultural institutions, have merged. The merger took effect from July 1, after a long process of negotiations and discussions. The members of both organizations will now participate in the new organization, which will have a combined membership of over 5000.

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I began by wanting to be a writer, hoping to write what one used to call satirically the G.A.N. — “the Great Australian Novel”. That was when I was at university. In those days, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the topic discussed at parties was not a film, as it is today, but the latest novel. For instance, we would have been excited by the latest Saul Bellow, or Lucky Jim. Film was certainly part of that era, but the idea of becoming a filmmaker was regarded as being outside our range. There were no Australian films being made, and getting a start in filmmaking just didn’t seem possible.

Where did you go after university?

To the National Film Library. I wasn’t especially hooked on film, but it seemed one way of getting into writing. The only organization then making films in Australia was the Commonwealth Film Unit, and I felt I might be able to make my way there from the National Film Library and get work as a scriptwriter.

The job (Film Officer Grade 1) consisted of looking at documentaries for four hours every day — “appraising” them, as it was called, and deciding whom they should be referred to. A diet of this sort (From Wood Pulp to Newspaper, Bolivian Arts and Crafts) ultimately gave me a distaste for the whole documentary scene. I then became involved in scientific editing and writing for the Antarctic Division.

When did you decide to try filmmaking?

Probably after I saw Lomrisse’s Crin blanc (The Wild White Stallion) at the Melbourne Film Festival. I knew one couldn’t make expensive Hollywood-style films in Australia, but one like Crin blanc seemed possible.

My first film was The Prize, which I followed with several art films. I was a friend of painters like Arthur Boyd and John Perceval, and it seemed easy and inexpensive to make films on their work.

Sebastian the Fox

You then made “Sebastian the Fox” for the ABC . . .

Yes. The significant thing from a technical point of view about Sebastian was that he couldn’t speak. He could only communicate his feelings by blinking his eyes, lifting his tail and so on. No attempt was made to disguise the fact that he was a puppet; his strings were quite obvious.

The world Sebastian inhabited was full of big, rather comic adults, who were nearly always seen as comically wrong-headed, pompous or idiotic authority-figures. Sebastian occasionally linked up with children; apart from that he was a loner.

The original title song, for which George Dreyfus wrote the music and I the lyrics, goes like this:

In the bush there is a creature and he’s got a bushy tail
He’s not a kangaroo or a mongoose or a snail
Oh he wears a suit and waistcoat and the smartest shoes and socks
That’s Sebastian, Sebastian Fox.

“However does it happen that there is gravel in your bed?”
Who put the bucket on the door, that toppled on your head?
Who is it picked your pockets? Who milked your money-box?
That’s Sebastian, Sebastian Fox, etc.

Sebastian was a pure innocent. In terms of psychology, he was the id — naked spontaneity; one’s wishes expressed directly along the lines of the pleasure principle. Sebastian was able to do delinquent things and still be loved by children because his delinquency was always directed at the rules. He was never wicked or anti-social.

One can see a very obvious development from Sebastian to people like Stork, who also was an innocent, and Alvin, another innocent. For me, Sebastian is one of the first recessive Oz heroes.

Apparently you ran into some censorship problems with the ABC over “Sebastian” . . .

Yes. The ABC would accept that a brave little tailor could drop a rock on the head of a giant in a Grimm’s fairy tale, but wouldn’t allow something similar in Sebastian. They had a set of spinster school teacher values, which meant that everybody in a children’s program was supposed to act in an exemplary way. Consequently, almost nothing could happen.

There was an element of this attitude at the Commonwealth Film Unit as well. They were not so much into stories as highbrow and worthy public-spirited themes.

This puritanism exists today. Take, for example, the often calvanistic reaction to films like “Alvin Purple” and “Petersen” . . .

Sure, but the puritanism of today emanates from intellectual quarters. The Women’s Lib reaction to
Petersen does not represent the views of the average person, or the bureaucracies administering money.

The puritan attitudes of the early 1960s were shared by society as a whole. Sex was basically unmentionable, violence and crime, it was assured, didn't really happen here, etc. But now, when everything is permitted and one is free to attack any subjects, censorship comes from a different quarter. Not from the community, but from ideological pressure groups. And these groups certainly have influence on the government funding bodies. I don't know, but I suspect a violent, right-wing, vengeance fantasy like Mad Max would have found difficulty in getting government support.

What did you do after “Ned Kelly” fell through?

We had another shot with a feature, which was From the Other Island. It is a story about a delinquent figure who escapes from the French Island prison and finishes at the motor races on Phillip Island. There he becomes involved with a Portsea lady.

It was in the style of Rebel Without a Cause, but it didn't get beyond an outline stage.

How did you plan to finance these films?

I got a book, I think by Sol Encel, listing the 66 wealthiest families in Australia. I then compiled a list of likely people to bite. David Baker, who was then working with me, would write to somebody and say we had a film we wanted to make and asked if we could come and see them. I must have been shown out of a hundred different offices of tycoons of various sorts. But some people did put up money, like Rupert Murdoch who put in £10,000, which was a considerable amount in those days. On Man in Iron, we were looking for £50,000, but we only raised half. We gave back the money hoping we would return to fight another day.

First Attempts at a Feature

Was “2000 Weeks” the first feature screenplay you wrote?

No, I had written a script (Man in Iron) on Ned Kelly in 1960. My producer, Pat Ryan, took it to Britain and showed it to British Lion. They were not interested in investing, but offered us money for the screenplay. Then, a year later, they brought out their own script on Kelly, written by David Storey. Of course, the Kelly story was in public domain, so they had every right to do their own version.

The same thing happened in 1969 with Eliza Fraser. Three months after we had arrived in London and bashed our script around, another one was being fielded (Michael Luke's The Domestication of Mrs Fraser). This was subsequently sold to Sandy Howard. The earlier experience with the Kelly script was a big factor, I'd say, in our deciding to go ahead with Eliza Fraser once Sandy Howard had announced his intention of going ahead with the same story.

2000 Weeks

How did you finally get the money for “2000 Weeks”?

When I returned from the U.S., where I had spent two years, Pat Ryan and I joined up again. Eltham Films, which was really Pat Ryan, put up 45 per cent, Senior Films — at the time the largest production house in Melbourne — put in around 45 per cent, and about 10 per cent came from Peter Lord at Victorian Film Laboratories.

In those days, the only people interested in making features were those in the industry. The government saw itself as having no role, other than putting money into Film Australia and the ABC. Also, the major distributors were unable to return money on any of the few films that had been made. They felt local filmmaking was uneconomic, and, of course, they were largely correct.

The few Australian features which had been released had given the industry a very bad image. When we ran a test screening on Stork, for instance, the results indicated that while an audience would like the film, they probably wouldn't go along if they knew it was Australian. Consequently, we identified Stork with overseas products, saying, "Funny as M*A*S*H", "Bawdier than Tom Jones", and so on.

What was the deal you did with Columbia on the distribution of “2000 Weeks”?

We got the same deal Columbia had used for Man in Iron, distributed on a 75-25 basis, with us
getting 25 per cent of the net profit. The promotion of $10,000 was shared between Columbia and Eltham Senior.

People hostile to the distributors said Columbia hung onto the film for seven months before releasing it. True, but Columbia wasn’t able to get a cinema until seven months after it had agreed to take the film; and since Columbia doesn’t have its own chain of cinemas, that doesn’t surprise me. It was then put into the Forum in Melbourne, which was a bit of a cemetery for films. But it was put in at Easter, a good time, and everybody did their best for it.

The major problem was that it was a festival-type film and it needed the support, just like a Padre Padrone, of critics like Colin Bennett. Unfortunately, though the film was reviewed in the ABC and Film Australia, which Sydney did.

For a long time, conspiracy theories were held about distributors. Did you ever subscribe to them?

No. That feeling was very polarized in Sydney, much more so than in Melbourne. The Sydney producers saw the distributor-exhibitor interests as our enemies, and I think much of my reputation as a sold-out bastard emanated from my public utterances that one should work with the distributors because they were our natural allies.

It was my experience, when dealing with Village-Roadshow, and with Colin Jones and Tom Nicholas at Columbia, that the distributors were sympathetic to the idea of an Australian film industry. They were, in fact, keener to give it a go than the critics and our so-called custodians of film culture. These people neither saw the possibility of growth, nor that the Australian audience might be interested in seeing itself on film. I don’t think the bulk of these critics were sufficiently interested in their own society to be able to recognize those things which related to us. They were spiritually far more at home in Paris and London, not Melbourne or Sydney.

How do you feel about “2000 Weeks” today?

I have a special place in my heart for it, because it was my first feature and in some ways autobiographical. But I wince when I see it, except for the few energy points which are mainly in the flashbacks.

I think of the first 10 years of my film work, up to and including 2000 Weeks, as my apprenticeship. Stork exhibits more control; and the breakthrough with Stork was that it had a script with plenty of energy. I don’t believe the actings in 2000 Weeks is bad, so much as a question of actors being asked to say unsayable things, and act unactable things. It was too attenuated, too deficient in energy and too much of it was in an intellectualized form, instead of action.

Well, soon after we had finished the film Pat Ryan, David Bilcock, Rob Copping and I pulled out of Senior Films and formed Bilcock and Copping. The idea was to make commercials, which would then finance features. We then started off as a small group and the only thing we were sure of was that ABC America had pulled out of covering the event. We knew we had almost a certain sale, so we forged ahead.

Then, when the Experimental Film Fund began, I applied for money to make Filth. I had been very amused by an incident at La Mama involving John Romeril’s Mr Big, The Big Fat Pig, which was based on what had happened to Alex Buzo’s Norman and Ahmed when it was first performed.

Romeril’s play had a group of people swearing on stage, and then the police would arrest them. The detectives were played by people like Peter Cummins. One night, however, when the cast and audience were leaving after a performance, they were arrested in the car park by real police and marched down to the Carlton police station.

It seemed like a funny idea for a film, which would have been a cinema verite version of what had happened. But once I started on it I found all sorts of reticences from the people involved, and had to give it up. As I had already been given $7500 by the EFF, I went back to my assessor, Fred Schepisi, and asked, “Can I go ahead and adapt a play of Dave Williamson’s instead?” It was called Stork. Fred agreed and I started looking for more money. I got a commitment of $5000 from Bilcock and Copping, and the rest I raised by hocking some of my Arthur Boyd pictures. We raised about $21,000, and decided to forge ahead. In the end, the film cost about $60,000.

We released it ourselves at the Palais during Christmas, and advertised it through John Singleton’s advertising agency, Spasm, which had done some ACI testing on the film.

Was your decision to four-wall the film at the Palais a reaction to Columbia’s handling of “2000 Weeks”?

In one way, yes. It wasn’t that I thought we, the producers, could distribute a film better than the distributors, but that we needed to prove to the distributors that there was an audience for Australian films. Of course, this is what John
Murray had done when he roadshowed The Naked Bunyip.

How successful was the run at the Palais?

It took $50,000 in six weeks, returning to us $20,000. I then showed the film to Roadshow, but they turned it down. So we hired Harry Miller’s Metro Theatre in Bourke St, as well as the Village cinema in Balwyn. We also took it to Monash and Melbourne universities.

This way we managed to raise our takings to $37,000, but still nobody would take over the distribution of the film. We then took it to Sydney and four-walled it at Mosman. It was only then that we got our first offer, which was from Hoyts. But Hoyts would only give me a suburban release, and couldn’t guarantee the film would recover $30,000, the amount needed to put us in the black. So I took the film to Greater Union, which also knocked it back. I then returned to Melbourne and decided to try Village again. This time Graham Burke decided to take the film. It ended doing infinitely better than anybody thought possible. It took $224,000 in film hire and returned to us about $150,000; this was on an expenditure of only $60,000.

Was the decision to set up Hexagon based on the success of “Stork”? There were two factors: certainly the success of Stork impressed Village-Roadshow, entered into a partnership with Bilcock and Copping, and my company, Tim Burstall and Associates. Bilcock and Copping and I each had 25 per cent; Roadshow 50 per cent.

The important thing to remember was that we had put up the money to make our first film; once Hexagon was established, we, the production arm, had to put up half the money. That was how it worked till Eliza Fraser, when Bilcock and Copping pulled out because the figures were getting too high for them. If a film failed, we lost money; if it made a profit, we committed ourselves to turning it back into making more films.

So, I was the producer, director and financier (25 per cent) of my own projects. This placed me in a very different position from anyone else in the industry. Enviable in one way, but hardly the cushion position a lot of industry people saw me as occupying.

What was the budget of “Libido”? Libido, which was the first film to move away from ocker comedy. As you know, it was a portmanteau feature consisting of four self-contained stories by Craig McGregor, Hal Porter, Thomas Keneally and David Williamson. Chris Muru produced the project for the PDGA with John Murray. The Williamson story was the events. Another, though probably unconscious, motive was that I wanted to make it more autobiographical.

I was brought up in England in an enormous house in the north of Windsor. I often heard those days had nannies, and rarely, in fact, saw one’s parents. You never ate with them, though there was something called High Tea, when they would all come in and give you a kiss. But the person you ran to, if you fell over and hurt your leg, was your nanny, not your mama. Mama was the source of values, and harsh repressive expectations. So, there was a split focus thing: that is, between one to whom you owed allegiance, and the one who was freely chosen. This element — the mother/’veeness split in Porter’s story — was what I was interested in developing.

I suspect, by the way, the split between the two women in 2000 Words was influenced by this upbring.

What was intended as the next film? The PDGA has often discussed the PDGA received a grant of about $25,000 from the Arts Council. John Murray’s budget was about $7000, as was David Baker’s and Fred Schepisi’s. I went in for a special pleading on the grounds that my episode was a period piece. I was finally given $13,000, though the episode’s true cost, given deferments, etc., would have been closer to $23,000.

All the actors and technicians received some payment, except for the Swinburne film students who helped us out, while the directors and producers deferred their entire fees.

How has the film fared commercially? I think the outgoing was $75,000, which was closer to $120,000 if you took the deferments into account. The return so far is between $60,000 and $75,000. Now, if we sell it to television for another $50,000, we would be in the clear. It hasn’t been sold yet, but the PDGA has it in hand.

The PDGA has often discussed doing another portmanteau film... After we finished Labyrinth, I was very keen on the idea of doing one such film a year. It seemed the best way of bleeding young directors in the feature business. After all, it was Schepisi’s first film, and Baker’s and Murray’s. In each case, except for John who was most ruthlessly savaged by the critics and has since retired hurt, Labyrinth was a great help to their careers.

What was intended as the next film? Something called The Bed. This time we thought we had to connect the stories, and each revolved around a brass bed. A bed is a good pivot because it is something on which one can be born, live, make love and die.

One story was written by Alan Marshall, which Mal Brying was set to do; another by Morris Lurie called Jingle Jungle, which Ross Dimsey was to direct. There was a third by John Powers story written for Simon Wincer; and a fourth by Max Richards, which Rod Kinnear was to direct.

What happened to the project? Although failure can be very divisive, success can be even more so. The Lido exercise, curiously enough, generated a lot of obstruction, and jealousy, and it took a long time to get another project moving. But once we did, we still couldn’t raise sufficient money. The VFC were prepared to invest, but the Australian Film Commission wouldn’t come to the party. They said portmanteau films were finished, and that while Lido was fine in its day, the idea was no longer viable. I think they were quite wrong, and it was a great pity.

Alvin Purple

Next came “Alvin”, which was Hexagon’s first venture into filmmaking?

Yes, but it was originally intended that it would be Petersen. An announcement was made in the press, in which Al Finney, David Williamson and I said we were going to make a new film. Unfortunately, David was working very hard — he was still at Swinburne—and couldn’t finish the screenplay to meet Village-Roadshow’s deadline. So, we began looking round for other ideas.

At that time, Roadshow had had a very successful run with Pasolini’s Decameron, and there appeared to be an opening for an Australian Decameron. I went looking for stories, visiting writers like Bob Ellis, Frank Hardy, Williamson and Barry Oakley. I had 26 stories in all, and one of these was by Alan Hopgood, called Alvin Purple. While the first half was comic, the second was serious, but I thought it could chop off the front end and get an amusing 20-minute episode out of it. But as I bored further into all the stories, the Decameron idea seemed a little small. So I thought the Alvin Purple story and developed it with Hopgood, aiming at comedy. In the end, I rewrote quite a lot of it — the water-bed stuff, the chases, the turning of the McBurney figure, who was serious in the original, into a charlatan, a sex maniac.

Was Alvin’s original girlfriend (Eli McClure) a remnant of Hopgood’s serious second half?
No, I introduced her as I felt the audience needed a point of comparison with which to identify. Given that Alvin's behavior is running counter to a certain sort of morality, you must have relics of that morality or you have no contrast. I think the problem with the love affair in 2000 Weeks, for example, was that while it was true of a certain section of society, a general audience found it hard to accept. It may have been all right in a French film, but not in an Australian. If the characters had been deceiving each other, and not openly declaring their relationships, it probably would have met with greater acceptance.

This relationship between Alvin and the girl was actually developed much further in the final screenplay, but I had to cut a lot out during the fine cut.

For the sake of keeping up the level of humor...

Yes. A lot of jokes went as well, just to keep the thing moving. After Alvin and the body painting girl roll around in paint on the water-bed, for instance, there was a cut to him looking at the canvas and saying, "Not bad for a self-portrait." Not that it isn't a funny line, but it destroyed the pace and had to go.

Ken Hall once said that the only sure financial bet in Australia was a comedy. Do you agree?

I think a well-executed film in almost any genre can work, though some genres are better than others. The track record of comedies in Australia is probably the best, but I suspect that comedies are not what audiences are looking for at the moment. The kind of comedy that is working is that of Neil Simon and Woody Allen, and we are not likely to get anything on those lines, are we?

How successful was "Alvin"?

I think it is the third most successful Australian film in the last decade. According to my figures, it has taken about $5 million gross, of which about $2.4 million has been returned to the exhibitors. So, $1.6 million came to the distributors, which knocked off $200,000. This left the production company, Hexagon, with $1.1 million. Now take off the cost ($202,000) and you are left with $900,000. It was then sold for $40,000 to television, so the September 1977 total became $340,000.

Alvin was a joint venture, so Roadshow got $70,000, Bilcock and Copping $230,000 and I left with $120,000, the bulk of which I put into Hexagon's next films. So, while it seems a lot of money to make, you don't see very much.

Alvin Rides Again

The sequel, "Alvin Rides Again", soon followed, but apparently you were not very enthusiastic about doing one...

Hexagon had bought the rights to Petersen, which was the project I was keen on doing next. Given the performance of Alvin, however, the Hexagon Board felt there was no choice. But while Alvin wanted to do a follow-up, neither Hopgood nor Graeme Blundell were keen. Blundell had the chance to play three different roles: Alvin; a gangster called Balls McGee; and Alvin pretending to be Balls — a role rich in comic possibilities (cf Wonder Man). But when it came to the crunch, Blundell failed to differentiate between playing Balls and playing Alvin pretending to be Balls.

In my view, the film fails for precisely that reason: i.e., Alvin is lost.

How much creative control did you exercise as producer?

I controlled the writing as well as the casting, and I was close to the editing. But it would be idiotic to call it my film, as some critics insist on doing.

As sequels go, it was quite successful...

Oh yes, we made money from it. I don't think it was as good as the first Alvin, but it did well enough to end up as Australia's sixth or seventh most successful film.

There must have been a temptation for Hexagon to keep the series going...

There was, but the ABC then entered the picture and that was the end of that.

Petersen

Your next film was "Petersen"...

The Hexagon Board, in particular Graham Burke, didn't want to make Petersen. Burke felt nobody would be interested in the lives of university students. I said I would make it outside Hexagon,
and approached the AFDC, which also knocked it back. Then, as soon as Burke heard we had been knocked back — he is a very quixotic man — he changed his mind and decided to support us. Burke, to be honest, liked it very much when he saw it.

Was it a commercial success?

Yes, though it didn’t do as well as Alvin. It only made about $70,000, but after a television sale and an overseas sale it is doing nearly as well as Alvin Rides Again.

"Petersen" makes an interesting companion piece to "2000 Weeks", adoptive one. David Williamson wrote the role of Petersen specifically for Jack Thompson, and, as Jack was an adopted son, we decided to explore this. So we gave Petersen a middle-class background, but a whole line up of working-class or lower-middle-class connections.

Every intellectual or academic character in your films is treated critically. There is not one who is likeable . . .

Yes, that is true. I suppose you have to look at my background for an answer. My father and my grandfather were professors, but in a discipline [engineering] which is not a discipline [English] which is critical to university. Will and Petersen is an electrician who aspires to go to university. Will and Petersen is an electrician who aspires to go to university. Will and Petersen have two women — again a split between the mistress and the wife. In the case of Petersen, the mistress represents an intellectual set of values, someone to whom he aspires, but who also grates on him, and he on her, in terms of a whole series of cultural clashes. He comes from Moonee Ponds, and she from the south side of the River.

In the case of 2000 Weeks, Will’s life is an emotional Rock of Gibraltar figure, while the mistress is a kind of romantic addition to his life. It is a gratuitous love affair.

Then there is the question of father-son relationships. The father in 2000 Weeks is of the old puritan sort, and there has been a total breakdown in father-son relationship. In Petersen, the father is an

No, much earlier. For instance, there were no chairs of English Literature until 1900. In other words, by the time the novel was dying, the academics began to see it as something worth studying. With film, I wish to fight off the entry of the theorists, culture vultures and influence sniffers into an area which I still think of as free — especially of the terrible burden of bullshit that the academics are now trying to pour over it. Most of them are unresponsive, schoolteacher, rule-of-thumb people.

Do you link the academic edifice in "Petersen" with Petersen’s stepfather who runs a church without any connection with, or belief in, God?

Absolutely. F. R. Leavis says somewhere that, “The only argument for Philistinism I ever felt had any weight was the Anzac in the First World War.” I don’t know what he meant exactly, except that the Iarrirakin Australian — relaxed, healthy and with an anti-consciousness view of life — had a few things to be said for him. So, I certainly think that to oppose the view of a reductive, commonsensical electrician to a university professor was a productive thing to do.

I can remember a fight in Woolloomooloo where a gang of thugs removed the railings outside a house and then moved in. The only three people who opposed them were me (a public school boy), a journalist who happened to be a violence freak, and a drop-out that’s right. Petersen is really a re-vamp of the earlier film, though there is a class difference. Will (Mark McManus), in 2000 Weeks, is a journalist who aspires to be a writer; Petersen (Jack Thompson) is an electrician who aspires to go to university. Will and Petersen have two women — again a split between the mistress and the wife. In the case of Petersen, the mistress represents an intellectual set of values, someone to whom he aspires, but who also grates on him, and he on her, in terms of a whole series of cultural clashes. He comes from Moonee Ponds, and she from the south side of the River.

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neurotic. The party was composed entirely of “varsity chaps” who were denying that anything was happening. One of them said, “We libertarians are cowards, Tim,” as he disappeared into the other room. It was the same syndrome one finds in critics like Colin Bennett who think that violence is a Hollywood import, not something that ever really happens in Australia.

I think the very uneventfulness of Australian suburban life is connected with a kind of undercurrent of violence in all sorts of places — an anarchic desire to break the bloody thing apart.

It is at the party, particularly when Petersen goes to protect the children, that the audience comes to side with him . . .

Yes, except I would have thought the problem with the film was it wasn’t until he started to fail that people sided with him. I think the male-bonding section of the audience is with him earlier, but it is not until his woman starts kicking him in the teeth that the whole audience comes behind him. Up to that point, I suspect they have been put off by a lot of his demonstration of Australian manhood. Of course, I knew there were some things which the university-educated, middle-class person would resent and dislike about Petersen, but I was prepared to risk that . . .

End Play

“End Play”, which is based on a Russell Braddon novel, is quite a departure . . .

Yes. I wanted to get away from ocker material, and I thought of doing either a western, a musical or a crime-thriller. Of these, End Play was the easiest to mount. It was just after Sleuth, and I thought a two-hander like End Play would be viable.

It is interesting to reflect how everybody was trying to move away from ocker material at the same time. Fred Schepisi was doing Devil’s Playground, Peter Weir Picnic at Hanging Rock and so on. We all felt we had to move into something different, and widen the scope.

Did you have a free hand in adapting the novel?

At the time I felt there were restrictions, but I suspect they were mostly in my mind. What interested me was the competition between the two brothers. This led me to look at the sexual possibilities of introducing a girl who had been the girlfriend of one, and then got off with the other — which is what I did. Perhaps I should have taken that idea further, even down to introducing a murder. That certainly would have given more energy to the middle of the film.

Many of the film’s scenes were shot on a set. What effect did that have on the finished film?

It made it far more fluid than would have been possible had we shot on location. There was a major problem with the set, however, in that it meant that it would open directly out into the garden. Unfortunately, we couldn’t get the right man to build the exterior part of the set and had to give the idea away. There was, therefore, a bump

Continued on P. 576
JENI THORNLEY and MARTHA ANSARA

Barbara Alysen

Martha Ansara and Jeni Thornley are filmmakers whose work spans the history of feminist film production in Australia, and incorporates the varied styles that genre has encompassed. Very little has happened in the past 10 years of Australian feminist filmmaking in which at least one of them has not been involved.

Thornley has acted in several films directed by Ansara, and last year made her first film, Maidens, which was judged Best Film in the General Section of the Greater Union Awards, and invited to the 1978 Flaherty Seminar in the U.S.

Ansara is best known as a cinematographer. Her camera credits include: Letters from Poland (directed by Sophia Turkiewicz); Prisoners (made by the Prisoners Action Group); and two films about Aboriginal Australians, Alec Morgan’s Robin Campbell . . . Old Feller Now, and Essie Coffey’s My Survival as an Aboriginal.

Ansara and Thornley met in 1969 at the inaugural meeting of the Sydney Women’s Liberation group. A year later they began making Film for Discussion, a propaganda film that would, in Ansara’s words, “show the things that lead a young, attractive girl to discover women’s liberation”.

It was the first feminist film to commence production in Australia, but not the first finished. By the time it was completed three others, Living Together (directed by Julie Gibson, and narrated by Jeni Thornley), Woman’s Day 20c (made by Margot Knox, Virginia Coventry, Kaye Martyn, Robyn Murphy), and Home (made by Robyn Murphy, Susan Varga, Barbara Levy, and Leoni Crennan) were already in distribution.

Film For Discussion was premiered in the Womenvision Festival at the Sydney Filmmakers Co-operative in 1973. It turned out to be a very sensitive and restrained film. Beginning with a montage sequence, borrowed in style and content from the work of Cuban filmmaker Santiago Alvarez, it shows Thornley at work and at home questioning the limited roles offered to women in Australian society.

Despite Ansara’s reservations about film competitions, Film for Discussion was entered in the 1974 Greater Union Awards. However, outside the cinema, she and other members of the Sydney Women’s Film Group handed out leaflets which criticized the Greater Union Organization as “the thumb of the hand which is strangling the development of a native film industry”. It added:

Such a farce as the Greater Union Awards raises several questions. This year the Australian film industry has crawled forward just a few more inches, with the production of several features under way and a good number of short films. How are we to judge their value? Does it help to pit one against the other in competition? . . . Can films really be measured by a few judges in a room? Because a film is complete only when people see it, we consider its context. Who was it meant for and for what purpose?

Graham Shirley’s A Day Like Tomorrow (which covered similar ground to Film For Discussion, but in a completely different style), won the documentary section of the awards that year. Comparing the two, film reviewer Mike Harris wrote that A Day Like Tomorrow was a “far more cogent piece of women’s lib. propaganda than . . . the mechanically turgid and often ill-observed entry by the Sydney Women’s Film Group. While the latter did raise questions that need not just an answer but a solution, it over-reached and, at any rate in this particular demi-chauvinist, evoked the same reaction one got from Leni Riefenstahl’s Der triumph des Willens: it was so numbing as to create a distancing — disbelief took over. Or was it defensiveness?” He conceded, however, that “they’re both thought-provoking and in that they’re valuable.”

Film For Discussion, however, is one of the most widely-screened Australian short films; Ansara estimates it has been seen by as many people as some of the more successful feature films. It has also found distributors in Britain and North America — a rare achievement for a short film.

In 1974, Ansara and Jane Oehr co-ordinated the Women’s Film Workshop, conducted with funds from the Interim Training Program of the Film and Television School; 20 women participated, among them Thornley. Although

2. Reviewed in this issue.
feminism was not an entry requirement, many of those who took part in the course had worked in the women's movement. The workshop was run along collective lines, with everyone taking some of the responsibility for its organization.

During the workshop Thornley made Still Life (together with Dasha Ross), a short film about an artist's model posing for an all-male class.

"The Workshop was the first time I was actually involved in making films. Until then I had either been watching or acting in them. The Workshop was my first opportunity to get my hands on filmmaking equipment, it was very exciting. Making films was so different from being the passive receiver."

After the Women's Film Workshop was concluded, Thornley decided to make her own film: "I wrote a script which I put up to the Australian Film Institute. It was called Cup of Tea and was about having an abortion in the mid-1960s when it was illegal. Basically, it was a dramatization; it explored the contrast between the intensity of lovemaking and the reality of getting an abortion when it was illegal.

"The intensity of that contrast was really strong in my mind, but I couldn't fuse the two experiences together. That's why I wanted to make a film about it. I think it was quite a good script.

"In the end, however, I didn't make it; I couldn't come to terms with the idea of a two-week shoot, using actors and lights, and all the other paraphernalia. Now that I have read and understood cinema, I knew I wanted to make a film, but I didn't want to make that film. So, one day I decided to look at all the films I had ever acted in or worked on, and after brooding over them decided to change the concept for my film. I then wrote to the AFI and advised them what I wanted to do, and they gave their okay."

"Maidens" was evolving. Thornley worked as a camera assistant, first for Jon Rhodes at Film Australia and then, on Ansara's recommendation, for Tom Cowan on Journey Among Women.

"From the idea to the execution, Maidens took three years. During that time I tried to enrol in the Film and Television School, but each year I was rejected. The outline of Maidens was one of the things I submitted in my last application.

"One of the reasons it was such a struggle to make was that I had to deal with my lack of confidence. I had taken the rejection from the School very badly. They said they wouldn't admit me because my work was not of a sufficiently high standard, and I began to believe it. Perhaps there was some truth in what they said.

"Denied access to formal training, I was working without the skills and patterns one develops when one has experience." Maidens evolved into a portrait of four generations of Thornley's maternal family, exploring the period between 1900 and 1977, drawing on photographs found in family albums. It is an intensely personal film, and a comment on the development of all Australian families.

When the film previewed at the Sydney Film Festival in June 1978, film reviewer Paddy McGuinness wrote:

"The General Category award was . . . quite mystifying. It was given to a film called Maidens, by Jeni Thornley, which was technically incompetent, boring and stupid. I can only imagine that its evangelistic lesbianism won it support from the clique of anti-male fringe-dwellers in the women's movement."

The General Section had been judged, in fact, by filmmakers Sandra Gross and Phil Noyce, and Filmnews editor Tina Kaufman. Noyce and Kaufman replied to the McGuinness review, describing it as "lazy and offhand". Their letter didn't arrive in time for the following edition and was not published, but it said, in part:

"There is a world-wide body of film appreciation which ignores the technical aspects of images and responds to the emotion communicated by the manipulation of these images. In these films, over-exposure, graininess, contrasty lighting, or whatever, are valid expressionist tools to be used by the new generation of filmmakers who, not bound by traditional Hollywood aesthetics, find themselves free to fashion a new cinema vocabulary. Jeni Thornley has done just this, and we applaud her work."

McGuinness had also questioned the authority of the Australian judges of the Greater Union Awards. Traditionally, the foreign delegates to the Festival, who judge the Rouben Mamoulian Award, choose a different film from their local counterparts (1979 being an exception). Part of his concern with parochialism, however, must have been invalidated when Maidens won a Gold Hugo at the Chicago Film Festival and was invited to the Flaherty Seminar in the U.S.

Commenting on the Awards and McGuinness' reaction to the film, Thornley said:

"Even getting into the finals of the Greater Union Awards was a kind of vindication of the criticisms that had been made about the film and the Film School made about me. It was even more of a vindication when the Film School sent me a telegram of congratulations. "Paddy's review disturbed me, but by the time it was published the film had been shown to lots of people and other reactions were even more disturbing. When I was having the sound transferred, the sound technician — who was the first man to listen to it — looked as though he had fallen asleep! I felt really mortified. "I suppose it's like having children. You can't control what people think or feel. The film is a free spirit."

My Survival as an Aboriginal

In 1976, Martha Ansara enrolled in the full-time program at the Australian Film and Television School to study cinematography. During the three years she spent there, Ansara directed

4. The AFI was then administering the funding for the Australian Film Commission's Experimental Film Fund.

two films — Don’t Be Too Polite Girls (about working women), and Secret Storm (featuring Jeni Thornley) — and shot several others, including Letters From Poland and Me and Johnne (directed by Jeni Thornley).

At the School, Ansara studied under cinematographer Brian Probyn, of whom she said: “Everything I know I owe to him. You only really need one good person teaching you if you’re learning a craft. You just have cups of tea with them and watch them in action. After a while it rubs off.”

During her final year, Ansara, together with black activist Essie Coffey, applied to the AFC for funds to make a documentary, My Survival as an Aboriginal. However, the production was postponed until Ansara had completed her course at the School:

“While I was working on Backroads with Phil Noyce I was aware of being different from the other people working on the film. While we were up in Brewarrina I met Essie. She was very nice to me; there were certain ways in which I was very different from the film crew that were acceptable to her.

“We had a bit of a talk about this and that and agreed on certain political questions. I learned quite a bit from her. When it was time to go I said, ‘Well I’ll make our own film, one that will say all the things that had to be left out of Backroads.’

“You know how you say those things, and the next week you’ve forgotten them? Well, I didn’t forget, and one day I just got on the train to Dubbo and then on the bus to Brewarrina — and there was Essie on the bus! And so we discussed what the film should be about. I thought we should make a drama — just as exciting as Noyce’s Backroads, but she said no. She wanted everything in the film to be truthful, not play acting.”

My Survival as an Aboriginal was directed by Coffey and photographed by Ansara; it won the documentary section of the 1979 Greater Union Awards and the Rouben Mamoulian Award.

Coffey could not attend the Festival to accept the awards, so Ansara, who had just published an article in Filmnews detailing the history of the Greater Union Awards (which criticized them for not exhibiting the winning films in their cinemas, and for not increasing the prize money in line with inflation), collected them on her behalf. She used her acceptance speech to remind the audience that poor nutrition and government indifference were still destroying the cinemas, and for not increasing the prize money from the Creative Development Branch of the Aboriginals.

One of the things that has been important to me is making films that really speak from inside a situation. Just about the best experience I’ve ever had was working for the Prisoners Action Group on Prisoners (winner of the documentary section of the 1977 Greater Union Awards). It was very inspiring because Tony Green, who produced the film and also appeared in it, knew so clearly what he wanted to say.

“To make a film, you have to remain naive. If you make a film with somebody like Essie or Tony Green — who hadn’t made a film before — you have to do exactly as they say and not know better. Their weakness, which is ignorance about how film works, is also their strength. If you start trying to correct that, you ruin their strength.”

As well as making films and distributing them, writing and looking after two children, Ansara also works, from time to time, as an assessor for the Creative Development Branch of the AFC:

“One of the things that has been important to me — not that I’ve kept it up — is that I went to see films obsessively for many years before I even thought about making a film. I can remember when I was 19 and I used to keep the dictionary by my bed to look up the names of actresses, how they did it, etc., so I didn’t have to wait for the reviews to come out. That was very different from the film crew other than Tony Green. They did the film work that I had to do and I went.”

My Survival was initially funded with $16,500 from the Creative Development Branch of the AFC:

“We were very economical; everybody had to eat porridge. We had the money to make a 26-min. film, but I could tell it was going to be a bit longer. So we were careful with money, and for only $1500 more we got a 50-min. film — and an internegative too! I think we did very well.

Essie Coffey (centre) during the shooting of My Survival as an Aboriginal.

“While Ansara returns, she hopes to make a film on Vietnam with independent filmmaker Richard Mordaunt. She also hopes to study with cameraman Ross Wood, for which she received traineeship funding from the Women’s Film Fund several months ago.

Thornley has worked on a compilation documentary about women and work in Australia, with Margot Oliver and Megan McMurphy. The research is being funded by the Creative Development Branch:

“Since Maidens, I have developed more expansive ideas about what films can be used for. I didn’t make Maidens to be used for anything. It’s just as well I worked that out with Maidens and not some other kind of film. But it had to be made; it was a process of transformation within myself. I know it is limited as far as distribution is concerned, because I don’t think it’s accessible to a wide audience.

“The women and work film is one that’s needed. The only Australian film on the subject is Don’t Be Too Polite Girls, but there is no labor history film. We want to explore the labor history of women in Australia, and the image of women in Australian films.

“By January we hope to have the equivalent of a shooting script, all the copyright questions worked out, the sound research completed, and we will have resolved what gauge and length the film is going to be.

“This film couldn’t have been made five or 10 years ago, because we are drawing on research by feminist historians like Anne Summers, Sue Equity and Marion de BMW — work that had come out of the women’s movement and wasn’t around before.”

Ansara is one of the few women technicians working in the Australian film industry; and she has very strong views on role models: women should fill in the industry, and how they should achieve them:

“I can remember when I was 19 and I used to sit down and carry things through with people when people were making films. I always thought it was only somebody very special who photographed films. It was hard for me to realize that Alfred Hitchcock didn’t photograph his films, that he had never done any work without physically having to do it. I always have to do things with my own hands.

“Being able to photograph films has very little to do with technical considerations and a lot to do with mental and expressiveness. I just wish more women knew this and then they wouldn’t be so intimidated by machines.

“The film is disturbing that more women don’t want to work in technical areas. I don’t see how we are going to take over the film industry unless they do. However, I don’t think there are the barriers now that there used to be. People like Jan Kenny have opened the way for women to do technical work.

“I think women are discouraged by their own inhibitions. They are still tentative about working in the film industry. They don’t do it with their hands and they don’t do it at a safe distance, and for me, directing is a safe distance.

“Part of my reason for saying this is that I reject the notion of a single person, the director, being the creative force behind a film. There is an adulation for directors in this society that I don’t share. I would like to see film where a great deal of preparation and thought and inspiration comes from all those involved go into their making.

“I am not sure I wish to direct films, but I like to photograph them. I also want to take responsibility for films. For me, the making of the film is the seeing of it. I can’t give that up to anybody else.” ★
Top left: Oshima (left) rehearsing Eika Matsuda and Tatsuya Fuji on the set of Empire of the Senses.

Bottom left: Empire of Passion, which won Oshima the award for best direction at the 1978 Cannes Film Festival.

Bottom right: Empire of the Senses. The film's explicitness has made Oshima a scapegoat for attempts by the Japanese authorities to suppress freedom of expression.
Do you think the obscenity charges against you and the outcome of the trial you are now involved in will affect your work?

I don't think it will have much influence.

Why were the charges brought against you? With such a long tradition of pornography in Japan the official attitude seems very inconsistent . . .

I think so, too; it is absolutely inconsistent. As for the police, they have no objective basis on which to decide what is obscene and what is not. When they occasionally set up someone as a criminal, they just make a scapegoat or example of him; they think others will not follow suit. In some way or other they want to suppress our freedom of expression. So they hit someone in the public eye, like the recent incident involving the writer, Akiyuki Nosaka, and now the filmmaker Oshima.

When it came into the country, Empire of the Senses had already been cut by the censors, so they couldn't make the film itself their target. Therefore, they hit the book of the film, and are using that to teach us a lesson. That is the way power works. Of course it is contradictory.

Do you think the situation will get worse in Japan?

It is bad enough as it is. I don't think it can get much worse.

In your films, you often deal with characters who have been defined as criminals or outcasts by society. Is this because the conflict between society and the individual can be seen more sharply through them? Or are you more concerned with the definition arrived at by a society or government of what asocial or criminal behavior is, and what creates a criminal?

I am very interested in the criminal as such. As for the criminal versus society, of course I am very interested in this. But I am more interested in the criminal for his own sake than in the conflict between the two. Ultimately it is the suffering human being that concerns me. And the criminal is some-one who experiences life as suffering more than most. I want to portray such people.

Do you think the reaction to your films abroad is different from that in Japan?

I think it is the same. It varies more with the individual than with the nationality. In the case of The Ceremony, for instance, if you take the structuralists' view of it, their reaction is so difficult to comprehend; not even I can understand it!

When I saw "Empire of the Senses" at the Sydney Film Festival — where it was very popular — several people who liked it said they thought it was beautiful, but not erotic . . .

Not erotic? I can see that.

Was that your intention?

Yes.

Do you see a connection between your approach and the 'ukiyo' woodblocks, or traditional Japanese theatre?

There is a connection, but it is not something I was conscious of. It just came out that way in the process.

I understand "Empire of the Senses" was particularly popular among women in Japan. Did you expect that?

Yes. I thought it would have a large following among women.

You once did a television program, over a period of time, in which you spoke to women about their problems — sexual, marital and so on — and gave them advice. Did this affect the making of the film?

Yes, it was related. Let me put it this way: my films have usually portrayed criminals. In the earliest ones, the person committing the crime might be a young boy or a youth. The typical crime, in the case of the youth, was rape. In such cases the woman would not be the perpetrator of the crime, but only the object of it. From a certain period, with films like Empire of the Senses and Empire of Passion, I began to do the opposite, to make women the central characters. The focus of my interest shifted in this way towards women, and I think the television program where I talked with women had something to do with this.

Feminism has gained in popularity in Japan in the past couple of years, perhaps partly because it is something that has come from the outside and become fashionable. Do you have an opinion or comment to make on this trend?

Yes. I feel I want to stand aside and fight with the women who are putting up a serious struggle. But among all the various currents, there are those that have come from overseas and just become fashionable. Basically, what was called the women's lib. movement when it began was very good. In Japan it was at its best and was most vigorous as a movement just before International Women's Year, in 1975. After that, it went in the opposite direction, and while taking on a liberal facade, it became reactionary.

The old women's movement in Japan went hand in hand with class struggle and socialism for a long time. With the women's lib. movement it became clear for the first time that the struggle had to deal with basic issues peculiar to women. I would support this.

But we now have something called feminism. This, I think, is led by a group of elite women who are asserting their rights while embracing a male society. I don't think that's the case with all feminists.
Top left: Sachiko Hidari as a railway worker's wife in The Far Road.

Top right: The Far Road. Hidari (right) discusses a scene with one of the railway workers.

Bottom: Hisashi Igana in The Far Road.
SACHIKO HIDARI

As an actress, I don't like a scene cut, and therefore, as a director, I often use very long takes. When I stop a scene I feel that the basic thread has been cut short and the flow of human emotion has stopped.

I have worked with many directors, and each has his own way of drawing out an actor. The one who impressed me most was Tomu Uchida. He would direct according to the needs of each actor.

Working with Hani on the other hand meant using an all-amateur team. She and He was difficult to make for that reason. But the experience was useful in the making of The Far Road, and later I spoke to women who make a film.

Places. Then, gradually, I began to supplement their husbands' incomes. They were very dissatisfied and felt they had to do something. They wanted to support their husbands when they went on strike for better wages.

What they told me affected me greatly, and later I spoke to women in factories, offices, and other work places. Then, gradually, I began to develop a story. I discussed it with union officials and suggested it would make a film.

Sachiko Hidari is the only woman to direct a commercial feature film in Japan ("The Far Road" — 1977), since the death of actress Kinuyo Tanaka, who, between 1954 and 1962, directed six films.

"The Far Road" was seen for the first time in Australia last year, at a travelling festival of Japanese films sponsored by the Australia-Japan Foundation, and again this year at screenings organized by the National Film Theatre of Australia. Overseas, the film has been screened at the Berlin Festival and in the New Directors' series at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Hidari not only directed and starred in "The Far Road", but also produced it, with finance raised from the Japanese National Railway Workers' Union. It is based on her original idea and scripted by the well-known Japanese writer, Ken Miyamoto.

Sachiko Hidari, like Kinuyo Tanaka, turned to directing after a long career as an actress, and has worked with some of Japan's leading directors. Her films give a vivid, although idealized picture of the post-war Japanese woman, with emphasis on strength of will, independence, perseverance and earthiness. Hidari's two finest performances were in Shohei Imamura's "The Insect Woman" (1963), and Susumu Hani's "She and He" (1963), which won her the best actress award at the Berlin Film Festival.

In this interview, conducted by Solrun Hoaas, Hidari discusses her career as an actress, and the making of "The Far Road". She begins by describing how her acting experience affected her approach to directing.

There are a lot of women like that in Japan; women who live a simple life and learn to cope with hardship when their husbands are sacked or receive cuts in salary. There is nothing very dramatic about such people.

Women have great perseverance — not just in Japan, but all over the world. They have an ability to put up with things that men don't.

Do you see this as a good thing?

No, I don't think one can say that. If the situation women find themselves in makes no sense, they must also have the intelligence to change it. Up until now perseverance has been made into a virtue. But now more and more women refuse to be bound by tradition; they decide their lives for themselves. There are such women in Japan, too, but in a society influenced by the media people tend to become passive.

The role I played in "The Far Road" is a combination of many women I have met. I created the character from the positive traits I found in them.

1. The star of Kenji Mizoguchi's "The Life of Oharu"

Essentially, The Far Road is a plea for a better life for railway workers, and for all other people in government-managed industries. These are nationalized industries that continue to operate as if they were not nationalized. Why should a worker be getting a pitance after 30 years on the job?

The lives of ordinary working families are not portrayed in Japanese films very often, and the image of the working man is very weak.

Did the film change much in the making?

There is a lot in the film that's not in the script. In the theatre it could work to have the actors speak the lines as written, but I felt it wouldn't with young actors who had no experience of the workers' lives. So I told them to go to the railway workers and talk to them, make up their dialogue, and ask themselves questions like, "Why does father work for such low wages?", or "Why should I follow in his footsteps and become a railway worker?"

You remember that long sequence where the boy is talking to his mother about his future as they walk along the rails?

Yes, I liked that scene very much...

The boy made up those lines himself.

I liked the pace. You allowed it to run its course...

Yes. There is no cut in this scene. I told the cameraman to keep shooting, at least until the boy had stopped talking. I was surprised that it came off in one take. Rather than make things as the mother telling the son, "You should study hard, then go to university..." and so on, I wanted the mother to listen to what her son had to say and hear what he wanted to do. Therefore, I had the boy who plays the son make it up himself.

Each time we ran through the scene it was different, but the basic content was the same: the son realized he had to choose his own course, and then, by his own choice, decided on the railway job. Here was something in his father's way of living that had moved him.

Japan has become a country where parents, worried about their children's future, do everything to get them into an elite course. They totally disregard the children's individual qualities and think only of their progress from kindergarten through to university. This is horrendous; it was very much in mind while I was making the film.

The character you play in "The Far Road" is a very idealized...

There are a lot of women like that in Japan; women who live a simple life and learn to cope with hardship when their husbands are sacked or receive cuts in salary. There is nothing very dramatic about such people.

Women have great perseverance — not just in Japan, but all over the world. They have an ability to put up with things that men don't.
From its farthest limit. At the poorer end of the market, most noticeably in Western Europe, former visionaries—increasingly obliged to seek their financing from television or international producers—appear to be caught up in the drift towards 'safe', common-denominator productions, only the East European countries seem immune from these contradictions; pressures of the capitalist market place. Indeed, the major overall impression to be generated by this year's Cannes Festival was of the international film industry—engaged in an elaborate game of musical chairs. On the basis of the tendencies to emerge from the 1979 Festival, it appears (and exceptions to this general rule were more than gratefully received) that the U.S. is the present stronghold of auteurist cinema; that Eastern Europe is excelling in the area of social and moral criticism; and that Western Europe is floundering aesthetically, somewhere between the two stools. To complete the cautionary metaphor, it's worth remembering that musical chairs, besides involving a universal shift of positions, is also a game in which the players are eliminated—one by one.

To return finally, and concretely, to Hair, Forman has 'opened up' the original Galt MacDermot stage show into a transcontinental odyssey. Although incorporating all but three of the original songs, the story has been re-shaped.

A breathtaking elegiac opening sequence shows the untroubled and unchanging beauty of the farmlands from which Claude (John Savage) has been drafted into the U.S. Army (at the time active in Vietnam). His two-day stay of grace in New York becomes his, and our, initiation into the delights of tribal, drop-out society, expressed less effectively through Twyla Tharp's choreographed ensemble work in Central Park than through the compliant and slightly oppressive charismas of the super drop-out, Berger (Treat Williams), who assumes the Ariadne task of guiding the novice Claude through the labyrinthine joys of the alternative society.

Berger demonstrably represents the alternative society's fundamental morality: and in practicing the collectivist doctrine he preaches to the point of following his new friend across country to his California boot camp and (albeit unintentionally) assuming his place in the Army, he in fact also endorses that most traditional of Hollywood virtues—man camaraderie.

If, on the negative side, it must be said that Forman's '60s reconstruction allows him little scope for the improvisation and unplanned observation that distinguished his work before One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, that neither Tharp's studiedly casual choreography nor Miroslav Ondricek's free-wheeling camera produce the sense of raw urgency which characterized the original stage show; that the film's more psychedelic 'production numbers' seem born of a meeting between Ken Russell and West Side Story—Forman's Hair still has one powerful thing in its favor. His own hindsight enables him to show, not merely the charm but also the fragility of the Aquarian Dream. The substance of the stage musical becomes merely the central panel, in the triptych which traces the thread connecting the stability of the farmlands to the imperial ambitions of Big Business. There are no true characters in Forman's Hair: everyone involved is either hawk or dove. And the penultimate sequence, in which the flower-child Berger—now shaved, shorn and uniformed—becomes one of the anonymous army to be swallowed into the belly of the jet transporter which will take him to Vietnam and another brutal, alternative reality, provides the cinema with its most potent aphorism yet for the optimism which was the '60s.

Via Vietnam, the American optimism of the '60s has yielded not merely to impotent despair, but also to a form of insanity the more terrifying for being self-induced. It, for the Czech emigre Forman, Vietnam could be observed as a linear projection of both Francis Ford Coppola, who, on his own admission, "knew very little about the war", its tales of nightmare horror could only be approached through a form of identification. Where Forman sees the war as terminating the hallucinogenic experience, the script for Apocalypse Now, which John Milius based, at Coppola's suggestion, on Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, was transposed via Vietnam into Apocalypse as "part zany comedy, part terrifying psychedellic-horror". It focuses on the internal drip of the war—by recording one man's experiences of them; at the same time, it questions the story itself for representing them through the eyes of a protagonist who is more observer than participant, and whose own moral, or amoral, bivalence prevents the filmgoer's identification with him from ever becoming more than partial, critical or tangential.

As film and protagonist make their inescapable journey towards the heart of darkness, the filmgoer finds himself submerged in an hallucinogenicly inviting, technologically sophisticated dance of death and destruction, at the same time denied any of the usual keys which would
simplify the task of deciphering its meaning.

The protagonist, Willard (Martin Sheen, considerably matured since Badlands), is a Special Officer — in other words, a professional killer of professional killers. In common with many a uniformed soldier, he is sent on a search-and-destroy mission; but the difference in his case is that the object of his search is not an enemy outpost but an individual American officer, Kurtz (Marlon Brando), who has established a private kingdom far behind enemy lines.

In sharp contrast to Deer Hunter, where violence and a brutal enemy lurk in close-up whenever an American citizen is faced with a moment of moral choice, Apocalypse Now reduces the enemy to abstraction and (except for the bombing raid) to invisibility: the horror of war emerges the more pronounced for being merely part of an eerie, but beautiful, background. It is this background, this escalating retreat from the established rules and values of civilization, that gives the film its sustained element of muted suspense.

Sheen's impassive, sweaty, interrogative gaze suggest a process of introspection at work; one finds oneself wondering, as the film's style and pacing become increasingly oneiric and introspective, whether this process will prove powerful enough to modify his original sense of himself as a man with a simple job to do. And at the end of the film, Willard's mission accomplished, we are still wondering — uncertain whether he has killed Kurtz only to take his place.

To complain, as most people did, that everything which happens in the film after the first shadow-darkened sighting of Marlon Brando's Kurtz is an anti-climactic mess, is to complain about the film's inner logic — rather like complaining that the holy grail, when finally located, proves no more visually exciting than a glass of tomato juice. Coppola's film, in many respects a multi-million-dollar, airborne Aguirre, is a journey to the thresholds of moral choice, sanity and the human soul: he can hardly be reproached for failing to depict the inner darkness as vividly as he does the approach to it.

Coppola's incomparable and spectacular achievement served to eclipse the brightness of most of the other American entries, or at least to have the effect of turning them into period pieces — which, indeed, several of them were. The least exciting was Martin Ritt's Norma Rae, for which Sally Field, in the title role, received the Best Actress award. It's an unsubtle, comic-strip treatment of a process of introspection at work; one finds oneself wondering, as the film's style and pacing become increasingly oneiric and introspective, whether this process will prove powerful enough to modify her original sense of herself as a woman that lasted longer than the one he risked his life for at a time, it remains as fundamentally old-fashioned and clichéd as the perennially-smiling Jewish union organizer played by Ron Leibman.

Terence Malick's ecstatically-praised Days of Heaven was, for me, a disappointment. Despite Nestor Almendros' photography, which endows the flat expanses of the open prairies with an epic dignity and a quivering fragility, the film's pretensions to epic proportions will reflect as much in the amplification through the Dolby sound system of every rustle of corn or snap of twig as in the Greek tragic aspirations of its tale of three incestuously-connected characters. Malick's incoherence is marked by the film's inability to achieve the mythical status of a Gone With the Wind if it is to avoid sinking into the mire of the noir novel. Working from his own original screenplay, Malick reproduces the distance devices he used in Badlands (another story of expulsion from Eden in which woman is temptress and man pays the highest penalty for heading her siren song) by having his story narrated in voice-over by a child, this time a worldly-wise one who is herself a peripheral character, a role which much of the tension should derive from the child's recollections begin to work, and over-worked, to lend a tragic stature to their largely non-verbal communications within a dominant landscape; but the faux-naif effects from which much of the tension should derive (the gap between child perception and adult passions) wears gratingly thin before the holocaust of the final reel.

Visual beauty is also predominant in Woody Allen's latest, Manhattan, a hymn to the rosy-velveting of a city, here peopled only by lovers and culture-lovers, photographed by Gordon Willis in low-contrast black-and-white, and serenaded by the old Gershwin tunes that make up the music track.

Where Malick's aspirations were clearly signalled as Biblical, Allen sticks to his own, increasingly assured brand of urban anthropocentrism: if love and death remain his twin obsessions, the emphasis Still remains on their manifestations in the here-and-now. Casting himself in the central role — a divorced writer called Ike Davis — Allen laments the transcendence of his mortal unions ("I've never had a relationship with a woman that lasted longer than the one between Hitler and Eva Braun"). Allen's characters over whose clay feet his own romantic yearnings stumble are drawn from the more affected echelons of the
New York culture-vultures; and although the irrepressible Diane Keaton again imposes herself as a vulnerable neurotic, despite the polysyllabic banality of her up-market small talk, it's this latter which defines the communications between the characters, except Allen's Ike and his schoolgirl girlfriend (Mariel Hemingway).

In this context, as in the characters' common heritage of neurosis, provides a levelling and a leveling agent. Allen's self-mockery renders him closer to the heroic than the other characters with their self-assertions. This time, primarily, it's the other people who are the joke.

And though Allen, as director and screen-persona, still has a long way to go before he reaches complacency, there are signs that his anxieties are beginning to fit him more comfortably than before. The result is not only a technically more accomplished film, but also one in which the humor occasionally treats a dangerously thin line between the self-deprecatory and the self-congratulatory: the Allen style is now almost too polished to suit the emotional mess that lies at the heart of its subject matter.

While Manhattan belongs in the category of perfectly-proportioned minor works, there was one other American film at Cannes which not even Apocalypse Now could succeed in dwarfing: The China Syndrome — an excellently-crafted, apocalyptic cliffhanger about a go-getting television presenter (Jane Fonda at her most convincing yet) who uncovers evidence of a lethal fault in a nuclear power plant and starts wagging a doubly-doomed fight against the big business interests which control it — an excellently-drawn film as uncompromisingly modern in its tirelessly questioning spirit, as it is 'old-fashioned' in its flawless craftsmanship. Scripted by Benedict Fitzgerald, from a novel by Flannery O'Connor, Wise Blood crafted, apocalyptic cliffhanger about a

 clandestine preacher. Everyone he meets proves to be a false prophet (or a charlatan sermonizer) soothsaying in the wilderness of a curiously underpopulated city in which each moves in almost perfect isolation from the misfits around him. Try as he may to assert his claim to his own, self-motivating life, Hazel encounters only characters who define themselves and him in relation to a God who, if present at all, would appear to function primarily as a font of commercial enterprise. Enraged, Hazel attempts to preach his own anti-religion, "the Church of Christ without Christ", and just as we have grown to see him as conventionally insane — a man with a fixed idea he can neither communicate nor abandon — we realize that he is as sane as the next man, that each of the characters mirrors the others in his separate but equal, and equally unhedged, insanity.

Independently, the characters struggle to impose a meaning of lives long since disvested of any: whether they speak of love or sin or redemption, they confront the same yawning void of loneliness and purposelessness, driven by the compulsion of their warped inner logic to attempt to join what remains sundered.

Wise Blood, a perfectly proportioned minor work. Even after Hazel, in a film which perfectly balances the blackest of humor with the bleakest of Greek-tragic visions, has maimed and blinded himself in a confused attempt to prove the non-redeemptive value of suffering, he remains such stuff as lonely female dreams can prey on. His crusade to prove the meaninglessness of existence lends him the power of a holy man.

For me, only one of the European films at Cannes achieved the same parabolic power as Huston's: Rainer Werner Fassbinder's The Third Generation, much-maligned by his fellow countrymen, and which, in a style which recalls Godard's last attempts to reconcile narrative cinema with political preoccupations, bombards its audience with multiple and conflicting sounds and images, and a barrage of technological gadgets, to suggest the fundamental meaningfulness underlying a multiplicity of alternative meanings; and the extent to which machines take control of the men who invented them. The idea of society as a vast, many-headed Frankenstein monster is not a new one to Fassbinder's work. It was central to his two-part television film, World on a Wire, in which the scientist hero, working on the creation of facsimiles humans, found himself to be no more than a facsimile from another scientist's brain.

But science fiction is one thing, and sensitive contemporary politics evidently another. The general outrage with which most German critics have greeted The Third Generation apparently derives largely from the fact that its characters are not robots-scientists, but members of a terrorist cell whose biographical details frequently appear to derive from those of the Baader-Meinhof group. Terrorists, especially dead ones, have, it seems, already acquired their own fixed place in the mythology of contemporary politics. And those who see them as demons seem joined to those who regard them as martyrs in resisting any attempt to disturb the mythological status quo.

Yet, it is precisely this status quo, this receptacle of received ideas, this vast machine for converting energy into unthreatening cliche, which Fassbinder takes as his target. And here he challenges it as uncompromisingly as he challenges the artistic conventions which govern how a political tale should, correctly.

While sharing all of their rage at a hubris-society, Fassbinder dares to laugh at Germany's political leaders; to suggest that they are at their most risible in their attempts to fudge for themselves invidual identities separate from the society that spawned them. Hence, on the one hand, the camped-up theatrical posturings of his superstar guerrilla group; hence, on the other, the many jokes revealed that he have not yet cut the umbilical knot which binds them to a consumerist society: they complain for, in the end, a safe house, but a true haven in the world of our fate (shown out of competition) to sample urban life and to divest himself of his hell-fire religious origins. His impersonation of an atheistic swinger is not a success: everyone, from the fat, $4 whore with whom he begins his attempted initiation into ungodliness, recognizes him as 'a preacher'. Everyone he meets proves to be a false prophet (or a charlatan sermonizer) soothsaying in the wilderness of a curiously underpopulated city in which each moves in almost perfect isolation from the misfits around him. Try as he may to assert his claim to his own, self-motivating life, Hazel encounters only characters who define themselves and him in relation to a God who, if present at all, would appear to function primarily as a font of commercial enterprise. Enraged, Hazel attempts to preach his own anti-religion, "the Church of Christ without Christ", and just as we have grown to see him as conventionally insane — a man with a fixed idea he can neither communicate nor abandon — we realize that he is as sane as the next man, that each of the characters mirrors the others in his separate but equal, and equally unhedged, insanity.

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machines within machines, they aspire to become the image which society has made of them.

When a series of ironic accidents leads to their kidnapping the Constantine-character whose creation they unwittingly are, they direct the shooting of their home-movie ultimatum with all the perfectionism of a von Sternberg. The retake becomes a metaphor for the human condition. And in suggesting that society’s ‘monsters’ are merely its own, mirror-image creations rather than its detachable excrescences, Fassbinder probes indelicately at the endemic nature of totalitarian attitudes within the democratic state machine.

While Fassbinder’s film was consigned to the Festival’s subsidiary section, rapidly entitled ‘Un Certain Regard’, another film which turned terrorism to conventionally dramatic effect represented Italy in the main competition. Dino Risi’s Dear Papa (Caro Papa) casts Vittorio Gassman as a multi-national industrialist who finds that his student son is pitting a political assassination, but takes a lot longer than the audience to realise that he himself is the intended victim. Fassbinder’s it turned into a streamlined, the film places equal emphasis on the public’s inculcating its violence or the generation gap. The tycoon is characterized as considerably more intelligent than his rebel son (though both are surrounded by crude caricatures — of wealth and avant-garde respectively), and an opportunistically ‘happy’ ending suggests that family ties are stronger than political differences. Blood, in this case, proves thicker than blood.

Another competitive Italian attempt to combine apocalyptic warnings with popular family entertainment was Luigi Comencini’s Bottleneck (Lingorgo una storia impossibile). Screened at a time when tales of the violence produced by petrol shortages in the U.S. might have given it a topical edge, it vitiates its topicality, but takes a lot longer than the audience to realise that he himself is the intended victim. Fashionably post-synchronized, the film’s portrait of civilization paralysed by an inflationary cosmic warnings; because he is content to show, through the ebb-and-flow of human relations, the mechanisms by which people — sooner than confront the yawning abysses of their own solitude — can accommodate themselves to even the most irregular forms of camaraderie.

The odd couple of La Drolesse are a 20 year-old mentally-retarded farm boy and the practical 11 year-old girl whom he kidnaps for company. Doillon creates the ultimately tedious effect of a Grand Hotel on immobile wheels. Another inescapable fable about the breakdown of civilization was Federico Fellini’s Orchestra Rehearsal (Prova d’orchestra), which was shown in an unofficial screening at the Festival of the Italian Film Festival. The political implications of its (crudely post-synchronized) portrait of an orchestra disintegrating into anarchy, until their conductor reaffirms the need for a ‘strong leader’, have been hotly disputed. In fact, like many a younger filmmaker on display in Cannes this year, Fellini seemed determined to have it both ways — a determination which reduced his film, even at its modest television length of 70 minutes, to a formal exercise in danger of becoming a pretentious bore.

Surprisingly, it was Italy’s foremost political filmmaker who provided the Competition with its most attenuated political message. Ebell, Francesco Rosi’s adaptation from Carlo Levi’s Christ Stopped at Eboli, allows the desolate poverty of Lucania to speak for itself, and attempts to demonstrate, with nudges and underlines, the irrelevance of national politics to a lifestyle virtually untouched by the Industrial Revolution. Rosi’s powers — of observation and composition — are such that one might reasonably have hoped for another masterpiece in the manner of Ermanno Olmi’s Clog Tree. Unfortunately, the mute, amused and occasionally outraged humanism which Gian Maria Volonté is required to register in the central role of the exiled intellectual, introduce a false note of sentimental patronage. And with many a sequence concluding with a close-up of the soulful-looking dog who follows Levi into exile, one can’t help wonder whether Christ didn’t also find the time to stop in Disneyland.

It was France, however, which provided the Festival with its most concentrated area of disappointment, despite the continuation, through Le Drolesse, that Jacques Doillon is the most uncompromisingly original filmmaker working there today. Original, because he dares to base his dramas on Malick’s Biblical aspirations, showing the preference of his misfits’ sequestered domesticity to anything they can expect to find in the world. Unfortunately, one Doillon is not enough to save the French cinema’s reputation, which was helped by neither Alain Corneau’s Série Noire, nor by Techine’s tedious Bronte Sisters, which most resembled a television serial without the weekly interval. This film was determined to avoid the pitfalls of putting the literary process on the screen; but since the major events in his sisters’ lives were writing and dying, he is left with an anthology of well-photographed death scenes to help the nudgingly referential dialogue along its leaden path.

There is more than one sense in which great writers don’t always make for the greatest films. American James Ivory, providing the Festival, in The Europeans, with its only official British entry, unwisely plays Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s fairly straightforward adaptation from Henry James for farce and prettiness, leaving the wit and subtlety of the original as strained as the effects of pathos after which Lee Remick strives in the role of an unsuccessful European fortune-huntress in 1850s New England. The film is all the more of a disappointment, in that the same creative team’s recent television film, Hotel Savoy over Georgie and Bonnie’s Pictures (set in contemporary India and screened in the Market section at Cannes), had wittily-
I am part of the second generation of Swiss filmmakers — after Alain Tanner, Michel Soutter and Claude Goretta. Though I started making films at the same time, I followed a different course. I have more affinity with German-Swiss cinema than with French-Swiss cinema. The difference between the two cinemas is that while the French-Swiss came out of television, the German-Swiss originated in documentaries.

The documentary school in German Switzerland is rather developed. It is a social reflection on Swiss society, and has developed a rapport with the people. The subjects of these films are planted in the social and political problematic.

The French-Swiss cinema, on the other hand, has followed a different course. I have tried to get the film started through the classical approach of finding an established producer. This took a year, and came to nothing. And, during that time, the technicians and technicians, etc., don't exist other than for television. This has had a direct effect on the kinds of cinema that have developed. The financial and technical constraints gave an intimate form to the films. They express themselves through the spoken word with very few characters — one thinks of films like Bertrand von Effenterre's Erica Minor, or the films of Tanner and Soutter.

The form of these films was also influenced by their being shot on 16mm, in black and white, and with few actors. Many scenes would often take place in one room and, because of budgetary limitations, there was rarely any shooting in the countryside.

This is not a value judgment on the films; it is an attempt to characterize them. Today, however, there is a generation of Swiss filmmakers who are reacting to this form; who want to open out their cinema. The last films of Tanner and Soutter are examples of this — Messidor and so on. This cinema also uses a more poetic language, with humor and dialogue that doesn't deal directly with the social and political content of the film — that is to say, which isn't formulated by it.

"Les petites fugues" took three years to make. Was this a reflection of the difficulty of your moving from documentaries into features?

It is true that the gestation of Les petites fugues was very slow, but the problem was a different one. The need to get away from documentaries is something felt in the documentaries: they are quite theatricalized. A more important problem is the financial side. Les petites fugues cost 1,600,000 Swiss francs (AS$48,300), which is quite expensive.

However, the slow gestation also came from my method of work. I work in a very artisanal way, and two film collectives were used in making the film. This allowed the film to be made in a very autonomous way.

Did these collectives financially support the film?

No. Collectives don't subsidize films; they just gather together the technical side — the technicians and so on. They also have sound studios, and editing and mixing facilities. The filmmaker is the one who actually pushes his project forward. The state doesn't subsidize the collective; it subsidizes the film.

The main collectives are Filmkollektiv in Zurich, German Switzerland, and Film et Video Collectif in Lausanne, French Switzerland.

Before going to the collectives, I tried to get the film started through the classical approach of finding an established producer. This took a year, and came to nothing. And, during that time, the technicians united to bring together all their tools with which they work. Finally, Robert Boner, who is a member of the collective in Lausanne, became the producer. He is now a professional producer. He started with other films in the collective, like Patricia Moraz's The Indians Are Still Far Away.

Government subsidy is obviously essential to continued film production in Switzerland. What is the present level of funding, and is it likely to continue?

It is essential if films are to be made in Switzerland. At the moment 2,750,000 Swiss francs (AS$458,035) is made available for film production and culture — that is, for absolutely everything to do with film culture.
Does the state expect to recoup the money it invests in films?

Things are moving in that direction, but financial gain is not yet a criterion in deciding what films are to be made.

How much did the state invest in "Les petites fugues"?

It put in 300,000 Swiss francs, which is about one-fifth of the budget. Equally important, however, is the financial involvement of Swiss television. It is practically impossible to make a film with the co-production of the BBC. The audience in Switzerland is so small that it is impossible to cover costs in Switzerland alone.

I understand the story in the film is based on a true incident...

Yes. There are three essential things for Swiss films: government subsidy, co-production with Swiss television, and co-production with a foreign country. The audience in Switzerland is so small that it is impossible to cover costs in Switzerland alone.

I am interested in your use of the motor-cycle as Pipe's vehicle, while it does help Pipe progress toward autonomy, a motor-cycle is also a negative product of civilization: it is noisy, polluting, causes the landscape to be broken up with roads and so on...

The means offered by modern technology has that effect only because one is the master as well as prisoner of it. Everything depends on the way things are used. In the case of Pipe, instead of being prisoner of the motor-bike, he is privileged to conquer it himself.

Ione's personal and deeper experiences.

Is this dealing with characters, rather than ideas, indicative of something wider than just a reaction to the earlier films of Goretta and Tanner?

Yes. It is an evolution that followed the movements of 1968—a re-definition of what is "political". This re-definition of the politique is something that comes essentially from the individual. One cannot impose a transformation on society in general; it is a transformation of the individual that one must achieve.

Power is questioned because Pipe questions himself, and through his actions invites the audience to use the same processes of self-questioning.

Yes. Pipe only imposes what he is trying to do. He cannot communicate it to his boss because he would not understand.

Correct. Pipe only imposes what he is trying to do.

Up to this point the boss has had the responsibility of everybody on the farm — or, at least, felt he had the responsibility. But from the moment a person takes responsibility for himself, the power of the boss is lessened. It is therefore something that one is forced to impose; one cannot do it through discussion.

So, while the boss finally does give responsibility to the others, they have in fact already taken that responsibility themselves.

Filmography

1965 Le panier a viande (short)
1964 Les chercheurs de vache (short)
1967 Le jenic (short)
1967 Valhalla (short)
1969 Le reveil de l'ordre (short)
1970 Le sangles a vacherin (short)
1970 — Celui qui dit non (short)
1970 J'assure (short)
1970 Les boites a vacherin (short)
1970 Le four en Pierre Olaire (short)
1970 Le prix d'un divorce (short)
1976 Le tannerie de la sarraz (short)
1976 — Angele (short)
1970 Le tannerie de la sarraz (short)
1970 Les boites a vacherin (short)
1970 La passementerie (short)
1970 — Les derniers documents
1970 Le reveil de l'ordre (short)
1970 Le prix d'un divorce (short)

Features

Documentaires
1965 Le panier a viande (short)
1964 Les chercheurs de vache (short)
1967 Le jenic (short)
1967 Valhalla (short)
1969 Le reveil de l'ordre (short)
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1970 Le reveil de l'ordre (short)
1970 Le prix d'un divorce (short)
The history of Australian television must inevitably be that of government policy and legislation — there are two reasons for this: (a) Broadcasting uses limited air space and, therefore, precludes free competition; and (b) It reaches every member of the public who can turn on a receiving set, thereby requiring some control. This history, therefore, is one of government action and reaction to the various vested interests involved in broadcasting.

In the early days of radio, when the system was being established, these interests were manufacturers and retailers, broadcasting companies and the public. The successes and failures of these pressure groups on the government of the day resulted in the dual system of national broadcasting — the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the commercial system — which exists today.1 The three factors which determined the structure of television were the existing dual system of commercial and ABC radio, the federal election of December 1949, and the economic crisis in 1951-52.

### Dual System Established

Radio moved out of the experimentation stage in 1923, and the first regulations introduced by the Post Office were for a system of sealed sets. They were the brainchild of Ernest Fisk, managing director of AWA, which was one of the leading manufacturers. Through the Post Office, listeners paid licence fees nominating the broadcasting station they wished to receive, and their sets were sealed to receive that channel only. Initially, no direct commercial advertising was allowed. It soon became obvious, however, that there were not enough listeners' licences to generate sufficient revenue to support the broadcasting stations. So the Postmaster-General, following pressure on the Post Office in relation to regulation, and these difficulties eventually led to the setting up of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting, which produced its Report in 1942. This released considerable evidence in favor of the BBC system, but did not recommend that system because of the difficulty of compensating the existing companies.2 Instead, the Government tried to get the “A” class licenses to pool their resources, set up relay stations and make greater use of interstate relays; but the profit motive of the individual companies mitigated against this compromise.

Finally, in 1929, the Government decided to acquire the plant and equipment of all the “A” class stations. It paid £64,261.10.7d in compensation and put the supply of programs to these stations up for tender. The Australian Broadcasting Company, a consortium of new interests (some of the stations already broadcasting were involved), won the contract for three years, with a promise to meet the demands of various public pressure groups interested in education, music and the arts.

Throughout 1930 and 1931 the pressure from public groups continued; many of them believed that only a public corporation could provide a high standard of programming on a national basis. The Government was prepared to introduce such a structure when the Australian Broadcasting Company licence expired in 1932, and the Australian Broadcasting Commission Act was passed. This set up the ABC along the lines similar to those which exist today.

The new ABC had problems in the first decade of its existence: with new broadcasts, publications and relations with the Government. Over the same period the commercial companies were having problems with the Post Office in relation to regulation, and these difficulties eventually led to the setting up of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting, which produced its Report in 1942.3 This released considerable evidence in favor of the BBC, but the Government decided on a public service in the six capital cities which would cover 60 per cent of the population. It also wanted to co-ordinate and control the technical side of all broadcasting, including television, and the programming and advertising side of commercial radio. The debate in parliament focused on the issue of control, rather than the pros and cons of commercial television.

The Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasters (the forerunner to the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters) had, as early as 1936, considered the advantages of a separate board to prevent chaos of the airwaves. The Federation was unhappy about the way the Post Office had been regulating commercial stations and allocating channels. However, the Federation feared that a government authority would interfere in programming, particularly if the body was set up by a Labor government. The Liberal Opposition also strongly opposed the concept of a board, claiming that it would be “the first step towards nationalization”. The Control Board was set up in March 1949 with three permanent Board members and a staff recruited from the Post Office. The Labor government regarded the Board as a champion of the interests of the listeners, and the Board recognized that its responsibilities in this area "represent a novel development in the administration of broadcasting".

Within months of the Board’s inception it ventured into the programming role and issued its first order (Political Order No. 1) which defined the terms of availability of airtime for political broadcasts, and required commercial stations to transmit any addresses by party candidates for the Senate. The Report recommended, among other things, the administration of commercial radio by legislation and an end to its direct control by the Post Office. The Government concurred, and to the existing legislation, which controlled the ABC, added these recommendations. This new Act became the substantial basis of the Broadcasting and Television Act as it exists today.

### Early Television Policy

The 1942 Act, of course, made no reference to television; its history begins with legislation passed six years later, in 1948. This Act set up the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (the forerunner of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal) and excluded commercial television.4 The government of the day was eager to set up a national service in the six capital cities which would cover 60 per cent of the population. It also wanted to co-ordinate and control the technical side of all broadcasting, including television, and the programming and advertising side of commercial radio. The debate in parliament focused on the issue of control, rather than the pros and cons of commercial television.

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1. As every government since 1942 has failed to examine the structure, performance and role of the ABC in the broadcasting system, this analysis has not attempted to plot the history of the ABC, which has made very little impact on broadcasting structure and control.
5. Ibid.
leaders which had been broadcast by the ABC. In the 1946 elections the ABC had given a 15-minute segment to the Communist Party, but by 1949 the Cold War had begun and a “Reds under the bed” climate existed on both sides of parliament. The Control Board revoked the order, which was destined for revocation by parliament anyway, and it never again made an independent move in the programming area.

**The 1949 Election**

The Labor government called for tenders for the supply of television transmitters and studio equipment for a national service in each capital city, but before work began the Liberal Party gained power and Robert Menzies became Prime Minister.

The new Government announced its detailed policy on television in June 1950. It stated that television would develop gradually, with one station in Sydney for the National Television Service, which would expand as funds became available. There were also to be two commercial television licences — one in Sydney and one in Melbourne — with others available to applicants in any of the other capital cities who showed they had the financial capacity to sustain a service.

This policy statement had serious implications for the ABC. Far from being given a monopolistic control of television, which was a possibility under the Labor government’s policy, it was fighting for the junior role in the development of television. Moreover, it was left uncertain of the future plans of the Government which officially supported private enterprise and had many members who were not fans of the ABC. Charles Moses, general manager of the ABC at the time, said many years later that he had suggested to Menzies that a national service and commercial service should come under one statutory authority, like the ABC. This way, the powerful medium could be operated in the public interest. He admitted, however, that Menzies was never in favor of the idea.

In August 1950, the Government set up a television advisory committee, consisting of the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs, the chairman of the ABC and the chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board. Charles Moses went overseas on a fact-finding mission for this Committee. He recalled he was concerned to prevent that the same mistakes which had been made in radio — particularly the separation of responsibility between programming which was done by the ABC and the provision of technical facilities which were supplied by the Post Office. Because of the cost of setting up a national television service, Moses wanted a system introduced which would encourage the Australian public to buy television sets. He had been very impressed with what he had found in San Francisco, where statistics showed that an increasing number of television sets were bought as more channels went to air. He also said he was very conscious of the cost of making television programs, and that the cost of a national service might be too much for the Australian economy to sustain. He proposed, therefore, that there should be advertising on the ABC in 20 to 25 per cent of its programs.

**The Economic Crisis of 1952**

By early 1952 the economic situation had become serious, and in March the Government announced that it had deferred the introduction of television until the economy is improved. The future of television was again problematic, but early in 1953 the Government announced it would amend the broadcasting legislation to permit the licensing of commercial television stations “on the same fundamental basis as has been so remarkably successful in respect of sound broadcasting.” It also appointed a Royal Commission on Television, chaired by Professor G. W. Paton, vice-chancellor of Melbourne University, and including the chairman of the Control Board, to determine how many television stations there should be, and where they should be located.

The Opposition was very critical of the Government introducing legislation to provide for commercial television before the Royal Commission had reported, and for not allowing the Commission to provide a basic philosophy for the introduction of television, or even to decide whether commercial television was wanted.

**Number of Channels**

The Royal Commission took evidence from a number of witnesses who felt that a television service should be operated solely by a government authority, and that commercial services should not be permitted to operate at all — or, alternatively, that the latter should only be permitted to operate after the public service had been established for some years.

In a personal submission, Richard Boyer, the chairman of the ABC, revealed the real problem inherent in a commercial television system: “It is around this question of the limitation of total television transmission that the real issue is joined in the respective merit of commercial and public operation of television. In public operation there is no inherent urge to telecast more hours or more sessions than the availability of material of quality and public interest will permit. Commercially there is a natural urge to fill all possible hours with material of some sort for time is the product sold. This inevitably leads to the inclusion of a vast amount of material which is of inferior and sometimes distinctly harmful character. When one considers the long preparation and care devoted to the production of film for theatre use because of the possibility of screening into thousands of individual audiences over a long period of time, it is obvious that the filling of day-long television programs on a multiplicity of stations must result in a lowering of quality.”

Boyer then recommended a gradual introduction, stating that it was inadvisable to entrench any sectional interest, be it commercial, poli-
casters, newspaper proprietors and manufacturers of television sets.

evidence from the commercial radio broadcasters which aimed to inquire only into conditions under which the existing dual system should operate, and stated:

"Although the question whether commercial television should be permitted in Australia is clearly a matter which has caused great concern to large sections of the community, we have come to the conclusion that it is not included in the matters referred to us, and we do not propose to offer any observation in this issue."14

In 1954, the Royal Commission recommended one national station and two commercial licences in Sydney and Melbourne, favoring the evidence from the commercial radio broadcasters, newspaper proprietors and manufacturers which wanted to encourage the purchase of television sets.

### Television Licences

The next significant event was the choosing of the licensees. The Control Board conducted public hearings into the granting of licences in 1955. Four applications were received for the two Melbourne licences, and eight for the two in Sydney, and the Control Board approved representations by counsel. The Control Board also gave permission to the New South Wales branch of the Returned Services' League, and Actors and Announcers Equity to be heard as interested parties, and Equity made a strong plea for an Australian content quota.

The Control Board reported to the Minister

noting that the applications came from a narrow area of press, broadcasting and theatre interests, and recommended that the four licences be given to the applications with substantial press and broadcasting interests. It is interesting that they did not recommend one substantial Sydney application with no press interests. The Minister approved the Control Board's recommendations in April 1955, and all four commercial licences were on the air by January 1957.

In 1957, the government announced the extension of the ABC and commercial television services to the other four capital cities.15 It also stated that it had made no decision on the number of commercial licences to be granted in each capital city, and would not do so until the Control Board had made recommendations based on further public hearings.

In the Control Board's Report on the Brisbane and Adelaide hearings it noted that much of the evidence was devoted to the interest and development of the existing stations in Sydney and Melbourne, and that GTV's evidence indicated that the station should be allowed to develop television in country areas through the establishment of relay stations.

So, the Control Board addressed itself particularly to two issues: whether the existing licensees in Sydney and Melbourne should be allowed to exercise substantial influence in the establishment of the new stations in Brisbane and Adelaide; and to what extent newspapers, which already had interests in television broadcasting stations in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide, should be allowed to exercise control over television stations in Brisbane and Adelaide, if licences were granted to them.

The Control Board answered both questions negatively, recommending that there should be only one licence issued in either city and that a locally-owned company, not controlled in any way by companies already holding licences, would be preferred.

The government, however, rejected these recommendations and requested the Control Board to choose two licensees in each city from the original applicants.16 This decision was another blow to the independence of the Control Board, and ensured that the existing Sydney and Melbourne television licensees, with their powerful radio, newspaper and magazine interest groups, had a strong influence in the Brisbane and Adelaide stations.

There was no difference of opinion in Perth and Hobart. All applicants stated that only one licence should be granted, and TVW (in Perth) and Tasmanian Television (in Hobart) were recommended by the Control Board.

By 1961, television had been extended to 33 country areas, which had already allocated one ABC and one commercial television channel. The Postmaster-General had directed that, where possible, licences would be allocated on the basis that they should not be controlled by companies and not associated with the metropolitan services. Two of these licences were in the large conurbations adjoining Sydney in Newcastle and Wollongong. The Sydney licensees attempted to get overseas programs. The Board tried to impose conditions on the Sydney stations to stop this embargo, but the stations took the Control Board to the High Court and they succeeded. However, when it became clear that the Government intended to support the Control Board with legislation, the stations gave in.

In March 1963, the government announced that a third licence would be allocated to the four capital cities.17 This decision appears to have resulted from a number of pressures: the advertising industry wanted greater competition; other commercial interests wanted a piece of what appeared to be the profitable television cake (between 1959 and 1961 net profits increased from $1.5 million to $2.8 million, yet the Control Board made only a token effort to enforce regulations relating to the amount of Australian content). Other pressures included the need to build up television coverage in the areas which had already been excluded by the development of television, which was building up with existing metropolitan stations (in the previous year Consolidated Press, owners of the TCN licence in Sydney, had taken over GTV Melbourne) and the Government's concern that if Labor won the next elections it might allow the trade union movement to have the third licence.

The reason the Minister gave, however, was that there was room in the airspace, and that "great competition would result in benefits to the public and the development of the television service."18

There were nine applications for the Sydney licence and six for Melbourne. GTV Melbourne tried unsuccessfully to intervene in the Melbourne hearings to prevent these two independent stations from getting overseas programs. The Board tried to impose conditions on the Sydney stations to stop this embargo, but the stations took the Control Board to the High Court and they succeeded. However, when it became clear that the Government intended to support the Control Board with legislation, the stations gave in.

The granting of the 1963 licences is significant because it brought Ansett into television. The Ansett company, Austrarama, got the Melbourne licence but not the Brisbane licence for which it also applied. The Board recommended Universal Telecasters which had no other commercial television interests, and claimed that the stations would be run by Queenslanders for Queenslanders. Ansett then bought up the shares in Universal Telecasters and controlled the company. The Melbourne Herald commented: "If an applicant rejected by the Board can gain his ends by buying its successful rival's share on the stock exchanges, it seems a pity to make the Board do things at once but rather ineffective form of indoor recreation."

In recommending South Australian Telecasters Ltd for the licence in Adelaide, the Control Board noted that the majority of shares would be held in South Australia, except for some held by Ansett. This station (SAS-10) was taken over by TVW Perth in 1971, however, and now the majority of shares are held in Western Australia. In Perth, Ansett also had a small number of shares in Swan Television, the successful applicant for the second licence.

So, by July 1965, when the third stations in Brisbane and Adelaide went on air (the last of this group to do so), the structure was completed in its present form, and what Richard Boyer feared in 1953 had arrived — endless hours of airtime to be filled.

**Standards**

The major concern with the standards for television has always been over the amount of Australian-made programs (which is measurable), rather than their quality (which is not). At the Royal Commission hearings, the case in favor of Australian content was frequently argued in terms of showing Australian culture, and the need to employ Australians and develop Australian talent.

A large number of submissions from parents and teachers were concerned about the amount of American programs which might be shown, and the commercialism that went with them. Other witnesses cited American research which showed that the number of hours children spent viewing television was beginning to equal that spent at school; that there was a considerable reduction in the time children spent at play; that television watching induced depressed mental activity; and that the amount of violence on television was having an effect on children. Addressing himself to the quality of the programs, Richard Boyer again made pertinent comments in his submission:

"The hours of telecasting and the number of stations operating should be strictly related to the availability of material of good quality. As with radio, it is possible to put programs of a sort at small cost on the T.V. screen. The interest both of the public and of the producer of T.V. require limitation of hours to a point where standards can be maintained."

In the light of the subsequent development of television it is interesting to note that Boyer quoted to the Commission an article which had appeared in the *New York Times*, written by Jack Gold, a radio critic:

"Television is getting pretty bad. The high hopes which were held by so many are vanishing before our eyes. The medium is heading hell bent for the rut of innocence, mediocrity and sameness that made a juke-box of radio. What of the endless procession of crime thrillers and of the panel shows with the same faces appearing over and over again with monotonous regularity? And the children's programs? Is there no sense escape from the nauseating trifle whereon the younger generation sing the praises of cereals and candy bars? Are these programs to be the sole measure of the child inheritance, the riches of the library and the treasure of the arts? Television take heed! It is blindly and short-sightedly selling its ultimate greatness for a batch of synthetic popularity ratings that are boring into T.V.'s foundation like termites."

The Royal Commission, commenting on standards, stated that there was strong evidence from two groups: those who saw themselves as potential licensees favoring self-regulation; and those who believed that self-regulation would not be an "adequate means of maintaining standards because commercial pressures would encourage mediocrity, and the paucity of Australian talent would encourage the introduction of cheap and inferior overseas programs to save costs. The Commission recommended that: "The hours of telecasting and the number of stations operating should be strictly related to the availability of material of good quality."

**Australian Content**

Another reason the employment argument has tended to swamp the one for high quality is the clause introduced into the legislation in 1942, and retained since. It requires the commercial licensees, and the ABC, to "as far as possible use the services of Australians."

The Royal Commission Report in 1953 had stated that Australian artistes should play a real and steady increasing part in Australian television; but it also stated that it was not possible to recommend a quota of Australian content until actual experience had been gained on the amount of talent available.

At the public hearings for the granting of the first licence in Sydney in 1955, Clive Evatt QC appeared for Actors Equity and asked the witnesses that were there, who were the six in relation to Australian programming and the employment of Australian artistes. He made a very strong plea to the Board to require as a condition of the licence not less than 55 per cent program hours of Australian content.

The Control Board stated, however, that it did not intend to recommend any such condition, as it was sure licensees would discharge the obligation of ensuring that best use was made of Australian talent. It did recommend, however, that the granting of licences should be on the condition that the licensees complied with any program standards the Board determined.

Although there was no Australian content quota during the first month of operation, there were severe restrictions on the amount of overseas programming permitted because of the shortage of overseas currency. The Government limited each organization's expenditure on overseas material to $60,000, of which not more than two-thirds could be spent in U.S. dollars. This meant a lot of programming was local live material (there were no video recording machines until 1959).

But in July 1957, the Government released this restriction, despite public pressure for its retention as an Australian content control mechanism. It is significant that the percentage of Australian content before the restriction was lifted was ATN: 66 per cent; TCN: 45 per cent; GTV: 61 per cent; and HSV: 45 per cent. By

22. ABCB. Report and Recommendation to the Postmaster-General on Applications for a Licence for a Commercial Television Station in Sydney and Melbourne areas.


24. ABCB. Report and Recommendation to the Postmaster-General on Applications for a Licence for a Commercial Television Station in the Brisbane area, in the Adelaide area and in the Perth area.
September 1958 programming hours had increased, but Australian content had dropped to below 45 per cent for all stations, with TCN the lowest at 37 per cent.27 Public pressure for more Australian content continued, and in 1960 the Minister introduced the first quota. He advised licensees that the proportion of Australian programs televised by each station at the end of three years of operation should be not less than 40 per cent, and must include at least one hour a week, between 7.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. However, the annual report of the Control Board for June 1962 showed that neither of the Sydney commercial stations had reached 40 per cent when the Postmaster-General announced the proposed introduction of a third channel in the other four capital cities.

Throughout 1962, and during the public hearings for a third commercial license in Sydney and Melbourne, the Control Board heard evidence from applicants about their plans for Australian programs. In choosing the two successful applicants for Sydney and Melbourne the Control Board stated that it was impressed with the Sydney applicant (United Telecasters) and quoted from its submission: “A real and persistent effort should be made to bring a fresh, original and Australian approach to all types of entertaining programming”.

The Board, in recommending the Melbourne licence to Austarama Television Ltd, stated that it attached great importance to the nature of the program proposals of this applicant. These proposals included 24.5 hours of programs of Australian origin, or 58 per cent in the first year of operation, and a gradual increase in the second and third years. The company also sought to create “a strong Australian image in its programs” and “that the content of the program would also need to reflect an Australian environment, encouraging awareness of the achievements of Australia and advance the arts and crafts culture of the nation.”

The hearings for the third licence in Brisbane and Adelaide, however, attracted considerable evidence arguing that an additional channel would have dilatory effects on the existing commercial stations. The Control Board stated in its Report that it recognized this, and that there may be some reduction in the local production of Australian programs, but the curtailment would not necessarily lead to serious results. It stated that: “Any reduction of the amount of Australian programs produced locally would we consider to be largely offset by the use of some of the increasing quantity of good quality Australian programs which will become available particularly as a result of the productions of the new Sydney and Melbourne stations.”

To appease the growing pressure for more Australian content from the unions, independent film producers, and the public, the Government28 set up the Select Committee on the Encouragement of Australian Productions for Television, chaired by Senator Vincent. It took evidence in all states and generated a great deal of interest and expectation, and reported to the Government in 1963.29 This committee was very critical of the Control Board’s regulation of commercial television and made a number of recommendations, some of which are on one coming into effect:

(a) That applications for a licence renewal should be heard in public;
(b) That the renewal period for a television

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quota: All Programs</th>
<th>7.30p.m.-9.30p.m. Drama</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>40 per cent</td>
<td>4 hours a month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>*VINCENT REPORT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>45 per cent</td>
<td>8 hours a month</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>50 per cent Credit</td>
<td>12 hours a month</td>
<td>2 hours a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>50 per cent</td>
<td>18 hours a month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td><strong>MAKE IT AUSTRALIAN</strong></td>
<td>6p.m.-10p.m.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>50 per cent including credit first release drama</th>
<th>45 per cent</th>
<th>6 hours a month</th>
<th>4 hours a month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>*TARIFF BOARD REPORTS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973 Points system introduced</td>
<td>6 hours a month</td>
<td>4 hours a month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Points system introduced</td>
<td>6 hours a month</td>
<td>4 hours a month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Overseas programs allowed</td>
<td>6 hours a month</td>
<td>4 hours a month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>*ABT SELF-REGULATION INQUIRY</td>
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</table>


The Vincent Committee was the beginning of the slow process of raising awareness to media and film issues within industry organizations and with the public. The Control Board could no longer turn a blind eye to the Australian content issue. It set up research into audience attitudes to programming,30 and gradually raised the percentage quotas as the pressure continued to grow (see Table 1). However, it appeared incapable of strongly imposing these quotas.

The lack of media publicity for the Government’s inaction gradually stimulated awareness of the problems of media monopoly. Some unions responded by demanding a break-up of media control. The recommendations for funding the film industry and breaking up distribution and exhibition monopolies led to growing pressure from filmmakers which resulted in a U.S. seminar in 1969 on the professional training of film and television scriptwriters, producers and directors. From this came the recommendations for the Australian Film Development Corporation, the Experimental Film Fund, and the Film and Television School. The Vincent Committee’s recommendations for a national television council were taken over by interested unions31 which formed a council to get the recommendations implemented.

All this activity spawned the “T.V. — Make it Australian” campaign in 1971. Media unions, filmmakers and individuals working in the film and television industry organized petitions in marginal seats in Melbourne and Sydney. They sought an inquiry into the structure of Australian television and assistance for Australian films. These petitions were presented to the Senate and had two results: in August 1971, the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Science and the Arts was given the reference to inquire into “all aspects of television and broadcasting including Australian content of television programs” under the chairmanship of Senator Davidson; and, in March 1972, the Minister for Trade and Industry requested the Tariff Board to inquire into, and recommend on, the assistance needed for production in Australia of motion picture films and television programs. These bodies took evidence throughout 1972 from the film and television industry.

The Tariff Board reported in June 197332 making recommendations to assist Australian film production, distribution and exhibition, including the setting up of a government body to invest in films, and a strategy for breaking up the distribution and exhibition monopolies. The
Robert Bruning

How was Gemini Productions set up?

Gemini dates from 1971, when I was making The Godfathers, which was my first television series. There were five of us involved in the production: Michael Laurence, the writer, Bill Hughes and Alister Smart, who were directors, David Hannay, the production manager, and myself. I was anxious to ensure that all of us were financially involved in the production, but the others felt that a share of the profits wasn't as satisfactory as some equity in the company.

I wasn't prepared to give them equity in my family company, so I set up Gemini Productions as a strictly package production company. It was called Gemini because there were many people in the group with that star sign.

We did a lot of television while the half-hour weekly series was still popular. We knew how to work economically, and, though we were not making a fortune, we did quite nicely. I was making The Godfathers for $5600 an episode, yet making money on it -- that was quite a neat trick. The margin was $400 an episode and I calculated on having to make 22 episodes to break even.

How was the series financed?

That came about because of a public challenge Clyde Packer made with Bobby Limb, after Limb had gone to the press and said that television stations weren't prepared to back small Australian producers. Limb maintained that, given the chance, he could make a half-hour television series for $5000 an episode. Clyde retaliated by saying that if Limb could, he would place an order for it and then he did. Finally, Limb backed off and I just happened to run into Clyde at the time. I offered to make a series for $5600 an episode, and, as luck would have it, we made a good pilot and got the order.

As it turned out, the series was so successful that after 26 episodes Michael, who had written every episode, started to go round the twist. So he wrote himself out and wrote Harold Hopkins in. We continued with the show for another two years, then we fell on hard times. I was doing the True Blue Show, my first variety show, and it was too much to bite off. It died in the Christmas of 1973, and in 1974 I couldn't even get arrested.

Fortunately, I got a role in Sunday Too Far Away and Crawfords, who had always been kind to me, offered me work. But it just wasn't enough, especially since I got married that year.

Well, somebody loved you...

Yes, somebody loved me. Then I devised the idea of making television films back to back, but I couldn't convince anybody there was a market for them. The evidence was there because Spelling Goldberg had been making them very successfully in the U.S., but no one would listen.

Then, in 1975, I finally got an order. It was from Channel 9 for a terrible thing called Paradise. I made it in Surfers Paradise, and, although I would like to forget it, it has been shown on American prime-time in syndication. Paramount bought it outright; in fact, it's the only one I ever sold — the rest are in distribution.

Channel 7 then gave me a chance on Is There Anybody There?, which was the first of the true all-film tele-features. I made that in 1976, and it did very well. On the basis of it, Channel 7 gave me my first back-to-back order, which we made in 1977: Mama's Gone a' Hunting, The Alternative and Gone to Ground. They all rated well, but I came up against the combination of things that goes to small independent producers: because television features made in Australia are not viable, you have to have deficit finance; because you are deficit financed, you have to keep your deficit as low as possible; because you are trying to keep your deficit as low as possible, you have to keep your own end as low as possible and you live on virtually nothing; and so on. Obviously, I didn't starve to death, but I didn't have the necessary financial resources to keep that sort of structure going.

I then looked at the forecast and it seemed that by the end of 1978 I was going to be into various investors for more than $300,000. Now, although I am not a particularly pessimistic sort of person, I knew that if I went bad at the age of 48, there was no way I was going to be able to pay that sort of money back. As a production company, I needed the umbrella of a bigger organization.

I then spoke to Reg Grundy. Reg was already a drama producer of substance, but he wanted to widen the range of his drama activities, the upshot of which was that I sold Gemini Productions to Reg, with a contract to run it for him for two years. That contract expired on October 31, last year.

Gemini is now a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Grundy Organization, and will remain so. My relationship with Reg is such, that when they want to do a television feature, and they feel I might be the right kind of producer, I could be brought in as a contract producer — should I be available.

It was a very painless transfer, the only difference being that I had much flasher offices, and though I still wrote the cheques, I didn't get

As Australia's feature film industry developed from the revival of 1970, it was inevitable that the closely-related fields of features and television would overlap. One area where this is particularly apparent is tele-features, which are often funded by the Australian Film Commission, as well as by commercial television stations.

A pioneer of the tele-feature is Robert Bruning, a producer whose name is as associated with acting as with the television shows he has produced. "The Godfathers", a series which Bruning began in 1971 on a budget of $5600 an episode, was a courageous start. It was soon followed by a string of tele-features, which includes "The Alternative", "Mama's Gone a'Hunting" and "Is There Anybody There?".

Bruning, who still alternates between producing and acting, was recently in Melbourne working for Crawford Productions. There he spoke to Peter Beilby and Scott Murray.

Robert Bruning (second from left) and cast from The Godfathers.
to sign them any more. I also had the opportunity to develop other projects. This meant I could take on a bigger production schedule in 1977. We did seven that year, which was slightly too many.

You said you evolved a technique of making these features on very low budgets. What did that involve?

The first thing is to have all the scripts ready and locked-off before the first day of pre-production. Then, if you take on the right sort of highly professional hardworking production staff, you can virtually pre-produce three features simultaneously. The films might not all be happening at once, but bits of one film could be attended to while another is shooting, and so on.

We used to shoot the films in three six-day weeks, with a week's lay-off in between for the crew to collapse. In effect, we were offering people three months work, with lots of variety. All the films had urban locations, so theoretically the crew could get home to their wives every night. It didn't quite work out that way, though, as some of the days were quite long.

There were all sorts of economies like that, which reduce your overheads enormously. But the whole thing won't work unless your scripts are locked-off. If you have any problems with script alterations and so forth, then the whole thing falls to pieces. As we discovered last year, it all falls to pieces with acts of God. Paul Eddey became very ill while he was working on these projects and we were forced to postpone one of them in the middle. Now that is not just the postponement of a film, it is the postponement of everything that follows.

Your first three tele-features were done with Channel 7. Did they put up the money?

They bought them in advance; Channel 7 bought the television rights and the Australian Film Commission put up the deficit. Channel 7 also had a very modest percentage of the films. They are beautiful customers in the sense that once you have proved that you can do what they want, nobody hassles you. I like to think that I enjoy an excellent relationship with Channel 7, though I wish they would pay me a little more.

What figure are we talking about for a tele-feature?

It varied over the years. In 1977, the figure offered by the television stations was somewhere between $70,000 and $84,000, depending on the length of format — i.e. 90 minutes or two hours. Now that was against budgets of between $105,000 and $125,000, so there is a fairly heavy deficit, and you are not going to make that up from your advance from a distributor.

Did the financing of the tele-features change when Grundy became involved?

No, they were still deficit financed by the AFC.

So Grundys didn't have any investment in the projects, except by virtue of their production company. . . .

I don't think their total contribution is reflected in the budget; the provision of facilities and so forth are only nominally charged for in the budget. I would say that Grundy's contribution was heavy, and, of course, in between productions, he kept my staff and me busy developing properties. Now that's a punt. The money that has gone into those scripts has not come from the AFC, but the Grundy Organization's pockets. I would imagine that in the past 18 months, considering the American operation as well, the Grundy Organization's investment on drama would have been in excess of $100,000. That's a lot of bread, and one of the things a smaller producer like myself can't bankroll.

You said that your first three tele-features rated well. How was that tested?
Robert Bruning as the lecherous film producer who lures Angela (Sigrid Thornton) into The Godfathers: Eric Oldfield, Michael

often referred to, which I call the area of "prestige". It measures the amount of kudos brought to a

Lawrence and Anna Volska.

There?, two of my three films that have come off the top. In a year where however, things can change.

that your films were taken up by an public acclaim.

Now my tele-features, while rating

station by the programs it shows. Now my tele-features, while rating well, also brought their fair share of public acclaim. Is There Anybody There?, for example, took a Penguin, and also a Sammy for the best music. In the second year, the two of my three films that have been shown (Mama’s Gone a Hunting and The Alternative) took eight awards between them.

I think all these awards indicate that Channel 7’s involvement in drama is at a level other than purely

If we could talk now about the overseas marketing. You said earlier that your films were taken up by an overseas distributor . . .

Yes, Is There Anybody There?, Mama’s Gone a’ Hunting, Gone to

and The Alternative were all distributed by Paramount. The deal was a substantial cash up-front in return for the right to distribute them for 15 years. That is a little long in my opinion, but it’s a buyers’ market. They take a 35 per cent commission on sales, which comes off the top. In a year where sales have been, say, $100,000, this means $35,000 comes off the top to start with.

Then come a whole range of standard charges, like print costs and so forth. These may be as high as $25,000, and you are left with $40,000. Off the top of that comes the repayment of any advances — say $25,000. So, out of the $100,000 raised in sales, you are left with a nett $14,000, which doesn’t look too good for the investors. If the films do well in the next year, however, things can change.

Do tele-features have long lives in that sense?

It depends on how they are sold. Mostly they are sold in packages, grouped round a “leader” film. For example, if someone wanted to sell My Fair Lady to Japan, they would put 50 films with it, of which Is There Anybody There? might be the last card in the pack. Now, if the sale is for a million dollars, you don’t work out how much Is There Anybody There? gets by dividing a million dollars equally among 51 films. My Fair Lady would probably get $800,000, and the rest would then be split up — probably quite arbitrarily.

One of the areas I find most unsatisfactory about the situation is that the producer loses control of where or for what his product will be sold. So, while I am very grateful to Paramount for getting us into an international sphere, I am less than happy about the methods by which I let myself be drawn in. I certainly wouldn’t allow it to happen again.

In retrospect, is there a way to make profitable tele-features in Australia?

Yes, and I believe everybody is going to have a crack at it this year. In fact, there will be enough product around to make the feature business look a bit sick in terms of total output.

What form will these tele-features take?

The first thing everybody is thinking about is of low-budget cinema films with television legs beyond that point. In a sense, I believe that’s what Patrick and End Play are. Patrick probably has cinema legs outside this country as well, but certainly it has television legs. It is a first-class piece of television product for the U.S. because if you dub that track into American, the film could easily be thought to have come out of San Francisco, New York, or New Orleans. There are no cars in it, so you don’t see what side of the road people drive on; the situation is mostly interior; it’s about mostly middle-class people with present day modern values; and so on. It’s pretty international in its approach.

End Play was always a television film in concept, though it was made on a budget that was too high for its day. It deserved a better run in the local cinema, however, and its television airing certainly proved worthwhile. I believe it will work very well on air overseas.

So, a cinema film with television legs is one way of taking the deficit out of financing. You make the film for, let’s say $300,000, and that is not an awful lot to win back at the cinema. Sure, you still have to make a million dollars plus to break even, but if you have a few goodies in it — like an acceptable American television star — you have a chance. I don’t think we will break into the American networks for many, many years, though American syndication is definitely a possibility.

Do you think the package concept should also be adopted?

Sure. If you have a package you can hedge your bets a little. If one gets up, it will probably carry the other two, or at least make a step towards them. It’s all little bits and pieces.

Do you envisage a greater coming together of the television and film industries, and, if so, could that be a way of making the industries more viable?

Yes, though there are several ways they could become more viable. One is a correct application of the new taxation laws. I don’t think the television stations are completely aware of what’s possible.

If the television stations in a network were to form into the investment groups, they could then invest in feature films and at the same time show substantial financial results in the form of taxation relief. This would then mean they could afford to invest far more than they have in the past.

I have great sympathy for television stations, however, because every time they turn in a good financial result everybody says they should immediately subsidize the whole feature film business. I just don’t subscribe to that. They are in the television game and they are doing what we should be doing, which is making money.

The important thing is for more feature films to do well at the box-office. I know one network, for example, which over the past three years has invested in 10 features, only one of which made a profit. Now, you can’t blame the boards of directors, who are after all in the television business, saying to their managements, “Just remember chaps, what business you are in.” It is, after all, horses for courses.

Robert Bruning (centre) with the stars of The Godfathers: Eric Oldfield, Michael Lawrence and Anna Volska.

It is more than ratings. There is an area of television, which is not often referred to, which I call the area of “prestige”. It measures the amount of kudos brought to a

Robert Bruning as the lecherous film producer who lures Angela (Sigrid Thornton) into doing some test shots. Simon Wincer’s Snapshot.

Gerard Kennedy and Vince Martin in Mama's Gone a' Hunting, Bruning's first all-film tele-feature.
CRAWFORD PRODUCTIONS

A brief history

Albert Moran

Since the early 1960s, Crawford Productions has produced more than 2000 hours of television drama (see fig. 1). Such an output makes it the largest producer in the country, well ahead of its largest commercial competitor, the Grundy Organisation, which has only been in the drama area since 1974. Crawford has also exceeded the output of the ABC. Yet, with the exception of John C. Murray's article, "Defending the Defenders" (Lumière, No. 22, April 1973), there has been a critical silence about the significance of the organisation's contribution to the television and film industries. This article, therefore, is offered as a stimulus to further work in the field.

Crawford Productions began as Hector Crawford Productions in 1945. Up to the coming of television in 1956, it was one of the largest transcription houses for the production of radio material in Australia. At its peak, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it was producing more than 10 hours of material a week (fig. 2 gives a sample of various titles and the number of episodes produced).

With the advent of television, several transcription houses planned to move into television; Grace Gibson Productions in Sydney made a half-hour television pilot The Adventures of Al Munch (released in newspapers as I Found Joe Barton), and Australasian Radio Productions in Melbourne did a half-hour comedy pilot, Man About the House; neither found the backers necessary to allow them to go into production. Crawford was the only company to make the transition successfully and, altogether, it has been in drama production for nearly 35 years.

The company was founded by Hector Crawford and his sister, Dorothy. Hector's background was in music and Dorothy's in music and drama. Not surprisingly, the transcription house specialized in these areas.

Hector Crawford was born in Melbourne in 1913 and was educated as a choirboy at St Paul's Cathedral School and at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. As a young man he was actively involved with music: he was on the staff of the Conservatorium, conducted a number of Melbourne choirs, and, in 1938, started the "Music For The People" outdoor concert series. Then, in 1940, he became music and recording director of Broadcast Exchange of Australia, a Melbourne-based recording and radio production company.

Dorothy Crawford, after a scholarship course in singing and pianoforte at the Conservatorium, was a professional singer for several years before switching to the theatre and drama. She worked in the ABC, in radio acting and production, before linking up with her brother to form Hector Crawford Productions.

The company started business in offices in Little Collins St. During its radio days, Crawford was an intimate family company with no more than 10 to 12 people on the payroll. They included office staff, who also doubled as script editors, Hector and Dorothy, and others with writing, acting or production skills. At different times, these included Roland Strong, Rube Sharlet and John Omiston-Reid.

The first program the company made was Melba (the part was sung by Glenda Raymond who became Hector Crawford's wife in 1950) and music was to be its early strength. Later, its drama production became just as outstanding. Sales were as successful as its programs and, unlike some of the other transcription houses, Crawfords rarely sold anything that was not on a national basis. In addition, it achieved sales in 20 overseas countries.

With the advent of television and the general trend in radio to music formats, the demand for recorded music slackened considerably. The years up to 1961 were lean, but some revenue came in from other sources, such as overseas sales, radio and television commercials, and documentary film production (especially the Export Action series which the company produced under an arrangement with the Department of Trade).

Crawfords was an intimate family company. There was a very close relationship between the company and the family. The company was a personal business which was conducted on a personal basis. The科技园 Organisation, which has only been in the drama area since 1974. Crawford has also exceeded the output of the ABC. Yet, with the exception of John C. Murray's article, "Defending the Defenders" (Lumière, No. 22, April 1973), there has been a critical silence about the significance of the organisation's contribution to the television and film industries. This article, therefore, is offered as a stimulus to further work in the field.

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Figure 1

TELEVISION DRAMA OUTPUT

As at January 1979

Consider Your Verdict 160 one-hour episodes
Homicide 500 one-hour episodes
Hunter 39 one-hour episodes
Division 4 300 one-hour episodes
Mallacoota Police 200 one-hour episodes
Ryan 26 one-hour episodes
The Box 700 one-hour episodes
The Last Of The Australians 26 half-hour episodes
Bluesy 36 one-hour episodes
Solo One 13 half-hour episodes
The Bluestone Boys 26 one-hour episodes
The Sullivans 200 one-hour episodes
Young Ramsey 13 one-hour episodes
Bobby Dazler 13 half-hour episodes
Cop Shop 140 one-hour episodes

These figures are approximate only.

Current in production are The Sullivans, Cop Shop and Skyways, Murder Squad and Young Ramsey (a second 13 episode series is in preparation).

Crawford even had two early television quiz shows in Video Village and Wedding Day, and in its offices, on the second floor of the Olderfleet Building at 475 Collins St, where it moved in 1960, the company also ran the Crawford Television Workshop, an acting workshop which was a further source of revenue. The breakthrough, however, came when HSV Channel 7 invited Crawfords to transfer its long-running radio series, Consider Your Verdict, to television (by then it had finished on radio).

Consider Your Verdict was a low-budget adaptation of the radio program. On radio each had run as five half-hour episodes; on television it began as two-hour episodes, but was then cut down to one. It won little distinction or glory, apart from a TV Week Logie in 1961 for Best Australian Drama; but for a good part of that year it was the only local drama series in production.

Against imported courtroom dramas of the time, such as Perry Mason and Boyd Q.C., Consider Your Verdict looked distinctly tame. Confined to the courtroom set, the series had no regular characters, although a small group of actors, such as Wyn Roberts, Roland Strong, George Fairfax, Peter Aarnesson and Robert Peach, recurred as counsel, and action was confined to verbal interrogations between witnesses and counsel. Audience involvement was, therefore, centred on an involvement with lay people in any particular case, and in the question of whether the accused was...
The Homicide team as it was in 1974: Dennis Grovernor (left), Don Barker, Gary Day and Charles “Bud” Tingwell.

Senior Detective Frank Banner (Gerard Kennedy) and suspect (Bill Pearson) in Division 4, Crawfords’ second highest rating program (after Homicide) up to 1972.

Rod Mullinar in Ryan, a series which centred on the adventures of a private detective.
productions at Crawfords up to the early 1970s). Autonomy was then structurally impossible because of the pattern of organization: if anything, authorship on these early programs was collective and anonymous. And yet, paradoxically, while individual authorship was denied, the script was promoted in importance because it became a means of controlling and focusing the efforts of various divisions of the company while it passed through the different stages of production. Thus, the area of production given most importance was the writing, with writers being the best paid and most highly-regarded employees in the company.

Finally, the pattern outlined meant that the family retained overall control of its programs. Even if the family members were unable to supervise the finer details of production, they could, through the teams they had developed, retain overall guidance and control. The final credit of a Crawford program in those years — “Company’s Own Police Drama Scripts” — expressed the dominance of the family in the company.

Late in 1963, Consider Your Verdict was cancelled. Crawfords had already developed a new series, Homicide, and had sunk its own money into a pilot episode, The Stunt, written by Phil Freedman and Ian Jones. Although HTV Channel 7 was interested, other sales had taken place before the new series got into regular production. Even then the company found that they were getting back less than the program cost, and it was two years before Homicide began to show a profit.

From the beginning, however, the new series outrated Consider Your Verdict. It started on Melbourne television in late 1964, and in Sydney early in 1965; within months it was among the 10 most popular programs in both cities. From 1966 to 1972 it was the most popular program on Australian television, and only Division 4 came close to rivalling it.

Despite obvious differences, Homicide showed some interesting continuities with Consider Your Verdict. Like it, Homicide was based on a recurring plot situation (a murder and its investigation) rather than on characterization. The homicide squad did contain regular characters, but for much of its run there were not five or six subject of dramatic interest. Altogether there were 15 changes of police characters: the original team was John Fegan, Terry McDermott and Lex Mitchell; the final one was Charles Tingwell, Don Barker, Gary Day and Dennis Grosvenor.

Like Consider Your Verdict, the stress was on authenticity. The files of the Victorian police department were available to the writers (although writers also had access to the police drama scripts from the radio days). Police advisers vetted scripts for details and accuracy, and the department helped in such things as blocking off traffic for film shooting, allowing access to places like Russell St and the Police Academy, and providing megaphones, ambulances, etc.

The first 13 episodes of Homicide culminated in a courtroom trial along the same lines as Consider Your Verdict. In practical terms, the trial took many days. These segments were shot on videotape. However, it was in the use of filmed inserts that Homicide broke with its predecessor. The program started on a ratio of about one length of film (about 16 minutes of screen time) to two of videotape. This was gradually increased until, just before it converted to all film and color in 1972, film and videotape were of about equal length.

Film enabled Homicide to move outdoors; it saw the introduction of physical action, chases and fights. It also saw the introduction of a side of a large Australian city with which most viewers were familiar, but which had not been seen previously on local television. For many of those working on the program this was one of the chief reasons for its success, a view echoed and supported by John C. Murray in his 1973 article: “In Homicide and Division 4 the dramatic character, action and ethic are embedded in a world we know — the sub-industrial landscape of narrow-gutted South Melbourne back streets and lanes, the Victoria docks, the Dynon road railway yard ... More than anything else, the location shooting makes the series good to look at; and again it all sustains thatThemes of Hunter that I've been talking about. If a smalltime drunk-roller is being pursued by the boys in blue, then he'll be hunted down smalltime back streets, alleys and courtyards; the squalor of his crime shadowed by the squalor of the settings.”

For more than 10 years Homicide was to be at the centre of Crawfords’ operation. Its success tended to confirm the company in a certain kind of thinking. After the cancellation of Hunter, an ambitious attempt at a spy series which could not resolve whether it wanted to be Ian Fleming or John le Carre, was discontinued, Crawfords fell back on the police format for a new series. In late 1968 for the Nine Network to replace the spy series.

Originally titled Saints and Sinners and set in the St Kilda police station, it was changed to Division 4 and relocated at Yarra Central after claims that it cast a bad light on the area. By way of varying the police format, the new series concentrated on a suburban police station, and included uniform police on the beat, as well as plain-clothes detectives.

Because of the evident popularity of the home-grown police series, ATV-0 tried to
make its own variant of the genre. It commissioned former Sydney radio producer Ron Beck to produce The Long Arm, but cancelled the show after poor ratings. The station then approached Crawfords and Matlock Police went to air the following year.

Even after its demise, Homicide still has an obvious glow of attraction for stations, the company and even its competitors. As one executive at Crawfords said, “Cop shows always come back.”

A year after its cancellation, Crawfords was back to the police format with Bluey, a series that had only lukewarm ratings and after completing its 29-episode contract was not renewed. Meanwhile, the Reg Grundy Organisation had its first shot at the format with King’s Men, a series that found an even earlier grave.

Late in 1977, an obvious marriage of soap opera and the police format took place when Crawfords produced Cop Shop. Currently, Crawfords and Grundys are preparing pilots for new police series; Crawfords’ series is tentatively titled Murder Squad.

Despite this tendency to fall back on what is known and successful, there have also been conscious attempts to find variations within the format. With Division 4, Crawfords tried to develop the personality of the individual police. However, the different writers tended to get out of step and the characters became atemporal, like their counterparts in Homicide. So the experiment was abandoned.

In later episodes, however, when Don Battye was executive producer, the series successfully deepened and developed the police characters.

Matlock Police, at first, also ran the risk of duplicating Homicide. In later episodes, however, a more rural setting was achieved, but it was only in Solo One, a half-hour spin-off, and Young Ramsey, an hour series about a veterinary surgeon, that the company got into the pastoral drama whose potential is contained in Matlock Police. Solo One and Young Ramsey were produced by Henry Crawford, one of the later producers of Matlock Police.

Crawfords’ record outside the police format has been patchier and less decisive. Ryan, a series that attempted to give private detectives the same glamorous exciting lives that Hunter had given special agents, was even less successful than its predecessor. Of their three comedy series, The Last of the Australians did reasonably well, but The Bluestone Boys and Bobby Dazzler were cancelled.

The Box was Crawfords’ first venture into soap opera, but only after Cash-Harmon’s Number 96 had opened up this area almost two years earlier. While it was never as popular as its Sydney counterpart, it achieved reasonable success and helped the company greatly in a very difficult period.

Crawfords’ other serials have been Hotel Story and The Sullivans. Hotel Story was cancelled after eight episodes had been made, and before any were put to air. As for The Sullivans, the recent McNair survey listed it as the most successful local serial in current production.

In these years, Crawfords grew to be the largest drama production house in Australia. Unlike several other production groups which were reluctant to venture into more than one series at a time, for fear of not being able to attract sufficient competent writers and technicians, Crawfords had always been willing to expand production to meet demand. By 1974 it had five programs on air — Homicide, Division 4, Matlock Police, Ryan and The Box — and was producing 6.5 hours of television drama each week.

The company had also ballooned in size. In 1964 when Homicide had started, there were about 30 people on staff. 10 years later there were nearly 400. This staff was housed in the Olderfleet Building, then in nearby buildings, before Crawfords moved to new premises in Southamton Cres., Abbotsford, in 1973. These premises were large enough to accommodate three sound stages (later reduced to two), as well as the company itself. The exteriors of the premises were mythologized as Channel 12 in The Box.

As the company swelled in size, the family strove to retain control of the direction of growth. To the initial script editing and production team of Phil Freedman and Sonia Borg were added Ian Jones, Douglas Tainsh, Terry Stapleton, Tom Hegarty and Howard Griffiths. This group became an important nucleus for the development of the different series and around it were grouped younger, less experienced writers. Through script editing and production conferences, they gave newcomers the same kind of initiation into the company as they had received themselves earlier.

The nucleus of writers/script editors was important to the company in other ways. After about 1973, when the production system that developed with Consider Your Verdict was changed so that one person was in overall control of a program, that person was more likely to come from the pool of older writers than anywhere else in the company.

Also, in the early 1970s when Crawfords instituted the position of associate director of the company — partly an honorary title in recognition of contribution, but also an attempt to open better lines of communication between workers and management — 11 of the first 12 associate directors had been writers.

Nevertheless, close supervision and control by the family became impossible as the company grew. This was perhaps most apparent in the production area. By early 1974, it was impossible to keep all five programs under the same degree of close supervision. Producers found that they might be left alone for long periods to get on with their programs only then to be subjected to a bout of sustained scrutiny. Many staff developed split loyalties — to the company, but also to their programs.

Homicide remained at the centre of productions, but it too changed. Starting with Hunter, Crawfords developed a policy of commissioning former Sydney radio producer Ron Beck to produce Homicide and moving more experienced people into the new programs. However, with new programs being added in 1968, 1970, 1972 and 1973, newcomers were spending less and less time in apprenticeship and were absorbing much less of the family’s way of doing things. In other words, as Crawfords grew and more shows went into production, the creative space in which people in the company worked expanded.

Homicide was the only one of the police series to go over to an all-film format, which it did in 1973. (Ryan was also produced on this system, but Division 4 and Matlock Police stayed as film/tape integration up to the time they ceased production.) The company also decided to have the same director shoot the interiors as well as the exteriors, a decision making for potentially greater visual and dramatic coherence, but one at odds with the company’s previous organization of production.

This decision, which moved some of the company’s programs out from under the nominal control of the family, was reinforced by the company’s agreement to change the title of the positions of Henry Crawford (only a distant cousin of the family and never on the board of directors) and Don Battye. Homicide and Division 4 were changed from that of script editors to executive producers. An executive producer was given overall control of a program, and writers, script editors and directors were ultimately responsible to him. From this time on, therefore, it is possible and fruitful to search for authorial presences at this level in Crawfords’ output.

The company may have agreed to institute the new position because, by this stage, it was planning The Box which was to be its first drama serial in television. Unlike a series where each episode is a self-contained story, perhaps with regular characters, a serial has...
Figure 3

CRAWFORD TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS
MELBOURNE SCREENING DATES AND RATINGS*

One-hour Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series</th>
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<td>Homicide</td>
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<td>40 *Max. 51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matlock Police</td>
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<td>Ryan</td>
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<td>Bluey</td>
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<td>The Bluestone Boys</td>
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<td>Hotel Story</td>
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Half-hour Series

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<td>Last of the Australians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solo One</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sullivans</td>
<td>34</td>
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*Compiled from a list prepared by Colin Jones of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal

Disaster struck in early 1975. Within months, the three networks cancelled the police series (though production was not to end until early the following year). Whether the cancellations were coincidental was, and is, a matter of speculation in the industry. One theory had it that the moves were an attempt to cut Crawfords down to size, for by this time the company was easily the most important outside supplier of drama programs to the networks in Australia.

In addition, in the early years of the Labor Government there was talk of taking away one television station licence from a licensee. 0-10 seemed the most vulnerable network and, after all, Crawfords had been an unsuccessful station licence applicant in 1963.

Another theory had it that Crawfords was covertly playing politics and several of the most vocal elements in the “TV, make it Australian!” campaign were actors employed on the company’s series. There was also a story that the campaign had sent telexes to Canberra politicians using telex machines at Crawfords. However, from the stations’ point of view, the cancellations were justified by the dropping ratings.

The cancellations certainly cut down the company. The years 1975 and 1976 were as difficult for Crawfords as had been the period between 1956 and 1961. Indeed, had it not been for The Box, which continued in production until 1977, the company could have gone into receivership. As it was, large cutbacks had to be made, and by early 1976 staff was down to about 70. Production teams were broken up, and senior and junior employees were retrenched.

The years since have been a process of cautious regrowth. Overseas sales have developed and can cushion losses on the Australian market. Three programs are on air, and there are several projects in preparation.

However, in all their time in television Crawfords has never developed a production base in Sydney, although it has toyed with the idea. Parts of Hunter were shot there and it was originally intended to base Bluey there. The success this year of Prisoner, which Grundy Productions, a Sydney-based company, is making for ATV-0 in Melbourne is an ominous development. It means that Crawfords now faces major competition in its home market, a market it has always dominated.

Tony Bonner (left) and Bruce Barry in Crawfords’ adult soap-opera, Skyways.
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How do you see the role of a director on a series such as “Against the Wind”?

No differently from that of being a director of a feature. Basically, a director’s job is to take a piece of literature, in this case a script, and turn it into a series of images. It’s a kind of translation. You start with a writer’s ideas, which you then have to translate, as faithfully as possible, onto a television or cinema screen. In the process you can greatly influence the original — hopefully improving it.

I think all directors like to feel that their work is individualistic. Now, if a writer tries to force a certain kind of shot on me, as a director, I usually find the finished product doesn’t have any vitality.

On “Against The Wind” there were two directors, and the scripts were controlled — in some cases written — by Ian Jones and Bronwyn Binns. Did this ever conflict with your stamp of individualism?

I think they resolved that problem when they chose Simon Wincer and me as directors. Not only are Simon and I close friends, we have worked together for nearly 10 years, starting with Cash and Company. Our ideas on filmmaking tend to agree, and Pegasus knew, when they picked Simon and me, that they were not going to get radically different looking episodes. If they had chosen a director other than Simon, however, there could have been obvious differences between the programs. I think they were very lucky to have us.

You left Crawfords twice to work on other projects ...

It is a pattern I set up when I first left Crawfords years ago. Russell Hagg and Patrick Edgeworth were starting an independent company, Homestead Films, to produce Cash and Company. I knew them fairly well — I had worked with them on some of their Crawfords’ projects — and when they showed me some of the scripts, I was really impressed. So, it was a question of an opportunity appearing and me leaping at it.

I have always tried to chase things I believe will make good television, and that is why I have moved away from Crawfords several times. But it’s always good to come back to Crawfords, because they have very high standards in what they do.

My specific reason for coming back to Crawfords after Against The Wind was to work on The Sullivans, which I think is a wonderful program. Now that Against The Wind has finished, I consider The Sullivans to be the best series being done in Australia. I was also drawn back to Crawfords because I heard they were doing another 13 episodes of Young Ramsay. This fills me with joy, because I have always felt it is an excellent program.

There is enthusiasm among the crew at Crawfords, which is invariably made up of young people. When I first started working on Homicide, for example, it used to be a major logistical problem to move the crew from one location to another, because nobody was old enough to have a car licence. I can also fondly recall the waves of terror that used to break out among the crew when Australia had conscription; crew members were always worrying whether they would be called up.

I owe Crawfords a great deal for training me, and I believe that training has kept me in work over the years. Because I owe them that, I am always happy to go back; they are like a family. Crawfords is the place in which I grew up, and I have had many good times there. But I must stress that one of the reasons I
of high standard. If they started producing bad programs, I wouldn't go back.

Do producers at Crawfords, such as Hector and Ian Crawford, have much say in how you shoot an episode?

They allow a lot of creative freedom — until you stuff it up. In that case you are gone. Usually they say, "Here is a script, there is the crew, and that's the amount of time we have to do it in. Now go away and do it."

Does that "creative freedom" involve the right to rewrite or re-structure a script?

That situation doesn't occur because the scripts they produce don't need to be re-written. So much work has been done on a script, that most of the really horrific things have been weeded out. That's not to say that from time to time things don't go wrong. But if they do, they expect you, as director, to do what must be done, bearing in mind the overall story.

I think they would be very disappointed if you suddenly rang in from location and said, "It's not working, what will I do?"

As a director, do you notice any major differences between working on film and videotape? For example, one tends to direct videotape via a control booth, as opposed to being next to the camera on a film set ...

The major difference is that filmmaking is much slower, but then you generally have more time. In a sense, film is also a cooler medium, where a performance, or bits of it, may have to be done several times. On videotape you look at a scene played in its entirety and can do all the cutting within a specific amount of time. The pace and intensity of performance, therefore, are fairly fixed. With film, however, you can adjust performances and pacing when you edit the thing later.

Another noticeable difference is that with film you can shoot through 360 degrees. As a result, you tend to conceive scenes in the round — actor's movements and so on. On videotape you usually conceive things in terms of 180 degrees, because on the other side of that line are your cameras.

There is a compensating factor, however, in that you can get away with amazing cuts on videotape that you can't on film. You can't make a continuity blue, for example, because the continuity is always there. Consequently, you tend not to worry about whether things will cut together; all you have to do is press a button.

Do you primarily see yourself as a director of film or of television?

My role is that of a communicator, whatever the medium. Television is the most effective means of communication in the world today. If a feature film is a tear-away success in Australia, for example, perhaps 200,000 people will have seen it. Yet one episode of Against The Wind reached nearly five million people.

What makes me love television is its wholesale effectiveness, compared with other forms of communication. It is also an amazingly voracious consumer of product, which means it will always work in response to the public. If people don't watch a program, the station will respond and that program won't stay on the air. If it does work, then the station is the first to say, "Hey, that's fantastic, let's keep it going". In a way, that's why Young Ramsay is to have another series.

What is the status of the director in the Australian industry?

Australia is a fairly young country as films go. Consequently, the director doesn't have the same status as one would have in the U.S. Similarly, he may not be the highest paid member on the crew. Directing in Australia is a pressured job, because you have to do a lot in a little time. Programs also have to be produced at a fraction of the cost of American television, and because of that we all have to work very efficiently.

Rather than saying The Sullivans has gone on and on, I prefer to think of it as having evolved. The characters, for a start, are now quite different to what they were when they originally set out.
I have worked almost exclusively on short-run series — Cash and Company, Young Ramsay, Against The Wind, and the new series of Young Ramsay — so I can’t speak with absolute knowledge of what it is like to work on a program for a couple of years. I have always slid out from under the responsibility.

Is that because you fear stagnation?

I suppose a long run could become stultifying, but if it does, that stagnation will probably wind up on the screen. The ratings will then drop, and the show will be cancelled.

But there are situations which are stultifying solely in terms of one’s satisfaction with a series . . .

If you are in a spin you do something else. Let someone else do it.

Can you do that at Crawfords?

I feel I can. From time to time I work as a stills photographer on a feature. I find this can be a great relief from directing, which is often very insular, and I can watch other crews and directors at work. That is very stimulating, and I come back much fresher.

Shooting stills on features also gives you a greater command of the language of cinema. It is essential to know about the focal length of lenses and what light will do because this knowledge helps you understand a cameraman’s problems.

On the other hand, directing is what I have been doing, and I have always seen myself as a director. I enjoy it; it is a field with unlimited scope. As society changes in Australia, so do the programs we make — and with each program change comes a rethink of your directing methods. Originally, I was an action director; now, due to Against The Wind and The Sullivans, I am seen as an historical drama specialist.

The most important thing to remember, however, is that it is no good working on a program unless you really want to do it, and no good directing anything unless you believe you can make a contribution.

I was recently approached by Tony Ginnane to direct Thirst. Although I was very happy at the thought of being associated with Tony, I didn’t feel I could make the contribution needed for that script to become a success. So, I turned it down, which is what you must do in such circumstances.

Did you feel the script was lacking?

No, I just felt it would have been wrong for me to direct something which I didn’t feel highly motivated to do. That doesn’t mean to say it was a bad script; simply, it wasn’t the right script for me at the time.

Have you ever thought about moving on features?

Absolutely not. I don’t regard features as a step up from television. I consider myself a communicator, and, as I have said, television is the most effective way of communicating. There are some subjects that are communicated better in the cinema, but those subjects are very few and far between. I find television exciting. It’s part of my life, and something I never want to give up.
The recent classification of children's television programs for transmission during the 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. time slot has brought the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal's Children's Program Committee under attack from producers, various sections of the media, and the Federation of Commercial Television Stations.

In view of the concern expressed by many sources, the Committee decided that children's programs should improve as soon as possible. Consequently, its most urgent task was to formulate requirements for televising 'C' classified programs after 4 p.m.

As a result of public inquiries by the Tribunal, and the general interest in the subject, there was a great deal of published material on the expectations and criticisms of children's programming. The Committee, therefore, decided to find out how it could help in the production of worthwhile programs. It agreed that children's programs needed some kind of protection from competitive programs, such as cartoons and family-oriented imported material, if the long-term goals of the public and the producers were to be realized.

It was also apparent that producers would welcome access to research material and advice to help them refine their concepts and techniques. It was clear that many inexperienced producers would be entering this field in

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It was also apparent that producers would welcome access to research material and advice to help them refine their concepts and techniques. It was clear that many inexperienced producers would be entering this field in

(c) pro-social messages proposed for kindergarten programs.

In view of the concern expressed by many sources, the Committee decided that children's programs should improve as soon as possible. Consequently, its most urgent task was to formulate requirements for televising 'C' classified programs after 4 p.m.

As a result of public inquiries by the Tribunal, and the general interest in the subject, there was a great deal of published material on the expectations and criticisms of children's programming. The Committee, therefore, decided to find out how it could help in the production of worthwhile programs. It agreed that children's programs needed some kind of protection from competitive programs, such as cartoons and family-oriented imported material, if the long-term goals of the public and the producers were to be realized.
response to the demands being made for children's programs, and that such assistance would be welcomed.

Because of the urgency, the Committee agreed to meet these requirements in two stages: firstly, it decided on the requirements for the types of programs needed, the minimum quantities to be televised, and the times of presentation; secondly, Ian Fairweather, one of Australia's most successful children's program producers, was commissioned to compile a handbook on production techniques, and Millicent Poole, of Macquarie University, was engaged to evaluate research material gathered in the U.S., and put them in an Australian context.

Although the implementation of this strategy was the Committee's first priority, it was also active in the advertising field. A sub-committee, comprising Frank Meaney, Bruce Harris and Sarah Guest, was set up to prepare guidelines for advertisements to be shown during times allotted for children's programs.

The Committee forwarded its recommendations to the Tribunal on requirements for 'C' classified material on May 14, 1979. At that time, as chairman of the Committee, I said: "It has been a tribute to the sincerity and goodwill of the members of the industry within the Committee that such a high level of amicable agreement in this sensitive and important area has been so readily achieved."

In drawing up its recommendations, the Committee avoided any recipe, or formula for children's programs and stressed the need for the industry to support production with resources, facilities, time, and genuine commitment, so that the expertise needed to create quality children's programs could be developed.

The guidelines called for the production of Australian drama, documentaries, magazine, and information programs designed for children. They stressed that programs should not be "didactic, instructional and overtly educational", but must first be entertaining television, and that programs "should be about subjects which interest children and should be designed and presented in such a way that they can be readily understood and appreciated by children". To achieve these aims, the Committee made 13 recommendations (see box).

The television industries lobby group, the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS), had two main objections to the guidelines. They argued that programs should be "suitable" rather than "specifically designed" for children, and that there should be no restriction on the time when the program could be shown.

FACTS argued that children were not a majority group in the audience between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m., and in effect it was undemocratic not to cater for the other members of that audience with general programming. FACTS also argued that if stations were to invest in quality productions for children they should be able to program them later in the evening when there was a larger audience watching television.

It followed from the FACTS argument that the programs should, therefore, be suitable for a family audience rather than a child audience. The Committee recognized that the term 'suitable' could be applied to any family program, including sport, and that it would be difficult to argue that any of the programs shown in the 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. time slot over the years were not "suitable" for children.

In addition, research shows that there is a higher proportion of 6 to 13 year-olds in the 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. television audience than at any other time, and that they have more chance to control the set themselves at that time.

During its deliberations, the Committee commissioned a study of the audience in the house between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. The results showed that adults who were watching television at that time believed programs shown between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. should be for children. Most adults surveyed also said they were watching television at that time for reasons unrelated to the program — such as sitting with their children, or having the TV on in the background while doing the ironing.

**Consolidated List of Children's Programs classified by the Tribunal.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classified 'C'</th>
<th>Submitted by</th>
<th>Date Classified</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animals, Animals, Animals (U.S.)</td>
<td>TCN-9</td>
<td>June 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>API Animated Classics (Australia)</td>
<td>TCN-9, ATN-7</td>
<td>June 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Beauty (Britain)</td>
<td>ATN-7, Flemantte</td>
<td>June 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Works</td>
<td>Max Stuart</td>
<td>July 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bush Bunch, The (Australia)</td>
<td>Aranda Prod.</td>
<td>June 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerie's War (Britain)</td>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>June 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch a Rainbow (U.S.)</td>
<td>Max Stuart</td>
<td>July 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch Kandy (Australia)</td>
<td>AN7</td>
<td>July 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity Show (Australia)</td>
<td>NWS-9</td>
<td>June 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth Patrol (Australia)</td>
<td>Earth Film Prod.</td>
<td>July 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electric Company (U.S.)</td>
<td>TEN-10</td>
<td>June 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elephant Boy (Australia)</td>
<td>AN7</td>
<td>July 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Hour Festival (U.S.)</td>
<td>QTQ-9, Flemantte</td>
<td>June 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patty and George (Australia)</td>
<td>Tas. Film Corp.</td>
<td>June 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gene Machine (Britain)</td>
<td>STW-9</td>
<td>July 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden Flowers (Australia)</td>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>June 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads and Tails (Britain)</td>
<td>ATN-7</td>
<td>June 20</td>
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<td>Heidi (ATN/API Intertel)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Here Come the Double Deckers (Britain)</td>
<td>TVW-7</td>
<td>July 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henry Winkler Meets Shakespeare (U.S.)</td>
<td>TCN-9</td>
<td>June 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackanory Playhouse (Britain)</td>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>June 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Just William (Britain)</td>
<td>ATN-7</td>
<td>June 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>K.O. (Australia)</td>
<td>ADS-7</td>
<td>June 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lost Islands (Australia)</td>
<td>TEN-10</td>
<td>June 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadows (Britain)</td>
<td>SAS-10</td>
<td>June 20</td>
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<td>Shirl's Neighbourhood (Australia)</td>
<td>Townsend Corp.</td>
<td>June 1</td>
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<td>Tin Chased pilot (Australia)</td>
<td>Skippy (Australia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solo One (Australia)</td>
<td>TVW-7</td>
<td>June 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Hart (Britain)</td>
<td>TVW-7, ATN-7</td>
<td>June 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terracotta Horse, The (Britain)</td>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>June 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomorrow People (Britain)</td>
<td>TVW-7, ATN-7</td>
<td>June 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes What (Australia)</td>
<td>STW-9</td>
<td>July 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Provisional 'C'**

| A Kid's Country (Australia) | NWS-7 | June 1 |
| Stax (Australia) | HSV-7 | June 1 |
| Crackerjack (Australia) | SAS-10 | July 18 |

**Not Acceptable**

To date, 13 programs have been rejected by the Committee as unacceptable for 'C' classification.

Reviewed on July 18.
WHO WILL BE THE WINNERS IN 1979?

BLUE FIN
CATHY'S CHILD
DAWN
DIMBOOLA
IN SEARCH OF ANNA
KOSTAS
THE LAST OF THE KNUCKLEMEN
MAD MAX
MONEY MOVERS
MY BRILLIANT CAREER
THE NIGHT THE PROWLER
THE ODD ANGRY SHOT
PALM BEACH
SNAPSHOT
THIRD PERSON PLURAL
or
TIM

Keep Friday night, 28 September free for the
AUSTRALIAN FILM AWARDS PRESENTATION

Televised nationally by the Nine Network at 8.30 p.m.

The Australian Film Awards are an activity of the Australian Film Institute.
FILMS REGISTERED WITHOUT ELIMINATIONS

For General Exhibition (G)

Avenue (16 mm): Lenfilm Studio, U.S.S.R. (3230.00 m)
The Connection Back: Lenfilm Studio, U.S.S.R. (2635.30 m)
Edouard et Caroline (16 mm): Not shown, France (1590.00 m)
Evel: D. Clark, U.S.A. (3262.90 m)
I Me, Myself and Irene (16 mm): Sochiku Prod., Japan (2088.00 m)
Kate Higginbotham (16 mm): N.H.K., Japan (1919.00 m)
Killing of a Dog (16 mm): M. Rappaport, U.S.A. (2635.30 m)
Katherine the Great (16 mm): B. Schreider, U.S.S.R. (3265.00 m)
Memoria: Mosfilm, U.S.S.R. (2635.00 m)
My Brother and Tender Beast: Mosfilm, U.S.S.R. (2635.00 m)

Super Dragon: H. Chen, Hong Kong (2490.00 m)

(16 mm): Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, U.S.A. (831.00 m)

Not Recommended for Children (NRC)

Aki Hongo: Mercado Prods, India (3737.00 m)
Angelino Aチンチン(Atchintchin) Proser: Mexico (2635.00 m)
Binoys Flowers: Mosfilm, U.S.S.R. (3265.00 m)

Town for People (16 mm): Mosfilm Documentary Studio, U.S.S.R. (1590.00 m)

Unconscionable Diplomats: Sabbah, Egypt (1199.00 m)

Documentary Film Studios, U.S.S.R. (1593.00 m)

Boulevard Nights: Mosfilm, U.S.S.R. (2387.00 m)

Documentary Studio, U.S.S.R. (2200.00 m)

Elvis: M. Rappaport, U.S.A. (2635.00 m)

Film Censorship Listings

Jaguar For Mature Audiences (M)

Koko: A Talking Gorilla

Ludi Dani (Crazy Days): Horror of Dracula

Leningrad Documentary Film Studio, U.S.S.R. (2387.00 m)

The Road to Happiness: Leningrad Documentary Film Studio, U.F.S.S.R. (2387.00 m)

B. Lantin: Lenfilm Studio, U.S.S.R. (2671.00 m)

Soldier and Elephant: Armen Film Studios, U.S.S.R. (2671.00 m)

The Soviet Armed Forces Reporting: Armen Film Studios, U.S.S.R.

The China Syndrome: (16 mm): Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, U.S.A. (2229.00 m)

Science Film Studios, U.S.S.R. (1742.00 m)

Armen Film Studios, U.S.S.R.

B. Schroder, U.S.A. (2229.00 m)

Mosfilm, U.S.S.R.

M. Rappaport, U.S.A. (2229.00 m)

Kommissar: N. H.K., Japan (2878.96 m)

A Fisherman from Hanstholm: U.K./W. Germany (1019.00 m)

Confession of Love: U.S.A. (3184.35 m)

Danie Gross: Toho Galaxy Films, Hong Kong (3672.00 m)

The Right of the First Signature: W. P. Ping, Hong Kong (2732.62 m)

The Legend of Hillbilly John: C. Lai Woo, Hong Kong (2732.62 m)

The Trial of Joan of Arc: J. Paris, France (2299.21 m)

The Golden Age of Second Avenue: Y. Sato, Japan (3184.35 m)

Hungarians: J. Paris, Greece (2482.03 m)

Heksen — Politics in Papua New Guinea:

M. Rappaport, U.S.A. (2482.03 m)

The Last of the Knucklemen:

S. Herdel Filmprod, Sweden (2400.00 m)

The Stroller in the Attic:

S. Lai Woo, Hong Kong (2400.00 m)

Once A Moth:

B. Schroder, U.S.A. (2400.00 m)

Northern Lights:

R. Dupont/B. Clark, U.K./Canada (2387.00 m)

The Life at Sixty:

S. Herdel Filmprod, Sweden (2387.00 m)

The Return of Plato: J. Paris, Greece (2387.00 m)

The Last Three Days:

M. Rappaport, U.S.A. (2387.00 m)

Make Love With Me:

R. Knop, U.S.A. (2387.00 m)

Mafilm:

R. Dupont/B. Clark, U.K./Canada (2387.00 m)

My Deacon Brother: J. Wang, Taiwan (2387.00 m)

The Last of the Knucklemen:

S. Herdel Filmprod, Sweden (2387.00 m)

5. Reduced by producer’s cuts from 2550.99 m

1. Reduced by producer’s cuts from 2550.99 m

Special Conditions: For showing not more than two days at 1979 Sydney/ Salzburg/ Berlin and Paris/ and Adele Film Festivals and then exported.

The Bleak Night:

S. Herdel Filmprod, Sweden (2387.00 m)

The Mountain of the Cannibal God:

S. Herdel Filmprod, Sweden (2387.00 m)

Make Love With Me:

S. Herdel Filmprod, Sweden (2387.00 m)

FILMS BOARD OF REVIEW

Decision reviewed: ‘NRC’ registration by the film censorship board.

The Board of Appeal: Uphold the decision of the Film Board of Review.

FILMS REGISTRATION WITHOUT ELIMINATIONS

For General Exhibition (G)

Dallas (16 mm): M. Karim, Egypt (1402.00 m)
El Rubbish (16 mm): E. El sayed, Egypt (1319.00 m)
The Great American Chase: C. Jones, U.S.A. (2737.00 m)
He Never Gives Up (16 mm): M. C. Ling, China (1319.00 m)

S. Lai Woo, Hong Kong (2737.00 m)

Paule Paulaender: K. Peter, France (2737.00 m)

T. Roter/N.R.H. Assoc., U.S.A. (2737.00 m)

J. Paris, Greece (2737.00 m)

A. Gulyuz, Turkey (2072.00 m)

S. Herdel Filmprod, Sweden (2072.00 m)

A. Gulyuz, Turkey (2072.00 m)

The Open Road:

S. Lai Woo, Hong Kong (2737.00 m)

The King of the Two Day Wonder:

S. Lai Woo, Hong Kong (2737.00 m)

The Goodbye Kiss:

S. Lai Woo, Hong Kong (2737.00 m)

The Winds of Autumn:

S. Lai Woo, Hong Kong (2737.00 m)

The Last of the Knucklemen:

S. Lai Woo, Hong Kong (2737.00 m)

For Restricted Exhibition (R)

Angela Kie, J. Wang, Taiwan (2413.00 m)

Daikaiju: Toho Galaxy Films, Hong Kong (2413.00 m)

The Perfect Possession: I. Allen, U.S.A.

J. Wang, Taiwan (2413.00 m)

H. Chen, Hong Kong (2490.00 m)

Not Recommended for Children (NRC)

Cathy’s Child (Reduced version): P. Oliver/R. Sulli-

van, Australia (2482.03 m)

Cloud of Romance: Not shown, Hong Kong (2482.03 m)

Die Stunde Null (Down to Zero) (16 mm): E. Reitfeld, W.

Women: N. Baytan, Turkey (2072.00 m)

F. Rosaci, B. Giorda, U.S.A. (2072.00 m)

P. M. Pontecorvo, Italy (2072.00 m)

F. Rosaci, B. Giorda, U.S.A. (2072.00 m)

FILMS REFUSED REGISTRATION

The Last of the Knucklemen: the producer’s appeal against an R rating was dismissed by the Board of Review and the censorship was upheld.
Melbourne’s 28th annual film festival was a less than notable one (it could hardly have come up to 1978). Nevertheless, there were some significant elements: a group of independent American social-realist features, good new work by leading European directors, several interesting mavericks, and a valuable collection of “missed masterpieces”.

And, of course, the festival opened for the first time with an Australian film — Paul Cox’s Koatse.

The American independents made the greatest impact, if not the biggest splash (that was left to Paul Schrader’s very commercial Hardcore, the inclusion of which is no doubt explained by the presence of another Schrader film Blue Collar and the writer-director’s unfulfilled undertaking to attend in person).

Actually, Blue Collar — now in commercial release — belongs among the American social-realist collection. One of the most effective fiction features ever made about American workers on the job, it is a world apart in source (Universal) from the independent origins of the other five.

Of course, it is significant that three of the four (the other five are about American racial minorities, while another comes from Bolivia, Australians sometimes need to be reminded that the U.S. is one among 23 nations on the American continents.)

The most impressive, John Hanson and Rob Nilsson’s Northern Lights, is a worthy fulfiment of the writer-directors’ aim of “making films about real people in a real social context”.

The chiaroscuro of Judy Irola’s black and white photography effectively delineates the quiet lives of these Scandinavian migrant families riven by adversity and exploitation. The screenplay, based on a real-life episode in American political history — the brief surge to power of a rural populist movement in North Dakota just over a half-century ago.

A fictional story about participants in this movement is told with a spare, compelling authority that doesn’t need the authenticating framing device provided by documentary shots of a veteran survivor of the movement. Other migrants undergoing even tougher times in the U.S. today are the Mexican itinerants who cross the border illegally to find work as agricultural laborers.

Robert M. Young’s Alambrista! (the Spanish word means, literally, tightrope-walker) is a colorful, engaging, witty odyssey in delusion and disappointment. Although Young’s script has its lapses into the facile, he conveys with wry solicitude the edgy, often sordid, lives of illegals hounded by the authorities and ripped off by cynical employers.

An ironic closing sequence, in which a young woman sneaks into a customs station to give birth north of the border, satirically implies the conflicts of the poor Mexican “so far from God, so close to the U.S.”.

Ethiopian Haile Gerima contributed one of the hits of the 1977 Melbourne festival, Harvest, 3000 Years, about survival feudalism in his native land. His Bush Mama, made in Los Angeles in 1975, is an explosive examination of what it’s like to be poor, black and female in the land of the free.

Gerima’s disturbing film, a stylish complexity ranging from detached naturalism to the fervidly surreal, is greatly enhanced by its dynamic, multi-level soundtrack.

Ralph D. Silver’s On the Yard falls between romanticized Hollywood pseudo-realist and the gritty verismo of the other American social-realist films. One expects a James Cagney or George Raft to show up Malcolm Braly’s screenplay, based on his own experiences, as it follows those patterns of prison life made so familiar by a score of features from The Big House to Fortune and Men’s Eyes.

The film’s older-style melodramatic narrative is updated by Silver’s coolly uncommitted attitude to inmates and warders (“we are all victims” runs the not-exactly-apocalyptic theme). The obligatory escape scene, nuttily reminiscent of Charlie Bubbles, equals the glossy color of Alan Metzger’s photography for incongruity.

Bolivian Antonio Eguino’s Chuquiago represents an important trend in the cinema of Latin America. Most of the social-realist filmmakers of the Americas have suffered heavily in recent times for daring to depict things as they really are (Eguino was himself jailed) and this director has obviously concluded that half a loaf of social observation is better than suppression, exile or worse. Particularly if it permits the filmmaker to go on slicing away at his subject.

Yet Eguino’s lively, colorful, episodic film manages to say quite a lot within four slight sketches about people in Bolivia’s biggest city La Paz (Chuquisaca is the Inca name). The stories, moving through the social strata from a wide-eyed Aymara boy to a wealthy girl student dabbling in radical politics, survey the state of the nation without leaning too heavily on the sensitivities of Bolivia’s ever-temporary regimes.

Of the other Third World nations represented, Tunisia and India provided impressive new works, while an unusually simplistic stinker came from Cuba.

Rida Behi’s Sun of the Hyenas, a Tunisian-Dutch co-production, didactically describes the corruption and disintegration caused to a Mediterranean fishing village by mindless tourism. A hotel for European holidaymakers, established with the aid of palm-greased local politician-businessmen, devastates the village community. The well-off visitors unwittingly traduce everything they touch, reducing the local people to humiliating servitude.

The writer-director shows an inventive capacity for establishing his visual symbols amid stunning scenic composition, though some of the imagery is a mite obvious.

A Ritual, the first feature of 29 year-old Indian Girish Kasaravalli is reminiscent of the earlier films of Satyajit Ray. Its spare exposition, measured pace and S. Ramachandra’s limpid black-and-white photography put one in mind of Ray’s Devi, also an attack on religious superstition and intolerance. Kasaravalli develops an affecting poignancy in the story of a young woman destroyed by inhuman dogmatism.

Yet the shocker from Cuba, Sergio Giria’s Slave Hunter, is a pseudo-western, preposterously heavy-handed in its depiction of cowboy-like bounty hunters tracking runaway slaves in 18th Century colonial Cuba. The contrast between this simple-minded hokum and the sensitive depths of Gutierrez Alea’s The Last Supper, a 1978 festival highlight, was positively pungent.

This year’s less-than-lustrious line-up gained some distinction from new works of four leading European directors — Andrzej Wajda, Krzysztof Zanussi, Claude Chabrol and Rainer Werner Fassbinder — in top form.

Poland’s Wajda led the way, harking back with the wry hindsight of chastened maturity to the heady days of Ashes and Diamonds. His Man of Marble, significantly, is a story within a story.

A young contemporary Polish filmmaker, ambitiously embarked upon a difficult subject for her diploma film — a documentary on the life and times of a now-forgotten shock-worker of the Stalin era — is obstructed at every turn. The project is finally vetoed, after she has made some startling incursions into recent history and upset a number of people who would rather forget what happened in the 1950s.

Wajda’s film, made in 1977, itself ran into trouble and was suppressed for a time. But just as his great early films benefited from an official thaw, so Man of Marble, Wajda’s best work for a long time, has surfaced in the wake of another round of liberalization.

The film is ingenious and audacious. It recalls the Stalinist past through flashbacks during interviews conducted in the present, gradually revealing that, while the subject himself has disappeared, his family, friends and enemies have made accommodations of some sort with existing reality.

The young filmmaker is last seen being led to the long-sought meeting with the unseen protagonist. The implications of this skilfully extended tracking shot — it counterpoints another at the film’s beginning, when she scurries in the reverse direction through an art museum, searching for the forgotten hero’s statue — remain, like other questions the film raises about present-day Poland, tantalisingly open-ended.

Wajda’s compatriot, Zanussi, is also deeply concerned with the human condition, but in a far more personal way.

Spiral takes a bleakly caustic, if not wholly unsympathetic, view of human kind, returning to the fatalism of Illumination in its story of a man who knows he has a terminal illness. The anti-hero of Spiral, however, reacts with self-pitying rage in a disturbingly unflinching chronicle that rejects the chin-up pop dispensed in most
works of fiction — and often in real life. Zanussi stresses the patient's emotional wretchedness with frenetic (often hand-held) shots of him lurching aggressively around a holiday chalet and, later, a hospital. A surreal epilogue reminds us of the transience of human existence as the retracing figure of the man we have just seen die, flickers out between frames.

Another East European director with fresh vigor is Zoltán Fabri, one of the great survivors of Hungarian film. Fabri's Hungarians, a shrewd parable which twits Fabri's countrymen as well as their Soviet big brother, describes the experiences of a band of wartime guest-workers in Nazi Germany. There is not much doubt about the identity of the client, delivered by an old man, discussing Germany's impending defeat, who says: "That's what happened when you pal up with the Hungarians!"

But there is also a chilling note in the paranoia of another expatriate farmworker when, after a run-in with the German masters of the multi-national volunteer and conscripted workforce, he demands: "Why do they always pick on us?"

**The Marriage of Maria Braun** is one of the best Rainer Werner Fassbinder films yet seen in Australia. Unusually, the script isn't his (although he is credited with the dialogue of Peter Marthe-heimer and Pir Frolc's screenplay). Moreover, the story of an enigmatic woman making it in postwar Germany is unusually thick with socio-political allegory. The dark fluency of style, however, is unmistakably Fassbinder.

It begins in the last years of World War 2, when Maria's wedding to a soldier is farcically disrupted by Allied bombing. Surviving postwar chaos, American occupation and a murder charge (her unexpected returned husband takes her to a concentration camp), she scarcely knows and is now elderly star, describes how fresh desperation, social values and material concerns.

Maria (played by Fassbinder stock company stalwart Hanna Schygulla) may be seen as a metaphor for West German woman making it in postwar Germany is unusually thick with socio-political allegory. The dark fluency of style, however, is unmistakably Fassbinder.

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Features

One of the unexpected delights of the 1979 Sydney Film Festival was Legend of the Mountain, by Hong Kong director King Hu. Partly based on a Sung Dynasty story, the film is an elaborate romance about a scholar who retreats to a remote fort along the Great Wall to copy a sutra which will help wandering souls find their next reincarnation; he meets a group of ghosts who scheme to steal it from him, and falls in love with two of them.

Like many recent Asian films, Legend of the Mountain is a positive feast of cinematic entertainment unified by a complex and gripping narrative. It is as though the love story itself has passed through a magic kaleidoscope, giving off a dazzling variety of emotional shades and tones, and passing us back and forth, from laughter and lyricism to sadness and terror; while the spectacular beauty of the finely-controlled photography holds us, like an inspired display of fireworks, in a timeless, hypnotic state.

Lino Brocka's Insiang, about a young girl in an urban slum who shares her mother's lover for revenge, is a strong social realist film muted by a heavy dose of melodrama injected to get the film past the Filipino censors. Insiang was made roughly and quickly, and it shows; but its savage, documentary insistence on the smallest details of life in the overcrowded cardboard shanties gives it a power whose impact survives, despite the slightly syrupy overtones of the drama between mother, daughter and lover.

In contrast, Claude Berri's standard bourgeois comedy Un moment d'egarement (In a Wild Moment) was a breath of fresh air. Pierre and Jacques are middle-aged men on holiday with their daughters. Pierre allows himself to be seduced by his friend's daughter Francoise, and is terrified of the consequences while hypocritically maintaining the pose of a stern father with his own daughter Martine. The comedy is very much at the expense of the men and the absurdity of their moral system; but it is without a trace of meanness or simple-minded reduction of their feelings, and, as a result, Berri's film is as moving as it is amusing.

Michel Deville's Le dossier 51 is a film with an idea which is fascinating on paper, but rather boring in its realiza­tion. A rising diplomat is treated as the object of an investigation by an agency planning to recruit him as a spy. Everything is seen through the eyes of the investigators, so that the audience is placed in the position of the intelligence organization, and never that of the victim. However the frightening implications of the information industry, and the disturbing experience of seeing everything through its eyes, are repeatedly undermined in the film by gratuitous switches to crude spy comedy of the Get Smart variety; the tension dissipates, and one becomes acutely aware of the film's excessive length.

Overkill is also a characteristic of Swiss director Alain Tanner's Mesd'or. Like his earlier films, Le salmonandre and Jonas, Mesd'or explores a situation in which young people have a great deal of rebellious energy combined with problems of purpose and direction. In Mes­d'or, two girls set out to travel around Switzerland living off their wits, simply for the sake of doing so, and keep going until it ends in tragedy.

One of the most interesting things in the film is the way the legendary beauty of the scenery becomes, through repetition, the image of a trap of deadly monotony. The smallness of the territory open to the girls makes the very idea of seeking freedom on the road a con­demnation to suffocating circularity. Nevertheless Tanner's film, like its heroines, keeps going long after the theme's potential has been exhausted.

At the other end of the spectrum of

Claude Berri's In a Wild Moment: a breath of fresh air after the emptiness of many of the Festival's films.

Both films seem to suffer from a kind of emptiness which cannot be put down to the critical vision of the respective directors, since the central characters are presented to us with a caressing seriousness which is all too revealing.
Swiss society from Tanner's discontended youth are the public officials pilloried in Rolf Lysy's Die schweizer-nacher (The Swiss Wannabes). Max Bodmer and his reluctant assistant, Moritz Fischer, are special investigators entrusted with assessing applications for Swiss citizenship; and through their frequently absurd and distasteful activities, Lysy satirizes the narrowness, stupidity, and conformity inherent in a certain nationalistic view of Swiss superiority.

Although The Swissmake has some funny moments, it is very heavy-handed; and it tends to be a film which encourages complacency — the assured laughter of those who do not see themselves in the petty official as much as it deflates it in the person of Bodmer himself.

The political limbo of the young in Italy today is the theme of Nanni Moretti's Ecce bimbo. Teasing, ironic, and always only half-satirizing, Ecce bimbo is a loose and open study of a group of young people worrying about everything, including the sense of futility and detachment at the heart of their anxieties. The film has something of the form of the consciousness-raising sessions undertaken by the central character (played by Moretti) and his male friends: rambling and undirected, but in the process discovering a power of self-masochism which is all the more disturbing in its acutely self-conscious pointlessness.

Ecce bimbo is a smart film confronting the youth in Moretti's film is that, increasingly in Europe, traditional left and far left politics are seen as empty rhetoric and a present disaster, rather than of hope for the future. Moretti's docudrama Solzhenitsyn's Children are Making a Lot of Noise in Paris explores the intense arguments over the role of consciousness-raising sessions undertaken by the central character (played by Moretti) and his male friends: rambling and undirected, but in the process discovering a power of self-masochism which is all the more disturbing in its acutely self-conscious pointlessness.

Hullabaloo Over George and Bonnie's Pictures is a delightful fusion of a personal and cultural memory. The Indian palace of this film is the meeting place of the present with several layers of Indian past, personal and cultural memories. The film captured two films made over a collection of ancient art treasures are an American collector, a buyer from the Maharajah. One of the most interesting features of the film is the way in which it brings together the different and sometimes contradictory strands of Indian life, creating a sense of a rich and ironic nation. The film is a mixture of humor and drama, with excellent performances by Jens Udsen as his irascible and magnificent tailor's assistant, and with a fine attention to detail in even the smallest aspects of the film.

Dynamite Hands,plete with trailer between. In the first, the second part, Baxter's Beauties of 1933, a colorful Bbaby Berkeley-styled musical, thumps along ridiculously happy ending, it becomes obvious that they don't make them like that anymore. But perhaps Donen has been a bit too successful in pointing this out.

Robert Altman's Perfect Couple traces a computer-generated couple tracing to fall in love in spite of their different backgrounds. Through the scion of a wealth tradition-bound Greek family, she is a live-in singer, often playing sad and gloomy music, while he is a young lawyer who becomes a prizefighter to pay for his sister's education. It is all the more disturbing in its acutely self-conscious pointlessness.

Altman's observation of behavior is impecable, and the more they are simply not interesting. A Perfect Couple will be a disappointment for Altman fanatics, even though it is crafted with his usual control and conciseness.

The three West German features screened this year fulfilled, and even surpassed, the anticipation and expectations audiences have come to have of films from that country. The staggeringly prolific Rainer Werner Fassbinder had two very different works. The Marriage of Maria Braun and In a Year with 13 Moons.

In a Year with 13 Moons plays out a grisly but fascinating prelude to a suicide in a scene note worth in Fassbinder's understated, subjective nature. Dealing with an unusual and singular history does not among his most forceful achievements, but this testament of how the weak are devoured.

Robert Altman's Nick Carter in Prague, a pastiche of screen detectives from Sherlock Holmes to Inspector Clouseau, it proved to be highly spirited and eclectic. However Jiri Menzel's The Three Magnificent Crank Machines bears out the suspicion that although Czech humor is not altogether banal, it is relatively unsophisticated; perhaps you have to be a Czech.
Peter Weir's The Plumber: anatomy of a burgeoning paranoia.

Plumber made its small screen debut. On television it was luminous by dint of the company it kept, but as cinema it fell short of expectations built up since The Last Wave.

Weir's anatomy of a burgeoning paranoia, although painstakingly drawn, doesn't quite wash. A pretty but repulsive anthropologist Jill Cowper (Judy Morris) has her erudite background. Her nervousness would seem credible if it were not for the unexpected arrival of Max (Ivar Kants), campus plumber (or is he?), and odd and protracted things happen in the bathroom. The daintier elements of the story have not been possible. Perhaps screening the series in its entirety (thereby revealing the scope of the projects) may have rendered them more impressive.

Morris' theme is the pet burial business. Floyd McGuire stumbles through a jumbled tale involving his dream of a fitting end for family pets, and the founding of his own cemetery. He mumbles about canine devotion and the horrors of the nearby rendering plant, to which many unfortunate animals are consigned. McGuire's cemetery, however, becomes embroiled in human squabbles and goes downhill. All his little cadavers are dug up and moved to another establishment run by Carl Harberts. Harberts has evolved his own brand of Christianity (The Bubbling Wells Church of Universal Love); it admits animals to the brotherhood of man. On such truths are dynasties founded.

Ned Burgess' languid camerawork in Gates of Heaven pays off in a cluster of rishes bearing testimonials to four-legged friendship ("God is Love, Backwards it's Dog"). Undoubtedly the Harberts, who own their success to exploitation of human loneliness, deserve every veiled insult the film makes about them. But the audience is encouraged to laugh at the petty sentiments of people whose only crime is incoherence, and whose only loathsome is to invest their love in animals. They give the Harberts, and he serves it up as farce. It is an unsettling form of humor.

Politics and sex dominated the Spanish entries, which included two chilling examinations of the violent conflict between left and right in that country — The M.P. and Blindfolded — and one misogynist drivel posing as a thriller entitled Bilbao. Like Knife in the Head, The M.P. and Blindfolded carry an urgent message for people in all countries where there are marked political divisions. The two films explore the superficiality of human and political violence touches everyone.

Director Eloy de la Iglesia's protagonist in The M.P. is Roberto Orbea (Jose Sacristan), a young Kennedy-style left-wing politician married to an attractive and ambitious woman. He is also covertly homosexual, and as his election to the position of secretary-general of his party becomes likely, this is used by the right-wing to destroy him.

The demented lives of the story have something in common with the Jeremy Thorpe case in Britain: the hint of homosexuality is enough to destroy a political career. But the most terrifying aspects of The M.P. and The Bubbling Wells Church of Universal Love); it admits animals to the brotherhood of man. On such truths are dynasties founded.

Nagisa Oshima's Empire of Passion was the only Japanese film screened at this year's Festival. Following In the Realm of the Senses, Oshima again relates the tale of a consuming love, but this time he does not linger on the nature of physical passion; rather its implications.

Resorting to more traditional storytelling techniques, Oshima introduces the notions of morality and retribution, blending them with supernatural elements. Although not as exquisitely crafted, or as sensational as its predecessor, Empire of Passion certainly demonstrates Oshima's rare faculty for creating a palpable and poignant 'other reality'.

Errol Morris' film debut, Gates of Heaven, raises some pertinent questions about the morality of a style of documentary filmmaking which turns people into clowns for the benefit of the camera.
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AN INTRODUCTION TO FILM MERCHANDISING

GUIDE FOR THE

AUSTRALIAN FILM PRODUCER: PART 16

In this 16th part of a 17-part series, Cinema Papers contributing editor Antony I. Ginnane, and solicitors Ian Baillieu and Leon Gorr discuss merchandising techniques and practices associated with the production and release of a feature film.

Introduction

Traditionally, film merchandising activities have performed two main functions: firstly, they have been seen as an adjunct to the marketing and advertising of a film; and secondly, through the exploitation of ancillary rights, they have contributed to a film’s income. Until recently, however, the income-earning potential of merchandising activities has not been fully exploited, and a film’s primary spin-offs—books and soundtrack—have been used primarily for promotional purposes.

In the past three years this position has changed markedly. Now, not only do the producers of hit musicals like Saturday Night Fever and Grease, but also the makers of every type of product from Star Wars to the James Bond films, are engaged in the exploitation of ancillary rights. The major studios have moved into an area which had previously been exploited only by Disney Studios and a few independent producers; and which, in Australia, had only been taken advantage of by the Reg Grundy Organization (with their Australian-Swedish joint venture Abba) and the South Australian Film Corporation (with the merchandising of Storm Boy and Blue Fin).

New areas of merchandising have rapidly been developed by producers, and have yielded profits, which, in certain instances (for example Star Wars), exceeded the revenue derived from the initial theatrical release of the film.

Traditional Merchandising

Traditionally, two items have been the object of film merchandising: firstly, merchandising relating to the literary basis of the film, the screenplay; and secondly, merchandising relating to the musical basis of the film, the soundtrack.

(1) The Screenplay

In his screenwriter’s contract with the writer, a producer should have acquired all ancillary rights related to the script, either on an outright basis or on some profit-sharing arrangement with the writer. Then, either directly or through a literary agent, the producer will approach various publishing houses to survey interest in either:

(a) a novelization of the film script;
(b) the publication of the screenplay itself (if the film is from a play, or has other serious literary merit);
(c) the publication of a new edition of the book on which the screenplay is based (in soft-cover or hard-back, featuring scenes from the film on either jacket or cover);
(d) the publication of a picture book, featuring drawings of the film or stills from it; or,
(e) combinations of the above.

Normally, the publisher will pay the producer an advance against royalties and a percentage of profits once the royalty has been recouped—which differs according to the various ways the book is released. The publisher may acquire worldwide rights to publication, although it is probably better for Australian producers to separate non-Australian rights, as foreign distributors, particularly American distributors, may want to include novelization rights in their licence agreements. In any event, American and European publishers will often pay twice as much for novelization rights as Australian publishers do for world rights. A typical advance by an Australian publisher for novelization rights varies between $1700 and $6000, depending on the topicality of the material.

The producer who assigns literary right to a publisher should ensure that the book’s cover, and/or jacket, features the film’s logo and other artwork. It may also be possible to arrange for the publisher to spend a certain amount of money to launch the book, and for the book’s advertising to promote the film. In general, the more cross plugging of the book and the film, the better.

(2) The Music and the Soundtrack

As previously noted, except for musicals, the intrinsic value of a soundtrack recording is extremely limited, and the importance of an LP to a producer lies in the promotional applications. Frequently, the producer will license the film’s soundtrack to a record company, forgoing a cash advance for a percentage of sales revenue, in return for the recording company advancing the cost of producing an album. In this instance, the producer should ensure that the film’s logo, artwork, and other promotional material are featured on the record sleeve. The producer should also ensure that he has made a suitable arrangement with the composer of the film’s soundtrack for royalties received from the sale of an LP. Frequently Australian composers will have a ‘residuals’ clause in their contract.

In Europe, producers frequently do not include the costs of recording the soundtrack in the film’s budget because the composer’s record company will pay all costs in return for a better deal on publishing and other rights. Some European composers (for example, Ennio Morricone and Francis Lai) have so much influence that their records sell on the basis of their names alone.

Recently, the joint promotion of Saturday Night Fever and its LP involved the film’s trailer plugging the album. This sort of cross-over between the cinema and recording industries promises to become a permanent feature of film and record exploitation.

New Merchandising Areas

Many new merchandising areas have been opened up recently, and one of the most significant has been licensing. As already noted, Walt Disney Productions and a number of independent producers have explored this area from time to time, often with great success. In Australia, the Reg Grundy Organization, and others, have approached producers for the right to exploit various merchandising activities. To the authors’ knowledge, no merchandiser has paid any Australian producer an advance upfront, and, with the exception of Abba, large sums have not been involved.

In general, the merchandiser attempts to sell characters or exploitable elements in a film to clients whose sales targets tie in with the film’s intended audience. Everything from games, toys, and clothing are designed according to various aspects of the film. Licensees pay advances to exploit these commodities, and the merchandiser takes a commission of between 15 and 40 per cent of sales revenue.

The producer’s agreement with the merchandiser should provide for the producer to be advised of all commercial exploitation which is in progress, and to approve or disapprove of any proposed licences. It should also provide that any articles created under licence featuring the film should be of a high standard in quality and appearance.

It is unlikely, however, that Australian producers will receive large sums from merchandising activities until they become involved in larger scale international productions.

The Future

American film producers involved in high budget productions are now shaping their packages to include merchandisable elements in the story and screenplay, and merchandising organizations are buying rights to suitable films and television series now in production. It is likely that the 1980s will see income from merchandising become a new source of sales finance.
Based on the famous Boer War incident in which three Australian soldiers were court-martialled by the British Army as political scapegoats, and later executed.

**CAST**

- Lt. Harry Morant: Edward Woodward
- Lt. Peter Handcock: Bryan Brown
- Lt. George Witton: Lewis Fitz-Gerald
- Major Thomas: Jack Thompson
- Major Bolton: Rod Mullinar
- Capt. Taylor: John Waters
- Lord Kitchener: Alan Cassell

**CREW**

- Producer: Matt Carroll
- Director: Bruce Beresford
- Script: Jonathan Hardy, David Stevens
- Photography: Don McAlpine
- Editor: Bill Anderson
- Art Director: David Copping
INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTION ROUND-UP

Compiled by Terry Bourke

U.S.

Stuart Rosenberg has replaced Bob Rafelson as director on Brubaker, with Robert Redford. Rafelson apparently comes to it with a 20th-Century-Fox official on location.

Alan Parker is directing newcomers Irene Cara and Lee Curreri in MGM's Hot Lunch; Norman Jewison has cast Al Pacino and John Foray in And Justice For All; and Jean-Pierre Zazuard is to direct Christopher Reeve and Christopher Plummer in Universal's Somewhere In Time.

Jerry Schatzberg is directing Warren's Honeysuckle Rose, in which recording artist Willy Nelson makes his acting debut; Sidney J. Furie will direct Neil Diamond in The Jazz Singer. Following the success of Love At First Bite, George Hamilton will feature in another spoof entitled Zororo, The Gay Blade.

John Cleese will star in Airplane's next comedy The History of the World, Part One; Robby Benson and Charles Durning in Jeff Wain's The Laughing; Tuesday Weld in Bill Persky's The Serial; and Robby and Lloyd Bridges in Abraham Zuckerman's Aireplane.

Charles Jarrott is in Hawaii directing Geneviève Bujold and Ricky Schroeder in Walt Disney's Last Flight of Noah's Ark; while at the Disney studios, Michael Nankin is directing David Naughton in The All-Night Treasure Hunt.

John Travolta will return to the screen in Urban Cowboy, directed by James Bridges.

Robert Hammer is to direct Hollywood Strangler; Andrew J. Fenady The Man With Roger's Face; Claude Bolling steering, starring Joseph Bottoms; William Friedkin Cruising; Ron Maxwell Little Darlings; and Cliff Reynolds A Day of Judgement for producer Earl Reynolds.

Mike Newell has cast Charles Heston and Susannah York in Awakening; Rita Moreno and Madeleine Kahn are to star in Richard Brenner's Happy Birthday, Gemini; Peter Boyce is to star in Where The Buffalo Roam for Art Linson and Mark Lester is directing Linda Blair in Roller Boogie.


Alan Arkin will go to Brazil some time this year to direct Argo; Walter Bernstein is directing Little Miss Marker; Martin Brest has cast George Burns and Art Carney in Going In Style; Floyd Munson will direct Hollywood Knights for Columbia; Michael Schultz is shooting Scavenger Hunt and John Gallagher is completing Down The Shore.

Hollywood producer Dan Tark has signed Yugoslav writer-director Vlasto Gilic to make Days Of Dreams in Prague early next year; Bob Othman is back in the Philippines writing and directing Ladyfiglers, starring Yvette Mimieux, Jack Soo, and Nancy Kwan; and Richard Brander is in Los Angeles completing Malibu Summer.

Don Taylor is to direct Kirk Douglas, Katherine Ross and Martin Sheen in The Final Countdown.

Jim Jones is directing That's Life, starring Red Buttons and Danny Thomas. It is the second of three films he is making in Florida.

Richard Marquand is directing Birth of the Beatles on location in Liverpool and Hamburg for producer Dick Clark.

At Lee International Studios in Middlesex, Bob Brooks is directing The Knowledge, and Mike Newell The Awakening. Otto Preminger has started The Human Factor, with Richard Attenborough and John Gielgud; and Sir Laurence Olivier is starring in Desmond Davis' Clash of the Titans.

Gary Grant, last seen in Walk, Don't Run (1965) will make a comeback in Nightwatch later this year; and Jack Gold is to direct David Hemmings in Euston Films' Charlie Muffin.

Euston has also engaged Jim Goddard to direct Peter Vaughan in Fox, Val Guest is directing Trevor Howard and Robin Nedwell in The Shillingly Blowers.

David Wickes is directing David Essex for Rank Films in Silver Dream Racer; while producer Jeremy Thomas and director Nicholas Roeg are winding-up the other Rank production, Illusions.

Don Siegel is shooting Rough Cut, starring Burt Reynolds; and Andrew McLaglen's Esther, Ruth and Jennifer (starring Roger Moore, Anthony Perkins and James Mason) has been re-titled North Sea Hijack.

Sandy Howard is continuing to use Canada as a production base, and is following City on Fire with Death Ship, also being directed by Alvin Rakoff. Howard again signed Sydney stuntman Grant Page for Death Ship, which stars George Kennedy and Richard Crenna, with locations in Montreal and Quebec. Rakoff will go on to make Spy Games, starring Elliot Gould, again shooting in Montreal and Quebec.

Producer Claude Leger's Canerum Films, which is associated with French director Just Jacolin, and produced Girls, has announced that Andrzej Zulawski will direct Possession in Toronto.

John Trent is directing Bruce Dern and Ann-Margret in Middle-Age Spread, Robin Spry is directing Lark, and Lewis Rose is producing films in Toronto and Puerto Rico; and David Cronenberg is completing Fast Company, which stars William Smith.

Donald Sutherland will star in the AIP production of Nothing Personal for George Bloomfield. Alfred Sole will direct Tanya's Island on locations in Toronto and Puerto Rico; and John Vernon will star in Mark Warren's Crunch in Montreal.

Production has slumped, and a number of studios may be forced to close. The crisis is the result of seven major films, now before the cameras, opting for locations in the countryside or abroad.

Court trials also are hampering the distribution of four costly films, and filmmakers fear provincial magistrates will come down heavily because of political pressure.

Despite legal wrangles, director Bernardo Bertolucci is the "presenter" of a costly new film, Personal Effects, being directed by his younger brother Giuseppe, and produced by their cousin Giovanni Bertolucci; 20th Century-Fox have invested in the film.

Milo Fjärv is directing the French-Italian co-production Chiedo asolo; Giorgio Capitano is directing Lobster For Breakfast; Enrico Maria Salerno stars in II Corpo delle ragazzette.

Concluded on P. 581

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## BOX-OFFICE GROSSES

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* Figures exclude N/A figures.
* Box-office grosses of individual films have been supplied to Cinema Papers by the Australian Film Commission.
* This figure represents the total box-office gross of all foreign films shown during the period in the area specified.
* Continuing into next period
* This figure represents the total box-office gross of all foreign films shown during the period in the area specified.
* Figures drawn from capital city and inner suburban first release hardtops only.

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(1) Australian theatrical distributor only, RS — Roadshow, GUO — Greater Union Organization Film Distributors, HTS — Hoyts Theatres, FOX — 20th Century Fox, UA — United Artists, CIC — Cinema Centre Group, FW — Filmways Australian Distributors, COL — Columbia Pictures, REG — Regent Film Distributors, CCIC — Cinema Centre Group, AFC — Australian Film Commission, SOLUM — South Australian Film Corporation, MCA — Music Corporation of America, S — Sharmill Films, OTH — Other. (2) Figures are drawn from capital city and inner suburban first release hardtops only.
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"The Sullivans" is one of the most successful television drama series ever produced in Australia. Since the first episode went to air in November 1975, the nightly screenings of the program have commanded more than a third of the total viewing audience.

The series, which deals with the trials and tribulations of an Australian family during World War 2, was conceived by Ian Jones for Crawford Productions, and more than 500 episodes have been produced for the Nine Network.

"The John Sullivan Story" is a tele-feature based on events in "The Sullivans" series. It was broadcast recently in Melbourne and Sydney and set a record for a tele-feature, staggering observers by attracting more than half the total viewing audience.

Produced by John Barningham and directed by David Stevens, from a script by Tony Morphett and Brian Wright, "The John Sullivan Story" relates the events which occur between the disappearance of the pacifist John Sullivan (Andrew McFarlane) at sea, and his re-appearance in London nearly two years later.

In the following report, David Stevens, a writer and director of "The Sullivans" series, and the director of "The John Sullivan Story", talks to Cinema Papers.
David Stevens' career began on the stage in Britain, where he worked as an actor, director, and impresario before migrating to New Zealand in 1966.

He joined the New Zealand Broadcasting Commission to become a producer of radio drama, then moved into television where he soon established himself as one of the leading directors in the country.

In 1972, Stevens was invited to join Crawford Productions in Australia, and after directing “Homicide”, he turned to writing. He has since written more than 60 hours of drama, including episodes of “Homicide”, “Division 4”, “Matlock Police”, “The Box”, and “The Sullivans”, and a feature film script from the play Breaker Morant, for the South Australian Film Corporation.

He has also directed “The Sullivans”, as well as episodes of “The Box” and “Number 96”, and the telefeatures, “Roses Bloom Twice”, and “The John Sullivan Story”.

Stevens and long-time associate Henry Crawford have formed a production company, Mariner Films, and are now working on a television series based on Nevil Shute’s A Town Like Alice.

Stevens was interviewed in Melbourne by Peter Belby shortly after the Nine Network broadcast “The John Sullivan Story”. In this interview, he talks about writing and directing “The Sullivans”, and the making of “The John Sullivan Story”.

How many episodes were planned?

There was a contract for 13 weeks — 65 episodes.

How far ahead were you writing?

About four months ahead of the start of production.

Was the entire series planned before you began, or did it evolve from episode to episode?

It was really only planned in detail for the first six. On a series you usually find that the person who conceived the program regards it very much as his baby, and in the early stages has a very firm idea of how he wants it to go. It’s a bit like a big feature film script, except the person at the helm usually isn’t the person who is going to direct it.

Gradually, however, as ideas run out, or people are replaced, there is much greater freedom. Now, I regard writing The Sullivans as one of the major joys of being a dramatist in Australia, because if you can persuade the script editor and story editor into an idea, then you can really talk about almost any concept. I have discussed death, for example, in quite detailed terms in The Sullivans. I even did a sort of Norman Lindsay pastoral involving the character of Geoff, played by Jaime Higgins, and it turned out to be one of the favorite episodes I had written.

How much research goes into writing an episode of “The Sullivans”?

A great deal. We get a monthly book which gives us all the trivia of daily life for that corresponding month in the year. The episodes I am writing now are set in 1944, and from the book I can find out how much mushrooms cost at the market, what was on in the cinemas, what tram fares were, what was in the newspapers... all the trivia of daily life you need to know if you are writing about people. Most people's lives are expressed in trivia: while our inner lives are experienced as subjective drama.

Is much freedom taken with the actual historical situations?

Some. In The John Sullivan Story, for example, the actual Yugoslavian political situation was so complicated that to present it in accessible terms would have been virtually impossible. And because I believe that drama is not documentary, and that it is made for people, I felt it was necessary to reduce the political situation to its essentials — as it affected John Sullivan. I think this is the only line one can take unless one is going to make a documentary series like The World at War. I am concerned with how my characters see the situations: subjective drama as opposed to objective drama.

How does an individual script for “The Sullivans” evolve?

A writer is usually contracted to do two episodes — which is the maximum load a writer can carry at any one time and still keep reasonably ahead of pace. Once the script is commissioned a plotting meeting is held with the producer, the story editor, two or three script editors, and a researcher if necessary, and the story is plotted out.

Depending on the content of the writer, he can either just sit there and plot out a general story line with the others, or, if he has a story which he really wants to tell, he can take over and say, “That’s the story I want to tell; that’s what I’m going to do”, and if it’s good they all say, “Terrific, go and do it!”

Once the story is agreed upon it is usually hammered into a two-page form by one of the script editors — probably the person who
will edit it. Then the writer is given a week to 10 days to write a scene breakdown, which is what he plans to do with the story in a structural form. This will then be kicked around by the script editors, and if they have any major objections they will voice them then. If they feel the writer hasn’t fulfilled what he originally set out to do, they will comment on it. The writing usually takes me about two weeks — although once it took eight weeks, and another time three days.

The script and story editors appear to play a key role in developing a script . . .

Largely because of the volume of material being developed. The system we use was perfected by the BBC, the greatest television production house in the world, and I think you will find that until the auteur theory raised its head, it was also used on films — only the role of the script editor wasn’t credited. The BBC really took an extant system and developed it.

The function of the script editor is a vitally important one, and I am convinced that the scripts of several Australian films could have been vastly improved if a decent script editor had been working on them. But then you run smack into the auteur theory. I think one of the major differences between film and television is that it is very hard to make television an ego trip, because there are too many people pricking your ego all along the line.

Is it common for a producer to request changes to a script once it is completed?

If he feels it’s necessary. A director may also request changes. I have been very fortunate with my producers and directors, and very seldom has a script of mine been changed. But I also know that a writer must have the ability to evaluate the merit of his own work, although I would never want to be without a script editor — just as in novels one never works without a story editor.

In a recent interview Ian Coughlan said he thought that one of the reasons Australian serials, like “The Restless Years”, were so successful was because of the strength of the characters. Do you agree?

Yes. I think it’s true of all good drama. Basically, people are interested in people. We are constantly told that audiences only want action on television, and in the days of the police shows there was very heavy pressure to make them as action-filled as possible; but, in fact, the big-action series aren’t nearly as popular as the people series.

Do you think weak characterisation is a flaw in Australian feature films?

Yes. Most people who are involved in feature films in this country have absolutely no training in drama. There is a vast difference between shaping a one-minute commercial and shaping a 90-minute drama. There is also a great deal of difference directing an actor in a one-minute commercial and shaping a performance over 90 minutes.

Is the development of a character any easier in a series which continues week after week?

If you are dead lucky. But whether a series is a goer or not is governed by the quality of the first episodes; so you have to define at least some aspects of a character very quickly — as you must do in a feature film.

Are there any formulae writers use to create characters an audience will respond to immediately?

None at all. Although there is an organization in the U.S. which devised a whole series using a computer program with details on all the series which had been successful in the past. But as far as I am concerned, there is no guarantee that what has been successful in the past will succeed in the future; an audience is always attracted by the new and vibrant.

Have you devised characters which just haven’t worked, and had to be ‘eliminated’?

Yes.

How do you know when the audience isn’t responding to such a character?

You sense it very quickly. You devise what you think is an exciting character, everybody has a ball for the first script or two, then suddenly everybody stops writing for that character. They are given words to say, but they are meaningless. Then there is a desperate attempt to put life back into the character, but it becomes clear that the role inherently lacks dramatic conflicts — and that’s what writers need, conflict upon conflict upon conflict.

Some characters serve a wonderful function for a period, but then they cease to do so, and unless a new situation creates a new function, they stagnate.

Are there any restrictions on the subject matter in “The Sullivans”?

Not really. They once touched on homosexuality in “The Sullivans” which is not a subject which would have been readily accessible to someone in Camberwell at that time. But it was dealt with lightly and with great taste. I think an audience that has been exposed to The Box and Number 96 can cope with anything.

The reason I work in television is because I reach a mass audience; I can put across messages, however sugar-coated. If you treat the audience as intelligent adults you can go a long way. But if you think you can give them the lowest crap and get away with it, then you are insulting the audience and your own work.

Why do you think “The Sullivans” has been so successful?

One of the most important ingredients of success in television — or in films — is timing and “The Sullivans” was perfectly timed. When the first episodes hit we were in an economic depression, which, for many people, was the most severe financial crisis since World War 2. They were being shown a family in a situation they could relate to: recession, war, survival. I also think that within the development of Australian film and television it was the first time that period had been touched upon. In features, we had the initial successes with sex comedies like Alvin Purple and Barry McKenzie: it proved we could make films people wanted to see. Then the audiences wanted to know more about their past. And the historical films that were made were necessary for the audience to catch up on its own past, which it had always been denied on film or television. Gradually the past came closer, and now we have cries for contemporary material, and the audience is ready for it.

The Seven Network uses a program evaluation service called TAPE to test audience reaction to a script. Has this ever been done at Crawfords?

Seven has the prerogative on TAPE in this country, and I don’t think there is an equivalent organization used by the Nine Network. There are a lot of arguments for and against TAPE; I think any comment on a script is worthwhile if it comes from people you respect.

TAPE has made some very strange decisions though. They said Solo One wouldn’t go, and the channel believed them. But when it went to air it got an astronomical rating for a 7 o’clock Friday night time-slot.

I believe “The Sullivans” went into production without a pilot episode being made, which meant it was untested before going to air . . .

Yes. But pilots are a problem too. It’s very expensive to make a pilot, and the costs have to be amortized across the entire series, which can’t always be done. And by the time a pilot is made and the audience is tested, it can be nine months before it all comes together again. GTV-9 had the very good sense to realize the problems a pilot

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1. Cinema Papers, No. 22, July-August, p.449
presented for The Sullivans, so it gave the go-ahead without one.

**Directing**

Did you write any of the episodes of "The Sullivans" you directed?

No, they have been from other people's scripts.

Have you ever been tempted to re-write or re-shape them?

Yes, it's the director who has to take it on the floor and make it work. I always try to go on the floor totally satisfied that the script I am working from is viable, and the last thing I will do, if I can possibly avoid it, is change one line of the dialogue while I am directing.

Do you encounter any difficulties being only one of four or five people directing episodes of a series?

Not really. When I am given a script to direct — either my own or someone else's — I concentrate on that particular story. I divine what the essence of it is, and treat it as if it were a film in its own right; the fact that other directors work on other episodes doesn't affect what I do.

Is there collaboration between the directors of a series like "The Sullivans"?

Well, in the case of Homicide which I was very intimately involved in, Paul Eddey, Igor Auzins and I knew each other very well, but we never actually sat down and said, "Right, what is the policy line we're taking?" We knew our personalities would be reflected in the episodes we did, and left it at that. The same is true of writers. There are writers with whom I will discuss aspects of The Sullivans, and writers I won't.

Television series like "The Sullivans" still use a mixture of film and videotape. Do you find it difficult switching between the two media?

Yes, it's a problem because the two things just don't match. Nobody has ever found a way to make them match, and nobody ever will.

There is a strong move in Britain now for a program to be shot either completely on film, or on videotape. I think that's the only answer.

What are the main differences between working on film and videotape?

The different look of film and tape is the main thing. That can, in part, be traced to the fact that television generally uses three cameras, and film only one. When you are lighting for three cameras simultaneously, it's harder than lighting for one.

However, I seldom work with three-camera video. I tend to use video like film, and edit in any inserts during the cutting. On the other hand, doing a seven or eight-minute scene with multiple cameras on videotape in one clean sweep is wonderful for the actors. You can feel the tension of the performances going across, and this is very difficult to get on film.

Given the tight shooting schedules on a series like "The Sullivans", do you find you have to sacrifice rehearsal time with actors?

The rehearsal time with videotape is minimal, but there is one.

Is there a tendency to cast character actors who require less rehearsal?

That's the lowest common denominator. If you are going to break down a performance an actor first presents to you, then you have to be damn certain you have enough time to build it up again. For expediency, one will always cast the obvious, but we try and avoid this — although it's not always possible.

Are you always closely involved with the casting?

Totally. This is one of my first arguments with any management I work for. There are some actors who are very good, and I can work with, and some I can't. There are also actors who are considered not so good, but whom I can work with.
So, Brian Wright was asked to do a four-page summation of what could have happened, given that he had disappeared in the Eastern Mediterranean. It was terrific, everybody liked it, and so it was presented to the Network. They too liked it, and it snowballed from there.

I didn’t come into it until much later. I was working on a feature called The Two of Me, which fell through and I went to Los Angeles for a while. Hector phoned me and asked if I was interested in coming back to direct a tele-feature based on The Sullivans, and I said yes.

When I came back, Tony Morgan’s final draft had been completed and was about to be edited. I read it and liked it, although I had reservations about shooting it in the scheduled three, five-day weeks!

Was it conceived as a big budget feature?

No, I don’t think so. It probably wouldn’t have happened if they thought it was going to be expensive. It was conceived as being a little out of the ordinary though. Everyone thought it was a fun idea, and something that should be done. This is one of the great beauties of working at Crawfords: when Hector thinks it’s a good thing, he will spin along with it, and give you a great deal of freedom.

Was there more freedom working on the tele-feature than on the series?

Yes, though on the series he exercises greater influence. But on the tele-feature, he just phoned me one night and said, “Well, okay, you have the score, now take over the orchestra”.

Did you have a long pre-production period?

Good grief, no! I started work on it at the beginning of February, and commenced shooting towards the end of March. So we had eight weeks to get the whole thing together — from completed script to the first day of shooting.

That’s not much time, compared to an average feature film . . .

That’s another of the advantages of working with an organization like Crawfords. It’s a very sophisticated structure that allows you to do things quickly and efficiently.

Was “The John Sullivan Story” conceived as an extended episode of the series, or did you want to be different?

I don’t believe a similarity would have helped it in any way. An audience responds to something that is new, not something that’s the same. If The John Sullivan Story had looked like three episodes of The Sullivans joined together it wouldn’t have had the same impact. I approach my work, and see it for what I believe it to be: I take it from that point. That’s the only way I can work. This is probably why I have not made a feature film. On the three occasions I agreed to direct features, I have listened to the producers’ point of view and tried to correlate that to the script, then said, “Well, I think it should go this way”, and we have parted ways.

So you find it easier to work in a more collaborative atmosphere — like at Crawfords?

Yes, I don’t have the sort of ego that can play the politics that is necessary to get a feature film off the ground. I think I would have functioned very well under the old Hollywood studio system. When a whole stack of films is being produced, you don’t have the glare that one-off feature filmmaking is exposed to. I think the pressure a lot of feature filmmakers are under denies them the right to make mistakes — which is the right of every artiste.

In television there is so much scope for experiment and improvisation. You can do an impressionistic work, or a naturalistic work. A lot of people in the Australian film industry are saying that filmmakers have to perfect naturalism before they do anything else; as far as I am concerned, I went through that a long time ago.

Did you ever think of casting actors with box-office appeal in “The John Sullivan Story”?

No, because I don’t believe there is any such thing. There isn’t one Australian “star” who actually puts butts on seats on the strength of his or her name. In fact, I don’t think there is such a thing as a guaranteed financial name in the world.

I am glad there weren’t any pressures put on me to use “name” actors, because I may not have found Vera Plevnik who played Nadia.

You said earlier that when you get a script you divine the essence of the story, and mould the way you direct around that. What did you see as the essence of “The John Sullivan Story”?

When I first heard of The John Sullivan Story I thought it was going to be a big war epic, and for a while my thinking was along those lines. I thought of doing things like using stock footage showing the Yugoslavian army retreating across the snow, and cutting in our own close-ups. Then one night I applied my own fairly rigid rules and decided it was simply about John Sullivan. It was about the war seen from his point of view: he wouldn’t see 20,000 people, only the group immediately around him.

So basically, it was about a pacifist caught up in the war, involving concepts of humanitarianism and religion. If it had been a true story, John Sullivan may well have been canonized, because the qualities he displays seemed to me to be the true stuff saints are made of.

Although the story is set in the thick of the war, there are only a couple of fighting scenes. Was the amount of action restricted by the budget?

No. People are basically interested in people, and a large part of the audience watching The John Sullivan Story is interested in the action only because that is what the central character. It’s like a car chase; I have never been moved to laughter or tears by a car, but I may be moved to great concern and compassion about the person in the car.

So, in The John Sullivan Story we concentrated on developing the characters, and never considered the action in terms other than how it related to John Sullivan’s disappearance. For example, there is a silent scene of the Partisan army, in the aftermath of the Nazi attack, which I felt was necessary, dramatically, after the big “up” of the attack and before the retreat, to set the mood for the succeeding scene between John Sullivan (Andrew McFarlane) and Stipra (Frank Gallacher), in which you care very much about them because you have seen what they have been through.

There is quite a mixture of languages in the story — Yugoslavian, English and German. Why did you decide to dub rather than subtitle?

I think I must have had more memos about the accent problem than any other aspect of the film. I made up my mind fairly early in the piece about how we should handle it. I listened to some ‘40s war films and saw how Hollywood coped with it then, and frankly, it seemed to me to be the most accessible way to do it. The whole point of acting in English is to tell the story in the simplest way, creating the greatest effect on the audience. Sub-titles are distracting; they really belong to documentaries.

Andrew McFarlane’s performance in the film is very powerful . . .

I have known Andrew since he first came out of NIDA, and he has developed into one of the best actors to work with. He now has the technical equipment to do just about anything he wants.

In the sequence where he gives himself up to the Germans, the gut feeling breaks through all his technique; yet his technique gives him the discipline to carry on acting, even though, inside, the man is breaking up. He walks off-camera at the end of that shot and we freeze frame. In fact, what happened was that he fell into my arms and just cried for about three or four minutes — and not one of the crew or cast thought it was extraordinary to see a grown man crying in another man’s arms.

Andrew’s part in the film is an extremely difficult one, because he doesn’t have any violent outlets. And yet he has to maintain audience interest and the credibility of the character.

Many of the scenes in “The John Sullivan Story” are quite violent. Were you restricted in the depiction of violent events?

Violence is a difficult thing like the subject of sex — because what is suggested is often far more powerful than what is not. The amputation sequence deeply disturbs a number of people, but, in fact, all you see is a rather well-made up leg, and everything else is left to your imagination; the effect is completely by implication. In the big Nazi air attack you don’t see kids killed, but it’s an extremely violent scene.

There are two shots in the film I was asked to change — one was deleted altogether and the other

Concluded on P. 575
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Liddy Clark
Ride on Stranger
Blue Fin

Andrew McKaige
Skyways

Louise Philip
Cop Shop

John Arnold
Sam
Prisoner

Collette Mann
Prisoner

Stephen Clark
20 Good Years
Sullivans

Gaynor Martin
Skyways

Maria Mercedes
Patrol Boat
Prisoner

Rosie Sturgess
Thirst
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Brian Granrott
Sullivans
Prisoner

Sue Devine
Sullivans

Ron Challinor
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Irene Hewitt
Dimboola

Alan Hardy

Kate Turner
Melbourne Theatre Company

Peter Byrne
Skyways

Gillian Seamer
Melbourne Theatre Company

Kevin Colebrooke
Sullivans

Alan Rowe
Dimboola

Lisa Crittenden
Sullivans

Burton Cooper

John Heywood
Melbourne Theatre Company

Neil McColl
Sullivans

Jane Scalzi
Young Talent Time

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THE EARTHLING
Prod. company: Earthing Productions
Director: Peter Collinson
Scriptwriter: Graham Foy
Sound recordist: Don Connolly
Costume designer: Judy Dorsman
Casting consultants: M & L Casting
Prod, secretary: Jenny Day
Scriptwriter: Lanny Cotier
Exec, producer: Stephen Sharmat
Director: Peter Collinson
Based on the idea of: Graham Foy
Synopsis: A tale of discovery, set in a time
far beyond the end of the world
as we know it.

THE BLUE LAGOON
Forsee details see issue 22

HARLEQUIN
Prod. company: F.G. Film Productions for Far Flight Investments
Director: John Webster
Scriptwriter: Simon Wincer
Associate directors: Brian May
Assistant director: John Webster
Additional dialogue: Jon George, Neil Hicks
Script editor: Russell Hagg
Based on the novel by: John Gardner
Synopsis: A taut, life-and-death struggle for survival in the
remote Vampire wilderness.

THE PROMOTION OF MR SMITH
(Working title)
Producer: Richard Brennan
Director: John Webster
Scriptwriter: Bob Watson
Editor: Dave Darley
Sound recordist: Don Connolly
Prod, secretary: Jenny Day
Scriptwriter: Lanny Cotier
Exec, producer: Stephen Sharmat
Synopsis: An adventure story, set in the
1920s, that takes the audience
on a thrilling journey of discovery.

PACIFIC BANANA
Prod. company: Pacific Banana
Director: John Lomond
Scriptwriter: John Lomond
Based on the idea of: John Lomond
Synopsis: A comedy that takes
the audience on a hilarious
journey of self-discovery.

BLOOD MONEY
Prod. company: Breakers Productions
Director: Peter Collinson
Scriptwriter: Robin Levinson
Cast: Bryan Brown (China), Max Phipps
(China), Bryan Brown (Lincoln), Max Phipps
(Lincoln), Bryan Brown (London), Max Phipps
(London)
Synopsis: A gripping crime story that
takes the audience on a wild
journey of danger and excitement.

THE BATTLE OF BROKEN HILL
Prod. company: Segal Films and Television Productions
Director: John Webster
Scriptwriter: Robin Levinson
Synopsis: A thrilling adventure story that
takes the audience on an
enchanting journey of discovery.

THE CAPTIVES
Prod. company: Clete Beach Films
Producer: Patrick Avel
Director: John Webster
Scriptwriter: John Webster
Based on the novel by: Helen Garner
Synopsis: A heart-wrenching story of
survival that takes the audience
on a journey of triumph and
tragedy.

MONKEY'S ORANGETHE CAPTIVES
Prod. company: Clete Beach Films
Producer: Patrick Avel
Director: John Webster
Scriptwriter: John Webster
Based on the novel by: Helen Garner
Synopsis: A heart-wrenching story of
survival that takes the audience
on a journey of triumph and
tragedy.

THE JOHNNY O'KEEFE STORY
Prod. company: R & R Murders (working title)
Synopsis: A gripping crime story that
takes the audience on a wild
journey of danger and excitement.
AWAITING RELEASE

Don McLennan's Sam: in post-production.
A list of cast and crew credits for Rod Hardy's film "UP FROM THE UNDERGROUND" is provided, detailing contributions from various roles such as actors, directors, producers, and technicians. It also includes information about the release date, length, and production companies involved. The film is described as a love story involving an unhappy married woman and the ultimate loss of innocence. The credits recognize the contributions of many individuals involved in the film's production, both on and off-screen, highlighting the collaborative nature of filmmaking. The text also includes other film-related content, such as production surveys, shorts, and other notices, providing a comprehensive overview of the film industry during that period.
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Sally,
Bev.

Phone: (03) 690 4273
Sound recordist .................Brett Southwick
Editor .............................................Peter Schmidt
Photographer .........................Stephen Rigden
Synopsis: A documentary on the search for Nazi war criminals. Filmed in Israel, Austria, Germany, France and South America, it includes secret footage of two of the most notorious war criminals still living, and interviews with relatives, historians and intelligence services. Nazi hunters, in a career of executed war criminals, families and war crime victims.

THE HUNTER AND THE HUNTED
Prod. title: Wind of Death
Prod. in association with Pac Productions for the Seven Network
Dist. company: Richard Price
Producer .........................Antoniette Starkie-West
Director ..........................Barbara Boyd
Screenwriter .........Barbara Boyd
Synopsis: A documentary surveying the activities of the Black Mamba Afri­can elephant, surviving in the last of its natural habitat in South Africa. The film is a powerful and emotive visual journey into the world of man’s closest evolutionary relative.

ANIMATION

GRENDEL GRENDEL GRENDEL
See details in Features — Production this issue.

THE LITTLE CONVICT
Details will be listed in Issue 24.

PUSSY PUPS
Producer .........................Antoniette Starkie-West
Director ..........................Barbara Boyd
Screenwriter .........Barbara Boyd
Synopsis: Pussy finds herself too small in a world of bullets. To gain attention, Pussy pursues up... and ends.

DOCUMENTARIES

A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA
Prod. company: Shopfront Films
Dist. company: Crimson Films
Producer .................Barbara Boyd
Director ..........................Barbara Boyd
Synopsis: The film showing a chronological overview of places, events and people along Highway 1, seen in the light of the narrator’s historical perspective.

SHORTS

ANIMALS OF AUSTRALIA
Prod. company: Educational Media
Dist. company: Australia’s Children’s Association
Producer .................Barbara Boyd
Director ..........................Barbara Boyd
Synopsis: A documentary showing the range of life forms in the Meteors and their environment of the labatory services. The film features

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*Cast:* Max Gilliss (James Muldoon), Coraline Francois (Shelley Muldoon (De Neve)), Max Gadd (Brian Muldoon), Caroline Nott (Deborah Muldoon).  
*Synopsis:* Set in Melbourne, the story of a young schoolteacher for whom nothing goes right.

---

**STAND BY FOR...**

*Cast:* Max Gilliss (James Muldoon), Coraline Francois (Shelley Muldoon), Max Gadd (Brian Muldoon), Caroline Nott (Deborah Muldoon).  
*Synopsis:* Set in Melbourne, the story of a young schoolteacher for whom nothing goes right.

---

**SHIRL'S NEIGHBOURHOOD**

*Cast:* Corinna Beach (Shirleen Middleton), Ray Worsfold (John Middleton), Nicholas Heard (Gary Middleton), Denise Jones (Dorothy Middleton).  
*Synopsis:* The continuing story of an underprivileged suburb in Melbourne, where the action takes place both in and around the house, from which the host and characters make excursions into the neighborhood.

---

**THE SULLIVANS**

*Cast:* Belinda Giblin (Olive Sullivan), James Packer (Harry Sullivan), Udayan Mukherjee (Bobby Sullivan), Joanne McElhinney (Cassie McCallum).  
*Synopsis:* A film history of Australia in the 20th Century, incorporating archival film from 1896 to the present day, it includes footage from the Grassland and Movie, three television series, and 210 interviews with famous Australians.

---

**YOUNG RAMSAY**

*Cast:* Reg Hume (John Ramsay), Tim Playford (Peter Ramsay), Kaye Truscott (Sue Ramsay), Kevin Lock (Gerry Ramsay), Alister McQueen (Bill Ramsay).  
*Synopsis:* The story of a group of people whose lives, through time and circumstance, are entwined in several ways — from love to murder.

---

**AUSTRA LIAN F ILM COMMISSION**

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**WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE**

*Cast:* John Hargreaves (Peter Ramsay), Richard Goyder (Tom Ramsay), Sergio Lazareff (Ray Turner), Louise Hollis (Cassie McCallum).  
*Synopsis:* The adventures of a country veterinarian — second in a television series.

---

**PRODUCTION SURVEY**

---

**RETRON S DRay**

*Cast:* Wyman Brown (Dave Hargreaves), Mary Taylor (Sue Hargreaves), Kaye Truscott (Sue Ramsay), Kevin Lock (Gerry Ramsay), Alister McQueen (Bill Ramsay).  
*Synopsis:* The story of a group of people whose lives, through time and circumstance, are entwined in several ways — from love to murder.

---

**PAUL SMITH**

*Cast:* Reg Hume (John Ramsay), Tim Playford (Peter Ramsay), Kaye Truscott (Sue Ramsay), Kevin Lock (Gerry Ramsay), Alister McQueen (Bill Ramsay).  
*Synopsis:* The story of a group of people whose lives, through time and circumstance, are entwined in several ways — from love to murder.

---

**PRODUCTION SURVEY**

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*Synopsis:* The story of a group of people whose lives, through time and circumstance, are entwined in several ways — from love to murder.
Production Investments
Richard Whitaker, Producer—$500
South Australian Film Corporation
Production

Project: “Women and Sport”

Director: Jack Zalkalns
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Producer: Damien Parer

Synopsis: A documentary on the achievements of women in sports.

TASMANIAN FILM CORPORATION

BOWEN PARK

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Russell Galloway
Assistant: Peter McKeown

Synopsis: A documentary on the development of Bowen Park, a historical site of social and cultural significance.

CALIBRATING SPRAY EQUIPMENT

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on the calibration of spray equipment.

GLIMPSES

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on the glimpses of Tasmania.

SHIPPING

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on the shipping industry in Tasmania.

PITFALLS IN HOUSE-BUILDING

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on the common pitfalls in house-building.

PET CARE

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on pet care.

MRS HARDING TEACHES RESOURCEFULLY

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on teaching resourcefully.

PRODUCTION SURVEY

Cinema Papers, September-October — 561

Victoria Film Corporation

Children and Safety

Scriptwriter: Margaret Skelton
Producer: Russell Porter

Synopsis: A series of films on children's safety and health.

Shrine

Scriptwriter: Sol Shulman
Producer: John Dixon

Synopsis: A documentary on the Shrine of Remembrance.

Smoke

Scriptwriter: Solomon Shulman
Producer: Kent Chadwick

Synopsis: A documentary on smoking.

Tapestry Workshop

Producer: Filipa Murison

Synopsis: A documentary on the Tapestry Workshop.

Gipsland Lakes Commission

Commission: Minister for Conservation, Fisheries and Wildlife Division

Synopsis: A documentary on the Gipsland Lakes Commission.

Through the Rip

Producer: Frank Stopp

Synopsis: A documentary on the rip.

Marine Resources

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on marine resources.

Mental Health

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Anna Whitehead
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on mental health.

Women and Sport

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Anna Whitehead
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on women and sport.

Pet Care

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on pet care.

Pitfalls in House-Building

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on the pitfalls in house-building.

Shipping

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on shipping.

Production

Tapestry Workshop

Producer: Filipa Murison

Synopsis: A documentary on the Tapestry Workshop.

Gipsland Lakes Commission

Commission: Minister for Conservation, Fisheries and Wildlife Division

Synopsis: A documentary on the Gipsland Lakes Commission.

Through the Rip

Producer: Frank Stopp

Synopsis: A documentary on the rip.

Marine Resources

Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Director: Barry Pierce
Scriptwriter: Jack Zalkalns
Assistant: John Patterson

Synopsis: A documentary on marine resources.
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<th>SHOOTING SCRIPTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELEASE SCRIPTS</td>
<td>PRODUCER'S PACKAGES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TREATMENTS</td>
<td>OUTLINES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LETTERS</td>
<td>GRANT APPLICATIONS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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AUSTRALIA
The Last of the Knucklemen

Keith Connolly

Australia experienced an explosion of theatrical talent in step with, but a little ahead of, its film renaissance. By the time our cinema was launched upon the fruitful 1970s, playwrights like David Williamson, Alexander Buzo, Jack Hibberd, John Romeril and Dorothy Hewett (to name only the front-runners) were shaking the stage with fresh, vivid insights into contemporary Australian life.

Little of this dramatic outpouring has reached the screen. Nobody wants to see Australian film swamped by productions derived, as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences pompously has it, "from another medium", but it is a pity that, so far, few films (the notable exceptions being Tom Jeffrey's The Removalists and Bruce Beresford's Don's Party, both by Williamson, and John Duigan's expanded version of Hibberd's Dimboola) have tapped the sizeable pool of quality material available.

Yet, it is with mixed feelings that one approaches Tim Burstall's adaptation of John Powers' lively, though limited, The Last of the Knucklemen. This three-act drama, set on a north-west drilling site (the film changes the locale to Central Australia), is simplistic, but interesting enough within narrow confines, although it degenerates in the last act into rough-house soap opera. (Compellingly, though, I well remember my surprise at the rapturous reception the sophisticated Melbourne opening-night audience accorded its jejune climax in 1973.)

On the face of it then, The Last of the Knucklemen is ideally suited to Burstall's proven facility for depicting the Australian male animal in all his pristine vainglory (Stork, Petersen, Alvin Purple). Too ideally, perhaps, and time after time, the film whoops the superficial naturalism of the play into comic-book bathos.

Burstall's screenplay is surprisingly faithful to the ascending theatrical pitch of the original, but the film's trouble lies not so much in the script as in the tenacity with which, in almost every expository scene, he goes for the dramatic jugular. The exceptions to this stridently elemental approach help prove the point. The best thing in the film is a high-stakes card game between Methuselah (Michael Duffield), a sick old gambler, and Pansy (Mike Preston), the camp stinker — characters granted a greater dimension in Burstall's conception (and very well played).

When Methuselah — Duffield, who created the role on stage, gives it a nice blend of pathos and irony — enunciates his limited remaining ambitions only to see them blighted in one hand of poker, the film gains in warmth and substance. By comparison, the other characters, even that of Tarzan (Gerard Kennedy), the legendary knuckleman of the title, are patently basic theatrical devices. Tarzan, the crew foreman, is fiercely possessive of his 'turf, a squalid little domain he dominates by force of personality and reminders of his fading physical prowess. As Methuselah explains to newcomer Monk (Michael Caton), knucklemen like Tarzan are relics of "the old days" when the riff-raff had to be held in check by men good with their fists. Still very much the top dog, Tarzan announces his staff-relations policy after the apparently non-unionized, cowed, crew display a rare solidarity (when the foreman's back is turned): "Any of this bullshit about all for one and one for all and you'll be booted down the road. This isn't General Motors or BHP! You're day laborers on a wildcat mine ... you're not hired to be smart alecs or talk-back merchants!" As Tarzan storms away after this barrage (there is a lot more) the workers are transfixed like Greyfriars fags who have been dressed down by the head prefect.

One hesitates to even mention Ken Hannam's Sunday Too Far Away in this context, for fear of appearing to equate two superficially-similar films, but a comparison between the essential authenticity of Hannam's shearers and the ambivalent

Tim Burstall's The Last of the Knucklemen a morality tale in which flawed but humane Good triumphs over cracked and sneaky Evil.
dacity of Burstall's driller is, invidiously, inevitable. If there really are groups of outback workers like the drilling crew, I am sure Log Hancock would like to hear from them.

At bottom, and that's not far beneath the frothy surface, *Knuckles* is an artless morality tale in which flawed but humane Good triumphs over cracked and sneaky Evil. It's not hard to identify the Good Guys; they smile more, swear less and are passing fair in appearance. The baddies scowl darkly, curse horribly and probably pull the wings off live flies. What's more, one of them, Carl (Steve Rackman), is a German of quite grotesque Hunishness (again unusually, only two new Australians are sighted throughout the film).

Carl is brought to the camp by Pansy with big money wagered on the result. Both baddies get their come-uppances when the enigmatic Tom (Peter Hehir), a fugitive payroll robber and karate expert, fights in Turzan's stead, proving that nice guys can finish first — if they have a black belt. (The ugly racism of the Carl episode is matched by the primitive sexism inherent in a sequence depicting a visit to the area by a mobile brothel).

In the main, *Knuckles* is commendable, if unadventurous technically. Leslie Brins' functionally theatrical bunk-house set is sparsely claustrophobic, as befits the cocktail of nearly all significant action. The tensions and temper of the plot originate there and Burstall wisely confines most of the exterior sequences to background authentication — the men at work, visits to the small town, swimming in a muddy stream.

While Dan Burstall's camera is out of doors (glowing, perhaps inacapably, with picture-postcard hues) Burstall briefly discards montages. A crucial discussion among the workers on the job is shot in a single take, the camera moving back and forth among the participants.

The music, scored by Bruce Smeaton, features a plinking banjo motif imitating redneck heartiness, while a yowling, wordless vocal, probably less unintentionally, is appropriate to the general thematic blankness.

In sum, *Knuckles* is disappointing, not for any marked defect of rendition, but rather because Burstall (who, of course, knows precisely what he is doing) keeps his sights so low.

---

My Brilliant Career

Brian McFarlane

Just when it seemed that 1979 was not to be a good year for Australian films, *My Brilliant Career* arrived to restore confidence and take its place with the six best films this country had produced in the liveliest decade of its cinema history.

Gillian Armstrong's film is, with one exception, wholly true to the spirit of Miles Franklin's semi-autobiographical novel, and in my view, greatly improves on the letter of 564 — Cinema Papers, September-October

But it does have a tough-mindedness that
a tension that's comic and sexual to the last between Harry and Sybylla deepens, pleasantness between them.

The lush natural background, at Caddagat and at Five-Bob Downs, sets off and helps to account for the social graces within. In this gentler, more yielding landscape, the film suggests, it is easier to be cultivated and independent.

In contrast to the swirling dining race through open doors and windows at home, here we get views of verdant gardens lightly beckoning as seen from the verandahs. This kind of natural receptiveness to man is epitomized in an exquisite long-shot: the composition of this scene, in which fence rails cross the foreground and Sybylla's red sunshade dominates the dappled, leafy greenness of the middle-ground through which the river runs, achieves a Monet-like impressionism.

The shot not merely artistic, but about art and people in harmonious settings. The scene has a nicely wedged anticlimax as Sybylla chucks the bunch of flowers brought her by the pompous English jackaroo in the river.

The film's visual style has been stressed here because it is more than a style; it is the chief source of the film's coherence. The grandeur of the Five-Bob and the colder house at Caddagat, recalls the shot of the verandah of the country pub to which Sybylla had earlier gone to find her drunken father. However, where the camera passes through the colonnade to make yet more elegance within, in the earlier scene it pulls back from the verandah to subvert our notion of the pub's charm by revealing its ugly squinstness.

The striking overhead shot of Sybylla dancing, somewhat wildly, at Caddagat, contrasts with the decorum of the breakfast scene the next day, or with the soft fireside interior at Five-Bob Downs. These later scenes, suggesting the constraints that work on Sybylla, resonate with the recollection of the earlier one.

The idea of Sybylla being wrenched out of the pleasures of Caddagat to go to work for the McSwat is underlined in the way this unpleasant news cuts into the serene image of the girl in the blossom tree. The extent of this break is made in tersely-effective visual terms: "Do her the world of good — make her think of other people," says Granny (Aileen Britton) compassionately, in the comfortable sitting-room, and the camera cuts to the McSwat children. The congeners of broken-down huts that is the McSwat farm is caught in a brilliant long-shot that suggests all the worse kinds of slouch incompetence; it is juxtaposed to a prettily-composed scene of Granp and Aunt Helen (Wendy Hughes) on the terrace at Caddagat.

If I am making the film's procedures sound too schematic, I don't mean to do so. What I want to point to is the intelligent way broken-down huts that is the McSwat farm, comfortable sitting-room, and the camera cuts to

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Tim

Dorothy Hewett

Advertised as "a love story of an older woman and a younger, intellectually handicapped man", the idea behind Tim sounded interesting; but unfortunately the film pussyfoots around the subject with a shallow and sentimental script, and the result is basically dishonest.

There is so much left unsaid that should have been explored in Tim, and so much is overstated that fails to make its point that the actors, struggling to develop some sort of veracity, are left with egg on their faces most of the time.

This applies in particular to Tim (Mel Gibson), the "slow-witted farmer who takes Abby from her brother, finds that "NoBODY's perfect... you just got half devil and half angel in you". But for the farmer, Abby has to be an angel. For as long as she seems to be one, the three wanderers live their days of heaven; playing with cultivation, throwing food on the ground for fun, laughing in the water, far from the furnaces of Chicago. One image captures the fragility of this paradoxical time, in which the heavens of the pleasures of security and permanence is measured in days which are numbered: a wine glass, glinting under the water, dropped carelessly by Bill and Abby on a night stolen together while the farmer sleeps.

Days of Heaven is composed of classical images of heaven and hell, good and evil, exploiting the ambiguities of flame and darkness: of the river which gives pleasure and death; of the earth and the wheat-fields which are spaces of pastoral delight and cruel labor, and of the wind which ruffles Abby's hair, and brings plague.

This imagery is curiously de-moralized in the film, given a historical and social meaning, and used to order a world in which subjective experience is not of good and evil in the ethical sense, but of the alternation of pain and pleasure, insecurity and safety, threat and tranquility. Clear-cut moral dichotomies, also, belong to the farmer's world, in which we are never allowed to become fully involved. Instead, the symbols of evil — the insects, the scarab, the grotesque and chattering wind-vane (with a chicken that might be the envy of Werner Herzog as its natural companion) — become bearers of indefinable menace.

The sense of menace is linked to disruption, to a change in the winds, to the inevitable breaking of an equilibrium, a state. Everything in Days of Heaven returns to motion, a motion which is at work in the very finest details of the film.

Roland Barthes once said, with remarkable simplicity, that the primary force of Eisenstein is due to the fact that "no image is boring". In those terms, a comparison with Malick's film is tempting. But the gulf is even more striking, and it is something to do with the politics of the meaning of movement.

Barthes also argued that Eisenstein's tableau require a fetishist subject to cut them out, and that in the long run this point of meaning is always the law. However that may be, the Eisensteinian beauty of ordered lines of tractors harmonizing in moving diagonals would be impossible in Malick's film.

Instead, we have the shot of the laborers moving in front of the farmer's house. The house itself is a fantastic construction, posed hugely off-centre in the horizon, and the darkened figures move about below it, going to and fro in different directions, drifting slowly through the fields.

The narration of Days of Heaven begins with a memory of a time when the apocalypse was predicted; when people roused a world which would go up in flames. It ends, however, not with the fire that destroys the farm, or the gunshot which ends Bill's life, but with a memory of an unnamed girl, a stray friend, who didn't know where she was going or what she was going to do.

At the end, the film itself simply lets things go, and imposes no sense of finality, closure, or absolute break. In the place of the last apocalypse is a kind of mated and fragile triumph of the nomads — a triumph of those who expect no final victory at all but to pass on and start again.

1. "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein", in Image-Music-Text, Fontana, p.72
and with the relative freedom of Tim and Mary's friendship.

Tim does attempt to deal with one forbidden Australian subject: the sexual life of the middle-aged woman. In the opening shots, Mary sees herself as an ageing woman, her dress, her movements, her conversation and reactions all revealing this. But Mary is obviously sexually attractive, self-reliant, and intellectually and socially well above average.

Coffey also composed the music and sang the three songs which feature in the film. For Coffey was the brainchild of Alec Morgan. Unlike My Survival, which centres around Coffey, and where the drive to raise the funds and make it came directly from her, Robin Campbell became the willing subject of Morgan's enthusiasm.

Robin Campbell is a terrific old man, an elder of the Murrarwarri tribe, which is also Essie's tribal group. Campbell is 75 and, considering the short life expectancy of Aboriginal people, this is a feat in itself. He lives in a corrugated-iron shack after working for more than 50 years as a shearer, drover, and country hand. Campbell used to carve emu eggs, too, but as he says, "you need good eyes for that", possibly without realizing that the skillful craft of egg-carving is becoming as rare as emu eggs. He has wood figures now, and his friends visit him to yarn the day away.

— Since Campbell's speech is affected by his old age, Bill Reid of Bourke provides the narration. Reid is one of the few remaining egg-carvers.

The script for Robin Campbell was written by Morgan from the words of Robin Campbell, and the film is about Campbell's memories of the old days — including things he saw and learnt as a child and a young man. Many of these recollections are acted out in the film using his young relatives.

In one, the legend of the Blue Crane when it was a woman is re-enacted. For this scene the actors wore period costume, which, untrained relations, all add to the authenticity of this old man's memories of a time now passed.

On the other hand, My Survival makes a clear social statement, but not in a political manner. The film is about a 13-year-old Essie Coffey who lives in a dilapidated house that has no hot water or sewerage. The walls are broken, the roof leaks, and there are holes in the floor. Coffey shares this two-bedroom dwelling with 18 other people. (She is married and has 18 children, 10 of them adopted.)

The audience, however, is not told about this. Nor does Coffey say how difficult it is for her to live in these conditions. They do not form a backdrop for the real story, how Aboriginal culture and tradition have survived, despite efforts over 200 years, to obliterate it.

Coffey lives in West Brewarrina, across the Barwon River, away from where the white folk of the town live. This black suburb is known locally as Doggy Dodge. Her efforts to preserve Aboriginal culture are depicted in scenes where she is shown teaching bushcraft to groups of children — the same bushcraft she learnt from her parents as a little girl. Coffey passes on her knowledge of the culture, and the children on a successful tracking expedition, which brings its own reward in the form of an earth-baked porcupine — still an Aboriginal feast.

Coffey also instills in the children a sense of pride: "This is your land", she says, though it is likely — as often happens in Brewarrina — that they could be arrested for trespass while hunting on it.

My Survival is full of contrasts. For example, in a class-room scene where, shortly after the return from the hunting expedition, the white school teacher gives the children a lesson in Australian history — while the audience, however, is not told about this. Nor does Coffey say how difficult it is for her to live in these conditions. They do not form a backdrop for the real story, how Aboriginal culture and tradition have survived, despite efforts over 200 years, to obliterate it.

Coffey managed to get the co-operation of a surprising number of people during the making of My Survival. Even the local police continued with their usual arrests, even though they know the cameras are on them.

Her real support is most evident, however, in the scenes filmed in and around her house. A sense of ‘family’ abounds, particularly when Coffey lines up the members of the household and explains her relationship to each with great affection, while the small children swing on her skirts. There is no acting, no dressing up for the occasion, nor any photography spoil. Coffey is the focus of the film, moving through it as she moves through her life, with a word of kindness here, a word of helpful advice there, a word of explanation — and even a very straight word where it is needed, too.

Despite Coffey's obviously heavy domestic workload, we see her holding a birthday party for one of the members of the household, and the relaxed casual air at the barbecue puts away any idea that it might have been contrived. Of course, it is not the usual ‘mugs and beer’ barbecue; a fresh catch from the river is laid on the coals alongside the Aboriginal favourite, ‘Johnny cake’.

All the usual things white people associate with Aborigines are there in My Survival, including dilapidated houses, overcrowding, and drinking, but the film also presents a rare insight into the ‘hows and whys’ of this lifestyle. And, of course, Essie Coffey’s very presence denies that these bedraggled people end up that way just because it is inevitable.

Coffey has a firm grasp on the complexities of the European way of life, and of the sophisticated tactics witness this film) required for our continued survival. Yet her outlook on life is simple. She is mother to her brood, and a friend to all who need one. Her appearances on the Aboriginal Legal Service in Brewarrina (of which she is founder) and the Aboriginal Land Trust (NSW) are an extension, as she sees it, of her concern for her family and neighbors.

My Survival as an Aboriginal received the Documentary of the Year Award and the Rouben Mamoulian Award at this year’s Sydney Film Festival.


Fedora

Richard Brennan

The prospect of losing touch with an audience is a source of anxiety shared by many filmmakers. This fear must increase as a filmmaker gets older and his tastes increasingly differ from those of a younger audience. And it takes more than intelligent filmmaking or a knowledge of audience taste to guarantee a film's success.

Interviewed by Film Comment early this year, the director of Fedora, Billy Wilder, said, "If you are a competent writer and you notice that the dance floor is empty, you may try to give them rock and roll or disco. But I can't do it. They would know that it isphony and they still would not come out and dance."

Just over 12 months ago, Wilder and actor William Holden expressed, on separate occasions, doubts that Fedora had sufficient elements contemporary audiences could respond to. "Can't you see the captions now?" asked Wilder. "Fedora is old hat," Richard Schickel's review in a recent issue of Time magazine is headed "Old Hat". Their appre-
Martin Scorsese, no censorship”, and he berates the star in a film from his script. Yesteryear, substitutes for those of Franz Waxman. The fact that “the kids with beads have taken beautiful vistas of Corfu, lit by Gerry Fisher, is his co-writer. John Seitz’ harsh images ofvard, genic quality. In this context I found the two Paramount circa 1950 have been replaced by Garbo was a brilliantly-photographed vehi­ lence into a flashback: “They’d done a good job on her — considering. At least she was going out in style. It is surprising that a number of leading critics have given the film such short shrift. Perhaps Fedora, like Alfred Hitchcock’s Vertigo and John Ford’s The Searchers, will not be fully appreciated till well after its release. Certainly, in years to come it will acquire a special status among Wilder’s work. As in Vertigo, the identity of the central female in Fedora is shrouded in a mystery which is dispelled more than half an hour before the end. The hostile response to this structural oddity has caused the film to be widely disparaged. However, a resolution of how Madame Fedora has retained her ageless beauty is less involving than Wilder’s examination of change, survival and decay. Fedora is portrayed as a supreme star, synthesizing Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich and Ingrid Bergman and perhaps even Joan Crawford. Like Garbo her failure to win an Academy Award is regarded as ironic, and she is remembered, particularly for a romantic scene pairing with Robert Taylor. Like Dietrich she is bullied on set by an image-obsessed Euro­ pean director, and her admirers are known to include Ernest Hemingway and Winston Churchill. Like Bergman she has played Joan of Arc and has been raped by a child. A major criticism of Fedora has been the casting of Hildegarde Knef and Marthe Keller — unequal in the eyes of many to their Garbo-esquerales. When Detweiller pleads with Fedora to go out in style.” In interviews, Wilder agreed that this was a stumbling block. However, some films by Billy Wilder date badly. One, Two, Three, with its references to former U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Spartacus, Nikita Khrushchev’s shoe-thumping at the U.N., and Joan Crawford’s links with Pepsi Cola, probably puzzle younger viewers when it turns up on a television late show. Time will be kinder to Fedora, which broods over the lost Holly­ wood of MGM, Robert Taylor, Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy and of course, Marlene Dietrich, and recalls an era of sex in the back of con­ vertibles with the voice of Nat King Cole on the car radio. There is no evidence in Fedora that Wilder’s skills are notably diminished. But at the age of 73, with no commercial hit since Irma la douce 16 years ago, and six consecutive commercial failures, the future must look bleak. Film lovers would obviously like him to go out on a winning note: this one concludes with the spectacle of the deluded Detweiller telling the audience in a voice-over that: “Six weeks later the countess died … the electric blanket I had sent her came back undelivered.” This romanticism, disguised as cynicism, recalls Double Indemnity. Arc in the Hole, Sunset Boulevard and Some Like it Hot. If this is to be Wilder’s last shot, I hope that it is one day recognized as a good one.

Wilder. When they worked for the last time together 16 years ago, and six consecutive commercial failures, the future must look bleak. Film lovers would obviously like him to go out on a winning note: this Fedora: Produced and directed by: Billy Wilder. Associate producer: J. A. L. Diamond. Screenplay: Billy Wilder, J. A. L. Diamond. Director of photography: Gerry Fisher. Editors: Fredric Stall­ jam. Art director: Alexander Trauner. Sound recordist: David Hildyard. Cost: Marthe Keller, William Holden, Hildegarde Knef, Jose Ferrer, Mario Adorf. Production company: Geria Film, Bavaria Verticals with the voice of Nat King Cole on the car radio. There is no evidence in Fedora that Wilder’s skills are notably diminished. But at the age of 73, with no commercial hit since Irma la douce 16 years ago, and six consecutive commercial failures, the future must look bleak. Film lovers would obviously like him to go out on a winning note: this one concludes with the spectacle of the deluded Detweiller telling the audience in a voice-over that: “Six weeks later the countess died … the electric blanket I had sent her came back undelivered.” This romanticism, disguised as cynicism, recalls Double Indemnity. Arc in the Hole, Sunset Boulevard and Some Like it Hot. If this is to be Wilder’s last shot, I hope that it is one day recognized as a good one.

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Fedora: William Holden (left) as the ageing scriptwriter Barry Detweiller at the funeral of Fedora (Hildegarde Knef).
OCP Limited advise that the name of Madelon Wilkens was inadvertently omitted from the credits on STAX episodes ST12/79 and ST16/79. Ms. Wilkens researched the stories "Comic Kid" and "Pigeons".
ing treated as peasants, and as "mere tradesmen"; "Talk about discrimination against the blacks". He says in the first of comments which disturb her ordered liberal views of a culture for everyone and every culture in its place. And where she mouths banalities about being free, he creates a song:

*I'm me not you
I'm me Babe
I've been to Babylon
I've touched the Golden Fleece
I'm me

Max has a strong imagination, the kind that is cheerfully able to invent a past for himself; but controlled by Jill's warnings and fears, he accuses her of having "too much imagination." Her imagination creates fears of a sexual threat, and yet allows her to agree, emotionally, with her friend Meg (Candy Raymond), that, "having a spunky guy around the house is a turn on.

Jill retaliates against Max's verbal attack on her, putting him down for saying "done" instead of "did", and he responds, jeering at her husband for losing his hair and being an intellectual, dismissing her collection of New Guinea artifacts as "a museum", and undermining her sense of order and of what is proper.

But Jill cannot convince Brian that the plumber is a threat, because he is too busy building his career. In his work he is caught, ironically, between the simple scientific view that nutritional deficiencies in New Guinea Highlands people are best treated in terms of the introduction of Western-style junk food, and his own suspicion that deeper cultural factors and practices have something to do with it.

In another of the film's many ironies, it is the results of the plumber's work (and pretty amazing work it is; she has every reason to doubt that he is genuinely a plumber!) that turns the dinner-party for her husband into the success that will clinch Brian's new appointment. It is his dry "collapsing bathrooms and cognacs" that made the night.

The most telling irony is an apparently insignificant remark made by Brian as Jill tries to explain her fear of the plumber: "He's not some sort of monster," he says. And yet the plumber is, in a very real sense, a monster to her. He represents everything she has shut out of her life, everything she refuses to recognize, and everything that threatens her well-measured and protective wall of complacency. Surrounded by manufactured culture in an Italian restaurant she confides to Brian: "I felt like I was losing control. It had never happened before." Brian is ignorantly reassuring in his revealing apology. "I just had to be selfish.

The Plumber is a tight, carefully wrought, disturbing film; perhaps the more so because the Hitchcockian promise of its opening scenes (there are references, as in Weir's earlier Hodeskule, to Psycho) is turned in an unexpected direction. We could have anticipated familiar variations on the theme of the sexually-threatening intruder in the house, but what in fact emerges is a complex examination of the structure of middle-class liberal defense systems. The examination is, if anything, more effective than the one undertaken in The Last Wave, because the disrupting factor is less arcane and more believable. (Despite the evidence of Max's plumbing and the portentous suggestiveness of much of his behavior.)

The Plumber is also a densely and effectively scripted The Last Wave. In keeping with the ironic complexity of its structure, much of the dialogue carries a charge of suggestion and power. The last line of his vocally-strummed song is, "Don't turn your back on me Babe", which is, of course, what she inevitably does. Almost the first statement Max makes to Jill is, "Your pipes, if you'll excuse the expression, are buggered.

And the multiple threat involved in these words is what finally forces Jill to take desperate and horribly dishonest measures in defense of their middle-class that security is so neatly represented in her white-wine, avocado, Mercedes appointment-in-Genova life. His scream, "Bloody bitch", leaves her alov and secure, high up on the balcony of her apartment.

The Plumber is a well-made, splendidly-acted, and important addition to the depressingly small number of Australian films which go beyond bland one-dimensionality. It marks writer-director Peter Weir as one of the few genuinely pioneering talents in Australia at present.


Thirst

Geoff Mayer

John Pinkney's script for Rod Hardy's Thirst appears to be inspired by the legend surrounding the exploits of the Hungarian countess, Erzsebet Bathory, who is said to have kept herself young and beautiful by bathing in the blood of young virgins. This legend also provided the inspiration for Harry Kumel's Le rouge aux levres (Daughters of Darkness - 1970), and Hammer Films' Countess Dracula (1971).

Thirst, however, has a contemporary Australian setting, although it clearly remains within the Gothic tradition of the late 18th Century with its dominant theme of the persecuted woman.

The film's heroine, Kate Davis (Chantal Contouri), is kidnapped by a bizarre secret society, the Hyma Brotherhood, and taken to a research farm and processing facility (the contemporary equivalent of a Gothic castle). She is then subjected to a prolonged conditioning process to make her accept the fact that she is a descendant of the Baroness von Kreutznitz, a blood-laster from way back. The drinking of blood, as the Brotherhood repeatedly stresses, is the ultimate aristocratic act, because this "vital human essence" confers power on a superior race of people.

Unfortunately, the makers of Thirst were not content to play around with the allegorical and atmospheric possibilities presented by this plot, and the film incorporates a number of other subsidiary narrative threads. One of these in particular, a flashback to a distressed five-year-old Kate being abandoned by her mother at a boarding school, only diverts the audience's attention from the main theme.

The rhythm of the film is also upset by the decision to begin the story during the early stages of Kate's conditioning, and then revert back to her pre-conditioned phase. Apart from providing a rather quirky, confusional opening, it also undermines any attempt to build suspense when Kate is later abducted.

The producers of Thirst, Antony I. Gimnane and William Fayman, must be congratulated for attempting to break the pattern set by the recent spate of bland Australian productions by producing entertaining genre films like Patrick and Snapshots, but their latest effort is needlessly repetitive and lacking in real tension. By revealing the conspiracy of the Brotherhood at the start of the film, dramatic potential has been sacrificed to concentrate on the techniques used by the lascivious Mrs Burker (Shirley Cameron) and Dr Gauss (Henry Silva) to break Kate's resistance to the Brotherhood's aims. Many of these — such as blood being siphoned from the catacombs 'inferior species' imprisoned on the farm, and the blood-drinking ceremonies (performed in a church in a liturgical fashion in the presence of devotees) — are repeated without sufficient variation to generate much excitement.

More successfully executed, however, is Kate's first escape attempt, and the scene in which blood runs down from a shower faucet (a variation of the technique used in Jeff Lieberman's excellent 'shocker', Quills). Because a sanneness pervades most of Thirst, one becomes immune to the intended shocks, and the ending of the film is never in question. The film is spent developing the appropriate atmosphere for each scene and many suffer from 'overkill'. For example, during the climactic escape attempt, Dr Gauss grabs the landing bar of a helicopter as it takes off. Not content to show Fraser (David Hemmings) kick Gauss off when the helicopter has reached a substantial height, Hardy's camera follows the downward path to where Gauss becomes entangled in high tension wires. Hardy then cuts to a shot of his body jerking from the electric shock, followed by a close-up of his mutilated face as he hits the ground.

Technically, Thirst is good, and overall Rod Hardy's direction is competent (although there are some excellent moments, like the one where Kate's suffering is captured simply by an expression on Gauss' face). But Brian May's score (with the exception of the blood-drinking ceremonies in the church) and Vince Monton's photography are not able to realize their full potential because Hardy does not allow enough time to build the appropriate atmosphere for each scene.

Thirst has the basis for a successful horror-thriller. Many of the ideas — such as the slave farm's 'blood cows', the all-pervasive Brotherhood, and the suggested link between the advertising industry and the conditioning process used by the Brotherhood — are excellent. Unfortunately, these are stifled by repetitive plot development and the unfailing attempts to convert Kate's taste buds to accept a 'nice' red head.

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One hears a lot about film culture, and Australia, we are led to believe, is in the process of developing such a culture. So, before looking at The Australian Journal of Screen Theory, I will examine an example from overseas and try to suggest what film culture and what can be attained within it.

In France, Eric Rohmer, who is not a young man, has announced he will join the avant-garde with Pratical Writers. Writers who were in the forefront of progressive literary studies in the 1950s have surfaced with extra-ordinary modernist works like L’immortelle (Alain Robbe-Grillet) and India Song (Marguerite Duras). Philosophers and historians (Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault) refer to the cinema on the same level as any other art or social phenomenon, and they are interviewed by Cahiers du Cinema. Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan write the occasional film review for newspapers like Le Monde.

Many French directors, as is well known, began as film critics. This is not some adolescent phase they manage to grow out of once they start making films. From Jean-Luc Godard, in the early 1960s, to Jean Eustache, today, their work is fashioned around the climate of current debate.

What is the common ground in these various illustrations? There is no separation of theory and analysis on the one hand, and actual films on the other. The two are in a constant, productive relationship. And it was for that reason Noel Burch wrote Praxis du Cinema (Theory of Film Practice). In the Australian context, it is hardly surprising that Jacques Rivette’s Celine and Julie Go Boating, or Louis Bunuel’s Cet objet obscur de desir (That Obscure Object of Desire) are treated superficially, almost bermused. One cannot talk about the Rivette film unless something is known about the debate on narrative cinema — in fact, one cannot even enjoy the film if unaware what its jokes refer to. And the Bunuel film will merely be some rehearsed tirade, denounced semiological way imaginable. Fortunately, he did not go unchallenged.

Those who attempt to teach film in Australia find they must bow to concepts and debates from overseas, which inevitably appear contrived. Tertiary students of film are taught a certain critical language (often very sophisticated) to discuss the Golden Years of Hollywood or Sergei Eisenstein, and then go off to see Newsfront, where they think with another, more or less naive, language.

The problem is to begin bridging such gaps, and the initial step is to admit their existence. Australian film culture has barely reached this point. Yet within this void resides The Australian Journal of Screen Theory, which tries to cover "the very broad issue on ocean studies. 2 Superman provides much of a show of debating with itself. Metrol works under similar constraints. Addressed to people involved in secondary education, the magazine gives the impresion of using the cinema to talk about every thing but the cinema. Storm Boy inspires a new awareness is created, pre­ ference of how we might understand the project. Cinema Papers literatures, on its own, cannot make much of a show of debating with itself. Metro works under similar constraints. Addressed to people involved in secondary education, the magazine gives the impresion of using the cinema to talk about every thing but the cinema. Storm Boy inspires a new awareness is created, preference of how we might understand the project. Cinema Papers literatures, on its own, cannot make much of a show of debating with itself. Metro works under similar constraints. Addressed to people involved in secondary education, the magazine gives the impresion of using the cinema to talk about every thing but the cinema. Storm Boy inspires a new awareness is created, preference of how we might understand the project. Cinema Papers literatures, on its own, cannot make much of a show of debating with itself. Metro works under similar constraints. Addressed to people involved in secondary education, the magazine gives the impresion of using the cinema to talk about every thing but the cinema. Storm Boy inspires a new awareness is created, preference of how we might understand the project. Cinema Papers literatures, on its own, cannot make much of a show of debating with itself. Metro works under similar constraints. Addressed to people involved in secondary education, the magazine gives the impresion of using the cinema to talk about every thing but the cinema. Storm Boy inspires a new awareness is created, preference of how we might understand the project. Cinema Papers literatures, on its own, cannot make much of a show of debating with itself. Metro works under similar constraints. Addressed to people involved in secondary education, the magazine gives the impresion of using the cinema to talk about every thing but the cinema. Storm Boy inspires a new awareness is created, preference of how we might understand the project.
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temporarily or permanently behind. The real world enters the film and swamps it. Consequently, all films begin to look much the same, because they perform the same social functions.

A debate between Albert Moran and Geoff Mayer over 20,000 Years in Sing Sing crystallizes this problem. Moran's fascinating 'reading' of the film, modelled on the Cahiers du Cinema text on Young Mr Lincoln, conludes: "...it bears the marks of its intended intervention in American society in 1933, the worst year of the Depression, an intervention for the continuation of the existing order and on behalf of the new Roosevelt administration." Mayer points out that a genre such as the prison film uses recurring narrative elements that can be traced years before and after 1933. Perhaps the cinema has a more defused, even mythical social function, as Will Wright argues in his book Six Guns and Society.

In this article I have tried to evoke the general sweep of approaches and issues touched on in the first four editions of Screen Theory — a fifth is forthcoming. But two articles need to be singled out because of the particular contribution they make to film criticism. Colin Gripp's article on Eric Rohmer's writings and films, "The Ideology of Realism," clarifies many of the scattered ideas on two essential areas: ideology and realism. It provides the finest 'reading' of Eric Rohmer's work I have come across in English language publications.

Lesley Stern's "Ciepdal Opera: The Restless Years", is the most important piece of criticism produced in this country, exciting and invaluable in the myriad of possibilities it opens up. "In looking at The Restless Years" she writes: "I want to challenge the notion of the audience for soap operas as passive consumers... the pleasure derived from them may well have to do with the playful kind of work they invite from the viewer in producing meaning."

"Play, pleasure, the unconscious, the position of the viewer... these concepts, used within the framework of psycho-analysis, are situated in a radical feminist discourse that usurps the prevailing idea of ideology as 'vague but defiantly dominant'... the relationship between text and reader is fictionalised out of the social formation, out of the relations of production which determine the viewing and reading context."  

Stern's analysis valuable because of the perspective it offers on conventional, traditional narrative forms, while suggesting an alternative practice: a radical avant-garde in criticism and film production. This alternative, far from being impersonal and academic — as current mainstream opinion would have it — involves everything that is most crucial: our place in society, our pleasures, our capacity to change and rework reproductive structures. Is that too utopian an ideal for a future Australian film culture?

Recent Releasess

The following books were released in Australia between April and June 1976. All titles are on sale in Australian bookshops.

The publishers are listed below the author in each entry, and the local distributor is shown in brackets. If no distributor is indicated, it denotes that the book is imported. Prices listed are for paperbacks, unless otherwise indicated, and are subject to variation between bookshops and states.

This list compiled by Merryn R. Bland of the Space Age Bookstore, Melbourne.

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Casts, credits, and other reference material.

Four of a Face: Swanson, Garbo, Crawford, Dietrich
Larry Carr
Penguin/Penguin Aust. $14.95 (PB)

The careers of four famous actresses portrayed through photographs.

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of the World's Greatest Movie Stars and Their Films

Ken Wlaschin
Salmanak/Hamlyn Aust. $9.50 (PB)

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John and Diana (A Love Story)

Corgi/Gordon and Gotch $2.50 (PB)

The story of John Travolta and Diana Hyland's affair.

The Non-Western Films of John Ford

A. Place

Citadel/Davis $21.55 (HC)

An illustrated text; each film is documented with casts and credits.

Biographies, Memoirs and Experiences in Filmmaking and Filmmographies

The Actor's Life (Journals) 1956-1976

Charles Heston

Alax Luek/Penguin $14.95 (HC)

The diaries kept by Charles Heston of his career from 1936-1976.

Behind Closed Doors

Shaun Tan

Wyndham/Riccal $3.50 (PB)

A collection of gossip.

The Films of George Pal

Gail Morgan Hickman

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The story of the relationship between a child actor and his mother, Joan Crawford, a ruthless, cunning, lonely woman.

Sophie, Living and Loving. Her Own Story

A. S. Barnes

Michael Joseph/Thomas Nelson $15.95 (HC)

The account of a singer who wrote songs for film directors; from the 1930s of Pozzvoli became one of the world's greatest film stars.

Critical

American Film Now

James Moosan

Oxford/Oxford University Press $30 (HC)

A broad guide to the business and the art of the American cinema.

Black Film as Genre

Thomas Craps

Indiana University Press $15

A discussion of the three types of horror films that emerged in the 1960s.

Dark Dreams: The Horror film from Psycho to Jaws

Charles Derry

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An examination of the three types of horror films that emerged in the 1960s.

Elements of Film

D. F. Blacker

Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich/Ruth Walls $11.50 (PB)

A distinguished writer and film editor provides technical information about the process of filmmaking. New edition.

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More From Hollywood

A. S. Barnes/Renal $27.50 (HC)

A companion volume to From Hollywood, containing the story of the personalities who made Hollywood the film capital of the world.

The Western — From Silents to the Seventies

George N. Fossen and William K. Everson

Penguin/Penguin Aust. $9.50 (HC)

A detailed history of the western, highlighting famous stars and directors.

Reference

The Illustrated Who's Who in British Films

Dona Gifford

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Filmmaking, Acting Technique and Marketing

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Burton Wool

Bantam/Gordon and Gotch $8.50 (PB)

James Bond and Moonraker

Christopher Waring

Panther/Gordon and Gotch $2.95 (PB)

Production Report

Continued from P. 551

was reduced in length — but I respected the reasons for the request and went along with them. I am really against violence. The John Sullivan Story is about a psychotic lawyer and it's preaching the humanist cause to a wide audience. Within that it is necessary to give a sense of the sort of violence that surrounds the man.

Mariner Films

You are involved with Henry Crawford in a company which has acquired the rights to "A Town Like Alice"

Henry Crawford and I have known each other since the Homicide days. He is my business partner and one of my closest friends. We set up Mariner Films, not in competition with major production houses like Crawford's and Grundys, but rather to create a business structure to allow us, occasionally, to do things we passionately believe in — on the terms that we want to do them. I can't see it giving me full-time employment, and I don't want it to be that sort of structure. But there are things we love and want to do which we might have difficulty persuading other managements to let us do.

Not that I think with A Town Like Alice we would have had many problems convincing Crawfords or Grundys to do it. But we really think we were going to get the rights, because we just wrote off saying, "How about it?" We were surprised when they said yes. It's a story I really love, and we really, really, really want to do it, and says things about the humanist cause which I think are very important.

At what stage is it now?

To date we have sold it for more than half its costs to the Seven Network, and have also pre-sold it to the BBC for a good sum — the first time an Australian commercial production has been pre-sold to them...
when one moved from inside out into the garden. This meant I didn’t have the fluidity going in and out that I wanted.

Still, I was very pleased with the amount of movement I got into the film. A wheelchair is a wonderfully rich thing cinematically: it has a lovely motion, and I was able to experiment with many interesting moves.

Several critics felt the ending was too obvious; by making Mark (John Waters) so patently the murderer, one knew it had to be the other ...

Look at how the film opens. We begin by showing one brother killing a hitch-hiker. The key thing was that there were two cars, of the same make and upholstery, but with different exterior colors. Now, we never show the face of the murderer; we just show the face of the girl. After he stabs her with the broken arrow, we then cut to Mark arriving at his car in a similar car. So, he looks suspiciously like the murderer. Then, by the time we show him carrying in the corpse, that absolutely none of us was convinced he is guilty. Once we have established he is the murderer, therefore, the tension of the drama is what is going to happen when Robert (George Mallaby) finds out what Mark has done. And, once he has to let Mark know he knows, what will Mark do to him? Will he kill him?

Then there are the cops. Their line of questioning is at the brother who is ‘guilty’. Now the other, who is apparently innocent, appears to be protecting Mark from the cops, yet at the same time appears to be letting on. So, not only are the cops playing a kind of cat-and-mouse game, but so is Robert.

We also resisted the temptation to film only two people out of 100 people, but who was the murderer in the first 20 minutes of the film. Their explanation was that they wouldn’t accept the obvious. A few others also started to twig at Robert being guilty during the fight, but for my money it didn’t matter if people twigged at that late stage.

How successful was the film?

It has just broken even, so one can’t really count it as a success. It is No. 14 or 15, and did about as well as Devil’s Playground.

The film cost more than we bargained. I originally budgeted it at about $250,000, but it finally cost $290,000.

The film rated very highly on television. Was it perhaps a subject that could have been done as a television film, and on a lower budget?

In some ways I would have preferred to make it a tele-feature for $135,000, but there is no way of telling if we would have got the same result. If I had made it for television, I could have picked up $80,000 at most from a television station. That was $250,000 from Bruce Gordon at Paramount. Now, that only gives you $105,000 — i.e., a deficit of $30,000.

Are we making a lot of tele-features on feature budgets?

Yes, and the reason is that it is often easier to get the money to make a $600,000 feature than a $135,000 tele-feature. Distributors are into feature films and, at this juncture, television stations aren’t very open to independent packages of tele-features.

Because a producer’s salary is usually linked to a budget, here is the central factor the producer gets. Some commentators have suggested this situation tempts producers to go for high budgets ...

That is a cynical interpretation, but it is probably true in a couple of cases — I can certainly think of a few. But a more important influence is the way our government corporations work. They reason that although one is likely to lose $400,000 of a $600,000 budget, there is still the chance that one can make $200,000. On the $135,000 tele-feature, as I said before, you are bound to lose at least $30,000. Now for my money, I would be making many more tele­features, letting them lose on $1000 a week. By the time we hit Hexagon, Jack Thompson was on $1000 a week. By the time we hit Alvin, Petersen, Jack Thompson was on $500 a week. For Alvin, Howard was up to $2000 a week. For Waters, Jack Thompson was on $2000. Of course, $2000 a week is minuscule, compared to paying Trevor Howard $48,000 for 12 days’ work. That is about the percentage I went on over End Play. The budget on that started at $244,000, moved to $260,000 and finished on $294,000.

Up until 1974, budgets were quite containable. But then things soared. To give you an idea, let’s look at what I paid the actors, though one could do the same exercise with technicians, equipment charges, etc. In March 1971, when I did Stork, everybody was paid $200 a week. By the first Alvin, budget had jumped up to $500 a week. For Petersen, Jack Thompson was on $1000 a week. By the time we hit Alvin, Jack Thompson was on $2000 a week. Of course, $2000 a week is minuscule, compared to paying Trevor Howard $48,000 for 12 days’ work, but it gives you an idea of the escalating costs in one area of filmmaking.

Apparently there was dissension at Hexagon over what sort of film “Eliza” should be ...

It is true that the script changed a lot from the original, but I was behind that. Originally I had intended the film to be a kind of Rashomon — i.e., three versions of the incident told by three different people. But, when William and I worked on it more, we felt Eliza should become more a comic figure. She was essentially a con woman, and I thought the possibilities for satire were great.

Looking back with the wisdom of hindsight, sending up history is not of, though, that is you should never make an Eliza Fraser or a Jimmy Blacksmith without an overseas partner. There are two basic ways to make such a film, just as there are two basic ways to make a $2.2 million without Susannah York?

I don’t know, but I believe it would have. One thing I am certain of, though, is that you should never make an Eliza Fraser or a Jimmy Blacksmith without an overseas partner. There are two basic ways to make such a film, just as there are two basic ways to make a $2.2 million without Susannah York?
of making a film: one is to make indigenous films, made solely for our local market and for less than $400,000; and the other is to make international films on larger budgets ($1 million or more). The international films can also be made in two ways: either with Australian directors working in the U.S., or by producers setting themselves up like a Los Angeles independent producer-packager, but based in Australia.

It would be a great pity, however, if our best people are siphoned off at the very point when we have to solve the problem of breaking into the international market.

High Rolling

The next film was “High Rolling”, which you produced . . .

One couldn’t describe High Rolling as a success, though it will finish breaking even four or five years after its release.

I am very fond of High Rolling, although in some ways it doesn’t come off. There is a slight problem in Jo Bottoms’ performance, which goes over a bit, and the bonding aspect works only fitfully. Still, I think Iqor Auzin is a fine director and the film only narrowly misses capturing the spirit of a good AIP road film. Mad Max is certainly handled better, but one can easily see the progression from Stone to High Rolling to Max Max.

What happened to Hexagon in this period between “Eliza” and “Last of the Knucklemen”? If you compare what happened to Hexagon with the South Australian Film Corporation, the difference is that while the SAFC may seem to have a comparatively-successful track record, it probably owes $5 or $6 million. If it were a commercial operation, it would be bankrupt, but it can go on because the debts are presumably written off by the South Australian Government.

However, it is significant that the SAFC is moving closer towards a commercial program like Hexagon’s. It is using John Landon and Alan Hopgood on Pacific Banana, which is like our Australia After Dark. You have Bruce Beresford, who basically occupies the same position that I occupied in Hexagon, doing a Williamson play, The Club. It is, in fact, moving into that mainstream middle area of drama, with the emphasis on entertainment. It is trying to get away from the culturally respectable stuff with which it made its reputation.

The Last of the Knucklemen

After “High Rolling” came “The Last of the Knucklemen”, which is a play that dates back to 1973. When did you obtain the rights for it?

Before we started on Eliza Fraser, I thought Hexagon should make a male bonding film, and the three possibilities were Rusty Buggles, The Odd Angry Shot and The Last of the Knucklemen. We looked at them and felt Knucklemen was the best.

We were delayed in buying the rights, though, because the play had been put on overseas, and the Melbourne Theatre Company, which owned the rights, was trying to sell it to the Yanks. Then that fell through and we inherited them.

How is the screenplay different from the play?

The problem with a play like Knucklemen is that one wants to open it out and show the desert environment. On the other hand, one needs to maintain the claustrophobia of being locked in a horrible tin shed with eight characters, a million miles from nowhere.

Like many Australian properties, Knucklemen is a story about a group, rather than an individual. Although it is called The Last of the Knucklemen, Tarzan (Gerard Kennedy) isn’t the hero. The man who starts all the dramatic initiative is Pansy (Mike Preston). Now, my first reaction was to take Tarzan and Methuselah (Michael Duffield) and make them into one character, by giving them a stronger dramatic line. After all, Methuselah is Tarzan 15 years hence. I also reduced the role of Tom (Peter Hehir), and even had Pansy finally replacing Tarzan-Methuselah as the knuckleman. But it turned out to be much less interesting.

I then tried starting with the robbery, but that just became another “bank robber on the run”, and the whole mining aspect was lost. So I stayed fairly close to the play, though I did try to flesh out certain characters and put in action where there was dialogue. There is probably only a third of the original dialogue in the film; I have kept the best lines.

If there is a weakness in the film, it is in the front half where one has to establish the characters. I think there are enough laughs to keep the film moving, but the thing doesn’t really start till the scene of Methuselah down the mine. From then on, it is all action. You are really saying, “Right, those are the cards in the pack, let’s get on with the game.”

Which characters did you flesh out?

Well, Pansy was to some extent changed. In the play, he was a stirrer, but really a coward, a powder-puff. I felt he had to have real menace, and be a genuine threat to Tarzan.

There is also much more of Tassie (Stewart Faichney) than in the play. I introduced that he was an alimony dodger with a little kid, and so on. I gave him a more interesting and coherent character.

How successful have Australian filmmakers been in creating an audience for their films?

We were very successful in the first three or four years, but is we succeeded away from the rocks as a subject, we lost the connection that we had established with the audience. It is not just that we went arsey, as that we forgot we were in showbusiness.

This connection is in the earlier films — and perhaps I show my bias here — because they were more confrontational. The newer films are more a lament for the past, and for decency. They don’t have the necessary abrasive, confronting connection with their audience.

Look, for example, at the number of films which amount to a resistance to change. The Irishman is about Clydesdales being replaced by a lorry. The Picture Show Man is about sound replacing the man who carts his silent reels around in a horse and buggy.

Newsfront is about the demise of the newsreel cameraman with the advent of television.

I believe that a lot of this lamentation is sentimental, and a lot of it is untrue. I know, for instance, that the very worst reporting on television is absolute triumph of integrity compared with the junk we saw coming out of Cinesound. The theme of Newsfront is basically that old Labor Party vision of what Australia might have become — the lost future we were all deprived of.

If you compare today’s films with those of the early days, you also find that the early ones had something which you could call hope.

The film which marked the changeover from energy to reflectiveness was Sunday Too Far Away. It was, if you like, a Commonwealth Film Unit-type film and was the first to go for good taste at the expense of energy. The film performed well, but the tendency it exemplified turned out to be a killer on audiences.

Don’t get me wrong, I believe in art. But to me art is the way in which one orders the material into the most concise, affecting and sharp way. But if art is seen, as it often is, as an absence of things that often is, as an absence of things that offend people — i.e., “good taste” — then I reach for my gun like Goering.

Filmography

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<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>The Prize</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>The Adventures of Sebastian the Fox</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>The Hot Centre of the World</td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>Three Old Friends</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>Blues From the Jungle</td>
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Its the symbol of the Australian Children's Film Foundation, the production wing of the Perth Institute of Film and Television, home of such high-flying numbers as "Falcon Island", a new children's television serial, and other children's television and cinema projects.

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Production is part of the Perth Institute of Film and Television
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ph. (09) 335 1055
Nagisa Oshima
Continued from P. 501

course. I support those who are fighting for the basic issues of women’s liberation.

In the Japanese mass media there is often a reaction to particular words, or terms, such as women’s lib. or feminism . . .

Because the term women’s lib. is despised, it’s a good one.

For that reason?

Yes. Feminism on the other hand has become an attractive term; the women who support it are fakes.

Because it is popular?

No, not popular, but it has become acceptable. Women’s lib. was also a fad in a way, but it was disliked. Those who supported it were also hated by the male society.

Do you think the situation will improve for women in Japan?

Yes, in form it is getting better, little by little, but in reality, it has a long way to go. I am not sure young women today have the strength and determination to fight in the way that, for instance, the women of my generation, who were struggling just after World War 2, did. The form may improve — as far as legislation for equality in jobs and so on is concerned — but whether the actual situation will improve for Japanese women is a different question.

Can “Empire of the Senses” be seen as a political film?

It’s not a film that directly takes up political questions, but by the very fact that it does not deal with politics, it can be seen as very political. As for judging it, that’s entirely up to the public. I don’t think there is any need for me to say whether it is political or not.

It is often suggested that Japan is not a class society, but recent years have seen the creation of a new elite or class through the mass media — the people who can use their access to the media to establish a position of power, whose views are often heard on television, for instance . . .

The Japanese really don’t think of power as something they have as individuals. Nor do they have a consciousness of it as a class. You can ask any Japanese, “Do you have power?” and they will all say they don’t.

I don’t think the people at the top in the mass media have a class consciousness either. They may comprise a class, but they are not aware of it.

In that sense, it is different from the class definition in Western Europe. In other words, the only thing that makes a class a class is the consciousness of being one. In Japan, for instance, the workers really don’t have a class consciousness. Consequently, I have great doubts whether even what may appear as a class really is the same as its European counterpart.

Although they may not be a class, this ‘mediacracy’, people who are famous enough in Japan, have easy access to the media to say anything they want, voice opinions and have them recognized. Though not unique to Japan, it seems to me a particularly acute problem . . .

I am against, and angered by, manipulation from television in this era of propaganda overkill. But that is not the same as saying those people have power. The Japanese reaction, as a homogeneous society, is that we can’t do much about it.

In other words, rather than have a different reaction to something than everyone else, people tend to be delighted that they have the same one as others. That is the greatest problem of Japan and the Japanese. If the people who actually have power really are aware of it, then there may be more of a chance for Japan. But they are not conscious of it, and the people below them are not aware that others exert power either.

Young people in Japan today seem to have a more resigned attitude towards politics than people in their thirties and forties. They don’t believe things will or can change. But they seem to have become better at enjoying life . . .

Yes, I think so too.

Do you think that is a positive change, or is it just resignation?

I don’t think one can say that it is either good or bad. It’s true that there has been a change in that direction. That is to say, when it comes to their relationship to the world around them, rather than facing it and actively setting things in action, they have learned how to enjoy whatever the world brings their way. So they have become good at seeking pleasure, as you say. But that’s neither good nor bad.

How do you feel about the present situation in Japanese cinema?

To put it in an extreme way, I am not in the least interested in the Japanese film situation of today.

Are there any other contemporary Japanese filmmakers whose work interests you?

I make my own films; I am not interested in others.

Did you see any Australian films at Cannes last year?

No, I don’t go to films. It’s as simple as that.

Are there any Japanese writers with whom you would be interested in working?

No.

You often use documentary material in your films. How do you view the relationship between documentary and fiction?

A good film is a good film, whether it is documentary or drama. Only the method is different. I can’t generalize on that.

In future films, will individual human relationships continue to interest you — the suffering of a single human being rather than social comment?

Yes, I think so. I don’t care to make any general social or political comment.

Is there a specific problem, or kind of person that interests you at the moment — for your next film?

I am thinking about all sorts of things at the moment. (long pause) Have you read my book? You read Japanese, don’t you?

Yes, but I haven’t read it.

Eika Matsuda in Empire of the Senses.

It would have been a good idea if you had read my book.

Sachiko Hidari
Continued from P. 503

You are not part of any women’s movement, even though you support women’s rights . . .

To participate in a movement because it has become fashionable is to be dishonest with oneself. These movements have always been attracted to foreign cultures, but they have not come to the stage where they produce something from within and solve problems in their own way.

How do you feel about the image of women as presented in Japanese films?

On the whole, it is the life of women as seen by men.

As an actress, I have always battled with directors over their images of women. There is always a conflict between the image of a woman as seen by a man, and as seen by a woman.

In The Far Road I had the opportunity to portray men as seen by a woman for a change.

1. These terms are used in English in Japan.

CURRENTS IN JAPANESE CINEMA

FILMOGRAPHY

Features

1959 Ai no kibo no machi (A Town of Love and Hope)
1960 Soshun zankoku monogatari (Naked Youth)
1960 Taiso no hakaba (The Burial)
1960 Nihon no yoru ki (Night and Fog over Japan)
1961 Shiku (The Catch)
1962 Amakusa shishi matsukusa (The Revolt)
1962 Wazawachi wa bellet (I Am Bellet)
1963 Chinama beken ryuoko (A Simple Adventure) Enaraka (Shanxishan the Flash)
1964 Yunbongi no miku (The Diary of Yunbongi)
1966 Hohoku no tojyosa (Violence at Noon)
1967 Ninja bug vinyl (Band of Ninjas)
1970 Shinjuku honsuki (Diary of a Shinjuku Thief)
1973 Shonen (Boy)
1970 Tokyo sanse suke hga (The Man Who Left His Will on Film)
1973 Ghibiki (Ceremony)
1972 Natsu no inn (Dray Summer Sister)
1976 Ai no corrida (Empire of the Senses). This film was made in France and the French title is L’Empire des sens.
1977 Ai no ba (Empire of Passion)

Television films

1964 Kuri no mika no sei (A Youth in the Ice)
1963 Waasanerera kogun (The Forgotten Army)
1965 Hantokutou no toride (Fort of Revolt)
1964 Shichinohi no mi (A Tomb for Youth)
1965 Washinoseishi (Dawn at Asia)
1968 Daishin tenno (The Pacific War)
1970 Na tokoku to boutokaidakum (Mao Tsung and the Cultural Revolution)

1. Taikeneki senso eizo ron (A Personal View of Post-war Film), 1975

2. Taikeneki senso eizo ron (A Personal View of Post-war Film), 1975

3. Taikeneki senso eizo ron (A Personal View of Post-war Film), 1975

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Cinema Papers, September-October — 579
Sydney Film Festival 1979
Continued from P. 539
The M.P. depicts a Spain in which the left-wing is legal, but unprotected, and where its followers are harassed, beaten and killed with impunity.

In Blindedfold, directed by Carlos Saura, the resurgence of fascism is depicted as an individual phenomenon: the protagonist is a young woman with a penchant for motorcycles, the audience who thought it was a considerable achievement of Alba Thays' Australian avant-garde classic Bolero.

On the closing night of the Festival part of Australian 1979 shorts, Now You're Talking was screened. A thoughtfully-researched and well-made film, the film touches on the reality of the 1930s and 1940s. Now You're Talking provides an introduction to the era of cinematic naïveté, and comments on the social and political overtones of the film that appeared on the screens during that period.

Last year the Festival screened Martha Cothran's Not a Pretty Picture, one of very few attempts to look at rape from the victim's point of view. Gooldie's work this year, Bimbo (U.S.) reveals the same sense of irony evident in her earlier work. Three male high school friends find themselves conscripted to make the bumper films for the U.S. armed forces and thus become a man-on-his-way-up, unwillingly involved in an abortive and unsuccessful and unfutile businessmen; and the third has joined the circus.

There are four awards for Australian short films made each year at the Festival. Three are part of the Greater Union Awards (General and Documentary, and entries are judged by members of the film industry. The other, the Rouben Mamoulian Award, is judged by the Festival's foreign delegates. Traditionally, the locals and visitors have disagreed on the most meritorious films. This year was an exception, with the Documentary and Mamoulian awards going to Essie Coffey's My Survival as an Australian.

Sonia Hoffman's Morris Loves Jack, produced at the Australian Film and Television Schools, won the Fiction Award. I gather the plot of Morris Loves Jack is supposed to come as a surprise: that while it appears as a fairly straightforward film, the film is well made, and features, as usual, convincing performances by John Hargreaves and Kris McQuade.

The winner of the General Award, Blood (U.S.A.), is an interesting optical printing and color tinting with languid dialogue, to describe the aimlessness of a young man's life. By and by, Lust's story is told. Stretches' film has a good deal more to say about the film than the film itself, which is unique — also makes it inaccessible to many of those who should see it.
International Production Round-up

Continued from Page 543

Director Pasquale Festa Campanile: Elio Petri has started shooting his latest movie, Via al Trascoro, and Dario Argenta is writing and directing Inferno.

Hong Kong

Shaw Brothers are among the major investors in Ronald Neame's Mystery, which was plagued with special effects problems, but is now scheduled to start shooting in late September. Shaw Brothers are also backing Steve McQueen's two-part Tale of Two Cities. Shaw Brothers' rival Raymond Chow is highly promoting his latest film, Beyond Reasonable Doubt.

New Zealand

Film production has dropped rapidly—from nearly 12,000 in 1977 to 172 last year—and only 48 are still being made. This is a widespread effect on film investment. The NZFC's marketing director, Lindsay Lisi, and the Film Industry Association chairman, Franco Cerbi, have written to the Minister for Tourism, asking for a tax break for filmmakers. The NFZC has been bought for theatrical distribution in New Zealand, Western Samoa and London. A sea epic, Taipan, directed by John O'Shea (Pacific), has been scripted by playwright Robert Lord, now living in New York, and John O'Shee (Pacific Pictures) is packaging several titles as a result of an overseas marketing trip to Britain, West Germany and the U.S.

The Hollywood film industry is slow- ing down at an alarming rate, and fears are held for its future. Devaluation of the Turkish lira by 75 per cent recently caused economic havoc and had a widespread effect on film investment. Turkish Inogbu, president of the Turkish Film Producers' Association, says 26 production companies have closed down this year, and film production has dropped rapidly—from 287 in 1977 to 172 last year—and only 48 are expected to be completed this year. Inogbu said: "The various governments of late have ignored the film industry. They gave $12 million to the state theatre for opera, ballet, but nothing to the film industry. They couldn't care less about the film industry."

Latest figures indicate film unemployment is nearing 12,000. From some prominent producers and directors are leaving the country. At least three leading actors and two actresses have already migrated, including Debrah Farentino, the top box-office star from 1970 to 1977.

Negative Cutting

Theatre

Turkey

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New Zealand

Film production in New Zealand is escalating each month, and with private investment becoming more readily available, following the New Zealand Film Commission's endeavors, local filmmakers have strong prospects of getting viable projects before the cameras.

Paul Mauders' Sons For The Return Home is in post-production after shooting in New Zealand. Western Samoan actor, London-born, A. Romance, it stars Uelese Petaia and Fiona Lindsay, and will be released by the Kereide Ghanian Organization in October. Already in release is John Reid's comedy-drama Middle-Age Special starring Grant Tilly, Dorothy McKegg, Donna Akersten and Sydney actor Peter Summer. Geoff Steven's Skin Deep has done well in local release, and will be shown at the Longford Cinema in Melbourne. It also opened the 1979 Annual New Directors/New Films Festival in New York, and is due to be released in London, Seattle, Melbourne and Lucarno Film Festivals.

Director Roger Donaldson is preparing to shoot Smash Palace, directed by Gunner Inglorious, David Byrne's Angel Mine has been bought for theatrical distribution in London, and producer John Barnett has received a second script development advance from the NZFC for Beyond Reasonable Doubt.

The NZFC's marketing director, Lindsay Shelton, reports several major deals for the eight features presented at the 1979 Cannes Film Festival, and several are awaiting ratification. Shelton also revealed that there is genuine interest in New Zealand as a location for several European features. Talks are also in progress for at least three co-productions as a result of the NZFC presence at Cannes.

Other features being developed in New Zealand include Michael Black's Pictures, to be scripted by playwright Robert Lord, now living in New York, and John O'Shee (Pacific Pictures) is packaging several titles as a result of an overseas marketing trip to Britain, West Germany and the U.S.

Hollywood filmmakers are now taking long, hard looks at the prospects of basing productions in New Zealand. However, David Lean and his backers are in two minds about New Zealand as a base for major sequences in the $40 million two-part blockbuster on the Bounty mutiny, following "big problems on taxation of cast and crew." Lean's executive team spent considerable time in New Zealand earlier this year trying to gain concessions on the salary tax of their visiting personnel when it was learned a double-taxation situation would prevail (which means the overseas cast and crew would be taxed on location and again in the U.S.). This would add to the already substantial budget if the producers had to pay. The New Zealand government says special legislation would have to be created to allow the concessions sought by the Lean executives, which would create legal and political problems with visitors and short-term workers in the country.

The Bounty ship replica, built in New Zealand, has undergone successful sea-trials there while Lean and producer Phil Kellogg decide where to shoot two other films, The Lawbreakers and The Long Arm. Anthony Hopkins has signed to play Captain Bligh, and Jon Voight will play mutiny leader Fletcher Christian. Lean plans a 42-week shooting schedule.

Much-hailed producer Robert Redford has packaged a $1.6 million feature for New Zealand's northern islands, based on Sylvia Ashton-Warner's widely-acclaimed novel Teacher. Radnitz says a Hollywood company will team up with Michael Furh (Pentice Films) and the Merac Corporation to make the film early in November. The NZFC advanced money for script development on the story which concerns the highly-successful education techniques used by Ashton-Warner among Maori tribes in the north of New Zealand. Radnitz will sign a leading U.S. director, but the bulk of the crew will be from New Zealand.

The Thorn Birds' associate producer Paul Offord has surveyed several South Island locations, following reconnaissances in Italy and Australia, as Warner Bros and director Herbert Ross prepare for a November start on the $12 million screen version of Colleen McCullough's bestseller. Jon Voight and Jane Fonda have been cast in the lead roles.

Tony Williams, director-cinematographer on the New Zealand-Australian feature Solo—co-produced by Sydney Independent film maker David Hannay—was invited to Hollywood to shoot location sequences for entertainer Kenny Rogers' new special for the CBS network. Williams, the leading New Zealand commercials maker, shot some striking footage for Rogers when he was in New Zealand last year. The singer was greatly impressed and has asked CBS to fly Williams in for the exterior shooting of the big-budgeted show.

Australian actor-director Roger Ward will spend September in New Zealand finalizing packaging his drama Reflex, which will be located in and around Wellington, late in January. Ward and New Zealand barrister Richard Hughes have secured substantial private investment in the project and hope to involve the NZFC in the $455,000 production. Reflex will be shot in New Zealand, with a largely local crew and cast.

Two other Australian actors, Bruce Spence and Tony Barry, will star in the comedy-chase Meatball, to be produced by Geoff Murphy and directed by Ian Mune. Locations "all over New Zealand" are planned.

Seeing Red, a season of six Australian films by women directors, has toured New Zealand. The program was organized by the New Zealand Students Art Council through the Sydney Filmmakers Co-operative, and screened in all major cities.
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1979 Cannes Film Festival
Continued from P. 507

Andrzej Wajda's weight, and the ironic detachment film begins to sink under its metaphoric nes competition: a junior-league sun's novelette crossed love between a miller's son and style undergoes no violent shifts in the often lacking from his more personal ex­

order. This epically-ambitious project is proves too great for a single film to sur­

The film's first hour, the moment war breaks out. Before that, Madigan, 1979 Cannes Film Festival

One of the most encouraging trends to confirm itself in Cannes this year was the confirmation that the state-owned industries of Eastern Europe are now magnanimous or secure enough to ac­

The adaptation problems involved in Schlondorff's The Tin Drum are of a different order. This epicely-ambitious project is marred by its very fidelity to its source material, by the fact that a surreal image from the printed page becomes gross and literal when rendered visually, and by the fact that the fractured narrative mode (even when faithfully preserved in the stunted Oskar's commentary) lacks the power to transform the more abstract images of real destruction.

One literary adaptation, from Knut Huns­sun's novelette Victoria, about the star­crossed love between a miller's son and the lord of the manor's daughter, also provided Widerberg with the material for what was certainly the nadir of the Can­nes competition. Even Werner Herzog, dubbed into excruciating American dialogue, which swiftly degenerates into a sentimental travelogue of the Norwegian fjords.

But from the moment of the telecast (which finds disfavor with the authorities), the image begins to chip away: his wife leaves him for a young demagogue, his university classes are abruptly canceled, his office desk is ap­propriated by another journalist, he finds himself ostracized for those very qualities for which he had been honored. After energetic efforts to alter his situa­tion, to change the newly-rightified at­titudes of his wife and the authorities, he settles down to confront his pain (the Polish title of the film translates as "Without Anaesthetic"). And his most lethally-painful discovery is that the truth, whose cause he has confidently thought to serve, is an infinitely malleable substance: it is his divorce case which reveals to him the elastic nature of 'facts' and the diverse interpretations which can be wrought from them.

It would, of course, be easy for anti­socialists to read Wajda's film as an in­diction of a system of government in which the political purge, even if signed with a velvet-gloved hand, is still a familiar occurrence. But that would be to miss the universality of what it has to say and show (life in a Western television­network being no more secure than that on a state-owned newspaper).

Wajda's greatness lies in the fact that he is the historian of an age, rather than of any particular ideology. He is aware that the human individual is dead, equally aware that the social machinery which conditions, exploits or manipulates all lives can, by each of us, only be experienced individually. And that, without the anaesthetic effects of a coherent rationalization, the gap between private feeling and public facts, is too painful for many to survive within. It is certainly significant that his discredited hero (superbly played by Zbigniew Zapasiewicz) should die in an accident for which no one is to blame.★

Andrzej Wajda's Rough Treatment: exploring the processes by which an individual finds that he has no control over the shape of his public or private life.
The Failure of the Labor government

The change in government in December 1972 brought all sorts of promises and a new Department of the Media. The Government's media policy was outlined at the Australian Labor Party Conference in July 1973 by the Minister for the Media, Douglas McClelland, a former member of the Vincent Committee. He promised that employment of Australians in film and television would be increased, that the Government would give priority to breaking up the monopolies of the commercial airwaves, and would provide public access to the broadcasting medium. The pressure groups and unions waited for things to happen, but it wasn't long, however, before they were uniting to fight the Government to prevent anything from happening.

The Minister made key appointments to the new department from commercial television and this began to destroy the confidence the pressure groups had in him. He then abolished listeners' licences (a possible method of freeing the ABC from direct government financial control) without any public discussion, and appeared to court Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, who visited Australia after the change in government, and who was on record as saying his objectives were to fight foreign governments which were attempting to strangle American motion picture business abroad. There was also no action on the early announcements of the revocation of one television licence in the four capital cities, and no adequate discussions with the unions on the introduction of a points system to regulate Australian content.

The union pressure which had built up over the previous 10 years never left the Minister alone. The Film Industry Action Committee, formed to oppose the visit of Jack Valenti, became a strong force, and added a new film dimension to the media lobby. There was a growing feeling of distrust towards the Minister, exacerbated by the lack of consultation about the legislation setting up the Australian Film Commission; the lack of action in relation to breaking the media monopolies; and the lack of success with the points system, which resulted in the compilation of a dossier on the Minister requesting his removal, and reorganization of the department. The campaign was successful and the Minister was replaced. But before the new Minister, Dr Moss Cass, could do any more than suspend for two hours a commercial television station in Hobart (TVT-6) for carrying too many commercials (the first time a television licence had been suspended), the Government lost office.

The Labor government's achievements in the area of television were not very great. Certainly there was more Australian content and more money for experimentation, but greater public access to the medium turned out to be a few programs on the ABC; breaking the ownership monopoly became setting up public radio stations; and greater employment led to a paper war between the unions and the Minister about the Control Board's report on Australian content.

The solid achievements were in radio and the film industry, the setting up of the AFC, the Australian Film and Television School, and the Film Radio and Television Board, and the introduction of public broadcasting. The first two of these, however, were in hand before the change of government, and all were additions to the existing system rather than changes to that system.

The Labor government can fairly claim that its legislation to put teeth into the Control Board was blocked by the Senate, but the need for this legislation was disputed by Senator James McClelland. The Government did appoint to the Board two strong, outspoken members, Dr Geoffrey Evans and Dr Patricia Edgar—but failed to review or overhaul the broadcasting system.

Senator James McClelland, who had in April 1973 taken over the chairmanship of the Senate Standing Committee looking into broadcasting, described the situation in January 1975 in a plea for a Royal Commission. He said that the media was a disaster area, with the institutions in disarray and the airwaves murky, and added that:

"The Australian Broadcasting Control Board is a bad joke, the ABC is a dithering, timid old fuddy duddy, commercial television and radio foster mediocrity and decry quality and the Department of the Media, if I may put it neutrally, has yet to prove itself."

34. Hall, S. 'Ten Years of Australian Television.' Sun Books, Melbourne, 1976. Contains a detailed account of this period.

38. ABCB. Report submitted to the ABC by the Advisory Committee on Program Standards. February 1976.

The System Changes

All the agitation for an inquiry, the changes in ownership and control, and the revocation of the points system persuaded Control Board to set up an advisory committee to look into standards. The Committee was chaired by Dr Patricia Edgar, but did not report until February 1976, after the change in government. Its report echoed the Tariff Board Report by linking standards with the structure of the television system and its economics, and recalled the earlier promises of the Minister of the Media in the Labor government by recommending the revocation of a licence in each of the four capital cities.

There were protests from the licenses who felt that under the new government (which was bussily dismantling the Department of the Media) they did not have to take the recommendations seriously. However, the Government set up an inquiry, conducted by the new Department of Posts and Telecommunications, which made responsible for broadcasting. The terms of reference were "to inquire into the Australian broadcasting system with particular regard to the machinery and procedures for control, planning, licensing regulation, funding and
administration of the system."

Under its chairman, Fred Green, the secretary of the new department, the committee took written evidence from interested parties and produced a report in September 1976 which had a stormy reception. When it was properly examined, however, the Green Report proved to be a document which could provide a philosophy for broadcasting and a blueprint for reorganization. The Report stated that the inquiry had "full appreciation of the need for the commercial sector to seek to serve community needs within the context of private enterprise operations, which have a responsibility to shareholders to achieve an appropriate profit result in relation to capital investment... However, in addition to directing their efforts to the presentation of relatively stereotyped styles of programs which are known to attract high numbers of viewers and listeners, it is most desirable that the commercial sector should at the same time attempt to introduce a measure of innovation and experimentation in programs catering to more sizeable, if not mass, audiences. This would also assist in achieving a diversity of programming over all three sectors of the broadcasting system." Within a year, the pressure groups which had supported the Labor government for its promises, and then criticized it for not reorganizing the broadcasting system, now had a government which had lost no time implementing one of the Report's major recommendations: namely, the dismantling of the Control Board and the replacement of it with the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal to provide a forum for the public voice over licence renewals — the linchpin of the Royal Commission recommendations for improving programming, back in 1954.

Lack of discussion with the unions and the pressure groups on the new legislation, and the appointment of commercial broadcasters as Tribunal members, again raised distrust about the motives of the Government. The Tribunal's first task — to conduct an inquiry into self-regulation by the broadcasters — was therefore met with cynicism.

Still, the public and unions came forward in their hundreds, demanding more Australian content, and more and better Australian children's programs. The Tribunal reported to the Government on self-regulation in July 1977 and, to the surprise of its opponents, did not go all the way with the commercial broadcasters but recommended stronger control for children's programs, and the setting up of a Broadcasting Information Office to gather information and represent the public at Tribunal hearings.

Throughout 1977 the public also gave evidence to the reorganized Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, which was looking into "the impact of television on the development and learning behaviour of children". And by the end of 1977, the Government had drafted legislation for public hearings into licence renewals. Then, in a surprise move, without any public discussion, it introduced a new concept in broadcasting: the Special Broadcasting Service, a statutory authority which offered the possibility of providing yet another type of government-funded television service.

Those who welcomed a government which was prepared to provide, and stand by, a philosophy and a blueprint for broadcasting, began to wonder whether action and reaction to pressure had not again taken over government policy.

The Future

Last year saw the beginning of the Tribunal hearings, the Government's acceptance of the Self-Regulation Report (and, therefore, a Children's Program Committee and the Broadcasting Information Office), the Report from the Senate Standing Committee, "Children and Television" and the tabling of the Report, "National Communications Satellite System", written by the Task Force the Minister had set up. All of which raise these questions:

(a) Will the Royal Commission's 25-year-old concept of public hearings, as part of a strategy to provide the public with a voice, be sufficient without the other part — a critical press?
(b) Will the Broadcasting Information Office help the public train that voice, so that it is capable of making an independent contribution, rather than providing the chorus for the media and union pressure groups?
(c) Will the satellite provide commercial television with the national network which was hoped for by some licensees in the early 1960s, but thwarted by the Government's policy towards country station ownership? Perhaps the most important question which this history reveals, however, is when will all interested groups and political parties stop looking for instant solutions and expedient palliatives, and deal with the real problems of broadcasting which Sir Richard Boyer identified in 1953 — namely, how to provide a service to all interested parties, commercial, educational, cultural, religious, political etc., who may now or in the future want to participate in television on a commercial basis?


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programs which are quite suitable for children to watch, and which may even, in some cases, be beneficial for them to watch; but unless a program has been specifically designed for children, in terms of the guidelines, these programs must be excluded from that particular time — from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays — which the Tribunal has in effect declared to be a 'children's hour'.

"In classifying 'C' television, the Committee is not guaranteeing or predicting success for that program. Further, it is not forcing any station to present that program during the 'C' period, but it is merely stating that should a station wish to present it at that time, it is a suitable program for that purpose.

"There have been certain statements made to the effect that the Committee is interested in continuing school hours into after-school television, and that programs must have some formal educational qualities in order to gain a 'C' classification. The Committee considers that in view of the discussions which it has held with members of the industry, and the material which has so far been published, it would be clear that the Committee has not changed the members' minds. We therefore repeat that programs must first of all be entertaining for children, and that didactic, formally-educational programs are not likely to meet this criterion."

There was no press comment on the Committee's second report.

It will take time for expertise in children's television to develop, but local production also needs funds, research and administration. It may be two or three years before we can be assured that high standards in Australian children's programs will have been achieved and are here to stay.

The future of children's television will be linked to the development of the industry. So far, against the predictions of many, the Tribunal has backed the Committee's recommendations. This means there is now strong pressure on the Government from certain sections of the industry to remove Mr Bruce Gyngell from his position as chairman of the Tribunal. It appears this opposition has been strengthened because of his attempts to carry through the Tribunal's policy on children's television and the 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. slot, the Committee had not accepted Mr Gyngell's offer to undertake a second term.

Should Mr Gyngell be replaced, then the future of children's television would be uncertain. Should the industry be vigilant, there would be no reason, other than the goodwill of some stations, for children's programs to be taken off the air.

"For the first time in the history of broadcasting in Australia, a Government agency has assumed full control of part of the broadcast day, dictating to viewers what they should see. Not even the Prime Minister demands or expects to be able to tell stations the time of day his addresses to the nation must go to air, yet the Tribunal has not hesitated to do so between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. It is unfortunate that stations are not receiving full credit at a time when they are doing more for children's television than they have in the past.

FACTS views don't represent the industry as a whole; historically it has tended to be dominated by the views of the Sydney stations. Privately, many station managers disagree with the views FACTS's state publicly on the children's issue. Many stations accept the guidelines and are getting on successfully with the job of producing, buying, and commissioning children's programs.

In presenting its second report on the classification of children's programs to the Tribunal in June this year, the Committee tried to clarify points it had made before, but which seemed to have been misunderstood in some quarters. It said:

"In classifying programs, the Committee is not deciding the suitability of programs for children; that is, it is not engaging in censorship. The task which the Committee has been given is to decide the suitability of programs for presentation at particular times of the day which the Tribunal has decided should be set aside for programs specifically designed for children. The Committee's decisions are made in the light of the guidelines which have been adopted for this particular purpose. The Committee recognizes that there are many

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