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Cinema Papers #33 July-August 1981

Scott Murray

Peter Beilby

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"Film allows you to see the things you miss in real life."

"When an audience watches a movie they generally see the expected. It's my aim to enable them to see things they normally wouldn't see in real life. A view that is possible only through a camera. And then on film. To create these shots you have to achieve the impossible—to shoot when all your experience tells you it's impossible. Your ability to do this is very much related to your understanding of how a particular stock will act in a particular situation. And you not only have to understand it but you have to keep up with the improvements. Over the last 60 years these improvements have given us the potential to make truly great pictures. With all the features I've shot, I've calculated that 554 kilometres of film has gone before my eye. And the majority of that film has been 35 mm Eastman Color Negative film. I think that says something for my attitude to the stock."

Don McAlpine.
Cinematographer.

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We're On Location The Film & Videotape Production Directory. We unite the three coasts with our one-stop, compact national book and bring the points in between into frame for film and videotape production.

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Select the most advanced negative matching service available to the Australian film industry - Computamatch!

Telephone: (02) 922 3607
Les McKenzie has been in the film industry for more than 25 years and you've never seen a thing he's done.

Les, what led you into the sound side of what is, after all, a visual medium?

In fact, I did start in the visual side of the business – as an assistant projectionist at the Hoyts 6 Ways Theatre, Bondi! Very glamorous. And I guess, just by sitting through so many movies I was intrigued by the realism of the tracks; how the director used sound to create the illusion and build the right atmosphere, and I wanted to find out more.

So where did you start?

Supreme Studios, Merv Murphy's place. I think almost everybody who worked in this industry through the 50's and 60's worked at Supreme. It was our Film and TV school in those days, our studio system. And I was lucky enough to train for four years under the finest technician this country has produced, Arthur Smith – A.C. Smith. From there I went to "Skippy" for three years. I did every episode – 91 of them and one feature. Then to the States for a while: then back to Australia as sound supervisor at APA.

So what does it take to be a good sound man?

I don't know. I'm still learning.

Still, there must be some things you listen for, that you expect to hear on a track?

Well, you know, I really believe that the good tracks are the ones where everything is put together so well that it becomes almost subliminal. I'm not against shock action tracks by any means, but I do like it all to go together as one entity.

What do film makers tend to overlook about sound?

They seem to think you can always phone it in later. And you can. But I feel that the performance the artist gives on the floor is so important you should do your best to get it on the day. It also saves the producer money. A couple of minutes on the set getting the right atmosphere, effects and performance can save days lost in post production trying to re-create them.

I know you've worked on many features, but what is the film you're most proud of, as far as your own contribution is concerned?

Oh, I think 'Tim' which was shot in 1978, just after I came to Colorfilm in fact. I'm very proud of 'Tim' because there is not one looped line in the picture. We had locations in the surf, at Mascot Airport, and out of cars, and it's all original material on the day. I was also sound supervisor, supervised the music score and made the optical neg when it was all over.

Any others?

Yes. I really think my best achievement in the optical transfer side of the business is the very first neg that I made on a picture called "Picnic at Hanging Rock." I don't know if it's common knowledge, but "Picnic" was nominated for a British Academy Award for sound.

Is there one movie you can think of that particularly impressed you because of its sound?

When I was at Universal they were dubbing the movie "Earthquake," and I enjoyed going over to the theatre and sitting with Ronny Pierce when they were doing the earthquake sequences. There were 59 cut elements in those sequences – a cut element is one complete reel with elements on it – but there were 59 effects reels in those sequences. And to sit there and see the Surround system working, it was one of the most spectacular things I can remember. It stands out.

I understand Colorfilm did all the release prints for 'Elephant Man' in this country, didn't that involve some rather special sound expertise?

Yes. 'Elephant Man' carried a Dolby variable area sound track, the first that has been printed in this country. So we had to do the research on the configuration of the negative as far as density, fog levels, cross cancellation and that sort of thing. Then print it and process it and hold it to the control parameters we'd set.

Do you expect to do more of these?

Yes I do. I don't really see us in the near future producing Dolby stereo negs in this country, but we'll certainly print more from overseas. At the moment there are only three Dolby cameras in the world: one in Los Angeles, one in London and one in Munich. The one in Munich is I understand producing Dolby Stereo Porn movies. I'd dearly love to go and see that!

What can you offer the film maker here at Colorfilm that he won't get anywhere else in Australia?

Our optical transfer system. I believe it's the finest monoptical system in the world. And so do RCA in America.

Why is that?

Because the cameras were hand fitted by the man who created the system in the first place – Art Blayney. When I first went to APA I had the opportunity to train with Art for 6 months. He's 80 years old now and he really is the doyen of optical recording. In fact, he's just been awarded the SMPTE Samuel L. Warner Award for outstanding achievement and contribution to sound in motion pictures. I asked Art to put those cameras together for me in Los Angeles. It took him 16 weeks, and when those cameras arrived here they were so well set up I just put them together and started running track. I did not have to do a thing. And now RCA are using our parameters for the cameras they're making today.

And what does that mean to the film maker?

It means we can produce a track for him at least as good as any he'd get anywhere else in the world. We tend to look upon Hollywood and London as being the centre of the industry, but our negatives out of here print as well as any of them.

You must be really busy now, what's currently happening at Colorfilm?

"Gallipoli" is ready for printing now, and coming up we've got: 'The Best of Friends', 'Partners', 'Heat Wave' and 'Angel Street' to name just a few. My personal aim here at Colorfilm is to build the best sound department in the southern hemisphere. I think our sound negs are fine, we're supplying magnetic xfers of dailies to producers, and I'm currently building up a very elaborate sound effects library. Plus, of course, our new preview room which will be ready in November. It has suspended walls and ceilings, big screen 35mm and 16mm projection, full stereo sound – the lot.

Now Les, you've worked in the States, at Universal.

Yes.

For Disney's, United Artists, Allied Artists.

Yes.

You've had offers to go and live and work in America, what's stopped you?

Because I'm a fifth generation Australian and proud of it. Look, I don't want to work anywhere else. The Australian film industry is as old and respected as any in the world. And today it's producing some of the best films in the world.

And Colorfilm?

Well, of course, the people make this company. My sound crew is the finest I've ever had and you don't often get the chance to work with technicians like Arthur Cambridge, Maggie Cardin, Bill Gooley and Roger Cowland. We're a team. We respect each other, and we love this industry. It's as simple as that.
Agfa-Gevaert have just released a new color negative camera film, available in 16mm and 35mm, that will positively enhance the creation of any masterpiece.

New Gevacolor 682 negative camera film.

This film passes even the toughest of tests with flying colours (if you'll forgive the pun), reproducing skin tones to perfection.

And it doesn't just offer a wide latitude that compensates for even the most severe exposure variations, but delivers such a fine grain that every frame can be appreciated as a work of art in itself.

Better still, this new film can be processed without any of the problems created by climatic conditions. And it's compatible with the process employed by most major Australian laboratories.

So in summary, all we can say is that if you've got the creative know-how, and the will, we've got the way. New Gevacolor Type 682.

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Top Film Changes

It was only a few years ago thatinserters of film advertising in trade periodicals started adding in small type, "These credits are not deemed to be contractual." This arose out of litigations over cast members being re- placed between the ads being printed and the films starting production.

In Australia today, production lists issued during shooting could well do with a similar proviso. The two recent examples are Wall to Wall and We of the Never Never.

Keith Salvat, director of Private Collection in 1972, was announced as the director of Wall to Wall, for which he wrote a screenplay. Salvat did in fact begin directing the film, but early in the shoot Mark Egerton took over as director. Neither Salvat nor producer Errol Sullivan have issued statements.

We of the Never Never, the first feature of Adams Packer Films, started shooting with John G. Murray as producer. Murray was then chief of production at Adams Packer. Not long into the shooting, Murray left the film and resigned from Adams Packer. His position as producer was taken over by Greg Tepper, formerly of the Experimental Film Fund and the Victorian Film Corporation and now general manager at Adams Packer. Brian Rosen was also brought in as associate producer. The $2.5 million film has only recently completed shooting and executive producer Philip Adams has claimed it has the luster of Gone With The Wind, though adding wryly it is Australia's Heaven's Gate, the film allegedly had its budget lifted to $3 million.

Since leaving Adams Packer, Murray has started Paul Cox's Close to the Heart, which he is producing independently for Adams Packer.

Motion Picture Guarantors

Motion Picture Guarantors Inc., one of the major international companies providing completion guarantees, has expanded its operations to include Australia and New Zealand. Company chairman Douglas Leiterman, and legal counsel Ettore Scola's (president), Ellen Burstyn (madame), Jean-Claude Carriere, Robert Chazal, Carlos Diegues, Antonio Gala, Andrei Tarkovsky, Jean-Claude Carriere, Franco Cristaldi, Christian Defaye, Carlos Diegues, Antonio Gala, Andrei Petrov and Douglas Slocumbe (messieurs).

All-time Aussie Champs

In the May 6 issue of Variety there is a listing of the "All-time Aussie Rental Champs", as of January 1, 1981. The top 10 gross film rental earners are:

1. Star Wars $6,200,000
2. Grease $5,100,000
3. Jaws $4,600,000
4. The Sound of Music $4,437,000
5. The Sting $4,327,000
6. The Towering Inferno $4,017,000
7. Gone With The Wind $3,426,000
8. Superman $3,333,000
9. Kramer vs. Kramer $2,746,000
10. Monty Python's Life of Brian $2,587,000

The top Australian films in the list are:

23. Picnic at Hanging Rock $1,767,000
34. Alvin Purple $1,643,000
56. Breaker Morant $1,216,000
70. Mad Max $1,083,000
79. My Brilliant Career $972,000
83. Storm Boy $959,000
86. Caddy $936,000
94. They're A Weird Mob $846,000
137. Alvin Rides Again $655,000
157. Eliza Fraser $575,000
162. Stone $550,000

State Film Moves

The Victorian state government has announced it will amalgamate the Victorian Film Corporation, the State Film Centre and the audio-visual branch of the Education Department. In explaining the move, the Minister of Educational Services, Mr Lacy, said: "The South Australian Film Corporation provides much more effectively through one organization the services that we provide through three." The biggest upset of the announcement was the threatened strike by some staff who are protesting that their Public Service status will change. This is because the new body will be outside the Service. Monty Burgess, assistant general secretary of the Public Service Association, said: "We recognize the need for people to be able to come in from Channel Nine or Hollywood and assist. We are saying they don't need to take the whole lot out of the Public Service." Union representatives are continuing to have talks with the Minister in the hope of avoiding a strike. Meanwhile, the larger issue of whether amalgamation will benefit film production and film culture in Victoria is still to be debated. But such a debate rests on the legislation, which will be introduced in the spring session.

Cannes Winners

The following dates have been set for the 1981 Cannes Film Festival:

1. Indian Summer - October 19-25
2. East-West Film Market - October 25-30
3. Traditional MIFED - October 25-30

MIFED is a concentrated marketplace for buyers and sellers of feature films and television programs. Application forms will be available from the marketing and distribution branch of the Australian Film Commission when they are received from Milan.

MIFED Announces Dates

The following dates have been set for the 1981 Milan 44th Session of MIFED:

1. United Artists Sold

United Artists, a subsidiary of the Transamerica Corporation, has been sold to the MGM Film Company for $380 million, of which $250 million was paid in cash.

Cannes Festival prizes were:

Palme d'Or:
Man of Iron (Wajda)
Jury Prize:
Light Years Away (Tanner)
Best Actress:
Isabelle Adjani (Possession and Quartet)
Best Actor:
Ugo Tognazzi (Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man)
Best Screenplay:
Istvan Szabo and Peter Dobai (Mephisto)
Special Jury Prize
Passione d'amore (Scalia)
Prize for Artistic Contribution
Excalibur (Boorman)
Award for Contemporary Cinema
Looks and Smiles (Locach and Neige)
(Berto and Roger)
Best Supporting Actress
Elena Solovoi (The Fact)
Camera d'or
Desperado City (Glowna)
Critic's Award:
(Competition) Mephisto (Divers)
Malou (Meirapfel)
Ecumenical Jury Prize
Man of Iron
The jury was Jacques Deray (president), Ellen Burstyn (madame), Jean-Claude Carriere, Pierre Chazal, Franco Cristaldi, Christian Defaye, Carlos Diegues, Antonio Gala, Andrei Petrov and Douglas Slocumbe (messieurs).
The Australian Film Institute has announced that the 24th annual presentation of the AFI/Australian Film Awards will take place at the Australian Film Theatre, Sydney, on September 16, 1981.

The Australian Film Awards, established by the AFI in 1958, are designed "to provide a stimulus to all Australian filmmakers and to draw attention to outstanding achievements by individuals and teams involved in the production of Australian films."

The Awards presentation is funded by a grant from the Australian Film Commission, which also sponsors the award for Best Feature Film. Television viewers throughout Australia will be able to see the presentations via the ABC.

According to Rolf de Heer, the Awards will be announced in late August.

**Greater Union Awards**

The 1981 Greater Union Awards were announced at the 1981 Sydney Film Festival. The winners are:

- **Public Enemy Number One** (David Bradbury)
- **AFC** (Wayne Morey)
- **Groping** (Alexander Proyas and Salie Silverstein)
- **House of Flame** (Kawamoto Kinoshita)
- **New Day's Nights** (Veronika Soul)
- **Public Enemy Number One** (David Bradbury)
- **Sydney-Bush** (Paul Winkler)
- **Plastic Art Award** (Rita Hocking, A. C. Art 
  ... (James Scott)
- **Animation Award** (Lawrence Daddo and David Sproxton and Peter Lord)

**Overseas Interest in Restoration of Australian Films**

According to Ray Edmondson, director of the National Library of Australia, restoration of original film elements is an important interest overseas in Australia's film restoration work, particularly on the Terence Hill feature for the Term of His Natural Life. Edmondson said that the film was restored using the full range of different technologies involved in the reconstruction of Australian feature films.

Edmondson said the film archives from every nation represented at the conference knew of the restoration of For the Term of His Natural Life. The film was restored using the full range of different technologies involved in the reconstruction of Australian feature films.

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**Comedy Week in Melbourne**

Well-known British humorist and stage, screen and radio writer Barry Took will be visiting Melbourne for the Open Program of the Australian Film and Television School to participate in a round-Australia series of "pressure-cooker" screen-writing seminars. Took will hold a five-night workshop in Melbourne during August.

**1981 AFI/Australian Film Awards**

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**Australian Film Commission**

**Betty Archer**

Betty Archer, who for the past three years has been director, research and development, for Warner Bros in London, has been employed as a consultant by the Australian Film Commission to assist in advising writers and filmmakers developing scripts for future productions.

Before working at Warner Bros, Archer was story editor and personal assistant to the European head of production with United Artists (1972-77), assistant story editor with Romulus Film (1971), story analyst and personal assistant to the managing director with Avco Embassy Pictures (UK) Limited (1970), and story analyst and personal assistant to the European head of production with Twenty-First Century-Fox Productions (1965-70).

Archer has taken up residence in Australia to join her family, will be available to the industry in general, but is specifically contracted to the AFC as an adviser.

**David Charles Field**

The general manager of the AFC, John Blatchley, has announced the appointment of David Charles Field as director — marketing and distribution.

Field, managing director of Collier Macmillan Pty Ltd, Cassell Australia Ltd, and has had considerable experience, both in his own country and internationally, in the field of marketing and distribution. Previously, he spent five years overseas serving, among others, as marketing director of F. A. C. McGraw-Hill Publishers.

Field said the AFC and the industry looked forward to benefiting, not only from Field's international marketing experience but also from his depth of knowledge of the related field of publishing rights, franchising, licensing and story properties and copyright.

Field took up his appointment on June 29, 1981.

**Michael O'Connell joins OCP**

Michael O'Connell, a producer-director of independent film and television producer next month.

O'Connell worked with Radio Telefis Eireann, the Irish state-run television organization, for eight years and his experience includes a weekly arts magazine, a comprehensive range of documentary productions and current affairs programs, as well as live music and drama production.

Former executive producer of OCP, Bob Weis, has left to produce Women of the Sun, a series of films about Aboriginal women.

**Hoyts**

Terry Jackman, managing director of Hoyts Theatres, today announced the appointment of Tony Malone as general sales and marketing manager of Hoyts Distribution.

Malone has had extensive experience in all aspects of the film business. He joined Columbia Pictures in 1956 and progressed through bookworkings and sales to become director of advertising and publicity.

In 1977, Malone moved to United Artists as Westco sales manager, was appointed general sales manager in 1979 and general manager in 1980.

**For the Term of His Natural Life**

The color scheme in the original print seemed to be rather arbitrary and, for the reconstructed version, it was used only as an aid to guide. Selection of colors was motivated by mood or emotions (red for anger or confrontation; blue for wistful romance). Color grading was done in the color printing studio, and the final print was delivered to the post-producer for quality assurance.

Music was arranged by the Palm Court Orchestra from the film's score period. After a live, fully-synchronized performance at the Sydney Film Festival, a track was recorded, a color dupe negative made to preserve the tints and tones, and a composite print was finally made in time for the closing night of the Melbourne Film Festival.
AUSTRALIAN MOTION PICTURE YEARBOOK 1981/82
Edited by Peter Beilby
Cinema Papers is pleased to announce that the 1981/82 edition of the
Australian Motion Picture Yearbook can now be ordered.

The enlarged, updated 1981/82 edition contains many new features, including:

- Comprehensive filmographies of feature film scriptwriters, directors of photography, composers, designers, editors and sound recordists
- Monographs on the work of director Bruce Beresford, producer Matt Carroll and scriptwriter David Williamson
- A round-up of films in production in 1981
- Actor's, technicians and casting agencies
- An expanded list of services and facilities, including equipment suppliers and marketing services

For further details see tear-out order form.
Dear Sir,

It is hard to imagine how any program, no matter how well or ineptly executed, which deals with humanism and Christianity, coming down firmly on the side of the former but allowing a place for the latter, can be so airy dismissed as "soap opera"; and it is simply impertinent to claim, with such absolute authority, exclusive insights within the late Nevil Shute's motives for writing the original novel.

The review of this program read like a sounding board for the prejudices and preconceptions of the reviewer about television in general, rather than this program in particular, and ended up as a vicious and unjustified attack on the producer [Henry Crawford], a man who has done more to improve the standards of television drama in this country than your elitist reviewer will ever begin to comprehend.

Nor can I accept the argument that you do not exercise editorial control over your reviewers, since I recall you would not print Bert Deling's review of Newfront because it did not conform to your editorial policy.

Eventually, I suppose, the day must come when you begin to understand that television drama is a medium in its own right, with its own traditions, conventions and structures, and that it is not some form of poor man's cinema.

Until that day does come, however, you cannot reasonably expect any future cooperation from me, nor privileged access to information about any production with which I am involved.

David Stevens
Director, A Town Like Alice

Jill Kitson replies:
If it is ellitist to assess television drama for its integrity, originality and credibility, rather than for its Christian or humanist sentiments, then I am clearly ellitist. And was it ellitist of me to praise these qualities in A Town Like Alice?

Of course, in a medium that measures success in terms of a mass audience, "ellitism" is a dreaded slur. But to avoid it, programmers tend to fall into another trap — that of trying constantly to please the mass audience with the blandly predictable. This essentially patronizing approach is, I suspect, responsible for many missed opportunities.

In particular, it seems to have been responsible for some of the weaknesses of A Town Like Alice, though not the chief weakness which, as I argued in my review, sprang from the structure of Nevil Shute's novel.

I agree that television drama is not "poor man's cinema". The point I was making was that series and serials are different forms of television drama, with their own traditions, conventions and structure (aside from the common structure imposed by two-minute advertising breaks at seven-minute intervals in commercial television).

I am sad, but not surprised, that Bert Stevens doesn't see this distinction too.

The Editor replies:
As David Stevens implies a lack of editorial control in printing Jill Kitson's review of A Town Like Alice as written, several points need to be made.

Kitson was asked to review Water Under The Bridge, The Last Outlaw and A Town Like Alice in October 1980. Before she or anyone at Cinema Papers had seen the programs. She could hardly, therefore, have been chosen to reflect the Editor's view.

Kitson was also asked to make comments about television mini-series in general, on the basis of the three programs up for review.

Once the review was completed, it went through the usual sub-editorial process. This did not alter Kitson's views. In fact, an observant reader may well have noticed that Kitson and I disagree over Jack's motivations in upholding the status quo in Willstown, at Jean's expense. (See interview with Henry Crawford, Cinema Papers, No. 31, p. 49.)

As to Stevens' allegation that Kitson's review "ended up as a vapid and unjustified attack on the producer", I can find no passage even remotely supporting of such a view. Kitson's opinions are considered and, I suggest, well argued.

Stevens also claims that Kitson, and Cinema Papers, sees television as "some form of poor man's cinema". Firstly, a careful reading shows Kitson maintains no such thing. Secondly, Kitson's views are not necessarily those of the Editor.

Stevens ends by making a plea for intelligent debate on television. I can think of no publication in Australia that has so regularly and conscientiously pursued that aim.

As to Bert Deling's piece on Newfront, it was not printed because it was more in the form of a production report than the review we required. Deling was given the opportunity to rewrite it, but declined. Keith Connolly was then commissioned. His review was as favorable as Deling's piece.
intuition about color as against black and white screen, is what people in their thou­
Yank flicks like subscribe to that. It is good that we are

Now, we have some concrete ideas, which before were, for me, hazy and unformulated.

The issue is most pressing alto­gether - content, format and layout. I don't always read Cinema Papers, but I will from now on if this stan­

Thank you for some entertaining and informative writing.

Dear Sir,

Dear Sir,

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Dear Sir,

From my experience, though, most people know (outside of "cinema graphic circles") would not agree with either Bob Ellis or myself on this topic. I am wondering if both will agree, whether it is also a cultural thing, of a somewhat "elitist" nature, by which people, like he and I, are "inhibited"?

I found his explanations very con­

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Dear Sir,

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From my experience, though, most people know (outside of "cinema graphic circles") would not agree with either Bob Ellis or myself on this topic. I am wondering if both will agree, whether it is also a cultural thing, of a somewhat "elitist" nature, by which people, like he and I, are "inhibited"?

I found his explanations very con­

vincing. They have given me some con­

crete ideas, which before were, for me, hazy and unformulated.

The issue is most pressing alto­gether - content, format and layout. I don't always read Cinema Papers, but I will from now on if this stan­

Thank you for some entertaining and informative writing.

Dear Sir,
**Dimboola**

In retrospect, how do you feel about "Dimboola"?

Dimboola confirmed in me the desire to work on projects that I write, or over which I have ultimate script control. A major problem with the film was that Jack Hibberd, the scriptwriter, and I had different concepts. It would have been better if someone had either come in and taken over the direction and stuck more to Jack's concept, or if Jack had released control and I had done it more to my taste. Understandably, as author of the original play, he was loath to do so and we ended up making compromises.

However, I don't share some of the critics' reservations about the film. I feel they approached it with inbuilt expectations and didn't allow themselves to accept the conventions under which it operated. For example, it was widely criticised for its theatricality. Certainly, it was larger than life, in the same way performances are often larger than life in overseas films, like those by Federico Fellini. But it was necessitated by Jack's writing.

If you have lines like, "Australia resembles two geriatric buttocks, is the ancient under-rump of the world, so to speak — hence the Australian passion for steak", you can't have them delivered naturalistically. I was asking for a heightened performance level from the cast to match the screenplay — the actors weren't to blame for any excess. In fact, I thought there was a number of excellent performances.

Do you think this critical misperception was shared by the audience?

*Audience reaction was extremely positive during the screenings of the film before its release. The distributor, GUO, was optimistic about its chances.*

Did the critics, therefore, influence an audience?

*It is a matter of degree. Certain films from overseas are given such huge publicity build-ups that they succeed irrespective of how the critics react. Most Australian films, on the other hand, are much more influenced by the critical reaction. Australian films which have got good critical receptions overseas, for example, have almost invariably done very well here.*

How difficult is it for Australian filmmakers to experiment?

*If you are doing something radically different, you would do well to air the film at overseas festivals to try and amass a good critical response before releasing the film here. This would then point some of the critics in the right direction. Also, the public is undoubtedly impressed by overseas acclaim.*

Apart from a resolve to do your own screenplays in the future, what else did you take away from "Dimboola"?

*When you make a film that fails, you need to try and separate yourself as a person from the failure of the film as a whole. As the film's director, I rightfully received much of the blame. Certainly, I made a number of mistakes and misjudgments which contributed to its failure. On the other hand, you can't take a critical drubbing too personally, otherwise you'll become embittered and paranoid fairly quickly.*

Why has it taken three years to do a film after "Dimboola"?

*I tried a number of projects, some of which I had been preparing before I was approached to do Dimboola. I submitted some scripts after Dimboola was finished, but I guess that film was damaging to their reception.*

Generally, the scripts were about political subjects. One of them was about the ethics of violence as a political weapon in advanced Western democracies. It told the story of a woman who had been involved with a group like the Red Army Fraction in Germany, and who had come to Australia on a false passport after her lover was killed when a bomb he had been planting exploded prematurely.

The woman was someone who no longer believed in the usefulness or ethical validity of that sort of tactic in the particular circumstance of an affluent Western democracy. Thus, she was burdened by having participated in an action she now regarded as immoral, yet which had resulted in the death of someone she loved. However, despite this, she was still searching for an alternative form of political expression.

That was a project for which I was unable to get money. I submitted it to a number of film bodies and did a great swag of drafts.

Is there a resistance to making films about political issues?

*Yes. Usually, though, this reticence by government bodies is expressed in terms of saying the film is not "commercially viable". But I had tailor-made the budget on...*
the Mouth to Mouth scale. With sales in Europe and a moderate release and television sale in Australia, I would have got the money back. So, I didn’t accept that argument as legitimate. I had another script dealing with a communal household fighting a local council which wanted to knock down a building in their street. The building was being used as a meeting place by a group of pensioners and by the youth in the area as a dance hall. That was another low-budget film and also unsuccessful in finding funds.

Then there was a screenplay about uranium which was a more overtly political film. That was also unsuccessful. There was a period

when I was developing and rewriting a number of scripts. In all, I put up about 20 applications to various bodies before I got The Winter of our Dreams accepted.

During this period, you left Melbourne for Sydney. Why the move?

I felt I had been living in Melbourne long enough. I wanted a change and thought of Sydney because I like the beach. There are additional benefits, of course, like the fact that the laboratories and most of the equipment-hiring services are in Sydney. The locations are also varied and Sydney is a much more photogenic city than Melbourne.

You didn’t feel any pressure as a filmmaker to move to Sydney because it is more the centre of the industry . . .

Yes, I probably did. The Australian Film Commission is up here, and the New South Wales Film Corporation has a much larger budget than the Victorian Film Corporation. Those things make a difference. There are also a lot more actors and technicians up here.

I think there will be a tendency to centralize in Sydney. In most countries there is probably only one large filmmaking centre. In the U.S., most of it is in Los Angeles, though there is a certain amount done in New York.

Winter of our Dreams

What is “Winter of our Dreams” about?

It is about the relationship of a prostitute and the owner of a specialist bookshop, whose lives are brought together by the suicide of Lisa, a mutual friend. The bookshop owner, Rob (Bryan Brown), was a radical student leader in the late 1960s and Lisa was his girlfriend during those days.

At the start of the film, Rob hears that Lisa has committed suicide and he wonders about the direction her life took in the past 10 years. During his investigations, he meets Lou, a Kings Cross prostitute, played by Judy Davis. Lou had been sort of adopted by Lisa in the last year of her life, Lisa seeing in Lou someone who was following in her footsteps.

The film then follows Rob and Lou’s relationship and contrasts their lifestyles. Lou has the diary that Lisa kept on her relationship with Rob 10 years before. The more Lou reads it, the more she identifies with Lisa and the more her relationship with Rob begins to parallel the earlier relationship. Rob is thus confronted indirectly by the memories of Lisa and the sort of person he was 10 years ago.

Winter of our Dreams actually derived from some of those earlier scripts. The male character, for example, is indirectly related to one of the characters in the script about terrorism. The whole thing came as a breakthrough in another script I was writing. I decided that the main female character should die at the beginning of the film and that her presence, or rather her death, is the trigger for events that then take place.

There seems to be continuity of characterization in your work. Some people, for example, will view Lou in “Winter of our Dreams” as having a lot of similarities with Carrie in “Mouth to Mouth”. Is this continuity intentional?

They are both outsiders living on the edge of society, but otherwise the similarity between them is solely in terms of how they earn a living. Carrie was starting to work in massage parlors in Mouth to Mouth — though that was a small different to Lou, just in terms of the type of person she is.

In the screenplay of “Winter of our Dreams”, the social, political and economic forces have less influence on the characters than in your other films. You seem more concerned with personal interaction . . .

Political comment in films and books can take a variety of forms. The script I wrote about the terrorist was obviously quite overt in its political approach. This film I see as no less political, though it operates in a different way.

What I am in part doing here is attempting to examine representatives of a generation who were once

allegedly radical, or who once paid lip-service to radical ideas, and to see where they have gone. In part, it is an indictment of educated middle-class people. Because of their various advantages, they have the greatest potential for generating social change. So, while the approach is more indirect, it is no less political.

There is a lot of discussion today as to whether the radicals of the 1960s “sold out” or realized that much of their energies had been misplaced,
either ideologically or pragmatically. Your script does not appear to take a strong line . . .

It is too easy to simply say the people who attended the moratoriums have sold out. The kind of momentum that a society like ours has is very difficult for people within it to assess accurately. It is hard to detach oneself long enough to take stock of what one is doing with one's life. In a way, the events of the film cause Rob to do just this; he is briefly dislocated from the mainstream of his life and glimpses its direction. There is a great diversity of pressures involved, and it would be too simple to condemn him out of hand.

With Rob and Gretel, I have attempted to draw people who reflect some of the diversity of influences and pressures that have occurred in the past 10 years. It is very important that the audience likes them and is aware that these people are complex, sensitive and committed in their own way. It is just that their commitment has, in a sense, become displaced.

If the film functions properly, there should be a gradual change in the audience's sympathies towards Lou. But if it's too great, the rest of the film will collapse.

There is a scene that seems to me to sum up the tone of the script, and that is when the 18 year-old girl is reading an expensive art book in Rob's bookshop and she complains about the price in the hope that he might reduce it; he doesn't. Ten years ago, however, had he been in that girl's position, he would have probably thrown the book at the bookshop owner . . .

I am hoping, in the way characters have been drawn and the way they are played, the irony of this kind of behaviour will be evident to the audience without it being too heavily pointed out. Likewise, the behaviour of Rob and Gretel is full of ironies.

There are many films that have been rather unsuccessful in making really telling criticisms of the middle class. It is very easy to send up the middle class and make it look ridiculous, but I think one is more likely to touch people if you can have them identifying with sympathetic characters who exhibit some of the contradictions and ironies that we live. An audience has far more room for personal examination if you allow it to engage itself with characters it likes. At the same time, it can also discover weaknesses.

Gretel and Rob have independent affairs and are open about it. And, except for a moment of dialogue, this situation isn't questioned. How do you see their relationship?

I wanted to depict two people who were making this choice of life-style work reasonably successfully. It has become, in a sense, a pre-occupation of theirs; it is, for example, a more important part of their mental life than anything political. Elements of jealousy and unease still remain, however.

The big difference between Rob and Gretel is that Gretel is someone whose life is fairly successful and goal-oriented. She is working as an academic and she likes her job; she has ambitions which are being realized. Rob, on the other hand, has no such rewarding job. He doesn't appear to be particularly interested or excited by running this bookshop.

At the same time, Rob's relationship with Lou revives the memories of the sort of direction that he could have taken had he made different choices when he was involved with Lisa. Rob has now opted for a different lifestyle, with its cerebral and rational approach to the world. But this rests rather uneasily with the more emotional, intuitive person he can still remember from university days, and can still feel inside. And the more Lou identifies with Lisa, the more Rob is confronted by those elements of his personality he has put in cold storage.

Towards the end, after Rob has backed out of his lunch with Lou, Rob says to Gretel, "I think it's good she didn't get too close." I interpreted that as much as a comment about the dangers of Gretel and Rob's relationship — i.e., of cutting oneself off from others — as much as it was about Rob shutting a door on an uneasy past . . .

It is both. Rob is very much making a choice to opt for a continuation of his present lifestyle, and to opt for a drier way of relating to the world. But, he is obviously hit in the guts by seeing Lou disintegrating in front of him. One could equally speculate that he might, after these events, choose to go somewhere quite different.

The disintegration of Lou is so strong that one continually expects her end to be the same as Lisa's . . .

Well, it may be. The departing image of the film ties the general and particular elements of a major part of the film's theme. Lou is seen allied, or together at any rate, with this small group of people demonstrating against uranium. She has...
Since the Gorton Liberal Government first decided to fund a commercial Australian film industry in 1970, federal governments have been looking for an elusive formula to foster a profitable national film industry.

Government preoccupation with subsidizing an arts industry stems, in no small way, from the relatively non-elitist character of film culture. Films are also, of course, potential domestic and export income earners. The preoccupation has spawned the recommendations of the 1972 Tariff Board Enquiry, the creation of government film bodies to administer government grants and investment, the Peat Marwick Mitchell Report in 1979, and private investment incentives through the Income Tax Assessment Act.

Through all these measures — mooted, promised, implemented or shelved — the Government has attempted to saddle the problems of a high-risk industry, involving continuously increasing film budgets, in a country of small and dispersed population and with foreign-dominated distribution/exhibition chains.

Income tax incentives have recently been hailed as the panacea to the industry's problems. But even more recently, controversy over legislation to implement the federal election promises in 1980 of increased incentives has also shaken out simmering discontent over the tax write-off as a method of assistance.

On September 30, 1980, the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, promised in his election policy speech a one-year, 150 per cent income tax write-off for investment in Australian films. He also promised tax exemption of up to 50 per cent of the original investment. The write-off was to be allowed in the first year of expenditure. It was estimated that the concessions would cost the Federal Government $2 million a year.

In December, the Federal Treasurer, Mr Howard, and the then Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Ellicott, issued a joint statement promising concessions to investors in 52 films, involving a total budget of $45 million.

A compromise did appear to have been reached on June 3, 1981. The original proposal would now continue to apply to investors who made an agreement with film producers between October 1, 1980, and May 27, 1981. This amendment-to-the-amendment-to-the-promise will apparently restore the original concessions to investors in 52 films, involving a total budget of $45 million.

But the question of whether it is appropriate for government to support the industry by giving high income earners its blessing to minimize their tax is now being viewed more critically than ever before. In fact, the surprisingly generous new tax incentives — which it seems are now viewed as overly generous by the Government — might have been unnecessary if the Government had been more responsive to industry lobbying when it introduced its first tax concessions to the film industry in 1978.

Despite industry pressure at the time for a 100 per cent write-off over a 12-month period, the 1978 tax concessions introduced a two-year write-off. This was an insufficient drawcard in itself, but it did draw attention to other tax schemes for film investment which did not have the government seal of approval. Such schemes enabled investors to lever their investment to get a deduction greater than the amount actually expended. In some schemes, the investment was artificially inflated to 10 times its original amount.

It became pretty well acknowledged that to attract private investment it was necessary to employ the more dubious tax schemes. At the time, one tax lawyer commented that, "As things stand, the only way to make film meaty for investors is to treat it slightly".

A trickle of such tax money found its way to "legitimate" films, but the "meaty" schemes also resulted in a proliferation of "Barrier Reef box brownies".

If genuine money was a little tight, Mr Howard's announcements in June and September, 1980, relating to such schemes put an effective clamp on almost any private money finding its way into film production. The Treasurer's subsequent attempts to reassure potential investors that "genuine" investment would not be affected did little to clarify the situation.

Shortly afterwards, the Federal Government was facing an election. Add to this the increasingly high media profile given the industry, the unfavorable reaction by the industry to Howard's clampdown and an extremely vocal lobbying group in the AFTPA, it was not surprising that the AFTPA's suggestions were slipped into Fraser's election policy speech.

In view of the Treasury's $2 million cost estimate of the original proposals, it seems that

the proposal was hastily adopted without serious consideration. When the estimate escalated from $2 million to $130 million and Treasury reportedly received 170 applications for the concessions, the stage was set for some amendment to the original proposal.

In justifying the change, Mr Howard said the generosity of the concessions had led to their "exploitation" in "unacceptable ways". Of major concern was that the concessions would be used for tax deferral: an investor could commit funds at the start of a financial year so that if the film in which he invested was not made, he would have effectively deferred paying tax.

Clearly, the Government's reneging on its original promise — although not as drastic as first believed — shows that its promise was ill-considered. It is also doubtful whether tax incentives in the future will be as effective as the original proposals in drumming up private capital, due to shaken confidence in government promises.

In most cases, the high income earners attracted to the concessions will be provisional rather than PAYE taxpayers; as such, they would not have been able to claim the deduction before March 1982 in any case, under the original proposal allowing the write-off in the year of expenditure. Neither will it affect investors in television and film documentaries, nor in other productions that can be completed in one year.

The year-of-marketing write-off will, however, affect films which take more than two years to reach release. In this respect, the AFTPA's complaint that the amendment will discriminate against the making of quality films rings true. So, to an extent, does the converse argument that the year of marketing deduction will encourage "quickie" films of dubious merit.

But the fact remains that the film industry is now the most heavily-subsidized local industry. The 150 per cent write-off and the tax exemption on profits offer far more protection than that of the clothing, footwear and motor vehicle industries. The concessions are certainly the most generous under the Income Tax Act.

It is the very generosity of the incentives — so it is argued — that could kill the industry with kindness. Except in such cases as *Squizzy* — in which the Victorian Film Corporation's backing was desired as a matter of policy — there is now little need for producers to seek financial assistance from the government film bodies. Thus a significant quality control on productions, through the involvement of the Australian Film Commission and the state film corporations, has been lost.

Presumably some sort of control will exist in the determination of films that qualify for the tax incentives, but by whom in Home Affairs it is not clear.

It is an irony of the incentives that they were introduced to encourage a national industry and yet large proportions of budgets may be spent in procuring imported talent to ensure profitable overseas sales and so secure the tax-exempt profits.

O ther issues are raised by the new tax incentives. They provide high income earners with the Government's "virtual blessing" to minimize their tax and it is questionable whether this gels with the much-vaulted intention of catching tax avoiders with a draconian replacement to the tax act's section 260. It is also debatable whether lower income earners should subsidize the higher income bracket's tax problems to the extent of $130 million a year.

Such questions aside, if there is a need for tax incentives to stimulate private investment in the industry, the 150 per cent write-off is presumably a good compromise between the ineffective two-year write-off and the more outrageous schemes with which sections of the film industry had been associated.

But presumably the industry would prefer to sever its ties with tax money in the long term. The Federal Treasurer's recent comments to parliament, that he regarded the new incentives as particularly generous, suggest that, in any case, the incentives in their new form may be shortlived. It was also suggested, before the October 1980 elections, by the Labor Party's Shadow Arts Minister, Senator Susan Ryan, that tax incentives may be necessary in the short term, but "in the long term, the restructuring of the distribution/exhibition system in Australia may obviate the need for such measures ..." Senator Ryan's suggestions hark back to the Tariff Board's Report in 1973 on Motion Picture Films and Television Programs. The Board's principal recommendations were for:

1. The establishment of an independent statutory body to administer grants and other financial assistance, and to operate a distribution network in competition with existing networks.
2. A scheme to reduce concentration of control by the Hoyts and Greater Union/Roadshow exhibition chains by forcing them to sell a proportion of their cinemas and to remove vertically-integrated distribution and exhibition through divestiture of shareholding; and
3. A single television program buying agency.

The theory behind such recommendations was that by breaking down the foreign-dominated distribution/exhibition system, Australian films would be given an equal chance at the box-office. Resurrecting this reasoning, Senator Ryan argued that the distribution/exhibition nexus had also led to restrictive trade practices such as block booking. This not only lowered the standard of films shown, she said, but it also put Australian films — usually excluded from the package — at a disadvantage.

To solve this problem, Senator Ryan suggested that the states could co-operate in a strategy for regulation of distribution/exhibition. She also pointed to various commonwealth constitutional powers which might be useful for such regulation.

Presumably, a Labor Government of the 1980s would have been more prepared to take on the distribution majors than its predecessor which shelved the more controversial recommendations. Labor's former Minister for the Media, Senator McClelland, recommended to cabinet at the time that there be neither a divestment scheme nor a single purchasing agency. Instead, it was suggested that the Government rely on the Trade Practices Act to break down the distribution/exhibition tie-up. But the Trade Practices Act has proved pretty much a toothless tiger in this respect, apart from the Trade Practices Commission's refusal in 1976 to grant the Motion Picture Distributors Association clearance for a standard form film hire contract between distributors and exhibitors.

The reasons supporting divestiture of major theatres from chains and divorcing exhibitors from distributors is attractive. While it might not lead in practice to an overwhelming preference for the Australian product, such films could at least be given an equal chance on their merits before Australian audiences. The pressure to sell the local product on overseas markets could then be alleviated to some extent. Accordingly, the need for big budgets may be reduced and so would the need for financial assistance from the Government.

However, it has been suggested that reducing the bargaining power of the exhibition majors may disproportionately strengthen the market power of the distributors. They could achieve this situation through manipulation of film print supply according to their own assessment of an outlet's revenue.

Perhaps the solution is for either government-subsidized exhibition outlets with specific national cultural objectives or subsidy of local films at the box-office. It has been argued before that the alternative — tax-deductible private investment — is unlikely to have much appeal to profit-consious investors. The legislation for 150 per cent tax write-off plus tax exempt profits for film investment recently introduced to federal parliament makes this argument largely redundant, as shown by the amount of tax money now available to the film industry. But in terms of policy, the box-office subsidy may be preferable to the new tax incentives because they would not discriminate between different classes of taxpayers — they would not enable the professional tax bracket to minimize their tax problems.

An appropriate forum where alternative methods of government assistance to the film industry could be evaluated would have been a...
The New Tax Concessions

Roses with Nasty Thorns

Ian Baillieu

It has become fashionable to describe the new film industry tax concessions as generous, and the Treasurer, Mr Howard, has done so publicly on several occasions. However, the concessions as originally proposed have been subjected to so many limitations, conditions and uncertainties that the overall result is not nearly so generous as the Treasurer would have the public suppose.

Following the election campaign announcement of the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, of the proposed concessions on September 30, 1980, and the joint announcement of the Treasurer and the Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, Mr Ellicott, on December 18, 1980, outlining the details, it took the Government until May 27, 1981, to prepare and introduce the necessary legislation. With some last-minute amendments this became law on June 24, 1981.

About a month earlier, in response to enquiries by producers and investors who were becoming increasingly nervous at the Government's tardiness, the Treasurer explained that the matter was complex and that care was being taken to frame the concessions so that they would not be used for tax avoidance. "Tax avoidance" has become an emotive political term, frequently parroted by commentators who do not stop to analyze its meaning, nor indeed whether it has any agreed, objective meaning.

It is worth pointing out that every tax deduction allowed by the Income Tax Assessment Act enables the taxpayer to avoid tax that would otherwise have been payable on the income offset by the deduction. Yet no one would argue that all allowable deductions should be scrapped. The issue surely is whether the allowance of any particular deduction is consistent with the scheme of the Act or with equity or with Government policy.

So one did not have to be a cynic to interpret the Treasurer's explanation to mean that, while going through the motions of fulfilling its promises, the Government was seeking ways to discourage reliance on the new concessions.

In this writer's opinion, the Government has achieved that objective to such an extent that some investors may prefer to rely on the concessions still available under Division 10B of the Act, with which Australian film investors have become familiar over the past two and a half years, even though the Government has not responded to requests to assist the film industry by rectifying certain uncertainties and anomalies in Division 10B.

Division 10B

The latest amendments have left largely untouched the scheme of Division 10B, which permits the capital cost of acquiring an interest in the copyright in a certified Australian film to be written off as a tax deduction at the rate of 50 per cent per year, commencing when the film has been completed (so that the copyright has come into subsistence) and the copyright interest has been used for the production of assessable income.

The amendments to Division 10B (some additions to Section 124K, and the insertion of new Sections 124KA and 124WA) are technical provisions designed to ensure that, particularly in the case of investing partnerships, where a deduction is taken under the new concessions it is not also taken under Division 10B.

It remains uncertain because of the requirement in Division 10B that the taxpayer must be the one who uses his copyright interest to produce assessable income whether a unit trust is an appropriate form of organization for investors wishing to obtain deductions under Division 10B. Since a trust, with the production company acting as trustee of the film for the investors, is (apart from tax considerations) clearly the most convenient and efficient method of organization, it is a pity that the Government has not demonstrated its sincerity towards the film industry by amending Division 10B to make it clear that trusts may be used.

It also remains uncertain to what extent the Commissioner may, under Section 124Z, reduce the allowable deduction under Division 10B where the taxpayer is obtaining from his copyright interest a benefit outside Australia — e.g., where the film is generating foreign income. (It is fear of this section, not any wish to avoid taxable income, that explains why Australian film investment contracts have commonly excluded investors from receiving any share of a film's foreign earnings.) It is a pity that the Government did not agree to revoke or clarify Section 124Z.

No change has been made to the eligibility of films for certification as Australian films under Division 10B, nor to the procedure and criteria for such certification.

It appears that certification under Division 10B is separate from any certification for the purpose of the new tax concessions, and must be separately applied for.

The certification provisions of Division 10B are rudimentary and contain some illogicalities. For instance, the Division clearly contemplates that a certificate may be issued in relation to a future production, yet the Minister is directed to have regard to some matters — e.g., the ownership of the copyright in the film, which may not be known until the film has been made.

The former Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Ellicott, overcame such difficulties with a blend of liberality, commonsense and a sympathetic attitude towards the practical needs of film producers. It remains to be seen whether the current Minister, Mr Wilson, will be as constructive.

Despite these uncertainties and the modest rate of write-off that it offers, Division 10B has some attractions for investors. There is no provision in Division 10B for a certificate to be revoked. So if, as in the past, a certificate can be obtained before a film is made, the investors at least know where they stand.

Division 10B is not subject to many of the limitations and conditions attached to the new concessions. Thus, there is no restriction on who may apply for a Division 10B certificate; Division 10B is not limited to certain categories of films, nor is it limited to first owners of copyright; taxpayers obtaining deductions in respect of capital expenditure under Division 10B are not specially restricted in carrying forward their losses or deducting their revenue expenses, nor are they denied tax exemption under Section 23C(6) and 23F(1) in respect of foreign source income; and capital expenditure for the purpose of Division 10B does not have to be "at risk" or expended "directly" in producing a film in order to qualify for deductibility.

Investors wishing to rely on Division 10B should however be aware of the amendments to Division 3 which also became law on June 24, 1981, and which (with retroactive effect) applied...
the expenditure recoupment provisions of Division 3 to capital expenditure that would otherwise be allowable as a deduction under Division 10B.

These amendments were particularly aimed to restrict film investors from obtaining leverage for the purpose of Division 10B by financing their investments with non-recourse or limited-recourse loans.

To the extent that the investor is unlikely to be called upon to repay such a loan, the Commissioner may treat the investor as having obtained an “additional benefit”. If the sum of such additional benefit and the tax that would be saved by allowing the deduction pursuant to Section 10B on the amount invested (i.e., in the case of an investor who is in the 40 per cent tax bracket, if more than 40 per cent of the investment is financed by non-repayable loan moneys), the investor is not allowed a deduction in respect of any part of the investment. There is provision for the Commissioner to amend the investor’s assessment so as to allow the deduction if the Commissioner later becomes satisfied that the investor will in fact be called upon to repay the relevant loan moneys.

Investors wishing to rely on Division 10B should also be aware of the new Section 124ZAE, which provides for a taxpayer to elect to have the new concessions. The amendments provide for a taxpayer to elect to claim deductions under Division 10B must take the precaution of making such an election, even where no application has been made. This is a necessary condition of obtaining a final certificate for a film — i.e., a final certificate under Division 10B must be applied for before the Commissioner makes a final determination of whether to issue a certificate under Division 10B. The same question arises in relation to the new concessions. The question is whether the new concessions shall not apply. It appears from the new Section 124Z(2)(b) that an investor intending to claim deductions under Division 10B must take the precaution of making such an election, even where no application has been made. The election should be made in writing lodged with the Commissioner on or before the date the investor lodges his tax return for the year for which a Division 10B deduction is first available.

The New Concessions

The general scheme of the new tax concessions has received wide publicity: a 150 per cent deduction (under a new Division 10BA) for capital invested in the production of a certified Australian film, plus tax exemption on the investor’s income from the film up to an amount equal to 50 per cent of such investment. The limitations on these concessions have not been so well publicized. How severe the limitations will prove in practice cannot yet be judged. Answers are still needed to the questions raised below.

Under Division 10BA, an irrevocable certificate for a film cannot be obtained under Section 124Z(2)(a) — cannot be obtained until after the film is made. In the meantime, a provisional certificate can be obtained for the reassurance of investors. However, a provisional certificate may be revoked at any time if the Commissioner is no longer satisfied that the film is or will be a qualifying Australian film. What protection does an investor have against the Minister simply changing his mind or his policy, and deciding that he is no longer satisfied?

The same question arises in relation to the availability of a final certificate. The pre-condition of a final certificate is the same as that for a provisional certificate — i.e., the Minister has to be satisfied that the film is a qualifying Australian film — but it appears that a separate application must be made for a final certificate, and as there will inevitably be further facts for the Minister to consider (e.g., the film actually having been screened), what assurance does an investor have that a final certificate will issue as a matter of course whenever the Minister has granted (or refused) a preliminary certificate?

Although the matters that the Minister is directed to take into account in determining, for the purpose of certification, whether a film has or will have significant Australian content are (save for the exclusion of the production expenditure incurred . . . or . . . budgeted in respect of the film”) substantially the same under Division 10BA as under Division 10B, only certain kinds of film are eligible for certification for the purpose of the new tax concessions.

Excluded is any film that is wholly or to a substantial extent
(a) a film for exhibition as an advertising medium; or
(b) a film for exhibition as a discussion program, a panel program, a variety program or a program of like nature;
(c) a film consisting of or including a sporting activity, a theatrical performance, an artistic performance or any other activity, performance or event, to which the public is normally admitted — whether free of charge or on payment of a charge;
(d) a film forming part of a drama program series that is, or is intended to be, of a continuing nature; or
(e) a training film.

Subject to those exclusions, to be eligible the film must be “a film produced wholly or principally for exhibition to the public in cinemas or other places . . . . or . . . . for television broadcasting, being a feature film or a film of like nature produced for exhibition by way of television broadcasting, a documentary or a mini-series of television drama”. (Section 123ZAA(4).) “Television broadcasting” includes transmission by cable.

Note that a film produced principally for distribution in the form of videocassettes would not be eligible.

Will the Minister interpret “the public” in Section 124ZAA(4) as including the public outside Australia? If not, certification will be confined to films produced wholly or principally for the Australian market. What is the scope for a mini-series of television drama? How many episodes may a series have, and still be “mini”?

Will a certificate be obtainable for a pilot film made for the purpose of obtaining a production order for a continuing drama series? If so, will the certificate (if provisional) be revoked if the pilot is incorporated in the series?

Does the exclusion of a “drama program series . . . of a continuing nature” disqualify a television film? It appears not.

The conditions on which the new 150 per cent deduction for film investment is available are set out in Section 124ZAF. The first condition is that the taxpayer has, under a contract entered into on or after October 1, 1980, “expended capital moneys in producing, or by way of contribution to the cost of producing” a certified film. Section 124ZAF(1) provides that a reference in Division 10BA to moneys expended in producing a film is a reference to moneys expended “to the extent to which those moneys are expended directly in producing a film”.

What is meant by “direct” expenditure? The Treasurer’s explanatory memorandum says that this word is intended to exclude “moneys such as brokerage fees for arranging that a group of people join together to produce a film”. But there is no logical distinction between the cost to a producer of assembling the finance needed for a film and the cost of assembling the men and the materials. Would the Treasurer argue that the costs of transporting cameras and crew to a location are not direct costs? A practice statement is needed from the Commissioner to make it clear what extent the following categories of costs will be regarded as direct costs of production:

- The Costs of acquiring underlying rights;
- The script development costs;
- Producers’ fees;
- Executing producers’ fees;
- Film producer’s indemnity and negative risks insurance;
- Errors and omissions insurance;
- Completion guarantee fees; and
- Revenue tax.

If the Commissioner takes a hard line on such costs, it is clear that a substantial percentage of the typical film budget will be excluded from the new concessions.

A further question concerns the common practice of a film producer getting a production underway by financing the costs until the investors have been signed up. Will the Commissioner contend that the investors’ reimbursement of such costs does not constitute direct expenditure in producing the film?

Another worrying provision is Section 124ZAH(1) which provides as follows:

(a) a taxpayer has expended capital moneys by way of contribution to the cost of producing a film; and
(b) an amount of moneys has been expended in producing the film; and
(c) an investor has contributed towards the production of a film; and
(d) an investor has contributed towards the production of a film; and
(e) the amount of moneys contributed by the investor has constituted direct expenditure in producing the film;

and, then, for the purposes of this Division (10BA), so much of the moneys expended by the taxpayer, that will be to be included in the amount referred to in paragraph (b) that has been expended in producing the film.

The Treasurer’s explanatory memorandum says that this provision is to enable the Commissioner, in circumstances where taxpayers have contributed towards the production of a film, to attribute actual expenditure out of the production account to the contributions of a particular taxpayer. It is not explained why such a power is needed. The wording of the section, however, goes far beyond that intention. On its face, it empowers the Commissioner to reduce the deduction available to an investor under Division 10BA whenever the investor has invested by means of contribution to a production account from which the film production expenses were paid (the normal case). What use will the Commissioner make of Section 123ZAH?

Section 124ZAJ empowers the Commissioner, in a case where a producer pays for goods or services supplied by someone with whom the producer is not dealing at arm’s length, to recognize as expended only such portion of the payment as the Commissioner regards as reasonable. A similar provision is in Division 10B. For all its uncertainty (there is, surprisingly, scarcely any authority on what is meant by “at arm’s length”), this power does not appear to have caused practical difficulties for producers and investors.

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Unquestionably the major talking point at this year's Cannes Festival was whether the Los Angeles Film Market would, if not kill off Cannes, at least damage its prestige seriously. Founded by Americans reportedly discontent with the confusions and expenses of Cannes, the L.A. Market premiered this year in April. Attracting mostly American producers and distributors, it proved a considerable success — so much so that it looked as if many of its delegates would bypass Cannes. If this happened, Cannes would inevitably have to take third spot behind L.A. and Mifed as an international marketplace.

As a result, the usual Cannes apprehension about the changeable Mediterranean weather was this year replaced by concern about the size and importance of the crowd on the Carlton terrace, a favored meeting place. As the Festival opened quietly, many did wonder if the crowds would ever appear. They didn’t. Fortunately, among those that did turn up were the U.S. majors, as well as many of the bigger foreign buyers.

Summarizing the Festival, market director, Robert Chabert, pointed out that the number of films shown in the market was 326 — the same as in 1980. And while the number of registered buyers and sellers was down from 2548 to 2100, the amount of business done seemed comparable with recent years. It is worth remembering, also, that Cannes is still a very large festival. This year, for example, the daily attendance at screenings in the Palais theatre averaged 8500. Included in that is 3000 odd critics and journalists. No other festival comes remotely close to so dense a concentration of world press. A successful main event screening can result in extraordinary-wide media coverage. The French have long known the value of this, opening many of the major Festival films throughout France, during or immediately after the Festival. Overseas distributors tend to let a lot of this publicity dissipate with long lead-ups, but this is often irresistible as many films are only seen for the first time at Cannes.

Another oft overlooked point is that Cannes is primarily a festival, and only secondarily a market. This year, with a lower market profile, the critical functions of the Festival gained a renewed understanding. So while L.A. may undermine Cannes value as a market, its position as the world’s major film event looks unlikely to be seriously challenged.

The Films

As there are up to 30 films screening at any one time, selecting what to see is the major dilemma confronting the reviewer/journalist. And if one comes away from the Festival liking only five or so out of 48 seen, as I did this year, one inevitably wonders whether one’s selection process was at fault or whether the range of films was just poor. 

A. Competition

Michael Cimino’s epic account of the Johnson County wars, Heaven’s Gate, is clearly a mess. Brutally cut from 219 to 149 minutes, what remains is a shambles of a reconstruction. Despite that, parts are brilliant and the film still ranks as a major American film of recent years.

Cimino is nothing if not a brilliantly-talented, visceral filmmaker. Even putting aside his themes — and he is one of the most provocatively unforgiving — he is a consummate technician. The opening three shots of The Deer Hunter, for example, with the truck sweeping into town, under the bridge that stands as a metaphorical curtain between the values and ideals of an isolated American perspective and those of an outside world, are riveting. And if Cimino does, like his fellow Italian-Americans Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese, slip too easily into the overwrought, at least he is prepared to confront or arouse emotions.

Equally, Cimino is not attracted by the clearly delineated — his characters can be on the ‘wrong’ and ‘right’ sides simultaneously, and he resists caricature, even when dealing in a codified genre, like a Western. The obvious examples in Heaven’s Gate are the Flarvards, Kristofferson’s classmate who has taken the path of least resistance, sliding with his class against the immensity of the issue; the Harvard graduate-come-backwater sheriff, and Irvine (John Hurt), Kristofferson’s classmate who has taken the path of least resistance, siding with his class against the immensity of the issue.

Best of all, though, is Champion (Christopher Walken), the killer paid by the landowners to lock down and eliminate cattle thieves, invariably poor settlers. He sees himself as being clearly in the right, but as the landowners press claim for the settled land, he finds himself unintentionally siding with the oppressors.

The ambiguity of his position, and of the times, is reflected in his resignation to a changing moral code that will engulf him. And in the film’s best scene, he invites the local brothel madame, Ella (Isabelle Huppert), to lunch with a couple of local hunters at his modest timber hut. The complexities of the scene — Champion’s tentativeness in expressing his feelings for Ella; the quiet that frighteningly pre-figures a carnage; the simple purity of the life of the hunters compared to prostitution of sex by Ella and killing by Champion — are beautifully conveyed in hushed tones and silence. Inexpressibly touching, it is not the least sentimental or contrived. Few filmmakers could do as well.

There are many other excellent scenes: the final battle, with its echoes of all battles ever fought; the roller-skating dance; the waltz between Averill and Ella; the dance at Yale.

Equally, there are many unsatisfactory moments (Ella’s charge into the battle; her overly-pointed scenes of the landowners’ fiendish scheming) and the casting is not always appropriate. Huppert is largely unconvincing as the madame, and Kristofferson is, at times, a oddity with a role. But it is hard to know how much has been unbalanced by the cutting.

John Hurt, for one, gets second billing on the credits but is rarely seen, and at one point (the Harvard graduation) is cut from the film altogether. The overly-pointed scenes of the landowners’ fiendish scheming) and the casting is not always appropriate. Huppert is largely unconvincing as the madame, and Kristofferson is, at times, almost invisible. It is hard to know how much has been unbalanced by the cutting.

The inhabitants and township of Sweetwater, Wyoming, in Michael Cimino’s Heaven’s Gate.
as that between people of any age; it is not the seduction of a minor. Moralists have continually attacked the attraction felt by couples widely separated in years (one need only notice how many American and British feminist writers have decryed the 13 year gap between Prince Charles and Lady Di). Blier, who has confronted moralists in all his films, again shows directorial integrity by being as explicit as his story demands (and that is emotional rather than visual), but not the ounce more that commercialism may crave. His boldness highlights a sexual issue that too many wish never existed, but unquestionably always will.

Andrzej Wajda's L'homme de fer (Man of Iron), predictable winner of the Palme d'Or, is a disappointing film. Like several Polish filmmakers, including Krzysztof Zanussi, Wajda has seemingly subjugated aesthetic considerations for political expediency.

What is most disappointing, however, is Wajda's unashamed support of Solidarity. History may, as they say, forgive him, but a total lack of objectivity makes for a toneless film. This is doubly surprising as Wajda is one filmmaker who has seen the contradictions behind the ideals of the noble, and highlighted the virtues of the damned. This lack of balance has also led to the film having a slightly out of date look, like that of a six-month-old Nationwide. Although only completed two days before its Cannes screening, history has overtaken it, with Solidarity already adopting techniques of its opposition (like suppressing alternate trace unionism) — just the sort of savage irony Wajda has delighted in showing up in films like The Promised Land.

James Ivory's Quartet, from the Jean Rhys novel, though not without the occasional charms, is a disappointment. Casting is the major problem, unbalanc-

Above: Joseph Cotten, as the Reverend Doctor, during the Harvard graduation ceremony. Heaven's Gate. Top right: Willie Nelson and James Caan in Michael Mann's Bressonian Violent Streets (Thief). Below right: step-daughter (Ariel Bresse) and her guardian (Patrick Deware) in Bertrand Blier's Beau pere.

Like Luchino Visconti's butchered Ludwig, Heaven's Gate is a film in tatters. It is no small achievement, then, that no director at Cannes could match this film's intermittent brilliance.

Another fine American film was Michael Mann's Violent Streets (Thief in some countries). A film noir, it is about the journey one man (James Caan) makes through the crime world, as he tears away the veneer of those profiting from it. Almost Bressonian in its starkness, the film is a triumph of technique. Ignoring the "neo-realistic" conventions of the genre (as Mann put it), he has concentrated on those aspects that, when highly formalized, give voice to the psychological state of his character. Visually, this sparsity works well, the camera making much out of neon lights reflected on greasy road surfaces or running along the distorting curves of a chrome fender. Aurally, Mann relies on an electronic score by Tangerine Dream, which helps unify the totality as well as heighten the concentration on the par­

ticular, such as his extraordinarily detailed depiction of a safe robbery.

The Promised Land. From the Jean Rhys novel, though not without the occasional charms, is a disappointment. Casting is the major problem, unbalanc-

Another excellent film is Bertrand Blier's Beau pere, the story of sexual attraction between a thirtysomething man and his 14 year-old step-daughter. The film opens with Remi (Patrick Deware) playing the piano in some soulless nightclub. Abruptly, he turns to the camera and recounts his story. His live-in companion ("We sailed together in the same boat for eight years without anyone parachuting provisions down to us") is killed in a car accident. He is thus left to look after her daughter, Marion (Ariel Besse). By law she should return to live with her separated father (Maurice Ronet), but returns to live with Remi. There, a drama of illicit desire begins: "She was 14. That's the age when a mirror never stops sending back im­ages of the most bewitching, dazzling and amazing sort. She had decided to use my eyes as her mirror. She had decided that a step-father, after all, is still a man, like any other, and there was nothing to stop her from seducing him. She had decided to make me melt and then to rule over my downfall. "Personaly, I never had the luck to be born a hero. I've always been riddled with fine little cracks and the least jolt makes me cave in. "So, of me what you like. Yes, it's true, I caved in. Clearly, a difficult and delicate subject.

Blier handles it with ferocious honesty and clarity. Marion's desire to seduce is matched by Remi's to succumb. It is a romantic, sensual and, in a sense, inevitable attraction. When their moment of first sexual contact comes, a delicate kiss after an agonizing build-up so masterfully prolonged by Blier, it is a triumphant moment of sensuality. Rarely, if ever, have I experienced so erotic a se­quence in cinema.

Remi and Marion's subsequent affair is the consummation of a desire as valid

Taking up the threads of his earlier Man of Marble, Wajda tells of many Poles affected by the birth of Solidarity, from dock workers at Gdansk to jour­nalists and filmmakers searching for the values of the new movement and the political corruption that necessitated its growth. But instead of deiving a narrative where action determines not only character but raises theoretical is­sues, Wajda has (lazily, I believe) opted for little more than a Four Corners-style reportage. Endlessly, he shows people discussing the problems of Poland and the possible solutions. It is fictionized documentary interviewing, and rather uninvoking in its one remove from ac­tuality.

1 All quotes written by Blier, from Remi's point of view, and printed in the Beau pere press book.
Dusan Makavejev's *Montenegro or Pigs and Pearls* is a virtual re-make of his preceding *Sweet Movie*. Again it is the story of a girl/woman who drifts accidentally into a counter-cultural underworld, and who, by experiencing its varied horrors and delights, is forced to re-evaluate her beliefs before returning to her previous life, albeit changed.

Instead of a hippie theatre group in Amsterdam, in *Montenegro* it is a Stockholm nightclub for immigrant Yugoslavians. Through confrontation with their different cultural, sexual and culinary habits, Marilyn Jordan (Susan Anspach) finds life is more than her boring, married life has let her experience. So great is the shock, that she returns home an anarchist, poisoning her family and her husband's psychiatrist — as if they were her problems.

The film ends with a statement that the story was based on actual events, as if this somehow validates the badly misjudged satire of the preceding 97 minutes. Makavejev’s films have often been saved by his sense of outrage and the absurd; here, his presentation is as flaccid as his narrative is repetitious of earlier, better works.

Bernardo Bertolucci's *La tragedia di un uomo ridicolo* (Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man) is, in the director's words, the first film of his "mature period".

Returning to the much-used Po valley, Bertolucci tells of a peasant (Ugo Tognazzi) who has become a wealthy cheese manufacturer and owner of a hideous villa which apes the local architecture. One day, he sees his son being kidnapped (laboriously set up with Tognazzi scanning the horizon, ostensibly to test out his new binoculars — given to him by his son, of course). But, the kidnapping is not all it seems: did, for example, the son plan it?

While frantically trying to regain his son (who shares those Italian cinematic characteristics of being affected, unlikeable and ungrateful; a son who rebels against bourgeois values as much out of boredom as anything else), he also wonders if he can trick the kidnappers. This way he might be able to bolster his ailing factory.

There are several predictable twists (instead of being ahead of his audiences, Bertolucci now trails them), before everything is 'resolved' in a spate of Borges-like ambiguities of the kind that hampered *The Spiker's Strategy*. All this narrative misjudgment wouldn't matter as much if the film had the visual boldness of his best films. But one product of this "mature period" is a strangely hesitant camera. Instead of his usually spectacular cranes and tracking shots, there are jerky and meaningless one metre tilts, or short pans back and forth. It is as if Bertolucci wants to shoot with utter simplicity but doesn't quite have the nerve to do so. The result is highly irritating.

Istvan Gaal's *Cserepek (Quarantine)* is yet another Hungarian tale of middle-life crisis. Here, the central character has stagnated; his feeling for life lost. He drifts, seemingly irrevocably, into despair. The various solutions — advice from friends; professional help by doctors and psychiatrists; even an encounter with a dying man (often a spiritual salve) — do nothing to avert his malaise.

This dreary film plods through its catalogue of failed exterior solutions before hitting on the supposedly revealing one: only by himself can man correct his state. This Gaal shows by having his protagonist help a poor little old lady bringing her pot plants out from inside her home into the rain. The ironic corollary that seems to have eluded Gaal is: Can oneself and others in her pathetic attempts to preserve her position through childish game-playing of the type H.P. demands.

Unfortunately, Smith's nicely-stated performance is not matched by Bates, who is particularly mannered, let alone ill-suited, in the role (based, one is told, on Ford Maddox Ford). H.J.'s downright unpleasantness and Adjani's inappropriateness as the girl, Marya, counter all Ivory's attempts to liven this drama. And as is the habit in most period films (this is set among the chic foreigners of 1930s Paris), the set and costume designers seem determined to swamp the action in gratuitous demonstrations of their crafts.

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this man (or all men) only find himself (themselves) by helping/impinging on others, thus depriving them of their right to act individually?

B. Divers

Mauro Bolognini's La dame aux camélias, already a critical and financial failure in Europe, is a minor but pleasant work from the Italian director.

The film is based on the novel by Alexandre Dumas jun. as well as Dumas' actual fascination for the courtesan, Alphonsine Piessis, on whom he based his heroine. The resultant narrative, which is set in parenthetical codas of the beginning and closing of Dumas' play, works rather well, particularly in the cut from the death of Alphonsine to its representation on stage.

The major problem with the film, and it near ruins it, is the casting of Isabelle Huppert as Alphonsine Huppert, an actress who rose to acclaim with her brilliant portrayal as Claude Goretta's selfless, retiring lacemaker, is quite unable to suggest Alphonsine's beguiling sexuality. This is a major handicap as Bolognini has always used this sexual power to subjugate men, in her drive to rise out of the poverty in which she was brought up.

Despite this weakness, the film is memorable for the exquisiteness of Piero Tosi's costumes and the excellent photography by Ennio Guarnieri. These, with the odd breathtaking sequence, such as the harrowing scene where a priest finds himself unable to control his desire and commits suicide, make the film an interesting addition to Bolognini's fine career.

Walerian Borowczyk's Docteur Jekyll et les femmes is his best film in years. The subject of a rave critique by French novelist Andre Pieyre de Mandiargues, it may well restore Borowczyk's battered reputation.

In this umpteenth adaptation of the Robert Louis Stevenson novel, Borowczyk has naturally concentrated on those aspects suited to his particular eye. He is clearly at home among the medical brio-brac of the era, and the sets, again designed by himself, make good use of period styles while also creating a dark labyrinth of unknown chambers that mirrors the human mind.

The transformation scenes, as Dr. Jekyll (Udo Kier) assumes the personification of Mr. Hyde, are cleverly done. After pouring the magic potion into a large bath, Jekyll lowers himself into it, still clothed. As the charmed water takes its effect, Jekyll writhes uncontrollably, the water splashing about violently and the light playing on its discordant surface contrasting with the blank dimness of the surrounding room. After a prolonged submergence, Hyde emerges, aloft with his demonic passion. Eroticism plays a lesser part than in almost all Borowczyk's other films — despite the presence of Marina Pierro, seen in his Heroines of Evil. The film's tone is also less off-hand than many, reminding one most of Story of Sin in its literal and dramatic coloring.

Jacques Doillon's La fille prodigue is an incisive look at a 30 year-old woman's collapse, signalled by her abrupt leave-taking of her husband and retreat to the family home. There, she regresses into a second childhood, seeing in her love for her father the possibility of a new, truer kind of relationship with men. Unfortunately, the film is a little too measured and intense to be dramatically satisfying, and though Jane Birkin and Michel Piccoli do much with their demanding roles, they remain Birkin and Piccoli. Doillon has not really worked with known actors before and he seems unsure about how to handle them — and, most importantly, how to submerge their off-screen personas.

Incest is also the theme of Christian B. Divers Braud Thomsen's documentary. The One You Love, which looks at the sexual feelings between parents and their small children. Thomsen argues that suppression of this natural desire leads to fascist aggression. The proposition is fascinating, but Thomsen brushes over it too quickly for one to be convinced.

Luc Berard's Plein sud is a mildly amusing French comedy, though hardly the film Berard's reputation would lead one to expect.

Patrick Dewaere is Serge, a university lecturer who goes to Barcelona to give several classes at the university. Bored by marriage and the stifling nature of academia, he turns a chance meeting at a station into an escape. But the escape proves its own trap, a penniless and sexually-sprint Serge finding himself enmeshed in a criminal complicity he fails to comprehend. Abandoning the rationality by which he made his career, he opts for adventure, for the unknown.

The film is a little long but Dewaere is most engaging when Serge loses grip of his senses. And Clio Goldsmith, as the girl he meets, shows fine comic flair and enough vitality to carry the story through its lesser moments.

David Hamilton's Tendres cousins is the least interesting of his three features — despite a screenplay by Pascale Lainé, who wrote The Lacemaker.

Going beyond his publicized fascination with adolescent sexuality, particularly of girls, Hamilton has attempted to make a provincial French farce in the style of Clochemerle. But the result is resolutely unfunny, a tedious parade of mistimed slapstick and crude characterization. Only in the last part, when the film focuses on a 14 year-old boy's sexual initiation, does the film merit attention.

Other films seen include Shuji Terayama's The Fruits of Passion, an adaptation of Pauline Reage's Return to the Chateau. Eric Rohmer's delightful but seemingly frivolous La femme de l'aventurier, Herbert Vesely's disjointed Egon Schiele, Volker Schlondorff's surprisingly unventive The Moral of Ruth Halbfass, Shohei Imamura's disappointing Eijanaika, John Boorman's erratically magical Excalibur and Andrzej Zulawski's crazed, hysterical but unarguably memorable Possession.
Of the present crop of Australian documentaries, few have grabbed as much attention as Stepping Out. Made for $55,000 from diverse sources, it demands attention because this is the International Year of Disabled Persons and the film is about the mentally retarded. It also has the power to make an audience feel elated, while at the same time questioning just how people come to be tagged mentally handicapped and what happens to them as a result.

The groundwork for Stepping Out was laid more than two years before any film was shot. Aldo Gennaro — a Chilean therapist/teacher/theatre director — was employed by the Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home in Sydney to run its Activity Therapy Centre. Gennaro had also set up a nightly drama workshop, and out of those workshops came "Life — Images and Reflections", a season of mime and dance performances staged at the Sydney Opera House in November 1979.

Stepping Out is a record of that theatrical event. It is also a glimpse of the lives and aspirations of the people who took part.

One of the things that emerges most clearly from the film is that the residents love Gennaro and their expressions of affection for him are some of the most moving scenes in the film. Seven months after the Opera House performances, and shortly after some board members saw an early cut of Stepping Out, Gennaro was dismissed. No official reason was given.

Two Sunshine residents feature in Stepping Out: Chris Dobbin, who is 31 years old and an extraordinarily expressive dancer; and Romayne Grace, 21 years old, who provides the film's commentary.

Stepping Out was produced and directed by Chris Noonan — his first independent film after seven years as a director at Film Australia.

Did you have a project ready when you left Film Australia?

There was only the possibility of making Stepping Out, but it was by no means certain. I had to raise the money first. The idea came to me because I had a friend who was working with Aldo, and knew the play would be performed at the Opera House. I had been invited up to the home a number of times and had always refused. Finally, I accepted an invitation to a Christmas play, the residents were staging. The performer-viewer role seemed distant enough for me to cope with.

I saw Chris Dobbin dance at that performance and he really got me interested in the residents as the subject for a film.

Was Aldo Gennaro receptive to the performance being filmed?

To a certain extent he was non-committal. He was worried about what the presence of the crew would do to the event and to the performers. But on balance he felt that, because they had never performed for a mass audience, it would probably be good to accustom them to lights and all the paraphernalia of a shoot. That way they would not be awed by the stage.

Was it Gennaro's decision to let you film?

Aldo's decision was necessary first, then I had to go before the board of the home and get their permission. It took a lot of convincing.

Did you have any problems working with mentally-retarded people?

I think every member of the crew had a problem coming to terms with spending time with the residents. Most people who see themselves as "normal" are afraid of coming in contact with the mentally handicapped: we were no exception.

When we started shooting, there were all sorts of barriers between us and them, but they are such warm and emotional people they unconsciously challenged the barriers we put up. We all had a very hard time until we surrendered to the experience. Everything became a total high after that. It involved conquering something in ourselves, and that was one of the major rewards of the whole exercise.

Were there technical problems in filming the residents? In "Best Boy", for example, all Philly wants to do is look at the camera?

At the beginning, the camera caused quite a stir and we did have problems with a couple of people when we set up the lights. One girl in particular became terribly upset by the effect of the light on her eyes and thought it was affecting her health. But that was overcome after a few days.

The main shoot was three weeks, but before that we had come in one day a week for three successive weeks, set up the lights and did a bit of filming. This was to capture some of the early rehearsals, and also to get the cast used to the equipment.

Another problem we ran against at the start was when we tried using radio mics to capture candid conversations, particularly between our two main characters, Chris and Romayne. They hated the mics,
feeling they were an invasion of their privacy. Romayne particularly resented the intrusion and it put a great distance between her and us until we realized what was happening and discarded the mics.

Why did you select Romayne Grace as narrator?

She suggested herself: she was the most articulate of the residents I met. When I first went to the home, I was interested mainly in Chris, since it was he who had really affected me during the Christmas play. But coming in contact with Chris meant meeting Romayne, because even then their relationship was quite close.

Grace seems much too articulate to have ever been classified “mentally retarded”...

Exactly. There are a number of people I felt should not have been in the home. They are there only because they have been deprived of the normal training we receive, which enables us to live in the outside world.

Did you want people to come away from the film feeling that some people in the home should not be there?

That is one of a number of themes which are implicit in the film. But Stepping Out is really about how these people are delightful human beings. I am sure that most people would not acknowledge mentally-handicapped people as human beings, even though they would never say it. It is a commonly-shared feeling that the value of a mentally-handicapped person is one of a living thing, but not of a human being.

Gennaro was sacked after the Opera House performance, yet you didn’t mention this in the film. Did it happen after the film was completed?

No, it happened while we were editing so we could have mentioned it. But we didn’t, because my approach to the film was a non-intellectual one and I had decided against a commentary. I wanted the audience to experience the players’ reality, rather than have it translated into a digestible form. To have inserted the information about Aldo would have created an intellectual focus at the end of the film. The film leaves the audience on a very high emotional level and to have then put up an institutional issue would have directed the audience’s positive energy towards that issue.

To what extent were you cashing in on the International Year of Disabled Persons in making the film?

To the extent that it became a commercial possibility to make a film about a taboo subject. The film would not have had much commercial potential otherwise.

Did you find it hard to raise the budget?

Incredibly hard, except for the initial contribution from the Department of Social Security. It put in $30,000 and for that has the right to an unlimited number of prints at cost price and full non-commercial rights. There were different deals for the other contributors.
Presumably the companies that contributed money — Boots, Unilever and GMH — did not want rights to the film...

No. Those companies donated after a lot of hassling. I approached 70 companies with a two-page typed letter. Those three were the only successes, and they put in about $1000 each.

Did any of the financial contributors want to see a script?

I gave them a very erudite proposal explaining that there was no possibility of having a script in advance, because it was an event and we could not predict what was going to happen. I agreed to show all sponsors, including the board of the home, the film just before we approved it for printing.

Naturally, I could not give anyone editorial control, but I guaranteed to listen to their comments and to consider them before making the final cut. That turned out to be acceptable.

Did they try to influence you?

The sponsors tried very little; the home tried quite a lot.

On what issues?

The board of the home was very worried about the amount of affection shown among residents, and between the residents and Aldo. One of the board members commented that the relationship shown between Aldo and the residents was an unnatural one.

Essentially, I think, it embarrassed them and they put a lot of pressure on me to delete those scenes.

Some of the board’s comments were incorporated in the final cut, but only because we had to cut 10 minutes out of the film.

How do audiences react to the film?

I have only seen it in two cinema screenings, both overseas. But it gets an extraordinary response. People are very moved by the film. Apparently at the Sydney Opera House, the film had standing ovations. It is really a dream response.

To what extent is the film likely to change people’s attitudes to institutionalization?

You might think your film is going to revolutionize the world while you are making it, but you come down to a much more realistic assessment of its influence once it is finished. From the feedback I’ve had, I think the film has changed a lot of people’s perceptions of the mentally handicapped.

Have you had much reaction to the film from parents and residents?

The feedback I have had from people in the film has been very positive. From the parents, I’ve had a mixed reaction. Romayne’s parents, for example, were very disappointed with the film. I think they reject a lot of things she says. Certainly, some members of the home’s administration felt the thoughts Romayne presents in the film were not really her own. In discussing it, they referred to her words as “the script”, with the assumption that I had written what she had to say and asked her to read it, which was not true.

On the other hand, Chris’ parents think it is a wonderful film.

In many ways, Chris Noonan — now in his late twenties — has had a classic progression as a filmmaker. He made his first film at school, on 16mm and in black and white. Called Could it Happen Here?, it portrays the school as a prison camp from which several inmates attempt an escape.

Back in 1970 the film became quite a curiosity. It was screened on television, and its makers were interviewed for television and written up in newspapers. The Sunday Telegraph, for one, reflected:

"It is a sad commentary on the Australian film industry that half a dozen schoolboys, using an old-fashioned borrowed camera and a budget of $187.35 can pick up third prize at the Sydney Film Festival."

The success of Could it Happen Here turned Noonan’s aspirations towards film as a career. He had planned to become an art teacher but, at the suggestion of producer Joan Long, he applied for, and got, a job at Film Australia as a production assistant. During two years at Film Australia, Noonan also started work on another film, Garbo, financed by the old Experimental Film Fund, then administered by the Arts Council.

In 1973, Noonan became one of the first intake at the Australian Film and Television School, joining Phil Noyce, Gill Armstrong and Graham Shirley, among others, for the one-year ‘interim’ course.
What was the AFTS looking for in that first year?

For people with at least limited experience in directing who had shown they were somehow committed to film.

And what were you looking for?

Confidence, essentially, and that is exactly what it provided. I was quite scared of direction, because I didn’t have enough experience to know whether the decision I had made off the top of my head, to work in film, was going to turn out to be the right one.

But the course was excellent, in that it was a very intense year, with each of us making three films and a number of studio and video programs.

If you had been offered the three-year full-time course, would you still have been interested?

No. At the time I thought one year was a long time to spend outside the mainstream of the industry. As it turned out it was excellent, because I never would have had the opportunity to make three films anywhere else. But if the course had involved three years of commitment, I am sure I would not have been interested. On the other hand, the film school is looking for different types of people now, with less emphasis on who-be-directors.

How did Film Australia react when you said you were going to the AFTS?

I was very fortunate, in that when I put in my resignation the producer-in-chief at Film Australia said he would prefer me to take one year’s leave without pay. They also offered me a project to direct once I graduated from the school. It wasn’t as exciting as I had imagined — it was a series on secondary school libraries — but I threw myself into it and convinced the sponsors that they wanted something totally different from what they thought they wanted.

Looking back, I am surprised the sponsors, the Schools Commission, gave me the respect they did. I had really long hair and must have made a strange impression. It was a bit of a surprise to be treated as someone who knew what he was talking about, when I was really only guessing at what I felt was the best approach.

At any rate, while we were shooting part of the library series at Sunshine North Tech I had the chance to make another film at the same time [The School is not an Island]. It’s about three girls from the school who try to set up a coffee shop in the area.

What other films stand out of those you directed at Film Australia?

There was one about Cyclone Tracy. The day after the cyclone hit, Film Australia flew me and a cameraman up to Darwin. We had two days in which to shoot a cinema short, and that had to be released by the end of the week. In an extraordinary show of efficiency at Film Australia, that schedule was observed. Tony Buckley cut it and I recorded a personal commentary for it.

The film was very successful. It was screened all over the world within a couple of weeks of release, mainly because Film Australia gave it away to everyone.

You also made one of the TCN-9 Film Australia co-productions, “Cass”. How did that go?

That was the only drama I made at Film Australia, and it received very mixed crits. It has a lot of fans and I still have people saying how much they liked it, but a lot of the reviews were bad.

I have been quite affected by the mixed reaction to Cass as most of my films have had very good press reaction and I was not used to being criticized. I still feel — a certain nervousness about the film, even though I really liked it at the time.

Why did you finally leave Film Australia?

I was very lucky at Film Australia and I owe the place a great deal. Up until Cass, every project was a new challenge and further extended my abilities. But after Cass I became involved in a number of projects in the developmental stage which fell through. Slowly, far too slowly, I realized that Cass was as far as I would go at Film Australia.

It was a very hard decision. I had spent most of my life working in institutions and it was a very secure existence, with the money coming in every week. By contrast, I could not see myself making a decent living out of independent production, the precedents were not good.

But I was in a situation of being frustrated and not making films — and the films I could have been making were not exciting to me. So I just had to get out and trust fate.

Stepping Out has been sold extensively overseas, mostly to television. Its success in the marketplace has been helped by the fact that it won the competition for “Best TV Program in the Spirit of International Year of Disabled Persons” at MIFED last year, a bronze award at the New York International Film and Television Festival, First Prize in the 6th Annual Dance Film Festival of New York and a Jury Prize at the Oberhausen Short Film Festival Germany.

At the time of this interview, the film looked like returning a small profit, some of which will go to the Lorna Hodgkinson Sunshine Home. *
Barrie Pattison

When color television came in to Australia, many considered it would make redundant the vintage black and white Hollywood features that had been bought as television packages in their hundreds in the 1950s. The films of MGM and Warner Brothers were thus returned to the parent companies and made available as hire copies on the Australian 16 mm market.

At this point, however, a number of things happened which are revealing of the Australian film scene. Most of the famous titles and the work of celebrity stars were found to be lost, worn-out or diverted. The 1930s horror films, the Jeanette MacDonald musicals and the Oscar winners were missing from the list. The last of the Greta Garbo films went off to New Zealand at the start of this year. That meant that what was left was not the material circulated by even the more intrepid repertory cinemas and film societies. In particular, several hundred of these were the program films of the pre-1935 period which are virtually unknown for a variety of reasons.

Film scholarship tends to dismiss these films as stage-bound and clumsy by comparison to the better known silent classics which precede them, or the films of the so-called Golden Years of Hollywood which follow. Season programming, to which film museums devote themselves so wholeheartedly, also encourages this neglect. The stars and major filmmakers of this period are not known and no programmer will play to empty seats a season of the work of, say, Lee Tracy or Sam Hardy, or of a director like George Hill or Wesley Ruggles.

The result of all this was that when Neil MacDonald and I approached Amalgamated Distributors in the Hoyts Centre, which now holds the two collections, they were on the point of destroying the copies to make space. Several hundred had not had a booking in the years they had been on offer.

Now, assuming the duplicating materials are still available and in as good condition as they had been 20 years ago when many of the copies were made, it would cost more than $1000 to order, print, ship and acquire a new copy of one of these vintage titles. Such material would never return that amount in the commercial market in Australia. That means, if these prints are destroyed, one of, if not, the largest collections of this rare material outside the U.S. would go and such material would never again be available in Australia.

The management of Amalgamated treated us sympathetically — not only because they could see that it seemed bad business to turn a few hundred thousand dollars worth of film into $42 worth of silver, but also from a genuine interest in the past of the film industry. We were allowed to look at anything we wanted and the destruction order was cancelled — temporarily at least.

Noel Cislawski, of the NSW Education Department, took the project seriously and found us a corner in which to screen. We then began publicizing our activities among the people who one might have expected to be interested. Some of the reactions were amazing, including astonishment that anyone was interested in American films which didn’t expose the infamies of the CIA.

A repeated response was that we should tell them when we were running Public Enemy and Camille. Only a handful were able to appreciate that these films were a different and possibly more important part of the jigsaw to the known and respected titles. Certainly one of the things which makes these films interesting is that they provide an insight into the way Hollywood retained its grip on world markets in a transition period.

So, on the copies went — sometimes five and six a day for two months — more films than the National Film Theatre gets through a year. The faint-hearted fell away and the determined sat there muttering, “Not Franchot Tone and Madge Evans again!” The survivors had the unique experience of seeing a substantial cross-section of the program films of the early years of sound, in quantity, not unlike the way the habitual filmgoers of the period first saw them and many of the same reactions were noticed.

One of the most fascinating opportunities was the discovery of the voices of many people thought of as silent film stars. Erich von Stroheim regular Dale Fuller does an “Indispensable Lisa” secretary in the remarkably modern Office Wife (Lloyd Bacon, 1930). Betty Compson, star of many of her husband, James Cruze’s films like Pony Express, provides a nice line in self-satire in On With the Show (Alan Crosland, 1929). Back stage, Sam Hardy notices her provocatively exposed leg and growls, “Cover that thing up.” Ernest Torrence from Toleable David and The Covered Wagon proves to have a ringing delivery in The Great Lover (Harry Beaumont, 1931) or the curious Somerset Maugham adaptation Strictly Unconventional (David Burton, 1929). Charles Farrell romances Bette Davis in The Big Shakedown (John Francis Dillon, 1933) as he had Janet Gaynor in Seventh Heaven.

The discovery is Ramon Novarro, star of the 1926 Ben Hur and usually heard only as this weak romantic interest in the Garbo Marta Hari. A remarkably full collection of his work remains, including his first talkie, Devil May Care (Sidney Franklin, 1929), where they pass off his Speedy Gonzales accent as "Gascon". The film challenges the limits of the studio’s sound technique, recording speech and music at the same time and running two cameras on some scenes.

More impressive are Huddle (Sam Wood, 1931), where Novarro is an Italian coalinmer playing quarterback for Yale; Daybreak (Jacques Feyder, 1931), an unexpectedly faithful Schnitzler adaptation (flawed only in an evasive ending; and The Barbarian (Wood, 1933), with remarkably torrid scenes with Myrna Loy. Versatile and personable enough to impress in all these characters, Novarro is clearly a major, neglected talent.

Even more interesting are two legendary casualties of the early sound period who emerge in a new perspective. John Gilbert was said to have a voice unsuitable for sound film. However, in Wood’s 1929 Way for a Sailor, he is victim of more awful material written, in part, by Gilbert’s regular collaborator Laurence Stallings (Big Parade, What Price Glory). By Gentleman’s Fate (1930), an exceptional film which strikingly pre-figures The Godfather, Gilbert’s voice can be seen to be the element needed to turn a matinee idol into a major screen actor.

Director Mervyn Le Roy, who did Little Caesar the same year, has given Gentleman’s Fate the look and much of the pace of the best of the Warner films he was then doing. It also has the Italian-American setting, the sleazy hotel decor and monologues like the two-shot with the profile at frame edge. Gilbert and Lois Wolheim make their scenes together gripping.
and, even with its unnecessarily moralizing ending, the film remains a considerable discovery.

It is also possible to see the last of Buster Keaton’s work as a star in the MGM sound films and it is true that these are only a shadow of his great silents. A few of the old routines are restaged on a smaller scale in What, No Beer (Edward Sedgwick, 1933). However, here, as in The Passionate Plumber (Sedgwick, 1932), he gets less laughs than talented straight actors like Gilbert Roland and John Miljan. The story that he was undermined in favor of the studio’s new comic, Jimmy Durante, seems unlikely with Durante called on to play an equally unfunny stooge role in both films.

Keaton’s delivery and agility have the qualities needed to make him a successful sound film comic. The other films available suggest another plausible reason for his decline. These titles include the extraordinarily rare The Chief (Charles Reisner, 1933), an attempt to put on film the then famous radio star, Ed Wynne. This film seems to have had no showing since its disastrous first release. There is also an extensive selection of the work of round-faced, wise-guy comedian William Haines, now forgotten, though he was star of the studio’s first talkie.

All these films, like the Keaton comedies, are in an unappealing, clumsy style despite good production values and talented collaborators. This house style is a long way from that of Paramount which served so well at that studio in the contemporary films of the Marx Brothers, Mae West, W.C. Fields or Maurice Chevalier. Their films are still admired and widely circulated. One team did manage to springboard a career out of the cycle where Keaton faltered — the Three Stooges.

Also available is the 1935 Baby Face Harrington, made by Raoul Walsh, where the beginning of a faster, more modern style is becoming evident. This was to develop in the Red Skelton and, later, Marx Brothers comedies.

The work of the directors is similarly intriguing. Few celebrity filmmakers are represented in the collection. There are no films by John Ford or Alfred Hitchcock, and only one inferior Cecil B. De Mille: his re-made cowboy, mother-love weepy The Squaw Man (1931).

William Wellman, however, is revealed in six virtually unknown films which give a new perspective on the range of the programmers with which he spaced his major works: Purchase Price (1932), with Barbara Stanwyck, recalls The Wind. Other Men’s Women (Steel Highway, 1931) is better dealing with trains than with its triangle plot. Midnight Mary (1933) is a faster prototype of the MGM woman’s film. College Coach (1933) surprisingly extends the Warner social cycle into an attack on football in education. Heroes For Sale (1933), though occasionally misjudged, has some amazing scenes, like “The Red Squad” dragging left-wingers from the dinner table and running them out of town. And, of course, Public Enemy has survived.

Warner staffers, notably Michael Curtiz, Mervyn Le Roy and William Dieterle, are represented by the lively, earlier co-features and also by the major works by which they are remembered, like Dieterle’s Emile Zola and Curtiz’ Sea Wolf.

However, the discoveries of the batch are by two little known and misrepresented filmmakers. One is George Hill. Despite his brilliant The Big House (with All Quiet ... the outstanding film of the era), he has not become a celebrity.

In the collection are two other remarkable films which he made. The Secret Six (1931) has Big House star Wallace Beery as a gangster.
Robert Altman has made 17 films in the past 13 years and has developed a cult following rivalled by few modern directors. But since his smash success with *M*A*S*H*, Altman’s films have mostly proved to be the bane of the major production and distribution companies which have supported his work. Even films such as *Nashville*, which have drawn uniform critical praise, have generally failed to measure up at the box-office.

As a result of wariness about the commercial prospects of two of his most recent films, the decision was made not to release them publicly in Australia. The films, *Health* and *Quintet*, have had their only Australian screenings at the 1981 Melbourne Film Festival.

In view of this situation ‘Cinema Papers’ arranged for Robert Altman to be interviewed by Australian writer Dennis Altman.
There is a point in the film, right at the end, when Grigor says: "Life can only be felt when death is near." Is this what you are really saying in that film?

That is the basis of the film. I think it ties in with gambling and game-playing. You have to put yourself in jeopardy, or else you just become like those people in the film the dogs ate; they just sat down and died.

Given that you create a totally artificial world in "Quintet", why do you go to all the trouble of filming on location, with the extraordinary climatic problems you had in Canada at that time?

We went to Canada to attain those climatic problems. It would have cost us a fortune to go on stages and do that. This set — the ruins of Expo '67 — was already there; so was the weather. It was always below zero, so we just froze everything in sight and created our own Ice Age.

Have there been distribution problems with "Quintet"?

No, it was released rather broadly. Fox promoted it, mainly on the basis of Paul Newman, and the film was not accepted by the public or the critics at all. There were very few critics who liked it, although those who did really liked it. Most of the public found it tiresome and dreary; it would have been better to release it and let it build its own reputation.

You tried very hard to do that by preventing too much advance discussion of the film . . .

Yes. But they treat all the films basically concentrated on the two coasts . . .

I have spent most of my adult life in Los Angeles or New York, but I think there is no question that you take your roots with you, and they certainly form your opinions and your view of things. I am definitely a midwestern person, although I grew up in Kansas City and in other areas.

What do you see as the American game?

I don't think there is an American game. It's too diverse; there are too many cultures.

What came first — the idea for the game or the idea for the film?

The film first, but I always had the idea that there was a game of the culture, like backgammon, chess, mahjong, dominoes. I wanted a game that represented the culture and that eventually became the end of the culture. The game survived longer than the culture.

What do you see as the American game?

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The idea that there was a game of the same name. There are actually rules and one can play it . . .

Oh yes, it's quite a good game. There are quintet clubs in the U.S. and they are now having tournaments.

What came first — the idea for the game or the idea for the film?

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two general categories, but I can't find a common keystone.

When you start a film, do you know how it's going to turn out?

Yes, but I never know that I know. The usual procedure is that I start a film and I have a vague idea of how it's going to be. Then we do the screenplay and we start and, I think, God, this is entirely different. So, I make an entirely different film than the one I started with. Then it's finished and I look at the end results. I realize that this is the film we started out to make.

Do you have any favorite films?

I like all my films and, like children, you tend to favor your least successful. But they are all different and they are all total in themselves. There is nothing I want to do again about them. If there are flaws, that is part of their nature. Quintet is now starting to surface in revival areas more, and I think it'll probably follow the same pattern as McCabe and Mrs Miller. That was also highly unsuccessful when it was first released and now everybody talks about it like it was a great big hit. Even the critics who really crucified it when it came out now refer to it as a masterpiece; they have short memories.

Most of my films seem to do that, which pleases me more than having a big commercial hit. People rediscover them, and they seem, eventually, to find an audience.

Does it worry you if the critics pan a film?

It depresses me, but I can't do much about it. I am more interested in an appreciative and responsive audience, no matter how small, than I am in a mass audience. I don't think I'd be very pleased if I had a film that went out like Grease and made $200 million, and yet everybody I ran into said, "That's the worst film I've ever seen." I think that would depress me more.

The experience I have with most of my films is that commercially they are not very successful, but I can always find a little pocket of cult people who seem to like them.

Does lack of commercial success make it difficult to make films?

It certainly does. George Lucas can do just about anything he wants. He doesn't even have to go to a banker any more; he can do it himself. If you have all that leeway you can do anything you please, but who are your favorite directors?

My favorite answer, which I am afraid I have learned so that it'll sound like a bad performance, is I don't know. When I was a youngster, I'd go to films as often as I could, and I thought those things just happened. I didn't know there was a director; I didn't even know the names of the ones who really influenced me.

What would you do if you weren't making films?

I think I'd be in theatre, or paint, or write. I would certainly be in an artistic arena, because that's where I have the most fun.

Do you watch a lot of films?

No.

The obvious question, I suppose, is who are your favorite directors?

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Do you have plans for other films?

I am about to do a film in Canada called An Easter Egg Hunt, which is set in England in 1915, in a girls' finishing school. We are going to start shooting in September.
This will be my fifth film in Canada. They have good technicians up there and, I think, they really know a lot about film.

Have you ever considered shooting a film in Australia?

We talked about shooting "Popeye" in Australia, but the production designer, Wolf Kruger, who had worked in Australia for a long time, felt we were logistically better off in Malta. I hadn't been in Australia, except during the War, although I had a big love affair with Australia — when I was 13 or 14 I decided I was going to migrate there.

think the lowest it could have been brought in for would have been about $16 million. We had an enormous amount of people to move halfway around the world. The set alone was $2 million to build. We took a long time, we were at sea and we had boats; everything was just expensive.

Going back to "Health" and its parodying of American politics, do you think of yourself as a political director, or of your films as political?

No, but I certainly have the right to use my political opinions or observations; especially my observations. All I am doing when I supposed to be subtle in any way. One of the complaints about Health was that there was so much going on all the time. These very complicated soundtracks are marvellous in a good cinema, but you put them in a place where the sound system or the acoustics aren't very good, and it'll drive people crazy.

In a number of your films, particularly "Nashville", the music is more than something that's just added at the end . . .

It always is. One of the first things I try to determine is where I am going to place music. Music to me is different from words, sound into the studios because there is an armed guard. And there is just a whole world of buskers and street performers out there. We found clowns and mimes and jugglers and fire-eaters, and they were marvellous. Why not take advantage of those people? I am not interested in doing a film where everybody looks like a cheerleader or a Hollywood startet.

That is one of the most striking things about your films compared with mainstream Hollywood films — the lack of pretty people in the conventional sense . . .

Casting is what it is all about. The actors are the artists; they are the people you see. You are the ones that ultimately put the thing together and deliver the message or emotion or whatever it is, and I consider that most of my creative work is finished by the time I finish casting.

What would you like your films to be remembered for?

Just what they are. I don't think any of them are important, and I think it is minor art, if it is art. I don't think any of them will mean much in 20 years.

Do you think that's the nature of film?

Our technology is such that I don't think they will last. Art has a life to it. If you look at our classics, the great artists like Rembrandt, we are talking about things that we admire, but we really admire them for different reasons today than they were admired for at the time, and even so that's a short period of time. We are talking about 400 or 500 years. I think it's more like — and I am satisfied with this — it's like building sand castles. You go down to the beach and get a lot of friends and you build a sand castle. You know that eventually the tide is going to take it away, so you try and finish it. Then you remember it, and you remember the experiences you had with the people who helped you build it. That's the real reward or wealth of filmmaking.

Filography

- The Delinquents
- The James Dean Story
- McCabe and Mrs Miller
- The James Dean Story
- Health
- Buffalo Bill and the Indians
- Thieves Like Us
- A Perfect Couple
- M*A*S*H
- California Split
- The Long Goodbye
- Nashville
- Nashville
- Nashville
- Nashville
- Buffalo Bill and the Indians
- A Perfect Couple
- Health
- Popeye

It's a pity for the Australian film industry that you didn't . . .

I'd probably be running a shoe-repair shop.

One of the things that hits someone coming from Australia is the sheer expense of making American films. "Popeye" cost about $20 million, and in a country where feature films are being made for about $1 million each, that seems an awful lot of money. Is there some way of cutting out of that and making good films?

In the first place you have the unions and in the second place you have the basic cost. It's escalating everywhere in the world and it will in Australia, too. The more films you make, the more expensive they are going to be; it's a shame.

Films don't have to cost that much and most of my films don't. I really didn't have control of the purse strings on Popeye, although I make a film is trying to show my view of a certain subject or genre. I try to express my view of politics and, by politics I mean government, our social laws, structures, the moral attitude of the culture that I live in.

Watching "Quintet" and "Health", it struck me you have moved away from the technique a lot of people associate with you, where you have a large number of overlapping conversations and a soundtrack that is very complex. That doesn't seem to be the case in these two . . .

Health is quite complicated, but not Quintet. Quintet to me was like a fairytale and it was very stylized in its language. All the actors had a different base language. Fernando Rey is Spanish, Vittorio Gassmann is Italian, Bibi Andersson is Swedish, Nina von Pallandt is Danish, David Langdon is English, Paul Newman is American. We purposely did that; it wasn't
Sergei Eisenstein and Bertolt Brecht, born in 1898 — Eisenstein in Riga on January 23 and Brecht in Augsburg on February 10 — were contemporaries living in two worlds which were to become irreconcilably opposed. Both became known during the 1920s with two early works: Battleship Potemkin (1926) and The Three-Penny Opera (1928). These marked decisive moments of immediate resonance because they formed part of the impetuous advance of a revolution that was to rock the foundations of bourgeois conceptions of film and theatre.

What mattered to both was the advancement of the arts. For, they said, the arts, with all their means of expression, all that could be assimilated. They, then, ranged from aesthetics in dialectical materialism; their goals, according to them, was Karl Marx. Both, rooted their search for new efficacious in their respective arts and confronted aesthetic problems with a commitment to scientific rigor and militancy.

They were nourished by some common sources, extracting from them all that could enrich their creative attitudes, all that could contribute to new means of expression, all that could be assimilated. They, then, ranged from Meyerhold to Joyce, through Chinese and Japanese theatre, the circus, the music-hall, Freud and Einstein.

But above all — or, better yet, underlying it all as a foundation and a guide — was Karl Marx. Both rooted their search for new efficacies in dialectical materialism; their goals, like their discoveries, were nourished by a common worldview.

However, Eisenstein on the one hand maintained that:

"In wishing to get a maximum departure from oneself in the spectator, we are obliged in the work to suggest to him a corresponding 'guide'. Following this guide, he will enter into the desired condition."

He proceeds to state, even more precisely, that:

"The simplest prototype of such imitative behaviour will be, of course, that of a person ecstatically following, on the screen, a personage grippingly familiar to him, in one way or another, 'goes out of himself'."

Brecht, on the other hand, declares almost by way of involuntary reply that:

"This magical operation must be combated. It is necessary to renounce anything that represents an attempt to hypnotize, anything that tries to provoke an ecstatic state or a clouding of vision."1

It thus becomes evident that in spite of not merely incidental points of contact but an entire intellectual base in common, they each travelled along separate and in some senses divergent paths. All this would seem to indicate that there is no compromise between them.

At first glance, we find that while one exalts passion, the other chooses the path of reason; while one wants the audience to surrender emotionally to the spectacle, the other wants them to remain separate, distant, analytical, rational. According to Eisenstein, 

"Pathos shows its effect when the spectator is compelled to jump from his seat. When he is compelled to break into tears. When the spectator is forced to go 'out of himself'."

"To use a prettier term, we might say that the effect of a work of pathos consists in whatever 'sends' the spectator into ecstasy. Actually, there is nothing to be added to such a formulation, for the symptoms above say exactly this: ecstasy, literally 'standing out of oneself' which is to say 'going out of himself', or 'departing from his ordinary condition'."

Of course, this "emotional surrender" (a state which one attains through identification with the character represented in the spectacle), this "different mode of being", also implies a separation from oneself. It, in one way or another determines a "different" way of seeing daily reality, then it also represents an alteration or an alienation from the self. Eisenstein is hasty to justify such a phenomenon by saying that:

"To go out of oneself is not to go into nothing. To go out of oneself inevitably implies a transition to something else, to something different in quality, to something opposite to what was (immobility into movement; silence into noise; etc.)."

This "transition to something different" is thus nothing other than a moment in the process of transformation of the viewer, a negative moment which has no reason to extend beyond its own limits; the limits of the spectacle itself. For Eisenstein, that moment when the viewers become alienated from themselves, and cease to be themselves to live in the other — in the character — was invested with particular interest inasmuch as it constitutes the premise of a desired change. And this change, for Eisenstein, is produced — or at least originates — in the realm of feelings and emotions. In a state of ecstasy.

"We understand a moment of culmination to mean those points in a process, those instants in which water becomes a new substance — steam or ice-water — or pig-iron becomes steel. Here we see the same going out of oneself, moving from one condition and passing from quality to quantity — ecstasy."

Brecht also wants to produce a transformation within the viewer, a change which will lead to a greater understanding of him or herself and the surrounding social environment and, consequently, to effective domination over self and surroundings. He says,

"It is necessary to transform the theatre entirely. These changes must not reach only the text, actor, and the whole staged representation, but the spectator must also enter into the process. His attitude must be modified."

Brecht appeals more to the viewers' reason than to their feelings and calls attention to the fact that "the spectator should not identify with the characters but argue about them." To achieve this, he proposes a mechanism of alienation in the relationship between the viewer and the character, but in the opposite sense of what Eisenstein proposed with his "pathetic structure". Through distancing devices, Brecht attempts to estrange, separate and alienate the viewers, not from themselves, but from the character (or, in a broader sense, from the whole dramatic development unfolding before them: the scenario, the fantasy...).

The viewer, says Brecht,

"Must not be yanked from his world in order to be transported to the world of art. There is no need to abduct him. Rather, he must be inserted into his own real world with his senses alert.

Brecht appeals to the viewers' reason: the idea is to trigger their critical attitude so that this distancing, more than an alienation device, could be seen as a form of genuine de-alienation, since it attempts to bring the viewers back into the reality of their own world (with a new perspective) and, ultimately, to return them to themselves.

If both artists share the same philosophical points of departure and the same revolutionary stance, how can they offer two such diametrically opposed solutions to the same problem? To what degree can their respective positions be considered antagonistic and irreconcilable?

Obviously, we are dealing with two different, even unique personalities. Dialogue between them must not have been easy. After finishing The Old and the New, Eisenstein travelled widely, working on various film projects — the Mexican film being the best known and most dramatically frustrated among them.* Earlier, towards the end of 1929, he had been in Berlin where he surely had occasion to meet Brecht.

Marie Seton's testimony of this point is eloquent enough:

“Equally curious and even a bit repulsive was the dry and bloodless energy that one felt in Bertolt Brecht, whose cutting lines and satiric pieces bit coldly into the heart of social hypocrisy. Sergei Mijailovich thought of Brecht as a tenacious professor armed with an air-powered political drill to bore away at the rock wall of consciousness that couldn’t be melted by the sheer heat of his passion.”

Aside from their personal idiosyncrasies, it is important to remember that they expressed themselves through two media — film and theatre — which, while sharing many common elements, also have particular characteristics. Eisenstein began working in theatre but, according to his own account, while directing plays, he was already thinking of film. In 1928, when he staged Ostrovsky's Witsmen Are Too Simple, he included a short comic film in his staging plan. From that point on, film filled his life, not merely as a means of artistic expression, but as an object of intense theoretical pursuit as well.

Brecht, on the other hand, was wholly a man of the theatre. If on occasion he approached film, it cannot be said that he had much success with that medium, which he eventually came to reject bitterly. Because he failed to consider the specificity of cinematic language, because he was unaware of the unique devices which film offered, he saw in film only a technical means to simplify the reproduction of a work. Thus Brecht ran up against narrow limits of expression which prevented him from fully realizing the possibilities of an “epic” cinema (in the sense in which he used the term) — a non-Aristotelian cinema, as if it were a dream, a substitute for reality, but one that mobilizes the consciousness of the viewer.

In the theatre, the actor’s interpretation of the role is the most effective distancing device; hence Brecht, in contrast, offers other possibilities. We could refer in general terms to “composition”, as Eisenstein understood it, made up of different elements (framing, narration, music — in a phrase, audiovisual montage). Its effectiveness is based on the manner in which these elements are structured.

However, Eisenstein, following his method, came up against obstacles which led him to disperse his energies in the search for forms. It would be unjust, however, simply to classify him as a formalist without bearing in mind the historical necessity of such a search — the logical consequence of the process of creating a new language, a new medium of expression with rules and syntax that could only flourish as the result of sustained practical research and attention basic in the development of the basic tools in the industry. Unlike theatre, which when Brecht entered the scene had already evolved and formally consolidated itself, allowing him to focus primarily on problems of content, cinema was then in its infancy.

Theatre and film make use of multiple expressive devices — image, word, music — and in both media these elements can be combined in different manners and measures. Often, one speaks of “theatrical” films or of “cinematic” theatre, which only serves to indicate that both forms may exchange influences, devices, achievements, attitudes.

But, at least as a general tendency, there is one specific trait that differentiates film from theatre and helps us to understand the contradictory positions assumed by Brecht and Eisenstein: film manifests itself primarily as visual language, which in theatre the spoken word bears more weight. The image particularizes, restricting meaning to the concrete determination of the object; the word permits generalization, the expression of ideas, concepts, abstractions outside the realm of concrete objects or images.

Images in the immediacy of their cinematic representation and based on the interplay of relations that further artistic pursuit, can be very suggestive and even moving, in that they appeal directly to the senses and register most comfortably on an emotional plane. But it is undeniable that they present narrow limits when it comes to communication on a conceptual, abstract and rational plane.

Thus, all of Eisenstein’s efforts to express concepts through the clash of images (intellectual montage) did not allow him to achieve his desired goals without the assistance of the word. It must be said, however, that his efforts have subsequently borne fruit, producing much a wider range of expressive possibilities in film.

Even more significant than personalities, or the medium through which, E.S. Eisenstein himself, is the social milieu from which each arose. Eisenstein was 19 when the Bolsheviks took power and initiated one of the most far-reaching transformations in modern history. His formative years as an artist were spent, then, in the midst of the effervescence of the early stages of the revolution, the years of the Proletkult and other “enormities”. During that time, he paid close attention to all the artistic vanguard movements that developed throughout the world — futurism, constructivism, “kino eye”. Meyerhold, Mayakovsky, Malevich, Tatlin, the idea of “art”, the consecration of “life”, experimentalist trends — movements which, in the Soviet Union, would acquire new physiognomies.

But film is the medium which can best express a revolution, bring to light the times, their authenticity and revitalizing energy which derived from the reality which gave them life.

Those same years passed for Brecht in a very different manner. He was a product of the German revolution, inflation, the sharpening of class antagonisms, misery, unemployment — and the consequent rise of fascism. In 1933, Brecht took the route of exile: Vienna, Paris, Denmark, Sweden. His works were banned and burned by the Nazis. It wasn’t until 1948, the year of Eisenstein’s death, that Brecht returned to Germany, established himself in Berlin (GDR) and dedicated most of his time to staging his own works.

It is obvious that, generally speaking, Eisenstein lived during a period of exaltation, of nascent strength, of triumph and affirmation, of utopianism, of collective strength, in contrast, Brecht lived during “sombre times”, full of decadence, defeat, barbarity, rejection and condemnation: times of rational separation which demanded an extraordinary lucidity and a solid critical perspective. It is, therefore, understandable that Eisenstein should place emphasis on emotional surrender as a premise for transformation within the viewer, while Brecht should reject that appeal and put all his emphasis on reason, distancing and a critical outlook — concepts which, for him, held an “active, effective, positive” meaning.

The followers of each (above all, those of Brecht) who launched the “montage of attractions” as an explosive but more lasting strategy) struck out — some with true fanaticism — for one path or the other in an unilateral fashion: they did not notice the breadth of these paths or perceive the points where both converge.

In Eisenstein, one can discern a theoretical line of development that leads him from the primitive “montage of attractions” derived from the cinema. But film, which is the medium which can best express a revolution, brings to light the times, their authenticity and revitalizing energy which derived from the reality which gave them life.

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We had new equipment (although we had some old equipment that had been rationalized) but very little experience; now we have old equipment, but lots of experience.

In the beginning, everybody was learning how to make films. I learned to edit with the newsreels, although I was a producer. Santiago Alvarado would ask me to go off to a certain factory and make an item about it. I would go off with the cameraman, come back and we would edit the film. Santiago would then include it in the reel.

It was a beautiful time, a great process in which we all got formed. We tried to do our best to reflect the reality of living the political life of the country—filming on one hand and doing guard duty with the militia on the other.

For example, I finished work at 5 p.m. and then at 8 p.m. we would go to guard our workplace, spending the night there until starting work again at 8 a.m. Some nights, for one reason or another, we wouldn’t get any sleep at all.

The atmosphere was of great revolutionary militancy. And this reality was reflected in the cinema.

The revolution has now gone through many processes, including its institutionalization, beginning in 1975. What effect did this have within the ICAIC?

As you say, we now have a state organism which has been institutionalized. The ICAIC is trying also to be institutionalized. But we have always taken into account the artistic parameters as well as the economic ones. In this way, the ICAIC has built up and maintained its high prestige.

Since 1973, the ICAIC has tried to organize production more from the economic point of view. This means strict budgeting, not over-shooting and keeping to schedule. These I consider very basic aspects of production, but for many years they were not taken into account.

One also wonders whether the early spirit of a place has been lost during a rational reorganization . . .

The spirit is maintained because ICAIC was created by a group of people with a very strong cinematographic vocation. They were all film artists. Tomas Alea, for example, was telling me that after seeing Newsfront the other night, he felt he really wanted to make another film. Of course he wants to make a film! The spirit is there; he is going to die wanting to make another film. And we are all the same.

But, of course, I must add that it is not as comfortable making a film according to a budget and a schedule as when you have a totally free hand. But we realize it is now necessary to work this way.

On a First Combat

Your first film, "On a First Combat", is very interesting, especially for a documentary, with its mixture of newsreel and re-enacted material . . .

The initial purpose in making the film was to warn imperialism about its aggressions against our country.

During the past 20 years, Cubans have lived under different degrees of tension. Now, for instance, we have President Reagan threatening aggression against Cuba and Nicaragua. And, in the 1970s, when I thought of making the film, we were living through a very tense time when it seemed as if the U.S. would attack Cuba. That is why I examined a very important case history: the first direct aggression of imperialism against Cuba — the explosion of the French arms ship Le Coubre — and what effect this aggression had on the Cuban population.

I interviewed a large group of those who had been wounded in the explosion, from dock workers to the general population. Clearly, the imperialists’ intention had been to have those attacked without arms, and also to frighten them. However, the exact opposite had been achieved: nobody in Cuba was frightened. In fact, everybody went to the port to help the victims and pick up the remaining armaments. The whole of Havana became a blue city as everybody wore their militia shirts.

The emotional support of the common citizen towards the revolution turned into a real one to the extent that we could give our lives to defend our beliefs. The conscious support was transformed into an armed support as people realized that what they were enjoying had to be defended. It meant a qualitative jump in the consciousness of the people.

I remember Castro’s speech when we buried the victims. He said that previously we had said, “Freedom or Death!” but from now on we would say, “Homeland or Death!” I thought all this had to be said to those who were contemplating new aggressions towards Cuba. So, I made the film.

Film Form

In 1971, the popularity with which the audience received our first films had begun to decline and turn into scepticism. Then, thanks to the newsreel and to The Twelve Chairs and Death of a Bureaucrat by Tomas Alea, the public began to regain interest in the Cuban cinema. Now, of course, Cuban films are very well received by the audience, and not just out of a sense of solidarity, but because they enjoy them.

In 1971, along with the fact that the population was used to fiction films, the documentary had a disadvantage in that it was shown between features. And, during that time, people would go out to smoke a cigarette or go to the toilet. For this reason, the documentary in Cuba had to capture the attention of the audience from the very beginning.

All these problems were in my mind and I went to the cinemas to study the situation. I then recalled the Warner Bros films of the later 1940s — like House on 92nd Street — which told a story by sending you back and forth between past and present.

I started my documentary like that, with a scene in which you couldn’t really tell what was happening. People are seen taking boxes out of a ship, emphasized by music and tension (I used dodecaphonic music), until they pick up a box from which is hanging a piece of rope. The music reaches a climax and you are sent to another scene where two children, who have nothing to do with the first scene, are playing a strange game of war. They say, “I declare war on such and such a country.”

Up to that moment — and I am sure because I proved it myself — no one in the audience has gone out to the toilet or have a smoke. Then the credits come down and the children keep on playing. The music of tension begins again and lasts until the last movement of the game, in which one child says, hitting the hand of the other child, “I declare war on Cuba!” The bomb explodes and I start immediately with the best archive material I could find. From then on, people sit there and watch the documentary. They receive a message.

A documentary is not a book which can be read a second or a third time to be understood; you have to give the public enough information that can be easily assimilated on the first reading. It has to be done in an attractive way.

Anyway, why should I reject reconstruction if dramatization will help me achieve my objectives?

In Australia, it is usually felt that a documentary should consist mainly of actuality filming . . .

For me a documentary is a weapon of combat, an instrument to have a change in the world.
The performance of yours I admire most is as Lord Trimingham in Joseph Losey’s “The Go-Between”. It seems to me so important to the film’s texture...

It was a wonderful film to do and a lovely part. It was my best film-making experience ever and offered enormous opportunity for an actor. Many people, and all the technicians, turned down work waiting for the moment when this would be made — and it was on and off until the last moment. They all went to work with such a will and devotion to Joe, and to the subject.

Looking back on it now — and I think I felt the same at the time — it was a great privilege to have been part of that film. Really, it was the last time we had a cinema industry in Britain.

“Sunday Bloody Sunday” came out at almost the same time and one wondered if this was the beginning of a new British film industry. Of course, it didn’t materialize...

It is very nice that it should be remembered, particularly in such an encouraging light.

In “The Go-Between”, it is immensely important that the whole view of the English aristocracy be so well done. To be less generously and accurately played would have upset the balance of the film. It seemed to me important that Trimingham be at least as attractive and interesting as the Alan Bates character...

The levels of society were important: Trimingham definitely was an aristocrat, and Margaret Leighton’s and Michael Gough’s characters were more of the nouveau riche than of the landed gentry.

You played in two other Losey films, “The Doll’s House” and “Galileo”. Was this a pleasure?

Yes, indeed it was. Anything that Joe offered I would do because he is a master, as we know.

How do you find Losey in his handling of actors?

Well, Joe is very generous to his actors. He allows them their own imagination without confining them. If you are right off the track he will gently put you back on it, but if you are within your interpretation and you want to use wide bounds — I will put it in that loose way — he allows you to get on with things as you would wish.

Does this bring film acting somewhere nearer to stage acting?

Much nearer.

You are much more in control of the whole performance...

Much more.

Have you worked with directors who you feel have not given adequate rein to actors?

Fortunately I never have, but I must say I would find it extremely difficult to accept — unless, of course, their point of view is unarguably righter than one’s own. The older one gets, the more sureness one faces in one’s own conception.

What about Fred Zinnemann? How did you find him to work with on “The Day of the Jackal”?

It was a wonderful experience working with Fred. He teaches everyone who is on the unit — actors, technicians alike. He is really very like the general who doesn’t sit at HQ, but who is out there doing the bravest deeds with the soldiers. And, of course, his overall conception of how to do something, and his demand upon you within a short space of time with very little material to show many things so quickly, is very exacting but extremely exhilarating.

Would you regard Losey and Zinnemann as perhaps the two most stimulating directors you have worked with?

I would say that they are both master directors.

What about Ridley Scott? “The Duellists” is a remarkable film which has never had, in this country, anything like the success or even the distribution it deserved. Do you think highly of him as a director?

Much admired. But I don’t think...
he is, in any sense at the moment — and he's a much younger man — in the class of Zinnemann or Losey. Maybe one day.

I think Scott is very much hoist on the petard of a style of commercial filmmaking which relies very heavily on extreme assault on its audience, rather than perhaps on more artistic appeal.

Which is another thing that makes "The Go-Between" a remarkable film for 1970 . . .

Yes, because it blows just as hard a punch in a much quieter way. And somehow the punch works for longer.

"The Mirror Crack'd" is your third film for Guy Hamilton. You have said he is a "traditional director". In what ways, as far as actors are concerned, would this make itself felt?

The films I have done with Guy are what you would call action-adventure. This one isn't so much action-adventure, but it is of a particular kind. It is certainly not The Go-Between. It is a very close-knit, will-wrought, well-thought out, well-planned way of filmmaking and it doesn't try to pretend to be what it isn't. If it is an action adventure, it is just an action adventure.

But Guy is very appreciative of an actor being able to supply a little more than maybe the part gives on paper.

Is this one of the charms of the Agatha Christie films, in that in the books there is not a single character who stays in the mind much, yet those films that have been made — like "Orient Express" and "Death on the Nile" — are very attractive largely because of the way actors seem to take the role by the throat and do something with it?

Yes, I would agree with you entirely. I think it's like having a lovely souffle for your pudding. You love it at the time, but you don't go home saying, "Oh, that souffle, that souffle!" You don't remember it that much; you just enjoy it on the moment. And these films do offer actors entertaining opportunities for personality acting.

What do you think is the future of British films? Would you agree that it has been a very lean decade?

Tremendously lean.

There seems to be little released in Australia, other than films like "Confessions of a Window Cleaner" . . .

Pathetic. Personally, I know very little about the industry, but I meet a lot of people who are intent on making jobs. What it really needs, I am sure, is the entrepreneurial vision from the top.

Do you get it from someone like Lord Lew Grade?

No, absolutely not. I think most in the business would agree that Lord Lew Grade and Bernard Delafont are admirable in their way, but quite unable to fill the role of the entrepreneur with flair. They do not have the instinctive knowledge of what the public wants, which is so necessary to a thriving industry.

Is there any hope for British films to establish themselves as a real alternative to Hollywood?

If we can make films inexpensively enough and aim to please the rest of the world outside the U.S. and build up that market — if one can give it a vulgar word — then I think there is a chance. Certainly our television products have proved this. If we could do that and secure a market, a fairly stable one, then I think the U.S., whom I have always considered to be a marvellous buyer — a better buyer than seller — would accept this.

But as things are now, where if you are to succeed you must succeed in the U.S. market, it doesn't work very happily. The U.S. is so stocked with plentiful trees, it doesn't need the influence from outside. They have, or they feel they have, all the originality produced within their shores for their market.

Is it mainly an economic problem?

I think economics always take a secondary place. Money never drives anything, really. Economies can be changed the minute you have a fine product, so it is a matter of persuading people that you have a fine product.

Again, it goes back to the entrepreneur who will not pay actors 5 million pounds each, who will see that the unions don't ask for enormous overtime wages and who will stabilize the logistics, as well as having the vision to supply pleasure to a public demand.

Have industrial problems created great difficulties in British filmmaking?

The trouble, of course, is that you can make some films with a unit of 15 or 20 people, while some films require a unit of 250. The union legislation, as it is now, requires that the former had an over-complement of staff, which is an enormous burden on production. I think actors probably demand too much money anyway.

"A Bridge Too Far", I suppose, is a case in point, with stories of an immense sum being paid to at least one actor for a very small part. Such
### March 1981

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#### Films Examined in terms of the Customs (Cinematographic Films) Regulations and States' film censorship legislation are listed below.

An explanatory key to reasons for classifying non-"G" films appears hereunder.

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### Registered Without Eliminations

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#### Not Recommended for Children (NRC)

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### Superimposed:

- Trans Cinema TV, U.S., 3900.34, Fox
- Black Dragons, U.S., 2920, produced by censors from 3955.78

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#### The Man Who Came at Dinner

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### The Incredible Shrinking Woman

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### The Hotlist Show in Town

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### Concluded on p. 307
Rod Bishop looks at a new 10-hour, Super 8 documentary on Australia, and talks to one of the filmmakers, Garry Patterson.

During 1979, filmmakers Garry Patterson, Franca Majoor and Russel Farrance drove a beat-up Kombi-wagen around Australia. They covered 20,000 km and carried only one Beaulieu 5008 Super 8 camera. Two years of research and a "shoot and run" approach to their material has produced something most filmmakers would consider impossible on the home movie format — a powerful 10-hour documentary they have self-effacingly titled Some Aspects of Australia.

The film is structured in 11 parts, each of 55 minutes duration. The first five sections are presented without narration, and deal with five major subjects: "The Kanakas of North Queensland", "Land Rights and Self-determination", "Banking and the Fiscal Crisis", "Mining, Utah and Ranger", and "Nimbin (The Politics of Food)".

Some of the stronger sequences from this section include: racist exploitation of Aboriginal culture by the tourist industry and ice cream companies in Surfers Paradise; dispossessed young blacks in the outback ramming their stolen car into another packed with bigoted whites; long, aching interviews with islanders who reveal the forgotten history of the Kanakas; an old man from an urban skid row drifts into a painful sleep on a park bench to the strains of "Waltzing Matilda"; tourist boats negotiate the Katherine Gorge; and whites gape at the work of Aboriginal cave painters, whose children die from trachoma.

The next five parts constitute the "Narrator series". This delivers a personal account of Australian history, from the arrival of European Man on this continent to the formal constitution of Federation in 1900. Throughout this series, Garry Patterson plays a parody of the television correspondent: a dishevelled, unshaven, slightly crazed historian who reads, at a fierce pace, his alternative history of Australia from a scrappy, dog-eared clipboard.

Whether he is striding through the bush, stalking some tropical tourist resort, squatting in front of Uluru or sitting disconsolately in the middle of the outback with the dismantled Volkswagen engine, Patterson relentlessly presents his fractured and fatalistic view of Australian history. His narration is intercut with a chronological travel diary, interview material and social observations that could not be included in the neat categories that divide the first half of the film.

The final section of Some Aspects of Australia is a 55-minute postscript on the logistics of information.

"Banking and the Fiscal Crisis" is the pivotal episode to the first section and the most obvious political statement in the 10 hours. It consists of a 55-minute illustrated interview with an "anonymous commentator" who carefully documents the case against the new international economic order. The thesis is one of totalitarian control of banking finance, headed by the Bilderbergers and involving the major international financing corporations of Rockefeller, Rothschild, Kuhn-Loeb, Morgan and others. The interview sheds light on "the poor little rich country", unable to digest its own resources or come to terms with its own wealth, let alone profit from them.

Banking conspiracies and international deals over resource development are beyond the comprehension of most Australians. Yet, it is precisely these Australians who lie at the heart of this mammoth film. They are the "underside" of Australian history, people seldom, if ever, asked to tell their story in any medium. We meet them at the Utah and Ranger mines, we see the casualties of race (Kanakas) and land (Aborignals), and explore the white middle-class alternative of the New Settlers.

Some Aspects of Australia is clearly no sanitized work of "balance" and a proper examination of the content contained in its 10 hours is still to be attempted. But its technical achievements are obvious. With their own finances and $3000 from the Australian Film Commission, Patterson, Majoor and Farrance shot a 10-hour film on a 2:1 ratio. With another $9000 loan they edited the material on single strip original and finally dubbed it onto video for distribution.

Some Aspects of Australia is essentially a film about people and politics. With an instinctive commitment that shows little fear of disturbing the individual political persuasions of its audience, the film may well be a frontier achievement for the aesthetic and commercial prospects of the Super 8 medium in this country.
The last film you made was a 10mm autobiographical feature called "How Willingly You Sing". In 1976 you shared a prize at the Australian Film Institute Awards. Why have you now chosen to work on 8mm and produce this 10-hour film?

The Creative Development Award was an encouragement to go onto bigger and better things, which I tried to do. I worked on a dozen scripts, and submitted three or four to various funding bodies. They were all eventually rejected, one way or the other.

The South Australian Film Corporation refused an idea that we wanted to do in Whyalla. They said they weren't interested in anything political. I also wrote a circus film for the Australian Film Commission and they called me a liar and a plagiarist.

But I don't want to get into a long list of sour grapes. I enjoy shooting film; I enjoy editing film. I believe the medium is important; it's a battleground. I had to work on Super 8 simply because nothing else was available to me.

Did you consciously set out to make a 10-hour film?

No. But the more we shot, the longer it got. The history of Australia was pretty flat, and we underestimated how keen people would be to tell their story. People only have access to media by invitation and there is a lot of frustration because of this. We generally talked to them for an hour or so, then asked: "What's your name, what's your job and what d'ya reckon?" People spoke directly at the camera. Their information is not sieved through an interviewer.

But you did choose to visit certain parts of Australia . . .

We decided to go anti-clockwise. Our research had isolated the major issues: Nimbin, mining, Utah, Ranger, land rights in North Queensland and Kakadu, Pine Gap and so on. That roughly mapped out the trip for us. People passed us on from one active group to another. Franca's brother, Bart, then joined us in Northern Queensland and stayed with us until the end.

We wanted to go to the Kimberleys and Wittenoom and the West Coast, but ran out of money in Darwin. We wrote to the AFC from Charters Towers, and sent the 10 hours of film we had already shot for their $3000. Murray Brown was very nice, but the AFC refused on the grounds that it would be supplementary funding.

You shot the film on single system and, as most Super 8 filmmakers know, you have the inbuilt problem of the 18-frame delay. Yet you shot for their $3000. Murray Brown was very nice, but the AFC refused on the grounds that it would be supplementary funding.

You shot the film on single system and, as most Super 8 filmmakers know, you have the inbuilt problem of the 18-frame delay. Yet you managed to do a fairly rough, three-track mix on various parts of the film...

The 18-frame delay is not a problem if you allow one second at the head and tail of the shot. The Beaulieu is a terrific camera, but any camera will do. We had a cassette recorder and a good microphone with a split lead. All the interviews went onto the cassettes and the sync sound went onto the stripe. There was no slating of shots. Non-sync material can be dubbed onto wild shots.

I worked with original film, and edited on a $150 S8 editor with a little sound reader. I originally screened the films and mixed the music live. But this stretched the tape splices and they wouldn't go through the telecine. So we re-spliced them, and worked on video dubs, either mixing the music while we dubbed, or mixing it later, transferring from track 1 to track 2.

I have finally mastered the control knobs on the back of the Elmo. It's not fine quality; it's rough. But the basic information is there. I figure it is pretty good value for money.

What film stock did you use?

Kodachrome 40 for outdoors, and 7244 for interviews — that is until Alice Springs, when we were down to $100 worth of silent film bought with a Bankcard from a chemist.

You didn't use Ektachrome 160?

No, it rubs off on your fingers — too soft.

Will distribution be on video?

The big problem at the moment is that the makers of video programs, and the people who watch them, are obliged to wait until the large manufacturers (their banking backers, their supporting governments, their protective military, and God knows who else) get their act together and divide the market satisfactorily among themselves. Then, they might let us know whether we are dealing with 3/4-inch, 1/2-inch, VHS or Betacord.

One video dealer told me that Sony and Sanyo have lost out on their Betacord system and may be turning to VHS. I am very suspicious of the 1/2-inch standard. If you shoot on Super 8, it is lighter, more flexible and probably cheaper than shooting on videotape. You can get broadcastable information. But if you shoot on a 1/2-inch home video, which is what the companies are encouraging people to buy, then problems arise. I don't know if 1/2-inch is broadcastable. You don't have access to an audience; you are trapped.

What have you learnt from the experience of making a 10-hour film on 8mm?

That the information we get on television is not that upon which the 2000 executives who run this country base their decisions. I don't know what is going on there, and that is an obsession. The second obsession is the possibility that television determines language and, ultimately, reality. Can I read this?

"The thesis is that no one has benefited more from the French Revolution than the international
banking houses, parasitic organizations which grew in the festering capitalism of post-feudal France and emerging America.

"By 1900 and following World War I, the family names that gave an international face to the monetary manipulations going on in the bowels of the banks (Morgan, Rothschild, Kuhn-Loeb, Wauberg, Rockefeller, etc.) were dominating international shipping, commerce and politics. They still do to this day.

"The conspiracy was, and has remained, the propagation of the myth that global progress and human endeavor are synonymous with capital growth and material expansion. This has been pushed (with international media networks coming under the same control) to the exclusion of any alternative measurement of collective happiness. We must be careful not to confuse homogeneity with equality."

The other thing I have learnt is that cinema language, Film language, television language, is still in its infancy. We have only just begun to appreciate how shots work, how to tell a story, how to get away from the proscenium theatre, how to hide a cut, how to pace. Also, how symbols, however fleeting, determine understanding — symbols that are universally relevant, and not limited to a particular medium. How certain symbols, visual symbols, are continually reinforced on television — to what ends, in whose interest?

Will you continue to work on 8mm or has the distribution experience been so difficult that you want to work on 16mm and 35mm formats?

The information boom is happening in video cassettes. Even Oxford University Press is looking at "publishing" video tapes. But there is little chance that network television will accept Super 8. So what is left? Cable television. Subscription television. Pay-television. Satellite television. Who is going to own all this? And for what reason? I think it is important that people who work in Film and video support community television. But a one-hour print on Super 8 costs about $650; a one-hour video, anything from $80 to $175. But it is essential to diversify, especially as the development in the Australian film industry is one of increasing central control. That may mean a lot of work for a lot of people, but it may mean the complete emasculation of cinema so that filmmakers, like entertainers, become mere salesmen.

Filmography

1971 *Retreat...Retreat*, 35 mins, 16mm
1975 *How Willingly You Sing*, 90 mins, 16mm
1975 *Papua New Guinea Independent Celebrations 1975*, with Robin Macrae
1976 *Here's to You Mr Robinson*, with Peter Tammer, 16mm
1976 *Freeway F19*, 60 mins, 8mm
1977 *Circus Oz*, with the Pram Factory, 60 mins, 8mm
1977 *Circus Royale*, 30 mins, 8mm
1977 *Confest Brodlo*, with Down to Earth Movement, 120 mins, 8mm
1978 *Builders' Labourers Mural*, with Preston Institute of Technology, 60 mins, 8mm
1978 *Chile Lucha/Chile Fights*, with the Free Chile Committee, 60 mins, 8mm
1981 *Some Aspects of Australia*, with Franca Majoor and Russel Farrance, 605 mins, 8mm

All available from Shopfront Films, 16 Bage St, Diamond Creek, Vic., 3089. (03) 438 2054.

One of the original landowners watches the Ranger opening ceremony without evident enthusiasm. Some Aspects of Australia.

Some Aspects of Australia


Part One: Nimbin and the Politics of Food.
Part Two: Kanakas and East Coast Racism.
Part Three: Banking and the New International Economic Order.
Part Four: Mining and Utah.
Part Seven: Narrator 2 (1791-1806). "Tourism: Brunswick Heads to Gladstone".
Part Eight: Narrator 3 (1804-1831). "North Queensland: Duaringa to Cairns".
Part Nine: Narrator 4 (1834-1856). "Outback: Tinaroo Falls Dam to Dunmarra".
Part Eleven: Postscript: The Logistics of Information.

One of the original landowners watches the Ranger opening ceremony without evident enthusiasm. Some Aspects of Australia.
THE ADAIR INSURANCE BROKING GROUP

The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith
The Picture Show Man
The Devil's Playground
Eliza Fraser
Alvin Purple
Uncle Tom's Cabin
Petersen
End Play
Palm Beach
Child Cathy's
Pacific Banana
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Phone 325 9699
ABC Inquiry

After an 18-month inquiry which included 61 hearings, 2,260 submissions and 5,960 pages of testimony, the Government-appointed Dix Report recommended sweeping changes to the ABC. Among the recommendations of the inquiry headed by marketing veteran Alex Dix were:
- Reconstruction of the ABC into a new National Broadcasting Organization, but still to be identified as the ABC.
- A governing board of directors, seven members and a 20-man consultative council representing community interests.
- Integration of ABC music and concert departments into a separate body: Music Australia.
- Introduction of modern business methods.
- More accountability to parliament.

The Dix Report said: "The ABC has become slow moving, overgrown, complacent and uncertain of the direction in which it is heading. Despite the efforts of many talented and dedicated people working for it... it (the ABC) has not only slipped from the forefront of change but threatens to be eclipsed by it... Australian society, itself undergoing rapid change, expects to lose less from its institutions. Organizations which are being financed by government are expected to justify themselves publicly and give cogent reasons why their traditional activities should continue..."

In the light of Razor Gang cuts to ABC funding of three per cent, along with abolition of the usual inflation adjustment of 10 per cent, an effective 13 percent cut in its budget, the ABC must tighten its financial belt.

The Dix Report said the ABC would need a bigger finance elsewhere as the possibility of the Government increasing its funding now or in the immediate future was small.

One suggested means of raising money was corporate underwriting of ABC programs — but not paid advertising — a recommendation which has brought howls of conservative protest from within and outside the ABC.

The Report also recommended a long-term plan to merge the ABC's news and public affairs departments to improve co-operation and cut down overlapping. Total cost of the recommendations — the majority of it spent over a five-year period — would be $158 million.

Communications Minister, Mr Sinclair, has promised to put the Dix Report before parliament in the autumn session next year.

A Town Like Alice

A Town Like Alice, the $1.25 million joint production between Channel 7, the Seven Network, the Australian Film Commission and the Victorian Film Corporation, has been a resounding success.

Filmed in Australia, Malaysia and London, the six-hour dramatization of Nevil Shute's novel was recently seen by about 15 million people in Britain. London production has been justifiably enthusiastic for the work of the cast, Helen Morse, Bryan Brown, Gordon Jackson, Anne Haddy and Yuki Shimoda, the scripts of Rosemary Sisson and Tom Hegarty, the direction of David Stevens and production of Henry Crawford.

New SCOOP Producer

Former television commercial producer John Blackett-Smith has won the contract from Channel 0/28 to provide Melbourne coverage for the station's SCOOP news-program. Former television newsman turned documentary filmmaker, Phil de Montignie, previously held the contract.

De Montignie was last heard of trekking through the Simpson Desert in the Northern Territory filming the recreation of the first scientific crossing of the desert in 1932.

The $100,000 documentary, The Madigan Line, will follow a team of surveyors, scientists and botanists as they make the crossing by camel. Mining corporation CRA has backed the program and De Montignie is confident of international sales. His DNM Productions recently sold a documentary of the Le Mans car classic in Europe, the U.S. and New Zealand.

TVW Takeover

Sir Robert Holmes a'Court has taken control of TVW Enterprises in Perth, which controls TVW-7, radio 6IX, a major interest in SAS-10 Adelaide, City Theatres and Entertainment Centre operations.

The Perth-based tycoon, who heads the Bell group of companies, takes over as chairman of TVW from Sir James Cruthers, who has been with TVW-7 for 23 years.

7 Goes for 1984 Olympics

The Seven Network, despite the setback on the Moscow Olympics, are negotiating for rights to cover the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. Already Seven has won over the Nine Network in gaining rights to the Winter Olympics to be held in Yugoslavia in 1984. Final negotiations for rights to the summer Olympics will take place later this year.

Change to B&T Act

The Federal Government has approved changes to the Broadcasting and Television Act. The changes are a revised version of controversial changes — dubbed "the Murdoch amendments" — first proposed earlier this year by Communications Minister, Mr Sinclair.

Under pressure from backbenchers, plans to make the Communications Minister responsible for determining public interest in licence hearings were dropped, and a clause was inserted denying appeal against licence application refusal by the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal.

Changes approved include strict guidelines for determining public interest, share dealings involving radio and television interests no longer subject to ABT approval before being allowed to go ahead, and a company will be allowed to hold 10 per cent in a television station before being deemed to have a "prescribed" or significant interest. The figure previously was five per cent.

Mr Sinclair had also proposed that licence applicants could have their case heard under either the new or old law, but this was also deleted. The amendment would have meant the appeal by Murdoch's News group before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal against last year's ABT decision on ATV-10 could be decided based on the new law, however, the appeal must now continue on the basis of the old law.

After lengthy hearings in Melbourne, the AAT hearing was adjourned to mid-August.

While a lot of media coverage has concerned Murdoch's assertions that he has little or no control personally over the programming of his television interests, the crucial question is whether networking is in the public interest. If the AAT upholds the ABT view that networking is not in the public interest, not only could Murdoch lose his ATV-10 licence, but it could mean trouble for the Nine Network when its licence comes up for renewal in March next year.

Sensing the danger, TCN-9 and GTV-9 applied to be included as parties to the proceedings before the AAT. Mr Justice Morling granted the application.

Bruce Gyngell, former head of the ABT, supports Murdoch's ownership of ATV-10 because he believes in strong networking as important to competition and thus to the benefit of the public. He told the annual meeting of the Public Relations Institute in Canberra (June 15) that: "The firm backing of ownership indeed begged the question of its (television's) marvellous and enormous ability to communicate ideas and exchange thoughts between people."

The Government, while notifying the AAT of its amendments to the Broadcasting and Television Act, has also given the ABT its favorable view of networking.

The increasing cost of drama and general television production — serials such as Cop Shop and Prisoner cost about $75,000 an hour — means that production of such shows requires strong commitment from more than one source, something networking can achieve.

(See also Nick Hard's report on pp. 262, 263 of this issue.)

Quiz Bandwagon

There are no prizes for guessing what prompted the rash of game and quiz shows taking viewers and contestants. The continued success of Sale of the Century — which in one recent program attracted 50 points — has inspired others.

Apart from Sale, Reg Grundy programs will be of relevance for the New Cinema Papers, July-August — 259
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- An expanded list of services and facilities, including equipment suppliers and marketing services

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1980 and 1981

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- Bruce Beresford, Matt Carroll and David Williamson.

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In November the Film and Television Production Association of Australia and the New South Wales Film Corporation brought together 15 international experts to discuss film financing, marketing, and distribution of Australian films in the 1980s with producers involved in the film and television industry.

The symposium was a resounding success.

Tape recordings made of the proceedings have been transcribed and edited by Cinema Papers, and published as the Film Expo '80 Seminar Papers.

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Arthur Abeles
Chairman, Filmmarketeers Ltd. (U.S.)

Theatrical Production Business and Legal Aspects
Barbara D. Boyle
Executive Vice-President, and Chief Operating Officer, New World Pictures (U.S.)

Distribution in the United States
Mark Damon
President, Producers Sales Organization (U.S.)

Producer/Distributor Relationships
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Simon O. Olswang
Solicitor, Brecker and Company (Britain)

Multi-National and Other Co-Productions
Rudy Petersdorf
President and Chief Operating Officer, Australian Films Office Inc. (U.S.)

The chapters: The Past (Andrew Pike), Social Realism (Keith Connolly), Comedy (Geoff Mayer), Horror and Suspense (Brian McFarlane), Action and Adventure (Susan Dermond), Fantasy (Adrian Martin), Historical Films (Tom Ryan), Personal Relationships and Sexuality (Meaghan Morris), Loneliness and Alienation (Rod Bishop and Fiona Mackie), Children's Films (Virginia Duigan), Avant-garde (Sam Rohdie).

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In this first major work on the Australian film industry's dramatic rebirth, 12 leading film writers combine to provide a lively and entertaining critique. Illustrated with 265 stills, including 55 in full color, this book is an invaluable record for all those interested in the New Australian Cinema.
New Grandy's PR Head

Thomas Greer, formerly publicity director for Channel 10 Sydney, has been appointed vice-president, publicity, advertising and public relations of the Reg Grundy Organisation.

Grundy's productions include Sale of the Century, The Resilient Years, Virtual Detective, First Runners, New Price in Right, Bellamy and Ford Superquiz.

Activity Goscombe continues as Grundy's television publicity manager.

Inquiry into Television Violence

The Senate Standing Committee on education and the arts has called for a public inquiry into television violence. It said television program standards in the Broadcasting and Television Act were "obscure, difficult to follow and wide open to interpretation."

The Committee called on the ABT to formulate guidelines to reduce television violence. It said research had shown the existence of a relationship between violence on television and in society, and that an inquiry should be held to review the existing program standards.

The Committee's recommendations included that the Federal Parliament consider the Committee's recommendations.

In the U.S., the television industry has been shocked by the withdrawal of a major advertiser from the sponsorship of 50 programs. ABC and Gamble, American television's largest advertiser, withdrew on a policy of not tolerating programs that fail to assess the socially redeeming features of a show — whether it is likely to encourage anti-social behaviour whether sex and violence are gratuitous.

Above came shortly before Coalition for Better Television announced a boycott on the sponsors of shows it thought most offensive. Details of the boycott were not available at the time of writing.

New SAFC Television Sales Agent

The South Australian Film Corporation is close to finalizing the appointment of an international distributor for its film productions, heralding the start of a new era for the Corporation.

SABC director, John Morris, following a visit to the Cannes International Film Festival, has decided to retain the withdrawal of a major advertiser from the sponsorship of shows it thought most offensive. Details of the boycott were not available at the time of writing.

New Facts Code for Children's Television

The Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations (FACTS) has announced a new code for advertising during children's programs. From August, advertising will be cut from children's programs.

The scheme will operate for a two-year trial period and was introduced as a result of a request from the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts recently recommended Government support for the ACTP.

Dr Patricia Edgar, director of a task force setting up the foundation, said it could not go ahead without Commonwealth support.

New SBS Board

Former Lord Mayor of Sydney, Sir Nicholas Shehadie, has been appointed chairman of the expanded Special Broadcasting Services Board, which oversees administration of multicultural television Channel 0/28.

Mr Sinclair, also announced that Melbourne barrister Frank Gabbly had been appointed as a new advisory council to the service.

The SBS board has been increased from seven to eight, with appointments for terms of up to three years.

The new board comprises Grigorij Sklyovsky, chairman of the SBS since 1978; Mr D. J. Kelleh, executive director of the 2SM broadcasting group; Tony Bonnici, vice-chairman of the Victorian Council of Victoria; John Lacy, chairman of the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW; Florida-born barrister Frank Gabbly; social worker from Brisbane, and Frank Galbally, chairman of the Institute of Multicultural Affairs.

The new advisory council, the membership of which has yet to be finalized, will replace the existing consultative committee, which comprises representatives of the Victorian and NSW Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Committees and the National Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council.

Announcement of the new SBS board will be made in the Senate on Thursday. The Italian Assistance Association, Australia's largest Italian welfare organization, said the re-appointed board would be given $20,000 to help the new board to share its channel with the public broadcasters.

At the same time, public broadcasters are critical of the new board. The ABC's chairman, Mr Wilson, said the ABC hoped the new SBS board would not decline to take the Sydney-Brisbane network third behind Nine and Seven.

Meanwhile, Communications Minister, Mr Sinclair, says a decision has yet to be made about formal establishment of a separate Multicultural Broadcasting Corporation as a statutory body. With the expansion of the SBS board, it appears the decision could be indefinitely delayed.

New Robb Series

Jill Robb, formerly Victorian Film Corporation's publicity director, has started work on a new television series destined for screening in the U.S. on public television.

The series, The Alcheringa Stone, is about a university professor and his studies of the legendary stone by the VFC, the Queensland Film Corporation and the television subsidiary of The Washington Post.

Mr Robb, best known for his role in The Man From U.N.C.L.E., has been imported to Sydney to advise the Australian production. Its host Graham Kennedy also has a leading role.

The five one-hour episodes are being shot on location at Mt Isa in Queensland. The producer with Jill Robb is Damien Prent.
Nick Herd reports on the role of government in regulating broadcasting. In particular, he examines the recent amendments to the Broadcasting Act.

T
he argument for regulation of broadcasting by the state is based upon the concept that since the airwaves are a scarce and public resource they should be used in such a manner that best accords with the public interest. It is a concept that finds legal legitimacy in the Constitution, which is the basis of broadcasting legislation and which successive governments, Royal Commissions and inquiries have reiterated.

Private interest, it is always said, cannot be assumed to accord with public interest, no matter how public-spirited it might be. Therefore, the state must use all its powers to ensure that the structural properties of the broadcasting system reflect this concept.

Commercial broadcasters, in putting a case for self-regulation, have often seemed to present regulation as relating primarily to questions of program standards and local content. They are important issues, ones which many public interest groups have focused on to the exclusion of any other. However, regulation has to be seen as going beyond this to include the issues of ownership and control, as well as the introduction of new technologies.

It is only in recent years that ownership and control has become a major public issue. Previously, it was assumed that the structure of commercial broadcasting was more or less stable. While there were occasional misgivings, publicly (particularly under the Labor Government), about the concentration of media interests, it was generally assumed that the government could prevent major changes in the status quo. However, the shakeup of commercial broadcasting, occasioned by the activities of Rupert Murdoch, have put that assumption to the test.

The result of that testing seems to be the demonstration by the present Government of a lack of resolve in regard to broadcasting regulation. The amendments to the Act, pushed through the autumn session of parliament by the Minister for Communication, Mr. Sinclair, would seem to indicate an unwillingness on the part of the Government to challenge the dominant commercial broadcasting interests. It now seems that the Government is prepared to allow the regulatory initiative to pass from it to the industry. This is at a time when the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal had demonstrated that it had the confidence to devise an effective system of regulation in the public interest.

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Britain, the U.S. and Canada, the countries upon which Australia has often modelled its broadcasting system, have long had independent statutory authorities vested with the responsibility of regulating broadcasting in the public interest. Their purpose has been to protect the broadcasting system from private monopolisation and political interference. It is only recently, however, that Australia has really had an equivalent to these bodies, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal. Its precursor, the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, had an essentially advisory role. The power to grant, renew, suspend and approve changes in ownership and control rested with the Minister. Even in the areas of program standards and the allocation of frequencies the ABCB was subject to ministerial oversight.

During the Labor Government's term of office, the idea of establishing an equivalent to the British Independent Broadcasting Authority, charged with regulating commercial broadcasting, was floated a number of times. However, no effort was made to reduce the discretionary power of the Minister. Despite the sound and fury, and the change of name to Media Minister, Labor did nothing to change the regulatory system.

The Fraser Government abolished the Media Ministry and established a departmental inquiry into the structure of broadcasting — the Green Inquiry. Its report recommended that, among other things, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal should replace the ABCB and be invested with all the powers of the Minister. They recommended that the licensing process should be a public one and that, as much as possible, the public should be able to confront broadcasters on their performance. Public interest groups were obviously eager for a more open system. But broadcasters were also ready to welcome a system that reduced the potential for direct political intervention.

Accordingly, the ABT was established in December 1976, but it was not until November 1977 that it was given the powers previously held by the Minister. Introducing the amendments, Eric Robinson, then Minister for Posts and Telecommunications, said:

"The principle of a broadcasting system not subject to political interference is one of the basic aims of the changes proposed... The major element of the changes aimed at depoliticising the broadcasting system is the transfer of the licensing power from the Minister to the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal."

The amendments gave the ABT the power to grant, renew, suspend, revoke and approve changes in the ownership of licences as well as to monitor and maintain program standards. It also gave the Tribunal substantial discretionary powers to act in the public interest outside of a literal interpretation of the Act. At the time, however, nobody seems to have been aware of just how wide the Tribunal's discretionary powers were.

The first public inquiry of the ABT examined the question of self-regulation for broadcasters. The result of that inquiry was a reiteration of the concept of public regulation. The Tribunal stated:

"We believe that the industry, either on a collective or an individual basis, should be regularly and directly confronted with the views of those whom it serves. The Tribunal contends that regular, public inquiries on licence applications and renewals will achieve this aim. The philosophy of direct public accountability is the basis of our approach to the regulation of broadcasting."

This statement indicated the philosophical basis upon which the ABT approached the subsequent public hearings into licence renewals and share transactions.

The licence renewal hearings in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne failed to demonstrate how wide the powers of the ABT were. In fact, to many it seemed that the ABT was being hobbled before it had really begun to move. The broadcasters came to the Sydney hearings deter-
minded to give the ABT a run for its money. It was not just that this was the first time the ABT was looking at the major media interests in the strongholds of their power. It was also that the industry had seen demonstrated in Adelaide that the ABT took its regulatory role seriously.

Despite the ABT’s intention to have open and informal hearings, the Sydney shareholders quickly moved down in legal argument. The major issue became the procedure to be adopted by the ABT at such hearings, rather than the performance of the applicants for renewal. At these hearings, the ABT had to consider whether the transaction gave to the Tribunal in connection with these matters, we infer that it is the purpose of the Act to ensure that commercial broadcasting is conducted in the interests of the public. By the end of 1980, the ABT, with the support of certain Liberal backbenchers, had established itself firmly as the body charged with the regulation of broadcasting in Australia. The only way that this could be changed was for parliament to rewrite the Act.

The following guidelines:

1. Whether the applicant is fit and proper to hold a licence;
2. Whether the applicant will provide adequate program services and encourage fair competition;
3. The commercial, financial, technical and management capabilities of the applicant; and
4. The degree of concentration of ownership and control of the public. Parliament would include some kind of retrospective legislation to ensure that the Administration could not be changed was for parliament to re-write the Act. It is clear now that some of the proposals so obviously partial to the Murdoch interests were deleted as a result of pressure from certain Liberal backbenchers. They were not, however, successful in protecting the power of the ABT.

The amendments to the Act remove the discretionary power of the ABT to decide what is in the public interest. Instead of the ABT being able to decide, as it sees fit, what is and what is not in the public interest, this is now limited to the following guidelines:

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In January this year, the Zagreb Theatre Company appeared in an open-air production of the play The Liberation of Skopje at the old Darlinghurst Gaol (now East Sydney Technical College). In between this short season and one held in Melbourne, Ferryman Television Productions, Sydney, booked the company for a week and filmed an adaptation for television.

Producer Eric Fullilove reports on the production of this harrowing story of the psychological damage of war on a child’s mind.

1. Obtaining the Rights, Unions and Associated Problems

As executive producer nominally responsible for drama for the experimental programs on the fledgling Channel 0/28, early last year I approached several entrepreneurs likely to import theatrical productions of note to Australia. The object was to consider “deals” for rights to televise such productions for Australian audiences.

Anthony Steel, artistic director of the Cladan Cultural Exchange Institute of Australia (CLADAN), enthused about the Zagreb Theatre’s (Yugoslavian) production of The Liberation of Skopje, which CLADAN intended to bring to Australia in January 1981. He sent me a resume and review of the play, which made...
me as enthusiastic as he was, particularly as Australia has such large Yugoslavian communities in Sydney and Melbourne (served by Channel 0/28).

As New Zealand had opted out of their proposed importation of the play, we were given the chance to buy the Australian rights to televise the production, and have the services of the Zagreb Theatre Company for one week, between other engagements. Channel 0/28 executives Bruce Gyngell, Ron Fowell and John Martin approved the deal, and agreement was reached with CLADAN.

Actors Equity then opposed the whole proposition (because no Australian actors were to be involved in this, a production spoken in Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian, German and Romany!) and protracted negotiations failed to reach a solution. It is to the credit of Channel 0/28 that they agreed to underwrite the costs of the Zagreb Theatre Company for that week, even if the teleplay could not be mounted.

Eventually, Equity came to an amicable arrangement with CLADAN and, with about two weeks notice before the arrival of the Zagreb Theatre Company, Ferryman Television Productions started urgent pre-production processes.

2. Pre-production and Censorship

I was not able to get either an English or Serbo-Croatian version of the play until the Company arrived and I then rushed the play for translation into English. I found that the text was littered with four-letter words. We subsequently discovered that many of the actors were also ad-libbing more profanities into their roles, during dramatic moments of the play. It should be pointed out that swear words are in common use in family life among the working class in Yugoslavia and that swearing is permitted during adult programs on television there.

As we were then adapting the play for television, I approached the author of the play (who fortunately accompanied the Company to Australia), and the stage director from Zagreb with a request for changes. They refused and Channel 0/28 ignored my appeals that (i) it could be screened at a late time spot, or (ii) to change the text would be the same as censoring one of Shakespeare’s works.

Not only would Channel 0/28 not allow certain words (“fuck” and “cunt” were among them) to appear on the sub-titles, they would not allow the words to be spoken by the actors in the original language. In the end, we were forced to have a Serbo-Croatian speaker on set with me during shooting.

Dusan Jovanovic and Ljubisa Ristic finally agreed to a compromise (“crotch” for “cunt”, for example), when I pointed out that, if we did not censor the text, the scenes would be cut later or the offending words “bleeped”. In the event, the final result was satisfactory from all points of view, although I was forced to have a Serbo-Croatian speaker on set with me during shooting.

I appointed a talented video-director, William Fitzwater, to direct the play. The stage play was set in two separate locations in the old gaol, and the audience was moved by the players within the areas. But after Fitzwater and I had seen the play, we decided it would not do it justice to have this static situation for television, so we adapted the play for television and eventually recorded the teleplay in 36 different locations.

3. Production

As the original budget had been based on photographing a stage play in two locations, and not recording in so many different locales, including interiors, Fitzwater and I planned the production tightly to make the best use of the O/B facilities arranged for the production. We had booked (from the excellent NBN-3 Newcastle station) an O/B van with four cameras for two days/nights and one camera (for pick-ups) for one day/night. As the teleplay contained day and night scenes, we made our crew calls between midday and 10 p.m. each day.

Fitzwater had planned to use only two cameras on many scenes so we “leap-frogged” the other two cameras to other locations, and the reserve camera crews set up the next scenes. NBN-3 set up their van in the centre of the old gaol complex so that the cables could radiate out into whatever direction we should choose to shoot.

There were other complications in the planning and execution of the production. One of the attractions of the play for me was that the cast included six children, two white horses, a dog and two dozen pigeons. Our agreement with Child Welfare meant that we were only permitted to work limited hours daily with the children and not later than 10 p.m. (“curtains” for the play) at night. So we had to schedule around the children.

Once we started shooting, it also started to rain. We quickly used our wet-weather cover and were forced to shoot some scenes in rain. After two days/nights, even with overtime, we were way behind schedule, so I gave the director a two-camera O/B for the last day/night’s shoot.

4. Post-production

Video tape editing was done at NBN-3 Newcastle. Because of the many shifts in location, and inserts tapes contained in so many rolls of tape, editing took 40 hours instead of the scheduled 10. We were also not able to “off-line” as much as we had hoped. Audio sweetening, which took place in the audio suite of Channel 0/28, also took many long hours because of the complex soundtracks. In the end, our mix was more like one on a feature film than a “sweetening”.

The teleplay was then screened on Channel 0/28 in April. The audience and critical reaction was very positive, and the channel is planning to repeat the show soon.
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Synopsis: The film about the myth of Pukamani, the Tiwi totemic figure who is the creator of the world and the gods. His story is told by the old Tiwi sculptor, who placed around the graves. These ancient sculptures of the gods and heroes, that were collected by Sandra Holmes, were presented in the cinemas long ago and viewed around the graves. These ancient sculptures, with the appropriate ritual songs, were collected by Sandra Holmes over a period of 24 years and filmed to tell the story of Pukamani.

THE SATURDAY SHOW


THE LIBERATION OF SKOPJE

Synopsis: A documentaion of the Albanian Sculptural Trefoil held on the coast of La Trobe University in the Presto Institute of Technology in March this year. Includes the 3rd and 4th session program between Australia and Canada.

THE GODDESS AND THE MOON MAN

Synopsis: A group of country children create an old mining town as an adventure camp for city children.

SECRET VALLEY

Synopsis: Based on the play by Dusan Jovanovic. The main character is the young and beautiful Cate, who is pursued by the gang of bullies, including Slasher and his gang. Can they rescue the time crystal from Phil and the bullies are also on their trail. Can they get Lord Clapper/loader, Martin Turner.

CONTEMPORARY

Synopsis: An Australian television series about the toughest cop in town with the toughest job in town.
Part 4a: Film Post-production on Videotape

Editing Alternatives

Many different methods can be used in assembling a film program on videotape. A typical filmmaker would prefer to first make a workprint. The original camera footage would then be cut and spliced (Fig. 1) to match the edited workprint, and a print made from the edited originals would then be transferred to tape. Edited camera originals could also — and often are — transferred directly to videotape.

Electronically-oriented production people with considerable television experience, on the other hand, are likely to assemble a film program on tape by transferring the original camera footage to tape from telecine and then electronically editing the transfers (Fig. 2) to produce a master program tape.

Many variations of these two basic approaches are being used in film post-production with elements of film editing and electronic editing being combined in a number of ways to give producers a great choice of program assembly alternatives.

Making a transfer from film to videotape is a fairly simple procedure. A reel containing the film to be transferred is placed on a telecine projector or film scanner. Video and audio cables carry the telecine output signals to a videotape machine loaded with blank tape and set up ready for recording. On cue, both machines are started and the signals are recorded in the form of magnetic traces or tracks on the tape.

The 2-inch quadruplex videotape recorder was used years ago for professional television program production. This recorder has a high-speed rotating head that lays down video tracks directly across the width of the tape. High-quality helical scan recorders also are used extensively in several formats. These machines carry the tape in a helical path around a rotating drum with one or more heads tracing out the long slanted tracks on the tape. With both quadruplex and helical recordings, program audio is recorded in a continuous track along one edge of the tape. Space must also be provided on the tape for control and cue tracks.

When a videotape recorder is being set up for a film transfer, a test track is used to optimize the recording system. A short section of color bars — electronically-generated vertical color bands — is recorded at the head end of the tape on which the film transfer is to be made. The color bars serve later on as a means of optimizing the videotape machine used to play back the program. These procedures ensure that the pictures at the input to the recording machine will be reproduced without significant alteration or degradation at the output of the playback machine.

Television practice requires that any changes needed in signal levels or picture color balance must be made at the sending end; in making a film transfer, this is the telecine control console. When the transfer is being made from a print, only relatively small video adjustments should be needed, since the film timer has already compensated in the printing process for scene-by-scene density and color variations in the camera originals. But in the transfer of original color reversal films or color negatives, sudden and sometimes quite large variations may be encountered, calling for corrections that cannot be made unobtrusively while the film is running.

There are now facilities which make the task of the telecine video operator much easier. Many post-production companies already have equipment that enables corrections to be determined by cycling the film back and forth over a scene; these corrections are then stored in a computer memory and applied automatically at the start of each scene as the film is being transferred to tape in an uninterrupted run.

Some Considerations

When film is being transferred to videotape, the purpose of the transfer and the way in which the transfer is made should be given careful consideration. If, for example, one plans to assemble the program by electronic editing, it is best (at least for now) to use a 2-inch quadruplex machine for the transfer. Editing capabilities for this format are particularly extensive and versatile. Besides, with a properly assisted 2-inch quadruplex machine, picture quality can be maintained throughout several generations of re-recording.

On the other hand, if all or most of the editing is to take place on the film before transfer, any convenient videotape format can be chosen for the transfer, depending on the end use of the program master tape. If the program is being produced for on-air television release, the transfer probably should be made on 2-inch quadruplex equipment. Some television broadcasters, however, are using 1-inch helical scan recorders that are available in two (broadcast quality) formats, designated B and C.

Outside these two broadcast formats, a great number of different types of helical scan recorders are in everyday operation in industry, commerce and education. Transfers can be made directly from film to any of these formats, but interchange among machines may not be feasible, or even possible. But a transfer from film to a 2-inch quadruplex tape can always be dubbed onto any helical scan format as the need arises. In most cases, it is preferable to make additional transfers directly from the edited camera original.

The relative merits of assembling programs on videotape by film editing, or by electronic editing, should also be carefully considered. Although it may appear much easier to transfer film footage to tape and then assemble the program by electronic editing, the availability of adequate editing facilities, including at least three videotape recorders and a video switcher/mixer, must be assured. Also, the high capital cost of all this equipment (dictating a high hourly usage fee), tied up for long periods while editing decisions are being made, must be kept in mind.

Off-line editing equipment and methods, devised to ease the difficulties of gaining access to broadcast-quality recording equipment for television program production on videotape, allow an editor to make time-consuming editing decisions in a quieter working area, away from the stress and strain — and noise — of the main videotape recording and playback centre. But for these gains, a penalty must be paid: off-line editing forces the editor to deal with numbers representing real scenes and production elements. As the video pictures are being reviewed on a monitor, each frame is identified by a coded number (SMPTe time code [Fig. 3] in hours, minutes, seconds, and television frames) that is keyed into the pictures. An edit list (Fig. 4) is prepared using these numbers and other necessary information to show where cuts or effects are to appear in the final master tape. The edit list is then used to generate a punched paper tape or floppy disc for auto assembly of the program.

In contrast, the film editor works entirely with actual pictures and sound as programs are being built, scene-by-scene, on an editing table. However, the final product of the editing process, including effects, can be seen only by making and projecting a print.
once a print has been made, it cannot be changed. At this stage, there may be a strong inducement to transfer the edited film to videotape, adding effects such as fades, dissolves, and superimposed lettering electronically. At the same time, electronic adjustments can be made at the telecine control console to modify picture appearance in any desired manner. If for any reason the transfer from film is found to be unacceptable, the tape can be erased and a new transfer made, with the desired changes incorporated in it.

**Film Video System Comparison**

A frequently stated objective in the development of the highly-sophisticated off-line videotape editing facilities now available is to give editors and program producers a degree of flexibility comparable with film editing. The 3/4-inch helical scan cassette recorders used in off-line editing (Fig. 5) have the capability of reproducing the pictures in slow motion down to still frame, in a manner similar to a film editing table. But the resemblance ends there. The individual picture images in film frames can be seen with the eye over an illuminated panel in the editing table, and the equipment needed to recreate picture movement consists of a very simple mechanical apparatus and a light source, superimposing successive film frames at any desired rate on a small rear projection screen.

Producing a video picture for viewing is a much more complex process. First, the video signals must be recovered from the recorded tracks on the tape by a moving magnetic head. Then the video signals have to be displayed on a television picture monitor by a scanning electron beam to recreate the picture images.

Electronic editing has been greatly simplified by the use of coded frame identification that enables any scene in a large roll of recordings to be located automatically by entering the corresponding numbers in the machine control panel. Film editing, on the other hand, is usually carried out by breaking down the camera originals into individual scenes and hanging these lengths of film on pegs in an editing bin, each one identified by a tab showing the scene number.

Some work has been done to develop a time-coding system for film, but, so far, most of this effort has been confined to Europe. The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) has been hailed by *American Cinematographer* as a revolutionary new approach to time marking on film. Gunther Bevier of the Steenbeck Company describes an editing table they were developing in a paper in the August 1975, *SMPTE Journal*. And K. H. Trissl of IRT (Institut für Rundfunktechnik GmbH) shows how this type of editing table can be used to automatically synchronize sound tracks with picture film by simply pressing a button (*BKSTS Journal*, November 1977). Film time coding has been used mainly in multicamera productions for synchronization of film cameras with the sound recorder (usually three cameras with one sound recorder). In film editing, there is less pressure to save time by speeding up the work, mainly because film is edited in sequence on simple and relatively inexpensive equipment. Also, since the action within a sequence often suggests or even dictates the way scenes should be assembled, editors can retain their creative objectives more easily working directly with film pictures and sound as compared with the electronic methods.

To be able to take advantage of the most favorable features of film and electronic editing methods — even to decide whether a program should be assembled in one way or another — the program producer needs to know how to organize these different operations in the most efficient manner. It is not unusual for films to be prepared for transfer by personnel isolated from those engaged in assembling programs on videotape. At a videotape centre, the production team may be advised to bring in all the available film footage so that the program can be assembled by electronic editing only to find afterwards that the costs might have been substantially reduced by arranging with a film editor to prepare the film footage for transfer in the most economical way. The editor, in general, needs to know how film is handled in making transfers from telecine to videotape, so that in assembling the camera originals into A&B rolls, for example, a successful transfer can be made.

**Common Practice**

A&B roll editing (Figs 6a and 6b) has been a most useful and frequently employed method in film printing operations for many years. With this method, effects such as fades, dissolves, and superimposed titles and credits can be added by printing, first the A roll and then the B roll, from common start marks, frame synchronization being maintained by the film printer. In modern film laboratories, printers are controlled by a punched paper tape or a microprocessor that counts the number of perforations (hence the
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Electronic Editing of Film Programs

Electronic editing avoids any cutting and splicing of the original videotape recordings or transfers from film. Portions of recordings can be dubbed (recorded) electronically onto a program master tape, leaving the originals intact.

Two videotape machines are needed to make a simple edit. A reel containing the original recordings or film transfers is placed on one machine (A), and a blank roll to become the master program tape is placed on another machine (B). The A machine records the scenes being dubbed onto the program master tape.

At the beginning of a program assembly operation, the first scene must be located in the roll of recordings on the A machine. The B machine is switched to the record mode. When the two machines are set in motion, by the operator depressing a combined start button, this scene is recorded onto the program master tape. A search is then started for the second scene in

![Fig. 7. 2-inch quadruplex videotape.](image)

the reel of recordings. After this scene has been located, the outgoing edit point in the second scene (on the A machine) and the ingoing edit point in the first scene (on the B machine) must be selected and identified by cue marks. These could be actual marks made with a felt-tip pen on the back of the tapes, but more often the cues consist of beep tones recorded in the cue tracks of the videotape.

Again the two machines are started, with the B machine in the playback mode reproducing the tail end of the first scene previously recorded. At the cue, the machine is switched to the record mode, either manually by the operator or automatically by the beep tones in the cue track. When the switchover is made on the machine, the remaining video and audio tracks after the outgoing edit point of the first scene and new video and audio from the second scene are laid down on the tape. Continuing the end of the second scene. This procedure is repeated, scene-by-scene, until the program has been assembled.

A properly-made electronic splice appears as a straight cut between the two scenes. If necessary, the sound can be laid down on the master tape separately from the picture by making a "sound only" edit. This is the basic electronic editing procedure. In practice, an experienced program producer can make an edit in less time, but the task of searching for wanted scenes in the reel of recordings (often several reels in some programs) and locating the in and out edit points in successive scenes before the splices can be made, usually takes more time and effort.

Simplicity is Complex

To simplify and speed up the process of program assembly, highly-sophisticated editing facilities have been developed. One of the most important videotape editing aids developed in the past few years is the SMPTE time and control code (Fig. 9).

All videotape recording formats allow space for a continuous longitudinal cue track (Audio 2) on one edge of the tape. Beep tones or pulses recorded on this cue track can provide for semi-automatic machine operation.

The SMPTE time and control code consists of a stream of pulses recorded in the cue track. Each television frame is identified by an address consisting of a series of coded pulses. The code can be recorded on the tape in two ways: first, by recording a scheduled time code at the start of a recording or in time of day from a clock; second, by recording the time code as the picture is being recorded on another tape.

It is customary to record the time and control code on the videotape at the time the original recordings or transfers from film are being made. At the same time, or in a subsequent viewing session, editing notes and a recording log should be prepared, essentially the same as a camera report used in film production. The recording log should also show the time-code address for each scene. The start of scene 23, for example, might be identified with the scene descriptor "Harry opens door and yells", and the time-code address as -- 10 43 18 16 -- that is, the 18th frame in the 16th second (a 1 25 television frames per second) after 10:43 a.m.

When the time comes to locate this scene in a roll of recordings, the time-code address is dialed or entered on a keyboard on the control panel of the playback machine. The machine automatically searches for that address; and after it has been located, cue up that particular frame at the playback head, or at some predetermined number of frames ahead of the first frame, to allow for machine run-up time.

The control function of the SMPTE time and control code is an invaluable aid in editing and assembling programs on videotape. By entering the outgoing and ingoing frame addresses for the splice point between two scenes, the machines will make the splice automatically on these frames. Of course, the machines used for editing must be equipped with the necessary search and control facilities for use of the codes recorded in the cue tracks of the tapes.

![Fig. 8. 1-inch helical scan (type C) videotape.](image)

The second part of this article, to be printed next issue, will cover on- and off-line editing, edit lists for program assembly, double-system videotape editing, editing films before transfer to videotape, electronic editing effects, the need for sync, post-production facilities, double-system alternatives, untouchable negatives and double-system sound.★

![Fig. 9. SMPTE time code display.](image)
Using the Louma Crane

Television commercial production has provided the basis of training and livelihood for most of the Australian feature film industry technicians and artists. It is also a source of innovative and complex technology to service the need for startling images that communicate quickly and with impact.

Ian Baker is a Melbourne director-cameraman noted for his feature work as director of photography on "The Devil's Playground" and "The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith", and for a number of award-winning commercials. Recently, he used the Louma crane for the first time in Australia, in the production of commercials for the launch of the Datsun Bluebird.

Ian Baker

When did you first consider using the Louma for the commercials?

While I was in the initial meetings with the agency, I was tap-dancing as I described these incredible shots around a moving car that only the Louma could do. So, when everyone loved the idea, we were really committed to use that piece of equipment. Then there was a time when I pulled back from the idea because I didn't want to attempt the shoot if I couldn't have the production back-up to do it properly. That was solved when we got together with AAV.

*Fred Harden is a film and television producer for the advertising agency John Clemenger Pty. Ltd. Melbourne.

What was Lavalou like to work with?

Great. Whenever I explained what shot I wanted, he said, "Fantastic." He was impressed with the way we used its

What did it cost?

Mega-bucks! Out of respect for the clients, I can only say that the equipment and operator alone cost more than the total budget of the usual 30-second commercial. We offered the crane to a few production companies for a share of the freight costs, but had no takers.

The main cost was the freight. They freighted every counter-weight, which was ridiculous because we didn't know what came with it and we didn't have time to say, "Don't send weights, we'll use sandbags." We did use the weights because they were so well designed: they moved along a rail and you could counter-balance it instantly. That's what cost the money, freighting tons of lead out here, plus the man and his accommodation, expenses and salary for two weeks.

One thing I worried about was the pub talk. I could hear the grips saying, "It could have been done with an Elmac at a fraction of the cost." But happily when everyone saw the equipment in use, they were stunned. I would describe it as strapping the camera to a bumble bee and letting it loose. It is such an amazing piece of equipment that, in itself, that becomes a problem. One has to use it in a restrained way and not for the effect alone.

What is the Louma?

With the Louma: Tony Sprague (left), Ian Baker, Jean-Marie Lavalou, Clive Duncan and Noel Mudie.

Samuelsons have been talking about the imminent arrival of the Louma for some time. How did you arrange it so quickly for this production?

Through them we contacted the French co-designer of the Louma, Jean-Marie Lavalou, and arranged to have him bring the crane out.

With the Louma: Tony Sprague (left), Ian Baker, Jean-Marie Lavalou, Clive Duncan and Noel Mudie.
New Products and Processes

Adjusting the balance weights.

movements to fit the mood of the commercial. As we worked, if I suggested some adaption or improvement to the gear he was very receptive. They are still developing the crane and seem to appreciate the feedback and suggestions.

Jean-Marie got the crane through Customs. It took a day to uncrate it and for Samuelsons to set it up. Jean-Marie then spent a day with the grips. There were three grips to operate it — two to push the dolly and one to crane it. In fact, there were times when we had two people on the crane to stop it because, after moving at one point, we had so much inertia to stabilize.

Does it come with a standard dolly?

It is so beautifully designed, it can go on anything or be adapted to anything, and to any camera with a video split. The video feed is needed because the operator isn't out there. You can gear it to different weights and put tension on it, so it feels like you are actually moving a heavy camera to whatever degree you are used to. It is exactly the same in operation except that you aren't being thrown around and should be able to do a better job than actually being on a crane.

It will go onto an Elemack on wheels or on tracks. Its own dolly is like a grander Elemack, higher because it will pitch down much lower from its fulcrum. We used it on and off its mounting. Tony Sprague at AAV has the complete set of its operating statistics but, for instance, on the dashboard shot we used a prism and went from a 2 inch (5 cm) lens height up to a possible 17 ft (5.2 m).

The biggest move we did was an arc of about 300 degrees around the car which involved a 30 ft (9.2 m) dolly, moving from a 2-inch lens height to about a 13 ft (4 m) lens height. That shot lasts for about 30 seconds and that is quite grand when you are on a false floor and trying to work up through a light row of electronics. Also, we were on a stage and you know how hard it is to light a car and make it look good.

The fact that the crane moves through such a wide area must cause unique lighting problems . . .

Sure. For lighting we had holes in the black floor with mini-brutes underneath projecting onto a huge overhead bounce board suspended from the roof about 21 ft (6.4 m) from the top of the car. So, in fact, we were dollying through shafts of light. When you look horizontally at the car you could only see black through the holes. Unless there was dust in the air, you couldn't see the shafts of light.

Many people might criticize my use of the Louma but, with due respect, you have to understand how difficult it is to light a car and do such a movement. Remember you are looking first in one side of the car then the other. So, using the crane meant we had lights on either side of the lady in the back, both on rheostats. When we moved from one side to the other, we would fade one up and the other down, with the lady throwing a piece of black velvet over the light that was in shot. We had people walking behind the camera putting masks over the camera to stop the reflections in the car. Then, whenever we crossed through one of the shafts of light, it would often cast a shadow of the crane onto the bounce board which you could see in the car. So, we had people lying on the floor with black cutters shuttering the light-shaft as the crane was about to cross it and someone uncovering another one to get the exposure.

In that shot we had about 18 people performing some highly-timed function, including the talent in the car turning the headlights up and down as we moved to the front. It is hard to appreciate the technical nature of what the machine did for us and what its use required. The total staging of the shot took about two weeks and we shot seven spots in six days, most of which were pullouts from the 90 sec.

Was there a particular reason you shot on videotape?

We had so many things going on that I
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The Louma in operation.

Cinema Papers, July-August — 275

Tony Sprague (AAV)

How is the pan and tilt head tensioned?

No, it was all counter-balanced. It was literally only a finger that was needed to move it. You didn’t have to heave at all. Sometimes, however, an operator was needed to slow it down at the end of a move because it had built up inertia. Noel Moodie was at the front end of the arm guiding it and he was dancing like a ballerina as he dodged in and out of bounce boards and lights.

What is the function of the semi-circular white gears at the post and on the head?

They are linked with a rod that goes through the centre of the tube and act together to keep the camera level when the arm is raised or lowered. The operator doesn’t have to tilt the camera to keep it horizontal to the floor. That is done for him and he only tilts relative to that.

Do the camera cables also go through the tube?

No, they run along it. We had the camera cables, including the zoom and focus controls that Ian operated in some of the shots, plus the leads of the lights mounted on the end. There is provision for headsets to plug into the end so that the crane operator and the two dolly operators had headsets. Clive had a headset and Ian had a spare set that were hooked into a cassette player so they could all hear the music and word cues.

What was the dolly like?

The dolly that came with it was a heavy duty dolly like a Rolls running on Elemack tracks or wheels. The centre section we used was about 3.5 ft (1.1 m), but you can go to a 5 ft (1.5 m) one. There are adjustable stays that brace it solidly.

Did Jean-Marie do any of the operating?

No, but he was a tremendous help. There were moves that we had planned the way we would with a normal Elemack and a jib arm. But he was able to say, “Instead of doing that, why not set the tracks this way?” He saved us a lot of time.

Was it difficult to swing or tilt the arm?

No, the boom is fixed. It is made up of sections and if you want to change the length there is a special trolley that you put under the camera head to support it. You drop it down, take the weights off, unscrew the end section and insert another piece. It only takes a few minutes. The weights have nylon centres and are on a cam so that they slide easily yet lock into place with the flick of a lever. They weigh about 15 kg a piece.

The machinery is as refined as, say, open-heart surgery. There is no noise and it is beautifully made. You would have to see it to appreciate my remark about strapping it to a bumblebee. The greatest fears I had about justifying the cost in bringing it out here were resolved on the first day when all the clients came to see this wonderful machine. Jean-Marie just got on to the wheels and made the camera do loop-the-loops in the air. That was enough. They didn’t want to see it shoot; they knew they had spent their money wisely. So did I!

I think it is the sort of machine that could be easily misused. You should start out with the idea and then realize it with the machine. It would also be invaluable where danger is involved. For instance, you can crane over a cliff or into a heat area, or where there is going to be flying glass or a crashing car. You could have it right down in front of the car. Okay, if it gets hit it is an expensive hit. But you certainly don’t have an operator to get used to not having the weight of the camera against him or his eye to the viewfinder.

How long did it take to unpack and set up the crane?

When we first set it up at Samuelsons, there was Jean-Marie, myself and a couple of the young guys from Sammies, and it took us an hour. That was with Jean-Marie saying, “That bit in that box goes there.” None of us had a clue which bit went where.

Could you strike it as quickly?

With a trained crew you could set it up or strike it in half an hour. It would be slightly longer to set up the video split. The length of the arm makes a difference to the speed of set up because after you extend it beyond 17 ft (5.2 m) you have to add bracing pieces to strengthen it. But it’s all beautifully made; there is a yoke on the end to attach guy ropes to and there is a handle that tightens it quickly.

Is there some motorized extension of the arm possible or is it all mechanical?

No, the boom is fixed. It is made up of sections and if you want to change the length there is a special trolley that you put under the camera head to support it. You drop it down, take the weights off, unscrew the end section and insert another piece. It only takes a few minutes. The weights have nylon centres and are on a cam so that they slide easily yet lock into place with the flick of a lever. They weigh about 15 kg a piece.

frightened to see not just a video split, which is not a very satisfactory image, but what we were really getting. I couldn’t wait for the following day to find the guy didn’t suffer the light at the right time.

The machine obviously impressed you. Do you see yourself using it again?

It is a great machine. The next time I do a feature, the first piece of equipment I would consider using would be the Louma. I could easily justify it to any producer. The amount of production value you would get out of the use of the crane, plus the saving in time in being able to move quickly around any interior or from interior to exterior or on exterior moves, would easily justify it.

The great thing about Jean-Marie as a co-designer is that whatever you wanted to do, you would put the problem to him and, even if they went away for six months and totally redesigned the thing, he would make sure you could do the move.
Will your next TV or movie music score win an award?

The composers listed here are available to the film, TV and advertising industries. Their diverse talents cover the musical spectrum through classical, jazz to contemporary music.

Kevin Peak

Kevin Peak, after receiving a classical musical education in Adelaide, went to the U.K. to pursue his musical studies at the Royal Academy of Music and Trinity College of Music. He became one of the most sought-after session guitarists in Europe with such names as Manfred Mann, Tom Jones, Olivia Newton-John, Mary Hopkin, Shirley Bassey and Mel Torme. He has made his name internationally as a classical solo guitarist on the concert platform but of late he has turned more and more to composition. Some of his film and TV work includes Animal Olympics (BBC); Tales of the Unexpected (Anglia); sold in 45 countries); and The Long Good Friday (feature), in conjunction with Francis Monkman.

As a member of the famous “Sky” group he has also composed and arranged many of their most successful hits.

Kevin is now intending to spend much of his time in Australia with his family.

Ron Goodwin

Ron Goodwin, with more than 70 film scores to his credit, is an undisputed master of his craft. His music ranges from jazz to classical treatments. He is a perfectionist with an enormous sense of fun, which has earned him the deep regard of his colleagues throughout show business. He broadcasts, records, composes film music and appears on the concert platform.

As a result of touring Australia and New Zealand as guest conductor with the major symphony orchestras, he has formed a very special relationship and fondness for the industry here and the Antipodean landscape.

The following are just a few of his outstanding credits:

1958-60 Village of the Damned I’m All Right Jack
1960 Trials of Oscar Wilde (Warwick Films)
1962 Day of the Triffids
1963 633 Squadron
1964 Of Human Bondage
1965 Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines
1966 That Riviera Touch
1968 Where Eagles Dare
1969 Battle of Britain
1972 Frenzy
1973 The Little Mermaid (Cartoon feature)
1974 The Happy Prince (Cartoon feature)
1977 Candleshoe (Disney)
1978 Force Ten from Navarone

Dudley Simpson

Dudley Simpson was born and educated in Melbourne. He is currently living in the U.K.

For further details of dates, times and availability of the above artists please do not hesitate to contact:

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PRODUCTION SURVEY

Producers, Directors and Production Companies

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Cinema Papers Pty Ltd, 644 Victoria St., North Melbourne, Vic. 3051
Telephone: (03) 329 5081

Cinema Papers, July—August — 277
**THE BEST OF FRIENDS**

Writer: Kit Denton
Director: Scott Hicks
Producers: Jane Campion, Michael Gudinski

**Cast:**
- Diana McLean (Val)
- Jon Blake (Ron)
- Chris Haywood (Phil)
- Kati Edwards (Ron's mother)
- Candy Raymond (Barbara)
- William Murray (Gerry)
- John Claro (Dave)
- Mary Brough (Vera)
- Tasmin Greig (Liz)
- Neil Hicks (Jim)
- Mark Lee (Bruce)

**Synopsis:**
A suburban community is blissfully unaware that it is about to be turned upside down by a series of events that will change their lives forever. The film follows the lives of several families as they navigate the challenges of love, friendship, and community. Through their shared experiences, they discover the true meaning of friendship and the importance of supporting each other in times of need.

**Length:**
95 mins

**Budget:**
$7m

**Shooting stock:**
Eastmancolor

**Length:**
35mm

**Format:**
Narrative

**Scheduled release:**
December, 1981

**THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER**

Director: Mark Egerton
Producers: Michael Hirst, Phillip Noyce

**Cast:**
- John Blake (Blace), Candy Raymond (Clare)
- Chris Haywood (Jack), Graeme Blundell (Tom)
- Barry Cracknell (Neal), Heidi Ellis (Susie)

**Synopsis:**
A young man from the outback sets out on a journey of self-discovery, facing challenges that test his courage and determination. Through his adventures, he learns the value of community, family, and the beauty of the Australian landscape.

**Length:**
95 mins

**Budget:**
$3m

**Shooting stock:**
Eastmancolor

**Format:**
Narrative

**Scheduled release:**
February, 1982
MYSTERY AT CASTLE HOUSE

Producers: Peter Maxwell, Michael Hoosey

Director: Peter Maxwell

Based on the original story
by Geoffrey Blythe

Starring: Garry Hannam, Garry McDonald

Synopsis: The murder of the richest man in the world

PARTNERS

DOCTORS & NURSES

Producers: Peter Maxwell, Michael Hoosey

Director: Donald Crisp

Based on the original story by

Synopsis: The lives of doctors and nurses

WE OF THE NEVER NEVER

Producers: Peter Maxwell, Michael Hoosey

Director: Donald Crisp

Synopsis: The lives of doctors and nurses
Producer Wayne Groom talks with Atlab's Jim Parsons.

When it comes to Super 16, Atlab leads the way.
PRODUCTION SURVEY

Editor: Stuart Armstrong
Photographer: Peter Johnson
Director: John Bukstel
Act: Peter Johnson
Sound: Brian McEwan
Gauge: 16mm

1982 COMMONWEALTH GAMES
Prod company: Film Australia
Prod, company: Trade Union
Dist company: Film Australia

MEETINGS
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Trade Union
Synopsis: The story of history and the development of the Australian Cinema.

THE NEVER LEARN
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia
Synopsis: A feature documentary about the early days of the Australian Film Industry.

NOISE
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia
Synopsis: The effects of noise on the human body.

VICTORIAN FILM CORPORATION
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia

CRIME DETECTION
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia
Synopsis: A feature documentary about the history of crime detection.

THE 1934 LONDON TO MELBOURNE AIR RACE
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia
Synopsis: A documentary about the classic air race.

WESTERNPORT CATCHMENT AREA
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia
Synopsis: A series of documentaries on the area's natural resources.

THE WET FLYMAN'S DREAM
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia
Synopsis: A feature documentary about the life of a fly fisherman.

THE UNSUSPECTING CONSUMER
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia
Synopsis: A documentary about consumer protection.

THE STATE OF THE ARTS
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia
Synopsis: A documentary about the state of the arts in Victoria.

STREET KIDS
Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia
Synopsis: A documentary about the lives of teenage boys in the inner city of Melbourne.

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Prod company: Film Australia
Dist company: Film Australia

MEETINGS
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Gallipoli

Brian McFarlane

The opening image of the film is that of a boy doing loosening and breathing exercises to commands rapped out by an old man. At dawn, in an empty West Australian landscape in May 1915, the boy practise his sprint as his uncle times him.

"What are your legs?" - "Steel springs." - "How fast can you run?" - "Like a leopard." - "How fast are you going to run?" - "Like a leopard." The boy has his answers by rote as the old man drills him. The incantation comes back to him just before the final scene as he climbs out of the trench at Gallipoli, stepping over the dead and wounded, to run madly into the line of the Turkish artillery. And the film's last few scenes hold the boy in the heroic posture of the runner, now streaked with blood.

Between the opening and closing images, Peter Weir has considerably extended his range, thematically and aesthetically. In his earlier feature films, he seemed chiefly preoccupied with the extraordinary luring at the edges of the mundane, with rational man confronted by matters in which his rationality no longer serves him. In Gallipoli, his concerns are at once less metaphysical and more sociological, less an illustration of a pre-determined thesis and more an exploration of attitudes. In spite of its title, the film is not a war epic; in fact, it deliberately refuses invitations to be so. Its first and last shots are of an individual and this proves to be more than mere artistic tidiness.

Gallipoli is not, then, a "war film" so much as a film about war; about the kinds of attitudes Australians and particular individuals took towards it in 1915; about, in a broader sense, what it felt like to be Australian then — and perhaps still does feel like. The second half of the film's length is taken up with scenes of war (in Egypt and later at Gallipoli). The earlier half has to do with Archy Hamilton's (Mark Lee) career as a sprinter, his meeting with Frank Dunne (Mel Gibson), whom Archy defeats at an athletic meeting, and their "joining up". Archy in the Light Horse, Frank in the Infantry.

The two halves of the film fit together because there are continuing ideas which Weir explores in an unfrazzled, unemphatic way and which gain in cogency through being pursued in different milieux. I mean ideas like competitiveness and mateship and sporting spirit as aspects of our national myth. As well, the earlier half of the film reinforces the idea of Australia's isolation from the rest of the world and the second half dramatizes the enforced surrender of that sense of isolation.

Archy's being a sprinter is a way of stressing the individual competitive aspect of the Australian character; its solitariness is created in Russell Boyd's glowing images of the austere blankness of the landscape. Stronger than the competitive urge, though, is the feeling for mateship: the friendship between rural Archy and urban, knowing Frank which develops after Archy has beaten Frank.

This relationship is developed in a long sequence in the first half of the film, in which the two head for Perth where Archy plans to join up. Stranded in the desert at a railway siding, they are told there will be a two weeks wait for the next Perth train, "unless you're game enough to cross the lake." Accepting this challenge they set off across the lake's dry bed, the Aboriginal railway worker warning them, "If the snakes don't get ya, the blackfellas will," and two incongruous figures set off in a dry, empty landscape of shimmering heat.

This landscape will have a visual echo in the desolate crags of Gallipoli, but a more important aural echo is also set up. Frank's joking reference to Burke and Wills pre-figures another doomed enterprise — the Gallipoli landing — which has also passed into the national mythology.

During their trek to Perth, Archy and Frank achieve a friendship that surpasses their different attitudes to the war. "It's not our bloody war — it's an English war," Frank claims, and Archy counters with, "You're a bloody coward." But Archy's patriotism is a mindless affair. When they meet an old man with a camel in the desert, the old man hasn't heard of the war (he has never been to Perth either, but he once knew a German), and Archy tries unsuccessfully to explain to him what the war is about.

This brief scene is rich in resonance: it encapsulates Australian isolation from world affairs (and underlines this by the very nature of the terrain), muddled patriotism to an undefined cause (and this notion gets its supreme expression at Gallipoli itself), and casual indifference to another country's quarrels. There is further an element of preposterousness in the very notion of this discussion taking place in a vast stretch of desert.

The two men finally reach Perth, are recruited and then separated until, months later, they meet in a field exercise in Egypt — an exercise in which Light Horse and Infantry get rid of their mutual animosity by acting as enemy to each other. An officer breaks up their friendly reunion with, "This is supposed to be warfare," so they lie down as if wounded. Major Barton (Bill Hunter), influenced by their running prowess, permits a transfer which allows them to go to Gallipoli. They want to be part of the action; in time they get their chance, with inevitable results.

If narrative were merely a matter of plot, the film would be thin and episodic enough. It would be a more or less interesting, even touching, account of a friendship casually begun and arbitrarily ended. However, the film's texture is persistently richer than such an account would suggest.

Gallipoli is not a polemical film: it is not essentially a "war film"; equally, it resists the label of "anti-war film". I don't mean that it celebrates war or that it approves of World War I and Australia's participation in it, but, rather, that its interest is in the way people react to and in war. This kind of interest leads Weir to admire the feeling that grows between Archy and Frank, between Frank and his former railway-ganger mates, between Archy and his...
Grendel, Grendel, Grendel

old tormentor Less (Harold Hopkins) to turns up briefly in the Gallipoli trenches.

Weir is interested in why these men go to war, why Australians, so cut off from world events, should involve themselves in Britain's military and political problems, and what happens to them when they do commit themselves to the war. That the film is concerned with individuals in war is affirmed by the striking emphasis on close-ups as opposed to the sweeping panoramic shot. (In the mock battle between the Infantry and the Light Horse, there are some stunning long shots of serried ranks, and it occurred to me that this was the last of the CinemaScope wars, but this is not where Weir's interest lies.)

In his exploration of why these Australians go to war, Weir suggests that the competitive urge (races, bets on races — on anything) is part of the Australian consciousness, that it's no more to be resisted than the sea and, if lost, the soldiers are warned about in Egypt.

The first half of the film is full of people challenging each other and of others betting on the outcome. The challenge of a war, however dimly its causes are understood, takes place in a context of competition. Archy's first reference to joining up is cut short by his uncle's reply, "You're under age", but Archy counters this by talking of his uncle's youthful escapades, competition, sporting spirit, enterprise: war offers a wider opportunity for their display.

Archy's younger brothers and sisters articulate, felt. In one charming fact: the Scyldings, sending so rich a gift to the new king, set out in their ship with food and water, no marbles if he betrayed him. And, at Gallipoli itself, it is clear that they are to draw the Turks out of the way so as to protect the British. Officer/men resentment (hinted at as the soldiers watch Major Barton drink champagne as he listens to his gramophone) falls before the stronger resentment against the British when Barton is commanded by the British Colonel (John Morris) to order his men to advance, with bayonets at the ready but no bullets, in spite of the Turks having dug in. They are cut to pieces and the camera pans slowly over the dead and dying.

The men who are left know that the next order will send them to death, and medals, watches, rings and other mementos are left in the Australian trench when they climb out into "the valley of the shadow of death" as the 23rd Psalm is read on the soundtrack. For a change, a freeze-frame ending means something: the final frame leaves us with a clear sense of lives cut short in utter futility.

Near the start of this review, I suggested that this film shows Weir extending his range and changing direction. In doing so, I suspect he has made his most successful film to date, and also that David Williamson's screenplay has been a major asset and critique of subsequent Australian involvement in world events, but this will not be crucial to a reading of the film.

Gallipoli is more loosely inclusive than the latter two, less determinedly enigmatic than the former two. It knows where it is going, without being in any particular hurry about it or without spelling out its themes. It manages to be a humane and moving reconstruction of times past without succumbing to nostalgia; those who wish to may see in it a critique of subsequent Australian involvement in world events, although they had little or no basis in fact:

"He spoke of how God had been kind to the Scyldings, sending so rich a harvest. The people sat beaming, bleary-eyed and fat, nodding their approval of God. He spoke of God's great generosity in sending them so wise a king. They raised their cups to God and Hrothgar, and Hrothgar smiled, bits of food in his beard.

One can easily see the appeal of such a story for the film's producer, Philip Adams, who in his other vocation is an advertising executive, a contemporary Shaper.

Stitt's Grendel, Grendel, Grendel remains faithful to the sardonic tone of the novel while injecting the film with a good deal more humor, some of it quite broad, such as Uther's warning to the king that he would have his royal marbles if he betrayed him. Also, Stitt creates a different personality for the selection of Hrothgar's idiotic Viking warriors and assemblage, and then provides them with an English, notably Yorkshire, accent delivered by Bobby Bright. Ernie

Left: Frank and Archy in Perth, before going to war. Gallipoli.
sacrificed a couple of live virgins instead of a deer.

Grendel decides to give them something to worry about, so, in front of everybody at Mead-Hall, he bites Wulf athel and only regret being that he didn’t take the soldier's helmet off as he had damaged a tooth. Powerless, Hrothgar welcomes Beowulf to destroy Grendel, as Unferth, his resident hero, had earlier been humiliating by Grendel. However, instead of a battle between a godlike hero and a vicious monster, as in the original epic poem, Gardner and Stitt’s film transform Beowulf into an insane figure who leaps upon and destroys a vulnerable Grendel.

The film opens with a shot of an isolated farmhouse where three men appear to be waiting inside. The film then cuts to another scene of a man arriving at an airport with a suitcase and getting into a taxi. He dismantes the false bottom of the case, revealing a hoard of British currency. He then hands the case to another man. The same man is seen in a bar chatting up two younger men. An arrangement is made and the younger men go outside while he pays for the drinks. The two men are immediately grabbed, bundled into a car, shot and dumped by a road. In the next scene a cuts backs to the farmhouse. A suitcase arrives for the three men, but before they open it they are jumped upon by the men who are behind the abduction. Over the film, Grendel, Grendel, Grendel: a clever, intelligent film incorporating a subtle plea for understanding and tolerance, although it may have trouble finding an audience. Except for the sporadic attempts by Ralph Bakshi, the animation pioneer, the importance placed on consideration as an important land­mark for a rather remarkable achievement.

The Long Good Friday

Stephen Garton

The Long Good Friday begins as an action thriller and ends as a study of a man incapable of adapting to a new set of circumstances. An interesting character, Harold Shand (Bob Hoskins), is a contemporary London crime boss. The film sets out to present a logical expression of a culture's dark or repressed side, and his speculations regarding the function of a monster in the human cosmos. The reasons for this are complex, although the importance placed on considerations such as realism and verisimilitude by popular audiences are obviously important factors.

It is to be hoped that Grendel, Grendel, Grendel goes some way towards breaking down such considerations by generating an understanding of the animated film as a legitimate form of adult entertainment.

Certainly Stitt’s film deserves serious consideration as an important landmark in the Australian film industry and as a development of that form of animation pioneered by UPA in the U.S. in the 1950s, a tradition breaking approach away from the strongly naturalistic style which had dominated commercial animation up to that point.

The film shows Harold basking in the fruits of this arrangement. He has his yacht, mistress (Helen Mirren), casino, penthouse apartment and cars, and his religious ‘mum’ can be chauffeured to church in a Rolls-Royce, while his mother is inside the church. Then the person originally involved in handling everything is shot and his suitcase is chopped to death at a public pool. Soon after, a bomb is found in Harold’s casino. By a stroke of luck the wires have come loose and it fails to explode.

Harold is worried by these events because they threaten his advantage. He deals with the two Mafia representatives, the latter of whom is in turn killed by the public to the restricted audience. The film then proceeds to explain how Harold took advantage of the situation, his law enforcement agency, and the Mafia. The latter is depicted as a group of essentially middle-class crime bosses who, with a bit of luck and a lot of thuggery, have made good. He is depicted as crass and un­professional and with a bit of luck and a lot of thuggery, has made good. He is depicted as crass and unprofessional, but he is still very much a part of the system. The central character, Harold Shand, is a classic example of British social mobility. He is basically a working-class boy who, with a bit of luck and a lot of thuggery, has made good. He is depicted as crass and unprofessional, but he is still very much a part of the system.
business executives, more at home in a world of boardrooms and corporate deals. They are smooth, unflappable and the youngest is a product of the Harvard Law School. This serves to highlight Harold’s working-class origins and his inability to deal with a new force in the London underworld. He naively believes that the old ways will win out. Events prove him wrong.

The Long Good Friday has all the elements of a good action thriller. The early sequences are engaging and Hoskins gives a skilful portrayal of Harold. The film, however, creates a dilemma of purpose for itself, between developing the complexities of the historical context, within which Harold is situated, and focusing more narrowly on a deeper psychological portrait of this central character. The film opts for the latter course of action.

Unfortunately, this narrowing of focus away from the dynamics of events towards the psychology of Harold entails a number of sacrifices. Other potentially interesting characters as a consequence remain undeveloped. Harold’s mistress is initially depicted as a person of considerable intelligence and strength, and not the standard support for the male ego. Harold, in fact, relies on her to help negotiate some of his deals. The film resolves the problem of what to do with such a character, not by developing her complexities but by considering her traditionally feminine and vulnerable.

Another problem is that the film tries to engage the audience’s sympathy with Harold’s plight. There are elements of a personal psychological development, but greater intracacies of plot, Harold and his mental anguish become the centrepieces. This results in a number of superfluous scenes that do little but let Hoskins parade some of his undoubtedly acting talents. Two notable examples are his soliloquy on ‘mate- ship’, when the man stabs at the pool turns out to be his best friend, and a longer shower sequence after Harold has killed someone.

The Long Good Friday has pretensions to being more than just a thriller. In the last analysis, the casting of Hoskins creates problems for the film. He is so suited to the part that the film fails to develop either narrative context or his interactions with other characters, which may have allowed a more complex picture of Harold and his situation to emerge. The plot becomes thinner towards the end. The strategy of focusing on Harold pays dividends in the interesting closing scenes, but by then too much has been sacrificed along the way.

Roadgames
Brian McFarlane

A heroine called “Hitch” for most of Roadgames is just one of the jokes in a film full of them. It points, of course, to the source and kind of joke that makes Richard Franklin’s new film such exhilarating fun.

This is not to say that the film is just a he-man movie. Hitchcock, but that Franklin’s obvious (and stated) reverence for the master has helped to shape his own style in a way that is wholly to his advantage. He cuts with a confidence no other Australian director equals and uses it to manipulate his audience between laugh and scream with impudent ease.

In the penultimate scene, the girl, Hitch (Jamie Lee Curtis), lifts her arm and the camera cuts to a ferocious cleaver falling — on to a hunk of meat on a butcher’s counter. A murdered girl’s mouth opens for a final scream, but a cheeky aural cut replaces the sound with the din of clattering rubbish bins. These are not mere rhetorical flourishes, but point to a director with an instinctive grasp of narrative technique and what it can do to our perception of reality as invigorating as it is rare. Roadgames is more tightly plotted than Patrick. An admirer of the latter, I would nevertheless acknowledge some narrative stonewalling and some unobserved incredulities. In Roadgames, if we judge some events on a criterion of credibility they will be found wanting (for example, when Hitchcock is behind the supporting cast turns up in Perth at a crucial moment). The point is that the film is almost insolent in daring us to react with concern for literal realism.

One doesn’t register the recurring presence of an accountant’s florid wife, a motor-cyclist in red, or the goonish boat-owner as an affront to realism, so much as their representing the protagonist’s growing sense of bewilderment and harassment. In Patrick there were some loose ends and some straining of credibility that drew attention to themselves as inadequacies; in Roadgames, Franklin’s control and confidence have markedly increased. If one’s credibility is strained, it is meant to be, and one can see why. And there are no loose ends — and no fat.

The pre-credits sequence, for instance, wastes nothing. The film opens on a line-up of garbage cans, pans to the Car-o-tel entrance, up to the neon sign and down to the truck arriving. The camera confronts the truck head-on and cuts to Pat Quid (Stacy Keach) talking to the unseen “Bowtell”, who turns out to be a dingo. The truck radio is giving news about a mutilated female corpse found in a garbage dump.

Quid’s fatigue, his taste for clowning (using the truck radio microphone as a razor) and his literary leanings are quickly established, and so is his observer’s capacity. He watches as a green panel van draws up and, as it happens, he borely the last vacant room he bores down in the sleeping compartment of the truck and starts to pluck a guitar, the camera cuts to the naked body of a girl in a motel room, also with guitar. The door behind

her opens; the killer stands there, garot-
ting wire in hand linked visually with the
guitar wire and the girl's thin metal
neckband; and as her mouth opens in a
scream, the film cuts to the morning
noise of garbage bins being rattled, and
Boswell sniffing among the green
garbage bags as Quid sees a hand and
face appear around the edge of a motel-
window curtain.

This is all fast, dense and resonant.
Everything in it - garbage, Boswell,
truck, news broadcast, panel van, wire
and, above all, Quid's weary, playful
voyeurism - assumes an unobtrusive
narrative significance. Visual and aural
signifiers make their points about plot
and character — and directorial inten-
tion — with wit and economy.

The cross-Nullarbor journey (its
beauty and emptiness stunningly
evoked by Vincent Monton's camera-
work), as Quid transports a trailer-load of
refrigerated carcasses to Perth, is the
setting for the long central section of a
teasing thriller. Its events are given a
more than episodic shape by Quid's
gradual surrendering of his observer
status as he becomes increasingly
certain that the green panel van, with its
mysterious ice-box, is linked with the
murders broadcast on the radio news.

As Quid begins his journey with "ful
devout courage", invoking Chaucer,
Shelley and others as he goes, the pace
is casually comic as he plays his
favorite road game of inventing little
dramas about the other travellers on the
roads. In the film's chief miscal-
culation, he confides these to the
dog/dingo and the film teeters on the
brink of whimsy. Teeters, but doesn't
quite topple, because he shortly
acquires a talking companion. She is
Hitch, the pretty girl he is about to pass
for the third time before he breaks
regulations and picks her up. And the
film needs her company at this stage
even more than he does.

The film gathers a new tension as
Hitch joins Quid in his determination to
catch the driver of the green panel van
and a new strand of sexual banter is
added to the film's dramatic texture.
Stacy Keach and Jamie Lee Curtis
recall all those Hitchcock duos from
Robert Donat and Madeleine Carroll,
through James Stewart and Grace
Kelly, to Bruce Dern and Barbara
Harris. There is enough good humor
and grace in their performances and
enough wit in Everett de Roche's
screenplay to sustain the comparisons.

The Franklin-De Roche collabora-
tion is the happiest in Australian films.
Together, they judge very accurately
how far we need to be sympathetically
involved with the protagonists, how
much they need to be individualized
(Hitch is a diplomat's casually-rebel-
lious daughter with an interest in the
killer's sex life; Quid's eclectic reading
embraces Donne, Hitchcock, The New
Yorker, and Grunt, all glimpsed in one
brief shot), and how to keep the
audience guessing about the other
characters they meet on the way.

These latter scarcely need the jokey
names they are given — Frita Frugal,
Sneezy Rider, Captain Careful, etc. —
but they are written and directed for the
same sort of enigmatic fun and tension
Hitchcock got from assorted nuns in high
heels, professors with missing little
fingers and gourmet cooks. These
characters are each given a scene in
which they are thoroughly worked for
suspense (at cliff-edge or in roadside
toilet) or for laughter (in the roadside
wreck of a motor boat), and they all
assemble at the finale of the chase in the
narrow back-streets of Perth.

It is in the overall rhythm of the film
that Franklin and De Roche really
show their skill. They know precisely
how to build to a climax — and then
deflate it (witness the scene where Quid
breaks into the panel van, opens the ice-
box, expecting to find who knows what
and finds instead ...). They
understand, too, the superiority of
suspense to surprise, so that the film's
impact grows from structured cunning
rather than reliance on moments of
shock. The latter are there too, but to
sharpen the edge of the suspense rather
than to replace it.

Quid among the refrigerated carcasses in his
truck. Roadgames.

Roadgames. Directed by: Richard Franklin. Pro-
ducer: Richard Franklin. Executive producer:
Bernard Schwartz. Screenplay: Everett de Roche.
Director of photography: Vincent Monton. Editor:
Edward McQueen. Music: Brian May. Production
director: Jon Dowling. Sound: Paul
Clark. Cast: Stacy Keach (Quid), Jamie Lee Curtis
(Hitch), Marijke Edward (Frita), Grant Page
(Smith/Joan), Bill Stacey (Capt. Careful),
Thaddeus Smith (Abbott), Stephen Millichamp
(Jones), Colin Vancazo (Frigid), John Murphy
(Renny). Production company: Quest Films.
Distributor: G.U.O. 35mm. 101 min. Australia.
1981.
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The Postman Always Rings Twice

Geoff Mayer

James M. Cain was once described as the "20 minute egg of the hard-boiled school". His banned-in-Boston first novel, The Postman Always Rings Twice, was first published in 1934. Since then there have been six (three official) films drawing on the basic storyline. Thankfully, the most recent version, directed by Bob Rafelson, finally captures much of the delicious fatalism that characterizes Cain's work.

Two of the most significant characteristics running through Cain's most successful novels (The Postman, Sense, Doubt, Docile, untying) are what are known as the "love-rack" and the "wish-come-true". The typical Cain protagonist is found leaning over the edge of a cliff for a better look at the "wish" (a woman and sometimes money as well) and when he gets his wish, he usually falls over the precipice, clutching both. The wish, the lure of the forbidden, always invokes the love-rack, the pain that accompanies desire.

Cain's original title for the novel was Bar-B-Q, but he changed it to The Postman Always Rings Twice after hearing playwright-friend Vincent Lawrence tell a story about his nervousness while waiting for a producer about a play. When Lawrence said that his local postman would always ring twice, Cain pointed out that it was an ideal title for a cliff for a better look at the "wish" (a woman and sometimes money as well) and when he gets his wish, he usually falls over the precipice, clutching both. The wish, the lure of the forbidden, always invokes the love-rack, the pain that accompanies desire.

The Postman Always Rings Twice

Bob Rafelson's The Postman Always Rings Twice.

The overwhelming passion of Frank Chambers (Jack Nicholson) and Cora (Jessica Lange). Bob Rafelson's The Postman Always Rings Twice.

The hideous innocence of the relationship between Frank and Cora, together with the other relationships in the film (Frank-Nick, Cora-Nick), generates alternation repulsing and sympathy for each character who, at different times throughout the film, is a victim of the relationship. For example, Frank, the feudal patriarch of the cafe, unintentionally humiliates Cora on various occasions — such as massaging her breasts with his feet while she reluctantly recites Greek words. Cora, on the other hand, eagerly betrays Nick, exploits Frank and suggests murder as the only viable form of action.

In fact, Rafelson's film is totally consistent with Cain's view of the world as a place inhabited by small, selfish people — superbly brought out in Mamet's script by the deal, between the defence lawyer Katz and the insurance rep, to manipulate audience sympathy for an otherwise illicit romance between malevolent lovers.

Cain's stated interest in writing The Postman Always Rings Twice was in the examination of the lovers after the murder. Predominantly, as in Double Indemnity, the romance goes sour. Cora, believing that Frank has betrayed her at the trial, eagerly attempts to manipulate audience sympathy for an otherwise illicit romance between malevolent lovers.

Cain's original title for the novel was Bar-B-Q, but he changed it to The Postman Always Ringwice after hearing playwright-friend Vincent Lawrce tell a story about his nervousness while waiting for a producer about a play. When Lawrence said that his local postman would always ring twice, Cain pointed out that it was an ideal title for a cliff for a better look at the "wish" (a woman and sometimes money as well) and when he gets his wish, he usually falls over the precipice, clutching both. The wish, the lure of the forbidden, always invokes the love-rack, the pain that accompanies desire.

The heart of the film, and it points to the only major weakness in Rafelson's film, the ending. Certainly the whole world is shattered when one of the lovers is killed, but to leave it that ignores the conventions of a melodrama which requires that the ending must be satisfying to the audience.

Rafelson and Mamet have gone to great pains to underline the melodramatic basis of the story throughout the film — particularly in the aftermath of the courtroom scene when Frank is wheeled down a corridor full of hyperactive reporters and court officials set they deny an appropriate ending for such a melodrama. Certainly they may have rejected the ending in the novel (and MGM's 1946 version) as too sentimental, but it was certainly an appropriate conclusion for two people who ultimately refused to let the body of their husband — whom Jessica Lange, after emoting become trapped inside and suffers multiple injuries as Cora screams for help from an oncoming car.

Because of his track-record (Five Easy Pieces, Head, The King of Marvin Gardens), Rafelson should have seemingly been one of the least qualified directors to adapt Cain's lean narrative style to the screen. However, in place of the self-indulgence, the tortured self-anxious, and the pretentiousness of those earlier films, Rafelson (and Mamet) have crafted a superb, tough film where everything is kept to the essential. Scenes of ellipsis, they frequently plunge the viewer into a sequence which appears to be halfway through and then conclude at an even higher point. This is totally consistent with Cain's habit of needling scenes at the last hint of breakdown — always striving for what he called the "rising coefficient of intensity".

Certainly the lengthy murder/accident fabrication sequence in the middle of the film bears this out. The actual murder takes place quite early in the sequence, but this is followed by an attempt to make it appear like a car accident. However, as Frank hits Cora, she becomes aroused and, in a scene which is still as shocking today as it may have been to readers in 1934, Frank makes love to Cora beside the car containing the body of her husband. This sequence continues as Frank, attempting to push the car further down the cliff, becomes trapped inside and suffers multiple injuries as Cora screams for help from an oncoming car.


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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.

NB: Figures in parentheses above the grosses represent weeks in release. If more than one figure appears, the film has been released in more than one cinema during the period.

(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 International Corporation, F/W — Filmways Australian Distributors, 7K — 7 Keys Film Distributors, COL — Columbia Pictures; REG — Regent Film Distributors, CCG — Cinema Centre Group, AFC — Australian Film Commission, SAWC — South Australian Film Corporation, WCA — Music Corporation of America; S — Sharmill Films, OTH — Other. (2) Figures are drawn from capital city and inner suburban first release hardtops only. (3) Split figures indicate a multiple cinema release.
Laurence Olivier: Theatre and Cinema
Robert Daniels

Errol Flynn: The Untold Story
Charles Higham
Granada, Britain, 1980
Brian McFarlane

Laurence Olivier may well be the greatest stage actor in the world, as a film star he is of considerably less significance, and Robert Daniels' syzyphic collection of adoring reviews and his own comments does not persuade one otherwise.

The book's sub-title is "Theatre and Cinema", which suggests an equal division of interest between theatre and films, but this is patently not what the book delivers. In fact, the nine photographs on the cover are all from his film roles, including one with the ex-wife Merle Oberon, in what is still perhaps his most famous film role, in Wuthering Heights. (Though the latter photo is of an actor's movie, 'mainme idol, many might echo James Agate who found Geraldine Fitzgerald's the "one remarkable bit of playing" in the film.)

The rest of the book bears out this emphasis. Nearly 250 pages are devoted to Olivier's films, for each of which is given cast and chief credits, a synopsis of the film's plot, and a selection from the reviews. The latter are heavily dominated by The New York Times, where the egregious Bosley Crowther held sway for what seems an eternity. On Pride and Prejudice, for instance, Daniels finds it worth quoting Crowther's gush about "the most deliciously pert comedy of nature" seem to be immiscible.

"The most deliciously pert comedy of old manners, the most crisp and cracking satire in costume that we in this corner can remember ever having seen on the screen... Laurence Olivier is Darcy, that's all there is to it... the arrogant, sardonic Darcy whose pride went before a most felicitous fall."

Elusive as Daniels relies on such definitive critical sources as Variety, Time, Newsweek and Judith Crist. The overall effect of numbing adulation makes one yearn for a vipingh thirst from John Simon. And, more seriously, these gluttonous snippets make clear that even an actor's films are worth a book, then they deserve a more enlightened critical approach than they get here.

Olivier has worked with some major film directors — William Wyler (Wuthering Heights, Sister Carrie), Alfred Hitchcock (Rebecca), Joseph Mankiewicz (Sleuth), Otto Preminger (Bunny Lake is Missing) and Stanley Kubrick (Spartacus) — and it would be interesting to know how they influenced one who training was essentially for the stage. Not for a moment does this book offer any such insights. Films by directors like these are given the same weight as those of more or less competent journeymen like Guy Hamilton — or worse, like Herbert Ross. Daniels is wholly indiscriminating; so, too, it seems were most reviewers.

The format adopted here is similar to Citadel's The Films of series and I can't imagine who would find it satisfying. Anyone really interested in Olivier as a film actor will have to look further than the funeral-baked meats offered here. Olivier's great trio of Shakespearean films — Henry V, Hamlet, and Richard III — are ripe for careful reappraisal. (I deliberately exclude Othello which, like The Three Sisters and The Dance of Death, is valuable as a record of a notable stage triumph rather than as a film.) His 1970 films, including "cameos" in all-star trash like Lady Caroline Lamb, and enterprises like The Boys from Brazil and The Betsy, are, I hope, helping "to pay for three children in school, for a family, and their future". There is certainly not much else to be said for them.

Not much sense of the actor's life emerges from this dreary catalogue. Olivier married three fine actresses — the incisive and under-rated Jill Esmond, Vivien Leigh, and the dubiously prolific and underrated Nora Eddington, who seems to have been quite out of her league, and elegant, generous Patrice Wymore — for their assistance. None of them seems to have had any real idea of the darker side of the Flynn character — or for the Flynn, Warner Bros' war-winning womanizer, was really a "treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain"? That he was apparently a Nazi agent; that Tyrone Power and he were lovers (insofar as Flynn was able to love anyone); that his sexual proclivities were nothing if not ecletic, with a strong taste for voyeurism and exhibitionism; that he was an unreliable drunk for much of his acting career; that he was outrageous dishonest and, indeed, wholly corrupt in all his financial dealings; that he was intimate with Nanook of the North.

Overall, it is a repellent story and it is hard to see why Highman thought it worth telling. Certainly, he doesn't seem to know what he thinks of Flynn. On p. 363, he speaks of Flynn as "playing [in The Sun Also Rises] against his natural chutz and open-hearted good-nature", on the next page he writes, "Like many evil men, Errol was drawn to kindness and goodness only as temporary peaceable refuge from the misery of being himself." The latter statement fits the information given, but the idea of "evil" and "open-hearted good-nature" seem to be immissible.

As actor and man he seems to have had little more to recommend him than athletic endurance. His autobiography, My Wicked, Wicked Ways, is probably lies as Highman claims. The truth, as it happens, seems merely redundant.

Recent Releases
Mervyn Binns

The films are, in the end, the least of Highman's concerns. He is more interested in tracing Flynn's connection with various Nazi agents, especially Dr. Hermann Erben, and his indefatigable pursuit of sexual gratification. In the former case, he has access to previously classified documents which establish a clear case for Flynn's fascist sympathies.

In regard to his sexual activities, all sorts of people have been ready to attest to his voracity and the chilling egosim it involved. Highman thanks the three assorted cads and has had problems with for Mexican boys, the treasons worked with and for Erben. At this late stage, it would be hard to care less if it were proved that Flynn was secretly mobilizing an Eskimo invasion of the U.S. or that he was intimate with Nanook of the North.

The format adopted here is similar to the cinema or related topics and released in Australia between May and June 1981. All titles are on sale in bookshops.

The publishers and the local distributors are listed in each entry. If no distributor is indicated, the book is imported (Imp.). The recommended prices listed are for paperbacks, unless otherwise indicated, and are subject to variations between bookshops and states.

The list was compiled by Mervyn R. Binns of the Sydney Morning Herald. Popular and General Interest

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Another provision enabling the Commissioner to reduce the amount qualifying for a Division 10BA deduction is Section 124ZAL, which empowers the Commissioner to reduce, by such amount as he considers reasonable, the amount taken to have been expended by the investor in producing, or by way of contribution to the cost of producing a film, if at any time the investor, before the copyright in the film comes into existence (i.e., before the film is completed), partially assigns or agrees to assign the investor's interest in the film copyright. The explanatory memorandum does not explain why the power is needed, nor what reduction would be appropriate in the circumstances. Will entry into a film distribution agreement be treated as a partial assignment of copyright? The section seems calculated to deter producers and investors from entering into any marketing agreements prior to completion of the film. If so, the effect will be to impede the commercial development of the industry.

Section 124ZAL should be borne in mind when considering Section 124ZAM. The latter section is intended to limit expenditure qualifying for a Division 10BA deduction in respect of which the investor is at risk of loss should the film venture fail. The explanatory memorandum says in relation to Section 124ZAM, that income arising from a pre-sale arrangement will not generally be taken to reduce the taxpayer's risk of loss, but that comment seems quite misleading in the light of Section 124ZAL. Moreover, as is typical of the new legislation, the actual wording of Section 124ZAM does not refer to the Treasurer's memorandum.

Section 124ZAM provides that the investor (the taxpayer) shall be taken to be at risk, by virtue of his investment, in respect of "an equal share of the profits or losses" if the Commissioner, would be suffered by the taxpayer by reason of the expenditure rather than generally be taken to reduce the taxpayer's risk of loss, but that comment seems quite misleading in the light of Section 124ZAL. Moreover, as is typical of the new legislation, the actual wording of Section 124ZAM does not refer to the Treasurer's memorandum.

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no real understanding of what they are, but the song some of them are singing seems to speak directly to her, although to the demonstrators it is a song about writing and change, and to hard-nosed intellectuals, perhaps, it is expressing some kind of naive amorphous "message".

But the little group of demonstrators are trying and, however, cynical one might be about their likely effects, the attempt itself is important. For Lou, there is a degree of personal loss — of Lisa and Rob — but equally, there is the loss of idealism which Lisa felt — she went down to the demonstration the day she committed suicide — and which Rob has recognized in his final scene. As for what will happen to Lou, it is very much on the knife edge, although there is something positive in seeing her with the group.

I also see a sadness in the fact that she is there as part of the group. Throughout the story, there is always hope for a resolution on a personal relationship level. So, while finding her joining of the group positive, in a relationship level. So, while finding her with the group.

With the way it also signifies a failure on a personal level. It is indicated in the swing to the right, with the election of people like Margaret Thatcher and the right, with the election of people who don't, or can't, play the game.

The polarity taking place in the West is increasing. On the headline level, it is indicated in the swing to the right, with the election of people like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. There is emerging an unforgiving mood and a really aggressively self-centred approach by those who have the power and those who are in work.

It is also true that this increasing self-centredness has led to a lessening commitment to others, an unwillingness to compromise for another's sake in a relationship...

Yes. One of the things that happened in the 1960s was the very strong emphasis on the individual contributing to social change through group activities. In the 1970s, people became increasingly preoccupied by personal issues, such as health and individual sexuality, and the exploration of exotic religious beliefs. It was the time of going off and making your own little world: getting a plot of land and so on.

Allied with this was a feeling that things had got so big that individuals could no longer affect the way things were going. More and more, you hear people talking at dinner parties about the inevitability of a nuclear conflict. That is symptomatic not so much of cynicism as a feeling that the activities and actions of the 1960s were rather naive in the face of the enormity of the problems, and the machinery that is up there.

There are many references to this sort of thing scattered within the film.

As these references remain the background, is there a danger of people merely viewing them as scene-setting details and not of major relevance?

They are just an atmosphere in which we are living, so they have their appropriate amount of time and focus in the film. The thrust of the film is simply happening within this framework.

I wanted Judy for Lou after seeing her in Water Under the Bridge and My Brilliant Career, although Winter of our Dreams is a very different territory. She has a great energy level which makes her compelling to watch and she is extremely versatile. Bryan has been involved with a number of good films, and I had for some time been looking for the additional kind of grain we got from her, although to the demonstrators it was the best I have experienced, as it was working fairly quickly. He has a very strong artistic commitment and contribution to make to the project, as well as his role as an overall administrator, which he does very well.

All of this led to Judy Davis and Bryan Brown. Why did you cast Judy Davis and Bryan Brown?

No. When I came up to Sydney towards the end of last year, I had just finished the script and decided to approach the producer. I talked to Richard Brennan about who was available, as the producers I had worked with before were all tied up. Richard recommended Dick Mason as he felt we shared similar interests, particularly in the political field. Fortunately, Dick liked the script.

Dick then got the thing off the ground very quickly. He has a very strong artistic commitment and contribution to make to the project, as well as his role as an overall administrator, which he does very well.

 Apparently you started filming earlier than anticipated...

Yes. We needed to go into production early for a number of reasons. One was the availability of the cast; they had commitments, Judy in particular.

Also, there was the availability of crew. We were sensitive to this sudden rush of production, and if we had waited we would have been struggling to compete with the offers that some of the larger production films would have been able to make to members of our crew.

When making a low-budget film, how difficult is it to get together a good crew and cast?

People like Judy and Bryan would always choose to do a project they liked and accept the level of pay the production could afford; that is the sort of people they are. The crew was probably drawn to the project for a number of reasons. Some were attracted by the script and were perhaps keen to work with the leading cast, others were old friends of Dick Mason's, and people like Tom Cowan and Lloyd Carrick. I have worked with regularly for years. While the rates of pay we offered were, of course, above union minimums, they were no one. Nothing like what will be paid on most other productions this year.

The decision of crew members to work on Winter was an expression of commitment to the project, and, in particular, to Dick Mason.

The atmosphere generated by the crew and the cast was terribly good on this film. It was the best I have experienced, as it was working fairly quickly, as it was managing to give a small crew. It takes a little of the pressure away from the actors by producing a quieter, less manic atmosphere in which the actors can perform. On a film like Winter of our Dreams, which depends so drastically on the performances, this is vitally important.

How did the size of crew compare with those you have worked with before?

I had four people more than on Mouth to Mouth. There was an extra person in the art department, a unit runner, a second assistant and a clapper-loader. We had to shoot fairly quickly, as it was a tight schedule for six weeks. But, again, that was a bonus for me, as I did Mouth to Mouth in four weeks, Dimboola in five and The Trespassers in four. I give much more detailed coverage than I had before.

You said in the earlier interview, after you finished shooting "Mouth to Mouth", that you didn't know yet whether it would have been worth spending an extra $25,000 to do it on 35mm. How do you feel now?

It would have meant an extra $362,000 and that was a hell of a lot of money as far as that budget went. With a budget like this, the difference of $25,000 or whatever is fairly small.

But I don't think Mouth to Mouth would have benefited from shooting on 35mm because I liked the additional kind of grain we got with the blow-up. They probably spend a lot of money on Saturday Night Fever to get the same look. For a film like Winter of our Dreams, 35mm is much more appropriate. The centre part of the film is in Rob and Gretel's home, which is a huge house in Birgrove, overlooking the Harbour. The shooting style here is quite different to that used in Lou's world — graceful, long tracking-shots. It needs the sharp, clean look 35mm can give. 

John Duigan

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Alienation and De-alienation

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from the montage of psychic stimuli, influenced by the reflexology of Pavlov — to his theory of "intellectual montage" in which he proposes to realize a "rational" cinema, one that reaches the viewers' intellect, but that makes them comprehend intellectually, that goes beyond emotional identification.

It is significant that Eisenstein, at barely 22 years of age and having yet produced anything of importance in the artistic realm arrived at the conviction (as he himself said) that art, in that it created a fictional world in order to relieve dissatisfaction with reality, was not only deceptive, but constituted a real threat to the progress and development of society. Above all, during the period he lived through, when all energies had to be tended to participate actively in the revolutionary "leap" to a higher form of social organization, Eisenstein found his own concerns echoed among the members of the Leftist Art Front (LEF) who nourished an "active hatred of art". However, as the young artist matured and gained a better grasp of effective expressive techniques, he concluded that rather than destroy that kind of art completely, it was necessary to go beyond that threatening art, and also guide "the entire thought process". Thus, in the case of a portrayal where the author's position is in contradiction with the apparent meaning of the portrayed act — that is, when a distanced, critical attitude is present on the author's part — the composition will respond structurally to the emotional state generated in the author in response to his relation to the act portrayed. Consequently, this will act to trigger within the viewer a similar critical perspective based on an emotional concept.

In other words, Eisenstein understands pathos as the means of transformation within the viewer. This transformation must function on a rational level as well, necessarily implying a critical assessment. He said that intellectual cinema had before it the task of "restoring emotional fullness" and "intellectual act of as a "law for the operation realized by intellectual cinema within the spectator-viewer relationship can be laid out schematically as follows: from image to feeling, from feeling to image, or in other words, a series of images provokes an emotional movement which in turn awakens a series of ideas (reason). Intellectual montage breaks from narrative montage (epic in the traditional sense), film also has as its raison d'être the forging of "accurate intellectual concepts from the dynamic clash of opposing passions".

Eisenstein's goal, in the final analysis, was to arrive at a rational, at intellectual comprehension. His expression intended to film Capital is not, then, so surprising. Of course, one must also take into consideration the fact that he never did so, surely because he still could not find the appropriate resources. The fact that he never fully developed this concept of intellectual montage is also well known. Eisenstein put forth these ideas in embryonic form, as the first steps towards the synthesis of art and science to which he always aspired. What matters most is that he lived dedicated to developing the expressive potential of film in such a way that one day, through his medium, a work like Capital could be realized.

What trajectory did Brecht follow during these same years? Born — as was Eisenstein — in the bosom of the bourgeoisie, his first work (Baal, 1919) depicted an anti-social, conviving, hedonistic character, contrasted with the traditional hero, the bourgeois idol. All his early output is marked by flashes of irony, anarchy, irony, scepticism and nihilism. In this way, he struck out violently against the values of a bourgeois world, verbally assaulting it, piquing it with grimaces and grotesque goblins which in the end also — to some degree — served as a source of exciting entertainment for those bourgeois spectators who dutifully went off by themselves for powerful emotions.

In the midst of this barely controlled poetic outbreak, once his goal as an artist and a revolutionary was defined, Brecht began to arm himself more theoretically, and to discipline himself. At the same time, he viscerally reaffirmed his rejection of "those spectators who leave their reason in the checkroom along with their overcoats". He began to speak then of an "artistic theatre" that aimed at a distance from the events it portrays, contrasting it to a dramatic theatre that makes the viewer "experience" an event through the exacerbation of concrete elements.

Brecht wasn't alone: others before him had blazed that trail in response to an urgent social demand, among them Piscator with his political theatre. But Brecht had the virtue of taking his ideas further, not only on the level of theoretical systematization, but also in terms of artistic achievement.

In 1930, after seeing the opera Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, Brecht drew an outline of his ideas of the new cinema in such a way that the traditional sense of the events developed on stage in all their complexity, in such a way that each is led to examine their own conduct, while at no time fully identifying with the characters on stage or submitting to the vicarious pleasure of living through another's experience. But to achieve this attitude, the viewer must be shaped as such through study, experience, etc.

Although Brecht acknowledges the role that emotions play in the art of work, he rejects character identification as the only mechanism for evoking them. He dedicates himself, therefore, to the task of rationally expressing the viewers' interests, which can never be more legitimate than the constant improvement of human relations (in the sense of social progress, development, revolution) in a world whose inhabitants are forced to act in "self-defence". In 1929, he categorically declared: "Only a new objective will make possible the new objective is pedagogy." With that, he set out to reach the proletariat first of all. Speaking to them openly, rationally, he attempted to teach them dialectics, and elevate their consciousness. That is to say, he was scrupulously pursued in his didactic plays, where he worked with a mixture of rigor and asceticism which markedly reduced his success with a pleasure-seeking public. The dilettante is urged to have a good time, to go to bed with their mates or simply to go to sleep, because people get tired.

Brecht then began to grasp the complexity of dialectics, After Rise and Fall of the City of
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Mahagonny and especially The Three-Penny Opera (1928), his works did not achieve the same resonance again until Mother Courage (1938). With this work, he attained a level of maturity, complexity and efficacy which he was to sustain in his later works, those same works that made him the most important playwright of our time.

Starting with Mother Courage, Brecht was able to work other, more traditional, theatrical elements into his plays with a masterful sense of proportion. After expressly acknowledging that the most important and noble function of theatre is to “entertain,” to provide pleasure and diversion, and that this function is its own justification, he developed in all its complexity his concept of pleasure as a concrete, historically-conditioned phenomenon, thereby postulating a type of pleasure determined by the circumstances of our times — which he called the “scientific age.” This led to accept certain traditional dramatic devices like the exacerbation of conflict, plot and even character identification.

Yet he would not let himself be carried away. Instead, he would make use of them for his own purposes, which in essence continued to be those he had outlined in his youth but now could attain fully. He insisted on the need to transcend the “antimony between reason and emotion.”

The separation of reason and feeling must be attributed to the effects of conventional theatre that persists in nullifying reason.” He maintained, “In Aristotelian theatre, empathy is also mental; non-Aristotelian theatre also resorts to emotional critique.”

In opposition to the hero defined in an idealist sense, whose acts embody a timeless truth, Brecht placed human beings historically and materialistically defined who, without hypocrisy, take upon themselves the concrete truth that “life involves before everything else eating and drinking, housing, clothing and various other things.”

Brecht situates himself on a level of immediacy which not only favors rational communication but also true emotional comprehension on the part of the viewer.

We have seen that Eisenstein also argued for a synthesis of art and science, and repeatedly had to defend himself against those who insisted on seeing in his work an attempt to separate reason from emotion.” If, on the other hand, Eisenstein moved “from image to feeling and from feeling to idea”, Brecht went a step further and observed that if feeling can stimulate reason, the latter, in turn, purifies one’s emotions.

Paradoxically, the very concept Eisenstein directed his investigative work towards the logic of emotions, while Brecht, apparently colder and in any case the more rigorous of the two, was won over by the emotion of logic. It would be erroneous, then, to state that Brecht, under distancing devices and Eisenstein under pathos without keeping in mind the subtleties which draw the two tendencies closer together and which permit a bridging of the two.

We would also be in error if, carried away by our zeal for integration based on the common principles which support each position, we should attempt to suppress the contradiction which separates them and has been seen. It is possible to find objective causes for it in the disparate social contexts from which each artist derived and in the different medium through which each chose to express himself. It is important to recognize the emphasis that one placed on reason and the other on emotion. The fact remains that each one elaborated different devices to arrive at an “emotional understanding” of the spectacle.

And, above all, there are certain mutually exclusive points, particular aspects of each theory which cannot easily be combined: Brecht firmly rejected the state of ecstasy in the viewer, while Eisenstein defended it.

The divergence between them can only be logically overcome if we consider that Eisensteinian pathos and Brechtian distanciation are but two moments in the same dialectical process (alienation/de-alienation) within which each man isolated and emphasized a different phase. In the broadest sense, both concepts are part of the same approach to film or theatre and, consequently, to life.

But in a stricter sense, they are contradictory and in opposition to each other. Neither concept alone will suffice to achieve fully the proposed objective. This is only brought about as the result of a process in which both elements interact. Emotion, character identification and ecstasy, as well as reason, critical perspective and lucidity, are all necessary moments within that process.

My aim is not to assume an eclectic stance to dilute the position of one artist into the other, but to explain their reason and their passions and, in the last analysis, the consequences of each. They represent opposite poles in a dialectical relation in which both elements interact. Emotion, character identification and ecstasy, as well as reason, critical perspective and lucidity, are all necessary moments within that process.

In socialism as in capitalism, in theatre as in film, it is possible to make room for both positions only if they are adopted as different moments of the process in which they are inscribed: dialectics of reason and passion within the framework of the relationship between the spectator and the viewer. Like a wish-fulfilling dream, the erotic ecstasy, amusement, rapture or pathos provoked by the work of art can also constitute the productive mechanism through which human beings and the world around them — but always on the condition that such states be transcended, since people must necessarily return to reality. (We refer here to normal, mature human beings who are concrete, objective interests, who in a free moment go to the cinema to enjoy a spectacle in the same way they might have a drink or make love.) This state of “separation” or “inhibition” can not only comfort and restore energy, but can actually generate it as well.

Every normal, mature person lives in reality, suffers its consequences and enjoys it. Their lives are based on reality; however, when they begin to gravitate toward illusion (call it inebriation, fantasy, alienation) it can be said that they are verging on a pathological state. These cases require special treatment.

We have seen that the elements in the relationship of spectator to performance: on the one hand, pathos, ecstasy, alienation; on the other, distancing, awareness of reality, de-alienation. Movement from one state to another can occur at various times and at different points in the space of performance. This movement which transports the viewers from one dialectical extreme to another during the show is similar to that which takes them from everyday reality to the films or the theatre or the reverse. Moreover, the everyday reality, to submerge oneself in a fictional reality, an autonomous world in which the audience will recognize themselves so as to come away enriched by the experience, is an exercise in alienation and de-alienation.

We have seen that Brecht questions, above all, the traditional, observer-oriented relationship of performance. When the viewers are so moved that they confuse illusion with reality, Brecht was alarmed. The systematization of distancing devices permits us to opt for a spectacle which, not as a substitute for reality, but as an illuminating, penetrating instrument of that reality through fiction which presents itself as such. It is clear that when one speaks of illusion — not necessarily in the sense of an error or deception, but as play. It can — and it should — be an illusion that we are aware of such from the beginning.

For an illusion to produce not only aesthetic pleasure but also instruction and stimulus, it must be carried out in such a way that “the painting yields to that which is painted. . . . Our images must cede the foreground to the reality they portray: the life of man in society.”

Within the framework of the process, which takes place in those who momentarily acquire the role of viewer to reintegrate themselves subsequently into their everyday space, the contrast between Brechtian and Eisensteinian points of view helps us understand the process of the spectators which take place during the viewer-spectacle phase: that is, the fictional moment.

The new rules of the game which give rise to this relationship not only allow for the spiritual enrichment of the viewer and a greater knowledge of reality through a (lived) aesthetic experience, but also favor the development of a critical attitude in the viewer towards the reality in which they themselves are inscribed. Viewers will cease to be such in relation to reality; they will confront it not as a given but as a process of evolution — an evolution to which they themselves are committed.
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heading a cast that includes Clark Gable and Jean Harlow, and has many of the qualities of director's best, realistic work. His last film, Clear All Wires (1933), features the brilliant Lee Tracy as an unscrupulous foreign correspondent whose activities get him onto the podium with Stalin in May Day. As in Blessed Event and The Nuisance, Tracy is seen to advantage and the film shows a surprisingly shrewd observation of the interface of terrorism and the media. Hill's work has elements which were not to surface in the American cinema for another 20 years.

Equally interesting is the early work of W.S. (Woody) Van Dyke, once associate of D.W. Griffith, William Flaherty and Frederick Mar- nau. Van Dyke's Trader Horn (1930) is still a uniquely evocative and savage contrast to the usual Hollywood jungle saga. Even less well known is his 1933 Eskimo, virtually a return to silent filmmaking with its inset titles translating the speech of the authentic Eskimo actors. Joe Sayers/Sawer also gives the performance of his career as the mountie. Despite weak process photography and studio inserts, the film has a complex point of view and achieves several powerful scenes.

Equally remarkable, Van Dyke's The Prizefighter And The Lady of the same year also manages surprising realism. A sports film, it has striking performances from Myrna Loy, Walter Huston and Otto Kruger, with boxer Max Baer handling the lead.

MGM was not the studio for this macho stuff and Van Dyke found himself guiding Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald in operettas and Joan Crawford in weepies. Though vapid beside his earlier work, these are the films most often looked at.

The collection, of course, continues to the 1950s and, along with more familiar items, it has oddities like the bulk of Jules Dassin's career as a second-string director at Metro. These include Reunion in France (1942), largely re-shot in a glossier style by Van Dyke; Nazi Agent (1941), with Conrad Veidt in a dual role; and the two charming and long-forgotten comedies he made with Marsha Hunt, Van Dyke's first feature, Kid Glove Killer (1941). These films, Affairs of Martha (1942) and Letter for Evie (1945), have considerable appeal and are a welcome addition to the collection. Evie, with the exception of the optical printer, and with it the wipe dissolve, appeared, along with back projection and the shot-living process.

Experimentation with these makes the films particularly fascinating, but it also gives them a quality which makes them seem dated to programmers and viewers, by comparison with the post-1935 titles realized in the style of the so-called Hollywood classics.

The earlier films also have their own curious set of taboos — no nudity, bad language or violence — and yet they freely dealt with subjects soon to be forbidden — abortion, dope, communism. This, too, comes as a surprise to the unprepared.

Indeed, one film records the process of decay which overtook the filmmaking of the day — Van Dyke's Laughing Boy with Novarro. Made in 1937, it is set among the Navajo Indians and shot in tribal lands using more genuine Indians than any other major Hollywood film. However, these real support players are fronted by Novarro in an awful wig and Lupe Velez, and the authentic material is broken by unconvincing studio shooting. There is a glimpse of the old Van Dyke in the rough lovelmaking of Velez and William Davidson, but more characteristic is Novarro's song in front of the back projection screen. This piece made only one more film as star and Van Dyke's own style vanished into a studio gloss indistinguishable from the work of a dozen others after this.

Watching this material in bulk, the same reaction is repeated. The earlier, rougher films have a charm and a conviction which is lost in the later, factory-finished films though the individual master works tend to come later. In a uniformly fascinating collection, every so often one film would catch attention — probably not even the best of the batch, but one with unexpected qualities: Office Wife, Gentleman's Fate, John Adolph's Central Park (1932) with Joan Blondell, King Vidor's The Stranger's Return (1933) with Stewart Erwin, Curtiz' Female (1933), Le Roy's Hi Nellie! (1933), Dieterle's Lawyer Man, with William Powell (1932), Roy Del Ruth's Taxi (1932), with James Cagney, Allee, as in Casablanca (1932), with Edward G. Robinson or Lothar Mendes' Payment Deferred (1932), with Laughton.

Also, unlike many 16mm copies of color and wide screen films, these black and white, standard screen-shape copies accurately represent the originals, apart from a couple made from originals in an early color process and a handful cropped in reduction from the original sound-on-disc picture negatives. Some of the copies are virtually mint and appear never to have been on air or screened publicly.

We ran that collection for months and came nowhere near touching bottom, and yet the pleasure of this was undermined by the knowledge that these were without an audience. The same factors which meant that many had little television use will keep them out of the local screening situations. The National Film Theatre did do seasons of a half dozen of the films of each studio, but appears unequipped for anything more ambitious.

The Weekend Australian ran an interview with Neil MacDonald and reported that, as a result of their intervention, the copies had been saved. I wish I shared their optimism.

The Australian Film Institute has reacted favorably to the suggestion that they might wish to mount a touring exhibition of the material. One method would be to give the films with introductions which would make possible the use of titles which are not immediately approachable. This would fit with the plans to circulate a display of their vintage cinema equipment. Without any action on this scale, the films will remain lost in an Australian context.

It recommended that the AFC seek to fund films with international, commercial potential. Funds should be budgeted to earn 60 per cent of their earnings from international sales.

PMM also recommended structural changes within the AFC to give it greater independence and a greater semblance of a commercial operation. Such recommendations gave the AFC the authority to approve projects of $250,000 or more.

The impact of these measures (if any) has been overshadowed by the tax incentives saga, but the PMM report on face value gives rise to a number of questions.

1. How sincere was the Federal Government's gesture of holding this inquiry if it allowed the PMM report to be conducted under the auspices of the AFC rather than an independent board?

2. How far will restructuring of the AFC go towards solving inherent problems in the Australian film industry?

3. Will the AFC be able to make commercial judgments about films any more successfully than it has done in the past?

4. To what extent would government funds solely for the international market have on the development of an identifiable, national film culture? The report gives relatively scant consideration to this aspect of the film industry.

The Federal Government's offering of a generous tax incentive to stimulate private investment in the film industry will no doubt result in an abundance of productions — at least until the tax perks are withdrawn. Otherwise the Government has demonstrated little effort to come grips with the industry's problems — even the cost of the tax incentives does not appear to have been thought through at the time they were promised. The problems of foreigndominated distribution and exhibition, highlighted in the 1972 Tariff Board Enquiry, have been ignored by successive governments, as have the particular funding needs of an industry that is part art and part commerce, and have been glossed over by the PMM report. The result of the flurry of film activity will reveal whether the maligned and heralded tax incentives kill the industry, with kindness or besow the desperately-needed Midas touch.
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Continued from p. 253

of knowledge. You have to remember that Grierson and others used to say: "You can use a documentary as a mirror or as a hammer." I don't want to use it as a mirror. I always use it as a hammer.

You saw "Newsfront" recently. What was your response?

It is a beautiful film, and important precisely because it reveals to me an Australia which has an ethic, and real cultural values, expressed through its people. It also shows the way foreign penetration has become inserted into the life and culture of the nation.

Australia is not just a population of isolated people where selfishness prevails, but one which has many values of which it is not very aware. It is important to realize that its [white] culture and population has a short history and is in formation. That is why it is important to deal with the problems of national identity.

"Newsfront" is also a very well-directed film, and I really like the freshness with which the film passes from black and white to color, from past to present, from newsreel to "reality".

We have a similar problem to Australia in being a nation with a nationality still in formation, and a culture which is about 100 years old. It is important to recognize our cultural values, the Cuban idiosyncrasies, and history, its language.

The Cuban language is a very special way of speaking Spanish. This is something that the Cuban finds difficult and tends to think, due to a low cultural development, since he speaks very differently to the proper Castilian Spanish. But that's not true. The particular idiosyncrasies of the nation meant that the sons of the immigrants didn't speak as their fathers did. And the language was shaped as a condition of national integrity. It became a very important cultural factor.

Something similar happens in Australia, where there is a very particular way of speaking, and which you have to defend as a factor of national identity.

Our culture in Cuba is very young and facing enormous danger. We have, in front of us, the most aggressive imperialism of this mode, with 250 million inhabitants to our 10 million. At any moment there could be direct aggression. I don't believe there will be, but if there were we would resist.

It could happen that they would win, so it is necessary that our population, which could be under the conditions of this invading country, have deeply internalized cultural values. Only this way can it resist the imposition of another culture.

And, after 10 or 20 years, we will be able to liberate ourselves — as the Vietnamese people did — and still retain our national identity.

The Literacy Teacher

The Literacy Teacher is nothing but a chronicle of an epoch in which a whole section of the population which lived behind its comforts to go to the countryside, to live in uncomfortable conditions, without pay, and teach that part of the population which hadn't had a chance to learn.

In the 59 years before the revolution, Cubans were not conscious of their own values. But with the revolution, they have seen their possibilities as a Cuban people, and regained the patriotic feeling which had been lost with the first American invasion and all the subsequent neo-colonialist government of the "pseudo" republic.

So, that is what The Literacy Teacher is all about. It is an effort to explain to the population that they really have heroic people among them, courageous and without self-interest; to show them their real national values. It is a song to make the national values rain forth on a very young nation in danger.

Edward Fox

Continued from p. 253

thinking must be at odds with the notion of getting an industry going, at least on a smallish scale . . .

Joe Levine [producer of A Bridge Too Far] did argue that those actors would normally be on a percentage of the film, which he didn't allow them. So, he paid them a very high salary because of the simple, good, old-fashioned American idea that they would surely make much money at the box-office and, therefore, be worth it.

You see, a producer like Joe would probably be recouping his production costs in other ways, through television markets or whatever, and taking a fair-sized profit himself. He would argue that since he chooses to take that risk, he should also be entitled to the profit, if there is one. And it is a perfectly fair way of seeing things. But it doesn't actually add up to a system or general product — though I suppose it does in a sense, because he has gone on to produce again and again.

Every time it sounds like an individual enterprise; not like the old days of MGM or even London Films . . .

I think it is all a bit defused. The general purpose is being "coalesced" a bit more.

I wonder if the malignated studio system really had more going for it than was commonly supposed?

I am sure it had.

Is there such a thing as a regularly functioning English film studio?

I don't think there is now, because the Twickenham Studio, which is probably the most used after Shepperton, is owned by Arabs. Shepperton is half-owned by a "pop" group. I think. No, there is no mogul.

To many people, you have become identified as the epitome of English aristocracy. Do you find this a constraint on your choice of roles?

I don't really feel so, although it is probably the most used after Shepperton, is owned by Arabs. Shepperton is half-owned by a "pop" group. I think. No, there is no mogul.

Last year, you played in Eliot's The Family Reunion on stage. Did you enjoy the change?

Oh yes. It is a play I am very fond of and had done with the same director and a lot of the same company in 1973. We wanted very much to do it again. A very important play, actually, but I think it is too difficult for most companies.

Would you prefer to concentrate on stage, screen or television?

I like flitting between the three. I think one is very helpful, in the sense of the practice of one's craft, to the other.

Is one more demanding than the other?

The stage is always more demanding because you have to present a coherent performance every night — no matter how you feel — and sustain it for two hours. As I have said before, the stage is really the actor's medium.★
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