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BODY HEAT
Picture Preview

February 1982

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Peter Bowlay,  
General Manager, Videolab.  
(A Division of the Colorfilm Group)

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Murray Forrest wants to grow another 40 million feet.

Tell us Murray, how does a Scottish economist come to be running the Colorfilm group in Australia?

I came out here in 1964 after finishing my studies in the UK. Things didn't look too bright in the UK, so I decided to give it a go in Australia. I didn't have a job, I didn't know anybody, my intention was to get a job in a bank or a finance company. As it turned out, I landed a job in the film industry by accident. I joined Swift & Bleakley in their accounts department, got into their motion picture department, stayed there one year, and joined Colorfilm. And I've been here ever since, fifteen years.

What are the various companies that make up the Colorfilm Group?

As concisely as possible. But first, a little history. The lab operations have been functioning since 1928. That part of the group started life as Commonwealth Laboratories. Then changed its name to Filmcraft. That was operated by Phil Budden. Then Automatic Film Laboratories started in the 1940s, and that was owned by Greater Union. They both offered the same service, black and white processing, and release printing for imported features. So when colour came in the early fifties, they decided to merge. And that became Colorfilm. There are three labs in the group, the main one here at Camperdown, then there's KG Colorfilm in North Sydney to service the ABC, and Cinevex in Melbourne. Then there's Filmlab Engineering.

What prompted that?

We started Filmlab because we'd been relying on English, Italian and American processing equipment, and the service was becoming a bit difficult. So we decided to build our own machines, and the success of the homebuilt machines prompted us to start Filmlab.

Does Filmlab only manufacture for the Colorfilm group?

No, we've equipped every Australian lab with processing systems, and equipped the New Zealand National Film Unit, as well as some of the government bodies in Asia, Malayasia, the Philippines, Hong Kong. That's a growing side of our business.

What about Video? That's another growth area.

Definitely, that's what prompted us into setting up Videolab in 1975. We could see that there was going to be this interface of video and film. And it's really just an extension of the philosophy we've had since 1928. We're in the business of reproducing images, however that's done now or in the future.

And how do you fit into the picture?

Each company has a Manager, and I'm the Group General Manager.

What other growth areas do you see?

Well, looking at the film business first. The volume of features produced in the country should steady at about 15 a year, that's a steady growth. I can't however see any major growth unless we get theatrical release printing back. That's how the lab started, printing release prints of product coming into the country.

Where is it done now?

In America mainly. I was just over at the MGM laboratories in Culver City, and they were doing the release prints for Raiders of the Lost Ark. They were processing 1800 release prints for world release. The largest run we've ever had at one time is 26 for Gallipoli.

So all American films released here are printed in America?

Most, yes. And English films in England, and so on.

And the local product when it's exported?

- We make the prints for local consumption only. If a film is sold overseas, we make a negative, send it over, and they do the prints there for the respective countries. So we tend to lose out both ways.

But you'd think nobody would know how to grade a release print of Gallipoli better than the lab who produced it?

Probably so. But look, we don't want to inhibit local producers by insisting on our doing prints for overseas release. Provided that we get to make the prints for the product coming in to the country.

Could you handle it?

We put 40 million feet through the lab last year. In the last eighteen months, we've put in a new high speed processing and printing plant. So that now, we could easily double that. The three things that are always asked are could we match the Americans on service, quality and price. I say, yes, we give as good a service as anyone in the world, the quality speaks for itself, and given the opportunity to quote on a bulk release we will match the overseas rate. The lab operates on throughput. If we're going to continue offering a 24 hour service, we have to have that extra plant operating at least 80 percent, and preferably 100 percent of the time. We've got to have that footage going through. It's for the benefit of the industry as a whole as well as for Colorfilm.

You're an administrator in a company of boffins. How much do you have to know about the science of film making?

No way I would class myself as a boffin. But perhaps it's an advantage not to be. Maybe I'm pleading a case for ignorance, but I see my job as being able to relate to all these technical people, to communicate right across all their areas of expertise and get them working together.

What's happening overseas, Murray?

Things are pretty grim in the UK, and exactly the opposite in the US. They're putting people off in the British labs, but in the last 12 months in the US, the four major labs, Technicolor, MGM, Deluxe and CFI, have spent $30 million dollars on new equipment, high speed processors mainly, to handle the tremendous amount of release print footage going through.

What films have you seen lately that you've enjoyed?

Well, Gallipoli of course. In fact, generally, I enjoy the Australian product. Gallipoli and Breaker Morant are two recently that I have thoroughly enjoyed. Not just because they're Australian, but they appeal to me. And of course I saw Raiders in Los Angeles. A tremendous film.

As always, why Colorfilm?

Well, we've had a commitment, I guess, to the film industry in this country for over 50 years, no doubt about that. Whatever we've made, we've reinvested in our two major resources, equipment and people. Of these two I guess the most important is the people. We put a tremendous importance on that, on getting people who are just as committed as we are. I've just returned from looking at labs around the world, as I do from time to time, and there's no doubt about it, as far as equipment is concerned, we're up with the state of the art. And as far as the people, well, truthfully, nowhere else did I find the attitude to the industry we have here at Colorfilm.

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*Recommended price only.
Cannes 1982

The 1982 Cannes Film Festival has been shortened by three days to 13 and runs from May 14 to 26 (curiously, all the press releases count it as 12 days). Apparently, it was felt the festival had become "too long and tiring." Debatable, but it is true attendances have always dropped dramatically in the last week of screenings.

Another 1982 initiative is to hold back the announcement of the awards until the closing ceremony. Previously they were announced at a press conference, mid-afternoon of the last day. This should help restore some glamour to the closing night.

As predicted by all but the festival press officers, the new Palais will not be finished in time, and the old Palais is to be reprinted for one more year.

On the subject of the delays, there is the case of the official Cannes poster. Last year it arrived eight days into the festival, and turned out to be the previous year's with the dates changed. This year, the poster is to be designed by Federico Fellini, who may at last have found his true métier.

BFI Museum

At the opening of the 1981 London Film Festival, Prince Charles announced that the British Film Institute was planning to build a Museum of the Moving Image. The Museum would be situated on London's South Bank, among the performing and visual arts complex that already exists there.

As it is envisaged, the Museum will be, in the words of British Film Institute director Tony Smith, "a wholly novel idea, and unlike any other existing museum." It proposes to show the vast and complex history of the moving image and provide a first opportunity to see, under one roof, the background to cinema, television and video. It is not intended to be a glass case museum, but one whose exhibits (expected cost £400,000) will evoke the past, present and future technology of the cinema, and draw people's attention to the industrial character of the moving image.

The BFI hopes the Museum will be opened in 1983 to coincide with the Institute's 50th birthday. The plans are being laid on the basis of three donations totaling £1.5 million. Largest donation of £1 million is from Hong Kong-based shipping and banking magnate Sir Yue-Kong Pao. A further £3 million is needed to complete the project.

A fund-raising committee headed by Lady Howe, wife of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Geoffrey Howe, is seeking the additional funds.

Censorship Appointments

The Attorney-General, Senator Durack, has announced the appointment of a new chairman and deputy chairman to the Films Board of Review. The chairman is Sir Richard Kingsland, former Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. He replaces Dudley McCarthy, who has retired.

Replacing Caroline Jones, who did not seek re-appointment as deputy chairman, is Gavin Souter, a Sydney journalist, who has been a member of the Board since January 1980.

Senator Durack also announced the appointment of Professor Peter Sheehan, Professor of Psychology at the University of Queensland, as a member of the Board to replace Professor Gordon Hammer.

National Film Archive Advisory Committee

The Council of the National Library of Australia has established a National Film Archive Committee to advise it on matters affecting the archive, and to improve liaison with the film and television industry.

Establishment of the committee was recommended in the Working Party Report on the National Film Archive presented to the then Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Ellicott, in October 1980 by the Australian Film Commission.

Members of the committee will serve voluntarily, in a personal capacity, for a two-year term. The initial appointees to the committee are: Phil Budden (chairman), member of the Board of Colorfilm; Patricia Lovell, film producer; James Malone, director of the Federation of Commercial Television Stations; James Mitchell, national director of the Film and Television Producers' Association of Australia; Tom Ryan, writer and film teacher; and David Williams, managing director of the Greater Union Organization.

Agfa

P. W. Hennessy, chairman and managing director of Agfa-Gevaert Limited, retired on December 31, 1981. Hennessy joined the company in 1957 and was appointed managing director in January 1967 and chairman in 1975. He will be succeeded by E. Harder, who was appointed to the Australian subsidiary in 1964. Harder was made director of the company's Industrial Division in 1978.
French Censors Go Liberal

One applauding initiative of the much-beguiled Socialists government of Francois Mitterrand is a major liberalization of film censorship. From now on, no film will be prohibited by the film review board (though it can be by the Culture Minister), nor can prohibitive tax sanctions be placed on violent X-rated films. The minimum age for adult films has also been lowered from 18 to 16 years. One retention of the old system is the restriction of hard-core sex films to specialized, and often poorly-located, sex cinemas.

The composition of the review board will also be changed greatly, with eight government representatives being replaced by five people appointed by the public. The example of the Mitterrand government will be considered seriously.

Australian Film Institute

The AFI has a new Board of Directors following the recent election. The successful candidates were Senator David Witten, Alan G. Brown, John Flaus, Ray Edmondson and Julie James-Bailey. They join Don McLennan and Michael Patt, who, because of a rotation system, did not have to stand for re-election.

Of those newly elected, John Flaus is a film theoretist, author and critic; Ray Edmondson is director of the National Archives, Canberra; and Julie James-Bailey is head of the research and survey unit of the Australian Film and Television School.

Recent staff changes at the AFI include the appointment of Jeremy Hooper as manager of the Research and Information Unit and Helen Zilko who has left to partner independent film distributor, Sylvie Le Clezio, as a partner, producer and publicist. John Flaus, who has resigned and been replaced by Ray Edmondson, is currently assistant manager of the AFI.

Censorship News

The Board of Censors in the last quarter of 1981 were those involving George Miller’s Mad Max 2. Completed just in time for a Christmas release, the film was submitted to the Board in December and classified “R” — the same fate that befell Max. The decision was apparently a surprise as Miller and producer Byron Kennedy, who have only recently produced an “M”-rated film to catch the eyes of younger viewers, were not prepared to accept the award and appealed to the Films Board of Review but the rating was upheld.

One was taken to the Board of Review which, contrary to its usual practice of promoting a need for selflessness, killing and revenge for all ages, got an “M” rating. Mad Max pales by comparison and looks foolish with an “R” rating. Maybe they’ll lower that to “M” and compound the error. (I am sure the Censorship Board really doesn’t seem to care at all). The Board of Review in a double with the same rating in a too distant future, when wars no longer exist.

Then there is Fort Apache The Bronx (”M”) with explicit razor killings and sleazy Taxi Drivers and if it is not to mention the subject matter alone. And then all those Aussie exercises in unrestrained abuse of the Censorship Board, “A Bridge Too Far” gaining the words “fuck”, “cunt”, and “cock sucker” used and re-used with laughter from the audience (what was left of them) who just couldn’t believe a film by one so moronic. Okay, Stir had a valid point in its portrayal of prison life, but it was not not “M”-rated for violence (like you have never seen before, or, thanks to the Censorship Board, enjoyed — all tastes catered for these modern days), nor for its putrid language. Stir negates film reviews being too repulsive, and “M”-rated. (Where’s the credibility?)

And now, the kids’ show: Xanadu (”G”) with the swear word “shit” used as part of normal, everyday life. If it is not used by the Board, not by the Board. And it is a quick, like all the audience, some soppy big dicks to admire. They show also offers (now true)”NRC” rating, new material like drug smoking is good fun” and, as Marilyn Sokol laugh while stone, “next time I’ll get the magic mushrooms”.

Isn’t it just too lax for words? I am (to quote a “G”-rated film) “pissed off” with the whole (quote “NRC” film) “fucking” situation. My opinion of the Censorship Board is that there is a completely careless and irresponsible attitude to the subject matter and morals of a degenerating way of life not shared by what seems to be the majority of filmgoers — judging by the number of complaints I get at my theatre by concerned parents both young and others.

Let me quote Raging Bull’s “M”- rated soundtrack: “fuck”, “arsehole”, “motherfucker”, “fud”, “cocksucker”, and if you think it offensive, try sitting in an auditorium with strangers and friends having your ears bombarded with such language, coupled with sound violence for the eye — after having paid $5.50 for the privilege.

Then on your way out the manager (me) smiles and says goodnight because he hopes you enjoyed your visit (haha), got your money’s worth (I can forget that) and will come again. He tells you about the weather and rain and time and money on which could be more of the same. After all, you don’t know what you are going to get faced with or hear since you can’t trust the Censor to classify certain films properly.

The Censorship Board has a no-confidence vote from me and with an open heart, I would never go to the cinema. Imagine how the paying public feels — as few of them as are left. It is becoming plainly obvious that the Censorship Board really doesn’t seem to care enough. The next time you hear a 9-year-old saying something with an “M” rating, don’t be more of the same. After all, you don’t know what you are going to get faced with or hear since you can’t trust the Censor to classify certain films properly.

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Dear Sir,

As the Australian correspondent to Screen International, I feel I should put the record straight with regard to the interview with Margaret Kelly and Joan Long published in the November-December issue of Cinema Papers (No. 35, pp. 435-37).

In the course of the interview, Joan Long, referring to Bruce Beresford, states: “we read an article in Screen International which listed all the embarrassing projects he had in mind.” Months later, Bruce told us that he never gave an interview to Screen International and it was made up from stuff from other newspapers and journals.

Obviously Bruce Beresford’s memory is at fault, as I interviewed him in the offices of the Playbox Theatre just after he had finished shooting Breaker Morant, and when he was in Melbourne setting up preliminary shooting of The Club. At the time he talked about all the projects he had lined up — and I still have the tape to prove it.

Furthermore, when I later saw Beresford on the set of The Club he mentioned how pleased he was with the interview and also said that several people in London had sent him clippings of it.

Raymond Stanley

Editor’s note: For the record, one magazine Bruce Beresford doesn’t give interviews to is Cinema Papers. Imurnerous approaches have been made, but all turned down on the grounds that “I don’t give interviews.”

To recognize and record Beresford’s contribution to Australian filmmaking, which would usually have been done with an interview, a 10,000 word monograph was especially written by Keith Connolly and printed in issue No. 26.

Fouled Language

Dear Sir,

I am becoming less enchanted with the irresponsible nature of our Film Censorship Board awarding several low “all age” ratings to films containing language, attitudes and morals very likely to offend a great many filmgoers.

How does a film like Stir Crazy with the word “fuck” used so openly and casually receive an “NRC” rating? Surely, (and before: A Bridge Too Far) “fuck” used in a film’s dialogue — even once and if, for example, the word “motherfucker”, “turd”, “cocksucker” were used, the Board is never thanked for the abovementioned classification for the abovementioned films is — to quote “IIRC”-rated Stir Crazy “fucked.”

Paul Brennan

Avoca Beach Theatre
Kevin Dobson, who directed his first feature, *The Mango Tree*, at 24, began in television. Starting as an editor and script consultant at Crawford Productions, he graduated to director on programs such as *Homicide*. He has also directed three tele-features, and episodes of *The Last Outlaw* and *I Can Jump Puddles*. His latest project is *Squizzy Taylor*, his second feature, now in post-production. He talks with Scott Murray.

**Squizzy Taylor**

To what degree was the scripting of "Squizzy Taylor" bound by what could be found to have actually happened?

We tried to get right away from that. It is always hard, though, when you are dealing with big characters in history, not to feel the need to be accurate. You want to show some of their historical events because that's what made them famous. So, on one level we didn't get tied down too much; on the other, we did show a couple of things that Squizzy actually did.

So several of the incidents in the film are invented . . .

The romantic parts have been invented, but they are traceable through history. The events, by and large, did happen; but not everything is historically correct, as with, say, *The Last Outlaw*. We were more interested in creating the era and tapestry of the 1920s than showing the actual car in which Squizzy got shot — although we did use the actual gun.

So, it's not bogged down with fact. It is basically a piece of entertainment. That Squizzy is an infamous character of the 1920s is just a plus.

What about his speech in the courtroom; is that based on court records?

Yes, to a certain extent. He did get up and give a good account of himself, but it is not accurate word for word.

What about accuracy in terms of period detail?

There is not one little piece that is not absolutely correct. Some of the places might have been moved around, but that is what Melbourne looked like in the 1920s.

Do you see that approach as necessary in a film set in the past?

Yes, why not?

What was the basis of the period research?

Well, Roger Simpson's research was extensive and had been going on since he was writing *Power Without Glory*. We also looked at a lot of the literature. The Flinders Street Station sequence, for example, was based on a still from a history book. Also, Nigel Buesst loaned us his film about Squizzy Taylor, which was the historically-correct documentary. His research saved a lot of time. There was a lot of original footage in the film, as well.

How difficult was it creating the 1920s in Melbourne?

Very difficult, but we got great co-operation. The police were fantastic, and the Victorian Government bodies, believe it or not, were amazing. It is hard to believe that a train can't run on time when you can see what they can do. When we stopped Flinders Street, they laid on buses as far back as Kew to cope with the backlog of people. It all happened with a minimum of fuss.

In Fitzroy, at Gertrude and Brunswick Streets, we took over the entire block on two successive Sundays. We had a great team and were geared for it. We also had a couple of policemen, which made it a whole lot easier in terms of people control. Nothing like a blue uniform when you are making a film!

Did the police read the screenplay? Presumably they might have been concerned by the representation of police in the film . . .

Well, it was all so long ago. I don't think it was a worry, just so long as they looked like real people, with real failings. Also, the Victoria Police in those days was having a very difficult time. There were only five or six in that particular branch and crime was on the run. They were great detectives, but they didn't have any vehicles. When they'd go to a bust, for instance, they'd arrive on a tram or in hire cars.

It still happens today. Two detectives recently turned up at a raid in a
Clockwise from top right: Squizzy (David Atkins) during the Melbourne influenza plague, the "honest cop", Pigott (Michael Long), harasses a dying Squizzy. Squizzy and girlfriend Ida (Kim Lewis); an accomplice of Squizzy's enters as Ida dresses; Squizzy with Dolly (Jacki Weaver); the newspaperman (Robert Harvey) and the policeman with underground connections, Brophy (Alan Cassell); Brophy and Pigott.
taxi because there was no car available...

Well, there you go; that's great. But they did it a whole lot more in those days, of course. I think the image of 40 cops getting off a tram and surrounding a place is just fantastic.

How much do you see the portrayal of the Alan Cassell character as indicative of the difficulties faced by members of the police force?

The balance, even today, between law and order, and what legislators do and what the courts do, is a very delicate one. There are more criminals in coats and ties than there are walking around with guns. And I am sure if you are involved with the criminal element for a long time, you would set a thief to catch a thief. The police probably know as much about breaking the law as they do about maintaining it — or, shall we say, bending it.

In the film, Squizzy is portrayed as someone created by the media. To what extent does that reflect the actual situation?

That is a really solid point in the film. Because of the nature of Australia, because of what it is and where it comes from, in the 1920s we needed an Al Capone, gangsters, Fitzroy vendettas and prohibition. And, when we needed a gangster, Squizzy happened to come along. So it was him. He was just a newspaper machination; something for the middle classes to look at and be thrilled about. And that sold newspapers. I think he was created by the media, almost completely.

Do you think this identity crisis is reflected in our films?

I think it has been. Everyone screams about period films, but I think we need them. Just as there has been the American Western, I think we need them. Just as there has been the Australian Film Institute's Apparat, I think we need to go back and explore as much as we can about the actual situation.

Is that where you see them?

No, I actually prefer to see them with audiences, at matinees. Raiders of the Lost Ark would be boring at the Australian Film Awards, but with 200 school-children screaming and yelling, it is really exciting.

Did you audience-preview "The Mango Tree" or "Squizzy Taylor" to find out that sort of matinee reaction?

We didn't with The Mango Tree, but we will with Squizzy. I think it is a good thing to do.

How did you go about choosing an actor for Squizzy? Were you keen to get someone of 5'2" stature?

No, we decided not to be ruled by that. We just set up the natural process for auditioning people. And in the course of that, David Atkins walked in, did an audition and walked out with the part. He was just perfect. He did things that only a person of 5'2" could do. For the audition, he did the scene in the car where Squizzy talks to Henry Stokes. We just had two chairs and Martin Vaughan reading Henry. David sat in 'the car' and pulled the seat forward then tipped the mirror down. No one else had done that, or had the insight to think of it. Yet to him it was just natural.

What was Atkins' acting experience?

He had done some theatre, and bits and pieces in television, but nothing of the size and weight of Squizzy Taylor.

Was that of concern to the producers and investors?

It caused a lot of talk, because it seems that one needs to have a name if one makes a film these days. But when you count up the names, there really aren't that many. I don't think we have many actors who actually make the turns stiles ring. I don't think one needs a name per se.

What about the crew on "Squizzy"?

Were you working with people you had used before, like your cameraman and editor...

Yes, I have known Dan Burstall for about 11 years: we used to make Homicide together. We get on very well together, and his work on Squizzy is exceptional.

There is a lot of night shooting. Did you consider day-for-night?

I am not a big fan of day-for-night. Night-for-night also gave us the opportunity to have fluorescent lights as background lights, which gave us more depth and greater control over the modelling of the background. We got all those crazy shadows on people's faces, which day-for-night flattens out.

You used fairly low-light levels inside, even going fairly dark on faces...

Yes, we didn't always use eyelights. If people walked through a dark area, it was dark; if people talked in a dark area, it was dark. There was not the usual soft-lighting ambiance. I think it worked very well.

Filming Squizzy as he takes a ride on a Melbourne tram. Squizzy Taylor.

How much studio work did you have?

About 60 per cent. We used Port Melbourne, Armstrongs and Open Channel. You can't build sets at the Starch Factory, so our turnaround was larger. Even though we had a studio, say, for two weeks, we would take two weeks putting the set in. So, in that time we would need somewhere else to go.

In our first week, all the police station sequences had to be shot at Armstrongs. It was a big set, and we had geared to put it in a big area. So it caught us a bit short to move to Armstrongs; its studio isn't enormously large for film work.

We constructed the sets in Abbotsford and transported them to South Melbourne, so our workshop wasn't actually at the job. To hire the studio space and build it would have meant tying the studio up for 18 weeks, rather than eight.

Armstrongs is a bit small; you can't nail to the floor at the Starch Factory and there is no lighting grid; and so on. Is there a studio up to standard in Australia?

I think the Starch Factory will get there, and without it we would be in an awful mess. But we need two Starch Factories in Melbourne, both geared with full facilities: workshops, offices, artists, make-up and dressing rooms, green rooms, canteens. You need that sort of system to support a film industry. You need to be able to have a turnaround, as it is difficult to film in a studio when a set is being built next to it. If there are two studio blocks, you could be preparing one while filming in the other; that would be great.

Are there any major shortcomings in facilities or techniques in Australia?

Yes. In Melbourne, there is a lack of adequate mixing facilities and operators. The use of some special effects techniques is beyond us and our labs, but I guess it all boils down to a lack of money. We could also rationalize our production more. We have a tendency for two people to run out and make the same film.

You mean like films on property development in inner Sydney...

Property development in inner Sydney, young boys growing up in Queensland. It is stupid making two films like The Irishman and The Mango Tree. If all the energy and money had gone into making one of them — either of them, it doesn't matter to me which one — we might have had one good film instead of two mediocre ones.

Crawford Days

You began your career in television, at Crawfords. What did you do there?

Fill kerosene heaters for the writers and get Hector his cheese for lunch. Crawfords used to have a trainee room and that's where I
Kevin Dobson

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worked as an editor, and then director. After Homicide, I moved into the script-editing department, onto Matlock Police. Henry Crawford then took over Matlock and put me out directing Homicide.

Had it been your ambition to direct?

Yes, once I had understood what the film industry was about. When I first walked in, Crawfords had a sort of horizontal structure. It was hard to see who did what. In those days, they had a videotape director, a film director and what they called a producer. The producer did all the talking to the actors, the videotape director would direct the videotape and the film director would just be responsible for the film sequences cutting together.

Then the all-film programs came along, and Crawfords realized they needed one director. When I first started directing Matlock, Police, Tom Burstall and I would do half of the film sequences together. He'd direct in the morning and I'd direct in the afternoon.

Did you learn anything working on Homicide?

We were always there together, arguing and fighting about what was best. We did some really inventive things.

What did you learn most at Crawfords?

How to direct movement. No one had been trained in that. When I left Crawfords, I really felt I had a reason to exist in the industry. But it was a problem film, though any film on location thousands of miles from anywhere is inevitably going to be a problem — particularly, I suppose, when you are young. I was only 24 and it was a bit daunting. Afterwards, everything became easier.

I saw it on television the other night. It obviously has a lot of problems, but I am still very fond of it.

What sort of problems?

As with everything, it started with the script. I also don’t know that I had the confidence at that stage to handle something that big. One or two performances were a little shaky as well.

Do you see scripts as being a failing ground?

I don’t think it’s just scripts. The producers have a lot of problems as well. They get a property and have


started. I then got a job as a continuity girl. But that only lasted a week and I went into the sound department, doing sound editing. After that it was to the cutting rooms, and onwards and upwards.

What programs were you working on?

I started on Division Four. I then went onto Matlock Police, which, in those days, was a move up from Division Four. They were black and white film and videotape integrated. We just cut the film segments.

After Matlock, Ryan came along and that was all filmed in color. Then Homicide turned all film and color, and I edited a 90-minute special for Ian Jones, Voice of the Gun. After that, I moved onto editing Homicide, which David Stevens, Igor Aunins and Paul Edwy were then directing.

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Do you see scripts as being a failing ground?

I don’t think it’s just scripts. The producers have a lot of problems as well. They get a property and have

to get it out. Often, enough time isn’t spent with the script. Writers and directors would like to spend more time, but they get caught in the situation of having to go into production.

When I took on The Mango Tree, we had six weeks to get it all together and start filming — then, 47 days to complete it. So, the script got away from all of us. It became a huge document, about three feet high and 4000 pages, with 96 million rewrites, and nightly notes under motel doors.

Then you bring in the actors, who inevitably want to put their force in it. The film eventually takes on its own personality and, once that happens, it can easily get away from you.

Do you think the present interpretation of the tax legislation, whereby films have to be financed and released in one year, could worsen this problem?

You should be able to get a film out in a year. It’s just how you gear to that. It doesn’t mean a film has to be a quickie, though there probably will be some.

I think the legislation has problems, and these need to be looked at. But if people are smart, they should be able to get their acts together. All those producers who haven’t done anything for a while must have vehicles that are pretty well polished by now. Probably by mid-1982 we will see a lot of people gearing to zot out a few films, and they shouldn’t take any more than a year to make and release.

Apprecantly, “The Mango Tree” was re-cut after its release . . .

Yes. When John Scott [editor] and I were working on the film, we arrived at our cut. That was then changed a great deal, but John and I were able to change it back to some of its initial shape. The film was released like that.

Then, once I had finished with the film, I believe Michael Pate was able to get hold of more money and re-cut it again. I think he took out another five minutes, which was probably a good thing. But I wasn’t involved, nor was John Scott. I spoke to Geraldine Fitzgerald in the U.S., however, and she said that she had given suggestions to Michael. Whether he was acting on them, I don’t know.

Which version did you see on television?

Michael’s, or whoever’s it was.

Tele-features and Commercials

After “The Mango Tree”, you did a couple more tele-features. Were they for Robert Bruning?

Yes. Robert was then a part of the Grundy Organization, so it was back to Grundys. Everyone was making tele-features then. Robert did, I think, 12. I made one with John Waters, called Demolition, and Image of Death with two American actresses. That was when Grundys and Robert were attempting to make mid-Atlantic films for the U.S. market. It was pretty ill-fated.

Did all the Bruning films go to air? Some seem to take a long time . . .

Yes, eventually. When I was making The Last Outlaw last year, Demolition was on television for the first time.

What happened between the last of the tele-features and “The Last Outlaw”?

Nothing. The world wasn’t going to beat a path to my doorstep. I had a film running in the city and, though it was getting a thorough caning, it kept running. But I didn’t get any work. Grundys wouldn’t take me as a television director, and at that stage Crawfords and I didn’t have a great relationship — we have now. So, for eight months I went steadily broke. Finally, someone asked me to make a commercial.

What was it?

For Canada Dry — In the Heat of the Night. That was great. Commercials were completely new to me, because I had always sworn I’d never get near them. I didn’t think they were real. They weren’t

Concluded on p. 97
ubrycki began his working life as a teacher and then a tutor in sociology at the University of New South Wales. In the early 1970s he abandoned his PhD thesis and gravitated towards video production and resident action, partly, he explains, as a reaction against the introspective nature of academic life.

The movement he joined was characterized by an uncommon and, for many, inspiring alliance between middle- and working-class residents and a trade union, the NSW Builders Labourers Federation, then under communist and left-wing ALP leadership. The movement was characterized also by attention from a new kind of media — portapak video.

Within the movement, Zubrycki met Warrick Robbins, one of the first tapemakers to work in Sydney. Robbins had been to North America and had picked up the Canadian program Challenge for Change's ideas about the use of video for social change. One of his first projects back in Sydney was a half-inch tape on the Waterloo campaign, part of which appears in the film.

Not long after meeting Robbins, Zubrycki was prompted to make his own tape about a road accident near his Balmain home. Balmain is another of Sydney's older areas. Its narrow streets slope down towards the harbor and were being used by trucks hauling containers to and from the wharf. Resident anger about the environmental problem the trucks posed was pushed to action by an incident in which one rolled back onto a car, killing two local residents.

Zubrycki made a tape about the trucks to show to a meeting of local residents. He borrowed equipment from an embryonic video access centre and, without knowing anything much about camera work or sound, managed over five days to produce a 40-minute tape which played back without shaking. More important, it was seen by a large number of residents, and he believes it helped their cause. Zubrycki says he still remembers the incredulous looks on the faces of senior public servants when he and the secretary of the action group showed the tape at a lunchtime meeting in Canberra.

Soon afterwards a cheque arrived enabling the group to carry out an environmental impact study. Subsequently Zubrycki made more tapes with inner-Sydney resident action groups. He also began to get commissions for tapes from planning research centres, and state and federal government departments.

In September 1981, the New South Wales Housing Commission announced that it had changed its plans for the inner-Sydney suburb of Waterloo. Instead of being scrapped to make way for flats, 200 old houses in the area were to be restored and another 300 built.

That decision was a victory for Waterloo residents after a nine-year battle to save their homes and the character of their neighborhood. Just a few months before that announcement, the fight to prevent the suburb being razed for high-rise development was chronicled on film.

Waterloo joins what is fast becoming a genre of films dealing with resident action in Sydney (others include Woolloomooloo, by Pat Fiske and Denise White, Richard Cole's Green City and Donald Crombie's The Killing of Angel Street).

Like the earlier Woolloomooloo (about another inner-Sydney suburb), Waterloo is an insider's view of the struggle to preserve some of the city's traditions. But unlike the earlier two documentaries, Waterloo looks behind the events of the past decade to build up a picture of the area's history. In the process it reveals much about New South Wales state politics, from the post-Depression years to the present.

According to its director, Tom Zubrycki, Waterloo is as much a film about the old-guard Australian Labor Party as a film about housing and resident action groups. But he did not set out to make quite so ambitious a document.
In 1977, Zubrycki collected a grant for $4700 from the Australian Film Commission to make a 16mm documentary of 40 minutes length on Waterloo, then zoned for re-development and the subject of a fight between state authorities and local residents. Originally he intended to look merely at the then campaign, which he figured would involve some violent confrontations between residents and the authorities. Those confrontations never eventuated. But the project changed direction with the involvement of Margaret Barry, a secretary turned community worker and resident activist.

In 1972, Barry, her mother Marsha Barry and the occupants of another 500 homes in Waterloo received a letter from the New South Wales Housing Commission. It told them that the area was in line for slum clearance and re-development; that the old houses were to be bulldozed to be replaced by blocks of flats. Like proposals to re-develop the Rocks and Victoria St, the Commission's plans for Waterloo would have dramatically changed the area's character. But in this case it was a state authority and not a private developer which was responsible.

Barry and her fellow residents decided to fight the re-development plan and then spent the next nine years doing so. In the early stages of the battle they were helped by the New South Wales branch of the Builders Labourers Federation, which had also stood by residents in Victoria St, Woolloomooloo, the Rocks and other sites where residents found themselves in conflict with developers of various complexions.

For Barry, the contemporary fight against re-development was part of a larger and longer battle to save inner-city homes and, at her suggestion, the film's focus was shifted to take in the history of Waterloo and that of the Housing Commission. The Commission was a state Labor government's response to nearly a decade of evictions and, sometimes, violence in Sydney's inner-city working-class suburbs. It was established in 1941 by Labor premier Sir William McKell.

A "local boy made good", McKell epitomized the often well-intentioned administrators who failed to understand the way their plans for slum clearance cut across the feelings of inner-city residents. From 1949, by which time McKell had bowed out of state politics, streets of terrace houses were listed for demolition, with tower-blocks intended for their replacement. Not until the early 1970s did residents begin to fight back.

Despite his background in video, Zubrycki says he always envisaged Waterloo as a film production:

"Video is not yet suited to mass market distribution in Australia and it is still less versatile than film, especially in post-production stages."

In fact, the film is a stark contrast to the often rambling tapes made about resident action, being instead a tightly-constructed blend of interviews, re-enactments, archival footage, still photographs and music — especially music. The score, composed for the film by Denis Kevans and Phyl Lobyl, helps pull the story together and keeps it moving along. In addition, Kevans, a South Sydney local and "professional raconteur", acted as a check on the script and helped give Zubrycki a feel for the area whose history he was recording.

The film was also workshopped with a number of academics and community workers committed to the campaign but not directly involved in it. They raised interpretations of the historical sequences, some of which directly challenged Barry's views. Zubrycki says he was then faced with a difficult ethical choice: to be completely faithful to Barry's interpretation or pursue a more independent line. Inevitably, he says, a compromise was reached.

Waterloo was completed for $20,000, excluding payments to the director and co-producer. Two-thirds of its budget came from the Creative Development Branch of the Australian Film Commission. It was screened first within the South Sydney community. It went on to win the documentary section of the 1981 Greater Union Awards at the Sydney Film Festival amid some controversy when Chris Noonan's Stepping Out, a leading contender for the award, failed to make even the finals.

Since then, Zubrycki, along with Julia Overton, has spent three months screening the film in Europe with the help of a marketing loan from the AFC. He says the film was particularly well received in Britain and The Netherlands, and was shown at the Lyon, Bilbao and Florence film festivals.

As his next project, Zubrycki is considering three topics, all involving some aspect of Australian history. Having taken four years to finish his last film, Zubrycki says he is in no hurry to begin his next. ★

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had such success with film exhibition that they ventured into production: the Kelly film was their second, and as it was much more ambitious than their earlier Moving Melbourne they had gone into partnership with Millard Johnson and William Gibson, another firm of exhibitors.

Johnson and Gibson had been analytical chemists before taking up film exhibition, so they were able to provide the technical expertise for the project. The film opened at Melbourne’s Athenaeum Theatre on the afternoon of Boxing Day 1906, and at the Town Hall that night. Thereafter, enthusiastic audiences supported extended seasons in all state capitals as well as country towns. The film toured New Zealand and England equally successfully in 1907, and was revived frequently throughout Australia over the next 10 years or more.

After this, though it was, by reputation, the first feature-length dramatized narrative film produced in Australia, it was not seen for several decades and, by the 1970s, it was listed as one of the missing - the National Film Archive held only a copy of the program booklet sold for 6d. at each screening, a few stills from this and from other sources, and a copy of the daybill advertising the film.

For many years, it was believed that a quarter reel, given by Gibson to trade journalist Gayne Dexter and destroyed in the London blitz, was the last surviving piece of the film. However, though it is now more than 70 years since the film was first produced and the film stock of that period is notoriously unstable, the long period during which the film circulated, and the many prints which must have been made to supply so diverse a market, kept hopes alive that it might still turn up.

The story so far...

The hanging of Ned Kelly in the Melbourne gaol on November 11, 1880, brought the bushranging era to a close, but seemed to only enhance Australian interest in the subject. A play about bushranging had been performed as early as 1821 and the theme remained a popular one with managers and audiences.

The career of the Kelly gang was depicted on the Melbourne stage by George Leitch in August 1881, only nine months after Ned’s death. The success of the bushranging genre, and the comparative ease of converting such an outdoor action drama from stage to film, encouraged John and Nevin Tait to make Kelly the subject of their first dramatized film. They had begun as theatrical entrepreneurs and had
And then it did. The first discovery was made in February 1976: three feet of the film was found in Adelaide, and donated to the National Film Archive in Canberra. This showed a few frames of the capture of Ned, recognizable from the stills on the 1906 poster (Figure 1).

Then, in early 1979, a more substantial find occurred: a tiny can of 35mm nitrate negative was found in Melbourne. The film was about 150 ft long, and in reasonably good condition, brittle and shrunken, but not otherwise deteriorated. It had two sequences clearly identifiable from stills and from the poster: one in which the constable makes a nuisance of himself at the Kelly homestead and is rebuffed by Kate and shot in the hand by Ned; and one of the ambush of troopers in their Wombat Ranges camp (Figure 2). The discovery of this fragment prompted new investigations into the history of the film.

Now read on...

A serious analysis of the film is very difficult from the tiny fragments available. The most immediate impression is of the skilful use of locations, and of action presented naturalistically and economically. There is no use of stage gesture or posturing, and in this regard the film is closer in spirit to the work of Edwin S. Porter in the U.S. or Cecil Hepworth in Britain than to, for instance, the Italian primitives: this is film as action, not as spectacle.

But there is also a most impressive use of the frame to create illusions of distance. The positioning of the camera in relation to the actors creates images that are, at the same time, natural and carefully deliberate. The two police left alone in the camp are seen to the left of the frame, in front of their tent, sighting a rifle at unseen birds in the top right, with the human action dwarfed by the surrounding bush (Figure 3). The ambush scenes move in closer, making the human action predominate once again. The capture of Kelly is particularly interesting: this is shot from a low angle, from the point of view of the police, and, although Kelly is in the middle distance, the impression is quite powerful as he advances on the camera, and the police in the foreground crouch behind the doubtful protection of a fallen tree (Figure 4).

What the fragments cannot tell us is how these scenes, individually so impressive, were put together. We know there were no inter-titles, which in other countries came to be used either as a description of the forthcoming spectacle, rather like the captions on a painting, or as commentary on the action appearing just before or after the image, rather like an author’s com-
munication with the reader of a novel. In the absence of inter-titles, the links must have been purely visual. There is, for instance, a moment during the capture sequence when the smoke from a pistol fired by the policeman in the lower right corner of the screen obliterates the action. From the few surviving frames, not necessarily in sequence, we cannot tell how such an effect was used, or, indeed, whether it was recognized as a visual linking device at all.

The fragments, then, are tantalizing and fascinating. But, until more becomes available for study, the problems concerning the history of the production can keep historians well occupied, for over the years of its disappearance apocryphal stories have accumulated around it. As a result, very little information about the production is non-controversial. There are conflicting claims and evidence about almost everything — the origins of the idea for the film, the source of finance, the locations used, the identity of cast and crew, the cost of the film, and so on.

For a researcher trying to sort out these contradictions with hindsight, there are two particularly confusing items: a poster dated 1910, and an unidentified fragment of film found in Perth. This fragment consists of about five minutes of film, containing sections of two major scenes from the Kelly story: the murder of Sherritt and the capture of the Glenrowan Hotel. The Sherritt scene seems to be complete — at least there is continuity within it — but the Glenrowan scenes are neither complete nor in sequence. The location for both scenes seems to be some sort of botanical gardens, with a man-made lake and narrow roads. The buildings representing Sherritt's hut and the Glenrowan Hotel are clearly theatrical flats, and no attempt has been made to disguise their two-dimensional character: the two-storey hotel has no roof, the hut shakes in the wind, clearly betraying that its boards are painted on canvas, and people move in and out from behind both structures without pretending they are solid (Figure 5). Other large flats representing trees have been placed strategically around the area, probably disguising inappropriate buildings: again no attempt has been made to integrate these with the real trees which are also present. There are no interiors at all; even the murder of Sherritt, which traditionally took place inside his home, is presented as having occurred outside.

Theoretically, the absence of interiors would point to an attempt to avoid theatricality; but the methods used in this case suggest rather a wish to use sets already available for a stage performance, and to avoid the technical problems which would have been inevitable in trying to film indoors. The final impression, of overwhelming theatricality, is confirmed by the performances: Sherritt, in particular, goes through the whole gamut of melodramatic gesture and pose to indicate temptation by the reward, lack of money in his pocket, his decision to betray the gang, and his invitation to the police to come to his home for a drink (Figure 6).

This is clearly not the 1906 film. Not only does its style betrays that of the other fragments and of the repeated descriptions in contemporary reviews of the 1906 film as "realistic" and "lifelike", but the actors who can be seen in this fragment do not bear any resemblance to those in the 1906 poster, nor to those in the identified 1906 fragment.

The moral position of the film is also different. The 1906 version refrains from passing judgment, and attempts to present the incidents as objectively as possible; the Perth fragment presents the gang as double-dyed villains and distorts the story (in historical as well as in legendary terms) to do so. It shows the gang forcing an old woodcutter, at gunpoint, to lure Sherritt outside his hut, then shooting not only Sherritt but also the two policemen who are with him. They then shoot round the old man's feet to force him to "dance", before killing him in cold blood and spurning his body with their feet as they leave (Figure 5). The change to outside the hut is in keeping with the camera style already described: the change from one murder to four allows the film to demonstrate (and so implicitly moralize about) the perfidy and ruthlessness of the gang.

Another indication that this is a different film is the presence of Ada Waldron, a character who does not appear in the 1906 printed synopsis, nor in any version of the historical story, but who is named twice, even in this brief fragment, as the carrier of important news.

For some time this fragment was believed to come from a film of the same name advertised in 1910. But the cast is clearly not those on the 1910 poster, and five of the six stills from the 1910 poster are interiors, including the one of Sherritt being shot.

So, the Perth fragment is definitely not the 1910 film either. It is clearly a very early production, probably from before World War I, and no other versions have been listed by historians as early as this. We can only speculate that, with the huge success of the Taits' production, pirate versions were saleable, and that this may have been one such film, produced cheaply by a theatrical company with the appropriate sets and costumes already available. Though there is much of intrinsic interest in it, as far as trying to find out about the 1906 film is concerned, this fragment leads only to a dead-end.
Gibson said that when he was in New Zealand with a touring biograph company, showing *Living London*, he found that audiences were deserting his show in favor of a stage play about the Kellys, presented by Charles McMahon's company. Though this claim was made many years after the events (*Everyone's*, July 29, 1931; *Sunday Herald*, October 9, 1949), it is certainly true that the McMahon company had a very successful New Zealand repertory season during 1906, and that one of the plays they performed was *The Kelly Gang*. Gibson's story is also compatible with the claims of Sam Crewe's and of John Forde of having played in Kelly plays around Melbourne, for, as has already been noted, there were plenty of these around in the years before 1906. Gibson and Crewe have been credited with the original idea, and the available evidence makes both claims reasonable.

Production occurred, according to this first version of the story, on Wednesdays and Sundays over a six-month period, at and around the Melbourne suburb of Heidelberg. These afternoons were the traditional half-holidays, and might well have been used by the producers as the only time their motley cast and crew could all be available at once. John Forde is quite circumstantial about it:

"Each Sunday and Wednesday for several weeks the entire company and crew left St Paul's Cathedral corner in horse-drawn drags for Heidelberg. Salaries ranged from 3/6 to 5/- a day when actually working. Horses were hired from Garton's livery stable" (*The Sun*, November 11, 1939).

Viola Tait (younger sister and biographer of the Tait brothers) and Gibson confirm this story, adding that sometimes the company also travelled by train. This was an important issue, as the Victorian Railways Commissioner was said to have provided a real track gang and train for the attempted derailment. Though the sources do not agree on just where the dirty deed was played out, Heidelberg, Rosanna and Eildon all rate a mention. And as all are on the same line, it is possible that all sources are speaking of the same place. There are no records in the Railways Department which could throw light on this: neither are there any in the Railways Historical Society, and members of that Society have failed to identify the piece of track from the stills available from the poster.

Charles Tait's wife had been Elizabeth Veitch: the Veitch family lived at Chartersville Estate in Heidelberg, and were part of the artists' community within which the famous "Heidelberg School" of Australian painting developed. This version of the story has the Veitch property as the site of most of the exterior filming, though the buildings visible in the stills cannot now be traced. Elizabeth Tait was also an expert horsewoman, and was credited with either playing Kate Kelly (Forde, *The Sun*, November 11, 1939) or with at least doing the riding for the unknown actress who played Kate (Viola Tait, *A Family of Brothers*, 1936).

E. J. Tait's diary (not, unfortunately, kept at the time, but written up later, at a date not specified) credits Charles Tait as director, says John and Charles Tait together wrote the scenario, that Sam Crewe was assistant director, and, rather ambiguously, adds "Photographer: Millard Johnson. Filming: William Gibson". It seems likely that it was Johnson who operated the camera, and that Gibson was responsible for the processing of the film, for a story is told of his developing the film in his bath (Tait diary, p. 26), and of his knowledge of chemicals being useful for obtaining effects such as a red tint for the section of the film which showed the forging of the gang's armor (Tait diary, pp. 25-6).

The second group of stories is not so systematically interdependent: it is rather a number of alternative claims to the first story, independent of each other, but capable of being read as a single narrative, particularly if they are seen as referring to a 1910 version rather than to the 1906 one. First there are the claims that the rights to the play were bought from E. J. Cole's Bohemian Company, and that the members of that company provided the actors for the production. Historian Anthony Buckley, working from sources supplied by the surviving Cole family, certainly assumes this. Jack Percival, writing basically about Gibson, and presumably after an interview with him, stated in 1949 that, "actors were hired from Cole's Dramatic Company at £1 a day" (*Sunday Herald*, October 9, 1949). But it would have been very difficult for the company to have been in the 1906 film, as they were engaged throughout 1906 in weekly change repertory at the Haymarket Hippodrome in Sydney. It would not have been possible for them to have travelled twice a week to a Melbourne suburb over a period of months, while working regularly in Sydney, 1000 km away.

However, in March 1907, Cole was reported to have opened a Melbourne Hippodrome and, in April, *Theatre* magazine reports the opening of the company's first Kelly play in Sydney. Cole may well, therefore, have been available, with the "new and elaborate scenery" (*Theatre*, April 1, 1907) prepared for the play, to produce a new version of the film in 1910, near Melbourne.

In contradiction of the story of the twice-weekly visits to Heidelberg, there exists a persistent rumor of the film having been made in a single week's location shooting, followed by a few extra days back in Melbourne. For instance: "Our lawless gang journeyed by train to a little country town ... We all stayed at the local pub, kept by a more experienced bush-ranger I remember, and there we made up and dressed ... That day every school-child in the district, male and female, wagged it, and they

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**Figure 8.** poster for the 1910 *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, held in the National Gallery, Canberra.

**Figure 9.** stills from the 1906 (top) and the 1910 (above) posters.
If there is something particularly disturbing about Blow Out, more disturbing than anything to be found in any other film by Brian de Palma, it is perhaps best located in that film's closing moments. A circular narrative movement, around finding the finishing touches for the horror film whose rough footage precedes the opening credits for Blow Out, is completed, and another circular movement, that of the camera around Blow Out's central character, Jack Terry (John Travolta), commences but remains unfinished as the screen becomes dark. Terry's progression through the narrative is not distinguished by any particular growth towards maturity or by any developing insight into the way the world works (though, indeed, such an insight, and the communication of it to others, has been his expressed goal throughout the film). In fact, that progression is signalled by the film's single flashback sequence as, more accurately, a regression, a repetition of a past event that continues to haunt him, a product of obsessive drives constantly directed outwards. The incomplete circular tracking movement around Terry can end only at the moment of his physical death, the final retreat from the emotional wasteland he has inhabited throughout the film.

Ostensibly Blow Out belongs to that cycle of films which asserts large-scale conspiracies in contexts which render their protagonists impotent or paranoid (from Blow Up to The Passenger, from Chinatown to The Tenant, through Executive Action, The Conversation, Night Moves and The Parallax View), a cycle of films whose box-office record could only generously be described as mediocre, whatever the individual merits one might wish to otherwise ascribe to particular examples of the cycle. Common to all these films is the characterization of the hero: an obsessive, locked into his own world and the work he pursues, desperate in his search to locate what he sees as the truth, absolutely destructive to all those around him and, finally, to himself. The nightmare may well be "out there", but it is also deep inside.

Terry is very much in the tradition of these heroes. A sound man for a film production house, his image of himself and his work is arranged around a belief in his independence, in his superiority over those with whom he comes into contact. Yet, as he pursues his ends, inadvertently he is going to fulfil the demands of his producer, Sam (Peter Boyden). Urged by him to find "the right scream" for their horror film's shower murder, Terry instead directs his labor at
expanding the library of sound effects that constitute the organized mess of his studio. He is totally involved in his private world of noises and voices.

The film's opening credits are linked with a series of split screen images in a sequence which underlines with an admirable precision the pre-occupations of the film. One half of the frame observes Terry's restless movement around his sound library, while the other half shows his television carrying a news bulletin, which he is not watching, about a potential presidential candidate. Two worlds, the private and the public, are thus linked by the film, Terry's commitment located firmly in the realm of the former. At the same time, the sequence draws attention to the making of Blow Out itself, the labels on Terry's collection of reference CDs, pointing to his particular interests but to the effects which are going to recur in the film we are watching (heart beat, clock, footsteps, shot, etc.).

Prior to shooting Sisters (1973), and after the overtly political concerns and formal experimentation of Greetings (1969) and Hi Mom! (1970), De Palma identified his movement towards the thriller as an attempt to find "something that reprieves me from the political and moral dilemmas of our society for a while". Arguably, De Palma's films, consciously or otherwise, have never abandoned these concerns, just defined them in a little more broadly. Blow Out's representation of sexual relations seems particularly pertinent here, as does its reflexive quality. The kind of space any film builds between itself and its viewers can be seen as political as well as moral in its implications, and the construction of this space is obviously a matter of the means by which a film is made.

I attempted to demonstrate in an article based around Dressed to Kill in Cinema Papers (No. 31, pp.20-25) that there has always been a kind of reflexivity in De Palma's fictions, drawing attention to the processes of creation and of watching, and Blow Out very clearly sustains this concern, not only in the self-referential segment to which I have already referred, but also in the way its narrative follows the production of two films, focusing on process at the same time as it adheres, with a daring and inventive stylistic unconventionality, to the conventional format of the thriller.

The film assumes this generic direction during the sequence that finds Terry filling the self-imposed isolation of an evening on a bridge over the Wissahickon Creek in search of new sounds. Armed with his powerful recording equipment (Robin Wood has evocatively described his microphone as a "substitute phallus"), he gains much pleasure from eavesdropping on a couple of lovers, one of whom, on becoming aware of his distant presence, urges their departure ("What is he? A peeping-Tom or something?"). Shortly afterwards, the accident, which makes the film's title refers takes place and provides Terry with an unexpected addition to his sound collection. McRyan, the political candidate, who was the subject of the earlier news bulletin in which Terry had shown no interest, perishes as the car plunges into the river, while Terry is able to rescue his companion for the evening, Sally (Nancy Allen).

From this point, the narrative follows Terry's attempts to reconstruct the incident and to discover the reason for the gunshot which, he later discovers from his recording, has caused the blow-out and the politician's death. His search becomes one for what he sees as "the truth", and the disbelief with which he is greeted by officialdom only serves to incite him: "I'm on my own with these guys... I know what I heard and I know what I saw and I'm not going to stop until everyone in the country knows about it."

He is assisted in his endeavor by the discovery, after a shot-by-shot coverage of the accident appears in a weekly journal, that an amateur photographer also happened to be at the right place at the right time. Despite the protestations of the film producer, he spends his time matching his soundtrack to the film, muttering a delighted "Great!" at the finished product after the sound is perfectly synchronized with the image substantiating his thesis about the gunshot. It is a moment which is echoed by his disthought "It's a good scream" response to his producer's excitement when, at the end of the film, the appropriate voice-over has at last been found for the girl in the shower in the horror film.

In his pursuit of "the truth", Terry manipulates Sally into assisting him. Like him, she has been urged by McRyan's assistant (Terrence Currier) to forget the incident in order to protect the reputation of the dead man, and while she seems to have every intention of doing so, she is also drawn by her debt to Terry ("I saved your life. The least you could do is have a drink with me") and attracted by his apparently romantic interest in her. His intentions, however, are single-minded, and at no stage in the film (until, perhaps, it is too late) is there any suggestion that her existence means anything to him other than a way of getting what he wants to know.

1. The working title for Blow Out was "Personal Effects", and I suspect, nothing would have been lost by its retention.


3. Pino Donaggio's superb score for the film (Ivan Hutchinson will discuss it at greater length in the next issue of Cinema Papers) evokes through its simple love theme an anticipation of a romantic coupling. When it does not occur a reassessment of the function of the music becomes necessary. In this new context, its romantic edge seems to create a kind of countertop with the events on the screen, urging the viewer to an ironic distance from the situation with which it has been linked, and especially from Terry whose behaviour is entirely at odds with the expectations initially raised by it, and suggesting a sense of melancholy, of a mourning for lost possibilities.
Looking for a sound: Terry in his studio, holding an erased tape. Blow Out.

of Terry's lack of consideration of the human factor in his work and of his overriding obsession with uncovering "the truth," have become disastrously clear. His anguished pursuit of her after he has inadvertently placed her in the clutches of McRyan's killer, Burke (John Lithgow), reveals a desperation which is at least as much a recognition of what the danger he has put her in implies for him as it does for her.

Throughout the film, emphasis is placed on Terry's inability to recognize the fact of his own blindness. His passionate quest for knowledge is also an attempt to reassure himself of his own understanding of events (even at the end, after he has disposed of Burke, he has no awareness of his motives for the killings), a revelation of nothing more than his personal impotence. Again with characteristic insight, Robin Wood has noted that "at the end of a De Palma movie, the patriarchal order has collapsed beyond restoration. Typically the films move towards the castration of the male protagonist."*4

Throughout the explicit recurrence throughout De Palma's films of the destructive consequences of male manipulation of women, in which context Blow Out is no exception, Wood's observation is a particularly useful one for a reading of the film. Terry's impotence in Blow Out, a product of the fact that he cannot recognize himself outside his professional identity, is fully worked out in his relationship with Sally and is visually reinforced by the wealth of cinematic means at De Palma's disposal. The recurrent use of overhead shots (of other characters as well as Terry) evokes the sense of a power at work above the characters, of an individual helplessness which pervades their lives despite their sense of control and their attempts to fix an order on things. The repeated circular tracking and panning movements of the camera around Terry assert a feeling of chaos against Terry's attempts to create that order (nowhere better illustrated than in the sequence in his studio after he has found all his tapes erased, when the camera's 360° path refuses the course of his movement, rendering him irrelevant, and moves round and round the jungle of entangled tape) and in Terry himself (as the camera tracks around him while he cradles the body of the murdered Sally in another of the film's "blow out" sequences as the fireworks of the Jubilee Day festival give explosive expression to his emotional despair).

Terry's ability to capture the right sound effect and to gain the information necessary to lead him to the next step in his attempt to find "the truth" seems totally dependent on chance, on the sudden and unexpected appearance of the sought material. His execution of Burke is similarly an act which indicates his blindness to its consequences. Not only is it too late to save Sally, but it also cuts him off from "the truth" that he thinks he has been seeking, denying him any chance of cathartic release. And if the killing of Burke might appear to have satisfied the demands of the thriller, the epilogue works to indicate the limitations of such a formula response to the film, both in terms of the personal drama (as Terry thrusts his fingers into his ears against the sound effect which will be a constant reminder of his irreparable impotence) and of the public one (the possibility of ever uncovering the chain of responsibility between Burke and the others who had been a party to his crimes dies along with him).

Further developing a perspective on Terry's manipulation of Sally, the structural connection the film pursues between him, Burke, and McRyan, Terry has parts to play at the scene of the accident near the start of the film and all three manipulate Sally for their own ends. Manny, despite his later protestations, had engaged her in a set-up which put her in danger, even if his efforts are in vain.

Yet the connections remain — both record the event, both take advantage of Sally's gullibility, and neither is particularly bright in the plans that they lay, though they think they are good at it. Again there are clear differences of motivation and attitude between Terry and Burke, yet the similarities the film draws between them are fascinating and illuminating. Both are professionals (whatever else he may be, Terry is shown to be good at the mechanics of his craft, and Burke is a most competent killer) and they are self-assured in the performance of their skills, even if both are eventually undone by them. Their deft handling of events in the course of the film, and despite having no overtly sexual interest in women, both seem such an interest in order to achieve their (again very different) ends. Finally, both are bound together in their respective acts of violence: Sally, but it also cuts him off from "the truth" and all three manipulate Sally for their own ends.

Looking at Manny,6 All three have their parts to play in the opening sequence which had initially appeared promising but which, ultimately, he had no control over. Clearly there is a difference here between Manny and Terry, for while Manny does both, even if his efforts are in vain, Terry does both, even if his efforts are in vain.

Terry is a restraining influence as Sally tries to leave hospital after her and McRyan's, "accident". Blow Out.

Narrative Manipulations / Brian de Palma’s Blow Out


5. The parallels with the act of artistic creation seems to be implied here and, though it is never made explicit, in a film so centrally about process it is difficult to avoid the analogy (or to believe that De Palma was not fully conscious of it and of its implications for him as a filmmaker at this stage).

6. Here the film recalls the structure of Klute, linking the detective, John Klute (Donald Sutherland), and the killer, Cable (Charles Cioffi), in their exploitation of the call girl, Bree Daniels (Jane Fonda), but with a significantly different resolution.
What had appeared as a source of a rather easy humor works instead to create an all-embracing irony, powerful and disturbing: the film that Terry thought he had been ignoring was the one for which, unawares, he had all along been seeking out the finishing touches. The real power has been in the hands of the film producer from the beginning, and the human waste that Jack has left behind him has been less in the service of a crusade for “the truth”, than fulfilling the needs of the machinery it was committed to displace, the machinery of fiction.

Like much of De Palma's previous work, Blow Out offers its viewer a double-vision: of a narrative work (and I can think of few films in the past decade that have equalled either its absolutely gripping narrative flow or the density of its formal arrangement) and simultaneously of a reflection upon the very processes by which it was constructed. Perhaps it is in this kind of direction that the best of the new Hollywood cinema has been fated to go, with sensibilities guided by a blending of old Hollywood cinema and European 'new waves', educated by the social and political upheavals of the late 1960s and early '70s, and sharpened by the critical and theoretical developments around film during the same period. It is an exciting direction, and Blow Out is a good example of what it has to offer.
Body Heat is a film noir, a genre film informed and changed by a modern sensibility. It is also Lawrence Kasdan's first film as director. Kasdan, a scriptwriter, has written Continental Divide, Raiders of the Lost Ark and The Bodyguard, and co-wrote The Empire Strikes Back.

The possessive husband, Edmund Walker (Richard Crenna), top left, stalks the man who has moved in on his wife. Meanwhile, the lovers, Matty Walker (Kathleen Turner) and Ned Racine (William Hurt), all other stills, make the most of caught moments.
When the process of moving pictures ceased to be a travelling peekshow and novelty attraction, becoming the enormous entertainment industry it is now, people were attracted from many different areas to have a crack at putting their visions, fantasies, jokes, fears and observations on film. They came from vaudeville, melodrama, operetta; from sideshows, serious theatre, ballet and the fine arts. They had been dancers, businessmen, painters, drill instructors, dilettantes or photographers. Within 20 years nearly every industrial country in the world was making films, pushing new discoveries to their limits, drawing inspiration and direction from any allied field that might be of use.

Film has some remarkable attributes; it marries all previously established artforms together into one linear piece. Writing, music, painting, sculpture, song and dance, and performance can link arms, hybridize and develop through association with one another in a way that may have been dreamt of, but has not been possible until this century. Cinema has become the dominating artform of the 20th Century; on completion it is paraded around the world in the same way that Botticelli's most recent painting would have been paraded through the streets of Florence 500 years ago. The new picture, preceded by priests, band and choir, would have been carried on a float decorated with flowers to wherever it was to hang in honor of the Lord. Today, thanks are offered to a different god.

Ever since the beginning of film, the designer has played an important role, starting with the costumes and sets Georges Méliès devised for his own garage productions in France in the early 1900s. But these were little other than tableaux enclosed within the camera frame's own proscenium arch. A few years later, in Italy, mother of grand opera, the sets became so massive for Giovanni Pastrone's Cabiria (1913) that the camera was forced to abandon its static position and start roaming about the huge marble halls to get a better look at its surroundings. A cinematic innovation had been forced upon the motion picture by the sheer enormity of the building. In 1916, D. W. Griffith advanced the cause of reproducing historical monuments by erecting the mammoth outdoor set for Intolerance, due largely to the fact that he just wanted to outgross the Italians. Judging by the still illustrated, I imagine he succeeded in his ambition.

Now while the early years of creating illusions to use as spectacular backdrops obviously had an element of seeing who could build the biggest and best, it is equally apparent from the photographs that these early art directors and designers were not copying the world around them or the findings of their extensive historical research. What they had all done was to make...
full use of the opportunity given to them in providing something new and amazing for each film, and created a special reality for that film, in which everything — the costumes, sets and props — adhered to that new concept. The idea of living in a stable reality had already changed by that time; and the more one now watches film, in one’s mind and memories “the real world where we thought we lived blends with the world of illusions.”

About the same time, the entire western world was in a state of revolution; people had quite suddenly acquired the ability to travel at hair-raising speeds on land and even in the air, they could talk to others half-way around the world, poison each other with gas and have thousands of novel inventions that were designed to help make daily life more comfortable. On top of this, the world of thought had been changed by Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and even Oscar Wilde; women were to be thought human, and the art world was in a state of frenzied discovery, much to the chagrin of the public which had made some world of illusions.

By the 1930s in the U.S., film was a strong entertainment industry, attracting many artists, actors and architects to apply their skills in this new area, since a lot of these men and women were unable to practise for themselves on account of the Depression. The resultant flow of labor (a lot of which was available at vastly reduced rates) helped boost the output of the studios immensely. There had also been a healthy and energetic interchange and exchange of ideas between theatre and film and other arts during the early years. The studio system had been well established since the 1910s. And, in later years, saw the involvement of writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald, and artists such as Salvador Dali, who designed dream sequences in Spellbound in 1945, and even started an aborted animation for the Disney studios.

The design departments of the major studios began to take on the characteristic touch of their department heads. Thus each studio quite consciously gathered together an art department that would provide a distinctive trademark. Echoed in Ernst Lubitsch’s observation that, “There is Paramount Paris, and Metro Paris, and of course the real Paris... But Paramount’s is the most Parisian of them all,” is that point about illusion and reality again.

What Lubitsch is referring to is the fact that the Paramount studios art department, headed by Hans Dreier until the early 1950s, imparted to film the atmosphere, joy and mystery of Paris better than any reproduction of the city could ever have done. Paramount had cooked up Essence of Paris, in other words, and the very fabric of the backings, streets, curtains and fruit stalls all join forces to insinuate themselves into the heart of the audience until it is enjoying the experience of seeing the city on film as much as if it were in France. The art of illusion had been stretched beyond stage mechanics to embrace actual feelings and experiences. During this time, film reality came of age in the American film industry.

The overlord of the MGM art department from 1924 until 1946 was Cedric Gibbons. One can see his credit on every MGM film up until 1936 (when he retired with a stroke), because he had it in his contract that only his name should appear as art director. This egomaniac is also supposed to have designed the Oscar award, of which he won 11 himself during his long career. Gibbons was undeniably an extremely creative man, despite his unfortunate characteristics, and I use him to illustrate an important point about the acceptance of the new-found film reality.

Throughout the 1940s, the interior decoration trends of the Art Nouveau, combined with influences that were later to emerge as the rigorous, function-orientated Bauhaus school of thought in industrial design, blended into what was then known as the Moderne (what we now call Art Deco). Now examples of houses or apartment buildings executed entirely in the Art Deco manner are extremely rare, due mainly to the fact that commissioners of art and architecture seldom have any foresight: rather they like to see elaborations of what they have seen to work in the past, even the recent past.

Gibbons saw, as a designer and former architecture student, a chance to develop the Art Deco style to its limits; not to be lived in for years to come, but solely for film. In erecting his sets, therefore, he could push the style to limits that had never been seen in reality — that could never be enjoyed on a Sunday afternoon by its owners — because he knew that when you built something for film you could go beyond the strictures of architecture and engineering laid down in the real world. His set for MGM’s 1935 production of Born to Dance establishes a height of the Deco style that exists only on film, which has since then become reality. The Instances of Deco work documented pale beside Gibbons’ flurry of squared-off columnar fireplace, the mirrors repeating the rooms into blackness, and the assymetrical border containing these mirrors, which spells out luxury and a sensual mystery.
with admirable economy. This set, like many others of the decade in the U.S., served to broadcast the new fashions of the day: film had started to play the prophet and arbiter of taste and dreams — during a world recession!

It is interesting to consider that this use of the film medium by the designer and producers as two-hour-long, frothy cakewalk parades in ideal home exhibitions could not have been conjured so effectively had it not been for a total control of the tool in hand — film as a malleable art form. The next recognized step was to take total control, not only of the tool and materials and devices, but to start manipulating the artform, in the same way that a sculptor hammers away at a piece of stone knowing that somewhere in there is a virgin and child.

Well, in 1939 David O. Selznik was making Gone With The Wind, and, as producer, he went through four directors for various reasons. However, the entire film had been planned on paper before it went to the shooting stage by William Cameron Menzies, one of the most influential and prolific designers in Anglo/American cinema, who had drawn "a thousand small, perfectly composed sketches for the camera to follow — every shot on paper, even to the light effect — and the various egos submitted to Menzies' vision" (Mary Corliss and Carlos Clarens, Film Comment, 1978). To keep those various egos happy, Selznik gave Menzies the title of "Production Designer", for he had as great a hand in the look of the film as in the dynamics, the rhythm and the lighting. Corliss and Clarens continue:

"If a film director is perceptive enough not to allow his ego to interfere, he can stimulate his art director to create . . . the inchoate images of his mind and delegate some of his directorial duties to his production designer to work with the cameraman."

The term production designer had been introduced, not as a gratuitous title, but to describe a concept — that of someone constantly monitoring the look of the project to ensure that the end result is as coherent a package as possible, and to work closely with the director in the planning stages to design whole sequences, or even the entire film, on paper before shooting. This work is combined with designing sets, and overseeing other visual departments, leaving the director more time to spend with his actors and editor. I shall say more about this particular role later on.

Meanwhile in Europe, the approach to filmmaking had been quite different; not being encapsulated in the U.S. studio system, the European film was the domain of the director, rather than of the studio head. The studio system was more like a large theatre company, with the head of the organization often unknown to its workers. As a result of the independence of the European directors, one can see a far more prolific output, and subsequently a more rapid development of ideas. If you like, this is the...
realm of the auteur director; it would have been his stamp that was the distinctive trademark upon a film rather than that of an organization. One cannot imagine Luis Bunuel or Jean Renoir submitting to the visions of their designers—they were the artists, though very much in collaboration with others who were specialists in their field.

In Europe, a different style of film developed: one more intimately concerned with the inner feelings of men and women, and reflecting the more traditional values of family, religion and class struggles that the U.S. cinema forgoes. The European films of the pre-war period were also more closely linked to the concurrent artistic movements of the time, often leading to collaborations like the Bunuel-Dali partnership, or the involvement in film of a poet such as Jean Cocteau.

It is interesting to look back to the formative years of European cinema, where one finds precedents for modern-day film genres. Jean Vigo's *Zero de Conduite* (1932) was remade by Lindsay Anderson as *If* in the 1960s, and his *L'Atlantique* could just as well be Francis Coppola's *The Rain People*, while such extraordinary notions, that may well look clumsy to us today, like *The Priest and the Seashell*, a sceptical look at the French Roman Catholic priesthood's inner fantasies, Cocteau's *Orphee* and the entire surrealist group's involvement in *Entr'acte*, are important contributions to the language of film as we now readily recognize and use it. These innovative gifts to cinema now make possible the work of Nicolas Roeg, Coppola and the Monty Python team: it does not come from the U.S. cinema.

But each discipline makes its own contribution to the medium, and each enriches the devices that are now at hand.

**I do not see it as essential that every film have a designer, since many films of a social-realist nature are the brainchild of the director, who conceives the project from beginning to end, with the help of an art director to ensure that the settings look right for the idea. This sort of film might also be shot largely on location, requiring only a certain degree of refurbishing. But the designer is not restricted to the large budget film by any manner of means, since by establishing a style of attack for a film, and ignoring the demands of naturalism for instance, the designer can create environments and atmosphere with the simplest of devices and backdrops, thus saving the produc-**
tion company a great deal of money, in return for a film with a coherent overall look. In this manner, it is possible to produce a film for $1 million that looks as though it should have cost $4 million, simply by predetermining the approach. However, to do this, it is essential that key creative people on the team are prepared to accept this approach. That may seem rather an odd thing to say, since I hear you asking why would those people be involved if they don't necessarily all agree with one another? Well, it happens, I can assure you. Unless the director, photographer, designer and costume designer are in accord, and the director trusts those specialists to interpret the brief for the film, then the whole thing will be a shambles.

It is equally important that the director has the same conviction about the film as the producer. But if the producer decides that the “stylization” of a film is a good money-saving device — that the idea can be articulated visually in this manner — and on seeing the results he panics, because he has never seen anything like it before, and urges a more conservative approach, then more money will have to be found to create that naturalistic look. Reproducing naturalism for film is an extremely expensive business. What this example demonstrates is that the director has the wrong producer, and quite probably that neither of them has the courage of his convictions to produce an innovative piece of work.

As an example of a low-budget film produced in Australia recently, that has the impact of a far more expensive film, I need only mention Mad Max, conceived, written and directed by George Miller. George's singular vision and unflagging creativity enthused an equally energetic group of people to realize his extraordinary idea. The film was made in 1977-78 for considerably less than $1 million and is to date the highest-grossing Australian film ever. George and producer Byron Kennedy had planned the film together, being in complete accord with one another.

The picture had been totally designed in the writing stage, relating to crisp, sparsely filled compositions, a very fast cutting rhythm, bright color and a great deal of action within the frame and in the camera's movements. On the other hand, there was insufficient money to build anything as elaborate as the future. So we had to use everything in an utterly broken-down condition, the main item of set dressing being garbage and litter, which costs nothing.

The particular environments could then be enhanced with certain key objects, like the car wreck on the beach at the beginning of the film, the backless bedroom cupboard in the same scene, or the extraordinary sight of the government official sitting on a broken lavatory dressed in a Japanese suit of armor while he discusses policy with the police chief. All these apparently thrown away details give enigma and meaning to the incongruous objects as well as their surroundings at the same time. One learns something about a time in the future when industry has ceased and its products have become totems to the people of that time; and one sees those things in unaccustomed places, which makes their intended function all the more poignant, ironic or ridiculous.

So, intent and design exist hand in hand; in fact the two words are often used synonymously. This becomes clear if one looks at a detail which I can best explain in my own terms. Suppose I have to design a haunted house for a film. I can either turn to one of the many books that have been published about horror films and copy one of those gothic buildings, or even create a synthesis of several types of houses from this genre. On the other hand, I can come up with something entirely my own, which would be a portrayal of my (and the director's) idea of a really spooky place. If I choose the latter, I cannot start drawing until I have a clear idea in my mind of what the finished thing should look like; there is no point in even dirtying a sheet of paper. The pencil will certainly not do the work for me as it is only a tool of my mind and its ideas. Furthermore, once that initial idea has finally gotten itself down on paper, for the house to be built I must have worked out every detail of color, decoration, dimension, texture, and the apparent age and character that the place is to have. If I have not, then the end result will show quite clearly that these aspects have not been thought through; that there was no overall concept. The outcome can then only be that the building will not say "haunted house" to the audience. The original intention will have failed.

A great many films fail for reasons of this type. It is an inarticulate meandering, a compromise of idea or realization. It is not good enough, through timidity, to put something in front of an audience as though saying, "Well, it's something like this — do you get the idea?", which only goes to show a lack of planning and design in the broadest sense.

There must also be the very strong conviction that the initial intention, and the direction taken to achieve it, is right for the film in question. An idea that is only half conceived cannot be

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The following notes have been prepared as a general guide to Investors and Producers dealing in Australian films for the purposes of the Income Tax Assessment Act (ITAA).

Each individual project has to be assessed on its merits, and the information below is of a general nature.

It is stressed that in cases of doubt inquiries should be made to the Australian Tax Office (ATO) for a ruling on the specific facts of the individual project.

**Eligible Films**

To qualify for consideration under the new provisions of Division 10BA of the ITAA, a film has to be an “eligible film” and one having “significant Australian content”. The Minister for Home Affairs and Environment receives applications in this regard, and, if satisfied on the basis of project details submitted before production, issues a provisional certificate as to the film’s eligibility and content.

It should be remembered that changes to the specifications of a film, especially if they involve foreign elements, may jeopardize the continuing status of the project in terms of certification and, therefore, prior clearance of any proposed change should be sought. On completion of a film, a further application should be made to the Minister for a final certificate and provided that the Minister is satisfied that the film has been completed within the details submitted in the application for provisional certification, together with any approved changes, a final certificate is expected to be issued without undue delay.

**Eligible Expenses**

**Marketing/Revenue Distinctions**

The Division 10BA deductions relate to capital expenditure incurred by the taxpayer in the production costs of a film. It is important to note that a typical film investment package may involve the expenditure of moneys which do not, in the hands of the taxpayer, have the nature of capital expenditure with regard to production costs. For example, amounts may be expended by the production company on behalf of the investor which are capital expenditure with respect to non-production items (e.g., formation expenses of joint venture or corporate structures), and conversely other expenses may be of a revenue nature associated with the film, such as publicity and marketing expenses.

Therefore, each category of expense should be carefully evaluated, to identify whether it will fall for assessment as a non-production capital expense in terms of the ITAA, a capital expense for the purposes of Division 10BA or a revenue expense for the purposes of Division 10BA.

Revenue expenses of the film (such as publicity) are eligible for deduction; however, they are only eligible for deduction against income derived from the same film in relation to which they were originally expended and at the time that such income becomes assessable.

**Production Expenses**

**Legal Expenses**: Such expenses relating to production goods and services are generally eligible expenses. For example, legal costs of contracting cast and crew qualify. However, legal costs of contracting investors do not qualify in the same manner.

**Sets and Props**: Items of a capital nature, such as equipment, buildings, sets and props, and other constructions are eligible to the extent of their value consumed during the production (e.g., the net cost of set construction qualifies after deducting from the cost of construction the proceeds of sale or other realization). Cars and film equipment should also be treated on a net basis.

**Completion Guarantees**: Standard form completion guarantees relating to the budget and time performance of the film have been held to qualify for eligible production costs.

**Producer Fees and Production Overheads**: These qualify to the extent that they
relate specifically to the producer’s role of producing the film. Care should be taken in relation to payment for any other services which a producer may render the overall project, such as arranging finance, formation of venture vehicles, etc., as those would not qualify as production costs of the film.

**Contingencies:** Naturally any amounts originally budgeted as an overall contingency will fall for assessment depending on the way in which a budget amount is allocated and the form in which it is actually expended.

**Overseas Expenses:** Payments in favor of non-Australian taxpayers are understood to stand or fall depending on the character of the payment in the hands of the Australian resident taxpayer. The general rules described above apply.

**Publicity and Marketing:** All costs of publicity and marketing are revenue expenses rather than capital cost of production.

**Distribution Expenses:** In principle, costs of materials produced after the completion of the film, for the purposes of servicing sales, such as multiple prints, etc., are revenue expenses. Completion is generally taken to occur at answer print stage.

### Development Expenses

A film project generally starts with the acquisition of an existing intellectual property, such as a book, or with the creation of an original screenplay. From that point, to the point at which a production can start, considerable development work is generally required, including writer’s and editor’s fees for development of the script, professional fees payable to directors and others for consultation in regard to such development, costs relating to location surveys, selecting and contracting of casts and crews, screen tests and costing of proposed film. This type of expense can be termed as expenses of developing “The Property.” Provided the investors acquire the Property by virtue of an arm’s-length commercial transaction, in the same way they acquire other units of production required to make the film, then such costs of developing the property are eligible in the hands of the taxpayer as part of the production costs of a film.

### At Risk

The “at risk” test has been held to apply to two separate aspects of a film investment. Firstly, it relates to the notion of the taxpayer being “at risk” for the production costs in the sense that those costs are incurred on his behalf. Secondly, the test is applied to any financial transactions that are designed to make the taxpayer’s risk a “paper risk” only as distinct from a commercial risk.

**At Risk Expenditure:** To qualify for Division 10BA deductions, the taxpayer has to fully commit his investment to the producer before the producer commits the expenditures which will eventually be met from the proceeds of the taxpayer’s investment. In other words, the critical relationship is the timing between the investor’s commitment to the producer and the producer’s commitments to the suppliers of production goods and services, rather than the cash-flow of the investment and the production costs. Care should be taken, therefore, to ascertain the commitment status of expenditures which are proposed to be met from investor commitments.

### Finance at Risk

There has been considerable debate on the “at risk” test in relation to borrowed funds and pre-sales. It is understood that the situation is as follows: In relation to borrowed funds, the taxpayer remains at risk for the total of his outlays. Providing the funds have been raised by a pre-sale arrangement, the taxpayer is at risk in the sense that the taxpayer is required to have his capital investment in the film to be made, the income will be taken into account in determining the amount for which the taxpayer was at risk.

In the normal course of events, it may be possible for the producer to secure a sale of some of the film rights before the production of the film, or even before its investment. Providing that such a pre-sale arrangement was the result of a normal commercial arms-length transaction, then the income arising from such a pre-sale arrangement will not generally be taken to reduce the taxpayer’s risk of loss.

However, to the extent that income was derived in the same arrangement under which the taxpayer has (by loan or otherwise) put in funds to enable the expenditure to be made, the income will be taken into account in determining the amount for which the taxpayer was at risk.

**Underwriting**

As noted above in the “at risk” commentary, the taxpayer is required to have his investment contractually committed to subsequent stages, in the form of amounts on account of his investment as an eligible expense. Therefore, an arrangement under which a producer proceeds to incur and expend monies, the funding of which is guaranteed to him by an underwriter, will not, as a rule, lead to such expenses being eligible in the hands of investors subsequently introduced by the underwriter to reimburse such expenses.

However, to the extent that some expenditures of a film need not be committed by the producer until a later stage of the film production process, then on an interim basis an underwriter could guarantee the introduction of investors who would be in a position to commit the required level of investment to the producer before the producer having to commit such final stage production expenses.

Therefore, it is possible to plan two-tier financing, whereby early production commitments are covered by early commitments from stage one investors and later commitments are covered by stage two investors, with an underwriter guaranteeing to the stage one investors and the producer the due performance of stage two investors so that the total financing of the film is assured.

### Timing of Deduction

Effectively the project has to satisfy three main tests to be eligible for Division 10BA deduction. Firstly, the film has to be completed; secondly, that the taxpayer has to use the copyright of the film for the purposes of producing assessable income or to derive assessable income under some form of “pre-sale”; and, thirdly, the Minister has to issue a provisional certificate in relation to that film.

Additionally, of course, the taxpayer has to fulfill the general conditions, in that he is at risk for his expenditures; that he is a resident taxpayer; and that he is one of the first owners of the copyright with the intent of using it to produce assessable income from the film.

### Revenue Test

One of the pre-conditions for claiming a deduction concerns the derivation by the taxpayer of assessable income from the use of the film copyright. This has been loosely referred to in the industry as the “revenue test”. It should be noted that the test bears upon the matters set out in Section 124ZAF and that in principle it is not necessary for the film to be exhibited to the public to satisfy this test. Other forms of normal industry marketing can produce assessable income for the taxpayer investor. An advance against theatrical distribution, for example, is an example. These notes are in the nature of general comments and should not be taken as specific rulings authorized by the ATO. Producers and investors should consult their professional advisors as to whether specific cases are assessable income or not. In the absence of specific rulings, application for specific rulings should be made to the relevant ATO office.

The above information is believed to be correct at the time of publication. However no responsibility can be taken for loss incurred by any person relying thereon.
Austerity dominated the 35th Edinburgh International Film Festival. Its stringency was worse than expected, even in this year of Britain's nasty recession, because the Scottish Film Council, having purchased a lovely old Methodist church in the heart of Edinburgh, is now converting the building to house the Festival and to provide a centre for Scottish film life. With subsidies eaten away by inflation, the building fund is still some $400,000 short, and in view of the urgency of finishing the reconstruction, the cost of the Festival had to be pared to a minimum.

Earlier in the year, it had been suggested that no Festival should be held in 1981, but the new director, Jim Hickey, knew that a small parsimonious Festival would still be better than none at all. Shortened from its usual 15 days to eight, and shorn of its usual adjuncts like lectures, publications and parties, the Festival still had its compensations; mainly because it remained true to its guiding principles.

It is these principles which had made Edinburgh the Mecca of independent filmmaker, especially documentary filmmakers; and also ensured it great honor on the “alternative festivals” round, which includes Rotterdam, Mannheim, Pesaro and soon, probably, Melbourne. The film of these principles is to be a showcase for new British independents, and to ensure critical attention for them in more leisurely circumstances than anywhere else, especially in the overcrowded London Film Festival. The second is to maintain the status and importance of documentaries - short and feature-length.

Some of these had already been shown at other festivals, shown rather than seen. The two Australian films, Public Enemy Number One and Against the Grain, were bespoken in Berlin, where they had an almost closed screening in tiny rooms. Unfortunately, Public Enemy Number One arrived in a box containing two copies of Reel Two, thus depriving Edinburgh audiences and critics of a chance to judge it fairly. All they saw of Wilfred Burchett's epic career was his contact with Ho Chi Minh, leading to the final shock of his career: the results of the Cambodian war. This was a great pity, as the early material, showing Burchett's reaction to Nazi and his stand in the years preceding World War 2, would have been of more interest to a predominantly European public.

So, it was overshadowed by two American documentary features, more efficiently packed and dispatched: the most-praised, colorful and skilled Rosie the Riveter, and The Day After Trinity, a well-made and well-edited talking-head documentary about a subject which could not be handled in any other way: about the character and motivation of Robert Oppenheimer and the atmosphere in which he and his team built and detonated the first atom bomb.

The only documentary with local (that is, Scottish) connotations was a 56-minute lyrical study of life, poetry and songs as preserved on a small Hebridean island, called The Shepherds of Berneray. This was researched and directed by two Americans, Jack Shea and Allen Moore, and financed mainly by Harvard University on some sort of community-research grant, with a little help from the Scottish authorities. It is a sensitive film, emphasizing the two main factors which govern the lives of the islanders: their climate, and their remoteness. But it is not necessarily for the sensitive city viewer: the traditional methods of castrating sheep, for instance, disturbed the digestion of critics accustomed to The Texas Chain Saw Massacre or John Carpenter.

**Shortfall of Features**

Although in planning the timetables, Jim Hickey aimed at compression rather than cutting, this did not work in practice. There was not nearly enough material from Europe; hardly anything, except for a thick special season of the Portuguese cinema, one Swiss and some German films. Even France cannot be said to have been fairly represented by Nelly Kaplan's Charles et Lucie, about a gormless couple of unedifying eccentrics.

The only "country" new to Edinburgh was Israel, with Yaki Yosha's The Vulture (from the Cannes Directors' Fortnight), which has a sharp sense of the texture and feel of everyday life in Israel today. It had created a furore at home, as it allegedly mocks the grief of parents for sons who died in the recent wars. In the feminist atmosphere of Edinburgh, it raised more objections by its complicated time-structure to break down the great bugbear of Edinburgh, linear narratives.

Op door, Maelve has some fine points, even apart from its worthy ideology of drawing parallels between British rule in Ulster and the male domination endured by Irish women. There are some excellent scenes, mostly location shooting (in every sense of the word) in Belfast; and towards the end of the film, the family relationships emerge with a breathing sensitivity. But it has many faults as well, and these stem from the script.

The photography is more than competent throughout, and some of the acting catches the mood, as well as the intonation, of the militantly Irish speech patterns.

Feminist anger was roused to pamphleteering-pitch by Voice Over, written.
and directed by Chris Monger, and made with money from the Welsh Arts Council. We were all given leaflets protesting against "the brutal misogyny of the film" in which a girl, raped early on by someone else, is taken into the care of a radio­bard, who tells romantic tales over the air, while living in bleak and frustrated domesticity with the girl in her traumatic autism. The protest would be justifiable if the film's content were at all relevant. But it is not. Voice Over is a youthful exercise in structuralist fiction.

For content, one must look elsewhere: for instance, to another BFI Production Board Film, Burning an Illusion, by Menelik Shabazz, another first-time writer and director who contrives to present a radical subject in a conventional, almost soap-opera format. The heroine, a British-born colored girl, starts by accepting the morality and expectations of middle-class English society, only to find that these attitudes and aspirations are not shared by the young men of her world. Finally, she is forced by circumstances to look for her roots in African culture and racial consciousness, which develop her dignity and strength.

In spite of slight faults, Burning an Illusion presents the emotional and social issues involved without overt comment or proselytizing.

A documentary which pleased the women's lib faction as well as the critics was And They Called Me Pussy Dynamite. The directors, Jenny Wilkes and Jennie Howarth, interviewed the nice, suburban dancer who drifted into striptease and pornography, with astonishing maturity and technical skill, considering that it was her first-year exercise at the National Film School.

Outnumbered by the U.S.

As always, the British and Third World films, even supported by some European material, were far outnumbered by American imports. One reason was that the lack of finance forced the organizers to aim the Gala Premieres towards raising funds, rather than just adding glitter.

though there was a touch of splendor in closing the week with Abel Gance's Napoleon in the seven-hour version re-created by Kevin Brownlow, with a full live orchestra conducted by the score's composer, Carl Davis.

But all the other galas were of popular and new American films, such as John Carpenter's Escape from New York, Peter Medak's cheerful spoof, Zorro the Gay Blade, Michael Mann's Violent Streets (aka Thief) and the unexpectedly brilliant, if violent, fully-animated science-fiction cartoon, Heavy Metal. Both Escape from New York and Heavy Metal may yet turn into cineaste cult-films, consistent with the Edinburgh Festival image.

But the American independents were also well represented by Bette Gordon's non-narrative, Empty Suitcases, Nicholas Broomfield and Joan Churchill's Soldier Girls, Babette Mangolte's The Reno Hotel, and the frenetic, but promising, Subway Riders by Amos Poe and Johanna Neer. These are all "difficult" works, which should not be dismissed by a sentence or two in an overall festival report, except insofar as they characterize the sympathy Edinburgh has for avant-garde aspirations.

By showing such films in an atmosphere of controversy, discussion and inquiry, and by giving young filmmakers their chance to meet critics and audiences, the Edinburgh Festival continues its struggle against the philistinism of the British Isles. One can only hope that the worst of financial hardships will be over by 1982, and that the Festival will return to supplying worldwide coverage of new trends, ideas and new films.
Was "Jeremy" a children's film?

Yes. It was 23 minutes and done on 16mm. We had a marvellous time making it. Jack was first assistant. There were about 20 people involved. Patrick Thompson played the little boy, Jeremy, and Brian Syron played his imaginary friend, Teapot.

Then I decided to keep going with And/Or = One. It is more an adult film about the emotions that pass through one's mind while one is doing something. It is a bit abstract, but it was always meant to be like that.

Kris McQuade plays Sam, Bridget Murphy is Rachael and Anna West is Melinda, the girl whose mind we explore. It is about 50 minutes long.

What has happened to that?

I have finished it and I am just waiting for an answer print. I don't have the money to get one at the moment. The two people I have shown it to — a Japanese distributor who was out here early in 1981 and an American marketing man — both liked it. But until I get the money to do a final print, I will have to keep going with it like that. As far as I am concerned it is finished, so I have started on another one.

Are you writing it?

Yes, I am trying a long film this time. They have got longer each time. It gets easier. You learn a lot from the first couple. I did a few Super 8 films in between, from which I also got a lot of experience. They were good fun to do.

Do you have help writing the feature — money from the Australian Film Commission, for instance?

No. I have written the first draft already and I am just doing the second now. It is called Jindalee Lady.

Will you direct the final film?

Yes, I hope so. It is the sort of thing I would like to make.

I have spent the past couple of weeks writing a script for Kris McQuade and David Bracks. They came up with a really good idea for a film, and they wrote the storyline. I have really enjoyed doing the script for them, but it was not the sort of thing I would want to make myself.

Which films or filmmakers do you admire?

I really like Nic Roeg's films. I think they are superb.

Didn't you have something to do with "Walkabout"?

No, I just travelled with them for a while. Kevin was working on it as a second sound recordist, and he was with Nic all the while. I spent some time with them here and later in Britain.

Roeg doesn't make a lot of films, but I think every one of his you can see again and again. He is a wonderful director, and inspires people tremendously. On Walkabout, they ran out of money a month before they finished filming, and he inspired people to keep working to finish it — and the money came through in the end.

I don't think he has made an enormous amount of money on his films, but he has always made good films, and they keep coming back.

Is there any conspicuous lack in the films being made in Australia?

I think we don't stray into anything erotic in Australia, which is the sort of thing in which I am
interested. You never see anything terribly erotic, and as soon as something comes across in Australian films as being erotic, it is immediately put down as being pornographic. We haven't really any feeling about eroticism. Most of the films we see are masculine things, with people always doing strong things.

But I don't spend all my life out there on the basketball court, I spend a lot more time in bed. I think a lot more people do than care to admit it. And it is something you never hear about, people's personal feelings. You always hear about how they feel about everything that happens outside, in the outside world. I am more interested in how people react in a sexual situation to other people, because we don't all react in the same way.

You are not talking about films like "Alvin Purple"...

I don't find films like that erotic. With someone like Nic Roeg you find that you can deal with erotic things in a wonderful way. He has the most extraordinary love scenes in his films — every one of them. In the love scene in Walkabout, the boy and girl never touch; it is all just done with eyes. We never have anything like that here.

Is it because most films here are directed by men?

I have different ideas about it, but I think sometimes men are also stopped. I think they are probably up against the same pressures if they want to do that sort of film. Ken Cameron probably ran up against a bit of this in Monkey Grip. He had some very gentle and, I think, quite beautiful love scenes. Helen Garner was there on the set which was a good thing. I am sure it helped keep some feeling of the feminine in those scenes. But I think he could find that audiences will have the same problems.

Somebody else I know made a feature and actually cut the love scene out after having had the film shown at a preview screening. They cut back the love scene because it was a bit strong and people in the audience filled out questionnaires and said they didn't think this would happen. So, I don't know.

Love-making is a difficult thing to deal with in films. People seem embarrassed by it and shy away from it...

I think so. And also some of it is really quite angry and not loving, but I don't think that is a bad thing.
I recently went over to Hollywood to do some marketing of *Morris Loves Jack* and some other shorts from the Australian Film and Television School. I had been writing a feature script for the past 11 months, and I needed a break. So, I thought I would go across and check it out.

I hired a cinema on Sunset Boulevard and showed my films to Terry Southern, who wrote *Dr Strangelove*, and Jack Scherr, who has produced countless Hollywood epics. Terry called me the "Renaissance of Australian film" and Jack wanted to get me an agent in Hollywood. It was very good for my confidence because living in Australia you tend to fade into the woodwork; you are just like everybody else. But over there you are someone new, you are someone interesting. They really look at your work.

When I gave them a quick rundown on the production report before screening my films, they all nearly keeled over because most of the films were made on non-existent budgets. *Morris Loves Jack* was made for $3000 and was shot in five days. *Bottoms Up* was based on a Roald Dahl short story and I shot that in three days on a budget of $1000, and *Jungle Line*, a documentary on King's Cross, I shot in one night, though it took six weeks to cut.

Hollywood I saw as a dinosaur lumbering around drunkenly on its feet with police helicopters buzzing overhead. I was there when [President] Reagan was shot. It was the last evening of the American Film Market, and they were due to have a large party. After the shooting it was cancelled.

When they finally did have the party the following evening, I went to the Hilton and there were rows of police six deep and hundreds of yards long; truncheons, guns, walkie-talkies, security. I felt as if I were going to prison rather than a celebration.

Anyway, if you said you were from Australia they would walk towards you with their hands open, ready to shake your hand. There is a common feeling of looking towards Australia as the great new
hopes. Every writer, every propsman, every director I spoke to asked, "Do you think I could go out there and maybe set up again?"

Also, I couldn't believe how many scripts were being thrust in my hand. It doesn't happen here. I wish it did!

But as I read them, I realized that I was not a product of that culture. How can I direct a film in the Bronx about a cute little old Italian? I could do it but, because I haven't grown up in that background, I wouldn't have the same intuition and smell for it. This made me realize that I can make international films here using Australian people. Even though I am a Czech directing films in Australia, I have become a naturalized Australian. I was educated and grew up here.

"Morris Loves Jack" was your last project at the AFTS . . .

When I presented the script at the Film School they strongly recommended that I not do it because the script wasn't any good and because it was far too ambitious a project. They felt I would never be able to bring it in on budget and on time. They told me I should attempt some little five-minute epic — perhaps a documentary on some safe issue. I had to fight them tooth and nail to be allowed to make it. It taught me how to make films despite everything — probably the most valuable lesson I had at the Film School.

What role did Dave Marsh play?

It was Dave's original idea. He and I co-wrote the first draft. I wrote all the lovey-dovey at-home stuff, and he wrote all the police material and all the masculine roles because he is far more familiar with it. Dave then went off and wrote a draft which we then workshopped with the actors. He wrote the next draft from that. I found that was a very good way of working.

I gave the final script to the actors a week or so before the shoot. We sat down one afternoon and worked our way right through. We had a reading, pulled it apart, stood it on its head, put it back together again, then Dave worked the final draft from that. It came together very quickly, very naturally. We actually had Kris and Johnny in mind when we wrote it.

The cast in Morris Loves Jack was so supportive. They believed in the script so much that they were willing to work 24 hours a day just to get the film up there properly. Hayden Keenan was also a very valuable first assistant. He has a vast storehouse of energy; if it can be guided in the right direction, there is just nothing he can't do.

What are you doing now?

I am writing a feature film, which I have been working on since Film School. I will direct it, and if I can keep it small so I can control as much of it as possible. I don't want it to get out of my hands. I'd like it to be a low-budget feature with a small crew — virtually the same size crew as Morris Loves Jack. That was 12 or 13 people, plus a smallish cast. You come in on time on a low budget and kill 'em — producers, that is. It's very important for your first film to go into profit.

When you say low budget, do you mean $200,000-$400,000?

I wouldn't want it to be more than $450,000. I'd like it to be less. You need a very good production team and a small camera and sound crew, because it is very important to keep that intimate feeling on set. As soon as you go to these very large-budget films, with a million people running around, I find that you lose vital energy. A lot of people stand around waiting on other people. If it is small, you can crack that whip much quicker.

Have you been approached to direct other projects since "Morris Loves Jack"?

I had a few scripts sent to me, but they are not in any area that I could really work on. One was a depressing story about a girl with suicidal tendencies, not a subject to set my heart pounding with delight.

Would you always cut your own films?

Yes, I have cut all my material — with a little help from my friends.
Hiding behind the “I”

Michael Rubbo, top Australian filmmaker for many years resident in Canada, talks to documentary director John Hughes.

Explicit personal intervention in your films is very much part of your style. Why did you develop that approach?

I did not develop it cold-bloodedly; I came to it almost apologetically. I saw the film journalist doing his research and covering his subjects in a so-called objective way. I could not do that. I had no proper journalistic background and, to compensate for what I then thought of as a deficiency, I developed a personal style. I used the word “I” in my narrations, for instance. I hid behind the “I”.

Why did you feel you had a right to a position that didn’t even pretend to be objective?

At first, I did not think I had a right. I just felt I could not do the other thing. Later, I developed a rationale for what I was already doing.

I had been a painter, and I thought, “Well, painters have won the right to portray the world as they see it. They sit in front of documentary reality and produce impressions, personal visions. Why can’t a documentary filmmaker do the same thing? be unashamedly impressionistic and personal?” I felt a lot better once I had that worked out.

So, from the beginning you saw yourself as an artist with the right to self-expression …

No, it took a while. Then, with growing confidence, I claimed more and more the right to project my vision. But at first, as in Sad Song of Yellow Skin, it was tentative. I did not appear in that film; just my voice. But even there it was a funny subject to be personal about, something as serious as that bloody and immoral war [Vietnam].

You chose to work in the world of politics with your first film, “The True Source of Knowledge”. How much did that film have to do with your experiences in Australia, or with being at an American university during the Vietnam war? Was it equivalent to, say, the experiences artists had in relation to Spain in 1936?

I have never thought of it that way. But the Vietnam war was certainly the major political event of my life. It was the time when I was most against the society I lived in, which was the U.S., as a student, and then Canada. Certainly, Sad Song came out of a feeling I couldn’t ignore; that I had to say something filmically against that war. But my efforts came nowhere near the works that came out of Spain.

What was good in my work was that I went against the tide of daily war stories and managed in my oblique personal way to do something which touched those Americans who saw it. I should say a lot of the credit for Sad Song goes to the cameraman Martin Duckworth.

Did you have a conscious criticism of the dominant notions of objectivity? You seem to suggest it was a gesture of humility, but your films argue it was a gesture of defiance …

I used to be impressed by so-called objectivity, but now I see it is mostly bullshit. We all see through our lens of partiality and prejudice. Better to have the lens in sight, so the viewer of the views can measure the angle of distortion for himself.

I am not defiant, but now I am prepared to defend my style. I am not saying it should be copied, but for me it has worked up till now. Every artist should find his voice and speak with it.

Is that something the National Film Board of Canada allows to happen?

Yes. In a sense, it even encourages it. The NFB is a rather disorganized place and due to that disorganization there is a lot of freedom for the filmmaker. There are various veto mechanisms, but the power is in the hands of the filmmakers to a surprising extent.

There is a scene in “Waiting for Fidel” where you argue with Jeff Stirling, who put up the money for the film. Did Stirling see the film at rough cut?

Actually, he didn’t put up the money, though at the time of shooting he thought he had
considerable equity in the film.

Yes, he saw the rough cut. He would not sign a release during shooting, so I was pretty nervous about the screening. I could see him squirming during the show and expected a blast when the lights went up. And there certainly would have been if his wife had not turned to him before he could say a word and said, "That's you Jeff." He paused and, before he could marshal his objections, Tom Daly (co-producer) came in with his wonderful soothing way and got him around to thinking it was a good piece of work. Now Stirling likes the film a great deal and uses it all the time — for what I am not sure.

Incidentally, I always show my films to people before they are released.

Have you ever had to make changes as a result of an objection?

Actually, Joey Smallwood in the same film did not like a few expletives that came from Stirling. As a result of an objection?

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Have you ever had to make changes the time — for what I am not sure.

I am not a trickster in the expletives that came from Stirling. Was ready to do this because I thought Smallwood had been very protective. I warned him, because it was important for him to realize I was protecting myself.

So, while you describe your approach as gentle, you are conscious of the power you have, as a filmmaker, to document . . .

Sure! But in this case it was merely a balance to a bigger power. He is powerful and rich, while I felt pretty vulnerable. I was just equalizing the situation a little.

Is that a metaphor for how you see yourself as a filmmaker, as somebody who has a cultural weapon with which to wage war on the dominant powers?

That is far too strong a term for my style. I snipe, tease and laugh at things. I don't blast like the East German crew did. I don't work from the resources of anger that Barbara Koppel fed on for Harlan County.

Documentaries have often had a natural tendency to anti-establishment. They put down and sabotage the official moment that is supposed to inspire awe, except Leni Riefenstahl with her Triumph of the Will which is called a documentary but is neither that nor an impression, but a corporate message orchestrated with infinite care.

In the U.S., the land of the black hats and white hats, so-called documentaries like 60 Minutes are cinematic sheriffs: good guy film journalists hunting down bad guy politicians, loan sharks, etc. The street plays a key part in this game, for it is on the street, and only on the street, that some of the quarry of such programs can be caught. The street is no-man's-land, and for a second or two the black hat is exposed as he steps between his fortress building and his limousine.

In one show, a film crew is hot after the histrionies of a corrupt midwestern politician. The man sees the camera in that vulnerable moment and makes the mistake of running along no-man's-land. Exciting footage, guilty footage. He ducks into a car park. The camera follows, opening up for the gloomy interior.

Finally, the camera has the panting guy pinned against a concrete wall. There's to escape. The journalist, also puffing, pulls out the facts about the girls this pimp has been supplying on his politician boss' orders. The man blanches, guilt all over his face. It is amazing. You have the hunt, arrest, trial and conviction happening right in front of you. True-life cowboys — or is it?

But even those of us who don't go so far are somewhat on the attack normally. Is it from conviction, a desire to redress the balance, or do we just know what excites?

In documentaries made for organizations — and probably most of the documentaries in the
world are sponsored in some way — there is a wish to bite the hand that feeds.

I love Dennis O'Rourke's Yumi Yet which was made for the Nuigini Government. This doesn't stop O'Rourke poking fun at a lot of the ritual. A trombone player's slide seems to be punching the orchestra conductor in the nose. Prince Charles, looking so clean and crisp is intercut with a lovely girl with painted face and naked breasts. We have all seen hundreds of films which play such tricks. This one does it well.

Perhaps we all do it to salve our consciences, perhaps to make us look a bit independent-minded. It is an easy vision and I do it too. I play black hat/white hat a bit. But then my film mind wanders to what interests me more; the individual.

Documentaries, for me, are the unconscious search for character. I say "unconscious" because often we don't realize that what we are looking for is real, revealing characters. The ideas then come through the characters.

I thought I had a good character in my film, The Man Who Can't Stop. He was my uncle, Francis Sutton. I say "thought" because I did not get it across as interesting as I had hoped. Francis has a cause, but he is not a raconteur. He is a quiet man who never gives up, but also never pushes to the point of rudeness or violence either. To me he epitomizes the difference between the person who works from convictions and the person who works from ideology.

I separated these two by saying that the former is made up of held beliefs built up slowly through life experience, while the latter is more something to be picked up, used and joined. Francis is a man of conviction. The New Philosophers I filmed in Paris were ideologues [cf 2].

Solzhenitsyn's Children ... are making a lot of noise in Paris.

I am proud of Francis and my film on him. During World War 2 he was a conscientious objector who was a hero fighting in Australia. Later, he took on a demeaning profession, finally to give it up for his environmental crusade, which is the subject of the film.

This film touches on another point: my search is usually for admirable characters, which is a problem because in real life, as in the cinema, villains are often more interesting. It is a constant dilemma, whether to film things and people who are admirable or go for the juicy stuff. Francis would have captured more of an audience if he had more violence and less decency in him. But it was his very decency and his convictions which made me want to film him.

It was also with this film that I found it would not be smooth sailing with a personal vision. Some of television's gate-keepers forgot that I was at the heart of the story, and got hung up on the fact it was my uncle. How could I be objective about my uncle, they asked. Well who said I was being objective?

It was not till I got to PBS in Boston that I found someone who, in the world of television, would admit to liking my personal vision. That was David Fanning of WBZ. He epitomizes the difference between those who stick to their guns and those who have recently been slammed. He actually liked the style of Solzhenitsyn's Children. I couldn't believe it.

And yet your films are really a logical development from the 'cinema verite' movement ...

3. Public Broadcasting Service. Rubbo has worked closely with WGBH, a public broadcasting station in Boston. Waiting for Fred, Solzhenitsyn's Children, and Yes or No, Jean-Guy Moreau have been broadcast on PBS.

Francis Sutton, the centre of Rubbo's The Man Who Can't Stop.

I don't think so. Cinema verite people believe in catching life uncontaminated. I say show the source of contamination. I said in Sydney recently, "Defend your documentaries in terms of authorship, because it is the best defence." If you defend them just in terms of content, then the television people are apt to say, "That's an interesting area, we'll do something on it ourselves to meet our requirements." But if you sell a vision, they cannot duplicate that vision.

In a way you are returning to some of the early assertions about documentary — Dziga Vertov, for example — and questioning the concepts of objectivity and "Documentary" in favor of something that has to do with the integrity of an artist. You are trying to shift reportage into a category called art where it will be safe from that sort of criticism ...

For me at least it is time to check out the word "documentary" implying as it does "documents and objectivity". I don't know what to call them instead, perhaps "visions". That sounds suitably inspired.

It might seem like I am trying to get off an uncomfortable hook, avoiding being careful and truthful. One must be truthful, but one must admit that around that checkable, repeatable truth there is the fact of personal vision and bias. So let that show.

Is there not a danger when doing that of asserting a new kind of authority? One thinks of the authority that has become associated with the so-called New Journalism where, because you are who you are, your perceptions have a validity which are not those of ordinary people ...

All media are powerful, thus all media are authority. So, it is a question of degree. In my films I come across as saying, "Great!" as though it is important, which it is not. I would say, "Great!" in quite the same way. Least, it hope it was not. We did not know what was happening. Really.

3. Co-produced by the NFB with Film Australia in 1973, The Man Who Can't Stop is the story of Francis Sutton, Rubbo's uncle, who is determined to convince the Australian people that its sewage should be piped inland, toward the dry interior.

The coconut monk in Rubbo's Sad Song of Yellow Skin.

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Michael Rubbo

we followed like equipped spectators.

So your films do evolve the way they look . . .

Yes. They are my account of true-life stories. My ideal is to find a story with a beginning, middle and an end, and all in a short time frame.

But your films are really about your life over a long period, as much as they are about the particular subject matter . . .

No, they are not about my real life, my deep life. There is a diary element and I feel incredibly privileged to be able to look back and see what I was doing year by year through the films. But how personal should I get? I don't think I am particularly interesting.

My ex-wife, a Chilean filmmaker, is making a diary film into which she has more or less dragged me. (How could I object, after doing it to others?) There are some pretty intimate things that happen before the camera; our problems come out.

My young sister, Kiffy, recently died. I spent the week after trying to understand her death and the terrible waste of it. Now, as I sit here, I am wondering if I could have filmed that week: the mad dash from Montreal when the terrible phone call came through from Melbourne; the flight delayed by the strike and then by a mechanical fault so that I arrived two hours too late for the funeral. Then getting to know her that week through the friends who loved her so much.

Two things that really impress me in your films is your use of cutaways and the use of sound as exclamation marks . . .

Really? I did not think I was very artful with those things. I am often surprised by the high levels of art and craftsmanship in other people's films. For instance, I don't know much about music in films. I suppose I could learn, but usually I am content to slap on some local folkloric music that I get on the spot. Collecting it at the time makes me feel it is right.

Talking about cutaways, in "Solzhenitsyn's Children" and "Waiting for Fidel" there is a lot of information in the images which looks as if it has been accidentally picked up . . .

Yes, though I think that cutaways which break the mood of a thing are very bad unless you consciously want to do that.

In Solzhenitsyn's Children, there is a marvellous cutaway of Louis Bernard Robitaille in the middle of Bernard Henri Levy's rant against Marx. I am stumbling out a question at that moment and Robitaille looks as if he wishes he could be as far away from this embarrassing situation as possible.

The shot actually came later in the session than the place it now occupies. But it is just right for the mood of that moment. I think I could defend all my cutaways.

Why do you feel the need to justify things in terms of saying it really was that way?

I suppose I am a bit defensive, and I do cheat, but I don't feel good about it. Somehow, I have trouble saying to myself that a cheating cutaway is my vision, though it sounds plausible, doesn't it?

I always feel guilty about the way I intercut unrelated (geographically) activities in Wet Earth and Warm People. Some men were making rafts of bamboo; others elsewhere were doing a dance with similar knives and bamboo. I intercut them as if they were happening on top of each other. I rationalized it by saying that I was showing how close art and artifact were in that society.

In Waiting for Fidel, I made another rare idea connection during the editing by intercutting a dance troupe with hard hats with some construction workers. But the shot which puzzles people the most in that film, because they assume it was a similar sort of editorializing, was the one of the ants coming down the tree. Did they stand for the workers of Cuba, some ask? Actually the ants were on the tree, already in the shot. It was geographically true, but I confess not minding that other meanings creep in.

At such times, I will admit that filmmakers have one rule: they will do what they can get away with; of course, the cop who stops you, and this is true of me, is often yourself. I am always giving myself tickets and sometimes I pay the fine.

Of your films, "Solzhenitsyn's Children" has perhaps been the most criticized . . .

Yes, perhaps deservedly. I don't think I would like it if I saw it made by someone else, but I would not be indifferent. Now, I like the fact it makes people angry, whereas at first it bothered me.

I was viciously criticized for this film, by a bunch of British Trotskyites, at the Grierson Seminar in Canada, a few years back. I wish I had a tape of their loathing; it might be healthy to listen to it occasionally.

They were trying to deal with the National Front, I suppose . . .

Well, they didn't like the politics of the film because on the screen, treated with undue courtesy, are a bunch of French intellectuals, once on the Left, who are now saying that Marxism leads to the Gulag.
To make it worse, the subject is handled in a playful way. They saw it as heresy in very bad taste. I know what they mean, but I found them totally intolerant of anyone who did not defer to their opinions, and I really don’t think it is my fault that the world does not act out their doctrinaire vision.

I took more seriously the disappointment of Judy Stone, who writes for the San Francisco Chronicle (she is the sister of J. F. Stone). She had liked Waiting for Fidel very much, but whereas my naivety charmed in that film, it bugged her in this one.

I was also disturbed that my friend Duckworth was very upset when he heard I was going to do Solzhenitsyn’s Children. “You are giving comfort to the enemies of socialism,” he said. “Why raise doubts when what we need is solidarity?”

I said if the cause depended on me keeping quiet, then it must be in a shaky state. Perhaps a little healthy debate would make it stronger. Later, he told me that while he could not accept the politics of the film, he loved the style.

To me, the politics of the film are contained in the scene of you and Robitaille walking through the street saying, “What’s wrong with us? We agree with everyone we meet; we find everyone convincing” . . .

You call that politics? It is shocking because one is supposed to have made up one’s mind before the camera rolls, and we obviously didn’t. What we had decided was that doubt itself is valid and important. Doubt is the best enemy of fanaticism. We defend the right to doubt in the film, even when the bullets are flying.

We bring in as a witness the venerable Arthur London, a member of the Czech parliament who was purged in the 1950s in Stalinist show trials. In spite of unjust years in prison, he keeps faith. He quotes Marx as admiring doubt more than any other quality, which surprises a few people. But when Robitaille asks him why he did not voice his doubts earlier in the show trials of the 1930s, also Stalinist, he raises the eternal dilemma: there was the enemy in front — Hitler and Mussolini — and that is not the time to voice doubts. But our film is saying that is exactly the time.

Later, Robitaille challenges Glucksmann, another New Philosopher, on the same question. Perhaps there are moments when you have to choose sides, even if your side is behaving abominably; you probably have to shut up about it. But you have to do it with great wariness, great remorse and misgiving.

It is interesting the New Philosophers say that, given that their actions contributed to the failure of the Left in the election . . .

But they refuse to be lumbered with that. Glucksmann somehow got his hands on an article that Robitaille had written about the New Philosophers and about himself and he said, “You wrote this article about us and you said because we weren’t on the Left, you put us on the Right.” He said, “I refuse to accept that categorization: that’s a Gulag; that’s a fascist act.”

Yes, or a cold war paradigm . . .

Right, and in a way he is correct.

In your films, a lot seems to happen because of the skill training or background of the cameramen, rather than as a result of your explicit direction. One thinks particularly of Waiting for Fidel . . .

Robbie’s “vision” of Montreal under demolition. The Walls Come Tumbling Down.

Doug Kiefer, who shot the Cuba film, is a rather stolid, not very exciting person. He would stand back and just observe in a calm way. And I think it is really great that in that fight sequence with me and Stirling, the camera is not emotionally involved. It is not zooming in and out, or hopping all over the place. The audience can observe everything cleanly and make their own judgments.

In the case of Duckworth, who did the Vietnam film, the camera became an extension of his own curiosity. If he zoomed in, it was because he wanted to see something more closely. And if he walked in on something, it was because of his curiosity.

Once a thing starts, I don’t whisper in a cameraman’s ear, unless to draw his attention to something I know he can’t see. At the end of Sad Song, for example, there is this woman being carried out in a coffin. You can hear my voice on the soundtrack saying, “Did you get the kid?” because her little daughter was walking in front of the coffin. I wanted it to be clear who she was and what she was doing, and I could see from where Duckworth was that he couldn’t see her.

When I am in front of the camera, I am even more reliant on the cameraman and how he shoots. In Waiting for Fidel, the first sequence where I got in front of the camera was during the argument about the Lenin School. I knew my voice was on the soundtrack, but I didn’t know how much I was in the shot. So when that particular argument finished, I asked Kiefer, “How much am I in the shot?” and he said, “You are very much in it.”

I then decided to keep on that way.

Did you see any rushes as you made the film?

In none of these cases did I see rushes, which was always a problem. It was particularly bad on Solzhenitsyn’s Children, although since Poulsen was shooting it, I knew it would be technically perfect. I didn’t know whether the bits of Robitaille and myself would be usable, so I didn’t go as far as I could have. They were just things that were very often shot off-the-cuff, except in the beginning.

A lot of these sequences seem to be more set up than scenes in earlier films . . .

It does look more set up, partly

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### August 1981

Films examined in terms of the Customs (Cinematograph Films) Regulations and States’ film censorship legislation are listed below.

An explanatory key for reasons for classifying non-“G” films appears hereafter.

#### Frequency

- Infrequent
- Frequent
- Low
- Medium
- High
- Justified
- Novel
- Gratification

### Films Registered Without Eliminations

**For General Exhibition (G)**

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**For Restricted Exhibition (R)**

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### Films Registered With Eliminations

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**For General Exhibition and “Films Board of Review”**

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**Films Refused Registration**

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### September 1981

Films Registered Without Eliminations

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### Concluded on p. 89
Australia's finest Sound Studios now have a 40'x40' water floor available for cine or stills. Call Maryanne Morss (02) 858 7600 for full details.
A recurring pattern of American heroism identified by Anthony Hopkins in a brief essay, "Contemporary Heroism: Vitality in Defeat," in *Heroes of Popular Culture* provides a useful framework for analysing the nature of Australian heroism in *Breaker Morant*. Hopkins identifies four major features which can be correlated with the Australian film:

1. "The hero possesses exceptional natural vitality, both in terms of masculine energy and spiritual integrity... his virtues are native rather than civilized, tending toward potency rather than purity, cunning rather than honor.

2. "Society is inherently and massively repressive, by its nature and in its operations opposed to vitality, eccentricity, individuality, and independence.

3. "Despite increasing social pressure, the hero remains non-conforming. The hero— who possesses neither social power nor influence—stands alone in essential spiritual opposition to social forces encroaching ever more progressively upon his independence and freedom.

4. "The hero suffers defeat, destruction, death."

The two prime elements of the pattern, the nature of the hero as cited in (1) and the nature of society as cited in (2), are continually juxtaposed by the editing, throughout the linear and diegetic development of *Breaker Morant*, until (4) is realized.

Director Bruce Beresford's mise-en-scene and framing are crucial to the projection and intensification of the "polar incompatibility" between the inherently repressive society of 19th Century/early 20th Century Imperialist Britain and the Australians of the Bushveldt Carbineers, the "irregular" mounted unit of the British Army, during the Boer War.

The Carbineers were the Boer guerillas; the three Australian officers—Morant (Edward Woodward), Handcock (Bryan Brown) and Witton (Lew Fitz-Gerald)—have been accused of unlawfully executing Boer prisoners and a German civilian. The framing and mise-en-scene of the interior scenes are contrasted with the exterior scenes. The interior sequences in the courtroom, Kitchener's headquarters and the prisoners' quarters symbolize the all-pervading power and dominance of Imperialism, its "nature" and its "operation".

Kitchener's office at Army headquarters is dominated by the color red, symbolic of power and wealth, the prerogative of the elite, as well as the British Imperialist connotation. This is a sharp contrast to the sparseness and neutral color of the Australians' environment. This contrast is set up early in the film with a cut from the attack on the Boer farmhouse by the Carbineers to Kitchener's office.

Lord Kitchener (Alan Cassell), his aide, Lieutenant Colonel Denny (Charles Tingwell), and Major Bolton (Rod Mullinar) are the archetypical Imperialists in manner, speech and grooming. It is significant that Denny, the ruling officer in the court-martial, and prosecuting counsel Major Bolton, share this scene with Kitchener: the symbolic effect will be carried over to the courtroom where they will be the administrators of British order and justice.

At a significant point in the court-martial, where tension has been gradually built up by cutting to flashbacks of the event in question, interspersed with close-ups of the person under cross-examination, and the fate of the three accused depends on the validity of Kitchener's issuing standing orders to take no prisoners-of-war, Bruce Beresford cuts to Kitchener's office. Kitchener, Commander of the British Army in South Africa, surrounded by the color red, is reflected in the mirror. The moment the accused's counsel has the opportunity to cross-examine, this shot has a powerful effect; this double image signifies the Janus face of Imperialism, the deceit and the resultant miscarriage of justice that will be perpetrated to preserve the status quo.

The power of this society is also manifested by the bust of Victoria, reflected beside Kitchener: the Empire reached its zenith under this monarch. The legal process of this society is a farce, by its "operations" designed to subjugate "individuality and independence" when necessary.

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Beresford's motif of vertical and horizontal lines in the interior and exterior sequences in *Breaker Morant* signifies the core of the polarization and areas of domination for the heroes and society, in "the unequal struggle between individual vitality and social organization". Until the final execution scene, the Australians are shown to be in control of the exterior landscape, "through his innate, native abilities—intelligence, skill, tenacity as an individual".

Shots of the unbroken horizontal line of the veldt are dominated by the line of Bushveldt Carbineers. Horsemanship is shown from frame edge to frame edge—the veldt occupies three-quarters of the frame, intensifying the imagery of dominance. The blending of the khaki uniforms with the veldt suggests their being in unity with their environment: their more immediate enemy, the Boers, are shown in dark colors, an ironic contrast. Other panoramic shots of the veldt have the Australians dominating the front of the frame.

The groupings and placement of tables in the courtroom emphasize the formal structure of British Imperialist society and its "operation". The courtroom is continually shot down the vertical line of the accused's table to the horizontal line of the court-committee's table. The table dominates the top of the frame, signifying the top ruling element of society. The vertical line of the tables running to the top of the frame is emphasized by the painted line of the wall; the accused Australians, unless shot in close-up, are seen below this dominant line. This is in direct contrast to their dominant position in the framing of the exterior veldt sequences.

In the prison quarters the heroes are overpowered by the structure; the lines of the roofing...
The courtroom, with the over-bearing roofing and the unbroken line on the wall: the accused are dominated by it, whereas the British officers on the elevated dais break through and surmount it. Breaker Morant.

The music in the film is...

...with these benefits: Peace, Order, Justice.\textsuperscript{2}

The policy of altruism is smugly mentioned by Major Bolton in one of the two scenes shot in Kitchener's office, which sets up the nature of British Imperialism, the dominant society of Kitchener's office, which sets up the nature of British Imperialism, the dominant society of

Major Thomas for the defendants and Major Bolton for the prosecution, encapsulate and reflect the "unequal struggle between individual

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President, The Ufland Agency (U.S.)

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the British and pro-British Boers on either side to Thomas at the end, representing the Aus­tralians — all watch silently as he begins to eat. The silence conveys the feeling that the group is in the presence of an unpredictable quantity, whose actions and impulses have not been inhibited in the same fashion as their own.

The “individuality and independence” of Morant is conveyed early in the film, after the ill-fated attack on the Boer farmhouse. When the band of Carbineers returns to Fort Edward, one of the men calls emphatically, “Get the Breaker,” conveying the sense of an individual power. This is built upon in a later scene, when Witton questions him: “You believe in the Empire, don’t you Harry?” “Do I?” Morant replies. The Breaker’s native cunning is alluded to in the scenes depicting the camaraderie of the unit; there are hints of escapades outside the law and social convention.

The scene which opens with the Australians ranged along a table running along the line of the horizon is significant in the development of the narrative. The encroachment of the social forces upon the individuality and freedom of the heroes is signified by the Union Jack flying over the table. This exposition of the hero’s character is interrupted by a cut to show the arrival of a group of Boer prisoners — the means by which society will finally exert its control over the heroes. The shooting of Boer prisoners by the Carbineers will precipitate the decisive confrontation between society and the heroes at the court-martial.

Handcock’s disregard for authority is expressed in his irreverent sense of humor. He constantly undercuts British pomposity. His potency is underlined through the function of women in Breaker Morant: they are seen as being purely for sexual gratification. When Handcock is cross-examined by Bolton at the court-martial over the shooting of Hesse, the German, and his alibi, this is clearly evident. Bolton: “Who were you visiting?” Handcock: “Nobody, Sir. Only one of the ladies.” Bolton: “These were married women.” Handcock: “They say a slice of a cut loaf is never missed.”

The potency and individuality of the heroes is crystallized in the scene where Morant is cross-examined by Bolton, regarding the shooting of the Boer prisoners at Fort Edward. “What rule did you shoot them under?” There is a rapid cut from the close-up of Morant as he replies emphatically “Rule 303” to a flashback to the action, with a close-up of the rifle, showing the number 303 imprinted on the stock. This incident establishes the Australians as fighting by the law of the gun.

The pragmatic Carbineers match and outwit the Boers at their own brand of warfare. This is reaffirmed in a following veldt scene when Breaker Morant says coolly of a raid on a Boer camp, “I got one, . . . crept up while they were asleep.”

The fourth element in the pattern of heroism identified by Hopkins, “The hero suffers defeat, destruction, death,” is realized in the execution scene by “means that are either socially acceptable or officially sanctioned.”

The victory of the “social organization over individual vitality”, through the physical death of the heroes, is potently shown by the mise-en-scene of the execution scene. A red rising sun signifies the ascendance of British Imperialism as it moves above the horizon of the bare veldt, the horizontal line that has formerly signified the area of dominance for the Carbineers. The red glow of the sun is reflected on Morant’s and Handcock’s faces as they wait, seated, for death. Their spiritual opposition is still evident as they refuse the black eye-bandages, and Morant calls to the firing squad, “Shoot straight, you bastards. Don’t make a mess of it!”

Bibliography

Breaker Morant (film), Adelaide, South Australian Film Corporation, 1980.
There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around—
That the colt from old Regret had got away
And had joined the wild bush horses—he was worth a thousand pound—
So all the cracks had gathered to the fray.
All the tried and noted riders from the stations near and far
Had mustered at the homestead over-night,
For the bushmen love hard-riding where the fleet wild horses are,
And the stockhorse sniffs the battle with delight.

Opposite: the "man from Snowy River", Jim Craig (Tom Burlinson), and his girlfriend, Jessica (Sigrid Thornton), in the high country. Left: Jim during "the ride". Below: Jim at the funeral of Henry Craig.
Top left: Clancy (Jack Thompson) and Spur (Kirk Douglas), the mountain man.  
Top centre: Clancy and Spur. Above: Jessica. Top right: Jim Craig alone in the high country. Right: mustering horses across a swirling river.
Top right: Jim and his "racehorse undersized". Centre right: Jessica. Bottom right: Spur and Jim. Below: the lovers.
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The Second Coming of Super 16

While researching this article, Bruce Williamson of Allab said that we were witnessing the "second coming of Super 16" and the phrase does capture some of the religious quality that conversation about Super 16 engenders.

When Rune Ericson, the Swedish cinematographer who developed the Super 16 format, published the first article in American Cinematographer in 1970, a filmmaker friend of mine immediately resolved to attack the gate of his Eclair NPR with a file and shoot his next feature in widescreen. After the initial fervor had died, because of the lack of laboratory services, the idea was put aside until recently I heard he had bought an Aaton, the one camera that could truly claim to have renewed the interest in Super 16.

The Aaton is a Super 16 option incorporated in the initial camera design. In an under hour, with replacement of the aperture plate, viewing screen and changing the optical centre of the lens, the camera is converted from standard 16 mm to Super 16. The ready availability of this camera and the required conversion of equipment being made by laboratories to handle and print Super 16 has led to Allab's recent high quality 16 mm to 35 mm blow-up of the first Australian Super 16 feature, Centrepiece. Already four new features and six documentaries have been announced as shooting in the Super 16 format this year.

This article is an overview of the technical and economic reasons for the interest crews and producers are showing in the format. There is also a short interview with the director and editor of Centrepiece, Tony Paterson, talking about post-production in Super 16.

The Development

Shooting in 16 mm and blowing up the image to 35 mm for theatrical release is not a new technique. The Australian film industry has owned some of its more noticeable successes to films as early as Sirk and, recently, the 16 mm to 35 mm blow-up. In the standard Academy ratio 16 mm and 35 mm have the same area and a 3:1.771, but the universal use in cinemas of a widescreen ratio of 1.85:1 crops a large portion of the image top and bottom from the 16 mm frame. When this area is blown up, the image quality is noticeably inferior to 35 mm projection.

What was required was a way to use the maximum area on the 16 mm original in the closest proportion to the final 35 mm blow-up. This was achieved by enlarging the camera aperture by 2 mm so that the image extended into the area leftover on single perforated stock for the soundtrack on the 16 mm print.

Because the 16 mm would only be used for supplying the blow-up image, this was no disadvantage and gave a frame proportion of 1.66:1, which is much closer to the 35 mm widescreen aspect. Since there is less cropping and more usable area, the result is a finer quality blow-up.

The Super 16 frame is about 20 per cent wider than the standard 16 mm frame, yet when blown up to 35 mm widescreen there is in fact about 46 per cent more usable area. This comes from the 20 per cent extended frame plus extra top and bottom which need not be cropped since it already fits comfortably into the wide screen format.

Super 16 Equipment

As previously mentioned, a modified or specialized camera is necessary to shoot Super 16. In all outward appearances it will be no different from a normal 16 mm camera; but, from inside, the picture aperture must be enlarged and the lens will have to have a wide enough field to cover the extended frame or be re-centred, or perhaps both. The viewfinder will also need to be wide enough to accommodate the extended picture area. Some cameras are easier than others to modify. The Eclair NPR was the first Super 16 modification. All guides and magazine surfaces that touch the film edge have to be recessed to avoid damage. Bolexes and Arriflexes have also been converted in this way. The major limitation is in the lenses that have extra covering power for the wider frame. Editing of the Super 16 film is carried out on the Super 16 rushes supplied by the laboratory. Since the rushes contain the extended frame area, it is necessary to have an editing machine that can project it. As with the camera, the editing machine will need to have a wider aperture and, of course, a screen size that will accommodate Super 16. The rollers on the machine will need to have a narrower shoulder so that no scratching will occur in the extended frame area. It can be argued, however, that scratching on the workprint is of little importance.

When they have seen the rushes projected in wide screen, find little difficulty cutting with a reduced area flattened, but manufacturers such as Kem, Prevoat and Steenbeck offer Super 16 modifications.

Other equipment the producer or filmmaker will need to consider is the projector on which they can expect to screen the Super 16 rushes. And, when neg. matching is carried out, it will need to be on a synchronizer with narrow shoulders to avoid scratching in the extended frame area. Normal checkerboard technique is used when conforming the negative.

Where the laboratory is concerned, it is necessary that all rollers and equipment on processors, printing machines, optical printers and synchronizers have been modified for Super 16.

There is usually no extra cost involved in processing and printing Super 16 compared with regular 16 mm. However, the laboratory will need to know when a particular consignment is Super 16 as special consideration is necessary when processing. The reason for this is that a different mask is used to produce the Super 16 frame.

Shooting For A Blow-up (Regular or Super 16)

When shooting 16 mm with the view of blowing up to 35 mm it is essential to keep tight control over exposing the negative. Exposure is important, as any deficiencies in this area will be passed over, probably to a greater extent, to the blow-up.

Where negative film is concerned, under exposure is not desirable. If in doubt, a slight overexposure is far better than an underexposed one. Grains will begin to appear, particularly in weak shadow areas, on the underexposed negative. It is not recommended to force process in this case, if the extent of under exposure is up to 1 stop. Modern negative emulsions have a good latitude. However, when force processing is introduced, the grain size is increased. This grain appeared most noticeable in the examples I was shown, in the areas of a light to mid-tone grey (18 per cent).

The best results so far have been on Kodak 7247 exposed normally and then blown up to CRI 5249.

Main Titles

Different methods of producing the titles for a blow-up may be recommended, depending upon the scenes used and the complexity of the job. Generally, the 16 mm background shot is blown up to a 5243 interpositive. Then the titles, shot on 35 mm, are added to produce a 5243 blow-up CRI. This is now added to the 5249 blow-up CRI.

Specifications:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Standard 16 mm</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspect Ratio</td>
<td>1.37:1</td>
<td>1.192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framed for wide screen</td>
<td>1.85:1</td>
<td>.0881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super 16</td>
<td>1.66:1</td>
<td>.1440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framed for wide screen</td>
<td>1.85:1</td>
<td>.1283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Raw stock 16 mm (Super 16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Per foot</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40,000 at $1.50</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Laboratory Costs – Super 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Per foot</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>$4000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L+ workprint</td>
<td>$700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected workprint</td>
<td>2080</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 16 mm A/B</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blow up CRI</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 mm 2nd A/P</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total laboratory costs</td>
<td>$33,080</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus raw stock</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$39,080</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Laboratory Costs – 35 mm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Per foot</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L+ workprint</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact CRI</td>
<td>$12,600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 mm 2nd A/P</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total laboratory costs</td>
<td>$41,900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus raw stock</td>
<td>24,630</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$66,530</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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To maintain maximum quality on titles and optical effects, it may be advisable to shoot the background scenes entirely in 35 mm. It is best to consult the optical department of the laboratory for the best procedures and titles that will give optimum quality.

**Cost Savings**

Although Super 16 was not designed to replace 35 mm, the cost savings of using Super 16 can be considerable depending on the production. The most noticeable saving is in raw stock and laboratory costs. Negative costs on 16 mm are about 40 per cent less than the same footage in 35 mm. Also, the running speed of 35 mm (90 ft/min) is more than double that of 16 mm (36 ft/min).

Altab has supplied the boxed laboratory costs as a comparison. They are based on a billing footage of 10,000 feet of 35 mm and the equivalent of 4000 feet in 16 mm for the final prints. A ratio of 10:1 is used for calculating the amount of raw stock necessary for the production.

The costs above were correct at the time of printing. Raw stock was Kodak Eastmancolor 7247 and 5247, and the laboratory prices are from Altab's feature price list.

It is common practice to print all takes for 16 mm, whereas on 35 mm the average take printed runs at about 60 per cent, so these factors have been taken into consideration. Also, note that the blow-up CRI rate is inclusive of all A & B roll, faces and dissolves, and wet-gate, and that the contact 35 mm CRI has included the 'B' roll only.

Many laboratory charges have been omitted since they would be somewhat similar for both: e.g., negative-matching, force-processing and opticals.

These figures show a total saving of $27,500 on the Super 16 route. This saving would be more or less according to the type of production and doesn’t take into account the production saving for the ease and portability of the lighter 16 mm equipment, which could be considerable.

Maybe I shouldn’t say that, but in my experience, and talking with Richard Franklin [director] about Fantasm, they had two shots in Super 16 minute 54 and they moved at massive speeds and rip it in the synchronizer. It is not the American way to handle little fiddly things; the Europeans are more careful.

Now that may be a fearful generalization but there is a certain style, and that style is 35 mm. You can wind it faster, throw it around the room, and one or two lines of dialogue and you think you just don’t see it on the screen. With Super 16 or 16 mm, you just can’t treat it like that; you have to much more careful.

There aren’t many Super 16 projectors around for instance, and you could be tempted to just throw it up on your regular 16 mm and scratch your work-print to bits. Because you tend to be working in low-budget situations with Super 16, you also tend to be under more panic situations; there are more opportunities to damage your film. With 35 mm, you cannot give it away to anybody; it’s a known quantity; you don’t have to realign light sources, etc.

We have a very well set up here and have modified equipment to do it, but it is somewhat of a hassle to go somewhere else where you have to move your screen masks, and re-centre your lens and light source in the projector. You can very easily get a situation where you are giving a sub-standard screening because one half of the screen is black and the other has an impression, no matter how much you say it will be all right on the day.

When we shot Centrespread in South Australia we used a Bauer. It was an arc, I think, and a massive light source, so there was no trouble in re-centring the light. It looked quite spectacular on the screen because the last thing I did there was The Survivor and that was in 35 mm and it was shot under low-light levels because it was mostly a night shoot. My experience of looking at those rushes, and then six weeks later going back to see the Centespread material that was fully lit and crisp, was that you wouldn’t believe. On Centespread was 16 mm. Both were shot well, but your eye gets hungry on a big screen after a while. If it is right when it’s cut, but looking at hours and hours of rushes of dark images you start suffering from color fatigue. The Super 16 looked great by comparison.

Did you do any tests to prepare for the blow-ups?

I did a couple of skin tests early on in the piece and they looked all right. Screening them against a first generation 16 mm worked, they look a bit gritty but quite adequate. Without the comparison, they looked terrific.

Were all the opticals shot Super 16?

We shot a mixture. All the opening shots were shot in Super 16, and they worked very well. It was a reasonably complicated multi-layer frame, and it was very close to my memory of the original. You can’t tell where it goes in and out of opticals.

So, overall, you were happy with Super 16 results?

Yes. Shooting Super 16 is much more controllable than when we used 16 mm in Europe. There is 20 to 25 percent more information on a framing that was a bit of a guess because we didn’t have a scribed viewpoint. No one, even at the projection stage, really knew where the top of the frame was. I got to be able to work it out by putting Academy leader in the gate and remembering the cut off.

On Centespread, we used up a No. 3 diffusion filter because we wanted to cut down the contrast. By comparison, there are parts of Mouth to Mouth that actually too shrouded are too clear and too bright. I suppose it is contrast, but they just look too sharp. There shouldn’t have been more atmospheric haze in the sphere so one’s brain could imagine it is seeing a little bit.

On Centespread, there were no problems; it was there every time. It was just like cutting a 35 mm film; your eye scans the same scan across the frame.

And was that all shot on the Aaton?

Yes, Geoff Simpson had just bought it. Other than a blow-out on the first day on the first 400-ft roll, things were pretty straightforward. So when we got there the stuff was of poor standard back from overseas it was almost unbelievable.

I did a Filmfinders day with a soundtrack from the U.S. where the line tones and levels were all over the place. We had cost $1 million to mix! We thought our equipment had broken down because we were meticulous, and they couldn’t believe that something from overseas could be so sloppy.

The blow-up of Fantasm was done overseas. While we were worrying about whether we were getting the boom shadow on a stage and taking care of our 35 mm Framing, the sausage was shot on a machine over there, splat! If you got it, you got it. That was in the budget area we were working in. When laboratories had life, we had to do it to the optimum. Altab does it the same way as Dr Magnusson does it in Sweden.

Framing is such a primary concern. What happens with framing for televisions?

You always frame for television. The Aaton has television framing in the viewfinder — in fact, it has everything in the viewfinder. If you get tired, you can play space invaders in the viewfinder.

So, what are your feelings about Super 16?

Super 16 is important, in that you maximize your returns. It might not be important for the big money guys, but indirectly it is because small product is what really keeps the thing going, with new ideas and new people. If you keep relying on the people with the big money to give you ideas, you will be working while they that they want to service their own ends (as we all do). But we should be getting a decent return on a lot of things, lots of change. Super 16 is a reasonable way of getting those ideas up on the screen reasonably cheaply.

It was this philosophy of keeping things small and open to new people that led to setting up this mixing studio. It was also because I wanted to get back to my family on weekends, and the only way I could do it and not be at the whim of the producers was to have my own downtown theatre. It is an expensive toy with some pretty flashy gear, but we do a lot of interesting work with a lot of young people who need help to get their ideas realized that you know are impossible. They are always ready to

**Tony Paterson**

Melbourne-based editor, Tony Paterson, describes himself as a freelance drama cutter. For television “back in the old days” he edited Tandarra and parts of Cash and Co, and he worked on a large number of features and many 16 mm to 35 mm blow-ups. Among them were three films for John Duigan, The Trespassers, Dimboola and Mouth to Mouth, the two Fantasms, Mad Max, Blue Fire Lady, The Survivor, Centrespread and has just finished Silent Reach. I talked to him at his editing and mixing studio in Elsternwick, Melbourne, in premises he shares with R.G. Film Laboratories.

There seems to be two ways to approach feature film production and the choice features of a film stock and a film laboratory. The choice of film stock is where your full-up cost is that of making the film itself — all the laboratory costs, processing,印 what you end up with no money at the end of it and one release print. You then bash your way around the world and claw your way to the top on the quality of your product.

There are a number of things that have been done that is — almost everything in Australia is done on 16 mm. The reason is that Brecker Morant had a big budget for selling the product to the audience after its completion.

The way of looking at production is where the cost to get to the release print is 25 to 30 per cent of the total budget, and the rest is publicity money which tells the people how good the film is. It doesn’t have to be good, as long as people believe you when you tell them. In a situation like that, Super 16 is no real advantage, its cost saving is not significant.

Also, in those circumstances, you have to cover your losses if they might occur. So, consequently, you have to shoot on 35 mm for the flexibility. More people can cut it all over the world, you can change this and that; finish it quickly in the U.S. average.

So Super 16 is restrictive in post-production.

No, you still have flexibility. But you have to be with a good laboratory that will do it. You really are restricted to a quality laboratory with Super 16. We are doing a good job here, and there are a few spots around the world. But if you go to a laboratory in the U.S. with a roll of Super 16, they drop the can on the floor as a matter of course.

CINEMA PAPERS January-February — 61

**Concluded on p.85**
Between Super 16 and 35mm there is

[logo]

...The first Super 16 lab in Australia, and still the best!
THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY
Prod. company: Waves Productions
Dist. company: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/PARAMOUNT
Producers: Michael Gudinski, Richard Lowenstein
Scriptwriter: Steve Niedorf
Director: Peter Weir
Screenwriter: Political
Photographer: D. Wimpy
Sound recordist: David Blackman
Associate producer: John Howard
Animation assistant: Bob Beer
Checkers and cleaners: Dean Underwood
Animal actors: Steven Blake, Tony Barry
Laboratory: Tim MacFarlane
Length: 100 mins
Shooting stock: Eastmancolor
Scheduled release: May 1982
Casts: Guy de Gastyne (Bill), John Howard
Synopsis: A re-make of the Australian cinematic classic, an adventure involving the manager and lead singer of a band that goes bust. Four teenagers set off to pursue the two rogues who, "stranged" without funds, are forced to turn to life of crime and steal a valuable racehorse.

THE CLINIC
Producer: Robert Le Ttet
Director: Michael Paterson
No further details supplied.

FOR LOVE ALONE
Prod. company: Margaret Finch Films
Producer: Margaret Finch
Director: Stephen Walters
Scriptwriter: Fay Weldon
Based on: The novel by Krista
Synopsis: The story of two Australian high-minded, passionate, and insensitive, her attempts to fulfill her story with her husband John. Walter's life is more than the producers known, and their other story is the American businesswoman, James Quick.

MOVING OUT
Producer: Jane Ballerlane
Director: Michael Paterson
No further details supplied.

THE SUNBEAM SHALT
Prod. company: R.M.L. Prod
Producer: Ray Lord
Scenarist: Richard Lawrence
Photographer: Lloyd Garrick
Sound recordist: Lloyd Garrick
Art director: George Miller
Art dept co-ordinator: Andy Mackay
Camera operator: Ray Brown
Make-up: Christine Rice
Wardrobe: Karen Price
Props: Andrew Gaty
Gaffer: Kim Evans
Key grip: Ray Brown
Camera operator: Ray Brown
Producer: Richard Mason
Based on the original
Title designer: Fran Bourke
Set designer: Peter Lambros
Editor: Ian Munro
Make-up: Margaret Lingham
Wardrobe: Robina Chaffey
Props buyers: Ian Allen
Production budget: $2,583,924
Producers: Janet McIver, Tony Barry
Synopsis:ремaking of husband Michael. Walter's life is more than the producers known, and their other story is the American businesswoman, James Quick.

DOT AND SANTA CLAUS (Further Adventures of Dot and the Tangaroa)
Prod. company: Yoram Gross Films
Dist. company: Baby Productions Inc.
Producers: Yoram Gross, Tony Barry
Director: Michael Clayton
Screenwriter: Margaret Finch
Photographer: Ray Black
Sound recordist: David Blackman
Associate producer: John Howard
Animals: Tony Barry
Based on the story by: Patricia Lovelock
Recording soundtrack: Julian Egginton
Art director: Don Finlay
Art dept co-ordinator: Andy Mackay
Camera operator: Ray Black
Make-up: Christine Rice
Sound recordist: David Blackman
Associate producer: John Howard
Animals: Tony Barry
Based on the story by: Patricia Lovelock
Recording soundtrack: Julian Egginton
Art director: Don Finlay
Art dept co-ordinator: Andy Mackay
Camera operator: Ray Black
Make-up: Christine Rice
Sound recordist: David Blackman
Synopsis: The story of the Tangaroa's further adventures, this time involving the character of Dot, who is the father of the original Dot, and the discovery of a new island

PRODUCTION

ONCE UPON A TIME
Prod. company: Waves Productions
Dist. company: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer/PARAMOUNT
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Scriptwriter: Steve Niedorf
Director: Peter Weir
Screenwriter: Political
Photographer: D. Wimpy
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The image contains a page from a publication listing the credits and information about various films. The text is too dense and contains many names and titles, making it difficult to extract specific details in a coherent manner. It appears to be a list of crew members, contributors, and production details for different films. Given the nature of the text, it is not possible to convert it into a meaningful natural language representation without losing context and detail.
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Northbridge Sydney NSW 2063
P.O. Box 97 Northbridge NSW 2063
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• MOVIOLA EDITING EQUIPMENT
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The person appointed should be capable of working alone and using own initiative.
Only experienced persons need apply.

Contact:
John Farmer,
STUDIO SOUND SYSTEMS
13 Keppel Road
Ryde 2112 Phone (02) 888 1746
FOXTAIL AND THE DEMON

Producer: John Skibinski
Director: John Skibinski
Based on the original: John Skibinski

Plot: A young girl who has lost her pet cockatiel is prevented from leaving the family by an immigration officer. With the help of a boy-scout, she pleads his case in Parliament.

HAPPY ENDINGS

Producer: Smiley Films
Director: Meg Stewart

Story: A young girl finds a new home in a happy ending setting.

THE BRIDGE

Producer: Freda de Moll
Director: John Williams

Synopsis: A scrupulous stays on after a call to get a holiday in a picturesque setting.

The BLACK PLANET

Producer: Barry Mecapone
Director: Paul Williams
Scriptwriter: Amanda Sanders
Script editor: Michael Carney
Music recording: Brian Coster
Dialogue recording: Wally Shaw
Animators: Paul Williams
Recreation camera: Vicky B rent

ANNIVERSARY

Producer: Brian Gaffney
Director: John Williams

Synopsis: The distant planet Terre Verte is threatened by a nuclear war. A spreading war of computing minds is involved in an arms and ammunition race. The war hawks hatch a similar plot to do the victors will be.

CHANGE

Producer: Paul Williams
Director: John Williams

Synopsis: This film concerns the relationship between two of history's most controversial states, Saddam and Kim. The film will partly dramatized and use interviews mixed with stock footage. Production will begin in Europe early November. The film is intended for competition by December.

MODERN MAID AND STAFF

Producer: Bob Williams

SYNOPSIS: A documentary on workers' undertakings; 16mm structuralist; 25 mins; production investment — $6000

AUSTRALIAN FILM CORPORATION

Project Development Branch
Projects approved at Australian Film Commission meeting on October 26, 1981

Script and Production Development Investments

Script Development

Heat Haze in Hell Life — Leslie Murray, Vic

50 mins; production funding — $6500

Graham Greene Presents Panama — SAF/television documentary; research for 1982

Ishy Fishys — Philip Ryall, Philip Wyll, Vic

55 mins; conditional approval production investment — $32,000

Glen's Story — Mark Sibley, Vic

50 mins; conditional approval production funding — $25,000

The Crossing — Ralston Allen, Espen Sandberg, Vic

2nd draft funding — $26,100

Synopsis of The Dream Greens — Don Aldred, cinema feature; 2nd draft funding — $20,000

The Sitters — Paul Beames, cinema feature; 1st draft funding and storyline funding — $3000

The Maggot Investment

For East — Asia Film Productions; cinema feature; conditional approval production investment — $55,000; conditional approval production funding — $30,000

Projects approved at Australian Film Commission meeting on December 16, 1981

Script and Production Development Investments

Script Development

Save the Lady — Richard Spratt, John Hargreaves, ABC

50 mins; production funding — $13,150

The Madigan Line — Andrew Murphy, ABC

50 mins; production funding — $7500

The Brink — ABC

50 mins; production funding — $12,000

The Black Smoke — Mark Stiles, ABC

50 mins; production funding — $10,000

Projects approved at Australian Film Commission meeting on January 15, 1982

Script and Production Development Investments

Script Development

Redemption — Mark Stiles, ABC

50 mins; production funding — $13,150

The Big Smoke — ABC

50 mins; production funding — $7500

Redemption — Mark Stiles, ABC

50 mins; production funding — $10,000

Projects approved at Australian Film Commission meeting on February 12, 1982

Script and Production Development Investments

Script Development

Redemption — Mark Stiles, ABC

50 mins; production funding — $13,150

The Big Smoke — ABC

50 mins; production funding — $7500

Redemption — Mark Stiles, ABC

50 mins; production funding — $10,000

Projects approved at Australian Film Commission meeting on March 12, 1982

Script and Production Development Investments

Script Development

Redemption — Mark Stiles, ABC

50 mins; production funding — $13,150

The Big Smoke — ABC

50 mins; production funding — $7500

Redemption — Mark Stiles, ABC

50 mins; production funding — $10,000
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South Australian Film Corporation
Atlantic City U.S.A.

Les Rabinowicz

Since Louis Malle's feature film debut in 1957 with Acen sou pour l'echafaud (Lift to the Scaffold), his films have been subject to conflicting critical appraisals. If the character of these has changed from a questioning of Malle's artistic integrity, occasioned by character-like changes in subject matter, especially in the genre pieces made during the 1960s to the varying assessments of his treatment of controversial issues in most of the films of the 1970s, it would, with the release of Atlantic City U.S.A., now appear that this has been replaced by an adulatory consensus.

Such is the praise for this compassionate and gently humorous tale about the humble aspirations and delusions of a handful of characters that it is tempting to sharpen one's reservations about this polished film.

The central figure, Lou (Burt Lancaster), is a one-time mini hood who, now in old age, prefers to remember himself in grandiose terms. He spends most of his time running numbers and looking after Grace (Kate Reid), an ex-gangster's moll who came to Atlantic City during the 1940s to the Betty Grable lookalike contest (she came third) and stayed. Then, there is Sally (Susan Sarandon), an oyster-bar waitress and Lou's estranged wife, and her pregnant sister, Chrissie (Hollis McLaren). The couple had been brought up in a New Orleans brothel and are presented with the utmost tact and discretion, while the old hotels are torn down to make way for new gambling casinos.

The same methods are at work in Atlantic City, just as are the deficiencies of many of Malle's previous efforts. In Le souffle au coeur (Murmur of the Heart, 1970), French collaboration with the Gestapo during the Occupation in Lacombe Lucien (1974), and child prostitution in Pretty Baby (1978). "Making it work", however, has produced a variety of stylistic accommodations, the least not being Malle's avowed directorial attitude of restraint and objectivity in the face of these controversial issues.

The same methods are at work in Atlantic City, just as are the deficiencies of many of Malle's previous efforts. In Le souffle au coeur, for instance, all the provocative elements — the loss of virginity in a whorehouse, brothers measuring their sexual organs and masturbating, and the somewhat nasty, somewhat-true, somewhat-true incest between mother and son — are presented with the utmost tact and discretion.

In Pretty Baby, a story about a 12-year-old girl, the daughter of a prostitute who has been brought up in a New Orleans brothel and her marriage to an older man, Malle somehow manages to find a way of not presenting any scenes containing explicit sex. And now in Atlantic City, the love scene between Lou and Sally is played more as a consummation of wishful thinking than sexual passion.

Malle, especially in his more recent films, has been careful not to challenge or shock his audiences. In Atlantic City he has preferred to win them over with charm. And though the screenplay by John Guare (a New York playwright probably best known for his collaboration with Miloš Forman on Taking Off) touches some emotionally-sordid incidents — Dave stealing his wife's purse, his parents refusing to accept her reverse-charges call to tell them that their son is dead — Malle skilfully over these shabby gestures of understanding.

And if Malle has sought to give his film some bite by including potentially-satirical scenes — Robert Goulet singing Paul Anka's trite, "Atlantic City My Old Friend," and a caricature of American television news, for instance — the end result seems somewhat bland and pointless.

One could possibly be forgiven for surmising that Malle has refrained from any comment about his characters in Atlantic City. In his mammoth documentary, Phantom India, Malle explored some of the childish fobles of the hippie generation. In Atlantic City he goes further by likening the two hippies (this time they are from Canada and not France) to Lou and Grace, and by making Chrissie a mindless twit and Dave a little punk out of his depth in the real world.

None of this is to say that Atlantic City is not an accomplished piece of filmmaking. Malle's craftsmanship and control, essential in a film which balances four characters and a handful of cameo appearances (including an extended one by Michel Piccoli as a pimp teacher) within a scenario that takes place over a two-day period, is admirable to the last. Yet alongside Malle's best film, Lacombe Lucien, Atlantic City pales. The significance of theme and moral complexity of the former highlights the superficial and inconsequential character of the latter.
although Bruce Beresford's Puberty Blues (based on the novel by Kathy Lette and Gabrielle Carey) will probably enjoy considerable popularity with teenagers, to write the film off as a purely commercial venture exploiting the Australian surfing cult would be most unjust. It would be even more so to add that it pretentiously uses concepts of social comment as a vehicle.

The film has no automatically generalized elements assaulting the audience with any blatant messages. Rather, the main characters, their adolescent problems, and the surfie clique are depicted as specific entities in themselves, not necessarily as typical samples of a generalized whole.

This makes Puberty Blues more valuable and accessible as a film an audience can relate to and identify with on an individual basis, rather than an attempt of the reverse.

This absence of any assumed stereotyped models in the film, either in its exploration of certain teenage problems, or of the surfie group, gives the film an intelligent specificity in dealing with its subject matter.

As well as this, Puberty Blues has many comic, dramatic and visual virtues that deal, with occasional force, with the pressures, problems and environment of the two main characters, Sue Knight and Deb Vickers (played well by Jad Capella and particularly Nell Schofield respectively), as they join and become involved with a local surfie clique.

The delineation of the Greenhill Gang's hierarchy, attitudes and rituals marks it as highly peculiar and all but self-contained in these respects within its social environment. The respective idol/worshipper relationship between the surfers and their girlfriends, the almost brutal singularity of the girls' subservient sex-maiden roles, the desperation with which Deb and Sue, through their eagerness and false regard for the group, join the surfies, and the boredom the girls must tolerate further accentuates the specificity of the group, and outlines the implications and consequences inherent with the privilege of its membership.

The opening shots of Puberty Blues show Deb and Sue on a crowded beach, greeting friends as they walk. A brief narration from Deb points out the divisions of the beach: "Dickheadland", from where Deb admits she and Sue hail, and Greenhills, where the surfers and their girlfriends hang out.

The arrival of the girls, amid cries of "Can they get girls?" and Sue-"I've never gone surfing before", and Deb-"I don't care." The girls' attitude is reinforced by the Likeness of casualness that suggests their being accorded shots of the girls silently sunbaking on the sands depict them as mere possessions, temporarily, and assimilate with the group. In one scene, the surfie clique is depicted in the old beach house. Bruce Beresford's Puberty Blues.

The totality with which Deb and Sue adopt their subservient sex-maiden roles, once accepted, is apparent as they interact and assimilate with the group. In one scene, while the boys are surfing, cuts to dismembered shots of the girls silently sunbathing on the sands depict them as mere possessions, with set functions of worship and servitude.

In fact, when the boys return from the water, Bruce criticizes Deb for not watching him surf. She and Sue then prepare to get food and, in a dehumanizing exchange, receive a stream of food orders from the boys, in a tone of casualness that suggests they are accustomed to such services from the female members of the group. As Deb and Sue head toward "Dickheadland", Deb comments in self-delusion, "Isn't this great!"

Even the curiosity Deb and Sue express for surfing is immediately suppressed by the gang's code of "girls don't surf!" because, as Strach (Ned Lander) puts it, "They might dig it." This repression of the girls' desires, as an instance of the inflexible expectations accorded their roles, is reinforced by the flight between the surfies and the lifeguards.

Although the scene makes its point as the girls cheer their idols on in battle, the Bud Spencer/Terence Hill type fight, with salvos of punches and blows with surfboards falling to yield one bloody nose or misplaced tooth, is too forced and silly, and upsets the incidental tone of most of the film's comedy.

When Deb, knowing that she must have sex with Bruce as part of her membership, asks Vicki (Joanne Olsen) for advice on what to do, she is told matter-of-factly, "Nothing; just lie there." Indeed, at the drive-in, the girls' primary function as sex-objects is emphasized with some force. While Sue is in the front seat of the panel van, being mesmerized by Danny's (Tony Hughes) cigarette tricks, Deb is in the back with Bruce. Without a word, and still chewing gum, Bruce roughly pulls down his trousers and underwear, and drops on Deb like a rock. He has difficulty and issues short, cold commands for Deb to shift about. She responds obediently, her nervousness to please him keeping her from saying anything about his animal-like attitude.

While pulsating, Bruce bumps his head on the van's ceiling and Deb automatically apologetically apologizes. This apology makes apparent the drastic distortion of mutual responsibility for gratification between sexual partners forged by the group's rigid role allocation of the girls as sex objects. This unbalanced feeling of inadequacy is further demonstrated at Sue's house where, even with the aid of vaseline, Bruce continues to have difficulty, and Deb apologetically resigns that his penis is too large!

This purely sexual obstacle prompts Bruce to break off with Deb and indicates the shallowness and single-minded purpose (at least as far as the boys are concerned) of any Commitment tension: Deb (Nell Schofield) and boyfriend Garry (Geoff Rhodes) at the old beach house. Bruce Beresford's Puberty Blues.
The French Lieutenant's Woman

Brian McFarlane

Film versions of great or famous novels run a perilous course with public and critics alike. The public, it is said, would never have permitted anyone but Clark Gable to play Rhett Butler, and is apt to complain bitterly if favorite characters or episodes are tampered with. The critics are likely to be equally unforgiving of a second-rate film. Whether or not it is an improvement, the French Lieutenant's Woman is one that I much enjoyed.

The film, directed by Roman Polanski, opens with the two women standing on a sand dune, looking at the sea. One of them is Deb (Joan O'Brien), the other is Sue (Tina Robinson), and the camera focuses on their faces as they talk. Sue says, "Yeah, who cares?" and Deb replies, "Who cares about anyone but yourself." This sets the tone for the film, which is about the relationship between Deb and Sue, two girls who are close friends but have very different personalities.

Deb is a tomboy who is more interested in surfing and playing cards than in boys or boys' games. Sue, on the other hand, is delicate and sensitive, and is more interested in boys and their girls. Deb and Sue are both members of the surf club, which is a group of boys who surf and play cards and are not interested in girls or women.

Deb and Sue both go through their own personal growth during the film. Deb learns to surf and to love surfing as much as Sue does. Sue learns to love Deb and to appreciate her for who she is.

The film also deals with the issue of whether or not women should be allowed to surf. The surf club is not interested in women and is not interested in Deb or Sue. Deb and Sue are both members of the surf club, but they are not treated the same way as the boys. They are not allowed to use the surfboard or the surf club facilities.

The film ends with Deb and Sue standing on the sand dune, looking at the sea, and talking about their future. Deb says, "I don't know what's going to happen to us, but I'm going to enjoy it while it lasts." Sue replies, "I'm going to enjoy it while it lasts too." This is the end of the film, and it leaves the audience with a sense of hope for the future.
directly, in doing so drawing attention to the craft, to this the author, one can think of has so insisted on our regarding the lives he has created as mere fictions and that he is making the audience who have nothing other than what he chooses to give them. As well, I can think of no other case where an author so contrives to make his characters, so as to consider them from moral and psychological viewpoints utterly unavailable to them.

The story of Sarah Woodruff, the ambiguous female figure, Charles Smith- ton, the gentleman with archaeological interests, and Erentina Freeman, the pretty flower of vulgar commerce, might have merited a straightforward filmmaking with, perhaps, some casting changes. Clearly this would not have been a "faithful" film version of Fowles' novel.

This novel is both narrative and expository upon narrative, and Karel Reisz's film based on Harold Pinter's screenplay tries to be adventurous and faithful in meeting the demands of the book on its various levels. Not that it is that it is fun. It has, probably unwarily avowed by the book's reputation and by its sense of the importance of Fowles' consistently literary art, this second film, which has led to a major miscalculation: whose invention — Reisz's or Pinter's — I am not sure — and Harland's contribution to this, have led to a film that is, quite simply, in no way is this over two hours, but that is hardly possible to become quite expert in predicting "what this over two hours, but that is hardly possible to become quite expert in predicting the outcome of the story, they become little more than irritants. Instead of providing a jab of contrast or whatever for that of its modern, certainly-situated house where, in the modern France Lieutenant's Woman: The stars of this film-within-the-film, Anna and Mike, are having an affair that falls apart when the filmmaking begins. The situation is played by Meryl Streep and Jeremy Irons who also play Sarah and Charles in what becomes the film's main, parallel narrative. The other players in the Victorian story (e.g., Collier (Mrs. Poulteney). Production company: Collier Productions. Director: Karel Reisz. Producer: Leon Ovse. Associate producers: Tom Maschke, Geoffrey Helman. Screenplay: Harold Pinter. Director of photography: Freddie Francis. Editor: John Bloom. Art director: Andrew Gordon. Set designer: Iain Tombs. Costumes: Meryl Streep (Sarah/Anna), Jeremy Irons (Charles/Mike), Mika McKee (Margaret), Harland March, Virginia McElwain. Consultant: Jacques (Vicar), Liz Smith (Mrs. Farley), Patricia Collier (Mrs. Poulteney). Production company: Collier Productions. Distributor: United Artists. 35mm. 123 mins. U.K. 1981.

Mad Max 2

Almos Makays

I liked Mad Max, and I like Mad Max 2. Perhaps such a statement may not mean very much to the majority who obviously share the same response, some others, however, will recall in horror and start holding up reports that were one "right and wrong" etc that have been used to flatten the first film into critical non-existence and doubtless will be soon again to do as much for the second. The verbs "liked/like", as used above, changed from their original sense of primary response which requires evaluation on at least two levels. On the first, an apparent, at least semi-factual basis for the acceptance of these films, which in my case relates largely to what I see as my perception of the comparative sexual inhibitions of the two Mad Max films and photographed with such care.

The thing that struck me about the first film was the way it was used to evoke exactly the right setting for the story. It is a single distant figure, centred-screen, at its end. This is followed by a substantial slab of the Victorian story, a tentative proposal to Ernestina in a lushly-foiled, softly-lit conservatory before a telephone in its edgy shrewd early to 1980, with Mike and Anna in bed.

This distinctively modern sound jars in the way that Fowles' autodidact involvement in a book, but its effect is not sustained by the rest of the modern scene in the way that Fowles' written comment often is. It is rather noting and adding rather in one's grasp of 1867 England; nor does the next interruption when Anna reads to Mike about "actual" fall in the Victorian setting. The film, however, is more and more aware of actors acting and of acting acting. As Sarah tells her story ("I gave up in the end, this, I mean...I should never be the same again", etc), we are as aware of Anna as of Sarah. The quality of interest involves acceptance of the idea and the way that was not true of the book. Reisz's film finds no equivalent for the novel's way of pulling back from its characters and their behaviour from the modern perspective. Some men have been caught between faithfulness to the book's procedures (i.e., they haven't sought a "actual" set), and the Century story of sexual obsession and repression, some others, however, will recall in horror and start holding up reports that were one "right and wrong" etc that have been used to flatten the first film into critical non-existence and doubtless will be soon again to do as much for the second.

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preoccupations of The Young Doctors and General Hospital.

Children have performed a variety of diverse functions in cinema. They have been the powerhouses, abused victims of adult vices and whims in 400 Blows and Sabotage, and the provocateurs who knowledgeably shatter the careful, fragile standards established by adults. They live in Lolita, Pretty Baby and Death in Venice. They may be the instigators of adult action, or simply the unfortunate recipients of force.

Their most familiar form is the precocious, seemingly independent and streetwise young man or woman in a role of host to the audience. Films such as Moon's Addie Prey, Shirley Temple's dimpled matchmaker in Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, Genevieve O'Reilly's husky-voiced millionaire Charles Spofford III and Alice's son Tommy in Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore, knowing, articulate kids who are effortlessly able to direct adults on to the right path. However, even these brazen children can ultimately be reduced to the personification of responsibility for adults; the devils, perpetrators, thieves and unwanted appendages, they have never been doctors and nurses. In this film, as in Bugsy Malone, the only child who remains in the film's present period is a streetwise, drop-dead gorgeous, seemingly independent and streetwise child star who was cruelly denied a future. Adie Prey, Shirley Temple's Badlands and Paper

Adult-childhood reversal: Mr X (Graeme Blundell), left, and Dr Bernard Christian (Brent Goward), Maurice Murphy's Doctors and Nurses.

The film's premise is to rely on the role reversal to sustain the film's involvement with the film. Its progress towards the final climax — Milligan's capture of the President, Milligan's surrender to the law, and the subsequent operation to remove the President's splinter — is too faithfully reliant on its predecessors. Even in terms of the film's structure, a few unexpected twists of the narrative; a few unexpected twists that reversion in the role structure of the world, one would expect a more adventurous attitude to the narrative; a few unexpected twists that redefine the carefully-constructed framework.

An effective fantasy ventures on new ground and supplies its own definitions and limitations. It is not bound to work through the structure established by years of General Hospital. It is a new fantasy, an established plot; the audience's familiarity with the clothes to introduce and establish the characters, and, in keeping with the notion of fantasy, overlooks any medical problem that could possibly result in permanent disability or death.

While the film has a great deal of charm, and an appeal to children and adults alike, the extent of its vision is a Utopia where children have the power and the knowledge to dominate adults and gently guide them on to the right path. As the director Maurice Murphy maintains, in this film the children win rather than lose. It is unfortunate that they are bound to use the methodologies that so many adult veterans of the hospital saga have perfected, in order to succeed. Our day at Royal Elizabeth begins with the arrival of an unconscious V.I.P., who requests of the present ward, "Can you request a rare hamburger? He is the President of the United States, with three neat G-men in tow, who are partially concealed behind large black plastic sunglasses. A succinct introduction to the hospital staff follows, with each employee identified by the well-worn phrases of soap opera jargon: the diligent, highly-efficient Sister Mary Gray (Sara Lamberti), who secrets love, but finds only professional kudos; the plastic blonde Sweetheart twins in love with the same man, the talented, suave surgeon; and the ubiquitous, well-meaning klutz intern, who falls over her own small feet at the slightest excuse. Every character is instantly familiar to an audience weaned on television.

The patients, all played by adults, are similarly stereotyped: Ms Veve Chiquet (June Sailer), the blue blue misanthrope complete with matching poodle-bags of taxiine and in tow, is the aging child star who was cruelly denied a future. Ms Veve Chiquet, the derelict, Milligan (Andrew McFarlane), the scoundrel from whom the derelict teaches the concept of professionalism; Murphy has relied largely on the strategies perfected by their soap opera predecessors. Even in terms of the film's structure, a few unexpected twists of the narrative; a few unexpected twists that redefine the carefully-constructed framework.

The dollar-chasing director of Royal Elizabeth finds the existence and continual usage of the public address system that most concisely sums up the film's approach to comedy. Its progress towards the final climax — Milligan's capture of the President, Milligan's surrender to the law, and the subsequent operation to remove the President's splinter — is too faithfully reliant on its predecessors. Even in terms of the film's structure, a few unexpected twists of the narrative; a few unexpected twists that redefine the carefully-constructed framework.
Journey Down Sunset Boulevard: The Films Of Billy Wilder

Neil Sinyard and Adrian Turner, BCW Publishing Limited, Ryde, Isle of Wight, Great Britain, 1979

Tom Ryan

Billy Wilder’s vital wit has earned him a posthumous place among those whose biting satire is nurtured by an American environment and directed at its mores. His films, or a large number of them, sparkle with a lurid, evocative one-liners delivered at the kind of speed that suggests there is no tomorrow.

The communist, Otto (Horst Buchholz), before his conversion through love in *One, Two, Three* (1961), tells the Coca-Cola importer, MacNamara (James Cagney), stationed in West Berlin: “Capitalism is like a dead herring in the moonlight: It shines but it stinks. The ‘cynicism exploited into a change of costume, though not yet attitude, a half-dressed Otto’s defiant cry: ‘It’s the Devil’s revolt,’ has to yield in the battle of wits to MacNamara’s precise retort, ‘Put your pants on, Spartacus.’” MacNamara’s subversion of American capitalism into world history somewhat undermines the debate with an exemplary piece of counter-productivity: “Any world that can produce William Shakespeare, the Taj Mahal and striped toothpaste can’t be all bad.”

The world of journalists represented in *Ace in the Hole* (1951) and *The Front Page* (1974) similarly provides a site for irreverence. Tatum (Kirk Douglas), in the former film, barks cynically at his occupation: “Tomorrow this’ll be yesterday’s, paper and they’ll wrap a fish in it.” And more than 20 years later, the tone hasn’t changed as Hildy (Jack Lemmon) indicts the emptiness of his editor’s declaration: “I’ve been doing this every day for 20 years. And the only time you ever get it up is when you put the paper to bed.”

Those lacking this kind of verbal flourish are unlikely to survive the kind of discomfits which pervade these and others of the films written and directed by Wilder. Power belongs to those who keep their wits about them, regardless of what other personal characteristics they have been given. That which determines a character really has nowhere to go but down for the count in the observation, “He’s got no sense of humor; the application of it to the German spy in the prisoner-of-war camp during the closing moments of *Stalag 17* (1953) being so appropriate that one is forced to wonder how he escaped detection beyond his first appearance in the film.

It is probably this element in Wilder’s work which has led to it being labelled as “cynical.” In his book, *The American Cinema*, Andrew Sarris includes Wilder among those directors whose work is adjudged as containing “less than meets the eye”, introducing his note on the director with the curious expectation that “Billy Wilder is too cynical to believe even his own cynicism.” Neil Sinyard and Adrian Turner’s, obviously an extended attempt to counter this view as, via a detailed analysis of each of Wilder’s films, they explore more fully...
Thus, in their analysis of the extraordinary *Ace in the Hole* (also known as *The Big Carnival*), Wilder diligently out-line the thematic structure of the film and accurately identify the criticism directed at it by that dubious viewer, hungry for sensation and hoping for blood, but ignore the rather dubious treatment dealt out to the character of Lorraine Minosa (Jan Sterling). In passing, they mention that

“Tatum is probably Wilder’s most extreme portrait of avarice and ambition, but the major thrust of Wilder’s scorn is directed not at him but at Leo’s wife Lorraine...”

but the implications of that observation for the film’s ideological status are ignored.

Ultimately Tatum is, at least partially, redeemed by Lorraine’s stabing of Tatum after her husband Leo’s death (when, in fact, it precedes it) and attributing the immediate physical threat posed by a hostile Tatum, the motif that she has been “forced to confront their mutual involvement in Leo’s death.”

The inaccuracy here is one that could be passed over as an aberration (and I should add that the book is impressively accurate for its details), were it not that it underlines the way in which authors deal with the ideology embodied in the films of unproblematically. I doubt it would have occurred had the book’s project been less reverent to Wilder the Artist and the development of his themes, and more questioning of the films and their ideological foundations. *Ace in the Hole* is a remarkable film, and thus an abbreviated mention of two writers (gay and otherwise) have expressed concern about how lesbians and gay men have been portrayed in films, and how homosexuality has been dealt with in film narratives. The type of writing that has “come out” in an assortment of publications has ranged from the merely descriptive “poof-and-dyke-spotters’” variety to in-depth analysis that attempts to place homosexuals and homosexuality in films and in a firm social/historical/political context.

A recent and greatly welcomed contribution to this growing body of writing is Vito Russo’s *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality In The Movies*. Since 1969, which marks the beginning of modern gay liberation movements across the world, more and more film theorists, critics, reviewers and writers (gay and otherwise) have expressed concern about how lesbians and homosexuals have been represented in films, and how homosexuality has been dealt with in film narratives. The type of writing that has “come out” in an assortment of publications has ranged from the merely descriptive “poof-and-dyke-spotters’” variety to in-depth analysis that attempts to place homosexuals and homosexuality in films and in a firm social/historical/political context.

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the recurrent modes of homosexual expression in the movies."

For instance, the first chapter is entitled "Who's A Sissy?: Homosexuality in Films, Gay Brothers, and ambles through the following years, Florida Enchantment (1914), Pandora's Box (1929), Blood Money (1933), Laura (1944), etc. to make a very strong throught the following years — A Florida Enchantment representations of homosexuals and homosexuality in films.

...similar to Park Tyle's less political than words."

...brings a gay liberationist perspective to saw a general swing backwards into project was valid, urgent and important legitimatize project.

Russo's ow n theoretical and political importance of connecting words and images in a subjective way. Russo manages to write a "subjective ordinary number of films in a "chronological and thematic" manner, and in so doing, creates a "history" that seems empirist and trans-historical in nature; that is linear and telological in its construction of achievements of individuals; that is heavily biased (not in viewpoint but in quantity) towards American cinema; and quite often, is consistently outside the realms of psychology and biology.

This ultimately results in a descriptive book that is invaluable because of the way it draws one's attention to the negative ways that lesbians and homosexual men have been represented and constructed in films. But beyond this, it leaves a lot to be desired. Russo has come up with a work that is in part a personal history, and in part a personal essay. He has analyzed the complex realm of representation. If he has been affected by such writing, he brings few of its valuable insights into this book.

Russo might defend himself, as he did in the Gay News interview, by saying: "an example of how to be a gay film critic." tanker's opinion of his "absolutely, And that his "style of criticism may be extremely well-intentioned and may produce a number of good things..."

"..."A special challenge needs to be critically scrutinized, especially when it results in such an uneven, though positive, book.


Gilbert Coats

Films about war will show what it is like, at best. Even documentary war films can be deceptive. Therefore, realism in war films is something most filmmakers have avoided. However, Bob (Bruce Dern) says in Coming Home, "It sure as hell don't show what it is..."

Gilbert Coats's book argues that the Vietnam War has been treated poorly in American feature films. In three decades of involvement, including 10 years of direct large-scale intervention, Hollywood produced one major popular film on the war, The Green Berets (1968), based on the only major popular novel that also spanned the only major popular popular song (as Julian Bond put it, "Look Away: Hollywood and Vietnam", Scribners, U.S., 1975: "...making a total of three artistic disasters — four if you count Apocalypse Now."

Since the war ended, the only film worthy of comment on the subject have been the ones that failed to bring in the big issues of the role of film in American society, Adair does not even raise them. Thus, Smith's observation that...

"...Vietnam did not generate a great many films, but may have been America's first major open-ended project...to grow out of attitudes supported, perhaps even created by, a generation of movies depicting America's military omnipotence is inestimable sociology, though appealing to an established prejudice. Smith's simple-minded idea that another Errol Flynn could have made the war popular does not appeal at all. Yet, there is a need to examine the thinking underlying these observations and the political realities of the American film industry's."

"...because it provides feedback that allows producers to discover what people prefer to believe about themselves. For the author, popular fiction film offers "a far richer vein of ideological than documentaries..." Unfortunaetly, the consequences of the ideological content of feature films is not explored in Adair's book.

Hollywood's Vietnam is a work of imaginative speculation. A total of 75 American films from Saloon (1947) to A Small Circle of Friends (1980), reflecting the war or its consequences, are discussed critically. The author's conclusion is, not surprisingly, that the consequences of the Vietnam War were fought, or the consequences of Vietnam. Consider: "Richter (1969).

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Apple Game
Susan Tate
Rotten apples...forbidden fruit...an apple a day...

Apples and their various and opposed connotations — decay, fulfilled, and still-rolled, healthy, and literary — and also in this film by Vera Chytilova, the highly-respected Czechoslovakian director of several films, including Something Different (1964), Daisies (1966), and Fruit of Paradise (1969) and, more recently, Calmunity (1979).

The game element implied in the title also runs through the film in conjunction with these concerns — games and tricks are played between and on people, by each other and by nature. The comical nature of the film, realized by a witty script and skilful improvisation by the actors, adds to this game element. Serious touches are worked into the film in counterpoint to give it a balance and to express something "deeper about the film", as Chytilova states should be the intent of every film.

The focal point for which this is natural is a direct relationship between the apple and the natural world. A basic apple is highly symbolic, and so is the fruit of paradise. In the biblical story, it is an apple that upwardly Adam and Eve, who is forced to eat the apple, giving rise to the most successful Australian film in its home market. Another interesting decision was the borrowing of Sigfried's apple, which had been shown uncut in the 1951 Sydney and Melbourne film festivals. Distribution of the film was cut down to 45 minutes, making it a motor show. A secondary role, the apple and the natural world, is a symbolic way of expressing the film's主旨.
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Continued from p. 37

I was told at one of the AFC assessments that people would laugh at those sorts of scenes, through embarrassment. Perhaps they would, but I don't think they do. I go to see the odd film that comes along that is a little bit more erotic than most, and I don't see people laughing. I have found the audiences quite open and receptive, especially the women.

One of the problems with the depiction of love making on the screen is the sameness...

But is it any different from seeing people continually being shot? How many different ways can you shoot somebody? They have tried every way!

But it is not the actual physical act of lovemaking or fucking or whatever it is; it is the emotional things that lead towards that point in which I am interested. It is very difficult to get an actress and an actor together in a moment like that, with a group of people around them, and make them feel like it is a most private moment. I think it is important that it is explained in the film. I think there has to be a lead up to it.

Did you experiment with this on "And/or-One"?

That film is mainly set in bed - a whole series of beds. It is about a girl who is working as a prostitute and who has a customer who masturbates while she counts out money. And while this goes on, she reflects on different things in her life, about her relationship to a couple of different people. That's really what the film is about — a love scene between two women and the man, and then another one between the two women, one woman who is very strong in her life.

It was hard to do, but I was lucky in that all the people who worked on the film were very professional about what was going on. There wasn't any feeling of embarrassment. We really didn't have that many people there, which often makes it hard. Everyone, for so long, has been taught that all of this is so terrible, yet nobody thinks twice about people being battered or brutalized or anything like that. Actors will take the most horrible parts, ones that are really crude, and yet they will do those in preference to doing something that might have a love scene in it.

How do you feel about the way women are portrayed in films?

I think there are gaps in that. Since most of the films we see are written and made by men, there are areas that for women don't ever ring true quite. What happens is you write something and color it different. If there are a man, the male characters usually have a lot more depth than the woman characters, and vice-versa. In that way, it would be good to be able to work more frequently with other people on scripts. That American idea of having a few people working on the script is really quite good.

This is usually seen as being an attack on the writer's integrity...

Yes, if you are thinking of it in terms of being a scriptwriter. But if you are thinking of it in terms of making a film — of the final thing — then it isn't, really. It is good to have different people's ideas of how scenes actually happen. When you are working in a group. This is something I never thought I would have liked.

I don't know how women should be portrayed in films. I think you can only just start letting women make films. It is like watching films about India being shown in India and then seeing an Indian film about the same thing. It is quite different.

Sonia Hofmann

Continued from p. 39

Would a condition of directing something for someone else be the right to cut it?

Yes, to have the right of the cut, until the film is screened to a test audience. Then, when it has been in front of an audience, I'll go by that; I am quite willing to talk further on the matter. Up until then I think it's the director's right.

I am still very much in the writing process when I edit: for me, it is as major a part of the writing process as the shooting and writing. The music and soundtrack are also very important. Music, the soundtrack and the subliminal sounds that are put on a soundtrack in most films are vastly underrated. That for me is one area of film that is imperative because there you are laying the whole psychological atmosphere; you are creating dramatic points that only you knew you were making anyway.

Directing is a bit more delicate in taking on other people's work, but I do enjoy editing other people's films. I have been offered a feature to cut next year. I enjoyed cutting Flamingo Park because it involved music and cutting to music. That is another important thing about my work as music influences me a lot. I respond very much to visual rhythms. And in Flamingo Park I had a lot of music and image to cut together. It was quite stimulating.

"Morris Loves Jack" has a very intimate feel to it...

Films should be intimate. I have a problem with a lot of the Australian films I have seen to date. With the exception of Love Letters From Teralba Road, not one of them are emotional. A lot of them observe people going through the storyline, but very few films get right to the heart. They tend to avoid emotional issues.

I think Steve Wallace's Love Letters From Teralba Road was a marvellous film. I call that the first internal Australian film. It's based on emotional spaces rather than external plot lines.

I guess I am an instinctual director rather than an intellectual one. All my subject matter always evolves around some emotional issue. It's very important to me, otherwise I really don't have a film.

Is there a wild generalization you can make — that if Australia is making films in which the characters don't seem to have an emotional life, it is because the films are made by men?

I wouldn't say that. I think that's a very dangerous generalization. I have seen lots of films made by men that have an intense emotional impact. I was talking more about an Australian quality; the Australian nature. I have seen a lot of emotional statements made by male filmmakers: Peter Watkins, Dusan Makavejev. It is easy to make a nice, clever story just going from A to B to C, but you can also be a coward and not delve into the whys and wherefores, into where people come from. That's the most interesting part about life: the motivating forces that drive people to do what they do. That is the delight in the human race or the tragedy of it. It is this more poetic side that is left out in a lot of Australian films.

I am really attracted by films that have humour. There is not enough laughter in our films. How many films do you walk out of laughing, tapping your toes and smiling, having really been given something? It's hard to laugh at a time when so many of our society is very low.

In Hollywood you would be most of the films being made were horror films. Most of the billboards around were of this man, naked from the waist up, holding a hand on his severed head with blood all over it. I am really concerned that people pay $5 to get themselves terrified. I think it's important to give people who are spending their money to see something that's positive, informative and even hysterically funny, so that they leave the theatre with a sense of having been given something new and having not something taken away.

New Products and Processes

Continued from p. 61

criticize you and say what a corrupt animal you are, which is good. It is better than complacently sitting at home being a corrupt animal and not knowing it.

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The Story of the Kelly Gang

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never returned to their studies till we left the town a week later" (Norman Campbell, Theatre Magazine, June 1, 1923).

Buckley also says that,

"Exteriors were completed in six days, and the 'interiors' were shot in Gibson's backyard on the seventh day again using a blackcloth and props from Cole's stage play" (Masque, June/July 1969, p. 9).

As Gibson was one of the producers in 1906 and 1910, this statement of location is equally reasonable for 1906, but the six-day shooting schedule is, in this case, directly linked with the Cole company, suggesting 1910.

Linked with these claims, is the siting of the production at Mitcham, now a suburb of Melbourne, but in those days easily qualifying as a "little country town". A number of sources relate how the railway line was pulled up at Mitcham, and how the Glenrowan Hotel was "a small cottage standing off the Whitehorse Road", which passes through Mitcham (Buckley).

Orrie Perry, one of the famous Perry family connected with early film production for the Salvation Army in Australia, claimed to have been cameraman for the Kelly film: even if Johnson and Gibson did not see stronger, Perry could not have shot the 1906 film at the time it was being produced: he was touring with a Biograph Company in New Zealand. In any case, an article in Everyone's (December 13, 1933) specifically mentions him as cameraman for "The Kelly Gang (Second edition)", which again could be the 1910 version.

So, by selection of those aspects of each story which hang together, it is possible to present a consistent tale of two separate productions. Unfortunately, the evidence does not allow the two stories to stand unchallenged. For, in addition to the information so conveniently selected, there are statements and claims that appear to bridge the two stories.

Central to these disagreements is the question of the cast. To support this theory, we should find that the Taits appear in 1906 and the Coles in 1910. But it is not as simple as this. The members of Cole's company were listed in December 1906 as Vene Linden, Ruth Belle Cole, Amy Sherwin, W. H. Ayr, P. Goodwin, G. Marshall and John McGowan. There is no mention in that list of Norman Campbell, the man who wrote that piece in Theatre Magazine in 1933 describing how the company went to the "little country town".

But there are more serious objections than this. John Forde's family can identify him from the stills of the 1906 production (Figure 10): there is no doubt that he played Dan in this, and he claims that the other players were Frank Mills as Ned, Will Coyne as Joe Byrne, Jack Ennis as Steve Hart, Charles Tait as the head of police and John Tait as the schoolmaster. But from the Cole family records, Tony Buckley concluded that the members of the Cole company who took part were Bella Cole, Vera Linden, Ollie Wilson and Frank Mills. In addition, there is a persistent rumor that the actor who played Ned had absconded during the shooting of the 1906 film and the rest of the film had to be shot in long shot or with a stand-in.

How, then, could Frank Mills have played in both, and still have absconded before the end of the first one? And why does his name occur as the only common element of the two lists? A possible solution is that the problem has arisen because Johnson and Gibson were involved in both productions. As time passed their memories of the two could have become entangled, so that when Gibson talks about filming on Sundays he is speaking of the 1906 production, but when he denies that any of the Taits acted in the film he is speaking of the 1910 version.

But then, what about the evidence of John Ford? If he was in both, this may account for his memory of the name Frank Mills, which sometimes confuses the question of the cast (Figure 11). But if that is so, then how did he come to be the only actor to be in both? Did he later join the Cole company? And why does he refer to incidents and locations that do not fit either story — such as that the Glenrowan Hotel was at Kangaroo Ground, and the fire was staged at Dreamland, in Luna Park? Luna Park is, admittedly, at St Kilda, and we have no reason why it would not be suitable for such a scene, particularly if his claim that interiors were shot at the rear of Johnson and Gibson's shop were accurate. And, if he is speaking, here, of the second production, then he must have been in both, as the stills in which he is identifiable are definitely of the 1906 version. I suppose it is just possible that he is the only actor in the 1910 stills who consistently holds his gun just at the height to make his face difficult to see.

Even more complicated (but interesting) speculation can arise from further exploring the relationship of the Cole company to the film. Cole had written, produced and acted in bush-ranger plays for more than 10 years. He was credited with writing the play Thunderbolt in 1890, and that was certainly one of several bush-ranging plays in his 1906 repertoire at the Sydney Haymarket Hippodrome.

Of most concern to us are two plays which were said to be about a totally fictitious bush-ranger, Captain Midnight: Captain Midnight the Wombatbargery Bushranger was presented in March 1906, and Bail Up was performed in both July and December. The latter may have been the renamed, re-edited version of the former, described in the Theatre magazine, rather confusingly, as a "new play" in the review of the December performance. It certainly does not seem to have been a Kelly play, and the first clear evidence of the Cole company performing in 1907 is in April, when Hands Up! or Ned Kelly and His Gang was advertised as being "produced as the Easter attraction, with new and elaborate scenery, illustrative of the Victorian border" (Theatre Magazine, April 1, 1907).

Cole's well-known preference for action-stories, if possible with an Australian setting, makes the only surprising aspect of this the lateness of his entry into the Kelly field. In December 1907, he was lecturing at the Melbourne Hippodrome, using biography, on the history of the Kelly gang. The police censorship records do not make clear what form the biography took: was it, for instance, a copy of the Tait film, or a new one, or something else? The police description of the lecture as covering the history of the family from the grandfather in Ireland to the death of Ned makes this unlikely, as the Taits' film did not include either of these. But the records distinctly mention "biography" rather than "lantern", so presumably it was a moving picture.

It would be tempting to guess that this is the Perthis fragment; were it not so clear that the cast is not the same as that of the 1907 poster, and that the title is not "Ned Kelly and His Gang", there is no reason why it would not be correct, partly correct, or perhaps an attempt to deceive the audience. But then, what about the evidence of John Ford? If he was in both, this may account for his memory of the name Frank Mills, which sometimes confuses the question of the cast (Figure 11). But if that is so, then how did he come to be the only actor to be in both? Did he later join the Cole company? And why does he refer to incidents and locations that do not fit either story — such as that the Glenrowan Hotel was at Kangaroo Ground, and the fire was staged at Dreamland, in Luna Park? Luna Park is, admittedly, at St Kilda, and there is no reason why it would not be suitable for such a scene, particularly if his claim that interiors were shot at the rear of Johnson and Gibson's shop were accurate. And, if he is speaking, here, of the second production, then he must have been in both, as the stills in which he is identifiable are definitely of the 1906 version. I suppose it is just possible that he is the only actor in the 1910 stills who consistently holds his gun just at the height to make his face difficult to see.

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**Films Censorship Listings**

**Continued from p. 46**

**Space Firebird** (reduced version) (a): Toko Leo Ltd, Japan, 2200.07 m, The Human Tower, Filmways, U.S., 2095 m, The High and the Holy.

**Veggie The Magnificent** (16mm): Not shown, Greece, 3673.30 m, The Castellorizian Club.

**Evita Peron:** Commercial Counsellor of the Soviet Union, 2459.62 m, Roadshow Dist., (videotape) (a): Israel, 60 mins, J. Vickers-Willis, The Language of Love, Australia.

**An American Werewolf in London:** Filmways, U.S., 2406 m, Fox Columbia Film Dist., (reconstructed version) (b): A. Guilleaume, Belgium, 2276.69 m, Limelight Prods, Australia, (overseas modified version) (c): G. H. Worthington, Nether­lands, 2750.43 m, GUO Film Dist., (videotape) (d): Toko Leo Ltd, 40 mins, K & C Imports, Nympho Cycler.

**Plan 9 From Outer Space:** 2509.92 m, Fox Columbia Film Dist., (16mm) (reconstructed version) (b): T. Mikels, U.S., 84 mins, 14th Mandolin Films, True Love.

**Evil Under the Rainbow:** Orion Pics, Warner Bros., U.S., 2373.82 m, Warner Brothers, Oasis Distribution.

**For Mature Audience (M)**


**The Big Boss** (reduced version) (a): Golden Harvest, Hong Kong, 2596.15 m, Filmways (Asia) Dist., (videotape) (b): Toho Co., 91 mins, Japan, 2595.01 m, Hoyts Dist., (videotape) (c): A. Mokuthe, South Africa, 2750 m, DAN Film, (videotape) (d): M. van Heyningen, Netherlands, 2679.25 m, Keswick Enterprises, U.S., (videotape) (e): A. Cole, Britain, 60 mins, K & C Imports, The Language of Love.

**La chambre rouge:** J-P Berchmans, Belgium, 2413.84 m, Belgian Chamber of Commerce, (videotape) (a): J. de Haan, 90 mins, The Big Boss.

**Michael Rubbo**

Continued from p. 45

"because we were in this very rigid country [France], where everything is done by appointment. People do not let you into their private lives. We would have liked to focus on Gucky's treatment, but he said, "No, I'll come to your apartment at such and such a time, and that will be it." So, we fell into a more formal mode, whereas Waiting for Fidel was really a free-for-all. There we didn't know what was going to happen next because of this sort of chemical interaction between us and the Cubans, and between ourselves.

Do you think the skill your crews have is something that has to do with news training?"

They haven't had news training, but rather direct cinema, or cinema verite. They also have to think on their feet a lot, because only rarely can they even write it down. If you try to pin it down with too many preconceptions, you will miss it. I suppose the reason Waiting for Fidel is an interview film to other filmmakers — more so perhaps than to audiences in general — is because filmmakers recognize how strange it is for a film crew to be there to do one thing but then to change direction on the spur of the moment. That is fascinating, because most people feel they couldn't do that.

I certainly don't think I could have done it a few years earlier. I think it was something that I was supposed to do, although in the case of Sad Song I was supposed to do something else. I sent a telegram to Tom Daly saying I couldn't do it, but we had planned and couldn't do it, so I should do what I felt was right.

I remember at an NFB program committee that quite a few of my ideas were very sceptical about my style, and I ran into a lot of flack. I was asked questions like, "How much do you plan to be in this?" My defence was that people ought to have a style, and that was my style, for better or worse.

The strange thing about the NFB is that everyone who works there spends most of their time bad-mouthing the place and saying it is on the brink of collapse, or that it should be swept away. But when you look out over its vision it is certainly not the norm. It is a very special environment.

Is that what coming to Australia does for you?

Yes, I am caught in a bit of a trap, because in a way I would really like to be back in Australia, for kinship and cultural reasons. I feel I have been away too long. Yet, at the same time, I know I can't bring the resources or working methods from the NFB with me.

What is your next project?

I have found a story in the world of science that I might be able to do, but have never wanted to do fiction just for the sake of having a feature to our name. But now I have a story that I can really respond to, so I relate it to my growing up. It was a very special time in my life and it is his world.

It is a long way off yet, but scarcely have I felt so right about something ahead of time. With Waiting for Fidel I had my "visions" if you will allow, one plunges off and plunges in. Quite different.

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**Films Registered with Eliminations**

For Restricted Exhibition (R)


Kung Fu Executioner: External Film, Hong Kong, 2496.74 m, Joe Siu Int'l Film Co., (videotape) (c): T. Mikels, U.S., 84 mins, 14th Mandolin Films, True Love.

**Michael Rubbo**

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**Filmography**

1965 The True Source of Knowledge 30 mins, black and white, 16mm

1966 The Long-Haul Men 17 mins, color, 16mm

Adventures 10 mins, color, 16mm

1969 Set: 20 mins, black and white, 16mm

Mrs Ryan's Drama Class 35 mins, black and white, 16mm

1974 The Man Who Can't Stop 58 mins, black and white, 16mm

Sad Song of Yellow Skin 58 mins, color, 16mm

Perpetual and Finagling 56 mins, black and white, 16mm

1976 Summer's Nearly Over 29 mins, black and white, 16mm

West Earth and Warm People 59 mins, color, 16mm

1977 D.K. . . . Camera 27 mins, color, 16mm

Jalan, Jalan: A Journey in Sundane Java 20 mins, black and white, 16mm

1979 The Streats of Saigon 20 mins, color, 16mm

Waiting for Fidel 58 mins, color, 16mm

1975 I am an old Tree 57 mins, color, 16mm

1976 Low Cost Housing in the Solomon Islands 20 mins, color, 16mm

The Digesters 12 mins, color, 16mm

1976 The Galaxy 16 mins, color, 16mm

Log House co-directed with Andreas Papadopoulos 28 mins, color, 16mm

The Walls Come Tumbling Down co-directed with Pierre Lasny and H. Winkrut, 26 mins, color, 16mm

1978 Hate to Love 57 mins, color, 16mm

Tigers and Their Tales 32 mins, color, 16mm

Sunbeinly's Children are making a lot of noise in Paris 87 mins, color, 16mm

1979 Yes or No, Jean-Gaye Moreau 58 mins, color, 16mm
expressed properly, two perfect examples of which are the "underground" art film and, at the other extreme, the commercial venture that deliberately sets out to capitalize on the topical fame of a shooting star or fashion that must inevitably pass. In the first case it has not been unusual to see, from the underground, a jumble of moving images cut together with no apparent plan or cohesion that creates a mental and visual blur, from which the audience tries to derive some sense, given the information in front of it.

The fact that everybody often leaves the theatre having derived dozens of different meanings from the film may only serve to reflect the filmmaker's own inability to express himself and or lack of conviction in his ideas. This kind of muddle is often responded to by the filmmaker or artist, when challenged, by some self-elevating remark such as "the world is not ready for me yet", or perhaps even "Don't show your own ignorance by asking such a stupid question, man." "Why not?", you might ask, "I thought you might know the answer."

By the same token, the commercially-intended film that is based on notions already accepted by the public that are fashionable fades will not always work if the concept of making money has not been married happily with some minor innovations to an established storyline. Grease worked very well with two popular stars; and putting Olivia Newton-John, Gene Kelly and the Electric Light Orchestra together might have seemed like a good idea on paper for the film Xanadu, but in reality all of these elements — each a viable money-spinner in their own right — did not work on film to produce anything especially captivating; and the audiences stayed away from the film. In both cases, a failure to realize the intent results in straightforward failure.

Film is not a topical medium with the same immediate feedback that newspapers and television enjoy, where events of that very day can be discussed, avoided or laughed at. Journals and television news rely upon immediacy, on-the-spot reporting and topicality, upon the exclusive story and the "scoop" for their continued existence in a world that they themselves have promoted as frantically busy and harum-scarum. From the inception of a fashionable trend within filmmaking itself, within its own time sphere. This leads to spates of films being released each year or so that take as a starting point something within the industry rather than something successful outside the industry. Thus a veritable rash of shock-horror films was set upon the public in the late 1970s, which were generated by one or two successful films. In this genre, a psychopathic killer would pop out at his pretty victim just when we could see him, but she could not. The largely adolescent audience would cream their pants at once, their screams of shock comfortably concealed behind a simultaneous blat on the soundtrack.

Dozens of pale imitations have been made with increasingly less and less content. Jaws provoked a similar epidemic in its own genre. But after the relative plausibility, sophistication and humor of that film, it became necessary (to re-use such a splendid formula) to come up with a host of equally vicious antagonists. Within an identical storyline we were challenged to be horrified in turn by hideous sharks, a whale, rats, frogs, (reptiles are always good), a grizzly bear, a bunch of feral dogs and, at the end of it all, even by the bees in Swarm — which leads me to think that it probably all started with Alfred Hitchcock's The Birds.

While I may seem to be wandering off the subject, consider that one has an idea for a really good film within the above-mentioned genres — butchering ghoul, marauding hideous creature, or a disaster involving a gigantic hotel burning down — and that the basic idea supersedes any
of these. And one is not keen on the idea because a vault on to the bandwagon seems to be in order. Well, simply because there has been a spate of films like the one in question, is absolutely no reason to reject it, as though the pitch has been ruined. To do so would be to do oneself the dishonor of assuming that the final film is going to look too similar to those before it, which is no basis for the creative process. On the contrary, it should in that case stimulate an original approach to the subject, such as setting it in the future, for instance. Intent and design.

S
o, design in film is the task of marrying together the directing concepts, written ideas, editing plan, photographic approach, settings, props and costumes into one visual whole, or a style, so that the whole film looks like it is meant to be all together in the one hour and a half, rather than like a dozen or so different ideas strung beside each other.

Perhaps the other most important consideration is that of the design of a film, giving it the necessary dramatic context and back-up, even to the extent of the settings virtually becoming members of the cast, like the astonishing landscapes created for The Wizard of Oz, which were as important as the little girl, the lion and the scarecrow, etc.

By placing certain scenes against complementary or jarring colors in contrast to the action taking place within them, one can manipulate the emotional effect of what the players are saying or doing. The hideaway of Lex Luther in Superman reveals the villain's aspirations to the grand life; his petty criminal's mind in the stolen pieces with which he has decorated his rooms; and his disregard for tradition when you realize that he is living in the future on the second floor of what used to be one of New York's oldest restaurants, having had the ground floor flooded to make a swimming pool. That set tells a lot about Luther, while the character speaks for himself; the set and the mood indicated through the lighting and the fact that a large portion of the main scene in there was one repeated wide shot that showed the whole room clearly. This last point would have been planned by director and designer together as the room was being drawn up. We already knew Superman and Lex Luther, so, while they spoke, there was a perfect opportunity to have a look around, and get a better idea of the city of Metropolis, and a few laughs.

Besides adding additional information, the decision for another film scene might be to do away with a background altogether, and shoot only the subject in a spot of light, the device Coppola used for the introduction of Kurtz in Apocalypse Now.

The two examples above are at extreme ends of an infinite scale of possibilities for heightening the impact of film, and while they are decisions that may be made by director, photographer, writer or designer, they are nonetheless design issues. The natural world, with all its shapes, colors and infinite configurations, along
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with the vast source of images that Man has
scratched and scribbled since he came down
from the trees go to make up the material with
which filmmakers can work. While the painter
has his tubes of color, the writer his vocabulary
and typewriter, and the musician his scales, the
filmmaker has the entire world as his palette,
being able to manipulate anything — absolutely
any thing — to create an atmosphere, sensation
or spectacle for the public’s enjoyment.

That is rather a wide scope of source
material, but, again, the juxtaposi-
tion does not have to relate to the
real world when placing objects
together in film, any more than
architecture has to faithfully follow any par-
cular style, even when attempting to evoke a par-
ticular period. In fact it is not a tricky one at all,
since the tribesmen wear ageless robes. But the
desert scene was shot in such a way as to
suggest pictorial reproduction of the period to
which the main story belongs. The desert scene
did not have the quality of a stereopticon slide; the
colors were faded, and the image did not have
the sharpness that the rest of the story had.
There was a picturebook quality that made us
accept the sequence without the slightest shock.
Given that the initial design concept of a film
could be blended together by adding a noggin of
the overall picture. If the designer has his pulse
with the director during the shooting of a film that
stands out as separate from its neighbour. The
desert sequence was shot in such a way as to
diminished his authority. He could retaliate
by giving the designer a stomach ulcer, but a
strong designer would stand his ground, fight
every foot of the film, and send him to
hospital with a heart attack. This is in fact the
substance of the battle that raged between
Walter Lang and designer John De Cuir
during the making of The King and I. At one
point De Cuir had to win Yul Brynner and
Deborah Kerr over to his side by shooting a
test reel using the controversial sets to demon-
strate that a pink palace in no way detracted
from the king’s royalty and that a boldly
stylized decor with a few oriental props would
only enhance Anna’s crinolines. Lang ended
up with a heart attack. De Cuir ended up with
an Academy Award — the ultimate vindica-
tion in the eyes of the industry.

Film is a visual medium, but I am by
no means advocating design for
design’s sake, when it comes to film;
for precisely that reason — that one
cannot use the most disparate elements and
make them look like they have been bed-
partners for ever.

To gain the full emotional potential of the
infinite amount of material that exists (apart
from what can be invented), it is surely permiss-
able to use anything to make the point. If a
certain image is required to illustrate an associ-
ation, memory or joke in film, but it looks at first
that, it just will not do, perhaps the film-
ing image can be transposed into a form where it
will blend perfectly or counterpoint harmoni-
ously with the rest of the film. In the middle of
Werner Herzog’s 19th Century story set in
Bavaria, The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser, there is
another story about a blind Arab leading his
tribe through the desert. His remaining faculties
of touch, taste and smell enable him to deter-
mine from a handful of sand which way lies
North, and therefore the direction that his
people should take. How do you make the
expansive compositions from the Sahara
compatible with the awkwardly-cluttered
Bavarian town? In fact it is not a tricky one at all,
since the tribesmen wear ageless robes. But the
desert scene was shot in such a way as to
suggest pictorial reproduction of the period to
which the main story belongs. The desert scene
did not have the quality of a stereopticon slide; the
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Kevin Dobson
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relevant to what I was doing. I couldn’t imagine spending three weeks getting two minutes of film; it seemed preposterous. But having done it, I can now understand why.

Have you continued to make commercials?

Yes. A while ago I went to New Zealand to do the original Norsca commercials. That was great. We dammed up a river in Arrowtown and flooded it just to get backlight shots of horses running through water. We choppered into inaccessible parts of Fiordland to take shots of pinecones. I also got to work with aeroplanes, and had a camera bolted on the nosecone, so we could drift around boats.

Then I went to the U.S. to do some tags for American Express commercials, with Karl Malden. When I came back, I got a phone call from Geoff Pollock at Crawfords asking me to direct three episodes of Young Ramsey.

Was that the second series?

Yes. That led directly to The Last Outlaw, I Can Jump Puddles and Squizzy Taylor.

"Young Ramsey" never seemed to get the public recognition many people felt it deserved.

I think it was on at a funny time. Was it Saturday nights at 6.30, which is like saying that it’s on in Venezuela next week? But I had no great affection for it as a series. It wasn’t enormously inspiring to me, though it was sad to see it go — particularly for Crawfords. I think Crawfords should concentrate on bringing something like that back.

The Last Outlaw and Tele-series

When did you become involved with "The Last Outlaw"?

I came in quite late. George Miller, whom I knew from Crawford days and Young Ramsey, was originally going to do all four two-hour episodes. But his load became too much and he asked me to relieve him of the third episode. I did that, and then as the episode before the huge shoot-out at Glenrowanloomed, I also took over episode one. So we ended up splitting 50/50. But George had been working on that series a year before. I was just the second director.

How much would you say it was Ian Jones’ project?

It was his and Bronwyn Binns’ — totally, completely and utterly.

It must be difficult for you as a director when you have a producer with a strong personal and creative interest . . .

I didn’t mind. I found him an interesting guy, and his knowledge of Australia between the 1850s and early 1900s is enormous. So it wasn’t all that difficult, although when you are in production it is hard not to see people as being in the way. It is hard to accept the stopping of filming because someone’s button isn’t right.

Anyway, it doesn’t matter what happens when you are directing; you still have the practical creative power. No one can ever take that away from you. Otherwise, you are not directing, someone else is. And Ian certainly didn’t do that.

After "The Last Outlaw", you did "I Can Jump Puddles" for the ABC . . .

Yes, the first four episodes. That was amazing. It was the first film-integrated program I had done. Many years after it had all been over for everyone else, the ABC chose to do it. I can jump puddles on film and videotape.

Nevertheless, working with Adam Garnett, who was 12, and Alan Marshall, who was 76, was just great. I loved it and think of the show with much affection.

What is your feeling about the mini-series format . . .

As long as people watch and enjoy them, then it is fine. It would be sad the day they stop.

How did you feel about "Water Under the Bridge" and "Alice"?

I didn’t like any of them — The Last Outlaw, Water Under the Bridge or A Town Like Alice. I am told A Town Like Alice was enormously successful, which is great, particularly for Henry Crawford [producer], David Stevens [director] and the actors. But whimsical romances aren’t really up my alley, per se.

I didn’t like Water Under the Bridge because I didn’t think it merited eight hours. I thought that the performances were brilliant. Dan Burstall’s photography was excellent, again. I enjoyed elements of it, but as a punter it didn’t really do a lot for me.

I didn’t like The Last Outlaw, because it shouldn’t have been a mini-series. It was too big a story. The only episodes of The Last Outlaw I really liked were One and Four, because One showed young Ned grow up into a man, and Four saw him come undone. They were of more value to me. The two middle episodes, which were the heart of the story, didn’t come across for me. I thought they were a little boring.

In her review of "A Town Like Alice", Jill Kitson ended by saying: "One further point worth noting is that the best performances in all these series (referring to "Water", "Last Outlaw" and "Alice") come from actresses and actors who have made their names in the Australian cinema, not in television. Perhaps the best hope for future mini-series is if their producers, directors and script editors also come from the cinema, where originality and integrity are still prized above soap-opera formulas." What’s your reaction to that?

I don’t know Jill Kitson, and I don’t know what she is saying. Who came from the cinema? Who is she referring to?

To people like Helen Morse and Bryan Brown. She is also suggesting that more television should be directed by film people, rather than television people . . .

It is wrong to make a distinction between film and television people. Most of the people who have been around for a long time, apart from the New Wave, have come from television. And one of those actors you are talking about has been gracing the small screen for years. I can’t see why directors and actors can’t use both mediums — after all, neither is big enough to sustain a huge industry.

If you want to be a director, it is your job to tell stories. So, how can there be a division? Igor Auzins has made two feature films, David Stevens is poised at any time to knock off a feature film, and George Miller, who has just made The Man From Snowy River, all began in television with me. You take a camera and a film crew and tell a story. You might be telling it for the cinema or for television, it doesn’t matter, so long as you tell that story correctly.
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