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Cinema Papers #41 December 1982

Scott Murray

Peter Beilby

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Color poster inside
plus Phar Lap, We of the Never Never and more

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And by the way, to all the award winners, 'We Of The Never Never,' 'Lonely Hearts,' 'Goodbye Paradise,' 'Mad Max II,' 'Monkey Grip,' 'Norman Loves Rose,' 'Fighting Back' and 'Man From Snowy River,' from the Colorfilm crew—'Congratulations.'
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**Phar Lap**
Producer John Sexton
Director Simon Wincer
Executive in Charge of Production Richard Davis
Director of Photography Russell Boyd

**Savage Islands**
Producers Rob Whitehouse, Lloyd Phillips
Director Ferdinand Fairfax
Production Supervisor Ted Lloyd
Director of Photography Toni Imi

**The Settlement**
Producer Robert Bruning
Director Howard Rubie
Production Manager Irene Korol
Director of Photography Ernie Clark

**Ginger Meggs**
Producer John Sexton
Co-Producer Michael Latimer
Director Jonathan Dawson
Production Manager Jill Nicholas
Director of Photography John Seale

**Battletruck**
Producers Lloyd Phillips, Rob Whitehouse
Director Harley Cokliss
Production Manager Jake Wright
Director of Photography John Ease
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*Recommended price only.
Director Piers Haggard continues: "One only has to look at the French government’s plans to realize how incredibly important the film industry is in presenting any national culture to the world. Maggie clearly sees us as a nation of porno-cable watchers."

Certainly the Sproat Report, to be released at the end of the year, will have a great effect on how long the British feature film industry continues to flicker. (For a more detailed report, see "Shock Review Stirs Industry", by Quentin Falk and Sue Newsom-Smith, Screen International, November 13-20, pp. 1-2.)

Children’s Television

Investments totalling almost $60,000 in the script development of five new children’s projects were announced by the Australian Children’s Television Foundation. Dr Patricia Edgar, ACTF director, said that a continuing flow of good quality projects was being submitted for funding both by experienced professionals and newer writers. "If all the projects now given investment funding reach production," she said, "we have estimated they will represent nearly $10 million worth of new children’s programs.

Total investment by the ACTF in project development has now reached $235,000, with three of the projects funded earlier this year scheduled to go into production early in 1983. The ACTF also revealed that it would be a major investor in the South Australian Film Corporation’s production of Colin Thiele’s film in The Story. This will be the SAFC’s third film of works by Thiele, and follows Storm Boy and Blue Fin.

In announcing the investment, Edgar emphasized that the ACTF has been created mainly to invest in the innovative, but costly, high-risk stage of the production process — program development — and then to attract the industry to make the program.

Funding to establish the ACTF has come from commonwealth and state governments, but, according to Edgar, the ACTF will not survive without broad-based financial support from the community. Funds from individuals, corporations, and philanthropic trusts and foundations are needed to continue investing in new programs.

Details of the new investments are as follows:

**Chase Through the Night** — $15,950 for first-draft funding for Episode one of a five-part mini-series to Endeavour Film Productions. **The Parallax Factor** — $5240 for final-draft funding for Episode one and treatment funding for Episodes two to five for a mini-series to David King Productions. **Storm Boy** — $5420 for first-draft funding for Episode one of a seven-part mini-series to Colinson Nominees and Pablo Albers Productions. **Teletexture Package and Rocks of Honey** — $6000 for Package Development and $20,165 for first-draft funding for the telefeature Rocks of Honey to Merryweather Productions.

National Library of Australia

Roger Easton, chief of technical operations at the Canadian National Film and Television Archives in Ottawa, recently spent a month in Australia as a consultant at the National Library. Widely recognized throughout North America for his expertise in sound and video preservation methods, he advised the Library on a strategy for establishing a video preservation facility in the National Film Archive and on the latest preservation developments that could be adopted in the Library’s sound recording section.

Easton was born in Sydney and once worked for a Sydney television station, but has lived in Canada for 16 years and is now a Canadian citizen.

Melbourne Festival

New appointments have been announced by the Melbourne Film Festival, now in its 32nd year and the world’s fifth oldest film festival.

Replacing Geoffrey Gardner as executive director (he retired in October) is Franco Cavara, former artistic director of the Australia-wide Italian Arts Festival. Cavara has also produced Opera sessions at the Adelaide Festival and the Sydney Opera House. In 1982, he was a member of the jury at the Melbourne Film Festival.

Man Kuttina, an Australian of Hungarian descent, has been named program director. Kuttina is a film critic who has written for many world film journals, including Sight & Sound, American Film and Cinema Papers. She is also on the awards panel of the British branch of FIPRESCI (International Association of Film Critics). She is now a Canadian citizen.

New Festival and program consultant. Kuttina will attend the Melbourne Film Festival.

Don Dunstan, former Premier of South Australia, has been appointed president of the Festival, a newly-created position.

Concluded on p. 503
The 1982 Australian Film Awards were held in Sydney at the Capitol Theatre on October 27 and telecast nationally by the ABC. Scott Murray reports:

In many ways the 1982 Awards presentation was the most successful yet, combining an entertaining live performance with a popular distribution of awards among many films. But the lead-up to the Awards was anything but eventful.

The Voting

The first controversy was over the implementation of a pre-selection process, which narrowed the 30 films entered down to 18. (For a full report see Cinema Papers, No. 37, pp. 108-109, 1982.)

Once the 18 films had been nominated, accredited AFI members voted in approved categories. Multiple screenings of each film were held in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Canberra, Hobart and Brisbane; attendance was compulsory.

Voting closed on October 20 (later extended to October 24) — or should have. Firstly, there was the problem of the Best Actors ballot paper — it had Norman Kaye starring in Moving Out and Vince Colosimo in Lonely Hearts (instead of vice versa). Once the AFI realized the error another ballot was sent out — this time correct.

Voters were told to discard the first ballot and use the second. The only problem was that some people had already completed and returned the first ballot before the second arrived. In some cases, the voters crossed out and corrected the errors on the ballot, thereby inadvertently marking their vote null and void. As they felt they had corrected the mistake, it is possible they didn’t bother to vote again.

What of those who voted twice? Well, the auditors, Lowe, Lippman, Figdor and Frank, washed out the incorrect ballots during the sorting and discarded them. Thus, only the second votes counted.

The second ballot paper error concerned the Screenplay Award. Instead of alphabetical order, as required, the nominees were jumbled — not a serious error except for the donkey ballot.

The major balloting problem, however, was the mail-out. Numerous people complained about non-arrival of forms; most who complained finally got their ballot papers; others merely waited in vain.

One Melbourne voter (not myself) was so incensed that his ballot paper had not arrived that he rang three times and complained. The first time he was told it was the mail. The second time Australia Post was again blamed. When he said his wife had received her voting slip two weeks earlier, the rationale was changed to a don’t know.

Finally, the closing date came and went. Irate that he had been denied his chance to vote, he telephoned the AFI on Monday, October 25, two days before the Awards. He was told it was too late to do anything. When he learned he was going to take legal action, he was told to stand by and he would be rung back. When he was called later that afternoon he was told to ring the auditors direct; who would take his vote by phone. This is what they did. And had he not told them he was ineligible in some categories, he would have been allowed to vote in all categories.

Needless to say, this account raises serious questions about the AFI’s and their auditors’ handling of the Awards voting.

Tradition

It is the prerogative of any organization to change its protocol requirements at any time — especially if a new management or board structure is introduced. Equally, there are certain courtesies that no organization should fail to observe.

At all previous Awards presentations, past executive directors had been invited to attend. This year, the incumbent executive director, Kathleen Norris, changed that policy and decided all past executive directors would have to pay if they wanted to come. This was both ungracious and mean-spirited — ungracious because several of those past executive directors had worked slavishly to lift the AFI to the high position it until recently held, and mean-spirited because the cost saving was minimal (only one past executive director opted to pay — a profit of $30).

The executive directors involved were Erwin Rado (founder and longest-serving), Richard Brennan, David Roe, John Foster and Peter Crayford. Of these, Brennan was invited as a producer of the nominated Starstruck and Crayford paid. Rado and Foster did not attend. Roe was finally invited after several complaints were lodged to Norris and AFI chairman, Senator Hamer, and after the intervention of two AFI board members.

Overall, the whole incident put the AFI in a poor light. One hopes that in the future it may feel more inclined to recognize the contributions of those who came before.

The Presentation

For those present, the 1982 Awards seemed to be the best since the start of television telecasts. The program was better structured, the musical numbers more crisply staged and the presenters far brasher and to the point. As compare, Philip Adams gave a humorous and winning performance, and Norris certainly proved a striking presence in her tradition-breaking appearance (all previous executive directors felt it proper that only the chairman should speak on behalf of the AFI).

Looking at a video recording later, however, the presentation seemed a little lacklustre in spots. Despite extensive technical gear and the expensive Lauma crane, the camera work and editing was often choppy and disconcerting. The fine performance by Jo Kennedy, Ross O’Donovan and back-up dancers, for example, was a brisk, invigorating performance to watch live — particularly the leap to the pole — but on television it lost most of its flair (the loop was covered from above, for some reason).

A second criticism of the presentation — and mostly from those outside the industry — was that too many of the films mentioned had never been heard of.

In 1976, when David Roe convinced Channel Nine to do the first televised Awards, the majority of the prizes went to Fred Schepisi’s un-released Devil’s Playground. While helping that film at the box-office, it did make for great television because the audience didn’t know anything about the film and felt left out.

Another criticism of the 1976 Awards was that the voting favored new, unreleased films over ones that already had finished their national release (e.g., Picnic at Hanging Rock which went largely unrecognized).

As a result, when the ABC agreed to do the telecast in 1977, it insisted that all films be released before the presentation. The AFI was happy to agree, because such a regulation was felt to militate against the criticism of favoritism for the new over the old.

The prior-release clause stayed until this year, when the number of films and the number of unreleased films — was deemed too large to be cope with adequately. So, the old problem of audience bewilderment returned.

It is certainly a problem that needs to be solved if ratings are to increase, which is the whole point of the telecast.

The Awards

The awards themselves require little comment as they represent the collective voting of accredited members of the AFI. It does seem odd that a film of the exceptional standard of Mad Max 2 should not be nominated for Best Film (but nominated for Best Director) but that is the way the voting goes.

I certainly agree with Bob Ellis in his criticism of the abandonment of the Jury Prize for features, but one can’t complain about Peter Tammer’s Journey to the End of Night receiving just recognition.

The winners are:

Best Film: Lonely Hearts, produced by John B. Murray.
Best Director: in Direction: George Miller for Mad Max 2.
Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role: Ray Barrett in Goodbye Paradise.
Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role: Kris McQuade in Fighting Back.
Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role: Warren Mitchell in Norman Loves Rose.
Best Achievement in Cinematography: Gary Hansen for We of the Never Never.
Best Achievement in Editing: Tim Winton for We of the Never Never.
Best Music Score: Bruce Rowland for Them From Snowy River.
Best Achievement in Art Direction: Graham Walker for Mad Max 2.
Best Achievement in Costume Design: Norma Moriceau for Mad Max 2.
Best Achievement in Sound: Bruce Lamshed, Roger Savage, Mark van Burren, Andrew Stewart, Byron Kennerley, Penn Robinson and Lloyd Carrick for Mad Max 2.

Jury (Non-feature Awards)

Best Short Fiction Film: A Most Attractive Man, produced by Gillian Coote and directed by Rivka Hartman.
Best Documentary: Angels of War, produced and directed by Andrew Pike, Hank Nelson and Gavan Dawes.
Best Animation: Pink Breeder, produced by Bruce Currie.
Best Experimental Film: The Bridge, produced and directed by Mark Foster.

Jury Prize: Peter Tammer for Journey to the End of Night.
Special Achievement in Cinematography: Louis Irving for Greetings From Wollongong.

Raymond Longford Award

Eric Porter.

Bob Ellis and Denny Lawrence accept their awards for Best Screenplay.

Sujatha and John B. Murray, producer of Lonely Hearts (Best Film) and co-producer of We of the Never Never (Best Cinematography).

Noni Hazlehurst is applauded by Mel Gibson and Pat Lovell for winning the award for Best Actress in Monkey Grip.

CINEMA PAPERS December — 501
Dear Sir,

My working week had ended and the usual pleasant anticipation with which I reached for Cinema Papers was dulled by just sheer exhaustion. However, when I read Scott, Murray’s piece titled “Industry Hysteria” my spirits were recharged and I was ready to take on anything.”

I agree 100 out of 100 with virtually everything you say in this piece and if there can be a recognition of these basic facts, then actions by people of goodwill will help to move the industry forward once more.

Let us hope that by next year the ratio will be reversed and we will see no out of 10 for at least three. Because, after all, there is nothing wrong with complacency that a damned good film won’t cure.

Yours sincerely,

Graham W. Burke
Roadshow

Misplaced accusations

Dear Sir,

Scott Murray’s Quarter Item, “Industry Hysteria” (Cinema Papers No. 40, p. 406), raised several topics that deserve comment.

First, the point is well made that it is the quality of a film itself, rather than the presence or absence of a foreign star, that determines whether the film will have box-office success; however, both those who argue that it is fallacious for distributors and other film buyers. Australian producers and investors, but in those who argue that it is fallacious for to restrict the freedom of choice of Australian talent that is not fairly recognized.

Critical of some of the attitudes and arguments against such organizations whereby the Commissioner may disallow the deductions if he is not satisfied that such repayment will take place, they are only justified when the profitability of the business is assured.

Why should Australians not be free to obtain loan finance and to invest in servicing foreign film projects or indeed any other combination of guile and wit required to force the market to accommodate Australian films when the income will be fully taxable and represent export earnings for Australia?

Producers of certified Australian films have seen the need to be handed a major competitive advantage, in that they can offer investors the subsidies contained in the film tax concessions. Not content with that, some producers are now trying to persuade the government to outlaw their competitors altogether.

They seem extraordinarily blind to the dangers (leave aside the unfairness of such a campaign) if it succeeds, what reason will be there for the government to change the situation for Australian films? The tax concessions may well be withdrawn. Further, many artists, technicians, and others in the industry may find their own tax positions (or that of their loan-out companies) harmed by whatever legislation is introduced to curb the application of section 51(1) to film business expenses.

It is surprising that the Group, and the many journalists and politicians who have echoed its views, have failed to identify what everyone on the inside of Australian film financing knows is the real reason (apart from the recession and investor-disappointment with some recent films) for the current slowdown in feature film production, namely, the operation, since July 1, of the new Companies legislation, which contains an expanded definition of “control” (and the consequent dangers (leave aside the unfairness) of having to put to a vote his right to have that say. I strongly disagree with UAA’s methods, and I am glad to see that it looks as if the Film Action Group is heading Scott’s advice and is indeed directing their complaints, objections and arguments against such organizations as UAA, Cinema Enterprises Ltd and Trans-Pacific Media to the government, which is as it should be.

Scott cites the industry’s indignation and reaction to these companies as having “had all the moralistic hyperbole of a Jerry Faiwell rally”. Such a strong statement leaves no doubt whose side Scott, director of two unsuccessful films, is on. The Pirate Movie was quite entertaining, but only if looked upon as a children’s film. The overall critical reaction to Ken Annakin’s picture has amply demonstrated that UAA publishes a review of The Pirate Movie? I doubt it. Scott could do a favorable one himself, if he dares.

Bob Ellis, to my memory, has never known what he is writing or talking about when making statements or writing articles on films and film industries, especially the Australian one. Bob has written good film scripts (Newfront, Fatty Finn and Goodbye Paradise) and some good critiques in his time, but appears very naive in anything else he attempts. Ellis should stick to what he knows and do it better.

When Bruce Beresford claimed that he wanted to make films in Australia for Australians he probably meant just that. Tender Mercies (his 1982 Texas film) was made in America for Americans. Why should the industry speak against Beresford, Philippe Mora, Fred Schepisi, Gillian Armstrong, Graeme Clifford or anyone else for that matter going to the U.S. to make a film? Callan, if he should be allowed to come here, but only if they happen to be making 98 per cent all-American, etc. films (with American crew, writers, musicians, etc.) that happen to be set, or partly set, in Australia i.e., Ride A Wild Pony, Born to Run, Adam’s Woman, The Side Car.

Act, I can only deplore the unfairness of its attack on UAA, and its refusal to recognize the effects of section 51(1) of the Act.

For all the Group’s rhetoric about Australian money being shipped away to American-controlled productions, there is no evidence that the investment of Australian certified films have been seriously affected by the money-raising activities of UAA. Any more than any other company owned have been by other legitimate opportunities competing for investors’ funds.

UAA well intends to restrict the last financial year, when the industry produced more than 30 Australian features. In the current year, when the slowdown in production has occurred, UAA has not yet promoted any projects as far as I am aware.

Producers whose finances are subsidized by the new Film Tax Concessions have every chance of UAA of exploiting the Australian taxation system.

The whole point about UAA’s operations is that they do not rely on any special tax concessions. The only justification for UAA, under which any taxpayer can offset non-capital, non-domestic business expenses against business income.

It is just not true to claim (as the Group evidently does, judging by similarly worded articles appearing in newspaper after newspaper) that section 51(1) offers investors a 375 per cent write-off. Section 51(1) itself offers no leverage. The concession may only be achieved by the taxpayer borrowing to pay for the expenses. As such borrowings have to be repaid (the Act already contains provisions whereby the Commissioner may disallow the deductions if he is not satisfied that such repayment will take place), they are only justified when the profitability of the business is assured.

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It is surprising that the Group, and the many journalists and politicians who have echoed its views, have failed to identify what everyone on the inside of Australian film financing knows is the real reason (apart from the recession and investor-disappointment with some recent films) for the current slowdown in feature film production, namely, the operation, since July 1, of the new Companies legislation, which contains an expanded definition of “control” (and the consequent dangers (leave aside the unfairness) of having to put to a vote his right to have that say. I strongly disagree with UAA’s methods, and I am glad to see that it looks as if the Film Action Group is heading Scott’s advice and is indeed directing their complaints, objections and arguments against such organizations as UAA, Cinema Enterprises Ltd and Trans-Pacific Media to the government, which is as it should be.

Scott cites the industry’s indignation and reaction to these companies as having “had all the moralistic hyperbole of a Jerry Faiwell rally”. Such a strong statement leaves no doubt whose side Scott, director of two unsuccessful films, is on. The Pirate Movie was quite entertaining, but only if looked upon as a children’s film. The overall critical reaction to Ken Annakin’s picture has amply demonstrated that UAA publishes a review of The Pirate Movie? I doubt it. Scott could do a favorable one himself, if he dares.

Bob Ellis, to my memory, has never known what he is writing or talking about when making statements or writing articles on films and film industries, especially the Australian one. Bob has written good film scripts (Newfront, Fatty Finn and Goodbye Paradise) and some good critiques in his time, but appears very naive in anything else he attempts. Ellis should stick to what he knows and do it better.

When Bruce Beresford claimed that he wanted to make films in Australia for Australians he probably meant just that. Tender Mercies (his 1982 Texas film) was made in America for Americans. Why should the industry speak against Beresford, Philippe Mora, Fred Schepisi, Gillian Armstrong, Graeme Clifford or anyone else for that matter going to the U.S. to make a film? Callan, if he should be allowed to come here, but only if they happen to be making 98 per cent all-American, etc. films (with American crew, writers, musicians, etc.) that happen to be set, or partly set, in Australia i.e., Ride A Wild Pony, Born to Run, Adam’s Woman, The Side Car.
Racers, The Sundowners. On the Every actor that Tony Ginnane has so far entered in the 1982 Australian Film and Television Awards are determined for. All (or most) of today's best films are non-star they are just not called "star" that may be box-office today, and from reading my Quarter item that I am uniformly bad.

entice Australian investors to keep their support of UAA with the claim that I should do with their or their investors' money. If the director's not the boss, who else will direct? The Travelling Film Festival makes an item, is that legally, at present, it has any legal difficulties relating to other business names, registered in each state of Australia.

The Travelling Film Festival — a division of the Sydney Film Festival — I would like to point out that there is only one Travelling Film Festival operating in Australia. The name the Travelling Film Festival — is a business name, registered in each state of Australia. It has difficulties relating to other organizations in operation in the state of Victoria have been overcome, and The Travelling Film Festival is now able to present its Autumn Tour in Yarram on February 11.

Yours faithfully,
Victoria Brien, Director.

The Quarter
Continued from p. 500
Australian Films Score Festival Awards

Angels of War has won the Grand Prix at the 14th Nyon International Film Festival in Switzerland. Produced by Andrew Pike, Hank Nelson and Gavan Dawes, Angels of War is a documentary about the experience of villagers when World War 2 came suddenly to the islands of Papuan Guinea.

The Plains of Heaven, produced by John Cruthers and directed by Ian Pringle, has been awarded the Dux (carrying a prize of 2000 DM) at the 3rd Marrakech International Film Week in West Germany. The Plains of Heaven is the story of two men who maintain a satellite relay station on the Bogong High Plains.

Producer Bob Weil's television mini-series, The Winning of the Sun, has won the United Nations Media Peace Prize for Television at Macquarie University on October 25. The awards (for television, radio and press) are determined by the United Nations Association of Australia.

The four-part series, directed by David Stevens, Stephen Wallace, James Rickerson and Geoffrey Nottage, depicts episodes in Aboriginal women's history and was recently shown on Channel 0/28.

Australian Film Commission Projects Approved

Commission Meeting, June 28
The AFC approved profit-sharing investments of grants totaling $516,250, including funding for two television productions for Tsutita (writer Ted Roberts); and $600 for Anthony J. Brooks' Curve of the Earth. Other projects include David Efron's Underground, which received a total of $100,000 for production development; $15,000 allocated to Natalie Under Capricorn (Bloodwood Film); $300,000 was allocated to Jill Robb's The Umbrella Woman (by writer Peter Kenna); $160,000 for third-draft funding on Venture Films' Xanadu; $13,750 went to G & S Productions for James Rickerson's Ginger Whisky; and $13,750 went to G & S Productions for Horizon Films' Where East Meets West.

Additionally, Crawford Productions has received a standby finance facility of $300,000 for All the Rivers Run. Cowarie Holdings has been allocated a total of $12,250 for Australian films on the international market; and a Trainee Grant of $1500 went to the Film Producers' Guild to cover Sydney accommodation costs for their nominated trainee, Tony Stanley.

Commission Meeting, July 26
Investments and grants approved included projects from the Project Development and the Creative Development branches. A total of $150,000 was allocated to Script Development Investment through the Project Development Branch, and included $50,000 for third-draft script funding of Richard Bradley's Alien Hunter; $23,933 for Joan Long's Silver City; $11,000 for Cynthia Connolly's television series Dreamscape; and Storyteller Enterprises receiving $9100 for writer Michael Cove's Terminal Man.

Projects approved through the Creative Development Branch included Script Development Investments allocated to 13 projects, including Mitch Meehan's and John Scalzi's The Little Luxuries ($38,151); Helen Geyer's The Trombonist ($31,217); John Walker and Macau Light Company's Where East Meets West ($23,300); Alec Morgan's Lousy Little Science Fiction ($19,141); and 50 members and says it is aiming to see that all accredited film and television directors join.

Pat Lovell, producer of Monkey Grip and Australian Businesswoman of the Year.

Further information can be obtained from Gillian Armstrong (02) 92 1004 or Albie Thoms (02) 965 4786.

McElroy & McElroy

McElroy & McElroy has announced two senior executive appointments as part of continued company expansion. Robert Fisher has been made general manager. He was senior partner in the Sydney and Brisbane practices of Wallace, McMillan & Smail, chartered accountants.

Fisher is financial controller of McElroy Productions. They are currently the MGM-financed feature The Year of Living Dangerously and with Hanna Barbara (Australia), a $2.5 million television mini-series for the Ten Network, Return to Eden.

Barrister Michael Wilcox has been made business affairs manager. He was manager of the corporate finance division of Citicorp Australia. Wilcox's specialty will be contracts and financing.

AFFDA = ASDA

The Australian Feature Film Directors Association is now to be known as the Australian Screen Directors Association. Members voted to change the name and expand the interests of the Association to include all directors working in film and television.

Gillian Armstrong has been elected president of ASDA, replacing foundation member Henri Safian. Armstrong heads a new executive consisting of Phillip Noyce, Stephen Wallace, Albie Thoms, James Rickerson, Sophia Turkeiwicz and Annette Simoncelli.

The aim of ASDA is to seek better conditions for directors in the Australian film and television industry. It is also working towards a standard contract that will clearly define directors' rights and protect their role in the industry.

Ken G. Hall has been made an officer of the Order of Australia. He was recently guest-of-honor at a meeting of ASDA where he addressed members on the role of directors in the Australian film industry. Referring to recent disputes in small film, Hall said: "If the director’s not the boss, who else is going to make the picture?"

Pat Lovell, producer of Monkey Grip and Australian Businesswoman of the Year.
Pre-production

When did you start work on “We of the Never Never”?

I bought the option rights to the book about five years ago. I was one of the thousands of people who were first introduced to it at school. It always had a relevance to me about the way of life in Australia.

What relevance is that?

I saw it as telling the story about the development of the Australian rural heritage. There is no doubt that much of what Australia is, and what we are, is because of our rural background. It is not the events, not the total scope, but the emotion of it — between races, between males and females, and between human beings and the countryside. We of the Never Never seemed to sum it up very well.

At what stage did Adams-Packer become involved?

After I’d had a shooting script prepared and only a few months before shooting. But their involvement only went as far as the financing of it.

It was understood that it was my project, and my view of the book. They specifically excluded themselves from anything other than an advisory capacity.

I had discussions with Phillip Adams quite often. Phillip is obviously very creative and talented, and the guidance he gave was valuable. Greg Tepper, who is a producer of the film, was at the Victorian Film Corporation when I first started the project, and he has guided it through the years.

The film credits four producers: producer (Greg Tepper), co-producer (John B. Murray), executive producer (Phillip Adams) and associate producer (Brian Rosen). Why was there a need for four producers?

Phillip, as executive producer, was in charge of the business end. As associate producer, Brian dealt with the usual, senior, day-to-day production area. Greg became the...
actual name producer when John Murray [the original producer] parted company with us.

At what stage did Murray leave the production?

John joined the production a few weeks before we were due to shoot, and he left perhaps one or two weeks into the shoot.

What caused his resignation?

I haven't discussed it with him and I don't know that my vague opinions would be worth noting, really. I was too busy at that time directing the film. However, for a producer like John, it may have been difficult to work with the fact that it was my project and that I had been difficult to work with the fact that it was my project and that I was in creative control. But I really don't know and I don't think it would be proper of me to make suppositions. I wasn't involved with discussions that took place between the production company and John just before he left the production. Quite a number of people came and went during the shooting. My job at the time was directing, not being totally familiar with why people were coming and going.

You sound a little circumspect . . .

I am determined in this interview not to be rude to anyone, because the last time I did an interview for Cinema Papers vast sections of the industry wouldn't speak to me for months.

I always believe it is so difficult to avoid ambiguities in answering questions that you sort of folk ask.

We sort of folk?

Yes, you know, people who interview and publish.

Why did you decide to shoot in the Northern Territory, with the problems of distance and isolation?

If the film is judged as successful, it will be to some extent because we were in the area where the story actually took place, and because we did, as individuals, experience basically the same conditions that the real characters experienced. It certainly had a profound effect on the cast, just to be in the same place and to walk the same ground. Some of them were quicker to realize that than others.

It is not easy working like that, obviously, but I think it is very worthwhile. The shoot was only 12 weeks and you can live through 12 weeks under almost any hardships. Perhaps one of the film's strengths is that it does have that edge of insanity about it.

What was the original budget?

About $2.5 million but I think we probably went about $700,000 over that. Most of the excess was expended on transport, accommodation and the art department. The cost of accommodation, for some reason or other, escalated while we were there. Transport costs had been underestimated, as had the cost of obtaining materials and supplies. Those three areas really took the film grossly over budget.

One of the complaints that Dan, a character in the book, makes is that city people, who don't really understand the outback, like telling bush stories. Do you think that the 12 weeks out there put you in a better position to understand the book was about?

Yes, even though I had spent quite a lot of time there in the years of researching the story and writing the script.

Screen Adaptation

What are the advantages and limitations of adapting a screenplay from an autobiography?

Peter Schreck, the screenwriter, could answer this better than I. But the limitations are enormous, particularly when adapting a
It certainly shows the attitudes of the other women, and it shows that she is a rebel of some sort. Obviously, it provides a contrast between city and country, and gives a context for the rest of the story.

The book is written in the first person. Did you ever consider using Jeannie as a narrator?

No, though we did consider resetting it in the present day, because life in that part of the Territory has changed very little since 1902. However, we judged that it would probably be more successful and just as relevant if we retained it as a period story.

The relationship between Jeannie and Aeneas (Arthur Dignam) is never explicitly developed in the book, and in the film it is emotionally restrained. How do you create a feeling of intimacy between a couple who talk so little about themselves and their marriage?

I suppose the answer is that we understood them to be not particularly communicative about their own feelings and emotions as human beings. We learned that from her family in Melbourne.

But it wasn't really a story of their marriage as such. Their marriage was a catalyst for the other events of the story. It is an examination of males and females, but not only of married males and females. It deals with the whole maleness of rural Australia as opposed to the woman's influence.

I thought her reticence in writing about emotions and feelings was a product of the time, of the sort of things that were acceptable for women to say at that time...

It was partly that, and partly because her husband had died only a year and a half after they were married. I don't think she'd really formed an advanced consciousness about her position as a married woman.

How did the Gunn family react to the film?

Generally they liked it. Some of them weren't absolutely comfortable with the two or three scenes between husband and wife that aren't in the book, because they tended to be confrontation scenes, and because they made Jeannie more aggressive than they remembered her to be. But we felt those scenes were dramatically necessary.

Do you see any similarity between films like “We of the Never Never” and “The Man From Snowy River” and the American Western in terms of the exploration of history and the celebration of pioneers and folk heroes?

Yes. Those two Australian films and Westerns certainly seem to perform the same function, but not in the same way. Interestingly, a comment I heard quite often from distributors in North America was that perhaps We of the Never Never will fulfill the search American filmmakers have embarked on for a new form of American Western.

They identified with the aspects of romanticism and pioneering isolation, and with the drama of empty spaces. Films like Long Riders and Barbarosa are all part of that continuing search.

It appears that the Western forms nowadays are a reflection of...
It is a reality in those sorts of environments, even today, that unless you are competent you are a liability. The men expected Aeneas to do it, particularly given his background. He was a strange character: an adventurer, a geographer, a romantic, a seafarer, a librarian — everything but a cattle station manager.

What about Jeannie's comment that she's a wallflower? You get a much stronger sense from the film than the book of a woman who is 30, who feels left on the shelf...

The concept of herself as a wallflower is taken directly from one of her letters from the Northern Territory to Melbourne, where she writes of herself as Plain Jane, the wallflower.

Jeanie is told she can come no closer to the feverish stranger, and Aeneas takes the tray. (This scene, along with all the others dealing with the stranger's sickness, death and burial, was cut from the film just after the world premiere and two days before the national release.)

Clearly, Jeannie feels obliged to prove herself as an individual before the men on the station will accept her. Yet throughout the film you get the feeling that she is excluded and resentful...

There are several scenes in the film which are crucial to Jeannie's character development but which seem quite different in the character charted in the book. The chapter dealing with the arrival of the feverish stranger is for Jeannie a demonstration of the bonds of mateship. Yet in the film it is her affirmation of exclusion from the male world. Why did you change its meaning?

I don't think we suggest in the film that she doesn't understand them or that they don't understand her. Towards the end of the film the attempt at comfort that she receives from Dandy (John Jarratt) is an indication of the support that she describes in the book. I suppose that the slant we took in the script was more concerned with the relations between the whites and the blacks in the second half of the film.

One of Jeannie's major criticisms of the men is their inability to express their emotions to a woman. Do you think Dandy's tears at the end are an indication of her influence on them?

I don't think we suggest in the film that she doesn't understand them or that they don't understand her. Towards the end of the film the attempt at comfort that she receives from Dandy (John Jarratt) is an indication of the support that she describes in the book. I suppose that the slant we took in the script was more concerned with the relations between the whites and the blacks in the second half of the film.

Chapter dealing with the arrival of the feverish stranger is for Jeannie a demonstration of the bonds of mateship. Yet in the film it is her affirmation of exclusion from the male world. Why did you change its meaning?

We tried to describe something she didn't describe. We tried to look at the events and suppose a personal, emotional response to them from her. She doesn't describe her emotional response to those events in the book. She describes the men's response. I think we have retained that as described in the book. We just tried to work through her response to being rejected in that way.

Yet, the effect of that scene is to make her seem resentful, whereas in the book she is more accepting of the constraints of her life in the Never Never...

I would argue that the reactions we gave her are reasonable, human reactions and not that far from what she might have felt at the time. But perhaps, as filmmakers, we were searching for some slightly more dramatic events. On several occasions we were advised that We of the Never Never just wouldn't make a film because it was altogether too saccharine, too unimportant and irrelevant to anything that's Australian today. Frankly, I think it is an indication of how poorly people read.

Each of these questions is relative to scenes we have invented rather than taken from the book. The film needed a forward-moving structure, and we decided to use those devices. We had no other reason for straying from the book.

But the drama really changes her character. It makes her much more aggressive, more sanctimonious, and even a bit neurotic...

Certainly it is not an absolutely faithful reproduction of the lady as perceived in the book, though I would hope that it is not a ridiculous interpretation. We tried to ensure that our inventions were believable, variations of human behaviour, given the circumstances of the book.

A film can only possibly deal with a very small section of a year in the life of a cattle station. Sometimes we couldn't find the appropriate dramatic moment in the book and we modified some of the events or some of the responses for the structure of the film.

I had trouble with the scene where Jeannie states that she has no desire to teach the Aboriginals anything on which she might learn from them. She then proceeds to bribe Goggle-Eye (Donald Bliker) to wear trousers, and teach Bett-Bett (Sibina Willy) to eat with a fork...

Exactly. I am delighted you had trouble with that. We saw those moments and attitudes as something she would work through for herself. She was a city bred, Edwardian lady with no special knowledge or understanding of other cultures. She had a certain emotional response to a situation, and believed that all human beings are equal. She wanted to learn rather than to teach.

Yet, when it actually comes to a moment of how to do that, in the middle section of the film, she doesn't have the knowledge or the experience or the insight to offer anything other than traditional Edwardian gardening tasks for Aboriginals.

As a character she is by no
means infallible. Her intervention does cause problems. Later in the film she questions her own intervention, but we have to see it before it is worth questioning.

Is the corroboree at the end supposed to indicate a resolution of problems?

It is an indication of acceptance by some of the members of the group, a desire for contact. But even that piece of intervention is basically unsuccessful because the white men overstep the situation.

Why is it necessary for them to get up in the middle of the ceremony and start shooting?

As their form of expression of aggression towards the black people of the time. I think that is a fairly accurate representation of how it was and is. It is unresolved. All we hoped to be able to do with the film was to have the audience ask itself one or two questions. We have no answers, only questions.

Occasionally the book is quite patronizing towards Aboriginals.

Yet in the film Jeannie actively challenges the men's attitude that the Aboriginals are somehow subordinate. Did you choose that change to make people aware of the prevalence of racist attitudes?

It is not a change we made. That confrontation between Jeannie and the men is described in the book. She specifically suggests that the Aboriginals have better knowledge and better ability to use that country than whites. She says that the station owners should share the produce of the station with the Aboriginals. I think she was a non-racist person; she held very few preconceptions.

How difficult is it to depict attitudes that are racist and to differentiate those attitudes from the attitudes of the film?

I can't tell anymore. Do you believe that the film takes a racist or a non-racist stand?

I think it shows that the men believe Aboriginals are heathens and subordinates. Jeannie holds a different view at the beginning, intervenes, finds that her actions are only causing conflict, and then leaves it at that . . .

You don't believe that there is any advance towards a third form of treatment of the Aboriginal just prior to her husband's death?

I suppose one of the things that perhaps the film ultimately says is that it is unresolved. In her case, we would suppose it is unresolved because she left the station. The work and the understanding that she as an individual, she and her husband as a couple, and, through them, the men of the station, accomplished was terminated because their time at the station was over.

You should probably run for about three weeks solid and then we tried to indicate.

If you must trivialize events, what are you hoping to convey with the film?

Well, you hope the moments that you indicate are real and true. But they are not very deep examinations of the moments — they can't be. Not necessarily in this film, but in any film. You are looking at a broad time scale; you have to be very specific about the events you select. You can't explain or background the moment adequately, can you?

I assume that through a whole variety of different techniques, without having a literal time scale, it is possible to convey a sense of what has gone before and what will follow particular moments . . .

Perhaps our definitions aren't exactly matching. I consider that unless you do fully explain and fully follow up, you have trivialized the importance of something. For me, We of the Never Never should probably run for about three weeks solid and then we might have been able to address ourselves to some of the things that we tried to indicate.

A film obviously isn't a definitive statement of any sort. It is an impression. It is an idea. It is hopefully an emotional and moving idea, but it is not a thorough explanation or examination.

How did the Aboriginal actors in the film feel about the way they were being depicted? Did they contribute in any way to the creation of the characters?

They contributed to the creation of their characters, yes. They didn't contribute to the script's treatment and the script's concept of black and white to any great extent.

Were they satisfied with the way they were depicted?

Yes, the responses I have had were that they were delighted with the film. They believed we were going to advance understanding of them as human beings.

What about the Bett-Bett character? She is a peripheral character in the book, but a central one in the film . . .

Concluded on p. 587
Paul Schrader is one of the seminal figures of the contemporary American cinema. His success is attributable to the creative use of his critical faculty and a commercial deployment of his Calvinism. The result is a body of work that is a bracing commentary on classic and modern Hollywood, and whose bleak vision would make film noir look like musical comedy.

Schrader’s new film, Cat People (1982), is the first he has directed from someone else’s script, but, in every other way, it looks like a characteristic Schrader work. The heroine, Irena Gallier (Nastassia Kinski), is both a predator and a victim of her own nature, and, as such, she recalls Schrader’s characterization of the heroes of Martin Scorsese’s Taxi Driver (1976) and Raging Bull (1980).

As with Taxi Driver and with Hardcore (1979), the violence is closely linked to sexual repression. In Cat People, when a young keeper is attacked by a black leopard, there is a shot of his blood splashing at the heroine’s feet, visually implying a link between feline ferocity and loss of virginity. The connection between sexuality and violence is spelled out by Irena’s brother, Paul (Malcolm McDowell): “Every time you tell yourself it’s love. But it isn’t. It’s blood. It’s death.”

The curator of the zoo, Oliver Yates (John Heard), is as repressed as the heroine, and sexual contact is postponed not only because of Irena’s fear of her savage nature but also because of Oliver’s apprehension about despoiling a vision of perfection. The character is introduced as he is reading Dante, which anticipates the film’s ultimate descent into the underworld and the revelation of his character: the curator as a romantic idealist in search of his Beatrice.

This connects Oliver very strongly with Michael Courtland (Cliff Robertson), the hero Schrader created for Brian De Palma’s Obsession (1976), who is also a romantic obsessive, a man who kills the thing he loves and then builds a shrine for her. In Obsession, the Dante-Beatrice legend is alluded to quite explicitly.

Cat People and Obsession can also be compared because of their imaginative use of a New Orleans setting for metaphysical melodrama, and their concern with the taboo of incest which in both films traumatically seems to be the only form of sexual release that will preserve the characters’ identity.

Like most of Schrader’s films, Cat People is extremely violent. The zoo is used to suggest that people are in their own private cages. In this film, as at the end of American Gigolo (1980), the two lovers are separated by bars, seeming to achieve an emotional affinity only when separated forcibly. The zoo imagery is used also as a correlative to human savagery and, as Schrader puts it, “the fear in our society now that there’s a monster lurking under the calm surfaces of every person.”

Similar imagery also pervades Schrader’s screenplays for Taxi Driver and the evocatively-entitled Raging Bull, when Jake La Motta (Robert De Niro) screams, “I’m not an animal!”

1. By Alan Ormsby, and based on the script for Cat People (1942) by DeWitt Bodeen.
2. Schrader is credited as co-scripter on Raging Bull with Mardik Martin.
I'm not an animal!”, as he batters his head against a brick wall.

The intense inner life of Schrader's characters is often signalled by external aggression. Similarly, just as a Schrader character tears himself to pieces psychologically, he is also in danger of being torn apart physically, limb from limb. One only has to think of the missing digits that scatter the Schrader scripts for The Yakuza (1975) and Taxi Driver; the hero's right hand in Rolling Thunder (1977) that is thrust into the mechanical garbage disposal unit; the keeper's severed arm in Cat People; the most sickening broken nose in film history in Raging Bull; and, in that film, the whole way in which Jake's masochism (masquerading as machismo) is signified by his ability to absorb extreme physical punishment.

Such bestiality goes hand in hand with Schrader's excremental vision. One of the dubious achievements of Cat People is to give a whole new dimension to the word “pus”, as the black leopard leaves disgusting evidence of its imminent presence. A hand becomes part of the garbage in Rolling Thunder. The demented desire of Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro) in Taxi Driver to clean up New York by practical action, rather than by political persuasion, erupts disturbingly when he startles the politician by declaring that, “The President should clean up the whole mess here; should flush it down the fuckin' toilet.” The desire to clean and purify becomes indistinguishable from a desire to expunge and annihilate.

One should be wary of identifying Schrader too clearly with his characters, but there sometimes is an uneasy sense of his putting a sentiment he is afraid to acknowledge within himself into the mouth of an unbalanced protagonist. This might account for the uncomfortable tone that lingers over some of the films. Is Travis in Taxi Driver a madman or a hero? Cat People recalls Hardcore in the way it seems to hesitate between tragedy and titillation, between sexual censoriousness and coy nudity. Schrader seems half-appalled, half-fascinated by the urban hells he evokes, and the films reel between contrary impulses of pleasure and punishment, Protestantism and permissiveness, purification and perversion. I am a little reminded of D. H. Lawrence's early response to Dostoevsky:

“He is again like the rat, slithering along in hate, in the shadows, and in order to belong to the light, professing love, all love. But his nose is sharp with hate, his running is shadowy and rat-like, he is a will fixed and gripped like a trap. He is not nice.”

It summons again Schrader's ambivalence towards his taxi-driver hero and his description of him as a man "who moves through the city like a rat through a sewer".

Schrader might be called a junk-food Dostoevsky. Like Dostoevsky, he is violent, melodramatic, religious and profoundly conservative. Like the Russian master also, he uses the tawdry formulae of crime fiction to erect massive psychological dramas about self-tormented people who struggle furiously between heaven and hell, and who find redemption through suffering and sacrifice.

The ultimate dramatic goal is rarely a narrative resolution but invariably a form of spiritual transcendence or enigma. One has only to think of the ironic and inscrutable final minutes of Taxi Driver or the spiritual implosion yet narrative diminuendo that forms the denouement of American Gigolo. “One thing I know that, whereas I was blind, now I see”, is the epilogue for Raging Bull, following the ambiguous closing scene where Jake talks to himself in the mirror, either facing himself at
last or disappearing under the flab of narcissism. Oliver visits the cage at the end of Cat People as if it were a shrine, and, as the cat stares back, the David Bowie song intones the lyric: “I could stare for a thousand years, and don’t you feel my blood enraged.”

All four films conclude with a movement into the mysterious black hole of the hero’s head. “Your last scene should play out there on the sidewalk”, Schrader has said. “The ripples should extend beyond the immediate film.”

Schrader’s style accompanying these visions is laceratingly lurid. It could be termed ‘neon realism’, in which an objectively familiar world is refracted nightmarishly through a disturbed central consciousness. The setting is invariably a modern America of garish impersonality, and the style takes its shadings from the tension and counterpoint Schrader finds between an active psychological life and an outer world of plastic surfaces.

Cat People is something of a departure from this and Schrader’s boldest stylistic experiment. Reality is only perfunctorily indicated and, through color, sound and performance, Schrader reaches for a visualization of a mythical world, not only to summon up the creatures that roam the subconscious but to evoke the essence of films as a dimension of magic. Some films make you think; Schrader’s make you dream. The goal of Cat People is to provide a pleasurable nightmare in a stylish exploitation context.

The dark side of life on which Schrader’s work seems exclusively to concentrate is at least alleviated by flashes of lugubrious humor. Cat People has fun in drawing feline analogies to human feelings: the preenings of Paul, the way Irena pounces on a bowl of fish in a cafe, or the way Paul’s housekeeper, Female (Ruby Dee), gives a clue to her own origin by her delighted response to Topcat on television.

The script for Joan Tewkesbury’s Old Boyfriends (1978), written by Schrader and his brother Leonard, has some nice comic flourishes, notably in the sexual humiliation of the egocentric vocalist, Eric Katz (John Belushi), and in John Houseman’s wonderful cameo as Dr Hoffman, a stuffy, small-town psychiatrist with a disdain for West Coast culture (he even pronounces Los Angeles as “Los Angeles”)

When a worker in Blue Collar (1978) launches a one-man attack with a forklift on a recalcitrant vending machine, the excessive reaction amusingly yet tellingly reflects the intensity of his exasperation with impasse mechanical inefficiency.

Amidst the perversion and pornography of Hardcore, there is a funny moment when a visiting producer is impressed by the direction of his new porno opus and receives the instant explanation for such sleazy expertise: “He’s from UCLA.”

Schrader also wrote an important article on film noir, which not only assisted towards a reevaluation of the classic noir films of the 1940s and 1950s but may have helped to create a climate in which the form could be revised and recognized in films such as Klute, Chinatown and Night Moves. Schrader was to contribute to this revival himself with his screenplay for Taxi Driver, in which the hero has classic noir symptoms: a loner, sexually-frustrated and obsessed, and oppressed by night and the city. Schrader could have become a great critic, but his ambition was to turn his demons into dollars and his way to do that was to write a script. Nevertheless, it is possible to see Schrader’s film career as being as much an act of criticism as of creativity. One of the central facets of Schrader’s creative work is the way it feeds off previous films and offers a modern perspective on earlier film classics, a form of adaptation that is also a form of criticism. This process variously takes the form of homage, parallelism with variations, expansion and contrast.

For example, Schrader’s screenplay for Brian De Palma’s Vertigo (1958), of which Obsession is a virtual remake, both in terms of plot (man loses the woman he loves only to come across her double), and in terms of style and visual detail (360 degree panning shots, dreams, paintings, letters, the church). There is a moment when the young artist, Sandra Portinari (Genevieve Bujold), the mirror-image of the woman Michael Courtland has lost, asks whether it is preferable to restore a great artistic original or cut through the surface to see what is underneath. Michael prefers the former.

The question has relevance to the main relationships, suggesting Michael’s self-deception and his desire to restore the original woman. But it also has relevance to the relation of this film to Vertigo. Now that the chances of seeing the Hitchcock film seem to be very scarce5, Obsession becomes itself the restoration of a lost masterpiece. Bernard Herrmann’s towering, anachronistic score supplies a delicious and nostalgic slice of authenticity.

Interestingly, Schrader fell out with De Palma because he wanted to continue the story into the 1980s, with Michael still searching for his lost love. This might have been truer to the spirit of the tragic outcome of Vertigo, with its ghosts and wanderers and its sense of trauma. As it stands, the film could be almost equally an allusion to Shakespeare’s The Winter’s Tale. A hero’s weakness costs him, he thinks, the life of


6. The film is subject to a contracted legal dispute over copyright, which has stopped the film being shown in most countries for several years — Editor.
his wife and daughter, but, after a remorseful 16 years, he is given a second chance to redeem himself through his reunion with a daughter who is also a surrogate wife figure. Destruction gives way to renewal: damnation to redemption.

Schrader’s third act for the drama could have been a compelling addition, but the film still is a remarkable celebration of Hitchcockian aesthetics, as important to the reclamation of Vertigo as one of the screen’s masterpieces as is the criticism of Robin Wood1 and Donald Spoto.

Obsession is a critical work of interpretative insight and not blind hagiography, and the form the film takes implicitly throws the emphasis away from Hitchcock as master of suspense and towards Hitchcock the anguished romantic and perverse psychologist.

A nother key film from the same period, to which Schrader’s work has alluded constantly, is John Ford’s The Searchers (1956). Four of his screenplays seem to derive inspiration from this source: The Yakuza, Taxi Driver, Rolling Thunder and Hardcore. The Yakuza takes from The Searchers the idea of a hero’s quest in an alien world for a kidnapped girl, a quest which is also a form of self-interrogation. However, Taxi Driver and Hardcore have heroes who see themselves as self-appointed Saviours journeying into the underworld to save a girl from what they perceive as the lower depths: a rescue mission that is also a journey into Hell.

Although The Yakuza borrows only the equivalent narrative situation of The Searchers, the other films make an attempt to approximate the complex psychology of the Ford film. Taxi Driver and Rolling Thunder, like The Searchers, have psychotic heroes whose antagonists are nightmare images of their own undisclosed wishes and innate violence. Their revenge becomes a kind of terrible purgation.

It is the madness in The Searchers that excites Schrader; the other element in that film which he has seized and enlarged is its veiled racism. Rolling Thunder attempts to confront this issue by having Charles Rane (William Devane), an ex-Vietnam POW, as the hero who sees the gang that invaded his home and murdered his wife as the equivalent of the Vietnamese whom he was prevented from fighting by his capture. His revenge thus becomes an elaborate compensation and a re-enactment of a personal racist fantasy, rather in the manner of Ethan Edwards’ (John Wayne) vendetta against the Indians in The Searchers who have ravaged the woman he secretly loved. However, with John Flynn’s direction softening Charles into a nice guy (“which would be the equivalent of giving the character in Taxi Driver a dog”, Schrader has said), Rolling Thunder now looks less like a film about a racist than a racist film.

Taxi Driver is more uncompromising. It includes the tender scene between Sport (Harvey Keitel) and the underage prostitute, Iris (Jodie Foster), which is the equivalent of a scene often imagined in The Searchers but never shown: the life together of Scar (Henry Brandon) and Debbie (Natalie Wood). Was it really unimaginable savagery or was there tenderness and even love there? Ford seems no more willing than his hero to confront these possibilities. Scorsese and Schrader crosscut their ‘Scar’ scene with that of Travis’ preparation for his own private war that will lead inexorably to his invasion of Sport and Iris’ camp. The nervy confrontations between Travis and Sport in Taxi Driver are not dissimilar to those of Ethan and Scar in The Searchers. As well as exposing some of the racist issues that the earlier film elided, Taxi Driver is also a modern reflection on the efficacy of heroism, maleness, prejudice and legitimised violence embodied in the Western of which Ford’s films are the supreme achievement. For the first time Ford, in The Searchers, is profoundly ambivalent about these attitudes and values. The bloody denouement of Taxi Driver mercilessly dramatises their savage legacy, and their fearful logic.

The other 1950s Hollywood classic which Schrader has revalued in his fictions is On the Waterfront. Schrader’s debut as writer and director, Blue Collar (1978)9, is full of references to Elia Kazan’s film, culminating in a verbal confrontation between Jerry Bartowski (Harvey Keitel) and Zeke Brown (Richard Pryor) that is almost word for word a repeat of the slanging match between Terry Malloy (Marlon Brando) and Johnny Friendly (Lee J. Cobb) that presaged their fight. But, significantly, Blue Collar is politically more knowing than On the Waterfront, more detailed in its observation of men at work, sharper in its observation of shop-floor politics, more cruel in its imagery (the rebel worker who is suffocated in a haze of blue paint spray) and more cynical in its exposure of the limits of individualism.

Kazan’s upbeat ending has now been pessi­mistically inflected by Schrader. Kazan’s apology for the informer in McCarthyist America has been pressed by Schrader to what it sees as a specifically Marxist conclusion. The final freeze of the men at the point of confrontation and we hear again the film’s message: “They pit the lifers against the new boys, the old against the young, the black against the white, to keep us in our place.”

Raging Bull alludes overtly to On the Waterfront in the final scene when Jake La Motta recites Terry Malloy’s famous speech: “You don’t understand — I could have had class. I could have been a contender.” Both films have heroes who are punch-drunk ex-boxers moving toward some form of redemption and who have a relationship with a blonde heroine classier than themselves but representing a desired vision of genteel womanhood, a sense of softness in a hard world. Both heroes have a love-hate relationship with their brothers who are also their managers and who ought to have looked after them better.

But the differences between the two heroes are more striking than their similarities. The illusions of Scorsese and Schrader to On the...
Paul Schrader

Waterfront and their examination of an actual 1950s hero in La Motta illustrate, by contrast, the essential romanticism of the 1950s screen hero and how such portraiture has changed during the past 25 years or so. Brando’s hero represents the confusions of a typical rebel of the ‘50s; De Niro’s that of the alienated anti-hero of the ‘70s. Brando is a rebel without a cause; De Niro a rebel without a brain. Brando’s solution to what he sees as corruption in On the Waterfront (testifying in court, fighting the villain) seems pristinely conventional when compared with De Niro’s manic and bloody remedies in Taxi Driver and Raging Bull.

These new heroes are not anguished idealists or angry young men. They are heroes who challenge any attempt at identification or moral approval. (As a British critic observed, Raging Bull could be subtitled: “Somebody Up There Hates Me.”) They reflect a contemporary confusion and scepticism about heroism and modern heroes and their morality is personal, private and idiosyncratic.

If a film such as Raging Bull can be read as Schrader’s critical commentary on the changing face of screen heroism since the 1950s, his remake of Cat People equally reflects savagely the different conventions of representing violence, sexuality and perverse mythology.

Jacques Tourneur’s 1942 version is all atmosphere, traces and implications; Schrader’s is explicit and erotic. Although the film pays tribute to two of the classic set-pieces of the original (the pursuit in the park; the swimming pool scene), Schrader is in some ways closer to Hitchcock than to Jacques Tourneur. The film particularly recalls Marnie in its self-conscious use of color (the association between blood-red and loss of innocence), its frank sexual imagery, and its allusions to animal behaviour to convey the heroine’s frightened sexuality and the hero’s odd and detached perceptions of the human zoo.

Given Schrader’s cine-literacy, such analogies are probably not accidental. But Schrader’s cine-literacy is of an altogether different kind from that of, say, Peter Bogdanovich’s. He does not simply compose a series of obsessive fan letters to his favorite films. The references are incorporated into an auto-critique of the cinema. They are not nostalgic, but intellectual. Their function is not simply referential but comparative and revaluing. Obsession resurrects Vertigo as a film of profound romantic psychology. Taxi Driver pays tribute to The Searchers but also extends it and recasts it for a new age, its racism and ambivalent ideology now brought closer to the surface. Blue Collar and Raging Bull criticize and revise the political and rhapsodic elements of On the Waterfront. Cat People, by alluding to the original and to Marnie, becomes a critical essay on the changing fashions of cinema in reflecting horror, demonology and sexual tension.

If Schrader’s films comment on film history, they also create it and become part of it. Indeed, any critical history of Hollywood in the past decade would have to give substantial attention to Schrader. He has collaborated with esteemed figures of the decade, such as Sydney Pollack and, in particular, Scorsese. His career has also intersected with less flamboyant but nevertheless significant figures of the decade, such as Sydney Pollack (who romanticized Schrader’s raw screenplay for The Yakura) and Tewkesbury (who gave a liberal feminist slant to the reactionary melodramatics of Schrader’s script). He did a first draft of Close Encounters of the Third Kind which Steven Spielberg later rejected. Indeed, it is tempting to think of Schrader and Scorsese’s floating yellow taxi-cab (in the first shot of Taxi Driver) and Spielberg’s floating yellow spacecraft (in Close Encounters) as the two most resonant emblems of the decade. They represent the extremes of menace and magic that were Hollywood’s chief box-office assets during the turbulent 1970s.

For all that, Schrader seems to stand apart from what seems most memorable or characteristic of the so-called Hollywood renaissance — from Scorsese’s febrile Catholicism to Milius’ epic extroversion, from the horror rhapsodies of De Palma to the Utopian fantasies of Spielberg. Schrader looks like a slightly cold, calculating enigma. How would one assess his achievement to date? Is there still a sense of a vacuum between the quality of his intelligence and the coherence of his achievement? If so, why?

A clue might be found in his creative method. When teaching screenwriting in an American university, his advice to his students, apparently, is: “Cultivate your neuroses: you never know when they might come in handy.” For the past decade or so, he has done that very successfully. But the danger is one of morbid introspection, of a neurosis indulged in more than critically examined.

With directorial sensibilities of the calibre of Scorsese and Tewkesbury, the neurotics at the wheel in Taxi Driver and Old Boyfriends can be scrutinized with some objectivity. Thanks mainly to Scorsese, Taxi Driver becomes something of a social document and not simply
the diary of a madman. Blue Collar also avoids neurotic narrowness by broadening its social context and splitting its focus of interest among three main characters. But the identification with the hero of Hardcore hurts the film: it is impossible to decide whether we are meant to deplore or endorse Jake VanDorn’s (George C. Scott) increasingly-violent behaviour.

The closer we are drawn into Schrader’s frame of mind, the more his distaste for certain aspects of modern progressiveness borders on the repressive and the prurient. This is something which also disfigures American Gigolo in its hostile attitude to gays and Negroes, not to mention gay Negroes.

Schrader’s screenwriting method, which he encourages in his pupils, is to think of one dominant emotion that is ruling his life at that moment and then find a dramatic metaphor that corresponds to that emotion. The example he often uses is Taxi Driver, the inspiration for which derived from Schrader’s personal feelings of loneliness and isolation and which were converted into the metaphor of a taxi driver cut off from human contact by the glass. It explains why Schrader’s characters seem to belong in a peculiar twilight zone between psychological realism and poetic metaphor. The roles they assume define for Schrader their professional function in society (taxi driver, gigolo) and a symbolic function in his particular vision of the world (taxi driver as a symbol of urban alienation, gigolo as icon of sleek, hustling, loveless Los Angeles).

Perhaps his greatest gift is precisely this imaginative capacity to summon forth images of infinite suggestiveness even before being fleshed out in narrative form.

Nevertheless, this method clearly has limitations for Schrader, irrespective of whether it would work for anyone else. It is a gift more appropriate to an imagist poet than a narrative dramatist. Schrader is much better at exposition than development, and the excellence of the basic idea sometimes diminishes in the machinery of narrative formula (like, for example, the glib attribution of the hero’s violence in Rolling Thunder to brutalization in Vietnam).

Hardcore has a brilliant premise. George C. Scott’s star persona as a crusader against the pollution of environment and traditional values (as in Rage, Day of the Dolphin, The Formula and, more recently, Taps) is powerfully evoked. The moral issues — the thin line between freedom and exploitation, the bourgeois having to defend his way of life to the prostitute, not the other way round — are potentially explosive, but Schrader has no real idea how to translate these into a dramatically-convincing context. VanDorn’s home life might explain why the daughter disappeared: it does not explain why she went into porno films. The mid-section, where VanDorn poses as a trendy film producer in sweat shirt and wig, is fearfully unconvincing on any level. Attempting to be an intelligent examination of the new morality, the film looks like a pornographic version of Mr Deeds Goes to Town.

Blue Collar has similar crudities of structure, its political strengths somewhat diluted by domestic sentimentality and the contrived diversion of a caper film plot. American Gigolo never quite pulls off its Bressonian coda, largely because this throws the whole weight onto the film’s weakest area: the hero’s relationship with the politician’s wife.

Old Boyfriends has a promising concept — the revaluation of one’s present through a direct encounter with one’s past — but no clear strategy and no real psychology. Why should the heroine believe that the process of rediscovery will result from a reunion with former boyfriends rather than, say, ex-girlfriends? (The obvious answer would be that it exemplifies and confirms Schrader’s conservative patriarchy.) What kind of heroine is it who, professing to be a clinical psychologist, dresses a retarded young man in his dead brother’s clothes before seducing him, and then is positively shattered to learn that it appears to have done him some harm? It is hard to decide whether the film is about adaptation or regression, or whether an adult film about a yearning for childhood innocence has coarsened into an immature film about developing adulthood.

The turning point in Schrader’s career might have been when he turned down an offer from Kael to become a regular film critic and instead wrote a screenplay. Schrader has always been materially ambitious and it might be that success came too quickly and too easily to him. The impression he has given since is that of an artistic sensibility slipping too willingly into a commercial straitjacket. He has mastered the complex currency of modern Hollywood, but it might be at the expense of his own sense of human complexity.

When thinking of Schrader, I always think of a line in Obsession when the daughter, distraught at defrauding her father with whom she has become emotionally involved, wonders how he will cope with her desertion, how he will live. “It’s a little late for existential questions,” she is told bluntly. “Just take the money. Believe me, it’ll help you to forget.” That is the question mark over Schrader’s career. Is it too late for him to return to the existential questions? Is the money helping him to forget?

Filmography

Screenwriter
1975 The Yakuza co-scripted with Robert Towne.
1976 Taxi Driver.
1976 Obsession.
1978 Old Boyfriends co-scripted with Leonard Schrader.
1980 Raging Bull co-scripted with Mardik Martin.

Director
1978 Blue Collar also co-scripted with Leonard Schrader.
1979 Hardcore (The Hardcore Life in Britain) also screenplay.
1980 American Gigolo also screenplay.
1982 Cat People.
Geoffrey Gardner talks to `vagrant
Peter Tammer has been making films for two decades. Throughout that time he has made films largely using his own resources and equipment. In many senses he is the most genuinely “independent” filmmaker in Australia. This is not necessarily by choice (as the ironic final credit of *Mallacoota Stampede* indicates), but the failure to find government funding has not, as it has with others, deterred or prevented him from pursuing his craft.

Independent film has various connotations. It stands for many adjectives used to describe certain aspects of filmmaking practice. “Oppositional”, “radical” and “alternative” are words fashionable in this context. “Experimental” and “avant-garde” are now less popular. There is a wealth of meanings and nuances.

The situation of independent filmmaking in Australia is similar to that in other western, social democracies. At the core of this activity is government funding via state-established funding bodies and/or state television. Financial support may entirely or partially cover the budget, usually on the basis that the filmmakers and any other personnel involved are prepared to work for near subsistence wages, and on the expectation of nil or marginal financial returns.

There is a certain irony, then, that what is described as independent filmmaking is in fact heavily dependent on government funding to produce, often, films opposed to the views of the political masters of those agents of the governments which make funding available.

The situation has been succinctly summarized by Sylvia Harvey in her pamphlet *Independent Cinema?* (West Midlands Arts, 1978):

“Given the present system of social relations and of relations in the cinema only the very wealthy are ‘independent’. Without the private means not only to finance a film project but beyond that to buy up a few cinemas in which to show the film, or at the very least a few projectors with which to show it, no filmmaker is ‘independent’. Rather, what we need to understand and analyse are the complex series of dependencies which characterise the position of the non-commercial filmmaker. What must be emphasised is the fact of dependence on whatever system of finance presents itself. ‘Independents’ are part of an economic system which contains and to some extent controls their production. The important question then becomes, from within that dependency, what are the possible areas of action, the possible areas of freedom within the larger constraints?”

In the case of Tammer, the fact that he has operated with a measure of self-inflicted financial independence in making films on laughably small budgets has meant that he has been entirely free to pursue his own notions of film form. It is safe to say that as a result of this freedom his films are unique, operating by Tammer’s own methods and laws.

I would not count him as a ‘natural’ filmmaker. His methods do not have any smooth grace. Poverty of means produces work that is rude and abrupt in the confrontation between subject and audience. At their best and most effective, they rely on a sense of shock that derives from an interest in the subject and from the way that Tammer attacks that subject. It is always a frontal attack.

Tammer’s most recently-completed film, *Journey to the End of Night*, is so far his only work to have a broad public impact mostly through extravagant press reaction to the revelations of its subject. Overseas film festivals are now showing interest. A breakthrough into commercial exhibition would seem to be mandatory.
In the films you made through the 1960s and early 1970s there is a quite eclectic range of topics. The one common thing is that you have chosen people who are in some way eccentric . . .

Eccentric is a bad word because it is prejudicial; it has a feeling of somebody being a nut. I don't think of someone like Danny Cramer or Reg Robinson that way. They are remarkable people.

The only time I have made a film about a real oddball was Danny Cramer in Struttin' The Mutton. But I don't think of Danny as an eccentric so much as a guy who had a freaky unpredictability, to which I was attracted. I was actually scared when I was doing the filming and I didn't know what was going to be the outcome. It took me six months to realize that instead of Danny being in only one scene in the film, he was the whole film. Jack C. documentary, which was to be the centre, became an onlooker to the event. I identify with the same sort of cringing that Mark was showing in the film.

What attracts you to your subjects?

I don't have a rule. I don't look for specific qualities. When I meet a person who has some remarkable attribute, as with Myra Roper or Reg Robinson or Bill Neave, I am attracted to making films which reflect their personalities and report their lives. But I have always tried to do more than that. For example, I was very conscious when making Here's to You Mr Robinson with Gary Patterson that we were also making a portrait of ourselves as vagrant filmmakers. That is very clear in the film for those who bother to read it. We didn't go out of our way to state it, but it was in the footage, so we left it in.

What does the term "vagrant filmmakers" mean?

I don't see myself as part of the commercial film establishment in a conventional sense. I am an independent filmmaker who will continue to make whatever films appeal to me, regardless of the financial conditions at the time. Now, this doesn't mean that I don't have aspirations to make feature films, but it is in the footage, so we left it in.

I prefer to work with standards completely different from those espoused by the industry. I do not want to work with large crews, large budgets or casts of thousands. I want to work on an intimate scale.

You have called this form of work "portrait films", making a distinction with what others call documentary or 'biogs'. How do you see that distinction?

I see my films as one of the aspects of documentary. They can be as biopic or biogs, but the normal understanding presupposes films about people of public note. You might get a film made by the BNR about Dame Edith Sitwell or a documentary about the life and work of Orson Welles, including an interview with him. That is the traditional documentary portrait.

Now, mine are equally portraits. They have elements of documentation but they are different in style. It is not a slice of the house style of television documentary portraits, which always, to my knowledge, include a narrator. There are very few films in the bio-pic line of documentary which look at with great relish; one is Grey Gardens. What I like about that film, and what people have responded to in my earlier films, is that the characters speak for themselves. The filmmaker modulates what the characters allow themselves to reveal.

With Grey Gardens, the Maysles brothers established a trust with two hermits, who reveal themselves to the world at large. I found that an absolutely staggering, breathtaking documentary. But, of course, it is so different from traditional documentary because of the absence of a voice of God dictating the sort of things that the audience should pick up. The audience is left total freedom to pick up on what it wants.

That is true of Here's to You Mr Robinson, much more than it is true of Journey to the End of Night, although Journey still has some of that quality. I have interspersed in that film things such as quotations.

The Maysles' films come out of the cinema verite school, and there has been a lot of discussion about whether the camera is influencing the people to perform before it. In your films, one suspects there is a great deal more performance. In "Struttin' the Mutton", for instance, there is an element of outrageous performance on which is being encouraged simply by the presence of the camera . . .

There is a great difference between the amount of performance encouraged by me as a filmmaker with Mark and Danny in Struttin' the Mutton and the amount of performance encouraged by me in Journey. The Myra Roper and Reg Robinson films would fall in between those two extremes.

I take as a basic departure that people will not be absolutely natural in front of a camera. They will not only reveal qualities about themselves they want revealed, but qualities they don't. That's inevitable.

Now, how much one pushes a person in that circumstance has to do with the aims and purpose of a film. Myra, for example, was cooperative but in no way as nearly as co-operative as Reg, who was in no way as co-operative as Bill. Bill was the one with the greatest sense of having a story to tell. He was the one who most wanted his story to be heard. He believed it was of great significance.

Quite often I would say to Bill things like, "Okay, let's set up a budget for Journey so you can talk about going down to the Tol plantation, and seeing some bodies of your mates that you might know from parade a couple of weeks ago and just down the trail two days ago. I want you to live through that moment again." He would then do so, and I would have to do three takes on that because the first two didn't have that quality of really living, but the third one did. I am not saying that there weren't many takes in the film — 40 or 50 per cent are first takes — but 50 per cent are third, fourth or fifth takes.

The best example of that was the last take in the film, where Bill talks to his mother and God and his mate Shep, who died after watching Bill kill the Japanese the day before. In that scene, I spent one whole afternoon filming what is a 10-minute take on film.

The first three takes were totally useless and it was cracking Bill up. I was scared of how far I was pushing him because I was pretty broken up watching him go through it. But even though it had the quality of disturbing him, it was not come over as genuine as it was in the final take, which is in the film. That is devastating in its power because he loses himself in a trance, which he hadn't done in the first three takes.

Now, I didn't take that approach with the Danny Boy take, which is equally powerful. That was a once.

You started making films literally out of your own pocket. How much of this was an instinctive way of working?

It has always been instinctive at the level that I want to make films and, if funds are not available through other channels, then they become available through my own resources. Therefore, I have had to make films on pocket-money budgets.

Mallacoota Stampede is the most expensive film I have made. Its total cash budget was $20,000 for 60 minutes. I put up $18,000, and got a $2000 Creative Development Fund editing grant. The true budget for Journey to the End of Night was about $17,000 for 74 minutes.

1. A Woman of Our Time, Here's to You Mr Robinson and Journey to the End of Night respectively.
All my other films have been cheaper, down to home movies like Our Luke and Flux, which cost me in the vicinity of $100 and $500 respectively.

Mallacoota Stampede

Did “Mallacoota Stampede” start life as a documentary?

No, Mallacoota was always meant to be a mixture of styles. The first level is actuality observation, with people doing casual things, such as parking their cars in caravan parks and bumping into people in the process of doing it, or a two-year-old kid pushing his father off a sandbank in a canoe. Sometimes they are aware of the camera; sometimes not.

The second level was meant to be a narrative structure in which two stories go on simultaneously, based around Donny, the country boy. In fact, two complete stories were written and a full cast was prepared. But because of budget problems, we didn’t get as many scenes shot as we intended. I could have completed it in a more expanded manner, even feature length, had I money to go back and do some extra shooting. But I couldn’t raise it before everyone disbanded.

Then there was a third level, where things were set up with the air of possibility. Take the motel scene, with Wanda and Michelle, the drag queens, and Donny and Larry. We discussed all the possibilities that scene could take. Then I just set up the camera and lights, with Kit Guyatt doing the sound, and said, “Okay, now we’re going to go into it.” We shot 400 feet of film which is 11 minutes, and there’s the scene!

The intensity comes from its penetration of Larry’s embarrassment. Larry allows his embarrassment to show through in his graceful, country-boy style. His natural personality takes over and he doesn’t mind showing that he is embarrassed. It is beautiful! Of course, it also owes a lot to Michelle’s natural coquetry.

“Mallacoota Stampede” gives the impression of improvised drama. How much of it did you plan?

The casting of the people who come from the city was done in two or three weeks before shooting. We even had some rehearsals in town. The country boys were only introduced to me on the day of my arrival at Mallacoota, by John Archer, the production manager. None of them had acted before, not even in school theatre.

I took a punt down there and tried them out with bits and pieces to find out who had a personality suited to a certain character. It was either all or nothing at that stage.

So, yes, it was a conscious decision that we were going to mix people who had acting ability with some who had none. Michael Bladen had acted in student films at Swinburne, Kirsty Grant had a dramatic course behind her, and Debbie Conway had parts in many commercials but no other screen acting at that stage.

Of course, Wanda and Michelle, the two drag queens, had done many shows but they are not performers in the style of film actors. Wanda, for example, was good doing repartee with an audience, but had never acted in a film. She didn’t know how to do things actors would know how to do.

It is difficult to be able to measure and deliver a performance, hit cues along the way and the things like that. As none of the people were really experienced as film actors, I had to modify the direction and performances to a more standard. I went for long takes and tried to find the action as it was happening, hoping that there were not too many continuity errors. I wanted the actors to get into a wind-up situation.

Unless it was budget, why did you choose to film like that?

Partly because I like to make films that have people questioning whether it is performance or whether it is a documentary of observation. In fact, one of the things I am very happy about in Journey to the End of Night is that a few people have asked me, “Does Bill really go around talking to himself like that all the time?” I would have thought that the fact it was artificial would have jumped out at them.

How do you expect people to react to this sort of sluggish, dramatic quality of the acting, acting that would be perceived by many as inexperienced?

The most difficult moment required of an inexperienced actor in Mallacoota Stampede would have been the scene between Tom Pye, who played the father, and Debbie Conway at the back of the van. He is coming to the realization that she has grown up and is about to leave home. He did that in one take, and he had never done anything on film before those two days. He did it with such power and conviction because it came out of his own experience. Is he an actor or is he just a person, and where is the difference?

It is not so much what is in the scene but whether, with its halting quality, it looks real in the context of how people judge film acting today . . .

I can answer that only by taking the completely opposite tack.
Imagine I were lucky enough to work with whom I consider to be the best actors in Australia. I believe I could still make my style of film, with the looseness I want and the tightness they want.

Can there be a confusion between what an amateur actor will give you, naturally, and what a professional actor will do by the nature of his training?

That confusion will be illuminated if a professional actor were cast alongside an amateur actor, and they both hit the truth of the performance. That is an indefinable thing. But it is what convinces you as against what doesn't. What I can't tolerate is performance that is not working, whether the actors are amateur or professional.

Journey to the End of Night

The press has concentrated on the revelatory nature of Bill Neave's story in "Journey to the End of Night", not on how it is told. I think we should concentrate on the times I have seen them. In a sense, they are documentaries made in a feature mode, but they are still very powerful documentations. Why limit them and call them either a feature film or a documentary? They are a wonderful hybrid, and I like hybrid films.

The quotations and titles interspersed throughout "Journey" obviously provide some commentary on Bill Neave's state of mind. But do you see them as more than that?

...
Where should film history research begin? Surely the start should be made with the films themselves, for the final evidence of their successes and failures. Would it be possible to make an objective judgment of the work of a filmmaker without first seeing a major part of the output?

Director Raymond Longford provides a good example of this oversight. Of the 26 silent films that Longford directed, only *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919), *On Our Selection* (1920) and a part of *Margaret Catchpole* (1911) survive. These were purportedly among the best of Longford’s output. No total overview of Longford’s work can be made.

A newcomer to film history research was emphatic in stressing to me the superiority of Longford’s direction over that of the McDonagh sisters following screenings of *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919) and *The Cheaters* (1929). Comparing two films of such vastly differing genre is questionable. But comparison of Longford’s best film with the least successful of the McDonaghs’ output is totally unreasonable.

By many accounts, the best of the McDonaghs’ films was the powerful anti-war talkie, *Two Minutes’ Silence* (1933). Like so much of Australia’s film heritage, *Two Minutes’ Silence* is a ‘lost’ film. Not only is judgment of its value on an objective basis impossible, most of the films which would provide the frame of reference for its judgment are lost as well.

Short films have survived in even smaller percentages than the features. The backbone of many Australian film studios were newsreels, advertisements, documentaries and variety shorts. In the 1920s and ’30s, the Victorian exhibition quota specified a minimum of 2000 ft (22 mins) of British and Australian film per program. A newsreel and a short could fill this requirement. Features were — at least in those days — more speculative.

Australian shorts had received practically no study before the recently-released *The Documentary Film in Australia*, edited by Ross Lansell and Peter Beilby. Ross Cooper and Andrew Pike’s excellent magnum opus, *Australian Film 1900-1977*, might therefore be more appropriately titled *Australian Feature Film 1900-1977* to emphasize this intentional omission.

*Probably the largest body of undocumented Australian shorts are those made by Frank Thring Senior’s Efftee Film Studios in Melbourne. Nearly all of them were shot between March 1931 and April 1934. In those 38 months, 12 features, about 80 shorts and 2 uncompleted features were produced with Efftee’s facilities. It was the most active period of sound film production in Melbourne’s history.*

Amazingly, nearly all of the Efftee output survives at the National Film Archive, Canberra. Many of these films are freely available for loan on 16mm viewing prints, without copyright restriction. The remainder are mostly held on nitrate prints and negatives. These await copying to acetate.

In its totality, the Efftee collection provides a comprehensive view of almost the whole output of one early Australian studio. This is probably a unique situation.
Efftee films contrast sharply with those of Cinesound. Lacking Ken Hall's tight direction and William Shepherd's skillful editing, Efftee films are often static, stagey and claustrophobic, seldom moving outdoors.

But the Efftee films have extremely high value as record. Over-riding their lack of cinemaphobic, seldom moving outdoors. Cinesound. Lacking Ken Hall's tight direction matic quality, a high technical and artistic films are often static, stagey and claustro- with a modern audience.

The Efftee Entertainers shorts, for instance, are a home-grown equivalent of Hollywood's Vitaphone Varieties. Cinesound never attempted to film stage acts on anything like this production scale, with the single exception of the 49-minute Cinesound Varieties (1934), of which only one print survives.

The acts filmed by Efftee were often recorded contemporaneously by Vocalion, the only Melbourne record company then active. Discs were made by Pat Hanna, Jack O'Hagan, Keith Desmond, Athol Tier, The Sundowners and Harry Jacobs' Orchestra. Efftee films provided a convenient means for cinema patrons to see Australian radio and recording stars who had previously been known only for their voices. This held particularly true in country areas, where cinema patrons had little opportunity to attend good legitimate theatre and variety shows. The Efftee Entertainers shorts are the visual equivalent of 78 r.p.m. recordings, and run to similar lengths (3 mins). Their survival alone makes them a priceless and unique record of Australian theatre history.

Unlike the Cinesound films, which could rely on their cinematic excellence to draw a crowd, the Efftee films relied heavily on the star appeal of established radio and stage personalities. Pat Hanna's films are particularly difficult for a modern audience to assess, stripped of the context of Hanna's ubiquitousness on stage and radio in the early 1930s, "Digger" humor, so familiar to Australian theatre-goers in the 1920s, tends to be lost on a modern audience. Collo- quialisms, then familiar, have since been replaced by the bombastic world of another war, and have faded even further in the subsequent flood-tide of language input with post-war immigration.

Efftee films reflect a rather naive and idiosyncratic Australia between the wars, anxious for psychological escape from the rigors of economic depression. George Wallace's "Aussie battler" comedies, Dorothy Brunt's dreams of a better life in Clara Gibbings and Pat Hanna's echoing of wartime camaraderie all reflect this.

Even in the Efftee documentaries, the escapist element is evident, presenting a 'chocolate box' vision of Australian life.

**Efftee's first musical short, Will Cade and his Regent Theatre Orchestra in Selections from 'The Desert Song' (1931). (Photograph courtesy Alan Stuart.)**

**The sound department at Efftee Studios, St Moritz, St Kilda, in 1934: Alan Mill, left, Jack Murray, John Heyer. (Photograph courtesy Jack Murray.)**

**Melbourne Today (1931) provides flowing images of rich parks and gardens, busy prosperous thoroughfares and stately public buildings. Arthur Higgins' magnificent cinematography maintains the highest standards of photographic pictorialism. Only occasionally is one brought down to earth by the sight of 'sussies' scratching for gold in the gutters of Ballarat, or by a shot of a Fascist march in Dear Old London.**

Noel Monkman's 11 shorts were made under the Australian Educational Films banner, in partnership with P. W. M. Sturig, Monkman (1896-1969) pioneered Australian microcinematography in these shorts. Most of the equipment used to make them was extem­porized by Monkman. Even today, they are a highly original record of Australian natural history, obviously made with sensitivity and enthusiasm.

Unfortunately, the 16mm viewing prints of the Efftee material are all too often a sad travesty of the 35mm originals. Without exception, the original 35mm Efftee prints have impeccable image quality and registration, and uncannily good sound quality. In shocking contrast, the 16mm print of the Regent Theatre Orchestra short has a virtually unlistenable soundtrack, full of hiss and flutter. The 16mm print of the Athol Tier short is incorrectly exposed, out of focus, and its sound is terribly distorted. Nearly all of the pre-1934 sound films were shot to a square frame, or pre-Academy format. In practically every case, 16mm prints from these pre-Academy films are badly cropped at top and bottom, destroying composition and slicing off heads and feet. Copying of these should be repeated to 'modified silent format' reduction specifications, to preserve the original aspect ratio on 16mm. Multiple 35mm release prints, and some original sound and picture negatives of the Efftee films, are held by the NFA, so the job should not entail any technical difficulty. Fortuitously, the Efftee nitrates haven't deteriorated except for a little shrinkage.

Of the five Great Barrier Reef shorts, only Ocean Oddities has been copied complete with its soundtrack. Originally, the NFA acquired only the picture negatives of these four shorts. With the acquisition of several Monkman release prints in the Davidson collection, it should now be possible to recover the missing sound.

Several of the Efftee shorts are held only on original nitrate stock at the NFA. The technical crew on all films listed here is as follows, unless otherwise stated.

**Feature Films Made in the Efftee Studio**

*Running times of original Australian prints are given. These are derived from censorship records. In some cases, the National Library's prints are derived from truncated versions intended for release in Britain. These will be noted. Detailed credits for the features, already published in Cooper and Pike's Australian Film 1900-1977, have been intentionally avoided.*

**A Co-respondent's Course**


**Diggers**


**The Haunted Barn**

(43 mins, 28/11/31) P.C.: Efftee. Dir.: E. A. Dietrich-
The Sentimental Bloke

His Royal Highness

Harmony Row

Diggers In Bigkty

Waltzing Matilda
(87 mins, rel. 21/2/33) P.C.: Pat Hanna Productions. Dir.: Pat Hanna and Raymond Longford. Comedy of returned servicemen in Melbourne.

A Ticket In Tatts

Sheepmates
(unfinished feature, in production at end of 1933) P.C.: Efftee. Dir.: F. W. Thring. About a third of this film was completed before production was suspended by Thring owing to dissatisfaction with the first rushes. Some 8000 feet of outtake footage and several lip-synch scenes had been filmed prior to suspension. Sheepmates was an adaptation of W. Hatfield's book of the same name, dealing with an Englishman's arrival in outback Australia. Leading players were Campbell Copelin, Marshall Crosby, H. B. Meade, George Wallace and Henry Wemmen. About five minutes of out-takes survive, with lip-synch sound.

Streets Of London

Clara Gibbings

Colfitt's Inn
(unfinished feature, 1934) P.C.: Efftee. Dir.: F. W. Thring. This Australian musical extravaganza, set in the 1820s, was produced on stage by Thring at the end of 1933. A film was planned, but only sound tests were made before production was suspended. A six-minute sound test of Gladys Moncrieff and Robert Chisholm singing "Stay While The Stars Are Shining", with a spoken introduction by Frank Harvey, survives.

Heritage

The "Efftee Entertainers" Variety Shorts

(chronological order)

(1) Will Cade and his Regent Theatre Orchestra in Selections From "Men Of The Desert" Song (5 mins, 1931) Melbourne's Regent Theatre Orchestra plays "The Riff Song" and "One Alone".

(2) Jack O'Hagen — Vocalist Composer (7 mins, 1931) Pioneer broadcaster O'Hagen sings a selection of his own compositions, including "Carry On", "By The Big Blue Billabong", "In Dreamy Anarchy", "After The Dawn" and "The Road To Gundagai".

(3) Cecil Parkes' Strad Trio in Selections From Their Repertoire (6 mins, 1931) Trio of violin, cello and piano playing a selection of ballads and light classical items.

(4) Athol Tier As Napoleon (7 mins, 1931) Rather bizarre and dated stage comic turn.

(5) Keith Desmond In Recitations (No. 1) (3 mins, 1931) Desmond recites the poem On The Stars in typical turn-of-the-century declamatory style.

(6) Keith Desmond In Recitations (No. 2) (6 mins, 1931) This short exists at the NFA only as a picture negative, and may not have been released.

(7) George Wallace, Australia's Premier Comedian (7 mins, 1931) An excellent short comic delivered in stand-up fashion. Patter, dance and song. The excellence of this short induced Thring to hire Wallace as a star comic for his later features.

(8) Melody and Terpsichore (7 mins, 1931) Violinist Herme Barton leads a corps-de-ballet of dancing lady violinists and solo dancer Dorothy Hutchison.

(9) Stan Ray and George Moon Jnr., Speciality Dancers (No. 1) (3 mins, 1931) Tap dancers with Art Chapman's Dance Orchestra playing "There Ought To Be A Moonlight Saving Time".


(12) Minnie Love In Impressions Of Famous Artists (No. 1) (3 mins, 1931) Veteran stage performer does an impression of British music hall star Lily Morris singing "We Crawled In The Old Apple Tree". Piano accompaniment by Stan Ray.

(13) Minnie Love In Impressions Of Famous Artists (No. 2) (5 mins, 1931) Impressions of Gracie Fields singing "A Couple Of Ducks" and Maurice Chevalier singing "Valentine".

(14) Minnie Love In Impressions Of Famous Artists (No. 3) (4 mins, 1931) Impression of Randolph Sutton singing "Over The Garden Wall" and of Maurice Chevalier singing "You Brought A New Kind Of Love To Me".

(15) The Sundowners — Harmony Quartette (No. 1) (5 mins, 1932) Popular vocal quartette from radio 3LO with piano accompanist Cecil Fraser. Songs include "In Apple Blossom Time" and "I Haven't Told Her, She Hasn't Told Me".

(16) The Sundowners — Harmony Quartette (No. 2) (5 mins, 1932) Songs include "The Wedding Of The Three Blind Mice" and "Sleepy Town Express".

(17) Lou Vernon — Character Songs (No. 1) (4 mins, 1932) Lou Vernon (1888-1971), veteran character actor and creator of the radio character "Dr. Mac", sings "That's My Idea Of A Lady".

(18) Kathleen Goodall — Songs At The Piano (No. 1) (4 mins, 1932) A character actress in panto and with Gilbert & Sullivan, and later a classical singer of some repute, Miss Goodall's personality shines through these shorts. It is a great pleasure to Thring never cast her in his feature films. She sings "Widows Are Wonderful".

(19) Kathleen Goodall — Songs At The Piano (No. 2) (5 mins, 1932) Sings "I'm Coming, Captain".

(20) Kathleen Goodall — Songs At The Piano (No. 3) (4 mins, 1932) Sings "Little Mary Fawcett".

(21) Peter Bornstein, Celebrated Violinist (5 mins, 1933) Bornstein plays a selection of classical items, with Henri Penn providing piano accompaniment.

(22) George White (unknown length, 1932) Short of unknown content, now apparently lost. Listed in an issue of Everyone's, March 1932.

(23) Miss Ada Reeve — Comedienne (No. 1) (4 mins, 1932) Famous British music hall star Ada Reeve in her first talkie shorts. Her career stretched back to the 1890s, and she had toured Australia as far back as 1897. In 1929 she appeared in the original cast of Floradora. She stayed in Australia for some years in the early 1990s, giving acting classes. Later returned to Britain and often appeared in cameo roles in later British films. Here she delivers the monologue "Aint Yer Jem" with accompaniment from Harry Jacobs Palais Theatre Orchestra.

(24) Miss Ada Reeve — Comedienne (No. 2) (5 mins, 1932) Sings "I Never Forget I'm A Lady" with accompaniment by Harry Jacobs Orchestra.

(25) Miss Byrl Walkley, Soprano (5 mins, 1932) Star of His Royal Highness and other Efftee productions sings "Love Is Best Of All" and "Trees". Piano accompaniment by Alaric Howitt, composer of music for His Royal Highness with George Wallace.


(27) Neil McKay, Scottish Comedian (7 mins, 1932) Glasgow-born comic filmed on his second visit to Australia, "The Sea's The Life For Me" with rather cliche'd patter.

(28) Williamson Imperial Grand Opera Co. Orchestra — Overture From Carmen, by Bizet (3 mins, 1932) Conducted by Maestro Wando Aldrovandi.


(30) Williamson-Imperial Grand Opera Co. Orchestra — Selections From The Barber Of Seville by Rossini (7 mins, 1932) The C. J. Williamson Opera Season Orchestra conducted by Wando Aldrovandi.

Continued on p. 582
Liliana Cavani, like compatriot Lina Wertmuller, is a controversial director. Not only have her films run into censorship problems (particularly The Night Porter), they also have the distinction of being attacked by Left and Right, and ridiculed for being pro- and anti-feminist.

Cavani's filmmaking style is as original as her opinions, which show no concession to popular thinking and indicate an individualist of striking talent.

Cavani was interviewed in Rome by Sue Adler during the post-production of her latest film, Oltra la porta (Beyond the Door), which stars Eleanora Giorgi and Marcello Mastroianni.
After graduating with a degree in Classics at the University of Bologna, you attended the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome. What was it like there in the early 1960s?

It worked very well. Some courses were properly designed and others were not, as in every school. But the students became very stupid in the years around 1968 and they closed the school. It was very painful to see the destructive demagogy because it meant that young people in successive years were deprived of a school. It was the only one for cinema which existed, and it was needed badly.

In most American universities there is a cinema section, but not in Italian universities. There are courses in the performing arts, but, like most things Italian, these courses are very rhetorical and not at all practical.

The Centro Sperimentale was very practical: at the end of the first year you did a 15-minute film, at the end of the second year a 30-minute film and so on. You learned to use lenses, to edit, etc. They are now re-establishing the school, 14 years after it was destroyed, and hopefully they will do it well.

Do you think you would have gone into the cinema without attending the Centro Sperimentale?

In Italy, schooling is virtually worthless, unless you want to make a career in the public service or as a cinema section. No one has ever asked me about my degree.

I applied for a post as a functionalist at the RAI [the Italian equivalent of the BBC] and got the job, but then they fired me. I proposed certain projects for them on a freelance basis. One was The Story of the Third Reich, which used German newreel documentation from all over the world.

From there, I went on to do other things for the RAI and for private television in Italy. I proposed documentaries on ideas that interested me and about things that were not very well known. I did a story about Stalinism, and an inquiry about urbanization. I was very interested in social and political issues at that time, and worked on many programs of this nature until 1965.

**Francesco d’Assisi**

**Francis of Assisi** was suggested by the people at the RAI. They wanted to do it in the studios using telecameras. I said, “No, I want to do it on 16mm with people from the street, not professional actors from the theatre.” I was able to do this because I already had a relationship with the RAI and had done various things for them.

I did have a bit of trouble because we were dealing with Saint Francis. I chose a young man who didn’t fit in with their ideas of the young Saint. They were rather taken aback. But their image didn’t interest me at all. I was concerned about the problem of Francis, which is that of every young person of 20 years of age who wants to change the world. It was also my problem and that of my generation.

**Galileo**

Galileo grew out of a co-production between a private network and the RAI and Sofia (Budapest) — the first, and perhaps the last, co-production between Italy and this eastern country. Many of the interiors were done in theatres and studios in Sofia. The RAI didn’t want to show it because it considered the film too anti-clerical and anti-Catholic. So it was shown in cinemas.

There were a lot of problems because in doing Galileo I had to depict Galileo against the church and the church against Galileo. Remember that only three years ago they took his books off the blacklist. But I find the polemics still very interesting and I would like to see the film at least, that was its point of departure.

Today, our problems have been reduced to two: terrorism and the Mafia. The Mafia is exclusively an Italian problem, but terrorism is a general one. I have never treated these issues on film because the newspapers are full of them and there is no point retelling it in the cinema, unless you have certain revelations to make.

**L’ospite (The Guest, the Host)**

The Guest, the Host was the story of a woman who had been dumped in an asylum and was sick only because the asylum had made her that way; before she was put there she was not sick, just too sensitive. Instead of sheltering these people, the asylum became a prison or concentration camp.

Now they have closed down a lot of these institutions and people who formerly were locked away are roaming the streets. Reforms are needed. It is not enough to open the gates.

**Milarepa**

Milarepa was inspired by my reading the book of the great Tibetan poet, Milarepa, which I liked very much. In the film I tell the story of a young person who reads the book and identifies with it. He and his professor are the key characters, and the youth has an important experience.

Sometimes reading a book does this to you: it is like experiencing physically the thing itself, being taken on a voyage. I simply wanted to relate the feeling of having an experience with a different culture and making an imaginary journey. I made it for television on a low budget but nowadays it is impossible to approach the private networks with projects like this. They should do films like Milarepa, which deal with certain themes and arguments. But the private networks clearly are not interested in such films; they cost more than they make. So I did it with the RAI.

**Galileo, The Guest, the Host and Milarepa** were filmed on 35mm film and done on low budgets. I believe in the quality of film stock over everything else. It is obvious that with 35mm the results are superior. I cannot bear when people use 16mm and blow it up to 35mm — the latest film by the Taviani brothers, for example. It is a swindle; it is not right.

It is fair enough to say that we cannot compete technically with the American cinema, but there has to be a minimum of professionalism and technical modernization. You can’t just rely on the moral content; you also have to produce something that is well made, that is visually beautiful.

The technical aspect is extremely important to me, but the Italian cinema has lagged behind in this area. For those who want their films to be very good technically, like Bernardo Bertolucci and me, you have to go through death struggles to ensure that things are done properly. Advanced techniques cost a lot of money; you have to hire expensive equipment.

*Top to bottom: Max (Dirk Bogarde) expects sexual favors from Lucia (Charlotte Rampling); entertainment for the Nazi officers; Max and Lucia; Lucia. Liliana Cavani's The Night Porter.*
In Italy, the critics don’t help at all. The more ‘poor’ a film is, the more they go for it; it is ludicrous. I believe films should be as well made as possible.

Il portiere di notte
(The Night Porter)

The Night Porter emerged when I did The Story of the Third Reich. I interviewed women who had survived the concentration camps, and others who had lived through that era.

There was one woman who said that every year she goes to Dachau, where she had been a prisoner, for her holidays. This made a strong impression on me. I would prefer to go on holidays to Hawaii, certainly not Dachau. But she experienced very intense sensations there. She didn’t want to tell me about them — though she did say she was searching for something, perhaps the suffering. I don’t know. The human psyche is very complicated.

There was another woman, from Milan, who, when she returned home after surviving a camp, was greatly annoyed that people treated her like a poor wretch. It got to the stage where she couldn’t stand her friends and relatives.

The only thing of which she accused the Nazis was that they had made her perceive the depths of human nature. We always think of this as a positive thing, because we look for the better side. However, she ascertained what human nature can be, and that understanding made it practically impossible for her to remain in the company of others. She said, “The physical suffering passes; this won’t ever go away.”

A story slowly evolved from all this, a story of the things that really happened. War does not just occur, it changes people. It plays on the need of people to feel important, to feel that they are stronger and superior to the next. In the end, it plays on the most animal instincts.

When I dealt with the sadomasochism within the couple in The Night Porter, only the psychoanalysts, not the critics, credited me with being right. They maintain that in each couple’s relationship there is sadomasochism, which can be developed to a maximum or remain at a minimum. The ordinary filmgoer understood this because he found something in it which, to an extent, he lives.

But the critics are used to seeing, and love to see, things with which they are familiar. And, if it is a woman who has made the film, and she has presented things in a manner to which they are not accustomed, they get very angry, and rant and rave. They are very conformist.

For example, if you make a film about the war, you have to talk about the Resistance. I have made two films which talk about war, The Night Porter and The Skin, which treat it in a manner contrary to what they expect. I would not enjoy giving a history lesson along the lines of what they would expect to hear in the schools, the way those bores — the critics — like to see things. When I want to say something, I want to do so in a different way — to the sound of another drum. By doing things this way, you come to understand them better yourself.

I grew up in the post-war era. Listening to what people said then, you would ask yourself: well who was a Fascist in Italy? Nobody! There was not one Fascist left, yet nobody had gone anywhere! It was as if the Martians had come and then gone away again in their spaceships, back into the sky. You ask yourself: how is this possible?

In fact, you were not allowed to talk about the things the Nazis or Fascists had done; everybody was in agreement — from the Christian Democrats to the Communists. All of them had rolled a big rock over it. And then you come to discover certain things, such as many Italians — in fact, nearly all Italians — had actually liked Fascism. You start to see things as they really were, then, not as they had been told to you. My generation doesn’t know what really happened.

I did The Story of the Third Reich exactly to demonstrate this, to show that Nazism played on something inside us, on the concierge (porter), the person who lives below us or across the road. Maybe this person feels frustrated in some way. So the moment he can put on a black uniform and punch somebody, he feels better. He feels like a big man.

Fascism opened the doors for all those who had a problem. To make a career in the university, for example, you had to be a card-carrying Fascist. Every university professor in Italy except 11 had taken the Fascist oath, just as had all the magistrates. So, what was the poor, little anti-Fascist to do?

The reality was that very few anti-Fascists existed. But, in 1944, when Germany was losing the war,
suddenly there was a mass of them. But the world has always been this way; the important thing is to understand what happened, otherwise we will never know what we are made from.

Did things become easier for you after the success of "The Night Porter"?

Indubitably. The film was very successful.

Al di la del bene e del male (Beyond Good and Evil)

What was the particular interest in Nietzsche?

From Nietzsche is born practically all modern challenging and questioning thought. Marcuse, for instance, derives from Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's relationship with Lou is fascinating to relate. The story was already modern: Lou was the blonde creature of which he had spoken, free and independent. She no longer had that 1800 type of female behaviour; more than a feminist, she was already simply herself. He pushes her and then she suffers.

Your heroines are similar: Lucia (Charlotte Rampling) in "The Night Porter" and Lou (Dominique Sanda) in "Beyond Good and Evil" are slim, self-assured . . .

Above all, they are cool and autonomous, as if they were young men. This is my ideal of woman; I am not interested in relating a story about the dolly-like heroine. I don't find these women physically interesting, either.

Actually, the Italian censors criticized me because Charlotte Rampling was on top making love. It was the first film — in Italy, at any rate — with 'her' on top and with 'her' ravishing 'him'; it was 'she' who unbuttoned his pants and groaned. But does the woman have to wait until it is done to her?

In the U.S. this question may not arise, but it does in Italy: how does a woman influence your career?

I really don't think that things are any better for women in the U.S. than they are in Italy. On the contrary, due to a strange cultural contradiction, in the Latin countries women are more respected than in Anglo-Saxon countries.

Sure in Italy when a woman walks down the street, men turn and look at her. They whistle, too, but I don't see what's so bad about that. They may not pinch your bum in the U.S., but there is a greater hatred of women among the men. They all seem to be homosexuals in the head, even if they go on to marry. It isn't like that in Italy.

In Italy, it is often the woman who doesn't set off and take on certain jobs. If she did, she wouldn't encounter any more difficulties than those encountered by American women. Actually, when you look around, you see there are female prime ministers in India and England, and there has been an Israeli woman Head of State, but never in the U.S. The Americans all talk a lot but they never actually do anything. They are a bunch of fops.

So, I don't believe that Italian women have a more difficult life — especially in the north, where I come from. My town is full of big-business women, and they get more respect than the men.

Having said this, one must remember that in the south of Italy men are capable of killing a woman if she has a lover. But you have to understand the context. It is part of a game. I am not saying that you should kill — on the contrary — but it is important to see the thing as a whole.

Germaine Greer went to Sicily in a very provocative way and with negative preconceptions, in order to speak critically of it. But once she got there, she understood a lot of things, much of which was contrary to what she had originally thought.

Everybody tends to stop at their own experience. One can say, "I find it annoying that a man pinches me on the bum", and of course that is perfectly right. It is an awful, masculine, roosterish habit. But it has to be seen with an overview.

La pelle (The Skin)

In The Skin I wanted to talk about that period of the American occupation of Naples. I think that everything we know about that era is distorted.

Malaparte [author of La pelle], like everybody else, was a Fascist and then became a Communist. But in many things he is much better than many others.

But apart from the phenomenon that is Naples, it interested me greatly to present Fascism to the people as it was.

I also wanted to show that it is always the women and the children who put things back together again. But then, even more than now, their opinions never counted.

Malaparte's point of view is excellent: the population, which is never asked if it wants the war or not, is always the one which pays. Sure, there are lots of other stories I could have done, but it was important to me to portray history as it really happened, not as it is depicted in the textbooks. This is far more educational.

In fact, I should now do The Skin 2, because of what went on in Naples after the earthquake, and with the money the government provided for its reconstruction. Things really went wild: the Camorra [Neapolitan Mafia] got involved and it was practically like a war breaking out. Last year alone, there were 187 deaths from this 'civil war', much more than under the American occupation in Naples. So why should we be scandalized over what happened then, when today it is worse?

Do you always collaborate on a screenplay?

If I were offered a screenplay which I liked very much, I would do it. But that hasn't happened yet.

So far, I have always done films based on stories written by me or with a collaborator or, as in the case of The Skin, based on a story taken from a book, but again with the screenplay written by me.

You have been quoted as saying that the images are more important than the dialogue . . .

It is always better to tell everything you can without words. The value and relevance of the image is always more important and more interesting, given that cinema is not literature.

Of course, dialogue can be very beautiful, and can be also extremely important. But I believe it is better that a scene has as little dialogue as possible. Naturally, if you are making a film about a trial then there has to be a lot of dialogue. But the photography, the costumes, etc., are all very important.

In the case of The Skin, for example, we had to reconstruct the 1940s — the Americans in Naples and the rubble in the streets — but we could only give an impression.

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Top to bottom: Lou (Dominique Sanda) "on top" of Friedrich Nietzsche (Erlind Josephson), as Paul Ree (Robert Powell) watches — Beyond Good and Evil; images of the American occupation of Naples in the 1940s. The Skin.
aid side by side, as I am sure many of their authors would like to be, film star biographies and autobiographies take up several, good-sized shelves in any performing arts bookshop. Twenty years ago, an actor generally had to make it on the stage before he or we could expect his life to be celebrated between hard covers. So, luminaries of Broadway and Shaftesbury Avenue, from Tallulah Bankhead to A. E. Matthews, were trying to persuade us that they were as interesting off-stage as on, and certainly that they were much more interesting than we were. The 1970s changed all that. Not to have the enthralling saga of your life take its place on the shelf with all those other lives has become a tacit admission of not having made it. Mere decent reticence in the face of a dull life stops no one, nor does even merer unimportance.

For the flood of star biographies and, worse, those written allegedly by the stars’ own hands, has gathered momentum through the past decade and shows no sign of abatement. Furthermore, they are getting longer (the first fruits of Stewart Granger’s anecdote run to more than 400 pages) and, a still more disquieting sign, there is a new trend towards stopping mid-career. Presumably, this latter habit, as evinced by Granger, James Mason and the unspeakable Shelley Winters, is meant to leave us breathless with anticipation for Volume Two. This is indeed making a little go a long way, since the off-screen lives of these people often are remarkably dull — often as dull as our own, just lived in more comfort.
shrewdly selecting the best of 50 takes, or Gregg Toland catching the upturned face in a way that softens the hard egoism.

On the basis of the nearly 20 volumes with which I have, withered away my youth in recent months, I would find it hard to adduce evidence for Gregory Peck’s assertion that stars for no reason, you know. They’re stars because they are interesting people. One of the chief recurring elements of these works is certain egoism. Clearly, even to get noticed to the point of being offered any role in a film takes a degree of persistence allied crucially to a powerfully egoistic belief in one’s powers.

Having achieved not merely any role but the powerful right to choose their roles—that is, to be a star—it is equally clear that an immense egoism, and egoism, comes into play to sustain that privileged position. Even a professional nice-guy like Peck derives gratification from the fact that, in his first film, his “name was to go above the title—and it has never gone anywhere else since” (p. 57). A monstrosity like Bette Davis snarled and clawed her way to the roles that made her a star, and, once established, by “relentlessly demanding, imposing, seeking restlessly for what was best”’: best for the film of course too, but essentially best for Bette.

To know you are a film star is, presumably, to know that millions of people around the world want to watch you both being recognizably “yourself” and doing something that is called film acting. It is a heady thought no doubt, and to the head a thought that often goes.

More often than not, unsustained by families, education, religion or any other of the decentralizing structures of their society, they are encouraged by those with a financial interest in their careers to inculcate their own publicity, to believe themselves the centre of their personal universes. With so many lives dependent on whether their latest film is pulling in the customers, small wonder it is that many of them give co-workers, spouses and others hell if their wishes are not fulfilled. To be as universal an icon as a film star is makes preposterous demands on the sanity, balance and humanity of the often otherwise-unremarkable human being just beneath the glamorous surface.

Film stars are so much a phenomenon of a packaging process, whereby some astute producer recognizes a saleable commodity, ensures that it is handsomely gift-wrapped and employs highly-skilled minions to market it, that sometimes it is hard to know what there is to any given star apart from a seductive physical presence. This presence is, of course, infinitely more important on the screen than on the stage, which is at once more exposed to the consumer and more tactfully distant from him. How film stars look seems to me to be the one indisputably vital element in their screen persona; whatever else they may bring to their roles in the way of, say, intelligence, understanding, depth of feeling or experience is much harder to assess and to attribute.

This being so, it is perhaps not surprising that on the page, as distinct from the screen, they often are disappointing. The perceptiveness and sensitivity we have admired as they loomed often are disappointing. The perceptiveness and much harder to assess and to attribute.


... Preserve the stars from wrong” (Wordsworth)

Apart from Flora Robson who didn’t marry at all and Mae West who may or may not have done so, most of the biographed girls and boys here were hitched up several times partners. “I’ve married five times”, [Henry Fonda] said abruptly, ‘and I’m goddamn ashamed of it.’ In most of the other volumes, the casting-off of the past, and the taking-on of the new are presented as part of some restless quest for truth in human relations, Fonda’s abrupt honesty on the matter—and I don’t mean to be striking a moral pose about this—is markedly at odds with the usual cant offered about marriage and divorce.

On the whole I prefer Susan Hayward’s direct account of why she wanted to be rid of Jess Barker, “The son of a bitch hit me”, to the tasteful evasion of Paul Freedland’s account of Gregory and Greta Peck’s break-up: “. . . the sad-looking surroundings [of their French villa] only seemed to echo the state of their relationship together. It took very little time for them both to realize that they weren’t going to be able to cope and that it had come to an end.” (p. 125.)

I don’t mean to underestimate the sort of pressures that stardom, with all its demands, imposes and right to choose their roles—that is, to be a star—it is equally clear that an immense egoism, and egoism, comes into play to sustain that privileged position. Even a professional nice-guy like Peck derives gratification from the fact that, in his first film, his “name was to go above the title—and it has never gone anywhere else since” (p. 57). A monstrosity like Bette Davis snarled and clawed her way to the roles that made her a star, and, once established, by “relentlessly demanding, imposing, seeking restlessly for what was best”’: best for the film of course too, but essentially best for Bette.

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The Biography Industry

boost sales like nothing else. Responses to this dilemma are various: Shelley Winters has decided to let it all hang out and a very repulsive spectacle it makes; James Mason has opted for such discretion that it comes as a surprise to find him named as a co-respondent in Roy and Pamela Kellino's divorce or to find, 100 pages later, that he and Pamela are parting.

The point of this is to suggest that very rarely indeed does a star emerge from one of these biographical skirmishes with his or her image unsullied. Honesty will frequently be unkind to them; discretion can make them sound dull; and a flair for the salacious may lose respect even as sales thrive. It is not just a matter of sexual behaviour; revealing other aspects of the private lives of stars rarely makes one think better of them. Claire Bloom is one exception: she writes with unaffected honesty about the vanity, ambition and selfishness that, she believes, played a part in her career. So, too, is Flora Robson who emerges, miraculously, from Kenneth Barrow's daunting hagiography as hard-working, intelligent and compassionate.

The fact that the off-screen lives of so many stars seem not to be particularly interesting sometimes leads biographers into whipping up a spurious sense of drama where none exists. For women stars this usually means an affair with Howard Hughes; the men, faintly afraid that theirs is an effeminate profession, dwell on manly experiences like motor-racing or flying. Again and again, one feels how much more satisfactory these Lives would be if they devoted themselves more whole-heartedly to the activities that made the stars famous enough for us to want to read about them: that is, their work in films. Instead of the current stress on their sexual appetites and adventures, instead of white-washing their marital histories, from which processes they inevitably emerge as lesser people, they could very usefully tell us a great deal that would be worth knowing about the processes of filmmaking.

“\textit{It is the stars, the stars above us govern our conditions}”

Shakespeare knew it all. For, in the history of Hollywood certainly, the influence of stars in shaping entertainment has been enormous. Productions were built around the talents of particular stars; the greater the responsibility on a star for a film's success or failure, the more powerful became that star's wishes in the making of the film. If stars could not sell a bad or unattractive film to the public (cf. Gable and Parnell, Julie Andrews and Star!), they undoubtedly increased the pulling power of many average-to-good films. Considering, too, the public's notorious fickleness (it could never, for instance, be induced to flock to Deanna Durbin movies after the Christmas Holiday fiasco), it is not surprising that so much studio effort and star ego went into ensuring that those stars above us would continue to govern our conditions.

ew actors fought harder to attain and maintain stardom than BETTE DAVIS. In 1964 she told her own story as she chose to present it in \textit{The Lonely Life}; as Charles Higham tells it now in \textit{Bette}, the lady's own account seems to have offered just a carefully preserved public

While Bette Davis was ruling the roost at Warners (known affectionately as San Quentin), TYRONE POWER was...
could do anything false, he's incapable. As a performer, as a man, he's pure", Sidney Lumet claimed, and if it sounds an extravagant claim it is perhaps not far from the public's view of Fonda. He has always seemed like one's ideal of the American liberal; according to Teichmann, there is more than a little correspondence between the screen persona and the real man, though the latter emerges as more ascetic, more rigorous, more egotistic, harder to know and harder still to live with. There is honesty in his approach to some of life's major issues; and in some of his chief relationships a stubborn integrity emerges, not unbecoming Tom Joad, Wyatt Earp and Barney Greenwald.

If Henry Fonda made a career out of persuading us to take him seriously, whether in a humid jury room or bringing order to the wild West, that other wild West — Mae — appeared on screen to take nothing seriously — especially not sex or men, and especially not any of the virtues held dear by middle America. Fergus Cashin's slim volume (a happy change from the never-mind-the-quality-feel-the-length approach) may not intend to cut MAE WEST down to size, but it does. "She had spent most of the twentieth century inventing herself", Cashin writes, and if she did not invent sex, "She . . . saw the humour in it and probably no one before or since has had more fun on what she called the 'linen battlefield' " (Time magazine).

And yet, if Cashin is to be trusted, the real-life truth is a good deal less amusing and less glittering than her brief, dazzling star career might have suggested. In fact, Mae West is a somewhat sad story of a creature who purveyed lubricity in public, first on stage and then on screen, and perhaps never knew anything about sex, let alone love in private life. The off screen facts are shrouded in mystery, starting with date of birth (1893 or 1888? — not that it can have mattered to anyone in over half a century), including the marriage (or was it?) to Frank Wallace in 1911, whether or not, if it happened, it was ever consummated, and indeed most of her private life.

West's 1930s films are now camp classics, a status that has nothing to do with their quality, which, apart from the choice one-liners, is generally atrocious. However, in the '30s the one-liners came thick and fast, many of them Mae's own invention we are told, and she quickly secured a powerful position at Paramount. Her first screen line, in reply to the hat-check girl's "Goodness, what beautiful diamonds", was the immortal, "Goodness had nothing to do with it, dearie." From that moment, Cashin tells us somewhat fulsomely, "she walked slowly, majestically up the stairs into motion picture history" (p. 98). The next two, She Done Him Wrong and I'm No Angel, both with the young Cary Grant, established her as a major star.

If none of the remaining six films she did in the '30s was as good as these, they were good enough to keep her public and Paramount more than happy. The 1940 teaming with W. C. Fields in My Little Chickadee was not a happy occasion ("They were, in turn, suspicion of each other, hostile, then indifferent", says Cashin) and this shows in the resulting film. Their comic styles — lewd innuendo from her, misogynistic mutterings from him — prove curiously immiscible.

It was, however, a triumph of subtlety, wit and taste, compared with the last two films of her career: Mike Sarne's Myra Breckinridge (1970), a Hollywood sex farce from below the bottom of the barrel, and Ken Hughes' bizarre Sextette (1978), in which she plays the bride of a young English aristocrat. But it is absurd to talk of Sarne or Hughes as if they were the authors of the films which defined new nadirs. Mae West was invincibly the author of her own films, as she was of the trashy, funny, finally mysterious drama of her life. There was probably much less, in several senses, than met the eye. The best is there in those '30s gags ("Between two evils, I always pick the one I never tried before") and Cashin does well to quote a good number of them. For the rest, he is left with an enigma: a star who became the target of a ferocious purity campaign, a woman whose private life would almost certainly have undermined the public image.

Another star who scarcely seemed to be taking sex seriously was DOROTHY LAMOUR. By the end of the '30s, in films like Jungle Princess, Ford's The Hurricane and Her Jungle Love, she had made the sarong and herself famous, but her most prolific period of stardom was in the next decade when she made 29 films. In these she established herself not merely as shapely but as blessed with a nicely deflating sense of humor that worked to best effect in the six Road films (1939-52). Her career and her not-very-remarkable private life are now presented for inspection in a volume of artless maunderings entitled My Side of the Road, "as told to Dick McInnes".

One doesn't doubt that Dorothy Lamour was a cheerful, pleasant woman but there just aren't 200 pages in her life. It is almost as if she is aware of this too as she tries conscientiously to whip up a spurious narrative interest: "Being practical, my first thought [grammar is not her major strength] was how could I get to Hollywood on my limited funds. Why bother? I asked myself; I knew I could never make it in films anyway." (Actually, this points to one of the weaknesses of all these books: we know they all made it, so that suspense is at a premium. This being so, most of them need more unusual — or better-observed — lives to offset the daunting lack of narrative interest.) Dorothy — it would seem unfriendly to call her

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14. Dorothy Lamour (as told to Dick McInnes), My Side of the Road, Robson Books, 1981.
Colin Higgins is one of America’s most successful practitioners of screen comedy. His screenplay for Harold and Maude (directed by Hal Ashby) was the basis of a continuously-popular cult film. Subsequently he wrote Silver Streak (directed by Arthur Hiller) and wrote and directed Foul Play, 9 to 5 and The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas. While serving as a jury member at the 1982 Montreal Film Festival, Higgins talked to fellow jury member David Stratton.

Apparently you grew up in Sydney...

Yes. Actually, I was born in New Caledonia in 1941. My mother was from Sydney and my father from San Francisco. They had met while she was a passenger on the “Mariposa”; my father was Chief Purser. It was a shipboard romance.

After Pearl Harbor, my father enlisted and my mother returned to Sydney with me and my older brother. In 1945, we lived in San Francisco for a while but soon afterwards returned to Sydney, where I stayed until 1957. We had a house in Hunters Hill and I went to school at Riverview.

I got my first part-time job in Sydney, working for MGM at their old Chalmers St office; I had to take the slides that advertised coming attractions to all the city and suburban Metro cinemas every week.

How did you become interested in writing?

At first I wanted to be an actor. In fact, I lost a scholarship to Stanford University because I became so obsessed with theatre. I went to New York and hung around the Actors Studio, but there were no acting jobs. So I became a page at the ABC television studios. Then I lost hope and volunteered for the Army. I was sent to Germany, and became a reporter on the army newspaper, Stars and Stripes. I was discharged in 1965 and spent six months in Europe, mostly in Paris.

Then I went back to the U.S., back to Stanford, and eventually got my B.A. majoring in Creative Writing. While at college, I supported myself as an actor, playing in small theatre productions. I also spent a year and a half in a dreadful sex farce called Once Over Nightly.

Then in 1967, I visited Expo’67 in Montreal, and went to many of the programs at the Montreal Film Festival. That was when I decided I wanted to direct. I was accepted into Film School at UCLA, where one of my fellow students was Paul Schrader. At the same time George Lucas and Randal Kleiser were at USC. That generation has become the backbone of our industry now, the first group to bridge the gap between film school students and the industry proper.

What sort of films did you make at UCLA?

I made two: Opus One was a satire on student films; Retreat was an anti-war statement. Then I submitted as my thesis a feature screenplay, which was Harold and Maude. I didn’t much money and I had answered an ad in the L.A. Times. A couple wanted a part-time chauffeur and someone to clean out their swimming pool in return for free lodging in the chauffeur’s quarters.

I was very lucky. It was a pretty swank Bel Air home, and turned out to be owned by a film pro-
producer, Ed Lewis. [Edward Lewis produced several of John Frankenheimer’s films of the 1960s, including The Manchurian Candidate, Seven Days in May and Grand Prix.] Ed was kind enough to take me quite often on sets. I showed him my script and he liked it.

What was the inspiration for “Harold and Maude”? It came from seeing a dolly crane for rental in a film equipment store. I thought I would make an exercise for film school, something very elaborate technically. So I worked out a situation with the dolly crane in mind, and that became the first scene where the mother discovers Harold hanging.

Then I thought, this is a bit gruesome, why not make a joke of it? So it became a fake suicide. And that is how the whole idea came to me; it all sprang from a desire to use that piece of equipment. Much later I realized that it developed technically. Dan Fapp shot it for me and we did three scenes from the film, all with the kid and his mother.

Well, the result was that they liked it, but not enough. So eventually I relented about directing it myself and Hal Ashby was brought in; I was made co-producer. I got on very well with Hal, and we thought the film came out great; Paramount was high on it, too. Then, fate took a turn. It was the end of 1971 and The Godfather was supposed to be the studio’s big Christmas release; it was booked into all the biggest and best theatres. But Francis [Coppola] hadn’t finished it. So I offered my film The Ik, which became a last-minute replacement; this little film of ours in those big cinemas up against all the top releases of the season. We were swamped. It was a major failure; total disaster. And I, of course, was persona non grata.

But it became a success eventually... Much later. In the meantime, I was in trouble. I finally got an offer from a couple of friends, Tom Miller and Eddie Milkis, who ran a television film company. They sold a “Movie of the Week” to ABC on the strength of a title, The Devil’s Daughter. But they had no script. So I wrote one for them, Jeannot Swarcz directed it and Shelley Winters and Joseph Cotten starred in it. It was just a job.

Then out of the blue I received a letter from Paris, from Jean-Louis Barrault. He told me Harold and Maude was a success there, that he had loved it and had thought of turning it into a play for the veteran French actress Madeleine Renaud. Would I help? I was very pleased and flattered. I went to Paris, adapted the screenplay into a theatre piece and then worked with Jean-Claude Carrière on the French translation. It was a huge success and ran for seven years.

While in Paris, I met Peter Brook and he invited me to join his company as “playwright-in-residence”. We did a play together called The Ik, a serious piece about mountain people in Uganda, which was put on first in Paris and then at the Round House in London.

How did you get back into movies? Well, by now Harold and Maude was looking better; it had become something of a cult film internationally. I still wanted to direct films, and I had figured the way to do that was to find producers who would support me. So I contacted Tom and Eddie with an idea for a script, which was Silver Streak, in the hope that if, by using another director, we could make a success with that one, I would have a chance to direct the next one.

And that is what happened. We offered Silver Streak to Paramount, but they turned it down because Tom and Eddie were television people. So we took it to Fox, and Frank Yablans agreed to do it with Arthur Hiller directing. Later we offered Foul Play to Fox, and they said, “We don’t use first-time directors”, so we went back to Paramount, which approved it because of the success of Silver Streak.

Were you happy with the job Arthur Hiller did on “Silver Streak”? Arthur is a very sweet man. He is not Hal Ashby, but he is a good commercial director. Seeing the film now, I think the climax, the train crash, is terrific, but I find the early scenes kind of slow.
that to write anything is a kind of miracle.

How did you come to do "9 to 5"?

I was approached by Jane Fonda, who had seen Foul Play. I had heard about this project for about a year. The premise was that three secretaries wanted to kill their boss; Jane was the producer and had got Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton. I think originally Mike Nichols was to have been the director; I know it was then a project for Herbert Ross.

Essentially, no one could lick the script, and the whole thing seemed to be falling apart. I was flattered to be asked, but when I read the script I realized why it was in trouble. The concept was right, but I knew it would have to be completely re-structured.

Shortly after I started working on it, I went to Cleveland to a meeting of an organization of office workers. I asked, as a discussion point, if any of them had ever thought of killing their boss. Suddenly everyone started laughing; they came up with some of the most gruesome schemes which they had conceived in moments of severe stress. And I knew then that was the key on which to hang it all: to get the women in such a stressful situation that they would imagine killing their boss in grotesquely humorous ways.

They are three very different kinds of actresses . . .

Yes indeed. Jane is very determined, but also surprisingly girlish and fun-loving. I thought she was super.

I had never seen Dolly work before and hardly knew who she was, but I went to see her act and was amused by the warm, quick-witted ad-libbing she did with the audience. When I discovered the following night that all those ad-libs were scripted, I was very impressed. Any time an actor fools me, I am impressed. I knew she would have no problem as an actress. I wrote the part as much as I could for her.

Lily's background is improvisational, so there was yet another contrast. I also wrote with her in mind.

Your next project was "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" . . .

It was another troubled situation. Universal had bought the rights to the stage musical and originally the stage director was going to do the film version, but he was fired — as was the writer. I was then brought in and production was put back about nine months. Universal had already cast Burt Reynolds and Dolly Parton, scouted locations and built sets, so
The reason I loved doing *Whorehouse* was that it was an old-fashioned MGM musical with two big stars doing what they do best. It is a slight story about a simple relationship: boy has girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl. It is very simplified entertainment and has been very successful, but if I did another musical I would try to do it better. It is interesting to speculate what it might have been like if the film had been cast closer to the original stage production, maybe with Robert Mitchum and Shirley MacLaine. That would have been interesting.

Now that "Whorehouse" is a big success, presumably you can pick and choose your next project . . .

I can, as you say, get finance easily now. I would like to do some smaller films, and I would like to do one in Australia, because of my background there and also because I am very impressed by all the excellent actors and actresses you have. I would very much like to work with some of them. And I find the Australian accent delightful!

Are your future projects comedies?

Probably. I have a couple of projects that are not comedies per se, but I think I would always treat them as comedies. I understand Olivier totally when he says he plays every part as comedy. He said once that he always insists on getting a laugh in the first ten minutes, whether it is there or not. I approve of that. ★

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Top left: Dulcie Mae (Lois Nettleton) is in love with Sheriff Ed Ear (Burt Reynolds), but he is in love with Miss Mona (Dolly Parton), bottom left. Above: Mona and Deputy Fred (Jim Nabors). Colin Higgins' *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*.
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In this, the first comprehensive publication on Australian documentary film, 50 researchers, authors and filmmakers have combined to examine the evolution of documentary filmmaking in Australia, and the state of the art today.

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

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

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Guy Hamilton (Mel Gibson), an Australian Broadcasting Service journalist, arrives in Jakarta during a time of political upheaval. There he is befriended by an enigmatic Australian Asian, Billy Kwan (Phipps Hunt), and they profoundly influence each other's destiny.

Guy becomes increasingly involved with the politics of the country and with Jill Bryant (Sigourney Weaver), an English Embassy secretary. Eventually, as these interests diverge, Guy must choose between them.

The Year of Living Dangerously is directed by Peter Weir, from a screenplay by David Williamson (based on the novel by Christopher Koch and on additional material by Alan Sharp), for producer James McElroy. Shot on locations in The Philippines and Australia, the film is Weir's fifth feature and his second collaboration with Williamson.
class of 1984 is the kind of film that immediately draws protests from those who fear films are going too far in dramatizing social unrest and in visualizing violence. It is true that the film’s Lincoln High is a dingily-depressed school, that its central gang is sometimes a variation on Alex and his Clockwork Droogs, and that some of the final killings, especially the circular-saw slashings, are alarmingly gruesome. But a case can be made for Class of 1984. The film presents Perry King as Mr Norris, the earnest American teacher with his potentially devoted students. These signal sentimentality. It also presents a punk gang that suggests sadistic eruptions are not far away.

As Class of 1984 proceeds, the gang is shown to be more and more psychotic; while they pose, vandalize and brutalize, the audience is forced to identify more and more with the teacher and his growing frustration and rage. When the gang rapes and abducts his wife, one feels so much revulsion and disgust that there is little problem in joining the teacher emotionally in massacring the gang. Our heads may not approve, our emotions may be disgusted but the film makes the gut consent to what we see.

By the time the gang is dead and the bloodied teacher rescues his wife, I, for one, felt physically better for having experienced the horrendous denouement. I had no intention of massacring anyone, but there had been a real catharsis.

“Unreal”, “exploitive” and “sentimental” are all apt words to describe the film. Yet, the invitation to identify with frustration, anger and rage, and their eruption is compelling. Furthermore, the purging of this rage by visual violence is very strong.

Mark L. Lester’s films have usually had a drive-in release in Australia. Distributors have seen them as tough actioners that will please the drive-in audiences like any other exploiter. The films then disappeared, although Truckstop Women has had some Melbourne University screenings and Stunts, his most respectable film, has been shown on television. In a Monthly Film Bulletin review of Truckstop Women, Tony Rayns wrote: “Truckstop Women carves its way jovially through a great deal of B-feature territory, investing the contemporary girl gang exploiter with strong reminiscences of ‘Fifties Westerns and small gangster movies, so that its appeal is at once nostalgic and very up-to-
Lester is an exploiter. He knows what creates this is true of all Lester's films and helps as an strong emotional involvement and what keeps they take for granted an appreciation of genres

Lester is linked with the B-budget genre films, which, in recent years, have come in for reappraisal. Without denying their use of stereotypes and cliche, one can acknowledge their power, and that they take for granted an appreciation of genres and their conventions.

The filmmakers know that if they suggest a convention vividly enough, the audience will recognize it, supply its own background and move with it. Cliches may be truths told too often or too trivially, but they are truths nonetheless. Similarly, conventions and stereotypes are authentic devices which have been over-used or used too tritely. But audiences quickly recognize the conventions — and relish this recognition — with a kind of automatic response which governs how they continue to respond. The audience accepts the conventions and becomes involved with the film.

Some audiences, however, who like to keep their distance, often identify the convention that gives them a feeling of instant superiority to the film. But even in the act of looking down on a convention, a critical audience acknowledges that the stereotypes do their work, something which the astute director (or exploitive director, deciding whether you are for or against him) can presume.

Lester chooses impact by action and convention rather than by speeches and reflection, although this film is not without its rhetorical regrets about contemporary society. He chooses gut response before intellectual response. A moment's recall of his previous films highlights this. Steel Arena and Stunts relied on the visual impact of speed, risks, danger and deaths to communicate how stuntmen ticked, especially in action. Stunts had the pluses of a murder mystery and love story to gain a larger audience.

Truckstop Women and Bobbie Jo and the Outlaw (which villain Peter Stegman [Timothy van Patten] is watching on television in Class of 1984) were action stories of tough women (and men) with their own codes of behaviour apart from the law in an exploitive, ugly world. Lester is also a film-buff director. Allusions or quotations can delight as well as serve as quick cross-references to themes and responses (both: pro and con) to other films. Watching Class of 1984, one is compelled (even without the hints of the advertisers) to remember Blackboard Jungle as well as To Sir with Love, Up the Down Staircase and other school films.

The kids assemble for classes in a style reminiscent of Grease (with an ironic twist as the drug-high boy plummets to death with the Stags and Stripes-from the school flagpole). There is an underpass gang confrontation echoing West Side Story. The psychotic gang is a bizarre variation on The Warriors, The Wanderers and the teenagers in The Omen. The lone crusade of the teacher with his private vigilantism echoes Death Wish.

The audience that Lester's films draw have some familiarity with these films and the allusions make ironic comment on Lincoln High and its problems.

But exactly what audience is Lester aiming at? The information offered at the opening of the film is tongue-in-cheek grim. One is told of 200,000 incidents of violence in high schools and that the story is based on fact. But, Lester reassures the audience, schools are not like Lincoln High — yet! There is the ominous choice of 1984 as the year of the title.

In its often spectacular domestic violence, may see the film as part warning, part mirror and as yet another film showing how authority and law are inadequate: a headmaster, who enjoys closed circuit television surveillance of the school corridors and the ability to send security guards to trouble-spots by intercom, sides with students rather than his staff. The law requires incontrovertible evidence by sight or action before charges can be laid against the gang members. From this point of view, society, as well as its assailants, is sick. The only same way of self-protection or justice is in violence.

This is the language of the right and of moral majorities. But because a large group in power upholds a view, it is a fallacy to assume that all cannot be found to bring against him. The line is that no one saw anyone actually do anything and so charges cannot be proven.

The film, though seemingly action-exploitive material of the drive-in type, does not appear to be catering for the teenage audience but for the adult and middle-aged audience. Teenagers might be tempted for a while to identify with Stegman and his anti-establishment stances, and his group's punk appearance and behaviour. But it soon emerges that they are bullies, local gangsters and quite psychotic.

Bikies interviewed after a 1979 preview of Mad Max told television reporters that they did not care for the film because it was unrealistically in its presentation of bike groups. Similarly, members of gangs are not likely to identify with Stegman's group. The average teenager, like the victim teenagers in the film, is probably not interested in seeing this kind of film anyway.

In catering for the adult audience, the film chooses acceptable targets. It parodies the widow, who is blind to the behaviour of the rotten son she has spoilt, and the inert principal. It is critical of, but kinder to, the police, whose hands are tied because of the law and their profession.

On the other hand, the adults who are to be identified with are the idealistic, committed, talented teacher and his pregnant wife, and Corrigan (Roddy McDowall), the frustrated, comic biology teacher who goes off the deep end, because he can't teach any more. The film appeals to the middle-of-the-road professional who identifies with work, is committed to people and who is frustrated by bureaucrats and boors. The film, then, could even be accused of sentimentality in its presumptions about who are the good guys and how black are their foes.

In fact, just as Death Wish appeals to the preservation of lifestyle and values as we know and want them, so this film is definitely on the side of the establishment in terms of education, personal growth, culture and tradition. The American High School (Lincoln, of course) is defaced, degraded by the bureaucrats and boors. "Moon River" and the "1812 Overture" are the music for the class to work on, in the hope of recognition by the city's symphony authorities. The group that causes havoc in the school is made up of only five individuals (though they recruit a 14-year-old hit-and-stub

The gang prepares to rape the wife of the school teacher. Class of 1984.

The terror continues: Mrs and Mr Norris (Perry King). Class of 1984.


who voice sentiments that sound similar are endorsing the same political stances. It might be argued that Norris is pursuing decency within the law and a sense of justice rather than wanting to be a member of a private law-enforcement agency. This is further endorsed by the ironic comment at the end of the film that the hero is not charged for his killing of the gang because the same incontrovertible evidence man and a would-be call girl. The principal comments explicitly that it is the disruptive minority that gets so much attention.

But by focusing on the pleasant hero battling for what he thinks is best, Lester is able to communicate anger to his adult audience and make them share the rage. The gang is insolent.
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SOUND MIXING

Julian Ellingworth discusses the new Atlab mixing theatre.

The Australian film and commercial industries have been fortunate to have had a tradition of invention and a supply of creative technicians and audio-engineers which have compensated for the lack of the latest equipment. But with the opening of another stereo sound film mixing facility in Sydney, Australia is now being serviced by audio post-production of a quality that will allow it to present its material at a standard equal to any in the world.

The continuing improvement in the quality of theatre sound equipment, with the installation of stereo sound and Dolby noise reduction systems, has created demand by local and overseas markets that must be met. The improved sound systems are also increasing the range of subtleties that a producer and director can call upon, and this in turn places demands on the operators.

Julian Ellingworth is the chief mixer at Atlab and it was at the opening of its new mixing theatre that Ian Wilson was able to interview him and follow this double theme of craft and technology. Ellingworth begins by discussing his entry into the film industry.

I left school in 1961 and did six months chartered accountancy, before getting a job at Artransa Film Studios in the accounts department under Keith Williams. But it didn’t take long before I found myself spending more time in the sound department and in the animation department where the tracers were. I became fairly interested in production and I finally managed to enquire Gus Lowry into getting me into it. He could see I was wasting everybody’s time in accounts.

The first job I had was as a director’s assistant to Alec Ezard on The Adventurers. It was about three young children, one of whom was played by the 12-year-old Sonia Hoffman.

After that I went into the editing room with Paul Bushby and learnt how to synchronize rushes, and bits and pieces like that. Then came a time of reenoughments and I was the first to go, being fairly expendable.

I then worked for Les Kelroy, who had a Nagra, for a while. People would ring him up and say they needed a sound recordist; one day I said, “This is it. I’ll take this Nagra and record sound.” So I went to record on the Cinesound sound stage, with Lloyd Shields on camera, for an episode of Memoirs. I forget which episode it was but it was being made for Channel 10. The sound must have been all right because they asked me to come back to work on it again.

I became a freelance recordist on the strength of that. In the famous words of Peter Fenton [mixer at United Sound], I had a Nagra and a road book and I was off and running. I freelanced for a while and eventually got a three-month contract at Film Australia as a location recordist, a contract which ran for about three years.

Eventually I joined the staff and went on location to New Guinea and all around Australia.

However, I got heartily sick of standing around or sitting on camera cases waiting for the lights to be set up or for people to make up their minds about which way the eye line should be! I became so bored I decided I would try studio work and do the mixing; at least I was involved, pushing knobs up and down, while others sat around.

I was at Film Australia for a total of 10 years; I left shortly after my long service leave, so I guess I was mixing for about eight years.

During my leave I worked for United Sound. Although I intended going overseas on a study tour, I only got as far as Pier St. They were getting busy with Barry McKenzie Holds His Own and the second Alvin Purple.

It was a great experience working with Peter Fenton. He was doing things differently. In Film Australia, it was just “face-up and record ‘em”. When I went to United, they were recording Hollywood-style on the three-track. It was new, exciting and a lot easier. You were able to do things that you would get frustrated trying to do when recording from 16mm.

Then I got bogged down working on Luke’s Kingdom. I was doing effects for three months and I got the shits again. So I went back to Film Australia and worked there for another year while they were setting up the new mixing theatre. Armed with my knowledge of United Sound, I designed the mixing console.

The console was made by Neve, which cost a fortune, and ergonomically was my idea of how a console should be laid out. Because I had worked at United Sound for 12 months, I figured I was an expert.

It was designed about six or seven years ago and now is actually out-of-date for stereo films, though it has been doing them quite successfully. They have done Mad Max 2, Freedom, Starstruck, Dead Easy, The Pirate Movie and a few others.

After leaving Film Australia, I freelanced for a while as a mixer. At the same time, I became interested in stereo mixing and applied for a Commonwealth Film Commission Grant for assisted passage overseas. Much to my surprise, because I had never won an award before, they said “Sure!” It wasn’t a lot of money, just enough for an around-the-world ticket and about $50 a day.

I was away for six weeks and watched some stereo mixing in Hollywood and London. I picked up an enormous amount of information and a lot of tricks about how the rest of the world operates.

Did they welcome you?

Yes. I was not allowed into a couple of films because the directors were a bit ‘anti’, but, through Ron Purvis’ contacts in Hollywood, I was able to see quite a few films. I saw them do The Muppet Movie which I felt should have been done in about one quarter of the time.

I watched Bill Barney, who won the Academy for Raiders of the Lost Ark.
and Samuel Golds who was mixing Rocky II. I also saw Altman's studio in which Dick Portman was mixing Rich Kids. Dick was nominated and won an Academy for Ordinary People.

So I saw a lot of top people. It was interesting to compare what they did and what they had to put up with, with what we do.

What were the differences?

Some of the studios, which will remain nameless, tended to have two and three guys sitting behind the panel and, if something went wrong, they just went to "(goddamn)" around for a few minutes. They would then walk until a tribe of thousands walked in and they then all had an argument. They would then go away and do things, and two hours later the mix would start again. It seemed to me that they had more time on their hands than they needed.

Was there an inefficient hierarchy?

Yes. Certainly there were a lot of guys behind the panel. I watched them on one film spending four hours getting one music sequence ready, and there was nothing to it: there was just stereo music and a vocal track. They played it to make sure it was the right vocal, then played it again; then they called the music editor in who listened to it and said he thought it was right but they should get somebody else. So they went and got another mix in the music studio and hauled it over and sunk it up.

The number of people who became involved seemed to me to be a bit beyond the pale. It would have been better to have carried the reel and gone on with something else instead of farting around for four hours.

How do you stop that happening in Australia?

Well that is exactly what we don't do here. If there is a debate going on, we would go on to something else because we just simply don't have the time not to.

They were looking at a six-week mix on a film which didn't need that long. I had done the trip and learnt what I thought was quite a lot—a good grounding in Dolby stereo—but I was still not at the point where I could really throw down the gauntlet and say, "Yes, I can do it. I'm the man to bring it to this country." But I did come back thinking it would be interesting and I did know more about stereo than I had before.

However, there wasn't a lot of work happening at United Sound when I came back. So I went and talked to Bob Epping at Ablab. Eventually I joined the organization in September 1979. From that point on it was a dream to build a bigger and better sound studio at Ablab.

In all fairness, I guess the dream was to build it bigger and better and quicker than anybody. We knew Film Australia was getting going and we figured United Sound would do something eventually. It was just a matter of where we did it and how.

We had a few problems building the ideal studio because of space limitations. There was talk about moving the complex elsewhere, but it was decided to keep it "in-house", even though we are at Epping, at least the whole thing is under one roof.

The project started to take shape in October 1981. We started to finalize the design. And allowing you to rehearse as many times as you like.

In effect, it is replacing your memory, freeing you from writing and revising dubbing charts . . .

And allowing you to rehearse as many times as you would like, rather than saying, "Let's go for a take." This way I can guarantee that the final mix will last exactly the time the footage runs, because we will rehearse for an hour to get it right.

In Melbourne, where there is no decent set-up, the sound is transferred at one place and mixed at another. What do you think about the

The Quad-Eight mixing console in the the Ablab sound theatre.
sound recordist having a supervisory role in this situation?

I think it would be dangerous to bring in a sound recordist on a job. There are times when it could work, but I know there have been times when it has caused exasperating friction. I know of situations when the dialogue recordist has been at the mix and has been convinced that there was better take of something, or that it should have been equalized, and the mixer has said, "Thank you but I'm mixing this film!"

Do you think there is anything positive about having a sound supervisor?

What there should be is a pre-production conference with the location recordist, mixer and dubbing editor discussing how to handle the stereo mix. You discuss what it will be an advantage to use what will be a waste of time. This is useful because you can suggest that they should get stereo sound in any way that is possi­ble, what things are good to cover, etc.

We also talk then about whether to use Dolby for the transfers in the initial stages, which the Dolby people say you should do. We have decided that there is a waste of time because it is a fact that the dubbing editor has to work with the Dolby encoder, which, when you screen them anywhere else, sounds whisplike — the inter­lines don't sound right.

There also needs to be a big sound post-production conference, especially when using stereo, to talk about whether you are going to re-transfer all the sound later or encode it in Dolby first or whatever. But I don't think the sound recordist needs to be at the mix.

However, we do need to involve the music people more because we still get the situation where the music guy says, "I thought that was a music sequence" and the dubbing mixer says, "What are you talking about? It is World War 3 and we are going to have effects." But we are getting better.

In terms of the optical transfer of the Dolby track, there are fewer complications than with the mono track. For years, mono tracks have been a matter of listen to the mix but, if it needs a bit of mid­lift or a bit of compression, don't tell the dubbing mixer, AAV's Brian Hughes, with songs by Melbourne com­poser Peter Best.

The sound for many new films today requires planning and experimentation to keep up with the complex special effects techniques used", says Laurence.

AAG has been involved in Australian films such as Mad Max, Mad Max 2, The Blue Lagoon, The Pirate Movie, The Man From Snowy River, The Clinic, We of the Never Never, Kitty and the Bagman and Goodbye Paradise.

Magic Sound for “Abra Cadabra”

The soundtrack for Abra Cadabra, the world's first 3-D animated feature film with Dolby Stereo sound, is being recorded at AAV-Australia in Melbourne, after being composed by Adams-Packker Films and producer –director Laurence "AAG in Melbourne composer Laurence. "It will finally be mixed down to four tracks for cleaning, analyzing, printing and processing.

As the media worlds focus their attention on the new video techniques of tape, cassette and disc, we are only an exposing ourselves. We are making it sound good and to hell with what the mixer says.

That is what you have to do well, you have to be able to compress it for the optical. You can't tell them that the film is no good, because in the studio it sounds great.

With stereo it is slightly different. You are mixing through a much tighter –controlled Dolby system and, by the time you do your two track transfer to magnetic, it is limited. There is no way you can exceed certain boundaries. Whenever you have a film to go to the optical camera you line up the Dolby tone, 50 per cent on the camera, press button A then button B, the transfer goes straight across and you can’t tamper with it. That is the first time that has ever happened!

Do you see any improvement in sight for 16mm optical tracks?

They could also use stereo for cable television release, which would solve some of the problems. There are limita­tions, of course, because of the speed of 16mm. It is more difficult to resolve the tighter waveform on 16mm. There is no way to solve the non-standard print problems: 16mm was invented as a

reversal medium years ago and no one intended professionals to get in on it. Now the same thing is happening with 8mm: they want 8mm optical tracks for in-flight movies!

Are there any technical reasons why a stereo mix would need to be done overseas?

No. Certainly they have the expertise from having done a million films, but they are probably going to take a hell of a lot longer than we will. We guess we are more enthusiastic, particularly now that stereo Dolby is here. We have to prove that we can make films that are as good.

Rank’s Longer Length Printing

As the media worlds focus their attention on the new video techniques of tape, cassette and disc, we are only a exposing ourselves. We are making it sound good and to hell with what the mixer says.

That is what you have to do well, you have to be able to compress it for the optical. You can’t tell them that the film is no good, because in the studio it sounds great.

With stereo it is slightly different. You are mixing through a much tighter –controlled Dolby system and, by the time you do your two track transfer to magnetic, it is limited. There is no way you can exceed certain boundaries. Whenever you have a film to go to the optical camera you line up the Dolby tone, 50 per cent on the camera, press button A then button B, the transfer goes straight across and you can’t tamper with it. That is the first time that has ever happened!

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which is simply to take two reels or parts, splice them into an endless loop sup­ported on elevators, and print and process, say, 100 or 200 prints of the same reel(s) before moving on to other reels. This process exaggerates the pro­cessing variables by increasing the time between printing and processing succes­sive parts of the same copy.

Rank Film Laboratories, through its R & D Group, has found a method of over­coming this and other deficiencies in bulk release printing. It has succeeded in:

- eliminating poor color matching in change-overs;
- eliminating stock joins requiring removal of frames or strengthening by back­tape;
- minimizing handling and simplifying movement of negatives; and
- reducing or eliminating accumulations of particular matter, especially at the beginning and end of reels.

Achieving this required an expenditure of $1,600,000, the invention of new equip­ment and the creation of a total system whereby a complete film of up to two hours and 25 minutes (4000 m) could be printed and processed in one pass, a condition which allows the grading at a reel change-over to be as accurate and fixed for all release prints as the grading within each reel.

New equipment was needed to handle the clearing and reworking of negative or positive film rolls of feature length. The specially designed equipment cleans negative or positive film rolls of any length; negatives are spliced together on the cleaner-rewind and then wound on to a large 46 cm centre core by a modular winder, creating a true-and-hard roll which needs no side supports or flanges.

To cope with both the size and weight of these 4000 m lengths, purpose-built trolleys transport up to four of these rolls simultaneously between the different locations for cleaning, analyzing, printing and processing.

The process is as follows: the negative is examined, cleaned at a speed of more than 100 m per minute to remove all minute particular matter, and then timing and cueing information is compiled by computer prior to printing.

Raw stock lengths are created to suit the corresponding negative rolls and splices are predetermined to fall exactly on the frame line (becoming invisible on projection). Because this stage is separate from the printing machine cycle, it means that rolls can be made up in advance, removing a complete operation from the printing cycle.

Checks and controls during printing are all computerized; the microcomputer that is used contains its own diagnostic pro­grams and can tell you where any elec­tronic or mechanical problems.

After the printed roll is completed, it is transported to the processing machine and, using a modular film winder, is fed into the developing machine as a whole copy.

As the developed print comes off the developing machine it is viewed, checked, broken down into double reels and shipped in the normal manner. The feature-length negative rolls are safely stored on their centre cores in the vertical position for maximum security.

As well as benefiting the filmgoer, Rank claims real benefits from the effective use of laboratory resources. Unlike looping methods which delay completion until the last reel has been processed, the Rank system is capable of integrating large and small print runs without difficulty, thereby allowing the earliest possible delivery of parts orders.

Rank Film Laboratories presented this longer length printing system to the SMPTE Conference in 1981. It represents a major contribution to ensuring constant print quality for every filmgoer. Although, in itself, this system will not change the future of cinema exhibition, it is con­sidered a positive step forward.

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

An explanatory key to reasons for classifying non-“G” films appears hereunder:

Frequency

Explicitness/intensity

Purpose

S (Sex) / V (Violent) / L (Language) / O (Other)

In frequent

Low

Medium

High

Justified

Gratuitous

Trip To The (vocated) T. Trim, U.S., 1928.00 m, Cinevista Films, Vff-m-g)

M (Moral)

For Restricted Exhibition (R)

Anybody’s Woman (Super 8: B. Gordon, U.S., 185.00 m, Australian Film Institute, Lff-m-g)

For Mature Audiences (M)

USA, 1947.00 m, Consolidated Exhibitors, Lff-m-g)

For Restricted Exhibition (R)

Dracula Erotica: H. Schwartz, U.S., 2203.15 m, Blake Cameron, For Restricted Exhibition (R)

Dreaded: 4.5 metres (10 sec)

For Mature Audiences (M)

Dracula Erotica (vocated revised version) (16mm): H. Schwartz, U.S., 2207.00 m, For Restricted Exhibition (R)

Dreaded: 5 metres (10 sec)

For Mature Audiences (M)

Films refused registration

Boys In The Sand (pre-censor cut version) (16mm): T. Chu, Taiwan, 2304.12 m, Golden Reel Films, O fem (adult thematic)

Dreaded: 5.5 metres (30 sec)

For Mature Audiences (M)

The Sadie (unlisted) E. Fechner, W. Germany, 2726.97 m, For Restricted Exhibition (R)

Dreaded: 8 metres (13 sec)

For Mature Audiences (M)

Cinevista Films, Vff-m-g)

Dreaded: 6 metres (12 sec)

For Mature Audiences (M)

Cinematograph Films, Vff-m-g)

Dreaded: 5.5 metres (30 sec)

For Mature Audiences (M)

Cima de Besos, U.S., 2008.00 m, Impact Films, Vff-m-g)

Dreaded: 5 metres (10 sec)

For Mature Audiences (M)

Cinema Papers, U.S., 1962.00 m, Fox Colombia Film Dist., Vff-m-g)

Dreaded: 10 metres (20 sec)

For Mature Audiences (M)

Cinematograph Films, Vff-m-g)

Dreaded: 6 metres (12 sec)

For Mature Audiences (M)

Cinema Papers, U.S., 1962.00 m, Fox Colombia Film Dist., Vff-m-g)

Dreaded: 5.5 metres (30 sec)

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Prod. company: Independent Prods

Producer: Geoff Gardner

Role: Andrew Loy

Scriptwriter: Charlie Stopp

Sound: David Connelly

Prod. coordinator: Bronson Ludlow

Prod. account: Penny Layard

Prod. assistant: Carmen Duncan (Margaret Davis), Bill Kerr

Director: Jonathan Radcliff

Continuity: Jacqueline Saunders

Mystery: Ms. J. Saunders

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Stunts coordinator: Vic Wilson

Assoc, producer: Russell Hurley

NEXT OF KIN

Prod companies: The Filth Haus, The Filth Haus

Prod crew: Robert Le Talbot, Terry Anderson

Starring: Robert Le Talbot, Terry Anderson

Based on the original idea by Terry Anderson

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Director Mark Sanders
Screenwriter Nancy Walkhur
Producer Bynon Gayge

SYNOPSIS

The Whales are under threat, and the Sea Conservation Society is trying to save them.

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Lonely Hearts

Keith Connolly

Paul Cox's *Lonely Hearts* is a neat compendium of attainable virtues, and the Australian Film Institute majority who voted it Best Film of 1982 no doubt appreciated this fact. A sad little social comedy with moments of anarchic gaiety, *Lonely Hearts* is clear-eyed in conception, thoughtfully executed, and places its somewhat implausible comic situation in a recognizably commonplace milieu.

Though the characters are unmistakably Australian, the most xenophobic filmgoer in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, will have little difficulty in relating to them or their problems.

Although the film has arcane interludes, not at all in keeping with its otherwise wryly realistic tone, they aren't as subversive of the whole as might be imagined. For one thing, these sequences work well as comedy. More important, they also reinforce the film's tragi-comical textual assertion that individuals trapped in externally-imposed life-roles are likely to break out by whatever eccentric means are at their disposal. Hence, the male lonely-heart shoplifts and pretends to be blind, while his ladylike counterpart, totally against the grain of a lifetime of complaisance, accepts the lead role in an amateur production of Strindberg.

These individuals are Peter Thompson (Norman Kaye), a 50-year-old bachelor piano-tuner, and Patricia Curnow (Wendy Hughes), a shy, mousy, but younger, bank clerk. They meet through a grasping introduction service and the film charts the uneven course of a diffident romance. It is a less-than-novel subject, ripe for caricature, but Cox, maintaining a basically humorous premise, invests it with warmth, sympathy and understanding.

Peter appears to have gone through life doing everything expected of him by his mother (whose funeral opens the film), his domineering sister (Julia Blake) and others. There is a suggestion, too, that Peter has been only too ready to shelter his inhibitions behind a dog-in-the-manger eagerness to please just about everybody from his ailing mother to the local elderly citizens' club.

Patricia, only child of an overbearing father (Vic Gordon) and fusspot mother (Irene Inescourt), has recently moved into her own flat — obviously with the disapproval of her parents.

Free for the first time of parental constraints and demands, Peter and Patricia now take what social norms (and their own expectations) regard as the next step: they nervously seek a partner of the opposite sex, not necessarily to marry, but certainly with something more than casual acquaintance in mind. Life-tasting isn't easy for either of these shy, repressed, sexually hung-up people. Their first outings, at Peter's instigation, include visits to his mother's grave and his weekly bingo night.

The characters are, of course, hyperbolic, but there is a little of Peter and Patricia in many Australians of their age-range. It is precisely this core of probability that makes the sweet'n'sour humor of *Lonely Hearts* so telling. The two suffer various hesitations, misunderstandings and false starts, through which the screenplay (by Cox and John Clarke) pilots them with a nice mixture of artifice and simplicity.

As well as having to clamber over social and personal hurdles, the pair must deal with the disapproval of their nearest and dearest — in particular, Peter's interfering and bossy sister and Patricia's bossy and interfering Dad.

Cox and Clarke concoct a small but effective drama, when Peter is caught for shoplifting, to resolve the couple's emotional deadlock. It also places in perspective several oddities of behaviour, seen earlier, which ultimately...
Three Brothers

Paulo Weinberger

Francesco Rosi’s latest film, Tre fratelli (Three Brothers), even considering the quality and originality of most of Rosi’s previous films (Salvatore Giuliano and Il caso Matteli [The Mattei Affair], to mention two), comes as a very positive surprise.

Whereas most of Rosi’s films were made with a political perspective, based either on facts — Salvatore Giuliano (1961), Le mani sulla città (Hands Over the City, 1963), The Mattei Affair (1972) and Lucky Luciano (1973) — or on works of fiction — Uomini contro (1970), Cadaveri eccellenti (Illustrious Corpses/The Context, 1976) and Cristo si è fermato a Eboli (Christ Stopped at Eboli, 1979) — this time Rosi and co-writer Tonino Guerra have created an original script, which has been translated into a creative film.

Although there are similarities in atmosphere and feeling between Three Brothers and Christ Stopped at Eboli, the scope of this film transcends that of the previous one. It is the result of a broader and deeper, more symbolic and innovatory approach, which draws forth different levels of interpretation.

Twenty years ago, when filming Salvatore Giuliano, Rosi had the idea of telling the story of an Italian family from the South. To this Rosi and co-writer Tonino Guerra have added a narrative key, taken from The Third Son, a short story by the Russian writer Andrei Platonov: an old man sends a telegram to each of his sons informing them of their mother’s death, and they all come to the funeral.

The Donato Giovanni family (Charles Vanel) is the old father, a peasant from Puglia, who has seen all his sons leave the white stone family farmhouse and go to different cities in Italy.

The eldest, Raffaele (Philippe Noiret), was given the best possible education, sent to university, and is usually the case with the second son of a Southern Italian family. He is a teacher in a Naples reformatory for problem children and has been approached by the police to find out which of the children have been making trouble at night, “stealing or doing something worse”, as a policeman puts it.

The youngest brother, Nicola (Michele Placido), who was expected to stay and work on the farm with his parents, rebelled and left for Turin in search of the dream of the factory in the North. He is an assembly-line worker who takes an active part in the union’s struggle for better working conditions and is being threatened with dismissal. From his broken marriage with a Northern girl, he has an eight-year-old daughter, Marta (Marta Zoffoli), whom he takes with him to the farmhouse.

Three Brothers opens with a still shot of a white wall of a building, with the windows looking like dark holes, or empty eye sockets. The subsequent image is a close-up of rats in a city rubbish dump, which one soon learns is part of a dream of Rocco’s.

The fact is that Rocco is the first character to appear on the screen is symbolic; he is the son closest to his old father, the first to arrive and embrace the old man in his grief, and the only one to stay by his side during mourning. They even look alike, a fact that is emphasized by Mezzogiorno acting both as Rocco and as the young Donato in scenes of their memories.

Raffaele is the second one to arrive, and he is clearly less attached to his father than Rocco and tends to be much more composed.

With the arrival of Nicola and Marta, the three brothers finally are brought together after a long separation and gradually their significant differences are unravelled.

Raffaele strongly believes that Italy’s democracy is being threatened by terrorism; Nicola is an activist
Three Brothers

The political issues have become secondary. As Rosi puts it, "The film talks first and foremost about love: love for a little girl; love for nature, for one's own dignity, for the demands one must impose oneself when faced by specific choices." 1

This is why Marta's closeness to her grandfather is an important aspect of the film. In one scene, the girl answers, still crying, "We are going to be rich. We are going to live in a big house. We are going to have a rubbish pile, with a view of a canvas, a horse in a crossbow (in which I am), a little girl; love for nature, for one's own dignity, for the demands one must impose oneself when faced by specific choices." 2

The acting also is superb, particularly Charles Vanel's performance — the natural world about him: . . . the camera hones in on and then tracks up to frame Rocco's eyes which in the early part of the film seem almost silent sobbing, and it is Marta who asks, "Are you crying?" "I've stopped." The embarrassed grandfather dries his tears with a handkerchief saying, "I'm not crying, it's just sweat." 3

Another fine moment occurs when Marta stays with her grandfather, standing in the coffin at the funeral, and finds an egg on the ground and gives it to the old man. A close-up of this gesture — is this a symbol of the seed of life — conveys an optimistic feeling for the future, survival, the potential of childhood and old age, found by Marta's innocence and Donato's simple wisdom of an old man.

The symmetrical dreams of the three brothers are also very effective. Nicola dreams of Marta's mother and overcoming his pride in the face of another man; he sees himself going to bed with Raffaele. Raffaele falls asleep while looking at the photograph of his own wedding ring on the beach when reminiscences, his young wife loses her哩

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The publican (Tex Morton), Jeannie Quinn (Angela Punch McGregor) and Mac (Tony Barry) before the final stage of the journey to Elsey Station. Igor Auins' We of the Never Never.

The actress' range even when the diffused screenplay is giving her the slightest assistance. Instead, it usually asks only cliche responses of her and she is unable, by her physical presence or by a sense of inner conviction, to transcend these. Against her unexpressive, inflexible performance, Arthur Dignam's intelligent brick-building with the script's straws goes for little, and the sense of relationship goes out the window.

The idea of the white woman establishing herself in this remote male world founders on the script's banalities as well as on McGreggor's inappropriateness: In the opening scene Jeannie is warned, "You must never lose your femininity!" and "Don't try to be a mate to him", but the promising irony — as one takes it to be — of this scene is not pursued. The resistance to Jeannie's presence in the man's world is of course worn down by what we assume to be courage and resourcefulness. In fact, the film hardly seems interested in her role as a woman: there is a promise of warmth of feeling between her and the black woman Rosie, but this relationship is not developed; in stilly written and played dialogue scenes, she asserts her willingness to do her own domestic work in the face of Aneas' opposition; and there are shots of her sitting solitary by lamplight or walking alone against the sky while the men are away for some days. But these are all perfunctory references; there is no sense of Auins or Schreck's having considered using the white woman's situation in a male-dominated world as an organizing narrative principle.

Similarly, the film raises the racial issue but does nothing about it. It is again a matter of scattered remarks and incidents: of Jeannie's being told she'll 'spoil 'em' if she offers trousers to the Aboriginals who do her garden; of the black women mainly presented as feeble, unreliable creatures; of Jeannie's bringing Bett-Bett into the house despite Aneas' claim that 'you can't take her away from her people'; and so on. There is an attempt to lift this sporadic interest to the level of philosophy. So trip to Peter Goggle-Eye (Donald Blitner) from dying: "I'm sick of people telling me there's nothing I can do." When he dies, she asks for an anachronism, "Where did we go wrong?"

The jeuness of the film's racial brown fingers gently uproot a small plant, while a rabbit looks on unaffected. One of the goblins wanders to the rim of the valley and gazes in wonder at the sprawling grid of shimmering lights of the city below.

Suddenly, large, noisy trucks and painfully bright headlights shatter the tranquility of the forest. Immediately the aliens prepare to lift-off to avoid detection, but the wanderer is too far away and frantically tries to avoid the large, lumbering figures with their searching torches. The aliens wait till the last possible second and leave just as the errant is in sight. The human beings watch in stunned amazement as the vehicle soars heavenward, while little E.T., gasping for breath, sighs mournfully.

Stranded on an alien world, E.T. quietly slips away from the human beings who are now hunting him. Waddling down into the valley, he scavenges in rubbish bins for food until he is discovered by 10-year-old Elliott (Henry Thomas), in the boy's backyard. Elliott's parents have recently separated; he is lonely and confused in his own home, the home of an empathic bond that starts with E.T., but what he feels is not simply that of friendship or love, it is an empathic bond that starts with E.T. The completeness of this bond is brought home when Elliott replies that "We're all right" to Michael's observation that E.T. looks ill. In the audience's eyes, this bond become that as E.T.'s health deteriorates so does Elliott's. Only when E.T. faces near death does the bond weaken.

Spielberg, for the most part, depicts the adults in the film as shadowy figures and, as far as the children are concerned, seemingly bent on mischief — Elliott's 'faceless' biology teacher, for example, and, to a greater extent, the 'agents' who hunt E.T. and whose intentions are never really known until the end. Even Elliott's mother Mary (Dee Wallace) is all but oblivious to the setting our hearts

E.T. The Extraterrestrial

Robert Conn

The stars are twinkling brightly in the night sky. In a secluded clearing a redwood forest on the outskirts of Los Angeles, an alien spacecraft sits, humming softly. Small figures can be seen inside, illuminated by the soft lights encircling the craft. Long, delicate, Jaws, making us gasp in awe with Close Encounters, setting our hearts racing in Raiders of the Lost Ark and just plain terrifying us with Poltergeist, Spielberg has reached into his heart and back into his childhood memories and constructed a film that is both exhilarating and deeply moving. It has great simplicity, sharing the basic themes of those early and child stories, such as The Yearling, with strong echoes of Peter Pan. E.T. is the lost animal, the stranger from a strange land, the secret that grown-ups cannot see and whom the children must aid in any way they can, just as Tinker Bell would die if they did not believe in fairies.

E.T. is about love, it is about children — about their innocence and their surprising unselfing strength. To help E.T., Elliott, Michael and Gertie must defy adult authority, take matters into their own hands and use their own suppressed natural abilities to change their previously 'unchangeable' circumstances, all for the love of E.T.

Although he has been abandoned by his father, Elliott finds in E.T. one who is even more alone, and more in need of a friend than himself. This compels Elliott, and his brother and sister, to face the serious responsibility of helping E.T. stay alive and to help him in any way to contact his ship. They must also keep him from being discovered by the 'grown-ups', who, they believe, would only misunderstand and perhaps experiment on him.

Although E.T. is physically vulnerable, he possesses great mental powers. He soon learns to talk, in halting fashion, with the help of Gertie and Sesame Street, and constructs a signaling device using levitation. The relationship between E.T. and Elliott is not simply that of love or friendship; to Elliott, E.T. is a mate to him; but the promiscuity of this bond starts with E.T.'s health and Elliott's. Only when E.T. faces near death does the bond weaken.

Spielberg, for the most part, depicts the adults in the film as shadowy figures and, as far as the children are concerned, seemingly bent on mischief — Elliott's 'faceless' biology teacher, for example, and, to a greater extent, the 'agents' who hunt E.T. and whose intentions are never really known until the end. Even Elliott's mother Mary (Dee Wallace) is all but oblivious to the incredible things happening around her. She does not see E.T. hiding in Elliott's closet among the other toys or scampering around her feet in the kitchen. She is too busy. Although she is the adult personified in the film, she also has lost her 'child's eyes' and fulfills Elliott's promise to Gertie that 'grown-ups can't see them'.

E.T. is set in typical American suburbia, an environment that Spielberg uses well, and where he grew up, and where he started to tell his stories on film. He seems to enjoy injecting the cosmos into people's backyards, juxtaposing the ordinary with the

1. Produced by Steven Spielberg and directed by Tebe Hooper.

We of the Never Never

Robert Conn

E.T. The Extraterrestrial, his latest and best film to date. After ignoring our instinctive fear of the unknown in
Crosstalk

Geoff Mayer

Scenario: the hero, confined to a wheelchair, discovers that a man, in an apartment in the same building as himself, has murdered his wife. The killer becomes aware that our hero knows of the crime, although nobody will believe him. Sounds familiar? Well, it isn’t — at least not in the hands of director Mark Egerton and scriptwriters Linda Lane and Denis Whitburn. The filmmakers of Crosstalk have gone to inordinate lengths to bury this deceptively simple plot in a film which eschews narrative progression for a visual obsession with computer printouts, glistening metallic surfaces, assorted machines, cars and cameras, and selected household appliances. Certainly the mood of claustrophobia, entrapment, voyeurism and alienation is maintained throughout the film. However, this viewer longed for some human confrontation; every time the narrative would head in this direction, Egerton would cut to the omniscient computer.

The plot is concerned with the machinations of an anonymous corporate group and its financial investment in a sensory computer, the I-500, developed by Ed Ballinger (Gary Day). However, Ballinger is less concerned than the corporate group about the financial ramifications of the project. When a car accident confines him to a wheelchair he loses interest in it — that is, until the computer draws his attention to a murder in a nearby apartment. The computer thereby begins a cat-and-mouse game between the killer, Stollier (John Ewart, superb as ever), and Ballinger.

The early scenes in the film establish an interesting premise: Ballinger’s obsession with his computer. A pre-breakfast argument with his wife Cindy (Penny Downie, conducted on a video hook-up in the house, emphasizes the film’s dominant motif tradition largely ignored since the revival of the industry a decade ago. In this regard, the film works extremely well on occasions as a thriller. An excellent example of this occurs when Ballinger persuades Jane (Kim Deacon), his young and attractive nurse, to search Stollier’s apartment during his absence and attach a bug to his phone. Ballinger, who is watching the monitors that cover the entrance to Stollier’s apartment, is inevitably distracted and the killer arrives home to find Jane trapped inside with the demembered head of Stollier’s wife (Jill Forster) visually prominent in the family clothes dryer.

The important factor is that the narrative works; Egerton and his team demonstrate an awareness of the conventions and the skill required to manipulate the audience to the desired effect. The pity is that the preoccupation with surface imagery and the repetition of the theme of the domination of machine over man allows this narrative drive to slacken, and audience involvement is sacrificed.

It is always a somewhat presumptuous, and totally futile, act to wish that a film incorporate neglected material. However, one cannot resist pointing to a number of missed opportunities, which also could have filled in some of the film’s gaps.

The status of the characters within the film is largely functional in that they are regarded as actants rather than personalities: the crippled, intelligent hero; the understanding wife; the loyal nurse; the sadistic killer; the mercenary corporation head; etc. However, there is sufficient scope within the framework of the drama to create a number of tensions between the characters. For example, Ballinger is cared for during the day by Jane and, on one occasion, kisses her in front of this wife. But this facet of the plot, together with the tension between husband and wife, is essentially ignored by the film.

E.T. The Extraterrestrial

E.T., the extraterrestrial lost on earth. Steven Spielberg’s E.T. The Extraterrestrial.
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Barbarosa
Barrie Pattison

Fred Schepisi’s Barbarosa is a Western shot in the Lajitas area, where the U.S. army was based when fighting Pancho Villa, with additional filming in Brackettsville, the much-modified décor of the Alamagordo. Native Texans Willie Nelson and Gary Busey lead the cast as Barbarosa, a war-weary, renegade Mexican who could have become clearly defined individuals, but which, incidentally, contrasts sharply with that in films from the Mexican community, and Karl, a German immigrant farm boy who teams up with him.

In the opening scenes, the teaming up seems uneasy: Nelson as a grubby, foul-mouthed man and Busey as the fugitive ploughboy fall short of what one has learned to expect from Butch and Sundance. Having been together for a while, however, they become clearly defined individuals, each with a likeable sense of humor.

Even if there is no hurry about putting the elements in order, they combine well. In the first glimpse of Barbarosa, the legendary bandit, he stands apparently unperturbed as a Mexican’s bullet creases his shirt (great effect that, too). It is not until well into the film that he begins to tutor Karl in the business of being a shootist and tells him, “Nothing makes a man more nervous than to see a man standing when he should be running like a spotted ass ape.”

Language is one of the film’s conspicuous features in a script by co-producer William Wittliff, which he wrote 10 years ago. Since then Wittliff has worked on the script of The Black Stallion and has written the much-discussed Raggedy Man, which is being filmed.

The film is full of lines like, “The Mexicans got a saying — what cannot be remedied must be endured” or “You haven’t got enough ass in your britches to pull the trigger on Barbarosa.” Then there are the exchanges between the leads — “I’ve killed a man”, “That ain’t no kind of a recommendation” — or Nelson joking about their parting, “I’m getting all wore out keeping you entertained.”

It has been said that Western dialogue is the only kind of archaic language convincing on film and Barbarosa makes considerable use of verbal set pieces. A local bandido tries to kill Barbarosa who avenges himself by burying the sleeping bandit with only his head clear of the sand — facing the bodies of the two boys he has shot. The villagers compose corridos (ballads) about the event and, listening in hiding, Barbarosa translates the words for Karl, who is inappropiate to the narrative emphasis in which the shadows of his apartment, his wife, and Barbarosa’s murderous wedding night. (“The Zavalas had the desire to kill the gringos but not yet the will.”) The exaggerated sound of the word “shot” is a nice flourish. Once again, one hears a different version much later. Both end with Barbarosa blowing away Don Braulio’s leg below the knee — an adventure: the thorns through which Karl fights his way, with a single drop of his blood falling from them; the bereaved father’s bullets falling to the ground when he realizes he will not be able to re-load in time to kill his son’s murderer; or the home washing, flustered on the line.

Why then did a well-made, entertaining film pitched at a popular audience not do better business? The most likely reason is that all attempts to resurrect the Western have failed — even superior, recent films such as Richard Lang’s Mountain Men, Walter Hill’s The Long Riders and, of course, Michael Cimino’s Heaven’s Gate. Since Vietnam, the perception of the frontier ethic has changed. The pioneer has become imperialist and anti-ecology. The cowboy has become the Ugly American. A generation has grown up unable to understand that material once was considered the most innocent of entertainment.

Barbarosa attempts to debunk the conventions one associates with the genre. However, it too is seduced by the notion of legend, already too self-conscious even in the days when people were taking John Ford’s Man Who Shot Liberty Valance more seriously than it deserved.

The climax calls for Karl to perpetuate Barbarosa’s reputation. This is done in an ingenious, even stirring way. Yet, it fails to impress for several reasons. The audience is already familiar with a variety of these exciting set pieces: e.g., Don Braulio’s son Eduardo (Dany de la Paz) galloping through the rancho gate on the vengeance trail, followed by the camera; and Barbarosa sticking up the seaside cantina. Riding out of history into legend is something one has seen before and not been impressed with.

As anyone who has investigated the back shelves of his neighborhood video store since the days of tax loss and local film commissions in the American states knows, there are a host of regional American features, with a couple of Hollywood stars and a stylish and entertaining gloss, which have sunk without the well-known ripple.

What makes this film of particular interest is that it is the work of Melbourne’s Fred Schepisi who moved to Hollywood, it was said, because local critics failed to take his The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith as seriously as they had his The Devil’s Playground.

Mind you, Schepisi is not the first of the home team to go off to the U.S. and come back with a feature. That distinction belongs to Philippe Mora whose professionally nasty The Beast Within is doing the drive-in circuit.

Bruce Beresford’s Tender Mercies is also due for release.

Schepisi also took along director of photography Ian Baker and composer Bruce Marnet. Their work in this new situation is superior. The changing patterns of light on the desert landscape or the rousing passages in the music give a lift to their scenes. There is no question that Barbarosa is a handsome film.

It is particularly revealing to look at Barbarosa as part of its maker’s output. The Devil’s Playground, like Schepisi’s similarly Catholic episode in Lihito, carried conviction. A naivety, which suggested that the death of a class-mate was less shocking than describing masturbation, did not stop the film from touching nerves. It had the impact of the unfamiliar that convinces one that the makers are dealing in truth rather than traditional attitudes, a quality that outweighs all shortcomings in, say, Craig’s Wife, Are We All Murderers or The Battle of Algiers.

The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith was, on the other hand, an established literary property dealing with the country’s most respectable good cause — oppression of the Aboriginals. The stances were adopted and it showed.

That film’s anti-racism is in vivid contrast to Barbarosa’s depiction of the Mexicans. Yet again they are shown as dirty, thieving, murderously shiftless and whoring, a representation which, incidentally, contrasts sharply with that in films from the Mexican industry.

From the days of William Randolph Hearst’s disputes with the Mexican government, the Hollywood film continues to offer “greaser” characters like the one who tells Tom Mix, “Yankee pig, it is with much pleasure I am going to keel you.” Chris Pin Martin back shooting John Wayne, The Wild Bunch, Break Out, The Border or even Seems Like Old Times,
choosing far from isolated examples. Of all the national groups, only the Taiwanese cop more flak in films.

Lacking a lobby as effective as the NAACP or the supporters of the American Indian, the Spanish-American groups have missed out on the upgrading of image during the past decade, apart from a few, like Robby Benson, Walking Tall or Boulevard Nights. There is Cheech and Chong but they are not quite Sidney Poitier.

This is not to attribute sinister beliefs and motives to Scheipari — or to Sam Peckinpah, Tony Richardson, et al. It does, however, emphasize a problem very evident in the Australian scene: the attractiveness (particularly to subsidy) of commitment to fashionable ideas too superficial to withstand pressure.

Barbarosa does try to balance its image of the Mexicans with Barbarosa’s speeches about the nobility of the Zavala family, notably at odds with the revelation of his dealings with Don Braulio. There is the curious notion of the pursuit as a crusade which has elevated the way of life of the clan: “Then God will put us back in houses made of sticks and mud”, and the use of the crucifix knife (thank you Luis Bunuel).

This undeveloped idea recalls the suggestion of the black minor theme in Jimmie Blacksmith as the good and bad sides of his nature, similarly stated a couple of times without being integrated into the action. It is possible that it made more sense in the longer version of Barbarosa.

The trailer contains footage which does not appear to be in the film and the synopsis describes missing scenes: Barbarosa’s original falling out with the Texas Rangers, killing Karl’s sadistic brother-in-law and the outsmarting of the crooked horse dealer to get his breeding stock for the farm. However, the cuts appear justified, with the film running close to outstaying its welcome at its current length.

Barbarosa’s overall failure is regrettable not because it contains prejudices as superficial as the good intentions of much of the locally-funded material, but because it shows that the front runners in the Australian film scene are capable of operating internationally. They have yet to find a film which will advertise the fact.


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**The Sharkcallers of Kontu**

Sorlin Houas

In The Sharkcallers of Kontu, Dennis O’Rourke takes material that is inherently dramatic and de-dramatizes it to focus on the spiritual meaning behind the magic of shark-calling in the village of Kontu in New Ireland. O’Rourke looks at this ritual in the context of the traditional beliefs and the pressures of change. The result is a complex film, which reveals a web of relationships between the spiritual and physical worlds of the people, and a sensitive relationship between the filmmaker and the shark-callers.

In dealing with shark-calling, O’Rourke carefully integrates it into the texture of daily life. The shark-callers are seen related to the other members of the community, who are subjected to pressures from an outside money economy, changing government and the imposition of Christianity.

The film also places the practice of shark-calling in the context of a belief pattern and its rituals. It is more than a method of catching fish: it is a form of magic, an expression of a relationship with a spiritual world and with the people’s ancestors. Mora, an all-powerful spirit, created the sharks and instructed them to respond only to the calling of the shark-callers, who had carried out the necessary ritual preparations and observed the prohibitions related to food, sex and certain pollutants.

All sharks have some spiritual force connected with them — either clan or wild bush spirits, or the spirit of the shark itself. Without these forces they would not be as important. The shark-calling provides a bridge to these spirits and is a form of communication.

This aspect of the magic is emphasized by the film’s reliance on conversations with the men who practise it, especially in two long sequences of the shark-callers filmed in sync, close-up and facing the camera — paddling out to meet the shark. They speak not as much of method as of their relationship to the spiritual nature of the shark and their sense of intimacy with this spirit.

These sequences are filmed from the prow of the boat, at close range, with a camera that is amazingly steady, even as the shark-catcher battles with the shark caught in his hoop, clubs it and brings it into the canoe. They have a quiet intensity unmarred by superficial commentary.

The filmmaker’s presence is obvious throughout the film, but in an obtrusive way: a very low-key narration by Dennis O’Rourke (the same voice heard elsewhere in pidgin on the soundtrack) provides only necessary information. He explains specific aspects of the shark-calling, without attributing intentions or feelings to the subjects.

Later, there are a few instances of editorial comment in this narration. In the memorable close-up shots in the canoe, his presence is obvious, both in the occasional question put to the man in his native language and in the strong sense one has that the shark-caller is communicating directly to the camera, knowing that the person behind the camera understands what he says. With the emphasis on communication in the film, the fact that the filmmaker speaks the language is important.

As they reach deeper water, O’Rourke films while the sharks swim around the canoe and, attracted by the shark-caller’s rattle, are caught in the hoop, and rock the lightweight boat. “If you attract a bad shark, it can attack you”, says the man of Kontu.

The dramatic nature of such material could have been played up for effect, as was done in a couple of films on the same subject made for exhibition in 1977 by Nippon Audio-Visual Productions, the company headed by Jun-ichi Ushiyama. They concentrated on the technique of shark-calling and

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A shark-caller battles with a shark caught in his hoop. Dennis O’Rourke’s The Sharkcallers of Kontu.
The film might be described as 'closed' to the extent that it takes a certain point of view and unashamedly uses editing techniques to put it across. Edited by Stewart Young (who also did Frontline and Angels of War), the film highlights the ironies and incongruities, indeed the absurdities, of the education that the children of Kontu receive.

They are totally alienated from their own culture: the children learn English in school using textbooks about cowboys, not fishermen. They are subtly conditioned, by textbooks with scenes about businesspeople wanting fast food and luxuries and to reject the traditional diet of taro, tapioca and sweet potato in what is to some extent still a subsistence economy. The content of their education has no relevance to their society.

There are shades here of YAP, O’Rourke’s earlier film about the coming of television to a small Pacific island, especially in the ironic use of the soundtrack: snippets from radio advertising and so on. In the earlier film, advertisements for American cosmetics and dentists openly made the point about the alienation of a people from their culture. The inanities of American soap operas were contrasted with a bus playing the flute, shrugging to himself on the fringe of the living quarters, where he was once the centre of the evening’s entertainment.

These may seem to be easy points to score, but in YAP they are in the context of a look at U.S. imperialism, Chinese merchant tells the men that if they supply two tons of shark fins, then he can give them a world market price. The film thus shifts its emphasis from the shark to the fisherman. The shark is used as a symbol to illustrate the pressures of capitalism on the culture, and the shark itself is reinforced by the attention given to the process of dividing up the different parts of the shark: some must be thrown back into the ocean, others are given to the villagers. The film’s special significance is in the men’s house as proof that man has the power to communicate with the spirits of his ancestors.

Today the fins are taken down from their traditional place and offered to the Chinese merchants who buy them for friends in Hong Kong and Singapore; the men of Kontu need cash to adapt to the outside pressures on their subsistence economy. The film returns to the last shot to the scene where the Chinese merchant tells the men that if they pay two tons of shark fins, then he can give them a world market price. The film thus shifts its emphasis from the shark to the fisherman. The shark is used as a symbol to illustrate the pressures of capitalism on the culture, and the shark itself is reinforced by the attention given to the process of dividing up the different parts of the shark: some must be thrown back into the ocean, others are given to the villagers. The film’s special significance is in the men’s house as proof that man has the power to communicate with the spirits of his ancestors.

In The Sharkcallers of Kontu, as in YAP, O’Rourke recognizes the importance of repetition in a documentary that integrates its themes into the daily life and belief patterns of a society. It is not always sufficient to state a point once and proceed with the film as narrative. Whereas in YAP the result is sometimes loose and rambling in the repeated return to scenes and situations already seen, here it is more controlled.

The Sharkcallers of Kontu has less of the journalistic style of the earlier films. However, it is not lacking in wry humor, and gives a sense of a more subtle process of sitting out, leaving the bare bones of what is an unashamedly transparent structure in a very fine film.

**Sharkcallers of Kontu:**

**A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy**

The four friends who come for the weekend are Leopold (Jose Ferrer), uncle to Adrian, and famous academic bore who quotes Freud and Einstein and goes into intellectual combat with other male rivals; Ariel (Mia Farrow), the fiancée of Leopold, nymph-like, liberated and a woman of the future; Maxwell (Tony Roberts, as always), the faithful friend to Andrew and a philandering womanizer; and Dulcy (Julie Hagerty), Maxwell’s friend for the weekend, the not-so-silly nurse who can cope with any emergency.

When all the visitors descend on the house, their dreams take on a reality and transformations are in store. As in Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, they become tanzalized as if under a spell. No one wants the partner they are with, and escapes in the woods become so frantic and ill-begotten that life becomes a dizzy labyrinth.

Andrew Hynns (Woody Allen) and Ariel Weymouth (Mia Farrow): “sex alleviates tension, and love causes it.” Woody Allen’s A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy.

The photography of Gordon Willis, together with the music of Mendelssohn, carries the situation to its logical extremes. When the actors aren’t posing as if for some Manet or Renoir Impressionist cameo, the music and photography make the actual woods come alive with the sound of music! There are babbling brooks, floating ducks, perfectly realized flowers and a host of other chocolate box goodies. It all makes for a marvelous send-up, and is one of the delights of the film.

Some of the characters are similarly ridiculed. When Leopold and Maxwell duel for word space, there is rarely a kind shot of them. But Allen’s persona in Andrew is etched more sympathetically. He muses about love, art and invention: “because I have trouble...”

**A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy**

Margaret Smith

Woody Allen suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and turned to fairy-floss. In A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy he has lost the fighting edge of a pioneer who ventured bravely into Annie Hall, Interiors, Manhattan and Stardust Memories. He kept his sense of humor and pathos, but in the final scenes of A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy that seems to be all that is left intact.

The film bags a question: where do you go when you have stopped exploring? For Allen, it seems to mean going into the past. But, on the other hand, can we expect the impossible when we are all variations on our past selves?

In this film, Allen turns to what he has done before: like his Love and Death, he twists an old classic (Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream) on its head as a starting point. If one wasn’t familiar with Allen’s more recent work, it might be enough. It is funny, delightful and absurd, but it isn’t the Allen who turned one out of the cinema grappling with a sense of oneself. One was amused, but it might have worked better if the laughs hadn’t been so constant or so long.

A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy takes six characters in search of an author. There is Andrew (Woody Allen), the Renaissance man, who tries to fly in his flying machine, and at other times without his wings; and his wife Adrian (Mary Steenburgen), who is an intelligent, educated woman made frigid because of the memory of an illicit affair. They live in a rustic country house, now part of the 20th century, where Andrew concentrates on his inventions to the detriment of his marriage.

**A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy**

Concluded on p. 583
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Phar Lap is directed by Simon Wincer, for producer John Sexton, from a screenplay by David Williamson.
out-of-date entries and obvious omissions, almost inevitable in such a consider- able and wide-ranging project. For instance, Ken Watts is listed both as managing director of Adams Packer Film Productions and chairman of the Australian Film Commission. Marc Aussie-Stone is still listed as the national director of the Film and Television Production Association of Australia (James Mitchell recently resigned after three years in that position). Why two entries for M & L? And whatever happened to the Victorian Film Corporation/Film Victoria? It is a reasonable sample, but obviously in need of updating.

The second section is the 70-plus “Classified indexes”, ranging from agencies and distribution through to television talk shows (U.S. only) and unions. It is here, in particular, that the omissions and discrepancies become more apparent from the Australian point of view. Is there really no Australian distribution company that handles documentaries? The recent Documentary Film in Australia lists no less than 80. Are there only two film commissions/ corporations in Australia (two more are listed in the previous “Companies” section)? What is this National Critics’ Circle? Films or theatre? And cardinal sin: if Filmmore is deserving of inclusion in the Tradepapers category, then, surely, Cinema Papers also merit inclusion.

The final section is simply an international telephone directory to all the people in the first section — listed alphabetically by surname, irrespective of country — and claimed to be some 15,000 “motion picture decision-makers and experts”. Phillip Adams appears four times, attache to no less than four, presumably defunct, one-off production companies, all of which have the telephone number of Adams’ ad agency, Monahan Dayman Adams, not Adams Packer. Joe Skrzynski is nowhere to be seen. Pat Lovell is in, Matt carrot is out, and so on. It is a seemingly arbitrary selection.

All this is nit-picking, to be sure. Bearing in mind its limitations further afield is the observation that the U.S. and British sections are less prone to errors and omissions — Marketplace is a valuable handbook. The price, given that it is a paper product, is prohibitive.

The two other recent Variety reference books are not as subject to dubious information. They either get the information right the first time or it is simply useless forever (or at least until the second edition).

Variety International Showbusiness Reference is an even more massive project than Marketplace, and intimidatingly so. In a sense, it is a commemorative volume for Variety’s 75th anni- versary, a distillation from the back files of what is claimed to be the largest single source of information about the entertainment industry worldwide”. Its avowed aim is no less than “to provide a single source of information on all facets of show business’ somehow compacted into one volume.

First in this information marathon are almost 6000 current biographies claimed to be “the largest single such compilation for actors, actresses, choreographers, cinematographers, composers, dancers, designers, directors, executives, film editors, journalists, musicians, producers, singers, songwriters and writers ever achieved”, ranging from the RKO sound engineer, John O. Aalberg, to Paramount board member, Eugene J. Zukor (son of the centenarian pioneer, the late Adolph Zukor). Some well-known Australians, such as Jack Thompson and Peter Weir, appear alongside the all-time greats, such as Marlene Dietrich (see Maria Magdalene von Losch, incidentally), the not-to-be-forgotten, and Frankly obscure.

The next major section is compre- hensive “Film credits” for every film reviewed in Variety from January 1, 1976, to December 31, 1980 — not only most of the English-language titles but also the major foreign-language and film festival titles — plus the date of the original Variety review (readily accessible these days on microfilm). Also released during this period included are the exceptions, being the real box-office dogs and the pretentious puppies.

Next is a complete listing of all the Oscar winners, as well as the nominees, in every category, from the beginning (1927-28) to 1979; the “All-time film rental champs” in the U.S.-Canada market (No. 1 is Star Wars), though not adjusted for inflation (No. 1 would then be Gone With the Wind); the major “festivals, major theatre” of 1981; “Television credits”, again from January 1, 1976, to December 31, 1980, including quite a few Australian programs, from A Big Country to Young Ramsay; a list of all the Emmy winners, as well as all the nominees, in every category, again from the beginning (1948) to 1979-80; the “Top 50 Nielsen-rated television shows” (No. 1 here is Dallas (Who Shot J.R.?) all “Broadway plays” (including musicals), again from January 1, 1976, to December 31, 1980; significant “Publications” in every category, again from the beginning (1947) to 1980; the Pulitzer Prize Plays, from as far back as 1918 (Jesse Lynch Williams’ Why Marry?) up to 1980 (Landford Wilson’s Talley’s Folly); all Long-Running Broadway Plays (“Greas getting tops that list); all the Grammy Award-winners, as well as all the nominees, in every category, from 1959 to 1979, as well as Platinum Records, from 1976 to 1980, and, finally, as to counterbalance the current biographies at the outset, a “Neurology” (to use Variety’s quaint term), also from January 1, 1976, to December 31, 1980, from the con- ductor Nathan Abas to the previously mentioned Adolph Zukor (who died at 103).

As one may have gathered by now, this book — no, monumental tome — is nothing if not exhaustive. Quite simply, it is an essential reference work for any library resource centre connected with any branch of show business.

Variety’s third recent reference undertaking is Variety Major U.S. Showbusiness Biographies. To some extent, it duplicates the previous volume in that it lists again all of the Oscars, Emmys, Tonys, Grammys and Pulitzer Prizes. On the other hand, this latter work has a massive index, which the former, perhaps understandably, has not. Actually, one really needs both books in tandem. Their accuracy and exhaustiveness are praiseworthy; their achievement hefty.
Finally, there are two other, British-based, film and television industry reference books. For the strictly speaking, yearbooks that serve to some extent as both national and international counterparts to the Australian Motion Picture Almanac

Kemps International Film and Television Yearbook is basically an industry-oriented handbook of technical services and facilities, divided into two halves: Great Britain and International. The British section ranges over no less than 30 separate categories, ranging from 'Accumulators and batteries' to 'Zoom fluid drive units', then follows a separate 'Film technicians' section that, in turn, ranges from the 'Art department' to 'Television and video lighting designers', and is further broken down into various sub-categories, ranging from 'Art directors' per se to the 'Technicians diary book of lists'. This seems ever-multiplying craftwork is reminiscent of all the trades and industries in Diderot's Encyclopedia.

Next comes the International half, covering more than 30 countries, from Argentina to Venezuela. Australia occupies some seven per cent of this section (the U.S. almost 33 1/3 per cent) and (like the U.S.) is first categorized by state, then by technical classification. The former researchers remain anonymous; the sources that were tapped and scoured likewise are anonymous; and the actual criteria for inclusion or exclusion go unmentioned. What there is, again, is selective; there are unfortunate omissions and, though not to the same degree as in Marketplace, the you are a devout reader of, say, American Cinematographer or the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers Journal, if you are something of a Samuelson's freak, or if you require anything from an anthropomorphic lens to a live vulture (or even a stuffed one) for your next British (and to a lesser extent U.S.) projection, then Kemps is definitely the manual for you: technical information overkill for some, but the name of the game is thoroughness.

Peter Noble's International Film and TV Yearbook 1981-82 (from the fold of the major British and television weekly paper, Screen International) is not as technically oriented as Kemps. It is aimed at a slightly different market, more the up-front shoven rather than the nuts and bolts people behind the scenes; Noble is 'above the line', Kemps 'below the line'.

Like Kemps, it is divided into British (subdivided into 'Films and television') and 'International directories' (in terms of the latter, Kemps has more than 800 pages to Noble's 30 pages or so distributed amongst a paltry nine countries). The Australian section, consisting of a meagre page and a half of various names and addresses, is, at best, token and really needs a major re-think and update. Again, for instance, Ken Watts is still ensconced at the Australian Film Commission, Jill Robb likewise at the Victorian Film Corporation, Jeremy Toepnitz at the Australian Film and Television School, etc.

By far the most important part of Noble's book, however, represents almost two-thirds of its contents: a "Who's Who in International Films and Television". To some extent, it is the British version of Richard Gertner's New York-based Motion Picture Almanac (not reviewed here), but in some respects more comprehensive and pictorial. Noble's British contingent is naturally strong, whereas Gertner's British contingent is fairly obvious not so. It is, in fact, fascinatingly well-known and not so well-known names, both in front of and behind the cameras, from Arthur Abeles of Filmakers (to veteran director Fred Zinnemann. It has more informative and up-to-date sets of credits and contact points than, say, Liz-Anne Dawden's Oxford Companion to Film (really for the film scholar) or Leslie Halliwells's Filmgoer's Companion (for the film fan): in essence, anybody who's anybody in the contemporary British film and television industries.

But the Australian representation is fairly thin and seems to be without much rhyme or reason: Tony Gilmaine, Brian Trenchard Smith and Peter Weir, but not, say, Bruce Beresford, Pat Lovell or Jack Thompson. Again, who decides these things and on what grounds? And it is pity the entries could not be more up-to-date: there seems sometimes to be an unfortunate lag of a year or so. So, all in you, if you are in need of some light bedtime reading . . .

Recent Releases

Mervyn Binns

This column lists books on sale in Australia or for distribution, up to December 1982, which deal with the cinema and related topics.

The publishers and the local distributors are listed below the author in each entry. If no distributor is indicated, the book is imported. The recommended prices listed are for paperbacks, unless otherwise indicated, and are subject to variations between bookshops and states.

The list was compiled by Mervyn R. Binns of the Space Age Bookstore, Melbourne.

Popular and General Interest

America's Favourite Movies: Behind the Scenes
Rudy Behringer
Unpar./Ruth Walls, $17.95 (TPB)
Background details of some of the greatest films from the U.S., including Frankenstein, The African Queen and High Noon.

The Best Movie Trivia and Quiz Book Ever
Malcolm Vance
Bonanza/Imp., $6.95 (HC)
An illustrated "book of lists".

The Best TV Trivia and Quiz Book Ever
Malcolm Vance
Bonanza/Imp., $6.95 (HC)
A nostalgic look at American television.

The Book of TV Lists
Gabe Essoe
Arlington/Imp., $12.50 (TPB)
A great collection of facts, figures and anecdotes about American television shows and personalities.

The Cinematelic Cat
Written by Bob Bruno, illustrated by Marguerite Chadwick
A/W/Imp., $9.75
Clever cartoon comments on famous films.

Filming the Impossible
Law Eviskion
Jonathan Cape/Australian Publishing Company, $29.95 (HC)
An account of 10 years filming "life-or-death" adventures for television. Illustrated with 190 color photographs.

The Films of the Seventies
Robert Booker/Law Eviskion
Cudal/Davis Publications, $30.35 (HC)
A survey of the American films made during the 1970s. Illustrated.

The Forties Gals
James B. Parish and Don E. Stonke
Arlington/Imp., $31.25 (HC)
The careers of actresses Lauren Bacall, Susan Hayward, Ilia Lupino, Anne Sheridan and Esther Williams.

The Great Women of the Screen
— Fifty Colourful Years of Cinema Lobby Cards
Jean Kobe
Aurum Press/Dean, $29.95 (HC)
A history of lobby posters, includes numerous color photographs.

Great Hollywood Teams
Garros Kamin
A/R/Imp./Angus and Robertson, $12.95
An illustrated survey of all the great teams on the screen, from Astaire and Rogers to Allen and Keaton.

The Great Movie Stars — The Golden Years
David Shipman
A/R/Imp./Angus and Robertson, $14.95 (TPB)
Featuring more than 200 entries, each being of a star whose name was made before the beginning of television.

The Great Movie Stars — The International Years
David Shipman
A/R/Imp./Angus and Robertson, $14.95 (TPB)
The second volume in Shipman's history of the stars of Hollywood, this volume featuring the international stars.

Tom Hutchinson

A/R/Imp./Angus and Robertson, $6.95 (HC)
A well-illustrated coverage of her career.

Book Reviews

Great Hollywood Teams
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An illustrated survey of all the great teams on the screen, from Astaire and Rogers to Allen and Keaton.

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A/R/Imp./Angus and Robertson, $14.95 (TPB)
The second volume in Shipman's history of the stars of Hollywood, this volume featuring the international stars.

Rick Mitzi

Richard Marek/Imp., $13.30 (TPB)
The plot lines, cast and characters of all the American situation comedies on television. Illustrated.

Hollywood's Children
Raymond Strait
St Martin's Press/Imp., $18.60 (HC)
The lives of the children of Hollywood stars and how they cope with being the children of big name stars.

The Making of the Great Westerns
William R. Meyer
Arlington/Imp., $26.65 (HC)
An examination of 30 great Westerns.

The R.K.O. Story
Richard B. Jewell and Vernon Hartlin
Morrow and Gordon and Gotor Distributors, $29.95 (HC)
The complete studio history, with all the 1051 films described and illustrated.

Special Effects — Starling Volume 3
David Houghton
Starling/Imp., $12.30 (TPB)
Complete synopsis of all the science-fiction films from the 1930s to the 70s.

Biographies and Filmographies

Apple Sauce — The Story of My Life
Michael Wilding, as told to Pamela Wilcox
A/A/Imp./Allen and Unwin, $19.95 (HC)
A biography of British actor Michael Wilding.

Before I Forget
James Mason
Sphere/Thomas Nelson Aust., $6.95
The autobiography of the leading British actor.

Cary Grant — The Light Touch
Lionel Godfrey
R. H. HA, $32.50 (HC)
A biography of Archie Leach, born in Bristol, England, and better known as Cary Grant.

Bob Hope: Portrait of a Superstar
Charles Thompson
Fontana/William Collins, $4.95
The life and career of America's best-loved comedian.

Charles Bronson
David Downing
W. H. Allen/Hutchinson Group Aust., $19.95 (HC)
An examination of the career of one of the most successful and highly-paid screen actors.

Clint Eastwood — The Screen Greats
Alan Frank
Wattle/Gordon and Gotor Distributors, $6.95 (HC)
A well-illustrated coverage of Clint Eastwood's career.

The Comic Art of Mel Brooks
Michael R. Meyer
W. H. Allen/Hutchinson Group Aust., $20.95 (HC)
The career of Mel Brooks, whom the fans love and the critics hate.

Eddie My Life, My Lover
Eddie Fisher
W. H. Allen/Hutchinson Group Aust., $27.95 (HC)
Eddie Fisher reveals his side of the story — his much publicized marriage, drugs, money problems and the rest.

Elizabeth Taylor — The Screen Greats
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Wattle/Gordon and Gotor Distributors, $6.95 (HC)
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>TITLE</th>
<th>Distributor</th>
<th>PERIOD 12.9.82 to 13.11.82</th>
<th>PERIOD 21.3.82 to 11.9.82*</th>
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1. Not for publication, but ranking correct.
2. Figures exclude N/A figures.
3. Box-office grosses of individual films have been supplied to Cinema Papers by the Australian Film Commission.
4. This figure represents the total box-office gross of all foreign films shown during the period in the area specified.
5. Continuing into next period.
6. Figures in parentheses above the grosses represent weeks in release. If more than one figure appears, the film has been released in more than one cinema during the period.
7. This figure represents the total box-office gross of all foreign films shown during the period in the area specified.
8. Incorrectly listed as 4.9.82 in previous issue.
9. Figures are drawn from capital city and inner suburban first release hardtops only. (1) Split figures indicate a multiple cinema release.
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You have to make certain choices; you have a measure for the situation within the limits of what you can spend. We don't have all those millions for making a film like the Americans.

**Are you one who is compelled to impart a message?**

Not really. I do this work because I like it, not necessarily to transmit a message. It is an experience to make a film; it is also an experience for me. I learn to make a film about something I knew very little about, and I have to think more deeply about certain problems, about those aspects that are usually ignored. Then, of course, the film can serve others, as an experience.

But I don't see myself as a priest preaching to people. I detest message films and political films. I make films about certain arguments or themes because it is an experience for me. Maybe there are others who also find the film an interesting experience; if so, great; if not, those are the breaks.

But three billion lire to have an illuminating personal experience...

Marcello Mastroianni, left, and girl in The Skin.

But the cinema is like that. Every film expresses the opinions or games of a director; it is like that throughout the performing arts. They don't save the world, they don't save us from atom bombs and they don't pretend to do these things. But they are a prime mover of ideas, of thought, and can present a point of view that may be different from one's own. They can help you to understand certain things, about yourself and about others; for me, a film or a play always has a significance.

**Filmography**

1961 Incontro notturno*
1962 L'evento
1963 Short films produced for a diploma at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome.
1965 The Order of the III R anum
A documentary for Italian television.
1964 L'eta di Stalin
1969 La casa in Italia
Documentary in four parts.
1970 La vita di Sveva
1971 A Vicky (Philipe Petit: Trial at Vichy)
1977 The Tale of Tiffany Lust
1981 N.S. Prods P/L,
2515.20 m, Grand Film Corp. P/L,
2906.09 m, Grand Film Corp.
2146.00 m, Cinema Italia,
2906.09 m, Grand Film Corp.,
1136.00 m, Blake Films Vic. P/L,
87 mins, A.M. Alessi Films & Video,
1810.38 m, Regent Trading Enterprises,
2203.00 m, Filmways A'sian Dist. P/L,
2523.56 m, Comfort Films Enterprise, S/(m-g),
2523.56 m, Comfort Films Enterprise, S/(m-g),
2245.70 m, Regent Trading Enterprises, S/(m-g),
2245.70 m, Regent Trading Enterprises, S/(m-g),
2331.58 m, D. Edmonds, U.S.,
2221.83 m, United Int'l Pictures,
2194.00 m, AZ N.A., Film Dist. P/L,
877.60 m, Joe Siu Int'l Film Co. P/L,
877.60 m, Joe Siu Int'l Film Co. P/L,
1136.00 m, Blake Films Vic. P/L,
877.60 m, Joe Siu Int'l Film Co. P/L,
2617.00 m, Video Classics, S/(f-m-g),
2617.00 m, Video Classics, S/(f-m-g),
2221.83 m, United Int'l Pictures,
2194.00 m, AZ N.A., Film Dist. P/L,
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1136.00 m, Blake Films Vic. P/L,
2617.00 m, Video Classics, S/(f-m-g),
2617.00 m, Video Classics, S/(f-m-g),
2221.83 m, United Int'l Pictures,
The Biography Industry
Continued from p. 532

Lamour — is bent on adhering to the maxim: “If you don’t say something nice about a person — don’t say anything nice about a person.” She has some trouble accommodating Joan Collins to this principle when Collins gets the lead in The Road to Hong Kong (1961), but elsewhere she is uniformly generous to her colleagues. She insists that life on the Road sets was overwhelmingly wholesome and jolly, and that Bob and Bing were endlessly engaged in japes that kept everyone in stitches.

Dorothy Lamour’s was not a major career but it provided a good deal of innocent pleasure. To give her — or Mr McInnes? — her due, she does seem to remember who did what in her films. She has either a good memory or has been careful in checking the credits for the films, so that those that she not littered with those unnecessary errors that disfigure so many of the genre. She is genuinely interested in talking about the films, even if this remains on a pretty simple level. Her private life, once over her early marriage to Herb Kaye, was a model of happy domesticity with William Howard, “the most beautiful man [she] had ever seen, in or out of motion pictures.”

From Howard Hughes she merely received roses; nice girl that she indeed had what she had been striving for all those years, she no longer needed it, partly because she second marriage, to Eaton Chalkley, brought her the power she had acquired over the years, she was unexpectantly and sentimentally moving.

A nice girl” is probably not the phrase that leads to mention relation to SUSAN HAYWARD but, as Christopher P. Anderson tells her story (published by the same firm in the same year as Dorothy Lamour’s), she lived her life, if not endearingly, at least consistently. From the poverty-stricken Brooklyn girlhood onward (much more real hardship than Lamour can muster by way of drama), she was a real fighter — tough, demanding, humourless, loving sparingly but intensely, genuinely courageous in her final struggle with cancer. When it was over in 1975, her doctor marvelled, “Nothing in the medical literature resembles it. It was amazing to live that long with this type of cancer. She was one of the great fighters. I’ve never seen anything like it!” (p. 258).

It sounds like any number of the characters she played in the heady days of her stardom in the 1940s and ’50s: the woman destroyed by drink in Smash-Up (1947); the girl who “loved not wisely but too well” — there was a lot of that about in the ’40s — in My Foolish Heart (1949); Jane Froman, overcoming disability to entertain troops in a walking machine, in With a Song in My Heart (1952); beating the booze again in I’ll Cry Tomorrow (1955): “Sip by sip, slip by slip, Lillian Roth hit the bottom of the bottle! Filmed on location — inside a woman’s soul!” the posters tempted us; and Barbara Graham, perhaps wrongly convicted of murder and executed in I Want to Live (1958). The latter, after four previous nominations, for the films named above, brought her the Oscar at last, with the attendant irony that “now that she indeed had what she had been striving for all those years, she no longer needed it” (p. 195).

She no longer needed it, partly because she was now — had been since the late 1940s — a true star and was now unimaginable as anything else, partly because her second marriage, to Eaton Chalkley, brought her the sort of peace that had hitherto eluded her. It eluded her in a big way during her marriage to minor actor Jess Barker, a stormy liaison even by Hollywood standards, a schism growing mainly out of her professional superiority and leading to a scandalous and acrimonious divorce. Anderson quotes transcripts of Hayward’s story in response to her attorney’s questioning: with no further gloss, the record has the elements of high ’40s melodrama, though more explicit in some details than ’40s cinema would have allowed.

Despite the more sensational aspects of her life — not merely being chased nude round the neighborhood by Barker but discovered in bed with Don “Red” Barry (an actor so minor he makes Barker look like Olivier) — and despite her chilling aloofness to most colleagues, in the end, Susan Hayward emerges from Anderson’s biography earning our respect — respect, that is, for the way she worked at her career, for unremitting vigor and professionalism in dealing with the often-ludicrous junk she was handed, and for an unillusioned approach to the Hollywood machine.

Her name and fame were made in more or less lurid roles but I have a special affection for some quieter achievements: for Lucy Overmire, wavering between admirers (not at all a “frontier spitfire” as Anderson characterizes her), in Jacques Tourneur’s beautiful western Canyon Passage; for the clergyman’s wife in Henry King’s I’d Climb the Highest Mountain (not a “technicolour blockbuster” as Anderson wrongly claims, but a modestly charming rural romance); and the sorely-tried wife in Nicholas Neame’s a “technicolour blockbuster” as Anderson wrongly claims, but a modestly charming rural romance); and the sorely-tried wife in Nicholas Neame’s The Million Pound Note and Vincente Minnelli’s Designing Woman — he shows as much comic flair as Lassie.
Most of the major stars created in the 1950s either are dead, like Marilyn Monroe or James Dean or Grace Kelly, or else film so restricted. Beating by two Chaucer's Wife of Bath who had five "Housbondes at chirche dore [not that Taylor bothered too much about the church door]... Without other companionge in youte" (no problems here for Taylor), her sexual adventures comprised a sickening chronicle. Husbands and lovers alike are a sorry lot, though she is perennially gushy and hopeful about them, even about Eddie Fisher whose just published memoirs I have promised myself as a special treat not to read.

Elizabeth Taylor's career is poised between the great star-making era of the 1930s and '40s, when she might have been made a real star instead of just a famous commodity, and the '70s when she looked merely archaic. SHELLY WINTERS, spanning the same period, has weathered the changing cinematic climate better. After a brief starlethood in Columbia, she was thoroughly noticed in Cukor's A Double Life (1948) as the doomed waitress. She then starred in half a dozen Universal features before reaching certifiable stardom in Stevens' A Place in the Sun (1951). In this she was very touching as factory hand Alice Tripp who, pregnant, gets in the way of George Eastman's (Clift) ambitions. Thereafter, she was rarely less than entertaining, especially fine for Charles Laughton in The Night of the Hunter, for Stanley Kubrick in Lolita and for Paul Mazursky in Next Stop, Greenwich Village. But I digress. Winters believed enough interesting things had happened to her up to 1954 to bring her unappetizing life-story to a halt with Robert Roos's Mambo, opposite one of her early husbands, Vittorio Gassman. A threatening note is struck on page 1 with an epilogue headed, "To be continued. I hope as well."

What is there to be said for Shelley — Also Known as Shirley except that it is a wholly unworthy account of (half of) a lively career? She offers an egomaniacal slurring throughout — for instance, as "spilling over with sex appeal, she was indeed the kind of girl American boys dreamed of marrying. She had the kind of beauty that would bring all a man ever dreamed of — wealth, fame, position. George Stevens knew that, with Elizabeth Taylor as his star, the audience would understand why George Eastman [Montgomery Clift] would kill for a place in the sun with her" (p. 33). Stevens, that is, seems to have understood what could be done with Taylor and that breathtaking beauty even if she scarcely seemed aware of what was going on.

Kelley has a sure grasp of the high-spots of Taylor's career: Velvet, Sun, Giant (1956) and Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1966), since what it has been is downhill all the way. Increasingly she has thrown herself into-the messy saga of her off-screen life, and Kelley records with a nicely sardonic edge: "The perilous melodrama of dying and coming back to life became one of her most prized roles" (p. 146). She became, in fact, a bore about her health and, indeed, about most things. Back in 1950 she "often asked [Stanley] Donen why he thought Nicky [Hilton] ignored her and found her boring" (p. 39). It is hard to find: apart from a certain generosity and cheery vulgarity, there is nothing to her except her sexual appetite and that, of course, is a matter for restricted circulation anyway. It is fairly restricted. BEATING by two Chaucer's Wife of Bath who had five "Housbondes at chirche dore [not that Taylor bothered too much about the church door]... Without other companionge in youte" (no problems here for Taylor), her sexual adventures comprised a sickening chronicle. Husbands and lovers alike are a sorry lot, though she is perennially gushy and hopeful about them, even about Eddie Fisher whose just published memoirs I have promised myself as a special treat not to read.


To be concluded next issue.
The Efftee Legacy

Continued from p. 523

(31) Signor Apollo Grandforts and the Williamson-Imperial Grand Opera Company Orchestra (5 mins, 1932) The internationally-renowned baritone sings "Largo Al Factotum" from the Barber of Seville by Rossini.

(32) Lou Vernon — Character Songs (No. 2) (5 mins, 1933) Very elaborate short with Vernon as an Italian fruit-stall owner singing "Italiano".

Two-reel Efftee Shorts — One Act Plays

(1) Oh, What A Night! (14 mins, 1932) Excellent domestic comedy with George Wallace as an errant drunk. Directed by Marshall Crosby and John Dozzi. A British print is held by the National Film Lending collection. Slightly longer print of Australian origin held at shelf number NB140 in the NFA. Dir.: Thring and Wallace.


The Pat Hanna Variety Shorts

(made as supports for Diggers in Blithely at the end of 1932)

(1) George Randall and Babe Scott in "The Impaler" (1932) Corpse comedy sketch and impersonation of a child actress. Two songs. Randall was an English actor-aviator. Babe Scott was George Wallace's half sister. A known vaudevillian in her own right. Dir.: Pat Hanna.

(2) Joe Valli and Charlie Albert in "Long Lost Son" (9 mins, 1932) Dandy actor applies for a job through a labor exchange. Interesting shot in many Australian films as a supporting comic, while Charles Albert's career on stage stretched back to 1893. Also has been on contract with J. C. Williamson's for many years by 1932. Dir.: Pat Hanna.

(3) Lavendar and Lace (4 mins, 1932) Ern Kopke (tenor) and Francis Ogilvy (solo dancer) with the Ostend string trio. Song and dance in 18th Century costume. Dir.: Pat Hanna.

(4) Pat Hanna in "The Gospel According To Cricket" (short extract of writing, listed in Everyone's of 14/12/1932). Pat Hanna as a clergyman, preaching the fate of 'Australia's Eleven' from the pulpits. Dir.: Pat Hanna.

The Efftee Documentaries


(4) Dear Old London (40 mins, 1934) A tourist's view of London in four reels, shot by an English crew under Claud Cummins' direction for Efftee. Includes an interesting shot of a fascist march.

Efftee Film Magazine Series

(5) "The Wedge Tailed Eagle" (5 mins, 1934) A series shot by George Wallace late in 1934. Only this episode is known to survive. Other episodes featured the koala, the echidna, etc. Dir.: Frank Harvey. Tech. assistance: David Fleathy.

(6) Tatler Newsreel Series: According to Jack Murray and Bert Nicholas, about a dozen newsreels were made specifically for the Tatler newsreel theatre in Melbourne towards the end of 1934. These appear to have been the last of the footage turned out by Efftee. Scraps of these newsreels held by the National Library include:

- Item from Tatler News No. 2 — Dr. William Maclean, M.L.A. (born 1900, died c. 1940) political retirement speech, in late 1934. Single item from Tatler News, three mins long.


Several complete Efftee-Tatler newsreels have recently been acquired from the Harry Davidson collection. Details are unknown as yet. The films are thought to include coverage of the 1934 Eucharistic Congress procession and a topical item on a crippled model-maker living in Essendon.

The "Australian Educational Films" Shorts

Australian Educational Films was formed in a partnership between Thring and naturalist Noel Monkman used Efftee facilities to produce eleven shorts:

The Barrier Reef Series

(1) Ocean Oddities (11 mins, 1931) Life histories of Barrier Reef animals including the green turtle, beche-de-mer, and crown of thorns starfish. Script, direction and photography by F. W. Thring.

(2) Coral And Its Creatures (11 mins, 1931) Coral forms, and the creatures that inhabit them. Visually rich item, but only picture negative held by NFA. Dir.: F. W. Thring.


(4) Strange Sea Shells (9 mins, 1932) Molluscs, diatoms, and the unusual creatures which inhabit the Barrier Reef. Dir.: F. W. Thring.

(5) Birds Of The Barrier Reef (9 mins, 1932) Rookeries on the Barrier Reef, with life histories of the gannet and muttonbird. Sound lost on existing NFA print. Dir.: F. W. Thring.

The 'Monkman Marvels' Series

(6) People Of The Ponds (11 mins, 1933) Microscopic life from the rock pool of an extinct Queensland volcano. Narration by F. W. Thring.

(7) Catching Crocodiles (9 mins, 1933) Life with the crocodile hunter on the Gulf of Carpentaria. Narration by F. W. Thring.


(9) You Never Guess (9 mins, 1934) Microphotography used to explain some lesser-known natural history phenomena. The beating heart of a fly larva; the ways wasps store fresh food; water beetles which dive with trapped air bubbles; etc. Direction and photography by Noel Monkman, narration spoken by Frank Harvey.

Miscellaneous Efftee Shorts

(1) Lord Somers — Speech (film lost, 1931) Speech on Engineering trade made by Lord Somers, British engineer. First Australian tests of Howard Hughes' Multicolor sound system. This item seems not to survive. The beating heart of a fly larva; the ways wasps store food; etc. Direction and photography by Noel Monkman, narration spoken by Frank Harvey.

(2) Arrivals at the 'Athenaeum' prior to showing of 'Australia's Eleven', Melbourne: Newsreel No. 1 (9 mins, 1931) Commentary by Norman Campbell is somewhat flowery, but evocative of the period. Dir.: F. W. Thring.

Newsreel Items Pertaining to Efftee Films

- Movietone News Vol. 2, No. 1. Released November 14, 1931. This contains a brief item titled Australian Talkies a Fact At Last! ... "Gala premiere at Plaza Melbourne draws a large audience to see first all home grown movies." The item, which survives at the National Film Library, shows F. W. Thring and others giving speeches, but the "moving picture" itself is not shown. Dir.: F. W. Thring.

- Melbourne Herald Newsreel No. 21 Released February 23, 1932. The film contains an item titled "How They're Made — Melbourne: Newsreel camera gives intimate glimpses of F. W. Thring directing big studio scene." The item was filmed by Roy Driver of Herschell's Films while he was working as third cameraman on the balcony scenes of His Royal Highness. No copy of this item, which was 3 mins in duration, is known to survive.


The Effete Legacy
Continued from p. 582

Stage Shows Produced by Effete in Times Resting from Film Production

Collins Inn (1935) — also planned as a film
Beloved Vagabond (1934)
Mother Of Pearl (1934)
Her Past (1934)
Jolly Roger (1934)
Children In Uniform (c. 1934)
S. S. Sun Shining (1932)
The Cedar Tree (1934)
Crazy Nights Revue (1935)
The Ojai Bird (1935)
Rope (1934)
Street of London (1933) — also made as a film
Clara Gibbings (1933) — also made as a film
The Above produced in Melbourne at the Garrick Theatre and at the Princess Theatre.

The "Non-stop Variety" Series

These were a re-arrangement of the Effete Entertainers shorts into groups of two or three for British release. The original shorts were sometimes crudely edited in the process of re-arrangement.

Non-stop Variety No. 1
First half only of Melody and Terpsichore (short 8)
First half only of Moon & Ray (short 9)
Ada Reeve in Aint Yer Jim (short 25, complete)
Last few feet of Melody and Terpsichore (short 8)

Non-stop Variety No. 2
Ada Reeve in I Never Forget I'm A Lady (short 24)
Small section only of Parkes' Strad Trio (short 3)

Non-stop Variety No. 3
Minnie section only of Melody and Terpsichore (short 8)
Second half only of Beryl Walkey short (short 25)

Non-stop Variety No. 4
Grand Opera Orchestra — Carman Overture (short 28)
Minnie Love in Impressions (short 14)

Sundowners Harmony Quartette (short 16, complete)
Non-stop Variety No. 5
Lou Vernon — "That’s My Idea Of A Lady" (short 17)
Peter Hume, Violinist (short 21, incomplete)
Minnie Love — "The Old Apple Tree" (short 12, complete)

Non-stop Variety No. 6
Grand Opera Orchestra — Fawn Overture (short 29)
Kath Goodall — "Mr Gay Breeches" (short 19)
Melbourne’s Chinese Orchestra (appearing here as "Ting A Ling And His Rolling Good Din-copaters") (short 11)

Non-stop Variety No. 7
Marsh Crosby — "Shanghai" (short 26, complete)
Minnie Love — "Couple Of Ducks" (first half only, short 20)
Moon & Ray — "Moonlight Saving Time" (short 9, second half only, followed by a clip from short 10)

Non-stop Variety No. 8
Lou Vernon — "I’m A Man" (short 32, complete)
Sundowners — "I Haven’t Told Her" (last half only, short 10)
Beryl Walkey — "Love Is Best Of All" (first half only, short 25)

Non-stop Variety No. 9
Minnie Love — Chevalier impression (first half only, short 8)
Cecil Parkes Strad Trio (section only of short 3)
Kath Goodall — "Little Mary Fawcett" (short 20, complete)

Non-stop Variety No. 10
Sundowners — "Apple Blossom Time" (short 15, first half)
Kath Goodall — "Widows" (short 18, complete)
Parkes Strad Trio — "Zigeunerweisen" (section only of short 3)

Also relating to Effete Films:

(1) F. W. Thring — filmed speech made at Fox studios, Hollywood, September 1929. This short, now probably lost, was made during a tour of Fox studios, where Thring was starring a big film distribution deal for Hoyts. It was shown at the Melbourne Regent Theatre in October 1929.

Production Survey
Continued from p. 559

TASMANIAN FILM CORPORATION

Production Survey
Continued from p. 569

Film Reviews

in bed, I can now fly"; about marriage: "The death of love"; about sex: "sex alleviates tension, and love causes it"; and about the nature of immature love as just mature love.

in one wonderful, post-coital scene, Andrew and Ariel lie on the riverbank and wonder why it wasn’t what it could have been when they were young and knew one another as first loves. They felt the sticks and stones, heard the insects and birds, and were distracted by the elements in general. The orgasmic moment eluded them; they could have been when they were young and knew one another as first loves.

This film illustrates many of the ambitions of its characters, and sensed their magic herself. The film is that it moves away from the worldliness of its characters, and sensed their magic herself. The film is that it moves away from the worldliness of its characters, and sensed their magic herself.

There are other common elements to similar conclusions, except for Maxwell and Leopold, who adopt rather surprising uncharacteristic traits. While the rest become cynical and worldly-wise, Maxwell and Leopold opt for the romantic. In one stroke, Allen brings the playboy character (Maxwell in this film) out of decades of female exploitation in his previous films into a situation of submissiveness and vulnerability. It is an ingenious comic twist.

The film has other reversals of fortune. There are constant battles between science and magic, and lend to detailed philosophical debates about the nature of life. Magic herself enters the fray, and eventually turns the tables on everyone.

A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy seems to go nowhere much in the end except into the woods. But like an old lover, Allen wins one over again, despite the resistance.

Even in the more "wild and wacky", the film is a light version of a love story full of poignant lives of six characters, and in this sense is a departure from the self-absorption of his other films. But here he has made some of his characters so silly, and the ladies, in particular, suffer. They affect, in Time's words, unfortunate "wild and wacky" performances, and a new kind of comedy.

Perhaps one of the problems of the film is that it moves away from the territory Allen describes in an interview — the territory which concerns itself with trying to live a decent life amidst the junk of contemporary culture, the temptations, the seductions. So how do you keep from selling out?

Stardust Memories had nearly everyone selling out, and proved too much a cross for the cinema audience. People were not used to being confronted with themselves, and refused to accept the film as the masterpiece it was.

Even Manhattan, as Scott Murray wrote in Cinema Papers, concerned itself with more than the failure of love. It explored the failed literary ambitions of its characters, and sensed they were indicative of the West’s greatest failing.

A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy seems to be almost purely about failed love, except that some of the characters have the saving grace of learning to suffer.
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SALE OR HIRE

Have a Merry and a Happy One
The awarding of the Jury Prize at the Australian Film Awards to "Journey" must help its release and that of your other films . . .

Peter Tammer

Continued from p. 520

interpretation of his events. He understood from the very start that we were making a film and that what I did, either by action or inaction, was an act of interpretation.

I was really quite worried about how Bill would accept some of the quotes. The one that freaked me out, when I showed him the first cut of the film, was about the face: that your face is a mirror of everything you have been through, but how terrifying a face you would have to have to reflect all that you have been through. I thought he would take it personally and object to it. But he understood it, or seemed to understand it, as being beyond him and being as much a general comment on our faces and the faces we see around us that smile and pretend it is all all right when it is terrible!

Why did you reject the idea of using archival footage?

I did go to the War Memorial in Canberra, and searched through the war footage, but what I found looked too pretty and clean to be interesting into that story. It would have looked like comic relief. The soldiers appeared too well dressed.

Apparantly Film Victoria has given you some money to promote "Journey". What plans have you for it?

The Australian Film Institute has not offered any reasonable season at the Longford or anywhere else, so we hired the Hawthorn Town Hall and ran the film there for two nights. Owing to the terrible acoustics and the difficulty people had understanding the dialogue, I feel we will have to try and find another way of showing the film.

Pat Longmore has a plan to distribute the film throughout Australia basing the marketing on the network of RSL clubs and other organizations which may be interested. This plan is largely why Film Victoria has loaned us promotion money.

We believe that distribution does not have to be a loss to the filmmaker or production company, unless you get yourself into the hands of the conventional distributors and exhibitors, where many films the certainty is that very little money received at the box-office will come back to the producer.

We are also offering the film for hire through Cineaction to any interested organizations, societies, clubs or colleges. Of course, at the same time as this is going on the film is being offered to television. I feel it is the sort of film which would make a wonderful special feature for Anzac Day.

The day before I received the Jury Prize at the 1982 Australian Film Awards presentation, organized by the AFI, I also received in the mail a standard letter from the AFI's Vincent Library. It requested me to withdraw most of my films from the Library owing to the fact that these films have not been attracting many hirings during the past couple of years. This is despite the fact that this organization helped to squeeze the Melbourne Co-op out of existence, taking over the films from the Co-op Library.

The AFI then proceeded to achieve far lower returns than we had been getting from the same films at the Co-op and autocratically raised their share of rentals from 25 per cent of hire fees to 50 per cent on the grounds that the extra share would be used to further promote our films and achieve better hirings.

Now, the AFI has admitted its overall failure in the most insulting way. What it adds up to is: as we have not been able to promote your films to any reasonable level of hiring, would you please take your films out of our library as they are taking up too much space!

This has had a very serious effect on me and, I am sure, upon many other filmmakers, who must be wondering what is the point of making films if the very organization which is set up for, owes its very existence to, our filmmaking, on the one hand shows almost no interest or expertise in managing our work, and, in its function as an exhibitor, prefers to show overseas films in its cinemas in far greater proportion than our films.

While on the one hand I am very grateful that the judges awarded me the Jury Award, I am also totally disgusted with the rest of the AFI operations, totally sick of begging and grovelling for a reasonable release of my films in their theatres (which they have so far avoided) and absolutely disappointed in their failure to market my films through their Library, even to the level of a quarter of the hire the same films were achieving while they were in the Co-op Library.

Future Plans

What films have you in preparation?

I have four scripts in various stages of development. They are all fictionally oriented.

One is a feature film script, Summer Rain, which I wrote with John Lord. It is ready to go, though we haven't any actors for it.

Two of the other scripts have conventional storylines but they are at the first-draft stage and are not ready for funding.

The fourth script is a very embryonic thing which is just at the idea-mulling stage. It has an avant-garde plot which moves all over the place, and characters who change roles all the time. The main character is on the run and we don't know what from. We assume it is a crime and that he is searching for an answer to his guilt.

Another project which I would really like to get into pretty quickly is the book Without Hardware by Catherine Dalton, which gives a completely different analysis of the Bogie and Chandler, and Holt and Calwell era. I would like to do a portrait film of Catherine Dalton rather than a film specifically about Bogie and Chandler, or a film about the book. It would be a portraiture documentaty, dramatized and non-narrated, with Catherine Dalton as the central character. I haven't been able to contact her so far, but I am still trying.

For which projects have you approached the funding bodies?

John Ruane and I have a script that is currently in the first-draft stage, Trial By Order, about a mass murderer and a boy who gets in his clutches, and the struggle between them. This has been variously described as depraved and obscene, and Murray Brown of the Creative Development Branch of the Australian Film Commission said that he would not tend it for assessment because of the abhorrent subject matter.

Have you that word for word?

Yes. I can show it on paper:

"Dear Peter,

I am returning your scripts and budgets for Trial by Ordeal, as I regret the project cannot be accepted for assessment by the Branch.

"Apart from the technical problem that the script has not been submitted in screenplay format, the abhorrent subject-matter makes it difficult for us to accept such a project as a viable competitor for the investment of public funds."

"I regret that so much effort has been involved to date. Had I known in advance of your intention to apply I would have been able to warn you of the problems associated with this type of project.

"Congratulations on your successes at this year's Melbourne Film Festival. [Tammer won a special award on opening night for Journey to the End of Night.]

"Yours sincerely,

"Murray Brown,

"Creative Development Branch,

"Australian Film Commission."

They are not the only ones who have reacted it like that. It is a gruesome story, but how can you make a film about a mass murderer without it having gruesome qualities.

They are basically shit scared of anything that deviates from a very traditional and conventional mould.

Filmography (all 16mm)

1964 And He Shall Rise Again 13 mins
1964 On the Ball 40 mins
1964 Beethoven and All That Jazz 3 Vi
1964 Pieces Dying 16 mins
1971 Flux 40 mins
1972 Journey to a Broken Heart 50 mins
1972 A Woman of Our Time 28 mins, col.
1972 The Curse of Laladjiogram 29 mins, col.
1975 Struttin' the Mutton 17 mins, col.
1976 Here's To You Mr Robinson co-directed with Gary Patterson, 50 mins, col.
1981 Mallacoota Stampede 60 mins, col.
1982 Journey to the End of Night 74 mins, col.

CINEMA PAPERS December — 585
A Correspondence Course in Film Lighting? YEP!

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Class of 1984
Continued from p. 543

offensive, drug-dealing and responsible for deaths; they paint graffiti on cars and then ignore them; they flaunt themselves behind police authorities who can't touch them and parents who won't; and they are, finally, sexually violent and murderous. They are presented as vermin; therefore the audience is made to feel that they should be exterminated.

These reflections on how the film works make one realize that, if taken at too realistic a level, the film becomes either absurd or offensive or both. And, yet, the film works. This means that it makes impact vividly, as so many genre films do, through realistic style on the surface, but that it communicates by contact with deeper levels of our psyche as the level of myth.

Class of 1984 may be seen as a contrived symbol of the confrontations in our cities today: between teenagers and adults, between groups with different powers, between differing moral stances, between good and evil, between two experiences of violence. Thus the situations and characters are dramatically exaggerated for the sake of achieving the response, especially the gut or emotional response. Films which are in the city are a "not-yet" world like that of A Clockwork Orange or of the pessimistic science fiction game Soylent Green, The Ultimate Warrior and Escape From New York. The school itself is an ugly travesty of the hopper Grease schools: the authorities are more enthusiastic about their surveillance techniques than about what they are surveying. The confrontations in classrooms and cafeterias echo prison riots. Vengeful and dramatic, the emotional blackmail power the gangs have.

The stage is thus set — as in the western, the genre film, and the police melodrama — for climactic confrontation and shoot-out. And it happens — with more than a vengeance.

Two possibilities are suggested: Corrigan is flip, afraid, frustrated, and collapses when his animals are slaughtered and displayed in his laboratory. Berserk, he teaches by pulling a gun on the gang in class to make them answer questions correctly. This gets a laugh from the audience so that the reign of terror which presumably was the climax of Stegman and his death more seriously.

The other possibility is that faced by Norris: help when you can, stay strong in attitude even when assaulted, take stances and, when all goes wrong, edge, out to the killers the horror they had in mind for you.

In fact, the film is not advocating either possibility but is showing the alternatives most vividly, enticing audiences to identify with both. Corrigan makes contact with Norris but getting in touch with Norris' rage and feeling empathy with his raging outrageous eruption purges us of terror, anger, and restores us to some calm. No student is likely to be massacred by a teacher who sees Class of 1984 — even though there might have been a danger before the film was seen.

Class of 1984 raises the question of how much violence should be permitted on our screens. Most people will be repelled more by the circular-saw slicing an arm and killing one gang member than by the subsequent deaths. Of course, the use of visual violence is often a matter of sensibility.

In theory, there is no limit as to what can be presented on the screen. Picturing the removal of an eye in a training film for ophthalmic personnel or the amputating an eye in a horror film, or even the eye-gouging sequence in King Lear, can be suggested or blatant. There is always room for argument about taste, and about whether the direction may use a shot for its own sake (leaving an audience gasping, missing the scenes which follow) or as part of a cumulative effect. One presumes that this is behind the "gratuitous" execution of the teacher in Class of 1984, rather than of films like Halloween/Friday the 13th, is that they put the audience in touch with its 'shadow': the potential for violence that is so evident in the gross overreaction in films to the students' sake and to condemn in others. The feeling of gut satisfaction in the last part of the film is, to some extent, alarming when one realizes that one shares the hero's outburst. It is also reassuring to know that the response that puts one in touch with the feelings of those whose life is, to a large extent, based on rage.

Class of 1984 is an exploitative action for middle-class, professional adults — and it works.

Igor Auzins
Continued from p. 509

The film is actually based on We of the Never Never and The Little Black Princess, which is a children's book written by Jeannie Gunn. It deals with the same year, much violence should be permitted on our screens. Most people will be repelled more by the circular-saw slicing an arm and killing one gang member than by the subsequent deaths. Of course, the use of visual violence is often a matter of sensibility.

Yes. Gary Hansen [director of photography] and I had considered what kind of response I wanted from the audience. We had done a lot of visual experiment with the camera, to try and find ways to make the audience feel what we wanted them to feel. We wanted to have a sense of frustration and the feeling of distance?

You seem to prefer a mobile single shot, which encompasses all the action, to a static wide-shot and then close-ups . . .

I don't mind cutting away from what is happening providing there is some good dramatic reason for doing it. But I do think that the close-up and the reverse shot are grossly over-used. They are remnants, probably, of television-style techniques.

How does it affect the dramatic pace of the film when you tend to use single long shots, rather than cutting? Do you risk a detachment from the characters?

No, I don't think so. I think it probably draws you into the characters a little more effectively. One doesn't use a long take when it is inappropriate; one uses whatever is appropriate for the moment.

But long takes do seem to be a mark of your technique as a director . . .

It is probably something that I have developed over the years. I used the same treatment to some extent on Water Under the Bridge.

I prefer to see the characters prepare the scene in as genuine a way as possible, and then just determine a method of getting the camera into the position. I don't object to changing the position spot for each moment in the scene. I don't believe that cutting is always the right way to accomplish that camera repositioning.

Are you happy with the final result?

I am delighted with the responses I have heard to the film, but I am not quite sure that some of the emotional or racial lines are strong enough. I think there is some ambiguity in areas I'd rather hadn't been there. Still, one is never entirely happy with anything, is one?
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