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Cinema Papers #43 May-June 1983

Scott Murray

Peter Beilby

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The face that his success is generally due to his ability to hard work and determination. He is a realistic character outside of human experience. He has an unshakable confidence in his success. The people he encounters are often amazed by his success and ability to assert his superiority.

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To Gethin Creagh the ideal dubbing environment has no walls.

Gethin, I believe you started as a sound recordist in New Zealand. How did you get into the business?

Right from a young kid I wanted to be in radio, not in film at all. As a kid it was all white coated technicians that I saw at the radio stations. From secondary school I went straight onto a traineeship with the NZBC. I gravitated to an audio secondary school I went straight onto to a traineeship with the NZBC. When Allen retired he presented me with the keys to the place and I worked there for a year until I got a call from Peter Benton at United Sound. Once again I'd run out of horizons so I left the ABC to work at United on feature movies, which is where I wanted to head for some time.

What are you working on at the moment?

Our next Australian feature is 'Winds of Jarrah', directed by Mark Egerton which will be in stereo. There will be a Malaysian feature before that which will be the first one in stereo out of South-East Asia.

Do you recall the first feature you did?

For my first two features I didn't know what country I was in. The first one was called 'Marebe'. It was from New Guinea and it was in Pelgian English. The next one was 'Manganinio', which had some English but was mostly Aborigine. Since that time I suppose I've done twenty five or twenty six features.

Which of those are especially memorable to you?

Oh, I think 'Heatwave' working with Phil Noyce. We had a great time doing that and I loved the movie. I think its fantastic and he's particularly good to work with. He's the sort of person who can draw it all out of you. You're sitting there sweating away, giving your best and he's asking for more. You do it for him willingly but its exhausting work.

Is there any sound track you're particularly pleased with?

The ones I'm really pleased with are the recent ones. 'Goodbye Paradise' is an excellent track. 'The Pirate Movie' was another good track. 'Dead Easy' is another one and 'Captain Invincible' is another good one. They're all good fun.

How long have you been with Colorfilm?

Like the dubbing theatre, I've only been to Colorfilm. It was originally going to be a screening theatre, however, it was decided to go into sound. We've only really been operating since just after Christmas.

How do you define your role as a mixer?

I've always thought the actual technique of mixing is only half the job. I've watched other mixers at work and it always seems to be how you're handling the director and the editors. You've got to get consensus in that room. You can't come out with a grey decision and you're the one they're all looking to. You've got to produce the goods because very often they don't know exactly what they want and you've got to invent it.

The dubbing theatre here at Colorfilm, what's it like?

It's fantastic. It's one of the only properly installed dubbing theatres I've ever seen. The equipment is first class and its put in the right way too. We can run more tracks than anybody else. We can lock in with time code interlock and are full hi-tech. We've got a Studer A800 24 track which is the Rolls Royce of multi track tape recorders which can lock into the system. We have one of the best dubbing suites around.

In your opinion, what is the ideal set-up and the ideal conditions to produce the best possible quality?

Plenty of feed back to the crew and your director and to your technical people. Lots of talking. No walls put up. A good technical backup is essential.

At one time the mixer knew how everything worked right down to the last transistor. He doesn't anymore. You have to be too specialised so you're always talking to your maintenance department to keep quality control up. And of course, talking to your director for artistic direction.

What about physically?

Good ergonomics. Well placed equipment so you can get to it otherwise you get fatigued. A good monitoring system otherwise you're deluding yourself. Also you can get aural fatigue if you're working with equipment which is below par; you're working blind, like the cameraman not looking through the eyepiece, just guessing. And good coffee.

How close do Colorfilm come to providing you with those ideal conditions?

Well they're pretty well there now.

Finally Gethin, Why Colorfilm?

I was waiting for that. I was going to say because Hollywood didn't ring. Well, I'm most impressed with the technical back-up. If I ask for something to be done, a modification, like I did the other week when I was working on a feature, I wanted a Monitor Matrix system, and I had one within 24 hours. Which is pretty impressive. The technical back-up here is amazing. The company wants to get into the sound side. That's been made clear to me. And if they get into something they usually make sure they're the leaders in it. Their unofficial projections into the future are good. It's an expanding company with good back-up and you get a fair deal. There's no nonsense with them.

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AFC Policy Statement

The Australian Film Commission’s chief executive, Joseph Skrzynski, has announced the formation of an AFC Policy Secretariat. Skrzynski said:

“...the Policy Secretariat will have three main functions:
- to assist the Commission review, plan and define its policy;
- to identify and research areas of concern for the industry, and initiate, collect and develop an industry data base;
- to identify particular problems with a view to formulating solutions for implementation by appropriate bodies.

“We see the Policy Secretariat as an essential development for the AFC, augmenting our policy and research capability, and look forward to continued consultation with the industry in matters of mutual concern.

Policy approval for AFC initiatives remains with commission members, while the Policy Secretariat is responsible for policy identification and research.”

The Policy Secretariat is headed by policy director, Michael Frankel (until recently the AFC’s senior legal officer), who has been involved with legal, financial and policy issues relating to film and company legislation. He will be assisted by information and public relations officer, Sue Murray; executive assistant, David Court; assistant to the Secretariat, Joy Holden; and various research consultants.

Censorship Changes

Various important modifications have been made to the handling of the censorship of films entered in approved Australian film festivals. On April 17, the federal Attorney-General, Senator Gareth Evans, issued this statement:

“...Regulations will be gazetted tomorrow to provide that films may be screened at recognized film festivals and similar events without the need to be approved by the Film Censorship Board.

“The decision to take this action has resulted from my assessment of the high standing and reputation of the major Australian film festivals over many years. I believe, as do the Governments of Victoria and New South Wales, that the Melbourne and Sydney Film Festivals, in particular, have now earned the right to be treated as responsible, self-regulating organizations, and that they can be relied upon to apply appropriate standards without Government censorship inter­ference...”

“The amendments to the Customs (Cinematograph Films) Regulations will establish a procedure for organizations to apply to the Attorney-General for approval as ‘approved organizations’ and to screen films at ‘approved events’.

“In determining whether to approve an organization or an event, the Attorney-General is obliged to take account of a number of matters, including:
- the organization’s purposes;
- whether the proposed event is in keeping with those purposes;
- the cultural or artistic quality of the activities in question; and
- the general standing and reputation of the organization in question.

“I believe that both the Sydney and Melbourne film festivals, which are ongoing organizations planning their next annual events in June, will be accepted as clearly eligible for exemption under these provisions.

“Applications from other organizations and in respect of other events will be considered on their merits as the occasion arises.

“The regulations make it clear that the new system will only operate in relation to a bona fide request for permission to be allowed to comply with a series of specific conditions, including:
- admission limited to subscribers;
- subscribers to be 18 years of age and over; and
- a limit of two screenings of any film at any one festival; and
- all films admitted under these conditions to be exported at the conclusion of the festival.

“The regulations also provide for an appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal against any decision by the Attorney-General to either refuse or revoke approval.”

On the same day, Senator David Hamer issued a press release:

“Senator David Hamer, Liberal Senator for Victoria and chairman of the Australian Film Institute, said in Melbourne today that he welcomed the new regulations from the federal Attorney-General for films to be screened at recognized film festivals and special screenings of the Australian Film Institute without the need for approval by the Film Censorship Board.

“Senator Hamer said that he had been concerned for many years about the censorship of special film screenings and film festivals and the harm done to government-supported film organizations (such as the AFI) in the past when certain films had to be withdrawn because of interference by the Film Censorship Board.

“Senator Hamer said that it was proper that the Film Censorship Board should continue to classify films to protect young people from unsuitable films and to act as a guide to parents so that they know beforehand whether a film is suitable for certain age groups. But in the case of AFI screenings and film festivals, membership is open to all people interested in the art of the film, who are over the age of 18 and therefore eligible to view ‘R’-rated films. In the past, the Chief Censor, Janet Strickland, justified banning certain films to the AFI and film festivals because she claimed that these organizations should not be able to show films that other

Unit Trusts

Dear Sirs,

I noted with interest (confusion) the two articles in Cinema Papers, No. 42, March 1983, relating to legal matters in the film industry namely: “Financing Australian Films” (released by the Australian Film Commission) and “Prospectuses: A Possible Solution” (p. 46).

The latter article states: “Therefore, the solution appears to be membership of a unit trust in which the members will obtain no interest in the trust property, or income from trust activity...”

However on page 38 of the volume of papers labelled “Financing Australian Films” (released by the Australian Film Commission) it is stated:

“If a trust were to be used as an investment vehicle in a film venture the investors would acquire units in the trust again, in proportion to their investments. A trust is an entity separate from the investors for taxation purposes and it would be the relevant investor and first owner of the copyright in the film. The benefit of the New Tax Concessions would be received by the beneficiaries only by way of additional distributions of the net assets of the trust. A trust cannot distribute a loss and, under the New Tax Concessions, film losses may only be realised against film income. Accordingly, an investor/beneficiary may be unable to take advantage of a film loss should it occur. It may often be expected that a film may make a loss in the first year of income thus the investor/beneficiary is further disadvantaged by this structure.”

Moreover on page 23 of the Cinema Papers March issue William Marshall is quoted as follows: “...trusts whether unit or family discretion­ary, (be) very careful about using any form of trust, 108(3)A does not allow for them.”

The legal and taxation aspects of film financing have, for the past couple of years, been nothing short of a “minefield” from which producers are only just starting to successfully emerge. You may well have in these two articles unintentionally extended said “minefield” yet again.

I believe that an article in your next issue which both rationalized and recon­ciled these two apparently conflicting views should be of great benefit to all members of the industry.

Yours sincerely,

John Kearney
Acting Director
Film Victoria

Brendan Archer (“Prospectuses”) replies: The extracts referred to in John Kearney’s letter are not in conflict. Both Bill Marshall’s statement and the extract from “Financing Australian Films” refer to the situation where an investment is made using a trust as the permanent investment vehicle. In my article, under the heading “Stage 3”, I stated: “The trustee would then vest the assets of the unit trust in the members...”

By vesting the assets, the trustee would drop out of the picture and the investment would be transferred to the individual members. This would ensure that the undesirable consequences referred to in the extracts quoted — i.e., the loss of the deductions by the investors (beneficiaries) — would not occur.
I believe it would be in the industry's interests to investigate the possibility of providing that the members of a unit trust specifically formed for the purpose of film investment be entitled to the Division 10BA deductions as if they were members of a partnership. A unit trust structure would appear to be an ideal structure for film investment purposes. I understand Phillip Adams advocated the use of unit trusts at a meeting of the various state film commissions in 1981.

**********

"Snowy" Box-office

Dear Sir,

I was amused by Jack Clancy's "The Man From Snowy River: Parents and Critics" in Cinema Papers (No. 42, March 1983, p. 50). First, it smacked of that ripe fruit produced by Parker Tyler and bottled for posterity. I doubt if Mr. Breckinridge. Even more diverting, Clancy chose to overflow out of a curious ignorance.

Pondering the "contradiction" between the success of the film at the Australian box-office and the "critical hamstring" it manifested abroad, I was inclined to cite the method of citation. Clancy continued: "if one adds to the Australian success an interesting corollary, that (as far as I am aware) the film has enjoyed nothing like that success in other countries, the puzzle becomes greater" (p. 50).

Yet in Perth, Western Australia, The Sunday Times (March 27, 1983, p. 44) printed the following news-item under a New York, Saturday date-line: "The Man From Snowy River which had previously taken $14 million, has chalked up another $12.24 million in 472 U.S. cinemas in the past 23 weeks."

Wait, old Clancy, old auteurist (a Clancy who refers to the author of the attack writes what is in the script, which he refuses to acknowledge. Its appraisal echoes the impression on Cremen, for her critical vision."

Cremen argues that women who see the film will "feel obliged to react favourably to it because so few films depict a lesbian relationship that is not automatically doomed". This is a valid point, but why did Cremen go to such lengths of misrepresenting and misquoting a review of her film to support her thesis?

Cremen was hard-pressed to find source material for her article and had to resort to using a film review "in a local student newspaper". By stressing the parochial source it is implied that the review is naively celebratory of the "worthy" subject matter. Cremen described the reviewer as "enthused" and "enamoured of the industry and yet does not draw too many conclusions."

I refer to Cremen's discussion of Nouchka van Brakel's A Woman Like Eve in which she refers to review of the film which appeared in the October 1982 issue of Newsweek (New South Wales Institute of Technology student newspaper). Cremen argues that women who see the film will "feel obliged to react favourably to it because so few films depict a lesbian relationship that is not automatically doomed". This is a valid point, but why did Cremen go to such lengths of misrepresenting and misquoting a review of her film to support her thesis?

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The review has obviously made an impression on Cremen, for her critical appraisal echoes the Newsweek review in a way which she refuses to acknowledge. It adds insult to injury by misleading Cinema Papers readers to think that a particular critic of a film in another magazine is an amateur and gullible, and then the author of the attack writes what is essentially the same review. Newsweek is cited to be of help with research of areas of film study which are ignored by the mainstream media. Just so, as we are correctly quoted and credited.

Yours sincerely,
Greg Keightley
Film Reviews Editor
Newsweek

Christine Cremen replies:

Really Newsweek, be fair: either I am (in your opinion) a lackey of the "mainstream media" who has been harshly critical of your reviewer's remarks, or a sneaky plagiarist who has stolen her superior insights. You can't have it both ways. Nevertheless, where she and I do agree is in our interest in the subject matter of the film. However, even though I too am "a sucker for a dyke romance", I am unwilling to praise everyone who appears on the screen with only the most tokenistic of damns.

**********

Australian Film Commission

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The Grasshoppers — Jane Oeh; 2nd draft funding — $11,504
Love on a Tourist Visa — Jan Sharp; Verite Film Productions; travel costs to Indonesia — $2966
The Umbrella Woman — Margaret Kelly Productions; towards preparation of production budget — $1000
Nightshade — Samson Productions; 1st draft funding — $13,000
Project: "Living Dangerously, Newsfront" — David West; towards preparation of project development branch — $2250
Earth Versus the Globos — Ben Chisholm Productions, Newsweek, View Films; 2nd draft funding — $32,500

Concluded on p.168
The films of Sydney Pollack concern individuals going through a process of learning, about themselves and their “roots”. Often they are helped in this process by their sexual partners.

Pollack’s *Bobby Deerfield* is one example. Bobby (Al Pacino) is a racing car champion who is afraid of life, too scared of stepping outside his self-constructed shell for fear of exposing himself emotionally. But through his relationship with Lillian (Marthe Keller), he is taught, as Lillian writes to him, “Life is made sweeter by taking a risk.”

By the end of the film, Bobby has opened himself out emotionally, letting the more sensitive side of his personality emerge. He has also realized that one cannot cut oneself off from one’s roots, and that one is strengthened by understanding the part family plays in life. A moving example is when Bobby gives as his address (to some fellow American tourists) that of his little-visited family home.

In many ways, Bobby’s sense of growth and increased sense of personal freedom conveys Pollack’s belief in the importance of individual struggle. In *Absence of Malice*, Michael Gallagher (Paul Newman) fights the injustice of a false newspaper item and takes on the newspaper itself. He does not allow himself to be daunted by the corporate’s oppressive and impersonal might, and his victory is that of the individual over the institution.

So, even if Pollack’s films often end in the parting of lovers (through choice or death), there is always a strong sense of each individual’s having grown through the process. Pollack is a fiercely optimistic filmmaker who sees nothing to be lost in taking a risk. As Bobby says of his brother, “He’s kind of a goddam fool . . . ‘cept he tries.”

S.M.
You have done a lot of work in television and in many of your films there seems to be a critical attitude towards it. Hubbell Gardiner (Robert Redford) in "The Way We Were" is shown to have coped out at the end when he has become a writer for television, while "Tootsie" is clearly a parody of certain kinds of television. How much is this a product of your own experiences?

It is partially that, and partially an attack on the travesty I think television has become in the U.S. At one time there was real promise for television; now I don't think there is. Apart from the public broadcasting system, where private stations and cable do some interesting programming, series television is pap.

At the time I was working in television it represented the ultimate compromise. You had to have commercial breaks, or the network had a different philosophy from the star, or you couldn't hire someone because he was too far to the left of the paper product that was sponsoring the show. You were always frustrated by something.

But even then good things were possible. On Ben Casey, I did almost every other show in the first two years and some of them were quite good. Given they were one hour shows done in five days, there is some pretty damn interesting stuff visually, and some nice performances and writing. But television has become silly now, and can't help but be a little satirical in my attitude to it on film.

Is it also connected to a broader view of the problems produced by institutions? You attacked the media in "Absence of Malice" and in "The Electric Horseman". There is the CIA in "Three Days of the Condor" and the ambiguity about 'The New York Times'. It is as if in your films institutions are constantly threatening that notion of the individual which is clearly so important to you . . .

Institutions do constantly threaten and frustrate the individual. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy and you can't get around it. That disturbs me. I am part of this institutionalization now in the film business. There isn't any film business. There's Coca-Cola. There's Gulf and Western. There's the Trans America Corporation. The only one really left is Marvin Davis who owns Twentieth Century-Fox, for which he personally paid them $700 million in cash. He's an oil man, but at least he is one man. If I wanted to, I could go and face Marvin Davis and have the satisfaction of yelling at him, but you can't argue with an institution.

It is like trying to argue with an airline. There isn't anybody who can do you any good because they are all working for somebody else. Nobody takes any personal responsibility. "But you don't understand. I have my tickets." "Well, I'm sorry sir. Your tickets have been sold to somebody else." "But who do I see about that?"

That is a line I have often used in my pictures. It started in This Property is Condemned, and was in Three Days of the Condor, Bobby Deerfield and Absence of Malice.

When there isn't anybody to see, you are in trouble, and there isn't anybody to see with institutions because institutions aren't anybody. Yet global economies and politics fertilize institutions.

One might look for personal relationships to provide a refuge from those institutions. Yet in almost all your films you separate your lovers at the end, as if they have to go off alone and face the world again. The exception is "Tootsie" . . .

Yes, Tootsie is the most optimistic film so far, but even there I couldn't quite bring them together as it was originally written, with them embracing and walking off together.

Basically, I don't think there are any solutions. There is only the examination of alternatives. There is no end to a journey; there is always another journey starting. But I do believe the alternative is personal relationships: they are the only refuge.

Personal relationships also have a dark side at their root because ultimately, and I hate to admit this, everyone is alone. The toughest things in the world you have to do alone: being born, dying, the gut-level choices you have to make in life, even in your career, even politically, to betray a friend or decide what is a moral move. There isn't any real refuge for your aloneness.

I don't mean to be as pessimistic as I sound, and I am very pro-relationships. I have been married for 25 years. I don't believe it is an ideal solution, but it is the closest thing we have. I don't know any other way to do it except to try. "But if it doesn't work, Sydney, why do you do it?" "Because there isn't anything else." Finally, that is a good enough reason.

"Bobby Deerfield" is, arguably, your most complex treatment of the dangers and rewards of relationships . . .

I'm glad you think that. The core of it was the irony of a man who faces death every day but knows nothing about life. He is taught about how to live by a dying woman who had this compulsion to give some meaning to her death. The metaphor for me was in the story Lillian (Marthe Keller) told about her father dying on the beach, and this hand sticking out underneath. They roll him over and find this child, and Lillian says, "It was so strange because it was as if my father had died and in his dying had laid the child, like an
There is a wonderful sparking between Deerfield and Lillian particularly in their first meeting over dinner at the clinic...

Yeah, it is an extraordinary scene. I love it. I love the fact that they have their backs to each other, and she has to turn around each time she talks. And I love that whole thing with the magician and how Deerfield tries to find out how he does the con tricks. Deerfield can't stand mysteries. He can't stand anything that can't be explained or understood. He has to know where every pebble is. That is why he picked a job that justifies so much carefulness. That is why the film opens with him walking the racing track; he previews every step he is going to take. That is why he always repeats a question before answering, to give himself as much time as possible. “Where am I going? . . . I'm going over there.” “How am I? . . . I'm fine.”

You must have been disappointed by the general failure of “Bobby Deerfield” to win an audience...

It didn't work anywhere; yet it is a favorite of mine.

I know you shouldn't defend films that fail, but I am stubborn about it. Everybody seems to have thought I was trying to make a tear-jerker, but that's not what I was trying to do at all.

It was important to me that people at least recognized the ways in which the theme of Bobby Deerfield, one that I'm terribly interested in, and which has been in all the pictures, although to a lesser degree than in Deerfield, is about roots. By that I mean people wandering away from where they belong, culturally, emotionally or physically. Bobby was a guy who cut himself off and, for whatever reasons, tried to deny who and what he really was. He assumed a constructed identity, which a lot of people do.

There are very few people who don't diverge from their roots. At some time they encounter a teacher, a piece of literature or something that makes them believe that they have been doing it all wrong, and that they have to change. They move to San Francisco or New York or London. They start a whole new life. But it is like cutting a tree off and then re-planting it: it is never as strong as when the original roots are kept. Most people find themselves returning to home base.

Coming to terms with one's past, finding answers there, emerges as a major theme in most of your films. In “Absence of Malice” and “The Electric Horseman,” Sonny Steele (Robert Redford) has betrayed his past and has to take a course back to it . . .

Exactly. It is in all those films — and very much so in The Yukza — but for some reason it seemed to work more palitably for audiences in those films than in Deerfield. For me, Deerfield was the more perfect expression of those themes, but people either found it boring or they wanted to watch a film about a boring man, or were not prepared for Pacino in that kind of role after Dog Day Afternoon and Serpico; they expected more fireworks.

In fact, you originally had Paul Newman cast as Bobby Deerfield, which would have made it a very different film . . .

I don't think it would have been as true a film, but commercially it probably would have been more successful. Newman was the first to try and get me to do it, because it was written for him by Alvin Sargent. We had a meeting down at Newman's beach house, and he really wanted to do it badly. But I had just made The Yukza, which was a failure, so I chickened out and did Three Days of the Condor. But as soon as Condor was successful, I dug Alvin's screenplay out of my drawer and re-read it. I became totally fascinated.

You seem to have developed a very productive relationship with Sargent . . .

Alvin and I have worked together on many films. He and David Rayfield, whom I first met when I was wrong in London. They worked together on The Way We Were, Beautiful. It was the first time I had been able to work with two writers at once, in the same room. The same thing happened on The Electric Horseman.

Alvin is a man who thinks of himself as missing life, a cloistered man who is afraid to take a chance. He is about 54 years old, very youngish looking and very attractive. But he was locked for 27 years in a marriage. His wife was terrific, and he has great affection for her, but it was the wrong marriage for him. He knew it. He hid upstairs in a room and typed all day long.

Actually, he has just re-married and his life is opening up beautifully. He's done Julia and Ordinary People, and won three Academy Awards. He is just blossoming.

Alvin writes very much out of his gut, but is disciplined enough as a craftsman to put it in a theatrical form. He writes fables about himself, but not narcissistic, autobiographical stuff. He also has a bizarre imagination. Only he could have written that crazy character, Carlos del Montanaro, the balloon guy eating the salami in Bobby Deerfield. Who is this strange balloon guy? I don't know. It doesn't make any sense in the world, except he is precisely the opposite to Deerfield. He is not where he belongs. He takes risks. He speaks to strangers, flies in the sky. He does all kinds of crazy things.

And in The Electric Horseman he came up with Gus (Will Hare), that crazy guy who lived out by a trailer park. He is the salami character in another guise.

You know, it was an interesting experience making Bobby Deerfield, because I was away from home, from my own roots. We shot it all in Europe, in strange, unreal places like Leichhardt in Switzerland. Hospitals like that really exist, with elixirs, health spas and everything.

Then we followed their journey, down the mountain to Belaggio and Lake Como. We stayed at the Villa Serbaloni, a strange place out of some Baroque past. And here is Lydia (Annie Duperey) who was wonderful. I love it when he comes back down the mountain and Lydia is waiting for him: “I will make you an omelette,” “I don’t want an omelette.” “I will make you an omelette and I don’t give a damn if you want an omelette.”

I loved another line so much I used it again in Electric Horseman: “Bobby, what will you do tomorrow?” which became “What are you going to do tomorrow Sonny?” It’s the same question because that is finally the question. “What has all this meant? What will I learn from all this?” And, of course, the characters in neither case can really give a definitive answer. Something has been learned, but nobody can say precisely what it is.

So all your films are positive inasmuch as the characters manage to grow because of their experiences?

They do grow. They grow by leaving home base and then returning different from when they left. Eliot in Four Quartets has a line which is the most significant line for me — it’s on my wall: “The purpose of all our wanderings is to arrive at the
point where we started and know it
for the first time." That is exactly
what happens to people in life.

Many of your characters have
difficulty making decisions alone,
and in part this reflects the loss of
a parental guidance or presence:
Bobby Deerfield, Megan in
"Absence of Malice", Hubbell and
Katie in "The Way We Were", Julie in "Tootsie"...

I think so. I have never thought
of it quite like that, but you strike
a note. You remind me of my past.
I had almost no parental guidance
and probably spent an awful lot of
my childhood involved in things
with an ambiguous nature, like
trying to figure out why there are
so many contradictory things.
Why could it not be more simple?

My mother died when I was
very young. My father was a certain
kind of a teacher, but more in
terms of physical survival than in
moral or philosophical terms. He
was a very physical guy and it was
more about taking care of your­
self, of being an athlete. I could
never speak to my father about
anything philosophical.

One of the things I enjoy most
in my life is sitting down and having
long talks with my three kids—my
two daughters particularly.
They are very open with me, about
everything — philosophical ques­
tions, moral questions, whatever.
My oldest daughter is a fresh­
man in college now, and on the way
to Europe recently I stopped in
Denver just to take her to dinner
and bullshit. It is something I
mixed with teaching.

The thing I am trying to teach
her, if I can teach her anything,
is that you don't need to have
answers to feel secure, because
most of the time the people
with the answers are in as much trouble
as anybody else. As Yeats said,
"The best do lack conviction, the
worst are full of passion and intensity."  

I am very suspicious of 'know­
ing'. It is almost impossible to
know anything. Yet all the time I
run in to 'experts' and, forgive me,
film critics who 'know'. But who
the hell knows? How do you know
so fast that this is right and this
is wrong, or this is good and this
is bad? It is hard to know anything
and it gets harder as you get older
and learn more. You face more
and more moral ambiguities all the
time. It would be wonderful if it
were easy, like the way John
Houseman talks about the war he
was in. He misses "the certainty,
the clarity".

I am a Jew who took a great deal
of pride in 1963 with the Israeli
situation. Now I am in a very com­
promised moral position, given
what is going on. It is very hard
to know what is right. It would
be wonderful to just have an
allegiance to an idea and say that
under no circumstances are we
wrong.

That is a small example, but it
happens in life all the time. It
happens in pictures.

The problem with that, however,
is that constant reflection prohibit
action . . .

That is exactly right. That is the
dilemma in 'The Way We Were'
you're so busy seeing every side
that you take no side. What you
are finally doing is rationalizing
inaction. I get furious with myself
for rationalizing inaction. It's like
a see-saw, and that is reflected in
the pictures, too. That's why there
is never reconciliation, because
each of the people usually repre­
sents one point of view. And if I
mine to the fullest the existen­tial
long view that Hubbell Gardiner
takes in 'The Way We Were', and
then mine to the fullest the com­
mitted point of view that Katie
Morosky (Barbra Streisand) takes,
ultimately I can't ever keep them
together. The differences are too
great. They're irreconcilable.

Given that quote from John
Houseman, "Absence of Malice"
seems like a yearning for that kind
of moral certainty because Michael
marches in like a cowboy out of
the West and rides off into the
sunset at the end . . .

Yes. He's the guy who isn't
morally ambiguous. He's not
paralyzed by weighing arguments.
"Hey, this isn't fair", he says. He
doesn't care whether it is an insti­
tuition or not. He says the one
great line: Did you ever try to talk
to a newspaper? I mean, he can't talk
to a newspaper, but he tries. It is
naivety, but naivety is the only way
you can do it.

I did the best work in my life
when I didn't know what I
couldn't do. It is learning the limits
that starts to cripple you. That is
why filmmaking is a burn-out busi­
ness, oddly. There are not a lot of
old directors. And you have
careers like Elia Kazan's and Billy
Wilders, and you wonder what
happened. Why is it great, great,
great and then stops? It stops
because you begin to define your­
self too much. You begin to
'know' or think you know. You
can't keep that sense of not
knowing what you can't do.

In your work there seems to be a
constant concern with the feminine
side of the male personality, and
vice versa. It is clearly there in
"Bobby Deerfield", something
Bobby has to learn about himself.
Was it this aspect that interested
you in "Tootsie"?

It was the only thing that inter­
sted me in Tootsie: the idea of a
man growing and becoming a
better man for having been a
woman. I wasn't interested in
doing a drag comedy. I wasn't
interested in Dustin Hoffman put­
ing on a dress.

I think I have always been inter­
ested in this aspect without know­
ing it. Until I got into Tootsie, when
I realized that the similarities
between men and women may
ultimately be more important than
the differences. Friendship between
men and women is tough, but it may
ultimately be the answer to reconciling
all these revolutions and liber­
tion movements.

We look around and some guy
says, as though it is an incredible
accomplishment, "She's my best
friend." And that's not usually
what happens. Usually a guy has a
guy as his best friend, and a girl
has a girl, and in the meantime
the guy has a lover, a wife or what­
ever. That is a sad commentary
on heterosexual relationships.

In the films I have done, particu­
larly the early ones, the wise one
was the woman. She was strong
and taught the man, starting with
'The Slender Thread', then 'The Way
We Were', 'Bobby Deerfield' and
'The Electric Horseman'.

There is a wiser, feminine part
in men that culture has repressed. But
"feminine" is really a misnomer.
If you ask a man to name the five
most appealing qualities in a
woman, not naming anything
physical, he would probably say
things like patience, sensitivity,
understanding, an ability to
nurture and kindness. Now there is
no reason they should be feminine
qualities, no reason they shouldn't
be in every man. They're humane
or human qualities.

Something very positive would
happen if men listened more to
that side of themselves and didn't
feel compelled to illustrate over
and over the macho side. There is
something very good about
ambition, about personal strength,
about stamina and the ability to handle stress, and all the things that we think of as strong qualities. But it is always better if it is tempered with some sensitivity.

I have played around with that theme a lot. I remember Lillian saying in *Bobby Deerfield* that she had big hands like her father. It's not wrong to have the qualities of a woman — nice hands, delicate hands — she's saying to Deerfield. And in *Julia* there is the relationship between these two women, which was not a homosexual relationship but a closeness. It was a relationship possible between two people.

Some of this sounds as pretentious as hell, and I don't mean it to, but global politics are too complicated for me. I can't deal with it. But I know as sure as I am sitting here that the only way to deal with it is between two people, not between countries. Everything starts between two people, and it can be a man and a man, a man and a woman, or a woman and a woman. It doesn't matter if things are right there, then you can't have wars.

You know, people say, "Why don't you make political movies?" I do make political films. "Why don't you make moral, philosophical movies?" Well, I do make very personal films, but in the form of big entertainment. That is the way to reach the maximum number of people — a lot more people than if I make a little tract picture with an essay in it, saying "Don't drop nuclear bombs. It's not good for you." Everybody knows it's not good for you.

No, I can't do it that way, but I can make somebody cry genuinely or laugh or be sad or root for better treatment of a person. Even in its own odd way in *Tootsie*, you see the truth when Ron (Dabney Coleman) says to Dorothy (Dustin Hoffman) the same line that Michael (Hoffman) said to Jeff (Bill Murray) about, "Listen, I never told her that." You see the lying so clearly and you know it's true. The audience laughs because they know it is the same damn thing that most guys say.

Now, you don't think you are learning something there, but in an odd way, because you are not being lectured at, because you are not being moralized to, you recognize for a split second the truth of it all. It moves some furniture around in your head a little bit; a little crack opens. And that is all that is necessary for starters.

We have debated various readings of that sequence when Michael delivers Julie's (Jessica Lange) 'line' to her on the balcony. It seems to me that Michael wants to be uncovered, because she is likely to recognize the line . . .

All I meant at that point was that fantasies are okay when you are in control of them but nobody
flirting with a man... otherwise I would

"Jessica [as Julie] is playing it like she's

Streisand, Faye Dunaway, Al

"Hey man, you'd better be
careful!"

Even in the scene where Dorothy
allegedly kisses Julie, she waits till
the last minute before pulling
away, because, as she says, "Obvi-
ously I had the same impulse too.''

Now, I don't want her to literally
be a lesbian because this is not
what the picture is about. I don't
want her not to be a lesbian, be-
because that is not what the picture
is about either. All I want her to do
is be sensitive and vulnerable, and
she is sweet at that moment. She
doesn't shout at Dorothy and say,
"How dare you!" or "Get out of
here." She very sensitively says,
"No, it's not your fault. It's my
fault", the way you would if a
misunderstanding like that
happened. But still something in
her is drawn to him.

So, I think unconsciously the
audience gets a sense of what it
would be like if they were together,
rather than if she reacted only
towards Dorothy as a woman. I
had to create some sort of sexual
tension between them, even though
it is bizarre in the sense that, in a
way, it is coming through the
dress.

Apparently, "Absence of Malice"
was originally written for two male
leads and you wanted one role
changed to a woman. Given the
kinds of relationships you have
mentioned in "Julia" and pursued
in "Tootsie", why did you see a
heterosexual relationship as neces-
sary here?

I don't seem to be able to do a
picture without a love story in it; it
is the pencil with which I can write.
In Absence of Malice, it was never
two men. However, we did think of
switching the roles, the man being
the reporter and the woman the
victim. The reason we couldn't
do that was that you wouldn't
believe a woman being suspected
of Mafia dealings. So I didn't have
much choice, finally, except to
make the victim the male so that
the misinterpretation of his con-
nections would be believable. His
father was Mafia, therefore he's
Mafia; his father was crooked,
therefore he's crooked.

How do you feel about the repre-
sentation of Megan Carter (Sally
Field) in the film?

Megan is not meant to be a great
journalist. Megan is an average
journalist, and I think she is a
fairly accurate representation, at
least in the U.S. She follows symp-
toms instead of facts, sometimes. I
know that a good journalist
wouldn't make a lot of the
mistakes she does, but we have
Pulitzer Prize journalists who have
made these mistakes.

I was very careful before I did
that picture: I sent people to the
Columbia Journalism School to
research every instance of journa-
listic malpractice I could find. I
assured myself that there were
precedents at least a hundred times
over for every mistake made in
that picture. And I documented it
all. Plus, I had an excellent
Pulitzer Prize-winning editor of the
Detroit Free Press as a writer
[Kurt Luedtke].

As well as the question of whether
or not she accurately represents
journalists, there is the question of
her function as a woman. When
Michael beats her up after Teresa's
suicide, it is as if one has been
manipulated into being hostile to
her rather than to the institution
...

Fair enough. But my only point
is that finally the institution, and
this is the irony of it, is the people.
I don't want to stop the free press
and I don't want to censure
journalists, but I want to say,
"Hey, you guys, you have to do it
better. I'm sorry, but if you have
that kind of responsibility, you
have to do it better." The answer is
to be a little more careful about
whom you give the by-line to in a
newspaper, because that's a big
forum.

It is the same as whom you let
make the picture. If I made pic-
tures which were out and out
propaganda, I think I would be
doing a very immoral thing. It's
not a fair arena to give me $21
million, then spend $15 million
more marketing this product and
let me say anything I want, if I'm
not a moral man. I had to watch
like hell on Three Days of the
Condor to let Higgins (Cliff
Roberson) and Joubert (Max von
Sydow) have their day in court.
Otherwise, it's not fair. Higgins
has to say, "You can take this
moral position because you're
eating, you're not hungry and
you're not freezing cold. But when
you're freezing and your car
won't start and there's no food in
your stomach, what are you going
to want then?" I have to leave you
on that note because that's another
wrench.

Now, I very much want to say
certain moral, positive things in
pictures, but I can't put my hand
on the scale and overbalance it.
That's cheating.

In "Tootsie", George Fields
(Sydney Pollack) tells Michael
why he hasn't the part in a new play:
"Terry Bishop is in soap opera.
Everybody knows his name." One
could look at the casting of your
films and say that you cast accord-
ing to that criterion. You have
used Sidney Potier, Redford five
times, Burt Lancaster twice, Paul
Newman, Robert Mitchum, June
Fonda twice, Sally Field, Barbra
Streisand, Faye Dunaway, Al
Pacino — all big names. To what
extent do you have your eye on the
box-office?
As originally written, the film was would have been wrong for, say, Richard Gere. Ryan O'Neal instead of Redford. It would have been quite different if I'd had Ryan O'Neal instead of Redford. As originally written, the film was a vehicle for the woman. My work was to try to level that argument out, and one of the ways was to cast someone who could pull his weight on screen with Streisand. And when Redford walks on screen, you automatically know you are dealing with an intelligent man. That is not necessarily true with Ryan O’Neal. He is a good actor, don't get me wrong, but the immediate association is not intelligence.

With Julie in *Tootsie*, a kind of sexual shorthand lets you know right away that she is the leading lady instead of Sandy (Teri Garr). I was very worried because you could be confused: Sandy’s is the better written part. That is the closer relationship. Would people think that the love story is Michael and Sandy? Well, I had to cast it so they would know the minute the two met that the love story belongs to Michael and Julie.

So, casting is very critical. It is not done so much for money, although you have probably a lot better chance of financing if you cast Streisand and Goldie Hawn as a female. Redford is not a guarantee of anything. Redford made *The Great Waldo Pepper*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Brubaker* — a lot of pictures that haven’t earned their money. So has Newman. He had made nothing but flops between 1970 and when I used him in *Absence of Malice*. But those people bring a history onto the screen with them, an unconscious series of associations from which you can’t disconnect them, and which can work very favorably for you.

Take the Megan character in *Malice*. I had to be very careful whom I cast as the lady. I wanted to be as ambiguous as I could, so I needed a sympathetic lady to do these unsympathetic things. I certainly didn’t want Faye Dunaway because it would have been a nightmare.

Sally Field is a sympathetic lady the minute she shows her face on screen because of *Norma Rae* and because of the fact that she’s had to fight against the system to become recognized as a good actress.

Newman also has a past. You can believe him taking on that newspaper. There is something old-fashioned about him; he comes out of old-fashioned films. It would have been wrong for, say, Richard Gere.

*The Way We Were* would have been quite different if I’d had Ryan O’Neal instead of Redford. As originally written, the film was

In your previous *Cinema Papers* interview, you talked about visual style in terms of catching the performance. You would like to shift the focus away from that. To what extent do you consciously tie visual patterns to thematic concerns?

You always try to. Visual style always works best when it comes out of some organic idea. Each scene has an idea if you want to push it to the wall. You ask, what is this scene really about? Eventually, that will lead you to behaviour, and to a visual style. You always try to label a scene emotionally: “This is the scene where Michael gets the worst news of his life.” You don’t try to explain the story as, “This is a scene where Michael comes and talks to his agent and finds out nobody will give him a part.” That won’t give you anything. But “This is the scene where Michael gets the final blow of bad news to an already bad life. He’s had his 40th birthday. He’s not gotten laid. He’s tried three girls. He’s lost the Tolstoy play. Now he’s told the worst news of his life.”

Now, that’s already starting to tell you how to play that scene.

Take the scene where Dorothy/Julie and Michael are in bed and he touches her. It is shot in one long, slow push-in, and one long, slow pull-back. It is one of the very few lyrical love scenes you have with them, and it would be wrong to cut back and forth. What is happening is a growing awareness of how touched Michael is by her story. In a sense, Julie is undressing in front of him, and so, even though it is her talking, the camera loses her and slowly pushes it on Michael, because he is the one that it is happening to.

Conventionally, you would say, “I have to do a close-up of her while she’s telling this whole story about the wallpaper”, but that’s not what the scene is about. It is about Michael falling in love with her because she is more intimate with him than she would be if they made love. That lands on him, and in order to see it land you have to concentrate on him.

Then, once you are there, you can’t leave it until he forces you. He takes his hand out of the covers. What is he going to do? It keeps pushing you back with the camera. He is going to touch her hair. And so it leads you to a visual style.

What do you have planned next?

Alvin is doing a project for me based on the life of Dashiel Hammett and Lillian Hellman. We did the script of *Julia* together, and then I had a schedule problem. I had committed myself to *Deerfield* because I didn’t think Alvin would finish *Julia* as fast as he did. Jane [Fonda] was ready to shoot right then, and Twentieth Century-Fox didn’t want to lose her, so they asked me if I’d let *Julia* go. I got paid off and I did *Deerfield*, while [Fred] Zinnemann took over *Julia*.

That is how Alvin and I became friends with Lillian Hellman. And over the years we have talked together about doing their life. We were finally able to convince her to sell the rights; that meant having to buy the rights to all her books: *Pentimento*, *Scoundrel Time* and *An Unfinished Woman*.

Alvin has been working for just about a year now on that story, and we should have it in the next couple of weeks.

It will be interesting to compare with “The Way We Were”, because one can see possible connections between the two . . .

Well, our ideal is the same: Streisand playing Hellman and Redford playing Hammett. That’s what it was designed for. Maybe it’s solvable; I don’t know. Sometimes pictures about real people are very tough to do. You have more freedom when they’re all imaginary. ★
The Dismissal is a confirmation ritual, a lengthy television re-enactment of the public record which celebrates the most controversial constitutional moment in Australian history.

The six-hour, three-part series opens by calling attention to its own status as a fiction, a film about political events. The opening credits unfurl against a black background to the accompaniment of piano music and the voice-over asserts the central reflective mood of the production: the attempt to order political events and understand them in the context of their time. The production also immediately establishes a level of abstraction for recollecting these events: “Looking back there are so many things. So many threads that wove the fabric of our lives.” The opening shots, in black and white, are of Vietnam, Nixon, the Middle East and civil disobedience. The images of street violence dissolve to the Statue of Liberty, and to a satellite shot of the earth in color, with Australia picked out in red.

This introduction establishes the tone, mood and subject material of the film, and deliberately draws the viewers’ attention to its own contrivance. The voice-over then makes the transition to Australia’s own political fortunes during this period of the early 1970s: “But I want to tell you about our country and some things which happened then and nearly tore it apart.” The image dissolves to “It’s Time” (the 1972 Labor Party campaign theme), shots in black and white of Gough Whitlam (Leader of the Opposition) and the election of 1972, inter-cut with color shots of crowds singing: history and its chorus.

The introduction takes one through a brief sequence of events until the second Labor electoral victory in May 1974. Then, on a note of impending confusion, and looming political and economic problems for the country, the cast of the production is introduced visually: pictures of the politicians together with images of the actors who play them. The contrast between newsfilm and its fictional reconstruction is made deliberately within the context of the film’s own narrative style, which includes elements of the silent film and television soap opera.

This style develops as the 1983 fictional representation increasingly takes over the recall of past events drawn from newsfilm. The past becomes the present as the film moves into longer sequences about Jim Cairns (Minister for Overseas Trade), Rex Connor (Minister for Minerals and Energy) and the opposition Liberal party. Deliberate notations indicate the context and progression of events: dates and place titles locate Canberra, parliament house, ministers’ offices; the slow unravelling of the loans affair.

The Dismissal is a restrained, terse and tactful historical reproduction. The program refuses to go beyond the historical record — at least the public record — in what it will depict. Relations between Rex Connor (Bill Hunter) and Tirth Khemlani (Harry Weis), or between Jim Cairns (John Hargreaves) and Junie Morosi (Neela Day), do not become speculative or sentimental. The opening image of Khemlani is one of a seedy, dubious, small-time operator, as ingratiating as a branch bank-teller who sees the chance for an unexpected promotion. The program dramatizes the character effectively while refusing to depict him in the more conventional clichés drawn from television, police or spy series.

A great deal of the critical attention given the series has concentrated on its supposed historical accuracy. How well or badly does Max Phipps play Gough Whitlam, how convincing is John Stanton as Malcolm Fraser, how insinuating is John Meillon as Sir John Kerr? The central historical dynamic in the events of 1975 is taken for granted, and critical attention focuses on the program’s supposed fidelity to the public record. Jim McClelland, former Minister for Labor in the Whitlam Government, wrote: “As a participant in the events with which it deals, I can attest that it makes a pretty good stab at the truth.” (Green Guide, The Age, March 17, 1983.)

But perhaps the central critical problem in this series is to accept the drama in the terms it establishes, and not to take it simply as a historical re-enactment in which the characters, plot and conclusion are already known. This is neither costume-drama nor simply spectacle. The Dismissal sets up its own images,
The Dismissal
Max Phipps as Gough Whitlam: creating "a fictional world which depends . . . on the patterns of meanings it establishes in its own dramatic terms". The Dismissal.

John Stanton as Malcolm Fraser: "coldness, aloofness and persistence". The Dismissal.

metaphors and explanations, and establishes, too, its own tone and point of view within which events can be considered, and general reflections about politics and democracy sustained.

Perhaps at the outset one should dismiss the question of whether the series represented politics in a way that contemporary viewers, who lived through these events, could find their depiction credible. It has been said, for example, that Fraser's coldness, aloofness and persistence were well-represented, but that Whitlam was reduced to a strutting figure of pretension without dignity. But in terms of our approach to television criticism, the question is neither about the skill with which certain figures have been impersonated, nor about the ways in which the public record of the times has been reconstructed. This approach implies a constant comparison between images drawn from 'real life' and the representation of precisely these events and characters on the screen.

What in fact happens with television drama, and quite self-consciously with this one, is that it constructs a fictional world which depends for its strength and conviction not so much on how well it can steer a middle course between partisan political views, nor on the accuracy of its characterizations, but on the patterns of meanings it establishes in its own dramatic terms. These patterns involve the ways in which the program makes politics into drama, and the historical explanation it proposes for the events that unfold.

The opening shots of the parliament establish the program's interest in the mechanics and forms of power, rather than in its dynamic. These are followed by lists of characters and actors in the production; the lengthy introduction to the series is brought to an end with a freeze-frame of Khemlani arriving in Australia on November 11, 1974. A voice-over tells that "exactly one year later the Labor Government will be dismissed from office." The form suggests Greek drama — reflection and implication — rather than television realism with its suspense and intrigue.

The Dismissal is only briefly and sketchily set in context of world affairs, just enough to identify Australia on the map; the program is mainly interested in the accuracy of its own chronology. The Australian history of the time, as recollected and imaged on the screen, is a public record of events and issues drawn from the media agenda. Constant recourse to newspapers, to credits about dates and places and to photographs of figures, such as Don Dunstan or Mick Young, reinforce the impression that the film's reconstruction is indistinguishable from the real events of the time.

An early interview sequence shows Whitlam responding to a question about NSW Premier Tom Lewis' decision to replace a member of parliament with another member drawn from a different political party. "A fundamental convention of Australian democracy has been demolished", warns Whitlam, "and democracy itself is in danger." The style of the program is to concentrate on this deliberate statement of political and constitutional facts, while the images reinforce an appearance of austerity, almost claustrophobic in their emphasis on the trappings of power, the cars, offices, conferences and the parliament.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this series is the evenness of tone, the way in which it dispenses anger, opposition and controversy in a lengthy development almost without melodrama. There is no contrived build-up to the dismissal: the suggestions of intrigue are carefully damped and, at the program's conclusion, the images translate from the actors in their
fictional world to newsfilm of the original events, as if to confer a degree of authenticity on the production and, curiously, at the same time to distance the viewers from any illusion that the program has presented the truth of the matter.

The evenness of tone comes about partly because of the restricted visual presentation of the political context and partly because of the voice-over which proceeds in a sombre and melancholy, not to say funereal, register, as though the sequences have been stuck together in a thin layer of slowly-setting concrete. The voice-over persistently strives for the significant, the poetic, the universal statement ("And so it's done. This thing that can never be undone," Or, "And so it goes. The tide of events bears us ceaselessly into the future.").

The narrative reconstruction steers uneasily at times between a recognition that historical events have specific and traceable causes and development, and a kind of resignation to the inevitability of the past. This occurs in part because of the way in which the program structures its images: parliament as a set of competing larrikins; Sir John Kerr set in the lyrical grounds of Yarralumla, with their suggestion of English countryside: the local political system and the vice-regal inheritance imaged in a conventional and relatively static fashion.

So what historical dynamic is suggested? The images of politics are narrow, the notions of conflict literal; the program veers between trying to dramatize a constitutional conflict in terms of an opposition between the Liberal Party and the popular will, imaged in support for the Labor Government, and a personal tragedy centred on the figure of the Governor-General, usually depicted with a glass in his hand, and finally represented as a kind of reluctant clown, self-important, edgy, responsive to any small indications that he too could play a part at the centre of the stage.

One is also told, in the end, that "those who forget history are bound to relive it"; this epitaph stands, perhaps, as a statement of intention about the program. But what is in question is precisely what is forgotten: that is, as The Dismissal sees it, the unscrupulous behaviour of the Liberal Party in opposition, behaviour directed against the government, the people and the conventions that safeguard Australian democracy. But the meaning of this behaviour, the roots and explanations of this constitutional clash, is not examined because the program does not attempt to reframe but to represent a set of events. This representation is clear in the conclusion when the drama collapses into film of Whitlam on the steps of parliament house, intercut with shots simulating the awaiting crowd.

Watching The Dismissal is to re-experience a slow, even, sombre representation of familiar events within a familiar frame. It is careful, respectful of the public record and unwilling to venture beyond it. This is its weakness and its strength, its concession to public affairs television and its deliberate attenuation as drama. It is an excellent representation of speeches, supplemented with sharp pen portraits but obscured in its larger view by its rhetoric: the voice-over, for instance, intones "So silently the crisis nears its flood, sweeping Kerr on relentlessly into history." But is Kerr the agent or the victim of this history? What is the relation of character to event? One can admire the program's refusal to entertain crass or polemical theories, while feeling that it may have limited appeal for viewers who did not live through the events.

In summary then, in terms of its fidelity to the surface of events, The Dismissal is convincing in the detail and accent of some of its characterizations. Some appear to be drawn directly from life, and others, such as Lady Kerr (Robyn Nevin), are etched from Shakespeare. However, these are not the terms in which the program needs to be assessed, and it deliberately calls attention to its own status as fiction. The program must be taken in its own terms, despite the pressure to accept it simply as a re-run of what everyone already knows. The Dismissal attempts to gloss over its authenticity by including references to incontestable traces of real life through newspapers, photos, television images and credits. And the relationship between its own fiction and the original events changes throughout the program series: i.e., the production does not establish an invariable relationship between its attempt to reproduce events and explain them by reframing them. For example, its explanation of the power-brokering in the Liberal Party does not go beyond the corridors and cubby-holes images of popular fiction.

The overall objective of imaging a historical dynamic finally tends to collapse into the assertion that tides of history take people with them, but this surfing analogy is never a very convincing explanation. The final respect for the public record commits The Dismissal to a ritual function, with a sacramental status and a kind of deliberate transparency, of a similar though different order as the Anzac ceremony: Lest We Forget.

Bill Hunter as Rex Connor: borne forward on the tide of events. The Dismissal.

Whitlam in parliament, playground for competing larrikins. The Dismissal.

John Hargreaves as Jim Cairns: what is done cannot be undone. The Dismissal.
Set in Sydney in the 1930s, *Careful, He Might Hear You* is the poignant but nightmare story of a boy caught in a bitter custody battle between two sisters. The boy is called PS, and he is seven years old.

Based on the novel by Sumner Locke Elliot, the film contrasts Lila, the anxious but tough suburban housewife, with her sister Vanessa, who is worldly, rich and beautiful, and who covets PS to fill the emptiness of her past.

*Careful, He Might Hear You* is directed by Carl Schultz, from a screenplay by Michael Jenkins, for producer Jill Robb. Director of photography is John Seale, production designer John Stoddard and costume designer Bruce Finlayson.

Right: Aunt Lila (Robyn Nevin) and PS (Nicholas Gledhill). Below: PS is surrounded by a team of well-meaning aunts and Uncle George (Peter Whitford), his salvation.
Above left and right: PS, the centre of a custody battle. Below: Lila, "the anxious but tough suburban housewife". 
Above left: Aunt Vanessa (Wendy Hughes), PS and Lila. Above right: PS and Vanessa.
Below left: PS plays cricket with some old chums. Below right: Vanessa.
Denny Lawrence, with two images from Goodbye Paradise, which Lawrence co-wrote with Bob Ellis.

Christine Cremen interviews the co-scriptwriter of "Goodbye Paradise"

You are best known at the moment for your co-authorship of "Goodbye Paradise", but in fact you have worked more frequently as a director . . .

I began as an actor, graduated from NIDA, and worked in radio and television. I then began directing in theatre, and writing for theatre and television. I found that it was directing that I liked doing most.

Then I decided, having always loved film, that film was the future, for this country and for me. So I got some money together and made a few short films. I applied to the Australian Film and Television School, which I saw as a good way to obtain all the necessary technical background I lacked. I was accepted, and, at the time of my biggest success in the theatre, I went back to school.

How long ago was this?

I was in the second intake. We graduated in 1979 into a film industry that was already on a downward turn, until the tax boom of 1981-82.

Is that why you went into directing "soap operas" for television . . .

Yes. I soon decided that rather than sit around trying to get one script off the ground, which I had done, I would much better off working for commercial television and producing an enormous amount. That way I could gain experience in coverage, working with large crews and being a hired hand.

What do you think of soap operas? Do you think you are 'debasling your talents' by working on them?

"Soap opera" is an awful term; it is something that has come to us, in fact, from American radio, and it is slightly inaccurate. Soap operas are mostly melodramas, and melodrama is a completely legitimate form of drama. And it is one that obviously appeals to a lot of people.

Guilty pleasures?

Yes, guilty pleasures. Academics are very keen to analyze them and to find that there is no reason to be guilty about liking them. However, the unfortunate thing in this country is that they are produced far too rapidly, on quite unrealistic schedules. This results in storylines, which after all are pretty trite in any melodrama, always being exposed as trite. The plotline is invariably rather thin and, if it happens to be built on relationships, then there isn't anything much to distract. If there are car chases, or karate fights or something, there is a lot of action and people don't really worry about the plot.

Are you saying that there can be quality soaps?

There have been and will be, but only if it is realized that you can produce two hours of television a week without killing everybody off.

Do you think "The Restless Years", which you directed, or indeed "Sons and Daughters" are quality products?

No, by definition, they are not. In fact, by admission of the people making television, there is a distinction between soaps and so-called "quality television".

Do you mean adaptations of Australian novels, such as "Lucinda Brayford"?

Yes, A Town Like Alice, Last Outlaw, Water Under the Bridge and Against the Wind are examples of "quality television". What people really should be saying is "quantity television", I suppose. Against the Wind is a quality melodrama, but it is melodrama. It is just that they have a lot more time to do it. It is basically a good yarn. It worked a lot better than, say, Sara Dane, which somehow just didn't seem to click.

An idea that is still current is that short films are what you avoid by arriving late at a cinema . . .

Well, I am talking about Australian fiction shorts which, unfortunately, are not getting that kind of distribution by the major exhibitors. A few films from the AFTS have been released with features, but not always with films that did well. The shorts themselves were very good.

The short film is a fascinating and difficult form and it should be given more support. I am quite interested in it, just as I am in the short story as a literary form.

One of your films was a finalist in the Greater Union Awards . . .

Yes, The Outing, which is far from being the best I have done. But it had a certain amount of style.
and, because it was a period piece that was fairly well produced, it had lots of nice costumes, locations and vintage cars. These tended to please those of the general public who saw it. It was also a good story and people like it for that reason. But it was immensely unpopular with the Sydney Film Festival audience, who don’t like decadent living displayed in film.

Do they prefer to go to the Film Festival and be filled with bourgeois guilt?

Well, I didn’t say that . . . But there is probably an amount of truth in that, yes.

It was interesting that one of the Greater Union judges was from Hoyts, and he said that the only film he had seen in the finals that he would show at Hoyts was The Outing. Most people took that as a tremendous insult, I didn’t. It is very easy to classify a film that happens to look good or tell a simple story or be populist in some way as being necessarily bad.

But don’t you think this reaction against period films is somewhat refreshing?

Yes, we have for various reasons delved into our past a little too much. One reason is that it is easier to get away with things in period; you can tell a weak story more easily because the surroundings are much more pleasant to look at.

Another reason, which is quite legitimate, is that people have a need to find their roots to help explain where they are now. Australia is probably overdue for the kind of nationalist fervor that hit the Americans 150 years after the pilgrims reached Plymouth Rock.

But what about this rabid nationalism? You were one of the people who agitated for preservation of the Amalgamated collection when it was threatened by destruction not so long ago. I remember you saying in the ‘National Times’ that people were interested in Australian culture, but that they thought anything from any other country, especially from Hollywood, was not worthy of being saved . . .

Absolutely. Of course, I support totally the move to find and preserve old Australian film because our cinema heritage is very important. But it is hardly as rich, or, as I said in the National Times, as influential on the young Australian filmmaker, as the Hollywood product. Therefore, the seminal influence is undeniable. The fact that the paintings of some obscure Flemish old master are being destroyed ought to be of concern to an Australian painter today.

As the people who saw some of those films at the time realized, they were important films then — important because they influenced other filmmakers. It is rather like being able to hang onto the plays of, say, Peele or some of the obscure Europeans from whom Shakespeare pinched his plots. It is very interesting to read them and occasionally you unearth quite a good one. It is just that people put things into slots, just the way that they always show Shane and High Noon rather than other Westerns in school classes. They are the ones that are talked about in the textbooks. A lot more, and better films, tend to be ignored.

**Goodbye Paradise**

I understand that the original concept of “Goodbye Paradise” was yours . . .

Yes. Being a genre buff and a fan of Raymond Chandler, I came up with a plot a fair while ago now which involved an ex-cop on the Gold Coast getting into a Chandler-esque situation. It is definitely a kind of decadent Southern Californian territory up there, and it seemed an ideal setting. Unfortunately, the plot I had involved a quasi-religious commune headed by a guy who turned out to be a charlatan, and a lot of them got killed off. So when the Jonestown thing came along, I thought it would be in poor taste, or at least be seen as a rip-off, so I put it away.

Then some years later, while talking to Bob Ellis, this idea came up and it appealed to Bob. He was negotiating with the New South Wales Film Corporation to produce a package of scripts, so we submitted the idea to them. They liked it a lot and, presto, we had a bit of money to go up to the Gold Coast and try and write a script around my thin premise.

Is this the first time you have written a script with someone else?

No, I have been a frequent collaborator, as has Bob. I have always seen myself primarily as a director, and consequently have tended to collaborate, either in the theatre with actors, when I was writing, or in film scripting with other writers.

How did you and Ellis get on? Do you see yourselves as Beaumont and Fletcher?

I think Bob might have thought we were Johnson and Boswell. I won’t say it was easy, because no collaboration is. But film is a collaborative medium and this is something people don’t always understand. Very few people who make films understand the script-writing process.

Some people have been critical of the conclusion of “Goodbye Paradise”. . .

The criticisms have been valid. In some ways we wrote two films in one. I was writing more of a genre piece and Bob was trying to incorporate some of his personal politics. Also, towards the end of the writing of the film, the relationship was becoming a little strained and I think the end of the script suffered as a result. And because the script we gave Carl [Schultz, director] had certain flaws, especially the end, it also allowed him, I think, free rein to push his tongue more firmly into his cheek.

The in-joke of the climactic sequence at the army base is something a lot of people enjoy, but many others find it slightly superfluous. I must say I think that stylistically it pushes the film over the brink. It is also the only occasion in which Stacey is not present at all events, and I think somehow that is a mistake. He has a sort of omniscient presence, in that his voice-over narration is still there at Tod’s death, but he is not physically present to witness it. This is the sort of opinion that people have expressed.

The voice-over in “Goodbye Paradise” is rather anachronistic for a film of today . . .

Well, of course, it is the detective genre and it seemed to me most necessary to conform to that genre. An ‘updating’ of genre, in the way it is done in The Long Goodbye for instance, which is more of a satire anyway, is something a false, is somehow a betrayal of that genre. A film like Farewell
My Lovely comes to terms with the genre much better. And that, of course, contains voice-over narration, although it is admittedly set in period.

I note that there are a number of films around with this narration device; it was interesting to see that two of the films at the 1982 Australian Film Awards contained it and they were both fairly well liked. People seem to like aural complexity in film.

Ray Barrett is a very Chandler-esque character. He has that lived-in, Robert Mitchum-type face.

He certainly has. Of course, we wrote the film for Ray. When we did the research jaunt to the Gold Coast, Bob and I met up with Ray and spent a week there getting to know him. So we really did put a lot of Ray in that script. It is probably one of the few times this has happened in Australia and I think we were rewarded for that by a great performance. I know that Ray loves the character and is very keen to play Stacey again.

Was Robyn Nevin also an original choice?

No. We had a suggested casting page in our script and some of those suggestions we felt were very important. In some cases we were not necessarily right. Robyn wasn't somebody we had thought of, but her performance is a great strength of the film. In fact, another thing that people are unhappy with about the film is the death of the character played by Robyn Nevin. She does such a good job and makes the character so appealing that it really hurts when she is killed off. A slightly more insular, brittle performer might not have caused that kind of consternation.

I guess that is how we first conceived the role. But what Robyn does is really good and it was probably a mistake not to re-write the part.

What about the role of the 'Harry Lime' character (Guy Doleman)?

That is another interesting one. We hadn't thought of Guy Doleman. Because Harry is an Englishman, we thought of somebody like Anthony Quayle.

As with the casting of Kirk Douglas?

No, that wasn't our intention. We hadn't thought of his role as one that should be played by somebody famous to put bums on to seats. It was simply a question of the kind of actor that we saw in the part.

Guy's performance is really one of the highlights of the film. It is a character well worth watching for, too, and one we would certainly resurrect, since fortunately we didn't kill him off.

Are you and Ellis going to write the sequel?

Yes, in fact, Bob and I have recently been to South Australia which is the setting for the sequel of Goodbye Paradise. We are tending to call it "Goodbye Adelaide".

The script takes place at the Adelaide Festival of Arts and involves various visiting Russians and Americans in the kind of plot that you would expect from the first one. We have spent a couple of weeks just going around South Australia looking at various interesting locations. Things emerge from that kind of research trip which are invaluable to writing, and suggest that maybe such trips should be done a bit more. For instance, when we were researching Goodbye Paradise, I went to the hinterland of the Gold Coast and discovered not only that it was adjacent to Canungra, the army installation and the retirement spot of a number of doctors and Queensland politicians, but it was also the largest rhubarb growing area in the country, which I thought very amusing and well worth mentioning in the film. I know a lot of people enjoy the rhubarb. It becomes a symbol for something much more important that what it is.

People say a lot about the bright young directors and stars in the re-emergent Australian film industry. What observations do you have to make about the input of the writers of these films?

I think it has been a popular misconception that Australia doesn't have enough good writers. I am pleased that a lot of people are realizing now that perhaps what we lack most is good creative producers — inevitable, of course, in an industry that has been going for a relatively short time.

There are a lot of good writers around, though they are not all necessarily working in film or even in drama. They may be writing advertising, journalism or fiction. Writers like John Clarke, who wrote Lonely Hearts, and Peter Carey are moving into film. That is a very important trend to cultivate.

Again there are misconceptions about the filmmaking process even by people in it. The filmmaking doesn't start the day the cameras begin to turn over. That process begins with the idea and the writing of it, which may sound like a truism, but it is a fact people overlook. You are actually making a picture when you are writing it. It is very important that the creative input of the writer is recognized in the cinema.

I don't think for that matter that the input of the actor has been appreciated enough either, and it has tended to be the case that directors have come from technical areas and production in our industry, and not from the ranks of actors and writers. The best directors, if you look at world cinema, have been actors or writers, or both.

As well as writing and directing, you also teach at the AFTS. What is your province there?

I have been screen studies lecturer at the school.

What does this entail?

The area of screen studies is one that is under review at the moment and a new emphasis has been placed upon it in the course. The history is that, to begin with, the director of the AFTS, Professor Toeplitz, was the teacher of film history. When he left he asked me to take over that area. I felt it was important to incorporate a certain amount of the examination of contemporary cinema, particularly the Australian cinema, and also television, because that is an area where graduates from the AFTS will find work. So I set about trying to widen the scope of that program.

I think the next few years will see a much more exciting time for the students. The teaching of direction is being approached in a more complete way, with emphasis on performance and content. Whole general studies area is something the AFTS is getting into much more than it has in the past. Although it has always recognized its importance, it has been very hard to get people to teach it. So the AFTS has been accused of being a technical institution. Indeed, it has produced very good crafts people, but it has yet to produce a lot of good ideas people. I think we'll see this happening. The stimulus will be provided for that process to take place.

I believe the importance of studying what has gone before in the other arts and in film is absolutely essential. Students at the AFTS have come to me with ideas that they think are highly original and, of course, somebody has done it before. The students haven't seen the work of D. W. Griffith or Eric von Stroheim or Buster Keaton or whoever it may be, let alone more recent and probably more infrequently seen filmmakers. Somebody once said, 'Nothing is original except what has been forgotten', and I think that an enormous amount has been forgotten about what has been done in film. It is very important that we learn that before we can go forward.
Marcus Breen

Two primary aspects of filmmaking, scripting and casting, are rarely, if ever, considered or challenged. But they never disappear from the filmmaking process, a process that is hidden from view. The illusion is intentional, as the tricks of light and sound which our culture presents as film rarely take one behind the illusion and into the process. The exceptions to this dichotomy include the work of Jean-Luc Godard — e.g., Vent d'est and his recent film Passion — and Francois Truffaut's Day for Night.

Australian film, generally, is preoccupied with the illusion rather than the process. For example, Moving Out combines narrative with realistic images to produce superb illusion. But no clues are given to the audience about the unusual process involved in making this film. For this, one has to go to the 24-year-old director, Michael Pattinson, whose idiosyncratic approach to scriptwriting and casting challenged conventions within Australian filmmaking.

Pattinson scripted Moving Out in order to investigate the particular reality of the stories of Jan Sardi. A second-generation Italian, Sardi wrote about his experiences as a teacher at an inner-city school in Melbourne. When Sardi was a student at that same school, 99 per cent of the children were Anglo-Saxon; today, the school is 99 per cent Italian. Says Pattinson:

"The stories Jan Sardi had to tell were very funny. They were the sorts of stories we have all experienced as kids which, when you look back and see things in your childhood, were not terribly devastating or alarming. The interest was to focus the story around those things we all experienced as teenagers. At the time, those things were life and death issues: today, they are of little consequence. But a story from a kid's point of view, highlighting those issues, was interesting dramatic material."

But while Pattinson found the stories "humorous and poignant", he had no "inherent passion for the subject matter". The desire to investigate the issue of multiculturalism subsequently developed, but "only through my involvement with the project":

"You are dealing with characters in a conflict situation, in a dual identity crisis and so on. On one hand, you have kids going to school and being Australians, and, on the other, these kids come home from school and have to be what their parents do not want to lose sight of. That is where they come from and what their heritage is."

With a series of stories based on the everyday conflicts of Italian adolescents, and with financial assistance from the Creative Development Branch of the Australian Film Commission, Pattinson and Sardi worked towards integrating the story scenes into a complete scenario, to finding a "thread through the whole thing":

"What we had to do was try and isolate a premise or theme. Well, that wasn't hard. It is a story about change, about 'moving out', insofar as Gino's family is moving from one suburb to another. Also, Gino is maturing and passing through adolescence. And it is about people coming from one country to live in another."

"Isolating that premise, we could then go through the material we had gathered in a very long draft, which probably was running to approximately 250 pages, and look at the material relating to that premise."

The conflict, change and struggle for personal and cultural identity that permeates the characters in Moving Out is supported by a sub-theme of class issues. People who migrate from one country to another often do so because the "other", as opposed to "mother", country offers something better — improved socio-economic conditions and a concomitant upward mobility. And so, in Moving Out, Gino's parents decide to move from Fitzroy to Doncaster.

The concept of change is the most notable aspect of Moving Out because it allows an examination of some of the factors that operate in a society like Australia. Pattinson has
worked this theme gently, avoiding the temptation to judge Gino’s family for its decision, while allowing the theme to become something of a cancer for the audience conscience:

“Gino’s father wants to get his kids out of what he regards as an ethnic belt into the Australian heartland. He believes, for better or for worse — I won’t make any comment on that — that his children will receive a better education in Doncaster than they will receive in Fitzroy . . . But I don’t think that’s real class consciousness on behalf of the boy’s father, however misguided you or I may think that to be. Basically, the father has all the best intentions.”

Gino is finally permitted to resolve the conflict of deciding whether he is Australian or Italian. The question in his mind, says Pattinson, is “Well, what am I?” And the decision is made, in part, for him by the arrival from Italy of friends of the family, who reinforce his waning Italian identity. Gino reaches a final conclusion, yet it seems to be a dilemma that remains long after the credits have rolled past.

Certainly, no simple solutions are offered. It would be ridiculous to attempt to arrive at solutions because what Moving Out offers is realism, drama, tempered by sceptical optimism for the future.

Moving Out is not only interesting for its idiosyncratic style, but also for its unusual casting approach.

First, there was the problem of finding young people with acting ability; agencies had little to offer, especially when the second problem, the ability to speak Italian, was already a complicating element.

And, furthermore, adolescence, the fundamental common denominator of the younger children, was already a complicating element because what Moving Out offers is realism, tempered by sceptical optimism for the future.

Moving Out and spontaneity that developed among the actors was readily incorporated into the film. And, after the lengthy workshop sessions with the final cast, their natural reservations about facing the camera were reduced.

Not only does this process involve a reappraisal of the traditional pressure upon actors to learn lines and characterizations in a short time, but it also suggests that patience and perseverance pay off:

“Much of the ability and rapport of the teenage group who formed the principal cast is the result of a very firm acquaintance they had built up with each other by the time they arrived on the set on the first day. I expect also, without being presumptuous, they had some sort of confidence in me, because I had got to know them very well.”

This process, particularly when it is successful, will always involve some exploration. In fact, the more filmmakers explore new possibilities for breaking free of anachronistic film mores, the more will Australia’s film culture improve. For film critics, viewers and makers, this is axiomatic. But the system of filmmaking, as established in this country, is too often a hare in rapid pursuit of easy glory. An example comes from Pattinson, whose work on Moving Out has been recognized by scriptwriters and investors as worthy of supporting:

“I’ve been offered different things to direct that have involved teenagers. [These people say] ‘Michael made Moving Out, got a few teenagers in it, that was a good film; here’s a script with teenagers in, can you have it ready by next week please?’ But, it just doesn’t work that way.”

Any lessons Pattinson has learnt from Moving Out will become evident as he continues to pursue a filmmaking career. At present he is working on pre-production for a new film, Street Heroes, again with Jan Sardi. One can only hope that he manages to avoid the temptation to enter the ring with the quick sale and production release merchants of the establishment.

As long as healthy films come from young and creative Australians, Australian film culture can move freely into more incisive criticism of this society. Moreover, as long as the process is always challenged and refined, the illusion will itself reap its own rewards.
Debi Enker and Tom Ryan

Charting a brief history of the kinds of problems facing the development of Philippine cinema, Bienvenido Lum­bero notes the constraining effects of U.S. colonial rule: “As early as 1914, Hollywood had the Philippine market all to itself, its products monopolizing the best outlets in Manila.” This kind of control produced an all too familiar chain reaction. A control of the market effectively means a con­trol of audience tastes and, though this can be less readily verified, it would appear that only those local films which pursued the generic models born in Hollywood were likely to find viable outlets in The Philippines.

For Lino Brocka, one of the best known of the new Philippine filmmakers, the roots of the problem do not lie with the audiences, to whom other, contem­porous refer to as the “bakya” (pre­dominantly slapstick, unadulterated) cinema-goers, but in what Lumbero identifies as “the dynamics of cultural oppression.”

“What can one expect of an audi­ence that has been fed nothing but secret-agent, karate fantasy, and slapstick movies since time immem­orial? A child raised on rock ‘n roll would find classical music strange, discordant, unpleasant; an audience raised in an atmosphere of motion­picture commercialism and escapism would regard a good film totally alien.”

The problematic separation of com­merce and art aside, the current state of Philippine cinema can be produc­tive of understanding the history of its context. Its future need not be fully determined by a past so recognized: the identification of the problem, together with an attempt of both developing national cinemas, become important factors in the initiation of the “protracted struggle” necessary for the creation of an indigenous film culture. For Brocka, an important voice in The Philippines, it is not simply a matter of discussing the cinem­atic tradition that has ruled in his country and providing his own sub­stitute, but of creating an ongoing dialogue with his audience through his films. “The only way one can elevate local cinema from its present ‘bakya’ status to an artistically acceptable level is to introduce gradual changes until one succeeds in creating one’s desired audience.”

In this context, one can readily appreciate the dismay of Philippine filmmakers at the terms in which the Manila International Film Festival seems to have been defined. On the one hand, there is the rhetoric, delivered with unwanted irony by Madame Imelda Marcos, “the first lady” of The Philippines: “Art liberates Man. We, thus, cele­brate his liberation. This Festival is a celebration. We shall have more celebrations — of magic, wit, and wisdom, the delight of the senses and the refinement of sensibility, which survival and Time itself would be but a passing shadow on a plain of desolation.”

And there is the endorsement given by the various luminaries who arrive to deliver their press con­ferences, to sing the praises of the Marcos regime and its “visionary urban and social agenda”, and to attend in force, or two, at which, if they’re so favored, they may be presented with a Golden Eagle award “for services to the Festi­vals”, before returning home, usually across the Pacific. As the gathered press were informed on the opening day of this Festival, all is “about social activity.”

The self­congratulatory façade of the Festival thus becomes a lavish side­show at gatherings where it is the attention and prestige for the reigning regime.

On the other hand, there is the organ­ization and programming of the Festival itself. A convenient double­think provides the terms of reference for this, identifying the Festival simul­taneously as a “living museum” and a “commercial market­place”, thus bringing it into line with the “major” European festivals. Clearly, it is the latter characteristic which dominates the schizophrenic reality of the event, and in terms of the day­to­day operations, the latter’s controlling influence is, in words of a visiting dis­trictor, “where it all happens.”

Perhaps as a response to French boycotts and the general unrest that accompanied the 1982 Festival, 1983 saw the introduction of a showcase of some Philippine cinema and of some hitherto unseen Asian cinema (though one of the two Burmese films, U Tu Khat’s Ch A Hnya (Parity Of Love) appeared minus the first reel). Most of the attention, however, was focused on those films deemed appropriate for an international market; the aforementioned films and others which may have created a “dis­cordant” note, generally were releg­ated to secondary venues, or worse.

Given the need for the Festival to support itself, after the last minute withdrawal of government funding under pressure from the World Bank, it was argued that the programming needed to be pitched at capturing paying audiences. This, as well as the announcement that all proceeds from this “Festival for a Cause” were to be committed to “the mentally, physi­cally, and socially handicapped”, created a sense that any criticism of the rationale for or the organization of the Festival could only be a product of petulance. What is camouflaged by all of this, however, are broader questions to do with festivals in general, the real­ities of Philippine life, the develop­ment of a Philippine film culture and a sense of national identity, and the possibilities for a productive move­ment for change.

T.R.

The following statement by Lino Brocka and screenwriter Mike de Leon provides its own perspective on the function of film festivals and on the place of the 1983 Manila International Film Festival in the life of The Philippines.

Press Statement
February 3, 1983

In The Hollywood Reporter of January 18, 1983, copies of which have been distributed to the press at the Manila International Film Festival, it is reported that the Festival has been “reorganized, so that Lino Brocka is now part of the Film administration (for young Filipino cinema) as is Mike de Leon (for scenarists).” We would like to clarify our position with regard to the Festival. We would like to make it clear that we are not “part of the Festival administration”. We have co­operated with the Festival administration in areas beneficial to the production, preserva­tion and promotion of serious Filipino films. Lino, by being a member (not of the administration but of the evaluation committee) was told that he had to present a film to be produced by the Experimental Cinema of The Philippines; Mike, by heading the technical committee in charge of sub­titling Filipino films.

Otherwise, we regret to say that we have serious reservations about the Festival. At the outset we would like to state that we are not against the holding of an international film fest per se. Any attempt to disseminate quality films, especially from Asia and The Philip­pines, can only be commendable. Like­wise, given the severe constraints on freedom of expression in the country, any effort to counter censorship and expand artistic freedom is worthy of praise.

However, we believe that these redeeming factors are not enough to offset the negative aspects of the Festival.

We believe that in a Third World Country such as The Philippines, economic resources, the ostentation and extrav­agance accompanying the Festival are completely unnecessary. We have been to smaller international filmfests in other countries, and we have seen that it is possible to focus attention on quality films on a more modest budget, without lavish displays.

We also deplore the fact that the Festival has misled the public by claiming that the movies being shown in commercial Metro Manila theatres are basically the same Festival films being shown at the Festival site. This is simply not true. With two or three exceptions, the movies showing down­town are not Festival films or quality films, but cheap sex­exploitation pictures with little or no artistic merit.

We feel that under the guise of fostering artistic freedom and raising funds for the disabled, the Festival is encouraging the kind of cynical com­mercialism which is rampant in the movie industry but which a filmfest is supposed to combat. The deleterious effect of such a policy is even now apparent. Producers are drawing up plans to make, not serious films tackling serious themes, but cheap sex­exploitation quickies.

We fear that by succumbing to crass­commercialism in this regard, the Festi­val has created a situation which makes a moralistic backlash inevitable and which would ultimately justify the imposition of more restrictions on freedom of expression in the cinema.

No better proof of this can be cited than the press reports that the board of censors, far from being liberalized, has been given broader and more repres­sive powers.

We hope that the profits now being raked in by the Festival will not blind the organizers to the fact that the primary aim of a film festival is to showcase quality films. All other aims, however worthy though they may be, are secondary.

Lino Brocka
Mike de Leon

Opposite: Kitty (Liddy Clark), Slugger (Paul Chubb) and Cyril (Gerard Maguire) during a shoot-out. Don Crombie’s Kitty and the Bagman.
The Festival was divided into four basic sections — Competition, Exhibition, Market and Symposia — and, ironically, the most disappointing aspect of the Festival was also the most revealing. Despite the gushing praise and glowing assurances that reverberated through the opening ceremony, the films entered in the allegedly prestigious Competition were generally uninspired. Although the 21 countries vying for the Golden Eagle Award seek representation at the Festival, most clearly reserve their major films for the accolades of the more celebrated arenas.

The Manila Festival may be in its second official year of existence, but any concessions that one was tempted to make because of the tribulations of infancy were soon overwhelmed by the sheer scale and pretension of the operation. The organizers’ aspirations of 1962 had become claims of achievement by 1963 and the prevalent official attitude was that the Festival had metamorphosed, not simply into the market place and focus of Asian cinema, but into an international festival of the standing of Cannes, Berlin or Venice. These premature claims were belied by both the standard of the Competition entries and the organization of films for public exhibition, which was at best hap-hazard. However, the remarkably efficient co-ordination of the Market leads to the conclusion that the Festival is primarily concerned with merchandising. While this recognition is not intrinsically a criticism, it becomes an overpowering consideration in view of the Festival’s assertions of cultural stimulation and global achievement.

It is easy to be sceptical of any trophy that claims to be “an attestation to the Festival’s soaring reputation for quality not only in physical terms but also in artistic excellence as well”. It is just as easy to tire of the much-vaulted, entirely-inappropriate description of the Competition as a summary of “the state-of-the-art”. However, it becomes totally unacceptable when the official entries of New Zealand, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and the U.S. are submitted as representative of the best these countries have to offer. The only positive observation one can make about the New Zealand entry, Wild Horses, is that visually and thematically it resembles a Western. However, its clumsy attempts to grapple with familiar themes are mired in banal dialogue, tedious stereotypes and an unimaginative use of the spectacular landscape of the Tongariro National Park.

When Don Mitchell (Keith Aber-dein) loses his job as a result of the closure of the local lumber mill, he decides to realize his dream of a life as a horse-catcher. The dogged pursuit of his ambition not only alienates his family and friends, but also draws him into a fateful conflict with a deer-hunting company. His energies are then inexplicably transferred to an obsession with the salvation of a silver stallion (presumably the film’s belated leap onto the lucrative The Man From Snowy River bandwagon). Though he manages to ensure the stallion’s survival, the film concludes with Mitchell abandoning his beloved high country in recognition of his powerlessness to halt the onslaught of industrialization.

The film half-heartedly attempts to convey a range of conflicts through its characterization of Mitchell as an idealistic anarchon. He is depicted initially as the pioneering cowboy pits against a corrupt, profit-oriented company, in a desperate attempt to preserve his lifestyle. As the situation deteriorates, he is coerced into a showdown with the company’s hired heavy, Tyson (Bruno Lawrence), and though he wins that battle he is ultimately forced to surrender his dream, and joins his family in the city.

With the exception of Lawrence’s wry performance as Tyson, the film has an inexorable predictability, punctuated in the most objectionable terms by its use of violence. The truly horrific horse shooting scenes simply exploit the emotions of an audience that repeatedly has been made aware of the cruel and mercenary intentions of its perpetrators. The epilogue’s attempt to contort the film into a statement about the need to protect the horses seems ludicrous when contrasted with its willingness to exploit its subject whenever there is the possibility of a gut-wrenching scene.

The postscript tacked onto the end of Jean-Claude Missiaen’s Tir groupe (Shot Pattern) is equally difficult to fathom. It assumes that a justification for the film’s simplistic and irksome prejudices may be found in its source material, the legal archives. Tir groupe poses another familiar scenario: a man’s quest to avenge the murder of his woman and, like Wild Horses, locates its troubled hero within a context of American cinema.

When Antoine (Gerard Lanvin) becomes obsessed with personally avenging the death of his girlfriend Carinne (Veronique Jannot), the film neatly avoids any relevant consideration of his role as a vigilante by juxtaposing him with Angry Young Man, James Dean, and Cowboy, Burt Lancaster. Rather than provide any incisive examination of a society in which the institutions of law enforcement may be rendered ineffective, the film promotes the philosophy that man has a right — indeed, a moral obligation — to rebel against the law in order to compensate his losses.

While tacitly approving Antoine’s transgressions, the film directs its outrage about the crimes plaguing French society squarely at the punk phenomenon. Middle-class life is depicted, through flashbacks of Antoine and Carinne’s romance, as a loving and nurturing existence. The venal thugs who destroy this ideal relationship are visually situated within a broad category of punks, generalized to incorporate any disturbing vermin who listen to abrasive music, dress in black or walk in the streets at night. The movement is seen to exist exclusively to destroy expensive cars, terrorize honest citizens and exacerbate the load of an over-taxed police force.

What Tir groupe finally poses is a disturbing and reactionary attitude to a manipulation which it can only locate simplistically. This criticism is not intended to exonerate the film’s villains, but simply to identify one of its numerous and invidious blurs on the origins of criminal behaviour. For while it lends validity to Antoine’s reprisal and shares the police inspector’s (Michel Constantin) lament that “organized crime is ancient history”, it assumes that modern criminals may be readily identified by their choice of clothing.

Kiez (Hell’s Kitchen), directed by Walter Bockmayer and Rolf Buhrmann, is an equally unappealing examination of the mechanics of crime. The film weaves a labored path through the seedy underworld of Hamburg, tracing the misadventures of Knut (Wolfgang Prenger), a hapless sailor who tries in vain to become master of his destiny by graduating from pimp to petty thief and small-time gangster. His relationships with a motley assortment of miserable characters are depicted as transient and unfulfilling. The film’s conclusion with his murder is neither surprising nor particularly distressing. Despite attempts to provide a perspective on a conceivably fascinating sub-culture, Kiez lapses into a tedious succession of phlegmatic encounters, punctuated too rarely by Thomas Mauch’s evocative night shots of the Hamburg docks.

Completing a disagreeable trio of films concerned with crime was Robert Benton’s Still of the Night, a pretentious pastiche of the works of Alfred Hitchcock, masquerading as a homage. While it manages to duplicate scenes from a host of Hitchcock’s films, it is totally devoid of the wit, irony or inventiveness that distinguished them. Only the recreation of the classic auction room scene from North by Northwest sustains any level of tension without resorting to the clichéd techniques of building suspense that blemish the remainder of the film. Meryl Streep and Roy Scheider deliver uncharacteristically constrained performances in roles better suited to the talents of Grace Kelly and Cary Grant. It is simply impossible to accept that Sam Rice (Scheider) could become so obsessed with Brooke Reynolds (Streep) that he could risk his life to vindicate her. Although Streep conveys an enigmatic edginess, she falls short of the tantalizing femme fatale ostensibly luring him into her web of deception and murder.

Marilou Diaz-Abaya’s Moral provides one of the Competition’s more surprising and laudable entries, with its compassionate depiction of four schoolgirls graduating into womanhood within the pressures and constraints of Filipino society. While its conventional narrative carefully avoids any overt challenge of existing institutions, the perceptive and often humorous account of life in Manila provided an engaging exception to an otherwise mediocre assortment of films.

Enduring bonds of loyalty and support are articulated between the spirited, middle-class girls, despite their diverse expectations of life. However, the most memorable element of the film is its enlightened and sensitive depiction of homosexuality. While most of the male characters are transient, the homosexual
Above: Marilou Diaz-Abaya's Moral, "a direct, if subtle, challenge to the existing regime". Below: Giorgio (Luciano Pavarotti), an Italian tenor; Franklin J. Schaffner's Yes Giorgio, one of the films in the vast Exhibition section.
Manila Festival

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mercurial temperament, but of the dissubtle indicator, not only of Sabine's characters. The enactment and resolution of a performance is also a major concern for Sabine obstinately pursues her pragmatic goal, only to discover that she has selected a man as determined to adhere to his master plan of life as she is, an obstacle that finally forces her temporary abandonment of her blueprint for a fulfilling existence.

Le beau mariage again demonstrates Rohmer's ability to create an engaging combination of characters who radiate an appealing vitality despite their often infuriating idiosyncrasies. Sabine and Clarisse present the polarities of womanhood: dark and fair, married and single, impulsive and consistent, united in their propensity to indulge in delightful fantasy. The fact that the "beau mariage" of the title never eventuates is hardly surprising considering the opening proverb, "Can any of us refrain from building castles in Spain?" But what endures, beyond the function of backtalk, is an obstacle that finally forces her temporary abandonment of her blueprint for a fulfilling existence.

The tone and structure of Le beau mariage reveal similarities to Rohmer's previous film, La femme de l'aviateur: both are constructed around a circle motif that returns the central character again demonstrates Rohmer's ability to create an engaging combination of characters who radiate an appealing vitality despite their often infuriating idiosyncrasies. Sabine and Clarisse present the polarities of womanhood: dark and fair, married and single, impulsive and consistent, united in their propensity to indulge in delightful fantasy. The fact that the "beau mariage" of the title never eventuates is hardly surprising considering the opening proverb, "Can any of us refrain from building castles in Spain?" But what endures, beyond the function of backtalk, is an obstacle that finally forces her temporary abandonment of her blueprint for a fulfilling existence.

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My initial intention in comparing the recent American romantic film *Best Friends* with the 1981 Australian romantic comedy *The Best of Friends* was to highlight the differences between two films which explore a similar theme, and then to point to the unique qualities of the Australian film. However, I soon realized that the two films were not only superficially similar but that the differences between them had little to do with any intrinsic national qualities.

For some reason, we often get nervous when an Australian film attempts to work within a well-established generic framework and neglects either to rework aspects of the Australian heritage (mateship or other elements of the ubiquitous "bush myth"), as in *Gallipoli*, or to localize the setting, as in *Monkey Grip*. The *Man From Snowy River*, on the other hand, unfortunately failed to camouflage its basic melodramatic approach to characterization and narrative sequence, which polarized into a simple tale of a young hero, Jim Craig (Tom Burlinson), having to overcome his orphaned highland origins. Also, the melodramatic device of twin brothers, Spur and Harrison (Kirk Douglas), separated by a distant feud and the "mystery" surrounding Jessica's (Sigrid Thornton) real father, combined with the predictable climactic sequence in which Jim brings the herd and claims Jessica and the community's acceptance as a reward, was sufficient to alert the critics that this is not Banjo Paterson but some alien narrative structure which can easily be dismissed with the tag, "Wallaby Western". The pain this provoked in Geoff Burrowes and George Miller is apparent in their *Cinema Papers* interview: they apparently were aware of the popular conventions which appeal to a large audience but unaware that our critical establishment does not wish to inviolate the local industry by employing such conventions.

Similarly, John Duigan had the audacity to desert urban Australia and the "delicacy of Mouth to Mouth (and) and the complexity of Winter of Our Dreams" and the critics could congratulate themselves on dismissing *Far East as Casablanca* revisited. Hence the failure of the film resulted from the decision to employ, "a narrative structure popularized by Hollywood films of the 1940s, definitively in *Casablanca*. The resulting combination produces a style so dependent on narrative drama that it constrains and dilutes the skills that have distinguished Duigan."³

Well, what is this pernicious narrative structure we are talking about? Could it be the redoubtable "classical realist text", also known as the "mainstream narrative" or the "Hollywood classical text"? It must be, as we have all seen it on late-night television films. However, the fact of the matter is that this narrative system is not unique to the pre-1960s American cinema but has its roots in the development of the Gothic novel, and in 18th and 19th Century French and British stage drama.⁴ It is part of the long evolution of that dramatic mode known as melodrama and, whether one likes it or not, it formed the basis of the narrative development of the Australian film, as well as the British, American and other national cinemas.

The problem is that the term "melodrama" conjures a series of negative images in the minds of many people, instead of being a neutral term that describes a particular dramatic structure.⁵ Essentially, melodrama presents characters who are free of the internal dividedness which marks a tragic structure; the melodramatic protagonist is faced with an external problem (such as villains, natural disasters, race or class prejudice, etc.) which polarizes the world into victors, victims and villains. This dramatic mode provides the basis of most Australian films, from *Mouth to Mouth* and The Killing of Angel Street to Gallipoli and Breaker Morant.

John Tulloch has even demonstrated the melodramatic basis of the pre-World War 2 Australian cinema by using the methodology employed by Claude Bremond in his analysis of fairy tales. Tulloch concludes that *Jungle Woman*, The Breaking of the Drought, Romance of Runnibede and other films demonstrate that, while there was a dominant structural concern with the bush/city dichotomy, it was expressed in a melodramatic framework emphasizing the "remarkable trans-historical and cross-cultural survival qualities of basic narrative forms".⁶

An aversion to or ignorance of the common ground shared by the Australian feature film and other popular cultural forms, from the past and from overseas, results in the surprise and indignation expressed at Pauline Kael's description of the experience of watching a "well-crafted" Australian film as the same as "reading an old-fashioned novel". Similarly,

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3. Ibid.
4. See T. Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury", *Monogram*, No. 4, p. 2; also, J. Fell, *Film and The Narrative Tradition*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1974, Ch. 2.

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Geoff Mayer

Paula McCallen (Goldie Hawn) and Richard Babson (Burt Reynolds) pose for a wedding photograph in Norman Jewison's *Best Friends*.
although working from a different basis, Sam Rohdie describes the Australian cinema as conservative, dull and conformist because "at best Australian films demonstrate a skill and expertise in handling what are only rather familiar positions; established modes of narrative construction, established specifically cinematic codes, established social/commercial genres."

While Rohdie longs for a local filmmaker who will break through this dull conformity, such as a Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Marie Straub or Miklos Jancso, and Pauline Kael waits for another Fred Schepisi, I would argue that such approaches tend to demean the achievements of the Australian cinema and fail to differentiate sufficiently among the many Australian films produced in this established narrative tradition. "Skill", "expertise", "established modes of narrative construction", "established specifically cinematic codes", and "established social/commercial genres" become pejorative terms, and a muddled suspense thriller such as Crossplot, for example, is equated with a superb film like Roadgames, which demonstrates a playful awareness of the conventions and techniques of the narrative strategies that generate suspense without alienating audience involvement in the film.

The Best of Friends belongs to another genre-narrative strategy which goes back to the early 1930s at least, and a cycle of films popularized by the narrative framework established in It Happened One Night. However, it should be recognized that this genre is only one mode of a dominant narrative system which encompasses the whole of the mainstream narrative film; it is marked by a common process of transformation whereby the initial order is disrupted and the elements are dispersed, resulting in the pressure to establish a new equilibrium and the consequent closure of the narrative process. There is within this system a generic specificity whereby each genre deals with this process in a different way.

It Happened One Night became known as a "screwball comedy" and for the next seven or eight years many films were included under this rather vague umbrella term. However, only a few films were consistent with the truly manic behaviour of protagonists who found the existing social conventions too restrictive for their natural development. For example, crazy films such as Bringing Up Baby propel helpless males, such as paleontologist David Huxley (Cary Grant), into a world populated by Freudian psychologists, effeminate big game hunters, drunken Irish gardeners, leopards and voracious society girls, such as Susan (Katharine Hepburn), who strip him of his trousers and dress him in a negligee while he searches for his missing intercostal clavicle, his "bone".

Bringing Up Baby was, commercially, the least successful film in the cycle, and most other screwball films were less frenetic, characterized by the struggle of both characters to bring their values and lifestyles into line with each other. Several other recurring narrative situations differentiated this particular species of the mainstream narrative film from other types of comedy, although the parameters were never very clear. It Happened One Night itself belonged to a tradition developed in the early sound period (e.g., Trouble in Paradise, Design For Living and Reunion in Vienna).

Perhaps the most decisive element in the development of the screwball cycle was the resurgence of the censors in 1933 and '34. The films produced after this time were, as Andrew Sarris has aptly described, sex comedies without sex. The tension and frustration in these films often derived from the repressive moral codes which acted as barriers to the fulfillment of desire, and the sexual frustration often leads to some oddball behaviour: Lucy's (Irene Dunne) attempts to attract husband Jerry (Cary Grant) into her bed before their divorce becomes final in The Awful Truth is testimony to this aspect of the genre. Other recurring generic elements included the sardonic treatment of family and in-laws; the fear that the restrictions of marriage may inhibit the protagonist's normal freedom; and the implied criticism of those social institutions which promulgate conformist tendencies in society. But aside from, or more correctly associated with, the screwball behaviour generated by sexual frustration, the most significant aspect of the genre was the degree of sex role reversal promoted by these films.

If, as has often been stated, the cinema has played a significant role in the construction and provision of images and definitions of masculinity and femininity, then the screwball comedy has played a part in redressing the concentration of films which deal only with the contradictions that haunt the hero in his choice between personal freedom and social commitment. In the screwball comedy, this crisis is often transferred to the heroine, and her role as the "civilizing force" of mother and domesticator is no longer assumed automatically; children are rarely, if ever, an integral part of these films. The ultimate appeal is the battle between two people who are fairly evenly-positioned to carry on an equal fight.

It is within this context that The Best of Friends and Best Friends can be examined from the point of view of changes from the pre-World War 2 cycle, and the differences between the Australian and the American film. The most apparent, and crucial, difference is that the source of the sexual frustration can no longer be traced to the repressive social context: in Best Friends Richard Babson (Burt Reynolds) is living with Paula McCullen (Goldie Hawn) at the start of the film, while in The Best of Friends Melanie (Angela Punch McGregor) is soon climbing on top of her old friend Tom (Graeme Blundell) after earlier declaring, "I like sex, I need sex."

Sexual frustration now has to be invented by a peculiar situation: in the American film, Paula takes Richard back to Buffalo for a honeymoon with her parents yet prohibits him from sleeping with her and hence violating the room in which she grew up; also, Paula reasons, if her husband sleeps with her then her parents will think they are having sex. On the other hand, in the Australian film the intimacy of living together and the prospect of marriage is the cause of the hostility and frustration, and pregnant Melanie is determined not to let marriage ruin her 20-year friendship with Tom. The males in both films, unlike the women, are eager for marriage.

Changed social attitudes, particularly with regard to sex outside marriage, have removed much of the basis of the genre and, consequently, some of the traditional possibilities for humor. For example, in a church sequence

when Melanie explains to Tom that she doesn't want to marry him, the film attempts to generate humor by intercutting between their remarks and the people in the church: when Melanie tells Tom that, "It's not your fault I got pregnant . . . I pushed you into it," there is a reaction-shot of three nuns who look up at them. Or, after telling him that she plans to keep the baby, a relieved Tom exclaims, "Thank God for that. Does it mean we can get married?"". The narrative progression from mutual antagonism to closing embrace appears less satisfying than ever, particularly since the modern variations are devoid of the class conflict, or even the rural-urban opposition, which gave the conclusions of the 1930s films a dimension lacking in these two recent films.

The differences between The Best of Friends and Best Friends is qualitative rather than structural. The success of this type of film often depends on the ability of the performers and commentaries on the role reversal rather subjective. For example, I would argue that Cary Grant was nearly indispensable to the genre as was a small group of 1930s comedienne: Carole Lombard, Jean Arthur, Rosalind Russell and Myrna Loy. Angela Punch McGregor, on the other hand, does not appear entirely comfortable in her role and, although Graeme Blundell fits into the genre, his Alvin persona is probably the closest one is going to get to Grant and the comedienne who dominated the genre in the '30s.

Films of this type also rely heavily on the quality of the dialogue, and David MacDonald's script for The Best of Friends contains several funny, insightful lines: for example, Melanie's mother (Ruth Cracknell) telling her daughter that she has settled for second best, "a Catholic accountant", or Tom's remark that he "knows nine couples that are getting divorced. Well five; the rest are Catholic." The humorous treatment of religion in the film (Catholic versus Protestant) is one of the few differences between the two films. Both films, however, work within the conventions of a long-established genre and represent an attempt to explore the idea that marriage and its attendant responsibilities, such as dirty bathrooms and crazy in-laws, can destroy an otherwise strong relationship. Certainly the Australian film does not deserve neglect because of its choice of narrative strategy. But then I could be wrong for I enjoyed The Man From Snowy River.
Interviewed by Debi Enker

Sydney-born Graeme Clifford has worked with an impressive medley of the cinema's most innovative and exciting directors. His credits as an editor include Nicolas Roeg's Don't Look Now and The Man Who Fell to Earth, Bob Rafelson's The Postman Always Rings Twice, Sam Peckinpah's Convoy, Jim Sharman's The Rocky Horror Picture Show and Robert Altman's Images. For Altman, he was also casting director on The Long Goodbye, casting and assistant director on McCabe and Mrs Miller, and assistant director and assistant editor on That Cold Day in the Park.

Clifford's directorial debut with Frances marks the emergence of a new element in his range of talents. While critical reaction to the film has been far from favorable, it must be conceded that this uncompromising portrayal of the life of Frances Farmer is a powerful indictment of Hollywood in particular and American institutions in general. Irrespective of any reservations one may harbor, Frances is a tribute to Clifford's assurance as a director and his steadfast refusal to compromise a vision.

What was it about Frances Farmer's life that interested you?

Just about everything. She believed the same kind of things I believe, she treated her work in the same way, she had the same feelings about authority, religion, Hollywood, Broadway, politics and life in general. I felt very much akin to her and was appalled by what had happened.

There are three major things I wanted to convey with the film. First was the outrage and anger at what had happened; it was an anger that never subsided and kept pushing me on until I got the film made. No one wanted to make it, no one wanted to finance it because it was seen as not commercial, depressing. Second was the struggle that most people make to try to become individuals, which is really all Frances is trying to do in a world that is becoming increasingly repressive and de-personalized. Third was that arbitrary distinction between madness and sanity. It has always been my opinion that some of the people in positions of authority, who supposedly are able to make these judgments, are possibly less sane than the people they are condemning. I am not talking about the clinically insane, but about people whose behaviour is somehow "different", who all seem to be covered by the amazing word "schizophrenia". When they can't figure out what is wrong with someone, they call them schizophrenic.

Does the fact that Frances existed make the film impossible to dismiss, forcing people to confront its intensity?

I couldn't make this sort of film, I couldn't say the things I am trying to say in this picture, with a fictitious story, because people wouldn't believe it. We all ought to worry about what happened to Frances and make sure that it doesn't happen again. I know that my film is not going to make a damn bit of difference, but sooner or later somebody is going to have to confront the problem of mental health and look at the appalling state of the institutions we have today. There are people in them who shouldn't be there: patients who have committed themselves because they felt they needed help, voluntary patients who are not released when they ask to be released, patients who have become unreasonable because of the drugs they have been given since they were admitted. To me it is shocking, and even more so is the fact that people don't seem to want to know about it.

Why do you refuse to allow a sense of release at the end? The obvious comparison is with a film like "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", where the Indian's escape allows a qualified optimism ...

It would have been phoney to have tagged on some kind of happy ending. The fact is that the institutional period of Frances's life did destroy her. But the inspiring thing is the fact that she never gave in; I think that out of that sense of loss and sadness can come a kind of release. If it causes people to be a little more compassionate then it will have made some difference.

You have called the film 'a triumph of the human spirit' ...

Yes, to me it is. It is wonderfully triumphant.

But the image of her at the end, with her face like a skeleton, makes her so lifeless. It seemed that a human being had been totally annihilated ...

Well, I suppose you are right. What I mean by a "triumph of the spirit" is that, although they wrecked her life, they didn't break her spirit. The fact that she stayed alive was a triumph; any normal person would have been dead after seven years in that place.

A recent edition of 'Screen International' says that after you decided to make "Frances" you returned to the U.S. to find three television networks wanting to make the story, three plays about it, three possible movies about it. You have said that the story itself was totally outrageous and shocking. So I persuaded Jonathan to hire me as the director. I knew that working with him would be a good experience because he had just produced The Elephant Man, which I love; Eric [Bergren] and Chris [De Vore] were doing the screenplay, and, as I had loved their screenplay for The Elephant Man, I thought the set-up couldn't be better.

Do you see similarities between "Frances" and "The Elephant Man"?

I have never thought about that connection, but there is an obvious similarity between the emotional content of both films. They are about people who were extraordinary, and both are rather sad. They both deal with greatly troubled lives that came under a great deal of pressure from society at large. And neither of them had a happy ending.

The film credits a third scriptwriter, Nicholas Kazan. What role did he play?

Chris and Eric finally burnt out, after six drafts. I needed something I wasn't getting from them, so I brought Nick in. He wrote the final shooting draft of the screenplay, and also contributed the
At what stage did you cast Jessica Lange?

I cast her before I was even hired by Jonathan Sanger. I knew that if I was going to make this film, she would play the part. I knew that no matter how compelling the story was, I wouldn’t have a picture without Jessica’s performance. She felt as strongly about Frances as I did.

What about Sam Shepard?

I have always loved Sam, ever since I saw Days of Heaven. I think he is a wonderfully enigmatic actor, and I wanted somebody like that for the role of Harry York. Based on a man named Stuart Jacobson, his is a difficult role, inasmuch as he only crops up in the film from time to time in her life. There may be several years between one scene and the next, and you never know what he has been doing in the interim. I thought that he and Jessica would get along wonderfully well together and make a good pair on screen. I felt you needed to feel an immediate attraction between them so you didn’t need to spend time building up that relationship.

Why is Harry York the film’s narrator?

That was never meant to be part of the film and I wish it wasn’t. I allowed myself to be convinced to take scenes out of the picture in order to make it shorter. Most of the missing scenes were at the beginning. They set up a relationship between Frances and her mother much better than it is at the moment. There was a good scene between the mother and the father which delineated their positions more clearly. You saw Frances meeting her husband instead of his suddenly being sprung on you in Seattle, as he is now. I was persuaded to take those out; it was a big mistake and I will never let it happen again. I had to use the narration to cover for the loss of those scenes. Hopefully, when the film is shown on cable television in the U.S., those scenes will be reinstated and the film will be 15 minutes longer. At least somebody somewhere will see it in the form in which I want it to be shown.

Frances’ marriage seems to be symptomatic of a larger problem because, generally, when she acts or reacts she is being self-destructive rather than productive . . .

I think that is true, and that it is true of many people. I have to stop myself from being self-destructive; I find it very easy, almost easier than anything else in the world. It is a result of frustration with the stupidity that you see around you, and you just react irrationally. Sam Peckinpah, for instance, one of the most brilliant directors in the U.S., is a terribly self-destructive man. So are a lot of great painters and musicians. It seems to go hand in hand with the creative process. You have to push yourself to the limit, look over the edge to see what is there, then go even further than that. So you push people, and you push situations to make people react. You drop something into a conversation, which is totally outrageous, just to get a rise out of them. Once that self-destructive mechanism is triggered, it is difficult to keep in check. Frances couldn’t keep it in check and went that little bit further than most of us are prepared to go. That is what made her very interesting to me.

You mentioned Peckinpah and you have worked with other similarly innovative directors: Robert Altman, Nicolas Roeg and Bob Rafelson. How do you think they have influenced your work as a director?

I could give you simplistic answers to that question, but dammit, you know, it is more complicated than that. You learn all sorts of things from different people; one of the reasons I worked with those people was because they are all individuals, and all are self-destructive; they push their art to the limit. It is exciting to me, and I like to work with exciting people. They make films that I want to watch, films that make me sit up and listen, and make me feel something. I don’t feel as if I am wasting time. When I see a film, I want to find out something I didn’t know before.

How did you research the film?

We hired an independent researcher and then I spoke to as many people as I could: Stuart Jacobson; actors who worked with her; Edith Head, who did a lot of her costumes; Elia Kazan, who directed her; and her first husband, Leif Erikson. Even the dialogue from the doctor who performs the lobotomy is word for word, taken from first person accounts of his demonstrations. A lot of Odets’ dialogue was adapted from interviews he gave about his views on acting and writing.

This dialogue was my most valuable asset because it formed a personality in my head. Because her story is so fantastic, I had to concentrate much of my attention on emphasizing the fact that the film is based on a true story.

Did you use any information from her autobiography?

Please don’t waste your money buying it, Will There Really Be A Morning? is a phoney autobiography, actually written by Jean Ratcliffe, and to a large extent inaccurate and sensationalized. The fact that it was attributed to Frances Farmer would make her turn in her grave. It is the ultimate insult. Ratcliffe wrote it after Frances had died, having lived with her during the last years of her life, and then, in an inspired piece of humility, dedicated the book to herself. I find it totally despicable that even after her death Frances is being exploited.

Brooksfilm bought the real autobiography which was unfinished because she died before it was completed. She was writing that with a lady named Lois Kibby, who would never permit its publication because she didn’t feel it was complete. We bought the rights to it on the understanding that it would not be published.

The thing about Frances Farmer’s life is that all of the facts will never be known. There is room for different interpretations of what happened to Frances and why.

The film depicts Hollywood as being completely hostile to Frances. Yet Howard Hawks calls her the greatest actress with whom he ever worked . . .

Frances claimed that Hawks was one of the few admirable directors — he and Alfred Green. She mentioned both with fond memories.

The impression given in the film is that she doesn’t regard “Come and Get It” very highly . . .

That is because it wasn’t finished by Hawks; he was fired half way through the shooting, by Sam Peckinpah. The film depicts Hollywood as being completely hostile to Frances. Yet Howard Hawks calls her the greatest actress with whom he ever worked . . .
Goldwyn, because he insisted on making a film that was faithful to the book. Goldwyn then hired William Wyler who followed the dictates of the studio and stuck a happy ending on it. Believe it or not, there were discussions during the making of Frances about tagging on a happy ending, which totally appalled me. You are bound to have the subject come up in Hollywood because they always want to make people happy. They don't want to make anyone unhappy — perish the thought! There must be room in our film-making community for films that don't necessarily have happy endings because many lives don't. If everybody just made films with happy endings, then we would have just one kind of film. I don't think Sophie's Choice has a particularly happy ending. Frances is obviously one of that group.

The depiction of Hollywood, in fact of most of the institutions in the film, is very damning. Given that there were people in Hollywood like Hawks who had some respect for Frances as an actress, why is it that you don't get the sense of a single person being able to appreciate anything about her other than "good tits"?

I had to deal with Hollywood briefly, and, though there were people in Hollywood who did appreciate her, they were few and far between. It is unfortunate and I know that it is probably not presenting a balanced view of Hollywood, but you have to go with the general feeling, which was that they were trying to force her to do things she didn't want to do. The scripts were terrible, they didn't care whether the wardrobe was accurate or not: in short, they attributed no intelligence to the audience. Film was still a relatively new medium and sound was particularly fresh. They could get away with anything. Frances attributed more intelligence to the audience than the studios did, and she couldn't justify giving them garbage.

Most of the characters who represent institutions in the film demonstrate really reprehensible attitudes . . .

Don't you find that in life? Anywhere you get a large bureaucracy, you get a slew of people who are just doing what they are told, mostly without questioning. I guess they are happy just to have a job, I wish we could go back to the days when people meant something.

In the U.S., they have this disgusting phrase that they use at the end of every sentence: "Have a nice day." I find it totally appalling. The phrase is meaningless. I have asked people in hotels and restaurants why they say, "Have a nice day", and they tell me the management likes them to say that. I go away thinking, "My God, this person is being drained of any human thought or emotion."

Organized religion does the same thing. I asked the same questions at the same period in my life that Frances Farmer did. I left my church because I felt it had no relevance whatsoever to my life and was trying to teach me to become another white sheep in an already all-white flock. As soon as you asked difficult questions of the ministers, they managed to evade the answers. That is all Frances was trying to point out in her essay at the beginning of the film.

The way in which the film is cut seems deliberately jarring, particularly in sequences that cut from one city to another. For example, the cut from the love scene on the beach in Seattle to the Hollywood night club, or the cut from Odets' apartment in New York to Frances on set in Hollywood, convey a sense of two completely different environments confronting each other. Did you intend that sense of dislocation?

Yes. There is no point in my elaborating on that, because you have just said it!

The impression of paths crossing seems central to the film. So many of its conversations take place in streets that it has the feeling of a long and harrowing journey . . .

I set some of those scenes in streets for that reason. I wanted to get the feeling of paths crossing but without any real connection, not just between Harry and Frances but also between her and the others. He developed one way and she developed in another way. Their lives came together at various points, but they were never meant to be together.

The music seems to be used to reflect her state of mind, particularly the Mozart. Was that your intention?

Yes, if you listen closely, there is also a theme for Harry. It is not very noticeable, but the flute is meant to be Harry and the har-
The Event Split The Nation.
The Telemovie Brought It Together
For 3 Nights Solid.

All the guys at Videolab would like to
shake a few hands. Quite a few.
Like every person associated with the
production of "The Dismissal".
Terry Hayes, the writer/producer.
The production house, Kennedy Miller
Entertainment. The directors, the actors.
The crew. Some of Australia's best talent.
Like Channel 10, who pulled the
country together for 3 big nights (and,
coincidentally, happened to get around
a 40 rating in Sydney alone, on each of
those nights).
It was a real pleasure to be part of
such a great project – both on the post-
production and the audio mix.
"The Dismissal" is a true example
of the sort of standards Australians can
achieve when they all pull together.
Congratulations.
### Films Registered Without Eliminations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Film Title</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Length</th>
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<td>Alexander Dovzhenko</td>
<td>1929</td>
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<td>The Eighth Wonder of the World</td>
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<td>Jean-Luc Godard</td>
<td>1980</td>
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### Not Recommended

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<tr>
<td>Alexander Junior</td>
<td>(Det Gorki Central Studios, Soviet Union, 1977 m, Soviet Embassy, USSR)</td>
<td>1977</td>
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<td>Crystal Gazing</td>
<td>(British Film Institute, Britain, 1967 m, Soviet Film Institute)</td>
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<td>The Duck of Waterhouse</td>
<td>(H.S. Film, Hong Kong, 2576 m, Golden Real Films)</td>
<td>1969</td>
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<td>The Escape Arc</td>
<td>(United Studio, U.S., 2550.92 m, Soviet Film Institute)</td>
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<td>The Gossips</td>
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<td>(Jing Chi, Taiwan, 1964 m, E. Seeto)</td>
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<td>Cinema City Films, Hong Kong</td>
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### Films Registered With Eliminations

### For Restricted Exhibition

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<td>Gambling for Head</td>
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### Films Refused Registration

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### Films Board of Review

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizen's Court</td>
<td>(reconstructed version)</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Mad</td>
<td>(reconstructed version)</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Three Soldiers</td>
<td>(reconstructed version)</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

- **Frequency:**
  - In frequent
  - Frequent
  - Low
  - Medium
  - High

- **Explicitness/Intensity:**
  - No explicitness/Intensity
  - Justified

- **Purpose:**
  - Justified
  - Gratuitous
  - Biblical
  - Moral
  - Political

---

*Source: CINEMA PAPERS May–June — 131*
December 1982

Films Registered Without Eliminations

For General Exhibition (G)

Adventures in Paradise (16mm) Scott Dietrich Films, U.S., 2359.72 m, Horse and Tumbler. Release: B. Scholler, A. Sidaris, U.S., 2396 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

Superb--- The Wild One Barbara Films, South Africa, 2941.27 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

Three Minutes Past Nine Sun Wan Film Co., Taiwan, 2386 m, Golden Reel Films, V(l-m-g).

The Sweet and Sour Cops: Not shown. Hong Kong, 2396.41 m, Comfort Film Enterprises, Vl-m-g, G.

Not Recommended for Children (NRC)

Challenge to White Fang Coralia Cinematografica, Italy/France, 2349 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

Sff-m-g, Lff-m-g)

Seasonal Films, Hong Kong, 2349 m, Golden Reel Films, V(l-m-g).

Tiger Killer: D. Sheldon, U.S./Philippines, 2565.70 m, Greater Union Film Dist., V(l-m-g).

What Price Stardom: 2935 m, K and C Video, U.S., 1782.95 m, A.Z. Associated Film Dist., V(l-m-g).

The Night: W. Emerson, 78 mins, Blake Films, V(l-m-g).

For Mature Audiences (M)

Barber Blues (16mm): H. King, Japan, 899 m, (b) Previously shown on April 1982.

Atypical Radioactive cow: J. Carr, Britain, 53 mins, Nilsen Films, V(l-m-g).

Lawman (videotape): J. Carr, Britain, 99 mins, Nilsen Films, V(l-m-g).

The Summer Party Massacre: A. McDaniels, U.S., 1917 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

The Scarecrow: I. Panayotovic, U.S./Yugoslavia, 2551 m, United Int'l Pictures, U.S., 2468 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

Love Child -- A True Story TheLady Company, U.S., 2605.82 m, Warner Bros (Auel), V(l-m-g), (b) Previously shown on November 1982.

January 1983

Films Registered Without Eliminations

For General Exhibition (G)

Mushroom: Recreation Corp., U.S., 1920.10 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

The Road on which with CZZ (videotape): Uyko Films, Australia, 71 mins, Uyko Films Aust. Setomerok: A Quest for Paradise (16mm): FWJ Productions, Australia, 1087.67 m, N. Waker Topfi: Baron Assoc. Israel, 2138.54 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

The Night: Charlemagne Prods., Britain, 2413.84 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

The Plague Dogs: Rupheimer Film, Germany, 2770.43 m, Hoyts Dist., V(l-m-g).

Play Dead: F. Rudting, U.S., 2331.55 m, Films Away Video, V(l-m-g).

The Scarecrow: R. Whitehorn, New Zealand, 2386 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

For Restriction Exhibition (R)

Electric Blue (videotape): A. Cole, Britain, 60 mins, Electric Blue Aust, V(l-m-g).

The Summer Party Massacre: A. McDaniels, U.S., 1917 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

The Taste of the Savage (reconstructed version): C. Ming, Hong Kong, 2551 m, United Int'l Pictures, U.S., 2468 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

The Taste of the Savage (reconstructed version): B. Emery, U.S., 2194.40 m, A.Z. Associated Film Dist., V(l-m-g).

The Taste of the Savage: 36 Cristy Film, United Int'l Pictures (UK), Hong Kong, 2396.10 m, United Int'l Pictures, U.S., 2468 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

The Scarecrow: I. Panayotovic, U.S./Yugoslavia, 2551 m, United Int'l Pictures, U.S., 2468 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

For Restricted Exhibition (R)

For Mature Audiences (M)

A Heart Breaking Woman: T.C. Chiling, Taiwan, 2363 m, Golden Reel Films, V(l-m-g).

Barber Blues (16mm): H. King, Japan, 899 m, (b) Previously shown on April 1982.

The Summer Party Massacre: A. McDaniels, U.S., 1917 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

The Scarecrow: I. Panayotovic, U.S./Yugoslavia, 2551 m, United Int'l Pictures, U.S., 2468 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

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The Scarecrow: I. Panayotovic, U.S./Yugoslavia, 2551 m, United Int'l Pictures, U.S., 2468 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

Love Child -- A True Story TheLady Company, U.S., 2605.82 m, Warner Bros (Auel), V(l-m-g), (b) Previously shown on November 1982.

Films Refused Registration


No. 18 Park Avenue (videotape): J. Carr, Britain, 53 mins, Nisen Production, V(l-m-g).

Sigmund Freud's Dilemma (16mm): A. McCaff and Orr, U.S., 69 mins, Nisen Productions, V(l-m-g).

In Love: A Story of Madame Bovary: K. Larsen, U.S., 2649 m, 14th Mandolin, V(l-m-g).

For Restrictions (R)

For Mature Audiences (M)

A Heart Breaking Woman: T.C. Chiling, Taiwan, 2363 m, Golden Reel Films, V(l-m-g).

Barber Blues (16mm): H. King, Japan, 899 m, (b) Previously shown on April 1982.
The Australian Motion Picture Yearbook 1983 ........................................ p. 2
The Documentary Film in Australia ....................................................... p. 3
The New Australian Cinema ................................................................. p. 4
Australian TV: The First 25 Years ....................................................... p. 4
Film Expo Seminar Report ................................................................. p. 4
Cinema Papers Subscriptions ............................................................. p. 5
Cinema Papers Back Issues ................................................................. p. 6
Order Form .......................................................................................... pp. 7 and 8
The third edition of the Australian Motion Picture Yearbook has been totally revised and updated.

The Yearbook again takes a detailed look at what has been happening in all sections of the Australian film scene over the past year, including financing, production, distribution, exhibition, television, film festivals, media, censorship and awards.

As in the past, all entrants in Australia's most comprehensive film and television industry directory have been contacted to check the accuracy of entries, and many new categories have been added.

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David Wells
Kodak

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The Australian

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The Melbourne Herald

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Documentary films occupy a special place in the history and development of Australian filmmaking. From the pioneering efforts of Baldwin Spencer to Damien Parer’s Academy Award winning Kokoda Front Line, to Chris Noonan’s Stepping Out and David Bradbury’s Frontline, Australia’s documentary filmmakers have been acclaimed world-wide.

The documentary film is also the mainstay of the Australian film industry. More time, more money and more effort goes into making documentaries in this country than any other film form — features, shorts or animation.

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.

**Contents**

**The History of the Documentary: A World View**
International landmarks, key figures, major movements.

**The Development of the Documentary in Australia**
A general history of the evolution of the documentary film in Australia, highlighting key films, personalities and events.

**Documentary Producers**
An examination of the various types of documentaries made in Australia, and who produces them. A study of government and independent production. The aims behind the production of documentaries, and the various film forms adopted to achieve the desired ends. This part surveys the sources of finance for documentary film here and abroad.

**The Marketplace**
The market for Australian documentary films, here and abroad. This section examines broadcast television, pay television, theatrical distribution, video sales and hire, box-office performances and ratings.

**Making a Documentary**
A series of case studies examining the making of documentaries. Examples include large budget documentary series for television; one-off documentaries for television and theatrical release; and educational and instructional documentaries.

Each case study examines, in detail, the steps in the production of the documentary, and features interviews with the key production, creative and technical personnel involved.

**The Australian Documentary: Themes and Concerns**
An examination of the themes, preoccupations and film forms used by Australian documentary producers and directors.

**Repositories and Preservation**
A survey of the practices surrounding the storage and preservation of documentary films in Australia. Comparisons of procedures here and abroad.

**The Future**
A look at the future for documentary films. The impact of new technology as it affects production, distribution and marketing. A forward look at the marketplace and the changing role of the documentary.

**Producers and Directors Checklist**
A checklist of documentary producers and directors currently working in Australia.

**Useful Information**
Reference information for those dealing with, or interested in, the documentary film. This section will include listings of documentary buyers, distributors, libraries, festivals, etc.
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.

**Contributors**

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<td>(10*) 114,103</td>
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<td>(9) 104,702</td>
<td>(10) 150,872</td>
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<td>The Year of Living Dangerously UIP</td>
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### Period: 14.11.82 to 22.1.83

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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>503,401</td>
<td>408,952</td>
<td>215,787</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>287,356</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Foreign Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,983,095</td>
<td>4,155,170</td>
<td>2,423,421</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1,755,912</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,486,496</td>
<td>4,564,122</td>
<td>2,639,208</td>
<td>1,987,980</td>
<td>2,043,268</td>
<td>16,721,074</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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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. Figures in parenthesis 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.
6. Figures are drawn from capital city and inner suburban first release hardtops only. (1) Split figures indicates a multiple cinema release.
Do you want a good movie, or a lion on your lap?
The peculiar history and uncertain future of the

Fred Harden

I can confidently predict (as others just as enthusiastic and improperly qualified confidently predicted in 1949 that 1983 is the year when 3-D film will finally fulfill the promise that no less a filmmaker and theoretician than Sergei Eisenstein predicted for it in 1949.

In an essay on stereoscopic cinema (presumably written after seeing the 1947 Russian 3-D film Robinson Crusoe by Andreevsky) Eisenstein said, "Not in any science, but throughout the whole of history — can there be an instance so dynamic and perfect of volume being transferred into space, and space into volume, both penetrating into each other, existing simultaneously, and this within the process of real movement.

"There is no need to fear the advent of this new era. Still less — to laugh in its face, as our ancestors laughed, throwing lumps of mud at the first umbrellas.

"A place must be prepared in consciousness for the arrival of new themes which, multiplied by the possibilities of new techniques, will demand new aesthetics for the expression of these new themes in the marvelous creations of the future.

"To open the way for them is a great and sacred task, and all those who dare to designate themselves as artists are called upon to contribute to its accomplishment."

In contrast to this expression of the capabilities of a three-dimensional cinema as a sacred task, the fact that a badly-acted, technically-poor soft-core porno movie, The Stewardsesses, is the top grossing 3-D film, having cost less than $100,000 to make in 1968 and grossing more than $26 million.

Here lies the paradox of the stereoscopic cinema. Ninety-two percent of us perceive the world in three dimensions, yet we have evolved a sophisticated world where our art and communications are dominated by print, film and television images that are safely contained on a flat plane of two dimensions.

There appears to be something fascinating in the perception of stereoscopic images that keeps filmmakers experimenting and 3-D films being made in approximately ten-year cycles for audiences new to the experience. The following article is an attempt to distil the history and nature of 3-D films from many sources, and to find the reasons for the rise and fall of a cinema that promised nothing less than "a lover in your arms and a lion in your lap."

I have drawn heavily from two important books that have been released recently:

- Lenny Lipton's Foundations of the Stereoscopic Cinema — A Study in Depth, published in 1982 by Van Nostrand Reinhold, and distributed by Thomas Nelson Australia. The recommended retail price is $29.95. (See review below.)
- Amazing 3-D by Dan Symmes and book designer Hal Morgan is published by Little, Brown and Company. My copy was $18.85 from Space Age Bookshop, Melbourne. The book is a heavily-illustrated (in two-color 3-D with glasses supplied) look at the popular pheno-

3-Dimentia. The Peculiar History of 3-D

The fact that one sees objects in depth — the reason being that our two eyes see different images which are fused by our brain into a very useful and coherent whole — has been noted and often incorrectly theorized about by many, including Euclid, Plato, Galen, Agulomonius, and Leonardo da Vinci. Johannes Kepler, who was myopic and suffered from double vision, offered his theory in 1611; Giovanni Baptista della Porta, a Neapolitan physicist, wrote in 1593, and the Florentine painter Jacopo Chimenti has left painted stereo pairs without any idea of his viewing system.

Their theoretical writing or illustration alluding to the problem of "doubleness of vision" left the problem unsolved until 1838, when physicist Charles Wheatstone explained that this retinal disparity actually gave people stereo vision. His Contribution to the Physiology of Vision — Part the First: On some remarkable, and hitherto unobserved Phenomena of Binocular Vision included the first published stereo drawings and an explanation of the mirror stereoscope that he invented in 1833. About six months after his 'memoir' was published in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Fox Talbot announced his early photographic process that produced paper prints called Talbotypes. Talbot was asked by Wheatstone to make some stereoscopic Talbotypes and obliged with a number of stereo portraits, and pictures of buildings and statues.

Wheatstone welcomed the camera and the discoveries of Niepce, Daguerre and Talbot which could accomplish greater stereo realism than was possible by any artist, but he did not seem overly eager to publish his further developments of his equipment (Part the Second appeared in 1852). His mirror stereoscope is illustrated below. These early photographic stereo pairs were taken with a single camera that was moved two-and-a-half inches (6.5 cm) for the second exposure, that being the average distance of the separation between people's eyes.

Sir David Brewster took Wheatstone's idea and designed a camera with two lenses and a stereoscopic viewer that also used lenses to allow the viewer's eyes to focus more easily on a smaller stereo pair. Queen Victoria was amused by the new invention at the 1851 London Exhibition and Brewster was quick to make her a gift of one of his stereoscopes and some stereo "views". The newspapers reported this shrewd gesture, making the new invention immediately acceptable to millions of Victorian families.

The popular success of the stereoscopic views (which were often hand-colored) was a phenomenon that lasted more than a decade until, as one historian suggests, the photographic reproductions in books and magazines took over the photo-journalistic role that the stereoscopic views of the arts and outposts of the Empire had provided. The evocative quality of this process is evident in many of the photographs that exist today and there are still many amateur stereo-photography enthusiasts working with modern cameras and filmstocks.

The change from still images to stereo motion pictures was marked by a number of inventions that used sequentially-posed still pictures, shown in "flip-book" forms or in drum peep-show formats.

The introduction of modern tripack color films makes possible systems like the Triangle two-filter process (see below for Mike Browning’s description of this process) but it still is restricted in the use of a full color spectrum, reducing it to those possible from a mixture of the two colors. The advantage of this method of anaglyphic stereoscopy remains the ease of single-lens projection.

Polarizing Filters and Adding Color

Because the most frequently used 3-D process today is a polarized one, the assumption is that it is a recent invention. In fact, there is an 1881 American patent for the use of polarized light in selecting images for stereoscopic projection. But the polarizing materials were all too crude or expensive until Edwin H. Land, and what is now the Polaroid Corporation, made high-quality sheet polarizers available in 1935. In a demonstration for the Society of Motion Picture Engineers in 1935, Land and his associates showed 16 mm black and white and full-color stereoscopic films taken on the early Kodachrome film that Kodak had released in the 16 mm format less than a year before. Unlike earlier chemical crystalline products, the Land polarizer is made “by absorbing iodine in a sheet of thin polyvinyl alcohol that has been stretched to arrange the molecules in long parallel chains”.

These parallel chains only pass light oriented in the same plane, a familiar process with the use of polarized sunglasses and camera filters.

The standard orientation for projection is with the left and right eye images polarized at 90 degrees to each other but on an angle of 45 degrees to the horizontal. This effectively presents the separate images to a viewer wearing glasses similarly arranged. The polarizing material is a neutral grey and, although it reduces the amount of transmitted light, it makes full color presentation possible.

The first (and many subsequent) polarizing systems used two interlocked cameras in a side-by-side configuration or with one camera shooting through a semi-silvered mirror and the other shooting the reflected image from its surface (see diagram). By adjusting the angles slightly, the two cameras’ fields of view cross over, or are made to converge, similar to what happens when one looks at an object. The other important adjustment is the distance between the centers or axes of the lenses. This “interaxial” distance is modified to alter the “depth” between planes to suit different lenses and enhance distances between subjects.

For many years the anaglyph process depended on synchronizing two interlocked projectors, but the interlocked multi-screen work of Abel Gance showed that the technique was adaptable. In Gance shot portions of his 1925 three-camera epic Napoleon in anaglyphic stereo, but chose not to include them in the final version. (There was an easier anaglyphic single projection method made possible by printing black and white images on one filmstrip with either a dye-toning or matrix process. One idea used a double-sided print film with emulsion on the back. It is now done easily, by printing on to color stock through filters.)

The size of the early two-camera systems (see the illustration of the huge Natural-Vision camera) would appear to be a major disadvantage. This does not seem to have prevented most production techniques and, as 3-D often requires more careful set-ups to get full impact from the images, the lack of hand-held portability was reportedly not a problem.

The Films and the Filmmakers

The introduction of polarized stereoscopic films did not mean the end of anaglyphic processes. For reasons mentioned above, it was a simple and effective process, but the world of color 3-D was waiting for a successful polarized system. Filmmakers who had used the earlier process had few problems in changing to the polarization method. Frederick Eugene Ives and Jacob Leventhal, working from a studio in Fort Lee, New Jersey, had produced five anaglyphic shorts that had limited release in 1925 under the collective title, Stereoscopiks.

When the partnership dissolved, Leventhal joined with John Norling to make several unrelated short sequences which they sold to MGM. Pete Smith, who was in charge of shorts at the time and packaged them into an anaglyphic short, Audio-scopiks, in 1936. Leventhal and Norling then made The New Audioscopiks, released in 1936, and their success convinced MGM to allow Smith to direct his anaglyphic Frankensteinsploitation, Third Dimension Murder, in 1941. Norling then made one of the 3-D films that seems to have had the most impact at the time. The Chrysler Motors Corporation commissioned a 15-minute promotional film for its display at the 1933 New York World’s Fair. With technical assistance from Polaroid, the high-quality black and white film, In Tune with Tomorrow, was seen by more than a million-and-a-half people and was successfully remade in color to attract further audiences at the 1940 World’s Fair.

In Europe, polarized films were made in Italy (Nozze Vagabondo in 1934) and Germany (Archenemy, in 1935, a 3-D color feature Zum greifen nah (You Can Nearly Touch It) was shot with a ZEISS single-band process and released in 1936). The Soviet Union had been experimenting with anaglyphic, eclipsing and polarized processes since the mid-1930s and had decided that the discomfort to the viewer of glasses could be solved by a lenticular screen process (see illustration). This successfully presented a limited-depth image that depended on a properly-positioned audience keeping their heads perfectly upright to see the effect. Soviet stereocinema has been a consistent innovator and its current 70 mm polarized process is presented in exclusively 3-D theatres, with a regular production rate of at least one feature a year.

The audience for 3-D film was often content to put up with badly registered, two-projector features and uncomfortable glasses to view the novelty. World War 2 stopped 3-D production except for strategic use in aerial reconnaissance and training, and public interest in 3-D turned to still photography.
The War is Over, the Battle Begins

The slump in cinema attendances after the war, in the period 1948 to 1952, has been attributed to Hollywood's ignoring of the growth of television which had finally come into its own in the post-war boom years, with the importance of a growing economy and home incomes, the Americans looked to television for entertainment for their growing families. Hollywood studios had forbidden their contract players to appear on television, and refused to advertise their new productions or to allow their backlog of films to be sold for television viewing. There was a feeling of contempt for the tiny flickering black and white images that could not compete with the color and glamour of the films, and it took the immense collapse of some of the large film studios before the message of the new medium was understood. Television was replacing the cinema as the regular source of entertainment for the majority of the public.

There was a fall in cinema attendance worldwide between 1946 and 1952, of between a half and two-thirds depending on the source of one's figures. The average cinema attendance in 1946 was about 80 million per week, and in 1952 it had dropped to less than 50 million. The House Committee on Un-American Activities effectively prevented many of the top creative filmmakers from working, and the numbers of actors and actresses under contract were being reduced. The studios were to face the small screen and try to win back the audience.

There was a rush for the files where the technical patents had been kept and a collection of new processes was proposed to make cinema screens larger, and films brighter, sharper and more colorful — that is, as different from the small home screen as possible. There was no difficulty in attracting the audience to the expensive spectacular type of film; what was needed was a way to bring the audience back to a regular cinema attendance, and stereo vision seemed to provide some hope. Most accounts of this period seem to ignore the earlier large screen experiments and talk about 3-D as being introduced for the first time to an audience new to the phenomenon.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the public had never really forgotten the 3-D process because of the commercial success of devices such as the stereo still photography Viewmaster and take-it-yourself 3-D cameras, such as the David Wilkie Company's 35 mm Stereo Realist camera. Dan Symmes in Amazing 3-D tells the story this way:

"By the fall of 1952 3-D had swelled to a massive 3-D boom in the United States. The theatre was equipped for polarized 3-D, and had, in 1954, introduced their Kodak Stereo attachment in 1952 that made two vertical format pictures side by side on the 16 mm frame."

"Deepties" and "Flatties" — the Films of the 1950s

For the 1951 Festival of Britain, brothers Nigel and Raymond Spottiswoode were asked to design and program a special theatre of the Future. The theatre was equipped for polarized 3-D, and had an optional lenticular 3-D screen and a video projector. Their program of five films included two animated shorts from Norman McLaren at the National Film Board of Canada: Around Is Around and Now is the Time (to put on your glasses), These were released later in the U.S. and the critic Robert Arnhem described the abstract films "as though Art was streaming from the skies" 2.

The Spottiswoodes showed two polarized black and white shorts and Somehow managed to get two of the giant Technicolor three-filmstrip process cameras to make Royal River, a color film about travelling down the Thames. The camera system that was used for their other films consisted of two 35 mm interlocked Newman-Sinclair cameras mounted with the lenses pointing at each other. Two mirrors set at a 45 degree angle allowed a large degree of control over the reflected image.

This arrangement was virtually the same that was used in 1953 for the Gunzburg's Natural Vision system, except for the use of Mitchell NC cameras with a large and heavy sound blimp. The Natural Vision camera was used to film Bwana Devil, released on November 27, 1952, in Los Angeles. It grossed $100,000 in one theatre in its first week, although it was uniformly panned by the critics. Here the studios saw a cheaply-made B-grade film making record profits without the massive costs involved in the other record-breaking process: the three-camera, three-projector Cinerama which had premiered in New York two months earlier.

The first Cinerama program, This is Cinerama (directed by documentary filmmaker Robert Flaherty), had audiences and critics alike flocking to the cinema, clutching their seats as the camera swooped down roller-coasters and up Niagara Falls. The success of the effect was due to the size and curvature of the screen that used the audience's peripheral vision to add to the impressions of movement and involvement. Although the process was simplified later to a single camera and projector system, the audience's interlocked equipment was an expense that theatre owners were reluctant to incur with no guarantee of a continued product.

Warner Bros was the first major studio to contract the Natural Vision system for three features. Julian Gunzberg became technical consultant and Jack L. Warner appointed Andre de Toth to direct the first double feature, Man in the Dark, on to the New York market two days before the premiere of House of Wax.

The Columbia film was stopped in pre-production as a flat film, rewritten to add some stereo effects and its shooting completed in 11 days. Although the effect on the audience was interesting, it was the first of many poorly-scripted, badly-acted, B-grade films that were to give 3-D the reputation of something merely sensational. Columbia's second film was the Western filmed in color, Fort Ti. It was slightly better than the first effort, but the novelty was still enough to make it a top-grossing film for a few weeks.

The story must have been in an uproar as each 3-D feature went on to break records. From April until mid-September 1953, the 3-D boom seemed the answer to all their problems. House of Wax took more than a million dollars in the first three weeks of April. Fort Ti, accompanied by Walt Disney's 3-D cartoon Melody, was the top-grossing film in late May and early June. Universal, with its own equipment, rushed a Ray Bradbury short story into production and It Came From Outer Space was the top-grossing film for June and July. The film was shot in black and white but released tinted in brown in what was billed as "scientifically perfected eye-resting Full Sepia Monochrome." 3

Paramount released a Technicolor costume drama, Sangaree, in June 1953 and, in spite of poor reviews, it grossed about $2 million before the end of the year. A New Yorker review with its own equipment, offered a crudely-shot rodeo story, Arena, that barely surfaced in the box-office, and Allied Artists released a horror film, The Maze, that did good business. Warner Bros returned with a Western, Charge at Feather River, that threw as many different objects as the story would allow at the audience, and it too was a box-office success.

In June 1953, viewers in the major cities could have chosen from five 3-D features and a number of shorts and cartoons. Warner Bros announced that the 3-D future product would be "deeper" — that is, more film in the box office.

2. Lipton describes the stereo effects as "fun" but the graphics as "terribly dated", when viewed at a screening in 1977.

3. " 
   Much comment was made at the time of the fact that the 'bears' had only one eye, and so could not see 3-D. His retort to the time reader was, "How hadn't Beethoven been deaf?"
   4. This was billed as the first stereo cartoon but there had been a number of earlier releases. Woody Woodpecker, Popeye, Bugs Bunny and Casper the Friendly Ghost all appeared in some form of stereo depth cartoons at this time.
the factors that contributed to the resistance to continued 3-D production and made the studios look for a single pitch to the public. It is evident that those two qualities had been made in 3-D instead of the continuing rush of exploitative product, the story may have been different.

Some quality films were made in 3-D, stereoscopic films continued to be made and the process continued to improve. Some of the studios then offered the films in 3-D or 2-D versions and, as in the case of MGM's Kiss Me Kate, had trouble convincing exhibitors that they would do better business with the 3-D version. Kiss Me Kate was shown flat as its New York premiere. Alfred Hitchcock's Dial M for Murder was also shown flat for its premiere (but has recently been revived in depth to a mixed reaction from critics who had become used to the 3-D version). Hitchcock had been more than 2000 theaters in the U.S. that could show 3-D films but the studios needed something that could be exported to all of them. By the end of 1953, the stage was being set for 'The new dimensional marvel you see without glasses! — Cinemascope.'

Features from the Black Lagoon

Among the B-grade 3-D features in production after the introduction of Cinemascope were a few that explored the techniques and subject matter. There was a documentary drama of the Korean war, Cease Fire, and, using a camera rig built by its camera department, Warner Bros was able to add subtleties to the John Wayne Westerns. They tried for a third dimension. There are also new 3-D features in release or production: the sequel to the sequel, Friday the 13th 3-D, and a number of films included short 3-D segments as part of the plot. Francis Ford Coppola directed a short segment for a skin flick, The Bellboy and the Playgirls, released in 1962, and returned with his somewhat boring but technically innovative The Bubble in 1966. The process was a single-strip with the two images printed horizontally, one above the other. This was the most common format for the next 10 years, and, after the success of The Stewardesses, mainly porno films were released in that format. With titles like Heavy Equipment, The Stewardesses, Love in 3D and even The New Stewardesses, they continued the image of poor quality 3-D as a cheap gimmick. Andy Warhol's Frankenstein, directed by Paul Morrissey, was released in 1974 and has become the second biggest grossing 3-D film. There were some theatres that showed 3-D films as regular revival screenings to an audience of enthusiasts, and sometimes have paid to have fresh prints made to preserve the film. There has been enough stereo still photography business for Kodak to continue its stereo slide mounting service, and the Viewmaster viewers have been promoted strongly by GAF to a new audience with its own 3-D magazines. Lipton has been a third dimension. If there is no development in this area it would be difficult to imagine holographs as anything other than a return to a peep-show format. The problems of light loss with the polarizing process, requiring special screens or increased light output from the projectors, can be solved with special theatres for exclusive 3-D presentation. This is possible for entertainment parks and exhibitions, at least the well-received Sea Dreams, made by Murray Lerner for the Florida Marineland park. The latest of these productions is the Kodak-sponsored Magic Journeys at the EPCOT centre at Disney World, also in Florida.
adapted for 3-D viewing at a cost and could be adapted for home or arcade video games. The use of electro-optical materials that become instantly opaque when an electric current is applied gives a simple solution to a fruitless, sterile shutter process's problems. Synchronized with the television screen or projector, the process requires wired glasses or a broadcast signal. The glasses would be expensive but there are many advantages.

The development of special screens that vibrate or rotate to present two or more different images, which can be viewed without glasses, seems a goal that, while desirable, will complicate the production process considerably. The qualities of the lenticular screens have been applied in a simple fashion in the Nimlo still camera (that is being produced at the Timex factory in Britain). This camera uses four lenses and the four vertical strips on to color photographic paper which is then bonded to a lenticular plastic surface. The effect is similar to the cheap 3-D postcards of animals and religious scenes, but, in the examples I have seen of typical home snapshots, it gives a good 3-D depth with only a slight loss of definition. If it costs no more, as promised, than a standard color print, then it will be another successful step in expanding the 2-D environment.

TRIUMPH OF THE FAT PEOPLE — The Aesthetics of 3-D

"In what is the dramatization of the situation enriched by means of this technical discovery? Does a three-dimensionally represented comedian find some additional means of expressiveness in this stereoscopy? A physical roundness? Will this be a triumph of the fat people? What can anger, jealousy, hatred gain from the fact that they will occur in three dimensions? And laughter . . . I cannot believe that one could induce more laughter than is induced by a custard pie hitting Mack Sennett's flat personages. And intrigue? Comedy?

"Is there any need of further proof that stereoscopic cinema is a fruitless, sterile medium?" Eisenstein quoted these lines from Louis Chavance, written in 1946, as a typical argument in his essay on 3-D. Most of the great filmmakers have addressed the 3-D problem at some time to the stereoscopic cinema. D. W. Griffith said, "It will add a mighty force to motion pictures . . . make them beyond any comparison the most powerful medium of expression of which anyone has dreamed." There have even been critics who have complained that 3-D makes films too lifelike. English film critic Roger Helvick warned against the trend of making films into "the three dimensional, all-talking, all-smelling, all-tasting, all-feeling chaos which is the inarticulate affair called the experience of life . . . It is wrong to try to make art too life-like."

The argument that there is only novelty value in 3-D to be exploited was expressed by an industry spokesman Peter Vlahos in 1974:

"Every ten or fifteen years a new audience has grown up, one that has not seen 3-D. There are several millions of young viewers who will pay to see a few 3-D presentations. After seeing them the novelty is gone . . . One can enjoy a good 3-D presentation, or a good movie, but it is unlikely one can produce both at the same time."

"This argument is undoubtedly based on the experience of the B-grade films of the time. It is not difficult to think of a number of favorite films that would have had greater moments of impact or involvement if they had been made in 3-D. There are many films that depend on the premise of the audience as voyeur that would gain complexity from being able, like Grace Kelly's hand, to reach towards the audience in 'Dial M for Murder,' as she tried to find the scissors to kill her attacker. Until directors of ability are given the chance to show the qualities of the medium, we will only have the conviction of writers like Michael Kerbel who pleads for the process:

"Images in depth raise questions about realism vs expressionism, mise on scene vs montage, and the audience's relationship to the screen — in short, about the very nature of the film medium. That 3-D hasn't always been used well, and didn't become accepted the way sound and widescreen did, shouldn't be of central importance to someone concerned with cinema's possibilities. Imagine a theorist's ignoring sound just because the earliest sound films were technically and artistically crude. Audiences will soon be presented with the opportunity to acknowledge or ignore the stereoscopic cinema as once again Hollywood presents them with lovers who refuse to stay on the screen and lions (or sharks) that leap into your lap."

Although polarized 3-D will be the standard requirement for presentation in theatres, broadcast television, which requires a compatible picture for those viewers who don’t have or choose not to wear glasses, has to find a different method. The system that seems to have been most successful in overseas experiments was developed by Jim Butterfield and Bud Alger of the Hollywood company 3-D Video Corporation. Their system was used in the British experiments in November 1982, and they have been arranging live broadcasts in the U.S.

The 3-D Video process has been used to transfer many of the mid-1950s 3-D films to videotape for videocassette and cable presentation. The system uses a pale blue and dark red color combination for the glasses which gives an almost full color view from one eye and a monochrome image from the other. That, apparently, is enough to block the slight fringing encoded in the picture and convince the brain it is seeing a 3-D image. The effect has been reported to be excellent.

It is interesting to see references in the articles appearing overseas to the successful broadcasts of 3-D television in Australia, the result of press reports of experiments carried out by Mike Browning and Volk Mol in Melbourne. The overseas reports have been premature as the system is yet to have its first (acknowledged) broadcasts. The industry gossip about their Triangle 3-D system had almost been forgotten until the announcement that Alex Stitt’s new animated feature Abra Cadabra was being filmed in the process. With the arrival of the Lenny Lipton and Amazing 3-D books, the feature Comin’ At Ya, and the announcement about Abra Cadabra, my interest in 3-D film and television was aroused.

The following interviews are with Volk Mol, a respected Melbourne cinematographer, Mike Browning, who has been directing documentaries and television commercials for two decades, and Alexander Stitt, who moves from animated commercials to full-length features with equal success. They explain the differences and unique qualities of their 3-D system and Phillip Adams adds the news that soon we will be able to judge the results for ourselves.
Film Victoria is currently updating
The Complete Guide to Film and Video Production in Victoria.

If you wish to be included in the following Categories, could you please fill in this form and return it to:
Sue Chamberlain, Film Victoria,
409 King Street, Melbourne Victoria, 3000. (03) 329 7033

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• Please attach any further details you may feel are relevant.
Can you explain the technical requirements of the Triangle 3-D process?

The only special equipment required is a modification of the camera lens; the rest of the process remains the same. Once the image is on film or tape, you can project or transmit it normally.

It is essentially an anaglyph process dependent on two specially-colored filter elements fitted inside the lenses. There is a module, consisting of a white keyway and two filters, but no circular iris; instead, there is a horizontal light valve which moves like a Venetian blind.

When the image is sharp and in focus the colored light from the filters is mixed evenly with the natural (white) light coming through the lens, and all the points of focus are on the film plane. Obviously, when you change focus, you move those points of focus to different positions, and the result is a color fringe on the out-of-focus parts of the image.

There is a blue fringe on one side and a red fringe on the other. They are not true blue and red, however; they are a mild peacock-turquoise and the red is almost magenta. By wearing glasses with those two colors you are blocking and counteracting the fringes and, unless you are slightly color blind, you see an image in depth.

Although the images are quite normal in color without the glasses, the system does depend on the "blocking" of some of the natural color to be able to see the 3-D. Yet the reduction in color with the glasses on seemed acceptable. The flesh tones in particular were very good...

Because the colors are so mild, within a matter of 10 seconds you forget the glasses, and the eyes seem just to click into seeing normal color. It is like watching a pale pastel picture, or a print in Hollywood MGM Metrocolor. It looks unnatural at first but you get used to it. You are okay as long as you don't keep taking off the glasses; when you do, you realize that you have been looking at two colors because the eye that has been seeing one color sees the world more in the opposite shade for a while. Quite a tall order.

"Correct color" is very subjective; there are many cues one depends on for the correct perception of color which are as subtle as the cues for perceiving depth...

"The advantage of the horizontal iris is that you can stop down and the fringe remains the same. Even at f:22 you get the fringes at the sides of the object."

Does the fringe disappear as you stop down?

The advantage of the horizontal iris is that you can see the effect immediately and build up what you want. With careful art direction it should be possible for any director to get good 3-D results — it is so easy to use. On the sample tape with Don Lane it was very simple. We taped it at 2 a.m. at Channel 9, and the camera operators easily worked out what focus pulling was required and were very excited by the system. It is the simplest and I feel the most natural of the 3-D systems.

I will remember Phillip's comment after seeing the original tests. We were standing in the control room and everyone was watching the banks of monitors, wearing their glasses and jumping up and down. But he just turned to me and said, "Do you take Diner's Club?"

What are the differences between the Triangle system and the Video West patent?

Their system was very basic. The patent only says that the process depends on two filters fitted inside the lens, but that was enough to prevent us from patenting ours in the U.S. The examples I have are CinemaScope tests, a workprint of Julie Andrews walking around her backyard and swimming pool. One side of the screen is red and one side blue, and there is a heavy fringe. Our system uses carefully-shaped filters and has our special light valve.

Does the fringe disappear as you stop down?

It is much simpler, of course, on tape because you can see the effect immediately and build up what you want. With careful art direction it should be possible for any director to get good 3-D results — it is so easy to use. On the sample tape with Don Lane it was very simple. We taped it at 2 a.m. at Channel 9, and the camera operators easily worked out what focus pulling was required and were very excited by the system. It is the simplest and I feel the most natural of the 3-D systems.

I will remember Phillip's comment after seeing the original tests. We were standing in the control room and everyone was watching the banks of monitors, wearing their glasses and jumping up and down. But he just turned to me and said, "Do you take Diner's Club?"

Unfortunately, Phillip Adams was ill and not able to comment on the applications of the process and the story of the development of the Triangle system. He did dictate the following information in reply to an early request:

All I want to say is that we will be going to air with a series of 3-D specials during the latter part of 1983 and I have, this week, solved the last remaining problem, that is, how to mass-distribute glasses. I can't reveal the Machiavellian methodology, but I will be able to put a pair of classes into the hands of 13 million Australians in time for the show. A very tall order.

I've been a 3-D buff since childhood. As a kid I invented a system that didn't require glasses and was astonished to discover that the Russians had come to exactly the same technical conclusions. And had made a film in "my" system. So 30 years later, when I bought the rights for Mike and Volk's process, I should have been ready for the shock that confronted me in the U.S. — that a virtually identical system had been invented at exactly the same time by an American scientist. Although the American system didn't work as well as Mike and Volk's, the patent effectively blocked ours. It was owned by Blake Edwards and Julie Andrews and I had to buy their patent out.

The invention that will go to air is very largely Volk and Mike's but with modifications created by a team of scientists I gathered together in New York and at Berkeley. These include a vertical [sic] iris device that increases depth perception while minimizing 'fringing' and more subtle, balanced tints for the special glasses. All in all, over 300 scientists, technologists and "visual psychologists" contributed to the program although Volk and Mike certainly deserve credit for 90 per cent of what it is, I believe, a remarkable breakthrough." (December 16, 1982.)

Mike Browning
Mike Browning mentioned that your first experiments with 3-D were in 1977 while you were both working at Riverside Studios. Can you remember what prompted those experiments?

It was a combination of things. I like to tinker around with lenses and I was fascinated by what is described as the nodal point of the lens, where the aperture is. I found that it was like a mixing chamber. I did a bit of fiddling around with color and things to see what would happen. I also had an enlarger that had a focusing system with, I think, red, blue and green filters in it. I don't have it any more, but when it was out of focus the colors would shift a little. If it were in focus, it would be white.

At that time, I was reading something about the red and blue-green 3-D process and I thought, "That's interesting; maybe that is a way to build up the principle." I used an SX-70 camera and some filters from a Rosco sample book, and took some pictures that I thought were interesting, which I showed to Mike. We live in the country only about a mile from each other. He looked at them and at me and said, "I think you have something here." I thought he might have been joking but he was serious, so I pulled an old Schneider lens apart and shot some film with it. He was thinking more of the technical aspects, such as colors of the filters and glasses, while I was concerned with perfecting the module. If you only use two colors in the mixing chamber it is not as good as when you use white light as well. It took a while to discover that.

Fortunately, I had worked for years with Mike and he saw commercial applications that I hadn't given much thought to. This is why we have worked together over the years. There was money available to develop it a bit further, so we did a lot of tests on film and 35mm stills, and at this stage Phillip Adams became interested.

Phillip is probably a genius in his own band of the spectrum. He certainly has a very active mind about marketing, and at that time he was probably the perfect and only man to get the thing off the ground. He made lots of the early arrangements.

There was another partner, John Taylor . . .

John was the managing director of Riverside. This project was only a sideline, something we did when there was nothing else. Admittedly it cost him a fair amount of money — $10,000 to $20,000 — but the arrangement was that his share would be paid off. So, although we didn't make any money out of it then, he did! I think you know the story about the expert from the U.S. who came to judge the value of the system. He was wearing glasses that looked like clear marbles cut in half and had to stand a foot away from the monitor. He thought it was a great thing: he had the contacts in the U.S. and concluded that although it was a simple system and working it could always be made better.

So, a lot of money and three years were spent by the Americans to make it better, which didn't work. Mike and I knew it wouldn't work and, if you place the module as it is today in Alex's lens beside our first one, you would see it is virtually the same.

What about the horizontal iris?

That was actually one of the only worthwhile ideas they came up with. It was very primitive but sound. It was hardly worth all the money. We actually perfected the idea mechanically, so that instead of a slot in the lens with two horizontal slides moving vertically up and down they are connected to the rotating aperture ring. This meant that we would contain the new iris inside the lens. It works exactly like a normal round iris except that it eliminates, or reduces to an acceptable extent, the fringing on the top and the bottom of the objects. Any fringing for our purpose should be on the verticals.

Does it alter the speed of the lens, or make it harder to use?

Yes, it reduces the speed by about one-and-a-half stops, and the different mechanical system means the settings have to be re-calibrated. The shapes of the filters have been worked out mathematically to mix in the right amount with ordinary light. You need very little fringing and it is only with experience that you know when you have gone too far. Stopping down may bring other things into focus which you might not want. With a still camera you can easily change the shutter speed but with film you would have to add ND filters. There is no question about it: if someone wanted to shoot something tomorrow, you would need some assistance to get the best result. The effect would be there but we have done hundreds of experiments to determine the best results.

To my knowledge, with all the stuff I have read, this system is still the best for television, for the simple reason that it is compatible for viewers without the glasses. Although polarized 3-D comes pretty close to being perfect, there is no simple way to use it on a single television screen using polarizing glasses. I have seen an electronic glasses system that you would plug into the back of the set, but the glasses cost about $300 each. It is very clever and the expertise behind it is probably many times greater than ours, but it is hardly a commercial proposition.

You have to remember that the television monitor is a small picture and with any system you will still have the effect of looking out a window with some depth in it. It is specifically the size that has the impact. If you have a cinema screen that is 2.2:1 screen ratio or even smaller still (e.g., an academy ratio) it is still quite big, and you have the effect in the theatre of being physically moved by the image. If you go smaller to a slide projector and then to a television set, you end up with what is just
Some of the colors that they came up with in the U.S. were quite bizarre. One I remember was a greenish, light green and purple color, probably scientifically perfect but objectionable to look through. The color has to be strong enough to eliminate the fringe image but subtle enough to allow the other colors to come through. Mike and I have always had a fight about the glasses. I have always felt that the colors should be heavy because the effect is so good; Mike says there is too much loss of color and make them lighter. So we have a compromise.

Since seeing some of the scenes from "Abra Cadabra", I have been conscious of the limitations of the effect with its three distinct planes. What happens when, in live action, someone walks toward you and you pull focus with them?

The fringing in the background would just get more obvious, but it is not a real problem. One of the things we found out very early was that the mind of the viewer has to 'click' onto the effect. It is an almost audible click. Some people cannot see it at first and we say walk around a bit and stand at the back, then suddenly they see it. Once their minds are conditioned to it, it works every time. You can put a 9.8 mm lens on an Arriflex and there would have to be objects touching the lens before there was any out-of-focus fringing — and people feel that they can still see depth. It is there, especially when cut between two shots with a stronger effect.

One of the grips at Riverside was looking at some still photos with the glasses while it was still top secret and he thought it was wonderful. He then looked at the front cover of the telephone book and said, "These glasses are terrific, I can see 3-D here." He was sure the effect was in the glasses. That is a fringe benefit that works for any system using glasses.

Lenny Lipton quotes a figure of between 5 and 8 per cent who either can't see polarized stereo (stereo blind) or experience discomfort. You would have added red-blue colorblind problems.1 Do you have many people who say they cannot see the effect?

There was some research done in the U.S. to find if there were any viewing problems. I think there was something like one person in ten who had problems seeing the effect.

If you had control of the application of the system, how would you approach it? Are there improvements that could be made?

Our system might have some further fine tuning coming from its use and experiments but it would be minor, using different colors. I don't think you could take it much further technically; you would have to go to a different system.

I think that lenticular screens might have some future, especially when they make solid state screens where each dot is in a fixed position. With a lenticular screen on top of that, nothing can move and you could have television viewing without glasses. As far as applications of the system, if some supernatural power gave me control, I would find the most competitive market and approach the individuals with the proposal of a half-hour show, at the most, or a segment in a show like The Don Lane Show. Then I would say, "Put on your glasses. Let's go to 3-D", and have a program with some commercials in 3-D. Millions of dollars could be made from that intense viewer involvement. It is perfect for television where the viewers' attention is fragmented: they get up and go to the fridge, never watching their full attention. In a cinema you might find the limitations of the system more obvious, because people have to stay put for a few hours.

I don't really want to make the programs, but as a commercial application I can see a wasted opportunity. When you ask how much money there would be in it, I would say some but that it has a perfectly valid commercial use. We are not cheating, there is a valid depth effect. It also works for magazines, printing, as you saw from that early Australian Playboy (although there were problems with that), but its time is now because tomorrow it could be old hat.

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1. Mol's story about the U.S. expert and his system. Mol: It's a long story but I was asked to supervise the photography and although the editor John Jost thought it was okay, I found it difficult to explain to the viewers. I was asked to see if they could do anything as they were used to. They didn't want to be restricted. I am used to studio lighting and found their flash lighting too flat. There was disagreement about the model and it was left to the last minute and had to go in because the Marlboro ad was booked. So you saw the result of a day and a half shooting and had no time to change. The color reproduction was another problem and the paper surface needs to be carefully selected because the shine draws the brain's attention to it. There are a lot of things that need thinking about.

2. Mol: It's a long story but I was asked to supervise the photography and although the editor John Jost thought it was okay, I found it difficult to explain to the viewers. I was asked to see if they could do anything as they were used to. They didn't want to be restricted. I am used to studio lighting and found their flash lighting too flat. There was disagreement about the model and it was left to the last minute and had to go in because the Marlboro ad was booked. So you saw the result of a day and a half shooting and had no time to change. The color reproduction was another problem and the paper surface needs to be carefully selected because the shine draws the brain's attention to it. There are a lot of things that need thinking about.
Why 3-D, when your first feature, "Grendel, Grendel, Grendel", was in a conventional form?

We had the option of doing Grendel in 3-D. We had just finished the soundtrack when Mike Browning told me about the process he and Volk Mol had invented. I thought he was pulling my leg, but a couple of days later he carted us off to Riverside Studio and showed it all to us on the Moviola.

We thought very seriously about it but decided against using the process because we were so far down the line. To build the equipment would have added about $100,000 to the budget and, as the budget for Grendel was only $100,000, it meant a lot of extra money. It also meant gearing up to do the glasses and so on. We had already raised the money for Grendel so we decided to let it go as it was.

From that moment, however, I wanted to use the process in my next film, and so Abra Cadabra was written specifically with it in mind. That is why it is called Abra Cadabra; we are using the process as a part of the film.

We are doing little bits of new film grammar, and re-thinking the process. We are not thinking of it as a 'round' 3-D film but as a series of planes. The analogy is toy theatre: instead of doing a cross dissolve, as you would in a regular film with one flat plane, you dissolve out only the back plane. For instance, we can dissolve out a forest and dissolve in to space, with the characters remaining in the foreground doing what they were doing.

We are also using a lot of tricks: for example, curtains that drop down and pull up again. The curtains have funny words written on them and give the film a theatrical, pantomime feeling. We are calling the film "an animated rock-pantomime". There is a lot of music but it is well-known nursery rhyme and Christmas carol-type music that has been embroidered on,iddled with and to which new words have been added. It is all recognizable at once.

When you decided to go to 3-D and multi-plane, what decisions did you have to make about choosing the new equipment? Was it a standard, "off the shelf" purchase?

It had to be because it takes forever just to get an animation rostrum off the shelf. We chose the Neilson-Hordell unit because it was available; they had one on the production line at about the right stage. The one big feature we needed was that the column that supports the camera be in the back left hand corner instead of the back centre. Peter Neilson designed it so that when the table is turned to vertical, it will accommodate long, roll-up titles. This is great because normally you roll up the titles as far as you can until you hit the column at the back, and then you have to bend them up or cut them off. The corner column suited us because we had to install another column anyway to support the multiple planes that hang up in the air.

We also have an intricate lighting problem because we have to light every plane individually. The sides immediately would have been taken up with lights and we needed the space at the back to hang the planes.

We made some modifications to their unit, mainly because we are shooting it anamorphic, in Panavision. We needed a much larger hole for the back projection in the table; instead of the usual 12 inches (30cm), we wanted a hole that was 18 inches (45cm) across. This meant revising the table design because the rods that hold the winder and controls had to be moved out and changed. All of the focusing system had to be altered. Normally the follow focus system operates on a bellows, so that the lens is moving up or down in relation to the focal plane. However, the Panavision lens has its focusing system within it, so a cog system that meshed into the lens had to be built.

In the meantime Ian Scott, of Scott Animation in St Kilda, who builds the devices to animate signs and cars in showrooms, built everything to Mike Browning's original designs for the planes. That meant a couple of columns so that the planes could be moved vertically, independently of the rest of the gear. Each of the three planes needed a platen to hold the cells flat, and moveable peg bars so that we could pan cells in and out, which is an essential part of the 3-D effect. Being able to pan the scene across is one of the things that really give you the effect of depth, so the cells had to be moveable. It was a lot of work getting those things done.

So your work is restricted to those planes . . .

It has four planes: the basic camera plane and three up in the air. We can shoot eight planes without any trouble by introducing the back projection system — that was my contribution to the system.

We have a thing called a Zoptic screen, invented by Zoran Persic, which is a smart bit of back projection material and works well optically. We put it in because the four planes were a long way apart. It is about a metre from the table to the top plane and if you were to go to eight planes you would be up to two metres, which would mean that the camera would be six metres up in the air instead of the four metres it is now. Also, on the bottom plane we work to a drawing 17 inches (43cm) across while the top plane is 18 inches (45cm) across, so you can imagine on eight planes the top one would be an inch and a half wide (3.8cm). Or conversely the bottom one could be five feet (1.52m). Painting the cells, let alone trying to change them under the camera, would be horrific.

By breaking the system in half we shoot background material which can contain animation four planes deep, process it and put it in the background projector, which gives us, in effect, four planes below our base plane.

How do you control the colour fringe on that many planes?

We have the colour fringe from our shooting of the original material, which is projected onto the Zoptic screen. The only trick is that we make that back projection plane the one in focus, which means that there is no further effect on the fringeing. It works brilliantly: we can run scenes that have back projection and scenes that do not and no one can detect a difference in quality on a big screen. We are delighted by it all.

The only problem with the Zoptic screen is that we have had to shoot at a very slow speed because of the low light level coming through the screen. In fact, we are on about a two-second exposure per frame instead of the normal quarter of a second.

Does the computer save you any time in controlling those planes?

The computer is essential when you are doing a paper and you have four planes moving. The camera has to stop and wind the first plane across one-hundredth of an inch (0.25mm), then the next one and so on, and put all the drawings down and take the picture. However, the computer controls all the planes. While it doesn't make the shooting any faster it eliminates a lot of human error, and frees the cameraman to think about the drawings rather than the mechanics. I think it is even more essential for this film because looking at the drawings is hard enough. The operator can be changing cells on all levels because we are doing a lot of atmospheric stuff, such as rain cycles, on all the planes.

If that is hard for the operator, how do the animators approach the multiple planes?

Although it certainly is irregular, all the animators have handled it well; there are a couple of tricks to it. It is difficult to get your mind
around the change of size and the fact that something in the foreground is drawn smaller than something in the background is peculiar. It is due to the focal length of the lens we are using and the size of drawing.

I solve most of the problems when I am doing the layouts. I do a basic layout of the scene at the major field size, say 17 inches (43cm) across. I draw all the elements at that size, then put them into the copy camera and make reduction drawings of the appropriate elements. The animator then has a basic layout to work from of how the whole thing looks and a series of separate pieces of paper with items drawn to scale. Once that is provided, it is all clear and understandable. But the tricks such as jumping from one plane to another and having a character move out of frame on one plane and in on another, which happens quite often, certainly test their concentration.

These are the kind of problems to which animators are accustomed anyway. There are many things that only make sense to an animator who is solving the mechanical problems associated with these sorts of tricks.

In live action you can have a person move from background to foreground easily, but in animation you are limited to a few planes. How have you handled these movements?

Originally we thought we could have that kind of movement because the planes are capable of discrete vertical movement. We can do it if we have just one plane but if we are using all the planes, which we do more often than not, we can’t get them close enough because of the lighting and the reflection problems when they get close together. So we have had to abandon that idea.

We get around it using tricks you don’t really notice. You can cheat when objects move quickly towards you, because you don’t really perceive them in dimension. It takes a while for you to decide where things are and, if they come haring at you, you can’t decide anyway. Even the Comin’ At Ya effects depend on the fact that you duck instinctively when something has been thrown towards you, rather than thinking that the object is actually leaving the screen.

How have you handled the limited color palette that the process involves?

The only limitation is that you can’t use the precise colors of the glasses. If you do, you see the color but it takes on a certain fluorescence and won’t sit in foreground or background. We have actually used the effect early in the film when a big curtain comes down to signal the beginning of the end of the scene. The Naughy Song. We have painted the words “Naughty Song” on the curtain and when it comes down with a great big thud, the impact is terrific. We have kept the curtain off all the characters but the blue isn’t as bad: it just tends to be recessive, it doesn’t ‘vibrate’, so we have used it judiciously. But there are lots of blues: you don’t have to use the same cerulean base.

The reduction in available colors is actually part of your own style, so you don’t feel it is restrictive?

Not at all. Instead of using every color in the world, stylistically I use a reduced palette. In choosing colors for the characters I select those that work well together, which means staying within a limited range. We designed all the characters, colored them as I thought they should be, shot some of them and looked through the glasses to see if there was any problem. There were one or two colors that looked a bit odd so we changed them. There was no feeling of restriction.

To what extent have you considered the possibility of the film being viewed in 2-D?

I haven’t really considered it at all; it would be like making things for color television and worrying about black and white. We see it in 2-D most of the time on the work-print; you don’t bother sitting at the editing bench while wearing glasses, so you watch it as 2-D material; looking at it that way there are no problems. If there was a scene that didn’t work you would consider doing something about it, but so far it is working fine.

One is immediately aware of the out-of-focus foregrounds, not so much as an intrusion but as something one is unaccustomed to seeing in hard-edged cartoon animation . . .

Yes, and it is very interesting that The Secret of Nimh (Don Bluth Productions), while looking like a nice Disney film with little animals and things, was shot on a two-plane system. They built the camera rostrum especially, and, judging from the photos in American Cinematographer, it is huge. They built two animation benches and stacked them on top of each other, with giant lights and complete controls on each, just to get soft focus material. If you have little animated characters sitting on a background, they are always as sharp as the main characters, so you are stuck with that as a style, especially when you cut to close-ups. But if you can throw the background out of focus it looks terrific.

On Grendel, and again on Abra Cadabra, I have adopted an idea of mine, which is to take all the lines off and leave flat shapes of color. I did it on Grendel purely for stylistic reasons because I hate the backgrounds being painted shapes and all the characters having lines around them. You can immediately tell which part of the scene is going to move! There are two ways to go: one is to put lines around everything, which is not silly. Disney has been doing that recently in The Animal Book and a couple of others.

The other way, also used by Disney, is to paint soft, colored lines around everything; when they went to the Xerox process, which has solid black lines, they began putting black lines around things in the background.

Although in Grendel the lines were left off for stylistic reasons, in Abra hard lines around things would become messy when thrown out of focus. Now, the flat areas of color just become soft at the edges, which is all right. The same thing happens in real films when a dark foreground shape is against a dark background. There are many scenes where you can’t see anything, and it looks okay. It has never been done in animation; people draw lines around the shape to make it stand out all the time. It means that in a strange way Abra is coming very close to real cinematography: colored shapes on characters tend to merge with colored shapes on backgrounds, and things in the foreground and background tend to move out of focus. In that regard it is all getting ‘real-er’, but our drawing style is so stylized it takes the film away from reality: in that way it is ambivalent.

Do you find the creative aspects of the 3-D process attractive enough to consider another 3-D film?

In the case of Abra Cadabra, it happens to work with the magic elements of the story. One of the things I find limiting is the restriction on the amount of movement of the new camera, which otherwise has the potential to go from a full wide frame down to a close-up in one inch across. Use to real multiple planes you would go crashing through three sheets of glass!

There are many other things that put aesthetic limits on your work with 3-D, but ask me again when we complete this film.

Camera details: the Neilson-Hordell camera is operated by John Curtain and Kim Humphreys. Curtain was a camera operator at Filmgraphics in Sydney and then at Raymond Lea. Although he does not work the Oxberry computer stand at Filmgraphics, he has watched its operation and considers the Neilson-Hordell operation is much simpler to use and program. The programmer of the animation stand computer-control program was Mark Roberts who came out from Canada for the installation with Peter Neilson. He then travelled to Britain where the BBC has recently installed a Neilson-Hordell computer-controlled stand.
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UNDERCOVER

Based on the original idea of John Parker, and is set in the fictional, energetic 1920s. It is about coming of age. It's about a young man named Fred Taylor and his business—the Sunbeam Colliery Company—emerging from the leadership traditions of Edwardianism into a period of dramatic change.

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'Snowy River's' got $18.5 million to say Cinema Papers is wrong

And if one adds to the Australian success an interesting corollary, that (as far as I am aware) the film has enjoyed nothing like that success in other countries, the puzzle becomes greater. Not only has its overseas performance in no way matched the local success but The Man From Snowy River has had nothing like the box-office success of Gallipoli, Breaker Morant or My Brilliant Career.

— JACK CLANCY WRITING IN CINEMA PAPERS, March 1983

"As much as I applaud Jack Clancy's motives in taking a 'Second Glance' at the popular success of THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER, a correction of fact is in order. Snowy River is enjoying spectacular success overseas.

'It is the second of only two Australian films to be considered a hit in the American market (the first was Road Warrior — but that didn't rate a mention either). At the time of writing Snowy River has grossed $18.5 million in U.S. and Canadian theatres alone. It has appeared several times on the U.S. top ten weekly grosses list, it is still in the top 30 — the third longest run on the list (after 28 weeks of release). It has played in as many as 700 theatres at any one time. As well, it was nominated by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association for a Golden Globe as best foreign film. And it won for director George Miller the most popular film award at the Montreal World Film Festival.

"With American free and pay TV to come, with the rest of the world about to start, I will go on record as saying that Snowy River will gross at least $35 million overseas".
Dusty

Arnold Zable

Dusty is something of a surprise as a film. With its unpretentious style, this gently-paced feature emerges as a significant contribution to the growing number of films that tackle aspects of Australian bushlore. The director, John Richardson, remains faithful to the spirit of the book upon which it is based, and the film should rekindle interest in the works of the novel's author, Frank Dalby Davison.

Davison's short stories and novels have been placed in the literary tradition of the work of Henry Lawson, A. B. "Banjo" Paterson and other Australian bush poets such as Vance Palmer. John Richardson introduces a range of themes: the relationship between man and animal, and man's attitude to the environment.

Davison had a deep empathy for his animal and human characters. He spent a lot of time on the land as a farmer and his works are full of detailed observations about the countryside and its inhabitants. In Dusty, as in Man-Shy, much of the story is told from the animal's point of view: Davison detected in animals an intelligence and sensitivity that combined with instinct to create vibrant characters. Richardson's major achievement in the film adaptation is to create Dusty as just such a creature. In doing so, he makes full use of his solid background as a documentary filmmaker and his experience in filming animals and wildlife.

The film's prologue condenses Davison's rich opening chapter, which depicts the mating of homestead kelpie and dingo bitch, the union of a domesticated working dog and a creature of the wild. The film recaptures in visual shorthand the scene's primordial quality. The dingo makes its first brief appearance as a creature with rare links to an ancient land; a creature of mystery who, thousands of years ago, as the narrator states, "wandered without fear or restraint over a vast continent".

The dingo bitch is killed by a youth who stumbles on her lair of pups. The surviving pup, in appearance a kelpie, the old stockman, and Dusty at a sheep trial. John Richardson's Dusty.

Dusty, the film, is based, and the film should rekindle interest in the works of the novel's author, Frank Dalby Davison. Davison's short stories and novels have been placed in the literary tradition of the work of Henry Lawson, A. B. "Banjo" Paterson and other Australian bush poets such as Vance Palmer. Like Richardson introduces a range of themes: the relationship between man and animal, and man's attitude to the environment.

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trained as actors; the dingoes were brought from their natural habitat in the Simpson desert to interact with true working-dogs; the animal scenes were shot in a more paddock with a rabbit-proof fence; and a small crew did the filming, with a minimum of distraction to the natural movement of the dogs.

Dusty's authenticity can be seen in his working of the sheep and, more dramatically, in his nocturnal forays into the bush where he gives way to his hereditary traits as a hunter. The sheep trial that enables Dusty's growth is particularly powerful in its delicate interaction between man, dog and sheep. The scene has the quality of a single dramatic camera shot: angles and close-ups to pick up the tension between the three focal points. Several scenes were shot from angles to capture Davison's effort to relate the story from the dog's point of view: for example, scenes of homestead life are shot from inside the wire compound in which Dusty is kept as a pup. Although this approach runs the risk of audience disorientation, it is more than justified in its intent to remain true to Davison's novel.

Above all, the audience is able to feel Dusty's sensitivity; his delight in running loose and exploring his environment; and his curiosity about the homestead, and life in the open. Throughout, Dusty's is almost as close as the medium of film can come to translating Davison's vivid description of "His senses were rich with retrospective satisfactions; breadth of freedom, sight and smell of night-bound patriarchy, the warm flesh and fur and feather, wool in his eyes, smell of sheep in his nostrils, the tug of flesh on his teeth and the taste of blood on his tongue." Richardson's documentary skills are also in evidence in his portraits of country life: close-ups of Richard folk at the sheep trials, a barn dance and in the pub. Once again he uses economy of restraint to achieve a powerful effect; these scenes were enhanced by setting them up as genuine happenings: the local Red Cross ran the dance and the sheep trials were organized by the local farmers and town residents. Camera man Alex McPhee, also working on his first feature, was able to employ the patience and restraint the medium of film permits, as his previous work in current affairs and documentaries to capture the atmosphere.

Although the film is shot in a contemporary setting, it sometimes has a period feeling and, in the animal scenes, a sense of the authentic. Richardson finally decided on the 1930s setting because it would highlight the interplay between man, animal and environment. Dusty is a more modern venture which, nevertheless, shows that these themes can be presented in an Australian setting without resorting to contrived situations. It is a film of understanding, patience, restraint and deep commitment; it touches on the heart, on the soul, on the spirit and on the surface of human beings.


Dusty is its evocation of an era of change. Because Dusty is a family film, it was released in 35mm. It was a commercial success, but its greatest importance is as a powerful evocation of an era of education and, particularly, the teaching profession. The film was made in 1983, but its themes are still relevant today. The classroom is a microcosm of society, and the teacher is a role model for young people. The film shows the teacher's dedication, the students' struggles, and the importance of education. It's a film that celebrates the human spirit and the power of education to change lives.

The week of 1980 (the year in which the film was made), its central character, Laurence Cuer (Nathalie Baye), constructed in terms of a moral confusion: her personal dismay, the heritage of the social upheaval of 1968; her private anguish, the product of the conflict between institutions and the idealistic quest that challenges their foundations. She is a character afflicted by history, yet also an individual who has to come to terms with her condition.

As in other Tavernier films (L'horloger de St Paul, Des enfants gates, Death Watch), Une semaine de vacances produces the sense of a journey, even if it is a moral rather than a geographical one. A recurrent image in the film is that of a restless Laurence, wandering the streets of Lyon, travelling to visit her parents in Beaulojais, constantly in motion and in search of comfort. Aged 31, a child of the '60s, she is a teacher committed to the values of a liberal education, but frustrated by the way in which those values seem to have no relevance to her own experience of working in a school and teaching a class. She finds herself in charge unable to accept the kind of liberation she wants to offer them: "The more freedom of expression we allow them, the less they have to say . . . Only their spelling is original!"

One of the direct concerns of the film is the problem of education and, though it is secondary to the problems of the characters and of Laurence in particular, it is nonetheless an aspect of the post-'68 malaise which seems to shroud their lives. "Teach maths, not literature. It's stable. Not even the communists can make parallels meet." This frustration grows until it reaches a point where Laurence's father, Jean, begins to question her commitment to her students. Jean's not a Mancheron, he's a factory worker, and he reflects on his son, "Kids no longer resemble their parents. They resemble their time. Jean's not a Mancheron, he's a '80s," or expresses his frustration at the changing face of the city itself, its modern look which he sees as a result of the city's new system of one-way entry routes.

Yet the loving camera-embrace of the city in the aerial tracking shot behind the opening credits and Pierre-William Glenn's beautifully misted images of its panorama suggest there is another way of seeing Lyon. Similarly, the energetic appearance in the film of...
Gandhi

Arnold Zable

Gandhi is a film of great vitality and commitment, a moving account of the Mahatma, "Gandhi," father of the Indian independence movement.

As the scriptwriter (John Briley) points out, "Gandhi's chief concern is that life can be encompassed in one telling": this is particularly the case in the life of a man who was so complex, and whose psychology is so far from "normal," as Gandhi. It is a daunting task portraying his life in three hours of film. But Briley, with his great gifts of the screenwriter and director, shows, through a succession of key episodes, the evolution in Gandhi's life to the mature leader who created a new vocabulary in the methods of political struggle. It also succeeds, to some extent, in its stated intention, "to try to make him come to the heart of the man." But there are inevitable problems and gaps; and there are distortions.

The film is prefaced by a haunting prologue, and framed at both ends by the assassination of the 78-year-old Gandhi (Ben Kingsley). The intense opening scene shows, as it does in the film's blend of restraint and understatement: an almost surreal effect is created as one follows the movements of the assassin, with Ravi Shankar's score slowly emerging from the silence during Gandhi's final moments. A fundamental inaccuracy is that the film does not show Gandhi's first wife as it accompanies the body of the slain Gandhi, on its final procession through the streets of Delhi, packed with countless mourners and dignitaries from many nations.

The audience has caught a glimpse of the greatness that marked the aura of good which surrounded him, and of the deep grief experienced by both the Indian and international community. An American broadcaster covering the funeral quotes the words of Einstein: "Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe that such a one as he ever flesh and blood walked upon this earth."

This emerges as director Richard Attenborough's view of Gandhi: the film is, essentially, a gentle ballad in praise of the apostle of non-violence. With a few significant exceptions, the film's more controversial aspects of Gandhi's personal and political life are glossed over or avoided.

Given the time constraint, the audience's first view of the young Gandhi is a wise choice by Briley. Gandhi is seen only a week after his arrival in South Africa, preparing to take up a legal position for a firm in the minority Indian community. While travelling from Durban to Pretoria, he is ejected violently from the train for having insisted on his right to travel first class. This emerges as director Richard Attenborough's view of Gandhi: the film is, essentially, a gentle ballad in praise of the apostle of non-violence. With a few significant exceptions, the film's more controversial aspects of Gandhi's personal and political life are glossed over or avoided.

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Gandhi
Gandhi

In another memorable scene, Gandhi finds his voice as a leader capable of accounting and disciplining a mass movement to adopt his unorthodox tactics of non-violence. There is also a fine portrayal of his relationship with Jan Smuts (Athol Fugard), one of the first of many such encounters with powerful political opponents who were at first furious at this obstinate little Indian, but who gradually were seduced by his curious blend of gentle strength, self-possession and unending commitment. As Gandhi and his followers face the head-on assault of galloping horses, one is left in no doubt about the immense dangers of the ways of non-violent resistance.

Gandhi’s first attempt at ashram life is also shown: the Phoenix settlement which was to become the forerunner of Gandhi’s communal farms, subject to his communal living and self-reliance. But, with one striking exception, one sees little of one of Gandhi’s major problems at this time: his relationship with his family. The exception is a scene with his wife, based on Gandhi’s disarmingly frank account in his autobiography. Kasturbai Gandhi, acted with subtle grace by Rohini Hattangady, confronts her husband when he orders her to do her share in raking and covering the latrines. The darker shades of Gandhi’s aspirations to perfection appear here. He momentarily loses control and castigates her for not living up to his demands. As Gandhi has pointed out, this was one of many confrontations between two strong personalities, thrown together in marriage at the age of 13.

But the audience does not see any other instances of this turbulence or of the conflict between Gandhi and his sons, particularly Harilal, the first born. While Harilal was an active participant in Gandhi’s campaigns, and was eventually refused entry to India by his father. He felt deep resentment at having become a pawn in his father’s political and spiritual experiments, and was extremely angry at his refusal to grant him a formal education. Gandhi insisted that his children grow up on his communal farms, subject to his radical ideas on the virtues of non-academic education and self-reliance. Harilal pointed out that Gandhi himself had received legal training in London and that many of his skills had come from formal education. None of this is shown in the film and, in a sense, it detracts from its integrity and from its avowed aim of getting at the heart of the man.

It should be added that the relationship between Kasturbai and Gandhi is very well portrayed. It did mature into an enduring and sensitive marriage and their conflicts did not necessarily detract from Gandhi’s stature. He never tried to hide anything: his life was a deliberately open book in line with his constant search for deeper truth. In fact, he credited Kasturbai with teaching him many lessons in the arts of patience and non-violent resistance, and he became an advocate for women’s rights in a society in which a deep repression of women was sanctioned by both the orthodox Hindu and Muslim faiths.

When Gandhi finally resettled in India in 1915, he was in his mid-forties, and an acclaimed leader for his work in South Africa. The film tends to overplay his humility and innocence of Indian politics at the time. He had, in fact, made several journeys back home and had become acquainted with many of the key figures in the Indian struggle for home rule. He was very firm in his ideas of non-violence, the links between spiritual development and politics, and on the virtues of communal living. It was largely at the insistence of Gopal Krishna Gokhale (Sheeram Lago), who appears briefly in the film, that Gandhi undertook to refrain from trying immediately to apply his methods to the Indian scene, and to travel the country for a first-hand view of its condition.

Attenborough is not, however, concerned with the intricacies of Indian politics and social conditions. Alternative viewpoints, the spectrum of ideas and tactics in the independence struggle, and some of Gandhi’s major conflicts with other leading members of the movement are overlooked. As well, the characters of Nehru, Sardar Patel and Jinnah are simplified or caricatured.

The most interesting portrayal is that of Nehru, very well acted by Roshan Seth, although one misses some of the elegance and style noted by his biographers. There are glimpses of that mixture of deep love and veneration, tinged with moments of deep frustration, that characterized his relationship with Gandhi, but what one does not see are the major differences in their outlooks. Gandhi had a deep and lasting impact on Nehru, steering him in the direction of greater simplicity. But, whereas Gandhi clung to a vision of a peasant-based Utopia, Nehru was a passionate believer in modernization — material progress based on socialistic principles. Perhaps more important was Nehru’s secular outlook as compared with Gandhi’s insistence on the links between religion and politics.

Sardar Patel (Saeed Jaffrey) is the most misrepresented figure in the film. He was, by most accounts, a hard-headed and shrewd political organizer. Often described as a Tammany Hall-style boss, Patel, under Gandhi’s guidance, built the Congress party into an impressive national machine that reached every province of India. One sees little of his peasant pragmatism and his distrust of intellectuals which helped bring him into conflict with Nehru.

The portrayal of Jinnah (Alvyez Padamsee) seems closer to the mark. He was suspicious of the ascetic Gandhi and apparently repulsed by his close identification with the peasantry. Jinnah believed in the leadership of an educated city-based elite. In his private life he enjoyed the trappings of his affluence and took pride in his profession and the good life that went with it. These differences are depicted in the film in subtle ways. What is not brought out in the film’s narrative, and perhaps similar nuances could have been conveyed, are the deep antipathy towards the treatment of the millions of untouchables, who he renamed the Harijans, “the children of God”. His relationship with the Harijans became an important aspect of his Indian crusades, but is barely touched on in the film. Furthermore, the grinding poverty that he so frequently reported in his underplayed, though the film presents, at most, a distanced and brief view of poverty, rather than the harsh realities that persist to this day.

From his Indian journey one sees the rapid growth of Gandhi as a unique, national figure with the capacity for mobilizing large numbers of people and gathering a group of devoted followers. Attenborough focuses on the campaign of the Champaran farmers, who had hoped to be aided by the British staffed schools in the villages, lectured on sanitation and provided medical facilities.

The turning point for Gandhi in India came with the brutal actions of physical dissimilarities by employing a range of subtle gestures, and recreating the gradual changes in accent, posture, and inner conviction of the maturing Gandhi. The change in accent is almost imperceptible, from the refined English that Gandhi picked up as a young law student in London, to the shades of Indian lilt that creep in during his later years. At the same time, one sees Gandhi move from the opulent bourgeois surroundings of his early years in South Africa, through a process of continual simplification, until he emerges as that “half-naked fakir”, as the enaged Winston Churchill labelled him.

There are several memorable glimpses that capture the legendary profile: his solitary figure setting foot on the steps of the Vice-regal palace, a frail man taking the might of an empire; or striding vigorously in front of mass marches, his bent figure clutching his staff, his followers barely able to keep pace; or sitting beside his spinning wheel, the famous symbol of his aspirations for an independent India based on peasant simplicity.

In many respects Gandhi was a loner, who deliberately conducted his politics outside the mainstream. His home base was Ashram. Politicians had to meet him on his home territory and they frequently motored or walked beside his train to hold vital discussions. Gandhi is seen to interpret them occasionally to attend to his ashram chores — tasks as basic as feeding his goats. He held fast to this view of political life from the time of his arrival, as he set out to disentangle and touch the pulses of some of those 700,000 villages that made up the scattered backbone of his country.

This Indian journey is a lyrical interlude in the film, set to the rhythm of Ravi Shankar’s music and synchronized with the beat and strains bearing the Gandhis in their third-class carriage, catching an overview of that vast complexity in landscape and lifestyle of India, which has been extended. Gandhi’s autobiography contains several chapters on this journey, and described how it challenged his religious and political views. He was very critical of some of the more regressive aspects of Hinduism and was rather backward of awareness about the basics of hygiene, sanitation and self-reliance. He also developed a deep antipathy towards the treatment of the millions of untouchables, who he renamed the Harijans, “the children of God”. His relationship with the Harijans became an important aspect of his Indian crusades, but is barely touched on in the film. Furthermore, the grinding poverty that he so frequently reported in his underplayed, though the film presents, at most, a distanced and brief view of poverty, rather than the harsh realities that persist to this day.

From his Indian journey one sees the rapid growth of Gandhi as a unique, national figure with the capacity for mobilizing large numbers of people and gathering a group of devoted followers. Attenborough focuses on the campaign of the Champaran farmers, who had hoped to be aided by the British staffed schools in the villages, lectured on sanitation and provided medical facilities.

The turning point for Gandhi in India came with the brutal actions of
Gandhi: Directed by: Richard Attenborough. Producer: Richard Attenborough. Executive producer: Michael Phillips. Director of photography: Bill Condon. Editor: Andrew Witt. Music: Ravi Shankar. Screenplay: John Briley. Co-producer: Rani Dube. Screenplay: John Briley. Directors of photography: Bill Williams, Ronnie Taylor. Editor: John Bloom. Production designer: Stuart Craig. Music: Ravi Shankar. Art director: Tony Titley. Costume designer: Beryl Vertue. The opening scenes of the local teenagers in their industrialized, suburban environment directs the audience towards Tom, who, while riding a motorcycle at high speed, has mental flashes from his past. These mental disturbances cause Tom to crash into a wire fence, the viewer becoming aware of the boy's deep social and psychological problems. During the film, these brief glimpses into Tom's past will be exposed at length and, to some extent, reconciled. Tom is truculent, abusive and defiant. At home he bashes his sister, and hits and swears at his mother, who, while vainly chastising him, insists that, "I took enough of that from your father." At school, after being unable to complete a test, he angers his teacher with irritating shrugs before throwing desks and bags, making bizarre stabbing gestures in the corridor, and running out of the school. When Tom is found and returned to school by the police, he is sent to Mr. Payne (Wyn Roberts) for punishment. In this scene, Tom's entrapment in an institution which can neither recognize nor deal adequately with his problems is strikingly conveyed. As Payne strapped the increasingly hurt and resentful Tom, he makes the weak, pedagogic assertion that, "You must learn, and you're going to learn." When Tom bursts out screaming and tosses things around, Payne's only recourse is to unlock the door so Tom can run out. The similarity to an untamed animal from a cage is telling. When John Embling arrives at the school, he discusses Tom with Mary, the lone, haggard-looking remedial teacher at the school. John recognizes Tom as a problem child, and briefly succeeds in winning his confidence by offering him the choice of participating in a class activity, rather than forcing him to. Their subsequent walk to the shops, and Tom's honesty in returning John's change, suggests the possibility of a rapport between teacher and student.
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This atmosphere of tentative friendship is soon shattered when, during a class, Tom erupts into violence. John manages to contain Tom but, rather than use the strap so thoughtfully provided by Mr. Payne, he tosses it to Tom's side of the room. Tom, desperate for a new target, begins swearing, smashing windows and tipping over lockers.

Eventually, John calms him down and they start cleaning up the room in an act of emerging, though still fragile, friendship. John later vents his feelings of frustration and powerlessness onto Mary, angry at the futility of his university training. In contrast to this sympathetic portrait of John, most of the teachers in the film are absurdly-contrived, sadistic caricatures. When John is introduced to the staff, one teacher coyly lectures him about the need for a strap. He shows John his strap, relishing the quality of the leather, its durability, and even recalling with affection the time when he administered three cuts apiece to a class of 30 students.

Equally important as the school environment in Tom's life is that of friends and home. Unfortunately, the depiction of Tom's restricted social world is sensationalized and incredible. He and his mates, for example, will drink beer constantly without bothering to get drunk and like to indulge in a little "wog bashing" on the spur of the moment. They also exhibit exceptional survival and driving skills for 13-year-olds as they steal a high-powered car, perform some professional-looking skids and crash at high speed into a shop without injury.

On the other hand, the portrayal of Tom's mother (Kris McQuade) is befriended by the young trainee teacher, John (Lewis Fitz-Gerald). Michael Caufield's Fighting Back.

Tom's second revelation to John is of his time in a boys' home where he was locked up with a deranged young boy. But the scene lacks impact, appearing from nowhere. Even the effect of the stark images of the home is nullified by an over-dramatic soundtrack.

More detrimental to the film, however, is the film's increasingly unquestioning view of John's character and attitudes. His attitudes are clearly sincere and he exhibits his admirable resolve in trying to help these teenagers. As he explains to a school principal, "In order to help them, you must take on their whole lives, not just school... physical reassurance is very important to these kids." But the effectiveness and practicality of these methods are never questioned or explored.

For example, John's all-consuming interaction with and attention to Tom is generalized into a philosophy of child care which John sees as applicable to all troubled teenagers. The film doesn't acknowledge or deal with the possibility that, while these methods may be effective on an individual basis, a methodology requiring total devotion of one person to one child (Tom is the only beneficiary the viewer sees of John's dedication) may not be practical on a larger scale, and may lead to the neglect of other needy children.

An Officer and a Gentleman

In a season more than usually crammed with solid box-office successes, all of them highly commercial, for example—Tootsie, Gandhi, The Verdict, for example—none is more satisfying than Taylor Hackford's An Officer and a Gentleman.

Despite its modish and mimetically authentic foul-mouthed dialogue, it is essentially an old-fashioned entertainment. It offers a well-crafted, upbeat ending, and some fine performances.
An Officer and a Gentleman

Taylor Hackford has taken some well-tried ingredients, shaken them up, and made them over into something which both belongs to a recognizable narrative tradition and has the look and feel of contemporary filmmaking.

The opening scene in the training camp at once creates that sense of order that Zack craves, even when it gives way to the ritual abuse of the line-up as conducted by the black sergeant Foley (Louis Gossett jun.). This abuse is meant to humiliate ("You from Oklahoma? Only two things come from Oklahoma — steers and queers. Which are you?") but, even without the shot near the end of a new set of recruits subject to the same assault, it is clear that Zack accepts it as part of a predictable pattern.

The training scenes themselves are convincingly rigorous. As Richard Price has written: "His [Zack's] education is so linear you feel like you're sitting through a training film"; and part of the film's appeal is in the way it trusts its audience to be interested in the learning processes. In this respect, it recalls Carol Reed's 40-year-old The Way Ahead which puts its rookies through comparable paces, even if the tone was considerably more genteel than in An Officer and a Gentleman. William Hartnell, Reed's sergeant, sounds like Ronald Colman compared with Louis Gossett's line in abuse and obscenity.

The film acknowledges the ritualistic aspects of the cadets' lives but allows these a goal of personal satisfaction which is absent from the assembly-line routine of the factory in which the girls, Paula and Lynette (Lisa Blount), earn their living. This is numbing work and the point is not just to make a qualified parallel with the naval trainees' lives, but to provide a motivation for the film's romances.

Foley warns the men against the local girls who are then presented, and driving away from, an utterly dreary urban landscape. Their only hope of escape is to marry an officer and a gentleman. Lynette tries to trap Zack's buddy Sid (David Keith) into marriage by pretending to be pregnant. When Sid, who has planned to marry a girl back home, decides to desert and marry Lynette, she makes it plain that it's an officer she wants. If Sid is not to be an officer then it's all off as far as she is concerned. Anyway, since this morning she knows she's not pregnant.

The film measures the glamour of an officer's uniform by standards of drabness with which it forces one to sympathize.

This tracks-crossing romance is the final narrative nudge Zack needs to complete the emergence from his loner's shell. He and Paula race to the motel Sid and Lynette have frequented only to find he has hanged himself. Zack fights it out with Foley in a final effort to prove he doesn't need anyone, but the film's penultimate scene shows him restored to the culmination of the training program: the passing-out parade. As the graduates file out, they shake hands with Foley and Zack assures him, "I never could have made it without you."

Sid's death has given Zack the impetus he needed to complete the course — and to retrieve his relationship with Paula. As much as Lynette, she wants to get away from her shabby home (complete with mother who had loved a naval cadet), but unlike Lynette she has taken off tricks to catch the man she wants. There is a very touching dignity and reticence in Debra Winger's performance as Paula and the film is sharpened sharply but humanely between this role and Lisa Blount's shrewdly-judged Lynette.

An Officer and a Gentleman is as good as its corporate treatment of some well-tried situations is in the film's acknowledgement of its heroine's sexual liberalism. Paula could have had her reform or, better still, die 40 years ago.

Given the generally down-beat mood of Hollywood films in the past decade or so, with their conventional unhappy endings, An Officer and a Gentleman is quite audacious in the way it builds up audience enthusiasm for its hero's success — in both of the film's eponymous roles. Early on, Gere's cocky performance, spiked with cynicism and a solipsistic guardedness, epitomized in that oddly cat-like walk, has recalled William Holden's opportunistic hero's Stalag 17. But Hackford doesn't want the audience to stay at that kind of admiring remove from Zack.

Taunted by Foley for his incapacity to "mash", for his solitariness ("You should be good at this [water training] if you can't [mash]") and for the shyer opportunism of his "deals"!, he breaks down as Foley intends he should do. Even when he says "I got nowhere else to go", the importance to him of the camp and its life is made clear to the audience — and to Zack himself. It is truly a climactic moment, played as it is by Gere and Gossett, it undeniably works.

So does the moment when Zack helps the one woman (Lisa Eilbacher) in the training squad over an obstacle wall; and so do two others already mentioned — the passing-out parade and the gathering up of Paula. Zack Mayo's emergence as an officer and a decent human being carries a surprising emotional punch that derives partly from literate scripting and partly from Gere's performance. He has given several remarkable film performances before — in Days of Heaven, Yanks, and, above all, in American Gigolo. Here, for the first time, encouraged by a role that invites him to approach an audience, he looks like an actor and a star. As a result there is a warmth and an invitation to empathy that belong to the role but which are also part of a star's equipment.

Everyone else is convincing too, especially David Keith as the vulnerable, good-natured Sid, Gossett in his Oscar-winning virtuoso display as Foley, and Robert Loggia (non-star leading man of the 1950s and '60s) in an accurate display of moral slovenliness as Zack's crummy Dad.

Backed by a splendidly stirring score, An Officer and a Gentleman is a film that relies on that, but, as it evolves in its playing and mise-en-scene the kinds of emotional response the elements of its screenplay seem to be seeking. I hope it won't usher in a batch of "heart-warming" films but there is no denying the way the old formulas can be brought up to date and made to work again when professionalism and honest feelings are brought to bear on them.

An Officer and a Gentleman: Directed by: Taylor Hackford. Producer: Martin

Sid Worley (David Keith) proposes marriage to Lynette (Lisa Blount). Taylor Hackford's An Officer and a Gentleman.

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First Contact

Barbara Aylsen

The success of Spielberg's E.T. is proof of just how appealing is the story of initial, friendly contact between two different worlds. First Contact also has that appeal.

In 1930 three Australian brothers, Mick, Tim and Dan Leahy, trekked into the until-then-unexplored highlands of Papua New Guinea looking for gold. Like other colonists, they assumed the mountains were uninhabited. Similarly, the million residents of the valleys behind the mountain walls believed they were the only people in the world.

The Leahy brothers' excursions were one of the last times Europeans would intrude on an 'undiscovered' people. Certainly it was the last time so large a group would be found.

What made the Leahys' trips unique was that the brothers were amateur photographers. They captured their first meetings with, and subsequent life among, the highlanders on photographs and 16mm film.

In 1980, Robin Anderson was in Papua New Guinea researching a planned film on Australian colonialism in the former territory. In the course of her enquiries she was told about some old film held by the son of one of the Leahy brothers. What he had was 2200 feet of disintegrating material. The restored film, and photographs taken by the Leahys, form the basis of First Contact. The images are fleshed out with interviews with the two, then-surviving Leahy brothers and with many of the highlanders who recall the strangers' arrival and who, by their recollections, establish a context for these old images. Their memories are presented as a mixture of fear, wonder, curiosity and, in retrospect, cynicism.

The highlanders tell their story matter-of-factly, revealing an exceptional concern for minute detail. How they first interpreted the white men's arrival (plus the arrival of contraptions such as phonographs and planes), and how they worked to reconcile the obvious differences and similarities between themselves and the strangers are part of the film's magic. This is no place to reveal details. What is striking, however, is their apparent lack of anger at the intrusion. There were some fights in which the Leahys killed natives (in self-defence they said), though it does not square with a villager's story of how a man was shot after the theft of a lap lap), yet there is little sign of resentment. Did the highlanders take the fighting for granted? When relations were friendly, the Leahys conducted a busy trade with them: shells, knives and axes in exchange for food and women. Again the tone of their recollections is matter-of-fact. Women who bore children to the Leahys explain how they were traded for 'good things'. The brothers clearly didn't disturb paradise.

Robin Anderson came to film-making from an academic background and from work as a television researcher; Bob Connolly is one of the old-hands from ABC current affairs; and Stewart Young is one of the most respected documentary film editors in the country (with credits that include Frontline, Public Enemy No. 1 and Angels of War). What the three have produced is an entertaining film about a series of historic meetings - selective, as most accounts are - that is as much drama as conventional documentary.

Stylistically, First Contact contains a little of everything. The narration is by the Leahy brothers, highland villagers and a narrator. Sometimes the faces on the screen talk to an (unseen and unheard) interviewer behind the camera, sometimes to the camera itself. Some events are re-enacted for the camera, others for an audience of children with the camera as observer.

The mix of styles enhances the story's appeal, but produces its own frustrations. The sequence of events, for example, becomes rather jumbled and, without a detailed explanation of relations between the highland villagers, it is difficult to understand the different reactions of the villagers to the white explorers. First Contact's success is in recreating a mood rather than chronicling events.

First Contact is one of several recent Australian-made documentaries on Papua New Guinea. The other most significant such film is Angels of War, directed by Andrew Pike, Hank Nelson and Gavan Daws. The story of how Papua New Guinea and its people were treated during World War 2, Angels of War inevitably is an angry film, one which deals with the continuing neglect of one-time service men and women and one which invites analysis and judgment of events.

First Contact doesn't dwell on analysis, beyond confirming that for the Leahy brothers, and some native men, self-interest played a big part in their relations. And although judgments of the European intrusion on life in the highlands could be made, First Contact does not invite them. What it does do is juxtapose white plans with black nature. Because the latter is novel and amusing it is that which is the more memorable.

The sombre side of First Contact, and what followed, is another story.

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Monsignor

Peter Malone

A facile but not unfair thumbnail review of Frank Perry's Monsignor could be 'The Cardinal' meets 'The Godfather' via 'The Shoes of the Fisherman'. But that would omit a topical and expensive cousin, 'The Thorn Birds'.

As with so many films with a religious theme, Monsignor tends to assume that religion is a phenomenon of reverential probity (heavenward eyes and pious gestures backed by strings and choirs) and that any deviation takes on solemnity requiring open-mouthed wonder or disgust or both. Monsignor (Christopher Reeve), not unlike the Cardinal (Tom Tryon) 20 years ago, is a pleasantly stolid cleric who is tried in the international as well as internal forum. Reeve uses some of his Superman style and mannerisms — and even changes his clothes for disguise quite often. Things answered, if not satisfied. From the investigation about his high finance and religious politics; chaplain's in action in war; vocation to priesthood and integrity; celibacy; emotional betrayal — and more. A film like Monsignor is ambitious but generally can rely on surface treatment — the sensational, the simplistic and the glib — to achieve an effect.

But, while the exploitive elements can be criticized, it does not mean that the scenario and the details are necessarily untrue. Vatican finance is topical enough: in 1982 American Archbishop Paul Marcinkus was under investigation about his high finance connections; banking director Roberto Calvi was found dead under Blackfriars Bridge in London — murder or suicide? Fraud, embezzlement and criminals serving gaol sentences made headlines. Monsignor thus raises questions that echo reality as well as raising eyebrows.

Yet, the writers seem to be presenting sincerely, through Cardinal Santoni (Fernando Rey), what they see as the Catholic church's religious belief. The penitent Monsignor is advised that, 'Where you have Peter [the Pope], there you have the Church': the principal virtue is obedience. Cardinal Santoni seems to believe this and Christopher Reeve acts the sequence of Monsignor's hearing with sentience as a repentance and salvation scene. Obedience, it seems, also will atone for every sin and grant the sinner respectability. Monsignor's (later Cardinal's) long, financial, power-hungry and unscrupulous career seems unjustified. Although the Pope finally quotes St John's Gospel to say that the Church must be in but not of the world and, although Monsignor will spend time in a monastery soul-searching, his quest seems doomed to be less a discovery of self in any spiritual sense than a reinforcing of the 'right attitude' to obedience. Many Catholics may believe this and act accordingly; many people outside the Catholic church may see it as projecting this image. However, this is not the tradition of the church, with its focus on Jesus Christ, personal religious commitment and the primacy of love and charity. In Monsignor, Christ is reduced to a crucifix figure, an icon or part of the ornamental pageantry. Audiences who are not of the opinion that obedience is the key virtue will be more sympathetic to Genevieve Bujold's disillusioned Clara, whose condemnation of her lover is heartfelt and savage. Monsignor seeks God's forgiveness. Clara says that it is not God that has to forgive. She does; and she never will. However, according to the screenplay, obedience will justify Monsignor's actions despite Clara's not forgiving him.

As melodrama, Monsignor takes on a vast best-seller range of issues and characters, and offers a purple passage, two-hour film, entertaining enough of its kind. Underlying the film is a topicality with some plausibility and definite fascination. It proposes a view of the Catholic church which highlights its worldliness and over-stresses obedience to make a virtue of the veneer of respectability. That means that the bases of Monsignor are as simplistic as its surfaces.


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writer. He wasn’t exactly filled with humility.

The scene where he first meets Frances, in her dressing room, is shot using cuts to her reflection in the mirror, suggesting that he is talking to her reflection . . .

Yes, he was and she was talking to his. I felt that they were confronting one another indirectly. From the minute these two people saw one another, there was an instant attraction, an electricity jumping between them. It seemed logical that Frances would talk to him in the mirror because it put him directly, there was silence.

It seemed that he was relating to Frances Farmer the film star whose name could bring big audiences to his play . . .

No, I think Odets was more concerned with putting her on; he wanted to get a rise out of her. He dropped those things in to make her react. It goes back to what I said about probing people to make them react. The most honest reaction you will get out of someone is when you get them unexpectedly. He was sitting on the couch, testing her, and she was allowing herself to be tested. But she also swung it around and challenges him. I saw it as a little duel between them. I wanted to indicate to the audience that there was an immediate attraction and competitiveness.

You also get a very strong element of competition between Frances and her mother, Lillian . . .

Yes, that was the major competition in her life. That again brings up the scenes that were taken out. There was more use of the scrapbook, which you now only see once in the film: you don’t see Lillian thumbing through this book of all those images that she held so dear, images of herself juxtaposed with Frances on the opposite page.

Why did you depict Lillian as the monster of the film?

That is a bit unfortunate because I don’t think she was a monster. In the scenes that I removed, she showed great compassion towards Frances and it made for a much better balanced relationship. It made it a little more understandable as to why Frances kept coming back home.

You construct the home at the beginning as a shining letter box, a well-kept house that is all clean and nice. There is a wonderful daughter and it looks like the ideal nuclear family. When you see the house at the end, it has fallen apart, and the letter box is rusty. The whole ideal has gone into decay. Do you see that as a parallel to Frances’ deterioration?

I was trying to indicate that Frances was in fact keeping the mother and the father together. Once she left, there was no family. There was no reason to keep up the house and it just disintegrated along with her.

The contrasts in weather conditions, particularly the use of rain and snow, also seem to reflect Frances’ disintegration . . .

Yes, it comes back to the elements, which have a great effect on me and I know they had a great effect on Frances. One of the first things I discussed with Laszlo Kovacs was the weather. Unfortunately, it didn’t rain in Seattle as much as I wanted it to, and I had to use rain machines. I wanted to contrast the rain of Seattle with the endless sun of Hollywood. The sun in California has an effect on you. You get very depressed. There’s all this sun, sun, sun — everything is perfect every day. You just wish for something to go wrong, so that you could appreciate the good times. You live in perennial sunshine for six months and you get bored stiff.

After the film’s depiction of the conditions in the asylum, the disclaimer at the end seems ironic . . .

I am glad you used that word; that’s exactly the way I wanted it to appear: ironic. The reason I prefaced the disclaimer with my own disclaimer was because I don’t believe it. We were forced to put it there in return for the use of certain facilities. The producers agreed to the disclaimer and I was hoping to imply that I didn’t.

After the obvious commitment you have had to this film, what do you do next?

It is very difficult for me to find something that I feel as passionate about. Before Frances, I was very keen on making the story of Burke and Wills. I have just to rekindle my enthusiasm for it. There are other stories I am interested in making. Jessica and I are going to make the story of Amelia Earhart, sometime in the future, and there is another book called Out of Africa that I am very interested in. I am also very interested in Charlie Chaplin, another astounding person whose life story has fascinated me since I could read. I am talking to a producer about that.
A contemporary fairy tale about Maxie, an 11-year-old girl, who befriends Molly, a dog that sings.

Molly is directed by Ned Lander, from a screenplay by Phillip Roope and Mark Thomas, for producer Hilary Linsead. Director of photography is Vince Monton.
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