4-1-1984

Cinema Papers #44-#45 10th Anniversary Issue

Scott Murray
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Cinema Papers #44-#45 10th Anniversary Issue

**Description**

Articles and Interviews
Voyages of Discovery: an interview with David Stevens Debi Enker 10
Words and Images Brian McFarlane 16
Street Kids: interviews with Kent Chadwick, Leigh Tilson and Rob Scott Arnold Zable 22
Simon Wincer: Interview Scott Murray 28
Mini-series Ewan Burnett 32
On Guard: an interview with Susan Lambert Victoria Treole 37
Tenth Anniversary Supplement A Personal History of ‘Cinema Papers’ Scott Murray 41
Photo Gallery 49
The Industry Comments 54
The Top Ten Films 62
Two Views Antony I. Ginnane, Phillip Adams 66
Features
The Quarter 8
Picture Preview: One Night Stand 26
Production Survey 75
Picture Preview: Silver City 96
From the Vault: a Cryptic Crossword Val Ward 99
Film Reviews
Man of Flowers Helen Greenwood 85
Careful, He Might Hear You Jim Schembri 86
Phar Lap Keith Connolly 87
Bush Christmas and Molly Geoff Mayer 88
Allies Keith Connolly 89
For Love or Money Rod Bishop 91
The Clinic Debi Enker 92

**Publisher**

Cinema Papers Pty Ltd, Richmond, 124p

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All-time Champs

The January 11, 1984, edition of Variety printed the following All-time Film Rental Champs (in the U.S.-Canada market) based on film rentals:
1. E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial $209,567,000
2. Star Wars $193,500,000
3. Return of the Jedi $165,500,000
4. The Empire Strikes Back $141,600,000
5. Jaws $133,435,000
6. Raiders of the Lost Ark $115,500,000
7. Grease $96,300,000
8. Tootsie $94,571,000
9. The Exorcist $89,000,000
10. The Godfather $86,275,000

Directed by Steven Spielberg has three entries in the top 10 (and four in the top 11), producer-director George Lucas also has three entries.

The highest-positioned Australian film is Mad Max 2 (The Road Warrior in the U.S.) at $381, with rentals of $11.3 million. Next comes The Man from Snowy River at $747 with rentals of $9.25 million.

The only other Australian film to make the chart (minimum rental entry: $4 million) is The Pirate Movie, at 739 with $5.2 million, thus proving some cynics wrong.

The best-positioned Australian director is Richard Franklin with Staying Alive at $33.6 million easily beating RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK ($32.5 million), at $32.5 million, E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial ($31.5 million), and Flashdance ($30.7 million). The Godfather is Richard Franklin with Staying Alive at $33.6 million easily beating RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK ($32.5 million), at $32.5 million, E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial ($31.5 million), and Flashdance ($30.7 million).

Of the expensive films, the big flops are:

1. Star Wars
2. Return of the Jedi
3. The Empire Strikes Back
4. The Godfather
5. The Godfather
6. The Godfather
7. The Godfather
8. The Godfather
9. The Godfather
10. The Godfather

Of the top 10, only two are 1983 releases: Return of the Jedi and Tootsie.

The next best in 1983 are:
1. Trading Places $40,600,000
2. War Games $36,959,975
3. Superman III $35,480,000
4. Flashdance $35,180,000
5. Staying Alive $33,650,000
6. Octopussy $33,199,000
7. Mr. Mom $31,500,000
8. 48 Hrs. $30,328,000
9. In the battle of the Bonds, Quadreysegau at $33.6 million easily beat Never Say Never Again at $25 million. Perhaps surprisingly, Never had the bigger production budget: $34 million versus $30 million. Other big-budget films of 1983 are Superman III at $35 million, Return of the Jedi at $32.5 million, Scarface at $31 million and The Right Stuff at $27 million. No Australian film made Variety's Big-Buck Scorerecord.

Of the expensive films, the big flops (given rentals to December 31, 1983) were The King of Comedy ($12 million rentals from a $19 million budget), Something Wicked This Way Comes ($13 million from $23 million), Brainstorm ($3 million from $20 million) and The Right Stuff ($8 million from $27 million). The best returns on a big budget were Return of the Jedi ($185.5 million from $32.5 million), Staying Alive ($15 million from $115 million) and Jaws 3-D ($26.4 million from $16 million).

American Film Market

The Australian representatives at the 1984 American Film Market (AFM), to be held from March 8 to 16, include Australian Film Commission staff members David Field and Malcolm Smith, Ray Atkinson (London representative), and Mike Harris and Andrea Marshall (from the Los Angeles office). Producers John Dingwall, David Stuck, Paul Davis, David Williams and Dick Toltz; and Jim Henry (South Australian Film Corporation).

The Australian films being screened at the AFM are:
1. Abra Cadabra
2. Aussie Assault
3. BMX Bandits
4. Brothers, Buddies, Midnite Spares and Undercover

For the first time in its four-year history, the AFM this year, with the addition of five new companies, will open its ranks to qualified sellers of foreign language films. Thus, it moves closer to a second Cannes.

The five new companies, representing four countries, will offer a total of 17 new films. The companies include Germany's Atlas International and Cineinternational, Italy's Salsiccia, Japan's Toei Co. and France's UGC.

New AFC Chief Executive

Kim Williams will be succeeding Joe Skrzynski as chief executive of the AFC in March this year.

Skrzynski was appointed to the AFC in September 1980. He was previously Corporate Services Manager of the merchant bank, Pittsburgh National Securities and Co., and financial adviser to the New South Wales Film Corporation.

During his term as chief executive, the AFC consolidated its supportive role in the film industry, concentrating on marketing, research, lobbying and monitoring the effects of the tax legislation. It also emphasized funding for the development of projects rather than basic investment funding in feature films.

Williams, who was general manager of Musica Viva until taking up the AFC appointment, has had a long involvement in the arts in Australia. He is also, at present, deputy chairman of the NSW State Grants Advisory Council to the Premier of NSW, a director of the Confederation of Australian Arts Centres, and a member of the National Arts and Entertainment Committee of the Australian Biennial Authority.

Censorship Changes

On February 1, 1984, legislation concerning the classification and censorship of videotapes and printed matter came into force in the Australian Capital Territory.

The new law is the first step in a process to establish a uniform system for the sale, hire and publication of videotapes and publications. The permits the restricted sale or hire of hard-core pornography and explicit violence under an "X" rating for video and a restricted rating for publications.

The main elements of the system incorporated in the ACT legislation are:
1. Imported videotapes for home use will no longer be subject to compulsory registration by the Commonwealth Film Censorship Board;
2. Videotapes for sale or hire are to be classified at the request of the importer, distributor or retailer by the Film Censorship Board;
3. The classification standards to be applied are to be the same as for cinemas: that is, "G", "NRC", "M" and "R", but with a further category "X" to be used for stronger material which would be refused cinema showing. Only child pornography and similar "vile and obscene material" such as films depicting or inciting drug misuse, terrorism or bestiality, would be refused classification altogether;
4. The states are to pass laws imposing appropriate points of sale restrictions (in particular, no sale to minors) for "R" and "X" classified material;
5. The existence of a classification to be a complete defence for retailers against prosecution under state obscenity laws; and
6. Classification recommendations by the Film Censorship Board to be subject to review by the Commonwealth Film Censorship Board.

The system of voluntary censorship places the onus on the importers, distributors and retailers, and will mean that products move more quickly on to the market.

At the moment, three states (Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia) have interim legislation based on the ACT model the other states are still thinking about adopting the model. The video industry expects that Queensland will take a position very different from the other states.

Eventually, the system of classification could be extended into theatrically-released films, based as it is on the principle that adults are entitled to read and view what they wish as long as people who consider such material offensive are protected from being inadvertently exposed to it.

Previously, he held positions as the general manager of Music Rostrum Australia and a lecturer at the NSWS State Conservatorium of Music. He was foundation member of the Music Board of the Australian Council and the then Dance and Youth Panels.

A recipient of many awards and prizes, Williams has had a fellowship from the Music Board in composition and won the Fender Flat Top award twice. He is married to the writer Kathy Lette.

The new look of video.

AFC Appointment

Vicki Molloy has been appointed director of the Creative Development Branch, filling the position left vacant by Lachlan Shaw in 1983 and taking over from Murray Brown who was temporary director.

Molloy has been working with the AFC as manager of the Women's Film Fund since 1981. Before that she had worked as a researcher and presenter for documentaries at the ABC, as production manager on Mouth to Mouth (1978) and Dimboola (1979), and worked in the editing department at the ABC.

As director of the Creative Development Branch, she will report to the general manager of Film Development, Malcolm Smith, and is responsible for Branch administration, policy advice on the Branch's developmental role, liaising with film groups and organizations, and direct funding of alternative and independent films.

Film Victoria

The board and staff of Film Victoria spent several months in 1983 formulating a policy review: looking at its past role, what its situation was and how best it might fulfill its charter. The director, Terence McMahon, issued invitations to 70 producers, directors, writers, composers, etc., and 10 organizations to give their comments, and the board spent time deliberating the policy document that was finally issued in November 1983.

The policy is a statement of the goals and parameters that Film Victoria has set itself. It emphasize "not only investments
in film and television but also a commitment to film culture, the pursuit of quality and innovation, and the commercial viability of the investments it will make.

Although Film Victoria has, under its legislation, the power to act as a producer, the policy affirms its decision not to exercise that role in the short term. This, McMahon says, reflects the opposition expressed by so many people in film and television production in Victoria to the idea of Film Victoria becoming a production house. The view was put strongly, from across the spectrum of the industry, that Film Victoria could not assist producers while actively competing with them.

Presently, Film Victoria has investments in several television mini-series, including The Anzacs (Geoff Burrowes and John Dixon), Return from Paradise (Roger Simpson and Roger Le Mesurier) and A Thousand Skies (J. C. Williams and Ross Dimsey). Two feature films in which Film Victoria is a significant investor are presently in pre-production: My First Wife (Paul Cox and Jane Ballantyne) and The Wrong World (Ian Pringle and John Cruthers).

Film Victoria believes it is better placed financially than it has been for years. The Victorian Government has doubled Film Victoria’s budget in September 1983 and this has enabled it to expand its staff by 40 per cent. Film Victoria is about to appoint several new staff members, one of whom will be a creative development officer whose principal responsibility will be liaison with organizations and individuals interested in the promotion of film culture.

Film Victoria has recently made grants to several film culture organizations including the Australian Film Institute, the Australian Teachers of Media, Cinema Papers and the Melbourne Film Festival. Involvement with these bodies is seen as a way of discharging the obligation it has set for itself in the policy document of having a “responsibility for the development and maintenance of film culture in this state”.

National Screenwriters’ Conference

The AFC has been investigating the feasibility of holding a National Screenwriters’ Conference as an annual event. A proposal has been prepared for the AFC by the co-ordinator, Margaret Mc-Clusky, which suggests that the Conference be sponsored partly by government funding bodies and partly through sponsorship. The Conference will be open to “Australian filmmakers, their professional organizations, and allied arts organizations with preference given to experienced and neophyte writers”.

The AFC has approved funding for Stage 1 of the Conference, which is the holding of two workshops — one in Melbourne and one in Sydney — to develop the proposal and form steering committees. The first was in Sydney on February 26, 1984, and the second will be in Melbourne on March 17, 1984.

AFTS Council Appointment

Bob Weis, a Melbourne film producer, has been appointed to the council of the Australian Film and Television School by the Governor-General, Sir Ninian Stephen. The appointment, one of five made by the Governor-General, is for a three-year term.

Weis is co-producer of The Clinic (1983) and producer of the critically acclaimed Women of the Sun (1981). He joins David Ferguson (chairman), Jeffrey Rush and John Daniel on the council. The position for the fifth member has been vacant since July 1983.

Film Festivals

The Melbourne Film Festival has appointed Paul Seto as its new executive director. Seto has been involved in several film and television productions, including The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith, Number 96 and some Reg Grundy productions, and was manager for two years of the radio station 4MB-FM in Brisbane.

The program consultant for the Festival is David Stratton who, until 1983, was director of the Sydney Film Festival for nearly 10 years. Stratton is now a selector and presenter of films for Channel 0/28.

The new director of the Sydney Film Festival is Rod Webb. Webb is executive director of the National Film Theatre and was previously a newscast officer at the Australian Film Commission from 1980 until his appointment to the Film Festival.

The Melbourne Film Festival will run from June 1 to June 16 at the new State Theatre in the Victorian Arts Centre. In addition to the usual prizes for short films, the festival will be awarding a Peace Prize to the film judged to have contributed significantly to the cause of world peace. Tickets will be available from BASS Agencies; brochures and information are available by phoning (03) 417-911.

In Sydney, the Film Festival will run from June 6 to June 24 at the State Theatre with the Greater Union Awards for Australian Short Films being held on the first day. The Rouben Mamoulian Award of $1000 has been donated by Kodak. Public bookings are now open and can be made by phoning (02) 860 3909 or through P.O. Box 25, Glebe, 2037.

Head of Full-time Program

The Australian Film and Television School has appointed Pablo Albers as Head of the Full-time Program, succeeding Richard Thomas who will return to professional practice when the 1984 graduates depart at the end of March.

Albers migrated to Australia in 1973, working as a director for the VideoTape Corporation in Sydney and The Film House in Melbourne before setting up his own production house six years ago. Albers now assumes responsibility for the AFTS’s full-time training courses in screenwriting, production management, direction, camera, sound and editing.

Corrigendum

In issue No. 43, May-June 1983, p. 125, Geoff Mayer’s article entitled “Best of Friends” quotes David MacMaddock as the scriptwriter. The author’s name is Donald MacMaddock. Cinema Papers apologizes for the error.

Notice to Readers

The directors of Cinema Papers Pty Ltd, the former publishers of Cinema Papers, express their regret to all readers, particularly subscribers, for the lengthy delay between issues. As several newspaper items have indicated, Cinema Papers was faced with serious financial problems in mid-1983 and, until these were resolved, publication had to be ceased.

Due to a recently finalized funding arrangement with the Australian Film Commission (AFC) and Film Victoria, Cinema Papers is returning to the newsstands with a renewed vigour and confidence in the future. A public company, MTV Publishing Limited, has been formed to publish the magazine, in an arrangement in accord with AFC and Film Victoria philosophies.

It must be stressed that the magazine’s independence is unencumbered by the new arrangement. As with investments in film production or distribution, there has been no attempt at creative interference. The magazine is free to pursue its editorial policies as the editor sees fit.

With the new company structure will soon come another editor, and a fresh examination of the approach and production of the magazine. Decisions made in the next few months will affect the form of Cinema Papers.

While regretting the magazine’s absence from the newsstands during the past nine months, the publishers feel confident that the new accord sees Cinema Papers in a much stronger position. The future is certainly bright.

Scott Murray
David Stevens interviewed by Debi Enker

David Stevens' second feature, Undercover, again demonstrates the director's capacity to inject humor and humanity into a script as densely populated, if not as sharply observed, as The Clinic's. The glossy, romantic tale of the rise of an undergarment business in the 1930s adds a new dimension of decor-laden style to a body of film and television work characterized by a continuing interest in the exploration of Australian history and society.

Like a number of his contemporaries, who alternate between film and television projects, Stevens began his training in Australia at Crawford Productions, directing episodes of Homicide during the final, “golden years” of the series. He reflects on his work there with pride and a conviction that the shift in emphasis from car chases to character studies, engineered by producer Henry Crawford during the last years of the program, created a diverse and exciting framework that has since been largely ignored or vastly underrated. He believes the Crawford's apprenticeship provided a formative and invaluable environment for experimentation with narrative structure and style for a group of directors, including Igor Auzins, Paul Eddey, Simon Wincer, Kevin Dobson and George Miller (Snowy River).

Stevens' work at Crawford's includes writing and directing on Division 4, Matlock, Solo One, The Sullivans and the tele-feature The John Sullivan Story, which he jokingly refers to as “Where Eagles Dare on $130,000”. Convinced that attitudes within the film industry to people who work in television are “scathing”, he sought a feature film credit and, after unsuccessful attempts to get Rusty Bugles and The Two of Me into production, became a co-writer on Breaker Morant.

Stevens then returned to television to direct A Town Like Alice and the second episode of Women of the Sun. If awards can be regarded as an indication of accomplishment, Stevens has an impressive list to his credit, including an Aogie for The Sullivans, an Academy Award and an Australian Film Award for the Breaker Morant screenplay, and a Logie and Emmy for A Town Like Alice.
Has the world-wide success of “A Town Like Alice” affected your career?

Look at me. I live in a little house in St Kilda and I love it, and I’ve even turned down very well paid work in Hollywood. I don’t want to make a film there just for the sake of it.

But a problem that arose from A Town Like Alice was that too many producers saw it and pigeon-holed me as a soft, romantic filmmaker with a strong sense of the Australian outback. One of reasons I made The Clinic was that I didn’t want to go on making A Town Like Alice again and again. I wanted to do something that would be perceived as totally different, though I happened to think that The Clinic has the same sort of humanist love in it as A Town Like Alice.

After “Alice”, your career has taken a different direction: into features . . .

The biggest audience you can reach, unless you do E.T. or Star Wars, is through television. So if you are interested in the communication of ideas, television is the place to work. If you do a film it has to be something that you can’t do on television, because of its spectacle, or because it needs a bigger screen or has a more restricted audience. The Clinic has now been bought for television, but, if I had tried to set it up for television, I wouldn’t have had a dog’s show.

Was your background in television a good preparation for directing features?

Magnificent. I really feel sorry for anybody who does not have that kind of experience before he goes on the boards to direct his first $2 million film. Homicide taught us to think on our feet, to think very fast and experiment. We tried all sorts of things, I remember doing one program in which I went for long, continuous, fluid takes all the time and then another in which I decided I would never move the camera once. We played games with structure and with performance; with comedy and with tragedy. It was a phenomenal advantage to have.

When we came to make The Clinic, I decided that it would be a very static film, with reasonably long takes. It wasn’t a decision I had to sit down and think about. I believed that the characterizations were paramount in the film; any attempt to throw the camera all over the set would have distracted that kind of experience before he went on the boards to direct his first $2 million film. Homicide taught us to think on our feet, to think very fast and experiment.

In relation to that, how would you describe “Undercover”? Although you would have to make some concessions for the medium, it seems to be a production that could be suitable for television . . .

It probably will be, but that is not why it was made. I had written Breaker Morant, I had filmed what is perceived as an Australian epic novel and I was doing The Clinic, which I knew would be perceived as a problem film. I believed I should follow it with something more mainstream. I wanted to work with a big budget. I wanted to do something that is, in the best sense of the word, camp.

I think Australian historical films are largely very po-faced, and I include Breaker Morant in that category. Some Australian films take themselves altogether too seriously. Art should be taken seriously but it should also be witty, sensitive, moving and irreverent. I wanted to do something that had a sense of fun and jollity about it.

When the script of Undercover turned up, I fell in love; it had all the things that I wanted to say. I wanted to make a genuinely glamorous film; I wanted to do something about an Australian hero that was fun. I hate the use of the word “entertainment” as though it were pejorative and Undercover is not intended to be just entertainment; it might be entertaining, but I would rather call it a romance, an Australian fairy story.

For a film that is based largely on fact, it actually looks like a fairy-tale: it starts with the book opening, it ends with the curtain falling, and both the music and the lighting suggest a fantasy world . . .

Let’s face it, you couldn’t do a number like “From the Outback to the Ocean”, where you have 20 chorus girls in red, white and blue tap-dancing to the Australian flag, in a serious film. We haven’t done an exact copy of Radiant Woman, we have done an interpretation of it.

Part of my worry about the direction in which Australian film is going is that it is obsessed with documentary fact. It has a rabid paranoia about going too far, going over the top and, if I had any criticism of what I did on Undercover, it is that it doesn’t go quite far enough over the top.

What would you have liked to be different about it?

Not a lot in terms of the work that everybody put into it, but, in terms of my work, I would have liked to have had another million dollars to spend. Then I could have put many more extras on screen.

Fred Burley (John Walton); a man with a vision of Australia. David Stevens’ Undercover.

We also had a horrendous situation in pre-production. We lost three or four of our 13 weeks preparation because the money fell apart and most of my energy had to be directed towards helping the producer, David Elfick, get the money back together again. All the departments had to stop work instead of me giving the cash to pay them. I think we could have used that four weeks just to make it a little bit more outrageous. And I would have liked to have channeled my energies into the making of the film, rather than worrying about whether it would be made.

How did you cast Michael Paré for the role of Max?

One of the reasons the money fell apart was because although the Max character was American and although we had agreed to cast an American, a local actor did a test for the role which was just wonderful. We decided to use him, but the backers wouldn’t hear of it. Because of the size of the budget, they believed they had to have an American as the main character. The money was, to an extent, dependent on this, so I was packed off to the U.S. to find an American actor in a week. I saw about 60 actors and I was told by the producer I had to put three names to Actors Equity.

My first choice was an actor of impeccable credentials, a very exciting, theatre-trained actor with whom I very much wanted to work. My second choice was an actor who probably wasn’t entirely right for the part, but who had a big name. Then, because they insisted I put up a third name, I proposed Michael Paré, a crazy Bronx boy who had come in to see me.

I was stunned when Equity turned down my first choice on the grounds that they had never heard of him, despite his extraordinary list of credentials. They said that I
could have my second choice as long as there was no government money in the film, but if there were government money in it I could only have Michael. In effect, Equity cast the role; I didn't.

I love Michael and I think he is terrific. He has a lovely brash quality in the film, but it is to take nothing away from his performance to say that he wasn't my first choice.

And Genevieve Picot (Libby)?

I had been aware of Genevieve for a long time because of her work with the Melbourne Theatre Company and with The Sullivans. I was trying to find a heroine with some balls. I auditioned a lot of actresses, but I couldn't go past Genevieve.

In all of your work the women are very strong, spirited and ambitious, and usually working people, with a lot of vitality. Is that something that attracts you to a script?

Do you object to this? [Laughs.] I think it is part of the Australian ethos. There is this fantasy that men run the country, but they don't: women do. Australian women are very ballys.

"Undercover" certainly gives that impression. Even the wife's role, which one would expect to be passive and compliant, isn't. She is very supportive, intelligent and is called upon to make decisions at crucial times which change the course of events. Nina (Sandy Gore) is also a particularly strong character. . . .

That is because of the kind of world in which I have grown up. In the theatre there is very little chauvinism. One is brought up amongst ballys, striking women and, if it is possible for them to be like that in that situation, why isn't it possible for them to be like that anywhere in the rest of the world.

What "Undercover" is essentially about, if you look beyond all the froth and glamer and tinsel, is the need to be yourself. It doesn't matter a damn who you are, go for it.

"It doesn't matter what you do as long as you do it brilliantly." . . .

That's right. It is the most telling line in the film: don't try and ape anybody else.

A very clever thing is done with the make-up in the film with the progression of the Libby character; she is delineated by her hair, her make-up and her costumes. There is a sequence when she makes the big speech in the Town Hall defending Fred Burley (John Walton) and you can see her is wearing a lot of make-up. But I felt that was right because Libby is going too far: she is trying to copy Nina. When she returns to the country, the make-up goes back to natural, and from then on she is her own woman.

Probably the most beautiful shot of Libby is during the rehearsal in the theatre when she is wearing very little make-up. She has become herself, and that is what the whole thing is all about. You can't be scared of what the world thinks of you. You just have to go out and do it.

The women are strong in "Undercover" but they seem to end up with weak or incompatible men. The relationship between Libby and Max is set up early in the film: at the moment she falls into his arms, one hears the harp music and one knows what is going to happen. But Nina and the Professor (Barry Otto), and Alice (Sue Leith) and Theo (Peter Phelps) seem to be particularly odd couples. Is it necessary to have a 'happy ending' pairing off the characters?

Whatever anybody says about Undercover, I think it has an almost Shakespearean structure. You are introduced to a group of people; some are survivors in some senses and some are not.

Alice and Libby we meet essentially at the same time. I have them in a three shot with Nina, which is deliberate because Nina, at that moment, makes the choice of which of the two is the star. We know then that Alice is never going to be the star, but that Libby is.

There is also a scene in which Alice realizes she is never going to be a designer. She has already given up on her dream, which was always only to get away from home, to live her life as she saw it. And her ambition, finally, was to marry a Theo.

As far as Nina and the Professor are concerned, Nina retires and hands over to Libby. She has had her glory, she has had her days. God knows how long the relationship with the Professor will last, but he is probably a good fuck.

"Undercover" has recently been recut. A couple of the changes are jarring, particularly in the scene with Nina and Libby at Libby's new flat. Some of the dialogue has been deleted . . .

"What a bugger [that] men have to give you babies."

The absence of that line took away some of the clarity of the character. There is a definite lesbian undertone in the film, particularly in that scene. The relationship between Nina and Libby is gentle, subtle and warm but that line, which is fairly suggestive, is gone, and the relationship becomes almost mother and daughter, mentor and student . . .

I have no argument. I don't approve of the new cut.

Were you involved in the cutting?

No.

Another example is the trimming down of the love scene and thus the implication that Libby is disillusioned . . .
There's nothing I can say. I agree with you.

So, why was it cut?

It would be totally unfair of me to comment. I think you would have to ask the producer that. He did the cutting.

Is Nina supposed to be lesbian?

No. I don't believe, as you must know from "The Clinic", that there are delineated sexualities. I don't believe in putting labels on anybody. Nina is a character who I am fairly sure at some point in her life had a love affair with a young woman and love affairs with young or even older men. If an interesting situation arose in a Bombay brothel that she happened to be visiting, I am sure Nina would give it a go. She has probably had relationships with homosexual men, too. She is not intended to be lesbian. She is intended to be a complete woman.

Similarly, in the character of Eric (Chris Haywood) in "The Clinic", you have presented one of the most positive, strong, intelligent and appealing representations of homosexuality on the screen. Was it your intention to do that?

Partly, but we only have Eric's word that he is homosexual, and we know that he lies at other points in the film.

When?

When he talks about the prostitutes to the boy. We know that he will say anything to shock the boy. It is only your assumption and that of Paul (Simon Burke), the student, that he is homosexual.

With Paul and Libby and, to an extent, Jean Paget (Helen Morse) in "A Town Like Alice", there is a process of education, whereby the character has to learn humility and draw on his or her courage and face up to mistakes. Is that a central part of your character development?

Isn't that what the process of life is? It is what the process of what my life has been. I hadn't realized the device was so apparent in all my work.

I guess it applies to Breaker Morant, too. In the original script, Major Thomas (Jack Thompson), the defending lawyer, was the central character and it traced his development from a bumbling, outback clerk of the court to a man with a passionate point of view and a commitment to a concept.

The actors' performances in all of your work appear very relaxed. There is an ease about them and, particularly in "The Clinic", a feeling of spontaneity. What approach do you take with your actors?

There is no simple answer to that question. When I decided to go into the theatre, I wanted to become an actor. Within five minutes I discovered that I wasn't going to be the Hamlet of my generation; I also discovered that there were directors and they seemed to have much more fun than actors. But I didn't want to be a failed actor turning to directing. I stuck with it and I had a very lucky break: I took over the lead in an important play in London and, since then, I have made up my own mind about the right soil for actors.

There are certain actors with whom I can't work. I need to work with actors who respond to my specific way of directing, which is to encourage them not to be afraid of making a fool of themselves, because, no matter how big a fool they make of themselves in front of the camera, I will be making a bigger tit of myself behind the camera.

Actors are extraordinary people. Nine times out of 10 you have to feed them lollies and make them feel good and, occasionally, you have to give them a smack, just as with a child. They have very fertile imaginations; the only problem is that sometimes they get side-tracked into areas that aren't necessarily relevant to the direction being taken, although those side areas may be infinitely fascinating in themselves. But, as far as possible, everything I do is subservient to the actors.

Everything?

Well, there is the script, of course, but everything else is subservient to the actors. [Laughs.] An actor has to put a pretty good case for me to allow him to change a line in the script.

So, there isn't that spontaneity really when it comes to the script?

No, not at all.

What is the art of acting? I have seen extraordinary, spontaneous performances of Shakespeare which don't stuff around with Shakespeare. Why should actors assume — why should anyone assume — that the script they are dealing with is not Shakespeare? Actors are not puppets. You cast actors for what they will bring to the role, not for what you can tell them to do. And I apply that to every aspect of the filmmaking process.

I think the work of Dean Semler (director of photography) and John Morton (gaffer) on Undercover is just ravishing. It was their idea to use soft smoke on almost every set, and Steve Dobson's (camera assistant) idea to use silk stockings on the camera lens. It was those men who were totally responsible for working out the look of the film. All I did was say, "I want it to look like a fairy-tale."

Obviously, one is constantly provoking, questioning and challenging, working over the structure of the shot that you choose. What was lovely for me was that all the visual elements came together in terms of the make-up, costumes, sets, locations, photography and lighting. It was a voyage of discovery for us all.

I try to create the right working atmosphere. If it is a happy scene, we have a bonza time laughing. If it is a sad scene, I tend to create a heavy atmosphere on the set. Although, occasionally, I will break down with some stupid joke or drop my trousers, just to remind the actors that tragedy and comedy are not separate entities.

With such a large group of people, all immersed in their tasks, how can you sustain the atmosphere?

It is very hard working dirección because you have to turn on an extraordinary performance all the time. But if everybody is trying to do their best, so all you have to do is lay down the ground rules. That is what being a director is: exercising that emotional control. It is the stage when I live. That doesn't mean to say I am not occasionally bored or, occasionally, worried or challenged, but happiness should encompass all emotions, including occasional boredom.

Your films have a range of disparate characters: the patients and the staff in "The Clinic", the group of women in "Alice", the employers and employees in Undercover. They are brought together in one place. And there is a density of characterization. They are all very much cross-sections of society, or groups in society...

I long to make a film with only two or three main characters in it. In The John Sullivan Story there are 10 or 11 leading characters. A Town Like Alice is filled with people, so is The Clinic, and in Undercover there are seven or eight main characters.
Is that a preference?

Not really, it just happens. The subjects demand it. Lots of people said to me when they read the script of The Clinic, “Ah yes, it’s all very well you know, but you should make it a story just about one of the doctors.” To which I said, “Yeh, well that’s fine, maybe it would make a very good film, but it is not the film I want to make.” I wanted to make the film it became: a day in the life of a VD clinic, not a day in the life of Dr Eric.

But your intimate, warm and humorous groups of people create a very strong sense of community in your work . . .

I suppose that is because I believe we are all part of a community. There is a Russian film of Hamlet of which Kenneth Tynan said, “It may not be the greatest Hamlet you’ve ever seen but it is the most properly peopled Elsinore.” Within the film, Elsinore is a very busy place. It is a crossroad for ambassadors and traders and courtiers, and Hamlet very seldom stands alone on a battlement and makes a great speech. He is usually stuck in the middle of 20 pages with half a dozen servants going there and five ambassadors being presented here, and that is what reality is. Very few of us live alone; we are all part of the street, the community, the city, the country or the world. When I eventually make Amsterdam it will be a film about how a community rather than an individual responds to a given threat.

What is “Amsterdam” about?

It is the true story of some Dutch homosexuals during World War 2 who formed their own little branch of the underground resistance and destroyed the central Nazi Criminal Register. For their pains, 12 of them were shot. But it is not about poofers. If a society or a community denies any one element within that society, or community, then it is denying the whole community. The Amsterdamers, in effect, believe that life is a pillared community, and that if one pillar is taken away the roof will fall down. I also believe that.

It fits in very well with “The Clinic” which also deals with a part of society that is usually ignored or repressed . . .

Yes. And Amsterdam will also be written by Greg Millin who wrote The Clinic.

It is also true of the women in “Alice” . . .

That’s right. Nobody wanted to know about them, but they needed each other to survive. Those who stuck to the old traditional concepts of life perished; those who were prepared to change their thinking, their clothes, their habits, their attitudes, their manners and their concepts were the survivors. It is very difficult to march half way across Malaysia in high heels and gloves. It is much easier to do it in a sarong and bare feet.

I was brought up in that situation. I was born in Palestine, and then I moved to Egypt and to South Africa, where I had a tribal Zulu nanny, so it is very difficult for me to believe in one concept of God. In fact, it is very hard for me to believe in a society in which every single human being is not an honored individual, in which someone is better than anybody else. I have always been surrounded by a multitude of diverse sounds and languages.

That suggests an interest in the use of overlapping dialogue . . .

I tried that experiment once at Crawford Productions. I wrote an episode for Matlock where, in the first seven pages, there are never less than two conversations happening at once, probably three. Overlapping dialogue is fine, but it can lead into situations, such as those you have in the worse excesses of Robert Altman, where you actually can’t hear anything.

Obviously theatre has been an important influence on your work. What other influences can you identify?

The great storytellers in film — David Lean, Fred Zinnemann, Carol Reed — are men who understand the myths of society, men who question God.

Bill Routt’s comments compare “Undercover” with the films of Preston Sturges and Frank Capra and it is easy to see the influence of the classical musical in the ending . . .

When people asked me what the film could be like, I said Frank Capra and Preston Sturges films. Nobody has heard of Sturges. It is not as crazy as a Sturges film but, in a similar way, its tongue is planted firmly in its cheek.

The ending was there in the manuscript. It is the one thing that never was changed. It was also a huge challenge. We shot it in five and a half days.

I also admire the pyrotechnic filmmakers beyond measure. I adore the work of George Miller (Mad Max) and I think the last two reels of Mad Max 2 are as perfect an example of montage as I can imagine in the cinema. I was on the edge of my seat. But I can’t do that. My stories are different from his in the way they are told. I don’t think the stories themselves differ greatly, but in the way they are told they are very different.

They are very much about heroism, and characters with tenacity and integrity working towards something and eventually succeeding . . .

I guess Mad Max is the same, isn’t he?

Yes, but he is a lot less naive than Fred Burley . . .

Well, Fred is a great dreamer. In fact, my films are really about dreamers. At present I am writing about Charles Kingsford-Smith, a man who was finally destroyed by a bureaucracy, and I suppose my whole life is dedicated to dreaming. “Stuff the bureaucracy.

Dream your dreams, live your dreams and be individual, as long as you do no harm to anybody.” That is the essential proviso.

What is the Kingsford-Smith project?

It is a six-hour mini-series for J. C. Williamson and Ross Dimsey about Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith, the first man to fly across the Pacific. I took it on as a job that I thought was interesting, but it has become a passion in my heart because it is about an adventurer destroyed by bureaucracy. I find parallels in his life that are important to me as an artist.

I don’t see adventurers, be they painters, writers or flyers, as being that much apart. Okay, so I don’t have a lot in common with . . .

Concluded on p. 106
Words and Images, by Brian McFarlane, is the first Australian book to examine the relationship between literature and film. Taking nine examples of recent films and two television series adapted from Australian novels — including The Getting of Wisdom, My Brilliant Career, Lucinda Brayford and The Year of Living Dangerously — McFarlane looks at some of the issues in transposing a narrative from one medium to the other.

In this article, Chapter 8 in the book, McFarlane discusses Helen Garner’s Monkey Grip and the film adaptation.

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Words and Images is published by Heinemann Publishers Australia, in association with Cinema Papers.
with Gracie [her daughter], looking like a ragged family. He took hold of my hand and we stood together comfortably, liking each other and feeling hopeful" (p. 90). But she qualifies this image with the knowledge that she "would have had to be a mediator: between him and Gracie, between him and the rest of the world".

The narrative surface of the novel is more crowded than the brief account above suggests. While Javo is the continuing strain of emotional engagement throughout the year of the novel's time span, Nora's life embraces many other relationships as well. Chief of these others is that with her small daughter, Gracie, who observes her mother with wry stoicism. As well there are the women friends (e.g., Eve, Rita, Cobby) from whom she receives varying degrees of support, and Lillian, whom she distrusts, mainly from Javo-based motives of jealousy; and the men who are variously friends and lovers, but mostly lovers even if that's not how they began. They include Javo's mate Martin, the latter's brother Joss, Gerald with whom Nora shares a house, and Francis. In fact, the network of shifting, drifting relationships involves a cast of characters almost bewildering in their numbers and made more so because Garner has not sought to characterize them in any detail. And yet there may be a narrative purpose in this: that sense of a loosely-knit, not-very-differentiated crowd of people, drifting past each other, sometimes touching briefly, has its point to make: these other lives are important to the narrative only as they affect Nora and none of them compares in her life with the intensity of her feeling for Javo. They have their brief moment of vividness, coinciding with their narrative function, then subside into being part of the general ambience. For instance, Angela swims into focus when she asks Nora to accompany her to a birth control clinic (she is "going to have a try at an IUD", p. 155). Angela has had love problems with Willy but they are not intrinsically important. What matters chiefly is how Nora responds to Angela: first, she is very ready to support her friend, and in this unstable circle of people there is a surprising amount of solidarity; second, she promotes the following reflection in Nora: "I silently envied the ease of her tears, the way she lived with her heart bravely on her sleeve, no levelling out of the violence of everything but full blast and shameless" (p. 156). The insight that offers into Nora and her view of her own situation is significant.

So, from the narrative's point of view, is Nora's capacity for such reflection. The more one reads this novel, the more one realizes that its central drama is to be found by attending to Nora's narrative voice. The most potent discourse in Monkey Grip is not the "subjective" utterances of characters but the surrounding (but far from "objective") narrative prose which of course belongs to Nora. And it is here, I believe, that the real drama of this novel is located. It seems to me scarcely possible to care one way or the other about most of the characters: one feels a mild revulsion against Javo, mild sympathy with, say, Angela: but one is in fact very much caught up with what Nora makes: these other lives are important to the narrative only as they affect Nora and none of them compares in her life with the intensity of her feeling for Javo. She is not merely a recording voice, but a presence which responds, and grows through response, to a range of relationships. She is defined partly in terms of how she behaves in these relationships, partly through that voice which is sometimes reflective, sometimes summarizing, sometimes self-assessing, and always individual and working towards the reader's sense of a whole character.

This is the kind of pleasure, in reading a novel, that grows on one, perhaps making stronger claims in second or later readings. My impatience with Monkey Grip on first acquaintance grew largely out of dissatisfaction with its apparent shapelessness. Like many good novels, it is episodic but most of its episodes are unmemorable, particularly if measured against the crude narrative yardstick of what-happens-next. In Monkey Grip, what happens next is apt to be very like what happened before: that is, there may have been a visit to the local swimming baths, or a sexual encounter (invariably, monotonously and, therefore perhaps, significantly referred to as "fucking"), or a meal, or a trip to somewhere. In themselves, scarcely one of them really matters and few of them stay in the memory. That is not to say they lack all vividness; there are many sharply observed touches about people and places: but that they lack the sort of vividness one needs in order to feel that a narrative is building. Further, one remembers odd scenes but not with any exactness as to the part of the novel from which they came. The scenes, like many of the characters, become part of that hazy milieu in which the more things change the more they stay the same.

This impression of narrative slackness, compared say with a "well-made" novel like Kenneth Cook's Wake in Fright, is accentuated by the novel's structural procedures. It is as though the latter are dictated by a mimetic urge to recreate the casual, careless, messy, sometimes warmly cheerful, often dreary lives of its characters. Scene after scene — and each chapter is divided into about half a dozen, some of them no more than snippets — is introduced by sentences like the following:

I was sitting at the kitchen table after tea when Javo came around the corner to the back door. (p. 21)
One afternoon, when I got home from working on the paper, I found Javo asleep in my bed . . . (p. 91)
Peg took Gracie out for the day and I went off by myself. (p. 106)
Javo came to my house a few afternoons later. (p. 118)
At eleven o'clock that night Chris walked in with some coke. (p. 175)
Cobby came home from America . . . (p. 190)
I went over to Peel Street and found Rita (tidying her room). (p. 193)
And so on, endlessly. It is perhaps the most loosely strung together novel of my acquaintance. The disjointedness, the failure of anything to build, and the sense of nothing's being more important than anything else are, at least on a first reading, maddening to the reader trying to discern and hold on to some sort of narrative development. Perhaps this problem is more acute to one raised in the tradition of carefully constructed, nineteenth-century, realist fiction than to those who have spent their formative years with modernism. Certainly on re-reading, the book's apparent randomness is less daunting. This may be the result of knowing that the novel offers little in the way of the usual narrative rewards (and thus not expecting them) but is, I believe, really due to recognition and acceptance of different moves towards narrative coherence — and to accepting monotony as part of its meaning.

There is no point in looking for an A—B—C pattern of causality but there are other elements in the narrative that work to give shape and flavour to the book. The major one, as I have suggested, is in the drama enacted in Nora's linking voice. In a two-paces-forward-one-pace-back fashion, she is gradually revealed as a protagonist trying to pull herself and her life into some sort of manageable shape. One's chief interest is concentrated in this rambling but oddly compelling and endearing inner action. When she finds Javo's "fit" left lying around in Rita's house, she realizes that one of the chief pressures of her life is that she "was guarding them all from each other" (p. 72). Sometimes her voice registers the pressures as unbearably demanding, but there are also occasions such as the one when

I was flooded with the possibilities, the theatre was full of people I liked and loved and whose work was joyful to me. Child beside me, friend to sleep with, body loose from dancing and laughter. Coasting! for a while. (p. 118)

It is a voice which establishes itself as honest so that it is worth listening to for its own sake and for the light it sheds on others. There is a thematic concern, enunciated on two occasions in connection with Angela but which goes well beyond her in its resonance. Her problem has to do with "Willy's determined constancy in loving both Angela and Paddy, while living with neither" and with finding this situation "no less painful to her for being ideologically impeccable" (p. 156). Later, when Willy has started an affair with Rita, there is talk about "breaking out of monogamy" but Angela is "too miserable to care about theory" (p. 192). These two remarks (about a character of no special consequence) point to a crucial and pervasive source of tension in the novel. Nora and her friends are all living what in 1975, the time of the novel, would have been called an alternative life-style. It is located mainly in Melbourne's inner suburbs and involves an approach free to the point of permissive in matters like where one lives and sleeps, and with whom, in experimentation with drugs, and in drifting from cafes to bars to fringe theatrical and filmmaking activities. Negatively, it implies a rejection of monogamous, orderly household, of women performing traditional sex roles, of steady, gainful employment, of the careful ordering of one's life. However, without much of the freedom, the indulging of instinct as opposed to behaving conventionally, is undeniably attractive to people like Nora, it brings with it its own kinds of pressures and hurts. The gap between the ideology and importunate reality often lets the draughts in. Nora has never tried to get Javo off the smack — "I didn't want to hold him, or stop him hitting up, or be with him twenty-four hours a day" (p. 66) — but this apparent easy tolerance of the junkie habit is no protection against the pain she feels each time he leaves her to look for a "score".

Beneath the surface disjointedness of their lives, she cannot help looking for a pattern that would help her to make sense of them. There is certainly no longer any hope or help for her in the suburban ordinariness of her Kew-based family whom she visits on Christmas Day, nor in the prospect of marriage. In trying to work things out in her own mind she contemplates herself and her women friends in these terms:

... we all thrashed about swapping and changing partners — like a very complicated dance to which the steps had not yet been choreographed, all of us trying to move gracefully in spite of our ignorance... (p. 192).

The image of the dance is in itself a sign that she wants to find, in the constantly shifting aspects of her life, a pattern, a sense of order, to which a key does exist but the finding of which the very nature of their ideological convictions makes improbable. The above reflection comes shortly after the Christmas inspection of her relations and it is completed by her resigned acceptance of the fact that "though the men we know often left plenty to be desired, at least in their company we had a little respite from the grosser indignities." Nora, that is, cuts her losses in a way that engages one's respect: for "plenty to be desired" one may read "relatively", or "supervivence", for "the grosser indignities", the sort of superiority her "big boss" uncle exudes in his treatment of his plump blonde wife. He is, she recognizes, implacably "the enemy". "What's love? Being a sucker, I suppose" (p. 63), Nora asks and, wryly, replies. Quoted out of context the remark may look portentously
theme-stating, but in the pattern of her life, with and, more often, without Javo, and of the lives of the loosely knitted group of friends, it is a constant preoccupation. It is also a question-and-answer that points to one of the ways in which the narrative is held together. The women in the novel are looking for a tenderness and kindness in their relationships with men, and Garner, through Nora, expresses a need for a mutuality of affection that precludes contracts but requires commitment, that insists on independence but yearns for steadiness. In writing about Monkey Grip and Glen Tomasetti's Thoroughly Decent People, Susan Higgins and Jill Matthews have claimed that:

Both novels are unabtrusively shaped by a critical examination of the way such cultural norms as the entrapment of women in domesticity and the attraction of romantic love are deeply internalized, and this makes it legitimate, even necessary to describe them as feminist.1

As far as Nora is concerned, she is aware of the possibilities of "entrapment" and is, indeed, firmly entrapped by her role as mother and lover. Despite the casual junketing around (e.g., to Tasmania, to Sydney, as well as on lesser expeditions), she is always aware of Gracie's needs as a pressure upon her. And while ostensibly resisting the notions of "romantic love" and what it implies for the woman involved, she also longs for some of its concomitants: for male tenderness, support, and answer to her sensual needs.

Her apparently casual, relaxed attitude to embarking on her relationship with Javo will be harder to sustain than she imagines. What Eve says, "You're not — you know — doin' it again, are you?", Nora "knew what she meant and could not go on a grin", and replies "Yeah, I suppose I've done it again" (p. 6). Already, on the next page, she shows an awareness of what it means:

People like Javo need people like me, steadier, to circle around for a while; and from my centre, held there by children's needs, I stare longingly outwards at his rootlessness.

She is genuinely attracted to the drifting life but is equally aware of her "entrapment". Much later, having arrived in Sydney at 6 a.m. with "Javo foul-tempered again, Gracie tired and frightened", she reflects, "I have to keep us together somehow" (p. 98). Whatever love is, it is not easy for Nora; as Barbara Giles, reviewing the novel, claims, Nora "is caught, as fast as Javo, her blue-eyed junkie, only her addiction is love"2. In its grip, despite the feminist ideology which elsewhere offers a good deal of comfort and practical support, Nora goes on to say, "caught in the usual feminine bind, of responsibility for bringing up a child, of love which makes demands on her". The men she knows, including the ones she sleeps with, do not make the demeaning demands on her that conventional monogamy may, but the monkey grip of passionate need is no less insescapable for that. Her love for Javo may be generous and unpossessive but that is no guarantee that she will not sometimes be "used" by him.

None of the other women, despite the warmth of sisterhood, is any better placed than she is. The book seems to me honest about the gains and losses in the feminist approach to love and sex. The women persevere with their lives, trying to square their ideology with the often chilling facts of "love habit", is done with enough humour and perception to make one bear with some of Garner's sloppier narrative habits. Certainly there is enough of both to make one feel the unfairness of Ronald Conway's characterization of "all this sweltering narcissism rolled up as group fellow-feeling", and to make the present writer mildly ashamed of having once described it as an "almost ostentation¬ously tedious novel". If I cannot, even on r-reading, find it "a tremendous book" as Barbara Giles does, or "overpoweringly real!" and "overwhelmingly filled with love and understanding" as Veronica Schwarz does3, I think there are now more things holding it together than I at first supposed. And the way the women grapple with the ideas of love and friendship and sex (the grappling is not limited to Nora) is one of the elements which help to provide a narrative cohesion not offered by a firmly made plot.

So, too, is Garner's meticulous re-creation of the milieu in which the novel's lives are lived. The physical scene of the inner suburbs of Carlton and Fitzroy, with a variety of vintage cafes, bars, houses, the swimming baths, cafes and bars, is not there in the sense in which landscape is in Thomas Hardy's novel: that is, a presence having something like a life of its own. It is a cliche to speak of Egdon Heath in Return of the Native as being almost a character in the novel. That is not the way Garner uses the setting:

"It was early summer. And everything, as it always does, began to heave and change." Nora at the pool. What you find in nineteenth century Russian writers, a certain use of detail and description", and she goes on to suggest how this certain use renders the detail organic rather than merely scene-setting. In Monkey Grip, the firmly established sense of place, and the cultural life that goes with it, provides a network that catches up the semi-nomadic tribe that peoples the book, and both shapes and gives them something to respond to.

It could not have been done by someone who did not know the life at first-hand; it is not a matter of research, but of living and understanding what holds these people tenuously but tenaciously together. The acutely rendered ambience is of course as much a matter of time as of place, and time is felt in several ways. The changing seasons, too, a metaphor for what is going on in the human lives, are therefore not used as a metaphor but as an agent for coherence: lives drift by haphazardly and their unpredictability is felt the more strongly against the sharp, sensual noting of the year's moving from summer to summer. But time isn't just nature: the novel's period is placed in reference to singers like Stevie Wonder and Skyhooks, to films like Dog Day Afternoon and The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, to the Australian Labor Party's being "done like a dinner" in 1975, in "pushing our way through Friday night crowds... back to Peel Street to watch Shoulder to Shoulder on TV" (p. 174). The cultural climate of Nora's world embraces fringe theatre and film-making (Nora works all night on a "junk movie"), the Melbourne Film Festival,至ting Stone, and endless novel-reading. The titles of her reading include Jean Rhys' After Leaving Mr McKenzie, Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express (coinciding with the film version released in 1975), Tolstoy's War and Peace, Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse, and, at the end, significantly perhaps, Washington Square which finishes with Henry James' heroine accepting the loss of her suitor and resigning herself with dignity, "as it were, for life". It is a nice touch to allude to this novel at this stage of Nora's life; it is even nicer not to make it (or Nina Bawden's A Woman of My Age) the novel's last reference but to whip Nora into To the Lighthouse instead. If there is, however, a thematic pattern in this reading it is well-concealed: there is a certain tendency towards novels about women in situations of entrapment, but Christie and Tolstoy remove the element of potential schematism. There used to


3 V. Schwarz, Sydney Morning Herald, 16 October 1978.

4 "It was early summer. And everything, as it always does, began to heave and change." Nora in the pool.
be an old examination question asking students to consider the proposition that "In a good novel, setting is never merely a matter of background." On this criterion, Monkey Grip is a "good novel". If it is not good enough to avoid some longueurs, it is extremely sharp in evoking a time and a place, so sharp and sustained that ambience becomes an important narrative element.

Ambience is of course one of the areas in which a film ought to have least trouble in the enterprise of adaptation from a novel. Ken Cameron, whose first feature Monkey Grip is, has certainly succeeded to a remarkable extent in making his mise-en-scène replace Nora's narrative voice in the novel. Further, by retaining a good deal of the novel's "metallanguage" in Nora's voice-over, he achieves an often startling replication of the feel and tone of the novel.

The film's opening few minutes show both strategies in action. In a series of deft strokes, Cameron sketches in an impression of the real pre-Javo happiness in Nora's life, in an audio-visual equivalent of the novel's opening paragraph which presents a warm breakfast ("noise, and clashing of plates, and people chewing with their mouths open, and talking, and laughing. Oh, I was happy then"). The film arrives at the breakfast table only after several other significant images: a blue screen gradually shimmers into life with an underwater shot of legs swimming in a chlorinated pool; these — or other — legs are then seen cycling through suburban streets; there is a cut back to the pool; and then the camera moves in the breakfast scene with people snatching at bacon and eggs. But if these images suggest cheerful casualness, the voice-over is suggesting something else. "Looking back, you see you've already plunged in when you thought you were only testing the water with your toe." The tension established between aural and visual means here is an example of the cinema working very economically. The pool, the swimming, the breakfast table are part of the shifting communal life of inner suburban Melbourne; the voice-over anticipates what is going on in it for Nora and Javo. It is a tighter, subtler start than the novel's which follows its opening paragraph with two short, explicit sentences: "It was early summer", "And everything, as it always does, began to heave and change." The film makes its meaning more unobtrusively, the mise-en-scène and the voice-over working contrapuntally as it were.

Even during my dissatisfied first reading of the novel, it seemed to me that Monkey Grip had distinct cinematic possibilities: that is, that a director sensitive to its social-cultural-political setting might make an attractive milieu study from it. And that is what Cameron, abetted by David Grielle's splendid camerawork, has done. Unclamorously but surely they have put on film the novel's small world of inner suburban streets and shops, recording studios, scungy lanes, and gritty-to-comfortable houses and backyards. He has caught accurately those aspects of Carlton that the National Trust isn't interested in preserving or that the developers haven't developed. No other Australian film has caught so well this faintly seedy aspect of Melbourne — life, nor in placing it in the lives lived there. The film's direction and screenplay offer a wry, sympathetically divided view of the characters' emotional lives, offering a parallel to the novel's sometimes painful apprehension of the gap between the ideology and the reality. The film balances a clear sense of rootless, itinerant camaraderie (less strongly feminist than in the novel), stressing the supportive aspect of its drifting, non-nuclear households against the emotionally draining, unfulfilling relationships of people who feel able to come and go at will.

Nora's apparently cheerful "I'll see you when I see you" approach is touching as it becomes increasingly clear that she'd like something more dependable. Her voice-over may say "All the splinters of my life fitted together again" when Javo (Colin Friels) comes back from Asia, but, resilient as she is, she knows that it is likely to shatter apart again when he next succumbs to his addiction. She and her friends talk so much about their emotional lives and needs that it becomes clear how inadequate to them are the uncommitted relationships in which they mostly find themselves. The endless talk along the lines of "I love you, but I can't handle it", or "It seems I only get to see you when you want something", strikes again and again authentic notes of unhappiness and banality. Despite my phrase "endless talk", the film really works very selectively in creating this impression: it reduces the number of shadowy characters from the novel and, inevitably, those that are left are fleshed out by the more presence of actors. Whereas in the novel the discussions about love and sex are between Nora and any one of many (deliberately?) undefined women, and some men, the film by putting faces to these names forces the audience to identify them. In my view, the emotional content of the film is sharpened by the selectiveness and by the use of actresses as distinct from each other as Lisa Peers (Rita) and Christina Amphlett (Angela). What can begin to seem like a monotonously long-playing record in the novel gets a spike of individuality from the acting in the film.
If Cameron has been lucky with his cameraman, his production designer (Clark Munro) and his musical director (Bruce Smeaton) in creating the mise-en-scène for these cheerful, painful, uncertain lives, he has been even more so in the casting of Noni Hazlehurst. Through her performance, Nora's attachment to Javo (intelligently played by a too-healthy-looking Colin Friels) is not just the source of a series of episodes but the shaping force of the film. She has, to start with, just the face for Nora: mobile, intelligent, embattled, vulnerable, with accesses of warmth and humour, and a mouth that can also turn down moodily. She clearly belongs to the scenes in which she is presented: in the office of the women's paper, all flags, posters, and tank-tops; in the house she shares with Rita until the strain of guarding her from Javo proves too great; in a beautifully composed and lit scene in which she works at her desk in a pool of light, while Javo sprawls on the bed. Hazelhurst and Cameron have worked successfully to make Nora's emotional progress the motivating factor for everything else in the film. It motivates, for instance, some of the film's most kindly and good-natured scenes: those between Nora and her daughter Gracie (age raised several years from the novel, to about ten or eleven). Gracie (Helen Garner's daughter, Alice, in a very engaging performance) is clear-eyed about her mother's somewhat feeble emotional life: without ever becoming a knowing tote, she does know what's what. When Nora asks her, out of little more than idle curiosity, "What do you feel about Javo?" she says "You should just be nicer to him and leave him alone." It is not censorious or wise-childish; just a plain answer, given because it was asked, to a difficult question. This is a very compressed version of a fine short scene in the novel (p. 102) and it works with beautiful directness. Gracie's clarity of vision contrasts with Nora's emotional messiness at this point. The film underlines how unlikely Nora is to be guided by advice, however sound, by having her rail at Javo in the next scene when he comes back stoned, having forgotten that he was due to take Gracie out. The film, by this juxtaposition, sharpens one's sense of the emotional disorderliness of Nora's life. And one of the sweetest moments in the film shows Nora and Gracie, companionable and relaxed with another on the Manly ferry at night, after Javo has left. The feeling between mother and daughter has been established with so much affectionate detail that Nora's final comment on it — about the pleasure and pain of seeing one's child "taking off" — resonates affectingly with what has gone before. There is sometimes an amusing sense of Gracie's being calmer and older than Nora, but the director does not let this develop into a cliché because Nora's proper, maternal love for her daughter has also been made plain.

It must be said that the film's greater sharpness and tightness do not always work in its favour. It is one thing for Nora's voice-over to reflect, "I couldn't live for long with his restlessness, his violent changes of mood" as she says, and wise to engage in the subtle modification of a narrative which even its original form, the novel, perhaps allows its central character, let alone its readers, more overt reflection than is wise. When reviewing Monkey Grip at the time of its release, I finished by saying that "it has understood that a film can dramatize monotony and repetitiveness without succumbing to either." Now I am less sure of this. It seems to me that comments like the one quoted above, or Nora's voice-over saying, "Naturally I remembered the good and lovable things about him [Javo], not the drugs and resentment", have more of a summarizing than a dramatizing function. In spite of their often retaining Garner's original words, the very selectivity with which they are chosen for the screenplay is an admission that film cannot cope as a novel can with the sustained inner play of thought. The feeling one has in reading the book of listening to a dramatic monologue, in which, as in a Browning poem like "The Bishop Orders His Tomb..." or "My Last Duchess", everything is filtered through the consciousness of the protagonist-speaker, is missing. What Javo and Gracie, Angela, Martin and the others are like, or what the city itself feels like, are no longer a matter of an individual's subjective impression. They inevitably take on an objective life of their own. One can no longer be sure of seeing them just as they appeared to Nora because there they are, with their own physical presences, the latter making as much claim on attention as Nora's perception of them. What has happened in the transposition of Garner's novel to the screen is that, while the original tone is largely maintained through the use of the voice-over (and aspects of the mise-en-scène), the process of thought remains elusive. In Chapter 1 of Words and Images it is suggested that rendering this process might well be one of the adaptor's chief difficulties. Cameron's film, careful and intelligent as it is, and based on a screenplay collaboration with the novel's author, has not really found an answer to this. If Sandra Hall is right in her observation that "The challenge of the novelist's tone intact", then Cameron must be said to have gone a good way to achieving success, but it is in certain important matters a qualitatively different achievement from that of the novel.

Notes
7. Sandra Hall, "Drifting along with a monkey on your back", The Bulletin, 6 July 1982, p. 95.
8. This will, of course, be true of any first-person novel transferred to the screen; true, that is, in varying degrees according to how far the "I" character is a participant in or observer of the events of the narrative, how far (s)he can be relied on. Nora seems to me very differently placed in these respects from, say, Pip in Great Expectations or Nick Carroway in F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby. In spite of the first-person narration, the characters of these two novels have an objective reality not to be felt in the shadowy lives of Garner's characters.

From 'Words and Images' by Brian McFarlane, published by Heinemann Publishers Australia, 1983.
Street Kids is a powerful documentary of the harsh world and the plight of homeless teenagers in Melbourne. Shot on locations ranging from St Kilda to more ‘respectable’ suburbia, the many hours of film have been edited tightly into a series of portraits of prostitution and drug dealing; the struggle to find accommodation and work; and the search for relief from boredom and for some warmth and love to compensate for the loss of family life. The children grapple with their predicament throughout the film, in response to the questions and gentle prodding of the filmmakers.

The film has a sense of immediacy: formal narration has been eliminated; the teenagers talk directly to the camera and confront the audience with their feelings. The camera probes and follows them through their favorite hang-outs, the all-night cafes, discos and pinball parlors, on street corners, and into their bare rooms in broken-down boarding-houses and flats, or their temporary beds in doorways, parks or on the streets.

The incisive and broad picture conveyed in Street Kids owes a great deal to a combination of documentary techniques used by the filmmakers. Producer Kent Chadwick and writer Adrian Tame spent one night a week for more than a year on the streets. Filmmakers, Leigh Tilson and Rob Scott, left their equipment untouched while they gained the trust of their subjects. They lived on the streets and in the boarding-houses with the teenagers and were able to maintain a degree of intimacy that would have been impossible with a larger crew.

From the time of first concept in 1980, through to research and production, Street Kids was three years in the making. Since its completion, the film has been the subject of major controversy. A scheduled transmission of the film by the Nine Network in April 1983 was halted at the eleventh hour by an injunction issued by the Victorian State Government through the Department of Community Welfare Services. The department then permitted the film to be screened and it was shown on Channel Nine (Melbourne) at the end of June 1983. It was the seventh highest rating program in Australia that year. It is still to be seen in Sydney and some other capital cities.

Street Kids raises the question of just how much freedom filmmakers have to record and comment on issues which are relevant to our times and our society. It also questions the use of film as therapy. By participating in the making of the film and receiving some feedback, the teenagers were able to gain some perspective on their situation, to become more articulate and aware of the forces that had warped their lives. Through the celluloid they could break through their isolation and reach out to a world which considers them to be outsiders and freaks.

Street Kids is not confined to a bleak vision; it offers glimpses of hope, supportive relationships and possible ways to escape.
How was the project conceived?

Chadwick: In a sense, Street Kids emerged from Do Not Pass Go, which looked at the plight of children from broken homes and bleak backgrounds who got busted by the police, caught up in the juvenile courts system and finally drifted into the welfare system, ending up in remand centres, etc. These kids were harmed by the bureaucratic process through which they went and their problems weren’t solved; they went back on the streets and it started all over again.

The main feedback from the public about Do Not Pass Go was how did the kids get into that situation in the first place? What were their backgrounds? Do Not Pass Go was never designed to answer those questions, but it threw up the question marks. So it was at that stage I decided that an important follow-up film would examine what was causing the breakdown in society that was leading to thousands of kids hitting the streets. That was where Street Kids was born.

It should be added that Do Not Pass Go was a dramatized documentary. Street Kids went one step further: it was important not to dramatize but to examine the issues first hand.

How did you develop your project?

Chadwick: At that stage I met a Jesuit priest, Alex McDonald, who was possibly the only person in Melbourne then living on the streets with the kids and not fulfilling any bureaucratic role through a department. He would be on the streets of St Kilda every night, and the kids would come to him for assistance.

It was through Alex that I was able, with writer Adrian Tame, to do our research, to try and understand what life on the streets was like for these kids. That research went on for about 10 months, at which stage I brought in Leigh and Rob to direct the film.

The film required that Leigh and Rob live on the streets with the kids. So they rented a room in a broken-down boarding house in St Kilda.

Tilson: We went there to move amongst them, to get to know them as a natural extension of living in the same environment. We generally made our first contact through intermediaries such as Alex. At the same time, the kids were sussing us out; they were suspicious of people with cameras because they had been ripped off in the past.

Scott: We talked to hundreds of kids with diverse backgrounds from all over Melbourne. However, it must be remembered that they were extremely mobile, being shunted, for one reason or another, from place to place. So you rarely found yourself talking to a kid who came from the suburb you were in. The kids in St Kilda come from everywhere.

Tilson: It takes much longer to get their trust or even get to talk to them in St Kilda, because they are in a much more precarious situation. It was six months before we started shooting in St Kilda. Whether you got on eventually came down to chemistry.

Chadwick: It should be stressed that it was important that this film not be like the various current affairs programs over the years, with their rather flippant and superficial look at sensational subject matter, in which the kids got ripped off, and the public was duped. It was essential, as far as we were concerned, to make something that put the issues within a wider perspective, that allowed the kids to tell their own story, and not just to dwell on the more sensational aspects.

In Street Kids you do see some of these more dramatic issues — heroin addiction, child prostitution, drug abuse — but they are in the film because they are a part of the kids’ lifestyle, and part of the problem. However, these are just the symptoms of the deeper problem, which is that these kids have nowhere to go, no one to turn to and no one to love. And that is a pretty horrifying situation, born of a lot of different social factors. And the problem is getting bigger in every western city.

Is one of these factors unemployment?

Chadwick: It is an exacerbating factor. But the cause is that there are so many pressures being brought to bear on families in the 1980s that there is a breakdown in communication between the parents and the kids. It happens at all levels in society. Unemployment just makes it worse.

If the kids were to name the major issues, what do you think they would be?

Scott: They all say, “I want more fuckin’ money”, but then don’t we all? The issue is deeper than that, and it is expressed more often in manner than in words. They feel outcast, they don’t feel at home, or there isn’t a home, or they can’t face the violence at home — incest and beatings, physical and mental. They live for the most part in incredible fear of something.

Tilson: The kids don’t have a significant person to rely upon, someone you belong to and feel loved by; someone who would accept you for what you are, and
not for the sake of fitting you in to something else. Being homeless is not being without a house or whatever — that is, lack of shelter — it is a symptom. The problem is: how did you get into that situation of being without shelter?

This comes out in the section on Rohan. He seems to be the only one who has really found a way out — at least temporarily — through that significant other person you speak of . . .

Tilson: That is why we put that segment in. It would be very easy to make a totally negative film. But their lives aren’t all negative; there are positive things — some sort of friendship, good times, whatever.

I really hate the stigmatization that they are born no-hopers. I don’t believe that is true. Circumstances and environment can socialize and affect you in many ways.

Chadwick: We talked to many kids. The key kids who ended up in the film were those for whom the making of this film was extremely important. They were aware of the problems they might encounter if they spoke out, if the total reality of their life was shown. They were not only committed to the film, but it became probably the most important aspect of their lives at the time. It was the first opportunity any of them ever had to tell their story. From that point of view they became almost working members of the production team.

Tilson: The Steenbeck [editing machine] was in the boarding-house room we stayed in. If we had shot something one day, or done an interview, it would be processed overnight, picked up from Cinex Laboratories down the road and shown back to them. Basically it was either good, bad, or shit-house. A lot of times they would say, “Oh, that was important to me, I want to do it again. I want it to get through and I blew it the first time.” Often we would have a lot of talking heads, and we would say, “This is becoming too boring. Is there a way we can illustrate this?” They would then come up with suggestions and we would talk them through. Then the kids would set it up to some extent, for instance telling the dealers it was okay that we were around.

It took nine months to cut the film — Rob, Kent and myself, in collaboration with the kids. A lot of them would come and help out with their segment. We made sure they were satisfied that their segment was an accurate representation of what they felt was important to say. It meant a lot to the kids to get it across correctly. To us, it was more academic. We were basically middle-class, and we have left that scene. It was a journey that we did and came out of. For but them it was cold reality.

Chadwick: This project was in many respects unique as a documentary made in this country. It would have been absolutely prohibitive to make Street Kids as a commercial proposition, to spend three years on a project in which you are aiming for an hour and a half of film. We could do it only because Film Victoria agreed to finance it, and because a group of very dedicated people were prepared to spend that much time exclusively making the film.

Tilson: Apart from our involvement with the St Kilda scene, and kids from other areas, we also spent a year going out one night a week to the Turana Youth Centre. Even though you make sure not to promise the kids things you can’t fulfil, so as not to let them down as they have been let down so many times in the past, you become very much a part of that reality, because it was just so much stronger than our protected, middle-class environment. This experience of making the film dominates your whole thinking.

I am thankful for the whole experience because it has shown me how important honest relationships are. On one level it was just like going overseas for a year, leaving your family and familiar surroundings.

This raises the question of film as therapy. Did any of the kids benefit from the process?

Chadwick: At the time that the film was being made, quite a few of the featured characters were benefiting very much, because it was the first time in their lives that people were treating them as human beings with something positive to offer society. If you watch those interviews, you can feel the kids thinking very deeply about what they are saying. This film gave them the chance to analyze themselves in a broader perspective.

Tilson: At first, many of the kids saw themselves as being able to help other kids through the film, to communicate to their parents, or even just to do something interesting. But at some point they would turn around and say, “Hey, I’m doing it for other kids. I’m doing it for me.”

Chadwick: It worked both ways also. I had a fair idea in statistical terms what the problem was about: that there were 15,000 kids roaming the streets of Victoria, and that most of them were in Melbourne. But coming to grips with the situation and talking with the kids was certainly very therapeutic for me, and I’m sure for Rob and Leigh as well.

There are two or three relationships in the film, and one can say that at least those couples have each other . . .

Chadwick: But remember that one of them says, “You can’t trust anybody. In some things, you can’t even trust your own girl-friend.” So even the couples are vulnerable in that situation. They just don’t trust anybody. An average person with a reasonable family life cannot conceive of the situation that these kids are in. These kids just don’t know what it is like to have somebody celebrate a birthday with them, or to send them a Christmas present. All the little things that are ways of declaring love for one another in a family situation are just not part of their world anymore.

Scott: It is interesting to note that they sometimes celebrate birthdays with each other, or spend Christmas together; this is some sense of community among some of them. But it is not the normal, family situation.

Tilson: Another thing that comes through is the way they live from day to day, without any hope for a future. They can’t plan. When you ask them what are you doing tomorrow, they answer, “I don’t know.” That obviously affected the filming. We had to go along, sometimes not knowing what we were to do the next day. Being completely unscripted was quite freaky in a way: to a large extent it was up to the kids as to what we would be doing, and to what depth we would be taken.

This affected the way we worked on a technical level as well. We had to be a mobile, two-man crew with portable equipment. Also, as many of the kids sleep all day, are up all night and are all over the place, it was important to capture anything we needed a high-speed film stock we could use at any time. We used Fuji 250 ASA stock that proved capable of achieving usable pictures at 2000 ASA. We pushed one stop in processing and two in printing. Our only artificial lighting was in interiors when occasionally we would use 250 watt globes in existing sockets. Street lights meant that we could shoot virtually anywhere.

Scott: It was important for us that the filming process was de-mystified; that it didn’t become a big deal. We never used a clapper board, we used a sync lead when we could get it together quickly enough, and we got heavily into lip reading for most of the synching of rushes. We didn’t use a shotgun microphone pointing at someone’s head, expecting them to be relaxed. Instead, we sacrificed some signal to extraneous noise and used a flat plate microphone taped to the side of the Nagra, making sure we were close to whatever was happening to be able to pick up the sound more effectively. Everyone loved to have their peek through the camera, too.

In this respect, were you influenced by any other documentaries?

Chadwick: One thing that impressed the hell out of me was a series of black and white films made about 10 years ago in New York called The Police Tapes. The filmmakers went out on night patrols with the police, their cameras in the back of the car, not knowing who would be encountered that night. They filmed every . . . Concluded on p. 104
Clockwise from top left: Sam (Tyler Coppin), Eva, Sharon and Brendan; Sam performs from King Lear; Brendan shuffles the cards for strip poker; Eva, in a flash-back to her schooldays; Brendan and Sharon.
Four young people are trapped in the Sydney Opera House on the night World War 3 breaks out.

One Night Stand is directed by John Duigan, from his screenplay, for producer Richard Mason. Director of photography is Tom Cowan.

Right: Eva (Saskia Post) and Sharon (Cassandra Delaney) huddle in an underground shelter. Below: Eva and Sharon are ‘chatted up’ by two Santa Clauses: Tony (David Pledger), left, and Brendan (Jay Hackett).
Having directed three features and almost 150 hours of film and videotape drama for television, as well as many commercials, Simon Wincer is one of Australia's most experienced directors.

Wincer began his career at ABC-TV in Sydney before working in the theatre, then at Rediffusion and the BBC in London. He returned to Australia to direct for Crawford Productions. His first feature, Snapshot, won a special award for Innovative Technique at the 1979 Asian Film Festival; Harlequin, which followed, drew only moderate reviews locally but proved successful overseas; and Phar Lap, his most recent feature, is the second most successful Australian film in its home territory.

Wincer has directed many award-winning television series, including episodes of the highly-acclaimed Against The Wind and The Sullivans. Other television work includes Cash and Company, Tandarra, Young Ramsay, The Lost Islands, Bailey’s Bird, Chopper Squad, Ryan and Homicide.

Three years ago Wincer joined forces with Michael Edgley in a new venture to produce feature films and television series for the Australian and international markets. Michael Edgley International co-presented The Man from Snowy River as its first film project and appointed Wincer as executive producer. Phar Lap was Edgley's second venture, and is being followed into release by John Duigan's One Night Stand (Wincer is executive producer) and Igor Auzins’ The Coolangatta Gold.

In the following interview, conducted by Scott Murray, Wincer talks about the success of Phar Lap, his role at Michael Edgley International and the new joint venture between Hoyts and Edgley International.

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Phar Lap

What attracted you to the story of Phar Lap?

It is a rattling good yarn, a great story. It is also a part of the Australian consciousness. When the horse comes storming home in the Melbourne Cup there are very few people who don’t get a shiver up their spine. We have all listened to the radio on the first Tuesday of every November, and, when you know the animal up on the screen that wins the Cup, it is very moving.

To what extent during the scripting and production did you feel bound by the facts? How much freedom did you allow yourself to turn it into a good story?

Nothing was invented. I came into the project at the first-draft stage and the first thing I did was to sit down with David Williamson [scriptwriter] and, after a couple of weeks, churn out another four drafts of the script. We had an excellent rapport, but he couldn’t believe how insistent I was in spending so much time with him. He’d had a few bad experiences working with other people, but I assured him, “Look, once this is right, we don’t have to worry.”

Actually, the biggest problem we had — when I say we I mean John Sexton [producer] too; he was the one who started the project and who was so passionate about it — with scripting was deciding what to throw away. One can only show so many races and in the early draft we had far too many racing scenes. We had to decide how many to show, and what were the key, dramatic moments.

What source did you use as a starting point?

Phar Lap, with a hoof injury, leads the race at Agua Caliente. Simon Wincer’s Phar Lap.

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Phar Lap

What attracted you to the story of Phar Lap?

It is a rattling good yarn, a great story. It is also a part of the Australian consciousness. When the horse comes storming home in the Melbourne Cup there are very few people who don’t get a shiver up their spine. We have all listened to the radio on the first Tuesday of every November, and, when you know the animal up on the screen that wins the Cup, it is very moving.

To what extent during the scripting and production did you feel bound by the facts? How much freedom did you allow yourself to turn it into a good story?

Nothing was invented. I came into the project at the first-draft stage and the first thing I did was to sit down with David Williamson [scriptwriter] and, after a couple of weeks, churn out another four drafts of the script. We had an excellent rapport, but he couldn’t believe how insistent I was in spending so much time with him. He’d had a few bad experiences working with other people, but I assured him, “Look, once this is right, we don’t have to worry.”

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What source did you use as a starting point?
John Sexton started with *Phar Lap*, a book by Michael Wilkinson, a former journalist with *The Sun* [Melbourne]. It was published in 1980. Michael had long conversations with David and John in the early days before I became involved. David also spent time with Tommy Woodcock (*Phar Lap*’s strapper and, later, trainer), and many of the scenes are almost verbatim as Tommy described them.

Basically, we have been true to the story and the legend. Even old Tom reckons we got the characters pretty right.

What about in areas of speculation, such as the death of *Phar Lap* in the U.S. Did you find out new things?

Not really. The day the horse died was a comedy of errors. Everybody ran off to get opinions and so many autopsies were conducted it all got out of hand. No one will ever really know. You talk to five different people who were there and get five different answers. Some say the Americans poisoned it, others say the vet gave it the wrong dose, or it was sick, or they had been using an arsenic-based poisonous spray on fruit trees outside the stables. The Governor of California actually called an investigation because the affair was a huge embarrassment to the Americans. This horse had arrived from Australia, won this fantastic race and, 16 days later, was dead.

Interestingly, the first guy who carved the horse up was the Australian vet, a man named Nelson, played by Robert Grubb in the film. He adamantly swore that the lining of the horse’s stomach had been eaten away by an irritant poison; in other words, *Phar Lap* had been got at. But the other vets didn’t agree.

You spend considerable screen time on the rigging of the Caulfield and Melbourne Cups double. Did you ever fear this lengthy episode would taint the audience’s response to *Phar Lap*?

No. It is not the horse’s fault, but that of the people behind it. Why we concentrated so much on that area — it is almost a film in itself — is that it demonstrated the behind-the-scenes power struggles. It was just sheer greed. During the two weeks of the Melbourne Cup period, *Phar Lap* raced something like eight miles in 10 days, just because Harry Telford (Martin Vaughan), the trainer, needed money to keep Braeside going, and because the owner, Dave Davis (Ron Leibman), was only getting a small percentage of the winnings. I can’t remember the amount of money they won on that Caulfield and Melbourne Cups double but it was, in today’s terms, millions of dollars.

The story of “Snowy River” is very much linked to the building of the Australian nation and the sort of people who were crucial to the development. How do you see the story of “*Phar Lap*” relating to Australia as a nation?

The aspect that fascinated me most was that an animal could become what we call “a hero to a nation”. We are looking at pre-Depression and then Depression Australia and, suddenly, amongst all the problems there was this symbol of hope. The mob would trudge out to Flemington and put a bob on *Phar Lap* — and that would pay for their dinner. The horse became an extraordinary icon, as many of Australia’s sporting figures have become, but *Phar Lap* even more so.

I have a beautiful piece of prose that a young girl wrote and sent us some years ago. She tried to analyze why a photo of this horse was on the family mantelpiece and what it meant to her father. It is the most moving piece. In her father’s case, she regards *Phar Lap* as a stable entity emerging from the insecurities of the times; a horse that kept on winning; it was something that everyone looked up to and loved.

So, it is a part of our history but it stirs you for different reasons from *Snowy River*. It doesn’t tell us anything more about our past than what we already know.

In many ways, *Phar Lap* is the classic Aussie battler. . . .

Yes, he triumphs, despite the odds. Good wins over evil, when no one thought he was any good in the first place.

One critic has already drawn

1. Tom Ryan, 3AW, Melbourne.
parallels between “Phar Lap” and “Gandhi”: in both the heroes die at the start; each, through their rise to fame, helps alleviate human troubles, but their solution to human troubles, by giving hope and encouragement for the future, is what defeats them at the end.

It is the same with all great figures in history. It is Greek tragedy.

The first thing I felt when I read the script was that Phar Lap was so great he was destined to die tragically. I then wrote down a list of all the people whose lives paralleled this: Jesus Christ, Gandhi, John Lennon, President Kennedy... It just goes on and on.

“Phar Lap” is unusual for its number of emotional climaxes. There are five or six points where the audience is invited to shed a tear...

All those elements were inherent to the story because that is the way it happened. However, we did choose to put the death of the horse at the beginning of the film because we felt that otherwise an Australian audience would spend the whole film waiting for it to happen.

In the U.S., we are experimenting with putting the death at the end. The first sneak preview was on January 28 and seemed to work just as well, but it is an unknowing audience. Audiences there really don’t know about Phar Lap; they are not conditioned to the legend.

The other emotional climaxes in the film are to do with the actual story. There is the triumph of the 1930 Melbourne Cup, after they tried to knock the horse off and it only just made the course in time. The next year the horse lost, but by then you are in love with the horse and it seems that everybody else is against it.

Something of which David Williamson, John Sexton and I were aware was how the Agua Caliente win had to top everything else emotionally. I think it succeeds because the horse really shouldn’t have raced with the injury to its hoof. A lot of people thought that was invented for the film, but it is exactly what happened. The horse broke down in the middle of the race somehow its big heart dragged it across the line. That is very emotional.

How did you cast the Americans in the film?

We found all the bit parts here, because there are enough local resident American actors now in Australia. Ron Leibman we found in the U.S. He is stunning in the film and was an absolute delight to work with. He had a marvellous rapport with everybody, particularly Martin Vaughn and Tom Burlinson. Ron always wants to play a scene totally against the way it was written; he is an absolute ball of energy.

Australia has rarely produced name stars. Have you attempted to promote Burlinson as a name, actively because I directed it! [Laughs]

Concluded on p. 102
The growth of the mini-series phenomenon over the past 14 years has contributed greatly to the revitalization of the film and television industry in the West. The form has drawn huge audiences on a regular basis and is still gaining in popularity with producers and audiences alike as its limitations and applications become established.

The term "mini-series" has been used to label everything from two-part, one-off specials (which resemble tele-features with long intermissions) to 26-hour sagas of daunting and exhausting proportions. The degree of confusion that exists as to what the format constitutes exactly is partly attributable to the fact that the term has a "special event" draw-power and consequently has been used extensively in pre-release network publicity.

Essentially, the mini-series is a limited-run series of two or more episodes (but usually less than the 13-episode block favored by series producers), whose narrative is developed over the block and resolved in the last episode. Unless it comprises an anthology of work or is an episodic documentary, the individual episodes of the body of the program do not present a major resolution of narrative development but have a dénouement similar to that used in the serial episode.

Traditionally, a mini-series is shot on film to achieve the picture quality suitable for its "special event" status. It is promoted as such and programmed over consecutive nights or in weekly instalments.

Antecedents

The mini-series format is peculiar to television. Although it is an amalgam of a number of formats, it has no direct precedent in films or broadcasting. It draws historical antecedents from the series, serial and feature forms in cinema, as well as their subsequent counterparts in television, but also owes a lot to the genre of the epic.

The film series and serials that became so popular in the 1910s were themselves spin-offs from another medium, that of the popular newspaper and magazine serializations of the 19th Century. Cinema added an extra dimension which, by the early 1930s, had created a devoted following around the world. Their huge success demonstrated that strong formulae and popular characters could attract audiences to return repeatedly to a continuing story.

The demise of serial and series production occurred with the introduction of radio and television. People found entertainment in their homes and, as cinemas drained, the studios concentrated on enticing patrons to them again with gimmicks such as 3D and Cinemascope. By the mid-1950s, the large-scale production of film series and serials had ceased.

The one form that could continue to attract the numbers was the epic. From D. W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation (1915) through to Gone with the Wind (1939), Ben Hur (1959), 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) and so on, the epic has successfully proved that productions of massive scale can draw audiences of similar proportions. The form established the precedent for special event viewing upon which the mini-series would later draw.

Television, at least for the first 30 years of its history, had no need of "special event" television epics. The novelty value was still very high and cheaply produced serials and series were the bulk stock for years. When not producing sports and variety shows, television refined and extended these two forms borrowed from film.

However, then as now, the serial and series presented quality problems. The episode-to-episode character and plot development of the serial generally overstretched its material; devices of tension developed in film serials became familiar and hackneyed; and irrelevant sub-plots, overacting and plastic emotions tested the patience of maturing audiences.

The series, though allowing for tighter dramatic narrative construction, wrestled with the danger of becoming blandly predictable. The necessity of returning the characters and plot to an unaltering, neutral base at the end of each episode resulted in the formulae for plot development becoming as clichéd as they did in serials. The aim for the success of a series rested on little more than the protagonist's ability to perform his function with style and flair, and the unusual nature of the circumstances in which he did it.

The one-off drama became a programming necessity to revitalize schedules. The "made for television" feature film dates back to the early 1950s when Walt Disney's Davy Crockett and other furry creatures began appearing in homes. By the mid-1960s the format had evolved into an important element of drama entertainment and had become an established part of television. The audience could watch a one-off feature in their homes with easy access to conveniences and frequent opportunities to

1. The Australian government specifies that for tax purposes each episode should be one hour or more for adults' mini-series or half-hour or more for children's mini-series.
do so. Even though television films were made on lower budgets than those for cinema, the show had been made specifically for the privileged home audience. One did not have to suffer tribulations such as losing half a two-shot in the transfer from the large to a small screen. One could also escape the escalating cost of the cinema ticket.

As with those other "special event" programs derived from Broadway shows, novels and variety, the tele-feature enjoyed enormous success but could not bring itself to transcend the standard 90-minute or two-hour duration. It appears the passive home audience was not credited with the concentration span or patience to sit through three hours of continuous drama.

Thus it suffered the same limitation as the cinema release: the constraint of a limited time slot and the inability to develop more than one thread of a narrative to any depth. A precedent had to be set to prove the viability of the long-form drama.

**The Inception of the Format**

This came with the BBC's production and broadcast, in the northern spring of 1969, of Sir Kenneth Clark's documentary mini-series, *Civilization*. This 13-part program dealt with the development of civilization in Western Europe and was the first of four, very successful, documentary mini-series produced by the BBC. It was followed by Alistair Cooke's *America* (1972), Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man* (1973) and John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Age of Uncertainty* (1977), which consolidated the successful use of the mini-series format to provide concise documentary perspectives on huge topics.

The precedent for drama mini-series was also set by the BBC. The process that made "Based on the novel by . . ." a regular credit was established in 1969 when the BBC produced *The Forsyte Saga* based on several novels by John Galsworthy. This 26-part, limited-run series finally allowed for the television novelization of popular literary material and its success proved that audiences relished the depth of characterization and plot development that this format allowed.

The BBC documentary mini-series *The Forsyte Saga* and the dramatized documentaries *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1970) and *Elizabeth R* (1971) were the inception and proof of the format. In the U.S., these shows were presented on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), whose tenure it was to screen material outside the definition of commercial television. Presented through Alistair Cooke's *Masterpiece Theatre*, the enormous popularity of these shows demonstrated the potential of the format to the commercial networks.

The popularization of the format in the U.S. was also attributable to the re-run issue. Research had shown that re-runs of mini-series were often as popular as the original screening. Programmers countered criticism of using re-runs, saying that they could not afford to produce constantly a high proportion of first-run material so they were able to produce more of the cheaper game and variety shows and increase production in foreign countries where costs were lower.

The foreign mini-series therefore became attractive as a special event drawcard. By the mid-1970s, the British had a practice of producing only as many programs as could be produced well. So, considering the obvious popularity of the material aired on PBS, the escalation of American mini-series production became inevitable.

**QB VII, Rich Man, Poor Man and The Blue Night** were three American-produced successes in the early 1970s that continued the gradual exploration of the format. The NBC set out to exploit these successes on a regular basis, but in doing so robbed the form of its special event attractiveness. In 1976, the NBC produced a weekly program called *Best Sellers*. The intention was to prevent the format from becoming bogged down in period pieces and so looked to novelists such as Harold Robbins, Irwin Shaw and Jacqueline Susann for soap-opera fiction, with intrigue and lust as the key elements.

The resulting programs, produced at Universal, such as *Captains and Kings* and *Seventh Avenue*, though individually sold off and the program made television history. It became the first popular television event ever, attracting a rating of 45, or 66 per cent of the possible audience numbers. It received 13 Emmy nominations and created a euphoria in the American industry that lasted for years.

**Australia**

In Australia, Channel 10 (or 0 as it was then) made up for a fairly mediocre ratings decade by buying *Roots* before shooting had begun. This foresight led them to cash in on a phenomenon which, though not rating as highly as it did in the U.S. (35 rating), certainly opened the eyes of local programmers to the potential of the mini-series.

Australia was indeed in a fortunate position. Having access to British- and American-produced programs meant that programmers could choose a product that had been proven successful in its home ground. The kind of reaction that kept restaurants around Australia empty during *Brideshead Revisited* in 1980 could generally be anticipated and so programmed for accordingly. Of course, this did not always hold true, as the only minor success of the flatulent *Winds of War* (1983) demonstrated.

The availability of quality foreign production placed enormous pressure on the local product to match the overseas standard on a fraction of the budget. In the days before the tax incentive for film investment, Ian Jones and Bronwyn Binns had valiantly produced *Against the Wind* (1978) on a shoe-string. At $75,000 an hour it was by no means expensive by international standards, reflecting the fact that an Australian mini-series was an untried commodity here and overseas. But Channel 7 believed in it strongly enough to take the gamble and the show's success rating, which increased from 30 for the first episode to 50 for the final one, established that a strong local market did indeed exist for the indigenous product.

The performance of *A Town Like Alice* in 1979 on the international market proved that this success could be taken further afield. Produced by Henry Crawford at the then huge sum of $225,000 an hour, this show was awarded an Emmy in 1981, nominated for another in 1982, won prizes in Banff and New York, and was cited by the British broadcasting critics as the "best imported drama in 1982."
The Success of the Mini-series

Internationally, programmers were looking to quality television to satisfy the growing sophistication and maturation of audience tastes. For many reasons the mini-series had greater scope for this quality and, although ratings do not always directly reflect the quality of programs, well-produced mini-series were good for ratings. These little numbers at the end of a weekly phone call from McNair Anderson in Australia, or Nielsen in the U.S., are the yardstick by which a program is judged. Often maligned as inaccurate, especially by television executives when unfavorable, they are pursued religiously and their admirable accuracy celebrated with expensive champagne when favorable.

Few networks are in the privileged position of the BBC or PBS which, because of the nature of their funding, are not inextricably tied into the pursuit of these numbers. They are able to pursue quality, wherever possible, for the sake of quality alone.

For those unfortunates pursuing the dollar return, however, the mini-series is special event television that is usually good for ratings. It also encourages major sponsorship and brightens a dull schedule.

The pursuit of quality is even reflected in the production set-up from which these projects are usually undertaken. The mini-series format, which has attracted the likes of Crawford Productions and McElroy and McElroy away from their usual domain, is, even for these organizations, produced from a separate entity set-up specifically for that purpose. This type of independent structure relies on the use of experienced freelance crews chosen for their proven track record and, while ensuring a creative contribution from the crew, it keeps overheads to a minimum and maximizes production value on the available budget.

The series and serial are locked into network or production-house schedules that often dictate compromises to keep the show on the road. Telefeatures and mini-series can achieve higher standards because, although they may well be locked into a budget-dictated, tight schedule, they need be released only when they are completed to the satisfaction of the producers.

One of the major elements of quality in mini-series is its ability to present, in novel form, popular literary works and to offer dramatic or documentary perspectives on important events in social history. In doing so it allows for a depth of study not possible in other forms. It can tell a good story.

The importance of the strength of this element was demonstrated in 1980 when Water Under the Bridge received disappointing ratings (24), despite a high degree of critical acclaim for its excellent performances and photography. The lack of strong characterizations and a tangible theme resulted in this mini-series settling down into melodrama of little pace where no expectation of resolution was fulfilled and where the characters became unlikeable in their unattractiveness.

The similar ratings disappointments of The Last Outlaw and The Timeless Land in the same year created a degree of negative feeling toward the form in the Australian industry. All three shows were well received by the critics and overseas sales were forthcoming but in the local market the reaction was unfavorable. This served to identify further the necessity for a strong narrative in a format that presents itself as above the ordinary in television drama.

Castleman and Podrazik, in their assessment of the success of Roots, identified the elements of success as:

- excellent writing, first rate acting, effective violence, strong relationships, tantalizing sex angles, a clear cut conflict between good and evil and an up-beat ending.

The longer format allows for complexity of character development without historic or dramatic compromise. It can expand on the single-thread construction available to the feature or series but can do so without having to pad the material ad infinitum, as is often the case with the serial.

It can also construct a historical event and present, in novel form, popular literary works and to offer dramatic or documentary perspectives on important events in social history that draws a degree of understanding from the huge proliferation of knowledge, sub-cultures and opinion that has characterized the technological age since the last war. The popularity of programs such as Roots and The Dismissal (1983) would tend to suggest the audience’s desire to extricate cohesive threads of understanding from the information melee. The format’s ability to explore social history in the docudrama application that it will probably never be allowed to fully exploit this potential on commercial television.

Ken Loach’s mini-series, Days of Hope (1974), set out to investigate issues such as conscription and unionism, and did so with such force that conservative British institutions feared that the BBC had been infiltrated by leftist banner wavers. In Australia, the show was nervously screened by the ABC in a non-rating period.

The drama and docudrama mini-series have the potential to transcend the role relegated to the series of endorsing the dominant political paradigm. In contemporary series, the protagonist is usually identified by his social role as doctor, lawyer or policeman. The plots to which he addresses himself are generally represented as maladies of individual psychologies rather than social ills. In redressing them, and to return each episode to its biographical base, he disposes of the symptom but not the sociological circumstances that produced it. The mini-series does not have to return the protagonist to a safe, neutral base each episode and, therefore, can examine more than the surface functioning of social systems.

It is interesting to note that the Australian government’s definition of the drama mini-series tax incentives amounts to an endorsement of the Hollywood narrative form wherein:

- the key dramatic elements are introduced, developed and concluded so as to form a narrative structure (similar to that of a novel) which features a major continuous plot enhanced by minor plot and there is the expectation of an ending which resolves the plot tension.

This would appear to preclude any form inciting anything other than a “resolution of tensions”.

One problem with the format’s use for the study of social history is the potential for the over-fictionalization of historic atrocities. Strongly identifiable demons are good for any form of entertainment and increasingly the hang-over from the “love” generation is dissipating as one is encouraged to polarize one’s emotions and relish the continents of hate, lust and so on. Historical aberrations make for popular television and Hitler shapes up as a favorite demon in mini-series. But the danger is that sensationalist television could over-fictionalize an atrocity to the

In Australia it peaked with a 43 rating and its successful re-run in 1983 again demonstrated its popularity.

Oppehomer (1980) and The Six Wives of Henry VIII is attributable to the ability of the mini-series to provide an in-depth investigation of the behaviour and motivations of noted individuals in their particular environments. This docudrama role has been used from the format’s inception and, though generally exploited in Australia, is becoming more and more prominent as producers turn increasingly to material with contemporary relevance. Among the topics dealt with in forthcoming Australian mini-series are the “Bodyline” cricket tests, the waterfront strike of the 1920s, Eureka Stockade and the Japanese POW escape from Cowra.

In this docudrama application, the mini-series has the ability to present concise but detailed perspectives on a social history that draws a degree of understanding from the huge proliferation of knowledge, sub-cultures and opinion that has characterized the technological age since the last war. The popularity of programs such as Roots and The Dismissal (1983) would tend to suggest the audience’s desire to extricate cohesive threads of understanding from the information melee.
extent that, for instance, Holocaust is remembered as “that moving mini-series of 1978” and the real atrocity is misplaced. However, when applied to drama fiction derived from novels, this danger is somewhat allayed.

Most successful drama mini-series have been period piece shows originating from novels. These offer the attraction of being able to provide a point of view, which is usually that of the novelist, and the quality television which is often construed as needing heaps on sets, costumes and so on. But there are problems associated with the production of contemporary mini-series that have resulted in the dearth of such shows. Exceptions such as Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy, the most successful are those flamboyant Hollywood extravaganzas which employ the soap and serial devices of sex, intrigue and wealth.

The serious mini-series relies heavily on continuity of dramatization and character development to hold the story together over an extended period. But when it is set in a modern environment this consistency runs into great difficulties.

In the feature film, dramatic continuity is equally important and generally achievable. Where there is only one producer, one director and one writer, a film may develop a cohesive framework or singularity of vision attributable to particular creative sources and deriving its merit from this.

The mini-series cannot afford this luxury. Due to the sheer volume of material and work, it is common practice to employ several writers and directors. When the final reference for the script development and execution is the period novel, the creative team has a clearly defined framework and environments at sufficient historical distance to act as a solid point of reference. With contemporary mini-series, however, the interpretation of recent modes of behaviour becomes arbitrary and difficult to sustain from a proliferation of creative contributors. The onus for dramatic continuity thus falls back on the producer who, especially in Australia, is also frequently acting as entrepreneur and salesman.

One possible solution to this problem is to reduce the contemporary story to a peculiar closed environment with interesting and unusual behaviour patterns. The subject and treatment do not have to be epic in proportion. The circumstances and quality of the drama lends the mini-series its special event status by allowing the audience a privileged insight into a unique environment.

Hollywood feels safer producing the likes of Aspen, Scruples and Moviola, which sell themselves through their sensationalism rather than their dramatic content. Apart from Return to Eden (1983) Australia has difficulty producing material of this epic, escapist nature because, basically, there is just not enough money to mount the scale of these productions and attempt, for instance, the obligatory wrecking of a fleet of vehicles in an urban landscape.

A contemporary mini-series such as Silent Reach (1983), though utilizing a unique and interesting environment, might not be able to sustain itself on the strength of its script. It therefore runs up against the expectation of more spectacular effects and adventure on the American scale which it might not be able to fulfill. The special event status has to be maintained, as such, on the level of the quality of the material and the quality of the production.

Another possible solution to this difficulty of the format to handle contemporary material successfully is for more writing, production and directing talent to be drawn from the cinema industry where the discipline and integrity of story construction is of paramount importance.

The return of such notable figures as David Williamson and Thomas Keneally to writing for the small screen would tend to give hope to television executives that the mini-series will stem the flow of writing talent from television to film.

There would also appear to be a necessity, though potentially expensive, for the delineation of creative producer/script editor/entrepreneur/promoter roles which, in independent production, is often relegated to or suffered by one individual. If there is a necessity for multiple directors and writers, the creative producer's role must become stronger. Whereas organizations such as Crawford Productions can afford the luxury of an in-house marketing director and production supervisor working on a project from an early stage, the independent producer may have to perform all of these tasks at the same time as suffering the traumas of having his house and family in hock to make ends meet before the finance comes through.

Programming

The mini-series format has traps for the television programmer. One of the biggest problems is that, unlike the series, the episodes of the mini-series cannot be split for re-runs. The show must occupy a set number of slots in a progression which, if not on subsequent nights as possibly originally programmed, should be no more than a week apart. Series such as M*A*S*H can be split and programmed to suit seasons, ratings or fancy without major alienation of the audience. Even episodes made 10 years apart are programmed in the same week with success.

The performance of mini-series re-runs has not been extensively researched in Australia but, in the U.S., it has been shown that they do not do as well as the series. If the special event
In terms of production, other than the distinct possibility that the Burrowes Dixon production of The Anzacs will eventuate, several projects from established producers are in advanced stages of development or pre-production.

Perhaps the most interesting event of 1984 will be the $7.3 million production by the South Australian Film Corporation of Rolf Boldrewood's Robbery Under Arms. This will be produced as a six-hour mini-series as well as a double-length feature film, complete with intermission, to precede its television release by two years. Producer Jock Blair feels that both of these forms will be viable propositions and will provide a secure return on the investment which, at $750,000 an hour of television, places it well ahead of the current average of $600,000 an hour.

This will be interesting because the use of the two formats for the same material has not proven successful for the two similar American ventures. For both Moses the Lawgiver (1975) and Shogun (1979) the feature film did poorly in the box-office, while the mini-series rated well on television. However, the enormous success of The Godfather and The Godfather Part II in the cinema guaranteed the subsequent success of the nine-hour mini-series, which was cut out of the two films and previously unused material, and screened many years later.

Robbery will differ from Shogun in that additional material will be shot for the feature rather than culling it out from the mini-series. Given the proven inability of the mini-series to rate well in re-runs in the U.S., however, it will be interesting to see whether the audience, having seen the blockbuster in the cinema, will watch the same special event on television as soon as two years later. The success of the mini-series would also appear to be heavily dependent on the success of the film release.

The ABC has had a couple of interesting, if low-budget, attempts at the mini-series format in recent years. 1915 (1982), A Descant for Gossips (1983) and The Scales of Justice (1983), though lacking the scale of production of other commercial projects, were popular because of the strength of their scripts and the intimate nature of their setting.

In this year, Chris Muir, head of the ABC drama department, has indicated that the ABC will in future steer clear of the mini-series ballyhoo in favor of lower-budget one-offs which he feels allow more opportunities for high-quality, innovative and imaginative experiments.

For those involved in independent production, the current slump in the cable television market in the U.S. could prove disadvantageous to the local as well as the American industries. Home Box Office, the vast organization which pre-bought All the Rivers Run (1983) from Crawford Productions, is currently going through a major staff and policy restructure in an effort to streamline operations. Even though Henry Crawford sold his series Five Mile Creek to the Disney cable network, cable television would appear to be proving less of a bonanza than expected. The phenomenal growth of home video in the U.S. has hit hard at what was the scrouge of network television several years ago.

Conclusion

The mini-series has the capacity to be used for serious drama. The British established this in the early days of the format and it has been consolidated with a strong infra-structure of quality Australian, American and British mini-series. The major hurdle is to maintain the pace and consistency of the story development. A show that waffles on endlessly without the draw-cards of a brilliant script or, conversely, so much sensationalism is destined to go the way of mini-series. A Descant for Gossips, and The Scales of Justice, have garnered the strength of their scripts and the intimate nature of their sets.

Furthermore, the special event status must be maintained. A number of prominent critics and producers have expressed concern with the rush of people, many without much experience, announcing interest in capitalizing on the tax incentives and intriguing mini-series of their own. Established producers such as Henry Crawford fear that a proliferation of quickly-produced, badly-scripted, cheap mini-series will throw the format into disrepute and deprive it in future of its special event attractiveness.

This is, indeed, a danger as the current popularity of the format has every man and his drover's dog jumping on the bandwagon, much as in 1975 and 1981 when everyone was making feature films. One can only hope that the process of elimination by ratings trial that has established the successful parameters of the mini-series during the past 14 years will create the pressures from the cable and television programmers for the continuing and growing use of the format for quality television.

Acknowledgment: Rosemary Curtis, Australian Film and Television School.
An interview with Susan Lambert

Why did you change from being a successful documentary director to a director of drama?

What Sarah and I are interested in is getting new ideas across to people and so, even in our documentaries, we have experimented with new ideas in form as a means to this end. For example, Size 10, at the time it was made, was not really what you would call a standard documentary. It included some dramatic sequences.

Another film, Behind Closed Doors, was a short one about domestic violence. It didn't have any people in it but was an experiment in film language to get across some information without having to resort to talking heads and statistics. As such, it worked very well.

Age Before Beauty is a much more conventional documentary with interviews, talking heads and so on, and it is very accessible.

With On Guard, the area we wanted to look at was women as activists. We wanted women to be seen on the screen as thinking, intelligent and active characters. The narrative drama suggested itself when we realized that we didn't want to be pinned down to a single issue, like before, but rather could exercise almost total control in terms of what was said and who said it.

We wanted to show a particular lifestyle and to show women in a positive way. Then we got excited about trying to do that within the adventure/thriller genre. But after much discussion we realized that the women should be concerned about something, so that the adventure/thriller stuff would have a firm foundation. We came up with the issue of reproductive engineering which we had been interested in for a long time. It is a fabulously complicated moral issue, with which the medical and legal authorities are still grappling.

Anyway, as we got further and further into the writing, the issue came more to the forefront and couldn't be kept down, so we had to research it thoroughly and arrive at a position. That was the hardest part.

What is interesting is that it is not an issue that has been bandied around or discussed within the women's movement, or in larger political circles; so, whereas previously our documentaries had been in reaction to issues already being discussed, this film was to tackle a subject long before it became an issue, and get people talking.

Do you always work with Sarah Gibson?

No, I made two films for the Health Commission through the New South Wales Film Corporation, although it was our production company, Red Heart Pictures, that got the tender. Sarah has made another film too, Ailsa (1977), about a woman artist.

Originally, we were going to co-produce and co-direct On Guard, but it became too big a project and, when Sarah was offered a lecturing position at the New South Wales Institute of Technology, which she was keen to do, we reorganized the production.

How did you get the idea for "On Guard"?

Susan Lambert’s On Guard, in the style of a heist adventure, concentrates on four politically active and assertive women (played by Liddy Clark, Jan Cornall, Kerry Dwyer and Mystery Carnage). Shot on 16 mm and 51 minutes long, the film is a frank depiction of the women’s sexuality and emotional lives, and the complexity of their domestic responsibilities. Within its thriller format, On Guard raises the ethical issue of biotechnology and its impact on women.

Lambert’s previous films, all documentaries, have mostly been co-directed with Sarah Gibson (co-writer and associate producer of On Guard). They include Ladies Rooms (also with Pat Fiske, 1978), Size 10 (1978), Behind Closed Doors (1980) and Age Before Beauty (1980). In the following interview Lambert talks with Victoria Treole.
We had always wanted to make an adventure film, having both been addicted in childhood to the *Perils of Pauline* kind of literature, and that, combined with the frustration of never seeing strong, capable women on the screen, led us right to it. We wanted to make a heist movie and have the girls get away. That's where it started.

Sarah had been overseas and was back obsessed with the idea that paper money was becoming obsolete and that credit was the evil force taking over, so we started toying with that idea. That was three and a half years ago; the idea metamorphosed, as they do.

**Where did you raise the finance for the film?**

We went to the Australian Film Commission with a treatment for a film called "*Rotten Motives, Twisted Passions*", which was the original story that became *On Guard*. We were rejected by the Creative Development Branch, but later got active money from the Women's Film Fund.

**Do you think that is significant?**

Yes, very significant. The first assessors both came from the mainstream industry. They were feature film writers and they simply had no idea of what we, and others, were on about. A lot of people were disillusioned with this particular panel. The assessors had no idea about the films we had already made, or the context in which we worked, and our ideas just fell on deaf ears. That whole assessment was a disaster for a lot of us.

**What did you do after getting the first-draft money from the Women's Film Fund?**

We did several drafts and then we went back to the Creative Development Branch for production money, at which point we were rejected again.

**Do you know why?**

I think they thought that the script wasn't ready.

**Was that appropriate?**

Looking back on it, I think it was. They were quite supportive of us in terms of being able to make the film, feeling that we were very visual and had achieved our aims in the past. But, they were reluctant to take the risk on that script. They were worried about the move into drama. It was a bit of a blow. It threw us right back into changing the dimensions of the script and what resulted was *On Guard*, a much more conventional narrative, except that it had four main characters, instead of the usual one or two.

So, with this new script, did you then engage Digby Duncan as producer?

No, Digby had been in it from the time we first approached the Women's Film Fund. With the new *On Guard* script, we went to the Women's Film Fund again and they supported the project with the first $20,000 and then we went back to the Creative Development Branch which came up with a further $70,000. But we still had to raise another great chunk of money, privately, which Digby did. We went into production in January 1983 and had raised the private money in the December prior to that. It was quite hair-raising at the time.

**You said that the first lot of assessors didn't really understand what you were trying to do, or the area in which you worked. Was that because the script differed greatly from a traditional narrative?**

It was attempting to do that at the time. In the first script the main emphasis was a large gang of women as opposed to one or two, or even four, well-defined individuals. It was also much more surreal in the sense that the heist they did was more ambitious and unbelievable, and it didn't have the issue-related content that the final script had. There was none of the business about reproductive engineering. It was solely to do with notions of crime and who are criminals and who aren't.

One of the interesting things about the heist in "*On Guard*" is that it is quite domestic in flavor. The mechanics of the crime are so simply explained that the film almost works as a blueprint for a new kind of terrorism. Were you aiming for that?

As soon as we started to break down the script, we had to come to terms with how they actually did it. In the earlier drafts, they had just sort of shuffled around with knobs and flashing lights, such as you see on television, and that wasn't good enough. As we were wondering what to do about it, a friend of mine, Cristina Perincioli, who is a German filmmaker, wrote to us after reading the first script. She had picked up the same absence and suggested building into the story our relationship as filmmakers, as well as the relationship of women to technology, and that started us off on a whole new period of research. We had to find out just how you would go about sabotaging a computer bank, not a subject that many computer people wanted to talk about, as you might imagine.

**Having arrived at a final script, how did you cast the film?**

Liddy Clark is quite well known and Kerry Dwyer is known for her theatre work but the others are more or less unknowns. Was there a reason for not using all established actresses?

We cast it ourselves — that is, Digby, Sarah and I — and we threw out a very wide net. We looked at professional actresses as well as women who hadn't acted before, but who were familiar with the lifestyle portrayed in the film. Liddy was fabulous right from the...
first reading and Jan Cornall was always somebody with whom I had wanted to work. She hadn’t done much film work but had worked a lot in comedy theatre and I thought she would be fascinating. It was a risk, but well worth it, and I am sure it is the beginning of a lot more work in films for her.

Mystery Carnage is the lead singer of a Sydney rock band, The Stray Dags, and she was the opposite in some ways to Liddy. She has no formal acting experience but has a fantastic screen presence; she has a really relaxed body language that was very unsteretypical, which was one of the things we were trying to present on the screen. That was quite important.

What do you mean by unsteretypical body language?

What continually frustrated us in a lot of films is that every time women attempt to do anything active, they always seem to fluff it up because they are seen as physically incapable. They stumble running down the street; the simplest action is always too much. We wanted to work against that notion, not by making a big thing of it, but just to show that, if you train for it, you can perform almost any physical feat with relative ease.

Given those ideas about characters, what were you hoping for in the art direction and style of the film?

The art direction was intended to be comic book in style, with lots of primary color followed right through into the lighting of the film. It was quite successful and I think the film does have a real comic strip feel to it, which sets it apart from most of the European movies which are all grey and brown. We wanted to reflect the Australian light.

Do you think it is a particularly Australian film?

Not so much in content, but certainly in light, color and the way people dress.

How has “On Guard” been received overseas?

It was selected for the London Film Festival and a lot of people were very excited about it because it made them feel optimistic. I think the humor had something to do with that. And they loved the fact that the women got away with it. It is a standard convention, but everyone responded to it and enjoyed it on that level. The same thing happened in Germany and Holland.

In London, where I was able to attend the discussions after the film, the audience relationship to undress was the big controversy. There are some scenes in the film where the women are nude or partly nude and there was a debate about whether these scenes constituted a voyeuristic cinema. Some of the audience thought that the women were being set up for the male gaze and that men would get off on it, which was of course the last thing that we wanted.

In relation to the lesbian sexuality in the film, we spent a lot of time discussing the best way to shoot it because, although some mainstream films have recently dealt with it in a romantic way, we thought that it was important to show scenes like this in an ordinary way and not make an issue out of it. What we finally decided was to shoot the bedroom scene in one wide-shot and to have it quite highly lit and try as much as possible not to have bits of sheet covering up bits of body, but in fact to have the bodies completely exposed. At the time, they are lying in bed discussing what is the best method of wedging a door open, so it is not as though the scene was there for erotic stimulation.

Are you only interested in directing films that you write?

At the moment, I would like to do more directing where I am not responsible for the whole film and for everything everyone says, so that I can actually concentrate on the craft of directing. Despite that, I am sure I will continue to make my own.

At 51 minutes long, “On Guard” is quite short for a theatrical release. What are the plans for it?

Ronin Films is the distributor and it has organized theatrical releases in four states, at the Academy in Sydney, the Carlton Moviehouse in Melbourne, the Classic in Adelaide and at the Electric Shadows cinema in Canberra. The film will be billed with a selection of Australian rock ‘n’ roll clips and Toby Zoates’ new animation, The Thief of Sydney, which will make a great program. The rock ‘n’ roll clips are a great idea, I think, because On Guard has a very strong music track composed and played by the Stray Dags and produced by Celeste Howden, who used to be with Stilleto. I love it.
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MacFarlane generators hire and supply portable sound proofed power generators for many film and television applications.

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Send for our brochure and price list and think of us when you next hear "Lights, action...!"
The first issue of a magazine called Cinema Papers was published by a group of under­
graduates at La Trobe University in October 1967. The name was derived from Cahiers du
Cinema which, by the mid-1960s, had become
the bible of the French “new wave” cinema.

The 25-page journal was run off on the roneo
in the Glenn College office with the help of the
college secretary, Kay Mathews (now at the
Australian Film Commission in Melbourne). It
was a low-budget operation with both paper
and machine borrowed from the late Professor
Whitehead, founding professor in Economics.

This first issue contained an emotional
editorial [see Box 1], one obviously motivated
by frustration at the lack of a meaningful and
significant film industry in Australia in the
mid-1960s. Edited by Philippe Mora, it
included contributions by Peter Beilby, Lucien
Bessiere, Rod Bishop', Freya Mathews, Mora
and Howard Willis.

Mora and Beilby had met at University High
School in 1963. They shared an obsession with
cinema, devouring any available literature on
film, and had also experimented with 8 mm
filmmaking at artist Mirka Mora’s studio in
Melbourne.

After graduating in 1966, they enrolled at La
Trobe University, which opened that year.
Shortly after orientation week they formed a
film society with Bishop, Willis and Mathews.
Not only did the society show films, its com­
mmittee decided to make them; Bishop has
described the resultant 16 mm shorts as “inter­
esting avant-garde and undergraduate stuff”.

The Film Society also decided to support
financially a film journal: the aforementioned
Cinema Papers. Unfortunately, it was a short­
ived publication. After that first and only
issue, Mora left for London to pursue a career
as a painter and filmmaker. He went on to
make Trouble in Monopolis (1968), Swastika
(1973), Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?
(1974), Mad Dog Morgan (1975), The Beast
Within (1982) and The Return of Captain

In 1968, Beilby left La Trobe to teach English
and film studies, while Bishop continued with a
degree in Sociology. The next year, Scott
Murray arrived at La Trobe and began a Bach­
elor of Science degree in pure maths. He joined
the film society and wrote film reviews for the
campus newspaper, Rabelais, which was then
co-edited by Bishop.

Box 1

Editorial, 1967

We are thinking about cinema here in Mel­
bourne, Australia. We are involved in cinema
but we are working and thinking in a complete
vacuum . . . There is not one champion of the
cinema in Australia who has any courage or
intelligence whatsoever — there is not one man
here in whom we can put our faith.

Local Production
Uninspired. Barely existent. Pathetic. The
Commonwealth Film Unit does not rate. Nor do
pseudo-underground films. Local television
production pampers the idiotic mind. Let us
hope (a hopeless hope) it is not indicative of the
state of the Australian consciousness . . .

Local Criticism
Uninspired, uninvolved, pathetic. Film criticism
(in The Australian, The Bulletin, Nation and
University Film Group Publications) is mostly
plagiaristic or psychophantic [sic] but always
astonishingly devoid of sensitivity and intelli­
genec . . .

Cinema Is Now

Cinema is now. It is a symptom of the Great
Australian Sterility that cinema does not exist
here/is not created here. Cinema is now, thus
Australia is yesterday. How ridiculous, how
absurd, how puerile to have to scream at Aus­
tralia. How ridiculous, how absurd, how puerile
to be cast in the role of angry young men. We
would rather be cynical, unidealistic, we would
rather hate and destroy. Oh the joy and
simplicity of crushing a few cretinous heads . . .
And so we are brought to this. To scream in
the dark for cinema. But we know in advance
that screams here land on deaf ears.
The Second Attempt
1967-70

Towards the end of 1969 there were rumbles of the re-emergence of a film industry in Australia. Beilby and Bishop were keen to get Cinema Papers restarted so that it could be a vital part of the development of that industry. They decided on a tabloid newspaper format for the magazine, and, with Demos Krouskos, formed Global Village Publications. The initial capital for the venture was $180, jointly contributed, and the first issue was released on October 24, 1969.

Keith Robertson, who had laid out and co-edited Rabelais, designed the new Cinema Papers; Murray wrote for the journal under his own name and the pen name, Stephen Kennett; and Mora became the London correspondent. Other contributors included Tom Ryan, John Tittensor, Ken Mogg, historian Andrew Pike, playwright Jack Hibberd, novelists Frank Moorhouse and Laurie Clancy, director Richard Franklin and political satirist Don Watson. No contributors were paid.

The first issue contained an enthusiastic and forward-looking editorial [see Box 2] which reflected the attitude of the editors. A lot of space was given to articles condemning the repressive censorship laws of the time and to others pressing the government for legislation to assist the financing of Australian film production.

In 1969 things had not improved much for the Australian cinema and most of the editorial content was, of necessity, on foreign films. But issue No. 1 did cover Albie Thoms' underground feature, Mrs. Robinson, and, by a report of the Producers and Directors Guild of Australia reprinted in issues No. 9 and No. 11.

The only film activity was in shorts and documentaries, particularly avant-garde and underground shorts. A major event was New Cinema ACT, a weekend of experimental films in Canberra organized by filmmakers Arthur and Corinne Cantrill (reviewed in No. 11).

Not everyone was excited by Cinema Papers' reappearance. Corinne Cantrill, who co-published Cantrills Filmnotes, wrote:

Rather than publish yet another little film magazine, why don't you put your money into filmmaking? If you can't do that, why don't you import a few films that have not been seen in Australia yet? Those would be worthwhile contributions to the contemporary film life in Australia.

Most of the reaction was positive, however, and 11 issues of the tabloid Cinema Papers were printed. Each was 12 pages and sold for 15 c. The first review of a mainstream Australian feature was Murray's critique of Frank Brittain's The Set (No. 6). The only other feature coverage was in a feature review of Philip Adams and Brian Robinson's Jack and Jill: A Postscript, and an interview with Tim Burstall about his 1969 feature, 2000 Weeks. All this indicated how little was happening with feature filmmaking, a crisis examined by Beilby in issue No. 7, and by a report of the Producers and Directors Guild of Australia reprinted in issues No. 9 and No. 11.

The journal unfortunately folded in 1970 after the eleventh issue (April 27, 1970), due to poor cash flow (the Sydney distributors had sold out of the stocks). Corinne Cantrill (reviewed in No. 11) wrote:

To those bored with the cliches that surround the Australian cinema and most of the editorial content was, of necessity, on foreign films. But issue No. 1 did cover Albie Thoms' underground feature, Mrs. Robinson, and, by a report of the Producers and Directors Guild of Australia reprinted in issues No. 9 and No. 11.

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The Third Edition
1973-84

Despite Cinema Papers’ cessation in 1970, those who had worked on it kept in contact and participated in several joint filmmaking activities, while continuing studies or teaching. The first of these films was the political documentary, Beginnings, made in 1970 by Bishop, Murray, Gordon Glenn (a La Trobe student who had worked at Crawford Productions) and Andrew Pecze (La Trobe). That year, Beilby directed a documentary on autistic children, Eye to Eye, assisted by Bishop, Glenn and Murray. Glenn also starred in Murray’s Paola (1971).

In June 1973, Mora returned to Australia to attend the Melbourne Film Festival to exhibit Swastika. He suggested to Beilby that they try to get Cinema Papers started again. Beilby was now working as a film editor at the La Trobe University Media Centre (run by Dr Patricia Edgar). He was interested and approached Murray and Bishop to be fellow editors, but the latter declined.

The major problem was finding the money to get the magazine up and running. The most likely source was the Film and Television Board (Radio was added later to the title), one of the seven boards of the then Australian Council for the Arts.

A submission was prepared, which outlined the policy of the magazine as one of documenting the growth of the local film industry and disseminating information to aid this growth [see Box 3]. The aim was to cover the spectrum of cinema, from film history to reviews, production reports to technical facts, film education to in-depth interviews with people from all facets of the filmmaking process.

In September, the Film and Television Board approved a grant of $10,000 for the first issue of what had been intended as a three-times-a-year publication. The Board instead requested it be quarterly.

When the grant came through, Keith Robertson was approached to do the lay-out. He agreed and went on to design every issue up to No. 42, when he left to work as a freelance graphic designer and then lecturer in graphic design at the Philip Institute of Technology (where, incidentally, Bishop is now a lecturer in film). Robertson was assisted for several years by Andrew Pecze, who now runs a typesetting and layout business.

An office was established in Richmond and the first issue produced. Dated January 1974, it was released in December 1973. The 96-page issue, costing $1.25, contained interviews with director Ken G. Hall (including a filmography), scriptwriter David Williamson (he had just written the bedtime film, Libido), actor Geoffrey Blundell (on Alvin Purple), director Gillian Armstrong (on her short film, 100 a Day) and independent distributor, and later producer, Antony I. Ginnane. Two Australian features were reviewed: Dalmas and 27A.

There was a profile of director Peter Weir, by Richard Brennan. This was followed by the first Cinema Papers Production Report, which covered the location filming of The Cars That Ate Paris in Sofala, NSW. Those interviewed in the Report were Weir, producers Hal and Jim Elmore, director of photography Peter McLean and sound recordist Ken Hammond. This initial Report set the tone for those that followed (it was a regular feature up to issue No. 28), in that film technicians were accorded prominence with directors and money men.

Early Australian cinema was represented by Ina Bertrand’s article on Francis Birtles (plus In the Hall interview), while technical matters were covered in a piece on the Victorian Film Laboratories. Barrett Hodsdon wrote an article on the recent Tariff Board Report on the Motion Picture Industry [see Box 4]. There was no Production Survey; that had to wait to the next issue, where In Production listed eight 35mm features and eight 16mm films.

In Barrett Hodsdon’s article on the 1973 Tariff Board Inquiry into Motion Picture Films, Hodsdon lists the Board’s principal recommendations:

1. The formation of an Australian Film Authority (AFA) envisaged as the main body charged with the function of fostering and developing the industry producing theatrical films in Australia; and
2. The divestiture of 13 theatres from the major chains in Australia and the divestment of exhibition from distribution.

The second recommendation never came about, but the AFA and the Australian Film Commission do share similar interests. It was intended that the AFA comprise four branches:

(i) Project Branch. This was to replace the Australian Film Development Corporation (AFDC).

(ii) Film Distribution Branch. This would (a) take over distribution from Film Australia, (b) be an export agency for Australian films, and (c) subdivide exhibition outlets for those films with special monitoring problems;

(iii) Special Funds Branch. This would be concerned with (a) awards to films without government finance, as well as films of special merit, and (b) the allocation of funds for the Experimental Film Fund, the Film and Television Development Fund, and Education and archival grants; and

(iv) Industry Supervision Branch. This would act as an overseer of commercial exhibition and distribution interests, and would supervise the divestiture of the theatre chains.

3. Bishop did eventually become a contributing editor, and has been a frequent contributor.

Box 4

Tariff Board Report

As with each Cinema Papers that followed, not all the editorial was on Australian cinema. There was an interview with special effects king Ray Harryhausen, an article (by Mora) on Comics and Film, and reviews of Le Samourai, Solaris and Performance.

It was always envisaged that Cinema Papers balance its editorial coverage between Australian and overseas cinema. The magazine aimed to be a forum for Australian writers to develop critical ideas and, naturally, these interests were not exclusively devoted to Australian cinema.

Cinema Papers also sought a coverage of other national cinemas, ranging from the Swedish to the French to the Sri Lankan. Many have parallels with Australia’s, particularly those in Canada and New Zealand. By means of lengthy supplements, which included interviews with top industry figures, the magazine attempted to provide a wide range of information for those within the Australian industry to evaluate the positive aspects and avoid the negative.

Another benefit of a world view is that it counters tendencies toward parochial journalism; such writing invites a lessening of standards, not what an industry, still in its infancy, needs. In an interview at the time of Cinema Papers’ inception, Murray said, “One of the best things we can do for the Australian film industry is to be tough on it.” The Australian film industry can only be said to have reached maturity when its films can stand honest comparison with the best from the rest of the world.


CINEMA PAPERS March-April — 43
Australian Reaction

The reaction to the first issue, by readers and film critics, was mostly enthusiastic. There was a surprising number of people who felt Australia would not be able to produce enough films for the magazine's writers to cover, but most applauded the launch of a new, national film magazine.

Many newspapers carried minor items or photographs of the magazine's launch party, but it was not until April 27, 1974, after the publication of a second issue of Cinema Papers, that a considered opinion was printed. That was by film critic Colin Bennett in The Age (Melbourne): Film Guide, Film Journal, Film Chronicle, Cinema Papers: Mark I, Shumiere . . . we've seen them all come and go. Now we have a magazine version of Cinema Papers . . . and a really promising publication it is. This courageous venture devotes most of its big, bulging pages to Australian cinema — just when the cinema is reaching its most interesting stage and needs all the encouragement and publicity it can get. The current issue includes some very important articles, as well as an amount of superfluous fat.

There are pitfalls, I think, which Cinema Papers must be careful to avoid. One is the danger of overdoing the question-answer interviews format, which can quickly grow boring . . . Then again, the editors, in their commendable eagerness to promote local production, have devoted large dollops of space to issues to some film people who have yet to prove themselves . . .

Bennett continued to chart Cinema Papers' progress and on January 22, 1977, wrote a follow-up piece. In part it read:

Three years ago when a new Australian quarterly appeared, I suggested it might prove to be 'a national film magazine worthy of the name to present an Australian viewpoint on cinema to the world'. And after 11 issues, Cinema Papers is at least well on the way . . . C.P. has become a forum for the interchange of ideas and information between those who make, distribute, exhibit and preserve films and those who see them. Nowadays, no film-lover interested in what is going on in this country can afford to miss an issue . . .

A good deal of C.P.'s superfluous fat has been cut away by now, although it is still inclined to grab the nearest available American producer off the phone and question him at length about his past in 'B' quickies or his views on the Australian industry. The magazine has also found a better balance between local content and writing of the sort covers international publications . . .

There is so much to commend about Cinema Papers . . .

In his first article, Bennett raised the most-voiced criticism of Cinema Papers: the number, length and format of its interviews. As Cinema Papers has never printed an editorial, and thus not commented on magazine policy, it is perhaps informative to make some remarks here.

Two of the inspirations for the present Cinema Papers were Andy Warhol's Interview and the Playboy interviews. In fact, at one stage it was envisaged the magazine would be entirely interviews; the editors finally decided on about 30 per cent.

In opting for a question-and-answer format, the editors chose not to commission rewritten interviews, whereby the interviewee's answers are dotted throughout the journalist's prose. An example could be:

Ken Miller lay back on his white lounge in his Paddington sitting room. Copies of Vanity Fair lay sprawled on his glass coffee table. He looked tired as he sipped his decaffeinated coffee. 'Yes, it was one hell of a shoot', he confided. I thought about probing him more, but he looked so wrung out I decided first to question him about his 'relationship' with actress Judy Morse . . .

As to length, it has always been an editorial decision between readability and the need for depth of coverage. At the same time, there is no reason to assume every interview is read in one sitting, or in its entirety; it can be put down part-way, as with a book, and resumed later; or, a reader can skip passages he finds of lesser relevance. It is certainly not presumed that every word in every interview is of interest to each reader.

Regarding accuracy, Cinema Papers has always had the policy of returning edited transcripts to Australian interviewees for checking. Interviewees may also suggest rewrites of sections if they feel the passages are unclear, but there is no obligation on Cinema Papers to accept the changes. Obviously most are, since it is in everyone's interest that the interview be printed in its best form. However, if the changes significantly alter the meaning of the original they are not accepted. A published interview is a record of that interview, and the integrity of it should be retained.

A final point is that some people, such as Bennett, have suggested that the interviews are unedited and thus cheaper to run than an article. But the transcription costs alone are more than the minimal amounts Cinema Papers has been able to pay for a finished article, and the costs of editing are also expensive.

In many ways, interviews are the backbone of Cinema Papers and are not some cheap stop-gap. It is no coincidence that when books on Australian cinema are published it is these interviews which are the most often sourced and quoted.

Another oft-voiced criticism of Cinema Papers has been that it has concentrated too much on feature filmmaking. Albie Thoms in a 1976 article on the Sydney Filmmakers Cooperative wrote about "the total neglect of the new alternative Australian cinema by the Board-funded quarterly Cinema Papers".

"Alternative" is a word that people use to cover all kinds of filmmaking, from the avant-garde to low-budget features. In terms of highly experimental films, the editors of Cinema Papers chose not to attempt to duplicate the fine work of the Cantrills in their magazine. However, it was always intended that the magazine cover, and give recognition to, short and low-budget films. And this has happened. By the time of Thoms' article, of the 14 directors interviewed by Cinema Papers, four were at that time exclusively directors of short films (Paul Winkler, David Greig, John Papadopolous, Gillian Armstrong) and nine had never before made a feature, most having made

---

experimental shorts (e.g. Peter Weir, Mike Thornhill). Only one director had made more than one feature: Ken G. Hall. (The break-up of articles and reviews shows a similar pattern.)

The most recent reference to Cinema Papers' "neglected" position in recognition in the International Film Guide. This annual publication is the only one in the world to list and evaluate the leading film periodicals. There is a main section and then "Other Magazines". In the 1976 edition, Cinema Papers had its first entry in the latter section:

One of the world's most imaginatively designed movie quarters, its large format embracing a host of pictures, capsule comments and serious reviews and interviews. Colour tinting adds impact to the layout.

The next year Cinema Papers was up-graded to the main section, making it one of the elect 19. It is the only Australian film magazine to have been so listed. In 1983, the main section was reduced to only 15 entries. The one on Cinema Papers reads:

Still the largest film magazine in the world, with its gigantic format housing splendid photo reproduction, this Australian bimonthly is a cunning mix of reviews, interviews, news, and hard industry knowhow that will be of interest far beyond the boundaries of Australia.

The IFG's view of Cinema Papers as one of the world's leading film periodicals is shared by the Federation International des Archives du Film (FIAF), which indexes the top international film magazines. The umbrella of information about Australian films for world film buyers, critics and historians. This role was envisaged about Australian films for world film buyers, critics and historians. This role was envisaged about Australian films and not the magazine (though an absence of reviews did displease several critics), the AFC's position was accepted by the publishers.

Consolidation

It was originally intended that the members of the editorial board (Beilby, Mora and Murray) would alternate in the position of managing editor. However, Mora had returned to Europe in 1974 and his input was restricted to that of a few articles. Beilby and Murray then decided to alternate with one-year editorships in an attempt to combine film production and publishing, thus encouraging a healthy interchange between the two. Beilby was production supervisor on Mad Dog Morgan during an "off" stretch while Murray wrote and directed Denial (1974) and, later, the short feature, Summer Shadows (1977). However, the alternating theory did not work in practice (it was difficult to synchronize) and, as a result, Murray has edited 35 (and co-edited one) of the first 44 issues.

While the managing editors, with input from the contributing editors, largely control the editorial, it is the writers who should take credit for its quality. Film criticism, research and journalism were in their infancy during the 1960s, though journals such as Annotations on Film and the Sydney Cinema Journal did print lively and informed pieces. But there was little sense of direction, in part because there was no feature industry on which to focus.

Many critics in the early 1970s wrote for Lumiere and the early editions of Cinema Papers, and historians such as Andrew Pike and John Cooper were beginning to publish the early stages of their excellent research. With Cinema Papers' reappearance in 1973, and the demise of magazines such as Lumiere, most of these writers were soon being published in the one source. This enabled Cinema Papers to become the forum it had intended to be, one which willingly published disparate views. It is thus extraordinary to find how often one, as editor, had to have agreed (or insisted upon) everything published in the magazine. One is frequently stopped in one's tracks with an indignant, "But how can you say you like that film? Your reviewer tore it to pieces."

Not only is there independence of thought, there are individual styles and interests. Tom Ryan's rigorous analyses of the films of Brian De Palma contrast with the witty reviews of star biographies by Brian McFarlane, just as interviews with Peter Weir and Michael Thornhill contrast in style and content with those with Paul Winkler and Andrew J. Poslokowitz.

It is not the place here to evaluate the skills of the many contributors to Cinema Papers; their work stands for itself. However, a look through the past 43 issues indicates the growing depth and quality of film writing in Australia (see Box 5, Cinema Papers). By no means has a monopoly on fine writing, in its magazine or associated publications, but it has played, and will continue to play, a key role as a forum for the best film writers, whatever their areas of interest.

In tandem with the increased editorial standard there has been a steady increase in sales. Starting with only 4000 in 1973, sales now approximate 15,000. This includes subscription sales in more than 60 countries, making the magazine more widely distributed than, say, Screen International (which sells 9000 copies).

In fact, Cinema Papers is one of the world's five or six top-selling critical film journals, on a par with Film Comment in the U.S.

"Box 5 Cinema Papers Initiatives"

The Interview
Production Report
Filmography
In Production
Festival Reviews
Picture Reviews
Review Section
Book Reviews
Index
Classrooms
The Quarter
Feature Checklist
Soundtracks
Guide to
Australian Film
Producer
Film Censorship
Listings
International
Production Round-up
Box-office Grosses
Filmmakers Service
Film and Facility Guide
Forum
New Zealand Report
Television Section
Film Study Resources
Guide
Other Cinema
Cannes Supplement
Television Supplement
Director Monograph
New Zealand
Supplement
New Zealand Section
Television Section
Canada Supplement
New Products and
Processes
Color Poster
Color Pages
Channels Magazine

CINEMA PAPERS March-April — 45

9. The only other attempt was when one executive of the AFC suggested that Cinema Papers' applications for funds would be more favorably received if the magazine stopped running advertisements from overseas companies. His suggestion was rejected.
10. It has been alleged that Lumiere folded because the Film and Television Board diverted funds from it to Cinema Papers. This is incorrect; Lumiere was invited at the time of Cinema Papers' inception to apply for another grant but declined to do so.
Changes

In 1976, Robert Le Tet joined Cinema Papers Pty Ltd as a financial adviser (he also became a director in 1980). Le Tet, who had worked at Crawford Productions and AAV, was at the time a freelance consultant before becoming managing director of The Film House Pty Ltd, and, among other positions, a consultant to and then director and deputy chairman of the Melbourne radio station, EON-FM. Le Tet's contribution to Cinema Papers was particularly significant in two areas: change of frequency and diversification.

In 1979, the magazine changed from a (base) 96-page quarterly to an 80-page bi-monthly. The aim was to amortize overheads against six issues instead of four, and thus improve the company's balance sheet and cash flow. The change to bi-monthly also enabled the magazine to carry more news-type information and be more up-to-date.

Going bi-monthly proved a success and was appreciated by readers. Instead of sales falling, as feared, they increased. And although advertising revenue per issue dropped, the annual total increased. So in two ways the change of frequency strengthened the magazine.

The rationale for diversification was that the projected annual deficit had stopped reducing and was beginning to worsen. As the Australian Film Commission, which had absorbed the Film, Radio and Television Board, indicated it could not increase its annual funding level, this meant extra funds had to be found elsewhere. The decision was to move into film-related publishing ventures which would hopefully return a profit.

The diversification, overseen by Beilby while Murray ran the magazine, commenced in a major way with the Australian Motion Picture Yearbook, first published in 1980 in association with the New South Wales Film Corporation. Its appearance was welcomed by the industry, which had not had access to the mass of information listed in its pages, and the book sold sufficient copies (2500) to nearly break even.

Subsequent editions appeared in 1981 (also in association with the NSWFC) and in 1982 (under the Four Seasons imprint). By then, sales had increased to 4000 including several hundred overseas. Each edition was edited by Beilby, the third in partnership with Ross Lansell.

Other early ventures included Film Production in the State of Victoria (1979), in association with the then Victorian Film Corporation, edited by Murray, Film Expo 80 (1981), published for the Film and Television Production Association of Australia and the NSWFC and The Australian Film Producers and Investors Guide (1978), edited by Beilby. This was a subscription service based on the highly-regarded "Guide to the Australian Film Producers", published in 19 parts in Cinema Papers. Unfortunately, the Investors Guide never fully got off the ground, and folded.

A much more successful project was The New Australian Cinema (1979), edited by Murray. This was the first book to analyze thematically Australian features and shorts since 1970. Published by Thomas Nelson Australia, in association with Cinema Papers, it quickly sold its print run and was reprinted in 1980.

Also published in association with Thomas Nelson was Australian TV: the first 25 years, edited by Beilby. It continued the growing coverage and interest in Australian television begun in Cinema Papers (No. 13).

Then, in 1981, Cinema Papers published The Documentary Film in Australia (in association with Film Victoria). Edited by Lansell and Beilby, it was a pioneering work. But it was costly to produce, and ended up draining the magazine's resources instead of supplementing them. This in itself threatened the continuance of the publishing program. Even with an enviable track record, the effects of one 'failed' project was becoming a risk Cinema Papers could barely afford to take.

This concern, plus an absence of risk capital, led to a scaling down of the diversification program. Beilby left Cinema Papers at the end of 1981-82 to head a new publishing venture, Roscope Publishers, set up to publish the Motion Picture Yearbook and several other yearbooks in a joint venture with Thomas Nelson. This meant that the only projects which could be initiated were those that could be handled by the magazine editor in any spare moments. Thus in 1982-83 only one project was started, Brian McFarlane's Words and Images (1983), published by Heinemann Publishers Australia, in association with Cinema Papers.

In this book, McFarlane examines 10 Australian novels and the films made of them since 1970. In all, the diversification program was a success, with most of the projects listing a profit. More important, they collectively represent a significant contribution to film and literary culture in Australia.

Interruptions

Cinema Papers had been published continuously from September 1973 to July 1983 when the publication was stopped, due to financial insolvency. The reasons for this are complex, in part due to shifts in the relationship between Cinema Papers Pty Ltd and the AFC.

As mentioned earlier, the AFC absorbed the Film, Radio and Television Board. It was not a happy merger, many senior executives in the AFC resenting having to take on the likes of the Experimental Film Fund; it was seen as lowering their self-image as merchant bankers to the film industry. They were less interested in film culture (despite the wording of the AFC's governing Act), and some questioned what they saw as Cinema Papers' aloofness from the film industry. While the Film and Television Board valued an independent, critical journal, some within the AFC felt the magazine should be more a servant to its philosophies and interests.
And, whereas the Film, Radio and Television Board had instructed that Cinema Papers be set up as a privately-owned company, the AFC was now arguing that the magazine should be controlled by an industry membership (as with the Australian Film Institute).

The issue that brought everything to a head was money. Since 1977, Cinema Papers has been assisted financially by deficit funding from the AFC. Cinema Papers would predict the annual, financial-year deficit and then apply to the AFC for that amount. In 1973, the grant represented 100 per cent of the expenditure budget; by 1981-1982, it had dropped to only 10 per cent, quite a gain on the road to self-sufficiency.

At the same time, the AFC began granting less than the requested amounts. In the three financial years from July 1980 to June 1983, Cinema Papers' requests were cut back by $42,000 (or 32 per cent).

These cut-backs were crippling and difficult to understand. Perhaps the annual grants were tied to earlier Film and Television Board levels ($9000 per issue in 1974; $8333 in 1982-83); perhaps the cut-backs represented an AFC suspicion of the size of the projected deficit, fuelled by having to deal daily with producers notorious for inflating their claims.

Of course, there were many other factors that contributed to Cinema Papers' financial plight. Cinema Papers' requests in full still would have been in the red. And if the AFC is guilty of unnecessary cut-backs, Cinema Papers is guilty of having requested too little. Knowing the AFC would make annual grants of only $40,000 to $50,000, Cinema Papers tried to produce the magazine for that, aware that substantially higher funds were required.

As well, there were the vagaries of the diversification program. This was worsened when a total absence of capital meant only one special project could be initiated in 1982-83.

Another contributing factor to the unhealthy position at the end of 1982-83 was the poor state of the film industry. Unsettled by changes in the tax legislation and generally hampered by the severe economic recession, the industry went through a lean phase. This had a major and detrimental effect on advertising sales.

The net result of all the above factors, and several others, was that Cinema Papers was faced at the end of 1982-83 with a large deficit. Given changes in the Companies Act, it became illegal to trade knowing one had a deficit one did not have a reasonable belief could be met. This meant the accumulated loss had to be liquidated and the subsidy for the next financial year granted or Cinema Papers would have to cease its operations.

In June 1983 Cinema Papers applied to the AFC, starkly setting out its financial position. One hope was to convince the AFC about the extent to which Cinema Papers felt it had been underfunded over the years. The application then proposed a scheme whereby the AFC and the various state film bodies would together meet the deficit and adequately fund the magazine in 1983-84.

While the application proposed a general course of action, it did not request specific amounts of money from specific corporations. It was, hopefully, a basis for discussion. But the AFC, alarmed by the size of the deficit and disappointed it had not been informed of the situation earlier, rejected the application outright. One week later another letter came from the AFC enquiring about when Cinema Papers was going into liquidation and what would happen to the masthead and copyright.

Given the AFC's rejection, Cinema Papers had no alternative but to cease publication voluntarily and on July 22 all staff were laid off. On the basis of legal advice, Cinema Papers then sought a 120-day moratorium from its creditors while it attempted to solve its financial plight. This proved a lengthy and exhausting process.

Applications to Film Victoria and the South Australian Film Corporation were rejected. No reply has been received from the Queensland Film Corporation to the July 15 application (things really do move slowly up North!). The only options were to raise funds privately (three offers were forthcoming) or change the AFC's mind.

Finally, after months of negotiation, and involving the advice and help of a Cinema Papers Action Committee, an agreement was reached between Cinema Papers and the AFC. It is worth mentioning here because it will have a major effect on the magazine in time to come.

13. The committee comprised, apart from Cinema Papers directors and staff, Alan Finney, Geoff Gardner, Natalie Miller, Jill Robb, Tom Ryan and Julie Stone.
The Future
1984...

Cinema Papers Pty Ltd has now sold the copyright and assets to a newly-formed public company, limited by guarantee, which has also taken on the subscription liability. The directors of MTV Publishing Limited are: Peter Beilby, Jill Robb (producer), Natalie Miller (director and producer), Alan Finney (head of marketing at Roadshow) and Tom Ryan (lecturer); others are still to be appointed.

As part of the deal, the AFC and Film Victoria have written off all outstanding loans and investments (the NSWFCC had already generously written off an outstanding investment in the second Australian Motion Picture Yearbook). As well, the AFC has granted $80,000 and Film Victoria $27,277. This covers the purchase of assets and the financing of the publication of these three issues of Cinema Papers by June 30 (of which this issue is the first). During that time a publishing and marketing consultant will examine all areas of production and management, and report back to the MTV directors on what he feels is the most feasible publishing and management structure. This could involve a change of frequency or format.

The final decision lies with the directors.

A new managing editor is also to be appointed. To this author, who, after 10 years with the publication, believes it is in the Journal's best interest to have a fresh input.

Not only will the MTV directors and staff bring new ideas to the magazine, but annual, open meetings will be held in Sydney and Melbourne, initially, to invite response from Cinema Papers' readers.

The net result of all these changes is that Cinema Papers can look forward to the future. Its financial support appears stable, with increased funding from the AFC and Film Victoria, and it can now fulfill its role as Australia's national film magazine with confidence. It will, of course, be a different magazine. How, one will have to wait and see. ★

Acknowledgments
The author would like to record here his appreciation to the following for their assistance and support during Cinema Papers' period of adjustment:

All those readers who wrote to the AFC giving their opinions of the magazine and arguing for continued funding; the AFC, in particular Joe Skrzynski, Phillip Adams, David Stratton and Murray Brown; Film Victoria, particularly Terence McMahon and John Kearney; the New South Wales Film Corporation, especially Paul Roomfalsky; Cinema Papers' members Patrick Amad and Helen Greenwood for working part-time for four months, without any expectation of financial reward; the Cinema Papers Action Committee and his fellow directors; several personal friends who gave great support; Ian Bailby, Antoni I. Ginnane; Sue Murray; Peggy Nicholls; Les Prad; David White; the management and staff at The Film House for their cooperation and the use of facilities, especially Trish Fole and Stuart Greig; and those creditors who gave Cinema Papers the time and encouragement to sort out its affairs.

The author also wishes to thank sincerely all Cinema Papers staff and contributors since September 1973.

The early sections of this article are based, in part, on a study of Cinema Papers written by Ewan Burnett.

Box 6

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Editors</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sub-editing</strong></td>
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| Arnold Zable, Jekes Zalkans |

48 — March-April CINEMA PAPERS
A selection of photographs commissioned for Cinema Papers

Phil Quirk; director Henri Safran; 1982
Ponch Hawkes; actress Helen Morse; 1982
Gordon Glenn; producer Phillip Adams; 1976
Photo Gallery

Ruth Maddison; producer Geoff Burrowes and director George Miller; 1982

Peter Thompson; director Tim Burstall; 1979

Gordon Glenn; director Gillian Armstrong; 1973

Peter Thompson; director Tim Burstall; 1979

Gordon Glenn; director John Power; 1977

Ponch Hawkes; filmmakers Corinne and Arthur Gretill; 1979

—

Philip Morris; animator Bruce Petty; 1979

Ponch Hawkes; filmmakers Corinne and Arthur Gretill; 1979

50 — March-April CINEMA PAPERS
Gordon Glenn; director Peter Weir; 1973

Leon Saunders; director Tom Cowan and daughter; 1977

Peter Thompson; director Kevin Dobson; 1982

Peter McLean, director Jim Sharman; 1979

Warren Scott; director Ken Cameron; 1979

Leon Saunders; director Phillip Noyce; 1977

Warren Scott; director-producer Michael Thornhill; 1979
Leon Saunders; producers James and Hal McElroy; 1977

Leon Saunders; Terry Jackman (Hoyts); 1977

Peter McLean; scriptwriter Margaret Kelly and producer Joan Long; 1981

Peter Hendrie; producer Antony I. Ginnane; 1978

Peter Hendrie; producer-director John Lamond; 1978

Gordon Glenn; producer Pat Lovell; 1976

Peter McLean; scriptwriter Margaret Kelly and producer Joan Long; 1981

Photo Gallery

Tenth Anniversary Supplement
Government Support for the Film Industry

Phillip Adams
Chairman, Australian Film Commission

Funds, Fiddles and Follies

Some months ago the Australian Film Commission (AFC) announced the appointment of Kim Williams as chief executive-designate. At the time I expressed delight that someone of Kim's calibre had been foolish enough to accept this important position. Kim may have been amused when he heard this but I wonder if he will be laughing in six months time. By then he will have been bad-mouthed by a hundred disappointed applicants, bloodied from his political joustings and jostled by besieging complainers, seers, bagmen and visionaries.

The AFC spends much of its time saying nyet to people, hearing the same word echo in the gloomy corridors of Canberra and, occasionally, when everything comes together and there is a film on the screen, standing in the back row and applauding the result. But there will be few thanks and no Oscars for Kim. At the end of his term he will join Joe Skrzynski in exile in Tuscany and begin work on his melancholy memoirs.

Government support for the arts is really a euphemism for fiddling and funding. It is something people in suits do to people in T-shirts. What's more, it is something you do largely by the seat of your pants: there are lots of rules but no formulae. You have to use your wits and read between the lines on the pieces of paper and faces in front of you. You can't consult a computer or a crystal ball.

This being the case, how do you judge the value of government support, the finesse of the fiddlers and funders? Certainly not by their rhetoric or dress sense. Perhaps the answer is to apply the Hollywood rule: that you are only as good as your last picture, or, in this case, funding decision.

But that is a pretty tough yardstick. Most filmmakers want to talk about their next picture, not the one they just finished, just as anglers prefer to recall only the one that got away. It is a human foible and funding bodies are not exempt.

The truth is that patrons, whether private benefactors or bodies corporate, are dwarfed when the dust has settled by the triumphs and follies of those they support. They are like the scaffolding on buildings: ungainly and temporary structures dismantled and forgotten when the building has finally taken shape.

However, for those who insist you are only as good as the last thing you did, the evidence is in your hands: the most recent decision of the AFC was to lend its support to this 10th Anniversary Issue, which I now commend to you.

Government Film Funding (State)

Paul Riomfalvy
Chairman, New South Wales Film Corporation

The Holy Grail

If there has been a single strand running through most Australian attitudes to filmmaking in the past decade, it is this: the search for a magic formula for The Great Australian Movie. We have meant several things by Great: implicit in the use of the word have been artistic achievement, cultural importance and entertainment. The GAM would be something which audiences would both admire and make profitable.

The magic formula has been our holy grail, something which, we have told ourselves, can be found — well, maybe. Like a medieval alchemist crying “Eureka”, we have delivered, when the dust has settled by the triumphs and contradictions as the following:

We must aim modestly at successful arthouse distribution. We must make films for the popular, mainstream market. Our models should be the best of European cinema. No, we have more to learn from American films. We must spend much more money on production. We must keep our budgets very low. People are rapt in rediscovering their past through period films. That might have been true but the market has become saturated with “nostalgia”: we must use contemporary themes. Overseas stars are essential to international sales. Overseas actors are a waste of money (besides being culturally impure). The subject-matter of our films should be more international. The most interesting subjects are those based on our national experience and culture. Profit lies in American cinema distribution. No, the cinema is dying; our best commercial hope lies in the new ancillary markets. Both propositions are wrong because they imply one-off motion pictures; we should be making mini-series for television instead. And so on.

Often, a formula has an immediate attraction because of very recent experience. Thus, the success of films such as Picnic at Hanging Rock and Caddie led to a rush to buy the rights to a lot of old Australian novels. The Man from Snowy River was taken as a validation of big budgets and high promotional expenditure. In contrast, Paul Cox has probably single-handedly been responsible for the recent advocacy of low-budget films.

A formula can owe its derivation as much to failure as to success. This explains the backlash against period films after the disappointing response to The Irishman, The Mango Tree and the like. I well remember the fears expressed by a number of people when the New South Wales Film Corporation decided to invest heavily in My Brilliant Career in 1978. “Not another period film!” was the wail. “You're making a mistake. The public is sick of nostalgia.” In their anguish, they ignored the fact that “period” does not necessarily equal “nostalgia” and that a film set at the turn of the century could have contemporary relevance. Eventually, we, too, were driven to tears — all the way to the bank.

This points to the problem with most of the formulas which have been advanced for the salvation of the Australian film industry: they have generally suffered from the logical fallacy of arguing from the particular to the general. This is not to say that they never contain elements of truth. Thus, it is interesting to observe that the most profitable Australian films have not depended for their success either in Australia or elsewhere, on the boxoffice attraction of overseas stars. (While two of those films — The Man from Snowy River and Breaker Morant — had foreign performers
in key roles, they were chosen for performance, not for any so-called "marquee" power. Similarly, the best prospects for many Australian films in North America might lie in the ancillary market. There has been a production of Mad Max 2 and The Man from Snowy River, breaking into the mainstream American theatrical market. Nor did it stop My Brilliant Career and Breaker Morant, for example, from doing good business on the American art-house circuit.

My belief is that, as it did for knights on white chargers in the Middle Ages, the search for a holy grail by Australian filmmakers has provoked, with some success, the search for the filmic holy grail. There is no magic formula. What matters are talent and good ideas, and these are unquantifiable and unpredictable — in other words, incapable of reduction to some kind of algorithm. In said search, one must be mindful of something which the chairman and chief executive of Universal Pictures, Lew Wasserman, the doyen of Hollywood filmmakers, once said; if he could be certain of a film's earning potential, he would not be sitting in his office earning a salary but would set up a one-man clairvoyancy business. Even what he earns in his present job would pale into insignificance alongside what he would make if he could see the future. This is not a matter for despair; it is simply a reality. For, without the aid of formulas, Australian filmmakers — producers, directors, technicians, actors and actresses — have achieved a lot in the past 10 years. In measurable terms, they have made some highly successful films and have won a host of awards. Perhaps more important, they have achieved two immeasurables: they have helped lift Australians' consciousness of their own place and culture, and they have created a greater addition to the art world, not just in Australia. Nevertheless, at this stage of its existence, the Australian film industry is still young. It has achieved a lot in the past 10 years, but its development — and in the foreseeable future — the Australian film industry cannot be economically viable, independent of governmental assistance. Government film-funding bodies remain the principal source of production finance, although the federal tax incentives are a form of official assistance — and in some instances, the grant to film a package may have, it is none other than the skill to produce, direct, write, film and act. What I have said might seem somewhat irrelevant. So be it. A touch more irreverence, towards ourselves, would not go astray in our industry. The end result of our labors can, of course, be very important, both in terms of the cultural and entertainment objectives and the financial responsibility we have. But, as individuals, I do not think we have to take ourselves nearly as seriously as we so often do. As I said before: what we need are talent and good ideas, not self-importance.

**Actors and Announcers Equity**

Janette Paramore
NSW Divisional Secretary, Actors and Announcers Equity

The achievements of the Australian film industry during the past 10 years have been positive and swift. In a few years, the industry has won recognition at home and abroad. It is to the credit of the creative people involved and of our governments to build an industry where one does not need government support for Australian film. Nevertheless, at this stage of its development, the Australian film industry is still young. It has achieved a lot in the past 10 years, but its development — and in the foreseeable future — the Australian film industry cannot be economically viable, independent of governmental assistance. Government film-funding bodies remain the principal source of production finance, although the federal tax incentives are a form of official assistance — and in some instances, the grant to film a package may have, it is none other than the skill to produce, direct, write, film and act. What I have said might seem somewhat irrelevant. So be it. A touch more irreverence, towards ourselves, would not go astray in our industry. The end result of our labors can, of course, be very important, both in terms of the cultural and entertainment objectives and the financial responsibility we have. But, as individuals, I do not think we have to take ourselves nearly as seriously as we so often do. As I said before: what we need are talent and good ideas, not self-importance.

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**Children's Television**

Patricia Edgar
Director, Australian Children's Television Foundation

Ten years ago the Children's Television Advisory Committee (CTAC), in a report to the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, condemned the low standard of children's programs produced by the television industry. The programs, the CTAC said, failed to meet the spirit of the Production Guidelines for Children's Television Programs published in June 1971. The programs were unimaginative, unfunny, and the confirmed that programming slots and children turned away from them in droves.

In 1981, two years after the introduction of new guidelines for children's programs by the
The CPC began with high hopes. Nothing less than a new dawn in children's television was envisaged in which programs would have the same resources, human and financial, as their adult counterparts. The results fell far short of this expectation.

The regulation of children's television is a new field. Only in Australia has the body responsible for monitoring the commercial television industry taken on the challenge of regulation; each step has been experimental.

The CPC soon recognized that the system needed tuning if regulation were to be successful. Two years after its creation, the CPC concluded there had been limited successes and significant failures resulting from its work. A number of high-quality, overseas programs had been shown which most certainly would not have been shown without the ABT's requirements. In addition, there were Australian-made programs which appeared on air which should not have been produced. The problems of children's television continued to be publicized, largely because of the CPC's existence.

However, the high level of repeated programs, the lack of diversity, the push-up of programs beyond the young age level to attract older audiences, and the lack of high-quality productions remained as problems. For the next three years the ABT ignored the CPC's requests to tighten the regulatory system. The stations flouted the guidelines and the ABT took no action until October 1983 when it released the CPC's revised program standards for public consumption. These standards are well-drafted and tighten the loopholes that had been evident. Repeals have been limited. The standards require 50 per cent of first-release Australian material to be played between 4 and 5 p.m.; there is a diversity of program types and an eight-hour, high-quality children's drama quota from each network to be broadcast each year beginning July 1984. The ABT is expected to have promulgated the standards by late February 1984. It has taken five years of work by the CPC to create this regulatory framework and this achievement is significant. However, to make programs which will attract children involves far more than standards; it takes creative talent, ideas, production expertise and money.

The second major breakthrough in the past decade in the area of children's television was the establishment of the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF). After a number of government inquiries, a Senate Standing Committee reported that the hard work of a number of groups and individuals, the Australian Education Council decided to establish a Working Group to look at the feasibility of establishing such a Foundation. That investigation led to the ACTF's incorporation in March 1982.

The ACTF's major function is to act as a catalyst bringing to children's television the film and televisions' best resources. It is done by encouraging the development, production and transmission of programs through script development, production-oriented research, providing production investment finance and other appropriate forms of assistance to program makers. The Foundation also works to raise the profile of children's television in the community by running workshops and seminars, providing speakers, arranging screenings, and publishing papers and study guides on relevant topics.

The past 10 years have brought significant changes in the area of children's television in Australia, but the main results are yet to be seen on the air. A regulatory system can provide only the framework; a foundation can take risks independent producers and stations would not take to develop new and exciting projects: in the end, the stations must co-operate if children's television is to succeed.

The position the ACTF takes is of fundamental importance in this process. Standards must be enforced. No station executive enjoys the process of public accountability that the licence renewal system would provide. The ABT can wield the stick but there must also be a carrot. Alongside the work of the ABT, the process of public accountability that the licence renewal system would provide. The ABT can wield the stick but there must also be a carrot. Alongside the work of the ABT, the process of public accountability.

Distribution and Exhibition

Alan Finney

National Director, Marketing and Distribution, Roadshow

Meeting Great Expectations

In the years leading up to the early 1970s, it seemed as though there were films from the U.S., France, Italy and Britain . . . and then there were Australian films. That Australian films were shown at all was due to the sense of obligation felt by the distributors and exhibitors, and that sense was bred by the Film Foundation of Australia. A lot of heat and urgency was generated by people who were determined, without really knowing why, that Australia have a film industry.

By the late 1970s, this sense of urgency had reached the stage where expectations about what the Australian film industry could produce had been raised too high. Films began falling far short of expectation and the public was let down. Australian film with the attitude, “Here is another Australian film being foisted on us.” In part, the public was reacting to the fact that every Australian film was being described as the best Australian film ever — at the urging of the producers.

Today, the energy and urgency have dissipated somewhat and the people handling Australian films have more confidence in them, and in themselves. They realize that distributing an Australian film is essentially similar to handling a film from any other country; that is, each film must be considered on an individual basis and on its merits.

The producers' expectation of Australian films has also become more realistic, taking the attitude that locally made films will be the same as films from other countries — some will be good and some will be bad. The thing that producers have had to carry in the past: that they are the best ever.

The pressure on distributors and exhibitors from producers has also lessened as the latter became more sensible and more attuned to the commercial place. In the early 1970s, producers used to be concerned that the distributor was not spending enough money on the launch of a film. Even today one still encounters producers who still say, “If it is not $250,000, they become frantic on the mistaken assumption that there is a direct causal relationship between the advertising dollar and the box-office: that the more you spend the more you are going to make.

Producers are now realizing that it is not wise to seek distribution with a distributor who does not share their commercial expectations of the film, or at the very least, the expectation that the distributor was not spending enough money on the launch of a film. Even today one still encounters producers who still say, “It is your job to get the film in the marketplace only to lose it; it may be better to aim solely for video. Don’t spend money on advertising: that is your advertising budget?” If it is not $250,000, they become frantic on the mistaken assumption that there is a direct causal relationship between the advertising dollar and the box-office: that the more you spend the more you are going to make.

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The Australian Motion Picture Yearbook 1983 ........................................ p. 2
Words and Images .................................................................................. p. 3
The New Australian Cinema .................................................................. p. 4
Australian TV: The First 25 Years ......................................................... p. 4
The Documentary Film in Australia ...................................................... 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.

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The author, Brian McFarlane, is Principal Lecturer in Literature at the Chisholm Institute of Technology and is a Contributing Editor to Cinema Papers, Australia's leading film journal. He has published many articles on Australian and other literature and film. He is also the author of a book on Martin Boyd's "Langton" novels, is the editor of the annual collection of literary essays, Viewpoints, and is the co-editor of a forthcoming anthology of Australian verse.

Contents

1. From Page to Screen
2. Wake in Fright
3. Picnic at Hanging Rock
4. The Getting of Wisdom
5. The Mango Tree
6. The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith
7. My Brilliant Career
8. Monkey Grip
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Roadshow had an idea for a budget that corresponded exactly with theirs. It is a development we applaud because it would be irresponsible to spend massive amounts of money that will not significantly increase one's return at the box-office and which would diminish any potential profit for producers and investors.

The question of whether marketing methods have become more sophisticated or targeted towards a specific audience, or whether the market has changed, is difficult to answer. Marketing methods are neither sophisticated nor do they change very much; we really tend to do the same things again and again. Some marketing tools and approaches are more appropriate for a particular film; probably the key question is: "Which of the rather stereotypical and established set of procedures do we apply to this film?" Why people go into a cinema to see a particular film, apart from the mass audience phenomenon such as E.T. and Return of the Jedi, is an unknown. No one knows why before the event. Everyone knows why after the event.

One of the most pleasant surprises of the past 10 years was Breaker Morant. Long and detailed meetings were held between Roadshow and an enthusiastic Matt Carroll [producer] about a film that would fit the Sydney Film Festival, but he was unable to find a director. Finally, he was given some money to go to Australia, where he came up with an idea for a budget that corresponded exactly with theirs. It is a development we applaud because it would be irresponsible to spend massive amounts of money that will not significantly increase one's return at the box-office and which would diminish any potential profit for producers and investors.

The Industry Comments

Barbara Alysen
Television reporter and producer

Documentaries

Documentaries are the Cinderellas of the film business. Those who make them are not feted by the media the way feature filmmakers are; the films themselves do not always fit the popular conception of cinema. But, in the past decade, it is the documentary more than the feature which has revealed the depth of talent and imagination in the local industry. Australian documentaries have proved more consistently successful overseas, critically and commercially, than most of the much-vaunted features which have secured foreign distribution.

Until recently, however, a local, independently made documentary was likely to be screened only by the Sydney Filmmakers Cooperative, the Institute or Perth Institute of Film and Television, and the chances of a sale to local television were, at best, slim. There have always been some exceptions, but in the past few years these have become more numerous. Film Australia's The Human Face of China, produced by Suzanne Baker, and Bostock's Lousy Little Sixpence were, at the time, the most ambitious documentaries. They aimed to do more than to make a straightforwardly made documentary was likely to be consistently successful overseas, critically and commercially, than most of the much-vaunted features which have secured foreign distribution.

Since the mid-1970s, the CDB, along with the AFC's Project Development Branch, has become a major source of funding for documentary filmmakers and those funds have been pivotal to an increase in production. The range of themes being treated and styles being employed has also blossomed.

Ironically, television, normally unadventurous, helped show the way. In 1969, the ABC began the series, Chequerboard, which ran into the mid-1970s and introduced a new style of social documentary.

Among the social issues of the early 1970s was the beginning of the "second wave" of feminism. A handful of self-taught filmmakers began to target Australia's Women's Film Group and began producing films to promote feminist ideas. The group's first films, Woman's Day 20c (1973), Home (1973) and A Film for Discussion (1975), have become classics.

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Other early titles include Patricia Edgar's Got At (1972) and Barbara Creed's Homosexuality: A Film for Discussion (1975). In International Women's Year, 1975, the South Australian Film Corporation (SAFC) and Film Australia produced documentaries on women's issues. From the SAFC came four films under the general title 1:1 and, from Film Australia, Jane Oehr's Seeing Red and Feeling Blue, a film about aboriginalism, is remembered in part for the controversy over Film Australia's final cut.

More recently, women's films have been more adventurous in style, and less easily categorized. One of the most ambitious important documentary, however, has been For Love or Money (Margot Oliver, Megan McMurphy, Jeni Thorney and Margot Nash, 1983), a two-hour compilation of the history of Australia's women's liberation movement.

In the 1970s, the Aboriginal land rights movement was also gathering steam. Alessandro Cavadini documented the black struggle, including the pitching of the tent in front of Parliament House in Canberra, in Ngilga A-Na (1972). Together with Carolyn Strachan he made Protected (1976), about a 1975 strike by Palm Islanders, We Stop Here (1978) and Two Laws (1981). Curtis Levy filmed the indigenous Malaybanga Country (1976); Geoffrey Bardon recorded traditional artists in A Calendar of Dreaming (1977) and Mick and the Moon (1978); and director of photography, Michael Edols, made the lyrical Lalai — Dreamtime and Floating (both 1976).

Recently, Aboriginals have become more involved in documenting their own campaigns. Community leader Essie Coffey worked with Martha Atkinson and Alec Morgan on My Survival As An Aboriginal (1979), and Gerry Bostock collaborated with Alec Morgan on Lousy Little Sixpence (1983).

In 1978, concern about the environment was voiced by Peter Woodroffe (Pat Paterson, Sedna White and Peter Gailey) and Green City (Richard Cole), two films about the "green bans" on development in Sydney. More recently the battle for Tasmania's Franklin River has been documented in such films as The Last Wild River (Mike Cordell, 1980).

These are but a few of the issues taken up by independent filmmakers. Other issues have been covered by institutions such as the Aus-
Australian Film and Television School (AFTS) which, since its first, interim training course in 1974, has produced a diverse series of documents, from Phil Noyce's irreverent profiles of a guru and a bikie leader in 'Castor and Pollux' (1974), to Peter Gray's examination of masturbation in 'Getting it On' (1977).

In 1977, the AFTS also produced a "training film", a dramatized-documentary called 'People Don't Talk About It' (Ansara and D. Hay) which detailed the working lives of women employed in a chicken-processing plant. The film became a cause celebre when the AFTS took legal action to prevent its release.

Although most Australian documentaries are made by institutions, it is those made independently, by self-employed producers and directors, which have proved the most significant. Theatrical and television screenings have ensured a large audience for some.

Tom Haydon's 'The Last Tasmanian' (1978) attracted international attention and caused some dissonance at home when Aboriginal and white activists questioned the accuracy of its title and its impact on land-rights demands by today's Tasmanian Aboriginals. David Bradley's 'Frontline' (1979) profiling Vietnam-war correspondent Neil Davis, has been widely seen around the world. Davis has been nominated for the American Academy Award, only the fifth Australian film to be nominated. Chris Noonan's 'Stepping Out' (1980) has introduced a worldwide audience to a new view of the intellectually handicapped and chauked up a host of awards along the way.

Many of Australia's most impressive documentaries have been shot offshore, among them Tidikawa and Friends (Jef and Su Doring 1971); Gary Kildea's 'Trobiand Cricket' (1976); 'Changing the Needle' (Martha Ansara, Mavis Robertson and Dasha Ross), the 1981 film of a drug rehabilitation centre in Vietnam; 'Angels of War' (Andrew Pilk, Hank Nelson and Gavan Daws, 1982), about the treatment of Papua New Guinean natives during the war in the Pacific; and 'First Contact' (Robin Anderson and Bob Connolly, 1983), documenting the first European expeditions into the New Guinea highlands. The latter two, along with 'Frontline' and 'For Love or Money', signal Australian filmmakers' new-found enthusiasm for compilation documentaries, after the success of Peter Luck's television series, 'This Fabulous Century'.

Among the success stories, Alby Mangels' 'World Safari' deserves a mention. A crusadely-travelogue, it became one of the top-grossing Australian films of 1980-81. It was a success because of its basic appeal and because Mangels and his partner took charge of the film's exhibition. In the style of the surf filmmaker, they turned screenings into a show and in country and suburban halls into drudgery events with enviable returns.

Success has brought a form of strength to local documentary filmmakers: the market is widening, but so is the competition. Many documentary filmmakers had to lobby hard to have their films included in the Fraser Government's 1981 package of tax concessions for investors in Australian films. And lobbying continues to try to win a better deal for the AFTC's Creative Development Branch, usually short of funds and still a crucial source of backing for many documentary filmmakers.

**Film Criticism**

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### Adrian Martin

**Tutor in Film Studies, Melbourne College of Advanced Education**

Ten years of Australian cinema: what is it that has kept me hanging in there during all that time as a film critic, promoting or debunking this film or that, that engaging in serious polemical arguments and generally prescribing the best direction for our national cinema?

The answer is a sad, tired, disillusioned one with no profit: Not today. Today it seems plugged into the "I love Australia", gung-ho nationalism which by now is the official policy of most local film institutions; more like the duty reluctantly internalized by a citizen who has been nagged into obedience by the solemn voices of "Australian film culture". For any local person, who loves films, it seems that Australian cinema must, by necessity, be the most important item on the film agenda. Magazines such as *Cinema Papers* and *Filmnews*, university, college and school courses everywhere, and the general orientation of public debate all testify to this on-going, urgent need.

Yet, there is a trick, a sleight-of-hand involved in all this. The struggle with the fabulous dream of an Australian cinema is waged in an eternal present: there is always a new film coming, a new director to be negotiated. Duty propels itself forth on one proviso: don't look back; amnesia is the handy, terminal condition of Australian "phantom film culture", for its history is a veritable skeleton of embarrassments. The drive to save the industry comments.

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### Film Studies (NSW)

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### Susan Dermody and John Tulloch

**Lecturer in film, New South Wales Institute of Technology; Associate professor, English and Linguistics, Macquarie University**

During the past 10 years, film and television studies have been established in several courses at tertiary institutions in Sydney: the New South Wales Institute of Technology (NSWIT), University of NSW, Macquarie University, and Sydney University, as well as segments of courses at Kuringai CAE and Sydney College of the Arts, and the promise of future developments at Nepean CAE. There are even signs of an off-shoot in screen studies becoming established in the Full-Time Program of the Australian Film and Television School (AFTS); at present the Open Program runs a kind of piggy-back graduate diploma in media study in which students accrue credit points from courses offered elsewhere.

These courses have had fluctuating fortunes; the most secure seem to have been those which have been integrated into degrees as areas of major study, as at NSWIT and perhaps Macquarie University, as well as segments of courses at Kuringai CAE and Sydney College of the Arts, and the promise of future developments at Nepean CAE. There are even signs of an off-shoot in screen studies becoming established in the Full-Time Program of the Australian Film and Television School (AFTS); at present the Open Program runs a kind of piggy-back graduate diploma in media study in which students accrue credit points from courses offered elsewhere.

This has not to imply that any of these filmmakers or films should now be unceremoniously dumped into the ashcan of history; rather that without the rhetoric that once accompanied them and the glimmer of a forever latent Australian cinema their accomplishments appear relatively slight. And, lest we forget, rehabilitation is the stage of a career.

A steadily growing disenchantment with the whole 'ball-game' of bold 'Australian film culture' came about for me with films such as 'Breaker Morant' and 'Starstruck'. When Australian filmmakers tried directly and lovingly to fulfill some of the richest traditions of narrative cinema, in picareque genres such as the romantic melodrama and the musical, their fundamental impoverishment became clear once and for all.

There is no real style in the Australian cinema, style being the organic, dynamic and physical process whereby meanings are expressed and kicked around. Sure, there is style as ornamentation (Phil Noyce) and kitsch (Gillian Armstrong); there is meaning as bland, dramatic statements within a dreamily realistic, television-style functionalism (John Duigan and Tom Cowan); but nothing resembling a fruitful, integrated marriage between the two. This has a lot to do with the fact that Australian film culture is a film culture at all but instead a desert where the fast-diminishing species of people, fanatically saturated in the historical appreciation of the cinema through film societies and the like, must make do with bright, young film-school technicians who are likely to become Australia's official filmmakers.

It used to be said of Australian filmmakers that they were 'just another bunch of provincial odd-ball directors who deserve his piece of midnight movie-cult fame (Jim Sharmar); a few filmmakers who can be depended upon to deliver the conventions expertly and playfully (Tim Burstall). The same might be said of many of the filmmakers who suffer from this trait, demonstrated by a real fear of full-blooded filmic expressiveness and an arrogant disdain of the cinema's languages and traditions.

In my view, beyond several films such as 'Breaker Morant' which make their mark at about the level of a decent tele-movie, Australian cinema adds up to a few, truly stylish films by any standards, such as 'Mad Max', 'The Devil', 'Cinemascope', 'Decline and Fall'... And even 'Mongol' and 'Cassiegur', the films of the filmmakers who suffer from this trait, demonstrated by a real fear of full-blooded filmic expressiveness and an arrogant disdain of the cinema's languages and traditions.

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second has moved on, with rather less conviction, and only a remnant (a figment?) of political purpose, through a wave of reaction to that Althusserian moment. The idea of 'determinacy' thought possible in the earlier phase is now gone, lost entirely in the signifying play of textuality with itself. The social conscience has been replaced, in post-structuralism, by the current moment.

Not everybody finds that they can get by on this regime of *cuisine minceur* (you can have fun with it, but can you live on it?). The present phase is partly one of groping for new starts in theory, that is to say more generally, from our own place, with less of the anxious genuflection towards the metropolis (that is always elsewhere) which has characterized much of Australian theory in the past.

This movement from theory (which at times has had more affinity with film and literary avant-gardes than with broader and more popular forms) was partly accompanied and partly checked, along the way, by developments in television. Another way to chart the educational fortunes of this period is to look at the change in teaching texts in screen and media studies. In 1974 there was a delicate publishing shift against the American and British traditions, with the appearance of Raymond Williams' *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* and Stan Cohen and Jack Young's *The Manufacture of News*. From then on the whole pattern of published textbook choices has involved a flow of detailed textual studies of television elections (*The Television Election*, Trevor Pateman), football on television (*Football on Television*, Ed Buscombe et al.), television history (*Television and History*, Colin McArthur), current affairs and its audience (*Everyday Television Nationwide* and *The Nationwide Audience*, Charlotte Bradburn and David Morely) and soap operas (*Coronation Street*, Richard Dyet et al.; *Crossroads*, Dorothy Hobson) were backed by the appearance every few years of a new 'essential' textbook, such as *Screen*, *Coronation Street*, *Dominion* and *Worldwide*. The Open University was mainly responsible for the flow of media textbooks and study guides, and the British Film Institute (BFI) published the detailed program monographs with production studies such as *The Making of a Television Series* and *The Making of Albert's World*, as well as film readers such as *Australian Film Reader*, *Albert Moran and Tom O'Regan* and an important Australian media textbook (*Australian Commercial Television*, Bill Dollery), against the background of McQueen's pioneering *Australian Media Monopolies*. In addition, there has been the important language, text and discourse work of Kress, Hodge and True (*Language and Discourse*, 1980) and *Language and Control*, Roger Fowler, Gunter Kress, Bob Hodge and Tony True), not to mention the various theoretical journals which have struggled (with little or no institutional support) into existence.

Theoretically, then, the development of film and media publishing in Australia and abroad has been encouraging in the past 10 years and has reflected the changes in film education and studies. If there were no book industry to match Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory* (though Terry Lovell's *Pictures of Reality* comes close) that is due, in part, at least, to the historical and political differences between literary studies and that of film at tertiary level. The conservative opponents of media theory are differently placed, because media courses are often seen to have a career function, as well as being a constant consideration for the practitioners of film studies) to attain the deserved amount of academic respectability for the practitioners of film studies to attain the deserved amount of academic respectability from the tertiary institutions and a bemused public; the latter has generally regarded films as anathema, film form, performances, new technologies, radical practices and radical meanings. In Sydney, at present, there are only the finestest, most uncertain glimmerings of a milieu in which that could possibly begin to take root. Much will depend on the pending and recently filled appointments in the AFC. Much more will depend on the intellectual courage of people in the Sydney film community.

### Film Studies (Victoria)

**Geoff Mayer**

Lecturer in Media Studies, Phillip Institute of Technology

Film Studies, Cinema Studies, Media, Visual Communication and Visual Language are some of the disguises concocted by people who wish to be less of the unconscious of this relation, and more of its conscience. The CDB has begun to fund forums for academics and film studies (and those who are both), such as the Australian Screen Studies Association in New South Wales weekend seminar on Independent Film and Authorship in late 1983. It is inviting the occasional thesaurist to sit on assessment panels, and even giving grants to film publishing projects.

What is needed for a lively and interesting independent film culture in Australia is free interplay with an environment of theory and discussion willing to take on questions of aesthetics, film form, performances, new technologies, radical practices and radical meanings. In Sydney, at present, there are only the finestest, most uncertain glimmerings of a milieu in which that could possibly begin to take root. Much will depend on the pending and recently filled appointments in the AFC. Much more will depend on the intellectual courage of people in the Sydney film community.

**CINEMA PAPERS March-April — 59**

**The Industry Comments**
Primary Diploma course. The College also conducted an annual two-week film festival based on a director or theme of historical interest; Eisenstein in 1961, D. W. Griffith in 1962, Silent Cinema in 1963, etc.

While there were isolated pockets of activity in this field in the 1960s in tertiary institutions — Bill Perkins in Tasmania, for example — there was little sign of widespread development. There were, of course, those regular visits of English literature students from the secondary schools to screenings of the literary classics, but that did little to promote an interest in film in its own right. It should also be noted that filmmaking became established in certain institutions far more easily because of the supposed vocational opportunities and the fact that the results of the course could be measured in tangible terms.

In the early 1970s, marked by Whitlam and the rapid growth in tertiary enrolments and accompanied by the renaissance of the Australian film industry, a climate existed which fostered the widespread development of Film Studies in the institutions. In Victoria, at length, the formation of the Tertiary Educators of Victoria, and its annual conference, and for secondary and primary teachers the Association of Teachers of Film and Video (ATOM), with its publication of *Metro* magazine, provided much needed focal points around which this area of study could develop.

Also significant was the range of film courses offered by the Australian Film Institute, and John Flaus and Ian Mills in particular, at the newly established La Trobe University, and the subsequent three-year Cinema Studies course. Since that time film study has become part of a number of universities. In 1973 the University of Sydney had a very timid flirtation with it.

Subsequent flowering has included the establishment of the Australian Film and Television School, particularly the work of its Open Program and the National Graduate Diploma Scheme which operates in every Australian state. There is also the biannual film conference conducted by the Australian Screen Studies Association (ATOM), with its publication of *Metro* magazine, provided much needed focal points around which this area of study could develop.

Since that time each institution has worked to demonstrate the sophistication and legitimacy of the discipline, there is another biannual conference which explores the inter-relationship between Film and History.

In the early 1970s, the Sydney University Teachers’ College in the 1960s approached the teaching of film through close analysis and a concern with the ways in which it communicates: camera composition, lighting, editing, sound, etc. To quote two examples of short films and extracts which combined with popular feature, foreign language and silent films.

So will 1984 be the end of the National Film Archive? No. Its growth has made possible much of the Australian film culture and films and film culture has been established: as a national perspective. Its place in the industry and film culture will have become closer and far more easily because of the supposed vocational opportunities and the fact that the results of the course could be measured in tangible terms.

The Industry Comments

Tenth Anniversary Supplement

National Film Archive

Ray Edmondson
Curator, National Film Archive

"Orphan of the Wilderness" . . . or "The Breaking of the Drought"?

The National Film Archive is more than an institution. It is the manifestation of an idea, and one of the most remarkable, and least remarked, cultural developments of the last 40 years has been the fertilization of this idea simultaneously and contemporaneously, throughout the world.

(ERNST LINDGREN, CURATOR OF THE NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE, LONDON, IN 1970)

Those words from the doyen of film archivists, enunciated in 1970, faced me with the report to the Australian Film and Television School of a five-month, world-wide study of film archives which *Cinema Papers* published in a condensed form in its December 1974 issue.

That I was the first Australian to undertake such a project indicated the underdevelopment of local film archive activity compared with, for example, Europe or North America. The report, and especially *Cinema Papers*’ conclusion that work on the National Film Archive (NFA) has become a major issue in recent months.

*Cinema Papers* and the NFA are, in a sense, of the same vintage. The NFA was established as a definable staff unit of the National Library in 1966 (though its origins go back to the 1930s). Although the growth of staff and resources has in no way kept pace with its development in other ways, it has clearly come of age. In 10 years, its collections have increased five-fold and usage 10-fold. Sophisticated systems and standards have developed from simple beginnings. It has produced film archivists with individual reputations and international perspective. Its place in the industry and film culture has been established: as a repository, an indispensable resource, a source of ideas and material. It has contributed to many hundreds of productions. Its collection growth has made possible much of the Australian film culture and film study and analysis.

As a result of "The Last Film Search", film restorations and the overseas "Cinema Australia" retrospectives, the NFA has begun to give substance to its cultural role of not only acquiring and preserving the moving image heritage but also making it tangible and accessible to the world. The operative word is "tangible".

So will 1984 be the end of the National Film Archive? No. Hopefully, by this time, nothing of permanent value would be in danger of being lost through insufficient funding.

Similarly, selection and acquisition activity would be sufficiently developed to survey and record all Australian production and exhibition. The NFA would be acquiring all material of permanent value — complete films and other documentation of the NFA Archive would have been revived and nurtured by the NFA.

Though hardly affluent, it will be far better funded and have better resources than at present; it will also be entrepreneurial in raising income. It will have a substantial presence in Sydney and Melbourne, and access centres in other capitals. Its headquarters would have functional importance, giving advice and making facilities for preservation, storage, publication, exhibitions, access to search, etc., available to the public, the industry and other institutions as well. Monumental? No. Practical and necessary? Yes.

As well as being a service resource, it would be a cultural focus and tourist attraction. Perhaps there would be standing sets from famous films on display for public enjoyment (as well as the preserved film itself); or the opportunity to enjoy a silent film with live music accompanying it (as knowledge of the skills involved); or the opportunity to enjoy a silent film with live music accompanying it (as knowledge of the skills involved). And the opportunity to enjoy a silent film with live music accompanying it (as knowledge of the skills involved). And the opportunity to enjoy a silent film with live music accompanying it (as knowledge of the skills involved). And the opportunity to enjoy a silent film with live music accompanying it (as knowledge of the skills involved). And the opportunity to enjoy a silent film with live music accompanying it (as knowledge of the skills involved). And the opportunity to enjoy a silent film with live music accompanying it (as knowledge of the skills involved). And the opportunity to enjoy a silent film with live music accompanying it (as knowledge of the skills involved).

The NFA’s relationship to the industry and the film culture will have become closer and more permanent; it will be an obvious part of the infrastructure, with daily acquisition and access contact, cross-use of facilities and exchange of staff. Its relationship to other cultural bodies will be more clearly defined, including its relationship to other bodies engaged in this field. Access to other film archives in Australia and Asia-Pacific. It will have established a role as a co-ordinator, centre of expertise and a support agency.

Internationally, it would have reached a parity with kindred institutions in other developed countries and would be contributing its share to the development of its field world-wide. It would be adequately representing and promoting the Australian moving image heritage overseas.

It would be making full use of computer and video technology. For the researcher, the collection will be much larger, much more diverse, better documented and a greater percentage of it will be accessible. There will, hopefully, be no official limits on access (such as the current restrictions). Beyond this, the NFA would initiate, support and promote activities which made the heritage more acces-

1. For those who do not recognize them: the titles of two classic Australian feature films made in 1936 and 1920 respectively.

sible to the community at large, possibilities limited only by imagination.

The original 1974 report, complemented and extended by many others since, is still read because it, and they, are still valid. Much of this "future scan" is implicit in that respect, because the experiences of other countries are signposts for Australia.

Although Australia, among the first nations to discern and realize the narrative and documentary potential of the cinema back in the 1900s, it has taken a long time to begin to evaluate its cultural status in relation to that of the other arts — and to recognize that status institutionally. The NFA should reflect Australia's pride in a long and significant heritage, and be recognition of the profound social impact of the moving-image media on the nation which was born with it. Is it possible, and appropriate, that by 1994 Australia is one of the world's leading and most innovative film archives? Time will tell.

Observations

Bob Ellis

Scriptwriter

Ending at the Beginning

After 10 years (or however long it has been since Stork so farcically fertilised the test tube baby Australians are now so awfully proud of) it is good that The Thorn Birds has turned up at last to show how it might have been otherwise: that the American has-beens, American accents, Mexican succo, Jacobean plot-lines and the blue, forgettable guinness vistas, with Brownie's token chest awe in the overlit foreground. How well we have done, in one way or another, in beating that rap at least. Imagine Steve McQueen in Brownie's token chest as we sweat in the overlit way or another, in beating that rap at least. Imagine Steve McQueen in Brownie's token chest as we sweat in the overlit

Richard Brennan

Producer

Ten years ago the revived Australian film industry was largely peopled by producers and the last wave out of Phoenix industry, overwhelmingly dependent on government support, its practitioners never seeming to suffer more than flesh wounds. But then, the success of the film which had evolved to support the larger budgets of films that were in low-budget filmmaking. Poverty proved the parent of invention and in 1972-73 approximately half of the films proved commercially successful.

But, of course, a film director's prime aim in The Stage is the only feature film with a reasonable Summer, Midnite Spares and Turkey Shoot, which also include the post-Weir oeuvre of James and Harold McElroy, and the man so disarrayedly described by David Puttnam as Tony Inane. But, other odd things did happen, certain random habits of mind that become our proudest traditions.

I have often thought of a monograph in the Andrew Sarris manner called They Stay North, a study of the work of Ken Hannam (Break of Day, Sunday Too Far Away, Summerfield, Dawn!), or Henri Safran's fondness for films that kill large waterfowl: can a single vision be akin here to the smallness of the ABC-trained men to themes of the loss of childhood companionship and youthful hope while the great, yellow, filtered sun beats down? Can it be, perhaps, the money? Perish the thought. What moves Carl Schultz to films? the young children cause beloved adults to die in multiple shipwrecks?

Yet, they are only part of a larger national perception, so apparent in our cinema, of the pointlessness of every effort, since nothing ever changes and you end at your beginning. Aunt Edna reciprocates Buzzy. Judy Davis rejects Sam Neil. Don's party doesn't win the election. Petersen fails the exam. Breaker is taken away and shot, Jimmie Blacksmith is taken out and hanged. Ned Kelly is taken out and hanged. Mad Dog Morgan is shot, decapitated and his scrotum given to Frank Thring. Phap Lap is taken out and stuffed. Richard Moir gives up looking for Anna. Jack Thompson in Sunday ends up broke and lonely as he began. The Man of Flowers ends up rich and lonely as he began. The boy in Careful, He Might Hear You ends up with his original suitcase, and glummer now he has seen the world. Mr Perceval the pelican is shot; so is the Wild Duck, but more economically with the same bullet as its young mistress. The crippled boy in Let The Balloon Float is hanged. Bush Christmas moneys of road the down unpunished. Bill Hunter, in Newsfront, grim and principled as ever, loses his wife and mistress but keeps his limp.

Some one, it seems, prevails. In our end is our beginning. Owners are only acceptable if, like Phap Lap and Gough Whitim, they end badly, or if, like Mad Max and the couple in A Town Like Alice, they suffer deeply and prosper moderately at the end. History, born of convict, political fudge and second-chance blood will not too readily forgive young spunks who make easy millions overnight as they do in Starstruck and Undercover, or in the Man of Flowers, Oliver's Movie or Whatever.

Fatty Finn's crystal set is reward enough. We must learn to be content with the dull sweet continuum of our ordinary lives. Cathy has her child out (back in migrant poverty, that is something), the Lonelyhearted lovers hide themselves, each least each other and the boy in The Devil's Playground has at least escaped his confinement — the best you can expect in a bitter, first-class (the least erotic society ever, I think), whose modesty of expectation must be served. Ah, so we are to be shot at dawn are we? That's not so bad.

Of course it has led to a certain sameness in our cinema (as much so as the Bond movies, and the last wave out of Phoenix industry, overwhelmingly dependent on government support, its practitioners never seemed to suffer more than flesh wounds. But then, the success of the film which had evolved to support the larger budgets of films that were in low-budget filmmaking. Poverty proved the parent of invention and in 1972-73 approximately half of the films proved commercially successful.

Then, in 1975, Sunday Too Far Away was screened in the Director's Fortnight at Cannes and the last wave out of Phoenix industry was born. Perhaps because it was a Phoenix industry, overwhelmingly dependent on government support, its practitioners never seemed to suffer more than flesh wounds. But then, the success of the film which had evolved to support the larger budgets of films that were in low-budget filmmaking. Poverty proved the parent of invention and in 1972-73 approximately half of the films proved commercially successful.

The current indications are that production will decline in 1984, 1985, 1986, The Coolangatta Gold is the only feature film with a substantial budget to have gone into production. The decrease in taxation benefits to investors is also to blame, and these seem to have been very imperfectly understood. A film offering benefits of 150 per cent for deductible items and 100 per cent for non-deductible items may offer overall benefits as low as 125 per cent. By contrast, a film offering benefits of 133 per cent for deductible items and 100 per cent for non-deductible items may have been picked up by an entity not seeking tax benefits (e.g., the Australian Film Commission or a state corporation), is in a more attractive position.

The rub is that the reduced benefit of net income from exploitation of the film: formerly 50 per cent, now 33 per cent. Benefits can only be reduced when income has been generated, and I suspect this partly accounts for the increased emphasis on low-budget filmmaking.

Several letters have recently appeared in the papers from brokers and entrepreneurs whose Cathy's husband out of Cathy's Child, the flying saucer out of Picnic at Hanging Rock and the last wave out of The Last Wave, and replacing them all with farewell subtitles, seems to be rather over-headily artistic — and perhaps a few of the most commercially successful directors, Sandy Harbutt, who made Stone and is bad with journalists, has disappeared without trace; one of the most commercially unsuccessful directors, Fred Schepisi, who is good with journalists (he gives good interviews), is judged our finest flower. It is important to know where the money is and the reputation. It is in the Sunday papers.
Philip Adams
Chairman, Australian Film Commission

In no particular order . . .

Grendel Grendel Grendel (Alex Stitt, 1981). For its verbal and visual magic. A small masterpiece that was dismissed and misunderstood because it didn’t fit into the grid system of Australian movies.

Don’s Party (Bruce Beresford, 1976). Inept in parts, but still the best piece of ensemble acting I have seen from an Australian cast.

The Plumber (Peter Weir, 1979). Weir’s most austere little film. Derived from Harold Pinter’s The Caretaker and The Dumb Waiter (the same dramatic proposition: an interloper challenging the incumbent for the ownership of the premises) but remarkably compelling.

Breaker Morant (Bruce Beresford, 1980). Kubrick did it better in Paths of Glory and I am not, for a moment, endorsing Beresford’s right-wing politics. But Australia’s Lieutenant Calley was powerfully, elegantly presented by Beresford who was, for the first time in his career, in complete control of his material.

The Getting of Wisdom (Bruce Beresford, 1977). Beresford again, and grossly underrated by Australian critics. The first of the “new wave” features about a winner — after all those films with detumescent central characters.

The Devil’s Playground (Fred Schepisi, 1976). Probably the best of the lot. A couple of Arthur Dignam’s scenes were over the top but the rest of it was just bloody marvellous. From the first frames (the camera drifting up the river) and the first note of [Bruce] Smeaton’s music you knew you were seeing a marvellous piece of work.

The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith (Fred Schepisi, 1978). Schepisi’s hyperbolic self-promotion was a two-edged sword. We all fell on it with blood-stained axes. But at its best, it was marvellous. You can see why Pauline Kael has the hots for Fred.

Kostas (Paul Cox, 1979). Still Cox’s best. I think. Angered by the way it had been ignored by all and sundry, I decided to back him with Lonely Hearts. But I still think that Kostas is superior to both Lonely Hearts and Man of Flowers. A strong, simple and honest film. But, oh, the ending!

The Great MacArthy (David Baker, 1975). Revisited at the time and now forgotten. I am not being perverse when I say it is another misjudged movie, with more ideas in its little finger than most films have in their entire feature length. Out of control and chaotic, it finally disintegrated like Dimboola. It was far less than the sum of its parts. But, ah, the parts! The helicopter arriving in the small town to Smeeton’s Fellini-esque music. The use of real-life grotesques such as Lou Richards and Jack Dyer. The undeniably Australianness of the comedy. We all owe David Baker an apology.

Careful, He Might Hear You (Carl Schultz, 1983). For all the opposite reasons. Its European elegance. Visconti in the Sydney suburbs. Overdone, overblown, overstated and yet wonderfully compelling. I think what I liked about it most was its passion. Too many Australian films are emotionally constipated. Suddenly, here was one that pulled out all the organ stops.

Gallipoli (Peter Weir, 1981). Weir and Williamson in love! I struggled against it, but was deeply affected by the film. Was seen to be blowing my nose when the lights came up.

Going Down (Haydn Kennan, 1983). Ninety minutes of chaos and rat-baggery that will go down in history as the film that launched the cinematic career of the multi-talented and completely unmanageable David Argue.

Sunday Too Far Away (Ken Hannam, 1975). Saw it again in China. Stands up very, very well. Reminds you just how very, very good Jack Thompson can be. Devoid of pretense. Not too heavy with the myth-making. Made me realize why I have always liked Mick Young.

. . . and about a dozen others that jostle for a place in my affections . . .

Peter Bellby
The Film House TV, Melbourne

In alphabetical order:

Breaker Morant
Don’s Party
The Devil’s Playground
Mad Max 2 (George Miller, 1981)
Man of Flowers (Paul Cox, 1983)
Picnic at Hanging Rock (Peter Weir, 1975)
Sunday Too Far Away
Wake in Fright (Ted Kotcheff, 1971)
Yacketty Yak (Dave Jones, 1974)

And as a footnote I would also include: A Personal History of the Australian Surf (Michael Blakemore, 1981), Lalal — Dreamtime (Michael Edols, 1975) and Tidikawa and Friends (Jef and Su Doring, 1971).
8. Don's Party
9. Sunday Too Far Away
10. The Man from Hong Kong (Brian Trenchard Smith, 1975)

This is such a boring list that I thought I would include Chris Maudson’s list written two years ago and shortly before his death:

1. Pure Shit
2. Newsfront
4. Mad Max
5. The FJ Holden (Michael Thornhill, 1977)
6. Wake in Fright
7. The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith
8. Palm Beach (Albie Thoms, 1979)
9. The Last Wave (Peter Weir, 1977)
10. In Search of Anna (Esbeth Storm, 1979)

Close, but not close enough:
27A (Esbeth Storm, 1973), Dalmas (Bert Deling, 1973), Between Wars (Michael Thornhill, 1974), The Devil's Playground and Mouth to Mouth.

Barry Cohen
Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, Canberra

Although Cinema Papers asked for my 10-all-time-favorite Australian films, I have included 11 which are of such a high standard that I felt it unfair to eliminate one. In no particular order:

My Brilliant Career
Newsfront
Picnic at Hanging Rock
The Year of Living Dangerously

Debi Enker
Cinema Papers, Melbourne

In alphabetical order:

The Clinic (David Stevens, 1983)
Heatwave (Phil Noyce, 1982)
Love Letters from Terabla Road (Stephen Wallace, 1977)
Mad Max
Mad Max 2
Monkey Grip
Newsfront
Picnic at Hanging Rock
The Plumber
Walkabout

Gordon Glenn
Australian Movies to the World (Co-writer, co-director)

1. Newsfront
2. Breaker Morant
3. Mad Max
4. Sunday Too Far Away
5. Don's Party
6. Lonely Hearts
7. Picnic at Hanging Rock
8. Mouth to Mouth
9. Queensland (John Ruane, 1974)
10. Yackety Yak

John Flaus
'Film buffs' Forecast', 3RRR, Melbourne

1. Brickwall (Paul Winkler, 1974)
2. Warrah (Arthur and Corinne Cantrill, 1982)
3. Mystical Rose (Mike Lee, 1976)
4. Pure Shit
5. Going Down
6. Idea Demonstrations Part 1 (Mike Parr and Peter Kennedy, 1972)
7. Sons of Namatjira
8. Pictures for Cities (Jeff Weary, 1992)
9. Kali (Brendon Stretch, 1975)
10. K Tape One (Jim Wilson, 1974)

The films used here have been chosen on the basis of comparison with world standards using the criteria of imagination, sensitivity and exploration of the medium as well as the likelihood of the film being of enduring significance.

Don Groves
Variety, Sydney

This is a personal view:

1. Gallipoli
2. Breaker Morant
3. Mad Max
4. Winter of Our Dreams
5. Picnic at Hanging Rock
6. My Brilliant Career
7. The Man from Snowy River
8. Caddie (Donald Crombie, 1976)
9. The Devil's Playground
10. Don's Party
in no particular order:
The Year of Living Dangerously
The Devil’s Playground
Winter of Our Dreams
Breaker Morant
The Getting of Wisdom
Monkey Grip
Mouth to Mouth
The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith
Newsfront
In Search of Anna

Paul Harris
*Film Buffs* Forecast*, 3RRR, Melbourne

1. Stir
2. Newsfront
3. The Devil’s Playground
4. Mad Max 2
5. Between Wars
6. Backroads (Phil Noyce, 1977)
7. Frontline (David Bradbury, 1979)
8. 27A
9. Pure Shit
10. Monkey Grip

John Hindle
ABC-TV, Green Guide (The Age), Melbourne

1. Gallipoli
2. Winter of Our Dreams
3. Breaker Morant
4. Newsfront
5. Starstruck (Gillian Armstrong, 1982)
6. Dusty (John Richardson, 1983)
7. The Getting of Wisdom
8. The Year of Living Dangerously
9. Mouth to Mouth
10. Storm Boy

Ivan Hutchinson
The Seven Network and Video Age, Melbourne

Australia still has to make a great movie, but certainly it has made some fine entertainments. Since my personal preference in that sort of film is still pretty basic — a strong narrative, a literate script, some genuine concern for the characters and professional technical skills — here, in alphabetical order, a “10 Best” since 1970, including two made by overseas directors which still must count as Aussie films since both present aspects of our country and way of life that the local boys haven’t touched on.

Breaker Morant. One would hardly complain about the quality of films from Australia (or anywhere else) if they were as well acted, written and directed as this adaptation of a good play by Kenneth Ross, The Last Wave. In my book, Peter Weir’s most satisfying film to date. Eerie, disturbing and finely crafted.

Mad Max 2. Not a great film, but certainly a great action movie. One sequel that is better than the original.

Mouth to Mouth. John Duigan has since worked with bigger budgets and better-known performers but his very human, well-observed and concerned film about youth adrift remains in the mind.

Newsfront. Still one of the most original and technically skilful of recent Australian films. One of our few movies to even attempt to comment on the recent political past.

Picnic at Hanging Rock. Finally unsatisfying, but the haunting and imaginative quality of this film has not yet been undimmed by time or even commercial television as a recent telecast proved.

Stork (Tim Burstall, 1971). Lots of things don’t work too well in this film, but Bruce Spence does. Besides, without the public acceptance of this one, would we have an industry at all?

Sunday Too Far Away. The first feature produced by the South Australian Film Corporation remains one of the most attractively “Aussie” of our movies, a well-observed, well-acted and likeable film.

Wake in Fright. Powerful look at the Australian ugliness, too powerful even for most Australians when first released.

Walkabout. Constantly fascinating mix of myth, mystery, romanticism and sex. Photographed and directed by Nicolas Roeg, and stamped with his highly individual style.

Tina Kaufman
Filmsnews, Sydney

Here is my list of 10 films from the past decade. I don’t want to say best or favourite, but rather that these are the ten films which worked best for me when I first saw them, and that the impression each one left has stayed strong.

Pure Shit
Love Letters from Teralba Road
The FJ Holden
Newsfront
Maddax and Maddax 2
Stir
Monkey Grip
Wrong Side of the Road (Ned Lander, 1981)
Starstruck
Going Down

Dougal MacDonald
The Canberra Times, Canberra

The five fun:
Kitty and the Bagman
The Odd Angry Shot
Goodbye Paradise
Maddax and Maddax 2
Maddax

The admirable five:
Lonely Hearts
Man of Flowers
Manganninie (John Honey, 1980)
Stir
The Devil’s Playground

Adrian Martin
Melbourne State College

1. Mystical Rose
2. Mad Max
3. The Last Wave
4. Journey to the End of Night (Peter Tammene, 1981)
5. Manless (Maria Koiz, 1981)
6. Mr Suzuki Comes to Australia (Paul Fletcher, 1981)
7. Dreams Come True (Jane Steevenson, 1982)
8. Watermelon Babies (Alan Vandermeide, 1983)

9. Hoddle Street Suite (John Dunkley-Smith, 1978)
10. Ocean Point Lookout (Corinne and Arthur Cantrill, 1978)

I have tended to favor some films from the recent boom in Super 8 mm films.

Brian McFarlane
Cinema Papers, Melbourne

In no particular order:
My Brilliant Career
The Year of Living Dangerously
Roadgames (Richard Franklin, 1981)
Wake in Fright
Paradise
Breaker Morant
Gallipoli
Lonely Hearts
Walkabout

The FJ Holden
The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith

Comments:
(i) Predominance of literacy adaptations among best Australian films has been striking, leading to a fairly cautious, decorous cinema.
(ii) If this list could be very slightly extended I would add Norman Lovett’s Rosco (Heni Safran, 1982), the only attractive Australian comedy, and Stephen Wallace’s Stir. Perhaps Heatwave.
(iii) The list has the look of cliché but Peter Weir seems to me the clear winner among directors.
(iv) I am struck by the scarcity of films making a lively engagement with contemporary Australia and may, in consequence, be over-valuing Thorhill’s The FJ Holden. Mouth to Mouth and Winter of Our Dreams seem the only other contenders in the field and they both, admirable as they are, run out of narrative puff.

Scott Murray
Cinema Papers, Melbourne

1. Walkabout
2. Wake in Fright
3. Picnic at Hanging Rock
4. Mad Max 2
5. Mad Max
6. A Personal History of the Australian Surf
7. Goodbye Paradise
8. Breaker Morant
9. Sunday Too Far Away
10. The Last Harvest (Jeff Bruer, 1977)

The ‘second 11’ is:

Bert Newton
The Nine Network, Melbourne

In no particular order:
The Man from Snowy River
Phar Lap
Fat Freddy (Maurice Murphy, 1980)
Sunday Too Far Away
Lonely Hearts
The Club (Bruce Beresford, 1980)
In alphabetical order:

**Kathleen Norris**  
Australian Film Institute, Sydney

In alphabetical order:

**Andrew Peacock**  
Leader of the Federal Liberal Party, Canberra

In alphabetical order:

**Tom Ryan**  
S A W and Cinema Papers, Melbourne

In no particular order:

**Bill Shanahan**  
Shanahan's Management, Sydney

In no particular order:

**Graham Shirley**  
Australian Cinema: the First Eighty Years (co-author)

The following tally is based on one vote per entry. The most voted for films are, thus:

**Peter Thompson**  
Sunday, Sydney

As many lists are not ordered, the following tally is based on one vote per entry. The most voted for films are, thus:

**Raymond Stanley**  
Screen International, Melbourne

This is a personal list, in no particular order, and must include Ken Hall's Dad and Dave Come to Town, despite it being outside the parameters.

**Evan Williams**  
The Australian, Sydney

Also approached:

Greg Bright (Australian Film Review); Corinne Cantrill (filmmaker); John Hanrahan (The Sun, Sydney); the Prime Minister, Robert J. Hawke; John Hinde (ABC radio); Stan James (The Adelaide Advertiser); and Anne-Marie dell 'Oso (The Sydney Morning Herald)
The state of the Australian film industry and its future direction has been a topic vocally debated since the industry's revival in 1970. At a Murdoch University (Perth) seminar in October 1983, producers Phillip Adams and Antony I. Ginnane spoke to opposing points of view.

In his speech, "Requiem for the Australian film industry", Ginnane examines what he sees as mistakes of the past decade, particularly in the area of government funding, and gives clear indication of how he sees the industry best surviving in the future.

Adams, in responding to Ginnane, gives his personal views as to what he sees worthy in the Australian cinema and why it should be encouraged and supported.

Antony I. Ginnane

Perhaps the only qualification I can really claim for being here tonight is that I think I am one of only two producers currently working in Australia to have made a feature film [Harlequin] in Western Australia in the past 20 years. I may not be a local, but hopefully that credential will prevent my being considered a complete outsider.


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along the lines of a Swedish or Eastern European industry, continually government-supported and contributing to the development and enrichment of Australian identity and culture. The Australian Film Commission Act 1975 and then the incentives introduced under amendments to the Australian Income Tax Act 1963, beginning in 1977, continued to refer to “significant Australian content” as the criterion by which a film became eligible for either AFC assistance or the tax incentives. The 1977 amendments placed that matter in the hands of the Minister for Home Affairs. Subsection 1(1) of Section 124(k) of the Income Tax Assessment Act effectively reiterated the definition of an “Australian film” as per the original Australian Film Development Corporation Act (quoted above), with some modifications.

So, during the past 10 or 15 years, the term “significant Australian content”, as we shall see, was to become the mallet by which the legs of a commercial, free-enterprise film industry were broken time and time again. Trade unions, federal and state bureaucrats and, ultimately, parliamentarians have succumbed during the past five years, and a “significant Australian content” has been translated to read “exclusive Australian content”. It happened despite the continuing evidence that Australia’s most successful films included key overseas content, from Rachel Roberts in Picnic at Hanging Rock, Richard Chamberlain in The Last Wave and Edward Woodward in Breaker Morant to, more recently, Kirk Douglas in The Man from Snowy River, Ron Leibman in Phar Lap and Linda Hunt, Michael Murphy and Sigourney Weaver in The Year of Living Dangerously— not to mention most of my own productions. It may be debatable whether overseas content was a plus, but it was certainly not a detriment to those films’ success.

The so-called theory behind this galloping chauvinism was that the purpose of the film incentives, direct and indirect, has been to stimulate an aspect of Australian culture. But what is “Australian culture”? When my company spends $1 million providing work for actors, technicians and associated industries in Perth in 1979 for our production Harlequin, or a year later $1.5 million in Adelaide for The Survivor, or a year later in Cairns $2.5 million for Turkey Shoot, has Australian culture been enhanced? Has Australian culture been abandoned if the subject matter technicians and artists are working on is international or non-Australian in setting and international in appeal? Was Shakespeare betraying British culture when he wrote Coriolanus or Julius Caesar? Is culture to be defined as an artistic endeavour that appeals only to a university graduate more than 30 years-old who earns at least $50,000 a year, or is there such a thing as “pop culture”? How do you account for filmmakers who come to their portfolios the Return of Captain Invincible — and yet allows ministers who come to their portfolios tabula rasa, as far as the industry is concerned, to be progressively influenced against internationalism by AFC bureaucrats who would, no doubt, be redundant if ever the Australian film industry became self-supporting. In my opinion, the intentions and strategy of the AFC, as film mandarins, have been totally and utterly wrong, from its initial interpretation of its parliamentary mandate to its most recent, behind-the-scenes lobbying for the latest tax cuts.

I think it is invaluable and informative to consider the way in which English-speaking Canada, faced with a similar problem as Australia (i.e., to create a film industry from nothing), acted. Canada, like Australia, used English as its main language, has an even greater proximity to, and is culturally-influenced dramatically by, the U.S. and had no tradition of a film industry.

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The Canadian government in 1967 set up the Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC). The original CFDC Act was, in many ways, a model for the AFC Act and the research behind it was heavily drawn upon by the Australian Tariff Board Inquiry. By 1979, the CFDC’s activities, coupled with private investors’ ability to write off 100 per cent of their investment in the certified Canadian film over 12 months, as well as a buoyant securities market for film public issues, created a vibrant film industry with a number of spectacular successes at the world box-office.

Speaking in October 1979 at a University of California seminar on “The Law of Canadian Film Production”, the then president of the CFDC, Mike McCabe, set out three assumptions that lay at the base of the CFDC’s investment in Canadian films:

1. the objective remained the creation of a feature film industry as an element of Canada’s cultural life;
2. the intention of the Canadian parliament was that, to the extent possible, this industry be self-sustaining and not an on-going dependant on the government; and
3. unless the Canadian industry was commercially successful, which would mean that a lot of people wanted to pay to see its films, the cultural objective would not be achieved. It would not be acceptable to create films only for a small elite, nor could such an elite provide the revenues needed to allow Canadian creators to continue to create.

Those objectives, which clearly mirror the Australian situation, required, said McCabe, a 10-point strategy. Let us examine this strategy and see how, in virtually every instance, the AFC moved in exactly the opposite direction, and how the formulation and interpretation of the 10B and 10BA incentives further prevented such a strategy being properly implemented.

Before we do so, however, it is worthwhile charting briefly the success or failure of McCabe’s strategy, as clearly its own relevance to the Australian situation is if it was or could have been successful.

2. N. Roberts and B.E. Haleman (eds), Syllabus on the Law of Canadian Film Production, University of Southern California.
An enormous amount of ill-informed comment has appeared in Australian media as to the success or failure of the years 1979, 1980 and 1981 in Canada. The AFC-based position has been that the Canadian experience was a failure, either because it did not manage to sustain the industry boom through 1982 or because the films created were internationally orientated productions as opposed to specifically indigenous works. The facts are that during that period a number of Canadian films became huge, world-wide box-office successes not directly related to the performance of McCabe: 

1. McCabe: If we are to have a feature film industry, its base must be a group of entrepreneurs who raise the money, assemble the creative team, get the film made and sell it. We must, therefore, focus on developing and supporting producers. 

My comment: The AFC and the state corporations consistently champion writers over the years at the Cannes Film Festival, yet it is the directors, writers, performers and technical people who make our films; (a) in Canada itself, we have to match the best films produced by other countries if we are to convince Canadians that they should pay their money to see our films; (b) if we are to have the stars and the production values that will bring Canadians to see our films, the budgets will be too high to recoup our costs in our Canadian television, American cable, and exhibition systems where we are unfairly restricted. 

2. McCabe: Unless Canadians are prepared to pay their money to foreign films limited and the exhibition of Canadian films legally required, we are going to have to make films that can compete with the best in the world because: 

(a) if we are to match the best films produced by other countries if we are to convince Canadians that they should pay their money to see our films; 
(b) if we are to have the stars and the production values that will bring Canadians to see our films, the budgets will be too high to recoup our costs in our Canadian television, American cable, and exhibition systems where we are unfairly restricted. 

My comment: Here both the AFC, by its marketing department, and the New South Wales Film Corporation (NSWFC), by the establishment of the Australian Films Office Inc. in Los Angeles, attempted to create structures to market the films produced, but the AFC's marketing officers privately admitted that type of promotion generated only merited European television, American art-house and limited American cable release. To help justify their existence they concentrated on giving our films one way to the Festival of Film in the real Year of Living Dangerously and, to a lesser extent, Gallipoli have received proper world-wide distribution by a major to date. By proper distribution, I mean full, mainstream marketing that included television, American cable release. To help justify their existence they concentrated on giving our films one way to the Festival of Film in the real Year of Living Dangerously and, to a lesser extent, Gallipoli have received proper world-wide distribution by a major to date. 

3. McCabe: Since the time of the speech, Lonely Hearts has also received a successful distribution in the U.S. — Ed. 

5. McCabe: We must have a conscious strategy for developing and promoting our own directors, writers, performers and technical people. We must create our own stars. 

My comment: Here at least the AFC tried, with its publicity machine and its huge presence over the years at the Cannes Film Festival, but generally, the list of local screenwriters, any suggestion of imported screenplays was an anathema, so that the Australian content sections of 10B and 10BA prevented our productions being packaged to international standards. 

6. McCabe: Given that we make top-quality films we must market them more aggressively at home and abroad, and we must take steps to get our films into distribution and exhibition systems where we are unfairly restricted. 

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7. McCabe: The CFDC should use its limited budget to lever other funds into the film industry. CFDC money should be spent when the risk is highest and the money scarcest — the development stage — to help the most promising projects. 

My comment: Rather than leveraging funds into the film industry, the AFC has consistently lobbied against attempts to take the industry out of its control by placing its funding in the hands of private enterprises. In the 1982-83 tax year, it campaigned against United American and Australasian Film Productions Pty Ltd (UAA) and other groups attempting to use money via Section 51(1) of the Income Tax Assessment Act, ultimately succeeding in having Part IV(A) of that Act used against them. If these groups had been embraced, who knows what the industry might now be, particularly as UAA only invested in production that had guaranteed profits. Following the 1982-83 tax year, when at least it seemed as if the marketplace had accepted the 10BA draft legislation, it was considering making independent investment decisions that displeased the AFC, Joseph Skrzynski, the AFC chief executive on whose advice [Minister for Home Affairs] Barry Cohen relied (excessively in my opinion)
opinion), with the help of the AFC's political contacts, organized the reduction of the 150 per cent deduction to 133 per cent and a dramatic increase in the AFC's funding, attempting, yet again, to shore up its position.

8. McCabe: Some of the CFDC's budget should continue to be available for films of cultural significance and where new and promising talent is involved. Even here, however, we must insist upon some possibility of commercial return. The absence of that possibility means that few people will see the film and little money will be returned to the producer so that he or she may continue to produce. My comment: Clearly, what has happened over the past 10 years is the exact reverse of that philosophy, where the AFC has lobbied to make "culturally significant" the sole lodestone for investment.

9. McCabe: The CFDC must work to create a situation in which the institutions and investors that finance other industries are brought into the film industry. My comment: My comments here are as for point 7.

10. McCabe: The rules of the game must be stabilized for four or five years so that the CFDC and the tax incentive can do the job they were meant to do: create an economically-viable film industry. My comment: The rules of the film game in Australia have been tinkered with on at least a dozen occasions during the past 10 years. The AFC consistently lobbied to change the ground rules, from 10B (100 per cent write-off in two years) to 10BA (150 per cent write-off in one year with the film to finish in the same year), through 10BA (150 per cent write-off in one year with the film to finish one year after investment), through 10BA (133 per cent write-off in one year). Tragically, each change has been at a critical period in the development of a self-sufficient local film industry — most notably the last — and without much consultation with the people who make up the film industry. At the same time, the AFC has interfered with the certification process, first trying to take it over and then giving it back to the Department of Home Affairs. It has lobbied against Section 51(1), interfered with discussions relating to the prospectus provisions of the Uniform Companies Code, etc. No industry development is immune to the ground rules changed more often than the film industry. Who is to blame? In large measure, the blame must lie with the AFC.

Despite the tragedy of mis-planning and mistakes, the AFC has managed, from time to time, to even present its own 'gallows humor'. Most notable of recent was when James Mitchell, former executive director of the Film and Television Producers Association of Australia, commissioned a report from Deloitte, Haskins and Sells which showed that of the 247 films produced from 1970 to 1982 only nine returned a profit to investors. Skrzynski then had the AFC operate on some quick telephoned research, which included asking producers, in whose film they [the AFC] had invested, whether they had made a profit. As a result, the AFC was pleased to trumpet to the world lay and trade press that the Deloitte, Haskins and Sells report was fatally flawed, and that the Australian film industry was in an excessively healthy state. Why? Instead of nine films out of 247 making a profit, 20 had made a profit. A better average than the U.S.'s one out of ten, says the AFC, ignoring the fact that in the U.S. the "one out of ten" takes $100 million to $200 million and pays for the other nine flops a hundred times over. Whereas Australia's most successful film Mad Max has only recouped its meagre budget 60 times and no others out of that 247 have exceeded three to four times recoupment.

Now what does the future hold? Clearly, nobody has a crystal ball, but the following is my scenario, or at least possible scenario, for the Australian film industry during the next two years or so:

1. vastly reduced production output as private investment rejects the new incentives as insufficiently attractive;
2. what production there is — say six to 10 films a year in the next two years — will, through the AFC's involvement and the topping up of the budget process, become even more indigenous in content and no more commercial in its results. The AFC's track record of investment in films is less than good, and probably worse, than the industry's average;
3. the industry will revert back to a cottage industry, causing inestimable damage to the levels of those technicians and other individuals who have made long-term financial career commitments based on continuous employment in the film industry. Similarly, those small- to medium-facility companies that have geared up, based on a certain level of production, will now come under massive financial pressure and the three or four production companies aspiring to semi-continuous production activity will have to completely scale down;
4. at the end of this two-year period, unless there is a change in federal government, and perhaps even if there is (as Treasury, having seen the incentives cut back, will not easily allow any government to reinstate them at earlier higher levels), I believe this Government will either further reduce the incentives to 100 per cent write-off, with additional, increased AFC funding, or, alternatively, it may eliminate any write-off, coloring film investment once again as a capital item with a total reversion to direct government funding, which is clearly more in accord with Labor Party policy; and
5. either of these solutions will mean that the goal of those who wish to create a small-scale, Swedish-style film industry will have been achieved, although, in my view, they may be surprised to find that most of our Bergman's have already been discovered. That is the likely future. But perhaps I can suggest an alternative, complete restructuring of the film industry incorporating the following:

1. the abolition of the AFC with any responsibility for limited funding of cultural projects for cinema by the present Creative Development Fund being handed over to the Australia Council or some similar organization, saving $6 million a year;
2. the abolition of the certification division of the Department of Home Affairs;
3. all investment in films to attract 100 per cent write-off, provided only that the management and control of the production company is Australian and that a certain percentage of the labor cost be expended on Australian residents and nationals; and
4. film investment and film income to remain eligible for all other incentives generally available to Australian export industries (for example, the export incentives).

This scenario would allow the film industry to operate on the rules of the investment marketplace: i.e., a reasonable expectation of profit. Investors and their advisers would be free to make bona fide commercial assessments of projects available in the marketplace, without the direct or indirect interference of the AFC or the Department of Home Affairs. Should the government desire to recognize specifically the speculative, high-risk nature of film investment, which it might well choose to do, any special incentives should be geared to film income: i.e., some continuance or extension of the currently exempt film-income provisions, a results-based incentive.

Arrangements akin to the above have been responsible for the recent, rapid resurgence of the British industry, both from the perspective of viable commercial productions — e.g., Gandhi or Chariots of Fire — and as a worldwide production facility — e.g., Superman, the Bond films and Star Wars, etc. This is the intelligent way to proceed.

CINEMA PAPERS March-April — 69
Tonight’s debate has been raging in the Australian film industry since 1906: the internationalists versus the nationalists. When the historic film Ned Kelly was being shot at about that time, another Australian pioneer filmmaker was filming Buffalo Bill. So those two streams have been arguing and fighting tooth and nail ever since.

I am going to talk anecdotally as opposed to structurally, so let me give you a few images which seem to me, to be what the Australian film industry is all about.

Tony Ginnane has talked about the international scene. Frankly, I don’t give a damn about the industry elsewhere. The reason we want a film industry is because Australia needs one. One of my first films was a film called Hearts and Minds, a documentary on Vietnam with Bruce Petty. Bruce was, and is, a genius. He wrote and drew a cartoon, which has always haunted me. It showed a big screen, and sitting in front of it was a little, passive Australian family staring glumly at it. On the screen were the following words: “Have your emotions lived for you tonight by American experts.” And that was the way it was.

I grew up on a diet of American pop art: Captain Marvel, Superman, Batman and Robin, John Wayne... In 1958, I remember being involved in a May Day march. I wasn’t a member of any union but they couldn't get any actors to march because it was the time of McCarthyism. We found ourselves an old, broken-down hearse, and a very thin actor called Ron Purnell, who was wonderfully cadaverous. We walked around the streets of Melbourne, behind the wharf laborers and in front of the Painters and Dockers, with Ron tolling the knell and calling out, “Australian television is destroying Australian talent.” And I remind you that at the time there was no Australian material on Australian television at all. In fact, the actors’ stipend (radio ‘soapies’ such as “When a Girl Marries”) had been knocked on the head. We walked around the streets of Melbourne people called out, “Australians haven’t got any talent.”

This was a time when a fellow called Lee Gordon would book the Festival Hall in Melbourne, put on “has-beens” and “never were” from the U.S., and audiences packed into the rafters.

I grew up in a world where we never heard the Australian accent from a radio; you certainly never heard it from a film soundtrack. The only time you heard the Australian accent was if a footballer or a jockey were being interviewed. The news readers on the ABC had a mock- Los Angeles accent. That did not seem to be healthy. From it flowed a cultural inferiority, a figurative forelock-tugging sense of subservience. I think it was A.D. Hope who coined the phrase the “cultural advantage”. It was very much a part of our lives; many of you may be too young to remember, but it was very real then.

I see danger if we take Tony’s line and become an international industry, and by “international” Tony unequivocally means an American industry, make no mistake about it. His argument is that the U.S. is the film industry and to plug into that international dynamic means you make films for the U.S., or films which Americans will accept.

A couple of years ago, Kirk Douglas arrived in Australia to star, stereophonically, in The Man from Snowy River, and I got a phone call asking me to come to the Hilton Hotel in Melbourne to discuss the project with Kirk Douglas. (I thought it was rather, because the Hilton was built on the corner where I used to sell my papers for five pence a dozen.) I was greeted at the door of the Douglas Hotel by a奶酪 by a very charming Belgian woman in her sixties: his wife. I was immediately impressed because I thought he would be on to his thirteenth bimbo by then!

I must say his wife was not anti-Douglas. He has been an extraordinary man and a very brave filmmaker. He broke the embargo on the Hollywood Ten, by hiring Dalton Trumbo; he also gave Stanley Kubrick his break; and it was really his idea to get Milos Forman to do One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, not his son’s. I had every reason to respect the man.

So, I sat opposite the most famous orifice in Hollywood (with the possible exception of Linda Lovelace) and gazed into that cavernous dimple, as he said, “I’ve got a great idea for a movie, Phil.” I asked, “What is it, Kirk?” He said, “I want you to read this script by a very clever young Californian writer.” I said, “Well, look, they come by the truck load; there are so many.” He said, “I’ve got a great idea for a movie.” I said, “I’ll read it.” He said, “It’s 1840 and I arrive in California.” I said, “What’s the idea?” He said, “I’ve got a great idea for a movie.” I said, “I’m shooting roos and Abos and...”

“About the Abos, Phil.” He could see he was losing me, so he skipped through the plot a bit. “I’m shooting roos and Abos and...” He continued, “I’m shooting roos and Abos and...” I asked, “About the roos or the Abos, Kirk?” He said, “About the Abos, Phil.” He could see he was losing me, so he skipped through the plot a bit. “I’m shooting roos and Abos and...”

I just imagined how my black, radical friends are going to like this! A cowboy organizing a revolution of Abos! So he skips to the end. “The end is just fantastic,” he said. “There is a big, bald hill across the Panavision screen, and I come over the top riding tall in the saddle. Behind me are 30,000 Abos!” I had to interrupt. “Kirk,” I said, “the Aboriginals are nomadic people, I think you’ve got them mixed up with Zulus or Apaches.” He said, “Don’t tell me about movies, Phil.” And I said, “Don’t tell me about Abos, Kirk.”

That was the end of that encounter, but it is not the end of that encounter in terms of the threat to the industry. We needed a film industry because, as Bruce Petty said, our emotions were being lived for us by American experts. I grew up in the world where we never saw an Australian on television or on the cinema screen; all we saw was imported. We had been fighting British wars for generations and now it was all the way with L.B.J. There was simply no energy to give ourselves a new direction. Oh, “So I orgasmed and I have often discussed this and we feel that had we lived in Germany we probably would not be so gung-ho about nationalism because the Germans seem to have used it rather lethally on more than one occasion.) To live in a country that had taken a pummelling like ours — which felt so “off-Broadway” — was really quite degrading.

The impetus for the film industry did not come out of an industry push at all. We did not have an industry. We had a few people making documentaries, we had television commercials and that was about it. I bought a clock-work Bolex camera, and I made a feature film.2 It took $6000 and six years to do it working at weekends with Brian Robinson, who now runs the Swinburne film school, the best in Australia. At the end it wasn’t bad; parts of it were in focus. There was no sync in the sound; it was, literally, Sellotaped together. We didn’t have an editing bench, or anything. But it won


Two images from Phillip Adams and Brian Robinson’s Jack and Jill: A Postscript, shot on a clock-work Bolex.
Dear Subscriber,

Thank you for your patience in awaiting this next, special double issue of Cinema Papers.

As you are aware, the magazine went through a difficult financial period last year, resulting in the cessation of publication. An account of the resolution of those financial problems and of the revival of Cinema Papers is inside this issue (see "A Personal History of Cinema Papers"); the net result was the formation of MTV Publishing Limited, a public company limited by guarantee, which is now the publisher of the magazine.

One condition of the sale of the magazine by Cinema Papers Pty Ltd to MTV Publishing Limited was that MTV Publishing take over the subscription liability. This was agreed, and all subscribers to Cinema Papers will have their subscriptions met by MTV Publishing. Part of this agreement was that this double issue (No. 44-45) count as two issues.

The directors and staff of Cinema Papers Pty Ltd would like to thank here all those subscribers who wrote to the Australian Film Commission and others expressing their regard for the magazine and arguing for its continued support. That support is now assured under a new arrangement with the Australian Film Commission and Film Victoria. The future for the magazine is bright.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Murray
Managing Editor
some awards: it won an award in Perth, two
awards at the Adelaide Festival and it won the
first Australian Film Awards feature prize.
I couldn’t get it released; no one would touch
it with a barge pole. But I learnt there was no
great mystique about making a film. You point
a camera, shots come out and you stick them
together. It’s not that hard. It suddenly seemed
to me that Australians, perhaps, could make
them.
At about the same time (as Tony well
remembers because he was involved in the
culture then) there was a lot of filmmaking
around Carlton and Melbourne. Melbourne
had the biggest film festival in the world, in
terms of ticket sales. We also had the biggest
film society movement and a very good Film
critic, a fellow called Colin Bennett (The Age),
who later became suffocatingly dull, but who
was then quite good. Quiz show personality
(and now Minister for Science and Technology)
Barry Jones had a talk-back radio program —
the first in Australia — and also had a late-
night television program, Encounter, which
was a sort of sub-Parkinson production. This
was about the time when the Prime Minister,
Harold Holt, was drowned. So there was
movement at the station to see who was going
to be the new Prime Minister.
The horse metaphor is correct, because all
the thoroughbreds were being assessed at the
Melbourne Club which is where our Prime
Ministers are traditionally chosen. But Barry
tipped an outsider: John Gorton. He had
gotten on the talk-back radio program and on
the television show, and the media momentum
from those interviews got Gorton’s jujurana-
rolling. Suddenly, Gorton was Prime Minister.
And he believed Barry Jones to be his lucky
rabbit’s foot.
Barry had Gorton’s ear and I had Barry’s
ear, and we used the link to some effect. We
started arguing that we needed a film industry.
Just before his disappearance, Holt had
actually prepared a list of people to advise him
on film. The list was given to Gorton and he
asked who Holt would have chosen. When
Gorton crossed all those candidates off, my
name survived. So that was the mechanism.
We wrote Gorton’s speeches and we wanted
cajoling him in such terms as: “You don’t want
to be like Harold Holt and go for all those
poofier arts, all that opera, etc. Movies, mate;
that’s the go.” We talked about the John
Gorton Film School and the Gorton Awards
and all that sort of stuff. It is funny, because
later on you had to change your technique.
With Bill McMahon you yelled and with Gough
Whitlam it was: “Only you are a Renaissance
man. Only you are a Medici.” “Quite right,
Phil!”
Thus, original impetus for a film industry
came largely out of the Melbourne film culture.
It was, in Tony’s terms, pretty soppy. It was
not concerned at all with making money, and it
was not terribly concerned with the rest of
the world. We just felt it might be a nice idea
to make films with our own voices, and our own
landscapes, to dream our own dreams.
I wrote a one-sheet report to Gorton and it
started off with a bit of interesting plagiarism;
“We hold these truths to be self-evident” were
the first words. I then went on to say it was
about time that we heard our own voices, etc.
The report never even went to Cabinet. Gorton
just pushed it through.
That was a lesson we learnt from Andre
Malraux who was for a while De Gaulle’s
Minister for the Arts. Malraux said, “The trick
is to make the Prime Minister the Minister for
Film. Then you get the money out of the
Treasury and the Minister is too busy to
interfere. Whereas, if you get junior
ministers, as we have often found to our cost,
they can’t get the money and they interfere all
the time. So our trick, right from day one, was
to have Gorton, Whitlam, Wran, Dunstan and
the rest of them as Ministers for Film.
My report recommended three things: an
Experimental Film Fund, a film school and an
Australian Film Development Corporation
(AFDC). We had to start from scratch. There
was nothing established to build on. We were
opposed by the Packers, by the ABC, and by
Great Union and Hoyts Theatres. None of
these interest groups wanted an Australian
industry. It was a pain in the neck. They fought
it tooth and nail, but we got it through.
The idea was that the Experimental Film Fund
gave money to anyone who had an idea.
Anything was experimental. A film on a seeing
eye dog or a hovercraft was experimental in
Australia in those days. It didn’t matter; a film
was experimental. From that exercise you
would select some of the brighter kids and send
them to film school. Out of that school would
come producers, directors and writers, who
would then be funded by the AFDC and go on
to greater things.
In the interim, however, Gorton was deposed
— self-immolated or whatever — and suddenly
we had a problem with a man called Peter
Howson. Howson tried to scrap everything, but
it was too late — though he did succeed in
stopping the film school.
I was on the Australian Film and Television
School’s interim council, so I decided I would
resign on This Day Tonight, which I did, very
noisily. The next morning I received a phone
message that the Prime Minister would call me
in half an hour. Another call: “The Prime
Minister would call in 20 minutes”, then “10
minutes” and, by then, I was getting a bit
nervy. Finally, I picked the phone up and a
little voice said, “Hello Phil.” It was Prime
Minister McMahon. I had never met him, nor
had I met his wife (and that is important
because of the punch line). He said he quite
understood how upset I was and he promised a
film school. Not just any film school, but the
best film school . . . and Sonia sends her love!
Out of the Experimental Film Fund came
people of the calibre of Peter Weir, and a lot of
the early films such as Stork, a moderate
success prior to The Adventures of Barry
McKenzie — the film for which I still have to
apologize. It’s 5 years later! So much was
generated by the Experimental Film Fund.
The middle link — the film school — was missing,
of course, until Whitlam came along and put it
in place.
I make no apology for the fact that we have a
national industry. I make no apology for it
being a nationalized industry. I say it
constantly: we live by whim of government. I
believe that if the rug were pulled, the only
films that would be left would be immoral and
that would be horrific horror and porn. There is
very little evidence that anything else would survive.
I also make no apology for the fact that the
film industry will stay subsidized. Whether the
government makes it through incentives or
through direct grants is almost irrelevant. All
art is subsidized. If we had the free market
applying in Australia, you could close the art
galleries, you could close the opera, the ballet,
Theatre, the lot. It is all subsidized. You
either want it or you don’t. If you want it, you
have to pay for it.
However, a lot of things Tony says about the
track record of the Australian Film
Commission are not correct. A letter or two
the other day from a departing AFC commissioner
who gave me a list of the films that the AFC
had said “no” to and it was a who’s who of the
films that it should have backed.
The picking process is hellishly hard. It is one
thing to eliminate films that lack quality, lack
originality, but it is very hard to know what is
going to win. Even when Star Wars was
finished, 20th Century-Fox didn’t really know
what it had. Fox almost gave it a minor release,
until one of the studio executive’s kids said it
and liked it.

The world is full of stories like that, about
films that even the great gurus of Hollywood
passed on. If they were as clever as all that, they
would be making more successes themselves. So
I think the film industry will remain subsidized.
I never promised Gorton anything else. My
original report to Gorton emphasized that
subsidies would be a permanent arrangement.
On the other hand, I am not against
international films. I don’t for a minute want
us to keep making navel-gazing and
narcissistic films. On the same day that I got my
Koala Award (Commissioner for Australia) from
the Governor-General, all hell had broken loose
over Robert Caswell’s documentary-drama for
the ABC, Scales of Justice. At a press
conference after my appointment I said that

Director: Bruce Beresford. Producer: Phillip
Adams.

CINEMA PAPERS March-April — 71
while at the AFC I hoped we would make just as many things to make people just as angry. There is one thing about Australian films which has bored me out of late: their tendency to flatten our ethics, the tendency to say nice things about Australia. I hope we will make more confronting films, a great many more films which admit to our regional realities, more films like Peter Weir's The Year of Living Dangerously or John Duigan's Far East. I hope to see more films that admit the fact that we are the second most multi-cultural nation on earth after Israel.

In my view, our natural market is not the U.S., but Europe. Tony would say that is because we make tired, defeatist, intellectual films for bored university graduates. I suggest it is because we make films for grown-ups. The Australian industry has tended to make films for people more than 25 years-old. (That is because we are so old and geriatric! We have not made any films at all for the young target group.)

I dismiss, with withering contempt, the tendency to bucket the past 10 or 15 years of Australian filmmaking. We are regarded as a great filmmaking country. Today Tony showed me American reviews of Lonely Hearts, the film I did last year with Paul Cox. Andrew Sarris, the Village Voice, the nastiest of the American critics, said that Lonely Hearts was the latest evidence of 'the continuing miracle of Australian film'. I think it has been a case of where there have been some dreadful films, but there have been some marvellous ones as well.

How does one judge 'international success'? I made Lonely Hearts with Cox because no one would touch him with a barge pole in a so-called free market. Cox had made a couple of very low-budget films, one called Kostas which, perhaps, one or two of you might have seen. I thought Kostas was shamefully handled: no one would release it, I knew his problem. When we made The Adventures of Barry McKenzie, the first film made with government money in the old AFDC days, I took it to the major theatre chains — Hoyts and Greater Union Theatres — whose eminence to me and to Australian film was total. They told me to stick it.

I then noticed that Ryan's Daughter had been running for ever in two cinemas — one in Melbourne and one in Sydney — for no good reason. No one was going. The only reason they were running it was because they could not get a replacement. The oligopoly was blocking film supply. So we put Barry McKenzie on and the rest is history; it went on to be a huge success. Kostas had been produced under the conditions that The Devil's Playground could get out! When Fred Schepisi made The Devil's Playground, he only got it released because I let him have my cinema, withdrawing Don's Party for him.

Don's Party was, to say the least, ethnie. I never thought it would travel beyond Melbourne and Sydney. Indeed, it didn't do well in Adelaide, and they hated it in Brisbane. However, it was a smash in Tel Aviv and in West Berlin, and it was one of the top 10 films of the year in Venezuela (where, I always thought, they probably confused it with Don Quixote). Tony and I both had films open in New York a couple of weeks ago. Tony's was Turkey Shoot, which is not an anti-fascist parable. It is the pornography of violence and probably the most violent film I have ever seen. I was so shocked by it at the Au, any more than the screenings that I lumbered out of the theatre and went down to the loo. That episode made the front page story in the Melbourne Truth: 'Adams walks out on Lynda Stoner', it said. The film's publicity people then went to a poster to get other people to go and see it!

Lonely Hearts is now playing in four New York cinemas and is becoming the cultural fridge being tossed to the other 'thinkink capitals', such as Boston and San Francisco. By contrast, Turkey Shoot opened simultaneously in about 9000 cinemas. I am delighted that Tony makes those sorts of films, but can't we make ours, too? There is room for us all. It is rather important that when our Prime Minister goes to the White House, the "first lady" of the U.S., Nancy Reagan, says that Bryan Brown is her favorite actor (having replaced Gene Autry). That is an enormous cultural achievement.

Tonight, Australian films are probably screening in about 40 or 50 countries. Almost universally, the films talked about are the films that Tony dismisses. The films that might make the money are Tony's 'mid-Pacific films', as I call them. I just cannot accept Tony's model. To me, the English film industry died when it accepted his postulate. The British film industry was pretty good. You might remember the Ealing comedy days, Sir Michael Balcon, Alexander Korda and others. It was, once, a great industry. They decided to go the American route and to make 'mid-Atlantic films'.

For 10 or 15 years the British technicians were fleecing, making the Superman and James Bond films. They were doing the technical work for a lot of the big Hollywood blockbusters, but no British idea was seen on the screen. There was no sense of British identity. Do we tell all our artists in Australia to start doing American stuff? The idea would be abhorrent.

Tony's energies are prodigious; I have often regretted that he is not in the mainstream! If he had been producing Peter Weir or Bruce Beresford, it would have been terrific for Peter and Bruce.

Another thing that has to be said about "internationalism". I don't think an Australian film is defined as Australian by where it is shot. It is defined by its attitude to its material. For example, I don't think it would be out of character to film an Australian version of a Shakespearean work. I wholeheartedly agree that we should not be narcissistic and narrow; that we should take a global view. But I will not tolerate, nor would I want to be a part of, a film industry which only made 'mid-Pacific films' for all those rich Americans. Let us have a rich, diverse school of filmmaking. We got into this industry for one reason: to give ourselves a national voice, to give ourselves a sense of national purpose and a national identity, and to throw that away would be a disaster and a fiasco.

Lonely Hearts: the latest evidence of "the continuing miracle of Australian film" (Andrew Sarris).
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**Synopsis:**

**Summary:** A contemporary story about a damaged family with a woman who is AWOL, and Kathy, a singer in a local rock club, who harbors him from the police.

**SON OF ALVIN**

**Summary:** A boy on the fringes of society who is a member of a group of kids who are in a local rock club, who harbors him from the police.

**CAST AND CREW**

**Director:** Brian Jones. **Producer:** Brian Jones. **Scriptwriter:** Brian Jones. **Production Designer:** Brian Jones. **Costume Designer:** Brian Jones. **Art Director:** Brian Jones. **Camera Operator:** John Ruane. **Sound Engineer:** Russell Hurley. **Lighting Director:** John Ruane. **Editor:** Russell Hurley. **Production Designer:** Brian Jones. **Art Director:** Brian Jones. **Costume Designer:** Brian Jones. **Art Director:** Brian Jones. **Camera Operator:** John Ruane. **Sound Engineer:** Russell Hurley. **Lighting Director:** John Ruane. **Editor:** Russell Hurley. **Production Designer:** Brian Jones. **Art Director:** Brian Jones. **Costume Designer:** Brian Jones. **Art Director:** Brian Jones. **Camera Operator:** John Ruane. **Sound Engineer:** Russell Hurley. **Lighting Director:** John Ruane. **Editor:** Russell Hurley. **Production Designer:** Brian Jones. **Art Director:** Brian Jones. **Costume Designer:** Brian Jones. **Art Director:** Brian Jones. **Camera Operator:** John Ruane. **Sound Engineer:** Russell Hurley. **Lighting Director:** John Ruane. **Editor:** Russell Hurley.
SYNOPSIS: Dramatized accounts of the seemingly unlikely sex lives of four men from different walks of life, all of whom seem to have a bond with the central character, Paul. The movie explores various themes such as infidelity, family secrets, and the impact of technology on relationships.

STREET HERO

Producers: Paul Daley Films

Directed by: Anni Montgomery

Written by: Robert Higgins

Starring: Emily Blunt, James McAvoy, and Demi Moore

Based on the novel by...


**Production Survey**

Make-up/hairdresser: Viva Megham
Prosthetic/hairdresser: David Bayliss
Standby props: Nick McCullum
Costume assistant: Daniel Jamieson
Editing assistants: Daniel Sze, Michaela Kent

**Safety and crafts**

Best boy: Peter West
Best girl: Richard Curtis
Runners: Claire O'Brien, Tim McLaughlin
Tuber: Grant McDonald
Budman: 95 mins
Gauge: 16mm

**Camera**

Cast: Rod Ouzounian (Steve Carson), Tony Alford (Chris Taylor), Chris Tushill (The Lawyer), Jon Gwynne (Graham Gwynne), Glynis Sweeting (Narissa), Dave Godden (William), Paper Thin Films (Suzanne), Glynis Sweeting (Betty Hobmett), Tanya Mann, Dorothy Mann, Chris Mann, Gary Mann, Mark Mann, Simon Mann, John Mann, Kim Mann, Paul Mann, Ron Mann, Sam Mann, Simon Mann, Tony Mann, and Sherry Mann.

**Synopsis**

A comedy about the struggle to stay young and out of business. Those who succeed are hailed as visionaries, while those who fail are accused of suspicion of the sabotage.

**PRISONERS**

**Producers**

- Tony Gallipoli

**Cast**

- Graham Kennedy (Norm Norris)
- Nell Ward (Sue Norris)
- Peter Haskell (Bert Norris)
- Dennis Davidson (Eskimo)
- Virginia Badger (Miss Badger)
- Brian Cox (Geordie Dryden)

**Synopsis**

In 1936, the miners in the small town of Sunbeam colliery, demanding better pay and wages, barricaded themselves in the main shaft of the Sunbeam colliery, demanding better pay and wages, barricaded themselves in the main shaft of the Sunbeam colliery, demanding better pay and wages, barricaded themselves in the main shaft of the Sunbeam colliery, demanding better pay and wages.

**STANLEY**

**Producers**

- Seven Keys Entertainment

**Cast**

- Greg McKey
- Melissa Key
- Richard Key
- Steve Key
- John Key

**Synopsis**

The film is about an eccentric American woman campaigning against the Vietnam War while working with the peace protesters in Sydney. The film highlights the struggle for the right to protest and the importance of peaceful protest in the context of a social movement.

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**Sharmill Films Catalogue**

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music WILLIAM MOTZING associate producer JULIA OVERTON executive producer SIMON WINCER
producer RICHARD MASON written and directed by JOHN DUIGAN

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THE WILD DUCK
Prod. company: Producers' Company
Dist. company: Photograph
Producer: Phoebe Bloomfield
Director: Arthur Penn
Based on the play by Henrik Ibsen
Photography: Rodin de Francqueville
Sound recording: Michael Finlay
Prod. designer: Dr. Marcel Laroche
Costume designer: Helen Thomas
Casting consultant: Daphne Droujous
Casting director: Nancy Peters
Camera operator: Stavros A. Karamolis
Clapper loader: Joe McCue
Assistant director: Jill Wexler
1st asst director: Kim Arning
2nd asst director: Sanja Hughes
Production manager: Ali Hassan
Production assistant: Carol Driscoll
Production secretary: Suzanne Donnelly
Production accounts: Mirabelle Queenton
1st asst director: Vivian Williams
2nd asst director: Kim Arning
Continuity: Sanja Hughes
Casting consultants: Milly Mathews
Costume designer: David Batterham
Focus puller: John Allen
Clapper loader: Conrad Stack
Assistant director: Dave Allen
Gaffer: Mick McManus
Boom operator: Noel Quinn
Costume designer: David Rowe
Make-up: Helen Tallman
Hairdresser: Derrick de Niese
Make-up: Helen Evans
Sound recordist: Jonathon Hughes
Electrician: Matt Slattery
Animal handler: Dale Aspen
Publicity: Wendy Day
Construction assistant: George Zammit
Tutor/chaperone: Johanna Kauffmann
Still photography: Chic Stringer
Continuity: Linda Ray
Sound editor: Paul Maxwell
Production manager: David Hardie
Production assistant: Sue Blaney
Production secretary: Libby Thomson
Financial controller: David Hando
Gaffer: Reg Garside
Key grip: Philip Shapera
2nd asst director: Ian Kenny
Prod, assistant: Joanne Rooney
Continuity: Linda Ray
Sound editor: Andrew Steuart
Make-up: Helen Tallman
Sound recordist: Don Connolly
Electrician: Jonathon Hughes
Catering: Ken Sharpies
Unit runner: Fiona Sullivan
Lab. runner: Louise Innes

IN RELEASE

BMX BANDITS
Prod. company: BMX Bandits
Dist. company: Nilson Premiere
Director: Paul Bartel
Scriptwriter: Patrick Edgeworth
Photography: Russell Hagg
Production manager: Karen Hammond
Production assistant: Rose Mary Galloway
Art director: Rosemary Scott
Costume designer: Carolynne Cunnane
Make-up: Candice Dubois
1st asst director: Bob Howard
2nd asst director: Murray Robertson
Production assistant: Libby Thomson
Casting consultants: Mitch Cunningham
Location manager: Martin O'Neil
Hairdresser: Susan O'Connor
Make-up: Catherine Dubois
Stunts: Robert Morris
Stunts: John Bailey
2nd asst director: Sue Parker
Prod, secretary: Penny Wall
Composer: Brian May
Score: Super 16mm
Profit: $150,000
Gauge: 35mm
Length: 90 mins

BUSH CHRISTMAS
Prod. company: Bush Christmas
Dist. company: Various
Producer: Paul Barron
Director: John Gilling
Scriptwriter: Ronald Neame
Photography: Chic Stringer
Production manager: Linda Ray
Production assistant: Libby Thomson
Continuity: Linda Ray
Sound editor: Andrew Steuart
Make-up: Helen Evans
Sound recordist: Don Connolly
Electrician: Jonathon Hughes
Catering: Ken Sharpies
Unit runner: Fiona Sullivan

INNOCENTS
Prod. company: Innocents
Dist. company: Connected Films Ltd
Producer: David Hardie
Director: William Mueller
Scriptwriter: Tony McLean
Photography: Michael DAVIS
Production manager: Dave Thomson
Production assistant: Joanne Rooney
Continuity: Linda Ray
Sound editor: Andrew Steuart
Make-up: Helen Evans
Sound recordist: Don Connolly
Electrician: Jonathon Hughes
Catering: Ken Sharpies
Unit runner: Fiona Sullivan

MOLLY
Prod. company: Molly
Dist. company: Greater Union Org.
Producer: Tim Burstow
Director: Neill Lander
Scriptwriter: Mark Thomas

ON LOCATION IN DALLAS, TX. AND SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA.

MAN OF FLOWERS
Prod. company: Flowers
Dist. company: Roadshow Producers
Producer: Joan Sainsbury
Director: Phillip Cox
Scriptwriter: Bob Ellis
Sound recordist: Lloyd Carrick
Music: "Conscience"

ACLU ASSOCIATION
Actor: Peter Ustinov
Actress: T. C. R. Mitchell
Production assistant: David Rowe
Continuity: Tony McLean

CINEMA PAPERS
March-April — 79

Production Survey
**RIVER OF GIANTS**

- **In release**

**Synopsis:** A voyage of observation, the story follows the Port Jackson Phillipan crew who manned Captain William Bligh in the eclipse of 1800 that followed the mutiny on the "Bounty." In 1785 Bligh ordered 33 open boats each to hold 20 men. The 33rd boat was 14 men; a dream haunted by the spirit of Bligh.

**Aboriginal Arts in Perkins**

- **In production**

**Synopsis:** A documentary about the Aboriginal peoples of WA filmworks in collaboration with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs of WA. The film charts the history of the living arts, the craft and ceremonial life of the Aboriginal people of WA, and how this culture is presented during the ceremony of the 30th anniversary of the Aboriginal Art."}

**ABORIGINAL IN ARTS WITH PERKINS**

- **In production**

**Synopsis:** A documentary about the Aborigines of WA filmworks in collaboration with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs of WA. The film charts the history of the living arts, the craft and ceremonial life of the Aboriginal people of WA, and how this culture is presented during the ceremony of the 30th anniversary of the Aboriginal Art."}

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Surviving the summer peril
Producers
Tinkle Productions

Title
Craigieburn, Vic

Story
Malcolm Richards

Time
1 hr 30 mins

Production
Executive producer, Peter Dimond

Synopsis
A film exploring the use of domestic and industrial waste water and demonstrating the inaccuracies and ecological advantages of such use.

New south wales film corporation

Ians choice
Producers
Television Miniatures

Title
Newtown, Syd

Story
Brian Hird

Time
60 mins

Production
Executive producer, Vittorio D'Alessandro

Synopsis
A film about the cultural and social issues in a Sydney suburb.

Managing sydneys waste
Producers
Macquarie University

Title
Sydney, N.S.W.

Story
Michael Wells

Time
90 mins

Production
Executive producer, Peter Dimond

Synopsis
A film investigating the use of domestic and industrial waste water and demonstrating the inaccuracies and ecological advantages of such use.

Cinema papers

March-April — 83

Concluded on p. 108
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Tel: 337 8041/336 1509
Man of Flowers

Helen Greenwood

Man of Flowers was the most unusual success of 1983. An art film, shot on a relatively low-budget and deliberately under-promoted, the appeal of the film lies in its ability to appear to raise issues when in fact it merely reflects opinions; to seem to challenge the mind when it actually only tickles a cerebral fancy; and to present a complex veneer of beautiful photography, disparate characters and quirky humor that masks a simple intent. Man of Flowers is a charming deception that makes one believe one has seen a highly intellectual and provocative film when one has merely had one's senses beautifully and effortlessly satiated. This is not to say that the film is facile or trite but that it involves audiences without making any demands on them.

Charles Bremer (Norman Kaye) is an intriguing character: he is initially presented in an almost comic fashion as an unblinking, small man who derives pleasure from watching an artist's model, Lisa (Alyson Best), do a striptease in his living room then marching into a church across the road to play the organ (visual pun intended, surely). Gradually, however, as the film progresses Charles becomes less and less a harmless figure of fun.

Kaye, in a delicate performance, manages to create a more aware and intellectual version of Peter Sellers' Chauncey Gardner (in Hal Ashby's Being There, 1981), with a touch of Pierre Huysman's Des Essenties (Against Nature, 1884). Both Chauncey and Charles come into wealth in the later stages of their lives and move in a world of their own which reduces people to images on a television screen (in the case of Chauncey) or objects (in the case of Charles). Both are incapable of sexual expression, although women do their best to coax it out of them. They exude a mixture of retarded naivety and guileless wisdom which proves a magnet for other people who can then interpret Chauncey and Charles as they wish. And, eventually, both Chauncey and Charles outwit and outmanoeuvre the people who are attempting to manipulate them. By underestimating Chauncey and Charles, those who attempt to use them become victims of their own machinations.

Kaye's portrayal of tortured sensibility, deliberateness and delicacy is a perfect echo of the dramatic flashback sequences Paul Cox uses to recall Charles' boyhood. With quavering, slow-moving images reminiscent of a nightmare, these scenes are a powerful depiction of a misunderstood child and shattered innocence. The need for and fascination with sensuality and beauty by the boy Charles is ignored by a stern, authoritarian father (Werner Herzog) and catered for by a beautiful, overprotective, mother (Hillary Kelly). Gradually the boy turns away from his father, retreating psychologically and raising claims of retardation from one of his aunts. The latter (played by Eileen Joyce and Marianne Baillieu), over-blonde and fleshy, are the incarnation of the women in a Titian painting and a stark contrast to the lean, ascetic lines of Charles' mother. The aunts also seem to be somewhat more than that; their sexually provocative behaviour and blowzy familiarity, combined with Charles' father's penchant for paintings his mother considers pornographic, hint at a rift between his parents and affairs that his father deliberately parades before his more prudish and chaste wife.

The nightmarish evocation explains why Charles grows up with obsessions about naked women, flowers and sculpture. Certainly, the constant presence of water — the bath, the swimming pool, the sea — represents a security that Charles still craves and his inability to emerge from a child-like state. These scenes with their psychological implications and striking filmic techniques render Man of Flowers more complex and add to one's perception of the film as an intellectual statement.

However, this is a red herring because the character Charles is not as much a study of a distorted psyche as it is a representation of an attitude to art. Charles is a strong advocate of a classical school of thought on art: sculpture must make you want to touch it; real paintings are of landscapes and flowers; a painting is something you can see even when your eyes are shut; and Talking Heads does not compare to Donizetti.

The questioning of artistic (and other) values is presented as a simplistic conflict between the traditional and the avant-garde, the old and the nouveau. The theme however is undermined by the fact that David (Chris Haywood), the painter supposed to represent the antithesis to the filmmaker's point of view, begs the question by the weakness and absurdity of the character. Haywood plays the comic relief well, but the modern painter equipped with flailing rope brush and blow-torch is hardly a credible counter-argument on behalf of the values of modern art.

Similarly, in the exaggeratedly crude relationship between Lisa and David, the latter can hardly be taken seriously as a representation of the chauvinistic, inconsiderate male and thereby weakens the reason for Lisa's refuge in a lesbian relationship. Given, too, the rather flat portrayal of Jane by Sarah Walker, one could be forgiven for regarding Lisa's actions as a passing idiosyncracy.

It is for that reason that I cannot agree with Meaghan Morris that Man of Flowers "...is a film about values and one that asks...that we interrogate our own". While the film is 1. Financial Review, September 30, 1983.
“affirming rather than destroying the richness of traditional cultural values”, it does not present a challenge to one’s values. Instead, it tells one into an unquestioning acceptance of the values represented by Charles because there is no convincing or equally alluring alternative.

The attractiveness of Man of Flowers is due, in part, to the minor characters. Created by Cox and fellow scenarist Bob Ellis, they are, with the exception of the art teacher (played by Julia Blake whose confused German and Irish accent bares an equally vague character), delightful diversions that also serve to add interest to the character of Charles. The guilt-ridden, self-pitying psychiatrist (Barry Dickins), the postman with theories on the meaning of life who never writes letters (Barry Dickins), the coppersmith (Patrick Cook) with intriguing ideas about society's disposal of its dead, and the shy church warden (Tony Llewellyn-Jones) are a diverse community of equally lost souls. It is also a welcome absurdity rather than pretentiousness that these characters are played respectively by a well-known scriptwriter, playwright, cartoonist and the associate producer of the film.

The film is also enhanced by the stunning photography of Yuri Sokol, a lush operatic score, and beautiful art direction by Asher Bilu, replete with allusions to Titian paintings, Caravaggio-inspired sets and the Magritte-like character of Charles himself. The allusions to art extend to the film’s creative way, Charles eliminating the potential disruption to Charles’ world prompts him to act. By disposing of David in an unlikely but highly creative way, Charles eliminates the external offence to his sensibilities and peace of mind. Whether he also purges himself of his psychological and sexual problems is not clear.

Man of Flowers manages to satisfy the senses, provide disarming wit and tease the mind with provocative images, drawing the audience in and convincing it that the film is challenging the intellect, when, in fact, it is merely teasing and disarming the converted.

The film’s metadramatic structure and nostalgic perspective is cautious not to elicit any unvaried or unemotional responses; it succeeds in offering the viewer occasionally moving, nostalgic “tear-jerkers.” Nonetheless, there are several significant jarring notes in the film, some of them stemming from the film’s earnest congeniality. Several segments of the film are overwrought, and there are some misjudgments of characterization and dramatic emphasis.

George (Peter Whitford) and Lila (Robyn Nevin) are the aunt and uncle who have raised P.S. (Nicholas Gledhill) as their own son in their working-class home. P.S.’s mother, Sinden, died giving birth to his father, Logan (John Hargreaves), has disappeared.

The rich and beautiful Aunt Vanessa (Wendy Hughes) arrives from London, assuring Lila that, although she will “borrow” him now and then, she doesn’t “want to change the rhythm of P.S.’s life”. But her presence is clearly discordant. She challenges Lila’s claim that she and George are practically mother and father to him, and infuriates George when she shunts P.S. out in the hallway, with George insisting, “We don’t ever shut him out!”

When P.S. arrives at Vanessa’s huge, rented mansion for his first stay she immediately begins to modify his speech, table manners and behaviour to suit her upper-class, British aspirations. She even reduces the near-sacred status of “dear one’s garden” by bluntly telling P.S. that under the stone slab lie the rotting remains of his mother.

Through his shuffling between the contrasting worlds of Vanessa and Lila, P.S. soon becomes the victim of the conflicting values and wishes they try to instil in him. This is borne out most notably when P.S. is made by each sister to lie to and keep confidences from the other, something clearly contrary to the openness Lila and George had engendered in him before Vanessa’s arrival.

However, Vanessa’s influence on P.S. is tenuous; this is illustrated when he meets his father for the first time. While Logan is twitchy and nervous, P.S. is restrained and mannered, showing no emotion and acting like the “little gentleman” Vanessa wants him to be.

Along with P.S., Logan breaks down, and P.S., momentarily out of Vanessa’s sight, vents his feelings, saying that he wants to stay with Lila and George. Logan swears he will fix it for P.S., it being the ‘one thing’ he can do for him, and tells P.S. to “belly-ache and make a big fuss” if he is made to do anything he dislikes.

Well-meaning and desperate for redemption, this aspect of Logan’s character, and its subsequent negation by his drunkenness and irresponsibility, is an appeal for viewer sympathy that works. As he is about to leave on a train, it is revealed that his heart-felt promise to P.S. has been broken. Logan having only signed papers that keep Vanessa from taking him to London. Logan appears not as a villain but as a pathetic, failed parent, a victim of his own vices whose only legacy and source of pride is P.S.

The effect of this brief visit from his father on P.S. is profound. He starts to rebel against Vanessa and decides not to return to her, telling her so on the phone and hiding in a closet when the chauffeur comes to pick him up.

After the judge (Edward Howell)
Careful, He Might Hear You

Directed by: Carl Schultz
Producer: Jill Robb
Screenplay: Michael Jenkins
Director of photography: John Seale
Editor: Richard W. Halsey
Production designer: John Stoddart
Music: Ray Cook
Sound recordist: Syd Butterworth
Cost: Wendy Hughes
Vedast (Vanessa), Robyn Nevin (Lila), Nicholas Gledhill (P.S.), George, and Lila, she is not drawn as a villainous figure of deliberate malice. Insights into her character reveal a tormented woman of confusion and contradiction, whose external wealth, material security and beauty mask her internal instabilities and emotional isolation. Her past love affair with Logan motivates her to want P.S. to fill the emotional void he left, yet her desire is tempered by an admission of failure in her quest for emotional fulfillment. P.S.’s despairing reaction to her death and his vision of her near the film’s end indicate that her loss carries considerable emotional impact for him and the viewers.

While Vanessa is the most dramatically involving character in the film next to P.S., Lila and George, her contrast to the recent spate of authentic, emotionally restrained and complex plots is a welcome contrast to the recent spate of films which feature precocious, world-wise under-10-year-olds.

Though Careful, He Might Hear You has been somewhat overrated, and could have benefited from several better-developed and -sustained indigenous period features, it is a pleasing and sporadically moving, if unexceptional, melodrama. Its lush production makes it attractive and the strong performances in the central roles, especially that of Hughes as Vanessa, elicit sympathy from the viewer. There are several misjudgments, but the film hits the right spots more times than it misses and that, after all, is what counts.


Phar Lap (Towering Inferno) wins his first race at the 1929 Derby at Randwick, Simon Wincer’s Phar Lap.


Phar Lap

Keith Connolly

Because of its origins, and by-now-familiar Edgley build-up, I must confess to approaching Phar Lap with some reservation. The first viewing (courtesy of the Australian Film Awards) was so pleasant a surprise that I attended a later screening, and a further press preview, to check my almost-wholly favorable reaction. There was no doubt about it: director Simon Wincer had turned out a largely authentic, emotionally restrained and thoroughly convincing mainstream film within the parameters of popular legend-mongering. By comparison, The Man From Snowy River is simply a refugee from Marboro country. Of course, Phar Lap is a pantingly-ready project for the “c’mon-Aussie” school of instant patriotism (can Bradman, Jacka, Darcy and remakes of Smithy and Ned Kelly be far behind?). But Wincer and scriptwriter David Williamson must have been acutely aware of the dangers inherent in this very ripeness: too much reverence would choke it just as surely as would a cavalier attitude to basic historical fact.

In the main, they strike a nicely-acceptable balance. The movie Phar Lap is somewhat larger than life, and so was the real-life racehorse. The period does take on a faintly roseate glow, yet those bleak Depression times were in truth envied for many Australians by this extraordinary animal. It is pop stuff, but acceptable, nevertheless, thanks to a skilful counterpointing of Phar Lap’s famous victories with the shortcomings, strengths and failures of the mere humans around him. There is little real attempt, beyond the accuracy of Anna Senior’s costumes and a general authenticity of locale, to capture the strained atmosphere of those penny-pinched times.

However, it should be noted that Wincer and Williamson canter deftly along a course strewn with hyperbolic temptation, making the most, but not too much, of an incident-studded four years. Certainly Williamson had to invent very little. His artistic imagination and superb grasp of Australian idiom (even though censorship-classification objectives presumably denied him the salty speech of the stables) supply the necessary undocumented moments and add human interludes of primary comic and emotional contrast.

These scenes, as well-written as anything Williamson has done for the screen, allow Wincer to establish a convincing relationship between horse and humans, notably strapper Tommy Woodcock (Tom Burlinson), trainer Harry Telford (Martin Vaughan) and

awards custody of P.S. to Vanessa, P.S. again makes his loyalties clear to an excellent performance by Whitford of his experience, growth and development of resourcefulness is a welcome contrast to the recent spate of films which feature precocious, world-wide under-10-year-olds.
Phar Lap

Bush Christmas and Molly

Geoff Mayer

Films made specifically for young children are often difficult to review as many of the elements one looks for in other films, such as generic complexity, a range of character traits, ambivalent endings and temporal changes, are not possible because of the conceptual difficulties of the genre. There are, on the other hand, certain basic elements which increase the chances of holding a young audience’s attention. The production teams for Bush Christmas and Molly are generally aware of these elements.

 Paramount amongst these is the subject matter and, if nothing else, the history of children’s literature and the cinema has repeatedly demonstrated the universal appeal of horses (Bush Christmas) and dogs (Molly). This, in turn, often evokes a degree of sentimentality when children are generally deprived of these pets for most of each film.

 Also significant in both films is the focus on the children as the central characters, the linear narrative, the employment of proven melodramatic devices of suspense, external tension and simple characters. That is, there is a clear division between good and evil, and the source of the narrative ‘problem’ is imposed by the villains (in both films the theft of the animals) on the sympathic characters. Mandatory, of course, is the resolution of all problems and the happy ending.

 It is interesting to compare Bush Christmas with Molly as both films share a number of structural and thematic similarities. But having watched the films on the same day one is struck by the smooth narrative confidence and humor of Bush Christmas, which is a credit to its creative team, particularly scribes Trevor Ted Roberts, who must surely be one of Australia’s most accomplished writers, as anyone who saw the last series of Patrol Boat will testify.

 Bush Christmas is set in the Australian outback during the early 1950s and the simple story consists of two strands. The first, and subsidiary

owner Dave Davis (Ron Leibman). The characters are something less than complex in outlook and behaviour, but then the world of the film has not previously been as short on subtlety as it is long on strategy.

The record is treated respectfully. Phar Lap’s brief career is telescoped a little, but by no means falsified, from the time the then-unknown racehorse reached Sydney from New Zealand in 1928 to his still-unexplained death in California only four years later.

The racing sequences are imaginative and authentic. Turf men I know find little fault with them (there are, apparently, so-called minor anachronisms) and praise the overall verisimilitude. And there is enough ‘action’, most of it factual, to satisfy the most fastidious filinger — from the Cup-eve shooting attempt to that last-fairy-tale win in Mexico and bizarre demise (recorded in a prologue that establishes the film’s historical perspective).

The causes of the strange death of Phar Lap, at a California stud farm not long before he was about to tackle the U.S. racing circuit, is soft-peddled. For whatever reason (the most likely being a reluctance to offend the potential American market), the conventional wisdom of my boyhood, that the Yanks had poisoned Phar Lap as assuredly as they had killed Les Darcy, is virtually ignored.

The only people really pilloried are the 1930s Victoria Racing Club committee, particularly its celebrated chairman L.K.S. McKinnon (played with redoubtable British-Australian starch by Vincent Ball). Ball’s characterization of the establishment autocrat who prompts the handicapper to give Phar Lap far too much weight is, like those of other male principals, a convenient blend of stereotype and substance. Martin Vaughan does his bloody-old-curmudgeon act with customary vehemence, Burlinson is the autocrat who prompts the handicapper to give Phar Lap far too much weight (Lachlan McKinnon), James Steele (Jim Pike), Georgia Carr (Emma Woodcock). Production companies, John Sexton Prods-Michael Edgley International. Distributor: Hoyts. 35 mm. 118 mins. Australia. 1985.

Bush Christmas and Molly

It goes without saying that this is Simon Wincer’s best film. He has enjoyed too much success in recent times, both as producer and director, to bother too much about what anyone thought of the best-forgotten Snapshot and Harlequin. But one gets the impression from Phar Lap that, as well as honing his directorial talents, he has added expressions like ‘not bloody likely!’ to his working vocabulary.


It might be expected that this dramatic framework, which follows the original version filmed by the Rank Organization in 1946-47, would offer little room for surprise or freshness. In fact, the worst is feared when Ben Thompson begins the film with, “One more bad Christmas and we are finished here.” It would appear that Roberts has it in for Summer as he is forced to utter a succession of similar gems including, “Sorry kids, I don’t think Prince [their horse] has got a chance” before the race, or after the race, “We’ve saved the old place.”

Within the essentially 19th Century melodramatic conventions of the story, Roberts has injected a consistent stream of humor, largely focusing on the relationship between Sly and that habitual scene-stealer, Bill. Sly, in particular, has a number of very funny lines with one of the best being his horrified reaction that Bill’s killing of a bush rabbit will antagonize the Aboriginals watching their progress (“You’ve shot one of their pets”). There are also some nice throwaway lines, such as Howard muttering “Taxi” as he stumbles through the

Molly, the ‘singing’ dog, and young friend, Maxie (Claudia Karvan). Ned Lander’s Molly.
dense bush. Even the children share in the comedy, particularly when he orders a triple — acting, atmosphere and cons the locals with his singing after a strong opening. The film is at Lye) takes Molly into a country pub resulting in a repetitive middle section weakness of a little girl’s attempt to recover the dog has a lot going for it, notably a photograph Bush Christmas and Molly its familiar conventions with humor, Molly opts for rather sinister overtones. If one walked in late one could be excused for thinking one was watching, on occasions, the build-up for a “splatter” movie. The villain’s obsession with becoming a performer dictates his single-minded efforts to steal Molly, a reasonable plot device to generate some tension. But director Ned Lander and director of photography Vince Monton repeatedly emphasize the psychotic disturbance of the villain: shots of his boarding-house room with its showbusiness fetish; a protracted sequence of Jones applying clown make-up to his face, or shaving his head with a barber’s cutthroat razor (and in one gruesome scene he accidentally steps on the blade). One begins to wonder if this is in fact McDonald’s screen test for Norman Bates in Psycho III: his character is devoid of humor except for a black joke when he drops a rat into the stew as he leaves his job as a short-order cook.

The only explanation I can offer for the rather radical shift in tone between the girl and her dog in sunny Coogee and the demented villain is the desire to approximate the threatening qualities of the fairy-tales gathered by the Brothers Grimm: publicity for the film describes Molly as a “modern fairy-tale about a dog with a rare gift”. Certainly fear is a key ingredient as the villainous S={$\text{Sly}$. He steals Maxie’s protection. The bulk of the story, retains interest throughout with a deft blend of humor, action and attractive characterizations.


Molly: Directed by: Ned Lander. Producer: Hilary Linstead. Associate producers: Phillip Roope, Mark Thomas, Screenplay: Phillip Roope, Mark Thomas, Ned Lander. Director of photography: Vincent Monton. Editor: Stewart Young. Music: Graeme Isaacs. Sound recordist: Lloyd Carrick. Cast: Claudia Karvan (Maxie), Garry McDonald (Jones), Molly (as herself), Ruth Cracknell (Mrs Reach), Reg Lye (Old Dan), Melissa Jaffer (Jenny), Slim de Grey (Tommy), Leslie Dayman (Bill Ireland), Robin Laurie (Stella) and members of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus. Production company: Trophila. Distributor: GUO. 35 mm. 88 mins. Australia. 1983.
Frank Snepp, senior CIA officer, Saigon, 1969-1975. Marian Wilkinson's Allies. Diem (but not how the agency helped bring Diem down). Frouty tells of the agency team "that had overthrown The Philippines government" being sent on a similar mission to Indonesia in 1958. (He also claims that Australian back-up teams were standing by to support the insurgents. Veteran CIA operative Ralph McGehee says he was the "custodian" of an influential book funded by the agency to cover its tracks in the Indonesian coup of 1965. McGehee and other highly placed agency men, Victor Marchetti and Frank Snepp, discuss the agency's role in Vietnam from the time the U.S. began to sponsor Diem in 1954. McGehee says that before this decision was taken the American people, and allies such as Australia, were sold a picture of the situation in Vietnam that was "sheer illusion".

Marchetti — author of a convincing and unsensational account of CIA workings and blunders, The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence — and Snepp, the CIA's chief strategy analyst in Saigon in 1975, say many interesting, and a few startling, things about American dealings with Canberra. The most startling is Marchetti's guarded reference to "clandestine" (his word) CIA activity in Australia during the time of the Whitlam Government. He describes how another CIA man complained to him that a "legitimate" (again, Marchetti's word) intelligence operation at Pine Gap was being endangered by another clandestine activity "of an internal nature in Australia" going on under the auspices of the CIA station chief in Canberra.

Snepp, darkly-handsome and still youthful-looking, describes how he deliberately misled the Australian government (through its ambassador in Saigon) about the size and nature of the North Vietnamese incursion into South Vietnam. Later, he says, he was instructed to regard the Whitlam Government as "North Vietnamese collaborators" after it demurred about American saturation bombing of the North!

Almost without exception, the Americans who appear in Allies are more forthcoming and articulate than the Australians. Only Clyde Cameron, with his charge that Australian intelligence men helped the CIA in Chile during the Allende Government, makes any notable contribution. Cameron alleges that, as Minister for Immigration in the Whitlam Government, he was "staggered" to discover that there were "21 to 24 ASIO agents around the world posing as immigration officials":

When I discovered the role Australian Intelligence had played in the overthrow of the Allende Government in Chile in 1973, I was appalled that my own department was involved in this sort of work. Our intelligence agents in Chile were acting as a 'hyphen' between the CIA, who [sic] weren't able to operate in Chile at that time, and the Pinochet junta which eventually murdered the democratically-elected president. Imagine my amazement!
when I received a letter from the Prime Minister saying that I was to take no further action in the matter... that I was not to withdraw ASIO agents even from Santiago and that nothing was to be done about it at all.

Other Australian witnesses include David Combe (whose phone-tapped mention of the film led to that extraordinary Royal Commission reference) talking about the Australian Labor Party having "hell frightened out of it" by allegations by Christopher Boyce of involvement by the CIA in Australian politics, and academic Dr Desmond Ball on the importance to Western Cape and Narrunga installations. The U.S. is by now quite experienced at the kind of token pacification practised by Marshall Green, the trouble-shooting American Ambassador during the Whitlam years, who stares levelly into the camera and declares:

"I thought that if we just mind our manners and deal with the new government perfectly straight, we'll all be all right. And so it turned out. Now that's quite a bit different from the testimony of Snepp."

When William Colby declares roundly "we have never interfered in Australian politics", judicious editing gently contradicts him a little later on, when Victor Marchetti declares the CIA has been involved in political action programs with friendly governments all over the world... why wouldn't we do it in Australia if necessary?

What, then, does Allies achieve?

Obviously, anyone who expects it to reveal a consistent line of American intervention and manipulation in Australian affairs isn't thinking clearly. After all, Australians have had no one like Jacobo Arbenz or Salvador Allende, much less Fidel Castro, to concern the U.S. And then, as the film's title and content constantly reminds Australians, they are allies.

The film's technique is formal, restrained and a good deal more expositor than outward appearances - the total lack of commentary, and the even-handed mix of participants and witnesses - might suggest. It is also fairly demanding. Those without a more-than-passing knowledge of world history since 1945, and particularly what went on in the South-East Asian and Pacific regions, may think that a good many of the witnesses' remarks are either opaque or irrelevant. All, however, have at least some significance, even if, in a few cases, it lies in what is not said.

In the end, one cannot but conclude that Australia's big brother in the U.S. (in the words of a ditty by the doggerel versifier of yesteryears, "Dry-blower") has indeed been watching over Australia - in its fashion.


For Love Or Money

Rod Bishop

Recently, Germaine Greer made some pertinent comments about the women's movement, believing it to be "exploited by lesbians and feminists" and riddled by a "silly religious observance" to ideology. Her most succinct criticism was aimed at Greenham Common whose feminist caretaker was criticized as further evidence of a "counter-productive and isolated" feminism rapidly lapsing into a form of political exile.

If Greer appears progressively at odds with a movement she perceives as sectarian and powerless, the feminist perspective of the compilation documentary For Love Or Money is intent on unapologetically linking the history of Australian women and their work to the politics of war, race and class.

In developing this wider political framework, the film opposes the notion of an isolated feminism, arguing that political issues, while sometimes appearing as lost causes, in fact relate to a more substantial undertaking: the quest for equal power with men to determine not only the lives of women but also the lives of others who have, throughout history, been kept powerless.

If the greatest strength of For Love Or Money derives from this political perspective, the film's major virtue is the fire and spirit with which it tackles...
there is nothing remotely in the class of For Love or Money. The film is most effective when documenting the patriarchal co-option of women for work, and the periodic decisions made by men to allow women into the workforce only when it suits their personal, political or economic ambitions.

For Love or Money strives to integrate the issues of war, race and social class with its theme of women and work. It simultaneously helps probe the failure of patriarchal societies to see these issues as not only specifically related to men, but as also reflecting the sexual inequalities perpetrated on women.

In a contemporary period of eroding economic conditions and its inherent threat to the gains made by women and their work, the confronting profile of feminism faces the prospect of qualified equalities: compromises born of realpolitik which suggest a form of equality but which do not necessarily carry either the entitlements to power or the apparatus for its use.

The images in this character, with all its curiosity and parodied prejudices, is the figure to which the film aligns its audience. The introduction of the character of a medical student early in the film signifies the start of an education process whereby the newcomer, and implicitly the audience, is instructed in the workings of the establishment.

Paul Armstrong (Simon Burke) staunchly embodies a range of conservative attitudes, directly contrasted with those of the staff and several patients. He is hostile to homosexuals, contemptuous yet curious about prostitutes, dishonest about his inhibitions and arrogant about his professional status. He also exhibits two traits viewed as particularly reprehensible: a lack of humor and a puritanism manifested in pomposity. He not only feels acutely uncomfortable in his new surroundings but also is essentially demeaned by them. It is a key factor in the film's strategy that this character, with all its curiosity and parodied prejudices, is the figure to which the film aligns its audience.

Paul is assigned to spend the morning with Eric Linden (Chris Haywood),
a doctor who manages on his first appearance in the film to contravene most of the proprieties associated with the medical profession. Dressed in tattered jeans and a haphazardly buttoned floral shirt, Eric demonstrates an informality with patients and a benevolent tolerance of them that Paul finds incomprehensible. When the doctor is revealed as an unrepentant homosexual, the contrast is complete. Paul’s exposure to Eric forms a central component of the narrative, delineating its assertion that education can transform an intolerant, and often ignorant, attitude into a more productive awareness.

Although a large part of Paul’s instruction is reliant on Eric’s tuition, the viewer’s tutelage is extended beyond the realm of his consciousness. There is a continual emphasis on the need for information about sex education and sexually transmitted diseases. The inappropriate over-reaction of an employer to an employee who has contracted syphilis, and the trauma of a patient suffering from herpes, are attributed to ignorance about the nature of the diseases. The more humorous sketches depict a general naivete about bodily functions and the transmission of infections. In this way the film seems consciously designed as a source of information for its audience, systematically chronicling the inadequacies of the pill, the treatments for venereal disease and the incidence of non-specific urethritis, an infection that exhibits some of the symptoms of gonorrhoea.

The film also attributes a part of Paul’s eventual conversion in attitude to his respite at the beach. When he is in the clinic he is unable to identify with any of the patients or place them in a broader context which accepts sexual diseases as a by-product of often healthy or fulfilling relationships. However, as he watches a couple at the beach, he is forced to acknowledge the existence of an intimacy and tenderness that he had automatically disassociated from the patients. Having accepted the clinic as a necessary, even desirable, establishment, he is able to return and see his work there in a different context. He is even able to confide his private fears to Eric in a scene which ironically concludes with the two men sharing a laugh in a toilet cubicle. It is indicative of the essential generosity of the script that even the most pompous and unpleasant character is granted his moment of integrity.

If The Clinic has a hero, it is Eric Linden, whose casual yet practical approach to his work is seen to emanate from a humor and humanity of real benefit to his patients. Hayward’s performance is not simply enjoyable, but almost remarkable: in a medium from which such representations are notably absent, he succeeds in portraying an open and intelligent homosexual as a character worthy of respect.

Linden’s professional attributes are shared by the other members of the staff. United by a spirit of community, they operate efficiently and with compassion and wry humor through the series of consultations. As a group, their tolerant receptivity becomes an antidote to the psychological disorders of a repressive culture. Their interaction with the variety of patients spilling out from the bustling waiting-room provides much of the basis for the film’s social observations.

However, even the staff is subject to criticism. In a seminal scene which takes a well-aimed swipe at any feelings of smugness or patronization emanating from the safety of the stalls, Wilma (Betty Bobbitt) is introduced. She appears to be a parody from the moment she enters Dr Young’s (Rona McLeod) office. She is acutely embarrassed about attending the clinic, to the extent of adopting a disguise and a pseudonym, then hiding in the toilets rather than be seen in the waiting-room. Her unfashionable modesty about sex has escalated to fearful proportions when combined with her over-zealous standards of hygiene. She feels, however, compelled to undergo
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**The Clinic**

an examination because, for the first time since her husband's departure (three years ago), she has slept with a man and was horrified when he failed to get out of bed and wash himself afterwards. Convinced that such neglect, in addition to his stained underwear, indicated that he was somehow unclean, she swallowed a tranquiliser and headed for the clinic.

Upon the disclosure of her complaint, even the normally sympathetic doctor and nurse (Jane Clifton) find it impossible to suppress their mirth. Wilma appears prudish and absurd; a bundle of inhibitions and neuroses comforted by valium, she could almost be a sister to Edna Everage. The viewer is encouraged to share the amused disbelief of the staff.

But the tone of the scene changes abruptly, in a style indicative of the fluidity with which the film can alternate between comedy and drama. Sensing that she is being ridiculed, Wilma rightly demands that she be treated with respect; she acknowledges that she may seem ridiculous but asserts that to her this is an embarrassing and degrading situation. The immediate effect of her protest is to silence the giggles of the staff and elicit an apology which once again stresses the need for compassion rather than gratuitous judgement. Her succinct speech produces an effect similar to that of Sandy's belated outburst in Tootsie. In both cases an ostensibly eccentric and neurotic woman confronts her detractors and explains her confusions, demanding that she be viewed more respectfully.

As both a comedy of manners and an examination of social mores, The Clinic is often poignant and consistently funny. But, occasionally, a heavy-handed attempt to draw attention to the serious side of the subject detracts from the fluidity of the film. A refusal to ignore the graver aspects of its subjects so as to sustain the laughs is admirable. However, the fate of the syphilis patient, Warwick (Ned Lander), overstates issues already adequately covered by the script and underestimates the impact of Lander's sensitive performance.

It is established clearly that Warwick is suffering from syphilis and that his honesty to the nurse at his place of employment has resulted in an unethical betrayal of his confidence and his retrenchment. Despite efforts by the helpful and maternal counsellor (Pat Evison), it is also clear that Warwick will remain a victim, not only of his disease but also of the lack of understanding demonstrated by his employer and family. In the light of this information, it becomes necessary to emphasize his plight by conveying news of his off-camera suicide. As one of the few occasions when the film relies on an overt statement of consequences rather than on employing a more subtle disclosure of information leading to the same conclusions, it creates an awkward and laboured tension.

The film's happy but hasty ending indicates a desire to thread the loose ends together. The antics of a religious fanatic, bent on throwing what he considers a veritable Sodom into chaos by depositing an ominous shoe in the lavatories, act as the device for the film's conclusion: in the interval between the building's evacuation and the return to business, Eric and Paul resolve their differences, Dr. Young reconciles with her husband; a satisfied patient returns with his fiancée in tow; and two other patients discover their mutual attraction in the street. Given the film's intention to create the impression of a possible day at the clinic, the intrusion of a bomb scare seems a little implausible. It is an unnecessary catalyst aimed at creating a quick resolution of uncertain situations when the structure of the film suggested they might be better left open-ended.

However, in spite of these reservations, The Clinic is an admirable satire on contemporary values and an incisive attempt to highlight the problems of individuals facing a particular form of private stress. For its comic sketches, it presents a host of talented comedians, including Mark Little, Evelyn Krape and Alan Pentland, and the transitions between comedy and drama are generally subtle and fluid. But if the film's real strength is its ability to depict situations that often produce embarrassment, discomfort and even bitterness in a context which reinforces the need for tolerance and compassion.
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Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Nina and Julian give a party in their temporary home — a fibro garage; Silver City; the Minister for Immigration, Mr Calwell (Ron Blanchard), presents a koala to "the 100,000th displaced person" (Cheryl Walton); Nina and Julian; Nina comes to the rescue of a fellow immigrant.

Right: Polish immigrants Nina (Gosia Dobrowolska) and Julian (Ivar Kants). Below: immigrants get their first glimpse of Australia.
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1984
A Film and Television Cryptic Crossword

Val Ward

Welcome to Xanadu:
How To Play

This is a cryptic crossword; the “cryptic” involves clues. It is similar to those found in weekend newspapers: the clues must be deciphered in various ways to get at their meaning and the proper referent to the word wanted, playing around with the possibilities and anagrams of language, association and meaning. The clue may contain more than one sort of mini-clue or reference, sometimes the answer is present in the clue. Clue: Mostly parochial American agency. Answer: MPAA, the U.S. rating board, found by noting the first letter of each word of the clue.

One may encounter homonymic variations in spelling between clue and answer.

Bon appetit.

Examples
Clue: Hunter and Dillon did it without Ritter (3). Solution by name association: Tim Hunter directed Matt Dillon’s first feature, Tex (the answer); Tex Ritter, deceased, had nothing to do with it.

Clue: At the start, home of Eastern U.S. film archives. “At the start” signals that the answer will be initials or an acronym; from there, with a bit of knowledge, one is led to Museum of Modern Art, which started one of the first U.S. archives and is located in the East, commonly referred to as MOMA (the answer).

Sometimes the answer is present in the clue. Clue: Mostly parochial American agency. Answer: MPAA, the U.S. rating board, found by noting the first letter of each word of the clue.

One may encounter homonymic variations in spelling between clue and answer.

Bon appetit.

CLUES ACROSS
1 Possible Australian version of centaur, harpy, mermaid, etc.; could mean race problems (8)
5 Features lost briefs, now seen naked and alone (6)
7 Fred, whose outburst marked a first for tot industry (3)
9 At the start, home of Eastern (U.S.) film archives (4)
10 She’s in aardvark, but loves lions (5)
11 Pacer prancing through the plot (5)
14 One one three eight (3)
15 Old lightweight for field pix (5)
16 It takes all kinds of money to make their pictures (8)
18 Sounds better since (5)
20 Smashing success as king in New York (4)
23 Silent missile (3)
24 To Billy Joe (3)
25 Sounds like producer convinces Ray (6)
28 First in doubt, brought film closer to people (2)
29 Wiener closet for cigar, Ali (8)
30 Horris in, chats with high society (5)
31 Briefly, Paramount’s favorite picture (2)
33 “No dearth of death near me!”, he raved (5)
34 Nero ninety north (7)
36 Dig — get sandy (3)
38 and 21 Down: Wise man’s Oriental mirror (4)
39 Variety’s rural sample rejected these films — kettlebells, they were (4)
41 Uccelacci from Indiana (5)
43 Sense not usually addressed by movies (4)
44 To get this consorter with detectives, must sort out The Third Man (4)
46 Rebel germ-hut contains Big Mac in tin pot, we hear? (6, 6)
47 Not as sutured as most, but ties up the story well (4)

(Solution on p. 9) ★

CLUES DOWN
1 Not just another pretty leg, her company simply purrs (3)
2 City so to speak, through the looking glass (1, 4, 4, 5)
3 Mixed up before breakfast (made hundreds of films after) (4)
4 From an old president, a research tool for ex-editor; the ladies’ man, too. Plural (6)
5 Between six and eight, Bergman took one — zoos got a lot more (4)
6 First saw ghosts, then carried Hopy (6)
8 Maid Marian? Seems likely for this wrong-way Peter Lorre (5)
11 Fudg’s “Looky!” (9)
12 Most army series humor isn’t so flat (4)
13 Essential for Westerns — try it in a mirror (4)
17 Comes hard and soft (4)
19 Very unusual male sexual difficulty (9)
21 see 38 Across (2, 2)
22 Half an otic (8)
24 Half of odd pair has affinity for garbage (5)
26 Cow callz backward for quick way to connect near and far (4)
27 Possessive toward Indian? Si, mi general — a tough bunch (7)
32 By the sound of it, wouldn’t you join a bug in a theory that could burn with an h? (7)
35 Often at midnight this head blanks out (6)
36 For weedy eagles, Ford’s Ford (5)
37 First for percussive thesp, we hear: Ref: ME, WB/77, QM/FBI
40 Sounds like dull ‘A’ actor regressed in future (4)
42 Necessity for Richard and all other writers (4)
45 Brief for fillial outfit: quick to speak up for profits (2)

CINEMA PAPERS March-April — 99
fingers have been burned in the local film industry. One firm, Roach, Tilley and Grice, first became involved in feature films with Winter of Our Dreams in 1981 and its success on a budget of less than $400,000 encouraged the firm to continue in the field. But despite this, and other numerous and excellent examples, there has been an unrealistically high level of expectation in this country to attempt to tailor budgets to production size, Libido, The Adventures of Barry McKenzie, Alvin Purple, Petersen, Stone and Sunday Too Far Away cost less than $300,000. Picnic at Hanging Rock, Caddie, Don’s Party, Storm Boy, Winter of our Dreams and Mad Max cost less than $600,000. The advent from Hong Kong, Breaker Morant, My Brilliant Career, Newsfront and Puberty Blues cost less than $1 million. Beyond that level, Gallipoli, Mad Max 2 and The Man from Snowy River have presumably recouped their budgets and others will. It seems to me to be madness to propose producing films whose budgets exceed the returns on The Man from Snowy River.

Nevertheless, one doesn’t need a licence to be a film producer: it is still a matter of sticking one’s name on a door with “producer” written underneath it. There is no regulating body controlling the industry nor will there be. But the market is a nervous place. An inevitable emphasis on low-budget and innovative films, which I, for one, welcome. Many filmmakers in Australia behave like paiseh children demanding a status equivalent to that of doctors while doing considerably less to alleviate human misery. Those with the skills to produce a Mad Max, a Gallipoli or a Snowy River are few and far between. There is no logical course of development from bargain-basement filmmaking to high-budget production, except that of the Peter Principle.

I hope that no one doubts that the bipartisan government support offered to the film industry is motivated by the English-speaking nations creating a $5 million fund. Government control is an astute politician can be seen at the same time to be clamping down on tax dodgers while simultaneously assisting filmmaking at a level “appropriate to the state of the economy”. The figures”. Here is the mechanism by which an international bank on condition they come here and stir Westpac and the ANZ out of their complacency. The tendency is to throw all industries into the lion’s den of the marketplace.

The three indicators lead me to a few tentative conclusions. The drafting of the legislation implementing the 150 per cent and the 133 per cent deductions has been carried out in arid fashion. Most men knowledgeable in the law could have drafted legislation to the same effect without destroying half a dozen rain forests. That, coupled with an attitude that first of all rejection of the concept of a Trust Fund, seems to indicate that the “Caterpillar Principle” is in force. For those not familiar with its workings, the Caterpillar Principle is a doctrine that states if a government department is in existence it must exist for a purpose; if the personnel of that Department are underemployed, there must be something for them to do.

It is a corollary of the Caterpillar Principle that the last one to touch it is responsible. The Department of Home Affairs was the last one to touch the film industry so it is responsible for providing the answer to the unanswerable question that politicians ask: “How much is all this going to cost?” An answer has to be found even if the basis of the answer is spurious. The Trust Fund provides that basis. Now, if a politician wants to reduce the level of deductibility he can state that the reduction made is justified because it is based on “government figures”. Here is the mechanism by which an astute politician can be seen at the same time to be clamping down on tax dodgers while simultaneously assisting filmmaking at a level “appropriate to the state of the economy”.

In other words, the Public Service, or those responsible in this particular area, want legislation to give their control over the industry as far as possible. Government control is an explanation for the incomprehensible nature of the legislation. Government control is an explanation for the existence of the extraordinary Trust Fund. Government control explains the $5 million fund to the AFC, and

The Rules of the Only Game in Town

It is a mercifully resistable temptation to draw on some of the grimmer observations of Damon Runyon when discussing Film Investment Tax Incentives. As the seeder operates ever so slightly at the time of the adoration of the harbor, and contemplates a “Windeyer’s”

Tax

Andrew Martin
Director, Cinemawest

The Ten Anniversary Supplement

The Industry Comments

Continued from p. 61
government control explains the enforcement of non-rules. If someone wants to antagonize the Commissioner, there are plenty of stumbling blocks available to be placed in the path of the unwary.

More than one senior member of the Treasury is reported to favor greater control by Treasury over the activities of other government departments. The implementation of this legislation reflects this style of governing. The film industry will gradually find itself in a position where back-benchers, no longer titillated by articles in Time and Newsweek about the "brave little industry" down under, bow to the economic wisdom of the Treasury.

The winds of change will blow cold around the doors of those who claim "most favored" status. In an economic climate that encourages free flow of investment cash to all sectors, the film industry could find itself the enemy of those who claim a slice of the same cake. The first writing appeared on the wall when the "sunrise industries" lobby called for similar incentive to aid its growth. Unless the film industry can in the future claim to represent the source of considerable export earnings, the concession will, over a period of time, be reduced from 133, to 125, and then to 110 or 100 per cent.

Women in Australian Film

Vicki Molloy
Director, Creative Development Branch, AFC

In December 1983, the Women’s Film Fund in conjunction with the Australian Film and Television School released a report entitled, Women in Australian Film Production. Analyzing the male-to-female breakdown of Cinema Papers' crew lists since 1974, and the responses of 400 women film workers about their employment and training experiences and needs, the report painted a less rosy picture of women's representation in the Australian film industry, putting paid to the misconception that "women run the industry".

One does not need research to know that only one female director between 1974 and 1982 had directed a 35mm feature film (Gillian Armstrong), although a few others have made low-budget, 16mm features. But it was alarming to find that no woman had received credits as director of photography or sound recordist on feature films, and that only 4.5 per cent of feature editors have been women.

The overall proportion of women employed in feature production did increase from 13 per cent to 26 per cent between 1974 and 1982, but this figure is still 10 per cent lower than the proportion of women in the workforce at large. The majority of women, furthermore, were still clustered in "traditional" female roles: e.g., make-up, hairdressing, production staff and continuity. Interestingly, only 13 per cent of all producer positions on features in this period of the study had been held by women.

The outstanding success of Pat Lovell, Joan Long, Margaret Fink, Jill Robb and several others would have one assume a much higher proportion of producers was female.

The success of several feature films focusing on female characters in the Australian film renaissance e.g., Caddy (1976), Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975), Getting of Wisdom (1977), Puberty Blues (1981) and My Brilliant Career (1979) — may have led one to believe that women are well represented on the screen, at least. This has certainly not been the case, as actresses such as Noni Hazlehurst have been quick to point out. The actual number of films about women has been few. Actors Equity has been looking at a way of evaluating the proportion of significant female roles in Australian cinema, a study which would doubtless produce depressing results.

In the independent filmmaking scene, however, women have become much more prominent during the past 10 years. At the 1983 Sydney Film Festival’s Greater Union Awards for short films, winning films in all four sections had women directors. Jackie McEldowney’s Festival winning short drama Polyester was instrumental in the organization of several women’s film workshops. From it emerged 10 films, including What’s the Matter Sally (1974) and The Moonage Daydreams of Charlene Stardust (1974). A women’s film group was also active in Melbourne about the same time and, in Adelaide in 1975, Penny Chapman produced four short films directed by women in a package entitled 1:1, as the Women Australian Film Group’s first contribution to International Women’s Year.

The International Women’s Year Secretariat financed several women’s films during 1975, as well as a memorable, international Women’s Film Festival. At the first ever International Women’s Year was the Women’s Film Fund (WFF). A sum of $100,000 had been allocated to, but not taken up by, Germaine Greer, for a series on human reproduction. After again allocating $100,000, the fund was set aside as a permanent source of finance for future women’s film work. The WFF now operates under the auspices of the Australian Film Commission and has supported many fine films, such as Pins and Needles (1980), Consolation Prize (1979), Greetings from Wollongong (1982) and Age Before Beauty (1980).

The WFF has also been responsible for initiating the distribution of women’s films, research, training and employment. It was instrumental in the organization of Women in Film and Television associations in several cities, and has recently established a women’s film unit at Film Australia, under a Commonwealth Employment Program grant.

Throughout the years women have produced a body of excellent short, low-budget films. Although few have followed the feminist film theoreticians’ assertion to develop a new and distinct "female" film language to counter dominant cinema modes, there have been many clear and forceful issue-orientated documentaries such as The Selling of the Female Image (1979), or Red Head Pictures’ Size 10 (1976), and Behind Closed Doors (1980); short narratives such as The Singer and the Dancer (1977), A Most Attractive Man (1981), and Last Breakfast in Paradise (1982); personal and political films such as Maidens (1978), and My Survival as an Aboriginal (1978). These films are widely circulated non-theatrically, usually through the Australian Film Institute or the Sydney Film-makers Co-operative, which has for many years paid special attention to the promotion of women’s films, and employs a women's film worker.

Given the number of outstanding short films directed (and crowed) by women, one wonders why there have not been more women engaged as directors, or in other key creative and technical roles, in the commercial sense. The 1983 survey found that the majority of women working in independent films worked to workloads that were pretty heavy in features (and, incidentally, the reverse was the case for women working in features). But the obstacles are many and varied - old-fashioned prejudices create caution among producers and distributors mitigating against choosing female directors; for women it is harder to get a first job in an area that is not traditionally female; many traditional female jobs don’t lead on to key creative or technical positions; and existing social circumstances make it difficult for women to persevere in an industry with such long hours and irregular work.

The findings of the survey referred to earlier that 83 per cent of women working in features or independent films did now have children in their care (compared with 1981 Census figures in which 75 per cent of Australian women more than 15 years-old have borne children) must also provide a clue as to why there have been a strength of independent women’s film work in this past decade could also have been a strength within mainstream Australian cinema, creating a genre akin to the social realist films produced by the "angry young men" in Britain in the 1950s.

Women must be given a greater voice in Australian cinema in the 1980s.
Simon Wincer

Continued from p. 31

Edgley International

How did you become involved with Michael Edgley International?

Michael. and I go back about 20 years. I had done some television work but was interested in learning more about drama. So I decided to go into theatre for a while and ended up as stage manager in one of the Edgley Russian shows. I was about 22 then, as was Michael, who was just starting the company, and we struck up a friendship.

Over the years, we always said we should get back together and do a film or television project. Eventually, we agreed to do something about it three and a half years ago: I had finished Harlequin and started to look for something suitable with which to launch the Edgley film operation. The Man from Snowy River came along at about that time.

Geoff Burrowes [producer], George Miller [director] and myself had worked at Crawfords. Geoff raised the possibility of doing something that could be successful, not only here but overseas. And, whatever people think about it, there is no doubt that film left its mark.

So the Edgley organization is interested in taking on projects at various stages of development as well as originating others themselves?

Yes. The highest risk on any project is the development stage. That is when the producer makes the most critical decisions: the choice of material, the concept, the story. If you don't get it right then, it's never going to get any better. Consequently, we try to become involved in a project as early as possible. But it varies. What we are finding now, particularly with the Hoyts-Edgley venture, is that people come to us with projects that are already at a first- or second-draft stage and often it is a matter of deciding what to go with.

That was the case with John Duigan's One Night Stand. Since then, I had a bit of input with John on the script, which I enjoyed immensely. But basically the development of the project was left to Dick Mason [producer] and John.

The Edgley organization's expertise is in the marketing side and raising the money. I guess I am more the creative person, and I have an input on the script and production — those kinds of decisions.

What form has the Hoyts-Edgley venture taken?

The relationship has been pretty informal in terms of legal structure. It is virtually run by Terry Jackman and John Chissick from the Hoyts side, and Michael and myself from Edgley. It is administered by a general manager, John Daniel, who was previously at the Australian Film Commission.

Once we found this structure was starting to work well, the big problem became finding projects. That is where all the effort went. Now, all of a sudden, we seem to have a lot of them, so we are going to have to expand just a little. But we don't want to get too big. We don't want to become a bank instead of a company that is helping to produce and market films. The aim is for a producer or a writer to come to us and we will provide back-up and expertise, particularly in the marketing area, but also in production.

The biggest fault with Australian films still seems to be that people don't spend enough time developing scripts to the stage where they are ready to be filmed. People think as soon as they have a reasonable draft, and investors are prepared to put the money into it, they should go into production.

Producers don't appear to put in sufficient effort at the marketing end, either.

What happens then is the producer starts working on another project, and tends to forget that the next most important part after the script and the production is marketing.

One Night Stand is just entering that phase now, of being marketed outside Australia. That allows Dick Mason and John Duigan, who brought the film to us initially, to get on with their next projects while Terry Jackman and Michael start doing the foreign marketing. That is the attraction of our whole set-up: producers can come to us knowing that we can be a help in raising money and in getting the film marketed properly. Without such a set-up, the Australian producer has to be not only a creative genius, but a business genius as well. No one is qualified to handle all the complex sides of filmmaking, these days.

I am very fond of One Night Stand. It is an extraordinary little film with an enormous impact. It is a very clever concept and looks at the most important issues in the world today. It is about and entertaining way. It certainly has a chilling effect. We have really high hopes for it.

The amount of money that it cost, $1.4 million, is very little for these days. But the production values are extraordinary. There are scenes shot in Paris and New York, with demonstration scenes in Sydney involving 20,000 people.

John Duigan is a highly talented filmmaker and a brilliant writer. It has been an utter joy working with him because his approach to filmmaking is different to mine, and that has been a real learning process for me.

John is very adventurous, particularly in the post-production, where this film really grew. It was quite extraordinary because every time we looked at a new cut it was entirely different. John and John Scott, the editor, played around for a couple of months finalizing the thing. It is constructed in an unusual way: it is quite surreal in places, yet it all ties together in the end.

What has been your involvement in 'The Coolangatta Gold'?

I have only been involved in the background on Coolangatta. It is physically impossible for me to allocate time to each production. John Daniel is really the man on that film, though it is a project which is very dear to Michael's and Terry's hearts. I have been much more involved in Phar Lap, and a little one On One Night Stand. However, I will be involved in the post-production of The Coolangatta Gold, to some extent.

Everyone has high hopes for Coolangatta and, from what I have seen, it looks absolutely fabulous: stunning country, beautiful cast and a great contemporary storyline that has been made a long time ago. No one could come up with the right script, until Peter Schreck did. Hopefully The Coolangatta Gold will capture that audience we were talking about, those 14 to 22-year-olds that Phar Lap didn't get.

Are you planning to direct any of the next Edgley-Hoyts projects?

Oh, certainly. It is just a matter of finding the right story.

Some critics seem to have a higher opinion of your directing abilities today than they did at the time of Snap Shot or Harlequin. How do you feel about your progress as a director?

I don't think I am all that better a director. It is a project that makes you look good, and Phar Lap was a great project. If you get a good script you are half way there. It is pretty hard to mock up a good script, but it is impossible to make a bad script good.

Those other films were low-budget and aimed at a particular market. I never pretended that they were the world's greatest scripts, but I had to make a living as a director and I am not ashamed of either.

As a producer, I know what I am good at and I knew at the time I was doing Phar Lap that it was the sort of film I was very good at, with lots of emotion and action. But when you are given something as interesting as Phar Lap, it is pretty hard to fail.

Did you read that interview with Dr George Miller in Australian Film Review. He said something along the lines that you can train anyone to be a director if he is intelligent. I don't quite agree, but the point he is making is that if you understand the mechanics of filmmaking, the art is in the script. I tend to agree. ★

3. Australian Film Review, Issue 24, Jan.-Feb. 1, 1984. Miller said:

"Directing films is one thing but that's not filmmaking only. Sure there are skills, but they're skills that are readily achieved by anybody who is intelligent enough... there are more mysterious things about film. It's the other end of how a film is conceived and how it is written and how it interacts with society. The early part of the film, including the writing, is much more important than the shooting of it."
Malcolm Smith, Penny Chapman and Errol Sullivan have recently joined the Australian Film Commission to provide an even greater service to the Australian film and television industry.

With their enthusiasm and experience they will assist all members of the industry through streamlining assistance schemes and stimulating creative project development.

For further information about our financial assistance and counselling services please contact the Commission:

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Interstate callers are advised that the Australian Film Commission has installed a toll free line: (008) 22 6615.
encounter that the police had that evening, whether it was a domestic fight or something more dramatic. The immediacy and the power of those tapes is overwhelming. It is the true guts of documentary filmmaking.

We have used that technique on occasions in Street Kids, and it has come over very strongly. But apart from that, I don’t think that anything in particular influenced us at all, except a belief that it had to be filmed directly and spontaneously.

Tilson: For me there was an element of New Journalism in the filmmaking process. So often the events, the unexpected, took over, just as in New Journalism the reporter is dominated by what is subjectively happening to him. It is also not dissimilar in style to the work of American documentary filmmakers such as Frederick Wiseman, D.A. Pennebaker and films such as Gimme Shelter, and the cinema verité.

Chadwick: As filmmakers, you have to decide on what general approach you are going to take in terms of making it as realistic as possible, not trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the audience, and then just follow it instinctively.

Scott: That’s not to say that there is no element of performance in it, because there is. The kids turned on incredibly powerful performances, some of which were too powerful for the film. It is either because of language or because the kids decided to modify what they had said. For example, one kid whose father had been sexually assaulting her was extremely angry and vented her anger openly. But later on she decided to modify her stance because she didn’t want to break completely the family. She wanted to leave some avenue open for reconciliation. We had to take all these sorts of things into account.

Tilson: We were also aware of the sort of audience for which we were making the film. There were some even more devastating, extreme things that happened, but we all were aware that our purpose was to make a film for a general audience on what it feels like to be homeless. I think that a positive aspect of the restraint we used to get these things across and reach out to an uninitiated audience.

How effective do you think the film can be in actually changing attitudes or in changing these kids’ predicament?

Chadwick: I have gone beyond the point now where I think that films or books can automatically solve these problems. It would be very naïve to think that. There is no way of any of us think that Street Kids is going to solve the problems society has in the 1980s. And, in the long run, it is not necessarily going to help any of the kids who were in it. But certainly it is at least going to make a large section of society aware of the problem.

It may also help a lot of kids who may go down that path, because there is nothing very nice at all about what you see in the drug sequences, in the prostitution sequences, in all the sequences, those kids are basically saying, ‘Help, I don’t really want to be in this situation.’ So, while it will not solve the problem, it will make some contribution to general awareness.

One direct contribution that the film has made has been the formation of the Delta Squad in Victoria to treat kids in a more sympathetic way.

Scott: The reaction we observed at preliminary screenings was the personal impact of the film. People went quiet for a while until someone broke the ice and started talking about it. This personal response has been very encouraging, but related to a discussion of the issues the film raises. Some of these reactions have been extremely positive, and some have been negative.

Chadwick: For the police, which included eight high-ranking officers in the Victorian Police Department, from the deputy commissioner down, it was in a sense a revelation. Not that various individual members of the police force weren’t aware of specific aspects of the problem, but it was the first time that they felt like they were related in a coherent way. The severity of the situation came through for the first time. As a result of the film, the Special Delta Squad was formed.

Scott: What they saw was that these kids were normal, with normal emotions, but caught up in a situation outside the normal bounds of society. They could see that they were not freaks or idiots. And because they were being treated to a discussion by the kids, via the film, they need for a greater sensitivity in treating the kids through the system.

Chadwick: The Police Department reacted very positively, but, as for the Community Welfare Department, the reactions from officialdom were minimal. The only assumption we could make from this comparative silence was that nobody in the department was prepared to make a statement, one way or the other, presumably because of the official implications of doing so.

On the other hand, when we showed the film to a number of independent social workers and organizations, they were enormously impressed.

It seems that, to one group at least, the film is perceived as a threat.

Chadwick: Yes. But it was a self-conceived threat. In my view, the film did not pose a threat to the Department of Community Welfare Services.

Scott: It raised the issue of responsibility, and the way that the Department is going to become involved into action. And I guess because there is no strong presence in the film by Community Welfare Department officers — and this is simply because we did not come across them in our journeys — they felt vulnerable. We didn’t set out to slag them. We certainly had made quite an indictment of that department by using some of the material we had shot, but that wasn’t our aim.

The kids did make some pointed revelations about official delays and mistakes, and in general it is a whole new area to look at. But we are not setting ourselves up to be experts in the field and hopefully, as a result of the film being made, other more qualified people will be able to do something about the problem.

The social worker shown in the film seems to be a very positive force, even though social workers have been criticized for their work in such situations.

Chadwick: But she is outside the bureaucratic system. The problem is that most social workers are employed by the bureaucratic system that employs them. Alex McDonald made one very incisive remark about social workers right after the film which indicated that there is no good running a service operation from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. while the client is asleep. Those kids need support and back-up after the normal 9 to 5 government department working day. It is people like Alex and Linda — who, in a way, is an independent social worker — who can really give them support. If you are not there when the kids have the problems, then you are of no use to them whatsoever.

If you are looking for solutions, you realize there are so many closed doors: real estate agents who don’t provide accommodation, employers who are reluctant to offer jobs, families whose doors remain closed.

Tilson: That is the hardest thing of all. The kids would often say that they feel on the outside of society, forced into this situation through circumstances. ‘Now, how do I get in? How do I find somewhere to sleep? How do I stop being a problem, a key to any of the doors, just to get started?’ And there are many things that stop them, which means that most stay out there.

The real tragedy is this constant rejection by society.

Scott: That is one of the ways they say, ‘Why not get into hitting smack for the rush of it and for the way it soothes the pain?’ In no time that becomes a normal activity; eating, sleeping and getting money. If the door remains unopened, what is the point of knocking anymore.

Chadwick: You can see this in the film, you can see a number of the kids express the wish to die. When one of them is asked, ‘When do you think you’re going to die?’, he says, ‘Well, I think I’m going to die in my twenties.’ So you ask him, ‘Why’s that?’ And by this stage he has a stare on his face. It is a sort of check-mate question: he is looking ahead, but he can’t see anything.

Tilson: In some ways, dying is not such a bad option. There are many things that have happened to people who are tragic as dying. And there are other situations when there is no way out. In fact, eight kids who were in some way associated with the film have died since it was started.

Scott: It should be added that the film is not a dirge of the dying. There is a lot of positive perception in the film, even though some of it tends towards the cynical. You do see that these kids are as bright and spontaneous as any of the kids leading a normal life.

Given the long time making the film, it must have been frustrating to have to wait so long to have it shown publicly.

Chadwick: The experience of making Street Kids has, for all of us, called into question just how much can be said and filmed about such issues which are indicative of the time in which we live; just how far you can go with or without the support of the police. So it’s a film about; and to what extent filmmakers in the 1980s are compromised and prevented from putting on film a reality that society doesn’t want to see.

Scott: You can go to Afghanistan, or away from your immediate environment, and shoot something that shows blood and guts happening — and people won’t be in the streets. However, as soon as you show something which is as horrific but which is in your own environment, you hit a lot of reactions that have to do with the position of the people who are seeing it. This is the difference in making a film on issues that are too close to home.

Chadwick: It should be said that right through the controversy and the pressures that have been brought to bear on us, as filmmakers, and the kids, we have all stood firm in not compromising the film in any way. And we don’t intend to allow it to be compromised.
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David Stevens

Continued from page 15

Edmund Hillary; I could never climb Mt Everest. But I would love to feel that one day I would make a film that would open up visions of the world as much as the conquest of Mt Everest did. Well, anything is possible. Man is capable of anything. And man is not a chauvinist term. [Laughs.]

"Undercover" seems a very nationalistic film; the Great White Train, the push for local industry, the arguments with importers. Why?

Well, it is a very tongue-in-cheek form of nationalism. There is still a huge cultural cringe in Australia: we still insist that our heroes have to be recognized overseas before we recognize them here. What Fred Burley was trying to do was simply say, "Bugger it. We can do it here, and we needn't be ashamed of ourselves." I believe the same thing.

Equally, I believe that an excess of nationalism can lead to the excesses of Nazi Germany. So the patriotism, the jingoism, in Undercover is very tongue-in-cheek. It says be proud of who you are and proud of Australia, but don't take it too seriously.

It seems somewhat ironic that the success of the House of Berlei is based on the selling of fantasies.

Sell them their dreams? Why not. It is better than selling them reality, isn't it?

There is something morally dubious about it.

Well, let's try and work it out. We have just come from an age where women were trapped in whalebone. Society moves slowly, so one can't jump straight from being trapped in whalebone to burning one's bra. So, when one goes down to the elastic rather than the whalebone, it has to be made to look glamorous. One has to sell women their dreams. Surely that is a step forward.

I agree that the selling of artificial dreams is wrong. The selling of a totally romanticized view of the world in which no kind of reality intrudes is deeply, awfully wrong.

The next film I am due to write is called Africa, which I will direct. It is an attempt to try and examine Australia's relationship with the Third World in general, and specifically the Black Third World in famine-ridden Africa. One could do a horrendous documentary about this, which 10 people would see, but I intend to do it as a love story. So in that sense I am selling people their fantasies, but fantasies with a hard core of reality. I am using the form of the love story to attempt to get across a potent message.

With "The Clinic" you manage to move fluidly between comedy and drama. The subject is controversial, yet the film is accessible, educational and funny. What do you see as the differences between directing comedy and drama?

I am concerned about the Australian obsession with historical documentary or documentary fact, but I am also deeply concerned with this obsession of dividing things into comedy and drama. What is the difference?

Laughing?

You cry and you also laugh with A Town Like Alice. Life isn't one thing; nobody's life is tragic or comic. The greatest comics are those who make you cry when they slip on a banana skin and yet you're laughing at the same time. The greatest tragedians are those who make you laugh with the character first because you recognize the humanity of the character.

If you take Laurence Olivier's Richard III, you actually think that Richard is a jolly, cheerful and funny chap, then he starts doing those terrible things. You are forced as an audience to make a moral evaluation of the character first because you recognize the humanity of the character.

If you take Laurence Olivier's Marat & Sade, you have two characters on screen at the same time, and you have a range from broad comedy to drama when she turns away from him and he understands that she is saying no. Your heart bleeds for him.

There is also a very acute sense of that in "The Clinic". You resist the temptation of making a character look stupid in order to get a laugh, particularly with Wilma (Betty Bobbitt). Initially one wants to laugh at her or to patronize her, but then one is made to feel callous and guilty. Frank in "Undercover" is the same sort of character: he could be a country bumpkin, he could look stupid and naive and clumsy, but he isn't...2

It comes back to what I believe about drama. The Wilma character in The Clinic is a case of almost taking that too far. In the first double-head screening of The Clinic the audience stopped laughing when Wilma told them off, and didn't laugh again for the rest of the film. We were shit-scared. But hers was the classic case: "I may be making a fool of myself, but I don't believe I deserve to be laughed at." That's the cry of every individual in the world.

A director doesn't have to do very much when he has a script and a cast like we had for The Clinic. One of the things that I love about the film is that there are scenes in which only people who are into a particular sexual behaviour will understand. For example, Helga (Evelyn Krape) talks happily about rectal sex. Ninety per cent of the audience doesn't understand what she's talking about, but there will be a few hysterical laughs from women in the audience who know exactly what she is talking about. The rest of the audience may be bored by that scene, or puzzled, as they try and work out what the hell she's been up to the night before. For the people in the audience who do understand what she's talking about, it is a ravishing moment because that is probably the first time they have ever heard something they may feel guilty about being whispered in public. It's like Francois Truffaut's approach in Day For Night. There are jokes that only people who have worked on a film crew would laugh at.

That concern with the exploration of Australian heroes and the past is recurrent in your work: "Breaker Morant", "The Sullivan", "A Town Like Alice"...2

If I suppose I take a revisionist view of history. There are people in society who try to make others conform to their standard of behaviour, and I will fight that, all the way down the line. If you believe in revisionist interpretations of history, then there was a time at some distant point in the past when everybody behaved according to the same fashion. But they never did. People have always been people, questioning and disobeying their elders. So you have to take the revisionist view.

If Nevil Shute were alive and could see the film of A Town Like Alice, I think what he would be most cross about is the fact that we allowed Joe (Bryan Brown) to fornicate before they were married, because it says specifically in the book that they did not.

If you want to present a total characterization of anyone you must show all aspects of the character. One of the things I believe modern audiences need to know is that Jean Brown (from Town Like Alice) is a very mean, selfish, ungrateful woman. There is also a very acute sense of moral evaluation of the character...
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Producer: Michael Cloran
Scen. co-ordinator: George Wooden
Scriptwriter: Michael Cloran

SYNOPSIS: A young Greek Cypriot woman becomes the target of a violent attack on the streets of Melbourne. A detective assigned to the case begins to realize that the crime is a common problem of one of Melbourne.

MAIL-ORDER BRIDE

Pro. company: ABC
Producer: Michael Cloran
Scen. co-ordinator: George Wooden
Scriptwriter: Michael Cloran

SYNOPSIS: Kev, the builder from Badigeri, returns from the island and becomes involved in a domestic dispute with his wife. While the couple is fighting, a violent attack on a local business results, leading to the discovery of a smuggling ring.

EUREKA STOCKADE

Pro. company: ABC
Producer: Michael Cloran
Scen. co-ordinator: George Wooden
Scriptwriter: Michael Cloran

SYNOPSIS: A group of miners become involved in a shootout with the police, leading to a series of events that change the course of Australian history.

AWAITING RELEASE

CHASING THROUGH THE NIGHT

Pro. company: ABC
Producer: Michael Cloran
Scen. co-ordinator: George Wooden
Scriptwriter: Michael Cloran

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