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Cinema Papers #48 October-November 1984

Scott Murray

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Cinema Papers #48 October-November 1984

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"A visual classic."

"One of the most beautiful films in the world."

"One of the most staggering, most influential motion pictures ever made."

Harry Dean Stanton, Bastasch Kinski

Paris, Texas

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écrit par Sam Shepard

Produced by Susan and Emilio Estevez

Directed by Wim Wenders

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Starring Harry Dean Stanton, Bastasch Kinski

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Strikebound
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Sydney, March 27.
A TRM Production, in association with Film Victoria. Produced by Miranda Bain, Timothy White. Written, directed by Richard Lowenstein, from unpublished book, “Dead Men Don’t Dig Coal” by Wendy Lowenstein. Camera (color), Andrew De Groot; editor, Jill Bilcock; music, Declan Affley; production design, Tracy Watt; costumes, Jennie Tate. Reviewed at Australian Film Commission theatrette, Sydney, Jan. 6, 1984. Running time: 101 MINS.

Wattie Doig............................Chris Haywood
Agnes Doig..................................Carol Burns
Idris Williams ................Hugh Keays-Byrne

With Rob Steele, David Kendall, Declan Affley, John Flaus, John Howard, Tony Hawkins, Marion Edward, Nik Forster.

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**The Slim Dusty Movie**
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Associate Producer Brian Douglas
Director of Photography David Eggby

**Journey to the Dawning of the Day**
Produced by Michael Dillon
Director Michael Dillon
Executive Producers Lindsay Gazel, Judith West, Stanley Sarris
Director of Photography Michael Dillon

**Annie's Coming Out**
Produced by Don Murray
Director Gil Brealey
Executive Producer Don Harley
Director of Photography Mick von Bornemann A.C.S.

**Phar Lap**
Produced by John Sexton in association with Hoyts
Michael Edgley International
Director Simon Wincer
Executive in Charge of Production Richard Davis
Director of Photography Russell Boyd

**Savage Islands**
Produced by Rob Whitehouse and Lloyd Phillips
Director Ferdinand Fairfax
Production Supervisor Ted Lloyd
Director of Photography Toni Imi

**The Settlement**
Produced by Robert Bruning
Director Howard Rubie
Production Manager Irene Koroi
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Censorship

Scott Murray reports on the possible revocation of the "X" certificate in the face of sectional pressure:

It was envisaged that when the "X" certificate was enacted there would be some public outcry, from the Festival of Light, femalists and other puritan groups. Strangely, there was mostly silence. The various state Attorneys-General (save from Queensland) were in agreement that adults should be basically free to watch what they wanted in their own homes. The public obviously agreed because once the videos were released business was brisk (as it had been in the days of below-the-counter sales). Several video outlets which at first refused to stock the material did an about-face when the demand became obvious.

What is rarely mentioned when discussing pornography on video is that "X"-rated sexual material appeals to females and males. Unlike the days of the sex cinema, where one had difficulty entering if one was a same-sex macintosh and a dirty look, today much of the "X" audience is couples. This is not necessarily the case, but the subject of such material) where the content and production of "X" material has changed dramatically in Australia. The films reflect the new audience: most have a storyline and, even, a hint of romance; there is an industry-high level of women directors and a conscious effort to erotic ly appeal to women; few films depict sexual deviancy; the gotty look of early "X" films has been replaced by glowing photography and lush settings; the actors are young and attractive and, most important, appear to have happily chosen their career. In short, the viewer can help satisfy that need. Not everyone has applauded the pretty up of porn. It is reported that the maclintosh brigade misses the sleaziness of tone (they are not catered for in Aus tralia with live shows which intersperse the acts). However the new audience attracts the public at the end of the financial year. The Aurora, with live shows which intersperse the other arts, is enormous; at least 60 per cent of the applications and received 24 per cent of the funding; Victoria submitted 24 per cent of the applications and received 30 per cent of the funding; and other States submitted 14 per cent and received 22 per cent.

Perhaps realizing their untenable position (should the Censor now ban some "X" films?) the lobbyists have resorted to that well-flogged horse: the smut film. This is an irrelevancy as such films would be banned by the Censor under the present legislation.

One regrettable aspect of the recent censorship debate is that it has been political in style, being based on a use of cliche. ("We have to draw the line somewhere", etc.). The jargon runs deep that the issues fades. This makes it difficult for those concerned about civil liberties (and more are far too few in Australia) to enter the fray. Attempts at being reasonable are met with abuse. It is hard for the first time in years to understand doubly hard when members of the Labor movement, the only political faction historically concerned with the issue of censorship, have had the impact of speeches to the press, as has the Premier of New South Wales, Neville Wran. It is to be hoped that some politicians will stand firm for the right of adults to speak, listen and see freely.

Financial Year Round-up

At the end of the 1983-84 financial year, a total of 136 projects had been funded in Australia. Of these, 29 are features, 10 are mini-series, 18 are tele-features and 79 are documentaries. The total finance raised and committed to these projects is $130.5 million, of which $106 million is investment and $24.5 million is underwriting. According to Errol Sullivan, supervising consultant of the AFC-administered $5 million special production fund, 80 per cent of all projects financed received assistance from the fund: 15 of them features and seven mini-series. The production fund has also committed itself to forward obligations of $1.89 million, of which $1.3 million is to projects that had secured their budgets at the end of the financial year. At the end of June, the production fund was fully expended, in terms of cash payments, except for about $10,000.

An analysis of the amounts allocated from the production fund shows that New South Wales submitted 22 per cent of the applications and received 48 per cent of the funding; Victoria submitted 24 per cent of the applications and received 30 per cent of the funding; and other States submitted 14 per cent and received 22 per cent.

The AFC estimates that the total value of production in 1983-84 was $70 million. An approximate figure only, it comprises $45 million financed in 1982-83 and 1983-84 under the 150 per cent deduction scheme, and $25 million financed in 1983-84 under the 135 per cent deduction scheme.

In a speech at an Industry function in Sydney on August 8, the Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment, Barry Cohen, noted that the level of investment in features in 1983-84 was consistent with previous years.

W.A. Report

Ann Macbeth, director of the Film and Television Institute in Western Australia, reports on the industry scene:

In Adelaide June madness did not greatly increase the production activity here in the West. The reliably on-going industry base remains documentaries, with several series well underway.

Wildfilm Australia is half-way through production of their 13-part $1 million series for television on Australian wild life, Making of Fauna, which received funding from the Western Australia Film Council (WAFC). Another television series, Great Public Bars of the World, has finished shooting the first episode in New York and is heading for Britain to shoot the second episode in October. The producer, Carmelo Musca of CM Productions, says this eight-part series of one-hour episodes has an up-front national deal with Channel 9 and backing for non-deductibles from the WAFC.

The all-Western Australian crew are bringing in each episode for just over $200,000. Ironically, the third episode in Australia will be the most expensive, 'because of the high cost of travel in Aus tralia', said Musca. Richard Oxenburgh Productions has live documentaries in production — "not by choice," says producer Richard Oxen burgh; "that's just the way it happened." "Camera operator Jan Kenny arrived in the West four months ago and has had two weeks in Perth", he said. The rest of the time she has been out on location. Their $280,000, 35 mm, wide-screen documentary, Same Season, presents the similarities between autumn in Japan and in Australia: the people, the life, the country. Currently in post-production, Same Season should be released in November.

Brin McEllory and David Noakes Brand New Day, a 50-minute $65,000 documentary about the 1983 Aboriginal Arts Festival, has completed post-produc tion and is ready for release. Several Aboriginal people who have looked at the
fire-out say it is an exciting film about the importance of Aboriginal culture in society today.

A documentary about the all-women rock band Tanya Tucker's Too Hot to Handle features some of the New Wave but about peripheral New Wave that was imperfect but impressive art-house distribution network that sexual content) and the lack of the extensive screenings and open discussion with some of Australia's leading film professionals. Held in August at the Chauvel in Paddington, the cinema with the most interesting screenings and the most uncomfortable seats, the sessions attracted an audience of young, not so young, filmmakers, writers, actors and other interested people questioning about money and marketing that was pursued nearly every night, there also were large crowds of would-be producers and disgruntled, on-the-fringe filmmakers.

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This chapter is titled "Australian Filmmakers' Week"

Dore Koeper reports:

"The Australian Film Institute is doing things it should be doing," remarked a participant in the recent Australian Filmmakers' Week in Sydney. Sponsed by the Sydney Morning Herald and G. C. Collective, it offered nine programs and screenings and open discussion with some of Australia's leading film professionals. Held in August at the Chauvel in Paddington, the cinema with the most interesting screenings and the most uncomfortable seats, the sessions attracted an audience of young, not so young, filmmakers, writers, actors and other interested people questioning about money and marketing that was pursued nearly every night, there also were large crowds of would-be producers and disgruntled, on-the-fringe filmmakers.

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due to the influence of Aboriginal culture in society today. The film, Pudding Thieves, was completed.

Brian Davies' name acquired an extraordinary significance around Melbourne during the 1960s. The significance lay not simply in the fact that he was trying to make a film out of his own pocket. After all, others such as Phillip Adams, Giorgio Manganelli, and others were attempting much the same. Davies, however, had assumed a position of "leadership" amongst those loosely associated with MUFs, who at that time had starred in glasses of following in the footsteps of the French New Wave directors who seemed to have sprung from nowhere and were now seeming to rewrite the rules, both industrial and aesthetic, of commercial feature filmmaking. Davies was attempting to follow the examples of Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette, the Cahiers du cinema section of the New Wave. In the early 1960s he had become co-editor of Film Journal, a glossy publication founded by Jim Merralls and funded by MUFs. It was on the racks, but its contributions to the critical debate on film were as good as any in the English-speaking world. It was published in Film Journal that Davies focused on the French New Wave, based on the imperfections of that period and the unrelated but ample amount of Australian film scholarship. A combination of censorship (which denied one, two, or three films a year for all its worthwhile efforts) and "industry," called video 'nasty', Godard's Breathless, limp distribution practices (which required that most foreign language films imported be capable of being sold on their sexual content) and the lack of the extensive art-house distribution network that existed in the New Wave that was imperfect but intensely enthusiastic. It manifested itself in writing not simply about the major figures in Western Australia funded in the 30 June cruise between filmmakers and distributors that often saw proposals turned down. If all even half of these projects are realized, Western Australia will be a busy focus for filmmaking.

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Obituary

Brian Davies

I started studying at Melbourne University in 1953. The third term edition of Annotated Film, the house publication of the Melbourne University Film Society (MUFs), carried interviews with two student filmmakers who had embarked on ambitious "feature" projects: Brian Davies and Bert Deling. Deling's film was eventually abandoned but Davies persevered with one very successful documentary, Williams shot on 16 mm by Erika Addis. An intense 50-minute, 16 mm documentary

Obituary

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Ken Cameron's second feature, *Fast Talking*, is tough, funny and uncompromising in its critique of Australian institutions, particularly the relationship between the education system and the working-class outcasts of society.

Cameron had already made two short films on the subject of teachers and pupils confronting the inflexibility of a bureaucratic education system. *Sailing to Brooklyn* (1975), made while Cameron was still teaching English at a high school in New South Wales, is about a relationship between a young English teacher and a high-school girl. *Temperament Unsuitable* (1978), with Steven Spears and Robyn Nevin, concerns a “student teacher who is too radical for the school he is sent to and ends up getting into conflict with the staff”.

In 1977, Cameron made *Out of It*, which tells of three unemployed youths who head north in an old car after a bungled robbery. It continues his fascination with people “who are just outside the law and in conflict with things”.

*Monkey Grip* (1982), Cameron's first feature, looks at communal life in the inner-city suburbs of Melbourne and extends his interest in the sexuality of human relationships. Again, the characters are people on the fringe of society.

Since completing *Fast Talking*, Cameron has directed a tele-feature for producer Michael Carson at the ABC. He describes *Crime of the Decade*, which went to air in August this year, as “*Fast Talking* 2. It uses a lot of the same actors . . . but it takes the story a year further on when things have grown much tougher . . .”

Cameron is interviewed here by Geoff Mayer and Scott Murray.

I wrote the first sketch of *Fast Talking* in 1980 at a time when I didn't think I could get *Monkey Grip* made. [Producer] Pat Lovell and I had been trying for a couple of years to get *Monkey Grip* financed and we almost had it together when it fell through. So, I started work on *Fast Talking*.

But, not long after, the money for *Monkey Grip* came through and I had to abandon work on *Fast Talking*. I went back to it at the end of 1982.

“*Fast Talking*” has a strong anti-authority motif: for instance, the opening with the bars and the scene in the chicken coop which you set against the ending of the film when Steve Carson (Rod Zuanic) rides off . . .

All my films in schools express that. It is not that I am anti-education, it is that I think schools are a model for Australian society. They are everyone's first contact with authority, with the rules. In *Fast Talking*, you see Steve's struggling with authority figures, not just at the school, but also with the police, his father and his elder brother — all these coercive figures. It is a problem that Australians have: the struggle to express oneself, or to be oneself, with so many fathers. I know I have had it.

Does that come out of your school background?

The film is my life, my growing up and my attitude towards authority. It is very hard in Australia to feel free to express strong opposition. There are so many restrictions and the most you can achieve usually is just to be evasive, like Steve — he is always slipping out of the window or ducking away. You can't confront it head on because you will fail. The tall poppies soon get knocked down.

You have been very savage with some of the teachers: the scene when Steve makes the wooden penis and the vice-principal's preoccupation with his fish and his petunias . . .

There is hardly anything in *Fast Talking* that I haven't somehow seen or heard in schools. All of it is culled from observation or memory, including the fish and the petunias. At the high school in which I taught, the deputy principal did nothing but water the garden, enter it in gardening competitions and co-opt the kids into chain gangs to work in it.

When I have seen the film with an audience of teachers they have responded straight away; they recognize the level of satire. People who went to private schools or who don't quite recognize that milieu think, "This has to be exaggerated"; but it isn't. That sort of eccentricity is out there, alive and well.
There seems to be a sense of enclosure in the film. Steve is frequently visualized against bars or through bars; for example, in the end sequence when he is breaking out of Redback's (Steve Bisley) yard and in the sequence when Steve is talking to Sharon Hart (Tracy Mann) . . .

Schools are like that. The bars are there; we didn't put them there.

No, but you have gone to some trouble to frame things in a certain way . . .

Nowadays, schools feel they are under attack. Since the days of 10 per cent unemployment, there has been a lot of hostility directed towards them. The Steve Carson character is too young to be aware of his political situation but he knows intuitively that he is going to get screwed: the school is just keeping him captive until he is kicked out and left unemployed. School is a bit like a penal settlement.

You don't see either the school or the family institution as offering salvation?

No. On the contrary, the schools have contributed to the division of kids on the basis of gender and class. The school has determined his destiny.

Do many people object to the film being unsentimental?

A lot of people want lovable characters. When we had trouble getting distribution, that was one of the things levelled against us. People thought the film was too harsh, but I was just trying to be truthful and, if you want to portray situations like that truthfully, sentiment just doesn't have a place.

But the lack of sentiment comes through even in the humor of the film. One of the scenes which has shocked a few people is the one in which Megsy, the dog, savages the cat . . .

Well, kids respond to that. I saw the film a couple of weeks ago at a sneak preview with an audience mainly of kids. The scene arouses mixed feelings. They laugh a lot but then it hits them and they realize it is not funny; the cat is dead and the poor woman is going to suffer when she finds out. But it is a black humor I have seen in so many kids. They are not sentimental; they can often laugh at the most awful things.

There is a type of equivalent of racism among a lot of adults towards kids — I don't know what you would call it, "kiddism" or something — whereby they try to be protective and deny kids a futureless world into which he was heading. It was far more sophisticated than that of the adults'.

The one scene that disturbs some teachers is the burning of the school. That is a touchy issue in Melbourne . . .

It is touchy here in Sydney. What is important about the burning of the school is why people do it. They are not just vandals who have come out of nowhere and burn the school; they are often people who have a terrific hostility towards the school. I think that Fast Talking reveals why these kids break in. They are not intending to burn it — that is an accident and, in fact, they try to put it out. They break in because they feel they are being ripped off. It is an act of revenge.

Schools have to acknowledge that if they play a part in people's lives, then they have to expect to be accountable. The problem with schools is that it is usually a one-way system: the kids don't feel they can express their grievances or control their lives there.

In one scene, Redback is fixing the wheels of a bike and Steve is looking at him with eyes glistening, totally attentive. Redback says to him, "Listen pal, you've got to pay attention here, this ain't school." That seems to be a crucial point in the context of the film . . .

A lot of guys are like the Steve character; their lives are impoverished as far as having older admirable males to whom they can relate. That is what Redback is. He has been in gaol but somehow has survived that experience, built a bit of a business and created a life for himself. Steve recognizes in this bloke an unsentimental, tough attitude, but there is also a warmth about the guy. And Steve
can see a purpose in what Redback does: you fix a bike and sell it. That makes sense to the kid, whereas school is abstract, bizarre and pretty pointless.

That line, "I've seen this show before", is one interpretation of the end of the film when Steve is riding off. There is a small camera track in on Redback, before the image dissolves to Steve going off into the sunset . . .

I think it is pretty clear that Steve will get caught and spend time in gaol. But, ultimately, he will grow up and probably become like Redback. He will have to go through that stage to come out the other side. Some people say he should be punished but I think it is very clear that the film has another destiny in mind for him.

Actually, some teachers have said they thought he should be punished . . .

But that would be terrible; it would be a defeatist ending if he suffered or were punished. Moral growth, any sort of growth, has to come from within. If he were punished, then he would just be bitter and hostile. It is as if he has to rebel and take charge of his own destiny to grow. And that is what the school system doesn't allow: it continues to impose regulations which don't give him the space to grow.

So we talk about some of the actors in 'Fast Talking', especially the young ones: Chris Truswell, who played The Moose, Rod Zuanic (Steve Carson) and Toni Alaylis (Vicki). Where did you find them?

I spent about three months walking around the Western suburbs [in Sydney], taking small drama classes in schools, just to see if I could find the right kind of people. I would go to a school and give a drama lesson for an hour or two to a group of 20 or 30 people. I would do some free improvisation and out of that, sometimes, if I were lucky, I would find a person or two whom I thought was worth following up. People such as Rod just stood out. I found him in a high school at Blacktown.

So he had no acting experience before the film?

Only within the high school.

Was it the same with Chris Truswell?

No. Chris was a bit older than the others, about 17, and had just left school. He was found a different way. We had a campaign on the radio station 2SM to see if we could bring in a larger group of people than I could find. Chris responded to an advertisement on the radio and came in with the others to spend a minute talking on tape. I wasn't present, but Chris did impressions and he was very funny.

Chris is not an actor: he works as an apprentice printer. I guess acting was something that hadn't occurred to him, but, as with a lot of kids that age, he just loves imitating things on television.

So the actors weren't inhibited by the camera . . .

No, they wanted to do it. They weren't people who needed coercing. Toni is a bit different. She was still at school when I met her — she is only about 16 — and nowadays she is more interested in rock 'n' roll than acting. Both Toni and Rod have parts in Mad Max 3.

How did you go about choosing the music for the film?

Sharon Calcraft has only done a couple of scores, for Far East and Winter of Our Dreams. I knew her when I was teaching; she was in 5th Form when I first met her in high school.

Are you happy with the music in the film?

Yes, but it is an unusual score. Some people have told me they thought the film should have had 'full on' rock 'n' roll.

Music is always one of those things you never know about. It is a huge creative area that can influence a film in many ways. Sharon and I were both enthusiastic about the bass guitar sound with the little guy.

Obviously, you have chosen the setting of the film carefully, such as with the scene in which Steve takes Megsy for a run along the beach . . .

It is not a beach; it is more a denuded landscape full of junk cars. People have destroyed the light covering of bushes and trees, and have left a great, sandy wasteland — it is like an urban Australian desert. The choice of locations was deliberate and an extension of my thoughts about the school. Australia is like a junk yard, like most industrial nations and industrial cities, and I wanted the environment to be an expression of the disregard that society has for a character such as Steve.

I used Botany all the time because it is where Australia began — it is where James Cook and Joseph Banks first came ashore and took a walk — but now it is like the 'arsehole' of Sydney. In any other country in the world, it would probably be an incredible park or a beautiful environment, but here it has just become a dead industrial zone.
Why did you decide to do “Crime of the Decade” after “Fast Talking”?

Because it was a chance to extend all that work I had done with those teenagers. Every time you do a film with kids, you really regret that they go back to school or work. You know that the taste they had of filmmaking is all they will ever get. I feel a real commitment to those people.

Another reason I wanted to do Crime of the Decade was that it developed an area that I had touched on in Fast Talking. I wanted to go further. Of course, the big difference is that I didn't write it; Michael Cove did. It was the first time I had worked on someone else’s script. It was interesting learning about that process.

Were you at all concerned about the similarity of the two films?

No. I would be really surprised if, outside the film industry, the same audiance existed for both films. I mean, 15 year-olds will go and see Fast Talking but I don’t think any of them will watch Crime on the ABC.

One of the problems I have had with films in the past is that no one has seen them. Temperament Unsuitable was seen only by a specialized audience and some people in the industry. So I don't think my problem has ever been over-exposure.

There are some scenes in “Crime of the Decade” which are nearly identical to ones in “Fast Talking”, such as when an older brother presses a younger brother into selling 'smack' to his friends . . .

Of course. But Michael Cove had not seen Fast Talking, and I didn’t want him to because I didn’t want him to be influenced by it. So, it is interesting how similar they are.

Michael lives on the fringe of that area, and he has spent a lot of time talking with the people who went to the Minto Community Centre, where we shot the film. The stories he writes are all based on actual cases. Some people find some of the stuff exaggerated and ridiculous, but that is because they don’t want to come to terms with it. And when you work in that documentary style, inevitably you come up with similar kinds of scenes. But Crime of the Decade does go further. In Fast Talking, you have kids stealing eggs in the chicken farm. In Crime, the chicken farm is the place where the kids go to work. So it is bleaker; it is further down the track. It also addresses itself to class division in Australia.

Another way we have done this is to intercut the upper middle-class dinner party with the story of those kids. We do have real social divisions and the structure of Crime is a deliberate attempt to make those two worlds rub up against one another. People will be forced to check their allegiances. It is an experimental structure and not a narrative one in the sense of Fast Talking. It is like an essay; a portrait of a particular group of people, and a community.

The structure is also experimental in that the time frames of the two inter-cutting stories are different . . .

Yes. In fact, one reviewer, who works for that noted Sydney journal of social comment, The Sunday Telegraph, said that it was the worst film she had seen in 10 years and that she couldn’t understand how these boring people got to dinner so regularly. She didn’t even catch on to the fact that there was one time frame inter-cut with a continuing time frame. But, if you do things like that, you just have to expect that a lot of people won’t like it or even respond.

“Crime of the Decade” is also essay-like in that it makes no attempt to honor concepts of narrative balance: you have no rays of sunshine to balance the bleakness of your portrait . . .

It is a didactic film and there is none of the Australian Pollyanna approach of, “Well, things aren’t so bad; there is also a lot of happiness in this community. Many people are very contented with their lot, etc.” That undercuts any attempt to say something. Crime was an attempt to make a deliberate statement that would be provocative, and it has provoked a very mixed reaction. There are people that just loathe that sort of filmmaking, and they loathe what it says.

There is a real tendency in Australia not to want to make statements. There have been didactic documentaries which come right out and make a case, but not dramas. In drama, you are supposed to be balanced, with well-rounded characters and a story that goes somewhere. The idea of using drama in an essay-like manner is rare here.

To what extent do you or Michael Cove see the ending as a portent of violence? Australian communities have seen very little so far . . .

In our history there has been a lot of violence. In the 1890s, with the Queensland strikes and the drought, there was incredible violence. In the 1920s, there was the same sort of thing, with the coal lock-outs. But it always gets squashed.

What is happening now is the creation of a huge peasant class because of the cynical way in which our capitalist economy works. These people will never
work; they will never get a share of the wealth of the country. Sooner or later, they will find their voice and it may be violent. There is a lot of anger out there, and why shouldn't they feel angry? Their lives have been so messed around.

You mentioned earlier your use of Botany Bay in "Fast Talking". In a sense, the satellite towns depicted in "Crime of the Decade" are the new Botany Bays, the birthplaces of a more modern Australia . . .

If you get up on top of that water tower in the film, you look one way and see beautiful rolling hills; you look the other way, and it is Campbelltown, which extends for miles. We haven't learned to live well with the landscape. We bugger things up and that is tragic because there is no turning around and doing it again properly. We haven't organized things to suit human beings; we have organized things to suit the capitalist class.

I am very interested in the connection between the potential of the country and what it is becoming. I have always admired The Great Gatsby, where the central image is the land the Dutch sailors saw, with all its potential, and then there is the Valley of Ashes, which is what it has become.

By setting "Fast Talking" in Botany, do you also intend to link Steve's larrikin nature with that of the convicts?

Yes. Steve is like a descendant of the convict class, the one who has to obey. The difference with Crime is partly a difference of my writing and Michael Cove's. In Fast Talking, my character evades issues and ducks out the back door. He is like a little rat running away. In Crime, the characters are stuck there, trapped in an environment. There is no feeling that anyone can escape and that leads to violence. So, there are two different ways of looking at the situation.

The option we have usually taken is to evade these conflicts. Most Australian heroes were evaders, like the bushrangers who ducked off into the bush. They made little forays, but only to then retreat back into the bush. And Eureka was a failed attempt by people who stood and fought.

The scene in "Crime of the Decade" in which Steve and Elly (Toni Allaylis) change their minds about leaving doesn't really convey a sense of standing up to fight. Steve is a leader who won't lead and is almost willfully defeatist. He also refuses to accept the rewards of personal relationships on an individual level. His staying is the act of a nihilist . . .

I would agree with that. It is not a convincing stand. That nihilism is what I recognize in a lot of people who have really been through it; they give up the idea of getting away or staying and fighting. Steve is what the character in Fast Talking would be if he were a few years further down the road. That boyish, brash, Ginger Meggs quality gives way to a sullen, almost defeated quality. And he has all the other problems of adolescence, such as sexual identity and poor self-concept, when you have no job and you can't see where you are heading. Combined with this is an anger over feeling oppressed by all these fathers, by all these people who stand over you. So it is right that he is not very coherent or consistent or even practical. I recognize all those things, that confusion.

The whole movement at the end of the film may seem strange, but every year, out there at Minto, they have riots where the people go bananas and turn cars over and burn them. You can't see anything they gain from doing it; it is the letting off of the aggression they feel. So Steve's going up the hill to Terry (John Jarratt), the social worker, who walks out the door and goes somewhere else; to stay within the school defuses what you are.

Terry (John Jarratt), the social worker, appears at best to be just hanging in there. He is in a situation where he hasn't any control. Is that all one can hope for from social workers?

I would have thought he was doing a good job, actually. He understands those kids and he knows that you can't dramatically change things for them.

There was a scene we shot in which he talked about trying to raise money to buy a block of land in the country, to have a place where they could occasionally go and do some work. This is what the actual social worker at Minto was doing. But for some reason it didn't end up in the film; I'm not sure why — too much like Pollyanna, I suppose.

Terry is actually in a bind because when the shit hits the fan he is the one caught in the middle. When there is real trouble, like destruction, it is the social workers who are held to blame, because they are seen to be influencing the kids. That is why Terry gets angry when they start talking about getting violent.

It is the same way I feel about teachers. Those middle people, the ones who try to bridge the gap between the divisions, are part of the problem. Filmmakers, too, are part of the problem. They are the oil that greases the violent rupture and stand in the way of real change. Real change is dividing up the cake. ★
Rebels, Rumbles
"What are you rebelling against, Johnny?"
"What've ya got?"

Marlon Brando as Johnny in "The Wild One" (1954)

Is Easy Rider dead? The 'born to be wild' ethos of the bike boys, turning their backs on straight and stable society to roar down the open highways in search of freedom, maybe throwing a scare into a few frightened communities on the way, has almost dwindled away in contemporary cinema. The biker movie had a parabolic rise and fall from The Wild One (1954) through the American-International and New World 'Angels' films, Easy Rider (1969) in the 1960s into the genre mixes of the 1970s (e.g., Bike Boys go to Vietnam in The Losers). Like the Universal monsters in the 1940s, these monsters of the road ended up as comedy figures in other stars' movies: Clint Eastwood in Every Which Way But Loose (1978) and sequel. Motor-bikes seem to have become transport, not proud stallions carrying wild boys and girls towards their dreams. If motor-bikes can be read as the symbols of fast and dangerous rebellion in the youth movies of the 1950s and '60s, then the spirit of rebellion they signified has likewise paled on the screen. The trend in the representation of teenagers in films of the early 1980s has been largely a conformity to mindless pursuits of partying, fun, sexual fantasies as well as security and money, all prior to rather than in opposition to entering the establishment. If Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman) were graduating in 1984 he would be looking up "Plastics" on the stock market instead of shrinking in horror from the word.

National Lampoon's Animal House (1978) is a watershed for the development of teenage characters in American films since. Significantly, it is two sets of student characters at war with each other, not the faculty or government. The fun-loving slobs spawned dozens of imitations down to the current Bachelor Party and Golan-Globus teenage exploitation quickies. Their upper-crust targets survived to prove that an early pursuit of sex, wealth and luxury can also be fun in such films as Class (1983) and Risky Business (1983).
"There's something I've got to do. I've got to go. I don't know where — just somewhere, out of here, and I've got to go now."
Aidan Quinn as Johnny Rourke in "Reckless" (1984)

But three films arriving in 1984, two from the U.S. and one from Australia, may signal a turning point in the perception of teenage characters on the screen. All three feature a male teenage hero living in similar stressful home and social situations, caring nothing for what the future immediately offers. If he conforms by settling into the mould prepared for him this will be precious little, so he is looking for a way out.

Three storylines
Rusty-James (Matt Dillon) is a 14 year-old living with his alcoholic father (Dennis Hopper) in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His mother deserted the family when he was two years old. Rusty-James idolizes his elder brother, known as the Motorcycle Boy (Mickey Rourke), who has a reputation as a gang leader. Rusty-James tries to emulate this tough leadership but gets expelled from school and loses his girlfriend, Patty (Diane Lane). The Motorcycle Boy has made a bike trip to California and back, and becomes fascinated by the Siamese "rumble fish" in the pet shop. He is killed in his attempt to liberate the Motorcycle Boy's ambitions and find his own.


Steve (Rod Zuanic) is a 14 year-old living with his alcoholic father (Peter Hehir) in a Sydney suburb. His mother has just left to live with another man. His elder brother Al (Gary Cook) is a drug pusher who uses Steve as a connection with the schoolkids. Steve has two friends and followers, Moose (Chris Truswell) and Vicki (Toni Allalys), but is considered a delinquent and a no-hoper by the school staff who want to expel him. Steve meets Redback (Steve Bisley), a former bike racer, now owning a bike wrecking shop, whose love for motor-cycles once took him on a joyride to Alice Springs on a stolen bike, and thence to jail. Redback takes a fraternal interest in Steve, helping him to restore his own bike. Steve's escapades lead him into trouble with the law, so he takes a bike to make a run for freedom.


Johnny (Aidan Quinn) is a high-school student in an American steel town. He lives with his ailing, semi-alcoholic father (Kenneth McMillan). His mother deserted him at some unspecified previous time. Johnny rides a motor-cycle on which he performs suicidal stunts. He is a loner at school, branded by staff as a no-hoper and generally disliked by his classmates for his walled-off, careless attitude. Chance brings him together on several occasions with Tracey (Daryl Hannah) whose initial indifference to Johnny changes into an attraction which catalyzes her dissatisfaction with her wealthy and stable family background and her well-off boyfriend, Randy (Adam Baldwin). Johnny and Tracey begin an affair which leads Johnny into trouble with Randy. After Johnny's father dies, he burns down their house and persuades Tracey to join him on his motor-cycle to leave the town behind.


These three films each focus on a young, inarticulate, white male protagonist who understands that his family history, authority figures and even his peers are conspiring to push him into a desolate future. Another world is out there and his motor-cycle represents the only way to escape his boundaries. Wherever the bike takes him has to be better.

These three films are far from being carbon copies of one another, and use a radically different range of styles to express their content, but nevertheless find common ground in several important areas.

Coppola employs black-and-white photography and wide-angle lenses in Rumble Fish to present the backside of Tulsa. Critics have busily noticed that this technique has been 'borrowed' from Orson Welles, Jean Cocteau, Luis Bunuel or perhaps any director who has used black and white expressively. It is important to note then that Rumble Fish is not a derivative film, and is most effective and coherent in its visual style in providing a sense of hellish unreality to the desolate and unattractive, urban landscapes, expanding the horizons so the characters appear trapped by a vast space and lowering the sky with the punctuating shots of oppressive, fast-moving clouds. Drifting white smoke adds further unreality to the wideangled street scenes. The Motorcycle Boy is color blind, seeing in monochrome only, and only the rumble fish themselves are photographed in color. Rusty-James' concussions and injuries have left him with hallucinations and, in one instance, with an out-of-body experience which might appear imposed on a film in a realistic mode. The decor of Rusty-James' house and the dinner dates from the 1940s and '50s. The characters seem trapped in different time zones: Rusty-James longs for the
return of the days of the gangs, his father obliterates the present through drink and every­where clocks tick onward as a repetitive motif, including a giant handless one on the side of a lorry as a backdrop for one of the Motorcycle Boy’s confrontations with the law. The sequel then, of Rumble Fish is partly geographical, partly a state of mind.

By contrast, Fast Talking is strictly realistic and naturally colored. The locations in Sydney’s industrial suburbs are not modified by tricks of photography or mise-en-scène, but effectively delineate an unattractive milieu in which to grow up. Its borders are large fac­tories, freeways, a waste paper tip, the concrete expanses of the school and shabby streets. These locations are used with considerable flair, especially the giant bales of waste paper which are the film’s most surreal aspect, providing a background to several scenes and the setting for the chase Steve leads the school prefects on. This chase and other action is heightened by percussive music on the soundtrack. Whereas Rusty-James doesn’t interact with the part-real, part-imaginary setting of Rumble Fish, Steve in Fast Talking uses his environment for his own ends, making quick escapes down school drain-pipes and across roofs, nimbly slithering from the grips of cops in underground trains, stations and toilets, and leaning on to the back of a passing truck when about to be arrested for stealing newspapers.

Steve is a cunning survivor until he exhausts the local possibilities and has to run. Rusty-James is less sharp, surviving more by instinct, toughness and not a little help from the Motorcycle Boy.

The town in Reckless (the same location as that in The Deer Hunter) is dominated to an even greater extent by the huge steel mill which appears to loom above everything in all direc­tions, even the cemetery. Day and night its noise and smoke fill the air, allowing no escape for the workers whose poor housing is in its shadows. Those whom the industry has made rich have their own spacious and lush suburb, far away from the mill. The film opens with Johnny’s vantage point of the town: a look-out point complete with coin-in-slot binoculars for the panoramas of chimneys and smoke. Johnny plays his ritualistic act of defiance by placing a beer can on the very edge of the precipice and racing his motor-cycle towards it, skidding at the last moment to knock over the can with his rear wheel. When he takes Tracey to the look-out it is to reinforce his dream of getting away from there. He can’t do it unless he can convince someone else that what he sees is hell on earth. Reckless is photographed in rich reds and blacks by the German director of photography Michael Ballhaus who succeeds magnificently by using long lenses to create an environment in which the noise, heat and presence of the mill are everywhere. Significantly, when Johnny takes Tracey into the school at night they end up in the boiler room to make love for the first time, surrounded by pipes and steam.

Fast Talking is the film most concerned with telling a realistic story of a boy from a broken home without too many trappings of expressionistic style. It differs too from the American films in having its teenage roles played by actors close to the correct age, rather than in or approaching their twenties. The greater age of the American actors perhaps makes their explicit sexual encounters more acceptable to the mass audience. Fast Talking includes references to contraceptives and subtly suggests a relationship between an older student and the young student teacher Sharon (Tracy Mann), but romance between Steve and Vicki is at its tentative beginnings. Drugs are seen to be a greater part of the Australian kids’ lives than sex, but are despised by Rusty-James for their part in breaking up the gangs.

Steve has been coerced into dope dealing by his brother Al. Al criticizes Steve for being soft and sentimental after their father poisons Steve’s dog, and tries to convince him that money is the only thing worth being attached to. Steve’s father is pictured as a hopeless and violent drunk, a casualty of chronic unemployment. Steve is the most affected by his mother’s leaving at the beginning of the film.

Rusty-James doesn’t remember his mother who left him when he was two. He would like to be the Motorcycle Boy, stepping into his shoes as gang leader, but time has left them behind. He is unconcerned about his future, caring only about his status as the toughest kid around and a little about Patty. His father, an intellectual drifted into alcoholism, isn’t an authority figure, more a benign elder brother who Rusty-James rarely comprehends. Neither can he always understand the Motorcycle Boy, who is always there to save his skin. The Motorcycle Boy is isolated within himself, color blind and partially deaf, eventually lost in his obsession to liberate the pet store’s rumble fish.

Steve’s surrogate brother, Redback, has the clearest perspective on Steve’s future. Like the Motorcycle Boy, he stole motor-bikes for joy­rides, once going as far as Alice Springs, but after the routines of reform schools and jail he has gone straight and warns Steve about taking a similar route. The Motorcycle Boy’s trips have taken him to California which he found “as amusing as this place”, but is where he found their mother. Rusty-James does pick up and fulfil his dream of riding the bike as far as the ocean, too.

Johnny is more of a loner, an outsider. He is...
Rebels, Rumbles and Motor-cycle Boys

with him to the slow beat of Larry Graham's CINEMA PAPERS

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Rusty-James and friends, after the fight, the blood seeping through. Rumble Fish.

an only child and his mother left at some unspecified time. He is contrasted to Tracey's boyfriend, the privileged Randy, who knows exactly what he wants to do: follow his father in the management of American Steel. When Randy tells Johnny that he "used to be normal" and asks what happened, Johnny replies that he "grew out of it". Johnny's father is overweight, unhealthy and drinks, often collapsing at work and necessitating Johnny to be called out of school to collect him. His father takes pride in Johnny's achievements in the football team, sticking cuttings inside his locker and admiring Johnny in his suit while chiding him for being skinny and not filling it out at the shoulders. Johnny in turn sees his father as a failure, a loser whose book is read by one of the main characters, Ponyboy Curtis. Ponyboy is an only child and his mother left at some unspecified time. He is contrasted to Tracey's boyfriend, the privileged Randy, who knows exactly what he wants to do: follow his father in the management of American Steel. When Randy tells Johnny that he "used to be normal" and asks what happened, Johnny replies that he "grew out of it". Johnny's father is overweight, unhealthy and drinks, often collapsing at work and necessitating Johnny to be called out of school to collect him. His father takes pride in Johnny's achievements in the football team, sticking cuttings inside his locker and admiring Johnny in his suit while chiding him for being skinny and not filling it out at the shoulders. Johnny in turn sees his father as a failure, a loser whose book is read by one of the main characters, Ponyboy Curtis. Ponyboy is an only child and his mother left at some unspecified time.

Johnny's Undefined Freedom Threatens Their Rigidly Structured Lives.

Motor-bikes represent that freedom and power. The Motorcycle Boy has made his cross-country trips and Rusty-James realizes he has to do the same. After at first rejecting Steve's rumbling advances, Vicki returns them when Steve shows her his restored bike and takes her for a ride. Tracey's first adrenaline-pumping encounter with Johnny in the film is when he rides his bike directly at her car. She watches him later riding away after making love to his waitress girlfriend in the back of the diner, and immediately refuses Randy's advances in her car. Tracey and Johnny begin to share dreams of escape when he takes her on the bike to the lookout. At the point of maximum confusion in the film, Tracey pours out her dissatisfaction with her calm, never-causing-trouble-or-worry life to her bemused mother and drives off, accidentally running Johnny off the road. Finally, of course, she will rejoin him on the bike to ride away from the town.

It is worth mentioning here two related films for their slightly different and arguably less-successful approach to similar characters. Coppola's The Outsiders, also adapted from a Susan Hinton novel, was made immediately prior to Rumble Fish in Tulsa with some of the same cast, notably Matt Dillon and Diane Lane. Ken Cameron's Crime of the Decade was made after Fast Talking, again with many of the same cast, as an ABC tele-feature.

In The Outsiders, Coppola more obviously pays homage to classical Hollywood narrative cinema, with brilliantly-filtered color and anamorphic Panavision images and an straightforward, straightforward narrative of socially divided teenage gangs in the early 1960s. The title "The Outsiders" drifts across the screen as did "Gone With The Wind", whose book is read by one of the main characters. Although the film is about breaking down the social barriers that separate the "Greasers" from the "Socs" and keep them at each other's throats, it endorses group solidarity, the sense of belonging to family or peer group. Ponyboy (C. Thomas Howell) and Johnny (Ralph Macchio), only run after Johnny has run to a Soc in self-defence, rescue some small children from a burning church. Dallas (Matt Dillon) helps against his better judgment and gets caught in the collapsing building with Johnny. Dallas takes this as proof that he is not worth helping anybody and, after Johnny's death, tries to escape by himself, robbing a store and making a run for it, only to be shot by the police.

Crime of the Decade is set in a less-confined but still characterless satellite housing estate on the outskirts of Sydney. Its chief characters are Steve (Mark Davis), who lives in a community centre for homeless youths, and Elly (Toni Allaylis), who moves in after her step-father sexually assaults her and she receives no support from her mother. Absent fathers are
the norm in this community. A successful building contractor, Laurie Fletcher (John Gregg), is running for state parliament in the electorate. When not making hollow speeches about youth unemployment he is satirically presented presiding over an endless dinner party in his home, pontificating about fine wines and fielding challenges from his friends about what he intends to do for the poor and disenchanted. Steve and Elly, too, have some dreams of a better life as they survey the landscape and distant skyscrapers from a high vantage point on top of a water tower. They dare each other to commit a double suicide, but choose to live. It seems they may form a bond towards an eventual escape, but the accidental death of a friend, Roily (Paul Smith), drives Steve to shoot the politician and, unlike the open ending of *Fast Talking*, a freeze-frame on this Steve’s face indicates his life options have been effectively closed off at this point.

All these films demonstrate a fundamental difference between American and Australian cinema. Coppola’s and Foley’s films produce a distinctive and heightened sense of ‘movie reality’. The audience is made to feel it is being offered a viewpoint and cinematic experience of manipulated sounds and visions which tell a story and are an entertainment in themselves. It is important to American audiences that money can be seen to have been spent on production values.

Cameron’s films are well-paced, edited and directed without proclaiming themselves to be ‘stylish’. Both are most concerned with drawing identifiable teenage characters and realistically representing their contemporary problems. Perhaps this reflects a need for Australian audiences to see themselves as they are and the notion of documentary realism being more worthwhile than ‘art’ or directorial flights of fancy. *Fast Talking* and *Crime of the Decade* also demonstrate the difference in directing similar material for cinema and television. *Fast Talking* advances its story through more action and location shooting, and its narrative drive avoids long dialogue scenes. The strong points in *Crime of the Decade* are the licence arising from the television documentary tradition which allows presentation of the story’s more sordid aspects: Elly’s sexual assault by her stepfather, Steve’s by his brother and Rolly’s death by petrol-sniffing, all powerfully dramatic scenes that *Fast Talking* doesn’t attempt to approach.

It should be noted that neither *Rumble Fish* nor *Reckless* have been financially successful in their American release. For the mass audience geared to the *Porky’s* approach to teenage films, Coppola’s punching them in the eye with style must be more than a few degrees away from easy acceptability, and *Reckless*, oddly enough, has gathered some criticism for having a ‘trite’ storyline rather than the subversive one it has by current American standards. How many films in 1984 end with the hero burning his house down and stealing a blonde cheerleader away from his clean-cut, arranged match?

That *Fast Talking*, *Rumble Fish* and *Reckless* all succeed as stimulating pieces of cinema happily proves there is no right way to make a narrative film. A small industry like Australia’s has little leeway towards large-scale experimentation. *Fast Talking* exemplifies the small, lively contemporary film with the best chance of success on its home territory. A large-budget fantasy such as *Razorback* has the better chance of success in the world market. The trick might be to merge the two, and get it right.

Meanwhile, the motor-cycle boys are back, and hopefully one can look forward to the return of the road movie.

**Acknowledgments**

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As the result of a timely introduction at a party several years ago, Michael Pattinson discovered that Jan Sardi had an idea for a script that could suit his requirements for a 40-minute short. Their collaboration became the feature Moving Out (1982), which Pattinson co-produced with Jane Ballantyne.

The film was Pattinson's debut as a feature director, though he had directed episodes of Prisoner, The Young Doctors, documentaries and commercials. For Sardi, Moving Out was the first step on a road that would gradually draw him away from high-school teaching.

When their next collaboration, on Street Hero, had developed the script to an advanced stage, they approached entrepreneur Paul Dainty and proposed his backing of the project, to be produced by Julie Monton, with Dainty as the executive producer. According to Pattinson, Dainty had been looking for a suitable script and Street Hero's combination of a montage style with a rock music soundtrack provided an ideal opportunity for him to combine his existing business with a film venture.

Sardi and Pattinson are currently preparing another project: Just Friends, an episode in the "Winners" series for the Australian Children's Television Foundation, to be produced by Jane Ballantyne.

Sardi is also developing a script for PBL Productions, which will be produced by Richard Brennan. The telefeature, which Sardi describes as a "classic road film", traces the relationship between a mild-mannered accountant and an escaped prisoner who takes him hostage for six days.

Pattinson confesses to walking around the block a lot at night, sifting through a variety of ideas for a new feature and trying to find the one that can undermine "whoever it is out there who is paying people not to go to the cinema".

Pattinson and Sardi are interviewed by Debi Enker.

Vinnie (Vince Colosimo) is a character in the tradition of James Dean and Marlon Brando: a rebel hero. For the first 10 minutes of the film he doesn't talk; then, the information that he stopped talking for six months after his father died is revealed. Why did you take that direction with his character development?

Sardi: I think it is interesting to build a picture of someone and then slowly reverse or undermine it. Everyone has weaknesses; all the tough kids who hang around down on the corner can be vulnerable. When you build on this, in the classic tradition of a rebel hero, you have to go into more detail: this guy has a life; he comes from somewhere; he has a mother and father. Slowly you start to reverse that first impression. That is much more interesting than creating a character who is all white because the audience hasn't anywhere to go with him.

If you start off with Vinnie, who doesn't talk, you can slowly start to chip away at him. You realize that he has weaknesses and is a sensitive character: he reads to his sister and tells her stories. So, you slowly start to involve the audience.

The scene in which Vinnie tells the bedtime story about a boy who achieves an impossible dream links directly with the last sequence of the film in which Vinnie literally rises above his environment...

Pattinson: It is a key scene. Jan set out to write a fairy-tale, which could be an allegory of what the film is about, expressed by the lines: "'No,' he said to the fairy, 'only birds can fly', and the fairy said, "'No, you can too if you really want to.' So he got up in a big tree and he flapped his arms harder and harder and harder and he did..."

That is the message of the film.

Sardi: If you look at it purely on a character level, we wanted a scene which shows he is a fairly warm-hearted kid. But it is also taking the script a stage further. The fairy story incorporates the element of poetry — of condensing and heightening things. He could have told his sister any story at all, and the audience would have said, "Yes, he is a nice character", but the story is carefully chosen. It is similar to poets using words to try to find the right feeling.

On another level "Street Hero" fits in with a cycle of youth films such as Francis Ford Coppola's "Rumble Fish" and "The Outsiders", and Ken Cameron's "Fast Talking". Often in films of that genre, the only possible resolution for the male character is to leave town in order to make a new life for himself, though his fate is ambiguous. The difference in "Street Hero" is that Vinnie and Gloria (Sigrid Thornton) decide to stay. It is a lot more optimistic about the possibilities of their situation than "Fast Talking", "Rumble Fish" or "The Outsiders"...

Pattinson: Yes, at the end of the film he has turned his back on one side of his life, the crime element. Vinnie has rejected the path he could have taken if he had followed in his father's footsteps, and he and Gloria have the courage to face the future. In an emotional sense, he has travelled an enor-
mous way from the beginning of the film, although it is only a tiny distance in physical terms.

Sardi: It also sits a lot easier with kids: there are a lot of films that portray kids getting out and doing things, but the kids who watch the films have to go back to the Housing Commission flats; they have to go back to their problems. The film is saying that the escape route is within yourself; it is not out there somewhere. I think that probably appeals to kids.

Pattinson: Kids are cynical. We could have ended the film by showing Vinnie going on to be a famous rock ‘n’ roll star. It is an obvious visualization. Their timing and rhythm may not have been spot on, but one can polish that up later in a cutting room.

Sardi: Yes. If you know them, the way they speak and the way they look, you can visualize a lot more. The process of writing is really recording a film or a scene which is already in your head, by putting it down on paper in order to share it with everyone else. So if you can visualize the people in it, you can use that to your advantage. Especially with Vince: the way he talks, his expressions and rhythms, are ideal when you are dealing with kids. And there is a certain brokenness and unevenness in the way they talk that Vince can project. It is the mentality which you try to capture.

What were the elements of Gloria’s character that were central to the narrative?

Sardi: In all the traditional films about rebel heroes there is the good woman. In Street Hero there are three: Bonnie (Sandy Gore), Gloria and Vinnie’s mother (Peta Toppano). It is almost a 1940s or 1950s romantic concept of the woman trying to save the rebel from himself or from other people.

Apparentlly Thornton was interested in the role of Gloria because of a desire to move away from period dramas to something more contemporary. Is that one of the reasons that you decided to use her?

Pattinson: Principally, I thought Sigrid would play it very well, though I also wanted to see her do something radically different. She would probably support those views. But the two go hand in hand, because quite often when someone does something totally different it becomes a refreshing change. They can bring something marvellous to it.

Is it an advantage when writing a screenplay to have an idea of which actor is going to play a particular part?

Sardi: Well, that is good because I think that the important thing is to try to give impressions rather than spell things out. I don’t think we need to know everything about Gloria.

It is interesting that the audience doesn’t see her father. He is discussed, but there isn’t a shot of him . . .

Sardi: He was there originally, but we got rid of him. We had a very long first draft. We weren’t quite sure which areas were the strengths of the film. We had the story of the band, we had Vinnie’s story and the night life and his struggle, but also as a story in its own right. For our focus, it was inevitable that the emphasis was on Vinnie and his life and Vinnie’s struggle. Everything was directed towards that and we held back on anything which didn’t throw light on it.

The many articles written about you describe you as being very open to script changes and suggestions from the actors. Is that accurate?

Pattinson: I suppose so, but I don’t think that an improvisational style, without preparation, works very successfully with kids,
and particularly with untrained actors. I don’t think I am any better a director with kids than anyone else. What makes it work is if you go about it the right way. It is important to take the time to explore before you shoot, and to conduct workshops with kids, which we have done on Moving Out and Street Hero. Jan’s brother, Peter Sardi, is an actor and does a lot of work with the kids as preparation. I became more involved as pre-production continued to the point where we were in more formalized rehearsal, closer to shooting the film. I certainly think that if you want the best out of actors you have to give them a great deal of room in which to move. But I don’t look at the shooting of the film as a situation where we spend a lot of time exploring.

How did the workshops function? How did you get the kids into the right frame of mind to work on the film?

Pattinson: I look at workshops in an informal sense. It may be playing pinball or being in a room discussing things in great detail and doing improvisations. A lot of the kids probably thought, “Why are we doing this?” but it became more apparent as we started to channel the things that most related and fused them with the characters they were expected to play in the film. It is very much a discovery exercise, looking at things and saying, “You can use that there.”

Does it give you more confidence?

Pattinson: I think it gives the kids more confidence because they become involved with each other, and probably with me as the director, and feel a bit more relaxed and trusting.

When you walk down the street you see the most marvellous performances in front of you and you think, “If that could be a film, it would be fantastic.” All you have to do to capture it on film is either hide the film crew or make the people feel relaxed enough to be themselves. So much about acting is being yourself.

With both your films, a number of names recur in the cast and crew credits. Do you see yourself working with a repertory-like structure?

Pattinson: Certainly there are people on both sides of the camera involved in both films. I warm to the idea of a repertory group of actors, but not to the point at which what you are able to develop as a script is limited. I am very pleased with some of the performances in Street Hero. Vince’s is an obvious one. It is through a long association with him that I know what he can do, and that spells success in developing a performance.

Both Moving Out and Street Hero pay considerable attention to the education system. In Moving Out’, the teachers are basically likeable and well intended, even if they are totally out of touch with the kids’ needs. But in Street Hero the teachers, with the exception of Bonnie, are totally useless and, if one refers to Miss Reagan (Amanda Muggleton), positively evil. Is that a new pessimism about education?

Sardi: Yes. Most teachers are working with the best of intentions. If they weren’t, they certainly wouldn’t be out there doing it; there is very little joy in it. Basically, they are as much victims of the education system as the kids.

But whereas one could sympathize with the teachers in Moving Out, in Street Hero it is impossible. Their dominant subject of conversation is the state of the toilets . . .

Sardi: Sure, but I don’t think that is exaggerated. I have been there: they have staff meetings and they talk about the toilets, or the color of the rubbish bins.

They are trying to fathom some sense of purpose, but basically the problem is the system that they are working within. And any real education that takes place at schools is, I believe, the result of the relationship a student has with a particular teacher.

Which is why you create a character such as Bonnie . . .

Sardi: Exactly. Kids who are brilliant at maths in one year can cop a new teacher and, all of a sudden, fail.

Teachers either survive in that system, as Bonnie does, by creating relationships with the students, or they can submit totally and not give a damn. That happens a lot. It is a result of that lack of personal contact.

Other themes which crop up in both films are an interest in ethnic communities and their assimilation, urban lifestyles and, particularly, the disintegrating structure of families. Are they areas you both believe are important to depict in films?

Pattinson: Well, if you are making a film about kids, it is hard to ignore them. With regard to ethnic themes, obviously Moving Out.

Working with best Intentions: Bonnie (Sandy Crew), the teacher. Street Hero.

Moving East. Saorin (Sara Tan录取), the teacher. Street Hero.

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Out was a film about the assimilation of an Italo-Australian boy. It doesn't ignore the fact, like so many films and television productions, that there is a huge multicultural slab in Australian society. Your question is better directed at people who make television programs. Why do they ignore it? Why do they clear the streets of anyone who is not Anglo-Saxon whenever they want to make a television show?

Gino in “Moving Out” and Vinnie in “Street Hero” eventually reject the paths their fathers have taken. For Gino, it is the old country and a particular way of life and culture, and, for Vinnie, it is a rejection of the world of crime. Why does that pattern occur in both films?

Pattinson: That is an unconscious recurrence. Gino eventually comes to accept both ways of life. I don't think it is a distinct rejection of his father or family. It anything, it is the story of his realization and acceptance of who he is, where his family comes from and what they represent.

A point of conflict in “Street Hero” comes when Vinnie's mother becomes involved in a relationship with an Australian man. It totally disrupts the family. Does that suggest that there is no common ground between the two cultures; that there is conflict and tension which can't be resolved?

Sardi: No, I think you have to look at it purely in terms of the character. Vinnie's father was a hero in his eyes: it is what he lives for at the beginning of the film. He is the perfect image of a man, and that is what Vinnie wants to be. This other guy is such a shit; he is a drunk and he bashes Vinnie's mum. But it is not really due to cultural differences.

Pattinson: It is a story device.

The atmosphere of life in the city is a violent one. It seems that the violence can explode out of nowhere. Often in films the device of the trip to the country is used as a contrast to the city. In this case, the country is just as ominous as the city. What is the purpose of that trip?

Pattinson: The point is what is happening on a one-to-one level with the characters. Gloria and Vinnie are able to spend time together, sexually and emotionally. Vinnie discovers a great deal about himself. He has always relied on Freddy (Tibor Gyapjas) to tell him how wonderful he is. That is very selfish and when Freddy gets beaten up by the country yokels, he rebels against Vinnie's high-handed manner.

Sardi: Those scenes deal with Vinnie's selfishness — Freddy gets beaten up basically as a result of it. In the later scenes, Vinnie wants to lash out after his mother dies, but he doesn't because he has been there and he has learnt.

Pattinson: Visually, it is nice because the environment in which Vinnie moves is very claustrophobic. He gets an impression with Easy Street and the school around the corner that life is closing in on him. It is good to get a feeling of wide-open space, especially for kids who have never moved out of Flemington, who have never seen the ocean. But it is not something we exploited in a huge way.

Sardi: It also breaks down all the things that stop these kids from communicating. It removes the constraints of the city.

The adult characters are used to represent the different directions Vinnie can take. There is his mother in the Commission flats; Bonnie and music and education; Gloria and her values, but it is more than that. She taps his potential and he discovers self-respect. Everybody knows Vinnie and they pat him on the back. He discovers a great deal, a feeling of wide-open space, that is subtle but unmistakeable and the tone is not judgmental. In fact, it is even humorous . . .

Sardi: I was talking to a teacher the other day who had seen the film and who remarked that sexual tension often does manifest itself. But we didn't want to get into that whole area — it is part of the relationships. Bonnie is one of the important forces in his life as is Gloria and his mother.

“Street Hero” operates on a faster pace than “Moving Out”. There is a lot more action and a more complex storyline. How do you see it as a development from “Moving Out”?}

Pattinson: The story for Street Hero grew out of Moving Out. If you want to make a film for kids you have to make it in a manner to which they are going to respond. Given the huge influence of the 200 km per hour entertainment that is bombarding the kids — which is all part of the rock clip genre — it needs a fast pace; they can absorb information very quickly. They have grown up with television, which is something you can turn up, turn down, leave and come back to. Parents are the kids have to confront that. Otherwise, kids will eat their chips or throw their drinks around. You have to grip them by the throat and say, "Watch this: you are not going to talk."

Sardi: One of the major achievements in making a film for kids these days is to be able to hold their attention for 90 minutes.

The style of the film suggests a desire to play around a bit, to experiment with camera angles and tracking shots, and with editing and use of montage. Has your

Concluded on p. 383
The ABC's Sunday-night viewers, too long abandoned to BBC drama, natural history and music, could well do with an injection of local, topical, controversial films.

What the ABC Television Drama department has provided, in its recent series of six Australian films, is an attempt to meet that need. The films have been commissioned from different writers, directors and producers, and the results are very mixed. They differ in subject, mood and style to some extent; they tackle difficult subjects, including unemployment, racism and sexism. They range across personal fantasies about death, sex and the sea. Only one of them, Stephen Wallace's *Mail-Order Bride*, manages to be entirely successful within the constraints of the series.

Despite this variety of inputs and topics, the films look as if they have come from the same production house. They are tele-features rather than films shown on television, relying upon techniques drawn from television. The films look as if they are made on low budgets; they depend on simple and limited story-lines which, in several cases, are strung out far too long. Much of the action is shot in television dialogue sequences, with two-shots, close-ups and limited location work. In some of the films, the writing does not allow for a subtle view of things, and the stories become relentlessly prescriptive, allowing viewers little room for ambiguity, irony or humor.

These tele-features are basically single-situation plots, often literal in their development and punishingly slow. They tend to look rather like illustrated stories and they demonstrate little inwardness, despite the recurrence of personal fantasy. These fantasies are self-enclosed, obsessive and destructive, certainly in the case of Julie Nelson (Julieanne Newbould) in *Kindred Spirits*, Sir Dorton Serry (Warren Mitchell) in *Man of Letters*, Mac (Bill Kerr) in *White Man's Legend* and Alison Berger (Julie Nihill) in *Every Move She Makes*.

In too many of these films there is little dramatic resonance. To show the Australian landscape in *White Man's Legend* is not to reflect on it in any thought-provoking way, and to give a major role to an Aboriginal youth is not to say anything about the place of Aboriginals in society. Similarly, to tackle questions about sexism in *Man of Letters* is not, necessarily, to raise them in very interesting ways.

But the intention, of coming to grips with volatile and controversial issues, distinguishes this series of films from most of the commercial mini-series, *Waterfront* and *The Dismissal* being notable exceptions.

The series, and each film in it, was introduced to viewers by actress Wendy Hughes, and these introductions are an art form in themselves. Looking directly at the camera, Hughes produces her sentences as if to convey the impression, and dispel it, that she has just thought of what she wants to say. Every glance and gesture is practised in a studied imitation of spontaneity, as is, too, her hesitant, fluttering search for just the right word, just the right pause. Here is an actress, innocent of television naturalism, lending credibility from the theatre. This is an occasion, a celebration; this is art.

Glen Tomasetti's novel is the basis for *Man of Letters*, directed by Chris Thomson (*Spring and Fall, Waterfront, Five Mile Creek and The Last Bastion*). It was adapted for television by Alma de Groen and stars Warren Mitchell as an eccentric professor. The story follows out his private fantasies about women. He is a man of letters, who prefers to conduct his affairs by post. This is a whimsical idea, but suffocated by the length and over-playing of the production.

The story-line develops slowly, relying on a voice-over narration to give an ironic, or at least self-deprecating, commentary from the professor. Sequences are connected by often unnecessary establishing shots: in the car, at airports, hotel lobbies, office corridors. But the film falls down by cheapening its material, trying to score off everything. Cheap shots are passed off as wit, and literally everything is up for grabs. Professor Sir Dorton Serry is set up in a common image of the philosophy academic: preoccupied with ends and means, fussily involved in structures of language and impotent. The first of the women

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**John O'Hara**
he meets, Con (Genevieve Mooy), the feminist filmmaker, is represented as aggressive and lesbian. She has blonde, spiky hair, and wears a short denim skirt. One’s first view of her, as Dorton steps from a lift, is from behind, as the camera moves up her legs from high heels to denim skirt. This is demonstrating and indulging sexism.

Another board member remarks to Dorton that he hates liberated women: “I like very young, very soft, very tasty girls.” As he says this, the viewer is watching a close-up of Con’s bottom as she walks to the meeting. There, one sees Dorton’s clumsy fantasy of Con dressed in a white towel, moving her tongue suggestively and winking at him, then jumping on the table and dancing. The image cuts to a shot looking up along her body, before Dorton begins fantasizing about her breasts: “miraculously unsupported, unsagging mammaries”.

All of this is a kind of lowest common denominator image, representing the feminist as absurd, yet as an object of desire, both for sex and revenge. Con is interested, it turns out, in what is presented as a usual catalogue of reform: domestic violence, social justice, Aboriginals and women. These references are placed as an indication of how boring she is. The female film critic, too, is satirized in turn (“I admired the almost epic quality of your film”, she says).

Dorton visits another friend or would-be flame, Doona (Arna-Maria Winchester), who wants to take him to bed, and flashes to him, and to viewers, when he retreats. The whole junket concludes with an hysterical scene in his hotel room, in which two feminists appear late in the evening and make love in his bed (“Our major statement is that after weaning women never have a breast to suck until they find each other”). He throws water over them, they hiss at him like intertwined snakes and he collapses like a worn-out puritan in the corridor.

After this unpromising beginning, the film meanders through lengthy sequences demonstrating Dorton’s mental collapse, his destruction of a lifetime’s letter-writing to women and his abuse of a long-suffering wife who has finally made it as president of the local plant society.

Another of the personal fantasy films is Kindred Spirits, directed by Peter Fisk and written by Patricia Johnson. This is a lighter, more delicate film than any of the others, except for its heavy-handed satire of a stand-up comic of the very old school. The film is more romantic and lush than others in the series, but also thin and over-extended.

Julieanne Newbould plays Julie, a dancer who imagines she sees the drowning of a young man at Bondi beach. She is haunted by his image throughout the film, attempts to find out who he was and, finally, embraces him as she meets her death.

Julie is a baffled, innocent witness to a tragedy that she discovers took place in 1938 at Bondi. She appears disoriented in the film, troubled by her visions, leaving Tommy (John Ewart), her lover and stand-up comic, moving in temporarily with a sympathetic fellow dancer, and then wandering the streets and beaches, apparently indifferent to the passing of time. She is something of a waif, lost in the film, as some of the other major characters in the other films in this series.

There are intimations of death throughout the film: the tragedy Julie witnesses at the beginning, which cuts appallingly to Tommy greeting a journalist with the line, ‘You’re dead on time’; then, a visit to a tarot card reader turns up the card of death, which she is told, reasonably enough, means extreme change; and she is persistently visited by the figure of the dead young man, dressed in glowing cricket whites, like a refugee from Bodyline. Why he is dressed in cricketing gear is not explained. She dreams that he is wandering through an empty house, when she meets him standing in front of a full-length window, light pouring through like a kind of blue haze. This image is picked up at the moment of her death.

On her way to discovering something about him, and perhaps herself, she tracks down newspaper reports of the disaster, and finally an old woman, Miss Morris (Patricia Kennedy), who, it appears, was the girl friend of the drowned man. Morris refuses to discuss him. Julie persists, desperately, for reasons that are not clear, believing that Morris holds the key to the mystery.

Eventually, the film cuts short what has become a long and unresolved story by introducing, with extraordinary temerity, the Granville rail disaster. Julie is on a suburban train when she sees the tragic white figure in the next carriage. As he starts to move towards her, the shot cuts to the front of the train and the train track. She sits beside her and there is a close-up of the track. As they begin to kiss, there are three, rapidly intercut shots of an approaching bridge, and then a close-up on a station sign: Granville. The shock effect lies in the cut to the sign and its associations of disaster. But nothing in the film has suggested this kind of conclusion. It appears gratuitous and unconvincing as a dramatic resolution.

There are three quick shots of train wreckage, which depend for their effect on evoking the impact of television news film. The image then dissolves to the lovers, as they have become, kissing and radiant in a new, soft blue light. They gaze at each other, draw apart and walk towards light-filled French doors, with filmy curtains blowing in front of them. The image dissolves, as they disappear, to a close-up of the curtains, which in turn dissolves to golden light playing on the waves of Bondi.
This conclusion represents a kind of violence done to the story. It depends for its effect on a whole set of references which exist outside the story and leaves unanswered questions which the film has set up about Julie's identity and fantasy.

A different kind of fantasy, rather more grim and persistent, is represented in Catherine Millar's Every Move She Makes. This is a gothic horror story, about a young girl, Alison (Julie Nihill), who is persecuted by a psychopathic lover. It is a fantasy about innocence and its corruptibility, about collusion between the normal and the deviant.

Some of the images of uncertainty and disorientation are striking: shots taken from ceiling- or floor-level, a face disclosed in a swinging mirror, changes rung on the classic image of girl on a swing, not healthy Victorian erotica, but shot from above, suggesting the world turned upside down. One of the problems for the film is to integrate these moments of vertigo into the narrative. But it tends to relapse into repeating the same suspense moment. There is a montage of horror shots, cut from the story and leaves unanswered questions which the film has set up about Julie's identity and fantasy.

The legal system is also caricatured, partly by the florid language attributed to the lawyer (“The sanctity of her home has been violated”) and partly by a shot of the court taken from above which shows the court as a kind of sardine can. These excesses, though, may be directed by a conscious attempt on the part of the film’s director to demonstrate the limit of male understanding. Producer Erina Rayner says,

Men understand only male ways of behaving; she [Alison] is suspected for the way in which she chooses to stand her ground. The system is not geared to helping someone like her.

But, generally, the changes rung on melodramatic images of horror are more interesting than the awkward interchanges Alison has with the men in the film. Here it is in some danger of falling into the adolescent emotionalism it represents. The film is better displaying Alison’s vulnerability, particularly in a fine opening sequence of water, glass and flesh, which transforms the usual images of girl in shower. These shots are nicely held and reflective; the cutting is dramatic and arresting. Unfortunately, the lighting is not as good and some exterior car chase sequences are ruined by poor lighting.
shots, beside the boat on the beach; the second in the pub, of eight shots, introducing the problem about buying the boat; and the third, of seven shots of the two men on their way home. They climb a set of steps, walk a few feet, then turn in for the camera, as if for a public affairs program. This extensive introduction has already given the viewer too much time to think and too little to think about. But the film really loses its grip in the next episode, which is the buying of the boat.

Nottage intercuts two sequences here: the men off buying the boat and the women at church. He begins with a shot, which runs for more than 20 seconds, of the men walking down to the beach, then cuts back and forward between the church and the boat eight times. After 44 shots, one is told by the priest (Don Reid) that “Man is a poor frail thing that can be tossed like a boat on the sea.”

Mac takes his boat to sea, discovers an Aboriginal stowaway who wants a job aboard, and is caught at sea in a storm. He tries to make port, and lodges the boat irretrievably up a creek. Slowly, like everything else in the film, he declines into obsession and paranoia, raving at the Aboriginal.

Oh, the fish are nibbling at her belly. Boat knows about wind and sky, but a belly. Belly lives in the water, son, because that’s where I live too.

His death comes as a welcome relief for the viewer. His relationship with the Aboriginal has remained undeveloped, largely inexplicable. And the trouble with obsessive paranoia is that it is not a very interesting state for anyone else. The film is too slow, its focus on Mac too limited, to allow tragic implications to surface.

The most polemical and, in some ways, adventurous film of the series is Ken Cameron’s Crime of the Decade. Presumably, the title is meant to be ironic, to imply that what once might have been the crime of the century has become familiar, a part of everyday experience. But one quality this film lacks is distance and perspective on its own story, whether that be ironic, humorous or analytical. The film breaks into two quite different kinds of cinema, counterposing two life-styles: that of the unemployed western-suburbs youth, and the affluent, middle-class property developer who aspires to political office. This figure, Laurie Fletcher, is played by John Gregg as a flat and toneless representation of the self-interested businessman, mouthing the clichés of return to work and independence and self-reliance.

The film intercuts sequences of the street life of the young unemployed with a long, continuing dinner party at Fletcher’s house. There are eight sequences at his house, and in most of them he appears with a bottle of wine in his hand, parroting the indiscreet charm of the bourgeoisie. He begins with champagne, toasting the new member for Merriweather, proceeds to “a ’74 chardonnay”, then to a pinot noir (“got more body than a shiraz”), an imported sauterne (“picked late when the grapes are just mouldy”) and finally to brandy.

This inter-cutting doesn’t work at all; it is too deliberate and stiffed, too self-consciously making obvious points about self-interest, greed and indulgence. The cut from a working-class kitchen table, with cans of beer and bottles of sauce, to a close-up of prawns in lettuce is repeated in a later cut from bread and eggs frying in a pan to a close-up of an elegant dinner plate, silver and crystal. This sort of posturing cuts out any analysis beyond what is already taken for granted: that a state of class warfare exists. It prepares the viewer for the final scene in which the working-class youth shoots the property developer (“There’s a war and you’re the enemy”). This act of violence is represented as a logical outcome of a systemic repression. The film has the energy of all the right convictions, but ruins its case by overstatement.

Society exists in a state of guerrilla warfare, and all the sincerity and integrity belong to the dispossessed. The police are imaged as corrupt pawns of the capitalist powers. When Fletcher is making a commercial, he is disturbed by the sound of the youths riding their bikes. “Keep the bloody kids quiet will you Darryl?” he says. “Getting right onto it, Mr Fletcher”, says the cop, tipping his cap and scrambling into the police car. The cop then takes one of the youths home and tries to pick up his mother: “I like my tea weak and my women strong.”

Meanwhile, one has seen episodes of attempted rape of a daughter in a live-in relationship, the daughter being blamed by the mother for the incident and thrown out of the home; petty vandalism; drug running, including heroin pushing; prostitution among the young; and, finally, the death of one of them from petrol sniffing. These scenes are acted with restraint and conviction, but their effectiveness is diminished by the relentless overstatement in the contrasting sequences at the dinner table.

What the film appears to endorse is a view that no answers matter; the situation has already passed beyond solutions short of violence and class war. It takes up an easy pessimism, allowing the viewer no distance, no ambiguities, no alternatives. The social-realistic style of the street life clashes with the device of the extended dinner party (and the sound levels here are annoyingly low). The film is too much like an illustrated lecture in which all the real points for discussion have been taken for granted. Its effect is to promote the tedium from which the young are shown to suffer. Nothing can be done, so everything is excuses.
Ampy and Kevin: "I've made up my mind that you're the woman I love...I want to settle down with a wife I can count on and who likes the quiet life." Mail Order-Bride.

Kevin (Ray Meagher) and his Filipino bride, Ampy (Charito Ortez), Stephen Wallace's Mail-Order Bride.

by Stephen Wallace (The Love Letters from Teralba Road, Captives of Care, For Love Alone), brilliantly acted by Ray Meagher and Charito Ortez, and written in an easy, insinuating idiom by Robyn Davidson. This is her first television script, following the success of Tracks, her account of a camel trek across the top end of Australia.

The film begins with the situation of Kevin (Ray Meagher), a middle-aged Australian country builder who has been corresponding with several women, at least one of whom is from The Philippines. He offers marriage, is accepted, and the film traces the outcome of this unlikely liaison. The woman, Ampy (Charito Ortez), becomes a metaphor for cross-cultural conflict, including attitudes in the local community towards blacks and questions of race. The ways in which the film represents metaphor is one of its strengths, as are its transitions in mood and pace from one sequence to another. Slowly, a cumulative feeling of oppression and unease develops from what looks to be an easy-going, simple and attractive lifestyle.

The film opens on a shot of the back of Kevin's bush hat; the camera pulls back and one sees his unidentified figure in country gear, carrying flowers and waiting at an airport. From this characteristic shot, the film develops a nice, laconic style of introducing situations indirectly, almost casually. Kevin turns to a nice, laconic style of introducing situations.

From this characteristic shot, the film develops a nice, laconic style of introducing situations indirectly, almost casually. Kevin turns to reveal an Australian of indeterminate age and condition; he is from the country, but it is hard to tell if he is young or old, fit or flabby, easy or tense. What is concealed about him is what is most interesting.

The voice-over says that he is meeting his bride-to-be from The Philippines. He has written to her: "I've made up my mind that you're the woman I love...I want to settle down with a wife I can count on and who likes the quiet life." Some of the disturbing implications of this process are registered as Kevin waits behind the barrier; he starts as a beautiful Filipino girl, frisky as a racehorse, goes past him. Ampy is quiet, dark, shy and attentive. The nuances of their meeting are well suggested, with its mixture of anticipation, curiosity, fear and disappointment ("You're smaller than I thought").

Then there is an unobtrusive transition sequence as he drives her home two hundred miles to Badigeri. The tone is laconic, dry and understated; but the unease is clear. Her voice-over explains her response to his letter, her determination to be a good wife. The city gives way to blackened bush, then green countryside.

A guitar solo underlines this return to country life. Small differences are registered, about a dead wallaby ("Vermin", says Kevin) and then about Aboriginals they see on the way into town ("The missing link", he says dispassionately).

Ampy's introduction to the town, her marriage and the beginnings of life in a caravan with Kevin are handled tactfully and with a good deal of humor. The wedding ceremony cuts to a close-up of a beer glass and peanuts at the reception. Ampy meets some sympathetic people, as the air of good humor is dispelled in a confined space from which no escape is possible.

Kevin takes his wife sexually the next morning in a grim, groping ritual of mechanical lust, which is despairing to watch; there is then a nice dissolve to a scene of the two of them fishing, happy together — an easy, Huckleberry Finn romance.

The town's social life is imaged deftly, with amusement, but penetrating to levels of prejudice that lie beneath the surface. Kevin is uneasy talking about politics ("They've got to put a stop to communism") and about pollution ("You can't have progress without paying for it"). None of this is overstated in the film, but slowly establishes the limits of tolerance.

Ampy's friendship with the blacks precipitates a crisis with Kevin when he discovers she has been to their camp. Shortly afterward, protesters decorate the statue of the returned soldier with a land rights flag, and Kevin and his mates determine to teach the blacks a lesson by shooting up their camp. This sequence is intercut with shots of Kevin in the caravan, where he has gone to get his gun, begged by Ampy not to go. Excited by her desperation and the violence of the situation, he turns to fucking her. Several times, the film connects explicitly sexual frustration and anger with personal violence directed against women and blacks.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Ampy is raped by a friend of Kevin's one night when he is away, drunk. The next shot picks up the story as though the consequences of the rape have been suppressed. The camera tracks past shops in the main street, catches up with Kevin's Landrover, parked with furniture, and Kevin talking, cheerfully enough, about their future, child, house and her mother's visit. The film ends on this anti-climax, unexpected and powerful in its sense that life will go on largely as before; there are no means of working out this crisis and crime.

Mail-Order Bride is rewarding for its rhythms and transitions, its easy changes of mood and pace, and the way it draws viewers into an understated view of small-town country life and attitudes. It is a scaring indictment of prejudice, violence and racial terrorism, and deserves a wider release than Sunday-night television. It should become as much part of the culture, and reflections on it, as Wake in Fright. And it does all this without a big-name star and on a small budget. This film vindicates the ABC's attempt to tackle serious issues by commissioning local drama. ★

Amphy and Kevin: "I've made up my mind that you're the woman I love...I want to settle down with a wife I can count on and who likes the quiet life." Mail Order-Bride.
Chris Muir has been head of the ABC Television Drama department for nearly two years. He is presiding over a department which, in the 1980s, is trying hard to invigorate itself. It recently launched Sweet and Sour, a rock fantasy series; The Young Wife, a drama about a Greek family; and a Sunday night series of Australian tele-features, directed by feature film directors such as Ken Cameron and Stephen Wallace.

The ABC is now planning another series of Sunday night tele-features; individual tele-features such as Displaced Persons, about European migrants, Time's Raging, about a contemporary relationship, and One Summer Again, a radical look at the Heidelberg School; and a series about a Russian emigré family running a hotel in Sydney in the 1930s, Palace of Dreams.

Before taking up his Sydney position, Muir was head of the ABC Television Drama department in Victoria when it made I Can Jump Puddles. He was also president of the Melbourne Directors' Guild for several years and was executive producer, with John B. Murray, of Libido (1973).

Muir was interviewed by Helen Greenwood and Margaret Smith.

**Tele-features**

What prompted ABC Drama to move into tele-features?

They were missing from our program schedule and no other stations were doing them in great quantity. We felt audiences would be looking for something new. ABC Drama is trying for variety and for audience reach; we have to consider the balance of material we are doing because we have to cater for a very wide audience. There should be some history, some comedy, some adventure stories and some innovative work, such as Sweet and Sour.

Is this why each of the tele-features in the series is so different?
I have always felt — and I have worked in the ABC for a long time, and in a variety of departments — that there was an ABC 'house-style'. It is as if something were muffled, as if the actors were walking around in space helmets. We quite often get away from it, but a lot of the time it appeared as if the material had been done in slow motion.

So, it was important to demonstrate that we were not locked into any particular style; that we did have, in Melbourne and Sydney, a range of producer talent that would enable us to tackle different subjects. We decided the best thing to do was to look at six entirely unrelated subjects.

Did the various approaches — thriller, social realist, comedy — emerge out of the producers' interests?

The producers, in effect, selected the kind of theme they wanted to be associated with. Alan Burke was very keen to do Kindred Spirits — his work has always had a lot of romance in it; a lot of spiritual feeling — and he was very taken by the Trish Johnson script. I can think of producers who probably would not want to go near it, who would want something hard-edged.

As a rule, ABC audiences anticipate that they are going to see 'middle-of-the-road' entertainment. As a result, I received some very strong letters about the lesbian scene in Man of Letters. People said it was disgusting and that the ABC shouldn't be doing that kind of material. I think we decided the best thing to do was to look at six entirely unrelated subjects.

What sort of budgets were involved with the tele-features?

By commercial standards, and ignoring the complex costing system within the ABC, the budgets were $500,000 on average. They were shot fast, in five weeks or so, with small casts; there is really nothing extravagant about them. We can't overshoot the budget because we haven't any money to cover overages: we are our own completion guarantors.

You used feature film directors such as Ken Cameron and Stephen Wallace for the tele-features: what do you think will be the effect of the increasing cross-over of people and styles between cinema and television?

I went to a very daunting futurological seminar at the Australian Film and Television School, with 50 prominent people from the film and television industry. There was very strong and heated debate about the proposition that there might be no cinema in the future, with celluloid disappearing altogether. Everything would be shot electronically and most would finish up on television screens, either through video cassettes or a proliferation of stations. Cinemas, if they did exist, would also be using electronic images, projected by lasers. I suspect that there is a good deal of truth in that prognostication.

I don't know, however, how some of the tele-features we have made would stand up in the cinema.

All the old-fashioned rules of television — shooting the drama in close-up because it is the medium of the close-up — still stand to a certain extent. People do expect to get in close when they are watching a television play. Rhythmically, there may be differences in the two mediums.

Man of Letters is a very interesting production, but I have

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Robert Watts has been with Lucasfilm since 1975, although contracted to work from film to film. He is credited as production supervisor on *Star Wars*, associate producer on *Empire and Raiders*, and co-producer on *Return of the Jedi*. On *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, he is producer.

Watts has a history of work on other large-scale productions, including Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), Franklin Schaffner's *Papillon* (1973) and two Bond films, *Thunderball* (1965) and *You Only Live Twice* (1967). He has also worked on Roman Polanski's *Repulsion* (1965), Charles Jarrot's *The Other Side of Midnight* (1977), and produced Peter Brook's *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1978).

*Temple of Doom* adheres to the trusted formula of big-screen, big-production, extravagant, mass-audience entertainment. It grossed more than $U.S.42 million in its first six days of release — an all-time record. During a recent promotional visit to Australia for *Temple of Doom*, Watts spoke about the film, his role with Lucasfilm, the video boom, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg to Jim Schembri.

What was your role on each of the Lucasfilm projects?

On the earlier films, *Star Wars* for example, I was the production supervisor, working under the producer. All I did was take care of the English end, which was all the live-action photography: I really had nothing to do with the rest of the film. In many respects, that was also true for *Jedi*.

Initially, I was going to go back to the U.S. for the post-production on *Star Wars*, but then *Raiders* came up and I went into that immediately. Being associate producer, I got involved on a slightly higher plane.

Then on *Jedi*, as co-producer, I was involved on a higher plane again. But like the other films I was unable to see it through to post-production.

On *Temple of Doom*, finally I am the producer, and I have been overseeing it all the way. In many respects, it is more satisfying. It is certainly the way I like to work.

What specifically was your function on "Temple of Doom"?

My job was to oversee the film and try to make it come out on budget at the end.

After reading the script, the first function is to decide where you are going to make it. I go on a trip looking for locations with the set designer, and he and I figure out what all the costs are going to be. He does the set end and I do the rest.

Then we start from a nucleus and build up the crew. By the time it comes to shoot, I have all the crews in all the locations, set-con­structing and preparing, so that when the shooting crew arrives there is no time wasted.

The most expensive element of *Temple of Doom* was the shooting. When you are carrying a very high density of extremely skilled and highly paid technicians and actors, every minute counts.

Do you have any creative control?

Frankly, I don't have a great deal of creative control in these films. I am delegated the responsi­bility by George Lucas to make sure they run efficiently, to make sure everything is there for Steven Spielberg, or whoever is directing. One does get involved creatively in areas relating to cost because working cost creatively is creative in itself. It isn't just a case of saying yes or no, but a case of knowing when to say, "Yes, let's spend a bit more" or, "No, we can't do this" for various reasons.

Spielberg is a very good person to work with because he is very adaptive and creative. What we are
always looking for is the best way to spend every dollar we have and to get it up on the screen without waste. Spielberg works that way.

How do you manage a budget of $527 million? Can you give an example of the creative costing you mentioned?

On Temple of Doom, I usually would get to the studio at 6.30 a.m. and look at the cost runs to keep myself up-to-date. A budget for a film is divided into accounts; every department has its own account which has to be adhered to. You will never get every account right — some will be over and some will be under — so what you are looking to do is get the bottom-line figure.

As we were going along, Steven would make adjustments to the script that required certain additions and, on occasion, subtractions, so we had to constantly balance the total financial scheme.

An example of this was the scene number at the beginning of the film. In the original script, it was much smaller and less ambitious, with 12 girls doing the number in the confines of the nightclub. It would have needed only one set and not the 32 dancers, completely separate limbo set and the expensive sparkle effects we ended up using.

These changes were made before we started shooting, so I had to find the extra money — obviously it was going to be somewhat more expensive. Among other things, I looked at the shooting schedule for the chase in the streets of Shanghai. Originally, it had been laid out to be quite a long shoot but, without curtailing the story for that sequence in any way, we revised the schedule. We ended up doing it entirely with the second unit, with the interiors of the car done separately in a studio.

The second-unit shooting took only six nights, which was far less than I had originally estimated and budgeted for. The money we saved there went towards giving us the latitude to make the opening dance number more lavish.

That is the biggest example I can give, though there are a lot of smaller ones.

What I have to be very careful about, too, is that we finish the picture on budget. Spielberg always works that way, and the only reason he will make adjustments to the script is for reasons of cost. But if I get to the end of the film and we are $527,000 under budget, Steven is going to turn to me and say, “You cut down my 50 people. Why?” So, while it is nice to be under budget, what we set out to do is put all the money we have available on the screen. It’s an exercise in which you go in and say, “Well, it is budgeted for $27 million, but let’s cut corners and make it for $20 million.”

Why are Lucasfilm productions so popular?

Because they take all the thrill-a-minute elements of the old serials and up-date them in terms of technology to make them acceptable to audiences today. When you show those old Flash Gordon serials, people still laugh and enjoy them. But technologically they are very primitive and audiences today are sophisticated; you can’t get away with poor product.

Is George Lucas’ overriding creative control of his products a major factor in their popularity?

George has a very clear eye; he can put his finger very simply on what works and what doesn’t in the context of a scene and in terms of the way an audience will react to it. It is an instinct with him, the same way that Steven Spielberg is an instinctive director. If one believes in reincarnation, Lucas probably worked in early films because he has this unerring instinct.

I have worked with Spielberg and Lucas and, though their styles as directors are totally different, they have individually been so successful and their coming together is marvellous. There is a very fruitful and creative working atmosphere, with no tension or conflict. They are close friends, they respect each other professionally and creatively, and, therefore, they get the best result through their co-operation.

George is a marvellous editor and has always been heavily involved in the production of his films, including Temple of Doom. There is a lot of creative input from Steven and George, though the final input is from Steven, as it should be.

How does Lucasfilm define its market? Who are you going for?

With this type of film, you are mainly going for the teenagers through to those in their mid-20s. The statisticians tell us who is going to see the films and who sees them more than once; to get the biggest gross a lot of people have to see them more than once, which tends to happen with films of this sort. They are a fast-moving, roller-coaster ride and kids tend to want to get on again and have another go.

In light of the remarkably strong position of Lucasfilm in the film industry, were there any real worries that “Temple of Doom” was going to fail, or, indeed, that anything produced by Lucasfilm is going to fail?

Oh, absolutely. I think it essential that you do worry because the day you sit back and think you have a sure-fire hit on your hands is the day you are going to fall flat on your arse. The public goes to see what it likes, and if you get arrogant and think people will accept anything you churn out then you are wrong. Never underestimate the public: it is the public, after all, which allows the films to be made. It is important to go into each film with the freshest of approaches and to try to make it the best film you possibly can. It is like the industry as a whole; it is always a learning process and you never say you know it all, because the day you do that you are going to fall flat.

But there is a strong argument that there is going to be a guaranteed, large, hard-core audience for anything Lucasfilm produces. There are fan clubs, carry-overs from the last film and also a lot of people who just seem to be devoted to George Lucas . . .

Well, certainly, there is that carry-over, but let us suppose that Temple of Doom had been a terrible film: it would still have had a great first week because a lot of people would have gone to see it regardless. But it wouldn’t have had a good second week and it probably would have died in the third. Word of mouth kills faster than anything. A good example would be the first Star Trek film which had enormous hype, with all the trekkies and so on, and had a colossal first week, but, because it was a dull film, it went down thereafter.

There seems to be a trend towards big-budget, big-production films. Do you think this might be a conscious reaction to the video boom?

Yes. To draw people away from their homes and their video cassettes you have to give them something that can’t be seen on video.

I don’t think the video industry will ever kill the cinema. Maybe people’s viewing habits will change as video becomes more sophisticated, with better definition and stereo, but I think there will always be a place for the cinema. However, it is very much up to the cinema owners to make sure their theatres have optimum projection, that the seats are comfortable and that patrons are catered to a “night out” atmosphere.

Video cassettes do have a big plus in that we can advertise theatrical releases on them. The tape for Raiders carried a trailer for the Temple of Doom, and sold very well, so imagine the millions who saw the trailer.

Is the coming out of “Raiders of the Lost Ark” on video in any way a concession to the video boom? Will it mean in the future that Lucasfilm will make big-screen productions, keeping in mind that the film will end up on video?
No, I don't think there will be a compromise in the way they are shot because, if you make it for the big screen, you must make it for the big screen. Although, eventually, all these films will go to video, because that is another market, as are cable and free TV, the big, wide-screen film should never be compromised by keeping all the action in the centre of the frame. These films will still have some excitement on video, though not as great, because they should be seen with Dolby stereo sound on a 70 mm screen for maximum impact.

Spielberg came out with "Raiders" after "1941" and the special edition of "Close Encounters" had been released and failed. Some people have suggested that Spielberg was offered the directorship of the film as a 'helping hand'. Was that the case?

No, absolutely not.

When I first met Steven at a meeting for Raiders he was still editing 1941, and the special edition of Close Encounters hadn't even been shot; that was done while we were in pre-production on Raiders. So, neither of those films had emerged into the light of the public arena.

Having said that, I must say that there are directors who never come back from a disaster such as 1941, which could be described as a case of over-indulgence. When Steven made Raiders, we came in under schedule and hang on budget. The reason we were not under budget is because we put the money we saved back into miniatures for extra effects. That film ended up being the sixth highest grossing film of all time, and we knew what has happened since with E.T. and Poltergeist. So, there was no sitting back saying, "Oh my God, what a mess" and never being able to get back into it — and that is talent.

There certainly does seem to be a pattern of directors who have made successful films and then have come out with huge, expensive failures...

No matter what success a director may have with a film, he is still vulnerable. And, of course, some directors are less consistent than others.

I suppose Francis Ford Coppola is an example of just how erratic a director can be. My view of One From the Heart is that it didn't have a good script and was dull, and it didn't make it because of that. But, I absolutely adore The Godfather films and I love Apocalypse Now, which for me is a great piece of surreal cinema. But, there is no guarantee of continued success, as One From the Heart proved, no matter how much you spend. The Cotton Club is supposed to have cost $50 million: if that is the case, it will never get it back.

Clint Eastwood is another example. I liked two of his lower-key films, Bronco Billy and Honky Tonk Man. They are probably more personal to Eastwood than the Dirty Harry films, but the fans want to see him as Dirty Harry. The other films just don't appeal to his fans and so are less successful.

Ridley Scott, who made Alien and Blade Runner, is a product of commercials. One of the problems of commercials' directors is that their films tend to be very stylish, but lacking in story content: the director is used to selling something in 30 seconds with incredibly beautiful imagery. I read an early script for Blade Runner and thought it was fantastic, but I don't think the final film worked because it had no humor and nothing to relieve it. It was an amazing exercise in style and technique, but without any real heart to bring you close to it. It was too cold.

Alien worked because it is basically a haunted house picture set in space. It came out at the start of the Star Wars space boom, had that element added the alien running about the ship, which is a variation on an old theme.

You mention that it is important to marry special effects with characters and story, but isn't it also true that people probably went to see the Star Wars! trilogy for the technical innovations as much as anything else?

It is important that the drama and effects complement each other. You can't have a film that is just a series of effects without a story and characters. People have tried and all you get is a series of effects that are, in themselves, impressive, but that don't mean anything if they don't fit the context of a story that has emotion.

The best marriage of those elements in the Star Wars films is in Empire, which is the most literate of the three films. Walt Disney's Tron is an example of the effects getting in the way of the drama and the audience involvement with the characters. I actually enjoyed Tron, though few did! I thought it was a most intriguing concept but it didn't work because of the script. Disney is always working with such bad scripts. It was the same problem with The Black Hole, which was basically 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea set in space. Now, finally Disney seems to be growing up.

The violence in "Temple of Doom" has been criticized and you have said in its defence that the film's violence does not relate to people's knowledge of violence. As far as people having their hearts ripped out, that may be true, but people know of whippings and shootings. What functions do those graphic scenes have in a mass-audience entertainment piece such as "Temple of Doom"?

In those scenes, you are dealing with a cult that has strayed away from religion and reality — the bad element. And, as in any fairy-tale situation, you paint it bad. So, the violence serves as a strong emotional response from the audience, and you get it by giving them something that is going to evoke a strong emotion. The whipping scene is paid for on the conveyer belt, when both individuals get to pay back their tormentors.

It is hard for me to defend the film's violence. I would say it forms part and parcel of the...
John C. Murray

At the outset, let it be said that *Bodyline* is a very considerable achievement. Quite apart from its efficient management of the brute logistics of producing 10 hours of large-scale television narrative, the series as a conception is marked by imaginative sweep and, if it is not too strong a word, a high measure of courage. Taking as its core the infamous MCC tour of Australia in 1932-33 and the events preceding it, the production explores a complex of concerns and interests that go well beyond a simple “You Are There” recreation of the better-known facts of the tour. And it is in that respect that speaking of the courage of the conception is apt.

It is, after all, at least daring to base a 10-episode mini-series on as relatively arcane a game as cricket, the more so if the events at issue are more than 50 years in the past and the series is intended for international distribution. Kennedy Miller† chanced its arm there to begin with. But to do as the series’ writers did — to employ those long-gone events as a framework with. But to do as the series’ writers did — to employ those long-gone events as a framework for the dramatization of personal, social and political tensions of a wide-ranging kind — is very brave indeed.

Though, in the final analysis, it might be said that the conceptions are not always fully realized (that *Bodyline*, at worst, could be accused of not being sure of just what, centrally, it is wanting to clarify), and that there are some nagging infelicities of writing and direction, none of these should diminish respect for the demanding task the production team took on.

At one point in episode 3, Percy Fender (John Gregg) stresses to Edith (Heather Mitchell) the courage required of any top-flight sportsman to risk the humiliation of public failure. That is a point about mass-spectator sports and sportsmen of which one needs continually to be reminded. But it is a fact about mass-audience dramatic narratives which should not be forgotten, either. *Bodyline* invites the patronage of a large audience (the pre-release publicity was very well orchestrated), it plays its game according to a set of well-understood dramatic rules and, in so doing, it lays itself open to public judgment.

On the evidence of ratings surveys, the risks proved to be worth taking: *Bodyline* not only attracted a big audience for its first night, but increased that audience to record figures during the four nights of the run. But the possibility of failure, even abject failure, could never have been discounted.

Without pushing the connection too hard, Douglas Jardine really demand that the injured Harold Larwood bowl out his final over in Brisbane and did Bill Woodfull sportingly refuse to score off the powerless balls that Larwood trundled up to him? Did Jardine actually tell Pataudi that he would never play Test cricket for England again because of his opposition to Jardine’s tactics? I don’t know, and without saying those and others are not legitimate questions, for the purposes of this exercise I don’t very much care. Dramatically, they are powerful moments, consistent with the obsessiveness of the Douglas Jardine (Hugo Weaving) persona the production creates.

Instead, in an effort to impose some order on what is a very large canvas of people, conflicts and events, I have chosen to take a limited selection of strands in that canvas to examine. And, in isolating them, a few ideas are offered, directly or by implication, on the success or otherwise of their realization.

Before getting into that, a quick point. As remarked earlier, a claim can be made that *Bodyline*, in pursuing a number of centres of interest involved in the 1932-33 Tests, rather loses its way. What, when all the dust had settled, is *Bodyline* fundamentally concerned with? The character of Jardine? Australian cricket as an arena for the expression of this country’s independence from Mother England? The first fissures in the seamless edifice of Empire? Don Bradman as the quintessential folk-hero? The different class and social structures of England and Australia as manifested in cricket? And so the list could go on. The absence of any clear-cut answer to the question can be regarded as a criticism, arising from the long-established and generally proper expectation that a dramatic narrative must have a central, unambiguous thrust, whatever else is dealt with along the way.

But there is a counter-view which can at least be entertained. The existential fact is that one’s experience of *Bodyline* was spread over 10 hours of viewing time, broken into a four-night, $3 + 2 + 2 + 3$ pattern. This made a viewer’s identification and retention of a central thrust or theme, even if it were there, very difficult, perhaps even impossible. And as a conjecture, it could be said that Kennedy Miller knew this from the outset. In other words, given the nature of the enterprise, the

1. A Kennedy Miller Production for Network Ten. *Bodyline* was produced by Terry Hayes and George Miller. It was directed by Carl Schultz, George Ogilvie, Denny Lawrence and Lex Marinus, from a screenplay by Robert Casswell, Lex Marinus, Denny Lawrence and Terry Hayes. The director of photography was Dean Semler, the editors Richard Francis-Bruce and David Stiven.
producers and their team of four writers and four directors recognized that they could locate the focus of attention on different things in different episodes or combinations of episodes.

If, in the main, one's final impression of the series was kaleidoscopic, perhaps that was the way it was meant to be, rather than the absence of a single major focus being something the team strove for but was unable to achieve.

So, without being exhaustive, what can *Bodyline* be said to be about, in the sense of those things it brings into sharp dramatic relief?

In part, it is about the integration of England's imperial power, class system and structures of privilege in the *gestalt* of the country's national game. As Edith's voice says in episode 1, quoting Cecil Rhodes: “To be born British is to win first prize in the lottery of life.”

This theme is solidly realized in the early episodes, and recurs forcefully in the middle and later ones. Jardine's sense of destiny, his vision that as captain of England his was a nationally-ordained mission to re-establish the rights of the rulers over the ruled, is powerfully founded in the sequences of his childhood in India, his schooldays at Horris Hill and Winchester, and in his striking rationale for a new conception of playing the game: "This country led the world into the Industrial Revolution, and we must now design a machine to win at cricket."

In this context, vignettes abound: Lord Harris (Frank Thring) ritually presenting young Jardine with an expensive cricket bat (the sword of honor?); Jardine's father (Arthur Dignam) demonstrating strokes to his son off balls bowled up by turbaned lackeys; the lovely images of the Winchester-Eton match being played against a backdrop of soft English greenery; gentleman Jardine's meeting with miner Harold Larwood (Jim Holt) in the backyard of a grim tenement negotiating to supply him with a new pair of cricket boots; and the tightly written and directed meeting of Lord Harris with Jardine to arrange the easing of Jardine into the England captaincy by pressuring Percy Fender to stand down as county leader. And set against these are the harshly lit sequences of Australia's young Bradman (the man of destiny of that upstart world) scoring runs in a local country cricket match — all dry yellows and browns and spindly gum-trees — and remaining behind after stumps to practise his drives on the parched, cracked pitch.

Some reviewers have decried the production's use of Edith's voice-over as a commentary device, characterizing it as something of a Kennedy Miller cliché. For my part, the omniscient commentary works very well. The intelligently written words, spoken with measured calm by Mitchell, illuminate the perspectives — Empire, history, opposed cultures — within which the singular things being seen and heard are to be located. Certainly, in the early episodes, it is the commentary more than anything else that establishes the implications of the impending, almost predestined clash between England's Jardine and Australia's Bradman. More than just sporting matters are at issue; more than sporting history is in the making.

Then again, *Bodyline* is also about the complex psychology of Douglas Jardine. Indeed, if the series possesses any one strand which links the episodes together, other than the straight chronology of the Tests, it has to be this. Not only does the series begin and end with Jardine (the child of destiny; the man’s career ending in a welter of anti-Bodyline riots in India), but the major dramatic moments over the 10 hours are generated by him. Jardine,
quite literally, makes the drama and is, with one exception, the most compelling figure of all. That this was to be so is heralded by a sharply written exchange in the first episode. Passing comment on young Jardine's impending separation from his parents' care, a family friend remarks, "Well, they say the solitary tree grows strong." Jardine's mother (Jane Harders) replies, "No, I think you have got the quotation wrong. It is 'The solitary tree, if it grows at all, grows strong.'" Any character about whom that is said is going to be worth watching.

And, once again, it is Edith's commentary that on several occasions reminds one of the well-springs of Jardine's driven behaviour ("His was a manner forged by public schools and loneliness"). A man of personal magnetism, a stickler for social proprieties, remorseless in his leadership, compulsive in the commitment to what he saw as the necessarily cruel processes of winning, Weaving's Douglas Jardine is the ballast of the whole series. Though the production is not particularly well served by the inclusion of the relationship between Jardine and Edith — I cannot find any seriously useful point it makes or supports — the extent to which Jardine cast his shadow over Bodyline is exemplified in the coda of the final episode. Edith's voice is giving a series of summations of the fates of the major characters. Having stated the blank facts about Jardine's later life and death of cancer in the 1950s, Edith concludes: "Whenever I now hear the sound of bat on ball I cannot help but think of him."

Now, in one respect that is an inflation: their relationship is not strongly enough realized in the narrative to give the utterance the warrant it invites. But, at a different remove, the force of Jardine's presence in the series justifies the comment as a surrogate expression of the viewers' sentiments. Bodyline makes Jardine important. Love him or hate him, one could not forget him.

Tied to Jardine is the third thread: the figure of Pelham "Plum" Warner (Rhys McConnachie), and the frictions between his duties as manager of the MCC team and Jardine's as captain. It could be said that (historical considerations aside) the narrative needs Warner. There has to be some knowledgeable figure to whom Jardine could articulate such things as his philosophy of cricket (and his philosophy of life: "Things are won by pain and sacrifice — I learned that as a child...."); his attitude towards Australia and Australians; his feelings about his own masters, the Lords; and his view of his charter as England captain.

But, in the event, Pelham Warner becomes much more than a convenient sounding board for what Jardine thinks and feels. The role as written and acted (a fine performance by McConnachie) provides Bodyline with a character of almost tragic dimension. Imbued with a love of "this beautiful game", locked into its traditions and codes, a friend and admirer of Australians, and a man in many ways trading on past and fading glories, Warner is reduced from an initial, ebullient confidence to despairing helplessness, unable to restrain Jardine's juggernaut drive to win at all costs.

There are few moments in the series more affecting than when Warner, having finally (even weakly) washed his hands Pilate-like of any responsibility for Jardine's tactics, and profoundly wounded by Jardine's disdain for him and his principles, stagers half-drunk into his hotel room. He sits on the bed, gazes blankly at a trophy honoring his services to cricket and, dropping his head, begins to sob. But he steels himself, refusing as a Briton to give way to the indulgence, and reasserts his composure as best he can. It is a sad yet noble moment for a person out-run by circumstances not of his making, and crushed by a man holding his values in contempt.

The accumulating tensions between Warner and Jardine culminate in one of the best exchanges of the whole production. The Brisbane Test, and thus the Test series, having been won by England, Warner offers an obligatory but highly qualified congratulation to Jardine, ending with: "I am forced to say that history will remember you as a man who stooped to conquer." Jardine's response? "Well, sir, we both know that history has forgotten you...." How revealing of the depths...
to which their relationship has fallen that each should say that to the other. Clearly, in lodging attention on just these three facets of Bodyline, a very great deal has been left untouched. What, for example, of Don Bradman?

The difficulty here is that Bradman, in the writers’ conception of the shape Bodyline was to take, was doomed to be a thin character, perhaps at worst an uninteresting one. The production nicely establishes Bradman’s stature as a folk-hero for a nation that was in desperate need of one; but his function in the drama is not that of a crucial agent. Bradman is the target against whom the Bodyline plot is directed — the focus of it. In plain terms, he is acted upon by events rather than, like Jardine, initiating them. And victims of events are essentially less interesting than the generators of them. In Jardine’s case, one has to know why he was uniquely the right man, in virtue of upbringing, attitudes and psychology, to plan and press the attack. Bradman, on the other hand, is under attack, not because of any psychological singularity, but because as a brilliantly gifted batsman he could score more runs than anyone else. That explains his heroic stature, but makes no necessary call for him to be defined as a personality. So Bradman begins as, and remains, a figure, not in any full sense a character.

And what of the action sequences, the Test matches themselves? Here there is a need for some obvious concessions. No team of extras, no matter how cleverly disposed and filmed, is ever going to look and sound like 50,000 people at the MCG. And no group of actors, no matter how well coached it might have been, is ever likely to show that easy grace of technique, movement and speed that marks a professional sportman. So one has to accept the best simulations of crowds and cricketing skills that the directors can provide, even though they fall short of one’s normal experiences of the real things.

But there is an exception, in one device director Carl Schultz uses in the later episodes. Occasionally, he covers the approach of Larwood to the crease with the camera tracking him in a high oblique angle to the point of delivery, then cuts to a similarly positioned but static shot looking down the pitch at the batsman’s stroke. The effect conveys an impression of the bowler’s speed and the batsman’s split-second response lacking elsewhere in the presentation of the Tests.

Finally, just to clear them out of the system, a few nigbling complaints might be worth stating. Episodes 4 and 5, especially the sections dealing with the MCC’s sea voyage to Australia, are rather otiose, not doing very much to further the momentum of events (in fact retarding it) or the elaboration of character.

There are also a few too many declamatory speeches put into the actors’ mouths. The exhortation by Clive Cooper (Max Cullen) to Packer, entreating him to release Bradman from his writing contract, works well enough, but the death-bed address by Lord Harris, a couple of homilies lodged with Bradman and particularly the “Us Aussie Battlers” sermon by Vic Richardson (Michael O’Neill) to his team-mates sit rather uneasily with the generally quiet, naturalistic writing and direction that marks the series.

But it is churlish to make too much of reservations such as these. Out-weighing them are some admirable performances, particularly by all the actresses; Dean Semler’s sensitive photography; the attention to details throughout (the careful ageing of Jardine and his parents in the earlier episodes as a small case in point); and the assured handling of such large-group interior sequences as the 1932-1933 New Year’s Eve party.

As remarked at the beginning, Bodyline is a considerable achievement. While far from flawless, it is bold, imaginative and, in its finer moments, wholly engrossing.
Animation in Australia can be divided into three basic categories: commercial animation, which is the shortest (30 to 60 seconds) and the most expensive; independent animation, usually made for the love of it and for a fraction of the cost of its commercial equivalent; and feature-length animation.

With the notable exception of Alex Stitt's work, Australian animated features are made for the American market. This has resulted in a middle-of-the-road style of animation, suitable for Dickensian stories and other classics so popular with American audiences.

As animation is the most labor-intensive form of filmmaking, the quality and style of a feature often suffers in the face of economic considerations.

With the cost of an animated feature starting at $1 million and with there being only a limited audience in Australia for such films, very few producers are willing to risk involvement with animated filmmaking.

One of the few is Yoram Gross, who is the most prolific and financially successful Australian in this field. Animator Antoinette Starkiewicz interviewed Yoram Gross and questioned him about his dependence on the demands of the American market, the importance of economic considerations as against innovation and quality, and the creating of animation with an Australian theme.

By all accounts, you are the most successful director and producer of animated films in Australia...

That sounds good but I don't know if it is true. I don't know how Hanna Barbera or Burbank are doing.

To be really successful, one has to be able to sell a film to the U.S. before the film is made. We have achieved this with Dot and the Koala, which is in production, and with Dot and Keeto. We have been able to pre-sell films on the basis of a one-page story outline and a title.

How do your films fare in Australia?

We are producing films — and I don't have to explain to you the difference between features for cinema and television — for a limited market. Children's films can only be screened during the school holidays. Therefore, films accumulate. Our films are probably five per cent of those waiting to be screened. If the cinemas accept our films at all — there still are Walt Disney films which are much better than ours, and Star Wars is a better film than all our films put together — we are lucky if we can get one or two screenings a day. This is not enough to create a new market and finance another film.

What is the difference between the distribution of your films in the U.S. and in Australia?

America has 250 million people and Australia has 15 million. Furthermore, the market in America is the major one overseas because the 250 million people all speak the same language: there is no need for subtitling or dubbing, as there is in Europe.

You have now made more feature films than Walt Disney. He made only about five, as far as the classics are concerned, and in 1983 you completed your sixth, "The Camel Boy". Do you see yourself as a latter day Disney?

I see myself as Yoram Gross. It is as good a name as Walt Disney — a little bit German, but what can you do?

I don't want to be compared with Walt Disney or my films with his. First, it wouldn't be fair because Disney had such big
budgets and, therefore, made better films. Second, our films have live-action backgrounds.

But, like you, Disney felt a responsibility towards entertaining and educating children . . .

I feel a responsibility, in whatever I do, to try to be honest. My client is a child; I don't want to lie to him.

We are trying to make films that will teach something, that have a message — and a message in my language is a positive one.

Animated feature films are labor intensive, expensive and take a long time to make. Why did you decide to go into features in 1977?

I was making features in Israel before I came to Australia. I made one with animated puppets, Joseph the Dreamer (1961), a biblical film and official entry to the Cannes Film Festival in 1962. Then, I decided to only make experimental films, which had been my hobby, to build up a good reputation among filmmakers in Europe. When I came to Australia, I really wanted to continue making experimental films, even though I knew I would only earn a small income.

Unfortunately, I was soon forced to make all kinds of commercials, opticals and so on. But I became fed up; I didn't see any reason, apart from financial, for helping sell a product which I didn't use and didn't like. I felt it was time to be a filmmaker who made only what he wanted to make, not what Mr Cigarette or Mr Food wanted me to make.

But why feature-length films?

Because they are the only films which can be shown. Short films have no market today; they can't be shown anywhere except to the family on Saturdays or at Bar Mitzvahs.

So you turned to feature animation for economic reasons . . .

Not just for economic reasons; I want to show the films I made, not keep them at home. I can sell a feature before it is even made, but I can't sell a short.

Also, there is nothing wrong with features: they give more pleasure.

Animators differ on that point. Some say that in 10 minutes you can have greater control over your creativity and perhaps a greater opportunity to experiment in the medium . . .

Did you ever see my short film We Shall Never Die (1958)?

No . . .

Did you see Chansons sans paroles (1958)?

It was never shown here . . .

Music has been in me since I was a six year-old; it came first in my life. But images were always in my mind, as with everyone who listens to music. Although I can show people what I see in a film, I am restricted when I am making commercial films. But I can express more in films than with just music. So, it is a step forward.

Ralph Stevenson, in Animation in the Cinema, says, "The animated film may be one of the most powerful means of expression at the artist's disposal. The animator can say more than the pure painter or sculptor and, at the same time, can intensify his meaning, with richer resources of movement and color than the writer or speaker" . . .


As far as I understand they are beautiful words, but I don't want to compare forms of art because it is only my impression. Chopin was able to say with music things I am not able to say using music and film. But I am against comparing what is richer and what is not richer. Walt Disney's films are beautiful and brilliant — magnificent, I would say. They are drawn and painted but one cannot compare them with a Rembrandt who was painting only still life, with no music and no movement.

Disney spared no expense in achieving his kind of magical realism; he pushed his animators and himself to the limit. You use the more conventional and simplistic style of animation. Is that because there is not the kind of money now in animation that the Disney studio commanded?

Absolutely. Today, the average budget for one of our animated features is $1 million, whereas a feature for less than $6 million does not exist in the U.S.

I had the great pleasure of meeting two Disney animators in Zagreb, Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, who are also the authors of Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life. They used to produce 10 to 15 feet of animated film a week,

Two animators — Yoram Gross

and earned enough money to support their family and themselves.

Isn’t that what an animator in Australia can expect: to be paid enough to support his family and himself?

Yes, but if an animator in Australia were to produce 10 to 15 feet a week he would die from hunger. He has to produce 30 or 40 feet a week to make a living.

So the quality suffers . . .

Absolutely. Australian animators are extremely talented people, as talented as those at Walt Disney, but time is important. You can’t experiment too much or you will reduce the animator to living on bread and water.

Disney didn’t make any money; his first feature, Snow White (1937), was a flop and I believe Fantasia (1940) was a flop. Today Fantasia is bringing in money slowly, but Universal could have put the money into the bank and earned interest.

Disney took an enormous gamble with his films, especially with “Snow White” . . .

Not a successful gamble, because he lost.

Financially he may have lost, but artistically he gave the world something unforgettable and made a milestone in the history of animation . . .

How many times could he lose money? How many times will the investors give you money to lose their money? Investors do not really care about art; they want to earn money on their investment. They don’t want to lose their money just because Mr Gross wants to make art.

So what made you turn to animation?

I was doing a lot of animation in experimental films. I noticed that I could express myself better and that I had more control of the characters than I did in live-action films. I was controlling them frame by frame and that meant that I was controlling 24 movements per second. You cannot do this with actors. With the live-action and animated features I make today, I have to take into consideration people, whether they be the actors, or the animators: they are artists with something to say as well.

What kind of control do you exercise over the films you make now?

I think of myself as a conductor in an orchestra and the musicians as human beings who are artists as well as people who know how to play an instrument. You have seen Vladimir Ashkenazy conduct an orchestra. The musicians are not only humans holding instruments between their legs . . . it sounds very erotic.

Music is erotic . . .

Everything is erotic.

Your films are not very erotic . . .

Aren’t they? You didn’t see Chansons sans paroles.

Does the strength of the conductor lie in his team?

Yes, but if the conductor has a budget for only two musicians it would be very hard for him to play a Beethoven symphony.

The use of the live-action background against an animated foreground, or with animated characters, is your trademark now.

Why have you combined the two forms?

Once, as a young person, I was told: if you have something to say, say it in the form of a feeling — music or whatever — but if you have nothing to say don’t say it. Likewise, if you are doing something, you have to have a reason. To make a film I have to ask myself: why am I doing an animated film?; should it really be animated? Maybe we should use live-action; maybe we shouldn’t make it at all.

I believed that Dot and the Kangaroo (1977) should not be produced as a live-action film because all the animals are talking. Therefore, it had to be animated. Also, the Blue Mountains in New South Wales, where we shot the background, are so beautiful that I saw no reason to transfer them to drawing. We could express ourselves using the background as it was.

That was the first reason for using a combination of live-action backgrounds and animated characters. I am still happy with this combination: economically it works, which means the market accepts and likes it.

The second reason is that this has now become our style. My agents would be disappointed if we came to them with a film that was not on a live-action background. It does not mean that I think live action is better than drawn action, but there is nothing to compare to this form.

You don’t think the two realities, the live action which exists in its own world of realism and the very stylized, simple forms of the cartoon characters, are in conflict stylistically?

The conflict does not disturb me; if there is a conflict it is good. Art without conflict is bad, because it means people have
nothing to say. Every form of life has conflict.

The First Feature

Where did the story of “Dot and the Kangaroo” originate and why did it particularly interest you?

It is based on a classic book by Edith Pedley. After looking at 50 books, I thought it was the best to animate.

How did you raise the money?

From 1968 until 1977, I had been doing commercials and documentaries. After nine years we had enough money to start our first feature and to stop making commercials, which as I said was not really our cup of tea.

I am in the lucky position that I can do a lot of things in film production myself. If I am ready to work hard, I can start and finish a film with minimal outside help.

If you watch the credits of Dot and the Kangaroo, you realize we didn’t have 40 people to work on it, as we have now, and that it had a very small budget.

I wanted to write the music myself but have Bob Young compose the songs. But Bob convinced me it would be better if he did all the music. I’m a soft person and agreed.

Then we asked a few animators to help us. I did the main editing; only at the last moment I asked in a better editor than me and it was finished by him.

What was the final budget for “Dot and the Kangaroo”?

Including promotion costs, about $200,000. We did not have the $200,000 but we did have a friendly bank manager who believed in what we were doing. He made the film his personal risk and gave us an unusual overdraft so that we could finish it.

The budget of $200,000 was just the money spent because I did not charge for my work in the film as an editor — I was editing for 10 months — director and producer. Even the animators weren’t paid very well; they loved the story and wanted to do a feature.

 hoyts finally accepted the film but it was a very hard job to convince them. They screened it once a day at nine o’clock in the morning and, as you can imagine, not a lot of children came at that time. Star Wars (1977) was our competition that year and it was screened all day. Of course, we couldn’t pay the money we owed to the bank — that is, till the AFC bought the film.

Does the AFC own the copyright?

No, we own the copyright. We are also co-owners of the film with the AFC on a 25/75 basis. I am quite happy about that because at least the bank manager didn’t have to go to gaol.

Today Dot and the Kangaroo is being shown non-stop everywhere: in the U.S., in Germany, in Belgium, even in China, on television and in the cinema. It has taken two to three years to earn its money.

The Little Convict

Your next feature, in 1979, was “The Little Convict”, again a combination of animation and live action, but this time also using a live actor . . .

Rolf Harris was the star and for the first time we had private investors — doctors, lawyers and accountants. Luckily, they got their money back. The film was not very successful but the investors were happy, nonetheless.

Do you feel that “The Little Convict” evolved in style and ideas from “Dot and the Kangaroo”?

It is hard to say, but I think so. The Little Convict had more messages than Dot and the Kangaroo which dealt with conservation and the appreciation of nature, while The Little Convict was more a social comment.

Sarah

The next film, in 1980, was “Sarah” . . .

Sarah is still a relatively new film because it has not been screened in Australia. We cannot find a cinema to take it because the film is not Mickey Mouse. Again, it has some social comments about war but the kind of war in Sarah is not really attractive because you don’t see blood or a lot of people being killed. But you do see the tragedy of a little girl.

Sarah was sold to Channel 4 in England and, of course, we sold it to the U.S. I am very proud of this film; I am only sorry that I cannot show it in Australia. But the cinemas want to make money; they don’t want to sell stories that are important to Mr Gross.

Do you feel that they are also important to children?

Absolutely. The story of Sarah is very important because it is a
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Lee Whitmore's *Ned Wethered* is a film about remembering. Using pencil drawings and a "flickering rhythm", Whitmore has animated her memories of a family friend who died when she was about 15. The only surviving mementos were a photograph and the sheet music of three piano pieces written by him.

The resultant film won the 1984 Greater Union Award in the General Section. It is Whitmore's first film as director, her previous film experience being as an art director on Stephen Wallace's *Stir* (1980), John Duigan's *Winter of Our Dreams* (1981) and several short films. A graduate of the Australian Film and Television School (AFTS), Whitmore is also a graphic artist.

The following interview was conducted by Mark Stiles and Glenys Rowe.

**Why did you move from art direction on features to the relatively isolated world of the animator?**

Out of a desire to feel more satisfaction with the work I do. The role of art directors and the kind of conditions under which they work just aren't satisfying or creative; you spend most of your time doing managerial work. Also, I didn't like the power games that are played on features.

**Is it possible that your experience was borne out of the fact that you really wanted to be a director and not an art director?**

It is hard for me to answer that. There is no place in this country where you can learn art direction. Art directors either come out of art schools, or they are frustrated architects or theatre directors . . .

**Is that where you came from?**

I hadn't come out of any particular school. When I walked on to the set for the first time I didn't know what the other people were doing; I just started doing what I thought I should and suddenly began picking up what everyone else was doing, which is what a lot of people do.
The AFTS refuses to accept any responsibility for having a course in art direction. All they offer is a correspondence course and a kind of sandwich study for students already enrolled in an art course at another college. No one takes it seriously. You can specialize in direction, cinematography and so on, but not in art direction. The trouble is that not only do art directors suffer, in that they have to learn everything the hard way, but also the crew suffers because no one knows what the art director is meant to be doing. There is no theoretical basis for what you do. It is all on the job training. If you succeed, it has a lot more to do with your personality than with your creative input to the film.

There is a tendency amongst film crews to think that everybody can art direct: everybody knows what color would suit the room or what clothes the leading lady should be wearing. But that is equally true in all other areas — I might think I know what are the best camera shots — but protocol dictates that I do not interfere. With art direction, however, people have a way of speaking out of turn; no one respects the role of the art director. I know all departments complain of this, but it is especially true for the art departments.

Were there any instances where this interference caused you particular concern?

Working on Winter of Our Dreams was quite a hurtful experience for me, and I came out of it wondering whether, in fact, I were the problem. Everybody else on film crews seemed to be getting on fine, going from one shoot to the next and having a lovely time. I seemed to be the only one causing the ripples. So, I asked myself, “Why am I beginning to doubt myself?” I guess I have gone full circle now and somewhere in-between was probably the truth. I ran away in a sense.

But you ran away to do something positive: you became a director. . .

I was lucky in that I had something to run to.

Was “Ned Wethered” a film you had always wanted to make?

No, I never wanted to do animation. In fact, I never wanted to make a film. It was really by accident, through knowing people. Films were never a great passion of my life.

I guess I saw myself as a fine artist. I have done theatre design, children’s book illustrations and general graphic art work.

So, by what process did you come to the complex and time-consuming work that became “Ned Wethered”?

I don’t know. Perhaps at the back of my mind it occurred to me that animation would combine the two things I knew most about: filmmaking and graphics.

So, one day I sat down and wrote a whole lot of essays about people I knew. I have no idea why I did them. One of these essays stood out, the one about Ned. It was actually the first one which I started to develop as a script and move on to a story board. It seemed to have the most meaning to me as an adult. The others were nice stories, quite pleasant and quite sad. But then writing stories about old people does tend to be sad.

There were a few teary people at the film festival screenings. Essentially, it is not a sad story, so why does it make so many people cry?

The music is a major factor: it kind of tugs at you.

The music is Ned Wethered’s. Was that the only memento you had of him?

There is also the photo in the film and a couple of books he illustrated when he was a young man. But the illustrations are nothing special; they are very much of their time.

What was uppermost in your mind when you were doing the story board? Did you want to do a biography of Ned?

I was not trying consciously to make any points: I was really working off my memory and the processes of remembering. So it was more about than that it was about Ned.

In a funny way, Ned was always incidental: the film could have been about any of those other characters. He became important because he was involved with the visual arts; it made a strong connection with me and with my making the film.

In calling the film “Ned Wethered”, one expects a film about Ned Wethered when really the film might better be described as “Lee Whitmore remembers Ned Wethered”. What do other people think of your remembering?

This man has been totally forgotten. There is nobody, other than my family, my knowledge, who would remember him. His mother died but he left without trace — like most people.

I like the fact that he was so ordinary; yet, I relate to the fact that he was a creative person who had some of the same concerns I recognize in myself.

Were you surprised at what you remembered?

Yes. And it became stronger, too. Three years is a long time to be making a film which, in many ways, is a process of going into yourself. Things I wrote down were one level of remembering, but, when you start to animate, you get into quite subtle things: gestures, the way somebody would walk or hold themselves, for instance.

Were you concerned with other people’s memories or just yours?

I tried to cut off from their memories. I didn’t ask them questions and I didn’t do any research on Ned. What I remembered was important to me because it was about that process. I didn’t try and compare my remembrances with my brother’s or my mother’s, for instance. If I had tried to do that, it would have really been all over the place.

My perspective was what had strength. Funnily, the less I could remember, the stronger it became. There was something about that selection of details, the fact that there were only so few, that gave me a sense there was a meaning to those fragments.

For a seemingly marginal person in your life, Ned has evoked a great deal. Why do you think that is?

Maybe I feel like a marginal person, too. There is a lot of Ned in my father because my father was very much an outsider and had great difficulty with people socially. He lived for his work. He was an artist but he never received the acclaim he deserved, although he was appreciated by his peers and he made a good living. Ned and he used to have great chats.
"Ned Wethered" has a very distinct 'feel' to it. What were the techniques you used?

The animation is paper animation: pencil drawings on paper, shot on 16 mm with eight drawings a second. Because I didn't know anything about cameras and, more important, was not interested in conquering that area, I solved everything in the drawings. There are no camera movements in the film, which is unusual. For example, if there is a zoom, it is done in the drawings, which makes the whole process much lengthier, but also gives the film a consistent quality you would not get if you were to suddenly zoom in on a drawing.

The flickering rhythm is established by the fact that I was literally redrawing each image every three frames. I started to realize that this gave the film atmosphere, that people were actually walking around in it. I liked that. It was not like the flatter, more graphic approach that most animation houses do. Pencil drawings are especially hard to photograph but Jenny Ochs did a wonderful job.

How many drawings did you have to make?

There were about 6000 finished art drawings but to get those there were a whole lot more. I spent a lot of time working out the shots and how to fit them together: for instance, whether it was to be a close-up or a bit wider. I enjoyed that part of it: it was like editing, honing down the story board, fitting it together dramatically and deciding what was the most powerful shot.

Did you need much editing?

No, though I probably used more than most animations. Denise Haslem, the editor, was great. She was always sympathetic and empathetic to the film, and helped me with things such as connecting one shot with another, making the links, using the music and so on. I had no idea if anything was going to work — I had never done any animation before — and I had to see it played back. I edited the whole thing, at that stage, with Denise. I was able to see where I needed an extra shot or more time or where something was too fast. Although this is not an unusual process with animation, I may have used it more than other animators because they would have known more or been more confident. What was unusual was editing at that point, putting the music and soundtrack to it, and almost having a film that worked dramatically. People saw it at that stage and liked it.

Then I went back and started refining it, which was the hardest stage. I worked over all the drawings, developing them, re-animating sections and coloring them. I spent a lot of time working out how to color the film.

What medium did you use?

Colored pencils and a heavy lead pencil. With most animation, there is a soundtrack, usually music, to which you work out the movements and then do all your timing on timing sheets. I didn't do that. I had a voice-over, which I had done myself, and knew roughly how long it was. Then I just sat down and did the drawings. I kept pretty faithfully to the story board but tried to improve it all the time; I just let the movements take their course. By the end, I thought I had a 20-minute film: I didn't know how everything was going to fit — it was really quite risky — but it did. Thankfully, a lot of the movements are really slow, a lot slower than in real life.

Have you learned anything new about Ned since making the film?

I learned recently that just before he died he wanted to leave some money to my Mum — about two thousand pounds. He didn't want the government to get it. But she never did anything about it and the government did get it. What also attracted me to his story was that he seemed to be a man with a lot of promise — like all of us I suppose — but who didn't really succeed. I have a soft spot for losers.
In 1937, on a small dairy farm 500 km north of Sydney, an 11-year-old boy decided to change his name from David Gordon Kirkpatrick and become a country music star. The boy became Slim Dusty.

The setting for The Slim Dusty Movie is the Australian West, today and yesterday. The story is a saga, spanning nearly 50 years, of a man, his guitar, his music and the woman who stands by his side.

The Slim Dusty Movie is directed by Rob Stewart for producer Kent Chadwick, from a screenplay by Chadwick. The director of photography is David Eggby (with additional photography by Dan Burstall), the sound recordist Paul Clarke, the editor Ken Sallows. The film stars Slim Dusty, Joy McKean, Anne Kirkpatrick, Jon Blake, Dean Stitworthy and Sandy Paul.

Left: two young cowboys on the road to stardom, Slim (Dean Stitworthy) and his mate Shorty (Bret Lewis). Below: Slim sings to the troops on a Sydney-bound train during the war years.
Top: Slim and his father (Tom Travers) leave Kempsey, heading for the city in search of a recording contract. Above: on the road today, Slim (Slim Dusty) swaps tall stories with an old bushman (Lew Williams).

Above: the yodelling McKean sisters, Joy and Heather (Sandy Paul and Mary Charleston), introduce Slim on their 1950s' radio show. Below: Slim salutes the crowds from the boardwalk of his "All Star Western Parade".
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Ph: (02) 4396955, Telex AA24482
Fred Harden

The following items are selected from products announced at the June Society of Motion Pictures and Television Engineers (SMPTE) show, and some other recent items.

In the last issue I mentioned the Fairlight CVI (Computer Video Instrument, an awkward mouthful). I didn't have a photograph at the time but have since received a demonstration tape and the following photographs. I still feel that the CVI is a breakthrough machine, with its graphics resolution as the only feature that distinguishes the CVI while it is performing functions found on broadcast equipment 10 times its $5000 price. The resolution is 256 x 256 (280 x 192 pixels is about average for a home computer), but there are 14 bit planes and a possible 4096 colors.

The ability to mix the graphics with a live video source lets one create matte shapes on the small digitizing pad, and then combine that with a reasonably good chroma key. The field store allows mirror, pan, zoom and stretch effects, and the demonstration tape makes heavy use of the trail effects. There is a lack of subtlety in most of the sample tape demonstrations, but the CVI is only what the operator makes of it. There are many artists who could produce stunning material on the CVI, and, as the units get into the market, the software updates will make full use of this innovative machine.

Another video item was the Philips version of the Laservision Professional Video Disc player, VP 855. Designed to be modular with a number of options, the standard player is intended for computer control through a serial computer interface (RS-232-C) or IBM, parallel. The CPU standard 286, 64K with 48K of RAM.

Control of the disc can be from a dump into the RAM from discs that are specially recorded using data on a section of the second audio channel, or by an EPROM cartridge that plugs into the front of the unit. Philips supplies a hardware and program package called ILVAS (Interactive LaserVision Authoring System) to produce software to control the machine. This is not essential, however, as the manual has full details of what codes are required to control the machine through the serial interface, and Philips is proposing a standard code (V-code) that has a number of powerful functions.

In addition, there is a Genlock to sync a number of machines together, a Teletext overlay facility and an infra-red or wired remote control. Details from Philips offices in your state. Prices start at $3000 and go to $5000, according to the modules selected.

A new item from EECO Inc., from Santa Ana, California, announces a significant development in recording audio on video discs. It has been possible in the past to record about two seconds of audio for each freeze frame held on the disc. EECO has an encoder AVC300 that compresses the audio during pre-mastering and an attachment for domestic players, VAC300, which converts the audio to normal on playback. Up to 10 seconds of audio is possible on every 1/30 second (NTSC) frame, giving the average 30-minute disc a capability of 150 hours of audio information play back. The use of sound effects and voice-over, still frames, captions, etc., makes the EECODER system an attractive and simple proposition for audio-visual uses.

Announced but not on display at the SMPTE show was the OTARI MTR10-TC mastering/production 1/2-inch recorder. Similar, in most respects, to the MTR-12 model that is already in several studios, the TC designation on the MTR-10 is for Time Code, and it reads and records SMPTE time code on a centre track. The ability to also read Nagra Stereo and Neopilot tapes means that the machine has been designed for film and television production. Details are available from Kinson Enterprises, Unit 3, 3 Lanceley Place, Artarmon, NSW, 2064.

R.H. Cunningham Pty Ltd displayed the Sennheiser SK 2012 radio mike unit and the Sennheiser EM 1036 receiver. With their proprietary H Dyn noise reduction built there were a number of units sold for television studio use and for ENG production. The EM 1036 receivers are VHF/UHF, have six channels of single-channel operation or three channels of fill diversity, for each rack mount unit.

I saw the SQN-3 microphone mixer for the first time in Sydney. I was interested to see it with its plugbox and connectors to interface with the Nagra SN recorder. These sit on top of the SQN-3 (see photo) and the whole unit is a compact 210 mm x 120 mm, and about 80 mm deep. Maybe it is because I like small things but so must the stations which are using the SQN with their Betacams units for ENG. The SQN-3 Type M has three XLR-3 female connectors with powering, peak metering, a peak limiter and off-tape monitoring with a standard 1/4-inch mono-jack connector.

Contact: R.H. Cunningham, 146 Roden St, West Melbourne, Vic., 3003 and 4/8 Walters Rd, Neutral Bay, NSW, 2069.

Of the many edit controllers that were featured, Graeme Thirkell's EDITRON 200 deserved more than a passing glance. Most of the overseas machines such as the Convergence Corporation Super90 and EGS-200 series machines (distributed by Pacific Communications) appeared overdesigned compared with this Australian product. The Editron 200 has SMPTE/EBU time code editing for two machines (video or audio) for $11,500. It can handle up to five machines in different configurations and comprises a rack-mounted control unit and the keyboard unit displayed above. A unique feature is the 40 x 8 LCD alphanumeric and graphic display, and the system of using any of the machines as master or slave because the host operating system acts as the real master. This prevents the wow and flutter of one machine from affecting another. Either time code, tacho or pilot tone machines can be handled and the system reference can be derived from mains, internal crystal controlled SPG, optional external time code input, or a selected master machine. It can operate 24 or 25 frames simultaneously (as can 29.97 and 30, and drop frames modes for U.S.). Because of the local construction and support, the Editron stands high on my list of editors.

Contact: Editron Australia Pty Ltd, 36 Lever St, Oakleigh, Vic., 3166.

The John Barry Group has announced the first of a range of Arrilites: the Arrilite 800 and 2000. Eight hundred watt and 2 Kw respectively, these are produced by Arnold and Richter, and priced to be competitive with Redheads and Blondes. The
HOW CATCHING A PLANE CAN STRETCH YOUR BUDGET

A trifling two hours from Sydney, a solitary one hour from Melbourne: a first class studio facility; film and video editing suites; multi-track recording studio; preview theatres (16 and 35mm); and a staff of experienced professional camera and sound operators, editors, script writers, directors and production crews.

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1-3 Bowen Road, Moonah, Hobart. 7009
Phone: (002) 30 3534 Telex: AA57148
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Budget $8.6 million
Director John Thompson (Irons), Matthew
Fargher (King), Ralph Cohlet (Grey),
Charles Dance (Cody), Peter Wight
(McDonagh), Don Cheadle (Cody),
Geoffrey Rush (Gaza)
Casting .......................... David Wooley
Based on the original idea by
Patrick White
Synopsis: A child is lost
in a desert to the peaks of treacherous,
snow-covered mountains. The
case is quickly transformed into an
immoral enterprise.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION

Producer ............................................. Jack Thompson
Executive producers ............. John Dorrington,
Geoffrey Rush (Cody), Peter Wight
Producer .................................................. Jack Thompson
Based on the original idea by
Patrick White
Synopsis: A contemporary adventure
story set on the South China Sea.

Synopsis: The story of two men who
struggle to conquer differences in
culture, temperament and values in order
to survive the dangers of their adventures
and achieve their goal.

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**Contemporary Film Review**

**THE COLDAGG GOLD**

**DOT AND KEETO**

**DOT AND THE KOALA**

**EMPTY BEACH**

**THE NAKED COUNTRY**

**POST-PRODUCTION**

**THE COCA-COLA KID**

**COFFLE**
SYNOPSIS: A passionate thriller.

ROBBERY UNDER ARMS

PRODUCTION DESIGN

ARTWORKS

WRONG WORLD

AWAITING RELEASE

FANTASY MAN

PRODUCERS

Superintendent

Warden

Prisoners

INMATES

STAFF

STAFF

PRODUCTION DESIGN

ARTWORKS

WRONG WORLD

AWAITING RELEASE

FANTASY MAN

PRODUCERS

Superintendent

Warden

Prisoners

INMATES

STAFF

STAFF

PRODUCTION DESIGN

ARTWORKS

WRONG WORLD

AWAITING RELEASE

FANTASY MAN

Production

Company

Di Net Films

Producer

Antony I. Cunningham

Director

Diana Nettlefold

Scriptwriter

Diana Nettlefold

Music performed by

John Ertler,

Composer

Diana Nettlefold

Scriptwriter

Diana Nettlefold

Producer

Antony I. Cunningham

Director

Diana Nettlefold

Scriptwriter

Diana Nettlefold

Music performed by

John Ertler,

Composers

John Ertler,

Production

Company

Endeavour Prods

Director

Diana Nettlefold

Scriptwriter

Diana Nettlefold

Music performed by

John Ertler,

Composition

John Ertler,

Production

Company

Endeavour Prods

Director

Diana Nettlefold

Scriptwriter

Diana Nettlefold

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John Ertler,

Composition

John Ertler,

Production

Company

Endeavour Prods

Director

Diana Nettlefold

Scriptwriter

Diana Nettlefold

Music performed by

John Ertler,

Composition

John Ertler,
The Australian Film Commission is pleased to advise that the Federal Government has provided a further $5 million this year for the Special Production Fund.

The Special Production Fund offers investment in non-deductibles, distribution undertakings, production loans and underwriting facilities for Australian film and television projects. In 1983/84 the Special Production Fund provided finance for 16 feature films, seven mini-series, 14 documentaries and four one-off television dramas with a total budget value of $70 million.

Application forms and guidelines for applicants are available from:

Supervising Consultant
Special Production Fund
Australian Film Commission
8 West Street
North Sydney NSW 2060
Tel: (02) 922 6855
Toll free: (008) 22 6615

AUSTRALIAN FILM COMMISSION
DOCUMENTARIES

COLLM CALLING CANBERRA
Prod. company: AIA Film Unit
Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Prod. date: 1974
Director: Philip de Margerie
Co-director: Stephen Pascoe
Producers: Philip de Margerie,
Brian Solomon
Exec. producer: Ray Sinclair
Prod. supervisor: John Scanlon
Prod. manager: Wayne Cowen
Prod. accountant: Neil Manthorpe
Prod. secretary: Niree Creed
Editor: Jeremy Hogarth
Casting: Nadia Tass
Scriptwriter: Peter Cooke
Sound recordist: Julian Scott
Sound mixer: Sean Meltzer
Camera operator: Alan Healey
Prod. assistant: Martin Sharman
Art director: David Parker
Art assistant: Roy McDougal
Cinematographer: Martin Sharman
Art director: David Parker
Costume: Frosi (Marisa), Gino B. Tomisichi (Pino),
Cliff Ellen (Det. Sgt Samuel- Bennett (Eric),
Barry Kay (Thommo), Clayton (Anderson),
Barry Grantham (Bennett), Martin Grenfell (Spank),
Jim Buchanan, Jack Jackson, Martin Sharman,
Gregory Steel, John Scanlon, Anne Edney,
Karen Aldridge, and the wonderful crew.

SYNOPSIS: A junior version of "Paul Hogan"
travels to Europe to promote the land
Australia's economy. The film highlights
of the promotion, including a visit to the
the Groom's Holding Church in The
King's Rocks, Sydney. Episode 1 in the series
The Great Australian Adventure.

WHAT'S THE SCORE?
Prod. company: AMOS
Dist. company: Tasmanian Film Corporation
Prod. date: 1974
Director: Philip de Margerie
Producers: Philip de Margerie,
Brian Solomon
Exec. producer: Ray Sinclair
Prod. manager: Wayne Cowen
Prod. accountant: Neil Manthorpe
Prod. secretary: Niree Creed
Editors: Jeremy Hogarth
Casting: Nadia Tass
Scriptwriter: Peter Cooke
Sound recordist: Julian Scott
Sound mixer: Sean Meltzer
Camera operator: Alan Healey
Prod. assistant: Martin Sharman
Art director: David Parker
Art assistant: Roy McDougal
Cinematographer: Martin Sharman
Art director: David Parker
Costume: Frosi (Marisa), Gino B. Tomisichi (Pino),
Cliff Ellen (Det. Sgt Samuel-Bennett (Eric),
Barry Kay (Thommo), Clayton (Anderson),
Barry Grantham (Bennett), Martin Grenfell (Spank),
Jim Buchanan, Jack Jackson, Martin Sharman,
Gregory Steel, John Scanlon, Anne Edney,
Karen Aldridge, and the wonderful crew.

SYNOPSIS: A junior version of "Paul Hogan"
travels to Europe to promote the land
Australia's economy. The film highlights
of the promotion, including a visit to the
the Groom's Holding Church in The
King's Rocks, Sydney. Episode 1 in the series
The Great Australian Adventure.

GOVERNMENT FILM PRODUCTION

CINEMA PAPERS October — 351
Casting: Michael Lynch (Forcast)  

2nd asst directors: Chris Webb, Margaret Kelly, Trent Jones, spent 10 years in a deplorable condition, giving rise to anxiety, making their own decisions, coming to terms with life, growing up.

FLIGHT INTO HELL

Producer: ABC Film

Synopsis: Television series made for Disney

Producers: Sandra Levy, Howard Glanz, Mark Brown, Joan Edmonds, produced by Finko, the punk lion.

WHO DARES WIN

Synopsis: Television series made for Disney

Producers: Peter M. Voss, Barry M. Morey, Art director: Johnfleet, made in the Australian bush for 53 days.

THE LION KING

Synopsis: Television series made for Disney

Producers: John Mounsey, Alex Green, producing.

Synopsis: Television series made for Disney

Producers: John Mounsey, Alex Green, producing.  

FLIGHT INTO HELL

Synopsis: The events surrounding a pair of children's adventures are set.

Synopsis: Television series made for Disney

Producers: John Mounsey, Alex Green, producing.  

FLIGHT INTO HELL

Synopsis: Television series made for Disney

Producers: John Mounsey, Alex Green, producing.  

FLIGHT INTO HELL

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FLIGHT INTO HELL

Synopsis: Television series made for Disney

Producers: John Mounsey, Alex Green, producing.
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Westrex (London) Amps, Drivers, Speakers, etc.

David Yo
PO Box 832 Monterey Pk, Ca. 91754 USA
Tel: (213) 576 2642
SYNOPSIS: “The Last Bastion” are the words used by John Curtin in his 1942 appeal to the people of Australia. The threat of invasion was imminent. Protestantism rose up to defeat the invaders under the leadership of Robert Morice (Tim Pappas), a devout Catholic. The story is about a young Australian who, in his struggle to achieve freedom for his nation from the fascist regime, is forced to leave his family and friends. His ultimate sacrifice is the key to his country’s survival.

THE LAST BASTION

Producers:
David Sperling (David Burt), Arthur Piddington

Synopsis: A story of adventure and romance on a contemporary Royal Flying Doctor Service.

CITY WEST

Producers:
Fernando Proctor, Mark Chamberlain

Synopsis: A day in the life of a Fly-in Film Services Iris Butler, a Royal Flying Doctor Service. She is flying to a remote community to deliver medical supplies and to perform surgery. Her journey takes her through a rugged landscape, where she faces harsh weather conditions and the challenge of delivering life-saving medical care to those in need.

AWAITING RELEASE

CINEMA PAPERS October — 335

Production Survey

Grip
Roy McCoy

Gaffer
Miles Moulton

Electrician
Bruce Towers

Costume designer
Mary Chapman

Ward assistant
Lucinda McEwan

Production facilities
Mobile Production Facilities

Sound recordists
Steve Torro, John Heron

Set dressers
Steven Torro, Michael Hunter

Sound engineer
Peter Townend

Publicity
Jill MacLachlan

Casting
Finn Kennedy

Production
ABC Television

Synopsis: “A day in the life of a Fly-in Film Services Iris Butler, a Royal Flying Doctor Service. She is flying to a remote community to deliver medical supplies and to perform surgery. Her journey takes her through a rugged landscape, where she faces harsh weather conditions and the challenge of delivering life-saving medical care to those in need.

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which have been nominated in the 1984 awards.

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Strikebound

Dave Watson

Any work of art which sets itself the task of dealing directly with the themes of struggle, growth and, above all, victory runs the risk of succumbing to its own rhetoric. Richard Lowenstein's first feature, Strikebound, accepts that risk and brilliantly eliminates it. Lowenstein is on record as saying that among his pet hates are "films and television programs which romanticize the trade union movement". Apart from the copious technical ways in which such a romanticization can be avoided, the principal tools to which Lowenstein has recourse are understatement and gentle, but irrepressible, humor.

One of the opening titles of the film informs the audience that Wattie is militant in his fight for better working conditions in the Sunbeam Colliery. Wattie's readiness to act in the workers' movement during the Depression inhibited the growth of the Australian Communist Party; Agnes, an ex-Presbyterian, is a member of the Salvation Army. The two worlds are structurally counterpointed from the outset and their eventual fusion — when Agnes dispenses with her Salvation Army uniform and organizes a women's auxiliary group in material support of the striking miners — lifts the film's discourse beyond party politics and into the realms of social consciousness.

As the real Wattie Doig suggests at more than one point in the film, but who are forced by the nature of their job to keep order — in apparent support, therefore, of scabs and management. (Credit for the suggestive articulation of this dilemma must surely go to Tony Hawkins' Police Sergeant.)

To elaborate, however, the aforementioned injustice which any brief résumé of Strikebound must do to the film, and to air some of the difficulties which such a work, by its very nature, presents to the reviewer, one must examine the network of images on which the film is based. For it is these images, and the technical expertise with which they are brought to the screen, which confer on the film an indisputable artistic validity. This is over and above the socio-political validity to which the film can justifiably lay claim and which has, in any case, been long since historically sanctioned.

Lowenstein has chosen to place his representation of events between two excerpts from interviews with the real Agnes and Wattie Doig (still alive, and still socialists, in their eighties). The purpose of this technique is twofold.

First, it lends a documentary veracity to the central, "dramatic" section of Strikebound: introductory titles alone — "This film is based on events which actually happened", etc. — would have been inadequate. Second, the comments which the Doigs make, and which run on as voice-over into the opening sequences of the reconstruction, immediately validate, historically and through the eyes of the two main characters, the events the audience is about to witness. As Lowenstein has said:

I had made up my mind to stick to reality rather than dramatize it too much. I wanted to recreate the truth as Wattie and Agnes saw it.

In addition to the interview-excerpts, Lowenstein offers, again on the fringes of the film's central dramatic section, a set of working-class portraits (in pithy summary does scant justice to a film whose uncompromising humanism far transcends the immediacy of the historical facts it relates. The Doigs are, initially at least, as politically diverse as any couple can be. Wattie is a card-carrying member of the Australian Communist Party; Agnes, an ex-Presbyterian, is a member of the Salvation Army. The two worlds are structurally counterpointed from the outset and their eventual fusion — when Agnes dispenses with her Salvation Army uniform and organizes a women's auxiliary group in material support of the striking miners — lifts the film's discourse beyond party politics and into the realms of social consciousness.

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(Affley) exhorts "dirty blackleg miners" to join the union while they still can, and with solidarity, as in the frequent episodes of community singing in the film. It is worthy of note, too, that these episodes, and their ideological import, are all the stronger for their being not only understated (at the level of artistic expression), but also necessarily a historical-factual level, since they played an active role in keeping up the morale of the mining community during strike action. A salutary parallel with analogous inclusions of popular cultural expression in, for instance, Bernardo Bertolucci's Novecento (1971-76), leaves Lowenstein a clear winner. Bertolucci's film also charts the growth of the socialist movement, albeit in a European context. But it carries with it the stigma of ideological compromise as the pastoral sequences, for all their good intentions, are mythicized and, therefore, prone to a closed and self-defeating rhetoric which Lowenstein, for his part, has skillfully avoided.

In the central section of the film, the conflict in class interests — the two dialectical poles out of which the third term, socialist consciousness, is of necessity spawned — is, for the most part, articulated obliquely, and without intervention of the documentary-type comment that the Doigs provide at beginning and end. Certainly, the more explicit passages, for all their undoubtedly necessary inclusion (given their basis in fact), fall far away from this suggestive canon. For example, Wattie's distribution of leaflets down the pit early on in the film establishes his militancy in no uncertain terms and, indeed, needs no metaphorical extension. The early sequences, however, which trace Agnes' growing awareness of the inhumanity of a system which offers its workers appalling conditions and no established minimum pay, are rich in eloquently silent close-ups and suggestions of tacit solidarity. A striking example would be when Agnes (brilliantly played by Carol Burns), during a bout of Salvation Army hymn-singing, stands on the hand of a fleeing scab — a wonderfully incongruous passage, and a high point in the film's quiet humanity.

The fact that Lowenstein has seen fit to include many such episodes, and to great effect, is testimony to the success of his anti-rhetorical stance. It is this stance, detectable at every moment of the film, which allows the work to succeed where such well-intentioned projects as Waterfront failed. Lowenstein has innovated, and Strikebound represents a new departure in Australian filmmaking.

My First Wife

My First Wife

Brian McFarlane

A marriage founded on emotional negligence and infidelity; an older couple, parents of the wife, the husband's parents, whose marriage has survived an early affair of the mother's; and the relationships between each set of parents and their children: this all sounds like the basis for a realistic film of middle-class bourgeois lives in crisis.

However, My First Wife is directed by Paul Cox who, after Lonely Hearts (1982) and Man of Flowers (1983), has clearly moved away from the more or less naturalist treatment that, say, a Douglas Sirk might have brought to such material; or from his own more straightforward approach in Kostas (1979). This is not to say that he is stylistically adrift from his subject but that he is willing to be adventurous in attacking it. "European, ornate and empty," is how someone unkindly described Cox's latest film. This is unkind in the sense that, in the characteristically literal-minded realism of so much Australian cinema, Cox is prepared to be ambitious, to risk charges of floridness and pretension (and sometimes to deserve them), and to make use of screen space in quite daring ways. "In the end the family is important," says John's dying father (Robin Lovejoy); "in the end the family is everything," and the film moves towards an unequivocal affirmation of this belief. In the last scene, as the mourners move away from the grave-side, John (John Hargreaves) and Helen (Wendy Hughes) are together, not with any certainty of reconciliation perhaps, but taking tentative steps towards it. It has cost a death and John's failed suicide attempt to achieve even these, curiously connected with John's remark about how a hanged man executes: "They force the sperm of life out of him." If there is something portentously symbolic about this, there is also the suggestion of a film with ideas, of a film that wants to move beyond careful representation of bourgeois lives in crisis.

The film's structure depends on the parallels and contrasts between the couples concerned, the relationship between each partner and the other, and that between each set of parents with its offspring. In spite of the excellent performances from Hughes and, especially, Hargreaves, in the central roles, the presentation of their marriage is the least convincing. It is never wholly clear why and how their marriage has reached the breaking point which is the linch-pin for the film's narrative. One is forced to accept this as a cardinal function in the drama, setting in train what follows, and drawing in the responses of John's parents and Helen's parents, without ever being given a clear sense of how the marriage has gone wrong.

The first post-credits shot shows a
couple making love in a darkened bedroom, intercut with what proves to be a chorale image of trees rushing past as if viewed from a speeding train, then cutting to a man with car-phones in a radio station, announcing Glück’s “Orpheus and Eurydice” as the next record. There is a good deal of cross-cutting between the studio and the exterior with the train speeding by, with the suggestion of parallel lives—headlessness? connections?), until the man, John, returns home to find his wife asleep (or is she?). This is all done with economy and a certain enigmatic beauty, but the actual scene in which Helen confronts John with the fact that he wants to kill him fails to maintain the tensions so far built up. Cox knows when to keep his camera still and concentrates on the faces here in a long two-shot, then when it is let down by himself and Bob Ellis as screenwriters. The dialogue in this crucial scene is insistently banal (“I’ve never make love any more”, “‘For God’s sake say what you’re feeling for once’”). The preceding scene has shown Helen (played by Daniela Silverio) and her son (David Cameron) but nothing prepares the audience for the confrontation, and the inadequacy of the dialogue suggests that the break is a result of the actors’ inability to imagine the depth of feeling beyond the undercurrents of the film. The scene then cuts to a close-up of the cello with the speaker at the funeral where John speaks the farewell words, “The face is almost over.” These words may perhaps be read as applying to the state of his marriage which, one tentatively assumes, is to be given another try. The film is, in fact, less schematic than it has been made to sound here, the structure fleshes out with a firmly detailed sense of families and relationships and places. As well, a prose account of the film’s structures also fails to do justice to the visual style which transforms the film and gives it a richer, more allusive texture: flashbacks, montages recalling John and Helen’s wedding; symbolic intercuts of rushing trains and trees acting as a kind of emotional punctuation of the present realities; and an ambitious attempt to render the downward spiral of John’s blurred thoughts and emotions during his suicide attempt. These will no doubt attract the criticism of “arty,” that favorite Australian term of abuse.

My First Wife does indeed have a more “European” feel to it than most Australian films (not surprising perhaps since Cox is Dutch) and it is more “ornate” visually than Australian films characteristically are. That is, Cox is a highly self-conscious filmmaker and highly conscious of what film can do that other narrative modes cannot. His methods foreground the artificiality of film as a system rather than seek to suppress this fact in the classic Hollywood narrative style. In this respect, he is nearer in spirit to the Peter Weir of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* or the *Last Wave* than to any other of the major Australian filmmakers of the past decade. Cox is interested in the erotic and in its power to disturb orderly surfaces, and the visual style of *My First Wife* — and its opposition of a musical high culture to uncivilized passions — points to an impressively cinematic talent at work. The risks of the occasional dip into banality are worth taking for the rewards, which are of a kind not common in the Australian cinema.

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Identification of a Woman

Dave Watson

John Fowles has said that the only real subject to which modern fiction should address itself is the difficulty of writing modern fiction. Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Identificazione di una donna* (Identification of a Woman, 1982) offers a cinematic elaboration of the same problem. The film represents an extended reflection on the medium used — in short, a meta-film. But it is not simply a film about making films as was, for instance, François Truffaut’s *La nuit américaine* (Day for Night, 1973). Rather, it is a film about the difficulty of making a film, about the arduousness of conception.

If one bears in mind that there can be few countries (France would be another prominent example) in which the literary and cinematic traditions run parallel and, indeed, actively overlap as much as they do in Italy, then a consideration of Antonioni’s film in a specifically Italian context is not only salutary but necessary — and this in spite of the manifestly universal repercussions of the film’s statement. Such literary-cinematic parallels can be readily found, for instance, in the diversified work of Pier Paolo Pasolini, whose socio-political commitment is articulated not only through his films but also, and some would say to a greater extent, through his novels, poetry and essays. It is no accident that, in Italy, Pasolini is best known and remembered for these latter activities, rather than for the films for which he is appreciated abroad. The neo-realism of Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica, too, promul-
Identification of a Woman

1. The story is one of a collection entitled Gli amori difficili, Elmaudi, Torino, 1970 (Difficult Loves, translated by William Weaver, Secker and Warburg, London, 1984). The tales collectively represent nothing less than a polytypic of the very sort of social and temporal alienation that Antonioni has been at pains to express and exercise in such films as Deserto rosso (The Red Desert, 1964), and the trilogy (L'avventura, 1960, La notte, 1961, and L'eclisse, 1962). The philosophical implications of its cinematic treatment are, in Antonioni's case, at least, rather different. Nicoletta Farra (Tomas Millan) is a film director caught in a crisis between two films and with only the certainty that he needs a particular female face for his next film to sustain his search for a new story. One of the cruxes of Calvino's pithy tale is that Antonioni wants/needs to photograph all possible variants of Bice, as a substitute for the Ur-photo which would include all other possible images. In like manner, Antonioni's Nicoletta frequently works prior to his artistic altar: a notice-board filled with press cuttings and photographs, each of which is a variation on the same physiognomic theme. Having tracked down, and remarkably quickly, the face that his film requires, and enjoyed the sexual favors of the body to which it is attached, Nicoletta quietly proceeds to walk in the nearest thing to love he has experienced; and the film is shaped in favor of his new-found sexual and spiritual equilibrium, which leaves the reader with an equally complete novels, and, in so doing, collectively represent a systematic con-


3. For the theme of chance-coincidence in Antonioni, one has only to look at far as Profession: Reporter (The Passenger, 1975): identical (or near-identical) men are thrown together in an African desert; the same woman humps into the protagonist in two different European towns; buses arrive in the middle of nowhere, out of nowhere, but at the convenient moment; and so on.

4. Compare the disappearing and re-appearing Girl (Maria Schneider) in The Passenger.

5. The paternity theme, in its menacing aspect, is picked up neatly (and with a subtly displaced Oedipality) in the figure of Mavi's father, who, it transpires, is more likely to be the very one who, through the film, threatens to confront Mavi with physical violence if he does not stop seeing Mavi. As for the physical differences between Ida and Mavi, Antonioni has said:

"During his search [for a female image around which to construct his next film Niccolò] has relationships with two very different kinds of young women. This creates confusion in his mind, because it is very easy to transfer one's reality into imagination. Here there is, let us say, conflict between himself and his life. This is the base of the film."

(From an interview with Judith Slaton, published in Screen International: Monthly Film Bulletin, March 1983, p. 61.)

Identification of a Woman

Identification of a Woman

Identification of a Woman

Nicoletta (Tomas Millan) and Mavi, wallowing "in the nearest thing to love he has experienced". Identification of a Woman.

which she and Niccolò lose each other, after a bitter argument, in thick fog — Niccolò is thrown once again into a crisis which he is rendered doubly irrevocable by his having lost not only the "face" he needs for his film, but also the woman who had, in the meantime, brought him into relationship he had left behind, his absence.

Then, not sated even by this process, it drives him to record on film, and with another pose, leaves Antonino to his equilibrium. When Mavi (Daniela Silverio) abruptly disappears — and...
Nicaragua no pasaran

Marcus Breen

The opening scenes of *Nicaragua no pasaran* depict the funeral service and march for 17 Nicaraguans killed by CIA-backed counter-revolutionaries. The dead are described as “17 representatives of dignity and love”. It is both dignity and love that are the foundation for the Nicaraguan revolution and David Bradbury’s film.

Bradbury’s previous two films, *Frontline* (1979) and *Public Enemy Number One* (1980), were documentary studies of individual Australians who had contributed significantly to changing the consciousness of the world by reporting war news honestly and radically. The “heroes” of these films were Neil Davis and Wilfred Burchett. In *Nicaragua no pasaran*, Bradbury turns the camera from individuals who have been models for Bradbury himself to an event that is remarkably similar to the events about which Davis and Burchett reported.

*Nicaragua no pasaran* is a film that is capable of seeing politics and film criticism. This develops as the camera moves along the window — a reflection, perhaps, that Borge is just one of many of the active revolutionaries in Nicaragua. The rhythm of the film is relaxed and moves systematically with the reassuring narration, never losing sight of the rational mode which must be used to counteract Reagan’s accusations.

Finally, the film stands as a testament to a form of internationalism that is rare, but which began with the Vietnam War and which continues with the defence of the Nicaraguan revolution. Bradbury is, perhaps, one of the few Australian filmmakers who is capable of seeing politics and filmmaking as essentially nationless because they involve and affect almost

---

everyone. This concern should be
encouraged as Australians move on to
the stage where the struggles for
dignity must be supported. For, as
Bradbury has shown us in this film,
they are struggles borne out of love.

Nicaragua no pasaran


Silver City

Helen Greenwood

Silver City is Sophia Turkiewicz’s first feature and is an accomplished piece of filmmaking. In it, Turkiewicz takes up the themes she first explored in her excellent short film, Letters from Poland (1977). Both feature and short focus on a woman who, because of circumstances beyond her control, has been dislocated from her normal life and forced to rebuild another. In both films, the women, unfortunately, attempt to base their new life on a doomed relationship with a man.

Here, the similarities between the two films end. Whereas in Letters from Poland the audience is left to assume that Dana (Basia Bonkowski) has the strength and courage to pick up the shattered remains of her hopes and continue to make a life for herself, in Silver City one is shown that this is the outcome. Whereas Letters from Poland is shot in an unforgiving and gritty fashion, closely weaving in the day-to-day problems of a non-English speaking, female migrant on her own with the tragic climax of being married to a man who has discovered that his first wife, presumed dead, is still living. Silver City is gently lit and lushly photographed to give a romantic setting to a story that acknowledges the problems of migrant life but chooses to keep them at a distance and concentrate on the relationship between the two main characters. Silver City uses the period more as a context in which to situate the story and as a dramatic device to propel it than as a theme in its own right.

This is why Silver City disappoints. So much of what is good about the film lies outside the love story but is never developed. Further, what distinguishes one love story from another is the characters or the context in which they are placed. By not permitting the social and historical background to play a major part in establishing the characters or in the narrative, Silver City moves from tragedy to melodrama; it does not, however, manage to create a strong character involvement.

The relationship between Nina (Gosia Dobrowolska) and Julian (Ivar Kants) is one of the main problems. It is difficult to see and, therefore, understand the attraction between Julian and Nina. There is an attempt to present Nina as different to the rest of the migrants — she is certainly pretty, she speaks some English, has a great deal of verve, and aspires to better things in her life — but she does not appear to be Julian’s intellectual equal any more than is his wife, Anna (Anna Jemison). Nor does she appear to be any more optimistic, supportive or stronger than Anna. There is an indication that all is not well between Anna and Julian — “it has never been the same” — and that Anna has aged due to her experience during the war. But these are minor in face of the strength of the duty and obligation Julian feels to his family. What then is the element that convinces Julian to forsake that which he has come to a new country for: his family?

Although Dobrowolska and Kants make a nice looking couple on the screen, there is no sense of great physical passion burning to be consummated, and it is halfway through the film before they make love. One longs for some indications of incredible mental attainment or even some passionate fumbling between the two lovers. But in keeping with the gentle tenor of the film, their relationship is presented in a wholesome, wholesome fashion. There are a few scenes in which remorse and recrimination, surely a normal part of relationships such as these, are needed to surface. But these are towards the end of the film and lost in the rush of the film to conclusion.

The two climactic sequences in the film — Nina’s breakdown in the country town and her learning that Anna is bearing Julian’s child — are arrived at awkwardly. In the early climax, Nina is sexually harassed by some locals and ignored by her fellow workers. However, these incidents in themselves are not sufficient to explain her inability to cope, nor is it clear that her separation from Julian is the cause of her mental state.

This is not to say that the attempted rape scene is not effective. It is a welcome change of pace and mood, and touches on some of the darker side of being a migrant in Australia. And, it is an example of how the sequence between the Pole dealing with a customs official, and the fight between Julian, Viktor (Steve Bisley) and the suspected Nazi, of emotionally intense scenes which are outside the main storyline. They introduce interesting characters and subjects which are more gripping, yet never exploited.

In the second climax, the sequence of events is once again unconvincing and obvious to the viewer. It is also marred by jumping quickly from event to event without reason and with no emotional effect on the audience. Julian, when confronted by his mother-in-law and the priest with Anna’s illness, seems to do nothing about it and he neither offers an explanation to Nina nor does she demand one. He then gets on the wrong bus, misses his law exam and disappears for the night. When Nina does find him, he announces that Anna is pregnant with his child and that he must return to his family. Why Julian has continued to sleep with his wife during his time with Nina; why Nina with her suspicions about Julian and Anna’s behaviour already aroused does not question or guess at what the ‘illness’ means; and why she lets Julian get on what she suspects is the wrong bus all create a loose set of events. It seems that the denouement, the resolution of the relationship, has been artificially imposed on the narrative and, before the audience realizes what has happened (assuming that it, like Nina, has not already guessed), it is back in the present on the train with the two, now ex, lovers.

Apart from failing to integrate and develop the powerful theme of people torn from their culture and their country, and apart from the narrative problems towards the end, Silver City has some wonderful moments. As well as the individual scenes mentioned above, the opening scene behind the train, also an establishing scene but
Cammina, cammina

Rod Bishop

History is always ambivalent; thus, the more time goes by, the more experience and understanding humanity acquires; and the more, therefore, one should re-read history in order to discover the ever new aspects of events that have been enshrined in officially approved ‘standard versions’...

This questioning doubt, transposed to the Christian religion, permeates Ermanno Olmi's Cammina, cammina (Keep Walking, Keep Walking), a film in which Olmi has written, directed, produced, edited, photographed, set designed and costume designed. Like his previous work, L'albero degli zoccoli (The Tree of Wooden Clogs, 1978), Olmi has once again cast his film entirely from non-professionals, this time using villagers from Volterra in Tuscany where "the faces of the people reminded me of the Etruscans, an ancient Italian race".

In this Tuscan village during the Middle Ages, a group of peasants prepare a pageant play based on the three wise men and the pilgrims who followed them into Bethlehem. A spruiker's voice warns that the play will be a mixture of "fact, fiction and the imagination".

That same night, a celestial comet appears above their village, streaming across "the heavenly vault" — surely a sign from God as prophesied in the Scriptures, announcing the arrival of his Son on Earth. In the village, the local wise man, Mel, a flock of simple peasants, a centurion and a royal coach laden with gifts all gather to begin a pilgrimage in search of the Messiah.

Joined by two tribes from the orient, each led by a wise man, their epic journey brings them to Herod's castle, where their quest is greeted with great suspicion. But they then trudge on to a local wise man, Mel, a flock of simple peasants, a centurion and a royal coach laden with gifts all gather to begin a pilgrimage in search of the Messiah.

Autocratic and authoritarian, Mel's religious faith is not beyond the pragmatic arrogance of his intellect. As the pilgrims stand in the 'manger', one of the band asks Mel whether this child of a 'squatter' couple can really be the Messiah: "We must act as if he were", replies Mel: "we have no choice but to believe in this certainty."

Despite their doubts and the obvious ambiguities of the situation, the three wise men, at the pinnacle of their charismatic power over the pilgrims, infuse this discovery of the Child with mystical significance, the fecundity of their faith causing them to literally lay the foundations of the future Church on rocky ground.

Mel's personal intellectual degeneracy rises again when, fearing for his own life at the hands of Herod's
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troops, he pretends to have experienced a 'visitaton' from a heavenly messenger, claiming God has advised them to return to their own lands. On this journey home, Mel steals the gold coins entrusted to him as gifts for the Saviour, quickly stamping on any dissent and tying up a devout pilgrim who has uncovered the theft of the coins: "But with this money we shall build temples to celebrate the coming of God!", pleads the distraught Mel. "You serve God with words, with ceremonies . . .", accuses the pilgrim; "you should have let yourself be killed defending the Saviour. We trusted you with hope. From now on, you will only celebrate the death of hope in your temples."

Olmi carefully dissects the abilities of the intellectual to capitalize on the ignorance and blind faith of others. By promising salvation and purpose, the intellectual is capable of convincing others to serve more noble causes. The death of Christ, the most noble of causes, provides the promise of salvation and proof for the celebration of the Christian religion.

When the devout pilgrim talks to Mel of the death of hope, he foretells a 'visitation' from a heavenly messenger. There remains no proof, no accountability, merely the ego-driven desire of the wise men to have themselves enshrined within the 'divine plan'.

Beyond this lie only the intangibles: intuition, belief, wish fulfilment. "What would be the use of faith", muses one pilgrim as the band trudges on to Bethlehem. "If we could all understand God's design?"

Olmi's narrative subversion of the nativity story is perfectly rendered through the bumbling banality of these treacherous wise men. For their part, the pilgrims are merely confused peasants. Promised some redemption from the hardship and poverty of their lives, they would follow anyone who sounded impressive and could give a half-way decent explanation of the comet that appeared above their village.

The possessors of knowledge (the wise men) have led the pilgrims (the ignorant) into Herod's castle (the temporal, military power). Initially disappointed at not finding the Saviour within its walls, several pilgrims, spurred on by warnings from the local revolutionaries, invent a new sighting of the comet, which they claim disappeared behind the distant hills. Thus, the pilgrims stumble on to the next castle ("If there's a castle, there must be a King"), and literally claim the first new-born child they find to be the Son of God.

This scene, with its echoes of the 'discovery' of the Indian saint Krishnamurti, is Olmi's superbly simplistic vision of the inherent desperation of all religions to make the 'facts' fit the dogmas. The Bible and the prophecies of the pre-evangelical priests have simply been reworked by Olmi to critique the mystified and fabricated religious legends that nearly half of humanity has used as the basis of its Christian faith.

Thus proffered, essential 'truths' of religious legend are the issues in Cammina, cammina and, by scorning the wise men's trek to Bethlehem, Olmi merely chooses one of the New Testament's well-known stories to present his view of the origins of all religious faith.

The evangelist Matthew left The Bible with its 'authorized' account of the nativity story. Yet, this legend, like so many from both the Old and New Testaments, has been recorded by religious communities all over the East and different versions of the Magi's story have been passed down through history. When the versions are compared, it is clear the texts of the scriptures have, over the centuries, been distorted to suit the exigencies of the day. Olmi's is a personal reworking of the event, governed, of course, by his own intellect but highlighting a story already tampered with, and enriched by, popular imagination.

The child Rupo, who accompanies the pilgrims and acts as Mel's assistant, comes to represent not the New Testament, but the capacity of humanity to wonder: to have the courage to come out into the open and see the world with the innocence of a child. In fact, Rupo attacks Mel long before any of the other pilgrims. He cannot understand the necessity for a blood sacrifice, or the meaningless ritual in which Mel instructs him to enact. Rupo represents hope, but not the dead hope of a ritualized salvation. In the end, he defiantly confronts the mystification of the Magi and becomes possessed of wonder, intent on understanding his own life and the meaning of the 'faith' behind the religiosity he has been handed by others.

It has often been claimed that very little happens in an Olmi film. Perhaps, like the three wise men, it should be suggested to such detractors that they look a little more carefully. All of Olmi's sublime filmmaking talents are evident in Cammina, cammina. Stylistically, it is a seamless work: languid, elegiac, mesmeric; its sensual beauties reflected in the autumn and amber browns of the Tuscan countryside, its narrative structure toughened by the director's penetrating screenplay.

Originally completed at four and a half hours for Italian Rai Television, the first version for the cinema, shown at the 1983 Cannes Film Festival, was two hours and 40 minutes in length. A further cut has brought the running time back to two hours and 20 minutes and, although it appears to have suffered less than Ingmar Bergman's Fanny and Alexander, it is transposition from the small to the large screen, it is regrettable this second edit for the cinema has lost two important sequences.1

1. Both are collective discussions. The first is between the local Volterra King and the pilgrims, and underlines the intellectual power held by Mel over the wealth and sovereignty of his monarch. The second is between the pilgrims and Herod, and provides at least part of the motivation for Mel's betrayal (his lies about 'visits' from heavenly messengers). But it also expands on the pragmatism of Herod's position, giving greater relevance to wise man Pedro's comment: "When people are dissatisfied, the smallest religious event can be dangerous."
Audiences outside Italy can only evaluate the motion picture of the film available at the time and, if in the 1980s one is helpless to stop the drain of the 'art house' directors to television, where their films are qualified and diminished by unavoidable shortened theatrical releases, then *Cammina, cammina*, an astonishing 50 per cent of its original running length, must still be seen for the major and significant work of cinema that it is.

If nothing else, Olmi, clearly one of the more important directors working today, always guarantees his audience a cinematic experience. Everything Richard Roud claims for the boy (Vinnie, the priest, Antonio Cucciare (Rupo, the boy), villagers from Volterra, Tuscany. Production Company: RAI RadioTelevision. Distributor: Sharmill Films. 35 mm. 140 mins. Italy. 1983.

**Street Hero**

**Dave Sargent**

Music videos are continuing to proliferate and amaze with dazzling displays and sound. They are also beginning to produce many effects within feature-length filmmaking, particularly those films aimed at a "young market". These effects are aesthetic, as well as economic. They also appear to be circumscribed by the grossly distortive "entertainment discourse" of "give the kids what they want!" flashy visuals, "identifiable" stories, 'spunky' stars and a soaring music soundtrack heard to death.

One film that bears many imprints of the music clip — and not surprisingly since it is presented by pop music (and tennis) entrepreneur Paul Dainty — is *Street Hero*. The film is produced by Julie Monson, directed by Michael Pattinson, photographed by Vince Monson and written by Jan Sardi, who all contributed to the much-acclaimed *Moving Out*.

Unfortunately, this reviewer has never seen that film. So, no comparisons can be made. However, from the "word" that circulated about *Moving Out*, especially in relation to its "realism"; *Street Hero* seems to be a quite a departure. This is apparent in the film's narrative structure and elaboration of story, hyper-realistic set design and lighting, performances, imagery and, of course, musical score.

As has been suggested already, this has much to do with the stylistic influences of music clips. But it is also related to Hollywood influences: a steady stream of films which, since the end of the 1970s, has (re)introduced the myth of the hero played out against the back-drop of seedy and seamy city streets. These films are part of a longer Hollywood tradition (*The Wild One, Rebel Without A Cause, Blackboard Jungle*, etc.) which began to emerge in the 1950s when the U.S. began to take sociological and psychology into its (social) body and (unconscious) soul. *Street Hero* is very much in this genre with its story centred on "the angry young man".

Vinnie (Vince Colosimo) is an alienated 17 year-old who inhabits Melbourne's high-rise flats and the streets upon which they cast their gloomy shadows. When Vinnie first struts into the film with a cool, masculine confidence that makes all eyes turn to him, he seems on top of his world. But it soon becomes clear that his macho, princely pose is a facade. Not even his shimmering red-leather jacket can cover the fact that like all angst-ridden, adolescent males he is just a boy wanting desperately to become a man. But the big question is: what sort of man to become?

In this film, Vinnie's race, class and gender position allows him two options. He can yield to manly, though questionable aspirations, such as boxing and underworld crime, to become a carbon copy of his deceased though greatly remembered father. Or he can pay heed to the women in his life — his devoted mama (Peta Toppano), his cute and street-wise girl friend, Gloria (Sigrid Thornton), and his committed and caring music teacher (Sandy Gore) — all of whom want (and are prepared to make "great sacrifices" for) film to have a "better life" as a drummer. As one would expect in such a male-centred story, "Only Vinnie can make the final choice".

Such is the skeletal structure of *Street Hero*, shredded of its muscle. But while the narrative is being pumped up by shifting between present and past, moved along in a pacey manner and heavily encoded by signs of the times, the reasons for Vinnie's youthful confusion are provided by two rather cliché-ridden, and now very institutionalized, explanations.

First, there are the social relations and forces with which Vinnie must come to terms. These include the spaces which he inhabits, and his peers and older "role models": mother and misogynist boy friend, underworld characters, corrupt police and bumbling teachers.

Then, there are psychological relations and situations which Vinnie must confront. These include a repressed early trauma and resolution of his Oedipus complex, which involves another form of repression: mother-incest.

It is not that these explanations are not worthy of consideration in the filmic text. Far too often films ignore that "individuals" are caught up in psychological and social relations. But it is how *Street Hero* deals with this which makes for some very excruciating and embarrassing moments. There are some very stereotypical performances which perform a quick-speak function, but are obtrusive to the point of ridiculousness. And, the Oedipal strand, which yields to traditionally mawkish melodramatic technique rather than a more inventive style, comes to such an excessive, explosive point of resolution that it virtually rips the film apart. From that moment, the rest of the film resembles a post-script. Whereas in Hollywood melodramas of the 1950s these ruptures and cinematic excesses were often purposely created for subversive reasons, in *Street Hero*
there is little evidence to suggest that the intent is as consciously sophisticated as Street Hero attempts to layer the film with additional meaning in two ways: setting and music. A valiant effort is made to use these creatively but, ultimately, they are not.

Extraordinarily imaginative sets by Brian Thomson, whose work in Starstruck gave the film a charming vibrancy, once again pay homage to ‘Aussie’ icons. But, in Street Hero, Thomson’s obsession with cultural identity based on the 1970s, has perhaps become overbearing. It disrupts the film in a non-productive way, often making individual walls of the sets far more fascinating than the picture itself. Less paint and more restraint might have been more effective visually.

The music in Street Hero also suffers from overkill, and is generally disappointing because of its brassy, anthemic sameness. The majority of it is over-produced, over-written and over-performed by some very well-known names who are probably more appealing to those whose pop-music tastes were shaped by these artists in the late 1960s and ’70s than in the 1980s. These include, amongst others, Ross Wilson, Garth Porter, Daryl Braithwaite, Rick Springfield, Renee Geyer, Leo Sayer and Ricky Fataar.

Bald titles such as ‘New Hero’, ‘Death Before Dishonour’, ‘Something to Believe In’ and ‘Haunted Me’, point to the fact that the music is used in a banal way to complement the film action rather than set up any contradictory tensions. Several segments of the film in which a song occurs resemble little films within a film. These might make for a great few moments on Countdown, but become boring when they are used repetitively in feature.

The hyper-realism of Street Hero, which might have been the film’s saving grace, is, ultimately, the factor which (for this reviewer) brought it down. It might have been used to deconstruct the myth of the hero and the romanticization of strong men in very interesting ways. But, instead, Street Hero reinforces mythology by asserting itself as: ‘more real than the real thing’. In the end, an over-abundance of “special effects” makes Street Hero a film which is not all that special.

Where The Green Ants Dream

Dorot Koeke

“You white men are lost. You don’t understand the land. Too many silly questions. Your presence on this earth will come to an end. You have no purpose, no desire to live.”

This is the premise of the Aboriginal point of view in Where The Green Ants Dream. Werner Herzog has succeeded in making a film with no sense, no purpose and no direction.

The film’s opening landscapes arouse suspicion. The visual quality of Herzog’s previous work is lacking from the start. Why he put his name to this amateurish production is more mysterious than his admittedly “personal mythology” about the green ants dream. Herzog has proven himself a director and writer with a strong personal vision, and his films have favorably borne the trademark of his obsession with “personal mythology.” But watching Green Ants is rather like being a casual spectator of an avant-garde performance.

Not only does Green Ants lack the dramatic impact of Fitzcarraldo, the visual polish of Nosferatu or the thoughtfulness of The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser, but the story-line is nonsensical, a script that does not even approach the level of a trite screenplay’s first draft. The images are tedious, the editing sloppy and the acting mediocre, although one has to admit that it is better to give the actors the benefit of the doubt and not to fault the actors but of a difficult, banal script — and of a short-sighted director having a very bad day in his career.

Lance Hackett (Bruce Spence) is the eager geologist employed by Ayers Mining, who is faced with the conflict of the Aboriginal leaders who are mining interests somewhere in central Australia, and the local Aboriginals’ right to mining the land which has been part of their heritage for 40,000 years.

“Who are you?”, “Where are you from?” “What are you doing here?” “Why are you here?” “What is it? Why is it? What does it mean?”, are the questions asked of the Aboriginal leaders (Wandjuk Marika and Roy Marika). Werner Herzog’s Where The Green Ants Dream.

Hackett is the Aboriginal-hating, Caterpillar-loving, ockerorman; Norman Kaye is capable as the compromising executive from Ayers Mining; and Colleen Clifford appears for no special reason. The Aboriginals sit and sleep and only briefly manipulate music or dance. The mining crew, in their uniforms, dot the Aboriginals’ landscape like little orange soldiers. Wandjuk Marika and Roy Marika maintain a strong and powerful presence as the Aboriginal leaders, but seem to grow impatient as the film progresses. One senses they would like to accept the offer of Coca-Cola, smiles more often and takes the side of his corporate employers less seriously. One is finally urged to be convinced of the truth of Hackett’s inner journey when he reveals his recurring dream to Miss Strehlow: “I am a light, a spirit. I am not real. I am not here. I am a spirit. I am a being with no sense, no purpose and no direction.”

It was good to see Bruce Spence in a role other than the village idiot, the way in which audiences have previously seen him stumbling, drinking and drooling through The Cars That Ate Paris, Buddies and Mad Max 2. Ray Barrett appears red-faced as the Aboriginal-hating, Caterpillar-loving ockerorman; Norman Kaye is capable as the compromising executive from Ayers Mining; and Colleen Clifford appears for no special reason. The Aboriginals sit and sleep and only briefly manipulate music or dance. The mining crew, in their uniforms, dot the Aboriginals’ landscape like little orange soldiers. Wandjuk Marika and Roy Marika maintain a strong and powerful presence as the Aboriginal leaders, but seem to grow impatient as the film progresses. One senses they would like to accept the offer of Coca-Cola, smiles more often and takes the side of his corporate employers less seriously. One is finally urged to be convinced of the truth of Hackett’s inner journey when he reveals his recurring dream to Miss Strehlow: “I am a light, a spirit. I am not real. I am not here. I am a spirit. I am a being with no sense, no purpose and no direction.”

Lance Hackett (Bruce Spence), an eager geologist from Ayers Mining, and two Aboriginal leaders (Wandjuk Marika and Roy Marika). Werner Herzog’s Where The Green Ants Dream.
Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years
Graham Shirley and Brian Adams
Currency Press in conjunction with Angus & Robertson Publishers, Sydney, 1984
Hardback, 336pp., A$24.95
ISBN 0 207 145814

Rod Bishop

In 1971, Prime Minister John Gorton, a fan of Westerns and private eye movies, oversaw the establishment of the Australian Film Development Corporation. At the time, Gorton expressed his desire for the AFDC to prove to the rest of the world that Australia was capable of producing films containing "other things than avant-garde kangaroos and Ned Kellys".

Gorton's quip, aimed perhaps at British directors Nicolai Roeg and Tony Richardson, underlines the strong nationalist thread that runs through Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years, this latest volume in the series of books from Graham Shirley and Brian Adams.

National sentiment is only one of the elements built into the historical perspective used by the authors. And, when Shirley and Adams stick rigidly to conventional methods, their work is exact, comprehensive and precise; a charter of the production, exhibition and distribution wings of the Australian film industry between 1896 and 1975, set within a context of the prevailing economic conditions and changing government attitudes.

Shirley and Adams could have written this book for readers whose sole interest lies with the content of the films. They are content to offer plot synopses and occasional comment as to the relative critical and commercial impact of any particular film. Individual filmmakers are generally profiled when their cinematic contributions have developed directorial techniques or raised the production standards of the industry. The authors also recognize film workers who have made significant contributions towards lobbying for an indigenous industry.

Their book contains an impressive use of primary source material, particularly personal interviews, newspapers, magazines, diaries and government reports (including excellent coverage of the 1926 Royal Commission and the 1972 Tariff Board Inquiry). Adams and Shirley have carefully drawn out the essential historical facts for each era, giving this book value as both a comprehensive historical account and an essential reference work.

It is only the authors' strict adherence to calendar chronology that gives the book an occasional pedantic tone. But the crafting of any lucid history is determined by constraints and conventions, and, where the authors have chosen to stay within that framework, the result is a well-balanced historical coverage.

This achievement is at its most obvious in the first two sections, Part One covering a 33-year period from 1896 to 1929 and Part Two chronicles the 34 years from 1930 to 1964. These two sections constitute more than 75 per cent of the book, and are greatly helped by the authors' strong nationalist sentiments, in evidence when they quote Cozens Spencer's outburst, as early as 1914, at "Australi[al]s becoming the dumping ground for all the producers in the world.

The history of exhibition and distribution is similarly well-defined, and the account of the 1926 Royal Commission, with its specie of quotas and tariff protection, and the eloquent attacks by Australian producers toward American control of the industry are also well documented. In the mid-1920s, Americans managed to obtain a bargain basement price for the successful German film industry, heaving under that country's economic collapse. Thus, it comes as no surprise to learn from Shirley and Adams that by 1927 nearly 95 per cent of the films shown in Australia were American in origin.

Shirley and Adams give a diligent and well-balanced view of the industry's past. The contributions of Raymond Longford, Beaumont Smith, Charles Chauvel, Lottie Lyell, Frank Barrett, the McDonagh Sisters, Frank Hurley, Efftee Film Productions, Ken Hall, Cinesound, Eric Porter, John Heyer, Lee Robinson and Chips Rafferty (among others) are evaluated with the calm detachment necessary in any factually-based, historical account.

The third and shortest part of this volume covers the years 1965 to 1975, ending when "the industry's ... formerly separate artistic and commercial achievements were merged in Sunday Too Far Away". Livelier and more acerbic in tone, Shirley and Adams give a spirited account of the industry's revival.

Of particular value is the space devoted by the authors to clarifying the contributions of the "underground" cinema of the 1960s, and its important transformation during the early 1970s into a varied, exciting and energetic independent cinema.

In the early part of this section, emphasis is given to the work of the early pioneers, among them Albie Thoms, Arthur and Catherine Carr, Aggy Read, Paul Winkler, the Ubu Films group and the formation of the Sydney Filmmakers' Co-operative.

At times, their extensive coverage of this important movement, which preceded the renaissance of the mainstream commercial industry by nearly 10 years, is a little too partisan. For instance, the account of the so-called "Carlton" group in the 1960s (comprising Nigel Buesst, Dave Minter, Tim Burstall, Brian Davies and others) gives the impression that the Melbourne 'underground' somehow had it easier than their Sydney counterparts: "Melbourne's independent filmmakers had for many years received monetary aid from the State Film Centre and the Federation of Victorian Film Societies . . ."

In fact, the number of filmmakers who benefited from the limited funds available was very small, and, rather than imply this situation gave the Melbourne 'underground' some sort of enviable headstart on Sydney, the authors may have better amplified on the progressive, even enlightened, attitude of these Victorian bodies towards the development of an indigenous film culture.

But these misgivings are minor, and the significant space accorded to the low-budget cinema gives depth to Shirley and Adams' gripping and informative account of the resurgence of the industry between 1965 and 1975.

Apart from the coverage accorded to the 1972 Tariff Inquiry, the authors follow through the industry lobby for the creation of the Australian Film Development Corporation; the establishment of the national film school; and the founding of the Experimental Film and Television Fund.

The notorious exploits of Senator Doug McClelland (Minister for the Media in the 1973 Labor Cabinet) and his scandalous co-option by the internationally powerful Jack Valenti (president of the Motion Picture Association of America) are given great prominence. In hindsight, it is clear that these problems unnecessarily retarded and undermined the heralded contributions of many local filmmakers toward the development of a viable industry.

Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years is a historical account of major consequence. Any reader with more than a passing interest in the Australian industry should not hesitate to add this volume to his or her collection.

And, apart from its content, the book is excellently presented: the simplicity of its index and its ease of access as a reference work cannot be faulted.

Although this present volume finishes its account in 1975, the book clearly shows the need for a similar history of the 'halcyon days' that followed. Shirley and Adams could produce a valuable and beneficial companion to this otherwise exhaustive and accurate historical account.

The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema
Robert Phillip Kolker
Oxford University Press, New York, 1983
Paperback, 428pp., A$18.50
ISBN 0 19 503302 7

Dennis Bowers

Robert Kolker, who is associate professor of Film Studies at the University of Maryland, has followed his study of contemporary American directors, A Cinema of Loneliness, with a broad-ranging survey and analysis of modernist cinema in Europe and Latin America. His book, The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema, provides a useful summary of the current state of the field.

Kolker begins by defining the term "international" and then proceeds to examine the history of cinema in Europe and Latin America. He discusses the development of national cinemas, the influence of foreign films, and the emergence of new directors. Kolker also pays close attention to the role of distributors and exhibitors in shaping the contemporary international cinema.

One of the strengths of The Altering Eye is its focus oncase studies. Kolker includes detailed analyses of films by directors such as Luis Buñuel, Federico Fellini, and Andrei Tarkovsky. He also discusses the work of emerging directors from countries such as Brazil, India, and Iran.

The book is well-organized and easy to read. Kolker presents his arguments clearly and concisely, and provides numerous examples to illustrate his points. He also includes a comprehensive bibliography of books and articles on contemporary international cinema.

Overall, The Altering Eye is an important contribution to the study of contemporary international cinema. It provides a valuable resource for students and scholars interested in this field.
Book Reviews

Robert Philip Kolker

The Altering Eye

Contemporary International Cinema

America. His subject in The Altering Eye is “film made in the spirit of resistance, rebellion, and refusal” – that is, films made in reaction to an American cinema which deals mainly in melodramas in which the processes of identification and naturalization are strong, and the focus is on personal problems and emotional analysis, rather than on political or social context.

Contrasted with safe, conformist films, modernist cinema works to question and surprise, redefining the notion of film as a reflection of reality, exposing it as cultural artifact and inviting an active response on the part of spectators. Kolker traces the paradigmatic influence of Bertolt Brecht on modernist works in all the narrative arts, and notes the revitalizing of film criticism in the 1970s (through development of the tools of semology, structuralism and Lacanian psychology, and ideological analysis. Although The Altering Eye is informed by each of these approaches, it is clearly strongest in terms of its Marxist analysis of ideology.

The book is divided into three sections. In the first, “The Validity of the Image”, Kolker traces the development of that American cinema of “entertainment and evasion”. The flavor of his writing is apparent here:

... large amounts of money could not be made from peep-shows in working-class neighborhoods, profit and respectability could only come from an audience with money and respectability. Two things were immediately needed to attract this group: elegant exhibition and a film content that combined the blandest, seemingly most inoffensive morality with sexual titillation which could in turn be defended by a high moral tone.

The economic, political, and psychological complexities of the film audience’s experience were largely transformed into images that sweetened life by simplifying it and denied economic inequality by denying that such inequality had any importance for happiness. It was a cinema of accommodation in which good characters achieved marriage and a middle-class life, where obedience and sacrifice were rewarded. (p. 26-27)

Having described the Hollywood model of filmmaking, Kolker briefly discusses Sergei Eisenstein and the German expressionists as filmmakers who rejected Hollywood realism and, in that sense, acted as precursors of Italian neo-realism. He then sets out the substantial beginnings of modernist cinema. Eric von Stroheim and Jean Renoir are also noted as important influences in the development of modernist cinema, which deals mainly in resistance, rebellion, and refusal. In the first, “The Validity of the Image”, Kolker discusses the tools of semiology, structuralism and Lacanian psychology, and ideological analysis. Although The Altering Eye is informed by each of these approaches, it is clearly strongest in terms of its Marxist analysis of ideology.

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The second section, “The Substance of Form”, deals with the period of radical exploration of film form in the 1960s and early 1970s, when filmmaking was replaced or subverted established codes and conventions more thoroughly than the neo-realist had done. It focuses on the other arts. Here Kolker focuses on the Brechtian achievements of Michelangelo Antonioni, Renais, French new wave directors (notably Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer) and the Gemeinschaft (Wim Wenders and Werner Herzog).

The insights Kolker arrives at through tracing the influence of earlier movements is this passage on Antonioni:

It is as if Antonioni reached through the neo-realist frame back to the expressionist movement... merging both in an unusual hybrid. The neo-realist-disallowed edge of studio sets, the expressionists depended on them. Theirs was a set design, a world of painted backdrops, painted shadows and plaster trees. The distortions of environment they created to reflect the emotional disjunctions or the logical world of their characters were made to order, static, staged. Antonioni begins with a place that exists and so arranges his characters in it and his camera’s approach to it, so treats it with light and lens, that he molds the “reality” – the pre-existing material he finds — into a mise-en-scene that affects, explains, amplifies, and corroborates the characters. The “real” world is given an expressive form... (p. 139-40)

Since modernist cinema must attempt to “prevent the spectator from slipping easily through the structures of presentation into an emotional world of character and action”, the most famous of European directors, Bergman, is dismissed as “the great melodramatist... concerned with individuals in the cinematic throes of personal crisis...”. For Kolker, Bergman has no genuine relation to the real world and has no great commitment to intellectual enquiry.

Politics and sexuality are examined in the final chapter; both have caused American filmmakers and critics considerable unease. Overly political films are all too readily diagnosed as propaganda in the U.S. whereas the critical climate in Europe has been more favorable, after politicizing image and narrative in neo-realist films. It is in relation to political cinema that Kolker provides his most detailed analyses of individuals, notably Masculin-Feminin, Red Psalm, Angi Vera, In the Year of the Thirteen Moons, La conformista (The Conformist) and Last Tango in Paris. Most of these films also lend themselves to an examination of what they portend about reality and society with the social order, links usually denied in film melodrama, with its implications for the real life.

One striking omission from this discussion is Lina Wertmüller, whose films form a major study of sex and politics. Possibly, Kolker notes that the distancing established by Wertmüller’s mixture of comic and melodramatic modes, and the disruption of narrative continuity in her complex arrangement of chronology (as in

Dominique Sanda in Bernardo Bertolucci’s The Conformist.

Los olvidados), Ermanno Olmi and of course Buñuel and Brecht.

Minor quibbles aside, Kolker’s latest book is an important and timely contribution to film studies, informed by the recent developments in theory. Familiar classics are often seen from fresh perspectives, the overview of film history is consistent and persuasive, and Kolker’s writing on less well-known films, such as Lucia and Antonina das mortes or on familiar ones such as The Conformist, makes one want to view (or review) the film discussed. Though modernist cinema is not a new concept, as Kolker claims, his book should provide a strong impulse to a wider critical interest in the Brechtian movement in cinema.

Australian Movies to the World: The International Success of Australian Films Since 1970

David White

Fontana Australia, Sydney, and Cinema Papers, Melbourne, 1984

Paperback, 144pp, A$12.95 ISBN 0 00 636718 6

Susan Dermdy

Australian Movies to the World is rather like an extended chapter from the front of Michael (now out-valued and recently missed) Australian Motion Picture Yearbook. That is the measure of its usefulness and its limitations. It flashes out a story of gradual overseas recognition for Australian films in a shaky, uncritical way.

Sue Matthews’ recent book, Australian Films/American Dreams”, in 1982 covered some similar territory, concentrating on the influence of the American cinema on Australian films after Brecker Morant in 1982, but the difference in approach is informative. She edited her material to a liberal and open-minded opinion that there was a real difference between the two cinemas. In a sense, the format itself invited that kind of montage, while White’s book follows the course of least resistance in its own format. It meanders along a chronological road to the present, in leisurely, illustrated fashion. But, for me, the lack of debate, or polemical, or developed critical position that results makes the book less interesting than it might have been.

The book opens off from the research and interviews gathered for the 1983 documentary of the same title, written and directed by Gordon Glenn and Scott Murray, and, like the film, it tends to have the non-political, ‘good-news’ mode of argument. However, the information that it offers on overseas critical and box-office response is valuable, on film-makers and producers. Had it included a comparative chart, listing budgets, domestic market returns and international sales, it would make an invaluable resource. And if the book had been indexed, its resource value would again be greater than it is.
The title itself is like an announcement of good news: Australians have broken through the barriers of self doubt. They have seen the light, overcome the tyrannies of distance and are connecting in some way with the world, through film. Interestingly, though, the title is a sentence without a verb. It is written like this: ‘My love to you;’ it eschews saying ‘taken’, ‘pushed’, ‘protested’, ‘sent’ etc. Instead, it is a headline of the fact accomplished, or the destiny achieved, and it is an invitation to rally around the success and anticipate its future.

After announcing a destiny — recognition and acclaim for Australian films in that ‘most unlikely place’ — Cannes the book reads back to find the gradual but forward march of the industry to this threshold point. Just as Yearbook could not exactly afford to find, in any new edition, that the industry had faded, shrunk or nose-dived in quality, so Australian Movies to the World cannot really fail to find a perpetually upward curve towards the present. It is within these limits that the book is written.

But what are the effects of these limits? White offers a clear, well-written recapitulation of the more worthy, citable moments (films) of the period since 1970. The account is spiced by generous stills selected and laid out in the familiar A4 format. White concentrates, with ever increasing success as he moves into the 1980s, on the commercial side and the profit side of the films on their release point of the films onwards. I can’t see it really changing the way that anybody thinks. And like the industry itself, it is valid as an attempt to find the film in its own terms, and many in color. By cleverly juxtaposing the visual topography of Kubrick’s imagery (in which the director has always described as essentially a ‘non-verbal experience’), the stills evoke a much deeper resonance of artistic identity than has been accomplished in previous text-centred descriptions.

Well aware of this neglect, Ciment stimulates the reader-viewer into forming associations through ‘unexpected analogies or internal rhyme’, effectively charting a Kubrick iconography. A fine example of this technique is represented by three photos referred to as ‘The nocturnal ‘return of the repressed’’, depicting the ‘look’ of Dave Bowman, and Alex and Jack Torrance within the director’s favorite stylistic predilections of ‘corridor’ framing and reverse tracking. A rationale is well suited to the emblematic and evasive Kubrick, for it is precisely this sense of uncanny ‘association’ one feels with each new Kubrick film or review. A sense of the familiar is found often in the most inhosiptable and alienating cinematic terrain from the temporal dislocation and repetition of 2001: A Space Odyssey, the labyrinthine arena of The Shining’s (1979) Overlook Hotel and maze.

Kubrick
Michel Ciment, translated by Gilbert Adair
Hardback, 238 pp., A$19.95
ISBN 0 00 216353 5

This is the fifth book-length treatment printed in English which attempts to analyze critically the Kubrick oeuvre. Michel Ciment bases his book on a combination of photo montage, biography, interview and critique, all of which deliverances within a handsomely produced volume.

Unlike the earlier dissertations, Ciment has strongly emphasized a visual representation of Kubrick’s cinema by including more than 300 illustrations, mostly frame enlargements, and many in color. By cleverly juxtaposing the visual topography of Kubrick’s imagery (in which the director has always described as essentially a ‘non-verbal experience’), the stills evoke a much deeper resonance of artistic identity than has been accomplished in previous text-centred descriptions.

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At the end of the 1960s Australia had virtually no film industry. By 1983 its movies were being shown throughout the cinema-going world, from mainstream theatres in America to art houses in Europe.

In a rapid transformation, a country which had previously been best known for its kangaroos and koalas produced something new and surprising: to quote *Time* magazine, “the world’s most vital cinema, extravagantly creative, fiercely indigenous”.

*Australian Movies to the World* looks at how this transformation came about and how those movies broke into the international market. And, through interviews with Australian and overseas directors, producers, actors, distribution executives and critics, it tells the story of the people who made it all possible.

David White is a writer based in Sydney. He worked as a newspaper journalist for 13 years, including stints as a correspondent in Papua New Guinea and as a news executive. He became Federal Publicity Officer of the Australian Labor Party in 1971 and, after Labor’s election to national office in 1972, Media Secretary to Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. He resigned from that post in late 1974 to travel overseas. Back in Australia, he became a film publicist in 1978 and, in that capacity, made a number of trips to Europe and America. He is married to film editor Denise Hunter.

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Notes
Further Reading
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144 pp $12.95

Published by Fontana Australia and Cinema Papers
the binary oppositions of sexuality and death, reason and aggression, isolation and the individual:

Eroticism is displaced from woman to death; and if in American society death tends to be treated as a taboo, the power elite nevertheless operates through institutionalised violence. (p. 67, 70)

Avoiding a chronological discussion, the author creates a kind of analytical pot-pourri, in one instance drawing from Hegel, Jonathan Swift and Voltaire to illustrate Kubrick’s obvious fascination with all aspects of 18th Century “Enlightenment”. Such eclecticism serves to exemplify the textual complexity of Kubrick’s cinema. It also reflects the enormous multi-disciplinary research the filmmaker does at the commencement of each new project.

In the chapter concentrating on both 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) and The Shining, Ciment reveals that a primary focus of Kubrick’s art is the search through the “fantastic” and its myths for the “reason” behind the “irrational” which governs human-kind. The Shining is particularly open to psychoanalytic reading and Ciment draws upon key elements essential for understanding its dynamic narrative:

The gradual erosion of the frontier between the ego and the world, the real and the imaginary, characteristic of schizophrenia — is visible. (p. 135)

Similarly, the author traces the Oedipal link between the eye and the phallus, most clearly evident in 2001:

It united instinct with intelligence and was linked with the presence of the monolith (the eye of the ape, of the leopard, of HAL 9000, of the astronaut, of the fox) preceding each of mankind’s advances. (p. 144)

Ultimately, Ciment’s view of Kubrick is that of a “disillusioned romantic” who regards life as either a tragedy or a grotesque farce. His oeuvre involves the exposition of both instinct and subconscious, while promoting “reason” as the real solution, though never at the expense of one’s primal self. This argument is best supported by Kubrick’s responses (and those of his colleagues) to Ciment’s well-directed questions.

Three interviews spanning a decade also reveal the director’s desire to rationalize his work in psychoanalytic terms. In A Clockwork Orange (1971), for example, he describes Alex (Malcolm McDowell) as representing the unconscious: man in his natural state, pre-civilized. With regard to The Shining, he speaks of Freud’s essay on the “uncanny” (“the uncanny is the only feeling which is more powerfully expressed in art than in real life”) as alone justifying the supernatural genre. Disappointingly, the rarer interview by Barry Lyndon (1975) is drier and more superficial.

In the final interviews, James B. Harris (“People would want to talk to Stanley that much more attentively and work that much harder out of respect for him”), Ken Adam (“A creative director can add a whole new dimension to your work which you wouldn’t have thought possible”), John Alcott (“Working for him is like going to school and being paid for it”) and Julian Senior (“Few people know how to plan their lives as meticulously and pragmatically as Stanley”) provide some interesting anecdotal material and an insight into the mechanics of the director’s craft which Kubrick was either too modest or too apprehensive of misinterpretation to elaborate upon.

The Kubrick which Ciment’s portrait evokes, however, is not without contradiction. The author asserts:

One of the major obsessions of Kubrick’s films is the desire for absolute control over people and things and its inevitable correlate, the terror of losing control — informs the very practice of his craft. Anxiety, even despair, are at the core of Kubrick’s work; they are also the driving force of his creative activity. (p. 122)

Ironically, this romantic image of traditional artistic angst seems to belie the very content of Ciment’s text since Kubrick’s insatiable desire for control touches even his biographers. Not only did Kubrick select many of the-stills and frame enlargements himself, but a footnote explains that the director’s interviews were “revised” and “expanded” at Kubrick’s request.

There are also a couple of problems eschewed by Ciment’s analyses. For example, the criticism of misogyny often levelled against Kubrick and comments such as The Final Shot (2001) is perhaps the only really peaceful image created by an artist more at ease in nightmare (p. 107) ignore the important accusation by author Susan Sontag, Robert Philip Kolker et al of a fascist ideology operating within the text.

Aside from these few lapses, however, Ciment’s Kubrick remains an authoritative guide to the cinema of this polaritical artist. As an introductory work (with its extensive bibliography), or as a supplementary text, it has quite a deal to offer.

Recent Releases

Mervyn Binns

This column lists a selection of books on sale in Australia up to August 1984, which deal with the cinema and related topics:

The publishers and the local distributors are listed below the author in each entry. If an illustration is indicated, the book is imported (Imp.). The recommended prices listed are for paperbacks, unless otherwise indicated, and are subject to variations between bookshops and states.

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

Popular and General Interest

Cowboy Movies
Norman Richards
Bison Books/Gordon & Gotch Distributors, $6.95 (HC)
An illustrated history of Westerns with black and white, and some color illustrations. A great bargain at this price.

The Dark Side of the Screen: Film Noir
PETER HIRSCH
The Cape/Australia & New Zealand Book Co, $25.95 (TPB)
A critical history of the genre that captured America’s dark mood in the 1940s and ’50s.

The Hollywood Hall of Shame
H. A. McDowell
Angus & Robertson/Angus & Robertson Publishers, $14.95 (TPB)
An expose of horror and expensive flops in movie history, by the author of 50 Worst Movies Ever Made.

Horror Movies
Daniel Cohen
Bison Books/Gordon & Gotch Distributors, $6.95 (HC)
An illustrated history of horror films with black and white and color illustrations.

Science Fiction Movies
Gregory Richards
Bison Books/Gordon & Gotch Distributors, $6.95 (HC)
A detailed history of sci-fi films, with black and white, and some color illustrations. An up-to-date coverage at a very good price.

Australian Movies to the World — The International Success of Australian Films Since 1970
David White
Fontana/Cinema Papers/William Collins, $12.95 (PB)
This book gives an insight into how the Australian film industry has become accepted, artistically and commercially, on the international scene since 1970. Illustrated with many black and white photographs. Large format paperback.

Biographies, Memoirs, Filmographies

Ereau — My Wicked Wicked Ways
Parry William Collins, $5.95 (PB)
A new reprint of Flynn’s own story.

Princess Grace
Sarah Bradford
Weinstein & Nicolson/Hodder & Stoughton, $5.95 (HC)
The biography of the poor little rich girl, who became a top movie star and a princess.

FILMMAKING

Filmmakers on Filmmaking: Volume 1
Joseph McBride
J. P. T. Archer/Imp., $11.95 (PB)
A collection of stories put together by this well-known, motion picture author.

CINEMA PAPERS October — 373

The second volume of this valuable book.

Filmmakers on Filmmaking: Volume 2
Weidenfeld & Nicolson/Hodder & Stoughton, $19.95 (HC)
A major biography of the American director Howard Hawks.

New German Film — The Displaced Image
Timothy Corrigan
Texas University Press/Imp., $13.55 (PB)
The best book, so far, about the new German film scene.

Cinema History

The novel based on the current Central television series.

Now a major movie starring Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner.

Vengeance
Leslie Caron
Pavane/William Collins, $4.95 (PB)
A collection of stories put together by this well-known, motion picture author.
emotion trying to be generated at that point in the film. There are so many comedic parts in the film which, I think, mitigate the violence, which is more Tom and Jerry than Friday the 13th. It is not thought and goes well, it is entertainment. But to make that work it has to have definite levels of emotion. In the main, it is light and tongue-in-cheek, but there is a fairly dark side to the other previous parents should see it before deciding to take their children.

Robert Watts

Continued from p. 329

He had a very personal involvement with Jedi, which was the hardest for him because he had to round off the trilogy. He only visited us three times during the shoot for Temple of Doom because he was busy getting Jedi out. The whole Star Wars saga has been a great drain on him.

The only change I have seen in him is that he has an enormous amount of self-confidence, which must come. It has been extremely pleasant working with him.

Robert Watts

Motzing: "I thought we were supposed to be talking about scripts", sighed a frustrated person as Bob Ellis and the night’s participants rehearsed the problems of production, casting and marketing. Ellis mumbled a pre-written speech and entertained with his sardonic wit, largely at the expense of Goodbye Paradise’s other creative personnel. He implied that the poor and noble screenwriter is victimized by the work being manipulated and misunderstood in the hands of uncooperative directors and producers.

"All agree that something is wrong with Goodbye Paradise. No one feels easy about the situation. An obsession with the film’s outcome was boring and excessive, and he prepared the audience, many of whom were very new to the film for the first time, to see its weaknesses rather than its strengths.

While it is interesting to know that other actors and music were once considered in the making of a film, dwelling on "what might have been" served little purpose in the examination of turning words into images, or in a seminar billed as "Scriptwriting.

One of Ellis’s few comments which dealt with scriptwriting was that one is massively overpaid for total frustration as a screenwriter” in comparison with novel writing: “You don’t get paid at all but have total fulfillment.” The audience tended to sympathize with Ellis, sharing the writer’s difficulties. Ellis made the suggestion that the director must make things work; its original intent being misused by big, bad producers.

The people who wanted to discuss the making of a film, dwelling on "what might have been" served little purpose in the examination of turning words into images, or in a seminar billed as "Scriptwriting.

The next Australian Screen Studies Association conference, to be held at Griffith University in Brisbane from 1 to 7 December, 1984, will focus on the contemporary Australian film industry, film and television education, and the cinema-televis ion interface.

Work on the commercial film industry will include its history, policies, politics, products (the films themselves) and its...
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<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
<th>PERIOD 24.6.84 to 11.8.84</th>
<th>PERIOD 29.4.84 to 23.6.84</th>
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<td>The Wild Duck</td>
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<td>Grand Total</td>
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1 Not for publication, but ranking correct.
* Figures exclude N/A figures.
- Box-office grosses of individual films have been supplied to Cinema Papers by the Australian Film Commission.
- This figure represents the total box-office gross of all foreign films shown during the period in the area specified.
* Continuing into next period.
NB Figures in parentheses above the grosses represent weeks in release. If more than one figure appears, the film has been released in more than one cinema during the period. (1) Australian theatrical distributor only. RS — Roadshow, GUO — Greater Union Organization Film Distributors, HTS — Hoyts Theatres, FOX — 20th Century Fox, UA — United Artists, CIC — Cinema International Corporation, FW — Filmways Australasian Distributors, 7K — 7 Keys Film Distributors, COL — Columbia Pictures, REG — Regent Film Distributors, CCG — Cinema Centre Group, AFC — Australian Film Commission, SAFG — South Australian Film Corporation, MCA — Music Corporation of America, OTH — Other. (2) Figures are drawn from capital city and inner suburban first release hardtops only. (3) Split figures indicate a multiple cinema release.
Films Censorship Listings

April 1984

Films Registered Without Deletions

G (For General Exhibition)

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NRC (Not Recommended for Children)

Champions: P. Shaw, Britain, 3073.16m, Publishing & Broadcasting Video, Gemotional areas

Don Camillo: Fantasia Prod., Italy, 3073.89m, Roadshow Dist., V(i-m-g)

Thief for Pavilions: G. Reeve, India-Britain, 3072.16m, Publishing & Broadcasting Video, V(i-v)

Fire in the 34th Express: Mostim, Soviet Union, 2221.6m, Trade Representative of the Soviet Union, V(i-m-g)

Tara, Tara, Tara (pre-censor cut version): Taurus Films, U.S., 2044m, 14th Mandolin

Tendues Cousins: Swit Presents (Swin refugee) to V. Bemoln, France, 2385m, Concentrated Exhibitions, V(i-m-g)

(Previously shown on October 1983 List)

May 1984

Films Registered With Deletions

R (For Restricted Exhibition)

Prisoners of Paradise: Caribbean Prod., U.S., 2029.82m, A-Z. Assoc. Film Dist., Sfi-m-g

Decision reviewed. Classify "R" by Film Censorship Board

(Previously shown on March 1984 List)

Films Registered Without Deletions

G (For General Exhibition)

The Slim Dusty Movie: The Slim Dusty Movie, Australia, 2330.01m, Greater Union Film Dist.

A Stolen Happiness: Not shown. Soviet Union, 2855m, U.S. Film Society

NRC (Not Recommended for Children)

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Thief for Pavilions: G. Reeve, India-Britain, 3072.16m, Publishing & Broadcasting Video, V(i-v)

Fire in the 34th Express: Mostim, Soviet Union, 2221.6m, Trade Representative of the Soviet Union, V(i-m-g)

Tara, Tara, Tara (pre-censor cut version): Taurus Films, U.S., 2044m, 14th Mandolin

Tendues Cousins: Swit Presents (Swin refugee) to V. Bemoln, France, 2385m, Concentrated Exhibitions, V(i-m-g)

(Previously shown on October 1983 List)
New Products and Processes

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The Quarter

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interactions with the international context: that is, film markets, film cultures. Work in the education section will cover curriculum organization and development; educational resources; the cultural policy of the Australian Film Commission and the Australian Film Institute; the uses of film and television in English and other curricula; and the possibility of developing links between different kinds of film training on both secondary and tertiary levels. The section on the film-television interface will cover recent work on the economic relations between film and television; the study of television; and the economic, policy and theoretical implications of the “dissemination” of film into television.

All three sections will involve formal papers delivered by speakers, panel-discussions, workshops, and screenings of films and videotapes. Expected visitors include Mandre Merok, editor of Screen, and Thomas Guback, the American scholar and researcher who wrote The International Film Industry.

For further information please contact Stuart Cunningham; Dugald Williamson or Jill Weber at Griffith University, Nathan, Queensland, 4111. Telephone (07) 275 7111.

--------------------------------------------------------------

Austrian Film Awards

The nominations for the annual Australian Film Awards, to be held in Melbourne on 5 October at the State Theatre in the Victorian Arts Centre, were announced on 12 September. The categories and nominations are:

Best Film

Annie's Coming Out

Silver City

Stroebound

Best Director

Gil Brealey (Annie’s Coming Out)

Ken Cameron (Fast Talking)

Paul Cox (My First Wife)

Sophia Turkiewicz (Silver City)

Best Original Screenplay

Ken Cameron (Fast Talking)

Paul Cox (My First Wife)

Jan Sardi (Street Hero)

Sophia Turkiewicz, Thomas Keneally (Silver City)

Best Adaptation as a Screenplay

Everett De Roche (Razorback)

Patrick Edgeworth (BMX Bandits)

Robert Lowenstein (Stroebound)

John Patterson, Chris Borthwick (Annie’s Coming Out)

Best Actress

Carol Burns (Stroebound)

Gosia Dobrowolska (Silver City)

Wendy Hughes (My First Wife)

Angela Punch McGregor (Annie’s Coming Out)

Best Supporting Actress

Sandy Gore (Street Hero)

Anna Jimson (Silver City)

Monica Maughan (Annie’s Coming Out)

Peta Toppanno (Street Hero)

Best Actor

Drew Forsythe (Annie’s Coming Out)

John Hargreaves (My First Wife)

Chris Haywood (Stroebound)

Ivar Kants (Silver City)

Best Supporting Actor

David Arque (BMX Bandits)

Steve Bisley (Silver City, Fast Talking)

Peter Hein (Fast Talking)

Best Cinematography

Andrew de Groot (Stroebound)

John Seale (Silver City)

Dean Semler (Razorback)

Yuu Sokol (My First Wife)

Best Production Design

Igor Nai (Silver City)

Brian Thompson (Street Hero)

Bryce Walsley (Razorback)

Tracy Watt, Neil Angwin, Harry Zettel, MacGregor Knox (Stroebound)

Best Costume Design

Jan Hurley (Silver City)

Best Music

Iva Davies (Razorback)

William Motzing (Silver City)

Garth Porter; Bruce Streaton; Hunter, Hunter and Pigott; Sayer and Pondia; Sharon O'Neill; Wilson, Black and Pepper; Morrison and Barker; Del Shannon (Street Hero)

Simon Walker (Annie’s Coming Out)

Corrigendum

In the previous issue of Cinema Papers (p. 273) Peter Malone’s review of The Evil That Men Do and The Star Chamber should conclude with:

...the paradoxical vengeance film of the 1970s and ‘80s will appeal to film theoreticians as they do now to the public.

Edilok. Made by a German company, g.t.c., the small desktop unit (155 mm high x 260 mm wide x 330 mm deep) or 19-inch rack mount, slaves a 1/2-, 3/4- or 1-inch video recorder to a standard flat-bed editor. The flat bed has to have a reference signal out and may need a shaft-encoder pulse fitted (most of the new machines already have this), and the video machine needs time code (vertical or on one of the audio tracks) output. The accuracy is quoted at better than + or – ½ a frame and, if the VCR allows synchronization, the interlock is phase locked at sound speed.

For $8900, ex Sydney, you will get the Central Processing unit (rack or table), software for the suggested video slave (JVC 5500, 6600, 5550 or 6650), one LTC or VTC reader, one character inserter (to display the frame position of master and slave on a monitor, and it also shows sync and lock indications), power supply and all cables and connectors.

Contact: g.t.c. Australia Pty Ltd, 54a Beech Rd, Beechcroft, NSW, 2119.

If manufacturers and distributors would like new product information included in this section they should send photographs and details to New Products and Processes editor, MTV Publishing Limited, 644 Victoria St, North Melbourne, Vic., 3051.

New Products and Processes

Continued from p. 345

main difference in design is the fibreglass and high-impact plastic construction which reduces the weight and, with good ventilation, keeps the outer casing at a low temperature. There is an inner casing to prevent any back-spill light, and a locking device for the power lead. The basic kit has a fine hair-wire mesh screen for protection against glass breakage, and accessories available include barndoors, scrims and stands. John Barry will make up three- and four-head kits with accessories and stands.

Contact: John Barry Group Pty Ltd, 27 Hotham Parade, Ararat, Ararat, Victoria, 3377.

Rank Electronics also have some lighting news, having been appointed exclusive distributor of the Quartzcolor lanio range. Advertised in the last issue were a new studio softlight, the ARTURO, available as a 3000k Tungsten Halogen, or 5600k Discharge model; a 575W HMI “Blonde” called the Shaula model (that’s Italian?); and a cleverly designed, 3000W portable discharge floodlight, the Bellatrix. The latter is made of black, thermoplastic material and has a very small, square-wave electron–ballast. It can be used as a sungun or the handgrip accepts a stand mount.

The big gun, however, is the new SR1RO, 12kW, discharge Fresnel spotlight. A 500 mm (20-inch) lens, good ventilation, safety microswitches and key lock are all part of the deal, and the Ballast unit is designed for location handling.

Contact: Rank Electronics offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth will supply details.

One of the many electronic interlock devices to allow either standard audio or film editing equipment to control or be ‘slaved’ to videotape machines, which were displayed at the show, was the Film-Pro device. Made by a German company, g.t.c., the small desktop unit (155 mm high x 260 mm wide x 330 mm deep) or 19-inch rack mount, slaves a 1/2-, 3/4- or 1-inch video recorder to a standard flat-bed editor. The flat bed has to have a reference signal out and may need a shaft-encoder pulse fitted (most of the new machines already have this), and the video machine needs time code (vertical or on one of the audio tracks) output. The accuracy is quoted at better than + or – ½ a frame and, if the VCR allows synchronization, the interlock is phase locked at sound speed.

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To all the film makers
awaiting announcement of AFI awards,

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Australia has one of
the oldest film industries in the world.
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feature films, shorts and experimental films
in tens of thousands of productions.
An excellent achievement which continues today.
And one with which Kodak is proud
to be associated.

KODAK (Australasia) Pty. Ltd. Motion Picture Market Division.
Yoram Gross
Continued from p. 338

story of today. Mia Farrow, who starred in the film, has adopted two kids from Korea and two kids from Vietnam. Maybe this is one of the reasons she accepted the role, because she is familiar with this tragedy. It is not light entertain-

ment.

Around the World with Dot

In 1981, with “Around the World with Dot”, you returned to more
light-hearted entertainment . . .

It is more a lesson in geography. After watching this film most children will know more about it than they knew before.

How has the film fared in the cinemas?

The film has been sold in the U.S. and was distributed in Aus-
tralia by Hoyts. Today, it is a best-seller on video in England; in the
U.S. and was distributed in Aus-
terrible business for a long time.

Two animators starred in the film, has adopted

Dot and the Bunny: “. . . when you are born Bunny, you will die Bunny: c’est la vie.”

A production still from Around the World with Dot: the six kangaroos became two, and Father Christmas substituted his traditional cap for a bush hat.

D

All the films, except the last one, The Camel Boy, for technical reasons, are involved in music. But we tried to make Dot and Keeto a musical. When we see the Queen of the film produce her eggs, we hear a song that describes how it is her job to make a new society. On Monday she produces eggs to be lawyers, on Tuesday workers, on Wednesday soldiers . . . On Sunday, of course, she produces eggs for the royal family.

We use live footage of insects in an entertaining way — it won’t be a dry documentary — and by the end Dot and the kids will know a lot about insects.

This film is in production. In pre-production are Dot and the Whale, Dot and the Bunyip and Terra Australis. Terra Australis is about the history of Australia 30,000 years ago. Dr Michael Archer is a consultant and the film is based on his archaeological discoveries. It is an animated film with puppets, the first time I have used them since Joseph the Dreamer.

Why are you returning to three dimensions?

Because we have found very talented people who produce puppets.

What have been some of the technical developments in the Yoram Gross Film Studio?

There are three new developments. The first is the introduction of a line-test machine from Japan, the first in Australia. It is a computer, not a video recorder, and has a memory bank capable of storing 250 line drawings. Each
Two animators — Yoram Gross

Gross on location for the background filming of The Camel Boy.

animator can register the drawings he has done on paper into the computer, which takes five to 10 minutes, and call up the drawings immediately on a monitor. Let us say he is looking at his 20 drawings and suddenly sees that drawing number 14 is not good enough: he can take it out from the memory and replace it with another drawing without reregistering the existing drawings, as happens now.

The machine is one of the reasons that our standard of animation is improving.

What are the other technical advances?

We have an incredible Xerox machine, which is again the only one in Australia and comes from Japan. It duplicates a pencil drawing on celluloid without scratching the celluloid or leaving spots. It does the job faster and better.

We also have a new camera which allows us to see instantly on a large television screen, instead of on a small monitor, what is being shot by the camera operator. It is a normal film camera combined with a television camera.

What do you feel is your contribution to Australian cinema, to children and to animated film?

My contribution is that I produce feature films, non-stop, in Australia. My aim is to have these films shown here, too. I believe our Dot films are well-known overseas, in the U.S. and in Europe, and every year they are becoming more well-known. In Australia, however, we are still fighting to show them. We are trying to achieve this through our own company, Young Australian Films, by taking our films to schools.

Now, because we wish to expose these films in cinemas as well, we initiated an Australian Children's International Film Festival. The director was Greg Flynn and the premiere, opened by the Prime Minister, was on May 5 in Sydney. The Festival may, in future, be part of UNESCO's involvement in promoting children's film festivals around the world. The Festival was a non-profit venture because the aim was to expose children's films which are not accepted in the cinema for some reason. This way children will be able to see Australian and international children's films which, though not commercially viable, are artistically valuable.

**Filmography**

**Features**

- 1961 Joseph the Dreamer
- 1964 One Pound Only
- 1977 Dot and the Kangaroo (animated)
- 1979 The Little Convict (animated)
- 1980 Sarah (animated)
- 1981 Save the Lady (scriptwriter only)
- 1982 Dot and the Bunny (animated)
- 1983 The Camel Boy (animated)
- 1984 Dot and the Koala (animated, in production)
- Terra Australis (animated)
- Dot and Keeto (animated, in production)

**Shorts**

- 1958 We Shall Never Die
- 1959 Chansons sans paroles
- 1959 Shir lelo mylym
- 1962 And the Earth was Without Form and Void
- 1963 Yemenite Fantasy
- 1966 Kazvuv met Bulim mesaprim
- 1967 Muscol a murit Lumina verde
- 1969 Bon appetit
- 1970 Prelude
- 1971 To Nefretiti
- 1974 The End
- 1975 Sun

**Documentaries**

- 1970 The Politicians
- 1977 The First Animated Step

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Australian Film and Television School
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CINEMA PAPERS October — 381
Chris Muir
Continued from p. 325

absolutely no idea how it would work in a cinema. And you wouldn’t get investors wanting to put money into that sort of material because it is so high risk.

so television enables you to develop subject matter which otherwise may not be produced.

Other Projects

Should the ABC be in the position of producing more experimental material?

The word “experimental” worries me because it is always associated with “high-risk” and “non-professionalism”. But, it is always very attractive for producers in the organization to have a time slot available to try out new technologies and new forms of drama, and hopefully still attract a large audience. Producers in this department would find this very useful in the 1980s.

What do you think are your department’s most outstanding productions?

I am a bit paralyzed when it comes to questions such as that because I am so fixed into the future and the present. In television, one of the problems for any person in my position is that the past disappears very quickly. But, inevitably, you hold on to the favorites in your memory because you are making measurements.

Without being offensive to other producers, it would be appropriate to list A Timeless Land, I Can Jump Puddles, Scales of Justice and 1915. There is also Alan Burke’s production of A Toast to Melba, a one-off drama which everyone remembers as being experimental, successful and innovative — all those adjectives which describe something that is fresh and daring. There was the children’s series Home, which is now screening in England, and you could also look right back to the 1960s, to a series such as My Brother Jack, which was most impressive in its time.

One’s perspective of the past constantly changes, so something one now regards as unimportant or ineffective can gain new meaning; for example, Bellbird, of which I was not particularly fond, I now look back on as having considerable qualities. It had its usefulness: it entertained an audience and was, at the time, a trail blazer.

“Scales of Justice” was filmed using realist techniques rather than naturalism. Do you think it has opened the door to more controversial, pioneering work?

We do not set out to be controversial but rather to bring together a set of situations which inevitably will be in conflict. If those characters and conflicts are put in a modern setting, of course, it gives the drama a dynamic. A controversial drama has a feeling of contemporary truth about it.

Some of that contemporary truth creates an audience reaction which can be quite exciting, which, of course, is good drama . . .

Scales of Justice had a strong reaction because it dealt with complex political matters in a contemporary setting.

A lot of producers are coming to terms with the fact that some series were using history as a buffer, as a device to tackle a lot of issues so the audience could come away saying, “Tut tut, weren’t things terrible then.” Producers in Australia now realize that the audience is sophisticated enough to see contemporary themes projected on the screen.

Another of my concerns about continuing to make historical drama is that we are not making anything at the moment to leave behind about our industry. Archivists in 100 years should be able to go to a lead vault and say, “The ABC did a funny thing called Man of Letters: let’s put that up and see what they were doing in those days.” It is very important that we don’t get locked into only reproducing the past, forgetting the present.

“Sweet and Sour” is, therefore, an attempt to relate to contemporary issues and capture the present mood of a generation . . .

With Sweet and Sour, we recognized that there was an audience of young people which was not being catered for by ABC television drama. We worked out some strict guidelines for the series: that it was not to be pessimistic; it was to be a bit zany; and it should have an integration of rock music. It was a fairly high-risk area: although Geoffrey Nottage, who is an established director, did the first few episodes, the directors who came on line after that were all ABC trained directors, and it was Jan Chapman’s first stab at producing in the ABC. Our feeling was that it would demonstrate again that the Drama department was not a fuddy-duddy department locked into a particular style.

What have the ratings been?

A lot of people who watch Dr. Who in that time slot threw up their hands in horror and said, “We are going to leave the ABC till Dr. Who comes on again.” At the beginning, the ratings were normal but it is interesting that they have climbed through the ratings. And, although the research we did indicated that the age group we were aiming for would be anything from 14 to 24, it seems to be much wider than that.

Your other series, “The Young Wife”, is an authentic and rather unusual look at Melbourne’s migrant community . . .

The Young Wife recognizes the roots of our multiculturalism, and it certainly says a great deal about Greek-Cypriot in Australia 30 years ago.

We have discovered some very fine actors through that series, and there will be a continuing recognition of new actors from multicultural backgrounds. We are now doing, for instance, a play by Louis Nowra, Displaced Persons, about a group of refugees which arrives in Sydney from Eastern Europe immediately after World War 2. For that, we have cast Eastern European actors living in Australia.

Matt Carroll, of Channel 10, said recently that the ABC was failing to produce sufficient unusual programs springing from the minorities in our community and, therefore, was not fulfilling its charter . . .

In terms of fulfilling our charter, we would like to do more much more. But I would have thought that Sweet and Sour and Scales of Justice were pioneering work. I don’t have any more to say; if Matt Carroll stays tuned he will see some more pioneering work. We have material in hand that has not even been thought of by the commercial channels.

Do you ever feel hamstrung being a creative department within a public-service framework?

It is more a framework to protect public money and see that money is spent wisely. Sure, you have problems, but you have them if you are running a small theatre or an independent film company, and it is important to have administrative rules. The ABC is still one of the great places for relative creative freedom.

What other projects are you planning?

We are hoping to retain the Sweet and Sour group because they are bright people to have in the department. They are looking at another series which will have music associated with it. We are doing a 10-part series in Sydney called Palace of Dreams being produced by Sandra Levy which will, again, introduce the element of multiculturalism. I am pleased that multiculturalism is part of our charter, not through tokenism but simply because it is a very powerful and mainstreaming force which hasn’t been tapped sufficiently in this country. What I hope will happen in the next few years is that we will see films along the lines of those that Elia Kazan was making in the 1950s.

Multicultural drama will be a turning point in Australian writing in the next two to three years. It may not be in television but it is inevitable, particularly with all the tension with immigration, that someone is going to tap it and write something brilliant. Once we start to look at the conflicts and the positive passions which exist between the mix of nationalities we have in Australia, there is no doubt we will start to get a new kind of writing. There is a force there which will suddenly pick up and it is very important for ABC Drama to be at the forefront of that.

Why then did ABC Drama not take up the offer of producing “Women of the Sun” some years ago?

The difficulty was not to do with the subject matter, but with the resources and facilities to handle it at the time. The ABC did buy the story rights.

I wouldn’t like to be leading a drama department that shied away from explosive issues or confrontational drama. But there has to be a balance: you are going to upset one section of the audience, you should, hopefully, be pleasing another section.

Johanna Pigott and Tim Gooding, who devised Sweet and Sour and wrote six of the 20 episodes.
Pattinson: I don’t think it has changed a lot, but it is a progression. Obviously, moving a camera works very well with music, and can give the effect of the film going like a steam train.

Some people have said they find something difficult to follow. It is interesting that the adult audience tries to complicate information in a linear or rational manner: something is introduced and adults want to see it developed and resolved clearly. The kids’ comprehension of the film seems far greater than a lot of adults: they take small pieces of information and hang on to them for a small amount of time. If it amounts to nothing, the kids will just toss it away rather than confuse themselves by trying to work out where it is supposed to be going.

Sardi: That is right. Adults intellectualize. When kids watch pop culture, they interpret it and assume their own story, whereas adults tend to sit back and look for the conventional story-line, and wait for it to be resolved. And while they are doing that, they are missing what is happening on the screen. They really can’t see the forest for the trees. Kids will receive those impressions and they will do something with them.

The design of the film and the photography are quite bold and striking. To what extent did Brian Thomson [production designer] and Vince Monton [director of photography] decide on the look and atmosphere of the film?

Pattinson: The film was conceived, at a script stage, as one which borrowed from other genres and was heavily stylized. Vincent and Brian’s contributions to that stylization are enormous. I had worked with Brian on another project being developed in Sydney years ago and, from the moment that Jan and I started to develop this idea, Brian was the first person to whom we spoke.

A lot of Australian films don’t really look like anything in particular, except well exposed. Brian is a designer, not an art director. An art director more often than not works into a location and says, “Well, I think that painting should resemble a Norman Lindsay rather than a Picasso”, or “I don’t like the color of the asparagus.” Brian walks into a location and says, “Right. We will get rid of that wall there. We will paint the whole place, change all the tables and move the roof up three feet.” He starts from scratch. There is no point having a very talented designer, such as Brian, if you are not going to go out for something that really has a distinctive look and style. That is why a lot of the film is constructed around sets.

Pattinson: I built a massive back-lot which constitutes Easy Street. That was an idea that grew out of conversations between Brian and myself. Rather than set the film in a plethora of different locations, we decided to find somewhere where a lot of the activity could occur, even though Jan had written a specific location for Easy Street. Brian built his location and put them all in one spot. And Brian and Vincent worked very closely together on the lighting and style. The emphasis on red is totally Brian’s idea, and I think it looks stunning.

Did you have an audience, or an international market, in mind when you decided to make the film? The type of poetry that was set in any city, in any country?

Pattinson: If your question is, "Well, we are trying to be mid-Pacific?", the answer is most definitely no.

Sardi: It is part of the heightened reality of the film. Brian’s sets are poetry more than real life. I like to describe the film as having its feet in social reality but its head way up in the clouds, and that is a type of poetry.

Pattinson: The whole nature of the film is drawn from real events and collaged to make one story. Given that, there was no single location that suited all of our requirements. So we thought it was far better to create something fictional which drew together a lot of truths, but was not set in any particular city. It is not really an attempt to be general: but, although there was no conscious effort to avoid it, the film does not take on a parochial feel. It probably does give the production a fairly international look.

In a film such as “Flashdance” or “Saturday Night Fever”, the music plays an enormous part in the identification with characters. How did you go about selecting the music for “Street Hero”?

Pattinson: Obviously, the music is crucial, but it is really the fusion of this music and the style that creates that feeling. In Rocky, it is the fusion between that famous anthem and the shots of Rocky bouncing up and down with his arms in the air on the steps of the Philadelphia Town Hall. They click together.

Some of the music for Street Hero was recorded in a rough track as guide tracks to get an idea of what the pace of the film should be. A lot of the music was selected by listening through thousands of demos of different people’s work and trying them with the rough pictures or trying ideas in different spots. The odd thing with music is that songs which, on first inspection, you would never think would work with the sort of imagery you have for some reason just fit into shape: for instance, the song that Sharon O’Neill wrote for us, “Blood Red Roses”. I had thought of that sequence as much more up-tempo than it was — not so much in terms of the cutting patterns of the pictures, but of what the music was doing. But a slower song seems to be a nice counter-balance.

Sardi: With films such as Flashdance and Staying Alive, the film just seems to be a coathanger on which to hang a lot of music and sell the films. We try and do a little more than that. A lot of films have a radio or transistor in every shot so you can have music blaring, and then they fill in the images, or a moment. But we must look as though it could be set in any city, in any country?

Pattinson: That is the one song which relates directly to visuals. I feel quite strongly that, when you are doing a film, the way one can do is narrate the action with the lyrics. Most of the songs express the sort of environment in which Vinnie moves and, in an esoteric way, what are his hopes and aspirations. But if it gets to the point where the lyrics are a narration, then it just doesn’t work. You think you are working towards a fusion between the music and the pictures, but in fact it is just getting further away, because you are forced to focus either on one or the other.

Sardi: What we want is music to create the right mood or atmosphere to enhance the drama, rather than fill the gaps.

“Street Hero” and “Moving Out” strive to incorporate elements that are going to attract adolescent audiences. Do you think that Australian films have neglected that section of the audience in the past?

Pattinson: Every prospectus one reads for a film says that it is going to appeal to the 15- to 25-year-old audience, because everybody knows they represent the majority of cinemagoers. When you read, in a lot of cases, it becomes clear that it may not have much appeal to that audience.

What does appeal to that audience?

Sardi: Something with a lot of energy and a sense of optimism. Plus the sense of wanting to break out of the environment and the community that you live in.

There are also fantasies. Every kid has had a teacher that they wanted to punch in the mouth. So you tap their fantasies and dreams, even if it is just wanting to play a musical instrument or bash up the local bully. They want to live those moments. They want to escape.

Pattinson: When we set out to make this film, we looked very carefully at films such as Rocky and Flashdance to see what they do to kids. While the critics may assassinate these films because they might not conform to what they believe a film should be in terms of construction, you cannot argue with the fact that the kids come out excited. It might last only until they get out the front door or back to the carpark, but they want to jump in the air and scream. It motivates them to do something with their lives. It was precisely that stirring feeling we aimed at, and a factor in creating that is the sense of personal achievement.
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