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Cinema Papers #52 July 1985

Nick Roddick
Debi Enker

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Description
NEWS PLUS ... Tussles over imported actors and worries about vanishing tax concessions; light at the end of the tunnel in the censorship backlog; and British TV faces an advertising crisis. Plus a look at the business done at Cannes, the AFC's annual report, the latest graduate films from the Film and Television School, and the recent conference on Kids' TV. And reports from Cannes, Filmex, Flongkong, Oberhausen and the PanAfrican Festival at Ouagadougou ....................................2 HOLLYWOOD-ENGLAND Graham Fuller talks to British director John Schlesinger about his latest film, The Falcon and the Snowman, and about the fact that most of his recent work has been in America ..............10 BEHIND THE BUBBLES m a special series of articles, Cinema Papers writers look at the wonderful world of the soaps. Pat H. Broeske reports from daytime America, where it all started; Geoff Mayer takes Australia's soaps apart; Nick Roddick profiles Grundys, the Australian soap factory; and — a touch of class — Saskia Baron talks to Edgar Reitz, director of Heimat, the 'super soap' that has been pulling in festival audiences.......................14 CAREER WOMAN Just back from her first Hollywood film, Mrs Soffel, Australian director Gillian Armstrong talks to Debi Enker about the experience — and about how she'd do it differently next time .........................26 HERE IS THE NEWS John O'Hara examines the organization of Australia's television news, talks to the people who plan it, and looks at how they put together a picture of the world ..................................................30 FUNERAL RITES Graveside humour can be international, as Belinda Meares found out when she talked to Japanese director Juzo Itami, about his film The Funeral .................................................................34 A WOMAN'S PLACE Graham Shirley looks at the role women have played in the Australian film industry and talks to the directors of a new documentary, Don't Call Me Girlie..............................................................36 WORKING-CLASS HERO Special Grand Jury Prize at Cannes and opening night gala at Melbourne: Birdy is — and isn't — like Alan Parker's other films. Nick Roddick talks to the director .........................40 PUTTING THE BUMS ON THE SEATS Peter Schmideg plunges into the wild world of film advertising — the posters, the trailers and the things you don't see ..........................................................44 FACTS AND FIGURES A round-up of the current production scene, with special reports on For Love Alone and Double Sculls. Plus the second part of Fred Harden's guide to microcomputers — how they can help the writer and the sound team — and a brief look at how Robbery Under Arms didn't exactly walk off with the Australian box office loot..................................................48 FILM REVIEWS Full-length reviews of Birdy, The Company of Wolves, The Falcon and the Snowman, Mrs Soffel, Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment and Porky's Revenge, The Purple Rose of Cairo, The Razor's Edge, Starman and Stranger Than Paradise. Plus shorter reviews of all the recent releases..........................................................63 BOOK REVIEWS Chaplin — His Life and Art by David Robinson; Art Politics Cinema: The Cineaste Interviews edited by Dan Georgakas and Lenny Rubenstein; Australian Film & Television Finance & Investment Guide issued by the AFC; and Special Effects — Wire, Tape and Rubber-Band Style by L.B. Abbott..............73

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John Schlesinger: Is this not America?
Facts or Figureheads?
TV news in Australia
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Above, Channel 10's David Johnston goes fearlessly in search of a visually interesting news story. Below, directors Gillian Armstrong and Alan Parker talk about their latest films.
Writs and recriminations fly over casting dispute

**Equity objects to Lancaster Miller visa applications**

In the aftermath of the protracted dispute over foreign actors in last year's *Fortress*, a fresh row is currently simmering over the forthcoming $47 million miniseries, *The Lancaster Miller Affair*. Based on the real-life story of a flying ace (Bill Lancaster) and his lady (Chubby Miller) and set in the late twenties, *Lancaster Miller* has been in pre-production since early autumn.

Shooting was due to start in mid-June, but has now been delayed for at least three weeks as a result of a court dispute about two of the lead roles, those of Bill Lancaster and his friend, Hayden Clarke. Kerry Mack has already been cast as Chubby Miller. There are also rumours of the same dispute causing a budget hike.

According to associate producer David Hamnay, the search for Australian actors to play the parts of Lancaster (who was English) and Clarke (who was American) began in March, after both Sam Neill and John Hargreaves had turned down the former role.

Letters to actors' agents came up with 50 possible Lancasters and 33 Clarkes. Of the former, says Hamnay, 30 were shortlisted; of the latter, 23 were rejected for age or ethnic reasons (an Italian actor, it was agreed, could not play Lancaster). Three were overseas actors anyway, who happened to be represented by Australian agents.

Of the potential Clarkes, 25 were tested; three were rejected for age and ethnic reasons, two were unavailable, and three were overseas artists. None of the remaining 43 actors was suitable for either role.

Four days after the tests were completed, on 24 April, a letter was sent to Equity outlining the steps already taken, and requesting support for visa applications for British actors. Possible names suggested were David Bowie, Sting, Timothy Dalton and Simon McCorkeld.

Equity, says Hamnay, took until 23 May to reply, and the answer was 'No'. Accordingly, the production company went ahead and applied to the Department of Immigration for visas for the two actors who had been definitely approached, Peter Firkin (for Lancaster) and Joseph Bottoms (for Clarke). Equity objected to both applications.

On 4 June, the applications were rejected. An appeal faded no better, with the National Disputes Committee unanimously reaffirming the earlier decision.

Equity's chief objection to the applications, it appears, was that the cast's roles were not properly carried out — a claim which has subsequently become the subject of threatened litigation between director Henri Safran and Actors and Announcers Equity, on the grounds that Equity was making 'an overt attack on [Safran's] integrity'.

In the meantime, Lancaster Miller Producers cast their net again. Finally, on 17 June, the day shooting should have started, Nicholas Edie was cast as Lancaster, and John Cull as Hayden Clarke. Hamnay describes the whole experience as 'a Kafkaesque nightmare', and says he is 'outraged beyond belief' by Equity's behaviour. 'It is a question of intellectual, creative and artistic freedom being abused,' says Hamnay. 'It is every director's and every producer's right to choose the best person for the film.'

Both Hamnay and Lancaster Miller's producer, Paul Davies, are adamant that they did everything possible to get a suitable Australian actor before applying for the visas, and that the casting of Firkin and Bottoms was not gratuitous. 'We've all seen Americans and Englishmen playing Australians,' says Hamnay. 'Why should we be insulting the British and the Americans the way they have insulted us?'

John Wiley, President of the Screen Producers Association of Australia, set the dispute in a wider context, and said the Association 'is as much depressed as angred by Equity's attitude to the situation as a whole. Their position seems to be built on nothing at all: if you look at the facts, you can see the writing on the wall'.

Wiley says, 'This is what's going on: Equity is making the best possible film, not just another good-looking Australian picture. We want it to be great. Equity's position is an absolute abuse of intellectual and artistic freedom, telling an artist what he can and cannot do. It's got nothing to do with the defence of employment. How clear they say that, when their knocking back of the application involved the livelihood of 68 crew, 145 actors and 1,060 extras?'

Had Edie not been available for the title role, Paul Davies is adamant that the production would have been cut despite the $1.5 million that had already been spent on development. 'That,' he says, 'would have been our responsibility to our investors.'

Nick Roddick

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**Film industry prepares for tax summit**

**White paper proposes end to 10BA**

While the controversial White Paper on the Reform of the Australian Tax System is currently encountering a hostile reception from the trade union movement, it is also causing some concern within the film industry.

In the section of the report dealing with reforms to tax shelter legislation, paragraph 4.14 notes that the 10BA concessions, which were expected to cost $13 million in 1981-82 and $20 million in 1982-83, are to be abolished. The paragraph also notes that the concessions have been heavily utilised as a shelter for high income earners.

In the following paragraph, the report states that the government 'is disposed to discontinue the immediate 133 per cent deduction for films and the 33 per cent exemption. Were this course taken, the alternative already in the law of two-year write-off of the cost could remain and the Government would consult with the film industry on more cost-effective and equitable forms of assistance.'

Representatives of the film industry have been quick to point out that the White Paper is a proposal rather than a fait accompli. 'The White Paper is an options paper and a basis for discussion,' says Australian Film Commission Chairman Philip Adams. 'It does not in any way conflict with existing commitments made to the film industry. A month ago, the government publicly confirmed that the film tax concessions remain for the life of the present Parliament. There is nothing in the White Paper to suggest that this commitment will not be honoured.'

Adams adds that 'the 10BA concessions are envied and admired by filmmakers around the world'.

Terence McMahon, Director of Film Victoria, echoes Adams's view, stating: 'It's not only a White Paper — it's not the law of the land yet, although the Government has indicated its preferred option quite clearly.'

While he notes that the paragraph dealing with the abolition of 10BA leaves room for industry discussion, he adds: '10BA will be hard to follow. It resuscitated the film and television industries, and the excesses associated with 10B, the 10BA predecessor, were not apparent under 10BA.' Like Adams, McMahon adopts a wait-and-see approach — adding, however, that 'one cannot question the prerogative of the Government to follow its preferred option'.

Anne Britton, of Actor's Equity, took a stronger position on the proposed concession cuts, stating: 'We would obviously oppose any change. Without some form of Government assistance, there is little possibility that the Australian film and television industries would survive.'

A caustic note was added to the debate by John Wiley, President of the Screen Producers' Association of Australia. The '10BA concessions were not just plucked out of the air; every option known to man was tried at one time or another. Nothing radically different will work.'

While some factions of the film industry caution against over-reaction and others see the writing on the wall, one thing remains certain: the July tax summit, which will be attended by members of the film industry, should provide the arena for some very lively discussion.

Debi Enker
Brakes on the money machine

Drop in advertising revenue causes concern for Britain's ITV

"Just like a licence to print your own money" was the way that a television baron once famously described the travails of owning a British commercial TV company. Virtually alone among industrialists, he was an ex-proprietor of the U.K. economy, the advertising-funded Independent Television Network (ITV) has prospered almost obscenely during the long British recession. ITV revenue has increased fivefold since 1974, taking total annual revenue above the £1 billion mark. In the first half of last year alone, advertising income shot up 15% — three times the rate of inflation.

No one knows why, historically, commercial television has been so impervious to the ups and downs of the economy. And no one knows why, suddenly, the advertisers have turned away, and the ITV system has been plunged into its first true financial crisis since 1956.

The alarm bells were first sounded at the end of 1984. Advertisers showed a clear-cut one-year decline in ad money of 3% for November — the first such dip in three years. Hopes that a slight temporary hiccup were dashed in the new year: by February, the shortfall was 7.5%, and cutbacks started to hit the New York Times since.

The ITV system is made up of fifteen regional companies — five of them providing most of the output. Their activities — which form themselves into a network during prime time. The largest, Thames TV in London (maker of such shows as Benny Hill and Minder), announced the closure of one of its studios and a 2% cut in all budgets. In the North, Central TV (Crossroads, Shine on Harvey Moon, Auf Wiedersehen Pet) trimmed 5% from costs.
News Plus

The company also came closest to providing the one major news story from Cannes this year: a tie-up with America's mushrooming Film Films. Cannon's Manheim Golan boasted of having won some $30-million worth of business at Cannes, including a film deal with the Handel Film group in which Jean-Luc Godard to make a version of King Lear.

And, on the Festival's first Sunday (12 May), Golan promised that a big deal with a huge deal under was imminent. By Wednesday, however, the deal had not been signed. As of now, Cannon distribute through Hoyts and currently have no production tie-ups in Australia.

Nick Roddick

Log-jam update

Moves underway to clear censorship backlog

Although distributors and exhibitors are still facing delays of up to six months in getting censorship classifications on their films, recent moves by the Attorney-General's department have begun to alleviate the problem.

At the end of March, the Film Censorship Board was swamped by a backlog of 2,800 applications comprising film, video and television programmes awaiting classification. According to Frank Matzi, executive officer for the Board, the number had been reduced to 1,450 by the end of May, as a result of "short term firefighting methods" instituted by Attorney-General Bowen.

Moves by the department, in response to mounting pressure from the film and video industries, have taken two forms. The short-term measures have been to assign an emergency task force of four officers to the Board for one month, and to allow increased expenditure on overtime. In addition, the current membership of the Board will soon be increased from nine to twelve, thereby providing three extra full-time officers to clear the backlogs. Long-term moves include plans to computerize the office over the next twelve months, and to supply additional staff to develop the computer system and transfer approximately a quarter of a million card-file entries on to the computer.

The new Board members should enable a reshuffle of the screening schedule and ratio, which stands at a time allocation of 45% to television (comprising only imported product for commercial stations), 30% to cinema, and 25% to video. It should also enable some as a relief to increasingly frustrated film industry personnel, for while the delay in video classification is projected to shrink to only two months by July, the delay on theatrical releases, according to Matzi, stands at three to four months. This figure, it is anything, an optimistic one, some distributors have complained of delays of over twelve months, and of being limited to one screening per week, even when they had 20 films awaiting classification.

"Though most of the distributors contacted were clearly agitated, they did not wish to be identified in antagonizing the Board at this stage it can only make it more difficult for us," one explained. In spite of the havoc that the delays are causing for release timetables, all the distributors stressed that the fault did not lie primarily with the censorship department but with the supply of stock. It is only in the fall back to February 1984 when classification of video titles was made compulsory, an enormous responsibility which had been created for the censors, yet apparently no one had the foresight to provide the additional staff and finance necessary to cope with the load.

A further complication is the duplication and triplication of services; many distributors go through three separate evaluations for television, video and cinema release. And, if a film is refused registration and subject to appeal, or needs cuts, it must be allocated additional screenings which can cause further delays for scheduled films.

A recent proposal by the Attorney-General's department does suggest a short-cutting of this prolonged procedure. Though it is yet to be officially implemented, the proposal states that all films will have to be viewed for video classification, if video distributors furnish a copy and pay a fee of $100, a very reasonable proposal. It is felt that this move will enable the board to clear its backlog of video applications, which currently stands at a time allocation of 45% to television, and 30% to cinema.

In terms of creativity, it was the off-beat that this viewer found the most stimulating, while the family stories had depth of treatment and showed solid craft, doing more for their particular points of view than those with a more obvious social conscience.

Andrew L. Urban

Off-beat themes in this year's student films

Film School screenings reveal more than technical skill

There may be an eccentric genius among this year's graduates from the Australian Film and Television School, but there are certainly some very promising talents. What is more, this year's best work amongst the students reflects the confidence that the School promotes technique ahead of creativity.

Most interesting enough, however, those films or videos which dealt with social issues head-on generally failed; it was in the more subtle approach to picture making that the students shone.

The most whimsical of all this year's work was an eleven-minute, 35mm colour short, 7.55 AM, written by Robert Marchand and directed by Robert Alcock. Witty, wordless, surreal and technically good (with some good effects work by Mark Ferguson), it showed great promise in its makers, and has already been picked up for general exhibition by GTO.

Ferguson, who majored in editing, came up with a surprise when he somehow squeezed in sufficient time between editing other student works to make his own 30-minute, 16mm colour short, Danny, with Marchand again writing. Ferguson assembled a strong cast for a deceptively simple romance between a country boy and a city girl in a lodging house. Behind the story, however, a bizarre event — which is only glimpsed — takes place.

Marchand's The Cellist (27 minutes colour, 16mm), which he both wrote and directed, showed his special talent for finding engaging human stories with a twist. And Franco Di Chiara's Life After Death, scripted by John Lomie and made with minimal resources, showed its maker to be a natural, fluent filmmaker, going for expressive and communicative pace.

The story is accurately observed and illuminating, its central character a 55-year-old woman whose husband's death has made her reject most people. "Give me the child . . ."

Luminaries gather for conference on children's television

"Prestigious", "elegant" and "high-flying" are not the predictable epithets for a children's television conference. But 'The Challenge of Kids IV', conducted by the Australian Children's Television Foundation at Melbourne's Regent Hotel in May, was all of these.

The conference was officially opened by Mr. Hazel Hawke, a member of the Foundation's board, with a glitzy dinner in the Regent ballroom. Around 200 representatives of government, industry, school, librarians, media, publishing and education attended the two-day seminar, which covered a broad range of topics, pertinent and topical in the context of the future of television for children.

The keynote address of TV VIPs from Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. were in attendance, headed by the keynote speaker, Britain's Channel 4's Ian Sardi. He advocated pluralist television for a pluralist society, and was one of a number of speakers to set children's television viewing firmly in the context of their necessarily complex everyday lives.

Undertaking the need for diversity, Isaac asserted that "broadcasting which serves the individual ends up serving the community". It was, he said, a powerful, persuasive and pervasive medium, and children needed to learn "about the language of television — who owns it, who writes it, what it says, how it says it, what else it may be saying."

Isacs also produced some useful formulae for the uninstructed who were looking for ways to approach younger viewers. "Children at all ages," he said, "need stories from television. They need stories about a world they know, and stories about worlds that they can only imagine. They need fantasy. They need the tang of truths they can recognize."
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about the sub-texts in drama scripts for children. And he added a warning: "A good story isn't enough unless it allows for active participation, unless it enables the kids to step into the characters' shoes, moment to moment, and face the same dilemmas, questions, choices — lets them call on their own personalities."

James Davern, executive producer of the well-established series A Country Practice, which attracts a huge number of youthful viewers, pondered on the wisdom of reducing television to a lowest common denominator. "The secret," he said, "is to treat your audience not as a mass, but as intelligent human beings. The gutters of the world are full of producers who thought their audiences were dumb."

And the concept of mass communication came under vigorous attack from a variety of delgates. "In most societies," said James Halloran, director of the Centre for Mass Communication in Leicester, "you can forget mass communication. TV is not a medium, but a social, political system."

Discussing the future of children's television, Peter Piddick, media editor and TV critic of The Guardian, warned that "the challenge appears to be not of kids' TV, but to it. The challenge to us is to keep space for it to breathe." And Ian Fairweather, children's programme co-ordinator for the Ten Network, placed the debate in a disturbing context, quoting a typical child's vision of the future: "All I could see was metal and concrete, and no trees or grass and a black, polluted sky." Said Fairweather, "Hope for the future has always been manifest in the young. What if the young have no hope of the future?"

—— According to Ross Howarth, executive media director with J. Walter Thompson (Australia), future advertisers could well look towards direct funding of children's television. Howarth blamed television stations' reluctance to support new developments in children's programming on "the uncertainty that has existed over advertising and programming standards."

"Any endeavour by a producer writer or television station to develop programming of strong appeal to children," declared Howarth, "will receive a special encouragement for the advertising industry."

On his second visit to Australia in six months, Jay Rayvid, senior vice-president of WQED in Pittsburgh, voiced a similar criticism, and called on Australian writers and producers to contribute to WQED's series of dramas for pre-teens, Wonderworks, which was funded in 1982 by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting with an initial budget of $6 million. Rayvid echoed the views of many speakers when he spoke of releasing children from the "do-good ghetto where, in the minds of many, children only watch alone, isolated from their parents, a ghetto where budgets that are spent on their programmes are either dreadfully low, or only made higher because of their ability to sell related toys."

Jill Morris

Briefly . . .

AWARDS: Five Australian documentaries were selected for awards at the 1985 U.S. Industrial Film Festival. The festival, held annually in Chicago, is the largest of its kind in the world, with 1,150 entries competing this year in twelve categories. Both Son and Seasons, produced by Richard Oxenburgh, and East Meets West, produced and directed by Ivan Hexter, won Silver Screen awards, with the former also receiving recognition as the winner of the Cultural Documentaries category.

Mr B Says No, produced by Anthony Heffernan, took home a Golden Camera award and Insult to Injury, produced by Ann Durrowetz, won a Certificate of Creative Excellence. The Fourm Victorian documentary in the group, Be a Sport, produced by Eve Ash, also impressed the jury and took home a prize.

Hector Crawford has been accorded the 1985 Sir Charles McGrath Award for Individual Excellence in Marketing. The award is presented annually by the Australian Marketing Institute for outstanding contribution to marketing in Australia. Crawford, a pioneer of local radio and television and a conductor of Music for the People, received the award in recognition of his contribution to the promotion of Australian television at home and abroad.

Nominations have opened for the 1985 Byron Kennedy Award, which aims to recognise, encourage and reward talented people in any facet of the film and television industry. The award will be presented annually by the Australian Marketing Institute for outstanding contribution to marketing in Australia. Crawford, a pioneer of local radio and television and a conductor of Music for the People, received the award in recognition of his contribution to the promotion of Australian television at home and abroad.

Nominations close on 2 August, and should be directed to The Jury, Byron Kennedy Award, Australian Film Institute, 47 Little Lonsdale St, Melbourne 3000.

CORRECTIONS: In the directory of Australian films screening at Cannes (Cinema Papers, No. 51) we listed The New South Wales Film Corporation as the representatives for The Boy Who Had Everything. The film was represented by Stewart Heffernan, for J.C. Williamson Film Distributors, who have exclusive world-wide distribution rights for the feature.

Saskia Baron is film editor of City Limits magazine in London.

Rod Bishop teaches film at the Phillip Institute of Technology.

Pat H. Broeske is a freelance journalist and writer on film and television based in California, and a regular contributor to Soap Opera Digest.

Rolando Caputo lectures in film at Deakin University.

Joan L. Cohen works in the film department of the Los Angeles County Museum.

Robert Conn is an optical effects technician.

Allarabaye Daja is the editor of the Senegal-based African cinema review, Unit Cinéma.

Derek Elsey is associate editor of the International Film Guide.

Graham Fuller is film editor of Stills magazine.

Helen Greenwood is a freelance book editor and writer on film.

Sarah Guest is director of the Australian Council for Children's Film and Television and a board member of Film Victoria.

Jimmy Hafefsee is a freelance writer on film.

Fred Harden is a Melbourne film and television producer and has a regular column on technical information in The Video Age.

Ilan Horner is a film, video and entertainment journalist based in Sydney.

Shelia Johnston is a London-based writer and film critic for LAM magazine.

Paul Kalina is a freelance writer on film.

G. R. Lansell is a freelance writer on film and was co-editor of the Australian Motion Picture Yearbook 1983 and The Documentary Film in Australia (1982).

Adrian Martin is a tutor in film studies at Melbourne State College.

Geoff Mayer is a film critic at film studies at the Phillip Institute of Technology.

Brian McFarlane is a lecturer in English at Chisholm Institute.

Belinda Meares is a New Zealand-born freelance writer working out of Paris.

Jim Schembri is a journalist at The Age.

Peter Schmideg is a freelance film researcher currently working on documentaries.

Mark Stiles is a freelance filmmaker.

David Stratton is the host of Movie of the Week on SBS TV and reviews films for Variety.

Andrew L. Urban was editor of Encore and is currently managing editor of Event and a regular contributor to the arts pages of The Australian.

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Proclaiming that the blink of an eye. Scaled down and with few frills, it barely seemed like a festival at all: one just seemed to be going to the location. Held in the busy shopping 'village' street, were just as long. Lines for was less than standing room only, and few $125 a throw for film and party, the event starring Maggie Smith and Michael Palin. At that former director Gary Essert had. Where normal filmgoing.

All in all, the proceedings seemed austere and lacking in a sense of showmanship. New Filmex directors Ken Wlaschin and Suzanne Normooy, who came with organizers and excellent administrators, but they don't have the daring and sense of fun that former director Gary Essert had. Where were the opening-night elephants and the ballons? It's true that such things played havoc with the budget, but at least you knew you were attending an event. This year, you wondered.

Filmex '85 presented 143 films from 24 different countries. The predominant language was English, with a strong sprinkling of Spanish-language films. The Far East was well represented, too, but offerings from the European mainland were sparse.

For the first time, there were prizes -- the 'Independent Feature Competition', in association with the Independent Feature Project, with three awards to offer. Grand Prize went to The Roommate, directed by Neil Cox, and described in the Filmex programme as 'The Odd Couple set in a freshman college dormitory'.

Aas Ghazali's Before and After won Best Fiction Award, and Best Documentary went to Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg's moving study of early gay politics, The Boys in the Band.

The opening night premiere was A Private Function from Great Britain, starring Maggie Smith and Michael Palin. At $125 a throw for film and party, the event was less than standing room only, and few Hollywood celebs showed up.

Ken Cameron's Fast Talking, which proved the most popular Australian film at Filmex.

Always provided the glitter the opening night audience was after, however, the films with known faces from the film industry, including Steve Martin, Ten Garr, Sally Kelly and Henry Jaglom. There were several Filmex sell-outs, as word spread quickly about the movies.

One of these was Michael Aper's 28 Up, which had a repeat screening. Made for British television, this absorbing documentary follows the lives of several young people at ages 7, 14, 21 and 28. Colin Buckley's Blue Money, another Brian Telmoivo, was also a sell-out screening, and featured Tim Curry as a cab driver with showbiz aspirations. Paul Morrissey's Mixed Blood was perhaps the festival's popular hit, and one of the few films talked about by everyone.

In the domain of the more traditional 'art' film, Krzysztof Zanussi's Sokojopoksiej Slonca (The Year of the Quiet Sun) -- recently acquired for Australian release by Shaimili Films -- together with Marcel Camus's Los Santos Inocentes (The Holy Innocents), and Hideo Gozha's Onimasa, were highlights of this year's festival. And the inevitable Helmaat (Night Island), Edgar, Brazil, a dark yet epic, got raves from those with enough stamina to sit through it.

The Far East provided close to 20 films, programmed in the hope of drawing the diverse Asian population of Los Angeles to Filmex. This never really materialized -- Westwood was too far and the $6 tab too steep -- in spite of the really interesting selection of films, especially three from Korea, two from Sri Lanka, and a stunner from China. Xie Jin's Qiu Jin -- A Revolutionary.

Less soberly, All-Nite Champagne featured forty screen treat bookended by Top Hat and Breakfast at Tiffany's. Champagne was served and, for a few hours one could forget the general lack of excitement and the various technical hitches that seem to plague every Filmex (maybe some film is out to prove that it's a dying art form?).

The closing night film was Almost You, directed by Adam Brook and starring Brooke Adams. A romantic comedy set in affluent Manhattan, it outshined its audience, ending Filmex with a wapshot and adding to the general feeling of going to a film festival that wasn't really festival.

With increasing concern over non-African control of the continent's cinema distribution, between the ninth and tenth Pan-African Cinema Festival at Ouagadougou (FESPACO) set out to be a film-popular -- a celebration by and for the people of Africa, with African solidarity as its theme. Held between 23 February and 9 March in the Upper Volta capital, all the 1985 event lived up to its three main goals: to be open to all, to give all-comers a chance for self-expression, and to reflect on the path that future initiatives should take.

Opening and closing with concerts by orchestras of local children, the festival also featured Nightly performances by folk dance troupes, a ball in honour of visiting filmmakers, and a series of trips to the countryside around Ouagadougou. Such care and attention are virtually non-existent at other filmfests.

Two of the major awards went to Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg's Moving Study of Early Gay Politics, The Boys in the Band, and Paul Morrissey's Mixed Blood was perhaps the festival's popular hit, and one of the few films talked about by everyone.

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Another feature of the festival were the open forums which followed the screenings, forcing directors to face up to public questioning of their films and to speak directly about their work. Perhaps inevitably, some of the directors appeared not to welcome this exposure, while others revelled in it.

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Isa Le Tisserand (Issa the Weaver) by Idrissa Ouedraogo from Burkina Faso, is about a Kurkina village weaver. Like everywhere else, the village he lives in becomes dependent on trash brought in from elsewhere, and the weaver, to adapt, gains up weaving -- a sad, 20-minute story told against a background of plaintive music.

The official prize for best short, however, went to Mariamu's Marriage from Tanzania, by Mangayoma Ngogue Ron. A film about a marriage who can't turn out, only be cured by the traditional village medicine man -- a fitting prize-winner for Ouagadougou's celebration of African solidarity.

Local children sing in welcome at the Pan-African Festival at Ouagadougou.
Far Eastern promise

Hongkong festival provides a mixed panorama of Asian films

Now in its ninth year, the Hongkong International Film Festival has grown fat, with some 150 films spread over four venues and two weeks. But, despite its size, there is little of the usual festival raucousness: foreign directors were thin on the ground this year, and most of the aim HK$1.5 million budget went on assembling an impressive international section, including a sizeable Asian segment, and the now customary array of book-up booklets.

Most of the international selection was familiar to any traveller on last year’s festival circuit. But, in arthouse-starved Hongkong, Homecoming, Chinese style: Yim Ho’s Si shui liu nian (Homecoming),

which has only one film society worthy of the name (Studio One), no archive and a ruthless commercial sector — the films are eagerly devoured. Last year, the festival was managed to make a small profit on ticket sales. This year, the spacious venues of the Kowloon City Hall and Kings Theatre frequently looked empty.

But it is the Asian section which has given the HKIFF its deserved reputation. With the death of Shaw Bros. sets. And Tsui Hark, though sensitive, introverted performance by the Chinese production was represented only by a variable clutch of mainland productions. And it was the mainland that provided the coup d’choc for the whole Asian section. Chen Kaige’s extraordinary use of ‘Scope’, the latter raising a balladic tale set amid the dusty landscape of Shaxiu province, which evoked Jancze in its use of music and ritual, and Bresson in its visual choosiness.

Using stylized snatches of dialogue, it tells of the relationship between a Swiss Route Army soldier and a poverty-stricken family whose teenage daughter is to be wedded in an arranged marriage. On the evidence of Hsing tudi, the mainland could soon see a new wave explosion along the lines of Hongkong (in 1979) and Taiwan (since 1983).

In the event, though, it was Thailand and Indonesia which produced the most satisfying works, paying no lip-service to international tastes, and dealing with their subjects in wholly local terms. Chantal Vizan’s Titian serambut dibelah tujuh (The Narrow Bridge) joined the growing body of Indonesian films dissecting the contradictory demands of Islam in a rural society, polarizing its theme into the conflict between an older and younger generation.

Both his film and Cherd Song’s Pueng Paeng, from Thailand, featured some evidence of ‘Neo-Realism’... Andersen & Co. etc., and some evocative, minimal plot, and a striking performance by Chanutepon Vissophon, as the younger, selfless sister, Paeng.

And nobody could fault the excellence of the joint first prize-winners, both from Brazil: Povo da Lua, Povo do Sangue (People of the Moon, People of Blood) — a dreamy, melancholy portrait of a threatened local tribe, and Seguranca Nacional (In the Name of National Security) — launched an anti-governmental attack. But noble efforts had increased production by 10%.

But the gentle irony of this delightful film travelled and translated badly, and Harold left Oberhausen empty-handed.

As did Rhinus, unpromisingly described in the programme notes as ‘a story about housing problems in Rotterdam produced with non-professional actors’. It turned out to be an affectionate and often very funny portrait of a crafty old scrap-merchant with a huge beer gut, an even bigger mouth and a taste for the anti-social new suburb.

The form/content question which beset the episodic adventures of the unlovely Otmar Schickers — nearly half the 104 entries in competition were assigned to this category — and on weightiness of subject rather than on formal innovation.

Due, perhaps, to the predominance of entries from the East and the South where, whether for economic, political or film-cultural reasons, the real aesthetic holds sway, this focus was also fostered by the festival’s policy of screening films in two programmes under thematic headings, albeit often of the vaguest kind (eg: ‘That’s Life!’).

Whether predominated at the prize-giving, too. Totem was a dour Danish study of disaffected punks, while Hazateres (Homecoming) was a sympathetic but utterly conventional documentary portrait of ethnic Germans who returned to Hungary illegally to seek a new home in their motherland. Das Lustige Spiel (The Fun Game) from the GDR took a dour look at a housing project — a nationalistic atrocity cut up, its board game currently popular in the USA — which cired out for the jet-black comic touch of Dr Strangelope or The Atomic Cafe.

Another entry from the GDR which netted a number of awards was Rangierer (Shunters). Quietly observing a group of railwaymen shunting trains, this film dispensed with dialogue and voice-over commentary, simply relying on the beauty of its cinematography and the texture of natural sounds to achieve its effects, and was only spoiled by a rather pedestrian approach to authentic labour.

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U.S. films miss out on the prizes

Cannes jury and selection committee play it safe

It was — or should have been — the year of the Americans. The U.S. had four films in competition — *Mask*, *Pale Rider*, *Birdy* and *Mishima*, and, with French Minister of Culture Jack Lang bestowing the Légion d'honneur on the MPAA's Jack Valenti, efforts were evidently being made to heal the wounds of the past.

Not a jury verdict, though. With Miles Forman as its president, it voted unanimously in favour of an Eastern European art film, Emir Kusturica's *Otac na sluzbenom putu (Father on a Business Trip)*, the Yugoslav movie which, with — let's face it — poor word of mouth, has vanished into view in the Cannes issue of *Cinema Papers*. We shall return to it next issue.

Kusturica's film was over two hours and, quite frankly, neonon have been. The same might be said for *Red Ezredes* (Colonel Red), Istvan Szabo's study of a military careerist, which won the Jury Prize. The first hour was magnificent — a film that truly filled the screen. But, despite a great performance by Klaus Maria Brandauer, one's attention began to wander thereafter.

Two founder members of the French new wave came up with rather predictable works. Claude Chabrol's *Poulet au vinaigre (Chicken with Vinegar)*, a tale of murder and mystery in a small community, with Stéphane Audran going over the top as a cripplied agoraphobic, could have been *Le Boucher* crossed with *La Décadence prodigieuse*, but was, instead, merely an acceptable entertainment. And Jean-Luc Godard's *Détective*, greatly admired by some, assembled bits and pieces of the director's previous work, used a star cast — Claude Brasseur, Nathalie Baye, Johnny Hallyday, Jean-Piére Léaud and Alan Cumby — drawn from four decades of French showbusiness, and ended up as an amusing, self-reflexive but essentially slender film.

The only real excitement — it's tempting to say: the only real cinema — in the competition came from Nicolas Roeg's *Insignificance* (there will be a Roeg interview and an *Insignificance* review in the next issue of *Cinema Papers*) and the Argentine entry, *La Historia Oficial*, directed by Luis Puenzo.

The title of Puenzo's film links the heroine's job — as a traditionally teacher of history — with her unwilling discovery that the 'official version' of life under the junta is not the same as the truth.

Norma Aleandro plays the wife of a rich industrialist whose daughter, Gaby, is adopted. A series of events make her realise that Gaby's natural mother is one of los desaparecidos, and that her beloved child was born in jail to a political prisoner. Under the junta, there was apparently something of a trade in the adoption of babies born to 'non-existent' prisoners.

The theme itself is harrowing enough, but what makes the film unforgettable (despite a rather conservative form) is the decision to tell the story, not from the point of view of a relation of one of los desaparecidos, where the reaction could have been comfortably conditioned by liberal outrage but from, as it were, the other side. Norma Aleandro's performance as a woman whose seemingly solid world falls apart around her as she discovers the real history — of herself, of her country — nearly deserved the Best Actress award, which she shared with Cher. Roadshow has bought the film for Australia.

At the end of the ten days of competition, there were also a couple of engaging oddities — Dino Risi's *Scemo di Guerra* (Down in the Market), one of the Festival's strongest memories. The other strong memory was a market film, the Norwegian *Orions Belte (Orion's Belt)*, directed by Ola Solum. A highly intelligent political thriller set on the edge of the world — the desolate landscape round Spitzbergen — it provided me with the fortuitous opportunity of being able to stop talking about it since, and will doubtless be unable to restrain myself in future issues of *Cinema Papers*.

And René Feret's *Mystère Alexina* certainly stood out from the surrounding scrubbery because of its story: a young nineteenth-century woman who abrutly discovers, in late adolescence, that she is a boy (the French word 'mystère', which means 'mystery', is also how the French pronounce 'Mister'). Whether it would work as well if, unlike me, you came to it already knowing that Alexina would turn out to be Camille. I'm not sure. But, with a deft script by the veteran Jean Grisault and an outstanding performance by cartoonist Philippe Vulliemin in the title role(s), it left one of the Festival's strongest memories.

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Nick Roddick

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That said, however, this year's Fortnight seemed a little thin, apart from *Judo Itamis' Ososhiki (The Funeral)*, featured on page 34, and Susan Seidelman's *Desperately Seeking Susan*, a marvellously slick little comedy thriller, like mid-period Hitchcock, with a great central performance by Rosanna Arquette, and a very good one by pop star Madonna.

The main Festival's own 'Un Certain Jeune Regard' section, often a repository for also-rans, came up with two real gems this year: Francisco Regueiro's *Padre Nuestro* (Paternoster), about a terminally ill cardinal (Fernando Ray) who returns to Spain to trace his illegitimate daughter — who has become a whore — and his granddaughter. Only in Spain could a film about that not become a comedy. Gentle and intelligent, *Padre Nuestro* was characterised by that sense of texture that most Spanish films currently seem to have.

Emir Kusturica's *Otac na sluzbenom putu (Father on a Business Trip)* — unanimous prize winner at Cannes this year. But the award still came as a surprise to many.

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Nick Roddick
AN ENGLISHMAN ABROAD

One of the key members of the British 'new wave' of the late fifties, John Schlesinger has made five of his last seven films in America. Far away from films like Billy Liar and Darling, his latest, The Falcon and the Snowman — about two comfortably-off kids from Southern California who turn traitor — is probably his most American movie to date. Largely unapologetic about his own defection, Schlesinger talks to Graham Fuller about his career, and about The Falcon — which turns out to have more than a little 'Australian content'.

The filmmaker as gringo: John Schlesinger on location in Mexico City for The Falcon and the Snowman, which was shot at Churubusco Studios.
In the spring of 1977, two young Americans, 23-year-old Christopher Boyce and 25-year-old Andrew Daulton Lee, were tried and convicted in Los Angeles of passing top secret information to the Soviet Union. Boyce was sentenced to 40 years' imprisonment; Lee got life.

Even before John Schlesinger made his film about them, The Falcon and the Snowman, movies would play a part in their story. It was just a few weeks after Christopher Boyce had flown to Eastwood's in Escape from Alcatraz in the cinema that Boyce, in January 1980, used similar methods to Eastwood's to spring himself from jail. That October, still on the run, he phoned Robert Lindsey, author of the book, The Falcon and the Snowman, who told him Hollywood was planning a film about his spying exploits. "How does it end?" Boyce allegedly asked. "That depends on you," Lindsey replied.

In August 1981, Boyce was recaptured. Very shortly, he would be deep in consultation with Timothy Hutton, the actor hired to play him in the movie.

For two years, Boyce and Lee had made a mockery of America's defence security systems. And, when they were exposed, their crimes against the U.S.A. were considered as heinous as those supposed to have been committed by Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. But the boys were not exactly card-carrying communists, nor even vaguely radical. They came from exemplary middle-class American backgrounds — in Southern California's rich Palos Verdes peninsula — they had been altar boys together, and their chief "interests" were golf and horses.

What Schlesinger was quick to dismiss, however, was an abiding interest in spies — something which might seem to be suggested by the fact that his previous project, the award-winning BBC-TV film, An Englishman Abroad, was about English detective Guy Burgess. "There are all sorts of implausible things that those boys did in Falcon," he says, "but the film isn't about espionage. And I don't think An Englishman Abroad is about espionage — it's about a young man who's got himself out on a limb, by whatever action. We don't know the extent of what Burgess did, because he was never brought to trial. That, anyway, is a different kettle of fish. I'm not really interested in anything except the human story in that anecdote — and the one in Falcon, too. If it had been an ordinary sort of cloak-and-dagger story, I don't think I'd have done it."

So, although the film shows Christopher Boyce discovering the unimaginable in the cold, computerized defence dungeon where he worked...and Daulton Lee wheeling and dealing with grave Soviet officials in the equally chilly embassy, there is no attempt on behalf of Schlesinger and his writer, Steven Zaillian, to make The Falcon and the Snowman a tense spy thriller along conventional genre lines: their concern is with character.

Boyce, a candidate for the priesthood and the son of a former F.B.I. man (who pulled a few strings to get his son a security job when he quit his seminary), was employed from July 1974 as a code clerk with the defence contractor, TRW Systems Incorporated, which operated in close collaboration with the C.I.A. Working as a "byeman" in TRW's "Black Vault", Boyce had to monitor coded intelligence messages coming in from around the world via TRW's spy satellites. But he was shocked and disillusioned to learn, through messages he decoded, that the C.I.A. was interfering in the internal policies of other countries.

What particularly disturbed Boyce was the C.I.A.'s infiltration of trade unions and the Labor Party in Australia, and the Agency's likely role in the 1975 sacking of Labor Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam. During testimony, Boyce implied that the top secret security installations at Pine Gap, near Alice Springs, and at Nurrungah, near Woomera, were bases for covert C.I.A. operations into Australia. Using Whittam, who had been told that Pine Gap was an electronic intelligence gathering station with no weapon potential, had asked the Australian defence establishment for more information about C.I.A. activities at the bases, a politically embarrassing move that jeopardized their security. Defence officials put pressure on Whittam to "curb his behaviour", and Governor Sir John Kerr was duly briefed. Three days later, the Whittam administration fell.

Chris Boyce was so incensed by what he considered to be the C.I.A.'s perfidy that, in an act of what now seems like impulsive retribution against his own country, he turned traitor. Via the drug hustler, Daulton Lee, who was seeking a viable new trade, he began to peddle documents to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City. Thousands of defence secrets were leaked for cash to the Russians between April 1975 and January 1977, when Lee was finally arrested. Much of the information they passed on to the Russians was what now seems to have been so outrageously secret — that the C.I.A. colour-coded its spies. For the Russians, it was a valuable intelligence service.

Unlike Timothy Hutton and Sean Penn, Schlesinger chose not to meet the convicted men. "I'd seen Chris Boyce on television, and it struck me that he was taking up a certain position years after the event. It seemed to me that I should remain objective and think of the characters as they were when it was happening to them. We took them quite seriously. I didn't think our attitude to the characters in any way conformed what they did, because it was an act of considerable impetuosity and stupidity. On Chris's part, though, it was an act of considerable frustration, revenge and rebelliousness; and, in a sense, I can understand what he was thinking at that moment. He really wanted to throw a spanner in the works."

On Daulton's part, it seemed to me that I was dealing with something that I'd dealt with before: the idea of somebody who can't come to terms with his life, and who lives in a fantasy world — pretty venal, but nevertheless a pathetic figure. Obviously the Daulton character is more theatrical, and very easy for an audience to identify with, because his actions are so outrageous — which is another element in it that's appealing. But I was particularly interested in Chris. Maybe he wasn't thinking too clearly, but he was definitely conscious and in a muddle about what was going on around him — about a war which they all knew to be pointless, and about Watergate. It must have made a lot of people wonder. It seemed to me there was no point in coming down heavily against them. It would have been too easy to do that. History has already judged them."

The Falcon and the Snowman began its four-year gestation period at Fox, where Schlesinger prepared two scripts with Zaillian for Gabriel Kazaka, with whom the director was to co-produce the picture. Then it all fell through. "We were out in the wilderness for quite a long time, during which I thought we'd never make the film," says Schlesinger. "I came home to Britain and did An Englishman Abroad and Separate Tables for TV. Then, suddenly, it all seemed to be coming together again."

Orion were the new backers and, with Schlesinger, Hutton and others (including the Schlesinger goes West (Nathanauel): timing up a shot for 1977's The Day of the Locust. On the left, cinematographer Conrad Hall.
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Taking reduced salaries, $11.5 million was raised.

"We all knew we had to make considerable financial sacrifices to get this film off the ground," says Schlesinger. "We also knew we had to do as much of it in Mexico City as we could, to cut costs. So we built sets in the Churubusco Studios. It just meant that one had to think more in advance about detail. It wasn't a question of what seemed like an endless search for estate agents, production designer James D. Bissell found what they were looking for: two Palos Verdes-style houses in suburban Mexico City. Schlesinger compares the experience to Scotland for An Englishman Abroad, and stresses the importance of that kind of improvisation.

Dressing the sets and the officials for the Soviet outpost in Mexico for Falcon seems to have been reasonably straightforward, however. "I wanted to see how people dressed at the Soviet Embassy. We stood outside one day and followed a car in, so that somebody would come out to us. And I saw this man dressed in cowboy boots, jeans and a rather nice leather jacket. He came out and was very friendly: 'What do you want? What are you doing?' We didn't say we were doing a film, but at least I could see the reality of the place and how they dressed. One of the things I find endlessly fascinating as a director is observation — using actual experience as a sketchpad.'

Using a similar approach, Schlesinger had a two-week rehearsal period with his actors before shooting started, using a tape-recorder and transcriptions to build their improvisations into the script. The technique seems to have worked well with Timothy Hutton and Sean Penn, who give very strong performances. As Boyce, Hutton is all brooding intensity — dark, troubled, irritable. As Lee, Sean Penn veers between a coke hustler's swagger and a heroin addict's private mayhem. One scene, where Boyce confronts his accomplice at the airport and Lee's face crumples into that of a sobbing baby, has an unnerving quality — the 'fantasy' seems to have turned into something more like a nightmare, only real.

"That, ironically enough, was one of the easier days we had on the film. We did it terribly smoothly in one day, and went on our way. It is a very strong scene, but there was a sort of resistance on Sean's part to playing any kind of vulnerability with Tim. There was a kind of competitiveness between them which Tim — I think rightly — resented. It was stormy between them.

"It was a hard film — one of the least enjoyable for me, because I usually have enormously cordial relationships with my actors. An Englishman Abroad, for example, was a total joy, because I was working with very good friends to whom I was — and am — devoted. But I find the young American actor quite a tricky animal, because you don't know where the performance stops and the real person starts — they really do get into their parts.

"Tim Hutton, I found, needs reassurance and wants full discussion. Sean is pretty certain of what he's doing, but we had some tussles. I can only explain his behaviour as rebelling against any kind of authority figure, as he does in the film. But the brilliance of his performance — and Tim's — is undeniable, so what more can I say? It doesn't matter what you go through in the end, if you get the result. I don't think we've ever seen a drug addict like the one played by Sean Penn."

The Falcon and the Snowman is Schlesinger's fifth American feature, and he has been happy to commute between the U.S.A. and Britain for film projects since Midnight Cowboy (1969). His other three American films have been The Day of the Locust (1975), Marathon Man (1976) and Honky Tonk Freeway (1981). The latter was a massive portmanteau film with over a hundred speaking parts, whose financial disaster has passed into Hollywood lore without, on the surface at least, unduly affecting Schlesinger's critical standing. Falcon, on the other hand, has made money on both sides of the Atlantic.

In Britain in the same period, Schlesinger has made Sunday, Bloody Sunday (1971) and Yanks (1979), atmospheric and conscientious movies that succeed in capturing the spirit of a certain time — though not, one feels, with the brilliance the director displayed earlier in his career. Born in London in 1926, Schlesinger came to prominence on the crest of the British new wave' of the late fifties and early sixties — a period of transformation from postwar austerity to affluence and permissiveness.

A Kind of Loving (1962), Billy Liar (1963) and Darling (1965) spanned the gulf between drab working-class life in the North of England, and the chic and shallow 'swinging London'. Schlesinger is understandably quite firm about the fact that he is finished with such material, considering it now to be the domain of television. And he is not over-enthusiastic about the British cinema's new 'new wave'. He expresses admiration for David Puttnam, Roland Joffe, Bill Forsyth and Simon Relph, but otherwise laments the lack of entrepreneurial talent in Britain. His own bitter experience of trying to raise finance in his home country seems to have dulled his appetite for its film industry.

"I am anxious to work in England again," he says, "but I find the eternal struggle of getting something off the ground not worth it. I find thinking in Britain pretty unimaginative on the whole, and I resent people being rather hostile to me about my American films. I do unashamedly like working in America, because it's full of stories and opportunity, and there is enthusiasm for one's work. One knows money's always the problem. We're talking about substantial differences in budget and salary, which is fine for me — but I don't care, provided everybody really wants what you're doing. But I think that I am able to work in both places, and very lucky to be able to do that." ★
Illicit affairs, illegitimacy, dread diseases, great clothes... Welcome to the world of the soaps, or 'daytime dramas' as they used to be known, before they invaded the nighttime schedules and took over the top of the TV ratings. Long-time soap addict Pat H. Broeske looks at the history, the histrionics and the economics of the American soap opera, and (in the inset interview) talks to Bob and Eileen Pollock, the powers behind the day-to-day running of Dynasty.

Once television's bastard child, soaps no longer want for respectability. By day and night, they boast potent ratings, thereby boosting the profits of the American networks. And they have star power. Unlike sitcoms and shoot-'em-ups — not to mention the majority of today's feature films, with their teen-oriented fetishes — nighttime's super soaps abound in faces that are... well, faces. From the weekly wickedness of Dynasty's Joan Collins to the guest-star scheming of legends like Lana Turner (Falcon Crest) and Ava Gardner (Knots Landing), they provide welcome visions that require neither laugh tracks nor special effects.

The daytime soaps aren't doing badly in that department, either. Ever since Liz Taylor flashed her violet eyes on General Hospital — where she appeared in 1981 at the wedding of Luke and Laura, as the evil and wealthy widow, Helena Cassadine — it's been fashionable for stars to do guest bits on their favourite afternoon delights.

Marriage (here between General Hospital's Luke and Laura in 1981) can end a soap character's sex life.
Actually, the tradition was established in 1964, when a storyline for The Doctors found a group of celebrities — including TV talk-show king Johnny Carson — dropping by to promote a message for the National Association for Mental Health. Around the same time, Joan Crawford stepped in to sub for ailing daughter Christina, a regular on The Secret Storm.

In more recent years, rock group The B-52s and ballet dancer Edward Villela have visited The Guiding Light, Dick Cavett (wearing his hair greasy and parted down the middle) was a mystery soap which has since been cancelled, and television health guru Richard Simmons has played to a slimy travel agent on The Edge of Night.

According to legend, the soaps got their start in the early twenties, when a radio announcer filled empty airtime by picking up a book and reading aloud. The next week, he was besieged by listeners' letters clamouring to know what happened next.

Radio had its first continuing characters in 1929, with the nighttime favourite, Amos 'n' Andy. But it remained for schoolteacher Irna Phillips and advertising writers Frank and Anne Hummert to bring continuing characters — and sin and suffering — to daytime. The earliest shows set the trend. Literaryally created to sell soap, they included the none-too-subtly titled Oxydol's Own Ma Perkins (1931) and Betty and Bob (1932), with its tale of struggling secretary Betty, who marries Bob, son of a millionaire, despite objections from his family. The Depression, it seemed, could easily be overcome.

Dynamic pairings from three of soap opera's 'big 3s': left to right, Larry Hagman and Linda Gray of Dallas; Lisa Truax and Michael Leoni of daytime's The Days of Our Lives; and Joan Collins and Diahann Carroll in Dynasty.

Backstage Wife (1935) told of Mary Noble, who struggled against all odds — starlets included — to hang onto her matinee-idol husband, Larry Noble. Meanwhile, Our Gal Sunday (1937) asked the fateful question, "Can a girl find happiness with the rich and titled Lord Henry Brinltopre?"

TV's first soap bowed in in 1950. Titled The First Hundred Years, it was the dramatic story of young marrieds Chris and Connie Thayer, and its bubble burst in less than fifteen months. CBS's Love of Life, which premiered in September 1951, and the radio soap The Guiding Light, which met the light of the cathode ray just under a year later on the same network, were TV's first soap hits.

More than 40 soaps made their way onto daytime television between 1950 and 1960. The dominant theme of the day: how to keep a marriage intact. The most controversial issue: alcohol.

The characters also had time for endless cups of coffee. Themes heated up in the sixties, when The Guiding Light featured a storyline — by soap pioneer Agnes Nixon — on uterine cancer. Suddenly, daytime soap was going where nighttime TV feared to tread. But the soap audience began to waver, especially in the mid-seventies, when women — who have historically comprised the bulk of daytime soap audiences — sought social change during the halcyon days of the women's movement.

Nonetheless, the daytime soap audience had swelled to an impressive 20 million by 1976, largely due to increasing boldness in the bedroom and toward social issues. Among the hip topics: male rape (Love of Life), artificial insemination (Days of Our Lives), veneral disease (The Young and the Restless), interracial romance (Days of Our Lives) and women's liberation (All My Children). The audience grew to a reported 30 million by the end of the decade. Among the most avid fans: Andy Warhol, Sammy Davis Jr., Carol Burnett, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and the Baltimore Colts.
Before the daytime soaps came of age — with a star system all their own, and salaries said to be as high as $500,000 a year — soap credits went unmentioned in the official biographies of many a major performer. It wasn’t considered respectable to do the soaps.

All the same, a lot of respected names have done them and, to set the record straight, a roll call includes: Ellen Burstyn (The Doctors), Warren Beatty (Love of Life), Lee Grant (Search for Tomorrow and One Man’s Family), Sandy Dennis (The Guiding Light), Eva Marie Saint (One Man’s Family), Robert DeNiro (Search for Tomorrow) and Susan Sarandon (A World Apart and Search for Tomorrow). Not to mention Jack Lemmon (A Brighter Day), Martin Sheen (As the World Turns), Cleo Tyson (The Doctors), Marsha Mason (Love of Life), Christopher Reeve (Love of Life), Mark Hamill (General Hospital), Tom Selleck (The Young and the Restless), Jill Clayburgh (Search for Tomorrow), Kathleen Turner (The Doctors) and Rick Springfield (General Hospital).

John Frankenheimer is another soap alumnus: he directed episodes of Search for Tomorrow. Before he made his way to the mammoth miniseries The Winds of War, director Dan Curtis had a stopover as creator and executive producer of the cult soap, Dark Shadows, where the characters included vampires and witches. Director Mark Rydell and screenwriter Ernest Thompson also had sudsy forays as actors: Rydell appeared in both As the World Turns and The Edge of Night, while Thompson did Somerset.

Continuity is one of the big appeals of the soap opera: our lives may go up and down, but the soaps go on for ever. Our ability to live vicariously through characters whose emotional conflicts are, despite the gossamer trappings, realistic, is another lure. So is voyeurism. Hormonal rampages — long integral to the soaps — are particularly rampant during daytime hours, especially between unmarried lovers. In fact, young, impressionable soap fans could easily be misled. In soapdom, married couples have sex less than unmarried ones, all the characters seem to be doctors or lawyers, and amnesia is the commonest illness.

But why do one soap succeed and another fail? Network executives certainly haven’t found the answer. The roster of recent primetime casualties is dominated by shows that had the tight, closely-confined settings which are the uniting factor among the genre’s successes. Among them, Flamingo Road (set in the sultry south), Bare Essence (about the perfume industry), Paper Dolls (about model-ling), King’s Crossing (another slice of smalltown life), Emerald Point N.A.S. (a seafaring soap), and Kensington’s (set in a glitzy department store). None has rung the bell.

Aside from the ‘big D’ stalwarts, Dallas and Dynasty, only Knots Landing, set in a community of cul-de-sacs and connivers (led by Donna Mills and William Devane), and Falcon Crest, where Jane Wyman rules with wicked grandson Lorenzo Lamas, have successfully withstood the tumultuous ratings game.

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But that doesn’t mean that schedulers have given up on giving audiences new soap habits. This past year saw daytime welcome Santa Barbara; and, this fall, Dynasty will spin off Dynasty II: The Colbys. The genre’s persistence can obviously be attributed to its proven ability to earn that same green stuff that comes so easily to the Dallas and Dynasty clans. There are currently thirteen morning and afternoon serials on the three U.S. networks (CBS, NBC and ABC). Along with the game shows, they bring in some $1.4 billion in annual advertising revenue. And, because production costs of the daytime serials are significantly lower than their nighttime counterparts, they can bring in twice the profits of a primetime like Dallas. When General Hospital’s vital signs are humming (read: top ratings), it racks up an estimated $150 million in annual profits. All My Children is said to bring in around $120 million in profits. A single rating-point boost for a hit...
For most of us, Alexis and Blake and Krystle and Fallon and the rest of the Dynasty gang are figures of the small screen — and, of course, of our wildest, most mercenary dreams.

For Bob and Eileen Pollock, however, they are near and dear friends. As supervising producers of Dynasty and its impending spin-off, Dynasty II: The Colbys (which will debut this fall in the U.S.), they help co-ordinate the lives of the show's characters.

"We seem to be the only kids on the block who know the stories of every character," says Eileen. "We get phone calls from the writers asking, 'What was that fight between Jeff and Fallon about, the night after they were at that motel...?'"

Former actors and married for 38 years, "we are a one-type-writer, one-bed, one-car, ongoing love affair," jokes Eileen — the Pollocks first got together as a writing team during the so-called Golden Years of the fifties. "It cringe a little when I hear that phrase, 'Golden Years'," says Eileen, "because I think about what it's going to look like in print. People will have images of these two dear old parties in their rocking chairs."

She needn't worry. A vivacious and glamorous brunette, she gets so animated when talking about Dynasty that she sometimes jumps midstream into her husband's sentences. He doesn't seem to mind at all. Writing teams develop a habit about sharing sentences.

From the prestigious evening shows, Robert Montgomery Presents and The U.S. Steel Hour, the Pollocks moved to daytime, writing A Brighter Day and Love of Life. When they were named chief writers on The Doctors, they decided to bring some of their dramatic expertise to bear on the soap opera format. The series wound up winning an Emmy, as Best Daytime Series — the first such honour for a soap.

According to producer and star Joan Collins, "the Pollocks returned to nighttime, as head writers for Dynasty. They came aboard the show after its thirteenth episode, following the dramatic courtroom appearance of a mysterious woman in black in the season cliffhanger, "Nobody knew who the woman in black was," explains Eileen, "and with good reason: she hadn't been cast yet." But there were certainly plans for that character. In a meeting with producer Aaron Spelling, the Pollocks learned that Sophia Loren was being sought as a four-episode guest star. "We nearly fell over when we heard that," says Bob. "We were convinced that that character had to be major, not someone who exited after only four hours."

Along with Dynasty's creators — and good friends — Esther and Richard Shapiro, the Pollocks helped to pick Joan Collins to play the scheming Alexis. With John Forsythe and Linda Evans, she formed the series triumvirate that sent the show climbing the ratings. Casting coups aside, however, the Pollocks believe that storyline and characters are the superstars of the series. Says Eileen, "You must give audiences people they can give a damn about. They must hate them enough to sit there aggravated, waiting for them to get it in the neck."

And the appeal of the show? "It's the temper of the times," says Bob. "The whole hunger for glamour, for a return to times that are glittery and beautiful. "All those people with no monetary problems," adds Eileen, "but every other kind of problem. So what we have is this wonderful fantasy trip. We've built in honest-to-God human values that viewers can fasten onto. But there's that added bonus of watching the characters suffer in absolutely spectacular-looking clothes, and of watching their hearts break behind the wheels of absolutely spectacular-looking cars. I think there's an element of fun in the midst of all this suffering. A person can come away saying, 'You see: you can have all the money in the world, but it still can't buy happiness'."

The Pollocks work with a staff of writers who do their best to tangle further the already tangled lives of the Dynasty clan. Background stories — even those spanning seasons past — must always be considered. "That mining of the back story is what makes your canvas so rich and your texture so rich," says Eileen, "because your people have a life before the curtain goes up. We work until our canvas seems full — and correct."

Sometimes, the background stories can limit the range of a particular character. For example, Claudia Blaisdel Carrington (Pamela Bellwood) had to be written out of the series for a season. "The character had been mentally ill — she was a wounded sparrow," says Eileen. "It would have taken a whole season to play her rehabilitation. There was no way to play that on Dynasty, because hers was a very down, very grim kind of story. We had to take her off the show, so that she could return cured. That opened her up, to let her play a whole new range."

Stressing that "the actors on our show do not dictate the characters: they interpret the characters", the Pollocks nevertheless admit that they frequently have to smooth out their stars' problems with individual scenes. In particular, Bob Pollock recalls the time Collins questioned whether Alexis should kiss a king, as the script dictated. "I made a couple of dialogue changes, so she didn't have to kiss him. Later, when we were shooting that episode, I happened to be on the set. The king, who hadn't been cast when Joan first read the script, happened to be a very attractive man. And Joan came up to me and said, 'Why is it that I don't kiss the king?' I think I should kiss the king... figure. So we made a few more changes. And she kissed him. Quite well."

At the 1980 Republican convention, Reaganites wore buttons proclaiming 'A Democrat Shot J.R.'

Of the vixens and the villains, with both shows scuffling for the top spot. The race for the ratings was most evident this May, when both Dallas and Dynasty attempted to outdo one another with cliffhanger endings — the now-traditional way to cap a season's programmes, and to bring viewers back for the next slate of shows.

Dallas did not have a wedding (played by Patrick Duffy), that once noble character, via a careening car. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the ever-ruthless J.R. (Larry Hagman) once again had poor Sue Ellen (Linda Gray) locked up after her latest bout with the bottle.

On the other side of the Rockies — indeed, the other side of the world (in the fictional principality of Moldavia) — the wedding of Amanda Carrington to Prince Michael ended in bloodshed. Who among those gathered — including series luminaries John Forsythe, Linda Evans and Joan Collins — survived? Tune in next season...
November 1976-October 1982
November 1977-December 1983
February 1974-September 1977
December 1977-February 1982
January 1967-December 1977
698
582
579
304
318
557
390
424

parents, and a series of romantic conflicts between Mary and her foster father. The episode ends with Peart and a spurned local suitor in hot pursuit, and the now familiar cliffhanger question: "How long would the hundred dollars last? What would she do when it was gone?"

The initial appeal of the open-ended narrative to film producers was the same as its appeal to today's Australian television producers: serials were relatively cheap to produce and generated a reasonably stable following. It appealed to audiences because it exploited what E.M. Forster has described as the basic, primordial essence of storytelling: the ability to involve its audience in the pattern of "... and then ... and then ...". The intense desire to speculate on and learn the fate of interesting people is central to both the traditional close narrative and the open serial. But, in the latter, total knowledge must be denied.

In What Happened to Mary?, this denial extended to twelve chapters/episodes (although the story was extended a further six chapters in Who Will Marry Mary? the following year). In Sons and Daughters, A Country Practice and Neighbours, on the other hand, it is implied that this denial will last forever. Even the end of production is unable satisfactorily to resolve the complex interrelationships generated by the multiple, interwoven plot developments - as the script editors of Carson's Law and Possession are no doubt well aware.

The soap opera, a continuing, open-ended narrative about the domestic and romantic entanglements of a series of multiple relationships, has been a staple of American and Australian afternoon television for many years. The Channel 2 serial, Bellbird, deserves a special mention, both for its quality and for its historical function as Australia's first evening serial. The narrative pace, the setting - a small rural town - and the thematic concerns provided the basis for A Country Practice, currently Australia's most popular evening serial.

Following the nighttime success of Bellbird and the U.S. import, Peyton Place (1964-9), Number 96, The Box, The Sullivans and The Restless Years went on, during the seventies, to establish the commercial viability of the serial format in primetime. The dramatic context for these programmes, as well as for the current serials, has been largely established by the aesthetic and narrative basis of the American daytime serial - something which has probably been influenced by cost more than any other single factor. Despite the patriotic pride of the supporters of The Sullivans and A Country Practice for the supposedly indigenous qualities of these programmes, the differences are largely superficial ones - setting, accent, period. The dramatic structure is essentially the same as that of the American ones.

The protagonists of a soap opera, daytime or nighttime, are clearly identifiable - or stereotypical - characters, caught in convoluted and often bizarre plot complications. Yet the paradox is that, within this highly artificial dramatic context, the programmes seem, for the viewer, to be closer to some form of experiential reality than virtually any other form of drama. In other words, soap operas are able to break through the 'psychic distance' generated by fictional representations, so that the viewer, at

**WateMARKS**

*Australia's longest-running soaps in broadcast hours (up to the end of June 1985)*

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18 — July CINEMA PAPERS
As Wandin Valley says farewell to Molly, Geoff Mayer takes a cold, hard look at Australia's soap operas — at where they came from, how they tell their stories, how they hold on to their viewers, and what sort of world they portray.

least for the duration of the programme, feels he or she has an almost intimate involvement with the characters. Unlike the Hollywood domestic melodramas of the forties and fifties with their complex mise-en-scène, the Australian soap opera, like its American daytime counterpart, concentrates almost entirely on dialogue. It is a 'world of words', which locks the viewer into caring about Molly's leukemia (A Country Practice), Max and Maria's separation (Neighbours) and Barbara Hamilton's two-husband plight (Sons and Daughters). Just as the sets are purely functional, indicating the setting in a minimal fashion, so the camera set-ups (mostly medium close-ups, or talking two-shots) and the editing are entirely dictated by the demands of the dialogue. Movement by the character is likewise generally very restricted, so that nothing interferes with the continuous dialogue exchanges about never-ending personal and domestic crises.

The net effect is to position the viewer in a series of kitchens, living rooms, hospital corridors and doctors' (or vets') surgeries, where the same issue can be discussed, analyzed, agonized over, but rarely resolved. The emphasis is on dialogue, in other words, but it doesn't advance the plot. Consider, for example, the decision of the mainstays of Ramsay Street (Neighbours), Max and Maria (Francis Bell and Dasha Blahova), to separate over the long-kept secret about the birth of her son, Danny (David Clencie). The episode opens with Max and Maria telling their other son, Shane (Peter O'Brien), of the decision. Shane then discusses the problem — i.e. the hidden secret, the 'why' — with Daphne (Elaine Smith); this is followed by another resident, Jim Robinson (Alan Dale), announcing the break-up to his nosy daughter, Julie (Vicki Blanche).

Shane then agonizes over the separation with his mother, after which Max and Maria discuss the effects of their split on the estranged Danny. Maria and Shane then go over much the same ground again to conclude the episode. If that is not enough, the trailer for the following night shows Shane discussing the problem with Jim's mother-in-law, Helen (Anne Haddy), while the voice-over unnecessarily observes that 'Shane still isn't getting any answers'. Thus, while dialogue is the focus of the serial, rarely is it meaningful in the sense of plot development, which leaves ample time for the viewer to consider the ramifications of every action.

A languid pace characterizes the Australian soap opera. Unlike the discomfort generated by the rapid temporal and narrative jumps in a series like Hill Street Blues (which nevertheless retains some of the open narrative characteristics of the serials), A Country Practice, Sons and Daughters and the rest offer the security of always knowing what is happening. Narrative coherence, an important ingredient for many viewers, is an implied promise in each of these programmes. Unlike the strong conflict/confrontation/climax pattern of Dallas and Dynasty (which, at the end of each season, borders on the farcical), the gentle narrative rhythm of the Australian soap opera — with the exception of Possession and Prisoner — fails to disguise the basic similarities between the programmes. Particularly evident is the lateral — rather than linear — movement of the narrative, involving a series of often disconnected issues. A recent episode of Sons and Daughters crosscut continually between a triangle of characters with a problem: Samantha, Amanda and Carolyn; David, Lee and Tim; Wayne, Julie and Julie's father; and Beryl, Jim and Kingsford. Finally, the narrator extended each of these 'problems' in the trailer which concluded the episode. The problem can never be resolved.

Whereas the entire thrust of the traditional closed narrative is to resolve the problem, the soap opera functions according to the same principles as the classic striptease: it tries to involve and excite through a series of intensification devices, and builds to a strong emotional peak. Ultimately, however, it denies a complete and satisfying climax, for the resolution can only temporarily
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alleviate the desire to know. Thus, where the closed narrative of ‘socially conscious’ dramas such as Quincy, or sitcoms like Family Ties eventually contain the contradictions and ambiguities of the world, the soap opera offers — potentially, at least — a radical alternative, because of its narrative form and repetitive thematic concerns.

The paradox of the soap opera is that, while the text superficially celebrates marriage and heterosexual love as ideals, the narrative continually exposes them as unobtainable goals. Breakdown and heartbreak are essential to the problem-based narratives. Anne Haddy, who plays Helen in Neighbours, showed herself quite aware of all this when, considering the possibility of a romantic relationship for her character, she commented that she hoped it would be unrequited, “because as soon as anyone achieves happiness, that’s the finish”.

A Country Practice is something of a hybrid between the traditional closed narrative and the soap-operatic form. This is largely a product of the programme’s determination to inject a recurring series of social issues — child abuse, wife-bashing — into the usual, open-ended construction. Generally, the effect of these issues is to persuade the audience that they can be resolved (i.e. contained) by society — unlike the irreconcilable domestic differences of the less socially conscious soap operas.

Another factor which links all the soaps, daytime and nighttime, and which would otherwise seem to disturb the surface realism of the programmes, is the use of intensification devices to carry the viewer across commercial breaks, and from episode to episode. The most obvious is the time-honoured cliffhanger technique. At the end of the first episode of The Henderson Kids, Steve (Paul Smith) and the local bully appear to fall — literally — over a cliff. We cut to Tam (Nadine Garner) screaming and, as we move into a tight close-up, her scream is echoed over the freeze frame of her distraught face. The reaction shots on the face of Alexis’s daughter and lover when she announces that she is going to get married at the end of a Dynasty episode achieve the same effect as the frozen stare on the face of Caroline (Abigail) when she tries to convince Stephen (Michael Long) that she has seen the ‘ghost’ of her missing daughter in Sons and Daughters. Other intensification techniques include the often blatant use of dramatic music to generate excitement, coupled with the ‘empty look’, which allows the viewer to speculate on what is going on in the mind of a particular character. Commercial breaks provide an obvious punctuation point. For example, Tracey (Anna Hruby) tells of a plan she has hatched with Leigh (Lisa Critenden) to frame Jim (Sean Scully) and break up his relationship with Beryl (Leila Hayes) in Sons and Daughters. The camera moves in to a close-up of Leigh as her father asks, “Is that true?” After the commercial break, however, the confrontation continues as if there had been no break — except that the opening long shot of the group lessens the tension which had previously been built up to a mini-climax. The effect of such techniques is always to leave an emotional residue, either between episodes or in breaks during episodes. The emotional grip on the audience is never released: they must always be concerned about ‘what is happening to Mary’.

Though they don’t much like the word, soap operas are what have kept Grundys in business — that and game shows. With Sons and Daughters, Sale of the Century, Perfect Match and Prisoner on the current production line, the Grundy Organization is firmly established as one of the chief suppliers of primetime product for Australian television. Nick Roddick sketches in a brief profile of the company, and talks to its Managing Director, Ian Holmes, about approaches, programmes, and the failure of Possession to make the splash that was expected of it.

By the time he left, the Grundy Organization had been in operation for just under 20 years. In 1959, Reg took his 2CH radio quiz show, Reg Grundy’s Wheel of Fortune, across the street to the new medium, where it filled an hour’s Saturday afternoon slot on Sydney’s TCN-9. That was the start of an empire. In those early days, Reg presented the show, but it was as a programme packager that he proved...
packaging of programmes that most successful, and it is with the packaging of programmes that Grundys have prospered ever since.

Shortly after Wheel of Fortune was established, Grundy put together another quiz show, Concentration also for TCN-9, but this time hosted by someone else. Initially, Melbourne’s GTV-9 was running the same show, but hosted by the young Philip Brady (the Sydney show was hosted by Terry Dear). The result of the packaging deal was that the Dear show could be syndicated to Melbourne far cheaper than Melbourne could produce its own show. Grundy had gone nationwide — or as near nationwide as was possible on those restricted airwaves of the early sixties.

Packaging still remains the key to the Grundys method. The Grundy Organization develops a project — a game show or a serial — to the point where it can be presented to a network (though nowadays the network is likely to put up production money, and amortize it across the eventual serial). With network interest enlisted, the project is then developed to pilot stage. The third and final stage, if all goes well, is for an agreed number of episodes to be made for an agreed price. In general terms, the system is like a combination of the advertising business and the movies: the initial development of a project is, or should be, at the company’s risk; the actual making of the programme depends on a pre-sale. It is as near to a solid business set-up as the volatile world of the entertainment industry will allow, and it is very profitable for the packagers.

Currently, Grundys are involved in the production of 26 hours of television a week in Australia, with a further ten hours (Sale of the Century, Scrabble and Time Machine for NBC, with Sale of the Century also syndicated) being produced out of Los Angeles by Reg Grundy Productions Inc. With offices in the U.K., Hongkong and the U.S., Grundys programmes are now seen in over 60 countries, and a major development in Europe is planned for the end of the year, probably in France.

Of the Australian output, around 60% is currently game shows, and the remaining 40% serials. Though the late seventies saw them embark on tele-movies in a big way — in 1978 alone, Grundys made Image of Death, The Death Train, Roses Bloom Twice, Demolition, The Scalp Merchant and The Newman Shame — that is an area that has been cut back since Holmes moved in. The decision was obviously a commercial one: even with the burgeoning world ancillary rights markets, which can make territory-by-territory sales of a telemovie to broadcast television, cable, satellite and video a very profitable undertaking, the cost of developing and producing a one-off is such that it is just not capable of generating the same continuous cash flow as a successful serial or a hit game show.

And a regular turnover is the mainstay of the Grundys philosophy. Turning over particularly well right now are Sons and Daughters, with a rating in the mid-to-high twenties, closely followed by Sale of the Century, with a slightly lower rating but at the less-than-peak viewing time of 7 o’clock, and the magnificently vulgar Perfect Match, with a rating in the low-to-mid twenties — “but at a time,” says Holmes, “when that is exceptionally good.”

Definitely nor in the top range is Grundys’ most recent bid for the soap audience, Possession, the serial in which everyone seems to get a chance to shoot the central character, some time detective and frequent victim Vince Bailey (David Reyne). Listed in the company’s 1984 slate as a drama serial — that is, a continuing story with a central cast and a cliffhanger at the end of each episode — Possession has now been downgraded in the 1985 list to a ‘series’ (a number of episodes with recurring characters but each with a self-contained storyline). It has also sunk from primetime into the dog hours of the evening. What all this means is that, unlike all true soaps, Possession will not go on forever. 52 episodes will be it: the programme will not be back next season.

Obviously this is not the first time a Grundys programme hasn’t worked: Punishment, the follow-up to Prisoner, didn’t exactly light up the sky either. And Holmes is relatively sanguine about the failure of Possession: “With hindsight,” he says, “we probably tried to go too far away from the norm.” But it is the sort of hiccup which a company like Grundys will do its best to avoid, since it is, claims Holmes, only when a programme goes into its second season that the profit really starts to flow.

As with any area of commercial television, ratings have been as crucial to Possession’s demise as they have been to the success of other Grundys product. Interestingly, though, ratings are of indirect rather than direct importance: the actual success of a show doesn’t affect the amount of money Grundys get from the network, since this was determined before the show ever went to air, as part of the original commissioning deal. What ratings do determine is whether or not...
work renews the contract. And
that’s where the money is.

Renewal is thus the cornerstone of Grundys’ success. “A company like ours,” says Holmes, “needs a pretty healthy output of weekly productions. Having established that, you do have the opportunity to do other things.” In the past, The Young Doctors (1976-1981) and The Restless Years (1977-1981) have been rosy sources of health. Currently, it is Prisoner (in production since 1979), Sale of the Century (since 1980), and Perfect Match (since 1983). The first two are Grundys originals, the last was licensed in from the United States, where a version has been in syndication since 1967. Brightest hope of this season’s new shows is the enormously successful European participation show, It’s a Knockout — a sort of World War III fought with inflatable dolls and buckets of water — which was licensed from France's Guy Lux (a man, not a company) for an undisclosed but almost certainly substantial amount.

The other thing Holmes has done since his arrival at Grundys is pursue a policy of diversification. This has included a travel company, GO Grundy Travel, a $7-million family entertainment complex at Surfer’s Paradise — a sort of Grundyland — and a share in the Sydney Entertainment Centre. At the moment, however, there are no plans to repeat Grundys one and only venture into the movies, the 1974 film, Barry McKenzie Holds His Own. A plan, announced in 1978, for a $1.5-million development deal with the Australian Film Commission, never came to fruition. But Grundys are going back to the single-story format. A $4-million, six-hour miniseries is now in development with the 7 Network. And, claims Holmes, Grundys have “eleven to twelve” made-for-TV movies at various stages of development. The healthy output, in other words, is now allowing the other things.

The bottom line of Grundys' estimated $40 million turnover, however, is the packaged material — the games and the soap operas. Not surprisingly, Holmes resists the word 'soap': “I don’t like the expression, because it doesn’t relate to what we do. That form of serial production, which was started by the soap powder manufacturers, is not much like the ones we do. They were faster made, with a lower scene-count. Our production values are much higher.”

Certainly, Grundys’ stock is quite high within the industry. Though there is some inevitable grumbling about it being a factory — if used to be a joke that no one working on the major drama serials had ever set eyes on Reg himself — there is a general feeling that producers and directors are left to get on with the job without the front-office interference that is a regular feature of some TV production houses. The result, as any Australian television knows, can be the occasional classic episode, which brings the formula to life.

The formula is, in the final analysis, what some operatic — or ‘primetime drama’, as Holmes prefers to call it — is all about. Grundys works because the product keeps the public interested. And, though it will probably never feature in an anthology of great Australian drama, it certainly seems to hit the right sort of note to the Australian viewing public is concerned. For game shows, the formula is even simpler (though not, of course, simple to predict): the vicarious experience of at least one of the seven deadly sins, usually avarice. Perfect Match, with its constant hint of naughtiness and conflict, and its astute manipulation of the game show trick of secondary sponsorship (the giving of prizes whose brand names are endlessly mentioned on air); and Sons and Daughters, with its closely contained dramas and hothouse atmosphere, are among the most commercially successful products currently available on Australian television.

“I don’t like the expression ‘soap’, because it doesn’t relate to what we do. That form of serial production, which was started by the soap powder manufacturers, is not much like the ones we do”
Film Victoria is the Government film authority for the State of Victoria, established to encourage, promote and assist the production and exhibition of film and television.

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Phone (03) 329 7033
With a running time of fifteen hours, 40 minutes and ten seconds, Heimat is one of the most improbable hits of the eighties. Yet everywhere it has been shown — first in Germany (both in the cinema and on television), then in France, Britain, Italy — it has hooked audiences like some upmarket soap opera. They have become fascinated by the lives of the characters, hanging on for hour after hour to find out what happens next. At the screenings in Frankfurt, the audience stayed all night to see the whole film, then made themselves breakfast in the cinema and, in some cases, settled down to watch it again.

Heimat is the story of life in the small village of Schabbach, in the Hunsrück area of south-west Germany. It has 140 speaking parts, and covers a timespan from 1919 to 1982. Saskia Baron talked to Heimat's writer and director, Edgar Reitz (who grew up in Hunsrück), about the origins of the film, and in particular about one of its most difficult sections — the Nazi years in Schabbach.

When the first episode of Heimat was shown on German television, it scored ratings of 56%. "Something very strange started to happen," says Reitz. "German people began to write down their personal experiences and memories. They did it in the style of Heimat: it gave them a language and a framework. I recently got a 600-page script from a lady who saw it in December and had needed all this time to write it. She sent her memories, her life to me. Maybe it's that the German collective memory has been unlocked. This May was the 40th anniversary of the end of the war, and there's so little on film, so few documents about the war and the period afterwards. People and their stories have an obligation to the next generation to pass on their memories."  

"We Germans have a hard time with our stories. It is our own history that is in our way. 1945, the nation's 'zero hour', wiped out a lot, and created a gap in people's ability to remember. As Mischelich put it, an entire people has been 'unable to mourn'. In this case, that means 'unable to tell stories', because our memories are so fragmented. When the actual events they are confronted with. Even now, 40 years after the war, we are still troubled by the weight of moral judgement. Where's the dividing line between personal stories and public history? In our case, that means 'unable to tell our stories'. It is our own history that is looking for its place."

"In Heimat, all the elements are mixed up, so that I can explain how it could happen, how it was possible. But we were always careful to present facts, because people like to get a simple answer, and this answer could never be simple. There is no image of the Nazi period too light?"

"On the other hand, you have to consider this problem: what does it mean if we tell the story of someone living in the Nazi period who gives no answers for their actions — who, in a sense, is involved but not involved? Where's the dividing line between private, family life and political life? It's normal in cinema to divide them: it makes things simpler."

"I promised them anything," says Reitz. "And take short walks. By the time the snow melted, the most important characters and the village were on paper. I returned to Munich and showed it to a friend of mine."

That friend was a book editor who also happened to be a producer for WDR TV. The producer in him became excited right away, and he told Reitz to turn his synopsis, not into a novel, but into a screenplay. So, back in motion pictures, Reitz needed assistance. He called in an old collaborator, Peter Steinbach, and together they started to work on the film. But Steinbach didn't know the Hunsrück, where Reitz grew up and where the film was set. They wanted to get the dialect, atmosphere and social life right, so Reitz decided to return home for his first visit in years.

"My mother liked Peter, and told him many, many stories she hadn't told me. We got in the mood for his first visit in years."

Reitz's producer friend read the script as they wrote, and WDR finally bought the rights. That was a start, and preparations for shooting began in July 1980. But there still wasn't enough money. Enter another TV company, WDR. They looked at Heimat's mammoth script, and asked if it could be shortened. "I showed them anything," says Reitz.

"Cash for the first six hours of film was finished up after three months' shooting. In steps a Berlin TV station: another contract, another six hours. They were up to twelve now, after eight months' filming. By the time they ran out again, the actors and technicians had such faith in the project that they worked for several weeks without pay. The TV people were invited to visit them and watch them work — and so they got the rest of the money.

After eighteen months' shooting, Reitz returned to Munich, and spent another eighteen months editing the film. By June 1984, they had the first print, which was screened at the Munich Film Festival for the actors and crew, but also for Bernd Eichinger, Germany's top independent producer. He told Reitz that he'd do the premiere run without a fee. "What German movies lack," said Eichinger, "is the necessary shot of captive insanity. That is why Edgar Reitz's Heimat has my support, because a sixteen-hour film — that's insane!"
Gillian Armstrong's anecdotes about the production of her first American film, Mrs Soffel, are full of tales of literally numbing conditions, studio diplomacies and difficult decision-making. She talks to Debi Enker about her recent work with Diane Keaton and Mel Gibson, the studio system, the revival of the local film industry and the lure of music video.

The big temptation, writing on Gillian Armstrong, is effusively to proclaim the return of yet another great Aussie achiever. The last two years of her life have certainly offered all the right cliches. With only two features under her belt, she travels to the glitter capital and secures a project with MGM. Though they implore her to sign a three-picture deal, she politely declines, stating: "I don't want to tie myself up like that, and I definitely want to come back to Australia. Thank you, but no thank you." The patriotic undertones of this decision alone send the mental flags proudly unfurling.

Then there is the American project itself: a respectably budgeted production boasting two of the box-office's favourite attractions, Mel Gibson and Diane Keaton, and a supporting actor — Matthew Modine — who clearly has a healthy career ahead of him. The feminist spirits soar along with the nationalistic stirrings as one conjures up images of a plucky young female director at the helm of a production that few American women would get a crack at.

Finally, there are the much-publicized stories of this headstrong filmmaker steadfastly holding off armies of studio executives who want to dilute her vision . . . and winning! Now we're really cooking: a female David taking on a polyester-clad Goliath . . . an artist locking horns with businessmen . . . a proud Aussie battler returning to her native shores in triumph . . . a woman assaulting the male bastion. The right ingredients are all there.

But there is one major obstacle to an overblown ode to Gillian Armstrong: the director herself. Her humour, candour, instinct for irony and willingness to admit error soon discourage any such tendencies. There are no horror stories, juicy bits of gossip or tales of temperamental actors. The three leads were, in fact, "very professional, working in hideous conditions without complaint"; the studio executives proved to be reasonable human beings who ultimately applied "very little creative interference", and the romantic allure of shooting a thirteen-million-dollar film on exotic locations is reduced to an anecdote about slight homesickness and learning useful lessons for next time.

"I was away eighteen months
making this film," Armstrong asserts, "and if I ever make another American one, I'll make sure I edit it in Australia. That's what Peter Weir did with Witness, and I will put it in my contract next time. They thought I thought you were making anything to Australia - it seems so far away - but it was silly. Here I was, cutting away in an editing room in Toronto. I may as well have been in Sydney, going home to my own bed. It was nice to live in Canada, but it got a bit boring after six months. We went into summer and it was boiling and there was no beach!"

The impression that Armstrong conveys is of a selective, clear-sighted and pragmatic person, with a shrewd eye, a keen awareness of her goals and an almost embarrassing willingness to give credit where it is due. Very little time passes without reference to the support given by Gibson, Keaton and Modine, the sensitivity of scriptwriter Ron Nyswaner, or the creative contributions of cinematographer Russell Boyd and production designer Luciana Arrighi. Although the prospect of testing her talents in the capital of commercial cinema was attractive, Armstrong held out on committing to a film until she was convinced that the project offered both a script that suited her interests, and one that would not duplicate her past efforts. When the idea for Mrs Soffel was first proposed, her reaction was far from ecstatic, "I heard it was set in the past, and I thought: 'Oh, no, I've done that'. It wasn't inspiring until I read the script and realised, 'Hey! This is the city, it's gritty and it's jail'. Then it became inspiring to think of creating a whole new look that I hadn't been involved in before." She was emphatic that she did not want to recreate the romantic hues of My Brilliant Career, though the films are set only a few years apart. It would be a romance set in a sombre, oppressive environment, with a resolution as defiant, yet unconventional, as that of My Brilliant Career.

In discussing the design of the film, with its bleak vision of industrial Pittsburgh at the turn of the century, Armstrong explains: "Our major concept was to make it look like a black and white film. For me, the strongest image was blood on the snow. There was really to be no colour in the overall design until the blood red on the snow. I didn't want it to be a romantic sort of past, because it wasn't a romantic time at all. It's a story about romance - love and passion - but the environment was hideous, which may have been the very reason that the passion was so heightened. It wasn't meant to be a pretty love story."

Working closely with Boyd and Arrighi, Armstrong evolved the concept for the visual design from images of Dickensian England - of "an ugly, tough environment at the beginning of the industrial age. We finally decided to go with photos of the industrial revolution," explains Armstrong, "rather than the paintings of the time. We hated that sepia look of the past, where everyone seems to be in nice browns."

To introduce the notion of a story that occurs in the industrial age, Armstrong decided on a series of shots of the pock-marked Pittsburgh skyline taken by the second unit, which did not appear in the script. "I liked the idea of opening the film with something that was quite modern. It evolved with the composer, Mark Isham. We started off with that sound from the steel mill - that thump, thump. There was meant to be a feeling of machinery pounding and of something trying to get out."

"Trying to get out" is a state that applies in more than one aspect of Mrs Soffel. All three central characters are shown as perpetually incarcerated - either by prison bars, religion, social convention, clothing, class or family. Even though Kate (Keaton) and Ed (Gibson) briefly break out, Kate literally ends up back where she started. As in My Brilliant Career, Mrs Soffel concludes with the couple separated and the woman alone. However, the image of Kate alone is not meant to suggest defeat. "I was hoping that people would leave the film with the feeling in her face, with the sense that it was worth it," Armstrong explains. "Despite everything, she'd had a rare experience: real love, a great love."

The real problem, however, was that most people thought she was locked up for ever and a day, says Armstrong. "I realise now that I should have used a title saying that she was a model prisoner who was released two years later on a good behaviour bond, that she worked as a seamstress and died nine years later. I didn't realise that people assumed that she was there for life. I regret now that I didn't put that in, but I was being more self-conscious about my films than I needed to be. I ended My Brilliant Career with a title saying 'the book was published and blah blah blah'. The general public would never remember it out of context. 'I can't end two films the same way'."

Although Armstrong and Keaton had been looking for a mutually suitable project for some time, the circumstances that preceded the production of Mrs Soffel were not ideal. Gibson had completed shooting on The River only six weeks earlier, and Keaton had only two weeks holiday between The Little Drummer Girl and rehearsals for Mrs Soffel. "It wasn't an ideal situation for me," Armstrong recalls. "I was particularly worried, in Diane's case, that I would have a tired, cross person on my hands. It is a very difficult situation for an actor." The productive two-week rehearsal period, however, soon removed these doubts. "Diane, Mel and Matthew got along very well and, by the time we started shooting, Diane was becoming Mrs Soffel - goodbye Little Drummer Girl."

Armstrong's high regard for her cast is constantly evident. "They were great trouppers," she enthuses. "There are many stars who would just walk out of their caravans and say 'C'mon, I'm not going out there, it's too cold'". They never complained. We were in our Arctic gear, but they were in period clothes. Obviously, we tried to keep them warm - they had 20 pairs of long underwear on under their costumes, but it was very cold out there."

She is particularly pleased with the duality that Gibson puts into the role of Edward Biddle - the uncertainty about his feelings for the prim, devout mother who becomes, albeit briefly, his libidinous. "That was the thing that attracted Mel and a lot of other actors who were after that role. That was the great challenge: to play that ambiguous and to identify the point where he changes and the game starts to backfire on him."

Though she explains that the process of change in Ed is a slow and subtle one, she adds that, "for me, the scene where you really feel that he is falling in love with her is the scene where she brings him the saws. There's that moment after he's got them - sure, he's happy: 'Great, it's all worked'. But there's a moment then, when she's reading the bible. And it's actually something that they improvised. She was supposed to read three lines from the bible, and she kept reading. They kept playing with each other. He was smiling, and she was reading and trying not to smile. We left it in because I thought there was a moment of real warmth between them."

Making decisions about what will stay in the film and what will be cut is not, however, something that is accomplished in blissful isolation by the director. "My biggest worry," Armstrong recalls, "was that, finally, my picture was in the hands of a team of studio executives who could take it away and do whatever they wanted to it; change the music, shoot a new ending. But, really, I wasn't asked to
compromise too much. MGM agreed that we were all out to make a tragic love story, so they didn’t try to give it a happy ending. It wouldn’t have been an easy thing to do anyway, because it would have upset two very powerful people called Diane Keaton and Mel Gibson, who were very supportive to me, and who had both seen the film and really liked it.

“And they didn’t want to offend me totally,” she grins, “because they wanted me to make more pictures for them. Our biggest struggles were about the budget: they wanted me to shoot faster and cheaper.”

In the end, the studio objected to only three scenes. The first was the long pan across the faces of the Biddles’ captors, which the studio believed slowed the film down. Armstrong argued that it was more effective to play the deaths on the faces of the posse than on the Biddles’ last breaths in the snow. She does, however, concede that “it works for some people, and other people don’t like it at all.”

The second tussle came over the scene of the Soffel family packing to leave the Allegheny jail following Kate’s capture. The studio maintained that seeing a forlorn Peter Soffel (Edward Herrmann) would turn the audience against the heroine, by reminding them that she had abandoned her family. “I didn’t want to whitewash the story,” asserts Armstrong. “I don’t think that it was necessarily a good thing she’d done, and I also think that it was a terrible tragedy in the lives of those children. But the point was that it did happen and I wanted to show all the sides of the story.” Like the objection to the death scene, the Boston preview solved this problem. It was clear that Kate did not suffer any moral backlash; and the studio, to its credit, immediately dropped its objections.

Not surprisingly, the third contentious scene — the love scene between Gibson and Keaton — turned out to be one of audiences’ three favourite scenes, and therefore won its place in the film without the premature cut that the studio, rather chastely, requested. With some incredulity, Armstrong explains that “they wanted me to cut it when they fell back on the bed. I said, ‘C’m on, this is what the film is about: two people falling in love!’

Armstrong also notes, with evident relief, that the Boston audience was a hurdle that was quite gracefully overcome. Two weeks earlier, at the same cinema, an audience, knowing that the studio executives were present for a test screening, booed, hissed and stamped their feet at Falling in Love with such gusto that the film was hastily transported to Chicago for a second opinion. Taking into account the possible peculiarities of a single audience, MGM had allowed for three test runs before insisting on any changes, but the positive reaction to the first screening spared Armstrong the two further trials.

Having experienced a taste of the studio system, she regards future projects in Australia in a new light. “In some ways, it would be more difficult to do a picture here again,” she muses. “I had more money, I had a bigger set than I’d ever worked with before and a slightly bigger crew. But you can say ‘I’ve just got one more take of this shot, do you mind if we go for five more minutes?’ And they say ‘Okay, sure’.”

“The increased budget does, however, bring obvious advantages. ‘We got into a real jail because we had the money to pay the jail, pay the city council and make donations to charities, so they closed city streets for us.” The notion of working in a film-making atmosphere, where generous funding allows scope for costly creative manoeuvres, is something of a misconception, though. “Mrs Soffel was a twelve-week shoot and Starstruck was a ten-week shoot,” says Armstrong. “So, even with all that money, your dream of shooting over five months, waiting for the right cloud and going back and doing a scene that you don’t like again the next day, is an illusion. With all that thirteen million, the overheads were higher, the actors were paid a lot more and I was paid a lot more.” While the personal financial advantages are clearly an enticement, she adds: “I’d be working faster and cheaper.”

Nothing, says. “Pat’s been very patient, because I left to do Mrs Soffel in the middle of working on the script. She’s now given me the material I was trying to raise the finance. But, because it’s mostly shot in Greece, we have to shoot before the tourist season, while it’s still warm, so that’s April or May next year. If Pat hasn’t got the money by the end of this year, it will have to wait another whole year.”

The subject of maternity leave introduces discussion of her new status as mother of a baby daughter called Billie. The demands of motherhood have again aroused her interest in directing video clips, which only demand commitments for short periods of time. Although she is quick to remind the unwary interviewer that she is now a real mother, she remarks: “It’s like a do-or-die effort now,” she says. “It’s like a do-or-die effort now.”

Armstrong points out that she will only do “artists whose music I like”. When reminded of a statement from the past, when an independent female director observed that “a lot of women’s major creative energies have gone into bringing up children”, Armstrong seems pleasantly relieved by her own second-hand perceptions. “I see now what she means.” she chuckles. “Having a baby has changed my attitude to life, totally, I may never make another film now. I’ll be a mother.” Given her enthusiasm for Clean Straw for Nothing and the prospect of work in music video, as well as a mischievous look in her eye and the characteristic irony in her tone, that seems unlikely. ★

“Mrs Soffel” and “Starstruck” are examples of the many projects in Australia in a new light. Armstrong notes that it was necessary to work faster and cheaper.

“Mrs Soffel” and “Starstruck” are examples of the many projects in Australia in a new light. Armstrong notes that it was necessary to work faster and cheaper.
When the ABC changed over to \textit{The National}, there was a knock-on effect on the other channels’ TV news formats. But how much has really changed? And how much has all the new technology and the emphasis on international coverage created a better understanding of the world in which we live?

John O’Hara looks at the changes at the ABC, talks to those responsible for Australia’s television news, and suggests that, with a few exceptions, it sets out to provide a pretty reassuring picture of the world.

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The Bradford football stadium fire of 11 May 1985, cited by news editors as the sort of story television can do better than anyone else.

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Television news, like television itself, has become a common language, a way of referring to things that is taken for granted. It appears translucent, except when the presentation changes, as it did recently with the ABC’s \textit{National}. The news has become a kind of microcosm of television, blending together highly produced, fragmentary narratives of fact, fiction and fantasy, constructed according to a formula about what makes a ‘good story’ and how it should be told.

News is a powerful way of producing and confirming knowledge about events, issues and institutions. The term ‘news’ itself is ambiguous, referring both to the product (stories and programmes), and to the practices and routines of collecting and processing it. What is more, the practices shape the product.

There may be large gaps in the account television news offers of the world — it may be superficial, quickly dated and disposable — but it remains the primary source of information for most people. The Australian Broadcasting Tribunal survey on news found that people rated the best coverage of news as follows: television 63%, press 22%, radio 15%.

Television news is also a good deal more than just information. It establishes an agenda, lays out an order of priorities about events and issues, and appears to reveal and connect the ment contained in those brief segments of microcosm of television, blending together highly produced, fragmentary narratives of fact, fiction and fantasy, constructed according to a formula about what makes a ‘good story’ and how it should be told.

News derives its impact, too, from its immediacy, from the vividness of the pictures which gradually come to dominate: the camera doesn’t lie. News derives its impact, too, from its immediacy, from the vividness of the pictures which gradually come to dominate: the camera doesn’t lie. News derives its impact, too, from its immediacy, from the vividness of the pictures which gradually come to dominate: the camera doesn’t lie.

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CINEMA PAPERS July — 31
“If the story is big enough, that’s OK: if you had the Prime Minister announcing the Third World War, you wouldn’t need anything else”

David Johnston, Channel 10

enough, that’s OK: if you had the Prime Minister announcing the Third World War, you wouldn’t need anything else. Some stories are important, but there is no vision. To get the point across properly, you need some sort of graphic illustration. So we would do these stories now with graphic illustrations, whereas before they may have been put down the bulletin or maybe not done at all.

Nor are timing, format and technology the only things that have changed: major changes have taken place in securing international coverage of news. Each of the networks has arrangements with agencies providing news film (see accompanying diagram). Granted the complexity of the arrangements and the shareholdings in international news film companies, there is some room for confusion about exclusivity and copyright, to say nothing of the independence of news sources.

The situation, according to Ian Carroll, is immensely unstable. One of the major news wire services, United Press International, has collapsed, with debts of US$30-40 million. The previous UPI/ITN news film agency, formed by UPI and Independent Television News in England, has changed its name to WTN — World-Wide Television News — following the withdrawal of UPI. The present shareholders in WTN (the name was changed only three months ago) are ITN: 47/2%, ABC (American Broadcasting Company): 42/4%, and the 9 Network in Australia: 10%.

The smallest of Australia’s channels, SBS, makes the most of its overseas sources, which are Visnews (subscribed to by all networks except 9) and a weekly feed from World-Wide Television News and Asiavision. Dermott O’Brien, Chief of Staff at the 7 network, points out that NBC is exclusive to them. But the 10 network takes Visnews from the U.S., which allows them rights to NBC. “That’s the hassle,” explains O’Brien. “Even though you might have the exclusive rights to an overseas service, it becomes incredibly difficult, because everybody gets a slice of everything, basically, as was highlighted by the Bradford fire. The network had exclusive rights, but 10 were able to buy the vision on a one-off basis. We were able to negotiate enough for our purposes on a broadcaster-to-broadcaster basis, negotiated by our London bureau. It’s a can of worms. We are cautious about exclusive rights.”

For interstate news, each station depends upon sister stations and on cooperative arrangements with regional broadcasters.

With all this manpower and technology, it is clear that news is now not simply what happens, but a constructed version of events. All television news services use only a fraction of the stories available to them, so there are decisions to be made about what to use and what to reject. There are also decisions about the order and balance of items, about the viewpoints to be included, and the angles to be developed.

There needs to be a flow in a bulletin. Says Channel 9 news editor Graham Coddington, “It’s not just an unstructured thing. It’s got to have a balance in it, and there’s got to be some sort of logical progression from one story to another. For example, you wouldn’t come out of a story about the White House nurse and get to the victims of the Bradford fire into some sort of funny Mickey Mouse story. Also, we try to have a flow of stories, so the bulletin doesn’t taper off in interest. And we try to end the second break with a slightly lighter story, particularly if we have had a bad day — if there’s a lot of gloom and doom and disaster. So we try and put a little bit of lightness into the bulletin, too. Maybe that reflects our audience somewhat.”

Stories are rated according to “news value”. “The number one consideration is vision,” says Channel 7’s Dermott O’Brien. “Coupled with that is the effect it has on people, on the public. Every story wants to know about the budget and the National Wage Case, but those two stories are boring visually and boring to present on television. The pictures of the Bradford fire, however, had you actually sitting on the edge of your chair; and that also affected people, because there’s not one person who hasn’t been in a football crowd or who hasn’t sat back and watched soccer. Things like that make the best stories, if you like.”

Channel 9’s Graham Coddington acknowledges the matter more cautiously, but comes up with much the same criteria for stories. “One characteristic they must be good stories to begin with. A good story can be a Costigan Royal Commission: with electronic graphics, we can make a thing like that into a good television news story. But probably, if I’m honest with you, the best television news stories are those which television can do best of all — you know, the bush fire type of thing: something where the visual element is probably greater than the story element. No words in a newspaper can convey Ash Wednesday the way television pictures did.”

“A good human interest story is a good television story if it relates to something who can express themselves well. We rely a lot on the ability of people — the sorts of people we call ‘talent’: ministers, or whoever is being interviewed. Their ability to convey what they’re saying is important. For example, there are some cabinet ministers whom I avoid using if we can, because they are simply bad television talent. It’s not their fault, but that’s the way it is. We’ll get a reporter to paraphrase what they’re saying, rather than get them to say it themselves.”

News, we clearly need to recognize,

“...
is more than information presented in discrete stories: news is a process, part of an information order. News is the product of certain practices and routines. And it expresses basic understandings about what matters in society. News is a constructed version of events, a carefully selected and edited presentation. Stories are chosen for their value as television stories, within an agenda that is largely taken for granted.

SBS is something of an exception, with its emphasis on multi-cultural stories, and three-quarters of its bulletin given to overseas news. The service used to pay even more deliberate attention to stories with a multi-cultural angle, but now concentrates on more general coverage. The news service represents a shrewd use of limited resources; and, in its international emphasis, fills what Chief of

Staff Rick Carter calls “an obvious gap”. Currently limited to Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, the network will transmit to four further cities — Brisbane, Adelaide, Newcastle and Hobart — from the middle of this year. From next year, Perth will be included, and probably Darwin. Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of this news service,

however, is its more conservative format, relying heavily on a news-reader who gives an outline account of information that would otherwise be hard to come by.

In all cases, however, news is by definition what has happened in the last newscast, and television does not have the time to develop background pieces, or to place items in context, beyond what can be taken for granted.

Part of this process of compensating for lack of history involves reliance on a familiar iconography of contemporary culture: shots of petrol pumps, pickets, files of refugees, war-torn streets, airport lounges... The pictures appear to mean more than they do.

Television news also lacks specialist knowledge of situations. It is essentially reactive, a quality expressed in the comments that “there isn’t anywhere in the world that we can’t get pictures out of” (Dermot O’Brien) or “we are not a news service of record, as The Age is probably a journal of record; we are a daily front-page-cum-page-three spot news service” (Graham Coddington). Part of this lack of specialized knowledge lies in the practice of using generalist reporters, and part of it in the dependance on other sources for so much of the news, particularly from overseas.

Finally, television news concentrates on surface detail at the expense of more complex, subtle or qualified information. Thus the news becomes politically conservative, because of its concentration on what is familiar, already known and recognizable.

The language of news tends to simplify and polarize events. It is terse, clear, succinct, reduced events and relationships to a succession of crisp, positive statements. What this language leaves out of account is doubt, uncertainty, ambiguity and openness about outcomes. Such language does not acknowledge sources, nor does it allow for alternative versions. So the language of news perpetuates its own myth of a single, authoritative version of events.

This is particularly disturbing when one considers the complexity of many of the events and negotiations that make up the news, and the difficulty of disentangling the real story from statements made for the record. As part of this problem, there is the highly developed capacity of certain interests — government media units, public relations firms, even intelligence services — to shape the news by putting out their own information already packaged.

What news represents, then, is a consensus about values. Different journalists describe this consensus differently. “I think what we do,” says Channel 10’s David Johnston, “is reflect at the end of the day the sort of things that people would be talking about, and reflect the sorts of decisions they may have come to in any sort of group discussion in the office, or the pub or the home. The issues and topics they talk about and the conclusions they come to would be similar to the sort of things they would see on the news.”

“We are not in favour and we’re not against anything,” says Channel 9’s Graham Coddington. “Well, obviously we’re in favour of the ‘motherhood’ things — things like famines and attacks on old ladies, blatant racism: that sort of thing.”

“Obviously, we’re in favour of the ‘motherhood’ things — things like famines and attacks on old ladies, blatant racism: that sort of thing” — Graham Coddington, Channel 9

Staff Rick Carter calls “an obvious gap”. Currently limited to Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, the network will transmit to four further cities — Brisbane, Adelaide, Newcastle and Hobart — from the middle of this year. From next year, Perth will be included, and probably Darwin. Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of this news service,
The film which opened the Directors' Fortnight this year, Juzo Itami's The Funeral, surprised Cannes audiences considerably, and will probably do the same for festival audiences in Melbourne. Belinda Meares talked to Itami just after the Cannes screening of The Funeral — which is not, as its title might imply, a dour reflection on mortality, but a very funny film.
brusquely called away from their Tokyo film studio — where they are shooting a commercial — to attend to the urgent business of burying Chizuko's father, victim of a sudden heart attack. Funerals have seemed to be the subject of many Japanese films — one remembers the scene in Kurosawa's Ikiru (Living, 1952) — but Itami doesn't think they are a particularly Japanese subject, and his explanation somewhat goes to the unique tone of the film.

"Many filmmakers have treated the subject of funerals in their films, you know — Kurosawa, Hitchcock, Ford, Dreyer . . . The way I see it is this: films and funerals participate on the same essential level. A funeral is like a film: it is not a sad thing, because people want to see the dead person off into the next world; the dreamworld — that's what the funeral ceremony is for. It's a kind of ritual, based on the belief that there is a next world. The medium of film creates the idea of another world, too: that's why funerals and films participate in the same fantasy.

The key to Itami's film is the clash between the modern world in which Wabisuke and Chizuko live, and the ritualized, traditional world of the funeral, officiated over by the funeral director, Eihara (Nekohachi Edoya), and, ultimately, by an elderly priest (played by that veteran of every Ozu film, Chishu Ryu). "In film, says Itami, "my personal desire and my instinct is to show contradiction, to achieve a telling juxtaposition — in the same frame, if possible. I like to mix modern and traditional. In one of the early scenes, we see Chizuko in the studio going to answer the phone. She is wearing a classical kimono and sandals, and stumbles over the trailing wires and the pieces of modern electrical equipment as she hurries across the studio floor. "What I want to do is confront people with life's contradictions — like when the old man comes back from the doctor with avocados and eats them for the evening meal: he eats them with relish, even though he knows he is dying. Food is the image of life. And the scene . . . " At the funeral, the feverish activity generated by their new responsibilities plunges the whole group into irrepressible moods of hilarity, and Wabisuke engages in a reckless romp with a lady mourner. The Cannes audience found this scene hilarious, which rather puzzled Itami. "A non-Japanese public has very different responses to the film, whereas the Japanese didn't laugh at all at that part. Humour is based on reference, and if you don't share the same context, humour doesn't always work. As for the sex scene: sex at a funeral is completely inappropriate. Wabisuke knows this, and the idea bothers him far more than the fact of being unfaithful to his wife. But life's impulses are strongest when they are most inappropriate!"

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The Funeral, though it deals with death and sex, never disintegrates into vulgarity, nor hardens into ferocity. It is, as the French would say, "sympathique." funny, indulgent, intimate, old-fashioned and refreshing, a methodical film, composed of a wealth of gently provocative images. The images are those of contemporary Japanese people swept unprepared into a mystifying period of ceremonial living: images of three generations of westernized Orientals finding their unshakeable modern habits confronted with the trappings of an ancient culture.

"The contradiction between ancient and modern life is the biggest, if not the unique, problem facing us today," says Itami. "Japan's culture has been violated by western culture. The old way of thinking — the cosmological way of thinking, which included life, death and everything has been disturbed by the intrusion of western values. The Japanese have internalized the fight between the old and the new, boys being in day-to-day existence, but they have not really resolved the basic problem."

The Funeral is Itami's first film, but he has tried not to approach it differently from his other creative work. "Every time I embark on a new act of creative composition, I try a new style, a new formula: I like experimenting. I also like filming from unusual angles. For instance, I had the group around the coffin filmed from the point of view of the dead person. That makes the living themselves look ghoulish."

He denies that the specifics of the film come from his own life, but admits a solid base of autobiography. "My wife plays the leading role, and my two children are in it as well. The house is mine, with all my belongings in it. But I wouldn't go so far as to say it is an autobiographical film, although it is based on a personal experience I had at a funeral. It is a mixture of truth and lies — about 30% reality, which is the backbone on which I have built the 70% fiction."

Not content with this headlong excursion into areas of taboo, Itami is only beginning to explore other danger areas for his next films. "The first is about food and eating because, as I said before, food is the image of life."

"The contradiction between ancient and modern life is the biggest, if not the unique, problem facing us today"

"A non-Japanese public has very different responses to the film. They laughed a lot during the sex scene, whereas the Japanese didn't laugh at all at that part"
A couple of years back, For Love or Money examined the whole history of women at work in Australia. Now, a new documentary, Don’t Call Me Girlie, zeroes in on women in the film industry, charting their contributions to Australian cinema off-screen as well as on. Graham Shirley looks at the background to the project, and talks to the film’s co-directors, Stewart Young and Andrée Wright.

Writing in 1933 about the McDonagh sisters’ fourth film, Two Minutes Silence, Dance magazine made the observation that the sisters’ work was the result of “courage and conviction to create what others had deemed impossible. It might,” Dance continued, “be the story of the Australian Film Industry, for it is typical of the fight that Australian producers must face in a country which has everything under God’s creation — except courage and confidence.”

It is interesting now to read this as a typical example of publicity for early Australian filmmakers, rather than as a reflection on the position of women in the Australian film industry. In fact, almost none of the publicity for the McDonaghs — or, indeed, for other women filmmakers of their day — mentioned the difficulties that women faced in achieving that position. For, while it was rare for women who had key creative roles behind the camera to be discriminated against, it was not until the seventies that any sustained attention was paid to why so few women had got there in the first place.

To give an instance: only ten months before the September 1926 preview of the McDonagh’s first feature, Those Who Love, the death had occurred of Lottie Lyell, an Australian film star with many times the production experience the McDonaghs would ultimately achieve with their four features. Lyell’s death, however, attracted scant press attention, and the same could be said of the recognition she had received for the increasing amount of work she had done on the production and direction of a total of 28 features officially credited to her partner, Raymond Longford.

Lottie Lyell was certainly well known to contemporary Australian audiences for her appearances in no less than eighteen of Longford’s films, and she is best remembered for her role as Doreen in Longford’s 1918 The Sentimental Bloke. But less than a handful of people have ever known the full extent of her involvement in the making of the Longford films, especially in the areas of co-direction, writing and editing. And, while historians have identified Lyell as one of the key figures in Australian filmmaking, it has not been until Stewart Young and Andrée Wright’s documentary, Don’t Call Me Girlie, that Lyell’s story has been used as a benchmark to illustrate the immense amount that women in Australian film have been able to achieve when given the opportunity.

The inspiration for Don’t Call Me Girlie came in 1981, when Stewart Young was working as editor and Andrée Wright as researcher on John Pilger’s documentary, Island of Dreams. While looking for suitable extracts in Charles Chauvel’s The Rats of Tobruk (1944), Young came across a scene in which Pauline Garrick — as Kate Carmody, a woman running a cattle station — was asked by her lover Blue (Grant Taylor), if she wasn’t being a bit mid-Victorian. Seeing this as one of the more intriguing ways in which Australian women had been reflected throughout the history of filmmaking in this country, Young suggested to Andrée Wright that they collaborate on a documentary that looked at the screen images of women from the early years on. Wright’s immediate response was to think he was joking. “He has a rather quirky sense of humour,” she says, “and he used to make little teasing comments about my feminism every day. And I thought, ‘Oh, right! This is another one!’ ”

Young, however, was already
Anthony Buckley's 1967 documentary, Forgotten Cinema, became familiar with many early Australian films as a result of his work on Anthony Buckley's 1967 documentary, Forgotten Cinema, and he remembered "lots of entertaining areas" in them. His main aim was to make a documentary that would entertain as well as inform, and he kept the idea brewing in his mind for another eighteen months, until he and Wright met in another cutting room, where he was re-editing Angels of War for American television. As Wright recalls it, Young said, "it was the blue: "Look, I was serious about that documentary, and I don't understand why you never seemed enthusiastic about it!"

As co-directors of what would become Don't Call Me Girlie, Wright and Young were to collaborate on choosing extracts from the archives, on planning how the interviews and stills would be shot, and on discussing the impact of the editing. While Young concentrated on the latter, Wright focused on research, and on scripting and conducting the interviews. Producer Betty Furlong also commented regularly on the editing, and took complete charge of the financial side of the film. She was, in Wright's words, to be "an enormous source of energy, insight, clear thinking and support".

It was not until Wright commenced research on the film, however, that its orientation began to move from being one about women's on-screen roles to being one which also embraced women's work behind the scenes. Indeed, Wright was to unearth so much information about the latter that she decided to end the coverage of women in film at 1940, rather than bring it up to the eighties.

Of crucial importance here was what Wright discovered about Lottie Lyell. The starting point was her first viewing of The Sentimental Bloke. Knowing little about the film apart from its reputation, Wright placed it last in the twenty films she was to view at the National Film and Sound Archive. "I put it on late one afternoon, and I played it through. I got to the end, and I simply rewound it and played it again. I'd fallen in love with it, and I'd certainly fallen in love with Lottie Lyell. I had previously thought she sounded interesting, but really no more than that. You have to actually see her act; then you realise that, whatever star quality is, she had it. Seeing that film made it incredibly exciting for the project, and I suddenly wanted to know all about Lottie Lyell."

Accordingly, Wright set out to find Lyell's grave, a quest which brought a rush of unexpected information on the relationship between Lyell and Raymond Longford, personally as well as professionally. According to the tombstone which Young visited in Sydney, Lyell and Longford had shared the same grave from the time of the latter's death in 1959. Inquiring into the circumstances behind this, Young learnt that Longford had arranged for Lyell's inscription to be placed on the top half of the headstone after her death, but that Longford's own name had not been inscribed until the early seventies.

Among the reasons for this were the fact that Lyell was Longford's lover as well as his creative partner, and that Longford had two wives, neither of whom was Lyell. Wright considers the fact that Longford should want to be buried with Lyell 35 years after her death meant that her influence on him must have been very strong, adding ironically that this was the only time Lyell ever got top billing.

To give visual support to the information Wright had researched on Lyell's production abilities, Don't Call Me Girlie filmed an interview in London with 93-year-old Marjorie Osborne, star of the Longford-Lyell film, The Blue Mountains Mystery (1921), and another with Ted Hood, who clearly remembers eight years of accompanying his father, stills photographer S.J. Hood, onto the Longford and Lyell locations. To illustrate Longford and Lyell's personal relationship and the social convention it defied, Young and Wright were also to make adroit use of The Woman Suffers (1918), a Longford-Lyell film which the National Film and Sound Archive found while Don't Call Me Girlie was being researched.

The Woman Suffers is the story of two women who find themselves pregnant after being deserted by their lovers. By the standards of 1918, both could have been regarded as 'fallen' women, and therefore in the wrong. The film is partly a repudiation of this attitude. Although the first woman commits suicide, the second, played by Lottie Lyell, goes on to have the baby and enjoys a happy ending. Wright feels that Lyell's view of her relationship with Longford was to some extent mirrored in her writing and performance of the role she played in The Woman Suffers. 'She knew very well from her own experience that the idea of 'the right woman' and 'the wrong woman' was a false one. She was inadvertently carrying out the idea of the wrong woman in her relationship with Longford, and it was quite obvious that it didn't suit her.'

The emphasis on Lottie Lyell in the first part of Don't Call Me Girlie has meant paying far less attention to other Australian women filmmakers and stars of the silent period. In the same way, the industrial dominance of Cinesound Productions through the thirties made it hard for Young and Wright not to focus on that studio as the centre of the period's film production aspirations, achievements and images of women. Under the leadership of Ken G. Hall, Cinesound was Australia's most prolific maker of features during the thirties, with eighteen films produced between 1931 and 1940, and it came closest to achieving the Hollywood-style production and promotional methods familiar to Australian audiences.
But, if Cinesound gave good opportunities to women as actresses and in positions like script girl, assistant editor and lab worker, it employed no one woman whose creative responsibilities were comparable to those of Lottie Lyell. Away from Cinesound, the obvious 1930s equivalents to Lyell were the McDonagh sisters and Elsa Chauvel, the latter collaborating between 1927 and 1958 in production and script work with her husband, director Charles Chauvel. But Wright and Young had difficulty highlighting the work of these women during the thirties: the McDonaghs’ only complete sound film, Two Minutes Silence, turned out to be lost, and Charles and Elsa Chauvel’s most impressive work postdates 1940 (which also made it impossible to include the Kate Carmody scene from The Rats of Tobruk, which had been Girlie’s original inspiration).

That left Cinesound, whose output brought the industry its most outward and visible form throughout the decade. Wright considers, however, that the added technical and financial complexities of sound film required two different people to achieve even half of what Lottie Lyell had been able to in the silent era. Two Cinesound women are, therefore, highlighted in Don’t Call Me Girlie: the leading actress, Shirley Ann Richards, and the publicist, Nancy Gurr. Wright sees their place in the documentary as representing the work of an on-screen woman and an off-screen woman. “In the first part of the film, it’s as if Lottie Lyell is both.”

Off screen, Nancy Gurr, the publicist, was confident of being able to gauge the tastes of women, whom she believed made up the main part of cinema audiences, and she always emphasized publicity angles which would appeal to women. In Don’t Call Me Girlie, she tells how her male colleagues airily dismissed her protest that no woman would want to see a Cinesound film called Ants in His Pants (1939), after its title had been changed from Come Up Smiling. The film opened to meagre audiences, the original title was restored, and Come Up Smiling went on to attract good business.

On screen, meanwhile, having lost its first female star, Jocelyn Howarth, to Hollywood after two features, Cinesound did not find a permanent replacement until Ken G. Hall saw the work of Shirley Ann Richards in the studio’s It Isn’t Done (1937). Richards was then signed to a long-term contract, and appeared to great effect in four more Cinesound features until, with the outbreak of war and the closure of feature production at the studio, she, too, sailed for Hollywood and further stardom under the name of Ann Richards. At Cinesound, Nancy Gurr helped Richards become the top film star south of the equator, guiding and elevating her image to that of Cinesound’s greatest public asset — a woman of obvious talent, beauty and intelligence.

The title, Don’t Call Me Girlie, is actually a line spoken by Shirley Ann Richards in Dad and Dave Come to Town (1938), a film in which she plays a businesswoman able to deal shrewdly with opposition from male rivals. And it is Richards’s part in this film which completes the documentary’s survey of women’s on-screen roles between 1906 and 1940, a period during which they ranged from spirited girls of the bush, sweethearts and virgins, to their counterparts, the fallen women, vamps and sophisticated of the city. What we see of Richards in Dad and Dave Come to Town comes close to what she says in one of the Don’t Call Me Girlie interviews about her formative years, when she was surrounded by women of strong character and independence.

The two other Cinesound actresses who tell their own stories in Don’t Call Me Girlie are Aileen Britton, who played an unwed mother in Tall Timbers (1937), and Jean Hatton, the teenage singing star of Mr Chedworth Steps Out (1939) and the aforementioned Come Up Smiling, who suffered the trauma of having her image and personality overwhelmed by the studio’s promotion of her as “Australia’s Deanna Durbin”. The interview with Hatton is something of a scoop, since she has been reluctant to talk about her career since it was terminated by the war. “Jean was highly talented in so many ways,” Ken Hall has said of her, “and it was with genuine regret that I did not see her career blossom as I believe it should have done.”

Don’t Call Me Girlie’s most notable achievement, sums up Stewart Young, is that of “putting on the map the contributions that women have made to film in Australia. I think that people haven’t really considered the extent to which women have been doing it for decades, and they’ve been doing it well. And that’s an inspiration.”

As to whether there will be a Part 2, looking at women in the industry from 1940 to the present, Young and Wright are fully aware that the number of issues to be covered would make it a much harder film to tackle. But, in Young’s words, “it’s begging to be done”.

Shirley Ann Richards delivers the documentary’s title line in Dad and Dave Come to Town (1938).
Edited by Peter Beilby and Ross Lansell

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Alan Parker

FROM BUGSY TO BIRDY

A director who has had his actors bite out tongues in the dungeons of Malta, do full-scale dance routines on the streets of New York and destroy one another's tennis courts in the woods of Northern California, Alan Parker has a reputation for grabbing his audience by the lapels. But, as Nick Roddick found out, his latest film has taught him how to whisper.
At least a decade before the current, much-touted British film renaissance, which might usefully be described as a lot of hot air and a number of rather tepid films — there were some rather more quotable glimmerings amid the moribund gloom of the British film industry, which was then in the process of becoming a service outline from the American empire. Like most good things in British cinema recently, it started in television, with director Mike Ridley Scott (The Duellists, Alien, Blade Runner and the forthcoming Legend) and Hugh Hudson (Charliots of Fire, Greystoke — The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes and the forthcoming Revolution), whose experience was chiefly in commercials. Above all, there was Alan Parker, who also started in commercials, but who had directed two television plays (No Hard Feelings and The Evacues), two short films (Footsteps and Our Cissy). With the exception of The Evacues, written by Jack Rosenthal, he wrote them as well — and had written one completed screenplay, Melody, directed by Warris Hussein in 1971.

Parker’s style was heavily marked by the commercials he had done, and it was this which, initially, made his films stand out in the drab landscape of British cinema, which even the late forties revival — the films of John Schlesinger, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson — had done little to brighten, at any rate from the stylistic point of view. In British cinema, story had traditionally been king, with words as its chief couriers. In the sixties and early seventies, while London swung, the nearest Britain’s audio-visual media came to a distinctive visual style were the bright, hard colours and dolly-bird aesthetic of the earlier James Bond movies and the Avengers TV series — a style which, in Joseph Losey’s Modesty Blaise, proved the undoing of at least one major director.

Check back through British film criticism of the time, and it’s easy to see at least one of the reasons for this: the atmosphere was distinctly hostile to visual showiness. Thematic density and narrative ‘experiment’ were the most successful in a brilliantly conceived and executed twelve-minute segment in the middle, when the young Pink (played by Kevin McKeon, before he turns into Bob Geldof) searches for his lost father. Like the best of Parker’s work, the sequence is about harshly simple imagery — the same grimy, unrelenting visual style which has resulted in what, for me, are Parker’s best films, Shoot the Moon and Birdy — best because they do not have about them the lapel-grabbing anger that characterizes Midnight Express.

Even Pink Floyd The Wall, a hugely ambitious fresco of a movie, is at its most successful in a brilliantly conceived and executed twelve-minute segment in the middle, when the young Pink (played by Kevin McKeon, before he turns into Bob Geldof) searches for his lost father. Like the best of Parker’s work, the sequence is about harshly simple imagery — the same grimy, unrelenting visual style which has resulted in what, for me, are Parker’s best films, Shoot the Moon and Birdy — best because they do not have about them the lapel-grabbing anger that characterizes Midnight Express.

In Britain, Parker’s work has been consistently treated with a kind of indulgent condescension, as though he had committed the two cardinal sins for an indigenous filmmaker: success and a regular output. A few of the phrases lavished on his films which have provided Parker’s critics with their broadest target, especially in the post-Godardian seventies, when technical roughness was a revolution- ary statement, “I suppose the basic argument is that we are too involved with technique, rather than in what we’re trying to say,” comments Parker. “I don’t entirely accept that, insofar as I think that, from the point of view of technique, our work is extremely sophisticated — infinitely more sophisticated than people really acknowledge in Britain. The visual conception of things has never really been part and parcel of our heritage of film. It’s always been a very word-based, and it still is. On the other hand, I’ve rewritten every single screenplay that I’ve written, and I’ve never made a film yet which I didn’t think had my point of view within it.”

Parker’s two best films, Shoot the Moon and Birdy — best because they do not have about them the lapel-grabbing anger that characterizes Midnight Express.

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basement tapes were better than the finished films, so Parker graduated to directing commercials: for Hovis bread, Cockburn's port, Bird's Eye frozen foods, Nescafe, Benson & Hedges, Hamlet cigars, Guinness...

In time, the two Alans also did cinema commercials, including one that will be remembered by any British cinemagoers of the late seventies, the Benson & Hedges 'Zulu' ad, which had a bizarre opening party of British Boer War soldiers and offering them two weeks to get used to the brand's new taste. It ended with a raucous battle in which all the British kept saying "Sorry!" and the Zulu chief took time off to tell the camera about a new washing powder.

That, of course, was after cigarette commercials had been banned from British television. It was a three-day shoot, and it cost the then astronomical sum of £80,000. But, says Marshall, it was all on the screen. "We are very honest filmmakers. Whether you like or dislike our films in terms of storyline, nobody could ever criticize them for what they look like, or what the professional attitude to filmmaking is."

Parker's breakthrough into feature films preceded the 'Zulu' commercial by some three years, and was made against considerable odds. "Bugsy Malone" was a very pragmatic exercise. It was made in 1975, at a time in the British film industry when no one could set anything up — a very, very difficult time. A great deal of what's happening now is because of the leg-work people like Puttnam and myself did then. I'd written five screenplays, all about things that were very close to me, about Islington, where I grew up — very English, very London, very angry working class. All I ever wanted to be was Ken Loach, because he was my favourite filmmaker.

"With those screenplays, the rubber stamp that everybody had was: Too parochial. If I'd just walked up and down Wardour Street shouting for those films made, I'd still be there. I had to think 'What do I know about?' And what I did know about was American movies. So I did a parody of them. It seemed to me, not having the intellectual pretensions I would have, that certainly helps if you're going to be locked away in the wilds of Northern California or in a dungeon in Malta. And his visual tastes are very similar to mine. His interest, when he works with me, is lighting rather than photography. Because the other important person is John Stanier, the camera operator. I think it's a combination of Michael's taste in lighting and me working directly with John. I don't work the American system, with the director of photography instructing his people. I work directly with John, and the three of us have evolved a very good rapport over the years, which means that I can go" — he makes a framing gesture with his fingers — "and they know the track and the lens. That kind of shorthand is very, very valuable."

Parker is also insistent that they are British filmmakers. "We're a bunch of yobbos who got lucky. What we do is, we get on aeroplanes and go make movies somewhere else. We went on location to Malta to do Midnight Express, and it was a totally British crew. On the other films, I've had the same key personnel. It's just that, in order to do my job, I have to go on location. What I want to do next is a film based on the Tom Sharpe novels. When I go to Africa to do that, I'll be on location in Africa: I won't have joined the African film industry."

That statement, however, was made during the editing of "Pink Floyd The Wall," which was followed by a two-year gap. In the meantime, the African project receded, and Parker returned to the U.S. to make what is perhaps his most American movie of all, Birdy — the story of two teenagers in Philadel-

"All I ever wanted to be was Ken Loach, because he was my favourite filmmaker"

— for 'the family audience' — that didn't talk down to the kids, and that I didn't feel embarrassed about making.

"When I finished it, and with everybody giving me a standing ovation at Cannes, and every single American studio after us to do stuff, I got those five screenplays out again. And I didn't like them: I didn't want to do that kind of film anymore. Something had happened — the seduction of world cinema. During that seduction process every director goes through when he's hot, I was asked to go to New York and do a film of The Wiz,
South Philly, which is where these kids come from: they had to go. They were too stupid to get out of it. The middle-class kids who went to university waving their notes from their shrinks, they got out of it. I think it was one of the best speeches I’ve ever written, but in the end, I thought, ‘No, you’re preaching. Your movie should tell all this.’ So I just had this one line: ‘We didn’t know what we were getting into with this John Wayne shit. In any other war, I would have been a hero.’

Cruical to Birdy were the flying scenes, where Parker and Co. experienced with a Skycam — a contraption operated by wires and a gyroscope. “We had a few days to do it, and three of them were disasters. It’s such a highly complicated, computerized thing, and it was the first time it had been used in an urban situation. It’s supposed to be used in a sports stadium. In the end, we had to find another way of doing it. So, in the flying scene, there are actually eight cuts. It doesn’t look like it, but there’s a cut every time you go up in the sky. Mostly, we used a Steadicam. There’s 40 seconds of Skycam, which gives you the illusion that you’re low, then suddenly you’re 150 feet up in the air. You could never have done that with a crane, and you can’t get a helicopter into the middle of Philadelphia.”

The other ‘difficult’ scene was the extraordinary love scene, in which Matthew Modine strips and climbs into the aviary he has made for Perta, his beloved canary. It is a scene which entails a knife-edge between absurdity and some kind of unwatchable perversion. In the end, though, it is disturbingly beautiful — ‘amour fou’ of the kind you rarely find in a Hollywood film. “We took it very seriously, because if the audience had laughed at it, I would have failed miserably. We were a little bit out of control, because the bird would only do what it wanted to do. It was pretty hushed on the set, just like we were doing a normal love scene. In fact, to be honest, with you, I don’t remember a crew so quiet and so taken aback at the end of it.”

It is, indeed, one of the most restrained scenes in the whole of Parker’s work; and he readily admits that the film as a whole is his most gentle. “I think it’s just me getting a bit more mature, I think it’s the best of my films, because it’s the most balanced. I think that, too often before, I was shouting. Now I know that you can shout and you can whisper, and people still listen. I think those two years of reflection allowed me to stand back and look at what I was doing.”

“I hate birds: I really can’t stand them”

have been a hero? I loved that line: they went there and they were scared shitless and they lost limbs, then they came back and they were spat on. I couldn’t have had that with a Second World War story.

In fact, I wrote a whole speech for Al, which we didn’t use, and which was my anti-Vietnam war speech. It was all about class. Vietnam was a working-class war. The kids from

phon who are traumatized in different ways by the Vietnam war. One of them, Al (Nicolas Cage), is badly burned; the other, Birdy (Matthew Modine), retreats into a private world in which he becomes one of the birds that fascinated him through his teenage years.

Strangely enough, Parker feels that Birdy is the closest he has come to those five screenplays he didn’t make before Bugsy: "I love Philadelphia. It’s a horrible place to make a movie, but the feel of it is like where I grew up, and it’s an excuse for me to do the English film you used to keep saying I should have done. Philadelphia is the best-kept secret in America, because half the city’s derelict; it’s almost like it’s been abandoned. All the decisions are taken at street level. I mean, we had all the co-operation in the world from the Mayor’s department, but they were powerless and they would never admit it. So it meant street-by-street negotiations in a tough black area, which isn’t easy. It wasn’t me that did it, of course. I’d just keep on shooting. It was the production department who had all the pressure.”

For Parker, the film is less about birds — "I hate birds: I really can’t stand them" — than about the Vietnam war: the screenplay, by Sandy Kroopf and Jack Behr, has updated William Wharton’s original novel to post-Vietnam. “I thought it was better, because Vietnam was such an unpopular war. And, without wanting to sound pretentious, in a way Birdy is in shock and America has been in shock since Vietnam, because they lost and they were wrong. You know where Al says, ‘In any other war, I would Bookends of Parker’s career. Above, dancing in the street five years before Fame — Fat Sam’s gang do the ‘Bad Guys’ number from Bugsy Malone. Right, Birdy and buddies: Nicolas Cage (in bandage) cradles Matthew Modine (in shock) after the baseballs have failed to work in Birdy.
What makes us want to see a film — some kind of sixth sense, or an inspiration that falls from the skies? The answer, for most of us, is advertising — the posters, the trailers, the radio commercials, the TV spots, which offer a tantalizing glimpse of the goodies to come. A bad campaign can sink a film, a good campaign can make it. But film advertising has always been a rather private part of a very public business.

Here, Peter Schmideg, who spent three years working on campaigns in Wardour Street, heart of the British distribution industry, lifts the lid on the whole business.

Working in the cramped, smoke-filled cutting rooms along London's Wardour Street, you soon come to realise that putting together a film advertising campaign is, in miniature, every bit as tortuous — and just as fraught with pitfalls, fascination and fun — as making the film itself.

Ultimately, it is a question of selling — of putting bums on seats, as they say. However, everyone has his or her own idea of what is going to work, starting with the producers. After all, they say, they should know: they've been involved with the film since its inception. Often, however, this means they can't see the story for the celluloid. Then you have the distributors. They know how the film should be sold: they know their market, they've been doing it for years . . .

Previous experience can be misleading, though. Every film is different, and the public can be very fickle: what has worked in one market can be a disastrous flop somewhere else. In addition, some films are 'sleepers' — they suddenly take off without warning. Like Trading Places: nobody really expected it to be such a hit.

Caught in the middle of the crossfire between producer, director and unpredictable public are the people who are actually going to create the posters, trailers and other elements: us. It is, of course, like planning a battle. Even the jargon is militaristic: 'strategy', 'tactic', 'spearhead'. Often, it ends up with the producer or the distributor — sometimes both — saying: "It's a love story. Forget everything else: it's all about relationships." Which just about covers everything from A Night at the Opera to E.T.

When we presented our posters to the client, we would generally produce at least a dozen or more concepts: it's what they wanted. With Reds, there were apparently 150 concepts (and I bet you can't remember what the final poster looked like). A concept is a highly finished 'rough', with all the copy typeset. Working for clients like U.I.P. in London, we weren't obliged to follow the U.S. poster concept. Thus, for Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom we came up with about a dozen concepts, including a late entry which I only finished on the morning of the presentation: it simply said, "The Hero is Back". The ones they liked best were then placed into market research, along with the original American campaign.

At this stage, I should add that the whole process of creating the campaign was carried out without the benefit of having seen the film, since Indiana was in the final stages of post-production. What we did get was a press release, a synopsis, and around 400 35mm slides, which we stuck on the office windows, like some bizarre attempt at stained glass. From these, we chose a number of shots, sent them off to the labs for blow-ups, cut them, trimmed them and pasted them, until we had both upright and horizontal posters.

The work we were doing was for all territories except the U.S., including the U.K., Europe and Australasia, and the shots we chose for: 'The Hero is Back' was a rather brooding one of Harrison Ford striding towards us. In the original, he was actually accompanied by an elephant, but what you don't see can't bother you. As it was, it looked as if he was walking straight out of the poster towards us, still a bit dusty and weary from his adventure. But the film is in fact a prequel: the action takes place a year or so before the hero was chased...
by that giant steel Jaffa in that cave in Peru. We decided to ignore this, however, and tried not to place the film in any sequence, either before or after Raiders.

Although the 'Hero' concept won at research level, it was decided to give the figure a bit more life by adding a machete. Then someone else piped up with the suggestion that he should be holding a whip, as his trademark. So our brooding hero, emerging from the shadows of a cool, leafy jungle, was lost forever. In his place was a cross between Errol Flynn and a circus ringmaster. One saving grace, though, was that the campaign was liked enough to be used throughout the U.S.A., which I am told is a very rare event indeed.

Presentations always had their complications. There was the question of how well it would work in black and white (in newspaper ads, for instance). For this purpose, one organization had on its staff a chap who I'm sure had monochrome vision: he probably viewed the world as one huge newsprint photograph. He would be called in at the appropriate moment, and would give us his verdict.

Then there were the 'contractuals'. These were the rules, specified in the contract, that governed the position (above or below the title) of the star's name. A 'likeness' clause also stipulated photography or illustration, and how realistic the latter had to be. And there was a mathematical relationship, expressed as a percentage, between the star's name and the title of the film. Al Pacino's name had to be the same size as Scarface, wherever it was printed. You weren't sure whether the film was called 'Pacino' or 'Scarface'. Apart from these minor considerations, however, we were free to do as we liked... as long as we remembered that it was a love story.

With trailers, time was at a premium. Three-minute cinema trailers would take a few days to get to the stage of rough-cut double-head, but TV trailers would often have to be finished on the afternoon of the day we were briefed. A trailer doesn't have to tell a story, and it doesn't need a beginning, middle or end. Sometimes, we choose to see a film because of only one particular scene in a trailer. For example, the Clint Eastwood film, Sudden Impact, had a very short trailer, with Eastwood splitting out the now immortal words: "Go ahead... make... my... day!" It was enough to convince people to see it or not. When you're editing a trailer, you very quickly become aware of the power of the splicer. You can take any film, whether it's Mary Poppins, Terms of Endearment or Rocky, and turn it into anything from a thriller to a soppy drama to a comedy.

In trailers, drama can be enhanced by overlapping dialogue from a rather boring shot over a more exciting-looking scene. Something that is already funny visually can be made twice as funny by overlapping it with humorous dialogue. You can do almost anything, as long as you point for a particular shot. With the movie Brainstorm, we decided the most effective way of positioning it was as a sci-fi action film, which it really wasn't. (It could also have been promoted as a mushy romance, because there was a real surfet of that, too!) The U.S. poster showed what appeared to be a female window dummy with a vast halo of light around her. It really conveyed very little. For our trailers, we used a lot of short, quick cuts, punctuated by computer effects. The voice-over was not a minimum, but we would keep cutting back to a computer monitor, full-screen, printing out some very enticing information.

In trailers, drama can be enhanced by overlapping dialogue from a rather boring shot over a more exciting-looking scene. Something that is already funny visually can be made twice as funny by overlapping it with humorous dialogue. You can do almost anything, as long as you remember that your job isn't to re-edit the film, but to sell it, and that you are trying to convey the sort of film it is. In other words, cheat.

Al Pacino's name had to be the same size as Scarface, wherever it was printed. You weren't sure whether the film was called 'Pacino' or 'Scarface'.

Above, Clint Eastwood delivers the line that was to become the catch for the Sudden Impact trailer: "Go ahead: make... my... day!" Below, Brainstorm: sold as sci-fi, it could have been sentiment.

You can do almost anything, as long as you remember that your job isn't to re-edit the film, but to sell it, and that you are trying to convey the sort of film it is. In other words, cheat.

Take 48 HRS, which starred Nick Nolte and launched Eddie Murphy into superstardom. It was a violent film, but it was also a very funny film. The trailer could have made it look like a Neil Simon farce or, by concentrating on the violent elements, have appealed to the heavy mob. It's these sorts of situations which send distributors rushing to their market research reports, the way other people rush to the medicine cabinet for an aspirin. The research, however, like the aspirin, cures the symptoms only, not the cause. Is it a comedy? Is it a drama? Will you be selling yourself short if you try to combine both? Is the market you're aiming at interested in (a) a comedy, or (b) a violent cops-and-robbers shoot-out picture? Or is it a love story? Back to square one.

Audio-trailers, promoting films on radio, can also be very effective if done properly. You are still trying to sell the film, capturing some of its essential ingredients or creating a certain mood, but all you are using is sound — often a mixture of soundtrack lifts and voice-overs, leaving enough room for a tag which tells people where the film is playing. For Airplane II — The Sequel, rather than get bogged down in detail, we took two of the funniest scenes (ones that would work on radio), and wrapped some similarly funny commentary around them, allowing the film dialogue to be the star of the commercial. When picking bits of soundtrack, it's essential to make sure they're clear, without too many other effects, and intelligible in their own right.

Lately, it seems to me, far too much emphasis has been placed on The Poster. The poster is strictly point-of-sale, at best a reminder, nothing more, nothing less. You see a poster — I mean, really see a poster, nicely framed and back-lighted — and you are already standing in line to buy your ticket. You also have in front of you a jumble of stills — a sort of static, freeze-frame trailer, showing you bits of the movie. Many people in the business seem to think that the poster is the key to publicity that the average filmgoer will see. But the filmgoer doesn't live in a vacuum: there are reviews, interviews with the stars, and 30-minute television advertisements masquerading as documentaries about how the film was made. Viewers get a pretty good idea of what the film is about, who's in it, what era it takes place in, and whether it's funny. So where does this leave the humble poster? On the wall: it's a reminder, nothing more, nothing less. And, as a single selling tool, without other elements, it has a lot of drawbacks. You can't compare a poster or a press ad to a three-minute trailer or a 30-second TV spot. Posters are seen but not heard. TV is both.

Selling a film to an unsuspecting public is very complex, and it is a process which tends to be taken for granted. The film is complete. Actors, director and crew are all involved in other projects. But, somehow, the posters and the trailers materialize. No matter how good and how clever the campaign is, though, let's not forget the most powerful and unpredictable force of all in film advertising: word of mouth. But that's another story...
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On location

With the end of the financial year looming, May and June did not provide bumper crops of new feature productions getting underway, though activity was a little more buoyant in television.

The $2.32 million feature, The More Things Change..., commenced production on locations in Neerim, near Warragul in Victoria, late in April. Produced by Jill Robb, this contemporary look at role reversals marks actress Robyn Nevin's debut as a film director. Nevin, who is on leave from her post as a director with the Sydney Theatre Company, was approached by Robb to direct the film because the producer believed that the script demanded strong performances, "relying on the nuances of acting far more than stunts, locations or art direction".

In a strategy common in theatre, the novice director was teamed with a crew of considerable experience, headed by cinematographer Dan Burstall, who has recently tried his hand at directing episodes of Crawford Productions' Special Squad. It was felt that Nevin's ability with actors would complement Burstall's talent for visual imagery and provide an ideal working combination.

The windfall to the shooting schedule provided by an Indian summer in Victoria was quickly offset on the second day of production when male lead Barry Otto broke a bone in his foot. Timetables were hastily altered and interiors that did not require his presence were shot. When Otto hobbled back on to the set a week later, Victorian weather showed its true colours and sent showers down on the cast and crew. Meanwhile, in New South Wales, Magpie Films' Short Changed completed production on 28 May.

Several television projects began in May. Simpson-Le Mesurier's family saga, Sword of Honour, got underway on 13 May, and JNP's Land of Hope, also focusing on family relationships over a number of decades, went before the cameras. Production on the five part miniseries, The Lancaster Miller Affair, was put back by a week (see News story) and is now due to commence on 24 June. Roadshow, Code and Carroll's Archer, tracing the exploits of a horse who walked from New South Wales to Victoria to win the Melbourne Cup, is also due to begin shooting late in June.

Further down the production track, Barron Films' I Own the Racecourse and Collins-Murray's Marie Claire (still the working title, though World Film Alliance were promoting it as Devil in the Flash at Cannes) moved to post-production in May. In South Australia, the SAFC's Playing Beatle Bow finished shooting on 13 June. Final touches were added to the newly retitled The Leonski Incident, which has been previewed to potential distributors in the U.S. In the same period, Mermaid Beach's A Street to Die and Nilsen Première's Jenny Kissed Me were completed.

In Sydney, PBL's activity continued with production on the miniseries Double Sculls, while the feature For Love Alone completed its eight-week shoot on 25 May. Paul Kalina visited both locations and reports on the big- and small-screen projects:

The day after seeing Stir in 1980, Margaret Fink sent the film's director, Stephen Wallace, a copy of Christina Stead's autobiography, For Love Alone. The previous year, Fink's production of My Brilliant Career had earned itself far-reaching critical acclaim, good overseas sales and a strong boost for the imminently rising careers of Judy Davis, Sam Neill and the film's debut feature director, Gillian Armstrong. Nevertheless, it has taken Fink six years to raise the $3.8 million to make For Love Alone — and to this day she remains baffled as to why.

What attracted Wallace, who also wrote the script, is that "it tries openly to explore love: it treats love as a noun, and shows someone who is passionately pursuing what she believes in, in a way that most Australians don't."

The story follows Teresa Hawkins (Helen Buday) from Sydney to London in the thirties, as she seeks her ideals of love, career and marriage within the rigid confines of contemporary social and moral attitudes.

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The day after seeing Stir in 1980, Margaret Fink sent the film's director, Stephen Wallace, a copy of Christina Stead's autobiography, For Love Alone.
Right, Stephen Wallace puts Helen Buday on the right tracks in the Margaret Fink production of For Love Alone. Below, Ian Gilmour, left (with director of photography Vince Monton, focus puller Derry Field and — partly hidden — sound recordist Tim Lloyd), prepares to get the show on the water in PBL Productions' telefeature, Double Sculls.

For Helen Buday, it is only her second film role. Since graduating from N.I.D.A. in 1983, she has acted on stage, and played the role of Savannah Nix in Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome. She describes Teresa as a strong character, "original in everything she does, even little things like not wearing gloves and a hat. She wants to be a writer, but she really wants love. She pines after one character for years and years, and finally comes to her senses."

Jonathan Crow (Hugo Weaving) is the object of Teresa's pining. For Stephen Wallace, "he is so awful and yet so believable. And that excited me. I think that there is a bit of every man in Jonathan." There is an ironic twist to the difficulty Wallace had in presenting a story told from a woman's point of view: the main male character is so hated by the author, the hero so admired, that if they were presented as they are in the book, Teresa would appear as a silly girl.

For the art department of For Love Alone, the first few weeks were something of a nightmare, with torrential rain threatening the exterior sets. In fact, more than half the film's sets have been built, with suitable locations sought out for the real. As most of the film is set in London, production designer John Stoddart has looked for the most English of interiors. The mezzanine of the soon-to-be-demolished Winter Garden Theatre, which might once have been one of Christina Stead's retreats, is being used as the dining room of the ship which carries Teresa to England. On board, she meets the worldly James Quick (Sam Neill). "Oh! A colonial!" he says. "I'm a great admirer of Captain Bligh."

In designing the film, Stoddart has gone for fairly low-key naturalistic effects. "After all," he says, "if you look around, nothing looks absolutely up-to-date: all periods are mixed. Although this is a film set in the thirties, we're not treating it as a period film. There are references to the Depression, but that is not what the film is about."

"We didn't get obsessed with historic artefacts," says Wallace. "In the end, I think the art direction is going to be symbolically rather than historically accurate." Wallace, whose previous work as a director and writer has concentrated on contemporary issues, is determined that the film be relevant to people today. The period setting has only restricted him by limiting places they could film (though glass shots and front projection have also inhibited him slightly). In terms of directorial style, however, Wallace is approaching For Love Alone as a naturalistic drama. Maintaining faith in his ability, Finck proudly told him to direct it like it was an ABC drama. For Richard Brennan, producer of Double Sculls, however, the small screen is providing a happy union of pragmatism, aesthetics and budgetary concerns. "I think that movies made for television always had a bit of an air about them," he says. "We're making Double Sculls exactly the same way as if it were a feature, except it's being shot on 16mm. It's the same coverage, the same attention to performance. What really affects me is the size of the audience you can reach. I was really jealous when I watched A Town Like Alice. I thought, 'More people are watching this tonight than any film I've made.'"

"The only thing I have against working on that very large scale is the hubris it encourages people believing that, because it is bigger, it is better. I think you can get lost in the logistics: personal relationships suffer because you are waiting for the helicopter."

Double Sculls is the second of eight planned productions under a joint venture between PBL Productions and the Australian Film Commission. Based on the 'feature film made for television' model of Britain's Channel 4, the project aims to unearth new writers and directors.

"What we've tried to do," says Brennan, "is get a really good cast and crew, especially cameraman, first assistant, production manager and editor. One of the reasons I was approached is because nearly every film I've produced has been the director's first or second feature."

Ian Gilmour graduated from acting to directing two years ago, after completing a one-year course at the Film and Television School designed to train industry personnel to direct. As promised, Gilmour's cast is one of the finest in the country. John Hargreaves, Chris Haywood, Angela Punch-McGregor, Judi Farr and Bill Kerr. As an actor who has worked with directors like Fred Schepisi, John Duigan and Carl Schultz, Gilmour recalls the rapport they had with their casts, rather than the technicalities of their directing style. "Paramount for me," he says, "is keeping a loose, easy-going feel to the action, while maintaining a coverage which is going to cut and be cinematic."

The storyline of Double Sculls concerns the friendship of two men, whose lives, both past and present, intersect in the sport of sculling. Although scriptwriter Chris Peacock has based one of the film's themes on current medical research into indigenous opiates, Gilmour sees the film's drama as essentially that of the relationships between the major characters.

For the roles, both Hargreaves and Haywood have become skilled scullers. "It feels more real than fake," he says. "We're making Double Sculls exactly the same way as if it were a feature, except it's being shot on 16mm. It's the same coverage, the same attention to performance. What really affects me is the size of the audience you can reach. I was really jealous when I watched A Town Like Alice. I thought, 'More people are watching this tonight than any film I've made.'"

"Yes, I draw your attention to the errors in the May issue 'Facts and Figures' column, with regard to the Leonski Incident.

1. The picture did not come to a stop. No shooting time was ever lost, and the picture came in eight days ahead of schedule.
2. There was no dispute between the completion guarantee company and Philippe Mora, the director.
3. Cuts to the script were made by Philippe and writer/producer Bill Nagle in consultation with myself. Cuts made in no way affected the narrative and were in the interests of maintaining a reasonable and realistic running time.

Far better to cut the script than shoot the scene and cut it out.

The good sense of this mutual decision is borne out by the fact that John Scott's first assembly ran two hours and 40 minutes. The cut was in the interests of maintaining a reasonable running time. The picture came in eight days ahead of schedule.

While appreciating your interest in our picture, we must point out that your comments were damaging to the picture, the producers and especially to the reputation of the director.

Yours sincerely,

David A. Hainay
Producer, Suatu Film Management.
Sachtler ENG/Film Fluid Head Systems take the gamble out of camera support. Lightweight, easy to set up, quick to adjust for perfect balance — you get into action fast with Sachtler. The precise fluid movement gives you complete confident control over all camera movements, the wide pan and tilt ranges allowing you to follow your subject wherever it leads, smoothly and effortlessly and as fast as you like — there are up to 7 precise adjustments for drag. Sachtler virtuosity in design and performance is matched with unrivalled durability and reliability to make Sachtler Systems unbeatable. A comprehensive range of accessories completes the picture. The Sachtler range of fluid heads caters for all budgets and requirements — so if you want to get ahead, get a Sachtler!
FEATURES

PRE-PRODUCTION

AUSTRALIAN DREAM
Pro. company: Filmlife Ltd
Producer: Jack McEwan
Director: Jack McEwan
Based on the original idea by: Jack McEwan
Photography: Anthony Wheeler
Prod. designer: Chris Minns
Exec. producer: Ralf Arbeit
Director: Anthony Wheeler
Based on the original idea by: Anthony Wheeler
Prod. designer: Peter Mandei (Britain)
Director: Jack McEwan
Based on the original idea by: Jack McEwan
Director: Russell Mulcahy

SOMETHING GREAT
Pro. company: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Director: Jonathan Demme
Scriptwriter: Frank Howson
Prod. company: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Director: Jonathan Demme
Scriptwriter: Frank Howson
Prod. company: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Director: Jonathan Demme
Scriptwriter: Frank Howson
Prod. company: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Director: Jonathan Demme
Scriptwriter: Frank Howson

END OF THE LINE
Pro. company: De Roche
Producer: Hilary De Roche
Director: De Roche
Producer: Hilary De Roche
Director: De Roche
Producer: De Roche
Director: De Roche
Producer: De Roche

TWO YEARS AFTER
Pro. company: Firestorm
Producer: Firestorm
Director: Firestorm
Producer: Firestorm
Director: Firestorm

BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER
Pro. company: CINEMA PAPERS
Producer: CINEMA PAPERS
Director: CINEMA PAPERS
Producer: CINEMA PAPERS
Director: CINEMA PAPERS

THE DISTANCE
Pro. company: Sascha Management
Producer: Sascha Management
Director: Sascha Management
Producer: Sascha Management
Director: Sascha Management

IN PRODUCTION

PRODUCERS

Help us make this Production Survey as complete as possible. If you have something which is about to go into production, let us know and we will make sure it is included. Contact: Karl Ensler or 329 5953. or write to her at Cinema Papers, 644 Victoria Street, North Melbourne, Victoria 3051.

NEVER AGAIN
Pro. company: Magna Pictures Corporation
Producer: Magna Pictures Corporation
Director: Magna Pictures Corporation
Producer: Magna Pictures Corporation
Director: Magna Pictures Corporation
Producer: Magna Pictures Corporation
Director: Magna Pictures Corporation

VAGERS OF THE CHINESE SEA
Pro. company: Salsa Movie Co
Producer: Salsa Movie Co
Director: Salsa Movie Co
Producer: Salsa Movie Co
Director: Salsa Movie Co

THE DEE EATER (working title)
Pro. company: Davidoff Picture Ltd
Producer: Hilary De Roche
Director: Hilary De Roche
Producer: Hilary De Roche
Director: Hilary De Roche
Producer: Hilary De Roche
Director: Hilary De Roche

THE BIG HURT
Pro. company: Big Hurt
Producer: Chris Kaey
Director: Chris Kaey
Producer: Chris Kaey
Director: Chris Kaey

BLOWING HOT AND COLD
Pro. company: Celluloid Productions
Producer: Brian Trenchard-Smith
Director: Brian Trenchard-Smith
Producer: Brian Trenchard-Smith
Director: Brian Trenchard-Smith
Producer: Brian Trenchard-Smith
Director: Brian Trenchard-Smith

THE RED LADY
Pro. company: The Red Lady
Producer: The Red Lady
Director: The Red Lady
Producer: The Red Lady
Director: The Red Lady

DEAD-END DRIVE-IN
Pro. company: Springvale Productions Pty Ltd
Producer: Jack Matthews
Director: Jack Matthews
Producer: Jack Matthews
Director: Jack Matthews
Producer: Jack Matthews
Director: Jack Matthews

KANGAROO
Pro. company: Jeannette Films
Producer: Jeannette Films
Director: Jeannette Films
Producer: Jeannette Films
Director: Jeannette Films

MALCOLM
Pro. company: Malcolm Media
Producer: Malcolm Media
Director: Malcolm Media
Producer: Malcolm Media
Director: Malcolm Media

PLAYING BEATLES
Pro. company: Salsa Movie Co
Director: Salsa Movie Co
Producer: Salsa Movie Co
Director: Salsa Movie Co
Producer: Salsa Movie Co

POST-PRODUCTION

AUSSIE
Pro. company: Filmlife Ltd
Producer: Filmlife Ltd
Director: Filmlife Ltd
Producer: Filmlife Ltd
Director: Filmlife Ltd
Producer: Filmlife Ltd
Director: Filmlife Ltd

DOTTED BUNNY
Pro. company: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Director: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Producer: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Director: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Producer: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Director: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Producer: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd
Director: Bulldog Films Pty Ltd

THE DISTANCE
Pro. company: Sascha Management
Producer: Sascha Management
Director: Sascha Management
Producer: Sascha Management
Director: Sascha Management

CINEMA PAPERS July — 51
54 — July CINEMA

IN PRODUCTION

Gregor (The Body Builder) — 1985

Director: John Anker
Producer: Peter O'Byrne
Synopsis: A young man who has been

suffering from muscular dystrophy.

Synopsis: The new generation of Northern

Ireland writers is giving the Irish littera-

ture modernism a new life.

Synopsis: The new generation of Northern

Ireland writers is giving the Irish littera-

ture modernism a new life.

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ture modernism a new life.
SYMPATHY

Synopsis: The story of the detective of the Ubiquitous Madonna Petrov in Canberra in 1964.

DANCE

Synopsis: Based on Anthony Grey's novel 'The Trailblazer' and Grey's experience in Vietnam from 1966-71. The story follows an American's entanglements of the lives of the two men, an entanglement that is both tragic and touching.

THE TRAILBLAZER


THE TRAILBLAZER


PORKFISH

Synopsis: Love him or hate him, put every country in the world, a place for their own, drawing back to cumber, amidst the Australian families, and their neighbours.

LAND OF HOPE

Synopsis: A special effecta, science fiction adventure about three people in a machine manipulated environment and their adventures through space.

THE LANCASTER MILL AFFAIR

Synopsis: Sam Larkin allocates a year of his life to find the answer to the question: What first appears as a human and kindly socializer, becomes a ruthless, scathing, asexual force.

DOUBLE SCULS

Synopsis: Based on John's original story, a tale of unemployment, deception and a love affair.

THRIFFLE

Synopsis: For love. It was in his nature to do things the right way, that was the way he saw it. He did everything right, or at least tried.

PRODUCTION

Synopsis: 'Saigon' the story traces an American's life and his relationship with a Vietnamese woman.

SAIGON

Synopsis: Based on Anthony Grey's novel 'The Trailblazer', a high adventure about three people in a machine manipulated environment and their adventures through space.
### TUSITALA

**Producer:** Australian Film Theatre
**Director:** Michael J. Pate
**Screenplay:** Michael Buerk
**Photography:** Brian McRae
**Art director:** Philip Heasman
**Costume designer:** Patricia de Vries
**Make-up:** Vicki Friedman
**Boom operator:** Mark Wasiutak
**Focus puller:** Mark Dower

**Synopsis:** A story about a young woman who travels to the South Pacific to find her missing brother.

### ANZACS

**Producer:** Brian Jackson
**Director:** Joseph H. Lewis
**Screenplay:** John G. Blystone
**Photography:** Alton Clark
**Art director:** Ted Healy
**Costume designer:** Johnnie Lee
**Make-up:** Robert C. Seger
**Boom operator:** Phillip Heasman

**Synopsis:** Based on the original idea of a real-life incident, this film tells the story of a group of Australian soldiers who are stranded on a desert island.

### BUTTERFLY ISLAND

**Producer:** Brian Jackson
**Director:** Joseph H. Lewis
**Screenplay:** John G. Blystone
**Photography:** Alton Clark
**Art director:** Ted Healy
**Costume designer:** Johnnie Lee

**Synopsis:** Set during World War II, the story follows a group of Australian soldiers who are captured by the Japanese and must find a way to survive in the jungle.

### BELIEVE THE BELOW

**Producer:** Australian Film Theatre
**Director:** John G. Blystone
**Screenplay:** John G. Blystone
**Photography:** Alton Clark
**Art director:** Ted Healy
**Costume designer:** Johnnie Lee
**Make-up:** Robert C. Seger
**Boom operator:** Phillip Heasman

**Synopsis:** During World War II, a group of Australian soldiers are forced to fight against Japanese forces in the South Pacific.

### THE DUNERA BOYS

**Producer:** Australian Film Theatre
**Director:** Jack Kinney
**Screenplay:** John G. Blystone
**Photography:** Alton Clark
**Art director:** Ted Healy
**Costume designer:** Johnnie Lee
**Make-up:** Robert C. Seger
**Boom operator:** Phillip Heasman

**Synopsis:** Based on the original idea of a real-life incident, this film tells the story of a group of Australian soldiers who are stranded on a desert island.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**Producer:** Brian Jackson
**Director:** Joseph H. Lewis
**Screenplay:** John G. Blystone
**Photography:** Alton Clark
**Art director:** Ted Healy
**Costume designer:** Johnnie Lee
**Make-up:** Robert C. Seger
**Boom operator:** Phillip Heasman

**Synopsis:** During World War II, a group of Australian soldiers are forced to fight against Japanese forces in the South Pacific.
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1-3 Bowen Road, Moonah, Hobart. 7009
Phone: (002) 28 6263 Telex: AA57148
March-April 1985

If January and February were hardly bumper months for local films at the home box office, March and April were even worse, with only one new Aussie film on the circuits. And that, it seems fair to say, didn't exactly perform to expectation.

In March, there was hardly an indigenous title to be seen on the city-centre screens of the nation's capitals. World Safari II, oblivious to its almost daily title changes on the world market, mopped up its Sydney run with $1,776 in the first week of March, and bowed out in Perth with a still-strong $2,273.

In Melbourne, Melvin, Son of Alvin (see letter) soldiered on into the first two weeks of March, with a combined box office of just under $1,000 for those two weeks. The Coolangatta Gold returned briefly to Perth for a $898 week, and My First Wife also had a second outing in that city, for a one-week return of $898.

Robbery Under Arms opened at the end of the month, with all the publicity that a good promotional budget can buy. It didn't help. The reviews ranged from lukewarm to appaling, and the public — to give a charitable interpretation on it — decided to wait for the miniseries. Only in Perth — that place again! — did they turn out for it with any real enthusiasm; even in its home city of Adelaide, the returns were just so-so.

In the east coast capitals, however, the response was dismal. In Brisbane, it didn't play. In Sydney, reports came in of the film playing to empty suburban cinemas, while in the city centre the combined take only nudged past the $10,000 mark in one of the four weeks. In Melbourne, it bombed, and would almost certainly not have got a third week if it hadn't been Australian.

All in all, then, a disappointment for what was, despite its length and a certain unevenness of tone, quite a decent film (even if saying so does get you into Filmnews).

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In March, there was hardly an indigenous title to be seen on the city-centre screens of the nation's capitals. World Safari II, oblivious to its almost daily title changes on the world market, mopped up its Sydney run with $1,776 in the first week of March, and bowed out in Perth with a still-strong $2,273.

In Melbourne, Melvin, Son of Alvin (see letter) soldiered on into the first two weeks of March, with a combined box office of just under $1,000 for those two weeks. The Coolangatta Gold returned briefly to Perth for a $898 week, and My First Wife also had a second outing in that city, for a one-week return of $898.

Robbery Under Arms opened at the end of the month, with all the publicity that a good promotional budget can buy. It didn't help. The reviews ranged from lukewarm to appaling, and the public — to give a charitable interpretation on it — decided to wait for the miniseries. Only in Perth — that place again! — did they turn out for it with any real enthusiasm; even in its home city of Adelaide, the returns were just so-so.

In the east coast capitals, however, the response was dismal. In Brisbane, it didn't play. In Sydney, reports came in of the film playing to empty suburban cinemas, while in the city centre the combined take only nudged past the $10,000 mark in one of the four weeks. In Melbourne, it bombed, and would almost certainly not have got a third week if it hadn't been Australian.

All in all, then, a disappointment for what was, despite its length and a certain unevenness of tone, quite a decent film (even if saying so does get you into Filmnews).
In the May issue of Cinema Papers, Fred Harden looked at the use of microcomputers in production accounting and scheduling. In the concluding part of his survey, he examines ways in which micros can help the writer, make things easier for the sound recordist and revolutionize the business of sound editing — an area in which Australia is now a world leader.

As an independent producer working from a home office, I have found the computer essential to my business. Quotes, call sheets, cost summaries and invoices are all done with word-processing software ... and I've learned to touch type! All this has allowed me to present myself in a professional manner to the agencies and clients I work with, without the overheads of a typing service. For me, the computer has become an essential tool, so much so that I have bought myself a smaller, portable model as well.

As a writer, the gains have been even greater. The ability to revise as often as necessary, to shift blocks of text around, to correct mistakes and to incorporate parts of earlier stories from the files — all this has allowed me a lot of creative freedom. It took me a while to become familiar with the complexities of the system, but it is now second nature, and I tend to forget that it was, at times, extremely frustrating.

There is not a screenwriter I know who hasn't purchased or is not planning to purchase a computer. One of the most useful programmes for the screenwriter is an American one called Scriptor. Made by Screenplay Systems in Burbank, California, and sold in Australia through Scorpio Computers in Sydney (88 Darling Street, Glebe, NSW 2037. Ph. [02] 660 6005), it is a text-formatting package with a lot of unique features.

Geoff Baxter of Iloura Visual Services: "We use the Sontron edit control system mostly for commercial video production, and also for our Interscreen system."

SmartKey is an Australian programme that has achieved success around the world. Distributed by FBN Software in Canberra (16 Coles Place, Torrens, ACT 2007. Ph. [062] 86 1102), it is a small programme — about 4K — that you include on each of your programme disks, so that it is loaded before you start work. It then lets you assign any keys on your keyboard as function keys. The advantage for scripting is that full character
names can be assigned to just one key, which speeds up the writing process. It also means that repeating sequences of keys and control keys needed to change margins with programmes such as Wordstar can be set up for one key definition. Definitions can be saved at the end of the session, and stored in a special compressed format for the next time you work on that script. When I used SmartKey to revise the first draft of an unformatted script, I estimate that it saved about a full day's work of hundred-page script. Used in conjunction with Scriptor, it works even better.

Writer Garrie Hutchinson has had much the same experience. "Scriptor formats your screenplay after you have written it on your word-processor," he says, "with Wordstar or, in our case, PerfectWriter. If you use it with SmartKey, it means that all that repetitive writing out of character names and 'INT's and 'EXT's are taken care of with one key stroke. At the formatting stage, Scriptor puts all the columns in the right place, makes all the page breaks work properly — without 'widow' lines — makes sure that all the things that should be capitalized are capitalized, and asks you on-screen questions where things are mucked up. If you take out a page or make something longer, it will re-adjust all the page breaks and 'continued'."

"I would think, what Scriptor costs, you would save in typing costs on one script. And I think the benefit of word-processing programmes, including this one, is that they prompt you to revise. Anything that makes revision easier has got to be worth it. Anyone who is writing a script not using Scriptor is doing it the hard way."

CMX was Sontron's main competitor, but Thirkell reckons they won out initially because of cost: Sontron cost about a third. "It's about two and a half times less than the CMX now," he says, "and, scattered around Australia, we have about 30 systems. Some of the early ones were hybrids — part ours and part someone else's product. But, for the last three years, they have been totally our design, and locally manufactured.

"A lot of the video development work was done here in Melbourne, in conjunction with Chris Schwarz at Complete Post Productions, and at Boura Visual Services. The early audio systems were done with people like Channel 10 and the Swinburne Institute of Technology. When we became involved with Roger Savage and the Soundfirm project, the whole audio system was looked at very much from an international point of view: we wanted to make a product which would be acceptable on a world market. Some of the software and features have come out of a collaboration between Roger and ourselves, and have given us a product that leads most other audio editing systems at the moment. When the second stage of software is completed, it will certainly be a clear leader on a world scale."

Roger Savage, who worked on the sound re-recording of Return of the Jedi at Lucasfilm and has just finished mixing Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome, started out in the music field. "But my interests moved gradually from music towards films," he says, "because I'd done a lot of film scoring, way back in the days of Tim Burstall's Stork (1971) and things like that — early Melbourne stuff."

"But when I moved into film, the only place to do it was in Sydney. There was nothing in Melbourne; people were even going to Adelaide. There was basically nothing here for mixing 35mm. So, that was the first reason for setting up. The other was that, coming from the music side, which was so advanced technically in processing sound, going back to a film mix was like going back to the Dark Ages — very crude. I found it exciting and interesting to see how you could apply what had been developed in the record industry to film."

"When I went to Lucasfilm, it confirmed everything. Their company, Sprocket Systems, was using multi-track — not to the extent we were using it, but Ben Burtt was using it to piece together sound effects before they went onto sprockets for the mix. They used a multi-track synthesised to film to create the elements, which is
what we are doing here, except we are also using multi-track for the final mix.

Before I went to Jedi, I had bought the computer from Graeme at Sontron and purchased the actual synchronizer, although we hadn't developed the software for it. The reason I went to Graeme was because the missing thing was something that could easily control sprockets and timecode, because even at this stage there are things you can't do outside of sprockets — just as there are things you can do much faster on tape. Graeme's synchronizer was the one we wanted to use, and we developed the software specifically for this application with film and video sound.

"The controller allows you to interlock or synchronize a videotape machine — in this case a Sony U-matic, but we have also used a 1" recorder. We can interface the video, audio machine, multi-track or two-track and, in our case, Magnatech 16mm sprocketed dubbers, which includes the projector. You can have up to fifteen of these machines on-line. We also have a KEM flatbed editor interlocked. This has a video camera fitted, which we use mostly for doing film-to-tape as our workprint or mixing dups. The reason it works is that the KEM controlled by the computer is absolutely frame-accurate, whereas the two are not normally synchronous.

"The system is more than just the synchronizer, though. For example, it can run the multi-track backwards in sync, for film-style rock and roll. It has built-in VCAs for automatic fading, comparators for dropping into and out of record, and the next expansion on it is the interface with a laser disc player for accessing sound effects.

"The overseas companies had not seen the wisdom of going to a mass-produced microcomputer, and were staying with their own, fairly old and inflexible systems"

Geoff Baxter

"Coming from the music side, which was so advanced technically, going back to a film mix was like going back to the Dark Ages — very crude"

Roger Savage

That would become just like another machine to it; it would grab a sound from our specially prepared sound effects disc and, depending on how many discs you had on-line, you could play a whole soundtrack from disc. And all to half-frame accuracy.

Geoff Baxter, chief engineer at Ilioura Visual Services in Melbourne, is also a Sontron user. "It was able to leapfrog ahead of the overseas editing systems in a number of ways," he says. "First, it was able to do it on price, because the overseas companies had not seen the wisdom of going to a mass-produced microcomputer, and were staying with their own, fairly old and inflexible systems. They were overtaken by developments in the home and hobby market that brought a flood of low-cost computers, and we took advantage of companies like Sontron and Automatic Edit Controllers in Sydney.

You can now purchase a system that will essentially do everything that a $125,000 CMX will do for around $25,000. And the Australian editing systems are by no means behind the overseas ones. Sony and Ampex have produced very good systems but, to use them, you are virtually locked into using their equipment as well. The greater the amount of their peripheral equipment you have, the bigger advantage you will get from their programme. People who wanted to mix and match equipment were then brought to systems like CMX, which will drive virtually anybody's equipment. There are others which offer similar equipment, but at a price. Which left a nice gap for AEC and Sontron to get into. Plus they were here, so they could be more responsive to ideas and feedback from the local editors, because it is a distinctly separate market from the rest of the world.

"We use the Sontron edit control system mostly for commercial video production, and also for the assembly of material for our Interscreen system. The Interscreen computer is run in a similar way to the edit system, except that, initially, it synchronizes the three cassette machines required in replay. When that's achieved, it goes about the business of switching the signals from these three machines, plus a colour generator, to any one of the twelve monitors. And it will do this every single frame if you want it to, which produces a truly dynamic display. The switching decisions are entered into the computer and synchronized to an SMPTE timecode on one of the U-matic cassettes.

"Related to the Interscreen but on a separate computer is our stock library. Because the Interscreen programmes require so much material and we often have to cope with stock footage, finding the material on a large reel of tape is difficult. After the material comes in and is cleaned, our copyrightist has each reel is logged by hand and the information entered into the computer. You can then use a sort-print-out to search for a specific entry, or use the computer to find it.

"The programme was modified from one I wrote to keep track of the cables in a building! The library needed almost the same features. It runs on a cheap, $2,600 CP/M computer with built-in 64K memory, which is hooked up to a Brother typewriter. We also use it for word-processing, and it will also do our invoices."

For the working sound recordist, the technology needs to be both simpler and, of course, lighter. But microcomputers are the way to go, and we are now using one to do the conversions from his film footage and frame-count lists, to work out the equivalent timecode numbers. It is then printed out as a video-edit decision list that he takes to the tape house.

Wilson has found his microcomputer especially rugged, and with some surprising fringe benefits. "It's survived from snow to desert temperatures; it's probably worn better than me. And it's actually a help in some of those locations, because it is such a novelty. We were filming with children in the Hunza Valley for The Fountain of Youth and, although they spoke some English, they were a bit scared of us. I had a short programme that let them type in their name and then it printed it out in big letters. Then you tore the strip off and gave it to them, and they rushed round delighted!

"And once, we struck a customs guy where we changed the carnet — something which can get you into a lot of trouble. I had already entered the changes into the computer, and when he questioned us, I said: 'Hang on, I'll get it for you', and out it printed. He could have said, 'Smart aleck'. But he was fascinated; we talked computers for fifteen minutes, and he let us through." ★

Above, sound recordist Ian Wilson with his highly portable Sharp 1500.

"The print-out can use a number of different colours so, for example, you can use red for the 'print' takes, etc. With the 24K memory, it will hold about a week's recording information. The programme itself only takes up about 7K. So, with the new 64K memory chips here soon, you could keep a five- or six-week production in memory. You can download it to a small cassette recorder if you like, and I do that at the end of the day because, computers being what they are, anything can happen. Then stick the print-out strips on to the tape box, and supply a copy for the editor or whoever needs them. The advantage of that is that, while you can lose sheets, you hardly ever lose a tape box."

Wilson has found a number of spin-off benefits. "I've got a programme that calculates my cash flow, that does my invoice on the day of the shoot, and I enter the detail information. I could add a description at the time or later; and, at the end of the shoot, print it out on a very small printer attached to the end of it. It's all very compact, and it travels well.

"The overseas companies had not seen the wisdom of going to a mass-produced microcomputer, and were staying with their own, fairly old and inflexible systems"
The Gibson Group would like to thank the Festival for staging the Australian Premiere of

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Prisoners

MRS SOFFEL

There are evident similarities between Gillian Armstrong's debut feature, Brilliant Career (1979), and her recent film, Mrs Soffel. Both films depict a woman trapped by her sex and circumstances: in the case of My Brilliant Career's Sybylla (Judy Davis), the trap was poverty; in the case of Kate Soffel (Diane Keaton), it is marriage. Both films are period pieces in mise-en-scène only: their themes are contemporary and seem to detach themselves from the visual style of the films. And both films use their mise-en-scène — the interiors of homes and landscapes — to represent the moods and predicaments of their characters. Indeed, Mrs Soffel extends these elements into a stylized comment upon the status of women.

Kate Soffel, the wife of a prison warden in turn-of-the-century Pittsburgh, is desperately unhappy, seeking solace in religion and her children, and taking to her bed when neither provides a remedy for her dilemma. For Kate, unlike Sybylla, has gone one step further: she has entered the marriage institution against which Sybylla fought, and so is doomed. And, like Aunt Helen (Wendy Hughes) in My Brilliant Career, Kate also offers "a model of what to avoid: the subservience of women to passion", as Brian McFarlane put it in Words and Images.

Kate's passion manifests itself in her aid to and love for the convicted murderer, Ed Biddle (Mel Gibson). Kate and Ed are drawn to each other as they realise that each is the captive of society's dictates. It is no accident that bars, claustrophobic camera angles, stifling interiors and sombre shadows mark the visual style of the prison scenes, in sharp contrast to the open, clear, white open spaces of the cold Canadian landscapes into which they eventually flee. Armstrong — and her directorial voice — cannot be ignored: constantly counterposes images of fire and steel, dark and light, and themes of conformity and restlessness, religion and fate.

Kate never seems to belong in her surroundings: there is constant tension between her and the settings of the first part of the film. Her haunted eyes, uneasy movements through the cells delivering bibles, the camera which captures her in the stifling interiors of her home, overwhelmingly filled with objects, only make the bars of the prison — all testify to the concept of a woman kept in place only by force of circumstances.

The contrast and comparison with Ed is beautifully portrayed in a scene in which she is beating carpets with her maid behind the stifling interiors of her home, over­

and cannot accept that the status quo is immutable.

Both girls will be marked by their mother's actions. Yet, strangely, it is Irene, the one who disapproves of her mother, who visits her after her disgrace. Therein lies the sole note of optimism in the film: the hope that future generations will benefit from the experiences of a woman such as Kate Soffel. For no hope lies in the fate of Kate: her attempt to escape her emotional prison is foiled by her "subservience to passion," and she is once again behind bars.

The poignant final scene firmly refocuses attention to an intellectual concept is clear (if at times overwhelming) in its control of the frame. Best of all, this is a movie about dose of salts.


Reel life

THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO

The last Woody Allen film I saw was Annie Hall. I rather liked Annie Hall, but something about it warned me away from what was to follow. The Purple Rose of Cairo would not have tempted me into the cinema if I had not been asked to review it. Now it seems as though I have been realise: this is a suspicious concatenation of circumstances indeed and, if I were you, I would take what follows with a healthy dose of salts.

The Purple Rose of Cairo is an entertaining film, with a bright and lively tone that won't be charmed by it. It is not hilarious, I suppose, but what is called 'gently funny'. It is also what is called 'other-sweet'. The story concerns an innocent dreamer whose dreams come (all too briefly) true. A social comment squares through the fantasy. Poverty and apathy are contrasted with ersatz Tinseltown luxe.

Allen's narrative is deftly structured — a model of its kind. His observation of social detail is witty and precise. The film is jam-packed with understated virtues (for example, Gordon Willis's cinematography recalls Charles Burchfield's streetscapes, with all the ways out cut off within the frame). Best of all, this is a movie about movies: self-reflexive, hip, aware. And you get to cry at the end.

Actually, you could start crying right at the beginning: it is the Depression. Men out of work, women trying to put bread on the table, dark colours, no make-up, untidy hair, old clothes. Mia Farrow is this waitress. Only she's really not much of a waitress. Her old man doesn't have a job, and he won't be charmed by it. It is not hilarious, I suppose, but what is called 'gently funny'. It is also what is called 'other-sweet'. The story concerns an innocent dreamer whose dreams come (all too briefly) true. A social comment squares through the fantasy. Poverty and apathy are contrasted with ersatz Tinseltown luxe.

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truth, there isn’t much of anything going on—one’s only support and she drops a plate and gets fired. And then she goes home and her old man is playing around with that fat broad. You are asking yourself, “Is this a comedy, or what?” So, she walks out and goes to the movies again.

**The Purple Rose of Cairo.** And you wouldn’t believe what happens: this guy in the movie looks right out at her and says, “You must really like this picture, you’ve been here seven times!” And he walks right down the movie and into her life! It is a moment of madness, the best moment in the movie. It is also the premise upon which the narrative of the film is built — a premise whose implications are ultimately rejected by the picture’s sudsy finale.

Indeed, once it has been established that the worlds of ‘fiction’ and ‘reality’ can intersect, the film seems bent on running away from the premise. Tom Baxter (Jeff Daniels), the character from the screen — the star who plays the character, who appears later in her own right — falls in love with Cecilia (Farrow), and she with him. But they never get it on together. They kiss more. Significantly, they talk a lot about what happens when the screen fades to black (Tom and Cecilia know, Cecilia doesn’t. And there is a clever sequence in which Tom visits a brothel. But the line is not approached. The idea of sexual relations or furtive act, but a proud and public social statement of class, race, gender and family determination, and also politically conservative, playing on wink-nudge responses to anything ‘trendy’ or ‘deviant’.

If *Porky’s Revenge*, in particular, registers so strongly as ‘adolescent’, an interesting scenario emerges. Above and beyond the intrinsic quality (of whatever kind) of the film itself. A simple but nagging question arises: Why is the worldview of this film (and, in fact, many teen movies) so obsessed with sexual humiliation? Over and over, characters are cruelly ‘set up’ in embarrassing situations, or their unchecked libido lands them in such situations, or they are caught on the brink of (or in the middle of) some titillating, kinky act. Sex is always public and ‘dirty’. Is it any wonder, then, that a code of normal (private, domestic, genital) sexuality is endlessly defined in the dialogue (‘You don’t look her waist, it’s not one of the designated areas’) or that the plot is structured on an elaborate series of premonitory photos, stag movies and so on, that self-referentially implicate Porky’s Revenge, and indeed the entire institution of cinema, as irrevocably dirty, voyeuristic, imperious, humiliating, exposing private acts to public eyes — a kind of (non-explicit, but not the less fully operational) pornography?

But then, as if in horrified self-realisation at this depressingly moral conclusion, Porky’s Revenge turns elsewhere. As in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, too many teen movies involving schools, gangs or police productions, a certain positive message is eventually inserted, so as to transcend the narrative’s hitherto established grid of inconceivable differences, sexual issues and words against tyrannical authority.

It is even more a mess than you could imagine. The film ends with an almost ritual celebration, in which conflicts dissolve, humiliation disappears, and all evil elements are Porky are expelled. At last, sex is not a dirty or furtive act, but a proud and public social statement of class, race, gender and family determination, within which the characters struggle to hold on.

**Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment and Porky’s Revenge.**

By that unfortunate middle-class reflex, the picture haunts film reviewers. And the first films in the Police Academy and Porky’s series were, upon release, instantly labelled as ‘ascriptable’ category reserved for most teen movies. The film is middle-class in the sense that a ridiculous conflation of these filmic stereotypes express a deep-seated hatred and resentment of that cultural lifestyle defined as ‘the middle-class’. The movie has a Working-class attitude, as the boys. She sleeps slouched on his bed, while the boys-in-training re-run the fifties cut-stom. The Honeymooners. His life is one of tragic crime, on horses, on roads. Willie has, and doesn’t have to try too hard: it comes naturally. The only ruffle in his world is when the phone rings and the voice is Hungarian. ‘Speak English,’ he says, ‘I’m an American now.” And, coming to intrigue on his ordered, disciplined life with a curious man-cousin of Evie, on her way from Motherland to Cleveland.

Willy’s best friend, Eddie, looks forward to this arrival. Willy wouldn’t do anything so uncool as be enthusiastic. And, when Evie arrives, enrobed in baggy black police uniform, Willy is thunderstruck by her sultry glance. Willy finds out that he’s met his match in larcenous charm. He fills her portable cassette which plays only a plangent Screamin’ Jay Hawkins blues. Evia soon proves herself as Willy’s greatest competition. Willy has the little rookie’s (Chesterfields, TV dinners) as the boys. She can also wield a Hoover, and doesn’t seek to maintain when she goes to see Oz films without her. When Evie leaves for Cleveland, Willy’s greatest competitor is her. She puts it on over her pullover, and shuffles it off later in the street and into a trashcan. Eddie watches, admiringly. End of Part One.

### Pigging out

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### The goulash archipelago

**STRANGER THAN PARADISE.**

Wille lives in a shoe-box in New York City. He sleeps slouched on his bed, while the TV broods over to his is a trock. She puts it on over her pullover, and shuffles it off later in the street and into a trashcan. Eddie watches, admiringly. End of Part One.
Loners: top left, Matthew Modine in Paradise. Ezer Balint in freezing fog, bad movies and a teasable winter sun of Florida, equipped with all that playing bridge, dispensing growls and off in a borrowed car for Cleveland and the girl on men's business, this time at the Eva. In a frozen house they find The Aunt, season motel. Eva lies flat on the car's back — testimony to Ray's last fight with cancer. This is her holiday, too, and she's and-white film stock donated by Wenders which possesses a reassured, easy irony, The State of Things. But it's far better than such film

 Stranger Than Paradise. Directed, written and acted by Jim Jarmusch. Producer: Sara Driver. Executive producer: Otto Groumek. Co-producer: Tris Trombone. Co-editor: Melody London. Music: John Lurie, Aaron Picht, Screamin' Jay Hawkins. Sound: Lance Venning. Design: Kurai Cast John Lurie (Willa (Bea Mohanty), Esther Balint (Eva), Richard E. Sizemore (Eva), Cecilia Stark (Aunt Perta, the canary). Actors, Birdy is a monomaniac. The problem with his monomania is that it takes him, quite literally, over the edge. Dresser asks Al, "Is his leather (This way, the pigeons think I'm one of them)." He dumbs, "I'm blotto low, to the very top of a cower station."

 Hanging over the edge to catch pigeons, he steps, and ends up clinging to a gutter around a hundred feet up. Desperately, Al tries to pull him back. Birdy, however, is not so much car as exhilarated — high, one might almost say. "You're going to jump?" asks Al, incredulously. "No, Al, I'm going to fly," says Birdy. And does so, plunging straight through the air and landing on the heap of sand — where, as they say, he sustains only minor injuries.

 porównajcie z Chicago section of the film, Birdy's behaviour is eccentrically obsessive — that weird kid, as his friend tells him before they meet — than fruit. And his obsession on is lightly handled — except, perhaps, in his love scene with Parida in the car any. Birdy's first attempt at manpowered flight, for instance, is a wacky affair, conditioned from the front of a grocer's delivery bicycle (pedalled by the faithful Al), on top of a massive garbage tip, to the strains of that late fifties classic of musical bur­

Puerto Rican�n, Ricky Valleon's "La Bamba." It ends in a pool of wacky water, at the bottom of a garbage-strewn slope. Briefly, though, Birdy flew. What really cripes Birdy's wings is Vietnam — ironically, perhaps, since it is the traumatizing experience of Nam that pushes him off the mental edge and leaves him squat­

Looking at a lonely man whose changed loyalties had not altered his love for all things British, it was also the after scenario of a professional spy who had turned. In his new film, The Falcon and the Snowman, Schlesinger takes a more serious look at what turns a man into a traitor — a question that is raised but never fully answered, because real life can be stranger than a John Le Carre novel.

The truth in this case is based on Robert Lindsey's bestseller about two young Americans who were imprisoned in 1977 on U.S. satellite codes to the Russians. Christopher Boyce (Timothy Hutton) steals classified documents from the aerospace defence establishment where he works and sells them to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City through his childhood friend, Andrew Dalton Jean Lee (Sean Penn), a drug dealer. What triggers Boyce's treason is coded C.I.A. messages to destabilize the Vietnamese government in Australia. As an experienced fencer, Boyce recognizes the predatory nature of the C.I.A. which, according to him, has outgrown its appetite for legitimate intelligence and has now begun preying on small nations.

For Lee, his friend and go-between, the motives are purely mercenary. With his get-rich-quick approach to life, the information he sells is just another business transaction, no different from the heroin he hustles. He is not easily cowed by K.G.B. tactics, and


Not easily cowed by K.G.B. tactics, and
High anxiety

THE RAZOR’S EDGE

One’s first response is to wonder why on earth anyone would want to film The Razor’s Edge in the eighties, and to suspect that the producers of the film are possessed of an inferiority complex. There is still an audience for such high-toned tosh. Somerset Maugham’s social satire is characterised by its fine camouflaged wit, but what about all that superficial searching for truth, so popular in post-World War II cinema, when fine literature was made but now gone with the wind? Pervasive, shallow, self-conscious and contrived, the film does not seem any more ‘real’ than its creators’ own characters. It is, in a word, an embarrassment to the postwar male audience.

The Razor’s Edge works in its own incantation, it does so on the level of some very well-achieved human relationships. And where the film markedly exceeds the 1946 version is in Bill Murray’s Larry. The early sophistication gives point to his sobering wartime experiences, as these in turn do to his postwar malaise. The easy humour and sexuality he reveals early on feed into the later Larry, as he the new sense of a meaning to life has destroyed everything else about him. His relationship with the two women, Isabel (Catherine Hicks) and Sophie (filmmaker’s wife in the story of Larry Darrell’s “curious existence”) is characterized by a clash of worlds that the film uses to make one question what it all means, and in the Search for Truth in picturesquely drawn landscapes (Isabel), Denholm Elliott (Elliot Templeton), Peter Boyle (the old tailor), Peter Vaughan (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Stephen Dalbert (McFarlane), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane (the old tailor), Brian McFarlane 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The Company of Wolves wants to be a film about desire. But it is altogether too academic and too well-mannered — dare one say too ‘British’? — for that. Angela Carter’s idea of a modernist style is one that fits not into modernism at all, but the modernist family values what it is doing, elaborating on its own exquisite playfulness.

This spills over into Neil Jordan’s direction, which painfully emphasizes every twist in sight — each plunge into fantasy cut at length, each Chinese box delicately fitted. Watching it, one longs for a bit of real modernist pace, a stray moment of radically intense acceleration, or a logical permutation to make the mind boggle just a little. But no: The Company of Wolves piles all the way to a ‘shock ending’ — a final filmisation of reality and fantasy, a final blow against a simple or comfortable inter­pretation of the fiction, which is hardly even surprising, let alone disturbing.

Even as a straight film fantasy, leaving aside the modernist pretensions, The Company of Wolves is far too reliant on clichés — misty mists, lusty maidens, a howling synthesiser soundtrack — ever effectively to evoke a child’s or a teenager’s inner fantasy life.

Again, one is left remembering other films: Carlos Saura’s Cria Cuervos Raise Ravens), or Roy Rowland’s The Five Thousand Fingers of Doctor T. And, as a film attempting to break down the complex, links between fear and desire, sexual drives and gendered identities, nature and culture, one might well think of Woody Allen, the sex­uality of Schrader’s Cat People to the academic feminism of The Company of Wolves.

But imagine . . . This film, written by Italo Calvino and directed by Raul Ruiz, erudite and crude at the same time. Then, really, we’d be in the company of wolves.

Adrian Martin


The Company of Wolves

“Whenever I want you, all I have to do is dream”. When Jenny falls into a drunken drogue, her dream is to be married to the man in the form of the Starman, a creature who clones Scott's body and proceeds to provide love, companionship and, ultimately, the family that she craves.

E.T. chose Elliott, the disconsolate child of a broken home, and granted him celebrity status and paternal guidance. Centauri scooped a stifled pinball wizard from the confines of a caravan park to the fantastic heights of starfighting.

The Starman functions in the same way. By filling the gaps in Jenny’s life, in both cases, the alien graciously a home deprived of a father figure or husband and alleviates the loneliness and threat of death or divorce. In a sense, he rejuvenates the cosy ideal of the nuclear family, providing the perfect safety and security that seems to have died with Spencer Tracy.

In addition, Starman is essentially an E.T. with sex appeal. He is a filter through which America is observed, observed (but not too harshly) rapped over the knuckles, and finally celebrated. While E.T.’s expedition through American culture was confined to a middle-class neighbourhood, Jenny and her alien embark on a journey through America and its iconography. Her visitor has three days to enjoy the symbolic journey of the planet, and then head home via a motor crator in Arizona.

On her journey from Jenny’s house to his destination, he is introduced to the idiosyncrasies of ears and to the peculiarities of their lives: love, murder, diversity and apple pie. As the trip takes in America— hambur­gers, hand guns, dinners, baseball caps, poker machines, mobile homes, rednecks, hot rods and highways — the film makes a game attempt to present both a glimpse of the dark side of the dream and a hearty cheer for America.

Starman juggles images of bar­barity with a highly traditional brand of patriotism. And, when the hero realises in the form of the company of wolves, that he leaves with impressions of a world pop­ulated by a diversity of people and values, his penchant for cherry cobblers and fairy tales were being ‘re-read’ with new meaning and horizons.

The Company of Wolves: sadly, is not the film to realise such imaginings. It is full of double extrapositions, misreadings and hidden meanings which it painstakingly announces with each new scene. But it all seems to get bogged down in the miasma of those misreadings and meanings drawn upon by the production’s art department.

The Company of Wolves dammatically forgets what is potentiality comprehension of a particular fictional territory, the kind of territory that we associate with the novels of its screenwriter, Angela Carter. It is indeed concerned with the complex historical and mythical resonances of the wolf figure. But, more centrally, it views them retrospectively, through a whole series of current cultural obsessions, in particular current theorizations of female sexuality and desire. It is as if the old myths and fairy tales were being ‘re-read’ with modern, feminist eyes, turned over and made strange in the process.

The film does this through a territory via the unconscious of a subconscious girl. What better psychic stage is there on which to present both a glimpse of the dark side of the forces or drives — or at least to give that name the possibility of a kind of a home deprived of a father figure or husband, and granted him celebrity status and paternal guidance. Centauri scooped a stifled pinball wizard from the confines of a caravan park to the fantastic heights of starfighting.

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Short Reviews:  
An A-Z

**American Dreamer** offers a pleasant, if patchy, variation on the frothy romantic comedies of the thirties and forties. Jobeth Williams stars as a perky suburban wife whose success in a supermarket writing competition wins her a trip to Paris. After she is hit by a car in front of one of the many monuments exhibited by the film, she awakens with the conviction that she is the glamorous, fearless sleuth, Rebecca Ryan — the heroine of her pastiche novel.

What ensues is a spirited, if slightly protracted, romp through the City of Love, with Williams zealously pursuing real and imagined villains and Tom Conti trailing amiably behind her.

For those of us who had tired of Conti's recurring false clues and unpredictable direction. Whenever a scene has clearly lost its fizz, the problem is skirted by forcing Williams to do a grand exit swathed in Givenchy or Dior creations. She manages to carry it off with sufficient elan the first half dozen times, but after that, one wonders why the film wasn't more rigorously pruned.  

Debi Enker

_Inside the Walls_ has caused riots on its home turf. With a cast and crew made up of both Jews and Arabs, it is every inch a prison drama, with riots, violence, emotional scenes in the visiting room, hints of homo-sexual rape, and even a man who keeps birds.

To be honest, it is not a very good film, pushing even its central characters into stereotype, and choreographing its confrontations along strictly conventional lines. What makes it fascinating, though, is what it has to say.

Conflict between Jews and Arabs in the jail is intensified with the arrival of a young Jew (Ayelet Zurer) convicted of dealings with the P.L.O. But the leaders of both 'communities' (Ammi Dagan as Uri, a Jew in for twelve years for armed robbery, and Muhammad Bakri as the P.L.O. man, Issam, who got 50 years for terrorism) keep the sides apart. In the end, however, they unite in a hunger strike when a head guard tries to frame the Arabs for the murder of a Jewish drug dealer.

Clearly courageous in its even-handed treatment of both sides, the film is really memorable for its subtlety, the unmistakeable implication that it is the authorities, inside and outside the walls, who are responsible for perpetuating the violence between the two races, through the shameless manipulation of prejudice and the planting of false information about events.

Nick Roddick

Joel and Ethan Coen, both associated with Sam Raimi's smash horror hit, _The Evil Dead_, have debuted with a surprisingly mature addition to the recent and fashionable revival of film noir. A big improvement on _Body Heat_, _Stranger's Kiss_ and _The Postman Always Rings Twice_, _Blood Simple_ seems less constrained by the genre's framework, and the Coens have effortlessly subverted their story with recurring false clues and unpredictable aberrations.

Their consistent, double-edged ironies transcend it all, leaving the audience with a string of memorable moments. The basic ingredients are pretty standard: husband, wife, infidel, private detective, gun, lots of murders... But the Coens, with a cheeky self-confidence, have transcended it all, leaving the audience with a string of memorable moments.

Their consistent, double-edged ironies make it difficult not to admire their talents. And, for most of the film, they imaginatively blend the keep-'em-guessing plot with a strikingly stylish and humorous approach.

In fact, the siblings show such control over their narrative that the easy, effortless manipulation of genre almost borders on arrogance. But the film has an integrity which means that it never loses control over its gentle, self-mocking style.

Rod Bishop

Assembling a diverse group of characters in a confined space can be a simple and effective way of focusing on character development and interaction. The Breakfast Club uses the library of a Chicago high school as the arena for exploring teen themes: parents, teachers, sex, peer groups, popularity and rebellion.

While the film's narrative is familiar, its witty, pacy and occasionally savage script and the ensemble of vibrant performances breathe vitality and poignancy into the subject. The disparate captives of an eight-hour Saturday detention comprise a handful of the classic cinematic stereotypes of adolescence: pretty prom queen Molly Ringwald, insolent rebel Judd Nelson, shy bookworm Anthony Michael Hall, arrogant athlete Emilio Estevez and sullen outcast Ally Sheedy.

Having established the clichés, however, writer/director/co-producer John Hughes proceeds to dismantle them, highlighting the characters' common values and problems. Their progress towards unity and
their emergence from the rigid roles is set against their irreverence towards the repressive environment.

Hughes and his lively cast seem to revel in the spatial limitations of the film, and the emphasis is on dialogue and performance. And, while it never trespasses into the unexpected, the film’s liveliness, humour and sensitivity are consistently engaging.

Deb Enker

Caravan of Courage, An Ewok Adventure is no more a film for children under eight than was Return of the Jedi. The important difference this time around is that Lucasfilm is not trying to dupe the cosmos into believing that its tale about a race of warrior teddy bears is a grand, portentous, metaphysical epic.

The story concerns two children who enlist the help of the Ewoks to rescue their parents, who were captured by a monster on the forest moon of Endor. Beautifully streamlined, fluidly paced and incident-packed, the film uses the fairy-tale elements of humour, emotion, conflict, danger, loss and heroism to good effect.

The special effects, by Industrial Light and Magic, provide some exciting highlights, including a stop-motion battle with a forest beast and a dazzling night scene where 1,000 Trinket-bell-like creatures fill the air.

Ironically, the production of this relatively low-budget Star Wars offshoot is more successful at evoking the alien world of Endor than Jedi was, though the predominance of close-up and medium shots perhaps betray the film’s original television target.

To its credit, the film wisely avoids tying the story into the struggle against Darth Vader, of which we have seen quite enough for the time being, thank you very much.

Jim Schembel

Melodrama is a tricky genre. Stuff it up on you and you get a Possession, where sweat replaces styles, and the camera scuttles round after the actors, seeking the fluid, intensifying movements of a Minnelli or a Sirk, but looking like an outside broadcast.

Get melodrama right, though, and the result can be magic — a view of the world that is rooted in reality, but that can take off into transcendence at the first opportunity, like grand opera or a children’s story.

Bruce Morrison

Constance almost gets it really right. Set in the primly stultifying climate of postwar Auckland, the film tells the story of its heroine, who is lured by Gilda (the film) and seduced by Vogue (the magazine). Her attempts to live in the world she has created, however, bring her into head-on conflict with reality. And reality, as in all the best melodramas, wins.

Steering a neat course between the over-dressed — Richard Jeziorny’s production design is a major plus — and overkill, Morrison’s film only rarely lapses into picture-book pathos. For most of the time, it grips us with Constance’s descent into hell, thanks not a little to two magnificent central performances — by Donough Rees in the title role, and Judie Douglass as her mother.

Only Shane Briant is a bit lackluster as the cad. But that does not detract from a fine film in which, for once, style is integral to the story, not laid on top with a trowel.

Nick Roddick

The Flamingo Kid belongs with those teen movies that cast an critical eye on the ideological underpinnings of American culture — a group that includes films such as Saturday Night Fever, Risky Business and Fast Times at Ridgemont High.

Young Jeffrey Willis (Matt Dillon) migrates from Brooklyn to L.A. for summer jobs around the El Flamingo Beach Club, a haven for the bejewelled, narcissistic nouveau-riche to bathe in the reflection of their prosperity. For Jeffrey, the place becomes the promised land of opportunity, the American dream come true, and the WASP beauty (Janet Jones) who beckons to him seems like a human equivalent of the Statue of Liberty.

It is the summer of 1969 — according to producer Michael Phillips, “probably the last moment of our national innocence” — and the film becomes a moral fable about the disillusionment of an era. Framing Jeffrey’s odyssey between Independence Day and Labor Day, it represents the values of the past: honesty, loyalty, the work ethic.

In a sense, it is a modern version of The Wizard of Oz, and equally conservative the bottom line is, “There’s no place like home”. But its intertwining of personal drama with the iconography of American life provides further evidence of the creative potential to be found in the recurring elements of the teen movie.

Tom Ryan

The easy line, “Frankly, gentlemen, the attitude of this division sucks”, introduces us to the familiar but enjoyable clash between the little man and the (American) system. In the case of Flashpoint, it is U.S. border patrolmen Kris Kristofferson and Treat Williams versus Washington Fed’s Kurtwood Smith and Mark Sade.

Each side is after the various contents of a wrecked jeep, and each side has its own secret. The patrolmen want the cache of $800,000, and the Feds want to keep the skeleton quiet.

Writers Dennis Shryack and Michael Butler use crisp, well-written dialogue and bright characteristics to develop a highly entertaining story, which is enhanced by some stunning desert locations, proficient playing and direction, and effectively unobtrusive music by Tangerine Dream.

Flashpoint is a first feature for producer Skip Short and director William Tannen, whose award-winning teamwork on commercials is evident in the film’s economy.

But references to the 1963 Kennedy assassination and the epilogue’s ominous claim that those with knowledge of the assassins have been murdered in circumstances equally mysterious prove unnecessary: the film works well enough without such gratuitous attempts at credibility.

Ian Horner

Has the show started?” ask members of the on-screen audience on two occasions, as trauma interrupts preparations for the feminist cabaret show of Micha (Helle Ryslinge) and Laura (Annemarie Helger), who in a Christian Braad Thomsen’s Seks Og Magic, provide some exciting high-energy, rock music.

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Ernie Althoff

Directed by Richard Donner — he of the seesaw career, with Superman as its peak, and The Toy as its nadir — and shot better than Vittorio Storaro, Ladyhawk is a widescreen, action-packed, tragi-comic, sword-and-sorcery mess.

As if this were not enough, Navarre’s beloved, Isabeau of Anjou (Michelle Pfieffer), similarly cursed, is woman by night and hawk by day. Until they are put back on the same track at the end, thanks to one of those eclipses that can ruin the best of spells, the only time Navarre and Isabeau are part of the same species is one snowy dawn, when they get to lock fingers as the sun rises.

The film’s failure to make anything out of even this moment, however — beyond over-exposure, optical effects and solid
bursts of synthesizer — is symptomatic of its overall failure. The landscapes are breathtaking, and Storaro occasionally has fun with a crane. But the result isn’t even balse metal; it’s an alloyed alloy, wasting Leo McKern (an actor who now seems to be typecast by his nose) as a buccaneer monk, and dragged beyond the boundaries of even amused indulgence by the inept playing of Matthew Broughton as a kind of medieval superbrat, forever ingratiating himself with the camera.

The Motown crowd responsible for Berry Gordy’s The Last Dragon obviously have a talent for picking out what’s hip and making it funny. A fresh-faced, bright little comedy, the video boom and New York’s cultural diversity all at once, and to keep its pace up bursts of synthesizer — is symptomatic of its overall failure. The landscapes are breathtaking, and Storaro occasionally has fun with a crane. But the result isn’t even balse metal; it’s an alloyed alloy, wasting Leo McKern (an actor who now seems to be typecast by his nose) as a buccaneer monk, and dragged beyond the boundaries of even amused indulgence by the inept playing of Matthew Broughton as a kind of medieval superbrat, forever ingratiating himself with the camera.

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Two scenes from The Pope of Greenwich Village give an indication of what this film could have been, but unfortunately fails to be. A languid, leisurely-paced scene shows Italian characters (possibly Little Italy). When director Stuart Rosenberg cuts to a high-angle long shot, showing these impeccably dressed hoods swaying in unison to the melodic sounds of Frank Sinatra’s Summer Wind, one knows the meaning of the phrase ‘making an impression’.

As in so many films dealing with cultural stereotypes, Leroy — who seems to believe that kung fu has more to do with strange noises and ‘attitude’ than physical skill — walks about in oriental garb, his hands in his prayer posture, asking people where he should go to find his ‘master’, while orientals talk and “act like streetwise blacks. Leroy’s father owns a pizza parlour, and is proud of it.

There are also some predictable — though serviceable — emotional elements (Leroy’s romance with Laura, and a kung fu terrorist smashing up his father’s pizza parlour) to keep the audience on side, and to help make the chop-socky finale a tribute to the genre’s compulsory scene.

Jim Schembrì

The problem is, however, that Rosenberg isn’t interested in street life: he almost keeps the characters oblivious to their surroundings. It is, therefore, not surprising that the tempo, flux, movement and mood of the street are not consistently evoked.

Jim Schembrì

A dramatized documentary about the work of British prostitutes and their development of a self-help parliamentary lobby group, Prostitute is concerned with the conditions of work, customer relations and labour involved in prostitution. Its passing reference to Michel Foucault and to a frequent debunking of middle-class academia and sexual neuroses places the work of prostitutes firmly within the realm of employment, and prevents the film from being the usual trendy final act with skinflint entertainment often associated with the subject.

By positioning the audience as if it were actually a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film, director Tony Garnett — whose first feature this is, after producing Floating Islands — gives the audience a third party to the discussions and events within the film.

The film has been banned for four years by the Australian Censorship Board, and is only now getting a commercial release in Melbourne, five years after it was made. At a time when prostitutes were seeking legitimation as workers, and sexuality, women and pornography were strong issues both within the women’s movement and within groups concerned about the politics of representation, Prostitute would have seemed direct, daring and full of integrity. Now, though, the issues and methods of the film seem didactic and plodding.

Sally Semmens

Michael Crichton’s Runaway creates a totally credible urban environment of the near future (by logically extending our current technology) and crosses it with a thriller: in the police department, a ‘runaway squad’ has been formed to retrieve and repair malfunctioning robots. The squad’s Sgt Rainsay (Tom Selleck) comes across a non-standard microchip in a murder and, this puts him on the trail of the evil Luther (Gene Simmons).

Thematically, the film is engaging, with its glimpses of a highly possible future. And the action scenes are breathtaking. In one, Luther fires a ‘smart bullet’ (which locks on to a person’s body and tracks it down like a heat-seeking missile), and we cut to a POV shot of the bullet tracking round corners and through pipes as it homes in on its target.

In fact, the respective champions of the endless ‘form versus content’ debate could have a field day with the film. The bare bones of its derivative narrative contain all the elements: sympathetic good cop, sticking evil bad guy, car chases, close calls, shootouts; an emotionally charged climax... But what brings it all to life are a cracking pace, technical wizardry, some breathtaking cinematography (by John A. Alonzo) and an intriguing, realistic setting.

Jim Schembrì
Jonathan Demme (Citizen's Band, Melvin and Howard) originally approached New York art band Talking Heads with the idea of filming their strongly visual stage show. The result, Stop Making Sense, is a surprisingly satisfying 80-minute concert film. Avoiding both the hysterical cutting of the three-minute pop clip and the prolonged interviews that marred The Last Waltz, Demme concentrates on showcasing the band in performance, and his restrained direction is both a relief and a delight.

An army of clapper-loaders is kept busy as the 35mm Panavision cameras sweep and glide around the band. The fluid camerawork and the stage lighting effectively dissolve the static relationship between audience and performers, there are invisible miracles of coverage and cutting, and the sound is superb. At screenings, the audience has applauded each number as if at a live concert — a new twist on Sensurround.

It means to have a good time, largely defined in terms of beer, bickering, bums and boobs. In this, the film's celebration of spontaneity seems dangerously like a rationale for adolescentcrudity, so that the jock and jockette can do their thing.

Equally dubious is its representation of the two girls, who play very minor variations on the roles of the nice girl and the tart, the virgin and the whore, both 'things' defined by a kind of thinking that makes one embarrassed to be male.

Tom Ryan

The repercussions of an education system that is run like any old bureaucracy provide the dramatic framework for Teachers, which sets forth a world in which moral and social responsibility have been conventionally pigeonholed, both for pragmatic reasons and because of the absence of ideals.

The plot revolves around a handful of characters whose personal and professional lives intersect when it is discovered that a graduate of John F. Kennedy High School is illiterate. Unions, lawyers and teachers answer the call. A compromise is reached, and the 'real' issue is skirted.

Alex Jurel (Nick Nolte), a once inspirational but now disillusioned teacher, finds himself at the focus of these forces, which threaten his position. A cocky and laconic character, Alex's interactions with an ex-student (Joseph Williams), his deputy (Judd Hirsch) and a defensive, alienated student (Ralph Macchio), force him to redefine his role as a teacher.

Not surprisingly, John F. Kennedy High is more like an asylum than a school. And Teachers, something of a sideshow film, is concerned more with ideals than with pragmatism. Ultimately, though, it is its equation of protagonist with leer that lends the film its ambiguous sense of optimism and forbearance.

Paul Kalina

Channel 9 has its 'Classic Catches', Channel 7 its 'Marks of the Year' and MGM has its 'That's Whatever' series. 1974 and 1976 were the years of That's Entertainment, Parts I and II. For 1985, we have That's Dancing!, a collection of various dance styles, courtesy of the movie camera, and arranged by writer/director Jack Haley Jr.

Like the above-mentioned compilations of, spinning highlights, Haley's film extracts its components from their sources and assembles them for display. And, at the level of spectacle, there are many choreographed pleasures, from Busby Berkeley to Michael Jackson. There are also some archival treasures, including a dance sequence which was cut from the 'If I Only Had a Brain' number in The Wizard of Oz. There's also footage of Gene Kelly and Carol Haney performing the 'Schmerza­zade' number, which we then see superbly animated for invitation to the Dance, as well as a segment from a thirties Vitaphone short, Ruth Jones for President, featuring Sammy Davis very Junior. And there's Bill Bojangles' Robinson, The Nicholas Brothers, Fred Astaire and even Mikhail Baryshnikov.

As a history, though, the film is a deception. Any grasp of the place of dance within its various contexts — social, dramatic, aesthetic — is abandoned for the sake of a celebration of style.

Tom Ryan

Above, fishing for a date: Gib (John Cusack) with Alison (Daphne Zuniga) into some after-hours revision in The Sure Thing. Below, jumping for joy: Paula Kelly, Shirley MacLaine and Chita Rivera in the 'There's Got to Be Something Better Than This' number from Sweet Charity, one of the excerpts in That's Dancing!
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CHAPLIN — HIS LIFE AND ART by David Robinson
(William Collins, 1985. $27.95. ISBN 0 00 216587 X)

Inspired, no doubt, by the painstakingly researched books of Kevin Brownlow, film critics and historians have recently started to provide minutely detailed studies of key figures from the cinema's past. Last year, there was Richard Schickel's magnificent book on D.W. Griffith, and now comes David Robinson's exhaustively detailed account of the life and films of Charles Spencer Chaplin.

Robinson, who received the complete support of Lady Chaplin and her family, spent countless hours combing through the filmmaker's archives at Vevey in Switzerland, his home for the last 20 years of his life. Chaplin, it seems, rarely threw anything away: Robinson discovered scripts, letters, memos, financial records and other memorabilia by the crateful. Plus there were the films themselves, not to mention the care­fully catalogued out-takes (which formed the basis of The Unknown Chaplin, Kevin Brownlow's three remarkable one-hour programmes for Thames Television).

Although Chaplin, in his 1964 autobiography, was quite detailed about his poverty-ridden childhood in the East End of London, Robinson is able to correct a few minor errors, and reproduces some fascinating old documents — vaudeville playbills listing Chaplin's father and mother, as well as the comedian's first press notice; an announcement, in the showbiz magazine The Magnet, of the birth on 15 May 1899, to "the wife of Mr Charles Chaplin, née Miss Lily Harley — of a beautiful boy".

Robinson is also able to fill in the gaps that Chaplin himself left, particularly in the later years, when he deals with the genesis of the films themselves, and with Chaplin's chaotic private life.

With access to more material than he might have thought possible, Robinson gives us the clearest possible picture of one of the great men of the cinema, and reveals him in all of his very human contradictions. He was desperately shy, but quick to take the floor — as long as his private life was kept well out of it. He was an inveterate womanizer, and especially fond of very young women, which got him into trouble more than once.

He was an anarchist who was unjustly accused, by right-wing Americans, of being a communist. He found the process of creation deeply painful; and, when he could afford to, he took endless time over each and every artistic decision, and was not afraid to scrap the work of months and start all over again.

This is a vast book, rich in detail and in affection for its subject. It contains no less than ten appendices, including a chronology of Chaplin's life, three Keystone screenplays and a Chaplin's 'Who's Who' (thumbnail sketches of important people in his life and career). The book is also copiously illustrated, with rare reproductions of early London theatre programmes (including Sherlock Holmes, in which Chaplin played a 'straight' role as Holmes's servant, Billy).

There are even some still photographs from Sea Gulls, the legendary drama produced by Chaplin in 1926 and directed by Josef von Sternberg with Edna Purviance in the lead. The book provides much more detail about the film than has been available before, and includes a copy of the certificate of destruction of the only existing negative, dated 21 June 1933.

Robinson has, in this magnificent book, given us a definitive portrait of Chaplin the filmmaker and Chaplin the man. It is essential for every film enthusiast.

David Stratton

Left turns

ART POLITICS CINEMA: THE CINEASTE INTERVIEWS edited by Dan Georgakas & Lenny Rubenstein

Art Politics Cinema: The Cineaste interviews comprises a selection of 35 interviews taken from the pages of Cineaste, the American left-wing journal founded by Gary Crowdus in 1967. From its inception, the magazine's orientation has been towards overt political film practices, and its interests have included radical politics — which feed into the radical realist documentary — the screenwriters' 'wars', the unionization of the film industry and the Hollywood black­listings.

No doubt Cineaste's interest in the thirties as a period of film history is partly due to the fact that the exchanges in politics and art were carried out most evidently in the domain of popular culture: within Hollywood itself, capital of the commercial film industry.

With few exceptions, the impression given by The Cineaste interviews is that of the journal itself: predominantly interested in that political cinema which operates within the mainstream of film production, distribution and exhibition. In terms of the contemporary American cinema, Cineaste seeks out what it calls 'Hollywood's political cinema', represented here by Bruce Gilbert (producer of The China Syndrome), Paul Schrader (Blue Collar), Gordon Parks (Shaft) and Jane Fonda (Introduction to the Enemy).

The question that arises in such interviews is: can a politically controversial cinema be produced from within the system, or are such films ideologically compromised as a result of being produced in that system? The issue is somewhat clouded by the fact that Cineaste favours a cinema which may be politically compromised, but which addresses a majority audience, rather than a cinema which is more radically interventionist in its political and aesthetic thrust, but engages a minority audience, generally as a result of distribution channels being closed to it.
This certainly explains why 'political' directors such as Costa-Gavras, Bernardo Bertolucci, Elia Kazan, Gillo Pontecorvo, and Andrej Wajda, to name a few, are given priority over more intellectually rigorous and unconventional directors, such as Godard, Kiar, Straub/Huillet and Jancsó.

The absence of these filmmakers cannot simply be excused by the fact that the journal "lacked interview opportunities". Surely a magazine that has been in existence for roughly eighteen years—and has been as committed to radical politics as Cineaste—must, for the sake of comprehensiveness, make opportunities available.

Less surprising is the omission of interviews with avant-garde filmmakers. Cineaste devotes little attention to the traditional avant-garde, seeing it as predominantly apolitical and ahistorical.

The issue of the avant-garde is raised only once in the book and, ironically, it occurs during the interview with the New York Times film critic, Vincent Canby. Both the interviewer and the interviewee agree that "there really isn't an audience for those films". For Canby, that ends the debate about the political effectiveness of the avant-garde.

One can also take issue with the presentation of the book itself. Why is it necessary to have an establishment critic such as Roger Ebert provide a less than adequate Foreword, which displaces the focus from 'politics' to "art"? Surely Ebert could not have understood Third World filmmakers like Rocha, Litvin and Alea, who speak in their respective interviews of the specific political context of their cultures and their films. Is it not the abstract humanist ideology of "universal human emotions", set as a standard by Ebert, which they seek to avoid?

Ebert's foreword, which begins with the statement "Art and Revolution. Choose one. I choose Art". It is a false opposition to begin with: Cineaste has the habit of turning polemics into slogans.

The Preface by the editors also has its faults. The index to Cineaste interviews, published at the back of the book, lists over 100 interviews. Yet the Preface isn't at all clear about the process of selection. Is it not the final choice (which one necessarily disagrees with) or not the abstract humanist ideology of "universal human emotions", set as a standard by Ebert, which they seek to avoid?

In the case of documentary filmmakers, it is explained that their exclusion is due to the prospect of the future publication of an entire book on the subject. But why is the Third World cinema not more fully represented? Of the 35 interviews, only four are with Third World filmmakers, as opposed to 20 with European directors and screenwriters. As the general index shows, there were more than four to choose from.

The interviews with Rocha (Brazil), Litvin (Cuba) and Alea (Cuba) are among the most interesting in the book, and they leave one wanting to read more from such filmmakers.

Other interviews available to Cineaste but not published in this volume were with Belllocchio, Oshima and Minnelli. All three directors have made a significant contribution to the political film, but for some reason they do not make the grade. One is not asking that Cineaste provide us with a complete guide to political filmmakers, but a few words about why a certain selection was made (over and above the obvious space considerations) would have helped to define the current scope of interest.

Holding Cineaste's orientation towards a particular kind of political cinema, little remains to be said about the specifics of the actual interviews. With one or two possible exceptions, they are a significant contribution to the debate on politics in and of film. And, for one of us with a less than complete set of back issues, the publication makes a worthy addition to one's collection.

Riotardo Caputo.

Make your own movies

AUSTRALIAN FILM & TELEVISION FINANCE & INVESTMENT GUIDE

This large-format, eighteen-page booklet is a useful introduction to what can be a labyrinthine subject, beset in its upper reaches with silk-suited sharks. As Australian film inexorably loses its internationally acclaimed innocence, it moves equally inexorably towards American practice, where the deal itself becomes the art form. Here begins the Lesson for Today . . .

It falls into four parts. The first is ‘Investment in Film Making’, which is more or less a list of handy hints, verging somewhat on the platitudinous, but necessary for the growing ranks of novice investors. (For the already street-smart investor, William Bayers’s now slightly dated Breaking Through, Selling Out, Dropping Dead [New York, 1971] is recommended.)

The section next is a fairly easily comprehensible explanation of the 1981 and 1993 Division 108A amendments of the original Income Tax Assessment Act of 1936 (No. 27). Study it by all means, but also unhesitatingly seek professional advice. Much the same can be said for the third section, ‘Structures for Raising Finance for Film Investment’.

The fourth and final section is a ‘Glossary of Terms’, a little over one hundred in all, from scrupling for finance through production personnel to getting ripped off at the other end — specifically, from A & B Editing to Wardrobe. Note that some terms are defined not in this section but earlier on, while others such as ‘Major Distributors’ are out of date (cf. the fairly regular Who’s Who of Canadian film productions). The present glossary is OK, but for slightly more advanced information, see the section on the motion picture terminology in A Don E. Miller’s The Book of Jargon: An Essential Guide to the Inside Languages of Today (New York, 1971), and also Donn Dellow’s The Dictionary of Marketing and Related Terms in the Motion Picture Industry (Los Angeles, 1975).

In fact, a further reading guide should have been appended (on that blank last page). But, as it goes, recommended. And it’s free.

G.R. Lansell

Miracles take a little longer . . .

SPECIAL EFFECTS — WIRE, TAPE AND RUBBER-BAND STYLE

In these days of motion control cameras, computer image generation and advanced production hardware, the great film technicians of yesterday are being all too rapidly forgotten — names like Jack Pierce, the make-up wizard of the original Frankenstein and Wolfman movies, and John P. Fulton, head of special effects on Cecil B. DeMille’s 1954 The Ten Commandments.

Is this what it takes to get the money to make a film? — the poster for Bruce Beresford’s 1979 film, Money Movers.
These are names which, among others, are totally unknown to today's young effects aficionados. The technical wizardry of Star Wars and Tron has seemingly eclipsed the truly great work of the previous generation of special effects men.

Because of this unfortunate trend, a book by L. B. Abbott, one of the real legends of special effects, is something to welcome. Spanning over half a century, his career includes credits on some of the most spectacular and successful films of all time. And, in Special Effects — Wire, Tape and Rubber-Band Style, which is part autobiography, part technical manual, Abbott takes us behind the scenes of just a fraction of the films upon which he performed his wizardry.

Born in California in 1908, Abbott was surrounded from the start by the world of film. The Sunday dinner table was the meeting place for a continuous flow of motion picture and photographic technicians, and Abbott's father was a pioneer in his own right in the field of colour cinematography.

Abbott's initial intention was to study geology, but a chance meeting with a department head from the William Fox Studios steered him into the movies. His first assignment — a baptism of fire — was a non-stop stint as a camera assistant on Raoul Walsh's What Price Glory? (1926).

He describes his subsequent experiences with obvious pleasure, particularly his adventures as a horse-riding assistant cameraman. He talks about the introduction of early sound techniques, and mentions his teaming with various cameramen to produce basic effects (even though he was not yet officially labelled as an effects man).

It is this first part of the book that is the most enjoyable. The rest is rather dry; the following section, for instance, describes some of the basic principles of special effects — miniature photography, glass shots and various types of traveling mattes — and is probably a little too technical for most readers.

But it does contain quite an eye-opener, when Abbott describes his work on Robert Wise's The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951). As the flying saucer lands in Washington, D.C. background shot necessitated the production of a shadow under the spacecraft. Abbott and his team shot a two-foot model saucer against black (from which they could pull a matte), with a props man lowering it on wires while they timed it with a metronome. Next, a white background was used, the model painted black, and the props man did his stuff again to produce the shadow. Who says you need a computer?

In the final part of the book (which takes up the remaining two thirds) Abbott talks in detail about a dozen of his better-known credits, which turn out to be those that I remember most fondly from my own childhood — films that took you to worlds that existed only in the imagination (and, for a short while, on a soundstage somewhere). These include Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1959), The Lost World (1960) and Fantastic Voyage (1966). Abbott's more recent credits have included Tora! Tora! Tora! (1970), The Poseidon Adventure (1972) and The Towering Inferno (1975).

Apart from these obvious 'special effects' movies, Abbott also includes The Boston Strangler (1968) and Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969), making the point that special effects can be used to advantage in any kind of movie.

For The Boston Strangler, Abbott describes the process by which the extremely complex split-screen shots were thought out, planned and executed. And, in Butch Cassidy, when the duo jump off the cliff into the raging river to escape the law, what we actually see are two stunt men jumping off a tall crane parked beside the lake on the Fox ranch. The cliffs they seem to be missing by inches are no more than paintings on a sheet of glass placed about ten feet in front of the camera!

Overall, the book is most enjoyable, although the summaries of each film's storyline tend to be far too long, and the space could have been better used for more behind-the-scenes information or more stills. And, since the colour stills throughout the book have, with a few exceptions, been taken from old prints of the films themselves, their quality leaves a lot to be desired.

Despite these faults, however, L.B. Abbott's book contains more than enough valuable material, memorable anecdotes and hints for the professional and the interested layman to recommend itself very highly.

Robert Conn

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