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Description
FRONT LINES: A look at the new co-production arrangements, a report on the comedy writers’ workshop, and a general round-up of film and TV news. Plus festival reports from Dublin, Edinburgh and Varna; our regular columns from around the world; and profiles of cinematographer Jan Kenny, director Lewis Gilbert and actor Scott Glenn .........................................................................................2

ISSUES: Geoff Gardner looks at the history of film festivals in Australia, and wonders what function they now serve .................................................................42 PRODUCTION: A comprehensive round-up of what’s now in production in Australia, with special reports on The Right-Hand Man, Birdsville and the ABC’s 2 Friends..............................................................................................................44 TECHNICALITIES: Fred Harden looks at some of the tempting new hard- and software on show at the IREECON convention in Melbourne .......................................................58

FILM AND TV REVIEWS: Full-length reviews of Anzacs, Archer, The Brother from Another Planet, Fran, Goonies, Kiss of the Spider Woman, Official Story, The Perfectionist, Prizzi’s Honor, Rebel, Red Matildas, Rocking the Foundations, Silverado, The Still Point and Turtle Diary. Plus shorter reviews of all the recent releases..........................................................61 BOOK REVIEWS: Arguing the Arts by Tim Rowse; Brian De Palma by Michael Bliss and Double De Palma by Susan Dworkin; and The Electronic Estate by Trevor Barr, Images and Industry by Albert Moran and Made for Television by Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart .................................................................................................77

INDIANA STEWART: Ray Comiskey talks to veteran Hollywood star James Stewart, born in the small Pennsylvania town of Indiana 77 years ago, and a man whom John Ford once summed up with the phrase “People just seem to like him” .............................................14

TALENT TIME: Debi Enker interviews Debbie Byrne about her starring role in the new Australian film, Rebel ........................................................................................................18 YOU CAN NEVER GO FAR ENOUGH: Brian Thompson, production designer on Rebel, talks to Paul Kalina about how he turned the drabness of wartime Sydney into the glittering neon world we see in the film .................................................................22 COMIN’ AT YA: Nick Roddick meets maverick Dutch director Paul Verhoeven, whose two latest films have opened in Australia within a month of one another ....26

SANTA’S LITTLE HELPER: Derek Meddings, one of cinema’s most respected special effects men, talks to Nick Roddick about his career .................................................28

GOODS ENOUGH FOR YOU: Peter Schmideg looks at how tee-shirts and underwear, toys and tie-ins have become as much a part of the film business as the movies that inspire them .........................................................................................32

OVER THE RAINBOW: Belinda Meares on the trials and tribulations of bringing the news from Mururoa....36 HOME MOVIES: Movie of the Week host David Stratton gives a special preview of the films you’ll be seeing on SBS in 1986 .................................................................39

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Contents

FRONT LINES: A look at the new co-production arrangements, a report on the comedy writers' workshop, and a general round-up of film and TV news. Plus festival reports from Dublin, Edinburgh and Varna; our regular columns from around the world; and profiles of cinematographer Jan Kenny, director Lewis Gilbert and actor Scott Glenn .................................................. 2

ISSUES: Geoff Gardner looks at the history of film festivals in Australia, and wonders what function they now serve .................................................................................. 42

PRODUCTION: A comprehensive round up of what's now in production in Australia, with special reports on The Right-Hand Man, Birdsville and the ABC's 2 Friends ................................................................................. 44

TECHNICALITIES: Fred Harden looks at some of the tempting new hard- and software on show at the IRECON convention in Melbourne ........................................................................................................ 58

FILM AND TV REVIEWS: Full-length reviews of Anzacs, Archer, The Brother from Another Planet, Frans, Goonies, Kiss of the Spider Woman, Official Story, The Perfectionist, Prizzi's Honor, Rebel, Red Matidas, Rocking the Foundations, Silverado, The Still Point and Turtle Diary. Plus shorter reviews of all the recent releases ........................................................................................................ 61

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OVER THE RAINBOW: Belinda Meares on the trials and tribulations of bringing the news from Mururoa ........................................................................................................ 36

HOME MOVIES: Movie of the Week host David Stratton gives a special preview of the films you'll be seeing on SBS in 1986 ........................................................................................................ 39

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AFC announces details of its co-production agreement

Industry panel to choose projects, but applications currently somewhat slow

On 14 November, the Minister for the Arts, Heritage and the Environment, Mr Barry Cohen, announced a scheme designed to "enable the Australian film and television industry to enter into international co-productions." More than just a casual nod in the direction of such schemes — which have been legally possible for some time under the provisions of Division 10BA of the Income Tax Assessment Act — but falling short of the kind of formal, intergovernmental co-production treaties that exist in a number of European countries and Canada, the scheme is something which, according to Australian Film Commission chief executive Kim Williams, has been in the offing for almost as long as the AFC has existed.

And, though the precise timing of the announcement — less than two months after the announcement of the curtailment of the 133/30 tax concessions which prompted the boom in film and miniseries production of the early eighties, it must obviously be seen as part of a plan aimed at minimizing the effects on production generally reckoned to be inevitable now that the concession levels have been reduced to 120/20 (see Cinema Papers, No. 94).

The scheme, based on "an accord" between the AFC and the various professional bodies most directly affected — Actors Equity, the Australian Writers Guild, the Australian Theatre and Amusement Employees Association, the Musicians Union and the Screen Production Association of Australia, with the Australian Directors' Association and the Australian Guild of Screen Composers also involved in the negotiations — is for a trial two-year period only, during which time it is envisaged that up to fourteen international co-productions can or may be made.

It is, in fact, a remarkably flexible arrangement. One of the Commission's guiding principles, says Williams, was to avoid hard and fast co-production treaties, into which it is hard to build considerations as to the quality of the project. And, although in cases of special urgency. The panel will be any non-cash contributions exceeding $A5,000, e.g. use of studios, air tickets, use of facilities, deferred payments, etc."

Applications will be considered by a panel of eight, meeting at least three times a year, with the possibility of phone hook-ups in cases of special urgency. The panel will make recommendations to the Board of the AFC. If the project is approved, the AFC and the overseas authority involved will draw up a memorandum of understanding, which may not then be substantially varied without prior approval. Producers will also have to sort out all the usual conditions of employment of overseas artists and technicians prior to the drawing up of the memorandum. Once the memorandum has been drawn up, the producer can apply to the increased chances of distribution in the co-producing country which are likely to come with any single deal.

The procedure for submitting proposed co-productions is relatively simple in its outline, but could well be quite complicated — and time-consuming — in the details of its application. In the first instance, partners in intending co-productions are to submit an application to the Film Development Division of the AFC on a thirteen-page form, on which the questions range from the culturally general ("How is the subject matter of relevance to Australia?") to the financially precise ("Give all sources of funds, both Australian and overseas, to be used in making the film, including grants, investments, loans and guarantees ... Will there be any non-cash contributions exceeding $A5,000, e.g. use of studios, air tickets, use of facilities, deferred payments, etc.?"

Producers' representative Errol Sullivan.

Commission chairman Phillip Adams, announcing it in Melbourne on 15 November, "is that it provides a set of ground rules from which to negotiate each co-production."

As a number of local producers have noted, the balance of the thinking behind the co-production agreement is cultural rather than economic: the need for each proposal to be "vetted" by a panel reporting to the board of the AFC seems, if not designed, at any rate likely to deter an influx of overseas (predominantly American) money looking for locations and labour. The agreement will not suit the kind of "offshore" deals which are generally co-productions in name alone, a number of which were made across the Tasman in New Zealand at the turn of the decade. But the agreement may also, a number of producers fear, make more genuine deals hard to negotiate.

The scheme's objectives, according to the AFC, are to allow Australian filmmakers to explore opportunities for creative and technical collaboration with overseas filmmakers, to establish links with overseas and production interests, to gain access to new overseas markets and to improve returns from existing ones. And, although a majority of Australian financial and cultural equity has to be achieved "over the life of the programme", individual co-production deals may see this fall as low as 40%

"What is significant about the accord," said Actors' representative Noni Hazlehurst. "is that it provides a set of ground rules from which to negotiate each co-production."

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CINEMA PAPERS January — 3

The hills are alive...  

Comedy writers gather in the Blue Mountains for weekend workshop

Welcome to the Temple of Doom (as some have come to know it), where many of you will learn to subvert, among others, the Barry McKenzie movies. The event (in a high risk of comedy) has resulted in a weekend workshop. Some 130 writers, producers and actors rallied to the event. The first session focused on the genre's lack of success and the possible reasons for this. Panelists commented on the awkwardness and conservatism associated with looking at our culture in naturalistic situation comedy.

Producer and writer Dave Weis said that, "although there is a myth that Australians have a great sense of humour, it is difficult to find that reflected in our current society. However, while Geoffrey Attherden, writer of Mother and Son, attributed this to the fact that we are a society still in transition, that our screen images have not yet caught up with the present.

Bob Ellis and David Cunningham (of the Gronholm Organization) lamented the local lack of defined, recognizable types with the British and American situations, where these have been established by long traditions of stage and screen. Australians' traits of honesty and egalitarianism (or the desire for it) have also deprived us of much potential material. "There is a hatred of conversation in the Australian soul," claimed Ellis, "so that the comedy which works best is the soliloquy — the man standing up in an audience and talking to himself, like Hogan, Gunson, Humphries or Gillies."

The misgivings about narrative comedy have resulted. Attherden pointed out, in a chronic lack of opportunity for writers, actors and directors to practise their craft. Not that writers have been daunted by this; "for there are enough scripts to set up a Bicentennial monument". What is in short supply is experience. The high risk of comedy has resulted in a weekend workshop. Some 130 writers, producers and actors rallied to the event.

Just as it was all beginning to sound like a tale of misery and woe, however, the next session, Case Studies, presented concrete proof that some comedies have been made, some even under conditions that are close to ideal. Philip Dalkin, writer of Wills and Burke, related, with some embarrassment and guilt that his experience on his first feature had been extremely pleasurable. He had had an input into casting, rehearsal, editing and even marketing, writing the press kit and the trailer. Other writers shook their heads in disbelief.

Don't call us: John O'Ready and Denny Dubrow, organizers of the workshop session at the Comedy Writers' Workshop.
Briefly . . .

Woman and independent filmmaking in Australia since 1970.

While the past twelve months have seen a number of highprofile events and financial and in terms of its membership, in both of which areas there has been a recent Bons in her view, Bons observes that growth can and will occur. She cites the education and publications programme as the key area for growth and adds that the provision of services and resources to meet educational requirements throughout the country. Although she would have liked to see more development in the area of exhibition, she asserts that programming has improved substantially at both of the AFI's cinemas.

For the future, Bons hopes that the Institute will become more active as a lobbyist, and as a packager and programmer for television.

It is that time of the year when annual reports begin to flood the box office. This year, at the beginning of each year, the AFI releases its Annual Report, which is followed by a comprehensive mid-year report in July. The year-end report is due in October, and the AFI's annual conference is held in November.

Other recent publications include the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal Foundation Annual Report 1984-85, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal Annual Report 1984-85, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal Report on Screen Production, and the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal Report on Screen Production 1984-85.

A second series of telemovies is currently being organized by the Australian Children's Television Foundation. Following the winners series — which Network Ten has had an exclusive rights to air in a variety of timeslots on apparently random days — the ACTF is planning to show a series of two-hour television films from July to January 1986.

The eight part series will include work by writers Stephen J. Breen, Murray Ullman, and Harry and the Hendersons. Other writers include directors Ken Cameron, Paul Cox, Bob Weir, and Johnston.

The television series in Europe for John Lamond's Sky Pirates, directed by Colin Eggleston, have been completed. The series, which was made in Germany, will appear on the air in Germany in August.

The 130-page report, prepared by the eleven-member Advisory Committee to the National Film and Sound Archive, entitled "Television and Video: A Report on Current Practices and Programmes" is now available.

Two of its main recommendations are an increase in funding for television and film production, and a five-year management plan to develop the Archive. Other recommendations include the development of the Archive into a national film and television archive; recognition of the Archive as an important asset to the country; and encouragement of the development of the Archive as an essential asset to the country.

Response to the report, which was compiled by the Department of Industry, has been encouraging. Arts Minister Barry brick, has highlighted the importance of the past year has seen significant growth for the Institute and that the foundations for future success have been laid. Bons will pursue her work as a writer, researcher and script consultant. Her immediate task will be to complete the section of a book on television and film production, and to write a series of articles on the history of television and film production in the United States.
The Slim Dusty Movie
Produced by Kent Chadwick
Director Rob Stewart
Associate Producer Brian Douglas
Director of Photography David Eggby

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

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

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

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

The Settlement
Produced by Robert Bruning
Director Howard Rubie
Production Manager Irene Korol
Director of Photography Ernie Clark

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

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Front Lines

The studio in the firing-line is Universal. Last-minute tinkering at Universal, and a distaff Rambo turned its back on Ridley Scott's mythical than dark) finale. Gilliam refused, arguing won't be seen until Easter 1986 — though it won't be held hostage. The outskirts of LA will make this movie any more accessible to twelve-year-olds.

His four months' work on the score resulted in music — including a sweeping ballet — that one associate of Scott's calls 'monumental'. Audiences outside the domestic market will still be able to hear it, but the version with the Tangerine Dream music is set for a spring 1986 release in the US. Elsewhere, a Rambette is on the way: blonde adventure queen Sybil Danning stars as a distaff Rambo in Commando Squad, set to begin filming in January for Trans World Entertainment. She'll be the one toting the weaponry — 'everything short of the neutron bomb,' said a spokes-

man — in order to rescue an American being held hostage. The outsights of LA will portray a South American country.

If 'Stallone is America's No. 1 hero,' then say hello to America's number one she-ro,' promises Danning, who is also to strike some heroic poses as hostess of a series of features for USA Home Video. To debut in January, Sybil Danning's Adventure Video will find her, in the opening and closing segments, dressed for the particular occasion. If it's a gladiator Second blood: Sybil Danning, soon to play a female Rambo, as she will appear in her cable show.

Around the world

Around the world

Britain by Sheila Johnston

Goldcrest loses its glitter, but the UK box office shows signs of recovery

There's trouble down at Goldcrest, the production house responsible for Gandhi, The Killing Fields and that front-runner in the British Film Revival, Chariots of Fire. Playing for enormously high stakes in a high-risk game, the company has stretched its resources to the limit, beyond with three major productions, none of which can be expected to start generating revenue until the end of the year. Roland Joffé's Killing Fields follow-up, The Mission, set and shot in South America, is the company's economic but Absolute Beginners has nudged over the top to the tune of £2 million ($4 million) — according to director Julien Temple because, at $9 million, it was under-budgeted from the outset. The film is due in Australia around Easter.

Hugh Hudson's Revolution, due to open in New York and Los Angeles before the end of the year, so as to qualify for Oscar consideration, meanwhile, has spiralled into the stratosphere at (industry reports vary) around £6 million ($12 million) over budget. World-wide, having cut corners on the usual completion guarantee insurance for all three films, Goldcrest was left to pick up the tab.

The villain of this particular piece seems to have been chief executive James Lee, whom Goldcrest's board say is less than popular with some of his colleagues. When head of production Sandy Lieberson terminated his contract with Goldcrest in November, he moved to Columbia, the studio where, in defiance of last spring's gloomy prognoses (see my column in Cinema Papers No 59), Columbia's third quarter took over the No 1 slot from Sly the following week, and has continued to perform strongly.

Besides, the company has included A Nightmare on Elm Street, Lifeforce, Pale Rider and (one of the biggest openers of the year) Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome, while the French film, Subway, has set new records in the subtitled market.
New Zealand by Mike Nicolaid

Local features on local screens, and signs of a pick-up in production

1985 has not been without its irony for the New Zealand film industry. While uncertainties loomed over present and future feature-film production, with many industry leaders morose, depressed, and, indeed, in some cases, could have been forgiven for wondering what all the fuss was about. From its point of view, the opportunity to have its own indigenous movie (albeit of uneven quality) in cinemas throughout the country has never been greater.

In all, nine features were released, with two others — John Reid’s Leave All Fair, and Barry Barclay’s feature-length documentary, The Neglected Miracles, — playing the well-patronized Wellington and Auckland film festivals.

The palpable hit was Mirage Films’ Came A Hot Friday, directed by Ian Mune and produced by Barry Port, which enjoyed a healthy public audience between-screen nationwide release through Kerridge-Odeon in August/September. According to Mirage’s marketing director, Paul Davis, the picture grossed NZ$280,000 in five weeks, which should ensure it eventually tops the estimated NZ$1.4 million pick-up over a much longer period by Geoff Murphy’s Goodbye Pork Pie. Davis says that, because Came A Hot Friday has already exceeded the country’s previous biggest indigenous money-earner.

Other films to have a strong impact with audiences were the thriller Goodbye Pork Pie, followed on by its women producers Robin Laing and Gaylene Preston for an extended season in Wellington before heading for Auckland to Mark Galloway’s independent Academy, and Vincent Ward’s Vigil, selected for competition in America in 1984 but not released here until this year.

Mr Wrong has become something of a cause céfure in that it was by-passed for distribution by the two major chains (Kerridge-Odeon and Amalgamated Theatres), despite outstanding notices and enthusiastic audience reaction at the festivals. Opening in Auckland on 25 October, it broke house records for a weekend’s trade at the Academy and Laing, who run there through to Christmas.

Vigil was originally released in the North Island through a local theatre circuit, but was folded in Auckland and Wellington. Producer John Maynard is now four-walling it itself, and has collected the money much more quickly than Pork Pie, the return to producers has already exceeded the company’s previous biggest indigenous money-earner.

Earlier in the year, Other Halves, a love story matching a white, married, middle-class woman in her thirties with a Poly- rhenian teenager, directed by John Laing and starring Lisa Harrow and Mark Pilis, picked up its share of fare, as did the Gibson Group’s children’s film, The Silent One.

This out-pouring of films from a country as small as New Zealand (pop. 3,200,000), linked with pessimism about the future, can be interpreted as a final stage in the industry’s development. An artificially inflated boom, halted by last year’s 30 September cut-off of tax benefits for private investors, generated enormous pressure to get films made before the cash-flow dried up.

A few features came from this boom, a number of which would have benefited from more development before going into production. Out of it, the industry emerged, relieved yet exhausted, and perturbed about the future. That’s the past, “declares the managing director of the New Film Commission, David Gascoigne. “The push towards 30 September 1984 meant depletion of the reservoir of projects and energy. It takes times to build up again.”

One area of priority for the Commission has been to build up the number and range of projects worth developing, and it is surprising how quickly turnarounds can begin again. One of the latest is a feature film starring for a new film feature was Larry Parr’s youth pictures, Queen City Rocker, directed by Bruce Morrison (Constance, Shaker Run).

Since then, however, other projects have begun to blossom. These include three low-budget features for which the Commission will be arranging finance: Dangerous Orphans, an urban thriller produced by Don Reynolds and directed by John Laing; Monica, a love story directed by Richard Addis and produced by Reynolds and, Nagi, a slice of life on the cultures, produced by John O’Shea and directed by Barry Barclay.

Monica began shooting on 16 October, and Queen City Rocker four days later. Dangerous Orphans rolled on Wellington locations for six weeks; Nagi will shoot on east coast North Island sites in January/February.

Elsewhere, there are signs of growth and optimism. Auckland producer Lloyd Phillips, of Phillips-Whitehouse Productions Limited, which has just opened television ministries. Heart Of The High Country, has announced a co-production feature film project with the National of Montreal, based on events surrounding the skiing of French secret service agents of the “Rainbow Warrior”. Arnie Gebart, the Canadian screenwriter of Montenegro, is already here and at work on the script, and a New Zealand director is expected to be named shortly. Filming will begin in April next year.

There is also strong interest in the prospect recently released by financiers Fay, Richwhite and Co Ltd, for the NZ$50-million animated feature based on Murray Ball’s popular cartoon strip, Footrot Flats. The strip runs in 25 local newspapers throughout the country has never been greater.

Weber’s commission. "I like to think the government will get finance straight to producers from private investors.”

Germany by Dieter Osswald

Goodbye to the Filmverlag, hello to the AIDS boom

No subject currently obsesses the German media as much as the AIDS epidemic. One surprising aspect of the boom, that AIDS should now have made it into the cinema — in force, what is known as the German film. From the first of the mark as an AIDS film, the first German production followed on its heels a wave of others. More are promised, including two from the doyens of German gay filmmaking, Rosa von Praunheim and Frank Roghl.

On the distribution front, there has also been a minor sensation: the renowned filmmaker der Autoren has been sold. Set up in 1972 by such luminaries of the ‘New German cinema’ as Wim Wenders, Werner Herzog, Alexander Kluge and Werner Grosendorfer, the company was in financial difficulties by 1976, and only survived because of the financial involvement of Rudolf Augstein, publisher of the news magazine, Der Spiegel.

A few off the fair’s film business going downhill, however; a deal with Octon Pictures proved a flop, and the row over the distribution of Paris, Texas did not create much sympathy for the company, which was generally (if not entirely accurately) perceived as the villain of the piece. Augstein, who has now sold the Filmverlag to Theo Hinz, a former managing director and presently owner of another distributor, Future. He is also joined by Edgar Reitz’s Helmut. Futura and the Filmverlag are to merge.

Meanwhile, preparations for the ‘Berlinale’ are going full steam ahead. The 38th international Berlin Film Festival will be held from 14-25 February 1986, and will be divided into six sections: the International Competition (for the Golden Bear), the International Forum of Young Cinema, the Children’s Film Festival, New German Films, the Film Market and the Info-Show (information section).

Short films are eligible for the competition, the children’s festival and the market. Under the regulations, only standard format 35mm and 70mm films can be shown in competition, in addition, films must have been produced in the twelve months immediately prior to the festival. U-matic or VHS low-band videocassettes may be submitted for selection purposes.

On the production front, Der Name der Rose, based on Umberto Eco’s bestselling book, The Name of the Rose, is under way for Neue Constantin Film, with Frenchman Jean-Jacques Annaud directing and Sean Connery starring.

Also in production is Momo, based on another novel by Michael (The Never-ending Story) Ende. Momo is about time thieves. Mario Adorf is in the lead, Johannes Schaff is directing, cinematography is by Xaver Schwarzenberg, and most of the film will be shot at Rome’s Cinecitta. And, at Munich’s Bavaria Studios, Germany’s highest-budget film, made exclusively with American money, Enemy Mine, directed by Wolfgang Petersen, has gone before the cameras.

Autumn box-office winners in the Federal Republic have been (in addition to Otto — Der Film) fairly predictable: Max Max Beyond Thunderdome and Desperately Seeking Susan, with Rambo: First Blood Part II also doing massive business (the film was released against it in several cities). Notable among the box-office flops have been Return to Oz and the German production, Drei gegen Drei.

For the record: in several major cities, Amadeus is now into its second year, with Divo also still enjoying its maturation run. The Rocky Horror Picture Show, however, which has been a hardy box-office annual for many years, has finally faded. The reason? It was recently screened on TV.

A note on foreign-language titles

Wherever possible, Cinema Papers tries to give the original title of a film and its English title. But we can only do this with films for which an English title of some kind exists. So, rather than give approximate translations of titles (or, worse still, explanations of the word-play in a title), we give English-language titles only for those films that have been screened outside their country of origin or at major festivals. This means that most of the films in the ‘Around the World’ section are given with their original title only.

CINEMA PAPERS January — 7
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France by Belinda Meares

Box office takes a dive, and independent TV is hit by political wrinkles

A long spell of fine weather is generally blamed for having kept the French from their cinemas that were closed for four months, according to the 15.6% unemployment rate among 16-25-year-olds probably more than to do with the trend. Business is down 20% in comparison to the same period in 1984; and, though this has not affected the blockbusters, modest successes are increasingly rare. Production companies that have gone bankrupt, the Groupement des Editeurs Français et Garland Productions, while the financing still hangs in the balance. The Gaumont-Columbia joint venture, Triumph Films, has also been abandoned.

High-level steps are being taken to rectify this dismal situation. The tax incentive measures announced this summer are now being applied under the direction of specialized production finance companies called SOFCAS. A 16.6% value added tax on television revenues has been reduced to 7%, which should free 400 million francs a year for programme creation, and another 100 million francs to get a state-run, cultural channel off the ground next year.

In the production side, progress towards independent television is stalled by political wrangling and administrative red-tape. The two national channels are national monopolies, will not be broadcasting by Christmas, as predicted, while regional channels will be showing two films per day. Business is down 12% on the same period last year, and rediscovers the simple pleasures of the local way of life. Their creation, and another 300 million francs to access and attendances; the same goes for Bruce Beresford's King David.

Local films are headed by P.R.O.F.S., a three-part series of Italian black comedies, Tre uomini e un cuoref, is also doing well for Coline Serreau. Thierry Lhermitte's La guerre des Boutons, a film in the same vein, with star Serena Grandi, is back with Anemone in Le mariage du siècle, a spoof on royalty.

Another disappointing box office result has been Béatrix Taussig's La chiave (The Key), directed by France's superstars, with star Serena Grandi, and attendances; the same goes for Bruce Beresford's King David.

France's favourite stars. As a result, the second channel will be showing two films back-to-back each week. And the private networks are competing with their usual avalanche of films, but are stepping up the commercial breaks from 30 to 40 minutes for each one.

Looking forward to the Christmas releases, the front-runners look like being Adolfo Celi's Dr. No, starring Sean Connery, and The Man with the Golden Gun, starring Roger Moore. The latter is likely to be the winner — together with I soliti ignoti vent'anni dopo, a sequel to Monico Rindi's classic. I soliti ignoti (Big Deal on Madonna Street, 1958), directed by newcomer Amanzio Montaldo, the new Alberto Sordi comedy, Ba-Bo-Bon, directed by Sergio Corbucci, and Carlo Verdone's new farce, Troppo forte.

Italy by Lorenzo Codelli

Gloom, anguish and sex on the big screen, oceans of nostalgia on the small

On the production front, the Italian autumn is beginning to look like a season of discontent. Established filmmakers of different generations are struggling to come up with varied approaches like Ettore Scola, Nanni Moretti, and Tinto Brass. Meanwhile, de Mondo and 300 million francs has been raised this year, which should boost productions. The government has promised a 30% tax break for each one!

Among the more established names, Federico Fellini is about to start shooting his new film, 2012, based on a novel by Henry Bernstein, while Bertrand Tavernier has nearly finished shooting La petite de minuit, a film about American jazzmen in Paris, in which he will also play the male lead. Andre Techine has chosen Catherine Deneuve to star in La mauvaise herbe. And Lambert Wilson, who starred in Cinecittà's entry, Le mariage du siècle, is teaming up with Truffaut Kariyô to make Les nuits de la pleine lune (Full Moon in Paris), in Yves Boisset's Bleu comme enfer.

On the negative side, progress towards independent television is stalled by political wrangling and administrative red-tape. The two national channels are national monopolies, which will not be broadcasting by Christmas, as predicted, while regional channels will be showing two films per day.

Though his desperate eyes, we get a moral vision that is never too narrow — he is the most non-Catholic pastor to be put on the big screen in recent years, and is finely spiced with sarcasm. Moretti's style as a director is still elementary, and his growing social ambitions disdained to be accompanied by imaginative visual resources.

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Days at the seaside

Traditional values to the fore in Bulgarian festival

Varna, by the Black Sea, is sometimes described as the Soviet bloc's answer to the Gold Coast. But, in early October, with autumn leaves swirling round its decaying promenades, where old men and sailors walked, it looked more like something out of Death in Venice. Suffering from an electricity crisis, Varna nevertheless turned on all the lights of the Palace of Culture and Sport to welcome its international guests to the Fourth World Animated Film Festival. It was like a beacon, its 4,000 seats filled nightly, not just with professionals, but with hundreds of families, teenagers, sailors and workers.

Perhaps that is the clue to the nature of eastern European animation: its childish simplicity and directness, coupled with sharp criticism of the system, is able to communicate with its large audience on many levels. It seems that, in the Soviet bloc, it is animation and not live action which is the visible expression of popular sentiment — though this is, no doubt, due to the fact that the two previous international animation festivals held this year (Annecy and Hiroshima) had swept us both the best the west had to offer.

There seem, in fact, to be too many festivals, and not enough new and exciting films to go round — an opinion shared by many professionals, from both east and west.

Australian animation was welcomed with much applause and some critical acclaim. Ned Wethered, by Lee Whitmore, was praised by the Bulgarian critic, for its "deeply intimate, lyrical and heart-warming story, and the artlessness sought in the drawings." But Iron Bark Bill in the Champion Buckjump, directed by Phil Pepper, was perhaps more much for the Australian and Bulgarian translators, and its meaning was lost to a non-English-speaking audience. Showing perhaps the beauty and message of animation lies in the image, not the spoken word.

"The work presented by this writer," as reviewed by "the audience with its portentousness [sic], both in aesthetics and content," Modesty, and the sheer lack of space, forbid me from saying another word.

Antoniette Starkiewicz

Mounting greenery

First Dublin Film Festival off to a good start

Two films from down under — Gillian Armstrong's Starstruck and Vincent Ward's Vigil (from New Zealand) — were among the 60 odd films chosen for the first Dublin Film Festival, which filled venues in the city for most of its eight-day run in mid-September.

The programme included sections on material not previously screened in the Irish capital, the cinema's links with the stage (to celebrate the Festival's connections with the long-established Dublin Theatre Festival, which opened on 21 September, two days after the Film Festival ended), youth films to mark International Youth Year, and recent work by Irish filmmakers. Conteporst of the Festival was Heimatz, Edgar Reitz's massive drama of German history. Other big hits in an eclectic and highly successful selection included Susan Seidelman's lightly feminist comedy, Desperately Seeking Susan; Diane Kurys's Coup de foudre (At First Sight), Haruki Hawk's The Weeping Rain, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's vidalcentric Querelle, and Luis Puenzo's study of the Argentinean Shakespearian comedy in an ethnic setting, La historia oficial.

The Varna Grand Prix was awarded to Seidelman's film, which was presented in a special screening on 4 October (two days after the Film Festival ended), followed by a gala dinner for the award winners. The Varna Grand Prix was awarded to Seidelman's film, which was presented in a special screening on 4 October (two days after the Film Festival ended), followed by a gala dinner for the award winners.

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The idea for the Festival came from the organizers of the theatre event, who asked Michael Dywer, film critic of The Sunday Tribune, and Myles Dungan of RTE, to work with them, to compile a programme to precede their own festival. The Film Festival's success has generated so much interest that there will be a second festival, to be planned for next year. It will run for several months and be scheduled for 20 November to 4 December (overlapping with the London Film Festival). For the 1986 event, twelve sections are planned.

Ray Comiskey

Where the mainstream meets the off-beat

The standard Edinburgh mix offers few premiers, but a strong oriental section

The 1985 Edinburgh Film Festival continued, as usual, something for everyone. "One of the two more commercial films are..." the Festival director. "I am not sure that the films will be of interest to a wider public," explained Festival director Jim Hick. "But, with that said, I have to say that the films are of interest of a wide range of audiences, out there, who all desire to have the opportunity to participate.

Apart from the glitzy but disappointing American film, a selection of fine documentaries and a Godard retrospective accompanied the two new films, it seems likely that few will have gone away disappointed.

The mainstream US contingent included Cocoon, A Nightmare on Elm Street, Back to the Future and Pale Rider, plus a selection of "marginal" films with some degree of studio involvement, which could also be seen as "independence". The Purple Rose, A Tale of All Tales; Two outstanding documentaries at Edinburgh were The Purple Rose, A Tale of All Tales; and The Angelic Conversation.

The Festival has its limitations: the cinema's links with the stage (to celebrate the Festival's connections with the long-established Dublin Theatre Festival, which opened on 21 September, two days after the Film Festival ended), youth films to mark International Youth Year, and recent work by Irish filmmakers. Conteporst of the Festival was Heimatz, Edgar Reitz's massive drama of German history. Other big hits in an eclectic and highly successful selection included Susan Seidelman's lightly feminist comedy, Desperately Seeking Susan; Diane Kurys's Coup de foudre (At First Sight), Haruki Hawk's The Weeping Rain, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's vidalcentric Querelle, and Luis Puenzo's study of the Argentinean Shakespearian comedy in an ethnic setting, La historia oficial.

Included in a retrospective mini-season were such films as Sauve qui peut (la vie) (Slow Motion), Passion and Prénom: Carmen (First Name: Carmen). Added to these were two latest films: Je vous salue, Marie (Hail Mary) and Detective. The former, praised by many, damaged by others (the Pope included), was discussed when it showed at Berlin (Cinema Papers, No. 51); the latter, recorded on from Cannes (No. 52) is an intermittently amusing, byzantine critical piece on the business of filmmaking and the detective genre.

Ironically, (in this British Film Year), British cinema at Edinburgh was represented almost entirely by the work of Jean-Luc Godard. Included in a retrospective mini-season were such films as Sauve qui peut (la vie) (Slow Motion), Passion and Prénom: Carmen (First Name: Carmen). Added to these were two latest films: Je vous salue, Marie (Hail Mary) and Detective. The former, praised by many, damaged by others (the Pope included), was discussed when it showed at Berlin (Cinema Papers, No. 51); the latter, recorded on from Cannes (No. 52) is an intermittently amusing, byzantine critical piece on the business of filmmaking and the detective genre.

But perhaps the biggest surprise of the Festival was Stephen Frears's television film, The School Teacher. Scopied by English-born Pakistanny playwright, Habib Kureishi, it offers original and ironic insights into racism, homosexuality and life in general, and is one of the most interesting and entertaining films to come out of Britain this year. It has already been discussed here (something which could be said for most of the Edinburgh films). Not so Derek Jarman.

Britain's leading independent filmmaker, Jarman, wrote, directed and starred in The Angelic Conversation. The idea for the Festival came from the organizers of the theatre event, who asked Michael Dywer, film critic of The Sunday Tribune, and Myles Dungan of RTE, to work with them, to compile a programme to precede their own festival. The Film Festival's success has generated so much interest that there will be a second festival, to be planned for next year. It will run for several months and be scheduled for 20 November to 4 December (overlapping with the London Film Festival). For the 1986 event, twelve sections are planned.
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Second time lucky
Jan Kenny, cinematographer

In the male-dominated field of cinematography, Jan Kenny is a rarity. Her work as director of photography on *Fran* completes a trailblazing record and marks, in industry terms, an official recognition of her status and expertise. With each step along the way, Kenny has broken new ground in commercial features as the first female clapper loader, the first female focus puller, the first female camera operator and, now, the first woman in Australia to get a DOP credit on a feature.

But Jan Kenny had no conscious aspirations to be a pioneer; she simply wanted to become a cinematographer. This, however, was a difficult job for a woman in the mid-1960s. Thus, her resume shows a clear demarcation between two lives — BC and AC, before and after cinematography. Out of necessity, BC — her first life — included sports teaching, stage management and a number of jobs in peripheral areas of film. She tried, for instance, at the Commonwealth Film Unit. But the closest she got to a camera was as production assistant. Cameras were out of bounds to women.

Her "second life" began in 1976, when she decided to make one more determined bid to break into cinematography. By a stroke of luck — a contact with the South Australian Film Corporation — she got a two-week job working with Russell Boyd.

"I practised like mad for days," she recalls. "Though he was a little dubious at first, once he saw that I really knew what I was doing and that I was keen, he was very supportive. He became my early mentor. After that, he gave me two more jobs as clapper loader on his films. And, by setting the precedent, he opened up a lot of opportunities for me. I really owe him my career."


Her philosophy has been to stay in there and do her best, and she believes that the major turning points can be accidental. For instance, she made the step up from clapper loader to focus puller on *Dain*(1979), when the male scheduled for the job fell through the glass roof of the Sydney University swimming pool. "Of course," she jokes, "there were those who claim he was pushed!" It was also a coincidence that she was in Western Australia, working for Richard Oxenburgh, when Glenda Hambly was looking for a DOP on *Fran*.

Kenny recalls the experience of working on the film as extremely enjoyable. She says she got to a camera was as production assistant. Cameras were out of bounds to women.

"That first year was the most difficult," she says. "After that, each new stage was a whole new battle. It's like that for the guys as well. But, for me, as a woman, progress was much slower. Yet, obviously, that has worked for me, because I've gained so much solid experience. And, with that under my belt, I felt comfortable about my work."


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Sixty years on
British director Lewis Gilbert

Veteran filmmaker Lewis Gilbert has been involved in the British film industry for nearly 60 years, starting as a child actor in silent films, then working as an assistant to, among others, Alfred Hitchcock (on *Jamaica Inn*, 1939), before embarking on a diverse career as a director. This has included a series of war dramas — *The Sea Shall Not Have Them* (1954), *Reach for the Sky* (1956), *Sink the Bismarck* (1960), *Operation Daybreak* (1975) — three James Bond films (*You Only Live Twice*, 1967; *The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977; *Moonraker*, 1979) and a number of stage adaptations *Alfie* (1966), *Educating Rita* (1985), and this year's *Not Quite Jerusalem*.

"Primarily," says Gilbert, "I'm a commercial director, interested in good stories that are entertaining. By acting as my own producer, I've been able to control the content of my films. And I have a great admiration for writers who sit in front of a piece of paper. For myself, I find writing a very lonely occupation, and I enjoy collaborating with other people."

As a child, Gilbert travelled with his parents, a vaudeville act who toured the Commonwealth Film Unit. But the closest she got to a camera was as production assistant. Cameras were out of bounds to women.

"As a child," he says, "I found it boring to sit around on a set all day; gradually, I became interested in the technical side. On my last film as an actor, *The Divorce of Lady X* (1937), Alexander Korda offered me a job as a trainee. Korda had played a two-week job working with Russell Boyd. "I practised like mad for days," she recalls. "Though he was a little dubious at first, once he saw that I really knew what I was doing and that I was keen, he was very supportive. He became my early mentor. After that, he gave me two more jobs as clapper loader on his films. And, by setting the precedent, he opened up a lot of opportunities for me. I really owe him my career."


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The non-hero is back
Scott Glenn, actor

In the eighties, the American cinema, tiring of blistering, Gene Hackman-like villains, has evolved a new, pared-down brand of non-hero: angular, taciturn, powerfully built and pretty mean. Charlie Bronson was probably the model, but the new batch of non-heroes often give the impression of having, unlike Bronson, a brain. And a lot of them have been played by Scott Glenn.

Neither card-carrying good guys nor all-out bad guys, Glenn's non-heroes spring between moral poles. In Urban Cowboy (1980), he is the ex-con who moves in on Olley's bar, masters the mechanical bull and temporarily walks off with Debra Winger. He may be a real sonofabitch, but he is so much more interesting to watch than John Travolta's sassying juvenile that he unbalances the film.

In The River (1984), as Sissy Spaccom's mean ex-lover, Joe Wade, out to expropriate the nice folks (Spaccom and Mel Gibson), he again gives the film an edge it badly needs. And in Silverado, where the 'real' hero (and top billing) goes to Kevin Kline, a much cuddlier gunman, it is Glenn who seems most in tune with the film, fitting the landscape, and with a terse delivery that matches the film's abrupt, operatic style.

It should come as no surprise to anyone who has seen these films that Scott Glenn is in line for an Oscar. A few minutes' conversation, however, and the notion of a latterday Alan Ladd begins to fade. Glenn is also an English graduate from a top East Coast university (William and Mary, in Virginia), a life member of Lee Strasberg's Actor's Studio, a man with fourteen years of stage experience behind him, and a friend of Sam Shepard's (who considers 'without any question the finest American playwright alive, if not the finest playwright alive anywhere').

It may be his slightly distant, threatening look that has got him his recent parts: the sadistic, ex-lover in Personal Best (1982); Glaeken Trismegistus, a kind of supernatural Lone Ranger in Michael (Miami Vice); Mank's virtually unseen Gothic thriller, The Keep (1983); and astronaut Alan Shepard in The Right Stuff (1983).

But choice has something to do with it. Glenn goes for roles that make him, as he puts it, salivate: 'It's something that happens at the cutting edge of my experience, when I read a script. It happens before my heart or my mind do anything; it comes from my solar plexus. What is it that makes your foot start moving when you hear a piece of music, or makes you salivate when you walk into a kitchen? It's an appetite that gets stirred.'

Nowadays, Glenn can wait for this to happen, though it obviously wasn't always so. Though his movie career dates back to 1972 (a small role in The Baby Maker) and includes Nashville (1975) — he was the hapless soldier who followed Renee Blakely around — it is only since Apocalypse Now (1979), in which he played Captain Colby, that he has felt really sure about what he is doing. 'As an actor, one of the things that happened to me in Apocalypse is, I got confidence. When I went over there, life in LA was pretty much just scratching around, being rejected by a lot of casting people in television. After every rejection, I would just do the mean thing... And then I'd go back home to my wife, and she'd console me, and I'd feel better. And then I'd go back out and try again. I tried in LA... and things started to happen.' So now, the family travels with him.

The only time that didn't quite work out was on Urban Cowboy, when Wes High­ tower tended to take over. Scott Glenn, who was terrible, remembers, 'I still don't get as much of that as I would. But let's be fair to Wes; I had the wrong role. I was a feminist of my own brand and, when I chose to follow this lifestyle, I knew it would be difficult. So there is no point in bitterness. It's time we stopped looking at what happened to me in LA... and what happened in England. Ironically, Columbia bought the property for The Baby Maker, which wasn't going to happen, though it obviously wasn't always so. Though his movie career dates back to 1972 (a small role in The Baby Maker) and includes Nashville (1975) — he was the hapless soldier who followed Renee Blakely around . It's only since Apocalypse Now (1979), in which he played Captain Colby, that he has felt really sure about what he is doing. 'As an actor, one of the things that happened to me in Apocalypse is, I got confidence. When I went over there, life in LA was pretty much just scratching around, being rejected by a lot of casting people in television. After every rejection, I would just do the mean thing... And then I'd go back home to my wife, and she'd console me, and I'd feel better. And then I'd go back out and try again. I tried in LA... and things started to happen.' So now, the family travels with him.

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Scott Glenn was born in Amsterdam, New York, the third of four children, to a family of Dutch origin. "My father was a farmer, my mother a homemaker," he says. "I grew up in a small town, surrounded by fields and farms. It was a simple life, but it taught me the importance of hard work and perseverance."

After graduating from high school, Glenn attended the University of Southern California, where he studied drama. "I always knew I wanted to be an actor," he says. "I loved the idea of bringing characters to life on stage and screen."

Glenn's first big break came in 1979, when he landed the role of the title character in the hit film "Urban Cowboy." The role earned him critical acclaim and helped launch his career. "It was a dream come true," he says. "To work with John Carpenter and play a character as iconic as Urban Cowboy was a thrill."

Since then, Glenn has appeared in a number of high-profile films, including "The Right Stuff," "The Keep," and "Silverado." He has also appeared on television, including "The Hotchkiss Papers," for which he received an Emmy nomination. "I enjoy working on television," he says. "It's a great way to reach a wide audience and explore different characters."

Glenn is married to actress Mary Colbert, who he met on the set of "Silverado." They have two children. "Sherron and I are raising our kids in a small town in Colorado," he says. "It's a peaceful life, and it allows us to focus on our work and each other."

Glenn is known for his chameleonic abilities, his ability to transform into a variety of characters. "I think it's important to challenge yourself as an actor," he says. "It keeps you interested and engaged."

"But I'll always remember "Cinema Papers" — it is only since Apocalypse Now (1979), in which he played Captain Colby, that he has felt really sure about what he is doing. 'As an actor, one of the things that happened to me in Apocalypse is, I got confidence. When I went over there, life in LA was pretty much just scratching around, being rejected by a lot of casting people in television. After every rejection, I would just do the mean thing... And then I'd go back home to my wife, and she'd console me, and I'd feel better. And then I'd go back out and try again. I tried in LA... and things started to happen.' So now, the family travels with him.

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James Stewart is well past the proverbial three score years and ten now: grey and frail, his walk has slowed down to the rate of the famous drawl. Yet, behind the enormous, hesitant grey and frail, his walk has slowed in his own country, he seems a mental decency, or his consideration remains sharp and clear. His beliefs. If, like the present gung-ho man, he stepped down from the insulated him somewhat from the turmoil of today.

His politics are simple, direct and conservative, like the man. But neither money, time nor fame have robbed him of his sense of humour, his fundamental decency, or his consideration for others. It's as if his Jefferson Smith in Frank Capra's Mr Smith Goes To Washington, made almost 30 years ago, had stepped down from the screen to remind us of the virtues of simpler days. No wonder John Ford once said: "People just seem to like him".

He epitomizes, as did so many of Capra's films, the idealized home-spun qualities of the small-town America into which he was born (Indiana, Pennsylvania, on 20 May 1908): do your duty, and do the job in hand to the best of your ability. It was typical of him that, even at this age, he should come out of retirement to stomp the publicity trail for the re-issue of one of his biggest hits from the fifties, The Glenn Miller Story. The pity was that he couldn't have done it for a better example of his work than this rather flabby biopic of the Swing Era band leader who disappeared over the English Channel in 1944. But at least it provided the opportunity to talk of other things: Alfred Hitchcock, Ronald Reagan, Louis B. Mayer (and the contract system which bound him to Mayer's MGM for years), his stepson (killed in action in Vietnam), his favourite bad notice, his favourite movie of all those he has made, how he feels about today's world, and what life is like now. As always, his sense of humour and of what was fitting was never far from the surface.

Like so many of the early stars, he began on the stage, joining Joshua Logan's University Players, who included Henry Fonda and Margaret Sullavan, after graduating from Princeton in 1932. Soon after that, he went to New York with Fonda, where, among other things, he picked up a notice that still sticks in his mind. "I save all my bad notices," he says good-naturedly, "and I got one which is my favourite. I was in a play in New York and I played the part of an Austrian count, so you know I needed the money. This was in '33, for the Shuberts — the New York theatrical dynasty — and everything went wrong with it. It was a very pleasant thing: I robbed my brother of all the money in his bank and I'm going to run away with his wife. The play lasted about five days, and the critic Brooks Atkinson said — I don't have it framed, but almost — 'James Stewart wanders through the play like a befuddled tourist on the banks of the Danube'.

"This worried me," he continues, "and, as I say, I needed the money, and there was a woman in New York who was good at voice lessons and everything, so I went to her and said, 'Would it be possible for you to give me a slight accent so that it suggests a little of the Austrian? I don't want to go further than that, ma'am'. It cost five bucks an hour, and three hours later she called me in and said, 'I'm going to have to let you go' — he pauses for effect — 'I can't teach you an accent, but if you ever want to learn to speak English correctly...'. Frances Robinson Dove was her name, and she was around for a long time."

So was Stewart, but elsewhere. Not long after, and without taking up her offer, he went to Hollywood, where Louis B. Mayer put him under a seven-year contract at MGM. The contract system, though it was a form of legal slavery which enabled the studios to keep a firm grip on what their stars did, was never a big problem for Stewart, who made his movie debut in a small part in Spencer Tracy's The Murder Man in 1935.

"I was so busy acting I never really thought about it. You worked every day of the week, and when they handed you a script and said, 'You're going to do this, day after tomorrow', you did it. You didn't say that you didn't like the quality of the part," he adds wryly. "But I was very fortunate in that they loaned me out for several things."

The 'several things' included Next Time We Love (1936) at Universal with Margaret Sullivan, the remake of Seventh Heaven (1937) for Fox, Vivacious Lady (1938) with Ginger Rogers at RKO, Selznick's Made For Each Other (1938) with Carole Lombard, Columbia's Mr Smith Goes To Washington (1939) and, back at Universal, Destry Rides Again (1939), opposite Marlene Dietrich. "Maybe they did it because they didn't know what to do with me and got some pretty good deals," he says.

MGM belatedly began to get things right for Stewart at the end of the decade. He made two movies with his old sidekick, Margaret Sullivan: Lubitsch's The Shop Around The Corner, where his gift for playing comedy served him well, and Frank Borzage's The Mortal Storm, a drama about Nazism in a small Bavarian town. That same year (1940), he put himself unquestionably in the front rank by winning the Best Actor Oscar for his part as the reporter in Capra's acclaimed comedy, The Philadelphia Story, opposite Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant and Ruth Hussey.

By then, with World War II...
via an Oscar-winning role in The Philadelphia Story (1940), to the classic westerns of John Ford and Anthony Mann, and his trio of unforgettable Hitchcock movies: Rear Window (1954), The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956) and Vertigo (1958).

Catching up with him in Cannes, where he was on the road again to promote the re-release of The Glenn Miller Story (1953), Ray Comiskey talked to him about his films, his politics and his feelings about the world.

From East Anglia in Britain he led bombing raids on Bremen, Frankfurt and Berlin, among others, winning the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf clusters, the Air Medal, with three Oak Leaf clusters, and the Croix de Guerre with Palm. He was made a Group Commander and was promoted to Colonel before being discharged in 1945. There was at least one new element for him in the professional freedom he had after the war. The old studio contract was legal slavery while it lasted, but it was also a paternalistic system: studios protected their big stars, gave them the best directors and crews and tried to ensure they were only in films they liked. If you read between the lines of the contract, you were suspended, that time you were on suspension could be added to your seven-year contract. I got to MGM in 1935, and then, when I went into the army — I never thought of it — luckily, but I was in the army almost five years — during that time Olivia De Havilland took the system to court. She was suspended by Warners, and she sued them and won, and that phrase was taken out of the contract. My contract ran out the second year I was in the army, so when I came out I was a free agent, and my agent sort of advised me to stay independent because, looking back, I think he had a feeling that the days of the major studio may have been numbered.

What Stewart omits to say is that he was among the first of the top Hollywood stars to enlist. He volunteered, because of previous flying experience — planes were a great hobby of his — for the US Air Force, but was turned down because, at ten stone, he was under-weight for his height. By going on an orgy of eating, he was finally accepted in March 1941, nine months before Pearl Harbour.

His war career was distinguished. From East Anglia in Britain he led bombing raids on Bremen, Frankfurt and Berlin, among others, winning the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf clusters, the Air Medal, with three Oak Leaf clusters, and the Croix de Guerre with Palm. He was made a Group Commander and was promoted to Colonel before being discharged in 1945. There was at least one new element for him in the professional freedom he had after the war. The old studio contract was legal slavery while it lasted, but it was also a paternalistic system: studios protected their big stars, gave them the best directors and crews and tried to ensure they were only in films they liked. If you read between the lines of the contract, you were suspended, that time you were on suspension could be added to your seven-year contract. I got to MGM in 1935, and then, when I went into the army — I never thought of it — luckily, but I was in the army almost five years — during that time Olivia De Havilland took the system to court. She was suspended by Warners, and she sued them and won, and that phrase was taken out of the contract. My contract ran out the second year I was in the army, so when I came out I was a free agent, and my agent sort of advised me to stay independent because, looking back, I think he had a feeling that the days of the major studio may have been numbered.

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and, although they went about it in different ways, both of them wanted to get the story up on the screen visually. He makes a gesture to form a screen in mid-air with both hands. "The spoken word was secondary."

Did either one give much instruction on the approach to a character or a particular scene? "Well, take Hitchcock: first he'd get the camera right, and then he said, 'Yeah'. I never saw him look through a camera. Uh, maybe he couldn't get up." He chuckles at the thought of the fat director struggling with the equipment. "He'd make a little screen with his hands and the poor cameraman, whoever he was, had to get back there and look at it, and Hitch would say, 'This is what I want'. Then he'd go over and sit down, and when Bob Birch said, 'We're ready to go', he'd say, 'Get the actors, go in and move them around, and let me hear it'. That was about the size of the directing we got. He expected us — which sort of makes sense in a way, because this is what we're being paid for — to have worked out a plan of our own, to have tried to get the lines so that we worked out the movements in our minds, which I always felt was better than getting the cast round a table and getting sort of psychological about it."

Was not this more difficult on Rope, with its long, unbroken takes, and walls and furniture specially constructed so that they could be moved out of the way of the cameras? "We just did it as he told us," he says. "The main thing was to get the line, because of those long takes — not ten minutes, but about 900 feet of film in the camera. As it turned out, we couldn't use that that was recorded while he was filming. He made the walls and furniture with rubber wheels so they wouldn't make any noise, and the poor people said, 'No, you can't make it'; it sounds just exactly like it is — a wall moving on rubber wheels. So he wouldn't bother Hitchcock. He said: 'We'll do the first take for the camera, and take all the microphones out'. Then he took all the walls and furniture out and put in about 20 microphones all over the set, and we did it for sound. And there were only about five or six places where we had off-take, because of the time saved everything. 'We'd done it so much that we'd almost unconsciously gotten so that every line was repeated exactly the same.'"

But Rope, surely, was the epitome of "getting sort of psychological about it". "We went to Hitchcock and we said, 'You're really missing out on a wonderful opportunity here. You ought to build a set around the set and charge them five bucks to come in, because the movement of the camera and the walls moving was much more interesting than what we were saying.'"

What about the director's propensity for practical jokes? "What he'd do on the movie was just work. His practical jokes were more... I went to a dinner party at his home one time, and you came in and you suddenly saw that everything was blue. When the first course was brought in, it was blue. Meat and mashed potatoes: they were blue! And he never explained it."

He shakes his head in mock bewilderment. "Blue potatoes, you know. And everybody didn't eat very much. We came into the living room for a while and Hitch said, 'Would anybody like hors d'oeuvres or anything to eat?' And we all said no. And then he said, 'Well, then, perhaps you want to go home?' And we said yes.'"

Stewart was also one of the first of the major stars to say yes to something else. With Hollywood in the grip of its long, postwar box-office traumas, he negotiated a deal with Universal in 1952, in which he worked for a smaller salary, plus a percentage of the profits. It was a path soon followed by others, and it earned him over one million dollars from the 1954 Glenn Miller Story alone. No doubt it was only one of several factors contributing to the eventual demise of the studio system, but it confirmed the prescience of his agent, who, in the mid-forties, saw that the heyday of the big studios was coming to a close.

"Would he, nevertheless, like to see the big studios come back? "That is the real way to make movies," he says warmly. "But I think the idea of the major studio coming back is impossible from a cost point of view. The expense of having dozens of actors, directors, sound people, all the technical crew, under contract, and the enormous plant — in today's world, it's just too much. But I do think that some kind of concentration of talent, like Chaplin, Fairbanks, Pickford and Griffith did with United Artists years ago, could be very good for pictures, Spidberg, for instance: I wouldn't be surprised if he got a studio together. Everybody said when television came in that we were dead. I can remember when radio came in: the two movie theatres in my town closed down. Everybody thought it was the end of the world, and it survived."

The conversation changes tack again. Had he ever hankered after the job of President, or is that only for second-rate actors? The answer comes about such unshakeable convictions. "I've been getting more fan mail from kids aged eleven to sixteen than I ever did in the 50 years I've been in the business, and all of them sort of dwell on this fact: that they're in trouble, that there's too much violence, that they're sick of the violence on television. And they lots of times pick out It's A Wonderful Life — that it's sort of anti-that."

It seems the star's homespun appeal, redolent of stability and moral certainty, and values from another era, have caught something in the mood of America today. But is there not a paradox there? He himself took part in one of the worst wars that ever happened. Does he have any understanding of what he went into then, or was it simply out of his love of flying? "I just looked on it that I was asked to go by my country, and I felt it would be my duty to do so. And I still feel that way about it. I felt that about my stepson, whom I regarded as my own son. He graduated from college at the start of Vietnam. He didn't want the draft: he enlisted. He became a good Marine, with the result that he was killed in action. I don't take it — and his mother doesn't either — as a tragedy. You can't say it's tragic for a young man to give up his own life to enlist and serve his country, and get to be a good Marine, get to be good at his job, and then, on the field of battle, to behave himself in a gallant manner. You can't say that's a tragedy — a loss. We think of him every day — not a tragedy. He served his country."

There seemed nothing further to be said about such unshakeable convictions, particular to a man who has lived all his life by them and backed them up by personal bravery. As I was leaving, I reminded him that he was 77 this year. "I'm going to wait for 80, and then I'll have a party." ★
The Prizzi Family Album

PRIZZI’S HONOR - John Huston film starring Jack Nicholson and Kathleen Turner, is a black comedy about a Mafia hitman who falls in love with a woman who turns out to be his female counterpart.

PRIZZI’S HONOR presents characters of such sparkling disarray as to set a new standard for unctuous insipidity. Joining Nicholson and Turner are a regal gallery of co-stars including Robert Loggia as aidsie, Eduard Franz, John Cazale as Charlie’s aging father, Angelo, Tisa Farrow as William Hickey as Joe Corleone, Prizzi, the aging don, Joe Richardson as Anthony, David and Angelica Huston as Dominick’s consent daughter Maureen.

Jack Nicholson: "As the central but none too bright son of the complexly corrupt family in John Huston’s new film, PRIZZI’S HONOR, Jack Nicholson plays a hilariously believable American mobster. It’s a grandly comic and, at times, rather touching portrait of a complex man who is brought to earth by his love for a woman.

Kathleen Turner: From the instant Kathleen Turner began her role, her character - a mean, disaffected, unloving woman who later falls in love with Jack - was an unassailable success. Her performance was so strong that it overshadowed the entire film. Turner has since added to her resume with remarkable performances in "The Pope of Greenwich Village", "The Stunt Man", "A League of Their Own", and "The Accidental Tourist".

Angelica Huston: Angelica Huston plays the devilish, seductive daughter of the title character - a beautiful, seductive, and ruthless woman who is the center of the film. She is a master of the craft, and her performance is a highlight of the film.

John Huston: John Huston, born August 26, 1906, in a Manhattan town house, is the grandson of the famous actor-director-director, and the son of the famous actor-director-director. He is a master of the camera, and his films are characterized by his skill in capturing the essence of a story. His films are known for their, often, extraordinary beauty and their, often, extraordinary complexity. He is a master of the camera, and his films are characterized by his skill in capturing the essence of a story. His films are known for their, often, extraordinary beauty and their, often, extraordinary complexity.
Debbie Byrne is in town for the day and Melbourne’s media has been mobilized for the occasion. Journalists from the newspapers and assorted magazines are literally forming a queue from the hotel lobby to her room on the eighth floor. The telephone in the room jangles persistently as a reminder of the radio stations, waiting their turn in line for radio interviews. Then there are the TV crews, not so patiently standing by to set up the lights for their place on the agenda.

At the centre of the activity, Byrne appears happily, even vibrantly, at ease. Alternating booster shots of coffee with a supply of cigarettes, she seems to be in her element. It’s Monday, the day after her only time off from the rigours of the stage. When I was sixteen, I could walk into any studio, anywhere in Australia, and know exactly what I was doing. I knew what a director was talking about. So all the discipline involved. A lot of people don’t realize: we worked bloody hard on that show. We worked every day, every night, Saturdays, Sundays, just about seven days a week. And that was a great lesson, because we learned discipline and we learned commitment. We learned that, as much as you put in, you’re going to get back. And it was great. When I was sixteen, I’d grow up in the public eye. Now with the lead role in the new Australian movie Rebel, she is stepping up to the occasion, embracing her new status as a leading lady.

“I’m sure there are a lot of people in the public eye who have stepped up as much as I have, but they did it before they became public figures, whereas I had to do it all the way through.”

Debbie Byrne is stepping up to the occasion, embracing her new status as a leading lady in Rebel. Sixteen years is a long time in show business, especially when you’re only twenty-eight. But, from Young Talent Time to Cats, Debbie Byrne has grown up in the public eye. Now, with the lead role in the new Australian movie Rebel, she is tackling her first acting role and her first film all at the same time. Deb Enker talked to her about the experience, and about the difference between the one-camera discretion of a film set, and the multi-camera intrusions of television.
Debbie Byrne — private class, every day — and with private class, every day! It was a lot, concentration all the time.” Producer Phillip Emanuel paid for the classes, had a lot of faith in me,” she recalls, not seriously. I didn’t want to do crossed my mind,” she concedes, “but in Byrne’s talent — made primarily on familiar, while offering a range of new experiences is confined to variety work, in Byrne’s talent — made primarily on familiar, while offering a range of new challenges. “Working on a film is as | grading — but film is more subtle than television. I guess that, working with a cameraman, a film cameraman, is far different from working with video.” The way they shoot film is so exposing: they can see you so much closer. It’s like the cameraman is literally in the scene with you.”

Though Byrne concedes that her TV experience is confined to variety work, her summation of the performer’s relationship to the studio camera is revealing: “The camera is a domineering figure,” she asserts. “It’s this huge robot that has these lights that blink at you, and there are four of them on the set. If you’re working at the Channel 9 studios, you’ve got this huge thing on rollers running after you. It’s not sensitive to you. In film, there is one camera and it’s incredibly silent. When you are performing in front of something like a Louma crane, you’re not aware of it at all. And you don’t have to look at the bloody thing! You can look wherever you think your eyeliner should naturally go, or where your eyeliner has been directed to, rather than looking into this thing.”

For her first film, Byrne was thrown in with some pretty classy company, from Bryan Burnett and Bill Hunter to her American co-star, Matt Dillon. It was a situation that could either intimidate or validate a fledgling actress, and not surprisingly so for someone who has persistently refused to be daunted by career obstacles, she says. “I think it’s a positive one. “It was wonderful,” she enthuses, “they were very helpful. The last thing I needed was an inexperienced actor. But it wasn’t like they were saying ‘C’mon, we’ve gotta help Deb’. We all worked together very well, and I don’t think that I made anyone feel restless for me. I mean, I’m as experienced in work as they are: in discipline, in coming up with the goods. It’s just that I’m not experienced in dialogue. But I never blew my lines. I knew my work very well. If you’re nervous or feel insecure about something, then you do your homework very thoroughly, because you need as much security as possible in what you’re doing. You make sure nothing is going to throw you.”

In some ways, Byrne’s familiarity with a number of the crew members and Dillon’s inevitable status as a visitor duplicated the Kathy/Rebel relationship in the film. “He didn’t know anybody,” she says, “and we all knew each other. I was in comfortable company. I knew all the private jokes. But Matt wasn’t on home ground, so it was probably more difficult for him than it was for me, even though he was more experienced in film. A lot of people were very warm towards him, and I’m sure that helped, but it would have been nerve-wracking. I experienced it when I went to London to do The Cliff Richard Show. It was the first time in ten years that I walked into a studio and didn’t know anyone: not the make-up artist, not the director, not one cameraman. It’s a very strange feeling, and it was the same here for Matt.”

While Dillon was cast in the role of the outsider, Byrne readily embraced Kathy’s position as one of the girls in the Air Raid Club troupe, particularly with Julie Nihill, whose performance as the precious Joyce can only be described as a thoroughbred exuberant smashing of a type-cast mould. “Julie is great,” Byrne comments, “she’s very intelligent, very efficient, and she loves her job. She’s a very funny lady: Rebel showed a side of Julie that people haven’t utilized. She’s a real comic, and she plays the little tart so well! You’re not disappointed by Joyce: you forgive her. As Kathy says, she’s just a kid.”

Byrne harks back to her own childhood in order to describe the sensations of acting, in a manner that might alarm those devoted to the method school. “It’s a bit like pretending — playing mums and dads. I mean, you might be doing a scene that’s particularly painful, but it’s only real for the time you’re doing it. It’s not like a real situation. You’re just pretending, making it real for the moment that you need it to be real. In that way, it was a lot of fun, because you get to test yourself, to see what emotions you are aware you have and how far you can take an emotion, how willing you are to let yourself feel something.”

Sensibly refusing to be drawn into any neat descriptions of easy or difficult scenes, Byrne recalls one fairly innocuous scene that became taxing for reasons that have more to do with spirit than lack of it. “It’s the one where Matt and I are being indecent, and he pulls me into a box-car and pushes me against a wall. We did that two or three hundred times, I guess I got pushed around for fifteen takes. That became a little distressing, because it’s...
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SEEING RED
Rebel is one of the best-looking Australian films for some time. But not, as is so often the case, because of the landscape: what makes Rebel look good is the gloriously and artificially constructed world created for it by production designer Brian Thomson. Paul Kalina talked to him about his over-the-top approach, his passion for red and the way he set about creating Rebel's very distinctive world.

In an early scene in The Band Wagon, Jack Buchanan, as the producer, tells Gene Kelly, in the form of Fred Astaire, what the problems are with the artificiality of the film. "If it moves you, if it stimulates you, if it entertains you, then, I tell you, it's theatre!" They tell him the idea for a song — essentially, a plot thin enough to allow for some great musical numbers. He listens, finally giving his approval: "It's brilliant, contemporary, perceptive . . . this story is a modern version of Faust!"

The stage play, No Names ... No Packdrill, first came to the attention of Rebel's producer, Phillipp Emanuel, at its premiere in 1960. It is a satirically comic view of life in wartime: a young, recently married woman called Kathy (who becomes a widow during the play) has a young marine known only as Rebel, whose nightmarish experience of the war has led him to become a deserter. Between this guilt-ridden and tormented couple comes the archetypal larrkin, Tiger Kelly, whose mercenary motive for helping them counterspoints the theme of suffering. The eventual resolution hinges on the values of loyalty, political allegiance and, ultimately, self-preservation, with the play's title referring to a time-honoured tradition that a culprit would not be identified or punished so long as he returned something he had stolen.

To come to Rebel, the film, from Rebel, the play, is peculiar: Kathy, a mail-sorter in the play, is now a singer in an all-girl band; the claustrophobic single set has dissolved into a nightclub, an apartment, a brothel, and expansive interiors; and the realistic setting of Kings Cross in 1942 has been transformed into a self-defined and artificial world, in which musical numbers carry the drama. But these factors, novel as they might appear to someone familiar with the play, have been moulded into a very traditional kind of story. Whereas film adaptations of plays like Insignificance and Come Back to the S and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean have faithfully reproduced their theatrical form, Rebel's shape is that of the Hollywood backstage musical.

Such, it would seem, is the sort of film that the producers originally envisaged. What Rebel would have been had Olivia Newton-John played the lead role, as was initially planned, remains hypothetical: "It was all very traditional," reflects production designer Brian Thomson. "It was all meant to be happening in a very real Kings Cross in 1942. But my discussions with the director, Michael Jenkins, were that he wanted it to be pushed very far. I didn't know how far he meant except, as far as I'm concerned, you can never go far enough."

Wartime Sydney was never like this: Debbie Byrne (centre) and the Air Raid Club dancers. Thomson took a Nissen-hut interior, swathed it in pink neon, and turned it into the world apart he felt the film needed.

Thomson has already designed several films, including The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1977), Starstruck (1982), Street Hero (1984) and Just Friends (1984, from the Winners series), as well as numerous stage plays, musicals and operas. A director in his own right, his consistent style makes him one of Australia's most inventive and individualists. His usual approach was nicely described by Michael Pattinson (Cinema Papers No 48, October-November 1984), with whom Thomson has established a close working relationship: "Brian walks into a location and says, 'Right, we will get rid of that wall there. We will paint the whole place, change all the tables and move the roof up three feet'. He starts from scratch."

The only brief that Thomson got from Jenkins was that the director wanted to use long lenses, so that he could place the camera a long way back. After looking at Scales of Justice, which Jenkins directed in 1983, Thomson took him to Darling Harbour, which was then an abandoned and dilapidated industrial dock area, on which stood a massive, skeletal building. "I said, 'Nay, the art director, had just worked on Silver City'," he says, "and brought in lots of photos of Nissen huts. And I suddenly thought, 'That's what we should do: maybe throw up a temporary structure for the nightclub', and the whole thing developed in that way. There were seven openings in the side of that building. I was thinking of seven-letter words to fit into the facade, and suddenly thought of Victory. I set it up on a model, showed it to Michael, and he thought it was fabulous. It took till about then before we'd kind of collided, in terms of my being given a free rein. That was the beginning of the whole style and look of the film.

"Michael was incredibly supportive, though there were some problems later, when Matt Dillon arrived. His manager said that it would not work, that it was too much like a Francis Ford Coppola film — which I took as a compliment! He wanted his boy to be in a straight period film, like Breaker Morant, and that for a while undermined what we were doing."

"My discussions with Michael Jenkins were that he wanted it pushed very far. As far as I'm concerned, you can never go far enough."

CINEMA PAPERS January — 23
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mixture of the holiday atmosphere of soldiers on R & R, and the grim, desperate reality of war.

The most striking aspect of the film’s design is the Air-Raid Club, which is where all the musical numbers take place. It is a corrugated-iron construction, painted in vivid reds, and cluttered with glass and glassSus and lead suspended from the roof, a makeshift bunker, and numerous other concocted icons. “Where people live, they express themselves as much by what they discard as what they prize. That world in Rebel hopefully had bits of both,” says Thomson. Throughout the film, there is a playful juxtaposing of different technologies — the hi-tech look of neon in a makeshift environment — and aesthetic forms. In the brothel, for instance, there is an almost audible clash between the rusted chains and the neo-classical paintings.

“As in a pop art painting,” Thomson says, “it’s about taking something that you know, and placing it in a different context, thereby redefining its meaning. You’ve got to make people believe that the reality on the screen is similar to a reality that they’ve experienced somewhere else.” To this end, and also to avoid a ‘real’

forties look, Roger Kirk has chosen some unusual costumes for the girls in the band. Their outfits range from military uniforms to garters, corsets and fish-net stockings, mixed and ‘knocked up’ in a way that borrowson from other incongruous fashions.

Also remarkable about the film’s design is its combination of form and function. Inside Kathy’s apartment, a model of the Sydney Harbour Bridge serves as a room divider, while on the mantel stands Luna Park. One of the massive billboards that line Victory Street has “It’s your Australia: Fight for it” under a huge picture of the Harbour Bridge. This “graphic, theatrical resolution”, as Thomson calls it, replaces the need for a view of Sydney, while still adequately locating the film.

As in Michael Jenkins’s best-known work, Scars of Justice, Rebel takes place in an undefined, yet non-specific locale. “Eventually,” says Thomson, “we gave everything a name, depending on the specific locale. ‘The Air-Raid Club’ and ‘Victory Street’, and that’s what they became; whereas before, it was, like, Darlinghurst Road in Kings Cross. We created our own vocabulary, and the world even became real to us on the set.”

When Thomson talks of the “aesthetic fertilization” of film and theatre, he is talking both autobiographically and of his approach to Rebel. “In 1965, I directed a short film, Night of Shadows; photographed by Russell Boyd, it used devices like lighting changes, without ever cutting, to move from a different ‘position’. One of his favourite moments in film is in One From the Heart, when Frederic Forrest is reunited with Terri Garr, and the dim

The boys in the band: top, Ray Barrett and Debbie Byrne at the piano; above left, Bryan Brown as the larrikin Tiger Kelly; and, above right, production designer Brian Thompson, the man behind the film’s look.

light under which she sits comes up full. “In the theatre, we make audiences believe that what’s taking place is where they are told it is. In Rebel, I wanted it to be not just that you are a witness, but that you are emotionally involved.”

“We chose the colour red for what it is: it’s passion, anger... The interesting thing is that Bob Herbert’s stage directions for the play actually say that it takes place at ‘the red end of the spectrum’. That doesn’t mean you have to follow that literally, but I really thought that was an important statement and not to be overlooked. Sydney in 1942 was incredibly drab and, I mean, why bother...? If you want the turbulence, if you really want to believe that this kid doesn’t want to fight any more, then you’ve got to spit it up there on the screen. It isn’t just meant to be a ritzy-looking movie: it’s meant to be a film that means something, that says something about violence and passion.” In retrospect, however, Thomson has some reservations about the extensive use of red in the film. “Because it is such a strong colour, it begins to take over. It gives the film a coherence, but once it starts spilling over into props and costumes... That’s kind of passing the buck, but I don’t mean it like that.”

Peter James, too, is aware of the difficulty of red: it’s hard to expose and can easily oversaturate. None the less, there are many scenes where the lighting and colour design are superlative: the scenes at night, for instance, with the MPs on bikes, where long lenses, fast film and back-lighting create a very evocative effect; or one of Bob Herbert’s favourite images: Ray Barrett sitting by the piano, the back-ground blue and gold, whilst a red ring falls around him.

The use of long lenses, Louma and steam and stage design has also given Rebel a distinctive and recognizable style. In the nightclub scenes, the crane takes the audience, in sweeping, continuous shots, through the crowd, past the neon lights and stage props, and to seemingly ‘impossible’ positions. The exterior scenes are mainly done as long tracking shots, where the camera follows the action, and the long lenses allow for vast areas to be taken in, especially in the wide-screen format — “even though,” says Thomson, “a lot of it is a focus. A lot is in the purely texture. One of the first shots we filmed was looking down past the club; to me, that was fantastic, because we were looking at nearly 400 metres of detail, but all flattened out on the screen in the most wonderful way.”

Interestingly, for reasons of budget, no more than a small set could be constructed for Kathy’s apartment, and its size prevented Jenkins from using long lenses to film several romantic scenes which are arguably the weakest in the film.

As a director of music clips (he’d just returned from filming Apollonius 6) and designer of stage musicals (Jesus Christ Superstar, Chicago) and opera, Thomson is acutely aware of

the connection between musical composition and design. “I don’t believe you can do a musical film without the musical numbers worked out beforehand,” he says. “I am adamant that you should be handed a script and a tape. After we designed and named the club, Michael got the song ‘Air Raid’ tailored for it. The day I saw the rough cut, Ray said, ‘I think it was, over to me and said that he’d wished he’d seen the design, because he would have composed songs with more guts.”

“Bob Herbert’s stage directions for the play actually say that it takes place at ‘the red end of the spectrum’”
Double Dutch

There is an easy equation that English-speaking filmgoers tend to make: if a film is subtitled, it's an art movie; if it's in English, it's commercial — or at any rate commercially intended. This makes life a little difficult for the producers of over half the world's films; if they are to have any chance of a release onto the lucrative English-speaking market (mainly, of course, the United States), they have two basic options: dub, or accept defeat. If they do get a subtitled release, then their film, whether it's about two people discussing theology in a room, or two thousand people re-enacting the Trojan War to a full orchestral score, is likely to end up in an art house.

Dutch director Paul Verhoeven — pronounced 'Ver-hoo-ven' — exemplifies the problem. While his seventh feature, the English-speaking Flesh and Blood, was released in Australia by Roadshow towards the end of November with a combination of discretion (its explicit violence meant it was given no great press launch, and Channel Ten's Good Morning Australia was unable to show a clip) and good, old-fashioned ballyhoo ('the most controversial epic since Caligula'), promised the posters, his sixth film, De vierde man (The Fourth Man) is scheduled for a more limited, art-house release just after Christmas, through Newvision.

They are, of course, quite different films: Flesh and Blood is set in the sixteenth century ('a medieval Western,' Verhoeven calls it), while The Fourth Man is firmly modern, set in the Dutch seaside resort of Vlissingen (flushing in the history books) in the off-season. It is Dutch-made (and subtitled); Flesh and Blood is English-speaking, made in Spain and largely financed by Orion. But the two films do share a few things: murder and disfigurement, a strong sense of the occult, a fair amount of quite explicit sex (or they did in their original versions), an evident desire to shock, and as strong a sense of style as there is to be found in the work of any number of directors with ten times Verhoeven's reputation.

Paul Verhoeven is not a discreet man. Nor would anyone who has seen either of the above-mentioned films — or such earlier Verhoeven movies as Turks fruit (Turkish Delight, 1972) or Spetters (1980) — expect him to be. In conversation, he is given to illustrating general points by referring to personal experience, often extremely intimate personal experience, and to do so at the sort of voice-level one associates with garrulous drunks who sit next to you on trams. He is also outspoken about the reaction his films have provoked, at home and abroad. Flesh and Blood has raised a few hackles. The Fourth Man has caused its share of offence (as well as picking up 'splashes of grease', and refers (in addition to being metaphorical) to the mobile phone). I did my first feature in television, 'I did my first feature in 1971,' he says. 'There were other young filmmakers at the time who had done one or two feature films — very arty ones but, from the point of view of money (which producers are interested in) not very successful. I was introduced to Rob Houwers, the producer, by his secretary, who had seen the work I'd done on television. Rob hadn't, because he was living in Munich. So, she introduced me to him, and he produced my first film, Wat zien ik? It was called Business in the United States. It's a kind of comedy, but not interesting — not something to be proud of. I hated the subject, because I didn't see how you could do a film about it.' The subject, in keeping with Verhoeven's abiding interest for Spetters, was prostitution in Amsterdam.

The commercial success of the film, however, and that of his next three feature films: Turkish Delight, Soldaat van Oranje (variously known as Soldier of Orange and Survival in the Zone, 1977) — between which Verhoeven as probably the only 'commercial' Dutch director. It is a label from which he does not shy away. "Mostly," he says, "I prefer to do films for a broader audience. I want to make films like David Lean makes organization was set up to combat the harmful influence of Spetters — which was, of course, doing very well at the box office, or the Anti-Spetters League would not have bothered.

But it would be as much of a mistake to confuse the very direct way Verhoeven talks about his films with an insensitive, sensationalist approach to cinema in general, as it would be not to look beneath the violent surface of his films. Spetters, for example, the film to which he refers most often — the title, which was used for both its US and its British release, means 'splashes of grease', and refers (in addition to being metaphorical) to the mobile phone. "I did my first feature in television, 'I did my first feature in 1971,' he says. 'There were other young filmmakers at the time who had done one or two feature films — very arty ones but, from the point of view of money (which producers are interested in) not very successful. I was introduced to Rob Houwers, the producer, by his secretary, who had seen the work I'd done on television. Rob hadn't, because he was living in Munich. So, she introduced me to him, and he produced my first film, Wat zien ik? It was called Business in the United States. It's a kind of comedy, but not interesting — not something to be proud of. I hated the subject, because I didn't see how you could do a film about it.' The subject, in keeping with Verhoeven's abiding interest for Spetters, was prostitution in Amsterdam.

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"I suppose there is a kind of tension in me, a will to do these things. As a child, I always wanted to shock: that kind of feeling is very fundamental to me, I think. When all the other children were playing with a ball, the only thing I wanted to do was take the ball and throw it in the water. That was my game. I thought it was fun, because everybody was so interested in their game, and I wanted to disrupt it, to change it. I think I'm still doing the same thing with my films. Everybody's looking one way, and I give them a punch and say, 'Look that way!'"

The kinds of films Verhoeven has wanted to make — and has made — have frequently put him at odds, not just with the Dutch critics, but with the Dutch filmmaking establishment. And, in a country where a fair proportion of every feature's budget comes, of necessity, from government funds, being an enfant terrible has made life very hard. "You are so successful in Holland over the past five or six years. And again, they said, 'No, come back: it's not good enough!' I had already done four films which had been seen by more people together than all Dutch
The last two months of 1985 have shown Australian audiences two enormously different films by the same director, Dutchman Paul Verhoeven. One is a subtitled art film, The Fourth Man; the other is a multi-million-dollar Hollywood epic, Flesh and Blood. Nick Roddick talked to Verhoeven about the two films.

films in the last 20 years. I hate these people, because they consider it art only if it is done by Bertolucci, or if it has slow-moving camerawork!"

Ironically, The Fourth Man was liked by the powers that be in Holland, despite its outrageous scenes — including copulation in a mausoleum, with the passive partner in a distinctly Christlike pose. Verhoeven doesn’t find this strange at all. "The Fourth Man is stylized in obvious ways, and everybody sees it as arty or whatever — the photography, it’s completely plain-sailing."

So the critics liked the film. That’s the whole thing in Europe, I think. I see it as a big failure because the moment: it’s losing all vitality. The whole cultural luggage of Europe is on our shoulders, and it’s pushing us down.

A lack of vitality is not the charge one would make against The Fourth Man, for all its slow-moving camerawork, its heavily chiaroscuro lighting and its moments of outrageous symbolism. Based on a bestselling novel by an author with marked right-wing tendencies, it is the overheated tale of a female writer (Jeroen Krabbe — the slob, Sendor, in Turtle Diary) who goes to Vienna for a poetry reading, and becomes caught up in a number of interlocking sexual and occult occurrences, which are centred round the mysterious patron of a beauty parlour (Renee Soutendijk), who has somehow presided over the death of her three previous lovers. Gerard, the writer, is obviously lining up as No. 4. There is also a beautiful young man, Herman (Thom Hoffman), that the writer (named after the original novelist, Gerard Reve) hopes to seduce via the beautician.

Gerard is, of course, homosexual, but he managed to get it on with the mysterious Christine (Soutendijk). He does this rather well under the circumstances, I suggested to Verhoeven. "Gerard is a writer. He has a lot of imagination: he’s looking at the mirror behind her, and her back is just a back. It has no breasts, so he can project a male image. It’s a strange situation. But I think erotic situations — sexual relations — are treated in the same way: they are as much a part of the film as the more obviously ‘realistic’ sex. So the film fulfills his needs," says Verhoeven. "He has some telepathic or prophetic powers: that’s a normal thing. I accept that a guy has some ideas of the future, although I think these things are still vague and can be changed. But I don’t believe in the occult: I believe in science, and I think these things are science."

Science plays a strong role in Flesh and Blood, too. The film combines a fairly standard polarization between medieval superstition and the advance of medical science, with an abruptly contradictory stress on mystical powers, like that endowed on the statue of St Martin by the central character, a soldier of fortune also called Martin, and played by Rutger Hauer.

Flesh and Blood is a project that Verhoeven and his regular writer, Gerard Soeteman, have been trying to set up for some considerable time. "We had to make the other feature films to make Flesh and Blood: that was our original project," he says. "There was Gerard and me and Gijs Versluis, who was executive producer on Soldier of Orange and Spetters. These three people have been on the project for ten years. Gerard was the one who asked me to write a first outline in 1971: we’d just done this television serial, which was also medieval, but in the form of family entertainment. Then, in 1980, after Versluis went to the United States, we presented the project, which was only an outline at the time. The Ladd Company wanted to do it, so they gave us the money to write the script. We worked on that script for more than a year, but finally they decided not to do it. Sen, I’d almost by then."

Then it was with quite a few other companies before Orion took it. And it was the same thing all over again: a lot of actors I sent the script to sent it back saying they didn’t want to work with this pornographic material. Now, it’s a very open and explicit film, but it’s not pornographic. As I said, I’m interested in sexual things: I think it’s a very interesting part of life, and that you can express a lot of human feelings by showing how people do it."

In Flesh and Blood, a multi-national cast — Verhoeven’s long-time associate, Rutger Hauer, who has appeared in most of his films and owes much of his initial fame to a Verhoeven TV series; Australia’s Jack Thompson and Tom Burlinson, and a number of British and Spanish supporting players — do it quite frequently. But the film is mainly about the two things that its title mentions; and, if Verhoeven had difficulties in Holland, Hollywood was not entirely plain-sailing either. At times there are signs of the underside of the greater financial and artistic ‘freedom’ Verhoeven has long been craving — a chance to ‘go Hollywood’, without having to account for himself to Dutch government committees — beginning to exert itself: if anything, Flesh and Blood lacks the freedom of the earlier films. "You can almost feel the hands pulling him back,” as a long-time associate put it. But it is far from the ‘slow-moving camera’ of the European art film — even the slow-moving camera of The Fourth Man — and it has about it a recklessness that signals Verhoeven’s still unrealized promise as a maker of big films.

I still think you have to describe emotions in film by movement," he says. "You know that beautiful American author, James M. Cain? All his life, he had the same problem: they considered him just as a writer of thrillers. He refused to write as a ‘artist’: he wanted to use the thriller form. You have to be honest with yourself, and I’m sure that, the more you think about art, the less art you make. Whether Turkish Delight or Flesh and Blood have something to do with art, I don’t care. But I care if the film is still interesting in twenty years — that, for me, is the only criterion. If it’s still interesting in ten, twenty, thirty years, then the film has some power. It’s part of the culture."

"I think, too, that the chariot races in Ben Hur are art. I consider The Seventh Seal to be a beautiful film. But, if I were asked, ‘What do you consider the better cinematographic art, the chariot race in Ben Hur or The Seventh Seal?’ I would hesitate a long time, but I think I would prefer the chariot race. Because that’s cinema to me."

CINEMA PAPERS January — 27
By now, cinema audiences have got pretty used to the idea that a man can fly. Reindeer, however, are another matter: to date, their aerial antics have been confined to Christmas cards. This year, though, Santa and his sleigh-team are well and truly airborne. Nick Roddick went to Pinewood studios, near London, to meet the man who did it: Derek Meddings, who, in his time, has helped Dracula rise from the grave, made Thunderbirds’ Lady Penelope mobile, and made it possible for assorted superpersons to do their heroic stuff.
Though he has been in the film business for nigh on 30 years, has won an Oscar — for Superman the Movie in 1978 — and has a permanent office (or at any rate studio) at Shepperton, Derek Meddings is scarcely a household name, even in households in which cinema is a topic of conversation. Only for avid readers of that obscure bible for the special effects buff, Cinefantastique, is his name really one to conjure with. A quick scan through the indexes of books on the British cinema — even specialist works like David Pirie's A Heritage of Horror — might turn up Meddings. Lots of directors, a few actors, even the occasional writer — but no special effects people, not even Meddings's mentor, the brilliant father of British string-and-sealing-wax effects, Les Bowie.

Film history is slow to admit its artisans, preferring the more familiar world of artists, even when dealing with such works of craft as the Hammer horror films, for which Bowie and Meddings provided much of the horror. "Les was a fantastic artist," says Meddings, "and he always wanted to do all the effects on a film. If it hadn't been for Les, the Hammer films would have all ended up with 'U' certificates" — the old-style British classification for general-audience films — "and there would have been no horror!"

Though he started as a matte artist, doing Transylvanian hills and lowering mountain-top castles, Meddings soon graduated to other "modern" forms of special effects. And the reason you should know him, if not his name, is that it was Derek Meddings who propelled Lady Penelope and Parker through scale-model country lanes, around miniaturized cities and through various bits of space in Thunderbirds, orchestrated encounters between evil supertankers and a natty underwater Lotus coupé in The Spy Who Loved Me (1977), and made Superman fly (for which he won his Oscar).

Meddings's speciality is miniatures, and his shed at Pinewood is a mixture of an Aladdin's cave and a do-it-yourself nut's den, where latex and precision-engraved equipment vie for the fairly limited space with little rubber frogmen (stars of the Bond movie), working models of the glaze used to such great effect everywhere but at the box office for Krrui (1983), and pictures of reindeer. The reason for the,
Derek Meddings

Since his last Bond — For Your Eyes Only (1981) — and even before it, Meddings has worked in association with the Salkinds, a relationship which has, so far, lasted for five movies: the three Superman, Supergirl and now Santa Claus, on which he spent a year and a half. Discussion of his achievements is slightly hampered by the fact that, when we spoke (in early October), he hadn’t seen the completed picture — something which turns out to be a policy decision: “I deliberately didn’t want to see it until it was finished. I wanted to see it with a human audience, not film technicians.”

If some of the effects are refine-ments on things he’s done before — the toy car, bearing (supposedly) Dudley Moore, that flies above New York, follows a flight path blazed by Christopher Reeve — there was one completely new challenge: making the reindeer fly. He had presumably had some practice, with the Fire Mares in Krull — a film which counts as one of his major disappointments. “It’s only my opinion,” he says with his customary caution; “but I didn’t like the first script at all that much. I think there were about ten and, during that time, Peter Yates had one of them rewritten, and it was very, very good; there was a lot of excitement and a lot of humour. But the company putting up the money decided they liked the first script, so we went back to it. Somewhere along the line, the film went to pieces.”

Whether Santa Claus will go to pieces, it’s too soon to know. It’s not what one expects from a $50-million movie: less an epic than a warm little film, more full of ‘Aaaah!’ than ‘Ooooh!’ The flying reindeer, however, are something else. And, when one comes to consider the nature of the problem — eight reindeer, with thirty-two feet and several hundred antler points, not to mention a fat little man on an ornate sledge, all to be made to prance convincingly across the sky and, for afters, to fly under one of the bridges on New York’s East River — the results are pretty close to miraculous.

“I suppose,” says Meddings, “I was getting away from the norm of run of pictures. I make, which are chasing-hang- wall jobs. This one is supposed to look pretty and romantic — or fairy-tale, I suppose. The big problem was getting back to the old technique of film-ing through the sky. There’s a mixture of everything in that — real film, a lot of miniature work and the majority of the shots we’ve done as models, because you couldn’t have done it any other way: reindeer do not fly. When I look at them now, I’m very, very worried about how we were going to make it convincing. And, I need hardly add, so were the director and the producers. They were even in a panic about it.”

“You’ve got to make the reindeer look like they’re alive. Superman was alive. And, when you stuck him up on a pole arm and the background moved, he only had to move his head and smile, and everybody knew it was the real Superman. Reindeer don’t smile. They move their heads, but you’ve got to get them to do it in a convincing manner.”

Under strict instructions from the Salkinds, who obviously don’t want to go down in history as the men who blew the gaff on Santa in a big way, Meddings will not disclose the precise details of how he did it. But he used most of the techniques known to (special effects) man. Especially important were front projection and a motion-control camera.

“For front projection, the screen has a highly reflective surface — the same material that street signs are made out of. The picture is projected onto that and, because of the reflective surface, you get a very, very bright picture, and a lot of light coming back. But there’s not enough light from the projector so, although it puts the picture over the artists, it would never register on the screen. The actor creates a shadow on the background — on the screen. When they are in front of it, they mask that shadow — but only when the camera and the projector are perfectly aligned.

“With a motion-control camera, very simply, what happens is: you’ve got something that’s supposed to be flying, it will make a move, and the camera will also do a movement, and you would one position of flight. The camera will track in and then swing off, and it will look as though the sleigh has flown towards you and gone out of picture. But, in actual fact, it will be in a static position, and part of the movement will be created by a motor-controlled arm, which will make the sleigh turn or bank, but the forward movement will be created by the camera tracking in. It’s all computerised, which means that you can push a button, and the camera goes back to the start position, the sleigh goes back to the same position and, when you see the two pieces of film put together, you would never know it had been done by two separate movements. You can wind the film back and start again, and it will put it all in exactly the same position.”

For all his reliance on the string-and-sealing-wax approach, Meddings has enthusiastically embraced the motion-control camera. “We can’t feel the interference, the bounce — in my way of working anyway: people are so aware now. They’re all armchair critics. They can sit there and watch films on television, and because television is now so good, you can’t hang strings and say, ‘Well, they’ll never see it’.”

Unlike, say, Douglas Trumbull, however, who recently developed a whole new camera system called Show-Scan, Meddings is not interested in building his own camera equipment. “I’m really a visual person,” he says. “I know Doug, and I think he’s a very, very talented man, I wouldn’t even put myself in the same class as Doug Trumbull — shouldn’t say that, really, because he’s still working on a job! But he is a very, very talented lad, and because his dad is also an excellent camera mechanic, the two of them have turned out a piece of camera. For me, cameras have got to be a tool to do the job. You mustn’t treat them like little gods. If you want to hang them upside down on a piece of string, you’ve got to be able to do it.”

If there is one real sense of frustration he does feel, however, it is the lack of work in the UK, which affects both work and equipment. Since Santa Claus, Meddings has been working on Spies Like Us, and was all set to go into the sequel to Winds of War, called War and Remembrance. “This was going to be an epic,” he remarks, “but I was being pressured to finish what I was doing. Eventually, I did, and for seven weeks I worked on War and Remembrance. Then, last week, I was called to the States to discuss the budget and how we were going to go about doing all these shots, and within three days, my side of it had been put back one year, so now I’m out of work. I’m panicking. I turned down Little Shop of Horrors to do the Winds of War thing, because they seemed to be very, very keen and interested, but I had bought another house . . .! So, as of this moment, I’m unemployed!”

The other thing that worries him is that the motion-control equipment he persuaded the Salkinds to get for Santa Claus is lying idle. “It’s all stored away in a box somewhere. It frightens me, because in America, with the studios, if you can convince them, they will get this equipment, and it will expand. Every time I start a picture, I have an empty stage, and we have to spend quite a few weeks just putting all the bits and pieces together. You know, Roy Fields [the optical effects specialist, who shared Meddings’s Superman — ‘has a set-up here he has struggled and fought hard to get. He has two optical printers, but he’s squeezed into such a small flat, you really need to expand. There are very few people that are prepared to finance something like that. In all the years I’ve been in the industry, I’ve never heard of anyone who has paid me very much anyway: people are so aware now. They’re all armchair critics. They can sit there and watch films on television, and because television is now so good, you can’t hang strings and say, ‘Well, they’ll never see it’.”
INDEPENDENT FILM MAKERS' FUND

The Independent Film Makers' Fund is a special fund provided by the State Government through the Victorian Ministry for the Arts and administered by Film Victoria. The fund is set up to provide finance for a limited number of short films of high innovative and creative potential which will develop the talents and skills of Victorian film makers who can demonstrate that they could make a substantial contribution to the Victorian film industry in the future.

The fund can be reasonably flexible in its finance arrangements, but is specifically seeking those film makers working in narrative or documentary cinema or video who have displayed potential and whose film making career will be assisted by having the opportunity to further express their talents.

It is hoped that films or tapes, financed by the fund, will have some sales potential and appeal to a market which includes conventional forms of exhibition (broadcast TV, film festivals etc.).

The fund is, in the first instance, aimed at developing directorial talent, however people with proven skills in other areas (for instance cinematographers or writers) may apply.

The financial limits of the fund will dictate that the films financed would normally be expected to be of 30 or 60 minutes duration. It is not intended that the fund be a low budget first feature fund, nor will it provide assistance to highly experimental avant-garde works.

Applicants to the fund will be required to submit a script, budget and proposal for financing (if finance other than that provided by the fund is envisaged).

Only applicants from Victoria who can display skills and potential which could benefit the Victorian industry in the future should apply.

Applications close 27th January, 1986. For further detailed guidelines and application forms contact:

Kerrie McGovun,
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Since George Lucas pioneered new territories for movie merchandising with Star Wars, an industry has flourished with tie-ins to box-office hits. Whether it’s cuddly toys, Rambo knives or intergalactic bubble-gum, a product will be embraced if the campaign is properly planned and the film is a success. Peter Schmideg looks at the local and international evolution of the phenomenon, and at some of the basic rules for a strategic assault on the marketplace.

July 1977. Just two months ago, Star Wars was premiered in Hollywood. By now, the film has recouped its entire production and promotion cost. That fact alone is incredible enough. But what is even more impressive is that, during these embryonic stages of the Star Wars hysteria, over $100,000 worth of tee-shirts and $260,000 worth of intergalactic bubble-gum have been sold.

Today, we are used to the hundreds of products that accompany any major movie. In fact, we expect it: Who can forget the merchandising mania that accompanied the release of the Jedi. They were perfectly suited to merchandising, so naturally they got their own movie. Again part of a series, it was called Caravan of Courage – An Ewok Adventure. Invent a cute character, guest star it in your next movie, gauge audience reaction and, before you can say ‘money’, they’re being churned out in their dozens and their own movie is in pre-production.

Other films, like the Star Trek series, weren’t quite so successful with their merchandising. Naturally, success with the spin-off depends on the success of the film, and not all films are suitable targets for merchandising: the mind boggles when you contemplate merchandising ideas for a film such as The Black Hole, and there’s probably not an enormous untapped market out there for toy camels with the words Burke & Wills emblazoned on them.

Another thing you need is confidence. A lot of people are committing a small fortune to your film. A lot of people will also be buying expensive licensing agreements from you. Factories will be tearing up the contract and making moulds, designers will be putting together colourful boxes for your toys, games, puzzles and books. All these people are waiting — depending on your film to be a hit.

In Australia, things don’t really happen on quite such a large scale, but we do have our merchandising successes. Man From Snowy River for example, was the largest grossing movie in Australia’s cinematic history, until E.T. tipped it off the winner’s podium. It was also an incredible success story from a merchandising point of view.

Fred Gaffney of Gaffney International, national Licensing, based in Melbourne, is currently merchandising of Snowy River and Phar Lap. He claims that together, those two films represented about $50 million in retail sales. Snowy River cost in the vicinity of $7 million, with an advertising budget of $400,000. According to Gaffney, merchandising added another $5 million to its overall promotion. There were ten different publications, from colouring and activity books through to storybooks. There was an entire range of character clothing, and a single, jeans, jackets, hats, greeting cards, puzzles and games as well. “We even went in with Kelloggs. Mincing used the film in conjunction with a launch of its new Colt range of cars, and the Government also chipped in with a ‘Reynolds 500’ campaign, using Jack Thompson and footage from the film.

Gaffney believes that cross-promoting a film into and onto anything is as important as the right script, and that getting the licensing right is as important as getting the film right. In Australia, however, Gaffney claims that this side of the film business has dwelled on the past: There is a lack of co-operation from production companies and producers. Merchandizing just doesn’t have the same sort of credibility here as it does in the States. “We don’t treat selling as seriously.”

Gaffney also points out the indisputable correlation between the top-grossing films of all time, and the fact that all, without exception, were heavily merchandized. Merchandizing doesn’t guarantee success, but it does get your film into environments that advertising and promotion can’t reach. “At one stage merchandizing was new and exciting. Just imagine being there when the very first tee-shirt with a movie logo came out. Imagine seeing that very first book of the film or your first bit of Disney memorabilia. It was a thrill, it was new, different... it did send our imagination reeling. But today, we seem somehow to be like a record stylus stuck in the same groove, churning out the same message all the time, pushing back the boundaries far enough. In the seventies, for instance, we wit­nessed the development of a new phenomenon — the merchandizing of a city in the ‘I (heart) NY’ campaign. It has been copied ad infinitum, the multiplication of merchandise has been exponential, but the base is still the film. Merchandizing at its peak is dependent on the film, and the characters are strong enough to survive alone. And she has already cracked the lucrative US market with Dot.

A Sydney company, Yaffa Darling­ton, have been handling the merchandiz­ing of films such as Return of the Jedi, Dune, Bladerunner and most recently Santa Claus The Movie. According to Yaffa Darlington’s Chris Lockhart, perhaps the most unusual aspect of business is that a dog food manufacturer and Jedi.

But timing is always crucial: The final message from the people who are putting the business onto the streets is that they should plan their campaigns as soon as possible, even at scripting stage. They can evaluate the merchandising potential of the film from the reviews, and then they can get to work on it immediately. But they need three key ingredients: a product, a show business character, and a release date (not necessarily in that order). “If the film’s release is timed well, and it’s the right property,” says Gaffney “you can make a million just selling tee-shirts...”
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It was full of enthusiasm that a team of independent television journalists left Paris early in October to rendezvous with the Greenpeace flagship in the South Pacific. Supported by Gamma Television, a small French video news agency, David Carr-Brown, Philip Brookes and Pierre Bourgeois (English, Australian and French respectively) returned from the experience more than a little sobered, but with their integrity at least intact. The different reportage by the Greenpeace pilots was to transfer the images to an overprize-winning method consisted of the company. Guaranteeing worldwide distribution in a matter of hours, the Visnews, a semi-public British agency, bidding its main rival for the contract, succeeded in outbidding a handful of 'non-aligned' reporters and a collection of 'loyalist' local authorities.

Prior to the Mururoa protest, which had attracted universal attention as a result of the 'Rainbow Warrior' incident, the fledgling video agency had pulled off a triumphant deal with Greenpeace for exclusive coverage of the event, to be filmed from the vantage point of the protest vessel (Gamma had also offered a cameraman for one of the French naval vessels, but this was turned down).

Theirs would be the only ship in the news blackout, since such other independent reports would come out of the area would be from the defence correspondents on board the French naval vessel, the 'Baley', which were teleed to Mururoa, then on to the Defence Department's press service in Paris, where they were carefully vetted before being sent out to the correspondents' respective newspapers.

By proposing a sophisticated system for the rapid transmission of its images, Gamma succeeded in outbidding its main rival for the contract, Visnews, a semi-public British company. Guaranteeing worldwide distribution in a matter of hours, the prize-winning method consisted of installing a transmitter on board the boat to transfer the images to an over-head plane, which was equipped with a special receiver. An editing crew on board the plane would preview the tape on the way back to Tahiti, from where it would be dispatched via a French channel on the Intelsat satellite to London. There, another Gamma team, working from the studios of World Television Network, would carry out the final editing and feed the film into the global networks.

This procedure is not new — it was apparently first devised by French television for the intermittent coverage of trans-Atlantic yacht races — but it is so costly that it is seldom used for the coverage of news events. During their earlier campaigns at Mururoa, Greenpeace have generally worked with Visnews, whose method was simply to have the tapes picked up by a seaplane that landed next to the boat. In the event of rough seas or the hot pursuit of a French frigate, this sometimes proved to be an un Rewarding manoeuvre.

Once Gamma had succeeded in convincing Greenpeace of the superiority of their system, they then had to come up with an equally convincing sales plan. High-powered negotiations with television companies throughout the world bore remarkable fruit. The biggest North American news services, ABC, CBS and the cable network, CNN, agreed to form a pool for the purchase of a series of five documentaries at $177,000 each ($5,000 for CNN). Other countries followed suit: the BBC, ITN and WTN in Britain, the ABC and TVNZ in Australasia, NHK in Japan, RAI and RAI in Italy, German and Spanish companies and, not to be left out, Antenne 2 and TFI in France.

In this way, $US100,000 was raised to kick off the $US250,000-operation. Despite the enormous expense and the element of gamble involved, the chance to winkle their way into the competitive audio-visual market was what prompted Gamma to play for such high stakes. With Greenpeace hitting the headlines as never before, the Mururoa campaign presented the young agency with just the scoop it needed to earn its international wings.

Encouraged by guarantees from Tele-Diffusion-France that there would be no interference with their transmissions, Gamma went ahead and booked an Intelsat channel, hired from Radio-France-Outremer in Tahiti. Thus reassured, the team of reporters had every reason to be confident. Probably their greatest worry before leaving for the South Seas was the rumoured apathy of Greenpeace. Were the battle-weary ecologists intimidated by the veritable French armada waiting for them at Mururoa, or were they simply unmoved by it? Would the protagonists rise to the occasion as in the past, and provide the hoped-for spectacle for Gamma's cameras?

As things turned out, events went anything but according to plan. "I arrived in Tahiti ten days before the rest of the team," recalls David Carr-Brown, "to put petrol on the islands, to hire boats in the Marquesas, and to start relations with the French authorities. I was dealing with the High Commissioner, the local authorities and the military! We were getting along quite well until Henu — the French Defence Minister, who resigned in the wake of the 'Rainbow Warrior' affair — got the axe, and then things started to deteriorate. The military stopped talking to me altogether, and there was a lot of tension with the High Commissioner and the local administration." Carr-Brown has since discovered that all of this was calculated. From Paris, the explanation was that the problems Gamma was having were the fault of the local authorities. "In reality," he says, "they were orchestrated by a 20-man committee directed from the capital, presided over by the High Commissioner and composed of civil aviation authorities, customs officials, legal advisers, army staff and press officers — including Agence France Presse, with whom Gamma-TV have a partnership to handle access to the satellite channels of WTN had booked for us from London. They told me I had to understand they were a government organization, then a week later that I had to understand they were a private company and Gamma was competition! I decided to by-pass RFO's TV station and deal directly with TDF, who control the satellite channel. TDF told me the station happened to be in a military zone, and that access to it couldn't be given to civilians. I said I would supply my own transmission equipment, and send them a signal from outside the forbidden area. They then replied that this was not possible either, because TDF has the state monopoly on all television transmitted from French soil!

"It was only when I had reached stalemate with the High Commissioner that I admitted he was under orders from Paris to refuse us satellite access. All the verbal assurances and double-talk up until now had been stiff Gamma along, to ensure that nobody else would take our place. When Visnews and the Australian and New Zealand TV crews showed up in Tahiti, they were immediately expelled. They had no visas, of course, but they would never have been guaranteed them anyway.

The next problem was hiring a boat. Attempts to rendezvous with the 'Greenpeace' from the Marquesas islands were quashed because the local boat-owners were told they would need special permits to transport Gamma. Pressure was also put on the civil aviation operators at Papeete. Gamma was lucky enough to meet up with Michel Thion, who runs Tahiti Conquest Airlines. "Initially," says Carr-Brown, "he was luke-warm about helping us, but when someone told him he should pretend his plane had broken down, he got so riled he came round! The same the Mururoa people found for his pilot, Jean Vallon, who was threatened with having his licence revoked if he flew us out. But to save time, he said the 'he was luke-warm about helping us, but when someone told him he should pretend his plane had broken down, he got so riled he came round! The same the Mururoa people found for his pilot, Jean Vallon, who was threatened with having his licence revoked if he flew us out. But to save time, he said the
Greenpeace. "That was the most spectacular episode," recalls Philip Brooks. "We set off in two tiny boats, hardly more than eight feet long, piloted by local men equipped with walkie-talkies, to keep in touch with the mayor. Once we were nine miles out and had lost sight of land, we asked them to head east, which is where we presumed the 'Greenpeace' was. They began to get edgy, because they were beginning to suspect what we were up to. At that stage, the 'Greenpeace' was about 25 miles away, and had to take the precaution of not coming too close to the twelve-mile limit. We weren't getting very far with the boat crews, so we finally told them the real object of our mission, and they freaked out completely!"

"The mayor ordered them back, but we managed to get them to stop once we were nine miles away. The 'Balny' got as close as 20 yards before hoving to."

"The mayor of Nukutavake sent his boat around the islands and stockpile fuel for the 'Greenpeace'. While we stayed grounded at Tahiti, waiting for them to run out of fuel. As soon as they flew back, the way was clear for us to take off."

But the Gamma team had its fuel problems, too. "One of the first things I had done when I arrived down there," says Carr-Brown, "was to go round the islands and stockpile fuel for our boats. You know how vast the distances are in the Pacific. The High Commissioner's ruse was to fly fuel for 'medical purposes', to prevent our getting from Tahiti to Mururoa and back again. By flying loaded up with jerry cans of fuel, we managed it. However, this meant we ran the risk of explosion if we turned the heating on inside the plane, so the whole operation was carried out at 0°. And, every time we arrived back at the airport, the customs officers took our plane to bits: what should have been a four-and-a-half-hour expedition took up to twelve hours."

Gamma's problems didn't end when they had their material on tape and ready to send: the fourth documentary was supposed to be transferred to an Air France flight to Paris. But all three cases went missing for another five weeks. "We had to pay a $6,000 daily fine had they kept the equipment, so they let it go. I put it on a UTA flight to Los Angeles, where it was supposed to be transferred to an Air France flight to Paris. But all thirteen cases went missing for another five weeks."

By the end of the operation, Gamma were $US100,000 out of pocket. "We should have broken even from the sale of the film," says Carr-Brown. "Even though there were only four instead of five. We were not even able to recover our losses. None the less, the Gamma team is pleased with its footage of the meeting between the Tahitian separatists and the 'Greenpeace', even if it won't be shown in France, where TFI and Antenne 2, who own the rights, have judged it "uninteresting". The French authorities are doing their best to minimize the significance of the independence movement in Tahiti, and were petrified when the 'Greenpeace' had left Tahiti."

From Gamma's point of view, the first pictures of the 'Balny' and the 'Greenpeace' were well-received by the world networks, since they confirmed that the frigate was dodging the environmental vessel. The Japanese, though, were disappointed that the Gamma crew hadn't got aboard from the Marquesas and started filming earlier. The other three films went down well, especially the last one, with the Tahitian separatists, led by Oscar Temaru, mayor of Faa. But Carr-Brown and Brooks are a little concerned that, because so little has been reported of the 'Greenpeace' on Mururoa, it would go and stir up trouble in Tahiti — which was, apparently, more or less the crew's intention. After the boat's generator had broken down.

In the aftermath of the sinking of the 'Rainbow Warrior', the presence of a Greenpeace vessel to protest against the French nuclear tests on Mururoa atoll looked like being one of the year's top news stories. But not much else. One small Paris TV news agency, Gamma Television, however, was determined to break the blackout, with an ingenious system for getting pictures from the 'Greenpeace' onto the world's TV screens in record time. But, as Belinda Meares reports, they came up against the full obstructionist might of the French state in their attempts to do so.
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Five years old in February, David Stratton’s movie seasons on SBS provide most of us with many of our opportunities to see foreign films. Stratton kicks off after Christmas with a new line-up, with films from 21 countries. Cinema Papers invited him to give us a preview.

The first ‘Movie of the Week’, which used to be called ‘A Whole World of Movies’, went to air on 1 February 1981; the film was La dentelliere (The Lacemaker), in which Claude Goethert made Isabelle Huppert (who has just finished her first Australian film, Cactus, with Paul Cox) familiar. For a while, the programme was shown on Sunday evenings. Then, at the beginning of 1983, we moved to Mondays and, at the same time, introduced a second programme, ‘Cinema Classics’ — which, coincidentally, also began on 1 February, with Jean Renoir’s La grande illusion. Throughout 1983 and 1984, the two programmes were presented side by side; but, in 1985, I moved back to Sunday evenings, and ‘Cinema Classics’ was cancelled.

In 1986, there’ll be another and, I hope, final change. The programme will still be called ‘Movie of the Week’; but it will move to Friday evenings (much better, I think, than Sunday), and will become a combination of the two formats: a season of classics, using themes to link film presentations, and the one-off ‘Movie of the Week’ format.

The line-up is one I’m extremely proud of. For example, towards the end of January, I start a series called ‘Modern Masterpieces’, with Ermanno Olmi’s glorious L’albero degli zoccoli (The Tree of Wooden Clogs). That season will also include Louis Malle’s Le souffle au coeur (Murmur of the Heart), Akira Kurosawa’s first colour film, Dodes’ka-den, and our final screening of Bernardo Bertolucci’s L’amore dei zoccoli (The Ascent), which won the Oscar for Best Foreign Film. Two of these, I’ve shown before: Bergman’s Det sjunde inseglet (The Seventh Seal), Schichinin no keshu (The Quiet Ones), Bronenosets Potemkin (The Battleship Potemkin), our debut classic, La grande illusion, as well as Det sjunde inseglet (The Seventh Seal), Schichinin no keshu (The Quiet Ones), and Die Blechtrommel (The Tin Drum). But the other two are television firsts here: De Sica’s legendary Ladri di biciclette (Bicycle Thieves) — assuming that, by April, we’ve finally received the good-quality print we’ve been promised for months now — and Volker Schlondorff’s Die Blechtrommel (The Tin Drum).

There will also be seasons devoted to films from Asia and Latin America. From Latin America, there’ll be a three-film tribute to Jean Cocteau, and the tribute being made as a co-production with France, and features such distinguished French actors as Dominique Sanda and Jean François Stevini in its cast.

From Latin America, there’ll be Humberto Solas’s impressive epic debut film, Lucia, in which the Cuban director looks at three women in three periods of Cuban history; Joaquim Pedro de Andrade’s outrageous comedy, Macunaima — a wildly anarchic farce of which the Marx Brothers would not have been ashamed, involving a surprisingly adult child (played by a full-grown man) and a bloated capitalist who literally eats people; and Luis Buñuel’s El angel exterminador (The Exterminating Angel) from Mexico — shown before, but much requested.

I realize that this piece is starting to sound like a list of film titles, but I can’t resist adding a few more. We’ve finally persuaded Sovexportfilm to let us show the original Ukrainian version of Teni zabytykh predkov (Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors), a beautiful model-long unavailable, apparently because its director, Sergei Paradzhanov, was in such poor standing with the authorities in Moscow (after Sayat Nova, he spent some time in prison).

We also have three more recent art-house successes, two from Spain, one from Hungary. The Hungarian one is Pal Sándor’s Őszenes Dísztehelyen (Daniel Takes a Train), a controversial film about the death in a car crash of a Russian invasion of 1956. The Spanish films are Demonios en el jardín (Demons in the Garden), made in the same year, which is probably the finest work of director Manuel Gutierrez Aragon, about an eccentric family during the Franco era; and Carlos Saura’s dance version of Carmen.

There will be tributes, too, to talented people no longer with us. Indeed, the new Friday-night slot will commence, on 27 December, with a presentation of one of the most famous films of Simone Signoret, Moshe Mizrahi’s La vie devant soi (Madame Rosa), made in 1977, about an old Jewish woman’s affection for her Arab boy whose father has killed her husband. In all, a crowded but, I think, exciting programme for the year — a new Friday-night slot will commence, on 27 December, with a presentation of one of the most famous films of Simone Signoret, Moshe Mizrahi’s La vie devant soi (Madame Rosa), made in 1977, about an old Jewish woman’s affection for her Arab boy whose father has killed her husband. A tearjerker, it is also an extraordinary religious allegory by Larissa Shepitko, whose untimely death in a car crash in 1979 was a loss not only to Russian cinema, but to the world. The Ascent proved to be her last film, and should be essential viewing.

In contrast to the ‘Modern Masterpieces’ listed above will be a similar series, to be presented in October and November, of all-time classics. This season will include La belle et la bête, which she co-stars with her husband, Yves Montand.

Montand also co-stars in another tribute film, scheduled for the middle of the year. The film is Claude Sautet’s César et Rosalie, and the tribute being paid is to Romy Schneider, for this was one of her finest years. There’s also a three-film tribute to Jean Cocteau, with Orphée, Le testament d’Orphée and La belle et la bête.

In all, a crowded but, I think, exciting programme for the year — and one I hope SBS viewers will enjoy as much as we enjoy putting it all together.

See over for picture preview and full schedule

CINEMA PAPERS January — 39
Clockwise from top left: 31 January, Le souffle au coeur, Louis Malle; 4 April, Die Blechtrommel, Volker Schlöndorff; 9 May, Kharij, Mrinal Sen; 7 February, Voskhozhdeniye, Larissa Shepitko.

Movie of the Week — 1986 schedule

27 December
La vie devant soi (Madame Rosa)/France, 1977, Moshe Mizrahi/Simone Signoret.

3 January
Police Python 357/France, 1976, Alain Corneau/Simone Signoret.

10 January
Manèges/France, 1950, Yves Allegret/Simone Signoret.

17 January
La mort en ce jardin (Death in the Garden)/France-Mexico, 1956, Luis Buñuel/Simone Signoret.

24 January
L'albero degli zoccoli (The Tree of Wooden Clogs)/Italy, 1978, Ermanno Olmi/Modern Masterpieces.

31 January
Le souffle au coeur (Murmur of the Heart)/France, 1971, Louis Malle/Modern Masterpieces.

7 February
Voskhozhdeniye (The Ascent)/USSR, 1976, Larissa Shepitko/Modern Masterpieces.

14 February

21 February
Il conformista (The Conformist)/Italy, 1970, Bernardo Bertolucci/Modern Masterpieces.

28 February
Teni zabytykh predkov (Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors)/USSR, 1964, Sergei Paradzhanov.

7 March
Una gita scolastica (A School Outing)/Italy, 1983, Pupi Avati/Funny Business.

14 March
Zil pevčij drozd (There Was a Singing Blackbird)/USSR, 1971, Otar Iosseliani/Funny Business.

21 March
Tendre poulet (Dear Inspector)/France, 1977, Philippe de Broca/Funny Business.

28 March
Balkanski spijun (The Balkan Spy)/Yugoslavia, 1984, Bozidar Nikolic and Dusan Kovacevic/Funny Business.

4 April
Die Blechtrommel (The Tin Drum)/West Germany, 1979, Volker Schlöndorff/Oscars.

11 April
Ladri di bicicletti (Bicycle Thieves)/Italy, 1948, Vittorio de Sica/Oscars.

18 April
Jungfrukällen (The Virgin Spring)/Sweden, 1959, Ingmar Bergman/Oscars.

25 April
Ostre sledavane vlaky (Closely Watched Trains)/Czechoslovakia, 1966, Jiri Menzel/Oscars.

2 May
Poussière d'empire (Dust of Empire)/Vietnam-France, 1983, Lam Le/Asia.

9 May
Kharij (The Case is Closed)/India, 1983, Mrinal Sen/Asia.

16 May
Chengnan jiushi (My Memories of Old Beijing)/China, 1983, Wu Yigong/Asia.

23 May
Insiang/Philippines, 1976, Lino Brocka/Asia.

30 May
La banquière/France, 1980, Francis Girod/Romy Schneider.

6 June
César et Rosalie/France, 1972, Claude Sautet/Romy Schneider.

13 June
Carmen/Spain, 1983, Carlos Saura.

20 June
La belle et la bête (Beauty and the Beast)/France, 1947, Jean Cocteau/Jean Cocteau.

27 June
Orphée (Orpheus)/France, 1950, Jean Cocteau; and Le testament d'Orphée (The Testament of Orpheus)/France, 1959, Jean Cocteau/Jean Cocteau.
Clockwise from top left: 19 September, Demonios en el jardín, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragon; 31 October, La grande illusion, Jean Renoir; 14 November, Schichinin no samurai, Akira Kurosawa; 10 October, La notte, Michelangelo Antonioni.

4 July Pas si méchant que ça (Not as Bad as All That)/Switzerland, 1975, Claude Goretta/Stars (Depardieu).
25 July La provinciale/Italy, 1953, Mario Soldati/Stars (Lollobrigida).
8 August Popio el diamant (Ashes and Diamonds)/Poland, 1958, Andrzej Wajda/Stars (Cybulski).
15 August La guerre est finie (The War is Over)/France, 1966, Alain Resnais/Stars (Montand).
22 August Macunaíma/Brazil, 1969, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade/Latin America.
29 August Lucia/Cuba, 1969, Humberto Solas/Latin America.
5 September El angel exterminador (The Exterminating Angel)/Mexico, 1962, Luis Buñuel/Latin America.
12 September Ani ohevet otach Rosa (I Love You Rosa)/Israel, 1972, Moshe Mizrahi.
19 September Demonios en el jardín (Demons in the Garden)/Spain, 1982, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragon.
26 September La donna della domenica (The Sunday Woman)/Italy, 1975, Luigi Comencini/Mastroianni.
3 October Cronache di poveri amanti (Story of Poor Lovers)/Italy, 1954, Carlo Lizzani/Mastroianni.
10 October La notte/Italy, 1960, Michelangelo Antonioni/Mastroianni.
24 October Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari (The Cabinet of Dr Caligari)/Germany, 1919, Robert Wiene; and Bronenosets Potemkin (The Battleship Potemkin)/USSR, 1925, Sergei Eisenstein/All-time classics.
31 October La grande illusion/France, 1937, Jean Renoir/All-time classics.
7 November Charulata/India, 1964, Satyajit Ray/All-time classics.
14 November Schichinin no samurai (Seven Samurai)/Japan, 1954, Akira Kurosawa/All-time classics.
21 November Det sjunde inseglet (The Seventh Seal)/Sweden, 1957, Ingmar Bergman/All-time classics.
5 December Davitelj protiv davitelja (Strangler vs. Strangler)/Yugoslavia, 1984, Slobodan Sijan/Funny Business 2.
19 December Ewa chce spać (Eve Wants to Sleep)/Poland, 1957, Tadeusz Chmielewski/Funny business 2.
26 December Le coup de tête/Italy, 1973, Yves Robert/Mastroianni.

The full titles of the various seasons are: Tribute to Simone Signoret; Modern Masterpieces; Funny Business; Oscar Winners; Asian Cinema; Tribute to Romy Schneider; A Genuine Original; Jean Cocteau; Great Movie Stars; Latin America; Great Actors; Marcello Mastroianni, All-Time Classics; Funny Business No 2.

The schedule is correct at time of going to press, but all film titles are subject to alteration. ★
There can be little doubt that the climate in which our two major film festivals operate is changing fast. Australia is no longer as isolated as it once was from 'the best of world cinema': SBS (as the article over the page indicates) now programmes the sort of films that were once the exclusive prerogative of the Sydney and Melbourne festivals, and there has been a significant upswing in art-house activity. Where does this leave the festivals? In danger of a lingering death, suggests Geoff Gardner, unless some major changes are made.

One of the first references to film festivals in my memory occurred in a review of the so-called 'Italian Film Festival', held at the Palais in St Kilda in the early sixties. The reviewer opened by saying that film festivals had been going downhill of late, and this collection (of four films) provided further evidence of the slide.

The fact that the 'festival' consisted of four unreleased Italian titles sitting on Columbia's shelf (including Rossellini's Vanina, Vanina) was neither here nor there; the smell of decay was apparently about, and no one was going to be fooled by external appearances.

For another decade or so, the Melbourne Film Festival could sell out 4,000 seats (at giveaway prices) in a couple of days, and David Stratton had not even arrived to build Sydney's festival into a striking event by any standards in the world (and beat off the challenge of a rival festival into the bargain).

Colin Bennett was in his element and at the peak of his influence, supporting the Melbourne festival via his columns in The Age and his television festival preview. Cannes was a rather obscure and distant event. Giorgio Mangione took his film Clay there in 1966, but, without a local industry, it was somewhat irrelevant. We occasionally heard of a short that won a prize somewhere — Tim Burstall won something or other for The Prize at Venice, which was at least a festival reported in Sight and Sound. The London festival was just starting; New York and Los Angeles didn't have one.

Melbourne and Sydney were, however, going strong, and the reasons were obvious. We had this collection of people who didn't get to see movies like these any other way. They were all members of film societies, some of which had thousands on their books.

They went to events organized by private, non-profit bodies who neither sought nor wanted government assistance. The only contact they had with the government was via the censorship authorities, who came to be hated for their intolerance, arrogance, stupidity and plain bloody-mindedness — traits that still emerge from Pitt Street, though the two festivals are no longer their victims.

From the late fifties, through the sixties and seventies, even into the eighties, Australia had at least two and sometimes more events that held out the claim to be the vanguard of modern cinema, and the sole annual repository of a collection of (mainly European) art films, culled from the primary sources of Cannes, Venice and Berlin, and the secondary sources of the pages of Sight and Sound, Films and Filming and Film Quarterly.

They were not festivals as the Europeans knew them. They were not, in the European sense, marketplaces or prize arenas. Occasionally, a film might be acquired for distribution. Other films may have been provided by local distributors as part of some pre-release campaign. Often, the latter would occur where the film was seen as 'difficult'.

The festivals had no funds for guests from overseas until the late sixties, when Josef von Sternberg and Jorn Donner were the first to arrive, followed by Satyajit Ray, Michelangelo Antonioni and a host of lesser lights. A far greater number of big names never turned up at all, despite considerable effort. Discussion was confined to the foyer, or the Acland Street and Rose Bay cafes.

Our whole perception of 'current cinema' was distorted by ineffectual distribution monopolies and tasteless exhibition, with the dreaded censors playing their abysmal part by banning films of the quality of Viridiana or A bout de souffle (Breathless). For a while, we thought Philippe de Broca was a major figure in the French new wave.

The emphasis at the festivals remained doggedly on the Europeans. Asia may have had a small representation, America (North and South) something somewhere. As well, of course, the well-crafted narrative was predominant, pre-eminent and predictable.

While I don't wish to apportion blame, work being widely discussed elsewhere was ignored here. We saw no Fassbinder until Der Händler der vier Jahreszeiten (Merchant of the Four Seasons, 1971), no Straub ever, no Warhol ever (the 'first' being Paul Morrissey's Trash, 1970), no Brakhage, no Hollis Frampton, or Raul Ruiz, or Marguerite Duras, or Jonas Mekas, or dozens of others, during the desperate search for narrative.

The festivals provided a feast of Fellini, Szabo and Wajda, and occasional brilliant years when films by Belloccchio, Bertolucci, Skolimowski, Delvaux and Jancso were all screened for the first time. But those years stood out like granny's tooth.
But, before I nostalge away completely, let me explain why I have started with this elaborate preamble. Two things happened in the seventies. First, Australians started making films, and discovered that festivals were international marketplaces. And, with the decline in American and British production, more imaginative programming of the cinemas started to occur.

Just as filmmakers discovered Cannes at last, so did a plethora of independent distributors and exhibitors. The reducing cost of international air fares played its part as well, making new productions available more quickly than before. We finally accepted as the norm that a new European film would open here commercially one or even two years after its European release or, worse, a year or so after its London or New York opening.

Distribution practices started to give festivals their first tendency towards irrelevance. If the major European art films of the year were not available, then the festivals were willing to decide that minor films might do. From a desire to present a broad international perspective, the festivals often took rubbish from certain countries, and tokens from others.

However, the view was taken — and, to a degree, still is — that the festivals need to ensure they are the first to present a range of new narrative productions (predominantly from Europe), in order to maintain a pre-eminent cultural position.

Summarized, it appears that festival managements continue to believe their major purpose to be the premiere presentation of new films by major filmmakers (in the best possible conditions) to a group of subscribers who, although diminishing, remain willing to pay for this so-called privilege. All other aspects of the festivals' activities remain secondary to this purpose.

The fact that this practice is increasingly unimportant and irrelevant to those whose subscriptions were formerly able to sustain the activity, is still not being addressed. We are aware of the rise in art-house activity. SBS TV has provided a comfortable additional source. There have been a range of lateral solutions suggested for the problems this view creates, most notably the resort to private and public sector funding; but few have addressed themselves to whether the festivals are now small dinosaurs in a shrinking swamp while, around them, the land warms up and dries out an area they once moved in.

There have been responses to these new imperatives. The attempt has continued to be made, as it has in London, New York and Los Angeles, to provide a sprinkling showcase of new productions shortly to be released in the art cinemas. This year in Melbourne, for instance, Birdy, Dance with a Stranger, Insignificance, Heimat, Broken Mirrors, Blood Simple, Repo Man and Full Moon in Paris went into release after the festival. Some went into release almost immediately after their festival screening. The industry continues to be attached — rightly — to the idea that a festival audience may provide good word-of-mouth after a screening, particularly now that the audience represents only a tiny proportion of those who might choose to see the film.

My suggestions as to a way out of this situation would be several. If we are to continue to have at least one organization devoted to a generalist view of current world cinema, then, to ensure its survival and provide it with the largest possible audience, there is a need for a truly national organization, presenting its programme throughout the land. Sydney's festival contains the seeds for this development, via the resource it has, and its proven success with the Travelling Film Festival. To go further may well mean abandoning the FIAPF proscription on presentation and developing a national network. This would involve government support, a degree of (financial) co-operation with commercial distributors, the SBS and, if it ever gets beyond muttering phrases about cultural activity, the ABC.

Such an event would free up resources for more specialist local efforts — one which might serve a national community ready to travel for the purposes of seeing, meeting and discussing. This development would also require public sector support from such bodies as the AFC, the National Film and Sound Archive, State Film Centres, and those currently presenting programmes and events which lack perspective and co-ordination, and have a tendency to overlap.

Without the sense of a national view, and without efficiently allocating what are likely to become, in the post-Whitlam era, ever more limited resources, the festivals stand a chance of fading away as a result of benign but misguided policies that seek to maintain a vanishing idea/ideal.
Sticking to the ley-lines

The Right-Hand Man puts people before period

It was the day the horses got it on. Now, filmmaking is a stop-go affair at the best of times, but waiting for a mare and a stallion to mate—especially when, after an hour or so, the mare is thoroughly pissed off and won’t even look at the stallion—seemed to be a new one for the crew of Yarram’s The Right-Hand Man, shooting at Abercrombie House, just outside Bathurst, in New South Wales.

Nor was it an easy day for Jennifer Clarke, who plays Lady Ironminster, mother of one of the film’s two heroes. She has to lead the stallion, which is tethered to a wooden stall, stop, then deliver a line. It’s a complicated set-up, with the camera starting in close on the mare, then tracking back to frame Lady Ironminster and the stallion as one horse rears on its farrier coaching accident.

At first, the mare shies at the sudden camera movement, and the wrangler has to keep coming back into shot to calm her. Once that is sorted out, the stallion begins to edge round between Lady I and the camera, right on cue, each time she tries to deliver her line. The director, the DOP, the wrangler and the mare remain unruffled, but Lady I and the stallion are getting a little edgy.

It is the opening scene in Yarram’s $5 million historical feature, for UA Films and Greater Union. Based on a novel by Katherine Perrin (who wrote the book while he was playing one of the leads in Flambards — Captain Mark Russell (‘the shit,’ Grives explains helpfully).

“Surrogacy,” he says, “is something that has been found since the Bible. But, if you take the novel’s theme of one man dependent on another man’ — losing an arm in a coach-racing accident, Henry Iron­minster (Rupert Everett) is obliged to rely on young Ned Devine (Hugo Weaving) to drive his racing phaeton, the High Flyer — ‘and follow it all the way through, then you get what we’ve got today.’

Both Grives and Appleby stress that this is a people story first, and a period piece second. “When Steve said, ‘Read the script,’ says Appleby, ‘I thought, ‘Boy, this is something rather special.’” Grives, however, it is the period setting that makes the story work.

“Three years ago, I was told: ‘Set it around boats and cars, not horses’ I said, ‘Fine! if that’s your story, you do it!’ But, actually, you can’t, because surrogacy nowadays is done with that.” He makes an imaginary syringe — “and there’s a big difference between a doctor putting Basil’s sperm into a woman, and Basil actually, er, touching it in with the husband just down the road, which is what happens here.’

Director Di Drew, 36 years old, ex-ABC and with previous credits that include co­directorship of the miniseries ‘Surrogacy,’ he says, “is fascinated above all by the emotional tensions that the surrogacy issue raises. ‘It’s a high drama, the film has a certain pitch, which is risk-taking. It’s not about being careful. It’s about confronting emotions, and you’re either right or wrong. There’s no in-between, no middle ground’.”

Any suggestion that this sounds a little like melodrama elicits an immediate and eloquent reply from Drew: “Aaaahhnh!” It also nearly ends the interview, because melodrama lumps out to be what the ABC is being accused of turning down the project. But the kind of all-out approach that characterized the great screen melodramas is obviously what Drew is after. “Why play down the degree of what’s happening?” she asks.

“You might as well go after it and try to achieve it.”

Going after things also characterizes Grives’s approach to the externals of The Right-Hand Man. “What we were after was an eccentric British estate, which you could pick up and put down again in Surrey or Yorkshire. But, on the edges of that, you have Australia, always gaining, gazing.”

He has certainly found the eccentricity. Abercrombie House is the sort of building that has gone from inspired Victorian design to national treasure without ever passing through beauty. Built, like much of the surrounding area, in a kind of stone edgy.

“Not a gum tree in sight. Hill End is exactly the point of whacking kangaroos into the middle of the main street.”

Grives, working with his regular art director, Nic Hepworth, construction manager Ken Hazelwood and scenic artist Billi Malcolm, is reconstructing the place from photographs. “The feeling we’re after is definitely not Five Mile Creek,” he says. “I’m hoping it will have the atmosphere, not of buster movies and gold-mining films, but of what a rural town was like in those days.”

The other piece of reconstruction is even more awesome: the Cobb and Co ‘Leviathan’ coach, which young Ned Devine is driving when Harry Ironminster first spots him. That too, is taken from pictures. And, built by engineer Mike Hendricks for $110,000, it looks more solid than anything currently on the road, steamrollers included. Its capacity — on top, inside and on the back (depending on status) — is a staggering 89 people. Like most other things about The Right-Hand Man, it has a solid and reliable feel to it. The ley-lines may help; but, as of early November, the production didn’t really seem to need them.
The Birdsville crew had just returned from a month on location in the far-west New South Wales town of Bourke, and, on this particular Monday afternoon in Sydney, seemed in exceptionally high spirits.

Formerly known as The Trailblazer, Birdsville is the first theatrical feature from PBL, and Carl Schultz is directing from a screenplay by Robert Wale, with additional dialogue by Bob Ellis.

The subject is basically that of an outdoor adventure, set in the eighteen-nineties. But Schultz is emphasizing the comic possibilities inherent in the tale of a young adventurer, Harry Walford, who decides to "borrow" 1,500 head of cattle and, accompanied by his mate Bluey, drive them 2,000 miles from Roma in Queensland to Adelaide.

The Roma scenes were filmed at Bourke, with production designer Gordon Liddle overseeing the construction of the town at the local showground. On the Monday afternoon in question, Sydney's Rocks area was doubling for a main street in Adelaide.

Permission to close off part of George Street had obviously not been all that easy to obtain: the work had to be done on a Monday, buses had to be allowed passage, and it all had to be carried out as fast as possible. Some 30 extras were costumed under the watchful eye of Liddle (who is also the costume designer); shop fronts had been slightly modified, with a souvenir shop doubling as a dress shop, Mrs Overton's Quality Ladies' Outfitters, and a tobacconist as a P & O ticket office. The Rocks branch of the Bank of NSW needed no modification: it could pass muster in its present form.

The first scene to be shot was one of the film's heroines, Lily, finding a magnificent dress in the milliner's shop. Lily is played by a newcomer, eighteen-year-old Kathryn Walker, who was studying architecture and helping pay for it by doing some modelling when she was spotted by a casting agent.

Her only previous acting experience was in high-school plays, but Schultz seems to be delighted with her easy-going unassuming nature. The scene is shot from both outside and inside the shop, and within an astonishingly short space of time both Schultz and director of photography Dean Semler are satisfied with the results.

The next shot, of Harry and Bluey walking into the P & O office, requires two cameras. During the setting-up period, Semler talks about the use of Super Techniscope on this film (Brian Trenchard-Smith also used it on Dead-End Drive-In).

The system, says Semler, allows the film to be shot widescreen without the use of an anamorphic lens, which is a requisite of the Panavision system. Semler seems very satisfied with the depth of field he has seen in the rushes so far.

According to Schultz, the rather naive young couple at the centre of the film are the only ones taking the adventure seriously. For everyone else, action and characters are a bit larger than life.

In the role of Harry, Schultz has cast another newcomer — though Paul Goddard, unlike his leading lady, has had formal training as an actor, having graduated from NIDA in 1984 and appeared in a small role in Stephen Wallace's For Love Alone.

Harry's mate, Bluey, should give John Wood a meaty comic sidekick role, while other parts are being taken by John Meillon, Bruce Spence, Paul Chubb and Kerry Walker, the latter playing the madame of an Adelaide brothel.

The cameras are quickly set up and a stream of buses passes by. Then, it's "Action!" and, in no time at all (it seems), two more shots are in the can. Four successful set-ups in only one and a half hours, seemingly effortlessly achieved. No wonder producer Brian Rosen, who has dropped by for a progress report, is smiling.

A few days later, at the Mort Bay studios in Balmain, Schultz is shooting a scene from late in the film in which Harry and Bluey rescue Lily from the aforementioned brothel.

Again, Liddle's meticulous production design is apparent — a magnificent brothel set with red velvet wallpaper and a multitude of candles — as is the relaxed way that Schultz goes about extracting humour from a rather corny situation.

"I'm taking a bit of a chance with this," he admits during a break in the proceedings. "But there were some who felt that he was going over the top with the full-blooded melodrama of Careful, He Might Hear You, and, apart from Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome, that was Australia's last major critical and commercial success. Goodbye Paradise also had its extreme moments, and Schultz obviously delights in going just as far as he can with his material, indicating a gutsy approach all too rare in this country.

Kerry Walker, as the outraged brothel madame, is almost unrecognizable in a tightly-fitted dress and wig. Extras and crews fall about with laughter as Schultz and his principal actors dream up funny bits of business, while a honky-tonk piano tinkles away in the background.

One thing is certain: if cinema audiences derive as much fun from watching Birdsville as Schultz and his team have evidently been making it, it should be a rewarding experience. ★
Other people's children

2 Friends helps kick off the 1986 season of ABC telemovies

Filming stopped temporarily in the double-storey terrace house in Sydney's inner-city suburb of Newtown. The budget — affectionately known as Jonathan but currently being addressed by a variety of other names — stood obstinately still. Ignoring the coaxing of two of his leading ladies (Emma Coles and Kris McQuade), the ileas of director Jane Campion and the impatience of the crew, Jonathan steadfastly refused to perform his close-up.

In the previous shot, Coles and McQuade, playing the teenager Louise and her divorced mother, Janet, had been whiling away a Christmas morning in their lounge room amid the amiable clutter of presents, wrapping paper and a precarious tree. Louise's friend, Kelly (Kris Bidenko), had visited briefly, exchanged gifts and then left to rejoin her family, who were waiting outside in the battered Holden station wagon.

Campion had shot the scene with a static wide-shot and Jonathan, relishing his spot in the background, had executed an array of acrobatics from his perch, using a stray piece of curting as a prop. Seizing on the apparently talented animal to symbolize the festive spirit, Campion had asked director of photography Julian Penney to zoom in on the bird in action. But Jonathan refused to repeat his antics, blowing his opportunity for extra pay from a bit-part to a featured role in the ABC telemovie, 2 Friends.

The second off the rank for the 1986 season of telemovies — the first being The Book of Athuan, produced and directed by Alan Burke — 2 Friends is a project that unites a disproportionately high number of talented women.

Produced by Jan Chapman, who was involved in the innovative Sweet and Sour series and the soon-to-be-screened (and equally adventurous) mini-series, Dancing Daze, 2 Friends marks the first attempt by author Helen Garner to write a screenplay for television. As Chapman notes, the past two seasons of telemovies have provided "a chance for writers and directors who don't normally work in television to express themselves in the medium." A quick roll-call of the initiates does reveal an impressive line-up of talent: Alex Buzo, Louis Nowra, Ken Cameron, Kathy Mueller and now Jane Campion, whose short films, Peel, A Girl's Own Story and Passionless Moments, have won considerable acclaim from film festival audiences in Melbourne and Sydney. Complementing the trio at the helm are first assistant Kate Woods and designer Janet Patterson.

Garner's screenplay is essentially a story of friendship between two teenage girls, who experience several trials that test their loyalty to each other and their individual priorities. Campion believes that the perceptive eye for the details of domestic life that distinguish Garner's books will also be evident in the telemovie. "It's got a very stylish casualness, but the thing that I really like is that Helen has a very fresh feel for detail, she frames ordinary things in a way that makes them look fresh and immediate."

To tone in with Garner's style, two key decisions have been made. Firstly, the narrative will cover five time periods, from October 1984 to July 1985, but the film will open in July 1985. Like the film Betrayal (1982), it will be told backwards. Campion agrees that the concept was initially confusing to work with. "You probably hear us saying 'Now, where are we again, October or July?' It took me a while to get my head around the idea that going backwards is going forwards at the same time."

The second decision was one of tone. "We felt that it should have a style of its own," she explains, "much more like a tableau than is traditional for television: a static camera sitting back and observing; a lot of wide shots and playing with keeping the frame, and letting people move in and out of it." Visually, Chapman likens it to the style adopted by Jim Jarmusch for Stranger Than Paradise.

Choosing this style does place greater demands on the cast, however, and in this case, may have constituted something of a risk, as neither of the leads has had much previous television or film experience.

Kris Bidenko, playing the more flamboyant of the two girls, met the director while working on After Hours. Campion's 30-minute drama for the Women's Film Unit, and was chosen to play Kelly on the basis of that work. After Chapman and Campion had conducted days of auditions for the part of Louise, they found Coles, whose only previous TV experience was a commercial for Lancome.

Far from jeopardizing the style of camerawork, Campion believes that their relative inexperience has been an asset. "They make it work," she explains. "If they were too experienced, they'd be hitting marks too much, they'd lose the sense of idle curiosity that they tend to. And anyway, it's ridiculous to consider them anything but professional. They have been from the beginning. They always have their lines down, and there is no difference in their behaviour on set, except that perhaps they sometimes get a little more emotional than adults."

As Campion is describing Coles and Bidenko, they are occupying time between set-ups, huddled together on the narrow staircase, alternately giggling at and berating a recent issue of 60 magazine unveiled by another crew member. Coles, who had her shoulder-length blonde hair cut and dyed to look like the Louise that Campion envisaged, describes her character as 'very sensible'. "She's not very interested in boys and she doesn't take drugs."

As her divorced mother, Kris McQuade adds that Louise is "probably more disciplined than I am. She's got the vegie garden, she probably does most of the washing up and a lot of the cooking. McQuade is relishing her role, though many of her friends, remembering Fighting Back and the award-winning performance in Palace of Dreams, reacted to it with, 'Oh, you're playing another mum!'

With Janet, however, McQuade has found a soul mate. 'She's great,' she enthuses, 'she's a career woman. The other mothers that I've played have been the victims of the western suburbs. This time, I'm an independent woman. It's great, Louise is more sensitive and, through her sensibility, I get to be more flighty. I get to play more of a child and Louise gets to reprimand me more as the mother.'

Backing up the female leads is a strong team of actors in supporting roles, including Peter Hein, Tony Barry and Steve Bailey. "The male parts are actually quite small," Chapman explains, "but Jane and I wrote to the actors saying, 'These are small parts, but we think you're terrific', and they took them!"

The atmosphere on set resembles that depicted in the house-cluttered, casual and relaxed. The crew seem at ease with each other, comfortable in the confined space. "They're a very special crew," Chapman notes. "They shot Scales of Justice and, since then, they've done most of the tele­movies. It's a small, ten-person crew and they are very committed. They dedicatedly come to rushes and they involve themselves in the concept. I think it has to do with making the tele­movies with such different directors. In a sense, they have to be the continuity, it hasn't been the producers."

It seems that the telemovies will become an annual feature of ABC production. Varying dramatically in style, tone, content and even quality, the past two seasons have indeed provided a transfusion of new blood for the ABC, and the third batch promises to do the same. "It's very exciting," Chapman asserts. "I firmly believe that we should be doing things that the commercial stations don't do. And, frankly, it's what keeps one working for the ABC."

★

1 Friends: right, Kris Bidenko (left) and Emma Coles as Kelly and Louise. Below, Kris McQuade as Louise's mum, Janet.
The Cinema Papers Production Survey

A full listing of the features, telemovies, documentaries and shorts now in pre-production, production or post-production in Australia.

THE BEETLE (working title)

Prod. company.......................... Daedalus Films Pty Ltd

Producer................................. John Jacob

Director.................................. George Ogilvie

Editor...................................... Hilary Fung

Assoc. producer........................ Trudy Willig

Based on the unpublished short story by........ Jane Hyde

Budget................................... $2,478,561

SYNOPSIS: Dot and her friends team up for a musical special which features a "live" star performer.

PRODUCERS

Help us make this Production complete as possible. If you have something which is about to go into pre-production, production or post-production, let us know and we will make sure it is included.

CINEMA PAPERS January — 47
SYNOPSIS: The true story of the trials and tribulations of Australia's greatest criminal, who fell from grace as a result of World War II. The film is set in prehistoric Australia. The story is about a criminal who must fabricate a convincing world trip — in his own backyard.

THE STEAM DRIVEN ADVENTURES OF RIVERBOAT BILL

Production company: Yoram Gross

Director of animation: Ray Nowland

Director of photography: Graham Sharp

Scriptwriter: Greg Flynn

Art dept runner: Rowan McKenzie

Best boy: Nicky Payne

Set decorator: Sue Hall

Set decorator assistant: Andrea Hood

Carpenters: Brenton Gray, Steve Becker, John Kerr, Hamish Hughes, Beats Horrison

Props maker: Kim Hilder

Props buyer: David McKay

Wardrobe: Robyn McDonald

Ward, assistant: Judy Howieson

Painting & tracing: Robyn Drayton, Mimi Inal, Judy Howieson, Jan Stephen, Mary Hann, Gray Forsyth, Frantz and Friends, Grahame Razi

Catering: In Vogue Catering

Runner: Stephen Barbour

1st asst director: Ross Hamilton

2nd asst director: Jake Atkinson

3rd asst director: Christine King

Asst grip: Rourke Crawford-Flett

Electrician: Daniel Flowers

Electrician's assistant: Steven French

Make-up: Violette Fontaine

Ward, assistant: Andrea Hood

2nd unit photography: Wilf Watters

Prod. company: Yoram Gross

Prod. accountants: Libay de la Cruz, Erik Bierens

Prod. secretary: Catherine Bishop

Prod, assistant: Janette Deason

Prod. accountant: Brian Tucker

Prod, secretary: Perry Stapleton

Prod, assistant: Megan Killenn

Prod, accountants: Libay de la Cruz, Erik Bierens

Prod. company: Skreba Productions

Prod. company: Yoram Gross

Prod. company: David Hanney (Australia)

Prod. company: David Hanney Productions

Prod. company: Australian Institute of Entertainment Pty Ltd

Dist. company: Cori Films Inc.

Length: 97 minutes

Budget: $5.5 million

Shooting stock: Eastman

Gauge: 35 mm

Production Survey
likely hero who overcomes hardship, emerges triumphant and, in the process, learns the value of true friendship.

Based on the original idea by

CINEMA PAPERS


dead-end drive

Pro company: Springfield Productions
Producer: Andrew Strudwick
Co-producer: Sharon Kean
Scriptwriter: John Dickson
Sound editor:...
COMPOSERS: GARRY MCDONALD - LAURIE STONE

Credits Include:

- "Taurus Rising" T.V. Series
- "The Little Fella" Telefeature
- "Air Hawk" Telefeature
- "Outbreak of Hostilities" Telefeature
- "Second Time Lucky" Feature
- "The Flying Doctors" T.V. Mini-Series
- "Robbery Under Arms" Feature
- "The Henderson Kids" T.V. Series
- "Butterfly Island" T.V. Series
- "Playing Beatie Bow" Feature
- "I Love With Me Dad" Feature
- "Coopers Crossing" T.V. Series
- "The Far Country" T.V. Mini-Series

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Production Survey

Production:

SYDNEY — A CENTRE FOR SUBMARINE CONSTRUCTION

Producer: Tony Wilson Productions Producer: Tony Wilson
Director: John Joyce
Director: John Joyce
Editor: Ross Wilson
Editor: Ross Wilson
Sound recordist: Marcus Adler
Sound recordist: Marcus Adler
Art director: Graham Yule
Art director: Graham Yule
Scriptwriter: Ian Adkins
Scriptwriter: Ian Adkins

THE MAGIC OF CRICKET

Producer: The South Pole Producer: The South Pole
Scriptwriter: Stephen Powell
Scriptwriter: Stephen Powell
Director: Graham Chase
Director: Graham Chase
Editor: Alvin de Quincey
Editor: Alvin de Quincey
Sound recordist: Bronwyn Murphy
Sound recordist: Bronwyn Murphy

SHERBY’S PARTY

Producer: Australian Film Commission Producer: Australian Film Commission
Director: Damien Parer Director: Damien Parer
Editor: Liz Stroud
Editor: Liz Stroud

SPRITS

Producer: Meanigful Eye Producer: Meanigful Eye
Director: Peter Lawless Director: Peter Lawless
Editor: John Barker
Editor: John Barker
Sound recordist: Peter Miller
Sound recordist: Peter Miller

GETTING STRAIGHT

Producer: Film Australia Producer: Film Australia
Director: Tom Haydon Director: Tom Haydon
Editor: John Barker
Editor: John Barker
Sound recordist: Bronwyn Murphy
Sound recordist: Bronwyn Murphy

GOVERNMENT FILM PRODUCTION

FILM AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN INNOVATION

Producer: Film Australia Producer: Film Australia
Director: Elizabeth Knight Director: Elizabeth Knight
Editor: Bronwyn Murphy
Editor: Bronwyn Murphy
Sound recordist: John Barker
Sound recordist: John Barker

INTEREST RESTORATION AND DECORATION

Producer: Film Australia Producer: Film Australia
Director: Ariva Zagler Director: Ariva Zagler
Editor: John Barker
Editor: John Barker
Sound recordist: Bronwyn Murphy
Sound recordist: Bronwyn Murphy

52 — January CINEMA PAPERS
Production Survey

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- Sword of Honour
- Lancaster Miller
- The More Things Change
- Crocodile Dundee
- Archer

PRIME TIME

Pro. company: Crawford Productions
Producer: Lex Van Os
Director: David Rapsey
Sound producers: Terry Stapleton, Shaun Egan
Screenplay: Peter Herbert
Camera: Steve Turner
Editor: Ken Eastway
Production manager: Rick Thompson
Contact: Michael Lacy

SYNOPSIS: In Between is a four-part tele-

Production

Exec. producer: Ray Beatrice
Laboratory: Atlas
Design: John Marsh
Cast: Matthew Pfeiffer (Jim Wilson), Mary Kay

THE LAST FRONTIER

Prod. company: A Production
Dist. companies: Ten Network,

Production

Exec. producer: Ten Sanders
Director: Brian Douglas
Screenwriter: Michael Laurence
Based on the original idea

Contact: David Suttor
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“star” — sharp and aggressive. We watch

“The series is about the pressure on them, the
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Laboratory: Atlas
Design: John Marsh
Cast: Matthew Pfeiffer (Jim Wilson), Mary Kay

THE LAST FRONTIER

Prod. company: A Production
Dist. companies: Ten Network,
**GOING ON THE RUN**

**Prod. company:** Federation Film Co., Ltd.
**Prod. manager:** J. H. Broadbent
**Director:** Peter Collings
**Production manager:** David O'Donnell
**Casting:** Leslie Jones
**Prod. secretaries:** C. J. Simms, Pamela Goodwin
**Casting secretary:** Sally Gray

**Synopsis:** A group of convicts escape from prison and flee to a holiday camp for city children — they are hungry and want to rob fruit trees and caves to explore and, of all, very hungry. Their camp is surrounded by a snake that is searching for a long lost form of salt. The salt power is required for the world's minerals. The names and locations of these minerals have been engraved on the bodies of some of the convicts and hidden in the area around Silent Valley. With the help of Alistair, who is a construction worker on a road building project, they hatch the idea of "self" are concepts not often pre­

**HAUNDED**

**Prod. company:** Queensland Film Co., Ltd.
**Prod. manager:** David Jameson
**Director:** J. T. Hurst
**Production manager:** Dudley Wills
**Casting:** M. E. Kingsley
**Prod. secretaries:** M. E. Brown, B. J. West

**Synopsis:** The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel. The programme doesn't just taste, it is fuel.
**SKIN**

Production Survey

Make-up/hairdresser: Jose Perez
Gaffer: Lindsay Foote
Boom operator: Phil Keros
Casting: Lee Lamer
Focus puller: Brian Breheny
Assoc, producer: David Hannay
Prod, office attachment: Debbie Saffir
Composer: Bernadette Harvey
Camera assistant: Renee Romer

**THE LOCAL RAG**

Prod company: ABC TV
Director: Clive Hawkes
Writer: Kevin Hanchett
Producer: Ivan Strathie
Scen: John Styn
Editor: David Ryan
Sound design: Don Robertson

**THE LAST WARHORSE**

Prod company: Windswept
Dist company: JNP Films Pty Ltd
Director: Bob Meillon
Writer: Mark Dawber
Producers: Fiona Reilly, George Weiss
Prod co-ordinator: Greg Apps
Composer: Bernadette Harvey
Editor: John Dutton
Sound editor: Gerry Bell
Lab. liaison: Richard Piorkowski

**QUEST FOR HEALING**

Prod company: Watermark Productions
Dist company: Independent Productions
Producer: Richard Davis
Director: Fiona St John
Writer: William McRae-Davies
Prod designer: Lyndall Callander
Camera operator: John Mark
Focus puller: Tim Smith
Boom operators: Ian Wilson, Mark Dawber
Grip: Grahame Litchfield

**MOTHER AND SON**

Prod company: ABC TV
Dist company: ABC TV
Director: Geoff Fordham
Writer: JG Reilly
Producer: Mark Conaghan
Prod designer: Laurence Eastwood
Camera operator: Jan Kenny
Focus puller: Peter Ledgway
Boom operator: Ian Wilson
Sound design: Don Robertson

**OUTSIDE IN**

Prod company: Quest Films
Dist company: JNP Films Pty Ltd
Writer: Mark Dawber
Prod designer: Greg Apps
Composer: Bernadette Harvey
Editors: John Dutton, Brian Sandwell
Sound editor: Garry Bell
Lab. liaison: Richard Piorkowski

**RETURNO TO EDEN**

Prod company: Eden Productions
Dist company: Independent Distributors
Producer: Marc Adams
Director: Ross Harris
Writer: William McRae-Davies
Prod designer: Lyndall Callander
Camera operator: John Mark
Focus puller: Tim Smith
Boom operators: Ian Wilson, Mark Dawber
Grip: Grahame Litchfield

**SKIN**

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While the emphasis at IREECON is on broadcast electronics, the Convention also provides an opportunity to look at some of the recent developments in film and television technology, especially in the support areas of programme production, audio and lighting equipment. What follows is a brief summary of some of the items that caught my attention as being significant.

But before getting on to that, it is worth noting some very sophisticated software-hardware packages designed for radio and TV newsrooms, that accept stories sent from the field by modem from the reporter's portable computer, such as a Tanyc Model 100. This allows the news editor to see the material and then arrange it in a large-type, auto-due format for the on-line radio or newspaper. The news editor can select from all the on-line wire services as well, and need never put pen or typewriter to paper. The saving in time and the reduced handling of information is considerable.

In the film and video areas, the most dramatic event was the display of the Sony HDVS (high-definition video) system. I had, in fact, been lucky enough to see the Sony gear demonstrated at AAV some days before IREECON. AAV supplied the first Australian high-definition programme material in the form of a video clip with Wendy Stapleton and Peter Sullivan, performing in the studio and on various locations around Melbourne. Volk Mol was the director of photography, and the technical results were breathtaking, with images that, on the large-screen video projector, approached the resolution of 35mm film.

The Sony high-definition system is one of the most developed of all the television experiments. It achieves high-quality results by increasing the number of scan-lines in the broadcast image. Our PAL television format has 625 individual lines; the Sony increases this to 1125. As this is not compatible with current world broadcast formats, and the SMPTE is still trying to finalize a standard for high-definition, the Sony system has been designed to allow the best quality video image obtainable to be down-converted to a PAL, or NTSC standard, or to a 35mm printer via an electron-beam.

To enhance the comparison with film, the screen format is wider than that of 35mm, and, although the quality from the screen monitor looked good, it was on projection that the extra information on the wider ratio was most noticeable. The reason was that the special Trinitron monitors are limited physically by the mechanics of the tube design and the mask. The video projector, with its three tubes, does not have a physical limitation. And, in the 2.5m-wide screen, there are no scanlines noticeable at a normal viewing distance.

The implications are important for the future of theatrical film. Effects could be done on video — with the immediacy that that entails — and the result transferred to film for integration with conventional film footage. A number of directors, including George Lucas and Francis Ford Coppola, have used the system, and it will only be a year or so before it is used for a complete feature or a part of one.
the time-code functions. I've got our options required. The computer is powerful $45-50,000," says Chris. "The price footage library. We give the clients a cassette with a displayed time-code number, and they tell us where the shot starts. We then type the time-code number in along with an identifying roll number, and it gives us the scene and the edge number.

"We have avoided adding any other edge-number-matching functions to the programme," she says, "because I believe that it is a very long way to go about making a film. And all the extra handling that is required makes it extremely expensive. Our system is purely a film-to-tape one, that gives you the flexibility to re-cut scenes because you are transferring whole takes.

AEC has also released the list-management part of the software programme from their edit system. For about $950, it allows you to enter and edit a time-code list manually on any CP/M-based computer (an MS-DOS version will be available shortly). All the usual list features are available.

AEC then offer an overnight service where you can send the list information to them by modem, and they will courier an answer by the next working day. It costs $25 for a full service.

Mr Tiptop were showing their new 8mm semi-professional VCR, the Model 20 fluid head, and a compact tripod. It is designed for lightweight ENG cameras up to 8 kg (18 lbs), the "Take two-camera, but suitable for the lighter own design. Aimed at the small video production house, or film editing houses with their own design. Aimed at the small video production house, or film editing houses with it's now a fashionable grey — and will accept a 30-volt 250w lamp for hand-held grip stand or battery or camera-mounted use.

The Model 20 costs about $23,000 (more for a Miller tripods were showing their new tripod now looks more like the European style. The Model 20 has a built-in counterbalance system to correct nose/tail heavy charges them if required, then fast- or slow- the mini-VHS format disk to you

JVC's VHS editing recorder, an inexpensive way to assemble off-line editing gear. The lay-out of the machine is purely a film-to-tape one, that gives a number of heads and camera support systems, including their Merlin camera crane. Fitted with a video camera, its control and flexibility were impressive. Reasonably priced, on tripod legs it costs about $32,000 (more for a pedestal mount). TNS have a Merlin, and it is interesting to see that Vinten have always been a TV supplier, because the Merlin would be a perfect crane for film - work on the table-top or special-effect commercials.

Another UK company exhibiting was Polar Video, a small video equipment distributor with a number of products of their own design, including a 16mm editing house, or film editing houses with offline video installations, the equipment on display included the Liftroy time-code Insertor TC-1 ($1490). This is a low-cost way to read longitudinal time-code and insert it into the video information in a window area that can be variably positioned. The device could act as a time-code reader for edit suites, but is also being promoted as an off-line unit.

Among the Polar Video-designed equipment was a clever non-digital method of horizontally moving and locking a video frame so that titles, etc, can be repositioned. The picture can also be moved vertically, but in that mode the output cannot be recorded as a static frame. The PPM 1 Picture Mover costs about $2,680, and comes in a standard 19" rack-mount with a remote-control joystick.

For $490, Polar have a safe-area generator that displays a superimposed cutline border of title, safe area, title with adjustable horizontal line, and safe area with centre cross-hair. Powered from the ENG video cameras or from mains, the device draws 130mA and weighs 375 g.

Polar Vision were demonstrating their range of lighting and grid systems, and had the news that Lee Filters have bought into Colourtron in the UK, which gives them wider sales outlets and extra industry involvement. The nrmsg will not work here, but the equipment will be known as Lee Colourtron in the UK.

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Mr Tiptop were showing their new 8mm semi-professional VCR, the Model 20 fluid head, and a compact tripod. It is designed for lightweight ENG cameras up to 8 kg (18 lbs), the "Take two-camera, but suitable for the lighter own design. Aimed at the small video production house, or film editing houses with their own design. Aimed at the small video production house, or film editing houses with it's now a fashionable grey — and will accept a 30-volt 250w lamp for hand-held grip stand or battery or camera-mounted use.

The Model 20 costs about $23,000 (more for a Miller tripods were showing their new tripod now looks more like the European style. The Model 20 has a built-in counterbalance system to correct nose/tail heavy charges them if required, then fast- or slow- the mini-VHS format disk to you

JVC's VHS editing recorder, an inexpensive way to assemble off-line editing gear. The lay-out of the machine is purely a film-to-tape one, that gives a number of heads and camera support systems, including their Merlin camera crane. Fitted with a video camera, its control and flexibility were impressive. Reasonably priced, on tripod legs it costs about $32,000 (more for a pedestal mount). TNS have a Merlin, and it is interesting to see that Vinten have always been a TV supplier, because the Merlin would be a perfect crane for film - work on the table-top or special-effect commercials.

Another UK company exhibiting was Polar Video, a small video equipment distributor with a number of products of their own design, including a 16mm editing house, or film editing houses with offline video installations, the equipment on display included the Liftroy time-code Insertor TC-1 ($1490). This is a low-cost way to read longitudinal time-code and insert it into the video information in a window area that can be variably positioned. The device could act as a time-code reader for edit suites, but is also being promoted as an off-line unit.

Among the Polar Video-designed equipment was a clever non-digital method of horizontally moving and locking a video frame so that titles, etc, can be repositioned. The picture can also be moved vertically, but in that mode the output cannot be recorded as a static frame. The PPM 1 Picture Mover costs about $2,680, and comes in a standard 19" rack-mount with a remote-control joystick.

For $490, Polar have a safe-area generator that displays a superimposed cutline border of title, safe area, title with adjustable horizontal line, and safe area with centre cross-hair. Powered from the ENG video cameras or from mains, the device draws 130mA and weighs 375 g.

Polar Vision were demonstrating their range of lighting and grid systems, and had the news that Lee Filters have bought into Colourtron in the UK, which gives them wider sales outlets and extra industry involvement. The nrmsg will not work here, but the equipment will be known as Lee Colourtron in the UK.

AEC then offer an overnight service where you can send the list information to them by modem, and they will courier an answer by the next working day. It costs $25 for a full service.

Mr Tiptop were showing their new 8mm semi-professional VCR, the Model 20 fluid head, and a compact tripod to match. Designed for lightweight ENG video cameras, but suitable for the lighter 16mm cameras up to 8 kg (18 lbs), the AEC have also released the list-management part of the software programme from their edit system. For about $950, it allows you to enter and edit a time-code list manually on any CP/M-based computer (an MS-DOS version will be available shortly). All the usual list features are available.

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REBEL

The same logic that it took for Kathy, Don and Cosmo to turn *The Dwelling Cavalier* into *The Dancing Cavalier in Slingin’* in *The Rain* might well have been used to turn Bob Herbert’s play, *No Names... No Packdrill*, into the romantic musical, *Rebel*. You change the main character from a postal worker into a singer in an all-girl band, and you cast a lady who can sing, dance and act. Then you find the music, and you set about getting it all to lock right.

A fine bit of inspiration that might have been for conceiving an Australian musical film. And *Rebel* bears all the structural and stylistic trademarks of a musical into which melodrama has been added for good measure. The result is a film that works best as a musical, with its greater ambition in this respect masking its faults as a melodrama.

Faithful to Herbert’s play (he co-wrote the screenplay with director Michael Jenkins), the film gives a realistic treatment to the story of the relationship between an American deserter, Rebel (Matt Dillon), a Sydney girl, Kathy (Debbie Byrne), and the larrikin spiv, Tiger Kelly (Bryan Brown), who betrays them. As might have been expected, however, the film is more interested in the love story than in the caustic issues of nationalism and patriotism that were contained in the play.

Interpersed in this romance are the song-and-dance numbers in the ‘Air-Rad Club’, with a narrative technique that is traditional: as in *42nd Street* and the Astaire/Rogers movies, the musical numbers parallel the developing love affair. At the film’s centre is the appropriately named club, the subterfuge of a war-time establishment sequence (which also manages to make you think of the Lassco boardwalk shoot-out in *Man of the West*). An anonymous range-type is sleeping — in broad daylight — in a dim, plank-built line shack. Suddenly (‘suddenly’ is one of Kasdan’s operative words in this film), people start slamming, 45 slugs through the walls. We don’t see them, of course, because the camera stays inside the shack as the victim wakes up and shoots back, trying to find targets through cracks in the boards. He dies.

Turns out he’s one of the heroes, Emmett (Scott Glenn, from *The Right Stuff*), and he has no idea who his attackers are — or why they attacked him. Emmett starts out the film looking like David Carradine and ends up being photographed like Clint Eastwood, but, right through, he’s slick with a gun. Indeed, I am happy to report that even the villains are slick with a gun, not to mention some who are slick with a knife.

Emmett rides on into some more vaguely Italian-western stuff, and finds a man lying on the burning desert floor, dying of thirst in his well-faded tuxedo. This is Paden (Kevin Kline from *The Big Chill*), who is the second hero, and who has been robbed by his erstwhile partner, Paden is an amusing existentialist bear-type, a bit like Elliott Gould in *The Long Goodbye*. Already, we can tell that Emmett plans to shoot first, but Paden’s a bit more passive, preferring to cool things out.

Silverado, the written, produced and directed by Lawrence Kasdan, is absolutely jammed with plot and events. But, roughly: Emmett and Paden are journeying to Silverado, where Emmett has kin. The first part of the film concerns itself with forming a slightly edgy group of heroes: Emmett, Paden, Emmett’s brother, Bridges part — the brash, cocky, gun-happy kid, played by Kevin Kostner, and Mal (Danny Glover), a black earth-father sort also returning to family.

They adventure along, saving a wagon train containing Rosanna Arquette for whom Emmett and Paden show more interest than the filmmakers did in the editing room. Also encountered: John Cleese, as an exchange-programme sheriff — bink, fair, tough, and reminding you around the edges that Monty Python could erupt at any moment (it doesn’t).

When they reach Silverado, the film switches from odyssey to its central format: it’s a clean-up-the-town picture. The crooked sheriff, Cobb (Brian Dennehy, from *First Blood*), doing a Brian Keith-heavy, genial, grinning and ruthless), bullies the town and sucks it dry, watched philosophically by the lady who runs the saloon. Stella (Linda Hunt, witty and stylish), Paden opts for the saloon business. Also present: a gambler of uncertain loyalties, name of Paden’s (Jeff Bridges part — the brash, cocky, gun-happy kid played by Kevin Kostner), and Mal (Danny Glover), a black earth-father sort also returning to family.

People told me Silverado was a comedy. It is not in the ironic, deconstructive sense of McCabe and Mrs Miller, but in the broad sense of Blazing Saddles.

Welcome to Hard Times

SILVERADO

There are two Silverados, and I think the second is somewhat more successful than the first. But the first is mightily good: it’s the one for the notional ‘average viewer’, and I have to guess a bit about it, because the second Silverado is the one for those who, like myself, prefer the better or worse) seen at least 75% of all the westerns made between 1945 and 1975. Such an experience tends to affect the watching of any film, and even odder.

Immediately striking is Rebel’s distance from anything else being made here: whilst many local films look like tailor-made copies of recent American box-office successes, Rebel harks back several generations to the heyday of the Hollywood musical. And it is anything but contemporary in content and style. It doesn’t fully succeed, but what it does work as a wonderland of entertainment. And, as such, it is the very stuff of cinema.

Paul Kalina

Love in the Loo: Matt Dillon and Debbie Byrne in Rebel.

Love in the Loo: Matt Dillon and Debbie Byrne in Rebel.


Music: Bruce Broughton. Sound: David Ronne. Cast: Kevin Kline (Paden), Scott Glenn (Emmett), Kevin Costner (Jake), Danny Glover (Doc), Mariel Hemingway (Hannah), John Cleese (Sheriff Langston), Brian Dennehy (Cobb), Linda Hunt (Stella), Jeff Goldblum (Buck), Rusty Hammer (Matthias), Jon Gaminon (Dawson). Production company: Columbia Pictures. Distributor: Fox/Columbia. 115 minutes. USA, 1985.

Silverado does have humour, as most of the best westerners do, and it’s full of superbly-crafted lines of dialogue, one of the prizm joys of “classic” (real?) westerns. But it is really an adventure story set in the western genre. It is not (nearly) arch, over-blown or self-conscious, as the Indiana Jones films (the first of which was written by Kasdan) are. It may be pastiche, but it is not parody.

Though clearly expensive — and long, but you don’t notice — Silverado doesn’t even want to be an ‘A’ picture. It wants to be like a ‘B’ picture: emphasis more on action and event than on character psychology, deviantly equal for its stars, rather than foregrounding of star or stars. Even the image (of the preview print, at least) has a slightly washed out moddity about its range of colours, as though it echoed the genre, having been run hundreds of times already.

The second Silverado involves active connoisseurship. Unlike the rash of recent modernist versions of earlier films or film types (Kasdan example: Body Heat, reviewed uncharitably in these pages), this film does not want to maintain either distance or difference from its predecessors. It wants to be a film among those of Tourneur, Mann, DeToth, Kennedy, Hathaway, Mankiewicz. It is an interesting exercise in consonance or discordance to nor patronizes the western, and it is not particularly interesting in stringing together quotations from, or allusions to, specific westerns. As its postwar, pre-new wave images, gestures, events, expectations, quotations can be.

Fran: is a thoroughly Australian tragedy, with a thoroughly modern form. At the end, there is no return to a natural universe, as in Macbeth or King Lear, nothing to leave the audience feeling more comfortable — no supernatural forces, no storms of disorder.

The tragedy of Fran’s life happens under the brilliant Australian sun, in a flat, kerbed suburb, the equivalent of that sort of abrasive, mocking, self-conscious style that is part Australian idiom: that sort of abrasive, mocking, self-conscious style that is part of the clan. Fran herself was fostered out as a child, spent time in several institutions, but found that men were not interested in her — that is a portrait of her approaching adulthood. Fran is as much the point of the film as Noni Hazlehurst’s character, because Frank/Hazlehurst’s performance — and, therefore, powerless — rather than Fran/herself — is something of an heir-apparent — or was, is a member of the inner circle and Charley is a little thick — he thinks art

Fraid and loathing in WA
FRAN

FRAN

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The godson
PRIZZI’S HONOR

PRIZZI’S HONOR

Eighty-years-old next year, John Huston continues to be as unpredictable as ever. His offspring and critically acclaimed Wise Blood (1979) was followed by one of the bestest of all the pseudo-American Cannes thrillers, Phobia (1980). Routine offerings such as Escape to Victory (1981) and Annie (1982) were followed by the courageous adaptation of the unfilmable Under the Volcano (1984). And, just when you thought old Huston could at back on a life’s laurels and take it easy, along comes Prizzi’s Honor, a sharp, cynical, black-hearted comedy-thriller that is as modern in outlook as Repo Man. Based on a novel by Richard Condon, the film introduces Jack Nicholson as Charley Partanna, hitman for the Prizzi clan. A New York mafia family. None-too-bright but eaiser, Charley is, in a sense, part of the family. His father, Angelo (John Randolph), is a member of the inner circle and Charley is something of an heir-apparent — or was, until he bit his copy-book by bedding the daughter of the old Don (William Hickey) and black sheep of the clan.

The honour of the Prizzis has been sminched by this little incident, but the old man has solved the problem by driving his daughter out of the family home (she broods away malevolently in a wonderfully over-furnished apartment) and forgiving Charley.

Charley is a little thick — he thinks art deco is the name of another gangster —
The killer elite? Kathleen Turner and Jack Nicholson as the ill-matched hit persons in Prizzi's Honor.

but he knows what he likes. And, when he sees the beautiful Irene Walker (Kathleen Turner) across a crowded room at a family wedding, he knows instantly that she is the woman for him.

However, several complications arise in their relationship. Firstly, she’s geographically difficult: she lives in Los Angeles, not New York. Well, that’s not such a problem: they are plenty of flights each day (and Huston wryly inserts shots of planes flying either left to right or right to left across the screen to indicate who’s going where). What is more of a problem is that Irene is a member of Charley’s own profession: she is a hit-woman, and a very proficient one at that. Charley is dumfounded at the revelation, and asks the immortal question: “Do I ice her or marry her?” It is a line that is likely to crop up in the trivia quizzes of the future.

The first half of this longish film is quietly funny, but things start to get grimmer when Irene shows just what a professional she is. On assignment from the Prizzis, she and Charley are engaged in the somewhat misguided kidnapping of a bank manager. When they are interrupted by the arrival of some innocent passers-by, Irene’s lethal way with a gun is chilling. Eventually, both characters come to the realization that the world isn’t big enough for the two of them.

The only problem is which one will kill the other one first.

Prizzi’s Honor is an impeccably crafted film, wittily scripted by Condon and Janet Roach, beautifully shot in sombre colours by Andrzej Bartkowiak, and accompanied by a fine Alex North score. The humour is enhanced by the brutally matter-of-fact way that several complications arise in their relationship. The ironic contrast between the figure Sydney and the “much maligned” BLF had become the “Green,” and it is in this section that the film

In the Killing of Angel Street (1981), the union official, Elliott (John Hargreaves), compares soliciting union involvement in helping to save the street from demolition as “trying to stick something up a dinosaur’s arse: it takes six weeks to feel it.”

Rocking the Foundations concentrates more on the achievements of the dinosaur in action, and the results which have outlasted its extinction. Somewhere along the line,’ the commentary tells us, “Black Bans become dinosaur’s arse: it takes six weeks to feel it.”

In 1973, Patrick White complained in a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald how the “much malfunctioning” BLF had become the only rallying point for Sydney residents concerned about threats to their living space — evidence of the power that the union had achieved under Munsey in giving weight to the rights of the inner-city low-income earner. Backlash was inevitable, and the film shows how the BLF story overlaps with the Umina and Gatton story.

The film is well served by its stock footage of clashes between police and residents in the Rocks and Victoria Street, but elsewhere the connection between images of background events like Land Rights protests, the Springbok rugby tour, anti-Vietnam protest and the BLF is left somewhat tenuous. Another failing is the fact that, although it is stated that 60% of the NSW BLF rank and file are migrant workers, less than 6% of the film’s time is devoted to them.

Anzac, the Australian miniseries which follows a platoon of the Eighth Battalion from the outbreak of World War I until its return in mid-1919, has a number of thematic similarities with Ford’s film. The difference resides in the execution.

Film and TV Reviews

Fair dinkum on the western front

ANZACS

Towards the end of World War II, John Ford directed a film about the Americans and Filipinos trapped on the Bataan peninsula by the invading Japanese. By largely ignoring the enemy, exploring the bonds which held men and women together in such a situation, and assembling a powerful series of images to show the physical dismantlement of the group, They Were Expendable (1945) was able to eschew didactic speeches and simplistic characters, while still celebrating the dignity of the men and women left behind.

Anzacs, the Australian miniseries which follows a platoon of the Eighth Battalion from the outbreak of World War I until its return in mid-1919, has a number of thematic similarities with Ford’s film. The difference resides in the execution.
reminding the audience that, despite the "sacrifices of the Australians at Lone Pine and the Nek, the British landings at Suvla Bay were a failure."

Each of the related themes, which are part of the determination of Anzacs to celebrate maleness as a uniquely Australian trait, remains stuck on the other plates of history, and this is only part of the question of historical veracity.

More important is the selection of particular events to support the dominant themes, which tends to be done to the point of overuse. For example, while the battle at Pozières may have refused to continue attacking in 1918, the obsessive preoccupation with the superiorities of the AIF has the effect of bringing the narrative development to a halt, so that the audience can be bombarded with rhetoric.

This smugness in our superiority is reinforced on many levels, particularly through the repeated image of the 'lamb-to-the-slaughter' motif. The enemy is not so much the Germans, as the British officers, who, with one exception, are either incompetent or deliberatelyINOY, including the rest of the ministers. This is all brought together in the final sequence of images — a daughter walking from her father's grave and the words "Post" at a commemoration back in Australia to the barbed wire and the red poppies growing wild on the battlefields. This underlines the dominant theme: the violation of innocence. While there may be a good deal of truth in such a portrayal, it is hard to maintain such an intensity of indignation, based on a simple, politicized world view of 'us' and 'them', over ten hours of viewing.

Geyer Mayor

Down Argentine way

OFFICIAL STORY

There are some openings a reviewer should not use too often. This is one of them. If you see no other film this year, see Down Argentine Way.
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RED MATILDAS

In Red Matildas, one of the three women who are the subject of the film provides a superb explanation of why she joined the Communist Party in the thirties. She recalls how, as a fourteen-year-old, she worked as a shop assistant at Lucullus, a Melbourne cake shop. Her bosses heard her talking about her daughter, in Official Story.

Like Medea and Electra before her, Alicia unwillingly, but with a clear sense of the inevitability of her action, walks towards her catastrophe. Watching her do so is simultaneously exhilarating and disheartening, moving and instructive. Great art, in other words, and as overwhelming a cinematic experience as any to have been had for a long, long time.

Nick Roddick

Facing the future: Chunchuna Villafane as Ana and Norma Alfedro as Alicia, discussing her daughter, in Official Story.

It is in such circumstances that political education occurs. But, Audrey Blake tells the story of how the sense that something was terribly wrong in Australia, were all brought home to her. The threat of the marchers breaking the shop windows and taking the cakes was very real to her boss. So, Audrey Blake climbed into the window and did as she was told. But, in a single instant, the class antagonisms, the fear and the consciousness that something was terribly wrong in Australia, were all brought home to her.

Certainly, the women comment on the continuing struggle that they were a part of: “must fight against uranium mining and for the environment and our resources,” they say. “We must build on the strength that has been laid. . . we can have victories again.” They say. But these comments have a hollow ring to them, following on as they do from the description of previous forms of action. Little analysis or self-criticism is present.

In the women themselves, this is not a problem, because we need not necessarily demand self-criticism from them as subjects of a documentary. But Red Matildas would have been a much stronger film had the questions been put by the film’s makers about what went wrong with the left in Australia, and what happened to the Australian Communist Party, which promised so much up until the early seventies. Surely a film that does not only provide a history of its subject displays its subjects, but also explain why they have reached the position they are in? And certainly nothing they say about the future of the film, suggesting current commitments and also assuming these commitments. As the red, black, and multi-coloured flags of the left-associated groups move along a Melbourne street in a May Day march, Joan Goodwin, Audrey Blake and May Pennefather walk together, arm-in-arm. This is where they are now. How did they get there and why? Somehow, this question seems unresolved.

The film’s analytical style mitigates against the conflict and contradictions within Australian society and against fascism and unemployment, meant to them five decades ago. Moreover, there are stories told from the perspective of people who have been committed to the struggle for socialism and communism.

Red Matildas, then, is very much the story of three Australian women who are unrepentant about their membership of the Communist Party of Australia. It is also a film about women who were more than just observers of the Australian socio-political landscape: the women who were people who have been committed leftists, and for whom the past is part of a continuing struggle, where positions of strength and determination have been taken up and fought for.

And yet, in watching the film, something disconcerting happens. On the one hand, there is the knowledge that here are the archetypal struggles, while, on the other, a film of remarkable conventionality tells their story. Compilation footage is interspersed with talking-head shots of the three women, two in armchairs, one in her kitchen in Perth, talking, talking.

Sharon Connolly and Trevor Graham, the film’s producers/directors/writers, may have wanted to record the comments of ageing Australians, but they have done so in a very subdued manner. Sentiment may be the root cause of the film’s problem. Certainly, it is a good sentiment, but it is reflexive and safe: it is a sentiment that devalues its strength from the known past, thereby denying a complex present.

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Facing the past: May Pennefather, Audrey Blake and Joan Goodwin — the “Red Matildas” — on May Day 1984.
Coffee and Danish

THE PERFECTIONIST

Above all, Chris Thomson's film of David Williamson's The Perfectionist seems well designed. It is a lesson in the art of Studies, with its plot following the well-worn tracks of freedom of choice for middle-class women. Barbara Gunn, married to an academic, leads a life confined to the needs of three small boys. She yearns for the greater glories of a course in Welfare Studies, and makes a bid for freedom. Getting no help from her husband, or mother-in-law, she hires a babysitter, a male Danish dish, and satisfies the film's need for some romantic interest by falling in love with him.

The cast — Jacki Weaver as Barbara, John Waters as Stuart, the perfectionist, with Noel Ferrier and Jennifer Claire as his parents, Steven Vidler as the Danish Adonis, and Kate Fitzpatrick as Barbara's best friend, Su — all give, with one exception, the sort of performances one expects from old trouper, while running the risk of being upstaged by a trio of boys who seem to have all the 'fun and most of the battles'.

But, while producer Pat Lovell has been quoted as finding Williamson's "wit, humour and the wonderful characteristics" as the main strengths of the play, it has always seemed to me that the Williamson art is in presenting stereotypes and letting them do their thing.

Take the perfectionist himself. Stuart, a 1985-model intellectual yuppie, is the product of an ambitious professional father, whose measures of success are limited to academic achievement and subsequent status in the community. His father sees the careers of women as subordinate to those of men, and their lives as a reflection of their husbands' careers.

Like father, like son. Stuart is unable to see anything beyond his thesis; and, when the film opens, he has been perfecting this potential academic bomb for nine years. His wife and children have become mere background to his first place.

Then, two things happen at once: his wife makes her bid for freedom, and the sacred thesis turns out to be a failure. Stuart reacts by turning the full force of his obsessive nature onto the previously neglected household.

But Stuart is not the only perfectionist. Erik, the beautiful babysitter, may take a broader world view; but his views about how life should or should not be lived are quite as judgmental, intolerant and obsessive as Stuart's. Erik has all the trendy views: he believes in mutual respect, the non-exploitation of women, sex with commitment, and his vegetable lasagna is a treat. But, if Stuart is something of a stereotype (and John Waters has difficulty at times in making him more than two-dimensional), Erik fails to come across as anything but the standard Australian idea of a Nordic type (circa 1975).

David Williamson fails to explore what, for me, are the more interesting aspects of his story. For example, why do people seem incapable of changing their ways? Why do they fall in love with the same weapons to different battles? Just as Stuart applies the same obsessive personality to different areas of his life, why should we, the audience, be interested in him? Thus the group of children, who are 'the goonies' of the title, underwrite the future of their families against the grasping hands of the greedy capitalists. They succeed where their parents, with their regular jobs and their regulated lives, have failed.

For these children, Stuart is a clear appreciation that what is central to their existence is their escape from the mundane into the adventures that evolve from their dreams. Stumbling upon the investments tossed into the depths of a wishing-well, Mikey reminds the others that they're trespassing on sacred ground, that the coins aren't a part of the treasure that they're seeking "because they're somebody else's dreams".

Their quest, in any case, is less for money, than to establish their rights to their fantasies, away from the constraints of the everyday. Mikey, whose wisdom makes him a natural leader and an ideal spokesman for the film's pursuit of fantasy, urges his friends in their moment of doubt, to see the importance of their adventures, and that these dreams are not mere background to their first place.

Those who don't recognize (and what the film exploits but cannot confront) is the nature of the tension between the two ecological worlds. The image of the sea serves a simple, two-fold function: as an escape for those who are alive enough to see the adventures on offer, and as a means of gaining what is needed to deal with the "up there".

The goonies become the heroes of a conservative fable about how to deal with a life that has been robbed of its joy. Don't try to change it, the fable says. Escape from it, and you'll get what you want.

What the Goonies insists upon unequivocally is that the pursuit of fantasy is a thoroughly admirable endeavour. The film thus becomes a rationale for itself — nothing more and nothing less. And, while it is consistently engaging and inventive in its escapism, it is also unconcerned with anything else. Its naivey may be appealing, but it also is far from innocent.

Tom Ryan


Mother's little helper: Steven Vidler as Erik, the dicky Dane, and Jacki Weaver as Barbara in The Perfectionist.

On the right track: left to right, Jeff Cohen, Sean Astin, Corey Feldman and Ke Huy Quan — and at — The Goonies.

Mikey's imagination — a point suggested early on, when his face is superimposed on the pirate map he discovers in his father's attic. However, the pursuit of the treasure which it promises also becomes a quest to maintain the security of his childhood, in the form of the homes which the local families, who have been ordered to vacate to make way for a real-estate development. With the sophistication of scholars, he and his friends decode the map and venture underground into the womb of the earth and through a veritable fun-house of obstacles on their persuit, simultaneously satisfying their urge for excitement and their need for security.

The essence of The Perfectionist's humour lies in Williamson's talent for finding what is funny or pretentious in the most mundane aspects of the everyday life of middle Australia. And it is a relevant film for 1985, if only because it laughs at a few sacred cows.

Sarah Guest


Space invader

THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET

Lacking the self-conscious hipness of JimJamusich (Stranger than Paradise) or Alex Cox (Repo Man), but also exploiting the mainstream aspirations of John Cassavetes or Richard Pearce (Country), John Sayles is uniquely placed in the spectrum of...
WHEN YOU'RE QUITE READY, MR FLYNN, WE CAN BRING ON THE EMPTY HORSES!

SORRY, MIKE, JUST CALLING LINDA FOR A CP SUB. ALL YOU DO IS DIAL (03) 329 5983. AND NOW, SWEET MARIAN...

WRONG MOVIE, ERROL...

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trouble passing on his reaction to the equally silent human child.

Throughout the film, Sayles produces his usual mix of weirdly wonderful characters. A Harlem bar, O’Dell’s, is populated by blocks of all ages who, in one well-judged scene, warily interact with a couple of lost prepubescents from the mid-West, both stranded in an alien Harlem after taking the wrong subway.

A raving rastafarian takes the Brother through the depressed and drug-hidden back-streets: an Hispanic video-parlor owner decides the alien can speak only Spanish; a black nightclub singer takes him home, then asks: “How come I like you so much? You could be anybody.” And he is fearfully solicited by a subway rider who performs magic tricks before, as the Brother wishfully watches, jumping from the A-train at Times Square with the one-liner: “Now, watch all the white folks disappear!”

Far from perfect, The Brother from Another Planet, loaded with ideas and wistful comic interludes, shows how even a bargain-basement budget can produce an accessible, entertaining film laced with ‘serious’ themes. It wasn’t so long ago that Americans were praising Australian films for those very same qualities.

Rod Bishop

The Brother from Another Planet: Directed, written and edited by John Sayles. Producers: Peggy Rajski and Maggie Renzi. Director of photography: Ernest R. Dickerson. Production designer: Nora Chavoorian. Music: Mason Daring. Sound recordists: Eric Taylor and Michael Golub. Cast: Joe Morton (The Brother), Tom Wright (Sam Prescott), Caroline Aaron (Randy Sue Carter), Herbert Newsome (Earl), Dee Dee Bridgewater (Melverne Davis), Darryl Edwards (Fly), Leonard Jackson (Smokey), Bill Cobbs (Walker), Steve James (Odel), Edward Baran (Mr. Vance), John Sayles and David Stratharn (Uno and Do, the men in black). Production company: A-Train Films. Distributor: Greater Union. 35mm. 108 minutes. USA. 1984.

Going with the odds

ARCHER

Heart-warming tales of children and their pets are staple fodder in the Family Entertain­ment diet. Television’s “C” zone would be a desert over the years without the antics of Lassie, Rin Tin Tin, Skippy and Flicka. These long-running series and their numerous cinematic counterparts — National Velvet, The Black Stallion, Benji — are constructed upon a network of apparently inviolable conventions. Good will triumph over evil, justice will be done, bravery will be rewarded, parents and surrogate parents will make wise decisions, and animals will use their innate wisdom to bring out the best in nice people and catch up with the nasty ones.

In presenting the adventures of Dave Power (Brett Climo) and his prized horse, Archer (Hamilton Poole), Archer faithfully adheres to these familiar tropes. The result is a generally spritely variation on a tried and true formula. It is possibly the confident rendering of the basic plot that is the key to a successful effort to meet the divergent demands of viewers from the ages of six to 60, and this story of the horse that clinched the first coveted Melbourne Cup after a 550-mile walk from Nowra to Melbourne blends a number of ingredients from a variety of sources.

Memories of The Man From Snowy River are evoked as Dave and Archer tangle with a pack of wild brumbies in the mountain ranges. The glories of a winning dash to the finish line, reminiscent of Phar Lap, are in evidence, as are the dominant themes of the Winners series: achievement and fulfillment through personal endeavour and assertion of character.

Essentially, Archer sits comfortably within the parameters that have been established over the years, a largely unchallenged — within children’s television for some time. And, in an acknowledgement of its adher­ence to the wholesome formula — romance but no sex, action but no violence, positive development of the protagonist, happy endings — the final frames announce that “you have seen probably didn’t happen. But it should have.”

Though Dave seems a little older than many of his comparable protagonists, he is clearly regarded at the outset as a ‘boy’. The six-week campaign that he undertakes with Archer is well signposted, with direc­tions indicating the basic geographic journey, the discovery tour for the farm boy getting his first taste of a wider world, and the emotional stride from boyhood to maturity. Within the necessarily episodic, but generally fluid, travels through country, culture and adolescence, each incident and encounter adds a new and positive dimension to Dave’s character.

Any journey from farm to fame, Dave is shown to have what it takes. A proverbial rough diamond, he is quietly self-assured, tenacious and a bit mischievous. He is also green in the ways of the world, and a wistful comic interlude, shows how even a bargain-basement budget can produce an accessible, entertaining film laced with ‘serious’ themes. It wasn’t so long ago that Americans were praising Australian films for those very same qualities.

Rod Bishop

The Brother’s brothers: Fly, Smokey and Uno at O’Dell’s bar in The Brother from Another Planet.

Next stop, the lovely Catherine (Nicole Kidman) — a genuine dose of first love that serves to distinguish the Real Thing from the lusty looks at the kitchen maid. Dave learns of testy mountain maidens and the yearn­ings strong enough to lure him away from grooming Archer in favour of dancing with Catherine.

Precisely half-way through the six-week itinerary, Archer virtually leads Dave to the aptly titled Green Mountain for the journey’s seminal lesson. On the mountain, with the unconscious help of Anna Winter (Anna Maria Monticelli), Dave loses his green edges. He learns that some things are more important than pride, specifically the pride that he takes in the prospect of winning the race.

In helping the bereaved woman through the death of her baby and undertaking to jeopardize Archer’s entry in the Cup in order to locate her husband, Matthew (Ernie Gray), Dave trades pride for integrity, and dreams of glory for honourable action. This internal development is publicly demonstrated by a rite of passage in the style of Snowy River. In a death-defying bit of riding, Dave redeems his horse from a pack of brumbies, winning the grudging respect of the Real Men.

From that point on, he has earned his stripes, and he can coast home. He locates Matthew, outings a band of bushrangers and annealing in Melbourne as scheduled. A fortui­tous accident puts him in the saddle rightfully to claim the glory and, subse­quently, the girl.

Although it wears its doggedly whole­some intentions a little too earnestly at times, Archer is deftly written and assembled by writer Anne Brookes and director Denny Lawrence, and jauntily scored by Chris Neal. It is also enlivened by an entourage of well-judged performances from the supporting cast, notably Anna Maria Monticelli, who carries her tragedy with a regality that is compelling, and Robert Coleby, who plays Archer’s improb­ably titled owner — Etienne de Mestre — with just the right mix of fawning majesty and agile intellect.

Ultimately, Archer fulfills the unwritten laws of its 6.30 timeslot. It is affable, enter­taining, optimistic and unprovocative. Though it will do little to challenge the rever­sely observed parameters of family viewing, it steadfastly holds its own in the field.

Debi Enker

The sport of queens

KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

Manuel Puig’s first novel was called Betrayed by Rita Hayworth. Another Puig novel, Man on Another Planet, might be called ‘Betrayed by Hector Babenco’. Poor Manuel. They’ve taken a sharp, difficult book and made it into a soft, easy movie.

One thing, though: everyone who sees it will know it’s supposed to be good for them. And I, I have to be honest, most will be entertained and moved by it. It was anyone’s guess whether the blokes share a prison cell somewhere in right-wing, fascist-ruled, Portu­guese-speaking South America. One (played by William Hurt) is gay, almost a stereotyped queen (the ‘almost’ is impor­tant). The other (played by Ray Julia) is an engrossing journalist, his life devoted to The Struggle.

The queen tells the revolutionary the plot of a trashy romantic movie he claims he once saw. The revolutionary goes from a life of dream escapism to a pointless but noble act of Struggle.

The queen tells the revolutionary the plot of a trashy romantic movie he claims he once saw. The revolutionary goes from a life of dream escapism to a pointless but noble act of Struggle.

Well, I do.

Bill and Diane Rount

Careful, she can’t hear you

THE STILL POINT

At a time when thoughtful films about the problems of teenagers are as scarce as westerns, The Still Point, a thoughtful film about a fifteen-year-old handicapped girl, presents itself as either a grand folly or an example of a tenacious belief that the Australian industry can still aim films of some social relevance to a young audience.

Simply put, the story concerns a few crucial months for fourteen-year-old Sarah (Nadine Garner), as her copes with the multiple problems of deafness, puberty, the inner conflict stirred by her guilt that her handcap has responsi­bility for the dissolution of her parents’ marriage, and the growing attraction her mother, Barbara (Lyn Semmler), feels for Paul (Alex Mengel).

Rene Hunter may have found glorious possibilies here for a lush, emotional melodrama, but director Barbara Boyd-Ander­son and writer/producer Roso Cokosimo have adopted a low key, realistic approach.

In fact, though, much of the film’s mise en scene uses visual means of expressing Sarah’s place and self-image in the boundaries of her world that are not far removed from classical low-fi American pro­duction, circa 1955.

As in Mask, the revelation of Sarah’s problem is delayed as long as possible. Instead, we see her in the opening sequence having a quite normal dancing lesson, then prac­tising alone. In early scenes at home, she seems isolated from Barbara, but this is attributable to Barbara’s preoccupation with Paul. At school, her evident talent at drawing receives praise from her teacher and resentment from her classmates. The fact that she is deaf is not referred to until well into the film, though Sarah is evidently very good at hiding her voice, which is only slightly abnormally. Indeed, the difficulties of her affection are perhaps played down too much. The American Irving Berlin performance as a deaf girl in Voces (1979) is a little more convincing.

The decision to make the screenplay lucid and objectively presents the viewer with Sarah’s accelerating dilemma. At a time when peer-acceptance is important, she is becoming isolated. She is turning to a world of private self-expression, represented by a mechanical dancer on a music box and the mirror in front of which she makes herself up. And she lacks support from and com­munication with her mother, who in turn cannot commit herself to Paul.

A school-holiday visit to her grandmother (Florence Hall) and momentary contact with Sarah into situations in which she must confront all her problems and make some posi­tive decisions. Sarah is a most respectable character, very different from the norm. Her disfigurement was that she was the first one, which changed with the changes in Molina’s circumstances within the narrative. It seems isolated from Barbara, but his demand is to make the story of Molina end, not with Molina’s sacrifice, but with the woman of Valentin’s dreams — inevitable excrescences of the real world: they can ease the pain and they can create goals for which we will fight.

In the film, dreams become common­place, inevitable excesses of the mundane. And, make no mistake about it, what Molina relates to Valentin are dreams — fantasies — not goals. They come from inside his head, not from Hollywood or La Victòria.

I said Molina told one movie, but he actually makes a start on another, and it is this one which is most obviously not a movie. It is also the one that gives the film its visual theme. In the island, he tells Valentin, lives a beautiful Spider Woman (played by Braga, who takes her woman in this movie) taking him to the island of his dreams.

One way of dealing with the conflict here might have been to represent it as just that: conflict. Purple Rose goes a long way in showing how a drag queen risks her life night after night for drag. They couldn’t figure out a way to make us gasp instead of laugh, so they cut it out instead, figuring: who would miss it?


THE STILL POINT: Directed by Barbara Boyd­Anderson. Produced by Roso Cokosimo.
Hand of hearing, but hopefully not too hard to see: Nadine Garner as the hearing-impaired Sarah in The Still Point.


**TURTLE DIARY**

**Per ardua ad aqua**

**TURTLE DIARY**

Twenty years ago, when cinema was young again. Turtle Diary would probably have been French. Mutatis mutandis, it has all the trappings of a new wave film: a strong sense of place (here, London; there, almost invariably Paris) and a tendency to let the place and its trappings tell us about the people. What they say is somehow secondary. "Le cinéma," wrote Jean-Luc Godard, at a time when Roland Barthes was still a columnist, "est la mise en scène des objets" — cinema is about filming objects.

Framing objects may seem a strange way to describe a film with a screenplay by Harold Pinter, the English language’s most distinctive wordsmith. But Pinter’s screenplays have always occupied a subtly different terrain to his plays. Like no other playwright, he is as comfortable with the tangible as he is with the intangible.

Framing objects is a way of viewing what is on the page and what is going on in the frame. It is a way of looking at the things that Pinter puts on the page and seeing them in a different light. It is a way of looking at the things that Pinter puts on the stage and seeing them in a different light.

**Turtle Diary** is far from Pinter territory, demonstrating once and for all that the film is far more than just the sum of its parts. When they doing it, they have little reason to believe it could be directed at anyone but her, and Jeroen Krabbe’s sobriety and aggression are the most obvious traits which suggest others, rather than those which lead only to stereotype. Hence Eleanor Bron’s Miss Neap, the nervy Jady and Aggie and the Amoeba, who demonstrate another Pinter strength: the sketching in of people via caricature, not to decide, but to cope, they buckled down and reveal themselves. Pack-
As it weaves together the lives of an endearing and eccentric central trio of characters — the bar’s owner, Eve (Lesley Ann Warren), her ‘fattie’ friend, Nancy (Genevieve Bujold) and the enigmatic Mickey (Keith Carradine) — the film is euphoric in its moments of joy and poignant in its evocation of a sense of despair.

In this parade of misunderstanding and mis-limings, the dominant motif is the telephone, a constant symbol of strained communications between the characters who are privately debating the differences between love and sex with the aim of alleviating loneliness.

Debating no harmonious relationships and a series of lives fraught with longing, confusion and dismay — Choose Me’s eventual union of the couple is one that no one expects to hope but acknowledges its precariousness.

Director Alan Rudolph has created a filmed version of Daryl Sutro’s story of a mysterious ten-year-old boy who appears nowhere and is adopted by a pleasant couple (Mary Beth Hurt and Michael McKean), who quickly discover the lad, called Daryl (Barrel Oliver), is some kind of genius.

Indeed, Daryl is a great achiever at everything to which he applies himself, including computers, little girls, and his own prolific and procreative powers. However, when the director does his best, lovely thing with memories of Mr Ed, Bugs Bunny and Bilko amid the exotic locales of Boys Own Adventures, he can create some magical moments.

Forget Mozart (Vergeesl Mozart) is a West Germany/Czech spin-off of Peter Shaffer’s play, Amadeus. The key words must be timely marketing for, as a piece of filmmaking, it is as tacky and uninspired as others.

Gathered around Mozart’s death-bed, the principal members of the court begin peicing together the fragments of his life, thus initiating the numerous flashbacks that constitute the film’s action. As in the film of Amadeus, the focus seems to be less on handing down the ultimate theory of how Mozart died, than on simply creating good drama out of the composer’s life. Forget Mozart, however, wavers between a traditionally whodunit, right down to a Point character, and a Citizen Kane-like search for ‘Rootbud; the secret that is the key to his ambiguous yet illustrious life.

Unfortunately, little is revealed. The composer’s life as portrayed in the film is a textbook biography: clinical and singularly lacking in sympathetic qualities. The film’s episodic structure — Mozart the freemason; Mozart the alcoholic — is plodding and stodgy. But, worst of all, there is only one scene, during the performance of The Magic Flute, in which the film’s original premise sees light: that Mozart, through his music, had a ‘supernatural’ effect on others, and is therefore worthy of examination.

Filmed almost entirely in close-up, presumably because of the inadequacy of the sets (whenever a window is seen, its view is hidden by fog), and directed by Slavo Paul Kalina

Like Amadeus, Forget Mozart manages to feature the quintessential image of the ‘masking messenger’; here, however, it looks something out of Zorro.

There is a tightness of touch and a subtlety about Choose Me that is ideal both to the extent to which its wistfulness and tentatively skeumatic, life of human relationships.

Set in and around Eve’s Bar — read: uni­

versal meeting place — it is a portrait of characters in transition and awkwardly seeking alternatives.
focussed narrative, the film is far more concerned with constructing complex and fragile dramatic textures.

Its simple basics involves a rural visit by a famous film actress, Isabella (Brigitte Fossey), to her parents (Hildegard Knef and Ivan Desny), who are a disunited couple. The first hour of the film creates a detailed portrait of each character and the (often paradoxical) relationships they have with each other, but with a certain detachment of thought, a certain feeling of intention of signalling which way the story will go.

It is only well into it that a dominant theme of child-neglect emerges, but this is underlain by a subtly drawn mosaic of character detail which adds resonance to the basic premises of its major theme. It is, however, true that although it is always dramatically involving, it is never actually moving.

The cinematography is appropriately intimate and personal, with an emphasis on faces and expressions, though there is some unnecessary and not very helpfully placed music, the drama a forced feel at odds with the style of the rest of the film.

Jim Schenbri

The plot of Fright Night involves a re-cycling of the boy-who-cried-wolf routine. A vampire moves in next door to a nerdy teenager Charlie (William Ragsdale). The reason we know he needs the house is that he plays more attention to late-night horror movies on television than to his girlfriend's amorous advances.

The local community, as usual, isn’t hip to vampirism, and treats Charlie with disdain. Ironically, his only real ally is an in fact reluctant Peter Vincent (Roddy McDowall), a washed up star now reduced to being a cable TV horror expert.

Director/screenwriter Tom Holland, who previously penned Class of 1984, Psycho II and Cloak and Dagger, directs the story with the determination of a certain genre (garlic, wooden stakes, coffins, aversion to daylight, non-reflection in mirrors, etc), and indeed, if you look closely, you can see clear echoes of the Love at First Bite variety.

Jerry Dandridge (Chris Sarandon) is a stylish vampire dressed in a full-length leather cape, who presents a convincing image of virility and potent menace, while his screenplay, in a possible nod to Polanski’s The Fearless Vampire Killers, coyly hints that Jerry is involved in a bisexual relationship with his roommates.

As is now the prevailing custom with these excursions into the fantastic, the audience is treated to a cathartic exclusion in which various characters undergo elaborate bodily transformations and special-effects-induced metamorphoses.

The contrast to Polanski’s film is that the links between sexuality and vampirism are somewhat fudged in a narrative which begins and ends with Charlie in his bedroom, as the television set blares out horror movies and the compliant girlfriend blares out her own unanswered question.

Paul Harris

Heart of a Woman effectively detours the obstacle of being a bio-pic that is obliged to serve up an edifying ending. Its elliptical style — initially puzzling as it seems to glide too quickly over significant information — effectively re-orders the traditional priorities, shifting the film’s emphasis from celebration to examination.

As is now the prevailing custom with these excursions into the fantastic, the audience is treated to a cathartic exclusion in which various characters undergo elaborate bodily transformations and special-effects-induced metamorphoses.

The strictly sub-Fassbinder story is very thin, however, given that the film concerns a provincial town, the film traces the rampant obsession which Henri (Jean-Hugues Anglade), a pretty eighteen-year-old (Vittorio Mezzogorno), the second of Rossì’s Three Brothers), a macho hustler who tries to kid himself he’s straight.

Henri’s doting family environment is finely drawn, as is the film’s homophile idyll, operating largely around the gay club, and there is a strong performance from Roland Bertin as the sad street who grants and allows Henri to vent his passion on Jean.

But, ultimately, the film is only as interesting as Henri’s obsession, which becomes monotonously all-embracing. The inevitable comparison with the work of Genet only shows up the second-rate, boy-soft perspective of L’Homme Désordre’s quasi-ritualistic gambits. Had it been a film about heterosexual passion, it would have been a dead bore.

Tony Mitchell

Although it chooses to play out its battles of sex, class and politics in the form of a road movie — apparently intended to suggest the forward movement of the protagonist — Loose Connections is remarkably static. In fact, its prolonged and largely lacklustre spanning over feminism in particular might have been better suited to a pole but ineffectual after-dinner conversa-

Uting an archetypal odd couple — an intellectual middle-class feminist called Sally (Lindsay Duncan), and a working-class football fan, Harry (Stephen Rea) — the film offers pleasant scenery on the drive from London to Munich, and a really engaging performance from Harry’s rocking path from mistrust and mayhem to understanding and tolerance.

Lindsay Duncan and Stephen Rea deliver spirited performances that go some way towards neutralizing the creeping cuteness, but finally a lack of both visual and verbal wit. Instead of developing a gently blossoming relationship, Loose Connections is simply a gush of predictable slogans and cliches.

While director Richard Eyre was able to pinpoint and expose the nuances that generate among the complex characters in The Ploughman’s Lunch, Loose Connections opts for a broad canvas that ignores the local detail that can create a satisfying whole.

Debi Enker
Albert Brooks is, as far as I know, an unknown auteure for Australians. Neither of his two pictures, **Lost in America** (1975) or **Modern Romance** (1981) have been screened here.

**Lost in America** contains some trenchant humour about the superficiality of the Californian yuppie, a role that Brooks plays himself to perfection. He is a successful ad man possessed of a boss's growing horror as he dreams on him that he is expected to relocate from sunny California to the dubious delights of small-town Ohio is a beautifully timed and, incidentally, a near-reversal of Woody Allen's jokes about LA in **Annie Hall**.

There are other good scenes in **Lost in America**. Brooks persuades his wife (Julie Hagerty) to join him on a car journey and he succeeds in making her on an ambitiously optimistic trip to discover the 'real America' (his favourite movie is **Easy Rider**). They visit Las Vegas, where Hagerty compulsively gambles away all their money, and Brooks engages in a splendidly absurd interview with the Casino Manager (Gary Marshall) on the advantages of paying the money back.

But, ultimately, the film rather fizzes out. The ending is abrupt and unmotivated, the concluding scenes of a trip lost in America confirm that Albert Brooks is not on the brink of promotion, and modern satirist and, uneven as it may be, his latest film is usually intelligent and frequently very funny.

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David Stratton

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With few exceptions, the cinema has had little success with biographical material. Generic conventions give form to an individual's life on screen, and it is the logic of drama, not of life, which is understood.

A film like **Screamplay** (1979) understands this difference full well: it could not but do otherwise, given that its subject would, in any event, have side-stepped such knowledge on a film-maker. Thus, we can be grateful that director and co-writer Rufus B. Seder has side-stepped such knowledge on a film-maker. Thus, we can be grateful that director and co-writer Rufus B. Seder has side-stepped such knowledge on a film-maker.

The four chapters are, in fact, what the film believes to be the principal paradigms to be found in the process of a film — Action, and Harmony of Pen & Sword. Each of the first three paradigms are given thematic undertones: a young Houdini on the making of magic; a young Charles Chaplin on the making of comedy; and a young Vladimir Horowitz on the making of the piano. The fourth paradigm is represented by three fictional stories: **The Temple of the Golden Pavilion**, **Kyoko's House**, and **Runaway Horses**.

The film renders the ideal of parallelism between Mishima's life and his art well enough. And, while thematic connections are made, the mise en scène strives for representational difference between 'art' and 'life'. The film presents a clear sense of reality in the contemporary sequences of the film.

And, while one must acknowledge the degree of invention in the film, one cannot say that its little experiments with form and mise en scène are not enough to make it a signifcantly rewarding experience.

Rolando Caputo

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**Like The Three Musketeers** (1974), **Morons from Outer Space** scores such points as it can around the edges of the board, and very few near the centre. The impersonation of a zebra, for example, seems forced, but does, in fact, have a rationale, since the two films share a production deal with Brian Easell.

And, if the latest film comedy from the new generation of British TV comics (in this case, not the more or less predictable yowl of the **Dinah** News's Max Smith and Griff Rhys Jones) lacks the scale and ambition of Dick Lester's movie, it affords one or two little pleasures.

Take the opening: a ponderous voice over, a massively cliched special effect of a space ship passing ... then a long, long chant of a dialogue that complete with nodding dog in the rear window.

The film is back in the spacecraft, the interior and its occupant are clad in hideous approximations of suburban good taste: pink, fluffy pillows, terra cotta walls and dusty rugs. The steering wheel is covered in one of those fake fur gloves beloved of the K-mart Christmas catalogue.

After that, though, the chucks are few and far between, as the aliens crash-land their British motorway, are interrogated, escape and (how inventive can you get?) become punk rock stars.

Jimmy Hail, the discovery of the TV series, **Aft Wiedersehen**, Pett turns in the best performance, as an extraterritorial only here for the bargain. The talents of Griff Rhys Jones are wasted in the role of a callow cub reporter turned rock impresario. He has no one but himself to blame, however, since he cowrote the script.

**Nick Roddick**

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The fact that Claude Zidi's comedy **My New Partner (Les Rippoux)** (1978) is Most Popular Film (beating Marlene Gonna's **Broken Mirrors**) at this year's Sydney Film Festival is more a reflection of the festival goers' middle-of-the-road taste than any unusual merit in this stylish, semi-fictional and somewhat derivative film. But, ultimately, the film rather fizzes out.

No doubt its scenes of police corruption (**ripoux** is reverse slang for 'corrupt' — pourri in French) struck a chord, and the film could be seen as a kind of comic Scales of Justice without the social conscience.

A measure of Philippe Noiret's outstanding performance is provided by the way he manages to turn his character into a sympathetic fellow who simply wants his version of the Parisan dream: a bar, a racehorse and a retina with the French flag on.

He is counterbalanced by Thierry Lhermitte, an Anthony Perkins lookalike, who plays the young part of Francois, starting out green but rapidly outshining his veteran mate in criminal careers.

Superbly cast, funny and full of neat set pieces and sight gags, **Les Rippoux** is slick and street-wise, and no doubt set out to be satirical in contrasting the pronounced chaos with large-scale organized crime.

The result is a cut above Police Academy or Beverly Hills Cop, but not much better than 48 HRS.

**Tony Mitchell**

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In **George A. Romero's classic horror movie Night of the Living Dead**, the resurrected corpses roam a small corner of Pennsylvania; in its sequel, **Day of the Dead**, re-imagined for the 1980s, the fictionalized murders of 'old-fashioned values', aligned himself with a Chinese American, a feminist, and representing another breed of 'grass roots' politics, Dan White. The extraordinary events leading up to this tragedy and the scandalous trial that followed are the base of the compelling documentary, **The Times of Harvey Milk**.

At the time, San Francisco was conducting a unique experiment in social freedom. Under progressive Mayor Moscone, a board of supervisors was elected; Milk, an advocate not just for gay rights but for senior citizens, rank-and-file unions and ethnic minorities, was elected along with a Chinese American, a feminist, a black woman and, representing another breed of 'grass roots' politics, Dan White. White, a former fire chief and proponent of 'old-fashioned values', aligned himself with fundamentalist groups and was the sole dissident among the board of supervisors to the Gay Rights Bill. Proposition Six, which would have denied homosexuals their jobs teaching in public schools, brought Milk and White to the fore, several days after the motion was overwhelmingly rejected, White retired. The following week, re-claiming his seat, he murdered Moscone and Milk.

The film, by Robert Epstein and Richard Schm依内 and narrated by Harvey Fierstein (Torch Song Trilogy), brilliantly incorporates its many themes in the central story of Harvey Milk. Made up of TV news reports, interviews, snapshots and stock footage, it is a vivid patchwork of both Milk's career, and the wider context of the times that produced these exceptional events.

In this way, it avoids simplifying its issue into personal tragedy and martyrdom; it guides the viewer, with a tone that is emotive and persuasive, though never sappy, to the truth of what people like Milk and White were on about. For, ultimately, both men, democratically elected representatives of a 'libertarian' system, merely represented violently opposed values in American society.

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Paul Kalina

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On 27 November 1978, Mayor George Moscone and Harvey Milk, an outspoken gay political activist who had recently been elected to San Francisco's board of supervisors, were shot dead by fellow supervisor Dan White. The extraordinary events leading up to this tragedy and the scandalous trial that followed are the base of the compelling documentary, **The Times of Harvey Milk**.

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Debi Enker
One knows from his 1972 version of A Doll's House that Joseph Losey could take a set bound realist stage drama and make a cinematically fluent film out of it. But Steaming, his last film, resolutely resists the transition.

Some of the film's faults are the faults of Neil Dutt's play, indiscriminately transferred from stage to screen: the women's bath-house and the fight to maintain it as an awkward rallying point for sisterhood; the improbable cross-sectionalism of the clientele; the over-simplification of the feminist issues; its kindly but dated and curiously insulated sense of the lives it portrays.

However, if Steaming was never much of a play (it came too late to be either important or shocking), the film's faults must also be laid at Losey's door. It is unbearably talky in all the wrong ways: the dialogue has the theatricality that belongs to the stage rather than the screen. The film is also over-cast: Vanessa Redgrave, Sarah Miles and Diana Dors have presences too powerful for the necessary ensemble playing, so that Patti Love, as the working-class Josie, has to 'act' too strenuously to match them.

Not all Losey's graceful camerawork — and the eye is often struck by a fluid movement — or his command of the physical aspects of the mise en scène can disguise the film's oppressively theatrical origins. It is said to remember how one once made much virtue organic in, say, The Servant.

Fantasy figure: Kelly LeBrock swaps the red dress for an apron and mop in Weird Science.

At the beginning of Viva la vie, the film's director Claude Lelouch, appearing on a radio programme, implores audiences not to give away the film's ending to their friends. Lelouch and audiences, however, can rest easy. Whatever the vital secret is, it is so hidden in this uninvolved and vague film, that one begins to suspect that the plot is a pithy excuse for the film's vacuousness. Similarly, when a character states early in the film that Spielberg tells stories, Fellini doesn't tell stories, and Godard shows how to tell stories, it's really a warning for what's (not) coming.

The absurd story revolves around the unexplained mystery of two people who have disappeared. Woven into an E.T.-like story of earthlings' brains being tampered with, are forays into themes as numerous and far-flung as the stars in the sky: a nuclear holocaust; the metaphor of acting as art; the responsibility of the rich and powerful; the connection between dreams and life. Rather than developing into a multi-layered narrative, the film is a haphazard scattering of self-conscious reflections. What these finally have to do with the film's dénouement, or the very aspirations it pronounces, is anyone's guess.

What's more the play is the waste of a superb cast (Michel Piccoli, Charlotte Rampling, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Evelyn Boux and Charles Aznavour) and Lelouch's own talent — at least evidenced here by his handsome, self-operated camera work.

* Paul Kalina

Fans of The Breakfast Club, who have been considering John Hughes as the definitive chronicler of contemporary US teenage manners and mores, will be sadly disappointed with Weird Science, his third and least feature. Hughes again stars the effortlessly gawky Anthony Michael Hall (who narrowly missed getting the lead role in Stanley Kubrick's currently-shooting Vietnam War film), but the authenticity of Hall's earlier characters has given way here to mediocre mawkishness. Hall and his best buddy (Ran Mitchell-Smith) are sex-starved high-school no-hopers who yearn after a couple of pretty girls already taken by a satin-clad, bullying boy-friend. After seeing James Whale's The Bride of Frankenstein on television (ominously, it's in the new colour process), they create a woman of their own: although Hughes is never very clear about how they achieve this — or why, when the woman (Kelly LeBrock) emerges, she has magical powers.

Needless to say, the friends are too timid actually to do anything sexual with the available Ms LeBrock (maybe they're put off by her incongruous English accent), but they are happy for her to do the washing, cleaning and cooking (feminists will loathe the film), and to help them in their pursuit of the human girls.

Matters come to a head at a wild party which looks as though it's strayed from one of the National Lampoon movies Hughes has scripted. Basically, Weird Science has almost precisely the same plot as Francis Ford Coppola's The Bride, which I coincidentally caught on the same day. The settings and periods are quite different, of course, but both films manage to be both myopic and alarmingly boring. From Roddam, this was no great surprise, but from Hughes, it's a major let-down.

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WIND FROM THE EAST


This is a sad book — sad both because it was missed on the opportunity it might so readily have provided to develop a genuine debate (out of the heat of the kitchen, as it were) on funding the arts and because its 128 pages do not do justice to the issue of funding in Australia. The Adelaide Festival does not rate a mention, though many would regard it as significant. Indeed, the myopia about South Australia goes so far as to exclude the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust's involvement with the state theatre companies, Mr Rowse manages not to mention its long association with the South Australian Theatre Company.

Perhaps his lack of concern with the rest of the continent is most noteworthy in his constant references to the Australian Ballet and the Royal Ballet (sometimes capitalized, sometimes not), as though state opera and dance are the only arts worthy of comment. His references to "the financial problems of the Opera . . ." , and the reader is left to assume in such cases that one particular company is intended. Neither the writer's manner nor his typographic are any sure guide.

The most glaring gap of all, and one which curiously dates the book, is the total silence on the Tribes Inquiry into orchestral revenues. It is a report still being hotly debated in the arts community, and it has mammoth implications for the deployment of both artistic and financial resources in contemporary Australia. If ever there was a point of departure for an evaluation of the impact of the very issues Mr Rowse raises — decentralization, making it Australian, popular art in both the live and broadcast areas — this was it.

Mr Rowse has concentrated thus far on the performing arts as treated in this book, it is only because it is my area. Mr Rowse's solicitude, however, flourishes as happily in other art forms. In suggesting that the ABC's "disastrous" of many of the films of the independent sector ("a sector which he clearly right), he argues that this may have a political as well as an industrial logic. His substantiation includes: "The polling of the Hake-Woodeck Debate in November 1984 strongly suggested that the ABC audience would respond more positively to the composers of people who vote for the Coalition parties." This is simply cant. In the same chapter, he announces, out of the blue: "This is not to say that his commentary, as its examination of the grant determinations of the Board in the years 1974-5 and 1985, will show, Dr Lette has made no such claim. No reading of the document which Mr Rowse advances as his source will support such an interpretation.

It is not a happy start for the reader seeking a sound historical view for the arts situation. To argue for centralization. The Adelaide Festival does not rate a mention, though many would regard it as significant. Indeed, the myopia about South Australia goes so far as to exclude the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust's involvement with the state theatre companies, Mr Rowse manages not to mention its long association with the South Australian Theatre Company.

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Director Brian De Palma (right) discusses the Scarface script with Al Pacino.

 arming tension between the way that the characters would like things to occur and the way that inevitably are repre­ sented by the camerawork, intends to operate."

 There seems to be a real critical (if not grammatical) intelligence at work here. But then, with the very next sentence, it seems to have vanished: “In this sequence one can see the camera taking on aspects of a film character, probing into the recesses of the film’s meanings.”

 The editor of the Scarecrow "Filmmakers Series", Anthony Slide, must bear a large part of the responsibility for the unend­ veness that plagues Bliss’s book. And, though its critical endeavour deserves to be taken seriously (in a way that much writing on De Palma does), it really ought not to have been published in its present form.

 On the other hand, Susan Dworkin’s Double De Palma, a fascinating history of the making of Body Double, sustains its fluency and wisdom throughout. It is as concerned with the machinery and the politics behind the making of the film as it is with the personalities of the director and it is successful in creating an evocative portrait of both.

 Its unity comes from its systematic and complex use of the idea of the ‘double’, a motif particularly pertinent to De Palma’s films. Dworkin offers us the double face of De Palma and of the films he makes, refusing any simple correspondence between the two, and denying any simple perspective on either. And her exploration of those forces that mould the films into saleable shapes, the business behind them and the culture which provides the terms of reference for that business, is especially incisive.

 After reading Double De Palma, it will be very difficult to watch a film without reflect­ ing on the processes that are effected by its surfaces, without being aware that nothing about any film exists in isolation. It is a most eloquent book, taking us a long way from the gutter journalism and the dumbpeak to which I referred at the start of this review.

 Tom Ryan

 Hold the onions


 In a 1975 article entitled ‘What is this thing called love?’, New York film critic John Simon maintained that the person who really loves film will love fewer movies rather than more. He or she will, as the gourmet to his eating, become more discriminating — ‘involved but not mesmerized’. Sticking to the good-food analogy, Simon went on: ‘There are people who like to gorge themselves on hot-dog movies stuffed with cheap mustard; I don’t think they love movies — they merely dislike their tastes.’

 Without doubt, the same applies to the television audience. There are those who drift through its schedules simply to waste time: they gorge on the daily junk food of entertainment, boosting ratings (and sometimes) for producers of the most intellectually numbing programmes.

 But though Simon, who likens TV sets to litter baskets littering the avenue of film, might prefer to disagree, television, over the years, produced its own gastronomic delights: documentaries, dramas and news programmes that have stood out.

 But how often do they come along? Even the least discriminating among us would have paused on the abyssal tournament that Australian television programmes have served up in 1985. Not that there would necessarily be agreement from the executive suite. What, they might say, about The Dunera Boys? And what about A Thousand Stakes? Hmmmm, well without going into the financially costly timing of their appearance or the dramatic merits or otherwise of recent Australian miniatures, suffice it to say that one Anzac does not a TV summer make.

 Programme production in Australian commercial television continues under the benevolent guidance of former advertising­ space salesman and accountant. In public television, the situation is similarly anti­ intellectual: there, the accountants work with public servants to put on the shows. The day of the entertainer, the writer, the artist on television is still a long way off. What can be achieved when a truly creative team of producers, writers and actors is allowed to chase a dream is told in the absorbing British book, Made for Television: Euston Films Limited, by Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart. Euston Films may not be a name well­ known to most television viewers, here or in England. But the drama that the company has produced over the last decade would certainly take one to find it. If it’s The Sweeney, Minder, Out, Relly: Ace of Spies, Fox and Widows. Made for Television has written primarily to record the history of the company that produces these filmed (rather than video­ taped) programmes for Thames Television, the London­ based commercial TV network. In examining the curious Thames/Euston relationship of that to governments. And he has written an account of the making of the film as it is presented by the camerawork, intends to have vanished: “In this sequence one can see the camera taking on aspects of a film character, probing into the recesses of the film’s meanings.”

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 Manuel Alvarado, co-author of Made for Television was also co-author (with Edward Buscombe) of another earlier book useful for students of television, Hazell: The Making of A TV Series (BFI, 1978). And a similar exercise to that was conducted here in Australia by Albert Moran, a lecturer in media studies at Grifith University in Queensland.

 Moran’s analysis of an Australian programme was marred by one major factor: the show he chose to examine, a Network 10 crime series called Bellamy, proved a ratings failure and vanished from the screen before many of his readers would have had a chance to examine it. As a study of production, however, the book, Making a TV Series: The Bellamy Project (Currency Press, 1982), remains particularly rewarding.

 Moran has followed this up with a second book in the series of critical and historical studies his publishers call Australian Screen. This one. Images and Industry: Television Drama Production in Australia offers a comprehensive view of TV drama programmes, from discussion in those first commercial licence hearings onwards.

 Moran takes up the themes he anointed as well as budget breakdowns, from in­ house productions to independent packagers. His journey from the first attempt (1971) to A Town Like Alice (1981) is as entertaining to read as it is informative. And his full listing of programmes contains many forgotten gems — TV series. Perhaps two survive for a second. 22­ programme season. In Images and Industry, Moran points out how Australian TV has allowed the play and the limited­ run series to slip away.

 “What is interesting in this shift has been the collapse of the once­ respectable middle ground,” he writes. “Instead, television drama currently exists in two extremes: one the culturally­ disreputable serial (‘soaps’, ‘drip­ drama’) and the other, paradoxically, the mini­ series. The best of them is the most prestigious. Interestingly, one of the present crises for Australian networks is that there are signs that the audience is tiring of the meandering storylines and poor production values of the serials. The plays and limited­ run series may yet have a future!

 A third, and similarly pleasing, book, primarily for those who know their AUSSAT (from their on­ switch) is Trevor Barr’s crisply compiled study of information technology, The Electronic Estate: New Communications and Australia. This. Barr, a lecturer in media studies at Swinburne Institute of Technology, brings the clarity of his radio commentaries on the media to work. What is a forceful report on the state of our publishing, broadcasting and communica­ tions systems, his book is not a dull and dry tome, but a witty and entertaining one. It is a morale­ booster for our politicians. It ringing the alarm bells for our politicians. It is a forceful report on the state of our publishing, broadcasting and communica­ tions systems. It is a forceful report on the state of our publishing, broadcasting and communica­ tions systems. It is a forceful report on the state of our publishing, broadcasting and communica­ tions systems. It is a forceful report on the state of our publishing, broadcasting and communica­ tions systems. The Electronic Estate appears to be the alarm bells for our politicians. It is a forceful report on the state of our publishing, broadcasting and communica­ tions systems. The Electronic Estate appears to be the alarm bells for our politicians. It is a forceful report on the state of our publishing, broadcasting and communica­ tions systems. The Electronic Estate appears to be the alarm bells for our politicians. It is a forceful report on the state of our publishing, broadcasting and communica­ tions systems. The Electronic Estate appears to be the alarm bells for our politicians. It is a forceful report on the state of our publishing, broadcasting and communica­ tions systems.
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