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Terry Hayes
‘Bangkok Hilton’

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‘The Year My Voice Broke’ Sequel

Simon Wincer
and ‘Quigley Down Under’

Ron Cobb
Designing ‘The Abyss’
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INTEGRATING FILMVIEWS
NOVEMBER 1989
NUMBER 76

Contents

3 BRIEFLY: NEWS AND VIEWS

6 SIMON WINCER: 
Trusting His Instincts
Interview by Scott Murray

14 KENNEDY MILLER:
Cross-over and Collaboration
Debi Enker

24 TERRY HAYES: 
Bangkok Hilton
Interview by Scott Murray

30 JOHN DUIGAN:
Flirting
Interview by Scott Murray

36 ROMERO AND FATHER KIESER
Peter Malone

38 FLASHBACK:
Dennis Hopper and Kiefer Sutherland
Rod Bishop

42 BOULEVARD FILMS AND FRANK HOWSON
Paul Kalina

48 RON COBB
Interview by Paul Harris

53 FACES: Deborah Unger
Andrew Urban

54 DIRTY DOZEN

56 TECHNICALITIES:
IREECON '89, Laser-disc Editing
Fred Harden

60 FILM REVIEWS
Island Anne-Marie Crawford
Sex, Lies and Videotape Hunter Cordaity
Buried Alive Marcus Breen
Blind Fury Adrian Martin
Paris by Night Scott Murray

67 PRODUCTION SURVEY

80 CENSORSHIP LISTINGS

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The most interesting recent piece of local activity did not come from those organizations which are sopping up the tax funds allocated to film. It was a weekend of French 1920s features organized in Canberra by the Humanities Research Centre of the A.N.U., where Roger Hillman got together with the Cultural Service of the French Embassy and brought in Cinemathèque Française copies.

Movies had to have labels when those were made. That was what criticism was about. However, these French "Impressionist" films, the work of Louis Delluc, Jean Gremillon and Jean Epstein, actually did stand apart from those of the celebrity directors like Jean Renoir, Jacques Feyder and René Clair, which make up our limited notion of the French silent cinema.

Surprisingly, it is the "Impressionist" titles that contain the roots of the later French work. The bogus high fashion of Epstein's Le Glace a Trois Faces prefigures Alain Resnais' L'Année Dernière a Marienbad. In the barges and canals of Epstein's La Belle Ninonaite and Gremillon's Madame one sees those of L'Atlantide, Les Amants de Bras Mort and the rest, while the costumed, massgoing islanders of Gremillon's Gardiens de Phare foreshadow Drey a Besoin des Hommes. The graffited Marseilles bar of Gremillon's Coeur Fidele anticipates the Marcel Pagnol trio and comes complete with Van Dael's cigarette-in-mouth-corner- and-cap Jean Gabin prototype, playing opposite the sultry Gina Manes.

Note how much more effective is the knife fight of the 1928 Coeur Fidele, intercut with the montage of fair ground activity, than the more celebrated scene in Clair's Sous Les Toits de Paris two years later.

Even more unexpected was their form of film syntax, including a system of fades, wipes and iris all going to white, rather than black, or Glace a Trois Faces' recapitulation, playing jump cut images in reverse order.

It was interesting to get a look at the work of Delluc—basic and a little stiff but coming from the mind of the creator of both the film societies and art cinema movement.

It was not that these films were outstanding. They were limited by simple-minded story content, though all were intriguing and Coeur Fidele and Finis Terra considerably more.

The striking thing was that the screenings threw into relief the problems of serious film viewing in this country. Good as the 16mm copies were, they were a poor reproduction of the tinted originals. These nine films were only a fraction of those in the 47 programmes run in London, in turn taken from a far more extensive collection. The attendances were disappointing and even more disturbing was the lack of a mechanism to give wider exposure to copies brought halfway round the world at considerable effort.

The enthusiast network which once would have been delighted to have access to such prints has been thoroughly disrupted, the N.F.T. "mergered" out of existence, government charges introduced on formerly free libraries (NSW's no longer lends prints) and film history made marginal in media courses.

For the enthusiast group who did roll up a few days later with a vari-speed projector and a player full of K-Tel Classics for accompanied, the pleasure of seeing the material was muted by the knowledge that this was the only glimpse we were going to get into the range of historical material, no longer explored here.

We must look to the Australian Film Commission—more it seems to locate the problem than the solution.

It has proven impossible to establish any kind of discussion on the matter. Though you would never know it from reading the subsidized film publications, the destruction of the National Film Theatre of Australia has now been raised twice in federal parliament with very unsatisfactory responses from the AFC: funded studies used as an excuse for delays and rejected when delivered, refusal to offer specifics, no hint of commitment to archival exhibition.

The Peat Marwick study of that organization, which might have been a point at which the whistle was blown on this issue, took no action. The author, despite having read, among other things, the suppressed Rabindowitz Report on Subsidised Exhibition, commented "the Cinematheque concept is alive and well", presumably a reference to an outside Enthusiast initiative, largely by Dr. George Miller. (Just be glad he's on your side!)

Instead of the pilot programme of screenings which should have been put in place when the Australian Film Institute proved incapable of functioning as an archival exhibitor, we are to have another funded report and do not hold your breath there either. The AFC's Cultural Affairs officer has already told the Commonwealth Ombudsman that they are going to adhere to the recommendations of yet another of their in-house studies and put all their money into local production.

Australia has now been without a National Film Theatre for a decade. In the 1960s it took a handful of enthusiasts, operating part time out of someone's living room, six weeks to set up the NFTA. That provided a supply of serious film unparalleled here, before or since, for eleven years. It would still be there, if some accounts are correct, without the intervention of the bureaucracy. No one has yet explained why $40,000-a-year bureaucrats operating out of a North Sydney highrise have been unable to match that, for a decade. Watching those remarkable French silents brought home the scale of the problem.

CINEMA PAPERS 76 • 3

CORRIGENDA
- Margot Nash's Shadow Panic was incorrectly referred to in the last issue as Shadow Picnic. The photographer was Corrie Ancone.
- Mike Harris' ratings in "TV Scanners" (No. 79, p. 55) is incorrect. Harris used 1 as his highest rating, not 10 like the other reviewers. Harris has declined to participate further.
- In the review of Scouette (p. 57), it was incorrectly stated that the film had failed to get nominated at the AFI Awards for Best Screenplay.
By
Paul Davies Film and Television Entertainment

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BANNED FILM UNBANNED
Leonard Kastle's cult classic, The Honeymoon Killers, has been banned in Australia since its U.S. release in 1969, and has finally been cleared by the Commonwealth Censor. Though the Censor felt the film no longer deserved to be banned, his office was faced with the legal problem of how to unban it. At first, the distributor, Mark Spratt, was told that he would have to re-submit the film to the Censor, who would have no option but to rule it still banned. However, the Appeals Board would then overturn that ruling and classify it "R". Spratt suggested that this was a waste of time and money (two submission fees), but the Censor felt there was no legal alternative. (The distributors of the now unbanned Beyond the Valley of the Dolls faced a similar problem.) Spratt argued that there were in fact precedents for the Censor unbanning a film and, after further research, the Censor agreed and then certified the film.

MIMA'S OTHER PLEASURES
The Modern Image Makers Association is running a season of 11 programmes of film and video at the State Film Centre, Melbourne, 17 - 22 November. The programmes include "Feminist Avant Garde Film", which ranges from the 1970s to the present and includes work by Helen Grace and Erica Addis, Jane Campion, Tracey Moffatt and Margot Nash; "Sound Sync - In Performance", where film- and video-makers and musicians will work collaboratively to explore the various approaches to combining images and music in a live-performance context; and "Into the Nineties", a diverse view of recent video. For more information, contact MIMA on (03) 650 7692.

ATOM AWARDS
The Australian Teachers of Media organization is seeking entries for the 1989 ATOM Awards to Short, Educational Films and Videotapes. Entries will be considered for their use in education, but previous winners have not always been made with that intention in mind. Any short under 60 minutes and made after October 1988 will be eligible. Entries close 6 November. Telephone: (03) 482 2393.

FOR THE RECORD
AFC and FILM AUSTRALIA
As has already been widely reported, Daniel Rowland has left his position as chief executive of the Australian Film Commission. Cathy Robinson, who heads cultural activities for the AFC, has become acting chief executive. Peter Sainsbury, general manager, film development, has become deputy chief executive. Both will retain their existing functions.

AI Clark, head of film production and development with the Beyond International Group, has been appointed to the AFC board for a term of three years. Sandra Levy has been re-appointed for one year.

Robin Hughes has chosen not to renew her contract as managing director at Film Australia. She will leave at the end of this year. Applicants are now being sought for the position.

1989 AUSTRALIAN FILM INSTITUTE AWARDS
THE FOLLOWING AWARDS WERE ANNOUNCED AT THE PALAIS THEATRE, ST KILDA, ON THE EVENING OF OCTOBER 11.

FEATURE FILM
BEST FILM
Evil Angels
BEST DIRECTION
Fred Schepisi (Evil Angels)
BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY
Gerard Lee and Jane Campion (Sweetie)
BEST ACTRESS
Meryl Streep (Evil Angels)
BEST ACTOR
Sam Neill (Evil Angels)
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS
Victoria Longley (Celia)
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
Chris Haywood (Emerald City)
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
Dean Semler (Dead Calm)
BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY
Robert Casswell, Fred Schepisi (Evil Angels)
BEST EDITING
Richard Francis-Brice (Dead Calm)
BEST ORIGINAL MUSIC SCORE
Graeme Revell (Dead Calm)
BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN
Chris Kennedy (Ghosts ... of the Civil Dead)
BEST COSTUME DESIGN
Rose Chong (What the Moon Saw)
BEST SOUND
Ben Osmo, Lee Smith, Roger Savage (Dead Calm)
MEMBERS PRIZE FOR EXCELLENCE
IN A FEATURE FILM
Evil Angels

KODAK NON-FEATURE AWARDS
BEST DOCUMENTARY
Joe Leahy's Neighbours
BEST SHORT FICTION FILM
Bonza
BEST ANIMATED FILM
Still Flying
BEST EXPERIMENTAL FILM
Seal Mate
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
Sally Bongers (Shadow Pantis)
BEST DIRECTION
David Ogilvy (The Contract)
BEST EDITING
Denise Haslem, Tim Litchfield (Australia Daze)
BEST SCREENPLAY
David Swann (Bonza)

BEST SOUND
Liam Egan, Greg Bell, Robert Sullivan (Bodywork)

RAYMOND LONGFORD AWARD
(posthumously)
John Meillon

BYRON KENNEDY AWARD
Jane Campion

TELEVISION SECTION
MINI-SERIES
BEST MINI SERIES
Edens Lost
BEST DIRECTION
Neil Armfield (Edens Lost)
BEST SCREENPLAY
Joint Winners
Suzanne Hawley, Chris Lee, Denis Witburn (Body surfer)
Michael Gow (Edens Lost)
BEST ACTOR
Peter Kowitz (Body surfer)
BEST ACTRESS
Julia Blake (Edens Lost)

TELEFEATURES
BEST TELEFEATURE
Police State
BEST DIRECTOR
Peter Fisk (Rescue)
BEST SCREENPLAY
Ian David, Francine Finnane (Police State)
BEST ACTOR
Bill Hunter (Police State)
BEST ACTRESS
Pat Thomson (Malpractice)
Simon Wincer is one of Australia's finest directors, though he has rarely been given his proper due at home. Perhaps it is that his skills are too unobtrusive or are mistakenly seen as too conventionally mainstream. Wincer's greatest ability is to simply and effectively tell stories, always heightening the tale, never getting in its way. Many actors have given their finest performances under his direction, and when the emotional strings of an audience are meant to be tugged, they invariably are. It is for these reasons that his recent American mini-series, *Lonesome Dove*, has received unstinted praise in the U.S. and a record 18 Emmy nominations. Wincer is currently back in Australia filming *Quigley Down Under*, a $16 million production for Pathe Entertainment. Starring Tom Selleck and Laura San Giacomo, this 1860s adventure-romance is being filmed near Alice Springs, at the Port Melbourne Studios and on the Warrnambool coast. Wincer was interviewed at his Yarra Valley property by Scott Murray, during pre-production. PHOTO: PONCH HAWKES
WINGERS: Quigley Down Under is the story of Mathew Quigley, a rather trouble-prone cowboy with a fabulous long-range rifle. He arrives in colonial Australia to face two problems: Crazy Cora, who thinks he's her husband, and a ruthless landowner, who wants him to kill Aborigines. Quigley wants nothing to do with either, but ends up involved with both, ultimately becoming an unlikely legend.

Apparently the screenplay had been around for some time.

Yes. It was originally written for Clint Eastwood, who had it for a long time at Warners. About four years ago, Tom Selleck heard of it and UAA got involved. They tried putting it together for Warner Bros. and I think CBS Films, with Lewis Gilbert as director. But it fell over during pre-production.

By this stage, the script had gone through many drafts, all written by people not associated with Australia. You could see how committees had completely ruined it with re-writes. I didn't know much about that period of Australian history, so I gave it to Ian Jones. And it was Jonesy who said, "Actually, there's a bloody good story here." I then took it on, but only on the condition we could make the thing accurately Australian, as opposed to being an American western superimposed on Australia.

Ian Jones and I then went back to the original draft and literally started again. We changed the period and took out a little of the 'local' colour, such as koalas chained to guys' shoulders.

Why have you changed the period?

It was set in the 1880s and we've taken it back to the 1860s. It deals with things like the convict era and redcoats that couldn't have happened as originally portrayed in the script. We've made it historically accurate — not that it's a history lesson.

Who have you cast so far?

Tom Selleck is Quigley and Crazy Cora is being played by a sensational actress, Laura San Giacomo, from Sex, Lies and Videotape. Crazy Cora is one of the better roles written for a woman, and Laura could actually walk away with the film. That's not demeaning Tom, it's just that hers is such a good role.

Cora's kind of in and out of sanity the entire film, right until the very end. She and Quigley start off on the wrong foot and their relationship goes from bad to worse. They never really become close until well into the picture, which is nice.

The ruthless landowner is being played by Alan Rickman, a terrific actor who was the baddie in Die Hard. Of course, it's all subject to Equity approval. But because it's American finance and quite a large Australian cast, I think we'll get it through.

There's a terrific part for a young kid, and I'm really pleased we were able to get Ben Mendelsohn, who has the potential to go a long way. We also have Warren Mitchell, who is playing a wonderful German character, and Evelyn Krape. I don't think Evelyn's done anything in a mainstream film before, but she is a terrific actress.

You are doing Quigley Down Under for the newly formed Pathe Entertainment.

Yes. Pathe was formed by Giancarlo Paretti and swallowed up the French company, Pathe Pictures, the Cannon Group and several other smaller companies. It has become a major studio overnight and is headed by Alan Ladd Jr.

When he was at Fox, Laddy was the one who kept giving George Lucas the money to finish Star Wars and the one who financed Chariots of Fire. But he left Fox by the time Chariots was due to be distributed and, when Fox decided not to handle it, he picked it up for the Ladd Company. The rest is history and it went on to win the Best Picture Oscar.

Laddy has been around a lot of interesting movies, including Willow, Moonstruck, Norma Rae, A Fish Called Wanda, The Right Stuff and the original Police Academy. He's a very good operator, very quiet and not your typical American studio chief. He's very approachable and a real film buff. It was really Laddy's persistence that got me to look at the script of Quigley in the first place.

Pathe is also doing Fred Schepisi's The Russia House.

Yes, and possibly a new film with Gillian Armstrong.

Pathe has announced it is going to make 10 movies a year. The head of Creative Affairs is Rebecca Pollock, a daughter of director Sidney Pollock. Although I haven't met Sidney, I call him "my stringer photographer". I rang and asked him to take some photographs of western artifacts he has in his log cabin in Utah, which I
needed for research on Quigley. I am now having conversations with him about his credit on the movie!

**Who is shooting Quigley?**

David Eggby, who I used to work with at Crawfords. He has made a bit of a name for himself in the States with Warlock, which is a terrific looking film, and his second-unit work on Predator.

Ross Berriman is shooting second unit, which Adrian Carr, who is the editor, is directing. As everyone goes up in the business, it's hard to keep the old team together.

**Are you returning to the anamorphic format of The Lighthorseman?**

Yes. But because the video market is so important in America, I have agreed to block all the scenes for 1.85:1, which you can usually squeeze onto television. I will only really use the anamorphic format for landscapes.

It must be quite challenging switching back and forth from anamorphic to the near square television frame of Lonesome Dove.

I suppose it is, but because I started in television I'm used to it. The biggest challenge, actually, is how wide you can make your wide shots. In television, you always seem to do them two-tenths wider than they should be. You can never shoot too tightly on television and you become quite adept at squeezing a lot into a frame.

The beauty of the wide screen is just being able to use the full amount. I went and saw Lawrence of Arabia again a couple of weeks ago in Los Angeles with Ian Jones, and we just drooled. Lean just used every corner of the frame. There were scenes where the camera didn't move, but he was able to use the format to move people around. No one does that now, which is a pity.

**Probably because of the video market.**

Yes. If you look at Lawrence on video, you'll see it has been bastardized by panning and scanning. Cripes, it's awful.

**Having worked in Australia and America, have you found many differences with crews?**

Actually, they're very similar. The main difference is not so much in the crewing but the back-up. In America, they anticipate every possible occurrence: what happens if the set blows over, or if there's a plane strike, or if we can't get to location.

On D.A.R.Y.L., for instance, we were relying on the Airforce for a particular location and at the last minute they withdrew their cooperation – they didn't agree with the approach the film was taking. This is the scene where the kid steals the SR71 spy plane. Lockheed still wanted us to use the plane, but we suddenly didn't have an airport. So overnight the art department created a set at the back of Orlando Airport. They chartered 15 helicopters, spray painted them and brought in old B52s and lots of trucks and things. It was fantastic, and ended up looking better than the location we had planned to use. That's where they're so good.
Crew-wise, I think they are pretty similar the world over. They dress the same, tell the same jokes and drink the same beer. But maybe American crews are just a little more professional in their approach. People specialize more, and are proud of their particular niche. They also take the trouble to go see your last movie before they work with you.

With crews in Australia, you get the sense they are doing it more as a way of making a living. In America, they do it more because they love being part of the movies. They’ve usually seen everything that’s showing and you can have a good conversation about a particular film with almost any crew member.

I regard it as part of my job to go to the movies two or three times a week to see what else is happening. People here tend not to do that as much.

Perhaps one of the reasons there’s so little crew specialization in Australia is that everyone is concentrating on moving to the next rung up the ladder.

I guess that’s because the industry is still relatively young. You and I fit into that same category. I started as a mail boy at the ABC and worked my way up. You began as a film critic and now you’re a director. Everyone has their ambitions.

But, yes, there isn’t that willingness here to specialize, to become the best focus puller or the best camera operator. There are guys in America I know who could be cinematographers but enjoy operating too much to take the step. They feel they can contribute just as much by perfecting what they do.

On Lonesome Dove, you worked a six-day week. How does it feel coming back to Australia and the five-day week?

Well, America is a five-day week in the major cities like Los Angeles or New York. But as soon as you’re away on location it’s six days.

As a director, I certainly prefer a six-day week. Usually you are working in a place where you wouldn’t want to spend two days off. You also get a terrific momentum going and on Sunday you just want to collapse and recover.

The biggest difference in America is the twelve-hour shooting day instead of our ten. And they don’t have tea breaks, but something much better called craft service. There’s a guy who keeps tea and coffee and little snacks on the go all the time. So people just grab a cup of coffee when there’s a pause to do a set-up or the director’s rehearsing the cast. It’s much more efficient.

In the States, you have six hours without a break, then a meal break of only thirty minutes, timed from the last person to get his dinner, and then six more hours straight. It’s a very concentrated working day, but it’s more satisfactory than the stop-start you get in Australia.

On television over there, they shoot each day until they finish the schedule. The deadlines in episodic television are so tight they just can’t afford to get behind schedule. Sigrid Thornton recently told me how gruelling it is, particularly on a Friday, which is usually the last day of an episode. Sometimes they’re on stage for as long as 14 or 15 hours, which is very unfair on the cast. A 12-hour day is probably long enough for anybody.

What’s your reaction to the present state of the Australian film industry?

Our film industry is virtually non-existent. Hopefully it will get back to the situation where the projects that get made are those where the people involved really have a passion for their project. It was not all that hard to get finance for a movie three years ago, and too many films got made for our limited resources.

I must say, though, I have been quite removed from things since The Lighthorsemen, and it’s hard for me to be objective. But I have no doubt good scripts will always get made. There’s a universal shortage of them, not just in Australia. I get sent hundreds of the bloody things and most of them you go, “So what?” When a Lonesome Dove comes along, it’s joyous.

Do you worry that we might become little more than a service industry to the Americans?

I just hope that what happened in England doesn’t occur here. In the late 1960s and early 70s, English people suddenly found themselves working solely for Americans. Today the English industry is virtually non-existent. We are probably making more indigenous movies than they are in England.

It’s all very well to make Mission: Impossible here, especially from the technicians’ and actors’ point of view, but it doesn’t advance our industry at all. What happened with New World and Dino de Laurentiis makes me very angry: how they managed to come out here and con investors into buying shares. That was just appalling.

But the thing that makes me disappointed is that I’m one of a handful of local filmmakers to have worked extensively both here and in the States. Yet not once have I ever been asked to give an opinion on the industry by organized bodies like the Film Commission or the Film School. It seems strange that the people deciding the course of the film industry don’t contact people like myself.

As for some of the so-called experts that I believe are giving lectures at the Film School, that just amazes me. I’m not after a job lecturing at the Film School, but if I were asked to give a class, and I had the time, that is the sort of thing I’d enjoy doing. Phar Lap, Snowy River and The Lighthorsemen are Australian movies that all had major distribution in the U.S. and I could probably talk as knowledgeably about distribution there as any Australian filmmaker.

As for television, I don’t think there’s anyone locally who would have my experience with American networks. Lonesome Dove is the fourth network television show I’ve done. I would happily tell people about the politics of network television and what’s expected of you. I know some of the problems.
How did you become involved in _Lonesome Dove_?

The rights to Larry McMurtry’s novel were owned by Mowtown Productions, which is headed by a very bright black lady, Suzanne de Passe. She had bought the rights when every other studio had turned them down. One month later, the book won the Pulitzer Prize and, of course, everyone then wanted the project.

Mowtown was doing the mini-series for CBS with Robert Halmi Productions as deficit financiers. Halmi at that time was being taken over by Qintex. The head of Qintex in America, David Evans, a friend and a fan of my work, suggested me as director to Suzanne, and the other two producers, Bill Witiiff, who was also the writer, and Dyson Lovell.

That same day, I was also suggested by Steve Mills, then head of mini-series at CBS. I had already done two mini-series for the network: _The Last Frontier_, which had been an absolute ratings winner, and _Bluegrass_, which hadn’t as yet gone to air but which CBS had seen and really liked.

The next thing that happened was that the three producers sat down and looked at _The Lighthorsemen_ and _Phar Lap_, which they loved. They then flew me over to L.A. for an interview.

At that stage, they had also cast Robert Duvall. As he had director approval, he also looked at my movies.

Was the screenplay finalized at that stage?

Bill Witiiff had spent a year writing various drafts and it was virtually in its final draft form. There were a couple of minor adjustments after that, and a few I’m pleased to say came from my suggestions. They incorporated a few visual things from the book which I felt we could capitalize on.

*The stepling of the horses at night is one example. Originally, Bill had them stealing some cattle, which they also do. But cattle don’t run very fast, and I felt it would be much more spectacular if the first confrontation with the Mexicans was with the horses.*

Another idea I had was to have the boys run the stolen horses through the town of Lonesome Dove the next morning. Such ideas were heavily influenced by the fact that I knew from previous experience how we could do that sort of stuff fairly successfully, without consuming much shooting time.

Witiiff has written a very intelligent screenplay. It is also one of the most faithful adaptations I have seen.

Bill is a great writer and I owe him a lot. After all, you are only as good as the material you have to deal with.

The dialogue is wonderfully succinct. There are no long speeches and a lot happens between the lines, with unspoken dialogue. The words were always so right the actors never wanted to change things to suit themselves. That’s a great compliment to McMurtry and to Bill, who tried to use where possible the dialogue from the book.

Apparently, Witiiff is a friend of McMurtry’s.

Yes and it was Bill who in fact told me about the genesis of the book. When Peter Bogdanovich was shooting _The Last Picture Show_, McMurtry used to go on the set a lot. And one day Bogdanovich suggested they do a movie together featuring old cowboys. So McMurtry dreamed up the idea of three old cowboys having one last great adventure together. The cowboys were to be played by screen legends: Henry Fonda was to be Jake; John Wayne, Call; and Jimmy Stewart, Gus. It was called _The Streets of Laredo_, but for one reason or another people weren’t available and it didn’t get made.

McMurtry then decided that there was more to the story than just a screenplay. And as he’d always wanted to write a salute to his heritage in Texas, he developed his 100-page script into a thousand-page novel.

As for the name Lonesome Dove, McMurtry apparently saw a church group bus broken down on the side of the road with Lonesome Dove written on it. There’s no such place as Lonesome Dove.

There is now. It is part of the Western mythology.

You’re right. After the show went to air in America, I got hundreds of letters from various people. One guy in Miles City, Montana, who is a writer and a bit of a fan of my movies, wrote and said there are signs hanging everywhere in Miles City now: “Gus McCrae poked here”, “Gus McCrae drank here” ...

Did you meet McMurtry?

No, I still haven’t met him – that’s how far removed he was from it. But Bill fed him each draft of the script as it was finished. I think McMurtry’s major comment was that Bill had come up with a slightly better ending than in the book.

By moving to the end the scene where the journalist asks Call [Tommy Lee Jones] about his “vision”?

Yes, and by having Call recall the cost of the journey. It sort of rounded things off. Overall, though, I gather McMurtry is very pleased by what we did.

One of the real challenges in scripting terms must have been the number of interweaving stories. Was there much juggling involved?

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*LEFT: GUS MCCRAE (ROBERT DUVALL) AND LORENA (DIANE LANE) IN SIMON Wincer’S AWARD-WINNING ADAPTATION OF LARRY McMURTRY’S LONESOME DOVE.*
I think everybody thought that problem had been solved at the script level, but quite a lot of juggling went on in post-production.

Virtually the first 100 pages of *Lonesome Dove* deals with the main characters up until they go to Mexico to steal the horses. And that's basically what we tried to do. But we ended up inter-cutting the story more than had been scripted, and introducing some of the other characters a little earlier to help the pacing.

You have captured exactly the laconic opening of the novel. What is inconceivable is that an American network let you get away with it. The dramatic high point, I guess, is when the biscuits are finally cooked.

Yes, or when Gus [Robert Duvall] shoos away the pigs [laughs].

We were faithful to the book and I suppose the network had to go with it. If you're going to do the story of *Lonesome Dove*, you have to establish the lifestyle the boys had before they leave it. And the one way to do that was this sort of atmospheric opening.

*Lonesome Dove* doesn't have the usual peaks and valleys Americans artificially inject into their screenplays. In a sense, you have filmed the novel 'innocently'. It feels as if it could be the first Western ever told on film.

That's intentional. I chose not to look at any Westerns, so that I wouldn't be consciously influenced by anything that had gone before. I guess the last Western I saw was *Silverado*.

Which is the complete antithesis.

Exactly. *Silverado* is very stylistic in its approach, whereas mine was to capture the sense that this was really what it must have been like.

Bill Wittliff is a wonderful historian and has a terrific research library. With Carey White, the production designer, I looked at hundreds and hundreds of old photographs. Every building and every town was based on research.

It was the same with the wardrobe. Van (Broughton) Ramsey went for total accuracy. There are no low-slung guns, no strings tied around legs and stuff like that. Guns misfired and guys were dirty and dusty. They spat a lot and had dirty teeth. Their clothes were mostly worn out and nobody had any money. Life was boring, and it was hot and dusty. All the things Hollywood tends to avoid, we chose to show.

So, the look of the thing is certainly different.

The other thing was we had a wonderful cast, people who were not scared to play a pause or lean on a rail to take a breath between lines of dialogue. When you're working with actors like that, you can achieve a greater sense of reality.

**How closely were able to use the actual locations of the book?**

Pretty much. When I first came on the project, they wanted to film all of it in New Mexico. But New Mexico doesn't look like Texas, and the whole genesis of *Lonesome Dove* is in Texas. Luckily Bill Wittliff being Texan knew the only way to show the story was to try and use Texas locations for Texas.

Carey White drew a map of the whole journey and then we got photographs taken of all the different places on the journey. Then we just matched them to the locations. We found four main points where we could base the production, and branched out from there. So, half of *Lonesome Dove* was shot in Texas.

Part of the pleasure of watching *Lonesome Dove* is observing the ever-changing backgrounds.
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The ubiquitous narrator of Kennedy Miller’s productions might say it was a time of change, a time when a mood of optimism existed for the fledgling Australian film industry, a period that witnessed an unprecedented burst of creative energy. Then, that distinctive voice – the voice of destiny, of omniscience, the prophetic voice that has dominated so many of Kennedy Miller’s films and mini-series – might talk of how no one, at that time of so-called renaissance, could have foreseen the upheavals to come: the economic pressures, the escalating feelings of frustration and disillusionment, the subsequent exodus of so many of the pioneers. Finally, our narrator might turn his or her attention to the outsider, the one who arrived in an unexpected blaze of glory, who stood resolutely, even defiantly, apart and yet consistently maintained a steady course through the uncertainty. And here, our narrator might continue in that measured, unhurried voice, is the story of that outsider...

*This is a revised and updated version of “Cross-over and Collaboration”, first published in Back of Beyond: Discovering Australian Film and Television, Australian Film Commission, 1988. The catalogue was commissioned for a programme of film and television held at the University of California, Los Angeles, in October-November 1988. It is available from the AFC and Cinema Papers.

It is a romantic view, a simplistic account of the life and public image of a company formed by Byron Kennedy and George Miller, initially called Kennedy Miller Entertainment and subsequently just Kennedy Miller. It is an account that ignores the canny business decisions, the shrewd analysis of the economic climate, the company’s survival following the tragic death of Kennedy in a helicopter crash in 1983. It ignores the company’s pragmatic refusal to limit its horizons by specializing in film or television. It overlooks the spirit of innovation that has driven the company and the gambles that have paid off.

And, equally, not all the outsiders created for the large and small screens by Kennedy Miller have been triumphant, or calculated their courses so deliberately, or necessarily succeeded in the conventional sense of the word.
Yet, in some ways, placing the company into one of its own scenarios seems oddly appropriate. It does stand alone, quite apart from the film and television industries, maintaining its own rhythms, staffing structures, approach to production and aversion to publicity. And, since Mad Max (George Miller, 1979) burst on to Australian screens, the company’s image has lent itself to descriptions that might fit its first protagonist: capable, isolationist, renegade, tenacious.

Terry Hayes, who joined the company as a writer on Mad Max 2 (George Miller, 1981; also known as The Road Warrior), could, in fact, have been summarizing a romantic’s view of the organization when he said, during filming on the mini-series Vietnam (John Duigan, Chris Noonan, 1987), “We have a saying here at Kennedy Miller – Be Bold or Be Nothing.”

Mad Max appeared at a time when the industry was in the midst of a boom, when Australians were beginning to believe in the viability of a home-grown film industry and take pride in it. Yet, there were also doubts. There existed a nagging feeling that the industry was content to churn out nostalgic accounts of the past rather than to tackle more contemporary issues and concerns. Although Australians had not had the benefit of the sort of popular visual history that Americans enjoyed from Westerns, some critics maintained that the budding industry was taking the soft and safe options, a view that currently applies to mini-series.

Then, unexpectedly, there was Mad Max, a futuristic action film, boldly brandishing its literary and cinematic origins with a hero who would be equally at home in Dodge City or ancient Rome. It seemed brave, innovative and accomplished, exhibiting a seductive kinetic energy that was unique at the time — and has only rarely been achieved since.

Prior to Mad Max, Kennedy and Miller had collaborated on the short film Violence in the Cinema...Part 1 (George Miller, 1972) and an hour-long television special, Devil in Evening Dress (George Miller, 1973). However, the critical and commercial success of their first feature, which returned $A100 million from its world-wide release and became one of the few films of the period to make money, catapulted the pair to international prominence. A decade later, the company they established has produced five features, six mini-series, a television documentary series and three tele-features, and become the country’s most consistently successful film and television production house.

Clearly, Kennedy Miller’s development owes some debt to forces beyond its control, such as the 10BA tax incentives introduced by the Federal government. But, equally, an examination of the organization must recognize the distinctive attitudes and work methods that have contributed to its position.

From the time that the company completed its first mini-series, The Dismissal (George Miller, Phillip Noyce, George Ogilvie, Carl Shulitz, John Power, 1983), a number of fundamental elements have characterized the television production, in particular, and had varying degrees of influence on the features.

Initially, there is the commitment to what Miller calls the “comprehensivist” ideal:

Byron and I began by just trying to make films, looking to learn as much as we could about the process. Intuitively, both of us were comprehensivists: we wanted to explore all facets of filmmaking. We felt it was essential for us, as it is for everybody in a small industry, not to specialize.

Then Terry Hayes came in, and he too is very much a comprehensivist, even though he had been a journalist and writer. He was able to adapt the methodology he had learnt in journalism to filmmaking.

We further consolidated that ideal when Doug Mitchell joined us in 1983. Doug came to us as finance director but has emerged as the ‘silent power’ behind Kennedy Miller. He would pooh-pooh this, but his creative instincts are extremely acute. You see, beyond his business skills, he has evolved into a very skilled filmmaker.
So, if there is any one thing that characterizes Kennedy Miller, it is our belief in being as generalist as possible. We see the filmmaking process as organic and comprehensive.

But, Miller adds, it wasn’t originally comprehensive enough to include television:

When we began Kennedy Miller we despised television as a lower level of existence. But soon we realized it was just a different level - a different ecology, if you like. Now we are addicted to it.

Equally, the desire to explore all facets of the process seems to have imbued a spirit of innovation, a desire to attempt different forms and styles of visual storytelling. At the same time, the way that Kennedy, Miller and Hayes worked together, coupled with the unique demands of The Dismissal, produced a commitment to production based on collaboration at many stages: conception, writing, performance and direction. Says Hayes:

There was never any selfishness in George or Byron. They were always collaborative by nature. They never saw themselves as the makers of Mad Max who had to protect themselves from this new person. Rather, it was, ‘Come and join the commandos. If you are stupid enough to want to join, we want to have you.’

Finally, and evident in retrospect, Kennedy Miller’s output has largely focused on Australian history and values in the 20th Century, and it has chosen a wide-angle lens for that focus, a view that encompasses a broad range of motivations, opinions and actions.

Collaboration has become a cornerstone of the company’s approach to production. “Film-making is collaborative”, says Terry Hayes:

I’ve heard all these stories about the auteur theory of filmmaking. In the real world, that’s not how it happens. You have to work with your cinematographer, producer, director.

Collaboration requires a catalyst to work properly, and that’s not always me. George did it to Phil Noyce and me on Dead Calm [Noyce, 1989]. Phil and I had been squirrelling away on the script and we were really quite proud of it. Then George came back from America [where he had directed The Witches of Eastwick] and read it. He sat me down in particular and said, ‘It starts on page 50. Drop the first 49.’ I told him he was nuts...

At this point, we were about to start pre-production and the pressure was really on. But I thought about what George had said, and I had to admit he was right. Now, if George had been a polite person, if he had felt sensitive towards me, he wouldn’t have been so blunt. He might have just said to look at a certain scene or try re-working some dialogue. And that wouldn’t have resulted in the problems getting fixed.

The company’s approach, however, can be harrowing for writers in particular, to the extent that the Australian Writers’ Guild caution its members about working for Kennedy Miller. Tony Morphett, who wrote the screenplay for The Riddle of the Stinson (Chris Noonan, 1988), was involved in scripting The Dirtwater Dynasty (Michael Jenkins, John Power, 1988) and is an active Guild member, told a Sydney newspaper that some writers had complained that working for the company resembled “being raped by a 90-tonne gorilla”. While he understands the sentiments underlying that viewpoint, he describes his work with Kennedy Miller as “a genuine collaboration exercise”:

We wrote and re-wrote and tore each other’s work apart and put it together again ... Everyone was writing bits. There are some writers who hate this. It’s a total collaboration. A lot of writers are recluses by nature and, I imagine, would be horrified by the process.

But even a cursory examination of the company’s production credits reveals an ensemble of actors (including Bruce Spence, Hugo Weaving, Nicole Kidman and Nicholas Eadie) and writers-directors (such as Phillip Noyce, John Duigan, Chris Noonan, John Power, Ken Cameron and Carl Schultz) who find the collaborative approach productive and keep coming back for more.

Michael Jenkins, who worked on The Dirtwater Dynasty script and directed six of its 10 hours, found the process stimulating in both capacities:

It’s no one’s great single passion. Although the idea for The Dirtwater Dynasty came from Terry, no one was precious about it - he certainly wasn’t. Even in post-production, if you had a difference of opinion about whether a scene should go or stay, or should be shortened or changed in some way, it was a pretty democratic argument. They are not high-handed at any stage, and that’s pretty rare.

For an actor, the priority given to workshopping and rehearsal can be a refreshing change, moving the often compartmentalized process of film or television production closer to the methods of theatre. Bruce Spence, who plays the Gyro Captain in Mad Max 2, Jedediah in Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome (George Miller and George Ogilvie, 1985), Jonah in The Year My Voice Broke (John Duigan, 1987) and Lonely Logan in The Dirtwater Dynasty, says:

Kennedy Miller’s work methods and approach to creating drama are exciting collaborative acts. They create a situation for actors - and I know it applies to other people as well - in which you really feel you are an important part of the contribution. You’re not just a cog, and, as a result, you find yourself giving an enormous amount because you know how much your contribution is valued.
The emphasis on a creative ensemble's working together from the beginning of a production was consolidated by the inclusion of theatre director George Ogilvie in the team working on The Dismissal, and by the requirements of that six-hour mini-series' tracing the demise of Australia's Labor Government in 1975. Says Miller:

_The Dismissal_ was a tremendous learning process — a baptism of fire, if you like. More important, it was a quantum leap for us in terms of working with new writers and directors, and in evolving an understanding of the collaborative process ... George Ogilvie had come to work with us, and he brought with him this ensemble method of working with actors. It was a way of achieving a cohesive style and group rhythm amongst a disparate group of actors.9

That landmark mini-series also shaped the public perception of the company and constructed an approach to narrative that would recur in its work throughout the 1980s.

The decision to produce an account of the most traumatic upheaval in Australia's constitutional history, less than a decade after its occurrence, can only be regarded as a monumental risk. The dismissal of Gough Whitlam's Government by the Governor General, Sir John Kerr, divided the nation and initiated a controversy — unresolved to this day — about the nature of the constitution. At the time that Kennedy Miller undertook the project, the events still burned fresh in the public psyche and many of the participants in the furore still occupied prominent and highly visible positions in public life. By the time it was completed, the television network that had secured the broadcast rights perceived it as such a political hot potato that it twice delayed its scheduled screening prior to the March 1983 Federal election.

To attempt to convey accurately the complexity of the events and emotions surrounding the crisis, while depicting those involved, and their motivations, was no mean feat in itself. But other crucial needs also had to be met. The mini-series could not take sides. There was no mileage to be gained from allowing individual feelings, which could alienate many viewers, to colour the narrative, nor would such prejudices help to illuminate the network of events surrounding the expulsion. Yet, repressing such prejudices could not have been easy.

In addition, politics is not traditionally an irresistible attraction for viewers; in fact, the opposite is probably true. Therefore, wooing and sustaining interest over three nights would not be easy. The most succinct measure of Kennedy Miller's success in negotiating this minefield is the fact that the television network subsequently promoted four mini-series, three tele-features and one feature simply as Kennedy Miller productions. The company name, in itself, had become a marketable commodity, synonymous with quality productions of an ambitious nature.

_The Dismissal_ also introduced an approach to drama that has since become a keynote of the company's television productions. Says Hayes:

If there is anything that characterizes Kennedy Miller's work, it is that everything we make has a strong belief. The most common belief in the things we make is, 'Don't trust the bastards', don't trust anybody in authority because they will sell you down the river. Vietnam is about being sold out by people who should have known better: parents, governments ... In _Bodyline_ [Carl Schultz, George Ogilvie, Danny Lawrence, Lex Marinos, 1984], the evils were the cricketing lords who sent Jardine [Hugo Weaving] out here on a godforsaken task, and the Australian Cricket Board. _The Dismissal_ is about a man who had the authority, Kerr [John Meillon], who sold everybody out, including his country. _Mad Max_ is about a guy who operates in a world where there is no authority, yet he chooses to do the moral thing.

But, as Hayes notes, another philosophy must operate in tandem with the "Don't trust the bastards" credo in order to avoid simplistic, knee- jerking narratives:

It would have been the easiest thing in the world to play Kerr as a rabid, power-crazed maniac. It would have been easy to play Jardine as a most hateful man. In _The Dictatorship Dynasty, Hasky Tarbox_ [Dennis Miller] is a vile man. Yet when he loses his property, you understand why he's vile: that's what he thought he had to be in order to survive. Richard Eastwick [Hugo Weaving] is a madman: he's obsessed, neurotically driven, avocaricious. Yet, at the end of it all, you see his humanity.

A writer cannot write, a producer shouldn't produce and an actor certainly can't play a character who is just evil. That's not drama. You must look for what is redeeming in a man. That's really the core of drama, and that's the hallmark of a Kennedy Miller production: it doesn't take cheap shots.
The approach that Hayes describes is a fundamental premise of humanist dramatic construction, and it is certainly one that has created a distinctive element of Kennedy Miller's mini-series, a style that Stuart Cunningham has aptly labelled "multiperspectivism." Essentially, rather than offer heroes or villains, *The Dismissal*, as an example, eschews simple judgement on its characters, offering instead a myriad of motivations, perspectives and justifications.

Of the primary players in the Labor Party's demise, treasurer Jim Cairns (John Hargreaves) is depicted as a progressive, sensitive and thoughtful idealist. He is also seen as something of a political innocent, but cast in that light only by virtue of his refusal to capitulate to racism, sexism and innuendo.

The other ostensible culprit in the pivotal 'loans affair', Minister for Minerals and Energy, Rex Connor (Bill Hunter), is portrayed as a man zealously pursuing a dream of fully utilizing Australia's natural resources. Both are seen to lack political nous, rather than integrity, and both are seen as men of vision. The Achilles heel attributed to Prime Minister Whitlam (Max Phipps) is also naivety.

Across the Parliamentary floor, Opposition leader Malcolm Fraser (John Stanton) is seen as a resolute, if taciturn, tactician, surrounded by party members who agree that the Government has crippled the economy and that the voters are itching to switch their mandate to more competent recipients. He, too, is seen to take an unprecedented gamble, though he is also credited with a political acumen and discipline lacking in his opponents. At worst, Fraser and party members such as Reg Withers (Tom Oliver), Phillip Lynch (Ed Deveraux) and Tony Staley (David Downer) are ambitious opportunists, traits that are arguably ideally suited to careers in politics.

In the middle is John Kerr, the appointee representing the Queen. As Hayes noted, he is easily the juiciest target for a jaundiced, even bitter, characterization. Yet Kerr is drawn as an isolated and tormented figure, wrestling with his conscience, examining his commitment to the letter of the law and barely containing his feelings of resentment at being relegated to the role of an outsider. Like the television progeny who will emulate him, Pelham Warner (Rhys McConnachie) in *Bodyline* and Hordern (Simon Chilvers) in *The Cowra Breakout* (Phillip Noyce, Chris Noonan, 1985), he unwittingly finds himself in the eye of an ugly storm.

None of these characters, at any point in the spectrum, is made an object of derision or a martyr. Their motivations are all delineated with clarity and compassion. If anything, the scenario unfolds like a Greek tragedy, with all the players moving inexorably towards their destinies. And, as in *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* and *Bodyline*, the narration reinforces this feeling of fate's taking its course.

This kaleidoscopic, rather than telescopic, approach to history and to dramatic construction is also evident in Kennedy Miller's other mini-series, *Vietnam*, for example, reduces the myriad of perspectives to four: the members of the Goddard family. It offers the Goddards as a symbol of Australia between 1964 and 1972, the fractures within the family unit mirroring those of the wider society. The tumultuous events of the period are filtered through their generally contrasting outlooks, establishing interwoven yet autonomous paths for each family member.

Douglas Goddard (Barry Otto) starts out as a conservative government official, his wife Evelyn (Veronica Lang) as a loyal and unquestioning partner. Their son, Phil (Nicholas Eadie), is a classically restless university drop-out and their daughter, Megan (Nicole Kidman), a relatively carefree teenager. The war is a catalyst for all four. Douglas' convictions about the legitimacy of Australia's involvement in the conflict crumble and he comes to represent the shifting views of the middle class about the validity of the war. Evelyn breaks away from the marriage and establishes an independent life, symbolic of the emerging women's movement, and Megan becomes involved in...
university politics, personifying the anti-war movement. Phil, like the Vietnam veterans he represents, returns to discover that he is an outsider, alienated from family and community.

Also depicting Australia at war, *The Cowra Breakout* initially appears to be an Australian soldier's view of the Pacific conflict of World War 2. Unlike Phil Goddard, Stan Davidson (Alan David Lee) starts out like a blank page: he has no family life, no sweetheart and no job before he is sent to war. Stan seems to personify the ‘everyman’, an average city boy carrying out his duty to his country, innocently seeking adventure, who returns from the horrors of front-line battle a changed man. It also seems that *The Cowra Breakout* will be, through Stan and his platoon, a microcosm of Australia's war experiences, in much the same way as the Goddard family has been in Vietnam.

But by midway through *The Cowra Breakout's* ten hours, it becomes clear that the perspective of Japanese soldier Junji Hayashi (Junichi Ishida), Stan’s adversary at the pivotal mission house battle, will be equally relevant to the drama. The mini-series develops the two as counterparts, eventually transferring the periodic narration from Stan to Junji and using the characters in an identical fashion. They each become windows on the vastly different conventions that govern behaviour in their respective cultures.

By the end of the eighth hour, they have undergone similar experiences, moving from an innocent belief in their duties as soldiers to a passionate hatred of the enemy, then to painful self-examination and finally to forgiveness and understanding. It is with an appropriate symmetry that the hours spent with Stan at the beginning of *The Cowra Breakout* are balanced towards the end when it concentrates on the traumas of the Japanese prisoners and their Australian captors at the Cowra detention camp. This juxtaposition of the groups achieves the necessary balance because a clear perspective on each group has been created and explored.

Where *The Cowra Breakout* juxtaposes the Australians with their Japanese adversaries during the war, *Bodyline* looks at a different sort of combat but also uses a battlefield, the cricket arena, as a springboard for contrasting cultures and offers distinct perspectives on them. This account of the 1932-33 test cricket series between Australia and England chronicles the controversy surrounding English captain Douglas Jardine and a strategy that he called leg theory – which was nicknamed ‘bodyline’ by the media – and employed to stymie Australia’s star batsman, Donald Bradman (Gary Sweet).

Essentially, *Bodyline* uses the Australian and English teams and those associated with them as microcosms of their respective cultures, in much the same way as Vietnam uses the Goddards to reflect Australian society. And, as in *The Dismissal* and *The Cowra Breakout*, it tries hard to avoid taking sides. Although it does, particularly towards
the end, succumb to the temptation of portraying the Australians as plucky colonial battlers standing firm in the face of a cruel onslaught by a desperate Empire, for the most part such blatant barracking is rendered irrelevant. As John C. Murray observes:

The production nicely established Bradman's stature as a folk hero for a nation that was in desperate need of one; but his function in the drama was not that of crucial agent. Bradman was the target against who the bodyline plot was directed - the focus of it. In plain terms, he was acted upon by events, rather than, like Jardine, initiating them. And the victims of events are essentially less interesting than the generators of them."

Bodyline uses Jardine as its dramatic focus and as a variation on the unit commander despatched by the generals - the Marylebone Cricket Club lords - to defend the honour of a sagging empire. It then examines the nature of that empire through the team. Class divisions, a recurrent motif of Kennedy Miller's mini-series, are delineated here by contrasting Jardine, an educated son of the Raj, with bowler Harold Larwood (Jim Holt), a Nottingham-born miner. The bitter debates on ethics between Jardine and team manager Pelham Warner are clearly differences of opinion about the very nature of the empire that each seeks to serve to the best of his ability.

By contrast, the Australian team, led by Bill Woodfull (John Walton), is viewed as more egalitarian - though equally disposed to debates on ethics, albeit less heated ones - perhaps reflecting a sort of unity born of digging in at the trenches together in the face of an overwhelming assault.

But, having established the composition and ethics of both teams, and, by implication, the countries that they serve, Bodyline then draws parallels between their situations, casting both groups as foot soldiers in a war waged by armchair generals. It is the clearest case of Hayes' 'Don't trust the bastards' dictum, and Jardine refers directly to that philosophy in his bitter speech to Warner about "old men too weak and too mendacious to sully their own hands ... but they're quick to share the fruits of victory."

Finally, Bodyline presents detailed perspectives on both sides involved in the conflict and also manages to draw Jardine, who is initially described as "the most hated man ever to set foot in Australia", with compassion. Like Stan Davidson and Phil Goddard, he is depicted as a man who sets out simply to serve his country, but, unlike them, he never weakens in his resolve or questions his methods. In that light, he becomes as much a pawn in the conflict as Bradman: a weapon deployed in the service of country.

The multiperspectivism of Kennedy Miller's mini-series might be a result of the determination to avoid 'cheap shots' at characters, or that intention coupled with an understanding of the mechanics of devising engrossing drama. It could also be a concession to the format itself: 10 hours of television invites attention to more than one narrative thread if viewer interest is to be sustained, sometimes over four consecutive nights.

Interestingly, the company's recent tele-features, The Clean Machine (Ken Cameron, 1988), The Riddle of the Stinson and Fragments of War: The Story of Damien Parer (John Duigan, 1988), do not demonstrate this multiperspectivism. Each has a protagonist who acts as a fulcrum for the narrative. It is the perspective of this protagonist that shapes the viewer's responses. Even Fragments of War, which offers a narrator, does not use the narration to present a perspective that differs from that of its central character.

The acclaimed feature, The Year My Voice Broke (John Duigan, 1987), which won five Australian Film Institute awards, is the story of Danny (Noah Taylor) and his view of events in a country town during the 1960s. His is the voice of the title, and the other characters and situations are filtered through his wry observations. Similarly, the thriller Dead Calm (Phil Noyce, 1989), with three characters, does not
lend itself to a multitude of perspectives. The genesis of the features also makes them different from the mini-series. Miller:

The feature films tend to be less collaborative and much more the work of the directors. The screenplay of *The Year My Voice Broke* was very complete when John gave it to us, so it didn’t need our input. Kennedy Miller really just provided the finance, though in post-production we got involved by making the odd suggestion.

In the case of *Dead Calm*, that was a project Phil had been interested in for some time and had even spoken to Tony Bill, the American producer, about it. But the rights were tied up until we were eventually able to purchase them from Orson Welles’ estate.12

But while it appears that Kennedy Miller’s multiperspectives is confined to mini-series, its most recent mini-series, *The Dirtwater Dynasty*, breaks that convention, perhaps harking back to a desire to maintain flexibility and try new approaches to production. And, in a number of ways, *The Dirtwater Dynasty* does represent a departure. Unlike the other mini-series, it does not have a specific, factual incident from Australian history as its pivot. It is a sprawling, ten-hour saga tracing eighty years in the life of fictional protagonist Richard Eastwick, starting late in the 19th C. In style and structure, its generic cousins are the Western and the Soap Opera, and its tale of an obsessive, patriarchal pioneer’s battling harsh natural and man-made obstacles to carve out an empire is a scenario familiar to devotees of both genres. And, although wives, children, nasty neighbours and lifelong friends move through the tapestry of Eastwick’s life, in narrative terms none achieves his prominence or rivals him as a central focus.

But, if *The Dirtwater Dynasty* seems like a departure from the style of story-telling that has characterized Kennedy Miller’s mini-series, it is also thematically consistent with them. At one level, Richard Eastwick is a character who sets his goals, fights doggedly to achieve them at any cost and succeeds. In the same way that Douglas Jardine aims to regain the Ashes and Malcolm Fraser aims to lead a new government, Eastwick aims to establish an empire from the dirt and water of the outback. All three realize their ambitions. These, then, are Kennedy Miller’s ‘winners’, the characters who achieve their most prized ambitions.

Interestingly, all three are seen to be capable of a disconcerting coldness and a willingness to manipulate those around them in order to achieve their goals. They are also motivated by a zealous determination that causes casualties among those closest to them. They play tough, adhere to the letter of the law and effortlessly disregard niceties like convention. Eastwick refuses to share his abundant water supply with drought-stricken neighbour Hasy Tarbox, though it is arguably the wrong thing to do in terms of the outback’s behavioural codes. Fraser will not relent on his blocking of funds to the Government, though this action contravenes the conventions that have dominated the operation of government, Jardine’s adaptation of leg theory as a tactic to defeat the Australian cricketers falls with the rules of cricket. That it ignores the unwritten code of ethics that governs the game is not his concern.

So Eastwick gets his empire, Jardine his test victory and Fraser his appointment to Prime Minister. But all three productions depict these rather aloof winners with ambiguity and their victories as pyrrhic, each triumph carrying with it a bitter aftertaste. Eastwick has no heirs who will accept his fortune; Jardine is eventually shunned by the establishment that he sought to serve; and Fraser’s appointment precipitates a national uproar.

If these are the winners, who are the losers, the characters who fail to realize their ambitions? At face value, they are Woodfull and Bradman in *Bodyline*, who lead the team that loses the Ashes, or perhaps Whitlam in *The Dismissal*, as he fails to retain government. In *The Cowra Breakout*, the losers must be Stan and Junji, who both recognize the gravity of the escalating tension at the camp but are powerless to diffuse it.

Yet, finally, these characters are also deemed to be winners as they are all seen to win moral victories by retaining their integrity in the face of adversity. The lines between victory and defeat are deliberately blurred in each era and in each confrontation. Woodfull and Bradman agree to “cop it sweet”, to stay true to their ideal of the game. Whitlam stands firm on his ideals of leadership and to the conventions that he believes are the basis of democracy. Stan and Junji discover new concepts of duty and loyalty, and feel vindicated by adherence to these ideals.

It is also important to note that the female characters who populate Kennedy Miller’s productions are seen as vital counterparts for this array of male characters. Without exception, the women are strong, intelligent and independent. Without exception, the women are strong, intelligent and independent, from Evelyn and Rae (Nicole Kidman) in *Dead Calm* to Freya (Loene Carmen) in *The Year My Voice Broke*, and Rae (Nicole Kidman) in *Dead Calm*. Even the seemingly remote winners, Jardine, Fraser and Eastwick, achieve a new perspective through the women closest to them. As *Bodyline’s* narrator, Edith (Heather Mitchell) is able to provide an insight into Jardine that no one else has seen him in his warmth and humour, the tragedy of his obsession and the eventual irony of his ostracism.
Though Tamie Fraser (Faye Anderson) is not often seen in *The Dismissal*, at two critical points in Fraser’s career (election to party leader and appointment to Prime Minister) his immediate response is to call her with the news. A close bond between the two is suggested and, though it bears little relation to the surrounding events, it clearly affects the perception of the character. Eastwick’s first wife, Kate McBride (Victoria Longley), is seen to be his spiritual and temporal equal, a woman tough enough to handle the life they choose and capable of withstanding all its pressures. And, though scenarios similar to the one in *The Dirtwater Dynasty* are notorious for introducing second wives who resemble monsters, Frances (Judy Morris) is seen only in a positive light.

However, two male protagonists exist alone, isolated from the support, vitality, affection and insight offered by the female characters in particular, and from their environments in general. They are Phil Goddard and the title character of the three Mad Max films. In the worlds that Phil and Max come to inhabit, there can’t be female partners or friends. Their trajectories propel them through hell and back. To emerge, to survive at all, the price they pay is stand alone. Survival negates any notion of winning or losing or the possibility of any nurturing relationship. Phil’s war experiences, and particularly his stint with the commandos, crimp him emotionally. He becomes a misfit in both of the places he has called home.

Max, too, dwells alone and on the fringes of communities. From the time that he is widowed in *Mad Max*, he becomes a lone road warrior, forming only the transient associations mitigated by necessity, as with the Feral Child (Emil Minty) in *Mad Max 2*. By *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, however, a softer side of Max evolves by virtue of his association with Savannah Nix (Helen Buday) and her tribe of orphaned children.

Just as *Vietnam* concludes with a very cautious note of optimism—Phil’s reunion with his family—Max ends the last chapter of his trilogy as a man who has, at last, found his place. These two war veterans share none of the ambition of the winners, or the assured idealism of the losers, but their screen lives conclude with a glimmer of hope for characters who have learned to survive in worlds devoid of it.

This, then, is the gamut of Kennedy Miller’s protagonists: the winners, losers, dreamers, schemers and survivors. A thumbnail chronology charting the time span covered by the company’s work reveals a concentration on the milestone events that have affected Australia in the 20th C. But rather than present these events as significant in themselves, Kennedy Miller’s productions have been concerned with context. The actual dismissal in *The Dismissal* occurs in the last hour; the breakout in *The Cowra Breakout* takes place in the penultimate hour; and the controversial cricket test doesn’t begin until midway through *Bodyline*. What precedes these flashpoints, and characterizes the other mini-series, is a broad humanist examination of Australian society, a concern with the circumstances of history and the diversity of characters throughout it.

Though the company’s foundations with the Mad Max films may not have intended this result, in retrospect, the body of Kennedy Miller’s work—mini-series, tele-features and theatrical features—can be seen as a detailed excavation of recent Australian history. Sometimes, the nature of the culture is illustrated via internal conflict. Sometimes, the Australian mentality and customs are juxtaposed with those of other countries: the British in *Bodyline*, the Vietnamese in *Vietnam*, the Japanese in *The Cowra Breakout*. Sometimes, as in *Spartz Crazy* (Marcus D’Arcy, M. Charles Lamprell, 1988), the television series produced by the company, a particular obsession, in this case with sport, can be documented with humour.

But, finally, the perspective adopted is a detailed and multifaceted one, choosing perception over nostalgia and preferring compassion to judgement.

For further material on Kennedy Miller see the interviews with George Miller and Terry Hayes in *Back of Beyond: Discovering Australian Film and Television*, Scott Murray (Ed.), Australian Film Commission, 1988.

**NOTES**


2. Ed.: Schultz is spelt “Shultz” on the television credits (but not on the commercially released video cassettes). On all subsequent Kennedy Miller productions the “c” is added.


4. ditto, p. 36.


6. This quote, and all others which are not credited, are from interviews conducted by the author.


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We choose to fly Australian
Before joining Kennedy Miller in 1980, Terry Hayes was an extremely successful journalist. At only 21, he was the New York correspondent for the Fairfax group of newspapers, including The Sydney Morning Herald. He then returned to Australia to work as an investigative reporter for The Sun and, later, as its state political correspondent. In 1976, Hayes diversified his media skills by writing for and producing Melbourne’s Derryn Hinch’s current-affairs radio programme. But the siren call of the cinema would soon be heard and he joined Kennedy Miller. Now, he is one of Australia’s most regarded writers and producers of film and television, and a dynamic force in the development of Kennedy Miller into the country’s premier production house. In the following interview, conducted by Scott Murray, Hayes begins by describing the genesis of Kennedy Miller’s latest mini-series, Bangkok Hilton.

Bangkok Hilton really came out of the Barlow Chambers case, where two Australians were hanged in Malaysia for drug trafficking. Like everybody else in the country, I followed that story pretty closely. But when I read that Roadshow Coote & Carroll was going to do it as a mini-series, it occurred to me what a disastrous project that would turn out to be — not just because of the people involved, but because of the story itself.

Dramatically, you were going to run yourself into a terrible problem by asking the audience to sympathize with two people who are heroin importers. Given the mood of Australia and its attitude to drugs, I thought it would get a totally schizophrenic response from the audience. They might well start to sympathize with these people, but they would pull themselves up short every time and say, “Yes, but these people are motivated by greed.” The only way I could see of doing it would be to go right into the dark side of human nature. But Barlow and Chambers were not those sort of people. If anything, they were an illustration of the banality of evil.

At the same time, it struck me that if they’d been innocent you would have a pretty good story, not unlike Midnight Express. The guy in that wasn’t innocent, but most of the audience thought he was because it was only dope. Then I abstracted further and thought it would be really interesting if it were about an innocent woman convicted and sentenced to death on a heroin-trafficking charge.

Then a connection flashed in my mind with another story I had read about a young Irish girl who had fallen desperately in love with an Arab guy. She was a most unsophisticated woman, living away from home in London, and he convinced her he was highly sympathetic to the Jewish cause. When she got pregnant, he decided that they would go to the Middle East for a vacation. But at the last moment he concocted a story by which he couldn’t travel with her. He took her out to the airport and put her on an El Al plane. It was then they found a bomb in her luggage.

It has always struck me what a devastating moment that must have been: to within one second realize that somebody with whom you were desperately in love had just used you completely, somebody who felt so little for you that he was willing to destroy you in a mid-air explosion. Of course, as soon as you had dealt with that moment, you then had to cope with the fact that you’re about to spend a lifetime in prison unless you can convince the authorities you have been an unwitting dupe. And the only way to do that is to completely expose yourself and your stupidity.

Once I had the connection between these two stories, I was certain there was a great mini-series there. You change the bomb to heroin, make her an Australian girl and put her in a Thai gaol where death is by machine gun. The audience will be so behind her that you’ll get a really exciting ending.

Then I took one more step. Because it is a six hour mini-series, and you really need a wealth of story material, I decided that the man who helps save her would be her father. The only problem would be that she wouldn’t know who he was until the last moments of the mini-series. So, it is also a story of reconciliation and resurrection.

Tony Morphett was originally hired as the writer on it.

Yes. I was so exhausted from Dead Calm that I didn’t want to write it myself. And as I had worked very happily with Tony on The Riddle...
of the Stinson and The Dirtwater Dynasty, I got him to come in and start writing.

Tony was involved mainly at the discussion stage, helping resolve the complex plotting that goes into a mini-series. But then he got totally caught up with Confidence, the Bryan Brown feature, and a mini-series about Neil Davis for the South Australian Film Corporation. That's the trouble with Australia: there's so few good writers that you have to beat everyone else to death to get to work with them.

Anyway, as Tony didn't have enough time to give it the effort it needed, we came to an agreement whereby I'd take it on and do the screenplays. I sat down over Christmas and scribbled it out, having by then recovered from the nightmare of Dead Calm.

It was the most fun I've ever had writing. Might I say, it's the only fun I've ever had writing. I knew the story really well. All the discussions had been very useful.

One of the difficulties of the collaboration process must be in getting someone else to develop and write out ideas you have germinated. They must inevitably take paths you hadn't intended.

Yes, I think that's true.

The way I work is to make sure I have a beginning and one hell of an ending. It is a bit like unknown territory in between. Other people tend to work differently. If they're happy with the beginning, they then want to build from that moment by moment. That's fine. In fact, it's probably the most sensible way to work. The only trouble is that they can often miss the ending that I have in mind. And I do know that the one thing a mini-series absolutely needs if you're going to get the reviews — and if you don't get the reviews, you don't get the ratings — is an ending. When the critics and the reviewers have seen it, they must feel that they have had a complete experience.

For some writers, one of the difficulties of working at Kennedy Miller is coping with the fact that I'm a writer myself. That can lead to a higher level of insecurity for writers, who are pretty insecure people anyway. Writers usually deal with a film producer who doesn't write, so they have a fair degree of power. At Kennedy Miller, the dynamic is different. People come with the view that if things don't work out there's a couple of people here who can take it over. And I don't just mean me: George [Miller] is a writer as well.

Who were most involved in the discussions at this stage?

Tony, Ken Cameron [the director] and myself. Ken was there for them all, which is absolutely necessary. The story was a coalition; it wasn't just my thoughts. So, when Ken walked out onto the set, he felt a proprietorialness to the story because he'd been involved in its whole evolution. He had an understanding of it. He knew exactly what sort of story we were trying to tell.

It was an extremely happy marriage of things because the writing was fairly overwrought, which is, I guess, my fashion. Ken brought a great realism to performances and the drama. He prevented it going over the top.

In a sense, Bangkok Hilton begins with a continuation of the melodramatic style of The Dirtwater Dynasty and gradually shifts towards a more realistic mode.

That's true. I didn't want to do a prison story, like a Chained Heat. That didn't interest me. I wanted to do a rite-of-passage story about a girl who breaks out of a series of prisons through her life. The first prison is the family home, Guardbridge, and her extremely eccentric family. She escapes from there, but ends up in an even worse prison: a Thai gaol, the "Bangkok Hilton". When she finally manages to escape from that, you sense she now has the skills and wherewithal to re-build an original world, the world of Guardbridge.

But you're quite right about the shift in style. At the beginning it is very much like Now Voyager, a film which I drew on. The extremely difficult thing to do — not for me, but the director — was to make it all appear holistic. A key to that was Nicole Kidman. Her character, Katriona Stanton, starts off in hour one as "dawk of the week" and ends up in hour six with the realization that nothing is beyond her. She becomes very much like the girl — ah, the woman — in Dead Calm.

Nicole tells me that the most challenging thing she's ever had to do was make that trajectory believable. We were trying a pretty fine line there. It was not like doing Dirtwater which pretty much plays the same stylistic note for ten hours. There you had the relatively simple problem of how many more people you could kill. This was much different.

You mentioned the prisons of Katriona's home and the Thai gaol. But there is the third prison, that of her mind. The way you have treated that is classically 'Kennedy Miller': namely, you link her inner personal struggle with an external social, political or cultural drama. You in turn mirror that personal transformation with a stylistic change towards realism and balance.

Exactly. One of the characters in Bangkok Hilton says, "The first prison you have to escape is in your mind." That was originally a line for Nicole's character, but we changed it because we felt her saying it gave too much fore-knowledge.

The girl is the same physical person at Guardbridge as in the
prison. The only thing that's changed is her attitude to the world; how she is beginning to escape the prison of her mind. Now that's pretty interesting, but you have to make that manifest. That's why we have her build a doll's house which is an exact replica of Guardbridge, except that it hasn't any windows: just like a prison.

With an imprisoned and twisted doll which reminds one of Jane Eyre.

Yes, crushed and crippled. Bangkok Hilton is entirely about prisons, entirely about escape.

The other thread to this story is the resurrection of Hal Stanton [Denholm Elliott]. At the beginning, we know that he has been court martialed, and during the passage of the story you discover the circumstances of his cowardice. This is done via three major flashback sequences, which are stylistically very bold. The first is when he goes to visit Kat in Thailand, in the same gaol where he was held prisoner during the War.

The second is when she's sentenced to death and he turns to camera and staggers forward. You go into his head and he's back at his own court martial. He wasn't physically sentenced to death, but it was an equivalent thing for him. It 'killed' him.

The third flashback is in the tunnels underneath the gaol, where he goes to find her escape. He re-encounters his moment of great shame, which is that he has surrendered several of his men to the Japanese and they were executed. This time, however, he keeps going forward. The sword strikes down not just upon the soldier, but also upon himself. He screams in that moment and she hears the scream. That is what guides her out. And they are re-united there. So he, too, has escaped a prison – the prison of his past.

Because he had thwarted an escape and thereby imprisoned himself.

Yes, exactly.

Because you do so much linking and doubling, which is in all your work, you tread a fine line between writing about believable characters caught in individual dramas and building an entirely artificial and unconvincing edifice.

Absolutely. You can forget that they have to be totally believable characters. The great risk you run is that the audience will reject the show because of coincidence.

During the evolution of this story, I came up with the idea that the lawyer who helped save Kat was her father. Well, for months George kept saying, "You can't make him her father", and we had these arguments about coincidence and things like that. In the end, we resolved that in a movie you couldn't make him her father, because you only have 90 minutes. The coincidence would be too apparent and an audience would reject you. In a mini-series, however, you can bury that information under a much deeper pile of story.

The other thing I have realized about mini-series is that audiences hunger for characters who don't just have a present, but also a past and a future. In most movies, and especially in the movies we've done, characters tend to have only a present. Mad Max is about living moment to moment; Dead Calm all happens in 24 hours. But with a mini-series, audiences want a much more holistic experience of their characters, because they are spending six to ten hours with them.

When we did The Dismissal, I didn't have to worry about the past or the future because the audience brought that knowledge with them to the mini-series. All I had to do was worry about the present and the events of that particular year.

It was very similar with Bodyline. When I re-capped at the end everything that had happened to these characters, the really powerful moments were those which dealt with the men that history had forgotten. I didn't have to tell the audience anything about Bradman; they already knew.

With Vietnam, the audience brought a future because the mini-series tapped into the debate about the way that we had treated our vets.

Dirtwater has a past, a present and a future. In the beginning, Richard Eastwick emerges from a fairly Dickensian world - the past - and in the end his daughter becomes a nun, so you are saying that while the future is totally blighted on a temporal basis, on a spiritual basis maybe there's something going on.

That is a long and involved answer. But I'm agreeing with you in saying that you have to be extremely careful not to use your characters merely as dramatic devices to take you on a journey through an artificially created edifice. The aim is to be able to do take that journey in a meaningful and believable fashion.

But, to be honest, I don't know how it happens. I think I just have one of those minds which happens to be a bit convoluted.

I must disagree, if I may, about Mad Max and Dead Calm. The principal characters do have a past. Max is set up by the murder of his wife and child, and in Dead Calm the couple's baby crashes through that car windscreen.

But it's done in a very short-hand, instant way.
But you still put it in. Many filmmakers would have settled for a line of dialogue, if that.

Yes, that’s true. I’m glad you pointed that out. Now that I think about it, that’s true. I suppose I just can’t help myself.

What you have done is classic Kennedy Miller: establishing at the outset the emotional scars of the main characters. In Bangkok Hilton, it is the various forms of imprisonment, such as Stanton’s war memories and his alcoholism. The audience is thus made very clear what the personal struggles, the dramatic trajectories, are going to be. This raises another potential scripting danger: linearity. The audience knows you have to get Stanton off his booze and reconciled with his past and his daughter. So you have to be very careful not to do it in a too obviously step-by-step manner.

That’s where it becomes extremely complex. You are plotting various stories, not just Rat’s and Stanton’s. When I sit down and write, I generally find I have six to eight major threads to interweave. But before I can start, I have to look at all of those threads individually and be happy with them. Only then can I begin interweaving the fabric. And that is when writing gets really exhilarating. It is by this interweaving, this criss-crossing of plots and sub-plots, that you avoid the linearity, the predictability, that’s death to a mini-series.

If I have one criticism to make of a lot of Australian mini-series, it is that thematically they don’t mean anything. They don’t leave you with the impression that you’ve had a totally fulfilling and impactive experience. They are just plots and sub-plots, and the sub-plots often have nothing to do with the primary plot.

When you do a mini-series, it is absolutely necessary that you have a theme to it all, a premise which you’re trying to prove. Other people may disagree, but I think it’s incumbent upon the filmmakers to come up with sub-plots which serve to illustrate the thematic nature of the major plot. Dirtwater in a very pop mythological way did that. All of the sub-plots were about greed and avarice, and of course the major plot was about that too. It tried to take an issue and examine it from many different perspectives. Bangkok Hilton is all about the different forms of imprisonment. The Dismissal and Bodyline about power and corruption.

In a recent interview about Casualties of War, Brian De Palma talked about writing the part of the conservative, middle-class soldier. He started to put in all these scenes which detailed the character’s upbringing and his political and social views. But when he cast Michael J. Fox, he immediately realized that he didn’t need any of those scenes: Fox brought all that history with him to the screen. Now you have said that Bangkok Hilton was the first time you have specifically written for an actor or actress. In what sense did you specifically write it for Nicole Kidman?

The example you give is very interesting. As for Nicole, I specifically wrote it to push and test her. She has so much potential as an actress that had been untested.

The opening of Bangkok Hilton is designed to highlight a character who is totally different to the person Nicole is. I mean, Nicole reads as a pretty sophisticated, very self-confident, attractive woman. So we asked her to play someone who’s been crushed and who is physically unattractive.

You failed on the latter.

[Laughs.] There’s only so much I can do!

Interestingly enough, Stanton’s part was also written for a particular actor. Very early on in the discussions about the characters, Denholm’s name came up and I just couldn’t get him out of my head. Everytime I had to write something about Stanton, I saw Denholm. I hadn’t met him, but I had an image of him from all of the work he’d done. He was a man whose face looked somewhat dissolute, but who had a courage and a decency that the world had rather trampled upon. My character became exactly that, a man accused of doing a despicable thing but who, as you later learn, was really given no choice at all. He was not as cowardly as he might at first have appeared.

When I finally met Denholm, I found that part of him was exactly how he presents on screen, but there was also a part that was much, much different. It was my version of the actor that became the character.
Now that I am working on my next project with Phil Noyce, I find I am trying to cast it in my head. Putting faces to the characters tends to make your writing less mechanistic and more three dimensional.

The other thing I have learned is that actors are really hungry for over-the-top moments. They want you to push them. They don’t want to do safe, conservative roles. They feel they have this instrument to play things differently. But it has also come from talking to actors. Their biggest criticism of scripts is that things are mundane.

Dead Calm was extensively audience tested in the U.S. and changes were subsequently made, including a new ending. How has that audience testing experience affected the way you write?

Well, it taught me an enormous amount. The most important thing was the virtue of economy. Because writers love words, and because they often have a show-off quality, they tend to over-write. Most 120-page screenplays really should be about 90 pages. They don’t give the actor or the audience enough credit for getting on to the idea quickly. The audience sits in a darkened place with all of their senses totally focused on that screen. A nuance in one line of dialogue can carry more information than a page of a script.

Audience testing has also reinforced how writers should work with the director. Whether they like it or not, directors and writers must hold each other’s hands. I’m not saying on the set: I don’t want to go near the set. Can you imagine anything more boring unless you’re actually doing it? I’m talking about everything that leads up to the first day of principal photography.

A director has to understand the totality and complexity of the piece. Now he can do that by himself, by reading and working on the script, or he can be involved in the discussions from day one. Either way, a director must take a screenplay, even if it’s the world’s best, and re-work it into something of himself. Audience testing can show you, more than anything else, where confusion has crept into a film – confusion of character motivation, of logic; confusion often between the director and the writer.

It can also show you the great moments, too – where everything is completely focused; where the director, the script and the actor all hit exactly the same note. Unfortunately, these moments are nowhere near as common.

Writers don’t think like directors; they tend to think in words and scenes. The great thing I get from a director like Phil is his telling me, “We don’t need that. The actor will give it to us.” I never, for example, write the words “I love you”, because I know the actors can do that for you.

**CONCLUDES ON PAGE 76**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERRY HAYES • FILMOGRAPHY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AS WRITER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981 Mad Max 2 (co)</td>
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<td>1983 The Dismissal (co)</td>
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<td>1984 Bodyline (co)</td>
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<td>1985 The Courier Breakout (script editor) Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome (co)</td>
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<td>1987 Vietnam (co)</td>
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<td>1988 The Dirtwater Dynasty (co) Sports Crazy (co) The Clean Machine (co)</td>
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<td>1989 Dead Calm Bangkok Hilton</td>
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<td><strong>AS PRODUCER</strong></td>
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<td>1985 The Making of Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome</td>
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<td>1987 The Year My Voice Broke</td>
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<td>1990 The Riddle of the Stinson Fragments of War: The Story of Damien Parer</td>
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<td><strong>ASSOCIATE, PRODUCER</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1981 The Story of Damien Parer</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982 The Making of Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome</td>
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**BANGKOK HILTON PRODUCTION CREDITS**

- **Prod. company**: Kennedy Miller Prods
- **Producers**: Terry Hayes, Doug Mitchell, George Miller
- **Director**: Ken Cameron
- **Scriptwriter**: Terry Hayes, Geoff Burton
- **D.O.P.**: Henry Dangar, Franz Von den Berg, Louise Iones, Marcus D’Arcy
- **Sound recordist**: Ben Omo
- **Editors**: Owen Williams
- **Composer**: Graeme Revell
- **Assoc. producer**: Barbara Gibbs
- **Prod. coordinator**: Fiona King
- **Prod. manager**: Barbara Gibbs
- **Unit manager**: Justin Plummer
- **Loc. manager**: Peter Lawless
- **Prod. secretary**: Amella Marocchi
- **Financial controller**: Catherine Barber
- **Prod. accountant**: John May
- **1st asst director**: Keith Heygate
- **2nd asst director**: PJ Voeten
- **3rd asst director**: Maria Phillips
- **Continuity**: Pam Willis
- ** Casting**: Alison Barrett
- **Extras casting**: Gabrielle Haly
- **Focus puller**: Dan Reough
- **Clapper/reader**: Kathyrn Miller
- **Key grip**: Bruce Barber
- **Ast grip**: Terry Jackson
- **Gaffer**: Ian Plummer
- **Electrician**: Robbie Burra
- **Boom operator**: Andrew Duncan
- **Art director**: Michael Bridges
- **Costume designer**: Grainy Jackson
- **Make-up**: Lesley Van der Walt
- **Hairdresser**: John Zieglenstein
- **Wardrobe coord.**: Jenny Miles
- **Standby wardrobe**: Devina Maxwell
- **Art dept manager**: Kate Highfield
- **Props buyers**: Jenny Green
- **Set construction**: Mark Dawson
- **Set prop master**: George Zannit
- **Scenic artist**: Eric Todd
- **Set construction**: Frank Falconer
- **Bill Pope**: Wayne Pashley
- **JG Holbrook**: Jaz Maguire
- **Basil Ozeri**: Miriam Cortez
- **Lee Smith**: Peter Townsend
- **Annabelle Sheehan**: Nicholas Breslin
- **Mixer**: Kim McLaughnan
- **Still photography**: Mike MacLennan
- **Title designer**: Grant Atkinson
- **Best boy**: John Martin
- **Unit publicist**: Wendy Day
- **Catering**: Martini’s Catering Co.
- **Studios**: Kenneth Miller
- **Mixed at**: Soundfirm
- **Laboratory**: Colorfilm
- **Lab liaison**: Denise Wolfson
- **Length**: 3 x 2 hours
- **Gauge**: 16mm
- **Shooting stock**: Kodak

**CINEMA PAPERS 76 • 29**

- **Cast**: Nicole Kidman, Kattriona Stannard, Denholm Elliott, Hal Stannard, Hugo Weaving, Carlisle, Judy Smithers, Mandy, Norman Kaye, Mandy, Judy Morris, Karen, Jerome Ehlers, Archie, Pauline Chan, Pretty Warder
John Duigan is a deeply personal and individualistic writer-director. His films draw on the emotional and ethical issues of his generation, and, at their best, conjure with the forces that so often lie dormant within us. He has rigorously pursued his areas of interest and side-stepped the pseudo-Hollywood concerns of much of the Australian industry. It was no surprise that when Duigan did go to America to make a film, ROMERO (1989), it should be about something as fundamental as liberation theology.

In some ways, then, it was unexpected that Duigan should have elected to work with Kennedy Miller: a lone independent immersing himself in its intensely collaborative approach to filmmaking. But, as with almost everything connected with that mini-studio, the relationship has been a major success, from the powerful mini-series VIETNAM (1987), which Duigan co-wrote and -directed, to the highly acclaimed feature THE YEAR MY VOICE BROKE (1987). Today, Duigan is back at Kennedy Miller making FLirting, the second part of a trilogy begun with THE YEAR MY VOICE BROKE. It was during the shooting that he spoke with Scott Murray. He begins by describing how he became involved with Kennedy Miller.

Was any casting done during the discussion stage?

No, that came after the scripts were completed. We all brought our ideas to the casting. I had strong views on certain characters and others had certain views on some other characters. We did our tests and there was remarkable unanimity of agreement.

I was very keen on using Nicole Kidman as I'd worked with her before [on Winners] and knew she was very good. But she was over in Perth doing Windrider at the time we were casting, so the others agreed to hold off until she could come back and test for us. They also liked her very much.

Workshopping with actors is part of the Kennedy Miller process. Had you done it on your previous films?

People call it workshopping, but I just call it rehearsals. Coming from a theatre background, as I essentially did, I have always insisted...
John Duigan on having a minimum of two-weeks rehearsal. So, that was all familiar territory.

I tend to rehearse more on the text than to do a lot of exercises. Only occasionally do I have actors improvise, postulating scenes that don’t exist to see what happens.

Do you do much re-writing during this period?

Almost none. Occasionally I change an odd line that doesn’t sit well, but no changes occurred to the scripts of *Vietnam* during that period. I don’t use rehearsals as a re-writing time.

Your next involvement with Kennedy Miller was *The Year My Voice Broke*.

Yes. Before we even shot *Vietnam*, I mentioned to Doug Mitchell and Terry that I had a script I wanted to do next. They asked me to show it to them, and they liked it. There was the expectation that I would do that next.

Again, that was a script that didn’t undergo any re-writing. The main creative input from Kennedy Miller came during the casting and the post-production. The producers were interested in watching the screen tests and the evolution of the casting decisions.

A great strength of the Kennedy Miller producers is that they’re very good in post-production. Terry and George are both extremely creative at looking at projects in their entirety during that period. They work as the best producers do, which is to keep a certain distance during the actual shoot. This enables them to come in during the latter stages of editing with a good degree of detachment. They can pick up certain weaknesses quicker than you can yourself. That was certainly the case with *Vietnam* and *The Year My Voice Broke*. And even though George was doing *The Witches of Eastwick* in the U.S. at the time of *Voice Broke*, we sent him over cassettes of the different cuts and he was able to have an input.

Both Hayes and Miller have said that they view features a little differently from television. There is much more collaboration on the television than on the features.

To an extent, they give me a lot of space because I am directing what are essentially my own scripts. But they’ll make quite important suggestions during the preliminary stages.
In the evolution of the Flirting script, Terry had a couple of very important suggestions to make, while George essentially prodded me into pushing it further. They created a climate of continually raising the expectations of the script. And I did quite a lot of additional honing of the script under that stimulus.

With your early films, did you ever have the feeling of being a lone battler? Did you miss being pushed and challenged as much as you have been at Kennedy Miller?

[Long pause.] No, I had great support from Richard Mason during the period I worked with him. But I think that some of my projects could have benefited from more work at the script stage. There is the strong awareness at Kennedy Miller of the need to get the scripts as right as possible before you start shooting.

The three producers here are interesting because they all are very different people. Doug Mitchell always says he’s not a film expert, but his view is often very valid, partially because he considers himself to be an average sort of audience member. His view is different to Terry’s, and Terry’s is different to George’s, and so on. And, as we’re all friends, it has a sense of collaboration, not coercion. I respect them individually and I’ll give their points of view a lot of consideration. I won’t always agree with them, and I won’t always follow up what they suggest, but often they open up very fertile lines of thought.

I enjoy the environment and camaraderie here. I have a real affection for the whole institution of Kennedy Miller. I feel it has achieved a body of work which is distinguished by a commitment to quality.

I want to maintain an involvement with them, even if from time to time I go away and do other films. And it’s probably healthy for me to do things elsewhere from time to time. But I hope that I’ll keep coming back to do other things with them. I think they probably have that expectation, too.

During The Year My Voice Broke were you looking towards doing another project with them, or were you thinking of going to America?

I did a tele-feature for them [Fragments of War: The Story of Damien Parer] immediately after The Year My Voice Broke. So that was the next thing. I also talked to them about a project set on Norman Lindsay’s property, but they passed on that. I was then offered Romero and decided to do it. So I suspended work on trying to set up the Norman Lindsay film.

While I was working on Romero, I had a number of conversations with Kennedy Miller. They were keen to do the second part of the The Year My Voice Broke trilogy, so we agreed to slot it in in the middle of this year.

At what stage did you begin to conceive of the trilogy?

Well, I in fact wrote Flirting before I wrote The Year My Voice Broke. And it was while I wrote Voice Broke, that I had in the back of my mind the idea of adapting Flirting to fit Danny’s character.

How different was the original character in Flirting to Danny [Noah Taylor] in The Year My Voice Broke?

The Flirting character was not defined to the extent that he became. It was an early draft and there were some edges of the character that only became distilled in my mind when I made The Year My Voice Broke. I then went back and rewrote things.

I mean, it would have been premature to really think about a sequel until The Year My Voice Broke had been made and released. If it had been an unmitigated disaster, obviously the rest would never
be made. Then, once we decided to do *Flirting*, we were committed to a trilogy.

Essentially, the trilogy is about the development of a certain view of the world of a young man of that period, a philosophical and political view that tentatively takes form as he travels through the three films. And that point of view is drawn very largely from his experiences as an outsider within institutions: the town in the first one, the boarding school in the second. In the third, this view is thrown into focus when he experiences at first-hand a series of political events which, it is my intention, lead up to the student revolution of Paris in May '68. That is when his still unformulated political views distill.

This view is also drawn from his individual relationships, in *Flirting* from his relationship with Thandiwe (Tandy Newton), the daughter of an African nationalist academic who is lecturing in Australia for a year. Through Danny's contact with her, all sorts of additional worlds open up for him.

Are there many characters common to *The Year My Voice Broke*?

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**JOHN DUIGAN • FILMOGRAPHY**

1975 *The Firm Man* (feature) — director, producer, writer, composer
1976 *The Trespassers* (feature) — director, producer, writer
1978 *Mouth to Mouth* (feature) — director, producer, writer
1979 *Donkeys* (feature) — director
1981 *Winter of our Dreams* (feature) — director, writer
1982 *Far East* (feature) — director, writer
1984 *Our Night Stand* (feature) — director, writer
1985 *Room to Move* (part of Winners) — director
1987 *Vietnam* (mini-series) — a director [eps 1,4,5,9,10], co-writer [eps 4,5,1,2,3 with Chris Noonan, Terry Hayes; 6,7,8,9,10 with Chris Noonan]
1987 *The Year My Voice Broke* (feature) — director, writer
1988 *Fragments of War: The Story of Damien Parer* (tele-feature) — director, writer
1989 *Bitter Rice* (documentary) — director
1989 *Roomers* (feature) — director
1989 *Flirting* (feature) — director, writer

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**FLIRTING • PRODUCTION CREDITS**

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<tr>
<th>Prod. company</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Terry Hayes, Doug Mitchell, George Miller</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sarah Dejong</td>
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Cast: Noah Taylor (Danny), Tandy Newton, Thandiwe (Tandy Dewjawa), Nicole Kidman (Nicola), Kym Wilson (Melissa), Naomi Watts (Janet), Bartholomew Rose (Gilby), Marshall Napier, Mr Elliott, Jeff Truman (Mr Cotts), Jane Harders (Miss Anderson), Maggie Blain (Miss Macready).
experienced in those days when he wasn't a part of society. He feels that is becoming smothered and lying dormant within him.

I hope to try and distil that sense in its most acute form in the third part, although you sense it's starting to happen in Flirting. In some respects, it is perhaps an attempt to describe what I feel is beginning to take shape in the world at the moment, where the old political philosophies are beginning to give way to people asking different questions, ones which derive from a feeling that a whole part of human life and the human life force has been lost.

By "old", do you include political philosophies like Marxist Leninism?

Yes. Thandiwe's father in Flirting is an important figure in African nationalist movements at that time. He would be part of the Pan-African movement that Nkrumah of Ghana sponsored in the early 1960s. Thandiwe probably considers herself a Marxist and Danny becomes aware of Marx for the first time through her, although it's not a big part of the story.

The fact that Danny ends up in Paris seems significant in that the first new wave of Marxist criticism has come out of France, such as Bernard-Henri Levy and his oft-quoted "Marxism leads to the Gulag."

Yes. Danny's become very interested in Sartre, who, along with Muhammed Ali, is a hero figure for him. Sartre was not a particularly influential figure in criticizing Marxism, but he and de Beauvoir did become disenchanted with it at about that time.

There is a whole intellectual climate in France out of which has emerged a fairly comprehensive critique of Marxism. Intuitively it seems right to me that that is where he goes.

May 1968 has been quite romanticized in the movies. Is your intention to re-evaluate it?

I haven't done my research on it yet, but it seems to me that the majority of activists at that time really had no comprehensive political agenda. They created a climate out of which significant change might have come, but didn't really have any constructive things to implement. There was a mood of tremendous effervescence based on a real desire for change, but essentially I feel the movement was intellectually shallow. So I don't have a particularly positive attitude towards it, no.

Is that because they were looking for political solutions, whereas — and you used the word "mystical" earlier — you think the solutions lay in something more spiritual?

Yes. I tend to think May '68 was a reflection of something which has been steadily distilling during the course of this century: that is, a sense that the spiritual dimension of life has gone. This isn't a unique point of view by any means. But that burst of activity was probably an expression of something else — that something is missing from our lives, even if we are unable really to define what it is. So it manifest itself in a sense of outrage at the injustices of the Vietnam War, and, in other more superficial senses, of the education system in universities and schools, a sense of feeling that workers should have more say in the management of factories and all that kind of thing. To an extent I think that what was underneath was not addressed. So, yes, I agree.

What attracted you to the Romero project?

Most of the material I've been offered from America has been essentially B- or C-grade thrillers and comedies. They are probably scripts which have filtered down through the higher echelons of established directors. There were a couple of good ones I was attached to, but they never got made. This one was funded at the time I was approached.
ROMERO is the brain-child of producer Father Ellwood P. (Bud) Kieser. Kieser is an American Catholic priest and, after many years in television, it is his first venture into cinema features. Some of the money for *Romero* came from the religious order he belongs to, the Paulists, and from the Catholic Communications Campaign.

Kieser has worked in Los Angeles since 1956. He knows the movie industry well. The Paulists are an American order, established in the 19th Century by Isaac Hecker, a journalist concerned that Catholicism be not merely an inward-looking religion, but one which had the confidence of its beliefs and the courage to communicate them in contemporary media.

Kieser produced a religious series for television, *Insight*. In production from 1960 to 1983, it won six Emmy Awards for religious programmes. He had a constant succession of Hollywood stars, writers and directors in his 30-minute made-for-television dramas whose religious 'message' was not always explicit. The philosophy behind this kind of television production was the opposite of the proselytizing of the television evangelists. This was the presentation of Christian values in the market-place by story-telling.

With the deregulation of programming in the U.S. during the 1980s, Kieser found that the networks were less willing to screen religious programmes unless the churches paid big money to sponsor their own programmes. While Sunday morning has become prime time, it has not stopped some of the wealthy evangelists (especially Robert Schuller and his *Hour of Power* from the Crystal Cathedral) from paying their way. The Catholic Church supports a talk show, hosted by Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, on CBS at 7.30 a.m. Sunday and a Mass on the Nine Network. However, *Insight* and many other religious programmes appear regularly on cable channels.

The deregulation meant that Kieser decided to go for television productions that would compete in the open market. He produced *The Fourth Wise Man*, an hour special on ABC, in 1984.

His first tele-feature production was *We are the Children*, which was presented as an ABC "Movie of the Week" in 1987. In Australia it was screened as a "Wednesday Night at the Movies", in May 1986, by the Nine Network. Directed by Robert M. Young, whom Kieser acknowledged as easy to work with and creative, it was shot in four weeks. Kieser's memories of the British crew are not entirely happy — quite a contrast, he declares, to the easy collaboration of Americans and Australians on *Romero*.

*We are the Children* was the story of the photo-journalist who broke the news of the Ethiopian famine to the world media. Ted Danson stars as the journalist, Ally Sheedy is a young Philadelphia doctor and Judith Ivey gives the lie to the Hollywood cliche nun as a vigorously down-to-earth missionary sister.

Kieser is satisfied with *We are the Children* as a first attempt, but feels that the short time for filming (threatened at one stage by hostile Kenyan and Ethiopian government officials holding the company literally at gunpoint) and Sheedy's lack of experience took away from the overall impact.

*Romero* was first intended as a tele-feature. However, the networks turned down the idea. An assassinated, outspoken Salvadoran Archbishop was too controversial. He was also too depressing. And, besides, there was no love interest. Kieser decided to make a theatrical movie.

The death of Archbishop Romero had already been seen on the screen in Oliver Stone's *Salvador* (1986). Stone included a sequence where Major Max, head of the death squads, goaded his followers at a dinner into volunteering to kill the critical Archbishop. The sequence was reminiscent of Henry II's hint to his nobles to get rid
of Thomas a'Becket, familiar from Becket and T.S. Eliot’s “Who will rid me of this troublesome priest?”, from Murder in the Cathedral. Stone and co-writer Richard Boyle had James Woods as Boyle attend the Mass at which the Archbishop spoke out strongly against the military oppression in his sermon and had him killed while distributing Communion.

Australian audiences would be familiar with the tele-feature Choices of the Heart and the documentary (screened on ABC television), Roses in December, which focused on Jean Donovan, the American lay missionary (played by Melissa Gilbert in Choices and Cynthia Gibb in Salvador) who was raped and murdered in El Salvador in 1980, an incident that brought the country’s woes to U.S. and world headlines and prime time news. Australian audiences would also be familiar with David Bradbury’s documentary about the Nicaraguan troubles in Nicaragua, No Pasaran.

Kieser and his writer-friend (from Insight days) John Sacret Young went to Salvador in 1983 to get a feel for the country and its problems as well as to research Romero’s life and career. They interviewed colleagues and talked to enemies who condemned Romero as a dupe of the Communists, a puppet of the Jesuits and brainwashed by a psychologist in Costa Rica (statements that were incorporated into the screenplay).

Young (writer of the nuclear film Testament and co-creator of the television series China Beach) is not a Catholic, but is an Episcopalian admitting to a fascination, but also a love-hate relationship, with the church. Kieser thought that an outsider who could get the feel of things Catholic would be able to tell the story for a wider audience than the religious audience. It took Young several years to come up with the final draft of the screenplay.

When Kieser was ready to go into production (eight weeks in Mexican locations with two weeks of rehearsal), the American directors he was interested in were not available. Friends in Los Angeles mentioned John Duigan. Kieser breakfasted with him, and looked at Winter of Our Dreams and Far East. The latter was of interest insofar as Duigan had tackled the similar social problems in The Philippines of the Marcos regime and had been impressed with missionaries, sisters and lay, in Manila in 1981. The screenplay of Far East has a lay missionary who is tortured as one of the major supporting characters.

Kieser liked the films but felt that Bryan Brown lacked “heart” (perhaps not being on the wavelength of Brown’s laconic, ironic yet feeling, anti-heroes). But he also saw The Year My Voice Broke and felt that there was a great deal of heart, the quality he wanted for Romero. It persuaded him that Duigan should be the director for Romero.

Duigan professes a kind of pantheistic belief (that the whole universe is energizing; echoes of comments made by Bruce Spence's character in The Year My Voice Broke about force fields). However, Duigan had also been interested in the problems of social justice in Central America in which the Catholic Church has been heavily involved.

Kieser did not want a ‘holy’ or ‘sanctimonious’ view of the Church. He could make the distinction between the essence of the Church and its mission, and the limited, sinful faces of Church people. Lines like this are incorporated into the screenplay, especially the criticism by some Salvadorian clergy of the Vatican in appointing the unlikely and unpoplar, reticent and conservative, Oscar Romero as Primate of El Salvador.

What emerges in Romero is a strong portrait of a nervous, bookish priest, with friends ranging from socially active priests to aristocratic Salvadorian families, who gradually experiences at first hand the ruthless military oppression, with its treading down of the poor, and its torture and murder. He finds that circumstances and providence have conspired to make him the one who must speak out and protest the cruelty and injustice. From mild priest, he becomes outspoken Church leader — and martyred.

It is interesting to note that most of Australia’s major directors have not made films with explicitly religious characters or themes at home. Fred Schepisi is the exception. However, when they have gone to the U.S., they have accepted projects which are explicitly religious: Bruce Beresford and Texas Baptists in Tender Mercies and his biblical epic, King David; Peter Weir and the Amish in Witness; Gillian Armstrong and the Bible-reading and preaching Mrs. Soffel; even Carl Schultz with anti-christs in The Seventh Sign. And now we have Duigan with the most explicit, especially in John Sacret Young’s screenplay, where the Christ-figure parallel is drawn so explicitly: Romero kneeling in bewildered agony as to what he must do, being stripped by the military on the road, and shot to death as he raises the chalice, it spilling as he falls dead.

Kieser says that the shoot of Romerovas the happiest in his career. To foster a community spirit, he celebrated four Masses for the company during the filming period. Few of the crew were Catholics, though Raul Julia, originating from Puerto Rico, was an inactive but educated Catholic. However, the group attended, even participating by placing their tools of the trade on the altar as part of the Offering. The shoot ended with a Mass and a wrap party. Kieser has high praise for the Australians and for Duigan and, especially, for director of photography Geoff Burton and those working in editing and script supervision.

Romero is based on a true story which has had its impact round the world. In Melbourne, Catholic social justice groups still celebrate a Mass at St Francis Church on the anniversary of Romero’s death. Kieser says that there are the usual liberties taken with dramatizing a character. He is a filmmaker, not a journalist. But validity is the key to appreciation of this kind of film, not accuracy. The same point is made in Constantine Costa-Gavras’ films, such as Missing. It has been remarked that Romero is a Costa-Gavras kind of film.

Romero is not destined to be a box-office smash hit. It will probably do well in the U.S. on video cassette. This was already the pattern in the U.S. response to Salvador. However, critics have been favourable.

Kieser has several projects going. In keeping with his Christian vision and his desire to make movies that challenge his audiences, he wants to make a movie next of the dynamic New York social activist, Dorothy Day.

Romero is the first mainstream movie with church backing (although the Billy Graham organization was behind movies like Cross and the Switchblade, The Hiding Place, Joni). But Kieser has set a pattern for Catholic Church involvement in the movie industry. Romero is one of those heartfelt films that is a labour of love.
DENNIS HOPPER and KIEFER SUTHERLAND are starting rehearsals for the first scene of the night. On the far side of the Roaring Fork River an early coyote begins whining, and the camera crew are talking quietly among themselves.

Suddenly, Hopper explodes: "If you guys are gonna talk like that, then do it on your own time. Not while I'm rehearsing!"

Everyone freezes. Hopper has a legendary reputation for a hot temper and it's reflected by the crazed, psychopathic introverts he has been playing since *Easy Rider*. That famous 1969 cult movie not only made Hopper a countercultural hero, it also changed Hollywood's ideas about the way films could be made.

Twenty years later, Hopper is greying at the temples, and once again playing a character from that notorious time. His outburst at the crew passes quickly, and it isn't until 3.30 am that he throws another tantrum. As the dawn breaks over the snow covered Rockies and the production winds down for the night, the crew sighs with relief: "It's been a quiet night. Must be all you reporters."

*Flashback* is Glenwood Springs, Colorado, the location for Paramount Pictures' $14 million production of *Flashback*. Written by David Loughery, produced by Marvin Worth and directed by Italian Franco Amurri, *Flashback* is the saga of a 1960s radical, Huey Walker (Dennis Hopper). Walker, a yippie who once uncoupled Spiro Agnew's train while Agnew was waving goodbye to his supporters during a whistle-stop tour, has been on the run for this offence for the past twenty years. Kiefer Sutherland plays John Buckner, the young FBI agent who finally arrests the ageing radical.

The shoot is now into its eighth week and there are plenty of indications from crew members on the periphery of the production that it has not been without problems. Producer Worth is always at the centre of the action. At the end of each take, Hopper, Sutherland, Loughery and Amurri surround him for intense discussions. It is unclear whether a single voice is calling the shots.

Dennis Hopper is, however, the star attraction. His career started in the 1950s when he acted with his close friend James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Giant*. Dean's premature death has affected Hopper all his life.

In 1958, Hopper had a famous run-in with veteran director Henry Hathaway on the set of *From Hell to Texas*. Dissenting from the director's wishes, Hopper was pushed by Hathaway into an astonishing 86 takes on one scene before the actor finally relented.

This didn't help Hopper's subsequent career. He found work in B-grade Roger Corman bikie and drug pictures like *The Glory Stompers* (1966) and *The Trip* (1967) – a genre of films now somewhat strangely labelled "psychotronic".

In 1969, Hopper became the hottest property in Hollywood when he co-wrote, directed and acted in *Easy Rider*. Made for $370,000, it grossed more than $40 million at the box-office, but Hopper was to fall from grace only a few years later when his new film, *The Last Movie*, was mauled by the critics, died in the cinemas and has hardly been seen since.

The experience was traumatic for Hopper: "But I won first prize at the Venice Film Festival. I was up against Bergman, Kurosawa, Satyajit Ray and other big name directors, and I beat them all. That film has got to be seen, and reconsidered, particularly by the MTV generation who will understand its non-linear structure."

During the 1970s, Hopper roamed the world, but always returning to his home in Taos, New Mexico. He made films in Australia (Philippe Mora's *Mad Dog Morgan*); West Germany (Wim Wenders' *The American Friend*); the U.S. (Henry Jaglom's *Tracks*); Spain, Italy and the U.S. ( *Reborn*); and Canada (Hopper's own *Out of the Blue*).

Returning to Hollywood in the 1980s, Hopper acted in *Apocalypse Now* and *Rumblefish* (both Francis Ford Coppola), *River's Edge* (Tim Hunter), *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch), and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for *Hoosiers*. 
Recently, Hopper returned to directing with the L.A. gang-war film, Colors, and has just completed directing and acting in Backtrack (Do It the Hard Way).

For almost three decades, Hopper consumed vast quantities of drugs and alcohol, and towards the end was doing an ounce of cocaine every couple of days and, believe it or not, a gallon of rum a day. Not surprisingly, he began suffering from intense paranoia, and narrowly escaped death in Mexico in 1982. By 1984, his condition had worsened and Hopper was committed to the psychiatric ward of the Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles.

Now detoxed, it is a sober, clear-eyed and talkative Hopper who strolls into the Hotel Colorado after his regular game of golf. During the interview, he consumed nothing stronger than coffee.

HOPPER: Six years without alcohol and drugs has shown me my self-abuse was caused by hate. It started in the 1960s when I hated everything, particularly Hollywood, America's involvement in Vietnam and the racism that gave birth to the Civil Rights movement.

I was a person who thought it was all right for me to drink and take drugs because I was an actor. All the actors, musicians and writers I liked were all drinkers and druggers. Besides, I never thought I was an alcoholic; I just drank all day. I was shocked when I got sober and found out everyone didn't drink like that.

The 1960s was a period of experimentation with drugs. Do you consider the drug problems of the 1980s to be the result of that abuse?

There was a time in the 1960s when it was all working. Then organized crime took over and the drugs started working against us. But by that time we had become addicted.

I now belong to a twelve-step programme for helping people with drug and alcohol problems. It's an anonymous organization with no leaders or outreach programme. It's designed for the individual and I'm not allowed to discuss it with the press.

How did you survive this self-abuse?

I don't think it was my destiny to survive, I was just lucky. When James Dean died, my sense of destiny died with him.

If the 1960s were sourced by drug use, they were celebrated for their political activism. What do you consider the political issues of the 1980s?

The environment, the inner cities and drugs. But these aren't the same kind of issues as Vietnam or Civil Rights. I'm not sure how you can protest these 1980s issues. I think the youth should just go to school, and do whatever they want – Wall Street, big business. I don't have a problem with any of that.

And American foreign policy?

I don't think America has any major foreign policy problems at the moment. There aren't any Contras in Nicaragua any more. Have you considered that George Bush is okay? That maybe he's a good President? I also don't see a problem with nuclear war; I don't think it will happen. Nor am I down on nuclear power - I still think it can be made safe. The ozone problem is another matter, however.

Could you tell me something about your new film, Backtrack?

I'm trying to get the title changed to Do It The Hard Way. It's the title of a Chet Baker song used in the film. Basically, it's about a young woman artist, played by Jodie Foster, who's driving home from her studio one day when she gets a flat tyre near a deserted oil refinery. She is making her way across the refinery site to a gas station when she stumbles across a Mafia 'hit' in progress. She escapes to a police station, but the Mafia come after her and kill her boyfriend.

I'm hired by the Mafia to find and kill her. She disappears and changes her identity. By the time I catch up with her, I've fallen in love and have to give her the choice of coming away with me forever or being killed. Vestron had bought the script and I rewrote it with Alex Cox.

Recently, you published a book of photographs (Book Of The Sixties) and you have shown an interest in fine art painting.

James Dean and I both believed we had to know about great art before we could even begin to think about becoming actors, so Jimmy and I would hang around galleries and museums. I developed a good eye, and, when a painting bothered me, I'd return to reconsider it. Generally, that work later became famous - paintings by Jasper Johns, Rauschenberg, Warhol, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg and others.

FACING PAGE: HUEY WALKER (DENNIS HOPPER), THE AGEING RADICAL, AND JOHN BUCKNER (KIEFER SUTHERLAND), THE FBI AGENT WHO TRACKS HIM DOWN. FRANCO AMURRI'S FLASHBACK. LEFT: DURING THE FILMING OF FLASHBACK, FRANCO AMURRI DIRECTS DENNIS HOPPER AND SUTHERLAND.
I collected them before they were famous, and over an eight-year period spent about $36,000. If I hadn’t lost them all in my divorce to my first wife, they’d be worth $40 million today. I also painted myself at this time, but lost over 300 of my paintings in a fire at my Bel Air house in 1961. I never had the desire to paint again.

And my photographs were all taken between 1961 and 1967 – they were a way of getting to direct films. After Easy Rider I never took photographs again.

Is the Huey Walker character in Flashback close to the personality of Dennis Hopper?

Whichever I was in the 1960s, I now consider that person dead. Huey Walker is more like Abbie Hoffman, but without the politics. I was shocked when I was offered the part, as big names like Robin Williams and Bill Murray had been considered. My agency, CAA, didn’t want me to take the part — they had someone else in mind who would have made them more money.

But I really like the character of Huey Walker. It gives me the chance to play comedy, which I really haven’t done since I was a kid doing clown roles in Shakespeare. It gives me a chance to work with the producer Marvin Worth, who has been a friend for years, and to work for Paramount, which seems to be the best major studio in Hollywood these days.

Did you enjoy working with Italian director Franco Amurri?

Franco Amurri is a very pleasant and nice man. I’m sure he will have a great career managing a hotel on the Italian Riviera.

And the revolution? Has that died for you as well?

It’s a young man’s game. If you live through it, then you can try to make the changes. I just want to work. I’ve only directed five movies; I should have directed twenty by now.

**KIERF SUTHERLAND**


Are you interested in the 1960s?

People of my age have parents from that time. We’re always hearing stories from the 1960s, sometimes every night after dinner, or when our parents have their friends over. In some ways you didn’t have any choice; you have to become interested in the 1960s, even if you didn’t want to. It was part of my family life. My political beliefs have been shaped by the 1960s, but I try not to impose my political morality on others.

Did your father [Donald Sutherland] influence you in choosing your career?

I started when I was eleven at the Odyssey Theatre in Los Angeles. I lived with my mother in Toronto and in England for all my life. My father lived in the United States. I left home when I was fifteen. My brother had become an actor, and my mother was a very talented actor. My first film The Boy Boy was a very informative experience. I learned a lot from the director Daniel Petrie.

How did you get the part of John Buckner in Flashback?

I auditioned like everyone else. There was a lot of interest in the project. I think it was Dennis who made the final choice. I have never worked with an actor as co-operative and as helpful as Dennis. For example, he’s taught me how to act in a mastershot, so that when it comes to the close-ups I don’t have to work so hard to get the shots to match. You only learn that from someone with Dennis’ experience.

I’ve also learnt to concentrate my energies. On a shoot like tonight, I concentrate everything into the ten to twenty minutes of film that goes through the camera. I think it was Orson Welles who said: “I get paid to wait and I do the acting for free.”

But it’s a strange profession, particularly when you do as many films as I have in the last four years. Having children has changed my perception of most things as well. My wife has a twelve-year-old daughter, and we have a two-year-old.

Are you lined up for another project?

I go to England as soon as Flashback is finished to do Chicago for and the Show Girl, a true story about the only American GI to be convicted and hung by an English jury. He was a private in the Second World War who went AWOL, met a girl and went on a killing spree. It’s being directed by Bernard Rose, who just finished The Paper House. After that, I’m going to take a break.

What is your personal taste in films?

There was a time, when I was ten or eleven, when I loved every movie I saw. Luckily, I’m past that stage. I’d like to do another Western, a good cop movie. I really like films that can be looked back on with respect – Serpico, Dog Day Afternoon or The Godfather. I don’t like overly commercial films, and I don’t like films like Stranger in Paradise. I know everybody else loved it, but I couldn’t stand it. I’m not keen on films that try to intimidate an audience into feeling they are intellectually inferior.
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<th>18 Issues</th>
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Since the release of Boulevard of Broken Dreams (Pino Amenta) in 1988, Frank Howson’s production company, Boulevard Films, has completed a record number of five films in the past 12 months, making it Australia’s most prolific producer of feature films.

Three films are scheduled for production in 1990, and more further down the track.

To finance this ambitious slate, the company has raised $38.45 million during the past three years.

What is more, Boulevard Films has continued to make films at a time when few others could. Peter Boyle, who serves as chief executive officer and has executive produced the films, admits that it is tough out there: “The whole ball game has changed. It changes every time the tax laws change.” He hopes that the government will leave the tax concessions as they are so that once again producers have the opportunity to stabilize the investment base, but cautions that there is not much life for TOBA under 100 per cent. He also believes the job of attracting investment has been made a lot more difficult by Hemdale in the U.S. not meeting several distribution guarantees on local films.

Despite the hard times of late, Boulevard Films’ present fortune is very much a legacy of days gone by.

The financing of the first five films, which only completed production when Flynn (Brian Kavanagh) wrapped in October, was under-written before September 1985 at the old 133/33 TOBA tax rate. The package totalling $16.75 million was backed by 55 per cent pre-sales via Boulevard’s distribution arm, Bravo Entertainment.

Indeed, Howson and Boyle are keen to dispel the notion that the company’s rise had been meteoric. Howson admits that there was initially resentment from some people in the industry when it appeared that the company had suddenly sprouted from nowhere with its hefty production schedule. In fact, the company was formed in 1981, seven years before production of its first film, Boulevard of Broken Dreams. Most of that time, according to Boyle, was spent in the backroom “developing scripts, ideas and contacts, speaking to people, producers, film bodies, bankers, accountants and lawyers.”

Much of that time was also taken up by a project that didn’t take off, and another that, to the regret of some, did. The one that didn’t transpire was the still-unproduced “Something Great”, a project based on the life of folk hero Les Darcy. The Michael Edgley Organisation was interested at one stage, but the problem of control was a stumbling block, claims Howson. The $6 million project suffered another setback with the fall-out between Antony I. Ginnane’s International Film Management and Hemdale, which had provided a significant pre-sale.

The other project was Backstage (Johnathan Hardy, 1988), which was finally produced by the Burrowes Dixon Group. The project went to that production company, says Howson, under the condition that it act as executive producer only, and have no creative input: “I knew very clearly what audience it should be made for. But all of a sudden I found myself dealing with production by committee. To even make the
smallest decision required everyone sitting around the table. "Howson eventually walked away, leaving to conjecture what might have become of this controversial film, which has come to epitomize the 10BA era.

The eventual emergence of productions from Boulevard Films was certainly timely, not only for the company but for the industry. Howson admits that "had we not made Boulevard of Broken Dreams, we would have been left with an incredible debt". For the industry, feature film production in Melbourne would have ground to a virtual standstill had it not been for the five Melbourne-based projects.

Although Boulevard of Broken Dreams won two AFI Awards from seven nominations, it was less than a success with the critics, leading to letters being sent from the production company to a few reviewers. Howson insists that it was a box-office success, reflecting nonetheless that its local release should have been better staged. To capitalize on the AFI Awards, the film's distributor, Hoyts, rush released it before the soundtrack album and marketing campaign Boulevard had envisaged were ready.

However, what sounds like a soft-sell gives way to a more earnest explanation by Howson:

It was the first film we'd done, and it was made with a lot of commercial requirements because we weren't in the position to just make a film and hope for the best. We set out to make a film that would do well here and internationally.

One of those commercial requirements was the film's somewhat bathetic ending, in which the dying Tom Garfield (John Waters) is intercepted at the airport by his tear-striken and conciliatory wife and child. Originally, Tom was to have hopped on the plane without anyone knowing that he returned to L.A. to die. This dark ending would have pleased the critics, Howson predicts, but audiences would have felt cheated.

Howson claims that the range and variety of Boulevard's films reflects his eclectic tastes. Boyle believes it is a trap to produce films that look and feel the same. He feels it is important that distributors see a spread of styles, further enabling the company to move into various areas of the market place.

Nonetheless, similarities exist between the way the films are made. They are all produced and written (or co-written) by Howson, who also directed Hunting. Three of the six films made to date were directed by Pino Amenta. Many of the same actors reappear: Kim Gyngell and Guy Pearce having appeared in three, John Waters in two. The aim, say Howson and Boyle, is to nurture new talent and develop a stable of actors and crew members.

The films tend to be made on short shooting schedules, often
shot back-to-back. Budget-wise, Boyle likes to keep them below $3 million, "anything above that really needs support from a U.S. distributor, an American or British actor."

In terms of subject matter, the films tend toward domestic dramas rather than lurid excavations of the entertainment world a la Bob Fosse. (Flynn, assures Howson, will tactfully avoid some of Flynn's infamous party tricks.) The films' casting is likewise calculated to ensure widest possible audience appeal. Guy Pearce made his feature film debut in *Heaven Tonight* (Pino Amenta), staying on board for *Hunting* and the lead role in *Flynn.* Like Kim Gyngell, he is best known to audiences for his roles in television. In the case of Pearce, however, his popular reputation and following is somewhat higher calibre, having been forged in the high-rating and, significantly, internationally-known *Neighbours.*

Concomitant with these ploys is the priority given to the films' soundtracks. Boulevard intends to produce and market soundtrack albums for all the films. *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* was complemented by a soundtrack album featuring original recordings by well-known international artists. Five singles with corresponding film clips (shot by Howson) have been lifted from *Heaven Tonight.* CBS Records will distribute the records, which will, predictably, see yet another *Neighbours* star embark on a music career.

This particular strategy goes much further than simply using the marketing muscle of an international record company, significant though this is, to capitalize on what is effectively free advertising for the movie in another medium. It is more like a linchpin of the company, and an integral ingredient in the way projects are conceived. Howson says:

> From day one when perceive what style of film it will be, we almost decide how we'd like the poster shot. It may sound funny but it's thought out that carefully. We also incorporate the various songs we'd like to use in our scripts, so that we have a visual image of how the whole thing will end up in terms of the music component. We carefully plan the type and style of the songs we want. We've even contracted people to write particular styles of songs that fit into various moods of the film if we haven't got anything in our publishing catalogue or access to something.

Boyle goes so far as to state that the company's music interests are a key to its survival:

> What people are realizing is that it's very hard to make money in the Australian entertainment business out of one area, be it music publishing, records, movies or theatre ... We've been fortunate in that we've been able to spend money from our music activities to develop our film activities, and that's something that perhaps other producers haven't had.

In spite of the present economic climate, Boyle has managed to raise $12.5 million this year at the reduced 100 percent tax concession. He is understandably confident about Boulevard Films' ability to reach investors: "Our products are attractive because they're commercial. They stand a chance of breaking out and we're very realistic in terms of our budgets". Another secret of his success, he believes, is the company's long-term view: "You really have to go to those people with a long-term view, rather than 'Here's a film; I need this much money; it's going to be a hit.'"

On the production slate for 1990 are three projects: *Highway Hero: The Envoy,* a thriller concerning CIA involvement in Australia; and *Friday On My Mind,* a contemporary youth-oriented film about street kids. Howson stresses once again that these films will be very different from each other.
When as a child actor he appeared on a TV show, the title "Magical Frank" still comes back to haunt Frank Howson. The moniker harks back to Howson's younger days as a tap-dancing magician whose tricks went hopelessly wrong.

Wearing many hats, writing both the scripts and songs of his films, as well as producing them and, on occasion, directing, Frank Howson in fact brings all that experience under one umbrella. "Moving into film was a natural progression", says Howson. "It was a deliberate choice, not an accident."

I have never understood anyone who locked into one type of film. I have quite eclectic tastes; they run across the board. I think you select a film like music: to suit different moods. Sometimes you want to be intellectually stimulated, other times you want some light diversion.

The only time I get angry is when I see a film of a particular genre and it is badly done, shoddily produced or at the end of the film you don't care one way or another about the characters. It ends and you think, 'Fine. I spent 96 minutes in the presence of these people and I don't give a fuck about any of them.'

I got a lot of negative thoughts from some about the Les Darcy project. Michael Edgley and others wanted to change the sad ending. It has always seemed strange to me the thinking that you have to leave the audience on a high. It doesn't matter at the end of a movie if the audience is moved to tears or laughter; the important thing is that they are moved. If an audience cares enough about a character to cry, then the film has obviously worked.

Most of the characters in the films I have done so far are very flawed people. Tom Garfield in Boulevard of Broken Dreams has been very selfish and is struggling for some kind of redemption. The same with the character in Beyond My Reach, who some will probably find unlikable. But, if they are honest with themselves, they will realize he represents aspects of our own natures. He is multi-layered, enigmatic and, hopefully as a result, real.

The important thing for me is that at the end of a screenplay you feel that you've been on an emotional journey, that you have started at one point and either descended to something or risen above it. At the end of a film, even if it's a very subtle message, there must be some sort of enlightenment about the human condition.

Are there any particular types of films you would not be interested in producing?

I never thought I would do an action film, but then next year we are doing a film called Highway Hero, which is an ironic title. It is an action film, but hopefully it's one that has some intellectual meat beneath the surface.

A film that influenced me very much when writing it was Peckinpah's Straw Dogs, which is a film about violence, and about what somebody can become when he is under threat from other people. That theme has been explored in films like Death Wish. It is a good theme that has usually been sold down the line.

All the films you have made so far are set in the entertainment world.

F. Scott Fitzgerald was once told by his editor to write about what he knew. Heaven Tonight is a film I can go on record as saying every incident is true: either I have lived it, or I know somebody who has. There is no fabrication, except in the names, which have been changed to protect the guilty.

What particular aspect of the industry do you want to show?

Each film explores a different aspect. Boulevard is about somebody who has achieved what most people dream about, but is still not happy. What the Moon Saw is the total opposite: it's about a little boy at the very beginning of his life who sees the enchantment and

BOULEVARD FILMS' FILMS

IN RELEASE: Boulevard of Broken Dreams (Pino Amenta);
Beyond My Reach (Pino Amenta) IN POST-PRODUCTION: Flynn (Brian Kavanagh); Hunting (Pino Amenta)
AWAITING RELEASE: What the Moon Saw (Pino Amenta); Heaven Tonight (Pino Amenta)
What the Moon Saw, Heaven Tonight, Beyond My Reach; The Envy; Friday on My Mind

What is the philosophy behind the films the company produces?
You have made films in various genres.

To his regret, the title "Magical Frank" still comes back to haunt Frank Howson. The moniker harks back to Howson's younger days as a child actor. He appeared on a TV show, playing a tap-dancing magician whose tricks went hopelessly wrong. Instead of flying away, the doves dropped dead, and so on. The routine turned into a cult attraction and spawned live appearances, a hit record and a theatrical musical.

What the Moon Saw, penned songs that have been recorded far and wide, and, through his company Boulevard Music, published songs that have been recorded by such groups as Little River Band and Pseudo Echo.

"Moving into film was a natural progression", says Howson. "It brings all that experience under one umbrella." Howson in fact wears many hats, writing both the scripts and songs of his films, as well as producing them and, on Hunting, directing.
In several of your films you have written in parts for Americans. Is it necessary to do this for marketing purposes?

It certainly doesn’t hurt, and I’d be lying to say otherwise.

Do your investors also require name casting?

Not at all. As for John Savage in *Hunting*, I tried to cast his part in Australia and it was a part that could have been an Australian. But a requirement of that film’s financing was casting somebody known to an international distributor.

Unfortunately, because of the spiralling costs of budgets and productions, and because the industry is in a financial depression, it is harder and harder to get movies up and running. If a requirement of a pre-sale is having a known name, then you have to seriously consider it. But if you are going to bring in an import, then, for god’s sake, make sure you get a good one. That’s my attitude.

Some of the films we will do next year have that requirement. Others have smaller budgets and we may be able to tap dance around it. When we start talking of budgets of $3-5 million and higher, I don’t think it is an unfair requirement that you cast somebody an international audience has heard of. But I would resent it if somebody stood over me, like in the old Hollywood system, and demanded that I cast somebody who was inappropriate for a role. Fortunately I don’t have those restrictions.

Does your role as producer influence what goes into the screenplay you write, and vice versa?

Initially a writer sits down and writes the screenplay. At a later date, when the screenplay has been through several drafts, the producer takes over and starts thinking of casting, international appeal, pre-sales and distribution requirements. Woody Allen once said that he loves writing a script because it is his masterpiece. Everyday thereafter, a new truck load of compromises will arrive outside the door.

The interesting thing about producing is you have to balance and juggle these things to maintain the original integrity of the project. Sometimes it is a fine line to walk.

So while you are writing a screenplay, you will also be thinking of things that a producer will need to consider further down the track?

A certain location may be expensive; the screenplay may be timed at 130 minutes, in which case why shoot 130 minutes when you know that only 96 or 100 minutes will end up on the screen? These sort of things come into question. At the same time, you have to juggle what the original message and intention of the film was.

On some of Boulevard’s films, you have written the screenplay, produced, written the music and lyrics, even directed. Is involvement in so many areas a good thing?

Most of the people who work with me, like Kim Gyngell and John Waters, think I am very open to suggestions and ideas. The thing they love most is the rehearsal period, because it is a matter of sitting around a table and having a think-tank, bouncing ideas off one another, talking about the characters, trying to get to the heart of what we want portrayed on the screen. It is not as if I do any of those things in isolation. Obviously I have the final say, but only a madman would turn his back on a good idea.

How do you tend to allocate money within the budget of your films?

One thing I have always spent probably more money on than most other Australian producers is the soundtrack. With *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*, we recorded a great deal of those songs in L.A. with people like Richie Havens, Dan Hill and Marc Jordan. On most Australian productions, the soundtrack tends to be done last and usually at a stage when they have almost run out of money. It suffers as a result. To me, the soundtrack is one of the most important things for the emotional balance of a film.
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FACING PAGE: THE SET UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN AN ABANDONED REACTOR SITE.
Ron Cobb is truly a man for all seasons: political cartoonist, freelance artist and conceptual designer of hi-tech and effects films. His unusually varied and striking work has ranged from breakdown artist on Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* (1957), to the alien designer on George Lucas' *Star Wars* (1977), and the principal set designer on James Cameron's *Aliens* (1987) and *The Abyss* (1989). Cobb first came to Australia in 1972 on a lecture tour sponsored by the Australian Union of Students, stayed a year, married an Australian, Robin Love, and has been commuting since on an irregular basis. His eventual aim, once he has made the transition from designing to writing and directing, is to move to Sydney, where he and his wife have bought a house. An amiable, genially enthusiastic bear of a man, he exudes a genuine delight and enthusiasm for his craft that seems unjaded by ten years of working on major Hollywood features. He begins this interview by describing his first involvement with the film industry.

I graduated from Burbank High School in 1955 and went to work for Disney. I must confess I was not a great admirer of his family-oriented style of entertainment, which seemed to me to be endorsing particularly false values. But I loved the potential of animation, and in those days Disney was the only studio that would hire unproven talent. They had the volume of work and money to be able to hire inexperienced people and train them on-site at their own school.

Disney immediately put me to work on their current animated feature, *Sleeping Beauty*. I spent two years working on one sequence, and it was quite an education to observe and be part of the lengthy process involved in making animated features.

You were best known until the 1980s for your political cartoons and illustrations. How did you make the transition back to filmmaking?

I had worked as a political cartoonist in the American underground press during the 1960s. It turned out that Dan O'Bannon was a fan of my work and, through him, I eventually became involved in the low-budget film that Dan and John Carpenter were making at USC. Called *Dark Star*, it was conceived as a 40-minute, 16mm student film. I helped them out with some design work but had to leave to do a tour of Australian university campuses, promoting my cartoon work. When I returned to the States, I discovered that Dan had organized reshoots and a 35mm blow-up. The film then achieved a theatrical release [in 1974] and suddenly I found myself back in the film business.

On the basis of *Dark Star*, Dan was snapped up by George Lucas to work on his *Star Wars* as a visual consultant. Dan recommended to George that I could be useful on the scene involving the aliens in the cantina. I made six designs at a hundred dollars a piece, which were then turned over to Rick Baker who moulded them out of rubber. From this experience I started to develop a reputation, even though it was largely accidental.

I then became involved with [director] John Milius who commissioned some paintings on the basis of his having been a fan of my work over the years. I don’t think that I ever made a conscious effort to become involved in the film business. I just seemed to be pulled into it.

It seems producers have had problems over the years pigeon holing your various duties.

I started out with no particular film experience, living in a no-
man’s-land, helping fill out vacuums and making suggestions to the production designer when he was stuck with a design problem. I didn’t belong to the union and was ineligible to be considered an art director, except overseas. So I was variously described as a concept artist, illustrator or designer. My favourite credit is on Back to the Future [Robert Zemeckis, 1985], where I am billed as a “De Lorean time travel consultant”.

Have you ever had an assignment where you were allotted sufficient time and money to properly realize your ambitions?

I spent two years working on my first major feature, Conan the Barbarian [John Milius, 1982], even though much of this time was wasted. We wandered the world scouting for a suitable location and finally settled for Spain.

It was the first time that I was really in charge of the overall visual look of a film, so I was rather nervous. I was also not a great fan of the Conan books or comics, but Milius was attracted to the project as the ideal opportunity to make a pseudo-Kurosawa epic in the style of Seven Samurai.

I found Robert E. Howard’s novels to be lurid, stereotypical and uninteresting. I have always been a history buff, but with a taste running to period films rather than to fantasy history. To appease the pulp fans, John and I conspired to say that there was such a time as the late 19th century. We attempted to make a period film about the ancient world but we ran amok designing sets with Freudian symbolism to depict the snake cult, orgy chamber and flesh-coloured pillars.

How did you get on with Milius?

Good and bad. I have always been grateful to John because he argued for me as production designer on the project against the wishes of the producer, Dino de Laurentiis. I love John’s storytelling strengths and enthusiasm, although we are quite different in our professed political orientations. I must admit, though, that I prefer opinionated people to those who have no opinions at all.

John is a skilful writer, but I wonder whether he enjoys the physical process of actually directing, which seems to wear him out. Sometimes he would succumb to the temptation to make things a bit simpler and would skip coverage here and there.

Originally, Conan had been planned as Oliver Stone’s directing debut. He had written an elaborate screenplay, budgeted at $60 million. But when it looked as though Stone might be unavailable, the script was shopped around and eventually was seen by Milius. His immediate reaction was that Stone was wrong for the film, that the script’s structure was all awry and that he must salvage the project. He was totally intrigued by the Conan mythology and its echoing of Viking lore. He was also a great admirer of The Vikings [Richard Fleischer, 1958], with Tony Curtis and Kirk Douglas.

You spent much time and effort on a frontier epic that Milius was developing following the release of Big Wednesday (1978).

Yes, that was about Jedediah Smith, one of the early mountain men who made his way across the old, old west, travelling through the Rockies and across to Spanish-held California. John wanted to make this incredible tale as an historical sci-fi movie. We were intrigued by the early paintings of the American wilderness where all the details were exaggerated. We thought that it might be possible to make a film of Wagnerian grandeur, but it never came to be.

On Ridley Scott’s Alien (1978), you were described as a concept artist.

When Dan O’Bannon sold the Alien script to Fox, the actual production plans were fairly vague. I met Steven Spielberg when he was interviewed about making the movie, but he dropped out because of other commitments. I also recall spending several months working up designs for Walter Hill, when he was director for a while. A few others were also briefly involved.

Just prior to all this taking off, Dan had become linked up with Alejandro Jodorowsky, who was attempting to set up a film version of Dune in Paris. Alejandro wanted me to become involved and he already had Moebius and Gieger as part of his team. But it suddenly came unstuck.

Back on Alien, the English production designer, Michael Seymour, was experiencing difficulties. It soon became clear that he was a little out of his depth on an undertaking of this magnitude, and I came in to “fill out a few vacuums”. Gieger also came on and handled the alien designs. When it was all over, Gieger and I were both given “concept artist” credits.

As is typical of English production designers, Michael organized the logistics of the whole project, running the art department and working in an administrative capacity. He designed most of the lower decks, while I took care of the earth technology and the interior of the Nostromo.

A confusion existed in the public mind due to the fact that Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick had established the idea of deep space ships that weren’t streamlined and that had all their plumbing on display. George Lucas,
though, wanted the space ships to look like airplanes, so they ended up resembling airplanes with exterior plumbing.

It was difficult to achieve a consistent look on Alien because Ridley would become bored and ask for different ideas to be incorporated into the overall plan.

As for Alien, Jim Cameron envisaged it purely as an action movie. I was flown to England prior to the commencement of shooting to help out with designs on weapons and the dropship. Jim is also an excellent artist and designer and had used his own designs for the Arnold robot in The Terminator [1984].

What was your role in the overall design of The Abyss?

I was aware that Jim harboured the notion of making a large-scale underwater movie. Underwater is an “in” concept in Hollywood with a glut of strange, silly movies in production.

I did all the major designs while based in California, where I supervised the construction of the submarines. I never actually visited the set in North Carolina, but I was in daily contact and felt supremely confident that Jim would see my work through to our mutual satisfaction.

Essentially, the film is set on a near-future oil platform populated by a group of industrial workers in an Alien-like setting, but living in the deepest depths of the ocean. Jim asked me to design a mobil platform which would be located on the sea bed. It was three stories high, 200 ft long and with a big derrick on the back. It looked like a gigantic skeletal scorpion with thruster engines and huge feet, almost like an underwater helicopter.

Jim then found an uncompleted nuclear power station in Gaffney, North Carolina, with a concrete containment tank 200 ft in diameter and 100 ft deep. It was made to hold water in case of a nuclear leak for the reactor that was never added. We built a full-scale platform three stories high on the bottom of the tank and flooded it.

I then designed two full-scale submarines, dropped them in the tank and had actors drive them around as though they were 3000 ft at the bottom of the ocean. At that depth there is no light, so we had to erect a black circus tent over the tank and then floated black styrofoam balls on the surface so that not even a glimmer of light could get through.

Just prior to The Abyss, you had worked on a similarly themed project, Leviathan (1989).

Dino de Laurentiis had been developing some projects with director George Cosmatos, including “China Marines”, which I was involved with as a script consultant. For the first time in my career, I worked almost exclusively with the writers on various versions of the storyline and with early designs.

Suddenly, for a series of complicated reasons, “China Marines” fell through and we ended up doing Leviathan, from a script by David Peoples. The film was actually an Italian production, produced by Dino’s cousins, that was picked up by MGM for release.

The underwater setting called for something original but David had been told to concoct an “alien underwater” scenario. Much time was spent on rewrites to veer away from the more plagiaristic aspects of the storyline.

I was called away prior to the start of shooting, so I didn’t really expect to retain a screen credit as production designer. But it was George’s wish that my designs be followed as closely as possible in the finished film which is, unfortunately, too much of an Alien rip-off. For this reason I think the film failed quite profoundly, as most reviewers were quick to point out.

How did you get to work with Spielberg on Raiders of the Lost Ark?

I had met Steven while I was working with Milius on the aborted “Half The Sky” project. Spielberg was sharing space in the same office building: on one side of the hall Steven was finishing Raiders Of The Lost Ark, while on the other we were working on Conan.

I became excited when Steven described the Raiders storyline to me and started working weekends designing antique aircraft and experimental jets. Most of the basic ideas were his, but I loved having the chance to visualize them, as in the case of the Peruvian temple, the flying wing and the rolling stone.

The general consensus on Spielberg’s plunge into television anthologies with a fantasy base, Amazing Stories, seems to indicate a failure of artistic nerve and compromise.

Prior to helming Amazing Stories, my only other experience handling live-action work was uncredited second-unit work on Conan, as well as designing and directing its opening credits sequence. I was thrilled to hear that Steven planned to put his influence and money into what amounted to a revival of the old Twilight Zone concept. Everyone was excited at the possibilities of wacky, strange and pithy pieces of television writing and wonderful stories with different actors and directors each week.

Steven was encouraging all kinds of people, including myself, to write stories, but it soon became evident that he was gravitating towards light, cheerful and harmless Disney-like fantasies that were family oriented. The stories didn’t take any chances and lacked any meaningful drama.

The Last Starfighter (1984) is an underrated sci-fi fantasy that had the misfortune to be released in the wake of the decidedly inferior Tron (Peter Yates, 1982).

When I was making the early designs for Alien, I was keen to use computer simulation for the visuals of the instrumentation on board.
RON COBB: FILMOGRAPHY

1957  Sleeping Beauty (Clyde Geronimi)
      In-between/breakdown artist.
1974  Dark Star (John Carpenter)
      Designed space ship exterior.
1977  Star Wars (George Lucas)
      Designed some of the more elaborate aliens in the cantina scene.
1978  Alien (Ridley Scott)
      Concept artist. Designed exterior (miniature) and interior sets of the earthship Nostromo.
1981  Raiders Of The Lost Ark (Steven Spielberg)
      Designed the Nazi Flying Wing and the early concept of the Peruvian temple.
1981  Close Encounters Of The Third Kind: Special Edition (Steven Spielberg)
      Designed stranded tanker sequence and Mother Ship interior.
1982  Conan The Barbarian (John Milius)
      Production designer and director of additional second-unit photography.
1982  Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy (TV Series)
      Designer of cancelled project.
1984  The Last Starfighter (Nick Castle Jr.)
      Production designer. Computer simulation effects.
1985  Real Genius (Martha Coolidge)
      Designed laser technology and laser weapon system.
1985  My Science Project (Jonathan Betuel)
      Designed central UFO device.
1985  Back To The Future (Robert Zemeckis)
      Initial design of the De Lorean time machine.
1986  Steven Spielberg's Amazing Stories
      Co-designed the computer-simulated opening sequence.
      Directed the live action segments.
1986  Rough Boys (Z.Z. Top video clip.)
      Art Director.
      Designed space station/car wash set and some props.
1986  Robotbox (Stuart Gordon)
      Designed the 50m, multi-mode robots (inside and out),
      along with their support systems and the world they battle in (auto-mobiles, training devices, costumes).
      Film due to be released in 1990.
1987  Aliens (James Cameron)
      Designs for interior/exterior sets and land vehicles of the earth colony complex on the alien planet. Designs for the Drop Ship (small military space ship), the armoured personnel carrier and some of the hand weapons.
1987  Peter Gabriel Concert Film.
      Art Director. Untitled feature shot on location in Athens.
1989  Leviathan (George Cosmatos)
      Production Designer.
1989  The Abyss (James Cameron)
      Interior/exterior set designs for the underwater drilling platform. Designed two full-sized operable submarines, plus the main diving suits and helmets.
1989  Total Recall (Paul Verhoeven)
      Concept art/design. Created the overall look for the Mars colony and mine complex, including operable taxi cabs, full sized “mole” mining machines, some alien architecture/machines and general transportation (utility vehicles, a Martian mag-lev train, a Marsliner spaceship, etc.). Also designed the REKALL machine, a few key props, a squad car and a robotic taxi for the earth sequence, and many of the costumes.

RON COBB

the Nostromo. Ridley Scott shared my enthusiasm and we visited the California headquarters of a company that had been formed by John Whitney Jr and was to become Digital Productions.

After Conan, John [Milius] called me and asked me if I would be interested in joining his company. One of the first projects I worked on there was Lorimar’s The Last Starfighter, which presented the opportunity to work in the advanced computer simulation area using state-of-the-art technology.

At this time, everything was in place except a director. Lorimar was looking at the work of new directors and promising student filmmakers. One of the films they saw was a promising low-budget film called The Assassination Game (1982). It was Nick Castle’s first feature and he was subsequently hired.

We decided that the time had come to flirt with the idea of almost photo-real simulation: i.e., material that could be intercut with live action without necessarily stylizing the live action to make it fit the simulation as had been done in previous films like Tron.

We used a gigantic computer to assemble all the detail. I think we just pulled the effect off, although if you look at the film with a keen eye you may notice that some of the effects scenes have a certain airbrushed animation look. The sets were stylized and given a slightly cleaner look than is the norm.

Certain logistical problems relating to budget and scheduling meant that we retreated slightly from our original game plan in the sense that many of the simulated shots were more complicated and realistic than ended up in the completed film. We discovered that we would not have enough time to compute images to that level of realism. To get the film done in time, we had to use slightly less detail and go for a more simplified look. Despite some failings and a slight silliness, I have a great fondness for that film and feel that it is romantic and sweet.

You started work on Back To The Future at an early stage in the pre-production phase. Was this a decided advantage in terms of being able to formulate ideas?

I was involved with the early meetings on the project and had known director Bob Zemeckis from my uncredited involvement with an earlier film of his, an underrated comedy called Used Cars (1980).

I was hired to design the plans for the De Lorean car and add the various devices and instruments. With design work of this nature, you are usually the first person on deck after the writer because you need as much lead time as possible. This, in turn, gives you a greater influence on the project in terms of script changes and the possibility of suggesting different plot elements that can enhance the effects and general design. It’s really a creative and dynamic period in the realization of a film.

Total Recall (1989) seems to have been around forever and a day, most recently as the aborted De Laurentiis production to be shot at his Queensland studios.

The script has gone through various incarnations with various companies and directors [including David Cronenberg and Bruce Beresford], and is finally reaching the screen. The original screenplay, written by Ronald Shusett and Dan O’Bannon, has been modified by director Paul Verhoeven to accommodate the casting of Arnold Schwarzenegger and is being shot in Mexico, which is standing in for Mars. To give you an idea of how Hollywood works in the development of projects, I can recall that my involvement with Total Recall stretches back 11 years when I did a set of designs for Disney!
With her malleable face and voice, her energy and enthusiasm, Deborah Unger is establishing her film credits in quick succession. After two small television roles (A Country Practice, Coma Breakout), Unger was cast as Marion in Breakaway, directed by Don McLennan. In this, her first film role, she plays "an ex-heroine addict, a big red country singer desperately trying to make it in Nashville". The day after this film wrapped, Unger moved on to the set of Blood Oath as Sister Littell, a smaller, quieter role, in a film that focuses on the court-room drama of a little-known but controversial Japanese war-crimes trial. Directed by Stephen Wallace and starring Bryan Brown, the film does not stretch Unger's talents, but does give her welcome experience ("I love watching [director of photography] Russell Boyd work ... ").

After a short break, Unger tackles her third film, Til There Was You, in which she plays a lead role, as Anna. If all this seems fast-tracking a career, Unger is not satisfied: "I would like my next role to really push the learning process, a role with a big range. I'd like to go off the edge, to explore everything from extreme passion, simplicity ... an emotional rainbow with extremes. Something feisty. I want to be dancing in gumboots." Unger's energy and enthusiasm are bounded by the discipline acquired at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts, Sydney, for which she came specially to Australia from Canada.

ANDREW L. URBAN
A PANEL OF FILM REVIEWERS RATES TWELVE OF THE LATEST RELEASES ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 – WITH 10 BEING THE OPTIMUM RATING. THE CRITICS ARE: BILL COLLINS (CHANNEL 10; THE DAILY MIRROR); KEITH CONNOLLY (THE HERALD); JOHN FLAUS (3RRR, MELBOURNE; “EG”, THE AGE); SANDRA HALL (THE BULLETIN); PAUL HARRIS (3LO; “EG”, THE AGE); JOHN HINDE (ABC RADIO AND TELEVISION); STAN JAMES (THE ADELAIDE ADVERTISER); NEIL JILLET (THE AGE); SCOTT MURRAY; MIKE VAN NIEKERK (THE WEST AUSTRALIAN); TOM RYAN (3LO; THE SUNDAY AGE); DAVID STRATTON (SBS; VARIETY); AND EVAN WILLIAMS (THE AUSTRALIAN).
LETHAL WEAPON 2
RICHARD DONNER

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WE ARE ALWAYS INTERESTED IN PURCHASING COLLECTIONS OF RECORDINGS
Again, just as this issue was going to the printers, the newspapers being discouraged, it was surprising to see the quick response from is more people who know what they are talking about to complain! 

...would like to be paying customers in their own theatres. 

...behind me. That gap also let in the conversations of the ushers taking place in the foyer. I felt like demanding that they apologize to John Seale, whose pictures they spoiled.)

...Smith's smooth presentation and the audio-visual material reached their target and addressed many of the litany of woes that I have assembled (further contributions invited):

- Marked screens; poor focus and being left that way: incorrect masking; incorrect framing; wrong ratio aperture; noisy/scratchy soundtracks; badly set-up surround sound that after cracking from a side speaker suddenly bursts into life; external sound intruding; auditoriums that smell, usually from the disinfectants and carpet cleaners used (let alone the popcorn); over-bright auditorium EXIT lighting; and spill light.

...light spilled in through the entrance doors that had been left open.(At the performance of Dead Poets Society I saw recently in Sydney, light spilled in through the entrance doors that had been left open behind me. That gap also left in the conversations of the ushers taking place in the foyer. I felt like demanding that they apologize to John Seale, whose pictures they spoiled.)

The Kodak seminars, then, are a small but valuable contribution to ensuring that the quality images the production crews put so much time and energy into end up that way on the screen. Now all we need is more people who know what they are talking about to complain!

KODAK (AUSTRALASIA) IN TROUBLE?

Again, just as this issue was going to the printers, the newspapers headlined the Kodak threat to cut its manufacturing operation (and 500 jobs) at the Coburg plant in Melbourne unless it could receive some government assistance. In a time where industry protection is being discouraged, it was surprising to see the quick response from the Victorian government and from Canberra.

Although the movie industry has long become accustomed to the fact that our film stock has always been imported with the attendant problems that release dates, shipping and stock control have caused, there has been something comforting about having the backing and technical assistance of our biggest supplier as close as Melbourne. Some of us have grown up with that plant: as photography students we had guided tours, visited the labs and knew that we would have immediate assistance as expert as the actual technicians manufacturing our printing paper and processing our standard 8mm Kodachrome. And it happened enough times to make the idea of Kodak as just another ‘multi-national’ seem silly. These were the people that you spoke to on the phone and saw when you dropped your Kodachrome in for processing with the urgent overnight medical run.

Although there is no talk of stopping the processing operation, the decision to cut photographic paper manufacture has already cost 100 jobs and, with it, the loss of export income (apparently more than 70 per cent of the manufacturing output is for export to the Pacific region).

The potential loss of another high-technology industry at this time would mean that Australia will never get that expertise back, and it will be just another case where we will become consumers of an imported product. The fact that the local member for Wills, the electorate that includes the Coburg plant, is Mr Bob Hawke may have had something to do with the prompt action, but the decision is to be applauded, especially with the provisions requiring that Kodak spread the technology to a wider local base.

The Editor apologizes for the error in the last issue which headed the article on Ian Jones’ underwater camera housings as “New Perapex Underwater Housing for Arri II”. The heading should have referred, as the article indeed did, to the Arri III. The error was made in-house, not by Fred Harden.

Ian Jones’ company is called Trudian Film Productions Pty Ltd and is at 5 Tovan Akas Ave, Bentleigh Vic. 3204. Ph: 587 6145.

The engineer who constructed the housing also makes acrylic housings for other cameras, including video 8 camcorders.

Murray Wills can be contacted on (053) 92 2294.

Laser Disc Editing on Lonesome Dove

SCOTT MURRAY’S taped interview with director Simon Wincer (pp 6 - 12, 78 -79 this issue) contained the following interesting details of editing Lonesome Dove on the laser disc-based CMX 6000. I also spoke to Wincer (above) about the process before he journeyed to Alice Springs to start Quigley Down Under.

The prime advantage of laser discs for information and image storage is the access time. It is far easier to slide the laser read head across the flat surface of a videodisc than it is to spool through a roll of tape (or film for that matter). Combined with a computer, the
videodisc has proved to be a reliable and flexible tool, and the numbers in use around this country for education and industrial audio visuals are surprising. A Melbourne friend, Ray Hughes, has developed a multi-screen video projection system that uses six synchronized laser-disc players. These operate at intervals throughout the day under computer control and with sufficient reliability to be left unattended. The tourist theatre is in Alice Springs, and there is the option that the installation can be interrogated by phone from Melbourne to ensure that it is operating correctly.

For videodisc editing, the laser-video player has another advantage over linear rolls of film and tape. By adding a second play/read head that can move independently, or duplicating the disc on another player, you can switch without delay to another position on the disc, enabling you to cut to the end of the same shot that you are playing (if you want to).

With two or more players linked to the edit computer, the editor chooses the shots' edit points in and out, using the same SMPTE time code as conventional videotape, but it is encoded in the digital signal of each frame. A list of shots can be entered and, because the computer can decide which head can play the sequence fastest, there is no need to actually record any sequence other than a list of numbers. This list of numbers can be modified instantly and you do not lose any previous versions. So it is quite feasible to be able to compare the first cut, the director's cut, the producer's cut, the network's cut, etc. With a list of time-code numbers cross-linked to the film edge numbers, the negative cutter can then assemble the rolls to match the final edit. And sound is just as accessible.

When the first of these systems was launched almost three years ago, most people felt that they would be the first video-based system that could compete with the flexibility of flat-bed film editing. Systems such as Lucasfilm's Editroid appeared, and a number of companies have invested in them knowing that they were developing the future. But it is only now that the major edit controller companies, like CMX, have been able to deliver 'off the shelf units (and even then, as Wincer relates, they are writing software as they go).

Wincer had seen the CMX 6000 demonstrated at a trade show about two months before he started shooting "Lonesome Dove." Wincer:

I was really impressed. They were using it for commercials and I suggested to Corky Ehlers, the editor at The Post Group in Los Angeles, that we should investigate it. I was impressed by the flexibility, but also by the portability. I knew that if I wanted to bring the film back to Australia to cut, it would be almost impossible to haul the millions of feet of workprint back there, yet a couple of suitcases of laser discs was feasible.

When the process was investigated, Wincer found they could also offer the producers considerable savings in cost against a conventional film edit. He estimated that, for me it is joyous because it allows you to review every single take. When you are in a hurry during shooting, or you are concentrating on the performances, you cannot always do another take because of continuity problems. So there is quite a bit of mis-matching. Laser disc is the most accurate editing I have ever done, because you can try out all the alternatives so easily and you can actually 'rock' against the cut to fine tune the loose cuts. On film you can be one frame out and you don't bother to change it because it takes time and you think, 'Who is going to notice one frame?' But it does make a difference and it is easy to correct on laser disc. It is just terrific.

For information about the CMX6000 contact Magnatech Pty Ltd, on (03) 826 4111, or (02) 427 0666.

IREECON '89

11-15 SEPTEMBER

IHE Institution of Radio and Electronics Engineers Australia holds its convention and exhibition on alternate years to the SMPTE. Together these form the best local opportunities for manufacturers and importers of predominantly radio and television equipment to display their new product and for users of it, to catch up with prototype and NTSC equipment that we will eventually have access to in PAL formats.

Selection of significant items is always in the reviewer's interests and level of expertise, so I am always conscious of what I am bypassing and hope that the stand with broadcast satellite transmitters does not hold some device that will turn around later and bite my ignorance. Similarly with the programme of lectures when I pass up the talk on "Compliant Press-Fit Connectors" and then see the demonstration of a startling colour data-compression process for two-way telephone and video links at the exhibition and find that I missed the talk modestly titled, "Teleconference Equipment from NEC".

SO WHAT'S NEW?

Not a lot. The 'toys' are getting better, smaller, but not much cheaper, and, if you do not have a computer by now, forget it. There were a number of significant items that point to changes in film and video production, such as hand-held RDAT portable audio record-
ers that will inevitably make Nagras items of nostalgia, and the steady improvement of CCD video chips that have such advantage over tube cameras that we talk about the good old Philips LDK 14 days ("Daddy, what is a plumbicon?"). One need only look at the quality of the EP-3 CCD camera from NEC with 700 lines horizontal resolution and all the other advantages of solid state electronics, such as variable shutter speeds to 1/1500th of a second.

The Videssence Sustained Plasmatic Ionic Light sounds pretty scientific for a well-designed broad-source fluoro light, but you know how these Americans like to go on. The Videssence 12/8K gives the equivalent of an 8,000-watt broad source without the head and infrared, and was demonstrated as a particularly suitable source to use for Ultimatte work. There is a narrow 4K equivalent strip light for cyc lighting as well. The range is handled by Techtel, which also had a PC-based edit controller, Edit Master, that drew appreciative comments and was priced at the off-line market. It could control most professional machines and had particularly good EDL software.

Canon had its NTSC Video Stills system on display and the first of the PAL domestic units, the Xapshot RC-250. It is slated for end-of-the-year release and should cost less than $1,500.

Want to build your own camera? Philips had a bare-bones Imaging Module for about $560 ex tax for the basic mono CCD version. It just needed power and a lens. There were colour models and they use surface mount techniques on flexible PCBs to cram it all in to an area 89 x 170 x 45mm.

Overshadowing the Fuji film cans and tapes on the Hanimex stand, which hardly made a riveting display, was a one-piece edit controller and video enhancer from France called the Portax Video Edition VHS VEU 100. Mounted on a VHS video player, it allows you to mark 100 in and out points of your VHS tape and then assembles onto any other VCR that has an infrared remote control. With the record machine in record/pause the VEU 100 starts and stops it as it it finds each new cue point. There is a variable start and stop delay to fine tune the adjustment for new VCR, and it is worth a look. I hope that the manual was translated by different people to the 'Franglais' ad brochure, as it made even those who write the Korean brochures look literate.

The big news from Fuji was the release of its F-series motion picture stocks and I will be covering these later.

BUY AUSTRALIAN

It is more of an honest appreciation of how we can actually make innovative things of quality, rather than a desire to attract their advertising, that I have concentrated on Australian manufacturers. Because they usually don’t have decent advertising budgets, these are the items that we don’t hear about. As a result, we assume that there are no alternatives to the big brand names. It is often a case of existing customers and word of mouth only, so companies like Digiteyes, with its near saturation of their Shotlister product, are to be congratulated.

Drifting into areas that I do not normally frequent, I found that AW MicroElectronics has just spent $65 million on a plant at Homebush, Sydney, to design and manufacture ASICs (Application Specific Integrated Circuits), yet the list of ICs that they have already produced suggests applications for the local video-equipment designers.

ADx Systems is probably better known overseas than in its own country for a range of well-designed time-code and audio synchronizers. Its ADx-25 TurboLock synchronizer keeps turning up in more audio suites and ADx released its ADx-03, a very flexible package of VITC/LTC reader, generator, analyzer and comparator that includes its now standard timecode standards converter module that allows you to jam sync from one time-code standard to another. Quinto Communications is now the local agent.

Editron Australia Pty Ltd’s Sydney office should help redress its predominantly Victorian local market and it has developed export sales of its synchronizers (including one, it proudly announced, to Dolby Studios in San Francisco). The new Editron 440 is a budget-priced audio synchronizer and editor that shows the experience Graham Thirkle’s team has with non-standard applications. The 440 is just at home with film projector or dubbers, and sync from Pilot tone, video, bi-phase, or tachometer pulses, as it is to multiple (5 machine), 24-track interlocking. It includes a built-in time SMPTE/EBU code generator for 24, 25 and Drop frame and NDF. With an in-built software library of most audio, video and film equipment, this looked a very smart device.

In the same breath, there were new things from A.E.C. (Automatic Edit Controllers Pty Ltd), including a slow-motion add-on for the Sony BVW-75 machine, its AXIS video editor, a laser-disc controller, the ATCL, their inexpensive broadcast quality STILL frame store, and CAM (all their acronyms, not mine). CAM matches time-code numbers to edge numbers for negative matching, and I am going to catch up with it in a later issue.

The Digiteyes Shotlister edit list software has had a boost for users of it in VHS edit suites, with the release of its new VITC (Vertical Interval Time Code) generator that allows the VHS Hi-Fi track on the Edit VCR to be used. The Digiteyes generator regenerates time code complete with the existing user bits to keep the code continuous. This frees up the the other linear audio track for editing.

I do not know who Possum Video Products is, but the name makes a difference from the other HighTechNames approach. From Ringwood, Victoria, it showed a 12-volt 100-watt battery fill light. Rated at 3350 deg K, the battery pack in a neat nylon case with shoulder strap will run the lamp for 20 minutes with a 2.5 hour recharge. Designed with a pole mount and a hot-shoe adapter, Possum also offered a range of heads and AC adapters and plugs.
Lemac Sales demonstrated the West Australian-designed Cinekinetics One Man Grip kit. It had its own very classy catalogue with lots of tasteful white space which receives my Lowell Memorial Americanization Award for 1989. Despite the catalogue and the (shudder) Incredible Spreaderable tripod spreader (yes, it is the same three bits of chain grips always have in their trucks), the product looks well made and, for a small market item, reasonably priced. There is a Micro Jib arm mount on a tripod head (and sells for about $3,000); a small PVC pipe dolly in a carry case called a Pocket dolly; a foam-padded Cine Saddle that substitutes for shot or sandbags when mounting a camera on a car bonnet or platform but with enough loops to securely tie it down; and a tough-zipped canvas Sand Sack as a reusable sandbag. The whole kit comes for about $4,700 ex tax and would make a useful addition to a lot of ENG and 16mm camera shoots. I especially liked the Jib arm and the finish on all the items was very good. The Americans will love it.

Sharing a small stand, but attracting a lot of interest, were two products that are significant for their software design. The FAME Television Production Facility system is an integrated software system that tries to do it all. Developed by Continuum Software in Melbourne for AAV Melbourne and Pro-Image, Melbourne and Sydney, it handles facilities bookings, scheduling, library, labelling, invoicing and provides reports on facility usage analysis (Sorry Beryl, we will have to let you go) and cost-centre profitability. The introductory manual is uniquely Australian and blunt in parts (to put it mildly), but with their experience they can probably afford to be. It is hard to believe that anyone else could compete in the local market and, before long, you will be receiving the same computerized invoice from even more places.

AAV is also the home of Alchemy Research, Geoff Baxter, John Leonard and The Brat. With a particularly bad run of puns (Would you leave your valuable equipment in the hands of a BRAT?, Be the first on your block to adopt The Brat...) the Brat is a small (220 x 220 x 45mm) programmer/controller for a range of Audio/Visual systems. With its own language, Bratchat, it looked relatively simple to write sophisticated control sequences for use with videodisc and U-Matic players that can be controlled by a range of touch screen, keyboards or simple push buttons. Using Non Volatile storage chips and with onboard clock and smart software, it can control two players, has three remote-control inputs and two power-switching outputs, and two parallel ports for 8-bit computer data inputs/outputs. Available from mid November for about $1,820 ex tax, The Brat will really simplify the production of specialist interactive audio-visual programmes.
IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE to approach a new Paul Cox film without the fact of its being a Paul Cox film appearing more prominent than the film itself. More than any other Australian director, Cox has acquired the status of auteur. The remarkable consistency with which he is able to produce films on themes of personal concern makes him a truly singular figure in the Australian context. His films are apparently without the taint of market compromise. This is reiterated overtly or implicitly in interview after interview. His integrity may in fact be one of his best marketing devices.

One of the privileges awarded to auteurs is the latitude to make unspectacular films. This relief from the need to strain to attract attention is sometimes a good thing, but in the case of Island it has produced a rather insubstantial film. There are two main impulses at work in the film: the impulse to evoke, and to some extent document, the atmosphere and life on the particular Greek island of the film's setting; and a storytelling impulse which conjures three women, each of them in a particular kind of exile on the island.

The visual evocation of the island conveys little more than picture postcards: whitewashed walls, blue doors, the sea, the rocks, the obligatory native-with-donkey. Cox seems to be working with a photographic style popularized by Life magazine, a style which renders all people and places homogeneously exotic and intense. One rarely gets a tangible sense of 'real' life on the island, despite the textural detail.

Island has not so much a narrative as the vague structural outline of one. The relations between the three female characters, Eva (Eva Sitta), Sahana (Anoja Weerasinghe) and Marquise (Irene Papas), and their individual emotional struggles are ostensibly the focus of the story. The film has all the appropriate signs of human feelings – long gazes, 'meaningful' pauses, tearful goodbyes – but somehow these come across as superficial or not vividly expressed. The characters' most intimate moments are spent sitting in the dark amidst single shafts of light delivering gems about women being the strength of the earth (which is why men try to keep them down), and their nature being about love, not war. Cox presents these ideas as though, in his visionary way, he is presenting them to us for the first time. But of course these things have been in popular circulation for at least twenty years. Beneath the visual and formal embellishments, and the tone of wonderous revelation, the themes are cliches.

There is in Cox's work a deep identification with any kind of outsider and a romantic attachment to alienation as a state of being. Through its visual style and its portentiousness, Island becomes a kind of tasteful travelogue for exotic alienation. The tastefulness is all-pervasive. The film's treatment of such 'controversial' issues as murder and drug addiction (here too there is something a bit dated about Cox's shock-horror tone) is amazingly delicate. The murder happens oh-so-quietly, in the night.
and is handled quickly and without fuss. There is only one insipid reference to sex. Aside from these inconsequential incidents, there are just a few isolated statements about war and political conflict as an attempt to depict the drama of life. For all these token gestures, the film is ultimately passionless.

The dual impulse of the film, towards documentary and fiction, results in the co-existence of two very different filmic textures. On the one hand, there is an implicit drive towards some kind of verite. Cox’s use of non-actors to provide ‘realistic’ background detail and texture can be attributed to this drive. But such processes can sometimes have bizarre effects on the fiction. There is, for instance, a scene in which Sahana stumbles out of the local coffee house screaming in distress after the news of her husband’s death. The locals placed at tables outside the cafe remain impasive throughout, despite the fact that the scream could have burst an eardrum or two. In any context, this is a fascinating and strange moment. In Island, however, it highlights the way that the documentary and fiction textures do not weave together as it seems they should. In this film, they exist for the most part in two quite separate spheres as two solid forms rubbing uneasily together.

Cox is often identified as Australia’s great film artist. He seems to identify himself with such figures as the tragic genius Van Gogh (the subject of his film Vincent). In a critical sense, these associations do not enhance Cox’s work. The exceptional virtuosity and creative inspiration one is led to expect by the rhetoric surrounding him are simply not apparent in his films. In Island, the safe familiarity of his ‘beautiful’ images are an example of the lack of aesthetic inspiration in his work, as are the montages that are nothing more than postcard series, generating little energy in the juxtaposition.

Yet one cannot help but admire the dilligence and persistence with which he pursues his particular quest, a quest that has resulted in films that are entirely idiosyncratic within the Australian context. Perhaps Cox’s greatest genius lies simply in his ability to find a viable market for the kind of work he wants to create. As he has himself pointed out many times, his films do not lose money. This is no small achievement for a producer of independent and ‘personal’ films.

SEXY, LIES AND VIDEOTAPE
HUNTER CORDAIV

STEVEN SOBERBERG’S film comes to Australia with strong credentials from Cannes: the Palme d’Or and Best Actor awards. Such accolades are an easy and tempting reference point for a review of this debut independent feature, but the film has antecedents which are equally interesting. For instance, Sex, Lies and Videotape could be seen as a film starring the children of the characters in Decline of the American Empire. In Denys Arcand’s film, the characters talked about sex, life and history. They were, mostly, middle-aged and middle-class, belonging to a generation which felt the need to confess their deceits. For them, sex was the only source of happiness at a time when everything else was visibly decaying around them.

By contrast, the characters in Sex, Lies and Videotape are a generation younger and several steps deeper into post-modernist culture. For some of them, talking about sex has to be done on screen, via videotape, because sex is so problematic, if not impossible, for them. Now thoughts and feelings have a cold blue image-distance from the heart and its surrounding flesh. These ‘second generation’ characters live with different layers of deception, as indicated by the film’s title: momentary sexual relief replaces true feeling, outright lies displace the truth, and relationships on screen become preferable to engaging daily life.

These narrative levels are encountered from the opening sequences when Ann (Andie MacDowell), the wife of a young fast-lane lawyer, John (Peter Gallagher), is talking with her psychiatrist. She searches for a pattern in her nightmare world where garbage cans produce even more garbage, and she is reluctant to be touched by her husband. These two repulsions are symptoms of the ‘decline’ in Ann’s world, offset by her husband’s confidence that all is rosy—he has a rapidly ascending career and a frenetic affair with his wife’s sister, Cynthia (Laura San Giacomo). Video is added to the sex and lies of Ann and John when an old friend, Graham (James Spader), visits them. Graham quickly becomes the most compelling character in the film, a reclusive personality who hesitates when John suggests he take an apartment nearby because that would mean he’d have two keys in his life (the first being for his car).

The film uses Graham as a catalyst for unravelling the complexities of Ann, John and Cynthia. Like them, the viewer is drawn slowly, deliberately, into his life as a voyeur. Graham has the attractive and disquieting appearance of someone who has witnessed a great horror, or is perhaps a refugee from the lot of Down By Law or Repo Man. There are disconcerting pauses in his speech and comments which slide into scenes without warning, such as:

Graham: My mother is a prisoner of public television now.
and
Graham (to Ann): Have you ever been on television?
Ann: Why?
Graham: Just curious.

Only later does the viewer realize that in this context “television” means his private productions. For Graham, the confessions of women on tape are the closest he has come to sexual satisfaction. Soderbergh explores the relationship between sex and video (doing and watching) in a way which makes willing accomplices of his audience (Hitchcock perfected the technique in Rear Window) because the voyeurism is half respectable, half fetishesitic. Where’s the harm, after all, in telling a dispassionate camera about your first sexual experience, and, if that becomes arousing, surely that’s only natural? The cinema has always exploited these dark sides of its characters, the work of Hitchcock and Bunuel being good examples. In Sex, Lies and Videotape, this shadow-world is revealed when Ann, then Cynthia, agree to ‘appear’ on screen for Graham. Their interest is, in part, a fascination with the idea, and partly a reaction against John, who has betrayed Ann and is becoming less interesting to Cynthia. Graham appears ‘safe’ by comparison, because he admits to being important (“Does that bother you? Now?” runs the dialogue with Ann), and so his obsession with their images is directed towards himself rather than against them. This allows all
three to happily indulge in the experience.

If there is a flaw in the plot of Sex, Lies and Videotape, it is that John becomes predictably enraged when he discovers both his women have been filmed by Graham. As self-punishment he watches the tapes, attacks Graham, and, being so distracted by his domestic crises, loses his job as junior partner in the law firm. Here the film slides comfortably into a moral framework that is safe in every respect. Cynthia realizes she doesn’t need her affair with John, and Ann reverses Graham’s impotence, allowing him at last to turn off his camera because sex has become possible again – image is made flesh. The final shot of Ann and Graham sitting contentedly on the stoop of his apartment reading The New York Times, apparently now socially and sexually adjusted after their traumatic journey through the dark side of the video screen, is the last perverse joke in a film overshadowed by a persistent black hum.

Despite these narrative concessions, Sex, Lies and Videotape has an erotic tension which is supported by imaginative camerawork from Walt Lloyd, and sustained by a dark humour which this writer found attractive. If this $1.2 million film set in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, doesn’t quite live up to the accolades it has received, it does suggest that independent projects are still capable of overcoming the immense barriers to success that often defeat more mainstream films, which in turn maintains an audience for some of cinema’s more compelling fetishes.


BURIED ALIVE
THE STORY OF EAST TIMOR
MARCUS BRENN

THERE IS A REFRESHING EDGE to Buried Alive that just saves it from being a depressing linear documentary about one of the great tragedies of contemporary international politics.

In a word, the edge is Naom Chomsky. It is no surprise that the person who first analysed the concept of the industrial-military complex, and, indeed, coined that term, should have a mind like a vice, and analytical skills and knowledge that is locked out of the mainstream of western media.

From his high profile role in the 1960s and ’70s, Chomsky has become a marginalized figure, such has been the nature of the swing to the Right in the so-called liberal media. His disappearance from the scene represents, in part at least, the effectiveness of the Right in not reporting on progressive and radical ideas. This was a major success of Reaganism-Thatcherism and the like. These people cannot run economies, but they can decorate active intellectual environments.

Buried Alive represents an unequivocal statement that ideas, analysis and facts cannot be suppressed any longer. It is sad to have to say that Australian federal governments have been at the forefront of suppressing debate about East Timor. Even Gough Whitlam, an icon of the Australian Labor Party, was little more than a puppet of that pernicious reality, geo-politics, siding with Indonesia almost inadvertently, when he should have been siding with the call for independence and autonomy by the people of East Timor.

But it is the nature of geo-politics to never allow “independence and autonomy” as John Pilger explained so brilliantly in his book Heroes. Australia was an unwitting co-conspirator in the imperialistic intentions of Indonesia, when it allowed Indonesia to crush Fretelin late in 1975. With Whitlam’s demise came the Fraser years and truly slavish assistance. The Australian government went about its task of handing over East Timor to the Indonesians which crushed the progressive independent elements on the island.

Fretelin and the Democratic Union of Timor, which had engaged in a short-lived civil war, were to be decimated. In later years, when East Timor was to be raised as a major issue at the United Nations, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser contacted sympathetic Pacific Island nations, like Fiji, and told them not to support East Timor’s claims or Fretelin’s request for a full debate, lest they suffer repercussions in the region.

How pleased the U.S. must have been to have a belligerent bastard like the Australian Prime Minister doing its dirty work. While Fraser was looking after that side of the geo-politics, the Nazis in the Indonesian army were slaughtering up to 200,000 East Timorese. This is nothing new for the Indonesians, who must rank alongside the Chilean Government as one of the great neo-fascist regimes of the late 20th Century.

The Indonesian military junta (in truth that which it is) has a policy of smashing communism and progressive causes generally. There are reports that up to 500,000 Indonesians were butchered for their Left-wing tendencies, after the coup that installed current President Suharto and destroyed the happy liberal regime of founding President Sukarno. None of this information is readily reported in the Australian media.

This brings me back to Naom Chomsky and the conspiracy to silence the voices of the Left. But it is not just about silencing progressive voices; it is about a much more worrying trend, namely, keeping the public in the dark lest the truth cause it to rise up and strike at the heart of the system that keeps it ignorant.

It is eminently sensible that Buried Alive begins with a prologue in which Chomsky (mysteriously unnamed and just appearing as a talking head) sets the agenda for the film. He utters the following words with the intense directness that American academics and public figures often have:

As far as the American population is concerned there are a number of reasons why the East Timor issue should be important and these, in fact, are the reasons why the population knows nothing about it, why knowledge about it is kept from them.

At the end of the film this statement makes sense. At the head, it is puzzling. It is one of those cases where some innovation may have assisted the construction of the film. To use exactly the same statement at the conclusion of the film, as well as at the head, would have made the point eminently clear and reinforced the point that this is a film and an issue about which we know too little, and there are good reasons for that.

This is one example that typifies the problems that conventional documentary filmmaking incorporates. Statements on film like Chomsky’s: bold, brilliant and biting: are just sounds, little more than compressed air.

Why is it assumed that a statement, once uttered by an individual on film, has ongoing value? We read books for pleasure and for reference, but we watch films for quite different forms of pleasure and experience.

In particular, we watch documentary films to learn, to be informed and to be touched, and Buried Alive is certainly effective in this sense. It conveys an overpowering sense of despair and disgust. And, yet, it inevitably struggles to maintain the interest of the viewer because of the endless string of information and analysis that it conveys.

It is another of the important Aussie video documentary that need to be made, but which have a myriad of limitations. The first is their often distinct lack of filmic innovation.

I have discussed this matter in this publication quite recently and will not reiterate (see Cinema Papers, No. 74). However, it does need to be said that while Buried Alive may lack innovation, it does not suffer from some of the problems of its stablemates, simply because the story is so incredible, so shocking and international in scope.

It is good that co-director Gil Sine traveled to New York and did a door stop/footpath interview with Bill Hayden outside the UN, when Hayden was Australia’s foreign minister. There is footage of Jose Ramos-
Horta, Fretilin/East Timor's United Nation's representative. We see him in his small New York apartment, walking the streets in a poorish suburb, working up support inside the UN, addressing meetings of the UN. We also see Horta in his early days in the 1970s and watch his progress as a political activist, diplomat and citizen of the world.

Scrine and his co-directors have not been content with just this and the remarkable Chomsky. They have also taken their camera to Zimbabwe for a meeting of the non-aligned nations, to Angola and Mozambique - the two African states that have struggled to find their own way, as did East Timor, after the military coup in Lisbon on 24 April 1974 ushered out the neo-fascists and introduced liberal democracy.

Archival footage, perhaps even some scratchy super-8, conveys the sense that what happened in East Timor was poorly reported, that all that remains in an archival sense are fragments of film of the brave people who fought to control their own destiny.

There is also some remarkable footage of the five Australian journalists murdered by Indonesian troops. This perhaps is the most telling material in the film, reflecting on the brutality of the Indonesian military and the very core of Buried Alive - that the story was once being told and with this film it is now being told with history as our guide.

This is not a great film, simply one that had to be made. It is an indictment of our country and our world.

**Buried Alive: The Story of East Timor**


16mm. Australia. 1989.

**Blind Fury**

**ADRIAN MARTIN**

At the height of Blind Fury's denouement, there is an especially good moment. In a patently artificial, almost dreamlike process shot, the arch villain of the piece, Slag (Randall "Tex" Cobb), having been dispatched by the blind swordsman hero, Nick (Rutger Hauer), goes plunging down a snowy ravine. Just at the split second when the shot seems to have conveyed its in"dismissively, a 'genre' movie. The shot puts together, all at once: the finale to the big show-down the audience has been primed for; a gag ‘topper’ to this finale; and a breathtaking vista of the film’s ‘exotic’ location (it often goes unremarked that an element of ‘tourist spectacle’ is almost mandatory for commercial films these days). The gag itself is the culmination of a line of jokes throughout the film based on a familiar trope of samurai humour: three lightning quick-wipes of the blade; a pause as the audience tries to fathom exactly who or what has been cut; then the breathtaking and/or hilarious revelation of the results. And let one not forget to note the wonderfully inventive character name given to the villain, Slag, and the fact that he brings to this film the ‘inter­textual’ or generic association of many a role, but perhaps particularly that of the ‘Lone Biker of the Apocalypse’ from the Coens’ Raising Arizona.

There are two things to be argued for on behalf of Blind Fury and a torrent of other fine, neglected movies; the virtues of ‘genre’ movies, and then more particularly of action movies. Phillip Noyce’s film, assuredly, claims to be nothing more or less than an action movie, and it is particularly inappropriate in this case to ‘lament’ (as some reviewers, predictably, are compelled to do) that this director once made such serious, socially relevant works. Phooey to that: Blind Fury is a good action movie, in an entirely different cultural universe to Newsfront or Heatwave, and it has to be taken on its own terms. In a great deal of film reviewing and criticism, however, those ‘terms’ have hardly begun to be recognized. Indeed, the standard critical response to action movies, even in praise, tends to be one of apologetic defensiveness: “It’s no great work of art, but it’s two hours of thrills and fun, and at least it doesn’t take itself seriously.” One writer revealingly referred to Blind Fury as a ‘nuisance of a film’, and so it is – a nuisance for ‘serious’ criticism.

It is probably common knowledge that contemporary commercial cinema long ago learnt to deflate what Peter Wollen called “the doctrine of the purity of genres”. Today genre movies are, routinely, multi- or ‘mutant’-genre creations, rigorously ‘calc­ulated’. They have to be this way in order to achieve the desired high number of narrative twists, spectacular effects and cultural ‘markers’ or recognition points for different demographic or subcultural audiences. Almost every commercial film nowadays – and certainly every one that proudly thinks of itself as a ‘genre movie’ – is a more-or-less-familiar, more-or-less-novel reworking of a multitude of currently ‘available’ (i.e., saleable) plot lines, stars, character actors, hit songs, stylistic ambiances, topical references and so on. The key point is not that movies merely ‘quote’ other movies (as Blind Fury, for instance, reworks both a Japanese ‘Zatoichi’ movie and Cassavetes’ Gloria) – in popular culture territory, this is surely a banal observation by now – but how they quote, how they materially combine, energize and animate their chosen elements.

The heart of a genre action movie like Blind Fury, like with so much popular culture, is not in its ‘meanings’ (the Vietnam pretext to this film, for instance, is purely that – a pretext, a plot device) but in its movement, its achieved energy, what Lawrence Grossberg calls its “affective economy”. Blind Fury is a model of pure textual movement: a circulation of plot devices and bits of spectacular events into highs and lows, clinches and toppers. This goes not only for the obviously action-oriented sequences, but also the character-based ‘emotional’ ones. The ‘point’, ultimately, of all the interplay between Nick and the difficult child, Billy (Brandon Call), he must mind until returning to the redeemed dad, Frank (Terrance O’Quinn, from The Stepfather!), is not especially ‘ideological’ (although it’s that, too, in a routine sort of way). Rather, these charac-

**ABOVE: NICK (RUTGER HAUSER), THE BLIND SWORDSMAN, IN PHILLIP NOYCE’S BLIND FURY.**
Every genre movie, through its selection and repositioning of available elements, brings upon itself unique problems of structure, tone and effect to be solved, hopefully inventively. With *Blind Fury*, that means for Noyce getting two essential things right. The first is being able to turn the merry implausibility of the plot premise (a blind swordsman?) not into a self-defeating, uneasy running gag, but the very wellspring of the film's energy and its performative solicitation of the viewer. Scenes such as Slag's hair-raising van drive seem to me to succeed admirably on this level. The second problem is how to 'pitch' scenes that intend to be comically violent so that the laugh doesn't die as the audience starts wondering about 'real' blood, real death. The initial choice of a samurai genre premise is wise in this regard, for sword-fights, like old Hollywood gunfights in pre-Tea Bong ladies, can easily be rendered as rather bloodless affairs, all 'flash' and pantomime.

*Blind Fury* pushes the interesting problems of comic violence even further, however, with its running-gag rednecks, Tector (Nick Cassavetes) and Lyle Pike (Rick Overton), who are rather mean and foul at times (brilliant stroke: they end up killing each other?), and its complement of outrageously severe slicings and dicing of bodily parts. This is, of course, the classic edge on which genre movies work - courting only a movie, 'dummy' artificiality. While I suspect that some reviewers, and indeed some filmgoers, may never 'get a terrific laugh' from that site of Slag's splitting in two, it's nice to be able to note that some of us, still do, and that genre filmmakers will have to keep coming up with new ways of impressing us.

**PARIS BY NIGHT**

SCOTT MURRAY

JOHN FOWLES has written of Thomas Hardy, and his thwarted love for Tryphena Sparks, that:

... never was an English genius so devoted and indebted to one muse and one muse only. This tension ... - between lust and renunciation, undying recollection and undying repression, lyrical surrender and tragic duty, between the sordid facts and their noble use - energizes and explains one of the age's greatest writers; and beyond him, structures the whole age itself.

Like Hardy, David Hare is obsessed with the one female muse. And like that great author, Hare has by chronicling his Woman's movements through a more-modern age incisively dissected the malaises of post-war England.

This muse has already found several forms, including Anna in *Licking Hitler*, Caroline in *Dreams of Leaving*, Susan in the archetypal *Plenty*, Jean and Karen in *Wetherby*, and Clara in *Paris by Night*. But she remains essentially the same Woman: unknowable, melancholic, spirited and at times powerful, deceitful, with a quick intellect disconnected from her emotions, varying her troubles and often sexually maladjusted. This Woman is, in Albert J. Guerard's nomenclature2, the "hedonist tending to neurosis", a modern-day Sue Bridehead.

*Clara Paige* (Charlotte Rampling) is Hare's personification of the hypocrisies of Thatcherism. She is the bright and beautiful new face of the English Right. She stands for the triumph of individual will over a dependency on State: one succeeds or fails, without excuse, by dint of one's actions. Clara promotes herself as a successful, self-made woman, but she lives out a lie. Her one known business enterprise faltered badly and was passed on deceitful by her Tory husband, Gerald (Michael Gambon), to their business partner, Michael (Andrew Ray). There is also the question, not resolved in the film, of how much Clara's first successful steps into politics were the result of her being the wife of a Westminster parliamentarian.

Clara claims that most people need and want to be led, and she presents herself as their leader. Yet the moment things start to go wrong, she shows herself to be incapable of rational action, of leadership. Instead of living up to her own creed, she looks for others to blame. She becomes revisionist
about her past and she psychopathically creates for herself a bete noir in Michael, as if to explain her panic. It is this self-deluding impulse, this tension between appearance and sordid truth, that accelerates the collapse of her corrupt political and moral expediency.

Hare contrasts Clara’s downward spiral with a quite moving re-evaluation of Michael. At first, the audience is deeply mistrustful of him (he looks like a dissolute blackmailer), but this alters to a feeling of sympathy (when his daughter reveals a ‘true’ image of the man). This shift of perception reinforces one’s already intense dislike of Clara and all she pretends to stand for.

Of all the Hare Women, Clara is the most flawed: she kills without need or remorse, she is wantonly cruel (look at how she talks to her husband), quite incapable of giving herself emotionally, to either her son (she is an even worse parent than Diana (Barbara Hershey) in *A World Apart*) or to her (typically) insipid lover, Wallace (Iain Glen). In short, she exhibits no moral worth. And had not fate intervened, she would have gone on to, in Hare’s terms, wreak havoc on a society which, while it should have known better than to encourage her, deserves nought so bad. And there is not a hint that she, let alone her husband, will ever be redeemable. Her death reads nothing so much as Hare’s bitter wish fulfillment.

Surprisingly, this is not a view to which Hare publicly subscribes:

Clara is not a cold-hearted woman. There is a goodness in her ambition, she is capable of delight and deep melancholy. In short, she’s a fully rounded person ...  

Well, Hare’s view of goodness and delight is obviously not to everyone’s taste.

What is revealing about that quote, apart from the disturbing interregnum between creator and creation, is that Hare seems to list deep melancholy as one of Clara’s virtues (an “and” instead of a “but” is telling). And certainly melancholy is a prime characteristic of his Woman, but it is never a virtuous one. Invariably it is a form of self-indulgence which forestalls any hope of self-realization. Hence the often wilful path to trauma or destruction. This is why Anna doesn’t resist the drunken Scot in *Licking Hitler* and why Caroline in *Dreams of Leaving* sets herself on the path to insanity rather than acknowledge a positive emotion.

Hare’s attacks on Establishment males is no less acid: they act out repressed and repressing lives in the wood-panelled world of men’s clubs, parliamentary chambers and private dining rooms. They wield power ruthlessly so as not to be disturbed. (One imagines Gillray (Robert Hardy) will have a hard time living down Clara’s bursting into his club.)

Such a view is cliched and little more than an undramatic trivialization. Has Hare nothing more original or perceptive to say about male power in England? Why can’t English dramatist of the Left, of which Hare is one, attempt to write Right-wing characters who are more than just caricatures, people with the odd intriguing quality so as to afford a trissom with the hypocrisy of their politics. Charm has been the only thing ever accorded the men of the Right, and there’s precious little of that in Hare.

Hare’s reliance on caricature, on the too-easily targeted barb, comes in part from his obsession with words. When the words flow so easily, so majestically, there is the risk that they are not sufficiently challenged. Usually a director can come in and scalpel the redundant, but Hare is now often his own director, or he demands in his script contract that not a word be changed (cf the strictures on Fred Schepisi with *Penny*).

*Paris by Night* in particular suffers from this uncritical verbosity, as seen in this scene where Clara first visits her sister, Pauline (Jane Asher):

**Clara:** You’ve had a new haircut. It does look attractive.

**Pauline:** Clara, I’m your sister. It’s a perfectly ordinary haircut, neither good nor bad. I don’t need flattery. You have my vote.

First, one can see immediately that it is an ordinary haircut. Hare doesn’t yet seem to realize that he doesn’t need words to explain what the eyes can clearly see. Second, Rampling’s performance, especially in the brilliant use of her intense physicality, has already convinced the audience she is an inept voteatcher. Verbal explanation just isn’t needed. Yet, even then, Hare can’t let well enough alone and drives the point home even further when, in the next scene, Clara says to a visitor, “I like your haircut.” Given this deadening onslaught, it is difficult for the audience not to feel it is being dressed down by a very bossy teacher.

Of course, Hare is not using language realistically: how many people, after all, speak as precisely as his characters do. Hare’s dialogue is a stylization, just as is Roger Pratt’s 1940s lighting, or the script’s structure with its doubling and false mirrorings (what looks like Gerald’s murder at the start reflects perversely on his murder of Clara at the end). But this very stylization yields up no special pleasures, no nuances that justify the relentless explicitness.

As for the ‘thriller’ aspects of the plot, these too are trite. Mostly they hinge around several anonymous and menacing phone calls to Clara, which Hare would like one to believe are from Michael or someone connected with his ‘blackmail’ attempt. But the voice of actor Robert Hardy, who plays Tory power broker Adam Gillray, is so distinctive that it is hard to imagine anyone not immediately recognizing it.

This is a major misjudgment and makes the inexorable movement towards the ‘surprise’ resolution at Gillray’s club rather tedious. Worse, since the audience has probably deduced from the start that the caller is not Michael, Clara’s pushing him off the Pont des Arts appears even more cold-blooded and unmotivated than Hare perhaps intended.

Also sapping at the drama are several moments of out-of-character behaviour, used by Hare in a vain attempt to paste over plot holes. A much cited example is Clara’s telling Wallace to answer the phone in her hotel bedroom. This is entirely out of character and Hare has her do it simply because he hasn’t thought of a better way for Clara’s husband to learn that Wallace is with her.

Another is not having Clara immediately recognize the voice of the menacing caller (Gillray is, after all, her friend). One could put this down to Clara’s desire to create Michael as the villain, but Hare gives no help on this and one is left to conclude that it is probably again just sloppiness on his part. One can’t help feeling that the indignant teacher in Hare is not only disdainful of the conventions of the genre he is pluming, but, far worse, of his audience itself.

Hare has shown himself to be a major-writer director with his early television films. But today his work looks crude and played out. The precision has been replaced with a garulous bitterness, the love that fashioned his enigmatic Woman now replaced with anti-Thatcherist hate. His ending to *Dreams of Leaving* sounds even more self-prophetic: “Our lives dismay us. We know no comfort. We have dreams of leaving ... everyone I know.”

3. Quoted in the press kit for *Paris by Night*. 

**THE CROSSING**

Pro. co. Beyond International Group
Dist. company Hoyts
Producer Sue Secary
Director George Ogihie
Scriptwriter Ronald Allan
Exec. producers Al Clark

**Synopsis:** A romantic drama.

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**THE PHANTOM MOVIE**

Pro. company Pharra Films
Producer Peter Sjoquist
Scriptwriter Ken Shadle
Based on comic strip by Lee Falk
Exec. producer Bruce Sherlock
Asso. producer Mark Turnbull

**Synopsis:** No details supplied.

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**THE STARS ARE UPSIDE DOWN**

Pro. co. Soundstage International Ltd.
Dist. companies Australian T.V.
Acquisitions, B.B.C. Enterprises,
Grasshopper Productions
Producer Tibor Meszaros
Director Mario Andreacchio
Scriptwriter Joy Whitby
Based on novel by Gabriel Allon
Exec. producers Hannah Downie
Asso. producer Joy Whitby
Prod. supervisor Robert Cocks
Studios Soundstage Australia Limited
Tracks Grasshopper Productions

**Laboratory** Moviestar
**Budget** $1.4 million
**Length** 92 mins
**Genre** 16mm

**Synopsis:** The story of Tavy, a 16-year-old English servant girl, who finds love and a challenging new life in mid-19th Century Australia.

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**TILL THERE WAS YOU**

Pro. company Ayer Prods
Producer Jim McGlory
Director John Seale
Scriptwriter Michael Thomas
D.O.P. Geoffrey Simpson
Sound recordist Gary Wilkins
Editor Jill Billcock
Prod. designer George Liddie

**Synopsis:** No details supplied.
**NO CAUSE FOR ALARM**

Prod. company: International Film Entertainment
Dist. company: ITG Sugar Entertainment Prod.
Anony L. Ginnane, Steven St. Dick
Director: Michael Michalak
Scriptwriter: David Peoples
Sound recordist: Bob Allen
Antig: Bob Allen, Yoram Gross
Exec. producers: Paul Lichman, Arnie Fishman
Line producer: Barry Appleby
Prod. accountant: Joel Mason
Scriptwriter: Robert Kozik
Prod. assoc: Amanda Doherty
Best boy: Steve Price
Boom operator: Greg Nolan
Art director: Maria Ferro
Make-up: Vivienne MacGillivray
Set dresser: Ian Rae
Still photography: Greg Nolan
Publicity: Peter Brier
Location manager: John McLeod
Special fx: Monty Feiguth
Stunt coordinator: Guy Norris
Safety officer: Ken McLeod
Stunts: John McLeod

**QUIGLEY DOWN UNDER**

Prod. co: Quigley Down Under Prods
Director: Simon Wincer
Original screenplay: Simon Wincer, John Hill
Script editor: Ian Jones
D.O.P. David Eggby
D.O.P. David Eggby
Editor: Mark Gracie
Prod. assoc: Michael Bridges
Assoc. producer: Neville St. John
Standby wardrobe: Andrea Hood
Producer: Catherine Kilduff
Prod. coordinator: Sharon Miller
Unit manager: Ivan Freeman
Asst unit manager: Geoffrey Guiffre
Location manager: Peter Lawless
Prod. accountant: Jill Steele
(Moneypenny Services)

**THE MAGIC RIDDLE**

Prod. co: Yoram Gross Film Studio
D.O.P. Yoram Gross
Director: Yoram Gross
Scriptwriters: Yoram Gross, Alan MacRae
Assoc. producer: Vivienne Rushbrook

**MAKE-UP DRIVER**

Prod. co: Voram Gross Film Studio
D.O.P. Yoram Gross
Director: Yoram Gross
Scriptwriters: Yoram Gross, Alan MacRae
Assoc. producer: Vivienne Rushbrook

**Music**

**Guy Gross**

**Ray Nowland**

**Jeanette Toms**

**Rod Lee**

**80 minutes**

**35 mm**

**Colorfilm**

**$3.3 million**

**Kodak**

**Cast:** John Hannah (Neal), Steven Vidler (Bird), Charles Durning (Clancy), Max Caulfield (Abbot).

**Synopsis:** A crazy girl pilot and an investigative reporter join forces to crack a government cover-up.

**JUDDER BY NIGHT**

Prod. co: Quigley Down Under Prods
Director: Simon Wincer
Original screenplay: Simon Wincer, John Hill
Script editor: Ian Jones
D.O.P. David Eggby
D.O.P. David Eggby
Editor: Mark Gracie
Prod. assoc: Michael Bridges
Assoc. producer: Neville St. John
Standby wardrobe: Andrea Hood
Producer: Catherine Kilduff
Prod. coordinator: Sharon Miller
Unit manager: Ivan Freeman
Asst unit manager: Geoffrey Guiffre
Location manager: Peter Lawless
Prod. accountant: Jill Steele
(Moneypenny Services)
Cast: Tim Selleck (Matthew Quigley), Laura San Giacomo (Crazy Cora), Alan Rickman (Elliot Marston), Tony Bonner (Dobkin), Chris Hayward (Major Ashley Sands), Tracey Ullman (Sally), Chuck McKinney (Phil).

Synopsis: The story of an Australian Army Captain who was assigned by the Australian Army Legal Corps to prosecute Japanese war criminals in command of the Aborigines. Quigley wants nothing to do with either, but ends up involved with both to become an unlikely legend.

BLOOD OATH

Prod. company: Blood Oath Films
Producer: Charles Waterstreet
Director: Stephen Wallace
Screenwriters/Producers: Denis Whitburn, Brian Williams
D.O.P.: Rachel Boyd
Sound recordist: Ben Osmo
Editor: Nick Beauman
Prod. designer: Bernard Hildes
Co-producer: Anne Leyland
Line producer: Richard Brennan
Prod. coordinator: Bernadette Bransden
Prod. manager: O'Mahony
Accountant: Helen Watts
Unit/loc. manager: Hugh Johnstone
Prod. secretary: Chris Gordon
Prod. accountant: (Moneypenny Services)

Accounts ass't: Liane Lee
1st ass't director: Chris Webb
2nd ass't director: Maria Phillips
3rd ass't director: Linda Ray
Casting: Alison Barrett Cassing
Camera operator: David Williamson
Focus puller: John Phillips
Clapper/loader: Richard Redshaw
Key grip: Ray Brown
Artists: Ian Bird

Gaffer: Warren Grise
Assistant gaffer: Bart Grogrowe
Electricians: Paul Gartner
Boom operator: Garry Nolfows
Art director: James Kibble
Costume designer: Gordon "Gog" O'Brien
Make-up: Leander Waldvost
Hairdresser: Cheryl Williams
Make-up supervisor: Mel Dukes
Make-up assistant: Andrew Short
Make-up artists: Julie Frankham
Make-up props: Warren Kelly
Make-up buyers: Sue Maybury
Make-up artists: Paul Daleu
Standby props: Harry Zertol
Special effects: Ray Pedler

Construction manager: Danny Burnett
Construction: Phillip Worth
Sound editors: Karin Whittington, Nicholas Breslin
Editing assistant: David Grassini
Primary sound: Randi Norris
Editors: The Sound Agency
Still photography: Jim Townley
Runners: Sara Proby
Unit publicist: Allan Long
Catering: Feast Film Catering
Studio manager: Wayne Roadshow Studios, Queensland
Laboratory:
Colorfilm
Length: 110 mins
Gauge: 35 mm

Breakaway Films
Breakaway Films
Dist. co: Italian Cinema Enterprises
Producer: Don McLeann
Director: Don McLeann
Screenwriter: Jan Sardi
D.O.P.: Zbidginiu Friedrich
Sound recordist: Zbidginiu Friedrich
Supervising editor: Jane Ballantine
Exec. producer: Les Lithgow
Producers: Euan Keidie, Michelle Wil
Executive producer: Jimmy Jones
Locum manager: Neil McCarr
Unit manager: Leann Ammenthill
Banners: Matthew Baker-Hazel
Producer: Joseph Donghia
Asst accountant: Juanita Parker
Unit manager: Mary Maks
Asst production manager: Euan Keidie
1st assistant director: Paul Collie
2nd assistant director: Julie Burton
3rd assistant director: Mandy Walker
Clapper/loader: Peter Stone
Boom operator: Chris Goldsmith
Gaffer: Michael Hughes
Key grip: Peter Kershaw
Electricians: Michael Madison
Production manager: Stuart Crome
Caterers: Dave Davidson, James Perkins
Extricasting: Trevor Ripper
Unit assistant: Kim Baker
Focus puller: Samantha Carter
Costume designer: Sam Bal
Key grip: Rachel Nots
Gaffer: Maggie Kolev
Assistant electric: Anapa Kansip
Casting: Vivienne MacGillivary
Electricals: Greg Apps (Lia Mullin)
Riggers: Robbie Gibbs
Extricasting: Tony Johnston
Assistant producer: Paddy Reardon
Producers: Marta Muntess
Assistant producer: Martin McQuatt
Stunt coordinator: Kate Joyce
Armourer: John Rauche
Assistant armourer: Glenn Rehand
Special effects: Arch Roberts
Production manager: Robert McCleod
Transport captain: Colaf Forsey
Unit manager: Brian Holmes

D.O.P.: Jackie Sullivan
Jane O'Hara
Les Lithgow
Tony Johnston
Lynn Howson
Lyddy Van Gyen
Ben Osmo
Prod. coordinator
Casual make-up Vivienne MacGillicudy
Yvonne Savage
Scenic artists
Prod. coordinator
Unit manager
(Forecast)
Producers' assist
Prod. secretary
John Scott
Peter Boyle
John Osmond
3rd asst director
Peter Boyle
Wardrobe asst
Extras casting
Key grip
Casting
Hameister
Clapper/loader
Toby Pease
Annette Nevill
Transport captain
Make-up
Producers' asst
Julie Burton
Chris Goldsmith
Jose Perez
Loli Sanchez
Rob Visser
John Platt
Arch Roberts
Prod. manager
Kim Baker
Brian Holmes

Based on novel by
Euan Keddie
Criena Rohan
Annie Bleakley
Line producer
Stuart Crombie
3rd asst director
Peter Boyle
John Osmond
1st asst director
Rebecca Coote
Runners Matthew Baker-Hazell
Wardrobe asst
Extras casting
Boom operator
David McKay
Based on novel by
Euan Keddie
Criena Rohan
Annie Bleakley
Line producer
Stuart Crombie
3rd asst director
Peter Boyle
John Osmond
1st asst director
Rebecca Coote
Runners Matthew Baker-Hazell
Wardrobe asst
Extras casting
Boom operator
David McKay
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Annie Bleakley
Line producer
Stuart Crombie
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Line producer
Stuart Crombie
3rd asst direc
The Delinquents

Rob Visser

Randy Perrett

Randy Perrett

Randy Perrett

Randy Perrett

Randy Perrett

Randy Perrett

Randy Perrett

Randy Perrett

Randy Perrett
TOWARDS SAFER NEEDLE USE

Prod. company: Finders Media
Dist. company: Finders Media
Producer: Mike Davies
Director: Janice Todd
Scriptwriters: Mike Davies, Brian Simon
Based on original idea: Brian Simon

Synopsis: Action Replay is a continuing playby-play of a drama of differing sexual incompatibilities and warfare in personal relationships. The action constantly returns on itself and leads the characters down different roads (over 25 years), of their own choosing, to other possibilities.

MYTHS & LEGENDS

Prod. company: AFTRS
Dist. company: AFTRS
Producer: Julie Hamond
Director: Dana Rayson
Scriptwriters: Syliva Johnson, Dana Rayson
Sound recordists: Mark Noon, Tina Anderson
Editor: Wendy Chandler
Composer: NSW Conservatorium of Music

Synopsis: A man's delusion that he is strong need creates and sustains an opposition. It is a journey through life in a psychiatric hospital - medication, institutionalisation and oppression.

SPARKS

Prod. company: AFTRS
Produce: Prue Adams
Director: Robert Klenner
Scriptwriter: Catherine Zimdahl
Based on story by: Catherine Zimdahl
D.O.P.: Stavros Efthymiou
Prod. designer: Stavros Efthymiou
Editor: Michael Webster
Sound editor: Michael Webster

Synopsis: A programme detailing the life, work and progress of a writer. The programme contains creative exercises designed to be viewed by patients in psychiatric hospitals.

AUSTRALIAN FILM, TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

ACTION REPLAY

Prod. company: AFTRS
Exec. producer: William Fitzwater
Producer: Sara Howard
Director: Susan Zimbhala
Scriptwriter: Felix Weldon
Based on the play by: Thrish Ryan
Prod. supervisor: Keiran Usher

THE PURSUED

Prod. company: AFTRS
Dist. company: AFTRS
Producer: Brownyn Coupe
Director: Rex Crawford
Scriptwriters: Rex Crawford, Horacio Quiroga
Based on the story by: Horacio Quiroga

Editor: Carmen Galan
Prod. designer: Melody Cooper
Composer: Carmen Galan
Prod. manager: Merida Boros
Exec. producer: Don Calleistino

PEOPLE WHO STILL USE MILK BOTTLES

Producers: Standard Films
Producer: John Cruthers
Director: Brian McKenzie
Scriptwriter: Brian McKenzie
D.O.P.: Ray Argall
Sound recordist: Mark Tarcy
Assoc. producer: Janet McLeod
Prod. manager: Janet McLeod
Prod. accountant: Berndette Breitkreuz

Music performers: Yaraville Mouth
Organ Band: London
Sound editor: Lexia Ruiz
Research: Angela Borelli
Laboratory: Ginex
Lab technician: Ian Alexander

Budget: $190,000
Length: 58 mins
Budget: 16mm

Synopsis: The milk bottle is no more. In Victoria, it finished service on 15 October 1987. Once it had been the most widespread and commonsensical re-usable container in our lives. How quickly do things change? How much do we care that it is for the better?

SOMETHING CLOSE TO HELLL

Prod. company: Excalibur Nominees
Producers: Andrew Wiseman
Paul Roberts
Director: Paul Roberts
Scriptwriter: Paul Roberts
D.O.P.s: Nancy Sokil
Laslo Bananyi

Sound recordist: Catherine Montagny
Editon: David Frankick
Exec. producer: Paul Coullier
Assoc. producer: Sue Haberfeld
Prod. accountant: John Page
Still photography: Skip Watkins
Tech. advisor: John Austin
Length: 56 minutes
Gauge: Betacam SP

Synopsis: A tribute to burns survivors, their struggle and their will to fight back.

IF NOT NOW... WHERE?

Prod. company: TV ED Prods
Dist. company: Min. of Ed. (Vic.)
Producer: James Mann
Director: James Mann
D.O.P.: Chris O'Rourke
Sound recordist: Tony Paice
Editor: James Mann
Lighting: Rob McCubbin
Length: 21 mins
Gauge: BVU

Synopsis: This programme promotes and demonstrates Safe-T Cap needle handling and disposal system, a single-handed procedure that is a significant step towards safer needle use. The risk of needlestick injury is reduced thereby reducing the risk of transmission of blood borne pathogens in health care settings.

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN?
INVESTIGATING COMMUNITY DECISION MAKING

Prod. company: TV ED Prods
Dist. company: Min. of Ed. (Vic.)
Producer: James Mann
Director: James Mann
D.O.P.: Dana Rayson
Sound recordists: Mary Carol, Matt Noon
Editor: Janet Todd
Composer: Mike Davies

Synopsis: A man's delusion that he is strong need creates and sustains an opposition. It is a journey through life in a psychiatric hospital - medication, institutionalisation and oppression.

SYNOPSIS: ACTION REPLAY IS A CONTINUING PLAYBY-PLAY OF A DRAMA OF DIFFERING SEXUAL INCOMPATIBILITIES AND WARFARE IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS. THE ACTION CONSTANTLY RETURNS ON ITSELF AND LEADS THE CHARACTERS DOWN DIFFERENT ROADS (OVER 25 YEARS), OF THEIR OWN CHOOSING, TO OTHER POSSIBILITIES.

MYTHS & LEGENDS

PROD. COMPANY: AFTRS
DIST. COMPANY: AFTRS
PRODUCER: JULIE HAMOND
DIRECTOR: DANA RAYSON
SCRIPTWRITERS: SYLVIA JOHNSON, DANA RAYSON
SOUND RECORDISTS: MARK NOONSE, TINA ANDERSON
EDITOR: WENDY CHANDLER
COMPOSER: NSW CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

SYNOPSIS: A MAN'S DELUSION THAT HE IS STRONG NEED CREATES AND SUSTAINS AN OPPOSITION. IT IS A JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE IN A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - MEDICATION, INSTITUTIONALISATION AND OPPRESSION.

SPARKS

PROD. COMPANY: AFTRS
PRODUCE: PRUE ADAMS
DIRECTOR: ROBERT KLENNER
SCRIPTWRITER: CATHERINE ZIMDLAH
BASED ON STORY BY: CATHERINE ZIMDLAH
D.O.P.: STAVROS EFTHYMIOU
PROD. DESIGNER: STAVROS EFTHYMIOU
EDITOR: MICHAEL WEBSTER
SOUND EDITOR: MICHAEL WEBSTER

SYNOPSIS: A PROGRAMME DETAILING THE LIFE, WORK AND PROGRESS OF A WRITER. THE PROGRAMME CONTAINS CREATIVE EXERCISES DESIGNED TO BE VIEWED BY PATIENTS IN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS.
Victoria. It was made for presentation at its Open Day on the 10 October and for subsequent use in informing politicians and the public of the Laboratory's contribution to the nation.

ARMY APPRENTICES
Synopsis: A programme to present the profession of soldier-tradesperson, via the Army Apprentices School, as a challenging and rewarding career.

CHILDREN OF '39
Prod. company FA Dist. company FA Producer Aviva Ziegler Director Aviva Ziegler Exec. producer Paul Hamffress Prod. manager Ren Hammond Prod. secretary Lori Wallace Prod. accountant Elizabeth Clarke Publicity Jane Glen Marketing John Swindells Synopsis: The story of 17 Jewish children who were sent by their parents to Australia from Germany just prior to the outbreak of World War II.

HISTORY OF DISEASE
Prod. company FA Dist. company FA Director Aviva Ziegler Scriptwriter Dr Norman Swan Exec. producer Janet Bell Prod. manager Carolina Macmillan Prod. secretary Jane Benson Prod. accountant Waldemar Wawryniuk Publicity Jane Glen Marketing John Swindells Length 4 x 1 hour
Synopsis: A look at the important role disease has played in human history; even more important is the art of healing or the development of medicine itself.

IF IT WAS YOU - CARING FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA
Synopsis: Animated videos designed to help preschoolers cope with health problems.

R.A.N. UNDERGRADUATES
Prod. company FA Dist. company FA Producer Sonia Humphreys Scriptwriter Robert Lawrence Exec. producer Paul Hamffress Prod. manager Ron Hannan Prod. secretary Lori Wallace Prod. accountant Elizabeth Clarke Publicity Jane Glen Marketing John Swindells Length 45 mins (approx.) Shooting stock Eastmancolour
Synopsis: A series of short films totalling approx. 45 minutes to detail the vital role played by university graduates in today's Navy, in an attempt to sign up those presently at university as Naval Officers.

SAVE A NUGGET END
Cast: Kim Valentine and puppets: Sean Steenwimmer, Adrian Norman, Murray Raine and Ross Browning.
Synopsis: A puppet drama for the Australian Electoral Commission which explains the preferential voting system to upper-primary school children via a fantastic voyage to an abandoned amusement park.

MASTERs OF THE HIGH VALLEY
Prod. company FA Scriptwriter Tony Morphett Script Editor Peter Gawler Exec. producer Janet Bell Prod. manager Carolina Macmillan Prod. secretary Jane Benson Prod. accountant Waldemar Wawryniuk Publicity Jane Glen Marketing John Swindells Length 2 x 96 mins
Synopsis: A family saga set in the highland regions of Papua New Guinea and spanning three generations, it tells the story of Pat Hannan-white adventurer, gold prospector and plantation owner.

PLAYMAKERS/MUSIC MAKERS
Synopsis: Two series for upper-primary school children which look at the world of theatre and music through the roles of the practitioners.

PRE-SCHOOL HEALTH VIDEOS
Prod. company FA Dist. company Film Australia Researcher Judy Menczel Exec. producer Janet Bell Prod. manager Carolina Macmillan Prod. accountant Waldemar Wawryniuk Publicity Jane Glen Marketing John Swindells Length Various Gauge Video
Cost: Nori Hazelhurst.
Synopsis: Animated videos designed to help preschoolers cope with health problems.

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Cost: Nori Hazelhurst.
Synopsis: Animated videos designed to help preschoolers cope with health problems.

SAY NO TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Prod. company FA Scriptwriter Anna Darrozet Scriptwriter Tony Wright Exec. producer Ann Darrozet Scriptwriter Sue McIvor Length 18 mins
Synopsis: This video is concerned with domestic violence, focusing on the legal options available to victims.

Elderly Citizens Safety
Exec. producer Rachel Dixon Scriptwriter Anamaria Beligan Prod. company FA Dist. company FA Executive Director John Swindells Prod. manager Catriona Macmillan Prod. assistant Lori Wallace Prod. accountant Elizabeth Clarke Publicity Jane Glen Marketing John Swindells Length 12 mins Gauge Betacam Synopsis: To assist senior citizens to cope with traffic as pedestrians, drivers and users of public transport.

RIVER MANAGEMENT
Exec. producer Rachel Dixon Scriptwriter David Tall Length 10-12 mins Gauge B.V.U.
Synopsis: To illustrate ways in which vehicle occupants are at risk, whilst demonstrating means to increase vehicle occupant safety with emphasis on restraint use.

NEW SOUTH WALES FILM AND TELEVISION OFFICE INVESTING IN PEOPLE
Prod. co. Woodboomooloo Prods Producers Peter Cox Corrie Soeterboek Director Peter Cox D.O.P. Grant Watson Scriptwriter Harold Lander Prod. manager Mary-Joy La Editors Robert Gibson Stephen Dunn Prod. assistant Richard Lish Sound Art direction Ruth Braggeilte Post-production Frame Set & Match Length 19 mins Gauge Betacam to 1”
Synopsis: The Maritime Services Board of NSW, working closely with the Labor Council of NSW and various unions, has established an injury-prevention and rehabilitation programme to help injured staff return to normal work as soon as possible. This video outlines the rehabilitation programme and shows it in action through examples of injuries which might occur in the workplace.

NATIVE'S SHELTER
Production company Acclaside Communications Producers Sandra Alexander Peter Smith D.O.P. Martin McGrath Scriptwriter Peter Smith Prod. assistant Mark Logan Editors Deborah Reid Stuart Armstrong Graphics Frank Smith Arthur Dignam Length 22 mins Gauge 16 mm
Synopsis: The Lord Howe Island region is a World Heritage Area, administered by the Lord Howe Island Board. It is of great

CINEAMA PAPERS 78 - 79
WILDLIFE

**CORPORATE STRATEGY**

Prod. company Grundy Television

Casting before she wins acceptance and
Hanlon brothers. She must call on all her
oppose her stormy romances with the two
Australian outback.

**MODERN MEDICINE**

as vigorously as they
take up a practice. The locals resist Kate's
erupts in the blistering heat of the West

**Synopsis**

Produced for the National Parks
and Wildlife Service of New South Wales
to inform staff of the aims and objectives
of the Service in the years 1989 to 1991,
and provide a history of the service which
places it in a wider social context.

**TELEVISION PRODUCTION**

**BEYOND 2000**

Prod. company Beyond Productions
Dist. company Beyond International
Group

Producer Tim Clucas
Director Judith John-Story
Prod. assistant various
Sound recordists
Editors
Harley Oliver
Robert Davidson
Mark Verkerk
Twilight Prods
Prod. secretary Therese Hagerty
Camera operator various
Boom operator various
Hairdresser Warren Hanrahan
Props
David King
Props buyer various
Set designer Fred Lawrence
Set construction

**Synopsis**

A four-hour mini-series, *Jackaroo* is the story of a wild Australian
stockman, a part-Aboriginal jackaroo whose
bitter family struggle for power and land
erupts in the blistering heat of the West
Australian outback.

**SHADOWS OF THE HEART**

(Formerly *Kate's Rainbow*)

Prod. co. South Australian Film Corp.
Producer Jan Marnell
Director Rod Hardy
Scriptwriter Deborah Cox
D.O.P. David Foreman
Prod. designer Tel Stolo
Executive producer Jock Blair
Prod. coordinator Diane Stuart
Prod. manager Ross Stigwood
Unit manager Carson Carris
Location manager Carson Carris
Prod. accountant Sharon Jackson
1st asst director Edie Pylinski
Story editor Peter Gawler
Casting consultants Maura Fay & Associates
Set construction Lisa Studio
Mixed at Henwood Studios
Length 2 x 2 hours
Gauge 16mm

**Synopsis**

Summer, 1927: Doctor Kate
Munro arrives at remote Gannet Island to

**Synopsis**

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**BEYOND 2000**

Prod. company Beyond Productions
Dist. company Beyond International

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Sound recordists
Editors
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Mark Verkerk
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**FOR INCLUSION IN THE PRODUCTION SURVEY**

**CONTACT CINEMA PAPERS ON (03) 429 2511**

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**AJACKAROO**

Prod. company Crawford Prods
Exec. producer Ian Bradley
Produce co. Mike Perry
Director Michael Carton
Assoc prod/prod. superv. Vince Stims
Prod. manager Terrie Vincent
Casting Jan Ponifex
Publicity Susan Elizabeth Wood
Synopsis: A four-hour mini-series, *Jackaroo* is the story of a wild Australian
stockman, a part-Aboriginal jackaroo whose
bitter family struggle for power and land
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**Casting**

Casting consultants Maura Fay & Associates
Set construction Lisa Studio
Mixed at Henwood Studios
Length 2 x 2 hours
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What so often happens is that the director or editor feels that the writer is going to be really upset if a scene is cut. I have seen it happen on *Dead Calm*, the Mad Max films and especially the mini-series. Editors find it very difficult to come to terms with a writer-producer like myself saying, “Drop that scene” or “Get rid of those lines - we don’t need them”.

So, I love audience testing. I’ve learnt more about writing from it than anything except editing. You sit there and, boy, do you live with every one of your mistakes.

A criticism of audience testing is that the new ending of *Dead Calm* is a more ‘common denominator’ ending than the original.

The difficulties with the ending of *Dead Calm* were not with the audience testing, but in the original conception. The film did not have a satisfactory ending - ever. The problem should have been solved at the script stage, but wasn’t. We were relatively happy with it during editing, but, the moment we saw it with an audience, we knew it didn’t work; we didn’t need to read the test cards. The audience felt that it was a fantastic film that dribbled away. What we should have done was not start shooting the film until we were absolutely sure we had an ending that worked.

You can’t denigrate audience testing because of a failure in the scriptwriting.

But could it be argued that an audience will only want a genre ending to a genre picture, and that there may exist an ending more inventive than any audience could conceive?

Absolutely. I just wish we had found that inventive ending. But we didn’t do that. That was our failure.

And if you had audience tested in a different country, you would have different results.

Now that’s a very valid point.

The French presumably don’t want Rae [Nicole Kidman] to blow away Hughie [Billy Zane] the way the Americans do.

That’s absolutely true. However, I have no shadow of doubt that every change we made to that film enhanced it no end. I wouldn’t go and make a film now without having the ability to audience test it. I’d demand it in the contract if the studio didn’t want to do it. I want to see the film through somebody else’s eyes.

There is a danger of hearing stories like the one about the *Dead Calm* ending and discounting what is a very valuable tool. And that’s all it is: a tool. And, of course, tests can be fallible. You only have to remember that *Innerspace* got one of the highest test results in history, yet it died when it went out on release. The studio decided the campaign had been wrong and re-released it under a different campaign. But still it didn’t do any business. My theory was that once you got the audience into the cinema, they enjoyed the film; hence you got high test results. But the fact was that people had no interest in going to see that film under any circumstances. It just seemed like an old fashioned idea.

What most people do is look at the test cards and if the film got, say, more than a 70% approval rating, they think that warrants spending $ X million on the campaign. We didn’t do that; we went one step further. We read every one of those thousand test cards. We found two really interesting things. First, Americans are just hopeless at spelling. The level of literacy in that country is appalling. There is absolutely no doubt about that. Second, the vast majority of the audience had similar responses to certain sections of the film. They felt that the Nicole character was too dumb on the short-wave radio. They also told us where they felt the film got slow. And when we went back and looked at it, we were amazed how you could tell exactly the same story with a couple of minutes taken out.

At the end of the day, all audience testing can do is confirm your intuition. We thought there was a problem on the ending of *Dead Calm*. The test results confirmed that was the case. Now, there are those filmmakers who don’t give a shit about the audience, but I’m not one of them.

**BACK OF BEYOND**

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“BACK OF BEYOND: DISCOVERING AUSTRALIAN FILM AND TELEVISION” WAS PUBLISHED BY THE AUSTRALIAN FILM COMMISSION WITH THE GENEROUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OF THE AUSTRALIAN BICENTENNIAL AUTHORITY.
I have always been interested in a distant way to the politics of Central America and I knew a fair amount about Romero and El Salvador. I thought it was an important project for a number of reasons, principally because it dealt with the Catholic Church and its role in countries like El Salvador. It made very clear how the traditional view of the Church as a stabilizing influence between people and State in fact helps bolster and perpetuate some pretty horrific regimes. The liberation theology elements within the Church have a very different view to this, and have created extraordinary tensions within Church hierarchies.

I am not a Christian myself, but I know the Church is an extremely potent force in that part of the world. What it does is very significant politically, and I thought that the film could make a useful contribution to understanding the tensions within the Church and maybe point out some useful ways for theologians to orient themselves. That’s why I was attracted to it.

To what extent do you see the Church in those countries as being negative as opposed to neutral? How much has it become part of the problem that liberation theology is trying to resolve?

To a very great extent. Its role as a moderating force has become institutionalized and any capacity for internal reform in a lot of the Church leaders has gone. There is a kind of moral lethargy and a tendency for its leaders to identify with the aristocracies of these countries. That certainly mitigates against them really having any kind of realistic appraisal of the implications of their institutions for the country as a whole.

You are dealing with an intellectual debate which is not part of many Western lives. Were the producers and yourself in unison as to whom the film was aimed?

I would say that there was a certain harmony on moral levels in our intentions. I approached it from a humanist point of view, rather than a theological one. I was also very interested in the politics of the thing.

But, yes, there were some areas of disagreement. I would have liked to have spent more time dealing with the American involvement in El Salvador. The producer, Father Kieser, felt that in order for the film to speak to a large cross-section of people in the United States, we had to be very wary of what could be considered as anti-American diatribes. The audience would just switch off completely.

I also wanted to have some coverage of Romero’s visit to the Vatican: he visited there twice and had audiences with the current Pope. Father Kieser felt that the thrust of the story was the transformation of a rather aesthetic, bookish and unworldly man, who, because of a nightmarish series of revelations, finds within himself the moral authority to become a leading spokesman for human rights. That is indeed the core of the film, but I was equally drawn by the role and politics of the Church.

An interesting aspect of your Damien Parer film, which many people feel is atypical, is its treatment of Parer’s religious faith. You don’t see yourself as a Christian, but Christianity is a very strong element of both films.

Absolutely. It occurred to me at the time I agreed to do *Romero* that I was doing two films about Christians in a row. But in both cases they were biographical pieces and it was necessary to buy into that whole aspect. This is clearly so in *Romero*, but also in *Fragments*, where Parer’s faith was a very important part of his life and was reflected in everything he did. But yes, that area of interest is atypical.
Another change readers are sure to notice is that the boys don’t kill the pigs.

That was a conscious decision, because Bill felt we couldn’t have all of America watch these pigs trek 3,000 miles to Montana only to be sliced up for bacon. I don’t think we would ever have been forgiven if the boys had eaten them. So, scallywag McMurtry lost out there.

It’s interesting that you say you have never seen anything that’s as faithful to a book as this. I think everyone in America felt the same way. Each element people come away from the book remembering is addressed in the mini-series.

How did you find working within the strictures of American network television?

Because I’d done three network television things before – two for CBS and one for ABC – I knew the ground rules. But Lonesome Dove blazed new trails everywhere in terms of language, content and violence.

The producers and I felt the violence was particularly important, because it was part of the times. Lonesome Dove is about how the West really was and not how Hollywood chooses to see it. We felt we had to push it as far as we could. The violence is fairly done and never glorified. I tried to treat it as if it were just part of these guys’ lives.

The biggest problem was the language, because the book is quite explicit, especially about having a “good poke”. Now, you can say that on American television, but network television in America is so strange. You can say ‘God’, for instance, but not ‘Goddamn’!

In America, the networks are their own censors; there’s no board of censorship. So what they do is commission a DeForrest Report. DeForrest reviews the whole project and says what it thinks legally you can or can’t do and say.

The network legal people then look over it and say, “Well, we think that you should make sure you shoot alternate coverage on certain scenes and don’t dwell on the arrow on Gus’ leg”, etc.

Another network restriction is nudity and sexual nuance. In the book, for example, Lorena [Diane Lane] bathes naked in the river, but in the mini-series she’s wearing long johns.

We never actually considered doing that scene naked. To do that sort of stuff you need twice the amount of time. And on American television you can’t show bare bottoms or bare breasts, so it’s not even worth the trouble.

Actually, I think it’s very sexy when she bounces up out of the water in her underwear.

What about the sexual cruelties inflicted on Lorena after she’s kidnapped by Blue Duck [Frederick Forrest]? You only hint at those.

It all happens off-screen because Bill Wittliff decided it didn’t need addressing. You can see on Lorena’s face what she’s been through.

There is a reference in the mini-series to Blue Duck’s being a half-breed, whereas in the book he is a full blood. Was that changed for political reasons?

Yes. The network is very sensitive to addressing issues like the American Indian. So, we made him a mongrel half-breed.

The only other thing the network asked us to change was take out a few frames from one of the scalping scenes. But I can’t remember a single occasion where I was troubled about how I was going to do something. I did everything the way I thought it should be done. I stuck to the script, which the network had approved.
up his characterization. On *Lonesome Dove*, for example, he lined up an old sheriff, talked to a gunfighting expert and even met somebody who had shot a man. He also went and stayed with some Cajun cowboys down in Louisiana.

Anything Bobby takes on, he does to perfection. A few years ago he took up tennis and I’m told he almost reached professional standard. He took up tango dancing after that Broadway show *Argentina*, and became a brilliant tango dancer. As for horse riding, it is the same thing. He rides now almost to Olympic standard.

I have never worked with an actor where his continuity is so exact. And not just continuity of a performance, but make-up, hair, wardrobe – every little detail. He could walk out this door today and into the next room two months later and you’d swear that he’d done it all the same day. You have no idea where it comes from, because he doesn’t talk about his craft. It’s just there.

On the set, Bobby is very obliging and he seemed to enjoy working with me. But occasionally he could be difficult. He would sometimes just erupt for no reason at all and this kept everyone a bit tense. When Bobby wants to make you feel uncomfortable, he can.

One day, Bobby threw a junior photographer off the set after he was asked to do some silly things. Unfortunately, the photographer worked for Rupert Murdoch and that cost us the cover of *TV Guide*, which is three ratings points. I don’t think CBS enjoyed that.

Bobby had other problems with CBS in that he wanted us to cast a Blue Duck that nobody else did. The guy was a full blood Comanche, but not an actor. We ended up with Freddy Forrest and Bobby, who is a friend of Freddy’s, was pretty upset about that, and said so in the press.

So, Bobby has his moments. But I’m really only interested in the final product, and there’s no question he’s wonderful. ‘Take Gus’ death scene, which I think is remarkable. It goes for ten minutes and both he and Tommy Lee did only two takes. I had two cameras on each of them, and we literally did that scene in three hours. It was quite a difficult scene, but both of them were absolutely perfect, right down to each little subtlety and nuance.

Diane Lane was another wonderful choice.

Yes, she was great. We saw a lot of girls for the part of Lorena, but Di ended up being self-selective.

I think it was 3 or 4 weeks into the shooting before she came on to the set. I remember she had sort of brown hair and was in jeans and a t-shirt. The next time I saw her she was in her wardrobe, with her hair dyed blonde. She had suddenly become Lorena. She was great.

Two other actors I thought were terrific are Danny Glover and Robert Urich. Danny is one of the world’s great instinctive actors. He doesn’t have a lot of words in the piece, but you could play a whole scene on his face. It was always hard picking the moments of Danny’s you’d use because there were so many joyous ones. Right from the first rehearsal, Danny’s finger was right on the button. He was exactly there.

As for Robert Urich, he is a very experienced television actor. But it was a bit difficult for him being the TV glamour boy coming to work with these film heavyweights. He was very nervous, but then so was I.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

*Your most recent Australian film is The Lighthorsemen. Apparently you re-cut it for the U.S.*

Yes, we wanted us to make it a bit shorter. So Adrian and I, with the help of an American editor, trimmed it down. Actually, I think the second half of the film is probably better now. But I don’t like the opening as much, because I miss the little Australian section we had.

The charge is certainly better. In Australia, we were working to a really tight deadline, and Adrian and I could never really get away from the film. We kept making changes right up to the end of the mix, but I was still not 100% happy with it. It’s such a complex sequence, with nearly 800 shots. I just didn’t have the heart to just go slice, slice, slice. It needed more of a honing-down process.

I’m very fond of the film, so I was very disappointed when the mass audience stayed away from it. But I think most people who went to see it came out feeling pretty exhilarated. The charge is a wonderful climax.

Actually, it opened in Texas when we were shooting *Lonesome Dove*. Chrisie [Wincr’s wife] and I flew to Houston for the premiere. The film was terrifically well reviewed and almost all the reviewers came out in the papers the next day and said, ‘You can relax. The guy who is directing *Lonesome Dove is okay.’ This was nice because doing *Lonesome Dove* over there was a bit like re-making *The Bible*. Texans love that book so much they were really nervous about how Hollywood was going to treat it. And I think that’s why a lot of them went to see the film.

*The Lighthorsemen* also did okay in Los Angeles for a couple of weeks, then completely died. It’s just one of those things.

In Australia it came out at a time when audiences had swung away from watching very ‘Australian’ films. I think that holds today.

You might be right; I don’t know. All the same, it has performed better than most Australian films in terms of its return. Its pre-sales and television sales were about $6 million or 60% of the budget.

Ian Jones, myself and Tony Ginnane actually put a lot of money in to prop the film up when it looked like falling over. We’re suffering a bit from that now.

**Which version has been released on video in Australia?**

The Australian, and in America the American. It’s not that different a film.

**Have you had any experience with the American audience-testing process?**

I’m not a great fan of that. Having grown up on television, I believe you should go with your instincts.

There was an article the other day in *The Sunday Age* by Tom Ryan about happy endings. And someone in that article expressed a view I share: that audiences recruited for test screenings shouldn’t be telling us what they like or don’t like in a film. There’s not one thing in *Lonesome Dove* which is there as a result of the demands of an audience. Everything that’s there is a result of how the producers and I saw the film. And, as you know, it was a huge success.

I believe movies are the same. As soon as you start testing with an audience, everyone becomes an expert. They say, “Well, wouldn’t it be good if...”, or “Maybe you should try this.”

Another example of how dangerous this testing can be was *Phar Lap*. I’m not unhappy with the American version of the film, but the reason John Sexton and I chose to go with 20th Century-Fox was because they’d done a good job with *The Man from Snaggy River*. And yet all Fox wanted to do was spend $300,000 making changes to the film. If we had gone, for example, with Disney, they intended releasing the film in its Australian form.

Fox originally planned to release the film in the spring. But they did some audience testing and it did better than anything since *Star Wars*. So, they released it in the summer peak season. Well, that was the summer of the Olympic Games, *Ghostbusters* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* – their biggest summer ever. We got killed in the rush. It got nice reviews, but didn’t do much business. I still believe that if they’d stuck to their instincts and released it in the spring, things would have been different.

But look, you can’t become an instant expert. These guys spend between 5 and 7 million dollars releasing a film, and they’re justified in doing what they believe is necessary to cover their bet. On the other hand, if you don’t take a gamble, all we’ll end up doing is making formula films. We should stand firmly by our instincts, because that’s what we’re filmmakers for.

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JULY 1989
PG (PARENTAL GUIDANCE)

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<td>Perfect Match</td>
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G (GENERAL EXHIBITION)

Adventures of Milo and Otis, The | M. Leone | U.S., 84 mins, Columbia Tri Star Films, Occasional violence, V(|m-j) S(|m-g) L(|m-g) O(adult concepts) |
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AUGUST 1989

MATURE AUDIENCES

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