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The Films, The Filmmakers

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BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL

PAUL KALINA

ONE NEEDED ONLY to look at the 'Trabies' filling the streets of West Berlin, the hordes of East Germans lugging their newly-acquired VCRs or the East German border guards bemusedly peering through the man-size gaps in the Berlin Wall to get an inkling of the momentous events that had taken place exactly three months to the day before the opening of this year's Berlin Film Festival.

For the first time in the Festival's forty-year history, it was staged in both parts of the once-divided city. If this was not the correct time to ironically contemplate how the Festival's birthright had been suddenly supplanted - this along with several other international arts and music festivals were created in West Berlin at the height of the Cold War to help build the stature of the Federal German Republic's isolated outpost - it was indeed the occasion to cast one's eyes back through the tumultuous events of post-World War II history.

Whether as a result of extraordinary prescience, fortuitous coincidence or astute programming, the Berlinale managed to reflect broader social and political circumstances of Europe past and present - right down to the two Retrospectives. "The Year 1945" was designed as a follow-up to last year's programme of films on Europe in 1939, but with its emphasis on the consequences of the post-War divisions of Europe the timely programme took on an extra dimension as a history lesson. The other retrospective provided a survey of forty years of the Berlinale.

Six films from Eastern Europe took part in the Competition, including Jiri Menzel's Skrivandi Na Nitich (Larks On A String) and Frank Beyer's Spur Der Steine (Traces Of The Stones). Both films arrived at the Festival with the notable distinction of having been banned by their respective regimes. Beyer's film was unseen (and miraculously preserved intact) since 1966, after a monumental crackdown by the East German Communist Party which led to a nine-year hiatus in the American cinema's opening of the Festival, were unlikely to open in scores of theatres within days of the Festival's closing. Forum screened six forbidden films from East Germany from the years 1965-66, while Frederick Wiseman's Near Death, a six-hour documentary set in the intensive-care unit of a Boston hospital, provided demanding though rewarding viewing.

But it was not Verhoeven who caused the major controversy of this year's Festival. Before the Festival opened, German director Helma Sanders-Brahms quit the selection committee in protest over what she saw as a domination of American films in the Competition. Seven American films (Born on the Fourth of July, Music Box, The War of The Roses, Shadow Makers, Driving Miss Daisy, along with Steel Magnolias and Crimes and Misdemeanors screening out of Competition) and the US-West German co-production of The Handmaid's Tale (which proved to be one of the greatest disappointments of the Festival) were shown in the Competition section.

The real bone of contention was the choice of Steel Magnolias for the opening night extravaganza (on hand were stars Daryl Hannah, Julia Roberts, Olympia Dukakis, Sally Field and Dolly Parton, producer Ray Stark and director Herbert Ross). Audiences were unimpressed when the curtain raised on the American soapie, with even the popular press dubbing this historic East-West Festival opener an embarrassment and a sell-out to the interests of major U.S. distribution companies.

The wider issue at stake here was well explained by Derek Malcolm when he wrote in The Guardian, "What better showcase could the American cinema have for the attempt to extend its hegemony into Eastern Europe?"

But not far away from the Competition, at the Panorama and Forum screenings, was where one could get down to watching the films that truly belong to such a Festival, films that, in any event, were unlikely to open in scores of theatres.

Six-year-old documentary set in the intensive-care unit of a Boston hospital, provided demanding though rewarding viewing.

If there was a discovery to be made at this year's Festival it was in the two films by the prolific Finnish director Aki Kaurismaki. In Tuutikkuuhtaan tytö (The Girl from the Match Factory), Kaurismaki tells a wickedly comic story about the exploitation of a factory worker in a tone that is as dry as it is sardonic, while in Leningrad Cowboys Go America he charts a raucous fish-out-of-water comedy about a Finnish band that travels to America, only to discover that the yanks want nothing other than rock 'n' roll, but that success is forthcoming farther south in Mexico.
The major Australian news of this year’s Academy Awards was the success of Bruce Beresford’s American film, Driving Miss Daisy. It won Best Film, Best Actress (Jessica Tandy), Best Screenplay Adaptation (Alfred Uhry) and Best Make-up (Manilo Rocchetti). It is the first time a film directed by an Australian has won Best Film.

The major disappointment, as Billy Crystal and other presenters and acceptants remarked, was the non-inclusion of Beresford in the Best Director category. How can a film which is judged to be the best not also be the best directed? so many queried. But the Oscars are not about logic, and every year they have inconsistencies. However, it is fair to assume that, had Beresford been nominated, he would have won. How else can one explain Oliver Stone’s winning if his Born on the Fourth of July wasn’t thought good enough to win Best Film. So while Beresford must be happy his film did that well, there must be a sense of a personal chance so narrowly, and perhaps unfairly, missed.

What has been little remarked in the summations is that the Best Director nominations are submitted by the Screen Directors’ Guild of America; Academy members can vote only on those on the Guild’s list. This patently unfair system, where internal politics have too great a chance of influencing things, is something that should be changed. Strangely, it is similar to the pre-selection model adopted by the Australian Film Institute in its annual awards. So, with Beresford (and Peter Weir) missing out, John Farrow remains the only Australian to have won an Academy in a ‘major’ category. One suspects, however, that it won’t be long before another Australian name joins his on the Oscar lists.

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Dear Mr Murray,

What a magnificent article on my late husband John Farrow! I just sent a copy to my daughter Mia with a note saying how happy he would have been. More especially, since it came from his own country. It was his dream in his last years to return to Australia. I congratulate you on the tremendous research you have done...

I don't know why really that he has not been given more recognition. I think the economics of a large family forced him to do lesser films. Somehow too, a not-too-good script became a challenge to turn it into something good with re-writing and so on. And that worked often. The other night we ran Where Danger Lives: it is absorbing and timeless...

Many good wishes and gratitude

MAUREEN O'SULLIVAN FARROW CUSHING

PS: The original title of above film was “A White Rose for Julie”, which was why I wanted to do it.

JOY CAVILL

In 1955, Dan Casey, the Managing Director of Universal Pictures, contacted Chips Rafferty and told him of a feisty young secretary with lightning skills who desired to break into motion-picture production. Soon after, Joy Cavill joined the Southern International Company, working as secretary to Rafferty.

Zealous, determined and good-humoured, Cavill quickly won her way into many hearts. Chips Rafferty, for one, fondly nicknamed her “Mother”.

But not content to remain a continuity girl, Cavill pushed on, becoming involved in script discussions, and learning budget and cost control. She accomplished many feats: from designing daily production, first-assistant-director and camera-department reports to inventing the stripboard system which is still used throughout the world today. Cavill would become respected throughout the film industry for revolutionising methods of production co-ordination and cost control. Later she would add producing and writing to her skills, and win an Aawgie from the Australian Writers Guild for her first and last feature film, Dawn.

At Southern International, Cavill became associate producer on many features shot at the Cinesound film studios, including Dust in the Sun and the Franco-Australian production, The Stowaway.

Legendary writer, filmmaker and broadcaster, Lowell Thomas, and the CBS Television Network teamed with Cavill and Southern International to produce a $13 million series of one-hour specials, Careful He Might Hear You, which scooped twelve AFPI awards.

Cavill later became producer on the Shippy series, as well as co-producer on the feature, Nickel Queen, and two television series, Barrier Reef and Shannon’s Mob. Eventually Cavill achieved her life’s ambition: to write and produce her own feature film, Dawn! Although it did not achieve great box-office success, it did earn her a much-coveted Aawgie Award for best original screenplay.

Secretary, continuity girl, associate producer, writer, producer, filmmaker and “Mother”: Joy Cavill was many things to many people. Her outstanding contribution to the Australian film industry and her fine leadership qualities will be missed.

PAT GILLESPIE

ARCH NICHOLSON

Director Arch Nicholson died peacefully on 24 February 1990, the result of a motor neuron disease, ALS.

Nicholson had established an excellent reputation in the television industry, with documentaries such as The Russians and series including The Flying Doctors and Special Squad. He was well known for his speed on location and his ability to get material under trying conditions.

Nicholson branched into the cinema with four features, Fortress, Buddies, Dark Age and the recently completed Weekend With Kate (formerly “Death of Feeling”). The latter has quickly gathered a reputation at film markets as a skilfully made and delightful romantic comedy.

Nicholson’s early features, made during the worst years of the 10BA explosion, were felt by many to not be a true indication of what he could ultimately bring to the cinema. Unfortunately, he was robbed of that chance by his death at only 48.

AUSTRALIAN FILM FINANCE CORPORATION

FUNDING DECISIONS: FEBRUARY 1990

• DOCUMENTARIES

ENCOUNTERS OF THE SILKEN KIND (50 mins)
Roger Whitaker Films. Producer: Roger Whitaker. The economy of spiders is based on silk — as a tool, an appliance, a weapon, a lifetime. Written by Densey Clyne, this film will be a close and stunning look at the lives and loves of spiders.

PEGGY GLANVILLE-HICKS (60 mins) Juniper Films. Producer: John Tristram. The unconventional and adventurous life of Peggy Glanville-Hicks, one of the first, successful women composers. Working with librarians such as Thomas Mann, Robert Graves and Lawrence Durrell, her career included work for opera, symphony orchestra, ballet and film.

CROCODILE MAN (75 mins) David Ireland. Producer: David Ireland. David Ireland travels to the Kimberleys to come face to face with the biggest crocodiles in the country, and to study their ferocity and cunning, and their significance as a totem in Aboriginal dreamtime stories. Filmed largely from a cage, the result is some of the most exciting underwater footage ever captured.

TOTAL VALUE OF PFC INVESTMENTS IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR IS NOW APPROX. $114 MILLION.
John Seale is one of the world's most sought-after directors of photography, his work having ranged from the Oscar-nominated Rainman to Gorillas in the Mist, from Witness to Dead Poets Society. Many new offers are piling up and Hector Babenco [Kiss of the Spider Woman] wants him to shoot a rather expensive film set in South America. Seale is very tempted, but for the moment he has to put these temptations aside and finish making...
his first feature film as a director, *Till There Was You*. There is much riding on this adventure-romance set in the Vanuatu jungle, and not just for Seale. Apart from the $13 million budget, the film is a showcase for post-1980s Australian cinema, for the producers (Jim McElroy in particular), for established stars, Mark Harmon and Jeroen Krabbe, and for relative newcomer Deborah Unger.  

**Andrew L. Urban Reports**
ARK HARMON plays Frank Flynn, "an average sort of guy" from New York, who is summoned by his brother Charlie in the depths of the Vanuatu jungle, only to find Charlie dead by the time he gets there. He meets the embittered Viv (Jeroen Krabbe), who was Charlie's partner, and Viv's beautiful but unhappy wife, Anna (Deborah Unger).

It seems Charlie had said something about an old wartime bomber filled with Japanese gold that had crashed, but was never found. The search for the bomber is made the more intense by the growing attraction between Frank and Anna, the presence of the Vanuatu tribespeople and a couple of choice baddies.

Seale took a great interest in the final drafts of the script:

The conflict now doesn't lie as much between the blacks and whites as among the whites. We show the native people as they are - noble and dignified - and it's clear that it's the white man who doesn't fit into the jungle.

Seale also wanted to keep a balance between the action and the relationships of the three central characters. Producer Jim McElroy has fond hopes that the film "will have the same sort of values as the great old Hollywood movies, like Elephant Walk and To Have and Have Not... real characters and real situations".

For Seale, the biggest challenge has been directing performances; he is a good listener, but he also has a vision of the completed film:

I learnt from Peter Weir that the scene you're shooting is not the movie: it is before one scene and is followed by another. You play a sort of Moviola in your mind to determine what kind of pace to maintain.

Scale and his director of photography, Geoffrey Simpson, had many discussions on the film's 'look', prompted no doubt by Scale's own experiences. "All I ever wanted from the directors I've worked with was to talk to me about what look they wanted", he says. This time, he made sure he didn't fail his own DOP. Says Simpson:

Despite all the planning, unprepared-for things will always happen and one has to be able to adapt. "These are things I call lucky mistakes - gifts from nature. Especially with these villagers", says Seale, as he nods towards the Bunlaps scattered in their newly built village outside Vila.

The Bunlaps had been 'imported' from the Pentecost island in the northern region of the Vanuatu archipelago, after lengthy negotiations, which Seale initiated. He had been there in 1982, filming the extraordinary land dives that are unique to the Bunlaps, in which several men of the tribe hurl themselves from various heights up to thirty metres, from a specially built sacred tower, once a year (usually in April). The diver comes to within an inch of bashing his brains out on the ground, stopped short by carefully selected and measured vines tied to one ankle.

The tribe agreed to participate in the film as the villagers in the script, and also to assist with the land dive - including one that features the once ordinary
Frank having a go. The Bunlaps, dressed in nothing but grass skirts for women and nambas (penis sheaths) for men, became the location favourites, and some predicted they will steal the show with their mischievous good humour and energetic performances.

The village is one of the two major constructions that are an integral part of the action. It comprises some ten huts, built around a ceremonial circle studded with totems. The village sits naturally on the riverbank, as it would if it were inhabited. (It is: the Bunlaps lived

JOHN SEALE ON DIRECTING

"I've never realized in all those years how many answers you have to have. The actors want to know details about what happened to their characters years before the story begins.

"How do I feel about it? Well, some days I don't want to come to work ... Heh, but it's also very exciting. Especially when everything clicks. Getting it to click is the trick.

"What I realize now is you have to be absolutely 100 per cent on your script. It's very hard to try and fly it once you're shooting."

GEOFFREY SIMPSON ON CINEMATOGRAPHY

"We're not doing anything tricky; it's very simple. We want to let the action tell the story, and not let the cinematography overpower the film. But the light can be a nightmare here. It's very changeable. The jungle really comes alive with dapples of light through it. But getting the dapples just when you want to shoot is not easy."

MARK HARMON ON ACTING

"I've worked with quite a few first-time directors and writer-directors, and I like to take those kinds of chances. That's not to say if Sidney Pollack rang and asked me to do a picture I would say, 'No'.

"I work hard at trying not to let the effort show, so there is a degree of pride involved. But while I take my work seriously, I try not to take myself too seriously.

"I very much wanted to work with John Seale; I admire his work. I also liked the idea of a regular guy in irregular circumstances, just an everyman really, who comes to a place he can only find on a map, and, through situations he cannot control, discovers a lot about himself. And it changes him. All in two weeks."

JEROEN KRABBE ON ACTING

"With my painting, when I want to paint the bluest blue, I start with a red. I let that dry, and then start painting the blue. It's the same with acting: I start with the opposite. What you see here is a cynical, bitter Viv. But I play against it because that's already in the lines.

"If I find a problem with a role, I ask myself how would Dirk Bogarde do it, and how would Dustin Hoffman do it. They're both the ultimate, and yet very different: Bogarde is very still, and Hoffman is the ultimate entertainer. Sometimes I use the Bogarde model, sometimes the Hoffman. And the older you get, the more you leave out."

DEBORAH UNGER ON HER FIRST LEAD ROLE

"I love working with John Seale; I have so much respect for him. And I love the way he sees life, his conceptual framework, and, as a person, how he interprets his environment. I watch him to see what he watches.

"I love theatre and feel very comfortable there. I am beginning to feel playful and, as I am expanding, able to give more, to be more focused. But I'm not nearly as confident in front of the camera.

"I love the sensation of giving something to the story, to be there 100 per cent with all the crew and other actors, all going for the same thing. But I don't like it when the attention is focused on me. I hate it when someone says, 'Oh, it's such a good part for you.' That's external to the story. I hate people watching me instead of me being a part of the story."

CINEMA PAPERS 79 • 9
partner, and lived in a smaller adjacent house. They had a cocoa plantation, having bought the place for a dime. Yet all this time, Charlie was actually looking for Betty Blonde, the B25 bomber with the golden baggage. Viv had given up hope. Finally, when Charlie does find it, he doesn’t tell Viv: he can’t trust the man, and he, Charlie, has lost interest since he knows it belongs to Vanuatu. Viv would try and steal it.

All this happens before the story of the film begins. It’s the background to the action, and to some of the characters. The other thing about Viv is that he is so possessive of his wife he keeps her virtually imprisoned. She even tries to escape—and Frank’s arrival on the scene only fuels this explosive scenario.

in the huts throughout filming.) The village only took four weeks to construct, using local Mele tribesmen.

Around a small rise is the other main structure, the house where Viv and Anna live, a striking building beneath a giant banyan tree with a thousand roots shooting up together to form its main trunk. The house is framed by ‘Mount Hope’ and is aged to give it a suitably decayed facade. It is production designer George Liddle’s pride and joy: “The hill and the banyan tree dictated what we should build”, he maintains. Indeed, “finding the right location was the first thing we had to do.”

The task was largely the responsibility of line producer Tim Sanders, who surveyed much of the South Pacific. The house is contemporary, but with gentle echoes of the colonial 1940s. “There is nothing less than 50 years old in it”, says Liddle. “We brought it all out from Sydney: polished wooden items, cabinets ... We avoided plastic altogether.”

The house was built for about $70,000 in six weeks, much to the amazement of the local population, to whom this seemed like unseemly haste. But then it was not built to last, its foundation piles are made of coconut trunks-free and available, but subject to rotting. “It’s great fun”, Liddle says with a grin; “A remnant of the white man’s ways.”

In the film, Viv had built this house fifteen years ago. Then, after independence, all land ownership reverted to the Vanuatu people, with a lease for the occupant. It was this event that began Viv’s deterioration into bitterness. It was this that changed an appealing man, gradually eating away at him, into the festering sore he is today.

Charlie, Frank’s brother, was his...
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Hal and Jim McElroy are two of Australia's most prominent and successful producers. Their first feature, *The Cars That Ate Paris* (Peter Weir, 1974), was at the near start of Australia's much vaunted film revival. Their second film*, Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Weir, 1975), was a breakthrough success, locally and overseas. Their third, *The Last Wave* (Weir, 1977), was the first to attract major American studio investment.

The 1980s began with similar success. *The Year of Living dangerously* (Weir, 1982) was in many ways a consolidation and re-affirmation of the cinematic philosophy of their production entity, McElroy & McElroy. It is a bold film, aimed squarely at the international market and utilizing the drawing power of the Australian star Mel Gibson, and rising American name, Sigourney Weaver. The film also used other international elements (such as composer Maurice Jarre), as well as globally-recognized Australians (director Peter Weir and scriptwriter David Williamson).

The rest of the decade has been more diversified for the McElroys. There was, at the time, the surprising move into television, a move that prefigured the later cross-over for Kennedy Miller. *The Last Frontier* (Simon Wincer, 1986) was an American network breakthrough and *Return to Eden*, mini-series and series, a world-wide hit. The features have left less of a mark, ranging from *Razorback* (Russell Mulcahy, 1983) to *Melvin, Son of Alvin* (John Eastway, 1984). But McElroy & McElroy has big expectations of its latest feature, the $13 million *Till There Was You*, the first feature of acclaimed Australian cinematographer John Seale.

The McElroys were first interviewed by *Cinema Papers* in the January 1973 issue, and again after *The Last Wave*. In many ways, these interviews are a record of the production and aesthetic issues of the time. This interview, again conducted by Scott Murray, is no exception. In Part 1, the McElroys examine, at times provocatively, many of the central concerns in filmmaking in Australia in the early 1990s. In Part 2, they look back to their past successes and forward to hopefully those of the future.

*Produced in association with Patricia Lovell.*
Since you were last interviewed for *Cinema Papers* in 1977, the major change in the industry was the introduction of 10BA. What is your perspective on 10BA, the pluses and minuses?

**JIM:** We have built the film industry up and made it adult, turning it from a cottage industry into a business. That is a plus. Clearly, though, that business became too big. Too many films were made and inflation took over. From a commercial point of view, the investors got nervous, as you would expect. There were some good films made, but there was a lot of bad ones, which harmed the international reputation of this industry.

**HAL:** At the time, we had some grave reservations, but we chose not to voice them. We thought that we would seem to be selfish because, at the time, 10BA was perceived to be a wonderful thing for the industry.

**JIM:** We consciously adopted a low profile and didn’t speak about 10BA, because it is so easy to knock.

**HAL:** It did give people lots of opportunities and we hoped, along with everybody else, that these opportunities would produce a Second Wave of actors, writers, directors, etc. But the sad conclusion is that it didn’t. The inescapable conclusion is that there is an inverse relationship between the ease with which you can get money and the absence of genuinely resilient stars, directors and writers being thrown up.

Some would disagree, arguing that the one benefit of 10BA was it broke the stranglehold the Australian Film Commission had which favoured a certain group of established directors. 10BA gave a chance to many new people, most of whom were disappointing. But if you look at the French or American film press, the most applauded Australian directors of the late 1980s are new people who came out of 10BA: Campion, Bennett, Hillcoat ...

**JIM:** I didn’t see it that way, I must say. I recognize those names as being new talent, but I wouldn’t have thought they were the product of 10BA.

**HAL:** They would have come anyway because they’re talented.

But look, it is real easy to criticize what happened and there is nothing any of us can do about it. It happened. We all have to live with the consequence of it, and there really is no point in regretting it. 10BA was not as beneficial as everybody hoped, and certainly not as the politicians wished it to be, but it wasn’t a complete disaster. *Young Einstein* was made with it; so was *Crocodile Dundee*, *Return to Eden* and a lot of good Kennedy Miller stuff. On that level, you have to ask, “What’s the regret?” The only regret, I suppose, is lost opportunities. As for waiting for the Second Wave, maybe out of the 15 million people we already had more than our fair share of ‘stars’.

How seriously did the disappointing 10BA films damage the international reputation of Australian films, particularly in the U.S., where people put up a lot of pre-sales for films that turned out not to be even competent?

**JIM:** Most of the people who put up pre-sales in America were not that competent anyway. So they got what they deserved.

I mean that slightly tongue in cheek, but, yes, those films did do a lot of harm. At the same time, there was the big winner in *Crocodile Dundee*. That has made it easier for acceptance in a mainstream sense.

**HAL:** 10BA has to receive credit for that. *Dundee* was a product, a result, of 10BA and it was an astonishing success. So, arguing on that film alone, it paid everything back, all the debts. Perhaps the regret is that we managed to lose a lot of the inroads that we had made into the market generally by making bad films.
PRODUCTIVITY VS COSTS

At the same time, the nature of the theatrical industry changed. The Hollywood industry got into the giant-killer mentality, whilst we let our costs run away. We painted ourselves into a corner.

Most recently, Australian television has also gone sideways and we really have given ourselves a whole bunch of problems that have to be resolved before getting ourselves back on our feet. One of the things is to get costs down and productivity up. We need to get back a little more to reality and re-kindle the pioneering spirit and energy and commitment we had in the 1970s. Even if we do make films that don’t work, and inevitably we will, the cost won’t be as great because hopefully the budgets will be lower, relatively speaking, and we will be able to survive it. But where you are making six or eight million dollar disasters, it is a much more painful and public problem.

When you were interviewed in 1977, the biggest concern you had then was rapidly escalating budgets. Is this just a continuing problem or has it greatly worsened?

JIM: Oh yes, much. If you compare the cost of making a film in 1974 to that in 1990, the costs have rocketed. People will have to pull their belts in - everybody, not just the crews, but the actors, the producers, the directors, the writers, the whole shooting match.

Hal, in the speech you gave last year at the Screen Production Association of Australia (SPAA), you argued that Australian films should be made for under $2 million, like a Sweetie, which is already in profit, or for $10 to $15 million with international muscle.

JIM: Yes. And if Sweetie had been made for $10 million, it would not be in profit; it’s about that simple.

As for the $10 million film, it must have a star and other international elements that will make it work globally. Only then can you start to get your budget back.

One of Hal’s thrusts in the speech was that going international is not the only route. There are films that can be made for domestic audiences, but you have to realize the limitations of that audience from a financial point of view. There are only so many people here who can see a film. You can’t make the rules by the exceptions, like a Young Einstein, which grossed around $15 million in Australia.

HAL: Historically, costs always rise. Our problem is that, if you graph it, you will find a rapid acceleration during 10BA, which was due to a shortage of facilities and talent. People just bid everything up. But equally, when you look back to ’73, ’74 and ’75, we were making films for unrealistically low budgets. I mean, Jim and I paid ourselves $11,000 to produce Picnic at Hanging Rock, which took us three years. It was only the profit that film made which enabled us to keep working on it full time.

Now, of course, when there was money available, we stopped working for $11,000 and started paying ourselves a bit more. That was true in a lot of the above-the-line elements. The actors, writers and directors were, relatively speaking, underpaid compared to the grips and electrics. So that is where the greatest rises occurred, which was only right. But it has now got out of wack and the salaries no longer pay heed, as Jim said, to the size of the domestic market.

This situation creates great difficulties for younger filmmakers. It is therefore very important to ensure that they still have a door to walk through. It was hard enough trying to raise half a million dollars for Picnic at Hanging Rock, God knows how producers today, without a track record, can raise the two or three million necessary to make a film. Buggered if I know. I would hate to try to do it without a track record.

So, we must create an environment whereby people can make a movie for $1 million to $1.5 million. You must encourage the young and the energetic so as to keep the industry alive and vital. If we don’t do that, we are all going to calcify and petrify into middle age, because
Hal and Jim McElroy

the paradox is that all those young turks of the 1970s are all middle aged now. Unless we encourage the young guys and women, we are going to be buggered.

How do you get costs down? Do you re-negotiate awards and return to the sanity of a six-day shooting week and cancelling those ridiculous tea breaks?

HAL: That would be good, but it would only go some of the way. To my mind the answer is in working faster and more efficiently. We have got all slack and let laziness and unprofessional behaviour appear on the set. You know we shot *Cars that Ate Paris* in four weeks, *Picnic* in five and *Last Wave* in seven.

Now, if you were to ask some of the directors or cameramen around these days to make those sort of movies in five or seven weeks, they would simply say, “Not possible”. But it is possible; we did it. We can’t all have forgotten how, ourselves included.

The American style is to have high-paid people and have them go very, very fast. There’s nothing wrong with that.

JIM: I agree entirely with Hal: productivity is the issue.

HAL: Let’s also remember the change from six days to five days occurred at the height of 10BA activity. Everybody was working flat out and they were not having ‘the home life’ they wanted. Today, where the production rate is maybe half what it used to be, I doubt the technicians out there would be anywhere near as supportive of the five-day week. What people want to do now is work.

One of the problems with awards is they tend to be cast in concrete. If we had known as an industry that all three networks were very, very fast. What people want to do now is work. What people want to do now is work.

HAL: The more active members of SPAA got caught up in 10BA and didn’t pay enough attention to the very sorts of concerns we are talking about. We did a “Christopher Skase”; our eye left the ball as we rushed around making money and movies. We all let a situation develop which we now have to correct.

JIM: And how many days did they shoot the pilot in?

HAL: It was 20 days for a 96-minute movie. Now, that’s very efficient shooting and there aren’t many directors in Australia who could do that. But that’s how the American industry survived. They didn’t say that everybody had to go on half salary; they said everyone is going to have to work faster and harder. That’s a challenge the American industry has responded to, particularly in television.

THE ROLE OF SPAA

You were both active in 1977 in setting up the Independent Feature Film Producers Association (IFFPA). Could IFFPA, or SPAA as it became, have done more to control costs? Can it now be instrumental in adopting what you see as the solutions to the industry’s problems?

JIM: We were some of the founding people of IFFPA, but we became disenchastrated with the way it was going in the middle of the 10BA period. So, we sort of cut loose. But we want now to try and get more involved, because we do see a leadership role for SPAA in trying to rationalize the industry.

HAL: The more active members of SPAA got caught up in 10BA and didn’t pay enough attention to the very sorts of concerns we are talking about. We did a “Christopher Skase”; our eye left the ball as we rushed around making money and movies. We all let a situation develop which we now have to correct.

I do think SPAA should have been more responsible, but I don’t mean the executive, rather the membership. We all let someone else worry about the problems.

One of the perennial problems with SPAA is that it has a broad cross-section of representation: it has something like 170 members who range all the way from those making corporate videos to people making $12-14 million features. There is, for instance, a divergence of opinion within SPAA in regard to Actors Equity’s policy on imported actors. Some of the more inward-looking SPAA members actually agree with Actors Equity, while a much larger section of SPAA disagrees. So within the one organization you have a bit of conflict.

What I am hoping is that the harsher economic times are going to force people to look at things in a much more realistic light, to be more flexible and pragmatic. This so-called principle of defending Australia’s cultural integrity has to be examined in the full light of the new economic dawn. I don’t think it is appropriate for any
industry in Australia to say that we are making something just for Australians. Even the bloody car industry has decided to export cars to America.

It is bullshit to say that bringing in an overseas actor is some sort of cultural rape, or that movies which don't have those elements are, Q.E.D., more Australian and therefore more valid. Without mentioning the name of the movie I watched last night on television, it was a bad movie. It was an all-Australian movie, but it was a bad one. And please don't tell me it was more valid than some of the stuff we've done with imported actors. The industry has to get real.

As I said in my SPAA address, there is an inverse relationship between budget and freedom. The higher the budget, the less freedom you have making the story. If you make a low-budget film, you get the freedom you want. If the average budget of films in Australia is going to be $3-4 million, then we all have to export, and to do that you are probably going to need imported elements involved. Get your price down to a million and you get all the freedom in the world.

JIM: There have been some false arguments used by interested parties in preserving the purity or whatever of Australian films. You have had statistics compiled which were simply false, just to serve an argument. That is dishonest and distasteful.

ACTORS EQUITY

Do you think Actors Equity will change its position?

JIM: I hope, but I don't expect so. They must be terribly proud that in their rush for cultural purity they have created a situation where the Australian producer is penalized for bringing in imported people, yet there is an open-door policy of American films being made here. They can have whoever they want as long as they pay the rates. Now the effect of that is:

(a) with an American film made here, crew and cast are paid basically what they ask for (including SAG rates) as it is still cheaper than shooting in America;

(b) with an Australian film it inflates the industry in terms of cost, because of the extra loading each actor gets as a penalty for having an overseas element in the film. And when that actor goes to his next Australian film, he wants to get the same as on the last one and the crew member wants what he received on his last American film; and

(c) this has the effect of ensuring less films are made in Australia by Australian people with international potential. Is that really helping the industry?

Hal and I have a conflict here in that we don't object philosophically to American producers coming here. We don't think it's great; we don't think it's going to build the industry but we aren't going to be hypocritical and say they can't come. But we do ask that Equity at least give the Australian producer as much of a go as the Americans get. Let us do our stuff without penalizing us to the advantage of our American counterparts. It is just nuts.

My view is that Actors Equity has produced a really unhealthy atmosphere in the industry by taking the positions it has. There was an actor we had provisionally cast for Till There Was You, who was quoted in the press as saying, "Oh, well, this is just another 'American' film, so it won't mean much to me", or words to that effect. He was taking that attitude because we'd engaged an American actor who happens to be playing an American character. Now, I think it is really offensive and destructive to our industry, and the movie, for a person to rubbish in print the movie he is about to be paid to work on. Needless to say, this guy was recast. If people want to be critical of the sort of movies we are making, we don't want to work with them.

HAL: It appears that there are only two sorts of filmmaking happening in Australia and that's inappropriate. There is the "international movie", which is viewed as being mid-Atlantic and purely shitty, and there's the "culturally exact", meaning Australian. If we keep on rushing down that path where everybody makes a choice all the time, then they are going to continue to trip ourselves up. Was Young Einstein culturally exact? I don't know. But it struck me as being a very Australian movie and it was very, very successful. But I don't think it was very exact.
REPORT BY SCOTT MURRAY

TRACEY MOFFATT

NIGHT CRIES
A RURAL TRAGEDY

In a world where most film directors seem content to blandly record people talking, it is refreshing to find filmmakers concerned with image and sound, who realize that *mise en scène* can carry meaning more percieptibly than mere words can.

In 1986, Jane Campion drew international acclaim at Cannes with her starkly visual *Peel*. This year, it could well be Tracey Moffatt with her new short film, *NIGHT CRIES: A RURAL TRAGEDY*. It is a breathtakingly visual film, shot entirely in a studio—a sparse narrative suspended in an abstract, surreal space of artificial light and sound. It attacks and disturbs with its blunt political advocacy and touches emotionally in its gentler moments on faltering human relationships. It is proof of a new Australian filmmaking sensibility at work.

*NIGHT CRIES* visually begins with a Singer (Jimmy Little) crooning "Royal Telephone", a religious song promising God’s personal attention to everyone’s needs. In this film, the principal needs are those of the Australian Aborigines, whose time since the white settlement began has been, among many things, a battle to retain cultural and spiritual independence in the face of powerful white repositioning.

Thus, while in tone the Singer’s voice is soothing, his very presence reminds one of the era of the mission school, where black Australians were re-educated and re-clothed in an attempt to make them more ‘white’.
This connects strongly with the penultimate and most disturbing scene. The Old Mother lies dead on the ground; beside her is the Daughter, curled in a foetal position. As a baby cries mournfully on the soundtrack, one experiences an intense sense of loss at that now broken bond between mother and daughter. So even though the Old Mother is perhaps symbolic of white oppression, Moffatt portrays within this troubled family a love that has not been extinguished by the defects of the past.

This is not to say that the white presence in the film is not in many ways shown quite harshly. After the opening fragment of song, the camera tracks across a stylized view of the Australian outback to the Daughter’s reading a tourist brochure on the South Molle Island resort: sacred land becomes a marina. The camera then reverses its track toward the Old Mother, past a table strewn with tinned food: white processed food versus blacks living naturally off the land. That the Old Mother also wears a ghastly hand support reinforces the view of whites as a decadent, dying race (a view ironically the first white settlers held about the Aborigines). There is also the Old Mother’s incontinence, suggesting a white society clogged by its own cancers.

A parallel repositioning of that time was forced adoption, where black children were placed in, and raised by, white Australian families (usually middle-class). Thus, the black child-white mother relationship at the centre of Night Cries becomes symbolic of the wider Aboriginal-white relationship.

After the religious song is cut short, the film tracks to a middle-aged Aboriginal woman who is nursing what one presumes to be her aged, adoptive mother (there is no dialogue, no names and only a glimpse of photographs to hint at their relationship). The Old Mother (Agnes Hardwick) is incontinent and near senile, and awaiting death. She is suspended in a time continuum punctuated by wheelchair visits to the outside loo and by fitful sleep. The black Daughter (Marcia Langton) waits on her every need, with a resigned selflessness and, at times, a touch of suppressed anger. Unable to free herself from this stagnant fate—perhaps she feels too duty bound—all she can do is to wait for the Old Mother’s death. The frustration of that is shown when she sits outside the loo and violently twangs the handle of the bucket on which she is sitting.

During her tending of the Old Mother, the Daughter has memories of her youth. As she cools herself with a slowly-running hose, she recalls a bow being tied to her ‘pretty’ dress, of another in her hair. As the water runs down her skin, it is as if she is washing away the attempts of white society to make her dress and behave as if white.

A latter memory, and the most puzzling in the film, is of her and two boys (her brothers?) at a rocky beach with her younger-looking Mother (Elizabeth Gentle). The children toss seaweed at each other while the Mother stares out to sea, oblivious to and perhaps uninterested in the children. She then disappears, as if having fallen or jumped from the rocks, and the Daughter begins to cry. The seaweed around her neck has now bizarrely turned into what looks like magnetic tape, shiny and frightening in the way it tangles around her neck and won’t pull away.

One knows the Mother can’t have drowned, for one has seen her in old age, so her ‘disappearance’ is strange and unsettling. It is also the one moment where the Daughter, at any age, seems to have a need for the Mother—a need based on a fear of loss.
the sparse images, the darker the vision becomes. It is hard to imagine the film not unsettling, not stirring emotions, wherever it is screened.

Night Cries’ director, Tracey Moffatt, studied filmmaking at the Queensland College of the Arts in Brisbane. Moffatt:

It was the only place then in Queensland where you could do a practical filmmaking course. It was not a formal course, like at the Film School [AFTRS], but much looser. It had the basic equipment and I made some student films. But I wouldn’t want anyone to see them. They’re just exercises, like, ‘Go out and make a five-minute documentary’, or ‘Here’s a piece of music, go and put images to it.’

The good thing about the course, and we didn’t have fabulous visiting lecturers like the kids get at the Film School, was that they pushed an appreciation of film history. Ninety per cent of our time was spent watching films. It gave me a good grounding in film history, which has been very helpful. I’m glad I learnt filmmaking at an art school.

Moffatt graduated in 1982 and moved to Sydney. The first film she worked on was a documentary about the Commonwealth Games protest in Brisbane. Made by a group of black filmmakers, Guniwaya Ngigu (a Queensland aboriginal term for “we fight”) was not a rewarding experience. Moffatt:

We had fights amongst each other because some people in the group didn’t like the tone of the film. They thought it showed black people in not too positive a light, like getting arrested and yelling at cops.

I don’t really want to talk about that because nothing ever really happened with it. A $64,000 grant from the Australian Film Commission went down the drain and the film is sitting underneath my bed at home. The experience basically pissed me off and I don’t want to work in a collective on films any more.

Moffatt then worked in Sydney as a stills photographer, including on other people’s films. She wrote her first screenplay, which was for Nice Coloured Girls (1987), and received a grant from the Creative Development Fund to make it. The film is a confronting look at the plight of urban Aborigines today. It effectively overlays images of black girls on the town at night in Kings Cross with a voice-over of early white texts on the Aboriginal people. The film drew some criticism from fellow blacks for, again, showing them in a poor light, the black girls in the film being portrayed as knowingly fleecing white men for the sake of a night out.

In some ways, Nice Coloured Girls prefigures the deliberate artificiality of Night Cries, eschewing the documentary-realist tradition for a surrealist edge. At times the film strains too hard for effect (the image of the glass breaking over the white settlement painting achieves less than it attempts) and the craft level is not always as confident as the technique. But it bravely mixes a variety of filmic styles to striking effect and its linking of the Aboriginal people’s past and present is often quite disturbing.

Since Nice Coloured Girls, Moffatt has made Watch Out (1987), about the Aboriginal and Islander Dance Theatre, and a film on AIDS for the Aboriginal Medical Service. She has worked on commissions for Film Australia and, in 1988, directed part of the SBS series, A Change of Face, about the lack of positive representation of black and ethnic people in Australian films. An inevitable question, then, is whether Moffatt feels she has an obligation to make films about Aborigines. Moffatt:

When I sit down to write a script, I don’t think about how I am going to represent my aboriginal characters. But I am very conscious of what has come before me.

When I was studying film, I looked at a lot of late-1970s documentaries, including My Survival as an Aborigine and Two Laws, as well as Wrong Side of the Road. They are very good films for their time and they perhaps even inspired me to become a filmmaker. But I don’t feel the need to copy their gritty realist representation. Not all black films have to be like that. Yes I am Aboriginal, but I have the right to be avant-garde like any white artist.

I have a lot to do with the art scene in Sydney, more than with the film scene. I enjoy working with people who are non-film people, like Geoff Weary, a video and super 8 artist and photographer. I always work with him as my script editor because he is always reminding me, through his own work, that rules in filmmaking can be broken. For example, in Night Cries I originally had a sequence where you saw the old woman die. But Geoff said, ‘No, you don’t have to see it; you are dragging it out too much. Cutting to her dead is enough.’ It’s good having someone like that to stop you from becoming didactic.

While working on A Change of Face, Moffatt again came across Charles Chauvel’s 1955 Australian feature, Jedda. Moffatt:
I really like the set, which is the homestead interior. It is very American, very Bonanza, from the era when Australian films were trying to be like American westerns - even down to the landscape and music. So, I decided to recreate the set in a film.

I then took two of the film’s characters, Jedda, the black woman, and her white mother, and aged them as if thirty years had past. In the original film, Jedda is thrown off a cliff and killed. I wanted to resurrect her, and place the two of them back in the homestead situation, living out their days.

But as I developed the script, the film became less about them and more about me and my white foster mother. I was raised by an older white woman and the script became quite a personal story. The little girl who appears in some of the flashback sequences looks a lot like me. That was quite intentional.

While Jedda was a starting point, Moffatt is reluctant to stress the connection for fear of people looking to Jedda for clues to Night Cries. Moffatt:

“It’s just the look of Jedda that I’ve copied, that sort of artificial interior. But as far as landscape goes, I created my own. In part it is a reaction to a lot of Australian films where there is an obsession with photographing real landscape. I’m not particularly obsessed with landscape, and I like to think I can create my artificial version of it.

I am also very influenced by my photography, where I like to work in a studio situation, creating tableaux. I wanted to do the same with Night Cries.

The art director, Stephen Curtis, is a theatre person, and what I like about his work is its staginess. On Night Cries, he was inspired a lot by looking at some early Albert Namatjira paintings, with their faded pastel look. I didn’t want the chocolate boxy, saturated look that a lot of Australian films have.

We also used Agfa, a European film stock, to get that softer, more tonal look. This concerned at first John Witteron, the cinematographer, who was used only to Kodak and Fuji. Now he and everyone is ecstatic about the results.

Another influence was Japanese cinema: Kobayashi’s Kwaidan, for example, was shot in a sound stage. As for the shiny floor surfaces, they were created using Agfa film stock, with the ends of the frames extended to make the surfaces shiny. I wanted to make sure that the film was as artificial as possible.

Night Cries’ highly stylized soundtrack is also unusual for an Australian film, where the sole aims seem to be clear-sounding dialogue and lushly inappropriate music. There is rarely if ever an attempt to convey thoughts and feelings through sound, and Robert Bresson’s maxim that one should, wherever possible, replace an image with a sound would no doubt be seen as a ratbag heresy. But not to Moffatt who, with her sound crew, wrought a wonderfully eerie and disturbing soundtrack, one that at times melds imperceptibly with the images and, at others, comments perceptively on them. Moffatt:

The soundtrack was by Deborah Petrovitch, who is a video artist. She is also a soundscape artist who performs in pubs around Surry Hills at three o’clock in the morning, dressed in leather and crawling around a floor shaking a rattle. She’s really into voodoo and the sound at the beginning of my film that sounds like crazy monkeys is actually a woman choking. It was recorded in Haiti in the 1930s during a voodoo ceremony.

Sound is so important. Often when I’m writing a script I think of sounds first.

I also did this film in mono as Dolby stereo can sometimes be too pretty, with sound coming all around you. I didn’t want that as it can take away from the intensity of a film. And it really is an intense piece. Some people have said that I should hand out tranquilizers to audiences walking out at the end.

When the issue of the film’s black-white politics is raised, Moffatt distances herself from such a reading. Moffatt:

I would like to think, to use a cliché, that my film is universal, that it isn’t particularly about black Australia and white Australia. It’s about a child’s being moulded and repressed - she is very sexually repressed. It could be the story of anyone stranded in the middle of the desert having to look after their ageing mother.

American audiences understood it very well. They really liked it. It didn’t matter that they didn’t know the lead actress was Aboriginal.

When pressed about the film’s ending, which some may see as saying that Aboriginal rebirth is conditional on the death of many of the prevailing white-black relationships, Moffatt smiles gently. Moffatt:

Umm, sure. I wanted to end the film like that, leaving the Daughter in an emotional state, and then bring in Jimmy Little with his bouncy song so that it would grate even more. He offers this Christian healing, which can be so unwelcome and inappropriate at times.

At the same time, I don’t want to make fun of Jimmy or his Christianity. I present him as he is in real life. He is this smooth, soothing character who appears every now and then to punctuate the film. But, in fact, he’s not really soothing at all, but grating. It’s like something familiar which turns into something horrible.

Now that Night Cries seems assured of critical recognition around the world, what are Moffatt’s future plans?

I just got a grant from the AFC to write a feature film. That’s next, and hopefully I’ll get some money to make it. I haven’t started yet but I feel fairly confident about it, even though I haven’t written a feature screenplay before. I come from a short-film background and it does occasionally scare me to think about having to milk one idea for 90 minutes.

Still, I want to try it. Making a feature is not something I feel I need to do, but I would like to try. It should be very challenging.
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the Producers of the following
chose us ...

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BEYOND MY REACH
DINGO
FLYNN
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REINSURED AT LLOYD'S OF LONDON
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Independence with Dignity

'Struck by Lightning'

One of the Australian films going to Cannes this year is STRUCK BY LIGHTNING, a $2.6 million production from Adelaide, directed by Polish filmmaker Jerzy Domaradzki, and co-produced by Terry Charatsis and scriptwriter Trevor Farrant. This year's festival will be important for Australian films as productions emerge restructured from a base of tax-concession finance to a more commercial mixture of funding. STRUCK BY LIGHTNING is one of the new films completed during this uneasy period, a comedy about independence and dignity set in a workshop for the mentally handicapped.

The film mixes professional actors with non-professional disabled adults, known as the Heartbreakers. Their supervisor, Rennie (Garry McDonald), is challenged by a new physical education teacher, Cannizzaro (Brian Vriends). Cannizzaro's enthusiasm and idealism is not what the cynical, world-weary Rennie needs but may help the workshop survive. Their conflict is based on the classic antipathies of cynical experience and youthful optimism, and caught in the middle are the Heartbreakers, defenceless and unwanted by a society that prefers to hide its problems away from view.

For four days in November, Hunter Cordaiy was on the set of STRUCK BY LIGHTNING, where he saw some early scenes between Garry McDonald and Brian Vriends, and spoke with writer-co-producer Trevor Farrant and director Jerzy Domaradzki.
Estcourt House, on the western side of Adelaide, is the set for 'Saltmarsh', a sheltered workshop. It is a desolate stone building overlooking the sea that at one time was a school, and then a hospital. It has cavernous high ceilings, and this afternoon its corridors echo to the sounds of a film crew setting up equipment, actors in costume reading or playing cards, bathrooms that look more like places of medical ritual, perhaps a mortuary. At the back and seaward side is a brick extension and a dry brush hedge creating a small grassed courtyard, 1960s attempts at modernizing what really is a stately building in decline. Saltmarsh is described in the script as "a place no one wants, for people no one wants". There is an arched sign between the building and the beach which reads "Independence with Dignity", misspelled but no less defiant for the mistake. It is the symbolic entrance to the world of the Heartbreakers.

In the workshop, the Heartbreakers make bon-bons for the Christmas market, put brochures in envelopes and produce small wooden rocking-horses that balance on the edge of tables. It has a look of shabby order with tables covered in boxes, stacks of envelopes and rubber bands. Here the simplest tasks will be an achievement, an expression of hope that the employees do have a role in society, a function with even some economic possibility. Rennie is in charge of this uphill possibility.

The first scene after lunch brings out the flaw inherent in this idea: such production-line work denies the individuality and creativity of the employees. Can such mentally disabled people be creative? It's not a concept readily accepted by Noel (Henry Salter), a hunched figure in khaki overalls and with protruding ears who wants to be a sculptor and not a maker of identical balancing horses. A crisis is reached when the ever-suspicious Rennie finds some wood shavings that betray Noel's artistic ambitions: he sculpts monster-like heads. For the audience, it will be an early introduction to Rennie's managerial style, and Cannizzaro's first gathering of support amongst the Heartbreakers.

For the filmmakers, however, the scene has another dimension: the script requires Rennie to hit Noel over the head and warn him off his creative endeavours. In rehearsal, director Jerzy Domaradzki sees this action on the monitor and realizes it is too violent, with possible adverse implications for the film. But writer-co-producer Trevor Farrant, who is on the set, resists Domaradzki's attempts to soften the blow by insisting it shows Rennie's frustration rather than his inherent violence. The moment is made more poignant by the fact that Noel's disobedience is creative, not destructive.

It takes 1 minute 45 seconds to get a take, and, while the crew sets up for the first of three close-ups, Domaradzki talks about the differences between making films in Australia and Poland:

This production is better equipped, with all the small elements which create what I would call a film civilization. The lamps are more effective, the camera is very good - not an Arriflex, but a Moviecam - and the actors are available for as long as I want them, whereas in Poland they'd often be employed.
'Riders on the Storm'

doing a play and a film at the same time. Sometimes when I was filming I had to stop shooting at 5
o'clock because the actors had to leave. But the greatest advantage is a shooting ratio of 12:1.
However, the pressure of time is greater here, because in Australia time is more expensive. So,
in 40 days I have to do what would normally take 50 or 52 days.

That efficiency will mean Domaradzki can shoot three close-ups in the next 35 minutes.
These will be the flash-points of the confrontation between Rennie and Noel.

Domaradzki works patiently with McDonald in the cold, cramped workshop, discussing at
length the motive and intention of the simplest words of dialogue (“Burn it”, “I said don’t”).
It is a method that will be repeated over the next few days, a way of working which relies not
on a storyboard but with director and actors blocking out the movements, reacting to the
implications and needs of the dialogue, gestures, etc., before making any decisions about
framing and the camera position.

“I prefer to look at the actors and not at the monitor”, Domaradzki explains, “because
when I look at them on the monitor all I get is a cold message. Actors produce an energy and
I think it’s always better to look for this directly in their performance.”

The next scene, described by Domaradzki as “a very difficult shot”, begins in the small
courtyard at the rear of the building, and then follows Rennie and Cannizzaro along the
outside of the building to a large palm tree near the entrance. Outside, the full force of the
wind coming off the sea makes everyone quickly put on winter jackets.

To link these three distinct moments in such a long camera movement is ambitious and
fraught with problems of language, interpretation and camera logistics. “We have to create
a richer reality than the scriptwriter”, Domaradzki says with good humour, loud enough for
Farrant to hear.

For the next hour, discussions among Domaradzki, Farrant, director of photography Yuri
Sokol and first-assistant director David Wolfe-Barry centre on the camera and the possible
double meanings of the dialogue. The scene has two sexual references which have to be kept
in balance: Rennie’s lusting after the retarded Gail (Briony Williams) as she sits on the swing,
and Cannizzaro’s challenging a retarded exhibitionist, Kevin (Brian Logan), to a comparison
of penises by the palm tree. The fifty-metre track will link these two moments, but rehearsals
show that for much of the track the dialogue between Rennie and Cannizzaro is informationa
rather than inherently connected to the moment. Domaradzki feels the scene needs another
reason to be entertaining. It takes 90 minutes to find this element – the hand movements of
Kevin and Cannizzaro as they open their track-suit trousers – and then eight takes in quick
succession in case some of the magic, and the light, evaporates.

The first scene for the day will be outside at the entrance to Estcourt House, where Kevin’s
father, Mr Jeffries (Don Barker), will bring his son back to Saltmarsh after a home visit
and meet Cannizzaro for the first time. By contrast with yesterday’s long track, this should be
easier.

Though Domaradzki has planned as much as he can during the very short pre-production
period, he is thinking on his feet and has to adjust his vision of the film to each location and
scene, bringing out “the dynamics of the actors” rather than imposing a vision upon them
through the camera. This is an important distinction because he often meets supporting
actors for the first time just before shooting and must react quickly to the possibilities they
present. Don Barker is a good example. Getting out of the car to deliver a cruelly accurate
impersonation of Kevin’s distorted speech (“He’s too thick to remember anything”), he
towers over Brian Vriends and, by tilting the camera up, an unforeseen joke against Canniz­
zaro is extracted from the decision to cast such a tall actor. “I have to create the aesthetic for
this film from the reality I’m given”, Domaradzki says. “I’m looking for something which I feel
is important for me to tell an audience, and the style will be a natural part of that, but inside
the story.”
At 10:35, the first rehearsal is over and the ‘simple scene’ has become aesthetically complex. There is a quick re-write of some dialogue, while behind the set a row of Heartbreakers and their families are sitting patiently, watching the snail-like process of filming the opening of a car door.

By 11:00, there have been six takes and everyone is keen to get to the next scene which uses the Heartbreakers as a group. Part of the interest in Struck by Lightning is filming with the Heartbreakers. If actors are the volatile or unknown element in filmmaking, then working with the Heartbreakers is unique, and takes the film even further into the areas of improvisation and risk.

For the close-up of Jeffries’ getting out of the car, there is an intense continuity discussion between Domaradzki and Sokol. The tension eases when Domaradzki sees two ships on the horizon which he wants in the shot. In a low-budget film you take any extras you can find, and "ships for free" will quickly become the slogan for the shoot at Estcourt House.

By 12:15, after a rehearsal and a small change of camera position, several takes are good but ruined by rapidly moving clouds, planes, or both. Sitting beside Domaradzki after Take 3 is cancelled there is a sudden silence: Domaradzki has slumped in his chair while a concerned Sokol looks on. Under this level of pressure it is difficult for any director to hold on to a vision of the unmade film he sees in his head.

Despite the cold wind, a row of Heartbreakers and their parents still sit waiting on the lawn. Their patience is extraordinary. By 2:30 their time has come. The parents will drive up to the front of Estcourt House as Kevin’s father leaves. Domaradzki decides to do it in one shot, coordinating three cars and ten people, most of them Heartbreakers who must run towards and then past the camera.

The schedule then focuses on the first of two major scenes to be shot today: Heartbreakers on the beach. Domaradzki decides to shoot the opening scene in one take, with a perspective from infinity to close-up as Rennie and Cannizzaro lead the Heartbreakers from Estcourt House across a narrow bridge to the beach. He places the camera at the beach end of the bridge so the shot will show a single-file, multi-coloured parade of Heartbreakers carrying sporting equipment. Leading the procession will be Rennie and Cannizzaro, but, as Farrant explains, the shot has risk as well as comedy:

Cannizzaro says he has to first establish what they’re capable of. We have to do some aerobic testing, cardio-vascular evaluations, bring them down to the beach and put them through this basic commando course. He’s getting further and further ahead of the Heartbreakers carrying the equipment. By the time he hits the beach and turns around, they’re exhausted just from carrying the equipment.

Farrant explains why there have been no rehearsals for this shot: “It depends entirely on their ability to pick up what they’re supposed to do. We may have to march them across the sandhills a few times to get a take!”

By 4:30 the crew is setting up the second shot in the sequence when the line of exhausted Heartbreakers will crest the sand dunes. Out of the shelter of the dunes, the wind and sand bite into crew, actors and equipment. This must be one of the coldest beaches in Australia, and by 5:30 the pressure is on Domaradzki to finish quickly by shooting in the few short moments between fast-moving clouds. The quick pace – five takes in less than ten minutes – is difficult for the Heartbreakers who do not have to fake their collapse on the sand. “Push them to the limits” is Cannizzaro’s ironic dialogue as they fall.

The scene finishes with a close-up on Rennie, and the crew pack quickly for a return to Estcourt House to shoot a sunset scene between Rennie and Cannizzaro. This will be a crucial confrontation between the two characters and puts Domaradzki back into the cinematic environment he loves: actors and a camera in a room. In this scene, the ‘risks’ are that the golden light may fade and the possibility that, on film, the moment may be too beautiful for the dialogue, which has a dark, almost sinister, tone to it. “Two things ... together ... always” is Domaradzki’s succinct summary of the scene’s structure.

The windows of the workshop directly overlook the sea and the setting sun, which is flooding the room with a suitably magic light for the last set-up on a Friday afternoon. By 6:00, Domaradzki is blocking out movement and lines, Garry McDonald and Brian Vriends are still being made-up so Alison Goodwin (continuity), and David Wolfe-Barry (first-assistant director) stand in for them, moving, pausing and turning as Domaradzki begins to orchestrate them with the camera. What he is searching for is nuance, the message in the words which will
support the image of Rennie and Cannizzaro at either end of the sunlit room.

Their dialogue is about failure: Rennie senses a conspiracy to ensure the sheltered workshop does not succeed because he has been put in charge. It is a perverse acknowledgment of his own flawed self, which leads him to doubt Cannizzaro's motives for also accepting a job at Saltmarsh. The moment has the added resonance of McDonald, established actor, quizzing friends, rising star: "Why are you here? Who the fuck sent you?" Such overlapping of career and character goes straight to the psychic nerve all actors feed off, and each time McDonald says the lines he is able to see the sun visibly sinking.

After the first rehearsal (it is now 7:00), Domaradzki is not happy with the physical space between Rennie and Cannizzaro, which he wants to be a metaphor for their psychological relationship. He re-arranges the furniture and changes the path Brian must take along the side of a large table, momentarily replacing Vladimir Osherov as camera operator so that Sokol can watch on the monitor. Sokol agrees this new arrangement is better and a short discussion follows on Cannizzaro's dialogue: he is forced to admit he is a failure, but this is a ploy to gain Rennie's trust. Then, just before a full rehearsal, Sokol and Domaradzki put boxes and chairs in Vriends' way to give his movement more obstacles. By 7:30 they have a 'serious' rehearsal which runs 78 seconds, but should be shorter and on the next it is down to 66.

By now there are only 15 minutes of sunset left and on the next rehearsal McDonald misses his lines. Domaradzki comments that the sunset is producing a peculiar circle of reflected light behind McDonald's head and he is instantly dubbed "St Rennie". The first take is good, the second is better, and shorter, but the camera battery fades just before the third take as the sun sinks on cue. Everything is running on adrenaline and team work now as the battery is quickly replaced and another take catches the last moments of light. From Domaradzki's "Cut!" the relief is instant and the verdict unanimous: best shot of the day.

It is a warm Monday morning after the weekend break and, by 10:00 am, it is obvious that there is some longing for the creative tension of last Friday's sunset scene. The first exterior scene of the day involves the Heartbreakers having a packed lunch at the rear of Saltmarsh while Rennie introduces Cannizzaro to Gail. Domaradzki decides to begin with a short track to emphasize Rennie's attraction to Gail's pale beauty and the possibility of his going 'out of bounds'.

The first take, at 10:25, is stopped by the sudden arrival of a plane, and several more by mistakes in positioning or dialogue until Take 6, which is acceptable. The series of problems continues with the close-up of Gail on the swing, and an hour later the scene is all the better for the re-thinking of subtle movements, such as Rennie's hand touching her shoulder as the symbolic gesture of his physical attraction. The ironic rebuff he gets is because Gail is in love with another Heartbreaker. The difficulty with the scene has been how to translate the idea of Gail's idealized love into a gesture that needs no further explanation.

Before lunch there are two more short scenes scheduled, a close-up and a reverse angle. They are interesting because the Heartbreakers have been patiently sitting with packed lunches on their laps and now are told they can only pretend to eat them in case there has to be another take, which is almost certain. Sokol, Domaradzki and Wolfe-Barry are coaching the Heartbreakers to 'eat', and to respond to each other while the camera takes a group shot. It can only be done twice before the lunches are gone and the effort of co-ordination proves too difficult.

The advantage of mixing the professional actors and Heartbreakers together is shown when, after lunch, Kevin has to dance around the palm tree before stopping suddenly when Cannizzaro and Rennie approach. At first Kevin's dance is awkward, exaggerated, so Donald (Dick Tomkins) is asked to dance for Kevin. The result is brilliant and Domaradzki comes to the conclusion that perhaps not everything from the world of the Heartbreakers can be imitated.

Domaradzki then moves on to the next scene: a series of reaction shots of Kevin's exhibitionism which will require delicate direction to remain funny and not tacky. The scene is more than 'flashing' because it shows Cannizzaro will cross any boundary to be accepted by the Heartbreakers, and this forces Rennie to re-evaluate his new employee. Domaradzki and Sokol decide to exaggerate the camera movements and play down the dialogue which begins, 'Look at this!' They do four quick takes and then another four for the reverse angles on Cannizzaro's face, as he meets Kevin's display with equal bravado.
The next hour is taken up by shots of Foster (Denis Moore) judging the dual exhibitionism of Kevin and Cannizzaro, and then announcing the results to an assembled group of Heartbreakers. His decision is that “Kevin wins easily.” By 4:00, they are ready for the first take: Foster looks down into the opened tracksuits, turns and addresses the Heartbreakers who then run past the camera. The group dynamics of the movements are difficult to perfect and, after another four takes, Domaradzki decides to shoot the reaction of one Heartbreaker, Jody (Jocelyn Betheras), who remains in love with Cannizzaro, despite losing the challenge from Kevin. She is the Heartbreaker most infatuated with her ‘stardom’ in the film: “I’m having the best time”, she says. Her innocent “But I still love him” is the sentiment needed to balance Rennie’s earlier attraction to Gail, and should be one of the strong moments in the film. This has been achieved against the odds with hot, windless air aggravating the problem of doing so many shots in succession with the Heartbreakers.

The crew begins to draw on emotional credit as they move into the early evening schedule: filming the unpacking of soccer uniforms from the boot of a Mercedes. But if the strain of this Monday is showing, it hasn’t reached Brian Friends who is consistently perfect in movement and dialogue through rehearsal to Take 3, which finishes the shoot for the day at 6:40 p.m.

**Tuesday 14 November**

Tuesday begins at 8:00 a.m. in Rennie’s office. The scene, between Rennie and Cannizzaro, hinges on contrasting the cruel cynicism of Rennie with the idealism of the younger Cannizzaro over the prospects for the Heartbreakers’ exercise programme. The room is small, cluttered and difficult to film in. Rennie is meant to be doing exercises in the doorway, but this immediately creates focus problems, which are solved by Sokol with another “small track”. (These two words, along with “ships for free”, can now be guaranteed to bring a grin.) Domaradzki takes the scene one step further and decides to start it with Rennie’s jogging in the corridor outside the office before energetically entering the room. Cannizzaro wants to talk about exercising the Heartbreakers, but Rennie is preoccupied with making tea and looking for a hidden bottle of Scotch with which to spike the brew.

It is a strong scene for Garry McDonald, with witty dialogue, but the short movements require fine timing. In the next forty minutes, the scene is gradually rewritten by Domaradzki to become funnier and more dynamic, but it also loses its ending. “Where to cut?” becomes the big question. The crew, squashed into the small office, are beginning to wonder if Tuesday will become another Monday – uphill. Then Domaradzki announces to the room with a broad smile: “I have found the ending to the scene. One of the actors disappears.” The simplicity of using a classic storyline trick from Hollywood will work perfectly because Cannizzaro will now suddenly leave and Rennie will be alone holding two cups of tea in the empty room. The effect is to catch Rennie off balance and transfer the momentum of the relationship back to Cannizzaro.

Once the disappearing trick is integrated into the scene, the rehearsals focus on details of performance and positioning in the room. The scene is also too long, but this is solved by speeding up the dialogue. The last of six takes is completed by 10:50 a.m. and confidence visibly returns to the set.

Several exterior scenes on the soccer field follow, which continue the spirit of improvisation when some moments involving the Heartbreakers do not go according to the script. A scene that requires them to stand on one leg during warm-up exercises disintegrates into chaos as some fall over on cue and others defiantly take pride in remaining upright.

The remaining scenes after lunch are back in Estcourt House and allow the Heartbreakers to live up to their name. The first has two of them silhouetted against the workshop window doing a stand-up routine from Laurel and Hardy, throwing imaginary buckets of water and slapping faces. They are perfect on two takes and the crew spontaneously applauds. The second scene is more involved, shot partially in a narrow corridor, and involves Jody’s pushing a trolley in which Rennie will find the wood shavings from Noel’s carvings. Her “oh oh” will be a simple comment on the disaster that follows. The heat in the corridor is stifling and it takes ninety minutes before the first take, but the scene is more complicated, in terms of actors and camera, than anyone imagined and if there is a hero on the set today it is Jocelyn Betheras as Jody. The problems of timing are solved by a loud handclap to cue her and later, in the close-up, when she is told to “forget about the camera”, it is clearly an ambitious request for an actor who is starstruck.
Jerzy Domaradzki

Director of ‘Struck by Lightning’

How did you become involved with Struck by Lightning?

Like most of the important things in my life, it was by accident. I was working with Trevor Farrant on another script when he gave me the Struck by Lightning script to read. When I started it, I couldn’t stop. It was so moving that I told him, “If you want a director for this script, I’m ready anytime.”

That was February 1989 and a month later he called me and asked me to direct it. Terry Charatsis then applied to the Film Finance Corporation for the production money and here we are, in November, shooting the film.

It is unusual for a film to be prepared so quickly. How has this affected the production?

Trevor Farrant is a very precise scriptwriter, so the only difficulty was finding the right location. When I arrived in Adelaide I found the perfect location fifty metres from the hotel! It was an old building and would have been excellent for Saltmarsh, but it turned out we couldn’t use it. However, the image of this building was so strong that we looked for something similar and eventually found Estcourt House, where we’ve been filming this week.

The logic of these kind of places is similar. They are both old buildings, too big for a new owner and in a state of decay. To restore them would cost a fortune and, because only big companies can finance that level of restoration, sometimes these buildings are given to the government. Estcourt House was a Centre for Aboriginal Art and Activity, and before that a hospital. Nobody wanted it, so it was perfect for our story about people nobody wants.

Working with Downs Syndrome adults on Struck by Lightning must have problems and advantages for a filmmaker: one of the
problems would be the aesthetics of disabled people. People might say that you are exploiting the disabled.

This an issue film about retarded people: What should we do with them? There is an element of curiosity in a film like this, just as we are curious about certain tribes in New Guinea or Africa. This will happen wherever you touch an unusual problem or people. But the approach in the script has always been more universal, and shows the Downs Syndrome people as 'normal but different'. They are in some ways more happy: they don’t have a past, or a future, and live in the present. So making this film might, I think, help us to understand not only these special people, but also ourselves.

Their problems are what we create because we don’t have a method for dealing with them, or helping them exist, in our society. Their parents feel guilty and keep them at home; that doesn’t give them social relationships. So, they slip back. In this film, we try to show that if they can work it’s good because they are with each other; they can exchange some emotion and learn simple skills. So the main subject is to give them a chance, to show how to be tolerant. All my efforts have been to make this a more universal film and not just a curiosity.

The film mixes professional actors with the Downs Syndrome adults.

Yes. Our first decision was that they should be actors and not play themselves, so we created characters for each of them. But some characters, particularly those who have love affairs, we cast with actors. It would have been too risky, for technical reasons, and we were afraid of the price they might have to pay afterwards. Nobody could tell us how being in the film would affect them, and we were afraid that the reality of the film would get confused with the reality of their lives.

How did you choose which Downs Syndrome adults to use in the film?

We invited them to a workshop and set up something like a screen test. There are some limits to their abilities, but at the same time I discovered that most of them are like children, with very natural reactions. They are all potentially actors.

You have cast Garry McDonald as Rennie. McDonald is better known for his television work, so presumably this film is a challenge for him.

Because I’m new to the Australian film industry, I haven’t had the experience of working with any of these actors. So in some ways I don’t have preconceptions, like, for example, that Garry can’t play a tragic figure.

In another way, the film is also a challenge for Brian Vriends.

Yes. He’s a new face and for him it’s a chance to be the main character in a film and to work opposite Garry.

His casting was a very complex decision because I had to find two compatible actors who were opposites.

How did the professional actors learn about their retarded characters?

‘We ‘normal’ people have preconceptions about what is abnormal and so it was difficult for the actors to find the interior motivations. What I discovered in the workshop was that often the reaction of the Heartbreakers was the same as our ‘normal’ ones.”

The film mixes professional actors with the Downs Syndrome adults.

Yes. Our first decision was that they should be actors and not play themselves, so we created characters for each of them. But some characters, particularly those who have love affairs, we cast with actors. It would have been too risky, for technical reasons, and we
of America the people I met were surprised that I looked just like them, even though I came from a Communist country! They had created a stereotype of the stranger. I found a similar experience here.

What changes has this mixing of actors made to your directing?

What I've found is that the non-professional actors are perfect on most of the first takes. Why? Because in the next take they've learnt and they fix a reaction; they are not motivated by emotion but by memory of the first time. Their spontaneity is lost. When we repeat shots, they don't try to be, they pretend to be.

So, the general method we developed is a technical rehearsal and, when everything is ready, we bring on the Heartbreakers and shoot. Of course, this is interesting for the professional actors because they know the dialogue, but they don't know how the Heartbreakers, their partners, will react.

You have used a lot of tracks, and cranes. When should the camera move?

The point of view must be emotional, so that when the emotions change the camera must change. Unfortunately, I can't do as much movement with the camera as I would like because the technique is too heavy: it takes time and more movement means more barriers between me and the actors. I want to create an emotional tension by arranging the actors in a space. We are all concerned with space: our culture is connected with space in rooms, how we build houses, where we put fences, what is private and public, and how people behave in different spaces.

Does this affect the lighting as well?

With a low-budget film, with limited days and hours, we can't wait for the best light. And the agreement with Yuri Sokol from the beginning was that we would use a softer light — we didn't want to have contrast on their faces which would accentuate their mongolism. So we used lighting like for movie stars who are over forty, with more flattering, soft, dispersed light and not too many close-ups.

Why should audiences care about this story of Rennie, Cannizzaro and the Heartbreakers?

I care, and I have to believe that I have an understanding of the world and stories. I liked what Milos Forman said about filmmaking: because he's making the film for millions and it must be shown to millions, a director must give the audience some entertainment, humour and humanity. If a film is not for the mass audience, it has lost its power. Though television has created a much bigger audience, it is passive. I'm interested in cinema audiences because I prefer the viewers who vote on my film by buying a ticket.

DOMARADZKI FILMOGRAPHY
1975 "Romance", episode of Picture from Life
1975 A Long Wedding Night (tele-feature, 60 mins)
1976 Test Shots (feature, 85 mins) — also co-writer
1977 Beast/White Harvest (feature, 100 mins) — also co-writer
1980 The Laureat (tele-film, 55 mins)
1981 Great Race/Big Run (feature, 100 mins) — also co-writer
1983 The Tailor's Planet (feature, 87 mins) — also co-writer
1984 Three Watermills (mini-series, 3 x 60 mins) — also co-writer
1985 The Legend of the White Horse (feature, 85 mins)
1987 Cupid's Bow (feature, 100 mins) — also co-writer
1990 Struck by Lightning (feature, 90 mins)
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FEATURES

This is the first known attempt at listing all the Australian theatrical features made during the 1980s. While efforts have been made to make it as complete and accurate as possible, it perhaps inevitable that a film may have been overlooked, a cinema release gone unrecorded. Cinema Papers therefore invites readers to write in with comments so that a more definitive listing can be published in the near future.

FEATURES

DEFINITION

Features and tele-features are here defined, in accord with the archivist standard, as dramas of more than 60 minutes which have been shot on 16, 35 or 65 mm film.

The difficult determination to make is whether a film is a feature or tele-film. In the past, this was easier as there was little cross-over. Tele-features, although shot on film, tended also to be completed on video (especially the titles). But as production escalated in the 1980s, the demarcation lines blurred. Whereas in the 1970s almost every Australian feature received a theatrical release, by the end of the past decade that was true of less than 50 per cent. Most films went straight to video, others to television, some to oblivion. A new delineation was required.

After considering various possibilities, the following two-category system was settled on:

1. Features theatrically released in Australia (published this issue); and

2. Feature-length films released on video or television, or not at all (published next issue). This does not include mini-series or series.

The next step was deciding what constituted a theatrical release. The Australian Film Commission's standard is a cinema run of at least a week. But some mixed-programme cinemas show a particular film only once or twice a week, and a week's run seems an arbitrary measurement.

So, the rule adopted here is at least one cinema screening where tickets were sold for that film. It does not, therefore, include a festival screening, where tickets are sold for a number or series of films. A film which meets this criterion, but not say the AFC's, is Hayden Keenan's Pandemonium, which had two ticketed sessions at the Carlton Movie House.

In some cases, a theatre may have been hired to release a film (Snow: The Movie, for example), which some feel is not a fair release. But, in fact, this was once a common practice in Australia known as "four-walling". (The Naked Bunyip was the breakthrough 1970s Australian film to use this distribution technique.)

DRAMATIC CONTENT

A feature must have a considerable amount of 'acted' drama. Thus, in the Cinema Papers 1970-79 listing, The Naked Bunyip was included. Although a documentary in many senses, it has a large dramatic content centred on the researcher played by Graeme Blundell. A more recent example is Paul Cox's Vincent.

A particularly intriguing case is the "World Safari" series. The first two films were promoted as straight documentaries, but the third, Escape: World Safari III, was billed as a dramatized account of Alby Mangels' adventures. The decision, then, seems straightforward: include the third as a feature. However, a recent episode of A Current Affair did a story on Mangels which claimed that he had a habit of "arranging" scenes (e.g., a so-called "wild stallion" had been trucked in the day before). So, should the first two also be considered as dramatic features and, if so, how many other documentaries should also be re-categorized?

DATING

Of the many alternative dating systems, the one chosen here is the year of Australian theatrical release. The most-adopted standard is commercial world release, but this has not been adopted here as information about those Australian films which premiered overseas is not yet readily available.

TITLES

As per the recent, apparently much-read "Briefly" item on titles (thank you to those who have pointed out Now, Voyager has a comma), accuracy here is both a pedant's dream and nightmare. The approach here adopted is:

1. The title is that on the Australian release print. Again, this is the archivist standard. Regrettably, not all films have yet been checked for titular idiosyncrasies. However, this is being done for a new reference book and variations from the "accepted" title will be documented; and

2. Titles have been standardized to upper and lower case.

In the rare cases where a film has a sub-title, the standard archivist style of a colon is used to separate the two. There are two principal types:

1. A main title and an additional one in smaller type. For example, Tracey Moffatt's new film is Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy, the "Night Cries" appearing in large capitals, the "A Rural Tragedy" in smaller script across the bottom of the screen.

2. Titles where the two or more parts do not form a continuous statement without punctuation. For example, John Duigan's Fragments of War: The Story of Damien Parer.

A different case is Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome, where the wording flows normally, though different type faces are used in the titles.

IS it AUSTRALIAN?

This is the hardest determination to make. Again, production standards have changed and simple delineations blurred.

The country of principal photography has been often used as one test, while other archivists have argued for origin of financing. The location standard falls down with what are obviously Australian films that are largely shot off-shore (Far East, for example). Then again, most films today have a mix of financing from various world territories and that criterion is equally flawed.

What then of the nationality of the production company? Well, that is usually set up to maximize tax benefits and may reflect neither where a film was shot nor who financed it. Some think Race to the Yankee Zephyr is Australian; others regard it as a New Zealand film.

Perhaps the most important cases are those 1970s films, Wake in Fright and Walkabout. To this writer, they are, with Mad Max 2, the best films made in Australia. They are more profoundly perceptive about this country than the often fine efforts of local filmmakers. Certainly, no other film has come close to exposure of the sinister tyranny of mateship in Wake in Fright, or theuly, a film's financing structure one of the least important factors?

In the end, common sense must be applied, with all its flaws. No perfect alternative exists.
1980
Blood Money (CHRIS FITCHETT)
Breaker Morant (BRUCE BERESFORD)
The Chain Reaction (IAN BARRY)
The Club (BRUCE BERESFORD)
The Earthling (PETER COLLINSON)
Fatty Fin (MAURICE MURPHY)
Final Cut (ROSS DIMEY)
Hard Knocks (DON MCLENNAN)
Harlequin (SIMON WINGER)
Manganinnie (JOHN HONEY)
Maybe This Time (CHRIS McALL)
Nightmares (JOHN LAMMOND)
Stir (STEPHEN WALLACE)
Touch and Go (PETER MAXWELL)
Wronsly (IAN PRINGLE)

1981
Against the Grain (TIM BURNS)
Alison's Birthday (IAN DOUGLASH)
Centrespread (TONY PATERSON)
Gallipoli (PETER WEIR)
Grendel Grendel Grendel (ALEX STITT)
Hoodwink (CLAUDIA WHATMOUTH)
The Killing of Angel Street (DON CROMBIE)
Mad Max 2 [U.S.: The Road Warrior] (GEORGE MILLER)
Pacific Banana (JOHN LAMMOND)
Puberty Blues (BRUCE BERESFORD)
Race to the Yankee Zephyr (DAVID HEMMINGS)
Roadgames (RICHARD FRANKLIN)
The Seventh Match (YORAM GROSS)
Snow: The Movie (GEORGE KELSO, LANCE CURTIS)
The Survivor (DAVID HEMMINGS)
Winter of Our Dreams (JOHN DUIGAN)
Wrong Side of the Road (NEIL LANDER)

1982
Around the World with Dot [aka Dot and Santa Claus] (YORAM GROSS)
Attack Force Z (TIM BURNS)
The Best of Friends (MICHAEL ROBERTSON)
Breakfast in Paris (JOHN LAMMOND)
Corps (JAMES CLAYDEN)
Crostyle (MARK EGERTON)
A Dangerous Summer (QUENTIN MASTERS)
Doctors and Nurses (MAURICE MURPHY)
Duet for Four (TIM BURSTALL)
Far East (JOHN DUIGAN)
Freedom! (SCOTT HICKS)
Ginger Meggs (JOHNATHAN DAWSON)
Heatwave (PHIL NOYCE)
Lonely Hearts (PAUL COX)
The Man from Snowy River (GEORGE MILLER)
Monkey Grip (KEN CROMBIE)
Norman Loves Rose (HENRI SAFFRON)
The Pirate Movie (KEN ANNAMAN)
The Plains of Heaven (IAN PRINGLE)
Running on Empty (JOHN CLARK)

1983
BMX Bandits (BRIAN TRENCHARD SMITH)
Bush Christmass (HERNI SAFRAN)
Careful He Might Hear You (CARL SCHULTZ)
The Clinic (DAVID STEVENS)
Double Deal (BRIAN KAVANAUGH)
Dusty (JOHN RICHARDSON)
Fighting Back (MICHAEL CAULFIELD)
Going Down (HAYDEN KEENAN)
Goodbye Paradise (CARL SCHULTZ)
Hostage (FRANK SHIELDS)
Kitty and the Bagman (DON CROMBIE)
Man of Flowers (PAUL COX)
Midnite Spares (QUENTIN MASTERS)
Molly (NEIL LANDER)
Moving Out (MICHAEL PATTONSON)
Now and Forever (ADRIAN CARR)
Phar Lap (SIMON WINGER)
The Return of Captain Invincible (PHILIPPE MORA)

1984
Annie’s Coming Out (GIL BREALEY)
Buddies (ARCH NICHOLSON)
The Camel Boy (YORAM GROSS)
The Coolangatta Gold (IGOR AUZINS)
Dot and the Bunny (YORAM GROSS)
Epic (YORAM GROSS)
Fast Talking (KEN CROMBIE)
Melvin, Son of Alvin (JOHN EASTAWAY)
My First Wife (PAUL COX)
Mystery at Castle House (PETER MAXWELL)
One Night Stand (JOHN DUIGAN)
Razorback (RUSSELL MULCAHY)
The Settlement (HOWARD RUBIE)
Silver City (SOPHIA TURKIEWICZ)
Sky Pirates (COLIN EGGLESTON)
The Slim Dusty Movie (ROB STEWART)
Stanley (ESBEN STORM)
Street Hero (MICHAEL PATTONSON)
Strikebound (RICHARD LOWENSTEIN)
Tail of a Tiger (ROLF DE HEER)
Undercover (DAVID STEVENS)
The Wild Duck (HENRI SAFFRON)

1985
Bliss (RAY LAWRENCE)
The Coca-Cola Kid [aka David’s Luck] (GEORGE MILLER)
Dancing with the Moon (FRANK SHIELDS)
Dogs of Love (BRETT CRAWFORD)
Dot and the Koala (YORAM GROSS)
Emoh Ruo (DENNY LAWRENCE)
The Empty Beach (CHRIS THOMSON)
Fran (GLENDA HAMLY)
An Indecent Obsession (LEX MARINDOS)

1986
Backlash (BIL BENNETT)
The Big Hurt (BARRY PEAK)
Cactus (PAUL COX)
Cool Change (GEORGE MILLER)
Crocodile Dundee [U.S.: “Crocodile” Dundee] (PETER FAIMAN)
Dead-End Drive-In (BRIAN TRENCHARD SMITH)
Death of a Soldier (PHILIPPE MORA)
Dot and Keeto (YORAM GROSS)
Dot and the Whoa (YORAM GROSS)
Fair Game (MARIO ANDREACCHIO)
For Love Alone (STEPHEN WALLACE)
Fortress (ARCH NICHOLSON)
The Fringe Dwellers (BRUCE BERESFORD)
Frog Dreaming [U.S.: The Spirit Chasers] (BRIAN TRENCHARD SMITH)
Jenny Kissed Me [BRIAN TRENCHARD SMITH)
Malcolm (NADIA TASS)
The More Things Change (ROBYN NEVIN)
Playing Beatle Bow (DON CROMBIE)
Short Changed (GEORGE OULIV)"Traps (JOHN HUGHES)
Unfinished Business (BOB ELLIS)
Windriders (VINCENT MONTORIO)
The Winds of Jarrah (MARK EGERTON)
Wrong World (IAN PRINGLE)

1987
Bushfire Moon (GEORGE MILLER)
Dogs in Space (RICHARD LOWENSTEIN)
Dot and the Smugglers (YORAM GROSS)
Frenchman’s Farm (RON WAY)
Going Sane (MICHAEL ROBERTSON)
Ground Zero (MICHAEL PATTONSON, BRUCE MYLES)
High Tide (GILLIAN ARMSTRONG)
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Peter Kenna’s The Umbrella Woman [U.S.: The Good Wife] (KEN CROMBIE)
The Return of Captain Invincible (BRIAN TRENCHARD SMITH)
Blue Seven (PAUL COX)
Dot and the Whoa (YORAM GROSS)
The Right Hand Man (DI CREW)
Running from the Guns (JOHN DIXON)
Slate Wye & Me (DON MILLENAN)
Those Dear Departed (TED ROBINSON)
The Time Guardian (BRIAN HANNANT)
To Market, To Market (VIRGINIA ROUSE)
Travelling North (CARL SCHULTZ)
Twelfth Night (NEIL ARMFIELD)
Vincent (PAUL COX)
The Year My Voice Broke (JOHN DUIGAN)

1988
Around the World in 80 Days (STEPHEN MACLEAN)
As Time Goes By (BARRY PEAK)
Australian Dream (RIKKA HARTMAN)
Backstage (JONATHAN HARDY)
Belinda (PAMELA GIBBONS)
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Echoes of Paradise (PHIL NOYCE)
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The Everlasting Secret Family (MICHAEL THORNHILL)
Evil Angels [U.S.: A Cry in the Dark] (FRED SCHRIFRI)
Grieve’s Bodiely Harm (MARK JOFFE)
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The Surfer (FRANK SHIELDS)
The Tale of Ruby Rose (ROGER SCHLOES)
Warm Nights on a Slow Moving Train (BOB ELLIS)

1989
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Candy Regenting [aka Kiss the Night] (JAMES RICKETSON)
Cappuccino (ANTHONY BOWMAN)
Cella (ANN TURNER)
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A HOMOSEXUAL is bashed outside a beach public toilets and then humiliated during a nightmarish car ride, all unbeknownst to his live-in lover. Guilt, societal hostility, desire and fidelity are candidly explored in Night Out, a 16 mm short written and directed by Swinburne Film School graduate Lawrence Johnston.

Based on news reports of various 'poofter bashings', and partly on personal experience, this bleak film noir-style film covers a number of generic issues: the nature and consequences of promiscuity, lack of communication between couples, guilt as a consequence of infidelity and the notion of commitment in an AIDS age. Deliberately uncomfortable in undertone and subject matter, Night Out explores issues common to all people, regardless of their sexual preference.

The film was shot in Melbourne with a limited budget of $17,000, partly funded by Swinburne as part of its final-year graduate scheme, the rest coming from the Australian Film Commission and Johnston. Armed with a skeleton cast and crew, who in most instances waived their fees, Johnston captured most scenes in one take.

Johnston is adamant that the film is not "merely a gay love story" or a glorified anti-gay message:

"I had heard that many homosexual assaults had gone unreported, particularly in this time of AIDS and homophobia. I only touch on this in the film. Tony's complacency about it is almost brushed over. I could have gone the other way and made a rights-and-justice drama, but that wasn't what interested me. It is the small events that change people's viewpoints and their lives - the 'What if I hadn't done that?' after they already have. With Steve and Tony's relationship, I wanted to explore the issue of communication, what saying 'I love you' means when it really comes down to it. Lack of communication and expectations in relationships become a minefield through which irrevocable situations arise."

**GOLDEN BRAID**

ADAPTED FOR THE SCREEN by Paul Cox and Barry Dickins, and inspired by a Guy de Maupassant short story, *Golden Braid* is a black, erotic tale about a watchmaker who purchases an antique cabinet, and finds and fetishizes about a braid of hair inside one of its compartments. Chris Haywood stars as Bernard, the man caught between his fantasies and an affair with Terese (Gosia Dobrowolska), the wife of a Salvation Army Major.

Paul Cox has been hailed overseas as one of Australia’s leading film ambassadors, yet at home his unorthodox filmmaking methods have attracted some notoriety. Preferring to script as he films, Cox often re-shoots, discards or re-writes scenes. Some people claim his methods are unorthodox, yet others applaud him for his desire to involve the crew and production team in a collaborative process.

Cox’s films invariably generate heated critical debate when they are released, such as the controversial *Island*. And like that film, *Golden Braid* continues Cox’s personalized exploration of the human condition and man’s obsessions with the past. Cox adds:

“People ask me, ‘Why don’t you make political films?’ I think my films are political. They deal with the human condition and try to penetrate the human psyche. That’s a very difficult thing to do. You become a target and people attack you. They don’t want to be disturbed; they think it’s too arty. To make a film about the human condition is a threat.”

*Golden Braid* was shot in Melbourne and Venice, and was funded by the Australian Film Commission and Film Victoria.


TOP TO BOTTOM: TERENSE (GO SIA DOBROWOLSKA), CENTRE, WITH HER HUSBAND, JOSEPH (PAUL CHUBB), AND BERNARD (CHRIS HAYWOOD), THE WATCHMAKER. BERNARD WITH TWO CUSTOMERS. BERNARD AND TERENSE.
MARK CLARK VAN ARK is a comedy set in Melbourne about a 17-year-old boy, Danny Clark, who buys a Jaguar to impress his girlfriend, Joanna. On their first date, the car blows up and a plan devised by Danny and his friends to make things right goes awry, with hilarious results.

Mark Clark Van Ark is the third film from director Nadia Tass and cinematographer David Parker. It follows the highly successful Malcolm, and Rikky and Pete. Tass says: "I see myself as a servant - I serve the script. Certainly I take the script and make it my own, but I must be faithful to the film's ideals."

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*Red Maxs*, Sydney Film Festival

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BANK 40945
BASED ON A whimsical novel by Colin Talbot, Sweethearts is a contemporary 'Romeo and Juliet' story of mismatched lovers. Juliet, played by newcomer Christabel Wigley, is a brittle, money-hungry nymphet searching for her Romeo. But her search is hindered by Z (John F. Howard), an ardent admirer, low in sex appeal but who has enough money to keep the lucre-obsessed nymphet temporarily satisfied.

Summed up, Sweethearts poses the question, "Why does good love go bad, and is there romantic fulfillment in the real world?"

Talbot makes his directorial debut with this off-beat, music video-style feature that was shot in and around Melbourne. Featuring carnival colours, bizarre imagery and an assortment of odd characters, including a menacing cameo from the Bachelors of Prague's Henry Maas, the film showcases the music of many Melbourne talents, including Steven Cummings, Red Symons, Kenny Lopez and Paul Grabowsky.

A KINK IN THE PICASSO is a comedy of errors loosely inspired by the 1986 theft of Picasso’s "Weeping Woman" from the Victorian National Gallery.

A cultural terrorist spoof, it begins with news of a Picasso painting, valued at $10 million, getting ready to go on display at the State Gallery. The situation is exacerbated by Gallery director Bella McLeod (Jane Clifton) and cohort adviser Lionel Meadows (Jon Finlayson), who have a reputation for rejecting many Australian works. An outraged artist, Alex Nichols (Jane Menz), and her boyfriend, Joe Connors (Peter O’Brien), steal the Picasso in the hope of embarrassing Bella and Lionel. But their victory is short lived ...

A Kink in the Picasso was shot in inner Melbourne and features a number of bohemian cafes and galleries. Production design was kept to simple, bold primary colours to create an almost hyper-real setting. Other locations include Flemington racecourse, Melbourne University and the Victorian Artists’ Society. Although production ran smoothly, there were initial problems scouting for a suitable gallery location. Says executive producer Rosa Colosimo:

“We wanted to shoot in the National Gallery and they wrote back saying that they felt it would be absolutely irresponsible for them or any other galleries to be involved in a project that had to do with the theft of paintings from the gallery!”

Financial backing for Marc Gracie’s first 35mm feature was arranged through Duesbury’s and a Melbourne-based accounting firm.


CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: LIONEL MEADOWS (JON FINLAYSON), BELLA (JANE CLIFTON) AND THE PICASSO. NICK (ANDREW DADD) AND JOE (PETER O'BRIEN). JOE, LIONEL AND BELLA.
IN TOO DEEP has already been likened to Body Heat and 9 1/2 Weeks with its film noir-ish sensual imagery. Shot around Melbourne on a tight budget, the story evolves around Wendy (Santha Press), a singer, drifter and low-life love junkie who is admired by her younger sister, JoJo (Rebekah Elmaloglou), a 15-year-old rebel wanting to break free. Wendy starts an affair with Mack (Hugo Race), a cruel, manipulative petty criminal who is being watched closely by policemen Miles (John Flaus) and Dinny (Dominic Sweeney). The story is told from JoJo's perspective, the little sister watching, at first with admiration, then horror as things start to turn nasty. Caught up in the world of watching and being watched, of being used, of cruelty and desire, JoJo suffers the consequences of everyone else's actions.

The film was entirely shot on location, using two directors, two producers and two directors of photography, and features Melbourne's best jazz talents. Despite a limited budget, meticulous attention was devoted to the production design. As co-director John Tatoulis says:

"It could have been shot in black and white, but we decided against that. We gave it a hard, golden look, with lots of shadows, unusual angles, and severe lighting. We let the action happen within the frame, rather than relying on heavy cutting. Light and camera angles became part of our set dressing.

"We wanted to have a distinctive look: it had to look hot. We shot it over quite an extended period and went into winter. We chose a new Kodak stock (5297) that was a fast daylight stock and it gave the scenes a warm, golden-orange look."


Cast: Hugo Race (Mack), Santha Press (Wendy), Rebekah Elmaloglou (JoJo), John Flaus (Miles), Dominic Sweeney (Dinny), Craig Alexander (Ivan), Richard Aspel (Henry), Helen Rollinson (Margaret), Gerda Nicolson (Mrs Lyall), Robert Essex (Mr Lyall), Ian Rae (Pike), James Cox (Loch), Jack Bulmer (Bruno), Laurie Dobson (Ron), Duke Bannister (Jim Tibor), Tassos Ioannides (Tom Meira).
VICTORIAN FILM LABORATORIES presents a totally INDEPENDENT production
**BLOOD OATH**

Shortly after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, Japanese troops captured the Australian garrison on Ambon Island, 650 km north-west of Darwin. Of the 600 Australian prisoners of war held there, only 120 survived.

Stephen Wallace's *Blood Oath* is the story of the war-crimes trial held on the island after the war. It was written by Denis Whitburn and Brian Williams, Williams' father having been the prosecuting army lawyer at the actual trial. In the film, Bryan Brown plays lawyer Captain Cooper, "a quintessential 'Aussie': decent, irreverent, tough, sensitive, butch and clever".

**THE CROSSING**

George Ogilvie's *The Crossing* is the story of how three young people cope with the effects of an unstoppable yearning, a love that divides as well as unites. It is set in the mid 1960s, in a small New South Wales country town, and ends in a heart-stopping car chase near a railway crossing.


[See *Cinema Papers* No. 78, pps 6–14 for a full production report]

**HEAVEN TONIGHT**


**WHAT THE MOON SAW**

Director: Pino Amenta. Producer: Frank Howson. Executive producer: Peter Boyle. Line producer: Barbi Taylor. Screenplay: Frank Howson. Sound recordist: John Rowley. Editor: Philip Reid. Production designer: Jon Dowding. Costume designer: Aphrodite Kondos. Production company: Boulevard Films. Cast: John Savage (Michael Bergman), Kerry Armstrong (Michelle Harris), Jeffrey Thomas (Larry Harris), Rebecca Rigg (Debbie McCormick), Rhys McConnochie (Stockton), Ian Scott (Holmes), Stephen Whittaker (Roberts), Guy Pearce (Sharp), Nicholas Bell (Piggott), Stacey Valkenburg (Young Michelle).

[For information on *Heaven Tonight*, *Hunting and What the Moon Saw*, see the article on Boulevard Films in *Cinema Papers* No. 76, pps 42–46]

**STRANGERS**

The story of an ambitious young stockbroker who, after meeting an attractive stranger on a plane, finds herself ensnared in an ever-spiralling nightmare web of complication and intrigue which eventually leads to ruin and death.

Director: Craig Laffit. Producers: Craig Laffit, Wayne Groom. Associate producer: Ron Stigwood. Screenplay: John Emery. Photography: Steve Arnold. Sound recordist: Mike Piper. Editor: Denise Haratzis. Production designer: Derek Mills. Production company: Genesis Films. Cast: James Healey (Gary), Anne Looby (Anna), Melissa Docker (Rebecca), Tim Robertson (King), Jim Holt (Brahm), Geoff Morrell (Frank), Mary Regan (Joanne), Paul Mason (Sergeant), John Clayton (Agent).

**STRUCK BY LIGHTNING**

Based on a musical written by Frank Howson, The story of an ambitious young stockbroker who, after meeting an attractive stranger on a plane, finds herself ensnared in an ever-spiralling nightmare web of complication and intrigue which eventually leads to ruin and death.

Director: Jerzy Domaradzki. Producers: Terry Charatsis, Trevor Farrant. Screenplay: Trevor Farrant. Photography: Yuri Sokol. Cast: Gary McDonald (Rennie), Brian Friends (Cannizzaro), Private Talbot (Jason Donovan), and Captain Cooper (Bryan Brown), Stephen Wallace's *Blood Oath*. Below: Sam (Robert Mammon) and Meg (Danielle Spencer), George Ogilvie's *The Crossing*. Right: Kate (Catherine McClements) and Richard Mur (Colin Friels), Arch Nicholson's *Weekend with Kate.*
A terrific thriller from Karl Zwicky, director of Contagion and much television, including the recent children's mini-series, Elly and Jools. Vicious was re-cut before its Australian video release, but attempts are being made to show the film in its original form.


HARBOUR BEAT
Glasgow cop Neal McBride is a cynical loner who likes to go undercover. The rest of the police wish he'd stay there. McBride has a chip on his shoulder and can't keep his mouth shut. And after busting a crooked city councillor, he is re-assigned to Australia. There he is partnered with an easy-going Aussie, Lance (Lancelot) Cooper. Rejecting the dull routine work on offer, they plunge into an undercover drug operation.

Harbour Beat is the first feature as director for long-time producer David Elfick. His previous credits include Starstruck, Emoh Rua, Around the World in 80 Ways and the mini-series Fields of Fire (and its two sequels).

Director: David Elfick. Producers: David Elfick, Irene Dobson. Associate producer: Nina Stevenson. Screenplay: Morris Geltzman. Based on an original idea by David Elfick. Photography: Ellery Ryan. Sound recordist: Paul Brin-cat. Editor: Stuart Armstrong. Production designer: Michael Bridges. Costume designer: Bruce Finlayson. Production company: Palm Beach Pictures. Cast: John Hannah (Neal), Steven Vidler (Lancelot), Gary Day (Walker), Emily Simpson (Mason), Bill Young (Ginno), Tony Poli (De Santos), Angie Milliken (Simone), Christopher Cummins (Bazza), Rhonda Findleton (Carol), Angelina Henricks (Trudy), Peta Toppano (Mrs De Santoso).


WEEKEND WITH KATE
Richard Muir is juggling a high-powered career as a public relations executive for Origin records and a fiery affair with his dominating colleague Carla. Meanwhile, his beautiful wife, Kate, is feeling neglected ...

Weekend With Kate is the final film of the late Arch Nicholson, whose previous features were Fortress, Buddies and Dark Age.


Frenchman Pierre Rissient is an activist for films and filmmakers he believes in. He has discovered and promoted many new directors, overseen the critical revival of others whose careers have faulted, and argued eloquently for those unjustly ignored.

Some of these filmmakers are Australian. Since 1985, at the wise request of the Australian Film Commission, Rissient has regularly come to Australia to seek out the innovative and idiosyncratic. He has then helped guide those films through the seemingly labyrinthine selection procedures of Cannes and other festivals. An occasionally practising filmmaker himself, Rissient does not do this championing as a living, but because of a deep love for and commitment to the cinema. Like many others, he is gravely concerned about the declining standards of world cinema and is doing his utmost to seek out and promote new talent.

Rissient began his film career as a distributor and publicist. He was notable for bringing to world attention several American directors, including Raoul Walsh. In fact, French director Jean-Pierre Melville held Rissient wholly responsible for Walsh’s present standing. But Rissient is also a writer-director, having made the features *One Night Stand* and *Cinq et Peau*, neither of which have been seen widely in Australia. It is yet another of those film ironies that while Rissient works so generously to aid the exposure of Australian films overseas, Australia has not returned the favour.

Rissient was here recently looking at films for ones he could see making an impact at Cannes this year. In the following interview, conducted in English by Scott Murray, Rissient speaks of the role and importance of the Cannes Festival and, then, his activist role with the Australian cinema.

**CANNES FILM FESTIVAL**

How important is Cannes as a festival?

Cannes is the most important festival in the world, more important than all the other festivals put together. It has contributed to the recognition of directors, some new and others making a comeback, and it shows most of the interesting films – at least 60 per cent of them. As well, these films are exposed immediately to the attention of the whole world.

Of course, it does happen that some pictures get massacred at Cannes, sometimes for the right reasons – they are not good films – and sometimes for wrong ones. That is what we would call in French *un accident par cours*.

In what way is it important? Those who make American genre pictures in Australia tend to argue that Cannes is little more than a critical wank.
First, such people would say the same thing about an opening in Canada or Paris, or even in New York. To a large extent it is self-defence, because most of the time these people are envious of this kind of international recognition.

Second, many pictures got well sold out of Cannes. If you take a picture which personally I don't like, Olmi's *The Tree of Wooden Clogs*, it would never have been an international success without Cannes. And last year there was *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*, which would certainly not have done that well commercially without a place and a prize in Cannes.

So far, I have been speaking of films in the official Competition, but there are also many examples in the other sections. So, while it is not automatic that if a picture goes to Cannes it will be a commercial success, it will have a much better chance of being sold and well exposed. If a picture is well received at Cannes, distributors and exhibitors around the world are encouraged to give it more attention. It will have a better career.

You mentioned the other sections at Cannes. What are their various functions and importance?

When Cannes was created - and I was too young a boy to really know about it - there was only the Competition. But it was not the kind of Competition we have today. The films were selected by the participating countries, not by the Festival. Germany would select a picture to send, so would Russia, England, Canada and so on. As things progressed, Cannes discussed with the countries what pictures should get in. But basically it was the countries that sent the films, and they could have been selected for political, social or conventional taste reasons.

By the late 1960s or early '70s, Cannes reversed the process and selected pictures by itself. Of course, sometimes they couldn't get a picture from particular countries because of censorship, but all the pictures that were shown were selected by Cannes. Occasionally there was some political pressure, especially from the ex-French territories. The last picture shown at Cannes against its wishes was an Algerian film about four or five years ago. Again, one or two years later, the Ministère de la Coopération tried to impose Sembene Ousmane's last film, which was really disappointing. However, for the past several years, Cannes has successfully resisted such pressures.

Apart from the different methods of selection for the Competition, there have been several innovations. First, in the late 1950s or extremely early '60s, the critics started the La Semaine de la Critique (Critics' Week), which is open to the two first pictures of a director. Because it thought only in terms of features, some people who have done ten or twelve television films have still got into the Critics' Week. I think they should renew their way of considering that. Anyway, the Critics' Week has been basically following the same process since its creation.

In 1969, one year after May 1968, there was the creation of La Quinzaine des Réalisateurs (Directors' Fortnight), which was considered as a kind of fringe festival in Cannes. The first Quinzaine was located on the Rue d'Antibes and went through several locations before maturing at the Star theatres. Then, when the official sections moved from the old Palais to the new Palais, the Quinzaine went into the old Palais. However, the old Palais was destroyed last year and the Quinzaine had to move again. So they decided to move to the new Palais, where they are splitting time in the same theatre as the Un Certain Regard, which I'll talk about in a moment. This I think was a mistake. The Quinzaine's identity has been lost and most film critics today wouldn't be able to remember what pictures were shown last year at the Un Certain Regard and what were at the Quinzaine.

Next year, or the year after, the Quinzaine will have a new locale. In the meantime, it can concentrate on finding good films, because the one problem that is starting to exist everywhere is the lack of good films. Finding the good ones is not always easy.

Then, in the mid to late 1970s, the Festival itself opened a new section, not competitive, called Les Yeux Fertiles (Fertile Eyes). Its aim was to show pictures which were different and which, for right or wrong reasons, were not considered ripe for going into Competition. Les Yeux Fertiles then became quite soon after Un Certain Regard.
Basically, the differences between Un Certain Regard, the Quinzaine and the Critics’ Week are no longer that clear. A picture could be in one section, it could be in another. What is important is the quality of a film and the way the picture is promoted.

One other important change in the past two or three years, especially last year and I hope this year, is that the Competition has become more adventurous and daring in the choice of films. It is a less official, in the bad sense of that word, and a more adventurous selection. That in itself has made the selection process for the Directors’ Fortnight, Un Certain Regard and the Critics’ Week more difficult. They are now looking in certain ways more academic and old-fashioned than the Competition.

Are films always better off being in the Competition, or are there some films which are better served in one of the other sections?

That is a tricky question. Of course, if a film goes into Competition it gets much more exposure and interest. However, in the past it could be dangerous for a fragile film to go into Competition. So, in the past two or three years, we have tried to be aware of that and devise a different way to present films.

Most films in Competition are shown three times a day. But some films are now shown two times a day or even only once, which is an indication to people that a picture is a bit different, a bit more difficult. Those people who go for more easy-going story-telling films are now warned by the number of screenings which pictures are not as easy as the others. This will also mean there is a better concentration at the screening of people equipped to follow these films. So, the danger is less than it would have been a few years back.

Of course, there is still danger for any picture in Competition, but that has always been the case. When Antonioni’s L’Avventura was shown, there was a lot of disagreement about it. But despite the fact some 80 per cent didn’t like it, the film won the Critics’ Prize and it opened very well in Paris.

Last year, it was reported in Australia that Jane Campion’s Sweetie was not well received at Cannes, which was a completely wrong impression. I know for a fact that Sweetie was extremely well received at Cannes. All the critics, film festival directors, exhibitors and distributors who could like and defend that film liked it very much. That was the seed from which the picture has since become a success around the world.

You must also remember that the people who did not like it at Cannes would not like it wherever they saw it. And the fact that they reacted against the film is actually a positive thing. It was like when Victor Hugo in 1830 established romanticism. Many people booed and whistled, but romanticism was established after that. So the fact that some people did not like Sweetie helped Jane Campion become established: she has become a controversial figure.

Did you at any time consider offering Sweetie to the Critics’ Week or Un Certain Regard instead of Competition?

That was never my thinking, but I heard that some others thought that. No, I clearly said it should go to Competition. First, it gives greater status to the film. Second, I knew that if there were adverse reaction, it would be from a specific audience. We could then say that this specific audience did not like the film, which would be a positive thing for the film. Third, I suspected that many people would like the film and that the picture would receive much more coverage in the different media. It is because of that coverage that the picture has developed since.

If Competition is more prestigious for a director, could it be seen as a backward step if a later film goes into a section other than Competition?

I believe that there is no rule on that. Of course, a director who has been in Competition may feel that his vanity is bruised if a later film goes to Directors’ Fortnight or Un Certain Regard. But the selecting committee for Competition can be wrong from time to time, and if the picture goes to the Directors’ Fortnight then people might say, “Oh my God, it was wrong that this picture was not taken for Competition.” So the director can get a kind of sweet revenge.

Then again, maybe the selection committee was not wrong, and maybe sometimes my partners there - if you want to call them that - didn’t take a picture, not because it isn’t as good as other films in Competition, but maybe because they felt the audience was not ready for it. If Sweetie had not been preceded at Cannes by Jane’s shorts, I probably would have not thought it should have been in Competition. But there was an expectation of Jane’s next film because those shorts had been discovered at Cannes and, after that, travelled around the world. If tomorrow I saw a film that was just as good as Sweetie, but by someone about whom nothing was known, I might hesitate about putting it in Competition.

Does Cannes like to nurture a filmmaker from the Critics’ Week or Un Certain Regard up to Competition?

Obviously there is a bit of that. I don’t think it is an altogether conscious attitude and I don’t think it should be considered as patronistic, although it may be. If you think of literature, people are discovered by the publishing house, which usually doesn’t submit the first book for literary prizes, but tries to get the author known first. You find the same thing with art galleries and the painters they discover.

Naturally, if you have had a film in either Critics’ Week or Un Certain Regard, it is easier to come back and try for Competition because you are already established. There is an expectation about you and your work which makes people interested. But there are some people who have come once and never come again.

It used to be the case that many of the best critics at Cannes didn’t go to Competition films because they were thought too mainstream and boring. The real discoveries were in the other sections or even in the Marché (Market).

I don’t really agree with you. I don’t think that in years past the best critics from around the world went more to the Directors’ Fortnight or Critics’ Week. They may have pointed out that there were some interesting things outside the Competition, but that’s all. Today, you will probably find even more excitement about the Competition films than there was fifteen years ago.
FIRST ASSOCIATIONS

How did your association with Cannes begin and what forms has it taken?

After my military service, I was looking to make money. Having worked as a film critic and also as a film organizer of the Preview Club, I had become somewhat influential. Some people then told me to use my capacity for influencing people by becoming an activist for the pictures I liked. So, I started doing that in Paris.

I was also a small distributor and pioneered the reissue of unknown classics. At that time, the only classic pictures which were issued in France were *Citizen Kane*, *King Kong*, and *Grapes of Wrath*. I re-issued pictures which at that time were completely unknown or forgotten, taking care of the promotion myself. I was not making any money on that; I was doing it for love of cinema.

Anyway, I think I can say I was very successful and some people say that I established a new style of public relations. That meant that in the following years I was asked to take care of pictures during the Cannes Film Festival, as a press agent or whatever you like to call it. I only took pictures which I liked and for which I was willing to fight. I’m a good fighter for what I like. I cannot hide my emotions if I am disappointed by a film.

Soon, the circle of interest which I had in Paris also spread over Cannes and by the late 1960s most of the pictures which were praised at Cannes were pictures I was taking care of. One year, the three first prizes went to pictures I was representing. Another year, out of the eleven prizes given in all categories, eight went to my films; three years in a row the pictures which got to Golden Palm were my pictures - not my pictures, but pictures I was looking after.

Naturally, I became more and more in demand. There was even a funny story which I think I can repeat now. I don’t remember which picture I was representing, except it was a Universal film, maybe *Taking Off*. Anyway, Universal was talking to Robert Favre le Bret, who was the délégué general, and they mentioned my name. Apparently Favre said exasperatedly, “I know Pierre is important in Cannes, but he is not the one to run Cannes!”

I must say I had no problem with Favre le Bret. But he was a kind of distant old star, as if living in another time. He had a vision of what Cannes could be, but not of the films which could develop the festival.

Then, in 1971, Favre le Bret became président and Maurice Bessy became the délégué general. Maurice was a much more subtle diplomat, more aware of what was going on. One of the first things he did was to come to see me. “Pierre”, he said, “your flare has been very sharp. I would like to be in constant touch with you.” In 1972, for example, I geared quite a lot of films towards Cannes. For example, there was *Panic in Needle Park*, which is a very small film, about an unpopular subject and with a director who was completely unknown. Schatzberg’s earlier films had been a total flop in America and Al Pacino was virtually unknown at that time. But I got it into Competition.

Anyway, from 1972, I was more in a position to suggest. I knew that if I defended a film there was a kind of guarantee that the picture would receive some attention. I think people would have said that; I don’t want to say it pretentiously.

Bessy ran Cannes up until 1978 when Gilles Jacob became délégué general. I had known Gilles as a film critic since 1961. That relationship with Gilles, and with Cannes, has kept developing, I believe for the best on both sides.

So now, if you ask me what is my relationship, I would say it is not a formal one. But for the past two years, and even more this year, Gilles has asked me to be a kind of emissary. It could be for a picture which would be difficult to get from a certain country, or some director who is not easy to deal with. So probably my role has increased in the past two or three years.

But not only in Paris and in Cannes, but in many countries, people realize that since I was a very young man I have been in advance of the public taste. I was the one to initiate recognition of many filmmakers who are highly regarded today. And when I was not the one to initiate things, I was the one who forcefully fought for their films.

In the past few years, I have not been less right than I was 20 years ago. So, if I call Peter Scarlet in San Francisco or Richard Pena in New York, if I call Larry Kardish of the New Directors or Sheila Whitaker in London, they will pay attention to what I say. They will, of course, want to see the film, but the smallest film, the most unknown film from the most unknown territory, they will see.

THE AUSTRALIAN CONNECTION

When did the films that you are associated with begin including Australian ones?

The first Australian picture which I got into Cannes was *Sunday too far Away*. I had known David Roe at Cannes and he was able in his role at the Australian Film Institute to suggest some Australian films for festivals.

I was in Hong Kong one day when I received a phone call from David asking if he could send me *Sunday too far Away* to look at it regarding Cannes. I saw and really liked the film, and I told David I thought it should be at Cannes. But I didn’t see it in Competition, not because of quality but because of the nature of the film and the nature of the Competition at the time, I may not say that today.

At that time, there was no Un Certain Regard and the Critics’ Week was into over-structuralist films which were either really left wing or looking to be left wing. Of course, *Sunday too far Away* is not a rightest film, but it is not an overly leftist film, and certainly wasn’t a structuralist film. So I didn’t feel the Critics’ Week was the right place for it. In fact, I felt that the best chance would be Directors’ Fortnight, so I told Pierre-Henri Deleau [Quinzaine director] about it. He liked it, and the film got into Directors’ Fortnight.

The year after, Fred Schepisi’s *The Devil’s Playground* also got into the Directors’ Fortnight, and I think two or three years later Fred had *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* in Competition. It was not exactly, as some people say, the first Australian picture in Competition - rather, it was the first identified Australian picture in Competition.
I was then involved in the selection of *My Brilliant Career* for Competition, but I was not involved with *Breaker Morant*, not that I was against it, it was just that the circumstances didn’t happen that way.

Then, in 1984, at the Montreal Festival, where I was invited by Warner Bros. to accompany Clint Eastwood, who is a good friend of mine, I saw David Stratton. David was at that time a commissioner of the AFC, and he asked me if I would be interested in being invited by the AFC to come to see Australian films in order to recommend them for Cannes and, eventually, other festivals. I came for the first time in 1985 invited by the AFC and since then every year.

**You had been to Australia before that.**

Yes, but not as an invitee of the AFC to look at films.

**When you come here, do you look only at films screened by the AFC or will you consider anything producers may wish to show you?**

Of course. Usually, producers inform the AFC if they have a picture ready and want to submit it to Cannes.

Once I get to Sydney, I am told which pictures have been scheduled, though I also try to see other films which could be available, even if they’re on 16 mm or shorter than feature length. I try out of principle to see everything around.

Once I have seen a film, I give the producer my best judgement about whether I think it should go to Cannes. I do not have an official point of view. I am very cautious of any such established value system, even I would say the values I have established for myself in previous years. People can criticize my choices, but anyone can see that the pictures I have supported from Australia were not the obvious choices. I was not taking what was the official taste choice.

Fortunately, most of the time the pictures have been well received at Cannes. So if some people are disappointed that I didn’t take their film, which is never a personal attitude, I think they will have difficulty pretending that I am taking pictures which don’t achieve a certain reputation out of Cannes.

**It is not an exclusive thing, either. If you don’t think the film can be usefully presented to Cannes, it doesn’t mean the AFC won’t help in other ways.**

Exactly. Anyway, I don’t dis-recommend films. If I see a film and like it, I recommend it. And if I like it very much, I will fight for it to be somewhere. But I don’t dis-recommend films.

Now, it is true that if I don’t recommend a film it kind of looks as if I did dis-recommend it, but it’s not really that way. And some people, when I said I didn’t care for their film, have sent it to Cannes anyway. As far as I can remember, not one has been accepted by Cannes. Some people will say I have spoken to the selection committee beforehand and influenced them. That is not the case. If I see a film which I don’t like, I don’t call Gilles Jacob or the committee and say that I didn’t like it. I just don’t say anything.

**Have there been disappointments in that you have fought for films that didn’t get into Cannes?**

It has happened, but the percentage worldwide is not big - 10-15 per cent at most. But I don’t remember an Australian film that failed. All those which I have recommended have been at Cannes. I cannot say it will be the same in the future, but ...

**Of the films that you are an activist for around the world, what percentage is Australian?**

It depends from year to year on what is coming from Australia and from other countries. But since 1985 there have been two years during which there were more Australian films than other years. One year was 1986 when your film, *Devil in the Flesh*, was there with Jane, Bill Bennett and others.

**Is there a danger in becoming too associated with an advocacy of the Australian cinema and thus losing an independent standing?**

Maybe some people in Australia think that, but in Paris and London and New York that is not the case. For a long time I was considered as an advocate of American cinema and American genre. That was not correct, though I have defended American films, it is true. Not only the old pioneers, like Raoul Walsh, but also the new American directors. I brought practically all of them to recognition: Schatzberg, Altman, Coppola, Boorman, Scorsese. But I have also brought a lot of people to Cannes from England, as well as Fassbinder, Milos Forman, Makevejev, King Hu, Lino Brocka and many people from Asia. It is true I know less of eastern European cinema than I know the Asian cinema, but, if people think of me, they don’t think of Australia first.

**What have been some of your Australian successes at Cannes?**

The most obvious case is Jane Campion. When her short films were at Cannes in 1986, that was the first time something like that had happened. The success she had that year at Cannes led, I guess, to her
getting some money to make a picture as difficult as Sweetie. Then Sweetie came to Cannes and was extremely well received. It got very good distributors around the world, and got into the good theatres.

To a certain extent what is a pity is the fact that some of your directors have not followed up on their first successes at Cannes, either because they may not have done the right pictures afterwards, or maybe because they were not given an opportunity to make a picture. Why Ken Hannam has not followed the success of Sunday Too Far Away only people who know Ken Hannam’s psyche can say. Fred Schepisi is a success out of Cannes, and I would say also Gill Armstrong got a lot of advantage out of Cannes, as did Bruce Beresford.

One reason for a lack of follow-up is the schism between what you and others are doing to help Australian cinema overseas and the funding psychologies of the bureaucracies back here. In 1986, as you know, the main Australian critical successes at Cannes were Campion, Bennett and myself. Yet all three were rejected by the AFC for script development when they returned to Australia. Obviously I have a vested interest in raising such a question, but do you see this situation as a problem and one that needs to be addressed?

First, let me say I don’t do anything to help a film or a filmmaker. It would be condescending to put it that way. But if by bringing a film to Cannes I can contribute to its success, that makes me happy.

Equally, if I like a filmmaker, I like to see him develop. And it’s true that I have sometimes been disappointed to see that some of those filmmakers who were appreciated in Cannes are not being given a chance to develop properly back in Australia. So, I quite often say to the people I meet here that we should think more about protecting and developing the talent for the future. It is the best and only way to go. I wish it had been done more in the past, and I certainly hope it will be done more in the future. But I am not an Australian citizen, so what can I do?

Does the situation reflect within some of the funding structures a lack of understanding of the importance of events like Cannes?

Probably. It also probably reflects hypocrisy. Not only in administration, but everywhere else, people manoeuvre opinion. It is definitely the same in Los Angeles, which is an easier situation to talk about. For example, when Jerry Schatzberg’s first three films – Puzzle of a Downfall Child, Panic in Middle Park and Scarecrow – were tremendously well appreciated in Europe, and especially in France where Scarecrow won the Palme d’Or, there were a lot of film people in Los Angeles who were very envious of that success. So there developed a kind of a plot – not a cautiously established plot, but a kind of conspiracy – to diminish what happens in Cannes and in France. And in 1973 a certain Schatzberg project did not go ahead because a powerful director at the studio was hoping to go to Cannes next year.

The same kind of thing I expect exists here. I’m sure some people get the jobs because they court the right people. It is a worldwide situation.

How do you perceive the standing of the Australian cinema at this point?

First, I believe very few people worldwide think of the Australian cinema as such, just as very few people worldwide think of the Hong Kong or Brazilian cinemas. Most people think of what films went to Cannes or the other festivals, which ones opened in Paris or New York. I don’t think many people try for a grasp of what is happening in any particular country. Maybe they do a little about Hollywood, because it is easier to speak about the Hollywood film industry, and maybe also a little about France because there was the New Wave. In France there is a kind of cult, which is exaggerated and not well founded, about a group of people working together.

Occasionally people around the world think of a particular director, like George Miller. But I’m sure that most people who see Mad Max in Spain, in Turkey or elsewhere don’t know it is an Australian film. Most people think it is an American film set in Arizona, or somewhere like that. Even Crocodile Dundee, which is more Australian than Mad Max, was sold more on the jungle and the crocodile than being Australian. You could probably adjust the myth of Paul Hogan to other planes.

Personally, I think cinema worldwide is bad right now. The level of cinema is disintegrating, just as taste is disintegrating in literature and in life values. I don’t think Australia is any different. But, from time to time, some interesting films do appear, and sometimes from Australia. Some year there are more from Australia than maybe some other countries, another year it will be different. I am here in Melbourne today, Sydney tomorrow. But I wouldn’t have reacted differently last week in Hong Kong, or next week in Los Angeles and New York. I react from my own instinct and experience and impulse. Of course, I am aware that a Chinese film has to reflect Chinese culture, but really it is not like a screen between me and the film.

Since 1975, there have been very few innovative films, worldwide. So Australia is not the only country where innovative cinema has not existed. Again, after 1975, there are very few idiosyncratic films. If you think of the American cinema, it is possible the last idiosyncratic film from a new filmmaker was Mean Streets. A lot of filmmakers have come after, and some were maybe good, but none were really idiosyncratic... No, maybe that’s not true this year. Do the Right Thing is an idiosyncratic film.

Basically, I would say the same thing about France. And, if we speak of Australia, we come to Jane Campion, who is certainly idiosyncratic.

Based on all the years since 1975, the percentage of idiosyncratic, well-crafted films made in Australia is probably the same as elsewhere in the world. No better, maybe not worse.
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Going Forward or Going Backward?

Conversations with Rod Hailey on cinema technology, the constraints of business on cinema image quality, and about having your eyeballs sucked out.

Rod Hailey is the regional engineer for Greater Union Village Technology, and along with his counterpart from Greater Union, Bob Lucas, is responsible for the evaluation and installation of the theatre projection and sound equipment for their fifty plus theatres across Victoria. Having come from Village, Hailey’s account naturally reflects his experiences there.

Four-Walled Monsters

Cinemagoing habits have changed. Unless you confine yourself to the AFI theatres, the Valhallas and their like, you will have experienced the ‘pleasures’ of a multiplex.

Rod Hailey tells a story of an aggravated cinema patron who rang up to complain that he had been going to their local cinema and was upset by the limited choice of only two theatres. He had been to a multiplex and liked to be able to stand there, stunned by the range of films. He angrily wanted to know when this choice would be offered him at his local shopping centre.

That’s the impact of the multiplex. In a consumer society, two choices are simply not enough. People want cinemas near where we live, and part of their suburban shopping centre, so that they can drift from shopping to the movies and park just five minutes away.

Cinemas are now being built at a rate that reflects the rise in attendances worldwide. But the construction and installation of equipment are creating problems for cinema engineers. First, is it correct to assume that the new cinemas will be fitted with the best and latest projection and sound equipment? Second, is THX, Lucasfilm’s initiative to improve the presentation of all features, considered to be the standard to which they should all conform? The answers, as Hailey explains, are “Yes” and “Maybe”.

We have really just got the city complex [Village, Melbourne] up and running. We consider it to be state of the art, especially in audio, where we have followed Lucasfilm’s THX standards. From there we spread into the multiplex operations. The first was Knox, where four of the ten theatres are set for THX sound. The reason that the other theatres don’t have THX is primarily cost-related. In a multiplex, the expense of the building is a very important factor.

After Knox, THX was considered too expensive for the multiplexes, a decision Hailey obviously doesn’t share, believing that there should be at least two theatres in each complex set up for THX (particularly for the larger auditoriums).

THX, The Theatre

After Star Wars went into release in the U.S., producer-director George Lucas was extremely disappointed by the poor quality of the projected image and sound in many of the theatres he visited. With the movie’s success and the ensuing financial clout, he resolved to address the problem. His engineering department then developed what was called TAP, the Theatre Alignment Program, whereby contracted technicians visited all the theatres intending to run a Lucas or Spielberg movie and reported back on the problems. They did, in fact, deny a 70mm release to those theatres that were thought to be of a poor standard. Hailey:

The stories that the technicians told were horrific. They found mirrors that were years old, xenons way out of alignment, old valve systems, low-powered amps, magnetic heads that hadn’t been cleaned in years ... standards that were below what you found in a drive-in!

Lucas was concerned that the hundreds of hours and millions of dollars spent on making films were being wasted, and that the industry should get off its tail and do something about it.

As always, the problems come back to money and to the foresight of theatre management. Hailey:

It’s all right to have the architect design a cinema to how the theatre operator wants it to look like – and it’s his money after all – but from the technical side you can be left with a four-walled shell that is a monster to drag into alignment visually and aurally.

With the Village complex in the city, the building was underway when Tom Holman from Lucasfilm came out and conducted a seminar at the Russell Cinema. When I heard the potential of what they were offering, I knew that this is what the cinemas of today should be giving the public. We approached Tom Holman for information and the process was then bounced forward by our managing director, Graham Burke, who went to the States and visited the Skywalker Ranch at San Francisco. He was impressed by the system and his message came back to look at it. I was fortunate in having done some groundwork.

It was decided to make Cinema One in the city a THX house. I felt that if it worked there, it would be just as good in all three theatres. So we set them all up for the possibility of THX sound, and they were finished, as far as their sound systems, noise levels and acoustics, to that standard.

This move must have been personally satisfying to Hailey and his team as it was only two months later, after everyone had seen the success of Cinema One, that they were told to set up the others as THX.

THX (named after Lucas’ first sci-fi feature, THX-1138) is a specification for the whole environment of the cinema. It is a
big theatre environment. always, as Hailey explains:

He also uses Village theatres so that he try out the mixed sound in a back-up, the logos and the advertising material. Every six months there is a check on the cinema to see that it is maintaining the standard, and that information goes back to Lucasfilm. If it passes their checks, you are endorsed for a further period.

Hailey explains what the testing process involves:

We bought from Lucasfilm a very expensive [more than $10,500] analyzer called an IVIEPG-40, to which they have added a minicomputer. This gives you their testing program for THX. You can do any kind of theatre with this unit, but it is optimized for THX. You then dump all the information on to a disc that is sent back to Lucasfilm, which uses its analyzer to detect problem areas and tell us to address them.

I have visited Skywalker Ranch and, compared to their system, I’d say we were within 95 per cent of the original. We’re very close, and we’ve done it by spending a lot of money.

I believe that THX is a definite boon for Village. There is a lot of one-upmanship involved and there are people who think it’s all a lot of baloney. The fact that we were the first may be part of the reaction.

Great Expectations

Hailey becomes more passionate when talking about the right of filmmakers to see their work presented properly. His voice rises as he admits that maintaining the standard is not easy:

It is tough! But when we talk to the guys in the industry, Dick Leathers at Atlab, Roger Savage at Soundfirm and Les Mackenzie at Colorfilm, THX gives them only what they have a right to expect. Why should they spend countless hours mixing, dubbing and re-recording to get a result that falls apart in the theatre?

Roger Savage’s work is something Hailey feels particularly proud to be involved with. Savage has a THX licence for his mixing suite and he also uses Village theatres so that he try out the mixed sound in a big theatre environment.

But does a normal Dolby mix sound better in THX theatre? Not always, as Hailey explains:

THX is a pretty stringent requirement for recording and reproduction. So if you do a mix and it doesn’t sound right on a wide-range sound system such as THX, it might play well on one of the older cinema systems that are using old speakers and amps. THX can pick up inherent fault in dubbing and mixing, and there have been directors and sound recordists who have turned their noses up at it because, and I hate to say it, their recording wasn’t right. It may have been okay for a normal cinema, but for our wide range ones...

In the city, we have a situation where we have purchased another set of Dolby equalizer cards so that we can remove the house cards, put them aside and give them the three cards and say, ‘Play with it and line it up for yourself and make it sound like you want it to.’ At the end of that time, we put our EQ cards back to the standard that Dolby and Lucasfilm say is correct.

There is no wide deviation between Dolby and THX. Dolby has specific requirements which we follow rigorously. THX is an extension of that which allows the film to be played even better. Using modern wide-range speaker systems, it allows a film to be played louder, with flatter frequency response, cleaner sound and with better dispersion as far as high frequencies go.

DolbySR

There was a well-attended Australian Audio Engineering Society seminar last year where they brought out Tom Holman from Lucasfilm and Joan Allen from Dolby Laboratories. The presentation was primarily a paper on the history of stereo sound on film, starting from when Blumline was working on stereo soundtracks, through to CinemaScope with four-track magnetic sound, then to 70mm Dolby A stereo and finally to Dolby Lab’s latest release, Dolby SR. The results surprised many people. Hailey:

The examples of SR were so stunning that people came up and said, ‘It can’t be optical. You must be playing off digital!’ We said, ‘No, take a look in the box and you will see a piece of 35 mm film with an optical soundtrack running through the projector.’ It was that good, and the feedback we had was tremendous. It confirmed what the industry can do in sound reproduction, from the perspective of the audience’s response.

The standards are achievable here and we seem to get it right with films like Crocodile Dundee, The Fringe Dwellers and, more recent, The Delinquents. We do have the ability.

Actually, a lot of the problems we see are related to the printing part of the process. I despair sometimes with the American material. Some of their prints fall apart on the screen focus-wise.

In a Recycled Bin Near You

Through the Theatre Alignment Program, there is the opportunity for the projection staff to feed information about specific failings in the quality of prints back to Lucasfilm. That is then passed on to laboratories. But one of the biggest problems the theatres are seeing is not one that will be easily rectified. It relates directly to the trend to ‘splash release’.

Compared to only a few years ago, films are now on much shorter release, six-to-eight weeks is an average, with major features like Batman running twelve weeks. The film is then turned over to the video market and the prints are junked. With this ‘splash release’ format, the idea is to get the maximum number of prints out simultaneously. That requires the laboratories to run their printing
machines non-stop, putting a commercial pressure on quality control. Combine this with the trend to bigger and bigger screens in auditoriums of existing size, where you need short-focal length lenses, and the image magnification over a short viewing distance becomes huge. If there is any blemish related to the printing quality, you are going to see it magnified up to 20,000 times. Hailey thinks this puts the pressure back on the industry to improve positive print stocks, and thinks that the majority of the complaints are the result of not enough attention being paid to quality in the printing stage.

Taking Hailey’s example of Knox as an average multiplex, of the ten cinemas, four have large screens with projectors requiring medium to short focal-length lenses where focus is critical. The other six have small screens with longer focal-length lenses were the depth of focus is not a problem. In the city complex, one of the big theatres has very short focal-length lenses, blowing up to a very big screen, 15m by 7.5m high. As Hailey says, “The film only has to breathe in the gate and we have serious focus problems.”

Focus has become a constant problem. The reason is one that most cinemagoers would never be aware of: namely, of having the prints from the American “splash release” returned to the laboratories for repair and reconditioning, and then being sent out to other markets such as Australia. Unlike a new (and expensive) print, these reconditioned prints cause focus problems. Hailey is sure that, whatever they are doing to them in the reconditioning process is degrading the image and the stability of the print as it runs through the projector. These prints flop in and out of focus, and they flutter badly in the gate. We know it’s not the projectors and the result is an unacceptable image on the screen. The projectionist just can’t do anything.

What Hailey knows about the process involves ultrasonic cleaning, and then coating the film with a chemical that acts like the fluid in a liquid gate, filling the scratches in the emulsion anr. on the base. He admits that,

Some of them come up quite well, but the image on others falls apart and drive us nuts. The film bookers can’t understand what the problem is, but it must be something that happens to the base that makes it unstable. You can go into a theatre and it’s weaving between the platter and the projector, which is trying to plane this twisted and buckled film flat in the gate. When it does hold it flat, the image in the light path shifts, and you can look in the gate and see it breathing in and out.

The other problem with large screens is that with the high-light sources (4000w xenon lamps) there is a heat problem, especially on a platter that is running for two hours. Couple this with the reduced projection staff, where the guy is moving around and can’t check each one all the time, there is nothing you can do. The poor paying public gets their eyeballs sucked out.

In the past six months, we seem to have had some improvement but I don’t know yet if it’s because the distributors are bringing in better prints. But I know that the Americans recognize there is a big problem and maybe they are doing something about it. I’ve talked to people in production who have had feedback from release houses, and I’ve talked to projectionists in America who have had exactly the same experiences.

Another aspect may be that we are bringing negs in and printing them in Australia. These Australian prints are of a better quality than most American prints and certainly better than any of the reconditioned ones. We take more care in Australia and I really have high praise for the people at Adab and Colorfilm and the other labs doing release prints. Technically, no one can show us anything out here, in regard to cinema operation or the production side."

The Light at the End ...

Another factor that affects the screen image is the colour temperature of the light source. With the move from carbon-rod arc lights to the enclosed xenon lamps (called initially, with a touch of derision, "the arc in a bottle"), they are now just part of the low-maintenance and automated projection booth, with all the advertisements, trailers and feature assembled on a large, continuous platter.

Hailey tells the story of working with Peter Weir on the release of Dead Poets Society.

Peter was being very exact about the projection colour temperature so that the colours were accurate to the landscape and the period of the year when he shot it. In our initial release, he was particular that we got it right, and fortunately we did. But we had to bring things back up to standard that had slipped slightly. It was mostly alignment: all xenon bulbs have colour temperature differences from cold white to warm white, but the biggest factors are the mirrors.

Mirrors are batch made and when you look at the cold light (dichroic) mirrors that are used nowadays, they can have varying colours in the coatings. I’ve seen three new mirrors from the same company: one was green white, one was blue white and one was pink white. All you can do is use a colour temperature meter, or more usually show a director the film with each of them and ask which he prefers.

One of the restraints is that management usually doesn’t want to go changing bulbs and mirrors. A mirror costs about $1800 and a 4000w bulb costs almost $2000. It is a lot of money and we know we don’t have that problem alone. It’s the same for GU and Hoyts.

I believe that you must keep the quality to the best you can get, or even stretch a little further. The public deserves it. There is too much competition and we are saying to the public go out and look at our big screens, hear our great sound. We have to allow them to see the difference that a good 70mm print makes with the aural spread of the discrete soundtracks.

On the 70mm print of the release of Lethal Weapon, I can remember there was a darn dog barking on the right-hand channel. It was so real that you would almost shout, “Tell someone to shut that dog up!” And in the Return of the Jedi, when Luke is fighting with his father and he throws his light sabre to the right, your head was dragged around to follow the sound out the exit doorway. 70mm has that advantage. SK is getting there, but can’t quite achieve the channel separation.

I believe we should be trying to give the public that kind of experience. But it all revolves around the high cost of bringing 70mm prints into the country. Exhibitors have to look at the viability and, when they can’t afford it, it’s 35mm.

Hailey believes that as an industry we have to continue cultivating the desire to go to the movies and encourage audiences to appreciate 70mm releases. He feels that,

"You will only do that by giving them what they want to see and hear. And although I shudder at the technical problems the big screens give us, if you are going to compete with television, home video and the domestic surround-sound devices, you have to give the public good brightly-lit pictures and great sound. It’s the only way."

It is the paradox of being in the dark in the cinema: there is intimacy and a sharing of the experience with an audience around you. You can’t achieve that in your lounge room because of the familiarity of the room and the distractions of the kettle whistling in the kitchen or the dog that really is barking outside the back door. I still get a real buzz out of sitting in an audience.

"Technicalities" welcomes any information readers might have to offer regarding the production side of the industry. Please write to: "Technicalities", MTV Publishing, 43 Charles Street, Abbotsford, 3067, Victoria; or information can be faxed to (03) 427 9255.

CINEMA PAPERS 79 •  57
A panel of film reviewers has rated twelve of the latest releases on a scale of 0 to 10, the latter being the optimum rating (a dash means not seen). The critics are: Bill Collins (Channel 10; The Daily Mirror, Sydney); John Flaus (3RRR); Sandra Hall (The Bulletin, Sydney); Paul Harris (3LO; "EG", The Age, Melbourne); Ivan Hutchinson (Seven Network; The Sun, Melbourne); Stan James (The Adelaide Advertiser); Neil Jillett (The Age); Adrian Martin (Tension, Melbourne); Scott Murray; Mike van Niekerk (The West Australian); Tom Ryan (3LO; The Sunday Age, Melbourne); David Stratton (Variety; SBS); Peter Thompson (Sunday; The Sunday Age); and Evan Williams (The Australian, Sydney).

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HENRY V
KENNETH BRANAGH

Bill Collins 9
John Flaus 9
Sandra Hall 9
Paul Harris 4
Ivan Hutchinson 8
Stan James 3
Neil Jillett 8
Adrian Martin 8
Scott Murray 8
Mike van Nierkerk 8
Tom Ryan 7
David Stratton 8
Peter Thompson 5
Evans Williams 8

THE HONEymoon KILLERS
LEONARD KAStLE

Bill Collins 7
John Flaus 8
Sandra Hall 8
Paul Harris 8
Ivan Hutchinson 3
Stan James 6
Neil Jillett 6
Adrian Martin 7
Scott Murray 7
Mike van Nierkerk 7
Tom Ryan 7
David Stratton 8
Peter Thompson 7
Evans Williams

SHIRLEY VALENTINE
LEWIS GILBERT

Bill Collins 9
John Flaus 8
Sandra Hall 6
Paul Harris 2
Ivan Hutchinson 5
Stan James 7
Neil Jillett 5
Adrian Martin 7
Scott Murray 7
Mike van Nierkerk 6
Tom Ryan 0
David Stratton 1
Peter Thompson 6
Evans Williams 5

LET'S GET LOST
BRUCE WEBER

Bill Collins 8
John Flaus 8
Sandra Hall 7
Paul Harris 8
Ivan Hutchinson 8
Stan James 3
Neil Jillett 3
Adrian Martin 8
Scott Murray 5
Mike van Nierkerk 5
Tom Ryan 7
David Stratton 0
Peter Thompson 10
Evans Williams

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH [cont]
MICHAEL POWELL

Bill Collins 8
John Flaus 8
Sandra Hall 7
Paul Harris 7
Ivan Hutchinson 8
Stan James 8
Neil Jillett 8
Adrian Martin 8
Scott Murray 8
Mike van Nierkerk 7
Tom Ryan 7
David Stratton 9
Peter Thompson 10
Evans Williams

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HENRY V (KENNETH BRANAGH), ON HIS HORSE, LEADS HIS BAND OF BROTHERS IN BATTLE. "THE GREATNESS OF GREAT WORKS NEEDS TO BE TESTED IN SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS. THIS, WITH SOME ÉCLAT, IS WHAT BRANAGH HAS DONE IN HENRY V."

HENRY V
BRIAN MCFARLANE

ONE DOESN'T NEED THINK OF Kenneth Branagh's new film version of Henry V as a remake in the way that Big was a re-make of Vice Versa or John Byrum's The Razor's Edge was a re-make of Edmund Goulding's 1947 film. Popular novels, plays and original screenplays: all these are susceptible to the idea of the re-make, but curiously Shakespeare seems outside such a categorization. There is a sense in which the finest dramatic talents of their time ought to be measuring themselves against what Shakespeare offers, that every new screen version offers a kind of contemporary commentary on what has long since passed into the common cultural heritage.

The 1944 Olivier film, which has also passed into the cultural heritage, obviously hangs as a spectre over any succeeding film version of Henry V. Once one gets over the awkward stuff about why Henry and his forces should be in France in the first place, it is possible to see the rest of the play as a hymn to British courage and solidarity. Certainly, Olivier's beautiful and romantic wartime film, made at the instigation of the Ministry of Information, subscribed to such a view and the result was one of the great patriotic texts of the century. At the time of its making, England was literally embattled and Henry's "happy few", his "band of brothers", could easily be read as a metaphor for an England imperilled in 1944.

Whether some essence of "Englishness" is imperilled in the Thatcherite England of 1990 is another, more problematic, issue, though one many would have no trouble asserting.

The point is two-fold: inevitably a new film reading of Henry V will be compared with the Olivier version, and, in the case of many older viewers, not to the advantage of the new film. This may be partly a matter of the sheer conservatism that tends to believe that what was good and old must be better than what is new. It may also be to do with the second point to be made here: that is, one must take into account the different political-social-cultural climates in which the two films - 45 years apart - were made. The Olivier film, if appearing for the first time today, might well appear jingoistic: Branagh's film, with its often graphic stress on the physical horrors of war,
might well have been seen as dangerous in terms of 1944 public morale. They are, that is, both films of their times, and Branagh is on record as seeking to reclaim the Shakespearean text from its World War II mythology.

But the Olivier film came first. Speaking as one who has seen it only twice, once in 1968 and again last year, I have to say that I find Branagh's film haunted by the ghosts of Olivier's at every turn. Will the flight of arrows from the British bows describe the same graceful parabola? No, they don't: this time they look more like sleeky rain. Will the "little touch of Harry in the night" be done with the same heart-stopping regard for a leader who has almost no resources left than the courage and devotion of his band of brothers? Yes, it strikingly recalls the earlier rendering of France, Pistol, the Herald, Mountjoy and Mistress Quickly, lay those of Leo Genn, Robert Ravenscroft and Judi Dench, as the Constable of the scene. Can Emma Thompson and Geraldine McEwan, as Princess Katherine and her (more or less) English-speaking lady-in-waiting, lay the ghosts of Renee Asherson and Ivy St Helier, or Richard Easton, Robert Stephens, Christopher Ravenscroft and Judi Dench, as the Constable of the scene. Will the flight of arrows from the British bows describe the same graceful parabola? No, they don't: this time they look more like sleeky rain. Will the "little touch of Harry in the night" be done with the same heart-stopping regard for a leader who has almost no resources left than the courage and devotion of his band of brothers? Yes, it strikingly recalls the earlier rendering of France, Pistol, the Herald, Mountjoy and Mistress Quickly, lay those of Leo Genn, Robert Ravenscroft and Judi Dench, as the Constable of the scene. Can Emma Thompson and Geraldine McEwan, as Princess Katherine and her (more or less) English-speaking lady-in-waiting, lay the ghosts of Renee Asherson and Ivy St Helier, or Richard Easton, Robert Stephens, Christopher Ravenscroft and Judi Dench, as the Constable of the scene. Can Emma Thompson and Geraldine McEwan, as Princess Katherine and her (more or less) English-speaking lady-in-waiting, lay the ghosts of Renee Asherson and Ivy St Helier, or Richard Easton, Robert Stephens, Christopher Ravenscroft and Judi Dench, as the Constable of the scene. Can Emma Thompson and Geraldine McEwan, as Princess Katherine and her (more or less) English-speaking lady-in-waiting, lay the ghosts of Renee Asherson and Ivy St Helier, or Richard Easton, Robert Stephens, Christopher Ravenscroft and Judi Dench, as the Constable of the scene. Can Emma Thompson and Geraldine McEwan, as Princess Katherine and her (more or less) English-speaking lady-in-waiting, lay the ghosts of Renee Asherson and Ivy St Helier, or Richard Easton, Robert Stephens, Christopher Ravenscroft and Judi Dench, as the Constable of the scene. Can Emma Thompson and Geraldine McEwan, as Princess Katherine and her (more or less) English-speaking lady-in-waiting, lay the ghosts of Renee Asherson and Ivy St Helier, or Richard Easton, Robert Stephens, Christopher Ravenscroft and Judi Dench, as the Constable of the scene. Can Emma Thompson and Geraldine McEwan, as Princess Katherine and her (more or less) English-speaking lady-in-waiting, lay the ghosts of Renee Asherson and Ivy St Helier, or Richard Easton, Robert Stephens, Christopher Ravenscroft and Judi Dench, as the Constable of the scene. Can Emma Thompson and Geraldine McEwan, as Princess Katherine and her (more or less) English-speaking lady-in-waiting, lay the ghosts of Renee Asherson and Ivy St Helier, or Richard Easton, Robert Stephens, Christopher Ravenscroft and Judi Dench, as the Constable of the scene.
tive involvement rather than directing it; too much of the film looks murky (perhaps in the interests of the war-is-hell ideology, but inappropriate for lighter and more heroic moments); and the surprising somberness of the ending deflates the charm of Henry's wooing of Katherine. Not everything works, but a great deal does. Branagh has made a bold and venturesome assault on what might have seemed scarcely the Shakespearean Play for Today. Jim Schenck's Oscar round-up has this philistine word on the subject of Branagh's Best Oscar nomination: "There should be no awards for rehashing 400 year-old plays, however clever." ("EG", The Age, 23 March) Given the cinema's very brief role in the history of the arts, this seems an extraordinarily foolish remark, one which sees the arts as having nothing to do with each other and no history. The greatness of great works needs to be tested in succeeding generations. This, with some état, is what Branagh has done.

HENRY Directed by Kenneth Branagh. Producer: Bruce Sharman. Associate producer: David Parfit. Screenplay: Kenneth Branagh. Based on the play by William Shakespeare. Director of photography: Kenneth McMillan. Editor: Mike Bradsell. Production designer: Tim Harvey. Supervising art director: Norman Dorme. Costume designer: Phyllis Dalton. Composer: Patrick Doyle. Cast: Kenneth Branagh (Henry V), Derek Jacobi (Chorus), Simon Shepherd (Gloucester), James Larkin (Bedford), Brian Blessed (Exeter), Ian Holm (Fluellen), Robert Stephens (Pistol), Robbie Coltrane (Falstaff), Judi Dench (Mistress Quickly), Paul Scofield (French Films presentation, in association with the BBC and 35 mm; U.K. 1989. King). Michael Maloney (Dauphin), Alec McCowen (Ely), Robert Stephens (Pistol), Robbie Coltrane (Falstaff), Curzon-Film Distributors. Distributor: Hoyts. 137 mins; Christopher Ravenscroft (Mountjoy), Emma Thompson (Daisy Werthan), Simon Shepherd (Gloucester), James Larkin (Harvey. Supervising art director: Norman Dorme. Costume designer: Phyllis Dalton. Composer: Patrick Doyle. Directed by Kenneth Branagh. Producer: Bruce Beresford. Screenplay: Alan Sharp. Based on the play by William Shakespeare. Director of photography: Kenneth McMillan. Editor: Mike Bradsell. Production designer: Tim Harvey. Supervising art director: Norman Dorme. Costume designer: Phyllis Dalton. Composer: Patrick Doyle. Cast: Kenneth Branagh (Henry V), Derek Jacobi (Chorus), Simon Shepherd (Gloucester), James Larkin (Bedford), Brian Blessed (Exeter), Ian Holm (Fluellen), Robert Stephens (Pistol), Robbie Coltrane (Falstaff), Judi Dench (Mistress Quickly), Paul Scofield (French King), Michael Maloney (Dauphin), Alec McCowen (Ely), Christopher Ravenscroft (Mountjoy), Emma Thompson (Daisy Werthan (Jessica Tandy) is a fiercely independent, 72-year-old Jewish matron who manages one day to reverse her Packard car into her neighbour's garden. As a direct consequence of this, and thanks to her persistent son Boolie (Dan Aykroyd), she finds herself with a chauffeur, Hoke Colburn (Morgan Freeman). At first, Miss Daisy is reluctant and too proud to have a driver, but she eventually accepts and over a twenty-five-year period (1948 to 1973) a remarkable friendship develops. It is a genuine friendship premised on empathy and sincerity, a friendship that is elastic enough to test their attitudinal and behavioural differences, and cuts across class and race.

Driving Miss Daisy is a richly textured film that has much to say in an eloquent way about being a member of a minority group - be it Jewish or Afro-American - in the racist milieu of Georgia. This racist prejudice is a source on many occasions for humour, hurt and mutual understanding - of each other's identity, past and deep-seated values. The movie touches upon so many ideas and feelings that are central to racism and interracial understanding; it is poignant with cultural and moral truths that connect with, to use novelist Ralph Ellison's neat phrase, "the deep centres of American emotion" (Shadow and Act, 1972, p. 280). Encapsulated in the developing relationship between Miss Daisy and Hoke is a metaphorical expression of the intricate dynamic that has existed, and is still existing, in a symbiotic relationship between two minority groups. Apparently, Uhry's creative impulse was the attractive notion of putting together two minority figures who respond to racism in different ways. Hoke is
someone who has come to terms with being a victim of racial prejudice and Daisy is someone who has not experienced racism in any dramatic, overt manner.

Woven into the film’s narrative are certain historical details that give it aura of historical authenticity. In particular, there are two significant scenes which refer to the civil rights movement in the 1950s and ’60s: the 1958 bombing of Atlanta’s oldest Jewish synagogue (in this scene Miss Daisy is seated behind Hoke in her car on her way to the synagogue; she can’t believe that racists would want to bomb it) and the scene where Hoke is forced to listen to Dr Martin Luther King’s speech on the car radio because Miss Daisy feels uncomfortable about having Hoke with her inside the Dinkler Plaza Hotel, where King is speaking.

To say that Driving Miss Daisy is blessed with an exceptional script and two seminal screen performances is quite an understatement. Tandy is impeccably credible as the feisty, cranky eccentric in complete charge of her world. She goes from room to room in a manner befitting a benign monied atmosphere) informs us that Miss Daisy is someone whose life is built on family pride and tradition. Her relationship with her maid, Idella (Esther Rolle), is one that is built on mutual trust, as in the affecting scene where Miss Daisy tells Hoke how as a young girl in the 1880s she would travel to Mobile to visit her relatives. Her eyes stare beyond Hoke in the direction of the horizon and her finely modulated voice, with its Southern accent, conjures a stirring scene of childhood memories. She speaks of how as a child at Mobile she tasted the water of the Gulf of Mexico. It is a very vivid image and one can almost taste the water.

This idyllic scene is rudely shattered by two redneck speed cops who are suspicious of the two resting off the highway. One cop says to his friend (echoing Jimmy Stewart’s gangly body) is not too subtle a hand gesture suggests that Hoke is a per­son who is trying to live his life according to his

code of values.

Driving Miss Daisy allows Freeman the rare opportunity to perform a character that is morally complex and not preconceived, not stereotyped, but with Freeman there is an extra dimension, a certain stoical dignity in his characterization. Freeman’s performance resonates on so many different levels: his perpetual stoop (echoing Jimmy Stewart’s gan­gly body) is not too dramatically obvious, it is a subtle stoop, and an appealing source of fascination. Every shuffle Hoke takes is a telling reminder of Freeman’s Afro-American peers who graced the American screen in their demeaning Uncle Tom roles or as equally stereotyped rapists. Freeman’s pursing of his lips, the pregnant pauses in his speech and the subtle hand gestures suggest that Hoke is a person who is trying to live his life according to his

RAW NERVE
ADRIAN MARTIN

As the history of writing on film proves again and again, very few reviewers, critics or theorists have a good ear for film soundtracks – by which I mean not just the musical score, but the whole ensemble of relations between voice, noise, music and silence. If you are hoping to cultivate such an ear, I suggest you take a listen to Raw Nerve. For, very soon into the film, one becomes aware of a very bizarre noise: a droning track of bird calls, presumably designed to add the ambient reality of ‘outside’ to a three-handed drama that takes place mostly inside a single house. Try as you might to ignore this grating sound, its presence insist during every dramatic pause, every intense dialogue exchange, every blast of doodling jazz music. It seems, indeed, to run on continuously for the entire 90 minutes of the film. Hence, perhaps, the title Raw Nerve.

The ad slick, with its tableau of lounging teens gazing defiantly into the camera, tells the truth: Raw Nerve is something like an Australian transposition of John Hughes’ The Breakfast Club. These teens are spending an intense day together not as a result of school detention, but because they have broken into a high bourgeois home on Sydney’s North Shore. Like Hughes’ film, Raw Nerve moves towards the point where each teenager, in turn, lets down his or her ‘mask’, and reveals a painful, hidden truth. The comparison between the two films more or less stops there. Unlike many American teen movies, Raw Nerve does not display much of a ‘pop’ feel, either for the contemporary culture in which these teenagers live, or for the way the film itself might be constructed.

It is brave of director Tony Wellington to have written for himself such a ‘talky’, potentially static debut feature. The film avoids this fate by knowing some of the classic ‘moves’ that are possible within this situation: using different rooms for different moods; distributing the three characters into successive ‘twosome’ scenes; dynamically cutting into the flow of events with sudden intrusions; having several of the characters perform or ‘act’ in separate, dress-up rituals. To this end, the film endeavours to be always mutating and transforming itself, its characters, and their interrelationships. John Polson’s performance as the working class lad Billy fits particularly well with this aspiration: he has a wiry, angular, mobile energy that flows well on screen.

Beyond its interestingly needling insistence on the class division amongst the characters, Raw Nerve betrays rather conservative thematic interests. The ‘revealations’ that the teens eventually pour out are ho-hum affairs, revealing only what the filmmaker regards as ‘aberrations’ of an ideal life: a mother with an extra-marital lover, a 17-year-old girl with ‘horror of horrors!’ stretch marks. The woman’s role in all this is not prominent. Perhaps the title is a virtual obsession with the woman first. At least it can be reported in Raw Nerve’s favour that, once the burning revelations begin, the sex question is put aside for good. Indeed, the whimsical friends-again ‘life goes on’, ending with its clever narrative pay-off concerning stolen money, is probably the best thing in it.

The limitation of Raw Nerve as a film is indicated by that 90 minute bird call on the soundtrack. Of course, any filmmaker or sound designer faced with characters stuck in one room or house has an interesting problem on their hands: what do you do with the background sound to avoid either laying on too much music or capitulating to large holes of silence? Here, a good listen to The Breakfast Club is indeed instructive. One realizes very quickly that a realistic sound ambience is not the primary goal of its aural design. Rather, like in most American movies, the sound ensemble thickens and thins, ebbs and flows, in strict accordance with the feel and flow of the drama. This is an abstract, quietly poetic, pleasingly ‘plastic’ (in the sense of ‘the plastic arts’), wholly cinematic aesthetic working at the heart of even the most seemingly naturalistic American films (like Light of Day or River’s Edge). Raw Nerve gives the occasional sign that it is aware of these dynamics that are so central to ‘popular’ cinema. But mainly it’s just another Australian film.

RAW NERVE

BEYOND EL ROCCO
RAFFAELE CAPUTO AND PETER LAWRENCE

At an early point in Beyond El Rocco, a feature documentary on the history of jazz in Australia since the late 1950s, Don Burrows tells a story of an unnamed, young, black American pianist hurriedly arriving to sit in with the band at the El Rocco Jazz Cellar after finishing his gig behind Sarah Vaughan at Chequers Nightclub. Asked what he’d like to play, he chose ‘Body and Soul’, which he had been playing for Vaughan. But on this particular night at the El Rocco, the pianist’s rendition of “Body and Soul” was so uncharacteristic of his playing at Chequers that it left Don Burrows and the rest of the band bewildered. As described by Burrows, the pianist started off by slamming the lid down over the keyboards and then quickly opening it, before half disappearing into the piano as he plucked the strings and banged the keys with his elbows. “It was like Jekyll and Hyde”, says Burrows. With Sarah Vaughan, the pianist was being what Vaughan needed, but given the opportunity at the El Rocco he was another person, someone looking for himself musically.

This Jekyll-and-Hyde description serves to illustrate the unpredictable and improvisational atmosphere that had developed at the El Rocco, and hence to explain the attraction it held for jazz musicians at the time. Beyond this, however, that description can also stand good for the way in which the film conceives of two different camps within the jazz scene in Australia. There is what David Tolley in the film refers to as ‘traditional gentleman’s jazz’, and there is modern, improvisational jazz.

This looks and sounds like a fairly familiar opposition, that between the underground and the mainstream. This is articulated in the film largely through the dramatized sequences, and with a fictional narrator, Zoot Finster (Tony Barry), as he indirectly assimilates the voices of a number of jazz personalities with his own.

Zoot’s journeys through three major periods. The first is roughly centred in the late 1950s and early 60s, and is characterized as a period of emulation: Joe “Be-Bop” Lane recalls having Bird’s LEFT: EMOTIONS Erupt in Tony Wellington’s Raw Nerve. DAVID (KELLY DINGWALL), ON FLOOR, BILLY (JOHN POLSON) AND MICHELLE (REBECCA RIGG).
style down pat in only 2 years; John Sangster virtually apologizes for playing jazz and not being black, but pretending to be; while the El Rocco in Sydney and Jazz Centre 44 in Melbourne tended to demand Miles Davis and John Coltrane as models for their artists. Thus, according to Zoot, the White boys' Leaguestyle jazz musician was replaced by the Black Hipster. With his comment that "There's no need to feel like an underdog", only Bernie McGann doesn't seem to fit in with the prevailing view of the time.

Next, the mid-1960s to the early '70s was a period of disintegration, alienation, withdrawal and experimentation: McGann headed into the bush for a time, practising his horn in the open spaces; the Jazz Club scene almost died out; and experimentation groups like Free Carter divided the jazz world: many jazz musicians insecure as well as alienated from the free-thinking spirit of the 1960s pop scene. Yet through the mood for experimentation, artists like Phil Treloar and Roger Frampton attempted to discover a distinctive Australian voice, carrying this spirit over into the next period.

Finally, 1973 into the '80s was marked by rebirth. 1973 saw two significant events: the opening of a jazz club, The Basement, at Circular Quay (jazz was a spectator sport); and a co-operative movement emerged from the Conservatorium of N.S.W. By the late 1970s, there emerged from the Conservatorium a new breed of musicians and with them came a contemporary version of Zoot's. Co-operative groups were formed to exist independently from the mainstream of jazz, and with a desire to get out from underdog mentality, to move away from overseas models, and to discover this country's influences and unique sounds. Also, early in the decade, McGann returned from the bush and formed a band, The Last Straw.

In the 1980s, the jazz scene thrived, with exciting things on the horizon. And it is in this third period that Beyond El Rocco seems to place most of its weight. On the one hand, it certainly stands apart from Zoot's mythologizing of earlier periods, and, on the other hand, the role of Zoot Finster is not only that of witness to the evolution of a tradition, but also, as one learns from the first interview scene in his 1940s garb, he plays the role of a detective, a man in search of something. In a way, the film is an extended version of Burrows' pianist in search of his musical self. Yet, one cannot help but feel somewhat suspicious, for when one steps back and takes a long, hard look, it all seems to flow a little too smoothly. Indeed, the film patterns a rather orthodox trajectory, and a rather orthodox bi-partisan conception of a musical tradition. Perhaps it is part of the genre, but the kind of genre that springs to mind isn't part of documentary; it is more like the musical bio-pic. One thinks of films like The Five Pennies (about cornet player Red Nichols) or the Al Jolson Story where there is a similar kind of trajectory to that of emulation, withdrawal and rebirth. Most recent, there is a film like Bird with its bi-partisan conception of a unique individual's talent being placed against the conventions of the prevailing form.

There is a sense of another history to be told, and Beyond El Rocco is not a film completely lacking in this regard. Nor should its qualities be under- xmired. First, it is hard to find much else which attempts to document the history of Australian Jazz, despite anyone's misgivings about it. Second, through the curious figure of Bernie McGann some form of revisionist thought about Australian Jazz is made possible. While this revisionism is suggested in the film through the McGann figure, what is surprising is that it is not more fully and widely developed.

In the three major periods that Beyond El Rocco lays out, McGann's place within them is always uncertain: he is never quite there, always apart from what is happening around him. Yet, in another way, the film marks McGann out as an exemplary figure, and McGann kicks off the narrative trajectory, but through being packed away his instrument and heading into the streets. He indirectly leads us to Zoot Finster, who subsequently takes us on a journey into the past. At the film's end, on Zoot's return to the present, we cross paths with McGann again, only this time he's returning to the gathering and blowing a brief solo before they all set in.

Certainly, these two vignettes with McGann seem to mirror and individuate the film's trajectory, but they do not make him a central figure in a way that is undisclosed elsewhere. In a film that continually speaks volumes about influences, it is surprising to find that more is said about McGann by what isn't said, that the opening and closing of the film reveals a sense of an existentialist purpose in his relation to his playing - a genuine departure and a genuine return.

Beyond El Rocco

Bloodmoon
JIM SCHEMBRI

Bloodmoon is a truly memorable cinematic experience - but for all the wrong reasons. It is an unspellably funny film, but in the saddest possible way. It is a film promoted as a horror film, and it is for anyone with any faith left in Australian mainstream film. Bloodmoon, like its predecessors, has the worst acting, story, dialogue, camerawork and promotional gimmick, and it is the worst possible omen for where the Australian Film Industry is headed.

Bloodmoon is so unfathomably bad it is hard to know where to begin with it, although a public burning of the film's negative would be a good start.

Benefit of originality or even the ability to copy with style, the story in a nutshell - a kind of conglomerate of Romeo and Juliet, Halloween, Friday the 13th, Revenge of the Nerds and The Film with No Brain - goes something like this.

The woods near an all-girl Catholic school, where the inmates seem to do nothing but sing in choral choirs and flash their developing breasts at the camera, is being stalked by a psycho who likes strangling teenagers with a custom-made strap of barbed wire. The Catholic girls like to have it off on their own, and the Catholic boys from the nearby Winchester School, something frowned upon by the Head Nun.

Now, the posh boys from Winchester have a running war with the working-class lads from town, known as "The Townies". A forbidden romance blooms between one of the said Townies and the lead Catholic girl. Sub-plots involving their romance, the identity of the psycho, two girls who want to cheat on their exams, the background of the 'mysterious' married couple who run the school and the growing concern of the local policeman develop with the grace and subtlety of a surgical chainsaw to build to an 'action' climax for which the cinematic term "truly crappy" must have been originally invented.

The genre problem with Bloodmoon is that it was made. The second major problem is that it lacks a convincing killer who looks motivated enough to scare you. It also lacks convincing victims who look scared enough to scare you. Even in the Nightmare on Elm Street sequels, going right up to numbers 4 and 5, the makers were very careful to develop victim characters who had life, personalities and charisma, and to hire actors who could act. Thus, when they were killed, there was at least some dramatic weight to the affair.

In Bloodmoon, there is an array of flat, uninteresting teenage characters who fail to raise one iota of concern from the audience. You simply couldn't give a toss whether they live or die. And the fact that they are played by a cast of unknowns, whose acting talents certainly have an awful lot of developing to do, doesn't help.

Now, the easy way out of this would have been to contract some novel ways for these characters to die - maybe with some nice make-up effects, a dash of New Wave disembowelling or a new approach to dismemberment - but the film can't even manage to do that. All one gets are a few spurts of Heinz Big Red around the neck and eyes.

Stylewise, the film is totally void. The biggest indictment is its inability to master the basic rule of the Red Herring. Only two are set up - the psycho is either the nun or the sexually inadequate husband - and before long there's no doubt who it is, hence no suspense at all.

Visually, the film is a technical travesty. The camerawork is drab and the lighting is flat. If horror could be made as soap opera, this film is what it would look like. The film's idea of creating a creepy mood or a threatening atmosphere is to turn the lights out and drench the film set with rain.

But the biggest stylistic problem with Bloodmoon is the clever editing. There isn't one. In films of this genre, editing is where the best scares come from. Carrie, Cape, An American Werewolf in London and, more locally and relevantly, Dead Calm extract their biggest jolts from the audience with great cutting. The cleverest the editing gets in Bloodmoon is a cut from a screaming mouth in the woods to a singing mouth in the choir. Yo, brilliant.

Now, none of this would be quite so bad if Bloodmoon wasn't heralded as a major film getting major push through a major cinema chain. But it is, which highlights a crippling anomaly of the local industry that such a bad film should get such a big push when many good films (Shame, Fran, Grieving Bodily Harm, High Tide, A Street to Die, etc., etc.) get almost no push at all. And something must be said about the cunning way the film has been promoted.

Advertisements and posters for the film dare people to survive an entire screening of the film. Half an hour before the end there is a "fright break" and those too scared to sit through the rest get to contract some novel ways for these characters to die - maybe with some nice make-up effects, a dash of New Wave disembowelling or a new approach to dismemberment - but the film can't even manage to do that. All one gets are a few spurts of Heinz Big Red around the neck and eyes. The film's idea of creating a scary mood or a threatening atmosphere is to turn the lights out and drench the film set with rain.

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Advertisements and posters for the film dare people to survive an entire screening of the film. Half an hour before the end there is a "fright break" and those too scared to sit through the rest get to follow the yellow streak road out of the cinema to "chicken's corner" and get their money back.

It sounds like one of those goofy scare tactics they used to use in the 1950s, which would be fine, if these were the 1950s and not the 1990s - or if the film was good enough to warrant such a brazen display of marketing bravado. As it is, the
AN UNSEEN KILLER STALKS LOVERS MARY (HELEN THOMSON) AND KEVIN (IAN WILLIAMS) IN THE WOODS. ALEC MILLS’ BLOODMOON.

"fright break" gimmick is nothing more than a gimmick that reeks of panic. Obviously the film is a dud, the promoters knew it, and this was one way to help fill theatres.

Fortunately, Australian filmgoers are not as stupid as the promoters would like to believe. The response to the film in Melbourne and Sydney has generally been that the majority of people do leave during the "fright break", not because they are scared, but because they are appalled. Certainly, the packed 7:30 p.m. screening of the film I attended in the 386-seat Cinema 4 at Melbourne’s Village Complex in Bourke Street on Saturday 24 March 1990 was an unforgettable and hilarious cinema experience.

People obviously turned up expecting to see what was advertised: a horror movie. They were in high spirits, ready for a good fright. Ten minutes into the film, people started to groan. "I thought this was meant to be a scary movie" and "nothing’s happening" were two typical comments, although the most disturbing was the guy who quipped to his girlfriend: "This is an Australian Movie! If I’d have known that I would’ve gone to see Tango and Cash."

Many reams of dialogue in the film – the scene between the boy and the girl at the lake, the wife berating her sexually inadequate husband, the sex scenes, anything that required a modicum of skill or wordsense – were greeted with uproarious, hostile laughter.

The only character to get a friendly peal of laughter was the small girl at the beach picnic who disobeyed her mother and pours lemonade into a cup, only to spill it. The mother scolds her. "I’m sorry" the little girl chirps cheerfully, flashing a gorgeous, natural, cheeky smile. The audience laughed loudly with her as if she and they knew something the rest of the people in the film didn’t. Her cameo was certainly the acting highlight of the film.

But apart from the derisory laughter, the cackles, the heckles, the fake screams, the big moment for the audience came during the "fright break" when the killer was about to total two budding exam cheats. At least 60 per cent of the packed cinema flew bodily out of their seats and rushed for the exit, laughing, yelling, celebrating their impending refund and their emancipation from the wretched film. It looked like a scene from an Irwin Allen movie as hundreds filled the aisles and filed out.

Those who remained continued to groan, and at film’s end people dashed out as the first production credit was supered onto the screen. On the way out one person was heard to quip to the ladies at the box office: "I know I stayed ‘till the end, but can I have my money back anyway?"

It is with films like Bloodmoon that people start spouting phrases like "it’s so bad it’s good" and "unintentional comedy". To say this about a $1-a-week video is fine; to say it about the first mainstream Australian film release of the decade is not. The 1980s had its share of the worst Australian films ever made – Luigis Ladies, The Pirate Movie, Freedom!, Turkey Shoot, Boulevard of Broken Dreams and Double Deal to name a few – but for a film as awful, as cliché ridden, as derivative, as unimaginative and as poorly made as Bloodmoon to be made in Australia in 1990 is a cause for national mourning.

BLOODMOON Directed by Alec Mills. Producer: Stanley O'Toole. Executive producers: Graham Burke, Greg Coote. Associate producer: David Munro. Screenplay: Robert Brennan. Director of photography: John Stokes. Sound recordist: Ian Grant. Editor: David Halliday. Composer: Brian May. Cast: Leon Lissek (Miles Sheffield), Christine Amor (Virginia Sheffield), Ian Williams (Kevin Lynch), Helen Thomson (Mary Huston), Hazel Howson (Sister Mary-Ellen), Craig Cronin (Matt Desmond), Anya Molina (Michelle), Samantha Ritson (Gretchen), Tessa Pike (Kyle). Distributor: Greater Union Distributors. 100 mins. 35 mm. Australia. 1990.
JIM: I don’t think Einstein was born in Tasmania.

HAL: Fortunately, Yahoo basically said “Fuck you” to the world and made his own movie. Good luck to him.

I mean, how do you figure the ‘cultural exact’ argument with some of the hits we’ve had in Australia? Was Dead Poets Society cultural exact? I’m not sure. It was made by an Australian director and an Australian cameraman, and set in a supposedly New England boys school, that probably doesn’t exist, and was modelled on Cranbrook in Sydney, where the director went to school. But it was a wonderful movie.

Cultural exactness has nothing to do with successful and appropriate storytelling.

**AUSTRALIAN FILM FINANCE CORPORATION (FFC)**

**How do you think the FFC is doing?**

JIM: We are the recipients of a large cash loan, so it is pretty easy to be the supportive of them. But I was shocked by all the carry-on when the FFC opened up. It seemed to be pretty vitriolic.

I think the FFC is pretty efficient. There seems to be some criticism of their scrutiny process, but you have to have some sort of scrutiny, and taking a commercial basis is entirely reasonable. It is taxpayers’ money and the FFC has a legitimate right to commercially scrutinize projects in the market place. If a producer puts up a proposal on a $1 million feature, it would be appropriate for the scrutiny to occur essentially in Australia, because that’s where the film will be aimed essentially. If we are talking about a $10 million film, then it’s entirely appropriate for the scrutiny to involve America as well as Australia, because that’s where you are going to have to return the money.

It seems to me unfair to cry foul if the vote goes against you. Projects need scrutiny.

But part of the criticism, surely, is that the FFC doesn’t have sufficiently skilled scrutineers.

**A GROWING AND DANGEROUS ATTRACTION: BELOW, ANNA (DEBORAH UNGER) AND FACING PAGE, FLYNN (MARK HARMON), WITH SOME BUNLAP CHILDREN. JOHN SEALE’S TILL THERE WAS YOU.**

HAL: The only way you can make that assessment is on a case-by-case basis. Some of the biggest successes in Hollywood are people who have lucked into making what happened to be the right decision for the right project. But you can’t say we shouldn’t scrutinize projects because we can’t agree on who is going to do the assessment. Jim’s absolutely right. We are asking millions of people to sit down and watch a film, so let’s ask some people their opinion at the start. You don’t have to accept it.

Part of this complaining has to do with the ‘national living treasure’ syndrome, where some people believe they have a God-given right to be given money on a platter to make films. I am not sure any of these people can demonstrate that they deserve that opportunity. Nobody else in the world gets it, so why should they? It is taxpayers’ money and I would have thought that the obligation on the government and the bureaucrat is to try and ensure that it is sensibly spent.

**What are your feelings about the principle of the minimum 30% (now 35%) up-front private investment?**

HAL: Unless someone comes up with a better criterion, what’s wrong with that?

I am just asking ...

HAL: I don’t think anybody has come up with a convincing argument that this criterion is wrong; some just bitch that criteria exist at all. But you just can’t have a criterion-less situation. That’s grant time, and the question then is: Who is going to give the grants?

That’s what you essentially have with the FFC’s Trust Fund. Some see it as a return to the ‘paternalism’ of the AFDC era.

HAL: Apparently, there was something like sixty scripts submitted for the Fund. The FFC and Beyond International did some sort of sifting process and one hopes, if they were doing their job at all honestly, and certainly Beyond International has a big investment to recover, they thought bloody hard about it. You had a race with sixty people in it and five crossed the line. Well, good luck to them. To my mind that is perfectly fair and reasonable. What some people are proposing is that there not be a race, but that, whenever they want to wander in, they get handed the money.

JIM: It seems like an argument between a race and a lottery.

However, getting back to the scrutiny process, I think there is a persuasive argument to say that the scrutineers ought to be known to the applicant. If you go to a distributor asking for a pre-sale, you know whom you are talking to and how to slant your proposal. There are some films out there that distributor X is just simply not going to go for, whereas distributor Y just might.

The people the FFC goes to for opinions are pretty hardened individuals and they should be able to cope with having their names known. It’s probably a fairer way of behaving. It would remove a lot of frustration.

HAL: My sense is not that they don’t know the names, they just object to the principle. It’s a lot of bullshit.

**2. MC E L R OY & MC E L R OY**

When last interviewed, you worked together on each project. But since them you appear to have specialized more as individuals.

JIM: Financially it wasn’t making sense to both work on a particular project. So we took the conscious decision to try and enlarge our talents by doing individual projects. At the same time, each of us consults with the other quite closely on each other’s projects.

Hal primarily went into television, very successfully. I stayed in the feature area, less successfully. The picture I’m doing now is the first success I’ve had since The Year of Living Dangerously, which was the first picture I did on my own. The reason for that is that we had a relationship with Peter Weir, who is one of the world’s greatest directors, and it has taken a long time to find someone of near similar brilliance. I’ve found it on this one.

HAL, why did you move to television?
HAL: About ten years ago, we decided we should get to know more about it. Both Jim and I had worked in television years previously. Jim had started in television on *In Melbourne Tonight*, and I had produced commercials for it. So, it wasn’t the big change for us that it was for other people in the industry. And, somewhat foolishly and arrogantly, we believed it was going to be a lot easier than it proved to be.

We spent the first two or three years just trying to figure out how to make the move, and, with hindsight, we can say how smart we were. But there was a fair amount of economic imperative involved because we had just lost all the money we had ever made on *Picnic at Hanging Rock* on a laser light show. We were flat, motherless broke. We had to sell the house and everything. But necessity is the mother of invention, and we went into television at the right time. We were able to do programmes like *Return to Eden* on the staggeringly low budget of $2.25 million. And it’s still making us money; we get a cheque every month.

What it taught us was that the fundamental difference between film and television - and we always want to do both, if we can - is that the swing between loss and profit in television is pretty small, and basically negligible if you do your sums right. It is pretty hard to lose money making television and you can make quite good profits. In feature films, you can lose the lot the first weekend, or bust out and make a hundred million dollars. Our aim is to find a balance. We do television, which makes us regular money and keeps us working, and we do feature films which give us a fantastic blue sky. If we do it right, one might just be the mega-hit that makes the kind of money you can only dream about in television.

Television also keeps you honest. You are reminded that a fair amount of filmmaking can be wanking. You don’t have to have four cameras and 12 weeks shooting, with a shooting ratio of 15 to 1 and a crew of a hundred. You can actually make something that works for a lot less than that. And that’s healthy.

As well, you get the chance to work with people who may ultimately become feature filmmakers.

JIM: With television, you need to define your audience more carefully going in. There is less of a risk. With film, there is a higher risk and a higher possible return. It is more of a gamble.

HAL: There is also a disappointment level with television because it is so instant: it goes to air and is gone. You can spend a year or so of your life creating a wonderful mini-series and, because people are going out on one of the nights, they don’t bother to watch any of it. That is kind of disappointing.

A movie, on the other hand, kind of hangs around for longer, if it is successful. It enters the consciousness more strongly.

Except that re-runs are reminding audiences at the moment of *Return to Eden*. And Clive James spoke of it the other night, calling it the ‘King of all soaps’.

JIM: Well, it was huge in England.

HAL: And it was a hit in France three months ago. Poland was huge, as were Jordan, Indonesia and Argentina - everywhere.

It is interesting that when you went into television, and it was a couple of years before Kennedy Miller, television was seen as being ‘down market’ compared to cinema. That changed over the next five years, when the mini-series were often better than the Australian films in the cinemas.

HAL: Absolutely. I couldn’t agree more.

But now things have changed: 10BA, which funded the mini-series boom, is finished. What, then, is the future of good drama on Australian television?

JIM: Product is still needed and good producers will still be around. Don’t forget, Australian programmes still rate better than foreign programmes.

Of course, there will be some rationalization and all of us will have to lift our game.

HAL: The television stations are, as Jim said, going to want to keep on buying. So it is not a question of will they buy. Yes, they will. Will they be able to pay as much as they did before? No, the price has gone down. Will they buy as much as they did before? No. Will they buy from as broad a range of people? No. If they have less money to spread around, then they will be really selective about who they give it to, because they can’t afford to make a mistake.

Amongst that raft of television mini-series that were made, there was some exceptional television and some terrible television. Stations don’t want to make those mistakes again, so the people who made marginal television, or who are perceived as about to make marginal television, won’t get a shot. In the old days of 10BA, the stations might have said, “Sure we’ll buy it”, because they thought it would rate. Well, it didn’t rate. I won’t quote productions, but we all know the bad ones.

From now on, the television stations are going to get real tough. One of the network executives recently said that there are now only six or seven Australian producers from whom stations will be buying. Unless you are in that group, forget it. Now, I think most people can sit down and figure out who those six or seven are. You then have the situation where people who want to make something will have to form an association with one of those six or seven. That way they will have a shot at getting it made; if they go about it on their own, they won’t.

That is part of a very necessary consolidation the industry has to have. Australia can’t afford 170 members of SPAA; it’s just ludicrous. We have all to start co-operating with each other.

JIM: As happens in America ...

HAL: Where the studios have satellites spinning around them, and around those satellites are other satellites and so on. You have to link them up to get the production made. That’s what should happen here much more than it does.

What you are saying was a major part of your SPAA address: namely, the days of the lone independent producer are over.

JIM: Absolutely.

HAL: The big six producers we have been talking about have enormous experience and contacts. It’s not so much the idea, but who’s making it that is important. *Dead Poets Society* in the hands of anyone other than Peter Weir could have been a complete disaster. Peter breathed a magical quality into it and turned the thing into a hit movie. He was the X factor for that movie.

The same is true in television. The right sort of input at the right time in the creative process can turn a not very good idea into something wonderful. I’ll never forget that when the Zucker and Abraham team were putting together *Airplane*, they went to Para-
mount with the idea. Paramount loved it but was really worried about letting these relatively inexperienced people direct it. So they hired as producer the toughest old bastard, Howard Koch, and he hired the toughest old cameraman, Joe Biroc, who had shot Towering Inferno. Paramount stuck those two old stagers with these young turks and came up with a hit movie.

In Hollywood, they always put young guys with old guys to keep each other honest. That’s the sort of cross-fertilization that should occur in our industry. We actually have no stratas of experience, where some have been doing it for 25 years, and presumably have learnt something. I’m always delighted to pass on any knowledge I have; it just amazes me that nobody ever bothers to ask.

LOOKING BACK

The 1970s for McElroy and McElroy are easy for an outsider to define because you made three of the most important Australian films of that decade. How do you view your achievements in the 1980s?

JIM: The 1980s started brilliantly with The Year of Living Dangerously. People had said that an American studio would never back an Australian feature. Well it did, and that was a great triumph for us. The film gathered the prestige it deserved.

The other highlight would be the great successes in television. Last Frontier was the first Australian-produced mini-series on American network television, and it won the year for the network. That is a very considerable success. As well, Return to Eden was hugely successful in syndication in America and all around the globe. We then did a series on it, again successfully.

There was one other thing in television which I’m going to be slightly immodest about. There were two programmes we did – Hal did one, I the other – called Ratbags and Late Night with Jono and Dano. Neither worked from a ratings point of view, but they were in a way forerunners to programmes such as Fast Forward and Comedy Company. I’m not suggesting ours were as good a quality, but maybe they helped that whole thing off. Some of the people we engaged were Mark Mitchell – it was his first time on television – and Stephen Blackburn, the writer Geoffrey Atherden and so on.

HAL: We were truly teenagers when we were making those early movies. We have matured a lot, but we still have a long way to go. That makes it very exciting.

JIM: We have today a far greater ability in recognizing what works in a story. We have improved ourselves more in that area than anywhere else. We are less likely to make mistakes storywise.

HAL: We have always been perceived as businessmen and, yes, we have certainly become more sophisticated at the business end. But the real growth has been creatively, particularly in the story telling, story structure, story building, the importance of casting. If your story is important and your casting is right, you have three-quarters of a shot at winning.

JIM: There is also the casting off-screen.

HAL: Yes, getting the right creative elements together, working successfully with writers and directors.

We actually had a mixed fortune in working with Peter Weir. He is one of the great directors in the world and the big plus was working on our first four films with someone of that calibre. But we had to figure out a way of replacing him and learn some of the things that Peter did instinctively. He was born with the skills, the bugger, whereas we have had to learn them. That has taken a while and we are still learning. I look back on our filmography and each production has been just that little bit better than the previous one; we haven’t made the same mistakes.

JIM: Oh, I think we went sideways on a couple of occasions. And the failures were more often due to the concept than the execution. On some occasions we also screwed up in execution, but basically it was concepts.

HAL: That is why we are taking much more care with the concept. After all, people make decisions to go and see movies and/or watch television based on a concept – they sure as hell don’t read the script! And once the concept’s right, then everything else seems to fall into place. That’s why we have never had trouble finding finance; we have kind of gone for concepts, and, if the concept is right, people give us the money. I mean, the concept of Sex, Lies, and Videotape is terrific: a guy videotapes women talking about their sex life, but doesn’t really have sex with them. That is incredible, so no wonder it’s successful.

JIM: Today, a film must have a ‘must see’ quality about it.

What is the ‘must see’ quality of Till There Was You?

JIM: There are elements of the story that have never been seen before. And the setting is an exotic, fantastic part of the world.

HAL: You haven’t seen anything like this since Daktari. The natives are so black they are actually blue. And into that exotic context, you put romance, some laughs and a bit of action, and you have something totally different.

Given the problems you have had in replacing Peter Weir, it is interesting that you have gone for a cameraman as director.

JIM: What happened is that John Seale filled two bills which are contradictory. We needed someone with an international reputation, on the one hand, and, on the other we wanted new blood. Getting the two is like a contradiction in terms. But John was that individual and he has proved himself.

It has been a marvellous experience; I trust John Seale has a similar view. He is a great director and he’s made a terrific film; I can see it. John is a different director to Peter, but he’s a very talented one. I made the right choice.

The writer-director-producer relationship is the base of the creative triangle and all the other triangles come off it – you know, cameraman-editor-director and so on. These triangles are vital in any sort of film and, unless they work, the film won’t.

Till There Was You is a film which sits at the top end of your two-budgets scale.

JIM: That’s right. It is the sort of movie that in American terms would cost $20 to $30 million. That’s starting to become a big-budget movie. We’re not competing against the Batman so and so, but we are competing against, I guess, Romancing the Stone.

HAL: $13 million was our assessment of what we needed to give it the oomph to get it on that ‘must see’ list. Conceptually it was one of those films that could be made for less, so we made a conscious decision when we developed it that this was going to be a big movie.

We are developing another movie at the moment that Michael Thomas [Scandal, Till There Was You] is writing for us. It is a science-fiction thing and it’s going to need at least $20 million to make. But we have very little doubt that we’ll be able to finance it easily because it’s such a wonderful concept, Jim is also developing another project that’s going to cost...

JIM: Maybe as little as $3 million. It is a little bit more than the $1.5 million we were talking about earlier, but it’s in that general category. It does have international legs, but I want to keep it a really low budget because it’s a hard one. We want as much freedom as possible.

McELOy & McELOY Filmography

(All titles are features unless otherwise specified)

1974 The Cars That Ate Paris; 1975 Picnic at Hanging Rock; 1977 The Last Wave; 1978 Blue Fin; 1979 Deadline (tele-feature); 1981 A Dangerous Summer; Ratbags (13-episode television series); 1982 The Year of Living Dangerously; Return to Eden (6-hour mini-series); 1983 Razorback; 1984 Melvin, Son of Alvin; 1985 Remember Me (tele-feature); Return to Eden (22-episode television series); 1986 Late Night with Jono and Dano (live television variety); Sharks Paradise (tele-feature); The Last Frontier (4-hour mini-series); 1988 A Dangerous Life (6-hour mini-series); 1990 Till There Was You – in post-production 1990; 1990 Which Way Home (mini-series) – in pre-production.
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THE LAST NEWSREEL

Prod. company AFTRS
Dist. company Greater Union Org.
Director Stewart Burchmore
Producer Andrew Ganczarczyk
scriptwriter Marni Raprager

Synopsis: "The Last Newsreel" is a black-and-white film that celebrates the Operation Newsreel era. It features a fitting finale to the Newsreel era.

ONCE IN TIME

Prod. company AFTRS
Dist company AFI

Budget $122,624

Principal Credits

Director Isao Morimoto
Producer Felicity Nove
Scriptwriter Hilary Bell
D.O.P. Peter Borosh
Sound recordist Christian Bass
Editor Tanya Nehme
Costume designer Tor Larsen
Composer Anthony Partos

Planning and Development

Director Frances McGovern
Producer Ruth McHugh
Unit manager Annabel Scholes
Production runner Ian Moxon

Camera Crew

Camera operator Peter Borosh
Focus puller Andrew Worson
Key grip Tony Bosch
Asst grips Nick Rubic
Gaffer Ian Bosman
Best boy Phil Glen
On-set Crew

1st assist director Terry King
2nd assist director Michael Barlow
3rd assist director Todd Le May
Continuity Frances McGovern
Boom operators Mark Cornish

Make-up

Laboratory Marni Raprager
Sound Archive Wayne Hayes

Print stock Kodak 5231, 5222
Production National Film & Sound Archive

Cast: Annie Looby (Mable), Patrick Falzon (Johnny), ex-Cinesound - - Movietone staff and the people of Australia.

Synopsis: "The Last Newsreel" is a black-and-white film that celebrates Operation Newsreel era. It features a fitting finale to the Newsreel era.

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 Synopsis:
A humorous and dramatic look at the hidden side of koalas which reveals some very interesting and unusual behaviour. Using footage never before seen, Koalas highlights the extent to which Australians will go to help these lovable creatures.

FILM AUSTRALIA

KOALAS

Prod. company: FA
Production: 24/1/90 - 2/3/90
Director: Ian Munro
Producer: Ron Saunders
Scriptwriter: John Patterson
D.O.P.: Kim Batterham
Editor: Robin Archer
Prod. designer: Robert Dein
Costume design: Carol Connolly
Puppet design: Caroline Jones
Composer: Chris Neal
Prod. manager: Ken Anning
Prod. secretary: Sandie Morris
Prod. assistant: Browny Thompson
Prod. accountant: Rebekka Blackman
Key grip: Tony Bosch
Gaffer: Ian Andrews
Props maker: Richard Weight
Stunt props: Marcus Erasmus
Sound mixer: Kim Royle

Synopsis: Koalas is a humorous and dramatic look at the hidden side of koalas which reveals some very interesting and unusual behaviour. Using footage never before seen, Koalas highlights the extent to which Australians will go to help these lovable creatures.

TOYTIME

Prod. company: FA
Budget: $600,000
Production: 24/1/90 - 2/3/90
Director: Ian Munro
Producer: Ron Saunders
Scriptwriter: John Patterson
D.O.P.: Kim Batterham
Editor: Robin Archer
Prod. designer: Robert Dein
Costume design: Carol Connolly
Puppet design: Caroline Jones
Composer: Chris Neal
Prod. manager: Ken Anning
Prod. secretary: Sandie Morris
Prod. assistant: Browny Thompson
Prod. accountant: Rebekka Blackman
Key grip: Tony Bosch
Gaffer: Ian Andrews
Props maker: Richard Weight
Stunt props: Marcus Erasmus
Sound mixer: Kim Royle

Synopsis: A video to educate people in strategies to halt degradation of river managements.

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Prod. company ACTF
Dist. company Quartier Latin Int.
Budget $4.5 million (series of six dramas)
Pre-production 30/10/89 - 3/12/89
Production 4/12/89 - 23/12/89
Post-production 1/1/90 - 16/12/90

Principal Credits

Director Esben Storm
Producer Antonia Barnard
Exec. producer Patricia Edgar
Supervising prod. Ewan Burnett
Scriptwriter Steve J. Spears
D.O.P. Stephen Dobson
Sound recordist Paul Brincat
Costume designer Larry Eastwood

Planning and Development

Making & Marketing

Dist. company Quartier Latin Int.
Budget $4.5 million (series of six dramas)
Pre-production 30/10/89 - 3/12/89
Production 4/12/89 - 23/12/89
Post-production 1/1/90 - 16/12/90

Principal Credits

Director Esben Storm
Producer Antonia Barnard
Exec. producer Patricia Edgar
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Scriptwriter Steve J. Spears
D.O.P. Stephen Dobson
Sound recordist Paul Brincat
Costume designer Larry Eastwood

Planning and Development

Making & Marketing

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Producer Antonia Barnard
Exec. producer Patricia Edgar
Supervising prod. Ewan Burnett
Scriptwriter Steve J. Spears
D.O.P. Stephen Dobson
Sound recordist Paul Brincat
Costume designer Larry Eastwood

Planning and Development

Making & Marketing
touch with Centauri Headquarters, which enlists their aid to fight against a gang of terrorists in a Middle-eastern State.

**THE PAPER MAN**

**Producers**

Robert Hanlon, Jerome Ehlers, Janine Randolf, Terrie Vincent, Colette McKenna, John Pryce-Jones

**Directors**

Michael Carson, Paul Brocklebank, Graeme Nicholas, Ed Pyrlinski

**Screenplay**

Deborah Cox

**Based on**

John Hanlon brothers. She must call on all her powers to solve a mystery that threatens her job and her personal life.

**Production**

**Producers**

David Foreman, David Hirschfelder, Toivo Lember

**Directors**

Denise Haratzis, Jane Hyland, Diana Stuart

**Screenplay**

Hart Scott Rivoli, Peter Cawler

**Production**

**Producers**

Ron Sigwood, Susan Henry

**Directors**

Marcus Curtis, Gary Buss

**Screenplay**

Cinema Paper's

**Production**

**Producers**

Sharon Jackson, Val Smithers

**Directors**

Robert Van Amstell, Rachel Griffiths

**Screenplay**

Gary McKinnon, Andy McPhail

**Production**

**Producers**

David Foreman, Denis Harvey

**Directors**

Dennis Ruggiero, Latino Canale

**Screenplay**

Terry O'Quinn, Matt Czuchry

**Production**

**Producers**

Carolyn Mazzenga, Lance Hedges
IN THE CANNES

THE CROSSING
Directed by George Ogilvie

STRANGERS
Directed by Craig Lahiff

STRUCK BY LIGHTNING
Directed by Jerzy Domaradzki

THE MAGIC RIDDLE
Animation Directed and Produced by Yoram Gross

BEYOND INTERNATIONAL GROUP

EMERALD CITY
Directed by Michael Jenkins
Starring Nicole Kidman

Contact Gary Hamilton or Kaki Kirby
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Tina Turner kicked off the NSW Rugby League TV commercials and I used EXR stock to cover the play. Thrown in with these tough football players, Tina was great — and looking through the end of a 400mm lens she was electric, dynamic. Day interior, day exterior, night interior and night exterior with a chopper landing in the rain. I was amazed at how far into the black EXR 5296 searched. A lot of our shooting was at 50, 75, 100 frames and with this stock I knew I'd have more depth. It's good to shoot with a decent stop . . . something like 4 or 5.6. And pretty quick! A true EI 500. Grain? None! There was no grain and the blacks were black. It's simply the best. I could use EXR 5296 all the time. I know Tina and our director Dick Marks (of Dick Marks: the Australian Film Company) are more than happy.

David Bun
Director of Photography