Cinema Papers #80 August 1990

Scott Murray

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FRED SCHEPISI CAREER INTERVIEW
PLUS
CANNES 1990
PETER WEIR: 'GREENCARD'
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PARIS After visiting the Festival at Cannes, it was off to the cinema paradise of Paris where 313 feature films were showing in the city area. There is no place on earth that touches Paris as a place to see so wide a variety of films, to catch up on so many classics being properly shown in proper conditions (on 35 mm, not 16 mm).

Robert Bresson’s *Pickpocket* was one, showing to near-packed audiences on the Left Bank after years on the shelf for legal reasons. (*Une Femme Douce* was also in reprise.) It is extraordinary to finally see a decent print of this masterpiece, where the images are crisp and the black and white finely detailed, not a murky grey. One hopes someone can see their way to bringing it to Australia.

Also on show was Georges-Henri Clouzot’s *La Vérité*, shown near the Luxembourg Gardens in a sparkling new 35 mm print. Though perhaps a little attenuated in the increasingly grim second half, this is an extremely fine film and one of the better French films to attack ruthlessly its judicial system. It also showcases Brigitte Bardot at her finest, with an overly dramatic performance to match in quality her intensely soulful one in Jean-Luc Godard’s *Le Mépris*. No one who has seen *La Vérité* could any longer doubt her right to be taken as an important, serious actress.

Of the new films in release, the ones causing the biggest stir were Luc Besson’s *Nikita* and the reconstructed *Le Grand Bleu* and Jean-Paul Rappeneau’s *Cyrano de Bergerac* (see Cannes report).

In its full version (advertised at three hours but running at 167 mins), *The Big Blue* is many things the disgracefully butchered version shown in Australia is not. For one, it is coherent, and the relationship between Johanna (Rosanna Arquette) and Jacques Mayoll (Jean-Marc Barr) is powerfully felt as he struggles to form a human relationship on land, but fails, preferring the impossible: a life under the sea. Most of this relationship was not seen in Australia and it is little wonder many found the plot confusing or facile. In the full version it is neither, though its pleasures are mostly visual and stylistic.

Two key deletions were the love scenes. In Australia, the first was cut by Hoyts in an attempt to gain a lower censorship rating (interestingly, the critics were shown the unsnipped print). The second was never included in the Australian version, yet it is crucial to any understanding of Jacques’ inability to respond tactfully to earth-bound objects and people; it is only the sea and the life forms within it that he feels comfortable touching.

In the first love scene, Johanna is in the dominant position and Jacques lies beneath her, unsure about how to respond. In the second scene, their relationship having developed to a point where Jacques is for the first time at the point of becoming more than a mere reactor, has Jacques on top (*Besson* is a Latin, after all). One senses both the struggle and his sense of release. This in turn helps explain the nightmare of the sea’s closing in on him from above his bed; has he betrayed through this physical contact some bond with the sea?

More important still, this second love scene is what gives Johanna the confidence to assume she and Jacques can live ‘normally’ together on land and share a child. But Jacques has not reached that point and news of her pregnancy sets him on the inevitable path of withdrawal, ending with his forsaking all life on land.

Surprisingly, some people in France (including one expatriate writer I spoke with) have criticized Besson for releasing the long version, saying it is so sloppily put together that there are two World Diving Championships for the same year! Such criticism is misguided, the seeming repetition coming because Besson has a long flashback near the end which covers previous territory from a different angle. Specifically, in the film one first reaches Jacques’ decision to leave Johanna rather
Championship comes rather matter-of-factly. Abruptly, just as the conclusion to the Diving
where anything unusual or challenging is simply
is a marvellous narrative structure and works bril­
over lunch that Besson has the same problem as
Besson then goes back in time to re-examine this
indicates how the insidious simplemindedness of
wonder the millions who loved
around flashbacks and altering perspectives? No
missed out on savouring the intricacies and
king of Chicago never made it to lunch, and thus
conceit.
grammed role and adapting to a humanism that
film is her struggle between fulfilling her pro­
for rehabilitation. Here that means being turned
and is sent by the court to a psychiatric institution
Nikita,
seems to be welling to the surface in defiance of
The beginning is a dazzling display of tech­
new film, L'Y a des jours ... et des lunes, follows a disparate group of people over roughly twenty-four hours in Normandie. They appear to have nothing in common, except that each is battling on bravely against life's many problems. Lelouch holds back for even hinting at what may connect these people, thereby providing this seemingly divergent film with an uneasy tension. All is revealed with only minutes to go: all the characters are either involved in, or participants of, a minor car accident that leads to violence and death.

It is an extraordinarily brave thing to attempt—an examination of how violence can spontaneously and tragically erupt—and Lelouch pretty well pulls it off. Violence is often the culmination of simmering tensions set off by a purely arbitrary and accidental occurrence. Those tensions, as the film shows, may be the result of societal pressures (overwork, poor pay) or personal dramas (a marriage that fails on the wedding night). What is so uniquely Lelouch is that his vision hinges on individuals. Never for a second are they reduced, as political philosophers tend to do, to merely being a statistical part of a group. Quite clearly, Lelouch is in love with people (just as he

France it was being acclaimed as his best film in many years. It may well be, but how can one judge when only a handful of his thirty-one features have made it to Australia. It is a fine if over­
extended film and recalls the best films of his middle period, such as Toute Une Vie. Interest­
ingly, he uses a similar structure.

In Toute Une Vie, Lelouch chronicles what happens in the time leading up to two soon-to-be lovers meeting for the first time. On the girl's side, Lelouch recounts the histories of several preceding generations, while on the boy's he is only concerned with the period from his release from prison. (Most directors would have done the inevitable and kept both chronologies in step, but Lelouch is too much an individualist to settle for the obvious.) The structure works superbly and the final meeting between the lovers (off screen with a dialogue voice-over) is extremely moving after a three-hour build-up (yes, this film was pruned down for Australia as well).

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so obviously adores actors). His films have an invigorating warmth that, while sometimes a little whimsical, is never sentimental in the American sense. Most important, his viewpoint is never superior: he full well knows that he is one of the struggling individuals he films; and, if his camera sometimes sits aperched a tall crane, it is because the joyous magic of the cinema allows him to triumphantly record these individual dramas, the victories and failures, from on high.

In complete contrast is Quiet Days in Clichy, the latest in an all too-long line of disasters from Claude Chabrol. This is his most dispiriting film yet, a cynically disinterested remake of Henry Miller’s paean to sexual love. Made in Germany in English, it is a textbook case on all the possible horrors and misjudgements of international co-productions. Andrew McCarthy and Nigel Havers look nothing if not embarrassed by the whole enterprise, the sets of the Paris streets are simply ludicrous, the photography from the once great Jean Rabier is appalling and Chabrol’s direction indicates an interest only in the pay cheque. It will be interesting to see how the British critics, who have singlehandedly attempted to keep aloft his devastated critical standing (especially in France), will cope with a film as self-evidently bad as this.

In post-production in Paris was Ian Pringle’s Isabelle Eberhardt, a major Australian-French co-production about the pioneer explorer. The film has been shot in Tunisia and France, and stars Matilda May and Tchéky Karyo (from Nikita and The Bear). Pringle is presently working with editor Ken Sallows at Aramis Films in the heart of Paris. The sound editing and mixing will be done in Australia.

Another Australian co-production to recently complete filming in Paris is Dings. It is directed by Rolf de Heer and stars Miles Davis.

**LONDON** In England, the film industry was in a state of turmoil. Apart from the many relatively low-budget Film Four (co-)productions, there is little indigenous production. There were signs of interest, however, from the Government and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was due to appear at a symposium on how to save the industry. Tax benefits were being discussed.

The one British film to be released the week of visiting London was Nick Broomfield’s Diamond Skulls. This is the sort of film that led local critics to muse on whether England deserved to have an industry. Starring the totally inanimate Gabriel Byrne and the usually excellent Amanda Donohoe, this is a silly film about class privilege (surprise!) and how the upper class will even resort to murder to prevent the plebs from knowing what’s going on.

In many ways an unnecessary revolution to the British cinema of the 1960s, but with none of Losey’s skill or grace, this film seems designed for those whose hatred of privilege is so great as to blind all critical facilities. The rest of the world will sit in disbelief at this phonily scripted farce. That Channel Four should have funded it suggests a serious lapse in judgement.

Also on show, but from across the Channel, was Patrice Leconte’s Monsieur Hire. No two films could be more opposite, could more effectively epitomize the fundamental differences between British and French cinema today.

Monsieur Hire is an adaptation of Georges Simenon’s Les Fiancailles de M. Hire. It is a brilliant examination of the interchangeability of voyeur and observed, and of the dangerous games that can be played when the outward performance of a relationship changes. So accurately and precisely does it explore its subject that it renders the many articles written about voyeurism in the cinema quite superfluous: show the film instead. Fortunately, this will be released in Australia, an optimistic note to end on.

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**LETTER**

Dear [Editor],

I’m a great admirer of Cinema Papers and read it avidly as soon as it appears in my letter box. Regarding your Australian Film Production 1980-89 survey on page 34 of issue 79, I take up your invitation to make a comment.

In the survey you claim: “This is the first known attempt at listing all the Australian theatrical features made during the 1980s.” The Encore Directory, currently in its fifth edition, has provided since its inception in 1986 a comprehensive listing of all features, mini-series and telefilms made in Australia since 1970 and including producer, director and writer credits. The first few listings were compiled by Val and John Daniell and last year the Encore Directory staff took over this task themselves.

Also, I believe that the Australian Film Commission’s annual reports for most of the past 10 years have carried comprehensive listings of not only features made in that particular year but also updated lists going back to 1975.

By the way, Bob Robertson, the editor of the Encore Directory, is compiling the 1991 issue and your readers who work in film or television might like to update their listing by contacting her at PO Box 1377, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010 Yours sincerely,

Sandy George

**EDiTOR, ENCORE**

The Editor replies:

Ms George’s kind letter is based on not having read the quoted sentence as literally as was intended. While The Encore Directory gives annual listings of features, tele-features and mini-series, it makes no attempt (nor should it) to differentiate between features that received a theatrical release and those that didn’t (ditto the AFC annual reports). As well, the The Encore Directory dates features (as does the AFC listings) according to the financial year that production started, not the year of completion or first screening.

Thus, it is a question of an absence of interest or research by others, but of different approaches.

One book which does attempt a similar coverage to Cinema Papers is the recent Get The Picture (Peta Spear [ed.], AFC, Sydney, 1988). It provides a theatrical listing, but unfortunately stops in 1987.

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**AWARDS AND PRIZES**

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**DENDY AWARDS FOR AUSTRALIAN SHORT FILMS**

- **GENERAL CATEGORY** Teenage Babylon (Graeme Wood)
- **FICTION CATEGORY** Outside Looking In (Brendan Dahg)
- **DOCUMENTARY CATEGORY** No Problem (Jackie McKimmie)
- **YORAM GROSS ANIMATION AWARD** Feral Television (Damien Ledwich)
- **STA TRAVELAWARD Swimming** (Belinda Chayko)

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**1990 MELBOURNE FILM FESTIVAL SHORT FILM PRIZES**

- **GRAND PRIX Swimming** (Belinda Chayko, Australia)
- **BEST FICTION FILM He Was Once** (Mary Hestand, U.S.)
- **BEST DOCUMENTARY** (Noriko Sekiguchi, Australia) and Elephants (Jeremiah Hayes, Canada)
- **BEST ANIMATION FILM** (Brendan Dahg)
- **BEST EXPERIMENTAL FILM** Jolioue Touriste (Louise Bourque, Canada)
- **BEST AUSTRALIAN FILM Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy** (Tracey Moffatt, Australia)
- **BEST STUDENT FILM** A Rat in the Building (Andrew Horne, Australia)

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**BANFF AWARD**

Don Featherstone’s Difficult Pleasure, a film about artist Brett Whiteley, has won the Arts Documentary category at the Banff Television Festival. The film is part of the “Creative Spirits” series shown on the ABC last year.
AUSTRALIAN FILM FINANCE CORPORATION
FUNDING DECISIONS APRIL – JUNE

**APRIL • FEATURES**


**RESISTANCE** (91 mins) Macau Light Film Production. Producers: Pauline Rosenberg, Christina Ferguson. In a futuristic country town, anarchy is brewing among the workers while the nation is on the brink of martial law.


**APRIL • DOCUMENTARIES**

**WHITLAM** (80 mins) Lighthouse Films. Producer: Mark Davis. Gough Whitlam’s vision wrought indelible changes in Australians’ attitude to politics and culture, and their relationship to the rest of the world.

**OUT OF MIND** (1 hr) Anne Deveson Productions. Producer: Anne Deveson. 1 in 100 people world-wide will have schizophrenia at some time in their life.

**APRIL • TELEVISION**

**LUCY** (15 hrs) Producer: Jonathan Shiff. Lucky, a smarter than average police dog, is retired into the care of two children.

**GOLDEN FIDDLES** (2 x 2 hr) South Australian Film Corporation. Executive producer: Jock Blair. Producers: Gus Howard (Australia), Wendy Wacko (Canada). Australian-Canadian co-production. Struggling farming family in the Depression inherits great wealth. They set out to fulfill their dreams.

**MAY • FEATURES**

**SWEET TALKER** (90 mins) Confidence Productions. Executive producers: Taylor Hackford, Stuart Benjamin. Producer: Ben Gannon. Director: Michael Jenkins. Cast: Bryan Brown, Karen Allen. Common Harry Reynolds leaves prison and sets up a scam in a sleepy fishing village. (The FFC has agreed to provide a loan to cover print and advertising costs arising from a cinema release of this feature in the U.S.)

**BLINKY BILL** (80 mins) Yoram Gross Film Studios. Producer: Sandra Gross. Director: Yoram Gross. Animated feature based on Dorothy Hall’s book. A young koala is separated from his mother when loggers destroy their forest.

**JUNE • FEATURE**

**BLACK ROBE** (100 mins) Canadian-Australian co-production between Alliance Entertainment Corporation and Samson Productions. Executive producer: Robert Lantos. Co-producers: Robert Lantos, Sue Milliken. Director: Bruce Beresford. In the 17th century a young Jesuit is sent to a remote Quebec mission where his faith is put to a violent test. (FFC investment is limited to funding the Australian elements taking part in the production.)

**JUNE • TELEVISION**

**THE RIVER KINGS** (4 x 1 hr) Prospect Productions. Producer: Rob George. Director: Donald Crombie. In 1922 a young man leaves his impoverished family and heads for the River Murray. Based on Max Fatchen’s novel.

**BRIDES OF CHRIST** (6 x 1 hr) Roadshow Coote & Caroll. Executive producers: Penny Chapman, John Kelleher. Producer: Sue Masters. Director: Ken Cameron. Nuns and their students, protected from the world by convent walls, live by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

**JUNE • DOCUMENTARIES**


**SACRED SEX** (4 x 30 mins) Golday. Producer: Cynthia Conop. An international cross-cultural documentary on love and sex.


**POET IN A BUBBLE** (1 hr) Titus Films. Producers: Nicholas Adler, Caroline Sherwood. Story of a nine-year-old boy who suffers from total allergy syndrome, and whose first book of poems is about to be published.

**DIAMOND EMPIRE** (5 x 1 hr) Impact Media Productions. Executive producers: David Flanningham, William Cran. Producer: Jan Roberts. Investigation of the intrigue and geo-politics of the international diamond world. The FFC also approved a print and advertising loan to FATHER, the feature produced by Damian Parer for Barron Films and directed by John Power.

In the financial year 1989-90, the FFC committed itself to support 66 projects with total budgets of approximately $213 million.

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**AGENDA AND CORRIGENDA**

Given the usual mad rush of preparing a special Cannes issue, several regrettable errors crept into the last issue. Cinema Papers extends its apologies to those affected by them.

- The photograph on p. 6 of Jim and Hal McElroy was taken by Jim Townley, not by Lorrie Graham as credited.
- In “Australian Film Production 1980-89”, pp. 34 – 35, Jane Campion’s Sweetie is missing from the list of 1989 theatrical releases.
- American director Sydney Pollack has sadly been the victim of two recent misspellings, including an “i” for a “y” and an “o” for an “a”. The above spelling is correct.
- The list published as “The Australian Record at Cannes” (p. 47) was incomplete. One should add to the Directors’ Fortnight listing: 1970 David Perry (Albie Thomas); 1971 Please Don’t Stand on My Sunshine (Sonnia Hoffman). And to Un Certain Regard: 1988 Pleasure Domes (Maggie Fookes). There is also Mepostudios, which was shown in Un Certain Regard in 1988. It is a U.K.-South Africa-Australia production and is not generally included in Australian listings. Taking into account the four Australian films shown officially at Cannes in 1990, the full list, which is printed here for the record, is:

**AUSTRALIAN FILMS AT CANNES**

**COMPETITION**

1978 The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith (Fred Schepisi)
1979 My Brilliant Career (Gillian Armstrong)
1980 Breaker Morant (Bruce Beresford)
1983 The Year of Living Dangerously (Peter Weir) classified as an Australia-U.S. co-production
1985 Blia (Ray Lawrence)
1986 The Coca-Cola Kid (Dusan Makavejev)
1988 The Fringe Dwellers (Bruce Beresford)
1988 The Navigator (Vincent Ward)
1989 A Cry in the Dark (aka Evil Angels, Fred Schepisi)
1990 Sweetie (Jane Campion)

**UN CERTAIN REGARD**

1982 Monkey Grip (Ken Cameron)
1984 Man of Flowers (Paul Cox)
1986 Backlash (Bill Bennett)
1988 Burke and Wills (Graeme Clifford)
1990 A Girl’s Own Story (Jane Campion)
1991 Passionless Moments (Jane Campion)
1992 Two Friends (Jane Campion)
1994 A Song of Air (Merilee Bennetts)
1995 Pleasure Domes (Maggie Fookes)
1996 Malpractice (Bill Bennett)
1997 The Prisoner of St Petersburg (Ian Pringle)
1999 Hangop (Pauline Chan)

**LA SEMAINE DE LA CRITIQUE / CRITIC’S WEEEK**

1986 Devil in the Flesh (Scott Murray)
1986 LA QUINZAINES DES REALISATEURS (DIRECTORS’ FORTNIGHT)
1970 David Perry (Albie Thomas)
1971 Please Don’t Stand on My Sunshine (Sonnia Hoffman)
1975 Sunday too far Away (Ken Hannam)
1976 The Devil’s Playground (Fred Schepisi)
1978 The Getting of Wisdom (Bruce Beresford)
1982 Heatwave (Phil Noyce)
1986 Cactus (Paul Cox)
1987 The Surfer (Frank Shields)

**SHORTS COMPETITION**

1986 Peet (Jane Campion)
1987 Paleida (Laurie McInnes)
1990 Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy (Tracey Moffatt)

**SPECIAL SCREENINGS**

1987 Feathers (John Ruane)
1987 The Sentimental Bloke (Raymond Longford)

**JUNIOR CANNES**

1986 Fast Talking (Ken Cameron)

**AWARDS**

1980 Jack Thompson, for Best Supporting Actor (in Breaker Morant)
1986 Peet, Palme d’Or for Best Short Film
1987 Palme d’Or for Best Short Film

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**CINEMA PAPERS 80 • 5**
PETER WEIR
DURING THE FILMING OF
DEAD POETS SOCIETY
PHOTOGRAPH BY
FRANCOIS DUHAMEL
Peter Weir is following his enormously successful *Dead Poets Society* with *Greencard*, an independently financed film being made in New York. It is a comedy about a French composer, played by Gérard Depardieu, who comes to New York to start a new life. He desperately wants a union green card and enters a marriage of convenience with an American woman (Andie MacDowell). When immigration officials decide to investigate their marriage, they must unexpectedly and reluctantly live together for 48 hours.

At the time of this phone interview, Weir was deeply enmeshed in pre-production. He was also awaiting approval of the film as an official Australian-French co-production. This has since been achieved and *Greencard* is among the most recent group of films to be part financed by the Australian Film Finance Corporation.
In what way will *Greencard* qualify as a co-production?

The two things that aren't Australian are the subject matter and the fact there are no Australian actors. But I'm the director-writer-producer; my wife, Wendy, is the production designer; and the cameraman [Geoff Simpson] and the editor are Australian. So we gain on the points system there.

*Greencard* is a test case, actually. It's an *auteur* film, made overseas by an Australian director, with the involvement of French components.

Why have you chosen to do this film without the involvement of a major studio?

It seemed more logical this time, given it's my own screenplay and a very low-budget film. I have more control working outside the studio system. It is the same way I used to work in the early days.

I don't always want to be Hollywood based. In fact, I've been wanting to do this film for a long time before *Dead Poets*. It just got delayed.

What was the inspiration for the script?

It's an original screenplay written by me for Gérard Depardieu. A number of the character details are actually taken from his life.

admire him, and it seems an awful loss that he is largely unknown to English-speaking audiences, apart from real filmgoers. Most people just don't go to foreign movies.

Gérard is approaching 40 and I wanted to bring him something he could do in English. So, I tailored it. I knew he spoke English, though not fluently, and I tried to combine those elements of his talents that I'd seen on screen in various French movies - from his comedic sense to his edge of mystery, his romantic side.

Hasn't Depardieu attempted an English-language film before?

The right situation hadn't come along. He likes to work with *auteurs*, with writer-directors, and be part of the process of developing the screenplay. He doesn't just take a job; he likes to have a complete involvement. He's not interested in just turning up and being paid. He would never go to Hollywood and make a James Bond film.

Gérard came to Sydney for a couple of weeks last November so that we could work together. We have been building up this collaboration since before *Dead Poets*.

Have you always wanted to make Hollywood films?

Like most people, I grew up going to commercial cinema, and Hollywood was its primary source.

I always thought it would be great to make movies in Hollywood, but under my terms. They have to come from me, even if I haven't written them. I have to feel passionate about them, or feel they are part of me in some way. I have never wanted to go over there as a hired gun and say, "Get me a job."

Did you grow up with an ambition for directing?

When I started in film I tried everything - a bit of acting, writing, directing. But after a while I felt I had more talent beside the camera than in front of it. It was an evolution; I had no grand plan, no feeling of certainty. There wasn't even an industry when I started in the late 1960s.

Do you have a favourite film?

The films are like children in my family: there are things you like and dislike about each of them. They all have their own personalities. But *Gallipoli* and *Dead Poets* I'm very fond of.

Were you disappointed by the reception to *The Mosquito Coast*?
It was very disappointing for all involved. It was not a success anywhere, and it had vicious reviews in New York. But I have no regrets: I loved making it. It was simply a story people didn’t want to see. From early market tests we realized that they didn’t like the concept. They did not like the very thing that had moved me to make it.

How do you feel about *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *Gallipoli* being re-released in Australia? Is it premature to have a retrospective?

They are trying to make them work again commercially, and it’s wonderful if the films do have another life. It remains to be seen, though, with the public.

With the 75th anniversary of Gallipoli, they are hoping that a generation which hadn’t seen the film before will come.

Compared to films like *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Gallipoli* is much subtler in its anti-war approach.

I think that all people who make a war film are really anti-war. That goes without saying. We’ve all come to realize there are no victors or defeats in a war; there’s only destruction.

With *Gallipoli* I wanted to make a film about life and about death, a tragedy which just happened to be set in a war. I wanted you to get to know a generation of Australians who gave their lives in that war.

Frank Dunne [Mel Gibson] was a new European man, shaped by the outback and the hard and difficult experiences that living in Australia meant in those times. Australians like him were all of the things we probably turn into caricature now, but they were very real then.

**Financial Underwriting of Filmmaking Can Be Very Dangerous Because People Focus on Getting Their Applications Through the System, Rather Than on Working in a Tougher Free Market**

I always feel that the money will come if the idea is deep inside you and can’t be stopped — that’s what is important, not government bodies, meetings and lawyers.**

*Gallipoli* was the first Australian film to be distributed by a major American studio. It must have signalled for you an acceptance by the international film community.

At the time, it was a milestone, but subsequently I came to think we would have done better with a smaller distributor. It had a very modest success in America. We were with Paramount, which at the time also had *Reds* coming out. That’s where their interests were; they had so much money invested in it.

Paramount lost interest in us after a couple of weeks, just when we should have been nurtured like *Chariots of Fire* had been. But it did do well on television and rental. Of course, we should have changed the name: they could hardly pronounce it.

Elsewhere you have compared *Dead Poets Society* with *Gallipoli*. What did you mean by that?

In the sense of youth and spirit, and the fragility of physical and moral danger — moral in the sense that you knew that the Frank Dunne who comes back to Australia is very different to the one who went. A new type of cynicism had entered society.

The kids in *Dead Poets* are the same age as Frank, at that critical point where their lives can open up or be closed down by the education process. It can narrow their outlook and potential.

Apart from having that in common, there is an incredible energy that comes off kids at that age: the potential is just fantastic. You wonder where it all goes, as Mr Keating [Robin Williams] does in *Dead Poets*. The officer in the trench in *Gallipoli* knows it’s about to be extinguished — all for nothing.

I was in that kind of school, in that kind of classroom, in that year, 1959, at that age. But I didn’t have any caves or poetry. And I didn’t exactly have a Mr Keating, though everyone has somebody they remember as having given them something.

Why do you think *Dead Poets* was so embraced by Americans when it seems more European in its intent?

People are hungry. *Dead Poets* and films like *My Left Foot* and *Henry V* are showing that people want more rich and thoughtful movies. It’s that famous dilemma: Are the people getting what they want, or are they just accepting what they’re given?

When we conducted marketing tests on *Dead Poets*, we kept going into tougher and tougher territories. We started in the cities, then moved to the blue-collars. After that we went to the deep south and the ghettos. And every time we tested minorities, we had a very concept that winning is everything, so I couldn’t understand it. I didn’t realize then that Australians, through that action, were identified as a nation for the first time. I only understood that much later, and going to Gallipoli brought it home to me very sharply.

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were pleased with the Academy-Award nominations?

How would you explain that reaction to the film?

I don’t know, really. People rarely tell me if they don’t like a film. They only say something if they like it, and you can get a very false picture. You tend to think everyone who goes will like it, that they will be champions of the film.

Were you pleased with the Academy-Award nominations?

We didn’t count on them. Most films which are thought to have a chance are held back and released just before Christmas. But we went out much earlier and finished our run early in the year. That we were remembered was quite terrific.

Strong response. Given my kind of filmmaking, that was very exciting. How would you explain that reaction to the film?

I don’t know, really. People rarely tell me if they don’t like a film. They only say something if they like it, and you can get a very false picture. You tend to think everyone who goes will like it, that they will be champions of the film.

Were you as surprised at Bruce Beresford’s omission?

It was pretty hard to understand; absurd. He hired all those [Award-winning] people, and was involved in everything they did. That’s nothing to do with the film I made.

Americans have always been willing to open their doors to foreigners. Are Australians yet another example?

Hollywood will take and pay anyone who can do the job. Talent is something they don’t have any reserve in acknowledging, in the best and the worst ways. That is something you come to appreciate when you come over here and work.

You also feel embarrassed when our own unions in the entertainment field get hypersensitive about some situations. In the past few years there have been occasions where we [overseas-working] Aust-

tralis - actors, technicians and directors – have been embarrassed by the lack of generosity shown by our counterparts back home.

Are Australians too egalitarian?

It’s a cultural difference; each has its pros and cons. The good side of the tall-poppy syndrome is that we have a healthy attitude to pomposity, and a good, hard eye on the reality of situations. That’s the positive side. But it can lean over to suspecting anyone who’s been successful. Americans, on the other hand, can be excessive in idolizing minor successes or people who have simply made money.

There seems to be a lot of sour grapes in the Australian film industry at the moment.

I think “industry” is a bad word. Artists aren’t part of an industry. Industries give you the impression of highly designed systems that produce product. And the only place in the world like that is Hollywood, and there will never be another one. There is only room for one Hollywood.

As for the situation in Australia, I’m not that much in touch. All I do is look for the movies. Maybe there are fewer than before, but just recently Jane Campion’s *Sweetie* had enormous success on the art-house circuit in New York.

I guess it’s a case of keeping fingers crossed that there is a generation of Australians out there who will cut through the bureaucracy and find their own voice. Money is a part of it, but not the cause of new people coming through. Artists will be there regardless of the times.

There’s no question that it’s hard to get started in Australia now. It was easier when I was there in the late 1960s and early ’70s. There was no generation before us, unless you looked back to the time of Ken Hall and Chauvel, and they seemed so remote. We were writing the rule book, looking at films from other countries and then going out and shooting stuff ourselves, with no one to compare us to. It’s harder now, with younger filmmakers being pressured by producers to make films based on past hits.

Financial underwriting of filmmaking can be very dangerous because people focus on getting their applications through the system, rather than on working in a tougher free market. Steven Soderbergh somehow got the money for *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*. Nothing could stop his talent and the story he wanted to tell. Nothing stopped Kenneth Branagh doing a new version of *Henry V*, which must have caused a few blank stares when he first said he wanted to do it.

I always feel that the money will come if the idea is deep inside you and can’t be stopped. When you’re on fire, you somehow make it happen. That’s what is important, not government bodies, meetings and lawyers.

Do you spend much time in Australia, or are you always overseas?

People always think that. No, I live in Sydney and during any twelve months I spend about half my time in Australia. I cut my films there.

Do you ever feel that you lead the life of a gypsy?

Anyone who makes a living out of the arts has a gypsy spirit: you’re at home with your own kind wherever they are. There’s nothing better than talking with a bunch of film people in England or Australia or the U.S.: you immediately have so much in common.
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cannes 1990
CANNES 1990 WAS NOT A VINTAGE YEAR FOR AUSTRALIAN CINEMA, BUT, FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD, THINGS LOOKED FAIRLY BRIGHT. ALMOST ALL THE FILMS WERE SOLID AND WELL CRAFTED, AND FROM EASTERN EUROPE AND THE USSR CAME SIGNS OF AN INVIGORATING CINEMATIC REBIRTH.

After thirty-two hours en route, it is a wondrous relief to finally catch an airborne glimpse of the sharply hilled Côte d'Azur. And in the hazy distance is the white-faced town of Nice, and France's second busiest airport. Quickly through customs (this is not Australia), and one faces a difficult choice: queue for the extended bus trip to Cannes or take the nightmare taxi ride along the autoroute. Tiredness necessitated the latter, and soon a sparkling new Mercedes was sitting contentedly on 180 kph. Fifteen minutes later, and 400FF (AUS $100) the poorer, one was in Cannes, location of the world's most important film festival.

One is always excited to be back, and it isn't just for the seaside locale, which increasingly looks like a construction site and less like a Mediterranean resort. Almost every building of architectural or historic worth is going or gone, replaced by soulless towers of flats that scar the town and cast Surfers Paradise-like shadows over everything except the manicured sand.

One relatively new architectural conglomeration is the Palais de Festival, a warren of screening rooms and labyrinthine passages. But apart from a lack of open doors when one really needs them, the Palais works with admirable efficiency. Attendees have everything they could desire: a schedule that runs to the minute, up-to-date press information and even voice-over translations (through headphones) for films not sub-titled in English. All this is just as well, as forty thousand descend on Cannes, location of the world's most important film festival.

Apart from the international critics, there to scan the Festival for the new film that convinces people that cinema isn't yet dead, there are the film producers and buyers. Theirs is a totally separate existence of business by day and gala premieres at night in black tie (a rule from which even anarchistic directors are not exempt). Together with the stars, it is the powerful who provide the 'glamour' of Cannes and who help reinforce the uniquely French class system, where everyone is graded from superstar down to scruffy critic.

All the Australians at Cannes in 1990 were there to do business, either looking for films to distribute or selling films and ideas. Some cope extremely well with the mad hustle and boozy business deals, grabbing whatever opportunities they can get to corner important financiers and 'sell' their latest concept. Others seem a little overawed and rely extensively on the back-up provided by the Australian Film Commission. This year, the AFC had its usual offices atop a modern block of flats, next to where the grand old Palais once stood (actually it was a rather ugly building, but one is nostalgic for it now). The AFC also had a stand in the lobby of the Carlton Hotel, with staff to answer queries.

As there was no Australian feature selected for any of the events, it was hard to generate excitement about the state of the industry. The mere fact that Australia is expected to have at least one feature selected, but didn't, caused many to think we were going through dire times down under. This hardly helped the sellers trying to pitch new projects. However, the hardworking and resilient seemed by Festival's end to have overcome any initial negativity and achieved results.

The absence of a selected feature challenges the very basis by which money is poured into filmmaking by the Film Finance Corporation, the AFC and the state bodies. Of course, the FFC deliberately does not take aesthetic considerations into account, but the others do. A recent example is Paul Cox's new film, Golden Braid, which was totally funded by the AFC and Film Victoria. It was not selected by any of the events at Cannes. This does not mean per se that it is not a good film, but the Cannes rejection does indicate that either it is a disappointing film from an admired director (a commonly held view of those who have seen it) or that it is not a film of festival interest (the Cannes Festival's view of Nadia Toss' work, for example).

Now, some Australians consider the importance given to Cannes quite misguided, arguing it is an ego wank for uncommercial filmmakers. This is obviously untrue given even a cursory glance of the variety and quality of the films shown.
More important, selection at Cannes is often essential in generating a decent world sale (cf Sweetie). No other festival combines the critical and commercial aspects the way Cannes does; merely having a film in an event can help the funding of the next because the financiers are doing business within that festival environment.

As for whether the selection of films is taken too seriously, the fact remains that very few non-American films surface at the other festivals, or in general release, which critically match those shown at Cannes. Some might cite Hou Hsiao-hsien’s A City of Sadness as an exception (it premiered in Venezuela), but Cannes had already discovered his work and the new film is arguably not as fine as some of his preceding ones.

The reason all this is mentioned here is that three filmmakers had short films selected at Cannes: Tracey Moffatt with Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy in the shorts Competition; Pauline Chan with Hangup and The Space between the Door & the Floor, and Lawrence Johnston’s Night Out in Un Certain Regard. All films were very well received, which hardly any of the Australians at Cannes would have noticed because, apart from AFC staff, almost no Australians went. This lack of support is extraordinary: if a Danish film is screening, for example, you can bet every Dane in Cannes will go along for moral support; not so with Australians.

All three filmmakers showed beyond doubt that they are capable of making interesting and possibly important films. But once back in Oz, will support and recognition be forthcoming or will they be sent to the end of the queue? Is there anyone back home who will care?

THE FILMS

THE BEST FILM at Cannes 1990 was Shi no Toge (The Sting of Death), from Kohei Oguri, director of the much acclaimed Muddy River. The Sting of Death may well be the best Japanese film since Yoshige Yoshida’s Coup d’Etat and is affirmation of Oguri’s position as the greatest working Japanese director.

The Sting of Death is a film on many levels. Ostensibly it is the story of a marriage in crisis, but it is also a study of post-war Japan and of male-female roles within all societies.

Toshio (Ittoku Kishibe) was a member of an élite suicide squad during World War II, but was saved (ironically) from a ‘glorious’ death by the bombing of Hiroshima. That very salvation left him with a sense of life temporarily suspended and, in that state, he married an island girl, Miho (Keiko Matsuzaka). They then moved to Tokyo, where they brought up two children and he attempted to make a living as a writer.

By the 1950s, however, the marriage is in ruins, Miho suffering a mental breakdown as a result of Toshio’s having an extra-marital affair. It is at this point the film begins.

Insanely jealous, Miho threatens suicide (thereby mirroring, in a perverse way, Toshio’s mission during the war). Unable to face responsibility for her death, Toshio promises to do whatever she asks. In effect, he becomes her slave, reversing aspects of traditional, Japanese male-female roles. Soon they descend into a nightmare of emotional sado-masochism, resulting in a fumbled attempt at double suicide.

Up to here, the film is hypnotic, an extraordinary precisely and subtle piece of filmmaking. But not it seems for all, and the Cannes audience responded with whistles, laughter and booing. Despite this disruptive rudeness (why don’t people just leave?), the film managed to hold its own. Moving at the traditionally Japanese pace of a slow-moving brook, the film agonizingly details a further descent in breakdown and incarceration. But at the very nadir, with the parents separated from their children and dead within, a rebirth finally becomes possible. However, the path back to stability will be a difficult and tortuous one.

On an important level, Oguri charts how the post-war industrial boom in Japan gave a Western sheen to a lifestyle that was still ruled, often subconsciously, by traditions and values centuries old. A painful period of re-adjustment was ahead, one that would test not only the contradictions of sex roles but of materialism and its clash with the spiritual culture.

But for Westerners, it is perhaps the story of a marriage racked by jealousy that is most telling. It is frightening companion piece to The War of the Roses, where a death of desire, of respect, can lead to the most awful cruelty and destruction.

The only film to compare in cinematic rigour was Raymond Depardon’s La Captive du Désert, a ‘recreation’ of a famous case where a French woman was captured by African freedom fighters and held captive in the desert.

By eschewing traditional narrative and going for near static moments which approximate the sense and essence of being in the desert, surrounded by endless sand and stillness, in a place where boundaries cannot be defined, Depardon has made a surprisingly hypnotic film. Like Jean-Louis Bertuccelli’s Ramparts of Clay in its sparseness and restraint, La Captive du Désert will infuriate many. But in many ways it is the film from Cannes which lingers most in the memory. Brilliantly shot
by a crew of only five, with a strong performance by Sandrine Bonnaire, who has little more than ten lines yet is in almost every shot, it deserves a wider release and regard than it will no doubt get. The French have made many poetic, almost ethnographic, films; this is one of the most interesting.

These films aside, the biggest revelation at Cannes was Pavel Lounguine’s Taxi Blues, a dazzling evocation of the dark underside of modern Moscow, where a black market mentality has institutionalized greed and helped destroy possibilities it cannot understand. But, being Russia, nothing is black and white, and the forces that corrupt can also bind with a kind of love.

Schlikov (Piotr Zaichenko) is a taxi driver who knows and plays the black market; he is the one to go to if you want under-the-counter meat or a bottle of vodka after hours. But one night a drunken group of passengers disappear before paying the 600 rouble fare. Obsessed with its recovery, Schlikov tracks down one of the passengers, Liocha (Piotr Mamonov), and forces him into menial tasks to repay the debt. Stripped of most of his clothes and dignity, Liocha becomes Schlikov’s slave, a return to the master-servant exploitations of Czarist Russia. What Schlikov cannot appreciate is that Liocha’s rare skills as a saxophonist could bring far better and more fulfilling rewards. But because Schlikov is so limited by his own blinkered vision, he becomes a greatly tragic figure, symbolic of changes within Russia which put materialistic imperatives ahead of humanist. And unless it can see itself able to countenance both, Russia seems set on a doomed course.

The exploitation of one individual by another reminds one of the intense and destructive bonds in Dostoevsky’s work. But whereas Dostoevsky so often introduces goodness only to crush it, Lounguine’s optimism allows for a reversal of roles. Liocha is discovered by a visiting jazz musician, Hal Singer, and is whizzed off to the U.S. to return a Soviet star. Schlikov is forced to watch from the sidelines and his attempts to re-establish their old relationship fail. The image of Schlikov’s standing by his taxi in the middle of a Moscow thoroughfare, watching a giant video-screen image of Liocha playing his sax, is easily the Festival’s most haunting, and a tragically sad comment on potentials lost through narrowedness.

More important, Lounguine has allowed an otherwise dark character his moment of sympathy. Like his great Russian predecessors, Lounguine realizes that evil is nowhere near as far from goodness as the Manichean system suggests, that relationships can never be entirely pure but are a shifting, uneasy tension between the various forces that mould individuals and nations.

Taxi Blues is a wonderfully rich film of perestroika. One can hardly wait for the second instalment in this fascinating chronicle of a love-hate relationship with a soulful motherland.

Also at Cannes were two previously suppressed films from the once Communist block. Karel Kachyna’s biting parable of Stalinist times in Czechoslovakia, Ucho (The Ear), was shot in 1969 but suppressed on completion the next year. Twenty years later, it premiered in Cannes.

Ludvik (Radoslav Brzobohaty), a high government official, and his wife, Anna (Jirina Bohdalova), are at a coldly-formal presidential function in Prague when Ludvik begins noticing that several of his colleagues and superiors are missing. A few guests even make oblique remarks of surprise at seeing Ludvik there. The couple then return to their up-market house to find it dark and the power cut off. Safe from no one, least of all themselves and their half-truths, Anna and Ludvik then wait it out to the expected arrest before dawn. For a wife of a politician in Czechoslovakia at that time, this is simply unbelievable and works against Kachyna’s notion of an all-terrifying State.

That said, The Ear is a crisply made film and gloriously shot in black and white. At its best, it reminds one of the marvellous, badly long gone, halcyon days of the Czech cinema. It is also so boldly critical that one wonders how a man could put his life’s work at such
risk by going so far out on a limb. But in these post-Communist times it is easy to lose perspective and imagine that life in all the Eastern block countries was nothing less than a nightmare. In Kachyna’s case, his anti-State stand seems to not have affected him at all. Far from being banned from filmmaking, he made the same year Uz Zase Shkicu Pres Kaftase (I Can Jump Puddles Again), a film in 1971, another in 1972, two in 1973, and in 1974, etc. In all, 22 films in less than two decades. So much for the repressive State closing off this artist’s career!

It is quite possible, though, that Kachyna felt his career was on the line and nothing should be taken away from the obvious bravery of the man. Oh that Australian films were so boldly and precisely confrontational.

Far less satisfying was Ryszard Bugajski’s Przesłuchanie (The Interrogation), an example of the Polish cinema at its most hysterical. This ludicrously over-directed and -acted film of Stalinist terror is memorable largely for the scene where the heroine, Tonia (Krystyna Janda), tries to commit suicide by biting through her wrists. In the great Cannes tradition of bizarre prize giving, Janda won the award for Best Actress.

While responsibility for the risibly misjudged exercise must lie with the director, Bugajski’s style is really just another example of a Polish director pushing the boundaries of the official film school approach to directing: wobbly camera, murky lighting, exaggerated performances, lightning-fast editing, et al. It highlights the very dangers, observable already in Australia, of training directors en masse according to a given, and necessarily narrow, view of the cinema.

Equally disappointing, especially as it is the director’s last film before a career in politics, was Andrzej Wajda’s Korczak. It is the story of a Polish doctor who cared for, and then voluntarily died with, two hundred Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto. A paean to the beauty and innocence of youth, it had the potential to be a powerfully wrought work. But Wajda’s stolid direction and the perversely skeletal script result in a film that is unconvincing and dull.

Wajda’s nostalgic view of childhood innocence also reeks of an old man’s uncritical looking back. The children are absurdly pure, as stereotyped in their different ways as the brutal German officers. One scene even has a halo appear on a child’s pillow. And, at film’s end, instead of showing the children die in the gas chambers, Wajda has then run off in slow motion into a misty forest. Not even Disney at its most saccharin would attempt an ending as twee as this.

Korczak is a tragically long way from the intellectual toughness of Wajda’s earlier work and yet another example of his misjudged collaboration with scriptwriter Agnieszka Holland. His decline as a filmmaker is traceable directly from their first film together, Bez Zwieczenia (Rough Treatment), written before Człowiek z Marmur (Man of Marble). The lifeless Dyrygent (The Conductor) is another telling example.

What little interest Wajda’s film did create was over its portrayal of a Pole sympathetic to the Jews. On the whole, the Polish treatment of its Jewish people during the war rivalled the efforts of the Germans. After a career which includes many films felt to be antisemitic, Wajda’s decision to make this story now, forty-five years after the armistice, was subjected to less than positive criticism. And Wajda does seem a little dishonourable when he says, “Jewish themes had been banned from art by Polish censorship for twenty years.” One would of thought that he, of all the great Polish directors, could have raised his voice long before this.

The Festival’s most eagerly awaited films were Jean-Luc Godard’s Nouvelle Vague and David Lynch’s Wild at Heart. No two films could be more different.

The Godard is very much in the tradition of his recent work, particularly from Hail Mary through Detective and King Lear. It is a very hard film to review after one un-subtitled screening, the voice-overs and dialogue continuing his intensely non-narrative interest in philosophical and poetic summations. What can be said is that the film is as visually hypnotic as Passion, though far more muted in tone, and the conceit of Alain Delon playing two brothers with the same mistress, to show two sides of love (which are in fact the same), works very well. It felt like one of the best films at Cannes, but a viewing under better circumstances would help. (The lack of sub-titles was not the Festival’s fault but because Godard finished the film so close to deadline. In fact, he carried the print to Cannes with him — ever the cinematic showman.)

Another reason for wanting a second viewing is to try and settle the most discussed issue at Cannes: was, in fact, Delon playing two roles, as Godard’s press information had it? Many French speakers felt there was only one character, who dies but is reborn in a different guise. Others argued that the scene where he ‘drowns’ does not imply he actually died. Still others said that Delon did play two different people, but that there was nothing in the film to confirm if they were brothers. And so it goes...

It is even harder to write about Wild at Heart because sitting through more than 50 minutes of it was more than this reviewer could bear. It is clumsy in a way that defies description. Take for example the plethora of flashbacks near the start. Some are clearly in their scripted position, given the visual or verbal lead-ins. But many more are not and seem slotted into inappropriate positions in a desperate attempt to put an end to an obviously troubled post-production (Lynch even tries to blur the inevitable jerkiness with some singularly inappropriate dissolves).

As for the forced dialogue, it is painful to one’s ears, especially as spoken by the extraordinarily erratic Nicolas Cage and Laura Dern (her accent changes with every shot). Willem Dafoe makes an okay
villain, but poor Harry Dean Stanton must rue the day he ever walked into Paris, Texas and started a run of soul-destroying walk-ons.

Lynch's obsession with a post-modernist revival of trash presupposes that he can achieve something with the regurgitation, that he will shape the material in some innovative, meaningful way. But not here: Wild at Heart is a self-indulgent wallowing in cliché and evidences an increasingly perverse addiction to, and exploitation of, gore. Dune may have seemed Lynch's low point, but Wild at Heart surpasses it. Booed by many, in the grand Cannes tradition it won the Palme d'Or and the director a loving embrace from Jury chairman Bernardo Bertolucci. (The rest of jury, exhausted it seems from the battle to separate Paolo Taviani's Ordet, the Tavianis fail totally to evoke a sense of emerging spiritual grace. As for the miracles, they are almost comically tossed aside and carry none of the resonance of the priest's momentarily bringing the child back to life in Under the Sun of Satan, or, more powerfully, of the girl's revival at the end of Dreyer's Ordet. Spiritually, Night Sun is flat and that is largely the fault of a crudely schematic script, Julian Sands' inability here to indicate anything internal (he is all stubble and stagger) and rather matter-of-fact direction from the Tavianis.

There is a growing feeling among some critics that the Tavianis are not the filmmakers they were once heralded to be.

The film is ravishing at the start, both visually and emotionally, but falters badly when the religious aspects take precedence. Unlike Robert Bresson with his purist Diary of a Country Priest, or even Maurice Pialat with the erratic Under the Sun of Satan, the Tavianis fail totally to evoke a sense of emerging spiritual grace. As for the miracles, they are almost comically tossed aside and carry none of the resonance of the priest's momentarily bringing the child back to life in Under the Sun of Satan, or, more powerfully, of the girl's revival at the end of Dreyer's Ordet. Spiritually, Night Sun is flat and that is largely the fault of a crudely schematic script, Julian Sands' inability here to indicate anything internal (he is all stubble and stagger) and rather matter-of-fact direction from the Tavianis.

There is a growing feeling among some critics that the Tavianis are not the filmmakers they were once heralded to be. Night Sun does nothing to quash this view.

In contrast, Bertrand Tavernier's Daddy Nostalgia is a tender, gentle film about those fleeting, wonderful moments that "make us fond of life." It is a film of quiet reconciliation set against the pains of living in an increasingly hard, directionless world. In many ways, it is a welcome continuation of themes in Tavernier's best work, most particularly Une Semaine de Vacances.

Daddy (Dirk Bogarde) is recovering from a heart operation at the South-of-France home of his wife, Miche (Odette Laure). They live, at the distant end of a marriage, in separate worlds, signified by Daddy's speaking in his native tongue and Miche in hers. As Bogarde observed at his Cannes press conference, the saddest line in the film is Daddy's "You don't speak to me in English any more."

Daddy is visited by their Paris-based daughter, Caroline (Jane Birkin). She is of a different time and world (brought up by a nanny and never having felt close to her socially active parents). This is a much-loved theme of Tavernier's: the difficulties of making it through life and how today's young adults both dream of and resent the seemingly easier life of their parents.

This is exquisitely captured in the film's best scene, a conversation between Daddy and Caroline at a portside café. Reflecting on the wonderful, glittering life he has led, Daddy unconsciously pro-
which shows new strengths and an ability to evoke emotion without his usual recourse to the superficially Gothic.

concerns the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in camps during World War II (thus mirroring closely an Australian situation). This forced detention contravened the Constitution and led to reparations being paid a year or so ago.

What binds Parker’s recounting of this historical story is the love affair between the American-born Lily (Tamlyn Tomita) and Jack McGurn (Dennis Quaid). It is on this level that the film succeeds best: unlike most love films made today, Tomita and Quaid actually convince you that their characters are in love. Their reunions, after long separations, are powerfully felt and a measure of a sensitivity in Parker rarely glimpsed outside Shoot the Moon.

Where Parker occasionally falters is with the too-explicit and didactic rendition of the historical events. Characters deliver speeches where naturalistic dialogue would be better and the whole narrative is too neat by half. For example, of Lily’s two brothers, one is loyal to America, joins the army and is killed fighting the Japanese, while the other is willingly sent to Japan, a country he has never visited and whose language he cannot speak, in exchange for American prisoners of war. Yes, they do represent two contrary tensions within the Japanese-American community, but why make them brothers? And why so simplistically drawn?

Too long and often monotonous, Come See the Paradise is nevertheless an intermittently powerful film about a worthy and unrecorded subject. On occasions, it is also a great love story.

The other big American film was Clint Eastwood’s White Hunter Black Heart, a fictionalized account of the pre-production on John Huston’s The African Queen. Though an enjoyable, amiable film, it is unbalanced by Eastwood’s casting as movie director John Wilson (i.e., John Huston). He gets the accent very well, but he always looks like Eastwood trying to be Huston. A lesser-known actor could have been more convincing and distracted less from what is an amusing tale.

Eastwood directs in a European manner and even tosses aside the two sequences that most American directors would have made show-stoppers: testing the boat on the rapids and taking a plane ride with an ‘incompetent’ pilot. While the low-key approach works, particularly in the scenes where Huston’s fiery character dominates (as when putting down a racist society lady), it does give the film a rather monotonal quality.

Set in the relentlessly soul-destroying slums of Medellin, Rodrigo D is a Las Olvidadas of modern Colombia. A well-made if unexceptional first film, it tells a depressing story of listless youth drifting into casual violence and inevitable death.

Rodrigo D is the sort of film that is probably more important as a force in social change than as a piece of art. To Westerners who have seen many similar films from the many third world countries with similar problems, this one reeks of déjà vu and was, as such, largely dismissed. But its craft level is unusually strong, the mood well maintained and the tone always unsettling. But one does wish for a
little variation in its doggedly social realistic approach to melodrama. Sure, *Pixote* edged too far toward the indulgently macabre, and *Salaam Bombay* to the Hollywood slick, but *Rodrigo D* is just a little too predictable.

Also from a country with a developing cinema is Idrissa Ouédraogo’s *Ti-lai*. This is the third feature from the Burkina Faso director and is a charming and simple tale of false pride at odds with true love.

Saga (Rasmane Ouédraogo) had left his village for an extended time and his fiancée, Nogma (Ina Cissé), tiring of his absence, has married his father, Kuilga (Roukietou Barry). On Saga’s return, the lovers reunite, which is tantamount to incest. They flee after Saga’s brother, Kougri (Assane Ouédraogo), is sent to execute him but balks at familial murder. So begins a series of events that lead in their quietly inevitable way to death.

The filmmaking is as slick as any mainstream film, relying on the wry tone and understated humour to set it apart. Though ultimately a little insubstantial, *Ti-lai* makes one look forward to the next film from the Ouédraogos.

*Non ou a va Gloria de Mandar* (*Non, or the Vain Glory of Command*), by Portuguese director Manoel de Oliveira, is a stylized account of Portuguese failures at war. If Australia likes to believe it forged a nation out of the military setback of Gallipoli, Portugal, according to Oliveira, was born out of a series of crushing defeats.

Set during the last Portuguese colonial war (Africa, 1974), and using lavish historical recreations as flashbacks, the film is a relatively convincing portrait of false military pride and the stupidity of the non-defensive wars.

While interesting as history lesson, the film has the usual Oliveira hallmarks of listlessness (he sets up epic shots with thousands of extras and then has nothing happen) and a meandering pace. He has the obstinacy of a Bresson, but none of the montage skills. Shots linger and the editing is basic. Sometimes his images arrest with their sharpness, but otherwise his penchant is to shoot costumed people endlessly talking. His international standing is pretty well the result of untiring efforts of a single British critic. While the film’s international standing is pretty well the result of untiring efforts of a single British critic, it is a much more interesting and cinematic film than, say, a 36 *Fillette*.

Finally, there were the Australian shorts. Moffatt’s film was described at length in the previous issue, and Chan’s two films are discussed elsewhere in this issue. All three films show great originality, though in startlingly diverse ways. *Night Cries* comes very much out of a personal history of being black in an increasingly white Australia; Chan’s two films seem to reflect a Vietnamese upbringing but are bold excursions into the area of sexuality in an adopted country that usually punishes those brave enough to venture there.

Lawrence Johnston’s *Night Out* is a tough look at “poofier” bashing, a glimpse at the dark underside of Australian mateship. Visually inspired by various gay imagery, particularly the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe, this black-and-white film has a striking look and is precisely acted. Some have felt that the second half backs away from the more confronting issues of the start, but the later concentration on the relationship between the disillusioned lovers seems to this viewer quite appropriate. Just because the men are gay, why should there be an expectation that issues be treated in preference to their individual problems within a domestic situation? By increasingly narrowing his field of interest, Johnston has produced a sensitive, personal drama that builds in tension and interest.

Like Chan and Moffatt, he is a filmmaker to watch. It is to Cannes’ credit that it chose to highlight their films.

The filmmaking is as slick as any mainstream film, relying on the wry tone and understated humour to set it apart. Though ultimately a little insubstantial, *Ti-lai* makes one look forward to the next film from the Ouédraogos.

*Palme d’Or* — *Wild at Heart* (David Lynch); *Prix du Jury* — *Hidden Agenda* (Ken Loach); *Prix de la Meilleure Contribution Artistique* — *The Mother* (Gleb Panfilov); *Grand Prix Cannes* 90 ex aequo *The Sting of Death* (Kohei Oguri) and *Ti-lai* (Idrissa Ouédraogo); *Prix d’Interprétation Féminine* — *Krystyna Janda* (*The Interrogation*); *Prix d’Interprétation Masculine* — Gérard Depardieu (*Cyrano de Bergerac*); *Prix de la Mise en Scène* — Pavl Lounguine (*Taxi Blues*); *Palme d’Or du Court Métrage* — *The Lunch Date* (Adam Davidson); *Prix spécial du Court Métrage* — *La Chambre à Coucher* (Maerten Koopman) and *Revestriction* (Barthelemy Bompard); *Prix de la Commission Technique Superière* — Pierre Lhomme (*Cyrano de Bergerac*).
Following the lead of Jane Campion
and Tracey Moffatt, who caused a stir
with their quirky, surreal and strident
imagery, is Pauline Chan, a third-year
student at the Australian Film Television
& Radio School. Her second-year film,
The Space Between the Door & the
Floor, surpassed film school expecta-
tions was selected for the Shorts
Competition at Cannes this year. Also
selected was Hangup, Chan’s second-year
project, co-funded by the Australian
Film Commission and shot on Super 8.
Both films signature Chan’s interest
in stylization and drama, and draw on
themes familiar to most people in this
techno-ridden age: alienation, loneliness,
communication breakdown and fetish.
The Space Between the Door & the Floor borrows from film noir, with exaggerated characterization, contrasty lighting and stylized composition. Chan:

The script has a lot of humour in it and sends up cliched situations and characters. You think you’re seeing a detective movie by its opening, but it’s not. I tried to push the naturalist look just one more notch so that it has an edge.

Reminiscent in look and tone of Samuel Fuller’s The Naked Kiss, the film’s slightly bizarre overtones and black humour goes beyond designer ‘nirvana’. Confronting and challenging, Chan’s films twist traditional sensibilities.

In The Space Between the Door & the Floor, a telephonist is harassed by an obscene caller. Instead of freezing with horror, Lilly (Judith Stratford) is sexually aroused. The caller, Monroe (John Allen), sits in his darkened office, revelling in the anonymity. Meanwhile, his wife, Ethel (Maree D’Arcy), sits by the telephone waiting to get through to Danny (Phil Charley), the radio jock whom she loves. Wife and mistress at first appear passive, but as the black tale develops, the balance of power shifts, leaving the caller impotent. Danny and Lilly, the lust icons, are accessible only via telephone. For Ethel and Monroe, phone sex is the solution to their flagging relationship. The telephone, the communication symbol of the twentieth century, allows them to explore new opportunities and fetish, without fear of discovery. Chan:

The title is representative of how Monroe sees the world. He sees it from that little gap and he feels safe behind the door. In the end of the film he chooses to see the world from the little gap instead of moving out into the light, because behind that slit of light he can fantasize as much as he likes. He is observing the world from the backroom: fear of contact, fear of communication. The irony is that the technology of communication is breaking down communication.

The Space Between the Door & the Floor opens on an office block exterior that looks disarmingly hyper-real. The distorted camera angle and ethereal lighting lend the shot a static feel. The film then cuts to the interior, shafts of light carving shadows into the walls and floor. A figure approaches and enters. The closing of the door is punctuated by a sharp clunk. Following is a series of close-ups: of a corridor; a fan, eerily shot as a tangle of wires and blades slowly revolving; a hand tapping a desk; high heels tottering up the staircase. Dramatic music and static sounds fuse the mise-en-scène. So although the film faithfully borrows from traditional film noir structures, a time warp is created. Intonation and behaviour are maladjusted, and seamy pleasures lie beneath the tranquil setting.

Born and raised in Vietnam, Pauline Chan studied drama before migrating to Australia in 1982. Apart from working as an actor in various Australian and overseas productions, Chan also worked as a production assistant, runner and children’s television film researcher with Film Australia. In 1984, Chan worked for two years as a casting consultant for Multi Cultural Artists’ Agency, a subsidized agency that helps ethnic actors find work in Australia. After working as an assistant director on a project for Film Australia, which led to her co-directing a 75-minute documentary, Chan was accepted by the Australian Film Television & Radio School, majoring in direction and editing.

Direction is Chan’s first love, although writing follows closely behind. She spent several months writing plays for SBS radio and working part-time as a titles translator. Drifting, her first radio play, is the story of a refugee family in Australia. Under the Skin, another of her works, is a half-hour drama for a SBS series, but was recently rejected due to SBS cutbacks. Chan also co-scripted Hangup and The Space Between the Door & the Floor, and is currently collaborating with writer Alec Morgan on her third-year film.

Many of the themes Chan explores come from her community interest and her work as a commissioner for the Ethnic Affairs Commission in Sydney, where she counsels part-time. Chan:

Maybe my films appear a bit dark, but I deal with a lot of people’s problems. I like to express the problems in my community. There is a Chinese saying about people being ‘swallowed by the waves’. There’s a challenge in exploring those themes.

What I find interesting is the lack of relationships between people, their isolation and loneliness. The more advanced our technologies are, the more alienated we are from real contact.

When Chan approached the AFTRS with the idea for The Space Between the Door & the Floor, she was initially pressured to postpone the project till her third year. Chan:

Most second-year films run 5-10 minutes. Space runs 25 minutes, the equivalent duration of a third-year film.
It was difficult convincing the school that we could handle the project. I was under a lot of pressure and it was negotiation all the way through.

The film cost $9000 to make, with most of the funding coming from other film students and Chan. Most organizations waived fees and the production team spent many months surveying locations and scrounging period props and memorabilia. Chan even deferred her third year for six months in order to complete post-production.

It was during deferment that Chan was involved with the writing, designing and producing of her second film, Hangup. After receiving a small grant from the AFC (No Frills Experimental Project Funding), Chan shot the Super 8 film in two days and completed editing (on video) in three. The total cost was $2000. Chan:

It is an experimental piece and I had a lot more input and control in the visualizing. The Space Between the Door & the Floor was more collaborative.

With Hangup, I was taking a risk. It was short—seven minutes. I was trying to explore the area of sexuality, also making a statement about pornography, which is merely the disembodying of a human body. I thought it would be challenging to look at the theme and do it in a different way. In both films I wanted to create an element of danger, even though you never see any danger. I thought it would add tension to the pieces.

Tautly scripted and edited, Hangup opens with a black screen and supered credits, and voices setting up the scenario: he's picked her up in a bar and invited her back to his place. The names aren't important. There are no faces to be seen, just parts of bodies. In The Space Between the Door & the Floor, Chan painstakingly authenticated a 1940s-'50s soundtrack. In Hangup, she uses crystal-clear sounds and voices as narrative. Heavily edited, the film is slick, with fleeting, teasing glimpses of flesh and form.

The visual icon is the chessboard, representing the game and players. He enters the flat. She follows behind. A computerized chess set is in the foreground. He goes off to open a 'special bottle of chardonnay. She switches on the chessboard. He thinks he's in for a good time, but is surprised when she, too, has her own game.

In Hangup, like The Space Between the Door & the Floor, people mask their identities and create new personas. Fear of contact is protected by distance: voyeurism through a camera lens. The telephone augments depersonalization. Intimacy is mediated.

Communication is severed, exposing at the same time her "hangup" and his dejection at being "hungup." Chan:

The challenge with this piece was whether I would get away with the drama without relying on expressions. Technology allows them to be someone they are not. In Hangup, the woman is afraid of committing herself to anything, but once she's on the telephone she becomes a different person. She's more assertive. He cannot touch her on the telephone. She doesn't have to commit herself to anything. Same in The Space Between the Door & the Floor. What I'm trying to do is break down the stereotypes. Quite often in films you'll see the woman being the 'passive' one: the man undresses her, takes her, uses her. In Hangup, you expect her to be taken advantage of by the man. But the game is reversed. In The Space Between the Door & the Floor, the woman is put in a vulnerable position. She's the victim of an obscene phone call. In reality, she enjoys it and has an affair on the phone.

Meticulously visualized, Chan usually storyboards her films and discusses details with the director of photography before a shoot. Images are kept slick and sharp, sound and image minimalist and controlled.

I like to see clean, strong images, almost like graphics. If you have strong graphic images and styling then the message comes across clearer. The drama doesn't get muddied up in the vision. In the advertising world, if you have something that is simple and neat you can sell the product more effectively. In my way I'm selling a piece of drama.

Chan's future projects include completing her final-year film and project, plus completing her first film script, which hopefully will be realized next year.

I'm working with writer Alec Morgan on a documentary set in outback Australia. It is visually different from The Space and Hangup, but deals with themes of isolation and alienation again. My third-year video project, which I'm writing at the moment, is also about loneliness. It's about an old man, a Vietnamese refugee, who lives in Australia but seems isolated. It's about his coming to terms with his life. I have some feature ideas for next year, about isolation and alienation again, which I've written to first draft. (Laughs.) Don't ask me why I do these themes all the time! I find them interesting.
MARGARET ATTWOOD: THE HANDMAID'S TALE

MARGARET ATTWOOD attended the 1990 Berlin International Film Festival to accompany the world premiere of Volker Schlondorff's adaptation of her 1984 novel, The Handmaid's Tale. Sitting in the lounge of the plush Kempinski Hotel, sipping tea and wearing (unintentionally) the purple and black favourite colours of Henry Miller's June, she looked out of place. Attwood is the sort of woman one expects to emerge from a pile of freshman composition papers, in the dark leafy shades of a neo­gothic New England college campus, or from the corner of a madly overgrown garden in a beekeeper's outfit - certainly not here in newly-liberated, anything-goes Berlin. Attwood:

I actually began this book in Berlin six years ago, when Berlin was a very different place. It is very odd being here at this time and revisiting the wall. And to be in East Germany for the opening night was just amazing. The film was so perfectly understood by the Germans as the portrait of a certain kind of totalitarian society with which they are very familiar. The atmosphere, particularly that of people not being able to express their thoughts to one another, and always being suspicious and fearful, struck a chord over there. Of course, when I wrote the book I had no idea the wall would come tumbling down so quickly.

Atwood's story takes place in a mythical, strife-torn nation of the future, Gilead, situated where the U.S. is now. Ruled by the archaic laws of the old testament, young girls are turned into child-bearing machines by a society which, through sterility of the higher castes, can no longer reproduce itself properly.

Robert Duvall plays Fred, a leading figure in Gilead's government and the one responsible for security. He is married to the barren Serena Joy (Faye Dunaway).

When Kate (a feisty Natasha Richardson) fails in her attempt to cross the snowy borders, her husband is killed and her little daughter taken away. Meanwhile, as a fertile woman of appropriate age and health, she is induced into the honourable duties of handmaid by the fanatical Aunt Lydia (Victoria Tennent). Attwood:

I think most of my books start with images. Some of the images from this book, and from the film, come from the only book of social history I've written. It is about the revolution in Canada during the 1830s, when they used to hang people with white bags over their heads. Everything in the
novel comes from history, and that has been translated in the film.

Like the English language itself, I stole bits from everywhere; even the participatory hanging came from seventeenth-century England. And part of the idea came from what I knew of Rumania, especially the treatment of women and the forced childbearing that the Ceausescu regime was practising.

As for the general shape of society that emerges in Schlondorff’s film, Attwood has also called on a historical precedent, that of Puritan seventeenth-century New England, claiming that when society does go totalitarian it always takes a form that is familiar to the masses: e.g., Stalinist Russia took on the structures established by the Czars and, similarly, the East German regime stepped into the shoes of the Nazis. But what about America? The film is set in the U.S. of the future. What hope then?

If the U.S. were to go in this direction, and it seems to be doing so, it would be in the direction of a theocracy. It would advance its cause under a banner of secular humanism, not some kind of historical theory such as Marxism. No one would support such a thing. But Americans,

Anything which is prohibited becomes very important and takes on a mystique.

Scriptwriter Harold Pinter, in working on the book, sees one of the central images in his adaptation as being that of hygiene: It doesn’t need a sub-text. The emphasis on cleanliness in any society is a strong indication of how far into totalitarianism it has sunk.

Attwood then adds:

We always use the phrase ‘clean-up’ in terms of politics. In human terms, this brings us back to the ritual purification in society, and this is something that Volker Schlondorff has brought out to great effect in the film: the placing of the sins of a whole society on to the heads of a few scapegoats, and then eliminating them.

According to Attwood, when the novel came out first responses were varied: in Canada people said, “It could never happen here”; in England, “What a good story”; and in the U.S., “How long have we got?” One wonders what will be said of the film in Australia.

JONATHAN TAPLIN: DARLING OF THE art-house crowd, Cannes favourite Wim Wenders may not have had a movie in Competition at the Festival this year, but the odds are that his latest feature, Until the End of the World, already dubbed “the ultimate road movie” and currently shooting across the globe, will be somewhere in the running next year.

The film is being produced by Jonathan Taplin, one-time manager for Bob Dylan and The Band, and now head of the Trans-Pacific Group. Taplin:

This is not an art-house movie. It’s going to be Wenders’ most commercial movie to date and we all feel that it is a major leap forward for him. He is making a truly international love story, with a star cast, that is not...
German Stories

only accessible to a wider public, but won’t be any the less ‘intellectually stimulating’ for his long-standing fans.

It has been a long time since an essentially German director could command a cast as bright as William Hurt, Sam Neill, Max von Sydow and Jeanne Moreau – and indeed a musical line-up that encompasses Peter Gabriel, David Byrne, Ray Davies and Van Morrison. To this list one must add the usual Wenders director of photography Robby Müller and editor Peter Pryzygodda.

The recipe seems right for success, but it’s still to early to tell. There are so many experimental things about the film, indeed almost everything from the financing right down to the story, the visual look and the film stock. Taplin:

The kind of financing that we have is a state-of-the-art co-production between France [Argos], Germany [Road Movies] and Australia [Village Roadshow]. From my point of view, it has allowed a big-budget, $20 million film to be made which still allows the director as artist to remain a visionary and take a lot of chances. You can’t do that kind of thing in the United States. The mixture of subsidies – pre-sales via Majestic, my involvement through Trans-Pacific, a Japanese-American equity partnership – make this a unique co-production activity.

The storyline is equally unique. An unhappily married French woman (Solveig Dommartin) runs into a mysterious traveller in a shopping mall. The year is 1999. The traveller (William Hurt) is an American who is running around the world filming past journeys taken by his parents. He intends providing a vital clue that will bring success to an important discovery made by his father (Max von Sydow).

It’s basically two stories running parallel. There’s the love interest with Solveig, and then there’s the photographic element. The camera that William Hurt’s father has invented allows images to be placed directly inside the brain. He has invented this for a special purpose: his wife [Jeanne Moreau] is blind and doesn’t have long to live. The invention will allow her to see.

The invention is, however, coveted for sinister reasons by various government agencies and defence contractors: a weapon that can plant images in the brain is a useful one if you have bellicose ambitions. Thus the Hurt and Dommartin characters go on the run, them all over the globe. They end finally in the Australian outback – thus people are able to see their own dreams.

Wenders is using the latest in high technology and, for the first time, HDTV is being given a genuine use in feature filmmaking; as opposed to being just a demonstration, it plays an integral part in the shape of the film. Until the End of the World is also the first feature shot in 65mm since David Lean’s Lawrence of Arabia.

We began shooting in Menton [France] with some helicopter shots for the title sequences, then moved to San Remo and Venice. The crew is a lean, lithe and multi-national one, and the atmosphere on the set is like the Tower of Babel, save that everyone seems to understand each other. So far it is looking very big and very rich.

Next we move on to Rodes for a big action sequence before Bill Hurt and Ernie Dingo join us in Paris.

Other locations include Paris, Lisbon and Berlin. The whole team is then shipped out to San Francisco for a week’s shoot before descending on Tokyo for two weeks. It is then on to Australia to wrap at the Village Roadshow studios.

Until the End of the World is still in some ways quite a “German” film. Berlin plays such a big part in Wenders’ whole aesthetic that it has to be. The original script has scenes of the Berlin wall coming down in 1999. But it’s not the first time history has had a chance to re-write a script.

Margarethe Von Trotta: The Return

Margarethe Von Trotta has scored twice in Cannes with her last two films, Rosa Luxemburg and Love and Fear. She is currently in production on her latest, Die Rückkehr (The Return), on location in Paris and Brittany, and in Italian studios.

Barbara Sukowa’s working relationship with Margarethe Von Trotta goes back to 1981 with The Leadmen Years, and continued in 1985 with Rosa Luxemburg, for which she picked up the Best Actress award at the 1986 Cannes Film Festival. She now finds herself not only playing the lead for Von Trotta again but in between times is preparing for her role in Homo Faber (Last Call for Passenger Faber), the new film of Von Trotta’s husband, Volker Schlöndorff.

In The Return, Sukowa plays Martha, a doctor who comes back to her Paris home from Africa with the roots of her personal crisis still very much intact. Her failed relationship with a journalist, Victor (Samy Frey), and her lost friendship with her former friend Anna (Stefania Sandrelli), cause her to reassess her life with the aim of finding some kind of reconciliation with herself and with the world.

Von Trotta: The Return is a film about love and about friendship. The man in the story is torn between the two women in his life: Martha, who is intellectually much more critical, and Anna, who is very sweet and uncomplicated. What I want to show is that he has two women he must have: he needs some things from one and others from the other.

Von Trotta has lived in Italy for two years and this is her second film with the Italian production company, Scena (co-producer with Munich’s Bioskop Film). The list of credits on The Return proves that Von Trotta can now command the best in Italian technicians.

Behind the camera she has Tonino Della Colli, the maestro of Italian cinematography, who with The Return is working on his 167th film, in a list that includes such legendary titles as Once Upon a Time in the West, The Name of the Rose, Ginger and Fred, Intervista and La Voce della Luna.

Taking care of the art direction is Antonello Geleng, who in his rich and varied career has worked on most of Fellini’s films, including Roma, Amarcord and Casanova, as well as on Dino de Laurentis’ King Kong and, more recently, La Maschera and La Chiesa.

Though Love and Fear was a step a little further away from her more overtly political movies like The Leadmen Years and The Second Awakening of Christa Klages, The Return marks an even greater step towards films which are much more personal and intimate, a new phase in the directing career of Von Trotta. Barbara Sukowa:

I prefer to be in political movies. But on this one I trusted Margarethe, who has changed. When we did The Leadmen Years together, she was much more rigid, and here she is very gentle and much more mature.
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In the 1970s, Fred Schepisi made two of Australia’s finest films, *The Devil’s Playground* (1976) and *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978). Then, to the surprise and disappointment of many, he moved to the U.S., where, after a period of aborted projects, he made the critically-acclaimed Western *Barbarosa* (1982).

Today, Schepisi is one of an elite group of ‘A’ directors. The commercial success of his 1987 American film *Roxanne* has given him the freedom to make films of his eclectic choosing. These include *Evil Angels* (1988) and the soon-to-be-released *The Russia House*, adapted by Tom Stoppard from the John Le Carré novel.
Schepisi's work varies from astringent social criticism to refreshingly warm comedy, from a keen understanding of genre to a delight in the nuances of English mannerist drama. As such, his films are less easy to critically pigeonhole than those of most Australian directors. Each Schepisi film is an entity unto itself, seeking and adopting a directorial style peculiar to the material.

It was just before flying overseas to do the actors’ post-syncing on The Russia House that Schepisi spoke to Scott Murray. The result is an extensive career interview that begins with his early Australian features.
How do you look back today on your first filmmaking experiences?

They are good films, obviously. I wrote the first as an original and adapted the other, so I was right inside both of them. That was a good way to start working.

Financially, there was not a lot of room. Paying everyone, The Devil’s Playground cost $300,000, and we shot it in six-and-a-half weeks. The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith cost $1.2 million, the most expensive Australian film at the time. That took 14 weeks to shoot as it involved a lot of travelling – 10,000 kms, if I recall.

I remember people angrily raving on about the indecency of spending $1.2 million on an Australian film. It was as if we were throwing money away in the Hollywood manner. That was absolute nonsense: in fact, we had to keep cutting corners all the way through the production. It kind of made me laugh ... bitterly.

I guess the lesson that came out of that was not to listen to those kind of criticisms. You should concentrate on what you are doing and organize all of the mechanics, like the scheduling, to give yourself the best chance of achieving things creatively.

The one good thing was that the crew worked in a free sort of way. Because of that, and because we were essentially on one location, we were able to adjust our schedule for the appalling weather. I remember there was one scene that I had scripted for early morning sunshine. But we never could get it; I think we tried four times. Finally, I realized I had to sit down and work out how I could make the scene work in the rain. I then came up with what is one of the best moments in the film, in terms of atmospherics and effectiveness.

There is also the scene by the riverbank, which was obviously shot in inclement weather. It has a particularly intense and resonant atmosphere.

Absolutely. That is one of my most favourite scenes in lighting terms. There is something beautiful about the lightness of the grass, about the way the trees are spaced, and how the river glistens. They are in
"It was on Jimmie Blacksmith that I first came across burgeoning unionism in the Australian film industry. I couldn't always afford to deal with it, and had to keep coming up with deals. It didn't affect the film, but I let it bother me personally."

This little light spot, which goes off into darker areas. And, you're right, it was only because of that weather ... and also Ian's way of exposing, the choice of lens - that sort of stuff.

We knew a lot of the technique from commercials and documentaries, but applying it in emotional terms to the drama content of the picture is what you have to learn.

All in all, doing The Devil's Playground was an incredibly rewarding experience. We had the advantage of all living on the location [Werribee Park]. And, because we had no dough, all the interstate cast used to live at our house on weekends. Rhonda [Schepisi], who did all the scheduling with me, and the casting, and had helped get the thing rolling, was also the second assistant director. But of course she was then my wife and when everyone used to come back she would cook meals. It wasn't exactly her day off! I think our tempers were a little frayed. [Laughs]

But because all the crew and cast stayed on location, we were like a big family. We'd all have dinner together, and I could do a lot of my directing at night, when people were relaxed. They would ask me questions that didn't seem to be about what they had to do tomorrow, and I could reply in a more acceptable framework. I think that really helped us to establish the camaraderie that you can see in the film.

I remember we got that location after having toured all of N.S.W. and Victoria. Rhonda and [art director] Trevor Ling actually talked me into that place. I thought it was too big for the film I had in mind, but they kept saying to me, "You must make it smaller. Just imagine half the room is missing and you will work more comfortably." It took them a while to sell me the concept! [Laughs] But they did, and I am really glad.

Then I went to the Victorian government - this was before Film Victoria had started - and saw one of the ministers. He rose to the bait, thought the film was a fantastic idea, and allowed us to use Werribee Park for $3,000, which he then invested in the film. As this happened only a week before we had to start shooting, I left that place walking three feet off the ground ... and in tears.

There are two final things I'd like to say about working in Australia. On Jimmie Blacksmith, all the problems we'd found on Devil's Playground had been sorted out and things were far more professional. But it was a far, far bigger film than anyone had any idea of, particularly me. [Associate producer] Roy Stevens was really something in the way he helped me through that.

And it was on Jimmie Blacksmith that I first came across burgeoning unionism in the Australian film industry. I couldn't always afford to deal with it, and had to keep coming up with deals. It didn't affect the film, but I let it bother me personally.

I was also angry at the rumours that were spread about the film. Everybody seemed to want it to fail. That is a disturbing trait in the Australian character: preferring people to fail rather than succeed. The only reason I mention this is because the otherwise good experience was tinged a little with bitterness.

When I came back ten years later to do Evil Angels, I thought I knew the industry and people in it. But I realized very quickly that in those years everything had changed radically, and that I should treat coming back the same as if I were going to Canada or England or France. I had to select a crew here the same way I would in any of those places. There is a system for doing that, and I used it here.

To my surprise, I ended up with many of the people I had worked with on Jimmie Blacksmith. (The fact they had been with me before had not worked for them at all.) I got great pleasure out of that, because it meant they had gone on and improved themselves; they had built on a good foundation and not taken bad sidetracks or got...
After having made two of the finest Australian films of the 1970s, you moved overseas. Why the change?

Both those films cost me a lot of money. About $300,000 of *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* was Film House money, and half the budget on *The Devil's Playground* came from me. We also distributed that ourselves, which cost as much money again. That is a lot of dough and I had to work two shifts of commercials just to keep the money coming in.

After Jimmie Blacksmith, I had to again go back to directing commercials, just to keep Film House on its feet. I found that a very difficult process and I wanted to make sure I didn’t get lost making them again.

So, the first reason for going overseas was to get properly paid. The second was that I wanted to test myself in the international marketplace, to challenge what I had learnt. I also had this funny idea that if I managed to do a couple of successful films in America, and could build up a marketable name, that would make it easier for me to market any films I made back here.

The first thing I did over there was get one of the top agents, Sam Cohn. He got me a job writing, producing and directing a comedy for Fox. Fox had been partly involved through Hoyts in releasing *Raggedy Man*. That way we managed to get back to working the way we wanted. You don’t have to worry about the race, the schedule, the money. You get paid when you do the work.

I then spent probably the loneliest two months of my life, speaking to nobody day after day. It was not a particularly good time.

Meanwhile, I was being touted for a couple of projects. One was a tap dancing film that was going to be done in Chicago, called *Partners*, which I really liked. Another was *Raggedy Man*. I went to work on both of them. The musical was still being written, for which I was getting some money, but I was only on a promise with *Raggedy Man*. I did a lot of writing and research with its writer, Bill Whittliff. He also had another project going, which he told me about, and, to cut a long story short, that’s the one I ended up doing. I liked it, it was a definite project and it was called *Barbarosa*.

On *Barbarosa*, I had a manic of an actor called Gary Busey. He is a great actor, great actor, but an absolute nightmare to deal with. The art form in that picture was getting Gary out of his motor home and onto location so that he could act.

I also had four producers! One was this guy who had been the head of Marble Arch, which was ITC in America, and then been bumped sideways. As well, there was Willie Nelson, Gary Busey and Bill Whittliff. What this really meant was that I ended up doing the work. Certainly when there was any trouble I did the work. How I knew there was trouble was when I saw my producers driving away from the set, heading for Los Angeles on urgent business! [Laughs]

I was in terrible shape. I didn’t understand any of this sort of stuff; now I know it happens on a very regular basis. And it really is very dangerous, because the new guy never wants the old guy’s stuff.

Not knowing what to do, I went to the now third president of Fox and said, “You guys have a contract with me, and that’s why I’m here. You probably don’t want this project, but why don’t you let me set up an office, as I’m supposed to, and I’ll give you a rewrite. I can then collect my crummy $50,000, and you can throw it out. We’ll all walk away clean. And if you happen to like it, well fine.” And that is what happened. I was given Bette Midler’s old office and I asked for the oldest secretary on the lot, who got me the car parking space and all the privileges. It is like the Public Service: the secretary runs the joint. She knew who to ring and what to do. I didn’t have to bother management for anything.

I was in terrible shape. I didn’t understand any of this sort of stuff; now I know it happens on a very regular basis. And it really is very dangerous, because the new guy never wants the old guy’s stuff.

The biggest shock for anybody going to America is the size of the equipment. ITC was a danger, because the new guy never wants the old guy’s stuff.

We also found ourselves with this huge circus of cars and machinery and drivers. We soon worked out that there is no way you can get this huge circus moving swiftly. So we set up these little runner units and, while all the big stuff was back at base, we sent out the small units. That way we managed to get back to working the way we wanted. You
can’t defeat the machinery, but you must not let it defeat you.

Another problem was the production manager, who was a bully and a “tree is a tree”-type person. On our first survey, I knew it wasn’t going to work. So I went back to L.A. and said, “This man has to go.” There was a furore. But then I learnt how to deal with it. In America you can say, “Our personalities don’t mesh.” There is nothing wrong with the man – in fact, he is an extremely wonderful production supervisor – but our personalities don’t mesh.” I mean, that’s bullshit, but they did get me someone else, who was wonderful. That was my first Hollywood lesson.

By the way, I mustn’t forget [composer] Bruce Smeaton who has been involved with me all the way through. I talk about Ian Baker because I work with him every day on the set, but Bruce’s contribution to the films has been just fantastic.

I hate ordinary press interviews because it all comes down to what I have been doing. I keep saying, “Look, I am this group of people who have all contributed.” But they never write about that, which I find very annoying and very unfair to the people involved.

Where was Barbarosa shot? The locations are most striking.

I had Preston Aimes, a great, old-time production designer, come in at one stage. He told me to go to Big Ben National Park, but the producer said, “Over my dead body. It’s too remote.” Then I got Leon Erickson in, who had done McCabe and Mrs Miller. Leon is very eccentric and unusual, and I had a job convincing the producer he was the right person.

Leon and I then went down to Big Ben National Park and Del Rio, and found what we wanted. It was completely wilderness, but because it was a tourist spot there were tarred roads all through it. You could drive your trucks right to where you wanted, step off the road and shoot. Everywhere else the producer had wanted, which were really ugly, you felt you’d seen a hundred times before. They were also hard to get to, whereas this was so accessible.

The other great thing was you could do wide shots at both ends of the day, because of the way that the mountains were structured. And as you moved in to do closer work, there was always a direction you could point where you would get great light and good texture on the backgrounds. But these were things American producers don’t understand. Whereas we love to talk about light, over there there’s absolutely no point talking to anybody about it. They don’t understand light; they just want you to “shoot the story”! [Laughs]

Anyway, to convince the producer of the sensibleness of this location, we all jumped in a jet and flew down. When we landed, he got out and he fell to his knees. I thought, “Oh, great, he loves it!” Then I heard, “How can you do this to me?” [Laughs]

But we did end up shooting there, in a very remote town with no television. I have to tell you, the impact of no television on a group of people raised on 26 channels is really something to see. They are not like Australian crews who will make their own fun at night. These Americans had to make quite some adjustments. It was fun.

In many ways, doing a Western as your first American film was a risky undertaking. Westerns haven’t done well at the box office in years and there is the difficulty of bringing freshness to a genre that many feel is played out.

I agree. But the reason they chose me, which always makes me laugh, is that they thought Jimmy Blacksmith was a great Western. In fact, they even teach that in some of their film schools!

A child of some of my friends was going to film school there, and her major thesis was on Jimmy Blacksmith. It was her teacher’s specialty. So she asked me whether she could talk to me about it. I said, “Sure”, and she brought over all her questions. I think I made her fail because I said, “Well, that’s not right, and this is absolute rubbish.” It was all to do with Westerns – very silly stuff.

Anyway, that is why I was chosen. In general, Americans want your originality, but not for original films. They want it applied to their kind of films.

Many have commented on how badly Barbarosa was handled on its U.S. release.

The company I was making it for went broke and Universal took over the distribution, along with a number of other films. One was The Legend of the Lone Ranger, which they thought was going to be sensational. But any fool looking at it could have told them, “This is a total disaster.” And it was.

By the time Universal got round to releasing Barbarosa, they weren’t interested. In fact, Bob Raimey, who is now with New World, said to me, “This picture isn’t going to work and we’re not going to spend any money on it.” His reasons were that it had Willie Nelson, who had just failed in Honeysuckle Rose, that it was a Western; and that it had Mexicans in it. Great, huh?

I said, “Look, Westerns aren’t working, so you have to treat it as an ordinary movie. You should release it in New York and try and build up a reputation over a two-month period. Let people discover it as a film, then release it everywhere else. What you’re planning to do will cost $1.5 million and the film will just disappear. Instead, why don’t you spend $200,000 and find out if you can make it cross-over.”

But he said, “No, you won’t get the New York critics.” So I countered, “If I get the New York critics, will you reconsider?” Bob said he might and might not. “Furthermore”, he added, “if you don’t get the New York critics, I won’t release the film at all!”

Finally, I convinced them to have a screening in New York, meaning Manhattan. So where did they screen it? In Yonkers. The film then broke in the projector and all sorts of other things went wrong. But I did get the critics, and great quotes from Pauline Kael and David Denby. I even had one critic who hated it go back and see it again; I managed to convince him he liked it.

Despite this, Bob Raimey still ignored me and released it the same way they had released Honeysuckle Rose. Work that one out.

So, in answer to your question, not only was it dumb to make a Western, it was dumb to make it with those people. But I like the film; I like it a lot.
After *Barbarosa*, which gained you a considerable critical reputation, you went off to do a film that struck many people as an odd choice.

I was supposed to do *Partners* after *Barbarosa*, but there was a change of management at Lorrimar, where I was doing it. Half way through shooting *Barbarosa*, they rang me up and said, “We want to make this film for $8 million, instead of $15 million.” “How do you think you are going to do that?” I asked. “Oh,” they said, “we want to fly down to talk to you about it.” I told them I couldn’t do that in the middle of production. So they said, “Well, we want to do without this number and that number” and so on. I replied, “That’s good, you can do without the director as well. I’ll see you later.” [Laughs] And they did take out of the film everything that was of value.

I then tried to get up a number of other projects. One was set in Taiwan and written by James Goldman. I felt it was as good as *The Manchurian Candidate*, but we couldn’t get it made. Another great project was *The Consultant*, about a guy who manipulates political images for the media. It had Roy Scheider, and Jaqueline Bisset as a documentary reporter who gets mixed up in some killings. Just as all systems were go, we found out they weren’t. As it turned out, Jacky Bisset and I didn’t get on too well, anyway.

While I was in the middle of all this disappointment and nonsense, my editor from *Barbarosa* [Don Zimmerman] called me and said he was working with [producer] Norman Jewison on a project called *Iceman*. He sent the script over to me, I read it and then went and begged Norman Jewison to let me do it. I didn’t think it was the best script in the world, and I had to do a lot of research work on it, but it is a very authentic film. It is literally on the “what if” basis, and if you take just one leap of faith it all works.

*Iceman* isn’t the world’s most intellectual picture, but it has real heart about what it’s examining.

The film has the feeling of being made by people who applied more care and intelligence than the script deserved.

That is probably right. I think the original writer, [John] Drimmer, had some good ideas, but he wasn’t capable of carrying them through. Then Universal hired a guy who had written a great script for something or other, but he was neither very intelligent nor hardworking. So we were always behind the eight ball.

Norman Jewison, whom I like, also insisted during the audience testing period that certain things be removed. I think those cuts took away a bit of the edge and some of the explanation. I wouldn’t allow that to happen any more, but I had no choice at the time.

I am not having a shot at Norman. He did what he felt was right, and I think he was in one respect: some bits were a bit boring. But sometimes you have to have those boring bits because they are the rock on which everything else is built. You often find this in a good play. During the first act, you often wonder, “What the hell am I sitting here for?”, but it all pays off at the end.

The problem with *Iceman* was that it was always perceived as el cheapo science fiction by the public, who stayed away in droves. We should have been wiser to that possibility, but we weren’t. Still, it has had an extraordinary life on video. I get cheques from video - how’s that for a real surprise? And if I am getting cheques from video, somebody got rich!
“In general, Americans want your originality, but not for original films. They want it applied to their kind of films ... I love Plenty. I felt I was able to apply all the things I had learnt beforehand on my other films. Where things are said becomes as important as what is being said. The locations are a genuine character in the film.”

Plenty

Your next film, Plenty, is a leap forward in assurance and control.

I love Plenty. I felt I was able to apply all the things I had learnt beforehand on my other films. Where things are said becomes as important as what is being said. The locations are a genuine character in the film.

Plenty was London based. Was it English or American financed?

The financing was very complicated. That’s Ed Pressman [producer]!

We ended up being financed by R.K.O., which had just been rekindled in America, and then opened up in London as well. So it was American money, but an all-English production. Unfortunately, the revitalization only lasted a couple of years.

Both Sam Cohn, my agent, and Steven Tesich, a very good screenwriter in New York, had talked me into doing Plenty. I had enjoyed the play but had a couple of problems with some of it. I agreed to meet with David Hare, the writer, at the Sherry Netherlands in New York. As soon as we sat down, I said, “I want to be honest with you. I have some problems with the play and I’d like to articulate them to you. That way you’ll know exactly how I feel. If it is hurtful or rude, I can’t help that. I have to tell you, because you may not want to go on with this meeting, and it would be silly of us to do it the other way round.” So I told him what I felt, and he agreed that there were problems he had never been able to solve. In a couple of cases, he also made me see things another way, which was very helpful. We then realized we were heading in the same direction, and from then on we got on very well.

I knew it was a hell of an enterprise, but it was a really intelligent, worthy thing to do. I felt it could be a bloody good film.

The first step was to decide if we should cast Meryl Streep or Kate Nelligan, who had done the play on Broadway. Personally I wanted Meryl, for the reasons of getting more inroads into the character. She was also important in terms of getting the amount of money I believed was necessary to do the film. Kate had the reputation on stage at that time, but Meryl had it on film.

Ed Pressman then started running round trying to get the money. As soon as I smelt he had some of it, he found me on a plane to England, spending. I had him about $400,000 in the hole before he had a chance to blink. He had to make it work! [Laughs]

How was it working with David Hare? He has a reputation for being very precious about his screenplays and not allowing a word or an emphasis to be changed.

Such stories would have come from the film done in Vietnam [Saigon: Year of the Cat] and from people like Frederick Forrest, who wanted to ad lib his dialogue. You don’t ad lib a playwright’s dialogue. Of course, David wanted his words said in a certain way, as does any great writer. There are rhythms, and motors, and emotional undercurrents in those words.

David and I actually spent a lot of time taking Plenty from a stage play and making it a film. There were eight or ten drafts done on that screenplay. I would savage David, he would savage me, then he would go away and make it his own again. I would then savage him again and he would show me what I’d not seen. I’d suggest another way of doing it and we would work something out. Then he’d go away and make it his own again. It was a real process.

I believe we succeeded in fixing some of the flaws of the play. In fact, David and I laughed a lot when one critic said, “It’s just like the stage play. They haven’t changed anything at all.” The critic thought that was a slight, but we felt that was a fantastic compliment because more than a third of the script is new material.

Even though the script differed significantly from the original play, I always felt I was interpreting David Hare’s work. It is great work and I wasn’t about to go off and make some other film. In fact, during the filming, if there were moments we felt were still not working, we kept talking about them while I shot other stuff. That way we could hopefully fix things before it came time to shoot. And by David’s having that involvement in that process, the film stayed in his language and was pretty much as he wanted it.
think he is a bit what I'll call “self conscious”, though I don't mean it as strongly as that. He will do something from a literary or theatrical consideration, but it will come off as a self conscious camera movement. But he has a completely original approach, and is really exciting.

I also like Paris by Night, but I think I would have done a better job of it. I loved the script and really wanted to do it. I would have done a real film noir with a lot more bravura in the visuals. It would not have been David's film: it would have been David and Fred's film, and quite different.

Would you have portrayed the heroine so darkly?

No, not in David's way. He likes that. He is examining the cold bleakness of people. His thing is this English exterior which he wants to penetrate and bust. I would have examined that in another way.

A great example is The Gin Game, which is about a man and a woman in an old people's home. There are only two people on stage and it is about boredom and tedium, about life passing by. Many people would direct that in a boooorrrring way, letting you have that same experience. In the production I saw, [director] Mike Nichols made everything compelling and funny and fast. You knew all about the boredom and the agony, but you didn’t have to actually sit there and experience it in real time. In a way, there is a little of that in David's approach.

Having said that, I still like Paris by Night. It is a challenging and different experience.

Have you seen Strapless?

Yes. I like it a lot. It has a wonderful mood about it and a lot of energy. I love Blair Brown, though I think David could have made her look a bit prettier! [Laughs]

ROXANNE

After the success of Plenty, you moved to comedy with Roxanne.

I had actually been trying to do comedy for quite a while. Before Iceman, I had been involved with a physical comedy based on Robin Hood, which I was going to do in the style of The Three Musketeers, but hopefully even better. I was really looking forward to that, but it never came to be. I also had a Judith Ross script called The Other Man, which I thought was very funny.

In the meantime, I took two writing jobs. I did an adaptation of the book, Meet Me at the Melba. Interestingly, it is a lot of actresses'
favourite script, but I couldn’t get it made for love or money. Then I wrote an original comedy called Misconceptions, which I believe is very funny, but again couldn’t get it made.

As well as these, there were two Steve Tesich screenplays, both comedies of tone and character. They are very funny, but I couldn’t get anywhere with them. I got so depressed by this that I actually shot 20 minutes of one of them on videotape. The company which had put the project into turn­around thought I had created a miracle and changed their minds completely. Then two weeks later, when we went in for the final meeting, they changed their minds again. I think that had to do with Kirk Kerkorian playing round with money, and not the script.

So, it seemed as if no one would let me do a comedy. Then a friend of mine, Martha Lattrall, had her agency bought out by I.C.M., where Sam Cohn is. Suddenly she went from a friend who gave me advice to one of my agents. And it was she who sent me Roxanne, and who convinced [producer] Dan Melnick that he should meet me.

When I met with Dan, I rather arrogantly gave him my theories on comedy and life and acting. But he seemed to like all that, and my work. Steve Martin also turned out to be a great fan of Plenty, and was looking to take an acting step. So we had dinner with Steve and I took the bull by the horns and said, “Steve, your script doesn’t start until page 61. What are we going to do about it?” [Laughs] Fortunately, Steve agreed, and we got stuck into it. Then the guy who had been resisting me at Columbia left for another job and I was in.

Roxanne was a great experience for me and a breakthrough. You see, something happens when you start refining your aesthetics: you begin to censor yourself without knowing it. I saw a good line the other day: “You become good taste, looking over its shoulder.” You start to over-intellectualize and you eliminate all sorts of possibilities from your work.

I hadn’t fully realized that until Roxanne, where there is a lot of wonderfully silly things happening. For example, I had the idea of putting “The Blue Danube” at the start of the scene where the firemen practise with the hose. Then I thought, “Heh, I could do this whole sequence to ‘The Blue Danube’. I can shoot it with that in mind, just knowing I might do it.” But then I started to have doubts and decided it was corny. But hold on: Why is it corny? Who says it’s corny? And even if it is corny, what’s necessarily wrong with that? Shouldn’t I just be free and mad?

Then I remembered all the things I used to do at Bruce Clarke’s Jingle Workshop, back when I was doing documentaries. I’d invent musique concrète things. I even did a whole film with just five voices. I orchestrated all these sounds and words and supermarket conversations, then electronically treated them so that they became like metal-pressing machines. I used to be very free and experimental, going out and pushing the borders.

But as you get into features, there are certain things you get rid of, because everything has to be in the service of the story and the characters. Then one day you realize you have locked away something you’d forgotten you had. Roxanne opened all those doors for me.

It was very strange, because here I was doing a comedy which was forcing me to be far more conventional than I would have liked. There is always only one place to put the camera, and the minute you plan to have an alternative joke, or you want to drop a line, you are forced into coverage. You can’t afford to do it in one shot.

Against that need to be conservative, I had to fight to adopt a style and keep it in the film. Suddenly I was required to bring out a whole armoury of stuff I’d forgotten I had. Roxanne was a very freeing experience for me, and I have had a renewed attitude ever since. If something works, it works. Don’t get too intelligent and over-impose information in the photography and the music and sound. Don’t get stultified. Do all the work beforehand, then let go and be free and emotional. Don’t crush things to death intellectually.

Did that sense of freedom gained from Roxanne contribute to the ‘home movie’ style of Evil Angels?
Absolutely. Wobbly-cam! “What is this guy doing with wobbly-cam?” I used to be so perfect with all my camera moves and make the audience quite unconscious of what I was doing. If I moved, I crept. But now I ask myself: Why? Who says? You must find what the picture needs, then do it. And, yes, the ‘home movie’ style is definitely there in *Evil Angels*. It governs the whole structure of it, crossing as it does to people over the country for comments. I have taken that style even further in *The Russia House*.

One stylistic element common to all your films is the abrupt changing of perspective on people in the landscape. You cut from very wide to very close and even through 90 degrees, which almost no other director does. The opening of *Iceman* is quite extraordinary in its use of 90 degree cuts.

That is my grammar. Each film is different, as we agree, but there is a basic grammar about cutting on line and shocking scale changes. These are stimulus things: I hate those miserable little 30 degree changes and boring over-the-shoulder stuff. Cut round strongly; go 90 degrees if you want.

I like to work with modular-pattern filmmaking. If you find you have a flaw in the development or something, it is actually easier to unplug and shift things around when working this way than if you are using a more conventional system. That is something I learnt many, many years ago and is partly why I do some of what you mentioned.

But it is also more than that. If you go in on line, you are concentrating on one thing and not introducing extraneous information in the background; you are not distracting the audience.

The scene at the beginning of *Roxanne*, where C. D. Bales [Steve Martin] comes down the steps with his rucksack and walks along the path before meeting the two whoos, is almost the classic sequence of Schepisi patterning.

Yes it is. Absolutely.

Another stylistic element is the sense of community detailed in each picture. In *Roxanne*, for example, there is the strong feeling for the town and of the relationships between people.

Yes. Bill Hurt actually expressed it a little differently and I think more accurately. He said, “You fill in the corners.” Most people don’t. They concentrate on main characters and everyone else is peripheral.

For me, every character who appears in a film, from the very bit part right up, has to have an inner life. Many times they play things that are not immediately perceivable. And I give them as much information about who they are as I do the main actors. That is part of what gives that sense of community: they are all fully realized people, interacting in a very real way.

The perception of you in America must have changed greatly after the success of *Roxanne*. Did you feel that?

Absolutely. Up till then I was just an interesting filmmaker, straddling the majors and the independents. There was a lot of pressure from the good independents, and particularly writers, to do their work, and I still had the possibility of working for the majors. But then *Roxanne* made money. More than that, it was funny and warm. It could have been just a conventional comedy, but it became more than that.

*Roxanne* made the studios appreciate my skills more, and it also made money. I am not sure in which order that goes, but I have an idea. [Laughs]

Steve Martin had been tried in other films and not really succeeded, so the fact that he worked so well in *Roxanne* must have been seen as proof of your abilities as a director.

I think that’s true. But there is a certain irony in that, because what people haven’t picked up on is that Steve actually had something to act. This wasn’t just a series of vignettes or one-liners. There was a story, a character and a depth beyond the simply comedic approach, and a romance had an emotional storyline.

Presumably Steve Martin wrote it that way, to give him what he felt he hadn’t been offered before.

I don’t think he did that consciously, it was just the story he picked [*Cyrano de Bergerac*]. But he might have. I can’t properly answer that, though I’m sure he was looking for a good vehicle, yes.

**Evil Angels**

After *Roxanne*, your reputation was at a high with the major studios. But instead of trying to consolidate yourself in America, you came to Australia to make a film for Cannon. [Schepisi chuckles.] Once again you went off in a surprising direction.

Well, I don’t want to repeat myself. I want each film to be a challenge and a new experience. I don’t want to go back over where I have been unless I can find a different avenue of approach. I’ll certainly do more comedy, but there is a hell of a lot of other things I want to do as well.

Quite frankly, I didn’t want to do *Evil Angels*. I thought it was going to be too hard, and I was right. But [producer] Verity Lambert just drove me mad about it.

Fortunately, I was able to do it – and this will sound wrong – on Hollywood terms. I don’t think I could have done it without Meryl. With her name, I was able to get the money to do it properly.

Meryl was an enormously helpful collaborator on every level. She gave me the confidence to believe I could do it. I couldn’t, wouldn’t, have done it without her.

What did you think was too hard about it?

Outside of the controversy, and the amount and importance of the information, was the fact I couldn’t take any liability. I understand now why people 20 years after an event combine characters and cheat on a few things. What they present dramatically can be closer to the truth in an emotional way than if they were strictly hidebound
by the facts. I don’t think we ended up being hidebound, but that’s what I was frightened of.

As it was an on-going case, there was also the danger the film could negatively affect the lives of people involved. I didn’t want to take it on if there was any danger of my doing that. Verity felt my hesitation was because I didn’t know how to make the film, and that was true … at first. Then I did find out a way of doing it. But I had to tell Verity I couldn’t guarantee the film’s commerciality if I went in that direction.

I’m glad Verity talked me into it, because I think it is a bloody good film. It has been successful in many places, and in the oddest places it hasn’t. In America it wasn’t, but that is a whole other story.

When directors go to a foreign country, they often bring a fresh perspective to issues that local directors have missed. That is certainly the case with Walkabout and Wake in Fright, which could not have been made by Australian directors. It seems to me that in *Evil Angels* there is a freshness and objectivity in looking at Australia influenced by your time working overseas. Would you agree?

Yes, I do. The one thing I didn’t say when you asked why I went overseas was: to gain a better perspective and balance on my own country and culture. I wanted to see things in world terms and experience other similar situations. You definitely get a better appreciation of your own country if you can get away for a while and experience things on an international level. Of course, things can get distorted as well, if you are stupid.

*Evil Angels* is quite tough on Australians in several ways. You are very critical of the ‘rush to judgement’.

Yes … Explain that.

Well, within Australia there is a contradictory impulse. On the one hand, people won’t accede to government attempts to conform them, such as when they vetoed the banning of the Communist Party in the 1950s. At the same time, there is a strong desire on a personal level to make people conform to an accepted norm. And the Chamberlains were perceived by most Australians to be outside that accepted norm. People didn’t understand their religion and invented all sorts of crazinesses about it. They also resented the supposed lack of emotion. The Chamberlains were easily and hastily branded as guilty because of their ‘differentness’.

Absolutely. Their differentness is definitely what fired up the public in general. There were the unknown aspects of their religion, the unknown aspects of the case, the unknown spirituality of where it happened. The whole thing is not as bizarre as it seems, it just became that way.

I also think that all communities, and I realized this from being overseas, need scapegoats. They need some evil that they can experience and revel in without getting burnt. That way it can end up as a cautionary tale.

At the same time, one wonders why this country is so obsessed with the Chamberlains when at the same time a woman killed three of her children and only went to jail for two months. No one ever talked about that except on the first day. Why? Yet, with Lindy Chamberlain, here was someone who had lost her child through perfectly explicable circumstances and was treated like a witch.

My favourite line from Australians is: ‘I’d really like to see the other side of the story.’ Why can’t they accept there is no other side? I present all sides of the story in the best possible way, non-judgmentally. Just because the film comes down on the side of the Chamberlains’ innocence, why does that mean there has to be another side to the story?

Well one crucial difference from the book, for example, is that it doesn’t establish at the start the strong probability of her innocence the way the film does.

That is correct. [Pause] Well, we don’t really in the film either. We really just show it as everyone saw it and acted. You don’t exactly see what happens, but you do.

We could have done it by completely fudging the middle section and making the audience guess all the way. But it was our belief that would make the whole thing exploitative and a bit like a thriller. We wouldn’t have been able to examine the how and why to the extent that we do. We also felt it was important that audiences understand how little they had actually known when making their judgements. There was no evil villain, it was only the cumulative effect of everybody’s actions that became the villain. It was important that audiences actually experienced that, rather than just go on a thriller journey.

Although I don’t think you can compare the films, there is a way in which *The Accused* does it the other way around. I felt they sensationalized their story and revelled in the very thing they were supposedly criticizing.

Of course, my approach on *Evil Angels* cost us a lot of money. It didn’t do that well in America. But amongst actors and studio people it had an extraordinary impression. I am sure that is partly to do with Sam Neill’s and Meryl’s work, but the film also touched a nerve. Steven Spielberg was running around touting it as the best picture of that year. And John Landis, who had been through that publicity after the [helicopter] accident, wrote to say how much the film had affected him personally.

*Evil Angels* is a picture that spoke to people touched by bad or excessive publicity. That has lifted it, and me with it, into a whole other area. As much as *Roxanne*, it has helped put me in the position I have reached at this point.
How did you become involved with *The Russia House*?

Sam Cohn sent me a manuscript of the book just after Christmas [88/89], asking me to read it quickly. There were other people up for it at the time and Sam, who was also representing David Cornwall (John Le Carré), wanted to know if I would be interested in case it didn’t work out with these others. I read it, responded well to it and said I’d be interested. I was on my way to L.A. when he rang and said to go to London. So I went there and met David Cornwall, telling him how I felt about his book and what I thought I could do with it. I knew that he hadn’t been happy with any of the previous films. We talked for a while and then he suggested I meet with Tom Stoppard. Tom had been put forward by Mike Nichols when he was being considered for the project.

So, I met with Tom and discovered that we got on very well. We then both met with David to see whether we all three of us wanted to make the same film. We did and came to an agreement, forming a little pact amongst ourselves.

Then I flew to New York and rang the guy who had distributed *The Devil’s Playground* there, Jerry Rappaport. He is the biggest distributor for the Eastern block in films and food. He told me that Elem Klimov, head of the Filmmakers Union in Russia, was coming the next day and set up a meeting for me. Elem and I hit it off and we opened up the lines for the arrangement that we eventually adopted. This was on February 28.

Then I went round with Sam and tried to sell the project. Sam thought it would sell a bit more easily than I did; I knew it was a bit intelligent. Then Tom joined me in Los Angeles and we went and did a “dog and pony” show at a few studios. Eventually, we talked Alan Ladd Jr at Pathé into it and he gave us the money to write the first draft. (Incidentally, Laddy was president at Fox when I had first started there.) One of my conditions was that I also be given enough money to take the production designer, the DOP and myself on a location survey. Unfortunately, Ian couldn’t come in the end because he was working on another film.

I became the producer, but I asked for someone who had worked in Russia before. Paul Maslansky is an American who had worked a lot with the Ladd Company, and who’d made two films in Russia. He became my co-producer.

Well, we got the first draft in Cannes, when we were there for the Competition screening of *Evil Angels*. I went straight off after that to England for discussions with Tom on the second draft. While he worked on that, I shot off to Russia and did an eight-day survey in and around Moscow and Leningrad. I then sent the designer on to Lisbon and Maine and a couple of other places.

The second draft came in June, but Pathé wouldn’t make the film unless I got Sean Connery. This was after long discussions about who, how and why. So I flew from London to New York, and then on to L.A. airport. I met Jay Canter, who is Alan Ladd’s right-hand man, just before he got on a plane to Malaysia. I gave him the script, had a chat and a couple of drinks, and off he went. I then walked to another section of the main terminal and met with Sean Connery for an hour in the lounge of some airline or other. I gave him the script, talked like hell and tried to convince him to do it. I laid down my terms, he laid down his. Then he went off and I headed to yet another terminal to pick up [daughter] Ashley, who was coming in to spend some time with me. We then drove into town and delivered a script to Laddy.
"The Russia House is an anti-spy film. It is about how the very people who should have known things were changing didn't know. They don't want things to change. There are economies and ways of life based on the Arms Race. That is what we are really examining; that is the under-belly of the film."

That was on a Saturday and on Monday Sean rang me and said he wanted to do it. Boom, we were up and running!

Everyone had kept thinking there was no way we could do it. Even my own agent still can’t work out how we did. From a book to a film takes a long time. But Moscow, Leningrad, London, Lisbon and Vancouver all in that time: pretty good!

Did this speed have anything to do with the changes looming in Russia and Eastern Europe?

No. I wanted to go in September before the weather conditions in Russia became too difficult. But the bloody lawyers took a bit long negotiating Tom’s contract and we lost a few weeks. I knew that October was the latest we could start and, if I missed that, I’d have to wait six months. So we went like stink to do it in time.

That was the main driving force. At that time, nobody knew what was going to happen in Europe. Regardless of what might happen to Gorbachev or the system, there was no guarantee that the benevolent moment of free enterprise would continue.

During the making of the film, was anything changed to take account of altering circumstances?

No, the book is a moment in time. I felt it would always be relevant, and that there was no point trying to chase current circumstances. In fact, the film has stayed pretty well where the script was originally, even maybe back-pedalled a little.

The Russia House is an anti-spy film. It is about how the very people who should have known things were changing didn’t know. They don’t want things to change. There are economies and ways of life based on the Arms Race. That is what we are really examining; that is the under-belly of the film.

Then, during production, the Berlin Wall came down, and Hungary and Poland came out. Tiananmen Square happened the day before we went to Russia on our second survey. We met some American tourists at Leningrad airport and they were starved for news. It became very clear that nowhere in Russia had there been any reporting whatsoever on any of the events in China. I found that quite shocking.

Le Carré’s book is based on very long and precise conversations. From a Hollywood point of view, there isn’t much action in it. Was that ever a studio concern?

I kept saying it wouldn’t be, but rather something that would take you inside Russia and let you really experience it. Nobody thinks of it as a dialogue picture now. They think of it as an extremely involving story with an incredible sense of scale. It is a dramatic story that sucks you in and keeps you there. The love story is very strong and you don’t need the other stimuli of car chases and shooting round corners.

How have you dealt with the Russian characters? In The Hunt for Red October, for example, they are all so English that the inter-national tension never ignites.

Basically, all the Russians are Russian, except for Michelle Pfeiffer. But you’ll believe she is Russian.

Where Russians should speak Russian, they do so. There are only one or two places were a translation is needed and how that is done becomes part of the story. It wasn’t a real problem.

In terms of technique, The Russia House is a furtherance, in a way, of what I did in Evil Angels, but it is also something quite different. You will see some of my basic grammar, but that is only the rock, the foundation. I want to keep pushing the barriers. I mean, you don’t take an extremely complex John Le Carré novel, after promising the guy you’ll put it on screen with all of its complexity and nuances, and do it in a straightforward, linear way. You have to come up with something which is honest to the original work. And that is what Tom did. He came up with a wonderful structure; it’s very exciting.

If you get a chance to do something really different, you really should. After all, people don’t want to keep coming back to the same experiences. I can understand that there are cinematic traditions,
At the time of Jimmie Blacksmith, you said, “In the end you can only make a film for yourself. You have to make it to your integrity and to the way you truly feel... Obviously it is no good making a film without signposts in it – you need some consideration for the audience – but since there is no way of really knowing, you just do what you feel is going to create a real experience.”

Yes, I feel exactly the same. Maybe I have cocked my ear a little more than I had ever wanted them, but probably they should be even longer still. You can sense that when you watch it with an audience.

So, there are times when I must learn to work against my own nature, to give people more. I have to learn to do that more during the shooting as well. I ought to drop a little bit of my grammar and technique to better milk the emotional moments between people.

Why do you think there have been several very successful Australian directors in America? Are there particular qualities they bring to filmmaking?

Yes. Because of our experiences here, originally with very little money and very few resources and everybody learning together, we became free and inventive. We learnt more about the various facets of filmmaking than most international directors do, and also how to get the money onto the screen. We are also good, some of us.

I always laugh when the overseas people think of us as a breed, which we are definitely not, as Australians know. But there is probably something in our upbringing that singles us out. In Australia, we are brought up as Australians and all that means culturally. But there are also many English and American influences. There is an international “us”, as well as an Australian side. When we go overseas, we find we know more about things than we’d imagined, while at the same time seeing things with our own peculiar irreverence and focus.

So even though we Australian directors are very different, there probably is some common factor creeping into those films.

One thing that rarely creeps in is a revision to the cliched patterns of much American filmmaking.

Well, Bruce [Beresford], Peter [Weir], Gillian [Armstrong] and George [Miller] and I were brought up on a diet of good English and European cinema, as well as American commercialism. Our stand-off, observed, atmospheric style of filmmaking is influenced by European and Japanese films. We are a mixture of everything: warmer, say, than the Europeans, but not as warm or as exploitative as the Americans. Australians go for emotional truth, whereas Americans seem to prefer manufactured, commercialized emotion. That is what makes us different. It isn’t necessarily what makes our films sell more, because they don’t.

If anything, we have to put more emotionalism and warmth into our films for the American taste – and probably for the world’s taste, too.

F I L M O G R A P H Y  A S  D I R E C T O R

SHORTS AND DOCUMENTARIES 1964 - 66 Camera Corner (series of shorts); 1965 Breaking the Language Barrier (short); 1965 The Shape of Quality (documentary); 1965 People Make Papers (documentary); 1966 And One Was Gold (documentary) – also writer; 1967 Switch On (documentary); 1970 The Plus Factor (documentary) – also producer; 1972 Tomorrow’s Canberra (documentary) – also writer


ABOVE: SCHEPISI WITH MICHELLE PFEIFFER DURING THE PRODUCTION OF THE RUSSIA HOUSE.
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2. BACK OF BEYOND: DISCOVERING AUSTRALIAN FILM AND TELEVISION
A limited number of the catalogues prepared for the 1988 season of Australian film and television at the UCLA film and television archive in the U.S. are available for sale in Australia. Edited by Scott Murray, the catalogue is generously illustrated and includes the following articles:

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For a film that observes the seamier aspects of the then emerging drug culture in American society, Drugstore Cowboy, set in the early 1970s, is almost optimistic. It also bypasses the standard clichés besetting most screen depictions of the drug scene, which moralize, romanticize and/or proselytize.

DIRECTOR GUS VAN SANT maintains, “It is necessary to be optimistic when your characters are having such a hard time. I try to maintain a balancing act between optimism and pessimism, between slapstick and realism.”

Matt Dillon, breaking a recent run of box-office failures, convincingly plays Bob Hughes, a junkie who robs pharmacies to support his habit. He leads a motley team comprising his girlfriend (Kelly Lynch) and another young couple (Heather Graham and Wayne le Gros) on numerous chemist busts through the Pacific Northwest in search of drugs, “for home use only”.

In a triumphant screen ‘comeback’, Dillon has shaken off the self-conscious mannerisms that have marred his recent work and graduated from the teen league and its attendant typecasting. Says Van Sant: “I met Matt when we discussed an earlier project that didn’t eventuate, but we decided to work together at some point in the future.”

To research the film’s milieu, Dillon and Van Sant spoke with the book’s author, James Fogle, imprisoned at the Walla Walla State Penitentiary. Fogle wrote the book while serving time in San Quentin and Soledad for committing a series of pharmaceutical robberies in the 70s. Oregon writer Dan Yost, a longtime champion of Fogle’s book, collaborated with Van Sant on the screenplay. Van Sant:

Dan had corresponded with Fogle over time and was impressed by his storytelling abilities. But the manuscript was rejected by 30 publishers and, when James got out of prison, he embarked on more drugstore thefts.

When I was entertaining my second feature, Dan lent me a copy of the novel and I was immediately hooked.

We used John Huston’s Fat City as an example of how we wanted the film to look, with its down-and-out

AN INTERVIEW WITH
DIRECTOR GUS VAN SANT
BY PAUL HARRIS

Drugstore Cowboy
neighbourhoods. That movie happens to be a personal favourite of my cinematographer, Robert Yeoman. We were striving for a monotonal black-and-white visual style and studied magazine photos that had been shot using available light. Bruce Weber gave us invaluable help in finding some photo albums by a photographer named Larry Clarke, who specialized in portrait studies of junkies.

Unusually for a project of this nature, the screenplay had been written on spec and was before the cameras within a few months of completion. Says Van Sant, "I had originally assumed that we would be making the film on a low budget, namely about half a million. I was hoping for a million, but when Avenue Pictures became involved they gave me $2.500,000!"

Van Sant’s only other feature is Mala Noche, a low-budget, black-and-white drama about a liquor store clerk and his unreciprocated love for a young Latino. Made for a paltry $20,000, with a mix of professionals and untrained actors, the film became a minor hit on the festival-arthouse circuit and his calling card. Van Sant:

I enjoy writing because that seems to be the stage where you exert maximum control. Everything is hopefully perfect as you write and you can certainly make alterations.

The hard part is communicating this off the page into actors’ mindsets. The actual shoot is a freefall, fast-flying process where you can exercise the correct judgement to omit the parts that don’t work and retain the elements which are effective.

One of those effective elements is the casting of William S. Burroughs in a memorable cameo as Tom, the elderly defrocked priest who, several years prior, had turned Bob onto drugs. Van Sant:

I thought that he would be the perfect person, mentally and physically, to play the character that basically acts as a father figure to Bob.

I first worked with William in 1975 when I adapted one of his short stories, ‘The Discipline of D.E.’, for the screen. He readily gave me permission on both occasions for his services.

Although Van Sant is identified with the independent school of filmmaking, he has also experienced the machinations of the Hollywood system firsthand:

When I got out of college, I worked for Ken Shapiro as an assistant at Paramount. Ken, formerly an actor, was regarded as a hot property in the mid-1970s after directing the comedy, The Groove Tube, which was really an off-Broadway play full of sketches featuring his friend, Chevy Chase.

Most of our time was spent developing script ideas which never came to fruition. This was dispiriting for both of us. His next directing job didn’t come about until 1981. (Modern Problems), a film that was so badly received that he quit the business shortly after its release.

During this time Van Sant also made Alice In Hollywood, a 45-minute film which has never been released:

It’s about a young girl who travels the long, circuitous route to Hollywood in search of fame and stardom. All up, I spent six fruitless years working in Hollywood from ’75 to ’81.

Van Sant’s ongoing autobiographical film diary is an opportunity to “recharge the batteries” in between feature assignments: "I am making one 30-minute episode each year. It’s a lifelong project which ends when I die.”

Since the release of Drugstore Cowboy, Van Sant’s agent has been busy fielding numerous work offers. As Van Sant says, "There is no problem in finding work. The problem is in having control over the work that you do, particularly in areas like final cut and advertising approval."

In September, Van Sant hopes to commence shooting My Own Private Idaho, which he describes as being about "an older street hood who teaches and influences a young hustler who stands to gain a large inheritance". He is also working on a screenplay about Andy Warhol. His home base of Portland, Oregon, is notable for its huge timber reserves which, he says, are being severely depleted: "I want to become involved in helping to prevent the cutting down of the oldest parts of the forests. The government sees the forests as merely so much wood to be harvested."
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AFTRS AUSTRALIAN FILM TELEVISION & RADIO SCHOOL
Just when high-definition television looked a threat to familiar 19th Century film technology, film, as it has always done, is fighting back with new processes. BARRIE PATTISON reports...

The giant-screen, giant-film Imax system might be seen as one example, but it has in fact a twenty-year history. Curiously, it came into being at the point when the experimental forms of film presentation seen in the 1950s and '60s were at an end.

The "Wide Screen" era had climaxed with the divided-image, mainstream films such as Grand Prix, The Thomas Crown Affair and Run Angel Run, as well as the multi-screen events of the 1967 Montreal Expo. Among the producers who had battled the mechanical failures and bad colour matching on adjacent prints of these systems were Canadians Graeme Ferguson and Robert Kern (Labyrinth) and Roman Kroiter (Polar Life).

Banding together, they decided the answer was one big image coming out of a single, large film projector. A commission from the Fuji Corporation, and a deadline with the March 1970 Osaka Expo, gave the scheme reality. Their solution was to use 65 mm film, which had been produced for Hollywood super spectacles, on its edge. The idea recalled Otto Heller explaining VistaVision to Alexander Korda: "Alex, the big difference is that the scratches run sidewise!"

Choosing an image fifteen perforations across gave a picture intriguingly close to the 1:1.33 shape of the pre-wide screen film, but ten times its size. This was all very good, except that the trial mechanism ripped the film, the sprocket transports unable to deal with the weight. However, in Brisbane no less, where the prototype can still be seen in the Science Museum, an Australian named Ron Jones had created a device called The Rolling Loop, which sucked the film through the gate, caterpillar fashion.

Back in Canada, engineer Bill Shaw, who had never built a projector, incorporated this in a machine which had little connection with existing models. After much trial and error, and a loan from Fuji with only the hypothetical end product as security, Shaw managed to conduct a sponsor demonstration on a bed sheet stretched across a wall. Both the noise and the picture quality were startling; twenty years later that machine is still in use.

By-passing Hollywood, which had shown no interest, Norwegian Jan Jacobsen constructed a camera and the first Imax film, Tiger Child, arrived in time for applause at Osaka. This left the company with a product but no market, until a San Diego planetarium asked for a dome-screen theatre which became the first Omnimax house, using a wrap-around version of Imax. Both the flat Imax screen and the Omnimax domes proliferated. Together, they now number 65 round the globe, with eight temporary installations. The expectation is of a hundred in use by 1992.

Australia now has three: Imax at Dream World outside Brisbane, Omnimax Great Barrier Reef Wonderland and Parry City Perth. One planned for the Power House in Sydney fell victim to the bureaucrats, and the machines for an installation in Geelong are waiting for the building. The Australian office didn’t miss the fact that there were none at the Brisbane Expo while this year’s Osaka event has four.

The buildings that house these systems can be as different as the Teater Imax Keong Emas in Jakarta, in the form of a golden snail, to the starkly functional Los Angeles Mitsubishi Imax. Their capacities can range from less than a hundred people to more than eight hundred.

For Imax, the medium is the message. The process is as much of a draw as the individual films themselves. Programmes often include not only movies but a curtain raiser, which may be no more than a couple of slides with a voice-over, on up to the level of elaboration found in the presentation at Paris’ La Géode, a Buckminster Fuller-style dome in the La Villette City of Science and Industry. The show there opens with a mix of slides, laser and film from a machine on a motorized mount, which enables the projected narrator to move round the screen, identifying points of interest. At a key moment, lights behind the screen are switched on to reveal the inside walls of the dome, visible through the fabric. That’s already a hard act to follow.

A library of shots to be used for such presentations already exists. A space theme production was used in the Perth dome, while the Mugar Omni Theatre in Boston has a two-minute sys-
However, these novelty-emphasizing features could not have sustained the enterprise through twenty years. Its major competitor, Showscan, a 70 mm thirty-frames-a-second process involving Douglas Trumbull, has not managed to secure as conspicuous a place in the market, despite plans such as coupling theatres and pizza parlours.

The Disney Organisation is also still testing the water. Its Circle Vision, with projectors inside a dome surrounding a standing audience, has been little heard of lately. The touring version was mainly notable for an inflatable building.

Disney's theme parks do house the ambitious Captain Eo, a George Lucas-Francis Coppola-Michael Jackson space musical in two-projector 3D, but, even with stereo and laser effects, this has no more impact than the Natural Vision features of the 1950s. Lucas has expressed interest in doing an Imax feature and a theatre has been set up in the Epcot Centre.

One possible explanation for the success of Imax is that it stands aside from the mainstream, which tends to engulf and devour independents, either rejecting them or placing them in more conventional activities. The Imax people's roots are in the documentary tradition. Kroiter came from the Canadian National Film Board, which the Japanese sponsors seemed to have confused with the fledgling corporation. The NFB has since made several Imax films and Tiger Child was directed by the redoubtable Donald Brittain of Volcano and The Dione Quintuplets, the first of the celebrity non-fiction filmmakers to work in the process. Francis Thompson (NYN) and Ben Shedd, who carried off the Oscar with Flight of the Condor, have also made films for them and Ron Fricke, who did the time lapse photography on Koyaanisqatsi, followed his 1985 Chronos, accelerating images as different as rush-hour traffic and the seven ancient wonders, with a trip to Ayers Rock and to Halley's comet for Sacred Site.

Narrative film personnel are not excluded. Bill Coni scored Grand Canyon - The Hidden Secrets (1984), Chief Dan George fronts Ferguson's 1974 Man Belongs to the Earth and George Englund had Cloris Leachman face Gayne Rescher's camera for 1981's My Strange Uncle. A few historical spectacles have also been mounted: Keith Merrill's Alamo - The Price of Freedom and, intriguingly, Tony Ianzelo's The First Emperor of China, made on location, in collaboration with the Xian Film Studio.

Pierre Etaix's J'ecris dans l'espace (I Write in Space), about communications pioneer Claude Chappe, has just had a six-theatre premiere, a jokier item than the normally rather monumental tone of the big image productions. Dramatization does creep into even straight-forward productions like Greg MacGillivray's 1983 Behold Hawaii. However, the thrust is elsewhere.

The technology for traditional production exists: blimped cameras and sync-sound recording, and printers which will create the range of special optical effects and transitions. These appear to have been seldom used in the productions so far viewed, however. Also it must be remembered that on the Imax circuit a feature is a half-hour film, a copy of which will cost $15,000. Four-minute trailers are even made for these.

Imax's star turn is The Dream Is Alive, Fer-
guson's account of the three 1984 Space Shuttle flights. This was filmed by the astronauts, who had been rehearsed in the shots required in outer space, which required bouncing the forty-pound Imax camera in zero gravity. The system clarity is emphasized by working in a no-atmosphere environment and the images are extraordinary.

Imax claims twenty-three million people have seen this film. I was able to catch it in screenings at a science museum by half a million a year.

Other films of interest include Eddie Garrick's Magic Egg, which was state-of-the-art computer animation in 1984, with segments including a flight through a wire frame city and a trip through a coral garden with aquatics indistinguishable from live action. Distortion for dome screens was calculated in the computation. All this required fifteen hundred magnetic tapes which took fifty 24-hour days on the film recorder.

We Are Born of the Stars added to the complications of computer generation, those of anaglyph (red/green) 3D, to produce a monochrome movie that had crowds waiting four hours to see at the Tsukuba Expo 85. Transitions added full colour with polarised images from two cameras and projectors. This meant that the separation also had to be added into calculations and five picture frames were all that a 2,400-foot magnetic tape could hold, taking 25 minutes a frame to transfer to film. The two minutes of animation took four-hundred-and-fifty tapes. Ben Sheldr's Seasons uses the process for most of its half hour, contrasting the Ptolemaic and Copernican universes.

Not all productions are as ambitious, with a growing library of films for individual events or locations. George Casey's The Eruption of Mt. St. Helens of 1980 continues to run in neighbouring Seattle. It is one of the few productions to use footage enlarged from a smaller gauge and the quality drop in the earlier actuality is clear. The library does include Les Norvos' Cosmos, a blow-up from 35mm, however.

The future has already arrived, with run-up screenings for the Osaka Expo where they are premiering their Imax Solido process, a wrap-around 3D system with a production called Echons of the Sun. Even more startling is the Imax Magic Carpet, used on Flowers in the Sky. Here one Imax projector shows the image in front of the audience while another shows one under their feet, viewed through the transparent floor.

Running-in problems are being dealt with: the state-of-the-art 3D glasses deteriorate with traditional ultra-sonic cleaning and have to be done by hand; and audiences are reluctant to venture on to the see-through floor until encouraged by staff, but that is already happening.

One could argue that it is the effectiveness of its corporate structure that keeps the Imax process going, as much as the product itself. Imax has grown to a 300-person organization with offices in Japan and Europe, as well as the Canadian base. Imax publishes an elaborate colour magazine, The Big Frame, and has started running its own Imax film festivals, most recently offering 15 new productions at La Géode.

Imax's quality control is of a standard conventional film chains might study. It claims a 99.8% up time on the plant with help jetting in from the nearest office should problems occur. I have yet to see projected a damaged copy of a film. The controlled environment of the projection boxes (air conditioning, no smoking, no food) means that the specs of dirt that adhere to the rear element of the rolling loop, instead of flashing past as they do in standard projection, are rare.

So how good is Imax? Is it just alert management and science showmanship? I am always struck by the impression of size and sharpness, and the full stereo sound. The idea of a screen seating configuration which fills the whole field of view is always intriguing, and particularly important in removing the "decapitated edges" of 3D presentations. One can watch people leaning in the opposite direction to compensate for those sharp turns Imax delights in giving us.

While I have yet to see an Imax film that struck me as showing the qualities one looks for in conventional entertainment, I am always impressed by the places they take those 40-pound cameras: rafting in the Grand Canyon, attached to anything that will fly, under water and into outer space. Moments like the training drop into the net, in The Dream Alive, are quite gut wrenching.

It is possible to have reservations about Omnimax. By its nature, the reduced image blackouts out much of the large frame, eliminating the corners which would over-fill the domed screen. The fish-eye lens further reduces sharpness and the domes that I have seen had distracting visible seams. The distortion in the upper half means that even compatible Imax films must confine significant information to the lower portion.

One can argue that the secret of Imax's success and the buzz that audiences get out of these screenings, is that they have re-connected with the sense of wonder which was the movies' point of departure. From the fun-fair origins of Train Entering a Station and the early Phantom Riders, with the cameras strapped on the front of moving vehicles, through the roller coaster rides of 1950s Cinerama and 3D films, this is an element that resurfaces whenever the form is challenged.

It is a notion that lives, endures, outside the theatres showing fiction features. Well into the 1970s, turn-the-handle Mutascopes, with their original pre-World War I cards, could be found in European fun fairs and a conventional 70 mm projector (with another roller coaster movie) showing on a dome screen to a standing audience in Australian Agricultural shows and Luna Parks under the name of Cinema 2000. Disneyland has these pre-cinema and state-of-the-art mechanisms within walking distance of one another.

What Imax has done is identify a strain neglected by the mainstream and exploit it with great skill. Its existence challenges a lot of what one had always taken for granted about film, and that is no small part of the enjoyment of seeing its presentations. I wish Imax would uncerate a few more here so we could all do it on a regular basis.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Cinema Papers will publish in a future issue a story on Australia's first Imax film, Antarctica: The Last Place on Earth, now in production.
Tape Tension

David Connell at the Australian Film Television and Radio School, on shooting film for television.

Fred Harden reports...

The reason led to what was to become a theme running through the conversation over the two nights: the process of transferring negative to tape and Connell’s main reservations with it, the difficulty in getting the opportunity to grade it. This is not a problem that would arise with a film-finished production, where it is part of the director of photography’s role to sit with the colour grader and balance the answer print.

The group then moved downstairs to the studio area at the AFTRS and I watched Connell’s face drop when he saw the three unpainted flats that made up the set. It became a joke as the night went on and Connell began by explaining, “Usually from the script you have decided what time of day it is and you have talked with the art department. If it is night, they can give you things like practical lights or, in daytime, windows can give you source lights.” Here there was nothing, so he set up two 5ks, to give the key light from one window and a rim backlight from the other. There was a small amount of soft fill high on the set, with everyone cramped between the eye and the wall.

With an ARRI SR supplied by Lemac, using prime lenses, Connell shot a wide-shot and close-up of a couple sitting at a table. He repeated this over a range of exposures and on two different Eastman stocks. The first was the relatively new 7248, rated at 100 ASA tungsten, and the second was the high-speed negative 7292, rated at 320 ASA. The fill light was also varied and various bits of paper attached to the set explained how the spot meter read the difference from the main exposure setting.

A NIGHT AT THE LAB

The following night we were again pushed into corners in the maze that is Victorian Film Laboratories in Hawthorn. After a tour of the buildings, we watched in the screening room the one-light workprint from some 16mm footage for Rose Against the Odds that showed the fine-grain capability of the Kodak stock. After the VFL screening, I asked him if he would talk briefly about the process of shooting Rose and to elaborate on his feelings about the success of the negative-to-tape transfer on it.

BUDGETING FOR THE MYSTIQUE OF FILM

I began by asking his assessment of the success of the workshop evenings and if he saw any significance in the fact that over half of the group attending were Betacam video cameramen.

Connell: Obviously, doing something practical is better than having someone just talk for hours. That’s not experiencing the shooting of film. By using film, I believe you are being more creative. There is more to do in exposing it than just setting the exposure on the Betacam.

Connell agreed that there is more mystique in film, and it is a self-perpetuating thing. Because the production values are higher on feature...
productions than in shooting video on a corporate production, the video camera work offers little challenge or satisfaction. Somehow the attention to creating significant images has become transferred to the medium used: film. But could video ever replace film if the same care was taken?

Connell believes that television videotape production in Australia needn’t look as bad as it does. One problem is having people who have worked for years in lighting for television not realizing that times and styles have changed; they perpetuate the old processes when training new crew. He says there are still editors who dispute that the video editing process saves money, the advantage of viewing the result as it progresses on the television screen that will be its final release format, and the development of EDL (Edit Decision List) devices such as Shotlister, have sped up the post-production editing session usually happens early in the morning where the lighting is atrocious. The only way you can be a mile out on a tape is when you are. You can be a mile out on a tape transfer before you know about it. As everyone saw the stock we shot at the workshop, underexposure can be graded to look acceptable, but the print becomes very noticeable. I have yet to see the final result of Row so I’ll let you know then!

TAKING STOCK

Connell continues:

When you read a script, it becomes fairly obvious what stock you will use and Kodak stock is very hard to knock on the head, especially the Eastman 7245. Being a 16mm production, I used a lot of 7245 and 7248 and stayed clear of the high-speed neg except for one or two shots. The choice is up to the cameraman. If I had the money, I'd say Anglo, then it would be silly to make him change, although I know that on a job I did for Disney the contract insisted that Kodak stock be used. There are situations when I'd choose a different stock, but it's usually what you feel comfortable with.

I wish we'd had the time at the workshop to have tested the daylight negatives, but we would have been there all night. That would have shown a big difference from what we saw projected. If you have enough light, the 50 ASA 7245 is a very nice stock. I used it on all the daylight situations on Row, even the interiors. Sometimes the producer will complain about the lighting costs, which can skyrocket, but they didn't deny on Row that the result was there. They let me get more lights in.

My gaffer was Richard Tannel and he is very good. I like to operate, and the focus puller and gaffer are your right hand. It was different on Never Ending Story II [George Miller], where I only operated the Canadian part. I had some top British operators and there was just so much stuff going on that I was happy just to sometimes run the third camera. Because the crew was mostly German, I had my work cut out communicating what I wanted and I was a couple of times where there were gels on shots that I didn't notice until we done a few takes. I would set the shot up with the director and after that roam around, since I wasn't operating.

For Row there were fewer luxuries. The shoot period was nine weeks for main unit, with a week's second unit and a week in Tokyo. It was a tight schedule considering there were about eighty locations. Yet they were averaging five to six minutes a day. As Connell says “We had to go for it.”

I wanted Row Against the Odds to look gritty, not grainy, and certainly not beautiful. I kept the needs of television in mind, but I left a lot of dark areas, of television in mind, but I left a lot of dark areas, to look gritty, not grainy, and certainly not beautiful. 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A panel of reviewers has rated twelve of the latest releases on a scale of 1 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); Duncan McNab (The West Australian); Tom Ryan (3LO; The Sunday Age, Melbourne); David Stratton (Variety; SBS); Peter Thompson (Sunday; The Sunday Herald); and Evan Williams (The Australian, Sydney).

Michel [Jean-Paul Belmondo] and Patricia [Jean Seberg] in Jean-Luc Godard's first feature A Bout de Souffle (Breathless): Rates high among the critics with an average of 8.5.

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THIS ISSUE:

JESUS OF MONTRÉAL; REVENGE; LET'S GET LOST;
ROGER & ME; AND, THE PRISONER OF ST PETERSBURG

ABOVE: DANIEL COLOMBE (LOTHAIRE BLUETO) PLAYS JESUS CHRIST IN THE STAGING OF THE PASSION PLAY WITHIN DENYS ARCAD'S JESUS OF MONTRÉAL.

JESUS OF MONTRÉAL

PETER MALONE

ONE OF THE ADJECTIVES used in comments on Jesus of Montréal is "audacious". In its imagination, the staging of a Passion Play where the actor portraying Jesus Christ resembles him through contemporary parallels, and in its execution, stylishly cinematic art, the film is audacious. This was acknowledged in its many Canadian awards, the Jury Prize at Cannes, 1989, and an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Film, 1989.

Writer-director Denys Arcand came to wider than Canadian attention with his ethical dialogue, The Decline of the American Empire (1985). His sophisticated men and women enabled him to analyze the confused mores of our times, the bewildering intra-personal as well as interpersonal conflicts of insight and passionate wilfulness, and the human capacity for hope and for collapse. Talkative, witty, comic, melodramatic, it was a morality fable of and for the '80s.

With Jesus of Montréal, Arcand continues his ethical dialogue but expands his horizons. It is the late 1980s, but references range from the Big Bang theory to the end of the Cosmos. And he introduces the religious dimension of the dialogue, the moral traditions and the pieties of the French-Canadian Catholic ethos in which he grew up. No longer a practising Catholic, he is still influenced by memories, by education and the broad Catholic culture. It won't let him go. He still grasps at it. In fact, it permeates his consciousness and at some depth.

Jesus of Montréal is a stimulating film. It is anchored in the life of the city of Montréal: churches, shrines, soup-kitchens, hospitals, subway, theatres, restaurants, the vitality and the exploitation of cinema, television, advertising, public relations and, especially, theatre. But it is also a movie life of Jesus Christ, a Passion Play, an allegory of an ideal Everyman and a moralizing fable with a Christ-figure.
The film’s variety and successful versatility are reflected in an interview with Arcand:

I wanted to make a movie of ripping contrasts, from macabre comedy to absurd drama, reflecting life around us – shattering, trivial, contradictory. Some what like thirty-foot supermarket displays presenting a passion. A quick collection; novels by Dosto evsky competing for space with eau de toilette, bibles, pornographic videos, the collected works of Shakespeare, photographs of the earth while taken from the moon, astrological forecasts and posters of actors and Jesus, while loudspeakers and electronic boards pulsate endlessly against a backdrop of Per golesi, rock ‘n roll or rousing voices.

Because of this versatility, audiences will respond in a variety of ways. The film needs more than one viewing. Unsympathetic audiences may react to the heavy Jesus focus and the staging of the Stations of the Cross as yet another Biblical would-be Epic. Fundamentalist Christians might be offended by the amount of explanation and interpretation offered about the Gospels and the events in Jesus’ life. The devout might be distracted by the sub-plot of the unfaithful priest. Biblical scholars might be irritated by the speculations on archeological information and comparisons with Roman Empire magic and mythologies.

As well, Arcand’s satire is aimed at the advertising exploiters who lack respect, fawning media personalities and Satanic yuppie legal advisers. Something for everyone; something against everyone.

But Jesus of Montréal is striking and stimulating, and a way into appreciating what Arcand has done with the use of the categories, ‘jesus-figure’ and ‘Christ-figure’ (see Mouse Chris ts and Anti-christs, Sydney, 1988). Simply put, the Jesus-figure is any representation of Christ himself. The Christ-figure, on the other hand, is any character who is made to resemble Jesus Christ significantly and substantially. (Western culture, whether believing or not, has always used the Gospel story and its language as a readily-appreciated store of metaphors: passion, miracle, resurrection, lepers, Lazarus, Magdalen.)

The Jesus-figure of Arcand’s film is no namby-pamby, hokum card. Actor Lothaire Bluteau is easily identifiable with an expected Jesus look, but the Passion-play setting, with the audience following the action (even participating as they go around the cross with the wrestler bashing into the Passion, actually endowing it with fresh insight, is cleverly persuasive.

As the performances of the play continue, it is no surprise that Daniel, the Christ-figure, identifies with Jesus. On paper, his ‘cleansing’ of the modern temple of prurient, disrespectful advertising, might seem contrived, but is filmed with intense conviction. Many will identify with him as he over-turns the expensive equipment, slaps the brutal agent, and whips-chases the leering executives and French behind-the-scenes. Audiences also get a little smug satisfaction as they recognize the parallel to the temptations of Jesus in plush office corridors and a top-of-the-town restaurant. There is even a surprise condemnation of the Satan-smooth lawyer from the shrug of despising him by the presumed ‘bimbo’ accompanying Daniel and the lawyer during the temptations.

The lawyer is, of course, an anticrist figure. But what of the priest who has produced the play for 35 years, only to be revealed as too cowardly to leave the priesthood he had used to find security and an outlet for his love of theatre, and as a cover for sexual liaisons? He has a conscience but has rationalized his behaviour. However, he has absorbed the institution of the Church and its ethos, ultimately siding with authority when it comes to a dispute about theological orthodoxy and the criticisms of Daniel’s version of the play. Arcand dramatizes a valid critique of double standards of ecclesiastical behaviour through the centuries.

The Calvinist observer clearly identifies Daniel’s Christ-figure with Gospel insights. The Catholic devotion of The Stations of the Cross (key points in the stages of the Passion) is used as the framework. The filming of the scouring of Jesus, the crucifixion and piercing of Jesus’ side receive vivid cinematic treatment that is far beyond piety. Many of these sequences are as striking as those of Pasolini’s Gospel According to Matthew and as intelligently and respectfully written and played as those in Zeffirelli’s Jesus of Nazareth.

Daniel is made to resemble Jesus sometimes subtly, sometimes obviously. Though a top drama student, he has disappeared on a spiritual quest (to India – echoes of apocryphal stories of Jesus’ pilgrimages). He has lived a ‘hidden life’ until he emerges for his mission, the play.

John’s Gospel has a section where ordinary people and the religious authorities argue about Jesus’ origins and bicker about whether these origins should be clear or not if he is the expected Messiah. Arcand playfully and mischievously parallels this with interrogating media commentaries on Daniel’s background, flagrantly contradictory.

Critics familiar with the life of Jesus, but not with its Gospel detail or references, are alert to what Arcand is doing. Arcand selects key passages from each of the Gospels: the discussion with Pontius Pilate is an elaboration of passages from John, the denunciation of the religious leaders is straight out of Matthew, the moment where a devout black woman is so moved by the play that she prays out loud and clings to the actor as if he is Jesus is a playful variation on the Canaanite woman who ‘nags’ Jesus to heal her daughter while the disciples demand to know why.

On the level of Gospel parallels and variations, Arcand is skilful and audacious. It is there from the beginning of Daniel’s task. He chooses a disciple-act: a Mary Magdalene type (exploited by priest and by media producer), a warm actress who is a Mary reminder as a single mother, an actor who has had to sell out to dub (hilariously) pornographic movies, and an on-the-town restaurant. There is even a surprise confrontation: the lawyer is so leering and leering that he over-turns the expensive equipment, slaps the brutal agent, and whips-chases the leering executives and French behind-the-scenes. The lawyer is, of course, an anticrist figure. But what of the priest who has produced the play for 35 years, only to be revealed as too cowardly to leave the priesthood he had used to find security and an outlet for his love of theatre, and as a cover for sexual liaisons? He has a conscience but has rationalized his behaviour. However, he has absorbed the institution of the Church and its ethos, ultimately siding with authority when it comes to a dispute about theological orthodoxy and the criticisms of Daniel’s version of the play. Arcand dramatizes a valid critique of double standards of ecclesiastical behaviour through the centuries.

It dignifies several of the characters, whose lives are shallow but whose up-front manner is pretentious, to call them anticrist-figures. They are too trivial as human beings: the fawning socialites, the melodramatic media hostess and her tears, the auditioning agent, the brutal producer. And what of the Judas, the talented actor of the opening who sells himself as ‘homme sauvage’ of the men’s toiletries campaign? He ultimately cannot face Daniel – except that his billboard sauvage face looks down at the dying Daniel in the background. Symbolically he has hanged himself at the climax of the play which opens the film. Jesus of Montréal is a deeply serious film, it is also very funny, at times hilarious. (Arcand could make a comedy that would be uproarious.)

On the serious side, one can note the opening with Dostoevsky-like dialogue about the existence of God, faith and the human need for something or someone transcendent. There is the speculation about Gospel details and contemporary academic investigations into history and archaeology as well as mythologies of the Roman Empire. The implications of the Church authorities’ treatment of play and actors questions the humanity, faith and hypocrisy inherent in the institution. Arcand’s endgame is to make Montrealers mourn Daniel along with the rain, the hymn of lament in the background and the glimpse of the crosses standing on the hill above the city.

But audiences are carried along by the humour: the commercials, for the perfume, but especially the sexy routine and lyrics for Appalache beer; the pornography movie dubbing; the security guard urging visitors on to the next station of the cross and pleading with them to leave, that they know the ending; the routine of the police arresting Daniel; the lawyer congratulating him on an interesting show; the conversation with the psychiatrist about the sanity of acting the Jesus role. The mocking of the theatre camp-followers; the renditions of the passion according to Method, Street Theatre, Comedie Francaise, Japanese styles; and even the fight around the cross with the wrestler bashing into the cross to keep the play going but ultimately killing Daniel.

Arcand has written his screenplay shrewdly incorporating entertainment and food for thought. The screenplay speculates on resurrection stories making the dead Jesus-Daniel living through organ transplants and his being hallowed by disciples who will act in memory of him. His spirit lives. (Though there is the ironic touch that St Mark’s hospital is too hectic and impersonal to help the wounded Daniel, while the Jewish hospital is one of peace and care.)

Jesus of Montréal is particularly Catholic. Although it can and has been appreciated by critics and audiences for whom much of the symbolism and gospel reference is not known, Jesus of Montréal is a creative attempt to explore the faith, scepticism and disbelief of the contemporary world in a contemporary updating of the 2000-year Christian tradition.

REVENGE

PETER HUTCHINGS

REVENGE opens with a stunning sequence over the desert of the U.S.-Mexican border. Navy pilot Cochran (Kevin Costner) rockets across the desert for the last time in a display of virtuoso skill, balls and American technological prowess.

Obviously, the scene reprises director Tony Scott's earlier Top Gun, but it also establishes some of the dynamics of this film, cinematic and thematic. Cochran's virtuoso virility is not simply his own, it is an instance of America at its technologically best, just as the sheer thrill of the camerawork combined with the pulsing force of the sound production is an instance of American cinema at its best. The scene juxtaposes these qualities with those of the landscape, such that the violation of Mexican airspace subsequently prefigures future American incursions upon that culture, while the impervious harshness of the desert suggests the severity of a Mexican response to outsiders.

After this last flight, Cochran returns to a farewell party paid for by his friend Tiburon (Anthony Quinn), a wealthy Mexican power broker, at which he receives a pair of shotguns from Tiburon and an invitation to Mexico. He accepts, hunting lodge in the Mexican hills, the locale for and thus meets Tibey's young, new and apparently haughty wife Miryea (Madeleine Stowe). After a period of mutual indifference, tinged with hostility on Miryea's part, the two become illicit lovers, eventually sneaking off to Cochran's hunting lodge in the Mexican hills, the locale for the revenge tragedy that ensues upon Tibey's discovery of their affair.

Hitchcockian violence in Fatal Attraction, where eroticism comes from doing it in a lift, or with the dishes, and where violence comes from the spurned and is received as unexpected because of some idea of the 'rules' of casual infidelity, Revenge establishes violence as the starting point of eroticism.

It can do so because of the Mexican setting, and because this film is centred on the oedipal buddy relationship of Cochran and Tiburon.

The setting immediately makes credible the taboo and threat of the impending adultery without the necessity of establishing a moral framework that would be, in the current western moral climate, somewhat unusual. Usually, the risk of adulterous discovery is moral rather than mortal. But while the setting is a familiar device for investing the scenario with suspense, the very familiarity of the device recalls the genre of Jacobean and Caroline revenge tragedy so clearly invested with the moral purpose of overthrowing the moral frame of the court — that "things happen, and they are born to right them", that "the future is a madman's world". Clearly, the device recalls the genre of the Lear tragedy, in which the folly of the court is signalled by its title, a genre where the scenes of erotic and violent passions are invariably Italian or Spanish, and which featured sex, violence and intrigue in a spectacular manner as either entertainment or morality, if not both. And this genre is recalled also in the emblematic names of its main characters — Cochran and Tiburon (Spanish for shark, as one is told in the film) — emphasizing the morality play aspect of this story. Here, too, the casting also invokes a few of the film's homages to earlier 'westerns', especially in the appearance of sometime John Wayne impersonator, James Gammon, as the Texan.

In making Mexico the tangible, credible moral ground of the film, Kimball's photography and the production design of Seymour and Fernandez play a large part. Just as the landscape is
another character, characters like Tiburon are shot as if they are features of that landscape. After the discovery of the betrayals of his Friend and his Wife, Quinn’s brooding profile is shot like an Aztec statue, or one of the harsh rock formations of his desert.

NOTES
1. Promised by a jealous husband in Jonson’s Volpone “Corvino, Heart, I will drag thee hence, home, by the hair; Cry thee a strumpet, through the streets; rip up Thy mouth, unto thine ears; ...” (Ben Jonson, Volpone, 1605, III.7.96-98.)

REVENGE

LETS GET LOST
ADRIAN JACKSON

The Subject of Let’s Get Lost is Chet Baker, one of the most charismatic – and for a while successful – musicians of his day. Chet Baker shot to stardom early, partly because he was the trumpeter chosen to partner Charlie Parker when the legendary ‘Bird’ played in Los Angeles in 1952, more because of his contribution to Gerry Mulligan’s celebrated Quartet of the following year.

Baker soon came to epitomize all that was ‘cool’ about jazz in those days, what with his James Dean-like good looks, his vulnerable vocal style and the understated lyricism of his trumpet style. The stardom turned sour when Baker became a heroin addict, like so many jazzmen of his generation (who tragically thought that this would help them to emulate Parker’s genius). Unlike most of the others, Baker neither died young nor kicked the habit. He hung on, despite all the adverse publicity, the recurring run-ins with the law, and the sometimes startling deterioration of his talents. He spent the latter part of his life in Europe, constantly touring, recording whenever asked to, before he finally died in Amsterdam in 1988, at the age of 58, in a fall that could be interpreted as suicide or accident.

Let’s Get Lost examines the stardom and decline of Chet Baker. But is also can be seen as a study of drug addiction: Is this what drug addiction does to a person, or is this the sort of personality that becomes a junkie? It can also be taken as a document of the jazz life: the pressures that can be applied to an artist by fans who adore without understanding, by audiences that chatter above the music, and by an entertainment industry eager to exploit the artist’s appeal.

Much of the film’s impact comes from its before-and-after approach. Footage of the handsome young star provides a chilling contrast with the same man three decades later, a portrait of Dorian Gray who walks and talks as if in his sleep. Footage of Baker performing, onstage or in the studio (recording the music for the haunting soundtrack album “Chet Baker Sings and Plays from the Film Let’s Get Lost”), reveals the decay in the tone of his voice and trumpet, although the kernel of his talent is still there – perhaps lent
enhanced poignancy by his obvious fragility and world-weariness.

In addition to filming Baker at work, and eventually interviewing him direct, director Bruce Weber spends some time filming him at play. He is seen dining with his girlfriend at Cannes, or cruising in the California sun, with some of the director's friends, in a big convertible. Such scenes appear intended to show that the trumpeter was as photogenic in decline as in his prime, even that he retained his sex appeal, as younger women flock around to share a laugh or a caress. But they seem pointless and contrived, as if Weber thought he was still shooting ads for Calvin Klein. Elsewhere, however, Weber's use of inky black-and-white is quite effective, suggesting Baker as the inhabitant of an after-hours nether-world.

More fruitfully, Weber interviews some of Baker's former colleagues (like trumpeter-actor Jack Sheldon, who laughs about the time 'Chetty' stole his girlfriend), some of his many wives and girlfriends, and members of his family.

The Baker that emerges is not an admirable man. He used and manipulated people without a second thought, discarding them when they were of no further use. It becomes difficult to believe that he loved any of the women in his life (they seem to have expected every disappointment, but blamed it on another woman rather than on Baker). He neglected his children as they grew up. Even his mother tearfully admits that he was a disappointment as a son ("Yes, but don't let's go into that").

Scenes like this one raise questions about Weber's own ethics. Several of the interviewees are clearly distressed; one wife describes a girlfriend as a bitch, and adds, "Don't put that in!" Is Weber's own ethics. Several of the interviewees agree. Like the journalist that he is, Moore knows he is on to a good story and the material for a great film is falling into place. Unfortunately, like most Americans, he is reluctant to propose a solution to the problem, preferring instead to let the system speak for itself about its own ugliness. (American academic and social theoretician Lawrence Grossberg recently expressed frustration at the patent inability of his fellow Americans to cast a wide net over the ills that are shaking the foundations of their country. "In these times, AIDS has become the privileged sign of a suffering which negates intellectual work. What I don't understand is why AIDS has become the sign of suffering - there are many others dying from starvation, homelessness, etc.")

Appearances by Moore's boyhood heroes, Pat Boone and Anita Bryant, together with Miss Michigan (who went on to become Miss America of 1988) and Robert 'Eat shit, suckers' Schiller, and their pathetic efforts to encourage former assembly line workers to be confident and happy and believe in the American dream, serve to indicate how vacuous the American mind has become. Conversely, it indicates how well developed the process of using America's rich and glamorous showbiz personalities to recreate the myth of the American dream polemic, even when around their very heads the machinery of industry lies idle.

While Allan Bloom, in his very popular book of 1988, The Closing of the American Mind, condemned American educators for failing to stop the slide of values and culture into mediocrity, he failed to realize that the battle was lost long ago in the workshops and assembly areas of the country. Blind faith in America was a problem long before liberal curricula allowed questions to be raised about that America.

For its part, industry has cynically exploited the material and idealized aspirations of America, and the destruction of the welfare 'net' since 1980 has meant that the loss of faith in America is seeping up from those whose dreams of the country are most intense. This film shows that and comes as a rude shock to Australians who have such a relatively humane and generous system of welfare in place.

If these comments appear polemical and perhaps distorted by some conceits of their own, I offer no apology. Roger and Me makes it patently clear that capitalism is undoing itself by the brutality of its own inhumane logic. But as Marx said, capitalists always find ways of changing the system, of improving it. This seems less and less likely as the advanced world draws towards the end of capital accumulation based on conventional economic and productive models. We are moving to nowhere and Flint and its residents are at the forefront. It is they who are the new generation of holocaust victims, cooked alive by the ovens of corporate capital.

Indeed, if this film were to end with Moore's pursuit of Roger Smith and the portrayal of GM as a corporate criminal, it would have no great merits. Its success - or, should I say, its uppercut and knock-out punch - comes from the longevity of the film project, in that we see how high-minded attempts to provide jobs and new life for Flint fail.

A new Hyatt hotel, built because tourism is to save the city, fails and is sold. The Water Street Pavilion, incorporating recreations of Flint in its grand old days as a major car assembly town, fails and Auto World, with models of the great GM products, closes after six months. The tourists just
I had a nagging feeling that I had heard this propaganda about tourism saving an economy before. The monetarist rationale of the 1980s sold the same idea to Australia and in the process admitted that the national salvation was never again to be realized through labour-intensive industry.

Tony Buba’s Lightning Over Braddock: A Rustbowl Fantasy, which chronicles the demise of (his own) Pennsylvania steel mill town, made the same point, but with considerable idiosyncratic inflections, thereby robbing the subject matter of its human tragedy.

This is no time for post-modernist tricks, theories and technicalities, just as it is no time for the band-aid solutions of equally middle-class petty-capitalists trying to develop tourism from the refuse of a civilization. It is a time to point the camera and shoot. Michael Moore has done just that and proved yet again that cinema direct has sensate nerve endings that come to life even still.

One final and contradictory point needs to be made about Warner Bros’ distribution of Roger & Me. The company’s involvement with the project serves to reinforce the comments made in this review and in the film itself: namely, that the terrible demise of America’s working class into destitution, through the closure of labour intensive factories, is a major concern for humane Americans, even “caring” corporations.

Put another way, liberal Americans who believe in treating people with dignity do not like to see such obvious strata of society create an underclass of Americans. The homeless in America are everywhere and crime is burgeoning. Industry closures and corporate jinkings of its workers is a crime. Warners, for whatever reasons, is prepared to allow the message to percolate to an audience through the film (and later television). It is an important and relevant point.

Decades after the advent of cinema direct, the genre, as seen in Roger and Me, has a lot to contribute to current debate in a post-industrial world. Michael Moore has done a lot to resurrect the genre and direct the attention of a generation at the failing heart of advanced capitalism.

NOTE

ROGER & ME

THE PRISONER OF ST PETERSBURG
HUNTER CORDAY
TIAN PRINGLE’S The Prisoner of St Petersburg, which won first prize at last year’s Rotterdam International Film Festival, has quickly become a problem for film critics because once again Pringle has defied convention and dared to chart his own directorial course. The film has been described as everything from “a brave sort of eccentricity” (Adrian Martin’s review in Business Review Weekly, April 1990) to a naive and embarrassing flop.

Pringle’s films are never ineffectual, and he has the (certainly unwanted) reputation of having directed one of the great ‘lost’ films of recent Australian cinema — Wrong World — which, like his latest release, also won an overseas award (the 1985 Silver Bear in Berlin for Jo Kennedy as Best Actress) but which was barely seen in Australia.

Wrong World and The Prisoner of St Petersburg exploit Pringle’s cinematic concern for physical and psychological journeys undertaken by alienated characters who are lost in the maze of post-modern life. In terms of the dominant concerns of Australian cinema, this makes him a director whose work is perceived as ‘difficult’ and only relevant for minority audiences. It is an undeserved reputation because his films explore the same essential imbalance in the psyche of his characters that is the basis of storytelling regardless of the context being ‘minority’ or ‘mainstream’.

Pringle’s attraction to these characters was explained in an interview (Cinema Papers, May 1988) when he said, “I find I have more to say about the bent, the unwanted, the slightly crazed characters of this world than normal people. I understand them.” In this sense, to borrow a film title, Pringle’s characters, and the films they inhabit, are not reconciled.

The Prisoner of St Petersburg begins with this overt sense of caution. A young couple, Jack (Noah Taylor), travels by train to Berlin, arriving to find a suitably deserted ‘old city’; this Berlin could belong to almost any year this century, a feeling enhanced by the striking black-and-white photography of Ray Argall. Such timelessness allows Jack to be established as a character trapped in an era when literature dominated the imagination — in his case by the great Russian novelists such as Gogol and Dostoevsky. These writers, or more accurately their books, possess Jack to such a degree that his mind is tormented by their visions of the lower depths of a decaying European culture. The “Natasha” or “Sonja” he imagines walking past him is really Elena (played with tantalizing abandon by Solveig Dommartin), who along with her friend Johanna (Katja Teichmann in her first screen role) is cruising the Berlin bars, also trying to be free from the past, though their torment is a more contemporary angst that Jack’s battle with the giants of literature.

Having established this premise, the film then follows the trio on a circular journey through the Berlin night. Their adventures are by turns poignant and humorous, dominated by the spirited performances of Dommartin and Teichmann as the two drugged and drunk women. They have a sure sense of the necessary balance between the comic and ironic as they stumble through the streets, Johanna flirring with Jack who remains obsessed with Elena, convinced he’s met her before, perhaps in 1866. If Elena is alluring, then Johanna is a tragic-comic figure who is enthralled with their wandering: “I’ve never been so lost before”, she remarks, and when coming upon some trucks parked near an all-night diner explains, “Oh – trucks!”, with a tone of voice which suggests a perverse delight with large machinery.

Unfortunately, Noah Taylor is not able to carry the role of the demented Jack with anything like the dramatic timing of Dommartin or Teichmann, or display the sophistication needed for such a complex personality, and too often he resorts to caricature which is best exemplified by an annoying, exaggerating rolled of his eyes to represent his disturbed mind. Because of this the film becomes, perhaps unwittingly, more enjoyable as a story of the two women and their bemused efforts to ‘release’ the prisoner Jack, rather than his struggle to free himself.

The Prisoner of St Petersburg is an Australian-German co-production and was made with a combination of funding from the Australian Film Commission’s Special Production Fund and the Senate of Berlin. As a result of his dissatisfaction with the previous funding arrangements under 10BA, Pringle is almost alone amongst Australian filmmakers in pursuing a European connection in both finance and location for his films. This has set the pattern for his future productions and if The Prisoner of St Petersburg is not the best film he has made (that honour is still reserved for Wrong World) then it points the way forward for a style of filmmaking which is uniquely independent in spirit.

THE PRISONER OF ST PETERSBURG
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AUSTRALIAN FILM INSTITUTE

PUBLIC BODIES REVIEW COMMITTEE
INQUIRY INTO FILM VICTORIA
CHAIRMAN: JOHN HARROWFIELD M.P.

Pursuant to Section 23 of the Film Victoria Act 1981, Film Victoria has been referred to the Public Bodies Review Committee of the Parliament of Victoria for review.

Consequently, the Committee has now commenced its review into the efficiency, effectiveness and economic performance of Film Victoria.

The Committee invites written submissions from interested individuals and organisations in relation to the review.

All evidence provided to the Committee must be related to the Committee's Terms of Reference, available from the Secretary at the address below, or by telephoning (03) 655 6851.

Written submissions should be sent no later than Friday 31 August 1990, to:

Mr. David I. Ali
Secretary
Public Bodies Review Committee
19th Level
Nauru House
80 Collins Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

All submissions will be treated as public documents unless confidentiality is requested.

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A group of World War II army buddies find themselves united against a new enemy after one of their members' grandsons dies of a drug overdose. The youthful-minded veterans set out to expose the corrupt policeman whom they suspect is behind the drug racketeering.

Patrick Cook's satiric script is let down here by slipshod execution, which uncomfortably wavers between schmaltzy depictions of ageing people embarking on youthful adventures and realistic social commentary. The themes of mate-ship, the fraying of the social fabric and retirement are riddled with clichés and stereotypes.

PHIL NOYCE'S AMERICAN FILM, BLIND FURY.

BLIND FURY

Director: Phillip Noyce. Producers: Daniel Grodnik, Tim Matheson. Scriptwriter: Charles Robert Carner, based on a screenplay by Ryozo Kasahara. Director of photography: Don Burgess. Editor: David Simmons. Distributor: First Release. Cast: Dave Field (Wenzil), Mike Bishop (Hale), Nick Cave (Maynard). Television mini-series based on the true story of a group of German Jews who were sent to London in 1939. Mistaken to be Nazi sympathizers, they were dispatched to Australia on the ship "Dunera".

GHOSTS ... OF THE CIVIL DEAD


PHOTO: NOYCE'S AMERICAN FILM, BLIND FURY.

CINEMA PAPERS 80 • 65

PAUL KALINA

KOKODA CRESCENT


DUNERA BOYS


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OUTBACK VAMPIRES


POOR MAN'S ORANGE


Television mini-series based on Ruth Park's popular novel, released to video along with its sequel, Poor Man's Orange.

LONESOME DOVE


TAKEOVER

Director: Robert Marchand. Producer: Phillip Emanuel. Scriptwriter: Peter Moon. Director of photography: Robert Kohler. Editor: Murray Ferguson. Distributor: Roadshow. Cast: Barry Otto (George Oppenheimer), Anne Tenney (Hilda Oppenheimer), Alexander Kemp (Harvey). Lame and predictable comedy made for television, with the assistance of Film Victoria. It concerns a hard-working company executive who has neglected his family and is taken over by a computer. While his wife dabbles with a hokey psychic healer, he resuscitates his human powers to bring about a happy reconciliation with his distraught wife and their emotionally unbalanced son.

LONE STAR

Director: Peter Weir. Producer: Martin Rosen. Scriptwriter: Peter Weir. Director of photography: Don Burgess. Editor: David Simmons. Distributor: Roadshow. Cast: Sam Neill (Ray), Craig Kelly (Bud), Hugo Weaving (Dale). Based on the novel by Peter Weir. Review: "Lone Star" is a solid, entertaining film about a group of young people setting out to make a movie. The performers are excellent and the script is well written.

TO THE END OF THE WORLD

Director: Philip Noyce. Producer: Phillip Emanuel. Scriptwriter: Peter Weir. Director of photography: Don Burgess. Editor: David Simmons. Distributor: Roadshow. Cast: Sam Neill (Ray), Craig Kelly (Bud), Hugo Weaving (Dale). "To the End of the World" is a powerful, moving film about the end of the world. The acting is superb and the script is well written.

LOVER BOY


Television mini-series based on Ruth Park's popular novel, released to video along with its sequel, Poor Man's Orange.

POOR MAN'S ORANGE


Television mini-series based on Ruth Park's popular novel, released to video along with its sequel, Poor Man's Orange.

LONESOME DOVE


OUTBACK VAMPIRES


POOR MAN'S ORANGE


Television mini-series based on Ruth Park's popular novel, released to video along with its sequel, Poor Man's Orange.

LONESOME DOVE


OUTBACK VAMPIRES


POOR MAN'S ORANGE


Television mini-series based on Ruth Park's popular novel, released to video along with its sequel, Poor Man's Orange.
SCORSESE ON SCORSESE

JOHN CONOMOS

He has this great, generous gift of creating a situation for an audience, and sharing it with them. He is the ventriloquist and his doll, the singer and the song.

- MICHAEL POWELL

Marty is a sort of a film buff!

- ROBERT DE NIRO

SCORSESE ON SCORSESE is a perceptive and useful interview-history on the turbulent life and work of Martin Scorsese, the American cinema's night poet of the streets. A good part of the book is based on the three Guardian lectures Scorsese delivered in England during January 1987. The editors, David Thompson and Ian Christie, have managed to connect all the key episodes and films of Scorsese's life, and provide helpful commentaries throughout of the book's six chapters. It clearly demonstrates how much he is enmeshed in seeing movies as spiritual redemption.

As an artist, Scorsese makes and lives cinema like someone possessed: this is something which is abundantly clear throughout every page of the book, just as it is in his hyper-kinetic, visually and sonically innovative movies about ambition, guilt, human frailty, masculine violence and redemption. Above all, Scorsese's movies speak of an authentic personal vision and the imperative to try out his radical aesthetic ambitions against the creative discipline of generic conventions and audience reaction. His unmistakable, richly expressive mise-en-scène reveals a bold and intuitive understanding of human emotions, colour, gesture and rhythm.

What comes through time and again is Scorsese's overwhelming hunger for watching movies. His cinephilia began when he was three years old; his father, being a film buff, would take his asthmatic son to see all kinds of movies. He would then go home and draw the seductive images he'd seen dancing on the screen.

Scorsese loved biblical epics and, under the influence of books and newspaper comic strips as well, he would make up his own little stories. In this book, as well as in the earlier one by Mary Pat Kelly, Martin Scorsese: The First Decade (1980), some of Scorsese's storyboard images (and annotated comments) for Taxi Driver and Raging Bull are reproduced. They echo his childhood days in bed creating visual narratives for movies he would dream of making.

By the time he was six, Scorsese saw The Thief of Baghdad (1940), Duel in the Sun (1947) and Italian neorealist classics such as Bicycle Thieves (1948), Rome Open City (1945) and Paisa (1946). His family was one of the first in the neighbourhood to purchase a television in 1946. In the 1950s, there was a television programme called Million Dollar Movie, which showed the same film twice on weekday evenings and three times on Saturday and Sunday. Scorsese would watch, much to his mother's chagrin, the one movie over and over again. He would later claim that these multiple viewings made him aware of the dynamic relation of camera to music.

It was during this period that Scorsese encountered his first Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger film, The Tales of Hoffmann (1951). He was struck by its music, the theatricality of the performers' gestures and the fluid camera movements. Would it be too fanciful to suggest that what André Bazin symbolized for François Truffaut, Powell symbolized for Scorsese? After all, both Scorsese on Scorsese and The First Decade have, appropriately enough, prefaces by Powell.

From his early days as a child in New York's Little Italy to his most recent films ("Life Lessons" in New York Stories, and Good Fellas), Scorsese's love for movies, music and the vibrantly textured mosaic of American life, especially as epitomized by street life, have been responsible for one of the most uncompromisingly original voices in cinema today.

Scorsese's Italian-American identity and the emotional and cultural topography of Little Italy figure in significant measure in his work. This is particularly the case with early, self-confessedly personal works such as Who's that Knocking at my Door? (1969) and the dark, hallucinatory Mean Streets (1973), not to mention that other masterpiece of post-war American cinema, Raging Bull (1980). Based on the life of former boxing champion Jake La Motta, Raging Bull became, according to Scorsese (in the light of his then poor health, broken marriage and a creative impasse brought about partly by a severe state of depression), a means of personal redemption.

It needs to be remembered that Scorsese is representative of the so-called "Movie Brat" generation of American directors, which includes such figures as Brian De Palma, Francis Ford Coppola, John Milius, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. Scorsese's vast-ranging cinephilia (something that can be observed in his 1978 "Guilty Pleasures" article for Film Comment) was not only shaped by his childhood and teenage years, but also by studying filmmaking at New York University in the 1960s under Professor Haig Manoogian. (Raging Bull was dedicated to him.) Scorsese's cinephilia encompasses all kinds of cinema: film noir, the musical, the biblical epic, gangster movies, the Western, melodrama, fantasy movies, the horror film, comedy and the war movie. He is extremely familiar with the French New Wave as well as Italian Neorealism, European art cinema and, most important, the Holly-
wood studio system. To an obsessive cineaste like Scorsese, there is hardly any difference between cinema and life: movies are "really a kind of driven by their environment. Human relationships for the "Goya of Tenth Street" (Powell - who else?) not only pivot on aggression, instinct and obsession, but they dramatize the underlying cultural and ideological tensions of our epoch. Redemption is one of Scorsese's biggest themes and it accordingly reflects the fact that as a teenager, hence studying to be a priest. The four points of the filmmaker's emotional and cultural compass back in the 1950s consisted of the cinema, the church, music and the Mob.

Scorsese's restlessness as a film artist colours every look, gesture and utterance in his unpredictable films. Equally important in this sense is how his existential edginess is not only reflected in his indispensable collaborations with Robert De Niro (one of the great fertile collaborations between a director and a performer in American cinema), Harvey Keitel and Paul Schrader, but also in the way he envelops himself with movies and popular music. Perhaps the most apt description of Scorsese's work environment has been provided by Powell in his preface to the Kelly text: He breakfasts off images, eats tapes for lunch, comes surfing over the sound-waves to dinner. His house, or hut, caravan or automobile, purrs with electronics. Banks of video-tapes, screens, recorders and projections of grey and impersonal like Bertie Wooster's jeers, await the bidding of their young master. His bathroom is a cutting room, his bedroom a projection-room, time-clocks activate video-tapes over twenty-four hours, music plays unceasingly, day turns into night, night into day.

Scorsese's close relationship with De Niro is an integral part of this challenge to create an improvisatory, expressionist cinema. Scorsese and De Niro general. But again like De Niro, Keitel always leaves a little room for spontaneity and improvisation once the camera is rolling. His visceral dynamism is not only evident in Mean Streets but also in his electrifying performance as the jungle-cat pimp in Taxi Driver. Paul Schrader's collaboration with Scorsese is adequately documented in the book, showing how the Calvinist-reared filmmaker-screenwriter is not only sympathetic to Scorsese's cinema of redemption, but is also a cinephile of the first generation. Unlike Scorsese, Schrader was not allowed to see movies until the age of seventeen. Schrader has contributed scripts to three watershed works in Scorsese's oeuvre: Taxi Driver, Raging Bull and The Last Temptation of Christ. Of Schrader's screenplay for Taxi Driver, Scorsese has said:

Paul Schrader wrote that and the structure was terrific. It's the closest thing I could get to a script written by myself, let's say, that I wanted to do written by somebody else. (quoted in Kelly, p. 201).

Finally, a few words about Scorsese's use of music in his films: one would be hard pressed to think of another contemporary American director who utilizes music to such a fluid, expressive degree. Often Scorsese reminds his readers how, as a child living in Little Italy, music was always playing in the background. It was and is a constant source of joy and it formed an inherent element of the way Scorsese and his parents lived in the busy, congested buildings and streets of Lower Manhattan. Speaking of his childhood in Little Italy Scorsese states:

In many ways the main thing was the experience of music. I was living in a very crowded area where music would be playing constantly from various apartments across the street, from bars and candy stores. The radio was always on; a juke box would be playing out over the street; and Benny Goodman from another, and rock 'n' roll from downstairs.

For the filmmaker of Mean Streets, "the whole movie was Jumping Jack Flash and Be My Baby." For many people, the celebrated opening scene where Charlie enters the English, red-hued house where greeting his friends is one of the sublime moments of American cinema. What emerges in Scorsese on Scorsese is how the filmmaker's original cinema emanates from his autobiographical background in the 1940s and '50s when it seemed to the young cinephile and aspiring Hollywood director the world would stand still for rock 'n' roll and a John Wayne picture.

**BOOKS RECEIVED**

**ACADEMY AWARD-WINNING FILMS OF THE THIRTIES**

*John Howard Reid, Raster Press, Sydney, 1990, 224 pp., hb, rrp $40.***

This third volume in Raster's Film Index series details all but three of the 131 films honored by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science between 1929 and 1940. The three films excluded were already featured in the companion volumes Memorable Films of the Forties and Popular Films of the Forties. Information in this volume includes complete cast and credits for each film, American and Australian release dates, notes on competing nominees, production excerpts and reviews - some written specifically for this volume. Other sundry and relevant information is made available and where deemed appropriate, ranging from such items as stage credits (if based on stage play) to verifiable facts concerning key personal ties. This is an informed movie reference book for those with a passion for comprehensive listings.

**THE MGM STORY: THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF SIXTY-FIVE ROARING YEARS**


A revised and updated edition, with additional text for the years 1982 to 1989 written by Ronald Bergen. Includes special section on the celebrated M.G.M musicals. A good reference guide, though the most valuable feature is the book's collection of colour and black-and-white reproductions.

**THE SCREEN TEST HANDBOOK**


A 'how to' book offering practical advice in dealing with the screen tests, and designed specifically in relation to the Australian film and television industry. The book is divided into two parts: the first covers everything from how to explain the roles of key industry personnel to suggested ways of dealing with nerves when auditioning. Also included is advice from noted industry professionals.

Part two provides a variety of film and television audition pieces for practice, or for inclusion on a personal showreel. They cover a broad range of age groups for men, women and children, and are all Australian in content and style.

**A BRITISH PICTURE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY**


This is one of the most amusing recent autobiographies from a prominent film director. Like his films, Russell's book is based on seemingly erratic associations of ideas and feelings, the narrative jumping here and there because of perceived connections between visual images, emotion and music, landscape and memories. Russell can be very funny, as at David Putnam's expense, or most acutely at the late Paddy Chayevsky's. This is an anecdote about the pre-production on Altered States:

With only three weeks to go we commenced rehearsals in an empty storeroom on the Burbank lot. The dialogue was loaded with scientific mumbo-jumbo which the actors spat at each other across a long table watched over by Paddy and myself at either end. Paddy wanted everyone word-perfect and we sat there day after day until they were, and then he asked them to overlap their dialogue so that what had been barely comprehensible before degenerated into incomprehensible babble reminiscent of the Bronx Zoo, rendered all the more comic by the utmost seriousness of all concerned.

"Perfected for me," said Paddy, kissing his script the way Bernstein kisses the score of Beethoven's Ninth, "Over to you, Kenny." All eyes stared expectantly at me, waiting for some revelatory output.

"You can't improve on perfection, Paddy," I said. "Why don't we rehearse the scene where Jessup fucks Emily on the kitchen floor? I'd appreciate your input on the grunts."

Russell is also very good on music and opera (he scores a telling point against those who attacked his Madame Butterfly taking cocaine: Puccini included it in his stage directions!). The book also contains one of the best accounts of the problems that can beset a film before it gets made. A must.
NOTE: Production Survey forms follow a revised format. Cinema Papers regrets it cannot accept information received in a different format, as it does not have the staff to re-process the information.

**FEATURES ■ PRE-PRODUCTION**

**BLINKY BILL**
Pre-production 1/2/90-30/6/90
Production 1/7/90-30/6/91
Post-production 1/7/91-11/91
Prod. co. Yoram Gross Film Studios
Dist. co. Beyond International Group
Director Yoram Gross
Producer Yoram Gross
Exec. producer Sandra Gross
Based on The Adventures of Blinky Bill by Dorothy Wall
Scriptwriters Yoram Gross, John Palmer, Leonard Lee
Composer Guy Gross
Synopsis: The film tells the story of Blinky Bill's childhood with his friends in the bush. The peace and charm of their existence is shattered by the destruction and clearing of their home by loggers. But Blinky Bill rallies his friends and, in a series of exciting adventures, the bush animals win the struggle to preserve their existence.

**CRIMES OF PATRIOTS**
Director Richard Lowenstein
Producer Ed Pressman
Scriptwriter Ed Pressman
[No details supplied]

**THE FATAL BOND**
Prod. company Intertopic Films and Avalon Films
Budget $5 million
Principal Credits
Director Phil Avalon
Producer Vince Martin
Assoc. producer Peter Taylor
Scriptwriter Phil Avalon
D.O.P. Ray Hennan
Sound recordist Bob Clayton
Editor Ted Oten
Prod. designer Keith Holloway
Composer Art Phillips
Production Crew
Unit manager Peter Taylor

**PRODUCTION ■ SURVEYS**

**FEATURES ■ PRE-PRODUCTION**

**DEADLY**
Prod. co. MoirStorm Prods
Dist. co. Beyond International Group
Production 2/7/90...
Budget $4 million
Principal Credits
Director Kim Darby
Composer (Bnako) Sue Jarvis
Sound recordist Simon Cox
Editor Jock McLachlan
Stunts coord. Terry Ryan
Costume designer Lisa Meagher
Props buyer Suzie Carter

**THE MAGIC RIDDLE**
Prod. co. Yoram Gross Film Studio Dist. co. Beyond International Group
Principal Credits
Director Yoram Gross
Producer Yoram Gross
Assoc. producer Sandra Gross
Scriptwriters Yoram Gross, Leonard Lee
Music Guy Gross

**TURTLE BEACH**
Prod. co. Roadshow, Coote & Carroll
Principal Credits
Director Stephen Wallace
Producer Matt Carroll
Line producer Irene Dobson
Exec. producer Graham Burke
Scriptwriter Greg Coote

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TILL THERE WAS YOU
Prod. company: Ayer Prods
Dist. company: Sovereign Pictures
Budget: $13,514,000
Production: 1981/19-1/19/90
Principal Credits
Director: John Seale
Producer: Jim McElroy
Line producer: Tim Sanders
Scriptwriter: Michael Thomas
D.O.P.: Geoffrey Simpson
Sound recordist: Gary Wilkins
Editor: Jill Bilcock
Prod. designer: George Liddle
Costume designer: Arlette Major
Composer: Tony Milliandt
Planning and Development
Casting: Mike Fenton
Casting assistants: Faith Martin
Extras casting: Siobhan Hannah
Dialogue coach: Sandra Lee Paterson
Production Crew
Prod. supervisor: Grant Hill
Prod. coordinator: Jennie Crowley
Producer's asst: Lorette Adamson
Prod secretary: Amanda Seling
Location manager: Reg Cifton
Unit manager (Vanuatu): Tic Carroll
Unit assts: Alan Bentley, Christine Robson
Prod. asst: Jo Watson (Vanuatu)
Prod. runners: John Donald, Steve Snowden
Financial control: Kevin Wright
Prod. accountant: Christine Robson
Accounts assistant: Annee Piggott
Panasonic: Anne Davis
Insurer: Hammond Jewell
Completion guar.: Film Finances
Travel coord.: Helen Francis
Freight coord.: Michael McLean
Base office liaison: Fiona King
Camera Crew
Camera operators: Danny Batcher
Focus pullers: Martin Turner, Neil Carrie
Key grip: Laurie Kirkwood
Clapper-loaders: Mark Zagar
2nd unit D.O.P.: Kate Dennis
2nd unit focus: David Burr
Camera types: Barry Idle
Key grip: Mark Wastuk
Ass grip: Jo Joyson
Gaffer: Trevor Toune
Best boy: Wernher Gerbach
2nd gaffer: Simon Lee
Art director: Darren Bellangarry
Line producer: Ron Ware
Generator op: John Lee
On-set Crew
1st asst director: Steve Andrews
2nd asst director: Toby Peake
3rd asst director: Emma Schofield
Continuity: Pam Willis
Boom operator: Luke Fontaine
Hairdresser: Pascal Sait
Special fx asst: David Page
Stunts coordinator: Janine Raede
Safety officers: Archie Roberts
Chris Hession
Unit nurse: Jacqui Ramsey
Still photography: Gary Johnson
Victoria Buchanan
Catering: Kathy Trout (Vanuatu), Markie Janacisic (Syd.)

UNIT RUNNERS
Unit runner: Sara Probyn
Brooke Smith
Second Unit
1st asst director: Pat Cameron
2nd asst director: Karan Monkhous
Coordinator: Vicki Popplewell
Key grip: Warren Greg
Recordist: George Craig
Continuity: Jenny Quigley
Watermark Underwater
Cameraman: Wolfgang Knokich
Assistant: Jeremy Rayner
Aerial Unit
1st asst director: Michael McIntyre
Helicopter pilot: Mark Robertson
Art Department
Art directors: Ian Allen
Art dept coord: Malcolm Saville
Set dressers: Michael Tolerton
Marta Stawecz
Draftsman: Fiona Scott
Machinist: John Murch
Standy props: James Cox
Armourer: Brian Burns
Wardrobe
Wardrobe super: Kenny Thompson
Wardrobe assts: Heather Laurie
Suzanne Head
Construction Dept
Constr. manager: Bill Howle
Scenic artist: Peter Collas
Construction: Sandy Christy
Lead hand: John Stiles
Senior props: Andy Tickner
Labourer: Claudia Goodman-Davis
Set dresser: Matt Conners
Greensman: Peter Hordern
Plane construction: Janne Mitri
Valente
Wardrobe
Wardrobe super: Colleen Woulfe
Wardrobe asst: Francesca Bath
Animal trainer: Sharon Rigby
Animal handler: Rhonda Hall
Construction Dept
Scene art: Paul Brocklebank
Construct manager: Laurie Dorn
Carpenter: David Hawke
Wardrobe: ABC/Gore Hill
Set finisher: Virginia Pugliese
Studios
Waterloo Studios
Post-production
1st asst editor: Jane Moran
2nd asst editor: Jane Maguire
Editor: Julia Georgina
Sound transfer: Atab
Lab: Atab
Lab liaison: John Millar
35mm
Shooting stocks: Kodak, 5296, 5247;
AGFA XT320

Government Agency Involvement - Production
Mark Conner
Cast: Mark Harmon (Frank Flynn), Jeroen Krabbe (Viv), Deborah Unger (Anna), Shanice Bryan (Brenda), Robbe Krabbe (Robbo), Jeff Truman (Nobby).
Synopsis: Frank Flynn, an American jazz musician, comes to Vanuatu in search of his brother and finds murder, intrigue and romance - it's a jungle out there.

WAITING
Pro. co. Prod. - Filmedails Prods ABC
Prod. co. Prod. - FFC
Prod. co. Prod. - FFC
Prod. co. Prod. - ABC
Prod. co. Prod. - ABC
Prod. co. Prod. - ABC
Prod. co. Prod. - ABC
Prod. co. Prod. - ABC
Prod. co. Prod. - ABC

BUTOH AND THE JAPANESE
Synopsis: As Butoh is radical and non-conformist, it's a major development in contemporary performance. This documentary looks at the history of Butoh and also at four of the major performers and their companies.

BUTOH AND THE JAPANESE

Director: John Seale
Producers: Tommy Iliffe
Writer: Paul G. Viney
Co-producers: Paul G. Viney, Jill Coverdale
Promoters: Discuss

PROFESSIONAL VIOLENCE

Synopsis: Professional violence is, after all, a profitable business. The question is: how much is it worth to the victims? And, does the government have a responsibility to aid and protect them?

FINANCING

Principal Credits
Director: John Seale
Producer: Tommy Iliffe
Scriptwriter: Paul G. Viney
Composer: Marta Stawecz

PROFESSIONAL VIOLENCE

Synopsis: Professional violence is, after all, a profitable business. The question is: how much is it worth to the victims? And, does the government have a responsibility to aid and protect them?

PROFESSIONAL VIOLENCE

Synopsis: Professional violence is, after all, a profitable business. The question is: how much is it worth to the victims? And, does the government have a responsibility to aid and protect them?
### AUSTRALIAN FILM, TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL

**Principal Credits**
- **Producer:** Collins Oddy
- **Director:** Guy Morgan
- **Screenplay/Story:** Gwydion Mark Hamish
- **Editor:** Helen Jones
- **Design:** Bobbie Dwyer
- **Sound:** Paul Aronson
- **Music:** John Hinde
- **Production:** Brian Chapman

**Synopsis:** A girl who finds a magical world of toys that come to life in a child’s bedroom, with the help of a local girl, Jenny, who becomes her friend. The toys interact with each other and with the girl, leading to a series of adventures.

**Production Details**
- **Budget:** $2.45 million
- **Duration:** 30/4/90 – 1/6/90
- **Distribution:** SBS

### Film Victoria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-production editorial</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Script editor</strong></td>
<td>Nicola Woolmington</td>
<td>GET REAL – 1990–1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ray Stagg</td>
<td>Production Crew</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hamish McColl</td>
<td>Production Crew</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peter Lawless</td>
<td>Production Crew</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wally Rees</td>
<td>Production Crew</td>
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<td></td>
<td>John Kenney</td>
<td>Production Crew</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jane Stewart</td>
<td>Production Crew</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tom O’Connor</td>
<td>Production Crew</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Production Crew

- **Producer:** Collins Oddy
- **Director:** Guy Morgan
- **Screenplay/Story:** Gwydion Mark Hamish
- **Editor:** Helen Jones
- **Design:** Bobbie Dwyer
- **Sound:** Paul Aronson
- **Music:** John Hinde
- **Production:** Brian Chapman

**Synopsis:** A girl who finds a magical world of toys that come to life in a child’s bedroom, with the help of a local girl, Jenny, who becomes her friend. The toys interact with each other and with the girl, leading to a series of adventures.

**Production Details**
- **Budget:** $2.45 million
- **Duration:** 30/4/90 – 1/6/90
- **Distribution:** SBS

### Australian Film, Television and Radio School

**Principal Credits**
- **Producer:** Collins Oddy
- **Director:** Guy Morgan
- **Screenplay/Story:** Gwydion Mark Hamish
- **Editor:** Helen Jones
- **Design:** Bobbie Dwyer
- **Sound:** Paul Aronson
- **Music:** John Hinde
- **Production:** Brian Chapman

**Synopsis:** A girl who finds a magical world of toys that come to life in a child’s bedroom, with the help of a local girl, Jenny, who becomes her friend. The toys interact with each other and with the girl, leading to a series of adventures.

**Production Details**
- **Budget:** $2.45 million
- **Duration:** 30/4/90 – 1/6/90
- **Distribution:** SBS
 Synopsis: A group of women of all ages discovers that learning basic self defence can give them a sense of power and confidence as well as being an enjoyable experience.
THE WHAT AND WHY OF FOI

Prod. company: Vivid Pictures
Sponsoring body: RTA
Director: Helen Bowden
Producer: Susan Mackinnon
Scriptwriter: Dick Jarvis
D.O.P.: Phillip Bull
Sound: Paul Finlay
Editor: Margaret Sixel
Music: Julian Morgan
Prod. manager: Susan Mackinnon
Graphics-ination: Peter Will
Post-production: VisualEase
Length: 14 mins
Format: Betacam SP 1"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Producers</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Submitted length</th>
<th>Applicant</th>
<th>Reason for decision</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun Down There</td>
<td>R. Stigliano, U.S., 85 mins</td>
<td>AFI Distribution, Occasional sexual activity</td>
<td>S(i-m-g)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FEBRUARY 1990</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>G (GENERAL EXHIBITION)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Barbar the Movie</em> M. Hinton &amp; F. Goubert</td>
<td>C. Smith, France, Canada, 74 mins</td>
<td>Fox Columbia Tri Star Films</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Driving Miss Daisy</em> R. Zanuck-L. Zanuck</td>
<td>U.S., 96 mins</td>
<td>Fox Columbia Tri Star Films</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Words and Silk</em> P. Tyndall</td>
<td>Australia, Spain, 89 mins</td>
<td>Philip Tyndall</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>P (PARENTAL GUIDANCE)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>*Bu Su I. Ogura, Japan, 92 mins</td>
<td>Japan Information and Culture Centre</td>
<td>Adult Concepts</td>
<td>O (adult concepts)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Camille Claudel</em> C. Fechner, France, 157 mins</td>
<td>Premix Films, Nudity and adult concepts</td>
<td>O (adult concepts)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Furious Love and The Tycoon</em> M. Mazursky, U.S., 79 mins</td>
<td>Impactful Pictures</td>
<td>Occasional violence and sexual scenes</td>
<td>L(i-m-g) V(i-m-g)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Heart Into Hearts</em> B. Sharman, U.K., 138 mins</td>
<td>United International Pictures</td>
<td>Occasional coarse language and occasional violence</td>
<td>L(i-m-g) V(i-m-g)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Killing Dad (or How to Love Your Mother)</em> I. Smith, U.S., 92 mins</td>
<td>Fox Columbia Tri Star Films</td>
<td>Occasional low level coarse language and sexual concepts</td>
<td>O (sexual allusions, adult concepts)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Sight M. Tarlov, U.S., 81 mins</td>
<td>Village Roadshow Corporation</td>
<td>Infrequent low level coarse language and mild sexual allusions</td>
<td>L(i-m-g) V(i-m-g)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stella S. Golden Jr., U.S., 88 mins</td>
<td>Filmpac Holdings</td>
<td>Infrequent coarse language and drug references</td>
<td>L(i-m-g) O (drug references)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Two Brutes</em> B. Mazursky &amp; M. Emanuel-M. Cohen, Australia, 88 mins</td>
<td>Columbia Tri Star Films</td>
<td>Occasional coarse language and sexual allusions</td>
<td>L(i-m-g) O (sexual allusions)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Wizard</em> D. Chisholm-K. Topolsky, U.S., 99 mins</td>
<td>United Internat’l Pictures</td>
<td>Adult concepts, occasional low level coarse language</td>
<td>O (adult concepts)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**M (MATURE AUDIENCES)**

Better Tomorrow III A. Tsui Hark, Hong Kong, 198 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g) |
Tara-Sans Goes North K. Shimazu, Japan, 104 mins, Japan Information and Culture Centre, Adult concepts, O (adult concepts) |
Torn Apart D. Fisher-J. Menkin, U.S., 95 mins, Reid and Puxkar, Occasional violence and sexual scenes, S(i-m-g) S(i-m-g) |
Want to Stay Alive Sergio Gobbi, France, 85 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g) |

**M (MATURE AUDIENCES)**

Better Tomorrow III A. Tsui Hark, Hong Kong, 198 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g) |
Blake G. Frensen-D. Pullock, U.S., 114 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language and sexual scenes, S(i-m-g) L(f-m-g) |
Born on the Fourth of July A. Kinnman-H. Oliver Stone, U.S., 140 mins, United International Pictures, Occasional Violence and frequent coarse language, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) S(i-m-g) |

**M (MATURE AUDIENCES)**

Better Tomorrow III A. Tsui Hark, Hong Kong, 198 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g) |
Blake G. Frensen-D. Pullock, U.S., 114 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language and sexual scenes, S(i-m-g) L(f-m-g) |
Born on the Fourth of July A. Kinnman-H. Oliver Stone, U.S., 140 mins, United International Pictures, Occasional Violence and frequent coarse language, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) S(i-m-g) |

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Blake G. Frensen-D. Pullock, U.S., 114 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language and sexual scenes, S(i-m-g) L(f-m-g) |
Born on the Fourth of July A. Kinnman-H. Oliver Stone, U.S., 140 mins, United International Pictures, Occasional Violence and frequent coarse language, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) S(i-m-g) |

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Better Tomorrow III A. Tsui Hark, Hong Kong, 198 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g) |
Blake G. Frensen-D. Pullock, U.S., 114 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language and sexual scenes, S(i-m-g) L(f-m-g) |
Born on the Fourth of July A. Kinnman-H. Oliver Stone, U.S., 140 mins, United International Pictures, Occasional Violence and frequent coarse language, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) S(i-m-g) |

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Better Tomorrow III A. Tsui Hark, Hong Kong, 198 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g) |
Blake G. Frensen-D. Pullock, U.S., 114 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language and sexual scenes, S(i-m-g) L(f-m-g) |
Born on the Fourth of July A. Kinnman-H. Oliver Stone, U.S., 140 mins, United International Pictures, Occasional Violence and frequent coarse language, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) S(i-m-g) |
ABOVE: TIM ROTH AS MITCHEL IN PETER GREENAWAY’S THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE & HER LOVER. RATED R.

Downtown C. Maguire, U.S., 95 mins, Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Frequent coarse language and violence, L(i-m-g) V(i-m-g) 0 (drug use).

El Dorado Andres Vicente Gomez, Spain, 122 mins, Filmipac Holdings, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g) 0 (drug use).

Fourth War, The W. Schmidt U.S., 90 mins, NewVision Film Distributors, Occasional violence and coarse language, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) 0 (drug use).

Gate II A. Hamori, U.S., 92 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Horror O(horror, drug use).

Impulse A. Bidgood-A. Morgan, U.S., 109 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Impactful violence and occasional coarse language, L(i-m-g) V(i-m-g) 0 (drug use).

In Between Loves (main title not shown in English) Paragon Films, Hong Kong, 90 mins, Chinatown Cinema, Occasional violence and coarse language, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) 0 (drug use).

Limit Up J. Krane, U.S., 87 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language, L(i-m-g).


Me and Him Bernd Eichinger, U.S., 95 mins, Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Occasional coarse language and sexual allusions, L(i-m-g) O (sexual allusions).

Monsieur Hire R. Gleitsman-P. Carrosse, France, 79 mins, Dendy Cinema, Adult concepts and sexual allusions, O (adult concepts, sexual allusions).

My Darling Domestic (GreytEskey) PVQ Productions, Philippines, 134 mins, MegaStar Promotions, Occasional violence, V(i-l-j) L(i-l-j).


Pretty Woman Touchstone-Silverscreen Green, U.S., 117 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language and adult concepts, L(i-m-g) O (adult concepts).


Rude Awakening A. Russo, U.S., 100 mins, Filmipac Holdings, Occasional coarse language and drug use, L(i-m-g) O (drug use).

Shanghai Shanghai (said to be – main title not shown in English) Bo Ho Films, Hong Kong, 86 mins, Chinatown Cinema, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g).

Speaking Parsa Egy Film Arts Production, Canada, 91 mins, Dendy Cinema, Adult concepts, O (adult concepts).

Vampire Buster (main title not shown in English) Rower K.C. Tang, Hong Kong, 92 mins, Chinatown Cinema, Occasional violence, and horror O(horror) V(i-m-g).

Yao Tieng Hat O Vietnam Chuin Sing Films, Hong Kong, 94 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g).

R (RESTRICTED EXHIBITION) Deadly Sin, The (said to be – main title not shown in English) Fu Ngai Film Production, Hong Kong-Netherlands, 104 mins, Chinatown Cinema, Frequent graphic violence, V(i-m-g).

Fight to Survive Dragon Production, Hong Kong, 82 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional graphic violence, V(i-m-g).

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Alien Views ZDF, West Germany, 61 mins, The Australian Video Festival.


Redeemers S. Millard-M. McLeod, Australia, 56 mins, The Australian Video Festival.

FILMS BOARD OF REVIEW

Cook, the Thief His Wife and Her Lover, The R. Kassander, U.K., 125 mins, NewVision Film Distributors, Occasional coarse language and graphic violence, V(i-m-g) V(i-l-j).

Decision reviewed: Classify “R” – For Restricted Exhibition” by the Film Censorship Board.

Decision of the Board: Uphold the decision of the Film Censorship Board.

MARCH 1990

G (GENERAL EXHIBITION) Brief Encounter in Shinjuku Golden Harvest Production, Hong Kong, 98 mins, Chinatown Cinema

Mother Baba – Avatar of the Age: The Human Side of God I. Luck, U.S., 75 mins, Rod Tyson

Summer Page, A Noboru Kaji and Taisabu Sakuta, Japan, 89 mins, Quality Films

War and Flowers, Katsumi Ono Toru Azawa, Japan, 95 mins, Quality Films

PG (PARENTAL GUIDANCE)

Chocolat A. Belmondo-G. Croster, France, 102 mins, Dendy Cinema, Occasional coarse language and nudity, L(i-m-g).

Dream of Desire (main title not shown in English) Always Good Film Company, Hong Kong, 100 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional low level violence, V(i-l-j) L(i-l-j).

Forest of Little Bear (main title not shown in English) Hisashi Yabe, Japan, 114 mins, Quality Films, Occasional low level violence, V(i-l-j).

Joe Versus the Volcano T. Togo, U.S., 120 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language and violence, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g).

Path of Glory Movie Impact, Hong Kong, 94 mins, Chinatown Cinema, Occasional coarse language and violence, L(i-m-g).

Raw Nerve M. Lynch, Australia, 90 mins, Pyodawn, Adult concepts, drug use and frequent coarse language, L(i-m-g) O (adult concepts).

Road Home, The H. Rosenman-T. Baer, U.S., 115 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Frequent coarse language and adult concepts, L(i-m-g) O (adult concepts).

Run Don’t Walk (main title not shown in English) Dennis Yip Production, Hong Kong, 86 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g).

True Blood P. Maris, U.S., 96 mins, Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Frequent coarse language and occasional violence, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) O (drug use).

Valley, The, France, 104 mins, Valhalla Holdings, Sexual scenes and occasional coarse language, S(i-m-g) L(i-m-g).

R (RESTRICTED EXHIBITION)

Bad Taste (edited version) P. Jackson, New Zealand, 86 mins, Reid & Parker, Graphic horror effects, O (graphic horror effects).

FILMS BOARD OF REVIEW

Drugstore Cowboy (a) N. Welcher-K. Murphy, U.S., 89 mins, NewVision Film Distributors, Frequent drug use depiction and occasional violence.

Eight Taels of Gold (main title not shown in English) J. Sham, Hong Kong, 104 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional coarse language, L(i-m-g).

Flashback M. Worth, U.S., 107 mins, United International Pictures, Frequent coarse language, L(i-m-g).


I Was A Go Home M. Karmitz, France, 105 mins, Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Occasional coarse language, L(i-m-g).

Internal Affairs, F. Mancuso, Jr., U.S., 114 mins, United International Pictures, Frequent violence, coarse language and occasional sexual scenes, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g).

Mad Monkey, The A. Gomez, U.K.-France, 107 mins, Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Occasional coarse language, sexual scenes and adult concepts, L(i-m-g) O (adult concepts).

Men Don’t Leave J. Avnet, U.S., 111 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language, L(i-m-g).

Nightbreed G. Mantin, U.S.-U.K., 101 mins, Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Frequent violence, occasional coarse language and horror, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) O (adult concepts).

Path of Glory Movie Impact, Hong Kong, 94 mins, Chinatown Cinema, Occasional coarse language and violence, L(i-m-g) V(i-m-g).

Raw Nerve M. Lynch, Australia, 90 mins, Pyodawn, Adult concepts, drug use and frequent coarse language, L(i-m-g) O (adult concepts).

Revenge Hunt Lowery-Stanley Rubin, U.S., 120 mins, Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Impactful violence, frequent coarse language, drug use, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) O (drug use).

Road Home, The H. Rosenman-T. Baer, U.S., 115 mins, Village Roadship Corporation, Frequent coarse language and adult concepts, L(i-m-g) O (adult concepts).

Run Don’t Walk (main title not shown in English) Dennis Yip Production, Hong Kong, 86 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g).

True Blood P. Maris, U.S., 96 mins, Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Frequent coarse language and occasional violence, V(i-m-g) L(i-m-g) O (drug use).

Valley, The, France, 104 mins, Valhalla Holdings, Sexual scenes and occasional coarse language, S(i-m-g) L(i-m-g).

R (RESTRICTED EXHIBITION)

Bad Taste (edited version) P. Jackson, New Zealand, 86 mins, Reid & Parker, Graphic horror effects, O (graphic horror effects).

Santa Sangre C. Argento, Italy, 125 mins, NewVision Film Distributors, Occasional graphic violence, V(i-m-g).

Wild Orchid M. Danton-Anthony, U.S., 111 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional sexual activity, S(i-m-g).
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Daylight stock – yes, I shot "Father" on 5297 and EXR 5245. They intercut really well. Daylight films give me the look of reality I'm after, and lots of flexibility in difficult lighting situations. I started using 5297 when it was introduced a couple of years ago. Then the new EXR 5245 and 7245 came along and I saw their great potential. The low grain content is particularly important as well as the clean look and the warmth I can get in the night shots. I really appreciate the sharpness, the details in both shadow and highlight ... plus the under- and overexposure latitude. I think these EXR stocks are the finest quality motion picture films available. They really set a standard of their own.

Dan Burstall
Director of Photography
'Father'

Film origination ... "EXR sets the standard"