Description
Contents:

2 BRIEFLY

4 THE MAKING OF SPOTSWOOD ANDREW L. URBAN

8 ANTHONY HOPKINS INTERVIEW BY ANDREW L. URBAN

12 JONATHAN DEMME: THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS INTERVIEW BY ANA MARIA BAH I ANA

18 THE LAST DAYS OF CHEZ NOUS •ANDREWij! URBAN

24 THE MAKING AND RE-MAKING OF FLYNN KATHERINE TULICH

29 AUSTRALIAN FILMS AT CANNES

36 HUZZAH PRODUCTIONS’ DEAD TO THE WORLD REPORT AND INTERVIEW BY PETER GALVIN

41 JANE CASTLE: CINEMATOGRAPHER INTERVIEW BY PETER GALVIN

44 A WHOLE WORLD OF MOVIES SCOTT MURRAY, GREG KERR

51 DIRTY DOZEN

52 FILM REVIEWS AYA USA BOWMAN DADDY NOSTALGIE BRIAN McFARLANE FLIRTING RAFFAELE CAPUTO HAMLET BRIAN McFARLANE MONSIEUR HIRE RAYMOND YOUNIS NIRVANA STREET MURDER JOHN CONOMOS STRUCK BY LIGHTNING JAN EPSTEIN WAITING PHILIPPA BURN

63 VIDEO RELEASES COMPILED BY PAUL KALINA 66 BOOK REVIEWS FEATURING AUSTRALIA: THE CINEMA OF CHARLES CHAUVEL BARRETT Hodsdon * SCHRADER ON SCHRADER & OTHER WRITINGS SCOTT MURRAY CHILDREN AND TELEVISION: THE ONE EYED MONSTER ROBERT DJE YOUNG CINEMA IN AUSTRALIA: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY JOHN CONOMOS BOOKS RECEIVED

72 PRODUCTION SURVEY

79 FILM CENSORSHIP LISTINGS

Publisher
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ANTHONY HOPKINS
IN MARK JOFFE'S
SPOTSWOOD

THE FILMS, THE FILMMAKERS
AUSTRALIA AT CANNES

GILLIAN ARMSTRONG: 'THE LAST DAYS OF CHEZ NOUS'
JONATHAN DEMME: 'THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS'
'DEAD TO THE WORLD' / 'FLIRTING' / 'DADDY NOSTALGIE'
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MAY 1991 NUMBER 83 INCORPORATING FILM VIEWS

CONTENTS

2 BRIEFLY
4 THE MAKING OF SPOTSWOOD
   ANDREW L. URBAN
8 ANTHONY HOPKINS
   INTERVIEW BY ANDREW L. URBAN
12 JONATHAN DEMME: THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS
   INTERVIEW BY ANA MARIA BAHIANA
18 THE LAST DAYS OF CHEZ NOUS
   ANDREW L. URBAN
24 THE MAKING AND RE-MAKING OF FLYNN
   KATHERINE TULICH
29 AUSTRALIAN FILMS AT CANNES
36 HUZZAH PRODUCTIONS' DEAD TO THE WORLD
   REPORT AND INTERVIEW BY PETER GALVIN
41 JANE CASTLE: CINEMATOGRAPHER
   INTERVIEW BY PETER GALVIN
44 A WHOLE WORLD OF MOVIES
   SCOTT MURRAY, GREG KERR
51 DIRTY DOZEN
52 FILM REVIEWS
   AYA LISA BOWMAN
   DADDY NOSTALGIE BRIAN McFARLANE
   FLIRTING RAFFAELLE CAPUTO
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   BOOKS RECEIVED
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79 FILM CENSORSHIP LISTINGS

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part-time tutor at the University of Sydney.
14 FEBRUARY FEATURE

THE PRISONER


26 FEBRUARY FEATURES


25 MARCH FEATURES


TELEVISION


SIX PACK (6 x 1-hour tele-plays) Generation Films. Producer: Bob Weis. Scriptwriters: Andrew Bovell ("Piccolo Mondo"); Christopher Lee ("Afternoon"); Tony Ayres ("Loveless"); Joanna Murray-Smith ("Mimi Goes to the Analysts"); Tony Maniaty ("Loula"). Three women meet for lunch at Piccolo Mondo. On the menu is: marriage, infidelity, friendship and betrayal ("Piccolo Mondo"). Who is the 20-year-old who has moved in with Drew’s family on the day of his father’s funeral? ("Afternoon"). A drama about Oedipus gone wrong ("Loveless"). The patient before her at the analyst becomes the object of Mimi’s obsession ("Mimi Goes to the Analyst’s"). From childhood, Chaim has been attending funeral services, moving closer each time to the front of the chapel. It is 1952 and Michael’s proxy bride arrives from Greece; things will never be the same at the Blue Bird Cafe ("Loula").

DOCSUMARIES


TRUST FUND 22 FEBRUARY 1991

The results of the second FFC trust fund competition have been announced. Five projects were selected from the reported 178 entries, with ten finalists having been interviewed by representatives of the FFC and Beyond Films, the proposed films’ Australian distributor and international sales agent.

CAME BACK TO SHOW YOU I COULD FLY

Producer: Carol Hughes. Scriptwriter-director: Richard Lowenstein. An introverted 11-year-old meets the effervescent but drug-addicted Angie. The relationship offers strength to each and helps them face the truth about each other and themselves.

THE GREAT PRETENDER

Producers: David Ellick, Nina Stevenson. Scriptwriter-director: John Cundill. Artistic, bespectacled 15-year-old with a rampant libido tries to lose his virginity, with disastrous results.

HAMMERS OVER THE ANVIL


THIS ISSUE

Due to space restrictions, the obituary on Jacques Demy promised for this issue has been held over to the next.

AUSTRALIANNESS

In the continuing debate over what constitutes Australianness, Senator Michael Baume has called for the “Federal government [to] end the farce of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal’s continuing refusal to accept government-funded Australian film co-productions as Australian content for television purposes”. Baume said it was vital that the government inquiry into Australian content rules result in the removal of “this ludicrous anomaly that seriously disadvantages Australian film co-productions.” He continued:

At the moment, it is possible for a film co-production financed by the Australian government with Australian actors to receive no status as an Australian product for television purposes.

We have the ridiculous situation where the policy of one body, the Australian Film Commission, backed by the Department of Arts, Sports, Environment, Tourism and Territories, has been totally rejected by another, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal ...

The government should have got its act together on this years ago. But it is vital that it be resolved quickly now that Australia has entered into co-production treaties with such nations as the UK and Canada, and has a memorandum of understanding with France and New Zealand.
INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS' FUND
1991-1992

The INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS' FUND is a Film Victoria initiative which aims to assist emerging filmmakers in the areas of narrative drama and/or documentary film. Only applicants from Victoria are eligible to apply.

The Fund is aimed at developing directing and producing skills, however people with proven ability in other areas such as cinematography and screenwriting, who wish to move into direction, may apply.

Projects to be considered for Funding should be narrative dramas or documentaries of 20 to 60 minutes duration. Owing to limited funds, only a very select number of projects will be chosen.

Applicants to the Fund will be required to:

1. Complete and lodge to Film Victoria a Registration Form by Friday 12th July 1991.
   Additional information required:
   A. C.V's of Producer, Director and Writer
   B. A one to two page synopsis of the project

2. Selected applicants will then be invited to submit a formal application to Film Victoria by Friday 9th August 1991 including the final script, detailed budget and marketing proposal.

For Guidelines and Registration Forms, please contact:
Manager
Cultural Activities and Creative Development
Film Victoria
4th Floor, 49 Spring Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel(03)651-4089 Fax(03)651-4090

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♦ THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER
   A$1.50m gross box office
♦ JESUS OF MONTREAL (still in release)
   A$2.05m gross box office
♦ SEX. LIES & VIDEOTAPE (Virgin)
   A$2.82m gross box office
♦ CYRANO DE BERGERAC (still in release)
   A$1.70m gross box office

OUR FUTURE LOOKS EVEN BETTER:
♦ MILOU IN MAY
♦ DADDY NOSTALGIE
♦ LIFE AND NOTHING BUT
♦ ICICLE THIEF
♦ HARDWARE
♦ C'EST LA VIE
♦ COMPANY OF STRANGERS
♦ THE HAIRDRESSERS HUSBAND
♦ PROSPERO'S BOOKS
♦ VOYAGER
THIS PAGE: MR. BALL (AIWYN KURTS) AND WALLACE (ANTHONY HOPKINS), THE TIME AND MOTION EXPERT BROUGHT IN TO SAVE BALL’S MOCASSIN FACTORY. FACING PAGE: CAREY (BEN MENDELSOHN), THE YOUNG MAN ENLISTED AS WALLACE’S ASSISTANT, ADJUSTS A MODEL OF THE MOCASSIN FACTORY. MARK JONES’S SPOTSWOOD.

THE MAKING OF

Spotswo
TRODDEN OFFICES OF BALL'S MOCCASIN FACTORY * in the Melbourne suburb of Spotswood, inefficiency and mismanagement is the norm. Mr. Ball (Alwyn Kurts) has failed to negotiate the changing times since 1958, when the company last made a profit. That's where Wallace (Anthony Hopkins), the time-and-motion expert, comes in. Time-and-motion people were all the rage in the 1960s. Outsiders to the staff, but pillars of reform to their clients. Their reports would slash jobs and tear down years of comfortable, if inefficient, work practices. They were pedantic; they were not much liked; they were morose.
Producer Tim White explains why Anthony Hopkins was chosen for the lead role:

Wallace is an introverted, uptight sort of character and called for an excellent actor. He was underwritten in the script, so we wanted someone who was able to say a lot without words.

White says that the role benefits from the actor's being a foreigner:

Being non-Australian reinforces the idea that he is an outsider. Being an alien also assists in establishing the notion of there being a certain naivety in the post-war, mid-'60s Australia, when anything from the outside seemed like a good idea at the time.

With these thoughts, White, the writers, Max Dann and Andrew Knight, and director Mark Joffe approached Anthony Hopkins, who was filming in Mexico at the time. 'We sent his agent the script, expecting the process to take a few months', says White. 'Within three weeks we had a deal via fax.'

Hopkins confirms that it was the script which appealed to him, and the fact that it was to be a comedy, something he had never done before. He's certainly not doing it for the money: at $3.5 million, this is not a big-budget Hollywood movie. It is a much more intimate saga, "a tragedy of comic proportions", says Joffe.

It's the irony that is so important. This is a character-based comedy, not a sitcom. That's why we chose actors who would interpret character. The characters are interesting and unusual human beings, and we're pursuing things in subtle ways.

The situations are there in the script, of course, but we've been flexible in character interpretation relative to the script. Naturally, a director has to have an overall perspective, and my perception is focused. But there is a range within that focus.

Richard Brennan, who is producing the film with White, stresses that, while Spotswood is a comedy, it is essentially deadpan and laconic in style. Joffe emphasizes the point:

'We're certainly not playing it for laughs. So, in a way, it's a question of playing against the script, against the notion of what is interpreted as comedy. The parallel is perhaps with the Ealing comedies of the '50s, or things like Bill Forsyth's Local Hero.'

Joffe has a reputation for being prepared, focused and inventive. Russian born, he began his career with Crawford Productions in 1978, and from 1980 to '84 he directed more than eighty hours of Crawfords' top television dramas, including Carson's Law, The Sullivans and Special Squad. In 1985, he co-directed the mini-series The Great Bookie Robbery and, in 1987, he made the theatrical feature Grievous Bodily Harm. It was followed by the mini-series Shadow of the Cobra and the tele-feature Toy Soldiers.

Joffe worked with the writers on Spotswood for 18 months:

I was sick of getting offered projects to direct that weren't ready to be filmed. There are too many being made at second- or third-draft stage. The script, to me, is the most vital element, followed by casting.

The casting took three months. Hopkins' co-stars include Ben

**Spotswood**

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Mendelsohn as Carey, the hapless young man whom Wallace enlists as his assistant; Russell Crowe as a slimy salesman; Bruno Lawrence as the big-hearted Robert; Angela Punch McGregor as Mrs Wallace; and Rebecca Rigg as the boss' daughter, Cheryl. There are also newcomers Toni Collette and Dan Wyllie.

As for Ball's moccasin factory, that is being doubled by a deserted old Richmond (Victoria) warehouse. It has been transformed by the anarchic imagination of production designer Chris Kennedy. The decor is from the school of chaos, with leather, fur and grey lining matter scattered with abandon on the floors. Some of the detail with which Kennedy has dressed the set is of the naive, early '40s style, "Look at his Balls moccasins", with a sketch of two smiling women in the corner. Kennedy says, "I really felt that Ball's moccasin factory was a character in itself. I had people scouring Melbourne for unusual moccasins."

Inside the factory, one meets the workers under Mr Ball's careless care, for whom moccasin manufacture is a trivial interruption to the vital routine of gossip and chat—and the occasional lusty advance.

But immediately on his arrival, Wallace sees only incompetence and waste. To him, the solution is simple enough: sack the staff and stop making moccasins; import the blasted things. Or, at least, that's what he first intends to do. But this frigid watch watcher finds the silken threads of friendship and camaraderie tighten around him, and his professional judgement becomes clouded.

Joffe had a storyboard in his head and a style he describes as "earth-oriented, or organic". What he means is that he didn't want it to be an acting showcase, but natural and fresh looking. When the camera is shooting in the modern factory, there is more camera movement than in the older establishment, where the actors move in the frame more and the camera is more rigid.

But, Joffe hastens to add, he hopes this will be quite a subtle element. Also subtle will be the quiet message about Australian industry, which is an advocacy for restructuring. "There is far too little manufacturing in this country", Joffe believes. "But, basically, I aim to engage the audience in an unusual and entertaining way."

Spotswood, due for release later this year, is one of first five feature films financed entirely by the Film Finance Corporation under its pilot Film Fund programme (which has since acquired the unkind nickname in the industry of "the chook raffle"). This programme was created to locate those scripts that were unlikely to have foreign distributors queuing up with cash, but which nevertheless have a quirky, unique quality that could translate into commercial success—unlike Ball's moccasin factory.

1. Ed.: In the great Australian signwriters' tradition, the advertising in the film reads "Balls Moccasins", without the apostrophe.
CONSIDERING HIS STATUTE AS AN ACTOR, ANTHONY HOPKINS TAKES A VERY LOW PROFILE BY HOLLYWOOD STANDARDS. THERE IS AN ENGLISH MODESTY ABOUT THE DIMENSIONS OF HIS CARAVAN ON THE SET OF SPOTSWOOD. A HOMELY COAT HANGER RACK SERVES AS HIS PRIVATE WARDROBE, AND A TINY RED HEATER IS BILLOWING HOT AIR INTO THE SPACE NOW OCCUPIED BY TWO, BUT MEANT FOR ONE.

Just learn your lines. Stop complicating it. You are the part. Don’t add anything. Don’t take away, either; but don’t add anything.

AT $3.5 MILLION, Spotswood is one of the lower-budget films Hopkins has made. But he’s not in this one for the money, nor the glamour. “I loved the wacky, ambivalent, ambiguous script”, he says.

Hopkins is not big on dramatic revelation, and one has to listen carefully to catch the significance of things he says. Not that he is bland; just unfussy. Very English, too, perhaps, although he was born in Wales, in Port Albert (which is also Richard Burton’s home town).

Spotswod is set in the mid 1960s, when time-and-motion experts were in abundant supply. Hopkins plays such an expert, called to the archaic factory of old Mr Ball (Alwyn Kurts). Ben Mendelsohn plays the young romantic lead.

For the first time in his illustrious career, Hopkins has been asked to simply play himself. Ben Mendelsohn plays the young romantic lead.

Hopkins had wondered how he’d play this character, Wallace, on the plane to Australia. When he got here, director Mark Joffe’s request to “play himself” bemused the actor. Hopkins:

The only way I can do it is by being very straight and deadpan. Whenever a director asks me to be charming or cute, I throw up.

Playing myself was difficult at rehearsals. But then, on the first day of the shoot, I said to myself, ‘All right, I’ll just be me.’ It’s the first time I’ve dared.

Years ago, Hopkins would have analysed everything, writing lists of objectives in a very earnest way, “Like a caterpillar learning to walk, putting one foot in front of the other”.

A friend of his, the late John Dexter, finally set him straight: “Just learn your lines. Stop complicating it. You are the part. Don’t add anything. Don’t take away, either; but don’t add anything.”

Hopkins took the advice to heart (no more lists) and his work has never been better.

THE EVIL ONES

Among the many monsters he has played, Hopkins has a special fondness for Captain Bligh in Roger Donaldson’s The Bounty. It is a good example of how he brings a sympathetic reading to characters that growl on the screen. Hopkins:

Bligh had to get across that filthy great ocean in a tub and maintain discipline. He was not a real monster; he just lived by the rules. He was too rigid, too aloof and foul-mouthed, which really demoralized the men. But, remember, he lobbied against the cat-o-nine-tails, even though he used them. He had to.

Hopkins’ Emmy award-winning performance as Hitler in the CBS tele-movie, The Bunker, is another case in point. The American producer, who had been watching some scenes, came over to Hopkins during a break and said, “It’s chilling. But perhaps you should make him less human.” To this Hopkins replied, “I can’t make him less human: he was human.”

As he recounts this story, Hopkins shrugs his shoulders ever so slightly. “I played Hitler as a human being, not a stereotype.”

In The Silence of the Lambs, Jonathan Demme’s filmic adaptation of the Thomas Harris novel, Hopkins co-stars with Jodie Foster, with whom he had an easy rapport: “She works like me: she learns her lines, does her work and goes home.”

Hopkins plays Dr. Hannibal Lecter, a brilliant psychiatrist, who also happens to be a psychopath, locked up in an institution for the criminally insane. He earned his nickname of “the Cannibal” because he tore people’s faces off with his teeth.

Foster plays a rookie FBI agent, whose boss sends her to interrogate Hannibal, in the hope he may help them catch a serial killer who has murdered and mutilated several women in a particularly ghastly way. As the interviews progress, the FBI agent and the psychopath discover "a mutual, subterranean attraction" for each other. She becomes, as Hopkins puts it, "slightly obsessed with him".

Hopkins now thinks that Hannibal Lecter is perhaps the most fascinating of these evil characters.

"I don’t know why. If you are going to play a vicious, evil character, you have to play him as attractively as possible. I think I’m attracted to them. I don’t like cruelty, but maybe it’s better to accept that darker side of your nature than to suppress it.

The great villains of literature were motivated by all kinds of complex, deep stirrings. And their loneliness helps to make them fascinating.

Hopkins also feels that often the political despots have a sense of history ("They are like primitive seers") and regards Hollywood’s usual approach as too simplistic ("It’s the white hats-black hats syndrome").

In his time, Hopkins has played a wide range of characters, researching much history and literature. Does he feel he has gained in wisdom and tolerance?

Yes, perhaps, but the wisdom I have is that I know nothing. You go on accumulating information.

I have a ‘sugar pill to history’, as Olivier called it. When he played Richard III, he was trying to fight through the complexity and decided to concentrate on Richard’s magnetism, on how sexy he was. He built everything else on top of that. That was what he called the ‘sugar pill’.

OTHER ROLES

When Hopkins is asked to check his filmography, he is visibly surprised: “God, have I done all that?” He reads the two pages of film, theatre and television titles, exclaiming: “I certainly do have some credits!”

Another recent one is Desperate Hours, a remake of the 1956 Humphrey Bogart film about an escaped convict who takes a family hostage. The new film is a very violent version, directed by Michael Cimino and co-starring Mickey Rourke. Hopkins:

Mickey Rourke is a behaviouristic actor, and moody. We occasionally exchanged a few words, but he doesn’t say much on set. He’s very violent and uses physical violence to get going, I’d respond and fight back, hoping I wouldn’t get any bones broken or have my face readjusted. But I did get a few bruises.

Hopkins relates the experience with little enthusiasm. Rourke and Hopkins were not soul brothers, so Hopkins just got on with his lines and doing his job. But he does add that “Rourke can work whatever way he wants to.”

As for director Michael Cimino, Hopkins says:

Cimino communicated okay with Rourke, but he was very tense. So I got out of the tension and went to my dressing room, had a coffee. It gets you to after a while.

But Michael’s a very good director, and very fast.

Hopkins likens Cimino to a New York street-smart survivor. Then, holding his arm at waist height, he adds, “He’s that high ... and Napoleonic.”

Cimino never made the fatal mistake of shouting at Hopkins. Hopkins had long ago made a quiet little rule: “No shouting, or I leave.”

I can’t work with tension. It’s a nightmare. I won’t mention names, and most directors have been good. [Joffe, he says, “is dead easy.”] But if anyone rants and raves they have to get another actor.

Hopkins means it. He has walked off two big films for that reason. He doesn’t regret it, though he won’t say which ones (“It could get nasty ...”) The last time it happened, he just quietly got into a cab and went home. “I won’t work with people who are cruel, either to others on the set, or to me.”

POSTSCRIPT

Hopkins came to Australia and Spotwood after making three films in the U.S. in the previous year, one for Home Box Office and two for big studios. His wife, Jenni, likes to be out of his way when he is working. “She was here for a week, but she has gone back now.”

Does he find travelling around so much a strain?

There is no problem: I am restless and love to travel. Things get more tense if Jenni is with me when I work ... it’s too hard. She likes to be at home; I like to travel. It works out well.

But Hopkins also likes to keep a life separate from his work. He lives quietly, he says, “poodling about in bookshops”. He is not a recluse, he hastens to point out, but he does like his relaxation to be solitary.

If he occasionally goes out with people, he prefers small groups, and avoids Italian and French restaurants. (“Hate nouvelle cuisine – like water colour on a plate.”) He ends up going to Indian or Chinese restaurants, “otherwise eating is boring. I like to have spicy foods.” He also loves hotels and being looked after.

At the end of the day’s filming, his driver takes us back to the elegant old Windsor Hotel. Hopkins gets out, says goodbye, and walks unaccompanied, unmobbed, understate, into the hotel, where he will dine alone, read, have an early night and get up early for a session in the gym. “I feel so much more relaxed these last couple of years.”

ANTHONY HOPKINS – FILMOGRAPHY


Hopkins has an extensive list of theatre credits, and has appeared in leading roles in 29 major television drama productions.

AWARDS

1972: BAFTA (UK) Best TV Actor – War and Peace 1976: Emmy Award (US) Best Actor – The Lindbergh Kidnapping Case 1981: Emmy Award (US) Best Actor – The Bunker 1984: Variety Club Film Actor Award – The Bounty 1985: Variety Club Star Actor Award – Pravda; British Theatre Association Best Actor Award – Pravda; Laurence Olivier Awards (The Observer Award for Outstanding Achievement) – Pravda 1987: Presented with CBE; Moscow Film Festival Best Actor Award – 4th Chariot Cross Road
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The Silence of the Lambs was a hard movie to get made and, in spite of its relentless pace, its masterful suspense and extraordinary performances, it is a hard movie to watch: too many raw nerves are touched, from horrifying, methodical crime to a charming monster who defines the notion of evil as a repulsive entity.

It is ironical, then, that The Silence of the Lambs, Jonathan Demme's rendition of the Thomas Harris bestseller, is currently one of America's...
ICA'S TOP BOX-OFFICE SUCCESSES, HAVING AMASED ALMOST $60 MILLION IN ITS FIRST FOUR WEEKS AND PUSHING DEMME DEFINITELY BEYOND THE CULTURALLY SMART BUT COMMERCIAL FAILURE STATUS. HE IS CURRENTLY JUGGLING SEVERAL FILM PROJECTS, INCLUDING A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT HIS COUSIN, A MINISTER IN A TOUGH NEW YORK NEIGHBOURHOOD, AND ANOTHER THOMAS HARRIS NOVEL, FEATURING ONCE MORE THE TWO MAIN CHARACTERS FROM LAMBS, FBI AGENT CLARICE STARLING AND SUAVE PSYCHOPATH HANNIBAL LECTER.

JONATHAN DEMME

INTERVIEWED BY
ANA MARIA BAHIANA
JONATHAN DEMME

"The Silence of the Lambs was a very good script and I was delighted that it didn't have comedy in it. Making a good picture is incredibly hard work, but making a good picture that is also funny is even harder. I felt liberated by the absence of the comedy whip, of the comedy discipline. It is beautiful to just go "Is this scene real?" and not "Is it real and is it funny?" And these are not very funny times, are they? Who is in the mood for laughing nowadays? It is important to see movies that help us get even more upset than we are from reading the newspapers.

Part of the power of The Silence of the Lambs is its dramatically sombre, even Gothic, visual style. How did you conceive such a harrowing style?

This is not bad for someone who, admittedly, "stumbled into film" from a not-too-promising career as a movie critic in Miami, and a studio publicist in New York. And who, until now — in spite of a long and gruelling apprenticeship with schlockmeister Roger Corman, and a suspense thriller that no one saw (Last Embrace) — was imprisoned within the walls of the hip and cutesy niche with films such as Stop Making Sense, Something Wild and Married to the Mob.

As a matter of fact, when Demme's name came up at Orion Pictures as a possibility for directing The Silence of the Lambs — after actor Gene Hackman, who had fought to acquire the rights to the book, bowed out of directing it, apparently due to the amount of violence in the story — many frowned: would he have the guts and sensibility to put on the screen the unlikely tale of an FBI trainee trying, with the help of an imprisoned ex-psychiatrist (who used to kill, cook and eat his patients), to catch a serial murderer who shoots and skins his victims?

Demme proved he had. With the help of a couple of astounding performances by Jodie Foster as Starling, the FBI trainee, and Anthony Hopkins as Dr Hannibal "the Cannibal" Lecter, he fills the screen with a gradual but implacable descent into the halls of hell made in USA: sickness, violence, displaced desires, death.

The Silence of the Lambs seems such a huge departure from the style that people usually associate with you: light-hearted, hip stories told in bright, sun-washed colours. What prompted you to embark on a project like this?

From my perspective, the only true consistency in the movies I have done so far is that, hopefully, they have had good scripts. As you know, the vast majority of movies are dreadful and I think the reason for that is that there are so few good screenplays. The terrible crisis in the motion picture industry is that it is an industry laden with talent in all categories except writing. If I am lucky enough to read a good script, I want to make the movie. That is what drew me to my other projects, like Something Wild and Married to the Mob.
very good script and I was delighted. I felt liberated by the absence of the comedy whip, useful to just go ‘Is this scene real?’

Well, first of all [director of photography] Tak Fujimoto and [production designer] Kristi Zea were as involved in the conceptualization of the look of the movie as I was. It was a real heads-together kind of situation, as it should be in these matters.

Visually, it is inevitably a big departure from anything I have done before, because the nature of the material is such a gigantic departure. First you read a great book like *The Silence of the Lambs* and then you get a screenplay and you respond to that stuff. An idea that appealed to all of us was the idea of the stone – clinical, kind of lifeless, as it were – reality of Quantico [the FBI Academy in Virginia]. The FBI situations contrasted with the rest of the film, especially those Lecter is in. With him, we could have gone for a more modern kind of clinical, mental-institution penitentiary kind of feel, but we wanted to push the emotional potential of the more Gothic kind of look.

As for a character like Gumb [the serial killer], how do you explain the unexplainable? He is a movie character that behaves in a way that, tragically, some people in so-called real life behave. Can you explain that kind of behaviour? The people who work in the Behavioural Science unit of the FBI are trying to explain it, to understand it.

Since Gumb doesn’t take a lot of screen time, our best chance to give clues and impressions as to what constitutes the character was in the environment. And from our research – and here we go into this awful subject of serial killers – it is apparent that true serial killers do have a certain kind of cycle they work to. It is a cycle of stalking, abduction, preparation and execution, followed by the worst kind of depression and self-loathing. And the whole thing funnels into an escapist-style fantasy life. Serial killers always have a fantasy room.

Almost everything is very strictly from the book, but that particular idea of the fantasy room, and Gumb’s making a video of himself, comes from our research and from our dialogue with the people in Behavioural Sciences.

You also chose to use a very specific camera syntax, with shots that begin in close-up and end in extreme close-up. What was your motivation for this?

The close-ups are at the centre of a lot of scenes. But the idea doesn’t involve only close-ups – it is close-ups in a subjective camera kind of situation.

Of course, one of the classic usages of subjective camera is as a device to put the audience into a character’s shoes, not for a joke, but for a thrill; to try to get the audience to identify as much as possible with the character.
“This picture is clearly anti-violence.
It is a movie that makes you dread violence and, when it
rears its ugly head, it wants you to confirm
that violence is awful.”

So, with The Silence of the Lambs, which is a story first and fore­
most about a character, Clarice, who lives and will succeed or fail
by her senses, I felt it was really necessary to force the audience into
Clarice’s shoes as much as possible. I thought it was a gift for the
audience to identify as much as possible with Clarice. So, we used
the subjective camera in every single scene Clarice is in.

And, at a certain point, when she gets into these intense head
sessions with Dr Lecter, it is like when you are in an intense
conversation with somebody and you are so gripped you get swept
away; at a certain point, it is like you do go inside their head. And
the best way for us to try and capture that from a photographic
point of view was to push the camera in, closer and closer, on Dr
Lecter and then, indeed, to match that in the reverse because he
would be going inside of her head during these sequences. That
is why we did it.

It was a stylistically demanding kind of choice and one that
directors love to make. If you have actors who are really fantastic,
you want to get in there with close-ups whenever you possibly can.
And these were actors who could re-define the potential of close­
ups for me.

There is, of course, another, extremely powerful, strength of The
Silence of the Lambs: the spectacular performances of Anthony
Hopkins and Jodie Foster. Hopkins’ character, Dr Lecter, must
have been particularly demanding: a bright, sophisticated and
terrifyingly fascinating evil man. Who should one credit for his
final design: Hopkins or you?

Well, to begin with, I can tell you that Tony’s quite mad and that
is the fundamental thing. I thought of Tony Hopkins very, very
eary on. I have admired him for a long time.

Tony, I felt, would be fantastic for Dr Lecter for two basic
reasons. One is that he is a person who projects extreme intelli­
gence. There is something about him that makes you feel he is a
man who is a lot smarter than you are. And, of course, that is
fundamental to Lecter: someone who is, indeed, brighter than
almost everybody else he ever encounters. Perhaps one of the
things that appeals to him about Clarice is that she has a mind with
high potential.

The other quality that I felt is so fundamental to Tony is his
great humanity and compassion. That is especially apparent in The
Elephant Man. So, it was this intense humanity coupled with the
intense intelligence that made me feel he would be impossible to
beat as Dr Lecter.

In terms of characterization, and where that came from, it is
very simple: he showed up like that. I had very, very little to do in
terms of talking to him about the character, other than going,
“That’s wonderful; thank you.” He just showed up with Dr Lecter.
As a matter of fact, I have spoken to him a few times recently and
he is still Dr Lecter. I am a little distressed about that, but that’s
Tony. I like to think that Tony got the joke about Dr Lecter in a way
that nobody, save perhaps Tom Harris, may have gotten.

What about Jodie Foster and her Clarice Starling?

Again, there’s this super-charged word: intelligence. There was
not a big talent search involved. I found out that Jodie had read the
book and had expressed interest. When I met her, which I’d not
done before, what really excited me the most was the fact that this
was the first part Jodie would play that didn’t require her to mask
her intelligence. She would be allowed to be every bit as smart as
this exceptionally bright person actually is. And she managed to
make that kind of erotic, I think, although that is not pertinent to
the movie. In some way, just watching her use that mind of hers is
very intoxicating.

Again, it was very easy. You sit down with Jodie and you start
talking about the material and Jodie tells you what thematic appeal
it has for her and, candidly, how good she will be in the part. You
see how it all works together and, of course, she winds up in the
movie.

Working with Jodie is like that. You’d be sitting around,
shooting the breeze about current events or hairstyles, and then
the shot’s ready. She’d go in front of the camera and there’s
Clarice. This happened constantly through the movie: when the
camera would roll, there was this metamorphosis. It was so exci­
ting; I would fall in love all over again with Clarice at the drop of a
hat.

This film deals with such uncomfortable issues as serial murder,
extreme violence and cruelty. Do you, as a filmmaker, have special
concerns about these matters?

I do have this on-going relationship with screen violence. Any
filmmaker has it. If you care about violence in our society, as I do,
you inevitably wind up in some kind of complex dialogue within
himself about it. My basic struggle is that I wanted to be very responsible and show violence, when it is called for in a piece, as something horrifying and demeaning, something which must be prevented by any means, whenever possible.

The little kid moviegoer in me that grew up loving Westerns and war movies, even though now I know better, still sticks his head out from time to time and gets carried away with a thrilling action scene. I never get thrilled any more if there is a sort of orgiastic, pornographic, bullet-spraying kind of violence like in Rambo and that sort of movie – violence for violence’s sake. But if it is a movie that is professing to have a kind of theme of integrity and, it is one of those big show-down kind of moments, I can get swept up as I have for the past thirty-, forty-some years.

I am always trying to subdue that in myself as a filmmaker. I failed at that a lot in Married to the Mob, where I tried to do some exciting gun fights. I think I am a lot more successful in my struggle in this movie. This picture is clearly anti-violence. It is a movie that makes you dread violence and, when it rears its ugly head, it wants you to confirm that violence is awful.

There has been some rather loud complaints, especially from gay activists, about what they perceive as a homophobic undercurrent in The Silence of the Lambs – that, for instance, the serial killer is portrayed as a homosexual in a mean, distorted way, and that his homosexuality is at the root of his crimes. Can you comment on that?

There was an aspect in the story that I and the other filmmakers involved with the picture knew that, in this day and age of heightened prejudice and heightened violence born of prejudice, it was important that we be careful in not sending any kind of incorrect or inflammatory signals in any direction. We also, on another level, wanted to have a lot of integrity on a character basis. The movie’s villain is, of course, not homosexual. He is not portrayed to be gay. Nobody says he is gay. Indeed, a fundamental plot device is that his emulating, in pathetically ineffective ways, anything suggestive of stereotypical gay behaviour really clarifies and supports the fact that this guy is way off base in terms of actually being what he wishes he were. In his desire to not be who he is, he is someone with a gender problem. He is not someone with a sexuality that draws him to men. He is a man who loathes himself, who loathes himself so much he wants to be the farthest thing away from what he fundamentally is: he wants to be a woman.

It is a gender problem; that is what the whole story is about. It is a film that, though it gets into matters of sexual identification, in no way reinforces negative sexual stereotypes nor in any way is an incitement of negative feelings towards people of any kind of sexual preference.

This film received full co-operation from the FBI, which is a big surprise in the career of someone like yourself. Has your perception of the FBI changed in any way through this experience?

I went through an interesting cycle with my feelings about the FBI. As soon as I started paying attention to how this country works, I became very concerned about the FBI and the way it operates in many important areas of this country and this society. There was a moment for me, especially when faced with the idea that I wanted to make this movie, where there was a desire to go, “Well ...,” as there is a line in the movie, “there were the Hoover years.” And now we feel we have a new, enlightened FBI and a new, enlightened country and ...

Well, I am sorry to say that, but, from what I read in the newspapers and perceive about what is going on, the FBI has every bit the same potential nowadays to function in what I would consider profoundly negative ways, as well as in what I would consider a positive way in other areas. So, I feel the same way about the FBI. It is helpful to society in some ways and it is a menace in other ways. It is a White House police force.

I must say, though, that I have no mixed feelings about the Behavioural Science division of the FBI. It is fantastic. The people there are not only trying to figure out ways to catch serial killers once they strike, but where serial killers come from. Is there any way of preventing the birth and growth of a serial killer? Are there ways that society can attack the problem of people being treated so badly as children that they will turn against other members of society to this kind of extraordinary degree when they grow up? These Behavioural Science people are extraordinary. They are underpaid but they keep crusading.

What impact, if any, does the documentary side of your career have on your fictional work?

It gives me an unusual edge of enthusiasm that I can bring back to movies. I don’t feel chained to big movies, and I feel that it is liberating to go and do a documentary. It is nice to do something utterly different and then come back kind of refreshed and make a movie like The Silence of the Lambs. Maybe shooting documentaries has somewhat lubricated my ability to come to terms with what kind of photographic choices I want to make.
The Last Days of Chez Nous

The home is symbolic of the relationships within it, and Helen Garner's script is an exploration of these. Chez Nous producer Jan Chapman also produced Garner's much-awarded tele-feature, Two Friends, directed by Jane Campion. Garner's National Book Council award-winning first novel, Monkey Grip, was also adapted for the screen, by producer Patricia Lovell and director Ken Cameron.

Chapman says the script of Chez Nous developed over several years: "But it was always going to be about an Australian woman and a French man hitting difficult times in their marriage." And it seems some elements are drawn from Garner's own life, although she plays this down. It is by no means a documentary.

The central character is Beth (Lisa Harrow), a writer, who invites her lively red-headed sister Vicki (Kerry Fox) to join their hectic household, which already contains a husband, JP (Bruno Ganz); a lodger, the shy young country boy, Tim (Kiri Paramore); and Beth's daughter from a previous marriage, Annie (Miranda Otto). Is this the last straw? Could it be the last days of "chez nous"?

The last straw for JP, that is. As Chapman sees it, Ganz's European intensity captures exactly the JP whose feelings go unnoticed in a frantic household.

Beth, although warm, is a driven woman, controlling her household, determined to do the best for her family. She invariably shouts orders from another room, always gets to the phone first and never leaves lids off jars. Vicki's arrival acts as a catalyst and sparks a retaliation against her sister's domination.

Other characters include Beth's father (Bill Hunter), with whom Beth spends some bonding time in a quiet country retreat, and Angelo (Lex Marinos), who is an old, close friend; his wife, Sally (Mickey Camilleri), has just had a baby, and they often visit this fascinating household. It's Beth's web, in which she can detect the slightest quiver.

This is not a film filled with grand dramatic events, and may even be labelled a small film. At first, it was hard to convince people
of her vision, says Chapman. They would say to her that it sounded like something more suited to television. Chapman found it hard to explain that it could be and look stunning, even though it is dealing with the small incidents of life.

That feeling of intimacy appealed to Chapman:

One of the things I was attracted to was the number of little moments and scenes. I like Helen’s ability to see the absurd in the everyday. I like those contemporary films that do that, such as Jim Jarmusch’s. It’s fantastic to be able to do this in Australia.

Chapman praises the Film Finance Corporation’s initiative which established the Film Fund, the scheme under which this is being made. The Film Fund offers 100% finance to mid-budget features which show commercial potential but would be difficult to pre-sell.

These more sophisticated films, which are hard to describe in a single sentence, now have a chance to be made. And I chose Gillian Armstrong [My Brilliant Career, High Tide, Fires Within] to direct, because I remember seeing Gillian’s Bingo Bridesmaids & Braces, and I was reminded how she has always managed to capture the intimacy of human relationships.

As for Armstrong, one of those Australian film directors always cited as a national resource, she was instantly drawn to Garner’s script for similar reasons:

Helen writes so well about families. But it’s not just a comedy; I think it’s really a drama, with, like all well-rounded dramas, humour – and even a tragic element.

In talking to Garner after reading the screenplay, Armstrong found very few areas that seemed uncertain in intent:

Helen and I were very much in harmony on all of it. Of course, I choose things I relate to or am affected by. That means it’ll be my point of view as well as Helen’s.

Helen considers it a post-feminist film. Here is a woman with a family and career. But I think Helen is quite tough on her character. It’s very much, ‘The struggle’s over and what have we got? How do we make things work?’

Armstrong senses that there will be those who look at the names on the credits list and jump to the wrong conclusion:

Just because it’s Gillian Armstrong, Jan Chapman and Helen Garner, some people may think this is a heavy woman’s film. But it’s not.

She also recoils from the “woman’s film” label: “No, I wouldn’t call it a woman’s film; but yes, it’s a film for grown-ups.”

Here, “grown-ups” may well be interpreted as mature, not just over 21. Grown up, too, as in having sensibility as well as sense, insight as well as vision.

For Chapman, it is all going to plan – if not better: “I love the script passionately, and to see the rushes turn out even better is an extraordinary experience.”

During a couple of days spent on set, it becomes obvious that the team effort in the filmmaking process has become like a pleasant adhesive, which manages to hold everyone together without clogging up the cogs of the machine. In a
small Glebe terrace, situated between a tiny dead-end street and an even tinier lane, the paraphernalia of the filmmaking factory protrudes like spindly legs of a metallic spider, the lights and reflector shield attached to metal poles like captured insects.

The crew – a surprisingly small team – is intent and focused, yet calm and casual. Armstrong is directing a scene in the tiny courtyard at the rear, where a small table has been dressed with wine, salami and a fruit bowl. Lex Marinos, as Angelo, sits patiently cuddling a plastic baby, which is a stand-in for the real child in a bassinet up on the rear balcony, awaiting her historic first call, proud parents at her side.

Bruno Ganz, as JP, is rehearsing his entrance, in which he has to walk past the camera, bend over and greet Mickey Camilleri, who plays Angelo’s wife, Sally. The blocking problem comes from how much of his back and shoulder should be in frame.

Director of photography Geoffrey Simpson is on the seat of the camera unit, which rolls on miniature tracks, like a locomotive in slow motion. He is limited in movement by the miniature space, and discusses the minutiae with Armstrong and Ganz.

The sun is beating down, at the tail end of Australia’s hottest summer on record. During a lunch break, Armstrong sits eating steamed vegetables, fish cakes and pasta on her lap. Dangling around her neck is a tiny plastic baby, its body an imitation Hassleblad camera. It is a piece of kitsch she spied on a table in the props room and couldn’t resist. She says she stole it, but makes no apology, nor an indication that she will ever return it.

I’m having great fun. We had expected it to be tougher. It’s sticky and cramped, but nothing is really simple – or easy. Not even easy shots. *Fires Within* (her previous feature) was deceptively simple on paper. But there were seven huge scenes that were a nightmare.

Both Chapman and Armstrong remark on the volume and quality of Garner’s detail. It took three months to find the right house, so specifically is it described. However, in the end the house that was chosen is not a corner house, as it was originally in the final draft, but even Garner felt it was so suitable she re-wrote parts of the script to fit the property.

It is an indication of the importance of this location that five weeks of the eight-week shoot takes place here. There is also a week at Broken Hill, where Beth takes her father to strengthen their relationship, and two weeks around the city in cafés, on walks, at harbourside exteriors and a friend’s house.

The house is indeed unusual, being a small two-storey terrace, but without internal stairs. The stairs are outside, running up from the courtyard, which opens onto the small lane at the back. Through the door into the house, it is possible to see straight through to the front door, and the street beyond.

The location team found three more terraces in the same little street, which were available for use as catering, props and wardrobe units, and they struck the jackpot when
they found—just 100 metres away—an artist’s first-floor studio that was available for use as a spacious, elegant production office.

But even before she knew how wonderful the physical process was going to be, Gillian Armstrong felt compelled to make this film. After reading the script, she was determined:

I simply couldn’t bear the thought of anyone else directing it. It’s beautifully crafted, and the characters stay with you for a long time.

The characters, all strong, took a long time to cast. For JP, Chapman and Armstrong looked at Australian actors, then went to France. Chapman felt strongly about it:

He had to be authentic to portray that cultural flavour of a European. Bruno Ganz, though Swiss, has played French characters before, and has what we were looking for, with his friendly, round face and a touch of vulnerability behind the sophistication.

Ganz has worked extensively in theatre, most notably in Berlin, where he was co-founder of the Schaubühne Theatre, appearing in the works of Brecht, Ibsen and, in 1982, in the title role of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. His films include Der Amerikanische Freund (The American Friend) for Wim Wenders, Schaffiner’s The Boys from Brazil, Volker Schlöndorff’s Circle of Deceit and Werner Herzog’s Nosferatu - Phantom der Nacht (Nosferatu – The Vampire). Most recently, he starred in a film that did well in Australia, Wim Wenders’ Wings of Desire, which earned him much critical praise.

Immediately after shooting Chez Nous, Bruno Ganz heads off to Czechoslovakia to co-star with France’s Sandrine Bonnaire and Scottish actor Alan Cumming in Ian Sellar’s British-French film, Prague, described by its producer Chris Young as having echoes of Jules et Jim.

Lisa Harrow, who plays the central role of Beth, began her career in England, with the Royal Shakespeare Company. On the screen, she is probably best remembered for her portrayal of Helen, James Herriot’s wife, in All Creatures Bright and Beautiful and All Creatures Great and Small. In Australia, she co-starred in Under Capricorn, Act of Betrayal and the award-winning Come in Spinner, on which she worked with Chapman.

For those hundreds of thousands of Australians who have seen An Angel At My Table, Kerry Fox will not be a newcomer. She gained instant fame as the eldest Janet Frame, in the film that won this year’s Australian Film Critics Circle Best Foreign Film Award (New Zealand finally gaining recognition as a foreign country).

This is only Fox’s second feature film, but she has extensive theatre credits, including such varied productions as A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Oh, What a Lovely War!

DOP Geoffrey Simpson (Green Card), designer Janet Patterson (Body Surfers, Two Friends) and Armstrong between them have created a look that highlights splashes of strong colour on darker backgrounds. Other directors may well have recoiled from the risks involved, says Patterson, and gives Armstrong credit for accepting the concept.

For all its specificity, The Last Days of Chez Nous could take place anywhere; it is through its specifics that it reflects the universal, and it is equally Australian without being crudely labelled as such.

ABOVE: ARMSTRONG WITH SWISS ACTOR BRUNO GANZ, WHO PLAYS THE HUSBAND.
BELOW: ARMSTRONG AND PRODUCER JAN CHAPMAN, WHO ALSO PRODUCED TWO FRIENDS, FROM A HELEN GARNER SCRIPT.
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**Boulevard Films**
From Down Under to All Over.
Sorting fact from fiction is no easy task when it comes to the life of Australian-born Hollywood star Errol Flynn, something Boulevard Film's Frank Howson knows only too well. As co-writer (with Alister Webb), director and producer for the film, Flynn, Howson spent five years researching countless books, articles, journals and interviews on the actor. Says Howson:

It was the hardest script I've ever written. He was such an enigmatic figure. He may have been an outrageous extrovert, but it was hard to know the real Errol. He presented to people what he thought they wanted to see. That's why he became such a great Hollywood actor; all his life he had been acting. He'd just walk in front of the camera and lie again.

Howson felt that Flynn's Hollywood years are well known, so he wanted to make a film that focused on Flynn's early life:

I was surprised that most people in the U.S. and England didn't realize that Flynn was Australian. I think he was quite proud of being Australian, but the Hollywood press men wrote that he was Irish because Australia was too obscure.

Flynn was born on 20 June 1909 in Hobart Tasmania. His father was Professor Theodore Flynn, a renowned marine biologist. On the reputation of his father, Flynn was admitted to the
best private colleges and managed to get kicked out of all of them. Hearing of gold strikes in New Guinea, Flynn went there hoping to make his fortune. He stumbled into acting by accident when he heard that noted Australian filmmaker Charles Chauvel was holding auditions. Flynn ends with the actor’s 1932 movie debut, when he plays the role of Fletcher Christian in the film, In the Wake of the Bounty.

Playing the role of Flynn is 22-year-old actor Guy Pearce, a former Neighbours star. Pearce has already appeared in two Boulevard films, Heaven Tonight and Hunting, and will star in its upcoming feature, Friday On My Mind.

“I had never laid eyes on Guy before Heaven Tonight”, said Howson. “I hadn’t even seen Neighbours, but I was very impressed by his acting ability and his intelligence.”

Pearce felt he was a left-field choice for Flynn: “I thought it would be silly of me to audition for him. I had long blond hair, blue eyes and didn’t look anything like him.” But the hair was clipped, brown contact lenses inserted and, later in the movie, the trademark moustache added. The result is a fairly respectable resemblance to the legendary screen idol.

Pearce sees Flynn as a sympathetic character: “He was a very mixed-up person. Most of the things he did were out of desperation, trying to find himself. He was more like a kid who never grew up.”
It was in New Guinea, where the film concentrates most of its action, that Flynn’s most notorious exploits occurred. While searching for gold, he involved himself in slave trading and poaching. On one of his expeditions he shot a native and narrowly escaped a charge of manslaughter. He also earned extra money by working as a correspondent for The Bulletin.

For Flynn, Fiji is doubling as New Guinea (“It’s cheaper than going to Cairns”, notes Howson) and the film crew set up shop near a sleepy village called Lase Lase, about 50 kms from Nadi. Here they built their version of an authentic New Guinea village.

While Fiji is attempting to promote itself as an ideal film location (Return to Blue Lagoon had wrapped just prior to Flynn), film crews are likely to encounter stranger obstacles than anything Actors Equity could muster. Any transaction with the Fijians, including permission to use the land, has to be finalized over kava ceremonies (kava, a murky grey liquid made from the root of a plant, has a strong narcotic effect). With Flynn, they had to be convinced that portraying another culture was not sacrilegious.

Using Fijians as extras created another problem for they have a strict sense of Christian modesty and were unwilling to portray New Guinea natives in scant clothing. No women would agree to go topless so a South African actress, Sandi Schultz, was imported to play the role of the chief’s daughter. Even the men were modest. “They weren’t very keen to take their underwear off, but we couldn’t let them wear their Y fronts under the lap laps”, noted costume designer Rose Chong.

But the Fijians enjoyed the intrusion into their culture and crowded the set every day. Husbands, wives and children sat around and giggled as the laboriously slow work of filmmaking continued.

Howson says the film examines some of the darker aspects of Flynn’s character. Controversy always surrounded Flynn and his amorous exploits were notorious, fuelled by the swashbuckling image he created in such films as Captain Blood and The Adventures of Robin Hood. In 1942, he was charged (and consequentially acquitted) of statutory rape. The ensuing publicity heralded the catchphrase, “In Like Flynn”.

Even after his death in 1958, the enigmatic star raised headlines. The Charles Higham book, The Untold Story (first published in 1980), promised to reveal the ‘true’ Errol Flynn. The book told of homosexual affairs and suspect espionage work for the Nazis leading up to World War II.

Howson must feel, though, that wherever Flynn goes controversy follows, as difficulties plagued the production. The film was originally shot with director Brian Kavanaugh at the helm. A scheduled shoot in Cairns was delayed by airline strikes, and then star Guy Pearce was unavailable. The production ground to

‘FLYNN’

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a halt. Then, at the Cannes Film Festival last year, international marketing group J&M became interested in distributing the film but thought it needed reshooting as well as some ‘name stars’. J&M injected a further $1 million into the original budget of $3.5 million raised under 10BA.

According to Howson:

J&M saw a cut of the film in Cannes and loved the concept but felt certain things weren’t explored the way they could be. So we had a major rethink about the film and J&M had enough faith in us to put up the money to reshoot.

The production reshot some scenes in Melbourne before moving to Fiji for action sequences, this time with Howson directing. The production soon came under fire from Actors Equity as two key roles were recast with overseas actors. Australian actors Jeff Truman and Paul Steven were dumped and the roles taken over by English actor Steven Berkoff and American John Savage.

According to Howson, Australia lacks a star system and the simple economics is that we need “bankable” stars for international sales. “I wish that wasn’t the case but I am afraid that is the reality of the situation.” Equity, of course, sees it differently. “It is simplistic to say all overseas actors will help a film”, says Anne Britton, assistant federal secretary for Actors Equity. “I think the problem in the Australian industry is that overseas actors have been seen as a quick fix.”

Equity has consequentially demanded a full inquiry from the Federal Arts Minister, David Simmons.

For Howson, it will be yet another storm to weather since Boulevard Films came to prominence with its first film, Boulevard of Broken Dreams. With a slate of five films all funded under 10BA, Howson feels the company has been the object of much resentment:

There has been a lot of animosity in the industry because we seem to be doing so much when others are doing so little. We have done a great deal to restore investor confidence in the local film industry. Strangely, or rather typically, we seem to be resented in some circles for our efforts. No doubt that’s the kind of attitude that has made Australia what it is today.

We’ve built up a strong investor base [approximately 30,000 people] at a time when a lot of investors were burnt and ran away from film. We have wooed a lot of those people back.

Howson claims there have already been substantial overseas sales for Boulevard’s films, including a continuing output deal with J&M. “Anything that happens at the box office now is just cream”, he says.
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HOLIDAYS ON THE RIVIR TARRA

AYA

BACKSLIDING

DEADLY

DINGO

FLYNN

THE GOOD WOMAN OF BANGKOK

HOLIDAYS ON THE RIVER YARRA

ISABELLE EBERHARDT

NIKITA STREET MURDER

PROOF

SPOTSWOOD

STAN AND GEORGE'S NEW LIFE

WAITING

A WOMAN'S TALE

AUSTRALIAN FILMS AT
CANNES
1991

AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS, THE ABOVE WERE
THE AUSTRALIAN FILMS THOUGHT MOST LIKELY TO BE AT CANNES,
EITHER IN AN EVENT OR AT THE MARCHÉ.
erosion of his spiritual resolve (he and his wife are “born-again” Christians). It culminates in a spectacular conclusion where a desert refinery is destroyed, and love and God’s charity take second place to fear and a need to survive.

This $2.3 million film was funded by the Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC), and Film Four International and Itel in the UK. It is English-born director Simon Target’s first feature. Most of his previous experience had been gained making documentaries for Australian and British television. It was while researching a programme for the BBC in Australia that Target came on the idea of making a film about a foreigner being stranded in a remote place.

(SEE REPORT IN CINEMA PAPERS NO. 82, PP. 52-53.)

BLACK ROBE


Black Robe is the story of the mission by a French Jesuit priest, Father Laforgue, in 17th-Century Canada to convert the Indians to Christianity. It is the latest film from Australian director Bruce Beresford:

You can’t research this story without coming out admiring the Jesuits. Even if you went into it as the greatest anti-cleric of all time, you’d come out of it thinking those guys were so brave ... They make Schwarzengger look like a sissy.

(SEE REPORT IN CINEMA PAPERS NO. 82, PP. 52-53.)

DEAD TO THE WORLD

(SEE PRODUCTION REPORT THIS ISSUE, PP. 30-32.)
DEADLY


A romantic thriller set against a background of racial tension, Deadly is the explosive story of the suppression of justice in the heart of the Aboriginal homeland.

Deadly is the new film of writer-director Esben Storm, whose previous credits include 27A and In Search of Anna. It was the first of five features funded by the Australian Film Finance Corporation's Film Trust Fund to go into production. Storm:

'It's a love story, between a black and a white ... Neither Fringe Dwellers nor The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith is a relevant comparison; this is much tougher. Films like Wake In Fright and In the Heat of the Night come to mind.

'It's just as much a story of the Australian male. At the start, [Sgt Bourke] denies his sensitivity, but he's brought into naked contact with his emotions.

(SEE REPORT IN CINEMA PAPERS NO. 81, PP. 14-17.)

DINGO


In January 1969, a jet passenger plane is diverted to the Australian outback town of Poona Flat. The locals, including twelve-year-old John 'Dingo' Anderson, rush to the airport eager for excitement. Onboard is the legendary jazz trumpeter, Billy Cross, and his band. Cross, seeing the crowd, decides to play by way of greeting. The band sets up on the runway and plays. 'Dingo' has never heard anything so beautiful in his life. The band members re-board and the plane drifts away as softly as a dream.

The chance encounter with a legend of jazz begins a life-long dream for a young boy in the outback. Years later, he journeys to Paris to revive the dream.

Dingo is the new film by director Rolf de Heer and producer Marc Rosenberg, who made Incident at Raven's Gate.

FLYNN

**Flynn** is the story of Australian actor Errol Flynn's early years, up till his first screen role as Fletcher Christian in Charles Chauvel's *In the Wake of the Bounty* (1932).

The film was directed by Frank Howson, one of the principals of Boulevard Films, which has produced more films over the past few years than possibly any other Australian company.

(See Production Report this issue, pp. 24-27.)

**THE GOOD WOMAN OF BANGKOK**

Director: Dennis O'Rourke. Producer: Dennis O'Rourke. Associate producer: Glens Rowe. Screenwriter: Dennis O'Rourke. Director of photography: Dennis O'Rourke. Editor: Tim Litchfield. Sound recordist: Dennis O'Rourke. Cast: Yagwalak Chonchanakun (Aoi).

The filmmaker was forty-three and his marriage had ended. He was trying to understand how love could be so banal and yet so profound. He came to Bangkok, the mecca for western men with fantasies of exotic sex and love without pain. He wanted to meet a Thai prostitute and make a film about that.

Starting from the worst possible condition, the relationship between Aoi, the good woman of the story, and the filmmaker was recorded: its evolution from fake sexual intimacy to collusion in the process of making the film and, finally, to friendship and a kind of love.

**HOLIDAYS ON THE RIVER YARRA**

Director: Leo Berkeley. Producer: Fiona Cochrane. Screenwriter: Leo Berkeley. Director of photography: Brendan Lavelle. Art directors: Margaret Eastgate, Adele Flere. Editor: Leo Berkeley. Sound recordist: Mark Tarpey. Composer: Sam Mallet. Cast: Craig Adams (Eddie), Luke Elliot (Mick), Alex Menglet (Big Mac), Tahir Cambis (Stewie), Claudia Karvan (Elsa), Ian Scott (Frank), Sheryl Munks (Valerie), Angela McKenna (Mother), Eric Mueck (Billy), Justin Connor (Danny); John Brumptom, Jacek Koman, Chris Askey (Mercenaries).

Mick and Eddie are out-of-work teenagers, living in Melbourne and looking for some action. They become involved with a gang of would-be mercenaries headed for Africa. What they hope will be a great adventure goes horribly wrong.

*Holidays on the River Yarra* is the first feature of Leo Berkeley and was financed by the Australian Film Commission through its Special Production Fund.

**ISABELLE EBERHARDT**


*Isabelle Eberhardt* is the story of the romantic adventurer in North Africa at the turn of the century.

Inspired in part by Paul Bowles' introduction to a collection of Eberhardt's stories, this Australian-French co-production is the fourth feature of Ian Pringle, and follows *The Plains of Heaven* (1982), *Wrong World* (1986) and *The Prisoner of St Petersburg* (1990). Pringle:

The film is essentially an interior journey. There are elements of encountering a new culture, but ... it is more to do with the relationships she has with people.

*Isabelle* has allowed me to explore the beginnings of a style I want to take much further. I am ... dealing with a story that is very hard to tell. It is the most elusive life I have ever tried to capture on film.

(Pringle Interview, Cinema Papers No. 81, pp. 6-13.)
**NIRVANA STREET MURDER**

*Nirvana Street Murder* is a black comedy with an off-beat blend of action, drama and farce. It centres on the lives of two outlandish brothers who work at the local abattoirs: Boady is childish, violent, has a criminal record and is mentally unstable; Luke is normal.

*Nirvana Street Murder* is an independent feature funded by the AFC’s Creative Development Fund. It was originally intended as a 50-minute 16mm short but grew to a 75-minute 35mm feature. It was shot in Melbourne around the bleak industrial suburbs of Footscray, Brooklyn, North Melbourne and Collingwood, and is Aleksi Vellis’ directorial debut.

**PROOF**

Martin, blind since birth, trusts no one. He takes photographs as proof that the world he hears and touches is the same one sighted people see. He entrusts a likeable stranger, Andy, to describe his photographs. A unique friendship develops, but is soon imperilled by Martin’s obsessed house-keeper, Celia. The first feature of writer-director Jocelyn Moorhouse, *Proof* was funded by the AFC and Film Victoria.

**SPOTSWOOD**

It is Stan’s fortieth winter. Like his father before him, he works in a barber shop. Unlike his father, Stan has never mastered the art of customer relations.

**STAN AND GEORGE’S NEW LIFE**
Director: Brian McKenzie. Producer: Margot McDonald. Scriptwriters: Brian McKenzie, Deborah Cox. Director of photography: Ray Argall. Costume designer: Rose Chong. Editors: Edward McQueen-Mason, Daryl Mills. Sound recordist: Lloyd Carrick. Composer: Michael Atkinson. Cast: Paul Chubb (Stanley Harris), John Bluthal (Stan Sr), Julie Forsyth (George), Margaret Ford (Sheila Harris), Roy Baldwin (Thomas Stevens), Bruce Alexander (Geoffrey), Beverley Gardiner (Receptionist), Shapoor Batiwalla (Grey suit #1), Burt Cooper (Grey suit #2), Kenneth MacLeod (Grey suit #3).

It is Stan’s fortieth winter. Like his father before him, he works in a barber shop. Unlike his father, Stan has never mastered the art of customer relations.

With Stan’s business and confidence
flagging, his father, Stan Sr, manoeuvres him into work for the future - with the Bureau of Meteorology. Stan finds unexpected success as the “weather man” on a radio segment. And with his success comes romance with George, the office redhead.

But Stan’s hopes of combining job, marriage, home ownership and children are proving difficult.

*Stan and George’s New Life* is Brian McKenzie’s second fictional feature and comes after *With Love to the Person Next to Me* (1988) and the feature documentary *On the Waves of the Adriatic*. Producer Margot McDonald calls this new film “a gentle story with a charm and eccentric subtlety rarely seen on the screen”.

McKenzie says:

Films are part of the history of expression and reflection. Once there was only music, painting, theatre and sculpture, and now film has been added to these. Filmmaking is about taking reality and your ideas and the things you believe in and confronting them.

**WAITING**


Cast: Sheila Florance (Martha), Gosia Dobrowolska (Anna), Norman Kaye (Billy), Chris Haywood (Jonathan), Ernest Gray (Peter), Myrtle Woods (Miss Inchley), Bruce Myles (Con 1), Alex Menglet (Con 2), Monica Maughan (Billy’s daughter), Max Gillies (Billy’s son-in-law).

Martha is a modern character - a woman of imagination and spirit. At almost 80 years of age, she’s seen the good and the bad, and now offers her loving understanding to all who are willing to listen to her, and who prefer truth to beauty.

Martha makes her own rules and has her own moral code. She finds the world of man far too cynical and heartless, and fights the Establishment with great humor and compassion. In addition, she’s one of those rare, old souls that has great affinity with young people, and refuses to accept society’s constraint on growing old.

The death of her neighbour, “Old Billy”, exhausts and depresses Martha. In her confusion, she falls asleep whilst cooking a meal, and almost burns the flat down. The authorities decide it’s time for Martha to be committed to a home for the aged. But without honour, and makes her final decision.

*Awaiting* is director Jackie McKimmie’s second feature and follows the comedy *Australian Dream*.

(See review in this issue, p. 5969.)

**A WOMAN’S TALE**


Cast: Sheila Florance (Martha), Gosia Dobrowolska (Anna), Norman Kaye (Billy), Chris Haywood (Jonathan), Ernest Gray (Peter), Myrtle Woods (Miss Inchley), Bruce Myles (Con 1), Alex Menglet (Con 2), Monica Maughan (Billy’s daughter), Max Gillies (Billy’s son-in-law).

Filmmaking is about taking reality and confronting them.
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Huzzah Productions' Dead to the World flies directly in the face of what one casually expects from the Australian cinema: an earnestness, a serious intent, a weary, lyrical pose with an eye to some higher social purpose.

Dead to the World is a highly stylized, blackly comic vision that stands outside of this realist tradition that has so dominated Australian feature filmmaking over the past twenty years. Funded by the Australian Film Commission and shot on location in and around the inner-city Sydney suburb of Newtown, Dead to the World deals with the social realities of Australia: drugs, the real-estate development boom, the multi-cultural nature of Australian society.

Dead to the World is seriously different. Pop-culture iconography spills out of every frame, the dialogue is thickly allusive, rich in meaning, and the weighty themes are wrapped around a tortuous plot straight out of a classical Western.
Dead to the World sounds different, too. It is the first Australian feature film to break with the documentary tradition of recording with synchronous sound. Dead to the World is 100 per cent post-synch and it is a stunning success.

Here is a film to listen to first. The soundtrack sounds alive. Each line, each effect, lands straight in one's lap. It is important because this delight in technique is central to the film's playful sensibility. Here is a film, like the best of David Lynch, that mocks the conventions of narrative cinema whilst celebrating the sensuality of film; a film that quotes Force of Evil and West Side Story; one that has its arch villain dressed up as Santa Claus; a film that has the wit to invite one to laugh and think.

Peter Galvin

Clockwise from top left: Pearl (Lynette Curran) and her brother Bobby (Paul Goddard), Skip (Noah Taylor), Mr Keats (John Doyle) chats up Manny (Tobor Gyapjas), Johnny (Richard Roxburgh) and Trainer Alex (Agnieszka Perepeczko). Huzzah Productions' Dead to the World.
"You can’t live by clean simple righteous rules if the world is refiguring itself and righteousness isn’t the winners’ game. What happens if you don’t necessarily want to be a winner but a survivor?"

ROSS GIBSON

The following interview with Huzzah took place soon after the first public screening of Dead to the World.

How did Dead to the World evolve?

GIBSON: It was initiated as an idea of mine and I took it to the group. It comes out of an interest in modern Australian morality, especially metropolitan morality: What is it? Does it exist? How is it refiguring itself? What do we believe in?

What is “okay” for people to do?

GIBSON: Yes, I suppose so. What does each person deem acceptable, rather than what is the law, given that Australia is this blend of many different ethnic backgrounds, different communities, all of which bring their own law and mores to the location? The 1990s are very much about the fragmenting of communities and Australia is this location where the fragments land as well. There are also a lot of severely destabilizing influences – especially in Sydney – to do with real estate and with the impossibility of living on a low income. It then becomes a necessity to find scams to live.

Everybody in Dead to the World seems to be compromised.

GIBSON: You can’t live by clean simple righteous rules if the world is refiguring itself and righteousness isn’t the winners’ game. What happens if you don’t necessarily want to be a winner but a survivor? How do you refigure these tidy, neat, nice belief systems that you inherited if you know you’re gonna get screwed by these belief systems? What happens when everybody starts to refigure their ethical system? What is right and what is wrong and what is corrupt? Where do you draw the line?

Everybody has a past and everybody has an objective. In most cases, the objective ranges on a scale of simple survival up to fulfillment of lusty passions. So everybody is heading somewhere.

The only world that I’m interested in is the world as set up on the screen. I’m not really interested in these characters as people you’d meet on King Street, in the lived day.

At the same time they are recognizable.

GIBSON: We’d hope that they are recognizable because they have a history within the world that is set up in the narrative. You have to establish plausibilities.

There is a land called movieland where characters live and you create those characters with a sense of plausibility. To achieve that plausibility, you do all sorts of things: acting, camerawork, soundwork, consistencies within the logic of the narrative. But I do believe absolutely that there is a real world called movieland and that there are thousands and thousands of these citizens whom we know.

You used real estate as a metaphor, but in realistic terms how much is that boxing gym actually worth?

GIBSON: It’s worth whatever the object of desire is worth. It’s important on different scales of value. It has a certain value for Keats (John Doyle), which will be partly monetary and partly with deal making. The acquisition for Pearl (Lynette Curran) will be more complex in its gratification.

Keats is the most interesting character in the film.

GIBSON: Yes, within those narrative conventions we’ve worked in and those narrative conventions are 1940s and ’50s social problem movies.
The other convention is Jacobean dramaturgy, which a lot of film noir and 1950s problem movies are derived from. In Jacobean dramaturgy, Keats is the Machiavellian character, someone who has managed to perhaps — that “perhaps” is a dramatic component of the problem — purge morality and compassion from his constitution.

AUSTRALIAN CINEMA

PLAIN: This film is largely a response to what we think is wrong with Australian film. It is on one level a cerebral film, but, on another level, it is not. It has a strong story; it is not inaccessible. People have said to us, “Do you think audiences will understand this?” Of course! People can’t believe that you can be both cerebral and entertaining. They’ll accept it from a German or a French film, but not an Australian film.

PARR: It’s a problem brought up in Australia by the commercial viability of film. Anti-intellectualism has actually been intellectualized so that people theorize about why you shouldn’t theorize about your own work.

What do you see as problematic in Australian cinema?

PLAIN: On the whole, I think Australian audiences hate Australian films. But if you make something that’s not like other Australian films, they start to get nervous about that, too. They’ve posited their cinema in a safe position, which is that they don’t like to look at it, but it’s kind of nice.

PARR: Inoffensive.

CRUTHERS: Well behaved. It was a fairly conscious decision on Dead to the World to take the film away from the warm hue of emotional connections, the stuff that has been important to realist Australian cinema. I think people look for gratification when they go to the movies, certainly, but there are three or four other kinds of gratification apart from the emotions: spectacle, sound, vision, intellectual gratification. There is also satire, comedy, passion.

One thing that perhaps 99 per cent of people won’t pick-up on is the conscious manipulation of just about every element of the film and the sense of play within it. That’s a hallmark of post-modern work. It is a lot easier to recognize and come to terms with in other kinds of work, but it’s certainly a first for people engaged in it in a film. “What’s this? Am I supposed to laugh?”

The characters in Dead to the World are so much larger than life and, of course, the dialogue is so much pushed in the direction of genre stylization that it’s supposed to be quite recognizable.

GIBSON: I think there is a fear in Australia that people have of theorizing about their work, of thinking it right through to the end, as if that can in some way kill the magic.

PARR: We broke quite a few taboos.

Obviously the decision to totally post-synch the dialogue was greeted as dubious by the filmmaking community. But that somehow reflects your whole aesthetic, of challenging work methods through to narrative traditions.

PARR: That’s right. We didn’t realize just what the taboos were until we broke them.

Such as post-synching, theorizing and dialogue. The latter consists of a florid, thickly allusive use of language that is very unusual and not just in an Australian context.

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PLAIN: I think that’s related to another taboo, to another thing that you’re not supposed to do in Australian film, and that is to have characters who can talk to one another.

PARR: It’s like the decision to post-synch. It’s an attitude that says the object of film is to construct and deconstruct whatever you want. Whereas, in a realist tradition, you say that something magical happened on the day of recording.

GIBSON: It has an integrity that you can’t interfere with.

PARR: We don’t believe that.

PLAIN: We’d tell people we were post-synching and they’d ask, “Why?”

THE SOUND

Can you describe the concept behind the soundtrack?

GIBSON: The sound area is part of the plastic thrill of cinema. It’s one of the reasons why we thought we’d really go for it on the soundtrack.

Collectively, we all have a dissatisfaction with the way soundtracks in Australian film are the lowest common denominator. Every aspect of the soundtrack is brought down to the worst piece of recorded dialogue; you end up flattening everything out to the vagaries of the real world in which you are trying to act out your fiction. It seems strange to spend so much time framing, lighting
and getting the visual thematics in place, only to compromise the soundtrack.

We were interested in the soundtrack as being part of this evocation of legend land, as a component of the film that is dense with meaning. It is something we wanted to have absolute control over.

We told the actors that we were going to make the film twice and that they should conceptualize their work on that basis. Most actors in Australia, because of the stylistics of Australian film, have never had to confront the techniques of post-synching. (Actors in America have to have this craft or they don’t work.) We had to establish with the actors that it was to do with technique and craft, that it was not about capturing some splendid moment that happened on set. They had to build up that character again in the moment of the recreation.

PARR: I think that a lot of people see the whole process of post-synching as a cheat. You get the actor into the recording studio after the shooting and have them say their lines again, somehow tricking them into co-operating. The actors don’t see why they have to do it again and they get their backs up about it.

On Dead to the World, our actors watched the film straight through with the dialogue guidetrack. This never happens. What happens on most films is that, if an actor has a few post-synch lines, they come in and do them, and that’s it. The screening gave the actors the opportunity to talk about it, as well as a new understanding of their characters. They could see how it had been constructed within the narrative.

CRUTHERS: Actors often complain that post-synching happens months after they’ve given the performance. We had it set up so that there was the least amount of time between the end of shooting and the post-synching sessions.

GIBSON: One of the things that warmed my heart was that some of the actors who initially went white at the idea saw it as a challenge, took it on, and thoroughly enjoyed it. The evidence is there: they were all very good at it.

You work with a philosophy of acting which is definitely not talking about some indexical relationship with the real world. Actors are these dirty big signs: walking, talking signs. Actors have their characters. They could see how it had been constructed.

With a couple of minor exceptions, the post-synching appears perfect on the screen. There are moments which are just extraordinary, like the giant close-ups of mouths. What was the recording process and the ideas behind it?

PARR: Every character has his/her own signature sound. Pearl has her car screeches, Keats has his ring clicks, Manny (Tibor Gyapjas) has his chains and so on. With the actual process of synching, it was very basic: you sit down with your piece of film and your sound tape and you line it up.

For the recording of the post-synch dialogue, we used an old radio mike called an Electrovoice. It is cardioid and has a much more rounded sound than most modern microphones, such as the 416.

PLAIN: None of that modern shhh-sound.

PARR: We tried a few different mikes before choosing that one. The philosophy for the sound on Dead to the World was largely influenced by late 1940s and ’50s studio films which, if they weren’t post-synch, were recorded on sound stages with very clean tracks. Everyone was recorded right up against the mike, no matter what was happening on the screen. This gives everyone the same importance.

PLAIN: When there was a choice between getting a sound live outside and the studio, we would always choose the studio. All the effects were transferred to magnetic tape and then individually fitted. There is not one footstep that is not exactly in synch with the picture. Our philosophy was that it must do something for the audience to hear this incredibly clean, disembodied sound. Angus Robertson, who recorded it all for us at Spectrum, asked us, “Did you go back and use some synch stuff?” He couldn’t believe that you could get post-synch to fit that well.

PARR: We were doing something that a lot of sound editors won’t do: we were actually cutting to words. Say you have a piece of sound where the word goes wrrhh, we would cut a little bit of the word out so it would fit. Of course, some would say that you shouldn’t touch an actor’s words.

GIBSON: Yes, people say that. But why shouldn’t you touch an actor’s words? You cut them up in editing, you’ve cut them in other ways. Why can’t you cut their noises as well?

PARR: Every sound effect in the film had components; nothing was just one sound. Take, for instance, a punch: it would be made up of the sound of a real punch thrown by our pro-boxer, and the sound of air being expelled from a small cushion, plus a twig snapping.

HUZZAH PRODUCTIONS

CRUTHERS: This is the first film that I’m aware of that has been made and produced by graduates from the University of Technology Communications course. That course is basically representative of a new type of film education and a new way of thinking about film.

PLAIN: I think we all agree at Huzzah that, like the course, you can’t have practical filmmaking without some sort of intellectual discourse. You say things and then someone asks you about your favourite movies and you say Batman. Then they stare at you as if to say I must have this wrong. They can’t reconcile these two things. We all have a genuine love of what gets shown commercially.

Huzzah is constructed around the concept of a well co-ordinated, extremely efficient group of specialists who collaborate and critique each others’ work. Did this ever cause tension with technicians and people coming into it?

GIBSON: To put it as a real cliche, everybody was making the same film because we had talked about it so much.

PLAIN: I think there were times when we were interviewing people for technical positions and the person would want to know which one of us would be the one speak to. They would ask, “Could you elect someone?”

We have a clear direction, but it was important for people to understand it would be all four of us that make decisions.

Obviously, on set Ross is the director, while I would have to make certain decisions about cutting, Adrienne with sound and John in production.

CRUTHERS: I think the music was the area which was very hard to theorize about.

GIBSON: That was interesting for me as I ran into my theoretical incapacities. I don’t know how to talk theoretically about music.

PLAIN: You don’t think “it needs more oomph” is a theoretical position?

FUTURE PROJECTS

Huzzah have a number of scripts in the works. Are members working on their own features?

PLAIN: I think the important thing is not whether all four of us work on these projects together. What matters is that, if they are Huzzah productions, then we will be made in this manner and Huzzah is a process. The realist tradition is only one way to make a film.
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I interviewed Jane Castle graduated from the AFTRS in 1987 where she directed the award-winning short, Roadside Cafe. Castle has shot more than twenty music clips for such rock performers as Jimmy Barnes, Midnight Oil, James Freud and Hunters and Collectors. Castle was also camera operator on Sweetie.

This is your first feature as director of photography. Were you confident?

Of course not! I know it’s crazy, but I guess it’s just the myth of the "feature". I think the minute you get confident you end up doing something boring with your work.

Over the many projects that you have worked on, have you been at all conscious of developing a style which is identifiable with you?

I think you have to be diverse. You don’t want to get locked into a style. You push yourself to be different each time out, and I have my own likes and dislikes with lighting and composition.

In terms of lighting, I like to work straight from the script, looking at people’s emotions and interpreting them and putting that into the lighting. I use the possibilities that are thrown by the location and try not to work off a formula or a pattern.

For example, I don’t like to track with someone just because they happen to be walking along the street. You can show people in so many other ways, so why have this camera attached to them?

Peter Galvin

JANE CASTLE graduated from the AFTRS in 1987 where she directed the award-winning short, Roadside Cafe. Castle has shot more than twenty music clips for such rock performers as Jimmy Barnes, Midnight Oil, James Freud and Hunters and Collectors. Castle was also camera operator on Sweetie.

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For example, I don’t like to track with someone just because they happen to be walking along the street. You can show people in so many other ways, so why have this camera attached to them?

I like to move the camera when the dramatics of the script call for it and you can really bring that out. In action scenes, it’s fantastic sometimes. Hollywood tends to move the camera so much, mainly because they have these fantastic machines! I think it’s important to keep your mind open.

How did you work with Huzzah in developing the film’s very distinctive look?

Huzzah has always had a really strong concept of the film. There was a basic storyboard when I arrived on the project and I think that really helped Ross get his mind around it. I never work off storyboards in terms of composition and framing because they are basic pictures. You only work off them as a guide to coverage and, in some cases, you can use them as a stylistic reference. If you get locked into them, it can be a very negative way of working; when you arrive on location, you realize that they are very unrealistic.

Ross and I went right through the storyboard very early on and we spent a week discussing it line by line. Some scenes, like the action scenes, were not even storyboarded.

The lighting and composition are striking throughout, but the coverage style – extreme wide-shots, sudden close-ups – is quite strange. The mid-shot never arrived.

Yeah! We were going for a very restrained coverage, a highly stylized coverage, and not just a kind of mise-en-scène of wide-shots.
and close-ups when really needed. We avoiding covering scenes with the usual close-up, mid-shot, etc.

When the close-ups arrive at the end of the film, it’s very exciting. We also used some really extreme wide-shots in the gym to give it a sense of space.

This is a very low-budget film and yet the finished work looks rich and strong. That is interesting because Dead to the World presented some extremely difficult problems. For instance, the gym, where over a third of the action takes place, is just an enormous space. How did you work with it?

It was really difficult with the lights. Basically, we used a 6k as a key and blondies [reflected] off poly for fill on the ground near people’s faces. I could get right into their eyes.

Then I had to light all the walls around the gym so they wouldn’t go black. I did that with red heads.

It was a very difficult space, especially with the lights we had. I just tried to make it a moody space by keeping the walls down and the windows bleeding through. Obviously, there were limitations. I had to go direct with my key light, which is unfortunate as it’s such a hard light. But in such a huge space, that was all I could do. We didn’t have control over the windows, so we were constantly taking NV screens on and off outside and frosts.

Dead to the World is not a naturalistic drama. It’s a genre piece, basically. It’s not about one particular person’s emotions and feelings, it’s an ensemble piece, with pretty fast action. It’s a film that lingers on people.

So, I didn’t approach it at all naturalistically, where you have to have a living room that looks like a living room. We went for a comic book kind of approach with very graphic frames, using a hard foreground and then background. We used blocks of colour, not a lot of back light and fill key. That kind of stylization gave me a lot of freedom with colour.

Given the low budget and six-week shoot, did you feel that your hands were tied behind your back?

In the gym mainly. Every master shot there was a huge set-up and the plan was to avoid overtime. We only did a few hours, which is fairly unusual.

But I’ve often worked on low-budget shoots and working under impossible conditions is not so unusual. You just do it.

The film has a couple of truly outrageous moments: for instance, the scene that introduces the villain, Mr Keats, dressed as Santa in a stark lounge room saturated with blue light. Christmas lights are also flashing, giving the scene an uneasy feel.

It was probably the craziest idea that I had! I’ll own up to it now. The flashing lights were my idea.

Keats is a sort of sleaze-bag character. He’s rich and the blue is related to that. He’s a bastard with this up-market flat, and the things that happen around Keats are quite weird.

Each time Keats appears he is seen in a different place and he is shot in a different way.

That’s right. The places where you see him are quite weird: the aquarium, the railway tunnel, the sparse flat.

Nothing is ever normal with Keats.

That’s where I got the idea for the Christmas lights. The script said there were lights and a Christmas scene, so I thought why not use them.
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After years of little development in mainstream distribution and exhibition, things are rapidly changing. There are technological improvements in cinema projection and sound, the emergence of many multiplexes in the suburbs and a breakdown of tradition in only showing product from one's in-house distributor (Hoyts, for example, is now showing Village Roadshow films, and vice versa).

Going to a movie is now far easier, and generally more pleasurable (except for the increased talking and noisy sweet wrappers). Even video, once announced as the death knell for cinemas, is seen as encouraging people back into the movie theatres. Not that a love of movies need stop there.

Village and Greater Union have joined forces with Warner Bros. to recently open the Movie World theme park in Surfers Paradise, Queensland. To get a perspective on these changes, Cinema Papers spoke to leading figures at the three main exhibitor-distributors. In a future issue, the story will continue with the smaller, but no less important, distributors and exhibitors.

VILLAGE ROADSHOW
GRAHAM BURKE
MANAGING DIRECTOR

INTERVIEWED BY SCOTT MURRAY

What do you see as the principal future directions for the Village-Roadshow group?

The main direction we are on about is turning positives into positives. We live in a country, and a world, where everybody is talking doom and gloom instead of being positive and joyful, which is what we're trying to be. We are lucky in that the entertainment business traditionally acts in a counter-cyclical way to difficult times, as it did in the great Depression and as it is doing today.

What we are doing is trying to build the entire entertainment base of our group. If you look at our total direction, everything has a synergy; everything interlocks with what we're doing. You might ask how? Well, we are building, in partnership with Greater Union and Warner Bros., state-of-the-art multiplexes across Australia. By taking movies to the people, we are bringing in people who weren't previously going to the movies. For example, in Knox there were two old theatres out there that were averaging $20,000 a week. Logic would say that if you replace them with ten new screens, you are going to spread that $20,000 over those screens. Well, that's not the case, because we are averaging $180,000 a week. And we know from our research that it is because new people are coming to the movies.

As for Warner Bros. Movie World, it is more than a theme park. What we are doing is building the movie business in this country and putting movies into people's culture. If you go to Movie World, you want to get into the whole world of movies. And when you go back to your suburb or town, be it Wangaratta, South Yarra or Moonee Ponds, you are more likely to make movies part of what you do, whether it be by renting video tapes or going to a cinema. So our direction is very much movies, and entertainment and movies.

We have four principal areas of expressing that: 1. Warner Bros. Movie World; 2. Warner Roadshow Studios; 3. Roadshow distribution, where we distribute theatrically and on video and into television, through our Village multiplexes and theatres; and, 4. Film production.

These are the four legs to the table and they are all driven by the movies and entertainment.

Going through them separately, what is the concept behind Warner Bros. Movie World?

Warner Bros. Movie World, we believe, is the most exciting entertainment event that has ever happened in Australia. It is a look behind the scenes of a real-life working studio, together with some of the best shows and attractions that have ever been assembled. What makes them doubly interesting, of course, is that they are all movie-driven, all movie-related.

Let me give you a little taste of a day at Warner Bros. Movie World, and the experience will take you a whole day. You arrive at the carpark, where we have parking for three-and-a-half thousand cars, before entering through the Warner grand archway. You pass the Fountain of Fame and then get on the tram tour of the Warner Roadshow Studios, which overseas
people say are state-of-the-art and world standard.

This tour I've done many times and I still find it fun. You see sound stages, sets from movies, and the costume and carpentry departments. There is a real buzz in being at a major-league studio.

Is the tour dependent on their actually being a production shooting, or will you have to stage things?

We believe that the studios will be very busy. Since we've owned them, there have been three major television series and five feature films shot there. At the moment, we are shooting *Round the Bend* with Olympia Dukakis, and from May onwards bookings are very, very heavy in terms of television series and features.

Now, after the studio, you go to another huge sound stage where we have the Magic of Movies. We show how blue screen and sound are done, plus we have the *Memphis Belle* show, where we have the actual Memphis Belle that Warners built for the film. It is $US7 million worth of recreated flying fortress, assembled on a gimbal, which does its thing along with all the models. It truly is the magic behind the movies.

Now, at this point, you have probably spent about an hour, or an hour-and-a-quarter, on this more educative, but still very entertaining, part of the attraction. Then you head into Main Street and go into a whole world of wonder, fun and entertainment. Let me just touch upon some of the attractions, and there are many more than I will tell you about. First, there's the Police Academy stunt show, which is a lot of fun and full of action. We bought four actual L.A.P.D. police cars and we have an actual black helicopter that explodes every hour on the hour, in the most amazing way. That's one hell of an action-packed show.

Or, you can head across to the Looney Tunes area and join the quest to find Bugs Bunny who's down under. It is a very exciting dark ride. Or, you can go to the cartoon corner, or the Road Runner ride, or Yosemite Sam's. There is also the Adventures in the Fourth Dimension, which is a wonderful intermixing of such classic Warner Bros. 3-D movies as *The House of Wax* and *Dial M for Murder*. It uses the most modern technology and things actually come off the screen and dance before your eyes.

Other options are Young Einstein's Gravity Homestead, where things aren't as they appear to be, and the Western Action and Animal Actors Stage, where you see what horses and dogs do in the movies. There is some pretty rip-roaring Western action to boot. Or you can go to the Hollywood Classics, the Great Gremlins Adventure, or simply wander around Main Street to all of the stores and shops that have been recreated from Warner classic movies. There's the Aunt Mame Department Store, the Will's Wonkers Chocolate
Factory, Dirty Harry’s Bar and the Sundowners Outback Outfitters. If you’re hungry, which you are bound to be somewhere in the middle of all this, you can go to Rick’s Casablanca Cafe or The Commissary, one of the four or five other eating places.

I’m obviously very excited about it. And I’ve taken a number of different types of people over it recently and, without exception, they say, “Wow, this is fantastic!” Their reaction and response is, as mine is, of wonderful, childlike, enthusiastic fun.

So, I think it’s a big ray of sunshine for all of Australia. It’s about winning and having fun, and also about building the base of moviegoers for our production and exhibition industry. I think it’s a positive for the movie business and for Australia.

What is your calculation in terms of people specifically travelling to Movie World, as opposed to those just visiting when in the Surfers Paradise area?

It is significant that the other major event in our lifetime was Expo, which was held in Brisbane, forty minutes away from our site. We believe everybody from Queensland will go to Movie World.

We equally believe that all the visitors to Surfers, from mostly NSW and Victoria, will go there, too. As well, many people will opt to make a trip to Queensland, just as people in America go to Los Angeles to see the Universal studio tour or Disneyland.

In addition, we have had extraordinary interest from the Japanese, who are already booking in huge numbers to visit Movie World. We are confident that in our first year alone we are talking hundreds of thousands of Japanese. We are also talking New Zealanders, and people from Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore.

The interest has been quite extraordinary.

There is a natural proclivity for people to come to Australia, but they want even more reasons to do so. As most of this area is driven by the tour operators, Movie World is manna from heaven to these guys.

How big is Movie World in relation to the other theme parks in the world?

In terms of area, it’s probably bigger. I have just come from Florida and the land area of our Movie World theme park is bigger. In terms of show, which is what I guess it’s all about, we give as much or more show than any of the other big parks in the world.

And how does the ticketing work? Do you buy for the whole day or have to purchase separate tickets?

Admission is $29 for adults and for children $19. That entitles you to all the attractions within the park. The only thing you have to buy is your food.

The scaling of Disneyland was three-quarters life-size so that buildings don’t look too imposing to children. Was there any such scaling done at Movie World?

That’s a question I can’t answer. What I can say is that the man who actually built Disneyland, the legendary C.V. Wood, or Woody as he is known, is building this park for us. He is the grand designer.

As for the man behind the whole park, the actual designer is Rolf Roth, who has been the designer of a number of major parks, including Six Flags Over Texas and Magic Mountain. The art director-set designer is a movie art director-set designer called Craig Denis Edgar, and he has done movies such as Top Gun, Burgh Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Ghostbusters. He is the top man in his field in America, so the attention to detail and the quality of the way the park will be dressed up is quite remarkable.

What is the breakdown of the park’s ownership?

There are three partners, Warner Bros., Village Roadshow and Sea World, each of which owns a third.

You mentioned that one of the roles of the theme park is to educate and excite future moviegoers. In what sense do you see Movie World’s fulfilling that function?

Folklore has it, and I have no reason to doubt folklore, that Steven Spielberg went over the Universal Studios as a youngster and said, “Wow, this is for me.” He became so excited about film that he started seeing five movies a week, finally going on to make movies at Universal himself.

What Warner Bros. Movie World does is that it educates and interests young people about movies and everything to do with the movie culture. They are, therefore, more likely to become high-frequency moviegoers like you and me, instead of maybe high-frequency beer drinkers and football followers like some of the friends we went to school with. You and I went in one direction and these other friends of ours went in another. In our case, we are very one track.

Australia does not have a deep-seated commitment to film culture. In France, for example, the news and current affairs programmes run trailers of the films opening the next day. They prefer to report film stories to car accidents. Apart from The Movie Show on SBS and the odd ‘making-of’ documentary, there is no programming commitment to cinema. Do you think there is any way that cultural vacuum can be changed?

Well, I think we’re missing out Peter Thompson who does wonderful stuff on Sunday. Peter’s love for movies comes through and he is a joy to watch.

But what you are talking about is certainly evident in America, where there is so much more coverage of the movies. I think our television networks should wake up to this as there’s a lot more viewers interested in movies than the stuff they run towards the end of their news programmes. Let’s hope it happens.

How rapidly is seeing films in conventional cinemas going to become obsolete, or do you see that as always being a strong element of the movie experience?

I see it as always being the pre-eminent part of the movie experience, because people have gone out since recorded history to gather in groups. We like to rub shoulders and be part of a crowd. The more you get movies in any form at home, and the more ready access you have to cinemas, the more likely you are to go out to see a movie. Technology has nothing to do with the communal experience of being with the mob in a movie theatre. The phone can’t ring and the mother-in-law can’t pop in and visit.

Right now, we have technological leaps in terms of bigger picture, better sound and all of those things. But I believe they’re secondary to the going-out experience.

So videos are no longer perceived as a threat to cinema going?

Video builds cinema. When it first came in, the novelty factor had a dampening effect for a year, but then it started to gradually build cinema. I believe the figures would confirm that.

What technological changes do you see in the immediate future?

The only technological changes that logically one can foresee is better sound, better pictures and better seats. Whether you offer them at home, or in a theatre, they are, in my view, the only areas that you can go.

People are more interested in the play itself than the technology. Testament to that is the fact that of the four biggest pictures of the last year or so – Home Alone, Pretty Woman, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Ghost – not one was reliant on big gimmickry, big budget or big sound effects. They were all driven by the stories, by the players.

Curiously, one of our biggest pictures right now is a little piece adapted for the screen and magnificently done by Mel Gibson, called Hamlet.

Of the past few years, distribution practices have changed completely. One can see a Roadshow-distributed film in a Hoyts cinema. The old days of delineation have gone. Totally.

How did that come about?

It was market driven. When multiplexes came along, Hoyts was first into the market with Chadstone. It was a success, so we jumped into Knox. It’s market forces; it’s competition.
In days past, each exhibition chain strove to have a better image than the others. Is that true any more?

At Village, we try very hard to run our theatres better and give better service. We believe our seats are superior, and we are trying to build auditoriums with bigger-proportion screens and better sound. So, yes, we still try to get that edge.

But in all candour, I think the location of a cinema complex is probably the most important factor. If you live near Chadstone, you are going to go to Chadstone; if you live near Southland, you are going to go there. But for those people who live in between the two, we would hope they will select a Village theatre.

Because of the increasing number of multiplexes in the outlying suburbs, is the city now becoming a shrinking market?

The city used to be the ‘be all and end all’, whereas today it is a market corridor along with many other market corridors. But it is still a very important part of the market and I believe it will remain so in the Australian context.

As to film production, what are your immediate plans?

We recently made five feature films and we are involved, through Roadshow, Coote & Carroll, in television, particularly with G. P. and the ABC. We are committed to production and to finding and developing good ideas.

Film production is a business that, more than ever before, has great opportunities. But it is totally driven by ideas. Of the four box-office successes I mentioned earlier, all were relatively low-budget, with no star names. There were no stars in Home Alone to speak of; none at all in Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Pretty Woman which Richard Gere, but he was not a star at the time, though he is now; and Patrick Swayze was not considered a significant star at the time he made Ghost, but that has certainly changed.

So, you have four non-star, non-big-budget vehicles being hits, which shouldn’t be a mystery to us. George Miller with Mad Max and Mad Max 2, and Paul Hogan with the two “Crocodile” Dundees, proved that, if you can make a terrific product that really delivers to an audience, you can create a world star. That’s what happened with the Mass and the Dundees.

If we can come up with pictures that are wonderfully entertaining, they’ll find an audience. I have no doubt about that.

One could also add Young Einstein.

Of course. I was being modest because of our involvement.

What other features have you been recently involved in?

Young Einstein was actually before this renaissance, if you like. Since then we have done The Delinquents, Blood Oath, Turtle Beach, Hurricane Smith, Dead Sleep and Blood Moon.

HOYTS

ROY RAMSAY,
TECHNICAL MANAGER, AND
GREG CAVANAGH,
NATIONAL MARKETING MANAGER

INTERVIEWED BY GREG KERR

Over the past 15 or so years, one has seen the evolution of various technical developments—some would say gimmicks—such as Surround, 3D films and THX sound. What can your patrons look forward to in the way of technical improvements?

RAMSAY: I suppose the most immediate thing will be some form of digital sound, which has already been developed in a system on 70 mm by Kodak and ORC (Optical Radiation Corporation) in America. But 70 mm, although used in some cinemas, it not a medium every cinema can use.

As well, the Dolby Corporation is working on a 55 mm system which will be compatible to all cinemas. The print will have a Dolby stereo soundtrack plus a digital soundtrack.

Will you be concentrating on perfecting the projection of 35 mm prints as opposed to the much-touted 70 mm format?

RAMSAY: We have roughly 122 screens operating throughout Australia. We have an eight in Perth up and running, we’re building a six in Adelaide, and we have four multiplexes in Melbourne [two of which have eight screens each, the others having 10 screens]. In Sydney, we have George St in the central business district (CBD), which is a seven, Warringah (seven), Bankstown (eight), Pagewood (six), Newcastle (six), Wollongong (six) and Parramatta (three). The Myer centre in Brisbane is an eight.

The other cinemas are our standard city-release houses which have been operating for some time, but they are all equipped with Dolby, etc.

What efforts have been made to keep up with American cinema developments?

RAMSAY: We already have facilities in some of our cinemas for spectral recording, which is done on special 35 mm prints in Dolby. It is a new type of recording system which gives you...
a greater dynamic range, and that means less background noise.

What proposals have you to improve the overall comfort and ambience of your cinemas?

RAMSAY: In the new multiplexes, we're installing all the facilities we possibly can: liquor and candy bars, and updated seating. Although the seating is brand new, we have just brought in a new model which we are trying out. It will probably be installed in Adelaide.

What is your view on the sale of plastic-wrapped confectionery at theatres, which can be so disruptive to the enjoyment of films?

CAVANAGH: That's a good one. I suppose it is annoying.

Has any conscious effort been made to eradicate this problem?

RAMSAY: We have pioneered in a lot of our Australian cinemas the sale of bulk lollies which you pay for by weight. That has been an innovation, and eradicates the plastic wrapper?

CAVANAGH: Well, it hasn't phased it right out, but it has taken its use down to a minimum. The Candy House phenomenon has taken right over, and not just in Hoyts cinemas.

Some Hoyts cinemas in the Melbourne CBD seem to be trailing in some areas - sound quality for one. Is this because the organization is now concentrating more on suburban areas?

CAVANAGH: I don't acknowledge that fact, though I'm not close enough to that area to acknowledge it one way or another. All I know is that when I sat through Dances with Wolves two weeks ago, at a preview at the Cinema Centre [Melbourne], I thought the sound was excellent.

Obviously, the expansion and future is in suburban multiplexes. I think everyone acknowledges that fact. But there will always be theatres in the CBD area because there is a market there.

Is this suburban expansion an Australia-wide trend for your organization?

CAVANAGH: Definitely. Not just our company but obviously the Village-Warner Bros.-Greater Union conglomerate as well. In Melbourne, obviously, there is a lot more complexes up and running. In fact, Hoyts pioneered multiplexes in Australia, Chadstone being the first in 1986.

What percentage of your box-office takings is down in the suburbs and into some of the provincial areas of Australia. We will be following the retail trend, which is to take cinemas back to where the population centres are, rather than concentrating on CBD properties. Notwithstanding that, it is certainly our intention to maintain a very strong presence in the city and we will continue to regard our city cinemas as the flagship.

Has your alliance with Village Roadshow created a different rationale in your cinema development strategy? Why build your own cinemas when your films can be screened at Village cinemas and vice versa?

No, it hasn't really changed our philosophy, bearing in mind that Greater Union and Village have had a relationship for a long time through Greater Union's shareholding in Village.

Will your efforts in improving sight and sound at your cinemas be directed into perfecting 35 mm print formats?

We are only exhibitors and therefore not out there developing new equipment. We will be limited by the developments that are generated in engineering companies and design companies around the world. It is certainly our intention to give our patrons everything in the way of the latest technological developments.

What state-of-the-art projection system do you regard as the best at Greater Union?

From our point of view I guess it is Dolby SR with CP 200. We have a mixture of what is called Victoria 8.

As there are new developments, we look at them and enhance our systems if required. Have significant improvements been made in this area over the past few years?

I think we are now getting a lot more light onto the screen than ever before. Presentation is enhanced every time you upgrade a projector.

Do most of your technical improvements evolve from breakthroughs in America?

Not just America; certainly also from Europe. In fact, a lot of our equipment comes from Cinemeccanica, an Italian engineering com-
What is your view on the sale of plastic-wrapped confectionery at cinema kiosks?

I suppose it's a fact of life that cinemas are a little early for us to be doing that, because it was probably what one could call a "gimmick". It worked very well for Earthquake and up until the last film, which I think was Battle of the Midway. They made four or five films in Sensurround but the equipment was so expensive and it was only installed in a few cinemas around the world.

As with Cinerama, after you get through about half a dozen films using the technique, interest starts to wane.

What ever happened to Sensurround? Why didn't it develop and become a regular feature in movie houses?

It is a little hard to enforce standards, but I think the cost of a rock concert, or a disco with the cover charge included, $11 seems pretty competitive.

Does improving the technological aspects of your cinemas necessarily mean a corresponding leap in admission charges?

Not at all. If you go back and monitor the increase in prices over whatever time-span you like, prices haven't kept up with the increase in inflation. Despite that, we do have the best cinemas in the world.

Exhibitors in general in Australia have continued to upgrade their cinemas without passing those costs on to the public. So you consider $11 a fair price for seeing a movie?

I believe it is a very cheap form of entertainment compared with almost everything else. When you consider the cost of a rock concert, or a disco with the cover charge included, $11 is pretty competitive.

Should there be Australian industry standards which demand across-the-board quality of film projection and sound?

I think it's very hard to enforce standards where you have a free market. We certainly like to think that our cinemas are right at the forefront; I think you'll find most of our competitors think likewise.

What plans do you have to improve the overall comfort and ambience at your cinemas?

We're constantly looking at that. As late as this morning we were discussing providing the ultimate in comfort and ambience at our new five-cinema complex in Adelaide. We are going to make more of the atmosphere in the auditoriums and the complex as a whole, so that when people go to the cinema they regard it as an experience, rather than just going and seeing two hours of celluloid on the screen.

Can you elaborate on this?

It is a little early for us to be doing that, because the plans are still evolving.

What is your view on the sale of plastic-wrapped confectionery at cinema kiosks?

I suppose it's a fact of life that cinemas are a retail outlet. We're selling an experience, and a part of that retail function is to provide the ancillaries.

If we had noise-reduced wrappers, I suppose that would be ideal, but we only have a certain amount of input.

What emphasis is placed on consumer feedback in the design and location of your cinemas?

We do a tremendous amount of research, both in the design and location of cinemas: What do they get maximum numbers of visitations to our cinemas. And we still have a long way to go. We are at about half the visitations per year per head of population in the U.S.

What percentage of your box-office takings is from the city?

It is still far and away the major area in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. You must bear in mind that multiplexes are still in their infancy.

How did the video explosion of the 1980s affect your organization?

Yes. That, to some extent, is a by-product of video. We're still getting the same increase in inflation. Despite that, we do have the best cinemas in the world.

Do your findings indicate that the average age of Australian cinemagoers is increasing?

We still run some drive-ins which are successful, but I don't think anybody has plans to build more. There is still an audience for a limited number of drive-ins in each city, and we're still catering to that audience.
Now you can build your own library of some of the best titles in contemporary world cinema.

Special offer

To celebrate the launch of Contemporary Video Visions — a new mail-order video company — we are offering Fellini's masterpiece La Dolce Vita for the first time on videotape in Australia. Set in the 1960s, the film is a stylish tale of decadence, the pursuit of fame and the good life. La Dolce Vita is considered by many overseas and local critics to be one of the best films of the last 30 years.

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Return to: Contemporary Video Visions, PO Box 159, Port Melbourne, 3207.
Tel: (03) 646 5555 Fax: (03) 646 2411.
DIRTY DOZEN

A PANEL OF TWELVE FILM REVIEWERS HAS RATED A SELECTION OF THE LATEST RELEASES ON A SCALE OF 0 TO 10, THE LATTER BEING THE OPTIMUM RATING (A DASH MEANS NOT SEEN). THE CRITICS ARE: BILL COLLINS (CHANNEL 10; THE DAILY MIRROR, SYDNEY); JOHN FLAUS (3RRR, MELBOURNE); SANDRA HALL (THE BULLETIN, SYDNEY); PAUL HARRIS ("EG", THE AGE, MELBOURNE); IVAN HUTCHINSON (SEVEN NETWORK; HERALD-SUN, MELBOURNE); STAN JAMES (THE ADELAIDE ADVERTISER); NEIL JILLETT (THE AGE); ADRIAN MARTIN (TENSION, MELBOURNE); SCOTT MURRAY; TOM RYAN (3LO; THE SUNDAY AGE, MELBOURNE); DAVID STRATTON (VARIETY; SBS, SYDNEY); AND EVAN WILLIAMS (THE AUSTRALIAN, SYDNEY).

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<th>BILL COLLINS</th>
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AYA
LISA BOWMAN

AYA is an enlightened character study of a young Japanese war bride and her battle to embrace the Australian culture. The first feature film to be written and directed by Solrun Hoaas, Aya was awarded the CICAE (Confédération Internationale des Cinémas d'Art et d'Essai) prize for artistic quality and originality at the 1990 International Film Festival in Torino.

The film's distinctive visual style, with its rich and vividly composed images, traverses the two decades which contrast the subservience of Aya (Eri Ishida), when waitressing in a sukiyaki house, to the challenges of her assimilation as a mother, wife and daughter-in-law. The scenes photographed around Melbourne are a montage of nighttime barterings on the docks for Japanese produce, popular 1960s images and old Holdens.

The mood of Aya switches from the rhythm of a graceful Japanese haiku to a raucous Aussie ballad. And bright silk flying-fish hang from the rotating clothes line in the couple's backyard, providing one of the many dazzling visuals contrasting the two cultures.

The opening scene is an Australian country fair with a wood-chopping competition. Aya, having only recently arrived in Australia, performs a traditional tea ceremony, and it is here we see husband Frank's (Nicholas Eadie) contempt for his wife's culture as he turns away and looks disinterested.

Eri Ishida gives a delicate and affecting performance as Aya. Ishida is a well-known actress in Japan, having received much acclaim for her debut role in Tubasa-Wa-Kokoro-Ni-Tsukete (With Wings in My Heart). This is her first film outside Japan.

Nicholas Eadie gives a convincing performance as Aya's frustrating husband, while Chris Haywood is strong as the benevolent friend, convincingly speaking Japanese at times.

As the story unfolds, we watch the earnest and accommodating Aya, who has arrived in Australia married to Frank, an Australian soldier on duty with the Occupation Forces in Japan, face not only the hostility from her family but also the Australian government, which classifies her as an undesirable alien. Throughout the film, brief extracts from letters sent home to Japan reveal a poignant cover-up as Aya disguises her unhappiness at being in Australia.

The film examines her efforts to make a new life and the pressure Frank puts on her to become Australian and give up her culture. At one stage, Frank, doubting Aya's love for him and thinking she only used him to get into Australia, says to the go-between at their wedding (reminiscent of Cyrano de Bergerac, he wrote and translated the couple's love letters), Mac (Chris Haywood), "A meal ticket's a meal ticket."

The turning point in the film occurs when Frank, a successful draughtsman, has an accident and becomes withdrawn and self-pitying. Aya supports the family by working at a sukiyaki house. Their relationship slowly starts to unravel and Frank eventually becomes involved with an old acquaintance.

Mac, who understands Aya best, says to Frank, "She seems to know what's going on. She has tentacles on her fingertips."

The changes they have gone through and the culture barriers eventually take their toll...

DADDY NOSTALGIE

Brian McFarlane

Bertrand Tavernier’s Daddy Nostalgie is essentially a three-handier film. Daddy (Dirk Bogarde), an Englishman married to a Frenchwoman, Miche (Odette Laure), lives in a villa in the South of France where they have retired. When he has a heart attack, Caroline (Jane Birkin), the daughter he has neglected during her childhood, leaves her own life as writer and mother to be with him. The rest of the film subdues the chart the way the distances that separate these three have changed.

In what is above all a conversation piece, Chekhovian in the ways in which things get teased out in talk, these three lives, present and past, are revealed in a series of quietly eloquent episodes. If the over-all effect is not, however, episodic, this is because the underlying structure of Collo Tavernier O’Hagan’s screenplay is so firm: its basis is in the connections among these three characters and what time has done to them.

“I really envy me”, says Daddy as he recalls his past for Caroline, who was so little a part of it. He savours the way in which he has been saved from retirement in “rain-sodden, gnome-ridden Butleigh Salterton”. But his apparent talent for living, for a life without regrets, can’t be taken at face value because the film undercuts his words with flashback glimpses of a selfish, often trivial life, of cocktail parties, of crossing the Atlantic for the first time “for Yardley’s”, and so on. He is, in spite of seeming to resist it, sentimental about his past; but the film is not. He may think he has no regrets about life but Miche, his wife, can’t talk to him about the past “because for me it’s too painful”. Perhaps she, whom he describes in one of the flashbacks as the “most beautiful woman in London tonight”, has long been aware that they have nothing to talk about. And the past for Caroline was not fun. For her it was a matter of being told “Not now darling” and “Go back to Nanny”, while Daddy got on with being ironic and elegant. She directly challenges his view of the past: “It was a beautiful, selfish life – and your selfish sun’s going down.” He remembers selectively, Caroline painfully, and Miche, cocooned in Catholicism and cigarette smoke, effaces all she can.

A key element of the film’s drama is to show how past this past is, how everything has changed. The once-uxorious couple, neglectful of the child’s timorous claims on their attention, now exist as two almost entirely separate entities. Daddy, whose elegant selfishness had led him to ignore the little Caroline’s proffered poem, now turns towards her for laughter and understanding, giving her the affection he had been too careless to offer her as a child. For the first time he asks to see what she’s writing (a play-script) and the request resonates with his earlier neglect of her poem. Caroline, now divorced, seems distance from her own child, Martin, as she once was from Daddy. But it is she who has made the move to close the gap between her and Daddy and found him responding to her as he never had before. “You look just like Martin”, she tells him, and he replies, “I’d rather be your lover than your son.” It is a reply at once appropriate to his sophisticated, casual approach and significant in laying bare the film’s psychological structure. For, in relation to Miche, there is now no sign whatever of the lovers they once have been. She has become watchfully still, silently smoking, “praying on the sky” to the God whom Daddy dismisses as, “from what I know of Him, ... not over bright”. Caroline, in turn, has increasingly to adopt a maternal role toward Miche.

What Tavernier seems most interested in is the way time and circumstances change people and relationships. Daddy and Miche’s passion long since spent, they now appear to exist in a state of affectionate separateness. He has stayed because he loves her, as he tells Caroline in answer to her question, but loving has not necessarily implied understanding. The film’s generosity is seen in its refusal to apportion “blame” in this matter: it suggests rather that people will choose whatever refuges offer most comfort (religion for Miche, wit and irony for Daddy), and the space which the cameracharacteristically asserts between them enacts the separate nature of their comforts. “You never speak to me in English any more. I wonder why?”, says Daddy to Miche; this signifier of Miche’s withdrawal is typical of the film’s careful, rigorous structure. Nothing is wasted. A casual remark like this sums up a whole shift in emotional distance. As Daddy and Caroline move to reduce the space between them, Miche remains apart. When Caroline and Daddy go to look at a now-deserted mansion where he and Miche had gone to elegant house parties when young, he recalls Jessica for whom he “had a little weakness ... I saw her years later in Washington, fat and alcoholic.”

Daddy, Miche and Caroline may have escaped the physical ravages of time which have been visited on the unseen Jessica, but Tavernier and his cast make abundantly clear some of the other kinds of change that time can bring.

Not that Daddy Nostalgie is at all a sombre film. It unsentimentally values “th[o]se foolish things” (the song which weaves its way through the film) that make life suddenly joyous. Its whole central “action” – the raprochement between Daddy and Caroline – is an affirmation of what openness to affection can achieve, however late in the day. The day is, of course, very late for Daddy, but his death doesn’t cancel out what its final hours have held for him and Caroline.

A film such as this depends crucially on its acting and Tavernier has been superbly served by his three stars. Dirk Bogarde, returning to the big screen for the first time in twelve years, continues his position as one of the world’s finest film actors. The habit of irony, broken by the occasional flare-up (“I can’t smoke, I can’t drink and I’m in pain”) to Miche, by the
sudden moment of awareness ("No one ever trusted me; I don’t know why"), by the acknowledgment of what Caroline now means to him ("When you’re gone, I shall have no one to talk to"), the elegance and wit that ward off pain: here is detailed character drawing of a kind not common in contemporary cinema. It is a sad reflection on British cinema of the past twenty years that it has found nothing to use, let alone challenge, the resonances Bogarde brings to this role.

The two women – Jane Birkin and Odette Laure – are scarcely less remarkable, both wholly truthful and touching in detailing their characters’ relationship to Daddy and to each other. In fact, the acting is so fine that one can almost fail to do justice to the subtlety of the villa’s rooms or serves to isolate a watcher from two speakers. It also makes itself felt in the control over narrative rhythms, its habitual quiet tenor disrupted by a momentary eruption of pain or joy, and in the flicks given by the discreetly inserted flashbacks. In these, we never see Daddy or Miche (or indeed any adult) in full: they are either given from the child’s point of view or are no more than disembodied voices. What they do, in narrative terms, is to remind us of how the present has been formed by the past. What the film as a whole is concerned with, however, is not the present but the process is not irreversible; whatever the past has done, the present has its own power to effect change; people do not have to be passive victims of their pasts.

Daddy Nostalgia, no doubt, an ‘art-house’ film, but it will surely be relished by those who feel anesthetized by the visual and verbal violence that marks a good deal of contemporary cinema. It is visually elegant, verbally eloquent, humanely felt.

DADDY NOSTALGIA


FLIRTING

RAFAELE CAPUTO

I n the warm after-glow of their first sexual experience, the two teenage lovers, Danny Embling (Noah Taylor) and Thandie Adjewa (Thandie Newton), declare to one another, "You’re beautiful." There is the sense that the meaning extends further than what is normally meant by "beautiful". The characters may not know what that is, though they sense that something is bonding them together. It is as though their lives belong in between a recognizable reality and a mystical one, never quite settling.

It is 1965, three years on from the events that revolved around the characters of Danny, Freya (Loene Carmen) and Trevor (Ben Mendelsohn) in The Year My Voice Broke. Although Danny now finds himself away from his small home town, he is nonetheless in a restrictively contemplative stance, concerned with the central character’s transcendence of a particularly ‘hostile’ environment through his exposure to and relationship with another person. The peculiar aspect of both films is that a character’s effective transcendence of certain socially (and, in a manner, politically) constructed environments has hardly typified John Duigan’s other films.

If anything, the central character’s exposure, and then commitment, to another usually culminates in a fall from grace, so to speak. The characters played by Bryan Brown, for instance, in both Far East and Winter of Our Dreams are outsiders whose immediate concerns do not extend beyond the niche they have created for themselves. But involvements with others, which lead them into the sweep of events (events which actually bear little upon their world), and then the (reluctant) realization of a reality beyond their own seems to inevitably bring about their downfalls.

With The Year My Voice Broke and now Flirting, there appears to be something of a direct line of patrimony between Danny and Duigan’s other characters. But rather than being an heir apparent, with the fate of others in ascendency, Danny looks like his destiny is in regression. It is only in the sense of Flirting’s “pantheistic” preoccupation that it can be considered a sequel to The Year My Voice Broke. Outside of a few in-house hints, as it were, Flirting stands on its own. For Thandie, although an outsider like Freya, is estranged for a whole different set of reasons, indicative of another world beyond the understanding of Danny gained from previous experiences. Thandie is the daughter of an African nationalist on an academic post in Canberra. Because she is black, she is ostracized by most of the other girls and, thus, is on the same level as Danny in the social fabric of their respective schools.

But while there is this coded level in which both characters are different from the others, and are said to be different in no uncertain terms, there is another level at which Danny and Thandie are connected through an unworldly, unconsolidated view of the world. It is the film’s immersion into this kind of sensibility that Duigan appears to be most concerned with. For example, smell (according to Danny’s voice-over at the film’s opening) is the one thing he remembers most. It becomes an oblique nod to a higher order when the couple retain the smell of each other’s sex on their fingers. But it’s not a sensibility that stands forever and completely apart from the coded world. Thandie, for one thing, is a character that extends Danny’s awareness of politics, race and Africa. Where once such elements were an enactment on the world of Duigan’s characters, they now seem to stand in a fluid, causal relation. The significance of the lake which separates the two schools, for in—
The nearly empty cinema in which I saw *Hamlet* is any guide, it seems that the combination of director Franco Zeffirelli and star Mel Gibson is not about to ensure a major commercial success for the latest filmed Shakespeare.1 Most aspects of the film appear to be geared towards finding a large popular audience — its stars (Glenn Close as well as Gibson), its visual style, the way it keeps its eye on the story, the clarity of the verse-speaking which settles for easy intelligibility rather than poetic effect — but it may be that the film will end up by not pleasing anyone enough.

Shakespearean purists will perhaps take issue with some of the playing around with the order of text, with the truncation of some of the longer speeches, with the literal-minded insertions of what the play leaves to reporting. On the whole, none of these constitutes a major problem, though.

As to changes of order, these are generally in the interests of narrative flow. The film dispenses with the opening scene on the battlements in which the guards and Horatio discuss the apparition of Hamlet’s father. Instead, and very strikingly, it begins with the death of King Hamlet as his body is sealed in the coffin in the vault occupied by his ancestors, Queen Gertrude. She is also a persuasively commonplace woman who wants everything as “the most immediate to our throne”. All this seems aptly enough placed in the vault where as Hamlet wanders through the vault. It reading than is often the case, is appropriately more inward-looking, reflective Prince, more in keeping with the film’s emphasis. Zeffirelli’s much more “external” dealing with the Danish kingdom misses Fortinbras. “Goodnight sweet prince” is a less resonant final note for this Hamlet: neither sweetness nor priceness has been a notable element of Gibson’s performance.

Whether or not it is because we cannot think of Gibson without recalling *Mad Max* (and it is the essence of “stars” that they accrete resonances from earlier roles), it is true to say that the best of his Hamlet is in the “something dangerous” he suggests. He is happiest with the scenes of physical action and in suggesting elsewhere a suppressed violence that might erupt at any minute. His Hamlet is honest, manly and uncomplex. There is nothing idiosyncratic about him; when he is meant to be moody or brooding, one is always waiting for him to act.

While talking of the actors, it should be said that Glenn Close offers a remarkably fine Gertrude. She is sensual, responding to Claudius’ constantly touching her, and, in the closet scene, shutting Hamlet’s mouth, as he berates her, with what looks a passionate kiss, just as the Ghost appears. She is also a persuasively commonplace woman who wants everyone to be happy and to whom the revelation of Claudius’ murder is a wail of despair for this beautiful, light, sensual woman. Close makes every touching, too, her obvious affection for Ophelia, suggesting as well an interestingly equivocal moment of — perhaps — sexual jealousy, as Hamlet, in the play scene, declines her mother’s invitation to sit by her, finding “metal instead of flesh” gains by being juxtaposed to an overhead shot of the cheerful Gertrude’s kissing Claudius as they leave the castle to go riding. And “To be or not to be...”, less agonized in Gibson’s intelligent reading than is often the case, is appropriately staged as Hamlet wanders through the vault. It dissolves from there, not to the play’s confrontation of Ophelia by Hamlet, but to a wide shot of green cliffs with Hamlet on horseback, reinforcing the contrast of death and life, of being and not-being.

The omissions of Reynolds and Voltemand will probably trouble no one but that of Fortinbras is another matter, as it excises a political dimension from the play. With Fortinbras, a new kind of order will take place in Denmark. Olivier’s 1947 film also omitted Fortinbras and it seemed, in the light of his much more inward-looking, reflective Prince, in keeping with the film’s emphasis. Zeffirelli’s much more “external” dealing with the Danish kingdom misses Fortinbras. “Goodnight sweet prince” is a less resonant final note for this Hamlet: neither sweetness nor priceness has been a notable element of Gibson’s performance.

1. I am happy to find that the film is indeed proving successful at the box office.
real Ghost, neither strange nor frightening, but merely tired and old.

It may well be that Hamlet is less congenial to Zeffirelli’s talents than his popular Romeo and Juliet and The Taming of the Shrew in the late 1960s. He brings to Hamlet some of the same visual glamour that was so attractive in the earlier films, but here it seems less apposite for the action going forward. Filmed in Scotland and Kent, his Hamlet has a lushly pictorial quality. The credits are given over a long-shot of castle on cliff, the whole suffused in a blue glow that suggests a certain kind of “artistic” postcard. This Elsinore is almost always too handsome, without the visual beauties being made to work hard enough in the interests of drama. Instead of being struck by the contrast between, say, the beauty of the scene and the “maimed rites” of Ophelia’s funeral (and the passions it gives rise to), one merely notes the disorientating charm of the landscape and the pictorial quality of the composition.

To set against such cavils, it is only fair to add the camera moves with persistent fluency, keeping the action uppermost, playing over surfaces of stone or tapestry, coming to rest on a hidden figure. There is nothing stagy about the filming (as there so often is in the culturally prestigious BBC Shakespeare series), except surprisingly at the very end. The duel has been superbly staged: the camera keeps us absolutely well informed about both the passage of arms and the drama going on between the key spectators. Then, when it is all over, and Claudius, Gertrude, Hamlet and Laertes are dead, to provide a wholly theatrical tableau is hard enough in the interests of drama. Instead of being struck by the contrast between, say, the beauty of the scene and the “maimed rites” of Ophelia’s funeral (and the passions it gives rise to), one merely notes the disorientating charm of the landscape and the pictorial quality of the composition.

After all, it is only fair to add the camera moves with persistent fluency, keeping the action uppermost, playing over surfaces of stone or tapestry, coming to rest on a hidden figure. There is nothing stagy about the filming (as there so often is in the culturally prestigious BBC Shakespeare series), except surprisingly at the very end. The duel has been superbly staged: the camera keeps us absolutely well informed about both the passage of arms and the drama going on between the key spectators. Then, when it is all over, and Claudius, Gertrude, Hamlet and Laertes are dead, to provide a wholly theatrical tableau is quite shocking in the context of so fluidly cinematic a film.

Again and again Zeffirelli has alternated between watcher(s) and watched: Claudius and Polonius keeping tabs on Hamlet; Claudius watching Gertrude watching the duel; the audience and the players; Horatio and Hamlet watching the King watching the play. The editing processes work, in these instances, to articulate at many levels the drama of distrust and deceit which is everyday life at Elsinore. The editing elsewhere establishes the contrast between the burnished glow of feasting within and the blue chill of the ramparts, between the dangerous movement of the final duel and the stagnant stillness of the poisoned goblet in close-up.

If Shakespearean purists take issue, as they endemically and sometimes mechanically do, with every alteration, addition or omission, as if the verbal text were still paramount in the film, those who value a more individual, more daring approach to the text may also be disappointed. There is nothing foolish about Zeffirelli’s interpretation, but, equally, there is nothing very exciting about it (a comment which holds true for Gibson’s Hamlet). It throws no major new light on the most intrinsically elusive of all Shakespearean heroes and tragedies: it encourages us to wonder throughout how they will do this or that scene; it does not lead us to wonder what is at heart of this whole story.

Olivier’s film was tonally and stylistically touched with film noir influences: it became a study in individual malaise in a world offering no certainties. Tony Richardson’s 1969 film version (of his Roundhouse Theatre production) offered disaffected youth outraged at the hypocrisy of its elders, and cast Marianne Faithfull as an Ophelia for the times. Unlike those two films and unlike his own Romeo and Juliet, Zeffirelli has not notably made a 1990s film. Only the designer stubble sported by his Laertes and Horatio reminds us that this Hamlet belongs to a particular production period: part of the flatness is due to the absence of a sense of contemporary pressure. This Hamlet hasn’t, despite its many sound virtues, been dynamically re-charged, re-assessed, re-made for its time.

HAMELT


Monsieur Hire

Raymond Younis

Patrice Leconte’s Monsieur Hire was one of the major surprises of the 33rd London Film Festival and for good reason. Georges Simenon’s novel, Les Fiançailles de M. Hire, had been published in 1933 and made into a film by a director Leconte admires, Julien Duvivier, in 1946. That film was called Panique and was a source of inspiration, like the novel, for Leconte — so much so that he decided to remake it.

The major problem for Leconte was finding an actor who could portray the elusive, dispassionate nature and almost effigial-like appearance of Hire, without sacrificing the inner yearning and vulnerability of the character. The decision to cast Michel Blanc, an actor who had been recognized predominantly as a performer of comedy, proved to be crucial and completely successful. Blanc’s red hair and animated personality are no longer in evidence, yet the impact of the character is quite considerable.

The plot is quite similar to that of the novel, though some of the more violent aspects of the latter — for example, a dead girl rather than a butchered prostitute is found at the beginning of the film — are excluded. (Leconte may have chosen to make such changes in order to facilitate and heighten the dark and somewhat bizarre vein of humour in the film.) Hire is the major suspect, mainly because he is an outsider and not a little peculiar in his predispositions. He is a voyeur: in many respects he recalls Tomek (Olad Laubeskenko) in Krzysztof Kieslowski’s Krzysztof Film Miloścy (A Short Film About Love). He observes, quietly but insistently, a woman called Alice in a flat opposite. One evening, she catches a glimpse — in one of the most chilling and memorable images in the film — of the voyeur at his window and begins to wonder just what he has in fact seen. When her boyfriend flies from the police, a tenuous and intriguing relationship develops between she and Hire.

The visual and dramatic impact of the film is greatly due to the figure of Hire and also to the relationship — emotional, psychological and physical — between he and Alice. Hire’s funereal visage and impeccable bearing are quite ghastly and disquieting, especially when seen in silhouette. Indeed, black and white are the dominant tones of his world (until Alice penetrates it): he spends much time with white mice and pigeons, and, as a tailor, favours dark clothes. Colour and tone are used as dramatic analogues, as they are in the tortured fictions of Eisenstein, Antonioni and Resnais.

Hire’s pallid face is unemotional, an aspect that suggests an introvert, one who admires the dominant tones of his world (until Alice penetrates it): he spends much time with white mice and pigeons, and, as a tailor, favours dark clothes. Colour and tone are used as dramatic analogues, as they are in the tortured fictions of Eisenstein, Antonioni and Resnais.

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The film seems to be fashioned with no particular time and place in mind, which suggests the timeless quality of its themes: desire, prejudice, obsession, the devotion to a concept of love and, ironically, its destructive power. Significantly, these recur in *A Short Film About Love*. Hire, like Tomek, experiences cynicism and betrayal, and though Magda (Grazyna Szapolowska), perhaps, learns how to love wisely, Leconte's Alice loves not wisely but too well.

The characters inhabit a harsh universe where the individual, his/her desires and obsessions, questionings and the darker aspects of human experience are highlighted. The theme of voyeurism is reinforced by the intrusions of the camera into corners and shadows, into doorways and windows, into the sordid lives of little but not inconsiderable people and their small but not uninteresting destinies.

The film is also enriched by the restrained direction and performances. Subdued gestures and subtle connotations, correspondences and contrasts heighten the undertone of sensuality that is quite erotic and yet unnerving. It is a measure of Leconte's achievement that these alienated or unfulfilled individuals become, like many of Simenon's figures, in the words of Jean Renoir, "touching, disturbing and fascinating".


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**NIRVANA STREET MURDER**

Aksel Vellis’ *Nirvana Street Murder* was, as many would know by now, one of the 1990 Sydney Film Festival’s critical successes. Since then it has been steadily acquiring a certain kind of critical reputation as a movie that is in need of a larger public audience than was / is usually found in a film festival context. Now thanks to Newvision Films (and the Australian Film Commission, which had the insight to back it in the first place), *Nirvana Street Murder* will get a general release.

There is much to praise in this modest, stylish, taut and vibrant urban black comedy. Vellis’ directorial assurance and inventiveness is evident in virtually every scene, and the high-energy humour oscillates frequently between madcap bedlam and physical violence.

The movie’s humour has a dynamic, ambivalent quality that reminds one of the absurd violent humour found in Scorsese’s movies. Characteristically, Scorsese’s Italian-American street-wise characters horse around with each other one moment, only to be at each other’s throats the next. The knife-edge volatility that characterizes Scorsese’s wise-guys also (to a reasonable degree) marks Vellis’ marginalized characters who live in inner-suburban Melbourne. This is particularly true of the tumultuous and sometimes pathetic relationship between the two O'Hagan brothers, Boady (Mark Little) and Luke (Ben Mendelsohn). In many different ways, they echo the complex dynamic relationship between Johnny Boy (Robert De Niro) and Charlie (Harvey Keitel) in *Mean Streets* (1973).

The numerous well-choreographed scenes of irrational violence between the two hapless, free-wheeling brothers and their Greek counterparts are rich in performative nuance and subtle observations on how cultures clash in today's urban Australia. This wonderful offbeat mixture of comedy and violence is indicative of the filmmaker’s supple command of his transgeneric material. What we see and hear, and time again, is Vellis’ ability to blend successfully the familiar codes, icons and stylistic visuals of the old Crawford’s television police dramas with the basic thematic and visual interests of the action-comedy genre. Perhaps the best examples of this are the frenetic scenes of the brothers and friends’ being busted by the police and those that show Luke’s being pursued and arrested in a dead-end alley by the keen undercover cop (John Flaus).

In the same context, one should not forget the impressively performed scenes with Luke and the kind-hearted Molly (performed to perfection by Sheila Florance, whose presence in the film registers iconic connotations for anyone familiar with *Prisoner* and the like) that occur in her cavernous and opulent mansion, at Melbourne’s Botanical Gardens and the War Memorial.

In fact, *Nirvana Street Murder* succeeds in terms of imaginative story-telling, performance and cinematography because, aside from the individual gifts of those involved, Vellis has made a movie that is extremely well integrated in its use of the suspense, iconography, generic textuality and camera styles of past and present television crime shows, soaps and serials. For once we have a recent Australian feature that seems to know how to obtain the best iconographic and performative potential of its well-known television, and film and stage, actors.

Another finely tuned aspect of *Nirvana Street Murder* is the way Vellis has represented questions of bi-cultural conflict and identity in its narrative and visual style. The sequences of Luke with his Greek-Australian girlfriend, Helen (Mary Coustas), especially those at Helen’s home (where her Dad rules the roost with an iron fist), demonstrate a subtle and humorous understanding of the cultural and psychological mores and tensions that govern the familiar dynamics of such a household.

All the relevant performers here are credible and engaging to watch: Coustas is substantially fine as the sometimes bewildered and confused young girl caught in the vice of bicultural existence; and Dennis Dragonas is persuasive as her chauvinistic father (in a role mercifully unlike the stereotypical character type often surfacing in recent Australian films).
and on television). In one humorous scene he asks Luke (who has managed to visit Helen at her place by faking it as a salesman of encyclopedias) whether the books that he is selling explain what “respect” is, so that his “ungrateful” children may be more appreciative of its meaning. The subtitles used to translate Greek dialogue into English are put to good use in the scenes at Helen’s home because they remind the viewer that Helen is occupying a personal domestic space fraught with deep-seated familial conflict. There is a constant collision between the moral values held by Helen’s parents (who, particularly her father, are anxious to see her marry an upwardly mobile Greek-Australian boy) and her own (which are more in tune with Luke’s more non-authoritarian liberal values). Poor Luke cannot see why someone like Helen should even entertain the common notion that she marry a young Greek-Australian professional boy who will provide for her and share her ethnic background and customs, etc.

Another interesting feature of Nirvana Street Murder is the emphasis placed on how Greek-Australian males interact with their Anglo/Celtic counterparts in terms of their own machismo posturings, street-wise bravado, sub-cultural rituals and anti-Anglo/Celtic obsessions. Ultimately, this leads to farce and violence. For example, the wild and cleverly staged scenes of Boady finding Penny (Tamara Saulwick) as she makes love in a car to one of his wog nemeses, and Boady’s subsequent frenzy, embody some of the movie’s greatest moments of kinetic filmmaking. They also encapsulate the tragic misunderstanding that occurs between people of different cultural backgrounds.

The narrative structure of Nirvana Street Murder was inspired, according to Vellis, by his interest in wanting to make a movie about two brothers (one of whom, Boady, is a sleepwalker) and a newspaper article which dealt with a man who murdered his wife by drowning her in a waterbed. Hence the creation of the childish, unstable Boady who attempts to kill Molly in her waterbed by cutting the bed first (as did the man in the newspaper account) during one of his sleepwalking experiences.

The other important element for Vellis was the desire to construct a murder story along comic lines. Both Luke and Boady form the dramatic centre of Nirvana Street Murder: everything in this black comedy of bedlam and murder stems from the stormy relationship between the two brothers. From the early scenes (which follow a medium-shot of sheep in an abattoir corral, a motif that occurs several times more in the film), one senses that these two brothers will always, one way or another, be behind the eight ball. The odds are stacked against them.

Luke tries to have a “normal” life living on the breadline and cares for his reckless brother, who robs a chemist shop to get enough money to buy a purifier to make speed. There is even one hilarious encounter between the two where Boady complains to Luke that the picture of an armed hold-up man in the newspaper (which is meant to represent him) is all wrong.

Mark Little is particularly good as Boady, suggesting a very capable and pliable person of considerable camera presence. As Luke, Mendelsohn gives another characteristically brilliant performance, as seems the order of the day for this relatively young, enormously capable screen actor.

The alchemy between Little and Mendelsohn works well throughout the movie. Both seem graced with physical agility and being supremely relaxed in front of the camera. Most important, the camera likes both of them.

As a resourceful and witty spoof of the major dramatic and aesthetic concerns of Australian television crime shows, Nirvana Street Murder is quite an accomplishment. In terms of performance, the movie is an astounding achievement. What the viewer is constantly aware of is Vellis’ multi-faceted talents as writer-director. Thematically and stylistically, Nirvana Street Murder attests to his capacity to create a work that plays with well-defined stereotyped character types in a subversive, refreshing way. Clearly Vellis has a fairly intuitive and intelligent grasp of the basic dramatic and visual configurations of his highly engaging material.

There is much playful humour in Nirvana Street Murder which attests to the writer-director’s creative understanding of his doomed larrikin characters’ trying to survive in the margins of late-20th-century Melbourne and the dynamic cultural, psychological and social complexities of the migrant experience in this country.

Vellis is not a didactic filmmaker interested in giving his spectators castor oil in the hope of improving “multi-cultural” relations in our society. Instead, what we have in Vellis is a promising filmmaker who raids and re-works the established movie and television genres and popular culture, entertaining us with the rare capacity to make movie images and sounds that can astonish us for their dramatic vitality and unpredictability.

NIRVANA STREET MURDER
naturalism, passion and wit.

Rennie, a middle-aged, ex-'chatty' with an ironic sense of humour and a problem with alcohol, has found his niche caring for retarded people. He may be brusque and bullying at times, but he's committed to his charges and spends much of his energy battling indifference and lobbying for money. When Rennie applies through the Saltmarsh Foundation for funding to make the workshop more self-supporting, the government responds with a grant for a physical education teacher. This is how Pat Cannizzaro (Brian Friends), a fellow misfit fired by the Education Department for wanting to save his students rather than teach, gets his niche caring for re-misfit fired by the Education Department for wanting to save his students rather than teach, gets his niche caring for re-

The relationship between Rennie and Cannizzaro becomes the central dynamic for exploring the film's concerns. The partnership between the two men at first proves fruitful. Cannizzaro descends upon Saltmarsh like a lightning bolt. Young, volatile and charismatic, he energizes Rennie, who is cynical about life in general and frustrated by his inability to affect change, and jolts him into a revitalized, guarded meliorism. Hired by Rennie to develop a fitness programme appropriate for the trainees, "little kids at twenty or thirty who piss in their pants", Cannizzaro sets out immediately to mould Saltmarsh's motley assortment of retarded adults into a competitive team of soccer players that he calls, appropriately, the Heartbreakers.

Wearing lurid, brightly coloured track-suit gear (compliments of Juventus), which looks unconvincingly professional against their humpy, uncoordinated bodies, many of Cannizzaro's eager new recruits can't even begin to do warm-ups properly. But they and Cannizzaro persevere, and the best moments of the film are those which show, unsurprisingly, the Heartbreakers "on tour", with success being measured not by winning but by simply being able to score a goal.

The film concentrates on five or six of the trainees: Jody (Jocelyn Bethencourt), a sweet-tempered girl who personifies the loveable nature of Down's Syndrome people; Kevin (Brian M. Logan), the Heartbreaker's most reliable player with a good strong kick, who to his father's chagrin (and the amusement of almost everyone else) is fascinated by his own genitals; Noel (Henry Salter), a talented woodcarver who is forced by Rennie to forgo artistic expression for the greater good of cutting horses' heads for toys, which sell well; and Gail (Briony Williams) and Spencer (Syd Brisbane), a young couple in love, whose desire for sexual expression precipitates the crisis which pitches Cannizzaro into conflict with Rennie and the Saltmarsh board.

The disagreement between Rennie and Cannizzaro is about who has the correct approach to mentally handicapped people. Rennie, despite his genuine compassion and concern, really believes that little beyond human containment is realizable, the provision of a humane shelter where people can be taught to use their potential and have their individu-

available resources. Cannizzaro, on the other hand, despite being aware of the limitations, believes that intellectually disabled people have a right to full self-actualization, including sexual and artistic expression. This conflict spills over into a competition for the sexual favours of the social worker, Jill McHugh (Catherine McClements), who visits Saltmarsh regularly, and who was felt by Rennie to be his, and his alone, prior to the younger man's arrival. (As Rennie says wryly to Cannizzaro, when Jill's preference becomes obvious: "You've got the two things I want most in the world: Jill and hair?")

Struck by Lightning handles these complex issues deftly and warmly, with passion, but without didacticism, sentimentality or falsely assuming that there are easy solutions to these difficult problems. Best of all, it provokes thought and discussion. Much of the film focuses on the issue of the motivations behind the principal characters-Rennie, Cannizzaro and Jill-who are all finely drawn and well-acted. These are real people struggling to articulate, not in words but in actions, their feelings about the rights of mentally handicapped people and the responsibilities that society has for them.

Struck by Lightning is a memorable film. It is sincere, has engaging characters, and is good to look at, but it is also disappointingly uneven. Among generally fine performances, there is some poor acting that stands out (the headmaster, who upbraids Cannizzaro for throwing meat pies all over the school tuckshop, and Gail's mother spring immediately to mind). Similarly, while the great appeal of the film is its off-beat naturalism and humour, the scenes which open and close the film suffer from theatricality. They seem heavy handed and contrived, the closing scene in particular.

The film's emotional conclusion is the impromptu testimony given by the trainees in support of Rennie, whose resignation is sought by the Foundation's board of directors, because of his lenient approach to misbehaviour in allowing Gail and Spencer to spend a night with each other. Each trainee, beginning with Noel, makes a short, moving plea for Rennie's reinstatement, at the end of which they all pat him on the shoulder. Against the genuine power of these expressions of affection for Rennie, Cannizzaro's sudden grandstanding at the meeting and his melodramatic confession of guilt seems embarrassingly overblown, whilst structurally it has the diluting effect of an anti-climax.

Despite these flaws, Struck by Lightning is one from the heart, a fine film which one hopes will do a power of good for its subject.

W A I T I N G

PH I L I P P A  B U R N E

The opening scene of Waiting is at once brave, confronting and humorous. A naked woman is swimming in a river surrounded by bush (and with Doris Day singing "Que sera, sera" in the background). Then she stands up and reveals that she is far advanced in pregnancy.

The woman is Clare (Noni Hazlehurst), a painter who has just won the prestigious Moet et Chandon art prize, enabling her to live in France for a year. She has booked her ticket to Paris for the first available flight-the first flight after her baby is born, that is.

At the first signs of labour pains, Clare rings friends Sandy (HeLEN Jones), Therese (Fime Press) and Diane (Deborra-Lee Furness). They converge on her house in country Queensland, bringing with them three children, one husband, one boyfriend and a film camera.

As well as coming to support an old friend, Therese is there to finish her documentary film on home birth, and Sandy is there to help deliver the baby which will become hers. In her second feature film, writer-director Jackie McKimme tightly directs a well-written and dense script. The keys to the action are slowly revealed as the film progresses and the many layers of the story are filled in. Nearly all the action occurs within one location over twenty-four hours.

Clare, Sandy, Therese and Diane have been friends since school and over many years have shared more than just school lunches. As the film unfolds, it is revealed that Sandy's husband, Michael (Frank Whitten), an academic and social crusader, has slept with three of the four women. Years of resentment, secrets and jealousies begin to surface during the two days everyone is at Clare's farmhouse.

The different paths these women have chosen are indicative of the choices now available to women, and also signal the many and difficult decisions people must make.

Sandy has chosen a traditional path. She teaches kindergarten and craves motherhood. However, she is unable to have children. Completely involved in the events emotionally, she is physically excluded from the process of procreation. Consequently, she becomes bossy and frenetic. However, as events unfold, her rather annoying behaviour becomes rather pathetic as things do not turn out the way she hoped. The moment at which Sandy's hopes crash is impressively shot by director of photography Steve Mason, as she stands alone on a hillside masked by grey skies.

Therese is a hardened feminist. She is disillusioned with men, gives little attention to her appearance, makes feminist films, is always short of money and is the mother of a teenage daughter. Above her desk is the statement, "Dead men don't rape." Therese sees Clare's pregnancy as her opportunity to make the film which will set her on the map of women's filmmaking. Throughout the pregnancy, she has interviewed Clare about surrogate and home birth, now she awaits the ending: the birth itself. Nothing can interfere with this natural process or her career is over.

C I N E M A  P A P E R S  8 3  • 5 9
Diane is the glamorous one. She has spent many years overseas and edits a fashion magazine. Not afraid to use her looks for her own ends, she chats up the local policeman, much to the disgust of Therese, and persuades him to let Sandy's and Therese's recently arrested children off some charges. Diane has chosen to be a career woman, but not without realizing some sacrifices. The envy of the others, she is not altogether happy herself, nor is she wholly convinced of the wisdom of home birth.

Clare is the central character, but eventually becomes forgotten by the others as her labour pains cease and the complexity of their inter-relationships begin to boil over. Soon she is craving peace and quiet from her close friends.

Clare is intelligent, strong and independent. She is a talented painter who is just beginning to achieve recognition within her art community. She has chosen to live without her lover, Steve, who makes her realize what she has to do. She is independent but not totally self-sufficient.

But Waiting is not exclusively a film about women. The men in this film are equally complex and equally involved.

Michael is a man facing changes also. Many of his beliefs do not seem to be able to work in the realities of his life. His love/hate relationship with McDonald's food chain sums this up.

By contrast, Clare's friend and neighbour, Bill (Ray Barrett), is a down-to-earth Australian. In touch with nature and not interested in modern ideas and concerns, he avoids all of Clare's friends but is there when she needs him.

Men's complex relationship with birth is also given attention. The historical and cultural variation which exists, from the total exclusion of men to their total control as doctors and the recent trend of fathers' being present at a birth, is pointed out. Women's actual control over the process, and indeed over pregnancy, is highlighted.

McKimmie portrays both men and women as sympathetic, complex and human. Thus, although predominantly concerned with what are considered "women's issues", this is not a didactic, feminist tract or a sentimental portrayal of femininity but raises issues which many women and men find problematic in a decade which is trying to come to terms with the legacy of 1970s feminism, alternative lifestyles, ideological fights, etc.

McKimmie does not presume to find an answer for these and other issues, although through the story's resolution she does express an opinion on surrogacy at least. However, this is only one story and different people may have ended it differently. McKimmie acknowledges that there is no single question and no simple answer.

McKimmie is thereby realistic about the problems inherent in feminism but is com-}

recognizes the heterogeneity of people, their lives and problems, and that one person's solution would not be the solution for everyone and that person's decision will impact on others' lives.

The ways these people's lives are turning out is nicely contrasted with the first experimentation of their children. Sandy and Michael have two adopted children, a Vietnamese and an Aboriginal. Therese has a teenage daughter. The children are somewhat scathing of the adults' lives, but in their own lives are setting off on paths which in many ways echo them.

Waiting is also a very humorous film. Much of this comes from Hazlehurst's portrayal of Clare, as well as strong performances by most of the cast, and from the throwing together of so many different character types. Clare's awareness of the absurdity of her situation, surrounded by friends who have come to be with her and soon forget her in their preoccupation with old resentments, jealousies and insecurities, is evident on her face.

This is not the first time Hazlehurst and McKimmie have worked together. Hazlehurst starred in McKimmie's first feature, Australian Dream (1985), and in her award-winning short, Stations (1985).

Waiting is funny, sympathetic and somewhat provocative all at the same time. It is a film which I hope is indicative of a style of filmmaking to come in the 1990s, thoughtfully dealing with real issues in an non-didactic way, leaving viewers with enough material to make their own decisions.

Unfortunately, I fear that it may be marginalized by an audience sceptical about "women's issues" and "women's films" (and I include both women and men in that audience). Perhaps we need a shift of attitude away from seeing feminism as concerned with women to seeing it as concerned with people. Then we can see that the issues raised in this film are relevant to both women and men.

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**ACT OF BETRAYAL**


McGurk, a disillusioned IRA fighter, informs on his colleagues. Together with his wife and child, he is dispatched to Australia with a new identity, where a mercenary hit-man, Callaghan, traces his whereabouts with the help of McGurk’s lover (Deborra-Lee Furness in a thankless role).

This ‘feature length’ version of the two-part television mini-series has predictably suffered from the transition. The condensed material is marred by abrupt leaps, a denouement that is perfunctory and uniformly hollow characters. The climactic finale is rendered nearly incomprehensible, with characters seeming to appear out of nowhere due to slipshod re-editing.

This is the type of film where co-producers are signalled by moving to a new locale or introducing a new international actor, and where plot is all. It stubbornly refuses to provide insights into any of the principal characters, resorting to pithy motives like the accidental death of a child to explain McGurk’s betrayal, the hit-man’s night of love to indicate a change of heart.

**BLOOD OATH**


Dramatization of controversial war-crimes trial held shortly after the end of World War II in the Dutch East Indies. Reviewed in Cinema Papers, December 1990.

**BLOOD MOON**


**CALL ME MR BROWN**


Tele-feature (which has yet to be broadcast) based on the novel of the same name, made in 1985 based on the infamous Peter Macari, alias Mr Brown, the Qantas Airlines extortionist.

**COMPUTER GHOSTS**


Made for television, this would-be comedy begins with the cheapest-looking credits in history. Things go downhill from there.

The ‘plot’ is about a corrupt security firm, Crookschnatchers, which installs burglar alarms that create computer monsters to frighten the owners into selling up cheaply. (This is what Hollywood calls a high-concept film: its “hook” can be summed up in one sentence.) But the plot is uncovered by two computer hackers, Harlan and Anya, who have engaged in a computer tug-of-war over access to police files. It is a mark of this film’s low regard for its audience that it never shows the hackers do anything meaningful with their keyboarding (as happens in every American film with similar themes), the characters just banging away and magically breaking secret codes.

Director Marcus Cole made the industry take notice with his co-directing work on The Great Bookie Robbery. But Computer Ghosts is the sort of film that in a couple of years might be accidentally missing from his CV. [S.M.]

**CONTAIGN**


Karl Zwick’s promising feature debut is an inventive variation on the Halloween genre of slasher films. The haunted forest, rabid lunatics and the ominously luxurious house are no doubt familiar elements, though here they are nothing less than the illusory backdrops to the dreams and conquests of a real estate agent.

Goaded by a violent homosexual encounter, the budding “master of the universe” (Mark) meets temptation in the form of Ray Barrett’s slyly financier and his two promiscuous female companions (Nathalie Gaffney and Pamela Hawksford). Although the film dithers somewhat with some creaky plot elements, it is a sometimes inventive genre film with effective sound design by Tony Vaccher and John Dennison, efficient camerawork by John Stokes and assured direction by Zwick.

**THE CROSSING**


**THE DELINQUENTS**


Below: Creed (Jeff Fahey) and Pool Attendant in Ian Barry’s THE FIGHTING CREED (aka MINNAMURRA).

**DRIVING MISS DAISY**


Directed by Bruce Beresford and awarded Best Film at the 1990 Academy Awards (Beresford’s non-inclusion in the nominations for Best Director has been the subject of some debate and a worthy quip from Billy Crystal at the Awards presentation). Based on Alfred Uhry’s play of inter-racial friendships and the burdens of generational legacies. Reviewed in Cinema Papers, May 1990.

**EDEN’S LOST**


Originally known as Outback, this film had a brief theatrical outing under the title of Minnamurra, before being released to video under yet another name, The Fighting Creed. While the final title has the distinct ring of a mercenary marketing decision, it also refers to the plight of one of the film’s lead characters. (When shown recently on television, the title reverted to Minnamurra.)

Like the horses that gallop across the sweeping landscapes, this film has a reliable though predictable pedigree. Essentially modelled on The Man From Snowy River films, it is a decidedly old-fashioned romantic adventure in which a young woman’s quest to reclaim her father’s near-bankrupt heritage is paralleled by the trials of her two suitors: the cyclopic, self-assured American businessman, Creed, and the larrikin drover and trade union activist, Jack. Whilst the wider positions that these men represent are crudely dealt with, the conflicting values of the ‘grass roots’, working-class Australian and the enterprising American do lead to some intriguing and unexpected resolutions. Otherwise, the film steers a fairly straight course through picaresque adventure and ‘pulp’ romance, directed in a workman-like manner by Ian Barry (The Chain Reaction).

**FUTURE PAST**


**LIBIDO**


This is a little-seen, barely annotated (it is not recorded in the Cinema Papers Production Survey) 1987 feature. Assumedly made for television, it is a slight and unoriginal time-travel fantasy. The basic situation has a sly, introverted nerd in a race against time with his alter-ego self, who has returned from the past and is now employing his knowledge and lotharian charm to tap the futures market and to woo the nerd’s unsuspecting girlfriend.

This film is the equivalent of a high-school stage revue where a promising, currently faddish idea is enthusiastically though indiscriminately embraced, and economical, expedient solutions are found for most logistical problems. Here, for instance, the main characters work in a Sydney branch of the Video Ezy chain, skating around to the backdrop of current releases, but the real potential of this setting is barely exploited. Then there’s the seemingly endless scenes of sci-fi machinations that take place in front of hastily constructed sets with rudimentary computer-generated effects (how much better it was when Jack Deth simply emerged from the ocean in Charles Band’s wonderfully inventive Future Cop). Most tiresome, however, are the patently unfunny attempts at humour, with the hero’s supposedly ‘normal’ though obviously insane parents and their fanatical religious devotees. This is derivative, unremarkable and at least schlock.

**IN TOO DEEP**


This venture into the film noir universe of forbidden sexuality and underworld criminality is certainly what makes this unique in the current climate of Australian filmmaking. Initially the film concerns itself with the passionate, fiercely sexual relationship between a nightclub singer, Wendy, and Mack, a brooding criminal who is under surveillance by two policemen. Deborah Parsons’ script slowly (and perhaps too late) begins to incorporate the perspective of Wendy’s 15-year-old sister, JoJo, who moves into her older sister’s flat where she is ‘initiated’ into the adult world of sex, violence and their consequences.

Sadly, the adventure is let down by inconsistent performances, from Hugo Race’s endless sneer to Carillo Gantner’s woeful cameo as a gangster, and a tone that is never quite convincing. According to David Stratton’s The Asocado Plantation, the project was beset by production problems forcing it to shut down and resume several months later, which may partly explain the over-all unevenness.

**THE LAST BASTION**


Mini-series about Australia under the threat of Japanese invasion during World War II.
MORTGAGE

Naturalistic-played dramas driven by literate, dialogue-laden screenplays seem to be the touchstone of Australian television. All of which makes Bill Bennett’s move into improvisation and situation-derived scripts somewhat daring and innovative. However, this ‘docu-drama’ style falls, at times ambivalently, between documentary and drama, simulated ‘reconstruction’ and disarming kitchen-sink realism.

Mortgage is part of a Film Australia series which was broadcast on Network Nine (Bennett also contributed Matpractice and Custody) in which the trials of a young married couple building their dream home are painstakingly detailed. Bennett limits his treatment to the heavy emotional trials of the young couple while they battle on with unscrupulous builders, well-meaning bankers and lawyers. While at times this cautionary tale is pure bathos, it offers rare glimpses into the social conditioning of Australians. And at least two performances are, at times, too excruciatingly candid to watch.

RAW NERVE

Three teenagers ‘reveal’ themselves during the course of an intensive day in what has been described as an Australian reworking of The Breakfast Club. Reviewed in Cinema Papers, May 1989.

RELATIVES

This first feature of writer-director Anthony Bowman tells of a family’s gathering in the country for Grandfather’s eightieth birthday. This is the catalyst for family tensions to ebb and flow, for bonds to be made and broken.

Though very stage-like in its reliance on a theatrical style of performance, Relatives has its pleasures. The dialogue is sometimes sharp and witty (as when Joan, her husband’s driving having pushed a cyclist off the road, remarks disdainfully, “Dreadful legs!”) and the actors are confident. It is also a pleasure to see the great Ray Barrett in any role.

Bennett looks a much more interesting writer-director of small, tele-feature-like films than many currently in work. [S.M.]

RETURN HOME


ROCK ‘N’ ROLL COWBOYS

This film has something of a fantasy-cum-sci-fi B grader. Mikey, a no-luck band technician, wants to be a rock star and is tempted by a keyboard that creates music through one’s thoughts. In brief, this is Faust crossed with Douglas Trumbull’s Brainstorm, mildly crossed with Walter Hill’s Streets of Fire. [R.C.]

ROMERO

This John Duigan-directed film about Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero has had a drawn-out, circuitous journey to the video shops. It was originally scheduled to be released at least one year ago before its distributor, Filmpac, closed down. It has since been distributed by Roadshow Home Video.

An interview with John Duigan in Cinema Papers (November 1989) spelled out some of the evident problems with John Sacret Young’s script, with which Duigan was not in full agreement. At the same time, one is never uncertain of the good intentions that went into the making of this engaging film. The protracted sequence where Romero enters a church commanded by the military (one of whom it is suggested, but not stated, is American) is masterfully controlled and measured, sustaining the tension of the moment when the soldiers’ guns take aim and also the inner turmoil of Romero’s quest for liberation theology.

SEBASTIAN AND THE SPARROW

Mildly captivating film about the (to others) unlikely friendship between a public schoolboy, Sebastian, and a street kid, Sparrow. Both have reasons to be dissatisfied with life, and together they hit the road, avoiding parents, social workers and police. In the process, Sparrow finds his ‘lost’ mother and both gain a new perspective on familial love and responsibility.

The performances are not overly strong (though Jeremy Angerson looks exactly right as Sparrow) and the plotting is a little too contrived. But such is the way with children’s films in Australia (cf the ACTF’s work). And director-writer Scott Hicks does include some nicely detailed moments of observation, as when Sebastian is pulled over for under-age driving. Asked by the policeman to get out, Sebastian immediately leans against the car and spreads his legs, confidently demanding his right to one phone call: here hours in front of American television shows has pre-conditioned behaviour.

Hicks made the theatrical feature Freedom! some years ago, which had a similar theme. But Sebastian and the Sparrow is more likely to make his talents noticed. [S.M.]

THE SWORD OF BUSHIDO

A cheap adventure-action picture that is interesting for its inability to decide where it is going. With any luck neither will the audience.

An America airforce commander, also an expert on Japanese warrior cults and proficient with the sword, sets out to find the remains of his grandfather, whose plane came down somewhere in Thailand three days after the end of World War II. Through his special mental prowess, he deduces that his grandfather was unjustly assassinated by the Japanese. This tends to give the film a vengeance plot. Then he finds himself in the Western’s professional plot when he is suddenly called upon to help defend villagers from the attacks of gun runners and drug smugglers. Then there is a Holy Graal-like plot when he reveals he is actually trying to recover a special sword his grand-father stole from the Japanese, so that he can return it to them. [R.C.]

WENDY CRACKED A WALNUT

Rosanna Arquette, complete with American accent (which the film doesn’t explain), was imported for this uninspired rendition of the Cinderella fairytale. Wendy, day-dreaming to escape the mundanity of her supposedly skittish life and routine office-job, is stuck between her infantile, nerd boyfriend, Ronnie, and the mythical Prince Charming of her romantic fantasies, who emerges in the form of a slick, libidinally energized zombie, Jake.

Suzanne Hawley’s script maps Wendy’s quest against the narrowest parameters—carefree hedonism and sexual release (though the codes are strictly Victorian Era) versus grass-roots, homely nostalgia —copping-out with a resolution that suggests horror rather than fantasy.
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CINEMA PAPERS 83 • 65
FEATURING AUSTRALIA: THE CINEMA OF CHARLES CHAUVEL


BARRETT HODSDON

Prior to the 1970s revival of Australian cinema, there were few local directors who would qualify as bountiful subjects for intense research and scrutiny. The subject of Stuart Cunningham’s book, Charles Chauvel, is one case of a director who has already been accorded special status from a strictly limited pool of candidates. Indeed, the name Chauvel has acquired an aura from that period of Australian filmmaking when the industry was almost at zero point: i.e., the 1940s and ’50s. In the light of this, one of the more positive results of Cunningham’s work is his investigation of how the Chauvel legend was constructed in an indifferent commercial environment.

Rather than being touted as an auteur in abstract, Chauvel should be approached in the wider sense of a career trajectory that presented a number of dilemmas in a feature filmmaking milieu that was low-level and fluctuating.

Cunningham’s book is a valuable addition to the thin ranks of books that seriously attempt to probe aspects of Australian film history. This is especially so at a time when the fashion for Australian cinema is in recession. Featuring Australia does make a valiant effort to contextualize Chauvel in industry and social terms, as well as furnishing some useful readings of individual films.

Yet, given that the book was based on Cunningham’s PhD thesis, I sense an incomplete project, one that does not achieve a fully fledged analysis of the Chauvel predicament (for that is what it was), even though the writer is aware of the pertinent issues. His desire to pursue and distil these issues often seems lacking. The book does not really bridge the gap between the need to proffer an adequate analytical framework through which to assess the Chauvel predicament (one of a simultaneous champion and a displaced figure of Australian cinema) and the treatment of his feature films as isolated objects for study. One senses that the introductory chapter, “Approaching Chauvel”, has the air of a post-hoc rationalization of the project in order to give it a greater degree of coherence. Key questions that Cunningham raises about Chauvel’s position/predicament in Australian cinema (industrial, cultural, generic, aesthetic) are broached and then partially suspended as the study unfolds.

In his introduction, Cunningham peruses a number of topics which would seem to foreshadow a concerted attempt to unravel the Chauvel predicament: i.e., (1) Problems in conceptualizing film history; (2) Difficulties in approaching national cinemas; and (3) Past treatments of Australian film history.

In the end, these assume a sort of mechanical gesture rather than an incisive entry into the succeeding analysis.

Cunningham claims that he rejects the conventional critical model of tracing a director’s path from apprenticeship to maturity as appropriate for Chauvel (as Andrew Pike has done previously). He then proceeds to divide his career into chronological phases, despite his dismissal of the maturity model. He characterizes Chauvel’s first phase (i.e., his silent period) as one of entrepreneurial individualism; the second phase, encompassing the 1930s and World War II, is viewed as a period in which Chauvel made concerted attempts to build alliances between the production and distribution spheres, as well as starting the process of building a biographical legend culminating in the local success of Forty Thousand Horsemen and Rats of Tobruk; the final phase, covering the late ’40s and ’50s, sees Chauvel capitalizing upon this biographical legend and fiercely pursuing his role as independent producer-director.

Cunningham’s categorization seems eminently reasonable and could actually be construed as fortifying the maturity model, especially via the importance he attaches to the concept of cultural nationalism; the second phase, encompassing the 1930s and World War II, is viewed as a period in which Chauvel made concerted attempts to build alliances between the production and distribution spheres, as well as starting the process of building a biographical legend culminating in the local success of Forty Thousand Horsemen and Rats of Tobruk; the final phase, covering the late ’40s and ’50s, sees Chauvel capitalizing upon this biographical legend and fiercely pursuing his role as independent producer-director.

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Furthermore, Cunningham seems to sacrifice the opportunity to conduct an obvious and logical comparison between Chauvel and Ken G. Hall. This is unfortunate given the limited options to develop direct comparisons for the period in question. A Chauvel-Hall comparison would have helped to clarify the status and mission of Chauvel as an independent. Whereas Hall simply accepted the circumstances cast upon him to become Australia’s most prolific filmmaker of the ’30s, Chauvel had to struggle to launch and complete each project. Further, since Hall and Chauvel both admired and studied Hollywood filmmaking, a comparison between them would have been revealing, especially how each negotiated Hollywood classicism in terms of their narrative approach, not to mention their different signpostings of Australian culture. The question of Australian identity projection, and the impossible conditions of (post)-colonial culture, has interesting variations in each instance. Chauvel wanted to consciously project himself as a cultural nationalist whereas Hall did not harbour such ambitions.

The most uneasy dimension of Cunningham’s project is his appropriation of specific concepts in order to further his explication of the Chauvel predicament without a proper referencing of the previous use of these terms and their conceptual baggage that comes with them:

(1) The Classical Hollywood Style. Although Cunningham acknowledges the Bordwell and Thompson invocation here, he spends no time amplifying the term in its cross-application to Chauvel. He does not mention the restrictive formalist criteria that underlie the Bordwell and Thompson work. Consequently this allows a certain slippage in its application to Chauvel. Chauvel’s embracing of Hollywood’s narrative method does not especially distinguish him from a host of other filmmakers around the world that were looking to the Hollywood commercial model in the ’30s. An allegiance to the Hollywood mode of exposition was not a barrier to Chauvel’s rampant cultural nativism, but it did influence his understanding of dramaturgy and associated mise-en-scène elements. Cunningham fails to describe the nature and the implications of his allusions to the classical Hollywood mode of exposition and consequently he is unable to specify how we should bracket its application to the Australian filmmaking situation. In Chauvel’s work we cannot apply simple concepts of cultural subservience or cultural appropriation, for he falls into an ambiguous and perhaps indeterminate zone.

(2) The High Melodramatic Mode. Cunningham’s application of this term to some of Chauvel’s work again reflects a desire to appropriate a term imbued with resonance, without adequate explication of its critical context or value. This ultimately places the term in jargonistic limbo. Cunningham makes no reference to the debates around melodramatic form initiated by Elsaesser in the early ’70s and later taken up by feminist critics. This debate had a very specific bearing on the family melodrama and the associated genre of the women’s weepie in the classical American cinema. The debate revolved around the fusion of drama-
turgy, mise-en-scène and generic convention and was limited to such auteur-stylists as Minnelli, Sirk, Cukor, McCarey, Borzage and Ray. Thus Cunningham valorizes the high melodramatic mode vis-à-vis Chauvel in a critical vacuum. He does not prise open and test the concept. This raises a difficulty since Chauvel cannot be equated to the above-mentioned directors in terms of stylistic abstraction or sophistication, but he nevertheless was drawn to a sort of head surgery, equated to the above-mentioned directors in terms of the old mise-en-scène/melodrama debate would not matter if he had spent some time respecting the nature of melodrama in purely generic/popular culture terms. But he does not. 

(3) The Auteurist Designation. The other area of complaint is Cunningham’s double shuffle in the application of auteur to Chauvel. There seems to be some slippage between the notion of auteur and charting Chauvel’s biographical legend. I think Cunningham’s emphasis on the biographical legend is an important insight arising from his research. This can be read as a concerted attempt by Chauvel to construct himself as an ‘auteur’ through his industry status and public standing, without having to demonstrate it by textual markers. Chauvel was obviously a resolute producer-director who sought to control and stamp his projects, perhaps at the expense of more frequent output. But in terms of the old debates over authorship in Hollywood, a question mark hangs over Chauvel’s credentials. We need to extract the issue of Chauvel striving for respect and status on a number of fronts (of which the bio-legend becomes a key element) from whether or not Chauvel qualifies as a distinctive stylist who influenced the text with recurrent personal motifs and touches (as compared to a venerable director such as John Ford). There is insufficient clarification on Cunningham’s part as to how one might consider Chauvel as an auteur in the light of earlier critical debates over mise-en-scène strategies some decades ago. There was considerable discussion over how much-vaulted American directors auteurs were able to transform the elements of an established narrative system (genre, stars, story formulas, production values, etc.) into more idiosyncratic and personalized signifiers. Perhaps one could argue that Chauvel’s adeptness in building his biographical legend almost amounted to a substitute for purist conceptions of auteurism. Perhaps the most glaring example of Cunningham’s searching around and overreaching for appropriate academic terminology is the coinage of the word “localisation”. He ascribes this term to Chauvel’s desire “to shoot the true countryside in order to make Australia a film star”. He argues that it takes Chauvel beyond the documentary aesthetic and supposedly differentiates his films from being the dominant Hollywood genres. Here Cunningham appears to be clutching at straws in order to explain Chauvel’s secondment of the Australian landscape for cultural-nationalist ends. Although I am sympathetic to Cunningham’s difficulties in trying pinpoint the tone of Chauvel’s films, I have the impression that localisation is almost a means of short circuiting a more assiduous discussion of the dilemmas of Chauvel’s cultural nationalism. Is Chauvel’s depiction of the Australian countryside any more nationalist than John Ford’s portrayal of Monument Valley or the Mojave desert? 

Another example of Cunningham’s failure to pursue and extend a promising line of investigation is the proposed relation between Chauvel’s cinema and a domestic literary genre of travel/adventure writing best exemplified by Ian Riddiess’ and Frank Clune’s novels. This is disappointing since the ideological underpinning of this genre would appear to have interesting links to arguments about the impossible conditions of neo-colonialism broached elsewhere in the book. One might interpret a genre like this as representing an uneasy negotiation of the European experience in Australia despite an apparent surface bravado. A crossover with Chauvel’s preoccupations suggests a mixture of fascination with, and gauche response to, forging a spirit of nationhood in the “wilderness”, with its various manifestations of the exotic other. Again, this reader felt some frustration at being led to the threshold of a fruitful area of analysis, only to be thwarted by the writer’s eagerness to move on, irrespective.

Ultimately, Featuring Australian Averages upon transposing what is ostensibly an auteur critical study into a dissection of the tensions and dilemmas implicit in some of Australia’s post-colonial culture. Unfortunately, he does not really deliver. 

SCHRADE ON SCHRADE 
& OTHER WRITINGS

Kevin Jackson (ed.), Faber and Faber, London, 1990, 235 pp., index, illustrated, rrp $35.

SCOTT MURRAY

Though Paul Schrader wrote and directed one of the very few truly fine American films of the 1970s (American Gigolo, 1979), and directed one of the even fewer great American films of the 1980s (Patty Hearst, 1988), he is surprisingly little written and talked about. The publication of Schrader on Schrader is thus something to be warmly applauded.

The book really has two souls: a lengthy interview conducted by Jackson, broken into four parts (Background, The Critic, The Screenwriter and The Director), with a short Codex on stage plays. The other section is a selection of critical writings, including pieces on Easy Rider, Pickpocket, Roberto Rossellini, Sam Peckinpah and film noir. 

For those not familiar with Schrader’s writings for Film Comment, or, more important, Transcendental Style, his seminal work on Bresson, Ozu and Dreyer, this selection of more populist writing is a suitable introduction. One gains quickly a sense of the enthusiasm that generated part of his major book (if not its denser, more particular style) in this extract from "Pickpocket".

A custom of medieval architecture holds that the final portion of a structure should be left unfinished .. as a testament to man’s humility and his faith in God’s power to complete the building. The work of Bresson strikes us as just that final touch of arrangement, so that it could have scarcely been made by man, and yet so consume it caps and sanctifies the whole human effort.

Asentric, proud, saintly, the films of Bresson rank among the finest expressions of the human spirit. To find another who affects us as deeply and permanently we must press the limits of media and time: Dostoeyevski, Shakespear, Beethoven. Bresson has never, so far as I know, been measured by any of these. But in the sense that Bresson describes his project to Chauvel as "au cinéma, dans un décor immense" he is thus one of those consummate "très grands maîtres" who are the only authors of true films to have ever existed. His films of the 1950s (Pickpocket, Stigmata, The Devil’s Disciple, The Scarlet and the Black), his films of the 1960s (Mediterraneo, Pickpocket), his films of the 1970s (Pierrot le Fou, Pickpocket), his films of the 1980s (Mediterraneo, Pickpocket) could never be made by anyone else. He has made films in which I have never seen what I have ever seen. I would be tempted to say Pickpocket is the finest film I’ve ever seen if Bresson hadn’t made three or four films which affect me as deeply. (p. 38)

This passion for purist filmmaking and for purification by action and art is seen in much of Schrader’s work, particularly that wholly controlled by himself, for some collaborators, such as Martin Scorsese, have a habit of rather impurely rewriting the text (more later). Schrader is certainly one of the finest examples of a film critic putting his knowledge fully to work as a writer and director.

Schrader, as he is fond of recounting, came from Dutch stock and a strictly Calvinist upbringing in Grand Rapids, Michigan (captured truthfully, in part, in Hardcore). Having survived a regular dose of The Mickey Mouse Club on television, he ‘escaped’ briefly to a military academy in Virginia where he wrote a term paper on the book Black Like Me, “which was about the experiences of a white writer who posed as black in South Africa” (p. 8). The teacher wrote “This is not true” across it and marked it D. Then it was off to Calvin College, where, among other things, Schrader ran the film club and started to write.

Over the years in which the film club had been semi-legal, the selection of films was very intense: Oudry and L’ Avant-Dernière d’ Marinabad and Nazarin, all idea films; but as soon as it became legalized and part of the non-curriculum agenda at the college, the entertainment forces took over and films became progressively less adventurous. Today, they just show pap films. (p. 10)

That is also true of many potentionally interesting directors who succumb in Hollywood to the “entertainment forces” and turn out "pap". Schrader is definitely not one of those, and is still true to his visions, despite less than spectacular box-office returns.
While still debating whether to be a minis­
ter in the church, Schrader met and struck up
a friendship with critic Pauline Kael, who told
him to go to UCLA. Kael also put him onto the
L.A. Free Press which hired him as a critic, his
first piece being of John Cassavetes' Faces. But
the stint lasted less than a year, because Schrader
was fired for his negative review of Easy Rider
(reprinted by Jackson). This passage may give a hint why:

Easy Rider is very important movie—and it is a very
bad one, and I don’t think its importance should be used to obscure the gross misman-
agement of its subject-matter.

My complaint is that Easy Rider, for all its
good intentions, functions in the same superfi-
cial manner “liberal” Hollywood films have always
functioned. Easy Rider’s superficial characteriza-
tions and slick insights stem from the same
soft-headed mentality which produced such anathema ‘liberal’ films as Elia Kazan’s Gentle-
man’s Agreement and Stanley Kramer’s Defiant Ones...

What makes Easy Rider look like every other
gutless piece of Hollywood marshmallow liber-
alisn is Hopper’s refusal to play anything but a
stacked deck. You cannot lose when you plot
sterotypes against straw men. The problem for a
propagandist like Hopper is that humans are always more interesting than slogans, and to risk characterization is to risk failure ...

[A]s a work of art and imagination it falls
completely short. I demand more of art than I
do of life; I desire the sensitivity and insight that
only an artist can give. (pp. 34-37)

So, fired for being accurate and not bow-
ing to accepted wisdom (which Schrader, to
his credit, never does), Schrader “weasled [his]
way into the editorship” of the magazine Cinema
—which is well worth tracking down.

Jackson’s long interview with Schrader then
tracks the evolution of his critical writing through
the influences of Godard, Parker Tyler, Kael, Leavis and the seminal analysis of Young Mr. Lincoln in Screen. Then came Charles Eames, “the reason I think I was able to become a film-
maker” (p. 24). Eames was also instrumental in
Schrader’s writing his magnificent Transcen-
dental Style.

The whole of the Transcendental Style hypothesis is
not that if you reduce your sensual awareness rigorously and for long enough, the inner need
will explode and it will be pure because it will not have been siphoned off by easy and exploi-
tative identifications; it will have been refined
and compressed to its true identity, what Calvin
called the sensu divinaeitv, the divine sense ...

One of the things I have tried to do in my
films is ... have an emotionally blinding momen-
tum, like Mankiewicz or, like the end of
American Gigolo, where this spiritual essence pops
out of the film’s glibly produced image; or like the
moment in Light of Day when the girl is repon-
ciled with her mother ...

This is very hard to do, and one of the
problems I’ve run into is that it doesn’t really
work in commercial cinema because in order to get emotional blinding you have to deny so
much ... I’ve [now] mitigated the denial, but
then of course the blinding moments don’t
stand out so much. (pp. 28-29)

This sounds like a cop-out, but sidestepping
The Comfort of Strangers (which I have not
seen), there is no evidence of this. Schrader’s
next to last film is Patty Hearst, which is his most
rigorous, purest piece of work. There is no
mitigating the denial; in fact, it was that very
refusal to do so that angered so many critics
and blinded them to the work’s consummate
mastery. (It is telling that the less rigorous, but
still wonderful, Reversal of Fortune does not beg
the same angry response, “But it doesn’t ex-
plain what happened!”, that Patty Hearst does.
Both had the same screenwriter, Nick Kazan.)

The main revelation of “The Screenwriter”
section is Schrader’s revealing what he wrote
and how it got changed. Take Taxi Driver:

Marty wanted two things added: a scene for
Albert Brooks and a scene for Harvey Keitel. I
was opposed to this because everything in the
movie should take place from the taxi driver’s
point of view, and if he doesn’t see it, it doesn’t
exist ...

And I turned out to be right, because in the
end Marty did cut the scene he shot for
Albert; and for the scene he shot for Harvey
with Jodie Foster ... he had to put in a shot of
Bobby from another scene ... so that it looked as
if he was watching them. I think the reason the
film works is that you’re given no alternative
to Travis’s. (p. 116)

Where Scorsese also erred, in this critic’s
view, was in not rigorously pursuing Travis’ point
of view with his camera placement and lens use. For example, if Travis enters a room
he has never seen before, he shouldn’t precede him, but rather enter with him, ap-
proximating his perspective, as with an over-
shoulder shot. Equally, the lens should arguably equal Travis’s perspective (50mm).
But Scorsese seems too interested in the in-
estant effect to honour Schrader’s scripts with
the precision they deserve.

Now for Raging Bulk

the climax of my script was a scene which Marty
and Bob chose not to do, or rather did in a
different fashion.

It is the prison scene. Jake is in the cell and
he’s trying to masturbate and is unsuccessful,
because every time he tries to conjure up an
image of a woman he’s known, he also remem-
bers how badly he’s treated her, so he’s not able
to maintain an erection. Finally he takes it out
on his hands; he blames his hands and smashes
them against the wall. I’m not sure why, but they
were uncomfortable shooting this and so it
became ‘I am not an animal’ instead. (p. 131)

But the alterations (and diminutions)
didn’t end there: Scorsese ends the film with
the Bible quotation, “I was blind, and now I
see.” Schrader:

That’s purely Marty. I had no idea it was going
to be there, and when I saw the film I was
absolutely baffled. I don’t think it’s true of La
Motta either in real life or in the movie; I think
he’s the same dumb lug at the end as he is at the
beginning. I think Marty is just imposing
salvation on his subject by fiat. (p. 133)

Enough said.

Schrader also reveals himself an astute
judge of the finished work, as in this remark
about what went awskew with Peter Weir’s Mos-
quito Coast.

I don’t think the finished film really worked the
way the book did, which was, rather like Taxi
Driver, to have a character who’s initially charm-
ing and attractive and who sucks you in, so
that by the time you realize how mad your guide
is you’re already out in the wilderness with him.

One of the problems was the casting of the
lead role. It was written with Jack Nicholson in
mind, he was the only actor I could imagine who
would have that kind of absolute charm. But
for one reason or another Jack became unavailable
and so they went with Harrison Ford, who
doesn’t have that repu­ti­a­lian charm. He doesn’t
suck you in the first fifteen minutes and so the
movie is in effect over, because he’s only going
to become less and less likeable. (p. 128)

When reading the section on Schrader as
“The Director”, one recognizes a major flaw of
the book: the questions are exactly the same
kind as those in “The Screenwriter” section -
that is, concerned only with plot. There is little
to nothing about what a director actually does:
choosing lenses, framing shots, moving the
camera, instructing actors, blocking scenes,
sitting down with the editor, consulting with
the sound men, et al. Even when Schrader
manages to squeeze in a mention of his par-
ticular use of gels, Jackson fails to pick it up on.

In this sense, Jackson is typical of much
British (and, regrettably, Australian) film criti-
cism which seems to have come out of Leavis
and not a love of filmmaking. If they had not
seen the film but just read the script, the
writing would be exactly the same.

Now some critics protest that they don’t
and can’t write about the more technical as-
dpects of direction because they don’t un­
derstand it. That is like literary critics ruling them-
selves out of structural criticism because they
don’t understand English grammar and punc-
tuation. Basic skills are required of literary
critics; why not of film critic?

This aspect aside, and Jackson’s occasional
failure in pushing Schrader to more informa-
tive depths, this is a wonderful book and a joy to read.

CHILDREN AND TELEVISION: THE ONE EYED MONSTER?
Barrie Gunter and Jill McAleer, Routledge, Lon-
don & New York, 1990, 184 pp., rrp $29.95

ROBERT DE YOUNG

The number of hours children spend in
front of the television, and the impact of
its explicit and implicit values on them, is a
controversial area of media studies research
and theory. Gunter and McAleer freely ac-
knowledge this and discuss the usual gamut
of concerns expressed by writers and researchers
in the field: Does television influence aggres-
sive behaviour, reinforce social and sexual
stereotyping or adversely affect school perfor-
mance?

While many of the issues under discussion in
this text are not new, Gunter and McAleer’s
work is very useful because it summarizes the
research and findings to date, primarily, but
not exclusively, in England and North America.
From the outset, there is acknowledgement
that there are no easy and glib answers to any
of the above, and the authors caution that the
whole topic of children and television is a
minefield of suspicions, prejudices and fears
that are poorly substantiated by hard factual
evidence or research.

The introductory chapters provide a good
overview in this respect, and discuss how and
why children watch television, and how well
they follow and understand television discus-
sion. They note, for example, one study
where it was observed that, while watching an
episode of Sesame Street, some children looked
t and turned away from the screen every 25
Effects of other media and social and family effects of television on children from the evidence presented, their remarks seem a little too cautious and tentative. On the other hand, individual sections such as the discussion of Sesame Street and the presentation of minority groups on television are interesting and informative.

This certainly is not the sort of work one might turn to for support prejudices about the insidious or pernicious influence of television, but it is a very useful overview of where we are with the on-going debates about children and television. One child, at least, sees the world inhabited by children and the world of television as being poles apart—people are made smaller, s/he explains, and "lowered down by a rope" in order to get inside the television set. Nice place to visit but you wouldn’t want to live there.

CINEMA IN AUSTRALIA: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

Ina Bertrand (general ed.), NSW University Press, Sydney, 1989, 411 pp., hb, illustrated, rrp $39.95

JOHN CONOMOS

Any one who is remotely interested in Australian cinema and/or culture will find Cinema in Australia: A Documentary History invaluable. It is a comprehensive treasure-trove of indispensable documents—some familiar, others less so—that range from movie reviews to government reports, journal articles, advertisements, film festival newsletters, political commentaries, manifestoes, brochures from film societies and movie posters. All these documents constitute the relatively unknown, complex and shifting topography that represents Australian cinema (embracing both avant-garde and narrative feature films). The documents span from Henry Lawson’s story/script, "The Australian Cinematograph" (1897), which was filmed in 1972 as Where Dead Men Lie by the Commonwealth Film Unit (now known as Film Australia), to 1986.

The material is chronologically and theoretically structured and is divided into seven sections by established scholars and researchers on Australian cinema. Originally, Cinema in Australia was constructed to function as a companion volume to The Australian Stage (edited by Harold Love, NSW University Press, 1984), but they are only loosely related to each other. However, both collections of documents (as one is reminded in the unsigned "Preface" in Cinema in Australia) can be read as insightful maps that are still being drawn up in more telling-hypothetical terms about a particular, indigenous cultural field.

Most important, the underlying thrust of Cinema in Australia is to explore the basic cultural, historical, industrial and technological configurations of our local cinema as a sociocultural institution rather than as an aesthetic text. You will not find here documents that relate to questions dealing with textual analysis, cinephililia, genre, subjectivity, hermeneutics, etc. What we find instead is an excellent dossier of documents that speak of Australian cinema in terms of culture, economics, history and politics, cinema functioning in a cultural and social context as a complex multi-layered institution in a perpetual state of flux.

Another worthwhile aim of the book is its emphasis on describing the institutional trajectory of Australian cinema as an expression of the relevant critical discourses that emerged in the 1940s and ‘50s around the significant notion of cinema as "film art." For the first time, according to Stuart Cunningham and William Routt (in their rewarding section "Films became films"), cinema became a subject worthy of intellectual thinking. The title of their section belongs to Phillip Adams (that most quotable and ubiquitous of media pundits/movie producers whose role, along with Barry Jones and Peter Coleman, in shaping today’s local film landscape is appropriately stressed in the book), and comes from an article titled "The happiest summer of all" (1982), which is touching reminiscence about his movie-going youth watching continental movies in the drab, upright, WASP Melbourne of the early ’50s. In this subjective and melancholic piece Adams gives a cluster of cultural, iconographical and sociological factors that are still not widely considered as valid objects of informed critical analysis.

What do we know about the role of film societies, film festivals, film journals, independent film distributors and art-house cinemas in the formation of cinema in this country today? Practically nothing is our rhetorical response. To my knowledge, there is only a handful of people who have expressed concern over the years about these overlooked issues in film criticism and theory.

One of the most prized qualities of the book is how the collected documents articulate the elaborate vicissitudes of the institutional dimensions of Australian cinema in terms of cultural politics and the self-serving hegemonic interests of the local major exhibitors and distributors which have, since the beginning of the century, endeavoured at all costs to control indigenous feature-film production. In this respect, Cinema in Australia contains excellent industrial and government articles and reports that characterize the enormous complexity of the bureaucratic and industrial machinations over the decades in shaping the distribution and exhibition and the reception of our local industry.

Throughout the various documents that make up the first six sections (the
seventh is an excellent, well-designed and extensive bibliography compiled by Ina Bertrand and Jan Chandler), we have a concerted effort by the respective section editors to enunciate how Australian cinema can be best seen as a shifting (and relatively uncharted) dialectic between cultural politics and what Meaghan Morris once termed "political politics". What shines through is how successive federal and state governments since the 1920s have inherently assisted the various overseas interests of British- and American-owned local film companies in determining the look and shape of Australian feature film. This is a constant theme in *Cinema in Australia* and its overall significance in structuring past and present debates cannot be emphasized enough.

More to the point, *apropos* our current critical understanding of Australian cinema, is how these very debates about economic and cultural independence, "Australianism", cultural cringe anxiety, etc., still operate in an unsophisticated manner in the relevant critical economy of Australian cultural and film studies.

Thus, there are documents that emanate from a number of royal commissions and government reports: the ones that come to mind readily are the Royal Commission of 1927, The New South Wales Inquiry in the Film Industry: quota and film licensing (1934), the Australian National Film Board (1945), the seminal Vincent Report (1964), and the equally if not more significant 1969 committee report from the Australian Council for the Arts that was responsible for lobbying for a national film and television industry, which meant the advocacy for a National Film and Television School, an Experimental Film and Television Fund and Australian Film Development Corporation.

All these reports and documents (particularly the latter) were instrumental in contributing to the present-day character and structure of the local educational/training, government-funding and production sites that form a dominant (if not an indispensable) sector of our film culture responsible for mainstream narrative and independent filmmaking.

This means that the local film industry, as defined by the energies, strategies and industrial/cultural priorities of these different but interconnected sites, can be seen to be nurtured (to a varying degree depending on the current political and industrial expediencies of the appropriate epoch in question) along the related questions of government regulation, audience and public attitudes.

Ultimately, what many documents indicate is how the institution of Australian cinema functions in terms of the conflicting cultural and political roles of the government in encouraging the arts—especially cinema—in the community.

There is also throughout its contents statistical data, graphs and charts that strive to show salient cultural and industrial features about the Australian film industry during the early 1920s. This kind of information has some illustrative value in shedding light on certain desired aspects of the local film industry. One yearns to see more empirical data collected over the years that provide commentary about the varying relationships between film producers, funds, box-office receipts and marketing statistics, which government-sponsored features and/or independent films have made their money back, and so on.

The selection criteria, according to the book's preface, comprised selecting those documents that were political or polemical in character and not exclusively academic in context. All documents were chosen on the basis of being situated "within a particular discursive context" (p. xvi). Each document had to communicate to the reader from its own time and space; this meant that not only were the documents selected in a systematic fashion, to cover each relevant epoch, but, by selecting, ordering and commenting upon them by Bertrand and her colleagues, the documents were, to quote the Preface once more, set "adrift from the context which produced them" (p. xvi). Articles that were written in hindsight and those that are reflective in content and style were not selected.

It should be observed that both the accompanying introductions to the separate sections and the smaller annotations within each section constitute a complex dialectic between the past and the present. In fact, one of the key objectives of all the annotations is their aim to re-contextualize the documents for the 1980s.

One small irritating aspect of the book's design is the lack of a clear separation between field of film studies. They are collected here in this one volume, which deserves great attention given the critical and theoretical legacy it reflects.

**SHOOTING THE ACTOR OR THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF CONFUSION**


This is an account by British actor of his playing in Dusan Makavejev's *Manifesto*, made in the director's native Yugoslavia. It is mildly amusing, though only intermittently informative, Callow never really coming to grips with the film or its eccentric maker.

Makavejev has always been an *enfant terrible* of the cinema. On first meeting, he is extraordinarily charming and great fun, but some of those who work with him vow murder and revenge for the rest of their lives (David Roe, who produced Makavejev's *The Coca-Cola Kid*, is one whom the very mention of the M word turns ashén white and trembling). Well, it seems that Callow did not have an easy time of it, either. But rather than let his diary-like account be the grumpy last word, he has allowed Makavejev to interject, sometimes wittily, often otherwise. But the hoped-for dialogue between the two (near) antagonists unfortunately never eventuates to anything substantial.

There are some well-told incidents about the filming, but too much of the book seems rushed-off.

Of particular interest to Australian readers will be the bits about Chris Haywood, who also found himself in Yugoslavia (at the wrong time, one might add, given the direness of the finished film):
the documents and their respective accompanying annotations. This is a minor complaint in the light of the book's over-all fine design and production values.

The material was divided into the following six sections and edited by the following authors (I have already mentioned the seventh): 1. The most startling scientific marvel of the age (1896-1913), Ina Bertrand; 2. More than just entertainment (1914-1927), Dianne Collins; 3. Grand Gals of garb (1928-1939), Andrea Allard; 4. Fillums become films (1940-1956), Stuart Cunningham and William Routt; 5. Asymphony for clapperboards (1957-1975), Richard Barnden and Ken Berryman; 6. A question of loot (1976-1986), Ina Bertrand.

Each section's title gives the reader a clear impression of the dominant characteristic feature of Australian cinema's historical evolution at the respective period. And each section represents a critical mosaic of discourses central to the institutional development of Australian cinema during each period as constructed by the book's editors.

What we encounter as we read the documents is their emphasis on a certain group of essential cultural myths that tend to criss-cross along thematic lines across the vast socio-cultural and historical topography of the Australian cinema since the beginning of this century. These myths form a substantial core of theoretical interests characterising the past and present practice of Australian cinema studies.

The myths include the classical dichotomy between the city and the country, and the critical cultural importance of the Australian outback in shaping our popular conceptions about Australian cinema, questions relating to "Australianness" and our films as nationalistic expression. All these familiar mythologies, which are embedded in our speech and film writing about Australian cinema and culture (particularly as they apply to the Australian landscape), have been individualized during the past two decades by the now-familiar dedicated scholars, commentators and researchers who include not only the editors of the book but the authors of certain documents located within the text as well.

In one way or another, all the authors have bothered to investigate our local cinema in the unified belief that it is worthy of imaginative critical research and thinking. Whether as academic scholars, freelance critics, researchers, polemicists or as cineastes, they have endeavoured to illustrate in the respective work that Australian cinema is a cinema that is in need of sustained historical and textual analysis. Australian film culture is an elusive concept that cannot be taken for granted by our cultural bureaucrats, academics, critics and filmmakers.

One of the persistent cultural myths that we have entertained for a long time is how Australian cinema is unoriginal and of secondary value in the context of other national cinemas. Cinema in Australia succeeds in illuminating the absurdity of such a view.

On the question of Australian film culture, it is interesting to point out how (as Cunningham and Routt show) it comes to the fore in the late 1940s and early '50s in its various institutional manifestations (e.g., film festivals, film societies, film journals, art-house cinemas, "art films" and the government-sponsored documentary movement of the time) and defined a supportive ethos or "mind-set" for the later mid-1970s renaissance in Australian film.

Another worthwhile feature of the book is how there is for each section a dossier of production reports, advertisements, reviews and posters for one particular feature film. Utilizing this textual strategy, Bertrand and her associates can demonstrate to the reader how Australian cinema, as an institution and as an aesthetic object, connect to each other in many complex ways and how the film in question was read within the broader cultural and social parameters of the community at that time. By paying close attention to a particular feature film, the reader is able to appreciate relationships between production and audience, consumption and industry, government regulation and popular attitudes. Thus we can appreciate the "social imaginary" of our evolving moving image culture at a point of time. Arguably this is one of the work's main merits as a documentary history of our cinema.

Short, balding, eyes glistening, he is all relish, a man of pleasure. He talks without the slightest inhibition about, and with an assumption of common enthusiasm for, the things he loves (they seem to include most human recreations: sex, art, sport, sex, food, wine, sex — above all sex, of which he speaks with a connoisseur's relish, assessing the erotic merits of this race or that race, this section of the anatomy or that). Life is his hobby. He also has a deeply romantic streak. (p. 117)

MAGICAL REELS: A HISTORY OF CINEMA IN LATIN AMERICA


Magical Reels is part of a major series designed to map the field of contemporary Latin Ameri-

can culture, and this first of the series offers a comprehensive study of Latin American cinema. It charts the development of the various cinemas in an industry that is dominated by the advanced technology, massive finance and worldwide distribution of North America cinema.

A historical framework is set up which examines the progress of the silent era, the Golden Age of the Mexican cinema in the 1940s, and the theories and practices proposed by the New Cinema in the late 1950s through to the 1960s.

Then, in a country-by-country account, the book looks at how Latin American filmmakers have attempted to create images which express both national and popular concerns.

Magical Reels also takes a close look at how the aspirations of Latin American filmmakers have stood up to social and economic realities and, finally, it asks whether there is the space of a stable future for that cinema.

THE PRODUCTION BOOK 1991


A very informative reference directory for professionals in the Australian film television and advertising industries. This 1991 edition has been completely up-dated and expanded, and the practical, colour-coded tab index makes it easy-to-use.

The directory also provides credit listings for scriptwriters, producers and directors. The range of categories includes everything from directors to runners, music publishers to choreographers, as well as listings of recording studios, props hire, equipment hire and even late-night chemists and petrol stations.

It is an important hands-on reference directory.
NOTE: Production Survey forms now adhere to 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. Information is correct as of 1/4/91.

EIGHT BALL
Prod. company Meridian Films
Production Starting May
Principal Credits
Director Ray Argali
Producer Tim Silvey
Exec. producer Jill Robb
Screenwriters Ray Argali Gary Hill
DOP Mandy Walker
Sound recordist Ian Cregan
Prod. designer Ken Sallows
Planning and Development
Script editor John Cruthers
Casting Dina Mann
Production Crew
Prod. supervisor Denise Patience
Prod. manager Marion Pearce
Prod. co-ordinator Jenny Barty
Producer’s ass’t Judith Hughes
Prod secretary Georgia Carter
Unit manager Leigh Ammitzboll
Prod accountant Mandy Carter
Comp’d guarantor Film Finances
Camera Crew
Focus puller Campbell Miller
Clapper-loader Trevor Moore
Key grip Max Gaffney
On-set Crew
1st asst director Euan Keddie
Boom operator Tony Dickinson
Art Department
Art director Hugh Bateup
Post-production
Sound supervisor Dean Gawen
Goat 35mm
Government Agency Investment
Development Script Film Victoria
Production AFC
Synopsis Charlie is a young architect with seemingly everything going for him. Russell, the complete opposite, has just been released from prison. Their paths cross when Russell is employed to work on Charlie’s latest project: the construction of a giant Murray Cod as a tourist attraction for a small Victorian town.

FRIDAY ON MY MIND
Prod. company Boulevard Films
Production Starting in March
Principal Credits
Director Frank Howson
Producer Frank Howson
Exec. producer Peter Boyle
Screenwriter Frank Howson
Synopsis: Friday on My Mind is the story of Chris, a handsome, unemployed 18 year old who is plucked from obscurity to front a new advertising campaign. Things turn sour when Chris realises he’s being taken advantage of and his old friends are no longer around to fall back on.

HAMMERS OVER THE ANVIL
Prod. company SAFC
Production March 1992
Principal Credits
Director Ann Turner
Producer Richard Mason
Co-producer Peter Harvey Wright
Exec. producers Louisa Wethr Gua Howard
Screenwriter Peter Hepworth
Based on “Hammers over the Anvil” Written by Alan Marshall
Planning and Development
Script editor Peter Gawler

THE NOSTRADAMUS KID
Prod. co. Simpson Le Mesurier Films
Production October 1991
Principal Credits
Director Bob Ellis
Producer Terry Jennings
Exec. producers Roger Simpson
Screenwriter Bob Ellis
Planning and Development
Script editor Roger Simpson
Government Agency Investment
Development AFC
Production FFC
Synopsis: A gentle romantic comedy about the end of the world. The religious and sexual coming of age of a 1980s Seventh Day Adventist boy, who acquires a taste for drink, women and philosophy, and believes the end is nigh during the Cuban Missile Crisis, even though the much longer-for apocalypse seems to keep getting postponed.

WHO LEFT THE ... VIDEO ON
Prod. company Jarjoura Films
Principal Credits
Director Gary Jarjoura
Producer Gary Jarjoura
Screenwriter Gary Jarjoura
Original screenplay Gary Jarjoura
DOP Dave Ingall
D.O.P Jeff Malouf
Composers Gep Bartlett Art Phillips
Prod. manager Vicki Watson
Cast: Dave Ingall, Troy Nesmith.
Synopsis: Martin Lunning, a browning member of our video-watching society, is kidnapped by his cousins, Beef and Noodles, taken away to the country and shown a fun time, while Martin’s wife tries to defend her video store.

Blinky Bill
Prod. co. Yoram Gross Studios
Dist. co. Beyond International Group
Director Yoram Gross
Producer Yoram Gross
Exec. producer Sanda Gross
Scriptwriters Yoram Gross John Palmer
Based on The Adventures of Blinky Bill Written by Dorothy Wall
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.

THE LAST DAYS OF CHEZ NOUS
Prod. company Jan Chapman Prods
Dist. co. Beyond International Group
Production 8/8/1991 ...
Principal Credits
Director Gillian Armstrong
Producer Jan Chapman
Assoc. producer Mark Turnbull
Screenwriter Helen Garner
DOP Geoffrey Simpson
Sound recordist Ben Osmon
Editor Nicholas Beaton

FEATURES PRODUCTION

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Your complete Negative Matching Service including • Time Coding onto 8" Floppy Disc • Super 16mm • Syncing Neg or Pos Rubbish • 16mm & 35mm Edge-Coding Service ("Rubber Numbering") • Tight deadlines our speciality • 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if required.

Contact Greg Chapman
Tel (02) 439 3986
Fax (02) 437 5074

CINEMA PAPERS 83 • 73


**THE FATAL BOND**

**Synopsis:** The story of the journey of Father Laforgue in 17th-Century Canada to the underground city seeking an answer to the question: for its own extinction.

**Director:** James McTeigue

**Scriptwriter:** Ther Laforgue

**Producers:** Sandy Page, Robert Lantos

**Producers’ Asst:** Sabina Finnern

**Comp, Guarantor:** Film Finances

**DOP:** Adrian Bole

**Editor:** John Goldney

**Continuity:** Dimity Gregson

**Casting:** Cyall Beckman

**Special Fx Supers:** Rick McCallum, Cottrell Guidry, Russ Bien, Major Fast, John Allen, John T. Thompson, Jerry Billings

**Costume Designer:** Sandy Storey

**Art Director:** Rona Shearer

**Production Designer:** Annie Steggall

**Art Department:** Amanda Lovejoy, Keith Fielding

**Make-up Asst:** Sandy Manthy

**Make-up:** Sandy Manthy

**Stunts Co-Ord.:** Mary Norris

**Stunts:** Tony Cattaneo, Gary Proudfoot, Brian Davidson, Ross Gray, John Fugate

**Music:** Barry Cocksing

**Action Vehicle Co-Ord.:** Rick Bonnick

**Wardrobe:** Lyn Aske

**Stunt Co-Ord.:** Keith Holloway

**Post-production:** Ted Otten

**Sound Designers:** Brian Duffin, Art Phillips

**Musical Director:** Art Phillips

**Music Performs:** Kevin Johnson

**Sound:** Mark Voss

**Mixing:** Patti Mostyn Publicity

**Soundtrack:** Afgh

**Government Agency Investment:** Production

**Marketing:** Marketing Consultant

**Inter. Sales:** Beyond Films

**Dir. Cast:** Linda Blair (Leonie Stevens), Jerome Ehlers (T. Martinez), Dinah Gibson (Rocky), Stephen Leeder (Boon), Joe Bugner (Shamus Miller).

**Synopsis:** Joe and Leonie, drawn together by fate, set off to Springerville to begin a new life. Two murderers happen in their wake. The father of one of the victims, Anthony Boon, tracks the suspects, Joe and Leonie.

**The Girl Who Had Everything**

**Synopsis:** The story of the journey of Father Laforgue in 17th-Century Canada to the underground city seeking an answer to the question: for its own extinction.

**Director:** James McTeigue

**Scriptwriter:** Ther Laforgue

**Producers:** Sandy Page, Robert Lantos

**Producers’ Asst:** Sabina Finnern

**Comp, Guarantor:** Film Finances

**DOP:** Adrian Bole

**Editor:** John Goldney

**Continuity:** Dimity Gregson

**Casting:** Cyall Beckman

**Special Fx Supers:** Rick McCallum, Cottrell Guidry, Russ Bien, John Allen, John T. Thompson, Jerry Billings

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**Synopsis:** Joe and Leonie, drawn together by fate, set off to Springerville to begin a new life. Two murderers happen in their wake. The father of one of the victims, Anthony Boon, tracks the suspects, Joe and Leonie.
TURTLE BAY
Prod. co. Roadshow, Cotter & Carroll
Principal Credits
Director Stephen Wallace
Prod. man. Larrie Carroll
Line producer Doyle Irene Ossman
Exec. producers Arnon Milchan, Paul一角, Greg Coote
Scriptwriter Based on novel by Brian Montrose
DOP Blair D'Alaguet
Sound recordist Ben Osso
Editor Andy Turner
Prod. designer Brian Thomson
Costume designer Roger Kirk
Planning and Development
Script editor Sue Smith
 Casting
Production Babe Carroll
Prod. manager Fiona McGonaghy
Prod. co-ordinator Sharon Miller
Prod. secretary Rebecca Coote
Prod. sec. member. Daniella Kolundzija
Location manager Philip Roopen
Unit manager Richard Montgomery
 Prod.’s runners Melissa Warburton
John Riley
 Prod. accountant Jill Steele
Base accounts Carolyn Jones
Acco. admin. past Christine Gordon
Cameraw Crew
Camera operator David Williamson
Focus pullers John Plott
Camera assistant Colin Chaise
Clapper-loader Richard Bradshaw
Key grip Special fx sup. Brian Cox
Key grip David Hardie
Gaffer Warren Greiff
Best boy Paul Ganster
Electrician Colin Chase
Addt. electricity Brian Short, Tony Dowmunt
Caterer Grant Atkinson,
Caterer Grant Padgett
Sound Sean Conway
On-set Crew
1st ass. director Craig Adam son
2nd ass. director Colin Donohue
3rd ass. director John Plott
Continuity Linda Ray
Boom operator shutt. 1 & 2
Make-up Warren Greiff
Hair stylist Cheryl Williams
Safety officer Richard Bouse
Safety ass’ts John Halliday
Unit nurse Maggie Mackay
Fight co-ordinator Glen Bowell

Still photography Jim Sheldon
Unit publicist Annie Wright
Art Department
Art director Robert Dein
Art directors Michael Phillips, Michelle McGahey
Art dept co-ord. Tracey Hyde
Art dept runner Leslie Mills
Set dressers Kerrie Brown
Glenn Johnson
David McKay
Kathy Moys
Draftsman Ken Wilby
Set passy props John Osmundson
Art dept ass’ts. Angus Tattie, Andrew Short

Set wardrobe
Wedge super. Kerry Thompson
Set wardrobe Julie Middleton

Construction Dept
Scene artist Eric Todd
Construct. man. Alan Fleming

Post-production Laboratory Matt Carroll
Lab liaison Simon Wicks
Est. Greta Scacchi (Judith), Joan Chen
Location ( Minist), Art Malik (Kanun)

Synopsis: An ambitious Australian journalist returns to Malaysia to report on an international refugee crisis. Through her encounters with the people there, she is thrown into personal and professional conflicts that reach a climax on the East Coast of Malaysia.

UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD
Prod. companies Road Movies
Arts Films
Village Roadshow Pictures
(Aust)

Dist. company Trans Pacific
Production
Principal Credits
Director Warren Beatty
Producers Jonathan Taplin
Anatole Dauman
Co-producers Village Roadshow Pictures

Synopsis: Set in the year 2000, Until the End of the World is a love triangle set across four continents involving Sam, on the run from the authorities, Claire, who acts out of her love for Sam, and Eugene, obsessed by his love for Claire. Sam’s journey takes him from America, via Africa and India, to a mystical landscape in the mythological and magical landscape of central Australia.

RECENTLY COMPLETED
See previous issues for details on:

Ava: Dead to the world, deadly
Ding Dong, Hold On to Your Hearts, Yarra: Hurricane Smith, Eberhardt, Spot the Finished, Stardust, and George’s New Life, Waiting... A Woman’s Tale.

DOCUMENTARIES
SATELLITE DREAMING
Prod. company CAAMA Prods
Principal Credits
Director Mike Martin
Producers Ivo Burum

Synopsis: The arrival of Aussat, communications satellite, has provided some Aboriginal communities with the opportunity to see such programs as Neighbours and Home and Away. Satellite Dreaming looks at the ways these communities are attempting to control and use television.

DOGG ONE: WHAT A DOG’S LIFE!
Dist. company Stormringer Films
Prod. company Jane BallFilms

Synopsis: DOGG ONE, WHAT A DOG’S LIFE! is a true story about a loving, stable relationship and how to get one.

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT
Dist. company Village Roadshow
Prod. company Variety Club of Australia

Synopsis: BEEN THERE, DONE THAT chronicles the lives of four children who are living with cancer. The film looks at the ways these communities are attempting to control and use television.

CINEMA PAPERS 83 - 75
For details of the following see previous issue:

**THE ARTIST, THE PEASANT**
Prod. company: FA
Dist. company: FA

**Principal Credits**
Director: Franco di Chiara
Exec. producer: Paul Hunter
DOP: Simon Smith
Sound recordist: Victor Gentle
Editor: Wendy Chandler
Production Crew
Prod. manager: Ron Hannam
Prod. secretary: Lori Wallace
Prod. accountant: Elizabeth Clarke
Camera Crew
Camera assistants: Paolo Ferratti (Italy)
Alison Maxwell (Perth)

**Post-production**
Printed by: Guiseppe Mercuri.
Synopsis: A 50-minute documentary about Italian communist Guiseppe Mercuri: poet, artist, short-story writer, human and, more recent, painter. His writing and art work captures the density of his nephew, Franco di Chiara, is the filmmaker.

**ENVIRONMENT**
Prod company: FA

**Principal Credits**
Directors: Catherine Marcinic, Cathy Henkel
Exec. producer: Chris Oliver
Scriptwriter: Catherine Marcinic
Production Crew
Prod. supervisor: Hilary May
Prod. managers: Narragrange Grey

Marketing
Consultant: Francesca Muir
Publicity: Lesna Thomas
Synopsis: A look at environmental issues facing Australia.

**PALAU**
Prod. company: FA
Dist. company: FA

**Principal Credits**
Exec. producer: Janet Bell
Scriptwriter: Ian David

**Production Crew**
Prod. manager: Julie Gottrell-Dormer
Prod. secretary: Jane Benson
Marketing
Consultant: Francesca Muir

Synopsis: A political thriller which explores with violence and intrigue as a small Pacific Island takes on the super powers.

**PLAGUED**
Prod. company: FA
Dist. company: FA

**Principal Credits**
Directors: Atsuko Ziegler
Exec. producer: Ed Goldby
Co-producer: Channel Four
Exec. producers: Janet Bell
Scriptwriter: Dr Norman Swan

**Production Crew**
Prod. manager: Julie Gottrell-Dormer
Prod. secretary: Jane Benson
Marketing
Consultant: Francesca Muir
Synopsis: 4 x 1-hour documentary series which examines the inter-relationship between disease and civilization.

**LA STUPENDA**
Prod. companies: RM Associates

**Principal Credits**
Director: Derek Bailey
Producer: Brian Adams
Exec. producers: Chris Oliver

**Production Manager**
producer: Hilary May (Aus)

**Marketing**
Consultant: Francesca Muir
Publicity: Lesna Thomas
Cast: Joan Sutherland.
Synopsis: A combination of live performance and archival footage highlighting Joan Sutherland’s 42-year opera career.

For details of the following see previous issue:

**BABYBA MUKA**

**TELEVISION PRODUCTION**

**ALL TOGETHER NOW (series)**
Prod. companies: Telltale Films
Nine Network

**Principal Credits**
Director: Pino Amenta
Exec. producer: Kate Haliday
Line producer: John Podbielni
Head writer: Philip Minch
Scriptwriters: Shane Brennan
Stuart Thompson
Make-up: Amanda Rowbottom

**Kids**
Prod. supervisor: Jeannie Cameron
Prod. managers: Margaret Greer
Synopsis: Bobby Rivers is a 40-year-old Australian family, when they score a huge hit are well behind him. How will he cope with the discovery that he has two 15-year-old children that he never knew existed.

**BEYOND 2000 (series)**
[See issue 77 for details]

**CHANCES (series)**
Prod. company: Beyond Productions
Dist. Co.: Beyond International Group

**Principal Credits**
Directors: Mark Callan
Richard Sarrell
Peter McColl

**Synopsis**
A 50-minute documentary about the filmmaker.

**CLOWNING SIM**
Prod. company: BFI

**Principal Credits**
Director: Tony Cavanaugh

**Production Crew**
Production co-ord.: Stottie
Producer's ass't: Annie Neale
Prod. secretary: Joanne Neel
Location manager: James Legge
Unit manager: Louise Cullinan
Prod. runner: Simon Pao
Prod. accountant: John Marston
Accounts ass't: Val Barthes

**Camera Crew**
Camera operators: PM L petrol
Camera assistant: Peter Best

**PRODUCTION CREW**

**CASTING**

**Principal Credits**
Director: George Whaley
Producer: Barron Films

**Co-producers**
Peter Best

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**
Barron Films

**TELEVISION PAPERS 83**
SYNOPSIS: This two-hour television feature was a unique blending of the crocodile in its natural habitat and the Crocodile Hunter's own back story. The episode focused on the family's life in the wild, with particular emphasis on the challenges they faced in the Outback. The Crocodile Hunter's educational approach to wildlife conservation was highlighted, along with his family's ongoing struggle to preserve the crocodile's natural habitat.

**Production Credits**
- **Director:** Ken Cameron
- **Executive producer:** Penny Chapman
- **Associate producers:** Adrian Read, Ray Brown
- **Scriptwriters:** John Allop, Sue Smith
- **D.O.P.:** James Barrie
- **Sound recordist:** Nick Wood
- **Editor:** Tony Kavanagh
- **Prod. designer:** Marcus North
- **Art director:** John Pyce-Jones
- **Costume designer:** Annie Marshall
- **Composer:** Bill Mozingo

**Planning and Development**
- **Casting:** Maura Fay
- **Extra casting:** Irene Gaskell

**Production Crew**
- **Prod. manager:** Joanne Rooney
- **Prod. co-ordinator:** Sandy Stevens
- **Prod. secretary:** Sarah Adams
- **Location manager:** Patricia Rothkrans
- **Unit manager:** John Downie
- **Production runner:** Polly Job
- **Prod. accountant:** Michelle O'Arcy
- **Business affairs:** Kim Vecera
- **Insurer:** Hammond Jewel

**Camera Crew**
- **Camera operator:** Russell Bacon
- **Focus puller:** Sean McIlroy
- **Clapper-loader:** Lisa Lloyd
- **Key grip:** Gary Burdett
- **Ass grips:** Anne Dyer, Ben Hyde
- **Gaffer:** Tim Murray-Jones
- **Best boy:** Pierre Druon
- **Electrician:** Bruce Young
- **Gennie operative:** Bob Woods

**On Set Crew**
- **1st assistant director:** Adrian Pickersgill
- **2nd assistant director:** Karen Greaves
- **3rd assistant director:** Vicki Hastrich
- **Continuity:** Rhonda McAvoy
- **Boom operator:** Brian SVM
- **Make-up:** Jenny Boehm
- **Special fx co-ord:** John Neal
- **Still photography:** Gary Johnson
- **Unit publicist:** Virginia Sargent

**Art Director**
- **Art director:** John Pyce-Jones

**Boom operators**
- Neville Kelly
- Graham Cornish
- Paddy Oswald
- Steven Clode

**Set dressing**
- [Names not listed]

**Synopsis:** The life of the family of Crocodile Hunters, known as nuns, is depicted in the story of Catherine, Paul, and Ambrose. The tale of Brides of Christ provides an affecting encounter with a group of unforgettable women.

**EMBASSY II (series)**
- **Prod. companies:** ABC
- **Dist. company:** Grundy TV
- **Pre-production:** 21/1/91 – 10/2/91
- **Production:** 11/2/91 – 17/6/91
- **Post-production:** 18/5/91 – 7/7/91

**Primary Credits**
- **Directors:** Paul Moloney, Mark Callan
- **Line producer:** Richard Searl
- **Assoc. producer:** Geoffrey Nottage
- **Exec. producers:** Jill Robb, Ian Bradley
- **Scriptwriters:** John Reeves, John Coulter, Shane Brennan
- **Original story by:** John Bradby, Anna Lucas
- **Sound recordist:** Roger McAlpine
- **Editors:** Gary Watson, Chris Bragg
- **Prod. designer:** Max Nicolson
- **Costume designer:** Claire Griffin
- **Composer:** Peter Sullivan

**Planning and Development**
- **Script editors:** John Coulter, Anne Lucas
- **Casting:** Dina Mann
- **Extra casting:** Jane Hamilton
- **Production Crew**
  - **Prod. supervisor:** Vinny Stites
  - **Prod. manager:** Margaret Greenwell
  - **Prod. co-ordinator:** Gill Meillon
  - **Producer’s asst:** Aidan Stephenson
  - **Prod. secretary:** Angela Chenhall
  - **Location manager:** Ann Bartlett

**Camera Crew**
- **Camera operators:** Roger McAlpine, Peter Holmes, Austin Schmidt, David Gurner

**On Set Crew**
- **1st asst directors:** Ali Ali, Ron Alphon
- **2nd asst directors:** Ann Mavor, Charles Morse

**Publicity**
- **Digital:** Garry McDonald, Laurie Stone

**Synopsis:** This two-hour special features a crocodile, the world's oldest creature, as the story is told from the perspective of the Hunter family. The tale of Brides of Christ provides an affecting encounter with a group of unforgettable women.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>Censorship Listings</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Reason for decision</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DECEMBER 1990</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PG (PARENTAL GUIDANCE)</strong></td>
<td>Almost an Angel</td>
<td>J. Cornell, U.S., 97 mins</td>
<td>United International Pictures, Occasional low-level violence and coarse language, V(i-m-g) L(i-g)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Schumacher, U.S., 75 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation</td>
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<td>G Explanatory Key to reasons for classifying non-“G” films appears here.</td>
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**Censorship Listings**

**FREQUENCY**

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<tr>
<th>Infrrequent</th>
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<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
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<th>Gratutious</th>
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<td>S (Sex)</td>
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<td>V (Violence)</td>
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<td>O (Other)</td>
<td>i</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Title**

1. Look And Love Begins (a), B. Bruckner, Germany, 86 mins, Australian Film Institute (Sydney)
2. Other Frankie, The (c), Icaic, Cuba, 100 mins, Australian Film Institute (Sydney)
3. Paradise (b), D. Dorrie, Germany, 106 mins, Australian Film Institute (Sydney)
4. Right to the Heart (a), J. Meerapfel, Germany, 114 mins, Australian Film Institute (Sydney)
5. Sleep of Reason, The (b), U. Stockli, Germany, 82 mins, Australian Film Institute (Sydney)
6. Trouble With Love, The (a), H. Sander, Germany, 114 mins, Australian Film Institute (Sydney)
7. As You Desire Me (a), MGM, U.S., 71 mins, Victorian Arts Centre
8. Flesh and the Devil (a), MGM, U.S., 94 mins, Victorian Arts Centre
9. Kiss, The (a), MGM, U.S., 62 mins, Victorian Arts Centre
10. Love (a), MGM, U.S., 81 mins, Victorian Arts Centre
11. Mata Hari (a), MGM, U.S., 92 mins, Victorian Arts Centre
12. Mysterious Lady (a), MGM, U.S., 100 mins, Victorian Arts Centre

**Special Conditions**

Chicago Blues (a) (c), Icaic, Cuba, 14 mins, Australian Film Institute (Sydney)

**JANUARY 1991**

**G (GENERAL EXHIBITION)**

1. Donald Friend - The Prodigal Australian D. Bennettts, Australia, 90 mins, AustralIan Film Institute (Melbourne)
2. Glass Cape. The (main title not shown in English) M. Harra, Japan, 103 mins, Japanese Information and Culture Centre
3. Indo Express C. Fowler R. Gorrinage, Australia, 70 mins, Rock Requiem
4. Money (a) (b), D. Dorrie, Germany, 98 mins, Australian Film Institute (Sydney)
5. My Heart is in That Land (a) (c), Icaic, Cuba, 95 mins, Australian Film Institute (Sydney)

**PG (PARENTAL GUIDANCE)**

1. Alice R. Greenhurst, U.S., 103 ins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Adult concepts, O(adult concepts)
2. Das Schreckliche Machen M. Seifteleben, Germany, 91 mins, Dendy Cinema, Adult concepts, O(adult concepts)
4. Field, The N. Pearson, Eire, 107 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Adult concepts, occasional violence and coarse language, L(i-m-g) O(adult concepts)
5. Green Card (a) P. Weir, U.Australia-Australia, 106 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language, L(i-m-g)

**M (MATURE AUDIENCES)**

1. American Dream B. Koppelpe-Cohn, U.S., 95 mins, Quality Films, Occasional coarse language, L(v-m-g)
2. Bad News Bachelors F. di Chiara, Australia, 25 mins, Australian Film Institute (Melbourne), Sexual allusions and occasional coarse language, L(i-m-g) O(sexual allusions)
3. Bonfire of the Vanities B. de Palma, U.S., 121 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language, L(v-m-g)

**R (RESTRICTED EXHIBITION)**

1. Angel At My Table - A Trilogy, An English) Producer not shown, Hong Kong, 95 mins, Quality Films, Occasional coarse language, L(v-m-g)
2. comment Fair the Amour Avec un Negre Sans se Fatiguer R. Sadler-H. Lange, France-Canada, 95 mins, Petunia Nominens, Occasional coarse language and sexual scenes, L(i-m-g) S(i-m-g)
3. Cypress Tigers, The (main title not shown in English) Producer not shown, Hong Kong, 84 mins, Yu Enterprises, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g)
5. Flight of the Intruder M. Neufeld, U.S., 111 mins, United International Pictures, Occasional violence, V(i-m-g)
7. Graveyard Shift W. Dunn-R. Singleton, U.S., 83 mins, Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Horror and frequent coarse language, L(i-m-g) O(horror)
8. Green Card (a) P. Weir, Australia-France-U.S., 106 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language, L(v-m-g)

**R (RESTRICTED EXHIBITION)**

1. Armageddon (said to be - title now shown in English) Film City Productions, Hong Kong, 86 mins, Australian Cinema, Very frequent violence, V(f-m-g)
2. Gangland Odyssey (main title not shown in English) Film City Productions, Hong Kong, 95 mins, Quality Films, Occasional coarse language, L(v-m-g)
3. Hong Kong Gigolo (main title not shown in English) David Lam, Hong Kong, 94 mins, Ye Enterprises, Occasional coarse language, V(i-m-g)
4. King of Gamblers (main title not shown in English) Connie Leung, Mak Tak, Hong Kong, 90 mins, Ye Enterprises, Occasional coarse language, V(i-m-g)
5. Life is Cheap ... But Toilet Paper is Expensive W. Fredrick, Hong Kong, 95 mins, Premium Films, Adult concepts, O(adult concepts)
6. Men of Respect E. Horowitz, U.S., 109 mins, Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Occasional coarse language, V(i-m-g)
7. Predators L. Gordon J. Silver J. Silver J. Davis, U.S., 107 mins, Hoyts Fox Columbia Tri Star Films, Some graphic violence, drug abuse and coarse language, V(i-m-g) O(drug abuse) L(v-m-g)
8. Story of Kennedy Town (main title now shown in English) Producer not shown, Hong Kong, 96 mins, Australian Cinema, Very frequent violence, V(f-m-g)

**CINEMA PAPERS 83 • 79**
FILMS BOARD OF REVIEW

Green Card (a) P. Weir, Australia-France-U.S., 106 mins, Village Roadshow Corporation, Occasional coarse language, V(i-m-g) Film City Production, Hong Kong, 94 mins, Chinatown Cinema, Occasional graphic violence, V(i-m-g)

G (GENERAL EXHIBITION) L'Atalante Producer not shown, France, 192 mins, Premier Films

Second Animation Celebration - The Movie, The T. Thoren, Various, 102 mins, Acme Films

Tomorrow (main title now shown in English) H Nabeshima, Japan, 101 mins, Japan Information and Culture Centre

PG (PARENTAL GUIDANCE) Armour of God II - Operation Condor (title not shown in English) Golden Way Films, Hong Kong, 104 mins, Chinatown Cinema, Occasional coarse language, sexual allusions, L(i-m-g) O (sexual allure)

Berkeley in the Sixties M. Kitchell, U.S., 64 mins, Warhol Productions, U.S., 64 mins, National Library of Australia, Occasional coarse language, sexual allusions, L(i-m-g) O (sexual allure)

Michael Madana Kama Rajan (main title not shown in English) P. Arunachalam, India, 162 mins, Dayalan, Occasional low-level coarse language, L(i-m-g)

Triad Story (said to be - title not shown in English) Film City Production, Hong Kong, 94 mins, Chinatown Cinema, Occasional coarse language, exploitation nudity, S(i-m-g) O (exploit, nudity)

Temptation Summary Hong Kong, 92 mins, Chinatown Cinema, Occasional sexual activity, exploitation nudity, S(i-m-g) O (exploit, nudity)

Weekend 80 • CINEMA PAPERS 83
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